

“לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום”

Pinchas-Eliyahu Will Rectify the Month of Tamuz
which Alludes to the “Cheit HeEigel”

On this coming Shabbas kodesh, which approaches auspiciously, we are scheduled to read from the Torah parshas Pinchas. In a regular year, this parsha always falls during the first of the three weeks—extending from the seventeenth of Tamuz to the ninth of Av—known as “**bein-hametzarim**.” This name is derived from the following reference in Megillas Eichah (1, 3): **כל** “**רודפיה השיגוה בין המצרים—all her pursuers overtook her “bein hametzarim”** (literally: “between the narrow straits,” implying times of trouble). During this period of time, every Jew has an added obligation to feel distress and concern over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and Yisrael’s state of exile. It is a time to pray for the final and complete geulah!

We learn from the Baraisa (Megillah 31a) that Ezra HaSofer arranged the Shabbas Torah readings throughout the year with precision and intent. Therefore, it should be quite evident to us that there is an intimate connection between parshas Pinchas and the beginning of the three weeks of “bein hametzarim.” Let us explore the nature of this connection and gain a better understanding of Ezra HaSofer’s intent.

The Name Tamuz Alludes to an End of Our Culpability for the Sin of the Eigel

Let us begin by explaining the connection between parshas Pinchas and the month of Tamuz—based on a holy, mystical conversation that took place between two angelic figures. The great Rabbi Yisrael of Ruzhin, zy”a, and the great Rabbi of Apta, zy”a, the author of the Ohev Yisrael, once dined together to celebrate Rosh Chodesh Tamuz. At the meal, the great Rabbi of Ruzhin requested that the great Rabbi of Apta set up seven bottles of wine, while he would set up six bottles of wine.

He explained the reason for his request based on the well-known fact that the “cheit ha’eigel” occurred on the sixteenth of Tamuz between the sixth and seventh hours of the day. This is explained in the Gemara (Shabbas 89a) as follows:

“מאי דכתיב (שמות לב-א) וירא העם כי בושש משה, אל תקרי בושש אלא באו שש. בשעה שעלה משה למרום אמר להן לישראל, לסוף ארבעים יום בתחילת שש אני בא, לסוף ארבעים יום בא שטן ועירבב את העולם, אמר להן משה רבכם היכן הוא, אמרו לו עלה למרום, אמר להן באו שש ולא השגיחו עליו, מת ולא השגיחו עליו, הראה להן דמות מטתו, והיינו דקאמרי ליה לאהרן כי זה משה האיש וגו’.”

The passuk in sefer Shemos reads (32, 1): **“The people saw that Moshe was delayed (בושש) in returning.”** The Gemara teaches that instead of reading the word in this passuk as “vo-shesh”—meaning delayed—it should be read as “va-oo sheish”—indicating that six hours had passed. Upon ascending to the heavenly, mountainous heights, Moshe had told the people that he would return at the end of forty days, at the beginning of the sixth hour of the day—on the seventeenth of Tamuz. The people misconstrued his meaning, thinking that he would return on the sixteenth. At the end of forty days, according to their calculation, the Satan appeared to further confuse and mislead them. He convinced them that Moshe was dead, leading to their ultimate sin—the “cheit ha’eigel.”

This matter is alluded to in the name of the month, Tamuz. The name תמוז combines the letters תם ו' ז'—conveying the fact that we pray to Hashem that the taint of the “cheit ha’eigel,” which occurred between the “vav” and the “zayin”—the sixth and seventh hours—will finally be wiped away. [The word תם means to end; the letter “vav” has a numerical value of six; “zayin” has a numerical value of seven.] Hence, at the meal celebrating Rosh Chodesh Tamuz, the great Rabbi of Ruzhin, zy”a, requested that the great Rabbi of Apta, zy”a, would set up seven bottles of wine, while he would set up six bottles of wine. He hoped that together they could bring about the tikun for the “cheit ha’eigel”—alluded to by the name Tamuz--תם ו' ז'.

