

## Parshat Vayechi and The Tenth of Tevet

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

Parshat Vayechi is unique in that it is a *parsha stuma*, a closed parsha. There are no extra spaces between it and the preceding parsha. Rashi explains that this teaches us that the hearts of Yaakov's children were closed in expectation of the suffering that awaited them with the impending bondage. What does this Rashi really mean?

There are three consecutive fast days in Tevet. The eighth day of Tevet commemorates the day that the Torah was translated to Greek, the ninth day memorializes the death of Ezra and Nechemia, and the tenth day is a communal fast to mark the day that Nevuchadnetzar began the siege of Jerusalem. Rav Krem asks, why do we fast on *Asarah B'tevet*, which occurred three and half years before the *Churban*? Is it not adequate for us to fast when the destruction actually occurred? The Avudraham notes that in a way *Asara B'tevet* is even more significant than *Tisha B'av* in that if it would ever fall out on Shabbat it would not be pushed off like *Tisha B'av*. Why?

The Rambam writes that the primary purpose of a fast is not grief and mourning, but a call for us to repent in the very areas that caused the tragedies to occur. Rav Krem points out that *Asara B'tevet* can be explained on three levels. The first level clarifies the link between Vayechi and *Asara B'tevet*. When Hashem brings punishment upon an individual or nation, He doesn't do it all at once. At first, He sends warning signs and if the person has a sense of obligation, he takes it to heart and tries to ferret out the deeper reason behind it.

*Asara B'tevet* was the seed that was supposed to arouse the Jews to repent. Had they taken these warning signs appropriately they could've prevented the *Churban*. We are not fasting so much for what occurred, but rather to rectify the coldness and apathy that settled upon the Jews and caused the destruction. This is reflected in Parshat Vayechi. There is no space for contemplation. Chazal say that the Jews were exiled because they denied Hashem and *Malchut Beit David*.

*Malchut Beit David* is the idea of *hashgacha pratit*. When Natan Hanavi came to reprove David, he immediately admitted his error and looked to correct his ways. When suffering comes upon us, our focus should not be on the stick that hit us. The stick is just an agent, a sign from above, and we must attempt to look beyond it to rectify our evil deeds that caused it. Today, when we no longer have prophecy, we must pray to Hashem to open our eyes to rectify that which we need to. When Hashem sees us responding correctly, our suffering is reduced.

The second level of *Asara B'tevet* is the connection between the eighth, ninth, and tenth days. These three days of mourning commemorate the tragedy of the weakening of Torah. When the Greeks ordered the Torah to be translated, they caused darkness to descend upon the world. The Torah is like a rock that can be splintered in many directions. It contains layers of depth and meaning that can be interpreted in many ways. When the Torah was translated, it lost its beauty, multiplicity, and full essence.

Ezra was on the level of Moshe in that he promulgated the study of Torah in its original

Hebrew. With Targum Hashivim, Ezra's work was weakened and the inner aspect of Torah was lost. This is what we need to rectify on *Asara B'tevet*. The Leket V'halibuv writes that it is not enough to know the factual ideas of Torah. One must bring a spirit of *simcha*, enjoyment, and passion into our home with the *mitzvot*. As parents, our obligation should be to make Judaism a meaningful experience for our children. We need to kindle our homes with the inner light of Torah so that our children feel the joy and beauty of Judaism.

The *Churban* came due to baseless hatred. We can rectify this by working on feeling more responsibility for our fellow Jews. Shevet Dan is related to the month of Tevet. Dan was the *ma'asef*, he collected the stragglers. Our purpose too, is to emulate Dan and reach out to all the lost souls that never merited to know Torah.

The third level of *Asara B'tevet* connects the messages of the ninth and tenth of Tevet. When Ezra Hasofer passed away, the people did not realize what they had lost. Similarly, one of the purposes of *Asara B'tevet* is to awaken ourselves to the immense loss we experienced with the destruction of the Temple. We need to feel the pain of the *Shechina* over our exile. The Chatam Sofer writes that on *Asara B'tevet* the heavenly courts decided that this would be the beginning of the end. In the same vein, every year there is a judgment whether the Beit Hamikdash will be rebuilt again that year. *Tisha B'av* already happened, but *Asara B'tevet* has the ability to affect the future. May our heartfelt *teshuva* and *tefillot* on this pivotal day be

## Parshat Vayechi: Evil Eye

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In Parshat Vayechi, the verse states concerning Yosef, "A charming son is Yosef, a charming son to the eye." The sages teach us that Yosef and his descendants were *olei ayin* – above *ayin hara* (the evil eye). Yaakov blessed Yosef's children, "*V'yidgu la'rov*." Just as the sea covers the fish so that *ayin hara* doesn't affect them, you will be impervious to the evil eye.

The Maase Rokem explains that a person is

affected by *ayin hara* when another person exclaims in wonderment over what he has accomplished. This creates a reality separate from its source, which in turn causes Hashem to open up the books in heaven to determine if the person really deserves the good he received. However, if the person immediately attributes his gifts to Hashem, *ayin hara* cannot affect him.

