

The Amazing Connection between Tishah B'Av and Shemini Atzeres On Shemini Atzeres HKB"H Announces to Yisrael: Your Separation from Me on Tishah B'Av Is Hard on Me

This upcoming Shabbas Kodesh is actually Tishah B'Av; however, due to the kedushah of Shabbas, the fast and mourning are delayed until Sunday. Hence, it is fitting that we begin by explaining the association between Tishah B'Av and parshas Devarim, which is always read prior to the fast of Tishah B'Av, without exception. In the words of the Tur and the author of the Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 428, 4): **“תשעה—Tishah B'Av precedes Vaetchanan. Thus, the Torah reading on the Shabbas prior to Tishah B'Av is parshas Devarim.**

Furthermore, this Shabbas is referred to as “Shabbas Chazon.” This name derives from the fact that the haftarah designated for this special Shabbas is taken from the words of the prophet Yeshayah, who prophesied about the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash (Yeshayah 1, 1): **“חזון ישעיהו בן אמוץ:— the vision of Yeshayahu the son of Amotz, which he saw concerning Yehudah and Yerushalayim.** This parsha and this haftarah are always read on the Shabbas before Tishah B'Av — or on the actual Shabbas of Tishah B'Av.

The holy and brilliant Levush (ibid.) provides the rationale for this protocol: So that Moshe's rebuke of the people, which begins in parshas Devarim (Devarim 1, 12): **“איכה אשא לבדי— how can I bear your trouble and your burden and your quarrels alone?—will be read before Tishah B'Av along with the haftarah of “Chazon,” which is a rebuke concerning the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash. In other words, we wish to unite the two tochachot.**

“איכה ישבה בדד” versus “איכה אשא לבדי”

Let us add an enticing tidbit. The Midrash teaches us (Eichah Rabbasi, Introduction, 11): **“אילו זכיתם הייתם קוראים בתורה איכה אשא לבדי, ועכשיו שלא זכיתם הרי אתם קוראים (איכה א-א) -- had you been meritorious, you would have recited from the Torah, “How can I carry alone?”; now that you were not meritorious, you are required to recite, “How is it that she sits alone?”** Thus, we have an explicit connection between Moshe's rebuke--“איכה אשא לבדי”--and the lament of the divine poet regarding the churban of the Beis HaMikdash--“איכה ישבה בדד”.

To explain the Midrash, let us refer to parshas Chukas (Bamidbar 20, 29): **“ויראו כל העדה כי גוע אהרן ויבכו את אהרן שלשים יום-- the entire assembly witnessed that Aharon had perished; they wept for Aharon thirty days—the entire house of Yisrael.** Rashi comments: Everyone grieved over Aharon's death, both the men and the women, since he was the ultimate peacemaker—he promoted peace and amity between disputants, including husbands and wives. Along these lines, we learn in the Mishnah (Avos 1, 12): **“הלל אומר: הוי מתלמידי של אהרן, אוהב שלום ורודף שלום, אוהב את הבריות ומקרבן-- Hillel says: Be among the disciples of Aharon—love peace and promote peace, love your fellow creatures and bring them closer to Torah.**

This explains why Moshe Rabeinu poured out his heart, openly rebuking Yisrael: **“איכה--how can I bear your trouble and your burden and your quarrels alone?** In other words,

as long as my brother Aharon was alive, I knew that someone stood beside me who could resolve all of your quarrels amicably. For he loved and promoted peace. Now, however, that he has passed away and I remain alone: **“איכה אשא לבדי—טרחכם ומשאכם וריבכם”**—I lack the strength to deal with your “sin’as chinam” and your petty quarrels.

Upon careful scrutiny, it appears that with these words Moshe Rabeinu prophesied that the Beis HaMikdash was destined to be destroyed due to the sin of “sin’as chinam.” For, we have learned in the Gemara (Yoma 9b): **“מקדש שני”** שהיו עוסקין בתורה ומצוות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב, מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם, ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חנם כנגד שלש עבירות עבודה זרה --גילוי עריות ושפיכות דמים” during the period of the second Beis HaMikdash, the people engaged in Torah study, the performance of mitzvos and acts of kindness. It was destroyed because of baseless hatred--“sin’as chinam”; this teaches us that “sin’as chinam” carries as much weight as the three cardinal sins.

