Potomac Torah Study Center
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NOTE: Devrei Torah presented weekly in Loving Memory of Rabbi Leonard S. Cahan z"l, Rabbi Emeritus of Congregation Har Shalom, who started me on my road to learning 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his untimely death.

Devrei Torah are now Available for Download (normally by noon on Fridays) from www.PotomacTorah.org. Thanks to Bill Landau for hosting the Devrei Torah. New: a limited number of copies of the first attachment will now be available at Beth Sholom on the Shabbas table!

Am HaTorah Congregation in Bethesda, MD invites the public to join a special SEED program, two weeks of classes, lectures, and panel discussions appropriate to the season (no charge).

Schedule: https://www.amhatorah.org/docs/AmHaTorah-SEED%20Schedule-5781-2021.pdf

All programs except over Shabbat are available over Zoom at https://zoom.us/j/9446820075. To join by phone,call 301-715-8592 and enter meeting ID 944 682 0075#. Meeting password is 009445#.

We always read Parashat Devarim the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av. Moshe laments "Eicha," wondering how he could cope with the laments and complaints of B'Nai Yisrael (1:12). Jeremiah repeats this moan in Megillat Eicha, which we read on Tisha B'Av, as we moan the destruction of the Holy Temple and exile of survivors to Babylon.

Rabbi David Fohrman astutely observes that Megillat Eicha has a chiastic structure. For example, in chapter 1, the first half (through the first half of verse 11) has Jeremiah moaning about the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem. From the middle of verse 11, however, the rest of chapter 1 has Jerusalem moaning about the its pain in losing the Temple and Jews. The pain in Eicha, and the pain of Tisha B'Av, go two ways. We mourn our losses, and God moans about His loss of His special nation and His special place to dwell among His people. To understand Tisha B'Av, we must understand that God also mourns on this day.

Rabbi Fohrman brings the parallel of Eicha back to Gan Eden. After Chava and Adam sin by eating the fruit from Hashem's tree, they realize that they are naked and hide. God calls "Ayyekah," His moan of pain when Adam hides from Him. God knows that Adam and Chava have disobeyed Him and that He must banish them from His special garden. Many years later, God returns His voice, this time to the Jews at Har Sinai. To replace God's special tree in Gan Eden, God gives B'Nai Yisrael His Etz Chaim, the Torah. By following His mitzvot and studying the Torah, we can bring God into our lives and come as close to God's presence as a human may and survive.

The Haftorah this Shabbat, Isaiah 1:1-27, expresses God's disgust with the Jews, who observe the rituals of their religion while ignoring behavior that reflect's God's attribute of Divine Mercy (Hashem). Isaiah had a vision of the destruction of Israel and exile of the Jews, with God refusing to listen to our prayers. Isaiah warns that the people would need to wash, purify themselves, and re-direct their society to do good, seek justice, and care for victims, orphans, and widows. Only once Jews reformed their society on the basis of caring for the weak and unfortunate would God forgive our sins and listen to our prayers. At that point, God would return our judges and restore Jerusalem. Rabbi Fohrman observes that much of the weekday Shmoneh Esrei comes from this chapter, both in sentiment and in direct quotes. (For example, bracha 11, calling for God to restore our judges, essentially quotes from 1:26).

The Jews during the times of Isaiah and Jeremiah should have known that God would reject a society that ignored the most disadvantaged citizens. Immediately after the Revelation (Yitro), the next parsha (Mishpatim) translates Aseret Dibrot into specific mitzvot – virtually all based on protecting the members of society most at risk of falling behind. These themes return numerous times, so we can understand the disgust of God and the prophets when they see Jews failing to care for unfortunate fellow Jews.

We must understand compassion for the unfortunate in a proper light. Too many radicals (let alone non-Jews throughout the world) blame Israel and those who love our country for defending ourselves from attacks of anti-Semites who wish to murder us. Unfortunately, too many schools, including some that take money from the Jewish Federation, teach our young people that Israel is evil because we defend ourselves from those who attack us. One result is an atmosphere where college students who go to Hillel for Kosher food service are afraid to identify themselves on campus as Jews, and high school students, even at some Jewish day schools, are afraid to let others know that they support Israel. Those who condemn Israel encourage the gangs who attack Jews in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago, and other communities. If we want God to listen to and answer our prayers, then we must do our part as well. Encouraging enemies to attack Jews, and blaming Israel for protecting our people from those trying to murder us, are not what God wants, absolutely not the reason why Tisha B'Av is still a fast day. We must continue to oppose anti-Semites wherever threaten us – while we also show compassion for friendly but unfortunate members of society. Too many anti-Semitic teachers confuse our young people by calling Israel a nation of vicious thugs. They then label those who send thousands of rockets a week into Israel as freedom fighters. We have a sacred duty to stop this dangerous misinformation.

My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, devoted his adult life to teaching Jews to follow the teachings of the Torah and our prophets. He understood the difference between compassion for worthy unfortunate members of society and whitewash for anti-Semites. His diligence in opposing those who deny God by opposing His people was as vigorous as his compassion for those who truly deserved our help. Unfortunately, anti-Semites, including Jews whose views are essentially anti-Semitic, are making the world increasingly dangerous for Jews – in our country as well as everywhere else in the world. May our readings and reflections over Tisha B'Av help us understand the difference – and may we do our part to correct this dangerous misinformation campaign.

Shabbat Shalom,

Hannah & Alan

Much of the inspiration for my weekly Dvar Torah message comes from the insights of Rabbi David Fohrman and his team of scholars at www.alephbeta.org. Please join me in supporting this wonderful organization, which has increased its scholarly work during the pandemic, despite many of its supporters having to cut back on their donations.

Please daven for a Refuah Shlemah for Mordechai ben Chaya, Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, David Leib ben Sheina Reizel, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Zvi ben Sara Chaya, Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Reuven ben Masha, Meir ben Sara, Ramesh bat Heshmat, and Regina bat Allegra, who need our prayers. I have removed a number of names that have been on the list for a long time. Please contact me for any additions or subtractions. Thank you.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Devarim: Speaking Louder

By Rabbi Mordechai Kemenetzky © 1997

[Please remember Mordechai ben Chaya (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky) for a Mishebarach!]

Moshe is saying his last good-byes to his beloved nation. He stands at Israel's border and reviews forty years of trials and tribulations, the good times and the bad, and how his nation Israel matured to become the inheritor of the Promised Land. The first verse in this week's portion alludes to the ensuing topics of discussion. The Golden Calf, the incident with the spies, and the time when Israel faltered at the idol Ba'al Pe'or are amongst the many issues that are re-examined.

But the Torah defines Moshe's rebuke by confining it to a specific time frame. The Torah tells us that only "after smiting Sichon, king of the Amorites, and (the giant) Og, king of Bashan, did Moshe begin explaining this Torah (rebuke) to them." (Deuteronomy 1:4)

The fact that the Torah makes a point of stating that the reproofs occurred only after Moshe smote two powerful enemies has obvious connotations. Rashi explains: "if the Jews were to say, 'what has Moshe done for us? Has he brought us into the Land? How does he have the right to rebuke us?' Moshe thus waited until the defeat of the last two major enemies before rebuking the nation."

Perhaps Moshe wanted to tell us a bit more.

Reb Mendel Kaplan (1913-1985) was a Rebbe at the Talmudical Yeshiva of Philadelphia from 1965 until he passed away. In the later years, he would conduct an early morning class with a select group of students. He would study with them Daas Chachma U'Mussar, the magnum opus of his Rebbe, Rabbi Yeruchum Levovitz, the Mashgiach of the Mirrer Yeshiva of Europe and later Shanghai. Each day the group would meet before Shacharis (morning prayers) and listen to their elderly Rebbe discuss deep philosophical issues concerning the nature of man and the profound eternal struggle he faces.

One night a heavy snow covered the streets of Philadelphia. As the boys trudged into the classroom they were dazzled by the view of the dawn breaking over the white blanket that softly covered the frozen ground. But an even more amazing sight beheld then inside the classroom. Rav Mendel was at sitting at his desk wearing his boots, gloves, and an overcoat that was as warm as his expression. "Today we will learn the real Mussar (ethics)," he smiled. "Don't take off your boots and coats." He closed the large tome on his desk and pointed to six shovels neatly stacked in the corner of the classroom.

With that, he took a shovel, walked outside, and began to lead the boys in shoveling a path from the dormitories to the Bais Medrash where the entire school would soon conduct their morning prayers.

Moshe knew that for forty years he had admonished his nation on issues of faith, trust in Hashem, and belief in the prophets. He had put his honor on the line, as he constantly defended their misdeeds. He prayed for them as they battled with Amalek and prayed for them when G-d's wrath was upon them. But he had yet to do physical battle.

The call came. Moshe had to fight the most notorious and powerful rulers of the region, Sichon and Og. They were stronger and bigger and surely more aggressive than he was. His faith was on the line. He had to teach real Mussar. Only after conquering those two foes, showing his people that he too can get down in the trenches, did he begin to admonish the nation for forty years of various improprieties.

Sometimes, if you'd like your friend to become as pure as snow, you can't just talk about it. You have to shovel it.

Good Shabbos!

Tisha B'Av, Tragedy and a Personal God

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 1998

On the Ninth of Av we mourn over the destruction of the Temple and over other great tragedies that have befallen the Jewish people. It is a day marked by great sadness and sorrow, a day on which we are all mourners. The rituals unique to this day – not shaving, not bathing in hot water, not donning tfillin, not learning Torah, not greeting one another – all manifest our state as mourners. There is one practice, however, that appears incomprehensible in this context – we do not say tachanun, the penitential prayer. Why, of all days of the year, do we omit tachanun on Tisha B'Av, when such ommision is usually reserved for Shabbos and holidays? The rabbis explain this practice, saying that Tisha B'Av is call "mo'ed," an "appointed time" in the verse: "Call for Me (God) a 'mo'ed', an appointed time, to shatter my young men" (Lamentations). This term, "mo'ed" is the same term applied to Shabbos and the holidays, and hence Tisha B'Av is a day like them, a day which we consider, at least in one respect, to be like a holiday.

This explanation, far from explaining, really sharpens the question. How is it that we should consider Tisha B'Av to be like a holiday just because it is called a "mo'ed"? The context is altogether different! Unlike the holidays, it is not an appointed time for rejoicing; it is an appointed time for destruction! What is the meaning of this expression of joy – omitting tachanun – amidst all the expressions of mourning?

I believe that the answer to this question comes from an understanding of the nature of tragedy, and of how we as Jews relate to tragedy. This year, I have been giving a number of classes that deal with philosophical topics, among them, the question of Divine justice: why do bad things happen to good people? This question presents itself to almost all of us, particularly when we have personally experienced tragedy. The answer that we arrive at depends to no small degree on our world view: is it rationalistic or religious? Or, to put it in other words, to what degree do we see God involved in the world?

A rationalistic view tends to see God as very rarely involved in world events. God stands back and allows the world to run its natural course, and He will only interfere when absolutely necessary. This type of approach certainly presents an easy answer to the question of Divine justice: things are indeed unfair; God does not mete out justice in this world. The problem with this approach is that while solving a philosophical problem, it gives birth to a host of religious problems. For to accept a world without God's involvement not only contradicts many verses in the Torah, but would also lead to an empty, meaningless religious life. Why would we pray three times a day, if not that we believed that God answers – or at least listens to – our prayers? What type of a life would we be living if we did not see – or at least attempt to see – God within our world? Isn't that part of our religious obligation: to have a relationship with God, to see God in our world?

The answer is of course, yes, this is our obligation, this is Judaism's unique teaching, that there is a God who is not only Creator of Heaven and Earth, but who is also the Lord your God who took you out of the Land of Egypt. This is why we struggle so much with the question of divine justice, because we firmly believe that God is involved in this world, and thus we look for an explanation in tragedy, in evil.

When we look for explanations, for answers, they will not always be forthcoming. They may elude us for many years, or for our entire life. But whether we find the answers or not, our view of the world and of ourselves will be profoundly different than if we had never asked. For far from living in a meaningless world, a world of random and often cruel events, we will approach the world as a purposeful place, a place where things happen for a reason. And we will understand that our existence is likewise meaningful. We will understand that God brings about events because he cares for us, and that God does relate to us on a personal level.

As I said, we may never find the answers to our questions, but that should not change our faith in the nature of reality. We are not always privileged to know why things happen, even when they happen for a reason. The rabbis traditionally explain tragedy, as the Torah does, as a punishment: either a form of justice, or a spur for us to introspect and repent. These explanations are often appropriate and helpful. However, when it comes to national tragedy, and to tragedies of immense scope, they are sometimes hard to accept. Was all of this really necessary as a punishment, did we truly deserve this much? This, of course, is the cry of Lamentations: how could such a tragedy have occurred? How does it all make sense? And, just as obviously, this is the cry of our and the previous generation in response to the Holocaust: how could anyone say that this is a form of Divine punishment?

It is when faced with profound tragedies such as these that our faith is really brought to the trial. It is at these times that we must muster the strength to continue to believe in a God that is involved in the world, in a God who cares, while at the same time not trivializing or lying to ourselves about the immensity, and hence, incomprehensibility, of the tragedies that we have experienced. We cannot understand what happened, but we nonetheless continue to believe that the world is a meaningful place, that God does care.

This then is the message of Tisha B'Av as a "mo'ed." It would have been possible to look at the destruction of the Temple as a natural, historical event, as one nation – first the Babylonians, and then the Romans, striving for world domination, and the little country of Israel just having gotten in the way. The destruction of the Temple would then have been a meaningless tragedy. We, as Jews, refuse to believe this. These things happen because God wanted them to happen: "call for Me a "mo'ed" – an appointed time – to destroy My young men."And hence, the destruction of the Temple, far from being a sign of God's abandonment of the Jewish people, is in fact as sign of his relationship with them.

We mourn these events not only to express our grief, but because we believe that there are lessons that can be learned, that God was speaking to us through these events. While different people will hear different voices of God in these events, while some will strain to hear any voice at all, we believe there was a purpose, that it was a "mo'ed," an appointed time. And if God cares enough to bring tragedy upon us, He certainly cares enough to bring happiness and goodness upon us. We mourn our tragedies with the belief that they are part of our relationship with God, part of the process that will end in great joy. Whoever mourns over Jerusalem will merit and see in its rebuilding.

https://library.yctorah.org/1998/07/tisha-bav-tragedy-and-a-personal-god/

Parshas Devarim -- The Shabbos of Vision: Don't shoot, until they can see the whites of your eyes

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine* © 2014 Teach 613

The Parsha begins by telling us that Moshe, at the end of his life, gathered the people to deliver rebuke. He listed their shortcomings one after another. He included the incident of the golden calf, the spies, Korach's rebellion and more. Amazingly, the people took his words to heart and didn't have hard feelings. What was Moshe's secret in connecting with the people?

The commentaries explain that the key was in the timing and tone of the rebuke. Moshe had already proven himself as the trustworthy shepherd who truly cared for the people. Also, given at the end of his life his comments were not for self-serving convenience. The people sensed that Moshe's comments were constructive and for their benefit. They were attentive to his message.

Jewish tradition teaches that if rebuke is administered correctly it brings peace and harmony. Often, the key is in knowing how to help another person grow. Interestingly, the Talmud quotes Rabbi Tarfon as saying, "I wonder if there is anyone in our generation who can receive rebuke." To which the Talmud responds, "I wonder if there is anyone in our generation who knows how to administer rebuke."

The lesson of Moshe is that if a leader, parent, or teacher gives rebuke, he should do so very carefully and out of love. The recipient should sense the constructive nature of the rebuke, and be thankful for its message.

The art of giving constructive criticism is a talent that must be developed. The person giving the rebuke must truly love the recipient of the rebuke. Yet, for rebuke to bring peace and harmony, the person listening to the rebuke must also be a growing person. He or she must have a degree of maturity and self-confidence.

The Talmud relates that some great people did achieve this level. Rabbi Yochnan ben Nuri said, "Rabbi Akivah got into trouble many times because of my rebuke, but he just loved me all the more because of it." How did the criticism result in a peaceful, loving relationship? What was Rabbi Akivah's secret that enabled him to accept rebuke with joy?

Rabbi Akivah was able to love the person that rebuked him because he developed an attitude of wanting to improve. He knew his friend was rebuking him out of love. Rabbi Akivah lived his life with a quest for spiritual growth. In his mind, if you pointed out an area for improvement, you deserved a "Thank you."

Once we understand Rabbi Akivah's quest for spiritual growth, we can appreciate an amazing story about Rabbi Akivah. This story is most appropriate for this time of year as it deals with the Temple's destruction.

The Talmud relates that a number of sages were walking in Jerusalem, and they beheld the ruins of the Temple. All the sages began to cry, with the exception of Rabbi Akivah. Rabbi Akivah began to laugh. What did the great Rabbi Akivah see in the Temple's destruction that could cause him to laugh?

Let us take a moment to appreciate the Temple's destruction. Commentaries illustrate the concept by comparing it to the scene of an elder statesman at a party gone out of control. He screams, he yells, but no one pays any attention. Finally, he grabs hold of an expensive vase and smashes it to bits. The sound of the impact gets people's attention.

This is how Rabbi Akivah viewed the destruction of the Temple. G-d needed to get our attention. He tried with prophets, but we didn't pay attention. He gave us warnings, but we didn't heed them. It was like a party gone out of control. So He smashed the Temple. Boy, did He get our attention. We certainly cry at the loss. But Rabbi Akivah taught us that there is also room to smile. Because if the loss, and the implied rebuke, is the end, then there is indeed nothing more to do than cry. But if the loss is the beginning of cure and rejuvenation then the devastating blow is the start of something precious. One can look at the Temple ruins and say to G-d with a bit of a smile, "You screamed well. You got my attention."

This Shabbos is called Shabbos Chazon -- The Shabbos of Vision. As visionaries we don't just see the loss that is before our eyes; we also see its implications. The Temple's destruction represents G-d's love for us. He needed to get our attention. Tishah B'Av, if observed properly as G-d's meaningful rebuke to us, is the start of something special. What starts on Tishah B'Av with the destruction of the Temple, continues into Elul and the High Holidays as we try to get ourselves back on course. The season will culminate with Simchas Torah when we dance joyously to many meaningful tunes. One of my favorite has only three words which we simply repeat over and over. It is a song that acknowledges the difficult times in which we live since the Temple was destroyed. But it is also a song of hope, a song of yearning for salvation. It goes "Tzavey Yeshuos Yakov -- Command the salvation of the Jewish people." So may it be, speedily and in our time.

With heartfelt blessings for a wonderful Shabbos!

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http://www.teach613.org/the-shabbos-of-vision-dont-shoot-until-they-can-see-the-whites-of-your-eyes/

Fear or Freedom: Thoughts for Parashat Devarim

by Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

In his book, "The Case for Democracy," Natan Sharansky divides the world into two kinds of societies: fear societies, and free societies. Fear societies are tyrannies which rule by terrorizing their subjects, by restricting freedom of speech and movement, by instilling fear so that people will not voice opposition to the rulers. Fear societies are controlled by tyrants who are not hesitant to brutalize their people in order to quash dissent.

Sharansky, who was himself a prisoner of the KGB due to his outspokenness as a Soviet Jew, had high respect for the great Soviet dissenter, Andrei Sakharov. Sakharov lashed out against the Soviet's repression of human rights, and called on the nations of the world to protest on behalf of the people of the Soviet Union. Sakharov stated: "A country that does not respect the rights of its own people will not respect the rights of its neighbors." (p. 3) Tyrannies, when allowed to persist, are a danger not only to their own people but to other nations as well. In contrast to fear societies, free societies provide their people with the ability to speak freely, to express dissent, to move about in freedom.

Sharansky writes: “A society is free if people have a right to express their views without fear of arrest, imprisonment or physical harm.” (p. 40) In a free society, a person may offer opinions without fear of being assaulted, imprisoned or murdered. A free society fosters diversity; it respects individual rights; it allows people to think and act freely. Whereas a fear society represses its people, a free society allows its people to grow and flourish. Whereas a fear society is ruled by tyrants and their henchmen, a free society is governed by the rule of law.

Sharansky argues that all people would prefer to live in free societies. Those who live under dictators regret their inability to function in freedom. If given the opportunity, all people would choose to live in free societies. Sharansky was deeply grateful to those in the West who insisted on linking Soviet trade privileges with advances in human rights. He admired the courage of Senator Henry Jackson and President Ronald Reagan, who were adamant in their confrontation with the Soviet Union’s fear society. Because of their strength in confronting the evils of Soviet society, the Soviet Union ultimately collapsed. Millions of people were liberated from the fears and oppressions of Soviet rule, and people began to taste freedom for the first time.

The world today is still divided between fear societies and free societies. Just as in the past, many were willing to look aside at human rights abuses in fear societies, so today many are willing to keep the peace even if this means keeping tyrants in power in other lands. Sharansky argues that tyranny is allowed to persist because free societies do not stand up against them, and do not insist that they liberate their populations from oppression and terror.

In this week’s Torah portion, we read of Moses’ appointment of leaders over the Israelites in the wilderness: “So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men, and full of knowledge, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens, and officers, tribe by tribe. And I charged your judges at that time, saying: Hear the causes between your brethren and judge righteously between one another and the stranger that is with him. You shall not favor persons in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike; you shall not be afraid of the face of any man; for the judgment is God’s; and the cause that is too hard for you, you shall bring unto me and I will hear it.” (Devarim 1:15-17)

What an incredible description of the foundations of a free society. Each person, whether citizen or stranger, had personal access to a whole range of leaders. Each leader was obligated to render honest judgment, without showing any favoritism to one party or the other, and without fear. If the various levels of leaders were unable to resolve an issue, the problem was brought to Moses himself. All members of society, rich or poor, were to be governed by rule of law. All members were free to state their opinions. In free societies, people live without harassment from or fear of the government. There are laws to punish lawbreakers and to maintain safety and security among the people.

Tyrannies are an affront to the human spirit, an affront to human dignity. Tyrannies persist because their subjects are too weak and/or too afraid to rise up against the tyrants. Tyrannies persist because free societies do not exert enough pressure to change the status quo.

In our world today, we have free societies in the Western world, in Israel, and in some other countries. But many of the nations of the world are controlled by dictators who rule through fear and manipulation of their populations. They restrict free speech. They use the press for self-serving propaganda and do not allow independent voices to be heard. Some of these nations possess highly dangerous weapons, and other of these nations seek to develop highly dangerous weapons. As Andre Sakharov observed, nations that do not respect the rights of their own people will surely not respect the rights of other nations. So we live in a world where war and terrorism are constantly bubbling over, often in the name of an extreme brand of religion or political ideology.

Even in democratic societies, we witness an increase of thuggery and brutality, where extreme groups seek to silence or harm others with whom they disagree. Unless the free societies of the world stand forcefully against tyranny and terrorism, these horrible conditions will persist. Anyone who compromises with tyrants and terrorists is not only endangering the people who live under these tyrants and terrorists, but is endangering the safety and security of people who are currently living in free societies.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

https://www.jewishideas.org/fear-or-freedom-thoughts-parashat-devarim **The Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals has experienced a significant drop in donations during the pandemic. The Institute needs our help to maintain and**

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What Unifies the Jewish People? Thoughts for Tisha B'Av

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

Elias Canetti, a Sephardic Jew who won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1981, offers some interesting observations about Jews in his book, “Crowds and Power”: “Fools may tell stories of their sameness everywhere, but anyone who knows them well will be inclined to think that there are more varied types among them than among any other people...Jews are different from other people, but, in reality, they are most different from each other.”

Given the tremendous diversity among Jews, what is the unifying factor that makes us consider ourselves to be one people? Canetti writes: “One is driven to ask in what respect these people remain Jews; what makes them into Jews; what is the ultimate nature of the bond they feel when they say "I am a Jew"....This bond...is the Exodus from Egypt.” Canetti suggests that the Israelites’ formative experience as a vast crowd leaving Egypt is the key to understanding the nature of Jewish peoplehood. As long as Jews—however different they are from each other—share historical memories of the Exodus from Egypt, they continue to identify as members of one people. We are bound together by the shared experience of redemption.

While Canetti touches on a vital point in Jewish identity, his explanation is incomplete.

In his magnificent Haggadah, the artist David Moss has provided another vital ingredient in the mystery of Jewish peoplehood. The Passover seder is, of course, the classic recounting of the Exodus experience. Yet, early in his Haggadah, Moss incorporates a dirge chanted on Tisha B’Av, the quintessential day of Exile and tragedy for the Jewish people. The dirge contrasts the feelings of elation at the Exodus with the sense of despair at the Exile. (On a related note, the evening service of Tisha B’Av at Congregation Shearith Israel in New York features a poignant elegy—“Mah Nishtanah”—which highlights the contrasts between Passover and Tisha B’Av.)

Thus, the Jewish people are unified by two great national experiences: Redemption and Exile.

These experiences are not merely singular historical events, but are prototypes that imbue the entire span of Jewish history — past, present and future. We are supposed to experience the Passover seder as though we ourselves were redeemed from Egypt. We are supposed to experience Tisha B’Av as though we ourselves witnessed the razing of our Temples in Jerusalem and were forced into a long and distressing Exile. Our thousands of years of history are marked by periods of elation and mourning, redemptions and exiles. It is the personal connection with both of these themes that serves to unite us as one people. If one ceases to feel connected to the shared experiences and ramifications of Exodus and Exile, he/she ceases to identify as a Jew.

Just as we recall Tisha B’Av on Passover, so we remember Passover on Tisha B’Av. Even as we mourn the sufferings of Exile, we maintain perfect faith in our ultimate Redemption.

If Exodus and Exile are unifying factors in defining our Jewishness, the Torah itself is the ultimate source of our peoplehood.

In Parashat Devarim, read on the Shabbat before Tisha B’Av, we are told that Moses took it upon himself to expound the Torah to the Israelites (Devarim 1:5). A Midrash suggests that Moses explained the Torah to them in seventy languages. But why would Moses need to explain the Torah in seventy languages, since the Israelites could not possibly have known all these tongues?

The Midrash is obviously alluding to something of deeper significance. Perhaps it is suggesting that the Israelites would ultimately find themselves scattered throughout the world, and would learn many new languages. The scattered communities would become very different from each other, unable even to communicate clearly with each other. Moses

explained the Torah in seventy languages so that the Israelites would know that they had a unifying foundation in the Torah. No matter what language they would speak, the Torah would be accessible to them in that language. No matter how separate they seemed to be from other communities of Jews, the Torah bound them together as one people.

As we prepare for the observance of Tisha B'Av, let us take time to ponder the mystery and the wonder of Jewish peoplehood. The Exodus was the formative experience that propelled our people into history, with the principles of freedom and human dignity. The Exile was the experience that underscored our national courage, resilience, compassion and determination. The Torah was—and is—the foundation of our spiritual teachings, our ideas and our ideals.

Those who shed the mournful tears of Exile will ultimately shed the joyful tears of Redemption. And the Torah is, and will be, our light.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals. [Emphasis added]

https://www.jewishideas.org/what-unifies-jewish-people-thoughts-tisha-bav

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Kamtsa, Bar Kamtsa – and our Contemporary Parallels

By Rabbi Marc D. Angel *

The Talmud records a poignant story relating to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 CE. Although historians describe various political, sociological, and military explanations for the Roman war against the Jews, the Talmud—through the story of Kamtsa and Bar Kamtsa—points to a moral/spiritual cause of the destruction:

R. Johanan said: The destruction of Jerusalem came through Kamtsa and Bar Kamtsa in this way. A certain man had a friend Kamtsa and an enemy Bar Kamtsa. He once made a party and said to his servant, Go and bring Kamtsa. The man went and brought Bar Kamtsa. When the man [who gave the party] found him there he said, See, you tell tales about me; what are you doing here? Get out. Said the other: Since I am here, let me stay and I will pay you for whatever I eat and drink. He said, I won't. Then let me give you half the cost of the party. No, said the other. Then let me pay for the whole party. He still said, No, and he took him by the hand and put him out. Said the other, Since the rabbis were sitting there and did not stop him, this shows that they agreed with him. I will go and inform against them to the Government. He went and said to the Emperor, The Jews are rebelling against you. He said, How can I tell? He said to him: Send them an offering and see whether they will offer it [on the altar]. So he sent with him a fine calf. While on the way he [Bar Kamtsa] made a blemish on its upper lip, or as some say on the white of its eye, in a place where we [Jews] count it a blemish but they [the Romans] do not. The rabbis were inclined to offer it in order not to offend the Government. Said R. Zechariah b. Abkulas to them: People will say that blemished animals are offered on the altar. They then proposed to kill Bar Kamtsa so that he should not go and inform against them, but R. Zechariah b. Abkulas said to them, Is one who makes a blemish on consecrated animals to be put to death? R. Johanan thereupon remarked: Through the scrupulousness of R. Zechariah b. Abkulas our House has been destroyed, our Temple burnt and we ourselves exiled from our land. (Gittin 55b–56a)

The story tells of a host—apparently a wealthy man—who throws a party and wants his friend Kamtsa to be brought to it. The servant makes a mistake and brings Bar Kamtsa—a person the host despises. When the host sees Bar Kamtsa, he orders him to leave. Even though Bar Kamtsa pleads not to be humiliated by being sent away, the host is unbending. Bar Kamtsa offers to pay for whatever he eats, for half the expenses of the entire party, for the entire party—but the host unceremoniously leads Bar Kamtsa out of his home.

The story reflects a lack of peace among the Jewish community in Jerusalem. The antagonism between the host and Bar Kamtsa is palpable. The unpleasant scene at the party was witnessed by others—including "the rabbis"; obviously, "the rabbis" were included on the party's guest list. They were part of the host's social network. When Bar Kamtsa was ejected from the party, he did not express rage at the host. Rather, he was deeply wounded by the fact that rabbis had been silent in the face of the humiliation he had suffered: "Since the rabbis were sitting there and did not stop him, this shows that they agreed with him." He might have understood the host's uncouth behavior, since the host hated him. But he could not understand why the rabbis, through their silence, would go along with the host. Why didn't they stand up and protest on behalf of Bar Kamtsa? Why didn't they attempt to increase peace? Bar Kamtsa was so disgusted with the rabbis that he

decided to stir up the Roman Emperor against the Jewish people. If the rabbinic leadership itself was corrupt, then the entire community had to suffer.

Why didn't the rabbis speak up on behalf of Bar Kamtsa?

Apparently, the rabbis kept silent because they did not want to offend their host. If the host wanted to expel a mistakenly invited person, that was his business—not theirs. The host seems to have been a wealthy patron of the rabbis; he obviously wanted them included on his invitation list. Why should the rabbis offend their patron, in defense of an enemy of their patron? That might jeopardize their relationship with the host and could cost them future patronage.

The rabbis kept silent because they thought it socially and economically prudent for their own interests. They could not muster the courage to confront the host and try to intervene on behalf of Bar Kamtsa. By looking out for their own selfish interests, the rabbis chose to look the other way when Bar Kamtsa was publicly humiliated.

Rabbi Binyamin Lau, in his review of the rabbinical and historical sources of that period, came to the inescapable conclusion that "the rabbis were supported by the wealthy [members of the community], and consequently were unable to oppose their deeds. There is here a situation of economic pressure that enslaved the elders of the generation to the officials and the wealthy….The Torah infrastructure depended on the generosity of the rich."

When rabbis lost the spirit of independence, they also lost their moral compass. They were beholden to the rich, and could not afford to antagonize their patrons. They remained silent even when their patrons behaved badly, even when their silence allowed their patrons to humiliate others. Bar Kamtsa was outraged by the moral cowardice of the rabbis to such an extent that he turned traitor against the entire Jewish people.

The story goes on to say that Bar Kamtsa told the Emperor that the Jews were rebelling. To verify this, the Emperor sent an offering to be sacrificed in the Temple. If the Jews offered it up, that proved they were not rebelling. If the Jews refused to offer it up, this meant that they were defying the Emperor and were rising in rebellion. Bar Kamtsa took a fine calf on behalf of the Emperor, and put a slight blemish on it. He was learned enough to know that this blemish—while of no consequence to the Romans—would disqualify the animal from being offered according to Jewish law.

When Bar Kamtsa presented the offering at the Temple, the rabbis were inclined to allow it to be offered. They fully realized that if they rejected it, this would be construed by the Emperor as a sign of disloyalty and rebellion. Since there was so much at stake, the rabbis preferred to offer a blemished animal rather than incur the Emperor's wrath. This was a sound, prudent course of action. But one of the rabbis, Zecharyah b, Abkulas, objected. He insisted that the rabbis follow the letter of the law and not allow the offering of a blemished animal. He cited public opinion ("people will say") that the rabbis did not adhere to the law and therefore allowed a forbidden offering. The rabbis then considered the extreme possibility of murdering Bar Kamtsa, so that this traitor would not be able to return to the Emperor to report that the offering had been refused. Again, Zecharyah b. Abkulas objected. The halakha does not allow the death penalty for one who brings a blemished offering for sacrifice in the Temple. Murdering Bar Kamtsa, thus, would be unjustified and illegal. This was "check mate." The rabbis offered no further ideas on how to avoid antagonizing the Emperor. The offering was rejected, and Bar Kamtsa reported this to the Emperor. The result was the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and razing of the Temple. "R. Johanan thereupon remarked: Through the scrupulousness of R. Zechariah b. Abkulas our House has been destroyed, our Temple burnt and we ourselves exiled from our land."

Rabbi Johanan casts R. Zecharyah b. Abkulas as the villain of the story. R. Zecharyah was overly scrupulous in insisting on the letter of the law, and he lost sight of the larger issues involved. He did not factor in the consequences of his halakhic ruling; or if he did, he thought it was better to suffer the consequences rather than to violate the halakha. Rabbi Johanan blames R. Zecharyah's "scrupulousness" for the destruction of Jerusalem, the razing of the Temple, and the exile of the Jewish people. The moral of the story, according to Rabbi Johanan, is that rabbis need to have a grander vision when making halakhic decisions. It is not proper—and can be very dangerous—to rule purely on the basis of the letter of the law, without taking into consideration the larger issues and the consequences of these decisions. Technical correctness does not always make a halakhic ruling correct. On the contrary, technical correctness can lead to catastrophic results. To follow the precedent of Rabbi Zecharyah b. Abkulas is a dangerous mistake.

Yes, Rabbi Zecharyah b. Abkulas was overly scrupulous in his application of halakha, when other larger considerations should have been factored in. His narrow commitment to legal technicalities caused inexpressible suffering and destruction for the Jewish people. But is he the real villain of the story?

Rabbi Zecharyah was only one man. The other rabbis formed the majority. Why didn't they overrule Rabbi Zecharyah? The rabbis surely realized the implications of rejecting the Emperor's offering. They were even willing to commit murder to keep Bar Kamtsa from returning to the Emperor with a negative report. Why did the majority of the rabbis submit to Rabbi Zecharyah's "scrupulousness"?

The story is teaching not only about the mistaken attitude of Rabbi Zecharyah b. Abkulas, but about the weakness and cowardice of the rest of the rabbis. The other rabbis were intimidated by Rabbi Zecharyah. They were afraid that people would accuse them of being laxer in halakha than Rabbi Zecharyah. They worried lest their halakhic credibility would be called into question. Rabbi Zecharyah might be perceived by the public as the "really religious" rabbi, or the "fervently religious" rabbi; the other rabbis would be perceived as compromisers, as religiously defective. They recognized that Rabbi Zecharyah, after all, had technical halakhic justification for his positions. On the other hand, they would have to be innovative and utilize meta-halakhic considerations to justify their rulings. That approach—even if ultimately correct—requires considerable confidence in one's ability to make rulings that go beyond the letter of the law. Rabbi Zecharyah's position was safe: it had support in the halakhic texts and traditions. The rabbis' position was risky: it required breaking new ground, making innovative rulings based on extreme circumstances. The rabbis simply were not up to the challenge. They deferred to Rabbi Zecharyah because they lacked the courage and confidence to take responsibility for bold halakhic decision-making.

When Rabbis Do Not Increase Peace in the World

When rabbis lose sight of their core responsibility to bring peace into the world, the consequences are profoundly troubling. The public's respect for religion and religious leadership decreases. The rabbis themselves become narrower in outlook, more authoritarian, more identified with a rabbinic/political bureaucracy than with idealistic rabbinic service. They become agents of the status quo, curriers of favor from the rich and politically well-connected.

When rabbis lack independence and moral courage, the tendencies toward conformity and extremism arise. They adopt the strictest and most fundamentalist positions, because they do not want to appear "less fervent" than the extremist rabbinic authorities.

