

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 almost 50 years ago and was our family Rebbe and close friend until his recent 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.

We Jews must learn to switch moods in a flash. Consider, for example a Rabbi who starts a day with a bris at Shacharit, then rushes to officiate at a funeral, and returns to participate in a wedding a few hours later. Many families in mourning after a death in the family must host a wedding or Bar Mitzvah, because one is not to delay a simcha, even while in mourning.

This Shabbat, as we begin Sefer Devarim, we are in the midst of a period of mood changes. Sefer Bemidbar, which started with high hopes and spirits, ended with the story of shattered dreams for all but two adults of the generation of the Exodus. The gloom continues with Parashat Devarim, when Moshe wonders "Eicha" – how could he possibly carry the bad feelings, burdens, and quarrels of the people (1:12). Our mood hits bottom on Tisha B'Av a few days later, the anniversary of numerous of the worst disasters in Jewish history. (See the Chabad listing of disasters later in this attachment.) Fortunately, we soon recover from the gloom of Tisha B'Av. Next Shabbat, we read Vaetchanan, an upbeat parsha that includes the Aseret Dibrot (Ten Commandments) and first paragraph of the Shema. Six days after Tisha B'Av, we have Tu B'Av, one of the most joyous days of the year.

In Parashat Devarim, Moshe presents a selective review of the Jews' experiences during the 40 years since the Exodus. Rabbi David Fohrman has a unique interpretation of why Moshe selects specifically two incidents to discuss – the episode of the Meraglim and his father-in-law's suggestion that he appoint judges to help him resolve inter-personal disputes. Moshe uses the same language repeatedly to connect the issue of the judges with the episode of the Meraglim.

In this parsha, Rabbi Fohrman says that Moshe seems to consider the Meraglim as the real reason why God would not permit him to enter the land. Moshe states that God has carried the Jews the way that a father carries his child for 40 years in the Midbar – and He will carry and protect them when Moshe is gone and the people enter the land. Moshe, however, had put down his children (the people looking to him for a connection to God) when he asked for judges to help him. After Moshe put down his children, the people had a lack of faith in God at crucial times. To Rabbi Fohrman, this analysis explains why Moshe seems to have felt, upon reflection at the end of his life, that God would not let him enter the land. Moshe's pep talk in this parsha tries to compensate for his lacking years earlier. (This interpretation is novel but worth considering closely.)

Despite Moshe's deep unhappiness at not being able to enter the land, he does everything he can to prepare the people to enter and continue to deserve to remain in the land. Parashat Devarim is essentially a pep talk to prepare the people to go forward. Miriam and Aharon are both dead, and Moshe will die soon. The family that had led the people for 40 years will soon be gone. God will end His direct involvement with the people when they enter the land. They will need to cultivate and gather food from the land. They will need to initiate all military actions, both offensive and defensive, because God's involvement will only be behind the scenes. Moshe tells the people that they are ready for these challenges. He warns them not to think that any success comes from their greatness, but to understand that everything good comes because God is with them and helping them. The people must obey the mitzvot and keep a daily relationship with their Creator. In the remainder of Sefer Devarim, Moshe will prepare the people with detailed instructions for keeping God with them.

Being able to see God's presence in one's life is not always easy. One of the most important roles of parents and teachers is to help children learn how to find God in their lives. Often a person's Rebbe is his most important teacher – and a reason why our tradition holds that a person's Rebbe is like a father. My beloved Rebbe, Rabbi Leonard Cahan, z"l, taught and reinforced this lesson for me for nearly 50 years. Since his untimely passing, I have been fortunate to develop a close relationship and continue my learning with a few other Rebbes. As we prepare for Tisha B'Av and then switch moods toward hope and joy, may we continue to learn and build our individual relationships with Hashem.

Note: Thanks to the efforts of one of my Rebbes, Rabbi Eitan Cooper, Beth Sholom hopes to have some copies of my Devrei Torah materials available at Shabbat services starting this week. The printed copies will include the first two attachments in the E-mail version: the introduction (usually up to 15 pages) and Likutei Torah. The entire collection is too extensive to make numerous copies, but the entire package is available to download from www.PotomacTorah.org or by printing the attachments in the E-mail version.

Please daven for a Refuah Shleimah for Hershel Tzvi ben Chana, Eli ben Hanina, Yoram HaKohen ben Shoshana, Gedalya ben Sarah, Mordechai ben Chaya, Baruch Yitzhak ben Perl, David Leib HaKohen ben Sheina Reizel, Zev ben Sara Chaya, Uzi Yehuda ben Mirda Behla, HaRav Dovid Meir ben Chaya Tzippa; Eliav Yerachmiel ben Sara Dina, Amoz ben Tziviah, Reuven ben Masha, Moshe David ben Hannah, Meir ben Sara, Yitzhok Tzvi ben Yehudit Miriam, Yaakov Naphtali ben Michal Leah, Rivka Chaya bat Leah, Zissel Bat Mazal, Chana Bracha bas Rochel Leah, Leah Fruma bat Musa Devorah, Hinda Behla bat Chaya Leah, Nechama bas Tikva Rachel, Miriam Chava bat Yachid, and Ruth bat Sarah, all of whom greatly need our prayers. Note: Beth Sholom has additional names, including coronavirus victims, on a Tehillim list.

Hannah & Alan

Drasha: Parshas Devarim: A Meaningful Approach by Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky © 1997

Forty years of desert wanderings are coming to a close. Moshe knew that his end was near and wanted to leave the children of Israel with parting words that were filled with love, direction, guidance, and admonition.

He discussed many of the events of the past 40 years; the triumphs and tragedies. Though he did not mince words, there are many details that are added in Moshe's review that shed more light on the previously related incidents.

One story in particular is the story of the meraglim, the spies, who returned to the Jewish camp from Canaan with horrific tales and predictions of sure defeat. But it is not the end of the failed mission that I would like to focus on, rather its conception.

Moshe recounts: "You all approached me saying, 'let us send spies and they shall seek the land.'" Rashi is quick to comment on the words "all of you." "In confusion. The young pushed the old," explains Rashi, "and the older pushed ahead of the leaders!" Rashi adds that at the giving of the Torah, however, the elders and the youth came in orderly fashion to present their needs.

Two questions arise. Why does it make a difference, in the actual reporting of the spies, how the request was presented? In addition, why did Rashi deem it necessary to contrast this conduct with what occurred at the giving of the Torah?

During the first weeks of the Civil War, newspaper editorials from across the nation were filled a plethora of criticisms, advice, and second guessing of President Lincoln's handling of the crisis. Eventually, the editors asked for a meeting with the President, which he granted. During the meeting, each one of the editors interrupted the other with their ideas, suggestions, and egos.

Suddenly Mr. Lincoln stood up. “Gentleman,” he exclaimed, “this discussion reminds me of the story of the traveler whose carriage wheel broke right in the middle of a thunderstorm during the black of night. The rain was pouring, the thunder was booming and the carriage was sinking as he furtively tried to fix his wagon. He groped and grappled in the wet darkness to find a solution to his problem.

“Suddenly the sky lit up with a magnificent bolt of lightning that lit the countryside like daylight. Seconds later the ground shook from a clap of thunder that reverberated for miles with a deafening boom.

“The hapless traveler looked heavenward and tearfully pleaded with his creator. ‘Lord,’ he begged, is it possible to provide a little more light and a little less noise?’ ”

In defining the sin of the spies, Rashi notices very consequential words. “All of you converged.” He explains that particular phrase by contrasting it with a scenario that occurred at Sinai. When the Jewish nation wanted to modify the manner in which the revelation transpired, the request for Moshe’s intervention was done in an orderly manner.

A few years before his passing, my grandfather visited Israel and was asked to deliver a shiur (lecture) in a prominent Yeshiva on a difficult Talmudic passage.

Upon his arrival at the Yeshiva, he was shocked to see hordes of students and outsiders clamoring to get front row seats in order to hear the lecture. There was quite a bit of pushing and shoving. After all, at the time, Reb Yaakov was the oldest living Talmudic sage and this lecture was an unprecedented honor and privilege for the students and the throngs that entered the Yeshiva to get a glimpse of the Torah he was to offer. It was even difficult for him to approach the lecture, because of the chaotic disarray.

The goings on did not bear well with him. He discarded his planned lecture and instead posed the following question to the students: “In Parshas Shelach, the portion of the spies, the Torah tells us that each shevet (tribe) sent one spy. The Torah lists each spy according to his tribe. Yet, unlike ordinary enumeration of the tribes, this one is quite different. It is totally out of order. The Torah begins by listing the first four tribes in order of birth, but then jumps to Ephraim who was the youngest then to Benjamin then back to Menashe. Dan and Asher follow, with the tribes of Naftali and Gad ensuing. Many commentaries struggle to make some semblance of order out of this seeming hodgepodge of tribes. It is very strange indeed.

“But,” explained Reb Yaakov as he gazed with disappointment upon the unruly crowd. “Perhaps Rashi in Devorim explains the reason for the staggered enumeration. The reason they are mentioned out of order is simply because there was no order! The young pushed the old and moved ahead to say their piece. And from that moment, the mission was doomed.” Many of us have ideas and opinions. The way they are presented may have as much impact on their success as the ideas themselves.

Good Shabbos!

Devarim: When Does the Oral Torah Begin?

by Rabbi Dov Linzer, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshivat Chovevei Torah © 2015, 2020

What happens when we repeat a story or lesson in our own words? Does it improve with the retelling, or does it worsen? Is the message lost, or is it made more relevant? What is the point of retelling? Why not repeat things verbatim? Parashat Devarim opens with an epic retelling: a speech that took Moshe Rabbeinu more than a month to deliver. He retells three books of the Torah -Shemot, Vayikra, and Bamidbar – using his own words, not those of God.

The Midrash makes special note of the person doing this retelling (Devarim Rabbah 1:1). It is Moshe, the very man who said of himself, “lo ish devarim anokhi,” “I am not a man of words,” who now expounds on the entire Torah, opening with “elah ha'devarim,” “These are the words” (Shemot, 4:10). Why is a man who is not an “ish devarim” relating the entire book of Devarim? We might just as well ask why Moshe was chosen to be God’s spokesperson. Why not pick an ish devarim?

The simple answer is this: A person of words might contaminate God's message with his own words or ideas. Moshe, being challenged in speech, was certain to communicate God's word without embellishment or change. By the same token, a person such as Moshe is most suited to tell over the Torah in his own words. With Moshe Rabbeinu – with his humility, his desire to act only as a vessel for the Divine, his reluctance to love the sound of his own voice, and his general lack interested in asserting himself and his ideas – the message was sure to remain pure. God's words would be communicated through Moshe's. Hence, Moshe's words became part of the Torah itself, which became, in essence, God's own words.

Yet something did change in the retelling. The Gemara tells us, for example, that even if the literary juxtaposition of two mitzvot is not significant in the rest of the Torah, it is in Sefer Devarim (Berakhot 21a). Why is this so? The Shita Mikubetzet (ad. loc.) explains that, with Moshe now reordering previously given mitzvot, the reordering itself communicates a particular message. When we retell a story, it is shaped by choices we make in the organization of material, the order in which we put things, what we choose to emphasize, and even what we choose to omit. All of these become part of the message.

Thus, we find that an enormous percentage of Torah she'b'al Peh, the Oral Law, focuses on the verses – on the wording of the mitzvot – in Sefer Devarim. The Oral Law emerges naturally from Devarim because Devarim is already part of Oral Law. It is the engagement of a human being – Moshe – with the Divine Word of the Torah. As the Sefat Emet states:

This is the essence of Mishne Torah, the interconnection of the Written Torah and the Oral Torah. Moshe Rabbeinu was in the category of the Written Torah, and those about to enter into the land were in the category of the Oral Torah. Thus, the Mishne Torah contains both of these; it is the passageway connecting them.

To retell the Torah was to take it out of the context of those who left Egypt and bring it into the context of those who were about to enter into the land. It took the Torah away from Mount Sinai and out of the wilderness and brought it into society, into the daily lives of the people. Moshe's retelling of the Torah was true to God's word, but it was also a reframing of God's word. It was the beginning of the Oral Torah, the religious enterprise of engaging God's word with integrity while using our own, in each generation and for each generation.

The act of translating is another form of retelling. We are told at the beginning of our parasha that "Moshe began to expound this Torah" (1:5). Rashi, quoting Tanchuma, comments on this: "He explained it to them in seventy languages." When we translate, there is the risk of things getting lost or changed. But there is also opportunity. Translations allow a message to reach the widest possible audience. In fact, echoing Moshe's seventy-language translation, we find that many rabbis allowed the Torah scroll itself to be written in any language (Megillah 8b). People have been translating the Torah into the vernacular for millennia, and with every translation, the Torah becomes more accessible and more widespread.

However, translation can do more. It not only disseminates the Torah, it can also provide a fuller, truer realization of its meaning and its essence. When something is written in a person's native tongue, it becomes intelligible to him or her. When words are relayed in a way that person can relate to and understand, metaphorically, in one's own language, they become not only comprehensible, but meaningful. Such words can resonate and enter into our mind, our heart, and our soul.

The Sefat Emet uses the metaphor of clothing in discussing the translation of the Torah. Language, he says, is a type of outer garment to the meaning, the essence, of what is being conveyed, which is itself beyond language. Hebrew is one of these garments. On the one hand, clothing conceals; it covers our naked bodies. But clothing can also reveal; we wear different clothes for different occasions or moods, revealing different parts of ourselves. With every garment we put on we give a distinct expression of who we are.

The same is true for the Torah. When the Torah is translated into other languages, its meaning can be expanded, more fully actualized and revealed. To again quote the Sefat Emet:

"For to the degree that the light of the Torah has spread into other external garments, the more everything gets closer to the inner essence."

Retelling the Torah is critical to reaching people, and it is critical to the Torah's fullest realization. In fact, sections from the retelling in Sefer Devarim form the essence of our daily religious lives. The two paragraphs of Shema – shema and v'haya

im shamo – are both from Devarim (6:4-9, 11:13-21). These verses make up the Shema prayer, they are written on the mezuzah scroll, and they are two of the four chapters that constitute the tefillin scrolls. These are some of the most central components of our religious observance.

Our daily affirmations of faith in words, on our homes, and on our bodies are all from Moshe's retelling. His translation revealed a part of the Torah's essence, and it has entered into our homes and our hearts. To retell the Torah and to translate it into our own words is to partner with God, making the Torah that is written into a Torah that is spoken and heard, a Torah that is lived.

Shabbat Shalom!

Parshas Devorim -- Reconciliation Walk

by Rabbi Mordechai Rhine © 2017 Teach 613

The Jewish world is plunged each year into a three week season of mourning, occurring during the summer months, and preceding the High Holy Days. Concluding with Tishah B'Av, the day on which both the first and second Temples in Jerusalem were destroyed, these days are days of introspection regarding relationships, both interpersonal and spiritual.

Appropriately for the theme of the season, the readings of the prophets are readings of rebuke and nostalgia. G-d raised His children up and blessed them greatly, but they did not live up to the noble role that He envisioned. A terrible falling-out resulted in the relationship between G-d and His people, leading G-d to cause the Temples to be destroyed and His beloved people to be exiled from their land.

The pain resulting from the exile has been enormous. Over years, scattered throughout the lands, the Jewish people have managed to maintain serenity in the face of adverse environments. We have managed to come through both physically and spiritually; but the experiences have taken a significant toll in pain and suffering. Who can forget the Inquisition, the Cossack brutality, and the Holocaust? Even today with our own State, we sense that we are still in exile as impossible expectations are pressed upon us.

One can imagine that the Jewish people might be angry, and allow the falling-out to escalate. Indeed there is an attitude which says: If G-d abandons us, then we have every right to abandon Him.

Yet, the time of Tishah B'Av is not one of anger, and it is not one of increasing distance. Instead it is a time of thoughtfulness and reconciliation.

The story is told of a great and holy Rabbi, who told his students the night before Rosh Hashana that he wished them to accompany him to the outskirts of town. "The 'holy ones' have informed me that something momentous will happen tonight. I would like to be there."

The students went with him and eventually arrived at a little hovel, the home of a middle-aged man who was somewhat affiliated with their congregation. It was here that the great Rabbi stopped and stood by the window to witness developments. The man who lived there was oblivious to the fact that he had left the curtains wide open. In fact he seemed not to have a care in the world, except for the table that he was setting for two.

"Why is he setting for two?" one of the students asked in a hushed whisper. "Doesn't he live alone?"

But the great Rabbi motioned for quiet. Something momentous was about to occur.

So they watched silently as the man set two glasses out, and then filled them generously with vodka. He held his glass up, fervently expressed himself, and then with a clink of "L'Chayim" he drank his glass. Then, as he sat back with a smile on his lips, the great Rabbi said it was time to go.

The students wondered to themselves why their Master found it necessary to watch one of the least involved congregants get drunk on the night before Rosh Hashana. But, as they saw no explanation was forthcoming, they decided to keep their questions to themselves.

The next morning in synagogue they noticed that the man had come for services. They were a bit surprised to see him, and during a break they approached him to ask what was up. At first he didn't let on to anything. But finally he said, "Let's sit down. It is good that I should talk about it."

"You see," he began, "I used to be one of the wealthiest and most prestigious people in town."

"One day a business deal didn't go my way, and I got angry with G-d. I said, "If that is what You do to me, then I will not continue to be so fervent in my prayers."

"So I stopped coming regularly during the week, and things got worse.

"I continued being angry. As things got worse, I lessened my charity giving, my Torah studies, and even my relationships in the congregation. Over the years I have had to sell my house three times to downgrade, until now I live in a little place on the outskirts of town.

"Finally, this last week, I made a decision. I realized that G-d wasn't giving in. So, if things were to improve I would have to take the first step. So I decided that starting with Rosh Hashana I would do my best, and I would have confidence that G-d would do His best too.

"So what do Jews do when they have a falling-out, and want to makeup. They make a "L'Chayim." So I poured two glasses full, and I declared that we would once again be friends. I would start coming to services again, and G-d would reach out and make things right."

Sometimes in life, relationships experience downturns. The Jewish attitude is that although there may be enormous pain, reconciliation is possible.

I was recently consulted by the father of a teenage boy who told me that he had a terrible falling-out with his son. "He won't speak to me anymore," he told me. "Rabbi, will you please speak to him."

I met with the young man and heard him out. The boy acknowledged that he was consistently out of turn, but insisted that his father was overreacting. "So I shut him out," the boy stated plainly. "I give him the silent treatment, and now things are okay."

I could plainly see that things were not okay, and I told him, "I see that you have gone through a lot of pain. There are things that your dad says which you feel are way off base. You need to tell him that you are angry. You need to tell him what ticks you off. You need to go for a reconciliation walk."

Tishah B'Av is a thoughtful time, a time on the Jewish calendar that is the gateway to the High Holy Days. It is a time when even G-d Himself is looking to set things right.

"Therefore," G-d says (Hoshea 2:16-17), "I invite the Jewish people for a walk, to have a heart to heart talk. I will change the depths of destruction to a gateway of hope. It shall be like the song of youth at the time of the Exodus."

Are we ready for a song of youth, during the season of Tishah B'Av? Perhaps the song might have to wait for the holidays of Succos and Simchas Torah.

But we certainly are ready for a good and meaningful walk, a walk on which we can talk and we can listen, a walk of reconciliation.

With best wishes for a wonderful Shabbos.

Thoughts for Parashat Devarim and 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.

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.

* Jewishideas.org.

Parshas Devarim Shabbos Chazon

by Rabbi Yehoshua Singer*

Perhaps one of the most difficult elements of the Nine Days is appreciating what we are mourning. In Torah Judaism we do not mourn and focus on the past. Rather, we are mourning the present, that we still do not have the Temple and that we are still in exile. Yet after two thousand years the Temple, the Messiah, and the end of the exile are foreign to our minds. It is hard to imagine how it could come to pass and what such a time would look like. While we make an honest effort, it can be a great struggle to truly believe with conviction that such a time will come. If we struggle to understand how and when it would come to be, it is even harder to understand that we are already missing that part of ourselves and that we currently have what to mourn.

At the end of the Parsha, Moshe relates the recent wars with Sichon and Og and the division of their lands to the tribes of Reuven, Gad and half of Menashe. The Parsha concludes with Moshe recounting his charge to Yehoshua at that time: "Your eyes have seen all that Hashem, your G-d, has done to these two kings, so Hashem will do to all of the kingdoms that you are crossing over there." (Devarim 3:21)

Rabbeinu Bechaya notes that Moshe's remarks are being directed to the nation as a whole. Moshe felt it was important for everyone else to hear the charge he had given Yehoshua. Moshe wanted to strengthen the belief and courage of the nation. He, therefore, referenced the battles with Sichon and Og and how he had encouraged Yehoshua with those battles. This encouragement would enable them to recognize that Hashem would continue to fight for them in the same manner as they battled the thirty one kings of Canaan.

It is hard to understand why Moshe felt this would help? All those who were older than forty had experienced the year of the plagues in Egypt and the Splitting of the Sea. Everyone standing here had been living in the desert literally eating bread from Heaven and drinking the waters flowing out of a rock. They had comfortably traveled through the desert, surrounded by clouds. They had experienced the wars with Sichon and Og themselves, and the Medrash Tehillim (136) tells us were even more powerful than the Egyptians. If after all this, they still did not understand that Hashem was taking care of them and would watch over them in every way, then how would it help for Moshe to remind them of the battles? Trust and faith, though based on logic, have an emotional component. The more we trust and recognize that someone is there for us, the more tranquility we feel. It is from within this tranquility, this feeling that it will be okay, that we find the strength and courage to face our challenges. Moshe was encouraging them to focus on and consider the import of what they had recently experienced. For in order to reach that deeper level of trust, they needed to bring that awareness from their minds into their hearts.

Jewish history is replete with the miraculous continuity of our nation, a miracle itself on par with the miracle of a nation surviving in the desert. Now, as we find ourselves in the times before Moshiach, we again have seen miraculous Jewish battles. As is well known, the Israeli wars defy all military science. Anyone who has studied the prophecies regarding the time before Moshiach comes, sees these prophecies coming true before our eyes. The barren wasteland of Israel, that stayed desolate throughout our exile, has begun to flourish and thrive upon our return as prophesied by Yechezkel thousands of years ago (Yechezkel 36:8-12).

Perhaps, if we follow Moshe's advice to our ancestors, we can understand why we are mourning. If we consider the import of the miracles and wonders we have witnessed in recent times, if we consider the import of ancient prophecies coming true before our eyes, perhaps we can begin to understand the truth of swords turned into plowshares and lions laying with lambs. We can begin to bring these concepts from our minds into our hearts and find that faith. Then, perhaps, we can begin to understand what it is that we are mourning.

* Rabbi, Am HaTorah Congregation, Bethesda, MD.

Isaiah, Social Media, and Tisha B'av

By Rabbi Moshe Rube*

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 haftarah 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.

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Rav Kook Torah Devarim: The Book that Moses Wrote

Mipi Atzmo

Already from its opening sentence, we see that the final book of the Pentateuch is different from the first four. Instead of the usual introductory statement, "God spoke to Moses, saying," we read:

"These are the words that Moses spoke to all of Israel on the far side of the Jordan River ..."
(Deut. 1:1)

Unlike the other four books, Deuteronomy is largely a record of speeches that Moses delivered to the people before his death. The Talmud (Megillah 31b) confirms that the prophetic nature of this book is qualitatively different than the others. While the other books of the Torah are a direct transmission of God's word, Moses said Deuteronomy *mipi atzmo* — "on his own."

However, we cannot take this statement — that Deuteronomy consists of Moses' own words — at face value. Moses

could not have literally composed this book on his own, for the Sages taught that a prophet is not allowed to say in God's name what he did not hear from God (Shabbat 104a). So what does it mean that Moses wrote Deuteronomy *mipi atzmo*? In what way does this book differ from the previous four books of the Pentateuch?

Tadir versus Mekudash

The distinction between different levels of prophecy may be clarified by examining a Talmudic discussion in Zevachim 90b. The Talmud asks the following question: if we have before us two activities, one of which is holier (*mekudash*), but the second is more prevalent (*tadir*), which one should we perform first? The Sages concluded that the more prevalent activity takes precedence over the holier one, and should be discharged first.

One might infer from this ruling that the quality of prevalence is more important, and for this reason the more common activity is performed first. In fact, the exact opposite is true. If something is rare, this indicates that it belongs to a very high level of holiness — so high, in fact, that our limited world does not merit benefiting from this exceptional holiness on a permanent basis. Why then does the more common event take precedence? This is in recognition that we live in an imperfect world. We are naturally more receptive to and influenced by a lesser, more sustainable sanctity. In the future, however, the higher, transitory holiness will come first.

