

HOW TO REBUILD THE TEMPLE

The Shabbat of Parsha Devarim is also known as Shabbat Chazon, from the name of this week's Haftorah, which begins with the words Chazon Yeshaya ben Amotz ("The vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz"). In it the prophet Isaiah rebukes the Children of Israel for having committed various sins, and he calls upon them to completely repent before the Holy One, blessed be He. This Shabbat always precedes the fast of Tisha B'Av, the day when our Temple was destroyed, when our pride and glory disappeared. We can no longer offer sacrifices on Hashem's altar, a situation that will continue until He takes pity on the remnant of His people, allows us to rebuild the Temple, and sends us the redeemer, speedily and in our days. Amen, may it be so.

Yet to rectify the sin that caused the destruction of the Temple, we must constantly search our hearts in order to know how to better ourselves and bring about the construction of the new Temple. The Sages said, "Every generation that does not see the rebuilding of the Holy Temple is guilty of having destroyed it" (Yerushalmi, Yoma 1:1). Do we really want people to say that we destroyed the Temple with our own hands? Obviously not. Therefore we must think about how best to bring about its restoration. Some useful advice for bringing about the construction of the Temple is given at the beginning of Parsha Devarim. There we read of the reprimands that were addressed to the Children of Israel by Moses before he died. If we were to actually take them to heart, Hashem would quickly restore the Temple in all its glory.

At the beginning of the parsha we read, "These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel, on the other side of the Jordan, in the desert, in the Arabah, opposite Suf, between Paran and Tophel, and Laban and Hazereth and Di-zahab" (Deuteronomy 1:1). These names indicate the places where the Children of Israel angered Hashem, however Moses mentioned them only by way of allusion, for the sake of the Children of Israel's dignity. We must explain the meaning of these allusions, for the references show us the path to follow and the deeds to perform in order to conquer the evil inclination and hasten the rebuilding of the Temple. In fact we are well aware of the Sages' statement that "if

a man makes himself like a desert, abandoning himself to all [Rashi: He teaches Torah to everyone for free], then the Torah will be given to him as a gift" (Nedarim 55a). Only such a man can acquire the Torah. This is what Moses said to the Children of Israel: The first condition for rebuilding the Temple is the study of Torah. Furthermore, if we study Torah all other good things will come our way.

In the expression ba'arava ("in the Arabah" – Deuteronomy 1:1), the word arava contains the same letters as avera ("sin"). This means that Moses warned Israel that when a person wants to study Torah, the evil inclination immediately comes and incites him to sin. That is, not only will it not let a person study Torah, it will incite him to do the very opposite! This is why the wise foresee things, allowing them to completely reject the evil inclination. Some may ask, "How can I do that? How can someone as insignificant as myself rebuff the evil inclination? My desires are so strong, and temptations are so powerful, how can I possibly conquer them?" This is why Moses continued by saying mol suf ("opposite Suf"). This alludes to a well-known piece of advice that the Sages gave to those who want to subdue their evil inclination. What must a person do in that case? He must study Torah. If that fails to work, he should recite Shema, and if that also fails to work, he should reflect upon the day of death (Berachot 5a). This is the meaning of the words mol suf, namely to remind the evil inclination of the end (suf) of man's days, for everyone is destined to die. In this way each of us can truly conquer the evil inclination. At the same time we must strengthen ourselves in other areas. Now there are some people who truly want to better themselves, who want to become spiritually stronger, people who want to study Torah and perform mitzvot. They try to subdue the evil inclination day and night, yet they unfortunately continue to be occupied with useless things, things that have no value whatsoever, foolish pursuits that have nothing to do with serving G-d.

This is why Moses told the Children of Israel, "Between Paran and Tophel." The word paran evokes the word perurim ("crumbs"), and tophel recalls tefelim ("useless words"), things that are completely unjustified. This means that if you truly

want to strengthen yourselves spiritually, to be G-d-fearing Jews and hasten the Final Redemption, you should not be occupied with "crumbs" – useless things that have no justification – with petty sins. You should abandon all foolish pursuits and concentrate solely on the essential. You must focus on true spiritual values, for it is only the study of true spirituality that will raise you to great heights and lofty levels.

