

Shvilei Pinches

Bein Hametzorim

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Bein Hametzorim – Shabbos Chazon 5770

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“He Cast Down from Heaven to Earth the Glory of Yisroel”

Why Did the Holy One Cast Down the Glorious Image of Yaakov that is engraved upon his Throne of Glory

To commemorate the upcoming Shabbos Chazon--which always falls during the month of Av, during the last of the three weeks—let us reflect upon a tremendous insight concerning the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. The divine, prophet Yirmiyah revealed in Megillas Eichah (2,1): **“השליך משמים ארץ”**—He cast down from heaven to earth the glory of Yisroel; and He did not remember His footstool on the day of His wrath. Our blessed sages expound on this verse in the Midrash (Eichah Rabbosi 2,2):

“משל לבני מדינה שעשו עטרה למלך, הקניטוהו וסבלן, אחר כך אמר להם המלך, כלום אתם מקניטין אותי, אלא בעבור עטרה שעטרתם לי, הא לכון טרון באפיכון, [הרי לכם מתנתכם מושלכת באפיכם], כך אמר הקב“ה לישראל, כלום אתם מקניטין אותי אלא בשביל איקונין של יעקב שחקוקה על כסאי, הא לכון טרון באפיכון, הוי השליך משמים ארץ וגו’”.

It is analogous to the inhabitants of a kingdom who made a crown for the king; they kept provoking and angering the king and, yet, he tolerated them; finally, the king said to them that seeing as he tolerates their provocations only because of the crown they fashioned on his behalf, “here is your gift tossed back in your faces”; so, too, did the Holy One say to Yisroel, “I only tolerate your provocations due to the glorious image of Yaakov that is engraved upon my Throne, here it is tossed back in your faces,” as it is written: “He cast down from heaven to earth the glory of Yisroel.”

This Midrash is surely perplexing and disturbing to any intelligent person. How can we even imagine that the Holy One, who chooses Yisroel and loves Yisroel, would react in this manner to Yisroel’s provocations? Certainly, He is capable of punishing Yisroel even with Yaakov’s image still engraved on His Throne. There must definitely be a deeper, hidden meaning to this Midrash; it is incumbent upon us to unravel this mystery to the best of our limited abilities.

The Almighty Poured Out His Wrath upon Wooden Sticks and Stones

We can begin to address this matter, with reverence and devotion, based on several illuminating introductions from our holy sources. We will start with the words of the Midrash (E.R. 4,15):

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“כתיב (תהלים עט א) מזמור לאסף אלקים באו גוים בנחלתך, לא הוה קרא צריך למימר אלא בכי לאסף, נהי לאסף, קינה לאסף, ומה אומר מזמור לאסף, אלא... כך אמרו לאסף, הקב"ה החריב היכל ומקדש ואתה יושב ומזמר, אמר להם, מזמר אני ששפך הקב"ה חמתו על העצים ועל האבנים ולא שפך חמתו על ישראל”.

Why is this psalm referred to as a hymn or joyous song, rather than a lament or dirge? They said to Assaf: “The Holy One destroyed the Temple and the sanctuary and you are sitting around and composing songs?” Assaf replied: “I am rejoicing that the Holy One poured out His wrath upon wooden sticks and stones rather than upon Yisroel.”

We have learned that the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash was a wonderful blend of Divine kindness combined with Divine justice. The actual destruction of the Temple was an expression of Divine justice. The fact that this decree was only visited on the physical structure, on mere sticks and stones, reveals another dimension, that of Divine kindness. The fact that Yisroel were spared annihilation was an expression of Divine kindness.

Let us proceed to our next introduction, gleaned from the pure and holy teachings of Rabbi Eliyahu of Vilna, zy”a. He addresses the Gemorah (Berachos 3.):

“רבי אליעזר אומר שלש משמרות הוי הלילה, ועל כל משמר ומשמר יושב הקדוש ברוך הוא ושואג כארי, שנאמר (ירמיה כה ל) ה' ממרום ישאג וממעון קדשו יתן קולו שאוג ישאג על נוהו”.

