



# Parshas Devarim

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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'מפעל ליקוטי שמואל'  
"זה היום עשה ה' נגילה ונשמחה בו"

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## Children Are A Gift

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Rabbi Yissocher Frand

"May God, the Lord of your fathers, add a thousandfold more like you and bless you, as He spoke to you." (Devarim 1:11)

The Jewish people, Rashi informs us, were not very happy with the blessing Moshe gave them. "May God, the Lord of your fathers," he had said, "add a thousandfold more like you and bless you as He spoke to you."

"Only that and no more?" the people responded. "Is that the full extent of your blessing? Hashem blessed us (Bereishis 32:13) to be 'like the dust of the earth that is too numerous to count.'"

"You will surely get the blessing Hashem gave you," Moshe replied.

"This is just my own personal blessing to you."

What exactly was Moshe's reply? What additional benefit would the Jewish people derive from his blessing of a thousandfold increase if they were already receiving Hashem's blessing of virtually limitless increase?

The Chasam Sofer explains that Moshe was testing them. Why did they want children? Was it because children were useful, because they help carry the household burden, provide companionship and are a source of security in old age? Or is it because each child is a spark of the Divine, a priceless gift from Heaven, a piece of the World to Come?

So Moshe gave the Jewish people a test. He blessed them with a “thousandfold” increase in their population. If they had wanted children for their usefulness alone, they would have said, “Thank you, but that’s enough already! A thousandfold will suit our purposes just fine. We have no use for any more right now.” But that was not what they said. They wanted more children. They wanted children “too numerous to count.” Obviously, they were not thinking about their own material and emotional needs, but about the transcendent blessing that each child represents, and so, they proved themselves worthy of Hashem’s blessing.

Hundreds of years earlier, these two conflicting attitudes toward children had already become an issue. Yaakov and Eisav had made a division. Eisav was to take this world, and Yaakov was to take the World to Come. When Yaakov came back from Aram, Eisav welcomed him at the head of an army four hundred men strong. In the tense early minutes of the confrontation, Eisav noticed Yaakov’s many children.

“Who are these children?” Eisav asked.

“These are the children,” Yaakov replied, “that Hashem graciously gave to your servant.”

The Pirkei d’Rabbi Eliezer expands the dialogue between Yaakov and Eisav and reveals the underlying argument.

“What are you doing with all these children?” Eisav asked. “I thought we made a division, that I would take this world and you would take the World to Come. So why do you have so many

children? What do children have to do with the World to Come? Children are a boon in this world!"

"Not so," Yaakov responded. "Children are sparks of the Divine. The opportunity to raise a child, to develop a Divine soul to the point where it can enter the World to Come, is a privilege of the highest spiritual worth. That is why I have children."

Yaakov wants children for their own sake, but Eisav views them as an asset in this world. Children are an extra pair of hands on the farm. They can milk the cows and help with many other chores that need to be done in agrarian societies.

Modern man has progressed beyond agrarian life. He has moved off the farm and does not have such a need for children anymore. In fact, he has made a startling discovery. Children are a tremendous burden. They are expensive, time consuming and exasperating. Who needs children?

But what about companionship? Loneliness? No problem. Modern man can get a dog. Dogs are wonderful. Instead of coming home to a house full of clamoring, demanding, frustrating children, he can come home to an adoring, tail-wagging dog who will run to bring him his slippers and newspaper. So why does he need children? This is the attitude of Eisav adapted to modern times. Yaakov, on the other hand, understands that the purpose of children is not for enjoying this world or for making our lives easier. Each child represents a spiritual mission, a spark of the Divine entrusted to our care and our guidance, an opportunity to fulfill Hashem's desire to have this soul brought to the World to Come.

# That's Not What Friends Are For

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[The Three Weeks](#)

Rabbi Yochanan Zweig

The Talmud identifies the episode of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza as the incident which precipitated the destruction of Jerusalem. An individual who made a banquet sent an attendant to invite his friend Kamtza. However, the attendant erred, inviting Bar Kamtza instead. When the host saw Bar Kamtza sitting amongst the guests at his banquet, he proclaimed “Let see that man is the enemy of that man. What are you doing here?” He subsequently proceeded to evict Bar Kamtza. The Talmud relates that to avenge his public humiliation, Bar Kamtza went to the Roman authorities and slandered the Jews, which ultimately resulted in the tragic destruction of Jerusalem<sup>{1}</sup>. The aforementioned narrative is an illustration of the fact that the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed as a result of “sinas chinam” – “baseless hatred<sup>{2}</sup>.” What is baseless hatred? Unless a person has psychopathic tendencies, why would he hate for no reason?

The host’s reaction, “Let see that man is the enemy of that man” requires further elaboration. The general interpretation of this passage is that Bar Kamtza is the host’s enemy. Why would the host refer to himself in the third person, as “that man”?

