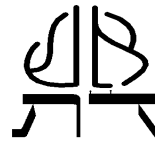


Toras



Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

Adapted by Dov Karoll with Avi Shmidman

"These are the devarim (words) that Moshe addressed to all Israel on the eastern side of the Jordan..." (Devarim 1:1). What are these "words"? What is their content? What is their nature?

Rashi (s.v. elleh), based on the Sifrei (Devarim 1 s.v. elleh), explains that this is rebuke, and the Sifrei cites a verse to this effect, "Yeshurun [Israel] grew fat and kicked..." (31:15). Rashi is looking ahead to the end of the book of Devarim by speaking of rebuke right at the beginning, while actually this is the subject of Parashat Ha'azinu. The Ramban (s.v. amar), on the other hand, explains that the "words" relate to the mitzvot that Moshe will explicate throughout the book of Devarim, starting with the Ten Commandments in chapter 5.

Regarding the significance of the phrase "To all Israel," Rashi and the Ramban again disagree, each one consistent with his position cited above. Rashi (s.v. el kol) explains, based on the continuation of the Sifrei (s.v. el kol), that the rebuke needed to take place in front of all Israel, because otherwise those who were not there would come with complaints: "Why did you not counter Moshe's words? Had I been there, I would have argued as follows..."

According to the Ramban, on the other hand, the need for all Israel to be assembled is a more fundamental one: given that Moshe's speech will involve a new acceptance of the Torah, this acceptance must take place before the entirety of the Jewish people.

Looking over the Sefer, we see that Parashat Devarim and the beginning of Va'etchanan contain much rebuke, as does most of Eikev. Re'eh, Shofetim and Ki Teitzei are full of mitzvot. Ki Tavo has both. Parts of Nitzavim and Vayeilekh are rebuke, and Parashat Ha'azinu is rebuke. In their interpretations of the

introduction to the Sefer, Rashi focuses on the element of rebuke and Ramban on the mitzvot. Clearly, each approach has significant basis in the Sefer, as both themes are prevalent. Apparently, two functions are being served simultaneously by these "words" that constitute the book of Devarim: rebuke and instruction.

Returning to the opening verse: "that Moshe spoke"—who is Moshe? What is his role? The verse refers to him here simply as "Moshe," but the Jewish people has come to refer to him as Moshe Rabbeinu, the teacher-instructor (mechanekeh) par excellence. He filled many roles as a teacher, as indicated by the Ramban in Parashat Yitro (Shemot 18:15, s.v. ki).

Regarding teaching, one can focus on the aspect of hora'a, instruction narrowly defined, the transmission of information and the imparting of knowledge. Alternatively, one can focus on chinukh, whole-person education, formation and development of character. Moshe Rabbeinu is filling two simultaneous roles, wearing two hats. These two aspects do not operate separately, but rather are mutual fructifying.

This dual role was fulfilled in an integrated way. The responsiveness to the call, the commitment necessary for each task, is interdependent.

On the one hand, before you can properly learn Torah, you need to have the basic commitment; you need a foundation in value and ethics. The Rambam highlights this notion in Hilkhot Talmud Torah:

"Words of Torah should be taught only to a student who is respectable and proper in action, or to a simple person. But if one encounters a person who is following an improper path, one should first restore him to the proper path, and only after assuring his restoration shall he be introduced to the beit midrash, study hall, and taught." (4:1)

The Rambam goes to an extreme in insisting on proper values as a prerequisite to the study of Torah; nevertheless, he highlights a very important point.

While the proper proportions of this balance may vary in different eras, one thing is clear: a student needs the basis of values before he can start learning Torah. You need to work on the basics of prayer before you can work the advanced dialectics of the Ketzot. We need to follow the example of the Jewish people at Sinai (based on Shemot 24:7), putting action ahead of study, "na'aseh" before "nishma."

On the other hand, learning Torah enables you to learn values, to accept rebuke and spiritual guidance. Torah is our treasure. "The Torah of God is perfect,

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in memory of
Avi David Guberman
Yartzeit is 6 Av
by Martin & Jean Guberman
May his neshama have an aliyah**

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renewing life; the teachings of God are enduring, making the simple wise" (Tehillim 19:8). Torah gives us the framework and basis, and develops the personality such that it can better respond to matters of ethics and values. The Gemara in Arakhin (16b) quotes two tannaim, one of whom (Rabbi Tarfon) states that nearly no one in his day is willing to accept rebuke, and another (Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya) who states that nearly no one in his day knows how to properly administer rebuke. This Gemara highlights that only someone with a firm basis in learning will be properly responsive to the constructive criticism of rebuke, of spiritual striving.

