



An Marvelous Revelation from Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk

Moshe Rabeinu Directed Words of Tochachah by Intimation to the Neshamos of Yisrael in the Untainted Sinless World of “Kol Yisrael”

The auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh preceding Tishah B'Av is known as **Shabbas Chazon**. Its name relates to the prophetic words of the navi related to the churban Beis HaMikdash that is read as the Haftarah (Yeshayah 1, 1): “חזון ישעיה בן אמוץ אשר חזה על יהודה וירושלים”—**the vision of Yeshayah the son of Amotz, which he saw concerning Yehudah and Yerushalayim**. This Haftarah is read every year in association with parshas Devarim. But why did Ezra HaSofer arrange for parshas Devarim to always be read on the Shabbas immediately preceding Tishah B'Av?

We find an explanation in the Levush (O.C. 428, 4) based on what is written in the Tur and the Shulchan Aruch: **Tishah B'Av should precede parshas Vaeschanan**. He adds: **So that they will read parshas Devarim, which begins with the rebukes of Moshe Rabeinu prior to Tishah B'Av; so that the Haftarah of Chazon will be read on it, which is a rebuke regarding the churban**.

In other words, we want to read the “tochachah”—rebuke—of Yeshayah HaNavi regarding the churban on the Shabbas preceding Tishah B'Av. Hence, we combine it with the words of “tochachah” Moshe Rabeinu delivered to Yisrael prior to his death in parshas Devarim (Devarim 1, 12): “איכה אשא לבדי טרחכם ומשאכם וריבכם”—**how can I bear your trouble and your burden and your quarrels alone?!** Thus, we combine these two “tochachos.”

“איכה ישבה בדד” Is a Tikun for “איכה אשא לבדי”

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by delving into the deeper connection between Moshe Rabeinu's words

of rebuke in parshas Devarim and the words of rebuke of Yeshayah HaNavi regarding the churban. We find the following in the Midrash (Eichah Rabbasi, Introduction, 11): **Had you been meritorious, you would be reciting from the Torah “איכה אשא לבדי”—how can I bear alone?!** Now that you were not meritorious, you are perforce reciting (Eichah 1, 1) “איכה ישבה בדד”—**how is it that she sits alone?!** What does this mean? Why if we were reciting “איכה אשא לבדי” would we not need to recite “איכה ישבה בדד”?

It appears that we can make sense of our sages' enigmatic words based on a teaching in the Gemara (Yoma 9b): “מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב, מפני שלשה דברים שהיו בו עבודה זרה, וגלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים... אבל מקדש שני שהיו עוסקים בתורה ומצוות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב, מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם, ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חנם כנגד שלש עבירות עבודה זרה גלוי עריות ושפיכות דמים.” The first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because the people were guilty of the three cardinal sins—avodah zarah, immorality and murder. These sins were not prevalent during the times of the second Beis HaMikdash; the people of that period engaged in Torah-study and performed mitzvos and acts of kindness. The second Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because of “sin'as chinam”—baseless hatred. This teaches us that “sin'as chinam” is equivalent to the three cardinal sins.

Then the Gemara asks: “ובמקדש ראשון לא הוה ביה שנאת חנם, והכתיב (יחזקאל א כז) מגורי אל חרב היו את עמי לכן ספק אל ירך, ואמר רבי אלעזר אלו בני אדם שאוכלין ושותין זה עם זה, ודוקרין זה את זה.” **And in the times of the first Mikdash was there really no “sin'as chinam”?**

But it is written (Yechezkel 1, 27): “Cry out and wail, Son of Man! For it was among My nation, it was among the princes of Yisrael. **Fearers of the sword were My people, therefore strike the thigh** (in grief).” **Rabbi Eliezer said: This refers to those people who eat and drink with each other but stab each other with verbal barbs.** Apparently, even those who were close were filled with “sin’as chinam.” The Gemara answers: **That behavior was found only among the princes of Yisrael.** This means that “sin’as chinam” already existed during the times of the first Beis HaMikdash, albeit only among the leaders of Yisrael but not among the general population.