When rabbis fear to express moral indignation so as not to jeopardize their financial or political situation, then the forces of injustice and disharmony increase. When rabbis adopt the narrow halakhic vision of Rabbi Zecharyah b. Abkulas, they invite catastrophe on the community. When the "silent majority" of rabbis allow the R. Zecharyahs to prevail, they forfeit their responsibility as religious leaders.

The contemporary Hareidization of Orthodox Judaism, both in Israel and the Diaspora, has tended to foster a narrow and extreme approach to halakha. This phenomenon has been accompanied by a widespread acquiescence on the part of Orthodox rabbis who are afraid to stand up against the growing extremism.

In the summer of 1984, I met with Rabbi Haim David Halevy, then Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. He was a particularly independent thinker, who much regretted the narrowness and extremism that had arisen within Orthodox rabbinic circles. He lamented what he called the rabbinic "mafia" that served as a thought police, rooting out and ostracizing rabbis who did not go along with the official policies of a small group of "gedolim," rabbinic authorities who are thought to have the ultimate power to decide halakhic policies. When honest discussion and diversity of opinion are quashed, the religious enterprise suffers.

The Orthodox rabbinic establishment in Israel, through the offices of the Chief Rabbinate, has had the sole official religious authority to determine matters relating to Jewish identity, conversion, marriage, and divorce. It has also wielded its authority in kashruth supervision and other areas of religious law relating to Jewish life in the State of Israel. This religious "monopoly" has been in place since the State of Israel was established in 1948. With so much power at their disposal, one would have expected—and might have hoped—that the rabbinate would have won a warm and respectful attitude among the population at large. The rabbis, after all, are charged with increasing peace between the people of Israel and their God; with applying halakha in a spirit of love, compassion, and understanding; with creating within the Jewish public a recognition that the rabbis are public servants working in the public's interest.

Regrettably, these things have not transpired. Although the Chief Rabbinate began with the creative leadership of Rabbis Benzion Uziel and Yitzchak Herzog, it gradually sank into a bureaucratic mire, in which rabbis struggled to gain political power and financial reward for themselves and/or for the institutions they represent. The Chief Rabbinate is not held as the ultimate religious authority in Israel by the Hareidi population. It is not respected by the non-Orthodox public. It has scant support within the Religious Zionist camp, since the Chief Rabbinate seems more interested in pandering to Hareidi interests than in promoting a genuine Religious Zionist vision and program for the Jewish State.

Recent polls in Israel have reflected a growing backlash against the Hareidization of religious life and against the political/social/religious coercion that has been fostered by Hareidi leadership. Seventy percent of Jewish Israelis are opposed to new religious legislation. Fifty-three pecert oppose all religiously coercive legislation. Forty-two percent believe that the tension between the Hareidim and the general public is the most serious internal schism in Israeli Jewish society—nearly twice as many as those who think the most serious tension is between the political left and political right. Sixty-five percent think the tensions between Hareidim and the general public are the most serious, or second most serious, problem facing the Israeli Jewish community. An increasing number of Israelis are in favor of a complete separation of religion and State, reflecting growing frustration with the religious status quo.

* Founder and Director, Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals. Excerpt of an article by Rabbi Marc D. Angel, "Reclaiming Orthodox Judaism," from issue 12 of *Conversations,* the journal of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

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Yearning for Shul: The Unique Status of Prayer in the Synagogue

by Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot *****

Introduction

In the midst of our current reality,[1] most of the normal human interactions with those beyond our family have been curtailed or eliminated entirely. One of the most central daily and weekly experience that observant Jews across the spectrum have lost access to is, of course, the ability to join together in the synagogue for communal prayer. In some cities, even prior to the official government orders to close all venues where people gather, synagogues understood the need to cease operations and get ahead of the curve to save lives and help society in the most responsible fashion. These closings have left us bereft of the comforting experiences of sharing in prayer and communal singing, the ability to fulfill many rituals such as keriat haTorah, recitation of Kaddish, and fulfilling tefillah beTzibbur (communal prayer), as well as socializing as a community at the post-service kiddush. This reality has curtailed sharing family semakhot and, God forbid, tragedies in person, schmoozing and learning together, as well as praying in the physical space of the synagogue itself.

It is that last element that I would briefly like to turn to, as it is a unique halakha that is not so well known or understood. Many believe that the formal halakhic purpose of coming together in a shul is that it allows us the ability to fulfill the mitzvoth of communal prayer and other rituals that can only be performed in a minyan. Congregating in shul is an instrumental vehicle to fulfill these goals. However, if those goals can be fulfilled in another venue, such as a private minyan at home, then it would seem that there is no value to praying privately in the synagogue. The truth, however, is more complex.

Importance of Prayer in the Synagogue

R. Yosef Karo (1488–1575) in his seminal code, Shulhan Arukh Orah Hayyim 90:9 writes,

> *A person should strive to pray in the synagogue with the community, and if he is not able to come to the synagogue, he should set his heart to pray at the time that the community is praying, and if he is unable to do pray at the time of the communal prayer, and he must pray alone, he should still pray in the synagogue (alone).*

The source for the last statement of Maran haMehaber is somewhat in dispute. Many commentators point to an aggadic passage in Berakhot 6a: “Abba Binyamin taught, ‘an individual’s prayer is only heard in the synagogue.’” This reading was adopted by the Geonim and many medieval commentaries.

Other medieval commentators rejected this as the source, as the text they had in the Bavli read, “an individual’s prayer is only heard in the synagogue with the community,” implying that the individual is praying together with the tzibbur—and the passage is therefore highlighting the value of communal prayer.

Some commentators instead point to a passage in the Jerusalem Talmud (Berakhot 4:4), which states: “A person should pray in a place that is set aside for prayer.” But here, too, there are questions, specifically as to how far reaching this statement is and whether other passages in the Jerusalem Talmud concur with it. Be that as it may, in the end, the Geonic understanding came to dominate the halakhic discourse and was codified as standard law, though in practice not everyone agreed to its full reach, especially in light of other conflicting considerations.

Rationale for the Directive

What might be the rationale behind the imperative to pray in a synagogue, even in the absence of a halakhic minyan?

Kavanah (Inward Intention)

One possible rationale for the halakha under discussion is that prayer in the precincts of the synagogue yields greater levels of devotion and kavanah. R. Menahem haMeiri (1240–1315) in his commentary on Berakhot writes, “Every person who can pray in the synagogue should do so because that is where the intention of the heart is found.” Meiri appears to interpret the homiletical comment in Berakhot 6a that prayer in the synagogue is “heard (by God)” as rooted in the fact that there can be greater levels of devotion in the synagogue prayer experience. Indeed, he writes in a section later in Berkahot 31a, “In the Talmud Yerushalmi it is stated that the person who prays at home alone and with great kavanah is as if he is surrounded by a wall of iron, that is, he can be sure that his prayer will be accepted.” In this reading, the directive is an ideal “who can pray” and does not make prayer at home invalid. Moreover, there is a subjective element that is clearly implied, i.e., if one finds that they have greater intensity of kavanah at home rather than praying alone in the pews of the synagogue, one could opt for the home experience.

Tied to Communal Prayer

A second rationale that may be proffered is that prayer in the walls of the synagogue, even without a quorum, connects us to tefillah beTzibbur in some ephemeral way. Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerona on R. Yitzhak Alfasi’s restatement of the sugya in Berakhot 6 cites the Geonic position mentioned previously that one must pray in a synagogue even privately “because it (is a place) set aside and established for public prayer–tefilah beTzibbur.” This formulation indicates that this halakha should be viewed as a corollary of the general principle of praying in a minyan. On some level, the individual rides on the coattails of the communal prayer, which usually occurs in the space where he or she is now praying individually. In this way it is similar to the other halakha mentioned by R. Yosef Karo above, namely the idea that if one cannot join the minyan at the synagogue, one should pray at home at the same time that the community is praying.

In the Presence of the King

A third possibility arises from the aggadic language of a passage in the Jerusalem Talmud. In 5:1 of Berakhot, the Yerushalmi states,

> *One who prays in the synagogue, it is as if he sacrificed a pure meal offering….It was recorded in the name of R. Abahu: “Seek out the Lord where He may be found, call to him where He is near” (i.e., the synagogue)…. R. Yohanan stated: Whoever prays in the synagogue it is as if the individual prayed in the Holy Temple.*

This idea is cited by a good number of Rishonim, including, R. Eliezer b. Yoel (1140–1225), who cites the verse in Ezekiel (11:16) “And I will be for them a Temple in miniature,” which the rabbis interpreted as referring to the synagogue in the absence of the Temple in Jerusalem, as the source for R. Yohanan’s statement that “Whoever prays in the synagogue it is as if the individual prayed in the Holy Temple” (Raavya, #12).

According to this line of thought, one who enters into the space of the synagogue is coming into the palace of the King, symbolically entering into the place where God is most "present." One might even go further and suggest that following this approach, praying in the synagogue is not simply some additional element, but becomes an essential part of the prayer experience. Rambam famously declares in Hilkhot Tefillah that the essential kavanah that one should have during the Amidah is the sense that one is "standing in the presence of the King." If so, entering into the space where God is most intensely "found" is part and parcel of achieving that goal. A radical expression of this notion may be found in a responsa of R. Yaakov B. Aharon of Karlin (d. 1844) who writes,

The Talmud states: "Abba Binyamin says, 'An individual's prayer is only heard in the synagogue'…. It is clear that this is true even if one has a quorum of ten in one's house, it is better to pray in the synagogue (even without a quorum). (Mishkenot Yaakov, OH #87)

This view is rejected by many other commentaries and does not appear to have been adopted as mainstream Jewish practice.

Conclusion

In this brief survey we have examined the halakhic import of the significance of praying in the synagogue even in the absence of a minyan. We explored three different rationales that may undergird this interesting halakha and its understanding of one of the roles of the synagogue in the experience of those who pray. We hope and pray for a speedy and safe return to the normal activity and hustle and bustle of our synagogue life in all its form together with the return to the other areas of spiritual and material lives.

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[1] Ed. Note: Rabbi Helfgot composed this essay in May 2020, during the COVID-19 shutdown.

https://www.jewishideas.org/article/yearning-shul-unique-status-prayer-synagogue

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Parshas Devarim and Tisha B'Av

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer *

In lieu of a Dvar Torah for this Shabbat, Rabbi Singer has invited several advanced Yeshiva students to participate in a SEED program with special seminars and panel discussions all week – open without charge to the public at Am HaTorah Congregation, 7609 Marbury Road, Bethesda, MD. The schedule is available at

https://www.amhatorah.org/docs/AmHaTorah-SEED%20Schedule-5781-2021.pdf

All programs except over Shabbat are available over Zoom at https://zoom.us/j/9446820075. To join by phone, call 301-715-8592 and enter meeting ID 944 682 0075#. Meeting password is 009445#.

We hope to be able to provide supplementary Devrei Torah from the SEED program at PotomacTorah.org before Shabbat or soon after. I have attended some of the programs in past years, and many are high quality and informative.

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Isaiah, Social Media, and Tisha B'av

By Rabbi Moshe Rube * (© 2020)

Tisha B'av is the fast when we mourn the loss of the Temple and all the tragedies that have befallen Jews throughout the ages. The Shabbos beforehand we call Shabbat Chazon due to the first word of the haftorah from the first chapter in Isaiah. Though we still will not be reading it live, I encourage you to read it this Shabbat.

Throughout Isaiah's first chapter, he gives many examples of the decaying relationship of God and Israel and how to reinvigorate it. The imagery used of a God who tells Israel their sacrifices and heartless prayers are burdens is enough to shock anyone out of complacency.

But one little detail really sticks out. In verse 9, Isaiah states: "Had not God kept us we would have been comparable to Sodom and Amorah" (which were completely decimated). In verse 10, Isaiah continues: "Listen to God's word, chiefs of Sodom. Listen to the Torah Nation of Amorah." He goes from comparing them to Sodom and Amorah to outright calling Israel by that name.

The Talmud in Brachot 19a jumps on this and warns us all to "never open our mouths to Satan" i.e. never speak in judgment of others, for our speech has incredible power. If we call another person evil then Satan (or the world's prosecuting attorney) will seize on that and use it to enact strict judgment on the other person. To put it more psychologically, if we call someone by an evil name (like a "Nazi") they are more liable to become something like that. Our words have power. They are not to be used for flippant insults, as is so often the case on social media. Isaiah compared Israel to Sodom, and one verse later they had become Sodom.

Isaiah stumbled with this here, and he stumbled in Chapter 6 Verse 5, where he moans about being amongst a people of impure lips. In Verse 6, the angel punishes him for his indictment of Israel by putting a hot coal on his tongue.

No one had more moral authority than Isaiah to admonish Israel, and we still see that God held him accountable for being just a little over the top with his language.

So of course we must be careful. No matter how much moral authority we may think we have, we must recognize the power of our words. If speech can cause someone to be considered as Sodom, it can surely build someone to be as inspiring as a righteous prophet of Israel. And when we build ourselves up, the likelihood increases that the Temple will be built up again.

Shabbat Shalom.

Rabbi Moshe Rube

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Rav Kook Torah
Devarim: Moses Speaks!

The Merchant and the King

The Book of Deuteronomy is essentially a collection of Moses' farewell speeches, delivered to the Jewish people as they prepared to enter the Land of Israel. The eloquence, passion, and cadence of Moses' discourses are breathtaking. One can only wonder: is this the same man who claimed to be "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue" (Ex. 4:10)?

The Sages were aware of this anomaly. The Midrash (Devarim Rabbah 1:7) offers the following parable to explain how eloquence is a relative matter:

> *"This is like a man selling purple cloth, who announced, 'Purple cloth for sale!' Hearing his voice, the king peeked out and called the merchant over.*

'What are you selling?' asked the king.
'Nothing, Your Highness.'
'But before I heard you call out, 'Purple cloth for sale,' and now you say, 'Nothing .' What changed?'
'Oh no!' exclaimed the merchant. 'I am selling purple cloth. But by your standards, it is nothing.'

The same idea, the Midrash concludes, may be applied to Moses and his speaking abilities. When standing before God, Creator of the faculty of speech, Moses announced, "I am not a man of words" (Ex. 4:10). But when it came to speaking to the Jewish people, the Torah records: "These are the words that Moses spoke."

Who May Be a Prophet?

In order to properly understand Moses' claim that he possessed inferior oratory skills, we need to examine a basic question regarding the nature of prophets and prophecy.

In the Mishneh Torah, Maimonides describes the prerequisite character traits and intellectual qualifications to be a prophet. He then writes:

"One who has perfected himself in all of these traits and is in perfect health - when he enters the pardeis [i.e., when he studies esoteric wisdom] and is drawn to those lofty and abstract matters... immediately the prophetic spirit will come to him." (Yesodei HaTorah 7:2)

This description seems to indicate that prophecy is purely a function of one's moral and spiritual preparation. Once one has attained the necessary spiritual level, he automatically merits prophecy.

However, Maimonides later writes that those who strive to attain prophecy are called "the sons of prophets" (see 2 Kings 2:15). Despite their intense efforts, they are still not full-fledged prophets. "Even though they direct their minds, it is possible that the Shechinah will inspire them, and it is possible that it will not" (ibid. 7:5). This statement indicates that attaining prophecy is not dependent only upon one's initiative and efforts. Even those who have attained the appropriate spiritual level are not assured that they will receive prophecy.

How can we reconcile these two seemingly contradictory statements?

Natural or Supernatural?

Many aspects of the spiritual realm parallel the physical world. We find that the physical world is largely governed by set laws of nature and physics. Only on occasion does Divine providence intervene in the rule of nature. The same holds true for the hidden resources of the soul. There are set, general rules that govern their functions. But there are also situations that go beyond the natural faculties of the soul.

We may thus rephrase our question as follows: is prophecy a naturally occurring spiritual talent for those who prepare themselves appropriately? Or does it fall under the category of the supernatural, dependent upon God's will at that time, when He chooses to perfect the world by way of prophetic message?

Ruach HaKodesh and Nevu'ah

To resolve this dilemma, we must distinguish between two types of prophecy. The first is an inner revelation in one's thoughts, called ruach hakodesh. This is naturally attained Divine knowledge, a result of the soul's nobility and its focus on lofty matters. This level of prophecy is a natural talent that God established within the soul.

There is, however, a second type of prophecy. This is nevu'ah, from the word niv, meaning 'expression' or 'utterance.' Nevu'ah is the consummation of the prophetic experience; prophecy goes beyond thought and is concretized in letters and words. This form of prophecy is not a natural faculty of the soul. It reflects a miraculous connection between the physical and spiritual realms, a supernatural phenomenon of Divine Will commanding the prophet to relay a specific message to the world.

We may now resolve the apparent contradiction in Maimonides' writings. When he wrote that the prophet will automatically attain prophecy, Maimonides was referring to the prophetic insight of ruach hakodesh. From his description, it is clear that he is speaking about a prophecy experienced mentally:

"His thoughts are constantly attuned to the holy. They are bound under God's Throne, to grasp those holy and pure images, perceiving God's wisdom [in all aspects of creation]."

When, on the other hand, Maimonides spoke of nevu'ah, he wrote that even though the prophet directs his mind, he will not necessarily merit prophetic communion with God. This form of prophecy is dependent upon God's Will, and not on the soul's natural talents.

Moses' Mistake

Now we can better understand Moses' claim that he was not "a man of words." Moses was certainly aware of his stature as a prophet. Maimonides teaches that a prophet "recognizes that he is no longer as he once was; but rather that he has been elevated above the level of other wise individuals." Moses was aware of his spiritual level — but only as one worthy of ruach hakodesh, of a prophetic mental state. He assumed that the greater level of nevu'ah would be similarly recognizable by one who merited it. Since Moses did not sense this level of prophecy within himself, he declared that he was not a "man of words" — i.e., one meriting prophecy expressed in speech.

Moses' reasoning, however, was flawed. The inner prophecy of thought is a natural talent of the soul and the result of the prophet's spiritual efforts; thus the prophet is aware that he merits ruach hakodesh. The external prophecy of nevu'ah, on the other hand, depends on God's Will, according to the dictates of Divine providence at that time. The first level is comparable to the laws of nature in the world, while the second is like supernatural miracles performed on special occasions. Thus nevu'ah does not reflect the inner qualities of the prophet's soul.

God's response to Moses is now clearer. "Who gave man a mouth? ... Who made him blind? Was it not I, the Lord?" (Ex. 4:11) The world has two sides, the natural and the supernatural. The mouth is part of the natural realm, whereas blindness is a special condition. Both, God told Moses, come from Me. Just as you attained the natural level of ruach hakodesh, so too, it is My will that you will be granted the supernatural level of nevu'ah.

The Prophetic Nature of Devarim

One final question: why is it that the Midrash only clarifies Moses' oratorical skills in the book of Deuteronomy? The answer to this question is to be found in the difference between the prophetic nature of Deuteronomy as opposed to the other books of Moses.

Regular nevu'ah occurs in this fashion: the prophet would first hear God's message, then the Divine Spirit would come over him, and he would relate what he had heard. The prophecy of Moses, however, was totally different. The Shechinah would "speak through his throat," even as he spoke to the people. Moses was merely a mouthpiece for the Divine Presence.

As a result, the first four books of the Pentateuch do not demonstrate Moses' oratory talents. The book of Deuteronomy, on the other hand, is a reflection of Moses' talents in the same way that the prophetic books of other prophets reflect their individual style of speech.

Were it not for Deuteronomy, we could have taken Moses' claim at face value and understood that he was literally "heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." But after reading the eloquent discourses of sefer Devarim, we realize that Moses was in fact referring to his prophetic abilities. Moses meant that he was unworthy of verbal nevu'ah. With regard to ordinary speech, however, Moses was only "heavy of mouth" in comparison to the King of the universe.

(Sapphire from the Land of Israel. Adapted from Otzarot HaRe'iyah vol. II, pp. 131-133 (originally published in Itur Sofrim))

http://www.ravkooktorah.org/DVARIM_67.htm

Why are there so many Jewish lawyers? (Devarim 5775)

By Lord Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l, Former Chief Rabbi of the U.K.*

At the beginning of Devarim, Moses reviews the history of the Israelites' experience in the wilderness, beginning with the appointment of leaders throughout the people, heads of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. He continues:

And I charged your judges at that time, "Hear the disputes between your people and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner residing among you. Do not show partiality in judging; hear both small and great alike. Do not be afraid of anyone, for judgment belongs to God. Bring me any case too hard for you, and I will hear it. (Deut. 1:16-17)

Thus at the outset of the book in which he summarized the entire history of Israel and its destiny as a holy people, he already gave priority to the administration of justice: something he would memorably summarize in a later chapter (16: 20) in the words, "Justice, justice, shall you pursue." The words for justice, tzedek and mishpat, are repeated, recurring themes of the book. The root tz-d-k appears eighteen times in Devarim; the root sh-f-t, forty-eight times.

Justice has seemed, throughout the generations, to lie at the beating heart of Jewish faith. Albert Einstein memorably spoke of "the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, an almost fanatical love of justice, and the desire for personal independence – these are the features of the Jewish tradition which make me thank my lucky stars that I belong to it." In the course of a television programme I made for the BBC I asked Hazel Cosgrove, the first woman to be appointed as a judge in Scotland, and an active member of the Edinburgh Jewish community, what had led her to choose law as a career, she replied as if it was self-evident, "Because Judaism teaches: Justice, justice shall you pursue."

One of the great Jewish lawyers of our time, Alan Dershowitz, is about to bring out a book about Abraham,[1] whom he sees as the first Jewish lawyer, "the patriarch of the legal profession: a defense lawyer for the damned who is willing to risk everything, even the wrath of God, in defense of his clients," the founder not just of monotheism but of a long line of Jewish lawyers. Dershowitz gives a vivid description of Abraham's prayer on behalf of the people of Sodom ("Shall the Judge of all the earth not do justice?") as a courtroom drama, with Abraham acting as lawyer for the citizens of the town, and God, as it were, as the accused. This was the forerunner of a great many such episodes in Torah and Tanakh, in which the prophets argued the cause of justice with God and with the people.

In modern times, Jews reached prominence as judges in America: among them Brandeis, Cardozo, and Felix Frankfurter. Ruth Bader Ginsburg was the first Jewish woman to be appointed to the Supreme Court. In Britain, between 1996 and 2008, two of Britain's three Lord Chief Justices were Jewish: Peter Taylor and Harry Woolf. In Germany in the early 1930s, though Jews were 0.7 per cent of the population, they represented 16.6 per cent of lawyers and judges.

One feature of Tanakh is noteworthy in this context. Throughout the Hebrew Bible some of the most intense encounters between the prophets and God are represented as courtroom dramas. Sometimes, as in the case of Moses, Jeremiah and Habakkuk, the plaintiff is humanity or the Jewish people. In the case of Job it is an individual who has suffered unfairly. The accused is God himself. The story is told by Elie Wiesel of how a case was brought against God by the Jewish prisoners in a concentration camp during the Holocaust.[2] At other times, it is God who brings a case against the children of Israel.

The word the Hebrew Bible uses for these unique dialogues between heaven and earth[3] is riv, which means a law-suit, and it derives from the idea that at the heart of the relationship between God and humanity – both in general, and specifically in relation to the Jewish people – is covenant, that is, a binding agreement, a mutual pledge, based on obedience to God's law on the part of humans, and on God's promise of loyalty and love on the part of Heaven. Thus either side can, as it were, bring the other to court on grounds of failure to fulfill their undertakings.

Three features mark Judaism as a distinctive faith. First is the radical idea that when God reveals himself to humans He does so in the form of law. In the ancient world, God was power. In Judaism, God is order, and order presupposes law. In the natural world of cause and effect, order takes the form of scientific law. But in the human world, where we have freewill, order takes the form of moral law. Hence the name of the Mosaic books: Torah, which means 'direction,

guidance, teaching,' but above all 'law.' The most basic meaning[4] of the most fundamental principle of Judaism, Torah min ha-Shamayim, 'Torah from Heaven,' is that God, not humans, is the source of binding law.

Second, we are charged with being interpreters of the law. That is our responsibility as heirs and guardians of the Torah she-be-al peh, the Oral Tradition. The phrase in which Moses describes the voice the people heard at the revelation at Sinai, kol gadol velo yasaf, is understood by the commentators in two seemingly contradictory ways. On the one hand it means 'the voice that was never heard again'; on the other, it means 'the voice that did not cease,' that is, the voice that was ever heard again.[5] There is, though, no contradiction. The voice that was never heard again is the one that represents the Written Torah. The voice that is ever heard again is that of the Oral Torah.

The Written Torah is min ha-shamayim, "from Heaven," but about the Oral Torah the Talmud insists Lo ba-shamayim hi, "It is not in Heaven."[6] Hence Judaism is a continuing conversation between the Giver of the law in Heaven and the interpreters of the law on Earth. That is part of what the Talmud means when it says that "Every judge who delivers a true judgment becomes a partner with the Holy One, blessed be He, in the work of creation."[7]

Third, fundamental to Judaism is education, and fundamental to education is instruction in Torah, that is, the law. That is what Isaiah meant when he said, "Listen to Me, you who know justice, the people in whose heart is My law; do not fear the reproach of men, nor be afraid of their insults" (Is. 51:7). It is what Jeremiah meant when he said, "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). It is what Josephus meant when he said, nineteen hundred years ago, "Should any one of our nation be asked about our laws, he will repeat them as readily as his own name." The result of our thorough education in our laws from the very dawn of intelligence is that they are, as it were, engraved on our souls. To be a Jewish child is to be, in the British phrase, "learned in the law." We are a nation of constitutional lawyers.

Why? Because Judaism is not just about spirituality. It is not simply a code for the salvation of the soul. It is a set of instructions for the creation of what the late Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein z"l called "societal beatitude." It is about bringing God into the shared spaces of our collective life. That needs law: law that represents justice, honoring all humans alike regardless of colour or class, that judges impartially between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, even in extremis between humanity and God, the law that links God, its Giver, to us, its interpreters, the law that alone allows freedom to coexist with order, so that my freedom is not bought at the cost of yours.

Small wonder, then, that there are so many Jewish lawyers.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Alan Dershowitz, Abraham: the world's first (but certainly not the last) Jewish lawyer, New York, Schocken, 2015.

[2] Elie Wiesel, The Trial of God, Schocken, 1995. The story is believed to be fictional, though on one occasion Wiesel said that it happened and that he was there.
[3] On the subject in general, see Anson Laytner, Arguing with God: A Jewish Tradition, Jason Aronson, 1977.

[4] Not the only meaning, to be sure. See Rambam, Hilkhot Teshuvah 3:5.

[5] Deut. 5: 19, and see Rashi ad loc., who gives both interpretations.

[6] Baba Metzia 59b.

[7] Shabbat 10a.

* Note: because Likutei Torah and the Internet Parsha Sheet, both attached by E-mail, normally include the two most recent Devrei Torah by Rabbi Sacks, I have selected an earlier Dvar. *See*

https://rabbisacks.org/why-are-there-so-many-jewish-lawyers-devarim-5775/

The Three Weeks

by Chaya Mushka & Nechama Krimmer *

We are now in the middle of "the Three Weeks," a period of mourning over the destruction of both the First and Second Holy Temples. It's a difficult subject to tackle as the loss is overwhelming. Where do we start? The horrific loss of human life? The subsequent trials of a long, cruel exile? The termination of our connection to G dliness that came through the Temple services? Can we even conceptualize the G dliness that was revealed inside the Temple enough for us to properly mourn for it today?

The destruction of the Beis HaMikdash was not just a Jewish tragedy. Gentiles also prayed, offered sacrifices, and received blessings in the Temple. As the Prophet Isaiah proclaimed, "I will bring them to My holy mount, and I will cause them to rejoice in My house of prayer, their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be acceptable upon My altar, for My house shall be called a house of prayer for ALL peoples" (56:7).

The windows of Hashem's House had an unusual quality. Generally, windows are constructed to bring in as much natural light as possible. The windows of the Beis HaMikdash, however, were constructed in the opposite direction. They were designed in order that the G dly light from inside the Beis HaMikdash could shine to the outside world.

Through the recent events of this year we have received a perhaps unwanted glimpse into the window of the destruction of the two Holy Temples.

On Lag B'Omer, we watched in horror as news flooded in of the martyrs who perished in Meron at the grave of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in the midst of such a joyous celebration. 45 dead, 150+ injured.

Then just a few weeks later, on the holiday of Shavuos, bleachers collapsed in a synagogue near Jerusalem. 2 dead, 160+ injured.

And last week, we watched the collapse of the Surfside Champlain Towers South in Miami and the rubble that was left behind. 54+ dead, 80+ missing and presumed dead.

These events, which unfolded in front of our eyes, each involve three things: a joyous occasion turned tragedy, a collapsing structure, and the unity that comes from shared grief.

Since everything that we see and hear is through Divine Providence, we can utilize these experiences to further understand what we are mourning for.

Or conversely, what we are collectively yearning for: the building of the Third Beis HaMikdash, which will never be destroyed.

* In Memory of Rabbi Chaim Dovid Nota Wichnin, z"l.
https://www.chabaddayton.com/templates/articlecco_cdo/aid/5183234/jewish/Three-Weeks.htm

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In Your Own Voice

By Menachem Feldman *

The fifth book of the Five Books of Moses, Devarim, which means “Words,” is named for the opening statement in the book:

These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel on that side of the Jordan.1

The Torah continues:

It came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month, that Moses spoke to the children of Israel according to all that the L rd had commanded him regarding them.2

Toward the end of Moses' life, as the Jews were about to cross the Jordan and enter the promised land, Moses spoke to his beloved people. He repeated all the commandments written in the first four books and he retold the stories of their sins and shortcomings of the past 40 years, in hopes that his words would help them learn and grow from their negative experiences.

While the first four books are written in third person (as in the very common verse "And G d spoke to Moses"), the fifth book is written in first person, in the voice of Moses himself. This difference is significant. It represents a change in Moses' role, and a change in the way we are to understand the Torah.

Moses received the Torah from G d and transmitted it to us. Moses' role was to be a loyal conduit who would convey the words of the Torah precisely as they were given to him. In the fifth book, however, Moses was no longer a mere transmitter. The words, ideas and teachings were internalized within Moses, and he therefore spoke them in his own voice.

This explains how both themes of the book of Devarim, the repetition of the Torah in Moses' own voice and the words of rebuke, are interrelated. The purpose of rebuke was to inspire the Jewish people to return to G d. But how would a person who rejected the voice of morality, and the will of G d, be inspired to return? The inspiration comes not from heeding the voice from above, but rather from listening to the voice that emanates from within ourselves. The commitment and courage to return to G d comes from the teachings and values of the Torah that have become part of the Jew.

Like Moses, we experience both of these steps in our own study of the Torah. At first, we listen and learn. We seek to hear and understand that which the Torah is teaching us. This is the first stage, the stage represented by the first four books, in which we seek to receive the Divine words handed down to us.

And then we arrive at the fifth book. It may not happen overnight, it may take 40 years of wandering, but over time we begin to discover the ideas of the Torah within our deepest self. Over time, the words of the Torah become our own. We identify with them, and they express our own point of view. In the second stage of study, in the fifth book, we speak the words of Torah in our own voice.3

FOOTNOTES:

1. Deuteronomy 1:1.

2. Ibid. 1:3.

3. Adapted from the teachings of the Rebbe, Likutei Sichot, vol. 19, Devarim, sicha 2.

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https://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/4811117/jewish/In-Your-Own-Voice.htm

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Devarim: G-d Only Loves

by Rabbi Moshe Wisnefsky *

Moses reminds the Jewish people how they reacted to the scouts' report after they had spied out the Land of Israel,accusing G-d of exhibiting ill will toward them. Deuteronomy 1:22-38

Until the Final Redemption, when there will no longer be any obstacles impeding the full revelation of G-d's goodness, opportunities will unfortunately remain to mistake G-d's love for us for cruelty.

Our challenge, until the Messianic Era, is to remain fully aware that G-d is at all times manifesting His love for us, even if it occasionally appears exactly the opposite.

Remaining conscious of this love will inspire us to reciprocate it by fulfilling His will to our utmost ability. This, in turn, will eliminate the last remaining impediments to the Final Redemption.

* From *Daily Wisdom #1*

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Likutei *Divrei* Torah

Gleanings of Divrei Torah on Parashat Hashavuah via the Internet

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Covenant and Conversation
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, z"l

The Leader as Teacher

It was one of the great moments of personal transformation, and it changed not only Moses but our very conception of leadership itself.

By the end of the book of Bamidbar, Moses' career as a leader would seem to be ending. He had appointed his successor, Joshua, and it would be Joshua, not Moses, who would lead the people across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Moses seemed to have now achieved everything he was destined to achieve. For him there would be no more battles to fight, no more miracles to perform, no more prayers to make on behalf of the people.

It is what Moses did next that bears the mark of greatness. For the final month of his life he stood before the assembled people, and delivered the series of addresses we know as the book of Deuteronomy or Devarim, literally "words." In these addresses, he reviewed the people's past and foresaw their future. He gave them laws. Some he had given them before but in a different form. Others were new; he had delayed announcing them until the people were about to enter the land. Linking all these details of law and history into a single overarching vision, he taught the people to see themselves as an am kadosh, a holy people, the only people whose sovereign and lawgiver was God Himself.

If someone who knew nothing about Judaism and the Jewish people were to ask you for a single book that would explain both who Jews are and why they do what they do, the best answer would be Devarim. No other book so encapsulates and dramatises all the key elements of Judaism as a faith and way of life.

In a much-watched TED talk, and a book with the same name,[1] Simon Sinek says that the transformative leaders are those who 'Start with Why.' More poetically, Antoine de Saint-Exupery said, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Through the addresses we read in the book of Devarim, Moses gave the people their Why. They are God's people, the nation on whom He has set His love, the people He rescued from slavery and gave, in the form of the commandments, the constitution of liberty. They may be small but they are unique. They are the people who, in themselves, testify to something beyond themselves. They are the people whose fate will defy the normal laws of history. Other nations, says Moses, will recognise the miraculous nature of the Jewish story – and so, from Blaise Pascal to Nikolai Berdyaev and beyond, they did.

In the last month of his life Moses ceased to be the liberator, the miracle-worker, the redeemer, and became instead Moshe Rabbeinu, "Moses, our teacher." He was the first example in history of the leadership type in which Jews have excelled: the leader as teacher.

Moses surely knew that some of his greatest achievements would not last forever. The people he had rescued would one day suffer exile and persecution again. The next time, though, they would not have a Moses to do miracles. So he planted a vision in their minds, hope in their hearts, a discipline in their deeds and a strength in their souls that would never fade. When leaders become educators they change lives.

In a powerful essay, 'Who is fit to lead the Jewish people?' Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik contrasted the Jewish attitude to kings and teachers as leadership types.[2] The Torah places severe limits on the power of kings. They must not multiply gold, or wives, or horses. A king is commanded "not to consider himself better than his fellow Israelites, nor turn from the law to the right or to the left" (Deut. 17:20).

A king was only to be appointed at the request of the people. According to Ibn Ezra, the appointment of a king was a permitted, but not an obligation. Abarbanel held that it was a concession to human frailty. Rabbeinu Bachya regarded the existence of a king as a punishment, not a reward.[3] In short, Judaism is at best ambivalent about monarchy – that is to say, about leadership as power.

On the other hand, its regard for teachers is almost unlimited. "Let the fear of your teacher be as the fear of heaven," says the Talmud.[4] Respect and reverence for your teacher should be greater even than respect and reverence for your parents, rules Rambam, because parents bring you into this world, while teachers give you entrance to the World to Come.[5]

When someone exercises power over us, they diminish us, but when someone teaches us, they help us grow. That is why Judaism, with its acute concern for human dignity, favours leadership as education over leadership as power. And it began with Moses, at the end of his life.

For twenty-two years, as a Chief Rabbi, I carried with me the following quotation from one of the greatest leaders of the Zionist movement, Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. Although he was a secular Jew, he was enough of a historian and Bible scholar to understand this dimension of leadership, and said so in eloquent words:

Whether you hold humble office in a municipality or in a small union or high office in a national government, the principles are the same: you must know what you want to achieve, be certain of your aims, and have these goals constantly in mind. You must fix your priorities. You must educate your party and must educate the wider public. You must have confidence in your people – often greater than they have in themselves, for the true political leader knows instinctively the measure of man's capacities and can rouse him to exert them in times of crisis. You must know when to fight your political opponents, and when to mark time. You must never compromise on matters of principle. You must always be conscious of the element of timing, and this demands a constant awareness of what is going on around you – in your region if you are a local leader, in your country and in the world if you are a national leader. And since the world never stops for a moment, and the pattern of power changes its elements like the movement of a kaleidoscope, you must constantly reassess chosen policies towards the achievement of your aims. A political leader must spend a lot of time thinking. And he must spend a lot of time educating the public, and educating them anew.[6]

The poet Shelley once said that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."[7] Whether this is true or false, I do not know, but this I know: that there is all the difference between giving people what they want and teaching them what to want.

