

PARSHA

## DEVARIM

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### 605



### CONFLICT IN THE HOME IS LIKE THE DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE

Rabbi David Pinto Chlita

*It is written, "How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels?" (Devarim 1:12).*

This week's parsha is usually read during the sad period of the year when our Temple was destroyed (between Tammuz 17 and Tisha B'Av). We find an allusion here to Megillat Eichah, which is read on Tisha B'Av, for the term eichah appears in both texts: "How [eichah] can I alone carry" and "How [eichah] she sits in solitude" (Eicha 1:1).

Our Sages ask, "Why was the First Temple destroyed? Because of...idolatry, immorality, bloodshed. ... Yet why was the Second Temple destroyed, seeing that in its time people occupied themselves with Torah, mitzvot, and the practice of charity? Because of baseless hatred" (Yoma 9b). The Gemara asks which sin was worse: "Were the earlier generations better, or the later ones?" It replies, "Look upon the Temple!" In other words, the earlier generations witnessed the rebuilding of the Temple, but not the later generations. Since it has not yet been rebuilt after 2,000 years, it is clear that baseless hatred is a graver sin than those committed by the earlier generations. That being the case, the way to remedy this is through baseless love. I once heard a Torah giant of our generation commenting upon the Sages' statement: "Whosoever partakes of the wedding meal of a bridegroom... it is as if he has restored one of the ruins of Jerusalem" (Berachot 6b). He noted that at first glance, it is difficult to see the connection between rejoicing newlyweds and rebuilding the ruins of Jerusalem. Yet as we know, rejoicing newlyweds is an extremely important mitzvah that allows us to merit the five expressions of joy mentioned in regard to the wedding ceremony, as well as to acquire Torah. A person who sings, dances, and rejoices in honor of newlyweds whom he does not personally know demonstrates selfless love, and he rectifies the baseless hatred that caused the destruction of our Temple. Hence the text considers him to have rebuilt the ruins of Jerusalem. It is as if he has repaired what has been broken, thus contributing to the reconstruction of the Temple by spreading baseless love, rather than the baseless hatred that brought about its destruction.

According to what we have said, I would like to explain the following teaching of our Sages: "If a man divorces his first wife, even the altar sheds tears" (Gittin 90b). Why is it precisely the altar that sheds tears? The answer is given by Rabbi Akiva, who said: "If husband [ish] and wife [ishah] merit it, the Shechinah rests upon them. Otherwise, fire consumes them" (Sotah 17a). When they merit it, G-d places the yud from His Name in the man (ish) and the hei from His Name in the woman (ishah). When they do not merit it, however, G-d withdraws

the letters of His Name from them, leaving them with esh ("fire"), which consumes them. When man and wife live in peace, love, and harmony – each of them concerned for the other and trying to shower them with kindness – their home becomes a place where baseless love is expressed, and by this merit their home becomes like the Temple, since G-d's Name (Y – H) is found in them and the Shechinah rests upon them. In the opposite case, baseless hatred will develop among a couple that is torn apart by quarrels, disputes and arguments. In fact hatred burns like a fire, and therefore each of them will do things to upset the other and harm them without reason, simply due to a lack of love. This baseless hatred distances the Name of G-d from their home, which then becomes like the ruins of the Temple. In that case, the Temple and its vessels shed tears, especially the altar, the main purpose of which is to establish peace between Jews and their Father in Heaven by enabling the bringing of offerings, by which Hashem forgives the sins of His children. Yet now that this home, which is a sanctuary, has destroyed itself through the baseless hatred that has come between the couple, to the point of leading them to divorce, the altar sheds tears because it senses that the Temple is still far from being rebuilt. In fact it was destroyed because of baseless hatred, which continues to be powerfully felt.

Much to our despair, lewdness in the diaspora is so powerful that it becomes difficult to protect ourselves from forbidden images. To guard ourselves from it requires a tremendous sacrifice. Nevertheless, those who fear Hashem and respect Torah manage to control what they look at and avoid appalling impurity. How do they merit this?

