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maskil Le'David

Torah Brings Blessing to Man

"These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisrael, on the other side of the Jordan, concerning the Wilderness, concerning the Aravah, opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tophel, and Lavan, and Chazerot, and Di-zahav" (Devarim 1:1).

Before Moshe Rabbeinu's passing he conveyed important matters to Am Yisrael for them to engrave in their hearts. It was difficult for him to depart from them, and he wished to inspire them one last time. Moshe intended these matters to be "provisions" for Am Yisrael's journey; by constantly observing them, they would always feel Moshe's presence.

"These are the words" implies "make these words the primary matter" disregarding all other "words." This directive includes the event of Moshe's passing — his passing should not cause Am Yisrael to become broken hearted and despondent. If they succeed this task they will merit feeling that Moshe Rabbeinu is still alive and with them at every moment, since "the righteous after their deaths are called alive."

With these words Moshe Rabbeinu wished to convey a message for all generations. The Beit Hamikdash was destroyed due to unjustified hatred, for it was the generation's jealousy of one another that caused them to speak *lashon hara*. Because of that *lashon hara*, arguments, and dissension, the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed. Likewise, Am Yisrael were punished because the spies spoke negatively about Eretz Yisrael, and due to this they were forced to wander through the Wilderness for forty years instead of entering the Land immediately. Therefore, Moshe said to them, "These are the words" — your speech must be only of a positive nature, while negative speech which promotes argument and strife must be rejected completely. In this way you will merit peace and friendship to reign among you,

automatically causing Hashem's presence to rest in your midst.

The *sefarim* write that the word "אלה" (these) is an acronym for "אבק לשון הרע" (dust of *lashon hara*), referring to forms of speech which are forbidden since they can easily lead to *lashon hara*. This implies that Moshe was warning Bnei Yisrael to be particular not to speak even *avak lashon hara*.

Although we might think dust is insignificant and inconsequential, this is not the case. These words have the power to sow great ruin and destruction! *Avak lashon hara* refers to words essentially permitted since they are not evil, yet the tone, timing, and/or manner in which they were spoken change their connotation completely making them *avak lashon hara*. One who is not careful with the prohibition of *avak lashon hara* will eventually, G-d forbid, come to speak actual *lashon hara*, leading to a situation where "a person would swallow his fellow alive!" From there to further destruction is a short path.

We find that the world had two great prophets. One was Moshe Rabbeinu, Am Yisrael's prophet, while, *lehavdil*, the other was the wicked Balaam who prophesized for the nations of the world. Those prophets were distinguished by their power of speech. Even though Moshe was "heavy of mouth and heavy of speech," his role was to transmit messages from Hashem to Am Yisrael. Since his role involved his voice, Hashem helped him be successful in his mission. His words of prophecy were accepted by Am Yisrael who believed that he was Hashem's messenger.

Balaam too possessed the power of speech and he wished to curse Am Yisrael. This shows us that he utilized his power of speech for the negative. Despite the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu knew how to curse, he nevertheless used his mouth for blessings; only when it was essential, for example with Korach and his assembly, did he curse. Both possessed the power of speech, but while Moshe utilized it for the good, Balaam exploited it for the bad.

Now we understand why Hashem turned to Balaam saying, "From where do you have the power to bless Am Yisrael? You possess no Torah and your mouth is impure."

cont. p.3.>>>

8 Av 5785

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Devarim - Chazon



Hilula

8 Av

Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef Zilber

9 Av

Rabbi Shlomo Kohen
Tzedek, Rav of Golpaigen
and Teheran

10 Av

Rabbi Tzion ibn Denan,
Av Beit Din of Ozdah
and Rabat

11 Av

Rabbi Yitzchak Blazer
of St. Petersburg

12 Av

Rabbi Yosef Lavton

13 Av

Rabbi Zevulun Graz

14 Av

Rabbi Yosef Naftali Stern,
Rosh Yeshiva of Pressburg





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

Rebuke is Compared to a Bee's Sting

"These are the words that Moshe spoke" (*Devarim* 1:1).

The Midrash (*Devarim Raba* 1:6) explains the term "דברים" (words) to be derived from the word "דבורים" – "bees." "Rabbi Yishmael ben Nachman said, 'Hashem said, My children behaved like bees, following the leadership of *tzaddikim* and prophets.'"

