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PARSHA INSIGHTS

by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

Seeds for the Future

“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the Wilderness, concerning the Aravah, opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tophel and Lavan, Chatzerot and Di Zahav...”

“You know. You’re such an idiot. I don’t know why you did that. Didn’t you realize that you would hurt his feelings? Why aren’t you more sensitive to other people?”

It always surprises me how the most sensitive people to their own feelings are sometimes the least sensitive to others.

Even when offering constructive advice to someone, the worst way to do is by a direct confrontation, for immediately the listener will rise against the perceived attack with all manner of self-justification: “I couldn’t help it”; “You think you could have done better?” etc. etc.

Better, by far, is to *allude* to the matter at hand, subtly planting an inference into the mind of the listener. In this way, his front-line early-warning defenses are not triggered, and the idea lodges in his subconscious to grow like a seed.

This is what Moshe does in the opening lines of the Book of Devarim. The place names that are mentioned here are locations of various sins and rebellions of the Jewish People: “...concerning the wilderness...” their lusting for the flesh pots of Egypt; “...concerning the Aravah...” their immorality with the daughters of Moav; “...opposite the Sea of Reeds...” their lack of trust in Hashem at the crossing of the sea; “...between Paran and Tophel and Lavan...” their complaints about the miraculous food – the Manna; “...and Chatzerot...” the rebellion of Korach; “and Di Zahav” the golden calf.

Moshe is addressing the Bnei Yisrael in the last five weeks of his life. He wants to leave them a strong and lasting message: To beware of inherent tendencies that have already brought them into trouble.

Rather than tackle them directly and risk rejection, Moshe plants the seeds of self-examination into the collective psyche of the Jewish People so that long after his departure they will still bear fruit.

- Sources: Rashi; Chasam Sofer, heard from Rabbi Naftali Falk

TISHA B'AV SPECIAL FEATURE

by Rabbi Reuven Lauffer

TO BUILD OR NOT TO BUILD? WHAT A QUESTION!

As we draw closer and closer to the most dismal day of the year, it is somewhat depressing to realize that the third and final Beit Hamikdash has not yet been built. Here we are, seemingly in the same place that we were this time last year (and the year before, and the year before that...), wondering where we went wrong. Questioning why we are still “Beit Hamikdash-less.”

There is a fascinating debate among the early authorities whether the Beit Hamikdash will be built by human hands, as were the first two Batei Mikdash, or whether the final Beit Hamikdash will descend from the Heavens as a completed structure made by Hashem’s.

Rashi (*Rosh Hashana* 30a) is of the opinion that the third Beit Hamikdash will descend in a state of completion from the Heavens, in all its perfect splendor. Tosafot (*Shavuot* 15b) agrees with Rashi that there will be no human building of the Beit Hamikdash.

Their view is based on a verse in *Shemot* (15:17), “You will bring them and implant them on the mount of Your heritage, the foundation of Your dwelling place that You, Hashem, has made; the Sanctuary my L-rd, that Your hands established.”

They point to the words, “the Sanctuary my L-rd, that Your hands established” to mean that iHashem alone will build the Beit Hamikdash.

However, Maimonides (*Hilchot Melachim* 11:1) is of the opinion that the Mashiach, assisted by the Jewish nation, will build the third Beit Hamikdash. The *Sefer HaChinuch* (Mitzvah 95) rules in accordance with Maimonides.

The *Zohar HaKadosh* (*Beresheet* 28a) supports Rashi’s opinion that the third Beit Hamikdash will be solely built by Hashem. The premise of the *Zohar* is quite simple. Since the third Beit Hamikdash will never be destroyed, it must be that it will be built by Hashem, Himself. The *Zohar Hakadosh* cites a verse from *Chagai* (2:9), “The glory of this latter Temple will be greater than that of the first...” Interestingly, the conventional interpretation of this verse is that it refers to the First and the Second Batei Mikdash. However, the *Zohar* understands it to be a reference to the glory and the splendor of the final Beit Hamikdash. This provides a novel insight into the first verse of chapter 127 in *Tehillim*, where King David writes, “If Hashem will not build the house, its builders labor in vain.”

Is there a way of knowing with certainty which opinion is correct? The *Maharam Schick*, Rabbi Moshe Schick 1807-1879, writes that it is possible that both opinions are valid. He cites the famous verse in *Yeshayah* (60:22), where Hashem declares that the final redemption will arrive “*be’ito achishena*, in its time I will hasten it.” Our Sages clarify (*Sanhedrin* 98a) that the redemption can come either at the last moment set aside by Hashem, *be’ito*, or it can arrive earlier, *achishena*. It all depends on our behavior. If we truly pine for redemption and go through a process of *Teshuvah*, we can bring about the Final Redemption right now. At this very minute! But, if not, we will need to wait, observing perhaps more days of Tisha b’Av until we merit to greet the Mashiach.