Teachers are the unacknowledged builders of the future, and if a leader seeks to make lasting change, they must follow in the footsteps of Moses and become an educator. The leader as teacher, using influence not power, spiritual and intellectual authority rather coercive force, was one the greatest contributions Judaism ever made to the moral horizons of humankind and it can be seen most clearly in the Book of Devarim, when Moses for the last month of his life summoned the next generation and taught them laws and lessons that would survive, and inspire, as long as there are human beings on earth.

[1] Simon Sinek, Start with Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to Take Action, Portfolio, 2011. The lecture can be seen at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qp0HIF3SfI4.
[2] Abraham R. Besdin, Reflections of the Rav, World Zionist Organisation, 1979, 127-139.
[3] In their commentaries to Deut. 17:15. Rabbenu Bachya's point is that the people should in principle have needed no other king than God Himself. In support of his view, he quotes Hosea: "They set up kings without My consent; they choose princes without My approval" (8:4); and "So in My anger I gave you a king, and in My wrath I took him away" (13:11).
[4] Pesachim 108b.
[5] Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Talmud Torah 5:1.
[6] Moshe Pearlman, Ben Gurion Looks Back in Talks with Moshe Pearlman, Weidenfeld and Nicolson, New York, 1965, 52. I owe this quotation to Jonathan (now Lord) Kestenbaum, Executive Director of the Office of the Chief Rabbi, 1991-1996.
[7] Percy Bysshe Shelley, A Defence of Poetry: An Essay (ReadHowYouWant, 2006), 53.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

The biblical reading of Devarim always falls out on the Sabbath preceding Tisha Be'av, the fast commemorating the destruction of our Holy Temples. This is not merely an "accident" of the calendar; in our portion, Moses reviews his life and he cries out, "How (eicha) can I bear your troublesomeness and your burdens and your belittling barbs?." [Deut. 1:12], a verse which begins with the same word that opens the Scroll of Lamentations ("How [Eicha] does she sit alone, the city once filled with our people?") The Torah reader on the Sabbath chants the Torah verse Eicha with the same haunting melody used for the Eicha reading on Tisha Be'av.

What is the significance of the destruction of the Temple? How important could the Temple have been if Judaism managed to survive without it for the last 2,000 years? And how many modern Jews can really identify with the slaughter of animals as offerings in a Temple? By exploring a fundamental difference of opinion between two great Jewish leaders—Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and Rabbi Akiva—we can gain insight into the significance of our Temple, and the irretrievable loss we suffered as a result of its destruction.

As the Romans besieged Jerusalem, Rabbi Yohanan managed to leave the city and meet with Vespasian, the leader of the Roman armed forces carrying out the siege. The rabbi requested that the Romans spare the city of Yavne and its wise men, the Sanhedrin of sages.

Rabbi Yohanan was willing to relinquish Jerusalem and the Temple so long as the Jews could remain in Israel and maintain their ongoing interpretations of the Oral Law.

Approximately six decades later, Rabbi Akiva bitterly condemned this accommodating stance of Rabbi Yohanan (even though he taught both of Rabbi Akiva's own two teachers, Rabbi Yehoshua and R. Eliezer), referring to a verse from the Prophet Isaiah which he applied to Rabbi Yohanan: "God turns the sages backwards and transforms their wisdom into foolishness" (Isa. 44:25) (B.T. Gittin 56b). Apparently, Rabbi Akiva believed that Rabbi Yohanan gave up too much too soon, that he should have continued to fight in order to retain Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Indeed, Rabbi Akiva put his ideas into practice by spearheading the Bar Kochba rebellion against Rome (135 CE) for the avowed purpose of Israel's liberation of Jerusalem and rebuilding of the Holy Temple.

What was the fundamental difference of opinion between these sages? Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai believed that, apart from the prohibitions of murder, sexual immorality and idolatry, the only value for which one may forfeit one's life is the survival of the Jewish nation. This explains why the Bible introduces the concept of a life-endangering obligatory war (milhemet mitzva) for the sake of the conquering the Land of Israel at the dawn of our history, because without the Land of Israel there would never have developed the nation of Israel. Given the overwhelming might of the Roman Empire and the Roman armies, Rabbi Yohanan concluded that if the Land of Israel and the Torah of Israel could be secured—Yavne and its wise men—it would be unnecessary and even halachically unacceptable to risk the survival of the Jewish people in a war for Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Rabbi Akiva believed differently. He understood the function of the Holy Temple and Jerusalem as being cardinal to the mission of Israel, a holy nation and a kingdom of priest-teachers (to the world) through whom all of the families of the earth are to be blessed.

The people of Israel were entrusted to teach the world that God created every human being in His Divine image, that each individual must be free and inviolable, and that our God of love and morality demands a world of peace and security for all. The city from which this message must emanate is the City of Jerusalem, the City of Peace (Yeru Shalom); the mechanism by which this mission is to be advanced is the Holy Temple, the beacon from which the Torah will go forth to all nations of the world, impressing upon them how "swords must be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift sword above nation and humanity will not learn war anymore" (Isa. 2:4). Rabbi Akiva believed that unless we disseminate this teaching to the world, there is no purpose to our national being; hence the centrality of our Messianic vision and the necessity of continuing to fight for Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Bar Kochba's revolt ended in failure. The subsequent Hadrianic persecutions and the resulting Jewish exile wrought havoc upon our nation, and it became clear to the overwhelming majority of our sages that Rabbi Akiva was wrong and Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai had been correct. He had rescued Judaism by his initiating the "exchange" with Vespasian.

But our situation has radically changed. Contemporary history, post-Holocaust, teaches us that the nation of Israel cannot survive without a Jewish state and a Jewish army. We live in a global village where one madman with nuclear power can (God forbid) destroy the entire world. This teaches us that, unless the inviolability of the human being and the universal acceptance of a God of peace becomes an axiom of all humanity, there will be no free humanity left in the world, and certainly no Jewish nation. Rabbi Akiva has been vindicated for our times; only by teaching fundamental absolute morality in our City of Peace can we secure the future of Israel and the free world.

The Person in the Parsha
Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb

"Words, Mere Words"

I have kept my time-worn copy of Roget's Thesaurus in my personal library since I was in the seventh grade. It was given to me by my teacher, a Mr. Zeller, who introduced me to the beauty of language and who first stimulated my fascination with words. He taught me to use this thesaurus in order to use language effectively and with precision.

There are those who scoff at words, deeming them to be much weaker than concrete objects. These are the people who distinguish between the "real world" and the world of "mere" verbal expression. Life has taught me, however, that these individuals are very wrong. Words are important not just in the social world, but have influence and impact upon the physical world as well.

With this week's Torah portion, Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22), we begin an entirely new book: Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the Pentateuch. This book differs from the previous four in many ways. In the first four books of the Bible, events take place, activities are performed, and stories happen. Not so in Deuteronomy. It is fundamentally one long speech; an exquisitely eloquent address, delivered over a period of forty days.

Events are described in Deuteronomy, but no event actually takes place in the entire book. That is, until the concluding eight verses which describe the death of Moses.

There is no storyline in this book . It consists of words of review, words of rebuke, words of instruction, and words of inspiration. Words, mere words. It is no wonder, then, that in Hebrew, the book is called Devarim, "Words."

Perhaps it is because of my lifelong obsession with words that this particular book is so personally significant to me. For many years, beginning with the week after I was bar mitzvah, I was the Torah reader for my synagogue, the baal koreh. I remember how thrilled I was as I chanted the words of Chumash Devarim. I recall savoring the very sounds of the words and absorbing the simple meaning of what I was chanting.

What is most astounding about this book-length address is that it is given by Moses, who, by his own admission, was not a man of words. You certainly will recall that it was in the Torah portion of Shemos which we read many months ago that Moses at first declined God's mission. He refused to be the one to deliver the Jewish people from Egypt. He said, "Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words...I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." (Exodus 4:10)

Our Torah portion begins, "These are the words that Moses addressed to all Israel…" Our Sages in the Midrash find this phenomenon remarkable. Say the rabbis in the Midrash, "Yesterday he said 'I am not a man of words,' and today he says 'These are the words?!' ...Rabbi Elazar put it this way: 'Yesterday he was a pasilus (pasilus is a Greek word meaning a person with a severe speech defect), and now he proclaims 'These are the words!' "

A contemporary rabbi, Yehuda Shaviv, whose work MiSinai Ba I so admire, makes the same point using different words: "This talent of Moses is a wondrous one. He, who began his leadership career so convinced that he was inarticulate that he depended upon his brother Aaron to be the spokesman able to convey his ideas to his audience, has now become, as his days are waning, a facile and persuasive speaker."

How are we to understand this transformation? I maintain that one cannot fully comprehend the unique nature of the book of Deuteronomy and its message unless he can answer the question which must trouble the alert reader and which so troubled the aforementioned rabbis: Why did Moses change?

Rabbi Shaviv offers a most suggestive approach to solving this dilemma. He begins by pointing out that Moses led his people for forty years but spoke to them more in the last forty days of his life than he did for the entire duration of his leadership.

He argues that we must postulate that Moses only now began to sense that the ears of the Israelites were at last receptive and attentive. They were finally ready to hear his words and to assimilate his message. Their hearts were now ready to open up and to understand both his words of faith and his words of rebuke. They were now ready to hear the hymn of mitzvot, statutes, and laws.

There is a very important lesson here. Language requires a relationship in order to be effective. Much depends upon the speaker, but the speaker must have a listener. Monologues do not communicate. Dialogs do. A speaker's eloquence depends upon his conviction that someone is listening.

Rabbi Shaviv proceeds to impart yet another creative teaching in his masterful little essay on this week's Torah portion. Moses becomes able to deliver his impressive address not only because he finally senses that he had a receptive audience. Rather, he can do so also because he has finally overcome his mistrust of "mere words."

Remember the tragedy of Moses' life, and remember the sin for which he was punished. The Almighty instructed him, when the people complained of thirst, to speak to the rock from which water would then flow. God instructed him to use "mere words."

But instead, Moses struck the rock with his staff. He only trusted a concrete object, a "real thing." He mistrusted "mere words." In a sense he was guilty of the same error of those to whom I referred at the beginning of this essay, to those who scoff at words.

So serious was his choice of things over words that God considered it an unforgivable flaw. God deemed it a sin deserving tragic punishment. He, therefore, deprived Moses of achieving his most precious dream: entering the Promised Land.

The entire book of Deuteronomy is evidence that Moses learned his lesson well. He may have failed to use words to draw water from the rock, but he succeeded gloriously in using words to inspire his people, words which continue to reverberate eternally for all of us.

"Mere words," you say? I hope I have convinced you of their supreme importance by sharing with you my own conviction of the importance of words, a conviction which began for me in the seventh grade.

Thank you, Mr. Zeller, wherever you are. And thank you, Rabbi Shaviv, for your insights into this week's parsha. I hope that I have conveyed them as satisfactorily to my audience as you did to yours.

Dvar Torah
Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

What is the greatest blessing ever given to the Jewish people? In Parshat Devarim, there is a Bracha by Moshe Rabenu which I believe would certainly qualify to be on a shortlist for such an accolade. Just prior to his death, Moshe said ' ה' אֱלקי אֲבוֹתֵכֶם יֹסֵף עֲלֵיכֶם כָּכֶם אֶלֶף פְּעָמִים may the Lord, God of your fathers increase your numbers to be one thousand times more than what you are'. The Midrash tells us that Moshe here was blessing our nation from one end of the world through to the other – such was the enormity of this blessing and proof of this is the fact that didn't say אלף פעם, he said אלף פעמים.

What does the midrash mean? In Sefer Binah L'atid he explains beautifully: you see אלף פעם would be one thousand times more than what you are. At that time we were 600,000 souls, so Moshe would have been saying to Hashem: throughout all generations bless the Jewish people to number as many as 600 million. אלף פעמים however, means: double what you have, and then double it again – when you've done that one thousand times – that will be the number of people throughout all time.

To appreciate the extent of the blessing, let me share with you a legend from thirteenth-century Persia. The king of Persia summoned to his palace the creator of the game of chess and told him "I'm so impressed with this game, I love playing it. Please let me give you a prize – what would you like?" So the creator of chess thought for a moment and said "For my prize please ask your servants to arrange a very large chessboard. On the first square put one grain of wheat. On the second square, double it to two, and the third square double to four, then eight, sixteen, thirty-two and by the time they get to the sixty-fourth square there will be a lot of grain. Put all the grain into sacks and that's what I'd like." The king responded, "is that it?" "Yes, that'll be sufficient."

The king summoned the master of his granary and instructed him to do just that. After a few hours the master of the granary came back to the king and said "Your Royal Highness, I'm sorry to tell you that in your entire kingdom you don't have sufficient wheat to give to this man." Indeed mathematicians will tell you that by the time you get to the sixty-fourth square, there will be more than eighteen quintillion grains of wheat estimated to be more than two thousand times the amount of wheat which is produced in the world in any year today. You wouldn't have thought it but such is the extent of this number and that is the Bracha that Moshe Rabenu was giving to the Jewish nation.

Just like the stars of the sky, if you look at our numbers throughout the ages you will be unable to count us. This Bracha by Moshe Rabenu is read by us every year on the Shabbat immediately prior to Tisha B'av, a day on which we recall successive attempts to destroy the Jewish people. Thanks to the Bracha of Moshe, thanks to the response of Hashem, thanks to the promises in our Torah – עם ישראל חי. The Jewish people will never be destroyed, we will continue to thrive and we will continue to live forever.

OTS Dvar Torah

A Rebuke That Brings Blessings to the World

Chezi Zecharia

Despite failed attempts at dialogue, Moshe doesn't back down. He attacks the nation's inappropriate behavior, respecfully yet assertively. Some thoughts on inter-generational accountability, which holds the secret to the Jewish people's existence.

Who among us enjoys being criticized or reproached? Even Moshe, our great and humble leader, has difficult experiences when it comes to his ability to communicate with the Jewish People: "they would not listen to Moshe, their spirits crushed by cruel bondage" (Exodus 6:9). Moreover, when the Jewish people complained at mei meriva, they are admonished by Moshe: "Listen, you rebels…" (Numbers 20:10)! According to some commentators, as a result of this act of rebuke, Moshe is informed that he would not lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.

Rebuke with sensitivity

Stories have been told of the Chafetz Chaim and how he had rebuked those around him. In one such case, the rebuke ended on a negative note for the one doing the rebuking:

Once, a Jew from the community who had begun opening his shop on the Sabbath was brought before the Chafetz Chaim. The Chafetz Chaim berated the Jew, who then closed his shop on the Sabbath. A half-year later, the Jew resumed opening his shop on the Sabbath, and the community asked him to visit the Chafetz Chaim. The Chafetz Chaim apologized repeatedly to the shop-owner, who forgave him, but also asked him why the Chafetz Chaim was asking for his forgiveness. The Chafetz Chaim responded that he is the one who should be asking for forgiveness, because he had castigated this Jew for violating the Sabbath. He explained that as long as he believed it to be constructive, he was permitted to castigate the Jew, but now, when he realized that it was not constructive, it turns out that the Chafetz Chaim was prohibited from castigating and disparaging the Jew.

One is not permitted to disregard a fellow human being's dignity and disparage others in the name of rebuke, as we are told by Rashi: "…and refers to them only by a mere allusion contained in the names of these places out of regard for Israel". Moshe himself would proceed to blessing the Jewish people during his rebuke, with a loving heart: "May Hashem, the God of your fathers, increase your numbers a thousandfold, and bless you as He promised you."

Fortunate is the generation that can hear words of rebuke

Many "compliments", rebukes, negative comments and critiques are slung at the young nation that had just left Egypt: "Yet for all that, you have no faith in Hashem, your God", with regard to the sin of the spies, and "…but you would not listen; you flouted the Hashem's command…", in reference to those who tried to reach the land of Israel independently after the sin of the spies. Observers could remark that this was truly an obstinate nation that tended to zigzag. However, we'll state that this was a great generation that was capable of hearing out and listening to words of rebuke. It was capable of hearing, accepting, and refraining from striking out. "To all of Israel…" – sixty thousand people were hearing and listening when the Torah was being given on Mount Sinai.

A nation of people, young and old, who were prepared to listen to rebuke bring blessings and spiritual satisfaction to the world:

… shall love the rebukes, for as long as there are rebukes in the world, spiritual satisfaction comes to the world, goodness and blessings come to the world, and evil leaves the world, as it is stated: "But to those who admonish shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them" (Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Tamid 28a)

Inter-generational accountability

"These are the words that Moshe addressed to all Israel…".

There are only two places in the biblical text that Moshe addresses the entire nation of Israel – in this week's parsha, and in Parshat Hakhel. The Kli Yakar points out that Moshe' statement was addressed to all of Israel, but that he was speaking mainly with the greatest of Israelites, each of which merited the appellation of Grandfather Israel". The gedolim, the greatest of the generation, transmit "Grandfather Israel's" heritage to future generations. They have the responsibility of strengthening the spiritual links in the chain that binds our nation together:

"… and because the gedolim must admonish the nation, for if they do not do so, the nation's guilt shall be attached to them."

Those who are great also have the great responsiblity of creating mutual inter-generational accountability. The admonishment may be addressed to this generation, but it remains in force for all generations to come, for in every generation, the gedolim, because of their responsibility, must ensure that "the path continues, and only those who continue walking will reach its end" (excerpted from a poem by Yoram Teharlev).

"The enlightened ones of all of the generations come together to build the Holy Temple"

The Sefat Emes asks, in his own language, how our sages could have stated that "each generation in whose days [the Holy Temple] was not built is considered [a generation] in whose days [the Temple] was destroyed". After all, there were countless generations with great and righteous people, so how could we say that the Temple was destroyed during that generation's time, because of those great people?

The Sefat Emes answers that the construction of the Holy Temple isn't merely the patrimony of the generation in whose time the Temple will be built. Rather, "All of the days of the generation come together will all of the enlightened ones of the children of Israel from all generations". A generation that doesn't concern itself with the next generation does not contribute to the building of the Temple, and as such, this generation's lack of effort is equated with destroying the Temple, God forbid. Conversely, the positive approach is that "every generation helps, and contributes a bit to the construction of the Temple". If there is enough inter-generational accountability, a mutual accountability that shows concern for the subsequent generations, the Temple will be built and re-established, along with the set of commandments and values that that our fathers, grandfathers and great-grandfathers taught us – all of those are the "enlightened ones" who will merit to be called Israel.

As we approach the ninth of Av of this year, and Shabbat Hazon, let us wish upon ourselves that we share the lot of the generations of the enlightened and those who are truly worthy, which come together to build the Holy Temple, out of mutual inter- and intra-generational accountability that spans many generations, instilling the value of ahavat hinam – baseless love.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Ikar and Tafell in Learning

The Gemarah (Nedarim 38a) tells us that the original plan of the Ribbono Shel Olam was that Moshe Rabbeinu would only tell the Jewish people the dinim of the Torah but Moshe could reserve the methods of the derivation of the dinim (pilpulah shel Torah) exclusively for his own descendants. However, Moshe Rabbeinu was good-hearted (tov ayin) and therefore shared everything with the Jewish people. The Netziv (in his commentary on the chumash) suggests that this good-hearted act of Moshe Rabbeinu took place at the beginning of chumash Devarim, the month before he passed away.

The Midrash tells us that the Ribbono shel Olam gave the Torah to the Jewish people in the desert instead of in Eretz Yisroel so that no individual shevet would be able to claim that they are the baalei batim over the Torah and should have the final say in psak halacha. Had the Ribbono shel Olam given the Torah to the Jewish people in Eretz Yisroel, the shevet that owned the part of Eretz Yisroel in which it was given would have claimed that they should have the final say. Therefore, the Torah was given in the desert, which did not belong to any of the shevotim, in order that all of the

Jewish people would be entitled to an equal say when shailos come up.

It would seem, then, that according to the Netziv's suggestion that Moshe Rabbeinu shared pilpulah shel Torah with everyone at the beginning of chumash Devarim when the Jewish people were located in eiver ha'Yardein, the shevet within whose share of eiver ha'Yardein this took place could claim that they should have the final say in psak halacha. However, the Netziv explains based on midrashim that the particular location in which Moshe Rabbeinu shared pilpula shel Torah with the Jewish people did not belong to any of the shevotim at that time, thus avoiding this problem.

The Gemarah (Eruvin 13) tells us that R' Meir's style of teaching was that he would explain all the logical possibilities in paskening a shaila. In the days of the Tano'im that was not a popular style. Rather, the students preferred to listen to a shiur where the rebbe said what the din is and explained why the din should be so; they were not interested in hearing all the other logical possibilities. As such, many of the students left R' Meir to learn in the yeshivos of the other Tano'im. In the next generation when the Tano'im voted how to pasken l'halacha, R' Meir's opinion was not accepted most of the time because he has fewer students than the others.

We live in a generation where everything is upside down. Most of the students in most of the yeshivos are not at all interested in the bottom line psak halacha, and rather are only interested in the pilpula shel Torah. According to the original plan of the Ribbono shel Olam, the pilpula shel Torah was not going to be transmitted to all of Klal Yisroel. This modern style of emphasizing all the sevoros and all the logical possibilities is really a distortion of the basic mitzvah of talmud Torah. According to the original plan, the ikar of limud ha'Torah was to be the psak halacha le'maaseh regarding every detail of every mitzvah. Our style of emphasizing sevoros in all directions is to be compared to a person only eating a lot of desserts without eating the main nutritious part of the meal. Only after one already thoroughly knows all the data about the chukim and the mishpatim does it make sense to spend time on the pilpula shel Torah.

Rabbi Michael Rosensweig
Tisha B'Av: A Day of Tears, A Day of Hope, A Catalyst for Teshuvah Mei'ahavah
"Hashiveinu Hashem eilecha ve'nashuvah; chadesh yameinu kekedem". Although it is the penultimate pasuk in Eichah, it is the verse that we repeat to conclude our oral rendition of this harrowing chronicle of national loss and suffering. At first glance, this pasuk, a plea for Divine assistance to attain repentance and redemption, seems to be a surprising choice to culminate the intense, even relentless depiction of collective agony engendered by the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash and Yerushalyim. The fact that this unanticipated climax entails twin dialectics - a) hashivenu-ve-nashuvah that blurs the lines between Divine and human initiative in teshuvah (See Midrash Eichah ad loc on this point), and b) chadesh-kekedem that characterizes the restored relationship between Klal Yisrael and Hashem also as a chidush - something innovative, further commands our attention as we ponder this curious choice.

To be sure, the decision to end on a hopeful, positive note is understandable (Rashi, end of Eichah). This is psychologically consistent with other halachic norms and institutions, and specifically conforms as well with the transition that occurs at the end of kinot on Tisha B'Av day, leading also to the post-chazot phase of this time of national mourning. Moreover, the emphasis on teshuvah in this aveilut context, superficially puzzling, in fact could not be more appropriate. Rambam (Hilchot Ta'anit 1:5) characterizes all of the tzomot enumerated in Zecharyah and the very institution of ta'anit as "mi-darkei ha-teshuvah", as stimuli that provoke profound introspection and that motivate heartfelt repentance. As the most intense of the national tzomot, it is certainly fitting that Tisha B'Av explicate and accentuate the teshuvah theme. At the same time, Eichah, typically recited at night and according to some authorities again in the morning, is read at a time that precedes the appropriate injection of nechamah. Furthermore, the hashiveinu conclusion anyway is more a plea and prayer than an expression of consolation. In any case, as the final sentiment expressed in Eichah, this distinctive articulation of teshuvah requires closer examination.

The Targum's renders "venashuvah" - "venatuv beteyuvta sheleimta", a reference to the rare attainment of a maximal repentance. Evidently, the twin dialectical components, cited previously, connote a profound and ambitious spiritual program. Rav Cayim Volozhiner (Nefesh ha-Hayim 4:31, cited also in this context by Rinat Yitzhak, Eichah 5:21), posits that "teshuvah sheleimah" generally refers to the category of teshuvah mei'ahavah that, according to the gemara (Yoma 86a), transforms sin into merits! Perhaps this stunning paradigm also embodies the challenge of Tisha B'Av mourning.

Sin and suffering are inherently negative, yet the spiritual challenge they pose also presents an opportunity to redirect one's life and reprioritize one's values. The doctrine of teshuvah mei'ahavah acutely illustrates this spiritual axiom. If the experience of alienation and desolation triggered by irrevocable loss or by misconduct that compromises our most important bond - with Hashem - awakens a deeper sense of conviction, dependence, and especially ahavat Hashem then the entire process is redemptive and even constructive, notwithstanding the lingering pain that was engendered. In this sense, teshuvah mei'ahavah produces a net benefit without minimizing the calamity that produced it.

The dialectics of hashivenu-venashuvah and chadesh-kekedem formulated in this Eichah verse reflect this. Rabbeinu Yonah (Shaarei Teshuvah 1:1, cited also by Rinat Yitzhak ad loc) notes that typically the initiation of authentic ahavat Hashem mandates Divine initiative. Hence, this maximalist teshuvah begins with the plea - "hashivenu Hashem eilecha." At the same time, the cultivation of teshuvah mei'ahavah in a manner that is potentially transformative and redemptive, requires not merely a passive response, but an energetic counter-initiative - "ve-nashuvah". Moreover, when pursued with more cognizance of the stakes and greater appreciation for the magnitude of this relationship, the goal - to retrieve and restore a shattered past (kekedem) - invariably advances, even catapults the relationship and produces important new dimensions (chadesh yameinu) in this defining, indispensable bond.

Elsewhere (Tishah B'Av [and the Status of Tishah B'Av nidchah]: A Day of Intense Mourning and Intensive National Unity and Identification) we have suggested that mourning the churban tests our core identity and challenges us to cultivate deeper ahavat Hashem, greater ahavat Yisrael, and a more profound sense of common national destiny. The capacity to authentically experience anguish over millennia-old national losses by means of the halachic structure and vehicles of aveilut yeshanah u-derabim (Yevmot 40b), reflects spiritual progress and constitutes a redemptive achievement, a kiyum in its own right. As Eikah's catalogue of tragic loss concludes, there is no more appropriate coda than repeating the plea for the attainment of teshuvah mei'ahavah, and by extension, underscoring the capacity to advance by constructively overcoming and redeeming spiritual adversity. This final emphasis not only projects nechamah, hope, the promise of enhanced spirituality in the aftermath of and as a response to sadness and tears, but also paves the way forward to the singular teshuvah opportunity of chodesh Elul.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah
by Rabbi Label Lam

The Birthing Room of History - Inspiration for Tisha B'av
Moshiach is born on Tisha B'Av – Yerushalmi Talmud Brochos
There is no light lie the light that comes from darkness – Zohar

The Last Mishne at the very end of Tractate Sotah gives a number of ominous signs that indicate that Moshiach is just around the corner. Our sages call this time period the birth pangs of Moshiach". Just as a woman giving birth goes through great travail by the very end and waves of pressure build until the child is born, so too the arrival of Moshaich will come with increasing pressure.

One of those signals that Moshiach is about to be born, so to speak, it, is "HaEmes T'hei Ne'aderes"- The Truth will Evaporate. The Maharsha explains that the word "Ne'aderes" has an implication of flocks, and so truth will be splintered up into small self interest groups, and no one will be concerned about what's really true. We find that nowadays the word "truth" is a sort of dirty word that wakes up bitter argumentation and feelings of hostility, "Whose truth?!" I was in a dentist's office a while ago and the cover on Time Magazine read, "Is Truth Dead?" I was alarmed and comforted at the same time. What a terrible question!? Yet we can anticipate with even greater hope that Moshiach is just around the corner. How did we get here?

Let us begin from a truly high point. The Jewish Nation was living securely in the Land of Israel. They, we had a king, let us say King David. The King was appointed by a Navi- a prophet. The king carried a Sefer Torah with him always. He was constantly held in check by both his commitment and obedience to the Torah and Mitzvos of HASHEM and the watchful eye of the Navi.

The King was not a brute or a dictator. The Hebrew word for king MELECH comes from a root, "Nimlach" which means to take council. The king feels the pulse of the nation. He is sensitive to their needs. He doesn't tell them what to think, he teaches and leads by example and expresses the highest aspirations and the deepest yearnings of the people. Aristotle said that the highest form of government is a benevolent despot; a ruler that is not only not abusive, but has the best interest of people in mind. This is very much the ideal of a King of Israel. The Torah, with the king, and the Navi, and the Sanhedrin are the arbiters of truth! Then justice and peace stand a chance of reigning.

What happened? The Jewish People were cast into exile by the Roman Empire now for almost 2000 years. The Torah was hijacked and perverted. It gave rise to the Holy Roman Empire which was wedded in an unholy political alliance with the Divine Right of Kings, giving rise to a fixed aristocratic class. The masses remained and were kept intentionally ignorant and poor.

With the industrial revolution and the rapid spread of universal knowledge, people began to awaken and rebel against this corrupt and false arrangement. Kings were toppled and the truth of the Bible as it was presented was discredited. It was replaced with "enlightenment, the ever widening circle of human knowledge, science, reason, and democracy. Now the human mind is the measure of all things and the majority decides what is true and what is not. With each election truth can change depending upon which political ideology or party is dominating. Effectively what's truth is reduced to a strictly human negotiation process. A very slippery slope!

Alexis de Tocqueville had warned about the tyranny of the majority. Now, whoever is able to persuade and plant images in the mind of the masses becomes the arbiter of truth. Eventually truth slips all the way down to the point where whoever feels more or shouts with the most intensity wins. It seems the need for truth is greater than ever as the language and processes to discover it peacefully and honestly become more corrupt and break down. The world is really crying out loud more desperately than ever for truth, pure and eternal. So we find ourselves in the birthing room of history.

About This We Cry!
All who eat and drink on the 9th of Av will not see the rejoicing of Jerusalem and all who mourn for Jerusalem will merit to see her joy… (Shulchan Aruch- Orach Chaim 554:25)

All who eat and drink on the 9th of Av: It is enough for the house of our G-d to be pained about its destruction at least one day in the year! (Mishne Berurah)

An ominously difficult day looms larger and larger as it approaches. The 9th of Av is admittedly not an easy day to face and endure. It's hard not to eat for the duration of a long summer day. We have no music to distract and console our spirits. We are to sit alone on the floor for at least part of the day and review the tragic trail of our history. It's not an easy time. Yet, it is critical to observe. The actions of the laws will tend to shape our mood and may thereby promote a real tear or two, and that would be a huge accomplishment.

Why is it good to cry on the 9th of Av?

I heard from Rabbi Shimshon Pincus zl. on Tisha B'Av many years ago the following powerful idea. He said that when one attends a simcha, a joyous occasion, a wedding for example, it's not easy to distinguish between the close family members and the guests. Everyone is dressed in their best. In the circle of dancing all have big smiles. The food is abundant. The drinks are flowing and it is neigh impossible to sort out the ones most close and those more peripheral to the joy of the day!

However at a funeral it is immediately clear and evident who the essential mourners are. Many respectful participants will sit and listen to eulogies but with dry eyes. Others are sobbing and at times uncontrollably. We can be sure that these are the close ones.

Therefore on the 9th of Av a Jew has a chance to move closer to heart of his people. Not only to demonstrate sympathy, that's nice too, but to empathize- showing that he feels it too. The more one identifies with the goals of the Jewish Nation the more there is to feel. The more isolated and insular the posture the more one maintains a cool and distant attitude. So it is, the less one cares the less one shares even in the happy events. Tisha B' Av like Pesach is a critical day for each of us to find the placements of our hearts.

What exactly are we mourning about on Tisha B'Av? Is it that we have suffered so much in exile! That's part of it. Is that the real pain though? At a funeral, are the ones who are wailing absorbed in thoughts of their own discomfort or are they rather busy in the mind identifying with the pain of the departed and measuring the enormity and magnitude of the loss!?

On Tisha B'Av we are not sitting there thinking about our stomachs that are grumbling or even that we find ourselves again under siege. The Chofetz Chaim spells out the real motive of the day as quoted above, "It is enough for the house of our G-d to be pained about its destruction at least one day a year." Contemplating that thought alone is enough to take us beyond our personal discomforts to rather stare at the enormous source of pain and to realize that the greatest loss is not ours alone. Every king and dictator has a palace or capital building that crowns his authority. It's hard to find a sports team that doesn't have a stadium where its powers are on display. Where is G-d Almighty's house? Not only we are in exile and under siege but the whole notion of HASHEM Echod is abused and mocked and misrepresented on a daily basis. It is about this we mourn and it is about this we cry!

BS"D

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Tisha B'Av on Motsaei Shabbat: A Primer

The transition from Shabbat to the Fast of Tisha B'Av * How to make havdalah when Tisha B'Av falls on Motzei Shabbat * The halakha for pregnant and nursing women when Tisha B'Av falls on Shabbat, and is postponed to Sunday

Rabbi Eliezer Melamed

Av 7 5775

When Tish'a B'Av falls out on Shabbat, we postpone the fast until Sunday, and on that Shabbat one may eat meat, drink wine, and even serve a meal like King Shlomo did in his day. We also sing Shabbat songs as usual, because there is no mourning on the Sabbath (concerning things done in private, see S.A. 554:19).

The Transition between Shabbat and Tish'a B'Av

However, there is an intermediate time between Shabbat and the fast, during which Shabbat has not yet ended but the prohibitions of the fast have already begun. This happens because we are unsure when one day ends and the next day begins – at sunset, or when the stars emerge. Therefore, the period between sunset and the emergence of the stars is ambiguous, being possibly day, and possibly night. It is called "bein hashmashot" (twilight). And since there is a mitzvah to add time onto Shabbat, Shabbat continues until a few minutes after the stars emerge, as listed on most calendars (in Jerusalem, sunset is at 19:45, and Shabbat ends at 20:21. In Tel Aviv, sunset is at 19:43, and the Shabbat ends at 20:23) 1 .

Consequently, the time between sunset and shortly after the emergence of the stars is both Shabbat andTish'a B'Av. During that time, it is forbidden to do anything that would appear like a custom of mourning, because we do not mourn on the Sabbath. On the other hand, after sunset, we avoid doing anything that is not necessary for the sake of Shabbat, like eating, drinking, washing, and anointing.

Seudah Shlishit

Therefore, we eat the third Sabbath meal (seudah shlishit) like we do on any other Shabbat, including the singing of Sabbath songs. However, we stop eating and drinking before sunset, because there is no obligation – from a Shabbat perspective – to continue eating seudah shlishit after sunset. It is also fitting not to sing joyous songs after sunset, and doing so does not constitute an expression of mourning, for people do not generally sing happy songs every moment of Shabbat.

Washing During the Transition Period

We also refrain from washing and anointing ourselves after sunset; after all, we do not bathe or anoint ourselves on Shabbat in any case. However, one who relieves himself during bein hashmashot should wash his hands normally, for if he washes only part of his hands as required on the fast, he is, in effect, mourning on the Sabbath.

The Changing of Clothes and Shoes

We remain in our Sabbath clothing, keep our shoes on, and continue to sit on chairs and greet each other until a few minutes after three, mid-sized stars appear in the sky. Then, we say "Baruch ha'mavdil bein kodesh le'chol ('Blessed is He Who separates between the holy and the mundane'), by which we take leave of the Sabbath. Afterwards, we remove our shoes, take off our Sabbath garments, and change into weekday clothes.

Some people have a custom to remove their shoes at sunset, seeing as wearing shoes is one of the prohibited actions on Tisha B'Av, and since in any case, there is no obligation to walk in shoes all of Shabbat, there's no lack of respect for the Sabbath by doing so. However, if others take notice that one has removed his shoes for the sake of mourning, it is clearly forbidden. Therefore, the prevalent custom is to remove one's shoes only after Shabbat has ended.

When changing from Shabbat to weekday clothing, one should wear clothing that was already worn the previous week, because one may not wear freshly laundered clothing on Tish'a B'Av.

Evening Prayer

Many communities have a custom to delay Ma'ariv until around fifteen minutes after Shabbat ends, in order to give everyone time to take leave of the Sabbath at home, remove their shoes, change their clothes, and come to the synagogue for Ma'ariv and the reading of Eichah in weekday clothes.

Havdalah in Speech and Over Wine

The fast begins immediately after Shabbat, making it is impossible to say havdalah over a cup of wine. Therefore, we postpone saying this form of havdalah until after the fast. Nevertheless, we say havdalah – "Ata Chonantanu" – in the Ma'ariv prayers, after which we are permitted to do work. Some say that women should pray Ma'ariv on such a Saturday night, in order to make havdalah in 'Ata Chonantanu'. Women who do not follow this practice should say, 'Baruch ha'mavdil bein kodesh le'chol', after which they are permitted to do work.