The First and Second Luchot

This distinction between *mekudash* and *tadir* illustrates the difference between the first and second set of *luchot* (tablets) that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. The first tablets were holier, a reflection of the singular unity of the Jewish people at that point in history. As the Midrash comments on Exodus 19:2, “The people encamped — as one person, with one heart — opposite the mountain” (*Mechilta*; *Rashi ad loc*).

After the sin of the Golden Calf, however, the Jewish people no longer deserved the special holiness of the first tablets. Tragically, the first *luchot* had to be broken; otherwise, the Jewish people would have warranted destruction. With the holy tablets shattered, the special unity of Israel also departed. This unity was later partially restored with the second covenant that they accepted upon themselves while encamped across the Jordan River on the plains of Moab. (The Hebrew name for this location, *Arvot Moav*, comes from the word '*arvut*,' meaning mutual responsibility.)

The exceptional holiness of the first tablets, and the special unity of the people at Mount Sinai, were simply too holy to maintain over time. They were replaced by less holy but more attainable substitutes — the second set of tablets, and the covenant at *Arvot Moav*.

Moses and the Other Prophets

After the sin of the Golden Calf, God offered to rebuild the Jewish people solely from Moses. Moses was unsullied by the sin of the Golden Calf; he still belonged to the transient realm of elevated holiness. Nonetheless, Moses rejected God's offer. He decided to include himself within the constant holiness of Israel. This is the meaning of the Talmudic statement that Moses wrote Deuteronomy “on his own.” On his own accord, Moses decided to join the spiritual level of the Jewish people, and help prepare the people for the more sustainable holiness through the renewed covenant of *Arvot Moav*.

Moses consciously limited the prophetic level of Deuteronomy so that it would correspond to that of other prophets. He withdrew from his unique prophetic status, a state where “No other prophet arose in Israel like Moses” (Deut. 34:10). With the book of Deuteronomy, he initiated the lower but more constant form of prophecy that would suit future generations. He led the way for the other prophets, and foretold that “God will establish for you a prophet from your midst like me” (Deut. 18:15).

In the future, however, the first set of tablets, which now appear to be broken, will be restored. The Jewish people will be ready for a higher, loftier holiness, and the *mekudash* will take precedent over the *tadir*. For this reason, the Holy Ark held both sets of tablets; each set was kept for its appropriate time.

(Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 287-290. Adapted from *Shemuot HaRe'iyah*, *Devarim* 1929.)

What Happened on the Ninth of Av?*

The 9th of Av, Tisha b'Av, commemorates a list of catastrophes so severe it's clearly a day set aside by G d for suffering. Learn seven historical events that took place on Tisha b'Av, the Jewish day of mourning.

1. The Spies Returned With a Bad Report

Picture this: The year is 1313 BCE. The Israelites are in the desert, recently having experienced the miraculous Exodus, and are now poised to enter the Promised Land. But first they dispatch a reconnaissance mission to assist in formulating a prudent battle strategy. The spies return on the eighth day of Av and report that the land is unconquerable. That night, the 9th of Av, the people cry. They insist that they'd rather go back to Egypt than be slaughtered by the Canaanites. G d is highly displeased by this public demonstration of distrust in His power, and consequently that generation of Israelites never enters the Holy Land. Only their children have that privilege, after wandering in the desert for another 38 years.

2. Both Holy Temples Were Destroyed

The First Temple was also destroyed on the 9th of Av (423 BCE). Five centuries later (in 69 CE), as the Romans drew closer to the Second Temple, ready to torch it, the Jews were shocked to realize that their Second Temple was destroyed the same day as the first.

3. The Battle at Betar Was Lost

When the Jews rebelled against Roman rule, they believed that their leader, Simon bar Kochba, would fulfill their messianic longings. But their hopes were cruelly dashed in 133 CE as the Jewish rebels were brutally butchered in the final battle at Betar. The date of the massacre? Of course—the 9th of Av!

4. The Romans Plowed the Beit Hamikdash

One year after their conquest of Betar, the Romans plowed over the Temple Mount, our nation's holiest site.

5. The Jews Were Expelled From England

The Jews were expelled from England in 1290 CE on, you guessed it, Tisha b'Av.

6. The Jews Were Banished From Spain

In 1492, the Golden Age of Spain came to a close when Queen Isabella and her husband Ferdinand ordered that the Jews be banished from the land. The edict of expulsion was signed on March 31, 1492, and the Jews were given exactly four months to put their affairs in order and leave the country. The Hebrew date on which no Jew was allowed any longer to remain in the land where he had enjoyed welcome and prosperity? Oh, by now you know it—the 9th of Av.

7. Both World Wars Began

Ready for just one more? World War II and the Holocaust, historians conclude, was actually the long drawn-out conclusion of World War I that began in 1914. And yes, amazingly enough, Germany declared war on Russia, effectively catapulting the First World War into motion, on the 9th of Av, Tisha b'Av.

What do you make of all this? Jews see this as another confirmation of the deeply held conviction that history isn't haphazard; events – even terrible ones – are part of a Divine plan and have spiritual meaning. The message of time is that everything has a rational purpose, even though we don't understand it.

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Devarim: The Vacuum of Choice*

Adapted by Yanki Tauber

On whose initiative were the spies sent? The way the story is told in Numbers 13, it was by divine command:

G d spoke to Moses, saying: "Send you men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel. One man, one man per tribe shall you send, each a prince among them . . ." (Numbers 13:1-2)

But when Moses recounts these events 40 years later, he tells the people of Israel,

You all approached me, and said: "Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land and bring us back word regarding the road by which we shall go up and the cities to we shall enter." The thing was favorable in my eyes; and I took twelve men from amongst you, one man per tribe . . . (Deuteronomy 1:22-23)

The commentaries reconcile these two accounts of the sending of the spies by explaining that the initiative indeed came from the people of Israel. "Moses then consulted with G d, who said to him, 'Send you men . . .,' to imply: Send them as dictated by your understanding. I am not telling you what to do. Do as you see fit" (Rashi). Thus, the spies' mission, while receiving divine consent, was a human endeavor, born of the desire of the people and dispatched because "the thing was favorable" in Moses' eyes.

The result was a tragic setback in the course of Jewish history. The spies brought back a most demoralizing report, and caused the people to lose faith in G d's promise of the Land of Israel as their eternal heritage. The entire generation was then deemed unfit to inherit the land, and it was decreed that they would live out their lives in the desert. Only 40 years later did Moses' successor, Joshua, lead a new generation across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. (Joshua and Caleb were the only two spies to speak in favor of conquering the land, and the only two men of that entire generation to enter it.)

Up until that time, G d had imparted specific directives to Moses and the people of Israel virtually every step of the way. The case of the spies was the first instance in which G d said, "I'm not telling you what to do; do as you see fit." Should this not have set off a warning light in the mind of Moses?

Indeed, it did. Our sages tell us that Moses sent off Joshua with the blessing, "May G d deliver you from the conspiracy of the spies" (Rashi to Numbers 13:16). So why did he send them? And if, for whatever reason, he thought it necessary to send them, why did he not at least bless them as he blessed Joshua? Even more amazing is the fact that a generation later, as the Jewish people finally stood at the ready (for the second time) to enter the land, Joshua dispatches spies! This time, it works out fine; but why did he again initiate a process which had ended so tragically in the past?

Obviously, Moses was well aware of the risks involved when embarking on a course of "do as you see fit." For man to strike out on his own, without precise instructions from on high, and with only his finite and subjective judgment as his compass, is to enter a minefield strewn with possibilities for error and failure. Yet Moses also knew that G d was opening a new arena of human potential.

Free Choice

A most crucial element of our mission in life is the element of choice. Were G d to have created man as a creature who cannot do wrong, then He might as well have created a perfect world in the first place, or no world at all. The entire point of G d's desire in creation is that there exists a non-perfected world, and that we choose to perfect it. It is precisely the possibility for error on our part that lends significance to our achievements.

The concept of choice exists on two levels. When G d issues an explicit instruction to us, we still have the choice to defy His command. This, however, is choice in a more limited sense. For, in essence, our soul is literally "a part of G d above" and, deep down, has but a single desire: to fulfill the divine will. In the words of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi: "A Jew is neither willing, nor is he able, to tear himself away from G d." When it comes down to it, each and every one of us desires only to do good, as defined by the will of G d. The only choice we have is whether to suppress our innate will or to express

it in our daily life.

Up until the episode of the spies, this was the only choice offered the Jewish people. G d provided unequivocal guidelines for each and every issue that confronted their lives. They had the choice to disobey, but to do so would run contrary to their deepest instincts.

The second level of choice was introduced with G d's reply to Moses regarding the spies. When Moses heard G d saying, "Do as you see fit," he understood that G d was opening another, even deeper and truer dimension of choice in the life of man. By creating an area in which He, the creator and absolute master of the world, states, "I am not telling you what to do," G d was imparting an even greater significance to human actions. Here, and only here, is the choice truly real; here, and only here, is there nothing to compel us in either direction.

When we enter this arena, the risks are greater: the possibility to err is greater, and the consequences of our error more devastating. But when we succeed in discovering, without instruction and empowerment from above, the optimum manner in which to enter the Holy Land and actualize the divine will, our deed is infinitely more valuable and significant.

The Self of Joshua

This was why Moses dispatched the spies, though fully aware of the hazards of their mission, without so much as a blessing that they be safeguarded from the pitfalls of human endeavor. Were he to have blessed them—to have imparted to them of his own spiritual prowess to succeed in their mission—he would have undermined the uniqueness of the opportunity that G d had granted by consenting that their mission be "by your understanding." The entire point was that both Moses (in deciding whether to send them) and the spies (in executing their mission) be entirely on their own, guided and empowered solely by their own understanding and humanity.

The only one to receive Moses blessing was Joshua, who was Moses' "faithful servant . . . never budging from [Moses'] tent" (Exodus 33:11). The unique relationship between Moses and Joshua is described by the Talmud by the following metaphor: "Moses face was like the face of the sun; Joshua's face was like the face of the moon." On the most basic level, this expresses the superiority of Moses over Joshua, the latter being but a pale reflector of the former's light; on a deeper level, this alludes to the depth of the bond between the greatest of teachers and the most devoted of disciples. As the moon has no luminance of its own, but receives all of its light from the sun, so had Joshua completely abnegated his self to his master, so that everything he had, and everything he was, derived from Moses.

For Moses to bless Joshua was not to empower Joshua with something that was not himself: Joshua's entire self was Moses. Armed with Moses' blessing, Joshua was truly and fully on his own—this was his essence and self, rather than something imposed on him from without.

Thus it was Joshua, who had successfully negotiated the arena of true and independent choice, who led the people of Israel into the land of Canaan. For the conquest of Canaan and its transformation into a "holy land" represents our entry into a place where there are no clearcut divine directives to distinguish good from evil and right from wrong, and our independent discovery of how to sanctify this environment as a home for G d.¹

FOOTNOTE:

1. Based on Sefer HaSichot 5749, vol. 2, pp. 536–540..

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Devarim: Overcoming Stagnation

By Rabbi M. Wisniefsky*

[Moses told the Jewish people,] "G-d, our G-d, spoke to us at Horeb saying, 'You have dwelt too long at this mountain.'" (Devarim 1:6)

G-d here is alluding to the lesson that we should never remain too long on the same level in our relationship with Him,

without advancing or ascending.

This idea is also articulated in the Prophets, where the human potential to progress in Divine consciousness is contrasted with the angels' lack of this potential: "If you go in my ways....I will make you into those who walk [i.e, constantly move forward] in contrast to these [angels], who [merely] stand here."

Angels, being personified emotional states of involvement with G-d, are static, whereas human beings can progress from one level to another in their emotional involvement with G-d. In fact, we should strive to reach the next level of spirituality as soon as we become aware of its existence.

Furthermore, this verse teaches us not to cloister ourselves in the study hall, devoting ourselves exclusively to our own self-refinement. Rather, G-d challenges us to leave this pristine and holy environment, traveling to a place far from "His mountain," to illuminate even these distant places with the Divine light of the Torah.

– Kehot's Daily Wisdom #2

*** An Insight from the Rebbe**

Gut Shabbos,
Rabbi Yosef B. Friedman
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Covenant and Conversation

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

The Teacher As Hero

Imagine the following scenario. You are 119 years and 11 months old. The end of your life is in sight. Your hopes have received devastating blows. You have been told by God that you will not enter the land to which you have been leading your people for forty years. You have been repeatedly criticised by the people you have led. Your sister and brother, with whom you shared the burdens of leadership, have predeceased you. And you know that neither of your children, Gershom and Eliezer, will succeed you. Your life seems to be coming to a tragic end, your destination unreachable, your aspirations unfulfilled. What do you do?

We can imagine a range of responses. You could sink into sadness, reflecting on the might-have-beens had the past taken a different direction. You could continue to plead with God to change His mind and let you cross the Jordan. You could retreat into memories of the good times: when the people sang a song at the Red Sea, when they gave their assent to the covenant at Sinai, when they built the Tabernacle. These would be the normal human reactions. Moses did none of these things – and what he did instead helped change the course of Jewish history.

For a month Moses convened the people on the far side of the Jordan and addressed them. Those addresses form the substance of the book of Deuteronomy. They are extraordinarily wide-ranging, covering a history of the past, a set of prophecies and warnings about the future, laws, narratives, a song, and a set of blessings. Together they constitute the most comprehensive, profound vision of what it is to be a holy people, dedicated to God, constructing a society that would stand as a role model for humanity in how to combine freedom and order, justice and compassion, individual dignity and collective responsibility.

Over and above what Moses said in the last month of his life, though, is what Moses did. He changed careers. He shifted his relationship with the people. No longer Moses the liberator, the lawgiver, the worker of miracles, the intermediary between the Israelites and God, he became the figure known to Jewish memory: Moshe Rabbeinu, “Moses, our teacher.” That is how Deuteronomy begins – “Moses began to expound this Law” (Deut. 1:5) – using a verb, *be’er*, that we have not encountered in this sense in the Torah and which appears only one more time towards the

end of the book: “And you shall write very clearly [*ba’er hetev*] all the words of this law on these stones” (27:8). He wanted to explain, expound, make clear. He wanted the people to understand that Judaism is not a religion of mysteries intelligible only to the few. It is – as he would say in his very last speech – an “inheritance of the [entire] congregation of Jacob” (33:4).

Moses became, in the last month of his life, the master educator. In these addresses, he does more than tell the people what the law is. He explains to them why the law is. There is nothing arbitrary about it. The law is as it is because of the people’s experience of slavery and persecution in Egypt, which was their tutorial in why we need freedom and law-governed liberty. Time and again he says: You shall do this because you were once slaves in Egypt. They must remember and never forget – two verbs that appear repeatedly in the book – where they came from and what it felt like to be exiled, persecuted, and powerless. In Lin-Manuel Miranda’s musical *Hamilton*, George Washington tells the young, hot-headed Alexander Hamilton: “Dying is easy, young man; living is harder.” In Deuteronomy, Moses keeps telling the Israelites, in effect: Slavery is easy; freedom is harder.

Throughout Deuteronomy, Moses reaches a new level of authority and wisdom. For the first time we hear him speak extensively in his own voice, rather than merely as the transmitter of God’s words to him. His grasp of vision and detail is faultless. He wants the people to understand that the laws God has commanded them are for their good, not just God’s.

All ancient peoples had gods. All ancient peoples had laws. But their laws were not from a god; they were from the king, pharaoh, or ruler – as in the famous law code of Hammurabi. The gods of the ancient world were seen as a source of power, not justice. Laws were man-made rules for the maintenance of social order. The Israelites were different. Their laws were not made by their kings – monarchy in ancient Israel was unique in endowing the king with no legislative powers. Their laws came directly from God Himself, creator of the universe and liberator of His people. Hence Moses’ ringing declaration: “Observe [these laws] carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people’” (Deut. 4:6).

At this defining moment of his life, Moses understood that, though he would not be physically with the people when they entered the Promised Land, he could still be with them intellectually and emotionally if he gave them the teachings to take with them into the future. Moses became the pioneer of perhaps the single greatest contribution of Judaism to the concept of leadership: the idea of the teacher as hero.

Heroes are people who demonstrate courage in the field of battle. What Moses knew was that the most important battles are not military. They are spiritual, moral, cultural. A military victory shifts the pieces on the chessboard of history. A spiritual victory changes lives. A military victory is almost always short-lived. Either the enemy attacks again or a new and more dangerous opponent appears. But spiritual victories can – if their lesson is not forgotten – last forever. Even quite ordinary people, Yiftah, for example (Book of Judges, Chapters 11–12), or Samson (Chapters 13–16), can be military heroes. But those who teach people to see, feel, and act differently, who enlarge the moral horizons of humankind, are rare indeed. Of these, Moses was the greatest.

Not only does he become the teacher in Deuteronomy. In words engraved on Jewish hearts ever since, he tells the entire people that they must become a nation of educators:

Make known to your children and your children’s children, how you once stood before the Lord your God at Horeb. (Deut. 4:9–10)

In the future, when your child asks you, “What is the meaning of the testimonies, decrees, and laws that the Lord our God has commanded you?” tell them, “We were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt, but the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand....” (Deut. 6:20–21)

Teach [these words] to your children, speaking of them when you sit at home and when you travel on the way, when you lie down and when you rise. (Deut. 11:19)

Indeed, the last two commands Moses ever gave the Israelites were explicitly educational in nature: to gather the entire people together in the seventh year to hear the Torah being read, to remind them of their covenant with God (Deut. 31:12–13), and, “Write down for yourselves this song and teach it to the people of Israel” (31:19), understood as the command

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that each person must write for himself a scroll of the law.

In Deuteronomy, a new word enters the biblical vocabulary: the verb *l-m-d*, meaning to learn or teach. The verb does not appear even once in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, or Numbers. In Deuteronomy it appears seventeen times.

There was nothing like this concern for universal education elsewhere in the ancient world. Jews became the people whose heroes were teachers, whose citadels were schools, and whose passion was study and the life of the mind.

Moses' end-of-life transformation is one of the most inspiring in all of religious history. In that one act, he liberated his career from tragedy. He became a leader not for his time only but for all time. His body did not accompany his people as they entered the land, but his teachings did. His sons did not succeed him, but his disciples did. He may have felt that he had not changed his people in his lifetime, but in the full perspective of history, he changed them more than any leader has ever changed any people, turning them into the people of the book and the nation who built not ziggurats or pyramids but schools and houses of study.

The poet Shelley famously said, "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." [1] In truth, though, it is not poets but teachers who shape society, handing on the legacy of the past to those who build the future. That insight sustained Judaism for longer than any other civilisation, and it began with Moses in the last month of his life.

[1] Percy Bysshe Shelley, "A Defence of Poetry," in *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley*, ed. Harold Bloom (Toronto: New American Library, 1996), 448.

Shabbat Shalom: Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan.... And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke unto the children of Israel, according unto all that Hashem had given him in commandment unto them; after he had smitten Sihon the king of the Emorites, who dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who dwelt in Ashtaroth, at Edrei; beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, Moses began to elucidate this Torah, saying..." (Deuteronomy 1:1-5)

There are two important issues which must be studied when approaching this week's Torah portion, the first theological and the second textual.

The theological question strikes us from the moment we open this fifth book of the Bible: Moses is speaking with his voice to the people of Israel. Each of the other four biblical books is written in the third person, in God's voice, as it were, recording the history, narrating the

drama and commanding the laws. This fifth book is written in the first person. Does this mean that the first four books are God's Bible and the fifth Moses' Bible?

The fifteenth-century Spanish biblical interpreter and faithful disciple of Maimonides, Don Isaac Abarbanel, queries "whether Deuteronomy was given by God from heaven, containing words from the mouth of the Divine as the rest of the Torah, or whether Moses spoke this book by himself... what he himself understood to be the intent of the Divine in his elucidation of the commandments, as the biblical text states, 'And Moses began to elucidate this Torah'" (Deut. 1:5).

The Abarbanel concludes that whereas the first four books of the Bible are God's words written down by Moses, this fifth book of the Bible contains Moses' words, which God commanded the prophet to write down. In this manner, Deuteronomy has equal sanctity with the rest of the five books, (Abarbanel, Introduction to Deuteronomy).

Perhaps the Abarbanel is agreeing with a provocative interpretation of the verse, "Moses will speak, and the Lord will answer him with a voice" (Ex. 19:19), which I once heard in the name of the Koztzer Rebbe, who asked: "What is the difference whether God speaks and Moses answers Amen, or Moses speaks and God answers Amen?!"

The second issue is textual in nature. The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' long farewell speech. Moses feels compelled to provide personal reflections on the significance of the commandments as well as his personal spin on many of the most tragic desert events.

From the very beginning of Moses' monologue, he cites God's invitation to the Israelites to conquer the Land of Israel. This would be the perfect introduction to a retelling of the Sin of the Scouts whose evil report dissuaded the Israelites from attempting the conquest. Indeed, he does begin to recount, "But you all drew near to me and said, 'Let us send out men before us, and let them scout out the land and report to us on the matter...'" (Deut. 1:22). But this retelling comes fourteen verses after God's initial invitation and these intervening fourteen verses are filled with what appears to be recriminations against a nation which Moses "is not able to carry [bear] alone" (1: 9). Only after this excursus from the topic at hand does Moses discuss the failed reconnaissance mission. Why the excursus? How does it explain the failed mission?

From God's initial approach to Moses at the burning bush, Moses was a reluctant leader. The reason was clear: Moses called himself "heavy of speech." I have previously explained this on the basis of an interpretation of the *Ralbag*, to mean that Moses was not given to

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"light banter"; he was so immersed in the "heavy" issues, that he had neither the patience nor the interest to convince an ungrateful and stiff-necked people to trust in God and conquer the Promised Land. Moses spent so much time in the companionship of the Divine that he lost the will – and ability – to consort with regular humanity, with Mr. Schwartz and Mrs. Goldberg: Moses yearned to speak to God, to convey the "heavy talk of God's commandments, he had neither the time nor the will for small-talk of a Pastoral Rabbi.

Moses knew himself. The verses leading up to the Sin of the Scouts are hardly an excuse. They explain his failure to give proper direction to the delegation of tribal princes, his inability to censure their report, his unwillingness to convince them of the critical significance of the conquest of the land. He could not bear the burden, the grumbings, of a nation which was too removed from God to be able to follow Him blindly as Moses was more than willing to do!

Back to theology. Maimonides explains that even at Mount Sinai, the entire nation only heard a sound emanating from the Divine, a Kol; each individual understood that sound in accordance with his specific and individual spiritual standing, while Moses was the only one able to "divine" the precise will of God within that sound – the words of the Ten Commandments (Guide to the Perplexed, II:32–33). Moses internalized the will of God and thereby produced the words of the four books of the Bible. God's words were internalized and written by Moses, the greatest prophet of all. Moses communicated with God. Moses may not always have spoken successfully to his own generation; but he did write, for us and for Jewish eternity.

But Moses also had a legacy to leave and an interpretation to give. In the book of Deuteronomy, he spoke to his people, telling them not God's words but his own, Moses's own interpretation of the events and the commandments: God commanded him to write down the words of this book as well for all eternity. God was granting the divine imprimatur of Torah to Moses' book of Deuteronomy – and making it His (God's) book as well. Moses spoke and God answered Amen.

The Person in the Parsha Rabbi Dr. Tzvi Hersh Weinreb The Path to Eloquence

It is an experience common to all freshmen. One comes to a new campus, knows no one, and tries to orient himself by identifying the senior students who seem to have prestige. Then, he tries to connect with these campus big shots.

This was my experience precisely when, many years ago, I explored a new yeshiva at a transition point in my life. I was barely 19 years old, and I was trying to decide whether I

would pursue an exclusively Talmudic education or combine my Talmud studies with college courses. I decided to spend the spring semester in an elite institution devoted only to Talmud, and to determine whether this approach suited me.

I quickly came to learn that the senior students were organized in a kind of hierarchy which reflected their respective degrees of erudition and their relationship to the world-famous dean of the school. I was somewhat impressed by all of them, but one in particular stood out for me. I do not recall his name now, but I can close my eyes and easily conjure up an image of him.

He was about twenty-five years old, of medium height, thin and wiry. He had a precision to him which resulted from his carefully measured movements. When he walked, he seemed to be taking each step intentionally. When he moved his hands, there was a precision to his movements. The words that came out of his mouth were few and deliberate; and his comments, short and to the point.

I remember being impressed by how he sat down before the texts he studied, first brushing the dust off of his desk and chair, then opening his book cautiously, and then taking from his pocket a plastic six-inch ruler. He placed the ruler under the line of text which was his focus, almost as if he intended to literally measure the words on the page.