Furthermore, if this is an example of baseless hatred, the host’s reaction should be visceral; why does he speak in an analytical tone, “Let see”? Finally, why is it Kamtza and Bar Kamtza who are denoted as being responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem? Should not the host be held accountable rather than Kamtza? A person usually does not harbor feelings of hatred for another human being unless he perceives that that individual has either

harmed him or possesses something which he deserves. However, there is an exception to this norm which has unfortunately divided Jewish communities throughout the world from the time of their inception; that is, the perception that a person's friends may not associate with his enemies, and for them to do so would be considered betrayal. A person with such a perception expects his friends to feel the same disdain for his enemies as he does, to hate his enemies simply because he does; this is "sinas chinam" – "baseless hatred".

The original dispute in the Talmud was between Kamtza and Bar Kamtza, as indicated by the host's reaction "Let see that man (Bar Kamtza) is an enemy of that man (Kamtza)"; the host is not referring to himself in the third person, rather he is referring to his friend Kamtza. Therefore, the host does not react emotionally, but with the intellectual understanding of a person who maintains the perception that since Bar Kamtza is an enemy of his friend Kamtza, he too should hate Bar Kamtza. It is for this reason that the Talmud states that Jerusalem was destroyed because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza; it was their dispute coupled with Kamtza's insistence that his friends not associate with Bar Kamtza which precipitated the host's sinas chinam.

*1. Gittin 55b*

*2. Yoma 9b*

## **It's Your Responsibility Too**

*"These are the words that Moshe spoke to all Yisroel..."(1:1)*

Sefer Devarim begins with Bnei Yisroel at the threshold of Eretz Yisroel. The entire Sefer spans the last five weeks of Moshe's life and records the rebuke that Moshe gave to Bnei Yisroel prior to his death. Parshas Devarim enumerates a list of places where Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisroel<sup>{1}</sup>. The Midrash notes that

there is no historical basis upon which to substantiate the existence of these places, rather their names are veiled allusions to all of the transgressions perpetrated by Bnei Yisroel while they were in the desert<sup>{2}</sup>. Rashi comments that Moshe only alluded to the transgressions, rather than mentioning them explicitly because of the dignity of Bnei Yisroel<sup>{3}</sup>. Throughout the earlier sections of the Torah we find Bnei Yisroel harshly castigated for these inappropriate actions and their transgressions magnified. Why is this rebuke different than those delivered in earlier parshios? The verse emphasizes that Moshe spoke “to the entire nation of Israel” – “el Kol Yisroel<sup>{4}</sup>.” Rashi cites the Sifri who explains that everyone had to be present, for if Moshe had only rebuked some of Bnei Yisroel, those who were not present would have claimed that had they been there, they would have been able to defend themselves from Moshe’s accusations. Therefore, it was necessary for the entire Bnei Yisroel to be present, so that no one could exclude himself from Moshe’s critique<sup>{5}</sup>. Again we find an element of this rebuke which does not exist in any prior castigation.

In order to explain the aforementioned difficulty, it is first necessary to address another problem. The Midrash interprets the names of the places where Moshe spoke to Bnei Yisroel as an allusion to their sins. Among the sins recorded are the complaints which occurred immediately after leaving Egypt, the spies’ evil speech, the golden calf, dissatisfaction with the manna, and Korach’s rebellion. Almost all of these transgressions were not committed by the people who stood before Moshe, rather by the “dor hamidbar”, the generation of people in the desert who were no longer living. Why did Moshe castigate the people for the sins of the earlier generation?

According to Torah law, an individual can be held accountable for the sins of his parents only if he continues in their evil path. If he does not follow in the evil ways of his parents, he is not held accountable for their behavior{6}. However, this law is only true on an individual level. On a national level, responsibility for the transgressions of earlier generations is always borne by the citizens of the nation, even if the citizens have no connection to the misdeeds of their ancestors. The reason for this is that a citizen of a nation is part of the same constant entity as that to which his predecessors belonged. He is a shareholder in the unchanging corporate entity which defines the nation, and as such, is responsible for any transgressions or atrocities perpetrated by the national entity. Culpability is not dependent upon whether or not the individual was involved in the misdeed.

Moshe was teaching the generation entering Eretz Yisroel that it was their responsibility to rectify the damage caused by their predecessors. They could not disassociate themselves from the actions of their ancestors by claiming that they were not pursuing the misdeeds of the earlier generations. Moshe was addressing them as the inheritors of the corporate entity of Israel, not as the children of the generation that left Egypt. Consequently, since they were not the perpetrators of these acts, they were not subject to the same harsh castigation as the earlier generation, and these acts were not magnified as they were in earlier sections of the Torah which addressed the perpetrators directly.

It is specifically this form of rebuke which required the presence of the entire nation. Since they did not perpetrate the acts for which Moshe was criticizing them, they could have had the misconception that as long as they themselves did not engage in the same grievous behavior, they could not be held accountable for those sins. Therefore, Moshe required that all of Bnei Yisroel be

1.1:1 2.Avos D'Rav Nosson 34:1

3.1:1

*4.Ibid*

*5.Ibid*

*6.Berachos 7a, Rashi Shemos 34:7*

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“These are the devarim / words that Moshe spoke to all Yisrael.” (1:1)

The word “Devarim” / “words”, suggests “devorim” / “bees.” The words of the Torah are like bees (and bee products). In other words, the Torah, especially the Sefer Devarim which contains many veiled rebukes, are as sweet as honey to those who keep them, but will sting as painfully as a bee to anyone who mistreats them.

