

# Toras Aish

## Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

**RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS**

### Who Wrote Sefer Devarim?

I'm always baffled on the differences in style and content that appear in the book of Devarim in contrast to the preceding four books of our Torah. Any serious student of Torah would notice a host of variations between these texts and the obvious question is "Why?"

Let me explain. First the language is different. In Devarim, Moshe our teacher often speaks in the first person something that is not found in the first four books of the Torah. Second, there are blatant disparities when contrasting the book of Devarim to the preceding books. For example, the differences in the language of the Ten Commandments. The obvious inclusion of additional words in the text in Devarim as well as a host of laws which do not appear in the preceding books. The section dealing with the blessings and rebukes are markedly different. One can therefore ask the question as to why this discrepancy? Was this book written by someone else? Is it G-d driven as the other books or was it written by Moshe?

These questions are indeed the discussion of our sages as well.

When one reads the commandments of Shabbat as it appears in the book of Shmot and Devarim, two divergent languages appear; "Zachor" and "Shamor". Which one appeared on the Ten Commandments? Or did they both appear? Our Rabbis state that these two languages were said at one time, something that no human can achieve. So that each time the Decalogue appeared, the second language was also used.

But the questions still abound? What about all the other dissimilarities in the book of Devarim? The additional laws-the additional curses and blessings- how were they written? Were they written and given by G-D or was it Moshe's words?

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky author of the book "Emes L'Yaakov" develops an interesting approach. He claims that there are times in the Torah that we see the word written in one way yet we read it in another way.

This issue of Toras Aish is dedicated in memory of  
Joseph M. Katzenstein z"l

יהודה משה יוסף בן החבר קלונימוס ז"ל  
by Annette & Victor Schabes and family

Examples of this can be found in the portion of Ki Tavo, in which the Torah writes one language, yet we vocalize it very differently. This phenomenon is referred to as the axiom of "Kri and Ktiv". He therefore posits the innovative notion that the differences between the text in Dvarim and the conflicting texts in the other sections of the Torah are just an example of this principle of "Kri and Ktiv", in which one time it appears as we should read it and the next time it appears as it is written or visa versa.

I believe that perhaps there is another explanation to these apparent differences.

In defining how the Torah was given to the Jewish people, the Bais Halevi states that on the original Decalogue were written the unwritten Torah as well (The Torah shbeal Peh). When the second set of tablets were given however, the Oral Torah was omitted. This omission made the Jewish people an integral part in the transmission of the Torah. Before they were outsiders looking at the text as it appeared in writing. Now that the Oral law was not written, the Jewish people were charged to be intimately involved in the transmission, and they became the conduit for the receiving and the transmission of the Oral Torah. They fundamentally became the unwritten law!

It is this line of reasoning that I believe explains the blatant disparities from the book of Deuteronomy to the other four preceding books. I would like to offer the theory that the book of Dvarim is the first example of the Oral law as interpreted by our teacher Moses. Its importance and value remains equal to the other books but it represents the beginnings of the elucidation and expounding of the preceding written Torah and the meanings of those words. In essence then, Moshe our teacher in the book of Devarim provided the first example of the exposition of the preceding books of the Torah; the "Torah Shbeal peh", the unwritten Torah. Using this reasoning we can easily explain the contrast in language, style and content of the book of Devarim when compared to the other books and arrive possibly at the conclusion that one book is an explanation of the others.

When I presented this theory to my esteemed colleague and Rabbi in West Hartford he commented that perhaps this is the intent of the words that appear at the beginning of Devarim that "Hoil Moshe beer et hatorah hazot", Moshe began to explain this Torah.

I believe it is! © 2009 Rabbi Mordechai Weiss -  
Rabbi Mordechai Weiss is the former Principal of the  
Bess and Paul Sigal Hebrew Academy of Greater

*Hartford and the Hebrew Academy of Atlantic County where together he served for over forty years. He and his wife D'vorah live in Efrat. All comments are welcome at [rvmordechai@aol.com](mailto:rvmordechai@aol.com)*

**RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS ZT"l**

## Covenant & Conversation

**T**he first verse of Devarim, the fifth and culminating book of the Torah, sounds prosaic. "These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan -- in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahav." There is no hint of drama in these words. But the sages of the Talmud found one, and it is life-changing.

What is odd in the verse is the last place-name: Di-zahav. What and where is this place? It hasn't been mentioned before, nor is it mentioned again anywhere else in Tanakh. But the name is tantalising. It seems to mean, "Enough gold." Gold is certainly something we have heard about before. It was the metal of which the calf was made while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Torah from God. This was one of the great sins of the wilderness years. Might the enigmatic mention of a place called "Enough gold" have something to do with it?