I was fascinated by him and began to inquire about his background. I soon learned that he was the wunderkind of the school. His scholarly achievements impressed everyone. In early adolescence, he had found his studies extremely frustrating. Had this occurred but a decade or two later, he would probably have been diagnosed as learning disabled. He was not as bright as his peers, had great difficulties in following the give and take of Talmudic passages, and couldn't handle the bilingual curriculum.

At the suggestion of his high school's guidance counselor, he made a trip to Israel to study there, something more uncommon in those days. While there, still frustrated, he sought the blessing and counsel of the famous sage, Rabbi Abraham Isaiah Karelitz, more commonly known as the Chazon Ish.

This great man, then in his waning years, encouraged the young lad to persist in his studies, but to limit the scope of his daily efforts to small, "bite-sized chunks" of text. He concluded the interview with a blessing, quoting the passage in Psalms which asserts that Torah study can make even a dullard wise.

I befriended the young man, easily five or six years my senior, and attempted to enlist him as my study partner. But I soon discovered that his keen intelligence and the broad scope of his

knowledge were far too advanced for me. The advice and blessing of the Chazon Ish coupled with the young man's years of toil and commitment had the desired effect. He may indeed have once been a dullard, but he was one no longer. He was now an intellectual giant.

Although I did not learn much Talmud from this fellow, I did learn a most important life lesson from him. I learned that one can overcome his limitations if he persists in trying to overcome them. I learned that one could undo his natural challenges with a combination of heeding wise counsel, becoming inspired spiritually, and devoting himself with diligence and dedication to the task.

It was much later in life when I realized that I could have learned the same important life lesson from this week's Torah portion, Parshat Devarim, and from no less a personage than our teacher, Moses, himself. This week, we begin the entire book of Deuteronomy. Almost all of this book consists of the major address which Moses gave to the Jewish people before he took his final leave from them. "These are the words that Moses addressed to all of Israel..." (Deuteronomy 1:1).

Although it is now the long, hot summer, all readers of this verse remember that cold, wintry Sabbath day just six months ago when we first encountered Moses, back in the Torah portion of Shemot. We then read of how Moses addressed the Almighty and expressed his inability to accept the divine mission. He said: "Please, O Lord, I have never been a man of words, either in times past or now that You have spoken to Your servant; I am slow of speech and slow of tongue..." (Exodus 4:10). Moses stammered and stuttered and suffered from a genuine speech defect.

How surprising it is, then, that in this week's Torah portion, albeit forty years later, he is capable of delivering the lengthy and eloquent address which we are about to read every week for the next several months! How did he overcome his limitations? What are the secrets of his path to eloquence?

These questions are asked in the collection of homilies known as the Midrash Tanchuma. There, the rabbis speak of the astounding power of sincere and sustained Torah study. They speak too of the effects of years of practice. And they emphasize the healing which comes about from a connection with the One Above. The rabbis of the Midrash Tanchuma could have cited the Lord's own response to Moses' initial complaint: "Who gives a man speech? Who makes him dumb or deaf, seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"

But those rabbis chose another proof text entirely to illustrate that man, with God's help, can overcome his handicaps and challenges. They quote instead that beautiful passage in the book of Isaiah which reads:

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Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.
Then the lame shall leap like a deer,
And the tongue of the dumb shall shout aloud;
For waters shall burst forth in the desert,
Streams in the wilderness. (Isaiah 35:5-6)

We seldom contemplate the development, nay transformation, of the man who was Moses. But it is important that we do so, because, although we each have our unique challenges and personal handicaps, we are capable of coping with them, and often of overcoming them. We all can develop, and we all can potentially transform ourselves.

This week, and in all of the ensuing weeks which lie ahead, as we read Moses' masterful valedictory and are impressed with the beauty of his language, we must strive to remember that he was not always a skilled orator. Quite the contrary, he was once an aral sefatayim, a man of impeded speech, who grew to achieve the divine blessing of shedding his impediments and addressing his people with the inspiring and eminent long speech that is the book of Deuteronomy.

He can be a role model for us all.

OTS Dvar Torah

What is the most effective model for rebuke?

Yael Tawil, OTS Jennie Sapirstein Junior High School

Moses doesn't just rebuke the people. He causes the nation to understand that each individual is part of a system, and part of a nation. What do his historical descriptions teach us about the end of miraculous leadership?

We all love compliments, and believe that empowerment and putting in a good word are far more effective than rebuking, but sometimes, as parents and educators, we ask ourselves when to take others to task, and who we should be making those comments to. We also must know when to remain silent.

The Book of Deuteronomy, also called the Mishne Torah, contains Moses' last address, and the various chapters of this book include quite a few words of rebuke. In the first four books, the leadership of the Jewish people was supernatural. This system centered on the individual. Now, with the Israelites camped out in the plains of Moab, preparing to enter the Holy Land, we usher in a new stage: natural leadership. Moses' leadership involves harsh reprimands. He often repeats that the nation should learn from its forefathers' past.

Moses' mission and aspiration is for the nation to internalize this reprimand and impress it into their hearts. The rabbis of the Mussar movement interpret the verse "Know therefore this today, and consider it in your heart" as meaning that "knowing this today" and

“considering it in your heart” are light-years apart. The children of Israel listen to their leader and his rebukes with an open mind and an attentive ear. This wasn’t merely about listening and cognitive processing, but an emotional experience allowing them to take in the message and understand it deeply within their hearts.

The Midrash Hagadol, referring to Moses’ rebukes, states: “The Holy One, Blessed Be He said to Israel: Moses’ rebuke is as dear to me as the Ten Commandments”. Rebuke is a vital tool for progress. Usually, people don’t notice their own faults, and only those around them can truly help them grow, progress, and become conscious of themselves and society. Rebuke is mentioned as one of the 48 ways of acquiring the Torah, and a person should love reproach (Sayings of the Fathers, Chapter 6). The sages felt that avoiding criticism is so problematic that they determined that “Jerusalem was destroyed only because people did not rebuke one another”, and they saw the commandment of rebuke as a manifestation of the love we feel for others.

Why is it so vital to listen to rebuke? What did Moses do so that the nation would listen to him? He rebuked out of love. Moses loved the people of Israel and felt responsible for their future as a nation and for their conduct once they entered the land he couldn’t enter. Our sages state that this is the condition – that all rebukes are motivated by love. Furthermore, the person doing the rebuking must also be capable of speaking softly, with kid gloves. If a person is judgmental and critical by nature, how would anyone listen to his reprimands and accept them?

The Midrash chooses to compare the villain Bilaam to Moses in order to illustrate how sensitive we must be when we decide who will say what: “One more thing [is meant by] these are the words, R. Acha, quoting R. Hanina, stated that the rebukes could have been stated by Bilaam, while Moses uttered the blessings, but had Bilaam issued [these rebukes], the children of Israel would have said ‘the one who rebukes us despises us’, and had Moses blessed them, the nations of the world would have said that he [Moses] had blessed them because he loved them. The Holy One, Blessed Be He determined that Moses, who loved them, would rebuke them, while Bilaam, who hated them, would bless them, so that the blessings and rebukes would be clear to the people of Israel (Devarim Rabbah, Chapter 1, Section 4).

“For everything there is a season; a time for every experience under heaven.” We should note the state our audience is in, and the time we choose to issue a rebuke, since a rebuke should not be issued at times of sorrow and distress. We see that both Jacob, when he said to Rachel “Am I in the place of God”, and Moses, who addressed the people, saying “Hear now, O rebels”, erred by overlooking the

physical and emotional state of the ones on the receiving end of the rebuke. The children of Israel are now camped out in the plains of Moab, shortly before entering the Promised Land, so now is precisely when this rebuke is possible and necessary. Rashi, basing himself on Sifri, teaches about the special moments in the rebuke: “From whom did he learn this? From Jacob, who reproved his sons only shortly before his death, so that one should not reprove him and again have to reprove him; and that his fellow whom he reproves should not, when he afterwards happens to see him, feel ashamed before him... and so he shall not feel anything against him in his heart, so that the rebukers are not rebuked, for rebuke leads to peace.” This is how Jacob behaved when blessing his sons, and this is how Moses behaves in our parsha.

“Living greatly” – another viewpoint suggested by Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaCohen Kook, which relates the intensity of the reprimands recorded in the Book of Numbers with the stage that the people of Israel are in, both back then and today. Moses doesn’t just rebuke the people. He causes the nation to understand that each individual is part of a system, and part of a nation. Challenges and failures are interwoven into his historical account. He uses them to impart responsibility onto the nation and the individual before they enter the land, where they will be directed through natural leadership.

Rav Kook is asking us to perceive every moment through the prism of greatness. An individual’s private moment is tied into the entire nation, and as such, it affects the entire people of Israel. A person who, at a certain point in time, chooses to broaden his or her horizons and take action immortalizes that moment and infuses it with meaning. “The great people address the minute issues, but they do so in ways of greatness” (Orot Hakodesh, Part 2, page 377).

On a personal note, over the past few years, we have been studying the topic of “living in greatness” in our school. Fortunately, the young women studying here see this concept as a driving force behind progress and finding a purpose in life. When encountering individuals passionate about fulfilling their calling, the girls feel challenged. They serve as their inspiration for the set of values these girls build for themselves, and they galvanize their personalities. I believe that as educators, we operate out of responsibility, and through prayer, in order to strike a sensitive balance, where, at times, we are required to criticize and rebuke. Sometimes, rebukes are said out of anger, disappointment and alienation. As we learn from Moses, rebuke must stem from proximity and love, and it must be given when the time is ripe. Sometimes, we can “bypass” and forego various rebukes when we present our young people with challenges that let them feel responsible and influential. Then, they can

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grow and conduct themselves out of a feeling of awareness and greatness.

Dvar Torah

Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis

A message for those who attack us...

Why are the enemies of the Jewish people compared to bees?

On Shabbat when we read parashat Devarim it will be erev Tisha B’av. In the parsha, we are told that Moshe reminded the nation of what had transpired in the wilderness – “vayerdifu etchem ka’asher t’assena ha’davorim” – the Amorite nation sought to destroy us and they pursued us just as bees do. So why are the Amorites compared to bees?

Ibn Ezra explains that if the bees within a hive sense that somebody or something is threatening them then they will all go after that person in their thousands. And so too with the phenomenon of antisemitism. Sometimes we find that irrational perception that the Jews pose a threat and as a result we suffer persecution.

Now Rashi takes us one step further. Rashi comments on the fact that after a bee stings – it dies! Similarly, we notice, says Rashi, how the nations who have sought to destroy the Jews, have in turn been destroyed.

This is a particularly apt thought for us to bear in mind as we approach the fast day of Tisha B’av. We will be recalling the manner in which the Babylonians, in the case of the first temple and the Romans in the case of the second temple, sought to destroy our people. We have prevailed while those nations – the mightiest on Earth in their time – have long been forgotten about.

Similarly, as we cast our minds back over the past century we reflect with pain on how the Nazis sought to physically annihilate us, and those in the Soviet Union sought to spiritually destroy our people – yet here we are, we are thriving as a nation, while they have been consigned to the pages of history!

At the time of the commencement of the Jewish people, Hashem, in his first statement to Avraham Avinu said “v’avarecha mevarachecha” – those who bless you will be blessed, “u’mekalelecha a’or” – those who curse you will be cursed. These sentiments are beautifully expressed in our Lecha Dodi prayer which we chant every Friday night. In addressing the city of Jerusalem which is a symbol of the Jewish nation we say “V’hayu lim’shisa shosai’yich” – those who seek to oppress and destroy you shall suffer that fate themselves! “V’rachaku kol m’valai’yich” – and all those who seek to devour you will be kept distant from you.

Despite the evil intentions of some of the mightiest nations on earth in history, to destroy

the Jewish people – with the help of Hashem, we have prevailed, while they have faded away. “Yasis alai’yich Elokai’ich” – may Hashem shower joy and happiness upon us so that we will not know oppression, persecution or attempts to annihilate us anymore – a time when, please God, Tisha B’Av which is referred to by our prophets as a festival, will be transformed into the happiest day of the year.

Dvar Torah: TorahWeb.Org

Rabbi Michael Rosensweig

Experiencing and Internalizing the

Churban: Ramban's view on Havdalah

"Mishenichnas Av memaatin be-simcha" (Ta'anit 26b). It is evidently insufficient merely to properly observe Tishah b'Av; it is necessary to actively and extensively prepare for this day. The calibrated, progressive expressions of national mourning in advance of 9Av (for Ashkenazim especially: 3 weeks, nine days, shavuah she'chal bo, 9Av-tosefet, night, pre-chatzot, post-chatzot, till chatzot of 10Av) serve a double function. On the one hand, they reflect an extended period of collective grief and communal introspection (in the spirit of "midarkei ha-teshuvah"-Rambam, Hilchos Ta'anit 1:2), beginning bein hametzarim and extending to chatzot after 9Av. At the same time, this advanced anticipation and elaborate process is designed to effectively facilitate an appropriately intense, acute sense of profound loss on the double anniversary of the churban ha-bayit, the apex of national calamity. To attain an authentic emotional response to aveilut de-rabbim and yeshanah (Yevamot 43b), historically distant and collectively diffused, requires progressive, concentrated immersion in the various protocols of aveilut. Only these will stimulate an acute, profound sense of individual and collective calamity, notwithstanding personal experiential distance from the events that engender the obligation.

The very capacity to truly, viscerally experience loss and pain due to the churban, attests to and furthers our national identification with and the authentic unity of Klal Yisrael, as it implicitly reflects and reinforces our appreciation for the central role and indispensable contribution of Eretz Yisrael and the Mikdash in Jewish life. Given these deeply rooted emotions and convictions, it is no wonder that the destruction of our national institutions engenders feelings of crisis that stimulate the sense of being diminished and bereft. Elsewhere (see TorahWeb, Tishah b'av 2016, and also TorahWeb, Tishah b'av 2001), we have elaborated on the theme, developed by Chatam Sofer and others, that 9Av's status as a "moed" (Eichah 1:15) also entails the glimmer of nechamah (consolation) implied and enhanced by an appropriate observance of this national mourning. Indeed, the commitment to national destiny and the cultivation of national empathy significantly contribute to reversing the churban's effect, paving the way for a lasting geulah.

The capacity of Klal Yisrael, collectively and even individually, to experience impoverishment and desolation on this day is encapsulated by an extraordinary view and formulation of the Ramban in, significantly, a strictly halachic context.

Addressing the issue of the viability of havdalah on a kos on motzai Shabbat Tishah b'Av (as the fast has already begun), the Ramban (Torah ha-Adam, Chavel ed., pp260-261; see also Rosh, Ta'anit 4:40) rejects the position of the Behag that one should postpone Havdalah until Sunday evening after the conclusion of the fast. He argues that a Havdalah delayed more than a day constitutes tashlumin, which is necessarily contingent upon the obligation and fundamental capacity to implement the obligation in its appropriate time. The legal obstacle to executing Havdalah on a kosmotzai Shabbat due to the fast, inherently disqualifies any tashlumin. [Rosh, op cit, addresses a parallel issue regarding an onein who was excluded from the initial obligation of Havdalah. It is reasonable to distinguish between different exemptions or exclusions, as well as between different time frames for fulfilling this mitzvah. The Rosh proposes to differentiate between the onein and Tishah b'Av exclusions. The Ramban, weighs the relationship between different times to compensate for having missed havdalah.] He further dismisses the suggestion that a minor drink the Havdalah wine, based on the principle established regarding birkat hazeman on Yon Kippur that this exception will be misconstrued and lead to the erosion of the prohibition against eating and drinking (Eruvin 40b-"ati le-misrach").

Finally, Ramban expresses his own conviction that Havdalah on a kos is not required under these circumstances, as one can properly accomplish Havdalah on this night through tefillah. He explains that the institution of havdalah al hakos was established only when Klal Yisrael attained a measure of stability, confidence, and affluence (he'eshiru, keva'uhu al ha-kos), a state that is completely incompatible with the visceral emotions of impoverishment, inadequacy, and persecution (kol Yisrael aniyim merudim heim, vechi hai shaata lo tiknu al ha-kos kelal...she-ein kos ba-olam ein zarich le-havdil) that prevail on this day of national mourning. The emphatic assertion and unambiguous halachic assessment that all Jews are fundamentally diminished on Tishah b'Av, legally excluded from the enactment of Havdalah on a kos, attests to the aspiration and capacity of national and historical Jewish identification and commitment.

While normatively we adopt the halachic ruling of the Behag, Rosh (Ta'anit), and Tur (Orach Chaim 556), postponing havdalah until motzai Tishah b'Av, Ramban's insightful and emotionally demanding perspective resonates powerfully. It inspires optimism that a genuine

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and deeply-felt aveilut de-rabbim ve-aveilut yeshanah is achievable, and that its attainment will pave the road to a geulah sheleimah be-karov.

Torah.Org Dvar Torah

by Rabbi Label Lam

Everything Humanly Possible

For these things I weep; my eye, yea my eye, sheds tears, for the comforter to restore my soul is removed from me; my children are desolate, for the enemy has prevailed. (Eicha 1:16)

All the prophets do not prophesy whenever they desire. Instead, they must concentrate their attention [upon spiritual concepts] and seclude themselves, [waiting] in a happy, joyous mood, because prophecy cannot rest upon a person when he is sad or languid, but only when he is happy. (Rambam- Hilchos Yisodei HaTorah 7:4)

Here we have a living breathing contradiction. On the one hand, the Rambam tells us that for a person to achieve a prophetic state of mind he must be, “in a happy, joyous mood, because prophecy cannot rest upon a person when he is sad or languid, but only when he is happy.” The Book of Eichah, which we read on Tisha B’Av, was written by the Yirmiyahu not with historical hindsight, but rather with prophetic foresight.

While he is envisioning and prophesizing about the tragic events that would befall the Jewish People and all the terrible experiences surrounding the destruction of the 1st Beis HaMikdash he should have naturally fallen into a depressed state. That would have immediately interrupted the joyous state of mind required for prophecy and his ability to continue reporting on the future should have ended there as well. So how come that wasn't the case here!? We see that he wrote the entire Megillah in a continuous state of prophecy.

This is a brutally true story. I was a witness to much of it! A friend, Reuven, years back was seated at the Pesach Seder, when his wife noticed something unusual on the neck of her nine year old son, Pinchus. She quietly pointed it out to her husband and after Yom Tov they went to the doctor. The doctor was alarmed by what he saw and he sent them for further tests to a specialist. The tests revealed the worst possible conclusion. The next few months were a medical nightmare for Reuven, his wife, and of course Pinchus. He ended up in the hospital in an increasingly serious condition. Reuven stopped whatever else he was doing to spend his all of his time and energies to be with his son and find a cure. He told me that he would stop off every night on the way back from the hospital and speak with Rabbi Mordechai Schwab ztl, the Tzadik of Monsey. He told me that Rabbi Schwab would give him encouraging words and then make some referral to another possible medical approach.

Reuven's wife, while she was sitting that fateful night at the Pesach Seder, was six months pregnant. Three months later she gave birth to a healthy baby boy. The condition of their son Pinchus, in the meantime was deteriorating. Eight days later, while Reuven and his family were preparing for the Bris of their new child, they received the terrible news from the hospital. That Pinchus passed away. In the morning they made a Bris, celebrating the entry of this Jewish child into the covenant of Avraham Avinu, and in the afternoon, they buried their nine year old son Pinchus. I remember thinking that only HaKodesh Boruch Hu could have arranged that both doors of life be opened at the same time.

At the burial, Reuven, a big man, was held up by two Rebbeim, but at one point when the shoveling was concluded they thrust him forward to speak. He lifted his voice like a wounded beast and cried to the heavens, "Pinchus Pinchus I did everything I could for you!" Then he had to be held up again. Later at the Shiva he told me that now he understood why Rabbi Schwab was giving him medical referrals rather than empty promises. He knew that things don't always turn out the way we want and we need to be able to say we did everything we could. No one can afford to be haunted by thoughts of "If I had only..."

The Chazon Ish says that for one person to possess in his heart both the extreme level of joy required for prophecy and at the same time to feel profound sadness is not a contradiction. I'm thinking, a negative prophecy, the Rambam tells us, as we see in the episode of Yona, does not have to be fulfilled. Maybe people will get the message and change. So Yirmiyahu, to forestall tragedy, was busy doing everything humanly possible.

Bar Ilan University: Dvar Torah
"Duplicated Stories" in Joseph Bekhor-Schor's Commentary
By Jonathan Jacobs*

Rabbi Joseph Bekhor-Schor (northern France, circa 1130-1200), is one of the most important biblical exegetes. He was a disciple of Rashbam and Rabbi Jacob Tam, and belonged to the school of plain-sense interpretation in northern France, founded by Rashi. Although his commentary on the Torah did not enjoy the great popularity enjoyed by Rashi's commentary on the Torah, nevertheless, a close look at Bekhor-Schor's interpretations

reveals him to have been an original, innovative, and at times even daring commentator. One of the important innovative ideas introduced by Bekhor-Schor was his pointing out instances where Scripture appears to be describing two separate events but, in his opinion, it was a single event that is mentioned twice. This was a novel approach, unique to Bekhor-Schor and not suggested by anyone else in northern France before him.¹

In the first few chapters of Deuteronomy Moses retells the course of several historical events described in earlier books of the Pentateuch. He does this with the sin of the spies (chapter 1, in continuation of Numbers 13-14); the conquest of the eastern side of the Jordan (chapters 2-3, continuing Numbers 21); the Theophany at Mount Sinai and the Decalogue (chapters 4-5, continuing Ex. 19-20); and the sin of the golden calf (chapter 9, continuing Exodus 32-34). Among the narratives that Moses retells is the sin of the *ma'apilim*, the Israelites who attempted to enter the land of Israel after the sin of the spies, despite the fact that the Holy One, blessed be He, had forbidden them to do so (first mentioned in Numbers 14:40-45 and retold in Moses' speech in Deuteronomy 1:41-44).

Bekhor-Schor begins with the novel reading that the *ma'apilim* were not killed in their battle against the Canaanites: *Like so many bees* (Deut. 1:44)—for they sting a person all over, but do not kill him; thus it says "dealt them a shattering blow" (Num. 14:45), for they chased them back, smote and wounded them, but did not kill them, for [the Lord] did not wish to have them fall by the sword of their enemies, that they not boast about them and thus desecrate the Lord's name. Note, that the number of fallen is not mentioned here, as it is in other battles.

This new interpretation is derived from precise consideration of the language used in Numbers 14, "*va-yakkum va-yakketum*" (rendered as "dealt them a shattering blow"), and in Deuteronomy 1, "like so many bees," and from the fact that Scripture does not list the number of fallen in this battle, in contrast to the usual practice in other accounts of warfare.²

This interpretation provides the basis for Bekhor-Schor's greatly innovative idea, which he presents forthwith: This is what seems to me to be the case: "When the Canaanite... learned that Israel was coming by the way of

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Atharim...he took some of them captive" (Num. 21:1), but did not kill any of them. Later the Holy One, blessed be He, took vengeance on them, as it is written, "Then Israel made a vow to the Lord" (Num. 21:2), and "the Lord delivered up the Canaanites... that place was named Hormah (Num. 21:3)—both battles took place at Hormah.

In order to understand his remarks, we must preface them with the observation that the book of Numbers describes two events that took place at Hormah. Numbers 14:41-45 describes the *ma'apilim* who marched towards the crest of the hill country after the sin of the spies, and their fate was that "the Amalekites and the Canaanites who dwelt in that hill country came down and dealt them a shattering blow at Hormah (*ad ha-Hormah*)" (Num. 14:45).³ Numbers 21:1-3 describes the Israelites' battle against the Canaanite king of Arad, whose outcome was that "the Lord heeded Israel's plea and delivered up the Canaanites; and they and their cities were proscribed. So that place was named Hormah" (Num. 21:3). In Bekhor-Schor's opinion there is a connection between the two accounts. Thus he writes in his commentary on Numbers 21:3:

That place was named Hormah [connected with *heherim*, or proscribed]—because of being proscribed. This was the same place where the Israelites were chased when they sought to march up to the hill country, as it is written, "they dealt them a shattering blow at Hormah" (Num. 14:45). The Torah spoke also for a future event, the place now being called Hormah.

And perhaps when it says here, "by way of Atharim" (Num. 21:1), that they engaged Israel in battle and took some of them captive—this refers to the same battle; for at that time they were defeated for having violated the decree of the Almighty, and it was in the mind of the Israelites to take revenge. So now they prayed over them and [He] let them take revenge, as explained here.