This leads the Kli Yakar (Devarim 1, 1) to a disturbing conclusion: The “sin’as chinam” that prevailed among the leaders of Yisrael during the era of Bayis Rishon caused and spread to the rest of Yisrael during the era of Bayis Sheini. Let us expand on this notion. While it is true that the first Beis HaMikdash was destroyed because the people of that era transgressed the three cardinal sins, sadly, we must ask why the leaders of Yisrael did not prevent them from doing so. Now, the answer is clear; the princes of Yisrael in that era lacked unity and harmony; they stabbed each other in the back verbally. Therefore, they were incapable of uniting to exert a positive influence on the people of their generation.

At this point, it behooves us to introduce a teaching from the Sefas Emes (Masei 5659). He asserts that HKB”H orchestrated for Aharon HaKohen to pass away specifically on Rosh Chodesh Av at the beginning of the nine days during which we mourn the Beis HaMikdash that was destroyed on account of “sin’as chinam.” Thus, his unique kedushah can influence us from above to emulate him—to love every Jew. In the words of the Mishnah (Avos 1, 12): **“Hillel says: Be among the disciples of Aharon—love shalom and promote shalom, love your fellow creatures, and bring them closer to Torah.”**

How Can I Bear This Burden Alone without My Brother Aharon

In this light, Moshe Rabeinu’s heartfelt rebuke of Yisrael takes on new meaning. While his brother Aharon was alive—who loved and promoted shalom—he was

invaluable in assisting Moshe settle disputes that arose among the people of Yisrael. Once he passed away, however, the burden seemed too heavy for Moshe to bear alone. Hence, he despaired and lamented: **“How can I bear your trouble and your burden and your quarrels alone?!”**

Nevertheless, because of his immense ahavah for Yisrael, Moshe Rabeinu would never abandon the people. So, he requested of them (Devarim 1, 13): **“הבו לכם אנשים חכמים ונבונים וידועים לשבטיכם ואשימם בראשיכם”—provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well known to your tribes, and I shall appoint them as your heads.** As we know from the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 69): **“ואתפשוטיה דמשה בכל דרא ודרא ובכל צדיק וצדיק”—the neshamah and spirit of Moshe Rabeinu exists to some degree within every tzaddik in every generation.** Therefore, he instructed them to delegate tzaddikim that he would appoint as leaders to teach them the ways of Hashem—especially how to overcome the negative, detrimental midah of “sin’as chinam.”

This explains Rashi’s comment on the passuk just cited beautifully: **“ואשימם בראשיכם”—and I shall appoint them as your heads. The word “ואשמם” is written without a “yud” to teach that the failings of Yisrael are attributable to their heads (leaders), who should have protested and directed them to the straight path.** We can suggest that Moshe Rabeinu mentioned this here, because he foresaw via “ruach hakodesh” that “sin’as chinam” would prevail among the leaders of Yisrael during the times of the first Mikdash, and this would carry over to the general population of Yisrael during the times of the second Mikdash—resulting in widespread “sin’as chinam.” Therefore, Moshe Rabeinu felt compelled to admonish all future leaders of Yisrael: **“ואשמם בראשיכם”—take care to avoid “sin’as chinam,” since the sins and shortcomings of Yisrael are on your heads.**

This then is the message of the Midrash: **Had you been meritorious, you would be reciting from the Torah “איכה אשא לבדי”—since Moshe admonishes Yisrael in this passuk to avoid disputes and “sin’as chinam”: “How can I bear your trouble and your burden and your quarrels alone?!”** Had you heeded this warning not to quarrel and to love one another, the Beis HaMikdash would not have been destroyed. **But now that you were not meritorious—**

because you did not make amends for the tragic flaw of “sin’as chinam”—**you are required to recite איכה ישבה בדד**—mourning the churban of the Beis HaMikdash due to the sin of “sin’as chinam.”

This explains very nicely the rationale of Ezra HaSofer for arranging to have parshas Devarim read on the Shabbas preceding Tishah B’Av. For, here we find the words of rebuke Moshe Rabeinu addresses to Yisrael: **איכה אשא לבדי טרחכם משאכם וריבכם**. He wished to impress upon us the message of the Midrash: Had we taken to heart the “tochachah” of Moshe Rabeinu **איכה אשא לבדי**, we would not have to read on Tishah B’Av **איכה ישבה בדד**. This should motivate all of us to perform total, sincere teshuvah with regards to the sin of “sin’as chinam.” In this merit, we will be privileged to see the total geulah and will no longer need to recite: **איכה ישבה בדד**.

