

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

On 27 March 2012, to celebrate the diamond jubilee of the Queen, an ancient ceremony took place at Buckingham Palace. A number of institutions presented Loyal Addresses to the Queen, thanking her for her service to the nation. Among them was the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Its then president, Vivian Wineman, included in his speech the traditional Jewish blessing on such occasions. He wished her well "until a hundred and twenty."

The Queen was amused and looked quizzically at Prince Philip. Neither of them had heard the expression before. Later the Prince asked what it meant, and we explained. A hundred and twenty is stated as the outer limit of a normal human lifetime in Genesis 6:3. The number is especially associated with Moses, about whom the Torah says, "Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, yet his eyes were undimmed and his strength undiminished" (Deut. 34:7). Together with Abraham, a man of very different personality and circumstance, Moses is a model of how to age well. With the growth of human longevity, this has become a significant and challenging issue for many of us. How do you grow old yet stay young?

The most sustained research into this topic is the Grant Study, begun in 1938, which has tracked the lives of 268 Harvard students for almost eighty years, seeking to understand what characteristics -- from personality type to intelligence to health, habits and relationships -- contribute to human flourishing. For more than thirty years, the project was directed by George Vaillant, whose books *Aging Well* and *Triumphs of Experience* have explored this fascinating territory.

Among the many dimensions of successful aging, Vaillant identifies two that are particularly relevant in the case of Moses. The first is what he calls generativity, namely taking care of the next generation. (The concept of generativity is drawn from the work of Erik Erikson, who saw it -- and its opposite, stagnation -- as one of one of the eight developmental stages of life.) He quotes John Kotre who defines it as "to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self." In middle or later life, when we have established a career, a reputation, and a set of

relationships, we can either stagnate or decide to give back to others: to community, society and the next generation. Generativity is often marked by undertaking new projects, often voluntary ones, or by learning new skills. Its marks are openness and care.

The other relevant dimension is what Vaillant calls keeper of the meaning. By this he means the wisdom that comes with age, something that is often more valued by traditional societies than modern or postmodern ones. The "elders" mentioned in Tanakh are people valued for their experience. "Ask your father and he will tell you, your elders, and they will explain to you," says the Torah (Deut. 32:7). "Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?" says the book of Job (12:12).

Being a keeper of the meaning means handing on the values of the past to the future. Age brings the reflection and detachment that allows us to stand back and not be swept along by the mood of the moment or passing fashion or the madness of the crowd. We need that wisdom, especially in an age as fast-paced as ours where huge success can come to people still quite young. Examine the careers of recent iconic figures like Bill Gates, Larry Page, Sergey Brin and Mark Zuckerberg, and you will discover that at a certain point they turned to older mentors who helped steer them through the white-water rapids of their success. *Asei lekha rav*, "Acquire for yourself a teacher", remains essential advice. (Avot 1:6, 16)

What is striking about the book of Devarim, set entirely in the last month of Moses' life, is how it shows the aged but still passionate and driven leader, turning to the twin tasks of generativity and keeper of the meaning.

It would have been easy for him to retire into an inner world of reminiscence, recalling the achievements of an extraordinary life, chosen by G-d to be the person who led an entire people from slavery to freedom and to the brink of the Promised Land. Alternatively he could have brooded on his failures, above all the fact that he would never physically enter the land to which



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he had spent forty years leading the nation. There are people -- we have all surely met them -- who are haunted by the sense that they have not won the recognition they deserved or achieved the success of which they dreamed when they were young.

Moses did neither of those things. Instead in his last days he turned his attention to the next generation and embarked on a new role. No longer Moses the liberator and lawgiver, he took on the task for which he has become known to tradition: Moshe Rabbenu, "Moses our teacher." It was, in some ways, his greatest achievement.

He told the young Israelites who they were, where they had come from and what their destiny was. He gave them laws, and did so in a new way. No longer was the emphasis on the Divine encounter, as it had been in Vayikra, or on sacrifices as it was in Bamidbar, but rather on the laws in their social context. He spoke about justice, and care for the poor, and consideration for employees, and love for the stranger. He set out the fundamentals of Jewish faith in a more systematic way than in any other book of Tanakh. He told them of G-d's love for their ancestors, and urged them to reciprocate that love with all their heart, soul and might. He renewed the covenant, reminding the people of the blessings they would enjoy if they kept faith with G-d, and the curses that would befall them if they did not. He taught them the great song in Ha'azinu, and gave the tribes his death-bed blessing.

