

But despite all this, while they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I have rejected them to obliterate them. (26:44)

In the closing words of the *Tochachah*, Rebuke, Hashem consoles His tormented Nation. They might be in exile, but it is not the end. The atrocities that have accompanied them throughout the exile, the travail that has been their constant shadow, does not mean that Hashem has rejected them. No, says Hashem. Even in exile they remain His People, and the Covenant He made with them remains in full force.

Parashas Bechukosai contains within it the first set of *kelalos*, curses, which comprise the Rebuke. The second set, which is larger, is in *Parashas Ki Savo*. The distinctions between the two Rebukes extend beyond their difference in size. One commonality between the two is the manner in which they are read by the *baal korei*, Torah reader, in *shul* on *Shabbos*. *Halachah* states that they are to be read quickly and in a low voice. During the time of the *Chafetz Chaim*, some individual Jews would exit the *shul*, almost run out, during the reading of the Rebuke. It was almost as if they did not want to hear the many curses. Clearly, this was not an intelligent way to act, but simple people think that what they do not hear cannot hurt them.

The *Chafetz Chaim* responded to these people with a parable. A Jew was compelled to go on the road for the purpose of seeking a livelihood. The journey involved traveling on old, decrepit roads filled with ditches, deep potholes and rocks. He feared the worst. One bad move, and his horse and wagon would be history, with himself to follow shortly thereafter. In an attempt to assuage his fears, his wife suggested that he wear a blindfold when he rode through the troubled area. He looked at her incredulously and said, "At least, if I keep my eyes open and look where I am going, I might avoid some of the dangerous holes. With my eyes closed, the danger is magnified exponentially." The lesson is obvious: If one listens intently to the curses, he increases the chance that he will not sin, thereby avoiding the punishment. If he ignores the warnings, his chances for success diminish considerably.

The *Tochachah* of our *parshah* closes with words of consolation and hope. Not so, the later *Tochachah* of *Parashas Ki Savo*. A number of explanations are offered for this. The *Ponevezer Rav, zl*, explains that the early *Tochachah* of our *parsha* addresses the collective nation. It is thus written in *lashon rabim*, the plural. The *Tochachah* of *Sefer Devarim* is speaking to each individual Jew. Thus, it is written in *lashon yachid*, the singular. The *havtachah*, promise, that "in the end all will be good," applies to the collective nation, a guarantee that cannot be made to each and every individual Jew.

The *Radbaz* distinguishes between the two Rebukes, in that the Rebuke of *Sefer Devarim* includes Hashem's Name (as the One Who is sending the curses) in most of the *kelalos*, while in *Sefer Vayikra*, the people view the curses as happenstance. Such a curse, whereby the victims/*Klal*

Yisrael do not realize the Source of their travail, requires a special consolation. Knowing that our loving Father is behind each curse is in and of itself a tremendous source of comfort.

In closing, *Horav Reuven Karlinstein, zl*, quotes the *pasuk* in *Yeshayah 54:7*, that refers to the many troubles and vicissitudes that have been our lot during our long and difficult exile. *B'rega katton azavtich u'v'rachamim gedolim akabtzeich*: "For but a brief moment have I forsaken you and with abundant mercy I will gather you in." The *Navi*, Prophet, *Yeshayah*, refers to all of our travail, the exiles, inquisitions, pogroms, holocaust – every drop of Jewish blood that has been spilled throughout our long and tumultuous history – as a *rega katton*, brief moment. Everything that has occurred in our history, all of the suffering and persecution, is the result of a "brief moment" when we were forsaken. We hope and anticipate every day, every moment, that the *rachamim gedolim*, "abundant mercy" will soon arrive, so that we will be so overwhelmed by the good that we will truly view the pain as having lasted but a "brief moment."