Accordingly, writes the *Maharam Schick*, if we do *Teshuvah* and we bring about the Final Redemption, we will build the Beit Hamikdash together with the Mashiach. And, if not, Hashem will cause the eternal Beit Hamikdash to descend to us at the End of Days.

Rabbi Asher Weiss, with his customary innovative brilliance, suggests that both views of how the final Beit Hamikdash will be built are correct. We will build, and Hashem will build. He explains that we are constructing the Beit Hamikdash in the Heavens right now with our actions down here. The Beit Hamikdash is in a constant process of being constructed in the Heavenly Realms through our Torah learning and our Mitzvah observance. And when we finally finish the process, Hashem will then allow the most brilliant and magnificent Beit Hamikdash to descend from the highest spiritual planes to its natural, physical location on Har HaBayit.

May we all merit to witness it very, very soon.

PEREK SHIRA

by Rabbi Shmuel Kraines

THE SONG OF THE FOX

The Fox says: “Woe is he who builds his house unjustly, and his upper rooms unlawfully. He works his fellow without remuneration; he does not pay him for his labor.” (*Yirmiyah 22:13*)

The fox is classically known to be sly and cunning. Not only is it highly intelligent and keenly alert to its surroundings, but it also has a sharp appearance, with a sinuous form, a pointed maw bearing twisted, jagged teeth, and sharply-pointed ears.

The fox trots through the wild stealthily, often glancing behind to see if it is being followed. It is extremely difficult to catch. Both fast and nimble, it can leap and dodge, and slip into narrow crannies, and one species can even climb trees. The fox is also known to employ tricks to shake off pursuers. For example, it may double back over its own tracks, or it may abruptly change direction and leap away from its tracks, or it may run over a shallow creek so as not to leave any tracks at all.

The fox's burrow is typical of its craftiness. It may dig its own burrow, but more often, it will seize the burrow of smaller animals. It will then make renovations, enlarging its length to 15 or 20 feet, and adding many openings for air circulation and for escape.

Sometimes, however, the fox's craftiness proves to be its own undoing. Indeed, cunning and wisdom

do not always go together. Although the fox is omnivorous, with a widely varied diet, its nocturnal scavenging excursions often take it into nearby farmlands, and if it's lucky, into the chicken-coop. Due to this, it is a notorious pest and a long-time enemy of farmers, who will do their best to get rid of it. In addition, their practice of stealing burrows works proves to be their own undoing, as this makes it possible for hunters to outsmart them by trapping a burrow that a fox may choose to occupy.

Although the fox obviously intends no evil, it symbolizes one who takes advantage over others by trickery, and its feud with the farmers demonstrates that even the most cunning of thieves eventually pays for his greediness. Thus, the fox's song is the lamentation of the prophet Yirmiyahu: “Woe is he who builds his house unjustly, and his upper rooms unlawfully. He works his fellow without remuneration; he does not pay him for his labor.” With these words, the prophet admonishes one who hires workers to build him a mansion and then neglects to pay them. This is fittingly the song of the fox, which seizes of others' burrows, amongst other forms of thievery. The fox's behavior brings to heart that it is the hard-working laborer who truly

deserves to eat the fruit of his toil – not the cunning trickster. This is the fox’s message, and its song.

The Sages employed fox parables to convey important moral lessons. Sometimes, the fox represented the wily *yetzer hara*, the evil inclination; at other times, it represented how one must resort to counter-trickery to outfox the *yetzer hara*. Instead of allowing ourselves to become its daily prey, naïvely falling into the same pitfalls over and over, we can choose to seek ways to avoid the temptation of sin entirely. As our Sages teach, one must be cunning in the service of Hashem.

When people cannot trust one another, society falls apart. This is reflected in the Mishna in Pirkei Avot

that states that the world stands on truth, justice, and peace. The glory of Yerushalayim in the times of the Beit Hamikdash was unimaginable, and it was largely due to the impeccable standard of justice and honesty that was prevalent. It was only when this standard decayed that this great metropolis fell into ruin. Quite poignantly, on account of the people's foxlike social conduct, the ruins of the holy Temple Mount became inhabited by foxes.

Hashem’s seal is truth and He abhors falsehood and guile. Trickery may appear to be profitable, but ultimately, that which is unjust cannot last in Hashem's world. We must build our lives, brick by brick, with straight honesty. It may be hard to do so at times, but the fox’s song reminds us that only such a structure is worth building.