Here, we learn that the night is divided into three watches and that the Holy One roars like a lion during each of these watches. Rashi deduces that Hashem roars three times from the possuk in Yirmiyah quoted by the Gemorah. The Gemorah (ibid.) continues:

“אמר רב יצחק בר שמואל משמיה דרב, שלש משמרות הוי הלילה, ועל כל משמר ומשמר יושב הקדוש ברוך הוא ושואג כארי ואומר, אוי לבנים שבעוונותיהם חרבתי את ביתי, ושרפתי את היכלי, והגליתים לבין אומות העולם”.

Along with these roars, the Almighty proclaims: “Woe is to the children whose transgressions have caused me to destroy My house, burn My sanctuary and exile them among the nations of the world.”

If we examine Hashem’s lament concerning Yisroel—“Woe is to the children”—we discern that He mentions three specific regrets: (a) I destroyed My house, (b) I burned My sanctuary and (c) I exiled them among the nations of the world. The Gra of Vilna, zy”a, points out that these three things correspond to three distinct aspects of the destruction of the Temple:

(a) destruction of the heavenly Beis HaMikdash, which Hashem does not enter during times of exile. This is taught in the Gemorah (Taanis 5.): “אמר הקב"ה לא אבוא בירושלים של מעלה עד שאבוא

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“לירושלים של מטה”—the Holy One said, “I will not enter the heavenly Jerusalem until I am ready to enter the earthly Jerusalem.” (b) the burning of the earthly Beis HaMikdash and (c) the exile of Yisroel among the nations. It is pertaining to these three desecrations that the Holy One cries out and roars like a lion: “Woe is to the children whose transgressions have caused me to destroy My house”—refers to the Beis HaMikdash up above—“burn my sanctuary”—is a reference to the Beis HaMikdash down below—“and exile them among the nations of the world”—obviously refers to the exile of Yisroel.

It is in this manner that the Gra explains the three roars that that the Holy One roars during the three watches of the night. As Rashi points out, the possuk indicates three separate roars. **“ה’ ממרום ישאג”**—Hashem will roar from above—this first roar laments the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash above. **“שאוג ישאג על נוהו”**—He will roar and roar over His abode—these two roars lament the burning of the Beis HaMikdash down below and Yisroel’s exile down below in this world.

The important lesson that he is teaching us is that it is insufficient to only cry and mourn over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash of this world and Yisroel’s exile, but, rather, we must also cry and grieve over the ruin of the Beis HaMikdash in the heavens. Furthermore, we might suggest that the three weeks of mourning were instituted with these three calamities specifically in mind.

The Throne of Glory Is the Beis HaMikdash Above

We still need to explain why the Holy One felt compelled to destroy the Beis HaMikdash above; why did it not suffice to destroy the Beis HaMikdash down below and to send Yisroel into exile? First of all, it is well-known that the Beis HaMikdash above and the Beis HaMikdash below are aligned with one another. We see this in parshas Vayeitzei (Bereishis 28,16): **“ויירא ויאמר מה נורא המקום הזה, אין זה כי אם בית אלקים וזה שער השמים”**—Yaakov is in awe of the place where he slept, and declares that it is none other than the House of the Lord. Rashi comments: **“ומדרשו שבית המקדש של מעלה”**—according to midrashic interpretation, the Beis HaMikdash above is aligned opposite the Beis HaMikdash below.

It is worth pointing out the lesser known fact, however, that the Beis HaMikdash on high is actually the Throne of Glory that the Holy One Blessed be He sits upon. Rashi points this out on the possuk in “shiras hayam” (Shemos 15,17): **“מכון לשבתך - מקדש של מטה מכון כנגד כסא של מעלה”**—the Temple below is aligned opposite the Throne above. The Mizrahi also emphasizes that the words **“מכון לשבתך”**—indicate the Throne that the Almighty sits upon.

In fact, we have an explicit reference in the words of the prophet (Yirmiyah 17,12): **“כסא כבוד מרום מראשון מקום מקדשנו”**—that the Throne of Glory above is related to the place of the Temple. The Gemorah (Pesachim 5.) elucidates this verse as a reference to the building of the Beis HaMikdash. So, we find it stated quite clearly that the Throne of Glory above is the very place of the Temple. Additionally, Rashi’s commentary on the possuk we began with in megillas Eichah-- **“השליך משמים”**

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“**ארץ תפארת ישראל ולא זכר הדום רגליו ביום אפוי**” –definitively states that the footstool where He rests His feet is the place of the Beis HaMikdash.

