

The Twenty-two Days of “Bein HaMetzarim” Correspond to the Twenty-two Letters of the Torah

On the Seventeenth of Tamuz the Twenty-two Letters of the Torah Flew Off of the Luchos and Were Dispersed throughout the Galuyos to Be Collected by Yisrael

On the auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh, we read from the Torah parshas Pinchas. In a non-leap year, it always falls out during the first of the three weeks of Bein HaMetzarim—the period extending from Shivah Asar B'Tamuz until Tishah B'Av. During this period, every Jew is obliged to mourn the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and the exile of the Shechinah and to pray for the complete geulah.

Now, we learn in the Gemara (Megillah 32b) that Ezra HaSofer established the annual cycle of Torah-readings with precise intent. Hence, it is obvious that parshas Pinchas is intimately related to the period of Bein HaMetzarim. Sensing this relationship, the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy”a, comments in Ohev Yisrael (Pinchas): “למה קורין פרשת פנחס בשבת בין המצרים ברוב השנים, אשר כל עיקרי המועדים כתובים בפרשה זו, ועל כרחך לא דבר ריק הוא, אך בכוונה מכוונת עשו חכמינו ז”ל. **Why is parshas Pinchas read on a Shabbas Bein HaMetzarim in most years? For, all the details of the festivals are recorded in this parsha. Perforce, this is not a mere coincidence. This was most certainly done by our sages of blessed memory on purpose using their “ruach hakodesh.”**

He explains brilliantly that the twenty-one days of Bein HaMetzarim are the source and foundation for all of the annual festivals, which also number twenty-one days. Here is what he writes:

“אמנם יש לומר בהעיר לב ושום שכל, דאלו הכ”א יום שבין י”ז בתמוז לט” באב, הם מקוריים ורשיים לכל המועדות של השנה שהם בכללם גם כן כ”א יום, היינו שבת וראש חודש, ז’ ימי הפסח, יום חג השבועות, ב’ ימים של ראש השנה, יום הכיפורים, ח’ ימי חג הסוכות [עם שמיני עצרת], וסימנך (תהלים עג-א) א”ך טוב לישראל, ואלו הכ”א יום שבין המצרים הם מקוריים רשיים להם.”

He enumerates the twenty-one festival days as follows: Shabbas and Rosh Chodesh, seven days of Pesach, Chag HaShavuot, two days of Rosh HaShanah, Yom HaKippurim and eight days of Succos (including Shemini Atzeres).

During the Period of “Bein HaMetzarim” We Come Closer to HKB”H to Cheer Him Up and Diminish the Sorrow of the Galus

It appears that we can explain this notion based on what we have learned in the Gemara (Berachos 3a): “שלש משמרות הוי: הלילה, ועל כל משמר ומשמר יושב הקדוש ברוך הוא ושואג כארי ואומר, אוי לבנים שבעוונותיהם החרבתי את ביתי, ושרפתי את היכלי, והגליתים לבין אומות העולם. **The night consists of three watches. During each watch HKB”H sits and roars like a lion and says: “Woe to My children! For, due to their transgressions, I destroyed My house, burned down My Sanctuary and exiled them among the nations of the world.”**

If this is true during the entire year, then how much more so is it true during the twenty-one nights of Bein HaMetzarim—that HKB”H mourns intensely the churban of the Beis HaMikdash and Yisrael’s Galus! Therefore, when a Jew draws nearer to HKB”H during these twenty-one days--to raise His spirits and alleviate His agony over the Galus--he inspires HKB”H to draw closer to him during the twenty-one festival days of the year; our actions below trigger a reaction above. For, we know that the festivals are unique occasions on which HKB”H draws closer to Yisrael.

Support for this notion can be found in Avodas Yisrael (Masei); there, he presents the following in the name of his teacher and Rav, Rabbi Dov Ber of Mezritsch, zy”a:

“וכבר הקדים לנו אדמו”ר ז”ל הג”ל, רמז בפסוק (איכה א-ג) כל רודפיה השיגוה בין המצרים, דהיינו כל מי שרודף להמליך את הבורא, יוכל להשיג יותר דוקא בימים אלו בין המצרים. למשל כי כשהשר יושב בביתו אז אימתו מוטלת, אשר לא כל איש ואיש יכול לבוא פנימה, מה שאין כאן אם השר עובר בשווקים וברחובות חוץ לפלטרין שלו, אז הוא קרוב לכל קוראיו ויאזין שועת כל הקוראים בשמו. וכן הנמשל לדעת כי בזמן הזה (משלי כז-ח) כי בצפור נודדת מקנה וגו’, לכן הרשות נתונה לכל אדם להתקרב אל מלכו של עולם והוא עונה אליהם.”