This development needs to take place in stages, with the two realms affecting each other in a dialectic manner. Each one constantly feeds off the other, and development in one area facilitates further development in the other.

Regarding the timing of Sefer Devarim: the Torah states, "And it was in the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, that Moshe addressed the children of Israel with the instructions that God had given him for them" (1:3). Rashi (s.v. vayhi), based on the Sifrei (Devarim 2, s.v. davar acher), explains that Moshe intentionally gave his rebuke proximate to his death, just as Ya'akov Avinu had done before him.

Why did Ya'akov Avinu delay his rebuke to Re'uven, Shim'on and Levi until just before his death? The Midrash provides us with Ya'akov's shocking answer: "Do you know why I did not rebuke you all these years? Because I did not want you to abandon me to follow my brother Esav." For our purposes, it is important to note that the Sifrei provides a very specific reason as to why this rebuke needed to wait for the end of Ya'akov's life, and it does not provide a general rule that rebuke should be saved until one is on his deathbed.

What about our case? Is there a particular explanation as to why Moshe Rabbeinu prefers to give his rebuke just before his passing? Based on what we have explained, it seems clear that there is indeed a reason. Can he rebuke the generation of the spies, the sinful generation that left Egypt and rejected the Land of Israel? It is precisely after Moshe Rabbeinu has toiled and invested in the upbringing of a new generation, tirelessly plowing, planting, and watering, bringing up children raised on his teachings and on his values, for an entire generation, that he can offer rebuke that will be heard.

Moshe can now exclaim, "I have plowed and I have planted, and now the time has come to harvest, to reap the fruits of my labor." This is the generation to whom he can finally give both rebuke and instruction. It is precisely at this point that they are ready to enter into a covenant on the contents, the mitzvot, as well as the values of the Torah, as we will see at the end of the sefer:

"You stand this day, all of you, before the Lord your God... all the men of Israel.... To enter into the covenant of the Lord your God, which the Lord your God is concluding with you today.... To the end that He may establish you this day as His people and be your God...." (29:9-12) [*This sicha was delivered on leil Shabbat, Parashat Devarim, 5763 (2003).*]

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

There are two important issues which must be studied when approaching this week's torah portion, the first theological and the second textual. The theological question strikes out at you from the first moment that you open this fifth Book of Deuteronomy: Moses is speaking with his voice to the people of Israel. Each of the other four Biblical books are written in the third person, in G-d's voice, as it were, recording the history, narrating the drama and commanding the laws. This fifth book is written in the first person.

Does this mean that the first four books are G-d's Bible and the fifth Moses' Bible? The fifteenth Century Spanish Biblical interpreter and faithful disciple of Maimonides, Don Isaac Abarbanel queries "whether Deuteronomy was given by G-d from heaven, containing words from the mouth of the Divine as the rest of the Torah, or whether Moses spoke this book by himself,... what he himself understood to be the intent of the Divine in his elucidation of the commandments, as the Biblical text states, 'And Moses began to elucidate this Torah' (Deuteronomy 1:5)." The Abarbanel concludes that whereas the first four Books of the Bible are G-d's words which G-d commanded to be written down by Moses, this fifth Book of the Bible is Moses' words, which G-d commanded to be written down by Moses.

In this manner, Deuteronomy has equal sanctity with the rest of the five Books, (Abarbanel, Introduction to Deuteronomy). Perhaps the Abarbanel is agreeing with a provocative interpretation to the verse, "Moses will speak, and the Lord will answer him with a voice" (Exodus 19:19), which I once heard in the name of the Kotzker Rebbe: What is the difference whether G-d speaks and Moses answers Amen, or Moses speaks and G-d answers Amen"?! But what is really the significance of writing as opposed to speaking?

The second issue is textual in nature. The Book of Deuteronomy is Moses' farewell speech, perhaps the longest speech in rhetorical history. This is not only because Moses does not wish to retire and leave center stage of Jewish history; Moses feels compelled to provide personal reflections on the significance of the commandments as well as his personal spin on many of the most tragic desert events.

Hence from the very beginning of Moses' monologue, the great prophet cites G-d's invitation to the Israelites to take over the land of Israel ("Behold, I have given this land before you; come and inherit the land which the Lord swore to your father's, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give to them and to their seed after them" Deuteronomy 1:8).