In reality, everything begins in the home. When man and wife live in peace and love, the Shechinah abides with them and G-d's Name (Y – H) rests upon them. The Shechinah accompanies them with every step they take, both inside the home and out. A man who lives in such an atmosphere is not interested in the lewd sights that surround him, for he is enveloped by the holy Shechinah that accompanies and protects him from all sin. In the opposite case, if the home is destroyed and conflict reigns within, the Shechinah withdraws itself and we find ourselves at the mercy of our evil inclination, even outside the home. It is up to us to realize how important it is to respect our spouse. We sometimes see certain individuals being very considerate with their friends, being polite and demonstrating good manners, listening to their concerns and helping them with their needs. Yet these very same individuals will adopt a poor and reprehensible attitude toward their spouses, failing to demonstrate concern or respect, and even hurting them with wrongful words. Why? Because they think that they are the masters of their own home, that everyone should

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listen to their instructions and satisfy their desires, and woe to anyone who disregards their orders! However we must be aware that such behavior is destructive, and that the Shechinah will distance itself with any opening left for baseless hatred, which is tantamount to the Temple being destroyed once more. Whoever considers the gravity of the destruction of the First and Second Temples will realize that in a home where conflict resides, multiple sanctuaries are destroyed because

of the numerous sins of the couple, and that the Temple as well as its ruined vessels shed tears as a result.

We must strengthen ourselves both in Torah study and the fulfillment of mitzvot, scrupulously and meticulously. In doing so, we will extinguish baseless hatred both for others and for our spouse, and we will develop baseless love and merit the Final Redemption, speedily and in our days. Amen.

## The Words of the Sages

### Succeeding in Times of Trial

It is written, “You shall not tremble before any man” (Devarim 1:17).

The residents of Hamburg had a difficult time finding a Rav who met their needs. Their requirements were extensive: First, they wanted someone who possessed a sharp mind, a giant in Torah, as well as someone who was friendly. They also wanted a Rav who was both determined and courageous. On the other hand, some residents wanted a Rav who was open to the ideas of the Haskalah [Jewish Enlightenment movement], which was slowly developing in the city. When they met Rabbi Raphael ben Yekutiel Susskind Cohen, they had a feeling that they had found the man they needed. His book *Torat Yekutiel* and other works testified to his genius, and his warmth was obvious.

When Rabbi Raphael traveled to Hamburg for the first time, he met with several notable figures from the city who were drawn to the Haskalah. Wanting to know if the Rav would help them spread their ideas, they asked him to travel to Berlin so that “Rabbi” Moses Mendelssohn, the leader of the Haskalah, could interview him. Rabbi Raphael agreed to their request.

Rabbi Raphael, who had grown up in Lithuania, where the negative impact of the Haskalah had not yet been felt, never heard of this “Rabbi” before, which is why he let himself be persuaded to travel all the way to Berlin. As soon as he found Mendelssohn’s house, he entered and saw him learning Torah with his head uncovered. He was flabbergasted, for he had never thought that such a thing was possible. Mendelssohn raised his head and greeted him with a warm shalom, a Rav whose arrival had been announced by telegram from the Maskilim of Hamburg. Stunned, Rabbi Raphael answered him forcefully: “There is no peace [shalom], says Hashem...”

Even before hearing his response, Rabbi Raphael continued: “Receiving a recommendation from a renegade such as yourself? I prefer to sweep the streets than receive a recommendation for my rabbinical position from such an unbeliever!”

Agitated, he then left Mendelssohn’s house.

Even before Rabbi Raphael could return to Hamburg, Mendelssohn sent a telegraph to the leaders of the city and strongly recommended that Rabbi Raphael be appointed as their Rav. He described him as a man who would not retract his views before those of others, an individual who was absolutely faithful to the truth, to the point of describing someone to whom he had come for support as an unbeliever.

The day that Rabbi Raphael was appointed as the Rav of Hamburg was a day of celebration. On the road leading to the city, a large gate made of flowers had been built, and on it was inscribed in large letters: “This is the gate of Hashem; the righteous shall pass through it” (Tehillim 118:20). The streets of the city had been decorated, and carpets had been laid out all along the road leading to the synagogue, with children dressed in holiday garments and standing on either side of the road waving flags. As soon as his speech in synagogue was over, the Rav headed toward

his new office. Yet before he could sit down, a visibly poor and needy woman entered. She told him that for weeks she had been claiming a small sum of money from the president of the community, but he had refused to pay her. Now that Rabbi Raphael had finally been appointed as the Rav of the city, she demanded a din Torah.

Whispers rippled through the crowd, for she was talking about the president of the community, a wealthy man who had appointed Rabbi Raphael as Rav and was responsible for his salary. To summon such a man to court, a man known to be determined and spirited, was something that just wasn’t done – especially on the first day that Rabbi Raphael was fulfilling his duties as Rav!

Upon hearing the case brought by the woman in distress, the Rav asked the shamash to go to the man’s home and summon him to a din Torah.

