

# SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

DEBARIM

Haftarah: Yeshayahu 1:1-27  
JULY 20-21, 2018 9 AB 5778

**DEDICATION: Happy 103<sup>rd</sup> Birthday to Mr David Golden**

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## EDITORS NOTES

This Shabbat we read the perasha of Devarim. We always read Devarim before the fast of Tisha BeAv when we read the book of Eicha as written by the prophet Yirmiyahu. The Perasha contains a verse Eicha Esav Levadi which reminds us of Eicha as does the Haftara from Isaiah which contains the word Eicha. Rabbi Abittan once discussed with us that the word Eicha can have many meanings. Hashem asks Adam, "Where are you". We discussed often Ayeh Kah – where is the light of 25? But it can also be Ayeh Koh, where is the promise that hashem made to Abraham of Koh Yihiyeh Zaraecha, that your children will be as the stars of the heaven in number, in being above all and in being over the mazalot.

Whenever Tisha BeAb comes, we remember the exiles. The Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans and as our rabbis explained the fifth and final exile of Yishmael. Some interpret the clay in the iron feet within Daniels explanation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as a combination of Esav or Edom with Yishmael. The fear is when Esav goes and marries the daughter of Yishmael and they join forces against Jacob.

***The following story appeared recently in the Wall Street Journal. I think it's part of the Islamization of Europe. Not that Islam is taking over but that Islam is a force and power within the Continent and Europe.***

***Five years ago, police arrested a Frenchman in his 20s who had acquired fake identification and bought paramilitary-style clothing as part of a plan to join militants in Syria.***

***The suspect, whose first name is Nassim, was convicted of conspiracy to support a terrorist group, under laws that grant French authorities wide latitude to take extremists off the streets, according to his lawyer.***

***In the coming weeks, he is to be set free, among the first of hundreds of inmates radicalized during the war in Syria and the rise of Islamic State who will be released from French prisons before the end of next year.***

***With their release, French antiterror authorities are bracing for the resurgence of a security threat that had waned when they broke up Islamic State terror cells in Europe. To try to prevent potential attacks, French police are forming a new unit to monitor former inmates.***

***"We run a huge risk: seeing people leave prison at the end of their sentences who will not have reformed at all, who are potentially even more extreme as a result of their time inside," Paris prosecutor François Molins said on national television in May.***

***That group includes inmates finishing longer sentences who were convicted before the Syrian war, such as Djamel Beghal, who left prison on Monday. Mr. Beghal was handed his first terrorism-related conviction in 2001, another in 2013, and French magistrates said he was a mentor to two of the men who launched the 2015 Charlie Hebdo attacks***

Rabbi Beryl Wein often stated that the greatest fear we as Jews should have is when our enemies unite. We recall the Mufti visiting Hitler, Yimach Shemam and planning the end of Jews not only in Europe but in the near east as well. As Islam becomes part of the very fabric of Europe. She is Esav's Mahalat.

If we look at the Vilna Gaon's interpretation of this fifth exile, we see the fear is when the nations of Edom come together in unity and the nations of Yishmael come together in unity and then both of these forces join. And what happens below is happening with their angelic forces above.

We see Israel and the Jews under constant external pressure and when America and Europe jointly forge an alliance with Iran who openly states their desire for our destruction; when pressure is applied on Israel to give back land and make a dangerous peace, we are in trouble.

Then with everything proceeding day by day against us, someone threw in a wrench into the works. And this wrench messed up everything. This wrench broke long established alliances, changed the rules and caused what some see as chaos. But in doing all this, the wrench allowed us at least a momentary breather. I can see the angels in heaven scratching their heads and wondering what's going on.

People can complain about Trump. People can complain about his tariffs. People can complain about his tweets and if he meant would or wouldn't, but one thing is certain, he's hit reset. We can shudder at the meeting with Putin, but if anyone won at that meeting, it was Israel.