**Sources: Pirkei Avos (2:15); Midrash Rabbah (Shir Hashirim 2:33); Berachos 17a; Shabbos 55a, 104a, and 119b; Birkas Shir; Rabbi Amitai Ben-David; Otzar HaYedios; Knaf Renanim*

In loving memory of Harav Zeev Shlomo ben Zecharia Leib

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Q & A – Devarim

Questions –

1. How do we see from the beginning of *Parshat Devarim* that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honor?
2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
5. What were some of the achievements that resulted from the Jewish People "dwelling" at Mt. Sinai?
6. Why does the Torah single out the names of the *avot* in connection with the giving of the Land?
7. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?
8. "*Apikorsim*" (those who denigrate Talmud scholars) observed Moshe's every move in order to accuse him. What did they observe, and what did they accuse him of?
9. Moshe was looking for several qualities in the judges he chose. Which quality couldn't he find?
10. Moshe told the judges, "The case that is too hard for you, bring it to me." How was he punished for this statement?
11. Why did Moshe describe the desert as great and frightful?
12. Which tribe was not represented among the spies?
13. Which city did Calev inherit?
14. How many kingdoms was Avraham promised? How many were conquered by Yehoshua?
15. Why were the Jewish People forbidden to provoke Ammon?
16. Why were the Jewish People not permitted to conquer the Philistines?
17. How did Hashem instill the dread of the Jewish People into the nations of the world?
18. Why did Moshe fear Og?
19. Who was instrumental in destroying the Refaim?
20. What was the advantage of Reuven and Gad leading the way into battle?

Answers

1. 1:1 Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned, but does not mention the sins themselves.
2. 1:2 - 40 days.
3. 1:3 - From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
4. 1:4 So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the Land as he promised?"
5. 1:6 - They received the Torah, built *themishkan* and all its vessels, appointed a Sanhedrin, and appointed officers.
6. 1:8 - Each of the *avot* possessed sufficient merit for the Jewish People to inherit the Land.
7. 1:10 - They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal.
8. 1:13 They observed the time he left home in the morning. If Moshe left early, they accused him of having family problems (which drove him from his home). If he left late, they accused him of staying home in order to plot evil against them.
9. 1:15 - Men of understanding.
10. 1:17 - When the daughters of Tzelofchad asked him a *halachic* question, the law was concealed from him.
11. 1:19 - Because the Jewish People saw huge, frightening snakes and scorpions in the desert.
12. 1:23 - Levi.
13. 1:36 - Hebron.
14. 2:5 - Avraham was promised the land of ten kingdoms. Yehoshua conquered seven. The lands of Moav, Ammon and Esav will be received in the time of the *mashiach*.
15. 2:9 - This was a reward for Lot's younger daughter, the mother of Ammon, for concealing her father's improper conduct.
16. 2:23 - Because Avraham had made a peace treaty with Avimelech, King of the Philistines.
17. 2:25 - During the battle against Og, the sun stood still for the sake of the Jewish People, and the whole world saw this.
18. 3:2 - Og possessed merit for having once helped Avraham.
19. 3:11 - Amrafel.
20. 3:18 - They were mighty men, and the enemy would succumb to them.

Q & A – Va'etchanan

Questions

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

Answers

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

Q & A – Ekev

Questions

1. What must the Jewish People do to ensure that Hashem will fulfill His promise to do good for us?
2. What were the:
 - a) wonders
 - b) strong hand
 - c) outstretched arm that the Jewish People saw in Egypt?
3. When a group performs a *mitzvah*, whose name is attached to the *mitzvah*?
4. How did the Jewish People do their laundry in the *midbar*?
5. How did the Jewish People obtain clothing for their growing children in the *midbar*?
6. How many days did Moshe spend on Mount Sinai altogether?
7. On what day did Moshe come down from Mount Sinai having received complete forgiveness for the Jewish People?
8. How was Aharon punished for his role in the golden calf?
9. Who made the ark in which Moshe placed the second set of tablets? What special function did it later serve?
10. Which sin of the Jewish People was prompted by the death of Aharon?
11. Why were the *levi'im* chosen by Hashem?
12. Why do the *levi'im* have no portion in the Land?
13. All aspects of man's life are in Hashem's "hands" except one. What is this?
14. What is the "added benefit" of observing the *mitzvot*?
15. What is meant by circumcising one's heart?
16. What are the sources of water for the fields of Egypt and *Eretz Yisrael*?
17. What path does the Torah prescribe for gaining new knowledge?
18. Which activity is "serving Hashem with the heart"?
19. When the Jewish People sin, why are they considered worse than the generation of the flood?
20. How does one "cleave to Hashem"?