He showed them the meaning of generativity, leaving behind a legacy that would outlive him, and what it is to be a keeper of meaning, summoning all his wisdom to reflect on past and future, giving the young the gift of his long experience. By way of personal example, he showed them what it is to grow old while staying young.

At the very end of the book, we read that at the age of 120, Moses' "eye was undimmed and his natural energy was unabated" (Deut. 34:7). I used to think that these were simply two descriptions until I realised that the first was the explanation of the second. Moses' energy was unabated because his eye was undimmed, meaning that he never lost the idealism of his youth, his passion for justice and for the responsibilities of freedom.

It is all too easy to abandon your ideals when

you see how hard it is to change even the smallest part of the world, but when you do you become cynical, disillusioned, disheartened. That is a kind of spiritual death. The people who don't, who never give up, who "do not go gentle into that dark night," (the first line of Dylan Thomas' poem of that title) who still see a world of possibilities around them and encourage and empower those who come after them, keep their spiritual energy intact.

There are people who do their best work young. Felix Mendelssohn wrote the Octet at the age of 16, and the Incidental Music to a Midsummer Night's Dream a year later, the greatest pieces of music ever written by one so young. Orson Welles had already achieved greatness in theatre and radio when he made Citizen Kane, one of the most transformative films in the history of cinema, at the age of 26.

But there were many others who kept getting better the older they became. Mozart and Beethoven were both child prodigies, yet they wrote their greatest music in the last years of their life. Claude Monet painted his shimmering landscapes of water lilies in his garden in Giverny in his eighties. Verdi wrote Falstaff at the age of 85. Benjamin Franklin invented the bifocal lens at age 78. The architect Frank Lloyd Wright designed the Guggenheim Museum at 92. Michelangelo, Titian, Matisse and Picasso all remained creative into their ninth decade. Judith Kerr who came to Britain when Hitler came to power in 1933 and wrote the children's classic *The Tiger who came to Tea*, recently won her first literary award at the age of 93. David Galenson in his *Old Masters and Young Geniuses* argues that those who are conceptual innovators do their best work young, while experimental innovators, who learn by trial and error, get better with age.

There is something moving about seeing Moses, at almost 120, looking forward as well as back, sharing his wisdom with the young, teaching us that while the body may age, the spirit can stay young ad meah ve-esrim, until a hundred and twenty, if we keep our ideals, give back to the community, and share our wisdom with those who will come after us, inspiring them to continue what we could not complete. ©2016 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The bleakest fast of the Hebrew calendar is on the ninth of Av, Tisha B'Av, commemorating the destruction of both Temples in Jerusalem (in 586 BCE, and 70 CE). We begin preparing ourselves up to feel the enormity of the loss three weeks before, from the 17th of Tammuz, with a sunrise-to-sunset fast on the date the Roman armies breached the wall around Jerusalem. Then, from the 17th of Tamuz until Tisha B'Av, Jewish law ordains a moratorium on all group

festivities, with no haircuts, no shaving (although some may continue to shave until the beginning of Av) or listening to music.

The expressions of mourning grow in intensity with the start of Av, when we do not wear freshly laundered clothing (except for those garments which absorb perspiration), and do not eat meat or drink wine other than on the Sabbath. And then, on Tisha Be'av itself, we fast for 25 hours (from before sunset until the coming out of the stars the next night), sit on the ground or on a low stool as we read the Scroll of Lamentations in the evening and recite dirges until midday; we do not even refresh ourselves with the balming waters of Torah except for those passages which deal with the destruction or laws of mourning. The prohibitions of meat and wine, and even laundering garments, extend into mid-day of the 10th of Av, when the majority of the Second Temple was actually destroyed by Roman flames.

But what precisely is it that we are mourning when we beat our breasts and weep over the destruction of the Temple? It cannot be the loss of the mere buildings, no matter how grand. After all, the Jews had already rejected the massive Egyptian pyramids in favor of two modest tablets of engraved stone. It cannot even be the loss of our national sovereignty (which the loss of the Temples symbolized), because if so, then our fast would be on the anniversary of the removal of the Judean kings and the installation of a Roman governor in Jerusalem, which took place decades before.