The first interpretation set forth by Bekhor-Schor was that the connection between the two events lay in the name being identical: chapter 21 describes two battles fought by the Israelites against the Canaanites in their fortieth year in the wilderness. In the first battle (Num. 21:1), the Canaanites won, and in the second (Num. 21:2-3), the Israelites. In the wake of the second battle the place was named Hormah; but this name had already been

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¹ This article is based, with slight modification, on J. Jacobs, *Bekhor Shoro Hadar Lo—Rabbi Joseph Bekhor-Schor bein Hemshekhuyut le-Hiddush*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem 2017, pp. 230-244.

² Bekhor-Schor comments on Numbers 14:43: "You will fall by the sword—just as you said, 'if only we might die in this wilderness' (Num. 14:2)." This implies that the *ma'apilim* were indeed killed. If so, then this remark was written in line with the first of Bekhor-Schor's interpretations presented in Num. 21:3, and not in accordance with the second interpretation; see below.

³ The assumption that "as far as Hormah" (*ad ha-Hormah*; could also be read *ad hohremah*, until it was totally proscribed) denotes a place name had already been made by Rashi, who wrote: "*Ad ha-Hormah*—the place was named after the event that took place there." It can, however, be read differently, as, for example, Ibn Ezra suggests: "*Ad ha-Hormah*—a place name; but some say, until they proscribed them (*ad she-heherim*)." "

mentioned in the battle of the *ma'apilim*, which took place in the second year after the exodus from Egypt, as is the way of the Torah in many instances to mention names "for a future event."⁴

Afterwards, Bekhor-Schor proposed another, more audacious interpretation, introducing it with the word "perhaps": the first battle (Num. 21:1) was not a new event taking place in the fortieth year, but the same event as the battle fought by the *ma'apilim* against the Canaanites, which took place in the second year after the exodus from Egypt, and is described in Numbers 14:35. The second battle (Num. 21:2-3) was the Israelites' revenge, thirty-eight years later, for the defeat of the *ma'apilim*.⁵

The second suggestion fits in well with the above-mentioned commentary at the beginning of Deuteronomy, according to which the Canaanites took Israelite fighters captive but did not kill them—a thesis that further supports his suggestion that both narratives are describing one and the same event.⁶

Bekhor-Schor did not stop with this single instance, but in the course of his commentary on the Torah pointed to a number of other instances in which, in his opinion, the Torah appeared to be describing two separate events which in actual fact were the same event.

1. Twice the Torah tells of the miraculous arrival of quail in order to satisfy the Israelites' hunger in the wilderness (Ex. 16:13, Num. 11:4-6). Bekhor-Schor's view is that in Exodus the Holy One, blessed be He, gave the Israelites manna alone, and although the quail is mentioned in Exodus, nevertheless it actually came only in the second passage, in Numbers.
2. Twice the Torah describes water being miraculously obtained from a rock (Ex. 17:1-7, Num. 20:1-13). Bekhor-Schor claimed the episodes were the same and that water was only miraculously obtained from a rock once.
3. Twice a census was taken of the Israelites, and identical figures were obtained notwithstanding the many months that elapsed between the two times (Ex. 30:11-16, and Num. 1:18-19, 46). Bekhor-Schor introduced the new idea that the census described in Numbers was the only census that was taken.

It must be noted that there is a difference between the three events mentioned here and the story of the *ma'apilim*. In Bekhor-Schor's opinion, the three instances share in common the fact that because of various circumstances in all of them the Bible incorporates a later

historical event before its chronological occurrence. In contrast, with the story of the *ma'apilim* we have the opposite situation: an earlier historical event is mentioned again, later, because of the subject matter.

In any event, in these commentaries Bekhor-Schor emerges as an original, independent and daring exegete. What led him to suggest this interesting line of interpretation? Abraham Geiger has suggested that Bekhor-Schor's inclination to reduce to the barest minimum any miracles mentioned in Scripture led him to combine various events, thus reducing two separate miracles to a single one. As an example, Geiger cites getting water out of the rock, which according to Bekhor-Schor took place only once, not twice.⁷ To his remarks we can add the miracle of the quail, which according to Bekhor-Schor took place once, not twice. Geiger cites many other interpretations (not related to doubled stories) in which Bekhor-Schor evidently followed the path of minimizing the miraculous, and in principle Geiger's assertion is undoubtedly correct. This explanation, however, does not account for the additional instances in which Bekhor-Schor applied his new approach. It seems, rather, that what underlies these interpretations is his close and precise reading of the plain sense of Scripture, as he himself explicitly remarked in one instance: "as shown by the biblical text" (Deut. 32:51), and as can be found throughout his important commentary on the Torah. Translated by Rachel Rowen

⁴ For example, see Rashi on Gen. 14:7, Ex. 3:1; Bekhor-Schor on Gen. 10:25, and many more.

⁵ Bekhor-Schor does not note this explicitly, but it appears that even according to this reading the name Hormah, only repeated in Numbers 21, had already been mentioned "for a future event" in Numbers 14:35.

⁶ Hizkuni (Num. 21:3) came out against Bekhor-Schor's interpretations without mentioning him by name: "*That place was named Hormah—after the herem* (proscription), and is not the same as that of which it was said 'They dealt them a shattering blow at Hormah' (Num. 14:45)."

⁷ A. Geiger, *Parshandata 'al Hakhmei Tzarfat Mefarshei ha-Mikra*, Leipzig 1846, pp. 53-54.



BS"D

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date: Jul 22, 2020, 4:31 PM

subject: Advanced Parsha - Devarim

Children Are a Gift

Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22)

Jul 19, 2020 | by **Rabbi Yissocher Frand**

The Jewish People, Rahsi informs us, were not very happy with the blessing Moshe gave them. "May God, the Lord of your fathers," he had said, "add a thousandfold more like you and bless you as He spoke to you."

"Only that and no more?" the people responded. "Is that the full extent of your blessing? Hashem blessed us (Bereishis 32:13) to be 'like the dust of the earth that is too numerous to count.'"

"You will surely get the blessing Hashem gave you," Moshe replied. "This is just my own personal blessing to you."

What exactly was Moshe's reply? What additional benefit would the Jewish people derive from his blessing of a thousandfold increase if they were already receiving Hashem's blessing of virtually limitless increase?

The Chasam Sofer explains that Moshe was testing them. Why did they want children? Was it because children were useful, because they help carry the household burden, provide companionship and are a source of security in old age? Or is it because each child is a spark of the Divine, a priceless gift from Heaven, a piece of the World to Come?

So Moshe gave the Jewish people a test. He blessed them with a "thousandfold" increase in their population. If they had wanted children for their usefulness alone, they would have said, "Thank you, but that's enough already! A thousandfold will suit our purposes just fine. We have no use for any more right now." But that was not what they said. They wanted more children. They wanted children "too numerous to count." Obviously, they were not thinking about their own material and emotional needs, but about

the transcendent blessing that each child represents, and so, they proved themselves worthy of Hashem's blessing.

Hundreds of years earlier, these two conflicting attitudes toward children had already become an issue. Yaakov and Eisav had made a division. Eisav was to take this world, and Yaakov was to take the World to Come. When Yaakov came back from Aram, Eisav welcomed him at the head of an army four hundred men strong. In the tense early minutes of the confrontation, Eisav noticed Yaakov's many children.

"Who are these children?" Eisav asked.

"These are the children," Yaakov replied, "that Hashem graciously gave to your servant."

The Pirkei d'Rabbi Eliezer expands the dialogue between Yaakov and Eisav and reveals the underlying argument.

"What are you doing with all these children?" Eisav asked. "I thought we made a division, that I would take this world and you would take the World to Come. So why do you have so many children? What do children have to do with the World to Come? Children are a boon in this world!"

"Not so," Yaakov responded. "Children are sparks of the Divine. The opportunity to raise a child, to develop a Divine soul to the point where it can enter the World to Come, is a privilege of the highest spiritual worth. That is why I have children."

Yaakov wants children for their own sake, but Eisav views them as an asset in this world. Children are an extra pair of hands on the farm. They can milk the cows and help with many other chores that need to be done in agrarian societies.

Modern man has progressed beyond agrarian life. He has moved off the farm and does not have such a need for children anymore. In fact, he has made a startling discovery. Children are a tremendous burden. They are expensive, time consuming and exasperating. Who needs children?

But what about companionship? Loneliness? No problem. Modern man can get a dog. Dogs are wonderful. Instead of coming home to a house full of clamoring, demanding, frustrating children, he can come home to an adoring, tail-wagging dog who will run to bring him his slippers and newspaper. So why does he need children? This is the attitude of Eisav adapted to modern times.

Yaakov, on the other hand, understands that the purpose of children is not for enjoying this world or for making our lives easier. Each child represents a spiritual mission, a spark of the Divine entrusted to our care and our guidance, an opportunity to fulfill Hashem's desire to have this soul brought to the World to Come.

from: Rabbi Sacks <info@rabbisacks.org>

date: Jul 22, 2020, 3:23 PM

subject: Followership (Devarim 5780)

Covenant & Conversation

Finding Faith in the Parsha with **Rabbi Jonathan Sacks**

Followership

In the last month of his life, Moses gathered the people. He instructed them about the laws they were to keep and reminded them of their history since the Exodus. That is the substance of the book of Devarim. Early in this process, he recalled the episode of the spies – the reason the people's parents were denied the opportunity to enter the land. He wanted the next generation to learn the lesson of that episode and carry it with them always. They needed faith and courage. Perhaps that has always been part of what it means to be a Jew.

But the story of the spies as he tells it here is very different indeed from the version in Shelach Lecha (Num. 13-14), which describes the events as they happened at the time, almost 39 years earlier. The discrepancies between the two accounts are glaring and numerous. Here I want to focus only on two. First: who proposed sending the spies? In Shelach, it was God who told Moses to do so. "The Lord said to Moses, 'Send men...'" In our parsha, it was the people who requested it: "Then all of you came to me and said, 'Let

us send men..." Who was it: God or the people? This makes a massive difference to how we understand the episode.

Second: what was their mission? In our parsha, the people said, "Let us send men to spy out [veyachperu] the land for us" (Deut. 1:22). The twelve men "made for the hill country, came to the wadi Eshcol, and spied it out [vayeraglu]" (Deut. 1:24). In other words, our parsha uses the two Hebrew verbs, *lachpor* and *leragel*, that mean to spy.

But as I pointed out in my *Covenant & Conversation* for Shelach Lecha, the account there conspicuously does not mention spying. Instead, thirteen times, it uses the verb *latur*, which means to tour, explore, travel, inspect. Even in our parsha, when Moses is talking, not about the spies but about God, he says He "goes before you on your journeys—to seek out (*latur*) the place where you are to encamp" (Deut. 1:33).

According to Malbim, *latur* means to seek out what is good about a place. *Lachpor* and *leragel* mean to seek out what is weak, vulnerable, exposed, defenceless. Touring and spying are completely different activities, so why does the account in our parsha present what happened as a spying mission, which the account in Shelach emphatically does not?

These two questions combine with a third, prompted by an extraordinary statement of Moses in our parsha. Having said that the spies and the people were punished by not living to enter the promised land, he then says:

This is very strange indeed. It is not like Moses to blame others for what seems to be his own failing. Besides which, it contradicts the testimony of the Torah itself, which tells us that Moses and Aaron were punished by not being permitted to enter the land because of what happened at Kadesh when the people complained about the lack of water. What they did wrong is debated by the commentators. Was it that Moses hit the rock? Or that he lost his temper? Or some other reason? Whichever it was, that was when God said: "Because you did not trust in Me enough to honour Me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them" (Num. 20:12). This was some 39 years after the episode of the spies. As to the discrepancy between the two accounts of the spies, R. David Zvi Hoffman argued that the account in Shelach tells us what happened. The account in our parsha, a generation later, was meant not to inform but to warn. Shelach is a historical narrative; our parsha is a sermon. These are different literary genres with different purposes.

As to Moses' remark, "Because of you, the Lord was incensed with me," Ramban suggests that he was simply saying that like the spies and the people, he too was condemned to die in the wilderness. Alternatively, he was hinting that no one should be able to say that Moses avoided the fate of the generation he led.

However, Abarbanel offers a fascinating alternative. Perhaps the reason Moses and Aaron were not permitted to enter the land was not because of the episode of water and the rock at Kadesh. That is intended to distract attention from their real sins. Aaron's real sin was the Golden Calf. Moses' real sin was the episode of the spies. The hint that this was so is in Moses' words here, "Because of you, the Lord was incensed with me also."

How though could the episode of the spies have been Moses' fault? It wasn't he who proposed sending them. It was either God or the people. He did not go on the mission. He did not bring back a report. He did not demoralise the people. Where then was Moses at fault? Why was God angry with him?

The answer lies in the first two questions: who proposed sending the spies? And why is there a difference in the verbs between here and Shelach?

Following Rashi, the two accounts, here and in Shelach, are not two different versions of the same event. They are the same version of the same event, but split in two, half told there, half here. It was the people who requested spies (as stated here). Moses took their request to God. God acceded to the request, but as a concession, not a command: "You may send," not "You must send" (as stated in Shelach).

However, in granting permission, God made a specific provision. The people had asked for spies: "Let us send men ahead to spy out [veyachperu] the land for us." God did not give Moses permission to send spies. He specifically used the verb *latur*, meaning, He gave permission for the men to tour the

land, come back and testify that it is a good and fertile land, flowing with milk and honey.

The people did not need spies. As Moses said, throughout the wilderness years God has been going "ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go" (Deut. 1:33). They did however need eyewitness testimony of the beauty and fruitfulness of the land to which they had been travelling and for which they would have to fight.

Moses, however, did not make this distinction clear. He told the twelve men: "See what the land is like and whether the people who live there are strong or weak, few or many. What kind of land do they live in? Is it good or bad? What kind of towns do they live in? Are they unwarlike or fortified?" This sounds dangerously like instructions for a spying mission.

When ten of the men came back with a demoralising report and the people panicked, at least part of the blame lay with Moses. The people had asked for spies. He should have made it clear that the men he was sending were not to act as spies.

How did Moses come to make such a mistake? Rashi suggests an answer.

Our parsha says: "Then all of you came to me and said, 'Let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us.'" The English does not convey the sense of menace in the original. They came, says Rashi, "in a crowd," without respect, protocol or order. They were a mob, and they were potentially dangerous. This mirrors the people's behaviour at the beginning of the story of the Golden Calf: "When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered against Aaron and said to him..." Faced with an angry mob, a leader is not always in control of the situation. True leadership is impossible in the face of the madness of crowds. Moses' mistake, if the analysis here is correct, was a very subtle one, the difference between a spying mission and a morale-boosting eyewitness account of the land. Even so, it must have been almost inevitable given the mood of the people.

That is what Moses meant when he said, "because of you the Lord was incensed with me too." He meant that God was angry with me for not showing stronger leadership, but it was you – or rather, your parents – who made that leadership impossible.

This suggests a fundamental, counterintuitive truth. There is a fine TED talk about leadership.[1] It takes less than 3 minutes to watch, and it asks, "What makes a leader?" It answers: "The first follower."

There is a famous saying of the Sages: "Make for yourself a teacher and acquire for yourself a friend." [2] The order of the verbs seems wrong. You don't make a teacher, you acquire one. You don't acquire a friend, you make one. In fact, though, the statement is precisely right. You make a teacher by being willing to learn. You make a leader by being willing to follow. When people are unwilling to follow, even the greatest leader cannot lead. That is what happened to Aaron at the time of the Calf, and in a far more subtle way to Moses at the time of the spies.

That, I would argue, is one reason why Joshua was chosen to be Moses' successor. There were other distinguished candidates, including Pinchas and Caleb. But Joshua, serving Moses throughout the wilderness years, was a role-model of what it is to be a follower. That, the Israelites needed to learn. I believe that followership is the great neglected art. Followers and leaders form a partnership of mutual challenge and respect. To be a follower in Judaism is not to be submissive, uncritical, blindly accepting. Questioning and arguing are a part of the relationship. Too often, though, we decry a lack of leadership when we are really suffering from a lack of followership.

[1] Derek Sivers, 'How to Start a Movement.'

[2] Mishnah, Avot 1:6.

Britain's Former Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks is a global religious leader, philosopher, the author of more than 25 books, and moral voice for our time. Until 1st September 2013 he served as Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, having held the position for 22 years.

fw from hamelaket@gmail.com
from: Rabbi Chanan Morrison <chanan@ravkooktorah.org>
to: rav-kook-list@googlegroups.com
subject: [Rav Kook Torah]
Devarim: Moses Speaks!

Rav Kook Torah

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.

From: Chaim Shulman

Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski's 80th Yahrtzeit is this Sunday 5 Av 5780. The following was an article written by my maternal grandfather Rav Michel Kossowsky zt"l, a nephew of Rav Chaim Ozer, who was at Rav Chaim Ozer's petira in Vilna in August of 1940.

SOUTH AFRICAN JEWISH OBSERVER 1960 (and reprinted in 1964)

Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski

(On his twentieth Yahrzeit, 5 Av 5700 - 5720)

By **Rabbi Dr. Michel Kossowsky**



[Rav Michel Kossowsky zt"l on left with Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzinski zt"l center]

ON FRIDAY morning, the 5th of Av, in the year 5700 (9th August, 1940), in a little summerhouse on the outskirts of the city of Vilna departed this life the last Rav of Vilna and the last in the line of "Chachmei Vilna" —

HA'GAON REB CHAIM OZER GRODZINSKI.

Dark clouds covered the horizon of Vilna Jewry, which was tense with foreboding. The city had only recently again changed its political regime - for the third time in ten months. When Polarta fell in September 1939, Vilna together with the whole of Eastern Poland, was occupied by the Russians and incorporated into the Soviet Union. That was part of the infamous friendship pact between Hitler and Stalin who divided between themselves the wreckage of Poland.

A month later Russia let it be known that she had "donated" Vilna and its environs to the then independent and neutral Lithuanian Republic, as an expression of "true friendship". In return, however, she demanded militia bases in Lithuania. Thus Vilna became part of the free and sovereign Republic of Lithuania. The citizens of Vilna and particularly the Jewish population greeted this happy change in their fortunes with great rejoicing. Tens of thousands of refugees from the Soviet part of Poland risked their lives to smuggle across the newly-established and faintly-marked border, in order to find safety and political asylum in the freedom of Lithuanian democracy.

However, eight months later, in June 1940, a well-prepared Communist coup d'état took place, and Lithuania became a Communist Republic. Vilna again became Part of the Soviet Union and the N.K.V.D. (the dreaded Russian Secret Police) reoccupied their headquarters in Pohulanka Street.

The thousands of refugees from the former Russian territory were in a state of panic, and the rest of the Vilna population also lived in constant fear.

A CENTRAL FIGURE

In this general confusion and bewilderment, everyone's eyes instinctively turned to the central figure of Vilna Jewry, the Gaon Reb Chaim Ozer, who for half of a century was the spiritual leader and spokesman of world Jewry.

The knowledge that Reb Chaim Ozer was here and was in contact with the rest of the world, gave confidence and a certain sense of security. For many years all had grown used to the idea that if any trouble happened they would go over to "the Rebbe", or, as others called him, "Reb Chaim Ozer", or, just "Chaim Leizer" as the broad masses of ordinary people used to refer to him endearingly, and he would give the right advice or find a way out.

Few knew how gravely ill the Gaon was already then, because, notwithstanding his failing health, he worked tirelessly. Dozens of people passed through his room daily and everyone came out with his request fulfilled as far as possible.

The war had created new complications and raised colossal problems, and Reb Chaim Ozer was the person around whom all those in need, individuals as well as institutions, grouped. He was the only contact with the free world, and with world Jewry.

THE LAST MOMENTS

A few weeks before his death, Reb Chaim Ozer moved to his summer residence (Datche) at the garden-suburb "Magistratzke Kolonie". The last few days he felt very weak and was confined to his bed. A silent fear gripped the members of his closer circle who realised the situation. The town did not know yet what the true position was.

At his death-bed, in the early hours of that Friday, except for the doctor and nurse, there were present also his Rebbetzin and the writer of this article. On the porch a few of his intimate Rabbinical friends were crying as they recited prayers.

The news of his death spread like wild fire and plunged Vilna Jewry into deep mourning. A sense of having been orphaned overtook all of them. Suddenly everyone felt lonely and forlorn in a stormy, perilous world. The tremendous impact which the news of his death had made was the greatest measure of the position which Reb Chaim Ozer had occupied in Jewry. Porters and cart-drivers together with Rabbis and Yeshiva students, learned people and "balebatim", as well as ordinary folk and the man in the street, all were utterly shocked and distressed.

The little summer house soon was overflowing with masses of people who were streaming in from town in an incessant procession. A meeting of Rabbis was hastily convened to work out the plan of the funeral. The body was taken back to his residence in town, in Zavalna Street and during that Saturday, the lamented "Shabbat Chazon", thousands of mourners passed through the house where the body lay, while minyanim changed uninterruptedly, during the day and the night, to recite psalms and appropriate prayers.

The gigantic funeral procession next morning was the greatest and also the last Jewish mass-demonstration which Vilna witnessed.

The fifty thousand people who followed the cortege included Rabbis from the whole of Lithuania, and the funeral orations which were delivered on the way and at the graveside, lasted almost the whole day.

Although the Communist authorities had prohibited demonstrations of this nature, they must have realised the strong feelings of the Jewish Community and did not hinder the funeral procession in any manner.

The People's Militia, with red armbands on their sleeves, accompanied the procession all along its mournful route and helped to keep order.

All the grief that had welled up in Jewish hearts at that time and the grave foreboding of the impending horror, were given vent in bitter lamentations at the parting of their beloved leader who, from now on, would entreat before the Throne of the Almighty for the people whom he led and for whom he cared and on whose behalf he spoke during the glorious half century of his Rabbinate.

RABBINIC DYNASTY

Reb Chaim Ozer was born in the year 5623 (1863) in the little townlet of Ivie, near Vilna. His father, Rabbi David Shlomo Grodzensky (Z.L.) and his grandfather, Rabbi Moshe Leib Grodzenski (Z.L.) had occupied between them the Rabbinical post of that community for a period of over eighty years. Together with the fifteen years during which my late father, Rabbi Isaac Kossowsky (Z.L.) who was a son-in-law of Rabbi David Shlomo (Z.L.) was

Rabbi in Ivie, this distinguished family formed a Rabbinic dynasty in the same community for the period of a full century without interruption.

THE ILUI

While he was still a young boy and studied under his father, the little Chaim Ozer became famous as a prodigy and was known in the whole district as the "ilui" (genius) of Ivie. At the age of twelve he went to the neighbouring town of Eishishok where at that time there was a "kibbutz" of young men who were renowned as "gdolim" in Torah.

When he became Bar-Mitzvah there, he was invited to deliver a discourse in accordance with the time-honoured custom. Instead, however, he offered to be examined in any place of the two classic Talmudic commentaries: "Ket-zot-Ha'choshen" and "Netivot Ha'mishpot."

The scholars of Eishishok were astounded to hear how the little Bar mitzvah boy recited by heart without stumbling and without stopping, whole pages of these two great works.

From Eishistok he went to the Yeshiva of Volozhin, where he studied under the Gaon Reb Chaim Brisker, (Z.L.) The deep friendship which developed between the great Master and the great disciple, continued throughout the many years during which they were both the spiritual leaders of world Jewry.

THE LEADER

The Ray of Vilna, Reb Elie Leizer (Z.L.) who was a son-in-law of the famous Gaon and saint Reb Yisroel Salanter (Z.L.) took the renowned "Ivier ilui" as husband for his daughter. When Reb Elie Leizer passed away, a few years later, Reb Chaim Ozer was invited to accept the vacant post. He was then the youngest among the Rabbis of Vilna. Nevertheless, he soon became recognised as the spiritual leader of "Yerushalayim D'Lita", the city of scholars and writers, "lomdim" and "gaonim". This position he maintained until the last day of his life.

However exalted that position might have been, Reb Chaim Ozer was more than just the Rav of Vilna. He was also more than just a Gaon, however great that designation is. There was in him an exceptional combination of rare "gaonut", deep wisdom, love of Israel, saintliness and humility, an understanding of politics, a remarkable sense for communal activity, an inborn quality for leadership and organisation, lovable character and endless patience.

Little Wonder, therefore, that in a short time he became one of the chief leaders of Russian and world Jewry, although that period, before the first world war, was rich in great scholars much older than he.

The Rabbi who sought a reply to a difficult Halachic question and the businessman who needed advice in a complicated business matter, the communal worker who was worried about a serious communal problem and the Rosh Yeshiva who needed help for his Yeshiva, an ordinary Jew who was in need of assistance and the Yeshiva student who wanted to talk in learning all came to Reb Chaim Ozer's hospitable door and all were received with the same cheerful and encouraging smile.

He dealt with everybody at the same time and all found satisfaction in their quest.

Whoever had the privilege of witnessing a busy morning in Reb Chaim Ozer's home, will never forget that picture.

