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**ISRAEL
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עַל אֵלֶּה אֲנִי בּוֹכֶיָה...









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Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

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PARSHA WEEKLY

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'The Jews will Tear Themselves Apart'

Vespasian, Nasrallah & the Scourge of Senseless Hatred



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

Hassan Nasrallah, the chief of Hezbollah's Terror organization is committed to Israel's destruction. He is well known to follow Israeli news and trends very closely. In a speech in February, commenting on the great current divisiveness in Israel, he quoted President Isaac Herzog, who had warned that Israel risked being torn apart if the government and opposition fail to engage in dialogue to reach a compromise. He also quoted many Israeli leaders and previous prime ministers talking of civil war:

"For the first time since the creation of [Israel], we hear speeches from the entity's president and former prime ministers Lapid, Bennett, Olmert and Barak along with former defense ministers and generals who talk about civil war and bloodshed and say that there is no solution to the challenges posed by the new government." He ends with a prayer, "G-d willing, Israel will not reach its 80th birthday."

Nasrallah points to internal strife in Israel as the greatest chance of, G-d Forbid, its destruction.

G-d is a Roman General

One of the most shocking texts I have encountered regarding the extent of Jewish divisiveness can be found in Josephus's account of a conversation regarding

Roman military tactics during the siege of Jerusalem. It involves a dispute between Roman military generals and Vespasian – the head of the Roman Army – who would soon become emperor and be replaced by his son Titus.

His general's argued that the internal strife weakened the Jews and presented an opportunity to attack and destroy the city as follows:

'And now all the rest of the commanders of the Romans deemed this sedition among their enemies to be of great advantage to them; and were very earnest to march to the city: and they urged Vespasian as their lord and general in all cases, to make haste; and said to him, that "The providence of G-d is on our side, by setting our enemies at variance against one another: that still the change in such cases may be sudden, and the Jews may quickly be at one again: either because they may be tired out with their civil miseries, or repent them of such doings."¹

Vespasian's reply to his soldiers highlights the tragic situation amongst the Jews and how the best Roman strategy is to simply to sit back and watch the Jews destroy each other without the Romans having to fire a shot:

'But Vespasian replied, that "They were greatly mistaken in what they thought fit to be done ... without considering

what was for their advantage, and for their security. For that if they now go and attack the city immediately, they shall occasion their enemies to unite together; and shall convert their force, now it is in its height, against themselves. But if they stay a while they shall have fewer enemies; because they will be **consumed** in this sedition. **That G-d acts as a general of the Romans better than he can do; and is giving the Jews up to them,** without any pains of their own; and granting their army a victory, without any danger. That therefore it is their best way, **while their enemies are destroying each other with their own hands,** and falling into the greatest of misfortunes, which is that of sedition, to sit still as spectators of the dangers they run into; rather than to fight hand to hand with men **that love murdering, and are mad one against another.** But if any one imagines that the glory of victory, when it is gotten without fighting, will be more insipid; let him know this much, that a glorious success quietly obtained, is more profitable than the dangers of a battle... **but that the Jews are vexed to pieces every day by their civil wars, and dissensions;** and are under greater miseries than if they were once taken, could be inflicted on them by us. Whether therefore any one hath regard to what is for our safety, he ought to suffer these Jews to destroy one another: or whether he hath regard to the greater glory of the action, we ought by no means to meddle with these men now they are afflicted with a distemper at home. For should we now conquer them, it would be said the conquest was not owing to our bravery, but to their sedition.”

Shocking beyond words. Granted the situation was painfully desperate – a lengthy siege and threat of annihilation. Yet instead of it bringing everyone together, it tore them apart.

Sectarianism and Sinat Chinam

Famously, our sages see senseless hatred as one of the salient causes for the destruction of the Second Temple. What is often missed is the context of how this is mentioned:

*“During the Second Temple period, the people occupied themselves with Torah, Mitzvot and lovingkindness. Why was the Temple destroyed? Because they acted with Sinat Chinam – senseless hatred.”*²

How is this possible to be considered religiously devout in terms of occupation with Torah and observance of the commandments and even excel at loving kindness and yet somehow also hate people at the same time? Is it really possible to love and hate people all at once?

The famed Rosh Yeshiva of Volozhin – the Netziv – suggests an answer: The people being hated were not the same ones being showered with lovingkindness: *“As a result of the senseless hatred in their hearts that one harbored for the other, they suspected all those who did not follow their path as a G-d-fearing Jew of being a Sadducee and a heretic.”*³

If you were part of my community of believers and followed my customs you were accepted, but if not, you were rejected. If you were part of my side of the political and religious divide, you were loved, if not you were demonized and derided.

Sectarianism reigned supreme prior to the destruction. There were many distinct sects – Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, Zealots and Sicarii – and more factions within these sects. If you were part of my faction, specific ideological group and community, you were worthy of endless kindness. But if you were part of another sect whose values and beliefs threatened mine, you were scorned and hated. There was no middle road. Only black and white. Either you’re ideologically with me or against me.

Thus the hatred and infighting in Jerusalem were so disastrous on the eve of destruction that Josephus describes the society as “a great body torn in pieces.”⁴

Demonization and the Sons of Darkness

How do disagreements deteriorate into such deep hatred?

In the War Scroll, found near the Dead Sea in the caves of Qumran, we can detect an answer. The text – probably written by the Essenes – describes its followers as “the

sons of light” and all others (including fellow Jews) as “the sons of darkness.”

This changes the rules of discourse.

We are no longer debating views or ideas. We are delegitimizing the other as a person. It is no longer about perspectives but about the person – vicious ad hominem attacks. It’s no longer about right and wrong, but about you and me. All who think and act like me are ‘good’ and bring spiritual light and morality to the world and all who disagree are ‘bad’ and immoral, invoking spiritual darkness. When I am absolutely right and you are absolutely wrong; when the other is **totally** disqualified and seen as part of ‘the dark side,’ we are treading dangerously close to the abyss of senseless hatred.

The issues roiling Israel at the moment have become so divisive that many on each side see the other as ‘sons of darkness’ – negative, nefarious and even evil. It has become for many a zero sum game. A black and white issue with no gray. No nuance – only right and wrong.

We are so blessed to have a Jewish sovereign state for 75 years now for the first time in two millennia. Just as we have always managed, with *Siyata DeShmaya*, to find ways to navigate together our way out of all quagmires, so too will we, *Be’ezrat Hashem*, find a way this time as well.

It is incumbent on us all to do all we can not to fan the flames of demonization and hatred but to strive for more understanding, empathy and unity.

1. Wars of the Jews, Book 4, chapter 6.

2. Yoma 9b.

3. Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin, HaEmek Davar, introduction to the book of Genesis.

4. The Jewish War, Book 5:1.

PERSONAL GROWTH

Are We Alone?



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Eicha Yashva Badad

E*icha yashva badad?* – Megilat Eicha opens by expressing surprise at Yerushalayim and the Jewish people's loneliness and isolation. This loneliness is the central theme of the entire first *perek* which describes how the city that was once full of people has become like a widow,¹ all her friends have betrayed her and become her enemies,² and she has become as a *nida*.³ The *perek* emphasizes four times⁴ that no one cares enough to even offer consolation. It is this **that** Yirmiya cries for – *'Al eileh ani bochiya eini eini yarda mayim ki rachak mimeni menachem meishiv nafshi.'*

Loneliness in the Torah

The difficulty of loneliness is already described by the Torah. Moshe references it in the *pasuk* that links Eicha to Parshat Devarim (the *parsha* always read the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av) – *'Eicha esa levadi.'*⁵ The burden of Jewish leadership is difficult; carrying it alone is unbearable.

In fact, Hashem identifies loneliness as what makes man incomplete as single – *'lo tov heyot ha'adam levado.'*⁶ When we are alone is also when we are most vulnerable. The Torah emphasizes that Yaakov Avinu was attacked when he was alone – *Vayikateir Yaakov levado, vayeiveik ish imo.'*⁷

Am Levadad Yishkon

All this having been said, being alone is not always a bad thing. Bilam's blessings include a description of the Jewish People as *'am levadad yishkon.'*⁸ This description is a blessing because our separation from other nations helps us focus on our relationship with Hashem.⁹

Loneliness makes real relationships possible. Love builds off two people's loneliness and crystallizes into marriage when

the two commit to one another with the exclusion of all others. Similarly, a meaningful relationship with Hashem hinges on people feeling lonely without Him. *Dveikut*¹⁰ with another is only possible when one feels for no one else.

These kinds of relationships help people find true and meaningful support and strength. Yaakov Avinu's relationship with Hashem helped him vanquish the mysterious *'ish*¹¹ and we – his descendants – learn from him¹² how to find similar celestial inspired strength – *Vayivateir Yaakov levado* – *Vinisgav Hashem levado.'*¹³ When we live this way, we and Hashem share a mutually exclusive relationship – alone with each other. This relationship, described in Shirat Haazinu¹⁴ as *'Hashem badad yanchenu v'ein imo eil neichar,'*¹⁵ allows for true security – *'Vayishkon Yisrael betach badad.'*¹⁶

The Eicha Call to Hashem

Appreciating this, Megilat Eicha channels its sense of loneliness towards a relationship with Hashem. *Perek Aleph* ends with a call to Hashem – *'I called for my lovers but they deceived me... See Hashem for I am in distress... There is none to comfort me.'*¹⁷

Perek Bet emphasizes that Hashem is the one who has brought the suffering. It is His way of calling us to turn to him. *'Hashem has done that which He devised. He has fulfilled His word that He commanded in days of old.. Arise, cry out in the night: In the beginning of the watches pour out your heart like water opposite Hashem's face...'*¹⁸

The pivotal personal *Perek Gimmel* recognizes that it is Hashem who has isolated us from the rest of the world to focus us on our relationship with Him. Suffering can sometimes be good and helpful for a man who needs to be alone so he can

reflect and appreciate the relationships he has abused.¹⁹ This reflection leads to a return to Hashem later in the *perek* – *'Let us search and try our ways and turn back to Hashem. Let us lift up our heart with our hands to G-d in the heavens. We have transgressed and have rebelled...'*²⁰

Am Yisrael has gotten the message. Hashem orchestrated the mass betrayal and isolation so that we would appreciate the need to turn and return to Him. Having done so, Megilat Eicha concludes with our call to Hashem to return us to Him – *'Hashiveinu Hashem eilecha venashuva, chadeish yameinu kikedem'*

1. Eicha 1:1. See also 5:3
2. Ibid 1:2, 19.
3. Ibid 1:8,
4. Ibid 1:2, 9, 16, 21.
5. Devarim 1:12.
6. Bereishit 2:18.
7. Ibid 32:25.
8. Bamidbar 23:9.
9. See Heimek Davar of the Netziv (et al) who speaks, in this context, about the importance of Jews retaining their unique distinct identity and not assimilating.
10. Note that this term appears in the Torah only in reference to the relationships between man and wife (Bereishit 2:24) and between man and Hashem (Devarim 4:4, 10:20, 11:22, 13:5, 30:20 etc.).
11. See Seforno 32:26 based on Shir Hashirim Rabba 3:9
12. See Rashi Bamidbar 23:9 based on the targumim.
13. See Bereishit Rabba 77:1.
14. Devarim 32:12.
15. See Ibn Ezra (et al) [based on the Targumim (et al)] who explains that the phrase can apply to how both Hashem and the Jewish people relate to one another.
16. Ibid 33:28. With the relationship with Hashem available to all of us at all times, no Jew is ever alone.
'מנין שאפילו אחד שיושב ועוסק בתורה שהקדוש ברוך הוא קובע לו שכר, שנאמר ישב בדד וידם כי נטל עליו (אבות ג:ב).'
17. Eicha 1:19-21.
18. Ibid 2:17-19.
19. Ibid 3:27-28.
20. Eicha 3:40-42.