The Blessing over the Candle

In addition, we recite the blessing over fire on such a Motzei Shabbat, because this blessing is not dependent on the cup of wine. Rather, it is an expression of thanks to God for creating fire, which was revealed to Adam on the first Motzei Shabbat. The custom is to recite the blessing after Ma'ariv, before the reading of Eichah, because people light candles at that time. Women also recite the blessing over fire. If they are in synagogue, they should hear the blessing of the chazan (cantor), and have benefit from the light of the candle lit in their vicinity so they can see it. If they are at home, they should light a candle and recite the blessing (see, Peninei Halakha: Shabbat 8:1, footnote 1).

Havdalah over Wine after the Fast

At the end of the fast, two blessings are recited: Borei pri hagefen, and HaMavdil ('He Who separates'). No blessing is made on spices or fire. When the fast is over, it is forbidden to eat before making havdalah over the cup of wine, because saying "Ata Chonantanu" or "Baruch ha'mavdil bein kodesh le'chol" permits one to do work, whereas havdalah over a cup permits one to eat and drink.

Pregnant and Nursing Women

Since the fast is postponed from Shabbat until Sunday, if a pregnant or nursing woman feels weak or has difficulty fasting, she may eat or drink. The reason for this is that the status of a postponed Fast of Tisha B'Avis similar to that of the Minor Fasts, in which pregnant and nursing woman are completely exempt (Peninei Halakha: Z'manim 10:20).

Havdalah for a Sick Person Who Needs to Eat on Tisha B'Av

A sick person who needs to eat on Tish'a B'Av, must say havdalah over a cup before eating. In such a case, it is proper to use chamar medinah, literally, a beverage containing alcohol, but is not wine, such as beer. In asha'at dachak (time of distress), one may also make havdalah on coffee, for some poskim hold that it is also considered a mashkeh medinah (Peninei Halakha: Shabbat 8:4). If one has no such beverage, he should sayhavdalah over grape juice, for since it has no alcohol content, it does not make one happy. And if even that is unavailable, he should say havdalah on wine and drink only a melo lugmav (a cheek full) [around 40 ml.].

A minor who eats on Tish'a B'Av need not say havdalah before eating.

The Laws of Mourning on the Day after Tisha B'Av

The majority of the Temple actually burned on the tenth of Av. Nevertheless, our Sages set the fast on the ninth of Av, according to when the fire began, but since in practice the majority of the Holy Temple was burned on the tenth, the People of Israel have a custom not to eat meat or drink wine on that date. In addition, many Jews are accustomed not to take a haircut or shower in hot water, do laundry, or wear laundered clothes on the tenth of Av.

This year, however, when Tish'a B'Av falls out on Shabbat and the fast is postponed until Sunday, the tenth of Av, the customs of mourning do not continue after the fast, and one is allowed to bathe in hot water, do laundry, and wear laundered clothes. As far as eating meat and drinking wine in the evening after the fast is over, someone who is machmir (stringent) tavo alav bracha (pious conduct for which one is blessed for being stringent), but one who wishes to be lenient is permitted.

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from: Torah Musings <newsletter@torahmusings.com>
date: Jul 14, 2021, 11:00 AM
subject: Torah Musings Daily Digest for 07/14/2021

The Transition From Shabbat Into Tisha B'Av

by R. Daniel Mann

Question: Could you please explain how to handle the transition from Shabbat into Tisha B'Av (when it falls on Motzaei Shabbat) regarding se'uda shlishit, Havdala, and changing clothes?

Answer: Se'uda shlishit: The baraita, quoted in Ta'anit 29a says that one may eat as extravagant a meal as he wants on Shabbat even if Tisha B'Av falls on that day or the next. The Tur (Orach Chayim 552) cites customs that one is allowed and would do best to curtail the Shabbat meal. This is especially so at se'uda shlishit, which is, in effect, the se'uda hamafseket. However, these considerations are countered by the need to avoid displaying mourning on Shabbat. Therefore, there are no real restrictions, even at se'uda shlishit (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 552:10). However, the mood should somewhat reflect the coming of Tisha B'Av, as long as it does not bring on clearly noticeable changes (Mishna Berura 552:23). One important halachic requirement is that one must finish eating before sunset (Rama ad loc.).

Havdala: One says Havdala in Shemoneh Esrei. Havdala over a cup of wine is done after Tisha B'Av (Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 556:1). Despite these facts, if one forgot to mention Havdala in Shemoneh Esrei, he does not repeat Shemoneh Esrei. Rather, the declaration of HaMavdil, which enables one to do actions that are forbidden on Shabbat, suffices (Mishna Berura 556:2). Unlike Havdala during the Nine Days, where we try to give the wine to a child rather than an adult (Rama, Orach Chayim 551:10), after Tisha B'Av, an adult can freely drink the Havdala wine (Mishna Berura 556:3). The beracha on besamim is not recited this week because it is always recited only on Motzaei Shabbat, and on Tisha B'Av it is not appropriate because it is supposed to serve as a pleasure that revives the soul.

The beracha on the fire is specific to Motzaei Shabbat, is not a pleasure, and does not require a cup. Therefore, the minhag is to recite it in shul toward the end of davening, before the reading of Eicha (Mishna Berura 556:1). There are those who say that a woman should, in general, avoid making Havdala. This is because of the doubt whether a woman is obligated in the beracha on the fire, which is not directly related to Shabbat and thus is a regular time-related mitzva, from which women are exempt (Bi'ur Halacha 296:8). Therefore, if one's wife will not be in shul at the time of the beracha, it is better for the husband not to fulfill the mitzva at that time, but to make the beracha on the fire at a time that his wife can hear it (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 62:(98)).

Taking off shoes: As we mentioned, one may not do a noticeable act of mourning before Shabbat is over. While finishing to eat before sunset or refraining from washing need not be noticeable, taking off shoes is. There are two minhagim as to when to take them off: 1) One waits until after Shabbat is out, says HaMavdil, and then changes clothes and goes to shul. One can do so a little earlier than the regular time listed for Shabbat being out, which is usually delayed a little bit beyond nightfall to allow for a significant adding on to Shabbat at its end. The exact time is not clear and depends on the latitude of one's location. It is advisable to start Ma'ariv a little late in order to allow those who take this approach to make it to shul (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata 62:40; Torat HaMo'adim 9:1). (If the rabbi has ruled that everyone should take the following approach, all should conform, and there is no need for such a delay). 2) One takes off his shoes after Barchu of Ma'ariv. One who takes the second approach should bring non-leather footwear and Eicha/Kinot books to shul before Shabbat to avoid the problem of hachana (preparations for after Shabbat). However, if one uses these sefarim somewhat in shul before Shabbat is out, he can bring them with him on Shabbat (Shemirat Shabbat K'hilchata ibid. 41).

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from: The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust <info@rabbisacks.org>
date: Jul 14, 2021, 2:18 PM
subject: The Leader as Teacher (Devarim 5781)

The Leader as Teacher (Devarim 5781)

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks ZL

It was one of the great moments of personal transformation, and it changed not only Moses but our very conception of leadership itself.

By the end of the book of Bamidbar, Moses' career as a leader would seem to be ending. He had appointed his successor, Joshua, and it would be Joshua, not Moses, who would lead the people across the Jordan into the Promised Land. Moses seemed to have now achieved everything he was destined to achieve. For him there would be no more battles to fight, no more miracles to perform, no more prayers to make on behalf of the people.

It is what Moses did next that bears the mark of greatness. For the final month of his life he stood before the assembled people, and delivered the series of addresses we know as the book of Deuteronomy or Devarim, literally "words." In these addresses, he reviewed the people's past and foresaw their future. He gave them laws. Some he had given them before but in a different form. Others were new; he had delayed announcing them until the people were about to enter the land. Linking all these details of law and history into a single overarching vision, he taught the people to see themselves as an am kadosh, a holy people, the only people whose sovereign and lawgiver was God Himself.

If someone who knew nothing about Judaism and the Jewish people were to ask you for a single book that would explain both who Jews are and why they do what they do, the best answer would be Devarim. No other book so encapsulates and dramatises all the key elements of Judaism as a faith and way of life.

In a much-watched TED talk, and a book with the same name,[1] Simon Sinek says that the transformative leaders are those who 'Start with Why.' More poetically, Antoine de Saint-Exupery said, "If you want to build a ship, don't drum up people together to collect wood and don't assign them tasks and work, but rather teach them to long for the endless immensity of the sea."

Through the addresses we read in the book of Devarim, Moses gave the people their Why. They are God's people, the nation on whom He has set His love, the people He rescued from slavery and gave, in the form of the commandments, the constitution of liberty. They may be small but they are unique. They are the people who, in themselves, testify to something beyond themselves. They are the people whose fate will defy the normal laws of history. Other nations, says Moses, will recognise the miraculous nature of the Jewish story – and so, from Blaise Pascal to Nikolai Berdyaev and beyond, they did.

In the last month of his life Moses ceased to be the liberator, the miracle-worker, the redeemer, and became instead Moshe Rabbeinu, "Moses, our teacher." He was the first example in history of the leadership type in which Jews have excelled: the leader as teacher.

Moses surely knew that some of his greatest achievements would not last forever. The people he had rescued would one day suffer exile and persecution again. The next time, though, they would not have a Moses to do miracles. So he planted a vision in their minds, hope in their hearts, a discipline in their deeds and a strength in their souls that would never fade. When leaders become educators they change lives.

In a powerful essay, 'Who is fit to lead the Jewish people?' Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik contrasted the Jewish attitude to kings and teachers as leadership types.[2] The Torah places severe limits on the power of kings. They must not multiply gold, or wives, or horses. A king is commanded "not to consider himself better than his fellow Israelites, nor turn from the law to the right or to the left" (Deut. 17:20).

A king was only to be appointed at the request of the people. According to Ibn Ezra, the appointment of a king was a permitted, but not an obligation. Abarbanel held that it was a concession to human frailty. Rabbeinu Bachya regarded the existence of a king as a punishment, not a reward.[3] In short, Judaism is at best ambivalent about monarchy – that is to say, about leadership as power.

On the other hand, its regard for teachers is almost unlimited. "Let the fear of your teacher be as the fear of heaven," says the Talmud.[4] Respect and reverence for your teacher should be greater even than respect and reverence for your parents, rules Rambam, because parents bring you into this world, while teachers give you entrance to the World to Come.[5]

When someone exercises power over us, they diminish us, but when someone teaches us, they help us grow. That is why Judaism, with its acute concern for human dignity, favours leadership as education over leadership as power. And it began with Moses, at the end of his life.

For twenty-two years, as a Chief Rabbi, I carried with me the following quotation from one of the greatest leaders of the Zionist movement, Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion. Although he was a secular Jew, he was enough of a historian and Bible scholar to understand this dimension of leadership, and said so in eloquent words:

Whether you hold humble office in a municipality or in a small union or high office in a national government, the principles are the same: you must know what you want to achieve, be certain of your aims, and have these goals constantly in mind. You must fix your priorities. You must educate your party and must educate the wider public. You must have confidence in your people – often greater than they have in themselves, for the true political leader knows instinctively the measure of man's capacities and can rouse him to exert them in times of crisis. You must know when to fight your political opponents, and when to mark time. You must never compromise on matters of principle. You must always be conscious of the element of timing, and this demands a constant awareness of what is going on around you – in your region if you are a local leader, in your country and in the world if you are a national leader. And since the world never stops for a moment, and the pattern of power changes its elements like the movement of a kaleidoscope, you must constantly reassess chosen policies towards the achievement of your aims. A political leader must spend a lot of time thinking. And he must spend a lot of time educating the public, and educating them anew.[6]

The poet Shelley once said that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world."[7] Whether this is true or false, I do not know, but this I know: that there is all the difference between giving people what they want and teaching them what to want.

Teachers are the unacknowledged builders of the future, and if a leader seeks to make lasting change, they must follow in the footsteps of Moses and become an educator. The leader as teacher, using influence not power, spiritual and intellectual authority rather coercive force, was one the greatest contributions Judaism ever made to the moral horizons of humankind and it can be seen most clearly in the Book of Devarim, when Moses for the last month of his life summoned the next generation and taught them laws and lessons that would survive, and inspire, as long as there are human beings on earth.

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fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein <info@jewishdestiny.com>
reply-to: info@jewishdestiny.com
subject: Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

Weekly Parsha DVARIM 5781

Rabbi Wein's Weekly Blog

This last oration of our teacher Moshe reviews the occurrences in history of the Jewish people after their miraculous Exodus from Egypt. The words of Moshe are very personal to him alone and reflect his recollection and viewpoint of all of the events and incidents that occurred during the 40 -year sojourn of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai.

Nuances of difference sometime appear between the descriptions that Moshe attributed to events that occurred, and the more objective description of those events recorded previously in the Torah. This is natural because of the different personal recollections by humans regarding events that occurred in the purely objective description, giving them a view of the same events but from a different perspective.

There is no need to reconcile the two apparent differing descriptions of the same Torah event. We know that human beings can never really be truly objective, and that everything that we see, and experience is always filtered through our own personalities, thoughts and even prejudices. As such, we can never claim objectivity in recalling past events and describing them for later generations.

It is not that truth is a subjective value, but, rather, it is not possible within the limitations of human existence, for truths to be accurately described, without the injection of the personality and the subjective viewpoint of the person recalling or describing the truth as to what occurred. Only heaven achieves ultimate accuracy of truth. We human beings strive for such perfection but should be aware that it is beyond our abilities to actually attain.

We see this clearly in how Moshe describes the origin of the debacle that befell the Jewish people regarding the sending of the spies to gain intelligence about the land of Israel. In the Torah previously, it appears that Moshe himself was the instigator and catalyst for this idea that later went so wrong. However, when Moshe relives the matter here in the book of Dvarim, he casts the incident in a different light completely. It was the people emerging as a mob upon him that forced him to agree to send spies, and to bring back a report about the land of Israel to the Jewish people before their actual entry into the country.

It is not that Moshe was trying to extract himself from blame and participation in this sad incident, which would doom that generation of the desert and never reach the land of Israel. It is simply that he records for us his absolute misgivings when the proposal first surfaced. In his memory, he does not see himself as ever having instigated the proposal and describes himself as an almost unwilling participant in the process that later ensued. In the eyes of heaven, because Moshe later acquiesced to the public demand for the sending of the spies, it made Moshe a prime mover, and instigator, if you will, in the event of the spies.

Oftentimes, in life, we are apparently innocent victims of forces brought upon us, and yet, we are held accountable personally for the consequences of our participation in the event, unwilling and hesitant as it may have been. The book of Dvarim teaches us many lessons in life that otherwise we may overlook, ignore and of which we may not be aware.

Shabbat shalom
Rabbi Berel Wein

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from: Esplanade Capital <jeisenstadt@esplanadecap.com>

date: Jul 16, 2021, 12:10 AM
subject: Rabbi Reisman's Weekly Chumash Shiur

Rabbi Reisman – Parshas Devarim 5781

– Topic – A Thought from the Beis Yitzchok on the Parsha

This comes from the Sefer Beis Yitzchok which is attached to the famous Kehillas Yitzchok and in the newer prints there is a Beis Yitzchok. He goes on the Posuk that is found in 1:17 (לֹא-תַכִּירוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט). Don't recognize faces in judgment. The Lashon is (תַכִּירוּ פָנִים). It should have said Lo Si'su Panim, don't favor people. (לֹא-תַכִּירוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט). What does it mean don't recognize people?

The Beis Yitzchok brings an incredible explanation of something well-known to us from Chazal. It is well-known that when Alexander the great set out to conquer the world and he came to Eretz Yisrael and he met Shimon Hatzaddik he fell to his feet and said as is found in Maseches Yoma 69a (12 lines from the bottom) (כיון שראה לשמעון הצדיק ירד ממרכבתו והשתחוה לפניו אמרו לו מלך גדול כמותך ישתחוה ליהודי זה אמר להם דמות דיוקנו של זה מנצחת לפני בבית מלחמתי). That the image of Shimon Hatzaddik is always in front of me when I go to do battle. This is a well-known Chazal.

The Beis Yitzchok gives a tremendous insight. What does it mean he recognized him? Could be Poshut Pshat, but he says more. He says Alexander the great was a student of Aristotle, he was a philosopher. Why did he set out to conquer the world? He was from the non-Jews in a non-Jewish world Aristotle had a certain greatness, a sense of purpose. Why was his disciple Alexander setting out to conquer the world?

The Beis Yitzchok says that the world was still full of Avodah Zorah even after the Yeitzer Hora of Avodah Zorah had passed, but the world was full of Avodah Zorah like Tosafos says at the beginning of Avodah Zorah. They didn't believe in it much but they still did it. Alexander who believed in philosophical approaches to humanity and to the world, wanted to rid the world of Avodah Zorah. When he set out he said it has got to be a better world. That is why he was a big Maskil, he was a big philosopher and he set out to conquer the world and set it in the path he wanted.

When Alexander saw Shimon Hatzaddik he recognized the Eidilkeit on him, he recognized the Feinkeit. Alexander was an Adam Poshut. The fact that Jews took his name to give to our children is not so Poshut. Alexander was somebody who had a deeper understanding of human beings. When he saw Shimon Hatzaddik he said it is for people like this that I am fighting all my battles. It is for a man like this that I look for. Every time I go to battle I look for someone who has this Demus, for somebody who has this Feinkeit, this Eidilkeit, this greatness, this glow.

There is a concept of Hakaras Panim, of being able to recognize the Feinkeit, the Eidilkeit and the greatness of a person. It is Lav Dafka that he saw an exact image of the face of Shimon Hatzaddik. The point was that it was Kidmuso, this is the image that he was looking for.

Says the Beis Yitzchok that is (לֹא-תַכִּירוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט). Even if someone comes with an Eidilkeit, with a Feinkeit (לֹא-תַכִּירוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט). Don't favor him in Mishpat. In Mishpat the Mishpat has to be purely based on the case itself, who is right who is wrong. The arguments back and forth. (לֹא-תַכִּירוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט).

I would add as a PS (לֹא-תַכִּירוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט) when it comes to Mishpat there is (לֹא-תַכִּירוּ פָנִים בַּמִּשְׁפָּט), however, Stam Azoi in the world you should look to recognize people who are Baalei Madreiga. These are two thoughts on the Parsha.

– Topic – A Thought on the upcoming Tisha B'av

Let me turn to one basic overarching thought regarding our 2,000 year Galus and the upcoming Tisha B'av. We find a number of places in the Torah that there is Kefitzas Haderech. In Parshas Chaya Sarah as is found in 24:42 (וָאָבֹא הַיּוֹם, אֶל-הָעָיִן). Eliezer has Kefitzas Haderech. In Parshas Vayeitzei as is found in 28:11 (וַיִּפְגַּע בַּמָּקוֹם וַיָּלֶן שָׁם). In Parshas Behaloscha as is found in 10:33 (וַיִּסְעוּ מֵהַר יְרוָר, דֶּרֶךְ שְׁלֹשֶׁת יָמִים) we find that Klal Yisrael before the Meraglim traveled three days travel in one day as Rashi point out (מהלך שלשת ימים הלכו ביום אחד). Kefitzas Haderech.

There is an old Kler that we always had. How does Kefitzas Haderech work? What is Kefitzas Haderech? I travel 100 miles and it takes me 2.5 hours and I did it in 2.5 minutes. That is Kefitzas Haderech. How does that work? Does it mean that I actually traveled 100 miles but time was suspended, so that after traveling the 100 miles and I get there I find out that only 2.5 minutes had gone by. So it is a miracle in Zman, it is a miracle in time. Or maybe not. Maybe it is a miracle in space. I traveled 100 miles in 2.5 minutes because the Ribbono Shel Olam compressed the 100 miles and I was able to go as if I was going just 100 feet and I got there 2.5 minutes later.

To illustrate the Chakira, if I had an odometer on my car and I was Eliezer and I traveled to find a Shidduch and I made it in one day. I traveled maybe 600 miles in one day. Did my odometer click off 600 miles of traveling, did I use up gas for 600 miles of traveling just that time was suspended, or no, the Pshat is that I only had to travel one day's worth of traveling and it is a miracle in space that I got there. Is it a miracle in time or a miracle in space? In Parshas Behaloscha (I might have mentioned it this year) that the Taima Dik'ra (11:1) brings a proof that no you are traveling the whole time but it is a miracle in Zman because you are still traveling the 100 miles. But once you get there the time is earlier than it would normally be. An understanding of Kefitzas Haderech.

The follow up Kasha is why. If the Borei Olam is doing a miracle and you are traveling from NY to Liberty 100 miles and the Ribbono Shel Olam says it normally takes 2.5 hours for you 2.5 minutes. Why would the Ribbono Shel Olam do the Neis in a way that makes you be Mat'riach, makes you bother, makes you have the Shlep of the road and you get there and it is only 2.5 minutes. Let the Ribbono Shel Olam do the Neis the other way that it should be a quick trip so to speak? A trip that involves only traveling 100 feet and not 100 miles?

The important answer is this. There is something to the trip, there is something to the traveling. We tend to think that when there is a problem we just have to get past the problem and the idea is to be smooth, the idea is not to have the problem.

There was once a Yid who had 6 children and 3 of them were rebellious children and they gave him a lot of headaches and 3 were the smooth type. He told an Adam Gadol about his problem and he said I didn't ask the Ribbono Shel Olam for 6 children. Had He given me only 3 children I would have Nachas and I would be very happy. To that this Adam Gadol replied, you are a fool. In Shamayim you were supposed to have 3 challenging children and that is your Tafkid. A Malach said You are going to give him 3 difficult children and no regular children. So the Ribbono Shel Olam said okay I will throw in 3 regular children. But your Tafkid is not the self-pilot children your Tafkid is the children that require your efforts and your Kochos.

Same thing here. We travel somewhere and we say it is Ratzon Hashem I am heading out. I am going and I am traveling to Eretz Yisrael. So I say let me just get there. No. the travel is meaningful. The going there is traveling. The effort that you put in is traveling. When you are traveling it is purposeful. The Tircha, the bother of getting there counts. The challenges, the difficulties that is the whole purpose of the traveling.

The mistake that people make is not appreciating the challenges on the way. It comes a Tisha B'av and many people have an attitude let me just close my eyes and open them up and Tisha B'av will be over. I fasted a whole day and accomplished, I fasted. No. The idea is not to get to the end of Tisha B'av without eating, the idea is to have a Tisha B'av that is meaningful. A Tisha B'av that counts for you, that is a source of Avodas Hashem. A source of Aliya in Avodas Hashem. It is not just to get there. It is how you get there. It is how you get there. The bother of getting there. The bumps on the road. They are purposeful. When there is Kefitzas Haderech, Hashem doesn't say alright you won't have the bother you will just be there. No. The bother is purposeful. Hashem doesn't steal that from you. The Tircha, the Shvitz, the bother. HKB"H doesn't steal it from you, not at all. You are Zoche to work hard.

It says in Parshas Maasei (וְאֵלֶּה מַסְעֵיהֶם, לְמוֹצָאֵיהֶם) this is where they were for their travel. I think that it is the Rogatchover who said you might think that the travel is just to get there and it doesn't matter. He said no (וְאֵלֶּה מַסְעֵיהֶם, לְמוֹצָאֵיהֶם) there is a purpose. The traveling itself, the Masa itself is for a purpose.

So Tisha B'av is coming and its challenges. The Minhagei Aveilos that we have all of this is purposeful. Someday it is going to go on the scale when we go upstairs when they judge the Maasei Bnei Adam. Tisha B'av is an opportunity to be really meaningful.

Try on the afternoon of Tishav B'av to take out a Sefer Iyov if you haven't learned it recently. Most of Iyov is very hard. But learn the first two Perakim. Geshmak! When I was a counselor I used to learn it with my campers and they used to beg me just to go further and I said no and we did the first Perek. The first Perek is fascinating. It is full of Mussar too.

So take an Iyov and learn it and then if you are in a Shul that has Rav Schwab on Iyov take out the Rav Schwab on Iyov and look at what he says on what you just learned. Even if hopefully Tisha B'av is a Yom Tov you can still learn Iyov and you are allowed to learn it on Yom Tov.

Wishing everyone an absolutely wonderful meaningful Shabbos Chazon. Please Daven for me to be Zoche to get into Eretz Yisrael this coming week. I am hoping next Thursday to be on the way to the airport during this call. B'ezras Hashem I hope to squeeze it in somehow between the TSA and boarding. B'ezras Hashem please Daven for me. Be well. A Gutten Shabbos to one and all!

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Rav Yochanan Zweig

This week's Insights is dedicated in loving memory of Avram Abish ben Menachem Mendel.

Everyone's a Critic

These are the words that Moshe spoke to Israel, on the other side of the Yarden, in the desert, in the plain, between Paran and Tophel… (1:1)

This week's parsha opens with Moshe addressing the entire nation. Both Rashi and Targum Yonason (ad loc) point out that Moshe isn't merely speaking to Bnei Yisroel - he's actually criticizing them. In fact, all the places listed in the possuk are locations where the Jewish people transgressed and angered Hashem.

The Talmud (Bava Metzia 30b) states that the reason Jerusalem was destroyed was because the inhabitants went according to the strict letter of the law and didn't act in ways that would have gone beyond the letter of the law. In other words, they didn't treat one another any better than the Torah required them to. Tosfos (ad loc) asks that the reason given for the destruction seems to contradict the Gemara (Yoma 9b), which states that the reason for the destruction was because of "baseless hatred." Tosfos answers that both those reasons played into the cause for the destruction. Seemingly, Tosfos is explaining that the baseless hatred led them to only do for each other what was required and nothing beyond the strict letter of the law.

Yet, the Gemara in Shabbos (119b) states that the reason for the destruction was because people failed to criticize one another. This, once again, seems to contradict the Gemara in Yoma that states the destruction stemmed from baseless hatred. Presumably, if baseless hatred was rampant in the city of Jerusalem then harsh criticism couldn't be far behind. What does the Gemara mean when it says that people didn't criticize each other?

Almost everyone is familiar with the Torah command "hocheach tocheach es amisecha" - the obligation of criticizing a fellow Jew. Sadly, many people have no idea what this really means or when to apply it. As an example: Most of us feel it is our sacred obligation to (loudly) shush the person in shul who is talking too loudly or is disruptive in some way. However, this does not fall under the obligation of criticizing a fellow Jew.

Maimonides (Hilchos Deyos 6:7) lays out very clearly what this mitzvah entails: "It is a mitzvah for a person who sees that his fellow Jew has sinned, or is following an improper path, to return him to proper behavior and to inform him that he is causing himself harm by his evil deeds - as the Torah (Vayikra 19:17) states: 'You shall surely admonish your colleague.'"

Clearly, according to Rambam, the prime motivation for criticism of another Jew should be your interest in his well being. In fact, as Rambam points out, one of the key elements of criticism is the explanation of how the person's behavior is harmful to themselves. In other words, the main driving force of criticism of another has to be your love of them and your desire that they don't hurt themselves.

Most of us only criticize the behaviors of others that bother us, not the behaviors that are harmful to them. We would prefer to blithely ignore the behaviors of our friends that are clearly detrimental to them - unless, of course, their behavior or something they do is disruptive to our own lives. At that point, we jump into action. But until that point is reached we would rather ignore their shortcomings and "leave well enough alone." In other words, we effectively only criticize when their behavior is about us, not when their behavior is about them. In addition, we should carefully consider what that says about our "friendships."

That's what the Gemara means by saying that Jerusalem was destroyed because we didn't criticize one another. This was a direct result of the baseless hatred. Because of the baseless hatred we had for one another we didn't care about each other and therefore didn't make any attempt to prevent other people from harming themselves.

The Death of Disconnection

How can I alone carry your trouble and your burden and your quarrels? (1:12)

Parshas Devarim is read every year on the Shabbos before Tisha B'Av. In this parsha Moshe laments: "eicha esa levadi - how can I myself bear the burden of Bnei Yisroel's quarrels and arguments." It is customary to read this possuk in the special melody of Megillas Eicha. Chazal, in the prologue of Midrash Eicha, give an interpretation to the meaning of the word eicha and the connection to Tisha B'av:

"R. Abbahu taught 'But they like men [Adam] have transgressed the covenant' (Hoshea 6:7). This refers to Adam Harishon, of whom Hashem said, 'I brought him into the Garden of Eden and I imposed a command upon him, but he transgressed it so I punished him by driving him out and sending him away.' 'V'kinati alav eicha - and lamented over him,' […] as it is said, Therefore Hashem God sent him forth, and lamented over him. 'Where art thou? (ayeka).' Similarly with his descendants. I brought them into the land of Israel, […] I gave them commandments, […] they transgressed my laws […] so I punished them by driving them out, and by sending them away, and I lamented over them, how (eicha) she (referring to Yerushalayim) sits solitary" (Eicha 1:1).

This, of course, refers to Adam's sin of eating from the Tree of Knowledge and violating the only commandment given to him at the time, which led to his banishment from Gan Eden. The parallel to Adam's sin is the sins of Bnei Yisroel that caused them to be driven out of Eretz Yisroel. These two words, eicha and ayeka, appear identical in the non-vowelized text as they are the exact same letters. Just as Hashem used the word ayeka when He banished Adam, He uses the word eicha when He banished Bnei Yisroel from Eretz Yisroel.

Maimonides (Hilchos Teshuvah 6:1-3) states that one of the core tenets of understanding Hashem's providence is the knowledge that all evil that befalls us, whether individually or as a community, comes from consciously using our free will to transgress sins. These punishments often come to us in the most horrific ways, but they are all meted out in accordance to Hashem's divine knowledge of the proper way to exact punishment to fit the sin. But all of these punishments are only if the person doesn't do teshuvah. However, if a person repents in a conscious manner and of his own free will, then this acts as a shield to protect him from punishment.

In light of this, we must examine how we, as a people, react to the devastating loss of the Beis Hamikdosh, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the death and banishment of the Jewish people, which is poignantly memorialized by the three weeks and Tisha B'Av.

Our sages instituted the custom to begin a period of mourning on the 17th of Tammuz. This gets progressively more intensive, culminating with Tisha B'Av. Towards the end of Tisha B'Av we begin to console ourselves, and over the next seven week we experience what is known as the "seven weeks of consolation." This is highlighted as such by the weekly haftorahs. Only after this process do we begin to embark on the teshuvah process. This seems a little backwards. According to Maimonides it seems we should be immediately embarking on teshuvah. What is this process of mourning? What are we trying to internalize?

Most people think that the period of mourning is the process of internalizing the terrible tragedies that happened to the Jewish people and feeling a sense of loss. This is really only part of the purpose, and perhaps, only a small part of it.

Of course Maimonides is right, we need to constantly focus on doing teshuvah. But the real issue in doing teshuvah is that we are often distracted from the root cause of our problem. We often look at teshuvah as our apology for a transgression, as in "please don't punish me (i.e. my family, my business) for my sins, I am sorry that I behaved in such a terrible manner." This is, at best, an incomplete perspective.

What we really should focus on is the severing of the relationship with Hashem due to our misbehavior. We need to begin to fathom the true effect of our transgressions – the disconnection from our source. When we are disconnected from Hashem that is when all the terrible things happen to us. Being disconnected from Hashem is literally death, because we are now merely finite beings.

That is why when Adam sinned he brought death to the world and that is what Hashem said to him "ayeka – where are you?" If we are disconnected from Hashem we are nowhere. Gone. Banished. The loss of the Beis Hamikdosh and Eretz Yisroel is the manifestation of the severing of the relationship with Hashem that had been restored, in part, after the sin of the Golden Calf.

This is also why it is prohibited to study to Torah on Tisha B'Av; the Torah and its infinite connection to Hashem masks this sense of disconnection. It is this death, the severing of our relationship with Hashem, that we must mourn during this time period. We have been banished from the relationship. It is for this reason that all the stories of the destruction, those that we are permitted to study on Tisha B'Av, appear in the tractate of Gittin – laws of divorce.

Only after suitably internalizing this loss, and its ramifications, do we begin to console ourselves. Even after all that we have done to Hashem, He still wants a relationship with us. When we begin to understand his yearning for us to return, then we can properly return to him with a complete teshuvah – a return to the relationship.

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from: **Steinsaltz** Center <office@steinsaltz-center.org> via auth.ccsend.com
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date: Jul 15, 2021, 7:02 PM
subject: Prepare for Tisha b'Av with the Steinsaltz Center

Prepare for Tisha b'Av with Megillat Eichah

In preparation for Tisha b'Av, the Steinsaltz Center presents a special edition of Megillat Eichah with commentary by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz zt"l. We hope this PDF gives you a deeper insight into Tisha b'Av and that we see an end to all suffering in our days.

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Tisha b'Av: Destruction & Redemption

The gloomiest day in the entire Jewish calendar is Tisha B'Av – the 9th day of the summer month of Av. A long series of national disasters, from the destruction of the first Temple to the Spanish Expulsion, is historically identified with this date. Moreover, in every generation this day has been looked upon as the essence of all national mourning, and the lamentation prayers of Tisha B'Av recall not only the events that occurred on that day, but also the story of the sufferings of our people throughout its exile. Nevertheless, the focus of mourning is the destruction of the Temple, both the beginning and the symbol of all that occurred thereafter.

For the Jewish people, the Temple was the only place for complete worship. It was the recognized center for all the Children of Israel, however scattered they were. Indeed, the Temple was the only holy place recognized by Judaism.

A Loss of Direction

As long as the Temple exists there is direction and significance to the flow and direction of life. The destruction of the Temple deprived the Jewish people of the central axis about which their lives revolved and toward which all other life expression was directed. Since it was destroyed, the Jewish people lack that central axis needed to direct its religious and national life and its very existence as a national body. Thus, the destruction of the Temple was not only metaphysically, but also historically and actually "the removal of the Shekhinah" (the Divine Presence) from Israel, "the exile of the Shekhinah."

The far-flung communities of Israel, which had possessed a center toward which all life was directed, were suddenly no longer in a state of mere temporary absence (which would eventually be terminated), but, in a deeper sense, in exile, under the yoke of "foreign slavery" in every land, including the land of Israel. Therefore, the sufferings of Israel are unlike those recorded in the history of any other nation. The destruction of the Temple was the "expulsion of the Divine Presence" from Israel, and all the subsequent sufferings of Israel are understood as merely a repetition of that same event, a loss continually felt by a people lacking the center of its being. All of our sufferings are qualitatively the same – the nation is not unified by a single center but is, rather, broken into separated parts and subject to continual injury. Therefore, in the course of the generations, all the days of mourning commemorating particular inflictions and sufferings were cancelled and Tisha B'Av became an all-encompassing day of heightened mourning.

Destruction & Redemption

The legend that the Messiah is born on Tisha B'Av, at the very time of the Destruction, is a key to understanding one aspect of the problem of the destruction and the notion of redemption. For redemption to take place, the repair of the various individual destructions alone is insufficient. Even if the entire people of Israel were to return to its land, this would be insufficient for the redemption of the Destruction. Furthermore, even the building of the Temple in and of itself could not repair that which had been damaged in the course of the generations.

Only the Messiah – who will bring redemption to the world on a higher plane and in a more complete fashion than ever before possible – can undo the Destruction. Redemption is not simply a return to the situation as it previously existed. Restoration is only a small part of the scheme of redemption. The redemption of the Jewish people must be accompanied by a qualitative change that affects the entire world. Only a redemption that rises above the sufferings of two thousand years, that brings the Jewish people – and the entire world – to a higher level of existence, this alone is full reparation for the Destruction.

~Adapted from "Tisha B'Av: Destruction & Redemption," by Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz zt"l, courtesy of Aleph Society, Inc

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Peninim on the Torah - Parashas Devarim
פרשת דברים תשפ"א

אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל... בין פארן ובין תופל ולבן וחצרות ודי זהב
These are the words that Moshe spoke to all *Yisrael*… between Paran and Tophel, and Lavan, and Chatzeiros, and Di Zahav. (1:1)

Eileh ha'devarim is reference to Moshe *Rabbeinu's* rebuke of *Klal Yisrael* for their past insurrections. In his attempt not to embarrass and offend his listeners, Moshe did not mention the sins in detail; rather, he made veiled references to the sins by using place names which alluded to the sins. *Chazal* (*Tamid* 28a) teach that one who rebukes his fellow *l'shem Shomayim,* for the sake of Heaven (solely to help and guide his fellow back to a path of appropriate behavior), will merit to dwell in the portion of Hashem… Moreover, the Heavenly Court extends over him a cord of Divine grace. What an incredible reward for someone who fulfills the *mitzvah* of *hochachah*, rebuke, *l'shem Shomayim*. We wonder why it should be so. Why should one who performs this *mitzvah* for the sake of Heaven be any more meritorious than he who performs any of the other 612 *mitzvos l'shem Shomayim*? A *mitzvah* is a *mitzvah,* and performing it in accordance to the Heavenly directive is the standard that applies to all *mitzvos* – or is this *mitzvah* unique in this sense?