This would be the perfect introduction to a retelling of the sin of the scouts, the ten tribal princes whose evil report dissuaded the Israelites from attempting the conquest. And indeed, he does begin to recount, "But you all drew near to me and said, 'Let us send out men before us, and let them scout out the land and report to us on the matter...' (Deuteronomy 1:22). But this retelling comes fourteen verses after G-d's initial invitation' and these intervening fourteen verses are filled with what appears to be recriminations against a nation which Moses "is not able to carry (bear) alone;" a numerous people fraught with battles, burden and internal strife" who required a competent, committed and fair-minded judicial system at the helm (Deuteronomy 1:9-21). Only after this seemingly out-of-place and inappropriate excursus from the topic at hand, does Moses begin the request for a reconnaissance mission which ultimately turned courage into cowardice and desert dream into desert death. Why the excursus? How does it explain the failed mission?

From the very beginning of G-d's approach to Moses at the burning bush, Moses was a reluctant leader, attempting to demur from accepting the mantle of G-d's mission. The reason was clear: Moses called himself a Kvad peh, heavy of speech. I have previously explained this to mean, on the basis of an interpretation of the Ralbag, that Moses was not given to "light banter;" Moses was so immersed in the "heavy" issues of his "active intellect" as it made contact with the Active Intellect of the Divine in order to produce the Torah, that he had neither the patience nor the interest to convince an ungrateful and stiff-necked people to trust in G-d and

conquer the Promised Land. He was not cut out for arbitrating the petty disputes of a nation caught up with the blandishments and jealousies of a materialistic world. Moses spent so much time in the companionship of the Divine that he lost the will—and ability—to consort with regular humanity.

Moses knew himself. The verses leading up to the sin of the scouts are hardly an excuse. They explain his failure to give proper direction to the delegation of tribal princes, his inability to censure their report, his unwillingness to convince them of the critical significance of the conquest of the land. For him, to know that it was the Divine will was more than enough. He could not bear the burden, the rumblings and the grumblings, of a nation who was too removed from G-d to be able to follow Him blindly.

Back to theology. Maimonides explains that even at Mount Sinai, the entire nation only heard a sound emanating from the Divine, a Kol; each individual understood that sound in accordance with his specific and individual spiritual standing, with Moses having been the only one enough to "divine" the precise will of G-d within that sound, the words of the 10 commandments (Guide to the Perplexed, Part II, Chapter 32). So did Moses internalize the will of G-d and thereby produce the words of the four Books of the Bible. G-d's words internalized and written by Moses, the greatest prophet of all. Moses communicated with G-d. He did not speak much to people; he was, after all, a K'vad peh. And in general, one speaks for his/her generation, but one writes for the generations, for eternity. Moses did not speak successfully to his generation; but Moses did write, for us and for Jewish eternity.

However, the Book of Deuteronomy was an exception. Moses had a legacy to leave and an interpretation to give—and so this time he spoke to his people, telling them not G-d's words but his own words. When G-d commanded Moses to write down the words of this Book as well for all the generations, for all eternity, G-d was granting the Divine imprimature of Torah to Moses' Book of Deuteronomy—and making it His (G-d's) Book as well. Moses spoke and G-d answered Amen. © 2004 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

One of the advantages of writing a weekly D'var Torah is that others often share their thoughts about the Parsha. Besides increasing the amount of discussion on the Parsha, it affords me the opportunity to hear another's perspectives—including comments, suggestions and questions that warrant looking into.¹

¹ Comments and questions are always welcome at dkramer@compuserve.com.

Last year, on Shabbos Chazone (aka Parshas Devarim), Rabbi Noach Witty asked me about G-d's "hardening Sichon's spirit and strengthening his heart" (Devarim 2:30), thus preventing him from allowing the Nation of Israel to pass through his land to cross the Jordan River into the Promised Land. Instead, Sichon not only refused, but attacked us (in a war that—as a result of his refusal—was now inevitable), bringing about his defeat—and along with it having Israel take over his territory. This implies that had G-d not interfered with Sichon's free will, he would have let us travel through his country, and he would have stayed alive and in power. How could G-d "punish" Sichon for refusing to allow us through and attacking us if the choice to do so wasn't really his?

This problem is similar to one raised by the commentators (Shemos 7:3) regarding G-d "hardening Pharaoh's heart," thus preventing him from letting the people go. If Pharaoh would have otherwise let them leave, how could He have sent the plagues? Besides the issue of taking away the ability to choose between right and wrong, G-d being just demands that there be no bad consequences if no bad choices are made. If the choice to do bad (i.e. refusing to let the people go or to pass through the land) is not made (as the ability to choose was removed), how could Pharaoh or Sichon have suffered the consequences as if they had made that choice themselves?

