

## How can I bear myself your trouble, your burden, and your arguments? (1:12)

*Rashi* explains the three terms: *tarchachem*; *masaachem*; *rivchem*. *Tarchachem* means your trouble. *Klal Yisrael* was troublesome. If one individual would observe his adversary winning a case, he would say, "I have witnesses to bring; I have proofs to bring, I am adding judges to you." In short, they caused trouble. *Masaachem* means your burden. The people were heretics. If Moshe *Rabbeinu* left his home early on his way to judge people, they would say, "What did the son of Amram see that led him to leave? Perhaps he is not calm in his house?" They were implying that there was trouble in his family. If he left later, they would comment that Moshe was sitting long, hard hours contemplating ways to undermine the people. *Rivchem* means your arguments. The Jews were petulant. In other words, the people questioned everything that Moshe did. Nothing was accepted as a positive. They always gave a negative twist to anything our leader would do. They looked for ways to undermine and impugn his leadership.

Moshe decided that the only solution to his problem was to appoint other judges to share his responsibility. Perhaps by seeing to it that everything did not fall on him alone, Moshe would thereby decrease the complaining, the apathy, the negativity.

The *Midrash Eichah* assesses Moshe's act of adding judges as having a negative impact on his relationship with the people; it was a decision which led to the most disastrous ramifications. *Chazal* say, "Three prophets prophesied in the same vernacular, all using the language of *Eichah*, 'woe:' Moshe; Yeshayahu; and Yirmiyahu. Moshe said, 'How can I bear myself your trouble, your burden, your arguments?' Yeshayahu said, 'How could she (Yerushalayim) become like a harlot?' Yirmiyahu said, 'How could she sit alone?' Perhaps *Chazal* are indicating that an intrinsic correlation exists between the laments of Moshe, Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu, a connection which alludes to the tragedy of the destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*.

The **Sfas Emes** explains that all of the sins that *Klal Yisrael* perpetrated throughout its tenure in the wilderness revert back to Moshe's bemoaning his inability to bear the burden of the nation alone. As a result, Hashem instructed him to appoint judges who would ease the burden. There was, however, a drawback: instead of hearing the voice of the Torah directly from Moshe, the nation was now privy to a mere echo of that voice. The lack of personal supervision by Moshe laid the framework, by planting the seeds that brought the nation to the *chet meraglim*, sin of the spies, which was the precursor of all the sins in the desert. Even at the end of their forty-year sojourn, when the original "émigrés" from Egypt had all gone to their eternal rest, members of the new generation standing in *Arvos Moav*, the Plains of Moav, listening to the voice of their *Rebbe*, Moshe, had within themselves faults which would ultimately lead the nation to sin and eventual exile.

The origin of transgression goes back to a specific point, an occurrence, an error, upon which is

predicated years of error building on error until it manifests itself in full-blown rebellion. It took quite some time for the nation to demonstrate its full-scale mutiny, the sin which brought about the destruction of the Temple and our exile. It took time, but it all dates back to a distancing of the people from Moshe. At first, it did not seem problematic. Over time, however, a breach in the relationship between the people and Moshe surfaced.

A leader must be attuned to the needs of everyone in his flock. While it is so much more convenient to relate to those that are *geshmak*, pleasant, charismatic, fun to be with people, there are others who are not so much fun. There are those who are boring, apathetic and bitter, whose problems are self-imposed and whose issues are often a figment of their imagination. They too, however, need counseling, advice, friendship. Moshe had a nation which was troublesome, argumentative and burdensome. It was a debilitating burden, but also an incredible opportunity. It was, indeed, difficult for Moshe to address the needs of each individual Jew. The sheer size of the one-man project was overwhelming. He was compelled to appoint judges who performed admirably. At the end of the day, the people no longer maintained that one-on-one, face-to-face relationship with Moshe. It might have been what was necessary then; later, however, this diminished relationship catalyzed our exile.

