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maskil Le'David

The Yetzer Hara — Both Brother and Foe

"You shall command the people, saying, 'You are passing through the boundary of your brothers the children of Eisav, who dwell in Seir; they will fear you, but you should be very careful'" (Devarim 2:4).

Moshe Rabbeinu warned Am Yisrael that when they cross the border of Seir they must be careful not to provoke the nation of Eisav. They must also be particular to pay for any food and drink they take from them. It seems surprising that Moshe Rabbeinu calls the people of Eisav "your brothers." Do Chazal not say (*Sifri, Beha'alotcha* 69), "It is a rule that Eisav hates Yaakov," and constantly seeks to kill him? So why did Moshe see fit to call them brothers, a term symbolizing peace and unity?

Chazal say (*Kiddushin* 30b), Hashem created the *yetzer hara* and, counter to it, created the Torah, a remedy for the ailments of the *yetzer hara*. In Hashem's eyes, the existence of the *yetzer hara* in This World is essential; without it man would not have to choose between good or evil — he would be drawn only towards good. It is the *yetzer hara* which tries to influence a person to take the path of evil; only because of the *yetzer hara* is man faced with the choice of following evil, or cleaving to Hashem and His Torah, thereby earning reward.

Man's reward in the World to Come grows according to the enormity of the tests he withstands. And the stronger a person's desire to overcome his *yetzer hara*, the more Hashem helps him, for one who wishes to purify himself is assisted (*Shabbat* 104a). The more time a person spends studying Torah in yeshiva, the greater is his protection from the *yetzer hara* even when he leaves its gates, since the Torah he studied continues to accompany and protect him from the *yetzer hara*.

This is what Hashem said to Moshe (*Devarim* 2:3): "Enough of your circling this mountain; turn yourselves northward." Meaning, until now you sat round the mountain and engaged in Torah, until the place became sanctified through your Torah study

and was considered like a yeshiva, a place designated for studying the holy Torah. The *yetzer hara* has already discovered that in this place of yours near the mountain it has no power to make you stumble since your Torah safeguards you; it is afraid to start up with you.

In order to multiply your reward and strengthen yourselves in Torah in a more intense fashion, you must travel away from this place, *while holding on to the Torah*, and turn northward to the place where the *yetzer hara* is found, called "*tzafon* – north" (*Sukkah* 52a). Only when you journey away from the protective walls of the yeshiva, does the battle with the *yetzer hara* become difficult and more acute. But then, if you are victorious, your reward grows proportionately, for the greater the test, the greater the reward you receive.

Eisav represents the *yetzer hara*. Moshe told Bnei Yisrael that they cannot eradicate the *yetzer hara* or terminate its presence; This World is the dwelling place of the *yetzer hara*, as per Hashem's wish.

In fact, This World belongs more to the *yetzer hara* than to man, since Yaakov and Eisav made a clear allocation between themselves: This World belongs to Eisav while the World to Come belongs to Yaakov, the pillar of Torah. Since it is impossible to completely rid This World of the *yetzer hara*, one should treat it as a brother who occupies the same house. One does not send away a bad brother, but we must defeat him. This is accomplished through studying the holy Torah, for when the voice is the voice of Yaakov, the hands of Eisav are not capable of overcoming those who study Torah.

The more a person prevails over his *yetzer hara*, the more he elevates himself. But at the same time one must always remember that the *yetzer hara* does not disappear completely; it only changes its form and place and one can never know how and when it will surprise us. The *yetzer hara's* power grows outside the walls of the *beit hamidrash*. Therefore when one closes his Gemara and leaves the study halls, he must continue to engage his thoughts in Torah. Then the power of Torah will protect him from the *yetzer hara*, and in addition, will increase his reward.

This is why Moshe Rabbeinu called the nation of Seir "brothers." Even though one must be vigilant of them and their influence, nevertheless it is only *through them* that the power of free choice exists in the world! And if one succeeds in defeating them, one is granted great reward.

