



INSIGHTS INTO KINOT

Kinah #6: We Can Longer be Oblivious About Tisha B'Av

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Connecting with Tisha B'Av has been a challenge in our modern era. Many speakers and educators often begin their *Kinos* explanations — particularly as they introduce this *kinah* — asking why we don't connect to the suffering and tragedy of this day. We don't connect because for most of our lives, the commemoration of this day related to the suffering that took place in various moments throughout our history. The destruction of the Bais Hamikdash and the suffering of the Jewish people was a subject that we related to from a textbook or history lesson, but not something

we could easily feel. For much of the last seventy-five years, we have been blessed to live a very comfortable life, and we struggle to comprehend what it means to lose the Mikdash. Our Jewish service has been consistent for so many years that, on occasion, we may forget that we are missing the central service in the Mikdash.

The opening *kinah* of the morning *Kinos* is titled “*Shavas*,” and was authored by Rav Elazar Hakalir. Like his other *kinos*, the first word is central to understanding the *kinah*. Why did Rav Elazar Hakalir focus on the word *shavas*? Rabbi Soloveitchik suggested that most things come to an end at a gradual pace. However, when it came to the creation of the world, Hashem was involved in creation until the very last moment of the sixth day. Shabbos began instantly on the seventh day. As such, the word *shabbos*, or *shavas*, not only connotes cessation, but also an instant change.

The Jewish people may have known that the *churban* was coming, but there was a moment when everything came to a halt. The mood changed in an instant.

I believe that this Tisha B'Av we can relate to the loss and distant feeling that Tisha B'Av exudes. This Tisha B'Av arrives after Jews experienced a year where the epicenter of our *yidishkeit* and service of G-d was removed from us on a moment's notice. That which we always took for granted — that we could daven, learn and connect with Hashem in our shuls — was no longer a reality. Although the magnitude of our suffering does not compare to that of our ancestors, the oblivious Tisha B'Av is no longer. The concept of exile is no longer a foreign concept; this year, we experienced a micro exile from the house of Hashem. This is a Tisha B'Av that relates on a smaller scale to the phenomenon of the Jew in the

exile. When we introduce *Kinos*, we no longer have to ask the audience to imagine what it felt like thousands of years ago. The rabbis do not have to paint an image in which the Ribono Shel Olam speaks to His nation through Jewish history. We approach this day of mourning and suffering with fresh wounds and tears.

In order to understand the depths of this new reality, we need to understand what the shul represents in a Jew's life. The significance of the shul in our Jewish lives is not merely a building with services and community events. A shul is integral for the survival of the Jew in the *galus*. We are often mistaken that throughout our years in exile there is no concept of Mikdash in our day. I think this approach is flawed. Chazal teach us that there was a physical Mikdash that stood in Yerushalayim known as the *Bais Hamikdash Shel Matta*, however there is also a *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* in the heavens. In Parshas Vayetzei (Bereishis 28:17), as Yaakov has a dream at the *makom Hamikdash*, Rashi, commenting on the verse *zeh sha'ar hashamayim* — this is the gate to heaven — states that the Bais Hamikdash in heaven parallels the Bais Hamikdash on earth. This statement of Rashi directly contradicts Rashi's comment in Parshas Beshalach (Shemos 15:17). Commenting on the verse *machon leshivtecha pa'alta Hashem* — the place You made to dwell in — Rashi reverses the order and states that the Mikdash below is directly parallel to the Mikdash in heaven. Which one is it? Why does Rashi contradict himself in stating in Vayetzei that the Bais Hamikdash below is primary, and in Beshalach that the Bais Hamikdash above is primary? Rav Yissachar Dov of Belz provides a fascinating insight. He