He presents an allusion from the passuk (Eichah 1, 3): **“All her pursuers overtook her ‘bein hametzarim’ (between the narrow straits).”** Everyone who strives to make the Creator King, can achieve more specifically during these days of “Bein HaMetzarim.” For instance, when the ruler sits in his house, he is feared; everyone is not allowed to go inside. Yet, when the ruler passes through the marketplaces and streets outside of his palace, he is in close proximity to all those who wish to speak with him and is likely to listen to the pleas of those who call his name. Similarly, it is important to know that during this period of time, it is (Mishlei 27, 8): **“Like a bird wandering from its nest ...”** Therefore, everyone is permitted to approach the King of the World, and He will answer them.

Then the Avodas Yisrael adds that it is imperative to make an effort to serve Hashem during the days of “Bein HaMetzarim”—to comfort him and please Him, so to speak, in His time of sorrow—believing sincerely in the coming of the Mashiach, when HKB”H will reveal Himself and rule over the entire world. It is vital not to neglect serving Hashem and not to despair even on Tisha B’Av, which appears to be a time of darkness and doom. Despite crying bitterly over what transpired on that tragic day; nevertheless, we must gladden the heart of the King with the joy that the future portends—the birth of Menachem, the Melech HaMashiach, on that day.

This is what the Ohev Yisrael means when he says that the twenty-one days of “Bein HaMetzarim” are the key to the twenty-one festival days. By drawing nearer to HKB”H to comfort Him, so to speak, during the period of “Bein HaMetzarim”—in His time of great sorrow over the Galus; HKB”H will draw nearer to us during the twenty-one days of the festivals. We can suggest that this is alluded to by the passuk (Shemos 3, 14): **“G-d said to Moshe, ‘אהיה אשר אהיה.’** HKB”H is alluding to Moshe that He will draw near to Yisrael on the twenty-one -- the numerical value of אהיה -- days of the festivals if they make an effort to draw near to Him during the twenty-one -- אהיה -- days of “Bein HaMetzarim.”

Why Do We Consider “Bein HaMetzarim” to Be Only Twenty-one Days when There Are Actually Twenty-two Days

Let us examine the Ohev Yisrael’s statement more closely. He contends that twenty-one festival days are mentioned in this week’s parsha corresponding to the twenty-one days of “Bein HaMetzarim.” The source for the notion that “Bein HaMetzarim” is twenty-one days comes from the words of the prophet (Yirmiyah 1, 11): **“ויהי דבר ה’ אלי לאמר, מה אתה רואה ירמיהו, ואומר מקל שקד אני רואה”** -- **the word of Hashem then came to me, saying, “What do you see**

Yirmiyahu?” And I said, “I see a staff made of almond wood.” Rashi comments in the name of a Midrash Aggadah that an almond grows and completes its development during a twenty-one-day period—corresponding to the number of days between the seventeenth of Tamuz, on which the city was breached and divided, and the ninth of Av, on which the House was burnt down.

Thus, the Midrash states explicitly that “Bein HaMetzarim” is a period of twenty-one days. Accordingly, many of our sacred sefarim refer to “Bein HaMetzarim” as being twenty-one days. A prime example is the Arizal in Sha’ar HaKavanot: **“ענין בין המצרים”** .והם כ”א ימים שבין י”ז לתמוז עד תשעה באב. This is perplexing, however, seeing as this period actually encompasses twenty-two days—the last thirteen days of the month of Tamuz and the first nine days of the month of Av.

The Bnei Yissaschar (Tamuz-Av 2, 3) provides us with a wonderful explanation. The thirteen days in the month of Tamuz correspond to the thirteen attributes of mercy (“yud-gimel midos harachamim”) mentioned in parshas Ki Tisa, after Moshe Rabeinu shattered the luchos on Shivah Asar B’Tamuz; whereas the nine days in the month of Av correspond to the nine attributes mentioned in parshas Shelach, after the sin of the “meraglim,” which eventually caused the churban of the Beis HaMikdash. Thus, it behooves us to explain why the Midrash only considers “Bein HaMetzarim” to be twenty-one days.

