

The *Shabbat* before *Tisha B'Av* is known as "*Shabbat Chazon*," from the first word of the *Haftarah* (*Yeshayahu* 1:1), "*Chazon* / The vision of Yeshayahu son of Amotz, which he saw concerning Yehuda and Yerushalayim." In a *Derashah* delivered in the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, R' Klonimus Kalmish Shapira z"l Hy"d (Chassidic Rebbe of Piasetzno, Poland; killed in the Holocaust in 1943) explained the significance of the word "*Chazon*."

He said: *Midrash Rabbah* lists ten forms of prophecy, and it asks, "Which is the harshest?" Rabbi Elazar answers, "*Chazon*' is the harshest, as we read (*Yeshayahu* 21:2), "A harsh *Chazut*/vision has been told to me'." [Until here from the *Midrash*] R' Shapira explained: When we studied the words of the Prophets about events surrounding the destruction of the *Bet Hamikdash*, we thought we understood that generation's suffering. Maybe we even cried occasionally. But now, we understand well the difference between talking or hearing about suffering and witnessing suffering. We know now that hearing about pain is not comparable in any way to seeing--and how much more so, experiencing--pain.

He continued: Some Prophets heard about the suffering that the Jewish People would experience, or they learned about it through one of the other levels of prophecy that the *Midrash* lists. But the most vivid prophecy, the harshest of all, is a "*Chazon*" / "vision," actually seeing the troubles that would come. – *Continued on back page* –

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R' Shapira added: Several Talmudic Sages said, "Let the birth pangs of *Mashiach* come, but let me not witness them." They knew through their learning what suffering the Jewish People would experience before the ultimate redemption would occur. But knowing and seeing are two different things, and these Sages could not bear the thought of witnessing such terrible suffering.

In this light, R' Shapira said, we can understand the verse (*Shmot* 3:7), "*Hashem* said, 'I have indeed seen the affliction of My people that is in Egypt and I have heard its outcry because of its taskmasters, for I have known of its sufferings'." The verse seems to be repetitive; of course, if one sees another's affliction, He knows about it! Rather, *Hashem* meant, "I have known all along about *Bnei Yisrael's* suffering," i.e., I knew that their suffering in Egypt was for their own good, just as a father whose child needs surgery knows that the surgery is for the child's own good. Even so, were the father to actually see the surgery in progress, his rational understanding of the need for the surgery would be overwhelmed by what he was witnessing. So, too, *Hashem* said to Moshe: "Of course I have known of *Bnei Yisrael's* suffering, and I know it was necessary. But, now (so-to-speak) that I have seen the affliction of My people, that supersedes what I have known."

R' Shapira concluded his *Derashah*: On the *Shabbat* before *Tisha B'Av*, the climax of the Three Weeks, we read a *Haftarah* that uses the harsh term "*Chazon*" / "vision." But just as we see our suffering, so it is seen in Heaven, and therefore the *Haftarah* ends with words of consolation: "Tziyon shall be redeemed with justice, and her returnees with righteousness."

(*Eish Kodesh*)

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Eichah

“How does she sit in solitude? The city that was great with people has become like a widow. The greatest among nations, the princess among provinces, has become a tributary.” (1:1)

R’ Moshe Almosnino z”l (Salonika, Greece; 1510-1581) writes that this verse is expressing wonder: How is it possible that a city whose population was so numerous has suddenly become so desolate? One would expect a city’s fortunes to change gradually, step-by-step, not so dramatically! Likewise, the second half of the verse asks: How is it possible that a nation that was so great (here referring to quality, not quantity), should suddenly be enslaved by another nation? The entire verse is a question that remains unanswered, R’ Almosnino writes.

