

BILVAVI

AV TALKS

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Collection of Drashas from the
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Avodah / Av – Turning Sadness Into Happiness

The Month of Av - and Our Avodah of Transforming Sadness Into Joy

We are in the month of Av, the month of mourning and sadness, which will one day be turned into joy, when we merit it from Hashem. Our *avodah* during the month of Av is two-fold. On one hand, we must know what sadness in the soul is, and then our *avodah* is to transform it into joy. Let us try here with the help of Hashem to understand what the source of sadness is, what the source of happiness is, and how we can leave sadness and enter joy.

A Difference Between The Soul of Men and Women

Since this is being delivered to women, we will try here to mainly discuss this subject in terms of the woman's soul.

First we will need the following introduction. Our Sages reveal that when Hashem created the world, He created it with four elements: fire, wind, water, and earth. A man's soul is mainly comprised of the elements of water and wind, whereas the soul of woman was mainly based upon the elements of fire and earth.

Of course, in general, every soul, man and woman alike, contains the four elements¹. A man certainly has fire and earth in his soul, and a woman certainly has water and wind in her soul. But it is just that the man's soul is mainly based upon water and wind, and a woman's soul is mainly based upon fire and earth. Therefore, whenever a woman feels sad, this is either coming mainly from the fire in her soul, or it is mainly coming from the earth in her soul.²

When Chavah sinned by eating of the *Eitz HaDaas*, she was cursed with, "*With sadness shall you bear children*". Women have to endure the mood swings that result from childbirth and pregnancy. There are also other times in a woman's life where sadness becomes dominant. The element of earth is where the sadness in women stems from, and it was activated when Chavah ate from the *Eitz HaDaas*. Again, to emphasize, it is either the element of earth or the element of fire which is the main source of a woman's sadness. The sin of Chavah, which brought about the effects of sadness upon childbearing, was only a means to activate the sadness that was already part of her inner makeup.

1 Refer to Getting To Know Your Soul

2 In Understanding Your Middos #002 (Laziness), the Rav explains the various causes for sadness which each of the four elements in the soul can cause, when they are left imbalanced. (1) Water-based sadness is a sadness due to running after various physical desires, which eventually breeds on sadness. (2) Wind-based sadness is a sadness which is caused by being too haughty, which causes a person to feel disappointed at his failures. (3) Fire-based sadness is the sadness that results from becoming angry. (4) Earth-based sadness is when a person feels lethargic.

Let us try to understand how we can see sadness coming from either the element of earth or fire.

Sadness Starts With 'Fire' and Awakens Our 'Earth'

To illustrate the concept, we can reflect into the following. The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed by fire, and when we mourn it, we sit on the ground – the 'earth'. Thus, it is 'fire' which plunged us into sadness and mourning, connecting us to the element of earth, similar to how the sin brought about the curse upon mankind, "*You are earth, and to earth you shall return*". We can imply from this that it is 'fire' in the soul which causes us to have a reason to be sad, sending us to the level of the 'earth', where the sadness is clearly manifest. So the sadness begins with the element of fire, and it is revealed in the element of earth.

Soon we will explain how sadness can come from the element of earth, but first let's digest the above concept. Now let us explain, with *siyata d'shmaya*, how exactly the element of fire causes sadness in the soul, and how sadness becomes manifest in our element of earth.

Fire: Destruction and Sadness

Fire destroys. Just like fire destroys physical things, so does the element of fire in our soul, our spiritual fire, tend to be destructive to our own soul. When a person misuses his element of fire, he destroys everything in his path, like a person who feels that nothing is important to him.

You can see this clearly from sad people who complain about everything and are never happy about anything in their life. When a person is sad, he feels that nothing is important to him anymore; nothing can make him happy, because nothing has any value to him. This is how a person uses his spiritual fire to unleash devastation and destruction upon his own soul – just like a very real fire.

We can give a few examples of this. Let's say you have a person who has five children; four of them are doing well, for the most part, and are generally a source of *nachas* to the parents, but one of the five children is a problematic child, causing the parents much heartache and grief. How does the person look at this situation? Either he can focus on the four good children he does have, or, he will become entirely consumed with sadness and frustration over his problematic child.

Some people feel that they have everything good in their family, because they were born with more of an "*ayin tovah*" (a good eye); they naturally adapt a positive outlook on everything. Others weren't born with such a positive nature, and tend to see their lives mostly in a bad light. But if a person is totally negative about his situation in life, then he is never happy. Nothing has any value to him – even if he has a spouse whom he is happy with and he has been blessed with a large family of children and he has other good things in his life. It is all worthless to him, and it's all because he is consumed in a particular part of his life which is distressing him.

This is a clear example of when one uses his spiritual fire in his soul to be destructive and it negates everything. Such a person, if he wants to change his outlook, should do some positive thinking every day. He should say to himself, “Did I get up in the morning today? Yes. Am I alive? Yes. Am I married? Yes. Do I have children? Yes.” And just start with that.

Writing Down a List of What's Good In Your Life

Let's give another example: when a person is amidst a stormy marriage. Although this is a problem, the question is: Is the person totally consumed by his problem? How does he look at his life? Does he consider his life to be worthless just because he has this one problem, or does he feel thankful to Hashem at least that he got up in the morning, that he's alive, that he's healthy, and that he has a family?

Many times people forget about the good that they do have in their life, and instead focus on the one bad part of their life. People have plenty of good in their life – good health, children, a house, and so many other good things – but because they have one problem, they don't consider their life to be good in general. This was Haman's problem. He had almost everything to be happy about, but only one thing didn't go his way. For this, he said, “*All of it is not worth anything to me.*” Many people feel that way too!

We need to balance out our feelings by making sure that our inner 'fire' is not getting out of hand and destroying all the good that is in our life.

If a person were to write down a list of everything good and bad in his life, usually, the list of the bad things will come out bigger. This is because people are too focused on the one bad thing in their life, and thus they don't consider their lives to be good. If only they could just get themselves to focus on the good parts of their life and keep reflecting into it.

Some Positive Reflections To Think About Each Day

There are a few things which we can reflect about that can immediately make us happy, no matter what our situation is.

For example, one good thing that we can think about it is the fact that we are Jewish. Every day we make a *beracha* (blessing) of “*shelo asani goy*” (That you did not make me a gentile); we thank Hashem for not making us a non-Jew. This is not just something we say – it can bring us great happiness, if we really think about it.

Another good thing to think about is that we possess a *neshamah*, a Divine soul, and we come from our great forefathers, Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov. Imagine if you had been born as a gentile, and you wouldn't be part of the Jewish nation. You would be missing out on everything! If you just think about this and reflect into it, it can cause you to feel sheer joy.

Another thing you can think about is: all of us stood at Har Sinai and received the Torah. Can you imagine what your life would be like if not for this? Think about this one thing, and you will have plenty to be happy about.

