

Devarim

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Hilula

4 – Rabbeinu Ben Tzion of Bobov hy"ד

5 – Rabbeinu Yitzchak Luria Ashkenazi, the Ari HaKadosh

6 – Rabbi Menachem son of R' Aaron Ibn Zerach, author of 'Tzedah Laderech'

7 – Rabbi Shalom Noach Barzovski, Admor of Slonim

8 – Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef Zilber

9 – Rabbi Shlomo Cohen-Tzedek, Rav of Galpayegan and Teheran

10 – Rabbi Tzion Ibn Denan, Av Beit Din of Ujda and Rabat

Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Son of the tzaddik Rabbi Moshe Ahron Pinto, zt"l, and grandson of the holy tzaddik and miracle-worker Rabbi Chaim Pinto, zy"א

MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Torah Brings Blessing to Man

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

Devarim 1:1)

Before Moshe Rabbeinu's passing, he conveyed to Am Yisrael important matters that they should engrave on their hearts since it was difficult for him to depart from them. Moshe intended that these matters should be 'provisions for the journey' for Am Yisrael, and through observing them at all times, they will feel that Moshe is still alive and among them.

"These are the words" implies, 'make these words the principal matter', while other 'words' you should leave by the side. This directive includes Moshe's passing, meaning that his passing should not cause Am Yisrael to become broken-hearted and despondent. If they succeed in doing so, they will merit feeling that Moshe Rabbeinu is still alive and with them at every moment, for "the righteous after their deaths are called alive".

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

I saw it brought in the sefarim that the word 'אלה', these, is an acronym for 'אבך לשון הרע', avak (meaning dust) of lashon hara (referring to forms of speech that are forbidden because they lead to lashon hara). This implies that Moshe was warning Bnei Yisrael to be most particular not to speak even avak lashon hara, and even though we might think that dust is something insignificant and valueless, this is in fact not so, for these words have the power to sow ruin and great destruction. Avak lashon hara includes words that are essentially permitted and do not speak evil of anyone, but the tone, timing, and manner in which they are said, change their connotation completely and they are considered as avak lashon hara. One who disregards the prohibition of avak lashon hara will eventually, G-d forbid, come to speak actual lashon hara, and then this becomes a situation where "a person

would swallow his fellow alive", and from here until a further destruction, the path is short.

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

Bilam too possessed the power of speech and he wished to curse Am Yisrael. This shows us that he utilized his power of speech for the negative. Even though Moshe Rabbeinu also knew how to curse, he nevertheless used his mouth for blessings, and only when it was necessary, for example in the incident with Korach and his assembly, did he curse them. Both of them, therefore, possessed the power of speech but while Moshe utilized it for the good, Bilam exploited it for the bad.

Now we understand why Hashem turned to Bilam and said, from where do you have the power to bless am Yisrael? You possess no Torah and your mouth is impure. Since this is the case, you don't have the merit and ability to bless them. A mouth that has not uttered words of Torah and has instead only made itself impure and repulsive with futile words and forbidden foods, then even if it wishes, it is not capable of blessing those who are called 'blessed'. However, a mouth that has occupied itself with Torah and its discussion, draws from this the power to give meaningful and effective blessings. The fact that in the end Bilam did bless Am Yisrael, stemmed from the fact that this was G-d's will, for otherwise he would not have had the ability to bless.

A diamond that is lying in the mud, covered with muck, must be taken out of the grime and cleaned well so that it should once again shine and illuminate. But as long as it remains covered with muck, there is no way to know that it is, in fact, a diamond, for it looks the same as any other stone that is lying in the wayside. Similarly, to possess the power to bless, the mouth needs to be cleaned, and how does one cleanse one's mouth? Through studying the Holy Torah, for it is the Torah alone that bestows man with the ability to bless.

Man's advantage over animals lies in the fact that he is blessed with the power of speech. An animal is unable to talk at all. So if man uses the gift of speech in a negative manner, this then makes the animal tenfold preferable to man, since it utters neither a good word nor a bad word, while man is using his mouth for the bad. Since it is the Torah alone that brings a person to correct speech, man is therefore obligated to study Torah so that his mouth should produce precious pearls.