It appears that we can reconcile this discrepancy by excluding Tishah B’Av from the twenty-one-day count, because it is considered a “mo’ed”—a festival. As the Shulchan Aruch explains (O.C. 552, 12), tachanun is not recited on erev Tishah B’Av, because it is called a “mo’ed.” Additionally, it explains (ibid. 559, 4) that tachanun is not recited on Tishah B’Av itself, because it is referred to as a “mo’ed.” It is referred to as a “mo’ed” explicitly in the following passuk (Eichah 1, 15): **“קרא עלי מועד”**— **he proclaimed a “mo’ed” against me.**

In Imrei Pinchas (Tishah B’Av 388), the great Rabbi Pinchas of Koritz, zy”a, explains why Tishah B’Av is referred to as a “mo’ed,” based on the statement in the Yerushalmi (Berachos 2, 4) that Tishah B’Av is the birthday of Mashiach ben David. In fact, Rabbi Chaim Vital explains in Sha’ar HaKavonos that he heard from his mentor, the Arizal, that the reason it is customary to sit on chairs after midday on Tishah B’Av, is because the Mashiach, who is called Menachem, will be born on Tishah B’Av, in the middle of the day.

Additionally, our holy sefarim explain, based on the Midrash (Eichah Rabbah 4, 14), that in the process of the churban of the Beis HaMikdash, HKB”H took out His wrath on the wood and

stones of the physical structure, thereby sparing Yisrael from extermination. Hence, Tishah B'Av is considered a "mo'ed," because Yisrael were spared. In Sha'ar HaKavanos (ibid.), this explanation is also given for the reason it is customary to sit on chairs after midday. For, at that time of day, when the fire consumed the physical structure of the Beis HaMikdash, it became apparent to Yisrael that HKB"H had taken out His wrath on the wood and stones and not on them.

Thus, we have explained why the period of "Bein HaMetzarim" is considered to be only twenty-one days; because the "mo'ed" of Tishah B'Av is not included in the count. Nevertheless, Tishah B'Av is a day of fasting and mourning related to the churban of the Beis HaMikdash. So, why did the navi compare the period of "Bein HaMetzarim" to the growth of an almond tree, which is twenty-one days. Why not include Tishah B'Av in the period of "Bein HaMetzarim," making it a period of twenty-two days?

The Twenty-two Days of "Bein HaMetzarim" Correspond to the Twenty-two Letters of the Torah that Were Damaged

I would like to present to our noble audience a novel explanation based on the incredible teachings of the great Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen of Lublin, zy"a, in Tzidkas HaTzaddik (171). He explains that the twenty-two days of "Bein HaMetzarim" correspond to the twenty-two letters of the Torah, from "aleph" to "tav"—which were damaged by Yisrael prior to the churban of the Beis HaMikdash. For, we learn in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 104a): "אמר רבי יוחנן, מפני מה לקו באל"ף בי"ת, מפני שעברו על התורה" **Rabbi Yochanan said: Why were they stricken with the letters of the "aleph-Beis"? Because they transgressed the Torah that was given with the "aleph-Beis."** Rashi explains that Rabbi Yochanan's question refers to the fact that Megillas Eichah is arranged alphabetically.

Accordingly, Rabbi Tzaddok proposes the novel explanation that the twenty-two days of "Bein HaMetzarim" correspond to the twenty-two letters of the Torah that Yisrael damaged at the time of the churban. The first day, Shivah Asar B'Tamuz, the day on which the luchos were shattered, corresponds to the letter "aleph," with which HKB"H began the Aseres HaDibros (Shemos 20, 2): "אנכי ה' אלקיך". The last day, Tishah B'Av, corresponds to the letter "tav," in keeping with the passuk (Eichah 4, 22): "תם עוונך—**the punishment of your iniquity is accomplished, O daughter of Tziyon.**" This passuk alludes to the elucidation in the Midrash that HKB"H poured out His wrath on the wood and trees in order to spare Yisrael from annihilation.

