

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE**DEBARIM****Haftarah: Yeshayahu 1:1-27****JULY 29-30, 2017 6 AB 5777****The Fast of Tish'ah B'ab will begin on Monday night, July 31 and end on Tuesday night, August 1.****DEDICATION: Le'refua shelema Elisheva bat Esther
AND In Memory of Stephen S. Dweck, Shelomo ben Hanna**

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SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE
 EDITORS NOTES

On Tuesday, I attended the funeral of Stephen S Dweck. Stephen's mom Helen and my dad were cousins. Growing up within the community, a big family was the norm. Our dad was one of eleven and our mom is one of nine. When it came to cousins, it wasn't unusual for friends to have 60, 70 or 80 cousins. And if people expanded this to children of their parent's cousins, many easily could count a hundred or more. Often with those third cousins there was so many that the relationship never went beyond, "hi, how are you, how you doing"?

But with the Dwecks, it was very different. Stephen always called me Cuz as does his sister Adrienne and we all feel a tremendous bond with David. I referred to their parents as Aunt and Uncle as they did and do to our parents. Stephen was like an older cousin and was always someone who had my back. Strangely enough when my wife arrived in Central High School in Brooklyn, it was Adrienne who always looked out for her. It would be really cool if I can say that Adrienne introduced us too, but no she didn't.

Stephen even as a kid was a great teacher. He was always very focused especially when it came to basketball and the importance of fundamentals, drills and never ending practice. He gave you hope, but one would never be nearly as good as him. Still he often suppressed his intense desire to win and allowed me to play on his team. Stephen was truly a sportsman. I have to say Chazak UBaruch to Jeff Sutton who gave a powerful and emotional hesped on Tuesday. He truly moved everyone there speaking about their childhood on the court from the backyard on East 4th to the Flatbush gym. And then mentioning how they were friends and it gave him such pleasure to see his son Joe so close to Stephen's son. And he

longed to see a little Stephen playing with a little Jeff BH one day.

Growing up, I often bumped into Stephen in Manhattan and he never tired of making sure we knew the ropes. He knew everyone everywhere. After Chantelle and I married, we often ran into him in airports around the world. And he always greeted you with a hug. In recent years, even in his illness, he never complained. He always greeted with a "Hey Cuz" and a big hug.

As a child, we often went together to his grandfather's home. Dave Bibi would teach us and test us. I was so pleased to hear from Rabbi Simcha Silverman of Etz Chaim of Flatbush of Stephen's tremendous commitment to Torah even on days he was suffering from incredible pain. His grandfather's love of Torah lived in him as we see it living his children, may Hashem bless them.

There are some people who go out of their way to make others comfortable. There are some who go out of their way to assist others. Stephen was one of those people who was a master of both skills. He was proud to be a Kohen and you felt good when you received his blessing because you knew he meant it and he loved you.

On Monday we commemorated the Yahrzeit of Aharon HaKohen. It's interesting that we do so as we begin the nine days. The rabbis explain that the Mikdash was destroyed because of Sinat Chinam, baseless hatred. They teach that as the Mikdash – The Temple has yet to be rebuilt; we are still guilty of that sin. Perhaps we begin the nine days thinking about Aaron because if we lived our lives like Aaron did, then perhaps we would have ended this long and painful exile by now. Stephen was a true descendant of Aaron.

This week we begin the book of Devarim where Moses gives his final speech. He begins by giving the people rebuke, but does so in a somewhat indirect manner. He then states: Eicha Esah Levadi - how can I bear your trouble and your

burden and your quarrels alone?

We always read this portion before Tisha BeAv. And on Tisha BeAv, we sit and read the book of Eicha which begins with the words Eicha Yashva Badad.. The rabbis tell us that had we been meritorious, we would have recited from the Torah, Moses word, Eicha - "How can I bear alone?"; now that we were not meritorious, we are required to recite, "How is it that she sits alone?"