Cries, Crisis and Conflict: Rabbinic Responses to Churban



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

Voices of conflicting political leadership resound throughout the *aggadot* of the second *Churban*. In contrast, the Sages of the time, dependent upon their patrons for survival, were relatively silent. Three voices of religious leadership, however, address the impending destruction of the second *Beit HaMikdash*, each with a different perspective and response to times of crisis.

The first is the passive tone of Rabbi Zecharia Ben Avkolus (Gittin 55b-56a). Rabbi Yochanan, living over a century after the destruction, initially “blames” Kamtza and Bar Kamtza for the destruction of Yerushalayim, yet concludes: “The humility of Rabbi Zecharia ben Avkolus destroyed our Temple, burned our Sanctuary and exiled us from our Land.”

The Rabbis had wanted to either offer a blemished animal brought by Bar Kamtza to preserve good relations with the authorities, or to kill the informer.

Rabbi Zecharia ben Avkolus said to them: “People will then think that blemished animals may be offered upon the altar... People will say that anyone who places a blemish on a sacrifice should be killed.” So the animal was not sacrificed and the informer was not killed. In retrospect, Rabbi Yochanan realized how drastic times require drastic messages from religious leaders and not a response of humility.

The second voice is that of Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen who, witnessing the murder of a *kohen* during *Mikdash* worship, stood on the stairs of the *Beit HaMikdash* and cried that all the people and the *kohanim* were culpable (Tosefta Yoma 1). He deplored Miriam, the daughter of wealthy Nakdimon, who demanded a ridiculously high dowry, and later witnessed her during

the siege of Yerushalayim eating fodder from the hooves of horses (Pesikta Rabbati 21). He bemoaned the fate of Marta, the daughter of Baythus, who insisted that her servants roll out carpets for her on Yom Kippur so that her feet would not be soiled, only to eventually be dragged through the streets, tied to the tails of horses (Eicha Rabbah 1:47).

Rabbi Tzadok did not respond with silence or passivity; he remained with the people in Yerushalayim and witnessed their moral and physical decay. He admonished the people and priests and observed fasts for 40 years to prevent the *Beit HaMikdash* from being destroyed. He remained hopeful of repentance without ignoring the apparent atrocities.

The most lasting and resounding voice of religious leadership is that of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai. Rabbi Yochanan harshly rebuked Sadducee distortion of *Halacha* and the brutal methods of burning storehouses by the Biryoni sect. Unlike Rabbi Tzadok, who still hoped for the nation’s repentance and restored peace, Rabbi Yochanan found the anger of the besieged populace to be intolerable and began planning for the possibility of destruction.

After surreptitiously escaping the Roman siege and greeting Vespasian as “king,” the new emperor granted Rabbi Yochanan his requests: “Give me Yavneh and its wise men, and the family chain of Rabban Gamaliel and physicians to heal R. Tzadok” (Gittin 56a-b).

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai mourned upon hearing of the *Churban*, but simultaneously anticipated and prepared for a new way of life that would transcend the absence of the *Mikdash* – “We have a form of atonement just like it [the *Mikdash*].

And what is it? Acts of kindness” (Avot DeRabbi Natan 4:5).

He re-established the Sanhedrin in Yavneh and enacted laws to replace animal sacrifice with prayer. He instituted that certain practices of the *Beit HaMikdash* continue, to remember it as it once stood, while also establishing means to recall its destruction.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai’s legacy of leadership was perpetuated by his students, who adopted his outlook of preparing for the future in times of distress. For example, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Chananya dealt with ascetics who refused to eat meat and drink wine after the destruction by reminding them that we must not overly mourn. Inspired by his mentor, he recommended that we engage in practices of mourning only when we are most prone to forgetting Yerushalayim, i.e. at joyous occasions (Bava Batra 60b).

The subsequent generation in Yavneh, led by Rabbi Akiva, began the next stage of preparation – anticipating the eventual return to and rebuilding of Yerushalayim (Makkot 24b).

Polarization and conflict may depress and blur our understanding of the present, yet do not absolve us from taking responsibility and providing a trajectory of religious-national survival for the future. May religious leadership’s voices of introspection together with hope for *Mikdash* restoration resound and awaken us to react, repent and properly plan for the rebuilding of a “just and righteous” society in Tzion.

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek

Question: In many synagogues, the Bima, the platform for reading the Torah, is higher than the floor. Often people who have trouble walking are not able to climb onto the Bima without help, and in some cases they are not able to go up to the Bima at all. When a handicapped man is called to the Torah, are we allowed to put a small table next to the Bima for the Torah scroll and read the Torah from there?

Answer:

Moving a Torah Scroll to Show Respect for a Person

The Mishna describes the way the High Priest read the Torah on Yom Kippur:

“The High Priest would come to read... The Chazzan of the community took the Torah scroll and gave it to the head of the community, who gave it to the deputy, who gave it to the High Priest. The High Priest stood up, took hold of it, and read from the Torah” [Yoma 7:1].

The Talmud Yerushalmi questions this Mishna. How can we bring the Torah scroll to the High Priest, instead of having him go to the place where the Torah is? The answer is:

“Since they are great men, the Torah is lifted up through them.”

That is, since these are great people, the Torah becomes more exalted even when it is brought to them. Based on this approach, the Mordechai writes that a Torah scroll should not be brought to a prison in order to read for the prisoners, because a Torah scroll should only be moved for especially exalted people (Rosh Hashanah 710).

The Talmud Yerushalmi does add that a Torah can also be moved in honor of the Reish Galuta (the head of the Diaspora), since traditionally he is a descendant of

King David. Based on this, the Or Zarua concludes that if a Torah can be moved to show respect for the Reish Galuta, it stands to reason that it can also be moved for a person who is not able to leave his home. (Volume 1, Keriyat Shema 9).

Based on the approach of the Or Zarua, we can say that in any case when the Torah is to be moved not as a sign of disrespect but to fill a need there will not be any problem. This implies that taking a Torah off the main Bima to a nearby table is permitted. However, the Shulchan Aruch is stringent, based on the opinion of the Mordechai (Orach Chaim 135:14), and the same is implied by the RAMA (ibid). We therefore cannot rely on the opinion of the Or Zarua for our purpose.

Other Reasons to be Lenient

Even though the Shulchan Aruch seems to prohibit putting the Torah on a small table next to the Bima, we can suggest some reasons why this may be permitted after all.

(1) The sources we looked at above all seem to involve removing a Torah scroll from the synagogue. However, in our case we want to move the Torah around inside the synagogue. Many rabbis allow a lenient approach of moving a Torah from one room to another within the synagogue building (see: Tzitz Eliezer 17:12; Yavia Omer 9, Orach Chaim 15). And we can assume that even those who are stringent will allow moving the Torah from one place to another within the same room.

(2) In our case we indeed want to move the Torah closer to the person, but the one who has been called up to the Torah is also expending a great effort and comes towards the Torah scroll. Perhaps because of this we can indeed be lenient. (This might be compared to the common

custom where the chazzan carries the Torah scroll to all the congregants so that they can kiss it, even though this substantially increases the route of the Torah when it is taken from the Holy Ark to the Bima.)

(3) From the words of the Talmud Yerushalmi quoted above, we might be able to derive a principle: Whenever moving the Torah scroll will result in a showing of greater respect for the Torah, it is permitted to move it. If, as in our case, the person called to the Torah is handicapped and finds it hard to move, and the congregation is interested in calling him to the Torah, such a move can bring the Torah and its values to a more exalted state, because it is clear to every observer that the Torah cares for a person who is handicapped and can be moved for his benefit (this opinion might differ from one congregation to another and from place to place).

(4) The RAMA rules (Orach Chaim 139:3) that even though the one called to the Torah must read together with the reader (because if he does not his blessings will have been recited in vain), it is possible to call one who is blind or ignorant, even though this is not a good practice. Biur Halacha explains (141) that the reason is that “if they are never called at all great shame will be caused, and this may also lead to disputes.” From this we can perhaps also reach some conclusions in our case: If a refusal to move the Torah from the Bima means that a handicapped person will never be called to the Torah, thereby shaming him and possibly leading to controversy, we should take a lenient approach and do whatever we can so that the man will be called to the Torah.

Summary and Conclusions

In practice, the best solution is to take

Continued on next page

על סף הכניסה

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



עס סיומו של ספר במדבר, הסתיים סיפור קורות עם ישראל במדבר, לפני הכניסה לארץ. כעת הם עומדים בערבות מואב, על סף הכניסה לארץ, ונפרדים ממנהיגם הדגול – משה. הכניסה אל הארץ מהווה שינוי מהותי בחייו של העם, וגם הפרידה ממנהיג כה משמעותי היא פרידה לא פשוטה, הדורשת הכנה נפשית. רגע לפני מותו, משה מנסה להכין את העם להמשך הדרך בלעדיו.

כיצד מנהיג אמור להיפרד מהקבוצה אותה הוא מלווה? דרך נפוצה לפרידה היא בהעלאת זכרונות נוסטלגיים מציוני דרך חשובים וארועים מרכזיים.

אחרים בוחרים להתמקד בהישגים – מאיפה התחלנו ולאן הגענו.

יש שיתארו את התהליך – מה עבר עלינו? במה השתנינו?

ניתן לבחור בנאום חגיגי ומרגש המתאר את הקבוצה ומעלותיה באופן חיובי, ואת העתיד המזהיר המצפה להם.

או לחלופין – לעשות הפקת לקחים והסקת מסקנות לקראת העתיד, כדי לדאוג שהדרך שהוא הנחיל לקבוצה תמשיך להחזיק מעמד ולא תהיה התפרקות אחרי לכתו.

נראה כי משה משתמש במגוון דרכים ואמצעים לפרידה, אך רובו של ספר דברים עוסק בהפקת לקחים מן העבר לצורך בניית עתידו של עם ישראל בארץ ישראל.

פרשת דברים פותחת את נאומו של משה רבנו בצורה קצת פסימית. משה מתאר את הקשיים הגדולים שהוא התמודד איתם בהנהגת העם. תיאורו מתחיל ממינוי השופטים, המוצג בספר דברים כיוזמה של משה בעקבות כובד משא ההנהגה וטרחנות העם: "ואמר אֲלֵכֶם בְּעֵת הַהוּא לֹא אוֹכַל לְבַדִּי שְׂאֵת

אֲתֹכֶם: ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם הִרְבֵּה אֲתֹכֶם... אֵיכָה אֶשָּׂא לְבַדִּי טַרְחָנְכֶם וּמִשְׁאָכְכֶם וְרִיבְכֶם" (א', ט-יב).

בהמשך מתאר משה את חטא המרגלים, מזוית קצת שונה מהמתואר בספר במדבר. היוזמה לשליחת מרגלים היא של העם (ולא של ה') והחטא עצמו נובע מפידים של העם עצמו, ופחות מדברי דיבה של המרגלים: "וּתְקַרְבוּן אֵלַי כָּלְכֶם וּתְאָמְרוּ נְשַׁלְחָה אֲנָשִׁים לְפָנֵינוּ וְנִחְפְּרוּ לָנוּ אֵת הָאָרֶץ... וְיִקְחוּ בְיָדָם מִפְּרֵי הָאָרֶץ וְיֹרְדוּ אֵלֵינוּ וְיִשְׁבּוּ אִתָּנוּ דַּבֵּר וְיֹאמְרוּ טוֹבָה הָאָרֶץ... וְלֹא אָבִיתֶם לַעֲלֹת וּתְאָמְרוּ אֵת פִּי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם: וּתְרַגְּנוּ בְּאֶהְלֵיכֶם וּתְאָמְרוּ בְּשִׁנְאָת ה' אֱתָנוּ הוֹצִיאָנוּ מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם לְתֵת אִתָּנוּ בְּיַד הָאֱמֹרִי לְהַשְׁמִידָנוּ: אָנָּה אֲנַחְנוּ עֲלֵימָּם אֲחִינוּ הִמְסוּ אֵת לְבַבְנוּ לֵאמֹר עִם גְּדוֹל וְרָם מִמֶּנּוּ עָרִים גְּדֹלֹת וּבְצוּרֹת בְּשָׁמַיִם וְגַם בְּנֵי עֲנָקִים רָאִינוּ שָׁם" (א', כב-כח).