Another good thing to think about is that all of the Jewish people have a share in *Olam HaBa* (the World To Come), except for a few wicked sinners who do not have a share. Do we ever think about this? The thought of this alone can make us happy.

When This Doesn't Work

However, some people, when they think about this, don't really care about the fact that we all come from the *Avos*, or that we all have *Olam Haba*, and that we all stood at Har Sinai.

A person might feel, "These are all very nice things to think about, but it doesn't help me. Right now, I have problems. I have *shalom bayis* problems. I have problematic children. I'm not seeing enough *nachas* from my children. My financial situation is very difficult for me. My life is full of problems. It is certainly nice that I come from the *Avos*, and it's nice to hear that I stood at Har Sinai and that I will get *Olam HaBa*, but right now, I am on this world, and it's filled with nothing but hardships for me."

But we have to remember that we are made up of a body (*guf*) and a soul (*neshamah*). We can use our soul's perspective to calm our angry perspective that's coming from our body, by reminding ourselves that we have all these great reasons to be happy: we have *Olam HaBa*, we have the Torah, we were made apart from the nations when we stood at Har Sinai, and we come from the *Avos*.

If we only look at life through the prism of our body, then yes, we will be consumed with our physical problems, and we will become paralyzed by our element of earth, which slows us down and makes us depressed.

But if we look at life through our soul, we are able to think about the fact that we come from the *Avos* – which is meaningful to our soul, because that means we have spirituality. The more we see our life through our soul and are focused on spirituality, the more of a balance we achieve between our body and soul, and we calm down inside ourselves.

Self-Help Books Don't Help Us

There are many gentile methods to get rid of depression which people turn to, out of desperation. When a Jew is sad and he seeks relief, he is tempted to read self-help books, written by various gentile psychologists or professors. But a gentile cannot help a Jew become happy. This is because a gentile lives only for This World, and therefore, a gentile's perspective is to seek how life on this world can be the most gratifying life on this world. A gentile is interested in how he can get the most out of This World, which is the world of the physical body. The secular methods of the world when it comes to treating depression cannot help us, because we have a Divine soul within us, and the soul in us needs something else which the non-Jewish books can't tell us.

We, the Jewish people, have special souls within us, and we have our own methods to reach happiness. There are actually many different ways we have, and each person needs to find the

proper way that is for him. The way a Jew attains happiness is essentially by leaving his body's viewpoint, and entering into his soul's viewpoint. Then he sees life through the prism of the soul, not through the body, and then he can be happy. As a person begins to enter the inner world of spirituality, he will find that his pull towards sadness and depression is lessening.

It takes a lot of inner work to arrive at true happiness. We cannot explain here in this short amount of time all the ways how we can reach happiness; it would take several hours. But we have said here what the key is. The key to happiness, the very first step to take, is to begin living a more internal kind of life, where we are seeing life through the prism of the soul, as opposed to living a life of superficiality and the body. Everyone should try to discover how he can enter this inner world; there are many ways (as explained in the previous months).

May we merit to transform our mourning and sadness in the month of Av, into happiness.

Questions & Answers with the Rav

Q1: *Why is fire associated with sadness? Also, isn't fire usually associated with enthusiasm?*

ANSWER: Very good question. Each of the elements has positive and negative uses. There are good and evil uses of earth, good and evil uses of water, good and evil uses of wind, and good and evil uses of fire.

Enthusiasm is certainly a nature rooted in the element of fire. When a person doesn't use his fire for enthusiasm, what happens? His fire is not being activated for good uses, so it will be destructive instead, and the person will view everything in his life as negative. Some people even use fire for enthusiasm in a bad way, like when they act very giddy always, and they aren't so focused in their life; they act childish and irresponsible. They are enthusiastic one day and forget about their enthusiasm a few days later. The way to use enthusiasm in a good way is to build upon it, not to use your fire to destroy your previous successes, but to keep the fire going and building upon your enthusiasm.

Q2: *If women are more prone to sadness, since we come from fire and earth (which are the elements that mainly cause sadness), is there a way for us to have more access to water and wind?*

ANSWER: Certainly. But we need to know how to use the other elements, and it is a very long discussion which we don't have time for now. Generally speaking, the element of earth is the root of the traits of sadness and laziness. If a person is mainly drawn towards laziness, the general solution is to try to stick to doing a certain pastime every day which you never veer from. If a person is mainly drawn towards sadness, the solution is generally to find certain positive aspects about yourself and your life which you can receive pleasure from on a continuous basis.

Essence / Av – Hearing Hashem

The Month of Av and the Sense of 'Hearing'

The month of Av, as we know, is the root of all tragedy and suffering in our history.

There are twelve months of the year, and each month contains a special power. The power contained in the month of Av, our Sages explain, is the power of *shemiyah* (hearing).

The Spies' Evil Report Was 'Heard' In the Month of Av

The Vilna Gaon explains that in the month of Av, the *bnei Yisrael* heard the accounting of the Spies about the land of Israel, where the Spies spoke disparage about the land. Instead of listening to Yehoshua and Calev's report, who spoke in praise of the land, the *bnei Yisrael* instead chose to listen to the other eight Spies, who spoke negatively about the land.

There is a power to use our ability of hearing for good, and there is a way how our hearing is used for evil. Our Sages explain that our ears contain an extra piece of skin underneath them, so that we can we block out our ears from hearing something evil³.

During the month of Av, the power of hearing was used for evil, when the *bnei Yisrael* listened to the Spies' report about the land, and they came to cry 'tears in vain'. Because they cried 'tears in vain', Hashem declared that day, the ninth day of Av, as "a day of crying throughout the generations".

When we stood at Har Sinai, we used our power of hearing for good, where we heard the voice of Hashem. This was where our power of hearing was used in the most elevated way possible. But in the month of Av, where we cried futile tears, the ears that heard at Har Sinai were damaged. At Har Sinai, we were freed from all forces of impurity and evil, and we returned to the level of perfection.

When we heard the Spies' report and we cried, the month of Av became a month of mourning for all generations to come; it was like a form of death that came to mankind.

There is personal mourning in each person's life, and there is mourning on the collective level of the Jewish people, which is when we mourn over the loss of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Let us try to understand, with the help of Hashem, what good listening is, and what evil listening is. Let us see how we can use the power of hearing for holiness - which will merit us to hear the sound of Mashiach's *shofar*.

Hearing and Understanding (Da'as)

³ Kesubos 5b

Firstly, we need to know what the sense of hearing is about. The Sages state that there are four senses (contained in the parts of the face): sight, hearing, smell, and speech. What is the essence of the power to 'hear'? We can know what it is by analyzing its opposite. The opposite of a listener is a deaf person (in Hebrew, "*cheirish*").