And it certainly could not have been the loss of the sacrifices, which disappeared together with the Temple. Prayers and repentance seem to be a fine substitute for sacrifices, and there are statements in the Midrash and in Maimonides Guide for the Perplexed which suggest that they are even improvements over them. Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook maintains that in the Third Temple the only sacrifice will be the "meatless" meal offering.

So what is it about the loss of the Temple which engenders such national mourning?

I would submit that the Holy Temple was inextricably intertwined with our national mission: to be G-d's witnesses, and thereby serve as a light unto the nations, bringing humanity to the G-d of justice, morality and peace. Our prophets saw the Temple as the living example from which all nations could learn how to perfect society. With the loss of the Temple, we ceased to be "players" on the world stage; we lost the means by which our message was to be promulgated. And a world without compassionate righteousness and just morality – especially with the possibility of global nuclear destruction – is a world which cannot endure.

At the very dawn of Jewish history, when Abraham was elected by G-d, he was given a divine charge: "through you shall be blessed all the families of

the earth" (Genesis 12:3). The Lord then seals a covenant with him, (Gen. 15) guaranteeing that he will be the father of a great nation, even the father of a multitude of nations (which will all accept ethical monotheism). And then the sacred text explains why Abraham was elected: "Through [Abraham] shall be blessed all the nations of the earth; the reason that I have known, loved and designated (Abraham) is in order that he command... his household after him to guard the way of the Lord, to do compassionate righteousness and just morality..." (Gen. 18:18, 19).

This charge is repeated to Abraham after the binding of Isaac (Gen. 22:17, 18). In effect, the Bible is saying our mission can only be accomplished if we are willing to sacrifice the lives of our children for it, and it will disseminate to the world from "the mountain from whence the Lord will be revealed" (ibid 14). When Jacob leaves his ancestral home (fleeing Esau's wrath) and dreams his dream at Beth El, he envisions a ladder rooted in the earth and reaching up to the heavens – a veritable Holy Temple, Beit Hamikdash; "he is blessed that his seed shall spread out westward, eastward, northward and southward, and through him shall be blessed all the families of the earth." Jacob identifies the ladder as "the house of G-d, at the gates of the heavens," and Rashi, citing the talmudic sages, insists that the ladder extended to the Temple Mount (Gen. 28:12, 14, 17 and Rashi ad loc).

In the Book of Exodus, at the Song of the Sea, when the text describes the awe of the nations at G-d's wondrous miracles in freeing the enslaved from tyranny, the Israelites sing of being brought to and planted within the Temple Mount, when the Temple of the Lord will be prepared by divine hands, and the Lord will reign throughout the world (Exodus 15:17, 18). And when King Solomon dedicates the Temple in Jerusalem, he beseeches G-d to answer the prayers of the gentiles who shall come from far away "for Your name's sake," so that "all the nations of the earth may recognize Your name, as does Your nation Israel" (I Kings 8:41-43).

And, in order to close the circle, when we read the prophetic portion of Isaiah this Shabbat, who weepingly excoriates the Israelites for forgetting their ethical calling, for their treatment of rituals as substitutes for loving-kindness and justice and thereby their having to suffer the destruction of the Temple, he promises that in the future "Zion shall be redeemed by moral justice, and those who return to Zion shall practice compassionate righteousness" (Isaiah 1:27).

The second chapter of Isaiah, a continuation of the vision we have just cited (Isaiah 2:1), pictures the Temple exalted above the mountains, inspiring the nations to "beat their swords into plowshares, their spears into pruning hooks". Indeed, we yearn for our Temple, which will inspire the world to accept a G-d of love, morality, compassion and peace. ©2016 Ohr Torah

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RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

No matter how accurately facts are presented, the picture that they impart is incomplete if the element of perspective and background is not also present. The Torah reading of last week concluded the narrative of the creation of the Jewish people and of their special role in human history and civilization. This week we begin to study the final book of the Torah of Moshe.

This is the book of perspective, of the long view of events. It serves to help us place the facts of our story in proper order, for a clearer understanding. In his long oration before his death – which is what constitutes the bulk of this book of the Torah – Moshe analyzes the past story of G-d's relationship to his human creatures as well as indicating the future role of the Jewish people in history.

