

ENCOUNTERS

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HASHKAFHA

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Rabbi Daniel Yarmush

STRENGTHENING OUR EMUNAH IN GALUS

פתחו שערים ויבא גוי צדיק
שומר אמונים

As our mourning over the *churban* intensifies during these Three Weeks, we might wonder why Hashem took the Beis Hamikdash from us. Why did He remove His *Shechinah*? True, we had sinned and deserved punishment, but what is to be gained from this type of consequence? How do we benefit from the lack of a place to bring *korbanos* and connect to Hashem? We know that Hashem acts only for our good and that we often cannot understand His ways, but perhaps we can somewhat clarify the purpose of *galus*. In doing so, we will realize which actions we must take to merit the return of the *Shechinah* to our midst.

R' Moshe's Answer – Internalizing That Hashem Is The Only One In Control

One hundred years ago, in the city of Luban, Rav Moshe Feinstein zt"l addressed this question (*Kol Ram – Bein HaMetzarim*). Rav Moshe spoke on Shabbos Nachamu (5682) at length about the concept of *galus*. He explained that we need to know that the purpose of life is to recognize Hashem in the world. This world is physical, masking Hashem's existence. Hashem challenges us to find Him beneath the curtain of nature. Moreover, we must recognize that the **only** power in existence is Hashem.

Galus is a place where we are forced to internalize this reality. A government forms, and its officials are now "in charge." If a draft is imposed, everyone needs to sign up to put their lives on the line. These officials are in "complete control" — until the next coup or revolution, when someone else attains "complete control." We know one thing for sure — we ourselves are completely not in control! We also know that the powers that rulers wield are so transient. We come to really feel that there is only One Who truly has complete control: Hashem.

If we fail to live with a feeling of awe while in His presence when we are fortunate enough to stand in Hashem's "backyard," then we need to be taught a lesson. The only way to learn that lesson is to inhabit the world outside Yerushalayim and experience that reality. Once we realize that there is no other power "out there," we can return and

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כל העונה נמן
בכל כחו פותחין
לו שערי גן עדן

appreciate being in the presence of the Almighty.

The Navi Hoshea

In the beginning of Hoshea (see *Pesachim* 87a) Hashem tells the Navi, "She [Klal Yisrael] is not My wife and I am not her husband! She says 'I will go after those who love me. The ones who provide me with my bread and my water, my wool and my linen, my oil and my drinks.' And she doesn't know that it is I who provides her grain, her grapevines, her olives. I give her gold... I will not continue..."

Failing to recognize that Hashem is the source of all the good we have is a tragic mistake that causes Hashem to stop sending *berachah*, *Rachmana litzlan*. Even worse, Hashem then refers to us as strangers. "You are 'לא עמי' – not My nation. You are not My wife."

PART I – BERACHOS IN GALUS

Berachos — Lifting the Veil of Nature

A significant part of the purpose of *galus* is to recognize that there is only One true power in the world. This means that we are completely dependent on Hashem in every aspect of our lives. Let's focus on one very practical way to actively internalize this fundamental reality – concentrating on *berachos*.

Rabbeinu Bachya (*Kad Hakemach*) writes that anyone who takes pleasure from this world without making a *berachah* can be compared to the people described above, who say, "I will follow those who love me, who give me my bread and my water, etc." They think their sustenance comes from elsewhere. By making a

berachah, we recognize that Hashem is the source of our good. "שהכל נהיה בדברו." Any time we benefit from this world, we are required to make a *berachah*. In this way we lift the veil of nature which covers Hashem's presence.

Ending "Natural Disasters"

Plagues effectively disguise Hashem's hand because people — whether good, bad, old, young, weak, or strong, etc. — sicken and die, *R"l*, without any apparent rhyme or reason. In the days of Dovid Hamelech, tens of thousands of people died in a terrible plague. This was the impetus for Dovid Hamelech to mandate the recital of one hundred *berachos* a day, a measure which ended the plague. The formula is simple, when we recognize that what seems like nature (i.e., a fruit growing from a tree) is really Hashem, we are unmasking His presence. In this *zechus*, He too will reveal Himself in the form of *refuos* and *yeshuos*. He will end the seemingly random happenings in the perils of "nature".

Building Ourselves as Batei Mikdash

Let us return briefly to our original question of what is supposed to come from us losing the *Bais Hamikdash*. Rav Chaim Freidlander *zt"l* (*Sifsei Chaim*, p. 374) offers the following additional explanation. Having a *makom hamikdash* provided a sense of security. There was a place to go to strengthen ourselves in *avodas Hashem*, a place to bring *korbanos* and get *kapparah* for our *aveiros*. If that sense of security is a cause of complacency and lack of devotion, however, Hashem takes it away. Suddenly, a person feels, "I don't have anywhere to go!" This epiphany can

encourage him to transform himself into a *mikdash*. “היכל ה' המה.” Hashem wants each of us to feel compelled and driven to make a *mikdash* out of himself, instead of relying on the actual Beis Hamikdash. This purpose too can be accomplished quicker through our *berachos*.

