



## DIVREI MENACHEM

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# A Time to Mourn; A Time to Reflect

Our Parshah, this week, opens the fifth and final book of the Chumash and is read on the Shabbat that precedes Tisha B'av during the Nine Days of mourning for the Batei Mikdash.

Sefer Devarim consists of several elements but primarily Moshe's soliloquy, his final message to the people, a recap of events that the people experienced from the time of the Exodus until the current period, with hints of reproof for the people's misdemeanors.

Additionally, insofar as Moshe repeats much of what was written in the books of Shemot, Vayikra, and Bemidbar, there are included in Sefer Devarim no less than two hundred mitzvot (cf. Sefer Hachinuch).

As we encounter the opening verses of Sefer Devarim, we suddenly hear the Baal Koreh chant Moshe's lament in the mournful chant of Eichah, "*How can I alone bear your cumbrance, and your burden and your strife?*" (Devarim 1:12). At that point there might arise in our hearts a sense of remorse, a sorrowful feeling enhanced as

the narrative continues.

For in just a few verses along, we follow, once again, the episode of the Meraglim and its tragic aftermath. We recall that their sin left Bnei Yisrael traipsing in the desert for forty years rather than entering Eretz Yisrael within days (ibid 1: 21-46).

The people wept – and it was the night of Tisha B'av. And Hashem, in His anger that the people had so readily lost faith in Him, exhorted that He would give us a real reason to wail in time. Indeed, years later, the two temples would fall precisely on that very same date! (cf. Taanit 29a).

Let us take solace, however, during this Shabbat, Shabbat Chazon. As the righteous Rebbe Avrom Yaakov of Sadigora intimated, the Shabbat brings light into the dark and dreary days of mourning.

Moreover, let us take succor from the uplifting last lines of the Haftarah in which the prophet Yeshaya records Hashem's commitment to us. Because, despite our unfaithfulness, He will ultimately "return My hand upon you...and Tzion will be redeemed with justice and her returnees with righteousness (Yeshaya 1:25-27). ■

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