

LBT's From Light to Liberation: *Tikva*/Hope

Week of March 28, 2021 / 15 Nissan 5781

Framing: Jewish history is replete with the same pattern: We build a thriving culture immersed in the dominant society, and then, after a certain amount of time, we become subject to prosecution and are sent into displaced or even murdered. And then, rising from the ashes, the Jewish people manage to survive and begin anew. We are *Shearith Yisrael*, the surviving remnant. Our prophets understood that the fire of hope burns bright in the core of our journey as human beings. Even in the midst of existential struggles, we cleave to hope -- the hope that our efforts and work will mean something and contribute to the creation of a better world than the one that we found. Below you will find two texts that emphasize hope in the aftermath of great destruction. The first, from the Prophet Jeremiah, who lived during the destruction of the First Temple, helped Jews find hope in the valley of destruction and death and is still sung at Jewish weddings today. The second text from the Babylonian Talmud equates prayer with hope as the rabbis similarly understood hope as being a central value for the Jewish people despite the Temple lying in ruins and the Jewish people dispersed to the four corners of the globe.

Jeremiah 33:10-11

(10) Thus said the Eternal: Again there shall be heard in this place, which you say is ruined, without a person or a beast—in the towns of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without people, without inhabitants, without animals — (11) the sound of mirth and gladness, the voice of bride and groom, the voice of those who cry, “Give thanks to the Eternal of Hosts, for the Eternal is good, for God’s kindness is everlasting!” as they bring thanksgiving offerings to the House of the Eternal. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as of old—said the Eternal.

Babylonian Talmud, Berakhot 32b:10

Rabbi Hama, son of Rabbi Hanina, said: A person who prayed and saw that she was not answered, should pray again, as it is stated: “Hope in Adonai, strengthen yourself, let your heart take courage, and hope in Adonai” (Psalms 27:14). One should turn to God with hope, and if necessary turn to God again with hope.

Questions for Reflection:

1. Jeremiah points out specific events that happen which help us find hope, like weddings. From where or whom do you derive hope? When you encounter moments in your life when you find yourself lacking hope what have you done?
2. Is there a connection for you, as the Talmud suggests, of placing hope in the divine and letting your heart be courageous? Does one catalyze the other?
3. It is not surprising that when Israel was searching for a national anthem, they selected *HaTikva*, a 19th century poem about hope in the Jewish tradition. In what ways do you consider hope to be an essential Jewish value?