

Good Shabbos, everyone.

I want to thank the drasha sponsors:

- Libby and Robbie Lehman, in loving memory of Libby's father, Reuben A. Friedman, whose *yahrtzeit* is the 7<sup>th</sup> of Av.
- Noah and Ellen Lightman, in memory of Noah's brother, Ezra Ben Zion Lightman, whose *yahrtzeit* is the 19<sup>th</sup> of Av.
- David and Judy Marwick, in memory of Mrs. Chana Mendlowitz, a"h.
- Hillel and Dena Soclof, in memory of Hillel's brother, Israel Soclof, Yisrael ben R. Avraham Abba, whose *yahrtzeit* is the 10<sup>th</sup> of Av, and in memory of Hillel's brother, Sanford Soclof, Shmaryahu ben R. Avraham Abba, whose *yahrtzeit* is the 24<sup>th</sup> of Av.
- Mayer and Arlene Teles, in memory of Mayer's mother, Sylvia Teles, Batsheva bas Yisroel, whose *yahrtzeit* is the 9<sup>th</sup> of Av.
- Peter and Rosemary Warschawski, on the occasion of Peter's mother, Camille Warschawski's *yahrtzeit* on the 7<sup>th</sup> of Av.

May the *neshamos* have an *aliya* and may the sponsors be rewarded for their support of the shul with *bracha*, *hatzlacha*, and good health.

Tomorrow is Tisha B'Av, the day set aside to recall the grief and anguish which characterize much of Jewish history. We remember the Jewish people's disorderly conduct towards Moshe in the desert, which was highlighted by the sin of the meraglim. We remember the destruction of the two Temples. We remember the Spanish Inquisition in 1492 and Hitler's extermination order against Polish Jewry. All of these events occurred on the ninth of Av, the darkest day of the Jewish calendar. We remember and try to begin the process of coming back.

If there is one word which symbolizes and characterizes Tisha B'Av, that word is **איכה** — It is a simple word, which literally means "how."

But what is it all about? The **Midrash in Eicha Rabba** notes that the word *eicha* tells the story.

**איכה רבה (וילנא) פרשה א:איכה ישבה, שלשה נתנבאו בלשון איכה, משה ישעיה וירמיה, משה אמר (דברים א') איכה אשא לבדי וגו', ישעיה אמר (ישעיה א') איכה היתה לזונה, ירמיה אמר איכה ישבה בדד,**

There are three instances in Tanach where a Navi received prophecy with the word *eicha*.

The first instance is this morning's Parasha, Devarim, when **Moshe** asks *eicha esa levadi*, how can I carry the burden of the Jews alone, with all their complaints and internal fighting, without their trust?

The second instance is when **Yeshayahu** (1:21) asks *eicha haysah lizonah kiryah neemanah*, how has the faithful city become unfaithful, untrustworthy?

The third instance is at the beginning of the Book of Eicha (1:1), which we will read tonight. The prophet **Yirmiyahu** laments *eicha yashvah vadad?* Alas, Alas, the Jews and the Jewish state sit in solitude. The Jews were kicked out of Jerusalem.

This Medrash reminds us that the *galus* we find ourselves living in today, which is a result of the *Churban Habayis* as expressed by Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu, was actually an outgrowth of something Moshe Rabbeinu discussed long before. **Rav Shaul Yisraeli**, former Rosh Yeshiva of Mercaz HaRav, writes that these are not three isolated and distinct occurrences. The use of the word *eicha* indicates that **these three episodes are connected; each instance is the root cause of the next one.**

כוונתם ללמדנו, שיש קשר סבתי בין האחד, לשני ולשלישי. הפליאה הגדולה שעמדה בפני ירמיה, הכאב הצורב שהבתא בדברי קינתו "איכה ישבה בדד, איך קרה האסון הגדול איך חלה הירכדיה האיומה, מצאת את תשובהת בפליאה הגדולה של הנביא שקדמהו "איה היתה לזונה קריה נאמנה." והשאלה הגדולה אף היא, שהתמיהה והפליאה והכאיבה כל כך את ישעיהו