Now, this enlightens us with regards to the statement of the Midrash: **“אילו זכיתם הייתם קוראים בתורה איכה אשא לבדי”**. In other words, had you been meritorious and responded appropriately to Moshe Rabeinu’s rebuke: **“איכה--how can I bear your trouble and your burden and your quarrels alone?”**—implored you not to quarrel but rather to love your fellow Jew, the Beis HaMikdash would not have been destroyed. **“ועכשיו שלא זכיתם”**—but now that you did not heed his rebuke and failed to subdue and overcome the yetzer of “sin’as chinam”: **“הרי אתם קוראים איכה ישבה בדד”**—you are forced to recite the lamentations depicting the churban of the Beis HaMikdash.

At this point, we can better appreciate the institution to always read parshas Devarim on the Shabbas prior to Tishah B’Av, which contains Moshe Rabeinu’s rebuke of Yisrael: **“איכה”** **“אשא לבדי טרחכם ומשאכם וריבכם”**. It is aimed at teaching us the lesson of the Midrash; had we heeded Moshe’s words--**“איכה”** **“אשא לבדי”**—we would not be compelled to read on Tishah B’Av--**“איכה ישבה בדד”**. This should inspire us to perform absolute teshuvah regarding the sin of “sin’as chinam.” In this merit, we will bring about the final geulah and will no longer need to recite: **“איכה ישבה בדד”**.

Two Huge Incongruities Regarding Tishah B’Av

In this essay, we intend to reconcile two huge incongruities regarding Tishah B’Av. Firstly, a huge contradiction exists regarding the nature of the day. On the one hand, it is a day of fasting and mourning over the destruction of the two Batei Mikdash. This prompted the sages to institute a fast beginning at sundown, similar to Yom Kippur. Additionally, all five forms of suffering and deprivation practiced on Yom Kippur are also practiced on Tishah B’Av; they include the prohibition to eat and drink, to bathe and anoint, and to wear leather footwear. Furthermore, it is prohibited to engage in Torah-study that might bring people joy and pleasure. It is also prohibited to sit on a chair until the middle of the day.

Yet, on the other hand, Yirmiyah HaNavi, who prophesied about the churban of Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash, chose to describe Tishah B’Av in Megillas Eichah as a “mo’ed”—a festive day. We find this description in the following passuk (Eichah 1, 15): **“קרא עלי מועד”--He proclaimed a “mo’ed” against me.** In fact, this description has halachic ramifications. The Shulchan Aruch rules (559, 4): **Tachanun is not recited on Tishah B’Av and they do not fall on their faces, because it is called a “mo’ed.”** Seemingly, this is quite surprising! In the words of the wisest of all men (Koheles 2, 2): **“ולשמחה מה זו עושה”--and of joy, what does it accomplish?!** What possessed Yirmiyah HaNavi to refer to the bitter day of Tishah B’Av, this day of churban, as a “mo’ed”? What sort of festival did HKB”H give us on this day of destruction?

For the second incongruity regarding Tishah B’Av, we will refer to a revelation from Chazal in the Gemara (Yoma 54b): **“בשעה שנכנסו נכרים להיכל ראו כרובים המעורין זה בזה”--when the gentiles entered the Heichal, they saw the Keruvim embracing one another.** The Shitah Mikubetzet (B.B. 99b) presents a question in the name of one of the Rishonim, the Ri Migash. The Gemara (ibid.) presents a contradiction between two pesukim with regards to the Keruvim. One passuk states (Shemos 25, 20): **“ופניהם איש אל אחיו”--their faces were toward each other**—indicating that they faced one another lovingly. Yet, another passuk states (Divrei HaYamim II 3, 13): **“ופניהם”** **“לביה”--their faces were toward the House**—indicating that they did not face one another.

