

THE COMMUNITY PARSHA SHEET



PARSHAT DEVARIM

London's Leading Young Professionals Platform and Jewish Communal Centre



RABBI JONATHAN TAWIL
TAL Founder & Director

WHERE'S MY REWARD?

The Midrash Tehillim says that the Giants Og and Sichon were more formidable adversaries than Pharaoh and his army. Moshe had battled Sichon and won. Now he faced a war against the mighty Og.

Yet before this war, Moshe seems to be worried. Hashem has to reassure him – Al Tirah Otoh (3:2) – do not fear him, for I (Hashem) will place him and his people in your hand.

What was bothering Moshe? Surely a man of the spiritual status of Moshe should not fear Og?

Og was not a normal adversary. He was a Giant with a formidable history.

Og was called "Hapalit", the escapee. He escaped from the Mabul (Targum Yonatan), from the war of the four kings against the five kings (Rashi), and from the war waged by the Ammoni nation against his people (Rashbam). What was the secret of his longevity?

Rashi cites the Midrash, which explains that Moshe was concerned because Og had a special merit for doing a kindness to Avraham hundreds of years earlier. At that time, Avraham's nephew Lot was taken captive. Og ran to Avraham to relate to him the news. Og had intended that Avraham should go to battle against the Four mightiest Kings, where he would be killed, opening the way for Og to take Sarah (Avraham's wife) for himself. Nevertheless this relating of news caused Avraham to save Lot's life and bring about a Kidush Hashem in the

world.

Hashem rewarded Og with an additional 500 years because of this merit!

Now Moshe faced this formidable foe, and was worried, perhaps this merits reward was still standing in Og's favour. Let us focus a moment on what is happening here. Og the despicable giant, has a bad intention, yet nevertheless is rewarded for his good actions? Has he not been rewarded enough? The Pesikta DeRabi Elazar brings down that he was rewarded by becoming the King of Bashan. How much reward does a man like this really deserve for a seemingly small and unintentional good deed? And surely Moshe the greatest prophet that ever lived, the True Servant of Hashem should not fear such a giant?

Before we answer let us turn for a moment to our current exile.

Chazal tell us that we find ourselves in the Galut Edom – the exile of Eisav. This exile has lasted for two thousand years. It is the longest exile of our people. But when will this exile end? The prophet Zechariya tells us exactly when! (2:12) Achar Kavod Shelachani. Rashi explains that the time will come only once the merit of Eisav has been removed. Which merit are we talking about? Eisav was well known to honour his father Yitzchak. He would be exemplary when it came to Kibud av Va Em. The Zohar (1:146b) states that it is that Kavod showed to his father, that gave him the merit to rule over us for thousands of years! Hence Zecharia states only after the Kavod has ended; only after that

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KIDS ZONE - QUIZ

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merit has ended will Hashem defeat the wicked.

We see that the ramifications of a good deed are long lasting.

Have you ever heard of Nebuchadnezzar? He was the mightiest Leader Babylon ever saw. The Gemara relates that in his early days Nebuchadnezzar served as a secretary and scribe for a previous Babylonian monarch. Once, when Nebuchadnezzar was absent from work, other royal secretaries of the king drafted a letter to be sent to the Jewish king of Judah, Chizkiah. The letter began: "Greetings to King Chizkiah! Greetings to the city of Jerusalem! Greetings to the great G-d!"

When Nebuchadnezzar returned to work and discovered how the letter was written, he was furious. "You call Him 'the Great G-d,' Nebuchadnezzar protested, "and you mention Him last?!"

In an isolated moment of moral conduct, Nebuchadnezzar insisted

that the letter be redone, and written as follows: "Greetings to the Great G-d! Greetings to the city of Jerusalem! Greetings to king Chizkiah!"

The problem was that the messenger had already been dispatched to Jerusalem with the first version of the letter in his hand. So Nebuchadnezzar ran out to call the messenger back and redo the letter. How far did he need to run? Merely three steps before he caught the messenger to give him a second version of the letter.

Our sages see this episode as the ultimate cause for Nebuchadnezzar's royal success. In the merit of his taking three steps to honour G-d, Nebuchadnezzar received the crown of royalty for three generations!

This world is a physical world. Our sages note that Behay Alma – in this world there is no reward – no payment for good deeds done. The real payment is infinite and in the next world. Yet Hashem chooses to "reward" the wicked in this world in order to finish from them in the next.

Moshe understood that there is an eternal payment for acts of good; he was worried that Og's merit still warranted him being alive. Therefore Hashem had to tell him, do not worry, his time has come, he has enjoyed enough reward for his actions.

The reward granted to these wicked people for their good actions in this world seems massive. Og the giant gets long life, lives as a mighty ruler; Nebuchadnezzar receives the monarchy for generations. Wow all that for such a small action. Yes! Even small actions count. Yet we must note that the real reward for our deeds is in the next world. We must realise that Hashem guards each and every mitzvah we do, every Amen we say, every Shabbat we keep, every act of kindness, it is all there in front of Hashem.

