



שבת פרשת דברים/שבת חזון
SHABBAT PARSHAT DEVORIM/CHAZON
 9 AV/JULY 21

Haftorah is Isaiah 1:1-27. Don't say צדקתך צדק. One may drink wine and eat meat even at Seudah Shlishit. No food after 8:23 PM.

FRIDAY NIGHT
EARLIEST CANDLES - 6:52 PM
MINCHA - 7:00 PM
CANDLE LIGHTING - 8:06 PM
TZAIT - 9:09 PM

SATURDAY
CHUMASH SHIUR - 8:00 AM
HASHKAMA - 8:20 AM
SHACHARIT MAIN - 9:00 AM
LAST KRIAT SHEMA - 9:22 AM
MINCHA - 6:00 PM
SHKIA - 8:23 PM
SHABBAT ENDS - 9:08 PM

תשעה באב – נדחה
TISHA B'AV (Postponed)
 10 AV/JULY 22

SATURDAY NIGHT
MAARIV - 9:30 PM

SUNDAY
SHACHARIT - 8:30 AM
MINCHA/MAARIV - 7:50 PM
FAST ENDS - 9:02 PM

CONGREGATION AHAVAT ACHIM
18-25 SADDLE RIVER ROAD
FAIR LAWN, NJ 07410-5909
201-797-0502
WWW.AHAVATACHIM.ORG

BULLETIN INFORMATION
TO REQUEST A BULLETIN
ANNOUNCEMENT (BY 7:00 PM
WEDNESDAY) OR DEDICATE A
BULLETIN FOR \$36 (\$54 W/PHOTO),
EMAIL SEPLOTNICK@GMAIL.COM

נא לא לדבר בשעת התפילה
 PLEASE NO CONVERSATION DURING SERVICES



WEEKDAY DAVENING INFORMATION

	Sunday (7/22)	Monday (7/23)	Tuesday (7/24)	Wednesday (7/25)	Thursday (7/26)	Friday (7/27)
Earliest Talit	4:28 AM	4:29 AM	4:30 AM	4:31 AM	4:32 AM	4:33 AM
Shacharit	8:30 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM	6:25 AM	6:15 AM	6:25 AM
Gedolah	1:39 PM	1:39 PM	1:39 PM	1:39 PM	1:39 PM	1:39 PM
Mincha - Maariv	7:50 PM	8:05 PM	8:05 PM	8:05 PM	8:05 PM	7:00 PM
Shkia	8:22 PM	8:21 PM	8:21 PM	8:20 PM	8:19 PM	
Fast Ends	9:02 PM					
Tzait	9:07 PM	9:06 PM	9:06 PM	9:05 PM	9:04 PM	



Mazal Tov to Audrey & Jack Bickel on the birth of a granddaughter, Kayla Rina, to Chanie & David.
 גדלוה לתורה ולחופה ולמעשים טובים
 May they raise her to Torah, chupah and good deeds.

Tisha B'av Night: Survivor testimonials in the lobby after Eicha (to encourage people to not break the mood of Tisha B'av upon leaving shul).

Tisha B'av Day:
 ☆ Explanatory Kinnot after Shacharit.
 ☆ Joint Tisha B'av camp/babysitting for kids ages 3-10, with YIFL (1:30-4:30pm)
 Cost is \$20 per child, with a cap of \$50 per family. Snacks provided.
 ☆ Movie, 3:00 PM, *Son of Saul* (and maybe a 2nd movie TBD).
 ☆ Tisha B'av "Kumzitz", 7:00 PM, with solemn songs to help us transition out of the intensity and mourning of Tisha B'av.

חמשה עשר באב/15th of Av, Friday, July 27



We conduct ourselves in a somewhat festive manner. We do not say Tachanun and we omit Tachanun at the preceding Mincha on Thursday. We say למנצח ואל ארץ אפים. For more information, see Page 4.