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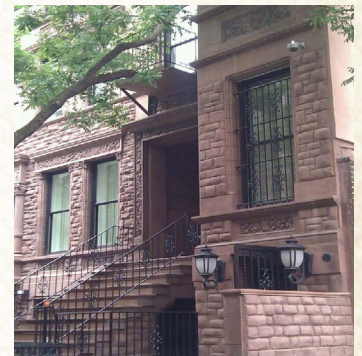
4 Av 5786

18 July 2026

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Devarim

Shabbat Chazon



Hilula

4 Av

Rabbi Shimon Biderman

5 Av

Rabbeinu Yitzchak Luria
Ashkenazi, the Ari Hakadosh

6 Av

Rabbi Moshe Ezra Mizrachi

7 Av

Rabbi Shalom Noach
Barzovski, Slonimer Rebbe

8 Av

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi,
Rav of Jaffa

9 Av

Rabbi Bentzion Moshe Yair
Weinstock

10 Av

Yissachar son
of Yaakov Avinu





PARSHAH PEARLS

Inspiring Reflections

One Repeats Something Important

“These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan” (Devarim 1:1).

The Book of Devarim is also called “*Mishna Torah* — a repetition of the Torah,” since before his death Moshe Rabbeinu repeated the entire Torah to Am Yisrael.

Why did Moshe Rabbeinu have to repeat the entire Torah before his death? No doubt during their forty years of wandering through the Wilderness Moshe Rabbeinu reviewed the Torah with Bnei Yisrael. And even if there is benefit in an additional review of the Torah, why did it have to be written anew in the Book of Devarim?

It seems to me that Hashem wanted to teach Am Yisrael that a Jew merits understanding the Torah and observing its mitzvot appropriately only when he reviews his learning, time after time without interruption. For when one reviews and repeats something, it demonstrates appreciation for it. Something one does not like or appreciate, one does not repeat; something important and valuable one repeats again and again.

If someone desires the Torah to penetrate his heart and become an inseparable part of him, he must review, as in “*Eilu Devarim*.” In this way he will merit the Torah being absorbed in his bones and also demonstrates appreciation for the Torah.

Rebuke before Death is like a Will

“It was in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month” (Devarim 1:3).

Rashi explains that Moshe only rebuked Bnei Yisrael close to his death. Who did he learn this from? From Yaakov, who only rebuked his children just before his death. We find that Yehoshua, Shmuel, and David also followed this conduct.

Rashi adds there are four reasons why one only offers rebuke close to one's death. One reason is so he should not find himself rebuking, and repeating the rebuke. But the difficulty is, on the contrary, the verse says “הוּכַח תּוֹכִיחַ — You shall reprove your fellow” (Vayikra 19:17) and Chazal explain the double expression to signify repeatedly rebuking, even one hundred times.

The *Oznaim L'Torah* explains there is a difference between rebuke given by a father to his son or rav to his *talmid*, and rebuke offered to one's fellow.

Particularly regarding a fellow Jew there is an obligation to rebuke even one hundred times, but with a father and son or rav and *talmid*, where the son is obligated to honor his father and the *talmid* is obligated to honor his rav, we are afraid that if the father/rav rebukes his son/*talmid* repeatedly, they will grow accustomed to not listening and begin to consider the prohibited act as something permissible, as is the case when a transgression is repeated. This is why a father and rav should not rebuke repeatedly.

However, before such a person passes away, that time is a beneficial time to offer rebuke. These parting words are considered like a will and are generally taken to heart more than regular rebuke.

WORDS OF THE SAGES



Sincere Crying and Pleading Versus Unjustified Crying

On the verse (*Bamidbar* 14:1), “The entire assembly raised up and issued its voice; the people wept that night,” Chazal expound (*Ta'anit* 29a): “Rava said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan, that day was Tisha B'Av. Hashem said to them, ‘You wept without a cause, I will establish [this night] for you [as a time of] weeping throughout the generations!’”

