

Shvilei Pinches

Parshas Vaeschanan & Shabbos Nachamu

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Parshas Vaeschanan 5770

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“נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אלקיכם”

It Is Our Obligation to Return Yaakov's Image to the Kisei Hakavod To Hasten the Building of the Third Beis HaMikdash

In this week's parsha, Vaeschanan, we learn of Moshe's prayers beseeching Hashem to allow him to enter Eretz Yisroel:

“ואתחנן אל ה' בעת ההיא לאמר, ה' אלקים אתה החלות להראות את עבדך את גדלך ואת ירך החזקה... אעברה נא ואראה את הארץ הטובה אשר בעבר הירדן ההר הטוב הזה והלבנון, ויתעבר ה' בי למענכם ולא שמע אלי, ויאמר ה' אלי רב לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה.”

It is only fitting that we begin this week's article with the words of the divine kabbalist Rabbi Nosen Notah Shapirah, zy" a, whose yahrtzeit falls on this upcoming shabbos kodesh, the thirteenth of menachem Av. He authored a sefer, the Megaleh Amukos, which elucidates the opening verse of parshas Vaeschanan in two-hundred and fifty two different ways—equivalent to the numerical value of the words “רב לך”, which are part of Hashem's response to Moshe's heartfelt pleas. As the name of the sefer implies, Megaleh Amukos, he reveals deep, heavenly insights contained (a) within the five hundred and fifteen prayers formulated by Moshe—the numerical equivalent of Vaeschanan—imploping Hashem to permit him to enter the promised land, and (b) in the Holy One's response: “רב לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה.”—“It is much for you! Do not continue to speak to me further about this matter.”

Moshe Yearned to Build the Beis HaMikdash

In honor of the upcoming “Shabbos Nachamu,” on which we recite the prophet's words of consolation (Yeshayah 40,1): “נחמו נחמו עמי יאמר אלקיכם”—Comfort, comfort my people, says your G-d—we have chosen to present the words of the Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (#20). There, he reveals to us that Moshe Rabeinu longed to enter the land so that he, himself, would build the Beis HaMikdash.

This is the meaning of his plea: “ה' אלקים אתה החלות להראות את עבדך את גדלך ואת ירך החזקה”—My Lord, Hashem, You had begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand. The first letters of the words “להראות ל'החלות אה”ל spell out the word “אה”ל—alluding to the “Tent of Meeting,” the mishkan, that served as the sanctuary, moving from place to place, as the people journeyed through the desert. In other words, Moshe asserts that by commanding him to construct the mishkan, the Tabernacle in the desert--to serve as a dwelling place for His Presence—You began revealing to me Your greatness and Your strong hand.

Now, that the appropriate time has arrived to build the permanent Beis HaMikdash in Yerushalayim: “אעברה נא ואראה את הארץ הטובה אשר בעבר הירדן ההר הטוב הזה והלבנון”—Please allow me to cross over and see the good land that lies on the other side of the Jordan river, this good mountain and

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the Lebanon. Rashi clarifies that “this good mountain” refers to Yerushalayim and “the Lebanon” refers to the Beis HaMikdash. To which the Holy One responds: “רב לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה”—It is much for you! Do not continue to speak to me further about this matter. This can be understood in light of what we have learned in the Gemorah (Sotah 9.):

“דרש רבי חנינא בר פפא, מאי דכתיב (תהלים לג א) רננו צדיקים בה' לישראלים נאווה תהלה, אל תקרי נאווה תהלה אלא נוה תהלה, זה משה ודוד שלא שלטו שונאיהם במעשיהם, דוד דכתיב (איכה ב ט) טבעו בארץ שעריה, משה דאמר מר משנבנה מקדש ראשון נגנו אהל מועד קרשיו ובריחיו ועמודיו ואדניו.”

We see that the handiwork crafted by Moshe and Dovid were protected and immune to the enemies of Yisroel. In fact, when the first Beis HaMikdash was built, the elements of the “Tent of Meeting” were hidden—its beams, its hooks, its bars, its pillars and its sockets.

It is known that when the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, the Holy One visited His wrath upon the sticks and stones of the physical structure in order to spare Yisroel from annihilation. This is taught in the Midrash which we mentioned last week (Eichah Rabbah 4,14) on the possuk (Tehillim 79,1):

“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.”