Ahavat Achim has arranged for the availability of private swimming lessons to be given by Joan Goldberg, with all proceeds to go to the Fair Lawn Mikvah Association. One 30-minute private lesson is \$25, and semi-private is \$15 per person (private pool is at 41-42 Rys Ter.), Fair Lawn. Contact Joan at 201-835-9412 or GoldberJoan@vahoo.com for more info.



Kiddush Information

- ☆ If you are around when the Rabbi says “על המחיה”, your assistance in clean up would be appreciated.
- ☆ To sponsor a Kiddush (\$1000/\$613/\$318 plus scotch) send an email to gplotnick@aol.com.

Adult Education



- ☆ CHUMASH CLASS - Shabbat morning before Shacharit.
- ☆ GEMARA SHIUR - One hour before Mincha, through the first Shabbat in November.
- ☆ DAYTIME TORAH VOYAGES - Thursdays at 2:00 PM.
- ☆ FUNDAMENTALS OF JEWISH THOUGHT - After Kiddush.
- ☆ PEREK ON THE LAWN, Pirkei Avot Periodic Shiur.

Gita Cooperwasser ע"ה

Youth Program

- ☆ Youth groups are on hiatus until September!



Tot Shabbat

- ☆ **This week's treat, story time featuring special guest Shelley Winchester!**



- ☆ July 21 - Aug. 18, Tot Shabbat, at 10:45 AM.
- ☆ July 28 - Shabbat Afternoon Parents and Me Play & Stay, 4:30 PM, at the Santacruz home, 4-01 Garvey Pl.



Perek on the Lawn

- ☆ Aug. 4 - Garfunkels', 12-56 Lyle Ter.
- ☆ Aug. 25
- ☆ Volunteer to host by emailing Larry at lardavbern@gmail.com.

Ahavat Achim Future Events

- ☆ Aug. 4 - Suedah Shlishit is sponsored in memory of Ilana Schwitzer's father, Aharon Rahabi Halevi ע"ה.
- ☆ Aug. 11 - Suedah Shlishit sponsored in honor of a Siyum on Mesechet Zevachim
- ☆ Aug. 12 - Torah dedication in memory of Nate's mother, Malka Schwitzer ע"ה
- ☆ Aug. 18 - BARuch Crawl, 4:00 PM, walking together to 3 separate homes to enjoy different foods with a different Bracha at each location. All are welcome!
- ☆ Sept. 25 - Kiddush is sponsored by the Winchester family on the Yartzeit of Steve's mother Helen Winchester, Miriam Hendl bas Shimon ע"ה
- ☆ March 9 - Yachad/Yavneh Shabbaton

Community Events

- ☆ July 22 – **Tisha B'Av Film Screenings**, screening Holocaust survivor films. Darchei Noam, Sun., 6:30 PM. For more info, click: [Screenings](#).
- ☆ August 5 – **Yoetzet Halacha Program: Ladies' Luau**, ladies only Darchei Noam event, at Galina Datkovsky's pool, 5 Chittenden Rd., Sunday, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM (RSVP, \$18 before 7/15, after \$25, at [Luau](#)).
- ☆ Aug. 12 – **Scavenger Hunt**, with Fair Lawn trivia and hustle. Darchei Noam, Sunday, 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM. Sign up with your team (up to 5 adults) at [Hunt](#).

SPECIAL HALACHOT REGARDING TISHA B'AV ON MOTZEI SHABBAT

Although Shabbat is the Ninth of Av, the fast and its observances are moved to Saturday night and Sunday. One may conduct themselves as on a normal Shabbat- all meals are eaten, including Suedah Shlishit. No preparations for the fast may be made [i.e., changing shoes, bringing kinnot books to shul] until Shabbat is completely over. The fast begins at sunset (8:23 PM), even though Shabbat is not yet over at that time.

