



A CLOSER LOOK AT THE KINOS: CONTEXT AND SEQUENCE

The recitation of Kinot on Tisha B'Av has a long history.¹ *Masechet Sofrim* (18:3) records the minhag to read Eicha on Tisha B'Av night along with selected perakim in Yirmiyahu and Tehilim. During the Geonic period, Selichos were recited within Chazaras HaShatz like on other fasts.² With the emergence of *piyut* as an integral part of davening, Kinot became part of the *sefer hayom* of Tisha B'Av. Many of the Kinot compositions were expansions of the *piyutim* recited within Chazaras HaShatz.³ Accordingly, only the chazan would recite the Kinot and others would listen. It was the chazan's responsibility to understand the

meaning of the Kinot. As the number of Kinot increased, their recitation was moved from Chazaras HaShatz to after kerias HaTorah. Within Ashkenazic Jewry, there were different traditions regarding the recitation of Kinot by the entire congregation. In Western Europe, the Kinot of R. Elazar HaKalir were recited by one designated individual and the other Kinot were recited by everyone present. In Eastern Europe, all of the Kinot were recited in unison.

In recent decades, we have witnessed a renewed interest in studying the Kinot. However, doing so poses a unique challenge. The Kinot

compositions are riddled with obscure language and contain numerous allusions to a wide range of pesukim and *ma'amarei Chazal*. Moreover, the paytan often employs a play on words or invents new linguistic genres. To attempt to plumb the meaning of Kinot requires some familiarity with these unique word forms, as well as the sources they derive from. Our ability to understand the Kinot has been greatly enhanced by the publication of annotated editions in both Hebrew and English.⁴ In addition, Rav Soloveitchik's annual exposition of the Kinot in Brookline, MA, have been published in various forums⁵ and have added immeasurably

to a deeper appreciation of Kinos and their underlying themes. Indeed, many shuls now follow Rav Soloveitchik's lead and have introduced an explanatory Kinos, in which the dirges are not merely recited, but are explained by the rabbi or some other knowledgeable individual who studied them in advance.

Almost half of the Kinos that appear in the collection of Ashkenazic Jewry were composed by R. Elazar HaKalir. While Hakalir's precise identity, as well as the historical period in which he flourished, are a matter of considerable controversy,⁶ there is no doubt that he was held in extremely high esteem. HaKalir's compositions are complex, and saturated with layers upon layers of meaning. Each word of HaKalir is "golden," laden with symbolism. His contributions to *piyut* have transformed our liturgy⁷ and his Kinos have been recited by Ashkenazic Jewry for centuries.

Literary Bridges between the Kinos

This essay will explore the literary transitions between the Kinos composed by R. Elazar HaKalir. As we shall see, an analysis of these literary bridges will yield fascinating insights that would largely go unnoticed in a superficial perusal of the Tisha B'Av Kinos.

The standard Kinos collection contains 19 Kinos for Tisha B'Av day that were authored by HaKalir.⁸ The first 15 appear in succession — beginning with "*Shavas*" (#6 in most editions of Kinos) through *Hatei* (#20). The next composition of HaKalir appears four Kinos later (#24) — "*Tisaser le'aleim*" — then a

gap of one Kinah (#25), followed by three additional HaKalir Kinos (#26, #27, #28).

If we look closely at the opening and closing words of these Kinos it is apparent that HaKalir intended his individual compositions to be part of a series. That is not to say that all 19 (he may have composed more) form part of one long series. Rather, they were likely written as a few "mini-series." [Prof. Daniel Goldschmidt suggests that in the past, the chazan would choose which mini-series to say.]

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The standard Kinos collections do not present all 19 compositions together. It is unclear why the last four of HaKalir's Kinos appear separately from the first 15. What is even more peculiar, however, is that the sequence in which these Kinos appear in our editions clearly do not conform to HaKalir's intended mini-series. Once we examine the literary bridges between each of these Kinos, this point will emerge into sharper focus.

Bridging Kinos 6 through 9

The first of the HaKalir Kinos recited on Tisha B'Av day (#6 in most editions; #7 in the Goldschmidt edition) begins with the word *Shavas*. This Kinah was intended to be a sequel to a Kinah that does not appear in our standard texts. We can discern this from the fact that the Kinah is based on the alphabetical structure of Eicha. Each stanza contains the words from Eicha represented by a specific letter of the aleph beis. The first stanza of this Kinah uses the letter *samech* and continues to the end of the aleph beis. The first 14 letters of the aleph beis are missing because they are part of a previous Kinah.⁹

The Kinah of *Shavas* closes with the words זכור ה' מה היה לנו — remember Hashem what has happened to us (taken from Eicha 5:1). This is clearly a bridge to the next Kinah, "*Eicha Atzta*" (#7), which employs זכור ה' מה היה לנו as its refrain. *Eicha Atzta* ends with אודה עד חוג שמים — I would soar to the circle of heaven,¹⁰ which also serves as the opening words of the subsequent Kinah (#8). The same applies to the closing words of Kinah #8 — איכה תפארתי מראשתי השליכו — How did they throw My glory from My head — which appear as the opening words of the next Kinah (#9). Thus far, we have identified a string of Kinos that are consistent with the standard edition.