All the rooms of the spacious apartment were full of all kinds of people, local and from outside. Amongst them Reb Chaim Ozer moved about with hasty little steps, radiating warmth and pleasantness all around him and talking with everybody at the same time.

Here he was engaged in a learned discussion with a group of Rabbis and at the same time he would be listening to the Talmudic discourse of a visiting Yeshiva Student; presently he was in consultation with communal and congregational leaders and yet found time to whisper advice to a troubled individual.

Next moment he was unobtrusively pressing a handful of money into the hand of a needy Jew and managed to dictate to his secretary a number of letters on various subjects in his succinct masterful Hebrew style.

Nobody felt slighted.

On the contrary, everyone had the impression that he received full attention

and everyone was enchanted with Reb Chaim Ozer's Personal charm, his "gaonic" sense of humour - subtle and refined, his outstandingly quick grasp and phenomenal memory, which enabled him to grasp everything at the same time.

He said of himself that, until his very advanced age, he did not know what forgetting was.

Numerous stories are told about his exceptional memory. The following interesting episode is a characteristic example.

Reb Chaim Ozer had a notebook in which he kept a record of the many charitable funds which passed through his hands. One day this precious notebook got lost and all efforts to discover it were in vain, much to the distress of all members of the household.

Reb Chaim Ozer then sat down and reconstructed from memory all the complicated accounts which had occupied many pages. The final total was correct. Some time later the book was found and it then appeared that Reb Chaim Ozer did not even change the order of the various amounts and had almost photographically reproduced the whole book.

I remember an episode when I sat together with a group of Rabbis in Reb Chaim Ozer's house and, as usual, the conversation turned on some Talmudic subject. In the course of the discussion, Reb Chaim Ozer took out a book from the shelves and pointed out to us a certain reference, which explained the problem under debate. Closing the book, he remarked with a smile that he last saw this reference while still a young boy in his native Ivie. That had been fifty years before!

The way he remembered people was staggering. Persons who had not seen him for thirty years told me that the moment they entered his room, quite unexpectedly, he cheerfully got up to meet them, calling them by their first name as if he had parted with them only yesterday!

FATHER OF YESHIVOT

During the first world war, when he fled together with many thousands of other Jewish refugees into central Russia, he became a one-man relief organisation there. With the aid of American Relief Funds he set up a network of "Refugee Chedars" (Chedars or Talmud-Torahs for refugee children), and people's restaurants in dozens of towns where the refugees concentrated. The Yeshivot and their leaders as well as countless individuals were supported by him. He also exercised considerable political influence in those turbulent years which preceded the Russian Revolution.

In the period between the two world wars, Reb Chaim Ozer was considered the leader and spokesman of religious Jewry. He particularly devoted himself to the fostering of Torah-education and became literally the father of the Yeshivot.

Together with the "Chofetz-Chaim" (Z.L.) he founded the "Vaad HaYeshivot" in Vilna and helped to establish a wide network of preparatory Yeshivot (Yeshivot Ktanut) in towns and villages in Eastern Poland, Polesie and Volynia. At the same time he was the supreme authority and "Posek Achron" in all Halachic questions and his ruling was considered the authoritative Din.

Amidst the thousands of problems to which he had to turn his attention, he managed to publish the three volumes of his great work "Achiezer", a compilation of Responsa on various Talmudic topics in which his "gaonic" erudition and sharpness of mind appear in all their glory.

Unfortunately, a considerable portion of his writings still remained in manuscript.

Immediately after his death, initial arrangements were made for the publication of the remainder of his writings as well as of his letters which had an outstanding historic importance. His faithful secretary, Rav Alter Voronovsky, took up the project diligently. However, shortly thereafter came the Nazi invasion and with it the end of all plans.

The name of Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski (Z.L.) the Gaon of Vilna of our generation, is deeply engraved in the hearts of Torah-Jewry and his memory will live for generations after.

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Devarim (Deuteronomy 1:1-3:22)

How To React To Criticism

by **Chief Rabbi Warren Goldstein**

Winston Churchill once wrote: "Criticism may not be agreeable, but it is necessary. It fulfils the same function as pain in the human body. It calls attention to an unhealthy state of things."

In a recent behavioural study, titled: "Behavioral Obligation and Information Avoidance", a group of students watched a fake documentary about a serious disease called "TAA Deficiency". The students weren't informed that TAA Deficiency was fictional; instead, they were given the option of providing a cheek swab to assess their risk of developing the disease. Half the students were told that if they ever developed TAA Deficiency, then the treatment would involve a two-week course of pills. Of this group, 52% agreed to provide the diagnostic cheek swab. The other half of the students were told the treatment would require taking the pills for the rest of their lives. Just 21% of this group agreed to the swab.

The implication of the study is clear - people are resistant to feedback that may oblige them to do something difficult or unwelcome.

Criticism and words of rebuke are particularly difficult to deal with. Implicit in these is the message that we need to change our ways, to modify the way we act. And nobody likes to be told they're doing the wrong thing. We'll do anything rather than admit that. Rather than hear the raw truth, we'll curate perfect online identities, seeking affirmation from friends who often aren't even acquaintances - that we are accomplished, beautiful, morally upstanding, that our lives are perfect.

The problem is, our minds are wired to reject or deflect negative feedback. If there's something wrong with us, something that - if we were aware of it - could push us to improve ourselves or address the problem directly, we'd rather not know about it.

This is unfortunate, because if it comes from the right place - if it's constructive, and done in the right way, at the right time - criticism can be enormously powerful in driving positive personal change and advancing human achievement.

At the moment, we are immersed in the 'Three Weeks' of national mourning. It is the time when we remember the destruction of the two Temples and the exile of our people. This period climaxes on the 9th day of Av - Tisha b'Av - when we undertake the only 25-hour fast of the year besides Yom Kippur. Fasting is not normally associated with mourning. On the contrary, a person who is sitting shiva is not supposed to fast - so why do we fast on this day? The Rambam (Laws of Fasts 5:1) says we fast on days of national mourning "in order to awaken the hearts [of people], to open the paths of repentance and to be a remembrance of our misdeeds and those of our fathers, which are like ours now ..." From the Rambam it is clear that the purpose of fasting is to catalyse the process of reflection, introspection and repentance. Interestingly, fasting is not only the culmination of the Three Weeks - we also kick off this period with a fast day, the Fast of Tammuz. We see that repentance, the process of mending our destructive habits, returning to a state of moral and spiritual purity, is an instrumental part of the Three Weeks. Viewed in this light, Tisha b'Av and the Three Weeks are a time of national reawakening. And, crucially, it's a national reawakening sparked by national rebuke and criticism. The Torah portion we read this week is Devarim, in which Moshe delivers his final address to the nation before passing. He begins this speech not with words of encouragement or affirmation, but, surprisingly, with words of reproof. We continue in this vein by reading Chapter 1 of Isaiah, in which the criticism and rebuke comes on even stronger. The Prophet Isaiah, who lived during the time when the First Temple stood, delivers a stinging critique of the people of his generation, calling on them to repent and return to God. It's no coincidence that these are the Torah passages we read before Tisha b'Av every year, because they are a reminder that this is a period not just of

mourning, but of national rebuke - the Three Weeks are a call to action in which we are reminded where we have strayed as a nation, and shaken from our complacency. In particular, we reflect on, and try to correct, the sin which caused the destruction of the Second Temple and the ensuing exile - divisiveness and baseless hatred between Jews.

Being able to hear criticism is crucial to the repentance process. The Rambam lists 24 traits which impede teshuva, and among them is hatred of rebuke. When we bring ourselves low through poor decisions and negative patterns of behaviour, rebuke and criticism can be decisive in arresting the slide and getting our lives back on an upward trajectory. This was the role the prophets performed throughout the ages; this was Moshe's focus during his last days; and as the Rambam points out, this is an important task of any spiritual leader to this day - to be the voice of conscience, the voice guiding us back to the good.

But, what lies at the heart of the idea of rebuke and reproof? What lies at the heart of the process of teshuva - of repentance? Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz says it is all about guiding us back to the truth. In life, we can make moral mistakes, and those mistakes can permeate our actions, and indeed our entire way of life. The process of going through the experience of reproof and then repentance is a process of returning to the truth. Reproof - and again, it needs to come from the right place, from a place of care and concern - can help us snap back to reality. It can begin breaking the bonds between our misdeeds and our pure, essential selves, and guide us back to truth.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz brings a fascinating Midrash demonstrating that rebuke is about guiding a person back to the truth, back to reality. The Midrash says when Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, he rebuked them for the way they had treated him all those years before, and the brothers were in turmoil and unable to respond. The problem is, nowhere in the text did Joseph directly rebuke his brothers for what they did to him. He merely said: "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?"

Rav Shmuelevitz explains the rebuke is contained in the simple words: "I am Joseph." Rebuke is about reconnecting us to the truth. He was pointing out to them that their lives had been based on a terrible mistake. When Joseph had related his dreams to them many years before about how they would one day bow down before him, the brothers felt threatened. According to Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, their concern was that Joseph would oppress them and lord over them, and they therefore perceived him as a threat to the family. To protect the family, they sold him into slavery in Egypt, separating him from his father, and causing untold grief. But, when Joseph says: "I am Joseph", he demonstrates to them that their fears were unfounded, because now indeed he does have power over them, and rather than using that power in a destructive fashion, he is in fact using it to help them - to rescue them from famine, to save the family. The rebuke reconnects the brothers to the truth. It is delivered quietly and subtly, but not any less powerfully. And the brothers' stunned silence confirms that, as they reflect on the weight of their actions.

The Three Weeks and Tisha b'Av are likewise a time to quietly and humbly reflect on our mistakes - on where we have fallen short of our potential as individuals and as a nation - and to use that as a springboard for turning things around. It is particularly a time to reflect on how we, as a nation, can find each other in love, respect and unity. This Shabbat - the Shabbat right before Tisha b'Av - is called Shabbat Chazon, "The Shabbat of Vision". The name comes from the opening words of the passage we read from the Book of Prophets this Shabbat: "Isaiah's Vision". Rav Hirsch says the word for vision, chazon, is derived from three other words, meaning "to divide", "to penetrate", and "chest". He explains that if you combine all three of these words, chazon signifies penetrating into the heart of a person - examining what lies beneath the surface, undertaking deep introspection so we can figure out where we are going wrong, and how we can improve. This is the work of Tisha b'Av and the Three Weeks. We don't just go through the motions of fasting, we don't just undertake a series of empty rituals. We ponder the meaning of our existence, we ponder the shape of our lives, and we specifically ponder the spiritual causes of the destruction of the

Temple and ensuing exile. And we do so not alone, but together, as a nation. This is a time of national repentance, when we draw on the energy of being part of the Jewish people, and of our shared national destiny. It's a time to reflect on where we have come from as a nation and what we can do to move forward together. Absorbing criticism is never easy for anyone. But, when we read those strong words of Moses and Isaiah this Shabbat, let's remember the power of rebuke to kickstart that journey.

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Drasha By **Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky**

Dedicated to the speedy recovery of Mordechai ben Chaya

Parshas Devarim

The Usual Suspects

This week's portion discusses an array of issues, among them entering and conquering of the land of Canaan, which was to occur shortly. The lands that the Israelites passed on their quest to conquer Canaan were inhabited by various tribes and nations: some of them Israel was allowed to conquer, while other lands were forbidden.

Even while nearing Canaan, there were nations the Israelites were warned not to provoke or attack.

Moshe tells the people, "Hashem said to me, 'You shall not distress Moab, and you shall not provoke war with them, for I shall not give you an inheritance from their land. For to the children of Lot have I given Ar as an inheritance. The Emim dwelled there previously, a great and populous people, and tall as the giants. They, too, were considered Rephaim, like the giants; and the Moabites called them Emim.'" (Deuteronomy 2:10-11).

There seems to be an important discussion about the land of the Giants.

Moshe refers to the Emim, who live in the land that was allocated to Avraham's nephew Lot. The verse seems to extend itself by explaining that the people living there are not Rephaim, rather they are Emim, who are often referred to as Rephaim, because they have Rephaim-like attributes.

However, Moshe explains to his people that those giants are not really Rephaim, rather they are actually Emim. Obviously, this whole identification process is a bit confusing. Rashi helps us understand the issue. "You might think that this is the land of the Rephaim which I gave (promised) to Abraham (Gen:15:20), because the Emim, who are Rephaim, dwelt there formerly (and they are one of the seven clans whose land you were to possess), but this is not that land, because those Rephaim I drove out from before the children of Lot and settled these in their stead" cf. Rashi on Deut. 3:13.

Rashi explains that though the land of the Rephaim was promised to Abraham, and as such should be rightfully inherited by the Jews, the land of Ar was not promised to Abraham. Ar was promised to Lot. If the Children of Israel expected to inherit Ar based on the fact that giants who were called Rephaim live there, Moshe corrects their misunderstanding. "You see," explain the commentaries, "these giants are really not the Rephaim variety of giants. They are the Emim variety. The original Rephaim were long gone and replaced. The Jews were promised the land of the Rephaim and not of Emim, who both resemble and are referred to as Rephaim."

Truth be told, all this seemingly irrelevant classification must have relevance to us students of the Torah. Why, otherwise, would the Torah spend so much time and verbiage on it? Why would it warn us not to confuse the Emim with Rephaim? It should just say, "Keep out of Ar, it goes to Lot!"

This story is true, I altered the details to spare the concerned.

Many years ago, during an extreme heat wave, a certain food manufacturer was cited by the Department of Health and the USDA for having an infestation of a particular species of a moth in its manufacturing facility.

Immediately, the board of directors sent its representatives to inspect the factory as well. After all, having insects in the plant were very bad for business. Not only could the government shut them down, they were a health hazard as well! A team of inspectors came to the plant to see how they should address the problem.

While going through the factory, a Vice-President popped the lid off a container of raw nuts. Like a tornado rising, a swarm of insects emerged from the bin. Shocked and dismayed, he called over one of the workers. "Do you see this?" he shouted. "Look at these flies!"

"Don't worry, sir," smiled the worker. "Those ain't the government flies. Those are the regular flies!"

Often we view adversaries in one fell swoop. An enemy is an enemy is an enemy. A giant is a giant is a giant.

Perhaps the Torah painstakingly teaches us that every nation has an accounting. Some the Israelites were allowed to inherit. Some they were allowed to attack. Others they were to avoid. Still others the Israelites were allowed to confront and not physically harm.

As Jews, we must be careful not to confuse the Emim and the Rephaim, the Edomites with the Ammonites, or the Sichons, or the Ogs or even the icebergs with the Greenbergs. We may not want to see differences in a world that wants to see black and white. But the Torah teaches us this week that no two nations are exactly the same. And no matter how tall they may appear, no two giants are alike.

Good Shabbos

This week's Drasha / Faxhomily is Dedicated by the Hirsch & Friedman Families, in memory of Henry Hirsch. The Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation are the prime supporters of Faxhomily World-Wide Copyright © 2002 by Rabbi M. Kamenetzky and Project Genesis, Inc. If you enjoy the weekly Drasha, now you can receive the best of Drasha in book form! Purchase Parsha Parables at a very special price! The author is the Dean of the Yeshiva of South Shore. Drasha is the e-mail edition of FaxHomily, a weekly torah facsimile on the weekly portion which is sponsored by The Henry and Myrtle Hirsch Foundation

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Rabbi Zweig on the Parsha

By **Rabbi Yochanan Zweig**

Parshas Devarim

That's Not What Friends Are For

The Talmud identifies the episode of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza as the incident which precipitated the destruction of Jerusalem. An individual who made a banquet sent an attendant to invite his friend Kamtza. However, the attendant erred, inviting Bar Kamtza instead. When the host saw Bar Kamtza sitting amongst the guests at his banquet, he proclaimed "Let see that man is the enemy of that man. What are you doing here?" He subsequently proceeded to evict Bar Kamtza. The Talmud relates that to avenge his public humiliation, Bar Kamtza went to the Roman authorities and slandered the Jews, which ultimately resulted in the tragic destruction of Jerusalem{1}. The aforementioned narrative is an illustration of the fact that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed as a result of "sinas chinam" – "baseless hatred{2}." What is baseless hatred? Unless a person has psychopathic tendencies, why would he hate for no reason?

The host's reaction, "Let see that man is the enemy of that man" requires further elaboration. The general interpretation of this passage is that Bar Kamtza is the host's enemy. Why would the host refer to himself in the third person, as "that man"? Furthermore, if this is an example of baseless hatred, the host's reaction should be visceral; why does he speak in an analytical

tone, “Let see”? Finally, why is it Kamtza and Bar Kamtza who are denoted as being responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem? Should not the host be held accountable rather than Kamtza?

A person usually does not harbor feelings of hatred for another human being unless he perceives that that individual has either harmed him or possesses something which he deserves. However, there is an exception to this norm which has unfortunately divided Jewish communities throughout the world from the time of their inception; that is, the perception that a person’s friends may not associate with his enemies, and for them to do so would be considered betrayal. A person with such a perception expects his friends to feel the same disdain for his enemies as he does, to hate his enemies simply because he does; this is “sinas chinam” – “baseless hatred”.

The original dispute in the Talmud was between Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, as indicated by the host’s reaction “Let see that man (Bar Kamtza) is an enemy of that man (Kamtza)”; the host is not referring to himself in the third person, rather he is referring to his friend Kamtza. Therefore, the host does not react emotionally, but with the intellectual understanding of a person who maintains the perception that since Bar Kamtza is an enemy of his friend Kamtza, he too should hate Bar Kamtza. It is for this reason that the Talmud states that Jerusalem was destroyed because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza; it was their dispute coupled with Kamtza’s insistence that his friends not associate with Bar Kamtza which precipitated the host’s sinas chinam.

1.Gittin 55b

2.Yoma 9b

It’s Your Responsibility Too

“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisroel...”(1:1)

Sefer Devarim begins with Bnei Yisroel at the threshold of Eretz Yisroel. The entire Sefer spans the last five weeks of Moshe’s life and records the rebuke that Moshe gave to Bnei Yisroel prior to his death. Parshas Devarim enumerates a list of places where Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisroel{1}. The Midrash notes that there is no historical basis upon which to substantiate the existence of these places, rather their names are veiled allusions to all of the transgressions perpetrated by Bnei Yisroel while they were in the desert{2}. Rashi comments that Moshe only alluded to the transgressions, rather than mentioning them explicitly because of the dignity of Bnei Yisroel{3}. Throughout the earlier sections of the Torah we find Bnei Yisroel harshly castigated for these inappropriate actions and their transgressions magnified. Why is this rebuke different than those delivered in earlier parshios?

The verse emphasizes that Moshe spoke “to the entire nation of Israel” – “el Kol Yisroel{4}.” Rashi cites the Sifri who explains that everyone had to be present, for if Moshe had only rebuked some of Bnei Yisroel, those who were not present would have claimed that had they been there, they would have been able to defend themselves from Moshe’s accusations. Therefore, it was necessary for the entire Bnei Yisroel to be present, so that no one could exclude himself from Moshe’s critique{5}. Again we find an element of this rebuke which does not exist in any prior castigation.

In order to explain the aforementioned difficulty, it is first necessary to address another problem. The Midrash interprets the names of the places where Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisroel as an allusion to their sins. Among the sins recorded are the complaints which occurred immediately after leaving Egypt, the spies’ evil speech, the golden calf, dissatisfaction with the manna, and Korach’s rebellion. Almost all of these transgressions were not committed by the people who stood before Moshe, rather by the “dor hamidbar”, the generation of people in the desert who were no longer living. Why did Moshe castigate the people for the sins of the earlier generation? According to Torah law, an individual can be held accountable for the sins of his parents only if he continues in their evil path. If he does not follow in the evil ways of his parents, he is not held accountable for their behavior{6}. However, this law is only true on an individual level. On a national level, responsibility for the transgressions of earlier generations is always borne by the citizens of the nation, even if the citizens have no connection to the misdeeds of their ancestors. The reason for this is that a citizen of a nation is part of the same constant entity as that to which his predecessors belonged.

He is a shareholder in the unchanging corporate entity which defines the nation, and as such, is responsible for any transgressions or atrocities perpetrated by the national entity. Culpability is not dependent upon whether or not the individual was involved in the misdeed.

Moshe was teaching the generation entering Eretz Yisroel that it was their responsibility to rectify the damage caused by their predecessors. They could not disassociate themselves from the actions of their ancestors by claiming that they were not pursuing the misdeeds of the earlier generations. Moshe was addressing them as the inheritors of the corporate entity of Israel, not as the children of the generation that left Egypt. Consequently, since they were not the perpetrators of these acts, they were not subject to the same harsh castigation as the earlier generation, and these acts were not magnified as they were in earlier sections of the Torah which addressed the perpetrators directly.

It is specifically this form of rebuke which required the presence of the entire nation. Since they did not perpetuate the acts for which Moshe was criticizing them, they could have had the misconception that as long as they themselves did not engage in the same grievous behavior, they could not be held accountable for those sins. Therefore, Moshe required that all of Bnei Yisroel be present so that he could explain to them that their culpability stemmed from their national responsibility, and as such, they were required to rectify the wrongdoings of their ancestors.

1.1:1 2.Avos D’Rav Nosson 34:1 3.1:1 4.Ibid 5.Ibid 6.Berachos 7a, Rashi Shemos 34:7

http://torahweb.org/author/rsch_dt_special.html

Piskei Halacha on Coronavirus Shaylas from Rav Hershel Schachter shlita

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Should the Beis Hamikdash not be rebuilt, we will fast on Shiva Asar B’Tamuz. As a result of the ongoing danger of Coronavirus, there are many who are still uncomfortable davening indoors, and have been following the medical recommendation to convene in outdoor venues. Although davening with a minyan has great value, it does not take precedence over safety, or over the importance of fasting on Shiva Asar B’Tamuz. As there is a clear concern of dehydration when spending time outdoors in the hot summer months, if one feels that as a result of their davening outdoors they may be required to drink on Shiva Asar B’Tamuz, it would be best to daven at home without a minyan. In areas where the heat is significant, it would be best not to conduct minyanim at all under these conditions, as they would place people in a position of either endangering their health or of compromising the fast.

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The period of mourning beginning on Shiva Asar B’Tamuz (The Three Weeks), is patterned off of the classical laws of Avelius when mourning a deceased parent. When mourning the loss of a parent, we have a custom to abstain from listening to joyful music. However, one would be allowed to listen to music if they felt it was needed to help assuage their personal feelings of anxiety or depression. At the current time due to the ongoing pandemic, the entire world is in a state of uncertainty and concern. One who feels compelled to listen to music in order to help alleviate their tension or pressure would be allowed to do so. This would especially apply to Erev Shabbos, when listening to music would create a positive frame of mind in anticipation of Shabbos.

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Ashkenazic custom is to refrain from laundering clothing from Rosh Chodesh Av through Tisha B’Av (the Nine Days). A medical professional or anyone else who is concerned about the spread of infection on their clothing, may launder their clothing even during this time period.

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There are many communities who have been curtailing their tefillah b'tzibur in order to limit the amount of potential exposure between participants. On Tisha B'Av, they may daven maariv and shachris b'tzibur and then continue as a community with the recitation of Eicha and Kinnos via zoom in each individual home.

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Due to the need for social distancing during the current pandemic, there is a concern about adequate spacing in shuls for the Yamim Noraim. Minyanim will probably have to abbreviate the davening in order to accommodate the many who will be in need of an indoor space to daven. If need be, all of the Piyutim can be deleted as well as some of the extra shofar blowing that we have the custom to do throughout the davening. (The basic shofar blasts are the ones after maftir and those included in the chazaras Hashatz). Should there be a need to abbreviate the Pesukei D'zimra as well, one must still make sure that it is done based on the rules of priority that govern the Pesukei D'zimra. Either way, if the congregation will be convening after reciting Pesukei D'zimra on their own, they cannot begin from "Hamelech" or "Shochen Ad" but rather from Nishmas which is considered the beginning of the paragraph.

42

B'Inyanei Tefilah (in Hebrew) - at

<http://torahweb.org/torah/docs/rsch/RavSchachter-Corona-42-July-12-2020.pdf>

43

It is Rabbinically forbidden to wash oneself with either hot or cold water on Tisha B'Av, unless it is for the purpose of removing dirt from one's body (which includes washing hands when waking up in the morning). Individuals who have been vigilant in following the updated CDC recommendations would be allowed to wash or sanitize their hands on Tisha B'Av as they otherwise would. There is no allowance for those who have disregarded the CDC recommendations as this would be categorized as rechitzah which is Rabbinically prohibited on Tisha B'Av.

