

Guarding the Outer Door, Opening the Inner Door

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 sound 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 three times every day that 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: *Y'hei shemei hagadol m'vorach/May his great name be blessed*, the Blessed Holy One, 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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