Havdalah is not recited over wine on Saturday night, and the Bracha over Besamim is not recited. When Shabbat ends you must recite "Baruch Hamavdil Bein Kodesh Lechol" before driving to Shul, doing any work, or changing for Tisha B'Av. We will recite the Bracha over the candle in Shul. If you cannot make it to Shul, please recite the Bracha "Borei Meorei HaEish" as you would during Havdalah.

Sunday night, before breaking your fast, recite Havdalah over wine/grape juice as usual. Brachot over Besamim and candle are not recited. While the restrictions of the 9 Days usually extend until midday of the day after Tisha B'Av, because Tisha B'Av is delayed this year most restrictions to shower, shave and do laundry end immediately after the fast. However the restriction on meat and wine [other than Havdalah] remains for the night.

For those who must eat on Tisha B'Av, recite Havdalah before you eat. It is preferable that this be done over a drink other than wine/grape juice [i.e. fruit juice, beer, or sweetened tea]. Brachot over the Besamim and candle are not recited.

Points To Ponder

- ☆ (2nd aliyah) For discussion: We read verse 12 in this aliyah to the tune of Eichah. How does the content of the verse match up with the idea of tisha b'av?
- ☆ (3rd-4th) The Book of Deuteronomy is called "Mishneh Torah" a repetition of the Torah. Of all of the events of the previous 4 books what event does Moshe choose to highlight in introducing the Torah's repetition? Why?
- ☆ (5th) How does the Torah describe each of the groups the Jewish people defeated in battle in this aliyah?
- ☆ (7th) When is the last time we read about the events of this aliyah? Bonus: Why repeat it now in the intro?

Answers to Points To Ponder

- ☆ (2nd) A possible explanation is that the verse focuses on the fighting between Jews, which Chazal explain is the reason for the destruction of the second Temple.
- ☆ (3rd-4th) The story of the spies. It's the event that Moshe is most afraid will repeat itself and doom the Jewish people.
- ☆ (5th) Physically stronger than the Jewish people.
- ☆ (7th) In last week's parsha. Perhaps it's repeated now because Moshe is delivering a sermon, using the events that the people are familiar with and experiencing in the moment (or just recently) to drive home the broader message of the parsha which is that God is stronger than any adversary of the Jewish people and therefore trust in God is the greatest military strategy.

TISHA B'AV

We are prohibited to eat and drink, to wash ourselves (even in cold water), to apply oils to ourselves for pleasurable purposes, to have marital relations, and to wear leather shoes. Anyone who eats or drinks on Tisha B'Av will not participate in the rejoicing over the rebuilt Jerusalem. And all who mourn for Jerusalem will earn the right to take part in the rejoicing over the rebuilt Jerusalem. Even women who are pregnant or nursing, or people of weak constitution, for whom fasting is very difficult must fast on Tisha B'Av (this does not apply to someone who is truly ill), for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash is worth suffering for at least one day a year.

At Maariv we remove the curtain from the Aron HaKodesh, dim the lights, and sit on the floor or on a low stool. We do not sit on regular chairs or benches until after midday on Sunday [1:03 PM]. We have a public recitation of Eichah, followed by several Kinot on the night of Tisha B'Av.

Sunday, on awakening, we wash our fingers only until the knuckles (as one is drying his fingers while still moist he may rub them across his eyes to remove the sediment). We do not wear our Tallit or Tefillin until midday, but do wear Tallit Koton, but without making a Bracha over it.

At Shacharit three Aliyahs from Parshat Vaeschanan (Deut. 4:25-40) "כי תוליד בנים"; The Haftorah is read in the melody of Eichah from Jeremiah 8:13-9:23: "אסוף אסיפם". We say the lengthy collection of Kinot until their completion (preferably around noon).

