

Achdut - Devarim

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אֵיכָה אֲשָׂא לְבַדִּי טְרַחֲכֶם וּמִשְׁאַכֶם וְרִיבְכֶם. (דברים א, יב)

This Shabbat we will listen to the ba'al koreh read this passuk to the tune of Megilat Eicha. Next week, we will commemorate Tisha Ba'Av, a huge *celebration*, since the Mashiach will surely arrive before then B"H. Our sages teach us that those who truly mourn the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash will merit its rebuilding.

The iconic word אֵיכָה is synonymous with the destruction of the Batei HaMikdash. What is it about this word that has given it this connotation? R' Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin's shita is that to understand a word, you examine the first time it is mentioned in the Torah. The first time we find this word (abeit with different vowels) is in sefer Breishit.

וַתִּפְקְחָה עֵינֵי שָׁנִיָּהֶם וַיֵּדְעוּ כִּי עִירְמָם הֵם וַיִּתְּפְרוּ עָלֶיהָ תְּאֵנָה וַיַּעֲשׂוּ לָהֶם חִלְרֹת. וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶת קוֹל ה' אֱ-לֹקִים מִתְּהִלָּה בְּגֶן לְרוּחַ הַיּוֹם וַיִּתְחַבֵּא הָאָדָם וְאִשְׁתּוֹ מִפְּנֵי ה' אֱ-לֹקִים בְּתוֹךְ עֵץ הַגֶּן. וַיִּקְרָא ה' אֱ-לֹקִים אֶל הָאָדָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ אֵיכָה. (בראשית ג, ז-ט)

Adam and Chava had just sinned with the עֵץ הַדַּעַת. With their newly acquired knowledge they realize that they are not clothed, so they cover themselves in fig leaves. They hear the voice of HKB"H permeating Gan Eden and they hide from the "face" of HKB"H. HKB"H then calls out to Adam אֵיכָה, "Where are you?"

It is interesting to note that the passuk refers to HKB"H using both His names י-ק-ו and אֱ-לֹקִים, reflecting both mercy and judgement (mercy precedes judgement). After Adam and Chava sinned, we would think that HKB"H would appear to them only with the name אֱ-לֹקִים reflecting מִדַּת הַדִּין. From this we see that HKB"H had not yet passed judgment on them, He was waiting to see how they responded before doing so – would they do teshuva or not.

The word אֵיכָה is therefore derived from a reality in which we "hide" from HKB"H, raising up barriers between ourselves and HKB"H's "face", which is a face of מִדַּת הַרַחֲמִים by default (אור החיים, פרשת וארא ו, ב). In response, HKB"H "hides" His face from us, הִסְתֵּר פָּנָיו. The gematria of the word אֵיכָה is לְבַד, alone.

Adam and Chava hid from HKB"H עץ הָגֵן, *within* the very thing that they sinned with, the עץ הַדַּעַת. When we sin against HKB"H, we envelop ourselves with the sin itself, which acts as a barrier between us and HKB"H.

Obviously, we cannot "hide" from HKB"H - Who is all seeing and all knowing. From the passuk we learn HKB"H's *derech eretz*, אֵיכָה. "I see you, I know where you are, you cannot hide from Me. But where are *you*? Where are you holding? Do you wish to reconnect with Me by doing teshuva, or do you want to persist in raising barriers between us?"

This is the true meaning of the word אֵיכָה. In our passuk above, Moshe is not only reiterating *his* frustration with Am Yisrael when they sinned, he is also reflecting HKB"H's thoughts. אֵיכָה אָשָׂא לְבָדִי "You chose the wrong option and you are now lonely without Me and I too am lonely without you. I am giving you the chance to do teshuva, will you take it?"

Everything is encoded into the Torah, from the beginning of time until the end of time. If Tisha Be'Av follows parshat, Devarim where we read the passuk אֵיכָה אָשָׂא לְבָדִי, then there must be links between this passuk and the destruction of the Batei Mikdash and also its *rebuilding* at the end of days.