One Hundred Pieces of Foundation

The Zohar Hakadosh writes that the *Matah HaAdanim*, the one hundred sockets which served as the foundation for the Mishkan, are paralleled by the *Matah HaAdanim*, one hundred names of Hashem mentioned in our *berachos* each day. The *mefarshim* (see *Sifsei Chaim, Midos Avodas Hashem*, p. 473) explain that by mentioning Hashem's name in a *berachah*, we are bringing Hashem into our hearts and lives. By doing so one hundred times a day, we transform ourselves into people who live constantly with Hashem. That is the definition of a *mikdash*: a place where we can always find Hashem.

In the *Bais Hamikdash*, we brought *karbanos*. Through them we were able to retain our connection with Hashem even after we sinned. The *Rokeach (Hakdama to Siddur)* writes that *berachos* in *galus* take the place of *karbanos* in the *Bais Hamikdash*. Even if we have done *aveiros*, by strengthening ourselves in *berachos* we can retain our connection.

That's All Hashem Wants From Us

The Rikanti writes that Hashem “desires” *berachos* greatly. His words can be better appreciated in light of the following powerful insight from the *Maharsha*. The Gemara (*Menachos 43b*) learns the obligation of saying one hundred *berachos* a day from the *pasuk*

“מה ה' אלוֹקֵיךָ שׁוֹאֵל: (מֵאֵה ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ שׁוֹאֵל) “What does Hashem request from you? Just that you be in awe of Him.” The *Maharsha* explains that the impetus for this derivation is a question asked in another Gemara. Is being in awe of Hashem something trivial?! How can the *pasuk* say “בי אִם, just”, about such a seemingly overwhelming request? To this our Gemara responds, “מֵאֵה ה' אֱלֹהֵיךָ שׁוֹאֵל מֵעַמְךָ,” Hashem wants one hundred *berachos*. By reciting *berachos* properly, living in awe of Hashem will come naturally! (If this *Maharsha* would comprise the entire content of this article, it would be well worth printing. May we never forget his words.)

By being careful with our *berachos*, firstly, we are recognizing that all the good that we have comes from Hashem. This awareness serves to hasten the fulfillment of the purpose of *galus*, which is for us to internalize that Hashem runs the world. Secondly, we are elevating ourselves to become individual dwelling places for the *Shechinah*. In doing so, we shorten the time we must wait to merit a Beis Hamikdash where Klal Yisrael can join in the comfort of Hashem's presence.

PART II – AMEN IN GALUS

Amen — the Mighty Warrior!

There is another level we can reach in revealing Hashem's presence in *galus* as well as another level we can reach in our *berachos*. Chazal (*Nazir 66b*) tell us that a *berachah* is like the infantry which goes into battle and begins the war. An *Amen* is the mighty warrior who comes to finish the conquest. Perhaps we can offer an

explanation for this parallel as follows.

The Gates of Gan Eden – Here and Now

The Gemara (*Shabbos 119b*) says “כל העונה אמן בכל כחו פותחין לו שערי גן עדן, שנא' פתחו שערים ויבא גוי צדיק שומר אמונים - אל תיקרי שומר אמונים אלא שומרים אמן.” “Whoever answers *Amen* with all his might (concentration – Rashi), the gates of Gan Eden are opened for him as it says, etc.” The *Maharal* explains that because *Amen* is an expression of *emunah*, we must utter it with all our might. One must put great effort into strengthening *emunah*, as this effort opens the gates of Gan Eden.

The sefer *Ntari Amen* references Rav Shmuel Rozovsky *zt"l* as stating that the language of the Gemara indicates that this is an immediate response. The gates of Gan Eden are opened **now**, in this world. He explains that the *chizuk* in *emunah* opens all the gates of *ruchniyus* for us while we are still alive and able to grow!