Just as a great portrait painting requires backdrop to truly capture the personality of the subject of the painting, so too, the story of a people requires a deeper understanding of its nature and history than can be provided by a mere presentation of dry facts alone. That is why this book of the Torah is so vital and necessary for any true appreciation of Judaism and of the Jewish people. One can say that this book is not only a “repetition” of the Torah – it is the Torah itself.

In this book of Dvarim, the Jewish people are revealed in all of their glory, as well as with their weaknesses and vulnerability. All of our foibles, of rebellion, backsliding, carping and complaining, are starkly revealed. Yet, the essential, unique traits of the Jewish people – their intellect and loyalty, tenaciousness and their desire for spiritual greatness – are also revealed and emphasized. The complexity of the Jewish character – both personal and national – is clearly outlined by Moshe in his final address to his beloved congregation.

He spares them no little criticism as he recounts the events that they brought upon themselves in their history, especially in their sojourn in the desert of Sinai. Nevertheless, his message is full of optimism regarding the eventual redemption and glory of Israel, the land and its people. He does not see the glass as being half-empty or half-full. He sees it merely as the container that holds the story of the Jewish people through the history of human civilization.

His optimism for the future is made more real and more likely by the cold realism of his description of the shortcomings of the past that so characterized the Jewish people that he led. The rabbis of the Talmud have taught us that Moshe was the “father” of prophets. He set the template for Jewish prophecy, which never spared the rod of criticism, while portraying the golden future that would surely come upon us. We should all

be able to recognize ourselves and our times in the book of Dvarim that we are commencing to read and study this week. ©2016 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Many events in the book of Bereishit (Genesis) repeat themselves in Devarim (Deuteronomy) with one major difference. Whereas Genesis is a narrative which focuses on individuals, Devarim focuses on the nations who have emerged from these individuals.

Consider for example the story in this week's portion of the children of Yaakov (Jacob), Am Yisrael, asking the children of Esav (Esau) for permission to go through their land on their way to Israel. It is a reversal of the story of the confrontation between Esav and Yaakov as found in the Genesis narrative.

In Bereishit Esau comes from the field tired and buys food from Yaakov. (Genesis 25:34) Here in Devarim, it is the Jews weary from years of wandering in the desert, who try to buy food and water from the children of Esav. (Devarim 2:6)

In Bereishit, Yaakov rejects traveling with Esav, but promises to rendezvous with him one day in Seir. That promise is never fulfilled in their lifetime. (Genesis 33:14) Yet, here in Devarim, the Israelites finally connect with the children of Esav in Seir, and are rejected. (Numbers 20:21; Devarim 2:8)

Note also the similarity in language. In preparation for his meeting with Esav, Jacob wrestles with a mysterious stranger and is struck in the hollow (kaf) of his thigh (Genesis 32:26). In Devarim, G-d tells the Jews not to antagonize the children of Esav, "For I shall not give you of their land, even the right to set foot (kaf) there." (Deuteronomy 2:5) Rabbi Yitzhak Twersky notes that the use of the uncommon term kaf in both places point; the reader to a similarity between these episodes.

Indeed, both stories also intersect in that they deal with fear. In Genesis it is Yaakov who is afraid before meeting Esav. In the words of the Torah, "Yaakov became very frightened." (Bereishit 32:8) Here, in Devarim it's the children of Esav who are frightened as the Israelites draw near. As the Torah states: "The Lord said to me (Moshe)...command the people saying 'you are passing through the boundary of your brothers, the children of Esav, who dwell in Seir; they will fear you.'" (Devarim 2:4, 5)

One can't help but note that the parallel stories in Devarim are often the reverse of the Bereishit narrative. Thus, events in Devarim could be viewed as

a corrective to what unfolded in Bereishit. A real appreciation of feeling the pain of another only comes when one feels that very pain. Perhaps Am Yisrael, the children of Yaakov, had to learn this lesson before entering the land of Israel. ©2011 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale.

RABBI MORDECHAI WEISS

Who Wrote Sefer Devarim?

I'm always baffled on the differences in style and content that appear in the book of Devarim in contrast to the preceding four books of our Torah. Any serious student of Torah would notice a host of variations between these texts and the obvious question is "Why?"