Bridging Kinah 9 to Kinah 15: Linking to the Tochecha in Bechukosai

Next we encounter something interesting. In the printed editions of the Kinos, Kinah #9 closes with words איכה ישבה חבצלת השרון — How does the Rose of Sharon¹¹ sit [alone] — an

apparent transition to the opening of Kina #10. However, this was not the original closing phrase of Kinah #9. Rather, this Kinah, as originally composed, ended with לכן קוננתי כקבר — איכה אשפתו פתוח כקבר — I therefore lament, how is it that his refuse box is open like a grave. This is a clear transition to Kinah #15, which opens with the words אשפתו פתוח כקבר. Apparently, this Kinah was intended to be followed not by the printed Kinah #10 but by what in our editions is #15!¹²

A closer look at Kinah #9 reveals why: Each stanza concludes with a pasuk from the *tochacha* in *Parashas Bechukosai*. It begins with the blessings preceding the *tochacha* (the first 11), continuing with the *klalos* (curses) (next 11), and the Kinah ends with “*vehalacti af ani*” (Vayikra 26:24) — I too shall walk [against you]¹³. Kinah #15 also contains a reference to the *tochacha* in each stanza and picks up precisely where Kinah #9 left off: from “*veheveisi alaichem cherev*” (26:25) — I will bring upon you a sword. Kinah #15 concludes with: “*Hashiveinu vehoreinu eileh hachukim*” — restore us and teach us these laws — based on the pasuk following the *tochacha*.¹⁴ The optimistic tone in which this Kinah concludes indicates that it is intended to close the series (6, 7, 8, 9, 15)¹⁵.

If so, we are left without a true bridge to #10— איכה ישבה חבצלת — השרון, a Kinah that deals with the 24 mishmaros of the kohanim. It is not clear which Kinahs, if any, are part of its series.¹⁶ The Kinah concludes with the words ומשלחנך תאריח שולי חמת אריח — and offer hospitality to the mishmar from “*chamas ari'ach*” — which does not seem to provide a literary bridge to a subsequent Kinah.¹⁷ Moreover,

the fact that this Kinah concludes on a semi-hopeful note suggests that it either closes a series or is a stand-alone Kinah.

Bridging Kinahs 11-12-14-13-16

Let us continue to the next series by exploring the concluding words of Kinah #11, which is introduced with the words ויקונן ירמיהו על יאשיהו — Yirmiyahu eulogized Yoshiyahu (#11).¹⁸ The Kinah closes with the words ונטש אהלי — my tent was abandoned. This phrase serves as a literary bridge to the next Kinah אהלי אשר — My tent that you craved (#12). Kinah #12 concludes with the words ועד עתה איכה יעיב באפו — and until now, how has He clouded me in His anger. The phrase איכה יעיב באפו is a reference to the opening words of the second perek of Eicha. Its placement at the end of Kinah #12 suggests that it is a bridge to another Kinah, but which one? It doesn't seem to connect to the Kinah that follows in the standard version, “*Ei koh*” — where is the [merit of] “*koh*” [that was promised to Avraham] (#13). Furthermore, the next Kinah, איכה אשר — Alas! That it has already been done (#14), concludes with the words רגנו להמיר לשון איכה — they protested that they were made to exchange the language of *eicha* with *ei koh*. Clearly, the two Kinahs were printed in inverted sequence — #14 leads into #13. However, if that is the case, what precedes #14 and what follows #13? We can resolve the second question by noting that #13 ends with עד מתי אלקים יחרף צר — for how long, O God, will the **oppressor** blaspheme? This seems to be a literary bridge to the Kinah זכור אשר — remember what the **oppressor** (Titus) did in the inner

sanctum (#16). Hence, we can discern a sequence of #14, #13, #16, but we have yet to decipher the whole series. What precedes #14 and what follows #16?