According to this, it turns out that had Moshe Rabeinu, indeed, entered the land and built the Beis HaMikdash, Hashem would not have had the option of visiting His wrath upon the sticks and stones of the physical structure—seeing as Moshe’s handiwork was impervious to our enemies’ hands. This, in fact, is implied in Hashem’s response to Moshe’s entreaties: “רב לך”—yours is too great—you and your handiwork are beyond the reach and control of Yisroel’s enemies; therefore, you may not cross the Jordan river to build the Beis HaMikdash; this will prevent the Holy One, chas v’shalom, from visiting His wrath upon Yisroel.

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

It seems that we can expand upon the Megaleh Amukos’s explanation of Hashem’s response to Moshe: “רב לך אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה”, based on our blessed sages’ teaching that we discussed at length last week. Elucidating the possuk in megillas Eichah (2,1), our sages taught in the Midrash (Eichah Rabbah 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 באפיוכון, [הרי לכם מתנתכם מושלכת באפיוכם], כך אמר הקב”ה לישראל, כלום אתם מקניטין אותי אלא בשביל איקונין של יעקב שחוקקה על כסאיו, הא לכון טרון באפיוכון, הוי השליך משמים ארץ וגו’.”

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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.”

We can only sit in utter amazement, wondering what would prompt HaKadosh Baruch Hu (HKBH) to cast down Yaakov’s image, engraved on the Throne of Glory, from heaven to earth. In last week’s piece, we explained, based on the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayakhel 7), that HKBH sits on His Throne of Glory in the Holy of Holies above which is oriented opposite the Holy of Holies below:

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

This provides us with an appreciation of the fact that the earthly Bais HaMikdash derives its sanctity and kedushah from the heavenly Beis HaMikdash—from the image of Yaakov, the source of all Jewish neshomehs, engraved on the Throne of Glory—which is aligned opposite the Bais Hamikdash on earth. Therefore, at the time of the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash, the Holy One cast down the splendid image of Yaakov. Only in this manner, was it possible to lay ruin to the Bais HaMikdash below and for HKBH to visit His wrath on the physical structure, in order to spare Yisroel from obliteration.

“If Hashem Will not Build the House then Its Builders Will Have Labored in Vain”

As it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, let us now approach this phenomenon—Hashem’s casting the splendid image of Yaakov down from heaven to earth at the time of the destruction of the Bais HaMikdash—from a different angle. We shall begin by introducing the brilliant words of the Yismach Moshe (Tetzaveh) expounding on the possuk (Tehillim 127,1): **“אם”** **“לא יבנה בית שוא עמלו בוניו בו”**—If Hashem will not build the house, the builders will have labored in vain. First, it is important to note that the word **“יבנה”**—he will build—appears in the future tense; whereas, later in the possuk, the word **“עמלו”**—they labored—appears in the past tense. The following are the extraordinary words of the Yismach Moshe:

“ולחבין כל זה נקדים מה דעמדו הקדמונים, הכי השני מקדשים שחרבו הם פועל ריק ח"ו והיו כלא היו, חלילה מלומר כן. אמנם הענין יובן על פי משל לאחד שהביא זרע אילן טוב ממרחק, ונטעו עד שצץ ופרח ועשה פרי, ואחר כך עקרו והביא זרע אילן אחר ונטעו וגם עשה פרי, ועקרו וחזר והביא זרע אילן דוגמתו מן המובחר, ונטעו והכניסו לקיום להיות דבר המתקיים לעד. והנה בעת עקירת השני אילנות הראשונים, כל

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הרואה משתומם ומתפלא על מה עשה ככה לארץ הזאת, לנטוע אילן טוב ויפה ולעקור אותו זה פעמיים, ומה טעם יש בדבר.

אמנם האיש הנוטע אף הוא השיב אמריו להם, כי הכל בחכמה ובהשכל, וכי גם נטיעת ב' האילנות הראשונים ועקירתם הכל היה צורך קיום אילן השלישי, לאשר כי הארץ הלזו אינה מסוגלת לגדל אילן כזה בטבעה ולא תוכל שאתו, לזאת הקדים לנטוע נטע נעמן בארץ, עדי תקבל קצת איכות וטבע עפר הארץ המגדלת אילנות כאלו, ואחרי זה עקרו לנטוע אחר תחתיו, וכן בפעם הב', ואז כשקבלה הארץ כח שיש בו די לקיים האילן קיום נצחי, נטע אילן השלישי אשר לזה היה מגמתו.

