



KINDER TORAH.™

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PARASHAS DEVARIM

DIRE STRAITS

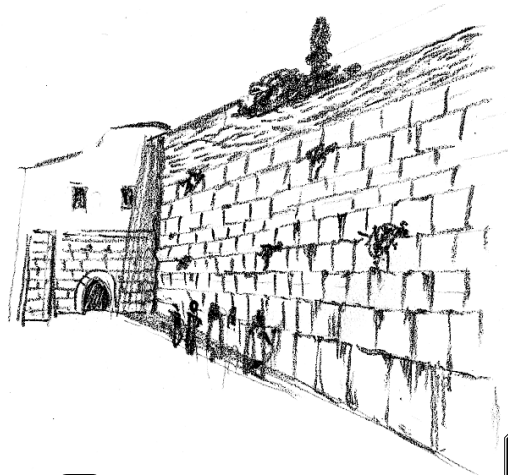
“These are the words that Moses spoke unto all Israel . . . between Paran and Tophel . . .” (Devarim 1:1). What was the nature of the words that Moshe Rabbeinu spoke at this time and place? They were words of *tochacha* (constructive criticism) delivered to Klal Yisrael. *Tochacha* (mentioning someone’s sins), when delivered in the presence of other people, can be embarrassing. Moshe was speaking to all of Klal Yisrael, and the potential for humiliation was very great. Therefore, he did not mention the sins directly; rather he only used words that hinted to them.

The Keli Yakar has a fascinating and compelling explanation of the sins hinted to in the first verse. Paran is the place where the *chet ha’meraglim* (sin of the spies) began, as the verse states, “Moshe sent them forth from Midbar Paran” (Bamidbar 13:3). Tophel is a word used in association with Avodah Zara in many places in Tanach. Here, it refers to the *chet ha’egel* (sin of the golden calf). Between Paran and Tophel refers to the period of time between these two sins. The *chet ha’egel* was on the seventeenth of Tammuz, and the *chet ha’meraglim* was on the ninth of Av. The three weeks between these two events is referred to as “*bein ha’metzarim*” – between the straits. The verse states, “All of her pursuers overtook her between the straits” (Megillas Eichah 1:3). This is a time of great danger for Klal Yisrael, because she has lost the protection from her enemies.

How can our nation be saved from her pursuers? We can either cry out to Hashem, or unite amongst ourselves. The first way relies upon our special status as Hashem’s chosen nation. Because of our closeness to Him, He promises to save us when we cry out to Him with broken hearts. We fulfill the mitzvah of “You shall love Hashem your G-d,” thereby demonstrating our love and closeness to Him, and He reciprocates in kind. The second way of salvation is more *derech ha’teva* (the natural way of the world). Any nation, including Klal Yisrael, finds strength in unity. Therefore, when we fulfill the mitzvah of “You shall love your fellow as yourself” there is hope for salvation even if we sin against Hashem.

During *bein ha’metzarim*, we lost both of these advantages. We sinned against Hashem with the *egel ha’zahav*. We belittled our status as His chosen nation. The *mazal* (constellation) of Tammuz is the crab, who usually crawls backwards. We turned backwards, away from our Creator; therefore, He turned away from us. On the seventeenth of Tammuz, the *luchos* (tablets) were broken as a result of the sin. This day became a day of breaking of stones, as the walls of Yerushalayim were breached on the seventeenth of Tammuz, almost 900 years later.

he Keli Yakar has a novel explanation of



The *chet ha’meraglim* as a sin *bein adam li’chaveyro* (between man and his fellow man). Klal Yisrael complained, “Because of Hashem’s hatred for us, He took us out of the land of Mitzrayim” (Devarim 1:27). A shocking statement. Can anyone truly believe that his Creator hates him? Rashi explains that the Jewish people projected their feelings onto other people. They hated their fellow man in their hearts. They therefore assumed that their fellow Jews hated them. The next step was assuming that Hashem hated them. The fact that they could claim that Hashem hates them reveals that there must have been rampant hatred amongst themselves. At the time of the destruction of the first Beis HaMikdash, there was hatred between the Princes of Israel. In the second Beis HaMikdash, it spread to all of the people. Therefore, they lost their advantage of unity, and with it, all hopes of salvation. The *mazal* of the month of Av is the lion. Each Jew acted

like a lion against his friend, ready to pounce upon him. They Jewish people cried for no justified reason on the night of the ninth of Av, when the *meraglim* returned from their mission. That night became a night of crying for generations, as both Bottei Mikdash were destroyed on Tisha B’Av.

During *bein ha’metzarim*, Klal Yisrael loses both avenues of salvation; therefore, all of her enemies can overcome her at this time. Moshe Rabbeinu stood at that moment and urged them to do *teshuva*. “Do not continue with your past sins! They will only result in further destruction! The breaking of stones and the night of crying will continue for all the generations!” Alas, they did not heed his warning. We still suffer from those sins. On the other hand, there is a bright side. Our nation still exists, thousands of years later! We still have the opportunity to do *teshuva*! We can avoid the trap of *bein ha’metzarim*. The Torah speaks to us. “Correct your sins! Draw close to the Almighty in *teshuva* on sins *bein adam li’Makom*. You will then merit His special protection. Draw close to your fellow Jews in *teshuva* on sins *bein adam li’chaveyro*. The unity will bring you strength. Get out of the trap, and rebuild the destruction.”

Kinderlach . . .

Tomorrow is Tisha B’Av. It does not have to be a day of mourning. It can be a day of rejoicing if the Beis HaMikdash is rebuilt. It is all up to us. There is still time to do teshuva. Hashem is waiting for you to come close to Him. Your fellow Jew is waiting for you to demonstrate your love for him. Get close to your Creator and your fellow Jews. Get out of this bein ha’metzarim trap and rebuild the Beis HaMikdash.

Parasha Questions:

- How long were the Bnei Yisrael encamped in Kadesh? (Rashi 1:46)
- Which land did Eisav receive as an inheritance? (2:5)
- Which land did Lot receive as an inheritance? (2:19)
- Did Sichon allow the Bnei Yisrael to pass through their land? (2:30)