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HEVRAT PINTO

Under Aegis of

Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א

11, rue du plateau - 75019 PARIS

Tel: (331) 48 03 53 89 • Fax (331) 42 08 50 85

8 Morris Road - Spring Valley NY 10977

Tel: 1-845 426 1276 • Fax: 1-845 426 1149

www.hevratpinto.org

Responsible of publication Hanania Soussan

THE REMEDY FOR THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE AND THE DESCENT OF THE SHECHINAH DEPENDS ON ALL ISRAEL (by Rabbi David Hanania Pinto שליט"א)

The verse states, "How can [eichah] I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels?" (Deuteronomy 1:12). At the time of the destruction of the first Temple, the prophet Jeremiah also began his lamentation with the word eichah: "How does [eichah] the city sit solitary, that was full of people" (Lamentations 1:1). It seems, therefore, that there is a connection between these two verses.

Now we know that the main reason for the Shechinah's presence in the Temple is for it to reside among the Children of Israel. How can we attract it to us? Solely by the diligent study of Torah (Torat Kohanim 26:3) and uniting with G-d, which awakens kindness from on high towards the Children of Israel (Zohar I:77b). Yet if the will to study weakens in Israel, it follows that the instrument that was to receive the Shechinah in order to spread good among the Children of Israel can no longer perform that task. Consequently the existence of the Temple becomes unnecessary, since there is no longer anything to spread, which is the reason why the Temple was destroyed. This is the meaning of the destruction of the Temple and the exile.

The remedy for these consists of building synagogues and houses of study & prayer from which the Torah will emanate. In this way we build the Temple, as it is written, "I have been for them a small sanctuary" (Ezekiel 11:16), which the Gemara interprets as synagogues and houses of study (Megillah 29a). Already during the time of the destruction of the second Temple, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai asked, "Give me Yavneh [יבנה] and its Sages" (Gittin 56b), and Rashi explains that it is not to be destroyed and that its Sages are not to be killed, for they are the source of a resurgence for the Jewish community, which will be rebuilt [יבנה] by constructing yeshivas.

However there is one condition that is absolutely necessary for this to happen: The entire people should immerse itself in the study of Torah. We find this idea alluded to in the words kerem Yavneh ("vine of Yavneh"). The word kerem is formed by the same letters as the word mecher ("sale"), which means that a man should be completely "sold" to Torah. Even G-d expresses Himself in this way concerning the Torah: "So to speak, I sold Myself with it" (Shemot

Rabba 33:1). At that moment, the Temple is rebuilt [יבנה] and the Shechinah comes to rest on it, for it does not move from synagogues and houses of study. These two things depend on one other. If we build synagogues and houses of study to elevate ourselves, through them, in Torah, we will study even more, which will allow us to acquire still further wisdom (Perkei Avoth 2:7), and wisdom is preferable to prophesy (Bava Batra 12a). The Torah (being wisdom) is the essential thing, for it is through it that the Shechinah will come to rest on man.

This is the meaning of Moses' exclamation, "How can I alone carry," which means: "How can I be connected to the Holy One, blessed be He, and close to Him without your determination? For you, the Children of Israel, are responsible for one another" (Sanhedrin 27b). It is difficult for an individual to observe the 613 mitzvot, for there are some that deal only with the priests and others that deal only with the Levites. Therefore, only collective responsibility allows for the accomplishment of all the mitzvot. Moreover, before performing a mitzvah we say, "in the name of all Israel." This is what Moses said, namely that he did not have the ability to exist by himself; he could only do so through their study of Torah and observance of the mitzvot. In fact, G-d's will is that everyone should be together, and through "in the name of all Israel," everything can be achieved.

In addition, Moses told the Children of Israel, "May the L-RD, the G-d of your forefathers, add to you a thousand times yourselves" (Deuteronomy 1:11). This means that the Eternal is your G-d only when you add to your study of Torah without interruption. Pay very special attention to your conduct towards one another and to the mitzvot that govern conduct, as it is written, "Judge righteously between a man and his brother or his litigant" (v.16). It is solely this increase in Torah study, coupled with mutual responsibility, which will "force" (so to speak) the Holy One, blessed be He, to make His Shechinah reside among you. Without joint responsibility and Torah, there would be no Shechinah in the Temple to spread its beneficial effects among you.