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date: Jul 22, 2020, 6:22 PM

subject: **Rabbi Wein - A Lasting Edifice**

Parshas Devarim

A Lasting Edifice

Our great teacher Moshe begins his final oration to the Jewish people in this week's Torah portion. He reviews for them the history of his stewardship of the Jewish people over the past 40 years. He recounts the miracles and tragedies that befell the Jewish people, from the Exodus from Egypt until the very day that they now stand at the banks of the river Jordan preparing to enter the land of Israel. It is a very detailed oration. Apparently, all the major events and issues, the highs and lows of the sojourn of Israel in the desert of Sinai, are remembered and recounted. He spares no detail or criticism as to what went wrong, and at the conclusion of this book, his love for the Jewish people is fully on exhibition by the manifold blessings that he bestows upon them.

Moshe mentions the heroes that arose to champion the cause of Torah and the Jewish people at moments of crisis, and he also tells us of those who fell short, i.e. how their acts of commission or omission led the Jewish people astray. He points out that heavenly guidance nurtured the Jewish people during this entire long span and assures them that the Creator will not abandon them in the future. But he also says that the Creator will hold them responsible for their behavior and their loyalty to Torah. What is striking to me is that Moshe omits any mention regarding the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle from his recollection of the history of the Jewish people in Sinai. Yet, in the text of the holy Torah itself, a great deal of space and detail is devoted to this subject. All the commentators are hard-pressed to

understand why many eternal commandments are merely mentioned or hinted at, while the construction of the Mishkan/Tabernacle occupies a great deal of space and detail.

Though I have not found many Torah commentaries that discuss this omission, I have myself have thought about it at some length. I think that Moshe is communicating to us a subtle but vital lesson that will enable the Jewish people to survive national loss and destruction, exile and dispersion, and yet be able to rebuild itself physically and spiritually. Moshe is teaching us that all physical structures, though they are the holiest of all human endeavors endowed with godly spirit, so to speak, they are nevertheless only temporary.

The Mishkan/Tabernacle lasted for hundreds of years in the desert and at Shilo in the land of Israel, but it eventually disappeared. The First Temple stood for 410 years but it too became only ruins. The Second Temple, which Herod rebuilt in enormous splendor and was one of the wonders of the ancient world, stood for 420 years. But it also was destroyed and disappeared. It is not the physical structure of buildings that has preserved the Jewish people until our very day. It is, rather, the Torah, its values and commandments, its worldview and systems of life that have enabled the Jewish people to survive and eventually prosper and rebuild themselves. It is no accident that the majority of Jewish scholars follow the opinion that the third Temple will not be built by human beings, because it has to be eternal, and all human construction, no matter how grand, noble or lofty still remains only a temporary structure. Moshe, in his oration, speaks not only to his generation but to all later generations of the Jewish people. He does not dwell on physical structures which are always subject to ruin and replacement, but on the spiritual greatness of the eternal Torah that the Lord has bestowed upon the Jewish people.

Shabbat shalom

Rabbi Berel Wein

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Shema Yisrael Torah Network

Peninim on the Torah - Parshas Devarim

פרשת דברים תש"פ

ויהי בארבעים שנה... דבר משה אל בני ישראל

It was in the fortieth year... when Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisrael. (1:3)

Rashi comments, "This teaches us that Moshe Rabbeinu did not rebuke them until immediately before his death." *Rashi* continues that Moshe derived this from Yaakov *Avinu*, who also waited until he was on his deathbed to rebuke his sons. Yaakov said, "Reuven, my son, why did I not rebuke you earlier? It was so that you should not leave me and join up with Eisav, my brother." This comment begs elucidation. Reuven was a holy person who, for the slightest vestige of sin, sat in sackcloth and fasted for a lengthy period of time. To say that rebuke would drive him to leave the *Shivtei Kah*, tribes of Hashem, and join Eisav, his uncle, is to suggest that he was quite far from virtuous. Furthermore, if Yaakov believed that rebuke could generate such a negative reaction from Reuven, can we even begin to imagine the negative effect it would have on us?

To have a better perspective concerning the spiritual descent that a degrading experience can catalyze, we turn to *Chazal*, *Chagigah* 5b: "*Rebbi* (Rabbi Yehudah *HaNasi*) was holding a *Kinos*, Book of Lamentations, in his hand. He read it. When he reached the *pasuk*, 'He has thrown *Yisrael* from the Heavens to the earth,' it (the Book of *Eichah*) fell from his hand. He exclaimed, 'Indeed (they have fallen), *m'eigra ramah l'birah amikta*, from a high roof to a deep pit.' What is it that *Rebbi* saw in the falling book that illuminated his understanding of the *pasuk*? *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz*, *zl*, explains that he realized that the book's place in his hand or on the floor was irrelevant to its condition. Where the book was situated was not the issue, but rather, how it arrived there. It was the fall that damaged the book. (Being on

the floor did not damage it – the fall did.) Likewise, the tragedy of *Klal Yisrael* is not where they are now in *galus*, exile; rather, it is the downfall and shock of the abrupt decline, “from on high to down low,” that battered them terribly. “He has thrown (*Yisrael*) from the Heavens to the earth.” The change of location from Heaven to earth did not impact *Klal Yisrael* as profoundly as much as the fall itself.

Coping with adversity, especially if it is sudden, can have a devastating transformative effect on a person. The tribe of Dan rejected Shlomis bas Divri’s son, and, when no one supported him, he blasphemed. In one split second he lost his worlds: this world; and the World-to-Come. He could not handle the fall. The Jewish People did not react much better when Moshe *Rabbeinu* (according to their erroneous calculation) was late in returning from Heaven. When the *Satan* depicted for them an image of Moshe on his deathbed being transported by angels, they lost it. Their spiritual descent resulted in the Golden Calf, for which we are still paying to this very day.

We all confront situations that can – and do – engender a spiritual descent. Some can succumb to a free-fall and have great difficulty returning. Others fight every step of the way, grasping at anything they can, to prevent their fall from causing serious, lasting damage. A person must be constantly on guard when he confronts a challenge, a period of adversity, lest he be caught off guard and edge too close to the precipice. The plunge is far more damaging than where one lands. One can always climb back up – unless – the fall in and of itself has caused him to lose his nerve, to be deprived of his self-control. Once his presence of mind has been impugned, he will have neither the desire nor the willpower to climb back up and return to his original spiritual status. A spiritual wound requires time to heal. We must give the person who has fallen time – support, comfort – and encouragement. To turn our back on him is to encourage spiritual suicide. It is all about time, patience and perseverance.

Horav Sholom, zl, of Probisht (Father of *Horav Yisrael Rizhiner*) was wont to say, “When a garment becomes soiled with mud and one hurries to clean it (while the mud is still moist), he will cause the stain to soak deeper, as it becomes absorbed in the fibers of the cloth. Rather, he should wait until the mud becomes completely dry, and then, with light rubbing it will all come off without leaving a mark.” People are not much different. Give them time and support – they will return – as long as they know that they are wanted.

ותקרבון אלי כלכם ותאמרו נשלחה אנשים לפנינו ויחפרו לנו את הארץ
All of you approached me and said, “Let us send men ahead of us, and let them spy out the land.” (1:22)

The *chet ha’meraglim*, sin of the spies, is recorded in the annals of our nation’s history as one of its most egregious sins. It was the precursor of what became our national day of mourning, *Tishah B’Av*. The ring leaders received their due punishment immediately. The rest of the nation, which capitulated to their self-imposed anxiety, saw their punishment carried out over the next thirty-eight years as they perished in the wilderness. What aggravates the sin most is that the spies were all men of repute, distinguished Torah leaders and princes of their individual tribes. How did such spiritual giants fall so low, from a spiritual zenith to such a nadir of depravity, that they lost their portion in *Olam Habba*, the World to Come?

Horav Mordechai Schwab, zl, quotes *Horav Elchanan Wasserman, zl*, who quoted his *Rebbe*, the *Chafetz Chaim, zl*, that any question concerning taking action, undertaking an endeavor, attempting to understand what is taking place in his life, whether it is a question that is spiritual or physical/material in nature, one should turn to the Heavenly Throne and listen to what Hashem has to say. Understandably, this is a metaphor for the Torah, for Hashem and the Torah are one. In other words: the answer/explanation to all one’s issues and questions are to be found in the Torah. To put it in every-day terms: consult a *tzaddik*, righteous person, who is well versed in the Torah and seek his guidance. Everyone should have a *rebbe*, for a *rebbe* is one’s connection to Heaven. His *rebbe* is the conduit for Hashem’s Heavenly guidance on earth.

Rav Schwab sums it up succinctly. One who seeks to follow the will of Hashem, to serve the Almighty with a complete and perfect heart, must first

determine the *ratzon*, will, of Hashem. The individual who first decides to act on his own, without turning to and asking for rabbinic/Torah guidance, is no longer able to listen properly with a captive ear, since his personal, vested interests stand in the way. It is similar to seeking guidance once one’s mind is already made up. He does not want advice. He wants a blessing that will coincide with his preconceived decision. A Jew’s goal must be to live *chaim birtzonon*, life in accordance with Hashem’s will. One who lives according to Hashem’s will never suffers from life’s ambiguities, because his trust in Hashem enables him to rise above them with the knowledge that this is what Hashem wants; this is what He asks of us. We abide by His will.

A young *ben Torah* was growing spiritually, both in his erudition and *yiraas Shomayim*, fear of Heaven. He was on his way to achieving an enviable level of spiritual integrity. He married a wonderful, young, like-minded woman, and together they set their minds towards establishing and building a *bayis ne’eman b’Yisrael*, a home true to Hashem and His dictates. Then tragedy struck when their oldest child, a sweet girl of three years old, became terminally ill. Back and forth went the rollercoaster of hope and depression. Treatment, remission, treatment. *Tzedakah*, charity; *tefillah*, prayer; *teshuvah*, repentance; visiting *tzaddikim*, holy men, to petition their blessings, torrents of tears storming the Heavens – all were heard; the answer, however, was “no.” The young child returned her pure soul to its Source.

During the *shivah*, seven-day-period of mourning, the young parents stoically sat on the ground and spoke with the many visitors who had come to comfort them. One *rav*, who was exceptionally close with the father, asked, “How were you able to maintain your emotional stability, as well as your spiritual devotion amid the rollercoaster of pain, then hope, just to have it shattered by fear and resignation?” The father replied, “I had one very low moment during which I was about to throw in the towel and give up on everything, when I met a Jew leaving the hospital who took one look at my face and asked, ‘What is wrong?’ I told him. He said, ‘Let me share my story with you.’

“One of my sons was gravitating away from religious observance. I turned to a *Rosh Yeshivah* who is very successful in bringing back these lost souls. He spent much time and expended even more energy to convince my son finally to return to the *Yiddishkeit* in which he was raised. He saw the light and became a firm, committed *maamin*, believer in Hashem. He married a young woman who was also a *baalas teshuvah*, penitent, and they moved to *Tzfas*. Within a few years, they became the parents of two healthy children. When their third child was born, the little boy displayed physical signs that all was not right. The doctors placed the infant into the neonatal intensive care unit and attempted to save his life with all the tools of modern science.

“The parents poured out their hearts to Hashem, Who, on the seventh day of the infant’s life, brought him Home to Him. The *halachah* states that, for a Jew to arise from *Techiyas Ha’Meisim*, Resurrection of the Dead, he must have a *bris*, be circumcised. Thus, prior to the infant’s burial, he had to have a *bris*. The *mohel*, circumciser, performed the ritual at the cemetery, after which my son was asked, ‘What name are you giving your son?’ He thought for a moment, and, with tears streaming down his face, declared, ‘I want to name him *Ratzon Hashem*.’ This is the name that symbolizes one’s willingness to accept Hashem’s decree regardless of its difficulty to understand. If this is the will of Hashem, I accept it with love!’ That man’s story guided us through our travail.”

Now that we have digressed and talked about a *rebbe*’s guidance, and the Jew’s willingness to accept what he is served throughout life as being the will of Hashem, we return to our original question, “Where did the *meraglim*, spies, go wrong?”

Rav Schwab explains that despite the spiritual plane which each of the *meraglim* achieved, Moshe *Rabbeinu* was still the *gadol hador*, the Torah giant of the generation. They should have consulted with him; they should have asked him, “What is the *ratzon Hashem*?” He was their quintessential *Rebbe*. They should have turned to him for guidance and inspiration. They did not, and, as a result, we observe *Tishah B’Av*. One added note: One may

have a *rebbe* from whom he derives knowledge, but if the *rebbe* is nothing more than the fountain from which the student's knowledge is derived – but otherwise, there is no relationship – he is not a student. If a *rebbe*/student relationship exists without such a bond, the student will go off on his own whenever the opportunity presents itself – as it did when the *meraglim* buckled under pressure.

Ri Mikorvil (quoted by *Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl*) rules that while one must interrupt his Torah study for the sake of burying the dead, he may not do so if it means interrupting his study with his *rebbe*. If he does so, it is considered as if he shed *blood*. The *Rosh Yeshivah* explains that while one may attain knowledge through his own learning, he has no path to grow and develop if he is not in communion with his *rebbe*. Therefore, the time he takes from the *rebbe/talmid* relationship is time of spiritual growth and development, thus precluding the student from achieving his true nature and magnitude. This is similar to shedding blood.

In order for a *talmid* to develop this relationship and benefit from it, he must have a profound perception of who his *rebbe* is – as a person in his own right and vis-à-vis his *talmid*. He must see his *rebbe* as a mentor who guides him in this world, affording him an opportunity to merit a place in the World to Come. In other words, he must appreciate his *rebbe*. I may add that this bond is reciprocal. Just as a pupil cannot really survive without his *rebbe*, so too, would the *rebbe* be hard-pressed to exist without his student. They are each indispensable to one another.

Horav Shlomo Freifeld, zl, a *Rosh Yeshivah* who excelled as a *rebbe*, would say, “The most honest gauge of a *talmid*'s success is not how much he has learned or how he behaves; it is the *amitus*, authenticity, of his relationship with his *rebbe*.” He understood that the *rebbe/talmid* relationship is sacrosanct; without a *rebbe*, one is not connected to the *mesorah*, tradition, chain of transmission of the Torah from generation to generation, from *rebbe* to *talmid*. The following vignette underscores this idea.

A new *bachur*, student, arrived at the *yeshivah* (Shaar Yashuv), and *Rav Shlomo* began to learn with him privately. Every morning following *Shacharis*, the morning service, they would learn *Mishnayos Meseches Zevachim* which deals with the intricacies of the ritual sacrifices offered in the *Bais Hamikdash*. After a few months, the student had become proficient in the *Mishnayos*. Nonetheless, *Rav Shlomo* continued to learn. This troubled the *bachur*, because he felt the *Rosh Yeshivah*'s time was valuable and could be put to better use by his learning with a student whose background was deficient. He asked *Rav Shlomo*, “Why does *Rebbe* not spend his personal time with those *bachurim* who could use a bit more instruction in their lessons?”

Rav Shlomo's response is classic. “I have high hopes for you, but until we have a personal relationship, you are not my *talmid* – and if you are not a *talmid*, you will not grow!”

Another classic, which every *rebbe* should savor. A secular Jew once visited and found the *Rosh Yeshivah* surrounded by *talmidim* (which was common). “Are they your students?” he asked. “No” was his reply, “they are my partners.”

Chazal (*Moed Kattan* 17a) quotes a criterion as the barometer for determining a *talmid*'s appreciation of his *rebbe*: “If (in your eyes) the *rebbe* is like a Ministering Angel, then learn Torah from him.” Simply, this means the student must be in awe of his *rebbe*. *Horav Shmuel Rosenberg, zl*, *Rav of Undsdorf*, explained this practically. *Chazal* teach that a *malach*, angel, does not perform more than one mission at a time, so that he be completely focused on and committed to his Heavenly mission (so to speak). Likewise, the *rebbe* who wants to reach his students, who wants to see them achieve *shleimus*, perfection, cannot be busy with other things. His focus should be entirely on his students.

Horav Bunim, zl, *m'Peshischa* explains this practically. Is anyone able to even begin fathoming the spiritual plane of a *malach*? An angel is so far beyond us that, as mortals, we do not begin to understand anything about them. This is how a student should view his *rebbe* – as an individual who is spiritually distant from him. There is one caveat: a *rebbe* can bring himself

close to his *talmid*, and thereby close the gap, in order to enhance the relationship – when necessary/appropriate.

אנה אנחנו עלים. אחינו המסו את לבבינו... ואמר אליכם לא תערצון ולא תיראון מהם
To where shall we ascend? Our brothers have melted our hearts... then I said to you, “Do not be broken and do not fear them.” (1:28,29)

Fear can do terrible things to a person. Fear is the antithesis of hope. Hope is the cure for fear. *Chazal* (*Berachos* 10a) teach, “Even if a sharp sword is resting on the neck of a person, he should not despair of Heavenly mercy.” One can *chas v'shalom*, Heaven forbid, be at the threshold of death – he should still hope; he should not throw in the towel and give up hope. Indeed, we experience every moment of life because Hashem wants us to experience it. We are alive during our present fearful state because Hashem wants us to live. Who are we to give up hope? If He would not want us to be here – we would not be here. It is as simple as that.

Interestingly, concerning the above *Chazal* (one should not despair even when the sharp blade is poised over his throat), we are not enjoined to pray. We are, instead, told not to give up hope. What does “not give up hope” mean? The *Baal Shem Tov* teaches that while prayer is most certainly critical and beneficial at all times, *Chazal* are telling us not to despair. This means we should maintain our *bitachon*, trust, in Hashem. Prayer is certainly a mainstay, but it should not take the place of *bitachon*. *Tefillah* that is not buttressed with *bitachon* is missing its most essential ingredient. The *Baal Shem Tov* was wont to exhort his *talmidim*, students, to believe in themselves. Hashem believes in us, otherwise, we would not be here. We should at least appreciate His faith in us by having faith in ourselves.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, observes that the *perek*, chapter, in *Sefer Tehillim* in which *David Hamelech* details some of his most distressful and agonizing moments is *Perek* 38. Some notable quotes are: “Your arrows were shot at me”; “My bones have no peace”; “My wounds are putrid and enflamed”; “I am bewildered and stooped, numb and greatly broken”; “My heart is engulfed with distress”; “I have no friend and companions”; “Enemies seek to harm me and speak maliciously”; “I expect misfortune, and pain always awaits.” Nonetheless, *David* says, “I became like one who does not hear and whose mouth cannot reply, G-d, all because of my hope in You.”

The distinction of this *perek* is that in all of *Sefer Tehillim*, 150 *perakim*, this is the only one which *David* begins with: *Mizmor l'David l'hazkir*, “A Psalm by *David*, to remember” (to review and say in times of trouble). (Veritably, *Perek* 70 also begins with *l'hazkir*, to remember, how Hashem saved and protected him from his pursuers and detractors.) Why would *David* seek to underscore the bitterness, grief, misery and heartbreak that he had experienced in his life – to the point that he encourages us to remember, to recite this *perek* during moments of distress?

Rav Zilberstein explains that *David* turns to us all and declares: “Have you ever heard of a Jew called *David Hamelech*? He received the monarchy forever. He merited to have a son, *Shlomo*, who was the wisest of all men, who built the *Bais Hamikdash*.” *David* was an author, a Psalmist, a poet, a king. *Moshiach Tziddkeinu* descends from him. He is the fourth leg of the Heavenly Chariot, *David Malka Meshicha*. He certainly was one of the most prodigious, successful personages in the annals of Jewish history. Yet, he suffered so much. All of *Perek* 38 relates his bitter suffering. He never lost hope. His suffering catalyzed his distinction. Thus, we are impelled to remember and inscribe on our hearts this chapter, because it teaches us that no situation, however bleak, is hopeless.

Fear destroys. Fear is, unfortunately, contagious. When a nation is gripped with fear it cannot function; it cannot think properly. What would be considered cogent during a period of calm suddenly becomes devoid of perspective. When fear takes hold of a person, he becomes overwhelmed. As a result, decisions which he would normally produce with ease, he struggles to make, or his decisions are nonsensical.

Acheinu heimasu es levaveinu; “Our brothers have melted our hearts.” Our nation that was liberated from Egypt, walked through the dried bed of the Red Sea, triumphed over Amalek, lived on Heavenly bread – but was

overcome with *bechayah shel chinam*, unwarranted weeping. Why? The hearts of *Klal Yisrael* had been melted by fear.

In *Likutei MoHaran* (11:48), *Horav Nachman Breslover*, zl, writes *K'she'adam tzarich laavor gesher tzaar meod – ha'klal v'ha'ikar shelo yispacheid klal*; “When a person must cross an exceedingly narrow bridge, the general principle and the essential thing is to not frighten yourself at all.” The narrow bridge is daunting; it is scary, but, if you want to cross it, you cannot surrender to your fears. *Rav Nachman*’s words are the basis of a song which became very popular. In the song, the reference is, *kol ha'olam kulo*, “the entire world is a narrow bridge.” In an emboldened move, the Israeli tank corps made their attack across the Suez Canal during the *Yom Kippur* War. As they began their advance towards the bridgehead on the canal, *Ariel Sharon*, the commander at the time, broadcast the song over all the radios and interiors of the attacking crews. The word, the lyrics, the tune, the hidden meaning, electrified the men until they all sang together, easing their fear and trepidation upon entering the battle.

What is the message of this sweet story? The world is compared to a narrow bridge. Life is filled with narrow bridges, highs and lows, fears and celebrations, pain and anxiety, happiness and joy, sickness and health and then the greatest challenge: mortality. Interestingly, the song compares the world to a narrow bridge. Is that the only dangerous place that inspires fear? A bridge is the symbol of a journey, of movement. The message is powerful. Yes, we are faced with fear, but we must move on. One does not stop in middle of a bridge out of fear. He should try to reach the other side as quickly as he can. This teaches us to work through our fears; do not ignore them, but certainly do not stop along the bridge. Move on! With *bitachon* in Hashem, we can overcome the fears and traverse the bridge. To weep for no warranted reason is certainly not the way to cross the bridge. That was their mistake in the wilderness. We now have *Tishah B'Av* to reflect on our fears, so that we triumph over them as we prepare for an end to the mourning with the advent of *Moshiach Tziddkeinu*.

Va'ani Tefillah

ועל נפלאותיך שבכל עת – *V'Al Nifleosecha she'b'chol eis*. And for Your wonders and favors in every season.

Actually, we experience three forms of miracles: First are overt miracles – which are extraordinary events that we are able to acknowledge without question. These are supernatural occurrences which are beyond our ability to comprehend – let alone explain. Then there are those events which are accepted as natural, which occur all the time. These revealed, unambiguous experiences, which we have convinced ourselves as natural, are, in effect, miracles. Finally, are those wonders which Hashem performs for us on a regular basis, of which we are unaware. These hidden Heavenly acts are unrecognizable, because we are unaware that they took place to the point that we do not recognize – thus, do not acknowledge – our good fortune. We have a flat tire on the way to an event/trip, which results in our missing the event or arriving too late. When word reaches us that something went wrong on the trip, we feel good, thankful we missed it. Only now do we realize that the flat tire was a Divine gift. Indeed, one only has to ask those who came late to work at the Twin Towers, for whatever reason, on September 11, 2001.

ע"ה ש"ה - Shelley Horwitz - לע"נ רוחה רחל בת ר' משה אריה-ה' ע"ה נפ' ח' אב תשנ"ו
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prepared and edited by Rabbi L. Scheinbaum

The Torah forbids making an *ohel* — a tent-like structure — that is of a permanent nature (not intended to be taken down that day or very soon). The Rabbis made a decree to prohibit even a temporary *ohel* so as not to come to (mistakenly) transgress the Torah prohibition against making a permanent *ohel*.

Our gemara teaches that opening a folding chair on Shabbat is permitted although this act creates a sheltered space underneath the seat part of the folding chair. It follows that in this case the prohibition against making an *ohel* on Shabbat does not apply. Does this mean that it is also permitted to open an umbrella on Shabbat? (Of course, it would not be permitted to carry the umbrella outside on Shabbat in a place where there is no *eiruv*.)

While a few poskim have permitted using an umbrella on Shabbat, the vast majority have prohibited opening it on Shabbat. And this is the widespread and accepted halacha. Why is opening an umbrella “worse” than opening a folding chair? One reason is that the *ohel* of the chair is meant to sit upon and not to serve as shelter for underneath it. Another reason is that the folding chair simply slides open and stays that way by its nature, whereas the rods of the umbrella need to be affixed open as an *ohel* by means of a mechanical process. (See *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 315:7 and the *Bi'ur Halacha* there, and *Shemirat Shabbat K'Hilchata* 24:15 and footnote 53 for a more detailed treatment of this subject.)

Regarding the question of whether one may use on Shabbat an umbrella that was open before Shabbat, there are also two main reasons to not allow this.

