

BILVAVI

**Yearning
on the
10th
of Teves**

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The Absence of Seeing Hashem In Creation It is not coincidental that the fast of *Asarah B'Teves*, the tenth day of the month of Teves, is also during the tenth month of the year.

The significance of the number 10 is found in many places. There is a mitzvah for a person to give *maaser*, to tithe his crops and animals, to the Levi and Kohen. The holiest day of the year, Yom Kippur, is on the tenth of Tishrei. Avraham *Avinu* was tested with ten trials, and the Jewish people endured ten trials in Egypt. What is the root of all this?

The Mishnah in Avos says that the world was created with ten expressions of Hashem. That was how the world was created, but what is the purpose of it all? To recognize the One who made it all. How do we recognize Him? Through *mitzvos*, *tefillah*, and perfecting our *middos*. Those are all the tools, but what is the goal? To recognize Him completely, to have *d'veykus* in Him, as the *Mesillas Yesharim* writes in the beginning. So the world was created through ten expressions, and the purpose of all of Creation is for the creations to become close and attached to Him.

[The purpose of the world is manifest in the dimensions of time, space, and soul.] In time, the purpose of the world is revealed on Yom Kippur, when all sins are forgiven, when everyone becomes purified, and the purpose of this purification is that all of the creations can be close to Hashem. At what time does a person feel closest to Hashem? Some people can feel the closeness during a time of turbulent emotions, such as in a time of joyous celebration, or during a troublesome time. But the time when almost all people feel closer to Hashem is, on Yom Kippur.

Where is the place in the world where the purpose of Creation was revealed? It was by the *Beis HaMikdash*. That was where a person could clearly sense Hashem. Our Sages said that when a person entered the *Beis*

HaMikdash, he could feel clearly that he was standing in Hashem's Presence. In our own times, people can also feel this closeness, of feeling Hashem's Presence, on varying levels. Some feel it more and some feel it less. But in those times, in the *Beis HaMikdash*, everyone felt it clearly. The *Vilna Gaon* says that we have no comprehension of the level of even the simplest Jew then.

Furthermore, there were ten miracles that took place every day in the *Beis HaMikdash*. There was a unique revelation of Torah that came forth from there, "*For from Zion comes forth the Torah, and the word of Hashem, from Jerusalem*", and this was a continuation of the revelations that took place on Har Sinai when the Torah was given. *Har HaMoriah*, the mountain where the *Beis HaMikdash* rested on, was a continuation of the light of Torah which Hashem revealed on Har Sinai. It was the place that revealed Hashem's Presence so clearly on this world. Everyone who entered the *Beis HaMikdash* was able to sense clearly what was important and what wasn't, what the main part of life is, why we exist, what we are living for, what our purpose is.

This revelation was not only limited to the *Beis HaMikdash*. An illumination of it spread to the rest of *Yerushalayim*, and also to the rest of Eretz Yisrael. Offshoots of it could also be felt at the other ends of the world. The closer a person got to the *Beis HaMikdash*, the closer he felt to Hashem. This was known as the event of *aliyah l'regel*, ascending by foot [on the festivals] to the *Beis HaMikdash*. *Chazal* say *Yerushalayim* was the "highest of the lands", which means it was the highest spiritual peak of the world. But it also meant that a person who went there would ascend on a soul level. It was the place in the world where the purpose of Creation was revealed. The closeness to Hashem there was felt clearly in the soul as a simple feeling of the heart. That was the case in the times when the *Beis HaMikdash* stood.

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The beginning of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* took place on the 10th of Teves. The *Beis Yosef* writes that if the 10th of Teves would fall out on Shabbos, it would be observed even on Shabbos. What is the great spiritual significance of this fast day?

There was a very deep destruction that took place on this day. It was the beginning of the destruction of a place in the world where the purpose of Creation was revealed. It signified the beginning of an event where we could no longer go to a place in the world where the clarity of Hashem's presence was felt, where the purpose of the Creation was revealed. Certainly, the purpose of Creation can still be revealed, even in our own times, but it has become very hidden since the beginning of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* [which took place on the 10th of Teves].

To illustrate the idea, we know that all of Creation came from Hashem's word. In the times of the *Beis HaMikdash*, a person could sense Hashem so clearly that even when he viewed a simple creation in front of him, he saw how it came from Hashem. One saw the light outside and was aware that the light comes from Hashem's light, which He created on the first day. One was able to see then how the water, the earth, the sky, the sun, the moon, the heavens and all of the stars in it, the plants, mountains, animals and all people in the world, all of Creation, comes from Hashem - from the ten expressions that He used to create the world.

Today, when we see all of this, we do not see it all as the expression of Hashem. We just see a world in front of us at face value. That is the meaning of the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*! When the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, it was not only a massive burning and an obliteration of an edifice of many stones. It was a destruction of all that the *Beis HaMikdash* stood for!