However, the question would seem to be a much more difficult one by Sichon. As the commentators point out, Pharaoh had already made the choice to use the Children of Israel as slave laborers, and to treat them harshly. He had already refused to let the nation go (without G-d having to harden his heart) after the first five plagues, so it was only after the next four plagues—and by the decision to chase them after having let them go—that G-d interfered with his choices. And, under the duress of the plagues, it was only through G-d's hardening of his heart that Pharaoh could even entertain the notion of still defying Him; it could be considered a returning of his ability to choose rather than a removal of it! But even if it was an elimination of free will and not a rebalancing, with Pharaoh already having made choices that deserved harsh punishment, the removal itself was not the cause of the punishment, his previous choices were. Sichon, on the other hand, had not previously harmed Israel—if anything he had helped them by taking land from Amon and Moav that could otherwise not have eventually become part of Israel's. So how could he have suffered the consequences of a choice he never really made?

It is also puzzling that although many commentators discuss this issue vis-?-vis the removal of Pharaoh's free will, the overwhelming majority do not mention it regarding G-d having hardened Sichon's heart. Nevertheless, there are several that do.

The Rambam (Laws of Repentance 6:3) says that "it is possible that a man will do such a terrible sin,

or so many sins, to the point where the appropriate approach for the True Judge (i.e. G-d) to take with this sinner for these sins which were committed knowingly and by choice is to withhold [the possibility of] repentance from him, and he is not given permission to repent from his wickedness in order that he die and be destroyed for the sins which he committed." The Rambam then brings numerous scriptural proofs to this concept, and applies this to Pharaoh for choosing to conspire to kill the Jewish infants (etc.) and to Sichon for sins he had done (although no examples are given). Rabbeinu Bachya (Devarim 2:30) expands on this, adding that "since they (Pharaoh and Sichon) went against G-d and rebelled against Him, G-d strengthened their hearts so that even if they had wanted to change their ways they would not have been able to."

The Akaidas Yitzchok (Shemos, Gate #36) says that by separating the plagues and giving Pharaoh a respite in between them, G-d gave him the opportunity to choose to refuse to let His people go. Under the stress of the plagues he could not have done so, so G-d "hardened his heart," i.e. gave him the opportunity to choose otherwise, by creating a situation where the stress was (somewhat) relieved, and where Pharaoh mistakenly thought that the problems might have passed. Similarly, he continues, G-d purposely had the nation ask Edom permission to pass through their land—only to move on after being denied such permission—then ask Moav the same thing, only to keep moving after their refusal, and then do the same with Amon. By the time Moshe sent messengers to Sichon asking permission to pass through his land, Sichon thought that he could say no—even though he was not forced to say no. This was the "hardening of his spirit" that G-d caused; it was not the removal of free will, but the creation of a situation that led Sichon to believe saying no was a viable option. In the end, though, it was his choice to say no.

The Rokayach (Devarim 2:30) says that Sichon really wanted to deny Israel permission to cut through his land, but would not have been able to if not for G-d "hardening his spirit and strengthening his heart." It was therefore not a removal of his free will, but a return of his ability to do what he really wanted.

There might be another possibility as well. In Midrash Rabbah (Bamidbar 19:17) it says that G-d caused that Sichon be given over to us without any pain. It then elaborates: "Even if Cheshbon (the city that Sichon was in after conquering it from Moav) were full of mosquitoes (rather than warriors) no creature would have been able to conquer it (it was so well fortified). And even if Sichon was in a valley no creature would be able to rule over him (he was so strong); there's no need to mention [the difficulty being that] he was strong and was staying in a fortified city. Even if he and his armies were in his other cities (i.e. not Cheshbon) it would have been exhausting for (the Children of) Israel to conquer each city (individually). So G-d gathered [all

of] them before [Israel] in order to defeat them without pain. As it says (Devarim 2:31) 'see that I have begun to give [Sichon] over to you.' They killed all the warriors that came out to meet them (in war), and then they needed no effort to defeat the women and children (that were left behind in the cities)."