From the reward these wicked people received for their seemingly small acts of good, we can fathom the reward that we will receive for every Mitzvah – Ah how lucky we are!



RABBI DAVID BAADANI
Director - TAL Chazanut Program

PARSHAT DEVARIM

The Rambam writes: One who ascends the altar on stairs is flogged, as is one who removes a stone from the altar, or from the entire Temple building or from the [area of courtyard] between the Temple and the altar as a destructive measure.

On the Pasuk, מִגִּיד דְּבָרוֹ לְיַעֲקֹב הַקָּדוֹשׁ וּמִשְׁפָּטָיו לְיִשְׂרָאֵל 'He issued His commands to Jacob, His statutes and rules to Israel,' say our Sages That the laws of the Torah are laws that G-d Himself fulfils so to speak. Thats why the Pasuk uses the terms of 'His commands, His statutes and rules.'

Asks Rabbi Haim Palachi (Turkey 1788 - 1868): according to this understanding, how did G-d allow to

Temple be destroyed?

Even regarding our synagogues it says in the Halacha, 'We do not destroy a synagogue (even) in order to build another synagogue' The only way to destroy a synagogue is when the purpose of the demolition is not destruction but renovation, to build a bigger and more magnificent place for Torah and Teffila.

According to that, we can understand that G-d wanted to destroy the first and second temples in order to build a third one in their place, one that will be more spiritual, more G-dly, a holy temple which will remain standing on forever and ever.

'Make Me a sanctuary וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם and I will dwell among them.' In our Mikdash, in our relationships, whether is a relationship with our spouse, with G-d or even with oneself, at home or at the work place, one

might very often experience what might appear as a destruction. But we need to remember that on Tisha B'av the Holy Temple was destroyed and on that same day Messiah was born. The Haftara of Shabbat Chazon describes a vision of destruction and loss, but on the other hand, on Shabbat Chazon, every Jew is given the ability to receive a vision of redemption (according to Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berdichov). It comes to teach us that the demolition that seems to us as a destruction sometimes it's an invitation for rehabilitation and renovation. When one door gets closed another one gets opened, when one era ends a new one begins. Take it as an opportunity to rebuild yourself and your relationships in a more strong, more real and more authentic way, a way that will take you to your own personal redemption.



RABBI YEHONATAN SALEM

A PERSON'S HONOUR

This week we start reading the fifth book of the Torah – Sefer Devarim. Literally translated as “the Book of Words,” it refers to the words of rebuke that Moshe Rabbenu reprimanded the Jewish People before he passed away. Just before their entering the Promised Land, our famed leader reiterated their failures and shortcomings during the forty years of wandering in the desert under his leadership.

Sefer Devarim is Moshe Rabbenu’s mussar – disciplinary book. It is replete with ethics, values, character perfection, self-improvement, and how to repent. All of these are relevant not only to that generation, but also to every member of Israel forever.

Moshe Rabbenu’s opening words recall all of that generation’s shortcomings. Yet, he only hinted at them and did not spell them out openly. This was because Moshe was concerned for and cared about the honour of the people.

At this juncture in time, we are mourning the destruction of our holy Temples,

which were destroyed at this time of year, thousands of years ago. The Gemara (Gittin 55b) relates one of the causes of the destruction. There was a person who had a friend called Kamtza and an enemy called Bar Kamtza. When making a party, he told his servant to go and invite his friend, Kamtza. His servant mistakenly went and invited his enemy, Bar Kamtza. At the feast, the host saw his enemy sitting there, and ordered him to leave. Bar Kamtza, trying to protect his honour, begged his host to let him pay for his portion and be allowed to stay, so as not to have to endure the embarrassment of having to leave. However, the host would not hear of it, and even after Bar Kamtza offered to pay the cost of the entire event, his offer “fell on deaf ears.” The host grabbed him and threw him out. Terribly embarrassed and seeking to take revenge, against his host and all those present who did not protest against his unfair treatment, he went to the king of Rome and fabricated a story that the Jews were rebelling against him. Eventually, the outcome of this story was the tragic loss of our holy Temple, when the Romans came and destroyed the Bet Hamikdash. The Gemara

deduces from this episode the severity of undermining a fellow person's honour. Due to their gross negligence in this area, G-d allowed our holy Bet Hamikdash to be destroyed, as a lesson to all.

Why is it, as our Sages teach us, that if one embarrasses his friend in public, he loses his portion in the world-to-come? This is because each person is created in the image of G-d. Hence, if someone else undermines that image, it is as if he is degrading G-d Himself.

Moreover, in many places our Torah emphasizes the obligation to honour our fellow man. The root of this obligation is the requirement to honour the image of G-d in which each person is created.