The beginning of the tragedies took place on the 10th of Teves, because the purpose of the Creation went into hiding, on this day. It was no longer revealed clearly in the world, and instead it went into a concealed, hidden state. The 10th of Teves is about the destruction of all the spiritual revelation that used to exist clearly in Creation. Today, this spiritual revelation is hidden. A simple, average Jew in the times of the *Beis HaMikdash* could feel it. Today, the average Jew cannot.

The Chofetz Chaim wrote many important sefarim, such as *Chofetz Chaim* and *Shemiras HaLashon*, which had many novel *halachos* on the laws of permitted and forbidden speech. He also wrote the monumental work *Mishnah Berurah*, which explains many aspects of daily *halachah*. But he also wrote a *sefer* on the laws of *Kodshim*, detailing the laws of the sacrifices and *avodah* in the *Beis HaMikdash*, which he wrote for Kohanim, so that Kohanim can know the *halachos* of the *avodah* in the *Beis HaMikdash*. He said that he wrote this *sefer* because the arrival of Mashiach was imminent, and that Kohanim should therefore be prepared for the *halachos*. He had very clear *emunah* in the arrival of Mashiach. His *emunah* in *Moshiach's* arrival was clear and simple.

Yet, the same Chofetz Chaim, who possessed such strong and clear *emunah*, also worked very hard to maintain his *emunah*. He said that whenever he felt somewhat lacking in *emunah*, he would open up a Chumash and begin to read through the first chapter of parshas Beraishis, to renew his *emunah*. He would begin with "In the beginning, Hashem created the heavens and the earth", and review all of the events, until he felt his clarity of *emunah* again. Then he would return to his regular learning. The destruction that took place on the tenth of Teves was a total antithesis to the above.

Why Do We Want The Beis HaMikdash? Many people know about this, but how many people live it? In the times of the *Beis HaMikdash* everyone felt it clearly and

yearned all the time for even more closeness. Every day we daven for the return of the *Beis HaMikdash*, in *Shemoneh Esrei* and in *Bircas HaMazon*. But in our souls, we have to await it. Each person needs to wonder if he really has the yearning, if he really feels what he's missing without the *Beis HaMikdash*. Do any of us have a yearning that it be rebuilt? And if we do, why do we want it? For what do we need it? We believe in the Sages that there will be a third *Beis HaMikdash*, as Hashem promised us through the words of His prophets, and that it will be eternal. But for what do we need it? First we need to yearn for it.

Fasting on *Asarah B'Teves* is the basic level of observance, and it is an obligation upon each Jew, but it is only the external part of this day. We need to infuse an internal meaning into this day, besides for actually observing the fast. The internal part of our *avodah* on the tenth of Teves is, that we need to wonder if we want the *Beis HaMikdash* – and in addition, why we want it.

The Sages said that all Heavenly blessing came to the world because of the *Beis HaMikdash*. So if a person is missing livelihood, he might yearn for the *Beis HaMikdash* so that he can be financially secure. Others are more spiritual than this, and they want the *Beis HaMikdash* because they want atonement for their sins. Only someone who feels bothered and pained at his sins can relate to this yearning. This is a higher level than the first kind of person, yet it is not the highest level to reach. A higher level is to yearn for the revelations of Torah that were available in the world because of the spiritual effects of the *Beis HaMikdash*. But even this isn't the highest level to yearn for the *Beis HaMikdash*. The truest reason to yearn for the *Beis HaMikdash* is, as explained earlier, because it was the revelation of Hashem's presence on this world.

Some people don't care at all for the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*. They are the worst results of the destruction. But even in those who do yearn for it, they

need to know the reason why we should want it rebuilt. We need to yearn for it because it enabled us to have more *emunah*, a clearer recognition of Hashem!

In Conclusion Every person should yearn for a greater closeness with Hashem, and this should be the reason why we desire rebuilding the *Beis HaMikdash*. But it should not be limited to this, for that would just be self-serving. It is about wishing for a world where everyone will know of Hashem. It should be a yearning for the betterment of the entire world.

The more one awaits the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash* for this reason, the more one is truly yearning for the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Just like a person misses his house when he leaves it and he wishes to return to it, so did we have a *Beis HaMikdash*, which was each Jew's true *bayis*, his true home. Just as a person misses his home when he leaves it and he wants to go back to it, so does each person need to yearn to return to the "house" in his own soul: The *Beis HaMikdash*. That is our true home, our spiritual fort, where we belong to.

Every day when we *daven Shemoneh Esrei*, when we ask for the rebuilding of the *Beis HaMikdash*, let us think for just a moment, about why we want it. Are we saying it only because it's part of the text of *Shemoneh Esrei* established by the Men of Great Assembly...? Or do we truly want the *Beis HaMikdash* to be rebuilt? Let us awaken in ourselves a true yearning for the *Beis HaMikdash*, and let us wonder why we should want it. We should truly yearn for its rebuilding, but for the truest and innermost reason for its rebuilding. When that is how we yearn for it, we will certainly merit to see it rebuilt in our times!

Translated from the Hebrew audio shiur:

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של עשרה בטבת