The shamash was afraid, for he realized the magnitude of his assignment. Indeed, the Rav was liable to be fired from his position on his very first day!

He therefore tried to distract him from this case, but without success. Having no other choice, the shamash went to the home of the man in question. As we can imagine, he not only returned alone, but also told the Rav that the president of the community had been very upset by this order and used an abundance of shameful expressions that he dared not repeat.

Faced with such a response, the Rav sent the shamash back to tell the president that if didn’t come right away, he would immediately excommunicate him.

At that point silence descended upon those present. Everyone thought that the Rav’s response was a little excessive, given that this was the president of the community they were talking about! Furthermore, nobody knew if the poor woman in question was credible! Above all, and despite the respect the Rav was owed, it hadn’t even been two hours since he had been officially appointed to his position!

Stammering with his words, the shamash explained that he was unable to relay such a message to the president of the community. The Rav then replied, quite forcefully, that he would find another shamash who was willing to obey the instructions given to him.

Realizing that he had no other choice, the shamash left half-heartedly for the president’s home. In the office of the Rav, tension was as high as they waited for the shamash to return. Not long afterwards, he returned with the man in question, who had a large smile on his face.

“I would like to welcome the new Rav of Hamburg!” he said. “I’m now at peace, for we have chosen someone who is perfectly suited for our city: A determined Rav whose faithfulness to the truth is without limit!” He then gave the Rav a warm handshake and said, “There’s no reason for a din Torah. We simply wanted to verify that you are qualified to serve as Rav. Now that we’ve seen you’re capable of excommunicating the president of the community on your first day on the job, it’s clear that you’re suited for it!”

## At the Source

### To All Israel

It is written, “These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel” (Devarim 1:1).

The term *eleh* (“these are”) is formed by the initials of *Avak Lashon Harah* (“dust of evil speech”), a sin that we all fall into. Thus it is written, “Most [people are guilty] of theft, a minority of lewdness, and all of Lashon Harah ... [more specifically] *Avak Lashon Harah*” (Bava Batra 165a).

According to the book *Chomat Anach*, that is why Moshe addressed his warning “to all Israel.”

### The Camp of Israel Only

It is written, “These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel” (Devarim 1:1).

“To all Israel” – the Midrash explains that all Israel heard Moshe’s voice, which extended for 12 miles.

Rabbi Eleazar HaKappar said that the expression “to all Israel” excludes the nations of the world. In fact only the Children of Israel could hear Moshe’s voice. The voice of Bilam, on the other hand, covered the entire world when he blessed the Children of Israel, and of him it is said: “If one blesses his friend loudly from early in the morning, it will be considered a curse for him” (Mishlei 27:14). Why was Bilam’s voice heard by everyone? In order for the nations of the world to hear him blessing the Children of Israel.

Yet when Moshe reprimanded them, his voice extended only to the camp of Israel, so that the nations of the world would not be aware of these reprimands.

### The Category of Torah

It is written, “These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel” (Devarim 1:1).

Rabbeinu Haim ben Attar interpreted this verse allegorically:

“These are the words that Moshe spoke – Moshe never spoke words in vain, and all his words pertained only to Torah and were infused with holiness, in agreement with the declaration of our Sages that ‘one who engages in idle conversation transgresses a positive commandment, for it is stated: “And you shall speak of them” [Devarim 6:7] – of them, but not of other matters’ [Yoma 19b].”

The book *Tiferet Shelmo* is surprised by this, for Moshe was 80 years old before the giving of the Torah, and according to our Sages he was the king of Ethiopia. That being the case, how can we say that he only spoke words of Torah and never discussed anything else throughout his life?

In reality, when we attempt and yearn to serve G-d, then all other occupations pertaining to our material needs enter into the category of “Torah.” Thus if we are truly motivated solely by a desire to fulfill G-d’s will, all our daily actions will then be categorized as “words of Torah”!

### Eleven Days

It is written, “Eleven days from Horev” (Devarim 1:2).

The *Kli Yakar* discovered a nice allusion in these eleven days. In fact they parallel the eleven days of the year in which we mourn the destruction of the Temple.

These are comprised of the nine days of the month of Av, plus Tammuz 17 and Tevet 10.

### He Commanded Moshe Only

It is written, “Hashem said to me, ‘You shall not distress Moab, and you shall not provoke war with them’ ” (Devarim 2:9).