The root of the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash and source for our long, bitter exile, explains the Maggid, Hagaon Rabbi Elimelech Biderman *shlit"a*, was a lack of faith. Their needless crying demonstrated that they had complaints against Hashem. Since they blemished their complete faith that Hashem is with them always, in every situation, the terrible *churban* came about.

This teaches us that one of the main rectifications regarding the *churban* must be strengthening our faith in Hashem, our Merciful Father, who seeks our good at every moment; we must not give in to unjustified crying. Although strengthening our faith is a lifetime's effort, and there is no moment we are not obligated to implant complete faith deep within ourselves, nevertheless during these days when we are mourning the *churban* whose root is unwarranted crying, we should put extra focus on this service.

The following story took place one Tisha B'Av during the Holocaust, related by the granddaughter of Hagaon Rabbi Hillel of Kalmia *zy"a*. Like thousands of our brethren, she was separated from her mother and husband and sent to one of the concentration camps. On Tisha B'Av morning, the Nazis ordered all the inmates to stand at attention in the courtyard. It was a clear day with not a cloud in sight.

The wicked Nazis *ym"sh* instructed them to sit down on the ground, which was covered with jagged, sharp stones that pierced their legs. They then treated them to a “performance” by the best of their musicians, deliberately delighting in depressing them on the bitter day of Tisha B'Av.

This woman could not bear the great humiliation and cried out from the depths of her heart: “Father in Heaven! Do not act for my sake, not even for the sake of Your people Yisrael, but for the sake of *Your* honor. Open up the heavens and pour down heavy rain which will end this terrible desecration of Your Name!”

Within moments, dark clouds appeared in the skies. Hashem opened up the heavens and heavy rain began to fall. The wicked Nazis took themselves and their instruments and bolted. The Jews sighed with relief and were able to return to their barracks. The woman related that during the entire period of the war, this incident was a great source of strength for her and fortified her belief that our Father, our Shepherd, is watching over us every step of the way. She saw how despite the great concealment, Hashem indeed listens to the pleas of those who cry out to Him.



WALKING IN THEIR WAYS

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

Cushioning Tragedy with Blessing

When I visited Poland in 1994, I was accompanied by the *chazzan* of the Aleppo *beit haknesset*, Mr. Meir Abadi, together with a female relative. He related that this woman's son had been involved in a horrific car accident and was lying in a hospital bed, unconscious. The doctors did not have much hope for his recovery.

When I heard this story, I instructed Mr. Abadi and his relative to go down to the ground floor of the building we were in and recite *Tehillim* on behalf of this young man for the next fifteen minutes. After that they should return to my room. In the merit of *Tehillim* said with a broken heart, my holy ancestors *zy"a* would serve as advocates for the boy before Hashem.

They did as I suggested. When they came back up, I handed Mr. Abadi a piece of paper on which I had written a blessing. I told him to hurry to the hospital and place the paper under the boy's pillow.

The *chazzan* did not believe he would be allowed to approach the boy who lay in intensive care, but he went anyway. Divine intervention was at play, opening all doors before him. Within a short time, the paper was under the boy's pillow.

A few hours later the miracle occurred! The boy opened his eyes and asked for a drink. After a short time, he was transferred to a regular ward. With Hashem's kindness, he merited a complete recovery.

I am often overwhelmed by the power of pure faith! And even though many times the Satan is involved, and one may find the more he prays, the more problems arise, still the main thing is not to despair of Heavenly mercy! Continue praying and hoping for Hashem's salvation.

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Moshe Rabbeinu also added (*Devarim* 2:6), "You shall purchase food from them for money so you may eat; also water shall you buy from them for money so you may drink." "*Kesef* – money" is derived from the term "*kisufin* – longing," as David Hamelech expresses (*Tehillim* 84:3), "My soul yearns, indeed it pines, for the courtyards of Hashem."