אף היא מוצאת האת תשובה בגילוי לוקי מסוים עוד בראשית ימיה של הואמ" איכה אשא לבדי טרחכם ומשאכם וריבכם. כי יסוד מוסד הוא ביהודות שהתשלשלות המאורעות בדברי ימי ישראל אינה מקרית, שהתנאים החיצוניים הן לטוב והן לרע אינם אלא התשקפות ותוצאה של המעמד הפנימי של העם... ראשית הקלוקל הוא ב"איכה אשא לבדי", "...איכה" זה הראשון הוא שהיבא לבסוף ל"איכה" של איכה היתה לזונה קירה נאמנה... הוא הוא שהוליד גם את ה"איכה" האחרון של "איכה ישבה בדד". חורבן האומה קדם לחורבן המידנה.

To understand this, we must go back to the first *eicha*. In Parshas Devarim, which we read this morning, Moshe told Hashem that a nation exhibiting certain traits would end up destroying themselves....and that is what happened.

דברים פרק א (יב) איכה אשא לבדי טרחכם ומשאכם וריבכם:

What negative behaviors did Moshe highlight?

רש"י דברים (פרשת דברים) פרק א פסוק יב

טרחכם - מלמד שהיו ישראל טרחנין. היה אחד מהם רואה את בעל דינו נוצח בדין, אומר יש לי עדים להביא, יש לי ראיות להביא, מסיף אני עליכם דינין:

ומשאכם - מלמד שהיו אפיקורסין. ר הקדים משה לצאת, אמרו, מה ראה בן עמרם לצאת, שמא אינו שפוי בתוך ביתו. איחר לצאת, אמרו, מה ראה בן עמרם שלא לצאת, מה אתם סבורים, יושב ויועץ עליכם עצות רעות וחושב עליכם מחשבות: וריבכם - מלמד שהיו רוגנים:

The Parsha itself does not specify them, but **Rashi** fills us in:

טרחכם— Moshe's use of this word teaches us that the Israelites were manipulative: if one of them perceived that his opponent in a lawsuit was about to be victor in the case, he would say: I have witnesses to bring, further proof to adduce, I will add judges.

ומשאכם— This teaches us that they were *Apikorsim* (that they treated the judges with scant respect): If Moshe went forth early from his tent they said, "Why does the son of Amram leave so early? Perhaps he is not at ease at home?" If he left late, they said, "What do you think? He is sitting and devising evil schemes against you, and is plotting against you."

ורביכם— This teaches us that they were always contentious.

These traits eventually led to their being rebellious in the time of Yeshayahu, and, ultimately, it led to their isolation in the time of Yirmiyahu. But what was at the root of this all? Was it the manipulation, the disrespect towards leadership, and the lack of courtesy for each other?

There is another **Medrash**, which goes back even further, and actually finds the root of the issues that led to the *churban* to be more fundamental and more universal.

מדרש זוטא - איכה (בובר) פרשה א[לט] [א א] איכה ישבה בדד, כל מה שאירע לאדם הראשון כך אירע לישראל, אדם הראשון הקדוש ברוך הוא הכניסו לגן עדן וצוהו, ועבר ודנו בשלוחין וגירושין וקונן עליו איכה, . . . וכן עשה לישראל הכניסם לארץ ישראל. שנאמר ואביא אתכם אל ארץ הכרמל וגו' (ירמיה ב' ז'), וציוה אותם ואמר להם זאת עשו וחיו וזאת לא תעשו, ועברו על צויו ודנם בגירושין ובשלוחין, שנאמר מביתי אגרשם (הושע ט' ט"ו), ודן אותם בשלוחין, שנאמר שלח מעל פני ויצאו (ירמיה ט"ו א'), ויקונן בעצמו עליהם איכה, איכה ישבה בדד.

*Everything that happened to the Jewish people first happened to Adam. Adam was placed by Hashem in the Garden of Eden; the Jewish people were brought by Hashem to Eretz Yisrael, a Paradise in its own right. Adam was given a commandment; The Jewish people were given 613 commandments. Adam sinned; The Jewish people sinned. Adam was sent away and expelled; Israel was sent away and expelled into a long and bitter exile.*

What the Rabbis intend by this parallelism is to teach us that Jewish exile comes from a fundamental human failing.