A person must adopt all these suggestions – studying Torah and defeating the evil inclination by reminding it of the day of death – all without occupying himself with petty foolish pursuits, but instead with spiritual ones. If a person does that, Moses continues to tell the Children of Israel, he will succeed in arriving at the primary thing. Such a person will arrive at lavan ("white"), for all his sins will be transformed from red to white, as it is written: "If your sins are like scarlet, they will become white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). Furthermore, deliberate sins will become merits, in which case a person may have a great deal of merit!

In addition to this, "Hazereth" – you will truly merit finding yourself in the courtyards of Hashem's house, rejoicing in His presence, gazing at His glory, and visiting His palace. All this will happen because you overcame all evil and strengthened yourself solely in what is good. Finally there is "Di-zahab," a reference to money, to zahav (gold). In other words, if you do everything mentioned above, you will receive a tremendous reward from Hashem in the world that is entirely good (the World to Come) for all the mitzvot and good deeds that you have accumulated. Why all this? It is because you will have conquered the golden calf, meaning the evil inclination that is alluded to by the word "Di-zahab." You will have deeply buried the evil inclination into the ground, and your entire personality will shine with holiness and purity, with Torah and mitzvot.

These are not simply sanctimonious remarks. We must implant these ideas deeply in our minds and in our hearts, for actions speak louder than words. It is only in this way that we will merit to hasten the Final Redemption and the construction of the Temple, speedily and in our days. Amen, may it be so!

MUSSAR FROM THE PARSHA

Reprimands

“These are the words that Moses spoke” (Deuteronomy 1:1).

Parsha Devarim marks the beginning of Mishneh Torah, which contains Moses' reprimands to the Children of Israel, his flock, before he left them. Actually, it is difficult to see just where the reprimands are in the text. Out of respect for Israel's dignity, Moses made an effort to conceal these reprimands in the verses, which is why he went about reprimanding them through allusion. This teaches us a great principle, which is that when we want to reprimand someone, this does not give us the right to shame him by shouting or harming his dignity. Needless to say, such reprimands will never be accepted by the person being addressed. We must learn from Moses that the best way to administer reprimands is to give them by way of allusion, delivering them with respect. Once we do that, they can have a positive influence on the person in question.

The word *tochecha* (“to reprimand”) comes from the root *toch* (interior), for the role for reprimands is to infuse moral teachings into the heart of man. Commenting on the book of Proverbs, the Vilna Gaon said that the verse, “Do not rebuke a scoffer, lest he hate you. Rebuke a wise man, and he will love you” (Proverbs 9:8) compares a reprimand to a mirror. Now a mirror can reflect the image of a person's face back to him, allowing him to see every blemish and hint of dirt and rid himself of them. In other words, a person who refuses to accept reprimands is interested in remaining with the same blemishes and defects, even though he can eliminate them with a spiritual mirror. Reprimands are so important that the Sages counted them among the 48 attributes by which one acquires Torah, as it is written: “Loving reproof” (Perkei Avoth 6:6).

It is said that the Vilna Gaon himself, even though he was greater than all others and versed in the entire Torah, did not hesitate to call upon the help of his friend, Rabbi Yaakov Krantz (the Maggid of Dubno). He paid the Maggid a good sum to reprimand him, constantly critique him, and tell him what he had to do to better himself. In his greatness, the Vilna Gaon knew that words of reproof are instrumental in the spiritual elevation of man, and it was only through them that he could add perfection to his perfection. Since a person does not see his own faults, he needs to hear critiques from others, who alone can spot one's defects. It is said that when the Sefat Emet was a boy, he once studied all night with a friend. Come morning, he was late for a class given by his grandfather, the Chiddushei HaRim. His grandfather did not spare the boy from criticism, who listened to everything his grandfather had to say without uttering a word in reply. When his friend later asked him why he didn't tell his grandfather that he had been late because he was studying Torah all night, the boy simply said that he didn't want to miss out on hearing his grandfather's reprimands.