Walking in their Ways

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

A Fiery Message

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

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

One night later that week, while everyone was sleeping peacefully, the refrigerator suddenly stopped working. Tongues of fire leaped out from the motor, and heavy smoke filled the entire house. Since everyone was fast asleep, we were in mortal danger. But Hashem had mercy on us and caused me to wake up. The first thing I felt was a terrible headache, and then I immediately realized with fright that the house was full of smoke.

I rushed out of bed immediately and staggered in the direction of the source and reaching the kitchen, discovered the refrigerator was on fire. I instantly awoke my sleeping family and by a miracle of miracles, we were all saved from a gruesome death.

This incident taught us, in a very clear way, that the mitzvah of tzedakah that I had performed that week, by donating generously, had served as an atonement for our entire family, and that is what protected us and saved us from a certain death, as it says, "Charity saves from death" (Mishlei 11:4).

The Haftarah

"The vision of Yeshaya" (Yeshaya 1)

The connection to Shabbat: The Haftarah speaks about the punishment that will befall Bnei Yisrael with the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, due to their sins. This is the third of the three special Haftarot that Chazal established to be read during the three weeks leading up to Tisha B'Av.

Guard Your Tongue

He Merits Much Good

If a father constantly warns his child and accustoms him from his youth not to speak lashon hara (and all the more so not to curse or lie) about any Jewish person, this will implant the matter in his soul and become second nature. In this way, it will be easy for him as he grows older to restrict himself with this holy attribute, and this will bring him merit in the Next World and all kinds of good in This World too.



In Our Father's Path

What Lies Behind Unjustified Hatred?

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

Under all "unjustified hatred" is buried "a lack of faith"!

Would we have faith, we would save ourselves hatred, jealousy, argument and lashon hara!

The Vilna Gaon explains the seemingly hard-to-understand expression 'unjustified hatred'. Why indeed do we call it 'unjustified hatred'? The hatred is not unjustified! If my friend drove me crazy, this is called 'unjustified hatred'? Do I really hate him for no reason?

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

If you hate him because you think that it is he who hurt you, this points to a lack of faith in Hashem.

This is the meaning of what we said above, that underneath all 'unjustified hatred' lies 'a lack of faith'!

It is told that someone dreamt that a certain friend was speaking lashon hara about him. These thoughts accompanied him for a long time. One day he met that friend and asked him:

"Why are you saying evil things about me?"

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

The next day he again met his friend and once again asked him, "Why are you speaking lashon hara about me?"

Yet his friend once again repeated the same answer, "You are simply dreaming."

When this happened for the third time and his friend tried to explain to him that it was all a figment of his imagination and a dream, he replied, "It may have indeed been a dream, but why are you talking about me?"...

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

Nice words.

But if indeed everything is from above, why are you furious with your neighbor? If you believe with perfect faith that everything is destined by Hashem, why are you quarreling with your friend? Why is your mouth constantly full of complaints against all types of people who did to you, took from you, harmed you?



Pearls of the Parsha

Treasures

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



Rebuke is Compared to a Bee's Sting

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

The Midrash (Devarim Raba 1:6) explains the term "words" (דברים) as being derived from the word "bees" (דבורים). "Rabbi Yishmael son of Nachman said, Hashem said, My children behaved like bees, following the leadership of tzadikim and prophets."

The 'Kesef Nivchar' zya"a explains the connection:

On the verse (Devarim 1:44), "The Amorite...went out against you and pursued you as the bees would do", Rashi quotes the Midrash: "Just as this bee when it strikes a man it dies immediately, the Amorites died immediately after defeating the Jews."

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

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

The Crowding Does Not Alarm Us

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

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

The connection between the two verses seems hard to understand.

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

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

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

He Lowered His Eyes When Judging

"Listen among your brethren" (1:16)

This phrase seems redundant. Why do the judges have to be told to listen, if they do not listen how will they be able to judge the case?

Rabbeinu Chaim ben Attar zya"a, the Holy Ohr HaChaim, writes, "The judge should not show a pleasant countenance to and look at one of the parties, while lowering his eyes to the other one. Rather he should listen to both equally, and this is the meaning of 'listen'. It means that the listening should be equal to both of them. If you pick up your eyes, do so to both of them, if you lower your eyes, lower them to them both".