“קל מלך נאמן” — Defining Reliability

The Gemara (*Berachos 63a*) tells us that in the Beis Hamikdash, they would not answer *Amen*. The *Dubno Maggid (Sefer Hamidos Sha'ar HaTefillah*, p. 5) explains the reason for this custom as follows. *Amen* stands for “קל מלך נאמן”, meaning that Hashem is completely trustworthy. “רחמיו נאמנים.” We are expressing our trust that even when we see “אף וחמה,” the wrath of Hashem, *R"l*, we know that it is really mercy and will be for our ultimate good. In the Beis Hamikdash, everything was clear. We pronounced Hashem's name the way it is spelled because there was a clarity in our perception of His unchanging goodness. In *galus*, we say

"*aleph-daled-nu-yud*" because we can't see the good clearly. For this reason, we need to strengthen our *emunah* by saying *Amen* with all our might, expressing our trust that "קל מלך נאמן"; Hashem's mercy is steadfast, unswerving and eternal. It is present in every situation and at every time, no matter how difficult it may be to comprehend.

A person says a *berachah*, expressing his gratitude or praise to Hashem. This is the infantry. The one listening affirms what he heard by answering *Amen*. He is also adding the idea that besides the fact that this obvious good that you are praising Hashem for is sourced in Hashem's graciousness — everything Hashem does is *chessed*! This expression of complete *emunah* is what opens the doors of Gan Eden. This is the mighty warrior who finishes off the battle.

This week Chicago's heart was broken again with the tragic passing of a precious little seven year old *neshama* – Chaim Gershon *a"h* ben *ybd*"I Yitzchok Aryeh. Only in Klal Yisroel will you hear a father speak like we heard on Monday. "*Ashreinu mah tov chelkeinu*" he began. And he went on to speak words of iron clad *emuna* clearly emanating from his heart. If all of Klal Yisroel would rise to such levels of *emuna* then it would be indeed impossible for Hashem to say "*Lo Ami*" "they are not My nation". As the *Rosh Yeshiva* Rav Yerucham *shlit"a* said this week in the name of the Maharal "If Klal Yisroel were *davuk* – attached to Hashem – it would be impossible for them to go into *galus*. Pure *emunah* is attachment to Hashem. The *Medrash* says in the *zechus* of *emuna* we will see the *geula*. We can do our part in

getting to such levels by answering *amen* with all our concentration.

The Prelude to the Beis Hamikdash

These concepts are illustrated in the *mizmor* Dovid Hamelech wrote for the establishment of the Beis Hamikdash. "*מזמור שיר חנוכת הבית לדוד*" The *mizmor* begins with "כי דליתני ולא" "exalt You Hashem, for You have uplifted me, and You did not allow my enemies to rejoice over me." The word *דליתני* stems from the word *דלה*, which means to draw (as in draw water). Drawing water entails a descent followed by the filling and lifting of the bucket. Dovid Hamelech is thanking Hashem for the times he sank low because through these experiences he was uplifted. Later, he continues, "הסתרת פניך הייתי נבהל" "You hid Your face, and I was bewildered." Dovid endured times when Hashem's involvement in the world was completely invisible. This caused him *בהלה*, terror. From that terrible state, "אליך ה' אקרא ואל" "To You Hashem I call, and to Hashem I plead." When we find ourselves bereft and forlorn, *Rachmana litzlan*, and the pain seems too much to bear, then we truly realize that there is absolutely nothing for us to rely on aside from Hashem Himself. Hashem is the only One Who will never leave us. He will always be there, watching us and placing us in the exact situation we need to experience. When we realize that and call to Him, then "הפכת מספדי למחול לי פתחת שקי ותאזרני" "Hashem will turn our eulogies into dance; He will remove our sackcloth and gird us with joy.

These concepts comprise the שיר

חנוכת הבית, the song of the inauguration of the Beis Hamikdash. When we rise to exalted levels of recognizing Hashem and living with Him in our mouths, hearts, and minds, then we ourselves become dwelling places for His presence. We are ready then for the rebuilding of the Beis Hamikdash.

Involving Children

Hagaon Rav Aharon Leib Shtienman *zt"l* was asked to speak to a group of elementary school *menahalim*. He had one short message. "We must teach our children the importance of the word *Amen*! It brings us to *Olam Haba* and it is the stepping stone to all *maalos*." By making a simple program involving children promoting *berachos* out loud with someone answering *amen* a tremendous impact can be made. (E.g. when a *beracha* is said put a chocolate chip in a container then have an ice cream party after a week.) We can hand ourselves and our children the keys to *Gan Eden*, in this world and the next.

We recite many *berachos* every day. We can say many of these aloud, allowing someone to answer *Amen*. Let us take upon ourselves to allow the sounds of *berachah* to reverberate in our homes! Let's open the gates of *Gan Eden* for ourselves with this simple word and establish ourselves as places of השכינה. Let us concentrate on the meaning of the word *Amen* and grow in our *emuna*. In this merit, may we be *zocheh* to the building of the Beis Hamikdash, במהרה בימנו אמן.

Rabbi Daniel Yarmush is a full-time member of Chicago Community Kollel.

