As per the final decree of Hashem, Moshe informs the Jewish nation that he will not enter into the Land of Canaan/Israel with them, but rather will die in the land of Moav where they are now situated, and be buried there. Moshe’s passionate and fervent prayers to annul this decree notwithstanding, Hashem’s decree stands.

With this in mind, we may ask, just exactly what is the death to which Moshe refers? Will Moshe really “die” or will he just “move” from one “place to another”? We can be sure that when somebody “dies” their body is certainly dead, but what about his or her “self”-their actual essence?

When a child is born, his or her parents, relatives and friends are happy. We wish the family Mazal Tov! But it is possible that in some other world, which the little baby left in order to be born here, there is simultaneous mourning and weeping.

Maybe that is what actually happens when one of us dies. We mourn the deceased. It hurts terribly. But we could say that in some remote world into which our departed one was just “born”, they congratulate each other with Mazal Tov.

Dying is nothing other than coming “Home”. Death, then, is not simply an individual’s life coming to an end; it is also the beginning of a new life.

Perhaps the death of a person does not only pose the question of where one is going, but is also profoundly relates to the matter of where they were before they were born.

We are always on the road: traveling a great distance, taking a side path to this world and staying a few years, before we continue our journey on the main road to some other great destination which we actually call “Home”.

If we had eyes to view the process from beyond this world, we would probably be astonished by what we perceive-two highways with heavy traffic: one on which thousands of souls travel to our world every day,
and the other on which thousands depart from our world to travel back “Home”.

And what of one’s individual purpose and mission in this world?

The Ari z”l writes that each individual is totally unique and that each of our souls comes into the world to do something specific that only it can do. If we don’t fulfill our own individual mission, no one else can do it for us.

The problem is that many of us go through life without ever asking what our life’s unique purpose is - let alone discovering it. We follow the road laid out by society: going to school, finding a job, getting married, raising a family, but with no clear sense of the unique mission entrusted to us. We are taught that our souls have already accepted their unique mission before coming into this world. However, it is our job to find out exactly what that is. Moshe was privileged to discover his life’s mission, and we are the beneficiaries of the discovery of this mission and his leadership.

We find ourselves on Shabbos Nachamu - The Sabbath of Comfort and Consolation following the observance of Tisha Be’’av. When we speak of comfort and consolation, we usually mean consolation for all of the losses and tragedies we have experienced as the Jewish people. But, in addition, we undoubtedly include finding comfort and relief for all of our individual and personal losses. The high point of which will be at the end of days - at the time of the arrival of the Messiah and the resurrection and resuscitation of the dead, as we have been promised by Hashem.

Then, at the end of days, when the great trumpet will sound and the dead will arise from their graves, the shortest walk to the place of assembly will be for those who are buried on the Mount of Olives. They will then be joined by all those who have been laid to rest on Har Hamenuchot. Others will come from the United States, Spain, Portugal, Iraq, Iran, Western and Eastern Europe, Africa, and many other countries. They will all walk up to the mountain of Jerusalem. They will mingle with all other Jews and all righteous people. All echoing the civilizations in which Jews have lived for thousands of years without being fully integrated.

And at that moment “…the earth will be filled with the knowledge of Hashem’s glory, as the waters cover the sea” (Yeshayahu 11:9).
THE POTENTIAL OF LOVE

David Adler

Due to production issues, we were unable to send out last week’s Ittim LaTorah, written by David Adler. With our apologies to our readership and to David, we have included an edited version of David’s D’var Torah this week for your reading enjoyment.

The forth interpretation of the Midrash Rabbah on the first pasuk of Seifer Devarim states the following:

Rav Acha the son of Chanina says It would have been appropriate to have the rebukes of Israel been said by Bilam and the blessings by Moshe. But had Bilam said the rebukes, Israel would have said it is an enemy that rebukes us. Had Moshe said the blessings, then the nations of the world would say it is their friend who blesses them. Therefore Hakadosh Baruch Hu let Moshe, who loves them, give them the rebuke and their enemy Bilam bless them, so that the blessings and rebukes would be clarified in the hand of Israel."

Putting this interpretation aside for a moment, let us travel hundreds of years in the future to the days of King Josiah, where Seifer Devarim plays a historic role in the annals of Jewish history. King Josiah was one of the last kings before the destruction of the first Beis Hamikdash. The 12th kina of Tisha Be’av discusses King Josiah and provides a snapshot of his life. What is most revealing is that for eighteen years King Josiah never saw a Seifer Torah. The first time he saw one, he happened upon the tochacha from Seifer Devarim. According to Chronicles II (34:19), when King Josiah heard the Tochacha, he ripped his garments and instituted massive reforms to try to get his nation back to G-d; he was nearly successful in his attempts.

My question is simply why did King Josiah make these changes? After all he could have claimed that he didn’t know about the Torah, and therefore would have had the status of annus (someone who commits a sin inadvertently). Furthermore how did King Josiah know that the tochacha had not been fulfilled already?

I would like to suggest the following.

When King Josiah was reading through Seifer Devarim, he realized that Israel had no greater advocate than Moshe. Moshe loved his people to the point that his rebuke was done out of love. When he realized that his end was near, he wanted Israel to understand that, despite everything they did in the desert, G-D will not abandon them, as long as they wanted to be remain close to G-D. King Josiah realized this and wanted to be like Moshe. He wanted to save his kingdom, he wanted his people to be close to G-d. He didn’t want the Tochacha to happen on his watch. He saw the potential in his kingdom. He made a Pesach, something that had not been seen for hundreds of years. It was a magnificent display of unity by nearly everyone. In fact in Melachim Beis (23:35), the pasuk states” There was no king like him… according to the Torah of Moshe.”

Last week we commemorated Tisha Be’av. We know the destruction of the 2nd Beis Hamikdash was caused by sinas chinam - loosely translated as “baseless hatred.” What is the opposite emotion of this trait? It is love. It is realizing the potential that every Jew has. In the story that everyone knows of Kamtza and Bar-Kamtza, we know that no one rebuked Kamtza. Imagine for a minute if someone had gotten up and rebuked Kamtza. They could have said: What are you doing? Do not embarrass this person in public. Do you see that he is trying to make peace with you? If someone saw the potential in Kamtza, who knows what might have happened?

Let us look at each other through the lens of Moshe and King Josiah and may the Beis Hamikdash be rebuilt speedily in our days.