לא זו בלבד שהעם מוצג כאן כאשם העיקרי בחטא המרגלים, אלא מוסיף משה וטוען שבגלל חטא זה נזר גם עליו, על מנהיג העם, שלא להכנס לארץ: "וְיִשְׁמַע ה' אֵת קוֹל דְּבַרְיֶכֶם וְיִקְצֹף... גַּם בִּי הִתְאַנַּף ה' בְּגִלְלֵכֶם לֵאמֹר גַּם אֲתָה לֹא תָבֵא שָׁם" (לד-לז).

כמובן שכל המסע הארוך במדבר נצבע בגווני החטא באופן חד משמעי: "וְהִזְמִים אֶשְׁר הִלְכְנוּ מִקְדֹּשׁ בְּרַנֵּעַ עַד אֶשְׁר עָבְרָנוּ אֵת נַחַל זָרְד שְׁלִשִׁים וּשְׁמֹנֶה שָׁנָה עַד תָּם כָּל הַדֹּר אֲנִישֵׁי הַמְּלַחְמָה מִקְרֵב הַמַּחְנֶה כְּאֶשְׁר נִשְׁבַּע ה' לָהֶם: וְגַם יָד ה' הִיָּתְהָ בָּם לְהַמָּם מִקְרֵב הַמַּחְנֶה עַד תָּמָם".

מעט האירועים שמהם בוחר לתאר בפתחת נאומו מייצגים את "טרחכם משאכם וריבכם", את הקושי להנהיג את העם. קשה לפספס את הנימה הכאובה בדבריו של משה, מה ראה משה רבנו, גדול המנהיגים שקמו לעם ישראל, לפתוח את דברי הפרידה שלו בנימה כל כך כאובה ואפילו פסימית?

אין ספק שמילותיו של משה נבחרו בקפידה והיו מכוונות למטרה חשובה, ולא נבעו מתסכול אישי

שלו כמנהיג. משה רבנו, גדול הנביאים והמנהיג הדגול, שנשא את ישראל במדבר על כפיו, "כאשר ישא האומן את היונק", והתפלל עבורם פעמים רבות, נפרד מעמו בחשש גדול. לאור קורותיו עם ישראל במדבר הוא חושש שלאחר מותו הם יעזבו את דרך ה', ישחיתו את דרכם, ויאבדו את זכותם על הארץ. הוא יודע כמה היה צריך להתאמץ כדי להעלות אותם על המסלול וכדי להחזיק אותם שם לאורך כל הדרך.

והוא חושש, שבלעדיו הם לא יחזיקו מעמד, אלא יסטו מן הדרך. לכאורה, הוא מביע אי-אמון בעם שלו, הוא לא סומך עליהם. במידה מסוימת הוא מרגיש שלא הצליח באמת לחנך אותם ולהנחיל להם את הדרך כך שימשיכו בה גם בלעדיו.

אך נראה שלא זו הנקודה. זה איננו נאום של ייאוש, אלא נאום של הסתכלות מפוקחת אל העתיד. מטרתו להזהיר את העם ולגרום להם ללכת בדרך הנכונה:

"וַעֲתָה יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁמַע אֶל הַחֲקִים וְאֶל הַמִּשְׁפָּטִים אֲשֶׁר אָנֹכִי מְלַמֵּד אֲתֶכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת לְמַעַן תַּחֲיוּ וּבְאֵתָם וְיִרְשְׁתֶּם אֵת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֹתֵיכֶם נָתַן לָכֶם... רַק הַשְׁמֹר לָךְ וּשְׁמֹר נִפְשֶׁךָ מֵאֵד פֹּן תִּשְׁכַּח אֵת הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וּפִן יִסּוּרוּ מִלְּבָבְךָ כֹּל מִי תִּיָּד וְהוֹדַעְתֶּם לְבַבְךָ וּלְבַבֵי בְנֵיךָ" (ד' א-י).

משה רוצה לוודא שישראל יבינו, ויפנימו ששמירת התורה והמצוות היא התנאי לחיים ולירושת הארץ.

משה חוזר ומזהיר את ישראל שוב ושוב לא מתוך יאוש, אלא דווקא מתוך אמון, שיש סיכוי, אך לשם כך יש צורך בעמל רב, בתוכחות ובאזהרות, בסייגים וגבולות, ובהנהגה רצינית.

משה מנסה להפוך את העם מ'טרחכם משאכם וריבכם' לעם שמסוגל להכנס אל הארץ בעצמה נפשית רוחנית ולעמוד בכל האתגרים בכחות עצמו.

Continued from previous page

the needs of the handicapped people into account in the planning stages of the synagogue, such that the entire area will be accessible for all the members of the community. It is a great mitzva to do this.

In places where this cannot be done, the Torah can be removed from the Bima and placed on a shelf or a table next to it, so that the person will be able to approach it

and be called to the Torah. If it is known in advance that a handicapped person will be called up, the best option is to read the whole portion from the shelf or the table.

If this is not possible, the Torah can be brought down to a table near the Bima, as noted, before the handicapped person is called. It is also best to read the section for the next person called up from the

table too. This shows very little disrespect for the Torah scroll, since it is being moved for more than one reader. It also shows consideration for the handicapped person, since he is not the only person who does not rise up to the Bima.

● Translated by the zomet.org.il staff.

We Can Change for the Better



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

In the coming days some students will unfortunately be receiving report cards which do not reflect their capabilities. On Shabbat we begin to read the book of Deuteronomy (Devarim) that holds an important message for these students and their parents.

In his first meeting with G-d, Moshe Rabbeinu declares: "I am not a man of words... I am heavy of mouth and heavy of tongue." As opposed to this, the book of Deuteronomy opens as follows: "These are the words which Moshe spoke to all of Israel". Devarim is full of long and passionate speeches delivered by Moshe Rabbeinu as he prepares to leave his people. What happened here? How did we transition from "I am not a man of words" to "These are the words that Moshe spoke?"

Our sages explain: Moshe Rabbeinu is given a task and a mission by G-d. He must take the people out of Egypt, teach them Torah, and lead them to the Promised Land. When we have a purpose and a goal, we can overcome many difficulties, including negative professional diagnoses and our own mistaken view of ourselves. Within each of us lies hidden, powerful potential and the reality we see before us today is not static. The same Moshe who initially said "I am not a man of words" became Moshe Rabbeinu, an eternal leader whose words we have been studying every day for more than 3000 years.



This Shabbat is the last Shabbat before Tisha B'Av and is called Shabbat Hazon (Sabbath of Vision). We read the Torah portion of Devarim and the haftarah begins with the words "A vision of

Yeshayahu." Here are four thoughts for this Shabbat of vision:

1. Perhaps the word "vision" needs dusting off. In daily life, we do not give it much attention. Tisha B'Av is a reminder of our great story, a story much greater than ourselves. For the last two years, it has seemed that the nation dwelling in Zion had one aspiration – 61. That someone would reach 61 mandates. But it was not to form a government of 61 that we returned to Zion, but rather to return to ourselves after 2,000 years of exile, to be a blessing to the Middle East and to the entire world.

2. Words like "redemption" and "holiness" never frightened our forefathers, not in the Diaspora and not at the beginnings of Zionism. Today our lexicon is much more modest. Many times we speak about rights and not about obligations, about universal values alone, but not national Jewish values. We want to create a reality in which all the tribes get along somehow, but without a common vision.

3. Our commentators explain that Shabbat Hazon is the Shabbat in which we must envision the maximum – both general and personal redemption. This is the time to notice what is lacking in the world, the vacuum created by what is missing, the troubles, all the points of distress – and to pray for the good to prevail. After years of the pandemic, after the catastrophe in Meron and the disaster in Miami, after countless terror attacks, the sorrow is palpable and we demand a better world.

4. Rav Kook wrote as follows: "We began to articulate something grand, among ourselves and to the entire world, but we

have not yet finished. We have stopped in the middle of our speech." Tisha B'Av is not only a day of mourning for what we lost, but rather a reminder of what to expect from ourselves and how much we have to gain.



אנחנו מתחילים לקרוא השבוע את ספר דברים, שכולו נאום הפרידה של משה רבנו מעם ישראל. משה רבנו מתחיל בתוכחה ובנזיפה כלפי העם על חטא המרגלים ועוד טעויות, ובעצם מלמד אותנו איך להעביר ביקורת בצורה נכונה:

1. לחכות. משה רבנו מחכה לסוף המסע במדבר, ורק עכשיו, ממש ערב פטירתו, לפני הכניסה לארץ, מנתח בדיעבד את הטעויות של העם. בפרספקטיבה של זמן, דברים נראים אחרת. זה לא נכון להגיב מתוך כעס, כאן ועכשיו. קחו נשימה.

2. שמירה על הכבוד. משה רבנו מזכיר את המקומות שבהם התרחשו החטאים, לרוב מבלי להיכנס לפרטי פרטים. לא את הכול צריך לשחזר ולהציף שוב לתודעה. רש"י מסביר שמשה "סתם את הדברים והזכירם ברמז, מפני כבודן של ישראל".

3. ביקורת מתוך אהבה. יש ביקורת שמטרתה סתם להעליב ולהשפיל, אבל ביקורת בונה נעשית מתוך אכפתיות אמיתית. משה רבנו הוכיח עד כמה הוא אוהב את העם. הוא עמד איתם בניסיונות קשים, והיה רועה נאמן ומסור לאורך כל דרך. לא פשוט לשמוע ביקורת, אבל כשמדובר במשה רבנו, הם יודעים היטב שהוא באמת רוצה בטובתם.

4. אמון בעם. זו לא רק אהבה, זה גם אמון בכך שהמבוקר מסוגל להשתנות ולהשתפר. למשה רבנו יש אמונה גדולה בפוטנציאל של העם. הוא יודע שיש להם משימה אדירה בארץ ישראל, ובשורה גדולה לבשר לעולם כולו.

שנדע לבקר נכון, ולשמוע נכון בביקורת.

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis

Deputy CEO, World Mizrachi

Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“**H**asShem our G-d spoke to us by Chorev, as follows: ‘Enough for you dwelling by this mountain’” (Devarim 1:6).

With these words, Moshe begins his last will and testament (which continues until the conclusion of the book of Devarim), five weeks prior to his death. Our commentators explain that Chorev refers either to Mount Sinai or the area near Mount Sinai where the people dwelt at the time of receiving the Torah.

What is meant by the phrase, “Enough for you dwelling by this mountain”? Whereas Rashi understood this as praise for the achievements of the Israelites in the wilderness, the Kli Yakar saw these as words of rebuke, providing two separate explanations.

First, he explains that the Israelites did not want to move on to the Promised Land but preferred to settle permanently by the mountain:

“When you go from Mount Chorev, the place where you learnt Torah, turn your faces to the land - the place of keeping Torah, for learning is not what is most important, but action” (Kli Yakar, Devarim 1).

Dwelling by Har Chorev, the Israelites felt they were leading ideal lives. They were sustained miraculously with water from the ground (Miriam’s well) and food from the sky (manna). They benefited from the presence of the Shechina (Divine presence) and without concerns for making a livelihood or building a country, they were able to dedicate their entire lives to studying Torah at the foot of the mountain where Torah was given. They were therefore rebuked to remind them of their role in the world - “learning is not what is most important, but action”.