Horav Nosson Ordman, zl (*Rosh Yeshivah, Eitz Chaim,* London), explains that a fundamental difference exists between the *mitzvah* of rebuke and all other *mitzvos* with regard to l'shem *Shomayim*. All other *mitzvos*, even if one were not to mention the correct and proper intentions *l'shem Shomayim*, he has at least performed a *mitzvah*. He has shaken the *Lulav*, he has recited *Kiddush*. If one rebukes for ulterior motives – anything other than to carry out the Heavenly mandate that one rebuke his fellow – it is an *aveirah*, a sin. It is precisely the *l'shem Shomayim* that transforms ordinary rebuke into a *mitzvah*. Otherwise, when ulterior motives are present it may be an act of *sinaah*, hatred. We lose our sense of objectivity, often convincing ourselves that we are acting out of love and care.

It is for this reason that, concerning other *mitzvos*, the rule of performing *shelo lishmah,* acting not for the sake of the *mitzvah*, applies and is even encouraged. The more one performs the *mitzvah*, the greater his attachment to it, and, with time, the *mitzvah* will refine him to the point that he will execute it *l'shem Shomayim*. *Tochachah*, however, is a sin which is only ennobled by its Heavenly connection. An *aveirah* does not become a *mitzvah* with its replication. One must delve into the *mitzvah* of rebuke, understand its significance, comprehend how it promotes love of Hashem and love of one's fellow. Thus, if one implements the *mitzvah* properly, he is allowed entrance into the portion of Hashem.

Another area in which *l'shem Shomayim* determines the spiritual respectability of an action is *kanaus*, zealousness. Unless a *kanai*, zealot, acts *l'shem Shomayim*, he is not a zealot. He is a rabble-rouser, a vengeful person who is guilty of character assassination and, even, murder. One may not think of himself when he acts zealously. He thinks only of the affront that is being perpetrated against Hashem. He is motivated by Hashem's "pain," by the disgrace to His Name, by the defamation of His Glory. Anything less than this is a sinful act of subjective reprisal.

Moshe *Rabbeinu* acted *l'shem Shomayim*. Otherwise, why would he have glossed over the gory details of their sins? He cared about *Klal Yisrael* and wanted to be certain that he did not overdo it. He had one purpose in his rebuke: to promote the honor of Hashem's Name. Their sins created a spiritual stain that needed to be expunged with *teshuvah*. In order to repent, one must first acknowledge his sin. This is the purpose of rebuke: reveal the sin and help to guide the sinner on his trip of return.

One issue remains concerning Moshe's rebuke which demands clarification. Moshe's rebuke focused on past indiscretions, sins that had been committed throughout *Klal Yisrael's* forty-year journey. What is to be gained by hashing over their past shortcomings? They sinned; they were punished – now what? They certainly will not make the same mistake again. They learned their lesson. Now would be a good time for *chizuk*, strengthening their resolve, elevating their egos, reminding them who they are and what they were capable of achieving. The last thing they needed was rebuke.

Rav Ordman explains that Moshe's intent was to probe their weaknesses to demonstrate to the nation that it was not over. It could happen once again. The *yetzer hora*, evil inclination, is relentless in his mission to create obstacles and encourage us to sin. He alters his strategy from person to person, and, as a result, no person, regardless of his spiritual echelon, is safe from his wiles. Moshe admonishes the people concerning their past behaviors, because their demeanors manifest a deficiency that could reappear at any time. He preached vigilance and more vigilance, because one can never know.

אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל
These are the words that Moshe spoke to all *Yisrael*. (1:1)

Moshe *Rabbeinu's* "words" were words of reproof, in which he lectured the nation for their past indiscretions. He did not censure; rather, he subtly alluded to their sins by mentioning places which intimated their sin: Why did he refer to the sins via the medium of place, rather than period/time during which the sin occurred? The *Mei HaShiloach* implies that since the place where they were encamped at the time of the sin's occurrence was not their decision, they had some sort of excuse to mitigate their behavior by blaming the effects of the environment in which they were located, over which they had no control. The journey followed Hashem's command. When He directed them to move – they moved. They remained encamped until Hashem issued their next moving orders. Thus, Moshe employed place in order to moderate – rather than excoriate. He rebuked with love and common sense.

Horav Zev Weinberger, zl, questions this. *Klal Yisrael* had no control over time either. Place is the "where?" – time is the "how long?" In any event, they had no authority neither regarding where they camped, nor how long they were there. *Rav* Weinberger explains that had Moshe employed time to allude to their sin, it would have magnified their guilt. He quotes *Horav Yeruchem Levovitz, zl,* who comments on the Torah's description of the sin of the Golden Calf; *Saru meheir min ha'derech asher Tziveesim*; "They have strayed quickly from the way that I commanded them" (*Devarim* 9:12). The *Mashgiach* asks: What is the difference whether their deviation from the path which Hashem commanded took place quickly or over a period of time? A sin is a sin. It is almost as if the celerity of their turning to sin is what determined the sin's stark negativity. *Rav* Yeruchem explains that forty days had elapsed from the sixth of *Sivan,* the day the Jewish nation received the Torah, until the seventeenth of *Tammuz,* the day that Moshe shattered the *Luchos*. If the nation could descend to such a nadir in only forty days, it was an indication that their actual acceptance of the Torah on the sixth of *Sivan* was deficient. Thus, we see that "time" plays a role in defining the egregiousness of a sin. The period during which it occurred intensified the sin of the *meraglim*, spies. The nation was enjoying unprecedented miraculous intervention on an almost constant basis. To sin at this time exacerbated the sin. Therefore, Moshe chose the medium of place over time to allude to the sin.

Clearly, there is an appropriate way to rebuke, and while the sincerity of the rebuker plays a major role in the delivery and acceptance of the rebuke, his wisdom, i.e., common sense, is just as important. One must know whom and when to rebuke. Not all people can handle rebuke and not all times are propitious for accepting rebuke. Subtle actions which deliver a potent message work better than words. A lecture can be misunderstood. Saying nothing and acting in a manner that delivers the message: "I care about you; I know that you did something inappropriate, but I am not prepared to talk about it until you are willing to accept what I have to say," can have greater efficacy without damaging the wrongdoer's emotions or ego. The following incident reinforces this idea.

A *talmid*, student, of *Yeshivas Mir*, Yerushalayim, asked the *Rosh Yeshivah, Horav Nosson Tzvi Finkel, zl,* for permission to leave early. The *zman*, semester, would be over in two weeks, and, apparently, his grandfather was

gravely ill. "I am very close with my grandfather, and it is only a question of two weeks. May I leave early?"
Rav Nosson Tzvi replied that guarding and adhering to the *yeshivah's* schedule is *kodesh kodoshim*, holy of holies. Furthermore, permission granted by the *Rosh Yeshivah* may be misconstrued by the other students who would similarly find some way to empower themselves to also leave early. While he would love to help, it would be detrimental to the student (questioner) and the rest of the *Yeshivah* if he would be lenient in this regard, "Continue to learn Torah and, perhaps in the merit of your studies, Hashem will send your grandfather a *refuah sheleimah*, complete recovery."
The young man respectfully left the *Rosh Yeshivah's* office, but did not respectfully return to the *bais hamedrash*. Instead, he called a taxi and went to the airport. He had decided (even before he went to the *Rosh Yeshivah*) that his love for his grandfather superseded everything, and nothing would stand in the way of his last good-bye. He was going home – regardless of the repercussions.
Unfortunately, he was unaware that Hashem had other plans. The *Malach Ha'Maves*, Angel of Death, had already been dispatched to return his grandfather's *neshamah*, soul, to its Heavenly Source. As soon as the plane landed in Kennedy Airport and he could now return to phone service, he noticed a number of text messages from his mother. He immediately called to ask what was wrong. To his chagrin, he was told that his grandfather had passed away during the interval of his flight from *Eretz Yisrael*. Since he was the closest and eldest grandchild, it was decided that he should accompany the body to burial in *Eretz Yisrael*.
Back-to-back flights are never easy. For a young man under the pressure of accompanying his grandfather's body to its final resting place, it was a difficult physical and its emotional journey. During the entire return trip, he had before his eyes the image of his revered *Rosh Yeshivah* who had just the other day admonished him concerning the *sidrei ha'yeshivah*. He did not know how he would be able to face him when he returned.
Not many people attended his grandfather's funeral. One person who came, however, was a complete surprise: *Rav* Nosson Tzvi Finkel! He attended the funeral in order to render emotional support to his student – who had just returned from a grueling double overseas flight. The *Rosh Yeshivah* suffered greatly from an illness that physically debilitated him. Yet, despite his pain, he was present, and he remained until the *zibulah basraita*, last shovel of dirt. The student turned to the *Rosh Yeshivah* and wanted to say "something." He was nervous, exhausted, fully-aware that he had acted in contradiction to the *Rosh Yeshivah's* advice. He was embarrassed. Before he could open up his mouth, the *Rosh Yeshivah* said, "You have just spent an entire twenty-four-hour period on a plane. You are exhausted, physically and emotionally drained from the trauma. You are certainly famished. I have asked my *Rebbetzin* to prepare a hearty meal for you. Now, you will come with me to eat and rest. Later, we will speak."
The *bachur's* eyes moistened when he heard the *Rosh Yeshivah*. No rebuke – despite his actions, which were counter to the *Rosh Yeshivah's* advice. No rebuke – yet, the *Rosh Yeshivah*, despite his pain and heavy schedule, had attended his grandfather's funeral, just to be present for him. No rebuke – the *Rosh Yeshivah* had his *Rebbetzin* prepare a large sumptuous meal for him, because after such an ordeal, he must be famished and exhausted. During the entire car trip to the *Rosh Yeshivah's* apartment – not one word of rebuke. It was not necessary; the *Rosh Yeshivah's* actions were, in and of themselves, the most powerful rebuke.

ד' אלקינו דבר אלינו בחרב לאמר רב לכם שבת בהר הזה

Hashem, our G-d, spoke to us in Chorev, saying: Enough of your dwelling by this mountain. (1:6)

Rashi quotes the *Midrash* which defines *rav*, enough, as abundance. This refers to the abundance of reward and achievement that *Klal Yisrael* gained during their one-year layover at *Sinai*. At *Sinai*, they received the Torah, built the *Mishkan* with its accoutrements, and Hashem designated the *Zekeinim*, Elders, as the leaders of the nation. Now, it was time to move on. The *Nesivos Shalom* offers an alternate exposition, with a homiletic twist. Chorev may be translated as destruction, referring to the *churban*, destruction of the *Bais Hamikdash*. Does this mean that we as a nation in exile are finished? Do we have no hope? *Rav lachem sheves* should be read as *Shabbos*. True, without the *Bais Hamikdash*, the Three Festivals during which we were *oleh regel*, pilgrimaged to the Temple thrice annually, were no longer possible. The *korbanos*, sacrifices, we had offered on the *Mizbayach*, Altar, were no longer feasible. *Shabbos*, however, is here to stay. It is our holy island in time which will never leave us. We should not give up, because, through *Shabbos*, we can achieve a sense of holiness even in our contemporary exile, when there is no Temple.

Furthermore, *Hashem Elokeinu diber eileinu b'chorev*. The sanctity of the Torah which we received remains with us even in Chorev – *churban*. Even in exile, the *Shechinah*, Divine Presence, is with us on *Shabbos* and through our commitment in Torah study.

ויפנו ויעלו ההרה ויבאו עד נחל אשכל

They turned and ascended the mountain and came until the valley of Eshkol. (1:24)

"Never allow the sadness of the past and your anxiety concerning the future to cloud the happiness of the present moment." *Chazal* teach that Eshkol was the name of one of Avraham *Avinu's* three friends, whom he consulted when he was commanded to have a *Bris Milah*. Anar advised against the procedure, claiming that it was too dangerous to chance at his advanced age. Mamreh told him to follow Hashem's command. Eshkol concurred with Anar and added his own negativity, suggesting that Avraham's enemies would take advantage of his weakened state.
Horav Elie Munk, zl, sees an analogy in the episode of the *eshkol anavim*, cluster of grapes, brought back by the spies. They sought to enforce their position that, just as the fruit was unusually large, so, too, were the land's inhabitants inordinately powerful. This is why the place was already called Eshkol at the time of Avraham's *Bris Milah*. It was characterized as a place where fears of one's future enemies would discourage a person from doing the right thing today.
Nachal Eshkol was a place which bespoke fear of the future. People that carry with them the baggage of past sad experiences cannot properly focus on and enjoy the present. Likewise, those who constantly worry about what the future holds for them have great difficulty living in the moment. *Hayom, achshov*, today, now, represents a Jew's faith. Today we are healthy, strong, united in our conviction. Yet, for some people, fear trumps faith, and, as a result, we refuse to accept what today, the present, has to offer, because we are afraid of the future. Eshkol feared the future. He symbolized one whose faith is frozen due to fear. Avraham did not listen to him, because his faith in Hashem transcended fear.
Someone once said that given the choice, we would all do *teshuvah*, repent. It is the right thing to do – today. What prevents us from following through on our logical positive intentions? Yesterday and tomorrow. We are anxious concerning yesterday's mistakes and fret over what will happen tomorrow. Were we to focus on the present – we would make the correct decision. *Im lo achshav eimasai*; "If not now when": Hillel's well-known maxim (*Pirkei Avos* 1:14) should guide us concerning the importance of seizing the moment and making the most of it. *Ibn Ezra* buttresses this thought with his own: *Ha'ovar ayin, v'ha'asid adayin, v'ha'hoveh k'heref ayin, im kein daagah minayin*? "The past is no longer here; the future is not yet; the present lasts but an eye blink; so why worry and fret?" if, indeed, we live only in the present then we would do well to seek to accomplish our goals in the immediate "now."
The only thing that we control is this very moment. Why waste it? This does not mean one should ignore the past – its lessons are critical. Neither should we completely disencumber ourselves from thinking about the future – one must have vision and goals. When one becomes overburdened by what might occur in the future, however, his present will be injudiciously slighted. We each have a spark within us that has the potential of igniting and becoming a powerful flame. Unfortunately, for some, this spark is suppressed as a result of life's troubles and travails. If we focus on the "here and now," and seize

the moment, we will succeed in mitigating the "yesterdays" and "tomorrows" and have a better, more accomplished life.

The concept of "now" plays itself out in another manner. *Chazal* (*Berachos* 6b) teach, "One should be meticulous in observing *Tefillas Minchah*, because it was at *Minchah* that Eliyahu *HaNavi* was answered." The *Lubavitcher Rebbe, Horav Yosef Yitzchak Schneerson, zl,* explains that, in the morning, one always has time to *daven Shacharis*; he can always wake up a half-hour earlier and then go to work. For *Maariv*, if he is running late, he just goes to bed fifteen minutes later. *Minchah*, however, is to be recited in the afternoon, right in the middle of the work day, the meeting, the conference, the trip. We recite it in the midst of intense activity. To be able to interrupt the business day in order to make time to recite *Minchah* is, indeed, an indication of dedication and commitment.

It is the same with regard to the life cycle. When one is young or old, it is relatively easy to make time for religious services. It is in the afternoon of one's life, the time reserved for "*Minchah*," that he manifests the greatest indication of commitment. It is during the "twenty to sixty" prime of life, when one has the vision and wherewithal to throw himself into world and business affairs, when the pursuit of material bounty absorbs most of his waking hours – it is then, if he invests time in spiritual matters, that he shows that he is deservedly meritorious.

Va'ani Tefillah

יהיו לרצון אמרי פי והגיון לבי לפניך – *Yiheyu l'ratzon imrei fi v'hegyon libi lefanecha*. May the expressions of my mouth and the thoughts of my heart find favor before You.

When one concludes his recitation of the *Shemoneh Esrai*, he has completed an esoteric encounter with Hashem. If he has executed the recitation with proper devotion and awe, he should experience a feeling of rapture and inspiration. This intimate encounter with Hashem will have elevated his soul. One must remember that upon reciting the words *Baruch Atah Hashem*, "Blessed are You Hashem," one is speaking directly to the Almighty. (The thought of this alone should gratify and elate a person.) Since *Shemoneh Esrai* is considered formal prayer as established by the *Anshei Knesses HaGedolah*, Men of the Great Assembly, as an obligatory prayer, reciting it demonstrates only that one is fulfilling his obligation. As a result, one might be crossing the line between a prayer which should be a petition for mercy and a supplication and one that is a fixed routine (which *Chazal* disdained). Thus, *Chazal* (as quoted in the *Talmud Berachos* 16b) were careful to add a personal prayer at the end of the *Shemoneh Esrai*, thereby manifesting intent to seek Divine favor and mercy. Once one has completed the blessings, his soul is aflame with great love for Hashem. Now is the time to express his innermost feelings, personal petitions and praises.

לע"נ רווה רחל בת ר' משה ארי-ה ע"ה נפ' ח' אב תשנ"ו
Shelley Horwitz ע"ה

prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

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Parshat Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1 – 3:22)
Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel – The biblical reading of Devarim always falls out on the Sabbath preceding Tisha Be'av, the fast commemorating the destruction of our Holy Temples. This is not merely an "accident" of the calendar; in our portion, Moses reviews his life and he cries out, "How (eicha) can I bear your troublesomeness and your burdens and your belittling barbs?." [Deut. 1:12], a verse which begins with the same word that opens the Scroll of Lamentations ("How [Eicha] does she sit alone, the city once filled with our people?") The Torah reader on the Sabbath chants the Torah verse Eicha with the same haunting melody used for the Eicha reading on Tisha Be'av.

What is the significance of the destruction of the Temple? How important could the Temple have been if Judaism managed to survive without it for the last 2,000 years? And how many modern Jews can really identify with the slaughter of animals as offerings in a Temple? By exploring a fundamental difference of opinion between two great Jewish leaders—Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai and Rabbi Akiva—we can gain insight into the significance of our Temple, and the irretrievable loss we suffered as a result of its destruction.

As the Romans besieged Jerusalem, Rabbi Yohanan managed to leave the city and meet with Vespasian, the leader of the Roman armed forces carrying out the siege. The rabbi requested that the Romans spare the city of Yavne and its wise men, the Sanhedrin of sages.

Rabbi Yohanan was willing to relinquish Jerusalem and the Temple so long as the Jews could remain in Israel and maintain their ongoing interpretations of the Oral Law.

Approximately six decades later, Rabbi Akiva bitterly condemned this accommodating stance of Rabbi Yohanan (even though he taught both of Rabbi Akiva's own two teachers, Rabbi Yehoshua and R. Eliezer), referring to a verse from the Prophet Isaiah which he applied to Rabbi Yohanan: "God turns the sages backwards and transforms their wisdom into foolishness" (Isa. 44:25) (B.T. Gittin 56b). Apparently, Rabbi Akiva believed that Rabbi Yohanan gave up too much too soon, that he should have continued to fight in order to retain Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Indeed, Rabbi Akiva put his ideas into practice by spearheading the Bar Kochba rebellion against Rome (135 CE) for the avowed purpose of Israel's liberation of Jerusalem and rebuilding of the Holy Temple.

What was the fundamental difference of opinion between these sages? Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai believed that, apart from the prohibitions of murder, sexual immorality and idolatry, the only value for which one may forfeit one's life is the survival of the Jewish nation. This explains why the Bible introduces the concept of a life-endangering obligatory war (milhemet mitzva) for the sake of the conquering the Land of Israel at the dawn of our history, because without the Land of Israel there would never have developed the nation of Israel. Given the overwhelming might of the Roman Empire and the Roman armies, Rabbi Yohanan concluded that if the Land of Israel and the Torah of Israel could be secured—Yavne and its wise men—it would be unnecessary and even halachically unacceptable to risk the survival of the Jewish people in a war for Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Rabbi Akiva believed differently. He understood the function of the Holy Temple and Jerusalem as being cardinal to the mission of Israel, a holy nation and a kingdom of priest-teachers (to the world) through whom all of the families of the earth are to be blessed.

The people of Israel were entrusted to teach the world that God created every human being in His Divine image, that each individual must be free and inviolable, and that our God of love and morality demands a world of peace and security for all. The city from which this message must emanate is the City of Jerusalem, the City of Peace (Yeru Shalom); the mechanism by which this mission is to be advanced is the Holy Temple, the beacon from which the Torah will go forth to all nations of the world, impressing upon them how "swords must be beaten into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift sword above nation and humanity will not learn war anymore" (Isa. 2:4). Rabbi Akiva believed that unless we disseminate this teaching to the world, there is no purpose to our national being; hence the centrality of our Messianic vision and the necessity of continuing to fight for Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Bar Kochba's revolt ended in failure. The subsequent Hadrianic persecutions and the resulting Jewish exile wrought havoc upon our nation, and it became clear to the overwhelming majority of our sages that Rabbi Akiva was wrong and Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai had been correct. He had rescued Judaism by his initiating the "exchange" with Vespasian.

But our situation has radically changed. Contemporary history, post-Holocaust, teaches us that the nation of Israel cannot survive without a Jewish state and a Jewish army. We live in a global village where one

madman with nuclear power can (God forbid) destroy the entire world. This teaches us that, unless the inviolability of the human being and the universal acceptance of a God of peace becomes an axiom of all humanity, there will be no free humanity left in the world, and certainly no Jewish nation. Rabbi Akiva has been vindicated for our times; only by teaching fundamental absolute morality in our City of Peace can we secure the future of Israel and the free world.
Shabbat Shalom!

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http://download.yutorah.org/2012/1053/Tisha_Bav_To-Go_-_5771_Rabbi_Reiss.pdf
YESHIVA UNIVERSITY • A TO-GO SERIES• TISHA B'AV 5771
Bereavement and Consolation
Rabbi Yona Reiss
And I will make their mourning into joy, and I will comfort and gladden them from their suffering. Yirmiyahu 31:12
Tisha Be'av is the saddest day on the Jewish calendar. This is the day on which "painful events were repeated" (Rosh Hashanah 18b), when both of the Holy Temples were destroyed, and the totality of Jewish tragedy is commemorated. And yet, every year, almost immediately upon the conclusion of the day of Tisha Be'av, we celebrate Shabbos Nachamu, the Shabbos of "comfort" and the joyous day of Tu Be'av, which is considered one of the two most festive days of the year. How do we explain this curious juxtaposition?
The question is amplified further when we consider the unique character of the mourning period that leads to Tisha Be'av. When a person mourns the death of a parent, an "aveilus chadashah" (new experience of loss), the most intense period of mourning is the first day, followed by the seven day "shiva" period that restricts hygiene, grooming and movement, followed by a lessrestrictive thirty day period that still prohibits haircutting, followed by an attenuated mourning period of twelve months. By contrast, the mourning for Tisha Be'av, an "aveilus yeshanah" (old experience of loss), becomes more intense as time progresses, beginning with the three weeks, during which haircuts and marriages are prohibited, then advancing to the month of Av during which laundering is prohibited, and then culminating with Tisha Be'av itself, in which the observances of the day are akin to the most intensive observances of a mourner observing "shiva."
Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik (see Out of the Whirlwind, pp. 9-30) explained that the reason for the distinction between the two mourning patterns is because the purpose of the mourning of a parent is to confront the immediate pain, and then eventually to re-adjust to a pattern of normalcy. By contrast, the purpose of the observance of Tisha Be'av, commemorating catastrophes that go back thousands of years, is to gradually reach a level of sensitivity and appreciation for the terrible loss that has befallen us, starting with a dull, almost imperceptible awareness, which gradually cascades into a crescendo of bitter mourning. However, if the purpose of the mourning period ending in Tisha Be'av is to increase the intensity of the mourning experience, how can we expect that almost immediately after the climax of bereavement, we will somehow have the capacity for comfort, and even for the celebration six days later of the day of Tu Be'av, one of the happiest days on the Jewish calendar? More puzzling is that the comfort and celebration are planned in advance, regardless of whether or not the Temple will actually be rebuilt immediately after Tisha Be'av.
Perhaps the message is that there is in fact no contradiction. The term "nachamu" which heralds the Shabbos after Tisha Be'av and headlines the haftorah of that Shabbos, has a double meaning, as explained by Rashi in Bereishis (6:6, and 27:42) with respect to other variations of the word nichum: "Nachamu" can mean either to be comforted, or to have a change of mind. True comfort can only be achieved when the fullest extent of one's anguished emotions have been expressed, so that there can be a "change of mindset" from mourning to joy. It is only at the point that the mourning for the loss of the Holy Temple has been most acutely felt that the ultimate experience of comfort becomes possible. Thus, the mourning for Tisha Be'av is both a pre-requisite for the ensuing comfort and a prescription for future joyousness. The notion of mourning as a pre-requisite for future joyousness is spelled out in the following Talmudic passage: Make Jerusalem happy and gladden it, all who love her shall rejoice with her, gladden all those who mourn for her." (Isaiah 66:10) From here it was taught that one who mourns Jerusalem shall behold its joyousness, but one who does not mourn Jerusalem will not behold its joyousness. Ta'anit 30b Furthermore, Rabbi Shaul Yedidya Shochet (early 20th century), author of Ahavat Shaul (drush l'yom sheni shel Shavuos), observes that the experience of mourning creates the immediate capacity to appreciate the joyousness of the Temple. This is why the Talmud uses the present tense, Zocheh Viroeh Besimchata (which literally means "beholds its joyousness") and not the future tense Yizkeh Viyireh. In this vein, it is also interesting to note that the Ramban quotes a version of the text (in his Toras Ha'adam) that states Zocheh Viroeh Besimchata – the mourner of Jerusalem experiences its comfort.
But why should it be that the full intensity of the mourning for the Temple creates the immediate capacity for comfort, and even for joy? One simple explanation, based on the Talmudic passage quoted above, is that the mourning creates the eligibility for the Temple to be rebuilt, for Jerusalem to be restored to its glory. We are comforted because, through mourning our loss, we have become eligible for salvation, and therefore we have the right to participate in eager anticipation for the redemptive moment to occur.
However, another possible explanation for the immediate capacity for comfort is inherent in the words at the beginning of the fifth chapter of Megilat Eikhah – Zechor Ha-shem Meh Haya Lanu – remember, Oh G-d, what we have experienced. Most commentators understand the phrase as referring to a recollection of destruction, and a cry for compassion regarding our devastation as a people. But there is another interpretation from the Alshikh HaKadosh that appears to be reflected in the elegy Eikha Atzta B'apekha by Rabbi Elazar HaKalir, in which the phrase Zechor Ha-shem Meh Haya Lanu is utilized as a refrain to provide a contrast between the grandeur of the Temple period and the 46 ravaging consequences of its destruction. According to the Alshikh, the words Zechor Ha-shem Meh Haya Lanu do not refer to the period of defeat, but rather to the time of triumph, when Jerusalem and the Temple were in their glory. He explains that it is impossible to mourn our current state of spiritual poverty and political subjugation without a remembrance of the sovereignty and spiritual prosperity that we once possessed as a people, the same way that a pauper who is born indigent is less equipped to bemoan his lack of riches than a wealthy person who has becomes impoverished and constantly recollects what he has lost.
Accordingly, our capacity to mourn properly on Tisha Be'av is ultimately dependent upon a recollection and appreciation of what it means to be spiritually rich, to bask in the divine presence of HaKadosh Barukh Hu in the Holy Temple, and to engage in His service in an atmosphere pervaded with holiness. It is only when we realize how impoverished we have become in our mundane existence in exile, and gradually grasp, through the progressive sequence of the mourning experience, the full extent of our loss and devastation, that we are able to comprehend and therefore experience the mourning of Tisha Be'av. Once we have achieved this heightened state of recognition, as the Ahavat Shaul explains, we can appreciate the joy that is attainable through regaining our previous state of spiritual majesty. This understanding enables us to transform the intensity of the mourning experience into a period of comfort and even joy, as we once again perceive the purpose of our strivings in this world, and look forward to re-living an existence that is inextricably woven with a connection to the Almighty.
This renewed appreciation for redemption elucidates the significance of Tu Be'av. The Talmud (Ta'anit 30b, immediately following the discussion about Tisha Be'av) describes various reasons regarding the celebration of Tu Be'av, including the identification of Tisha Be'av as the day that members of different tribes were given permission to marry each other, and other auspicious occasions. However, Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen Me'Lublin in his

work Pri Tzadik (volume 5) notes that there is another key allusion to the special nature of Tu Be'av contained in the Mishnah in Ta'anit (26b).
The Mishnah records that the two greatest Yamim Tovim (days of celebration) on the Jewish calendar are Tu Be'av and Yom Kippur. After describing the festivities of these two days, the Mishnah quotes the verse from Shir Hashirim (3:11): . The Mishnah then expounds upon the latter part of this verse: – the day of his marriage: this is the day that the Torah was given. Rashi explains that the day of marriage is a reference to Yom Kippur, the day that the luchot shniot (second set of Tablets) were given to the Jewish people. The Mishnah concludes with an exposition upon the second half of this concluding phrase – the day of happiness of his heart: this is the day of the future building of the next Holy Temple. The Pri Tzadik notes that based on the sequence of the Mishnah, the day of "happiness of his heart" must be a reference to the holiday of Tu Be'av (see also Maharsha ad loc, who writes similarly), on which day he concludes that the Holy Temple will be re-built in the future!
After the mourning of the Temple has been observed in all of its intensity and has elicited an appreciation of the grandeur that we seek to re-experience through the re-building of the Holy Temple, we are prepared not only for the comfort of Shabbos Nachamu but for a "change of 47 mindset" from mourning to celebration, reflected in the celebration of Tu Be'av, heralding the future building of the Holy Temple. May we all witness the full and ultimate realization of this celebration, when even the day of Tisha Be'av itself shall be transformed into a day of jubilation upon the building of the third Beit Hamikdash, may it happen speedily in our time.

Torah in Motion info@torahinmotion.org
August 8, 2011
Menachem Av 8, 5771
Thoughts on Tisha B'Av
Rabbi Jay Kelman
One does not have to look very hard to find sources within our tradition that allow, encourage, or even demand that we "hate" others. While the mitzvah to love our neighbor as ourselves is, according to Rabbi Akiva, the fundamental principle of the Torah, many restrict our neigbour, re'acha, to re'acha bmitzovt, our neigbour in mitzvot , excluding those are not observant.
The Shulchan Aruch codifies laws regarding sinners, including admonitions against giving certain sinners charity and the opinion that, under certain circumstances, certain severe sinners should be thrown into a pit and be left to die. The Rambam pulls no punches in ruling how sinners are to be treated. And sinners in the eyes of the Rambam include those observant Jews who reject one of what he considers to be a principle of faith. Thus, a wonderful person who meticulously observes the mitzvot but who believes, as the simple reading of the Torah implies, that G-d has a body, loses his share in the world to come and is to be despised.
It is also true that one can marshal other sources with a more "liberal" approach, which extend a hand to the less observant; on most contentious issues sources can be found on either side of the debate. Additionally many of our greatest scholars have "reinterpreted" many of these "harsh" sources or explained why for a variety of reasons they no longer apply in the open societies in which we live.
Yet to deny that hatred is at least part of our tradition – even if we may not use it in practice – would be a distortion. And that is even before we talk about such commands to wipe out Amalek, to destroy the seven nations or the killings that seem so prevalent in the early prophets.
It is not hatred per se that bothered the Rabbis but Sinnat Chinam usually translated as baseless hatred or hating for no reason or a very poor reason. The word chinam literally means free, for nothing, as in a guardian who is not paid for his services and thus bears no responsibility if the object is lost or stolen. Sinnat chinam would then imply a hatred that comes freely, where one does not take responsibility for one's action. One may say something without thinking about what feelings and pain it may evoke in others. One acts without thinking of the consequences as if one is free to do as one pleases, period. Focusing on oneself primarily means that our concern for others is minimized.
But sinnat chinam can also mean hatred without a purpose. Those sources in our tradition that mandate hate do so because of the belief that such hatred would actually accomplish something, making society better despite its rough medicine. By destroying Amalek and his many current followers we destroy evil, and by throwing evildoers into a pit we remove those who might entice others to sin. Imagine if every person caught driving while intoxicated was sentenced to death – it might be harsh and inappropriate but I guarantee you that within a month, almost no one would drive drunk, saving many more lives.
Our rabbis did not advocate "hatred" unless it would in the end prove to be constructive. Tragically by the time of the second commonwealth this was no longer true. Hatred, even if there was a good reason for it, produced little except more hatred. Tragically this cycle of hated has continued throughout Jewish history. Great rabbis have been involved in great debates that with the perspective of history seem pointless. There were good reasons for these debates and the rabbinic and lay leadership was doing what they felt was necessary for the Jewish people and our way of life. But it seems to me at least that these arguments produced little and those energies would have brought greater benefit had they been employed elsewhere. What was gained by the Emden-Eibysetz controversy except for the lowered stature of the rabbinate; were the fierce debates – and that is an understatement- over the founding of Chasidut productive? What positives for the Jewish people have come out of the denominational wars of today?
It is not enough to quote halachic sources allowing one to fight with others. Nor is having a good reason for causing controversy a strong foundation. One must ask oneself if such debate will truly benefit the Jewish people. No doubt the answer is often difficult but the last 2,000 years has taught us the likely answer. And while my analysis may be wrong if I am wrong I would prefer to err on the side of peace. Because if we err on the side of controversy we run the risk of perpetuating sinnat chinam .
Rav Kuk famously said that the third Temple will be rebuilt when we are routinely practice ahavat chinam . We look forward to the day when our interactions with others are those that will be productive and benefit the entire Jewish people. May that day come soon.

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Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by Menachem Leibtag

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SEFER DEVARIM Introduction

What is Sefer Devarim?

Most everyone would answer - a review or repeat of Chumash, just as its 'nickname' - 'Mishneh Torah' - seems to imply.

Is this really so?

As we now demonstrate, it won't take more than a minute to show how that popular answer is simply incorrect!

Let's quickly review the first four books (of Chumash), noting which of their primary topics are either included or missing from Sefer Devarim:

* Sefer Breishit: Sefer Devarim makes almost no mention of any of its stories - be it the story of Creation, the Flood, the Avot, or the brothers, etc.

* Sefer Shmot: We find only scant details of the Exodus, and not a word about the mishkan; even though we do find the story of Ma'amad Har Sinai & chet ha-egel.

* Sefer Vayikra: Here again, Sefer Devarim makes almost no mention of any of its mitzvot or stories, aside from a few laws that 'ring a bell' from Parshat Kedoshim, and some kashrut laws; but hardly a summary.

* Sefer Bamidbar: Indeed Sefer Devarim does tell over the stories of the 'spies' and the defeat of Sichon & Og (with some major 'minor changes'). However, there is barely a mention of the remaining stories found in Bamidbar (and there are many), nor do we find a review of any of its mitzvot (e.g. nazir, sota, challa, etc.).

Furthermore, Sefer Devarim contains numerous mitzvot that had never been mentioned earlier in Chumash! Certainly, if the book was a summary, then we should not expect for it to contain totally new material.

[To clarify this point, simply imagine that you are a teacher who assigns the class to summarize the first four books of Chumash. How would you grade a student who handed in Sefer Devarim as his assignment?]

Even though it took us only a few minutes to prove that Sefer Devarim is not a review of Chumash - it will take us much longer to explain what Sefer Devarim is, and why Chazal refer to it as "Mishneh Torah".

INTRODUCTION

Like many good books, Sefer Devarim can only be fully understood after you have read it. So for those of you who are not patient enough to read the entire book first (and analyze it), the following shiur will 'spill the beans'.

As usual, our shiur will focus on identifying its structure and theme. It is recommended that you study this shiur carefully, as its conclusions will provide the basis for our entire series on Sefer Devarim (in the weeks to follow).

A BOOK OF SPEECHES

The key to understanding Sefer Devarim lies in the recognition that it contains a very important (albeit long) speech delivered by Moshe Rabeinu, prior to his death; as well as several 'shorter' speeches; one which introduces that 'main speech', and others that form its conclusion.

Therefore, the first step of our shiur will be to identify those speeches. To do so, we must first note how the style of Sefer Devarim is unique, as it is written almost entirely in the first person - in contrast to the first four books of Chumash, which are written in 'third person'.

[Recall (from when you studied grammar) that speeches are recorded (or quoted) in first person, while narrative (stories) are usually written in third person.]

Therefore, to determine where each speech begins (and ends), we simply need to scan the book, noting where the narrative changes from third person (i.e. the regular narrator mode of Chumash) to first person (i.e. the direct quote of Moshe Rabeinu, as he speaks).