It is noteworthy that the Gematria of the word ‘Mussar’ = 306, which has the same Gematria as the word ‘D’vash’ (Honey), as well as, ‘Av HaRachamon’ (A reference to Hashem as our Merciful Father).

Although Mussar may sting, ultimately it is as sweet as honey, and should be used to refine one's character and reaffirm our connection to our Merciful Father

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This point is especially felt during the 9 Days and Tisha B'Av, the day of national mourning.

R' Zalman Rotberg shlita (rosh yeshiva of Yeshiva Bet Meir in Bnei Brak) writes: The Book of Eichah, in which the prophet Yirmiyah poured out his heart over the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash and the exile, teaches us not only about the past, but about the future. Chazal teach that prophecy can be

attained only when one is in a state of Simcha, joy. This means that Yirmiyah wrote Eichah, which is prophetic, in a state of joy! How is this possible?!

Because the mere fact that, in the midst of the destruction, Hashem spoke to Yirmiyah was a hopeful sign, a sign that He had not abandoned His people, that there is a future to Hashem's relationship with us.

No matter how low we may sink, our Father will ever abandon His cherished children.

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Written by B ROSE

The young people of Bnei Yisroel who were about to go into Eretz Yisroel. Moshe Rabbeinu in his last address to them, retold the story of their parents' mistakes in the Midbar. When retelling the Cheit of the Meraglim, Moshe says that they were punished and routed by the Emori in their effort to go to Eretz Yisroel without permission. After this defeat, they came back to the Machaneh and began to cry. The pasuk says (1:45) "V'Lo Shama Hashem B'Kolchem", Hashem did not listen to them. The next pasuk says that they stayed in Kadeish many years. Rashi says that they stayed there for 19 years without wandering around.

The Netziv says that we see from here that even when Hashem does not listen to our tefilos and does not grant our request, the tefila still helps. While their tefilos did not repeal the gezeira of staying in the Midbar for 40 years, it helped that they settled in one place did not need to wander for 19 years. We can't always get what we want but we always get something!

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Written by d fine

When reading through Moshe recapping the judicial reform that we are told about in parshas Yisro, one cannot help but note a glaring omission from the psukim.

Though it seemed to be Yisro's idea to set up a body of judges to lighten Moshe's workload, in parshas Devarim Moshe Rabeinu leaves out any

reference to Yisro. The Torah attests to the fact that Moshe was the most humble man that ever lived; so why did he not give Yisro the credit for his own idea?

Some write that Moshe had this idea of Yisro himself first – he just did not plan to implement it until after Mattan Torah.

Others point out that Yisro's plan differed from that of Moshe. Yisro wanted Moshe to be purely involved with the spiritual matters and to let the judges come to case decisions based on their own logic. But Moshe knew that Torah is the only true logic, and thus that he should be involved in some level in the judicial system, and that only after the Torah was given and learnt properly could there be a wholesome, true, and fair judicial system.

## **HUMOR**

### C'I qqf'Swguvqp

An elderly Jew in Berlin finds himself surrounded by a group of raucous Nazis, who knock him to the ground and ask him derisively, "Jew, who is responsible for the war?"

The old Jew is no fool. "The Jews," he replies. "And the bicycle riders."

"Why the bicycle riders?" ask the Nazis.

"Why the Jews?" counters the old man.

### C'Lgy'lp'Lcr cp

A Jewish American is in Tokyo, Japan on business. He is riding around the Ginza in a taxi when he suddenly realizes it's Friday night.

He asks the cab driver if there's a Jewish synagogue in Tokyo and the driver takes him to an unmarked building. The American enters and is

surprised to find a Japanese-Jewish congregation with a Japanese-Jewish rabbi.

They are all wearing yarmukas (skull caps) and talaysim (prayer shawls). He participates in the service which is in Hebrew – the international Jewish language for prayer. At the end of the service, the rabbi walks up the aisle and spots the American. He approaches and says with his thick Japanese accent, "You ... Jewish?"

The American replies, "Why yes I am".

The rabbi looks at the American and says, "Funny... you no looka Jewish".

C'Oqf gtp'Fc {'Lqpcj

As the storm raged, the captain realized his ship was sinking fast. He called out, "Anyone here know how to pray?"

One man stepped forward. "Aye, Captain, I know how to pray."

"Good," said the captain, "you pray while the rest of us put on our life jackets - we're one short."

C'Rckp'kp'vj g'J cpf

Mrs. Cohen has been suffering from arthritis. On the advice of her daughter-in-law, she goes to see Dr. Rubinstein, a specialist.

After a long visit, Dr. Rubinstein prescribes some medication and sends Mrs. Cohen on her way.

After a few weeks, Dr. Rubinstein calls Mrs. Cohen saying, "Mrs. Cohen, your check came back."

Mrs . Cohen answers , "So did my arthritis !"