In other words, the "hardening of his spirit and strengthening of his heart" caused Sichon to be overconfident, and come after Israel even though he and his army were more vulnerable out in the open. Had Sichon been left to his own choices, he might have stayed back and lay in ambush. Giving permission to Israel to pass through his land wouldn't have avoided the war (whether because the land was part of the "Land of the Emori" promised to our forefathers or because Sichon would have attacked us anyway even if we were just passing through, with the permission being a ruse to have us let our guard down and walk into a trap). G-d's intervention with Sichon's decision-making process was therefore not the cause of his fate, only a cause for how his fate played out. Would he have been defeated in a bloody, tiring war fought in the streets of the cities, or quickly and easily on the outskirts of his land; this was the only thing affected by, and determined by G-d's "hardening his spirit." G-d preferred the latter, so caused him to come out to fight rather than stay home and fight.

If this is what was meant by G-d "hardening his heart and strengthening his spirit," it is no longer an issue of G-d removing Sichon's ability to choose between right and wrong, and might explain why most commentators do not treat it as such.

May this be the last time we must mourn for Jerusalem; the last time Shabbos Parshas Devarim is spent focused more on Chazone Yishayahu than the words Moshe said in Mishneh Torah. © 2004 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

The Book of Devarim begins with Moshe's reprimand of the Jewish people as he recalls the numerous places in the desert where they rebelled against God. This is a way of reminding them, as they merit entering the Promised Land, not to be spiritually complacent.

Rather than rebuke the Jews directly, Moshe softens his words by alluding to the locations where the rebellions took place, and does not mention them directly. For example, Moshe uses the phrase "ve-di zahav," which is a place that does not actually exist. But, as Rashi states, the words mean "an abundance of gold," referring to the gold the Jews took from Egypt from which the idolatrous Golden Calf was made. (Deuteronomy 1:1) This type of allusion is employed by Moshe so that each person be able to remember the tragedies in the desert in their own way.

Not coincidentally, the portion of Devarim is always read on the Shabbat prior to Tisha B'Av, the day commemorating the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem. On this occasion, a different device is used to trigger memory.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, of blessed memory, called this period avelut yeshana, the mourning over an event that occurred long ago. Some ritual mechanism was required to feel the intensity of this loss. Thus, the halakha mandates that as we move closer to Tisha B'Av, the mourning process becomes more and more extreme.

Hence, three weeks prior to Tisha B'Av, on Shivah Asar B'Tamuz, the day that the walls of Jerusalem were penetrated, we begin to mourn by restricting ourselves as we would when mourning during the year following a parent's death. And almost two weeks later, on the first day of the month of Av, a nine day period begins. This time is more restricted as we mourn the way we would during the first thirty days after a close relative's death. Finally, on Tisha B'Av, the mourning becomes strongest as we sit on low chairs and follow other restrictions that are kept during the shivah, the seven days of mourning immediately after the death of a loved one.

Note, how this process of mourning is the reverse of what Rav Soloveitchik calls avelut hadasha, recent mourning, the mourning after one has just experienced the loss of a close relative. There, the movement of restriction is from the more to the less intense. This, because the loss is often most powerfully felt when it occurs. With time, the mourning ritual becomes less restrictive, allowing the bereaved to gradually return to the everyday world.

The confluence of our portion with Tisha B'Av presents different conduits to remember the past. Sometimes, the goal is to soften the recall as occurs in our portion; and sometimes the goal is to find a ritual mechanism to take events of thousands of years ago, and make them come alive in the present. © 2004 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA

RABBI ARON TENDLER

Rabbi's Notebook

In last week's Parsha the tribes of Reuven and Gad asked permission to settle in the trans-Jordan lands of Sichon and Og. Moshe acquiesced on condition that they become the point guard in the campaign to occupy the Promised Land. Additionally, Moshe insisted that $\frac{1}{2}$ of the tribe of Menashe join them in settling the trans-Jordan lands.

In last week's Rabbi's Notebook I explained why Moshe insisted that the tribe of Menashe join the venture; however, I did not explain what was driving Gad and Reuven to make the request. What were their real motives for wanting to live apart from the rest of the Jewish people? What were their real motives for

wanting to be further from Jerusalem and the Bais Hamikdash (holy temple)? What were their real motives for wanting to live closer to the other nations? What were their real motives for wanting to be the first line of defense protecting Israel's eastern border?

It is true that they had large cattle holdings and the trans-Jordan lands would provide ample pasture for their herds; however, that was the rationalization not the real motive. What were their real motives?

Rav Dessler explained that free willed beings must always battle the bias they have in favor of things physical and desired. No matter how spiritually evolved a person might be, he or she will still be physically bound to their existence. From birth to death the physical connection is a reality that cannot be denied. It can be controlled and sublimated; it can be modified and restricted; it can be avoided and subjugated; however, it can never be eradicated. Only death can sever the innate bond between the body and soul, the physical and the spiritual. Even the greatest Tzadik (righteous individual) will retain what Rav Dessler calls "the shadow" of his physicality. That shadow is a reality that must be never be ignored or taken for granted.

