

Parshas Devarim in a Nutshell

(Deuteronomy 1:1–3:22)

On the first of Shevat (thirty-seven days before his passing), Moses begins his repetition of the Torah to the assembled children of Israel, reviewing the events that occurred and the laws that were given in the course of their forty-year journey from Egypt to Sinai to the Promised Land, rebuking the people for their failings and iniquities, and enjoining them to keep the Torah and observe its commandments in the land that G-d is giving them as an eternal heritage, into which they shall cross after his death.

Moses recalls his appointment of judges and magistrates to ease his burden of meting out justice to the people and teaching them the word of G-d; the journey from Sinai through the great and fearsome desert; the sending of the spies and the people's subsequent spurning of the Promised Land, so that G-d decreed that the entire generation of the Exodus would die out in the desert. "Also against me," says Moses, "was G-d angry for your sake, saying: You, too, shall not go in there."

(continued next column)

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When a person is preoccupied with self-concern -- what I want, and what I think is right - that is what he will think and speak about. When, by contrast, he is able to step beyond his individual concerns, he is able to appreciate - and share with others -- G-d's wisdom.

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Moses also recounts some more recent events: the refusal of the nations of Moab and Ammon to allow the Israelites to pass through their countries; the wars against the Emorite kings Sichon and Og, and the settlement of their lands by the tribes of Reuben and Gad and part of the tribe of Manasseh; and Moses' message to his successor, Joshua, who will take the people into the Land and lead them in the battles for its conquest: "Fear them not, for the L-rd your G-d, He shall fight for you." ❖

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**Join us each weekday
morning Mon-Fri
as we delve into
the mysteries of
Chassidic concepts.
5:55 am, followed
immediately by
Shacharis.**



**Halachic Zmanim
Shabbos, Aug 6, 2022
Daylight Savings Time**

Earliest Tallis 4:54 AM
Latest Morning Shema..... 9:27 AM
Earliest Mincha (Gedola) . 1:38 PM
Plag Hamincha..... 6:42 PM
Earliest Evening Shema.... 8:37 PM

Anshei Lubavitch Congregation

Rabbi Levi and Leah Neubort

Adult education:

Rabbi Avrohom and Rivky Bergstein

Youth Outreach:

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Shabbos/Tisha B'Av Schedule

Erev Shabbos – Aug 5 / Menachem Av 8

Candle Lighting 7:50 pm
Mincha 7:30 pm

Shabbos Day – Aug 6 / Menachem Av 9

Chassidus 9:15 am
Shacharis 10:00am
Kiddush 12:15 pm
Mincha 1:35 pm
Fast begins 8:07 pm
Shabbos ends 8:52 pm
Marriv/ Eicha 9:25 pm

Sunday – Aug 7 / Menachem Av 10

Shacharis 9:00 am
Chatzos 1:01 pm
Mincha 1:45 pm
Maariv 8:15 pm
Fast ends 8:36 pm

**Latest morning Shema is now 9:27 AM. Be sure to recite the Shema at or before that time (even if at home).*

Bulletin
*This week's Bulletin
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Chassidic Masters

The Vacuum of Choice

*Based on the teachings of
the Lubavitcher Rebbe
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On whose initiative were the spies sent? The way the story is told in Numbers 13, it was by divine command:

G-d spoke to Moses, saying: "Send you men, that they may spy out the land of Canaan, which I am giving to the children of Israel. One man, one man per tribe shall you send, each a prince among them . . ." (Numbers 13:1-2)

But when Moses recounts these events 40 years later, he tells the people of Israel,

You all approached me, and said: "Let us send men before us, that they may search out the land and bring us back word regarding the road by which we shall go up and the cities to we shall enter." The thing was favorable in my eyes; and I took twelve men from amongst you, one man per tribe . . . (Deuteronomy 1:22-23)

The commentaries reconcile these two accounts of the sending of the spies by explaining that the initiative indeed came from the people of Israel. "Moses then consulted with G-d, who said to him, 'Send you men . . .,' to imply: Send them as dictated by your understanding. I am not telling you what to do. Do as you see fit" (Rashi). Thus, the spies' mission, while receiving divine consent, was a human endeavor, born of the desire of the people and dispatched because "the thing was favorable" in Moses' eyes.

