

A Taste of Torah

Slow Regression

By: Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher

The word *eicha* immediately brings to mind the Book of Lamentations, Megillas Eicha, that is read on the night of Tisha B'Av. But the word *eicha* appears notably in Scripture in three places. One, most famously, is the first word of aforementioned Megillas Eicha "Eicha – Alas! She sits in solitude." Another appears in the book of Yeshaya (Isaiah 1:21): "Eicha – How she has become like a harlot." The third appears in this week's parsha (Devarim 1:12), as Moshe comments to the Jewish People, "Eicha – How can I alone carry your contentiousness." All three of these verses are customarily read with the haunting, tragic tune used for the reading of Megillas Eicha. The source for this is a Medrash on Megillas Eicha that states that these three verses represent a noblewoman who had three different attendants. The first attendant served her mistress during her period of tranquility, the second during her period of scandalous behavior, and the third after she had been shamed due to her actions. So, too, Moshe guided the Jewish People during their days of glory following the Exodus, Yeshaya during their period of sinfulness, and Yirmiyah (Jeremiah – author of Eicha) at the time of their fall.

While we can certainly understand the progression from the lament of Yeshaya to that of Yirmiyah, Moshe's comments need a bit more explanation. For while the Jewish People in the desert were, at times, arduous and contentious, and Moshe required assistance to manage them, they were, overall,

very righteous individuals. How does their burdensomeness translate to the sinfulness and, later, exile of the Jews during the First Temple era?

The Sfas Emes (Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter; 1847-1905) explains that the difficulties experienced by Moshe in leading his flock in the desert were due to a subtle lack of willingness to follow Moshe. Though slight and barely perceptible, this imperfection took root. As time passed, as one generation departed and the next one arose, as the years, decades and centuries wore on, that small seed of imperfection had opportunity to sprout, grow and ultimately flourish – to the extent that it brought about the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish Nation from their land. As our Sages teach, one sin leads to another – for a small, barely perceptible shortcoming can take root and grow into a terrible monster down the line.

This was Moshe's observation; the *eicha* that he spoke of as the Jewish Nation flourished was the start of their eventual downfall, as it progressed to the *eicha* of their spiritual failure and, finally, the *eicha* of the tragic destruction and exile.

As we mourn the terrible tragedies that befell us on Tisha B'Av, let us remember that everything counts; seemingly small actions can make a big difference, both in positive and negative terms. What appears to be a trivial act now can grow to huge proportions later, bringing with it the good or evil consequences that seemed so unremarkable at the start.

Stories For The Soul

Tears On Shabbos

It was the fiftieth yahrtzeit of the great Chofetz Chaim (Rabbi Yisrael Meir Kagan; 1839-1933). In Miami, Florida, a rabbi delivered a talk about the Chofetz Chaim's life, accomplishments and impact. During the talk, he related an incident about a teenage boy in the Chofetz Chaim's yeshiva in Radin who was found smoking a cigarette on Shabbos. The incident sent the yeshiva into shock, and some wanted the student expelled. The Chofetz Chaim, however, requested to meet with the boy.

"I don't know what the Chofetz Chaim told that boy," said the rabbi. "But I am told that he never desecrated the Shabbos again."

Following the talk, everyone left – except for one old man who remained in his seat, looking very shaken. When the rabbi approached him, he said, "I know what the Chofetz Chaim said."

"How can you know what he said?" asked the rabbi, quite surprised.

"Because I was the yeshiva boy in the story! When I entered the Chofetz Chaim's home, he clasped my hand in his hands and said, 'Shabbos! Heiliger (holy) Shabbos!' And he started to cry. All he said, over and over again, was, 'Shabbos!' His tears fell upon my hand, and I thought they would burn a hole right through. I can still feel those tears. It is more than sixty years since this happened, but the impression the Chofetz Chaim made on me has never faded."

In this week's parsha, Moshe rebukes the Jewish People for their mistakes in the desert. But he only alludes to their errors, without directly discussing them, so as to preserve their honor. Knowing how to properly offer rebuke is vital to its efficacy.