As a loyal servant in the presence of his master, I would like to elaborate on his explanation by referring to that which is written in parshas Ki Sisa (Shemos 32, 19): "ויהי כאשר קרב אל המחנה: וירא את העגל ומחולות ויחר אף משה וישלך מיידו את הלוחות וישבר אותם תחת ההר— **it happened as he drew near the camp and he saw the "eigel" and the dances, that Moshe's anger burned; he threw down the luchos from his hands and shattered them at the bottom of the mountain.** Chazal teach us in the Midrash (S.R. 46, 1): "שפרחו הכתובים מן הלוחות לכך שברן"—what was written on the luchos flew off, causing him to shatter the luchos. We find an additional bit of information in another Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni Ki Sisa 393): "נסתכל משה בלוחות וראה הכתב שבהן שפרחו, וכברו על ידי משה ונפלו מידי ונשתברו"—upon seeing that the script on the luchos had flown away, the luchos became too burdensome; hence they fell from Moshe's hands and shattered.

According to this understanding, on Shivah Asar B'Tamuz, when the "cheit ha'eigel" was committed, the letters on the first luchos flew away. Therefore, the twenty-two days of the "Bein HaMetzarim" begin on this day. In truth, the letter "tes" does not appear at all in the first set of luchos. As we have learned in the Gemara (B.K. 54b):

"שאל רבי חנינא בן עגיל את רבי חייא בר אבא, מפני מה בדברות הראשונות לא נאמר בהם טוב, ובדברות האחרונות נאמר בהם טוב"

—**Rabbi Chanina ben Agil inquired of Rabbi Chiya bar Abba: Why is it that in the first set of "dibros" the word "tov" is not mentioned; yet, in the latter set of "dibros," "tov" is mentioned?** In other words, in the second set of "dibros" recorded in parshas Vaetchanan, it says (Devarim 5, 16): "למען יירא לך"—in the commandment of "kibud av v'eim." Whereas in the first set of "dibros" recorded in parshas Yitro, regarding the mitzvah of "kibud av v'eim," it merely says (Shemos 20, 12): "למען יאריכון ימיו"; the word "יטב" with the letter "tes" does not appear. Thus, only twenty-one letters of the alphabet flew off of the luchos.

The Gemara answers: "הואיל וסופן להשתבר"—**since they were destined to be shattered.** In other words, HKB"H did not want to mention the language "tov" in the first "dibros," because He knew they were destined to be shattered. To which the Gemara inquires: "וכי סופן להשתבר מאי הוי. אמר רב אשי חס ושלום פסקה טובה: **and if they were destined to be shattered, what of it? Rav Ashi said: Chas v'shalom that "goodness" had ceased for Yisrael.** In other words, had He mentioned a form of "tov" in the first "dibros," they might have thought that "goodness" had ceased for Yisrael with the shattering of the luchos. After all, the

“tov” on the luchos was shattered. Therefore, HKB”H reserved the use of the language “tov” for the second “dibros.”

How sweet are the words of the Chasam Sofer in his derashos! Based on this notion, he explains the allusion inherent in the passuk (Tehillim 73, 1): “אך טוב לישראל”. The fact that only א”ך—twenty-one—letters were shattered with the luchos, without the letter “tes”; “טוב לישראל”—was a good omen for Yisrael, so that they wouldn’t say that “goodness” had ceased for Yisrael. Thus, we have explicit proof that only twenty-one letters flew away when the luchos were shattered. That being the case, this does not accord, seemingly, with our assertion that the twenty-two days of “Bein HaMetzarim” correspond to the twenty-two letters that flew off of the luchos.

“And from the daughter of Tziyon all her splendor has departed”

It appears that we can reconcile the discrepancy with a novel interpretation. First, however, we will explain why the letters flew off of the luchos before they were shattered. We will also address the fact that HKB”H refrained from inscribing the letter “tes” on the luchos. We will refer to the fact that while the Beis HaMikdash stood, all of the directives of the Sanhedrin had to be obeyed, as we learn in parshas Shoftim (Devarim 17, 8):

“כי יפלא ממך דבר למשפט בין דם לדם בין דין לדין ובין נגע לנגע דברי ריבות בשעריך, וקמת ועלית אל המקום אשר יבחר ה' אלקיך בו, ובאת אל הכהנים הלויים ואל השופט אשר יהיה בימים ההם... על פי התורה אשר יורוך ועל המשפט אשר יאמרו לך תעשה, לא תסור מן הדבר אשר יגידו לך ימין ושמאל.”