We have already seen that #11 and #12 follow in sequence. Is it possible that they precede #14? At first glance, there is no connection between Kinah #12 which ends with איכה יעיב באפו and Kinah #14 which opens with איכה את אשר כבר עשהו. Upon closer examination, however, we discover something interesting. Kinah #14 consists of highly complex groupings of three stanzas, with the first two of those stanzas containing references to words in the second chapter of Eicha.¹⁹ As noted, Kinah #12 ends with the words איכה יעיב באפו, the opening words of this same chapter. Hence, it is clear that Kinah #12 contains a bridge to Kinah #14.²⁰ We have thus managed to identify a larger sequence of: 11, 12, 14, 13, 16.²¹ It remains unclear if this comprises the entire series or whether there are additional Kinahs in the series. After all, Kinah #16 does not conclude on a comforting note. Rather, it ends with ובת קול נשמעה עורה למה תישן — a heavenly voice is heard, saying “wake up, why are you sleeping?” Is this phrase intended as a bridge to another Kinah or is it the end of the series? This remains unclear.

Bridging Kinahs 18-19-20

The next Kinah in the standard editions is אם תאכלנה נשים פרין — If women eat their offspring (#17). The opening of this Kinah has no obvious connection to other Kinahs.

The subsequent Kinah, “*V'Atah amarta*” — And You said (#18), contains the phrase לך ה' הצדקה —

For You, Hashem is righteousness, in its final stanza, a clear bridge to the following Kinah (#19) titled לך ד' הצדקה. Similarly, #19 ends הטה אלקי אונך ושמע — My God, turn Your ears and listen, and the next Kinah (#20) is titled הטה אלקי אונך. Kinah #20 ends with והאר פניך על מקדשך השמים — shine Your countenance on Your desolate Temple, which are words of comfort, implying that this is the end

of the series. Thus, we have a series of 18, 19, and 20, though it is unclear if this is a complete series or if there are Kinahs that precede #18.

Pairing Kinah 17 with 28; 10 with 24; Bridging 27 to 26

There are four Kalir Kinahs that we have not yet explored (24, 26, 27, 28), and two others (10, 17) that we

have yet to pair with others. Working backward, “*Eich Enachem*” — how can I be comforted (#28) contains the refrain “*eich enachem*” for each line, with the exception of the closing line, “*ve’az enachem*” — then I will be comforted. The positive ending has the hallmark of a closing Kinah of a series. Indeed, it is the last Kinah that we recite of the Kalir Kinahs. However, it is unclear what, if any,

Illustrative Summary

The following chart lists the nineteen Kinahs of R. Elazar HaKalir recited on Tisha B’Av day along with their relevant literary bridges. The second from right column highlights the opening phrase or refrain of the Kinah that suggest a literary connection to a previous Kinah; the extreme right column highlights the Kinah’s closing phrases that often serve as literary bridges to a subsequent Kinah. The three left columns indicate the name and number of each Kinah and which Kinah it is definitely or possibly a sequel to.

#	Title	Sequel To	Opener/Refrain	Closing Phrase
6	שבת	Kinah that isn't recited	שבת סורו מני	זכור ה' מה היה לנו
7	איכה אצת	#6	זכור ה' מה היה לנו	אאדה עד חוג שמים
8	אאדה	#7	אאדה עד חוג שמים	איכה תפארתי מראשותי השליכו
9	איכה תפארתי	#8	איכה תפארתי מראשותי השליכו	איכה ישבה חבצלת השרון Original ending: איכה לכן קוננתי איכה אשפתו פתוח כקבר
10	איכה ישבה	#24 (Possible Pair)	איכה ישבה חבצלת השרון	ומשולחנך תאריח שולי חמת אריח
11	ויקונן ירמיהו		ויקונן ירמיהו על יאשיהו	ונטש אהלי
12	אהלי	#11	אהלי אשר תאבת	ועד עתה איכה יעיב באפו
13	אי כה	#14	אי כה	עד מתי אלקים יחרף צר
14	איכה את אשר כבר עשהו	#12	איכה את אשר כבר עשהו	רגנו להמיר לשון איכה בלשון אי כה
15	איכה אשפתו	#9	איכה אשפתו פתוח כקבר	השיבנו והורנו אלה החקים
16	זכור את אשר עשה צר בפנים	#13	זכור את אשר עשה צר בפנים	ובת קול נשמעה עורה למה תישן
17	אם תאכלנה	#28 (Possible Pair)	אם תאכלנו נשים פרין	ואם יהרג במקדש ה' כהן ונביא לא משמיעים
18	ואתה אמרת		ואתה אמרת	לך ה' הצדקה
19	לך ה' הצדקה	#18	לך ה' הצדקה	הטה אלקי אונך ושמע
20	הטה אלקי אונך	#19	הטה אלקי אונך	והאר פניך על מקדשך השמים
24	תסתר לאלם	#10 (Possible Pair)	תסתר לאלם	ואת נחלתי נטשתי
26	אז בהלוך ירמיהו	#27	אז בהלוך ירמיהו	הנני משובב גלות בניכם
27	אז במלאת ספק		אז במלאת ספק	תרחם ציון כי בא מועד
28	Closing Kinah: איך תנחמוני	#17 (Possible Pair)	איך אנחם	ואז אנחם

Kinah precedes this. “Az B’melos sefek” — then when the measure was filled (#27) doesn’t seem to provide a bridge to #28.

