

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

The word "*Eichah*," "how", in this context is contrasted by *Chazal* to the exclamations of later prophets, who also used the word *eichah* to allude to the *churban*, destruction, of the *Batei Mikdash*. Notably, the *baal koreih*, Torah reader, chants this *pasuk* differently than the others, singing it to the tune of *Eichah*, Lamentations, which is read on *Tisha B'Av*. The obvious connection is the single word, *eichah*. The *Gaon M'Vilna* suggests a deeper connection between the two *pesukim*. In the third word of the *pasuk* Moshe says, "*levadi*" "alone," (How can I alone bear?). A form of the word *levadi* is found in *Sefer Eichah*, "*Eichah yashvah badad*," "How the city sits in solitude." This, says the *Gaon*, is the common essence of the tragedy of *Tisha B'Av* and Moshe's complaint. They both produced conditions of loneliness.

Moshe was not complaining about the burdens of leadership. He was addressing the fact that it is lonely at the top. He was able to bear the burden of their problems only to the extent that the people were able to empathize with his position. Leadership is an awesome responsibility, but it is easier to accept when one knows that he has the support and encouragement of his flock. Moshe did not need this support; he was quite capable of directing the affairs of *Klal Yisrael*. The role is significantly more satisfying when the leader does not feel that he is alone. When his decision is appealing, he is popular; when it is controversial, because he does not meet the self-generated criteria of the people, suddenly the leader is under siege: He finds himself alone.

The *Navi* lamented a similar condition in Yerusholayim in which people were left to fend for themselves. The plight of the individual remained just that - the individual's concern. Nobody else seemed concerned with helping. There are individuals all over our communities who are alone. They do not seek charity; they do not seek any gifts. They yearn only for a bit of friendship. They do not want to be alone: A simple hello; a quick visit on *Shabbos*; an invitation for a meal; a ride to the store; someone with whom to share their joy and their pain; just someone to break the monotony and anxiety of being alone.

Parashas Devarim is traditionally read on the *Shabbos* prior to *Tisha B'Av*, the saddest *Shabbos* of the year. The *Shabbos* which precedes our national day of mourning carries a demanding message. "*Eichah yashvah badad*," "How the city sits alone." Let us make sure that no Jew will be left alone. In that merit, may the Almighty rebuild the *Bais Hamikdash* in our time, so that we will all together be able to worship Him in Yerusholayim.