The result was a tragic setback in the course of Jewish history. The spies brought back a most demoralizing report, and caused the people to lose faith in G-d's promise of the Land of Israel as their eternal heritage. The entire generation was then deemed unfit to inherit the land, and it was decreed that they would live out their lives in the desert. Only 40 years later did Moses' successor, Joshua, lead a new generation across the Jordan River and into the Promised Land. (Joshua and Caleb were the only two spies to speak in favor of conquering the land, and the only two men of that entire generation to enter it.)

Up until that time, G-d had imparted specific directives to Moses and the people of Israel virtually every step of the way. The case of the spies was the first instance in which G-d said, "I'm not telling you what to do; do as you see fit." Should this not have set off a warning light in the mind of Moses?

Indeed, it did. Our sages tell us that Moses sent off Joshua with the blessing, "May G-d deliver you from the conspiracy of the spies" (Rashi to Numbers 13:16). So why did he send them? And if, for whatever reason, he thought it necessary to send them, why did he not at least bless them as he blessed Joshua? Even more amazing is the fact that a generation later, as the Jewish people finally stood at the ready (for the second time) to enter the land, Joshua dispatches spies! This time, it works out fine; but why did he again initiate a process which had ended so tragically in the past?

Obviously, Moses was well aware of the risks involved when embarking on a course of "do as you see fit."

For man to strike out on his own, without precise instructions from on high, and with only his finite and subjective judgment as his compass, is to enter a minefield strewn with possibilities for error and failure. Yet Moses also knew that G-d was opening a new arena of human potential.

Free Choice

A most crucial element of our mission in life is the element of choice. Were G-d to have created man as a creature who cannot do wrong, then He might as well have created a perfect world in the first place, or no world at all. The entire point of G-d's desire in creation is that there exists a non-perfected world, and that we choose to perfect it. It is precisely the possibility for error on our part that lends significance to our achievements.

The concept of choice exists on two levels. When G-d issues an explicit instruction to us, we still have the choice to defy His command. This, however, is choice in a more limited sense. For, in essence, our soul is literally "a part of G-d above" and, deep down, has but a single desire: to fulfill the divine will. In the words of Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi: "A Jew is neither willing, nor is he able, to tear himself away from G-d." When it comes down to it, each and every one of us desires only to do good, as defined by the will of G-d. The only choice we have is whether to suppress our innate will or to express it in our daily life.

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Up until the episode of the spies, this was the only choice offered the Jewish people. G-d provided unequivocal guidelines for each and every issue that confronted their lives. They had the choice to disobey, but to do so would run contrary to their deepest instincts.

The second level of choice was introduced with G-d's reply to Moses regarding the spies. When Moses heard G-d saying, "Do as you see fit," he understood that G-d was opening another, even deeper and truer dimension of choice in the life of man. By creating an area in which He, the creator and absolute master of the world, states, "I am not telling you what to do," G-d was imparting an even greater significance to human actions. Here, and only here, is the choice truly real; here, and only here, is there nothing to compel us in either direction.

When we enter this arena, the risks are greater: the possibility to err is greater, and the consequences of our error more devastating. But when we succeed in discovering, without instruction and empowerment from above, the optimum manner in which to enter the Holy Land and actualize the divine will, our deed is infinitely more valuable and significant.

The Self of Joshua

This was why Moses dispatched the spies, though fully aware of the hazards of their mission, without so much as a blessing that they be safeguarded from the pitfalls of human endeavor. Were he to have blessed them—to have imparted to them of his own spiritual prowess to succeed in their mission—he would have undermined the uniqueness of the opportunity that G-d had granted by consenting that their mission be "by your understanding." The entire point was that both Moses (in deciding whether to send them) and the spies (in executing their mission) be entirely on their own, guided

and empowered solely by their own understanding and humanity.