If a matter of judgment will be hidden from you, between blood and blood, between verdict and verdict, or between affliction and affliction, matters of dispute in your cities—you shall rise and ascend to the place that Hashem, your G-d, shall choose. You shall come to the kohanim, the leviim, and to the judge who will be in those days . . . According to the teaching that they will teach you and according to the judgment that they will say to you, shall you do; you shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you, right or left.

Nevertheless, our holy sefarim teach us that after the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash, the Torah went into exile during all of the Galuyos. Regarding this phenomenon, the passuk says (Eichah 1, 6): “--“and from the daughter of Tziyon all her splendor has departed.” The precepts of the Torah -- representing the splendor of Tziyon -- vanished from Yerushalayim. Therefore, being exiled from place to place was necessitated, in order to reveal all the portions of the Torah associated with the various places around the world.

This phenomenon is evident from the fact that Yisrael were exiled to Bavel after the churban, so that they would reveal the **Talmud Bavli** there. For, it has provided us with illumination throughout the darkness of all the periods of exile. This point is emphasized by Chazal’s elucidation (Sanhedrin 24a) of the passuk (Eichah 3, 6): “במחשכים הושיבני כמותי עולם, אמר רבי ירמיה זה תלמודה של: “He has placed me in darkness like the eternally dead.” **Rabbi Yirmiyah said: This alludes to the Talmud of Bavel.**

In other words, HKB”H provided us with the Talmud of Bavel to illuminate for us the darkness of the Galus. In similar fashion, Yisrael were exiled from one place to another to reveal the portions of the Torah that were concealed there. For instance, our sacred Rishonim, who were like malachim—including Rashi and all of the French Tosafists—who revealed incredible portions of the Torah in France. Similarly, there were the Rishonim and scholars of Spain—the Rif, the Rambam, the Ramban, the Rashba and the Rosh—whose waters of Torah we drink from and thirst for; whose Torah will illuminate the way for us until the coming of the righteous redeemer.

This provides us with a very nice interpretation of the Mishnah (Avos 4, 14): “הוי גולה למקום תורה”-- **exile yourself to a place of Torah.** When a man leaves home to study Torah in another city, he should not complain that he is being compelled to go into exile. Instead, he should believe wholeheartedly that he is being exiled to “**a place of Torah.**” In other words, HKB”H, the Grand Orchestrator, has arranged for him to reach that particular location; for, there he will find the portion of the Torah that is uniquely his and is related to the essence of his neshamah.

Before the Shattering of the Luchos the Letters Flew Off and Were Scattered throughout the World

Now, we have learned in the Gemara (Eiruvim 54a): “מאי דכתיב: חרות על הלוחות, אלמלי לא נשתברו לוחות הראשונות לא נשתכחה תורה מישראל. רב אחא בר יעקב אמר, אין כל אומה ולשון שולטת בהן, שנאמר חרות אל תיקרי רב אחא בר יעקב אמר, אין כל אומה ולשון שולטת בהן, שנאמר חרות אל תיקרי. What is the meaning of that which is written (Shemos 32, 16): “Engraved on the luchos”? **Had the first luchos not been shattered, the Torah would never have been forgotten by Yisrael. Rav Acha bar Yaakov said: No nation or tongue would have been able to rule over them, for it says: “Charut,” do not read this as “charut”—meaning inscribed or engraved—but rather “cheirut”—meaning freedom.**

We find a similar teaching in the Midrash (S.R. 32, 1): “אלו המתינו ישראל למשה ולא היו עושים אותו מעשה, לא היתה גלויות ולא מלאך המות שולט בהן, וכן הוא אומר (שמות שם) והמכתב מכתב אלקים הוא חרות על הלוחות, מהו

חרות, רבי יהודה אומר חירות מן גלויות, ורבי נחמיה אומר חירות ממלאך המות.
Had they waited for Moshe and not committed that deed (the “cheit ha’eigel), **they would not have been susceptible to exiles or the Malach HaMaves. Thus, it says** (Shemos ibid.): **“And the script was the script of G-d, etched – ‘charut’ -- on the luchos.”** **What is the meaning of “charut”?** **Rabbi Yehudah says: Freedom from exiles; and Rabbi Nechemiah says: Freedom from the Malach HaMaves.** Thus, we learn that the shattering of the luchos introduced the possibility of Yisrael forgetting the Torah and subjected them to the decree of Galus.