Indeed, we find these links embedded in our passuk above. The gematria of - אֵיכָה אָשָׂא לְבָדִי טְרַחֲכֶם וּמִשְׁאַכְּם וְרִיבְכֶם - is the same gematria as וַיִּפֹּל עַל צִוְיָאֲרֵי בְנֵימִן אָחִיו וַיִּבְדֹּךְ וּבְנֵימִן בָּכָה עַל צִוְיָאֲרֵיו (בראשית מה, יד). Rashi (ibid.) says that Yosef wept on Binyamin's shoulders over the two Batei Mikdash in the inheritance of Binyamin that would be destroyed and Binyamin wept on Yosef's shoulder over Mishkan Shilo in Yosef's inheritance which would be destroyed.

Similarly, the gematria of - אֵיכָה אָשָׂא לְבָדִי טְרַחֲכֶם וּמִשְׁאַכְּם וְרִיבְכֶם - is the same gematria as מְנַחֵת יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם כִּימֵי עוֹלָם (מלאכי ג, ד), our daily supplication to HKB"H (recited immediately after taking three steps back following the עֲמִידָה) to restore the avodah to the Beit HaMikdash.

In this shiur, however, I would like to explore a different connection related to another gematria of the same passuk. The gematria of - אֵיכָה אָשָׂא לְבָדִי טְרַחֲכֶם וּמִשְׁאַכְּם וְרִיבְכֶם - is also the same gematria as שְׁנֵים עָשָׂר שְׁבַטֵי יִהּ לְבָדֶד.

As we approach the Nine Days, one of the most pressing questions on everyone's mind is the unity (or lack thereof) in Am Yisrael.

Unless you are living in a cave, you cannot help but be aware of the current "conflict" raging within Am Yisrael, which has been exacerbated by the war and even more so by the upcoming elections here in Israel. The conflict between the conservative right and the liberal left. The conflict between the Charedim and the rest of Am Yisrael regarding conscription. The conflict

regarding the balance between the judicial and executive branches of government. The conflict over the standards of Kashrut. The conflict of Jews abroad between their affiliation to the progressive-left Democrats and the conservative-right Republicans, etc. etc.

The only consensus between everyone right now is - that there is no achdut in Am Yisrael. That our current "state-of-the-nation" is eerily similar to that prior to חֲרִבּוֹן בֵּית שְׁנִי 1956 years ago, Rachmana litzlan. There are those who will dispute this assertion, but imho their view more reflects an optimistic hope than the reality on the ground.

Obviously achdut, unity, in Am Yisrael is a good thing and we all want to achieve it, because deep down we realize that it is not our enemies from without who are our greatest threat, but our enemies from within. The question is how to achieve achdut? Is it at all possible?

The answer is – "Yes, it is possible!" and we know this because it is a historical fact. For one fleeting moment Am Yisrael managed to achieve perfect unity (שְׁמוֹת יט, ב) וַיִּתֵּן שָׁם יִשְׂרָאֵל נֶגֶד הָהָר (שמות יט, ב), on which Rashi (ibid.) says כָּאִישׁ אֶחָד – at Har Sinai.

Although at other junctures Am Yisrael experienced a *heightened* sense of unity, like when we entered Eretz Yisrael with Yehoshua, the story of Purim, etc. there was no other case of *absolute* achdut like at Matan Torah. It is a very sobering thought, that in our 3338 years as a nation we only had perfect unity once and for a fleeting moment.

If it was achievable back then we know that it is possible to achieve it once again, but we cannot live in an illusion that this will be easy. The harsh reality is that we haven't experienced this type of unity for 3338 years. It is therefore something to strive for, something to work towards, but with the sobering understanding that it will be a battle.

I would like to present the Torah model of achdut in Am Yisrael, the vision the Torah had for our nation. This is not my personal opinion, it is not a "political opinion" emanating from sectorial bias, so if you disagree, complain to the Boss. It may seem counterintuitive and even surprising to many, but it is indisputable in the sources.

The Torah model for achdut in Am Yisrael is **"Unity through Separatism"**.