The Ri Migash answers: “לא קשיא כאן בזמן שישראל עושין רצונו של מקום—there is no difficulty; this passuk refers to when Yisrael satisfy G-d’s will; while this passuk refers to when Yisrael fail to satisfy G-d’s will. In other words, when Yisrael act in accordance with the will of G-d, and turn toward HKB”H lovingly, HKB”H turns toward them lovingly, as depicted by the passuk: “ופניהם לביית”H. However, when Yisrael fail to act in accordance with the will of G-d, they are essentially turning away from HKB”H. Consequently, HKB”H turns away from them, as well, as depicted by the second passuk: “ופניהם לביית”H. That being the case, how is it possible that at the time of the churban, when Yisrael were not following the will of G-d, that the gentiles found the Keruvim joined together, facing each other? The Ri Migash answers that they miraculously faced each other at the time of the churban, in order to show the goyim how much HKB”H actually loves and cherishes Yisrael.

Let us expand on the words of the Ri Migash. The Bnei Yissaschar (Tamuz-Av 3, 1) brings in the name of the holy Maggid, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsch, zy”a, another explanation as to why the Keruvim were unexpectedly joined together at the time of the churban. He refers to the following Gemara (Yevamos 62b): “חייב אדם לפקוד את אשתו בשעה שהוא יוצא לדרך”—**a man is obligated to remember his wife when he is about to embark on a journey.** When departing from one another, it is vital to strengthen the bond between them. Thus, when HKB”H separated from Yisrael, so to speak—for He had dwelt among them in the Beis HaMikdash—HKB”H remembered Yisrael, and bonded with them intensely. He wanted to encourage them and provide moral support as they were going into galut and wanted them to know beyond a shadow of a doubt how great His love for them was.

Twenty-two Days of Bein HaMetzarim Corresponding to Twenty-two Days in Tishrei

I was struck by a wonderful idea regarding these two incongruities: (1) Yirmiyah HaNavi calling Tishah B’Av a “mo’ed” and (2) HKB”H performing a miracle at the time of the churban, so that the gentiles would find the Keruvim in a loving embrace. At the same time, we will clarify several other issues related to Tishah B’Av. To do so, we will introduce an illuminating concept from the great Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech of

Blozhov, zy”a, in Tzvi LaTzaddik (Tamuz-Av 2, 2). He states that the twenty-two days of Bein HaMetzarim—from Shivah Asar B’Tamuz to Tishah B’Av—correspond to the twenty-two days from Rosh HaShanah to Shemini Atzeres. The earlier tzaddikim would mitigate the impact of each of the twenty-two days of Bein HaMetzarim by associating each day mentally with its counterpart in the first twenty-two days of Tishrei.

He presents substantiation in the name of his elder, the esteemed author of the Bnei Yissaschar, zy”a. He himself brings proof for this concept from the Maharsha in Chiddushei Aggadot (Bechorot 8a), who explains that the twenty-one days of Bein HaMetzarim, excluding Tishah B’Av, correspond to the twenty-one days from Rosh HaShanah to Hoshanah Rabbah. Accordingly, if we add Tishah B’Av, the twenty-second day of Bein HaMetzarim, it corresponds to Shemini Atzeres, the twenty-second day of Tishrei.

Thus, we learn a tremendous chiddush! The last day of Bein HaMetzarim—Tishah B’Av—on which the two Batei Mikdash were destroyed, corresponds to the last day of the Yamim Noraim and Chag HaSuccot—Shemini Atzeres. According to the Tzvi LaTzaddik cited above, earlier generations of tzaddikim would diminish the “din” of Tishah B’Av by focusing on its corresponding day in Tishrei. In other words, Shemini Atzeres was the tikun and mitigating factor for Tishah B’Av.