In the Merit of Unity We Can Ascend to the World of “Kol Yisrael”

Since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated from seventy different perspectives, we will suggest another reason for why Ezra HaSofer instituted the reading of parshas Devarim prior to Tishah B’Av. We will explore how the words of rebuke of Moshe Rabeinu at the beginning of the parsha constitute a magnificent tikun for the sin that led to the churban of the Beis HaMikdash (ibid. 1): **אלה הדברים אשר דיבר משה אל כל ישראל בעבר הירדן במדבר בערבה מול סוף בין פארן ובין תופל ולבן וחצרות ודי זהב**. These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisrael, across the Yarden, in the midbar, in the plain, opposite the reeds (Yam Suf), between Paran and Tophel and Lavan, and Chatzeiros and Di-zahav. Rashi comments: **“These are the words”—because they are words of rebuke and the text lists here all the places in which they angered the Omnipresent. Therefore, the matters are presented obscurely and mentioned through intimation, because of the kavod of Yisrael.**

We know that the commentaries take issue with this comment. After all, further on in sefer Devarim, Moshe Rabeinu enumerates these sins explicitly and harshly. For example, he castigates them (ibid. 9, 24): **ממרים הייתם עם ה’—מיום דעתי אתכם**—**you have been rebels against Hashem**

from the day that I knew you! So, why does Rashi contend here that **these matters are presented obscurely and through intimation because of the kavod of Yisrael?**

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by introducing an intriguing concept from the impeccable teachings of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, zy”a, in his sefer Noam Elimelech (Devarim). In his commentary on the opening passuk: **אלה הדברים אשר דיבר משה אל כל ישראל**—he says that in this passuk, Moshe Rabeinu hinted to us how to truly serve Hashem. It is through unity and including ourselves among the populace of Yisrael. Doing so enables one to ascend to an exalted world called **“Kol Yisrael.”** The untainted roots of all the neshamos of Yisrael that are free of sin are located there. Here is an excerpt of his sacred words:

There is a formula we recite before our service of Hashem and our tefilos: **“לשם יחוד כו’ בשם כל ישראל”**—**for the sake of the unification of the Holy One, blessed is He, and His Divine Presence, in reverence and love . . . in the name of all Yisrael. The rationale for reciting this formula is because “there is no perfect tzaddik on earth who has acted only virtuously and has not sinned” (Koheles 7, 20). So, how is it possible to perform any act of kedushah with our limbs, seeing as some aveirah has been committed with them, chalilah, and that limb is flawed? How can the kedushah of that act rest on it?**

The solution is to include oneself with the general populace of Yisrael. For, there is a world called **“Kol Yisrael”**; it is perfect and devoid of flaws. After all, the people of Yisrael are tzaddikim, as it is written (Yeshayah 60, 21): **“And Your people are all tzaddikim.”** If so, even if individuals occasionally sin, nevertheless, as a whole, they always retain their kedushah. They are devoid of a Satan and any serious defects, chalilah. So, if a person connects with this united entity, his tainted, blemished limb is rectified with a heavenly kedushah. He is then able to perform said mitzvah or deed.

He is teaching us that prior to performing a mitzvah, a Jew should have in mind to include himself with the roots of the neshamos of Yisrael in the domain called **“Kol Yisrael.”** As we know, a person is where his mind

and thoughts are. Thus, he will be totally in the exalted world of **"Kol Yisrael."** There, he is pure and free of any sin or spiritual flaw. In this manner, he is able to perform a mitzvah perfectly and ideally.

The Root of a Jew's Neshamah Remains in the Heavens Only a Branch of His Neshamah Descends into His Body Below

We will now expand on his holy remarks based on the well-known fact taught in our sacred sefarim that the essential part of a person's neshamah remains in the heavens above. Only a small portion of the light of the neshamah descends down to earth to reside within a human body. When a Jew succeeds in sanctifying the portion of the neshamah residing in his physical body by studying Torah and serving Hashem, the earthly portion connects with its heavenly source. As a result, the heavenly root infuses its human offshoot with an intense, brilliant illumination. This enables a Jew to withstand his yetzer and ascend even higher in his Torah learning and service of Hashem.