What "shadow" possessed the tribes of Reuven and Gad motivating their request to settle the lands of Sichon and Og? Furthermore, in what way did their commitment to lead the Jewish forces into battle offset Moshe's concerns for their spiritual and physical safety?

Gad was a tribe of warriors and Reuven was a tribe that should have been kings.

Gad was blessed by Yakov that they would lead the Jewish people in the campaign to capture the Promised Land and that all their men would return home safely. (Ber. Rashi 49:19) Reuven was the first-born of Yakov who should have been king but wasn't. Yakov criticized his impetuosity while Moshe blessed his acceptance. For a variety of reasons it became clear that Reuven was not the best qualified to be king; instead, Yehuda and Yoseph each rose to that position. Yehuda (starting with King David) eventually became king of Israel forging the national government and building the Bais Hamikdash. Yoseph, on the other hand, was king when interfacing with the non-Jewish world in the environment of the non-Jewish world for the benefit and survival of the nation. Rather than resent Yoseph for his dreams of royalty or Yehuda for his divinely appointed destiny, Reuven accepted that he would merely be "numbered among the Jewish people." (Divarim 33:6)

I would like to suggest that the otherwise intended leadership of Reuven and the gifted fighting ability of Gad were the "shadowed motives" for their request to occupy the captured lands of Sichon and Og.

Gad was a tribe of gifted warriors; disciplined, courageous, able, and willing; however, more so than all those essential qualities, they were one of the tribes of the Bnai Yisroel. Gad, like all his brothers and the tribes they birthed, were first and foremost servants of G-d.

They believed in His primacy and the absolute control He maintained over the world.

In Uz Yashir (Song at the Sea) we sing, "G-d is the Man of War?" Everyone is familiar with the adage, "There are no atheists in fox-holes." In many regards, that may be among the truest statements ever made. Soldiers, old and young alike, have told me that in war everyone knows that G-d walks the battlefield. So many near misses and "almosts" occur that it is impossible to explain why this one died and that one lived. The finger of G-d points and the hand of G-d protects; nevertheless, the best armies must still train their men to produce the finest warriors.

Training is the effort we put forth within the context of our absolute faith and dependency on the "Man of War." Therein lays the "shadow" of Gad's secret motivation. It is very difficult to work at becoming the best and not take credit for the outcome. "My strength and the power of my efforts accomplished all this!" Gad's challenge was to see beyond the successes of war and acknowledge that it was all done by the grace of G-d.

The lands of Og and Sichon were symbolic as well as practical, especially the lands of Og. Rashi explained in last week's Parsha and in Bereshis that Og was a survivor of the Mabul (Great Flood). Og was 1000 plus years old and was prediluvian. He was the sole survivor of the Rephaim, an ancient pre-Mabul race of giants, and most likely the oldest living human. Og thought of himself as invincible, all-powerful, and immortal. In many regards he was the ultimate practitioner of "My strength and the power of my efforts accomplished all this!" Having witnessed and survived the destruction of the world, the war between the five and four kings, and countless other conflicts, Og believed he would live forever. Witness to the evolution and demise of innumerable religions and lifestyles, he was unpleasantly surprised to see the return of monotheism and the Jewish nation. Until they arrived at the borders of his land he believed that Judaism would also go the way of the world? rise, fall, and if remembered as a historical footnote. Instead, he had to contend with it being alive and well and knocking at his front door!

The death of Og by the hands of Moshe Rabbeinu established in the minds of all, including the Jews, that Hashem was truly "the Man Of War." By all natural accounts Og should have killed Moshe; instead, like Dovid and Goliath, Og was destroyed and the primacy of Hashem was established.

In the minds of Gad, occupying the lands of Og had a very special meaning. As they built their homes and farms, everyone would know that the demise of Og represented the death of his philosophy. However, in the depths of their heart, the tribe of Gad was actually attracted to Og's way of thinking. It was that slight shadow of self-assurance and righteous determination

that Moshe suspected, questioned, and then challenged.

Reuven's shadowed motivation was different. As the one who did not become King, Reuven exhibited laudable restraint and acceptance. He did not complain and he did not appear resentful; yet, in the depths of his heart he mourned the loss of his kingship. Upon arriving at the borders of the Promised Land Reuven realized that he wanted to be different and apart from the rest of the nation. He wanted the chance to justify the order of his birth.