suggests that the Bais Hamikdash in Yerushalayim is physically aligned with the Bais Hamikdash above, and that is Rashi's point in Beshalach. In the construction of the classic Mikdash in Yerushalayim, the edifice below should physically parallel the Mikdash in heaven. However, in Vayetzei, Rashi is introducing an entirely new Mikdash. At this juncture in Yaakov's life, he was leaving Eretz Yisrael and preparing for the challenges ahead. This represents the Jew in exile, who faces the challenges of *galus*: How do we survive in the exile without a Mikdash? Yaakov was preparing Klal Yisrael for an existence without the classic edifice of the Bais Hamikdash, and introducing a metaphysical Mikdash for Jews in exile. This is what Rashi in Vayetzei was highlighting — that the *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* can descend and be transmitted everywhere. Although the *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* originates in Yerushalayim as referenced by Rashi in Beshalach, it is not restricted to this location. The *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* can also follow the Jew in the exile, where he builds a *Mikdash Shel Matta*. Through tefilla and Talmud Torah, a Jew in *galus* can extend the Mikdash to anywhere in the world. The *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* can be endowed and consecrated in the *galus* wherever the Jew creates his *avodas Hashem* below. Rashi therefore writes that the *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* and the kedusha of the Mikdash can be spread anywhere a Jew transmits that elevated existence. The *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* refers to the spiritual, non-physical Mikdash, which can be transported to any area that a Jew in the exile desires a spiritual connection with Hashem. Chazal (*Megillah* 29a) refer

to a shul in *galus* as a *mikdash me'at*, a miniature Bais Hamikdash. Our shuls, batei medrashos and areas dedicated for growth in our relationship with Hashem are an actual extension of the Bais Hamikdash. This may not be the primary Mikdash that has a designated location parallel to the *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah*. However, the *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* can be spread to other locations as well.

When our shuls were shuttered and inaccessible, our loneliness and despair came because we were cut off from that Mikdash experience. The *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* was not spreading to our communities as it normally would throughout the *galus*. The survival strategy that our grandfather Yaakov Avinu established in Parshas Vayetzei was disconnected from us. There was a sense of loneliness and kedusha missing in our lives. *Churban Hamikdash* was relatable, palpable and ever present. Our life source was stripped from us during the experiences of COVID. Tisha B'Av 5781 introduces a new approach to our lives and responsibility in this return to our Mikdash. As we sit here in shul and discuss the concept of being sent away from the Temple, this has new relevance and meaning in our lives. The concept of *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* spreading elsewhere is contingent on our sanctification of those areas. We recognize on this Tisha B'Av: the reality of *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* is contingent on us spreading that kedusha through our tefilos, Talmud Torah and ultimate respect for these sanctuaries. We never want to return to a life without the *Bais Hamikdash Shel Maalah* following our *Bais Hamikdash Shel Matah*.

Kinah #10: “Eicha Yashva Chavatzelet Hasharon” — Commemorating Destruction and Hope

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In *Kinah* 10 for Tisha B'Av day, Rabbi El'azar ha-Kalir poetically commemorates the destruction of the Priests and their Priestly cities. The Talmud (*Taanit* 27a) states that for the most part, the Priests did not live in Jerusalem. They were divided into 24 groups, each of which came to Jerusalem for two weeks each year to perform the *avodah* in the Mikdash. But during the rest of the year, these 24 groups lived in 24 cities. Some of these cities also housed non-Kohanim, while others were entirely inhabited by Kohanim (“*ir she-kulah Kohanim*”). The Romans destroyed each of these cities during the time of the churban.

This *kinah* details the names of the 24 cities and describes how each one suffered destruction and exile. Studying the *kinah* makes the churban tangible, allowing us to visualize our enemies emptying Priestly cities, dragging Kohanim from their homes, and sending them into exile. However, Tisha B'Av is really the story of the destruction, torture, and exile of all of Am Yisrael. Why does this *kinah* exclusively commemorate the narrative of the Kohanim?

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik (*The Lord is Righteous in All His Ways*, p. 243) explains that we specifically remember the Kohanim because they suffered

most at the hands of the Romans. Not only did the Kohanim perform the Priestly service in the Beit Hamikdash, they were the *talmidei chachamim* and part of the Sanhedrin as well. They were the spiritual core of the people. The Romans regarded the Kohanim as their central enemies, responsible for all wrongdoings toward the Empire. However, more significantly, they blamed the Kohanim for leading, maintaining, and sustaining the Jewish people after Jerusalem's destruction.