The *Kesef Nivchar zy"a*, explains the connection:

Explaining the verse (*Devarim* 1:44), "The Amorite...went out against you and pursued you *as the bees would do*," Rashi quotes the Midrash: "Like a bee that buries its stinger into a victim and then dies, the victorious Amorites died after defeating the Jews."

In a previous verse (*Devarim* 1:3) Rashi writes: "This teaches us that Moshe Rabbeinu only rebuked the people close to his death...There are four reasons why one only rebukes a person close to one's death, [the first reason being] so one should not rebuke him and rebuke him again."

"These are the words," is the beginning of Moshe's rebuke to Am Yisrael. The Midrash tells us that "*devarim*" hints to bees: just like a bee dies immediately after it stings, so Moshe died immediately after rebuking Am Yisrael.

The Crowding Does Not Concern Us

"Hashem, your G-d, has multiplied you and behold! you are like the stars of heaven in abundance" (*Devarim* 1:10).

Referring to the above verse, the *Midrash Rabba* quotes the verse (*Tehillim* 5:8), "I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You."

The connection between the two verses seems difficult to understand.

Rabbi Yaakov Yaffe *zt"l*, in his *sefer Yaakov Selah*, explains the intention of the Midrash based on the Mishna (*Avot* 5:5), "Ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Holy Temple: ...the people stood crowded together, yet prostrated themselves in ample space."

This then clarifies the difficulty. The Midrash wishes to reconcile the obvious question: How will the Land have ample room for all Am Yisrael, if they merit the fulfillment of the blessing and multiply "like the stars of heaven in abundance?"

For this reason the Midrash quotes the verse "I will prostrate myself toward Your Holy Sanctuary in awe of You" – come and see how Yisrael carried out the holy service in the Beit Hamikdash! They stood crowded together yet prostrated themselves in ample space. Exactly this miracle will occur in Eretz Yisrael too, and there will be ample room for all to dwell in the Land!



WORDS OF THE SAGES

What Lies Behind Unjustified Hatred?

On Tisha B'Av night we say in the *Kinnot*, "By our necks we were pursued, for we pursued unjustified hatred, woe unto us." The first principle we must be aware of, says Rabbi Elimelech Biderman, is that we think we are sitting on the ground because of baseless hatred – and with that the subject is closed. But this is not the case! We have to know that right beneath where we are sitting, something is buried! Something is concealed underneath the unjustified hatred! If we would pay attention to that buried matter, we would not come to baseless hatred.

Buried under any "Baseless Hatred" is "a Lack of Faith!"

Emunah (faith) will save us from hatred, jealousy, argument, and *lashon hara*!

The Vilna Gaon explains the expression "baseless hatred" – which seems difficult to comprehend. Why indeed is it called "baseless hatred?" The hatred is not unjustified – if my friend drove me crazy, the feeling is very much justified! Do I really hate him for no reason?

Says the Vilna Gaon, Hashem tells us that this kind of hatred *is* unjustified. Hashem is telling us, do you think *he* drove you crazy? It is not him, it is Me! This person is only My messenger. Had he not done what he did, I would have sent a different messenger to do exactly the same thing, for everything that happens is predetermined by Me.

If you hate him because you think *he* hurt you, it is lack of faith in Hashem.

Herein lies the explanation of what we said above – beneath all baseless hatred lies a lack of faith.

It is told how someone imagined that his friend was speaking *lashon hara* about him. These thoughts bothered him for a long time. One day he met that friend and asked him:

"Why are you saying evil things about me?"

"Far be it from me to do such a thing," the friend answered in astonishment. "I never spoke *lashon hara* about you. You must have imagined it."

The next day this person met his friend again and repeated, "Why are you speaking *lashon hara* about me?"

His friend once again answered, "You are simply dreaming." When this scenario repeated itself a third time and the friend tried explaining how it was all a product of his imagination, the person responded, "It may have been a dream, but still, why are you talking badly about me?"

This is exactly how we wander around in This World. If asked, "Do you believe in Hashem?" we will no doubt answer, "Of course, certainly. What's the question?" "Do you believe that everything is ordained by Heaven?" "Of course, certainly. Everything is from above!"

Nice words.