From these clues and cues, the sages inferred a remarkable drama. This is what they said: Moses spoke audaciously [hiti'ach devarim] towards Heaven... The school of R. Jannai learned this from the words Di-zahav. What do these words mean? They said in the school of R. Jannai: Thus spoke Moses before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Sovereign of the Universe, the silver and gold [zahav] which You showered on Israel until they said, 'Enough' [dai], was what caused them to make the calf... R. Hiyya bar Abba said: It is like the case of a man who had a son. He bathed him and anointed him and gave him plenty to eat and drink and hung a purse around his neck and set him down at the door of a house of ill-repute. How could he help sinning? (Berakhot 32a)

Moses, in this dramatic re-reading, is portrayed as counsel for the defence of the Jewish people. Yes, he admits to God, the people did indeed commit a sin. But it was You who provided them with the opportunity and the temptation. If the Israelites had not had gold in the wilderness, they could not have made a golden calf. Besides which, who needs gold in a wilderness? There was only one reason the Israelites had gold with them: because they were following Your instructions. You said: "Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbour and every woman is to ask her neighbour for objects of silver and gold" (Ex. 11:2). Therefore, do not blame them. Please, instead, forgive them.

This is a wonderful passage in its own right. It represents what the sages called chutzpah kelapei Shemaya, "audacity toward heaven." (Sanhedrin 105a. We tend to think of chutzpah as a Yiddish word, but it is in fact Aramaic and comes to us from the Babylonian

Talmud). The question, though, is: why did the sages choose this passage to make the point?

After all, the episode of the Golden Calf is set out in full in Exodus 32-34. The Torah tells us explicitly how daring Moses was in prayer. First, when God tells him what the people have done, Moses immediately responds by saying, "Lord, why should Your anger burn against Your people?... Why should the Egyptians say, 'It was with evil intent that He brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth'?" (Ex. 32:11-12). This is audacious. Moses tells God that, regardless of what the people have done, it will be His reputation that will suffer if it becomes known that He did not lead the Israelites to freedom, but instead killed them in the desert.

Then, descending the mountain and seeing what the people have done, he does his single most daring act. He smashes the tablets, engraved by God Himself. The audacity continues. Moses goes back up the mountain and says to God, "These people have indeed committed a great sin. They have made themselves an idol of gold. But now, please forgive their sin -- but if not, then blot me out of the book You have written." (Ex. 32:31-32). This is unprecedented language. This should be the passage to which the sages attached an account of Moses' boldness in defence of his people. Why then attach it here, to an obscure place-name in the first verse of Deuteronomy, where it is radically out of keeping with the plain sense of the verse. (Note, for example, that Rashi gives almost the opposite interpretation.)

I believe the answer is this. Throughout Devarim Moses is relentless in his criticism of the people: "From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord... You have been rebellious against the Lord ever since I have known you." (Deut. 9:7, 24). His critique extends to the future: "If you have been rebellious against the Lord while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!" (Deut. 31:27). Even the curses in Deuteronomy, delivered by Moses himself, are bleaker than those in Leviticus 26 and lack any note of consolation.

(According to the Talmud, Megillah 31b, Moses delivered the curses in Leviticus but the words themselves came from God; the curses in Deuteronomy were formulated by Moses himself. Obviously, the fact that they are in the Torah means that God ratified them.)

Criticism is easy to deliver but hard to bear. It is all too easy for people to close their ears, or even turn the criticism around ("He's blaming us, but he should be blaming himself. After all, he was in charge"). What does it take for criticism to be heeded? The people have to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the leader is always ready to defend them. They have to know that he cares for them, wants the best for them, and is prepared to take personal risks for their sake. Only when people know for certain that you want their good, do they listen

to you when you criticise them.

That is what led the sages to give the interpretation they did to the place-name Di-zahav in the first verse of Devarim. Why was Moses able to be as critical as he was in the last month of his life? Because the people he was talking to knew that he had defended them and their parents in his prayers for Divine forgiveness, that he had taken the risk of challenging God, that he had declined God's offer to abandon the Israelites and begin again with him -- in short, that his whole life as a leader was dedicated to doing what was the best for the people. When you know that about someone, you listen to them even when they criticise you.