Second, the Kli Yakar brings the opinion of those who claim the complete opposite:

“Others explain that he blamed them for running away from Har Chorev like

a child running away from school” (Kli Yakar, Devarim 1).

According to this explanation, the Israelites were not rebuked for wishing to stay at Har Sinai, but rebuked for running away too quickly! By hastily escaping like children at the end of a day at school, they displayed a lack of appreciation for the Torah and Mitzvot they received and were therefore deserving of rebuke.

These two contradictory explanations combine to provide us with very strong guidance. On the one hand, life is not only about the theoretical study of Torah. Rather, we must focus on keeping Torah as well, bringing Torah into our daily lives. At the same time, when engaging in other activities, we must not run away from studying Torah, but maintain a deep appreciation for the value of learning.

By internalising these messages, may our learning add meaning to our actions and may our actions add meaning to our learning.

Shabbat Shalom!

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To 120: Growing Old, Staying Young



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

On 27 March 2012, to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the Queen, an ancient ceremony took place at Buckingham Palace. A number of institutions presented Loyal Addresses to the Queen, thanking her for her service to the nation. Among them was the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Its then President, Vivian Wine- man, included in his speech the traditional Jewish blessing on such occasions. He wished her well “until a hundred and twenty.”

The Queen was amused and looked quizzically at Prince Philip. Neither of them had heard the expression before. Later the Prince asked what it meant, and we explained. A hundred and twenty is stated as the outer limit of a normal human lifetime in Genesis 6:3. The number is especially associated with Moses, about whom the Torah says:

“Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his strength undiminished.” (Deut. 34:7)

Together with Abraham, a man of very different personality and circumstance, Moses is a model of how to age well. With the growth of human longevity, this has become a significant and challenging issue for many of us. How do you grow old yet stay young?

The most sustained research into this topic is the Grant Study, begun in 1938, which has tracked the lives of 268 Harvard students for almost eighty years, seeking to understand what characteristics – from personality type to intelligence to health, habits, and relationships – contribute to human flourishing. For more than thirty years, the project was directed by George Vaillant, whose books *Aging Well* and *Triumphs of Experience* have

explored this fascinating territory.¹

Among the many dimensions of successful aging, Vaillant identifies two that are particularly relevant in the case of Moses. The first is what he calls *generativity*,² namely taking care of the next generation. He quotes John Kotre who defines it as “to invest one’s substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self.”³ In middle or later life, when we have established a career, a reputation, and a set of relationships, we can either stagnate or decide to give back to others: to community, society, and the next generation. Generativity is often marked by undertaking new projects, often voluntary ones, or by learning new skills. Its marks are openness and care.

The other relevant dimension is what Vaillant calls *keeper of the meaning*. By this he means the wisdom that comes with age, something that is often more valued by traditional societies than modern or postmodern ones. The “elders” mentioned in Tanach are people valued for their experience. “Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you,” says the Torah (Deut. 32:7). “Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?” says the book of Job (12:12).

Being a keeper of the meaning means handing on the values of the past to the future. Age brings the reflection and detachment that allows us to stand back and not be swept along by the mood of the moment or passing fashion or the madness of the crowd. We need that wisdom, especially in an age as fast-paced as ours where huge success can come to people still quite young. Examine the careers of recent iconic figures like Bill Gates, Larry Page, Sergey Brin, and Mark Zuckerberg, and you will discover that

at a certain point they turned to older mentors who helped steer them through the white-water rapids of their success. *Asseh lecha rav*, “Acquire for yourself a teacher” (Avot 1:6, 16) remains essential advice.

What is striking about the book of Devarim, set entirely in the last month of Moses’ life, is how it shows the aged but still passionate and driven leader, turning to the twin tasks of generativity and keeper of the meaning.

It would have been easy for him to retire into an inner world of reminiscence, recalling the achievements of an extraordinary life, chosen by G-d to be the person who led an entire people from slavery to freedom and to the brink of the Promised Land. Alternatively he could have brooded on his failures, above all the fact that he would never physically enter the land to which he had spent forty years leading the nation. There are people – we have all surely met them – who are haunted by the sense that they have not won the recognition they deserved or achieved the success of which they dreamed when they were young.

Moses did neither of those things. Instead in his last days he turned his attention to the next generation and embarked on a new role. No longer Moses the liberator and lawgiver, he took on the task for which he has become known to tradition: *Moshe Rabbeinu*, “Moses our teacher.” It was, in some ways, his greatest achievement.

He told the young Israelites who they were, where they had come from and what their destiny was. He gave them laws, and did so in a new way. No longer was the emphasis on the Divine encounter, as it had been in Vayikra, or on sacrifices as it was in Bamidbar, but

rather on the laws in their social context. He spoke about justice, and care for the poor, and consideration for employees, and love for the stranger. He set out the fundamentals of Jewish faith in a more systematic way than in any other book of Tanach. He told them of G-d's love for their ancestors, and urged them to reciprocate that love with all their heart, soul, and might. He renewed the covenant, reminding the people of the blessings they would enjoy if they kept faith with G-d, and the curses that would befall them if they did not. He taught them the great song in *Ha'azinu*, and gave the tribes his death-bed blessing.

He showed them the meaning of *generativity*, leaving behind a legacy that would outlive him, and what it is to be a *keeper of meaning*, summoning all his wisdom to reflect on past and future, giving the young the gift of his long experience. By way of personal example, he showed them what it is to grow old while staying young.

At the very end of the book, we read that at the age of 120, Moses' "eye was undimmed and his natural energy was unabated" (Deut. 34:7). I used to think that these were simply two descriptions until I realised that the first was the explanation of the second. Moses' energy was unabated *because* his eye was undimmed, meaning that he never lost the idealism of his youth, his passion for justice and for the responsibilities of freedom.

It is all too easy to abandon your ideals when you see how hard it is to change even the smallest part of the world, but

when you do you become cynical, disillusioned, disheartened. That is a kind of spiritual death. The people who don't, who never give up, who "do not go gentle into that good night,"⁴ who still see a world of possibilities around them and encourage and empower those who come after them, keep their spiritual energy intact.

There are people who do their best work young. Felix Mendelssohn wrote the *Octet* at the age of 16, and the *Overture to a Midsummer Night's Dream* a year later, the greatest pieces of music ever written by one so young. Orson Welles had already achieved greatness in theatre and radio when he made *Citizen Kane*, one of the most transformative films in the history of cinema, at the age of 26.

But there were many others who kept getting better the older they became. Mozart and Beethoven were both child prodigies, yet they wrote their greatest music in the last years of their life. Claude Monet painted his shimmering landscapes of water lilies in his garden in Giverny in his eighties. Verdi wrote *Falstaff* at the age of 85. Benjamin Franklin invented the bifocal lens at age 78. The architect Frank Lloyd Wright completed designs for the Guggenheim Museum at 92. Michelangelo, Titian, Matisse, and Picasso all remained creative into their ninth decade. Judith Kerr who came to Britain when Hitler came to power in 1933 and wrote the children's classic *The Tiger who came to Tea*, recently won her first literary award at the age of 93. David Galenson in his *Old Masters and Young*

Geniuses argues that those who are conceptual innovators do their best work young, while experimental innovators, who learn by trial and error, get better with age.⁵

There is something moving about seeing Moses, at almost 120, looking forward as well as back, sharing his wisdom with the young, teaching us that while the body may age, the spirit can stay young *ad me'ah ve'esrim*, until 120, if we keep our ideals, give back to the community, and share our wisdom with those who will come after us, inspiring them to continue what we could not complete.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- Do you know any "old" people who are "young" at heart? How do you think they keep their spirits so youthful?
- How do you think Moshe maintained his passion until his last day?
- How are we impacted by Moshe's efforts towards generativity, and his role as keeper of meaning today?

1. George Vaillant, *Aging Well*, Little, Brown, 2003; *Triumphs of Experience*, Harvard University Press, 2012.
2. The concept of generativity is drawn from the work of Erik Erikson, who saw it - and its opposite, stagnation - as one of one of the eight developmental stages of life.
3. John Kotre, *Outliving the Self: Generativity and the Interpretation of Lives* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), p. 10.
4. The first line of Dylan Thomas' poem of that title.
5. David Galenson, *Old Masters and Young Geniuses*, Princeton University Press, 2007.

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Mesiras HaTorah



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshiva, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

Moshe began explaining this Torah, saying. (Devarim 1:5) The Gemara in Nedarim teaches that originally, only the Written Torah, along with all of its requisite *halachos*, was to be transmitted by Moshe to Bnei Yisrael. The dialectic of Torah – the Oral Torah’s methodology and style of exegesis of the *Torah SheBichsav* – was exclusively given to Moshe and his descendants as a private undertaking. It was only because Moshe acted generously, “with a good eye,” that he shared this discipline – the ability to “read in-between the lines” of the text of the Torah to derive the details of each *halachah* – with all of Bnei Yisrael.

When did this generous act, in which Moshe imparted his full understanding of *Torah SheBe’al Peh* to all of Bnei Yisrael, take place? The Netziv explains that it occurred shortly before his death and is described with the words, הואיל משה באר, את התורה הזאת לאמר. The *passuk* in Va’es- chanan, “And this is the teaching that Moshe placed before Bnei Yisrael” is a reference to this process as well.

This reflects an important difference between Chumash Devarim and the other four Chumashim. While the other Chumashim began as *Torah SheBichsav*, Chumash Devarim, which consists of the great speech that Moshe delivered before Bnei Yisrael in Arvos Mo’av, began as *Torah SheBe’al Peh*. Of course, once Hashem dictated the words contained in Sefer Devarim to Moshe to be written down, they too were incorporated into the Chamishah Chumshei Torah and became part of *Torah SheBichsav*.

Rav Soloveitchik added that the above difference forms the basis of the distinc-

tion between Chumash Devarim and the rest of the Torah with regard to the exegetical principle of *semuchim*, expounding details of one *mitzvah* to another in an adjacent *passuk*. (When two *mitzvos* appear within the same *passuk*, the derivation of *dinim* based on the comparison of one to the other is referred to as *hekeshe*.) The Gemara in Yevamos teaches that we apply the methodology of *semuchim* only to Chumash Devarim, not to the rest of the Torah.

As we described, there is an element of *Torah SheBe’al Peh* to Chumash Devarim, and one who transmits the Oral Torah arranges his lesson in such a way that the topics discussed are associated with one another. We are thus able to derive *dinim* based on that order of association. However, in the rest of *Torah SheBichsav*, topics are not necessarily arranged by association.

The difference in the manner of transmission of the *Torah SheBichsav* and *Torah SheBe’al Peh* has important ramifications.

The Gemara in Gittin analyzes the *passuk*, “Write for yourself these words, for on the basis of these [orally transmitted] words I have established a covenant with you and Israel” (Shemos 34:27), noting that the first part of the *passuk* indicates that the words of the Torah are to be written, whereas the second part connotes an oral transmission.

The Gemara explains that this is not a contradiction. Hashem revealed to Moshe that just as He had initially given a portion of Torah, the Aseres HaDibros, in a written form and other portions in an oral form, that is the proper method to fulfill *mesiras haTorah* in future generations as well. Thus, we derive that

“Teachings that were given in writing, you are not permitted to transmit orally,” and that “Teachings that were given orally, you are not permitted to transmit in writing.”

In later generations, due to a decline in the intensity of *limmud haTorah*, *Torah SheBe’al Peh*, which had until then been learned by heart, was in danger of being forgotten. The Chachamim deemed it necessary to allow the recording of *Torah SheBe’al Peh*, and they expounded a *passuk* to justify their actions: “When it is a time to act for Hashem, nullify your Torah” (Tehillim 119:126). They argued, based on this *passuk*, that it is preferable that one *halachah* be uprooted so that the *Torah SheBe’al Peh* itself not be forgotten.