The Gemara defines a *cheirish*/deaf person as one who is born with the inability to hear and talk. If he can talk, he is not considered to be "deaf" according to the Torah. The Gemara also says that a *cheirish* has no *da'as* (sensible understanding), just like a minor or mentally ill person has no *da'as*. Elsewhere, the Gemara says that he has 'weak' *da'as*. But either way, there is something missing from his *da'as*.

Thus, one who can hear, one who has "a heart that listens", is one who has *da'as*. There is an expression in the Gemara, "You do not listen to me, you do not understand me." Being a listener doesn't just mean to use your physical ears to listen to the other person. It means to listen with your heart; to have a "*lev shomea*", a heart that listens, or a "*lev meivin*", a heart that understands.

Thus, hearing implies the ability to both hear and talk, and it also includes the ability to have *da'as* (sensible understanding). What is the explanation of this matter?

The Ability to Hear the 'Word of Hashem'

If we want to understand the essence of any matter, we need to examine where it appears the first time in the Torah. The first time the Torah speaks about the idea of hearing is by Adam *HaRishon*, when he heard the voice of Hashem calling to him in Gan Eden.

From where does a person get his power to talk from? It is because Hashem breathes into a person His word; the "*dvar Hashem*" (word of Hashem). Our entire speech gets its vitality from the "*dvar Hashem*" that empower it. The entire Creation is supported and sustained by the *dvar Hashem*.

This is also why the Sages say that we are commanded to always speak words of Torah, and to avoid speaking words of idle chatter. It is because we have to use our power of speech to emulate the *dvar Hashem*, and such speech contains true vitality that comes from Hashem. By contrast, when someone speaks meaningless words, and surely when he utters forbidden speech such as gossip and other forbidden forms of speech, he is speaking words that are empty from vitality.

Man is called "*nefesh chayah*" (a living soul), and *Targum* says that this means man is a "*ruach memalelah*" (a talking spirit), thus our entire ability to talk is due to the word of Hashem that was breathed into us.

When Hashem created the universe, He created it with ten expressions, but there was no man yet to hear it. Man was created last, and he didn't hear the *dvar Hashem* that said "Let there be light" and "Let there be a firmament." Until we received the Torah at Har Sinai, no one ever heard the actual *dvar Hashem*. For twenty-six generations, no one heard Hashem's voice. Although our *Avos* kept the entire Torah, and there was Torah learning in the yeshivah of Shem and Ever and in the yeshivah in Goshen, there was not yet a revelation of the *dvar Hashem* which a person could hear. Only at Har Sinai did we hear the voice of Hashem.

This is also the depth of the declaration of “*Naaseh V’Nishma*” (We will do, and we will hear), when we stood at Har Sinai. It was because we received a new kind of hearing, a new set of ears: the ability to hear Hashem’s voice. The ears we had before we stood at Har Sinai were not the same ears we had after Sinai. The ears we received at Har Sinai enable us to hear the *dvar Hashem*, to hear the Ten Commandments of the Torah, which commands us to speak the words of Torah. Ever since then, a person is able to remember Har Sinai – he is able to connect to the word of Hashem, which he heard at Har Sinai.

The Gemara defines a deaf person as one who is born as both deaf and mute; he cannot talk because there are no words which he has ever heard, to talk about. This is true about the physically deaf person - but there is also spiritual deafness (as we will soon explain).

When a person hears a spiritual message, he is connecting to the “*dvar Hashem*” that was heard at Sinai. Every single Jew received that ability.

The giving of the Torah was essentially a conversion process to Judaism, and it is also called a birth. The Sages said that a deaf person is one who is born deaf and mute, but if he can hear from birth, he is not called a deaf person according to *Halacha*. The birth of the Jewish people, which was at Har Sinai, meant that we were all on the level of hearing from birth. So we were all ‘born’ with the ability to hear the *dvar Hashem*, and ever since then, we have the ability to speak words of truth: the words of Torah, which is the word of Hashem.

The giving of the Torah at Sinai enabled us to receive a new kind of listening and speaking, in contrast to the person who is born deaf and mute, who cannot hear nor speak. This ability was only given to the Jewish people, for only the Jewish people stood at Sinai. It is forbidden to teach Torah to a gentile, nor may a gentile learn it; he is liable to capital punishment if he does so. This is because a gentile doesn’t view Torah as the *dvar Hashem*; he only learns it for the sake of knowing its information. But the Jewish people’s view towards the Torah is to learn it with the understanding that it is the *dvar Hashem*.

This is what it means to truly “hear”. A *lev shomeia*, a “heart that listens”, is a power exclusive to the Jew’s soul, who stood at Har Sinai. It is spiritual hearing; to hear the voice of Hashem – to hear the *dvar Hashem* in each thing.

Now we can understand what evil hearing is. When a person doesn’t hear the *dvar Hashem* in something, he has misused the power of hearing.

Hearing Hashem

Our *Gedolim* would often view the people who told them news as messengers of Hashem to let them hear what they needed to hear. They would hear Hashem talking to them within the information. But even a person who is not a *Gadol* can hear the messages of Hashem through the things he hears, for it is said that every Jew can hear the Heavenly “*bas kol*”.⁴

The Destruction of the Beis HaMikdash: What We Lost

4 A statement of the Baal Shem Tov. See Getting To Know Your Hisbodedus #010 – Inner Listening, and Reaching Your Essence #003

Yirmiyahu HaNavi warned *Klal Yisrael* that if they don't repent, Hashem will come and collect His debt. He said, "Hear, O heavens, and listen, earth." When *Klal Yisrael* didn't listen to the Navi, it was not only because they didn't repent, but because they lost the ability to listen with their hearts. By refusing to listen to the Navi, they lost their listening heart. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was because *Klal Yisrael* wasn't listening to what they needed to hear. Hashem speaks to a person all the time, but if someone doesn't hear His voice, he does as he pleases and thus he never repents.

Yerushalayim, and specifically the *Beis HaMikdash*, was the place where the voice of Hashem would go out from to the rest of the world. "For from Zion goes out Torah, and the word of Hashem from Jerusalem." The voice of Hashem was heard at the giving of the Torah, and then it was no longer openly heard. But it continues to be heard in the Torah, in the "word of Hashem" - and it was heard in the *Beis HaMikdash*. The *Beis HaMikdash* was a place where a person could always hear the word of Hashem. Whereas the giving of the Torah was only a temporary time to hear the word of Hashem, the *Beis HaMikdash* was a place where it was heard constantly. Thus, when we lost the *Beis HaMikdash*, we lost that ability to always hear Hashem's word.

The Loss of the Shirah (Song)

Let us try to understand more what the deep power of "hearing" is. The *Gemara* says that two voices cannot be heard at once. However, the *Raavad* writes that we can hear two tunes at once. This is because *nigun* (tune) is a higher kind of sound than hearing words. A person can also hear the *taamim* (sounds) and *nigun* (tune) contained in the Torah, the *shirah* (song) of the Torah, as he hears the words of Torah. In the *Beis HaMikdash*, the Kohanim would do the *Avodah*, and the Leviim sang the *shirah*; this was together with the "dvar Hashem" that went out from there.