One of my all-time heroes is the great Hassidic rabbi, Levi Yitzhak of Berdichev (1740-1809). Many stories are told of how he interceded with Heaven on behalf of the Jewish people. My favourite, doubtless apocryphal, story is this: Levi Yitzhak once saw a Jew smoking in the street on Shabbat. He said, "My friend, surely you have forgotten that it is Shabbat today." "No," said the other, "I know what day it is." "Then surely you have forgotten that smoking is forbidden on Shabbat." "No, I know it is forbidden." "Then surely, you must have been thinking about something else when you lit the cigarette." "No," the other replied, "I knew what I was doing." At this, Levi Yitzhak turned his eyes upward to heaven and said, "Sovereign of the universe, who is like Your people Israel? I give this man every chance, and still he cannot tell a lie!"

The great leaders of Israel were the great defenders of Israel, people who saw the good within the not-yet-good. That is why they were listened to when they urged people to change and grow. That is how the sages saw Moses. This was the man who had the audacity to win forgiveness for the people who had made the Golden Calf.

It is easy to criticise, hard to defend. But the Midrash about Moses tells us a life-changing idea: If you seek to change someone, make sure that you are willing to help them when they need your help, defend them when they need your defence, and see the good in them, not just the bad. Anyone can complain, but we have to earn the right to criticise. *Covenant and Conversation is kindly sponsored by the Schimmel Family in loving memory of Harry (Chaim) Schimmel zt"l © 2024 The Rabbi Sacks Legacy Trust rabbisacks.org*

**RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN**

## Shabbat Shalom

“**T**hese are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan.... And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spoke unto the children of Israel, according unto all that Hashem had given him in commandment unto them; after he had smitten Siñon the king of the Emorites, who

dwelt in Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, who dwelt in Ashtaroth, at Edrei; beyond the Jordan, in the land of Moab, took Moses upon him to expound this law, saying...” (Deuteronomy 1:1-5) There are two important issues which must be studied when approaching this week's Torah portion, the first theological and the second textual.

The theological question strikes us from the moment we open this fifth book of the Bible: Moses is speaking with his voice to the people of Israel. Each of the other four biblical books is written in the third person, in God's voice, as it were, recording the history, narrating the drama and commanding the laws. This fifth book is written in the first person. Does this mean that the first four books are God's Bible and the fifth Moses' Bible?

The fifteenth-century Spanish biblical interpreter and faithful disciple of Maimonides, Don Isaac Abarbanel, queries “whether Deuteronomy was given by God from heaven, containing words from the mouth of the Divine as the rest of the Torah, or whether Moses spoke this book by himself...what he himself understood to be the intent of the Divine in his elucidation of the commandments, as the biblical text states, ‘And Moses began to elucidate this Torah’” (Deut. 1:5).

The Abarbanel concludes that whereas the first four books of the Bible are God's words written down by Moses, this fifth book of the Bible contains Moses' words, which God commanded the prophet to write down. In this manner, Deuteronomy has equal sanctity with the rest of the five books, (Abarbanel, Introduction to Deuteronomy).

Perhaps the Abarbanel is agreeing with a provocative interpretation of the verse, “Moses will speak, and the Lord will answer him with a voice” (Ex. 19:19), which I once heard in the name of the Kotzker Rebbe, who asked: “What is the difference whether God speaks and Moses answers Amen, or Moses speaks and God answers Amen!?”

The second issue is textual in nature. The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' long farewell speech. Moses feels compelled to provide personal reflections on the significance of the commandments as well as his personal spin on many of the most tragic desert events.

From the very beginning of Moses' monologue, he cites God's invitation to the Israelites to conquer the Land of Israel. This would be the perfect introduction to a retelling of the Sin of the Scouts whose evil re-port dissuaded the Israelites from attempting the conquest. Indeed, he does begin to recount, “But you all drew near to me and said, ‘Let us send out men before us, and let them scout out the land and report to us on the matter...’” (Deut. 1:22). But this retelling comes fourteen verses after God's initial invitation and these intervening fourteen verses are filled with what appears to be recriminations against a nation which Moses “is not able to carry [bear] alone” (1: 9). Only after this excursus from the topic at hand does Moses discuss the failed

reconnaissance mission. Why the excursus? How does it explain the failed mission?

From God's initial approach to Moses at the burning bush, Moses was a reluctant leader. The reason was clear: Moses called himself "heavy of speech." I have previously explained this on the basis of an interpretation of the *Ralbag*, to mean that Moses was not given to "light banter"; he was so immersed in the "heavy" issues, that he had neither the patience nor the interest to convince an ungrateful and stiff-necked people to trust in God and conquer the Promised Land. Moses spent so much time in the companionship of the Divine that he lost the will – and ability – to consort with regular humanity.

Moses knew himself. The verses leading up to the Sin of the Scouts are hardly an excuse. They explain his failure to give proper direction to the delegation of tribal princes, his inability to censure their report, his unwillingness to convince them of the critical significance of the conquest of the land. He could not bear the burden, the grumblings, of a nation which was too removed from God to be able to follow Him blindly.