Many Rishonim are troubled by our practice of reciting various *parshiyos* of *Torah SheBichsav* orally, such as *Az Yashir* and *kri’as Shema*, seemingly in violation of the rule דברים שבכתב אי אתה רשאי לאומרו על פה. Reciting words of *Torah SheBichsav* from a *siddur* is also considered *ba’al peh*. In fact, anything less than a complete Chumash, even if it is written on *klaf*, does not have the status of *kri’ah bichsav*.

The Mechaber defends the practice, maintaining that it is permissible to recite *pessukim* that one knows fluently, including the well-known *parshiyos* of *kri’as Shema*, *Birchas Kohanim*, and *Parshas HaTamid*. However, the Vilna Gaon comments that the true resolution of the difficulty is the answer recorded by the Tur, in the name of the Rosh and Tosfos, that the *halachah* of דברים שבכתב אי אתה רשאי לאומרו על פה applies only to *pessukim* recited on behalf of a *tzibbur* in order to discharge their obligation.

The basis for this distinction is that the

Continued on next page

All In The Right Time



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

As we continue to approach what we hope will be a Chodesh Av full of Simcha, we are also preparing for a Shabbos in which we begin Moshe Rabbeinu's final speech to Am Yisrael and outlines what has happened during their time in the Midbar. In Pasuk 1:28 he relates the story of how the Meraglim returned from Eretz Yisrael and instilled fear in the nation. He explains how they described what they saw as ערים גדולות וגְּבוּרָה בַּשָּׁמַיִם - "large cities with surrounding walls that are sky-high". Rashi on this Pasuk explains, based on the Gemara in Chulin 90B, that the Torah sometimes will use exaggerated language. On this Gemara Rashi over there says that sometimes someone will overemphasise a certain detail not in a way of lying but rather because he was not careful.

Unfortunately, this can affect any of us. Sometimes we can get too heated about something we are very passionate about or get carried away and the result can be a lack of consideration of what we are really saying. Why is it that the Torah would speak in such a language? Rav Schwab ZT"l (Maayan Beis HasSho'eivah Page #383) shares an idea that beautifully helps to answer our question. In Neviim, we see that Am Yisrael throughout each Sefer

struggles in removing the Goyim from Eretz Yisrael. In Yehoshua, Shoftim and even during the reign of Shlomo HaMelech there are parts of Eretz Yisrael still not under our rule. It seems rather odd that this is still the case even hundreds of years after coming into the land. It is also that Yehoshua at the end of Sefer Yehoshua expresses how he did everything that was commanded of him. How could it be that he had fulfilled everything Hashem had said when Eretz Yisrael was not fully conquered? Rav Schwab explains that having the unvanquished cities was by design. As taught in Parshas Lech Lecha (15:16), Hashem will only remove the Goyim when they deserve to be displaced. The Gemara in Sotah (9A) teaches אין הקב"ה נפרע מן האומה עד שעת שילוחה - Hashem does not punish a sinful king until his time to be banished.

We learn from here that the lack of complete control over Eretz Yisrael was not a sign of a lack of victory, but rather how Hashem chose to conduct the way in which those that are removed from the land. We learn in Parshas Eikev (Devarim 7:22) that Hashem tells Moshe that there will not be an immediate take over from all those in Eretz Yisrael, but that this is going to be a process over time. This

is a yesod of Rav Schwab that can bring great understanding when learning Sefer Yehoshua. How does this help answer the question back in Parshas Devarim? When Moshe says that great cities have walls that are sky-high, he is telling us (quoting the Meraglim) that Am Yisrael will not capture all of Eretz Yisrael immediately. The people living there for now still have zechusim to live in the land. Now we can understand that this was an exaggeration to help better understand what our reality will be in terms of where we can go when going into Eretz Yisrael. The meaning of the walls going all the way up to the sky means that the right they had to be there came through Shomayim. Perhaps we can strengthen this understanding a little more. We know that the word "Gadol" does not just mean "great" or "big" but also refers to someone who does Chessed. The Michtav M'Eliyahu says that every time this word is used in Tanach it refers to someone being a Baal Chesed. When the Pasuk here says ערים גדולות - great cities, what it really trying to tell us is that those in the cities are "Gadol" they do chesed, and this is why Hashem has decided not to take them out of the land yet.

● Edited by Zac Winkler.

Continued from previous page

halachos discussed in the Gemara in Gitin are derived from Ma'amad Har Sinai, when Torah was transmitted to the Jewish People. Thus, rather than positing restrictions on one's personal limmud haTorah, these halachos represent the way to fulfill mesiras haTorah in the most complete fashion. Whenever Torah SheBichsav is taught to others, it should be read from a sefer kasher. Likewise, dis-

seminating Torah SheBe'al Peh in public using a written text is improper, since this is not the intended, optimal form of talmud Torah SheBe'al Peh.

However, as the Rambam writes in his Hakdamah to Yad HaChazakah, one was always permitted to write personal notes, a megillas setarim (hidden scroll) from which he could refresh his memory with regard to his learning. Only the

teaching of Torah SheBe'al Peh must take place orally. Similarly, with regard to Torah SheBichsav, private recitation of Az Yashir and kri'as Shema was never included in the restriction. In contrast, the leining of the Torah or the haftarah to discharge the obligation of the tzibbur requires kri'ah mitoch hak'sav from a sefer kasher.

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Parsha II.

Everything That Was Destroyed Can be Built



Chief Rabbi David Lau
Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel

At the Peel Commission of 1936, then Chairman of the Jewish Agency, David Ben-Gurion, addressed the crowd with the following statement: “About 300 years ago, a ship named ‘Mayflower’ sailed into the new world. It was a great event in the history of England and America, but I would like to know if there is one Englishman who knows exactly when this ship set sail and how many Americans know when. Do they know how many people were on the same ship, and what was the nature of the bread they ate when they left?”

“And yet,” Ben-Gurion added, “More than 3,300 years before the Mayflower voyage, the Jews left Egypt, and every Jew in the world knows exactly what day they went out – on the 15th of Nissan. And everyone knows exactly what bread the Jews ate – *matzah*. To this day, Jews all over the world eat *matzah* on the 15th of Nissan – in America, Russia and other countries, and tell the story of the Exodus and the troubles that befell the Jews from the Exodus until today.”

There is no other nation in the world that embodies, marks, recalls and is tormented by the events which occurred to them thousands of years ago. But the Jews have been reminding and remembering for thousands of years – not just the Temple which was destroyed on this day, Tisha B'Av, but all the significant events our people have gone through throughout history. The basis of the Jewish holidays is built upon this concept, so that Jewish tradition can be passed on, from father to son, from mother to daughter and for all future generations, because the essence



Every person has the power to destroy, but also, equally, the power to build.

of Judaism is והגדת לבנך, and you shall tell your son.

According to tradition, it was on Tisha B'Av that the spies who toured the Land returned to Moshe and to *Am Yisrael* who were awaiting their report in the desert. The spies managed to incite the people against Moshe and against the Land. Against them stood one man, Calev ben Yefuneh (who was later joined by Yehoshua ben Nun), who shouted loudly: עלה נעלה, “Let us go up and inherit it!” One man against an entire nation, trying to bring the nation to its rightful place, ארץ חמדת אבות, the Land of the forefathers, which would become the inheritance of their children.

This fast also marks the destruction of the Temple, the holiest place in Judaism. The destruction of the Second Temple was caused by *sinat chinam*, baseless hatred; because of a simple quarrel between two Jews, one of whom hurt his friend in public. It was this hatred that caused the great fire that eventually led to the destruction of the Temple.

From these events, we came to know the power of the individual. From the destruction, we learned how the hatred of one simple man – and the controversy he managed to stir up against another Jew – managed to cause such immense

damage. But, as Rabbi Nachman says, if you believe destruction is possible, believe rectification is possible too.

Every person has the power to destroy, but also, equally, the power to build.

On Tisha B'Av, we remember the moments of sorrow and pain that have befallen our people through the ages. The *kinnot* give expression to Jewish calamities, from the destruction of the Temples, through the Crusades, the suffering of the Martyrs in Spain, the pogroms to the destruction of European Jewry during World War II. This day is unique in that it belongs to all of us, to each and every one of our people. This fast does not belong to specific rabbis or personalities, because every member of the Jewish people can and should mark this historic national day, the day the *Beit HaMikdash* was destroyed, the day our people went into exile.

I pray and hope that just as the Temple was destroyed by the *sinat chinam* of ordinary Jews, so will it be rebuilt soon, with the help of G-d, through the *ahavat chinam* of ordinary Jews in our generation, each according to his or her power and abilities in prayer, good deeds, preservation of Jewish tradition and strengthening of faith and healthy, vibrant Judaism.



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Lack of Unity Led to the Destruction of the Beit HaMikdash



Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

מקדש שני שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצוות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם (יומא ט:ב).

The Second Beit HaMikdash, which stood during a period where the nation was engaged in the study of Torah, in the performance of mitzvot and in acts of loving kindness- why was it destroyed? Because there existed "sinat chinam" (unwarranted hatred among the people)! (Yoma 9b).

From the gemara cited above it appears that the main reason for the destruction of the second Beit HaMikdash was *sinat chinam*. We can appreciate that not treating others with respect is unjustifiable behavior, but why would such a severe punishment, such as destroying the Beit HaMikdash be warranted? Is there a direct connection between this transgression and the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash?

The main purpose of the Beit HaMikdash is to create an environment in which the Shechinah could dwell. As we are informed when directed to erect the Mishkan "Make for me a Temple and I will dwell in their midst" (Shemot 25:8). However, the Shechinah does not dwell among Am Yisrael when there is discord. The Sefer Haredim (citing the Zohar) derives from a pasuk in Iyuv (23:13) והוא באחד ומי ישיבנו (But He is One, and who will answer Him) – that G-d only dwells among Am Yisrael when they are united as one – אחד.

When we were instructed to build the Mishkan, each individual had to contribute an equal share. The rich could

not contribute an abundance and the poor could not contribute a deficiency. Everyone's contribution was identical to instill a feeling of uniformity. Only in that cohesive and integrated community could the Shechinah reside.

In addition, when Moshe commanded the people to build the Mishkan it was done in a communal manner – ויקהל משה את כל – עדת ישראל – The nation was assembled as a congregation! When the Mishkan was inaugurated as well the same verb is used:

ואת כל העדה הקהל אל פתח אהל מועד (ויקרא ח:ג).
The nation was assembled as a congregation!

When Shlomo inaugurated the First Beit HaMikdash the same term is used:
ויקהלו אל המלך שלמה כל איש ישראל (מלכים א ח-ב).

The repetitive use of the word הקהל to congregate or assemble is required when both the Mishkan and Mikdash are dedicated because without Am Yisrael coming together as one – the Shechinah is unable to reside in the Temple or among the nation.

Now we can understand the connection between the transgression of *sinat chinam* and the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash. Hatred causes a rift among the people. If the nation is divided, G-d is unable to reside within their midst and so there is no purpose for a Mikdash.

G-d despises when Jews are hostile to each other, like a parent who gets upset when his children fight. Sometimes the parent reaches a stage where he states: "I had enough, I am leaving" and he removes himself from their presence to let them work things out among themselves. When Am Yisrael is divided, Hashem takes a similar approach.

May we take it upon ourselves to be more respectful of others and to avoid unnecessary conflicts and disputes. To take positive measures to instill a feeling of togetherness among not only our friends but those who may have a *hashkafa* or opinion that differs from ours. It is in our hands to correct the mistake that led to our exile. May we be *zoche* to merit a *geula shlema* in our time.

The Art of Rebuke



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

Parshas Devarim, the fifth book of Torah opens with the following words: *These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Israel on the other side of the Jordan, in the wilderness, in the plain, opposite the Reed Sea, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan and Chatzeros and Di Zahav* (Devarim 1:1).