The Agra D'Kallah (Beha'aloscha) brings down in the name of the holy Maggid, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsch, zy"a, a beautiful interpretation of the passuk (Bamidbar 10, 2): **"עשה לך שתי חצוצרות כסף"**—**make for yourself two silver trumpets ("chatzOtzros")**. He interprets this as imploring us to make two halves—**"chatzi tzurot"**—that long—"nichsafim" (a play on the word **"kesef"**)—to unite with each other. The Agra D'Kallah asserts that the Maggid is referring to the two parts of the neshamah—its essence and root that remains holy and untainted above in the heavens, and its tiny offshoot that descended to clothe itself in a physical form down below. Now, the essence and root of the neshamah above always maintains its kedushah, since it is unaffected by the iniquities of the physical body below. In contrast, the branch of the neshamah below is sullied by the body's iniquities.

This then is the message: A person must strive to unite the two parts of the neshamah—the **"shtei chatzi tzurot"**—that long to be reunited—**"kesef."** As pointed out above, the plain meaning of **"כסף"** is silver, but is related to the Hebrew term for longing—"nichsafim." So, when

the branch of the neshamah within the body below serves Hashem and enhances its kedushah, the two parts of the neshamah yearn to illuminate each other; for they are now both in a state of kedushah. If, however, the portion of the neshamah below is damaged and tainted by the body's transgressions, a barrier is created between the two parts of the neshamah. For, in that case, the heavenly root of the neshamah wishes to remain separate in order to maintain its kedushah; it does not want to be sullied by the body's iniquities.

Thus, it turns out that even if a person blemishes his soul, chas v'shalom, as a result of sins and wrongdoing, he is only harming the portion of the neshamah down below within his body. Those sins and iniquities and their concomitant spiritual damage does not affect the root of the neshamah that remains in the heavens. This is a definite benefit for a Jew. For, even if he committed many sins and blemished the part of his neshamah down below, he can still make amends via teshuvah, since the related root of his neshamah above was unaffected and remains unblemished. As long as the root is perfect and unsullied, it is possible to rectify and heal the branches and regenerate them.

Now, let us see. Based on what we learned from the Noam Elimelech, we can achieve a better understanding of the Mishnah which is customarily recited before learning Pirkei Avos (Sanhedrin 90a): **"כל ישראל יש להם חלק לעולם הבא, שנאמר ועמך כולם צדיקים לעולם יירשו ארץ נצר מטעי מעשה ידי"**. **All Yisrael has a share of Olam HaBa, as it says (Yeshayah 60, 21): "And your people are all tzaddikim; they shall inherit the land forever; they are the stem of My plantings, My handiwork, in which to take pride."** The commentaries ask how is it possible to say: **"All Yisrael has a share of Olam HaBa"**? After all, there are total reshaim, who have forfeited their share of Olam HaBa due to the extent of their wickedness.

Nevertheless, based on what we have learned, we can posit that the Mishnah's statement refers to the essence and root of the neshamah that always remains in the heavens above in the universe of **"Kol Yisrael."** Thus, we can read the Mishnah as follows: In the world called **"Kol Yisrael,"**

where the roots of Yisrael's neshamos reside, every Jew has a portion in Olam HaBa, seeing as the harmful effects of one's sins do not reach there. This is substantiated by the conclusion of the passuk: **"And your people are all tzaddikim; they shall inherit the land forever."** To this, HKB"H adds that the root of the neshamah remains in a state of perfection, since **"they are the stem of My plantings, My handiwork, in which to take pride."** Man cannot alter this fact, but it is incumbent upon a Jew to also protect and rectify the portion of the neshamah residing in Olam HaZeh.

Moshe Rabeinu Addressed His Rebukes to the Roots of the Neshamos of Yisrael so that They Would Exert Their Influence on Their Branches Below

Notwithstanding, the interpretation of the Noam Elimelech still requires further clarification. He asserts that the passuk: **"אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל"**—is referring to the wonderful world of **"Kol Yisrael,"** which is flawless. That begs the question: If so, how can Rashi claim that Moshe addressed his words of **"tochachah"** specifically to that world? The neshamos there are blameless and do not need to be rebuked. It appears that we can provide clarification based on what the disciple of the Noam Elimelech, the holy Maggid of Kozhnitz, zy"a, wrote in Avodas Yisrael (Ha'azinu) regarding the passuk (Devarim 32, 1):