Back to theology. Maimonides explains that even at Mount Sinai, the entire nation only heard a sound emanating from the Divine, a *kol*; each individual understood that sound in accordance with his specific and individual spiritual standing, while Moses was the only one able to "divine" the precise will of God within that sound – the words of the Ten Commandments (*Guide to the Perplexed*, II:32–33). Moses internalized the will of God and thereby produced the words of the four books of the Bible. God's words were internalized and written by Moses, the greatest prophet of all. Moses communicated with God. Moses may not always have spoken successfully to his own generation; but he did write, for us and for Jewish eternity.

But Moses also had a legacy to leave and an interpretation to give. In the book of Deuteronomy, he spoke to his people, telling them not God's words but his own, and God commanded him to write down the words of this book as well for all eternity. God was granting the divine imprimatur of Torah to Moses' book of Deuteronomy – and making it His (God's) book as well. Moses spoke and God answered Amen. ©2024 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

**RABBI BEREL WEIN**

## Wein Online

**T**he nine days of mourning for Jerusalem's fall and the destruction of the Temples are upon us. This Shabat, which always precedes Tisha B'Av itself, takes its name from the haftorah of the prophet Yeshayahu read in the synagogue. The words of the prophet condemn the social ills of his times and society – governmental corruption, economic unfairness and a lack of legal and social justice. But these are the problems that have plagued all human societies from

time immemorial. And they are omnipresent in our current world and national society today as well.

So, at first glance, one could conclude that the prophet is making impossible demands, since human behavior and social interactions can never eliminate these issues fully. And we are all well aware that the Torah never demands the impossible from its human subjects. So what is the point of the prophet's criticism and harsh judgments? What is it that he really demands from us fallible mortal creatures?

I feel that he demands of us that we at least realize and recognize the shortcomings in our society. We may not be able to correct them all completely, but we should know that they exist. We should never allow apathy the ability to overwhelm our better instincts and arrest our never-ending quest for an improved social structure.

The prophet demands that we remain relentless in trying to improve the social conditions of the world we live in even if we know at the outset that complete success is beyond our human capabilities. By accepting our societal deficiencies without a murmur of regret or complaint we become complicit in our own eventual destruction.

The Chafetz Chaim is reputed to have said that what motivated him to write his monumental work about the evils of slander and evil speech was that he noticed that people who had engaged in such speech no longer exuded a sigh of regret over their words. Evil speech had become societally acceptable and there was no sense of shame or embarrassment present about engaging in that type of behavior.

Shame is a great weapon for good and when it disappears from society, when brazen self-interest and greed is somehow legitimized, then the prophet warns us of impending doom. Politicians disgraced by their previous behavior openly vie again for public office as though having served one's time in jail or being forced to resign from public office wipes their slate clean permanently.

A society that knows no shame, whose leaders never recognize the moral turpitude of their past behavior, dooms itself to the ills of favoritism, corruption and unfairness that will plague its existence. The prophet demands of us that even if we are unable to correct all ills and right all wrongs, we should at least be ashamed that such ills and wrongs exist within our society.

That recognition and sense of shame that accompanies it serves as the basis for possible necessary improvement in social attitudes and societal behavior. Then the prophet's optimistic prediction "Zion shall be redeemed through justice and those who return to it will also find redemption through righteousness" will yet be fully fulfilled. ©2024 *Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com). For more information on these and other products visit [www.rabbiwein.com](http://www.rabbiwein.com)*

RABBI AVI WEISS

## Shabbat Forshpeis

**M**any events in the Book of Deuteronomy intersect with the Genesis narrative. For example, Genesis narrates the stories of Jacob and Esau while Deuteronomy involves their descendants – the nations of Israel and Edom.

Note the similarities in language. In Deuteronomy, God tells the Jews not to antagonize the children of Esau, “For I shall not give you of their land, even the right to set foot [kaf] there” (Deuteronomy 2:5).

In Genesis, just before meeting Esau, Jacob (our third patriarch) wrestles with a mysterious stranger and is struck in the hollow (kaf) of his thigh (Genesis 32:26). The use of the uncommon term kaf in both places challenges the reader to explore similarities between these episodes. For example, just because Jacob was injured in his kaf as he prepares to meet Esau does not mean that his descendants can retaliate and encroach (kaf) on Edom’s territory.

Note, too, that here in Deuteronomy, the children of Esau are frightened as the Israelites draw near. As the Torah states: “The Lord said to me...command the people, saying, ‘You are passing through the boundary of your brothers, the children of Esau, who dwell in Seir; they will fear you’” (Deuteronomy 2:4). In Genesis, however, it is Jacob who fears meeting Esau. In the words of the Torah, “Jacob became very frightened” (Genesis 32:8). Patterns in the Torah constantly reappear. Here, a reverse parallel comes to light as Edom fears Israel.