The Jewish soul longs and yearns to cleave to the holy Torah which is more valuable than all the silver and gold in the world. So to defeat the nation of Eisav who are compared to the *yetzer hara*, we must possess a longing for the holy Torah, for it is only with the power of Torah that man can overcome the *yetzer hara*.

It follows then that the *yetzer hara* is both a brother and a foe. On the one hand it entails great danger to a person's spiritual state, but on the other hand without it the world cannot exist.

Because of the *yetzer hara*, man has free choice and can elevate himself in Torah and *yirat Shamayim*, but only if he knows how to protect himself from it and emerge victorious. The choice is in our hands – whether to succumb to the counsel of the *yetzer hara*, or fight against it through Torah study. And we must always realize – Hashem assists those who choose to fight against the *yetzer hara* so we can subdue it!



FROM THE TREASURY

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

Torah Has the Power to Protect from Sin

Parshat Devarim is usually read close to Tisha B'Av, the day the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed. The inherent connection between Parshat Devarim and Tisha B'Av lies in the fact that since Am Yisrael were not particular about engaging in the holy Torah, as a result they stumbled with the sin of *lashon hara*. This led to baseless hatred; the *Shechina* was exiled from their presence, and they were exiled from their Land (see *Yoma* 9b). This teaches us an important lesson. Torah has the power to protect man from sin and enables him to guard the purity of his mouth. However, when man is lax in using his mouth for Torah study, he begins to use it for secular matters and the habit quickly deteriorates from bad to worse, as he begins to stumble with the prohibition of *lashon hara*, *motzi shem ra*, false oaths, and other similar sins.

We know that when Hashem offered the Torah to Bnei Yisrael, they declared (*Shemot* 24:7), "We will do and we will obey." This means they wholeheartedly accepted upon themselves to study and observe the words of the holy Torah, even before they knew what it entailed. In fact, since Bnei Yisrael's declaration was like an oath, we – their offspring – are obligated to abide by this oath and G-d forbid not desecrate it, so as not to transgress the command (*Bamidbar* 30:3), "He shall not desecrate his word."

The Navi tells us (*Yirmiyahu* 34:8-22) that in the time of King Tzidkiyahu, Am Yisrael observed the Torah law and released their servants in the seventh year. However, a short time passed and they changed their minds and took their servants back. When Hashem saw Bnei Yisrael profaning Torah law and even going back on their own words, He punished them for this measure for measure: He brought about that they too became slaves to the nations of the world.

This demonstrates the severity of profaning the words of the holy Torah. Bnei Yisrael added to their sin by not only disregarding the Torah law, but also desecrating their words. Since Hashem saw His sons profaning His and their own words, He decided to punish them with the full severity of the law and therefore destroyed the Beit Hamikdash and exiled them from their Land.

a NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA

Learn How to Rebuke



As part of Moshe's rebuke, he mentioned "*Di-zahav*," referring to the act of making the Golden Calf. "Moshe said to Hashem: The abundance of silver and gold You gave Am Yisrael until they said 'enough,' caused them to make the Golden Calf" (*Yalkut Shimoni remez 797*).

It seems the essence of this rebuke is Moshe declaring Am Yisrael not guilty. Rather, it was the abundance of gold that led them to make the Golden Calf!

Our great Sages were always particular to observe the mitzvah of "You shall reprove your fellow," but at the same time they preserved the honor of those on the receiving end and also ensured others would not humiliate them.

Our Sages said (*Yoma 9b*), "Why was the second Beit Hamikdash destroyed? Because of baseless hatred." There was hatred among them and they were not prepared to forgo to one another. They were not wise enough to understand that one who forgoes and forgives gains most!

The *gaon* Rabbi Reuven Elbaz *shlit"a* is the Rosh Yeshiva of Ohr HaChaim and one of the greatest *machzirei b'teshuva* of our generation! Clearly this necessitates appropriate application of the mitzvah of rebuke. He enlightens us in his *sefer Mishkani Acharecha* with several points to take into account concerning this mitzvah. He begins by stressing that the timing of the rebuke must be chosen with utmost care.