והנמשל הוא כשראתה חכמתו יתברך, אשר אין בכח הארץ הגשומה הלזו, לקבל ולסבול נוגה אור קדושת בית המקדש השלישי שיבנה במהרה בימינו, אשר כוננה היוצר בגבהי מרומים ליסדו על מכון הר ציון, לולי הב' מקדשות הראשונות, אשר על ידם ובכח קדושת העבודה ויתר עבודת הקודש אשר היה שם כמה מאות שנה, קנתה הארץ גם היא כח רוחני ואיכות קדושה נפלאה, עדי תוכל מעתה לסבול קדושת הבית השלישי, מעשה ידי יוצר בית המקדש שלמעלה המכוון כנגד בית המקדש של מטה, וגדול יהיה כבוד הבית האחרון קיום נצחי ובית עולמים יקרא."

He explains: We need to address the question that troubled our predecessors. Were the first two Temples that were destroyed totally for naught, chas v'challilah, or did they serve some unknown purpose? The matter can be understood based on the following parable. A man plants seed for an exotic tree; once it blossoms and begins to bear fruit, he uproots the tree. In its place, he plants seed for a second tree; once again, he waits until it bears fruit and then uproots it, as well. Now, he acquires seed for a tree of indescribable quality and beauty. This time, he plants it and cares for it so that it will last forever. During the uprooting of the first two, beautiful, seemingly healthy trees, observers could not comprehend what this fellow was up to nor what his reasoning might be.

The fellow, himself, explained to them that all of his actions were founded on a sound, well thought out plan. Even the first two trees and their uprooting were ultimately for the sake of the survival and long-term existence of the third tree. The land, however, was not initially suited to sustain a tree of that nature and quality. Therefore, a gradual process needed to be employed, preparing the ground for its ultimate purpose. Once the soil achieved the richness and quality necessary to sustain a tree that could endure forever, the third tree was planted—the tree that was intended from the very start.

In a similar fashion, the Almighty intended all along to build the third Beis HaMikdash in its indescribable brilliance and splendor, swiftly in our days. Knowing, in His infinite Wisdom, that this physical, material world, could not, initially, sustain such a spiritual, holy structure, it was necessary to institute a gradual process involving the first two Basei HaMikdash. Thanks to their existence and the holy service that took place on their grounds over hundreds of years, the land acquired the spiritual potential and quality necessary to sustain and house the sanctity of the third Beis HaMikdash—the handiwork of the Creator, a Bayis that will outshine its predecessors and endure forever.

This, then, is the meaning of Dovid HaMelech's words: "אם ה' לא יבנה בית שוא עמלו בוניו בו"—If Hashem will not build the house, the builders will have labored in vain. The fact that we have witnessed the building and the destruction of two Temples is a source of hope and eager anticipation for those awaiting His salvation. If not for His divine plan to build in their place a third Bayis, more magnificent than the first two, why did Hashem bother building and destroying the first two. It would be heresy to suggest that His endeavors are for naught or that they serve no purpose. Certainly, all that

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has transpired has been in preparation for the anticipated third Beis HaMikdash, which shall be built shortly.

“Hashem Resolved to Destroy the Wall of the Daughter of Zion He Stretched Out the Line”

Come and see how beautifully the words of the Yismach Moshe help us understand what the great Alshich wrote in Devarim Nechumim on megillas Eichah, regarding the possuk (Eichah 2,8): **“חשב ה’—להשחית חומת בת ציון נטה קו”**—Hashem resolved to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion, He stretched out the line. The Alshich points out that the phrase **“נטה קו”**—stretched out the line—seems out of context here. After all, one stretches out the measuring stick, measuring lengths and widths, while designing and planning to build. This possuk, on the other hand, is discussing the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

He explains that prior to destroying the Beis HaMikdash, the Holy One was already taking measurements for the third Beis HaMikdash. He draws the following wonderful analogy:

“הנה קרה לו יתברך כמלך שיש לו בן חביב, ויבן לו בית מדות ועלויות מרווחים וטובים מאד, והיה משתעשע לדור עמו שם. ויהי כי ארכו הימים, ויעש בנו את הרע בעיני אביו עד היות בן מות, ובחמלת המלך על בנו ראה ויטיל כעסו על הדירה הנאה ההיא, ויתנה ביד שוסים לנתוץ ולהאביר ולהרוס למען על ידי בן יקל כעסו מעל בנו ידידו.”