The "Twelve Tribe" construct was created at the beginning of time with Adam and Chava, who were supposed to give birth to twelve children זָה סֵפֶר (בראשית ה, א), the word זָה referring to the number 12 (in gematria). Due to their sin with the עֵץ הַדַּעַת, this did not transpire. The task was handed down to Noach who also failed to accomplish it זָה יִנְחַמְנוּ מִמַּעֲשֵׂנוּ וּמִעֲצָבוֹן יָדֵינוּ

(בראשית ה, כט). Next up were Avraham and Sarah, but they too failed when Sarah doubted HKB"H (בראשית יח, יג) and was once again transferred to the next generation, Yitzchak and Rivka. They too did not succeed when Rivka complained (בראשית כה, כב) **וַתֹּאמֶר אִם כֵּן לָמָּה זֶה אֶנֶכִּי** (בראשית כה, כב).

The Twelve Tribe construct does not refer necessarily to "people" per se, but rather to a collection of twelve different "forces", כוחות, each of which is essential to the functioning of Am Yisrael.

Finally, along comes Yaakov and his wives Leah/Rachel/Bilha/Zilpa and they succeed in this mission, giving birth to twelve sons. There is clear delineation of function amongst the sons, Yehuda is to become the king, Levi the Kohen, Gad the soldier, Naftali the athlete, Dan the judge, etc. (as reflected in Yaakov's blessings to his sons before he dies). The passuk says **וַיְבָא יַעֲקֹב שָׁלֹם** (בראשית לג, יח) **עִיר שָׁכֶם** (בראשית לג, יח), that Yaakov's mission supposedly had been accomplished, establishing the Twelve Tribes of Am Yisrael.

Then calamity struck. The plan was that each of the tribes/sons would manifest their allotted כוח and collectively form Am Yisrael. But then along comes Yosef and his dreams of royalty, which the brothers mistakenly interpret as encroaching on his brother Yehuda's territory. Thus, the vision of the Twelve Tribes was temporarily derailed and postponed for another 233 years, when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt. In order to set the "train back on the tracks" as it were, required a כּוּר הַתּוֹךְ, the "furnace" that was Egypt.

When Yaakov died, his last will and testament was twofold. Revealing in his blessings to each of his twelve sons their destiny/role and also their "layout", surrounding his coffin, when his sons took him back to Eretz Yisrael for burial. This same layout and configuration were later copied when Am Yisrael camped and travelled in the Midbar.

When Bnei Yisrael left Egypt, it was not as one blurry potpourri of population, all mixed in together with one another. Each tribe was distinct and travelled separately from the others. This is the way we crossed over Yam Suf, in twelve separate "lanes" in the sea, separated by towering walls of water (תנחומא) (בשלח, פרק יד, י). We could see the tribes adjacent to us, but could not cross from one lane to the other. This is the way we stood at Har Sinai to receive the Torah. This is the way we encamped around the Mishkan. The water from the Well of Miriam formed rivers separating each tribe, so wide that you needed a boat to cross over from one to the other (במדבר רבה, חקת יט, כו). This is the way we travelled through the Midbar.

In the Midbar there were no "political parties", only tribes and their נְשִׂאִים, mentioned numerous times in different contexts. When an attempt was made to form "coalitions", mixing tribes, it ended in disaster (re: Korach). During the

inauguration of the Mishkan, the נְשִׂיא of each tribe brought their own distinct korban, on a different day. Although the components of each tribe's korban were equivalent, their kavanot and purpose were completely different (במדבר רבה יג-). It was taboo to mix tribes, a member of one tribe marrying a member of another tribe (re: daughters of Tzlofchad).

When Yehoshua conquered Eretz Yisrael, the land was parceled out to the twelve tribes, each in their own inheritance that facilitated them achieving their destined role in Am Yisrael (e.g. Zevulun on the coast with ships).

In נך we experience the same distinct separation of tribes, in numerous incidents mentioned in the periods of the Shoftim, the Melachim, etc.