At Mincha we put on Tallit and Tefillin, making the appropriate Brachot. From the Sefer Torah we have three Aliyahs in "ויחל"; the third Aliyah is the Maftir. The Haftorah is "דרשו" Isaiah 55:6-56:8 (until "אקבץ עליו לנקבציו"). In Shemonah Esrei include "נחם" in "בונה ירושלים" and "עננו" in "שומע תפלה". If one forgot "נחם" in "בונה ירושלים" he may say it before "ותחזינה עינינו" omitting the ending blessing "ברוך מנחם ציון", concluding only with "ותחזינה". The essence of a Fast Day is Teshuva - Repentance. This is particularly so for those sins that were responsible for the destruction of the Beit HaMikdash, and yet, which we remain guilty of today, such as: 1) profaning Shabbat, 2) not providing for the Torah education of one's small children, 3) not recite the Shema morning and night, 4) showing contempt for Torah scholars, 5) unwarranted hatred for each other, and 6) hardening their hearts to any fear of Divine retribution (see Gittin 55b).

Keep in mind that the major reason for the destruction of the Holy Temples was senseless hatred and Lashon Harah.

SUPPORT YOUR SHUL

Donate a Sefer, etc.

The shul has Siddurim & Machzorim (\$36) and Chumashim (\$54) available to be donated. Please contact Jeff Safier at robysafier@gmail.com for details.

Yahrzeit Plaques

Memorialize a loved one with a plaque for \$300 for members and \$450 for non-members. We will also endeavor to send you written notice of an upcoming yahrzeit, mention your loved one's name during the public Yizkor and list the yahrzeit in the Bulletin once a year. For more information, email Larry at lardavbern@gmail.com.

Scrip

Scrip is available from Men's Club. Email David at dmgarfunkel@gmail.com. Pay using Paypal (treasurer@ahavatachim.org) or use Discover, MasterCard or Visa - email treasurer@ahavatachim.org for details.

Mishebayrach

If you've made a Mishebayrach you've pledged to give Tzedakah on behalf of those for whom you asked Hashem's blessing. Contributions to the shul are appropriate and can be made via Paypal to treasurer@ahavatachim.org, or via MasterCard, Visa or Discover by sending info to Steve Winchester (contact him at treasurer@ahavatachim.org). If by check indicate on its face "Aliyah Donation."

David Schwitzer^{ר"ע} Social Hall

Please contact Ben Lang at bmmnpl@aol.com to book the David Schwitzer^{ר"ע} Social Hall for an event or special occasion. \$250 per simcha (members)/\$325 for Associates/\$400 paid in advance for non-members, plus the cost of any additional clean up (plus a \$150 security/cleaning deposit refunded when the social hall is returned in the condition it started in). Private caterers must be approved in advance by the Rabbi.

Men's Club

Please contact Elliot Greene at egreene@acm.org to join the Men's Club.

Honoraria

Contributions to acquire honoraria in memory or honor of a loved one are welcome. The available Honoraria list will be provided upon request by contacting Steven Plotnick at seplotnick@gmail.com.

Mitzvah Cards

Want mitzvah cards, contact Eita Latkin at 791-8940 or parentsof3@aol.com. Cost is \$3 per card. Also can be ordered in bulk - ten cards for \$25, which you send out yourself privately.

SUPPORT YOUR SHUL

TU B'AV

Tu B'Av was a joyous holiday in the days of the Beit Hamikdash marking the beginning of the grape harvest. Yom Kippur marked the end of the grape harvest. On both days the unmarried girls of Jerusalem would dress in white garments and go out to dance in the vineyards, and there were no holy days as happy for the Jews as Tu B'Av and Yom Kippur [Ta'anit 30b-31a.] The holiday also celebrated the wood-offering brought in the Temple [Nechemiah 10:35]). Other reasons for celebrating on Tu B'Av :

- While the Jews wandered in the desert for forty years, female orphans without brothers could only marry within their tribe, to prevent their father's inherited land from passing to other tribes. On 15 Av of the 40th year the ban was lifted.
- That same year, the last generation forbidden to enter Israel died out.
- The Tribe of Benjamin was allowed to intermarry with the other tribes after the incident of the Concubine of Gibeah (see Judges 19-21).
- Cutting wood for the Beit Hamikdash's main altar was completed for the year.
- Roman occupiers permitted burial of the massacre victims at Bethar. Miraculously, the bodies had not decomposed even after over a year.