On Shemini Atzeres HKB”H United with Kenesses Yisrael

I would now like to present upon the royal table, that which HKB”H kindly allowed me to perceive—how these elements tie together magnificently. We will begin with the passuk in parshas Pinchas related to Shemini Atzeres (Bamidbar 29, 35): “ביום השמיני עצרת תהיה לכם כל מלאכת עבודה לא תעשו, והקרבתם”—**on the eighth day, it shall be a restraining for you; you shall not do any work of labor. You shall offer an olah, a fire-offering, a satisfying aroma to Hashem; one bull, one ram . . .** Rashi comments: **Its interpretation in aggadah is: Because on all of the days of the festival, they brought offerings corresponding to the seventy nations, and when they were about to leave, the Omnipresent said to them, “I request of you, make a small festive meal for Me, so that I may have pleasure from you.”**

Rashi's source is the Gemara (Succah 55b): **“אמר רבי אלעזר, הני שבעים פרים כנגד מי, כנגד שבעים אומות. פר יחידי למה, כנגד אומה יחידה. משל למלך בשר ודם שאמר לעבדיו עשו לי סעודה גדולה, ליום אחרון—Rabbi Elazar said: To whom do these seventy bulls correspond? They correspond to the seventy nations. What is the purpose of the single bull? It corresponds to the one, special nation. It is analogous to a human king who said to his servants, “Make me a large meal.” On the last day, he said to the one most dear to him, “Make me a small meal, so that I may enjoy your company (alone).”**

Continuing his comment above, Rashi adds (Bamidbar ibid.): **“One bull, one ram”—these correspond to Yisrael, who are unique to HKB”H.** He requests of them, **“Linger for Me a bit more.”** This is an expression of endearment, like children who take leave of their father, and he says to them, **“Your departure is hard for me; linger one more day.”** At first glance, this deserves further explanation. How is it possible to say with regards to HKB”H: **“Your departure is hard for me”?** After all, HKB”H is with us everywhere and at all times. So, what is the actual purpose of this additional day? For, this day, too, will pass, like all of the days that preceded it.

In light of what we have discussed thus far, it appears that we can explain the matter based on a revelation from the Arizal in Sha’ar HaKavanos (Rosh HaShanah 1). He teaches us that all of the avodah in the month of Tishrei—including Rosh HaShanah, Aseres Yimei Teshuvah, Yom Kippur and the seven days of Succot—is aimed at preparing for Shemini Atzeres. For, on Shemini Atzeres, HKB”H unites with Kenesses Yisrael completely. This is the message inherent in Chazal’s allusion above: **On the last day, he says to the one most dear to him, “Make me a small meal, so that I may have pleasure from you.”**

This agrees wonderfully with what we have explained above. The twenty-two days of Tishrei from Rosh HaShanah to Shemini Atzeres, mitigate and sweeten the impact of the severe forces of “din” prevalent during the twenty-two days of Bein HaMetzarim. The last day of the former—Shemini Atzeres—corresponds to the last day of the latter—Tishah B’Av. So, whereas HKB”H abandoned Yisrael, as it were, on Tishah B’Av—painfully leaving the Beis HaMikdash while

Yisrael went into galut—HKB”H added a corresponding day in Tishrei, on which He unites with Kenesses Yisrael with extreme love.

This explains very nicely the miracle HKB”H performed on Tishah B’Av, at the time of the terrible churban. When the gentiles entered the Heichal, they witnessed the Keruvim embracing one another. So, while it appeared as if HKB”H had abandoned Yisrael, when He left the Beis HaMikdash, in truth, this was not so. In reality, the tikun, in the form of Shemini Atzeres—the day corresponding to Tishah B’Av—was already ready and waiting. On Shemini Atzeres, HKB”H is destined to unite with Kenesses Yisrael, after they rectify the twenty-two days of Bein HaMetzarim by means of the teshuvah they perform from Rosh HaShanah until Shemini Atzeres.

Your Departure on Tishah B’Av Is Hard on Me

This enlightens us as to HKB”H’s rationale for giving us the extra day of Shemini Atzeres: **“קשה עלי פרידתכם”—it is difficult for Me to be separated from you!** With this declaration, HKB”H hints to us how difficult it was for Him when we abandoned Him on Tishah B’Av. Therefore, He requests of Yisrael: **“עכבו עוד יום אחד—linger one more day.** Being the twenty-second day of Tishrei, the day corresponding to Tishah B’Av, He longed to remain alone with us on this special day. For, it represents the ultimate tikun for us abandoning Him on Tishah B’Av.