The Holy One Sits on His Throne in the Holy of Holies Above

Nevertheless, this subject requires clarification. The Throne of Glory is the royal chair that the Holy One sits on, as it were. On the other hand, the Beis HaMikdash is the house that surrounds all of the furniture and household contents. How then, can we say that the heavenly Throne and the Beis HaMikdash are one and the same? After some investigation, I found a solution to this puzzle among the teachings of our blessed sages in the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayakhel 7):

“חביב הוא מעשה הארון כסא הכבוד של מעלה, שנאמר (שמות טו) מכוון לשבתך פעלת ה' מקדש וגו', שמקדש של מעלה מכוון כנגד בית המקדש של מטה, והארון מכוון כנגד כסא הכבוד של מעלה שנאמר (ירמיה יז יב) כסא כבוד מרום מראשון, ובאיזה מקום היה מקום מקדשנו, הוי פעלת ה' מקדש ה' כוננו ידיך, אל תקרי מכוון אלא מכוון כנגד כסא הכבוד.”

“The Ark is treasured like the heavenly Throne of Glory, . . . , the heavenly Temple is aligned opposite the earthly Temple, and the Ark is aligned opposite the heavenly Throne of Glory, and where is the place of our Temple? . . . aligned opposite the Throne of Glory.”

Once again, we find an explicit source stating that the Holy One, as it were, sits on the Throne of Glory in the heavenly Holy of Holies, which is aligned opposite the Ark in the earthly Holy of Holies. Based on this understanding, the words of the possuk (Yirmiyah 17,12) can be elucidated as follows: **“כסא כבוד”**—the Throne of Glory which is located on high, is located in our Beis HaMikdash above.

This seems to explain why the prophets equated the heavenly Beis HaMikdash with the Throne of Glory. The sanctity and kedushah of the heavenly Beis HaMikdash stems from the fact that the Holy One, as it were, sits on His Throne of Glory; similarly, the kedushah of the earthly Beis HaMikdash derives from the fact that it is the place where He rests His Presence—as it is written (Shemos 25,8): “And they shall make Me a Sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them.”

It turns out that the two comments cited from Rashi deliver the same message. Rashi in parshas Vayeitzei introduced an aggadic interpretation teaching us that the heavenly Temple is aligned directly opposite the earthly Temple. Rashi in parshas Beshalach, in the shirah, taught us that the earthly Temple is aligned opposite the heavenly Throne. So, we see that the earthly Beis HaMikdash is aligned opposite the heavenly Beis HaMikdash, which contains the Throne of Glory that the Holy One sits upon.

This provides a nice interpretation of an enigmatic statement in the Gemorah (Berachos 7.):

“תניא אמר רבי ישמעאל בן אלישע, פעם אחת נכנסתי להקטיר קטורת לפני ולפנים, וראיתי אכתריאל יה ה' צבאות שהוא יושב על כסא רם ונשא, ואמר לי ישמעאל בני ברכני, אמרתי לו

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יהי רצון מלפניך שיכבשו רחמיך את כעסך, ויגולו רחמיך על מדותיך, ותתנהג עם בניך במדת הרחמים, ותיכנס להם לפנים משורת הדין, ונענע לי בראשו”.

Rabbi Yishmael, the Kohen Gadol, relates that upon entering the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur to burn the incense, he merited seeing the Lord sitting upon His high and lofty Throne. The Gemorah (Yoma 52:) teaches that the incense were placed between the two staves of the Ark. As we have learned from the Midrash, the Ark was aligned opposite the heavenly Throne; so, Rabbi Yishmael, performing the service down below, was able to see the Holy One Blessed be He sitting on His Throne in the Holy of Holies above.

The Sanctity of the Earthly Beis HaMikdash Derives from the Heavenly Beis HaMikdash

Let us continue to delve into the significance of this spiritual alignment. Why, in fact, did Hashem command that the earthly Temple be built with this precise orientation to the heavenly Temple? We might suggest that it teaches us that the sanctity and kedushah of the earthly Temple derives from the heavenly Temple. In other words, the Holy One sits on His Throne in the Holy of Holies above and transmits kedushah from there to the parallel construct on earth, the Ark in the Holy of Holies below.