I believe when Moses asks how he can bear alone, he is referring to his brother Aaron who has just passed. Aaron was his partner from the first moment he returned to Egypt, through the encounters with Pharaoh, as they crossed the sea, battled Amalek and moved through the desert. Aaron was the one who brought people together and could resolve all quarrels amicably. Perhaps the lesson is that has we accepted the rebuke of Moses and the life lesson of Aaron, than the Eicha we read on Shabbat would have sufficed. But because we didn't accept the rebuke, we didn't make a change and we didn't behave as Aaron, we still sit on the floor on Tuesday and mourn.

And this year we have another thing to add to our list of mourning. As Moses lost Aaron, our extended family has lost Stephen. Stephen, you were taken from us too soon and we will miss you.

My heart goes out to his amazing sons, Morris and Marc, who I often prayed with in Manhattan and to his daughters Helen and Michelle and to his sister Adrienne and his brother Duke, I know you too are saying, "How can I bear this alone"? But remember, you have each other, you have your memories and you have all of us.

I extend a hug from one cuz to another! Our thoughts and prayers are with you.

Shabbat Shalom
David Bibi

Summary of the Perasha

Sefer Devarim takes place over the course of 36 days where Benei Israel is encamped outside Erets Israel awaiting to enter the land. While the general theme of the Sefer is that Moshe is rebuking Benei Israel before his death the Sefer seemingly can be divided into 3 parts. The first three parshiot (Devarim, Va'etchanan, Ekev) involve Moshe rebuking Benei Israel reminding them of all the sins they did in the Midbar (and warning them not to stray once they get into the land of Israel). The next 3 parshiot (Re'eh,

Shoftim, Ki Teseh) deal with Mitsvot. The mitsvot are largely related to mitsvot Benei Israel will need in the land of Israel (i.e., mitsvot related to the land, to establishing a society and related to relationships between people). The last 5 parshiot deal with Moshe saying goodbye before his death. Ki Tavo and Nitsavim generally deal with Benei Israel renewing their covenant with Hashem (seemingly to strengthen our commitment to Hashem considering Moshe will no longer be with them) and in Va'yelech, Ha'azinu, and Ve'zoat Ha'beracha, respectively, Moshe says goodbye, gives Benei Israel a prophecy of what will be in the future and blesses Benei Israel. The Sefer sadly ends with the death of Moshe. The books of Neviim continues on to tell the story of Benei Israel's journey in conquering the land of Israel under the leadership of Yehoshua.

Devarim- Moshe rebukes Benei Israel recounting the sin of the spies and their stay in the midbar as a result

- 1- Moshe begins to indirectly rebuke Benei Israel before his death recounting the various places where Benei Israel sinned
- 2- Moshe recounts the appointing of judges and how they left Sinai poised to enter Israel
- 3- Moshe recounts the sin of the spies
- 4- Moshe recounts how they were forced to turn back into the midbar as a result of this sin
- 5- Moshe recounts when, in the 40th yr, Hashem told them to turn northward passing Seir and Moav towards the land of Sihon as they stopped circling and began back on their path towards Israel.
- 6- Moshe recounts how they conquered the lands of Sihon and Og on the way to Israel. And how Reuben, Gad and part of Menashe inherited this land.
- 7- Moshe recounts how he commanded Reuben and Gad to come conquer the land of Israel.

Parashat Devarim is jam packed with foundations in emuna. In Moshe's rebuke of Benei Israel before his death we can learn some great lessons. At first Moshe recounts when Benei Israel chose judges. He told them to judge the cases fairly and not based on the individuals involved. He went on to say "lo taguru mipeney ish kiy ha'mishpat le'Elokim hu", don't fear people for judgement is to Hashem. Meaning when we fear individuals and it causes us to do something inappropriate we are forgetting that the one we should really be fearing is Hashem. Moshe later discusses the sin of the spies. The meraglim spoke bad about the land and it caused the people to lose hope. The meraglim said "ahm gadol va'ram mimenu", the people in the land are greater and taller than us. And Moshe told them "lo ta'arsun ve'lo tiroon mehem", don't let your spirit be broken and don't be afraid. "Hashem yilachem lachem

ke'chol asher asa itchem be'Mitsrayim le'enechem", Hashem will protect you as he did in Mitsrayim. Moshe goes on to say that you saw Hashem carry you in the desert as a man would carry his son. We see here a great lesson in emunah that when things are tough we can't lose hope. When we are down we have to remember and think about all the times in the past that Hashem was there for us. And we can't be afraid or lose hope. It's a lack of trust in Hashem! Also, here we see Hashem takes care of us like a father takes care of his son. Any time we experience something difficult we have to remember who is doing it. It's our father who loves us the most and knows what is best for us!