But if everything is indeed from Above, why are you furious with your neighbor? If you believe with perfect faith that everything is destined by Hashem, why are you quarreling with your friend? By constantly complaining about how people did to us, took from us, harmed us – where is our *emunah*?



FROM THE TREASURY

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi **David**
Chananya Pinto, shlita

Like a Speck of Dust in a Spaceship Motor

The Gemara (*Gittin* 55a) tells us the story of Kamtza and bar Kamtza who hated one another, and how this caused the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. This incident portrays how the Sages of that generation stumbled with the sin of *lashon hara*. It is surprising how no one protested the host's behavior. Maybe the Sages decline began when they listened to *avak lashon hara*, related by the host concerning his unwanted guest. Since they did not hasten to restore peace between them, or at least silence the host, they fell deeper into the sin, to the extent that they were no longer careful about listening to words which disgraced the guest.

The *avak lashon hara* which at first glance seems to be only a slight offense, grew and intensified into something enormous, and actually led to the *churban*. The Sages of that generation were personally responsible for this, to some extent causing the *churban*. Had they put a stop to the *lashon hara* while it was still minor and insignificant like dust, they could have prevented the dissension and strife which ended with destruction.

We know how a small speck of dust in the motor of a spaceship, renders it unfit for take off into space. Only after removing all the dust from the motor and cleaning it thoroughly, can the motor work efficiently and propel the craft into space. Similarly, a small amount of *avak lashon hara* blemishes the unity and alliance of Am Yisrael, to the extent that Hashem can no longer rest His presence among His children. As Hashem's anger intensified, He poured out His wrath on sticks and stones rather than harm His people.

This was supposed to bring Am Yisrael to recognize how all that occurred to the Beit Hamikdash should really have happened to them. Since Hashem loves us, His children, and wants only good for us, He allowed us to remain alive to learn our lesson and rectify our evil ways.

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Since this is the case, you have no merit or ability to bless them. A mouth that has not uttered words of Torah, instead making itself impure and repulsive with foul words and forbidden foods, is incapable of blessing those referred to as "blessed." However, a mouth that has engaged itself in Torah discussion obtains the power to give meaningful and effective blessings. The fact that Balaam ended up blessing Am Yisrael was G-d's will; otherwise he would not have had the ability to bless.

A diamond found lying in the mud covered with dirt must be cleaned well and polished in order to once again sparkle. So long as it remains covered in dirt, how are we to know that it is indeed a diamond? It looks like any other stone lying on the wayside. Similarly, to possess the power to bless, the mouth has to be cleaned. How does one cleanse one's mouth? Through studying the holy Torah — it is the Torah alone that bestows man with the ability to bless.

Man's advantage over animals lies in our power of speech; animals are unable to talk at all. If man uses the gift of speech negatively, the animal will be superior to man, since it utters neither good nor bad while man is using his mouth for bad. Since the Torah alone brings a person to proper speech, we are obligated to study it — thus our mouths will produce diamonds.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

Tidbits of faith and trust
penned by Moreinu
v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Rabbi
David Chananya Pinto, shlita

A Fiery Message

A *tzedakah* collector once came to my home, collecting for his community. I offered him a generous donation, and he left in good spirits. My daughter, who witnessed the scene, turned to me in wonder, "Father," she began, "Why do you give so freely like that? Your own institutions are also in need of funds."

"My dear daughter," I replied, "You must always remember that Hashem has enough for everyone. Nothing is too difficult for Him. He can easily provide for all the needy people and Torah institutions in the entire world. One never loses out by giving to others!" I did not know just how soon my words would be realized.

One night later that week, while everyone was sleeping peacefully, the refrigerator suddenly stopped working. Tongues of fire leaped out from the motor, and heavy smoke filled the entire house. Since everyone was fast asleep, we were in mortal danger. But Hashem had mercy on us and caused me to wake up. The first thing I felt was a terrible headache, and then I immediately realized with fright that the house was full of smoke. I walked in the direction of the source and discovered a huge blaze where the refrigerator had been. I immediately awoke my family, and by a miracle we were all saved from a gruesome death.

