Referred Pain: Experiencing The Tragedy Of Churban Habayis In Our Times

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Reb Shabsi Yudelevitch זצ"ל once related how a group of tourists were walking through the neighbourhood of Meah Shearim on Tisha B'Av morning, and they wandered into a *shul*. They saw the lights were dimmed and all of the *mispalelim* were sitting on the floor and appeared very distressed. One of the tourists asked a *mispalel* sitting by the door, what was going on? The *mispalel* explained that: "Thousands of years ago we had a large magnificent temple, and our enemies came and destroyed it. Today is the anniversary of the date when it was destroyed, and so we are in mourning for the loss of our temple!" The tourist contemplated this, and after a minute he asked "Tell me, was your Temple insured?" The Yied replied, "No." The tourist responded: "In that case it really was a big loss. Next time, it's worthwhile getting insurance!"

We are of course not in *aveilus* because we didn't have insurance! However, like a person who was born blind, we can't begin to understand what we are missing and therefore we are not able to properly mourn its loss. Chazal tell us how the Beis Hamikdash enabled *Klal Yisrael* to experience the *Hashra'as Hashechina* in a far closer, more intimate way. However, it is very difficult for us to begin to comprehend what that means and therefore to begin to appreciate the magnitude of our loss. But there is a perspective we can understand.

A couple of years ago I began feeling excruciating pain down the inside of my leg. I went to see a doctor who told me that I had a slipped disc in my back. I replied "Doctor, my back feels fine, it's my leg which hurts!" to which the doctor explained, "There is nothing really wrong with your leg, but the slipped disc is sitting on the sciatic nerve which travels down your leg. The pressure on the nerve is 'telling your brain' that your leg is hurting; but in actual fact you are experiencing what is known as referred pain."

The Gemara[1] tells of a woman who was a neighbour of Rabban Gamliel and who unfortunately lost a child. In her pain and distress she audibly cried the whole night, mourning her son. When Rabban Gamliel heard her distress, he too cried the whole night until his eyelashes fell out. The Gemara implies that this story is connected to the *Churban HaBayis*, and in fact quotes a *pasuk* in Eichah in relation to this story. The question is, what has this story got to do with the Churban?

Reb Chaim Zeitchik zt"l explained that Rabban Gamliel understood that all the tragedies and difficulties that befall *Klal Yisrael*, whether on a communal level or on a personal level, have their origin in the fact that we no longer have a Beis Hamikdash! When Rabban Gamliel heard and felt his neighbour's pain, he in turn cried over the root cause of this tragedy - the *Churban HaBayis*. Apart from the incredible level of human loss *Klal Yisrael* suffered during the *Churban* of the *Bayis Rishon* and *Bayis Sheini* the *Batei Mikdash* served as a conduit through which *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* brought down to the world, health, wealth, *bracha* and *hatzalacha*.

However, we focus and mourn the 'partially referred pain', our own personal *tzoros*, and we hardly acknowledge the *Churban HaBayis*. We are so removed from it, that many people find it hard to invoke any feeling of loss for it at all, and instead focus on more recent tragedies, such as the Holocaust.

There was once a couple who waited many years for a child, and were *bentched* with a son. When the boy reached the age of five, his health started to rapidly deteriorate. His parents sought out the best doctors to try and diagnose what was wrong. Eventually, the parents were informed that their son had a very rare heart condition, which weakened the heart muscles. The only way to save him was to toughen him up, and try to make him more of a fighter. They explained that a child of this young age would not be able to achieve this in the warm and caring environment of his home. Drastic action was required. The only way they could save their dear son would be to send him away to an orphanage far away from where they lived. They would only be able to visit him every three months, and he would probably have to stay there at least a couple of years! The parents were naturally distraught. They tried explaining the situation to their young son, but he could not comprehend why his loving parents would desert him and send him away from his family and home. Without a choice, the parents had to bid their child a very emotional farewell. After three months, the parents eagerly arrived at the orphanage for their first long awaited visit. However, when they saw the conditions of the home, and how their son appeared, they were shocked. They tried to make the most of the short visit, but their son spent most of the time pleading to come home and asking them why they were doing this to him. By the time the parents had to leave their hysterical son, they were emotionally distraught. With each visit they found their son less distressed, but more distanced from them. This caused them tremendous pain, but they knew it was for their son's own good. After a couple of years, things deteriorated to a stage where their son didn't even acknowledge them; and whilst they eagerly awaited each visit, it was of no significance to him. This was the source of the greatest pain of all to the couple. After all that they had sacrificed for the wellbeing of their son, they had stopped being a factor in his life… they had saved a life but lost a son!

The Gemara[2] explains how at the time of the *churban* the *kruvim* where hugging each other, Rav Shimshon Pincus zt"l explains that this was to show that Hashem loves *Klal Yisrael* and was destroying the Beis HaMikdash for our own good. However, as the *galus* drags on, we become more and more distanced from him and are oblivious to how desperate He is to bring the *geulah* and be reunited with us.

May we be *zocheh* to repair our relationship with our Father in Heaven so that He can bring us home speedily and in our days.

1 Sanhedrin 104b

2 Yuma 54b

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