Though it sounds like these are all places in the desert where the nation traveled, Rashi teaches us that each name alludes to a different sin of the Israelites in the desert. Because Hashem had mercy on their dignity, Moshe here rebukes the nation by *alluding* to their sins, and not saying them outright.

To what sins does the verse allude?

Arava refers to the sin of Ba'al Peor; *Mol Suf* alludes to their rebelling at the Sea of Reeds, when they complained "are there not enough graves in Egypt that you took us out to die in the desert?"; *Tofel and Lavan* allude to their sins of slandering the manna; *Paran* alludes to the sin of the spies; and *Chatzeros* alludes to the rebellion of Korach.

What about *דַּי, דַּי*, literally 'more than enough gold'? Rashi teaches: *He rebuked them over the calf that they made, because of the abundance of gold that they had* (Rashi to Devarim 1:1).

As the nation had an excess of gold that they collected, which washed ashore after the Egyptians, their horses, chariots and riders sunk in the Reed Sea (see Rashi to Shemos 15:22), it was this gold that they used to construct the golden calf, which led to the tragic sin of national idol worship.

Rabbi Shalom Rosner teaches, "The Gemara (Brachos 32a) interprets the allusion of *Di Zahav* a bit differently: 'Moshe said to Hashem: The riches you gave to Bnei Yisrael until they said

'enough' (*דַּי, dai*) is what caused them to erect the golden (*בְּהָרָה*) calf.'"

It seems from the Gemara that Moshe blames Hashem for the sin of the golden calf. And yet, Rashi teaches us that this verse is *tochacha*, a rebuke by Moshe of the people, where he blames the nation for the sins! Was it the nation's fault, or was it G-d's fault (*keviyachol*)? How are we to understand this seeming contradiction?

Rabbi Rosner explains, "After hundreds of years of slavery, He took them out of Egypt with great miracles and gave them vast riches. What can be expected of someone who becomes a millionaire overnight? It is hard to deal with so much good fortune so quickly. It is Your fault, Hashem, for having spoiled them!

"Rav Asher Weiss asks what was transpiring here. Was Moshe Rabbeinu rebuking *Am Yisrael*, or was he directing the rebuke vis-a-vis the RS"O (*keviyachol*)? Actually, it was both. On the one hand, Moshe was giving the *Bnei Yisrael mussar* (chastisement), but at the same time, he was defending us."

It's as if he was saying - Hashem, what did You expect of them? Having been deprived of riches for hundreds of years, they simply could not properly handle the great wealth you gave them with the Exodus.

Rabbi Rosner points out that there is a very important lesson to be learned from this. "Whenever we are trying to improve someone else, as a parent, as a teacher, as a friend, at the same time that we are putting them down, we have to be raising them up. At the same time that we are *accusing* them of wrongdoing, we have to be *excusing* them for their sinful behavior. As the Gemara (Sotah 47a) states: *Always (a person shall) push away with the left hand (be harsh in rebuke when necessary), and with the right hand, draw close and embrace.*"

We must always display love for the child and/or *talmid*, and attempt in some way to defend their behavior, or see another angle of the transgression, even when rebuke is in order. Moshe *Rabbeinu* is the messenger of Hashem and our messenger as well. He is the go-between in both directions. From Hashem's point of view, Moshe was giving us *mussar*. But from our point of view, he was defending us before Hashem.

"May we take this lesson with us and carefully balance rebuking and defending our children and our students" (Shalom Rav, v.II, p.348-349).

"On one occasion, Rav Pam zt'l offered a homiletic interpretation of the saying: *כבודו וחשדו*, "Honor him but suspect him". Said Rav Pam: *If you must suspect him, do it in an honorable manner.* He illustrated this with a personal recollection:

"One year, when I taught at the mesivta level, I was asked to proctor a test. I sat at my desk with a *sefer* but at the same time, I kept an eye on the *talmidim*. At one point, I noticed one student copying from his neighbor's paper. Now I could have told him, 'I will tear up your paper for cheating!' or 'I'm going to give you a zero!' Instead, I walked over to him and whispered, 'If you don't understand the question, please come up to my desk and I will explain it to you.'

"Many years later, the *talmid* came over to me somewhere and said 'What I learned by the *Rebbi* I have long forgotten, but this [what happened that day when I cheated on the test] I will never forget" (Rav Pam, Artsroll, p.145-146).

What an incredible and beautiful lesson as we open *Sefer Devarim*, the final words that Moshe spoke to the nation he loved, and led, for forty years. A parent/teacher has many roles. Even when rebuke must be given to the child/student, we must look for ways to simultaneously defend them, thereby building up the person, even while criticizing the behavior.

Introduction to Sefer Devarim



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
Tanach Study Center | Yeshivat Har Etzion

What is Sefer Devarim? Most everyone would answer that it is a review or repeat of Chumash, just as its 'second name' - "**Mishneh Torah**" - implies.

Is this really so?

In contrast to the first four books of Chumash where the story (and/or *mitzvot*) are presented in **third** person, the style of Sefer Devarim is very different for it is written almost entirely in **first** person. The reason for this is quite simple: Sefer Devarim consists of a collection of speeches delivered by Moshe Rabeinu before his death.

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

Moshe's opening statement already informs us that this speech will contain the **chukim & mishpatim** that Bnei Yisrael must observe upon entry into the land. Whereas Moshe is about to die and Bnei Yisrael are about to enter the Land, this is Moshe's last opportunity to instruct Bnei Yisrael regarding their obligations when they enter the land.

However, instead of getting 'right down to business' and specifying the details of these **chukim & mishpatim**, Moshe Rabeinu prefaces these *mitzvot* with the story of how and when these *mitzvot* were first given:

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

This opening statement is critical for the effectiveness of Moshe's entire presentation. Moshe must remind Bnei Yisrael that their obligation evolves from

the covenant the nation accepted at Har Sinai, even though most of the members of this new generation were not present at that time!

This is why Moshe continues his introductory remarks with the story of Bnei Yisrael's acceptance of that covenant - i.e. the story of Ma'amad Har Sinai. First, he reminds them that the first Ten Commandments were actually heard **directly** from G-d (see 5:4-5). He then reviews those Ten commandments (see 5:6-19), the essence of that covenant.

The key to understanding the nature of this main speech lies in the subsequent story, which most effectively explains what the rest of the speech is all about.

In that story (5:20-31), Moshe Rabeinu tells of Bnei Yisrael's fear at Ma'amad Har Sinai and their opting to hear the remaining *mitzvot* from Moshe instead of directly from G-d. Those *mitzvot* - the remaining *mitzvot* that Bnei Yisrael received via Moshe (after they received the Ten Commandments) - are precisely what Moshe reviews in this main speech of Sefer Devarim.

In case you didn't follow, let's review our analysis by following the psukim inside. We pick up the story when Bnei Yisrael become frightened at Ma'amad Har Sinai and beg Moshe to act as their intermediary:

"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 G-d says, and then you tell us** everything that G-d 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 G-d, immediately after these first Ten Commandments.

Note how G-d grants their request that Moshe should act as their intermediary (see 5:25-26), and then He informs Moshe of the 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..." (5:27-30).

This *pasuk*, in its context, is the key to understanding Sefer Devarim. The *mitzvot* that Moshe Rabeinu prepares to teach in this oration are simply the *mitzvot* that Bnei Yisrael should have heard directly from G-d at Ma'amad Har Sinai (but were given via Moshe instead).

To prove this, we need only read the next *pasuk*, which introduces the *mitzvot* to be addressed by Moshe in his presentation:

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

Recall from 5:28 that G-d told Moshe that he should remain on Har Sinai to receive the **mitzvah, chukim & mishpatim**. As we see from the *pasuk* above, Moshe's lecture here is simply a delineation of those *mitzvot*.

Based on this introduction, we must conclude that the *mitzvot* presented here are simply those *mitzvot* that G-d gave via Moshe Rabeinu as a continuation of Ma'amad Har Sinai. It is also important to note that although the core of Moshe's speech consists of *mitzvot* initially received at Har Sinai, it is only natural that Moshe Rabeinu will add some of his own comments, relating to events which have

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Tolerating Different Opinions



Rabbi Eli Mansour

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The first verse in Parashat Debarim lists the names of the places in which Moshe delivered his final rebuke to Beneh Yisrael. However, these places do not actually exist. The Midrash explains that these names are actually allusions to the major sins that Beneh Yisrael committed during their journey through the wilderness. For example, “*Di Zahab*” – which means “abundant gold” – alludes to the sin of the golden calf, and “*Laban*” (“white”) refers to the people’s complaints about the manna, which was colored white.

The Rabbis infer from this indirect method of rebuke the importance of preserving people’s dignity when offering constructive criticism. Even in situations where it is warranted to criticize, it must be done delicately and respectfully. Our Rabbis teach us in numerous contexts that even sinners deserve dignity and respect. There are times when we need to point out mistakes, but this does not give us license to humiliate a fellow Jew, even if he does not properly observe the Torah. Thus, for example, the Midrash comments that G-d’s angel killed the donkey that spoke with Bilam to criticize him, in order that it does not become a source of shame and humiliation for Bilam. Even Bilam, a heartless anti-Semite who sought to annihilate all of Am Yisrael, deserved his dignity. Certainly, then, we must be careful not to humiliate any of our fellow

Jews – none of whom even approaches the sinfulness of Bilam.

And if we must avoid embarrassing sinners, then we must certainly exercise care in how we speak about observant Jews whose approaches and practices differ from ours. Needless to say, we cannot and must not tolerate ideas that are antithetical to Torah. But within the rubric of authentic Judaism, there is plenty of room for varying opinions on many different topics. Yeshiva students spend their days discussing and analyzing Mahalokot – differing views among the great Sages of the Talmud and later authorities. And they are all treated with equal reverence and importance. Different opinions exist among Torah scholars on a wide range of issues, and this is perfectly acceptable. We should each follow our own Rabbis, and certainly there is nothing wrong with having strongly-held views. But this does not give us the right to disparage or insult those who follow Hachamim who advocate different opinions.

The Gemara describes certain negative qualities that will characterize the generation before the arrival of Mashiah, one of them being “*Ha’emet Tiheyeh Ne’ederet*.” Literally, this means that “truth will be obscured,” meaning, truths that should be and always had been obvious and self-evident will become questionable. In our times, for example, low standards of modesty and integrity which would have

been rejected without a second thought generations ago are now considered valid options. This is one manifestation of “*Ha’emet Tiheyeh Ne’ederet*.” Additionally, however, the term “*Ne’ederet*” refers to the phenomenon of “*Eder*” – “flock.” The Jewish people will form small, independent “flocks” that stay away from one another. Each “flock” will follow its “shepherd,” its Rabbi, and show no respect or regard for anything else. The prevailing attitude will be one of “It’s my way, or you’re out!” There will be little or no tolerance for differing views and opinions.

Unfortunately, this is happening in our generation. We have lost the message of the first verse of Sefer Debarim, which demands showing respect even for those with whom we rightfully disagree. We are entitled to hold our opinions, but without disparaging people who think and act differently.

The period before Tisha B’Ab is the opportune time to improve ourselves in this area, to recommit ourselves to respecting and preserving the dignity of all people, especially of those with whom we do not agree on important matters. It is through this tolerance for people who are different from us that we correct the flaw of “*Sin’at Hinam*,” the baseless hatred for which the Mikdash was destroyed, and we will then be deserving of the Temple’s restoration and the unfolding of our final redemption, speedily and in our days, Amen.

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transpired in the interim. Nonetheless, the *mitzvot* themselves are 40 years old.

The *mitzvot* of Moshe’s main speech are simply a guide for Bnei Yisrael’s conduct as they conquer and settle the land. 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!).