Answers

1. 7:12 - Guard even the "light" commandments.
2. 7:19 -
 - a) Plagues;
 - b) Pestilence;
 - c) Slaying of the firstborn.
3. 8:1 - The person who finishes it.
4. 8:4 - The *ananei kavod* (clouds of glory) cleaned and bleached their clothes.
5. 8:4 - As their children grew, their clothing grew with them.
6. 9:18 - 120 days.
7. 9:18 - The tenth of Tishrei, Yom Kippur.
8. 9:20 - His two sons died.
9. 10:1 - Moshe. This ark would accompany the Jewish People into battle.
10. 10:6-7 - When Aharon died the *ananei kavod* departed causing many Jews to fear war with the King of Arad and to retreat toward Egypt.
11. 10:8 - Because they did not participate in the sin of the golden calf.
12. 10:9 - Since they served in the Temple, they were not free to work the land.
13. 10:12 - Fear of Heaven, which is dependent upon the person.
14. 10:13 - There is reward.
15. 10:16 - To remove those things that block the words of Torah from entering.
16. 11:10 - Egypt is irrigated by manually carrying water up from the Nile. *Eretz Yisrael* is supplied by rainwater requiring no work on the part of its inhabitants.
17. 11:13 - By repeatedly reviewing what one knows, one more easily acquires new knowledge.
18. 11:13 - Prayer.
19. 11:17 - Because the generation of the flood had no one from whom to learn.
20. 11:22 - Attaching oneself to Torah scholars.

Q & A – Re'eh

Questions

1. What were the sites designated for the "blessings and the curses" to be pronounced by the people?
2. On what condition will Bnei Yisrael receive the blessings from Hashem?
3. Why does the Torah use idolatry as an example when describing one who strays from the path that Hashem commanded?
4. What was to be the sign for the Jewish People that they would inherit the Land?
5. During the 14 years of the conquest and division of the Land, what types of offerings were permitted on private altars?
6. What must one do with consecrated animals that develop a blemish?
7. In what ways does a consecrated animal that develops a blemish retain a degree of kedusha (holiness) even after it has been redeemed?
8. Why was the tribe of Yehuda not permitted to conquer Jerusalem?
9. In consecutive verses, the Torah repeats the prohibition against eating blood. What two types of blood are referred to?
10. Why were the Jewish People allowed to see the extermination of the Canaanites?
11. What forms of idol worship are punishable by death?
12. If a person performs miracles in the name of Hashem and then says that the laws of the Torah have been revised, what is done to this person?
13. The Torah says, "To Him (Hashem) you shall cleave." How does one fulfill this command?
14. The trial of a person accused of encouraging others to worship idols differs from the trial of other capital cases. How?
15. Who has the primary responsibility of inflicting the punishment on one who tried to entice others to worship idols?
16. What is the "source" of the Jewish People being an *am kadosh* (holy nation)?
17. How should the Jewish People maintain themselves as an *am kadosh*?
18. What is the order of priority regarding to whom one should give charity?
19. What mitzvah recalls the Exodus from Egypt?
20. Which four individuals are under Hashem's "special protection"?

Answers

1. 11:26 - Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eval, respectively.
2. 11:27 - On condition that they listen to Hashem's commandments.
3. 11:28 - Because those who worship idols are considered as if they have strayed from the entire Torah.
4. 11:31 - The miracles that would occur while crossing the Jordan River.
5. 12:8 - Vow offerings or free-will offerings.
6. 12:15 - They must be redeemed and may then be eaten.
7. 12:15 - Eating it is permitted, but use of its milk or fleece is forbidden.
8. 12:17 - When Avraham bought ma'arat hamachpelah, he made a covenant of peace with the Hittites who sold it. His descendants honored this pact regarding the Hittite descendants in Jerusalem.
9. 12:24-25 - Blood that seeps slowly from the incision as soon as the cut is made and again after it no longer gushes. Blood absorbed into the limbs of the animal.
10. 12:30 - To learn not to follow in their depraved ways.
11. 12:30 - Slaughtering or burning a sacrifice on an altar, pouring libations, prostrating oneself, and any normal manner of worshipping that idol.
12. 13:2-6 - He is put to death.
13. 13:5 - One should emulate Hashem's actions by performing good deeds, assisting in burying the dead and visiting the sick.
14. 13:10 - If he was acquitted and new information of a condemning nature arises, he is retried. If he was judged guilty, he is not returned to court to plead in his favor.
15. 13:10 - The person whom the guilty one attempted to entice.
16. 14:2 - The kedusha is inherited from the avot.
17. 14:21 - By avoiding excesses even in permitted matters.
18. 15:7 - The most needy, a brother from one's father, a brother from one's mother, the poor of one's city, the poor of another city.
19. 16:3 - Eating the korban pesach and the matzah on the night of Pesach.
20. 16:10 - A levi, convert, orphan and widow.