Let me explain. First the language is different. In Devarim, Moshe our teacher often speaks in the first person something that is not found in the first four books of the Torah. Second, there are blatant disparities when contrasting the book of Devarim to the preceding books. For example, the differences in the language of the Ten Commandments. The obvious inclusion of additional words in the text in Devarim as well as a host of laws which do not appear in the preceding books. The section dealing with the blessings and rebukes are markedly different. One can therefore ask the question as to why this discrepancy? Was this book written by someone else? Is it G-d driven as the other books or was it written by Moshe?

These questions are indeed the discussion of our sages as well.

When one reads the commandments of Shabbat as it appears in the book of Shmot and Devarim, two divergent languages appear; "Zachor" and "Shamor". Which one appeared on the Ten Commandments? Or did they both appear? Our Rabbis state that these two languages were said at one time, something that no human can achieve. So that each time the Decalogue appeared, the second language was also used.

But the questions still abound? What about all the other dissimilarities in the book of Devarim? The additional laws-the additional curses and blessings-how were they written? Were they written and given by G-D or was it Moshe's words?

Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky author of the book "Emes L'Yaakov" develops an interesting approach. He claims that there are times in the Torah that we see the word written in one way yet we read it in another way. Examples of this can be found in the portion of Ki Tavo, in which the Torah writes one language, yet we vocalize it very differently. This phenomenon is referred

to as the axiom of "Kri and Ktiv". He therefore posits the innovative notion that the differences between the text in Dvarim and the conflicting texts in the other sections of the Torah are just an example of this principle of "Kri and Ktiv", in which one time it appears as we should read it and the next time it appears as it is written or visa versa.

I believe that perhaps there is another explanation to these apparent differences.

In defining how the Torah was given to the Jewish people, the Bais Halevi states that on the original Decalogue were written the unwritten Torah as well (The Torah shbeal Peh). When the second set of tablets were given however, the Oral Torah was omitted. This omission made the Jewish people an integral part in the transmission of the Torah. Before they were outsiders looking at the text as it appeared in writing. Now that the Oral law was not written, the Jewish people were charged to be intimately involved in the transmission, and they became the conduit for the receiving and the transmission of the Oral Torah. They fundamentally became the unwritten law!

It is this line of reasoning that I believe explains the blatant disparities from the book of Deuteronomy to the other four preceding books. I would like to offer the theory that the book of Dvarim is the first example of the Oral law as interpreted by our teacher Moses. Its importance and value remains equal to the other books but it represents the beginnings of the elucidation and expounding of the preceding written Torah and the meanings of those words. In essence then, Moshe our teacher in the book of Devarim provided the first example of the exposition of the preceding books of the Torah; the "Torah Shbeal peh", the unwritten Torah. Using this reasoning we can easily explain the contrast in language, style and content of the book of Devarim when compared to the other books and arrive possibly at the conclusion that one book is an explanation of the others.

When I presented this theory to my esteemed colleague and Rabbi in West Hartford he commented that perhaps this is the intent of the words that appear at the beginning of Devarim that "Hoil Moshe beer et hatorah hazot", Moshe began to explain this Torah.

I believe it is! ©2009 Rabbi Mordechai Weiss - Rabbi Mordechai Weiss is the former Principal of the Bess and Paul Sigel Hebrew Academy of Greater Hartford and will be making Aliya this Summer. Any comments can be e-mailed to him at rvmordechai@aol.com

RABBI SHLOMO RESSLER

Weekly Dvar

In Parshat Devarim Moshe recounts placing "ministers over thousands, over hundreds, ministers over fifties, and ministers over tens..." (1:15) If there were leaders governing thousands and hundreds, isn't it obvious that they would govern fifties and tens? What

does the Torah add by including those specifications?

The Sforno says that there is an implied rebuke in the appointment of judges over Israel, because they could not stop bickering and arguing to the point that every group of ten needed its own personal judge. While the Sforno implies that each person was overly concerned with his own property, in order for an argument to reach the courts, there also needs to be a lack of communication and an inability to reconcile differences.

If needless hatred begins with a lack of communication, then increased communication can remove the hatred and divisions that remain between us. With proper communication, we can not only properly mourn the Temple's destruction, but we can also make our own best efforts to ensure that it is rebuilt. © 2016 Rabbi S. Ressler & LeLamed, Inc.