The only one to receive Moses blessing was Joshua, who was Moses' "faithful servant . . . never budging from [Moses'] tent" (Exodus 33:11). The unique relationship between Moses and Joshua is described by the Talmud by the following metaphor: "Moses face was like the face of the sun; Joshua's face was like the face of the moon." On the most basic level, this expresses the superiority of Moses over Joshua, the latter being but a pale reflector of the former's light; on a deeper level, this alludes to the depth of the bond between the greatest of teachers and the most devoted of disciples. As the moon has no luminance of its own, but receives all of its light from the sun, so had Joshua completely abnegated his self to his master, so that everything he had, and everything he was, derived from Moses.

For Moses to bless Joshua was not to empower Joshua with something that was not himself: Joshua's entire self was Moses. Armed with Moses' blessing, Joshua was truly and fully on his own—this was his essence and self, rather than something imposed on him from without.

Thus it was Joshua, who had successfully negotiated the arena of true and independent choice, who led the people of Israel into the land of Canaan. For the conquest of Canaan and its transformation into a "holy land" represents our entry into a place where there are no clearcut divine directives to distinguish good from evil and right from wrong, and our independent discovery of how to sanctify this environment as a home for G-d. ❖

Megillas Aicha

On Tisha B'Av Eve, in the synagogue, the curtain is removed from the ark, and the lights are dimmed. After the evening prayers, the book of Lamentations (Eichah) is read. The leader reads aloud, and the congregation reads along in an undertone. In some communities (not Chabad), Lamentations is read by the leader from a parchment scroll. ❖

Tisha B'Av

As part of our mourning for the destruction of the Temple and the exile of Israel, we abstain from many pleasurable activities on the night and day of Av 9—starting with sundown on the eve of the day before, and concluding with the following nightfall (click here for the exact times in your location).

Specifically, **we don't**:

- Eat or drink. All adults – even pregnant and nursing women – fast on this day. One who is ill, or a pregnant woman who feels excessive weakness, should consult with a rabbi. An ill person who is not fasting should refrain from eating delicacies and should eat only that which is absolutely necessary for his physical wellbeing.
- Wear leather footwear, or footwear that contains any leather (even if it is only a leather sole).
- Sit on a normal-height chair until midday. ("Halachic" midday is the halfway point between sunrise and sunset; (click here for the exact times in your location.)
- Bathe or wash oneself—"even to insert a finger in cold water."
- Exceptions:
 - One who becomes soiled may rinse the affected area with cold water.
 - It is permitted to wash up after using the restroom.
 - When preparing food – for children, or for the post-fast meal – one may wash the food, even if it also, incidentally, washes the hands.
 - When ritually washing the hands in the morning, the water should be poured on the fingers only until the knuckle joints.
 - Apply ointment, lotions or creams.
 - It is permissible, however, to bathe a baby and apply ointments to his skin.
 - Engage in marital relations or any form of intimacy.
 - Send gifts, or even greet another with the customary "hello" or "how are you doing?"
 - Engage in outings, trips or similar pleasurable activities.
 - Wear fine festive clothing.
 - Study Torah, because "the commandments of G-d are upright, causing the heart to rejoice" (Psalms 19:9). It is, however, permitted – and encouraged – to study sections of the Torah which discuss the laws of mourning, the destruction of the Temples, and the tragedies which befell the Jewish people throughout our history. This prohibition actually begins at midday of the day before Tisha b'Av.

"One who mourns Jerusalem will merit to see her happiness, as the verse (Isaiah 66:10) promises: 'Rejoice with her greatly, all who mourn for her'" – Talmud Taanit 30b.

Havdalah is recited on Sunday night. In the evening prayers, the usual Shabbat night insertion, "Atah Chonantanu," is included. The prayer "Vihi Noam" is omitted. Those who have not recited the evening prayers should say, before doing any activity that is forbidden on Shabbat, "Baruch hamavdil bein kodesh l'chol" ("Blessed is He who separates between the holy [day of Shabbat] and the mundane [weekday]").

Sometime on Saturday night (ideally right before the reading of Eicha), kindle the havdalah candle and recite the appropriate blessing. (We do not recite the blessing of the spices.)

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Tisha B'Av (continued)

Immediately after the “Barchu” passage is recited in the Saturday night prayer service, remove your leather shoes and don non-leather footwear.