We now understand what the prophet Jeremiah said: "How does the city sit solitary, that was full of people" (Lamentations 1:1). This means as follows: How is it possible that

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THE MORAL OF THE STORY FROM THE MAGGID OF DUBNO

Jerusalem, a city so full of people, is now sitting alone, and that the crown has fallen from its head? How could the Shechinah have left this city that was once so populated that all eyes turned to her? The answer lies in the word “solitary”: Each person lived for himself, and there was no unity of the type evoked by the expression “In the name of all Israel.” Furthermore, there was no joint responsibility, which is why Jerusalem was destroyed.

Consequently, on one hand Moses warned the Children of Israel that if they wanted to elevate themselves, this did not depend only on the greatest sage of the time, but on the will of all the people and on their sense of responsibility. It is true that the Tzaddik can have a beneficial influence, but each person should make of himself a vessel ready to receive this influence. If not, the righteous will sit solitary, there will be neither mutual responsibility nor beneficial influence, and he will not be able to elevate himself or Israel with him. However, in order for a man to receive this influence, he should distance himself from all that can deter him, which we learn from the verse that states: “You shall command the people, saying, ‘You are passing through the boundary of your brothers the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir; they will fear you, but you should be very careful’” (Deuteronomy 2:4). When the Children of Israel carry out G-d’s will, all the peoples and all the wicked fear them and try to find favor with them. When they try to please Jews, it is at that moment that the Torah commands us to be very careful. Now as we know, the Sages have said, “Very – it is the evil inclination” (Bereshith Rabba 9:9). One should be very careful of their tricks because they are inspired by the evil inclination, and the possibility exists of falling prey to the same harmful desires as the other nations. We find an allusion to this idea in the word “Seir”, composed of the same letters as the word reshei (the wicked), which means that a person should not allow himself to be swept up by the wicked or the evil inclination.

The Torah also commands us, “You shall not provoke them” (Deuteronomy 2:5). Rather than saying, “Since they are afraid of me, I will settle next to them,” a person must distance himself from a place of temptation. In fact, “I shall not give of their land even the right to set foot” (ibid.) means: I will not let you follow in their footsteps, and if you do so nonetheless, you will fall into their hands. In addition, you don’t have the right to receive gifts from them. You must pay for what they provide you with, for you have been lacking nothing, and the Holy One, blessed be He, has blessed all the works of your hand. You are therefore duty bound to distance yourselves from temptation. This will allow you to be receptive to the influence of the Sages and the Tzaddikim of your time, and this will be the remedy for the destruction of the Temple through the descent of the Shechinah.

The Midrash states: “They sinned twice, they were struck twice, and they were comforted twice. They sinned twice, as it says, ‘Jerusalem has sinned a sin’ [Lamentations 1:8]; they were struck twice, as it says, ‘She has received double for all her sins from the hand of the L-RD’ [Isaiah 40:2]; they were comforted twice, as it says, ‘Comfort, comfort My people’ [Isaiah 40:1].”

It is difficult to understand why Jerusalem had to be struck twice. Could Hashem therefore be suspected of injustice?

To understand, let us illustrate with a parable:

A man had two sons. One went to a nightclub and began to eat, drink, and get drunk. During that time, the other got up by chance on a table and fell off of it. When the father was told what happened to both of them, he punished them severely. With time he managed to calm down, and (since he wanted to reconcile himself with both his sons) he gave the first a silver coin and the other two silver coins. He said to the first, “Not only did your brother suffer from his fall, but I also punished him myself. That’s why I gave him two silver coins. But you, you went to amuse yourself as much as you could, so content yourself with just one coin!”

This constitutes, “Comfort, comfort My people”. Why comfort them twice? Because “Jerusalem ... received double for all her sins from the hand of the L-RD,” meaning that in addition to the suffering inflicted on them through punishment, she suffered as a result of sin itself, as it is written, “You will be disgusted with yourselves in your own sight because of your iniquities” (Ezekiel 36:31). This is why our Sages have said that where the repentant stand, the righteous cannot stand. This is because Hashem treats them severely twice over for all their sins. At first, when they sin, they have to suffer its harmful consequences. Following that, they encounter great difficulty on the path of repentance, as the prophet states: “But when I see his [contrite] ways, I will heal him. I will guide him and recompense him and his mourners with consolations” (Isaiah 57:18). On this passage our Sages have explained: “It was his strength and the members of his body that mourned for him” (Vayikra Rabba 16). As for the righteous, they experience a great amount of pleasure, for it is written, “I rejoice over Your word, like one who finds abundant spoils” (Psalms 119:162).