We may tentatively conjecture that #17 (אם תאכלנה נשים פרין) should be paired with Kinah #28, in that both contain a pithy refrain of despair “alelai li” — woe unto me and “eich enachem.” In addition, both reference the slaughter of tens of thousands to avenge the *dam navi* — the blood of the slaughtered prophet.

Kinah #24 — תסתר לאלם תרשישים מרון — You hid yourself in order to silence the celestial angles from singing — does not indicate an overt connection to the other Kinos that appear beside it in our printed editions. It does, however, bear a fascinating literary and thematic connection to Kinah #10 — איכה ישבה חבצלת השרון — How does the Rose of Sharon sit [alone] (#10). The literary connection is in the same rhyme scheme. In Kinah #10, the last words of the respective lines of the first stanza are: השרון, מרון, אהרון, מרון. In the first stanza of Kinah #24,²² the rhyming words are strikingly similar: ארון, חרון, מרון. Furthermore, these two compositions are also thematically related in that Kinah #10 discusses the *mishmaros kehunah* — the families of Kohanim that served in the Beis HaMikdash, while Kinah #24 discusses the lost vessels of the Beis HaMikdash.²³

The two remaining Kinos are “Az Bahaloch Yirmiyahu” — Then when Yirmiyahu went (#26) and “Az

B’melos sefek” (#27). Both Kinos close with words of comfort. They also both open with the word “az.” Thematically, they are interrelated. They tell a single story, but in reverse order. Kinah #27 belongs before Kinah #26. Kinah #27 references a conversation between Yirmiyahu and a disheveled woman (symbolizing *Knesses Yisrael*). She directs him to call on the Avos to cry out on behalf of their exiled children. Kinah #26 opens with Yirmiyahu visiting the graves of the Avos and imploring them to pray for the Jewish people.²⁴

Conclusion

We have identified clear patterns in the sequence of Hakalir Kinos, and conjectured upon others (see accompanying chart above), although we have not assembled all the pieces of the puzzle. The awareness of the inter-relationships between these Kinos may be a useful guide for those who do not recite the entire collection of Kinos. Rather than selecting in an arbitrary fashion, I would recommend reciting Kinos that form part of the same series. Even those who do recite all the printed Kinos may wish to consider altering the order of their recitation so as to more accurately adhere to their original sequence. Hopefully, the issues discussed in this essay will become irrelevant in the very near future.

Endnotes

1. Much of this background material can be found in the introductory section of Prof. Daniel Goldschmidt’s edition of Kinos, as well as in the introduction to *Kinos Hameforash* (ed. R. Yaakov Weingarten).
2. Over time, on fast days, Selichos were removed from Chazaras HaShatz and recited afterward. On Tisha B’Av, Selichos were removed completely and replaced by Kinos. The *aveilus* motif overshadowed the *taanis* motif.
3. For many of our holidays, there is an expanded version of Chazaras HaShatz that includes piyutim. On Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, these piyutim are recited almost universally. However, on other holidays, the practice is less common. Some communities still recite *yotzros* in Chazaras HaShatz of the four parshiyos and some recite a *krovetz* in Chazaras HaShatz for Purim. Piyutim exist for Chazaras HaShatz of the other holidays, but are not commonly recited. The original Kinos were designed to be inserted into Chazaras HaShatz following a similar pattern.
4. In Hebrew, these include: *Seder HaKinos Le’Tisha B’Av* of Prof. Daniel Goldschmidt, *Kinos Hameforash*, (Weingarten) and *Kinos Tisha B’Av Im Peirush Kadmon* (Holzer). In English, there are the editions produced by R. Abraham Rosenfeld, Artscroll, and Koren.
5. Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter’s *The Lord is Righteous in All of His Ways*. See also *Harerei Kedem*, Vol. 2 pp. 306-311. Many of Rabbi Soloveitchik’s insights have also been incorporated in the Koren edition.
6. According to many Rishonim, R. Elazar HaKalir was a Tanna. Tosafos (*Chagigah* 13a, s.v. *V’raglei*) and the Rosh (*Berachos* chapter 5 #21) assume that he was R. Elazar, the son of R. Shimon bar Yochai. [See, however, *Mor U’ketziah* (OC 112) who quotes the Arizal as attesting that HaKalir contained the “spark of the soul” (*nitzotz nishmas*) of R. Elazar b. Shimon. See also the Chida’s *Machzik Bracha*, *ibid.*] According to the Rashba (*Teshuvos*