Rav Soloveitchik provides not only a basic explanation for the necessity of a *kinah* focused specifically on the Kohanim, he adds a much deeper understanding as well. During the time of the churban itself, the Kohanim suffered greatly, and fought fiercely to protect the Mikdash. The Midrash in *Eicha Rabbah* (*Petichta* 23) describes:

בַּיּוֹם שֶׁיָצְעוּ שְׂמֵרֵי הַבַּיִת, אֵלָיו מִשְׁמֵרוֹת כְּהֵנָה וְלִוְיָהּ. וְהִתְעַוְתוּ אֲנָשֵׁי הַחֵלֶל, אֵלָיו הַכֹּהֲנִים
“On the day that the guards of the house shake” this refers to the shifts of the Kohanim and Levi'im, “The men of valor bend,” this refers to the Kohanim. Additionally, the fact that it took three weeks — between Shiva Assar B'Tammuz, when the Romans breached the city walls, and Tisha B'Av, when they destroyed the Beit Hamikdash — is a testament to the efforts of the Kohanim. Indeed, various midrashim explain that the Kohanim led the resistance against the advancing armies. The Kohanim were weak, sick, and starving, but they fought so hard that it took the powerful Roman army three weeks to cover a distance that a seasoned seminary student can travel in a few minutes.

However, this *kinah* mourning the Kohanim commemorates much

more than physical resistance. The Kohanim need not be commemorated and mourned for the efforts they invested in protecting the Mikdash leading up to its destruction, though that alone is laudable. Rather, the Kohanim must be mourned as well for what they represented through their service prior to the churban. When the Kohanim served in the Mikdash during their designated time, they were serving on behalf of all of Am Yisrael, not only on behalf of themselves and their families. When the Kohanim brought the Korban Tamid, each morning and evening, it was considered to be on behalf of every Jew. The Kohanim represented a sense of responsibility for, and a connection to all of Klal Yisrael.

Today, we each have our own communities, shuls, schools, and organizations that we are involved in. We feel little connection to a Jew living in a different location, who may look different or practice differently that we do. One may say that this disunity is a product of *galut*, that a dispersed people have very few points of connection. However, on Tisha B'Av we connect this phenomenon not only to *galut* itself, but back to the Kohanim specifically, as those who exemplified the sense of responsibility that we have to one another as Jewish people. On Tisha B'Av we long for the unified service of HaKadosh Baruch Hu that was facilitated by the Kohanim, not just in physical unity, but in a sense of *achrayut* (responsibility) to one another.

Kinah #10: Eichah Yashvah Havatzelet ha-Sharon

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This *kinah* focuses exclusively on *kohanim* and on cities of *kohanim*. The *kohanim* were divided into twenty-four families, each one called a *mishmar*, and each *mishmar* ministered for at least two weeks a year in the *bet ha-mikdash*. In turn, each *mishmar* was divided into seven *batei av*, each of which served for one day that week. Thus, every *kohen* served in the *bet ha-mikdash* for some two days a year. We know the names of some of these families; some are mentioned in Nach and some in the Gemara. In addition, here we have a list of the twenty-four cities in which the *kohanim* lived; there were entire cities that consisted of only *kohanim*.

This is not only an ancient reality. Rishonim deal with how *aliyot* on Shabbat morning are distributed in such cities where everyone is a *kohen*, who gets *shei'ni* or *shlishi*, etc.¹ The island of Djerba off the coast of Tunisia is known for its unusually high percentage of *kohanim*. There is a local tradition there, that as far back as *churban bayit rishon* large numbers of *kohanim* escaped from Jerusalem to Djerba.

Why do we single out *kohanim* when it comes to the *kinot* of Tisha B'Av? Simply speaking, perhaps the reason is that they were the one group most directly impacted by the *churban* because they could not do the *avodah* there any longer. It affected them more intensely than it affected any other Jews. Rabbi Soloveitchik

offered a different suggestion. He often explained that they are singled out for their bravery and heroism. How long did it take the Babylonians (first *bet ha-mikdash*) or Romans (second *bet ha-mikdash*) to get from the walls of the city to the *har ha-bayit*? In the case of the Babylonians there is a disagreement between the Bavli (*Taanit* 28b: 30 days) and the Yerushalmi (*Taanit* 4:5: 21 days); in the case of the Romans all agree that it took them 21 days — 21 or 30 days were necessary to progress the distance that today is a six-minute walk! And the reason for this was, said Rabbi Soloveitchik, because the *kohanim* were valiantly and desperately fighting to protect the *beit ha-mikdash*. Since they were the ones, more than any other group, who heroically extended themselves to save the *bet ha-mikdash*, we give them special consideration.

