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בשבת



אור ישראל

Living Life Deeper

PARSHAS
VAYIGASH

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
RABBI NAFTALI ZIONS
RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN

THE GREATEST TRAGEDY

Our *Parshah* begins with the tense showdown between Yehudah and Yosef, culminating in the long awaited reveal, where Yosef surprises his brothers by announcing that he is their long-lost brother, Yosef. After Yosef inquires about Yaakov, and informs the brothers that he will provide for them, he embraces Binyamin, and they both cry.¹

While it would seem natural for the two brothers to cry after having not seen each other for twenty two years, Rashi² explains that they were not crying because of their reunion. Rather, Rashi says that Yosef was crying because of the destruction of both *Batei Mikdash*, which were destined to be in Binyamin's territory, and Binyamin was crying for the *Mishkan* at *Shiloh*, located in Yosef's territory, which was destroyed as well.³

Reb Dovid Leibowitz (1889-1941), quoted in the *Chidushei HaLev*⁴, points out a subtle lesson that applies to us daily. One would think that Yosef and Binyamin would be ecstatic at their meeting, or perhaps crying from the emotional reunion after not seeing each other for twenty two years. Yet, *Chazal* tell us that their tears were sourced in one thing - the loss of the *Beis Hamikdash* and *Mishkan*.

While we know that the saddest day in our history was the day that we lost our *Beis Hamikdash*, it is surprising to find how far-reaching the effects of that calamity were. Yosef and Binyamin, when they should have been at their most joyous, were instead heartbroken for something that had yet to happen. The terrible pain of losing the *Beis Hamikdash* was enough to do away with their happiness, and replace it with sorrow.

The loss of the *Beis Hamikdash* is something that we live with every day, yet it is something that we don't often think about. After all, it's hard to feel that you're missing something that you've never had! However, the fact that we don't even relate to our loss may be the greatest tragedy of all. Yet, we regularly have the opportunity to remember our loss - and use that to inspire our return to Hashem.

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is one thing to talk about the loss of the *Beis Hamikdash*, but it is another thing to actually feel that loss. What can we do to help us understand, and emotionally connect to what we are missing?

Fortunately, we have the ability to remind ourselves of our loss many times a day - both in the *Tefillos* that we say, and in *Birchas Hamazon*. One simple idea would be to focus on the words. Just understanding the meaning of the words that we are saying can help us recognize what we are missing. The daily repetition, if done consciously, can help us with our emotional connection to the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Another idea is to understand that the difficulties that we have stem from the fact that we have yet to achieve the ultimate purpose of the world - that everyone should recognize Hashem's supremacy.¹ When we have a rough day, it's an opportunity to remind ourselves that we no longer have the *Beis Hamikdash*, and perhaps put in a *Tefillah*, asking Hashem to return us to Yerushalayim.

1 R' Mordechai Gifter, cited by *Shiras Dovid*, *Eichah* 1:2

1 *Bereishis* 44:18-45:14

2 *Bereishis* 45:14 s.v. ובנימין בכה and ויפל על צוארי

3 *Shmuel* 1 4:10-11

4 *ibid.*

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Performed consistently, the *Mussar methodology* - emotionally repeating the words of Chazal with a supple heart and receptive attitude - can change us to our core! It can even sharpen our instincts, allowing us to successfully overcome unexpected *Nisyonos*. - R' Yehudah Zev Segal, *Yirah V'Daas Al HaTorah* p. 58

KNOWING OUR LOSS

Having lived in a big city his entire life, Refael Sivan* never even thought about moving out-of-town. Nevertheless, because of a lack of affordable housing, and the offer of a lucrative position, Refael found that he and his family were now living in a small town in the Midwest.

There was a lot to adjust to, the manner of speech, the lack of various amenities, and the sparse options when it came to shuls. Yet, strangely, he found himself much calmer, and after the initial hustle and bustle of the move, he noticed that he was generally less irritable and annoyed. Not only was Mr. Sivan feeling this way, but he noticed it in his wife as well.

What could it be? If anything, the frustrations at having to adjust their entire way of life should have made the Sivans edgier. Yet, the opposite had happened, and they could not figure it out.

That is, until they went back to the big city to visit family. Once there, they immediately realized what had occurred. It was the traffic. All his life, Refael had to contend with traffic. Even when going to the store a half a mile away, there were cars in the way, and narrow streets to navigate. It never bothered him; it was simply the way life was.

Yet, when he was able to remove himself from those surroundings, he relaxed. He was unaware of what he was going through, and how he was responding. Every day he found himself slightly on edge, and thought that he simply was irritable. Only later did he realize what was really getting to him.

Sometimes we don't even know what we are missing - whether it is something as mundane as traffic, or something as extraordinary as the *Beis Hamikdash*. Yet, when we finally get what we didn't even know we needed, we look back and wonder how we survived until now.

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** Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- When faced with suffering, a person would be able to walk into the *Beis Hamikdash* and understand why Hashem sent him these difficulties.¹
- Since the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, fruits have not been as tasty.²
- Since the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*, there has not been a single day that has not had something bad happen on it.³
- Hashem himself laments the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*.⁴

1 *Ha'amek Davar* on *Devarim* 28:59

2 *Sotah* 48a

3 *ibid.*

4 *Berachos* 3a