Q & A – Shoftim

Questions

1. What is the role of shoftim? What is the role of shotrim?
2. What qualifications should one look for when appointing a judge?
3. May a judge accept a bribe if only for the purpose of judging fairly?
4. What is the source for the concept "seek out a good beit din"?
5. Although the avot built matzevot, the Torah later forbade doing so. Why?
6. "You will come to...the judge who will be in those days." It's impossible to visit a judge living at a different time, so why must the Torah add these apparently extra words?
7. What does Hashem promise a king who doesn't amass much gold, doesn't raise many horses and doesn't marry many wives?
8. How many Torah scrolls must the king have?
9. How was King Shaul punished for disobeying a minor command of the Prophet Shmuel?
10. Certain kosher animals are not included in the law of "chazeh, shok and keiva." Which ones?
11. Families of kohanim served in the Beit Hamikdash on a rotational basis. When was this rotation system established?
12. Which three categories of false prophets are executed?
13. What does it mean to "prepare the way" to the cities of refuge?
14. How many witnesses are meant when the Torah writes the word eid (witness)?
15. "Through the mouth of two witnesses...." What types of testimony does this verse invalidate?
16. If witnesses in a capital case are proven to be *zomemim* (false-conspirators) before their intended victim is executed, how are they punished?
17. Why does the section about going to war follow the laws governing witnesses?
18. The Jewish army is warned of four "scare-tactics" the enemy might employ. What are they?
19. When a murder victim is found in a field, who determines which city is closest?
20. What happens if the murderer is found after the calf's neck was broken?

Answers

1. 16:18 - Shoftim are judges who pronounce judgment. Shotrim are officers who enforce it.
2. 16:18 - That he is expert in the law and that he is righteous.
3. 16:19 - No, because it will sway his judgment.
4. 16:20 - "Tzedek tzedek tirdof...."
5. 16:22 - Because the Canaanites used them for idolatry.
6. 17:9 - To teach that although a judge may not be as eminent as judges of previous generations, we must obey him nevertheless.
7. 17:18 - That his kingdom will endure.
8. 17:18 - Two. One stays in his treasury and one he keeps with him.
9. 17:20 - He lost his kingship.
10. 18:3 - Chayot (non-domestic-type animals).
11. 18:8 - During the time of David and Shmuel.
12. 18:20 - One who prophesies something he didn't hear, something told to another prophet, or prophesies in the name of an idol.
13. 19:3 - To post direction signs saying "refuge" at the crossroads.
14. 19:15 - Two, unless otherwise specified.
15. 19:15 - Written testimony and testimony translated from a language which the judges don't understand.
16. 19:19 - They are put to death.
17. 20:1 - To teach that if the Jewish People execute fair judgment they will be victorious in war.
18. 20:3 -
 - a) Changing their shields
 - b) Making their horses stomp and whinny
 - c) Shouting
 - d) Blowing horns.
19. 21:2 - The Sanhedrin.
20. 21:9 - He is tried and, if found guilty, executed.

WHAT'S IN A WORD?

by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein

Don't Trample On Me

In the Haftarah customarily read the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av, the prophet Isaiah expresses Hashem's dissatisfaction with the Jews' sinful ways and how He is no longer interested in their ritual services. In that context, the prophet relates that Hashem said: "When you come to show yourself before Me, who asked this from you – trampling (*romos*) of My courtyard?" (Isa. 1:12) In this essay we explore the verb *romes* and its etymology, with an attempt at discovering if and how *romes* differs from its apparent synonyms, *dorech* and *boss*.

All classical lexicographers, such as Menachem Ibn Saruk (920-970), Rabbi Yonah Ibn Janach (990-1050), Shlomo Ibn Parchon (the 12th century author of *Machberet HeAruch*), and Rabbi David Kimchi Radak (1160-1235), trace the word *romes* to the trilateral root REISH-MEM-SAMECH. Cognates of this root appear nineteen times throughout the Bible (none of which are in the Pentateuch), all in the context of "trampling/stomping" with one's feet. This term is also used in later rabbinic literature. For example, the Talmud (*Kiddushin* 66a) relates that when the Hasmonean king Yannai felt slighted by a rabbi who criticized him for taking the roles of both king and Kohen Gadol, somebody else advised Yannai to "trample" (*romsem*) all the Torah Scholars, which Rashi explains means that he should "kill" them.