This is precisely why we normally read Parsha Devarim on Shabbat Chazon. As we have seen, it is in Parsha Devarim that we perceive the greatness of reprimands. The Sages have said, “Jerusalem was destroyed only because they did not reprimand each other” (Shabbat 119b). From here we learn that we can rebuild Jerusalem through the mitzvah of reprimanding others. Needless to say, reprimands must be delivered gently and with kindness, and in this way we will merit hastening the Final Redemption.

What to Say and What Not to Say

“These are the words that Moses spoke” (Deuteronomy 1:1).

This verse can be explained figuratively by a statement that appears in the Gemara: “Rabba said: One who engages in profane talk transgresses a positive commandment, for it is written: ‘You shall speak of them’ [Deuteronomy 6:7] – ‘of them,’ but not of other matters” (Yoma 19b). From here we learn that it is forbidden to engage in frivolous conversations. Instead, we must only speak words of Torah and the fear of Heaven. This is why the Torah testifies of Moses,

“These are the words that Moses spoke,” meaning that he never spoke words that did not concern Torah or mitzvot, and everything that emerged from his mouth was infused with Torah and holiness.

– Ohr HaChaim HaKodesh

Moses Encourages the Children of Israel

“May the L-RD, the G-d of your fathers, add to you a thousand times yourselves” (Deuteronomy 1:11).

One Shabbat the Chozeh of Lublin was seated at the table and began to reprimand himself with harsh words, as if he were the most hardened criminal of the time. When the chassidim at the table heard this, a feeling of unease overcame them. They began leaving one by one, for if such criticisms applied to their Rebbe, what could be said of them? Then, all of a sudden, the Chozeh stopped, for he understood their sense of unease. He said to them, “May Hashem help you, that your grandchildren should not be worse than I.”

The Rav of Lublin, Rabbi Libel Eiger (the grandson of the gaon Rabbi Akiva Eiger), explained Moses' words in the following way: When Moses saw how his reprimands were breaking the spirit of the Children of Israel, he was afraid that they would become discouraged. This is why he immediately said, “May the L-RD, the G-d of your fathers, add to you a thousand times yourselves.” In other words, “Although I have reprimanded you, I want there to be many such as yourselves – upright Jews – for all the generations to come.”

Hearing Without Looking

“Listen among your brothers and judge righteously” (Deuteronomy 1:16).

The holy Ohr HaChaim said that the judges heard a brief report of what was happening among their brothers, yet they did not look at the people who were presenting themselves in court. They abstained from looking at them because they were afraid that one litigant might think that he (the judge) was smiling more at the other party. In that case, the litigant would lose confidence and be incapable of properly explaining his case.

He also added the following story: “I heard from a great scholar and pious man, a person who is very dear to me, Rabbi Moshe Berdugo, that whenever he sat down in judgment, he was very careful to keep his eyes lowered. He did this because he felt that if he were to raise his eyes to look at one litigant, the other would begin to get troubled.”

Judge Every Man Favorably

“Judge righteously” (Deuteronomy 1:16).

We can learn to judge every Jew favorably from the following story: In one of the large synagogues of Cholon, members of the congregation went to find the Rav for the Shabbat Musaf prayer. They told him that they heard the sounds of coins coming from the pocket of the Chazan, who was leading the prayer. They were unsure if this was important or not, and therefore they had approached the Rav.

The Rav wondered how it was possible for the Chazan – a person who, at least on the outside, was a G-d-fearing man – to have the chutzpah to carry money on Shabbat. The Rav said, “At first I didn't believe what the congregants were saying. However when I approached the Chazan, who was from Belgium, I too was stunned to realize that what they were saying was true! I had no choice but to clarify things by speaking to him. I therefore politely said to the Chazan, ‘Perhaps you've mistakenly put on your weekday pants?’ It was at that point that I learned just how important it is to judge every Jew favorably. I had the joy of discovering that what I had initially thought was true. These coins were half-dollars, which the Chazan said he had received as an amulet from Rabbi Itzikel of Antwerp Zatzal. Since the Chazon had designated them as an amulet and treated them as such, there was no prohibition against carrying them on Shabbat. The chassidim explain that it was for this reason that Hashem created reality with “many faces,” allowing us to judge everyone favorably, a very great mitzvah indeed!”