It should be noted that the source for this idea comes from the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 13, 28b). There we learn that the “Erev Rav” caused Yisrael to sin with the eigel between the sixth and seventh hour. This is also the reason why it is necessary to burn the chametz—which alludes to the yetzer hara and its forces--on erev

Pesach, between the sixth and seventh hours. In this manner, we exterminate the forces of tumah that caused Yisrael to sin between the sixth and seventh hour.

Tamuz Is a Time for Teshuvah

In this light, I would like to explain an aspect of Tamuz described in our holy sefarim. We find that the name תמוז is an abbreviation for ז'מני תשובה מ'משמישים ו'באים—**times of teshuvah are at hand**. Although the month designated for teshuvah is Elul, a wise person will get a head-start—beginning the process already in Tamuz. After all, the process leading to the churban of our Beis HaMikdash occurred during the months of Tamuz and Av.

Without a doubt, one should perform teshuvah all year long. Nevertheless, the month of Elul is uniquely designed for teshuvah by HKB"H. If so, why is the issue of teshuvah alluded to in the month of Tamuz more so than in the other months of the year? Yet, based on the allusion we just learned from the great Rabbi of Ruzhin, zy"א—that the name תמוז reminds us that we must make amends for the "cheit ha'eigel," which occurred between the sixth and seventh hours of the day—we can provide an explanation.

After the "cheit ha'eigel," HKB"H says to Moshe (Shemos 32, 34): **“ועתה לך נחה את העם אל אשר דברתי לך, הגה מלאכי ילך לפניך וביום פקדי ופקדתי עליהם את חטאתם—and now, go, lead the people to that which I have spoken to you. Behold! My angel shall go before you, and on a day that I make an accounting, I shall bring their sin to account against them. Rashi comments: “Always whenever I shall make an accounting of Yisrael’s sins against them, I will bring to account against them a bit of this sin along with the other sins. There is no punishment that is visited upon Yisrael which does not have in it some retribution for the sin of the eigel.”**

The commentaries labor desperately to explain the association between the "cheit ha'eigel" and the other sins. Why when HKB"H holds Yisrael accountable for other sins, chas v'shalom, does He also hold them accountable for the sin of the eigel? We have explained this before based on what we have learned in the Gemara (A.Z. 4b):

“אמר רבי יהושע בן לוי, לא עשו ישראל את העגל אלא ליתן פתחון פה לבעלי תשובה, שנאמר מי יתן והיה לבבם זה להם ליראה אותי כל הימים וגו', והיינו דאמר רבי יוחנן משום רשב"י... לא היו ישראל ראויין לאותו מעשה אלא להורות תשובה לרבים”.

Rashi explains that Yisrael were strong and in control of their yetzers; they were not susceptible to the persuasions of their yetzers. Thus, without divine intervention, they would not have made the eigel. Yet, it was decreed by the heavenly King that

the yetzer should win out, in order to set a precedent for ba'alei teshuvah. So, if a sinner should rationalize that teshuvah is futile, it will not be accepted, we can respond: Learn from the incident involving the eigel—they committed blasphemy, yet their teshuvah was accepted.

Seen from this perspective, it is now understandable why: **“and on a day that I make an accounting, I shall bring their sin to account against them”**—every sin also elicits the sin of the eigel. For, the entire episode of the "cheit ha'eigel" transpired solely for the sake of illustrating the power of teshuvah. Consequently, whenever Yisrael transgress, the "cheit ha'eigel" is recalled either positively or negatively. If they learned their lesson from the "cheit ha'eigel," and they perform teshuvah for their transgressions, not only are their sins atoned for, but they also eradicate the "cheit ha'eigel." For, their actions demonstrate that the "cheit ha'eigel" was not for naught; Hashem's will that it set a precedent for teshuvah is realized.