Rabbi Yosef Kimchi (1105-1170) in *Sefer HaGalui* and his son Rabbi David Kimchi in *Sefer HaShorashim* both explain that REISH-MEM-SAMECH should be understood as related to the root REISH-MEM-SIN (via the interchangeability of SAMECH and SIN), but they do not quite explain how the connection works out thematically. Words like *romes*, derived from that latter root, appears seventeen times in the Bible. Most of these occurrences can be found in the book of Genesis, where *romes* is typically used in reference to "creeping/crawling" creatures in the Creation and Flood narratives. To better understand the connection between REISH-MEM-SAMECH and REISH-MEM-SIN, we turn to Nachmanides (to Gen. 1:25) who explains that creeping insects use their entire body to "tread" over the ground on which they ambulate, so their very essence relates to the idea of "treading/trampling." Hence, the association of the word *romes* with the verb *romes*.

Interestingly, Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch (to Gen. 1:21) also recognizes a connection between REISH-MEM-SAMECH and REISH-MEM-SIN, but has a different way of understanding it. Because the letters SAMECH, SIN, and ZAYIN can all sometimes be interchangeable, Rabbi Hirsch sees the roots REISH-MEM-SAMECH, REISH-MEM-SIN, REISH-MEM-ZAYIN as all referring to the same basic idea of "treading/trampling," but to varying degrees of intensity: REISH-MEM-SAMECH refers to "trampling/stomping" with the full force of one's body in a very intense way intended to destroy/smash whatever lies beneath one's foot. Then, he explains, REISH-MEM-SIN refers to a lighter form of "trampling" because it denotes the way that bugs and insects – which are typically shorter and lightweight creatures – walk in the ground, but do not cause as much damage. Finally, the root REISH-MEM-ZAYIN is the etymon of the word *remez* ("hint/allusion"), which Rabbi Hirsch understands to primarily refer to "eye-winking" as means of subtly hinting to an idea. Thus, he explains that when the upper eyelid touches the bottom of the lower eyelid, this action mirrors the act of a foot "trampling/stomping" on the ground as one walks, but the palpebral movement is a much less intense and more subtle form of that action.

The word *dorech* is clearly related to the word *derech* ("path"), as it denotes the foot-stepping of a person who is walking on a certain trail. Indeed, all the lexicographers see these words are both derived from the trilateral root DALET-REISH-KAF, whose derivatives appear over 750 times in the Bible. To illustrate one case where the word *dorech* is used in the Bible, Hashem promises that when the Jews enter the Holy Land, He will give them "wherever the palm of your foot will tread [*tidroch*]" (Deut. 11:24, also cited by Joshua 1:3), and He promises that the Jews will "will tread [*tidroch*] over their [enemies'] high places." (Deut. 33:29) Both of these verses refer to the Jews conquering the land and subduing their enemies (by figuratively stepping on them).

Interestingly, the word *dorech* is sometimes even used alongside its counterpart (and ostensibly synonym), *romes*: In Psalms 91 (also known as *Shir Shel Pegaim*), we pray that Hashem watch us wherever we go, such that nothing bad will happen even if one might "tread over [*tidroch*] an old lion and a snake / trample [*tirmos*] a lion cub and sea-serpent." (Ps. 91:13)

Is there a difference between *dorech* and *romes*?

For that, this article continues at: http://ohr.edu/this_week/whats_in_a_word/

TALMUD TIPS

by Rabbi Moshe Newman

Gittin 58- 90

Rabbis and Kings

“Shalom aleichem, kings. Shalom aleichem, kings.”

With these words the Torah scholar named “Geneiva” walked up to the Sages Rav Huna and Rav Chisda and greeted them. They asked him why Torah Sages are called “kings”. He answered by citing a verse in Proverbs (8:15), “Kings reign with me (the Torah), and rulers legislate righteousness.” This statement on our *daf* is almost certainly the source of the well-known expression, “*Mon malchei? Rabbanan*” – Who are kings? Sages who have internalized the wisdom of the Torah are the true kings who can lead the Jewish People in the way of G-d.

Years ago I attended a certain Torah class that was taught by a very great Rabbi. The other students and I sat around a table awaiting his arrival. When he entered the room we all stood up, as is the halacha for students to stand in honor of their Rabbi. As he walked past to the head of the table he said to me, “What is all this fuss for?” I was surprised by his question, but after a second replied that “The Rabbi is our Rabbi, and we are showing honor to our Rabbi as we should.” He paused for a moment and said, “Indeed you have a dilemma. I don’t consider myself to be a Rabbi, and therefore you have no need to stand. However, since you consider me your Rabbi, you need to act appropriately and stand.” I sheepishly suggested that if our standing bothers him, he may tell us that he forgoes his honor so that we need not stand, based on the halacha that “a Rabbi who forgoes his honor, his honor is given up”. He replied, “That’s the real dilemma. Since I don’t consider myself to be a Rabbi, it doesn’t make sense for me to forgo my honor as a Rabbi. Therefore do whatever you need to do.” Of course we all continued to stand for him each day since he was our Rabbi and we certainly needed to stand for him to display our honor for a Torah scholar. Based on our *gemara*, however, that a Torah scholar is considered a king, I afterwards wondered if my original suggestion – that he could forgo the honor due to him as a Rabbi – was actually incorrect. As a Torah scholar is a “king”, the halacha is “a king who forgoes his honor his honor is not relinquished.”