Distorting Justice is an Offense to Hashem

“You shall not tremble before any man, for the judgment belongs to G-d” (Deuteronomy 1:17).

When a judge distorts justice, he not only wrongs the litigants, he also implicates, as it were, Hashem Himself!

Let us suppose, for example, that the Holy One, blessed be He, decreed on Rosh Hashanah that Reuven was to lose 100 dollars and Shimon 200 dollars. Now imagine that Shimon takes Reuven to court for 100 dollars, even though by law Reuven does not owe him any money. If the judge distorts justice and rules that Reuven must pay Shimon 100 dollars (a ruling that is not in accordance with the actual law), it follows that this runs counter to the ruling of Heaven. Now Hashem will have to repay, as it were, the 100 dollars that were unjustly taken from Reuven, and He will have to take back the 100 dollars that Shimon unfairly obtained.

Consequently, judges do not decide matters for people alone. In the final analysis, if someone has been the victim of theft and is unfairly lacking, Hashem will return his loss to him. However when justice itself has been distorted, this constitutes a sin against Heaven. Thus the Torah comes and warns us, “You shall not tremble before any man,” for if a judge is fearful and ends up distorting justice, he forces, as it were, G-d to act, “For the judgment belongs to G-d.” We must therefore fear the Holy One, blessed be He, and not mortal beings.

Both Sides of the Argument

“Listen among your brothers and judge righteously” (Deuteronomy 1:16).

When Rabbi Yonatan Eibeshutz celebrated his Bar Mitzvah, one of his family members said to him, “Today you’re 13 years old. Up to now you did not possess a good inclination, but only an evil inclination. What did you do whenever the evil inclination tried to entice you? How did you reject it?” The boy replied, “Whenever the evil inclination tried to entice me, I replied with the verse, ‘Listen among your brothers and judge righteously.’ The Sages deduced that this is a warning to the Beit Din not to listen to a litigant in the absence of his opponent, and a warning to the litigant not to present his case to the judge before his opponent appears [Sanhedrin 7b].” The boy then enthusiastically said, as if he had already won his case: “I rejected the evil inclination by telling it, ‘Be quiet and stop your incitement, for according to the Halachah it’s forbidden for you to speak. It’s also forbidden for me to hear your arguments before the appearance of the other litigant, the good inclination. When it will also be present, you can then make yourself heard and I’ll judge who is right.’ ”

EISHET CHAYIL

The Laws of Modesty in the Workplace

Maintaining a separation between male and female co-workers means that we must not create family bonds between them, such as by arranging family get-togethers, organized activities, and so on.

As much as possible, we must avoid transmitting objects directly from hand to hand. We must also avoid serving opposite-gender co-workers in any way, such as by purchasing something to eat for him or her, or getting that person something to drink. Doing things of this nature creates a bond between people, which is liable of leading to serious transgressions in the area of modesty.

When co-workers are eating, it is appropriate for men and women to eat separately. If that is not possible, they should at least eat at separate tables. Under no circumstances are men and women to sit together at one table, for that is obviously a serious breach in the area of modesty.