ובראותו כי לעומת כוונה זו עומדת טענה שכנגדה, לבל השליט אויבי בנו בביתו... על כן מה עשה, טרם השליט אויבים בבית ההוא, נתן בלבו לשוב לבנותו עשר ידות טוב ויפה ומהודר וגדול מן הראשון, ונטה מעתה קו המדה ועמד וימודד כמה ארכו וכמה רחבו וקומתו של האחרון הנחמד ההוא במקום הראשון...

והנה הן זאת אשר קרה לו יתברך עם בית יהודה, כי הוא הבן יקיר לו יתברך ויבן לו בית המקדש, וברוב עוונו חייב את ראשו למלך הקדוש, ובחמלתו הגדולה ראה להטיל עיקר כעסו בבית הקדוש ההוא, לתת אותו ביד אויביו לשורפו באש, וירא כי לעומת זה הלא הוא נגד כבודו יתברך, גוים ירקדו בהיכלו ויתנו בו קול שמחה כיום מועד על השליטם בביתו יתברך.

על כן מה עשה הוא יתברך, צוה ליחזקאל הנביא (יחזקאל מ ה) יקח קנה המדה, ויטה קו וימודד אורך המקדש האחרון אשר עתיד לבא במהרה בימינו, שהוא גדול מאד באיכות ובכמות מן הראשון... על כן מעתה מתנחם על היות עתיד לבנות טוב ממנו במקומו, וזה יאמר חשב ה’ וכו’, לומר תדע למה לא חש הוא יתברך על שמחת האויבים על השליטם בביתו, כי הלא מאז חשב ה’ להשחית חומת בת ציון כבר נטה קו על ידי הנביא כמדובר.”

The situation is analogous to a king who has a son, whom he loves dearly. He builds the son a spacious, elegant house which he enjoys spending time in with his son. As time passes, the son angers and betrays his father and is deserving of the death penalty. Out of compassion for his son, he chooses to take out his vengeance on the lovely dwelling rather than on his beloved son. He allows bandits to loot and pillage the home while his anger subsides.

The king realizes, however, that this solution is somewhat problematic. For, he is allowing his sons' enemies to prevail and rule over his son's house. So, prior to allowing these enemies to prevail, he resolves to rebuild his son's house in the future on a significantly grander and more magnificent scale.

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To confirm this resolve, he sets out to measure the dimensions of this future dwelling which will be more expansive and exquisite than the first.

This is similar to what transpired between the Almighty and His children. He had the Beis HaMikdash built for His beloved son. Due to His son's transgressions, the son deserved extinction. Out of compassion, He visited his vengeance upon the Beis HaMikdash, allowing enemies to burn down the structure; however, it was clearly disrespectful and an affront to the Almighty to allow goyim to parade around and rejoice in His, holy sanctuary. So, He commanded the prophet Yechezkel (Yechezkel 40,5) to take out the measuring stick, and to begin measuring out the dimensions of the future Beis HaMikdash—which we should merit swiftly, in our days—an edifice larger and grander than its predecessors.

This resolve to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash on a more majestic scale, consoled the Almighty with regard to the insult of having enemies dancing in His house; and this is the meaning of the possuk: "חשב ה' להשחית חומת בת ציון נטה קו"—whilst Hashem resolved to destroy the structure of the existing Beis HaMikdash, He already had the measuring stick out, as it were, measuring and designing the third Beis HaMikdash.

Combining the illuminating words of the Alshich with those of the Yismach Moshe, the possuk: "חשב ה' להשחית חומת בת ציון נטה קו", takes on an added dimension. Not only did He take out the measuring stick in order to mitigate the disrespect and insult of having His Sanctuary desecrated, but it was a demonstration for all to see that the true purpose of the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash was as a necessary step preparing this world for the third Beis HaMikdash to be built in the very near future.

The Third Beis HaMikdash Is in the Merit of Yaakov

Following this path, we can shed light on this act of Hashem's at the time of the destruction of the Temple: "השליך משמים ארץ תפארת ישראל"—casting down to earth the majestic image of Yaakov from the Throne of Glory. It is well-known that the third Beis HaMikdash will be built in the merit of Yaakov Ovinu as we have learned in the Gemorah (Pesachim 88.):

"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 אברהם שכתוב בו הר... לא כיצחק שכתוב בו שדה... אלא כיעקב שקראו בית."