If you have ample time (and patience/ and of course a Tanach Koren handy), you should first try to do this on your own. On the other hand, if you are short on time - you can 'cheat' by reading at least 1:1-7, 4:40-5:2, 26:16-27:2, 28:69-29:2, & 30:19-32:1, noting the transition from third person to first person, and hence where and how each speech begins.

INDENTIFYING SPEECH #1

For example, let's take a quick look at the opening psukim of Sefer Devarim (1:1-7). Note how the first five psukim are written in third person:

"These are the devarim (words / speeches) which Moshe spoke to all of Israel... In the fortieth year on the first day of the eleventh month... in Arvot Mo'av, Moshe began to explain this Torah saying..." (see 1:1-5);

This introduces the speech that begins (in the next pasuk) with the first sentence of Moshe Rabbeinu's speech:

"God, our Lord, spoke to us at Chorev saying..." (see 1:6).

[Note how this pasuk, and those that follow are written in first person.]

Then, scan the psukim that follow, noting how this speech continues from 1:6 all the way until 4:40 (i.e. the next four chapters). This entire section is written in first person, and hence constitutes Moshe's opening speech.

INDENTIFYING SPEECH #2 [the 'main speech']

In a similar manner, note how the first pasuk of chapter five introduces Moshe's next speech. Here again, the opening pasuk begins in third person, but immediately changes to first person, as soon as the speech begins:

"And Moshe called together all of Israel and said to them [third person] - Listen to the laws and rules that I tell you today... - [first person]" (see 5:1).

Where does this second speech end? If you have half an hour, you could scan the next twenty some chapters and look for its conclusion by yourself; otherwise, you can 'take our word' that it continues all the way until the end of chapter 26!

This observation (even though it is rarely noticed) will be the key towards understanding Sefer Devarim - for this twenty chapter long 'main speech' will emerge as the primary focus of the book!

After this 'main speech', in chapters 27-30 we find two more short speeches that directly relate to the main speech. Finally, from chapter 31 thru 34, Sefer Devarim 'returns' to the regular narrative style of Chumash, as it

concludes with the story of Moshe Rabbeinu's final day.

The following table summarizes the division of Sefer Devarim into its four speeches:

SPEECH #1
Chaps. 1-4
Introductory speech
SPEECH #2
Chaps. 5-26
Main speech
SPEECH #3
Chaps. 27-28
Tochacha & Covenant
SPEECH #4
Chaps. 29-30
Teshuva

THE MAIN SPEECH

As this table indicates, Speech #2 is by far the longest, so we'll begin our study by trying to figure out its primary topic. [Afterward, we will show how Speech #1 actually introduces this main speech.]

To help us identify the primary topic of the main speech [without the need to read it in its entirety], let's assume that Moshe Rabeinu will employ the 'golden rule' for an organized speech, i.e. he will:

(1) 'Say what you're gonna say' -
(2) 'Say it' - & then
(3) 'Say what you said.'

[We'll soon see how Moshe Rabeinu beautifully follows this golden rule in this speech.]

Let's take a careful look at how Moshe's begins this main speech, noting how he explains to the people what to expect:

"Listen Israel to the chukim & mishpatim which I am teaching you today, learn them and keep them..." (5:1).

This 'opener' immediately tells the listener that this speech will contain chukim & mishpatim [laws and rules] that must be studied and observed; and indeed that is precisely what we will find (when we will study the content of this speech).

However, these laws - that we now expect to hear (based on 5:1) - don't begin in the next pasuk. Instead, Moshe Rabeinu uses the first section of his speech (chapter five) to explain how and when these laws (that will begin in chapter six) were first given.

In other words, instead of beginning his speech immediately with this set of laws, he will preface these laws by first explaining why everyone is obligated to keep them (5:2-5), followed by the story of how he first received them at Har Sinai forty years earlier (5:20-30).

To appreciate this introductory chapter, and to understand why it contains a 'repeat' of the Ten Commandments, let's carefully review its flow of topic.

INTRO TO THE MAIN SPEECH - OBLIGATION & COVENANT

As his first point, Moshe emphasizes how these laws (that he is about to teach) were given as an integral part of the covenant between God and Bnei Yisrael at Har Sinai:

"Hashem made a covenant with us at Chorev. Not [only] with our forefathers did God made this covenant, but [also] with us - we, the living - here today..." (5:2-3).

Even though (and because) most of the members of this new generation were not present at Ma'amad Har Sinai, Moshe must first remind Bnei Yisrael that their obligation to keep these laws stems from that covenant at Har Sinai (forty years earlier)!

Recall as well how God had spoken the Ten Commandments directly to Bnei Yisrael as part of that covenant.

[Hence - the two tablets upon which they were inscribed are known as 'luchot ha-brit' - i.e. tablets of the Covenant.]

It is for this reason that Moshe Rabeinu first reviews the Ten Commandments (in 5:6-19), before he begins his teaching of the detailed 'chukim 'mishpatim' - for they form the key guidelines of this "brit"' between God and His nation. Note however that the Ten Commandments are presented as part of the story of 'how the laws were given' - the detailed laws, referred to in 5:1, don't begin until chapter six (and continue thru chapter 26).

WHY MOSHE IS TEACHING THE LAWS

Now comes the key story in this introductory section, for Moshe (in 5:20-30) tells the story of how Bnei Yisrael immediately became fearful after hearing the 'Dibrot' and asked Moshe that he become their intermediary to receive the remaining laws. As we shall see, this story explains when and how the laws (that Moshe is about to start teaching) were first given.

To clarify this, let's careful study these psukim, for they will help us understand the overall structure of the main speech:

"When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, you came up to me... and said... Let us not die, for this fearsome fire will consume us... you go closer and hear all that God says, and then you tell us everything that God commands, and we will willingly do it..." (5:20-26).

[Keep in mind that from this pasuk we can infer that had Bnei Yisrael not become fearful, they would have heard additional mitzvot directly from God, immediately after these first Ten Commandments.]

Note how God grants this request (that Moshe should act as their intermediary) by informing Moshe of His 'new plan:

"Go, say to them: 'Return to your tents.' But you remain here with Me, and I will give you the mitzvah, chukim & mishpatim... for them to observe in the land that I am giving them to possess..." (5:27-28).

Read this pasuk once again, for it is key towards understanding how the 'main speech' first came about. The mitzvot that Moshe will now teach (in this speech) are simply the same laws that God had first given to him on Har Sinai, after Bnei Yisrael asked him to become their intermediary.

In fact, Moshe himself states this explicitly in the next set of psukim that clearly introduce this set of laws:

"And this ('ve-zot') is the mitzvah, chukim & mishpatim that God has commanded me to teach you to be observed in the land you are about to enter..." (see 6:1-3).

Recall from 5:28 that God told Moshe that he should remain on Har Sinai to receive the mitzvah, chukim & mishpatim. This pasuk (6:1), explains how Moshe's lecture is simply a delineation of those mitzvot.

THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

Based on this introduction (i.e. 6:1-3), we conclude that these laws (that begin with 6:4) are simply those mitzvot that God had given to Bnei Yisrael - via Moshe Rabbeinu - as a continuation of the Ten Commandments at Ma amad Har Sinai. If so, then the first mitzvah of this special unit of laws is none other than the first parshia of 'kriyat shema':
"Shema Yisrael, Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad, ve-ahavta... ve-hayu ha-devarim ha-eileh..." (see 6:4-7).
[This can help us appreciate why this parsha is such an important part of our daily prayers - to be discussed in our shiur on Va'etchanan.]

This first parshia of kriyat shema begins a lengthy list of mitzvot (and several sections of rebuke) that continues all the way until Parshat Ki Tavo (i.e. chapter 26).
[That is why this speech is better known as 'ne'um ha-mitzvot' the speech of commandments. Just try counting how many mitzvot are indeed found in these 21 chapters - you'll find plenty!]

Note as well that after the first two cardinal mitzvot - belief in God and the commandment to love Him with all your heart - we find a statement that serves as yet another introduction to the mtizvot that will now follow:
"ve-hayu ha-devarim ha-eileh..." - And these words [clearly, this refers to the laws that will now follow in the speech] that I am teaching you today must be kept in your heart - (see 6:6-7)

We will soon return to discuss this pasuk in greater detail; however, we must first clarify an important point. Even though the core of this speech consists of the mitzvot that Moshe initially received at Har Sinai, it is only natural that Moshe Rabbeinu will add some comments of his own, relating to events that have transpired in the interim. [See, for example, chapters 8->9.] Nonetheless, the mitzvot themselves were first given forty years earlier.

Furthermore, as the psukim quoted above explain, these mitzvot share a common theme - for they all apply to Bnei Yisrael's forthcoming entry into the Land of Israel (see 5:28 & 6:1). [In next week's shiur we will discuss how these mitzvot divide into two distinct sections, the mitzva section (chapters 6 thru 11) and the chukim u-mishpatim section (chapters 12 - 26).]

WHEN THIS SPEECH WAS FIRST GIVEN

So when did Bnei Yisrael first hear these mitzvot?

If they were given at Har Sinai, then certainly Moshe should have taught them to the people at that time.

The answer to this question is found in Parshat Ki Tisa. There, in the story of how Moshe descended from Har Sinai with the second luchot, the Torah informs us:
"And it came to pass, when Moshe came down from Mount Sinai with the two tables of the testimony in his hand... and afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he [Moshe] commanded them all of the laws that God had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.
(See Shmot 34:29-32)

Clearly, Moshe had already taught these laws to Bnei Yisrael when he came down from Har Sinai. Yet, Sefer Shmot only tells the story of when Moshe first taught them, but doesn't record all of the actual laws that he both received and taught at that time. Instead, the Torah prefers to record some of those laws in Sefer Devarim, others in Sefer Bamidbar, and others in Sefer Vayikra.

In other words, Moshe Rabbeinu reviews an entire set of laws in Sefer Devarim; laws that he had already taught to the first generation when they were encamped at Har Sinai. Hence, the laws in Sefer Devarim are indeed a review of a set of laws that Bnei Yisrael had already received. However, they are not a review of the laws that Chumash had already recorded.
[This point clarifies why so many people misunderstand what is meant when Sefer Devarim is referred to as a 'review of laws'. It is indeed a review of laws that Moshe Rabeinu had already taught Bnei Yisrael, but it is not a review of the first four books of Chumash.]

One could also suggest a very logical reason for why the Torah preferred to record these laws in Sefer Devarim, rather than in Sefer Shmot. As we shall see, these mitzvot will focus on how Bnei Yisrael are to establish their nation in the Land of Israel (see 5:28 and 6:1/ 'la'asot ba-aretz' - to keep in the land). Hence, the Torah prefers to record them as they were taught by Moshe to the second generation - who would indeed enter the land; and not as they were given to the first generation - who sinned, and hence never entered the land.

This background will now help us understand why Chazal refer to this Sefer as "Mishneh Torah", and why this name is so commonly misunderstood. While doing so, we will also explain the 'simple meaning' of the famous psukim of kriyat shema that we recite every day.

MISHNEH TORAH

Let's return to the opening psukim of kriyat shema (6:4-8), which form the opening set of commandments that Moshe first received on Har Sinai (to relay to Bnei Yisrael) - soon after the Ten Commandments were given to the entire nation.

Moshe begins this set of laws with an opening statement that reflects a tenet of faith:
"shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad" (6:4)

This is followed by the most basic mitzva regarding attitude, which in essence is a way of life for every jew:
"ve-ahavta ..." - to love God with all your heart... (see 6:5),

Then, Moshe introduces the laws that he now plans to teach in a very interesting manner:
"ve-hayu ha-devarim ha-eileh...
- And these words [i.e. laws that will now follow]
that I am teaching you today must be kept in your heart - ve-shinantam - and you must repeat them (over and over) to our children and speak about them constantly, when at home, when you travel, when you lie down and when you get up..." (see 6:5-8).

Note the Hebrew word 've-shinantam' - which means more than simply to teach, but rather to 'repeat' [from the 'shoresh' (root) -' leshanen' [sh.n.n.]. Moshe instructs the nation that these forthcoming laws (i.e. the laws of the main speech of Sefer Devarim), need not only to be taught, but they also require constant repetition!

Thus, the word 'mishneh' - in the phrase "mishneh Torah" also stems from this same root - "l'shanen" - to repeat. Hence, the name "Mishneh Torah" implies a set of laws that require constant repetition!

This explains the confusion in regard to the meaning of this alternate name for Sefer Devarim. Mishneh Torah does not

imply that Sefer Devarim is a repeat (or review) of what has been written in Chumash thus far; rather, it refers to a special set of laws that requires constant repetition - i.e. when we sit in our homes etc. / see 6:6-7,

In other words, the mitzvot of the main speech of Sefer Devarim are special, insofar as they must be constantly repeated and taught ('ve-shinantam'), as its name - Mishneh Torah - implies. In fact, we fulfill this mitzva each day by reciting the first two parshiyot of kriyat shma.

Further proof of this interpretation is found in the sole pasuk in Sefer Devarim that contains the phrase mishneh Torah, in regard to the King in Parshat Shoftim:
"And when the King is seated on his royal throne, he must write this mishneh ha-torah in a book... and it must be with him and he must read from it every day of his life, in order that he learns to fear God..." (see 17:18-19).

Clearly, in this context, the term "Mishneh Torah" does not refer to a repeat of earlier laws, but rather to a set of laws that need to be repeated.
[Similarly, the word 'mishna' (as in Torah she-ba'al peh) has the same meaning. The mishnayot require 'shinun'; they must be repeated over and over again - hence they are called Mishna.]

BACK TO PARSHAT DEVARIM

This interpretation can help us understand the opening psukim of Sefer Devarim - which otherwise appear to be rather cryptic. Before we continue, it is suggested that you read Devarim 1:1-2, noting the difficulty of its translation.
"These are the devarim that Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael in Transjordan, in the desert, in the Arava, opposite Suf, between Paran and Tofel, and Di Zahav" (1:1).

First of all, what does the word devarim refer to:
the entire book? - the first speech? - all the speeches?

It's not clear. Secondly, what is the meaning of this long list of places?

The location of 'ever ha-yarden' [Transjordan] makes sense, for Bnei Yisrael are now encamped there (see 1:5); but the remaining list of places - ba-midbar, ba-arava, mul suf, bein paran u-tofel etc. - seems to be totally disjoint from the first half of this pasuk.

Are these many places, or just one place? What happened at all of these places? Again, it is not clear.

The next pasuk is even more enigmatic!
"Eleven days from Chorev, via Mount Se'ir, until Kadesh Barnea" (1:2).

This pasuk doesn't even form a complete sentence. What does it describe? What does it have to do with the previous pasuk?

Nonetheless, the next pasuk appears to be quite 'normal', and could easily have been the opening verse of the book:
"And it came to pass in the fortieth year on the first day of the eleventh month, Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael in accordance with the instructions that God had given him for them [after he had defeated Sichon]" (1:3-4).

This third pasuk seems to form an introduction to Moshe's speech. But this only strengthens our questions on the first two psukim. Why doesn't the Sefer just begin with the third pasuk?

Indeed, one who never studied Sefer Devarim should find himself terribly confused when reading these psukim.

However, based on our shiur, it is possible to suggest a very simple explanation (that will find support in Ibn Ezra and Ramban as well).

A SUPER INTRO

Recall how the main speech (i.e. ne'um ha-mitzvot / chapters 5-26) forms the focal point of Sefer Devarim, including a lengthy set of mitzvot that Bnei Yisrael must keep as they enter the Land of Israel. As we explained, Moshe had first taught these mitzvot to Bnei Yisrael when he came down from Har Sinai with the second luchot (see Shmot 34:32). However, since these laws require constant repetition [mishneh torah], it would only make sense that Moshe would have taught them numerous times.

Recall as well that the Torah uses this very same word 'ha-devarim' to introduce the mitzvot of the main speech / see 6:6 -'ve-hayu ha-devarim ha-eileh asher anochi metzaveh "

Therefore, one can assume that the phrase 'eileh ha-devarim' (in 1:1) refers to the same mitzvot that 've-hayu ha-devarim' refers to in 6:6) i.e. to the mitzvot of the main speech!

If so, then the first pasuk of the Sefer introduces this main speech! Hence, the first two psukim of Sefer Devarim can be understood as follows:
"These are the devarim [i.e. the mitzvot of the main speech] that Moshe delivered in Arvot Mo'av, [just as he had already delivered a similar speech in] the midbar, and arava, opposite suf, between Paran and Tofel, and at Di-zahav. [Furthermore, these mitzvot were also taught by Moshe to Bnei Yisrael during] their eleven day journey from Har Chorev to Kadesh Barnea." [Then] in the fortieth year... Moshe taught these laws (one last time] after the defeat of Sichon..." (see Devarim 1:1-4)

[See commentary of Ibn Ezra on 1:1-2.]

This explanation fits in beautifully with both Ibn Ezra's & Ramban's interpretation of the word "devarim" in the first pasuk of Sefer Devarim, as both commentators explain that the word "devarim" refers specifically to the mitzvot that Moshe will teach later on in the main speech.
[Ramban explains that these devarim begin with the Ten commandments (i.e. from chapter 5), while Ibn Ezra explains that they begin with the chukim & mishpatim in Parshat Re'eh (see 12:1). The underlying reason for this controversy will be explained in our shiur on Parshat Va-etchanan. The reason why Rashi explains that devarim refers to the 'rebuke' will be discussed in our shiur on Parshat Ekev.]

When we consider this setting, the Torah's emphasis in the second pasuk on the eleven day journey from Har Sinai to Kadesh Barnea becomes quite significant. Recall, that this eleven day journey was supposed to have been Bnei Yisrael's final preparation before conquering the land (had they not sinned)! As such, Moshe found it necessary to teach and review these important laws several times during that journey. [Again, see Ibn Ezra inside.]

Now, in the fortieth year on the first day of the eleventh month, Bnei Yisrael find themselves in a very similar situation - making their final preparations for the conquest of the land. Therefore, Moshe gathers the people in Arvot Mo'av to teach and review these mitzvot one last time.

In this manner, the first four psukim of Sefer Devarim actually form the introduction to the main speech (chapters 5-26).

However, before Moshe begins that main speech, he

first makes an introductory speech that is introduced by 1:5 and continues until 4:40. That speech will be discussed iy"h in our next shiur (on Parshat Devarim).

Untill then,
shabbat shalom
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. FROM HAR SINAI TO SEFER DEVARIM

In our shiur, we showed how the main body of Sefer Devarim contains the mitzvot that Moshe Rabbeinu originally received on Har Sinai. However, Moshe received many other mitzvot on Har Sinai. Therefore, it appears that even though Moshe received all of the mitzvot on Har Sinai, each book of Chumash focuses on a different category. Therefore, the important question becomes - what characterizes the mitzvot found in other books of Chumash? Or, more directly, on what basis were the mitzvot distributed among the five books?

To answer this question, we simply need to review our conclusions from previous shiurim.

First of all, let's review the main themes of each Sefer that we have found thus far:

* BREISHIT - God's creation of the universe and His choice of Avraham Avinu and his offspring to become His special nation.
* SHMOT - The Exodus of Am Yisrael from Egypt; their journey to Har Sinai; Matan Torah; chet ha-egel, and building the mishkan.
* VAYIKRA - Torat kohanim, the laws relating to offering korbanot in the mishkan, and various other laws that help make Am Yisrael a holy nation.
* BAMIDBAR - Bnei Yisrael's journey from Har Sinai (with the mishkan at its center) towards the Promised Land; and why they didn't enter the Land.

With this in mind, let's see how the laws in Sefer Devarim may relate to what we have found thus far.

Recall that God's original intention was to take Bnei Yisrael out of Egypt, bring them to Har Sinai (to receive the Torah), and then immediately bring them to Eretz Canaan, where these mitzvot are to be observed.

At Har Sinai, Bnei Yisrael entered into a covenant and heard the Ten Commandments. As we explained, they should have received many more mitzvot after hearing the first Ten Commandments. However, they were overwhelmed by the awesome experience of Ma amad Har Sinai and thus requested that Moshe act as their intermediary.

It is difficult to ascertain the exact chronological order of the events following their request. However, by combining the parallel accounts of this event in Sefer Shmot (see 20:15-21:1, & 24:1-18) and Sefer Devarim (see chapter 5), we arrive at the following chronology:

* On the day of Ma'amad Har Sinai, God gives Moshe a special set of laws, better known as Parshat Mishpatim (i.e. 20:19-23:33), which Moshe later conveys to Bnei Yisrael (see 24:3-4). Moshe writes these mitzvot on a special scroll ['sefer ha-brit' (see 24:4-7)], and on the next morning he organizes a special gathering where Bnei Yisrael publicly declare their acceptance of these laws (and whatever may follow). This covenant is better known as 'brit na'aseh ve-nishma'. [See 24:5-11. We have followed Ramban's peirush; Rashi takes a totally different approach. See Ramban 24:1 for a more detailed presentation of their machloket.]
* After this ceremony, God summons Moshe to Har Sinai to receive the luchot & additional laws ['ha-Torah v-hamitzva'; see 24:12-13], and so Moshe remains on Har Sinai for 40 days and nights to learn these mitzvot. It is not clear precisely to what 'ha-Torah ve-hamitzva' refers, but we may logically assume that it is during these 40 days when Moshe receives the mitzvot he later records in Sefer Devarim. [Note the use of these key words in the introductory psukim of Sefer Devarim: Torah in Devarim 1:5, 4:44; ha-mitzva in 5:28 & 6:1.] [Moshe most likely received many other mitzvot as well during these forty days, possibly even the laws of the mishkan. (see famous machloket between Rashi & Ramban - and our shiur on Parshat Teruma.)]
* As a result of chet ha-egel, the original plan to immediately conquer the land of Israel requires some modification. Consequently, we never find out precisely which mitzvot were given to Moshe during the first forty days and which were transmitted during the last forty days. Either way, Bnei Yisrael themselves do not hear any of these mitzvot until Moshe descends with the second luchot on Yom Kippur (see Shmot 34:29-33). At this point, Moshe teaches Bnei Yisrael all the mitzvot he had received, though they are not recorded at that point in Sefer Shmot (see again Shmot 34:29-33).
* During the next six months, Bnei Yisrael build the mishkan and review the laws they had just received from Moshe. Once the mishkan is built in Nissan and the korban Pesach is offered (in Nissan & Iyar), Bnei Yisrael are ready to begin their 11 day journey from Har Sinai to Kadesh Barnea', the excursion that was to have begun their conquest of the land. Instead, the people fail with the incident of the meraglim, and the rest is history.

This background can help us appreciate how the mitzvot are divided up among the various sefarim of Chumash, even though most all of them were first given to Moshe at Har Sinai, or at the Mishkan in Midbar Sinai.

Let's discuss them, one book at a time:

SHMOT

Sefer Shmot records the Ten Commandments and Parshat Mishpatim since they comprise an integral part of Ma'amad Har Sinai, i.e. the covenantal ceremony in which Bnei Yisrael accept the Torah. Although Sefer Shmot continues with the story of Moshe's ascent to Har Sinai, it does not record the specific mitzvot that he received during those forty days! Instead, the remainder of Sefer Shmot focuses entirely on those mitzvot relating to the atonement for chet ha-egel (34:10-29) and the construction of the mishkan (chapters 25-31, & 35-40 / plus the laws of Shabbat which relate to building the mishkan).

The exclusive focus on these laws at the end of Sefer Shmot is well understood. The theme of the second half of Sefer Shmot revolves around the issue of whether or not God's Shchina can remain within the camp of Bnei Yisrael. Whereas the mishkan provides a solution to this dilemma, its taking center-stage in the latter part of Sefer Shmot is to be expected. [See Ramban s introduction to Sefer Shmot, ve-akmal.]

What about the rest of the mitzvot transmitted to Moshe on Har Sinai?

As we will see, some surface in Sefer Vayikra, others in Sefer Bamidbar, and the main group appears in Sefer Devarim!

VAYIKRA

Even though Sefer Vayikra opens with the laws given from the ohel mo'ed (see 1:1), many of its mitzvot had already been presented on Har Sinai. This is explicit in Parshat Tzav (see 7:37-38); Parshat Behar (see 25:1); and Parshat Bechukotai (see 26:46 & 27:34). Certain parshiyot of mitzvot

such as Acharei Mot obviously must also have been given from the ohel mo'ed, but there is good reason to suggest that many of its other mitzvot, such as Parshat Kedoshim, were first given on Har Sinai.

So why are certain mitzvot of Har Sinai included in Sefer Vayikra? The answer is quite simple. Sefer Vayikra is a collection of mitzvot dealing with the mishkan, korbanot and the kedusha of Am Yisrael. Sefer Vayikra, better known as torat kohanim, simply contains all those parshiyot that contain mitzvot associated with its theme. Some were given to Moshe on Har Sinai, while others were transmitted from the ohel mo'ed. [See previous shiurim on Sefer Vayikra for more detail on this topic.]

BAMIDBAR

Sefer Bamidbar, we explained, is primarily the narrative describing Bnei Yisrael's journey from Har Sinai towards Eretz Canaan. As we explained in our shiurim on Sefer Bamidbar, that narrative is 'interrupted' by various parshiyot of mitzvot, which seem to have belonged in Sefer Vayikra. [For example: nazir, sota, challa, nsachim, tzitzit, tum'at meit, korbanot tmidim u-musafim, etc.] These mitzvot were probably first given to Moshe on Har Sinai (or some possibly from the ohel mo'ed, as well). Nonetheless, they are included in Sefer Bamidbar because of their thematic connection to its narrative.

DEVARIM

Now we can better understand Sefer Devarim. The books of Shmot, Vayikra, and Bamidbar contained only a limited sampling of the mitzvot that God had given to Moshe on Har Sinai, each Sefer recording only those mitzvot related to its theme. Sefer Devarim, as it turns out, is really our primary source of the mitzvot taught to Moshe on Har Sinai. As we explained above, this is exactly what chapter 5 indicates. [Recall that chapter 5 is the introductory chapter of Moshe's main speech, the presentation of the mitzva, chukim & mishpatim.]

Expectedly, these mitzvot of Har Sinai recorded in Sefer Devarim are presented in an organized fashion and share a common theme. To identify that common theme, let's take a look once again at the introduction to this collection of mitzvot:

"And this ('ve-zot') is the mitzva, chukim & mishpatim that God has commanded me to teach you to be observed in the land which you are about to enter..." (6:1-3 / see also 5:28).

The mitzvot of Moshe's main speech are simply a guide for Bnei Yisrael s conduct as they conquer and settle the land. [As we study the Sefer, this theme will become quite evident.] Therefore, practically speaking, this speech contains the most important mitzvot that Bnei Yisrael must follow as they enter the Land and establish their society. As these laws are so important, they must be studied 'over and over' again [= mishneh Torah].

Hence, it is only logical that Moshe decides to teach these mitzvot at a national gathering (as he is about to die and Bnei Yisrael are about to enter the Land). This also explains why these mitzvot will be taught once again on Har Eival, after Bnei Yisrael cross the Jordan (see Devarim chapter 27), and then again thereafter, once every seven years at the hakhel ceremony (see 31:9-13; notice the word Torah once again!).

B. BETWEEN THE NARRATIVES IN DEVARIM & BAMIDBAR

This understanding of the purpose and theme of each sefer helps explain the many discrepancies between the details of various events as recorded in Shmot and Bamidbar, and their parallel accounts in Sefer Devarim. (A classic example is chet ha-meraglim.) Neither book records all the details of any particular event; instead, each sefer records the events from the unique perspective of its own theme and purpose.

In the shiurim to follow, this understanding of the nature of Sefer Devarim will guide our study of each individual Parsha. Our shiur on Parshat Devarim (to follow) will be a direct continuation of this shiur. Till then,

C. TORAH SHE-BA'AL PEH

In the above shiur, we showed how the various mitzvot that Moshe received on Har Sinai are distributed among the various sefarim of Chumash, based on the theme of each Sefer. What about the mitzvot which Moshe received on Har Sinai that, for one reason or other, 'never made it' into Chumash? One could suggest that this is what we call 'halacha le-Mosheh mi-Sinai' in Torah she-ba'al peh (the Oral Law). This suggestion offers a very simple explanation of how the laws that Moshe received on Har Sinai are divided up between the Oral Law and the Written Law. Based on our shiur, that Moshe must have received many other laws on Har Sinai which were not included in any sefer in Chumash is almost pshat!

Obviously, the division between what became the Oral Law and the Written Law was divinely mandated and not accidental. Our above explanation simply makes it easier to understand how this division first developed. It also helps us understand why Torah she-ba'al peh is no less obligatory than Torah she-bichtav.

[See also Ibn Ezra to Shmot 24:12, re:"ha-Torah ve-hamitzva...," which may refer to the Written and Oral Laws.]

Furthermore, the prominent view in Chazal that all the mitzvot were first given on Har Sinai, repeated from the ohel mo'ed, and then given one last time at Arvot Mo'av. Our discussion shows how this statement actually reflects the 'simple pshat' in Chumash, once one pays attention to the story that Moshe tells as he begins his main speech in Sefer Devarim!

PARSHAT DEVARIM

[shiur revised 5765]

Why are there so many details in Parshat Devarim that appear to contradict what was written earlier in Chumash?

[For example, the story of: the "meraglim" (1:22-40 vs. Bamidbar 13:1-22), whose idea it was to appoint the judges (see 1:12-18 vs. Shmot 18:13-26), and how we confronted Edom in the fortieth year (see 2:4-8 vs. Bamidbar 20:14-).

In contrast to the 'heretical' solutions offered by the 'bible critics' - in the following shiur we suggest a very simple and logical reason for these discrepancies - based on our understanding of the overall theme and structure of Sefer Devarim, as discussed in our introductory shiur.

Therefore, we must begin our shiur with a quick review of the conclusions of that shiur - in order to understand the purpose of Moshe Rabeinu's first speech, which comprises the bulk of Parshat Devarim.

[If you didn't read that shiur, it is available on the web-site at www.tanach.org/dvarim/dvarint.pdf.]

INTRODUCTION

In the first four chapters of Sefer Devarim, Moshe Rabeinu delivers a speech to Bnei Yisrael, which serves as an introduction to his 'speech of Mitzvot' - the main speech (chapters 5 thru 26).

In that 'main speech', Moshe teaches a complete set of laws that Bnei Yisrael must keep as they conquer the Land, and establish their nation. Even though Moshe first received (and taught) those laws forty years earlier, he must teach them one last time, before his death - as the new generation now prepares to enter the Land.

Our shiur will demonstrate how the first speech introduces the main speech, which will then enable us to explain why its details may differ from their parallel accounts in Sefer Shmot and Bamidbar.

We begin our study by noting how and where the first speech begins.

THE OPENING LINE

In our introductory shiur, we explained how the first four psukim of Parshat Devarim (1:1-4) serve as an intro to the entire book, and hence introduce the main speech (that doesn't begin until chapter five). It is specifically the fifth pasuk that introduces the first speech:

"In Transjordan in Moav, - "ho'eel Moshe" - Moshe BEGAN explaining this TORAH saying:Y" (See 1:5, and Rashi!)

[The phrase "ha'Torah ha'zot" refers to the main speech (that begins in chapter five), as Sefer Devarim consistently uses the word "torah" in this context - see 4:44, 17:18 and 27:3 & 8.]

Hence, the next pasuk begins the actual speech - with Moshe telling Bnei Yisrael:

"Hashem spoke unto us in Chorev [=Har Sinai] saying: 'You have dwelt long enough in this mountain; "turn you, and take your journey, and go to the hill-country of the Amorites and unto all the places... the land of the Canaanites,as far as the great river, the river Euphrates. "

Behold, I am giving you the land: **go in and possess it**, which Hashem swore unto your forefathers..." (see 1:6-8)

When Moshe begins his speech by retelling how Bnei Yisrael left Har Sinai, it may appear that he is simply beginning a short historical review of everything that happened during their journey in the desert. However, as we read on, we'll see how the details that Moshe Rabeinu recalls, relate directly to the topic of the main speech. Let's explain why he begins with 'leaving Har Sinai'.

DEJA - VU

Recall that the mitzvot of the main speech were first given to Moshe at Har Sinai, and they were taught at that time, because Bnei Yisrael were supposed to travel from Har Sinai directly to the Land of Israel. Now, it is forty years later, and the new generation is in a very similar situation, i.e. ready to enter the land. Just as Moshe had taught their parents' generation these laws at Har Sinai - now he is teaching the new generation.

As the laws of the main speech relate to what Bnei Yisrael must do when they enter the land, Moshe begins his speech by explaining to the nation why forty years have passed since these laws were first given.

[Note that even though this may sound like a similar account Parshat Yitro (see Shmot 18:13-26), based on the context, the primary parallel is to Bamidbar chapter 11. See also Ibn Ezra (and Rashi) in Shmot 18:13, who explain that this story of the appointment of judges actually took place after the Torah was given, and hence, that chapter is out of place. Note as well how Shmot 18:27 may be parallel to Bamidbar 10:29-33!]

But what is the thematic importance of Moshe's discussion about the appointment of these judges? Even if those events took place 'at that same time' [see 1:9], these details don't appear to share any thematic connection to the story of the spies, nor to the laws of main speech! So why does Moshe mention it at all?

This neatly explains why the story of the spies emerges as the primary topic of chapter one (see 1:19-45) - for that sin was the principal reason for this forty year delay. [If Sefer Devarim was a simply a review of Chumash, then there are many other stories that Moshe should have mentioned beforehand!]

However, before Moshe retells the story of the spies, he inserts a short 'digression' regarding the appointment of judges, as detailed in 1:9-18, which at first glance appears to be superfluous.

Let's take a look at what this 'digression' includes; afterward we will suggest a reason for its inclusion.

WHAT DO JUDGES HAVE TO DO WITH ALL THIS?

Review 1:6-22, noting how it would have made much more sense for Moshe to go from 1:8 directly to 1:19 (please verify this on your own). Nonetheless, this more logical flow is 'interrupted' by what appears to be an unrelated statement:

"And I spoke unto you 'at that time', saying: 'I am not able to lead by myself..." (1:9)

Moshe's statement, even though it sounds at first bit negative, does not have to be understood as a complaint. In fact, the next two lines come precisely to counter that impression:

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[btw, note the parallels to Breishit 15:5-7!]

Moshe's inability to carry the burden of the entire nation stemmed from their population growth, which Moshe now explains was the fulfillment of a divine blessing.

In fact, based on the context of 1:6-8, the phrase "b'et ha'hi" [at that time] in 1:9 must relate to the time when Bnei Yisrael first left Har Sinai - as recorded in chapter 11 in Sefer Bamidbar. And sure enough, we find almost that identical wording in a statement that Moshe had made precisely 'at that time':

"lo uchal anochi l'vadi la'set et kol ha'am..." - I myself am not able to lead this nation... (see Bamidbar 11:14!)

In response to Moshe's 'complaint', God commanded Moshe to share his leadership with the 'seventy elders' (see Bamidbar 11:16-29). That response is reflected in Moshe next statement in his speech in Sefer Devarim, explaining how his burden of leadership was alleviated by the appointment of judges, in a hierarchal system of leadership:

"How can I alone bear your cumbrance, and burden, and disputes? [Therefore,] Get you, from each one of your tribes, wise men, and understanding, and full of knowledge, and I will make them heads over you... So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men, and full of knowledge, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, and captains of hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens, and officers, tribe by tribe. And I charged your judges at that time, saying: 'Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge righteously between a man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him... and the case that is too hard, you shall bring unto me, and I will hear it'. (See 1:12-17.)

JUDGES AND/OR TEACHERS

The answer to this question lies in the next (and final) pasuk of this 'digression':

"And I commanded **you** [the people] 'at that time' - et kol ha'DEVARIM - all the things which you should do." (see 1:18)

Pay attention to the phrase "va'atzave **etchem**" - which must refer to the people, and not the judges.

[You can prove this by simply comparing "v'atzave **et shofteichem**" in 1:16, to "v'atzave **etchem**" in 1:18!]

This short pasuk, even though it is often 'overlooked', connects everything together. Moshe explains that at that time, i.e. after appointing the judges, as Bnei Yisrael prepared to leave Har Sinai, he had commanded the people in regard to all the - DEVARIM - which they must do.

But what are those 'DEVARIM'?

Based on our introductory shiur, the answer should be obvious! These are the same '**devarim**' that:

- the opening pasuk of Sefer Devarim refers to (see 1:1)
- "v'hayu ha'devarim ha'eyleh" refers to (see 6:6)
- which are none other than the laws of the main speech of Sefer Devarim! [See Ibn Ezra & Chizkuni on 1:18.]