I would like to suggest another reason the *kohanim* are especially deserving of a separate *kinah* on Tisha B'Av. We know that a *kohen* cannot do the *avodah* if he drinks wine. We have a pale imitation of this ruling on Simchat Torah, during which we follow the unusual practice of *duchening* during Shacharit to avoid the *kohanim* *duchening* in their usual spot during Musaf, where they may do so under the influence of the wine (or other alcohol) they may have drunk after their *aliyot* on that day. The Gemara (*Taanit* 17a) states that when the *bet ha-mikdash* was standing, the *kohanim* whose time it was to serve had to be careful because, depending on the circumstances, they might be pressed into service at a moment's notice. The Gemara continues and states that even these days, when there is no *bet ha-mikdash*, *kohanim* need to be careful because, as Rashi explains,

the *bet ha-mikdash* may be rebuilt suddenly and their services will be necessary.² While the Talmud goes on to cite Rebbe's counter ruling, this notion that the *beit ha-mikdash* may be rebuilt at any moment is so powerful that it impacts normative halachah even in the 21st century. This ruling demonstrates that the *kohanim*, more than any other group, had to always live, in a practical way, with the expectation of a rebuilt Temple. In fact, one of the Geonim had a tradition, brought down from his family of *kohanim*, to let his nails grow long so that, at a moment's notice, he would be able to properly participate in a particular Temple ritual that required long nails.³ He is one of the Geonim, living roughly nine hundred years or so after the *churban*, and yet the possible immanence of a rebuilt *bet ha-mikdash* affected his personal hygiene!

I would like to suggest that perhaps this is why the *kohanim*, more than any other group, are worthy of their own *kinah* mourning for the destruction of the *bet ha-mikdash*. Every day they were forced to confront, in a most practical way, the possibility of a rebuilt Temple, and so the passage of every day without that taking place was for them a source of extra sadness and disappointment. Their mourning on Tisha B'Av thus deserves being acknowledged separately.

Endnotes

1. See *Teshuvot ha-Rashba Meyuhas le-ha-Ramban* #186. My thanks to my rabbi, Rabbi Yosef Adler, for this reference.
2. See Rashi ad. loc., s.v. *asur lishtot yayin kol oto ha-yom*, "שמה יבנה בית המקדש ותכבד העבודה, ויהיה זה צריך לעבודה."
3. B. M. Levin, *Otzar ha-Geonim*, *Taanit*, p. 30.

Kinah #19: Lecha Hashem Hatzedakah

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The *kinah* “*Lecha Hashem Hatzedakah*” focuses on the theme of *hakaras hacheit*, recognition of wrongdoing, and *tziduk hadin*, the recognition that as painful as punishment may be, we understand that Hashem is just, and it is our sins that have resulted in our punishment. The *kinah* highlights instances where nationally, we benefited from Hashem’s goodness, and yet we responded in a way in which we should be embarrassed — *v’lanu boshes hapanim*.

For example, R’ Elazar Hakalir contrasts how Hashem was so good to us in miraculously providing food and drink in the dessert with the *man* and the *be’er*, and yet our response was to complain about the *lechem hakelokel*, the light or destructive bread. What was the complaint? The bread was not digested in the normal way and there was no waste. However, instead of appreciating that their food was perfect and provided them all that they needed, the Jews complained.

With that backdrop, there is one stanza that seems difficult. R’ Elazar hakalir writes:

לך ה' הצדקה בסיחון ועוג וכל ממלכות כנען
ולנו בשת הפנים בעכן אשר מעל בחרם בלי
מצא מען.

You Hashem were righteous in how you helped us wage war against the local kings and nations: Sichon, Og and the kings of K’naan.

We are shamefaced regarding how Achan

took for himself from the forbidden spoils [of Yericho] without an excuse.

What episode is this referring to? Before the battle against Yericho, Yehoshua proclaimed that all the possessions of the inhabitants of Yericho must be destroyed, and that no one may benefit from them. When the Jews lost their subsequent battle against Ai, Yehoshua realized that someone must have sinned by taking from the spoils of Yericho, thereby spiritually endangering the nation and causing Hashem to punish them by losing to Ai. Lots were drawn to discover the perpetrator and they fell on Achan.

This stanza is troubling: all other cases that resulted in national punishment and embarrassment came about through a national chesed from Hashem that went unappreciated by the Jews as a whole. Here, however, the chesed from Hashem in battling the nations of K’naan was national, but the sin of Achan was individual. Why would that individual sin cause us, as a nation, to proclaim *v’lanu boshes hapanim* — that we are embarrassed?