If, however, Yisrael do not perform teshuvah for their transgressions, chas v'shalom, then they also deserve punishment for the "cheit ha'eigel." Seeing as they failed to learn from the "cheit ha'eigel" the importance of performing teshuvah, HKB"H's intervention, so to speak, in the "cheit ha'eigel" served no purpose. Therefore: **“וביום פקדי”**—when I hold them accountable for the transgressions, for which they did not perform teshuvah--**“ופקדתי”**—I will also hold them accountable for the "cheit ha'eigel," since they did not learn from it the necessity to perform teshuvah.

We can now appreciate the connection between the two allusions contained in the name Tamuz. Firstly, we learned from the great Rabbi of Ruzhin, zy"א, that the name תמוז can be broken down to form תם ו' ז'—reminding us that we must make amends for the "cheit ha'eigel" which transpired on the sixteenth of Tamuz, between the sixth and seventh hours. Secondly, the name תמוז is an abbreviation for ז'מני תשובה מ'משמישים ו'באים—**times of teshuvah are at hand**.

According to what we have explained, the two allusions convey the same message. When we perform teshuvah for all our wrongdoings, we achieve the desired tikun for the "cheit ha'eigel"; for, it was intended as a device to teach the benefit of teshuvah to the general population. So, by remembering to perform teshuvah during the month of Tamuz—which alludes to the fact that **“times of teshuvah are at hand”**—we effectively provide a tikun for the "cheit ha'eigel," which occurred between the sixth and seventh hours of the day. In other words, **תם ו' ז'**—we erase the blemish that occurred between the sixth and seventh hours.

We should also mention what is written in the sefer Zera Berech HaShelishi (Vayishlach). He applies this notion to explain the following passuk (Bereishis 25, 26): **“ואחרי כן יצא אחיו וידו אוחזת -- בעקב עשו”** **“afterwards, his brother emerged with his hand grabbing hold of Eisav’s heel.** This passuk teaches us that from the moment Yaakov Avinu was born, he held onto Eisav’s heel—alluding to the final letter of the name **“עשו”**; his aim was to extract the letter “vav” and return it to the realm of kedushah—completing the name **יעקוב**.

Thus, we can surmise that Yaakov took the letter “vav” from Eliyahu’s name as a guarantee; he was alluding to the fact that it is up to Eliyahu, the herald of the geulah, to perform this holy task. Eliyahu must extract the letter “vav” from Eisav’s name and restore the name **יעקוב** to its complete form—including the “vav.” Therefore, Yaakov shrewdly took the letter “vav” from his name in anticipation of the completion of the task at the time of the future geulah.

Based on this idea, the Agra D’Kalla explains the reason for the accepted tradition to write the word **שלו** with a split “vav.” For, the word **שלו** has the same numerical value as the name **עשו**—the antagonist of “shalom.” Pinchas, in the form of Eliyahu, is destined to snatch the letter “vav” from the name Eisav and deliver it to Yaakov. Hence, there is a split “vav” in the passuk that alludes to Pinchas’ destiny.

The meaning of the Baal HaTurim is now quite clear. The “vav” in the word **שלו** is split, alluding to the letter “vav” that Yaakov seized from Eliyahu. The purpose of seizing the “vav” was to urge Eliyahu to extract the “vav” from the name of Eisav—the antagonist of **שלו**. In essence, the Baal HaTurim and the Agra D’Kalla are conveying similar messages.

Eisav Is Sustained by Yisrael’s “Vav HaChibur”

Extending this idea a bit further, let us now explain why Pinchas merited, “midah k’neged midah,” to become Eliyahu—designated to extract the letter “vav” from the name **עשו**. In parshas Vaeira, we discussed the practical significance of the letter “vav” in the name **עשו**. After Eliyahu extracts the “vav,” he will remain merely **עש**—dry and devoid of any trace of life.

