

Introduction

Endowed with prophetic abilities from a very young age, Yirmiyahu Hanavi invests the totality of his being into becoming an elevated spiritual personality. Yet his legacy was to be the one who foretold the impending destruction of Yerushalayim. Hakadosh Baruch Hu chooses Yirmiyahu to serve as the conduit in relaying His discontent with Am Yisrael. Yirmiyahu becomes the personification of pain, the bearer of bad news, as he pleads with the Jewish people to elevate their lives and change their ways.

Yirmiyahu's emotional laments are expressed in the verses of Megilas Eicha, and none more poignant than the third chapter — beginning with the words “Ani HaGever” — as Yirmiyahu bears witness to the calamities that befell the Jewish people.

Megilas Eicha states:

וַתִּזְנַח מִשְׁלוֹם נַפְשִׁי נְשִׂיָתִי טוֹבָה
And my soul is removed far off from peace, I forgot prosperity.
Eicha 3:17

The Gemara comments:

מאי ותזנח משלום נפשי אמר ר' אבהו זו הדלקת נר בשבת נשיתי טובה אמר רבי ירמיהו זו בית המרחץ (אמר רבי יוחנן) זו רחיצת ידים ורגלים בחמין ר' יצחק נפחא אמר זו מטה נאה וכלים נאים שעליה ר' אבא אמר זו מטה מוצעת ואשה מקושטת לתלמידי חכמים.

“And my soul is removed far off from peace, I forgot prosperity” (Lamentations 3:17). What is: And my soul is removed far off from peace? Rabbi Abbahu said: That is the lack of opportunity to engage in kindling the Shabbat lights, which a



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refugee is unable to do. I forgot prosperity, Rabbi Yirmeya said: That is the lack of opportunity to bathe in the bathhouse. Rabbi Yochanan said: That is the lack of opportunity to engage in washing one's hands and feet in hot water. Rabbi Yitzchak Nappacha said: Prosperity is a pleasant bed and the pleasant bedclothes that are on it, which are not available in exile. Rabbi Abba said: That is a made bed, and a wife adorned, i.e., worthy of and suitable for Torah scholars.

Shabbat 25b (Translation: The William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud)

This is a striking interpretation. The verses are depicting the trauma and devastation of Jerusalem's destruction. And yet, the Gemara interprets the verses as portraying relatively common conveniences that have disappeared as a result of the *churban*. Lighting Shabbos candles, utilizing the bathhouse, washing ones hands and feet. Do these elements of life truly capture the anguish of Yirmiyahu?

The answer is that when reflecting upon *churban*, we often focus on the more extraordinary elements of destruction — the loss of our Beis Hamikdash and its associated patterns of Jewish life and the devastation of our Torah leadership and their legacy. However, the losses that are often most penetrating to the core of our people are those that disrupt

and uproot the normality of everyday life. Galus is manifest not only in the more fundamental elements of Jewish exile, but also in the enduring day-to-day challenges that we face in an unredeemed world. It is the accumulation of those challenges that serve to pose the ongoing threat to our survival as a vibrant and elevated people. Yirmiyahu affirmed the notion that the larger moments of suffering sometimes overshadow the more constant difficulties that characterize the vicissitudes of our lives.

This is true of individual challenges as well. So often, when someone in our community is suffering, we imagine that it is the larger-than-life dimensions of that experience that make the challenge so unbearable. Devoid of a solution to mitigate that reality, we distance ourselves from those enduring the challenge, leaving them feeling desperate and alone. Often, engaging in the more detailed and smaller challenges of life can alleviate a significant amount of pain, as so much of the challenge is indeed found in the upending of normalcy that comes with life's greatest tests. Perhaps we lack the capacity to propel the larger messianic solutions to our exile — but we can take hold of the smaller challenges of galus, and inch by inch bring our world to a moment of redemption.

Rav Yehuda Amital z"tl would point out that Rabbi Akiva's famous statement at the conclusion of *Maseches Makkos*, which depicts the enduring hope of the Jewish people, employs a verse that speaks not of larger cataclysmic and miraculous messianic revelations but rather something different:

בַּה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת עַד יֵשְׁבוּ זְקֵנִים וְזָקֵנוֹת

בְּרַחֲבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם וְאִישׁ מִשְׁעֲנָתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ מִרְבַּץ
וְרַחֲבוֹת הָעִיר יִמְלְאוּ יְלָדִים וְיִלְדוֹת
מִשְׁחָקִים בְּרַחֲבֶיהָ.

So said the Lord of Hosts: Elderly men and women will once again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand from old age. And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in those streets.

Zechariah 8:4-5

Our dream is for our lives to return to normal. To walk the streets of Jerusalem without fear or trepidation. To raise our families, build our homes, and grow our communities with a life devoted to avodas Hashem. May we merit to see this dream come to fruition in our times.



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