A MATTER OF EDUCATION

Systematic Understanding is Indispensable in the Study of Torah

The book of Deuteronomy, which is called Mishneh Torah, does not contain mitzvot that are introduced by the formula, “The L-RD spoke to Moses,” as in the other books of the Torah. (Note: One exception is the mitzvah that Moses received with regards to ascending Mount Nebo.) The book of Deuteronomy recounts the words that Moses spoke on his own initiative, under the influence of Ruach HaKodesh (Megillah 31 and Tosaphot ibid.). True, the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded Moses to also write the book of Deuteronomy (Bava Batra 15a), and just like every other part of the Torah, it too became the very word of G-d, a teaching we have received from generation to generation (see Rabbi Ibn Ezra on the end of his introduction to the book of Psalms). Nevertheless, we understand the book of Deuteronomy in a way that differs from the other books of the Torah. For example, when we read the reprimands that appear in Mishneh Torah, breaks are permitted in the reading, which is not the case for the reprimands that appear in the book of Leviticus (known as Torat Kohanim). We are also allowed to interpret the juxtapositions that occur in the book of Deuteronomy. For example, we are permitted to derive Halachot from the fact that some laws appear next to others in the text, even according to the view that such interpretations are forbidden to make within other books of the Torah.

Even in the written Torah, which came entirely from Hashem via Moses, we can distinguish between what is said directly by Hashem and what is said by Moses. The parsha containing the words of Bilam is often cited apart from the rest of the Torah (Bava Batra 14). How much more should we, for the oral Torah, distinguish between what is written in the Mishnah and in the Gemara, as well as between the words of the Rishonim, Acharonim, and so on. We must also distinguish between what is said explicitly and what can be derived. The word limud (“study”) comes from the root medida (“a measure”). Torah study is a way of knowing G-d’s word in a clear and explicit way. For Torah study to be useful, it must avoid confusion; its goal must be the knowledge of Hashem.

In the introduction to his book Derech Hashem, the Ramchal wrote: “When one knows a number of things and understands how they are categorized and systematically interrelated, he then has a great advantage over one who has the same knowledge without such a distinction. It is very much like the difference between looking at a well-arranged garden, planted in rows and patterns, and seeing a wild thicket or forest growing in confusion. When an individual is confronted by many details and does not know how they relate to one another or their true place in a general system, then his inquisitive intellect is given nothing more than a difficult, unsatisfying burden. He may struggle with it, but he will tire and grow weary long before he attains any gratification. Each detail will arouse his curiosity, but by not having access to the concept as a whole, he will become frustrated. The exact opposite is true when one knows something in relation to its context. Since he sees it within its framework, he can go on to grasp other concepts associated with it, and success will bring him pleasure and elation.”

GUARD YOUR TONGUE

Better to be Considered a Fool...

Today there unfortunately exists a phenomenon that is quite regrettable. We often find ourselves in the company of sinners who constantly use their tongues to slander others. Whoever finds himself in such a deplorable situation has the sacred duty to reprimand the slanderers and immediately leave their presence. He must not stay and allow his ears to become impure through their words. If there is no way to leave their presence, he must at least try to remain silent and not participate in their storytelling, even if such silence will arouse their scorn and have them consider him a fool. It is with respect to such situations that the Sages have said, “It is better for me to be called a fool all my days than that I should become [even] for one hour a wicked man in the sight of G-d” (Eduyot 5:6).

REASONS FOR THE MITZVOT

The Mitzvah of Appointing Judges

“Appoint for yourselves men who are wise and understanding” (Deuteronomy 1:13).

It is forbidden for leaders of the people to appoint judges who do not know the laws of the Torah and its righteous judgments. Even if we find a man who possesses fine character traits, yet is not competent in the wisdom of the Torah, the Torah tells us: “You shall not show favoritism in judgment” (v.17). In the Sifri the Sages explain that this warning concerns those who are responsible for appointing judges. They must not say, “So and so is wealthy, strong, and of fine appearance. Let’s appoint him as a judge!” Hence the verse states, “You shall not show favoritism in judgment.”

A judge is required to have the seven characteristics listed in our parsha. These characteristics are the following:

1. Men of accomplishment. Judges must have personal wealth, with nothing to gain from flattering anyone appearing before them in court. Furthermore, they must be courageous in order to save the oppressed. They must accomplish all the mitzvot in every detail and to perfection.

2. G-d-fearing people. They must fear Heaven, not individuals.

3. Men of truth. They must trust in the Holy One, blessed be He, and not speak lies. When they possess the characteristic of speaking only the truth, their words will be heard.

4. People who despise money. They must abhor money and not seek it. This characteristic will accustom them to avoid taking bribes.