As we know from the laws of grammar (“dikduk”), when the letter “vav” appears at the beginning of a word it usually acts as a conjunction, connecting two distinct items. An example of this can be found in the first passuk in the Torah (Bereishis 1, 1): **“את השמים ואת הארץ”**. In the phrase **“את השמים ואת הארץ”**—**the heavens and the earth**—we find the letter “vav” in the word **ואת** functioning as a conjunction, conveying the fact that

HKB”H created both the heavens and the earth. This type of “vav” is referred to as “vav hachibur”—the connecting “vav”—and is translated as the conjunction “and.”

Thus, when a Jew fulfills the mitzvah of (Vayikra 19, 18): **“ואהבת לרעך כמוך”**—**you shall love your neighbor as yourself**—connecting with his fellow Jews through love and friendship, he is connecting through kedushah. This form of connection acts as a tikun for the “vav hachibur.” On the other hand, when he associates with wicked people among the goyim, who hate the Torah, in effect, he is damaging the “vav hachibur”; for, he is forming an improper connection.

It is clear, therefore, that the source of life and sustenance provided by the letter “vav” in the name Eisav stems from Yisrael’s association with the descendants of Eisav. This association damages the “vav hachibur.” Furthermore, Eisav is sustained by this damage caused to the “vav hachibur.” Thus, we can conclude that only by separating ourselves from the goyim and their laws will we succeed in extracting the letter “vav” from Eisav.

We can now appreciate why Yaakov seized the letter “vav” from Eliyahu’s name as a pledge—assuring that he would eventually come and extract the letter “vav” from Eisav. After all, it is Eliyahu HaNavi’s mission to prepare Yisrael for the future geulah. He will do so by increasing peace and solidarity (shalom and achdut) among Yisrael and distancing them from the laws and behaviors of the goyim. This is expressed by the passuk as follows (Malachi 3, 23): **“הנה אנכי שולח לכם את אליהו הנביא לפני בוא יום ה’ הגדול והנורא, והשיב לב הנהגה מסיני, שאין אליהו בא לטמא ולטהר, לרחק ולקרב, אלא לרחק המקורבים בזרוע ולקרב המרוחקים בזרוע”** **Behold, I send you Eliyahu HaNavi before the coming of the great and awesome day of Hashem. And he will turn back the hearts of fathers with their sons and the hearts of sons with their fathers.**

This in fact is what we have learned in the Mishnah (Eduyos 8, 7): **“אמר רבי יהושע, מקובל אני מרבן יוחנן בן זכאי, ששמע מרבן ורבן מרבן, הלכה למשה מסיני, שאין אליהו בא לטמא ולטהר, לרחק ולקרב, אלא לרחק המקורבים בזרוע ולקרב המרוחקים בזרוע”** In other words, Eliyahu will fulfill his mission by distancing the goyim who have come too close and have forced themselves upon the Jewish people—corrupting Yisrael with their laws and customs--by whatever means possible. Simultaneously, he will draw near Jews who have drifted apart and afar by imbuing them with a sense of brotherly love, as it states: **“And he will turn back the hearts of fathers with their sons and the hearts of sons with their fathers.”**

By drawing Jews closer together and by separating them from the goyim, Eliyahu will correct the damage caused to the letter

“vav”—that has in effect sustained Eisav and his descendants. By means of this tikun, he will successfully extract the “vav” from Eisav’s name and return it to the realm of kedushah in Yaakov’s name—to be spelled in its complete form with a “vav,” יעקוב. This will complete Yaakov’s quest, which he embarked upon from birth: “וידו אוחות בעקב עשו”. He stretched out his holy hand to grasp onto the end of Eisav’s name--עשׂו—in order to extract the letter “vav” from him and return it to its rightful position within the realm of kedushah in the name יעקוב.