What is the connection?

The *Churban ha-Bayis*, the destruction of the Temple, represents that very same tragedy of man in the face of Hashem. Adam, having eaten of the Tree of Knowledge and supposedly having grown more sophisticated, now flees to the cluster of trees in the midst of the Garden -- and attempts to hide from

Hashem. His illegitimate grasp for knowledge, by eating from the “*eitz hada'as*,” has gained for him the foolish illusion that he is in charge, that he alone can set rules for Hashem. He imagines that he can erect impenetrable barriers between the domains of Hashem and man. Adam thus invites Hashem’s response in searing sarcasm, “*Ayekah*,” where are you, Adam? Where do you think you are that you can hide from Me? What makes you think that you can declare any place in the world out-of-bounds for Me? Many generations later, was not the Temple destroyed for the same reason? The Navi Yeshayahu describes a nation that was just going through the motions, but it lacked any real connection and subservience to Hashem. It was a nation worshipping idols inside their homes, while acting like pious Jews on the outside...

Indeed, the **Maharal** cites the famous *Gemara* in *Nedarim* that identifies the cause of the churban as the Jewish people’s not making a bracha on Talmud Torah. They detached the wisdom of the Torah from *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. They looked at the Torah as a set of nice, intellectual ideas, rather than as Hashem’s commandment and a means of connection to God.

When man thinks he is independent of Hashem, then even what he does in the service of Hashem is tainted. When he sees himself as separate from others, he denies his connection others through their common Creator. And whether we like it or not, Hashem peers into man's "exclusive" preserves — his office, his bank account, his business and his home — and caustically asks, “*Ayekah*,” where do you think you are? If you have failed to bring Me into your space, I shall seek you out and make you aware of My Presence. And when Hashem grimly poses the question “*Ayekah*,” and calls us to task, man whimpers, in return, *Eicha*—how did I not notice Hashem in the first place?

As modern man becomes more advanced and “progressive,” he repeats the same pattern — with even more tragic results... As we develop science and technology at an incredible pace, what has all this learning and sophistication led us to? The result is a greater isolation from God and more distance between one person and another.

So, what is the answer? It sounds very complicated...but it really isn't.

The Navi Yeshaya writes that recognizing God in our lives should be instinctual and basic.

ישעיהו פרק א פסוק ב: שָׁמְעוּ שָׁמַיִם וְהִאֲזִינִי אֲרֶץ כִּי יִקְוֶה דְבַר בְּנִים גְּדֹלְתִי וְרוֹמְמֹתַי וְהֵם פָּשְׁעוּ בִּי: יָדַע שׁוֹר קִנְיֹהוּ וְחֲמֹר אֲבוֹס בְּעֲלִיו יִשְׂרָאֵל לֹא יָדַע עֲמִי לֹא הִתְבּוֹנֵן:

*Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth, For the LORD has spoken: “I reared children and brought them up— And they have rebelled against Me! An ox knows its owner, A donkey its master’s crib: Israel does not know, My people takes no thought.*

רד"ק ישעיהו פרק א פסוק ג

(ג) ידע שור - זכר הבהמות שהן גדלות עם האדם לעבודתו ואף על פי שאינן בני דעת בכח ההכרה שיש בהם לרחק מן הנוק ולקרוב אל התועלת יכירו מי שייטיב להם תמיד והם הבעלים ושבים לביתם ולמקום מאכלם כשבאים ממלאכתם ואין פירוש קונהו קונה אותם בדמים לבד אלא המגדלו ועושה לו צרכיו תמיד וכן אביך קנך וכן אמר קונה שמים ואר

The **Radak** explains that animals naturally understand who is keeping them safe and sustaining them and they know to be faithful to their master.

A human being is expected to live with a sense of where he came from, who is providing for him...a sense of history and belonging.

רמב"ם הלכות יסודי התורה פרק א.א. יסוד היסודות ועמוד החכמות לידע שיש שם מצוי ראשון, והוא ממציא כל נמצא, וכל הנמצאים משמים וארץ ומה שביניהם לא נמצאו אלא מאמתת המצאו.

