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The Cure before the Illness - a Message of Hope

BEIS HAMIKDASH THOUGHT

The Ramp of the Mizbeach

The Ladders of Holiness & Impurity

The Midrash offers 2 contradictory explanations of the metaphor of the ladder in Yaakov's dream. This dream took place on the Temple Mount as Yaakov declared "this is the House of G-d and the gateway to Heaven".

On one hand, the Midrash teaches that the ladder represents the ramp of the Mizbeach, the sacrificial altar. At the same time, the ladder was also a metaphor for the statue in the dream of Nevuchadnezar, the Babylonian king who destroyed the Temple. This statue represented the nations who would exile the Jewish people.

The Kabbalists explain that there are 2 types of ladder. The ladder of Kedusha is one that lifts us up to higher spiritual levels. The ladder of impurity takes us down to the spiritual depths.

The Kohanim ascended the Mizbeach with a ramp, because the Torah states that we may not ascend the Mizbeach with stairs. The sages explain that this was to ensure that the Kohanim would not take large strides (פסיעה גסה). The word גסה also means arrogance.

This is the difference between the 2 ladders.

The ladder of impurity is when our accomplishments lead to arrogance and feelings of superiority. Far from lifting us up, this ladder pulls us down and brings spiritual destruction and exile.

The ladder of holiness is like the ramp of the Mizbeach. On this ladder, our strides are taken with humility and instead of becoming haughty, our accomplishments make us more humble.

One of the fundamental teachings in relation to the Divine system of judgment and punishment is the principle of מקדים רפואה למכה, that Hashem always prepares the cure before the illness.

Hashem does not send us punishment or affliction, without first preparing the consolation and rectification that will bring us out of the affliction. The reason for this is that the knowledge and awareness that our consolation has already been pre-destined and prepared, gives us hope, faith and comfort when we are going through our suffering.

Yirmiyahu was the prophet of the Churban. He prophesied about the impending destruction of the Temple and exile of the Jewish people because of their sins. He is the author of the book of Eicha in which he records a first-hand account of the horrors inflicted upon the Jewish people as the city of Yerushalaim and the Beis Hamikdash were destroyed and the Jewish people were exiled to Bavel.

But many years before Yirmiyahu, the Novi Yishayahu delivered prophesies of comfort and consolation, from which we take the seven Haftorahs of comfort that are read in the weeks after Tisha B'av, starting with the comfort of Nachamu Nachamu Ami. These prophesies describe the redemption of the Jewish people and their return to Zion.

The destruction of the Beis Hamikdash and subsequent exile described by Yirmiyahu was a punishment requited upon the Jewish people for our sins.

But when they went into exile, they took with them the words of the prophet Yishayahu, the Refuah that preceded the Makkah foretold by Yirmiyahu.

The comforting prophesies of Yishayahu would give them strength throughout their suffering, knowing that Hashem was with them in their pain and that they would eventually be redeemed and the city of Yerushalaim would return to its former glory. These words of comfort made their suffering in exile that much easier to bear.

This system of Divine justice and comfort is alluded to in Parshas Devarim, which is always read on the Shabbos before Tisha B'av.

In his address to Klal Yisrael, Moshe Rabbeinu employs the word Eicha - exclaiming Eicha Esa Levadi, how can I alone carry the troubles, burden and quarrels of the Jewish people?

The Midrash connects the Eicha of Moshe to the Eicha of Yirmiyahu. The word Eicha is synonymous with the destruction and suffering of the Churban.

But immediately prior to uttering this word, Moshe says "May Hashem, the G-d of your forefathers add to you a thousand times yourselves and bless you as He has spoken to you."

These words of blessing are the Refuah that comes before the Makkah alluded to by the word Eicha.

When Moshe said "as He has spoken to you", he was referring to the Giving of the Torah, when Hashem spoke to the Jewish people and showered them with G-dly love and revelation.

Moshe was reminding the Jewish people that Hashem will again reveal Himself to them and bless them, just as He did at Har Sinai. This will take place with the final Redemption, that will come after their suffering in Golus.

With these words of comfort, blessing and assurance, Moshe could then continue with the word Eicha, alluding to the dark times that would come upon the Jewish people.

The Chassidic masters teach that like one who demolishes a house in order to build a nicer one in its place, Hashem only brought the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash as a preparation for Moshiach and the rebuilding of the third Beis Hamikdash, where we will experience the ultimate revelation and glory.

The message of the cure before the illness holds true for all of our times of collective, national suffering which is commemorated and mourned on Tisha B'av. It is also true with our own personal moments of suffering and challenges as well.

When we go through difficult times, we can take strength and consolation with the knowledge that Hashem would never abandon us to suffer alone with no hope of redemption.

There is already, and will be, a cure to our illness. We know that Hashem has not abandoned us and is with us in every challenge. And we know that even before the suffering came upon us, Hashem has prepared His blessings for comfort and happiness and that we will ultimately emerge to a brighter and better place and future.

Honouring the Beis Hamikdash

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

In the final 2 chapters of the Laws of the Beis Hamikdash, the Rambam discusses the Mitzvos of fearing the Mikdash and of guarding the Mikdash.

The Mitzvah to revere the Mikdash is clearly stated in the Torah which states **וּמִקְדָּשִׁי תִירָאוּ**. The Midrash Toras Kohanim explains that the Mitzvah is not to fear the Mikdash building itself, but rather to fear “He who has commanded us to do so”.