It is worthwhile adding one more precious point. Our sacred sefarim provide us with an alternative interpretation of HKB”H’s declaration: **“קשה עלי פרידתכם.”** He is hinting to us that it is difficult for Him to witness the rifts and discord that emerge among Yisrael—even when these conflicts appear under the guise of **“עלי”**, seemingly for the sake of **“kevod shamayim.”** The source for this notion is found in Ahavas Shalom (Emor):

“או יאמר קשה עלי פרידתכם, פירוש כי לפעמים תזדמן מחלוקת ופירוד ח”ו בענין דבר מצוה, זה אומר כך ראוי לעשות המצוה, וזה אומר כך ראוי לעשות, ויכול להיות חס ושלום על ידי זה פירוד עצום. וזהו קשה ‘עלי’ דייקא, פירוש קשה הפירוד בדבר הנוגע לי, והיינו בדבר מצוה.”

Occasionally, dispute and discord arise, chas v’shalom, in relation to a mitzvah. One person argues that the mitzvah should be performed this way; while the other person argues that it should be performed a different

way. This difference of opinion can cause an enormous rift, chas v'shalom. This, in particular, is difficult for Me (עלי'). In other words, it pains Me to see discord arising from something related to Me, in other words a mitzvah.

This coincides fantastically with what we have explained above—that Shemini Atzeres corresponds to Tishah B'Av. As we know, the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed on Tishah B'Av because of “sin'as chinam.” Thus, HKB”H added the day of Shemini Atzeres as a tikun for the shortcoming of “sin'as chinam,” by proclaiming: “קשה עלי פרידתכם”. HKB”H is informing us that the separation and discord among the ranks of Yisrael—that was the underlying cause of the churban of the Beis HaMikdash and created a rift between HKB”H and Yisrael—is extremely hard on Him. Therefore, He pleads with Yisrael: “עכבו עוד יום אחד”—**linger one more day**. The emphasis is on the word “אחד”—imploring us to unite as “**one**” on this special day by adopting a doctrine of “ahavat chinam”; this will enable us to unite with HKB”H completely and irrevocably.

Seen from this perspective, the words of Yirmiyah HaNavi are all the more profound and incredible. Even though he foresaw the tremendous churban of Yerushalayim and the Beis HaMikdash, nevertheless he announces to all of Yisrael in Megillas Eichah: “קרא עלי מועד”. He is broadcasting to all of Yisrael that HKB”H has already prepared the remedy in advance of the ailment. He added a “mo’ed” corresponding to Tishah B'Av; namely, the day of Shemini Atzeres, on which HKB”H unites and luxuriates lovingly with Kenesses Yisrael.

We can suggest a very nice allusion to this fact from the Gemara’s (Succah 48a) elucidation related to Shemini Atzeres. In relation to Chag HaSuccot, the passuk states (Devarim 16, 15): “והיית אך שמח, לרבות לילי יום טוב האחרון”—**“and you shall be only joyous”**: **This comes to include the final night of Yom Tov**—in other words, Shemini Atzeres is included in the simchah of Succot. The commentaries question the use of the term “אך”; generally, it is a restrictive term rather than an inclusive term. Yet, this can be explained very nicely based on what we have discussed. The Torah is alluding to the fact that although Shemini Atzeres corresponds to Tishah B'Av—a day on which simchah is restricted, as indicated by the term “אך”—nevertheless, **“you shall only be joyous”** on Shemini Atzeres; for it is the tikun of Tishah B'Av.

We can suggest that the Torah even alludes to the reason for the simchah on Shemini Atzeres with the words: “והיית אך שמח”. The gematria of “אך” is twenty-one. Thus, the Torah alludes to the twenty-one days preceding Shemini Atzeres—from Rosh Hashanah until Hoshanah Rabbah--during which Yisrael engaged in acts of teshuvah, making amends for having caused the churban of the Beis HaMikdash during the period of Bein HaMetzarim. Therefore, it is a mitzvah to rejoice on Shemini Atzeres, acknowledging that HKB”H remains alone with Kenesses Yisrael, demonstrating His love.