We still have the Torah, even after the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. What is missing now from the Torah, then? What Torah did we lose with the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*? We lost its inner song, its *niggun*, its *shirah*.

This is the depth of why the Sages wanted to forbid *shirah* after the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed. The *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed because of *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred); the *shirah* is the opposite of the concept of *sinas chinam*. Whereas *sinas chinam* causes disparity, *shirah* comes to unify. It unified sound with word and enables us to hear two sounds at once.

In addition to the reason of *sinas chinam*, the *Beis HaMikdash* was also destroyed because of *lashon hora* (evil gossip). *Lashon hora* is also a kind of speech that causes disparity. *Lashon hora* is at its name implies - it is 'lashon ra', evil speech, because it is not true speech. It is far removed from the concept of *shirah*. One who speaks *lashon hora* about his friend is not unified with him and separates himself from him. He is missing the *shirah* of the Torah.

It is forbidden to hear *shirah* during the Nine Days, and the depth of this is because we lost the *shirah* of the Torah. We are missing the true *shirah*, and thus it is forbidden for us to take our minds off this loss; that is why we cannot listen to music during these days.

A *cheirish* (one who is born both deaf and mute) has no *da'as*, and the depth of this is because he cannot connect to others. He doesn't hear and he doesn't talk to others, so he cannot connect with others. Thus he has no *da'as*. If he can hear others or if he can talk to others, he is not

considered by *Chazal* to be “deaf” according to *Halacha*, because he can at least connect to others.

Our Avodah: Hearing the Word of Hashem in Everything We Hear

Now we can better understand what our *avodah* is during these days. The destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* was rooted in the fact that *Klal Yisrael* heard the Spies’ evil report. In addition, *Klal Yisrael* didn’t listen to the prophets who warned them of the impending destruction. The *avodah* of these days is thus to access and regain the power of *shemiyah*, inner listening.

Our ears heard the word of Hashem when we stood at Har Sinai, and this ingrained in us the power to hear the word of Hashem in each thing. One can hear the *dvar Hashem* in each thing he hears. In this way, everything that a person hears can bring him to the state of oneness with Hashem.

When one doesn’t hear the word of Hashem in each thing, and instead he simply hears the events of the world without connecting it to the *dvar Hashem*, he is listening to this “world of disparity” (as it is called by our Sages), instead of listening to the *dvar Hashem*. He hears the sounds of This World, not Hashem. This will also cause his own words that he speaks to be disconnected from the *dvar Hashem*.

But if one hears the *dvar Hashem* in each thing that he hears, he hears His one voice in everything. He only hears “one” voice alone. When he hears that “one” voice, he will find that his speech only can speak of only “one” thing...

In Conclusion

May we merit from Hashem that the impurity and blockages be removed from our ears, that instead of hearing the nonsense of this world, we should instead hear the word of Hashem. When we are hearing the word of Hashem, we can then speak of one thing alone, a kind of speech will unify all of *Klal Yisrael* together and turn us into one unit again. And through this we will merit, with the help of Hashem – may it come speedily in our days - the rebuilding of the complete *Beis HaMikdash* and the coming of *Mashiach*. Amen.

Mazal / Av – The Lion

The Destruction of Jerusalem: When The 'Lion' Attacked

The *mazal* of the month of Av is “*aryeh*”, the lion.

In this month, the *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed, by the Babylonian king, Nevuchadnezzar. Our Sages compared king Nevuchadnezzar to a lion, for only a ‘lion’ could have the power to attack the *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *Ariel*, “lion of G-d.”

It is clear that the *mazal* of the month of Av is tied to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Let us try to understand a little about what the ‘lion’ is in deeper terms, so that we can understand more about the month of Av, and the *avodah* we have during these days; may it be transformed from mourning to joy.

The Lion: The Symbol of Malchus \Royalty

Our Sages state that each of the animal groups has their respective king. The king of the birds is the eagle, the king of domestic animals is the bull, and the king of the beasts is the lion. The lion represents *malchus* (royalty). Although it is king over the beasts alone, it is considered to be the representation of the concept of *malchus*.

The Jewish people are referred to by seven names, and one of them is “*aryeh*”, “lion”. But more specifically, it is the tribe of Yehuda, the king of all the tribes of Israel and ancestor of the Davidic dynasty, who is compared to the lion.

The *Beis HaMikdash* is partially built in Yehuda’s portion, and the rest of the *Beis HaMikdash* is in Binyamin’s portion. Binyamin attained part of the status of the *malchus* due to the first king appointed in *Klal Yisrael*, who was King Shaul, a descendant of Binyamin. However, Shaul’s status of *malchus* was eventually transferred to David, who descends from Yehuda. The *Beis HaMikdash*, which was called *ariel* (lion of G-d), was a manifestation of *malchus* - represented by the “lion”.

The Evil Lion, Nevuchadnezzar

The Gemara⁵ says that a lion does not attack two people; it will only attack one single person at a time. The Gemara asks: don’t we see that a lion does attack two people at once? The Gemara answers that it depends. If the lion thinks that there are two people in front of it, it will not attack them both. But if it thinks that the two people look like two animals, then it will attack them both, because then it doesn’t think of them as people; it thinks of them as animals.

5 Pesachim 49a

The deeper meaning of this is that when a person sinks to the level of an animal, he can be attacked by the 'lion' [on the side of evil]. "*They became comparable to animals*", the prophet says, concerning the sinful level that the Jewish people sank to, in the era preceding the destruction. When we weren't sinning, we are called "*adam*" (man); we resemble the perfected level of 'man' that we are created to be. But when we sank to the level of sins, we were on the level of animals – and then we were able to be attacked by the 'lion': Nevuchadnezzar.

If the *Beis HaMikdash* could be destroyed in the month of Av – the representation of the entire Jewish people together – then it must be because we sank to the level in which we were comparable to animals. Had we been on the level of "man", then the 'lion' that is Nevuchadnezzar could not attack us, for the lion doesn't start up with even more than one man. If Nevuchadnezzar was able to come and destroy the *Beis HaMikdash*, this could only have been possible because we became like 'animals' in his eyes, and when he viewed us as animals, he was thus able to attack us. We lost our original *tzuras adam* (ideal form of man).

The Two 'Lions': Yehuda and Dan

In the blessing of Yaakov Avinu, Yehuda is compared to a lion. Yehuda is blessed with the *malchus* (the royal dynasty), the attribute of the lion. Generally speaking, the lion is represented by the tribe Yehuda. But we also find that the tribe Dan is compared to the lion. Yaakov Avinu compares Dan to a serpent, but Moshe Rabbeinu in his blessing compares Dan to a lion.

The Gemara says that the lion has six names⁶. However, there are essentially two roots of where it all stems from: there is a 'lion' aspect contained in Yehuda, and there is a 'lion' aspect contained in Dan.