The **Rambam** writes that the first *Mitzva* is to know that there is a Creator who created and sustains.

**Rav Elchanan Wasserman** (Kovetz Hearos) assumes that belief in Hashem does not require arduous study or in-depth knowledge of philosophy. Rather, even a cursory analysis of the world suffices to

prove the existence of a Creator. He brings evidence to this approach from the fact that the Rambam counts belief in God as one of the 613 commandments. Since every 13-year-old Jewish boy and 12-year-old Jewish girl is obligated in this commandment, it should be clear that belief in God does not require intense philosophical training or advanced intellectual ability...

This is what Yeshayah Hanavi told us thousands of years ago. ידע שור קונהו...however, ישראל לא, ועשית הישר והטוב...How is it that a beast recognizes its master, but the people of Israel do not recognize their Master? But it is not complicated. It is basic. We have to get back to basics.

Many people are familiar with the fact that Breishis is sometimes called *Sefer Ha-yashar*. But Rabbi Eliezar writes that Sefer Devarim should be called Sefer Ha-yashar...as it says ועשית הישר והטוב

תלמוד בבלי מסכת עבודה זרה דף כה

מאי ספר הישר? ר"א אומר: זה ספר משנה תורה, ואמאי קרו ליה ספר הישר? דכתיב: ועשית הישר והטוב בעיני ה'.

The **Maharsha** asks—just because there is a *Pasuk* in Devarim that says ועשית הישר והטוב, should the entire book--which sums up the Torah--have that name? Isn't the word *yashar* also used in Sefer Shmos?

מהרש"א [חדושי אגדות] מסכת עבודה זרה דף כה זה ספר משנה תורה. יש לדקדק דודאי ניהא בספר בראשית שנקרא ישר לפי שהוא כלו מספר במעשה ישרים וכן ספר שופטים שנקרא ישר לפי שנעשה כל הספר בזמן שכל איש הישר בעיניו יעשה אבל ספר משנה תורה שנקרא ישר אין לו טעם לכאורה וכי משום דכתיב ביה מלת ישר נקרא כל הספר ישר הלא בספר שמות נמי כתיב והישר בעיניו תעשה וגו'

He answers that ועשית הישר והטוב is an overarching principle-- that beyond the 613 mitzvos—the fundamental spirit of *yashrus*, of *menschlichkeit* must take over...must pervade and define the Jew.

Shlomo Hamelech says that Hashem made man *yashar*—with a simple understanding of right and wrong. Man was created directly by Hashem. He naturally understood what is moral and ethical, right and wrong...the Torah is an expression of that *yashrus*.

*Yashrus* means the basics...that we know whether we are honest with ourselves and see God and His expectations in our lives. It was the basic element that was missing in the *Midbar*. Moshe noticed that the people were trying to manipulate the system. They lacked a basic respect for leadership and courtesy for one another. A society like that will lead themselves to destruction. The foundation is rotten. The Kamtza and Bar Kamtza story is so significant—because it was that lack of basic respect for others... a lack of *yashrus*... According to **Maharsha** they were father and son...but society had deteriorated...

This was the cause of the very first Tisha b'Av disaster, the sin of the *Meraglim*. Their sin was that they refused to open their eyes, to see the hand of God in their lives—their history and their destiny. Hashem had provided them with so much—but they did not feel His presence—they focused only on what was lacking. Their sin was in their lack of perspective—NOT seeing God. We all have the ability to connect to G-d in all of our experiences, and it is our mandate and obligation to do so. And this explains why Chazal in *Taanis* teach us that one who properly mourns the *churban* will see the *simcha* of a rebuilt Yerushalayim...because to the extent that we begin to recognize Hashem and live with *yashrus*, the root cause of the *churban* is being repaired.

Our journey of *galus* has been long, and it continues to be difficult. Our journey seems to be, in a manner of speaking, an endless trek. But we have always found the strength to keep pushing forward, because we always had a goal—a rebuilt *Beis Hamikdash* in *Eretz Yisrael*. May we see that dream come true very soon...amen.