This almost absolute separatism is an underlying foundation stone of Am Yisrael. Each tribe lived separately from the other, did their own "thing", didn't interfere with the other tribes and their "things". This is the utopian vision/blessing Bilam transmitted וַיִּשָּׂא בָלָעַם אֶת עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל שֹׁכֵן לְשִׁבְטוֹ וְתַהֲי עָלָיו רוּחַ אֱ-לֹהִים. The reality of each tribe separated from the other, שֹׁכֵן לְשִׁבְטוֹ, is the utopian vision for Am Yisrael. These are not Bilam's words, they are HKB"H's words placed in Bilam's mouth. They are a *direct communiqué* from HKB"H Himself of His vision for the structure of Am Yisrael. It is not only that each tent didn't face the opening of another tent, it is more importantly that each *tribe* didn't interfere with the affairs of the other tribes. They concentrated on their own role and purpose. And again, הֵן יָשְׁבוּ בְּיָסְדָם (במדבר כג, ט), they will dwell alone – not only as a nation among the nations, but *within themselves*, each tribe לְבִדָּד יֵשְׁבוּ.

This delineation carried forward even when Am Yisrael were exiled after the Batei Mikdash were destroyed, the "Lost Tribes", each to a different part of the globe.

This deliberate separatism is essential in maintaining the national *integrity* of Am Yisrael. The concept of כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל עֲרֵבִים זֶה לָזֶה does not mean that we all have to look out *for* one another, but rather that each tribe needs to keep the other tribes in check and ensure they are fulfilling their allotted purpose.

There were, however, certain isolated cases where Am Yisrael rallied together as one, not as individual tribes, but as *one consolidated unit* composed of twelve subunits. Cases of national importance and magnitude.

Receiving the Torah at Har Sinai, the first and only (so far) case of *perfect unity* and functioning of the unit that is Am Yisrael.

Donating for and building the Mishkan, a collective, "tribeless" effort. The gold from one tribe was melted in together with the gold from another tribe.

The threads of techelet, argaman, tola'at shani etc. from one tribe were weaved together with threads of other tribes to make the Parochet. There were no "plaques" in the Mishkan. "This copper Kiyor was generously donated by the tribe of Asher!" - it was made from the mirrors of the women of *all* the tribes together. "This Menora is dedicated to the tribe of Yissachar and their generous donation!" There is *no* component of the Menorah that relates to the number twelve (7 stems, 9 flowers, 11 knobs, 22 cups). There is no significance to tribalism in the Mishkan, it was a national entity.

Waging war with our enemies. Am Yisrael, *all twelve tribes*, men and women waged war, מִלְחָמָת מִצְוָה, together - בְּמִלְחָמָת מִצְוָה הַכֹּל יוֹצְאִין אֶפְלוּ חֶתָן (women not in combat but in the "logistic corps", שם, תפארת ישראל). There were no units for each tribe separately, it was one consolidated unit. When or if one or more of the tribes were reluctant or refrained from joining the rest of Am Yisrael to fight these wars they were severely castigated. By Moshe - וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה לְבִנֵי גָד וְלְבִנֵי רָאוּבֵן הָאֲחִיכֶם זָבָאוּ - לְמַלְחָמָה וְאַתֶּם תֵּשְׁבוּ בָּהּ (במדבר לב, ו) לָמָּה יִשְׁבֹּת בֵּין הַמִּשְׁפָּתִים - By Devora - וַיִּפְקֹד מִי לֹא עָלָה (שופטים כא, ח) - פִּילָגֶשׁ בְּגִבְעָה (שופטים ה, טז).

Building the Beit HaMikdash. Shlomo HaMelech imposed a "tax" (people not money), to recruit a building force to build the first Beit HaMikdash. Aside from the tribe of the king, Yehuda (רש"י, מלכים א' ה, כז) all of the other tribes participated.

Tax for the upkeep of the Mikdash. The tax of מַחֲצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל was incumbent on all the tribes.

In addition to and more *importantly* than all the instances above, the single most unifying factor in Am Yisrael has and always will be – belief in HKB"H.