On the verse, “Hashem said to me, ‘You shall not distress Moab,’ ” Rav Hamnuna’s son asked: Up to now, was G-d speaking to someone else besides Moshe? Why does it explicitly state, “Hashem said to me”? In fact it was to Moshe alone, no one else, that G-d gave the order not to harm Moab or damage any of his possessions. He did not give this command to David, for out of that people, out of Moab, would emerge someone who would exercise Israel’s vengeance. This was David, who descended from Ruth the Moabitess. – *Zohar Balak* 190a

## In the Light of the Parsha

### Torah Study and the Joy of the Shechinah

by Rabbi David Pinto Shlita

*It is written, “Moshe began explaining this [ha-zot] Torah” (Devarim 1:5).*

Let us explain this verse allegorically. According to the Gemara (Menachot 53b), the term *zot* (“this”) designates the Torah, as it is written: “Ve-zot haTorah [And this Torah]” (Devarim 4:44). In several places within the *Zohar*, the *Shechinah* is also called *zot*. Out of a love for these sacred words, I will cite them now: “When Jacob desired to bless his sons, he said that his sons should be blessed with the bond of faith. It is written, ‘All these are the tribes of Israel, twelve, and this [ve-zot]’ [Bereshith 49:28]. Thus there were thirteen, the *Shechinah* being joined with them” (*Zohar* III:62a).

Let us cite another nice explanation in this regard. Concerning the verse, “And moreover, *gam zot* [also this] while they are in the land of their enemies” (Vayikra 26:44), Rabbi Abba says: “See how great is the love of the Holy One, blessed be He, for Israel, for although they brought exile upon themselves, the *Shechinah* never leaves them, as it says: ‘And moreover, *gam zot* [is with them] while they are in the land of their enemies.’ A king had a son who provoked him, and so he punished him with banishment and sent him to a distant land. Upon hearing this, the queen said: ‘Seeing that my son is going to a distant land and that the king has cast him out of his palace, I will not leave him. Either we will both return together to the palace, or we will both dwell together in another land.’ Over the course of time, the king sought the queen but did not find her, for she had left with her son. He said, ‘Since the queen is there, let them both return.’ However it is the queen whom the king first seeks out, and for her sake he seeks out his son, as it is written: ‘I have heard the groaning of the Children of Israel.’ Why? Because ‘I have remembered My covenant’ [Shemot 6:5]” (*Zohar* III:297b).

According to this, we may explain the verse: “Moshe began explaining this [ha-zot] Torah” (Devarim 1:5) to mean that through the study of Torah, which is called *zot*, we will merit the presence of the *Shechinah*, which is also called *zot*.

## Guard Your Tongue

### Constant Reprimands

Whoever wants to be extremely careful in regard to the prohibition against listening to slander or gossip should accustom himself to constantly reprimanding the members of his household and explaining to them the tremendous reward awaiting one who is careful with his words. Conversely, he must mention the gravity of its punishment, so they do not stumble into the sin of believing slander or gossip.

– Shaar HaZechira

### How to Issue Reprimands

It is written, “These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel” (Devarim 1:1).

Here Rashi states, “Since these are words of rebuke, and he [Moshe] enumerates here all the places where they angered the Omnipresent, it therefore makes no explicit mention of these incidents, but instead only alludes to them [by mentioning place names] out of respect for Israel.”

Reprimanding is truly an art, one that demands a very high spiritual level. We must understand how to issue a reprimand, to choose the right moment, and to carefully weigh our words and take other things into consideration. In the Gemara, Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah teaches us an important lesson by saying: “I wonder if there is anyone in this generation who knows how to reprimand” (Arachin 16b).

A quick look at the world of Rabbi Aryeh Levine Zatzal, the tzaddik of Jerusalem, shows us how he was able to combine education with reprimanding. After his death, the chassidic writer Rabbi Simcha Raz wrote two books about him: *Ish Tzaddik Haya* and *Tzaddik Yesod Olam*. In them appears the story of Rav Avraham Beharan, the founder of a school in Kfar Pines.

Rabbi Simcha Raz recounts that he was having a private discussion with Rav Beharan one day, and Rav Beharan said to him: “How do you think I became a teacher and was able to build a school? Where did I get the strength to do all this? I’ll tell you what pushed me towards what would become my goal in life. When I was young, about ten years old, I studied at the Etz Chaim Talmud Torah in Jerusalem. At the time, the children studied throughout the day, from morning till night.

