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The Destruction of Jerusalem: When The 'Lion' Attacked

The *mazal* of the month of Av is “*aryeh*”, the lion.

In this month, the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, by the Babylonian king, Nevuchadnezzar. Our Sages compared king Nevuchadnezzar to a lion, for only a ‘lion’ could have the power to attack the *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *Ariel*, “lion of G-d.”

It is clear that the *mazal* of the month of Av is tied to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Let us try to understand a little about what the ‘lion’ is in deeper terms, so that we can understand more about the month of Av, and the *avodah* we have during these days; may it be transformed from mourning to joy.

The Lion: The Symbol of Malchus/Royalty

Our Sages state that each of the animal groups has their respective king. The king of the birds is the eagle, the king of domestic animals is the bull, and the king of the beasts is the lion. The lion represents *malchus* (royalty). Although it is king over the beasts alone, it is considered to be the representation of the concept of *malchus*.

The Jewish people are referred to by seven names, and one of them is “*aryeh*”, “lion”. But more specifically, it is the tribe of Yehuda, the king of all the tribes of Israel and ancestor of the Davidic dynasty, who is compared to the lion.

The *Beis HaMikdash* is partially built in Yehuda’s portion, and the rest of the *Beis HaMikdash* is in Binyamin’s portion. Binyamin attained part of the status of the *malchus* due to the first king appointed in *Klal Yisrael*, who was King Shaul, a descendant of Binyamin. However, Shaul’s status of *malchus* was eventually transferred to David, who descends from Yehuda. The *Beis HaMikdash*, which was called *ariel* (lion of G-d), was a manifestation of *malchus* - represented by the “lion”.

The Evil Lion, Nevuchadnezzar

The Gemara^[1] says that a lion does not attack two people; it will only attack one single person at a time. The Gemara asks: don’t we see that a lion does attack two people at once? The Gemara answers that it depends. If the lion thinks that there are two people in front of it, it will not attack them both. But if it thinks that the two people look like two animals, then it will attack them both, because then it doesn’t think of them as people; it thinks of them as animals.

The deeper meaning of this is that when a person sinks to the level of an animal, he can be attacked by the 'lion' [on the side of evil]. "*They became comparable to animals*", the prophet says, concerning the sinful level that the Jewish people sank to, in the era preceding the destruction. When we weren't sinning, we are called "*adam*" (man); we resemble the perfected level of 'man' that we are created to be. But when we sank to the level of sins, we were on the level of animals – and then we were able to be attacked by the 'lion': Nevuchadnezzar.

If the *Beis HaMikdash* could be destroyed in the month of Av – the representation of the entire Jewish people together – then it must be because we sank to the level in which we were comparable to animals. Had we been on the level of "man", then the 'lion' that is Nevuchadnezzar could not attack us, for the lion doesn't start up with even more than one man. If Nevuchadnezzar was able to come and destroy the *Beis HaMikdash*, this could only have been possible because we became like 'animals' in his eyes, and when he viewed us as animals, he was thus able to attack us. We lost our original *tzuras adam* (ideal form of man).

The Two 'Lions': Yehuda and Dan

In the blessing of Yaakov Avinu, Yehuda is compared to a lion. Yehuda is blessed with the *malchus* (the royal dynasty), the attribute of the lion. Generally speaking, the lion is represented by the tribe Yehuda. But we also find that the tribe Dan is compared to the lion. Yaakov Avinu compares Dan to a serpent, but Moshe Rabbeinu in his blessing compares Dan to a lion.

The Gemara says that the lion has six names^[2]. However, there are essentially two roots of where it all stems from: there is a 'lion' aspect contained in Yehuda, and there is a 'lion' aspect contained in Dan.

The lion that is 'Yehuda' represents the concept of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda's role. Yehuda is the symbol of royalty, for the Davidic dynasty stems from him. The lion that is 'Dan', though, refers to the fact that the tribe of Dan is the protectors of the Jewish people, who would guard the borders of Eretz Yisrael from enemy attack; as the tribe Dan is portrayed in the blessing of Yaakov Avinu (as explained according to *Rashi*). This is Dan's aspect of 'lion'. Thus, there is a 'lion' that refers to royalty (Yehuda) and there is a lion that refers to fighting evil (Dan).