We have an important principle, however, that in order for positive influences to be transmitted from above, they must be triggered by good deeds and performance of mitzvos in this world. This principle is conveyed in the Zohar hakadosh (Vaerah 31:): **“תא חזי באתערותא דלתתא אתער לעילא, ועד לא יתער לעילא לאשראה עליה”** It is for this reason that Hashem commanded us to sacrifice offerings in the earthly Beis HaMikdash; by means of the fire rising from the altar below to the heavens above--**“ריח ניחוח אשה לה”**—emitting a satisfying aroma to Hashem—a tremendous bounty of kedushah is released and directed from the heavenly Beis HaMikdash to the earthly Beis HaMikdash.

Now, we have shed some light on one of the questions we posed initially. It was necessary to destroy the heavenly Beis HaMikdash in order to destroy the earthly Beis HaMikdash. The Holy One, in an act of Divine kindness, chose to visit His wrath and punishment upon the physical structure of the Beis HaMikdash, mere sticks and stones--**“שפך חמתו על העצים ועל האבנים”**—in order to spare Yisroel from annihilation. To permit the destruction of the earthly Beis HaMikdash, though, it was necessary to first cut off its source of kedushah from above.

The Destruction Does not Effect the Image of Yaakov

Following this path of enlightenment, we gain some insight into the magnificent ways the Almighty works. We began quoting a verse from Eichah and a midrashic interpretation describing how Hashem cast down from heaven to earth the splendid image of Yaakov Ovinu, the chosen of the Patriarchs, the glory of Yisroel, from its place on the heavenly Throne of Glory. The Gemorah (Pesachim 88.) teaches:

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”מאי דכתיב (ישעיה ב ג) והלכו עמים רבים ואמרו לכו ונעלה אל הר ה' אל בית אלהי יעקב וגו', אלקי יעקב ולא אלקי אברהם ויצחק, אלא לא כאברהם שכתוב בו הר... לא כיצחק שכתוב בו שדה... אלא כיעקב שקראו בית.”

This Gemorah is commenting on the fact that the nations, cited by the prophet, refer to the Beis HaMikdash as the house of Yaakov's G-d—not mentioning Avraham or Yitzchak. After all, Avraham referred to the place of the Beis HaMikdash as a “mountain,” Yitzchak referred to it as a “field,” and only Yaakov called it a “bayis,” a “house.”

The holy Alshich in Toras Moshe parshas Bechukotai (Vayikra 26,13) provides us with an explanation. The first Beis HaMikdash stood in the merit of Avraham Ovinu; unfortunately, our enemies descending from Yishmael, an offspring of Avraham, prevailed over it. The second Beis HaMikdash, which stood in the merit of Yitzchak Ovinu, was destroyed due to the overwhelming influences of our enemies who were descendants of Eisav, an offspring of Yitzchak. The third Beis HaMikdash, however, which will be in the merit of Yaakov Ovinu, whose offspring were all righteous, will stand forevermore.

We see, therefore, that as long as Yaakov's image was engraved on the Throne of Glory in the heavenly Temple above, the heavenly Temple could not be destroyed—Yaakov's sanctity imparted an everlasting quality to it. Being unable to destroy the heavenly Beis HaMikdash, Hashem would have been forced to mete out his punishment and wrath directly upon Yisroel.

As a result, the Holy One mercifully devised the plan to cast down Yaakov's image from heaven to earth. This allowed the destruction of the heavenly Beis HaMikdash; thereby allowing the destruction of the earthly Beis HaMikdash; thus, permitting Hashem's wrath to be visited upon mere sticks and stones—sparing Yisroel from devastation and extinction.

Lastly, we now have a very nice interpretation for the end of the possuk: **”השליך משמים ארץ”**—He cast down from heaven to earth the glory of Yisroel—He cast down the splendid image of Yaakov from the Throne of Glory in the heavenly Beis HaMikdash; **”ולא זכר”**—and He did not remember his footstool on the day of His wrath. Rashi explains: **”הדום רגליו, שרפרף מרגלותיו וזה בית המקדש”**—His footstool is the earthly Beis HaMikdash. In other words, the possuk is informing us that by casting down the image of Yaakov Ovinu from the Throne of Glory—which is the heavenly Beis HaMikdash—this enabled Him to destroy the earthly Beis HaMikdash—the footstool for the Throne of Glory.