

“How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels?” (1:12)

Parashas Devarim is always read on the *Shabbos* which precedes *Tisha B'Av*. This is due to the word *eichah*, how, the opening word of *Megillas Eichah*, which is read on *Tisha B'Av*. Indeed, the word *eichah* has become synonymous with *Tisha B'Av* and mourning. In the *Midrash Eichah*, *Chazal* say three prophesized using the word *eichah*: Moshe *Rabbeinu*, Yeshayah *HaNavi*, and Yirmiyahu *HaNavi*. Moshe said, “How can I alone carry your burdens?” Yeshayah said, “How did (*Klal Yisrael*) become like a harlot?” (*Yeshayah* 1:21). Yirmiyahu said, “How does she (*Klal Yisrael*) sit alone?” (*Eichah* 1:1). What is the *Midrash* alluding to? Is the association between the “*eichahs*” applicable to the word alone, or is there an underlying message to be derived herein? Perhaps the two *eichahs* echoed by the *Neviim* have a relationship with one another in that Yeshayah decries the sin and Yirmiyahu laments the punishment. What does Moshe *Rabbeinu*’s *eichah* have to do with the others? Furthermore, Moshe’s complaint regarding the need for judges to assist him does not seem to be in the correct place. Until this point Moshe has been criticizing *Klal Yisrael* for their past iniquities. He begins with the sin of the *Meraglim*, spies, and goes off on what seems to be a tangent, bemoaning the fact that he alone must shoulder the responsibility of judging the people.

I once heard it explained that in the words, “Provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well-known to your tribes” (1:13), Moshe was alluding to a serious problem that threatened the very existence of *Klal Yisrael*. He was acutely aware that it was necessary to get judges for each tribe who were members of that tribe, because no tribe would accept a judge who hailed from another one. Perhaps he was testing them: Would they accede to accepting a judge who was from another tribe? They responded in the affirmative. Yes, we think it is a great idea to appoint judges. Of course, we want one from our own tribe.

The lack of trust between the tribes was at the foundation of the spies’ sin. The people wanted spies – one from each tribe, because filial trust was something they did not possess. When you have twelve spies from different tribes, with disparate perspectives, each with his own personal agenda and focus, is it any wonder that the mission resulted in disaster? They were not working together – they were working against each other. Each one had to demonstrate his own personal dedication to the nation. Thus, they could not accept what the other *Nasi/spy* said, because he was from a different tribe. Yet, if one *Nasi* claimed that it was dangerous to enter *Eretz Yisrael* and that they could not triumph in battle against its inhabitants – the other *Nesiim* were compelled to agree. After all, if they disagreed, it would appear as if they did not care about the nation. In this manner, one *Nasi* could force the hand of the others. The *eichah* which decried the need to have different spies from each tribe led to the *eichah* which lamented the destruction of *Yerushalayim*.