RABBI BENJAMIN YUDIN

TorahWeb

The Shabbos prior to Tisha B'Av derives its name from the haftorah, whereby Isaiah the prophet castigates Israel for its sins, and prepares us for the national day of mourning, reminding us why we lost the Bais Hamikdash. The Beis Hamikdash unified the Jewish nation. To begin with, the korbanos were for the nation. On a daily basis, the Korban Tamid, the one lamb brought in the morning and the one lamb brought in the afternoon, were on behalf of the entire populace. One Kurban Mussaf, additional offering was brought on behalf of the nation every Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh, and Yom Tov. Even the atonement for each individual on Yom Kippur came about through the representative of the people, the Kohein Gadol.

The Ramchal (Daas Tvunos 160) teaches that the kohein officiating at the Korban Tamid had the challenging job of getting into the mindset of representing and reflecting all of Klal Yisrael. Just as they were represented by the kohanim in their avodah (actual performance of the offerings), the leviim with their singing and music, and Israelites with their ma'amad prayers, the kohein channeled the unique requests as per the character traits of the multitudes of the nation and offered them to Hashem.

King David expressed it in Tehillim (122:2) "Built up Jerusalem is like a city that is united together". The mishna (Avos 5:5) teaches that no one complained that the accommodations were stressful and crowded for the three pilgrim festivals in Jerusalem. The Chasam Sofer understands this to mean, that it was most certainly stressful, but the higher cause and privilege of being in close proximity to the Beis Hamikdash, united the people, and thus no one complained.

Moreover, the Beis Hamikdash was the vehicle whereby the Jewish nation experienced Hashgacha Pratis (Divine providence) on an ongoing basis. The

above cited mishna enumerates 10 open miracles that occurred therein regularly showing His presence in their midst. Our observance of Tisha B'Av is a strong reminder of what we are missing today.

This Tisha B'Av is most unique. It is coming during the time of the unification for the Jewish people that we have not felt for a long time. I met two days ago with Mrs. Rachel Frankel, the mother of Naftali H.Y.D. After sharing with her our deepest personal sympathy and expressing condolences on behalf of our congregation and community in New Jersey, I told her of monies that were donated in memory of the three boys to be used at the discretion of the families. Her immediate response was to use the funds to further the feelings of achdus and closeness that presently envelopes the land. Mr. Shaar, the father of Gil'ad H.Y.D hoped that this incredible outpouring of prayer and concern on behalf of world Jewry could help stem the tide of assimilation and intermarriage in the United States.

The unity in Israel today is unfortunately being continued by the war in Gaza. If only the West Bank were being rocketed, one could imagine some responding by asking, "why are they living there?" But when rockets fly towards Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, and the airport, it most certainly unites all Israel in imo anochi b'tzarah, we are all in this together. In addition, approximately a half million Israelis have on their phones an app that apprises them of when a siren goes off anywhere in the country, creating Kol Yisrael areivim zeh l'zeh, an intense feeling of camaraderie and concern one for another.

Moreover, we too have witnessed to date incredible Hashgacha pratis.

1. The iron dome was out of commission one day last week for eight hours outside of Ashkelon, and during these eight hours not a single rocket came.
2. Last week, when over 1,400 rockets had been shot into Israel and but one casualty, then the Turkish Prime Minister said "It cannot be true". He doesn't realize (Tehillim 121:4), "Behold, He neither slumbers nor sleeps, the Guardian of Israel".
3. A soldier was shot last night and the bullet was intercepted by the hand grenade he was wearing, which miraculously did not explode, neither damaging him nor his fellow soldiers.

The lists of the miracles that we witness daily are manifold.

Tisha B'Av reminds us that unity and Hashgacha pratis is to come from a positive source, the Beis Hamikdash, and not unfortunately from the horror of kidnapping of innocent teenagers and miracles from the battle front. Going into this Tisha B'av we are cognizant of (Tehillim 116:3) "Distress and grief I find, and I invoke the name of Hashem". Our prayers and Kinos are in response to the fifty three families that to date have made the supreme sacrifice for Am Yisrael. Our war with Gaza is but a continuation of the tragic

circumstances that occur in the absence of the Third Beis Hamikdash.