It seems that R’ Elazar Hakalir is teaching us about the role of the community in creating the environment in which individuals act. When a person can brazenly violate the decree of Yehoshua, it not only impugns him, but the nation. Had the community created the proper environment, Achan would have been unable to do what he did. So yes, it was the act of an individual, but a reason for the nation to feel *boshes hapanim*.

We have a responsibility to one another, not only for how we act, but for the atmosphere we create that permeates the community in which

we live. Every mitzvah we do brings us as a community closer to redemption and to change the mourning of Tisha B’Av to a Yom Tov celebration.

Kinah #20: Hope Amidst Despair

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Dedicated in memory of my late mother-in-law Judith Pfeffer, Yehudis bas Shmaya HaKohen a"h. May her memory be for a blessing.

The *Kinos* recited on Tisha B’Av morning can be divided into three sections:

1. *Kinos* 6–20, all composed by the famed liturgical poet Rabbi Elazar HaKalir.
2. *Kinos* 21–35, a mixture of *kinos* written by different authors; four of these *kinos* commemorate events which took place during the Crusades.
3. *Kinos* 36–45, focusing on the beauty of Eretz Yisrael and our yearning for it. We will focus here on the first section exclusively. Since the *kinos* of the first section are written by the same author, we can detect a logical progression in the themes those *kinos* touch upon.

The first two *kinos* describe the poet’s sense of shock and disbelief at the sudden calamity that has befallen the Jewish people. In *Kinah* 8, this shock gives way to weeping and a pained recollection of the blessings promised by Hashem, expressed in *Kinah* 9. The enormity of the tragedy is explored in the successive *kinos*: The loss of

spiritual leadership, as personified by the Kohanim (*Kinah* 10); the loss of inspired political leadership, as exemplified by King Yoshiyahu, the last truly righteous ruler of Yehuda (*Kinah* 11); the loss of the Beis HaMikdash, an integral part of Creation itself (*Kinos* 12 and 14); the seeming disappearance of the Divine promises made to the Jewish people (*Kinah* 13); and the human tragedy, captured by the many atrocities suffered by the Jewish people during the Churban (*Kinos* 15–17).

In *Kinah* 18, Rabbi Elazar HaKalir turns to the issue of theodicy: Why have these tragedies befallen the Jewish people? Each stanza of the *kinah* recounts promises of blessings or kindness bestowed by the Almighty on the Jewish people and then asks, “Lama?” — “Why” have we been subjected to so much torment?

The answer is provided in *Kinah* 19, which borrows its refrain from the ninth chapter of Sefer Daniel. In that chapter, Daniel fasts and beseeches the Almighty to rebuild the Beis HaMikdash, which is still in ruins. His prayers are answered when the angel Gavriel appears to him and reveals to him when the Beis HaMikdash will be rebuilt. The answer itself is cryptic, but the context implies that Daniel understands what Gavriel is revealing to him.

In the course of Daniel's prayer, he repeatedly expresses that the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash is the fault of Jewish sin, and that the Almighty's anger was justified. "Righteousness is Yours, Hashem," he says, "and we are shame-faced." (Daniel 9:7). That phrase serves as the refrain of *Kinah* 19. Rabbi Elazar HaKalir wants us to realize that, if we wish to have the Beis HaMikdash

restored, we must, like Daniel, first appreciate that it was destroyed because of our sins.

Daniel's prayer also serves as the basis for *Kinah* 20, the last *kinah* in this series. Here, the *kinah* invokes the phrase used by Daniel, "My G-d, incline Your ear and hear [us]" (Daniel 9:18). Like Daniel's prayer, *Kinah* 20 is a heartfelt plea that Hashem restore the Beis HaMikdash. The *kinah* concludes with another citation from Daniel's prayer: "Shine Your face on Your destroyed sanctuary." (Daniel 9:17)

By concluding his series of *Kinos* with references to Daniel's prayer, Rabbi Elazar HaKalir leaves us with a sense of hope, even in the midst of the mourning of Tisha B'Av. After all, Daniel was in a situation similar to our own: mourning the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash and unsure when it would be rebuilt. The implication of the *kinah's* reference to Daniel's prayer is that our prayers, just like Daniel's, will be answered, and we can look forward to an end to our mourning.