The **Baal Shem Tov** **zl**, interprets this idea in his explanation of the *pasuk* in *Shema Yisrael*: *V'sartem va'avaditem elohim acheirim*, "And you will turn away and serve gods of others." The slight "turning away," the minor deviation made by the earlier generations, will, over time, result in full-scale *avodah zarah*, idol worship. We have only to peruse history to observe how minor changes in Jewish practice have resulted in complete heresy and abrogation of Jewish observance. No such thing as a "minor" alteration exists. Change begets change, until the original is no longer recognizable.

When writing about the responsibility of a leader to all members of his diverse congregation, one cannot be oblivious to the outstanding contribution made by the *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim, **Horav Aryeh Levine, zl**. He made it his life's endeavor to reach out to those who were on the fringe, individuals whose lives had been shattered by adversity. He had a good word, a comforting word, a smile for everyone, regardless of how far he had strayed from his faith. He comforted the bereaved, gave hope to the gravely ill, and offered encouragement and succor to the Jewish prisoners confined by a government to whom politics had greater significance than Jewish blood.

Comforting the bereaved was especially important to him. He explained, "When a misfortune or tragic event befalls a person, apart from his personal anguish and suffering, his faith in Hashem becomes, to a certain extent, impaired. When a person comforts someone who is in mourning, not only does he give the mourner new spirit and courage by sharing in his sorrow, but he also returns his faith to its original strength."

**Rav Aryeh** always had a cogent response to pressing questions about faith. A former mayor of Rishon LeTzion, who was close with **Rav Aryeh**, had lost his family in the Holocaust. Once, while

visiting *Rav Aryeh*, he opened up, revealing the burden that had been weighing down on his heart: "The truth is that my faith in the Almighty was shaken by the Holocaust. What sin did my little son commit, that this should happen to him?"

*Rav Aryeh* immediately rose from his seat, took the man's hand in both of his and began caressing it. "There is a *tzaddik*," he began, "a righteous and devout person; and there is a *chasid*, a man of kindly piety and virtue, but only a *kadosh*, a holy person, a sanctified person, is one who was put to death for his religion and his faith. I must stand in your presence because you offered up to Hashem not one sacrifice, not one *kadosh*, but two."

"You know," he added, "when a child is born and enters into the world, everyone is enraptured with effusive joy – yet the child itself cries and wails. When someone dies, when his life spirit leaves the world, all the living mourn and grieve, but the living spirit exults and rejoices. It has gone from a world engulfed in darkness to a world of great light." *Rav Aryeh* continued talking with his friend until he was able to console him and bring him some inner tranquility, thus effecting closure to his bereavement.

At times, it was not what *Rav Aryeh* said, it was his presence that mattered. A devout Jew passed away on the night before *Pesach*. A steady, heavy rain fell on Yerushalayim. It just would not let up. As the *minhag*, custom, in Yerushalayim is not to permit the deceased to remain overnight, the funeral was quickly arranged and the deceased was brought to be buried that night.

The next day, the son of the deceased sat *shivah*, seven-day mourning period, only until midday, as required by *halachah*. It was *Erev Yom Tov*. Sadly, no one came to visit him. It was a short day, and everyone was overwhelmed with countless errands to perform. Since his father had passed away at night and was immediately buried, word of his demise had not been communicated. Those who were aware of his passing were over their heads in *Passover* preparations. This preface is not to impugn those who did not visit, but to underscore the sensitivity of the *gadol* they rightfully called: the *Tzaddik* of Yerushalayim.

The son recalled that a few hours before he was about to usher in the festival of *Pesach*, *Rav Aryeh* came knocking at his door. In that torrential downpour, he had come trudging on foot across Yerushalayim to visit and comfort the bereaved. He was the only man who came that day. "I will never forget this act of kindness," the son said, "nor will I ever forget the words of solace he spoke then to comfort and hearten me. It was just a few hours before *Yom Tov*. Everyone was busy with their own personal affairs. I was utterly alone in my grief. It was at that time that the *Rav* visited me. He cared; he felt my pain."