Other similarities stir the reader to recognize that in certain ways, events in Deuteronomy can be viewed as a corrective to elements of the Genesis narrative.

Consider the example of the Israelites asking the Edomites for permission to travel through their land and purchase food (Deuteronomy 2:6). This moment serves as a reversal of the Genesis story when Esau returns from the field, tired, and asks Jacob for food (Genesis 25:29–34).

Note as well that according to some commentaries, the narrative in Deuteronomy repeats the story of the Israelites asking the Edomites for permission to travel through the land. The Edomites, descendants of Esau, refuse (Numbers 20:14–21; Deuteronomy 2:2–8). Their rejection responds to the story in Genesis, where Jacob rejects Esau’s overtures to travel with him to Seir (Genesis 33:12–17).

Thus, events in Deuteronomy can be viewed as a tikkun (repair) for what unfolded in Genesis. A real appreciation of feeling the pain of another only comes when one feels that very pain. Perhaps Am Yisrael, the children of Jacob, had to learn this lesson before entering the land of Israel. ©2024 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox

Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

## Migdal Ohr

**"A**nd they said, “The land that Hashem is giving us is very good,” but you didn’t want to go up and you rebelled against the word of G-d...”

(Devarim 1:25-26) When Moshe recounted the story of the spies, He only says the Jews got a good report but didn’t want to go up to the land Hashem had promised them. Rashi says the good report came from Kalev and Yehoshua. The Ramban quotes this and asks an obvious question. True, two spies brought back a good report, but TEN spies argued with them! Why on earth should it be expected that the Jews would listen to two men over ten men?!

He answers that since Hashem had already told them it was good, and now these righteous men concurred based on their sojourn there, that should have been sufficient to outweigh the words of the ten spies, especially since they spoke out of ulterior motives.

Further, says the Ramban, when the spies saw Yehoshua and Kalev encouraging the people and telling them they could inherit the land, the ten spies went behind Moshe’s back and frightened the people by saying that they were too weak to defeat the Canaanites.

So let’s face it. There were ten great men scaring everyone. Why should the Jews be blamed for being afraid? Yes, Hashem said it would be good and so did two spies, but once you hear something so awful as the giants and people dying, how can you unhear it?

Moshe, here, was teaching us that we have a choice. When faced with a situation and the option of looking at it positively, or being negative and anxious about it, we should choose to see the good and not the bad. In Tehillim (34:13), Dovid HaMelech says, “Who is the man who desires life, who loves days to see good?”

This can also be read not as an interrogatory, but as a statement. “Who is the man who truly desires life? The one who loves days [so that he may choose] to see good.” When the spies came back, many of them were negative. They predicted the evil that would befall the Jews if they tried to conquer it. But there were some who disagreed. “No! The land is great and Hashem wants to give it to us. We can conquer them easily.”

Who do you listen to? Not the greater numbers, but the ones who have a positive outlook. Seeing the good in life is powerful, and it’s a choice that we make. When we do, that’s how Hashem guides us. If we trust Him and look forward to His goodness, He showers it upon us. If we don’t, and we worry about terrible possibilities, Hashem waits until we’re ready to trust Him, and then He will save us. Moshe was telling us to save ourselves the pain and be positive because that is what will make good things happen.

*While teaching in New York in 1957, a young*

man from Israel received a letter from home saying his father had suffered a heart attack and was in critical condition.

At a time when overseas phone calls were rare, the young man's anxiety was deepened by the thought that his father may have already passed away. Devastated, the young man wrote a note to the Lubavitcher Rebbe explaining the situation, ending with the words, "I don't even know what to think at this point!" In his response, the Rebbe underlined the man's final sentence and wrote next to it, "Shocking!!! Because the instruction of our Sages in such situations is well known: 'Think good and it will be good.'"

A few tense days passed, and finally the young man reached his mother by phone. "How is Father?" he asked. "He's out of danger!" "When did this happen?" "Thursday night."

After hanging up the phone, the young man went to 770 for Mincha. On his way out, the Rebbe turned to him and asked, "Nu, do you have good news for me?"

"Yes!" he responded. "I just phoned home and was told that my father is out of danger."

"Since when?" asked the Rebbe. "Since Thursday night." "And when did you begin to 'tracht gut'?"