Gittin 62a

The Kindness of Being Rushed Into Exile

“Hashem acted with kindness to the Jewish People by hastening their exile at the time of King Tzidkiyahu while those who had previously been exiled at the time of King Yachoniya were still there (in Bavel).”

This “kindness” that Hashem did for our nation by exiling a second part of the Jewish nation is taught by the Sage Mareimar on our *daf*, and is based on a verse in the Book of Daniel (9:14; a chapter that serves as inspiration and textual source for much of our “*tachanun*” prayer). The verse states, “And Hashem hastened up the evil and brought it upon us, for Hashem, our L-rd, is righteous with all His deeds that He has done, and we did not listen to His voice.”

But, really, what kind of “kindness” is it to be “hurried into exile”?

The Sage Mareimar answers this question with the above teaching regarding the exile at the time of King Tzidkiyahu being followed relatively quickly by the exile of King Yochaniya. The latter exile followed soon after the earlier one, eleven years later. Hashem, in His great kindness, “hurried” the next exile to be only a short time after the first one in order that the latter group of exiles would be able to learn Torah in Bavel from the earlier-exiled Sages, who were still alive there. The *gemara* states, based on a verse in the Book of Kings (II 24:16), that there were 1,000 very great Torah scholars in Bavel in the earlier exile. These Torah scholars were still alive there to transmit the Torah to the massive exile of the Jewish People in the days of King Yochaniya, eleven years following the exile of these Torah Sages during the reign of King Tzidkiyahu. (Rashi)

Another explanation for the “kindness of being hurried into exile” is offered by the Sage Ulla. He taught that Hashem hurried the Jewish People out of the Land of Israel after being there for 850 years, since they were transgressing in the Land, and if they would have continued doing so for two more years they would have been completely destroyed (G-d forbid). This is based on a fascinating hint that Ulla finds in the following verses: “When you have children and children's children, and you will be *long established in the Land*, and you become corrupt and make a graven image, the likeness of anything, and do evil in the eyes of the L-rd your G-d... you will speedily and utterly perish from the Land to which you cross the Jordan, to possess. You will not prolong your days upon it, but will be *utterly destroyed*.” (Deut. 4:25-26) The word for “long established” in the verse is “*v'noshantem*”, which has the numerical value of 852, i.e. 852 years. If they had remained in the Land of Israel for a total of 852 years – two more years – they would be punished as the verse says: “utterly destroyed”. Hashem showed them great kindness by exiling them two years before this tragedy could occur. (Rashi)

▪ *Gittin 88a*

TISHA B'AV RIDDLE

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

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

*Please note that this is true only in Ashkenazic synagogues. According to the widespread Sefardic custom, nobody sits down with the Torah; rather, the Torah scroll remains on the *bima*.

LETTER AND SPIRIT

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

Living Transmission

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sources: Commentary, Devarim 4:9

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Devarim

This Torah portion begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, *Sefer Devarim*. This Book is also called *Mishneh Torah*, "Repetition of the Torah" (hence the Greek/English title "Deuteronomy"). *Sefer Devarim* relates what Moshe told the Jewish People during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan River into the Land of Israel. Moshe reviews the mitzvahs with the people, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo – from the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe's guidance, to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua's leadership in the Land.

The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the *meraglim*. This Torah portion opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they had not sinned by sending spies into Eretz Yisrael. Hashem would have given them, without a fight, all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom.

Moshe details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results. The entire generation would die in the desert and Moshe would not enter Eretz Yisrael. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem's decree was to want to "go up and fight" to redress the sin. He recounts how they would not listen when he told them not to go, and that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They had ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon. These lands were not to be part of the map of Eretz Yisrael in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

Va'etchanan

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

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

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

Ekev

If *Bnei Yisrael* carefully observe even those "minor" mitzvahs that are usually "trampled" underfoot, Moshe promises them that they will be the most blessed of the nations on earth. Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* that they will conquer Eretz Canaan little by little – so that the land will not be overrun by wild animals in the hiatus before *Bnei Yisrael* are able to organize and settle the whole land. After again warning *Bnei Yisrael* to burn all carved idols of Canaanite gods, Moshe stresses that the Torah is indivisible and not open to partial observance.

