



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת דברים - בין המצרים

איכה אָשָׁא לְבַדִּי טְרַחֲכֶם וּמִשְׁאַכֶם וְרִיבְכֶם. (דברים א, יב)

How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels? (Devarim 1:12)

This week's *Sidrah* begins with Moshe's veiled rebuke to Klal Yisroel. In the final weeks of his life, he takes this opportunity to remind them of the sins and rebellions that marked their forty years in the *midbar*. Moshe mentions how he could no longer bear the burden of leading the people alone and notes that Hashem commanded him to appoint judges to assist in this task.

The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni*) points out that there are three instances in Tanach where the expression "איכה" is used, which serves as a parable for a noblewoman who had three close friends. The first saw her in her happiness; the second saw her in her infidelity, and the third saw her in her disgrace. In our *parshah*, Moshe observed Klal Yisroel in their glory and happiness, exclaiming, *איכה אָשָׁא לְבַדִּי*, *How can I carry this burden alone?* Yeshayah observed them during a time of disloyalty and bemoaned, *איכה הִיטָה*, *How has she become a harlot!* (Yeshayah 1:21). Lastly, Yirmiyah witnessed them in their disgrace and lamented *איכה יִשְׁבָּה בְּדָד*, *How is it that she sits in solitude!* (Eichah 1:1).

Although Moshe's statement in this week's *parshah* was made during a period of tranquillity, when Klal Yisroel were at a heightened spiritual level and about to enter Eretz Yisroel, these words were, in fact, an expression of anguish. This is first implied by the term *איכה*, which is linked by the Meforshim to the word *אִיכָה* (*Bereishis* 3:9), which signifies a mournful expression. Furthermore, this is highlighted by the universal *minhag* of reading this *possuk* in the sorrowful tune of Eichah.

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* clarifies that this Midrash highlights a connection between all three similar expressions. The link between Yeshayah's exclamation and Yirmiyah's lamentation is clear: since Klal Yisroel strayed from the Torah, they were punished with desolation. However, the connection between Moshe's words in this week's *parshah* and the other expressions of grief requires further exploration. In what way was Moshe's lament a cause and a prelude to the future catastrophic times that would befall Klal Yisroel?

Furthermore, when the Midrash cites Moshe's phrase, it only mentions the beginning of the *possuk*, *איכה אָשָׁא לְבַדִּי*, and omits the subsequent words *טְרַחֲכֶם וּמִשְׁאַכֶם וְרִיבְכֶם*. This implies that Moshe's sorrow was not due to having to deal with their disputes and arguments; rather, he lamented the fact that he had to involve others in the leadership of Klal Yisroel because he could not shoulder the workload alone. How did this reality - that Moshe was not the sole leader – contribute to the subsequent decline and misfortunes that Klal Yisroel experienced throughout the generations?

The Rosh Yeshiva explains that Moshe was bemoaning the unfortunate reality that Klal Yisroel did not merit to be under his direct authority. Had the nation been fortunate enough to maintain constant contact with him instead of relying on secondary leaders, they would have reached an entirely different spiritual level, altering the course of history. Klal Yisroel would not have experienced such a spiritual decline, and the resulting Churban, exile, and sorrow endured throughout the generations could have been avoided.

This concept can be better understood through an insight from the Chinuch regarding the *mitzvah* of ערי מקלט - the cities of refuge. One explanation for why the cities allocated as a haven for the unintentional killer were specifically those of the Levi'im is rooted in the fact that they were the only *shevet* not given a portion of agricultural land in Eretz Yisroel. This arrangement was intended to allow them to dedicate themselves entirely to their spiritual duties, which was essential for the Avodah in the Beis HaMikdash. Their lack of distractions enabled them to attain a higher spiritual level than the rest of the nation. Consequently, the Levi'im served as exemplary role models for the accidental murderer, who had much to gain by associating with such unique individuals and learning from their elevated ways. Additionally, the very land where the Levi'im resided became infused with *kedushah*, which provided atonement for the unintentional killer.

The lofty level achieved by the Levi'im, due to their dedication to the service of Hashem, is not exclusive to those from the tribe of Levi. Rather, anyone who wholeheartedly commits to serving Hashem can reach this elevated status. As the Rambam famously states (*end of Hil. Shemitah*), Shevet Levi did not receive a portion of land with their brothers because they were set apart to serve Hashem and to teach His righteous ways. They distanced themselves from worldly affairs, did not participate in wars, and did not inherit land, as they are the army and portion of Hashem. **This elevated spiritual status is not only reserved for the Levi'im but accessible to anyone who disengages from worldly matters to serve Hashem, thereby attaining an unparalleled *kedushah*.**

We see from the above that being in constant contact with elevated individuals can profoundly impact one's spiritual growth. Furthermore, the Sefer HaKuzari explains that anyone fortunate enough to meet a Navi would be forever transformed. Encountering such a holy person - someone who has perfected themselves to the extent of being worthy of conversing with Hashem – can lead to a significant shift within an individual. This uplifting experience fosters a spiritual metamorphosis, inspiring a life filled with humility, purity, and a desire to emulate the Navi in every possible way.

The Rosh Yeshiva notes that if this is true for a regular Navi, it is even more so for Moshe. One cannot begin to imagine the extraordinary impact of being in the presence of Moshe. The transformative experience described in the Kuzari would be greatly magnified, with this interaction resulting in an intense longing for a more spiritual life. Thus, if Klal Yisroel had not been plagued with so many disputes, necessitating the appointment of the שרי אלפים ושרי מאות, *officers over the thousands and hundreds*, they would have enjoyed constant interaction with Moshe, yielding profound positive effects.

This lack of interaction between the people and Moshe contributed to the spiritual decline of Klal Yisroel, which began with איכה הייתה לזונה, and culminated in the Churban and איכה ישבה בדד. This was the sorrow expressed by Moshe when he said איכה אשא לבדי. He foresaw that the lack of connection would lead to tragic consequences, ultimately resulting in Klal Yisroel's spiritual deterioration.

Let us strive to build close connections with our Gedolim and *tzaddikim*, as this will bring about meaningful growth. Ultimately, may we be *zoche* to the complete *geulah* swiftly in our days and be in the presence of our holy Nevi'im from previous generations.