

I. Summary

- **Moshe's discourse.** Moshe commenced this poetic discourse to the people by invoking the heavens and the earth as eternal witnesses to his warnings. He contrasted Hashem's faithfulness and justice with the corrupt ways of His chosen nation. If the Bnei Yisroel would but inquire of the older generation, they would be told how Hashem had selected Israel from among the other nations and had cared for them in the wilderness, as an eagle guards its young. However, in later generations, they may turn to other objects of worship. Consequently, Hashem promises to repay their lack of appreciation with the denial of His favor. Both young and old will be ravaged by disease and the cruelty of the enemy. It will only be His concern that the enemy should not gloat that will prevent Israel's complete destruction. Israel should, therefore, realize that it is only through Hashem's providence that they are able to fight off vastly superior armies. They should acknowledge that there is only one G-d whose might and power is complete.
- **Moshe ascends Mt. Nevo.** After completing this address, Moshe was told to ascend Mt. Nevo so that he would be able to see the Promised Land before he dies.

II. Divrei Torah

A. Lil'mode U'lilamed (Rabbi Mordechai Katz)

- The few chasing the many. In this Parsha, Moshe reminds the Jews that when they find themselves capable of defeating a vastly superior army, it is Hashem Who is responsible for their victory. There have been many occasions — including many in Israel's recent history — in which vastly outnumbered Jews have amazed the world by overcoming a powerful enemy. These instances serve to show that Hashem's mighty Hand was the decisive factor. During the Yom Kippur war, an Israeli paratrooper was about to parachute into Jerusalem. Snipers were shooting at the soldiers as they descended, so the paratroopers had to travel very lightly. The paratrooper assembled his backpack with great care. He then came upon his Tefillin; he was about to leave them behind on the plane, when he reconsidered. "These Tefillin have been with me wherever I've gone," he thought to himself. "Perhaps having the words of Hashem with me when I jump will bring me good fortune." Consequently, he put the bag into the backpack as well and jumped. The snipers' fire was there to greet him when he landed. He managed to scurry to safety and later examined himself and his belongings. The first thing he removed was his Tefillin. Immediately, he noticed a bullet hole in his Tefillin and the bullet lodged in the siddur which had been in his Tefillin bag! "It's a good thing I decided to take my Tefillin along," said the soldier. "If I hadn't, that bullet would have gone through my bag and into my body."

B. Living Each Week (Rabbi Abraham Twerski)

- Absorbing spirituality. "Listen, heavens, for I will speak . . . My teaching shall drop as the rain." The Rabbi of Kotzk interpreted the Hebrew text as "listen to heavenliness". A person may train his ear to distinguish musical notes and tones that the untrained ear cannot perceive. Similarly, says the Rabbi of Kotzk, our ears may be so accustomed to hearing only mundane matters that we are essentially deaf to spiritual matters. We must train our ears to be receptors of spirituality.
- Gratitude for prayer. "When I proclaim the Name of G-d, give greatness unto G-d." In the prayer of gratitude which the congregation recites during the repetition of the Amidah we say, "For which we give thanks to You, blessed is the G-d of gratitude." Rabbeinu Asher remarks that we give thanks to G-d for allowing us to express our gratitude to Him. The Hebrew word for prayer is "Tefillah," which means "a bond". When we recite Psalms or other songs of praise or when we ask G-d to provide for us, we enter into a relationship with him. Our prayers constitute communication with Hashem and when we communicate with Him we stand in a relationship with Him. This relationship is the most precious thing that a human being can have, and we should be grateful to G-d for giving us the opportunity to be close with Him. Prayer is thus a unique privilege.

C. Parsha Parables (Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky)

- Last hopes. In this week's Parsha, Moshe composes a final song for eternity, a highly mystical ballad filled with allusions to the future and dire predictions that were unfortunately fulfilled. One verse in particular reads, "When Hashem will have judged His people, He shall relent . . . when He sees that the enemy progresses and no one (feels that they) will be saved or assisted." The Talmud explains that his verse refers to the time when Hashem will ultimately redeem Israel and they will no longer be relentlessly persecuted. The Talmud asks, "when is that time?" One of the various answers is derived from this verse: "Moshiach will not come until the Jews have abandoned hope of redemption, as it states: He shall relent . . . when He sees that the enemy progresses and no one (feels that they) will be saved or assisted." Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky, z'tl asks, "how is it possible that a prerequisite for the actual deliverance will be the complete abandonment of a basic tenet of Judaism — hope for redemption? The answer is illustrated by the following story: The Maggid of Czernobel, a great Chasidic leader, was once approached by a childless woman who pleaded with him to bless her so that she could conceive. The Rebbe sighed, "I'm sorry, my dear child, there is nothing I can do." The woman was persistent. "You have helped so many others, why can't you help me?" The Maggid was unyielding. "I'm sorry, there is absolutely nothing I can do." The Rebbe's gabai (sexton) looked on in disbelief; he had never seen the Rebbe so unsympathetic. "Just wait," said the Rebbe to his gabai, "all will be clearly understood." The woman left the Magid's study and went into the foyer to weep. "Hashem, she cried, "if the Rebbe won't help me, then You are the only one I can turn to. Please, G-d, let me have a child!" The door to the study flew open and the Rebbe appeared with a broad smile on his face. "Come in, my child," he said warmly. "I heard your cry. Until now it was evident that you had misplaced your trust. You had relied solely on a Rebbe. Yet I have no magical power to grant wishes; I can only guide you in prayer. One must always put faith in Hashem. Now that you have realized that He is the one to ask, then He will be the one to answer." Only when we realize that redemption is in His hands will Hashem send us the true redemption.

D. Growth Through Torah (Rabbi Zelig Pliskin)

- Hashem always does for you what is in your best interest. "The Rock His acts are perfect, all of His Ways are just." The Chofetz Chaim once asked someone about how things were going for him. "It wouldn't hurt if things were a bit better," the man replied. "How can you possibly know that it wouldn't hurt?" replied the Chofetz Chaim. "Hashem knows better than you. He is merciful and compassionate. If He felt it would be good for you for things to be better, He definitely would have made them better. Certainly things are good for you the way there are." Things are not always the way we wish them to be, but they are always for our good. This awareness will give you an elevated feeling in your life. You have every right to try to improve your situation. But whenever you do all you can to try, and the situation is still not the way you would wish, work on internalizing the consciousness that Hashem is doing for you what is in your best interest.

E. Peninim on the Torah (Rabbi A.L. Scheinbaum)

- Faith in Hashem. "A G-d of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and right is He." Horav Y. Neiman, z'tl once heard the Chazon Ish, z'tl analogize perplexing events to a master tailor who takes shears and cuts up a beautiful piece of fabric. One can be assured that this is part of the process of creating a beautiful garment. Only a fool questions the tailor's motives. The same principle applies to Hashem's actions. We do not begin to understand His actions nor grasp why He makes these "incisions". We must realize, however, that we are merely flesh and blood with a limited level of understanding. The fact that we do not comprehend Hashem's actions should in no way diminish our belief in Him. The aged Rebbe of Yarislav once said that he merited living to a ripe old age because he never questioned Hashem. Rather, he accepted everything lovingly. He remarked that he feared that if he would seek an answer, Hashem would say to him, "If you don't understand, just come up to Heaven and I will explain everything to you." Since he was not quite ready to entertain such an idea, he never asked questions. May we merit to achieve the devotion inherent in this profound degree of faith in Hashem.