Living Beyond the Checklist



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There is a pasuk in Shmuel (2:1:18) which refers to a mysterious book called “Sefer Hayashar,” “the Book of the Upright.” The Gemara (Avoda Zara 25a) offers a number of opinions regarding the identity of this book:

Rabbi Chiya bar Abba says in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, “This refers to the book of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov [sefer Bereishis] who were called upright...” Rabbi Elazar says, “This refers to the Repetition of the Torah [sefer Devarim]. Why is it called the Book of the Upright? Because the pasuk (Devarim 6:18) says ‘And you shall do what is upright and good in the eyes of Hashem.’” Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmeini says, “This refers to the book of Shoftim. Why was it called the Book of the Upright? Because the pasuk (Shoftim 21:25) says, ‘In those days there was no king in Israel; each person did what was upright in his own eyes.’”

The Maharsha, commenting on this Gemara, points out that it is understandable why Bereishis would be called the Book of the Upright since its central theme is the lives of our upright forefathers. It is also understandable why Shoftim would be called the Book of the Upright because the people at that time were the antithesis of that which is upright. Why, he asks, would sefer Devarim be called the Book of the Upright based only on one pasuk that uses the word “upright?” Indeed, the word also appears in sefer Shmos. The Iyun Yaakov, a commentary on the Ein Yaakov, answers that Devarim, not Shmos is called the Book of the Upright because the word “upright” appears four times in sefer Devarim and only once in Shmos, but this explanation is not satisfying. The Navi must have used the title “The Book of the Upright” to describe the book’s

essence and not based on a tally of how many times the word “upright” is used in each book.

The Maharsha offers a beautiful explanation. By and large, all of the individual mitzvos are given in the other four books of the Torah. They are given as a list of details; a string of “thou shalt” and “though shalt not.” The purpose of sefer Devarim is to wrap all of those details into a unified whole called a “Jew,” a spiritual identity which is greater than the sum of its parts. The purpose of sefer Devarim is to teach a person how to go above and beyond each of the individual details of Jewish life to become someone who does “what is good and upright in the eyes of Hashem.” Such a Jew connects the dots of each of the mitzvos into one single transcendent reality. He lives not just to fulfill each of his obligations but to make his Father in Heaven proud.

The Gemara (Taanis 15a) says “Not everyone will merit light and not everyone will merit joy. The tzadikim merit light and the upright merit joy.” Rashi points out that the upright are on a higher level than the tzadikim. The commentaries ask how Rashi could explain that the upright are greater than tzadikim. Aren’t tzadikim also upright? It must be that while tzadikim keep all of the individual mitzvos but the upright weave all of those details together and go beyond the letter of the law. An upright person sanctifies himself by avoiding even certain things which are permissible because he listens to the voice of Hashem within himself. Hashem’s will is not the sum of everything which is technically permissible or forbidden. An upright Jew asks himself what Hashem *wants*.

The lack of uprightness was the central theme of Yeshaya Hanavi’s rebuke of the Jewish people in the haftara of Shabbos Chazon (Yeshaya 1:2, 4). He wrote

“Children I have raised and exalted, yet they have rebelled against Me... Woe to a sinful nation, a people heavy with sin, children of evildoers, corrupt children. They have abandoned Hashem, they have angered the Holy One of Israel, they have turned backwards.” One might think that these harsh psukim must refer to the worst nonobservant Jews who are heretics and idol worshipers.

But it is clear from the psukim later in the perek that the Navi is speaking to very “frum” Jews! The Navi says (Id. at 12, 14-15), “When you come to appear before Me [in the Beis Hamikdash on Pesach Shavuos and Sukkos], who requested this of you, to trample My courts? ... Your New Moons and your appointed seasons My soul hates, they are a burden to me. I am weary of enduring them... Even when you pray at length, I do not hear; your hands are full of blood.” The Navi is speaking to Jews who were careful to come to the Beis Hamikdash three times a year. This shows that they were also careful with all of the laws of purity and impurity. They also kept Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh. And not only did they daven, but they “pray at length!” Yet Hashem despises their service?

Why did Hashem reject their service? Because they attempted to keep all of the details while forgetting about the heart of Yiddishkeit. They were not upright. They did not study the ultimate mussar sefer, the book of Devarim. They kept only “checklist Yiddishkeit,” without ever asking “What does Hashem want? What will make Him happy?” They made no effort to fulfill “And you shall do what is upright and good in the eyes of Hashem.” They managed to keep the mitzvos but turned away from G-d. Hashem told them through the Navi, “This is not what I asked of you! This is not what I wanted!” Hashem told them (Id. at 16-17), “Wash,

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As the Play Comes to an End, Don't Opt Out



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It is a strange statement in the Jerusalem Talmud: *The Sages said: Every generation in which the Beit HaMikdash, the Holy Temple, is not rebuilt in its days, is considered as if it was destroyed in its days.*

Is this fair to say, that a generation which did not see the rebuilding of the Holy Temple is virtually responsible for its destruction? There have been many generations with extraordinary Tzaddikim who were dedicated to G-d and man in exemplary ways. It seems unjust to declare that each of them merited to have the Beit HaMikdash destroyed during their days, just because it was not built in their days.

What is more, if this statement is taken literally, then the generation in which the Beit HaMikdash will finally be rebuilt will somehow have to manage to be greater than any of its predecessors. For all the previous generations were considered destroyers of the Temple; yet that final generation manages to trump all other generations of Jews preceding it.

Moreover, it seems discouraging to tell us, that all the previous generations, filled with so much spiritual richness, and so many great souls—they all did not merit redemption, and were considered responsible for its destruction. Is it our generation, far weaker and lower, which will merit the rebuilding? If they could not do it, how can we?

The Talmud may be teaching us something very different—and providing us with a deeper perspective on Jewish history.

We often view history as disjointed narratives transpiring through numerous generations. Am I really connected to

my great-great-grandmother who lived in Russia two centuries ago? How about my great great grandfathers who lived 800 years ago in Spain, Germany, Italy, France, or Russia?

Judaism sees history as a single book—each page continuing the story of the past, and all the chapters together create a harmonious book. History is not a combination of many “short stories,” but rather it is like a single novel that consists of an aggregated narrative. Not only are we connected to our past. We keep them alive; they continue to live and function through us, genetically and spiritually.

Bringing redemption to the world, says the Talmud, will be the result of the accumulation of the achievements of the Jewish people from the time of the destruction to this very day. It is not one generation or another which does the job; each generation contributes to the work of mending our world and bringing Geulah-Redemptive consciousness to our planet.

The question of how we can do it if they did not do it, is missing the point. Imagine someone building for many years a super massive bonfire to cast light and warmth all around; this individual even pours the kerosene all over the logs, so the fire can catch easily. He just did not strike the match to light the fire. Now I come along and say, if he did not manage to light the fire, how can I?

But I was given the match. All I need to do is strike the match and the fire ascends.

The sweat, blood, and tears of the Jewish people over the last two thousand years—as well as the laughter, the joy, the faith, and the love—is all present and

accumulative, integrated like a sum in calculus, or like a vessel that is filled one drop after another, until it is full. We are not filling the vessel that previous generations could not fill; we are adding our drop of water to take it over the top.

Every generation of Jews builds the Beit HaMikdash in its day—every generation continues to fill our world with Divine light, love, hope, and healing. Every one of us, every day, builds a world of redemption, constructing part of the Holy Temple in his or her corner of the universe.

Each of us comes from generations of grandmothers who lit Shabbos candles every Friday before sunset, welcoming the holy day into their homes, as warm, loving tears flowed down unto the Shabbos table. Where did all those tears go? Do you think they faded into oblivion?

Their tears made their way into the soil of Jewish history, irrigating our souls, and giving us the strength to grow and blossom. Every tear of every Jewish mother over 2000 years became the water that was absorbed into our roots and seeds, providing us with the strength, resolve, and courage to continue to live and love. Every tear went into that vessel.

What then does the Talmud mean? Which generation is the one who we say that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed in its time?

It is the generation that gives up on this historic mission and chooses instead to no longer care to add whatever it can to all the good that has already been accumulated before it. It is the generation that opts out of the continuous journey from exile to redemption, from darkness to light, from violence to peace, from fragmentation to

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Matos-Masei: Kindnesses, Baderech



Rabbi Judah Mischel

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Rav Yehoshua Yogel zt'l, was born in Lodz, Poland, and was a student of the famed Lithuanian yeshivah in Kletzk, where he studied with the great Rav Aharon Kotler. After his *aliyah* in 1936, Rav Yogel studied at Yeshivat Merkaz HaRav and played a formidable role in rebuilding Torah in the Land of Israel after the war. While active in Mizrahi, a Religious Zionist movement, he maintained close relationships with both the Chazon Ish and Rav Shach, the latter an old yeshiva-mate who considered Rav Yogel a 'dear friend'.

Rav Yogel was part of a unique *chaburah* of great teachers and builders during the most turbulent and transitional times in modern Jewish history. One of Rav Yogel's mentors was the accomplished gaon, Rav Zvi Yehuda Meltzer, a disciple of the Alter of Novardok and eldest son of the Rav Isser Zalman Meltzer, Rav of Pardes Chana and founder of numerous *yeshivot*.

Rav Meltzer's son in law, Rav Yehuda Amital, zt'l was a unique *talmid chacham*, visionary and builder of Torah as well. After his family was killed in Auschwitz, Rav Amital came to Eretz Yisrael, fought in the Haganah and was the founding Rosh Yeshiva of Har Etzion (a.k.a "the Gush"). Respected for his penetrating genius and fierce independence, Rav Amital was beloved as a humble *gadol b'Yisrael* and deeply caring and dedicated rebbi.

In Pardes Chana, Rav Yogel and Rav Amital worked together at "HaMidrashiya", one of the first *yeshiva* high schools with a dual curriculum of Torah and secular studies. In those days a great debate raged in the world of academia and Biblical criticism regarding the alleged multiple authorship of *Sefer Yeshayahu*.

The traditional response was to not even entertain questions aimed at undermining the singular authorship and Divine source of the *Navi*.

One day, a passionate student challenged Rav Amital and asked him such a question directly. Much to the student's surprise, Rav Amital answered simply that he did not know. The frank honesty of the response diffused the conversation — and disappointed Rav Yogel. "How could you say that you don't know the answer?!"

Rav Amital replied: "Do you think this *shmendrik* is really bothered by the integrity of the Book of Yeshayahu? He's looking for an excuse to stop wearing *tefillin* and keeping the *mitzvot*! With my answer, I wanted to show that I, despite not knowing how to answer every question, continue to put on *tefillin* every day."



Our *sedra*, Parshas Devarim, is always read on the Shabbos immediately preceding Tishah B'av. In Sefer Devarim, also called *Mishneh Torah*, "The Review of the Torah", Moshe Rabbeinu begins to review the triumphs and travails (mainly travails) of Am Yisrael in the Midbar. At one point, telling Am Yisrael:

"*Eichah*, 'how' can I bear your trouble, your burden, and your strife all by myself?" (1:12)

In Jewish consciousness and language, *Eichah* is a plea, a desperate cry, from deep within — a question and lament, demanding "How? How could this be! How can this continue?" In a precious *minhag Yisrael*, the *baal korei* publicly chanting the Torah emphasizes the connection of this *pasuk* with the essence of Tisha B'Av, by *leyning* it with the mournful melody of *Megillas Eichah*. This fleeting hint at lam-

entation awakens our hearts to reflect on the unimaginable devastation and loss, suffering, death and exile experienced with and symbolized by the *Churban*, the destruction.

Midrash (*Eichah Rabbah*, 1:1) lists three examples of prophets who used the term *eichah*: Moshe Rabbeinu, Yeshayahu, and Yirmiyahu. Each employed the word to express different stages and experiences throughout our history.

On Tisha b'Av we join the Navi Yirmiyahu in his plea of *eichah*, asking, crying out in confusion, passionate sorrow and pain: 'How can this go on?! How can Klal Yisrael continue to exist in this state of *churban*?' The Megillah begins with the question and challenge: '*Eichah!* How can it be that the City, which was so full of life, now sits alone?'