Please understand that it is not for us to determine motives for the deeds of our forefathers. The generation that occupied the Promised Land merited doing so because they were the most deserving. By comparison, our levels of Emunah (belief) and Bitachon (trust) are but the faintest shadow of the profundity and depth of their faith. Yet, every mortal must acknowledge his own shadow. I believe that Gad and Reuven had theirs as well.

At the end of this week's Parsha, (3:16-22) Moshe sums up his succinct history of the desert years by charging Yehoshua to remember that it was G-d Who had vanquished the great kings Sichon and Og. Recounting the deal he had made with the two tribes of Reuven and Gad, Moshe reminded the nation that all of them would be confronted by the same shadowed challenge as had Reuven and Gad. Only by assuming the point position and leading the army into battle would Gad and Reuven see the folly of their true motives. Forced into the most dangerous and vulnerable position in each battle the great warriors of Gad and the determined leaders of Reuven would have to face their own shadows. To whom would they attribute the promised victories? Would they allow the shadow of self-congratulations and arrogance to mar the proof of G-d's mastery or would they dispel all shadows as they went to battle singing the praises of Hashem and His absolute mastery over all things?

(3:22) "You shall not fear them! G-d shall wage war for you!" © 2004 torah.org & Rabbi A. Tandler

BRIJNET/UNITED SYNAGOGUE - LONDON (O)

Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi Hershi Vogel, Ealing Synagogue

After Napoleon conquered the city of Acre in Northern Israel, he walked through the streets of the ancient seaport. His attention was caught by a group of people wailing bitterly. Incensed at the thought that perhaps they were heartbroken because of his conquest, Napoleon sent agents to investigate. His agents returned telling him that Jews were mourning. Indeed, their mourning was prompted by a conquest, but it was not Napoleon's victory that they were lamenting. It was the night of Tisha Beav, the ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av. They were mourning the

conquest of the Temple which occurred more the 1750 years previously on this date.

Napoleon was moved and said that any nation whose sense of history is so strong as to remember to the point of tears something that happened many years previously will live to see that history become present again.

Parshat Devarim is always read before the fast of Tisha Beav the day on which we commemorate the destruction of both Temples. More importantly, it is the day when we focus on building from those ruins, seeing that exile is not in itself an end, but a phase in the progress of mankind to its ultimate goal, the future redemption.

This Shabbat is called Shabbat Chazon, The Shabbat of Vision, referring to Isaiah's vision revealed in the Haftarah which we read this Shabbat. Isaiah's vision speaks of the retribution G-d will inflict on the Jewish people for their sins. Conversely, the name of this Shabbat has a positive connection. As Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev would say: On the Shabbat of vision, every Jew receives a vision of the third Temple.

Both interpretations relate to the fact that this Haftarah was instituted to be read before Tisha Beav which commemorates the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people.

How can these two seemingly opposite interpretations coexist? Our nation is prone to extremes. Whether we are at the highest peaks or the lowest depths, we simply are not ordinary. Our people, as a whole and as individuals, share a connection with the essence of G-d, which is not computable. It doesn't fit on a graph, defying all definitions and foreseeable determinations; making rules, rather than conforming to them. That essence was implanted in every one of us. Therefore we will be exceptional; at times sinking to the depths about which Isaiah spoke, and at times rising to the peaks that enable us to anticipate the revelations of the era of the Redemption.

What is most unique is that the two extremes are interrelated. The descent leads to the ascent. G-d structured the challenges of exile to compel us to express our deepest spiritual potential. And just as He presented us with these challenges, He gave us the ability to overcome them. © 2004 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

RABBI SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

On the language of our Sages, the book of Devarim is called "Mishneh Torah." Some commentaries translate this appellation as "the repetition of the Torah" (i.e., "mishneh" from the root "shnei" / "two"). They suggest that every halachah found in Devarim is stated, or at least alluded to, somewhere in the other books of the Torah. R' Naftali Zvi Yehuda Berlin z"l

(1817-1893; known as the "Netziv"; rabbi and rosh yeshiva of Volozhin) offers a different explanation:

"Mishneh" means "review," i.e., the main purpose of Sefer Devarim is to encourage us to delve deeply into, and review, the laws of the Torah. All of the mussar / rebuke found in this Book also boils down to this message: Accept upon yourselves the yoke of studying Torah in depth so that you do not deviate from its laws. True, many laws found in other Books are repeated in Devarim. The purpose of this repetition is to teach us to look beneath the surface of the verse. The peshat / "surface message" of the repeated pasuk or halachah was already learned elsewhere. Therefore, if you find a verse or law repeated, look deeper.