Later Moshe recounts how Benei Israel headed towards Israel and Hashem told them to attack Sihon. Hashem told them "ha'yom ha'zeh achel tet pachdecha ve'yiratecha...ve'ragzu ve'haloo mipenecha (Hashem placed fear of Benei Israel in the other nations. They will tremble before you). We see here another foundation in emuna that Hashem can put certain feelings in people's hearts and thoughts in their minds (and in our minds). Hashem can make someone fear you. Hashem can make someone love you. Hashem can put it in the buyer's heart to give you an order. Nothing is beyond Hashem's control! Let us learn from these great lessons and try and implement them in our daily lives.

Le'refua shelema Elisheva bat Esther

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"Why do You ignore us eternally, forsake us for so long. (Eichah 5:20)

Various gemarot discuss the reasons why the Temples were destroyed. Two of the reasons given are: baseless hatred amongst the Jewish people (Yoma 9b), and a general disrespect for Torah (Shabbat 119b). With this in mind, it is somewhat strange that on Tisha'ah B'Ab, the day we are commemorating the Temple's destruction, we are not permitted to greet people or speak in a friendly tone, which is behavior which increases friendship and love. We are also not permitted to learn Torah. Surely it would seem more appropriate to spend the day correcting the mistakes of our ancestors by increasing friendships and spending the day engrossed in Torah, showing our respect for it.

Rabbi Moshe Kormornick explains that the problem mentioned above is not only found in our ancestors. It is also found in us. The gemara explains that "every generation in which the Bet Hamikdash was not built is considered as if it was destroyed in its days. Since these problems can no longer only be attributed to our ancestors, we need to

take a new approach to correct these sins within ourselves. In our generation, we are guilty of constantly looking for the "quick fix." When we see a problem, especially within ourselves, our natural instinct is to repair the damage and quickly move on. But after we "fix it," have we actually changed? If we spend the day sending gifts, like on Purim, or immersed in Torah, like on Shabuot, we will not have time to sit and cry over what we lost through our faults, and we will be too distracted to really make a permanent change.

Therefore our Sages determined that we should act in this way on Tish'ah B'Ab in order that we should have time to appreciate what we have lost, and realize what we are truly missing. Rabbi Reuven Semah

RABBI ELI MANSOUR

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Is it Worth it?

The Gemara famously comments that the Second Temple was destroyed because of the sin of "Sin'at Hinam," which is literally translated as "baseless hatred," or hatred for no reason.

I once asked one of my Rabbis about the precise meaning of this term, "Sin'at Hinam." Is there any hatred that's really "Hinam," without any cause or reason? There's always a reason why we fight with somebody or dislike somebody. When do we choose to hate somebody for no reason?

The Rabbi answered with a fictional story of a teacher who noticed a student playing with his pencil during class. This was obviously a distraction, and so the teacher told the student to stop. But the student continued playing with the pencil, and again, the teacher sternly demanded that he put the pencil down. When the student continued to disobey, the teacher came over to him with a stick, and smacked the child's wrist with full force, causing a serious injury.

The incident was quickly reported to the principal, who called in the teacher to reprimand him. He demanded an explanation for the teacher's violence. The teacher explained that he punished the child because the child was playing with his pencil during class.

The principal, of course, was horrified. "For this misdemeanor you smack a child? This is how you react?"

Most people would agree that the teacher injured the student for no reason. Technically speaking, there was a reason, but the reaction was so destructive and so out of proportion that for all intents and purposes, there was no reason for what he did.

And this is how we must look at all fighting and animosity among Jews. Sure, we have our “reasons,” but when we consider just how destructive fighting is, these are not reasons at all.