Sisterhood Annual Coat Drive, for Center For Hope and Safety, will be Sunday, November 4 (Mitzvah Day in Bergen County), 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM, 36-02 Hale Pl., Fair Lawn. Gently worn, not torn, outer garments for all ages. For more info, contact Audrey at bickelar@aol.com.



The Sisterhood is looking for vibrant dedicated women to take over its leadership reigns, shape it in accordance with their vision, and prepare it to serve the next generation of women in the shul. Please step up, speak to Aryeh, and let's keep the momentum going!



Starting September 1, there will be some changes to our Hashkama minyon on Shabbat, including (1) beginning at 8:00 AM, (2) there will be a short D'var Torah each Shabbat, (3) regular shul announcements will be made, and (4) on applicable Yomim Tovim, there will be a Yizkor appeal. If interested in coming regularly or on occasion, please email jostu23@yahoo.com, as we are going to need to get commitments and take a head count before each Shabbat until the minyon is firmly established.



You can help Ahavat Achim's finances and it won't cost you a cent! Just make your regular Amazon purchases via this link: <https://smile.amazon.com/>. After a one-time set up designating Congregation Ahavat Achim of Fair Lawn as your preferred charity, nothing more for you to do except make your regular Amazon purchases.

- Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Ahavat Achim.
- AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service.

MISCELLANEOUS

Ahavat Achim Membership/ Hospitality

Contact Arnie at aspier@verizon.net for membership details. For Shabbat hospitality contact Melanie at mkwestel@gmail.com.

Bikkur Cholim/Chesed Committee

If someone needs a visit/assistance, contact Sara at saralevine06@gmail.com or Mary Lisa at kenkatter541@gmail.com.

Personal Announcements

Various life cycle events related to members are announced in the bulletin (e.g., births, bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings and deaths, as well as travel to/from Israel to study). We also welcome new members. Other personal announcements are not appropriate except as part of the bulletin's dedication (a \$36 cost - \$54 with photo).

Numbers & Info

☆ ERUV – To subscribe for updates, email fairlawneruv@groups.io. Check status at <https://groups.io/g/fairlawneruv> or call 201-254-9190.

☆ MIKVAH – 201-796-0350. At Shomrei Torah, 9 PM–10:30 PM, Motzei Shabbat from 1¼ hours after Shabbat ends for 1½ hours. Kaylim Mikvah: Sun. 10 AM-3 PM

☆ TWITTER: [AhavatAchimFL](https://twitter.com/AhavatAchimFL)

☆ FACEBOOK: facebook.com/groups/ahavat.achim/

☆ INSTAGRAM: instagram.com/ahavatachimfl/?hl=en

☆ FLICKR: flickr.com/photos/ahavatachim/albums

Shul Calendar

☆ To add events to the shul calendar email Larry at lardavbern@gmail.com



Swimming Lessons

All Proceeds go to the Fair Lawn Mikvah Association



Overcome your fear of swimming or just improve your strokes.

Joan Goldberg specializes in swimming lessons for kids and adults who have been afraid to swim.

30-minute private lesson is \$25

30-minute semi-private lesson is \$15 per person

Private Pool is located at 41-42 Rys Terrace, Fair Lawn

Contact Joan Goldberg at 201-835-9412

Or GoldbergJoan@yahoo.com

Tot* Shabbat: Summer Edition*

For kids 5 and under
Starting at 10:45 AM

SHABBAT SONGS, ALEF BET, TEFILLAH,
FREE PLAY AND A SNACK WITH BRACHOT



Special Story
Time with
Shelley
Winchester!



Info: totshabbataa@gmail.com
At Congregation Ahavat Achim in Fair Lawn, NJ

SHABBOS
DAY

PARENTS AND ME

PLAY & STAY

Congregation Ahavat Achim



Kids 10 and
Under are
Welcome!