R' Berlin continues: The Midrash records that when Hashem appeared to Yehoshua, he found that prophet studying Mishneh Torah. This shows the importance of this Book. Similarly, when the Torah commands the king to write a Torah scroll for himself, the language it chooses is (Devarim 17:18), "He shall write for himself this Mishneh Torah." In fact, he is required to write the entire Torah, but the verse emphasizes writing this Book because of its important message. Indeed, our Sages teach that it is only this delving into the Torah, the essence of the Talmud, that serves as the covenant between Hashem and the Jewish People. (He'emek Davar, Intro. to Devarim)

"Eichah / How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels? Provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well known to your tribes, and I shall appoint them as your heads." (Devarim 1:12-13)

Why did each tribe have to have judges from among its own ranks? R' Yitzchak Shmelkes z"l (rabbi of Lvov, Galicia) explains as follows:

When Bnei Yisrael arrived at Har Sinai to receive the Torah, they were, in our Sages' words, "Like one man with one heart." However, that unity was short-lived. By the fortieth year in the desert, Moshe discerned a subtle divide developing between the tribes of Bnei Yisrael, a divide that eventually widened so much that it led to the destruction of the Bet Hamikdash.

As Tanach records, the disunity among Bnei Yisrael only got worse after they settled in Eretz Yisrael until eventually the kingdom split into two. And, still, the gulf between people widened until the Second Temple was destroyed, specifically as a result of mindless hatred. Only regarding the time of the geulah / redemption are we told (in the words of Yechezkel 37:16-17 & 22): Now you, son of man, take for yourself one wooden tablet and write upon it, "For Yehuda and Bnei Yisrael, his comrades," and take another wooden tablet and write upon it, "For Yosef, the wooden tablet of Ephraim, and all Bnei Yisrael, his comrades." And bring them close to yourself, one to the other, like a single wooden tablet, and they shall become one in your

hand... I shall make them into a single nation in the land upon Yisrael's hills, and a single king shall be for them all as a king; and they shall no longer be two nations, no longer divided into two kingdoms again.

R' Shmelkes concludes: In light of the contentious nature of the Jewish People, we can understand the lesson the Torah wants to impart when it uses sand as a metaphor to describe Bnei Yisrael. On the one hand, each grain of sand is free-standing. This represents a Jew's desire for independence from his fellow men. However, the grains of sand on the beach lie side-by-side peacefully; indeed, their strength and their ability to hold back the sea is found only when they lie side-by-side. (Bet Yitzchak Al Ha'Torah: Parashat Vayishlach)

"For judgment is G-d's." (1:17) R' Aharon Lewin z"l (rabbi of Rzesow, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes: There is an opinion in the Gemara (Sanhedrin 6a—note that the halachah does not follow this view) that a judge who brings about a compromise between the parties is sinning. That opinion is based on the verse in Tehilim (10:3), "A botzea praises himself that he blasphemes Hashem." Among its many other meanings, the word "botzea" means one who cuts in half, i.e., one who compromises. [The same verb refers to cutting in general, for example, slicing bread.]

Another opinion in the Gemara is that the verse is Tehilim is referring to Yehuda when he suggested selling his brother Yosef as a slave. Yehuda possessed the moral authority in the eyes of his brothers to give Yosef his freedom. Instead, Yehuda compromised; he did not allow Yosef to be killed, but he did not set him free either. By compromising, he caused a desecration of G-d's Name.

A third opinion says that this verse refers to one who steals wheat, grinds it up to make flour, kneads a dough and then separates challah from it. Such a person is a botzea, but he actually blasphemes G-d.

How so? R' Lewin explains: Mitzvot can generally be divided into one of two categories: those between man and his fellow, and those between man and G-d. There are those people who are exceedingly meticulous regarding the mitzvot between man and G-d, yet they neglect horribly those between man and man. About this the prophet spoke in the verse (Yishayah 66:3), "He slaughters an ox, he slays a man." Regarding the laws of shechitah, this person is extremely careful, but he has no qualms about hitting his fellow man. What is this person doing? He is compromising.

Such a person, says R' Lewin, is spiritually bankrupt. Just as a person who declares bankruptcy appeases his creditors with partial payments, so this person tries to appease G-d with partial mitzvah observance. But that is not what the Torah demands. Don't seek compromises. Observe the Torah fully. (Ha'drash Ve'ha'iyun)