The Gemara (Berachos 8a) teaches that since the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash, Hashem takes refuge in the study of Torah. I understand this to mean that just as the Beis Hamikdash unified our people, Torah also has ability to unite our people. Case in point, notes the Aruch Ha'Shulchan in his introduction to Choshen Mishpat, Jews all over the world keep the same Shabbos, use the same esrog, keep Kosher, laws of family purity, we are all united through the Torah.

As we prepare to sit low and fast this Tisha B'Av, and pine for the day that our unity will emanate from Tehillim (116:13) "The cup of salvations I will raise, and the name of Hashem I will invoke". I would like to suggest a few ways to perpetuate these remarkable feelings of unity, please G-d soon beyond the war. Firstly, take note: it is not Hillel, but Shamai who teaches (Avos 1:15) to greet everyone favorably, with a cheerful countenance. He does not mean only those in one's circle, who share your character and ideology, rather go out of your way to show kinship, respect and brotherhood to all. The Yerushalmi (Yuma 1) teaches that the destruction of the first Temple was but the roof of the building. The second Beis Hamikdash which was destroyed because of baseless and senseless hatred had its very foundation was destroyed. We need heavy doses of ahavas chinum, to love each and every Jew, because if we have one Father, then we really are brothers and sisters.

Secondly, don't just pray for our soldiers in Gaza, but get the name of a specific soldier, for when you focus on him among the rest, your prayer is more focused. May I suggest you keep Amatzya Chaim ben Chedva Malka who sustained serious injuries to his legs, and doctors hope he will walk in several weeks.

Finally, your acts of chessed, your prayers, your Torah study, are the parcels that we can send from abroad to the soldiers and the rest of Israel. ©2014 Rabbi B. Yudin and The TorahWeb Foundation, Inc.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

"The paths of Zion are in mourning, without anyone coming for the holidays" (Eichah 1:4).

The overwhelming majority of commentators understand this verse to be consistent with the verses that precede it and follow it, describing a facet of the tragedy that befell Jerusalem after its destruction. In this verse, the prophet laments the emptiness of the roads leading to Jerusalem, which are now desolate because after the Temple was destroyed, the throngs of people who had traveled on them to make the thrice yearly pilgrimage were no longer coming. The Targum, however (see also Palgei Mayim, the commentary of the N'sivos on Eichah), explains the verse's intent

differently. Rather than lamenting the roads now being empty, the cause of the destruction is being described; because the streets were empty while the Temple still stood, as people were not making the required pilgrimages to Jerusalem, the Temple was destroyed. Why does the Targum (and the N'sivos) explain this verse differently than the verses that surround it?

Another question posed (asked in Iyun HaParasha #113 and by Rabbi Yitzchok Sorotzkin, sh'lita, in Rinas Yitzchok) is how the Targum could say that the cause of the destruction of the First Temple was not going to the Jerusalem at the required times, if the cause of the destruction is said (Yuma 9b) to have been the major sins of idol worship, adultery and murder. Rather than the Temple being destroyed so that the streets would become desolate (as a punishment for not filling them when they should have), the streets being desolate was a consequence of the Temple being destroyed for other reasons (the three big sins). How can the Targum say the focal point is having deserted streets if it was not having the Temple anymore because G-d couldn't live among us and our sins?

Rabbi Sorotzkin answers this question by quoting Rabbi Eliyahu Lopian's explanation of what it means that "G-d is trustworthy, with no injustice" (D'varim 32:4). After all, what kind of praise is it to say that G-d doesn't do any injustice? However, if we contrast the consequences of a human court's decision, where judges do not (and cannot) take into account the impact it will have on others (such as family members), with the decrees issued by the heavenly court, where any "collateral damage" is calculated before a decree is issued, this is high praise indeed, as with G-d "there is no injustice" to anyone. There are no "innocent bystanders," as if they were really "innocent," G-d would not have allowed them to suffer. Applying this to our verse, the decree that the Temple should be destroyed was issued because of the idolatry, adultery and murder being committed, but since one of the consequences of the destruction was desolate streets, if such a consequence was not deserved, it wouldn't have been allowed to happen.

In this context, the verse can be said to be consistent with those that precede it and follow it, as it is describing the consequence of the destruction, with the Targum explaining how that consequence was allowed to have occurred. We would have to add that before the destruction the streets weren't completely "desolate" (or this wouldn't be a consequence of the destruction), they just weren't close to being as crowded as they should have been, since so many had shirked their responsibility to go to Jerusalem.