The Amazing Connection between Tishah B'Av and Shemini Atzeres

In this manner, we will suggest another incredible association between Tishah B'Av and Shemini Atzeres, based on the following Gemara (Berachos 8a): “מיום שחרב בית המקדש--מיום שחרב בית המקדש אלא ד' אמות של הלכה בלבד” **from the day that the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed, HKB”H only has four cubits of halachah in His world**. Let us explain how the “**four cubits of halachah**” have replaced the Beis HaMikdash in the eyes of HKB”H. The purpose of the Beis HaMikdash was so that HKB”H would rest His Shechinah there, as it is written (Shemos 25, 8): “ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם”-- **and they shall make Me a Sanctuary, so that I may dwell among them**.

Now, as a result of the churban, the Shechinah vacated the Beis HaMikdash and ascended to Its place in the heavens. Regarding this departure, we find a haunting statement in the Gemara (R.H. 31a): “אמר רבי יוחנן, עשר מסעות נסעה שכינה”—**Rabbi Yochanan said: The Shechinah made ten journeys**. Rashi explains: **To remove itself from Yisrael little by little as they sinned**—during the latter years of the first Beis HaMikdash, the Shechinah departed gradually as Yisrael sank deeper into sin.

The Gemara there elaborates with regards to the holy Shechinah’s ten journeys: [שעל הארון בקדשי הקדשים] [מכפורת] [לעזרה] [לכרוב, ומכרוב למפתן] [לפתח של ההיכל], וממפתן לחצר [לעזרה שבין האולם למזבח], ומחצר למזבח [החיצון], וממזבח לגג, ומגג לחומה [של העזרה], ומחומה לעיר [ירושלים], ומעיר להר [הזיתים], ומהר למדבר, וממדבר עלתה וישבה במקומה, שנאמר [הושע ה-טו] אלך אשובה אל מקומי.” **From the Kapores (on top of the Aron in the Kodesh HaKodashim, it travelled) to the Keruv, then from that**

Keruv to the other Keruv, from the Keruv to the threshold of the Heichal, then from the threshold to the Courtyard, then from the Courtyard to the (outer) mizbeiach, then from the mizbeiach to the roof, then from the roof to the wall, then from the wall to the city (of Yerushalayim), then from the city to the Mount (Har HaZeisim), then from the Mount to the midbar, and (finally) from the midbar It ascended and settled in Its place, as it is stated: "I will go, I will return to My place."

We learn that the root of the churban was the fact that Yisrael—due to their multitude of sins—caused the departure of the Shechinah. Thus, we should comprehend that the requisite tikun is the return of the Shechinah to Yisrael. This feat is accomplished by means of Torah-study; for we have learned in the Mishnah (Avos 3, 6) that even if one sits and engages in Torah-study alone, the Shechinah is with him. This then is the meaning of the Gemara: "מיום שחרב בית המקדש"—from the time of the churban, due to the departure of the Shechinah from Yisrael--"אין לו להקב"ה בעולמו אלא ד' אמות של--"הלכה בלבד"—HKB"H suffices with four cubits of halachah. His

Shechinah dwells with those studying Torah and halachah in lieu of the Beis HaMikdash.

Now, Shemini Atzeres and Simchas Torah are intimately related to one another. In fact, in Eretz Yisrael, they are one and the same day. To celebrate Simchas Torah it is customary to take out all of the sifrei-Torah and dance around the "bimah," while singing and rejoicing.

We have now successfully shed some light on the incredible association that exists between Tishah B'Av and Shemini Atzeres. On Shemini Atzeres, HKB"H is distraught that He cannot rest His Shechinah in the Beis HaMikdash. Yet, as we have learned: "מיום שחרב בית המקדש אין לו להקב"ה בעולמו אלא ד' אמות של הלכה בלבד." Therefore, HKB"H graciously gave us Shemini Atzeres to correspond to Tishah B'Av—a day on which we complete the Torah-readings of the year and we rejoice with HKB"H. For, HKB"H celebrates the fact that His Shechinah can dwell within the four cubits of halachah until we merit His coming to redeem us—at the time of the everlasting geulah, with the coming of Mashiach ben David, swiftly, in our times. Amen.



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