Rav Naftali Ropshitzer taught that the whole

world is really a shadow of what is above. Our task is to connect everything back to its root, Hashem, and to remember that everything we have is a gift from Him. With constant cognizance of His presence, we can ward off *ayin hara*.

The Massei Rokem notes that Yosef and his children were above *ayin hara* because Yosef had Hashem's name constantly on his lips. He told Paroah, "*Elokim ya'aneh et shalom Paro*." Continued on Page 2



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Hashem will respond to your dream. It is not my wisdom. I'm just an emissary. Yosef had the attribute of *bitul* (self-nullification), which evokes the image of fish covered by water. When a person looks at water from above, he only sees water, but no fish. Yosef attributed his successes to G-d, in a sense acting like a fish who is not seen.

Bilam wanted to harm the Jewish people with *ayin hara*. But he saw how they were encamped, how one tent didn't face the other, how each person knew their place and didn't need to look at his neighbor to see what he was missing. Then he was forced to bless them.

*Ayin hara* has the numerical value of 400. Esav came with 400 people to meet Yaakov. He wanted to destroy all the blessing Yaakov had with *ayin hara*. When he saw Yaakov with his family and possessions, he asked, "Whose are these? How did you deserve all this?" Yaakov answered, "*Asher chanan Elokim et avdecha*." Hashem gave it to me as a free gift. He immediately attributed credit to the source and Esav could not harm him.

The *mishkan* stood in Shilo in the portion of Yosef for over 300 years. In the area of Shilo one was allowed to eat *kodshim kalim* (sacrifices with a lesser degree of sanctity) wherever one could see the *mishkan*. However, in Yerushalayim these sacrifices had to be

within the walls. Rav Abahu explains, "The eye that didn't benefit from what didn't belong to him could now eat and benefit to the extent the eye could see."

Yehuda is blessed that he will have rulership until Shilo comes. He will have that which comes from Yosef, the ability to connect everything back to Hashem.

Rav Levenstein noted that our mission is to strengthen our connection to Hashem. One can do this by learning to always say, *baruch Hashem, bezrat Hashem* while thinking about G-d's help. This is living the life of Yosef.

## Davening with a Minyan Part II

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Ari Jacobson

The Kitzur Shulchan Aruch notes the opinions that hold that one does not have to stand for kaddish unless it is said immediately after something that one was already standing for such as hallel. This is the practice of the Arizal and the Maharil, as recorded in the Darkei Moshe and in the Tur. Other opinions hold that one should always stand for kaddish as well as for other devarim sheb'kedusha (responses) which require a minyan. We see this from Sefer Shoftim, which tells that Eglon the king of Moav stood up when Ehud mentioned the name of Hashem. The Kitzur learns from this that if the evil Eglon, who was an idolater, stood up when Hashem's name was mentioned how much more so should we, the children of Hashem, do so. The Kitzur writes that although he records two practices, some who don't stand for the whole of kaddish and some who do, he recommends that one be stringent and stand for the whole kaddish. This is the practice in most Ashkenazi shuls.

In Seif Zayin, the Kitzur writes that devarim sheb'kedusha such as barchu, kaddish, and

kedusha require a minyan of ten people. This means a minimum of one speaking and nine listening. For the Chazan's repetition, it is preferable that the nine listeners have already finished shemone esrei. But even if only six finished and are listening, it's enough to begin the repetition. For devarim sheb'kedusha such as kaddish, if there are nine listening and one still davening shemone esrei it still counts as a minyan. This is the law even if you have four people still davening, as long as the majority can still recite the appropriate responses. If there are nine listening and then one falls asleep, one must wake him. One who is asleep cannot count in a minyan. This is the stringent view of the Pri Chadash, although the Shulchan Aruch rules that a sleeping person does count for a minyan.

In Seif Tet, the Kitzur notes that one can only recite kedusha with a minyan. What about the verses, kadosh kadosh and boruch kevod in the blessings of kriat shema? The poskim disagree if one can say it without minyan. The Kitzur follows the opinion of earlier authorities that permits one to recite it. However, since

some say one needs a minyan, this is another reason to always try to daven with a minyan.

In Seif Yud, the Kitzur discusses that if there are exactly ten men in the minyan, it is important that no one leave. If there are more than ten people present, one can leave early if one needs to. If the minyan starts off with ten men and then while the chazzan is repeating the shemone esrei someone walks out, for example to go to the bathroom, is the reader obligated to stop and wait for him to come back? The law is that if the minyan began with ten, you don't have to wait for him to come back. However, the Kitzur holds that one cannot then say the kaddeshim after shemone esrei. The Chofetz Chaim disagrees, and this is the general practice we follow, that one is allowed to say all the associated kaddeshim through the kaddish tiskabel if there is no longer a minyan present as long as one started with a minyan. However, the further kaddeshim after aleinu and shir shel yom which are generally recited by mourners cannot be recited.