The possuk in Yeshayah prophesies that, in the future, the nations of the world will go up to the house of the G-d of Yaakov—a clear statement that the future Beis HaMikdash is affiliated with Yaakov Ovinu. As shown above, the mishkan and the first two Basei HaMikdash were only preliminary steps toward the ultimate purpose of establishing and building the third Beis HaMikdash. Seeing as the world was not ready, initially, for that level of kedushah, the preparations were made via these earlier structures. We can see that the source of the kedushah for all of these structures emanates from Yaakov—in whose merit the ultimate bayis and purpose will be realized.

So, what did Hashem do at the time of the "churban"? He cast down from heaven to earth the majestic image of Yaakov that was engraved on the Throne of Glory. In so doing, Hashem was responding to those who were astonished that He would allow the enemies of Yisroel to destroy the Beis HaMikdash,

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and in particular the Holy of Holies, the holiest place on earth. This action demonstrated that the destruction of the first and second Basei HaMikdash constituted a divine act of kindness; He was preparing the world to receive and accommodate the third Beis HaMikdash—the bayis that would be built in the merit of Yaakov.

All Miracles Must Be Preceded by a Symbolic Action

Let us embellish this idea based on an important principle taught by the Ramban in parshas Lech Lecha (Bereishis 12,6). He states that a symbolic action must first be performed down below in order **“הניסים יעשהו האל יתברך על ידי עבדיו, עם הקדמת איזו תנועה מסודרת מאתו, כענין השליכהו ארצה, הרם את מטך, והכית בצור.”**

It is known that the third Beis HaMikdash will come down from heaven fully built and in its full grandeur. This is taught by Rashi and by Tosafos (Succah 41.): **“מקדש העתיד שאנו מצפין, בנוי ומשוכלל הוא יגלה ויבוא משמים שנאמר מקדש ה' כוננו ידיך.”** In parshas Beshalach (Shemos 15,17) stating the Hashem's Sanctuary will be prepared by His own hands. Therefore, even before the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the Holy One cast down from heaven to earth the majestic image of Yaakov as a symbolic gesture paving the way for the third Beis HaMikdash—a structure that will be built in Yaakov's merit and will also come down from heaven to earth in its full glory and majesty.

This also explains why the Holy One was not agreeable to Moshe Rabeinu's supplication to be allowed to enter the land and build the Beis HaMikdash. Based on what we have learned, Moshe's handiwork was immune and invulnerable to the destructive forces of Yisroel's enemies. If he would have built the Beis HaMikdash, it would have been built, perforce, with the inherent kedushah of the third Beis HaMikdash—to endure forevermore.

We have explained, however, that the world cannot accommodate that immense level of kedushah arriving all at once. As we have witnessed, it was necessary to build a first Beis HaMikdash and then a second, which were destroyed, to adequately prepare the world to receive the kedushah of the third Beis HaMikdash. This was conveyed to Moshe by HaKadosh Baruch Hu's response: **“רב לך”—**your level of kedushah is too great; the enemies of Yisroel will have no power over your handiwork. Therefore: **“אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד בדבר הזה”—**please, do not persist with your entreaties concerning this matter.

Let us conclude with an idea presented last week from the sefer Ben Ish Chayil, written by the holy Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Baghdad, zts"l. The Gemorah states (Yoma 86.): **“גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד שנאמר שובה ישראל עד ה' אלקיך”—**the power of teshuvah is so great that its effects reach all the way to the Throne of Glory, as it says, “Return Yisroel to Hashem, your G-d.” We also know that the future and final redemption is contingent on teshuvah (ibid.): **“גדולה תשובה שמקרבת את הגאולה”—**the power of teshuvah is so great that it hastens the redemption.

We find, therefore, that by means of teshuvah, we can restore the image of Yaakov to its rightful place on the Throne of Glory. This is implied in the sages' statement: **“גדולה תשובה שמגעת עד כסא הכבוד”—**the effect of teshuvah reaches the Throne of Glory by restoring the image of Yaakov to the Throne. The proof of this cause and effect relationship is found in the possuk cited: **“שובה ישראל”—**

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return the splendor of Yisroel, the glorious image of Yaakov (who is also known as Yisroel)-- "עַד הַ" אֱלֹקִים—back to the Throne of Glory, where it was before the Holy One cast it down to earth. It seems quite clear that it is our obligation to restore the image of Yaakov to the Throne of Glory above by means of sincere, wholehearted teshuvah that will hasten the arrival of the redemption, swiftly, in our times, Amen.