Rabbi Sorotzkin ends his piece with a question, based on Shir HaShirim Rabbah (8:11) saying that even after the destruction people still made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year. How can the

verse say that the streets of Zion became desolate after the destruction "without anyone coming on the holidays" if they still came after the Temple was destroyed? It should be noted that the Targum says explicitly that the roads to Jerusalem were desolate after the destruction, so it would be easy to say that it does not agree with Midrash Shir HaShirim's premise that it wasn't. Nevertheless, as stated above, the roads being empty after the destruction couldn't have been a consequence of the streets being empty before the destruction if there was no real difference and they were just as empty before and after. Rather, they were emptier than they should have been before the destruction, and even emptier after the destruction, even if there were still some making the pilgrimage. It could be therefore be argued that the streets would be considered desolate after the destruction even if a somewhat significant number of individuals still made the trip to Jerusalem for the holidays, since it couldn't compare with the number of people who did so before the destruction. But there's another possible way to answer the questions posed above.

Perhaps it is precisely because there were still those who made the trip to Jerusalem three times a year, even after the destruction, that the Targum avoids explaining this verse to be just referring to a consequence of the destruction, positioning it instead as a cause for the destruction. Which leaves us with the question of the dual causes, the three major sins and people not making the pilgrimage. However, multiple causes are not necessarily mutually exclusive (as Rabbi Sorotkin's answer demonstrates) and both could have been at least contributing factors to the destruction.

There are many reasons why traveling to Jerusalem several times a year is spiritually beneficial. It creates social peer pressure to do what's right, as everyone is gathering for religious purposes. It also brings about contact with individuals who can have a positive impact on us, whether it be righteous people who also traveled to Jerusalem, or the Kohanim we interact with when bringing our offerings in the Temple. The offerings themselves are designed to foster an



improved relationship with G-d, as well as demonstrating the value of the intellect over the mundane by subjugating something that shares our animalistic characteristics for a higher

purpose (see Ralbag's explanation of the purpose of bringing offerings, discussed when Noach brought his offerings after the flood, and in his concluding thoughts to Parashas Tzav). The bottom line is that making the thrice yearly trip helps us attain new spiritual heights, or at least maintain levels we had previously attained. It certainly helps prevent slipping to a lower level of spirituality. Just as someone who attends synagogue services on a regular basis has a much better chance of being, or becoming, more religious, so too did the regular trips to Jerusalem help raise the spiritual level of those who went. (Which then helped raise the level of the community as a whole, which then helped individuals continue to grow even more. And so the cycle continued, at least as long as the pilgrimages to Jerusalem were being made.)

It can therefore be suggested that had everyone made the thrice yearly trips to Jerusalem, they never would have sunk to a level whereby idolatry, adultery, and/or murder were committed, at least as pervasively. The Targum is pointing out that had the thrice-yearly trips to Jerusalem been made, the nation's level would not have sunk so low that these sins would become so rampant. It may have been the worshipping of idols, committing adultery and murdering others that brought about the decree that the Temple be destroyed, but avoiding the religious environment that could have prevented those sins from being committed started the process that allowed it to get to that point.

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SHLOMO KATZ

Hama'ayan

“Food you shall sell me for money as provisions, and I will eat; and you will give me water for money, and I shall drink -- only let me pass with my foot-goers. As the children of Esav who dwell in Se'ir did for me, and the Moabites who dwell in Ar...” (2:28-19)

R' Ovadiah of Bartenura z"l (15th century; Italy and Eretz Yisrael; author of the mishnah commentary known by his name) asks: In our verse, Moshe Rabbeinu says expressly that the Moabites provided food to Bnei Yisrael. Yet, we read later (23:5), "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter the congregation of Hashem, even their tenth generation shall not enter the congregation of Hashem, to eternity, because of the fact that they did not greet you with bread and water on the road when you were leaving Egypt"!

R' Ovadiah explains: The Moabites did sell food to Bnei Yisrael. However, the Moabites were our cousins, descendants of Lot, the nephew of Avraham Avinu. As such, they should have greeted us on the road with free food. Because of their lack of compassion for their own relatives, they are unfit to marry into the Jewish People. (Amar Naka) © 2014 S. Katz & torah.org