"When the Rebbe told me to do so," said the young man. "And when was that?" the Rebbe pressed gently. "Thursday evening." Smiling, the Rebbe concluded, "May such things never happen again. But you must always remember to think positively." © 2024 Rabbi J. Gewirtz & Migdal Ohr

#### **RABBI DAVID LEVIN**

## **Hashem is in Charge**

In the final book of the Torah, Sefer Devarim, Moshe reviewed with the people the history of their journey through the desert, restated the laws given to them by Hashem, and instructed them on what they would do to enter the land that Hashem promised to their forefathers. As part of that history, Moshe reminded them of their recent battles against their enemies. This reminder was to lift their spirits and give them hope for their future battles to conquer the land.

Moshe discussed several past battles and Hashem's control of those battles. The Torah tells us that Moshe spoke to the people stating: "This day you shall cross the border of Moav, Ar. You shall approach opposite the Children of Ammon; you shall not distress them and you shall not provoke them, for I shall not give any of the land of the Children of Ammon to you as an inheritance, for to the children of Lot have I given it as an inheritance. It, too, is considered the land of Rephaim, Rephaim dwelled in it previously, and the Ammonites called them Zamzumim. A great and populous people, and tall as giants, and Hashem destroyed them (Rephaim) before them (Ammon), and they drove them out and dwelled in their place, just as He did for the

children of Eisav who dwell in Seir, who destroyed the Horite before them. They drove them out and dwelled in their place until this day. And as for the Avvim who dwell in open cities until Gaza – the Caphtorim who went out of Caphtor destroyed them and dwelled in their place. Rise up and cross the Valley of Ammon; see! Into your hand have I delivered Sichon, King of Cheshbon, the Amorite, and his land. Begin to drive (him) out, and provoke war with him. This day I shall begin to place dread and fear of you on the face of the peoples under the entire heaven, when they hear of your reputation, and they will tremble and be anxious before you."

The section immediately before this spoke of the crossing into the land of Moav where these same instructions were given concerning the children of Moav, who were also the descendants of Lot. The lands given to Moav and Ammon were part of the land of the Rephaim, the "giants." It is not clear why the Torah gives such a long history of both Moav and Ammon, other than to tie the previous owners of the land, the Rephaim, to them. Rashi explains that this land was inhabited by these "giants," but that Hashem drove them out in order to give the land to the children of Lot. The Ramban did not agree with Rashi's understanding because the land was promised to Avraham by Hashem as an inheritance. The Ramban posits that the promise to Avraham was that his family would inherit the land, and that Hashem gave the land to the children of Lot, Avraham's nephew, in Avraham's honor. This was similar to giving Mount Seir (Edom) to Avraham's grandson, Eisav even though this was the land of the Chivites, a land that was also promised to Avraham for his children. These lands were all given to relatives of Avraham, but were also used as a separation of the sons of Lot and Eisav from the Children of Israel (Ya'akov).

HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin explains that all the nations mentioned here were in the path of the B'nei Yisrael on their way to cross the Jordan River. The B'nei Yisrael were commanded not to trouble the Moabites and the Ammonites, nations that they could have easily conquered, but instead to attack Sichon and Og, the two most powerful Kings of the area, and the Kings to whom all the nations of Canaan paid tribute. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that the B'nei Yisrael were disappointed by two aspects of this command: (1) the fact that lands that they thought would become theirs based on the promise to Avraham (Chivites and Rephaim) would not be turned over to them, and (2) that they would now have to fight the strongest and most powerful Kings instead of the weaker ones. But, perhaps, this was the reason that Moshe reminded them of the history of the lands that they were not to conquer, the lands belonging to the children of Eisav (Edom) and the children of Lot (Moav and Ammon). The nations that had previously lived in those lands were "giants," undefeatable, yet Hashem threw them out to give their lands to the the Children of Eisav and Lot, to whom they were promised. This was

Hashem's message to the B'nei Yisrael. Just as the mighty ones who dwelled in Edom, Moav, and Ammon were defeated by Hashem so that He could distribute the land to its rightful inheritors, so would the mighty nations of Canaan, including all the nations who paid tribute to Sichon and Og, be defeated by Hashem to give that land to its rightful inheritors, the B'nei Yisrael.

Moshe was told to attack Sichon and Og. "Rise up and cross the Valley of Amon; see! Into your hand have I delivered Sichon, King of Cheshbon, the Amorite, and his land. Begin to drive (him) out, and provoke war with him." This was part of the promise that Hashem made to the B'nei Yisrael. Even though the B'nei Yisrael had been told to avoid war with Moav, Seir, and Ammon, they were now told to attack Sichon and Og, and that Hashem would drive them out of their lands and give those lands to the B'nei Yisrael.