"האזינו השמים ואדברה ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי"—**"Hearken, O heavens, and I will speak; and may the earth hear the words of my mouth."** When a tzaddik wishes to return the people of his generation to good standing and constantly speaks words of **"mussar"** to them; yet, his words fail to penetrate their hearts, because their hearts are made of stone, due their numerous transgressions; and they have become attached to the klipah, chas v'shalom, G-d help us; it is advisable that he speak **"mussar"** to the root of their neshamos, where the klipah has no hold. This is the meaning of **"Hearken, O heavens, and I will speak"**—that is, to the root of the neshamos, which are called **"heavens"**; as a result, **"the earth will hear the words of my mouth"**—referring to man's material being.

As we have learned, the heavenly root of every Jewish neshamah is totally unaffected by the sins committed below. Therefore, when a tzaddik realizes that his words of rebuke are not getting through to the earthly portion of the neshamah due to the enormity of the damage and imperviousness of the heart resulting from the sins, iniquities and transgressions: **It is advisable that he speak "mussar" to the root of their neshamos, where the klipah has no hold.**

In other words, the tzaddik must address the root of that person's neshamah in the heavens that has been unaffected by that person's sins, so that it will influence and illuminate the small branch of the neshamah below clothed within a physical body. This is precisely what Moshe Rabeinu—who possessed this power—was doing with his pronouncement: **"האזינו השמים ואדברה"**. He was instructing the untainted part of the neshamah in the heavens to listen and heed what he was about to say. As a consequence: **"ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי"**—the part of the neshamah down on earth would also hear and heed his words.

Accordingly, this is also what his mentor, the great Rabbi Elimelech of Lizhensk, zy"a, is teaching us in relation to the passuk: **"אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל"**. In other words, Moshe Rabeinu was addressing words of **"tochachah"** to the roots of the neshamos of Yisrael in the world of **"Kol Yisrael,"** so that they would exert their influence on the branches of the neshamos of Yisrael down below. This is precisely the same approach as: **"האזינו השמים ואדברה"**—initially addressing the roots of the neshamos in the heavens above, so that they will exert their constructive influence on their branches below: **"ותשמע הארץ אמרי פי"**.

Moshe Rabeinu Spoke in Vague Terms so as Not to Shame Yisrael in the Sin Free World Called "Kol Yisrael"

Following this glorious path, we will now clarify Rashi's comment: **"These are the words"**—because they are words of rebuke and the text lists here all the places in which they angered the Omnipresent. Therefore, the matters are presented obscurely and mentioned through intimation, because of the kavod of Yisrael. We mentioned that the commentaries were perplexed by this

comment, since sefer Devarim is replete with explicit words of “tochachah” spoken by Moshe Rabeinu to all of Yisrael.

We can propose an explanation based on what we have discussed in this essay. When Moshe Rabeinu directed his words of rebuke to the root neshamos in the world of **“Kol Yisrael”**—so that they would exert a positive influence on their earthly branches—he spoke in obscure, vague terms. In the words of Rashi: **“מפני כבודן של ישראל”**. Since the blemishes caused by sins on earth do not reach there, Moshe was respectful of their kavod. However, when he directed his words of rebuke to the neshamos of Yisrael down below, he was explicit; he wanted to be sure that they understood him and would be motivated to perform wholehearted teshuvah.

This enlightens us regarding the rationale for reading parshas Devarim on the Shabbas preceding Tishah B’Av.

We have learned that “sin’as chinam” was instrumental in the churbans of both Batei Mikdash—among the princes of Yisrael during the era of the first Bayis and among the general population of Yisrael during the era of the second Bayis. As a consequence, they were unable to connect with the roots of the neshamos in the world of **“Kol Yisrael,”** where there is no sin.

Hence, Ezra HaSofer instituted the practice of reading parshas Devarim at this time, so that we would digest the full impact of Moshe Rabeinu’s words of “tochachah”: **“אלה הדברים אשר דיבר משה אל כל ישראל”**. As we learned from the Noam Elimelech, he intimated to us that unity is the magic key to overcoming the yetzer hara. In the merit of unity and harmony, we are able to connect with the perfect, untainted world of **“Kol Yisrael,”** where all of Yisrael are united as one. In this merit, we will experience the complete geulah, swiftly, in our times! Amen.



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