This makes perfect sense, for that special set of laws (that require constant repetition /"mishne Torah") relate to what Bnei Yisrael will need to keep when they enter the land. Therefore, when Bnei Yisrael first left Har Sinai forty years earlier, Moshe had taught the people these laws - **with the help of these judges;** and now forty years later, he reminds the people of those events, as he is about to teach them those laws one last time.

As it is the responsibility of the appointed judges to assist with the teaching of these laws (and their implementation /see 27:1-8!), Moshe includes those events at the beginning of his introductory speech.

Unfortunately, that generation failed. It is now Moshe's hope [and goal], that this generation will fare much better.

As Moshe's introductory speech focuses on Bnei Yisrael's need to be prepared for their conquest of the land, and their need to study the relevant laws, it actually makes sense that he mentions the appointment of judges first - for they will be the key towards the success of this endeavor. [Note as well 16:18 in the main speech.]

Finally, this interpretation of the word "devarim" in 1:18, explains why Moshe continues his speech by returning to their journey from Chorev to Kadesh Barnea (see1:19). Based on our understanding that 1:2 describes how the laws of the main speech were taught and studied during the eleven day journey from Chorev to Kadesh Barnea (see Ibn Ezra), then the detail in 1:18-19 refer to this very same point!

WHERE'S YITRO?

This interpretation can also explain why Yitro himself is not mentioned in this speech. Even though Devarim 1:15-17 may sound very similar to Shmot 18:14-22, the purpose of Moshe's speech is not to give a complete historical review of every event that transpired in the desert. Instead, it focuses on this special set of laws that Moshe is about to teach.

Therefore, there is no need to mention (at this time) whose original idea it may have been to set up this hierarchal judicial system. Instead, it is important to know that the judicial system that has been set up is there to serve the people, and it will facilitate their ability to establish themselves as God's nation in the land. [See again 27:1-8, noting again the parallel to Bamidbar chapter 11.]

WHO SENT THE SPIES?

Moshe continues his speech with the story of the "meraglim" [the spies]. As we explained, his purpose is to explain to the new generation why the first generation failed, in hope that they will

To summarize, we have shown the underlying logic behind the flow of topic in Moshe's opening speech (through at least the middle of chapter two), by considering the purpose of that speech .

THE PEP-TALK

Let's show now how the next section of this speech forms a reasonable continuation for this 'pep talk'.

In contrast to all the events that people may have viewed as a sign of fare better. Therefore, Moshe retells those events from that perspective, blaming the people (more than their leaders) for the failure of that generation - for he wants to make sure that the people do not become fearful again (as their parents did).

Note how critical this point is; for if one understands Sefer Devarim as a review of Chumash, then he is confronted with unachievable task of resolving the obvious contradictions between these two accounts. However, once it is understood that Moshe is telling over those events as part of a 'pep-talk', it makes perfect sense that he emphasizes only the details that are relevant to the theme of his speech.

For example, as leadership is an underlying theme is Sefer Bamidbar, Parshat Shelach highlights the fault of the nation's leaders in those events. In contrast, as Moshe is worried that the nation may 'chicken out' once again, he will emphasize that generation's fear and lack of faith & motivation.

[To ascertain what really happened would require a lot of 'detective' work, but recording those events in their entirety was neither the goal of Sefer Bamidbar nor Sefer Devarim!

You could compare this to twoTV cameras (one in the end zone and one on the sideline) filming a football game. Even though each camera is filming the same game, each one only shows the game for its own angle.]

THE MAAPILIM

Moshe includes the story of the "maapilim" (see 1:40-45), for it forms the conclusion of the "mergalim" incident. However that specific story, and those that follow, may have been included for an additional reason.

Moshe Rabeinu seems to be quite fearful (and rightly so) that the nation may 'chicken out' once again. In fact, realistically speaking, the people have some very good reasons to worry. Let's review them.

First of all, the last time they tried to conquer the land of Israel (see Bamidbar 14:40-45), they suffered a whopping defeat. Now Moshe may have explained that this was because God was not in their midst. However, surely the skeptics among them may have retorted that the very idea of conquering the land of Canaan was futile from the start (see Bamidbar13:31-33).

Furthermore, only less than a year earlier, the entire Israelite nation was challenged by the army of Edom, demanding that they not dare trespass their land (see Bamidbar 20:14-21). Instead of fighting, Moshe led them though a lengthy 'by-pass road'. Surely, many of the 'right-wingers' among the people viewed this as a sign of weakness. If they couldn't stand up to the threats of Edom, how could they stand up to the threats of all the nations of Canaan!

Finally, it may look a little suspicious that Moshe's encouraging words that the time has now come to conquer the land just so happens to coincide with his announcement of retirement!

Any (or all) of the above reasons may have raised doubts among the people. Therefore, in his opening speech, Moshe must allay these fears by explaining the divine reason for those actions:

1) The 'maapllim' lost because God was not in their midst (see 1:42)
2) We didn't trespass Edom, for 'family' reasons (see 2:4-8)
3) We didn't trespass Moav for similar reasons (see 2:9-12)
4) We waited forty years because of "chet ha'mergalim (see 2:13-17)
5) We didn=t' attack Amon for divine reasons as well (see 2:18-23)

weakness, Moshe now goes into minute detail of how Bnei Yisrael achieved remarkable success in their military campaign against Sichon & Og (see 2:24 thru 3:20).

Note how in Moshe's account of the war against Sichon and Og, we find many more details than were recorded in Sefer Bamidbar. The reason why is simple, for that battle is Moshe's best proof (for this new generation) that God is indeed capable of helping them, and hence - 'no need to fear'.

Even the settlement of the two and half tribes in Transjordan (see 3:12-20) is presented in a positive light, for it provides addition support to Moshe's claim that it is indeed possible to successfully conquer the mighty nations of Canaan. Moshe presents those events to show that battle against Canaan has already begun, and thus far has been quite successful! Crossing the Jordan, and entering the land won't be something 'new', but rather a continuation of the task that has already been partially fulfilled.

Simply note, how Moshe concludes this section of this speech with these words of encouragement:

> "And I commanded Yehoshua at that time, saying: '**Your own eyes have seen** all that Hashem has done unto these two kings; so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms where you go. You shall not fear them; for the LORD your God, He it is that fights for you." (see 3:21-22)

In case you didn't notice, we've already reached the conclusion of Parshat Devarim.

In Parshat Ve'etchanan, Moshe will continue this speech, by explaining why he himself will not be coming with them (once again, for divine reasons/ see 3:23-27).

Iy"h we will continue this study of Moshe's opening speech next week.

Till then,

shabbat shalom
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

1. Based on the shiur, attempt to explain the actual differences between the Torah's account of "chet ha'meraglim" here in Sefer Devarim and in Parshat Shelach.

2. Compare the account of the Bnei Yisrael's battle against Sichon and Og here in contrast to the account in Parshat Chukat. Explain why the account in Devarim lays more emphasis on the nature of these battles as conquest.

3. Recall our study of 1:9, and the phrase "ba'et ha'hee":

> "And I told you AT THAT TIME saying: 'I can no longer carry the burden of leading you by MYSELF." (1:9)

Even though this may sound like Yitro's observation that Moshe is working too hard (see Shmot 18:13-18), it can't be for two simple reasons:

1) Moshe says that it was his own complaint.

2) The pasuk says "b'et ha'hee" - AT THAT TIME, i.e. the time that they left Har Sinai on their journey to Eretz Canaan, and Yitro came almost a year earlier (or at least some six months earlier, see Rashi Shmot 18:13).

However, there is a much better source in Parshat B'haalotcha that matches this pasuk not only chronologically, but also thematically and textually! Recall that immediately after Bnei Yisrael left Har Sinai (note Bamidbar 10:33-36), we encountered the sin of the "mitavim" (see Bamidbar 11:1-10). Let's take a look now at Moshe's reaction to that sin:

> "And Moshe said to God: Why have you been so evil to me by putting the BURDEN of leading this people ("masa ha'am") upon me! Did I give birth to themY I MYSELF CAN NO LONGER CARRY THE BURDEN [to lead] this nation for it is too much for meY" (see 11:11-15)

Note how (1) this story takes place "ba'et ha'hee" - at this exact time - as Bnei Yisrael leave Har Sinai on their journey. (2) Moshe Rabeinu himself complains that he can no longer carry the burden of their leadership; and (3) we find the identical Hebrew words "lo

> your punishment should you not follow these forthcoming mitzvot, and the eternal option to do 'teshuva'.

> uchal anochi L'VADI LA'SET et kol ha'am ha'zeh" (Bamidbar 11:14/ compare Devarim 1:9)!

Furthermore, recall God's reaction to Moshe's complaint - He takes from Moshe's spirit ["ruach"] and divides it among the seventy elders of Israel, i.e. the nation's religious leadership. Thematically, this fits in very nicely with Moshe's opening speech, for now (in Sefer Devarim) we find Moshe's leadership being passed on to a new generation of leaders. Furthermore, it is precisely the job of these national leaders to teach and clarify the laws that Moshe will now teach them in his main speech. As noted in 1:18:

> "And I commanded you at that time - all of the DEVARIM that you must do."

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A SUMMARY OF THE FIRST SPEECH

The following outline reviews the main points of the first speech. It can serve as a review of this week's shiur, and preparation for next week's shiur:

A) INTRO

1:1-5 Opening narrative explaining background of the main speech. (what, when, where, etc.).

[the 'double introdcution']

B) FROM HAR SINAI TO ARVOT MOAV

The reason for the 40-year delay.

1:6-11 The original trip from Har Sinai to Eretz Yisrael, (what should have happened back then, instead of now).

1:12-18 Moshe's leadership shared with the elders etc. (they will help lead, judge, and teach the laws)

1:19-40 "Chet ha'Meraglim" - the REASON why that generation did not enter the Land, and why forty years have passed.

[Accented in this account is not to fear nations of Canaan like the previous generation had feared them.]

2:1-23 The journey from Kadesh, around Har Seir until Nachal Zared. The death of "Dor HaMidbar" (2:14-16)

Explaining why Edom, Moav & Amon were not trespassed.

[Edom, Moav, and Amon were not attacked due to a divine command and NOT because Bnei Yisrael were not able to fight them!]

2:24-30 The challenge of Sichon to battle, God's involvement /2:30)

2:31-3:22 The war against Sichon, and Og King of Bashan, Conquest of most of Transjordan, Inheritance of Reuven and Gad, and Menashe', and their promise to assist in the conquest of Canaan.

[Note God's assurance to assist the people, based on these events in 3:20-22.]

3:23-29 Moshe's final request to see the Land.

C) INTRODUCTION TO THE MITZVOT

4:1-24 General principles regarding mitzvot in forthcoming speech,

i.e. not to add or take away, their purpose- to be a example for other nations, not to worship God through any type of intermediary after Moshe dies.

4:25-40 a 'mini- tochacha',

4:41-49 - A short narrative

explaining how Moshe designated the three cities of refuge in Transjordan, followed by several introductory psukim for the forthcoming main

speech.]

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[shiur revised 5765]

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In fact, based on the context of 1:6-8, the phrase "b'et ha'hi" [at that time] in 1:9 must relate to the time when Bnei Yisrael first left Har Sinai - as recorded in chapter 11 in Sefer Bamidbar. And sure enough, we find almost that identical wording in a statement that Moshe had made precisely 'at that time':

"lo uchal anochi l'vadi la'set et kol ha'am..." - I myself am not able to lead this nation... (see Bamidbar 11:14!)

In response to Moshe's 'complaint', God commanded Moshe to share his leadership with the 'seventy elders' (see Bamidbar 11:16-29). That response is reflected in Moshe next statement in his speech in Sefer Devarim, explaining how his burden of leadership was alleviated by the appointment of judges, in a hierarchal system of leadership:

"How can I alone bear your cumbrance, and burden, and disputes? [Therefore,] Get you, from each one of your tribes, wise men, and understanding, and full of knowledge, and I will make them heads over you... So I took the heads of your tribes, wise men, and full of knowledge, and made them heads over you, captains of thousands, and captains of

hundreds, and captains of fifties, and captains of tens, and officers, tribe by tribe. And I charged your judges at that time, saying: 'Hear the causes between your brethren, and judge

[Note that even though this may sound like a similar account Parshat Yitro (see Shmot 18:13-26), based on the context, the primary parallel is to Bamidbar chapter 11. See also Ibn Ezra (and Rashi) in Shmot 18:13, who explain that this story of the appointment of judges actually took place after the Torah was given, and hence, that chapter is out of place. Note as well how Shmot 18:27 may be parallel to Bamidbar 10:29-33!]

But what is the thematic importance of Moshe's discussion about the appointment of these judges? Even if those events took place 'at that same time' [see 1:9], these details don't appear to share any thematic connection to the story of the spies, nor to the laws of main speech! So why does Moshe mention it at all?

JUDGES AND/OR TEACHERS

The answer to this question lies in the next (and final) pasuk of this 'digression':

"And I commanded **you** [the people] 'at that time' - et kol ha'DEVARIM - all the things which you should do." (see 1:18)

Pay attention to the phrase "va'atzave **etchem**" - which must refer to the people, and not the judges.

[You can prove this by simply comparing "v'atzave **et shofteichem**" in 1:16, to "v'atzave **etchem**" in 1:18!]

This short pasuk, even though it is often 'overlooked', connects everything together. Moshe explains that at that time, i.e. after appointing the judges, as Bnei Yisrael prepared to leave Har Sinai, he had commanded the people in regard to all the - DEVARIM - which they must do.

But what are those 'DEVARIM'?

Based on our introductory shiur, the answer should be obvious! These are the same '**devarim**' that:

- the opening pasuk of Sefer Devarim refers to (see 1:1)
- "v'hayu ha'devarim ha'eyleh" refers to (see 6:6)
- which are none other than the laws of the main speech of Sefer Devarim! [See Ibn Ezra & Chizkuni on 1:18.]

This makes perfect sense, for that special set of laws (that require constant repetition /"mishne Torah") relate to what Bnei Yisrael will need to keep when they enter the land. Therefore, when Bnei Yisrael first left Har Sinai forty years earlier, Moshe had taught the people these laws - **with the help of these judges;** and now forty years later, he reminds the people of those events, as he is about to teach them those laws one last time.

As it is the responsibility of the appointed judges to assist with the teaching of these laws (and their implementation /see 27:1-8!), Moshe includes those events at the beginning of his introductory speech.

Unfortunately, that generation failed. It is now Moshe's hope [and goal], that this generation will fare much better.

As Moshe's introductory speech focuses on Bnei Yisrael's need to be prepared for their conquest of the land, and their need to study the relevant laws, it actually makes sense that he mentions the appointment of judges first - for they will be the key towards the success of this endeavor. [Note as well 16:18 in the main speech.]

Finally, this interpretation of the word "devarim" in 1:18, explains why Moshe continues his speech by returning to their journey from Chorev to Kadesh Barnea (see1:19). Based on our understanding that 1:2 describes how the laws of the main speech were taught and studied during the eleven day journey from Chorev to Kadesh Barnea (see Ibn Ezra), then the detail in

righteously between a man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him... and the case that is too hard, you shall bring unto me, and I will hear it'. (See 1:12-17.)

1:18-19 refer to this very same point!

WHERE'S YITRO?

This interpretation can also explain why Yitro himself is not mentioned in this speech. Even though Devarim 1:15-17 may sound very similar to Shmot 18:14-22, the purpose of Moshe's speech is not to give a complete historical review of every event that transpired in the desert. Instead, it focuses on this special set of laws that Moshe is about to teach.

Therefore, there is no need to mention (at this time) whose original idea it may have been to set up this hierarchal judicial system. Instead, it is important to know that the judicial system that has been set up is there to serve the people, and it will facilitate their ability to establish themselves as God's nation in the land. [See again 27:1-8, noting again the parallel to Bamidbar chapter 11.]

WHO SENT THE SPIES?

Moshe continues his speech with the story of the "meraglim" [the spies]. As we explained, his purpose is to explain to the new generation why the first generation failed, in hope that they will fare better. Therefore, Moshe retells those events from that perspective, blaming the people (more than their leaders) for the failure of that generation - for he wants to make sure that the people do not become fearful again (as their parents did).

Note how critical this point is; for if one understands Sefer Devarim as a review of Chumash, then he is confronted with unachievable task of resolving the obvious contradictions between these two accounts. However, once it is understood that Moshe is telling over those events as part of a 'pep-talk', it makes perfect sense that he emphasizes only the details that are relevant to the theme of his speech.

For example, as leadership is an underlying theme is Sefer Bamidbar, Parshat Shelach highlights the fault of the nation's leaders in those events. In contrast, as Moshe is worried that the nation may 'chicken out' once again, he will emphasize that generation's fear and lack of faith & motivation.

[To ascertain what really happened would require a lot of 'detective' work, but recording those events in their entirety was neither the goal of Sefer Bamidbar nor Sefer Devarim!

You could compare this to twoTV cameras (one in the end zone and one on the sideline) filming a football game. Even though each camera is filming the same game, each one only shows the game for its own angle.]

THE MAAPILIM

Moshe includes the story of the "maapilim" (see 1:40-45), for it forms the conclusion of the "mergalim" incident. However that specific story, and those that follow, may have been included for an additional reason.

Moshe Rabeinu seems to be quite fearful (and rightly so) that the nation may 'chicken out' once again. In fact, realistically speaking, the people have some very good reasons to worry. Let's review them.

First of all, the last time they tried to conquer the land of Israel (see Bamidbar 14:40-45), they suffered a whopping defeat. Now Moshe may have explained that this was because God was not in their midst. However, surely the skeptics among them may have retorted that the very idea of conquering the land of Canaan was futile from the start (see Bamidbar13:31-33).

Furthermore, only less than a year earlier, the entire Israelite nation was challenged by the army of Edom, demanding that they not dare trespass their land (see Bamidbar 20:14-21). Instead of fighting, Moshe led them though a lengthy 'by-pass road'. Surely, many of the 'right-wingers' among the people viewed this as a sign of weakness. If they couldn't stand up to the threats of Edom, how could they stand up to the threats of all the nations of Canaan!

Finally, it may look a little suspicious that Moshe's

encouraging words that the time has now come to conquer the land just so happens to coincide with his announcement of retirement!

Any (or all) of the above reasons may have raised doubts among the people. Therefore, in his opening speech, Moshe must allay these fears by explaining the divine reason for those actions:
1) The 'maapllim' lost because God was not in their midst (see 1:42)
2) We didn't trespass Edom, for 'family' reasons (see 2:4-8)
3) We didn't trespass Moav for similar reasons (see 2:9-12)
4) We waited forty years because of "chet ha'mergalim (see 2:13-17)
5) We didn=t' attack Amon for divine reasons as well (see 2:18-23)

To summarize, we have shown the underlying logic behind the flow of topic in Moshe's opening speech (through at least the middle of chapter two), by considering the purpose of that speech .

THE PEP-TALK

Let's show now how the next section of this speech forms a reasonable continuation for this 'pep talk'.

In contrast to all the events that people may have viewed as a sign of weakness, Moshe now goes into minute detail of how Bnei Yisrael achieved remarkable success in their military campaign against Sichon & Og (see 2:24 thru 3:20).

Note how in Moshe's account of the war against Sichon and Og, we find many more details than were recorded in Sefer Bamidbar. The reason why is simple, for that battle is Moshe's best proof (for this new generation) that God is indeed capable of helping them, and hence - 'no need to fear'.

Even the settlement of the two and half tribes in Transjordan (see 3:12-20) is presented in a positive light, for it provides addition support to Moshe's claim that it is indeed possible to successfully conquer the mighty nations of Canaan. Moshe presents those events to show that battle against Canaan has already begun, and thus far has been quite successful! Crossing the Jordan, and entering the land won't be something 'new', but rather a continuation of the task that has already been partially fulfilled.

Simply note, how Moshe concludes this section of this speech with these words of encouragement:

> "And I commanded Yehoshua at that time, saying: '**Your own eyes have seen** all that Hashem has done unto these two kings; so shall the LORD do unto all the kingdoms where you go. You shall not fear them; for the LORD your God, He it is that fights for you." (see 3:21-22)

In case you didn't notice, we've already reached the conclusion of Parshat Devarim.

In Parshat Ve'etchanan, Moshe will continue this speech, by explaining why he himself will not be coming with them (once again, for divine reasons/ see 3:23-27).

Iy"h we will continue this study of Moshe's opening speech next week.

Till then,

shabbat shalom
menachem

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FOR FURTHER IYUN

1. Based on the shiur, attempt to explain the actual differences between the Torah's account of "chet ha'meraglim" here in Sefer Devarim and in Parshat Shelach.

2. Compare the account of the Bnei Yisrael's battle against Sichon and Og here in contrast to the account in Parshat Chukat. Explain why the account in Devarim lays more emphasis on the nature of these battles as conquest.

3. Recall our study of 1:9, and the phrase "ba'et ha'hee":

> "And I told you AT THAT TIME saying: 'I can no longer carry the burden of leading you by MYSELF." (1:9)

Even though this may sound like Yitro's observation that Moshe is working too hard (see Shmot 18:13-18), it can't be for two simple reasons:

1) Moshe says that it was his own complaint.

2) The pasuk says "b'et ha'hee" - AT THAT TIME, i.e. the time that they left Har Sinai on their journey to Eretz Canaan, and Yitro came almost a year earlier (or at least some six months earlier, see Rashi Shmot 18:13).

However, there is a much better source in Parshat B'haalotcha that matches this pasuk not only chronologically, but also thematically and textually! Recall that immediately after Bnei Yisrael left Har Sinai (note Bamidbar 10:33-36), we encountered the sin of the "mitavim" (see Bamidbar 11:1-10). Let's take a look now at Moshe's reaction to that sin:

> "And Moshe said to God: Why have you been so evil to me by putting the BURDEN of leading this people ("masa ha'am") upon me! Did I give birth to themי I MYSELF CAN NO LONGER CARRY THE BURDEN [to lead] this nation for it is too much for meי" (see 11:11-15)

Note how (1) this story takes place "ba'et ha'hee" - at this exact time - as Bnei Yisrael leave Har Sinai on their journey. (2) Moshe Rabeinu himself complains that he can no longer carry the burden of their leadership; and (3) we find the identical Hebrew words "lo uchal anochi L'VADI LA'SET et kol ha'am ha'zeh" (Bamidbar 11:14/ compare Devarim 1:9)!

Furthermore, recall God's reaction to Moshe's complaint - He takes from Moshe's spirit ["ruach"] and divides it among the seventy elders of Israel, i.e. the nation's religious leadership. Thematically, this fits in very nicely with Moshe's opening speech, for now (in Sefer Devarim) we find Moshe's leadership being passed on to a new generation of leaders. Furthermore, it is precisely the job of these national leaders to teach and clarify the laws that Moshe will now teach them in his main speech. As noted in 1:18:

> "And I commanded you at that time - all of the DEVARIM that you must do."

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A SUMMARY OF THE FIRST SPEECH

The following outline reviews the main points of the first speech. It can serve as a review of this week's shiur, and preparation for next week's shiur:

A) INTRO

1:1-5 Opening narrative explaining background of the main speech. (what, when, where, etc.).

[the 'double introdcution']

B) FROM HAR SINAI TO ARVOT MOAV

The reason for the 40-year delay.

1:6-11 The original trip from Har Sinai to Eretz Yisrael, (what should have happened back then, instead of now).

1:12-18 Moshe's leadership shared with the elders etc. (they will help lead, judge, and teach the laws)

1:19-40 "Chet ha'Meraglim" - the REASON why that generation did not enter the Land, and why forty years have passed.
[Accented in this account is not to fear nations of Canaan like the previous generation had feared them.]

2:1-23 The journey from Kadesh, around Har Seir until Nachal Zared. The death of "Dor HaMidbar" (2:14-16)

Explaining why Edom, Moav & Amon were not trespassed.
[Edom, Moav, and Amon were not attacked due to a divine

command and NOT because Bnei Yisrael were not able to fight them!]

2:24-30 The challenge of Sichon to battle, God's involvement /2:30)

2:31-3:22 The war against Sichon, and Og King of Bashan,
Conquest of most of Transjordan,
Inheritance of Reuven and Gad, and Menashe', and their promise to assist in the conquest of Canaan.
[Note God's assurance to assist the people, based on these events in 3:20-22.]
your punishment should you not follow these forthcoming mitzvot, and the eternal option to do 'teshuva'.

4:41-49 - A short narrative
explaining how Moshe designated the three cities of refuge in Transjordan, followed by several introductory psukim for the forthcoming main speech.]

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3:23-29 Moshe's final request to see the Land.

C) INTRODUCTION TO THE MITZVOT

4:1-24 General principles regarding mitzvot in forthcoming speech,
i.e. not to add or take away, their purpose- to be a example for other nations, not to worship God through any type of intermediary after Moshe dies.

4:25-40 a 'mini- tochacha',

Parshas Devarim: Moshe Becomes ”Moshe Rabbenu”

by Rabbi Yitz Etshalom

I. INTRODUCTION

Sefer D’varim is divided into three sections (just like Bamidbar – see our Siyyum on Sefer Bamidbar):

A) Historical Recounting (Chapters 1-11)

B) Mitzvot (Chapters 12-26)

C) Covenant Ceremonies (27-33)

(Chapter 34, describing Mosheh’s death, is a topic for a separate discussion)
Although we will focus our discussion on a few of the elements mentioned in the historical recitation/recounting (specifically those mentioned in the first three chapters; i.e. Parashat D’varim), we will also suggest, in broad strokes, some overarching themes of the entire Sefer – along with its purpose.

II. WHY ARE JUDGES MENTIONED HERE?

Near the beginning of our Parashah (1:13-17), Mosheh recounts the story of his delegating judges to handle the many complaints and disputes among the people.

[There is an anomaly in our practice worth pointing out here: When we read the Torah on Shabbat afternoon and on Monday and Thursday mornings, the general custom is to read the first "Aliyah” of the upcoming Shabbat morning Parashah. Only when that first Aliyah is too short to make three Aliyot (less than 10 verses), such as Parashat Nitzavim, or when it is too long (e.g. Ki Tissa), do we do otherwise.

During the week leading up to Shabbat Parashat D’varim, we read the first 11 verses, ending just before the verse which starts with the word Eikhah. These 11 verses are divided into 3 "mini”-Aliyot. On Shabbat morning, however, we end the first Aliyah after verse 10. This is done so that we don’t begin the next Aliyah with the word Eikhah; which, even though it doesn’t necessarily have a "tragic” implication here, carries the saddest associations for us – it is the banner word of Yirmiyah’s book of dirges, known as Eikhah or "Lamentations”. Since Parashat D’varim is always read on the Shabbat just prior to Tish’ah b’Av, we don’t want to begin an Aliyah with a word that has such sad and immediate associations – so we begin the Aliyah one verse "early”.]

After reminding the people that he had told them (almost 40 years ago) that they have become numerous and blessed by God – and blessing them that God should increase their numbers a thousand-fold – he notes that this burden was too much for him to bear. In response, he approached them, as follows:

Choose for each of your tribes Anashim (men) who are wise, discerning, and reputable to be your leaders.” You answered me, “Tov haDavar Asher Dibarta la’Asot (The plan you have proposed is a good one).” So I took the leaders of your tribes, wise and reputable Anashim, and installed them as leaders over you, commanders of thousands, commanders of hundreds, commanders of fifties, commanders of tens, and officials, throughout your tribes. I charged your judges at that time: “Give the members of your community a fair hearing, and judge rightly between one person and another, whether citizen or resident alien. You must not be partial in judging: hear out the small and the great alike; you shall not be intimidated by anyone, for the judgment is God’s. Any case that is too hard for you, bring to me, and I will hear it.” (1:14-17)

[Note that this story seems to be a blending of two distinct events: Yitro’s advice to Mosheh to delegate judicial responsibility (Sh’mot 18:19-26) and Mosheh’s complaint to God that the burden of the people is too great to bear (Bamidbar 11:11-15). In addition to the "blurring”, Yitro’s role is omitted here. Addressing this "slant” in historic retelling is beyond the scope of this shiur and will be dealt with in a future shiur.]

This narrative raises (at least) two questions:

A) Why is the mention of the delegation of judicial responsibility worthy of mention right at the beginning of Mosheh’s historical recounting? Wouldn’t it have been more reasonable to mention the Exodus, the Stand at Sinai or the Construction of the Mishkan at this point?

B) Why is Mosheh sharing his charge to the judges with the people? (“I charged your judges…”)

The same question may be asked in reference to a later verse in our Parashah:

Even with me Hashem was angry on your account, saying, “You also shall not enter there. Yehoshua bin Nun, your assistant, shall enter there; Oto Hazek (give him strength/encourage him), for he is the one who will secure Israel’s possession of it.” (1:37-38)

Why is Mosheh sharing God’s “personal” charge (to him regarding Yehoshua) with the people?

III. THE FIRST ANSWER: PROPER VS. IMPROPER LEADERSHIP

I would like to suggest an answer which will only satisfy our first problem – the very mention of the judges. It is predicated upon a methodological approach which we regularly utilize. The Torah will often use common language to create an association between two narratives (or areas of Halakhah). The result may be a newly discovered similarity (such as we found in our Siyyum on Sefer Bamidbar) – or a deliberate contrast (such as the Bil'am-Avraham association, mentioned in this year's shiur on Parashat Balak).

We begin with an assumption that is fairly safe – that Mosheh was going to mention the story of the scouts (M'raglim) in this historic recitation. This is a safe assumption because that one event (solely, if not chiefly) is what caused the present situation – only now were we prepared to enter the Land, instead of having been there for nearly 39 years.
That being the case, Mosheh may be telling us about the judges in order to draw an "inverted parallel" with the disaster of the M'raglim. Note how he describes the genesis of the mission of the scouts (again, this telling is different than that in Parashat Sh'lach – see the note above):

I said to you, "You have reached the hill country of the Amorites, which Hashem our God is giving us. See, Hashem your God has given the land to you; go up, take possession, as Hashem, the God of your ancestors, has promised you; do not fear or be dismayed." All of you came to me and said, "Let us send Anashim ahead of us to explore the land for us and bring back a report to us regarding the route by which we should go up and the cities we will come to." vayiTav b'Einei haDavar (The plan seemed good to me), and I took from you twelve Anashim, one from each tribe. (1:20-23)
The association with the "judges" narrative is clear – the common Anashim is one connection, as well as the reaction (Mosheh's in one case, the people's in the other) – which includes the phrase Tov haDavar (albeit with some grammatical variation). Now that we see the association of these two stories, we can immediately spot the difference, as per this chart:

JUDGES – SCOUTS

Whose Idea? – Mosheh – The People

Who Approved? – The People – Mosheh

Who Selected the Anashim? – Mosheh – The People

As we can see, the M'raglim incident, which led to a disaster of great proportions, was handled in the opposite manner of the appointment of judges (which was, from everything we know, a successful process). This teaches us a valuable lesson about leadership – one which was indispensable advice to the people as they were about to enter the Land and come under new leadership (Yehoshua).

Ideally, the leader actually leads – he inspires the people and directs them. Nevertheless, he cannot act without their approval and support – hence, even though Mosheh suggested the idea of the judges, the people's approval was a necessary step in the success of this venture. Afterwards, however, it was Mosheh who selected the right people for the job.

When the opposite direction is taken, disaster is inevitable and imminent. In the story of the scouts, the people made the demand and Mosheh approved (but we get the sense that it was more of a "rubber stamp", realizing that the people would rebel if he didn't give in) – and then the people selected their representatives for the mission. (Look carefully at the difference between the beginning of v. 15 and the beginning of the second half of v. 23 – it will only be clear if you look in the Hebrew).

In other words, **by telling us the story about the judges (in apposition to the scouts), Mosheh is teaching us about leadership. The leaders must be the ones who direct, with the support and approval (referendum) of the people – and they must execute their decisions. If, on the other hand, the people are leading the leader, who has no choice but to approve and leave the execution up to them – disaster is the assured result**.

Valuable as this lesson is, we are still "stuck" with the second question – why Mosheh shared his charge to the judges (and God's charge to him regarding Yehoshua) in this recounting.

In order to answer this, we need to ask a more general question about the first 11 chapters of D'varim.

IV. WHY THE HISTORICAL RECOUNTING?

As we noted, the first 11 chapters are devoted to a historical recounting of some of the events of the past 40 years – with a focus on the Stand at Sinai. This recounting is interspersed with Mussar – rebuke and warnings about the potential for "backsliding" waiting for the B'nei Yisra'el in the Land.

Why did Mosheh engage in this recounting? Didn't the people already know what they had gone through?

The first answer which comes to mind – and which is valid – is that indeed this group had not experienced these events. Keep in mind that the generation which had left Egypt, stood at Sinai and constructed the Mishkan (and rejected the Land) had died out in the desert and Mosheh was addressing the next generation. This explains the recounting – but not the style of that recounting. If we look through the entire recitation, we note that it is entirely presented in the second person:

“All of you came to me…and I took from you twelve Anashim…” and so on. See, especially, the following citation:
But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children’s children, how you once stood before Hashem your God at Horeb, when Hashem said to me, “Assemble the people for me, and I will let them hear my words, so that they may learn to fear me as long as they live on the earth, and may teach their children so”; (D’varim 4:9-10)
The entire stand at Sinai is presented to this generation as if they were there!

This strange (and technically inaccurate) recitation surely demands more explanation.

V. SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS – AND ONE MORE

In summary, we have the following questions with which to contend:

* Why did Mosheh mention the “judges” at the beginning of this historical recitation?

* Why did Mosheh share his charge to the judges with the B’nei Yisra’el?

* (Likewise) why did Mosheh share God’s charge to him regarding Yehoshua with the B’nei Yisra’el?

* What is the purpose of this recitation, in which Mosheh recounts all of the events that happened to his audience’s parents – but presents it in the second person, without mentioning the previous generation?

* What is the purpose of Sefer D’varim?

Before addressing these, we need a quick brush-up on the notion of “themes” within each Sefer of the Humash.

VI. THEME OF SEFER D’VARIM

As we discussed in our introductory shiur to Sefer Bamidbar, each of the five Humashim of the Torah reflect our relationship with God through a different vehicle. Here is the relevant “clip” from that shiur (with some editing):

FIVE UNIQUE BOOKS

Unlike the division into chapters, which is a foreign “overlay” onto the Torah (generally credited to Stephen Langton, an English churchman, who created this division in 1205 CE), the division into five books is inherent in the text itself. Not only does every Sefer Torah contain four blank lines between each Sefer, but each begins and ends in a style that is appropriate for a beginning or ending (as the case may be); case in point is the end of Vayyikra, the beginning of D’varim etc.
Each of these books reflects our relationship with haKadosh Barukh Hu through a different perspective:

B’RESHEET: THE PEOPLE AND THE LAND

In his first comment on the Torah, Rashi asks the famous question in the name of R. Yitzchak : Why did the Torah begin with the story of Creation – it should have begun with the first Mitzvah given to the Jewish people? His answer gives us an insight into the nature of the entire book of B’resheet: By committing the Creation to writing, our “deed” to Eretz Yisra’el becomes affirmed. In the future (!), when the nations of the world will come to dispute our claim on Eretz Yisra’el, we will show them that the Land is not theirs – nor is it ours. The Land belongs to God (as demonstrated in the Creation narrative); He gave it to whom He favored and then took it from them to give it to us. B’resheet is the only book of the Torah which takes place in the Land; it is the description of our well-anchored past there and the development of the covenant with the Patriarchs which gives us title to the Land. The final statement of this book is Yoseph’s reminder to his brothers that one day, God will remember them and take them out of this land to bring them back to the land that He promised to the Avot. In summary, B’resheet is a description of our relationship with the Almighty through Eretz Yisra’el.

SH’MOT: THE PARADIGM OF JEWISH HISTORY

As we see through the rest of T’nakh – and in literature and liturgy until this day – all of Jewish history is viewed through the prism of the Egypt-Sinai- experience, known broadly as Y’tziat Mitzrayim. Whether the focus is on the oppression of slavery, the miracles of salvation, the Song of thanksgiving, the faithfulness of the desert experience, the stand at Sinai or the intimacy with the Divine realized in the Mishkan, the events of Sefer Sh’mot serve as the all-encompassing paradigm for Jewish history. In summary, Sh’mot is a description of our relationship with God through history.

VAYYIKRA: THE MISHKAN-RELATIONSHIP

As is easily evidenced, the entire focus of the book of Vayyikra is our relationship to God as it is realized through the vehicle of the Mishkan. Here, unlike in Sh’mot, the Mishkan is not an end in and of itself, rather it is that place of offering Korbanot, coming close to God – with all of the attendant restrictions and considerations. Vayyikra is, indeed, a description of our relationship with God through the Beit haMikdash/Mishkan.