A broken hearted cry of *Eichah* to Hashem can actually be heard as a form of prayer. Not every question has an answer, but not every question is asking for an 'answer'. The openness of uncertainty, not knowing and questioning itself reveals the presence of deeper faith — in fact the essence of belief. Cognitive and spiritual dissonance can only appear on a backdrop of resonance. The destruction of Hashem's City bothers us because deep down we know it is an Eternal City. The paradox is almost too much for our human mind and heart to bear: "How can this be?!"



Zohar HaKadosh (*Bereishis*, 29a) directs our attention to the first time the word איכה appears in Torah. Following the tragic error of Adam *haRishon* eating from *Eitz ha-Daas*, he is filled with shame and 'hides', seeking to escape the repercussions of his actions. Before Adam and Chavah face banishment from Gan Eden, the root ex-

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Valuable Vision

Mrs. Shira Smiles

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The Jewish People does not only celebrate holidays of joy and grandeur. We also devote time to focusing on our communal failures and tragedies. In fact, we remember the time of our greatest loss, the destruction of our Holy Temple, for a full three week period, from the seventeenth of Tamuz to the ninth of Av.

Such a long focus on our tragedy would appear to be depressing. However, it all depends on one's perspective. If we focus on ourselves, on our failings and subsequent suffering, commemorating the tragedy for so long is self-defeating. But if we concentrate on Hakodosh Boruch Hu, understand whatever happens to us is through His Divine guidance and Providence, then we can accept our tribulations with an element of joy, knowing that these, too, are a manifestation of G-d's love for us. We can understand that Hashem, our Father, has raised us, but we have rebelled against Him. Nevertheless, although He is forced to reprimand us and punish us, He does so out of love, so that we will correct our ways and grow properly, as any parent raising his child would do. Can we recognize G-d's love in

difficult times, when His mercy seems hidden from us? We must not give up hope during times of trial. Rather, we must pursue Him, beseeching Him to lovingly show us His face.

This is the concept that lies at the heart of Shabbat Chazon, the Shabbat of vision, the last of the three haftorot of tragedy before Tisha b'Av, one for each of the three weeks. The designation comes from the first word of this week's Haftorah, "The vision of Isaiah..." The visions of these haftorot seem full of impending doom, for they foretell the quickly approaching hordes that will overrun Israel and destroy the Holy Temple. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, one can discern the glimmer of hope even in these foreboding prophecies.

How does Jeremiah, in the first Haftorah, envision this prophecy? He sees a rod of an almond tree. Within this image lies the hope that will turn despair into future joy. Right now, this rod is a mere stick, barren of any leaves, buds or fruit. But in twenty-one days, the almond tree will blossom and bear fruit. So, too, in the twenty-one days from the 17th of Tamuz to the ninth of Av, the days that seem darkest and most

empty for our nation, the potential for growth and rejuvenation is implanted within us. This desolation was necessary so that new spiritual life would spring forth, much as the gardener prunes the trees to allow the sunlight in so that the new growth will be vibrant and healthy.

The greater vision of this time is to internalize Hashem's love for us, in good times and bad, and to open our hearts to His Presence, to know Him each day, and to return Him to our hearts, the seat of our emotions and passions.

At the end of Tisha b'Av, we bless the new moon, the symbol of new hope. It will reach its fullness on the fifteenth of Av, traditionally a day of great joy and dancing.

Hashem supports us, Hashem loves us, in the days of our joy, and especially in the days of our tribulation and exile. We must look beyond the barren rod to its potential. The almond branch will bear fruit, and our term of exile will help perfect us so that we may merit the final redemption speedily, in our days.

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perience of all exiles, Hashem calls out to Adam, seeking him out to take responsibility: אַיְכָה, *Ayekah*, "Where are you?" In Hebrew, 'ayekah' has the same spelling as 'eichah'.

If we look outward and seek answers or explanations for our suffering, Hashem may not give us a direct answer. He may,

instead, redirect our focus inward, demanding that we ask ourselves "Where am I? What responsibility do I bear for the continued exile of Knesses Yisrael from her eternal homeland?"

Some questions and challenges addressed to our Creator might always remain unanswerable. If Mashiach has not come

before this Tisha b'Av, G-d forbid, perhaps instead of focusing only on the unanswerable questions around our inexplicable exile, we ought to shift our emphasis inward, and ask ourselves the pointed, yet faithful, question: *Ayekah?* "Where am I in all this — and what must I do to change it?"

Father Figure



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

Only in Judaism is G-d called “Father.” In most religions, the “father” is the mediating human figure, the one before whom one confesses that there is no access to G-d...

Only in Judaism is this said: “He is your Maker, your Father”, “If I am your Father, where is My honor?”

While the mother, according to psychoanalysts, is the one who gives us the ability to love, the father is the one who gives us the belief that we are worthy of love. He is the first “external” figure in a girl’s life, the one who has no immediate physical contact, is the recognition from the outside of a small and soft being’s capacity to be loved.

Are we worthy of love? “Out of hatred for us, G-d brought us out of Egypt,” said the Children of Israel in this week’s *parashah*,

when they felt so small, and the wonderful Rashi wrote in his extraordinary interpretation, “Really, however, He loved you, but you hated Him. What is in your own mind about your friend, you imagine is what is in his mind about you.” You are not only a reflection of the father, Rashi said, the father is also a reflection of you. A father should also feel worthy of love.

In Rabbi Nachman’s wonderful story, “The Rabbi and His Only Son,” he tells of a disappointed father. His wise son is only the “Smaller Luminary” an admirer who is not influenced by his own power. The son asks to go to a certain *tzaddik*, the father does not really understand him, although he tries, and the son dies...

It seems that this is a story of longing for a *tzaddik*, but Rabbi Nachman comforts a father, comforts all fathers: the child is actually asking you, father! He does not

want a “story of a rabbi and a son!” He wants an action of a father and a son... his longing for the *tzaddik* is a substitute for a father, for someone who will show the Smaller Luminary how great he is!

In the month of Av, we are all the Smaller Luminary. Maybe not what you dreamed of, Father, but we can not wait much longer! Let us feel worthy of love! Our Father, bless us, all of us, as one. We are all one in the light of Your face.

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cleanse yourselves... learn to do good, seek justice.” The way to rectify their sin was not to become frummer, but to become more upright.

We must look beyond checking off all of our religious obligations from our Yiddishkeit checklist and ask ourselves, “What does Hashem want from me right now? What would make Him proud?” May

we merit to live upright lives and may this Tisha B’Av be transformed from a day of mourning into a day of celebration as we greet Moshiach with the arrival of the final redemption.

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unity, and from brokenness to wholeness. It is the generation that says, “I am not part of this any longer. I am done.” It allows all the love, tears, kisses, and truth to stop in its tracks and not allow the train to reach

its ultimate destination—the space of Geulah, of complete redemption.

Every soul which ever lived contributed to the Third Temple. Then they moved backstage, to allow the next generation to

continue the work. But they never really left; they are just backstage.

Now it is our job to strike the match, and fill the world with light, to complete the play. When each of them will emerge from backstage and take the bow.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin

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In Parshat Devarim, Moshe describes the borders of the land he assigned to the tribes of Reuven and Gad:

וְהָעֲרָבָה וְהַיַּרְדֵּן וְגִבְלֵי מִכְנֹזֵת וְעַד יַם הָעֲרָבָה יָם
הַמֶּלַח תַּחַת אֲשֶׁרֶת הַפִּסְגָּה

"It included also the Arava, with the Jordan and its banks, from the Kinneret down to the Arava Sea, the Sea of Salt, beneath the slopes of the Pisga on the east" (Devarim 3:17)

This verse uses two phrases to describe the Dead Sea – the "Arava Sea" and the "Sea of Salt." Let's take a look at these terms for the Dead Sea, as well as some others.

The Arava Sea – יַם הָעֲרָבָה – gets its name from the desert Arava plain that it borders. It derives from the root ערב, one of the roots with the most varied meanings in Hebrew, not all of which are connected. The origin of ערָבָה is unclear. One theory is that it originally meant "remote region" and is

therefore connected to the sense of ערַב as "to depart." This would make it related to the word עָרַב – "evening," literally when the sun sets (departs).

The other term in the verse, יָם הַמֶּלַח, is the one used in Hebrew today. The origin of the name should be obvious to anyone who has visited it – since it is one of the world's saltiest bodies of water. The word מֶלַח – "salt" is unrelated to מַלְאָךְ – "sailor," the latter of which is ultimately of Sumerian origin. However, it is related to the English word "mallow," since Greek borrowed the Semitic word for salt to describe a plant growing in salty marshes. So מָלַח and marshmallow are cognates.

Another biblical word for the Dead Sea is הַיָּם הַמְּקוֹדְמוֹנִי – "the Eastern Sea," as found in Zechariah 14:8. This is also a geographic name, due to the sea being on the eastern border of Eretz Yisrael. The root קדַם

generally means "forward" or "front." For those of us accustomed to seeing maps with north on top, it sounds strange to have east be in front. But as the English word "orient" attests, finding one's bearings was done when facing east.

Another English term for the Dead Sea was Lake Asphaltites. This comes from Greek and Roman sources, including Josephus. This term recalls the word "asphalt," which derives from the Greek *asphaltos*. There is no question that the Dead Sea was associated with asphalt, found along its shores.

But the origin of the phrase "Lake Asphaltites" is less clear. Perhaps it was named for the asphalt found in the area. However, another theory claims that it was actually the asphalt named for the sea, which in turn got its name from another Hebrew term: יַם שְׁפֹלָה – "the low sea", fitting its location as the lowest place on earth.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh

Mizrachi Melbourne

A person's name appears twice in Parshat Devarim. The second time his name is spelled differently from the first time. Who is he?

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

The name Yehoshua appears twice in the Parsha. The first time it appears in 1:38, his name is spelled in the normal way with one Vav as "יהושֻׁעַ"; the second time his name appears in 3:21 it is spelt with two Vavs as "יהושֻׁעִים". The Chida in his Sefer Chomat Anoch explains this is because, in the latter verse, Moshe describes how he charged Yehoshua, saying, "You have seen with your own eyes all that Hashem has done to these two kings; so shall He do to all the kingdoms into which you shall cross over". Indeed Yehoshua was to experience miracles similar to Moshe in defeating the enemies. One of these was the stopping of the sun in Givon as described in Sefer Yehoshua 10:12. At that time Yehoshua's name would become great. This is hinted to here in the verse, by the full spelling of his name with two Vavs, which does not occur anywhere else in the Torah.



THIS WEEK in Jewish History

- July 22, 1920:** Keren Hayesod (United Israel Appeal), the worldwide organization to fund the development of the Jewish homeland, was founded in London.
- Av 5, 5332 (1572):** Yahrzeit of R. Yitzchak Luria (Ha-Ari), one of the most important figures ever in Jewish mysticism, who revolutionized the study of Kabbalah.
- July 24, 1922:** The 51 countries of the League of Nations unanimously granted Britain the mandate to oversee the establishment of the Jewish National Home in Israel.
- July 25, 1994:** Prime Minister Yitzchak Rabin signed a peace agreement with King Hussein of Jordan.
- July 26, 1267:** The Inquisition was established in Rome by Pope Clement IV, lasting 559 years until its final victim.
- Av 9, 2449 (1312 BCE):** The 12 scouts sent by Moshe 40 days earlier to survey the Land of Israel returned with a report that discouraged the people. Every year thereafter for 40 years, more than 15,000 Jews died on Av 9.
- Av 10, 3174 (586 B.C.E.):** The First Temple was completely destroyed by a fire which was started by the Babylonian general Nebuzaradan on the preceding evening.

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