The word אֶחָד is derived from the word אֶחָד. The unity that acts as a "glue" between all the tribes is our belief that HKB"H is the only One, true G-d. According to the Gemara (פסחים נו, ע"א) this was the twelve tribes' parting declaration to Yaakov their father before he died, the passuk we will read in next week's parsha (דברים ו, ד) שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד (דברים ו, ד). This passuk is the *remedy* to the passuk אֵיכָה אֶשָּׂא לְבָדִי טָרְחָכֶם וּמִשְׁאַכָּם וְרִיבְכֶם. Both have six words, the power to unify - both in עֵת רָצוֹן and also in עֵת צָרָה. The gematria of אֵיכָה אֶשָּׂא לְבָדִי טָרְחָכֶם וּמִשְׁאַכָּם וְרִיבְכֶם is the same gematria as אֶלֶּקִי יַעֲקֹב, שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד.

The only legitimate cases of "civil war" in Am Yisrael were in cases where some part of Am Yisrael *rejected HKB"H and His Torah*. For example, when Moshe returned from Har Sinai after the sin of the egel and rallied everyone with the call of (שמות לב, כו) מִי לָהּ אֱלֹהִי? Another example is the war against the tribe of Binyamin with (שופטים יט-כא) פִּילָגֶשׁ בְּגִבְעָה (שופטים יט-כא).

After that introduction we can now begin the shiur.

After a major systems failure (like the brothers selling Yosef) it required a כּוּר הַתּוֹךְ, a furnace like Egypt, to realign Am Yisrael with our "blueprint". Our contemporary furnace was the Holocaust. Following that and continuing to the present day, the Twelve Tribes have begun their journey home to Eretz Yisrael, after 1878 years of absence.

Aside from some Kohanim and Leviim (not all, those with centuries long yichus), the vast majority of Am Yisrael today do not know for sure which tribe of the twelve they belong to. That said, we do see a natural gravitation of people to certain fields of endeavor, כּוֹחוֹת. Being drawn by a subliminal pull of the neshama which is steering people towards their original "tribe". This is why some people in Am Yisrael become doctors, soldiers, merchants, talmidei chachamim, rabbanim, sofrim, teachers, etc. Although we cannot pin an official title on each of these "tribes" (Mashiach will when he comes), de facto Am Yisrael is gravitating to its roots. This is a natural and essential phenomenon and not one that should be interfered with.

The worst crime we can possibly commit is to "reeducate" people *away* from their natural affinity. That muddles up Am Yisrael instead of *consolidating* it. Separatism is an essential structural mechanism in Am Yisrael. It is in fact *damaging to prevent separatism*. It is perfectly natural and is in fact a *historic reversal*, that the Charedim are who they are, the Dati Leumi are who they are, the generals in the army, the judges, the doctors, the teachers, the scientists, the artists, the athletes, the police, the farmers, the accountants, the reporters, etc. etc. Each of us has our allotted place and role to play in Am Yisrael, the direction that our neshama subliminally pulls us in.

Another crime against Am Yisrael is for any of these "tribes" to mistakenly claim that they are superior in any way to any of the others. The Torah and Rabbanim of the Charedim are not superior to the Torah and Rabbanim of the Dati Leumi world. Ponevezh is not superior to Merkaz HaRav, Brisk is not superior to Chabad. People in each of these "tribes" are *exactly* where they should be, following their specific destiny with the unique כּוֹחוֹת HKB"ח gave them. Same goes for soldiers, hitech people, farmers, lawyers, judges, etc.

The terrible catastrophic lack of unity that currently exists today in Am Yisrael, is because every "tribe" is poking their eyes and noses into the "tent opening" of the other "tribe" – the *opposite* of טָבוּ אֶהְיֶה וְעָקֹב. We need to stop examining each other under the microscope. Instead, we all need to be שֶׁכֶּן – concentrate on our "thing" that we do best and not try make everyone else like us, not belittle, minimize or cancel others for their "thing".