The Torah continues, "This day I shall begin to place dread and fear of you on the face of the peoples under the entire heaven, when they hear of your reputation, and they will tremble and be anxious before you." The Torah uses the phrase, "under the entire heaven," which Rashi understands to mean that the sun stood still for Moshe in the battle with Og. This is similar to the sun standing still for Yehoshua after the B'nei Yisrael had entered the land. Hashem listened to the requests of Moshe and Yehoshua, but He was still in charge. HaRav Sorotzkin explains that the nations of the world all feared the B'nei Yisrael when they crossed the Red Sea through the miracles of Hashem. But the nations of the world saw that the B'nei Yisrael skirted the lands inhabited by the children of Eisav, Moav, and Ammon. The nations then lost their fear of the B'nei Yisrael, which is why Moshe now told the people that Hashem would bring back that fear. The Ramban points out that this dread and fear would cause the soldiers of their enemies to face the B'nei Yisrael with "melted hearts." We see this idea echoed by Rachav, the innkeeper of Yericho, who used these exact words to describe the fear that the people of Yericho had for the B'nei Yisrael.

Hashem's message to the people is important to us, also. Hashem explained to the people that the size and power of their enemies is unimportant. When Hashem chooses to protect the B'nei Yisrael, even in battle against its most fearsome enemies, the B'nei Yisrael will prevail only through Hashem. May we understand that our efforts can only be successful with the support from Hashem. © 2024 Rabbi D. Levin

**RABBI DOV KRAMER**

## Jewish Geography

**A**fter recapping what happened with the מרגלים, Moshe adds that the nation "dwelled in Kadesh for many days" (Devarim 1:46). But which Kadesh? Was it Kadesh Barneya, where the מרגלים were sent from, which would seem to be in Midbar Paran, or the

Kadesh near Edom, which was in Midbar Tzin?

Although Targum Yonasan (Bamidbar 21:1) says that Kadesh Barneya and Kadesh are the same place, since Kadesh is next to Edom (20:16), which is southeast of Eretz Yisroel, and Kadesh Barneya is a southern boundary marker (34:3-4), with other boundary markers given between the southeastern corner and Kadesh Barneya, they would seem to be two separate locations (which is how most understand it). So which Kadesh did they stay at "for many days"?

The context would indicate it was where the מרגלים were sent from, and many (e.g. Seder Olam 8, Ramban on Bamidbar 20:1, Chizkuni on Bamidbar 20:1 and Devarim 1:46 and Ibn Ezra on Devarim 1:46) explain it that way. Among the issues to be resolved is why it's referred to as "Kadesh" (rather than Kadesh Barneya, which is how Moshe referred to it earlier in his retelling), and how they could have stayed in Kadesh Barneya "for many days" if G-d had told them to leave "tomorrow" (Bamidbar 14:25).

At first glance, this wouldn't be the only time Kadesh Barneya was referred to as "Kadesh." When the מרגלים returned from their mission, they returned to "Midbar Paran, to Kadesh" (Bamidbar 13:26). Nevertheless, some point out that when two-word place-names have a "ה" added (to indicate going "to" that place), only one word of its name remains. For example, יבש גלעד (Shmuel I 31:11) becomes "יבשה" in the next verse, with "גלעד" being dropped. Similarly, when the מרגלים returned to קדש ברנע, it just says "קדשה" without "ברנע," even if otherwise it's never referred to as just "Kadesh."

At least two other points I made when I discussed Kadesh Barneya (<https://tinyurl.com/37kfcjvf>) are relevant here. (1) Kadesh Barneya is actually in Midbar Tzin, not Midbar Paran. As Seforno explains, it was the part of Eretz Yisroel where the scouts began their mission, opposite the part of Midbar Paran where the nation was camped. And (2) another name for Midbar Tzin is Midbar Kadesh (see Rashi on Yehoshua 1:4). Therefore, when the מרגלים returned to "Midbar Paran, to Kadesh," it's referring to the part of Midbar Paran opposite Kadesh, which could be referring to Midbar Kadesh rather than to Kadesh Barneya. But even if Kadesh Barneya was sometimes also referred to as "Kadesh," why would Moshe change how he referred to it?

As far as how Kadesh Barneya could be the place they "dwelled for many days" (which most understand to be 19 years) after G-d had told Moshe to resume traveling "tomorrow," the Or Hachayim (Bamidbar 14:25) suggests that they did leave right away, but returned 19 years later and then stayed there for a long time. Another possibility is based on the suggestion of Malbim and Netziv, that they stayed in Kadesh for 19 years as a result of G-d partially answering the nation's prayer not to wander for 38+

more years, with the years of wandering essentially cut in half. It's therefore also possible (as Oznayim LaTorah suggests) that the initial instruction to leave right away was also rescinded, and they stayed where they were "for many days."