The lion that is 'Yehuda' represents the concept of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda's role. Yehuda is the symbol of royalty, for the Davidic dynasty stems from him. The lion that is 'Dan', though, refers to the fact that the tribe of Dan is the protectors of the Jewish people, who would guard the borders of Eretz Yisrael from enemy attack; as the tribe Dan is portrayed in the blessing of Yaakov Avinu (as explained according to *Rashi*). This is Dan's aspect of 'lion'. Thus, there is a 'lion' that refers to royalty (Yehuda) and there is a lion that refers to fighting evil (Dan).

The Sages state, "A king can break fences, and no one can protest him." This is referring to the power of *malchus* (royalty), which is Yehuda's aspect. A true king is all-powerful and he can do as he pleases. We also find this concept in the side of evil. The Sages state that the Serpent is one who "breaks the fences of the world." The Serpent, who represents evil, has the audacity to break the proper rules of the world and trample upon all that is holy.

Dan is called the "serpent", but he is called the 'serpent' on the side of holiness, who can watch and protect the boundaries and fences of the Jewish people. Dan is the opposite of the concept of Yehuda, who is a king who can break all fences. Whereas Yehuda can break through all fences, because he is the king, Dan serves to protect the fences and boundaries within the Jewish people.

⁶ aryeh, kfir, lehavi, layish, shachal, shachaf

'Higher' Lion and 'Lower' Lion

The *Beis HaMikdash* is called *ariel*, “lion of G-d”. It is clear that the ‘lion’ which the *Beis HaMikdash* is compared to is the lion of Yehuda, an invincible ‘lion’, for he represents the *malchus* of Hashem. The evil ‘lion’, Nevuchadnezzar, came and destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*. How are we to understand this? If the lion of Yehuda cannot be attacked, for he is the king, then how could Nevuchadnezzar attack the *Beis HaMikdash*?

The answer is because Nevuchadnezzar’s ‘lion’ aspect does not draw its power from Yehuda’s ‘lion’ aspect. Rather, Nevuchadnezzar gets his ‘lion’ aspect from Dan. And the ‘lion’ aspect of Dan can be overcome by evil forces.

Yehuda’s ‘lion’ aspect cannot be defeated by Nevuchadnezzar, because the *malchus* of Yehuda cannot be overcome by the *malchus* of Nevuchadnezzar. The ‘lion’ on the side of evil, Nevuchadnezzar, can only attack the ‘lower lion’, Dan. Nevuchadnezzar can’t touch the ‘higher lion’, Yehuda.

Dan is compared to the lion and he is also compared to the serpent. When the Jewish people sank to the level of sinning, they awakened the evil hold of the Serpent, who was responsible for causing man to sin and all subsequent sins after that. Upon sinking to the level of sin, destruction was able to enter. Dan is compared to both the serpent and the lion; on the side of holiness, when we overcome the hold of the ‘Serpent’, the ‘lion’ on the side of evil isn’t able to attack us either.

From the tribe of Dan came the idol of Michah. Because of the tribe of Dan, evil was able to penetrate into the sheltered society of the Jewish people. The tribe of Dan dwelled on the outermost part of the encampment of the Jewish people, thus they were the most susceptible to the forces of impurity that was just outside of them; and therefore it was they who brought in the evil influences of idol worship.

Nevuchadnezzar, the ‘lion’ on the side of evil, was able to attack our *Beis HaMikdash*, which is called *ariel*, “lion of G-d”, only because of Dan. Nevuchadnezzar’s ‘lion’ aspect is really is no match for Yehuda’s ‘lion’. Nevuchadnezzar is only the ‘lower’ lion (rooted in Dan), thus it can only attack our ‘lower lion’; it cannot attack our ‘higher lion’.

The Gemara says that Nevuchadnezzar rode on a male lion, and placed a serpent hanging from his head. This is in line with the concept being described here that his “lion-like” power is really using the power of the ‘serpent’: Dan. The side of evil connects the ‘lion’ to the ‘serpent’; it is not capable of taking hold of the lion of Yehuda, but it can connect itself to the lion of Dan.

Dan is compared to the serpent, and he is also compared to a lion; therefore, the side of evil can connect itself to the serpent, and from there, it can connect itself to the level of the lion, for Dan is the connecting point between the serpent and the lion. This is what allowed Nevuchadnezzar to be the ‘lion’ that destroyed the *Beis HaMikdash*: he connected his ‘lion’ aspect to the ‘serpent’ aspect of Dan. And when the aspects of ‘lion’ and ‘serpent’ are combined for evil purposes, this is what enables the side of evil to attack and destroy the [external layer of the] *Beis HaMikdash*.

We have seen how the side of evil connects the lion and the serpent, for destructive uses. Now we will see how this concept is employed in the side of holiness.

Mashiach: The Holy Union of Yehuda and Dan

Mashiach ben David descends from Yehuda. Rashi explains that “his father will come from Yehuda, and his mother will come from Dan”. This shows us that Mashiach will be the connecting point between Yehuda and Dan – on the side of holiness. As we know, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which Mashiach ben David will build, will be forever. Let us examine the deep reason for this.

On Purim, we were saved by Mordechai, whose father comes from Yehuda, and whose mother comes from Binyamin. The connection between Yehuda and Binyamin symbolizes the first two *Batei Mikdash*, which was split between the portions of land of Yehuda and Binyamin. The deeper meaning behind this is because the *malchus* was eventually split between Yehuda and Binyamin. That rift essentially meant that there were two kings now. And there can only be one king in order for the king to have true power.

Thus, the very fact that the *malchus* was split between Yehuda and Binyamin was already a damage to the *malchus*. Because the *malchus* was damaged during the first two *Batei Mikdash*, it would follow that these two *Batei Mikdash* would ultimately be destroyed. This is because there can only be one *malchus* [under the same roof] - not two.

By contrast, the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which will be built by Mashiach, will be forever. Mashiach will come from Yehuda and Dan. If Mashiach were to come from Dan alone, he would be on the level of the ‘lower’ lion, and then he could be attacked by the other ‘lower’ lion that is on the side of evil. But Mashiach’s father is from Yehuda - the ‘higher’ lion - which is stronger than the ‘lower’ lion; thus it cannot be attacked.

Nevuchadnezzar can only attack the ‘lower’ lion in *Klal Yisrael*, but not the ‘higher’ lion in *Klal Yisrael*. Thus, the Mashiach, who will come from Yehuda, will be invincible, and his *Beis HaMikdash* cannot be destroyed.

The Sages say that had Moshe entered Eretz Yisrael and built the *Beis HaMikdash*, it could never have been destroyed. We also find that the *Mishkan*, which was built by Moshe, was not either destroyed; it was merely hidden. The *Mishkan*, which is never destroyed, is the root of the third *Beis HaMikdash*, which is never destroyed.