Whenever I am in the presence of great Torah personalities, what strikes me the most about them is how they treat all the people in their vicinity with utmost honour and respect. No matter what their level, standing or age, everyone is made to feel like “a million dollars.” Last week, my thirteen-year-old daughter wanted to ask a question to a Torah Sage. Not only did he accept her graciously, but he even gave her twenty minutes of his precious time!



HALACHOT BY RABBI ELI MANSOUR

The Nine Days –Wallpapering, Making New Purchases, and Eating Meat

The Sages instruct, "Mi'shenichnas Ab Mema'atin Be'simha" – "When Ab enters, we reduce our joy." This means that with the onset of the month of Ab, we are to avoid certain undertakings that bring us special joy. Thus, for example, one should not have his home freshly painted or wallpapered during the period of the Nine Days from Rosh Hodesh Ab though Tisha B'Ab. Likewise, it is forbidden to make any kind of renovations or purchases for the home that are done for strictly decorative purposes. It is also customary not to make significant purchases that bring a person special excitement, such as a new car. Strictly speaking, such purchases are allowed during the

Nine Days, but the accepted custom is not to make major purchases like these, since they bring a person joy which is inappropriate for this period of mourning. Major purchases should therefore be delayed until after Tisha B'Ab.

Similarly, during the Nine Days one should not purchase items for a bride and groom in preparation for their marriage, since these are joyous purchases. However, if the wedding is taking place immediately after Tisha B'Ab, and one might not have a time to make the necessary purchases after Tisha B'Ab, then he may buy the items during the Nine Days. Furthermore, if the price for the items will go up after Tisha B'Ab, then one may make the purchases during the Nine Days in order to avoid a financial loss.

It is forbidden to eat meat during the Nine Days. However, the custom in our community is to eat meat on Rosh Hodesh Ab, the first of the Nine Days.

Summary:

One may not have his home freshly papered or wallpapered during the Nine Days. It is preferable to avoid major purchases – such as the purchase of a car – during the Nine Days, as well as purchases for a bride and groom. However, if there may not be enough time before the wedding after Tisha B'Ab, or if the price will be higher after Tisha B'Ab, the one may make the purchases during the Nine Days. Meat is forbidden during the Nine Days, but the custom in our community is to eat meat on Rosh Hodesh Ab.



WEEKLY PARSHA OVERVIEW

Parshat Devarim

This Torah portion begins the last of the Five Books of The Torah, Sefer Devarim. This Book is also called Mishneh Torah, "Repetition of the Torah" (hence the Greek/English title "Deuteronomy"). Sefer Devarim relates what Moshe told the Jewish People during the last five weeks of his life, as they prepared to cross the Jordan River into the Land of Israel. Moshe reviews the mitzvahs with the people, stressing the change of lifestyle they are about to undergo – from the supernatural existence of the desert under Moshe's guidance, to the apparently natural life they will experience under Yehoshua's leader

ship in the Land. The central theme this week is the sin of the spies, the meraglim. This Torah portion opens with Moshe alluding to the sins of the previous generation who died in the desert. He describes what would have happened if they had not sinned by sending spies into Eretz Yisrael. Hashem would have given them, without a fight, all the land from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates, including the lands of Ammon, Moav and Edom. Moshe details the subtle sins that culminate in the sin of the spies, and reviews at length this incident and its results. The entire generation would die in the desert and Moshe would not enter

Eretz Yisrael. He reminds them that their immediate reaction to Hashem's decree was to want to "go up and fight" to redress the sin. He recounts how they would not listen when he told them not to go, and that they no longer merited vanquishing their enemies miraculously. They had ignored him and suffered a massive defeat. They were not allowed to fight with the kingdoms of Esav, Moav or Ammon. These lands were not to be part of the map of Eretz Yisrael in the meantime. When the conquest of Canaan will begin with Sichon and Og, it will be via natural warfare.

Rabbi Sinclair, Seasonsofthemoon.com



- Q**
1. How do we see from the beginning of Parshat Devarim that Moshe was concerned for the Jewish People's honour?
 2. How much time elapsed between leaving Mt. Sinai and sending the spies?
 3. Moshe rebuked the Jewish People shortly before his death. From whom did he learn this?
 4. Why did Moshe wait until he had smitten the Amorite kings before rebuking the Jewish People?
 5. What did Moshe convey to the Jewish People by saying: "You today are like the stars of the Heavens"?



- A**
1. Moshe mentions only the names of the places where the Jewish People sinned but does not mention the sins themselves.
 2. 40 days.
 3. From Yaakov, who rebuked his sons shortly before his death.
 4. So that no one could say, "What right has he to rebuke us; has he brought us into any part of the Land as he promised?"
 5. They are an eternal people, just as the sun, moon and stars are eternal



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