5. Men. They must be upright and honest in their deeds.

6. Wise. They must be competent, understanding the Torah to perfection and being able to address every question put to them.

7. Understanding. They must know how to deduce one ruling from another, which is a greater trait than wisdom. That is, a wise man may be perfectly versed in what is explicitly written, yet he may be unable to derive a law if it is not already formulated. Such is not the case for a man of understanding, who can derive a law that is not explicitly stated.

Every judge who sits in a three-man Beit Din, which is found in every city, must possess these seven great characteristics. As for the Great Sanhedrin (which convened in the Lishkat HaGazit adjacent to the Temple) and to the courts that convened on the Temple Mount (such as the 23-member court that presided over capital cases), they had to be comprised of great Torah figures and men who were extremely competent in all subjects, such as mathematics, astronomy, astrology and witchcraft. This was meant to ensure that they would have no difficulties in cases that touched upon these areas.

Moses commanded the Children of Israel to honor judges and sages. As long as people obeyed the judges, they would not stumble, for judges are called “the eyes of the people.” Just as a person’s 248 limbs are subservient to his eyes, so too can the Children of Israel do nothing without the advice of their judges and sages.

A TRUE STORY

Achieving Perfection in Serving Hashem

“You shall not show favoritism in judgment. Small and great alike shall you hear” (Deuteronomy 1:17).

One day the gaon Rabbi Eliyahu Dushnitzer took a bus ride with two of his companions. However as he handed the driver money for the fare, he didn’t notice that the driver failed to give him a ticket in return. When Rabbi Eliyahu realized what had happened, he wasn’t sure what to do. He told his companions that if he asked the driver for a ticket at this point, it might cause a Chillul Hashem. He said, “After all, can you imagine a rabbi telling the driver, ‘You didn’t give me a ticket.’ The driver will say, ‘Of course I did.’ There will then be a debate between the two, and everybody will look at them and begin making sneering comments about rabbis.” On the other hand, Rabbi Eliyahu said that if he left things as they were, an inspector might ask him for his ticket, and when he wouldn’t be able to show him one, he would be suspected of not having paid his fare. In the end, Rabbi Eliyahu decided to consider the money he had paid as completely ownerless (meaning that the driver could keep it) and he paid for another ticket. This teaches us what kind of effort a Jew must put into avoiding any appearance of sin.

YOUR EYES SHALL BEHOLD YOUR TEACHER

Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Horowitz – The Chozeh of Lublin

Our teacher the Chozeh of Lublin was born to Rabbi Avraham Elazar in the town of Shbarshin, a city in the Lublin region of Poland. From his youth, he sanctified and purified himself until he became the distinguished disciple of the holy Maggid of Mezritch. He was also the disciple of Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk, the author of Noam Elimelech. Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov was a great Torah figure, and many among his generation gathered in his shade to acquire wisdom, discernment, and knowledge.

During the lifetime of his teacher, Rabbi Elimelech of Lizensk, and by his directive, Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov was named as Rebbe. Before his death, Rabbi Elimelech bequeathed several of his powers to his disciple. He gave Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov the power of vision, and from that time on he could see far into the distance. This is why Jews called him the Chozeh (“Seer”) of Lublin, for he could see from one end of the world to the other, being aware of what his chassidim and disciples were doing at all times.

At first the Chozeh of Lublin lived in the town of Lanzut (where his student Rabbi Naphtali of Ropshitz was Rebbe). He then moved to Lublin, where he lived till his dying day. The Chozeh wanted to bring about the Final Redemption during his lifetime, yet his efforts were unsuccessful. As a result, he fell gravely ill on Simchat Torah 5575. His opponents greatly rejoiced upon hearing of this, boasting that they would hold a great feast on the day of his death. Upon hearing their claim, however, the Chozeh of Lublin said: “They won’t even be able to drink a glass of water on the day I die.” As it turned out, the Chozeh of Lublin’s words proved true, for his soul ascended to Heaven on Tisha B’Av 5575, a fast day. The Chozeh is buried in Lublin. May his merit protect us all.