By contrast, the first two *Batei Mikdash* were split between Yehuda and Binyamin, and thus they were susceptible to be destroyed, due to the disparity amongst the *malchus*. Yehuda and Binyamin really cannot be connected, because two kings cannot rule under the same roof. Thus the two *Batei Mikdash* which they jointly possessed could be attacked by Nevuchadnezzar.

The Third Beis HaMikdash: The Union of Yehudah and Dan

It has been explained here that there is a ‘lion’ of Yehuda, and a ‘lion’ of Dan. These concepts need understanding, however. In addition, we also need to understand what exactly their union is.

Since Yehuda and Dan are both called “lion”, their union would mean that there are now two “lions”. If there are two lions, there is no chance against them. Thus, the third *Beis HaMikdash*

will never be destroyed, for it is built by Mashiach, who comes from Yehuda and Dan, the two 'lions'.

Gevurah (Strength) and Malchus (Royalty)

Until now, we have outlined the concepts. Now let us try to relate to these matters on a more practical level in our life. What is the 'lion' of Yehuda, and what is the 'lion' of Dan, in terms of our own personal *avodah*?

We find that the Jewish people, in general, are compared to the lion. The beginning of *Shulchan Aruch* says that upon awakening in the morning, one must strengthen himself like a lion ("yisgaber k'ari"), to serve the Creator. The lion's identifying trait is *gevurah*, strength.

Gevurah, symbolized by the lion's strength, is referring to the 'lion' of Dan. The power of Dan is the power to be a 'lion' in terms of exercising *gevurah*; to illustrate, the tribe of Dan are called the protectors of the Jewish people. In this aspect, Dan is referred to as the 'lion': he shows strength, as he tries to fight the forces of evil.

When a person awakens from sleep, he must 'strengthen himself like a lion'. We can view this with a deeper understanding: *Chazal* say that sleep is a sixtieth of death; thus, getting up from sleep is like rising from a degree of death. Death was caused by the Serpent. But Dan is called both the lion and the serpent. Dan is a 'lion' with regards to the fact that he can strengthen himself and come out of the serpent's hold on him (the forces of evil), and pull himself out of the serpent's grasp. Dan is called the serpent, but his gift is that he can also come out of the 'serpent' that he is compared to: because he is also called a 'lion'. That is the 'lion of Dan': his aspect of *gevurah*, to strengthen himself and overcome evil.

Yehuda's power to be a lion, though, serves a totally different (and higher) purpose than Dan's 'lion' aspect. Yehuda's role is not merely to overcome evil and to rise above it. One of the animals pictured on the legs of the *Merkavah* (the "Holy Chariot" in Heaven), is the lion, and it is on the right side of the *Merkavah*, which shows that the lion symbolizes *malchus*. Yehuda's purpose is to reveal *malchus*.

These are very different aspects of the concept of the 'lion'. The 'lion of Dan' represents coming out of evil and lowliness; this is the 'lower lion', for it is not yet the ultimate power of the lion. The 'lion of Yehuda', which is the 'higher lion', is the lion that reveals *malchus*. The lion is king over all the animals, for it is the most exalted. This brings out the true concept of the lion: it is king. This is the higher lion (which is invincible): the lion of Yehuda.

The Depth of The Destruction

Now we can have a deeper understanding of what the destruction was to the *Beis HaMikdash*, and what our *avodah* is, during these days.

The 'destruction' is essentially a situation where we remain at the level of Dan and we aren't accessing the higher perspective, Yehuda. When we think that *gevurah* means to merely overcome evil, and we are unaware of the *malchus* which we must come to reveal, *this* is the depth of destruction! It is this perspective which could allow Nevuchadnezzar attack.

But remember, Nevuchadnezzar could only destroy our ‘lower’ lion, the lion of Dan, and not our ‘higher’ lion, Yehuda.

One has an *avodah* to fight evil, to strengthen himself and “be strong like a lion”, but ultimately, this aspect of *gevurah* is not using the essence of the lion’s power; it is only the serpent’s power. This is Dan’s power, not Yehuda’s power. Thus it is not enough to really stand a chance against evil. Only the “lion” within us can really overcome evil, and only the lion within us reveals our higher purpose.

The purpose of overcoming evil is not merely to overcome evil and rise above our earthiness where we can shake off the dust from ourselves. The purpose is to reveal our inherent *malchus*!

How To View Our Struggle With Evil

Now we will speak about this in simpler language.

You can have a person who is always fighting his *yetzer hora*, and he is constantly involved with the struggle in overcoming evil. But he might always dealing with thoughts of *shiflus* (low self-worth) towards himself. He is always busy fighting his feelings of low self-worth that is created from having to deal with overcoming disgusting evil acts. This kind of person is always fighting the *yetzer hora*, and commendably so – but he is only fighting with the power of Dan, which is not powerful enough to withstand the forces of evil.

The higher way of being “as strong like a lion” when we try to overcome evil is to realize the very essence (*atzmiyus*) of our *neshamah*. Our *neshamah* is called “daughter of the King”: we must remember our royal status and awaken it. Only then are we truly invincible to evil, and we can then fight evil using this higher perspective. But even more so, we access the *malchus* that is within us, which is the ultimate purpose.

In the month of Av, we mourn the destruction. Our eyes fill with tears, and we realize how low we have sunk, into the very ‘earth’ of This World. But we must realize that we can rise above all of this ‘earth’. We can shake off the dust that has gathered on us and be free of it. The Sages say that “Whoever mourns it, will merit to see it rebuilt”. We can rise above all that we have sunken into, but we must understand: how, exactly, do we rise? What is our perspective as we try to do so?

If one tries to fight the evil of this world because he is merely by trying to overcome, he still has a lowly perspective of himself. And in addition, he will not really succeed in fighting evil, when he has such a perspective. He still thinks he is part of the earth, and therefore, he is not immune to destruction.

But if one realizes that he can rise above his earthy aspect, when he has a yearning to come out of it because he realizes his inherent *malchus*, he reveals the true power of the Jewish people, who are called *bnei melachim* (sons of kings). It is from this deep place in our soul that we can view our struggles with, which we can use to ultimately persevere.

The Depth of ‘Getting Up After Chatzos’ on Tisha B’Av

The *halacha* is that after *chatzos* (noon) on *Tisha B'Av*, we rise from the ground, because we are taught that after *chatzos*, the *Mashiach* is born; our consolation begins. But we must know how to 'rise'. To what are we rising to?

On an inner level, we cannot rise from the earth if we remain on the level of Dan's *gevurah*. But if we access the level of Yehuda, then we will be able to. Rising from the earth means that we can rise above evil and earthiness, by fighting it and not giving in (*gevurah*\Dan) and it also means that we can truly be 'as strong as a lion' and reveal the inner royalty of a Jew's soul (*malchus*\Yehuda) - the deep and pure point in our soul which yearns for the revelation of the ultimate *malchus*.