And it cannot be overstated how destructive infighting among Jews is. Our Sages tell us that there was plenty of Torah study during the time of the Bet Hamikdash. There were Yeshivot and great scholars. But the people couldn't get along. There was nasty politics and backstabbing. Different factions of Jews worked against each other, rather than with each other. And all the Torah learning in the world couldn't make up for this tragic situation. We can go to Shiurim and get inspired to learn and do Misvot, but that won't help us if we can't get along.

The Gemara (Erubin 18) says that since the Temple was destroyed, the world is run by only two letters – the letters of “Yod” and “Heh.” The Arizal (Rabbi Yishak Luria of Safed, 1534-1572) explains that unity among Jews is what keeps the two parts of the divine Name – “Yod” and “Heh,” and “Vav” and “Heh” – together. When there is disunity among Jews, there is disunity in the divine Name, as it were. When we fight, we break God's Name, removing the “Vav” and “Heh,” leaving only the two letters of “Yod” and “Heh.”

This result of the Temple's destruction is alluded to in Parashat Debarim. Moshe Rabbenu tells the people that it takes eleven days to journey from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea (1:2). The Keli Yakar (Rav Shlomo Efrayim Luntchitz of Prague, 1550-1619) comments that this verse alludes to the eleven days when we commemorate the Temple's destruction – the fasts of Asara Be'Tebet and Shiba Asar Be'Tammuz, and the first nine days of Ab (which of course culminate with Tisha B'Ab). These eleven days are “from Horeb” – the result of the destruction (“Hurban”) whose effects we seek to reverse. We observe eleven days because 11 is the combined numerical value of the letters “Vav” and “Heh” – the two letters that are “missing” from the divine Name as a result of our fighting and inability to get along peacefully with one another.

Considering that fighting causes a rupture in the Name of God, all hatred is, indeed, “Hinam” – baseless and senseless. The next time we feel inclined to fight with a fellow Jew, let us ask ourselves, is it worth it? Is it worth destroying God's

Name, extending our state of exile, and negating the positive effects of all the Torah we study and Misvot we perform? Even if we were truly offended, or if we strongly object to what somebody did, is it worth making a fight? Is this any different than crushing a student's arm because he played with a pencil? Does it make sense to cause such harm because somebody did something wrong to us?

This is the perspective we should have as we look to cure the ill of “Sin'at Hinam” and restore peace and harmony among the Jewish people. Even if we have valid grievances, the fight is not worth it. We are far better off staying together, working together and respecting one another so that we can repair the divine Name and bring our final redemption, speedily and in our days, Amen.

VICTOR BIBI SOD HAPARASHA

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Rabbi Wein DISASTER AND REBIRTH

The remarkable lesson of the Jewish commemoration of the destruction of our Temples many centuries ago is not only that this commemoration continues to pain us but that, ironically, it almost unexpectedly provides us with hope and fortitude for a brighter future.

This fact is emphasized to us in the statement of the Talmud that the time of the Messiah began on the day that the Temples were destroyed. Most nations of the world do not commemorate the days of their defeat. It is days of conquest and victory that are usually celebrated.

Those nations and empires that once conquered us and exiled us from our own land have long ago passed into the dustbin of history. The Babylonian empire and later the Greek and Roman empires are no longer around to commemorate their day of seeming triumph over us. They are remembered only by those who they conquered while the conquerors themselves have passed from the world scene.

At first glance this would seem to be incredibly ironic. Nations attempt to forget and not to allow recall of times of disaster and defeat. But it is the Jewish people that have kept the memory of our enemies alive and fresh in our minds and hearts, and on our calendar over the ages. Remembering that we are bidden to erase the memory of Amalek from our midst has served to constantly remind us of its

presence in the world and of the danger that it still poses to us and to civilization generally. Apparently, it is only by remembering our enemies that we are able to truly erase their legacy from our people and the world generally.

One of the great rules of history is that there are no comebacks. However we also know that there are exceptions that exist to every rule. The exception to this rule was and is the survival and existence of the Jewish people. Commemorating the day of our defeats and disasters is again paradoxically the method of preserving our hopes and commitments to rebuild ourselves and our homeland.