Recite the havdalah on Sunday night before eating -- omitting the blessings on the spices and candle. When 9 Av is on Sunday, if possible, the havdalah wine or grape juice should be given to a child — younger than bar/bat mitzvah age—to drink. ❖

From Our Sages – Pinchas

These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel on the other side of the Jordan, in the desert, in the Aravah, opposite Suf, between Paran and Tofel, and Lavan, and Chatzerot, and Di-Zahav (Deuteronomy 1:1)

According to the Sifri, the numerous place names listed here are not landmarks indicating where Moses spoke these words—indeed, some of these places do not even exist as geographical locations. Rather, these are words of rebuke by Moses to the people of Israel. Instead of mentioning their sins outright, he alluded to them with these place names:

“In the desert”—the time they complained: “If only we would have died in the desert” (Exodus 17:3).

“In the Aravah (Plain)”—their worship of Baal Peor in the Plains of Moab (Numbers 25).

“Opposite Suf”—the trouble they made at the shores of Yam Suf, the Red Sea (see Exodus 14:11 and Rashi on Exodus 15:22).

“Paran”—the sin of the spies, who were dispatched from Paran (as recounted in Numbers 13 and later in our own Parshah).

“Tofel” and “Lavan” (meaning “libel” and “white”)—their libeling the white manna (Numbers 21:5).

“Chatzerot”—where Korach’s mutiny against Moses took place.

“Di-Zahav” (literally, “too much gold”)—the sin of the golden calf.

(Sifri, Rashi, et al)

It would have been fitting that the rebukes (in the Book of Deuteronomy) be pronounced by Balaam, and that the blessings (in the Parshah of Balak) be said by Moses. . . . But G-d said: Let Moses, who loves them, rebuke them; and let Balaam, who hates them, bless them.

(Yalkut Shimoni)

These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel (1:1)

It was only to the people of Israel that Moses spoke of their iniquities and failings. To G-d, Moses spoke only of the virtues of Israel, and justified them no matter what they did.

(Chassidic saying) ❖

Haftorah for Parshas Devarim in a nutshell

Isaiah 1:1-27

This week's haftorah is the third of a series of three "haftarot of affliction." These three haftarot are read during the Three Weeks of mourning for Jerusalem, between the fasts of 17 Tammuz and 9 Av.

Isaiah relays to the Jews a G-dly vision he experienced, chastising the residents of Judah and Jerusalem for having rebelled against G-d, criticizing them for repeating their errors and not abandoning their sinful ways — even after having been reprimanded and punished. "Woe to a sinful nation, a people heavy with iniquity, evildoing seed, corrupt children. They forsook G-d; they provoked the Holy One of Israel." Harsh words are employed, comparing the Jewish leaders to the rulers of Sodom and Gomorrah. G-d states his distaste for their sacrifices and offerings which were flavored with pagan customs. "How has she become a harlot, a faithful city; it was once full of justice, in which righteousness would lodge, but now it is a city of murderers..."

Isaiah then speaks gentler words, encouraging the people to repent sincerely and to perform acts of justice and kindness towards the needy, orphans and widows, and promising them the best of the land in return for their obedience. "If your sins prove to be like crimson, they will become white as snow; if they prove to be as red as crimson dye, they shall become as wool." The haftorah concludes with a promise that G-d will eventually reestablish Israel's judges and leaders, when "Zion shall be redeemed through justice and her penitents through righteousness."

Note: The first word of the haftorah is "Chazon" ("The vision [of Isaiah]"). The Shabbat when this haftorah is read, the Shabbat before Tisha b'Av, is thus called "Shabbat Chazon," the "Shabbat of the Vision." According to chassidic tradition, on this Shabbat the soul of every Jew is treated to a "vision" of the third Holy Temple that will be rebuilt with the coming of Moshiach. . ❖



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Marc S. Berman, Esq.
Attorney-at-Law
140 E. Ridgewood Ave.
Suite 415
Paramus, NJ 07652

Telephone: **(201) 797-4411**
msb@bermanlawoffice.com
www.bermanlawoffice.com
17-10 River Road, Suite 2C
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שבת שלום גוט שבת!



Good Shabbos to all!