In Conclusion

May we merit, with the help of Hashem, to reach the level of "His father is from Yehuda, and his mother is from Dan"⁷: that when we fight evil, it should be with both of these aspects. Then we will merit, with *siyata d'shamaya*, the light of Mashiach, and the revelation of the complete redemption to all of the Jewish people. *Amen, V'Am*

⁷ In quote of the words of Rashi concerning the Mashiach's ancestry.

Tribe / Av – Shimon

Av - The Month of Shemiyah/Listening, Corresponds To The Tribe of Shimon

We are in the month of Av, which means that the month of Elul will be here soon.

The months of Av and Elul bear a connection. They are both months in which we are meant to use our power of *shemiyah* (hearing). The month of Av corresponds to the power of *shemiyah*, “hearing”, and in the month of Elul, we begin to hear the *shofar* blast.

The Sages teach that the month of Av, specifically, contains the power of *shemiyah*/hearing.⁸ The twelve months of the year also correspond to each of the twelve tribes, and the month of Av corresponds to the tribe of Shimon.⁹ The word “Shimon” is from the word *shemiyah*, to hear.

Following the month of Av is the month of Elul, which is all about the power of *maaseh*, “taking action”. There are two views in our Sages about which tribe the month of Elul corresponds to. One view is that Elul corresponds to the tribe of Gad¹⁰, and the other view is that Elul corresponds to the tribe of Yehudah¹¹.

In either case, though, the month of Av is about the concept of *shemiyah* (hearing), while the following month, Elul, is about *maaseh* (action).

The Ideal State Is When Maaseh (Action) Precedes Shemiyah (Listening)

At Har Sinai, the people said *Naaseh*, “We will do”, before they said *Nishma*, “We will listen.”¹² Here, when it came to receive the Torah, we find that *maaseh* (action) preceded *shemiyah* (listening), because we were first willing to keep the Torah, before we even heard what the Torah entails of us. The Sages teach that when the people uttered “*Naaseh*” before saying “*Nishma*”, the angels remarked, “Who revealed this secret to them?”¹³

Thus, at the giving of the Torah, there was a secret revealed, that the power of *maaseh* (action) is able to precede *shemiyah* (listening).

How do we reconcile this with the order of the months, where Av, corresponding to *shemiyah*/listening, precedes Elul, which corresponds to *maaseh*/action? The answer to this is

⁸ Sefer Yetzirah 5:4

⁹ Ibid 5:5

¹⁰ The view of the Gra

¹¹ The view of the Arizal

¹² Shemos 24:7

¹³ Talmud Bavli Shabbos 88a

because after the sin with the Golden Calf, we fell from the exalted level we were at when we stood at Har Sinai, and that is why currently, it is *shemiyah* (listening) which precedes *maaseh* (action).

Thus, in the ideal state, *maaseh* (action) precedes *shemiyah* (listening). Why is it that way? And how did we fall from that level?

There is really a deeper root to this matter. When Hashem created the world, He first said “*Naaseh*”, that the world should be made. Thus, the original plan is that “*Naaseh*”, action, comes first. Before man was created, *maaseh* precedes *shemiyah*. Only after man was created did the order get changed, and now *shemiyah* precedes *maaseh*. Man first has to “hear” what to do, in order to know how to act. That is why the angels were perplexed at how *Klal Yisrael* knew the secret of saying *Naaseh V’Nishmah*.

When *maaseh* (action) precedes *shemiyah* (listening), a person naturally does the will of Hashem. But when *shemiyah*/listening precedes *maaseh*/action, man has to first “hear” what is being asked of him before he does it, and this will mean that man doesn’t always do the will of Hashem - because he doesn’t always listen. When doing depends on listening, man doesn’t always do what he is supposed to do, because he first has to listen, and he doesn’t always listen.

Two Different Kinds of Crying: Av and Elul

During the month of Av, our voices are heard, as we weep in mourning over the destruction. This kind of crying is called *bechi*, a mournful kind of crying. When we weep in Elul, though, it is a different kind of crying, which is called *yelalah*. What is the difference? Crying in the month of Av is to weep over the past, but crying in Elul is to regret the past and also make resolutions for the future. Our crying in Av focuses on the past, while our crying in Elul focuses on our future.

When we come into the month of Elul, we connect ourselves to the power of *maaseh*, to the *maaseh* (handiwork) of the *dvar Hashem*, the word of Hashem. The Sages teach that Hashem created the world in the month of Elul (on the 25th day of Elul). We are connecting ourselves in Elul to the *maaseh* of Hashem, to the original handiwork of Hashem, and this was the *maaseh* which preceded all *shemiyah*.

The concept of *maaseh* in Elul is two-faceted. We cry in Elul because we just passed the month of Av, where we didn’t hear the word of Hashem because of our sins, and thus we had to endure the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, and we cried over the past. But in Elul, not only do we cry for our sins of the past, but we also reveal the *maaseh* of the creation of the world. In that sense, we access the original level in which *maaseh* precedes *shemiyah*. In Elul, our crying comes as a result of the *maaseh* that is in Elul.

The Connection Between Shimon and Shemiyah/Listening

Let us try to understand this better.

Chazal teach that when Leah gave birth to her second son, she named him “*Shimon*”, from the word *shemiyah* (listening), because Hashem “listened” to her prayers when she felt “hated” by

Yaakov Avinu.¹⁴ Leah was aware that she was not the main wife of Yaakov Avinu, and that her sister Rachel was the main wife. This made her feel hated [on some level]. Thus, Shimon's name came from the fact that Leah felt hated.

The Gemara says that the people in those times were saying that the Lavan's older daughter, Leah, would marry Yitzchok's older son, Esav, and that Lavan's younger daughter, Rachel, would marry the younger son, Yaakov. When Leah heard the rumors, she was so pained at the fact that she might marry Esav, that her eyebrows fell out as she wept bitterly over her fate and prayed incessantly that she should not marry Esav.¹⁵

This was the actually the deeper root of how Leah would come to feel hated. It began with the fact that Leah was originally destined to marry the wicked Esav. There is a verse, "*Yaakov I loved... and Esav I hated.*"¹⁶ Esav is "hated" by Hashem. Thus, even when Leah married Yaakov, she still felt that she bore a connection to Esav, who is hated by Hashem. That is why she still felt hated, even as she was still married to Yaakov! She knew that she was not the main wife of Yaakov, and that meant that she was still connected with Esav [by default, since she was not considered by Yaakov to be the main wife]. When Shimon was born, Leah knew that Hashem "heard" how she had felt hated, and that is why Leah named him "*Shimon*", from the word *shemiyah*, to hear.