I remember that as a child growing up in my father's synagogue in Chicago that on the afternoon of the ninth of Av an appeal for funds to support the fledgling and struggling institutions then being created in the Land of Israel. As a child, I then thought that it was rather incongruous for this to take place on that day of mourning and sadness.

Yet now I realize the genius of that custom, for it contains within it the secret of our survival and the understanding of the miraculous rebirth of the Jewish people over the past century. Matching all of the miracles that constitute the natural world of the planet that we inhabit is the miracle, unending and inexplicable, of the survival of the Jewish people over all of the millennia of our exile and in spite of disasters which have constantly befallen us. One has to be almost willfully blind and spiteful to be able to ignore this singular event in all of world history.

The rabbis have taught us that the ninth day of Av is destined to be a holiday and a day of rejoicing. It will be a day of vindication and of confirmation of our history and destiny. As such, even when it still is a day of mourning and sadness it already contains the seeds of its future greatness and hope.

Jews always viewed this day of sadness and near despair as being a day of renewal and a foundation for rebuilding our world, our land and our mission. No penitential prayers are recited on his day because of this nucleus of hope that the day contains within it.

The rabbis taught us that those who mourn for Jerusalem witness its rebirth and restoration. The idea here is that those who truly mourn and care for the welfare of Jews immediately see the beginning of the restoration of Jerusalem and the Jewish people to greatness and prosperity. So, in a strange way, it is a day of mixed emotions and different vision – one of a difficult and troubled past and the other of a more glorious and meaningful future.

The observance of the fast day may weaken us physically but it is meant to strengthen us emotionally and spiritually. The Shabbat immediately following the ninth of Av already brings us comfort and hope. Our generation, one that has seen wondrous events, surely will be privileged to gain hope and commitment from this day of disaster and destruction.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

As we begin reading the fifth and final book of the Torah, I would like to discuss three questions. First, why does the book of Devarim have the structure it does: a mix of history, law, recollection and anticipation?

The sages knew that Devarim had a clear structure. Elsewhere in the Torah some rabbis used the principle of semikhat haparshiyot – that we can learn something from the fact that passage Y occurs immediately after passage X. Others however did not, because there is a rule, Ein Mukdam Umu'achar BaTorah, meaning, the Torah does not always follow a strict chronological sequence. So we cannot always attach significance to the fact that the passages are in the order they are. However, everyone agrees that there is precise order and structure in the book of Devarim (Berakhot 21b). But what is the order?

Second: the sages originally called Devarim Mishneh Torah, a “second law”. Hence the Latin name Deuteronomy, which means, the second law. But in what sense is Devarim a second law? Some of the laws Moses states in the book have appeared before, others have not. Is it a repetition of the laws Moses received at Sinai and the Tent of Meeting? Is it something new? What exactly is the meaning of Mishneh Torah?

Third: what is the book doing here? It represents the speeches Moses delivered in the last month of his life to the generation who would cross the Jordan and enter the Promised Land. Why is it included in the Torah at all? If the Torah is a history book, then we should proceed directly from the end of Bamidbar, the arrival of the Israelites at the banks of the river Jordan, to the book of Joshua, when they crossed the river and began their conquest of the land. If the Torah is a book of law, then Devarim should just be a collection of laws without all the historical reminiscence and prophecy it contains. What kind of book is Devarim and what is its significance to the Torah as a whole?

A number of relatively recent archeological discoveries have however thrown new light on all these questions. They are the engraved records of ancient treaties between neighbouring powers. Among them are the “Stele of the Vultures” commemorating the victory of Eannatum, ruler of Lagash in southern Mesopotamia, over the people of

Umma, and that of Naram-Sin, king of Kish and Akkad, with the ruler of Elam. Both date from the third millennium BCE, that is to say, before the time of Abraham.

The treaties are of two kinds: between parties of roughly equal power (“parity treaties”) and those between a strong one (a precursor of the modern idea of a superpower) and a weak one. These latter are known as “suzerainty treaties”, suzerain meaning the dominant power in a particular region.

Another name for treaty is, of course, *brit*, or covenant, and we now see their significance for an understanding of Judaism. Covenant was the basic structure in the ancient Middle East of treaties between neighbouring powers. Abraham, for example, makes a *brit* with Avimelech, king of Gerar, at Beersheva (Gen. 21:27-32). So does Isaac (Gen. 26:28). Jacob does so with Laban (Gen. 31:44-54).