IN MEMORY OF THE TZADIKIM

RABBI ABBA

Rabbi Abba was among the great Amoraim. He was the student of Shemuel, and though he learned from the great Babylonian Rabbanim, he often traveled to Eretz Israel to learn Torah from its Rabbanim.

The Gemara recounts that Rabbi Abba traveled to Eretz Israel by sea, and when his boat arrived by the shores of Akko, he embraced the earth. He had the merit of seeing Rabbi Yochanan, who headed the great yeshiva of Tiberias and was extremely old at the time. He also saw Resh Lakish (who died before Rabbi Yochanan). We also see just how much he loved Eretz Israel from a story found in the Gemara. Rabbi Abba purchased a plot of land in Eretz Israel, then returned to Babylon. However, what he didn't know was that another Amora, by the name of Rav Gidel, had previously begun negotiations to purchase that same plot of land. Rav Gidel went and complained about Rabbi Abba to Rav Zeira, who in turn told Rabbi Yitzchak bar Napacha of the incident (the latter were old friends of Rabbi Abba, and all three of them were among those who had come to Eretz Israel from Babylon). Rabbi Yitzchak bar Napacha said, "Wait until he returns for the holidays," meaning that they should wait until he comes back from Babylon to verify the story with him.

When Rabbi Abba came back, his friends asked him what was the law concerning "a poor man who awaits his portion, but then another comes and takes it." In other words, what was the law concerning a person who acts maliciously with the poor, trying to seize what awaits him before he has time to take possession of it? Rabbi Abba responded that such a person was a wicked man. And when he was asked why he himself acted in this way concerning the land of Rav Gidel, he replied that he was not aware that Rav Gidel had wanted to purchase it.

Rav Yitzchak bar Napacha therefore decided that he should give up the plot of land for Rav Gidel's benefit. Rabbi Abba replied that he didn't want to sell the plot of land, for it was his first purchase in Eretz Israel, hence it didn't bode well to sell it. Rather, he said that he was ready to give it to Rav Gidel as a gift.

For his part, Rav Gidel didn't want the land as a gift because of the principle that "one who hates gifts will live" (Proverbs 15:27). The Gemara concludes the story by saying that neither of them wanted to use the land in question, and so it was abandoned. This plot of land came to be known as "the land of the Rabbis" (see Kid-dushin 59a for details).

Rabbi Abba lived temperately and was accustomed to praying that his Torah views be accepted by his colleagues. Among the Sages who had particularly great respect for Shabbat, Rabbi Abba is mentioned favorably. He had the habit of purchasing 13 selaim of meat in honor of Shabbat, and pressed his servant to prepare everything in the best possible way. Rabbi Abba apparently had many guests on Shabbat, and he wanted to honor them with the finest tasting meals. He lived an exceedingly long time, and in his latter years he was considered as a leading Halachic authority in Eretz Israel. He shared this distinction with Rav Ami, who was Rosh Yeshiva, while Rabbi Abba himself was the Av Beit Din.

Rav Ami was named Rosh Yeshiva after the death of Rabbi Eliezer ben Pedat, who continued the academy of Rabbi Yochanan and Rabbi Shimon ben Eliakim. When Rav Ami moved the yeshiva to Cesarea, Rabbi Abba also joined him there. Rav Papa and Rav Ami called Rabbi Abba, "Our father of Eretz Israel."

The teachings of Rabbi Abba in Halachah and Aggadah are found throughout the Babylonian and Jerusalem Talmuds, as well as in the Midrashim. One of his famous parables, by which he explained what occurred between Ahasuerus and Haman, is cited in Megillah 14: "To what can the story of Ahasuerus and Haman be compared? To two men, one who had a mound in his field, and the other who had a pit in his. The latter thought, 'Who could sell me a mound?' while the other thought, 'Who could sell me a pit?' After a certain time, they encountered each other. The one who had a pit said to the one who had a mound, 'Sell me your mound,' to which the other replied, 'Take it for free! You're doing me a favor.' This is what happened when Ahasuerus said to Haman, 'The silver is given to you, the people also, to do with as you see fit' [Esther 3:11]."

To show just how catastrophic honor-seeking is, Gemara Sanhedrin cites the explanation of Rabbi Abba on the verse that states, "After this, Jeroboam did not repent from his evil way" (I Kings 13:33). The Gemara asks about the meaning of "After this," to which Rabbi Abba explains: "After the Holy One, blessed be He, grabbed hold of Jeroboam by his cloak and said to him, 'Repent, and I, you, and the son of Jesse will walk in Gan Eden,' Jeroboam replied, 'Who will be in charge?' to which the answer was 'the son of Jesse will be.' Jeroboam then responded by saying, 'In that case, I want nothing of it!'"