Shimon and Levi banded together to destroy the city of Shechem, and Yaakov Avinu cursed their anger. The Sages explain that Yaakov Avinu was chastising them for using Esav's methods of violence and war.¹⁷ Shimon (and Levi) used the method of Esav, of using violence to succeed, and on a deeper level, this is because Shimon bears a connection to Esav. Why? It was because, according to the above explanation, because Shimon's name was given in connection with Leah's feeling of being "hated", for being the destined mate of Esav.

Shimon's Punishment Was Because Of His Connection To Esav's Actions

Shimon was punished for instigating the violence on the city of Shechem and for arranging the sale of Yosef. Yaakov said of Shimon, "*I will spread him amongst Yisrael*". Shimon's tribe did not receive a concentrated portion of land in Eretz Yisrael. Instead, members of the tribe of Shimon were spread out over the entire landscape of Eretz Yisrael. The Sages state that Yehudah's portion of land overlaps with Shimon's portion of land. Shimon didn't receive an equal portion in Eretz Yisrael as the other tribes received. This was a direct punishment for acting like Esav, when he waged war against the city of Shechem. Shimon also bore a connection with Esav's actions, because just as Esav sold his rights to the firstborn, so did Shimon also lose his rights to a portion in *Eretz Yisrael*.

Taking this further, the destruction to the *Beis HaMikdash*, which took place in the month of Av - the month that corresponds to Shimon - is essentially rooted in the Shimon's error of acting

14 Beraishis 29:31

15 Talmud Bavli Bava Basra 123a

16 Malachi 1:2

17 Rashi on Beraishis 49:5

like Esav. When waging war on Shechem, Shimon engaged with the sword in order to kill. The Hebrew word for “sword” is “*cherev*”, which is the root of the word “*churban*”, destruction. When Shimon used the *cherev*/sword to wage war against the city of Shechem, he was acting like Esav, and this led the roots to the *churban*, to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

The Gemara says that the second *Beis HaMikdash* was destroyed due to *sinas chinam* (baseless hatred).¹⁸ This, too, is connected with Shimon. Shimon’s name was given in connection with Leah’s feeling of being “hated”. Since Leah felt hated, and Shimon’s name was a reminder of how she had felt hated, Shimon’s month, Av, would eventually become tainted with the baseless “hatred” that led to the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*.

Shimon’s Rectification Is To Join With Yehudah

[Thus, Shimon received an awful punishment, by acting like Esav. He lost a true portion in *Eretz Yisrael*, and his actions paved the way for the eventual destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*. Yet, Shimon is one of the holy tribes in the Jewish people, and he can certainly receive a *tikkun*, a spiritual repair.]

How can Shimon be repaired? The answer lies in his name, “Shimon”, which is from the words *shom meon*, “There, is the dwelling place [for G-d].” Shimon can be repaired when he becomes connected with the “dwelling place for G-d.”

Shimon’s error in destroying Shechem, where he acted like Esav, made him fall to the level of *shom avon*, “There, is sin”.¹⁹ Shimon’s repair is to rise from his fallen state, *shom avon*, “There, is sin”, to his ideal level, which is called *shom meon*, “There, is the dwelling place for G-d.” How can the tribe of Shimon achieve this repair?

In order for Shimon to be repaired, his tribe needs the rectified power of *shemiyah*, of listening. The fact that Yehudah’s portion overlaps Shimon’s portion in *Eretz Yisrael* is what contains the key to Shimon’s repair. It shows that the tribe of Shimon becomes repaired when they are joined and connected with the tribe of Yehudah. That is the deeper reason of why Hashem placed Shimon’s portion together with Yehudah’s: So that Shimon will learn from Yehudah and become repaired.

Shimon’s Repair Lays In Yehudah’s Power of “Naaseh V’Nishmah”

How does Shimon become repaired through Yehudah? It is because Yehudah has the power of *maaseh*, the power to take action, which precedes the power of *shemiyah*/listening (which is the power of Shimon). Yehudah represents the ideal state, in which *Naaseh* (We will do) precedes *Nishma* (We will hear), when *maaseh*/action precedes *shemiyah*/listening.

The ultimate effect of the ruination to Shimon’s power of *shemiyah*/listening, which took effect in the month that corresponds to Shimon/*shemiyah* – the month of Av - was the destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash* that happened in Shimon’s month, Av.

¹⁸ Talmud Bavli Yoma 9b

¹⁹ Zohar II parshas Mishpatim 104a

But when Shimon becomes joined with Yehudah, the ruined month of Av can become repaired. The month of Av can become repaired through its following months, Elul and Tishrei, which have great spiritual power. Elul contains the power of *maaseh* (action), which corresponds to the ideal state, in which *Naaseh* precedes *Nishma*. The month of Tishrei was when the second pair of *Lucho*s were given, and this returned the people (on some level) to the state in which *Naaseh* precedes *Nishma*. This is the key to repairing Shimon's ruined power of *shemiyah*.

Heeding Hashem's Voice – Hearing The Endless Sound of Hashem

Shimon's name is rooted in the word *shemiyah*, “hearing”, and this is a hint to the time when Hashem will “hear” to the cries of the Jewish people in exile.

How does one connect to the power of *shemiyah*, the holy power of “hearing”, which is Shimon's power and which is the concept of the month of Av?

When one makes sure to “hear” the word of Hashem, one is “hearing” a spiritual sound that is endless. It is essentially to hear the “sound of *shofar*”, a cry of the *shofar* which is joyous, because it heralds the Redemption, as opposed to a sad, mournful cry that signifies destruction. To “hear” the sound of the *shofar*, the endless sound, is to connect to the level of future, to “hear” the sound of the future even in the present.

In the months of Elul and Tishrei, the level of the future is more apparently revealed. The *shofar* blast which we hear in the month of Elul is so that we can become inspired to accept resolutions upon ourselves and engage in *teshuvah*. Rav Saadya Gaon says that the *shofar* we hear in the month of Tishrei, the *shofar* on Rosh HaShanah, alludes to the *shofar* of the future. Thus, on a deeper level, “hearing” the *shofar* during Elul and Tishrei is about becoming connected with the future.

This is in contrast with the month of Av, in which we cry over the past and we grieve over our sins and mistakes. The month of Av focuses on our errors of the past. By contrast, hearing the *shofar* sound [in the months of Elul and Tishrei] is a catalyst that awakens us to accept upon ourselves that we will do *teshuvah*, by making resolutions to improve, for the future. The months of Elul and Tishei are about looking towards the future.

In Conclusion

When Hashem is speaking to us, and we are not “hearing” Him, this resembles how Hashem spoke to Adam in Gan Eden, and Adam didn't want to “hear” Hashem's voice...

But when we make sure to accept resolutions for the future, to improve, to do *teshuvah*, we hear the endless sound, the voice of Hashem, which we will hear in the future, with the coming of the Redemption, in which we will hear the great *shofar* sound of the arrival of *Mashiach* !

May we all merit together to make resolutions for the future, and merit to hear the *shofar* of *Mashiach*, the complete redemption, may it come speedily in our days, Amen.