The Holy Ohr Hachaim adds: "I once heard from a dear and extremely pious Sage, Harav Rabbi Moshe Berdugo zya"a, that he was particular to look down when judging someone and he would never pick up his eyes. He felt that if he would look towards one of the claimants, the other one would become confused. He translated 'listen among your brethren' as do nothing more than listen. The words are heard from the ones who bring their claim without the judge displaying any different behavior to either of them and in this way, he will fulfill the continuation of the verse 'and judge righteously'."

Like a Speck of Dust in a Spaceship Motor

The Gemara (Gittin 55a) tells us the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza who hated each other, and what occurred between them set in motion the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash. It seems from this incident that the Sages of that generation stumbled with the sin of lashon hara, and it is surprising how they fell to such a low level and did not protest the host's behavior. It could be that the beginning of the Sages decline was the fact that they listened to avak lashon hara, related by the host concerning his unwanted guest. Since they did not hasten to restore the peace between them, or at least silence the host, they fell even deeper into the sin, to the extent that they were no longer careful about listening to words of disgrace about the guest.

That avak lashon hara which at first glance seems to be only a slight offense, grew and intensified into something enormous, and actually led to the Churban. The Sages of that generation are personally responsible for this, and there is a claim against them that they, to some extent, caused the Churban. Had they used their intelligence to put a stop to the lashon hara while it was still minor and insignificant like dust, they could have prevented the dissension and strife which in the end brought about the destruction.

We know that a speck of dust in the motor of a spaceship, renders it out of order and the spaceship cannot take off into space. Only after removing all the dust from the motor and cleaning it thoroughly, can the motor work efficiently and propel the craft into space. Similarly, a small amount of avak lashon hara blemishes the unity and alliance of Am Yisrael, to the extent that Hashem can no longer rest His Presence among His children, and He then emits His anger on sticks and stones rather than harm His people.

When Hashem's anger intensified, He poured out His wrath on sticks and stones instead of on His children, and this was supposed to bring Am Yisrael to the recognition that all that happened to the Beit Hamikdash should really have been done to them. But since Hashem loves His children and wants their good, He allowed them to remain alive so that they should learn a lesson and rectify their evil ways.

A NOVEL LOOK AT THE PARSHA



Contemplating the numerous nations, we find that there is an accepted custom of establishing a day of celebration in commemoration of a victory in battle, the day they merited national independence or other similar events. But we do not find that they establish a special day to commemorate a defeat or downfall, especially if it took place thousands of years ago. On the contrary, they try to cover up the matter and forget about it completely.

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

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

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

Am Yisrael know how to appreciate "the time of our exile", and not only "the time of our gladness" (as we say in the festival prayers)!

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

To what can this be compared? To a man who buys a lottery ticket, arrives home and announces to his wife: "Here is a lottery ticket. Take good care of it so that it shouldn't get lost, for it could be of great value."

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

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

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

Meanwhile, the father, who was on his way home, passed the lottery stand, and to his great joy, he saw that his number had won!

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

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

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

An outsider would assume that all their tears are equal, for all are crying. But the truth is that each person is crying about something else entirely. The young children are crying because they lost their game, the wife is crying because she betrayed her husband's trust,

and only the husband knows that they have a real reason to cry. Because of a silly game, the family lost an enormous amount of money that could have alleviated their difficult financial situation and changed their entire lifestyle.

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

Some are crying about their private sorrows. For one it translates into a lack of parnassah, for the other, it is his lack of success in life, while the third one is troubled by the killings and murders that have recently become a daily occurrence¹. Yet all these people are still not crying for that which one really needs to shed tears about.

Only one who cries about the Beit Hamikdash that was destroyed because of our sins and mourns its loss, is the one who is truly mourning for Yerushalayim. And he is the one who will merit witnessing its rebuilding.

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

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

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

This was his answer: "It is the Jewish people! On the one hand, they experience so many troubles which are the cause of their distress and tears, yet at the same time they have faith in a better future and delight in the fact that they have on Whom to lean."

This is why, immediately following Tisha B'Av, we read the Haftarah "Comfort, comfort My people" (Yeshaya 40), for when a Jew truly mourns the exile of the Shechina, Hashem immediately comforts him with a double comforting.