July 28
@ 4:30

Santacruz Home
40-01 Garvey Place



info: programmingaa@gmail.com

1ST ANNUAL

BARuch Crawl



Starting
@
4 PM



MEET, EAT, WALK & SAY A BRACHA

SHABBOS DAY, AUGUST 18

Adults, Kids & Teens

CONGREGATION
AHAVAT ACHIM

Fair Lawn, NJ

Starting @ the
Wigod Home
followed by
the Santacruz
Home + another
surprise venue

programmingaa@gmail.com



COVENANT & CONVERSATION

LIFE-CHANGING IDEAS IN THE PARSHA WITH RABBI SACKS



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I am deeply touched that *Covenant & Conversation* has been generously sponsored by *The Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation* in memory of Maurice and Divienne Wohl ז"ל. Maurice was a visionary philanthropist on a vast scale, driven throughout his life by a sense of Jewish responsibility. Divienne was a woman of the deepest humanity and compassion, who had a kind word for everyone. Together, they were a unique partnership of dedication and grace, for whom living was giving. Through their Charitable Foundation, they continue to bring blessings to Jewish communities around the world.



THE MAURICE WOHL
CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

— RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

The Effective Critic

Devarim 2018 / 5778

The first verse of Devarim, the fifth and culminating book of the Torah, sounds prosaic. “These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan—in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahav.” There is no hint of drama in these words. But the sages of the Talmud found one, and it is life-changing.

What is odd in the verse is the last place-name: Di-zahav. What and where is this place? It hasn't been mentioned before, nor is it mentioned again anywhere else in Tanakh. But the name is tantalising. It seems to mean, “Enough gold.” Gold is certainly something we have heard about before. It was the metal of which the calf was made while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Torah from God. This was one of the great sins of the wilderness years. Might the enigmatic mention of a place called “Enough gold” have something to do with it?

From these clues and cues, the sages inferred a remarkable drama. This is what they said:

Moses spoke audaciously [hiti'ach devarim] towards Heaven . . . The school of R. Jannai learned this from the words Di-zahav. What do these words mean? They said in the school of R. Jannai: Thus spoke Moses before the Holy One, blessed be He: “Sovereign of the Universe, the silver and gold [zahav] which You showered on Israel until they said, ‘Enough’ [dai], was what caused them to make the calf . . . R. Hiyya bar Abba said: It is like the case of a man who had

a son. He bathed him and anointed him and gave him plenty to eat and drink and hung a purse around his neck and set him down at the door of a house of ill-repute. How could he help sinning?!

Moses, in this dramatic re-reading, is portrayed as counsel for the defence of the Jewish people. Yes, he admits to God, the people did indeed commit a sin. But it was You who provided them with the opportunity and the temptation. If the Israelites had not had gold in the wilderness, they could not have made a golden calf.

“Moses, in this dramatic re-reading, is portrayed as counsel for the defence of the Jewish people.”

Besides which, who needs gold in a wilderness? There was only one reason the Israelites had gold with them: because they were following Your instructions. You said: “Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbour and every woman is to ask her neighbour for objects of silver and gold” (Ex. 11:2). Therefore, do not blame them. Please, instead, forgive them.

This is a wonderful passage in its own right. It represents what the sages called *chutzpah kelapei Shemaya*, “audacity toward heaven.”² (We tend to think of *chutzpah* as a Yiddish word, but it is in fact Aramaic and comes to us from the Babylonian Talmud). The question, though, is: why did the sages choose this passage to make the point?

After all, the episode of the Golden Calf is set out in full in Exodus 32-34. The Torah tells us explicitly how daring Moses was in prayer. First, when God tells him what the people have done, Moses immediately responds by saying, “Lord, why should Your anger burn against Your people? ... Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that He brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth?’” (Ex. 32:11-12). This is audacious. Moses tells God that, regardless of what the people have done, it will be His reputation that will suffer if it becomes known that He did not lead the Israelites to freedom, but instead killed them in the desert.