The Sages state, "A king can break fences, and no one can protest him." This is referring to the power of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda's aspect. A true king is all-powerful and he can do as he pleases. We also find this concept in the side of evil. The Sages state that the Serpent is one who "breaks the fences of the world." The Serpent, who represents evil, has the audacity to break the proper rules of the world and trample upon all that is holy.

Dan is called the "serpent", but he is called the 'serpent' on the side of holiness, who can watch and protect the boundaries and fences of the Jewish people. Dan is the opposite of the concept of Yehuda, who is a king who can break all fences. Whereas Yehuda can break through all fences, because he is the king, Dan serves to protect the fences and boundaries within the Jewish people.

'Higher' Lion and 'Lower' Lion

The *Beis HaMikdash* is called *ariel*, "lion of G-d". It is clear that the 'lion' which the *Beis HaMikdash* is compared to is the lion of Yehuda, an invincible 'lion', for he represents the *malchus* of Hashem. The evil 'lion', Nevuchadnezzar, came and destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*. How are we to understand this? If the lion of Yehuda cannot be attacked, for he is the king, then how could Nevuchadnezzar attack the *Beis HaMikdash*?

The answer is because Nevuchadnezzar's 'lion' aspect does not draw its power from Yehuda's 'lion'

aspect. Rather, Nevuchadnezzar gets his 'lion' aspect from Dan. And the 'lion' aspect of Dan can be overcome by evil forces.

Yehuda's 'lion' aspect cannot be defeated by Nevuchadnezzar, because the *malchus* of Yehuda cannot be overcome by the *malchus* of Nevuchadnezzar. The 'lion' on the side of evil, Nevuchadnezzar, can only attack the 'lower lion', Dan. Nevuchadnezzar can't touch the 'higher lion', Yehuda.

Dan is compared to the lion and he is also compared to the serpent. When the Jewish people sank to the level of sinning, they awakened the evil hold of the Serpent, who was responsible for causing man to sin and all subsequent sins after that. Upon sinking to the level of sin, destruction was able to enter. Dan is compared to both the serpent and the lion; on the side of holiness, when we overcome the hold of the 'Serpent', the 'lion' on the side of evil isn't able to attack us either.

From the tribe of Dan came the idol of Michah. Because of the tribe of Dan, evil was able to penetrate into the sheltered society of the Jewish people. The tribe of Dan dwelled on the outermost part of the encampment of the Jewish people, thus they were the most susceptible to the forces of impurity that was just outside of them; and therefore it was they who brought in the evil influences of idol worship.

Nevuchadnezzar, the 'lion' on the side of evil, was able to attack our *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *ariel*, "lion of G-d", only because of Dan. Nevuchadnezzar's 'lion' aspect is really is no match for Yehuda's 'lion'. Nevuchadnezzar is only the 'lower' lion (rooted in Dan), thus it can only attack our 'lower lion'; it cannot attack our 'higher lion'.

The Gemara says that Nevuchadnezzar rode on a male lion, and placed a serpent hanging from his head. This is in line with the concept being described here that his "lion-like" power is really using the power of the 'serpent': Dan. The side of evil connects the 'lion' to the 'serpent'; it is not capable of taking hold of the lion of Yehuda, but it can connect itself to the lion of Dan.

Dan is compared to the serpent, and he is also compared to a lion; therefore, the side of evil can connect itself to the serpent, and from there, it can connect itself to the level of the lion, for Dan is the connecting point between the serpent and the lion. This is what allowed Nevuchadnezzar to be the 'lion' that destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*: he connected his 'lion' aspect to the 'serpent' aspect of Dan. And when the aspects of 'lion' and 'serpent' are combined for evil purposes, this is what enables the side of evil to attack and destroy the [external layer of the] *Beis HaMikdash*.

We have seen how the side of evil connects the lion and the serpent, for destructive uses. Now we will see how this concept is employed in the side of holiness.

Mashiach: The Holy Union of Yehuda and Dan

Mashiach ben David descends from Yehuda. Rashi explains that "his father will come from Yehuda, and his mother will come from Dan". This shows us that *Mashiach* will be the connecting point between Yehuda and Dan – on the side of holiness. As we know, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which *Mashiach* ben David will build, will be forever. Let us examine the deep reason for this.

On Purim, we were saved by Mordechai, whose father comes from Yehuda, and whose mother comes from Binyamin. The connection between Yehuda and Binyamin symbolizes the first two *Batei Mikdash*, which was split between the portions of land of Yehuda and Binyamin. The deeper meaning behind this is because the *malchus* was eventually split between Yehuda and Binyamin. That rift essentially meant that there were two kings now. And there can only be one king in order for the king to have true power.

