

Volume III Issue 19

Parashat Devarim

READ IT
UP 

THE LEARN IT UP NEWSLETTER

Read it Up

Moshe's Hidden Message

By Cody Hakimian

Parashat Devarim begins with a list of places where Moshe Rabbeinu spoke to *Am Israel*. Citing a Midrash, Rashi comments that these places, “*Mol-Suf*,” “*Lavan*,” and “*Di-Zahav*,” don’t actually exist. Rather, they allude to different episodes where *Am Israel* sinned in the desert. For example, “*Mol-Suf*” refers to *Am Israel*’s rebellion against Moshe when they reached *Yam Suf* (Red Sea) and complained, “Is it because there are no graves in Egypt [that you have taken us to die in the desert?]” (Exod. 14:11). “*Lavan*”, which in Hebrew means “white,” refers to the incident where *Am Israel* complained about the manna, and “*Di-Zahav*”, alludes to the sin of the Golden calf (*zahav* means “gold” in Hebrew).

Looking at the bigger picture, this was Moshe Rabbeinu’s final speech (and rebuke) to *Am Israel* before he passed away and *Am Israel* was to enter Israel. We see that even during his final reprimand of *Am Israel*, Moshe only chastised the nation discretely, by only alluding to the nation’s past sins, to make sure not to embarrass the nation or insult their dignity.

The Torah is teaching us to do the same! Occasionally, when we criticize another Jew, we do so without restraint, without showing any care for the feelings of the other Jew who erred. Moshe Rabbeinu is teaching us that regardless of who the sinner is, when offering criticism one must do so discretely and with respect, making sure not to offend their dignity.

It’s not a coincidence that the *parasha* immediately before Tisha B’Av conveys this message. One of the reasons the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed was because people were not treating each other with respect.

The Gemara (Gittin 56a), relates an incident which took place during the time of the second Beit Hamikdash, where this problem of disrespect between two fellow Jews reached its climax. A wealthy man planning a party sends an invitation to a friend of his named *Kamtza*. His messenger mistakenly delivers the invitation to a man named **Bar Kamtza**, an enemy of the wealthy man. When the host sees *Bar Kamtza* at his party, he demands that he leave immediately. *Bar Kamtza* begs the host to let him stay, even offering to pay for the whole banquet just to not be embarrassed, but the host has several guests throw him out.

Outraged and embarrassed, *Bar Kamtza* plots his revenge by going to the Roman authorities and slandering the Jews, giving the Romans false reports that the Jews were planning a revolt. This leads to the Romans starting a military campaign which leads to the destruction of the second Beit Hamikdash. The obvious question is: why did Hashem let the evil *Bar Kamtza*’s efforts succeed when he was willing to endanger his whole nation? The answer is because he was embarrassed greatly by a fellow Jew.

A similar situation occurred up when Bilam was being scolded by his donkey. Hashem killed the donkey, just to spare the evil and corrupt Bilam, a little bit of dignity and respect due to every human being.

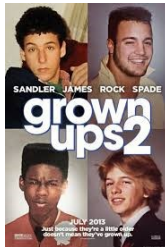
If Hashem afforded Bilam the wicked this much respect, how much more are we to give respect to each other? We must be especially careful to speak gently, with soft words and with respect when offering criticism. This is the key to correcting our mistake which led to the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash, and the long exile we still find ourselves in today.



Parasha Trivia!

1. *Moshe Rabbeinu* is seemingly the narrator of the Book of Devarim. Which of the following is true about *Moshe Rabbeinu*'s narrative in this book?

- a. In it, Moshe reminded the Jews of all the events that occurred in the desert, as a way of rebuke for all the times they angered God in the desert.
- b. By rebuking them, he was hoping they would learn from the sins of their parents, and not succumb to the influences and temptations of Canaan (Israel).
- c. He didn't explicitly rebuke them. Most of it was just hinted to in his retelling of the events.
- d. After *Moshe*'s speech, they all went to see the *Grown Ups 2* premier at midnight.
- e. Choices (a), (b), and (c).



2. What is the purpose of fasting on *Tisha B'av*? What is it supposed to accomplish?

- a. We fast because we all need to lose weight after all those engagement parties.

- b. Hashem wants us to suffer. It brings him pleasure, and it lets him to do his evil laugh "Mu-ha-ha-ha-haa!"
- c. We fast because, as Jews, we love money, and all these fast days save us a lot of money on food.
- d. It is supposed to make us think about the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*, and to contemplate why it was destroyed, and to repent.



3. On *Tisha B'av* we read the book of *Eichah* (Lamentations). Why?

- a. On *Tisha B'av* we are mourning the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*. In the Book of *Eicha*, Jeremiah the Prophet weeps and mourns as he describes the sad scene in Jerusalem after the destruction of the *Beit Hamikdash*.
- b. Bro, it's a sad day. No more jokes. The answer is (a).



Personality from Tanach

Jeremiah the Prophet

Jeremiah (pronounced *Yirmiyahu* in Hebrew) is considered the Prophet of Destruction, and is the name of a book in the *Neviim Acharonim* (Minor Prophets).

Brief Bio:

- Career as a prophet mostly involved rebuking the people and trying to get them to repent.
- After the Destruction, he willingly stays in Israel, instead of taking the king of Babylon's offer to be brought to and provided for in Babylonia

Famous Prophecies:

- Jeremiah 1 includes two of the most famous visions from the prophet. Both involve God imparting to him the coming of devastation to Israel.
 - ♦ In the first prophecy, Jeremiah sees an almond (*shaked*) staff. This is interpreted to mean that

God is *shoked* (watching) over His word (that Israel will be destroyed) to preform it.

- ♦ In the second prophecy, Jeremiah sees a boiling pot (*sir nafuach*) which is facing towards the North. This means that from the North the evil will come, which it in fact does.

Although Jeremiah is most known for the negative prophecies found in his book, there are also those which provide us hope. The most famous of them being God's remembering our faith in Him while following Him through the wilderness:

I remember for you the affection of your youth, the love of your betrothal; how you went after Me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel is the Lord's sacred portion, His first-fruits of the harvest; all that devour him shall be held guilty, evil shall come upon them, says the Lord (Jer. 2:2-3)



Questions? Comments? Ideas? Email us at MYCRiU@gmail.com



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