This incident taught us very clearly how the mitzvah of *tzedakah* I had performed that week, by donating generously, had served as an atonement for our entire family, and that is what protected us and saved us from sure death, as it says,
"Charity saves from death"

(*Mishlei* 11:4).

a NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Tears of Faith



We find among the nations of the world that they celebrate days commemorating victory in battle, establishment of national independence, or other similar events. However we do not find they commemorate days of defeat or downfall, especially if it took place thousands of years ago. On the contrary, they try to hide the matter and forget about it completely.

The Jewish nation differs in this respect. Our Sages established the Ninth of Av as a day of fasting and mourning, in remembrance of the defeat and downfall suffered at the hands of the Babylonians, which led to the burning of the Beit Hamikdash on this day (the Babylonians destroyed the first Beit Hamikdash). In addition, this day of remembrance is preceded by three weeks of preparation in which we practice certain customs of mourning.

How do we explain this contrast between the Jewish nation and the other nations of the world?

The difference is clear: the nations of the world live by the dictum "My strength and the might of my hand made me all this wealth." Establishing a day which commemorates their downfall is a great embarrassment for them; it commemorates their failure to emerge victorious. On the other hand, Am Yisrael live with the knowledge that everything that occurs is orchestrated by Hashem, including the downfalls and losses which befall us due to our own deeds. On the contrary, this kind of day empowers us with the ability to strengthen our faith and rectify our deeds.

Am Yisrael knows how to appreciate "the time of our exile" and not only "the time of our gladness" — as we say in the festival prayers.

Unfortunately, there are those who cry on Tisha B'Av yet do not know why they are crying.

We can compare this to the following parable:

A man buys a lottery ticket, arrives home and announces to his wife, "Here is a lottery ticket. Take good care of it so it shouldn't get lost, for it could be of great value."

The wife listens to her husband, places the lottery ticket inside one of the kitchen cabinets, and warns her children not to touch it.

The children, as children will do, nodded their heads in agreement, but as soon as their mother left the kitchen they climbed on a chair, took the ticket, and began playing with what they thought was an interesting game. Suddenly, the ticket fell onto the stove-top and in a matter of seconds was totally consumed by a burning flame!

The children began sobbing. The mother heard their cries and quickly came to see what had happened. The children explained that their "game" had burnt. After clarifying the story, to her great consternation the mother realized it was the lottery ticket that had met its fate — and she too began to cry.

Meanwhile the father was on his way home and passed the lottery stand. To his great joy he saw his number had won!

He ran home excitedly, but as soon as he opened the door he encountered his crying wife and children.

"Why is everyone crying?" he asked his wife in alarm.

She explained that the lottery ticket was no longer. And then he too began crying!

Outwardly it seems as though all their tears are of equal measure, after all they're all crying. But the truth is each person is crying for a different reason: the young children are crying because they lost their game, the wife is crying because she betrayed her husband's trust, and only the husband knows that they have a real reason to cry. On account of a silly game the family lost an enormous amount of money which could have alleviated their

difficult financial situation and changed their entire lifestyle.

So it is with our crying on Tisha B'Av. Indeed, we all cry — but the question is, about what?

Some are crying about their private sorrows. For one it translates into a lack of *parnassah*, for the other it is his lack of success in life, while the third one is troubled by the missiles which have recently become a frequent occurrence *r"l*. Yet all these people fail to grasp what we really should be crying about.

One who mourns the loss of our Beit Hamikdash, which was destroyed due to our sins, is the one truly mourning Yerushalayim. And it is he who will merit witnessing its rebuilding.

Despite the fasting and mourning of Tisha B'Av, we must live with a constant feeling of anticipation that Hashem will redeem us and rebuild the Beit Hamikdash. We must never lose hope.

A king once asked an artist to draw a picture of all the different nations, depicting each one's specific characteristics. The artist completed his work and the king was indeed able to identify each nation, until he came to a certain picture of a man's face. One eye was shedding tears while the other eye portrayed joy.

The king asked the artist, "Which nation does this picture represent?"

This was his answer: **"It is the Jewish people! On the one hand they encounter many troubles which cause them distress and tears, yet at the same time they have faith in a better future and delight in having Someone to lean on."**

For this reason, on Shabbat following Tisha B'Av we read the Haftarah "Comfort, comfort My people" (*Yeshaya* 40). When we truly mourn the exile of the *Shechina*, Hashem comforts us twofold.



"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"

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