He adds: Perhaps the answer is found in *Midrash Yalkut Shimoni*, which relates that *Hashem* asked Yerushalayim, “Who left you so desolate?” Yerushalayim answered, “Mast of the Universe! Who else could leave me so desolate, if not you alone?” [Until here from the *Midrash*]

R’ Almosnino explains: the Sages of the *Midrash* mean by this that *Hashem* wants to know, “Does Yerushalayim understand why she is desolate, or does Yerushalayim think it is a coincidence or is ordained by the stars?” Yerushalayim answers that, indeed, she does understand that no coincidence and no alignment of the stars could bring about such desolation, only an act of *Hashem* could be the cause. (That recognition is the first step in recognizing that one is being punished for his sins, which is the prerequisite to returning to *Hashem*.) (Yedei Moshe)



“She [Yerushalayim] weeps bitterly in the night, and her tear is on her cheek. She has no comforter from all her lovers; all her friends have betrayed her, they have become her enemies.” (1:2)

R’ Yitzchak Arama z”l (1420-1495; exiled with his brethren from Spain, he may have been killed in a pogrom in Italy) writes: When a soldier is defeated--even if, figuratively speaking, all of the constellations united to crush him--he does not cry publicly in the streets or the marketplace. Instead, he seeks a private place to mourn. Likewise, when Yosef’s “compassion for his brother had been stirred and he wanted to weep, he went into the room and wept there.” He did not weep publicly.

As such, writes R’ Arama, our verse can be understood as saying that, despite the horrors she experienced, Yerushalayim never lost her self-respect. She weeps bitterly, but only in the night, privately.

Even so, the verse says, she cannot hide her sorrow, for the impression of “her tear is (visible) on her cheek.” But do her supposed “friends” among the nations come to comfort her? No, they betray her. (*Akeidat Yitzchak*)

“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of *Yisrael*, on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the Wilderness, concerning the Aravah, opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tophel, and Lavan, and Chatzerot, and Di-Zahav.” (1:1)

Rashi z”l comments: Because these are words of rebuke and Moshe is enumerating here all the places where *Bnei Yisrael* provoked G-d to anger, he suppresses, out of regard for *Bnei Yisrael*, all mention of the ways in which they sinned. Instead, he refers to them only by allusions contained in the names of these places. [Until here from *Rashi*]

R’ Shmuel Rabinovitch *shlita* (“Rabbi of the Kotel Ha’ma’aravi and the Holy Sites”) writes: The book of *Devarim* is one long farewell speech in which Moshe Rabbeinu rebukes *Bnei Yisrael* for their numerous failings. One could, at first glance, read this negatively--as Moshe “closing the books,” *i.e.*, making a reckoning with *Bnei Yisrael*, before his death. But, if we remember Moshe’s past, we will read it completely differently.

While *Bnei Yisrael* were enslaved in Egypt, Moshe was growing up comfortably in Pharaoh’s palace. Moshe did not have to go out and observe their burdens (*Shmot* 2:11). He surely did not need to incur Pharaoh’s wrath by killing an Egyptian who was beating a Jew (*Shmot* 2:11-12).

When *Bnei Yisrael* made the Gold Calf, *Hashem* said (*Shmot* 32:10), “And now, desist from Me. Let My anger flare up against them and I shall annihilate them; and I shall make you a great nation.” Moshe could have accepted *Hashem*’s offer; he did not need to pray for *Bnei Yisrael* for 40 days and 40 nights! But he did, until *Hashem* said, “I have forgiven.”

That is who Moshe Rabbeinu was: He loved *Bnei Yisrael* absolutely! It follows, therefore, that his rebuke in *Sefer Devarim* was not meant to degrade *Bnei Yisrael*; it was all meant constructively.

A practical lesson that we can learn from our verse, R’ Rabinovitch concludes, is that even when one must criticize, even when criticism is spoken with love, it is important to show the recipient respect by avoiding as much as possible any explicit mention of the latter’s wrongdoing.

(*Avnei Derech*)

“They took in their hands from the fruit of the Land and they brought it down to us.” (1:25)

The Hebrew word for “and they brought it down” (“וירדו”) is written in the Torah without the letter “Yud” that one would expect to see after the letter “Reish.” R’ Azriel Yechiel Rubin z”l (1844-1912; rabbi in Mihalovice, Czechia) suggests: The *Gematria* of the letter *Yud* is ten, a reference to the ten Spies who brought fruit back from *Eretz Canaan* with the intention of frightening *Bnei Yisrael*. The Torah symbolically hides the “Yud” in our verse because those ten Spies already received their punishment and do not deserve to be embarrassed further. (*Sde Ya’ar*)