Thus, the very fact that the *malchus* was split between Yehuda and Binyamin was already a damage to the *malchus*. Because the *malchus* was damaged during the first two *Batei Mikdash*, it would follow that these two *Batei Mikdash* would ultimately be destroyed. This is because there can only be one *malchus* [under the same roof] - not two.

By contrast, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will be built by Mashiach, will be forever. Mashiach will come from Yehuda and Dan. If Mashiach were to come from Dan alone, he would be on the level of the 'lower' lion, and then he could be attacked by the other 'lower' lion that is on the side of evil. But Mashiach's father is from Yehuda - the 'higher' lion - which is stronger than the 'lower' lion; thus it cannot be attacked.

Nevuchadnezzar can only attack the 'lower' lion in *Klal Yisrael*, but not the 'higher' lion in *Klal Yisrael*. Thus, the Mashiach, who will come from Yehuda, will be invincible, and his *Beis HaMikdash* cannot be destroyed.

The Sages say that had Moshe entered Eretz Yisrael and built the *Beis HaMikdash*, it could never have been destroyed. We also find that the *Mishkan*, which was built by Moshe, was not either destroyed; it was merely hidden. The *Mishkan*, which is never destroyed, is the root of the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which is never destroyed.

By contrast, the first two *Batei Mikdash* were split between Yehuda and Binyamin, and thus they were susceptible to be destroyed, due to the disparity amongst the *malchus*. Yehuda and Binyamin really cannot be connected, because two kings cannot rule under the same roof. Thus the two *Batei Mikdash* which they jointly possessed could be attacked by Nevuchadnezzar.

The Third Beis HaMikdash: The Union of Yehudah and Dan

It has been explained here that there is a 'lion' of Yehuda, and a 'lion' of Dan. These concepts need understanding, however. In addition, we also need to understand what exactly their union is.

Since Yehuda and Dan are both called "lion", their union would mean that there are now two "lions". If there are two lions, there is no chance against them. Thus, the third *Beis HaMikdash* will never be destroyed, for it is built by Mashiach, who comes from Yehuda and Dan, the two 'lions'.

Gevurah (Strength) and Malchus (Royalty)

Until now, we have outlined the concepts. Now let us try to relate to these matters on a more practical level in our life. What is the 'lion' of Yehuda, and what is the 'lion' of Dan, in terms of our own personal *avodah*?

We find that the Jewish people, in general, are compared to the lion. The beginning of *Shulchan Aruch* says that upon awakening in the morning, one must strengthen himself like a lion ("*yisgaber k'ari*"), to serve the Creator. The lion's identifying trait is *gevurah*, strength.

Gevurah, symbolized by the lion's strength, is referring to the 'lion' of Dan. The power of Dan is the power to be a 'lion' in terms of exercising *gevurah*; to illustrate, the tribe of Dan are called the protectors of the Jewish people. In this aspect, Dan is referred to as the 'lion': he shows strength, as he tries to fight the forces of evil.

When a person awakens from sleep, he must 'strengthen himself like a lion'. We can view this with a deeper understanding: Chazal say that sleep is a sixtieth of death; thus, getting up from sleep is like rising from a degree of death. Death was caused by the Serpent. But Dan is called both the lion and the serpent. Dan is a 'lion' with regards to the fact that he can strengthen himself and come out of

the serpent's hold on him (the forces of evil), and pull himself out of the serpent's grasp. Dan is called the serpent, but his gift is that he can also come out of the 'serpent' that he is compared to: because he is also called a 'lion'. That is the 'lion of Dan': his aspect of *gevurah*, to strengthen himself and overcome evil.

Yehuda's power to be a lion, though, serves a totally different (and higher) purpose than Dan's 'lion' aspect. Yehuda's role is not merely to overcome evil and to rise above it. One of the animals pictured on the legs of the *Merkavah* (the "Holy Chariot" in Heaven), is the lion, and it is on the right side of the *Merkavah*, which shows that the lion symbolizes *malchus*. Yehuda's purpose is to reveal *malchus*.

These are very different aspects of the concept of the 'lion'. The 'lion of Dan' represents coming out of evil and lowliness; this is the 'lower lion', for it is not yet the ultimate power of the lion. The 'lion of Yehuda', which is the 'higher lion', is the lion that reveals *malchus*. The lion is king over all the animals, for it is the most exalted. This brings out the true concept of the lion: it is king. This is the higher lion (which is invincible): the lion of Yehuda.