Moshe describes the Land of Israel as a land of wheat, barley, grapes, figs, and pomegranates, a land of oil-yielding olives and date-honey. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to become haughty and think that their success in Eretz Yisrael is a result of their own powers or vigor. Rather, it was Hashem who gave them wealth and success. Nor did Hashem drive out the Canaanites because of *Bnei Yisrael's* righteousness, but rather because of the sins of the Canaanites, for the road from Mount Sinai had been a catalogue of large and small sins and rebellions against Hashem and Moshe.

Moshe details the events after Hashem spoke the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, culminating in his bringing down the second set of Tablets on Yom Kippur. Aharon's passing from this world is recorded, as is the elevation of the *Levi'im* to be Hashem's ministers. Moshe points out that the 70 souls who went down to Egypt have now become like the stars of heaven in abundance. After specifying the great virtues of the Land of Israel, Moshe says the second paragraph of the *Shema*, conceptualizing the blessings that accompany keeping mitzvahs, and the curses that result from non-observance.

Re'eh

Moshe presents to the nation the blessing of a spiritually oriented life, and the curse of becoming disconnected from Hashem. When the nation enters Eretz Yisrael, they must burn down any trees that had been used for idol-worship, and destroy all idolatrous statues. Hashem will choose only one place where the Divine Presence will dwell. Offerings may be brought only there, but not to a private altar.

Moshe repeatedly warns against eating animal blood. In the desert, all meat was slaughtered in the Mishkan, but in Eretz Yisrael meat may be *shechted* anywhere. Moshe lists the categories of foods that may be eaten only in Jerusalem. He warns the nation against copying the ways of the other nations. Since the Torah is complete and perfect, nothing may be added to or subtracted from it. If a so-called prophet tells the people to permanently abandon a Torah law or indulge in idol worship, he is to be put to death. One who entices others to worship idols is to be put to death. A city of idolatry must be razed. It is prohibited to show excessive signs of mourning, such as marking the skin or making a bald spot.

Moshe reiterates the classifications of kosher and non-kosher food and the prohibition of cooking meat and milk. Produce of the second tithe must be eaten in Jerusalem, and if the amount is too large to carry, it may be exchanged for money with which food is bought in Jerusalem and eaten there. In certain years this tithe is given to the poor. *Bnei Yisrael* are instructed to always be open-hearted, and in the seventh year any loans must be discounted, and then Hashem will bless the person in all ways. A Jewish bondsman is released after six years, and must be sent away with generous provisions. If he refuses to leave, his ear is pierced with an awl at the door post and he remains a bondsman until the Jubilee Year. This Torah portion concludes with a description of the three pilgrimage festivals: Pesach, Shavuot and Succot.

Shoftim

Moshe tells *Bnei Yisrael* to appoint judges and officers in their cities. A bribe of even an insignificant sum is forbidden. Trees are not to be planted near Hashem's altar, as was the way of idolaters. Blemishes in animals designated for offerings and other points of disqualification are listed. The Great Sanhedrin is to make binding decisions on new situations, according to Torah criteria, to prevent the fragmentation of the Torah. A very learned scholar who refuses to accept the halachic decisions of the Sanhedrin incurs the death penalty. A Jewish king may have possessions and symbols of power only as commensurate with the honor of his office, but not for self-aggrandizement. He is to write for himself two *Sifrei Torah* – one to be kept with him wherever he goes, so that he doesn't become haughty. Neither the *Kohanim* nor the *Levi'im* are to inherit land in the Land of Israel. Rather, they are to be supported by the community, by a system of tithes.

All divination is prohibited. Hashem promises the Jewish People that He will send them prophets to guide them, and Moshe explains how a true prophet may be distinguished from a false one. Cities of refuge are to be provided an accidental killer to escape the blood-avenger from the deceased's family. However, someone who kills with malice is to be handed over to the blood-avenger. Moshe cautions *Bnei Yisrael* not to move boundary markers to increase their property. Two witnesses who conspire to frame a third party are to be punished with the very same punishment that they conspired to bring upon the innocent party.

A *kohen* is to be anointed specifically for when Israel goes to war, to instill the nation's trust in Hashem. Among those disqualified from going to war is anyone who has built a new house but not lived in it yet, or anyone who is fearful or fainthearted. An enemy must be given the chance to make peace, but if they refuse, all the males are to be killed. Fruit trees are to be preserved and not cut down during the siege. If a corpse is found between cities, the elders of the nearest city must take a heifer, slaughter it, and wash their hands over it, saying that they are not guilty of the death.

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