BAMIDBAR: THE BOOK OF K'LAL YISRA'EL

Bamidbar is the description of our relationship with the Ribbono shel Olam through K'lal Yisra'el – the interactions of the Jewish people. That is why there is so much emphasis on our numbers (two full censuses), the placement of each tribe, the division of the Land – and the numbers lost through the plague at P'or. This also explains the inclusion of the interactions between the tribal leaders and Mosheh Rabbenu (especially at the end of the Sefer), and the dramatic challenges to Mosheh's leadership.

D'VARIM: "ASEH L'KHA RAV"

Unlike the first four books, Sefer D'varim is not said in God's "voice"; the voice of this book is Mosheh's. God is presented in the "third person".. From the introductory line: "These are the words that Mosheh spoke…" to the finale, the eulogy for Mosheh, D'varim is a book in which our Master and Teacher, Mosheh Rabbenu, takes center stage. D'varim is a description of our relationship with God through a Rebbi – through our association with tradition via our teachers.

VII. THE JOB OF A REBBI: THE PERSONIFICATION OF MESORAH

The job of Sefer D'varim can best be understood through this light.

The original Divine plan was to take the B'nei Yisra'el out of Egypt and to bring them directly into Eretz Yisra'el. In other words, the generation of the Exodus (Dor Yotz'ei Mitzrayim) would be the same as the generation of the Conquest (Dor Ba'ei ha'Aretz). As a result of the tragedy of the M'raglim, this plan was subverted and these two events, Exodus and Conquest, were "spread" between two generations. Mosheh, then, had an awesome task – to tie these two generations together, such that the distance between Sinai and Tziyyon would be bridged.

This is where Mosheh "earned" the title by which he is forever known – Mosheh Rabbenu – "Mosheh, our Rebbi". Indeed, the job of a Rebbi is more than instructive, even more than inspirational or exhortative. The Rebbi is the bridge with previous generations, taking us back to Sinai (along with taking us back to the Beit haMikdash, to Yavneh etc.). In simple terms, the Rebbi's job is to turn the past into the present. [I recall experiencing this first-hand when participating in the shiur of Rav Soloveitchik zt"l, seeing the Tannaim, Amoraim and Rishonim all sitting around his table as he orchestrated their debates. It was a marvelous experience, one which he describes beautifully in "uVikkashtem Misham" (pp. 231-232).]

The first person to set out to do this job was Mosheh, as he turned the generation of the Conquest into the generation of the Exodus. Indeed, the Plains of Mo'av was the first "Beit Midrash" and Sefer D'varim the first "Shiur". (See Abravanel's resolution of the challenges to Divine authorship of D'varim [in the moving i[in the moving introduction to his commentary on D'varim]iginally taught D'varim orally and then God commanded him to commit it to writing.)

How did Mosheh do it? One simple device which he utilized is one that became the staple of the Haggadah – talking about the past in the present and talking to the people as if they had experienced these events first-hand. In other words, by saying "You approached me…" etc., they were drawn in to the sense of "being there."

[Note that Moshe barely mentions any of the events which this generation "really" saw – the majority of the events mentioned belong to the previous generation] Mosheh was indeed "Rabbenu" – to the second generation! He was the first to perform this function – a function which guaranteed the potential for the eternity of the Jewish people. If it can be done once, it can be replicated every time! If one generation can be "brought back" to Sinai, so can every subsequent generation.

VIII. THE "THREAT" OF RENEWAL

This successful "education" project brought a terrifying danger in its wake – one to which the master teacher, Mosheh Rabbenu, was acutely aware. He was poised to bring them back to Sinai, to that great moment of Revelation – after which, he would ascend Har ha'Avarim (or Har N'vo) and die. Mosheh had already been told that that was he would die, when God instructed him to ascend that mountain (Bamidbar 27).

Mosheh remembered well what had happened the last time he had "disappeared" atop a mountain. When the B'nei Yisra'el had just experienced (in "real time") the Revelation, Mosheh ascended the mountain to receive the rest of the Law (along with the tablets). When the people were concerned about Mosheh's disappearance (remember – they did not know how long he was supposed to be on top of the mountain), they regressed to the idolatry of the golden calf.

How could Mosheh avoid the same pitfall? How could he insure that the B'nei Yisra'el would not achieve a "complete" return to Sinai, including the tragic aftermath of idolatry after his "one-way" ascension of the mountain?

IX. THE SOLUTION

Here is where the master teacher utilized his wonderful talent for education. In advance of retelling the people about their most glorious moments (Chs. 4-5, including the stand at Sinai and the Exodus), he instilled in them the understanding that he would not completely be leaving them. He told them about the two major functions which he held – leadership and instruction – and how he empowered others to continue his role. He immediately told them about the judges and how he charged them, such that even in his absence, there would be judges who would be an extension of Mosheh-as-instructor. We now understand why Mosheh introduced the judges at the beginning of his historical recitation – to reassure the people (as they felt closer to their past) that his leadership would still be their guide as they conquered and settled the Land.

We also understand why Mosheh shared his charge to the judges: The people needed to hear for themselves about the close relationship he had with those judges, such that they were not just filling a position, but really continuing his role. We can also understand why Mosheh shared God's command to him vis-a-vis Yehoshua: Just as the people needed to hear about his connection with the judges, they needed to hear about how his "presence" would be felt through Yehoshua. The phrase Oto Hazek (give him strength/encourage him), said about Yehoshua, reminds us of the empowerment which is the purpose of the S'mikhah (laying on the hands), by which Mosheh Rabbenu transferred the mantle of leadership to Yehoshua. (See this year's shiur on Parashat Vay'chi).

X. AFTERWORD

In section VI, I alluded to the difference between Sefer D'varim and the first four books. I'd like to share the observations of an old friend, Uzi Weingarten (benuzi@isracom.co.il), as published in the insightful weekly "Judaic Seminar" (which can be accessed through Shamash):

That Deuteronomy is called "Moses's book," as opposed to the other four books of the Torah, is substantiated by comparing two passages in Nehemiah that describe public readings of the Torah. On each occasion, a mitzvah that had fallen into disuse was "found." The first was the mitzvah of sitting in the sukkah during Sukkot, which appears only in Leviticus (23:42-43), and the second was the prohibition on an Ammonite or Moabite entering God's community, which appears only in Deuteronomy (23:4-7).

There is a crucial difference in how the two readings are described. Concerning sukkah, the author tells us:
They found written in the Torah, that God commanded through Moses that the Israelites sit in sukkot… (Nehemiah 8:14).
Regarding who can enter God's community, the author tells us:

On that day the Book of Moses was read to the people, and it was found written in it that an Ammonite or a Moabite should not enter God's community forever. (ibid. 13:1).

So a clear distinction is made: Leviticus is part of "the Torah that God commanded through Moses," and Deuteronomy is "the Book of Moses." The people did not consider the latter any less authoritative, and act on both commandments immediately. But there is still a difference in the linking to a source.

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Hit By an Angel

"These are the words..." (1:1)

The Midrash says, "There is no blade of grass in the field that grows unless a *malach* (spiritual messenger/angel) stands over it, hits it, and says 'Grow!' "

Why does the *malach* need to hit the blade of grass? Wouldn't some less violent form of encouragement suffice?

In Hebrew the word for "earth" is *Eretz*. *Eretz* can be read as *arutz* — "I will run." This world is always running forward. Running to a place beyond this world. *Eretz* is also related to *ratzon*, meaning "will" or "desire." What a person desires, what he wills, he "runs" toward.

This world is a world of trying, of striving to reach beyond this world. The word for "heaven" in Hebrew is *Shamayim*, from the root *sham*, which means "there." Literally, *Shamayim* means "theres," in the plural. *Sham-im*. Heaven is the sum total of all the "theres" that we can ever run to.

In other words, *Shamayim* is the ideal, the perfect form of everything in this world. Things in this world are not in a perfected state — they are still in their inchoate form.

One of the most difficult things in this world is to change. To become more than we are. To realize our true potential. We don't want to change. We'd rather sit by the pool and watch the water-lilies float to-and-fro. Any true change is painful.

The realization of the discrepancy between what we are and what we could be is like being hit by a *malach*.

Rashi and Onkelos both teach that the place names in verses one and two of this week's Torah portion are "code words" for the sins that took place at those places. Direct rebuke is rarely effective. It is much better to hint at the problem and let the listener feel the angel hitting him.

Q & A

Questions –

1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "*Apikorsim*" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did Hashem instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refaim?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

Answers

1. 1:1 Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the Land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the*mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzelofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Anger Issues

Biblical Hebrew has many different words for "anger." While Rabbeinu Efrayim counts only eight such words, Rabbi Avraham Bedersi HaPenini counts ten, and Rabbi Shlomo of Urbino manages to find fifteen! In this essay we will unpack the list of words for "anger" and show how they are not all truly synonymous. As we will see in this essay, some of the words in question refer to different points on the wide spectrum that spans from "annoyed" to "incensed," while others hone in on the object of one's wrathful outrage. Still, some words emphasize the *effects* of one's ire, while other words focus on the *cause* of one's temper. All in all, we will see that exploring the etymologies and polysemous usages of these words will shed light on the nuanced differences between the various words for "anger" in our list.

1. *Ka'as* (I Shmuel 1:6, Iyov 6:2) — This is the most common and generic word for "anger." Rabbeinu Efrayim explains that this word is a metathesis of the Hebrew word *eches* ("poison"), because anger puts a sort of poison in a person's heart. The Malbim writes that *ka'as* refers to specifically to a form of anger that remains pent up in one's heart but is never brought out in the open through action.

2. *Cheimah* (Isa. 27:4, Esther 7:10) — Rabbeinu Efrayim relates this word to the Hebrew word *cham* ("hot"), as an angry person gets "heated up" (or, "gas-lighted" in contemporary terms). Rabbi Bedersi supports this position by noting that we find the verb "burning" in regard to *cheimah* (Esther 1:12). He also notes that all the different terms for "anger" in the Bible only apply to human anger, except for the word *cheimah*, which is used also to denote an animal's anger (Deut. 32:33, Ps. 140:4, 58:5). The Malbim specifies that *cheimah* is a form of "anger" that is held in one's heart for a long time, even without committing any specific acts of rage.

3. *Charon* (Yechezkel 7:12, Zech. 10:3) — Rabbeinu Efrayim relates this word to the Hebrew word *chor* ("hole"), as the heat of one's burning anger pierces through one's body. Rabbi Bedersi explains that *charon* denotes a greater wrath than *cheimah* because *cheimah* just means "hot," while *charon* means "burnt" (see Yechezkel 24:10). Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814) departs from this trend, instead explaining *charon* as related to *nechirim* ("nostrils"), in reference to the angry person's heightened exhaling of hot air. Fascinatingly, *Peirush HaRokeach* explains that the word *charon* on its own means "upset," while *charon-af* refers to "anger."

4. *Rogez* (Iyov 3:17, II Kings 19:27) — In some places in the Bible the word *rogez* refers to "shaking," while in other places it refers to "fear." Rabbeinu Efrayim explains the connection to "anger," in that an angry person's entire body is aroused by his anger, just like shaking and fear can consume an individual's entire person. Rabbi Bedersi clarifies that *rogez* is not always associated with "anger," as sometimes it refers to "shaking" out of *fear* rather than out of *anger*. *Peirush HaRokeach* writes that *rogez* implies a form of "anger" whereby a person who was previously tranquil suddenly bursts into anger. The Malbim similarly writes that *rogez* refers to a sort of anger which harries the angry person and does not allow him respite to live in tranquility. Interestingly, the Yiddish term *b'rogez*, in reference to two

people who are in a fight, is derived from this Hebrew word.

5. *Evrah* (Ps. 78:49, Deut. 3:26) — Rabbeinu Efrayim relates this word to the Hebrew word *oveir* ("pass" / "violate"), because anger causes a person to violate his own expectations of himself, as well as his Creator's. Likewise, Malbim explains that through *evrah* the angry person goes beyond the apparent boundaries or limitations of his own anger to pour his wrath even on those who did not act against him. *Peirush HaRokeach* explains that *evrah* is related to the word *me'uberet* ("pregnant"), but the connection to "anger" remains unclear. Perhaps he means that the angry person's body swells up like a bloated pregnant lady, or perhaps the angry person's wrath remains with him for a long time like a pregnant woman is with child for nine months.

6. *Za'am* (Jer. 15:17, Zech. 1:12) — Rabbeinu Efrayim relates this word to the root ZAYIN-AYIN ("shaking," "moving"), because when a person is especially angry, he violently trembles and shakes, which also causes him to emit sweat (*zei'ah,* another word derived from this root). Ibn Janach and Rabbi Bedersi explain *za'am* as "anger" that stems from disgust or contempt of another. The Malbim explains that this word does not primarily refer to "anger." Rather, its literal meaning is "to curse." As the Malbim explains, in the context of anger *za'am* refers to one of the effects of rage, in that the angry person will curse at the object of his anger as long as he remains angry. Finally, the Vilna Gaon explains that *za'am* refers to "suppressed anger" that one holds back from showing outwardly.

7. *Za'af (*Michah 7:9, II Chron 26:19) — Rabbi Pappenehim understands this root as a portmanteau of the two roots ZAYIN-AYIN ("shaking," "moving") and ALEPH-PEH ("face"), in reference to a level of anger that brings about a furious facial twitch.

8. *Ketzef* (Num. 17:11, Zech. 1:2) — This word refers to a very intense form of "anger," whereby the angry person has reached a certain boiling point. In fact, Ibn Ezra (to Esther 1:12) and Radak (*Sefer HaShorashim,* entry *ketzef*) note that the word *ketzef* also refers to the "bubbles" that arise from boiling water (Hoshea 10:7), and the Aramaic word for "boiling" — *ritcha* — is also used in Rabbinic Hebrew as a synonym for "anger" (see *Berachot* 7a, *Rosh Hashanah* 32b, and *Sanhedrin* 48b). *Peirush HaRokeach* (to Ex. 16:20) adds that this type of anger is also visible through the sweat on the angry person's face, just like bubbles in boiling water come up to the surface and are plainly visible. *Eitz Yosef* (to *Eicha Rabbah* 2:3) writes that *ketzef* is the most extreme and dangerous form of "anger," associating that word with the archangel Gabriel (who represents G-d's Trait of Justice). On the other hand, Rabbeinu Efrayim seems to relate *ketzef* to the scum/froth that floats atop water, an allusion to the invariably unimportant thing that set off the angry person's fury. The Malbim explains *ketzef* as anger that is manifest outwardly, yet was coolly formulated by one's intellect and mental reflections (as opposed to a fit of emotional rage). This type of anger can even be a response to something that the object of one's anger did against somebody else, rather than just to the angry person himself. In Modern Hebrew, *katzefet* refers to "whipped cream."

9. *Ashan* (II Shmuel 22:9, Ps. 18:9, 80:5, Deut. 29:19) — This word literally means "smoke." Radak explains that this is a borrowed term that came to mean "anger" because smoke is a byproduct of a burning fire, while different words for "anger" can metaphorically be related to "boiling," "heat" and "fire" (as we saw above).

10. *Af* (Ex. 34:6, Deut. 6:15) — Besides meaning "anger," in other contexts this word means "nose" and/or "face." Rabbeinu Efrayim understands this word to relate to "anger" because the angry person's nose emits proverbial "smoke" that exemplifies his

wrath. The Malbim similarly writes that *af* refers to anger that is physically "visible" on the face of the angry person (i.e., through his facial countenance, disposition, or other expressions). The fact that the angry person is incensed is "in your face." *Af* typically comes about through one's emotion, not one's intellect, and this type of anger can sometimes be roused spontaneously. The Vilna Gaon offers three ways of differentiating between *af* and *cheimah*: First, *af* implies the beginning stages of "anger," while *cheimah* implies an anger that has already blown up into something more developed. Second, *af* refers to anger in thought, while *cheimah* implies anger in actions. Third, *cheimah* implies a more exclusive anger reserved for just one's enemies and those who seek to harm him, while *af* implies a more expansive anger that applies even to those who simply do not follow one's wishes.

11. *Anaf* (Deut. 1:37, Isa. 12:1, Ps. 2:12) — Rabbeinu Efrayim explains that this word is actually the same as *af,* except that it has an extra NUN. Radak writes the exact opposite, arguing that the root of *af* ("nose," "anger") is really ALEPH-NUN-PEH, but sometimes the NUN disappears. *Peirush HaRokeach* explains *anaf* as anger that spurs one into taking immediate revenge or retribution against another. The Bible lists a bird known as an *anafah* (Lev. 11:19, Duet. 14:18) as non-kosher, and the Talmud (*Chullin* 63a) explains that this refers to a specific type of "angry bird" (*dayah ragzanit*). As an aside, Rabbi Pappenheim traces the word *anaf* to the biliteral root NUN-PEH ("movement"), explaining that this refers to when one's body starts twitching and convulsing out of sheer anger.

12. *Panim* (Yirmiyahu 3:12, Gen. 32:21) — This word literally means "face" in most contexts, but is borrowed to mean "anger," because often times one's emotional state can be readily seen on one's face, especially when it comes to anger.

13. *Na'atz* (Num. 14:11, 14:23, 16:30) — Rabbi Pappenheim traces the root of *na'atz* to the monoliteral root represented by the letter TZADI ("goes out"). Accordingly, this term refers to the fact that a person can only tolerate something that he holds in contempt for a limited amount of time until his annoyance develops into an *outwardly expressed* "anger." The Malbim takes the opposite approach, explaining that *na'atz* refers to a sort of anger that leads to one's rejecting and pushing away another as though he were "disgusting."

14. *Atzvut* (I Kings 1:6, Isa. 63:10, Ps. 78:40) — In many cases this word means "upset" or "disappointed," which are negative feelings that can lead to "anger," but are not identical to the concept of "anger." Rabbi Avraham Maimuni cites his father Maimonides as explaining that the difference between *charon* and *atzvut* is that the former arouses one's thirst for vengeance and revenge, while the latter does not. In other cases, *atzvut* came to mean "sadness/melancholy," which is a slightly different concept.

15. *Ra'am* (Yechezkel 27:35, I Shmuel 1:6) — This word also means "noise" or "roar" (for examples, see Ps. 77:19, 81:8, Iyov 26:14, 39:25). This is because the angrier a person is, the more likely he or she will verbally lash out at others by yelling at them. Rashi (to Ex. 15:24, Yechezkel 27:35) connects the Mishnaic Hebrew (*Bava Meztia* 4:6, 6:1) term *taromet* (often mispronounced as *taarumot*), which means "complaint" or "grievance," to the same root as *ra'am*, because both are verbal expressions of dissatisfaction.

16. *Shetzef* (Isa. 54:8) — This word appears only once in the Bible and its meaning is not completely clear. Because of this it makes sense that *shetzef* does not make it to Rabbi Shlomo of Urbino's list of fifteen Hebrew words for "anger." In the one place that this word appears in the Bible, it is paired with the word *ketzef* ("anger"). According to Menachem and Rabbeinu Tam, just as *ketzef* means "anger," so too does *shetzef* mean

"anger." However, Targum Yonatan (there), Donash, Ibn Janach, Rabbi Yosef Kimchi, and Radak all argue that *shetzef* means "a little bit of." (Rashi to Isa. 54:8 cites both of these possibilities.) Donash also suggests that *shetzef* means the same thing as *rega* ("a fleeting moment"). *Peirush HaRokeach* similarly interprets *shetzef* as an expression of "speed," probably recalling the fact that when people "blow their fuse," they act in haste.

In summation, we close with Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim (1740-1814), who ranks seven different words for "anger" in terms of how intensely angry one becomes: The simplest form of anger is called *ka'as*. If one's anger reaches a point where his body starts shaking because of his fury, this is called *za'am*. When one's anger causes his body to start heating up, this is called *cheimah*, and when one's anger brings his blood to a boil, this is called *charon*. When a person's fury has reached the boiling point and is even visible on his facial expression, this is called *charon-af* (because he exhales hot air through his nose). When one becomes so rabidly angry that a sort of white foam forms around his lips, this is called *ketzef*. When a person becomes so angry that his body puffs up and becomes distended, this is called *evrah* (because this engorgement resembles a pregnant woman's swelling).

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

Blessings Over Tefillin: To Sit or To Stand?

(Part 3)

"I am not emotional about being the oldest man in the world; but it does mean something to me that I have donned tefillin for longer than anyone else."

Yisrael Kristal, 1903-2017, was officially recognized as the oldest living Holocaust survivor in 2014. In January 2016 he was recognized by the Guinness World Records as the world's oldest man.

There is a fascinating difference of opinion about how to put on the arm *tefillin*. The Sephardic and Chassidic custom is to put the arm *tefillin* on while sitting, and to stand when putting on the head *tefillin*. The Ashkenazic practice is to put on both the arm *tefillin* and the head *tefillin* while standing. The source of the Sephardic and Chassidic custom is found in the Zohar HaKadosh (Parshat Chayei Sarah and Parshat Bamidbar).

The Zohar makes a connection between the arm *tefillin* and the head *tefillin* and two different types of prayers — those that are recited sitting down and those that are said standing up. Each category of prayer generates a different form of spiritual energy, an energy that corresponds to the same form of spiritual energy created by

tefillin. The arm *tefillin* are compatible to those prayers that are said sitting down and the head *tefillin* to prayers that are recited standing up. Rabbi Yitzchak Luria was a famed sixteenth century Kabbalist, known as the Ari Zal (often written as Arizal). According to some opinions, the letters of *Ari* are an acronym for the Hebrew phrase "*Adoneinu Rabbeinu Yitzchak* — Our Master, Rabbi Yitzchak." According to others, the word Ari in Hebrew means a lion and is a term of deference, attesting to the fact that his mastery over the esoteric dimensions of the Torah was unparalleled. Rabbi Luria ruled that the correct way to put on *tefillin* is according to the Zohar HaKadosh.

Rabbi Yaakov Chaim Sofer (1870-1939) was a dazzlingly brilliant scholar from Baghdad and Jerusalem, universally recognized and acknowledged as one of the experts in Jewish Law in his generation. He wrote in his monumental work called *Kaf HaChaim* that the Sephardic custom is to put on the arm *tefillin* while seated, and the head *tefillin* while standing, and then to remain standing while wrapping the straps of the arm *tefillin* around the hand.

In the Shulchan Aruch, Rabbi Moshe Isserles (Orach Chaim 25) cites the opinion of the Zohar, but, as previously mentioned, he rules that the correct approach for the Ashkenazic communities is to stand up while putting on both the arm *tefillin* and the head *tefillin*.

The basic difference of opinion derives from differing views as to whether the Zohar can be relied upon for deriving practical Jewish Law or not. The opinion of the Sephardic authorities and the Ari Zal is that the Zohar can be used for practical application (although not always), whereas the Ashkenazic viewpoint is to use the Zohar only very rarely as a source for practical Law.

Regardless of *how* one puts on *tefillin* — sitting or standing — *where* the *tefillin* are placed is always the same. The box of the arm *tefillin* is positioned so that it points towards the heart, and the head *tefillin* sit on the fontanelle. The fontanelle represents our intellect and our intelligence, which is found in the brain, and the heart is the center of our emotions. Rabbeinu Bachya (Kad Hakemach) writes that one of the underlying lessons that *tefillin* portray is that we need both our heart and our intellect to serve G-d properly. Our heart to love Him, and our intellect to recognize Him.

To be continued...

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TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Devarim: Yoma 86 - Succah 5

How Great Is Teshuva?

Rabbi Levi said, "How great is teshuva! For it reaches unto (Hashem's) Throne of Glory..."
Rav Yonasan said, "How great is teshuva! For it brings the redemption closer.."
Reish Lakish said, "How great is teshuva! It turns his intentional sins into unintentional sins..." Gemara: Did not Reish Lakish say, "How great is teshuva! For it turns his sins into merits..."? The first statement of Reish Lakish refers to teshuva motivated by fear of Hashem; the second statement refers to teshuva motivated by the love of Hashem."
Rabbi Meir said, "How great is teshuva! The entire world is forgiven because of one person who has repented..."

These teachings about the greatness of *teshuva* are taught on our *daf* by these great Torah sages. As Rabbeinu Yonah of Gerona writes in explaining the great essence and importance of *teshuva*: "One of the great kindnesses that Hashem bestowed upon His creations is that He prepared a way for them to ascend from the baseness of their deeds, and to flee from the pitfalls of their inequities, to save their souls from destruction and to turn His wrath away from them. He taught them and exhorted them to return to Him if they sinned against Him, because of His abundance of kindness and righteousness, for He is aware of their desires, as it says, 'Hashem is good and righteous and therefore He guides sinners in the way (of repentance).'" (*Sha'arei Teshuva 1:1*)

Teshuva is vital for our existence, an indispensible factor in the final redemption, and it is one of the greatest kindnesses that Hashem has bestowed upon mankind. Many important works have been written throughout history to guide us in the way of *teshuva*, perhaps most notable of which are The Gates of Teshuva by Rabbeinu Yonah and The Laws of Teshuva by Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon (the Rambam). They both list three essential components necessary for *teshuva*: regret, confession and abandonment of sin. (In Hebrew, these requirements are called *charata*, *vidui* and *azivat ha'chet*.)

In this Talmud Tip, I would like to briefly address the topic of regret — in particular the practical aspect of "regret" when the sinner did not realize at the time that what he did was wrong. This is especially relevant to a person who grew up in a secular environment and only later on began to observe the Torah and its mitzvahs and return to the way of Hashem. This person is widely referred to as a *ba'al teshuva* – literally *"a master of teshuva"*, a person who has decided to embrace Torah Judaism, but was not aware of the sin (or the seriousness of the sin) at the time he transgressed beforehand. How can this person truly regret his sins, since he clearly did not know he was doing anything wrong at the time of the sin? How can there be regret without a sense of guilt?

My revered teacher, Rabbi Moshe Shapiro, *zatzal*, taught me one answer to this question (although other answers can be found in the teachings of the classical Torah commentaries, and are compiled in "After the Return" from Feldheim Publishers.)

Rabbi Shapiro taught me that the mere fact that a person wants to change his ways and return to observe the pleasant ways of the Torah shows that he regrets the sins of his previous way of life. His desire to live in a different way now is a clear indication that he regrets at least certain parts of his past. A person who has abandoned his secular lifestyle, and has accepted the Torah and mitzvahs, has shown a "de facto" regret for his past transgressions. The very

act of return to Judaism is a fulfillment of the requirement of "regret".

Rabbi Shapiro also explained that despite a person's innocence with regard to transgression, he should nevertheless regret his lost opportunities to fulfill the precepts of the Torah. A person who had a lottery ticket and lost it would certainly feel regret upon discovering that his ticket had the winning number, despite the fact that his loss was not necessarily the result of negligence. If the person however, was negligent, then merely regretting the loss without taking responsibility for his negligence would be insufficient.

- *Yoma 86b*

PARSHA OVERVIEW

This Torah portion begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, "Repetition of the Torah" (hence the Greek/English title "Deuteronomy"*). Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told the Jewish People during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan River into the Land of Israel. Moshe reviews the mitzvahs with the people, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo — from the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe's guidance, to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua's leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. This Torah portion opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they had not sinned by sending spies into Eretz Yisrael. Hashem would have given them, without a fight, all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom.

Moshe details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results. The entire generation would die in the desert and Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem's decree was to want to "go up and fight" to redress the sin. He recounts how they would not listen when he told them not to go, and that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They had ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon. These lands were not to be part of the map of Eretz Yisrael in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Hershman

Written in the Stars

When the Jewish nation was still but a thought in G-d's mind, Avraham is told of the great nation that will emerge from him: "Look, please, heavenward, and count the stars, if you are able to count them…So shall your seed be." And when the Jewish people are a fully formed nation, preparing to enter the Promised Land, Moshe opens his final address with words that echo this first prophecy: "G-d has multiplied you, and you are now like the stars of heaven in multitude." The repeated comparison to the stars — prior to the birth of the first Jew, and, again, as the entire nation prepares to set foot on the very land promised to Avraham — warrants some attention.

Just before this prophecy, Avraham was told that his seed would be like the dust of the earth — but there, the dust was not shown to him. In contrast, before his offspring are compared to the stars, Avraham is instructed to look heavenward and *behold* the stars. Avraham was seventy years old, and Sarah was sixty. He had all but given up hope of having a child in the natural course of events. From the vantage point of earth, his loss of hope was logical. Therefore, G-d bade him to look up toward heaven. There, in heaven, a different order is apparent — the great cosmos, created directly by G-d, beckoned Avraham to desist from his natural, earthbound speculation and instead open his mind to this starry world. *So shall your offspring be!* They will not be the product of natural conditions. Indeed, Avraham would wait another 30 years for Yitzchak to be born. This people that would emanate from him would find their beginnings and their continued existence in a world beyond nature, and would depend directly on G-d's Providence.

Now that the dream of the people of Avraham is a reality — in its full multitude of more than three million souls — Moshe again reflects on the miracle of their existence.

But there is also an additional significance to this comparison. By comparing them to the hosts of heaven — each one proclaiming itself to be the Handiwork of the Creator — Moshe seeks to negate the erroneous notion that the nation in its totality is just a numberless mass in which the individual has no importance. Rather, the people's multitudes are like the stars of heaven: Although they are countless, there is independent significance to each individual. Each one is a "world until himself," each one has his own value and is under G-d's direct Providence.

- *Sources: Commentary, Devarim 1:10 and Bereishet 15:5*

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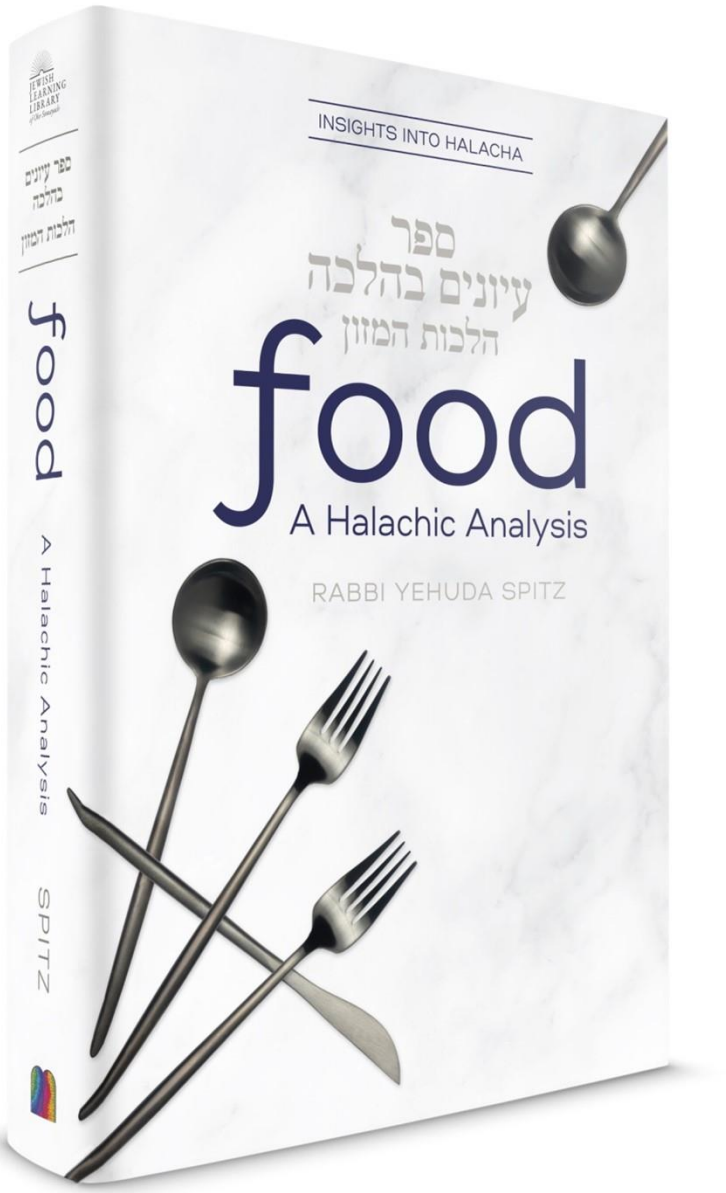
Sefer Iyunim B'Halacha - Hilchos Hamazon

Food: A Halachic Analysis



Now in Book Stores

Also Available From the Author:
Rabbi Spitz - yspitz@ohr.edu

Why we Weep

Tisha B'Av Program

At Ohr Somayach

Join us via livestream at ohr.edu/tishabav

All day seminar Sunday, July 18

09:20 am Special Kinos Reading & Explanation
Rav Yitzchak Breitowitz
Rav Kehillas Ohr Somayach

12:45 pm Rav Yitzchak Breitowitz,
Rav Kehilas Ohr Somayach
1:45 pm Rav Nota Schiller, Rosh Hayeshiva
2:45 pm Rabbi Dovid Kaplan
3:35 pm Rabbi Avraham Rockmill

4:25 pm Rabbi Dovid Gottlieb
5:15 pm Rabbi Reuven Lauffer
6:05 pm Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair
7:45 pm Rabbi Yehuda Samet

07:55 am Shacharis **08:50 am** Eicha Reading **7:00 pm** Mincha **8.09 pm** Maariv **8.14 pm** End of Fast

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Ezras nashim will be open throughout the day.

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Devarim – Torah Thoughts From SEED

The first Pasuk in this week's Parsha says that Moshe spoke to B'nei Yisroel about several of the places where they had camped. Rashi explains that Moshe was preparing to talk to them about the things they had done wrong in these places and how they had rebelled against Hashem. However, he didn't want to mention their rebellions openly because of their honor. He, therefore, only mentioned the locations where they had rebelled, hinting at what they had done. Moshe was talking to the generation that would be going into Eretz Yisroel, warning them to learn from the previous generation's mistakes. Why wasn't Moshe willing to say the actual mistake, if he wasn't talking to the people that actually had rebelled? Why was it necessary for their honor to only hint to it? We see a very powerful lesson from here. Even though they hadn't rebelled, since it was B'nei Yisroel that had rebelled, the nation which they are a part of, it would be insensitive to mention the rebellions explicitly. The Torah is showing us how much we have to think about what we say and how it could affect people.

Daniel Feldman

In this week's Parsha, Moshe spends time rebuking the B'nei Yisroel about the events that occurred throughout the years in the desert. He focuses on the sin of the B'nei Yisroel accepting the report of the spies. Look how appropo this Torah reading is for the upcoming week! It takes place on the Shabbos proceeding Tisha b'Av. Our sages teach us that because the B'nei Yisroel cried in despair on Tisha b'Av after accepting the negative report about Israel, Hashem set Tisha b'Av for all time as a day of crying until we reach our destiny. The two Temples were destroyed on Tisha b'Av and many more tragic events. In addition, our sages tell us that all pain and tragedy nowadays is partially a retribution for the sin of accepting the report of the spies! Look at how careful we must be not to get anywhere NEAR Lashon Hara (negative speech about someone). Because of our work in this area, may we all see the redemption in a speedy manner and the end of all world tragedies.

Akiva Meir Katz

In this week's Parsha, Moshe recalls how he had reassured the Jewish People that Hashem would help them in conquering Israel, the same way He had miraculously carried them out of Egypt and through the desert until this very moment. According to the Or HaChaim, Moshe then rebukes the Jewish People for not believing in these miracles, even though they themselves had experienced them. The Zohar compares this to a father who is carrying his son on his shoulders, and when they meet someone, the son asks the stranger if he has seen his father. Even as Hashem continuously carried the Jewish People, they didn't believe in the miracles He had previously performed for them. The verse alludes to this by saying "[G-d] who is walking before you etc," highlighting that even with the continued miracles, they denied G-d was guiding them and watching over them. We see from here the power of the evil inclination to lead a person even deny open miracles he had personally experienced. So long as a person wishes, one can always excuse the proofs of G-d's Providence, even when it plays out openly in front of him in his personal life.

Aryeh Singer

Have you ever wondered, why do my actions matter? Why should I bother? What worth do my actoions have? This logic is completely incorrect, as we find in this week's parsha. The Torah tells us a law which applies to the two nations of Ammon and Moav, but with one significant difference between them. The law is that the Jews can't provoke these nations by starting a war. Additionally, the Jews can not even provoke Ammon for non-war purposes, which does not apply to Moav. Rashi states that the reason for this difference is that the ancestors of these nations, Lots' daughters, made two different decisions. After the destruction of Sodom, they thought the entire world had been destroyed and that they and their father were the only survivors. Thinking they needed to preserve humanity, they each lived with their father and bore a child. When they gave birth, one daughter named her child Moav (from my father) while the other daughter named her child Ammon (the word comes from Imi, from me). Since the second daughter was more circumspect, she merited that her descendants should be protected from any provocation, even for non-war purposes. We see the impact of our actions, and how even generations later, our offspring can be affected by our choices.

Shua Katz