One is the issue of *marit ayin* — that an onlooker may see this act and mistakenly think that it is permitted to open an umbrella on Shabbat. A second reason is that a person is considered as continuously making a new *ohel* as he walks, making a new protected space under the umbrella in any new space he occupies.

from: Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>

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Ohr Somayach :: Talmud Tips :: Shabbat 135-141

For the week ending 25 July 2020 / 4 Av 5780

Rabbi Moshe Newman

The Umbrella-Tent

“A folding chair is permitted to open on Shabbat.” * Shabbat 138

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:" (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'.

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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.

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:

"Hashem has multiplied you, and, behold, you are this day a multitude as the stars of heaven. Hashem, the God of your fathers, should make you a thousand times so many and bless you, as He promised you! (1:10-11)

[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's 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 (see 1:19). 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 in 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 two TV 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 Bamidbar 13:31-33).

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 'maaplim' lost because God was not in their midst (see 1:42)

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).

ly"n 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) 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)

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 them? I MYSELF CAN NO LONGER CARRY THE BURDEN [to lead] this nation for it is too much for me!" (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 introduction']

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',

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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.

IDENTIFYING 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 Arvat 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 Rabeinu'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.

IDENTIFYING 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 Rabbeinu 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 Rabbeinu 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 Rabbeinu 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 make 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 Rabbeinu 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 carefully 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 parsha 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 parsha 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 mitzvot 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 8 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 Rabbeinu 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 - "leshanen" - 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 Arvat 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 'rebukey' 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 Arvat 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 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 Arvat 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 website 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

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:

"Hashem has multiplied you, and, behold, you are this day a multitude as the stars of heaven. Hashem, the God of your fathers, should make you a thousand times so many and bless you, as He promised you! (1:10-11)

[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's 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.)

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 (see 1:19). 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 'maapilim' 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).

ly"n 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 them? I MYSELF CAN NO LONGER CARRY THE BURDEN [to lead] this nation for it is too much for me!" (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 introduction']

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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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 Moshe'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 if in the moving introduction to his commentary on D'varim]ignally 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
Devarim

Walk, Don't Run

"These are the words..." (1:1)

After years of inactivity, my trusty Martin Acoustic Guitar emerged from its not-so-plush-anymore, lined case, its vintage attested to by the fading stickers saying "Pan Am Airways" and the like on the outside of the case. Decades of inactivity had rendered my finger-picking into finger-plodding, but I plowed on. Someone sent me a video of a world-renowned Australian guitar teacher, and one of his ideas resounded with me as a lesson for life. He was absolutely insistent that when you begin to learn a tune, you should play it at an absurdly slow pace – but you couldn't make *even one mistake*. If you made a mistake, you had to go back and play the piece even slower, until you reached a tempo at which your brain was playing faster than your fingers and your performance was flawless. Only then were you allowed to speed up ever-so-slowly.

The message I took from this was that in life – specifically, in our spiritual lives – it's all too easy to try to run before we can walk, and we end up being able to do neither. Practice make perfect, but if you practice your mistakes, you will also make *them* "perfect." You will inculcate your mistakes to the point where you will have to unlearn vast misplayed sonatas of your life. And *un-learning* is much, much harder than learning.

This week we begin the reading of the Book of Devarim, which literally means "words."

The captivity of the Jewish People in Egypt was more than just physical bondage. On a deeper level, Egypt represents the enslavement of the power of speech, the music of the soul. Egypt not only enslaved the bodies of the Jewish People, it put in chains the major weapon of the Jewish People – speech. Thus, the Torah writes that the Jewish People "cried out" to G-d. It doesn't write that they "*prayed*." For in Egypt, speech itself was bound. In Hebrew, the word for desert is *midbar*, which is from the root-word *mi'dibur* – "from speech." The emptiness of the desert is the ideal place for the rebuilding of the power of speech. Every year, as we emerge from the reading of the Book of Bamidbar to the Book of Devarim, we have the ability to relearn the "notes" of our "song" to Hashem, our relationship with Him, our *emuna* and trust in Him – by learning to play that tune again very slowly. But learning to play it right.

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Question: On Tisha B'Av morning, everyone sits on the floor as a sign of mourning. However, one person in the synagogue publicly sits down on a chair. Who is this person? (Answer on page 10)

PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Va'etchanan

Why Was I Created?

“Now, O Yisrael, listen to the decrees and to the ordinances that I teach you to perform...” (4:1)

One of the privileges of having been associated with Ohr Somayach for the last thirty is that I’ve met, and in some cases been close to, several human beings who were clearly living on a different level than the rest of mankind. One of them (who will, of course, remain nameless) is a genius in the art of human relationships. He once distilled the essence of one’s relationship with one’s fellow into three principles. I’ll try to present the first of these principles this week, and, G-d willing, the other two in the weeks to come.

His first principle is, “I was created to serve others, and no one was created to serve me.” This may sound a little extreme. What, my entire existence is for other people? Ostensibly, this sounds to be beyond the “letter of the law.”

But Hashem wants us to go beyond the letter of the law. When we keep to the letter of the law, we treat the mitzvahs like a business transaction — you do this for me and I’ll do that for you. Unlike a business transaction, Hashem doesn’t want or need our mitzvahs. What use does He have for them? If we are very righteous, what does that give Him? What Hashem wants is our heart. When you get a present from someone you love, you’re getting the person you love wrapped up inside the present. When you get a present from someone you don’t care about, you’re getting something you like — delivered by a delivery boy.

So, really, to go beyond the letter or the law is the essence of our relationship with Hashem. However, upon deeper examination it could be that, “I was created to serve others and no one was created to serve me” is indeed the letter of the law, and not an exceptional level of righteousness.

The Talmud in Shabbat (31a) says, *“Rava said: After departing from this world, when a person is brought to judgment for the life he lived in this world, they say to him ... Did you conduct business faithfully? Did you designate times for Torah study? Did you engage in procreation? Did you await salvation? Did you engage in the dialectics of wisdom and understand one matter from another?”*

The *Reishit Chochma*, quoting from *Mesechet Chibut Hakever*, says that in addition to these questions, a person is asked, “Did you crown Hashem as King over you, morning and evening?” Meaning, did you say the *Shema* morning and evening. And, “Did you crown your fellow over you by giving him/her pleasure (*nachat ruach*)?”

“Now, O Yisrael, listen to the decrees and to the ordinances that I teach you to perform...”

And so is it when the Torah speaks of decrees and ordinances. Just as the questions in *mesechet* Shabbat are of the essence, so too, “I was created to serve others and no one was created to serve me” is an essential duty — and not a level of saintliness.

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Shabbat 135-141

The Umbrella-Tent

“A folding chair is permitted to open on Shabbat.”

The Torah forbids making an *ohel* – a tent-like structure – that is of a permanent nature (not intended to be taken down that day or very soon). The Rabbis made a decree to prohibit even a temporary *ohel* so as not to come to (mistakenly) transgress the Torah prohibition against making a permanent *ohel*.

Our *gemara* teaches that opening a folding chair on Shabbat is permitted although this act creates a sheltered space underneath the seat part of the folding chair. It follows that in this case the prohibition against making an *ohel* on Shabbat does not apply. Does this mean that it is also permitted to open an umbrella on Shabbat? (Of course, it would not be permitted to carry the umbrella outside on Shabbat in a place where there is no *eiruv*.)

While a few *poskim* have permitted using an umbrella on Shabbat, the vast majority have prohibited opening it on Shabbat. And this is the widespread and accepted halacha. Why is opening an umbrella “worse” than opening a folding chair? One reason is that the *ohel* of the chair is meant to sit upon and not to serve as shelter for underneath it. Another reason is that the folding chair simply slides open and stays that way by its nature, whereas the rods of the umbrella need to be affixed open as an *ohel* by means of a mechanical process. (See Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 315:7 and the Bi’ur Halacha there, and Shemirat Shabbat K’Hilchata 24:15 and footnote 53 for a more detailed treatment of this subject.)

Regarding the question of whether one may use on Shabbat an umbrella that was open *before* Shabbat, there are also two main reasons to not allow this. One is the issue of *marit ayin* – that an onlooker may see this act and mistakenly think that it is permitted to open an umbrella on Shabbat. A second reason is that a person is considered as continuously making a new *ohel* as he walks, making a new protected space under the umbrella in any new space he occupies.

Shabbat 138a

Torah Together

Rabbi Nehorai would say, “Exile yourself to a place of Torah study; do not say that it will come to you, that your colleagues

will preserve it for you. Do not rely only on your own understanding.” (Avot 4:14)

This *mishna* is cited on our *daf* in relation to an unfortunate event involving Rabbi Elazar ben Aroch. Our *gemara* tells of a time when he travelled to a part of Eretz Yisrael renowned for its rich wines and relaxing mineral spas. Of course, Hashem created an amazing world filled with unfathomable beauty and pleasure. He created it all for us to enjoy in order to “open our hearts and minds” to grow close to Him and His Torah. However, excess luxury can make a negative impact on a person’s relationship with Hashem. Rabbi Elazar ben Aroch apparently indulged in worldly pleasures *slightly* more than was fit for a great Torah scholar of his stature, and, as a result, forgot his Torah knowledge. Fortunately, his Rabbi colleagues prayed for his spiritual wellbeing, and Hashem returned his vast Torah knowledge to him.

It is in this context that the *mishna* in Pirkei Avot is taught in our *gemara*, with special emphasis on the teaching that, “Your colleagues will preserve it (i.e. the Torah) for you.”

Many other interpretations and lessons have been learned from this *mishna* by the great Torah commentaries. One idea in particular is of great significance for any student of Torah study: The importance of being involved in Torah study together with a *chevruta* (study partner), a Yeshiva with many students, and with a Rabbi to guide each person’s Torah study. In fact, a person who studies Torah without others is in danger of incorrect and improper study, which can lead to thoughts, speech, and actions which are not in accordance with the true way of the Torah. (Elsewhere, in Talmud Tips for Masechet Maccot 10a, I have elaborated on this topic and related a powerful story involving Rav Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld that I have added to my “Recommended Reading List.”)

In this context, Rabbi Nehorai’s statement in Pirkei Avot reflects an explanation taught by Rav Ovadia from Bartenura, “the Rav.” The Rav writes that Rabbi Nehorai is warning every Torah student not to rely on his own intelligence for a true understanding of Torah, no matter how smart he is. Only the give-and-take of studying the Torah with others will lead one to be truly successful in achieving Torah wisdom.

▪ *Shabbat 147b*

Devorim

Questions

- How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
- How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
- Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
- Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
- What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People's "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
- Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
- What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
- "*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?
- Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
- Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
- Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
- Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
- Which city did Calev inherit?
- How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
- Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
- Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
- How did Hashem instill dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
- Why did Moshe fear Og?
- Who was instrumental in destroying the Refaim?
- What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary, unless otherwise stated.

Answers

- 1:1 Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
- 1:2 - 40 days.
- 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
- 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?"
- 1:6 - They received the Torah, built the *mishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
- 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
- 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
- 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.
- 1:15 - Men of understanding.
- 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzelofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
- 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
- 1:23 - Levi.
- 1:36 - Hebron.
- 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*.
- 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
- 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
- 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
- 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
- 3:11 - Amrafel.
- 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

Va'etchanan

Questions

1. "And I prayed to Hashem at that time." Why "at that time"?
2. What characteristic trait is represented by Hashem's "strong hand"?
3. What is *ha'levanon*?
4. What did Hashem tell Yehoshua after the battle of Ai?
5. What will happen if the Jewish People fail to keep the *mitzvot* properly?
6. How did the decree that Moshe not enter the Land affect him even in death?
7. What is hinted by the word *v'noshantem*?
8. Why were the Jewish People exiled two years earlier than indicated by Moshe's prophecy?
9. "You'll serve man-made gods." Is this literal?
10. Why is east called *mizrach*?
11. "Keep the Shabbat day as I have commanded you." When had Hashem previously commanded us to keep Shabbat?
12. Where did the Jewish People first receive the command to honor parents?
13. What is meant by "Hashem, our G-d, Hashem is One"?
14. What are two meanings of loving Hashem "with all your might"?
15. How well versed must one be in Torah?
16. Where does the word *totafot* come from?
17. Who is fit to swear in Hashem's name?
18. What does it mean that the Jews are the "smallest nation"?
19. When someone serves Hashem with love, how many generations receive reward?
20. Why are evil-doers rewarded in this world?

Answers

1. 3:23 - Defeating Sichon and Og, whose lands were part of *Eretz Canaan*, Moshe thought perhaps Hashem had annulled the vow against his entering the Land.
2. 3:24 - His willingness to forgive.
3. 3:25 - *Ha'levanon* means the *Beit Hamikdash*, which makes "white" (*lavan*), i.e., atones for, the Jewish People.
4. 3:28 - Yehoshua must lead the army into battle.
5. 4:9 - The non-Jewish world will regard them as foolish.
6. 4:22 - Even his remains weren't buried in the Land.
7. 4:25 - The *gematria* of *v'noshantem*, 852, hints at the number of years until the first exile.
8. 4:25 - So that the rest of the prophecy "that you shall utterly perish" would not be fulfilled.
9. 4:28 - No. It means you'll serve others who serve idols.
10. 4:41 - It's the direction from which the sun shines (*mizrach* means shining).
11. 5:13 - Before *Matan Torah*, at Marah. (*Shmot 15:25*)
12. 5:16 - At Marah. (*Shmot 15:25*).
13. 6:4 - Hashem, who is now our G-d, but not [accepted as] G-d of the other nations, will eventually be [accepted as] the one and only G-d.
14. 6:5 - 1) With everything you own. 2) Whether Hashem treats you with kindness or harshness.
15. 6:7 - If asked a Torah question, one should be able to reply quickly and clearly.
16. 6:8 - *Tot* means two in Caspi. *Fot* means two in Afriki. Together they allude to the four sections of tefillin.
17. 6:13 - One who serves Hashem and reveres His name.
18. 7:7 - *B'nei Yisrael* are the humblest nation.
19. 7:9 - 2,000.
20. 7:10 - So that they get no reward in the next world.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Remembering the Wall

The best way to remember the glory of the Holy Temple is to imagine ourselves reliving those times of old. Imagine walking past the Walls of Jerusalem (*Chomot Yerushalayim*) towards the Temple Mount. We can picture ourselves moving beyond the wall of the rampart (the *Cheil*) and into the Temple building. We can envision ourselves gazing upon the altar and seeing its bloodied walls (*Kir HaMizbeach*). But alas, the only remnant of that magnificent complex that still stands is the Western Wall, the *Kotel HaMaaravi*. In this essay we will explore six Hebrew words that mean “wall” (*chomah*, *kir*, *shur*, *cheil*, *chayitz*, and *kotel*) to better understand the nuances conveyed by each individual word.

As is his wont, Rabbi Shlomo of Urbino (a 16th century Italian scholar) writes in his work *Ohel Moed* (a lexicon of Hebrew synonyms) that the six words in question all mean the exact same thing. However, if we dig deeper into the roots of these words, we will see that there is more to it than that. Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) traces the words *cheil*, *chomah*, *kir*, *shur*, and *chayitz* to their respective two-letter roots. In doing so, he helps shed light on the nuances conveyed by these different words.

The word *chomah* appears more than 130 times in the Bible and always refers to a “wall” that surrounds a city or an important/large building. Rabbi Pappenheim (like Menachem Ibn Saruk) traces the word *chomah* to the two-letter root CHET-MEM, which, he explains, refers primarily to “heat.” As a derivative of this meaning, that biliteral root gives way to the word *milchamah* (“war”) — which is the culmination of a *heated* fight between multiple parties. Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim suggests that perhaps the word *chomah* is related to *milchamah*, as the main purpose of building a city wall is to protect its inhabitants from enemy warfare. Alternatively, Rabbi Pappenheim proposes that the word *chomah* is related to this two-letter root because the city wall might serve to block cool winds from entering, thus keeping the city warm.

Rabbi Eliezer ben Nossan (1090-1170), also known as the Raavan, notes that *chomah* is also related to “sight,” as the Aramaic root CHET-MEM-HEY refers to “seeing” (for example, see Targum Yonatan to Ex. 14:31). Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 49:22) makes a similar point.

[Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) in *HaKsav VeHaKabbalah* connects *chomah* to *cheimah* (“anger”) and *chamah* (“sun”), focusing on how a city wall sets a city apart from everything beyond its walls. Interestingly, Rabbi Hirsch (to Gen. 21:15) proposes that the word *cheimet* (“flask”) is related to *chomah* because a flask encloses and protect its contents, just like a city wall surrounds and protects a city.]

The word *kir* in the sense of “wall” appears about 74 times in the Bible. Most grammarians trace *kir* to the triliteral KUF-YOD-REISH, but some understand that the letter YOD is not part of the root. Rabbi Yehudah Aryeh of Carpentras (an 18th century grammarian and *dayan*) writes in *Ohalei Yehuda* that *kir* is related to *kor/kar* (“cold”), as it refers to a wall whose purpose is to provide shade and allow people to “cool off.”

Rabbi Pappenheim takes a different approach. He traces *kir* to the two-letter root KUF-REISH, which refers to the “strong impact” that results from extreme weight or velocity. One branch of words derived from this root are *korah* (“wooden beam”) and *tikrah* (“ceiling”), because the weight of the horizontal beams that comprise the ceiling weigh down on a building’s support, thus creating a point of impact. With this in mind, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *kir* (“wall”) refers to a vertically positioned wooden beam that bears the weight of a structure. From that original sense, *kir* was borrowed to refer to any sort of wall (i.e. even of stone or metal).

When Balaam foretells of Jewish ascendancy in Messianic times, he says that the Jews will *karkar* all the other nations of the world (Num. 24:17). Most commentators (Rashi and Ibn Ezra there, Ibn Janach in his *Sefer HaShorashim*) explain that this means that the Jews will “destroy” those nations, but they fail to explain the etymology of the word *karkar* and how it means “destroy.” Nevertheless, Radak in his *Sefer HaShorashim* writes that *karkar* derives from *kir*, explaining that this verb refers to “destroying a wall” (i.e. eliminating their means of protection). He compares *kir* to the noun *shoresh* (“root”), whose verb-form of *misharesh* means “to uproot.” Thus, *kir* can refer both to building a wall and also to tearing down a wall – two polar opposites. (Rabbi Hirsch (to Lev. 19:28, Num. 24:17) and Rabbi Yitzchok of Volozhin’s *Peh Kadosh* (to Num. 24:17) both offer comparable explanations).

The word *shur* in the sense of “wall” appears only in a handful of places in the Bible (Gen. 49:22, II Sam. 22:30, Ps. 18:30, and possibly Jer. 5:10 and Iyov 24:11). *Shur* (or more specifically, *shura*) appears more commonly in the Targumim as an Aramaic rendering of the Hebrew word *chomah* (Lev. 25:29, Joshua 2:15, 6:20, Lam. 2:8).

Rabbi Pappenheim traces the word *shur* to the two-letter SHIN-REISH, which refers to a “focal point.” He notes that the word *shar/sharir* (see Yechezkel 16:4, Prov. 3:8, and Iyov 40:16), which means “umbilical cord,” is the focal point that connects a fetus to its mother, and *shor* refers to an “ox,” whose main strength lies in its torso, thus placing a focus on its navel area. Based on this, Rabbi Pappenheim writes that the word *shoresh* (“root”) is also derived from this root because a plant’s roots are the focal point of its growth. Rabbi Pappenheim also explains that the word *yashar* (“straight”) derives from this root, as it denotes the fastest and shortest way to reach a specific focal point. To that effect, he notes that the word *shir* (“song”) relates to this root’s core meaning because it denotes a poetic composition that centers around one specific topic (“point”) and does not deviate from that theme.

Rabbi Pappenheim also writes that *shur* in the sense of “seeing” (see Num. 23:8, 24:27, Iyov 35:5) is also derived from SHIN-REISH because, unlike the other senses, the sense of sight can be directed to focus on a specific point and is not forced to take in everything at once. As corollaries to this meaning, *teshurah* (“tribute”) refers to a special gift given to somebody who greets (i.e. “sees”) a dignitary, *nesher* (“eagle”) refers to a bird who can “see” to far distances, and *sheirut* (“service”) refers to one who oversees the fulfillment of his master’s needs. (Alternatively, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that *sheirut* refers to “straightening” out the household affairs or remaining “straightforward” and steadfast to one’s boss’s wishes.)

When it comes to *shur* in the sense of “wall,” Rabbi Pappenheim offers two ways of connecting this word back to the primary meaning of SHIN-REISH. First, he proposes connecting *shur* with *yashar*, explaining that it refers specifically to a wall that is built as a straight line (as opposed to a *chomah* that encircles a city). Secondly, he writes that *shur* as “wall” is related to *shur* as “seeing,” because it denotes a tall wall that is used as a lookout post. In line with this latter supposition, Rabbi Dr. Ernest Klein (1899-1983) notes that both *shur* and *chomah* are words that bear the double meaning of “wall” and “seeing.” (See Rashi to Gen. 49:22 who seems unsure about whether *shur* there means “wall” or “seeing”. Interestingly, Radak writes that the word *shor* in Gen. 49:6 means “wall,” just as *shur* later in that chapter does.)

In discussing the word *cheil*, Rabbi Pappenheim explains that this word derives from the biliteral root CHET-LAMMED, which refers to “circular movement” and the “empty space” within a circumscribed circle. Accordingly, he understands that *cheil* refers to a short wall which surrounds a taller wall. The *cheil* thus creates an “empty” space between the two walls that serves as a sort of no man’s land. Rabbi Pappenheim further adduces his position from the Mishna (*Middos* 2:3) that refers to the space between the walls of the Temple Mount and the actual Temple building (i.e. the Women’s Courtyard) as the *cheil*.

The Talmud (*Pesachim* 86a) characterizes a *chomah* and a *cheil* as “a *shura* and a *bar-shura*” (“a wall and the son of a wall”). According to Rashi this means that *chomah* refers to an exterior wall while *cheil* refers to a shorter wall within the *chomah* (thus resembling a small son overshadowed by his bigger father). Radak seems unsure about whether *cheil* denotes a wall that is outside a *chomah* or inside a *chomah*. He then suggests that perhaps *cheil* does not even mean a “wall”, but rather it refers to a moat dug on the outskirts of a *chomah*.

The Hebrew word *chayitz* is a *hapax legomenon* because it only appears once in the entire Bible (Ezek. 13:10). Ibn Janach writes that the YOD is in place of an additional TZADI, so its root is really CHET-TZADI-TZADI, which means to “partition.” Rabbi Pappenheim similarly understands the word *chayitz* as an offshoot of the root CHET-TZADI, which means “dividing” or “splitting” something into two parts. Other words derived from this root include *chatzi* (“half”), *chazot* (“midday” or “midnight”), *chutz* (“outside/exterior”), and *cheitz* (“arrow”). Rabbi Pappenheim theorizes that *chayitz* specifically refers to a wall that divides one area/domain into two, and is thus synonymous with the Mishnaic Hebrew word *mechitzah* (see *Bava Basra* 1:1). That said, Rabbi Moshe Zacuto (1625-1697) in *Kol HaRamaz* (to *Sheviis* 3:8) writes that *chayitz* specifically denotes a “flimsy partition,” while *mechitzah* can apply to any sort of “partition” or “divider.”

Finally, we have arrived at the word *kotel*. This word appears only three times in the Bible: Once in Hebrew in Song of Songs 2:9, and twice in the Aramaic cognate *ktal* (Dan. 5:5, Ezra 5:8). The word *kotel* more commonly appears in the Targumim as an Aramaic rendering of the Hebrew word *kir* (see Targum to Lev. 1:15, 14:37, Joshua 2:15 and more), and Rabbi Ernest Klein actually connects *kotel* with the Akkadian *kutallu* ("backside").

To summarize: *chomah* = city wall or lookout post, *kir* = generic term for any structural wall, *cheil* = short wall, *chayitz* = flimsy partition, *mechitzah* = any partition, *shur* = Aramaic for *chomah*, *kotel* = Aramaic for *kir*.

For questions, comments, or to propose ideas for a future article, please contact the author at rklein@ohr.edu

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Devarim 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 into the Land of Israel. Moshe reviews the mitzvahs, 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*. The *parsha* 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.

Va'etchanan Overview

Although Moshe is content that Yehoshua will lead the nation, Moshe nevertheless prays to enter the Land of Israel in order to fulfill its special mitzvahs. Hashem refuses. Moshe reminds the Jewish People of the gathering at Sinai when they received the Torah, that they saw no visual representation of the Divine, but only the sound of words. Moshe impresses on the Jewish People that the Sinai revelation took place before an entire nation, not to a select elite, and that only the Jewish People will ever claim that Hashem spoke to their entire nation. Moshe specifically enjoins the *Bnei Yisrael* to "pass over" the Sinai event to their children throughout all generations.