The Depth of The Destruction

Now we can have a deeper understanding of what the destruction was to the *Beis HaMikdash*, and what our *avodah* is, during these days.

The 'destruction' is essentially a situation where we remain at the level of Dan and we aren't accessing the higher perspective, Yehuda. When we think that *gevurah* means to merely overcome evil, and we are unaware of the *malchus* which we must come to reveal, *this* is the depth of destruction! It is this perspective which could allow Nevuchadnezzar attack.

But remember, Nevuchadnezzar could only destroy our 'lower' lion, the lion of Dan, and not our 'higher' lion, Yehuda.

One has an *avodah* to fight evil, to strengthen himself and "be strong like a lion", but ultimately, this aspect of *gevurah* is not using the essence of the lion's power; it is only the serpent's power. This is Dan's power, not Yehuda's power. Thus it is not enough to really stand a chance against evil. Only the "lion" within us can really overcome evil, and only the lion within us reveals our higher purpose.

The purpose of overcoming evil is not merely to overcome evil and rise above our earthiness where we can shake off the dust from ourselves. The purpose is to reveal our inherent *malchus*!

How To View Our Struggle With Evil

Now we will speak about this in simpler language.

You can have a person who is always fighting his *yetzer hora*, and he is constantly involved with the struggle in overcoming evil. But he might always dealing with thoughts of *shiflus* (low self-worth) towards himself. He is always busy fighting his feelings of low self-worth that is created from having to deal with overcoming disgusting evil acts. This kind of person is always fighting the *yetzer hora*, and commendably so - but he is only fighting with the power of Dan, which is not powerful enough to withstand the forces of evil.

The higher way of being "as strong like a lion" when we try to overcome evil is to realize the very essence (*atzmiyus*) of our *neshamah*. Our *neshamah* is called "daughter of the King": we must remember our royal status and awaken it. Only then are we truly invincible to evil, and we can then fight evil using this higher perspective. But even more so, we access the *malchus* that is within us, which is the ultimate purpose.

In the month of Av, we mourn the destruction. Our eyes fill with tears, and we realize how low we have sunk, into the very 'earth' of This World. But we must realize that we can rise above all of this 'earth'. We can shake off the dust that has gathered on us and be free of it. The Sages say that "Whoever mourns it, will merit to see it rebuilt". We can rise above all that we have sunken into, but we must understand: how, exactly, do we rise? What is our perspective as we try to do so?

If one tries to fight the evil of this world because he is merely by trying to overcome, he still has a lowly perspective of himself. And in addition, he will not really succeed in fighting evil, when he has such a perspective. He still thinks he is part of the earth, and therefore, he is not immune to destruction.

But if one realizes that he can rise above his earthy aspect, when he has a yearning to come out of it because he realizes his inherent *malchus*, he reveals the true power of the Jewish people, who are called *bnei melachim* (sons of kings). It is from this deep place in our soul that we can view our struggles with, which we can use to ultimately persevere.

The Depth of 'Getting Up After Chatzos' on Tisha B'Av

The *halacha* is that after *chatzos* (noon) on *Tisha B'Av*, we rise from the ground, because we are taught that after *chatzos*, the *Mashiach* is born; our consolation begins. But we must know how to 'rise'. To what are we rising to?

On an inner level, we cannot rise from the earth if we remain on the level of Dan's *gevurah*. But if we access the level of Yehuda, then we will be able to. Rising from the earth means that we can rise above evil and earthiness, by fighting it and not giving in (*gevurah*\Dan) and it also means that we can truly be 'as strong as a lion' and reveal the inner royalty of a Jew's soul (*malchus*\Yehuda) - the deep and pure point in our soul which yearns for the revelation of the ultimate *malchus*.

In Conclusion

May we merit, with the help of Hashem, to reach the level of "His father is from Yehuda, and his mother is from Dan^[3]": that when we fight evil, it should be with both of these aspects. Then we will merit, with *siyata d'shamaya*, the light of *Mashiach*, and the revelation of the complete redemption to all of the Jewish people. *Amen, V'Amen*.

[1] Pesachim 49a

[2] *aryeh, kfir, lehavi, layish, shachal, shachaf*

[3] In quote of the words of *Rashi* concerning the *Mashiach's* ancestry.