We can now better appreciate Chazal’s statement in the Midrash that due to the “cheit ha’eigel” the letter flew off of the first luchos. In other words, all the portions of the Torah alluded to by the letters on the first set of luchos flew away and scattered throughout the territories of all the exiles; so that when Yisrael would go into Galus, they would gather up all those portions of the Torah.

It is with great pleasure that we can now explain what we learned in the Gemara above. HKB”H did not write the letter “tes” on the first set of luchos, so that they would not say, chas v’shalom: “בסקה טובה מישראל”. Let us explain. The letter “tes” alludes to “tov”—that which is good and favorable; it was not affected by the shattering of the luchos. In the merit of the letter “tes,” we are able to reveal all the portions of the Torah related to the other letters that were scattered throughout the lands of exile. However, had the letter “tes” been affected along with the other letters, they would have said, chas v’shalom: “בסקה טובה מישראל—it is impossible to rescue from Galus the scattered portions of the Torah, which are referred to as “tov.”

This is alluded to by the Mishnah (Avos 6, 3): “אין טוב אלא תורה; שנאמר כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם תורתי אל תעזבו”—**there is no “tov” other than Torah, as it states** (Mishlei 4, 2): **“I have given you a good teaching, do not forsake My Torah.”** Here, HKB”H is hinting to Yisrael: “כי לקח טוב נתתי לכם”—when I gave you the first set of luchos, I gave you: “לקח טוב”—a good and favorable omen by not writing the language “tov” on those luchos, so that it would not be damaged. I did that, so that: “תורתי אל תעזבו”—you would be able to gather up and clarify all the portions of the Torah that were scattered throughout the countries of Galus.

This explains very nicely why Chazal juxtaposed in the Gemara (B.K. 55a) the statement regarding why HKB”H omitted the language of “tov” on the first luchos with the following statement from Rabbi Yehoshua: “אמר רבי יהושע הרואה טי”ת בחלומו סימן יפה לו... הואיל ופתח בו הכתוב לטובה תחילה, שמבראשית עד וירא אלקים את

Rabbi Yehoshua said: **If a person sees the letter “tes” in his dream, this is an auspicious omen for him . . . since its first appearance in the Torah is in a positive context; for, from the word “Bereishit” (the first word of the Torah) until the words “and G-d saw the light was ‘tov,’” the letter “tes” is not written.** In other words, the first “tes” in the Torah appears in the word “tov”--“טוב”.

In light of our current discussion, we can explain the matter as follows. In the merit, of the letter “tes,” we are privileged to reveal the concealed light of the Torah, which is scattered throughout the world. For, we learn in the Zohar hakadosh (Terumah 168b) that the shape of the letter “tes” alludes to the good contained within it. Note that the top right side of the letter curves and projects into the interior of the letter. This can be viewed as an allusion to the fact that in the merit of this letter, which was not broken along with all of the other letters, we are entitled to reveal the light concealed within the letters of the Torah that were scattered throughout all of the lands of exile.

“Tes” B’Av Corresponds to the Letter “Tes” Whose Goodness Is Stored Within

Now, we have presented Rabbi Tzaddok HaKohen’s notion that the twenty-two days of “Bein HaMetzarim” correspond to the twenty-two letters of the Torah—with Shivah Asar B’Tamuz corresponding to the letter “aleph” and Tishah B’Av corresponding to the letter “tav.” However, since it is the nature of Torah to be elucidated in seventy different ways, we will presume, with the utmost respect, to propose an alternate explanation. The twenty-one days of “Bein HaMetzarim,” excluding Tishah B’Av, correspond to the twenty-one letters of the “aleph-Beis” that were tainted by the “cheit ha’eigel,” when they flew off of the luchos. Tishah B’Av, on the other hand, corresponds to the letter “tes,” which HKB”H chose not to inscribe on the first luchos, so that they would not think that goodness had left Yisrael.