Moshe predicts, accurately, that when the Jewish People dwell in Eretz Yisrael they will sin and be scattered among all the nations. They will stay few in number – but will eventually return to Hashem.

Moshe designates three "refuge cities" to which an inadvertent killer may flee. Moshe repeats the Ten Commandments and then teaches the *Shema*, the central credo of Judaism, that there is only One G-d. Moshe warns the people not to succumb to materialism, forgetting their purpose as a spiritual nation. The *parsha* ends with Moshe exhorting *Bnei Yisrael* not to intermarry when they enter Eretz Yisrael, as they cannot be a treasured and holy nation if they intermarry, and they would become indistinguishable from the other nations.

COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

BLESSING NINE : THAT SINKING FEELING

“Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who spreads out the earth upon the waters.”

At first glance, the language used for the ninth blessing is a bit of a mystery. “Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who spreads out the earth upon the waters.” There are two immediate questions that spring to mind. First, the most obvious question seems to be: What is the connection between this blessing and the rest of the Morning Blessings? We have seen the way that the blessings have developed up until now, with each blessing leading sequentially and logically to the next one. And now, all of a sudden this blessing seems to be a complete non-sequitur. Secondly, technically speaking, the earth is not spread out upon the waters. If anything, it is the opposite – the waters of the seas and the oceans sit *in* the earth, and not the other way around as the blessing states. What makes it even more puzzling is that the Rabbis teach that this blessing is a watershed (pun intended) moment in the recitation of the Morning Blessings.

Rabbi Eliyahu Kramer, 1720-1797, known as the Vilna Gaon (the Genius from Vilna), explains that the Morning Blessings up until now have taken us from our starting point of nothing more than being aware of the difference between good and evil (the first blessing) – to the point where we are fulfilling the commandments (the eighth blessing). But from here on, the blessings are going to focus on our *connection* to G-d, and the way that this connection has the capability to impact each person in a personal and fundamental fashion. Essentially, the first eight blessings are teaching us how to be *practicing* Jews, whereas the last seven blessings are designed to

convey to us how to become *believing* Jews. But where do we see this concept in the words of our blessing? And in what way do the waters of the world strengthen our belief in G-d?

More than two hundred years ago, the Vilna Gaon taught that at the center of the earth’s core is a liquid mass. This means that the weight of the whole world is supported by “water” (a generic term for any liquid). Only much later, in the twentieth century, did scientists corroborate his understanding, by discovering that the outer core of the earth’s center is a molten mass.

The Vilna Gaon explains that every moment of the world’s existence is dependent upon G-d. Without the Divine desire for its continuity, the enormous weight of the planet would cause the earth to sink in on itself and implode. According to the Vilna Gaon, both questions that we had at the beginning can be resolved with one answer. The peculiarity and the seeming inaccuracy of the language used for the blessing’s composition teach us that the world exists only at the behest of G-d.

Thus, having reached the point where we are certain of our ability to fulfill the *physical* commandments of G-d, we are now ready to embark on a voyage of exploration into our *spiritual commitment* to G-d. And the very first stop in our journey is a blessing which emphasizes that the continued existence of the world rests solely in the Hands of G-d. Every single moment of its being is entirely dependent upon G-d. And, consequently, without G-d’s continual Will that there be a world, the world would cease to exist.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Devarim

You Be the Judge of That

Moshe briefly chronicles the events of the years-long sojourn in the desert. The differences between the way the events are recorded as they occurred and as they are repeated are the subject of much commentary. Often, the versions supplement each other.

When Moshe describes his being overwhelmed at bearing the responsibility of the quarrelsome people, he recounts his instructions on appointing wise men who could also preside over disputes: *Give yourselves men, wise and discerning, and known to your tribes.* But when Yitro initially suggested this to Moshe, his instructions were quite different. The judges were to be *men of substance, G-d fearers, men of truth, who despise improper gain.*

When Yitro made the proposal to Moshe, he emphasized the importance of upright moral character, and only obscurely referenced their intellectual capability as “men of substance.” When Moshe instructed the people, he emphasized the intellectual abilities of the men to be chosen as judges, and encapsulated moral fitness by requiring that they be “known to your tribes” — known to be of upright character. Character is known only from their lives, and only to those who have associated with them. If Moshe were interested only in the

erudition of the candidates, he could have tested them himself. But to test their moral character, he needed the people to nominate them.

Moshe and Yitro did not disagree — both recognized that fearing G-d, loving truth, and hating improper gain were the most essential characteristics of a judge. However, they had different audiences. Yitro spoke to Moshe and could say it straight. Moshe addressed the masses. In the popular mind, the main virtue of a judge is his sharpness, erudition and wisdom. He thus began with that requirement and then added that the judges must also be a paragon of virtue.

In Jewish law, any three simple, honest men are considered fit to judge in ordinary civil matters. Since Torah knowledge was widespread in Israel, the assumption could be made that at least one of the three would be sufficiently versed in the knowledge of the law.

- Source: Commentary, Devarim 1:13

YIDDLE RIDDLE ANSWER FROM PAGE 1

Answer: The person honored with *hagbah* — lifting the Torah after it is read. This person lifts the Torah from the *bima* and sits in a chair. Then the Torah is bound and covered, and the person remains seated until the Torah is returned to the Holy Ark.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

Insights based on the writings of Rav S.R. Hirsch by Rabbi Yosef Herschman

Va'etchanan

Living Transmission

The granite foundation of our heritage for all generations is set forth in no uncertain terms. Moshe emphasizes that everything rests on one basic fact: the nation itself witnessed the Divine revelation of Torah. *Only take heed and guard your soul exceedingly, so that you do not forget the facts that your own eyes have seen, and so that they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life, and make them known to your children and your children's children.*

The historical fact of the Law Giving, as we experienced it with our own senses, is to remain alive forever in our hearts and minds, and it must be passed down to our children so that they too may take it to heart and pass it on to future generations.

There are two phenomena, each one unparalleled in its own right: A personal experience, perceived simultaneously by an entire nation is an unparalleled unique foundation for the historical fact of Revelation. The transmission of an entire nation from parents to children is a similarly unique unparalleled preservation of that experience. We are instructed here to “make it known” to our children – through the resoluteness and certainty born of our own personal experience. In this way, the authenticity remains even in the minds of the most remote descendants. Even the written record is authentic only because its contents have been handed down collectively by fathers to sons.

From this verse our Sages deduce a possible obligation to teach one's grandchildren Torah, in addition to one's children. Our Sages go on to praise this practice and declare that one who teaches his grandson Torah is considered as if he received it from Mount Sinai. The antecedent of “he”, however is unclear.

If “he” refers to the receiving grandson, the meaning is that what was received in the first generation shall be kept wholeheartedly by the receivers and then handed down to the next generation. It is as if that child himself stood at Mount Sinai.

If “he” refers to the father or grandfather, the meaning is that they are required to hand down the tradition with the clarity and conviction of people who themselves received the Torah at Mount Sinai.

Something else is also expressed here. When a person transmits the Torah to his children, he senses in his own life the faithfulness of the transmission. When he gives over what he learned from his own father, who learned it from his father, he is aware of the living authenticity of this tradition, reaching all the way back to Mount Sinai.

Notice how the Sages make this observation regarding a child who learns Torah from his grandfather and not a child who learns from his own father. When a child learns the same Torah from his grandfather's mouth which has already learned from his father's, he sees that his father teaches him only what he himself received from his father, and that child draws the conclusion that all of the fathers reaching back for generations handed down only what they received from their fathers. In this way, the transmission itself cloaks the content with authenticity, enabling each generation to be an effective link in the chain beginning at Mount Sinai and continuing until the end of generations.

- Source: Commentary, Devarim 4:9

SEASONS - THEN AND NOW

by Rabbi Chaviv Danesh

Harmony of a Nation - Overcoming Baseless Hatred (Part 4)

Ways to Overcome Baseless Hatred

Judging Favorably

One effective means for removing hatred from one's heart and restoring peace is through judging others favorably (see Rashi on Shabbat 127b "*hani nami bhanei shaichi*"). The halacha says that when one sees a G-d-fearing person do an act that can be interpreted as either a sin or not a sin, then it is a mitzvah to judge him favorably and make up in one's mind that the person indeed did not sin. This is true even if the act seems more likely to have been a sin. If there is no way to interpret it in a favorable light, one should make up in his mind that the person surely already regretted his actions and did *teshuva* for it.

If one saw a person who is mediocre in his Torah observance, then, if the act is *equally* likely to be a sin or not a sin, one must judge him favorably. If the act seems more likely to be a sin, then it is considered a good thing to judge him favorably even though one does not have to. If there is no way to interpret his action favorably, then he should think that perhaps the person already regretted his action and did *teshuva* for it (Chafetz Chaim 3:7, 4:4).

Regarding those who are not Torah observant in today's day and age, we mentioned in part two of this series that often it is because he is lacking basic Jewish education – and his sins are usually a result of ignorance and not of rebellion and malicious intent. In such a case, one is not allowed to hate him as a result of seeing him sin (see Rambam, Hilchot Mamrim 3:3, Chazon Ish, Orach Chaim 87:14 and Yoreh Deah 1:6, 2:16, 2:28, Marganita Tava, printed at the end of Sefer Ahavat Chessed). By contemplating on the above, one can remove hatred from one's heart by telling oneself that the person does not know better and does not have bad intent. By doing so, one will come to have compassion on him and hopefully even guide him in the right direction. A halachic authority should be contacted to determine who exactly falls under this category.

The question now is: How can one sincerely judge his fellow favorably and make up in his mind that he didn't sin when he saw him do an action that seems so likely to have been a transgression? One way to do this is by reminding oneself of cases where, even though one seemed sure of the malicious intent of his friend, it turned out that it was just a misunderstanding.

There is a story that I often contemplate when faced with such situations. There was a first grade teacher who was always very punctual for class. One morning, he was held up and came a few minutes late. He was silently regretting his own lateness when, to his chagrin, Shlomo, one of his students, ran over to him immediately, sticking his watch into the embarrassed teacher's face. The teacher reprimanded Shlomo and made a note to call his parents about the chutzpah displayed. On the telephone, Shlomo's mother explained, "Oh no! This was just a misunderstanding. You see, Shlomo just got a new watch and said he wanted you to be the first to see it..." (for more examples, see Shabbat 127a and Ahavat Yisrael, chapter 5). The situation above is actually very common. Often people think that they were wronged by their friend, when, in fact, the whole thing was a big misunderstanding.

Even in rare cases where it is not possible for someone to judge favorably, one can still minimize the hatred in his heart in other ways. For example, if his fellow did not speak to him in a befitting manner, he can think to himself that perhaps the person had a bad day, and, as a result of his angry mood, did not have full control over his actions. One can also consider the fact that his fellow may have wronged him accidentally, or maybe he already regretted his actions and was just too embarrassed to ask for forgiveness, or maybe his intentions were good even though the results were not (see Rashi on Shabbat 127b "*hani nami bhani shaichi*" and Ahavat Yisrael, chapter 5).

More generally, one can remind oneself that everyone has his own tests in life. Perhaps this person is not as sensitive

in one area, just as himself he may be lacking sensitivity in another. After all, everyone has their own unique weaknesses and strong points. With this perspective, one may be more understanding of the other's actions, and thereby reduce, or, even better, eradicate his personal hatred altogether.

As extra motivation to judge one's fellow favorably, it is worth mentioning the Gemara's teaching that judging one's fellow favorably is one of the unique things for which one receives reward both in this world and in the World to Come (see Shabbat 127a-127b).

Reprimanding

If the action of one's fellow was a sin, then one has the mitzvah to let him know that what he did was a transgression and reprimand him for his actions (Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 6:6-7; see also Chut Shani, Yom Hakipurim p. 122 who says that this mitzvah applies today as well). It can very well be that the offender did not know or realize that what he did was a transgression, and, upon knowing, will do *teshuva* for it and not repeat it in the future. Alternatively, perhaps he will explain how his actions were justified or misunderstood. Both of these

results will help to remove the hatred from one's heart (see Ohr Hachaim on Vayikra 19:17).

In cases like the above where one is obligated to judge one's fellow favorably, some hold that one does not have the mitzvah to reprimand him because he is obligated to assume that he didn't transgress or that he did *teshuva* for it already. Others, however, hold that even then one has the mitzvah of reprimanding (see Chafetz Chaim 4:4 and Be'er Mayim Chaim 18 there for a discussion). One should consult a competent halachic authority to judge and rule in each individual case.

When reprimanding, one must be very careful to do it in a sensitive and correct way so that it will be effective and so that one would not commit the serious transgression of embarrassing his fellow or hurting his feelings. In general, the mitzvah of reprimanding has many *halachot*, such as whom to reprimand, when and where to do it, how to do it, etc. In fact, there are cases where one should not reprimand at all. Therefore, before doing it, one must thoroughly learn the *halachot* of reprimanding and discuss the individual case with a competent halachic authority.

Harmony of a Nation - Overcoming Baseless Hatred (Part 5)

Relating One's Feelings

Often when people can't rid themselves of their inner hatred for their fellow, they act outwardly as if nothing happened, even though they are burning with hatred on the inside. There are many reasons why people do this. Sometimes it is because they want to avoid uncomfortable confrontation. At other times it is because they do not want to expose their pettiness by showing that such a small thing hurt them so much. There are also times when they do not want to reveal their true feelings because, then, their friend may apologize, and deep down they are not ready to forgive (see Alei Shor, vol. 2 p. 240). There are even times when people do this with very pure intentions, thinking that they are doing a mitzvah by "putting on a nice face" to the person who did them wrong. However, the halacha says otherwise.

The halacha dictates that after one tries everything mentioned in the previous articles (including reprimanding where the halacha calls for it) and realizes that he cannot rid himself of his hatred, he should let the other person know about his ill feelings towards him. This can often lead to reconciliation through: 1) his fellow

apologizing for what he did, 2) his fellow explaining the rationale behind his actions, 3) his fellow showing how it was all a big misunderstanding. Even if none of those scenarios happen, one still *gains* by letting the other know about his feelings. This is so because there are opinions that teach that if one informs his fellow about his feelings, he is no longer committing the prohibition of hating another person in his heart, because it is no longer in one's heart but rather out in the open (see Rambam, Sefer Hamitzvot, *mitzvot lo taaseh* 302, Hilchot De'ot 6:5, Chafetz Chaim, *Lavin* 7, Be'er Mayim Chaim and Kehillot Yaakov, Erachin 4).

According to these opinions, the Torah specifically warned about hatred in the heart more than revealed hatred, because in many ways hatred that is in the heart is more harmful. One reason is because, as mentioned above, when someone reveals his feelings, it can often lead to reconciliation, either between themselves or through a third party who will try and make peace between them. However, when one keeps it in his heart, others may not even know that there is animosity between them, and, therefore would not even try to make peace between them

(Peleh Yoetz, “*sinah*”). Also, at times his fellow either would not know that he did something wrong, or even if he did, he would think that his friend already forgave him and will therefore not make an effort to appease him.

Another reason why hatred in the heart may be worse is that when hatred is kept in the heart it grows bigger and bigger, while when it is revealed it is therapeutically diminished (see Yad Haketana, Hilchot De’ot 6:4).

Furthermore, when the hatred is not revealed, his fellow will not try to protect himself from possible revenge from him because he does not even know that his friend is angry at him. At times, he may even put his full trust in him, leaving him vulnerable to maltreatment. But when the hatred is revealed, his fellow will have his guard up, which can possibly prevent vengeful harm that may be coming his way (see Rabbeinu Yonah on Mishlei 3:29 and Chafetz Chaim, *lavin* 7, Be’er Mayim Chaim).

Obviously, one must be very careful in how he relates his feelings. Often, the way it is presented makes all the difference in whether it will lead to reconciliation or the opposite. It is therefore worthwhile to seek the advice of a competent halachic authority on how to go about this.

It must also be pointed out that this must only be a last resort, because, firstly, there are opinions that hold that one is committing the transgression of baseless hatred even when he shows it openly (see Ramban on Vayikra 19:17, see also Kehillot Yaakov, Erachin 4, for a discussion of the opinions). Furthermore, even according to the opinions that hold otherwise, one should still try to work on letting go of his hatred, because even though by revealing his feelings he does not transgress the prohibition of hating his fellow in his heart, he still transgresses the mitzvahs to not take revenge, to not bear a grudge, and to love one’s fellow as oneself. But according to these opinions it is still worthwhile to let his fellow know how he feels, because it is better to commit these transgressions than violating the more serious offense against hating one’s fellow in his heart (see Rambam, Sefer Hamitzvot, *lo taaseh* 302).

Personal Considerations

Other than the fact that baseless hatred is a serious transgression, there are also other personal considerations that can push one to rid himself of baseless hatred.

The Gemara says that the sin of baseless hatred causes quarrels to increase in one’s house, it causes one’s wife to have miscarriages and it causes one’s little children to die young (Shabbat 32b). (It is beyond the scope of this article to address why these things happen as a result of baseless hatred. The reader is encouraged to look at the commentaries for explanations of why this is so.)

Elsewhere, the Gemara says that whoever is not exacting with his fellow and does not try to repay him measure for measure for the pain that he caused him, Hashem also acts that way with him and is not exacting with him to repay him measure for measure for his own transgressions (Rosh Hashanah 17a, according to Rashi).

It was mentioned in a previous section that one of the ways to overcome baseless hatred is by judging one’s fellow favorably. With regard to this, the Gemara says that judging one’s fellow favorably is one of the unique things for which one receives reward both in this world and in the World to Come (see Shabbat 127a).

Building the Beit Hamikdash

We *daven* and look forward to the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash all the time. If permission were granted from Hashem to rebuild the Beit Hamikdash, every person would surely offer anything he could to make it happen. The Chafetz Chaim explains that the truth of the matter is that Hashem is offering us the opportunity to rebuild the Beit Hamikdash, through fixing the sin of baseless hatred that caused its destruction (Yoma 9b, Shemirat Halashon vol. 2 *perek* 7, Ahavat Yisrael, Chapter 2, see also Peleh Yoetz, “*sinah*”). As it says in Sefer Yeshayahu: The hand of Hashem is not short from saving, and His ear is not hard of hearing; rather, it is your sins that are separating you from your G-d, and your transgressions have caused Him to hide His face from you and from hearing you (Yeshayahu 59:1-2). Perhaps one big way to push ourselves to overcome baseless hatred is through reflecting on the fact that through removing the hatred we directly contribute to the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash. May we merit doing complete *teshuvah* and thereby contribute to the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash speedily in our days.

*Questions and comments can be sent to the author at chaviwdanesh@gmail.com

The students, alumni, staff and events of Ohr Somayach

by Rabbi Shlomo Simon

Harav Hagaon Rav Avraham Mordechai Isbee, *zt"l*

The Gemara in Rosh Hashana 18b says in regards to *Tzom Gedaliah*:

“The death of *Tzadikim* is equal to the burning of the Temple.”

The death of the great *Tzaddik*, Rav Avraham Mordechai Isbee during the Three Weeks leading up to the commemoration of the destruction of the Holy Temple is certainly an illustration of the *Gemara*’s dictum.

The first time I heard of Rav Avraham Mordechai Isbee was in Telshe Yeshiva in Cleveland in the 1970s. The Roshei Yeshiva, the *Kollel yungerleit* and the alumni, when telling stories of illustrious *talmidim of the Yeshiva*, mentioned him first. I thought at the time that if someone were to compile a “Hall of Fame” of the Telshe Yeshiva alumni, Rav Isbee would be at or near the top. He entered Telshe at the age of 12 and stayed for 17 years. The stories of his *hasmada* were legendary. It seemed he never slept, except perhaps for the occasional times when he would put his head down on his *shtender* and appear to doze off, and then wake up after a few minutes to resume learning. His finger never left its place on the page so that he never had to search for his exact place.

The next time I heard of him was when I came to Ohr Somayach. He was a *rebbe* here. I was in Rav Moshe Carlebach’s *shiur* (may he have a *refuah shleima* very soon), and he mentioned that even as a young boy in Detroit, Rav Isbee was special. They were in the same class in the day school in Detroit. He remembers that in the first grade when they were learning Chumash, the *rebbe* would ask a question and the inevitable answer was, “Morty says that Rashi says....” To his classmates, he was the *Gadol Hador*.

He had been a *magid shiur* in the early years of the Ohr Somayach Yeshiva in Jerusalem. By the time I came in 1986, he was learning in the Beis Midrash in the afternoons and giving weekly *shiurim* in Chumash, Navi and *hashkafa*. One could ask him any question on any *mesechta* in *Shas* — not just the one which the Yeshiva was learning.

Rav Yehuda Samet, an early *chavrusah* of Rav Isbee in Israel, told me that Rav Isbee took the monthly *Mifal HaShas* test every 30 days on 30 *blatt* of *Gemara* since its inception by the Klausenberger Rebbe in 1982. He testified that Rav Isbee knew *Shas* intimately. He also recalls a parlor meeting about 50 years ago in Mattersdorf, where they lived, for a new *kollel* that would be learning halacha. Even though he had little money, Rav Isbee was the largest donor. Rav Samet asked him why he gave so much. His answer was that since he spends all day learning *Gemara*, *Rishonim* and *Achronim*, he had little time for halacha, and that the *kollel* would give him a *chelek* in halacha.

Rav Moshe Newman relates the following story: “Sometimes I had the *chutzpah* to ask Rav Isbee if he would say a *chabura* to a certain group of *avreichim* who learned together *b'chevrusa* in the afternoons. He always agreed, with much humility. Once, after we planned a hastily arranged *chabura* to start in ten minutes, I told

the other *talmidim* in which room we would meet, and we would get ready to go together. It was on a complex subject, for me at least. I wasn't sure it was a fair request, and I noticed that Rav Isbee had started pacing, in thought, in the Beis Hamidrash, almost immediately after he agreed to teach us. I was concerned I had been out of order and that the request was perhaps "too much" – and that maybe he was trying to think of what he would say to us. I immediately expressed this concern to Rabbi Yisrael Rakovsky, a *magid shiur* at the time who later became Rosh Yeshiva at Ohr Somayach in Monsey. He laughed, saying that Rav Isbee didn't need to think of things to say. He was pacing and carefully deciding about what things to leave out and not to say! He could speak to us on that topic for hours and days and weeks, and more, without lacking beautiful *divrei Torah* on that topic – or on any other.

I was once at a *pidyon haben* for the son of a friend of mine, Reb Binyamin Wolpin. Rav Isbee was the Kohen. He was also related to Rabbi Wolpin's wife, so it was a family gathering. Rav Isbee told a story about his grandfather, who was sent to America by the Gerrer Rebbe in Europe, the Sfas Emes. In the 1880s the American Jewish community, especially outside of New York, was becoming rapidly secularized. The influence of the Reform movement was strong and the obstacles to making a living while still keeping Shabbos were almost insurmountable. The Sfas Emes decided to send one of his closest *talmidim*, Rav Isbee's grandfather, to Detroit to try to strengthen the *frum* community there. He didn't want to go. How could he leave the holiness of the Rebbe's court in Ger and go to the wasteland that was America, where almost every Jew became *frei* or his children became *frei*? The Rebbe told him not to worry, and gave him a special *beracha*: "Not only will your children and future descendants stay *frum*, but they will all be *talmidei chachamim*." More than one hundred years later, said Rav Isbee, one could see that the *beracha* was still being fulfilled.

Rav Isbee suffered for many years from a debilitating illness, to which he finally succumbed. He fought mightily and with *simchas hachaim*, to overcome its effects. He would give the *Shabbos HaGadol* and *Shabbos Teshuvah drashot* in the Ohr Somayach Beis Midrash during all of the years that I was in the Yeshiva. Watching him speak from the heart with such *hislahavus*, love and *emunah* was a lesson in itself. No one could be in his presence without feeling his holiness. He was an inspiration for all of our staff and *talmidim*. The loss is great, like the burning of our Holy Temple. May his memory be a blessing for all of us, and, as we hope to see the Temple speedily rebuilt in our days, may we also see HaKohen, Rav Isbee, doing its *avoda*.

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OHR SOMAYACH INTERNATIONAL PRESENTS:



A TISHA B'AV EVENT

BUILDING WITH TEARS

WED NIGHT / THURS JULY 29/30

RAV NOTA
SCHILLER

RAV YITZCHAK
BREITOWITZ

RAV MOSHE
SHTERNBUCH

RAV BINYOMIN
CARLEBACH

RABBI NACHSHON
SCHILLER

RABBI DOVID
GOTTLIEB

RABBI AVRAHAM
ROCKMILL

RABBI YAACOV ASHER
SINCLAIR

RABBI DOVID
KAPLAN

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