Rabbi Abba died at a great old age, apparently in Eretz Israel

THE STORY OF THE WEEK

A TRUE STORY

“May Only Goodness and Kindness Pursue Me All the Days of My Life”

The following story took place in 5683 (1923), while the Chofetz Chaim was staying with the distinguished Rav Akiva Schreiber in Vienna in order to participate in the first great convention of Agudath Israel. A great many people, motivated by a tremendous desire to see the Chofetz Chaim, gathered around Rav Akiva's house, but only a privileged few could enter inside. Rav Akiva was approached by a Rav from England who did a great deal of work for Jewish causes, and who asked him if he could be allowed to enter into the room where the Chofetz Chaim was, be it for only a few minutes, because he wanted to ask him an important question on which his entire future depended. Rav Schreiber accepted, and since he respected both the English Rav and his important work, he seated him near the table where the Chofetz Chaim was eating, proposing to introduce him immediately after the Birkat Hamazon. In the middle of the meal, the Chofetz Chaim recited the following Psalm: “A Psalm by David. The L-RD is my shepherd, I shall not lack.” He then turned towards the English Rav (whom he had never seen before) and explained the verse as follows: “It is very curious that David, King of Israel, says that goodness and kindness should pursue him [the Hebrew word for “pursue” has a negative connotation]. Is it possible for these two great things to transform themselves into pursuers; is it not rather murder and violence that pursue a man? How can goodness and kindness be thought of in this way? The answer must be that sometimes, a man has the impression that his acts of goodness and kindness become his pursuers, preventing him from living by stealing his precious time, bothering him in his activities, and causing him losses and driving peace from his home. His evil inclination then encourages him to forsake acts of goodness and kindness. What should he then do? Here the psalmist gives him the following advice: If you think that goodness and kindness are really pursuing you, don't abandon them for this reason. Rather, pray to G-d that ‘only goodness and kindness pursue me all the days of my life,’ that these should be the only type of ‘pursuers’ you have, not other, more fearsome ones. No harm will come to the righteous from being pursued by goodness and kindness, but on the contrary, in him will be accomplished the verse that states, ‘And I shall dwell in the House of the L-RD for long days.’”

The Chofetz Chaim had barely completed his explanation when the English Rav, tremendously moved by all this, arose and took leave of Rav Akiva.

The reason for the English Rav's astonishment was because he put great effort into trying to see the Chofetz Chaim so as to ask him an extremely important question, then all of a sudden he no longer felt that he had to ask it! The English Rav told Rav Akiva that the Chofetz Chaim had answered his question even before he had the time to ask him. The English Rav

explained his situation to him: In his hometown he created a Talmud Torah and a free loan fund that he directed himself. These institutions had developed well, but the work involved in these two undertakings took enormous amounts of his time. He was forced to neglect his personal affairs, which suffered tremendously, to the point that his wife had categorically demanded that he entrust the direction of these institutions to others. He himself didn't want to abandon this opportunity to do goodness and kindness, yet to preserve peace in the home, they both concluded that they would leave this decision to the Chofetz Chaim and to go according his advice. He had now explicitly heard that even if “goodness and kindness” truly pursue a man and upset his personal affairs, this no reason to neglect them; he must continue to occupy himself with them all the same. He had received the answer to his question, and now he hurried to announce to his wife the decision of the Chofetz Chaim.

THE PATH OF THE JUST

LOVE PART III

The desire for money should be directed in the following way: One will love money in order not to end up coveting the money of others and arrive at stealing or accepting charity. A man will provide for the needs of others, dress and feed the poor, and use his money to benefit pious Torah students. His wealth will allow him to remove himself from material concerns and to fix daily times for Torah study, as well as to perform the commandments. In order not to become inflated with pride, he will not overly rely on his fortune, but rather will use this ephemeral money to acquire his portion in the World to Come. It is in this way that he should appreciate his money.

The love for his wife will take on the following form: He will realize that his wife keeps him from sin and distances him from adultery. He will also realize that because of her, he can carry out the commandment of having children, which she will then be responsible for raising. She serves him for his entire life, prepares his meals and performs household tasks, thus allowing him to consecrate himself to Torah study and the performance of mitzvot. It is in this way that she helps him to serve his Creator.