I have based my theory on the sacred writings of the esteemed Rabbi of Apta, zy”a, in Ohev Yisrael (Pinchas). He explains that the reason the Beis HaMikdash was destroyed on ט’ באב, is an allusion to the letter “tes,” in the “aleph-Beis.” As mentioned, its right-side projects into the interior of the letter and hides there—alluding to the good concealed within. Here are his holy words: “והורבן הבית היה בט’ באב, ואות ט’ בכתובה אשורית ראשו כפול לתוכו; לרמז כי טוביה גניז בגוויה. וזהו ט’ אב, היינו שהוא יהיה לעתיד לבוא אב וראש לכל.” Similarly, ט’ באב, is destined to be the foremost of all the festivals. Now, however, in Galus, its essential goodness remains concealed within.

Let us explain what he means. In the merit of the churban, Yisrael were spared from annihilation, since HKB”H poured out His wrath on the wood and stones. Thus, there was goodness concealed even within the churban. Therefore, HKB”H arranged for the churban of the Beis HaMikdash to occur on ט' בא"ב—which stands for “tes” in the “aleph-Beis.” Thus, we see that Tishah B’Av corresponds to the letter “tes” that was not tainted by the “cheit ha’eigel.” As we have learned, due to the “cheit ha’eigel,” the twenty-one letters of the Torah inscribed on the first luchos flew away; the letter “tes,” however, was conspicuously and auspiciously absent.

We can now rejoice; for, we have shed some light on Chazal’s profound elucidation in the Midrash regarding Yirmiyah’s nevuah: “מקל שקד אני רואה” -- **I see a staff made of almond wood.** The period of “Bein HaMetzarim” is comprised of twenty-one days, like the sprouting of an almond tree. In reality, however, it contains twenty-two days. For, due to the “cheit ha’eigel” on Shivah Asar B’Tamuz, the luchos were shattered and all of the letters flew off of the luchos. As we have learned, however, only twenty-one letters flew off, since the letter “tes” was not present on the first set of luchos.

Therefore, Tishah B’Av--corresponding to the letter “tes,” as alluded to by the very name תשעה בא"ב, which can be interpreted as a reference to the ninth letter of the “aleph-Beis—is called a “mo’ed.” In the merit of the churban of the Beis HaMikdash, when HKB”H chose to pour out His wrath on the physical structure, Yisrael were spared and sentenced to Galus instead. It became their task to clarify all the portions of the Torah that had been exiled along with the letter “tes,” corresponding to “**Tes B’Av.**”

Amazingly, let us conclude this essay with the insight of the Bnei Yissaschar (Tamuz-Av 2, 1). He explains why the luchos were shattered on the **seventeenth** of Tamuz, which possesses the numerical value of ט"ז. Here are his sacred words:

י"ז בתמוז בו נשתברו הלוחות, ולא במקרה הוא י"ז דייקא כגימטריא ט"ז ב, והוא על פי מה שאמרו רבותינו ז"ל מפני מה אין טוב בדברות הראשונות, כי היה גלוי וידוע לפניו יתברך שמו שעתידין להשתבר ויאמרו ח"ו פסק הטוב, על כן אין בהם טוב רק בלוחות שניות, לומר שכל אלה הענינים ט"ז לישראל, על כן אירע המעשה ביום ט"ז בתמוז.

It is not a mere coincidence that the luchos were shattered specifically on the seventeenth of Tamuz, possessing the gematria of “tov.” As our blessed Rabbis taught us, the language of “tov” does not appear in the first set of “dibros”; because the Almighty knew that they were destined to be shattered, and the people would think, chas v’shalom, that they had lost all good. Therefore, the language of “tov” only appears in the second luchos. This teaches us that everything that transpired was for the “good” of Yisrael. Hence, this event occurred on the ט"ז day of Tamuz.

It turns out, therefore, that the luchos were shattered on the **seventeenth** of Tamuz, the gematria of ט"ז. This date alludes to the fact that even though all of the letters on the luchos flew off and were corrupted by the “cheit ha’eigel”; nevertheless, the letter “tes” representing “tov” was unaffected. Therefore, we have twenty-one days of “Bein HaMetzarim” until Tishah B’Av corresponding to the twenty-one corrupted letters, so that we can rectify them. Tishah B’Av itself corresponds to the letter “tes.” In its merit, we are able to retrieve and clarify all the scattered portions of the Torah. Thus, we will realize the true good with the coming of the “go’el tzedek,” swiftly, in our times. Amen!



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