First of all, we must know there are times unsuitable for rebuke. The Mishna says (*Avot 4:18*): "Do not appease your fellow in the time of his anger." Sometimes a person makes belligerent statements, "I will not allow them... I will take this till the bitter end..." And those around try to stop him, "What do you think you are doing?" But one must be aware that "anger lingers in the bosom of fools" (*Kohelet 7:9*). At this moment one is forbidden to rebuke; anything said will be of no benefit at all. No rebuke in the world enters the heart of one who is angry. One must give him time to calm down,

to drink a cup of coffee and have a bite of cake, and only once he is relaxed and satisfied can one begin speaking to him.

Even then, one must act wisely and raise different topics. Ask him how his child is doing in the Talmud Torah. Is everything okay with him? Tell him, "Hashem is so kind to you! How many children are on the streets, and Hashem blessed you with diamonds! He must love you dearly! And by the way, about what happened yesterday, I know you are certain so and so is guilty, but..." and so forth, with wisdom and intuition. But not when he is angry, for then it will be of no help.

Offering rebuke is one of the hardest things. Not for nothing did Moshe Rabbeinu not rebuke Am Yisrael the entire forty years they wandered in the Wilderness. Sometimes we are shocked to see people doing certain things, but before rebuking them harshly it is advisable to speak to them and try and understand what brought them to act in this way. Sometimes the results are surprising and totally unexpected!

The Flowers will Live and You Will Die?

"As a *bachur*," relates Hagaon Rabbi Reuven Elbaz *shlit"a*, "one Shabbat I was at my parent's home in Teveria. Leaving the *beit kneset* on Shabbat morning, I noticed one of the congregants who had prayed with us, watering his garden. I was shocked! A Jew who prays in the *beit kneset* watering his garden on Shabbat?!"

"I could have shouted at him, 'Fool! You deserve to be stoned! You are watering your garden on Shabbat!' But G-d forbid! This is not the way to rebuke!"

"I passed by and called out, 'Shabbat Shalom! It was so nice to see you in the *beit kneset*!'"

"He smiled and returned my greeting. And I continued gently, 'Do you know, there is a law

concerning watering plants on Shabbat... It is comparable to sowing seeds.'

"He immediately replied, 'G-d forbid! I know it is forbidden to sow! I am just watering... The poor flowers, in this heat — forty degrees — they can wither... I am not doing anything, just watering them a bit so they shouldn't die...'

"He spoke with such innocence; it made me crazy... He was certain he was strictly observing Shabbat! He goes to the *beit kneset*, makes Kiddush, eats cholent, and only waters the flowers a bit so they shouldn't die..."

"I told him, 'Do you want the flowers to live while you yourself will die? You are killing yourself!'"

"He invited me inside to explain further. I accepted his invitation and began speaking to him. It turned out he had no idea it was forbidden to water plants on Shabbat. 'Believe me, I had no idea!' he apologized. 'I am Shabbat observant and do not even use electricity. I had no idea about this prohibition...'

"We studied the relevant laws and he thanked me greatly. He eventually understood that it was a forbidden act, and I delighted with my success. I gave over everything pleasantly, not in a way that would have caused him to react, 'You don't tell me what to do!' How did I achieve this? Because I began by greeting him respectfully with 'Shabbat Shalom!' And continued with a gentle tone, teaching him in an honorable manner.

"When we know how to speak to those who are far from the truth and treat them with honor and love, we merit drawing them closer. There is no doubt, there are many ways to offer rebuke, but we have found rebuke presented in this fashion more easily accepted and successful. The Jews we come into contact with are not heretics, they are Jews whose faith is dormant in their hearts and only needs awakening, and sometimes some education as well."



"Contemplate and see that Hashem is good"

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