

## Echoes from an Inner Place

תִּנָּא אָמַר רַבִּי יוֹסִי: פַּעַם אַחַת הָיִיתִי מְהַלֵּךְ בַּדֶּרֶךְ, וְנִכְנַסְתִּי לְחוּרְבָּה אַחַת מִחוּרְבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַיִם לְהִתְפַּלֵּל. בָּא אֵלָיו זְכוֹר לְטוֹב וְשָׁמַר לִי עַל הַפֶּתַח וְהִמָּתִין לִי עַד שְׁסִימָתִי תְּפִילָּתִי. לְאַחַר שְׁסִימָתִי תְּפִילָּתִי אָמַר לִי: בְּנִי, מִפְּנֵי מָה נִכְנַסְתָּ לְחוּרְבָּה זוֹ? אָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: לְהִתְפַּלֵּל. אָמַר לִי: הִיָּה לָךְ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל בַּדֶּרֶךְ. וְאָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: מִתְגַּרָּא הָיִיתִי שָׁמָּה וַפְּסִיקוּ בִּי עוֹבְרֵי דֶרֶכִים. וְאָמַר לִי: הִיָּה לָךְ לְהִתְפַּלֵּל תְּפִילָּה קְצָרָה.

בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה לְמַדְתִּי מִמֶּנּוּ שְׁלֹשָׁה דְּבָרִים: לְמַדְתִּי שָׁאִין נִכְנָסִין לְחוּרְבָּה, וְלַמַּדְתִּי שְׁמִתְפַּלְלִין בַּדֶּרֶךְ, וְלַמַּדְתִּי שֶׁהַמִּתְפַּלֵּל בַּדֶּרֶךְ מִתְפַּלֵּל תְּפִילָּה קְצָרָה.

וְאָמַר לִי: בְּנִי, מָה קוֹל שְׁמַעְתָּ בְּחוּרְבָּה זוֹ? וְאָמַרְתִּי לוֹ: שְׁמַעְתִּי בֵּת קוֹל שְׁמִנְהֶמֶת כְּיוֹנָה וְאוֹמֶרֶת: אוֹי לְבָנִים שְׁבַעֲנוּנֵיהֶם הַחֲרַבְתִּי אֶת בֵּיתִי וְשָׂרַפְתִּי אֶת הַיִּכְלִי וְהַגְּלִיתִים לְבֵין הָאוֹמּוֹת. וְאָמַר לִי: חֲיִיד וְחִיִּי רֵאשֶׁד, לֹא שָׁעָה זוֹ בְּלִבְד אוֹמֶרֶת כֵּן, אֶלָּא בְּכָל יוֹם וְיוֹם אוֹמֶרֶת כֵּן. וְלֹא זוֹ בְּלִבְד, אֶלָּא בְּשָׁעָה שִׁישְׂרָאֵל נִכְנָסִין לְבֵיתִי כְּנִסְיוֹת וּלְבֵיתִי מִדְּרָשׁוֹת וְעוֹנִין "יִהְיֶה הַגָּדוֹל מְבוֹרָךְ" הַקָּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְנַעֵנֵעַ רֵאשׁוֹ וְאוֹמֵר: אֲשֶׁרִי הַמֶּלֶךְ שְׁמִקְלָסִין אוֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ כֵּן, מָה לוֹ לָאֵב שֶׁהִגְלָה אֶת בְּנָיו, וְאוֹי לָהֶם לְבָנִים שֶׁגָּלוּ מֵעַל שׁוּלְחַן אֲבִיהֶם.

Rabbi Yosi said: Once I was traveling and I entered one of the ruins of Jerusalem to pray. Elijah, always remembered for the good, came and waited for me at the entrance until I had finished my prayer. After I finished my prayer, he said to me: *Shalom alecha*/peace be upon you, my master!' I answered: *Shalom alecha*, my master and my teacher!' He said to me: My son, why did you enter this ruin? To pray, I replied. Said Elijah: You should have prayed on the road. I was afraid, said I, lest the passers-by interrupt me. He said to me, You should have prayed a shortened prayer.

And so I learned three things from him: I learned that one does not enter a ruin. I learned that one prays on the road, and I learned that one who prays on the road prays a shortened prayer.

My son, Elijah continued, what voice did you hear in that ruin? I told him: I heard a heavenly voice cooing like a dove and saying: Woe to the children on account of whose sins I destroyed my house and burned my Temple and exiled them among the nations!

By your life and breath, said he, it is not only in that moment that she cries so. It's every day, three times a day, she coos like a dove: *wooo, wooo, woe to the children...* And not only that, but whenever Israel enters its synagogues and study houses and recites the Kaddish, saying, *Y'hei shemei hagadol m'vorach*/May his great name be blessed, the Holy One, blessed be He, shakes his head and says: Happy is the king who is thus praised in his house! What a thing for the father who banished his children to hear! Woe to those children who are banished from their father's table.

(Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 3a)

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## Elijah Blue Prints

A resident of a courtyard community may be compelled by the other residents to contribute to the building of a gate house and a door for the courtyard.

This would seem to show that a gate house is an improvement. Yet, how can this be? After all, there was a certain pious man with whom Elijah used to converse regularly until that man built a gate house, after which Elijah did not come to speak with him anymore! In light of this, a gate house could not be an improvement!

There is no contradiction here. A gate house built within the courtyard's perimeter would be an improvement. Such a gate house would make it possible for a poor man to make himself heard within. But because this man built a gate house that protruded from the courtyard, Elijah refused to come anymore.

If you like, I can say that in both cases the gate house was built protruding from the courtyard and still there is no difficulty. One would not be an improvement while the other would be an improvement. In the one case—of which Elijah disapproved—there was a door and in the other there was no door, just a vestibule that allowed entrance into the waiting area from the outside.

Or again we may suppose that in both cases there was a door and still there is no difficulty in determining why Elijah would come or chose not to come. In one case there was a latch and in the other case there was no latch.

Or again I may say that in both cases there is a latch and still there is no difficulty because in the one case the latch was inside the door and in the other case it was outside.

(Babylonian Talmud Baba Batra 7b)