The Letter “Vav” Was Damaged by the “Cheit HaEigel”

We can now understand how the Erev Rav caused Yisrael to fail in the matter of the “cheit ha’eigel,” specifically around the sixth hour—as alluded to by the word “בששׁ”. They intended to strengthen the force of Eisav—emanating from the letter “vav” in his name. By enticing Yisrael to join them in the worship of an “avodah zarah,” they harmed the “vav hachibur”—empowering Eisav. Then, when the wicked Bilam entered the picture and advised Balak to entice Yisrael to sin with the daughters of Moav, Yisrael damaged the “vav hachibur” once more—by forming inappropriate associations and relationships.

The damage and the resultant plague continued until Pinchas the son of Elazar appeared on the scene. He understood the gravity of the situation and the need to eliminate the prohibited associations. This fact is alluded to by the passuk (Bamidbar 25, 7): “וירא פינחס בן אלעזר בן אהרן הכהן ויקם מתוך העדה ויקח רומח בידו”—**Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon the Kohan, saw, and he rose from amid the assembly, and he took a spear in his hand.** According to the Emek HaMelech, he specifically took a spear, because it resembles the letter “vav.” By killing Zimri and Cozbi with a weapon in the shape of a “vav,” he provided a tikun for the letter “vav”—which was damaged by these illicit relations. Simultaneously, he reunited Yisrael with their Father in Heaven.

This also enlightens us to some small degree as to why Pinchas’ reward represents a form of “midah k’neged midah.” Pinchas is reward with Hashem’s covenant of shalom—spelled with a split “vav.” As we have learned, this indicates that he will merit becoming Eliyahu, who is destined to extract the letter “vav” from the midst of 376) (עשׂו)—the counterpart of 376) (שלו). This was his reward for his willingness to sacrifice his life in order to disrupt

the prohibited relationships that resulted from the association with the daughters of Moav.

This then is the meaning of the Midrash cited above: “לכן אמור הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום - אמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש, פנחס הוא אליהו, אמר לו הקב”ה, אתה נתת שלום בין ישראל ובני בעולם הזה” HKB”H informs Pinchas that as compensation for establishing shalom between Yisrael and HKB”H in this world, and thus providing tikun for the letter “vav” and restoring it to the realm of kedushah--אף לעתיד לבא--אתה הוא שעתידי ליתן שלום בין לבין בני, שנאמר הנה אנכי שולח לכם את אליהו—he will be entrusted to fulfill this same function, once again, “le’asid la’vo.”

This also explains why Ezra HaSofer established the reading of parshas Pinchas at the beginning of the period of “bein hametzarim.” These three weeks begin during the month of Tamuz. As we have learned from the great Rabbi of Ruzhin, zy”a, the name Tamuz can be broken down to תם ו’ ז’. This serves as a reminder that we are obligated to make amends for the “cheit ha’eigel,” which occurred around the sixth hour of the day, resulting in damage to the “vav hachibur”—due to the inappropriate union with the Erev Rav to worship avodah zarah.

Clearly, events are related to time and date. Just as Moshe shattered the luchos on the seventeenth of Tamuz—in the aftermath of the “cheit ha’eigel”—so, too, the churban of the Beis HaMikdash began on this same date—when our enemies breached the walls of Yerushalayim. This, too, occurred as a result of forming inappropriate associations with the goyim and adopting their ways. Therefore, at the start of the period of “bein hametzarim”--when Yisrael committed the sin of the eigel at the sixth hour--it is only fitting and beneficial that we sit together with our brothers and read parshas Pinchas.

For, it is our desire to recall the merit of Pinchas—who is Eliyahu—who was willing to sacrifice his life by acting zealously in the name of Hashem—disrupting the prohibited union between Yisrael and Moav. In place of that improper relationship, he reunited Yisrael with their heavenly Father—promoting shalom between them. With this parsha reading, we wish to elicit HKB”H’s heavenly mercy, praying that He will fulfill His promise to Pinchas/Eliyahu: “הנני נותן לו את בריתי שלום”--**Behold! I give him My covenant of peace (“שלום”)**—that he should be privileged to announce to Yisrael the complete geulah—swiftly, in our times! Amen.

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