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Harashba 1:469), he was R. Elazar ben Arach. Others consider the possibility that HaKalir was R. Elazar b. Yaakov or R. Eliezer b. Hurkinus (*Tzemach Dovid*, 4:833). On the other hand, R. Yosef Steinhart (*Zichron Yosef, Orach Chaim*, no. 13), speculates based on the language of some of HaKalir's piyyutim, that he lived in the Geonic period. This view was also held by R. Wolf Heidenheim and R. Shlomo Yehuda Rappaport (Shir). [See, however, a critique of this opinion in *Noda Bi'Yehuda (Orach Chaim 2, #113*. See also lengthy discussion in *Shu"t Teshuva Me'ahava* by R. Elazar Fleckeles (*Orach Chaim 1:1*)]. Most contemporary scholars place HaKalir in the Byzantine period.

7. For an eloquent rebuttal of Ibn Ezra's critique of HaKalir's obscure literary style and a fascinating analysis of the genre of piyut as a whole, see Maharal's *Nesivos Olam, Nesiv Ha'Avoda*, perek 12.

8. *Kinos HaMeforash* (introduction P. 25) states that 20 of the Kinos were authored by HaKalir. This calculation is apparently based on his erroneously attributing the anonymous Kinah # 25 (*Aish tukad bekirbi*) to HaKalir (see p. 255, *ibid*).

9. This Kinah, which, according to Goldschmidt, begins with the words *Zechor Eicha*, appears in the appendix of the Goldschmidt edition (p. 147).

10. *A'adeh* can either mean soar (from דאה) or break (from איד).

11. *Chavatzeles hasharon* is a reference to the Jewish people based on Shir Hashairim 2:1.

12. As noted by Prof. Goldschmidt, once the original sequence was lost, the closing line of Kinah #9 was altered in order to create an "artificial" link to the Kinah that followed.

13. The bracketed words are taken from the Artscroll translation, given that the phrase "I too shall walk" originally appears in a negative context (as indicated by the subsequent words "ba'chamas ker"). However, it is possible that HaKalir took poetic license with these words and intended to allude to the mystical notion of "Shechinta begalusa" — that Hashem Himself went into exile along with the Jewish people.

14. The pasuk immediately following the tochacha (26:46) begins with the words *eileh hachukim*.

15. Indeed, in the Breuer's community, these five Kinos are read in succession.

16. See later, where we offer a conjecture that this Kinah be paired with Kinah #24.

17. The words "Vayekonein Yirmiyahu" that appear at the end of this Kinah in some printed editions is a misprint. It was inserted as an introduction to the next Kinah, which bemoans the tragic death of King Yoshiyahu, but bears no relevance to the Kinah at hand and therefore cannot serve as a literary bridge.

18. For an analysis of this Kinah, see my article in a previous issue of *Torah To Go*, Tisha B'Av 5776.

19. The third stanza in each set contains an embedded code for the name of the author, אלעזר בירבי קליר.

20. In the *Peirush Kadmon*, the stanza that serves as the last paragraph of Kinah #12 in our versions appears as an introduction to Kinah #14. This is further evidence that Kinah #12 was intended to be read together with Kinah #14. This stanza follows the poetic structure of Kinah #12 (with a play on the word פה) and weaves in the words איכה יעיב into that structure in order to connect it to Kinah #14.

21. This order also is followed by the Breuer's kehila.

22. The first printed stanza of Kinah #24, "Al Churban," is a preamble. It does not fit the style of the rest of the Kinah and it does not seem to be part of HaKalir's original Kinah. The actual first stanza begins "Tisaser."

23. Inasmuch as Kinah #10 ends on a semi-positive note and Kinah #24 does not, we would have to assume, if our conjecture is correct, that Kinah #24 should precede Kinah #10. However, there is no discernable literary bridge between the two, so our suggestion remains speculative.

24. It is interesting to note that the Kinah is based on the story found in *Eicha Rabbah, Pesicha* no. 24, with one major difference. In the midrash, Rochel is deemed most fit to pray on behalf of Klal Yisrael. In the Kinah, it is both Leah and Rochel together with Bilha and Zilpa who cry for the Jewish people and elicit Hashem's assurances regarding our ultimate return to Eretz Yisrael.

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