What the newly discovered treaties show is the precise form of ancient covenants. They had six parts. [1] They began with a preamble, establishing the identity of the person or power initiating the covenant. This was followed by [2] a historical prologue, reviewing the history of the relationship between the two parties to the covenant. Then came [3] the provisions of the covenant itself, the stipulations, which were often stated in two forms, [a] general principles, and [b] detailed provisions.

There then followed [4] a provision for the covenant to be deposited in a sacred place, and read on a regular basis. Next came [5] the sanctions associated with the covenant, namely the blessings that would follow if it was adhered to, and the curses that would occur if it is broken. Lastly there is [6] a statement of the witnesses to the agreement – usually the gods of the nations involved. The entire book of Devarim is structured as an extended covenant, on precisely these lines. This is how it works:

1	Preamble	1:1-1:5	Anonymous place, time and person initiating the covenant that follows; Moses on behalf of God.
2	Historical prologue	1:6 - 4:49	Moses recapitulates the history that has brought them to where they are, mostly recalling the events described in the book of Bamidbar
3	Stipulations	[a] chs. 5-11	[a] general provisions: Ten Commandments, Shema, etc. Recapitulation of events surrounding the making of the covenant at Sinai.
		[b] chs. 12-26	[b] specific provisions: the details of the law, with special reference to how they are to be carried out by the people as a whole in the land of Israel.
4	Deposition and regular reading	27, 31	The law to be inscribed on stone (table) at Mount Ebal; the Torah written by Moses and placed in the ark; to be read in public at a national assembly by the king every seven years.
5	Sanctions: the blessings and the curses	28	Ch. 28 states the blessings and curses; 29-30 the actual covenant renewal, together with a statement that even if the people break the covenant and the curses come to pass, return, teshuvah, is still possible.
6	Witnesses	30:19 - 32:1	"Heaven and earth" (4:26, 30:19, 31:28, 32:1); "This song" (31:19)

In other words, apart from Moses’ song and blessing of the tribes, with which the book and Moses’ life come to an end, the entire book of Devarim is a covenant on a monumental scale. We now see the extraordinary nature of the book. It has taken an ancient political formula and used it for an entirely new purpose.

What is unique about the covenant in Judaism is, first, that one of the parties is God himself. This would have been unintelligible to Israel’s neighbours, and remains extraordinary even today. The idea that God might bind himself to human beings, linking their destiny to His, making them His ambassadors – his “witnesses” – to the world, is still radical and challenging.

Second, the other party to the covenant is not, as it was in the ancient world, the king or ruler of the relevant nation, but the people as a whole. Every Israelite, as we saw in Exodus 19 and 24, and throughout Deuteronomy, is party to the covenant, and co-responsible with the people as a whole for its being kept.

From this flows the idea of Kol Yisrael Arevin Zeh Lazeh, “all Jews are responsible for one another”, as well as the much later American idea of “We, the people.” This transformation meant that every Jew had to know the law and teach it to his or her children. Every Jew had to know the story of his or her people, reciting it on Pesach and when bringing first-fruits to Jerusalem.

This is covenant politics, a unique form of political structure based not on a hierarchy of power but on a shared sense of history and destiny. It is a moral politics, dedicated to creating a just and gracious society that honours the dignity of all, especially the downtrodden, the poor, the powerless and the marginal: the widow, the orphan and the stranger.

The structure of the book is now clear. It follows precisely the structure of an ancient suzerainty treaty between a strong power, God, and a weak one, the Israelites. Politically, such treaties were well known in the ancient world, but religiously this is unique. For it means that God has taken an entire nation to be His “partners in the work of creation,” by showing all humanity what it is to construct a society that honours each individual as the image of God.

We now understand what Mishneh Torah means. It means that this book is a “copy” of the covenant between God and the people, made at Sinai, renewed on the bank of the Jordan, and renewed again at significant moments of Jewish history. It is the written record of the agreement, just as a ketubah is a written record of the obligations undertaken by a husband toward his wife.

