



*Yeshivat Ma'alot*  
*Parashat Devarim*  
*Rav Yehoshua Weitzman shlit"a*

ישיבת מעלות  
 פרשת דברים  
 רב יהושע ויצמן שליט"א

*Eicha and Ayyeka*

This week's parasha, Parashat Devarim, is read every year on the Shabbat before Tisha B'av. In the parasha, Moshe laments "Eicha esa levadi", how can I bear the burden of Bnei Yisrael's quarrels and arguments. It is customary to read this pasuk in the special melody of Megilat Eicha. Chazal, in the prologue of Midrash Eicha, give an interpretation to the meaning of the word Eicha<sup>1</sup>: R. Abbahu opened his discourse with the text, "But they like men [Adam] have transgressed the covenant"<sup>2</sup>. This alludes to the first man, of whom Hashem, said, "Hichnasti oto" - I brought him into the Garden of Eden, "Vtzivati" - and I imposed a command upon him, but he transgressed it; "V'danti oto b'girushin v'shiluchin" - so I punished him by driving him out and sending him forth, "V'kinati alav eicha" - and lamented over him,... as it is said, Therefore Hashem God sent him forth, and ' lamented over him, Eichah, as it is said, Where art thou; 'ayyekah', (the two Hebrew words appear identical in the non-vocalized text). Similarly with his descendants, I brought them into the land of Israel... I gave them commandments ... They transgressed My ordinances... So I punished them by driving them out, and by sending them forth, and I lamented over them, "How she (Yerushalayim) sits solitary"<sup>3</sup>.

The comparison between the expulsion from Gan Eden and the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash comes to show that both of these events did not randomly occur, rather they were the climax of a longer process. By understanding the steps in the process, we can understand the meaning of the destruction, and how we can go about to herald the redemption. The first step in Adam's expulsion was that Hashem placed him in Gan Eden, "Hichnasti oto". Gan Eden is Divine perfection; there, nothing is dependant on the actions of mankind. In other words, the beginning of this world was solely based on Hashem's will, and did not have any human intervention whatsoever.

The next phase is "v'tzivati", "and I commanded him". Hashem commanded Adam not to eat from the Etz Hada'at. In essence, now Adam also has responsibility. Within this Godly euphoria, Adam must also take charge for what he does. Many times, giving responsibility to man can lead to downfall. Adam was placed in Gan Eden, where the Divine perfection was much too great for him to handle. Therefore,

<sup>1</sup> Eicha Rabbah, prologue 4

<sup>2</sup> Hoshea 6, 7

<sup>3</sup> Eicha 1, 1

even though he was commanded to refrain from eating from the Etz Hada'at, Adam was not able to uphold his responsibility, and he fell.

This process, of confronting Divine perfection and the downfall that occurs afterwards, is found many times throughout the course of the history of our nation. Perhaps the most prominent example of this is Matan Torah. Bnei Yisrael was elevated to the highest heights as Hashem revealed Himself unto the entire nation. This face to face meeting is unparalleled to any other meeting between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael throughout the course of our history. Yet directly after Matan Torah, Bnei Yisrael builds the Egel Hazahav. They were not able to grasp the ultimate holiness of Matan Torah, and therefore they fell and worshiped an idol.

The next step that the Midrash quotes in the expulsion from Gan Eden is that Hashem judged Adam, expelled him, and sent him away. What is the difference between being expelled, "girushin", and being sent away, "shiluchin"? The expulsion was being sent out of Gan Eden, and the lose of the Divine perfection that surrounded Adam. Being sent away means that one feels that he has been sent for a reason, he feels that he has a mission to accomplish, and is therefore complacent with the fact the he is sent away. In the case of Adam, he had no desire to return to Gan Eden because he felt that he was sent away for a reason. So too, Am Yisrael in the exile feels that this is there place, this is the destination to which they have been sent. For some, this even means that they have no desire to return to Eretz Yisrael, because the galut is their "destination".

The final step of the expulsion from Gan Eden is the exclamation of "Ayeka" (where are you). This same step occurs in the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash but rather than Hashem asking "where are you", Hashem replies with the word "Eicha" (an expression of lament). Both Ayeka and Eicha are spelled the same way in Hebrew. Is there a connection between these two expressions? In addition, does the Midrash finish off in a state of lament, or is there a point of inspiration that can be found with the Midrash? Maybe these questions can be answered by a Chasidic story.

Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi, the first Rebbe of Chabad, was falsely charged with treason against the Czar, and was imprisoned in Petersburg. One day, one of the government ministers arrived to interrogate the Rebbe. He found the Rebbe deep in thought, and he understood that before him is an unusually wise person. The minister himself was quite well versed in Torah. He asked the Rebbe to explain to him the pasuk in Bereshit which says that Hashem called to Adam and said Ayeka (where are you). "Could it be that Hasehm did not know where Adam was?" asked the minister. The Rebbe responded by asking the minister "Do you believe that the Torah is eternal and is relevant to each person at all times?" The minister said yes. The Rebbe said to him that if this is so, than what Hashem asked Adam is not just a question to him, rather a question to every Jew- where are you. Each person is allotted a certain amount of years, days, and hours in this world in order to do what Hashem wants of us. Are we fulfilling our mission? The Rebbe gazed at the minister and said "You have lived such and such amount of years," (the Rebbe said exactly the age of the minister), "what have you done in your lifetime? Have you done good deeds to others?" The minister was amazed by the Rebbe's answer and thanked him for it. Based on this and other meetings with Rabbi Schneur Zalman, the minister came to

the conclusion that the Rebbe was not guilty of treason, and that the accusations made against him were all false.

The question Ayeka, or Eicha, forces each individual to reflect on his own personal life. "What am I doing here? How have I gotten to this point at my life, and where do I need to be going?" For each individual the answers may vary, yet they have one common denominator, to do tshuva on past transgressions and downfalls. When one honestly knows how to answer these questions, he has already taken a huge step in tshuva. He knows that he must improve his actions, and is not content with his current situation.

This is the exact opposite of being sent away from Gan Eden, as mentioned in the Midrash. It appears that both Adam and Am Yisrael undergo a process of downfall and retribution. The end of each process ends with a question mark. The answer to the question is answered of the course of history, and we too can contribute to the answer; where are we, and how are our actions helping to advance us towards Hashem. In this week's parasha, when Moshe exclaims Eicha, it can also be understood as the question Ayeka.