Kinah #26: Zilpah and Bilhah Cry Out

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The *Kinah* (26) of Az Bahaloch *Yirmiyahu al Kivrei Ha-Avot* describes how the prophet Yirmiyahu approached the graves of the patriarchs as well as Moshe Rabbeinu to awaken them to the tragedy of the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash and the exile of the Jewish people.

In the midrashic version (*Eichah Rabbah*, Peticha 24), we are told how

Yirmiyahu was specifically sent by Hashem to beseech the patriarchs and Moshe Rabbeinu to cry out on behalf of the Jewish people to evoke Hashem's mercy on their behalf. Based on this order, Yirmiyahu systematically evokes their pleas in defense of their descendants and their nation.

In the *kinah* of Tisha B'av, however, there is no mention of any such divine order, but simply a description of Yirmiyahu as a distraught prophet who desperately cries out to the patriarchs, "how can you lie down while your children have been sent into exile?" and incredulously exclaims, "what happened to the *z'chut Avot* that always served as a source of protection in the past?" In the *kinah*, the crying of Yirmiyahu is in the form of a weeping lament, consistent with the theme of Tisha B'av as a day of tears rather than one of advocacy.

Both versions record the plaintive pleas of Avrohom, Yitzchak, Yaakov, and Moshe, recounting their own acts of dedication and sacrifice toward Hashem as a source for rescinding the verdict against the children of Israel. In both accounts, Hashem responds by pointing out the pervasive and pernicious sins of the people, thus negating any possibility for clemency.

At the conclusion of the midrashic version, Rochel emerges, reminding Hashem of her personal self-sacrifice as she watched her sister, Leah, being given to Yaakov as a wife in her stead, then assisted Leah from underneath the nuptial bed with instructions as to how to win over Yaakov's heart. If Rochel, a human being with fragile emotion, could so nobly bear the degradation of being subordinate to her own conjugal competition, why could Hashem not bear the

competition of the idolatry toward which His people had strayed? To this argument, Hashem's mercy was aroused, and He declared, "for your sake, Rochel, I will return this people to their land." This account, of course, corresponds closely with the scriptural verses (Yirmiyahu 31:15-17) describing "Rochel weeping for her children" and then being consoled by Hashem with the assurance that "your children shall return to their borders."

By contrast, in the *kinah's* version, Rochel does not intercede solely on her own, but together with the other wives of Yaakov. Rochel's cries are preceded by those of Leah, her co-matriarch, but their heartfelt cries do not carry the day by themselves. Rather, their cries are followed by those of the maidservants. "Zilpah pounds her face (in distress), Bilhah laments with both of her hands." Only after the appearance of the maidservants does the *kinah* shift gears, provoking the response of Hashem, "*temimim* (wholesome ones) — go back to your eternal resting

place, I will fulfill all your aspirations, I was sent to Bavel for their sake; behold, I will return your children from exile."

Zilpah and Bilhah, the maidservants of Leah and Rochel, were never given the top billing that was accorded to the four matriarchs of the Jewish people (see *Berachos* 16b). Although they gave birth to four of the tribes, and effectively also served as matriarchs for the Jewish nation (see *Bemidbar Rabbah* 12:17, noting that the six wagons brought by the princes of the tribes alluded to the matriarchal status of Bilhah and Zilpah together with the other four matriarchs), their status as such was subsumed to that of Leah and Rochel (see *Pri Tzadik*, Behar, n.9). After having endured so much in silence and obscurity, they cannot contain themselves anymore in this *kinah*. If their nation would be wiped out, there would be nothing left of their quiet and heroic legacy. Perhaps this is the import of these final lines of the *kinah*. "Zilpah pounds her face," because she would have no further face to save, and "Bilhah

laments with both of her hands," because her handiwork, G-d forbid, would be extinguished.

Together with the heartfelt pleas of Rochel and Leah, this stirring awakening on the part of the least heralded matriarchs in the birth of Israel dramatically changes the narrative. The final coupling of the "wholesome ones," highlighting their self-sacrifice and self-effacement in the formation of the holy nation of Israel, evokes the verdict from the Almighty that their descendants will surely be granted redemption. Zilpah and Bilhah, having complemented the cries of Leah and Rochel with the pathos of their pain, can comfortably return to their eternal resting place in peace.



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