We need to allocate resources just like the Torah says לְרֹב תְּרֻבָּהּ נִחְלָתוֹ – (במדבר כו, נד), i.e per capita – according to the number of

people in that "tribe". You take the "education pie", the "transportation pie", the "social services pie" and all the other pies (budgets) and you allocate them *per capita*, so that each individual in each of the tribes ends up getting the same individual slice – their education slice, their transportation slice, their social services slice. The method of allocation of resources today is not based on that but rather on political interests, on who shouts loudest, "protekzia" and because of certain tribes mistakenly thinking that they have precedence over others.

We need leaders who respect everyone's sectoriality, that do not play one sector off against the other for their nefarious, selfish, egotistical political purposes. Leaders who respect everyone's sectoriality are the kind of leaders we should be grooming and electing, not those who are in favor of "national unity", which is a codeword for national decay and stagnation.

It all hinges on two common threads

The first common thread is that the Jewish People, whichever "tribe" they belong to – have to all believe in HKB"H, that He is the One G-d who created the universe and manages the world. That the Torah is the Divine moral compass and "handbook" of the world and that we have to live by it.

I truly think that 99% of the Jewish People, regardless of "tribe", already believe that and even those who say they don't, don't really in their hearts believe what they are saying – they are just mouthing reactionary opposition to other "tribes" interfering with them and their role in Am Yisrael and denigrating their "Torah" and avodat Hashem. No human can see into another's heart and truly know who that person really is. It is highly likely that a certain Chiloni from Tel Aviv, with a nose ring who drives on Shabbat is *more loved* by HKB"H and will more merit Olam Habah than a certain Charedi studying in Yeshivat Ponevezh with a streimel (re: "עולם הבא", "ע"א", "עולם הבא" ראייתו).

A small percent (I think 1% or less) is truly an "erev rav" that seeks to defy HKB"H and wage war against Him and His Torah. They are true reshamim and their neshamot have been destroyed by foreign influences and greed. The 99% of the true Am Yisrael need to cast out this 1% and *reconstitute* our nation, regardless of the disproportionate power this 1% may have relative to the 99%. It demands courage and tenacity.

The second common thread is that the Jewish People, whichever "tribe" they belong to – must rally together for matters of *national importance*.

To fight and defeat our enemy in this existential מלחמת מצינה, willingly and with mesirut nefesh, without shirking and without excuses that have no halachic basis.

To work together to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash and herald in the Geulah.

Those who try to weasel out of either of these national missions are refuting the first common thread and placing themselves in the 1% camp above.

The Gemara (פסחים נו, ע"א) says –

וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֶאֱסָפוּ וְאֶגִּידָה לָכֶם. בִּיקָשׁ יַעֲקֹב לְגִלוֹת לְבָנָיו קֶחַץ הַיָּמִין וְנִסְתַּלְקָה מִמֶּנּוּ שְׂכִינָהּ. אָמַר שְׁמָא חֵס וְשְׁלוֹם יֵשׁ בְּמִטָּתִי פָּסוּל כְּאֲבָרָהֶם שִׁינָא מִמֶּנּוּ יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל וְאָבִי יִצְחָק שִׁינָא מִמֶּנּוּ עָשׂוּ? אָמְרוּ לוֹ בָּנָיו שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל ה' אֶחָד. אָמְרוּ כְּשֵׁם שְׁאִין בְּלִבָּד אֶלָּא אֶחָד כֵּךְ אֵין בְּלִבְנֵי אֶלָּא אֶחָד. בְּאוֹתָהּ שָׁעָה פָּתַח יַעֲקֹב אָבִינוּ וַאֲמַר בְּרוּךְ שֵׁם כְּבוֹד מְלָכוּתוֹ לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד.

This is where we are now - קֶחַץ הַיָּמִין - Yaakov wanted to reveal to his sons back then, *what is happening right now before our very eyes*, but the Shechina departed from him and he couldn't see. It is all about achdut, back then and today. The glitch and the remedy are the same, back then and *today*.

As we approach the Nine Days and we remember the mistakes of our ancestors and bemoan the fate it wreaked on us, let us also *take responsibility* to reverse and repair that wrong. To establish true achdut in Am Yisrael, first by understanding what real achdut truly is and then by toiling endlessly to achieve it.

Shabbat Shalom

Eliezer Meir Saidel

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