Ibn Ezra, Rabbeinu Bachye and Midrash Esfah (Bamidbar 20:1) say they "dwelled for many days" at the Kadesh next to Edom. The biggest issue with this approach is the context, as until now Moshe was referring to Kadesh Barneya. Additionally, after leaving "Kadesh" they followed the same exact itinerary laid out when they were in Kadesh Barneya (compare Devarim 2:1 with 1:40 and with Bamidbar 14:25). However, according to Malbim and Netziv (and Oznayim LaTorah), the point Moshe was making was that even though G-d didn't answer their prayers regarding being able to enter Eretz Yisroel now, He did partially answer their prayers about not having to wander for 40 years, as they were able to stay in one place – Kadesh – for 19 years, which puts mentioning the other Kadesh in context. After leaving Kadesh, they followed the same itinerary as they would have had they left Kadesh Barneya and wandered the full 40 years – heading south towards the Yam Suf, to the desert. If anything, the itinerary is more accurate leaving from Kadesh than from Kadesh Barneya, as from Kadesh Barneya they went south, came back north (to Kadesh) then went back south again before going around Edom.

There are other advantages to having the 19 year-stay be at Kadesh rather than Kadesh Barneya. Besides referring to it as "Kadesh" rather than "Kadesh Barneya," and being able to leave Kadesh Barneya "the next day," it seems awkward to make them stay for 19 years in the very place they sinned, on the border of the land they (the adults) would no longer be able to enter, with Canaan fully aware of the intentions of the nation on their border (especially after the Ma'apilim attacked). The verses flow better as well, with Moshe transitioning from what happened at Kadesh Barneya to the 19-year stay in Kadesh because their prayer was partially answered, then continuing with what happened when they left Kadesh. If the 19-year stay was in Kadesh Barneya, his recap would go straight from what happened there to their trip around Edom, skipping everything in-

between, as if the main consequence of the sin of the scouts was having to enter the Promised Land from the east rather than the

south.

A straightforward reading of their arrival in Kadesh (Bamidbar 20:1) also



**Tisha B'Av**

indicates that they stayed there "for many days." For one thing, although the month of their arrival is given, the year is not. Almost everyone follows Seder Olam's lead that Miriam died in the 40th year, but this isn't stated explicitly. If they arrived in Kadesh 19 years earlier, with Miriam's death – and the resulting water shortage – occurring in their last year there (which was the 40th since the Exodus), we can understand why the year wasn't mentioned. [We would have to disregard Rashi's notion that everyone who was supposed to die in the desert had already died before they got to Kadesh, but the Midrashim do not say this here – only about their arrival at Hor Hahar (20:22), which was definitely in the 40th year. Rashi applies what the Midrashim say there to the same expression used here; they explain the expression used at Kadesh differently. Numerous commentators do take issue with Rashi's application.]

Alternatively, if this was their second stop at Kadesh (many say they stayed at Kadesh twice, which would mean the first one was for 19 years and their return was in the 40th year), the Torah would be combining both stops in the same narrative, mentioning their arrival the first time – without giving the year – before describing what happened the second time, when Miriam died.

The strongest argument for the 19-year stay being at Kadesh is the Torah describing it as a "dwelling" rather than just an encampment – "וישב העם בקדש," which parallels Moshe saying "ותשב בקדש." The only other place they "dwelled" in (before conquering Transjordan) was Mt. Sinai (Devarim 1:6). The symmetry of "dwelling" in "Kadesh" in both Bamidbar (20:1) and Devarim (1:46), along with the absence of the year of their arrival at Kadesh, has me siding with Ibn Ezra in Bamidbar over Ibn Ezra in Devarim. ©2024 Rabbi D. Kramer

**RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ Z"l**

## Shabbat Shalom Weekly

The Torah portion begins with the words: "These are the things which Moses spoke to all of Israel" (Deut. 1:1). The Torah then enumerates what is seemingly a list of places the Jewish people had traveled. The Siphre elucidates that out of respect for the Jewish people, Moses alluded to their transgressions by the name of each place, without being explicit. What can we learn from this?

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Chasman of the famed Hebron Yeshiva comments that a person who is sincerely interested in self-improvement and growth only needs a slight hint that he has done something wrong in order to realize that he needs to improve. Such a person looks for opportunities to make positive changes in himself and uses his own ability to think to fill in the details when someone gives him a hint that he has made a mistake. The Jewish people only needed a hint. *Based on Growth Through Torah by Rabbi Zelig Pliskin ©2014 Rabbi K. Packouz & aish.com*