We now also understand the place of Devarim in Tanakh as a whole. It is the axis on which all Jewish history turns. Had the generation who left Egypt the faith and courage to enter the promised land, all Jewish history would turn on the revelation at Sinai. In fact, though, the episode of the spies showed that that generation lacked the spirit to do so. Therefore the critical moment came for the next generation, when Moses at the end of his life renewed the covenant with them as the condition of their inheritance of

the land. The four previous books of the Torah lead up to this moment, and all the other books of Tanakh are a commentary to it – an account of how it worked out in the course of time.

Devarim is the book of the covenant, the centre-point of Jewish theology, and the project it defines is unique. For it aims at nothing less than the construction of a society that would moralise its members, inspire others, and serve as a role model of what might be achieved were humanity as a whole to worship the one God who made us all in His image.

AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

“You are passing by the border of your brothers the sons of Esav.” (2:3)

Also: “Our brothers the sons of Esav” (2:8). Also: “You shall not abhor an Edomi, for he is your brother”(23:8).

The enormous importance of kinship is here emphasized. And not only is this emotion and attitude incumbent upon the holy nation of Israel, but even the Edomites are blamed for forgetting the bond of brotherhood: “because he pursued his brother with the sword” Amos (1:11).

If such is the obligation of brotherhood between long separated offspring of the two estranged brothers, then how many times more is the obligation of brotherhood between the sons of Israel!

In view of this lesson, the words “Your brother” as used everywhere in the Torah in reference to a fellow Israelite, acquire a more powerful and realistic interpretation. If toward an Edomite we must feel an emotion of brotherhood, then how many thousands of degrees of brotherhood should we feel toward a fellow Israelite?

And we may add, how much more powerful (than these thousands of degrees of emotion) should be the feelings toward a brother, the son of your parents.

“That Hashem your G-d carried you just as a man carries his son.” (1:31)

This is a most significant declaration.

Israel, and Israel alone is Hashem's son, as He had declared: “My son My firstborn is Yisrael” (Shemot 4:22) and “Send forth My son” (ibid. 4:23).

All the severe castigations and the heavy chastisements (which our enemies delight in pointing out how the Israelites failed) were the strongest demonstrations of Hashem's love. “And you should know with your heart that just as a man chastises his son, so does Hashem your G-d chastise you.”(8:5) Although this generation was privileged to see and to be close to Hashem more than any other generation, yet the principle that Hashem bears Yisrael in His

arms as His son continues to hold for all their generations.

This is an astonishing statement which we ourselves would never have dared to say. Yet Hashem declares openly for the entire world to hear that the loyal and observant Jewish nation is held in His arms as a father holds his beloved child.

Quoted from “Journey Into Greatness” by Rabbi Avigdor Miller ZT'L

Rav Kook on the Perasha

Mipi Atzmo

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

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

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

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

Tadir versus Mekudash

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

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

The First and Second Luchot

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

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

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

Moses and the Other Prophets

After the sin of the Golden Calf, God offered to rebuild the Jewish people solely from Moses. Moses was unsullied by the sin of the Golden Calf; he still belonged to the transient realm of elevated holiness. Nonetheless, Moses rejected God's offer. He decided to include himself within the constant holiness of Israel. This is the meaning of the Talmudic statement that Moses wrote Deuteronomy “on his own.” On his

own accord, Moses decided to join the spiritual level of the Jewish people, and help prepare the people for the more sustainable holiness through the renewed covenant of Arvot Moav.

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

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

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

THE RAV KOOK SYNAGOGUE

A new synagogue community in Jerusalem is reviving one of Jerusalem's most significant Beit Kneset and Beit Midrash of modern Jewish history. Beit HaRav Kook is the home and Beit HaMidrash/Beit HaKneset that was built for Rabbi Avraham Itzchak HaCohen Kook TZ'L when he became the Chief Rabbi of Eretz Israel in 1921. Festively opened in 1923 it is the birthplace of Torat Eretz Israel and the spiritual rebirth that Rav Kook led. Regular tefillot ended there in 1965 when the Mercaz HaRav yeshiva moved to its current location in Kiryat Moshe.

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