Then, descending the mountain and seeing what the people have done, he does his single most daring act. He smashes the tablets, engraved by God Himself. The audacity continues. Moses goes back up the mountain and says to God, “These people have indeed committed a great sin. They have made themselves an idol of gold. But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book You have written.” (Ex. 32:31-32). This is unprecedented language. This should be the passage to which the sages

¹ Berakhot 32a.

² Sanhedrin 105a.

attached an account of Moses' boldness in defence of his people. Why then attach it here, to an obscure place-name in the first verse of Deuteronomy, where it is radically out of keeping with the plain sense of the verse.³

I believe the answer is this. Throughout Devarim Moses is relentless in his criticism of the people: "From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord... You have been rebellious against the Lord ever since I have known you." (Deut. 9:7, 24). His critique extends to the future: "If you have been rebellious against the Lord while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!" (Deut. 31:27). Even the curses in Deuteronomy, delivered by Moses himself,⁴ are bleaker than those in Leviticus 26 and lack any note of consolation.

Criticism is easy to deliver but hard to bear. It is all too easy for people to close their ears, or even turn the criticism around ("He's blaming us, but he should be blaming himself. After all, he was in charge"). What does it take for criticism to be heeded? The people have to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the leader is always ready to defend them. They have to know that he cares for them, wants the best for them, and is prepared to take personal risks for their sake. Only when people know for certain that you want their good, do they listen to you when you criticise them.

That is what led the sages to give the interpretation they did to the place-name Di-zahav in the first verse of Devarim. Why was Moses able to be as critical as he was in the last month of his life? Because the people he was talking to knew that he had defended them and their parents in his prayers for Divine forgiveness, that he had taken the risk of challenging God, that he had declined God's offer to abandon the Israelites and begin again with him – in short, that his whole life as a leader was dedicated to doing what was the best for the people. When you know that about someone, you listen to them even when they criticise you.

One of my all-time heroes is the great Hassidic rabbi, Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev (1740-1809). Many stories are told of how he interceded with Heaven on behalf of the Jewish people. My favourite, doubtless

“His whole life as a leader was dedicated to doing what was best for the people. When you know that about someone, you listen to them even when they criticise you.”

³ Note, for example, that Rashi gives almost the opposite interpretation.

⁴ According to the Talmud, Megillah 31b, Moses delivered the curses in Leviticus but the words themselves came from God; the curses in Deuteronomy were formulated by Moses himself. Obviously, the fact that they are in the Torah means that God ratified them.

apocryphal, story is this: Levi Yitzhak once saw a Jew smoking in the street on Shabbat. He said, “My friend, surely you have forgotten that it is Shabbat today.” “No,” said the other, “I know what day it is.” “Then surely you have forgotten that smoking is forbidden on Shabbat.” “No, I know it is forbidden.” “Then surely, you must have been thinking about something else when you lit the cigarette.” “No,” the other replied, “I knew what I was doing.” At this, Levi Yitzhak turned his eyes upward to heaven and said, “Sovereign of the universe, who is like Your people Israel? I give this man every chance, and still he cannot tell a lie!”

The great leaders of Israel were the great defenders of Israel, people who saw the good within the not-yet-good. That is why they were listened to when they urged people to change and grow. That is how the sages saw Moses. This was the man who had the audacity to win forgiveness for the people who had made the Golden Calf.

It is easy to criticise, hard to defend. But the Midrash about Moses tells us a life-changing idea: If you seek to change someone, make sure that you are willing to help them when they need your help, defend them when they need your defence, and see the good in them, not just the bad. Anyone can complain, but we have to earn the right to criticise.

Shabbat Shalom.



LIFE-CHANGING IDEA #39

If you seek to change someone, make sure that you are willing to help them when they need your help, defend them when they need your defence, and see the good in them, not just the bad.



For more material from Rabbi Sacks, or to join his mailing list, please visit www.rabbisacks.org

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