“I received food in measured amounts, given the poverty that reigned at the time. At noon, the Talmud Torah distributed a single plate of boiled meat to each student, and that was it! If someone wanted more, he had to patiently wait until everyone had received their share. If anything remained at that point, he could ask for a little more. One day I was especially hungry, and I asked for the boiled meat that I loved. I ate it quickly, and thought to myself that if I waited any longer to ask for more, there might be nothing left! With my stomach growling and a desire for more meat, I asked the cook for another plate.

“She looked at me and said, ‘You already had your share!’ At that point I got very upset with her, and I took the huge pot of boiling meat that was on the counter and completely overturned it! A huge ruckus ensued. The cook started screaming at me at the top of her lungs, and all the other children were shouting, ‘Avraham, you’ve gone crazy! How could you have spilled a pot of food! Why did you do that? What happened to your manners! Don’t you know that it’s forbidden to throw away food, that wasting like this is forbidden?!’

“An administrator was called to the kitchen, and when he saw what I had done he took me aside and gave me a severe talking down to. With the principle’s consent, it was decided that I would present myself to the mashgiach, Rabbi Aryeh Levine, on the following morning so he could lecture me and decide upon my punishment.

“I was trembling so much, I barely closed my eyes all that night. What could I possibly say to the mashgiach in my defense? I had truly done something unforgiveable! I didn’t know how to hide from the shame that awaited me. I then began to think of the punishment that was in store for me, and I had great difficulty sleeping that night. When I arrived at his office on the following morning, I was so afraid that I could hardly breathe. Rabbi Aryeh looked at me and said with a serious

tone: ‘Tell me, Avraham, is it true what I heard about you yesterday?’ I didn’t know what to say to defend myself. I felt that it was better to admit the truth, since it’s said: ‘Mercy is shown to one who admits his sin and renounces it.’ I therefore confessed in a hushed voice. I lowered my head and waited for the flood of reprimands that would surely come down upon me. Rabbi Aryeh then said to me, ‘From what I can gather from this story, you love boiled meat.’

“‘Yes, that’s true,’ I confessed. I then raised my eyes and saw that Rabbi Aryeh had placed a plate full of boiled meat on the side of the tiny table. He said, ‘Here, I’ve prepared a plate for you. Sit down and eat!’

“At that very instant, I decided in my heart that I would become a teacher when I grew up, for Rabbi Aryeh had just given me my first lesson on the principles of education.”

### The Faithful Ones - Accounts from the Tzaddikim of the Pinto Family

#### There’s No Arak Here

Near the end of his life, Rabbi Haim Pinto Hakatan, may his merit protect us, moved to Casablanca upon the request of the Jewish community so they could benefit from his presence.

On the day of his grandfather’s Hilloula, Rabbi Haim Pinto Hagadol, may his merit protect us, it turned out that there was no arak [anise liqueur] to serve the guests who had arrived for the festive meal. One participant offered to travel to the city of Safi to purchase a few bottles there. The country was in a state of war, however, and besides a lack of certain products that was noticeably felt, it was forbidden by law to manufacture or purchase strong alcoholic drinks. Nevertheless, Rabbi Haim told him who to go see upon his arrival in Safi, instructing him to tell the person in question that Rav Pinto had sent him. He therefore traveled to Safi, and despite the great distance he returned to Casablanca without problem. The Hilloula was now in full gear, and those who participated received alcohol. However the Satan aroused a non-Jewish neighbor, who knew what was going on, to inform the authorities that these Jews were having a celebration with strong alcoholic drinks. Naturally, the police immediately arrived on the premises and began looking for the arak.

“What are you looking for?” asked Rabbi Haim. When they explained, he replied: “Please, go ahead and look. You should realize, however, that you won’t find any arak here. We have water. Only water.” When the police found bottles of arak, they thought that they had found what they were looking for. However Rabbi Haim confidently told them to open the bottles in order to verify that they contained water, not arak. When they proceeded to open them, they sniffed, tasted, and noticed that it was only water. When they realized that they had found water, not arak, they left in a state of confusion and promptly punished the non-Jewish neighbor who had denounced them. After the police left, those who remained at the Hilloula continued to celebrate, stunned by the great miracle that had taken place. When they wanted some arak to drink, they addressed the Rav and told him that the joy of the Hilloula wouldn’t be complete if they only had water to drink. Rabbi Haim was surprised by their request: “But the person who went to Safi brought back arak, not water! Taste it and you’ll see!”

One of these participants later told our teacher Rabbi David Pinto Shlita that when they began to drink from these bottles again, they realized that it was indeed arak!