The Sefer Hachinuch (Mitzvah 254) explains that the objective of this Mitzvah is to fix into our souls a sense of awe, so that when a person would come to the Beis Hamikdash to daven or to bring a korban, their hearts would be softened, allowing them to do true Teshuvah.

Whilst being a Biblical Mitzvah, the parameters of how we show reverence in the Beis Hamikdash was given over to the Rabbis to determine.

Nowadays

The Mitzvah to fear the Mikdash applies even after the Temple’s destruction. This is learned from the juxtaposition of the Mitzvah to revere the sanctuary to the Mitzvah of keeping Shabbos. From this the sages expound that just as Shabbos observance applies for all time, so does the Mitzvah of revering the Mikdash. Furthermore, the sages learn from the Posuk **וְהָשִׁמּוּתוֹ אֶת מִקְדָּשֵׁיכֶם** “and I will destroy your sanctuaries”, that even after being destroyed, it is still called a Mikdash and the Kedusha remains.

Conduct on Har Habayis

The Sifra records that one may not enter Har Habayis with one’s travelling walking stick. Similarly one may not wear shoes on Har Habayis. We find precedent for this in the Tanach that on hallowed ground (such as Moshe at the Burning Bush) a person should remove their shoes. Most commentators explain that like Yom Kippur, this only applies to leather shoes.

One may also not enter **בְּאֵפוֹנְדָתוֹ**. Rashi explains this to be a form of money pouch that was worn on a belt. Rambam and the Bartenura explain that it refers to wearing only an undershirt without a garment on top.

The Sifra also forbids a person going onto Har Habayis with his money tied into his cloak. Tosfos explains that to do so would be disrespectful as it appears that he is going to en-

gage in trade. Tosfos concludes that if the money purse is concealed there is no problem.

The Rambam rules that one may not use Har Habayis as a shortcut. One may only enter for the purpose of a Mitzvah. A similar ruling applies to entering a Shule. One may not use a Shule as a shortcut or enter a Shule to take shelter from the rain or heat or to call a friend.

On Har Habayis, a person should walk calmly, taking small paces. One is also not allowed to act in a frivolous, light-hearted manner (**קְלוּת רֵאשׁ**) opposite the the Gate of Nikanor - the Eastern gate of the Azarah that stood opposite the Kodesh Hakodoshim.

When leaving one should not turn their back to the Heichal, walking in the same manner as one does when taking leave of a king - as we do at the end of Shemona Esrei.

Restricted Areas

Not entering the areas where one is forbidden to enter, is also a feature of revering the Sanctuary. According to the Rambam, entering an area which one is forbidden to enter, carries the penalty of Kareis to this day.

Which part of the Temple precinct a person could enter would depend on their status and their level of purity.

Jews going up onto Har Habayis today is a subject of debate. Most Poskim strictly forbid doing so because of the severity and complexity involved. Others permit doing so if done in a Halachically prescribed and compliant manner, including the laws of purity. Anyone considering a trip onto the Temple Mount should consult a competent Halachic authority on whether doing so is permissible and what conditions and guidelines are applicable.

Replicating Parts of the Mikdash

A person may not construct his home in the design of the Heichal, a porch in the form of the Ulam or a courtyard like the Azarah. This Halacha is brought in Shulchan Aruch. It only applies when building to the exact measurements of the Beis Hamikdash.

We are also forbidden from replicating the Menorah or Shulchan. The Radbaz explains that this is an extension of the mitzvah to revere the Mikdash in a similar way that a just as a commoner may not use the sceptre of the king as it would be a mark of disrespect.

Only a 7-branch Menorah is prohibited and only when made of metal. According to some author-

ities a golden Menorah may be made when it does not have the decorative features as described in the Torah (since the absence of these decorative features would invalidate a golden Menorah but not one made of another metal).

Guard of Honour

There is a positive Mitzvah to guard the Mikdash. Failing to guard the Mikdash also violates a negative Mitzvah. In the Rambam’s interpretation, this guarding was performed by 3 Kohanim and 21 Leviim who would stand at specific locations on Har Habayis and around the Azarah.

In Moreh Nevuchim, Rambam explains that the purpose of the guards was to prevent visitors from entering into restricted areas. In Mishneh Torah, Rambam explains that the guarding was not for concern of robbers or enemies. Rather it was a guard of honour - since one cannot compare a palace which has guards to one which does not.

Since this is the purpose of the Mitzvah, the commentaries (see Minchas Chinuch) question why the Rambam limits the guarding to night-time only (unlike the Raavad and Rosh who require Shemira by day as well).

Tiferes Yisroel answers based on the Rosh, that the purpose of the Shemira (as an extension of revering the Mikdash) is so that we do not remove our thoughts from the Mikdash. During the daytime, the fact that the Kohanim were serving in the Beis Hamikdash sufficed. Only at night would guards be necessary.

Over 100 years ago, Rabbi Hillel Moshe Meshel Gelbstein wrote a Kuntres to prove that this Mitzvah should apply today, just like the Mitzvah to fear the Mikdash. In his later years, he moved to Yerushalayim to do this job.

He references the Vilna Gaon who wrote that if we are able to do so, houses near the Kosel should be bought and stationed with guards to warn people not to put their hands into the cracks of the Kosel (a topic for another article) Most of his contemporaries did not accept his conclusions.

In the merit of learning about the Beis Hamikdash and in showing awe and reverence to our Shules which are called a **מִקְדָּשׁ מְנַעֲט**, a miniature Sanctuary, may we merit to be able to visit and serve Hashem in the Third Beis Hamikdash.