Kollel Happenings

LEARN 2 LEARN

You have long dreamed of acquiring the tools to achieve proficiency in learning Gemara on your own. But how? The Denver Community Kollel offers a comprehensive, step-by-step, level-by-level program crafted for people just like you. All you need is the ability to read Hebrew; we will teach you the rest. Class will resume on August 17th following summer break.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SHACHNE SOMMERS

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers as he discusses a number of difficulties encountered in the weekly Torah portion, and develops a comprehensive approach to resolve the issue, simultaneously conveying a deeper understanding of the material being discussed. Sunday nights, 7:40-8:30 pm, at the Kollel for men, 1516 Xavier, and Tuesday nights at the Southeast Kollel Torah center, 8-9 pm, for men and women. Class will resume on August 17th following summer break.

THE M.B. GLASSMAN FOUNDATION GOLD ADOPT-A-BUBBY PROGRAM

Do you know of a senior – a parent, grandparent, aunt, uncle, neighbor, fellow congregant – who would benefit from a weekly phone call to schmooze, share a thought on the parsha or Jewish calendar, or just say hello? Do you have a few minutes a week to call a senior in the community and make a difference in the life of another? Contact the Denver Community Kollel's M.B. Glassman Foundation GOLD Adopt-A-Bubby program! Call Joyce Litzman at the Denver Community Kollel at 303-820-2855, or email jlitzman@denverkollel.org.

Increase Your Jewish IQ

By: Rabbi Yaakov Zions

Last week we asked: Halacha states that one is required to wash his hands after removing his shoes (Orach Chaim 4:18). Some say this applies even without touching the shoes (Pri Megadim ibid.). Can you prove from a practiced custom that touching the shoes is needed to necessitate washing?

A: When the fast of Tisha B'Av is observed on Sunday (as it is this year), the restrictions of the day begin at nightfall after Shabbos. If ma'ariv is recited immediately at nightfall (as is usually done after Shabbos), the congregation removes their shoes after

reciting *borchu* without washing their hands (see M.B. 553:6).

This week's question: : In addition to the bows done during the *shemone esrei*, there are several other points where we fully bow (to the point of having the "knots" protrude from the back). What are they, and why is there no issue of adding to the original order of bows during *shemone esrei*?

To submit an answer to Rabbi Zions, email ryz@denverkollel.org

Ask the Rabbi

Giving Rebuke

Harlan from Jerusalem wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Recently someone came over to me and asked me if I shave with a razor. When I told them that I do, he told me that the Torah says that this is not allowed, and that I must use an electric shaver or grow a beard. I was very hurt by this and angry that a stranger mixed into my affairs. Later I heard that the person was actually obligated to rebuke me by Torah law. I can't believe that the Torah would command someone to hurt another person's feelings. Was he really right in "butting in?"

Dear Harlan,

The Torah in Parshas Kedoshim writes: "You should not hate your brother in your heart; rebuke your countryman and do not bear a sin on his account."

Maimonides and other Halachic authorities quote this verse as the source for a positive commandment to rebuke someone who has transgressed a law. This applies to both Biblical and Rabbinic laws. In your case, we are talking about the violation of a Torah commandment, so he was obligated to admonish you.

But that's not all there is to it. Although we've established that there's a commandment to rebuke, we must

understand that there are also laws that govern the method of rebuke.

Maimonides in his Codes writes that the one who rebukes must do so due to pure motivation of returning him to the path of Torah. If the transgression was done privately, then the rebuke should also be in private. It should be done with care, compassion and with honor. The point is not to sting the person or to satisfy some perverse sense of pleasure ~ rather to help him do the right thing.

In short, he did the right thing, but probably could have done it in a more sensitive way. (I personally would never rebuke anyone holding an open razor!)

Sources:

-Vayikra 19:17

-Maimonides-The Book of Mitzvos, positive commandment 205

-Sefer Hachinuch - positive commandment 239

-Avosos Ahava, by Rabbis Moshe Newman and Mordechai Becher, Sifrei Nof Publishers, Jerusalem, pp. 54,62

-Maimonides - The Codes, The Book of Knowledge, 6:7

Reprinted with permission from Ohr Somayach, Jerusalem, www.ohr.edu

The Torah Weekly is made possible through a generous grant from the

Harry H. Beren Foundation of Lakewood, NJ, in memory of Harry H. Beren, z"l.

Denver Community Kollel: 1516 Xavier Street, Denver, CO 80204 Tel: 303-820-2855 Fax: 303-820-2806

Email: info@denverkollel.org Web: www.denverkollel.org

To receive Torah Weekly by email, send an email to torah-subscribe@denverkollel.org