This year on tisha BeAb, we will not fast. This year on Tisha BeAb we will eat meat and drink wine and celebrate. In our synagogue we will celebrate the 103<sup>rd</sup> birthday, may Hashem bless him with 120 years of health and happiness, for our friend David Golden. It will be an unusual Tisha BeAb. And then on Sunday, we'll fast, but hopefully it will be the last fast and next year we will celebrate

### **From the Archives 5772 Mourning the Mikdash**

In all of our offices, for my entire life, there has always been one painting on the wall. It is the painting of a fine, distinguished and handsome man, my great grandfather Joseph A Bibi. I guess all our related family companies find their American origins in him, so it's fitting that his image graces the wall. What I never noticed until I walked by my dad's desk and checked the Yahrzeit (or as I was corrected by Dr. Stevan Dweck of California, a few weeks back, I should as a Sephardic Jew be using the term Mishmar) list a few moments ago was that my great grandfather passed away in 1927. I always imagined that my father who bears his grandfather's name had a relationship with the man, but I am not sure how much of a relationship they had in 2 ½ years. I do know that Joseph A Bibi was a world renowned Artisan who traveled the globe more than a century ago. He was a talmid hacham who studied the sodot of the Torah and as the patriarch of the family, who sacrificed so much and helped design his community, we owe him much. But when the 19th of Elul comes around each year, aside from giving a class in his memory and saying a hashkava or memorial prayer, I don't really mourn his passing. The picture makes me think of him more than any of my other great grandparents and the stories I heard give me a connection, but it's just a long distance connection. The Rabbis have a concept for this, it's called aveylut yeshana – "old" mourning.

Chas VeShalom – heaven forbid – when someone passes away and a relative mourns for them, we call this "new" mourning or aveylut chadasha. In halacha – Jewish Law – the closer one is to the tragedy the greater the level of mourning because we feel it. That person was here yesterday and now that person is gone. It's tangible. It's emotional. We have someone to mourn.

Hashem has created us so that over time following the loss of a loved one, we get over our mourning. We learn this from our forefather Yaakov's mourning for his son Joseph. Our Rabbis teach us that we can only begin to forget someone, and start to feel relief from the pain of mourning, after the person dies. Yaakov continued to mourn his son Joseph, for a full 22 years, because Yosef his son, was not dead.

When referring to the Churban – the destruction of the Temple – the Rabbis again use the term, "old" mourning. The fact is that the churban is difficult to relate to. The vast majority of us cannot begin to conceptualize the significance of the loss. We cannot imagine the enormous quantity of animals being slaughtered, cut and burned on the alter as smoke rose up. Even those who have gone through Daf Yomi and have at least briefly reviewed the Talmud cannot understand the Ketoret or incense offering. The fact is that the entire chapter of Jewish Law relating to the Temple is relatively unknown.

How does one mourn for that which one finds difficult to imagine? I see my great grandfather's picture every day. I knew who he was, where he was born, where he lived, what he did and how it relates to me and still I acknowledge his passing, but without tears.

How are we to cry over a building?

Clearly, a mourner is sad because he has experienced a loss. In order for one to mourn the loss of the Bet haMikdash, one must realize what has been lost and how it relates to him individually, to the Jews as a nation and to the entire world.

And although the Gemarah is Sukkah writes, "one who has not seen the Bet HaMikdash has never seen a majestic building", we are certainly not mourning the loss of a building, per se. In fact one of the reasons Hashem burned the stones of the Mikdash was to teach us that it's not about the cover, it's about what the cover encases and represents.

Pirkei Avot teaches that ten miracles were performed for our ancestors in the Bet HaMikdash:

1. No woman miscarried from the smell of sacrificial meat.
2. Sacrificial meat never spoiled.
3. No flies were present where they sacrificed animals.
4. The Kohen Gadol never had an emission on Yom Kippur.
5. The fire on the Alter was never extinguished by rain.
6. The pillar of smoke was never moved by the wind.
7. The Omer, the Two Breads and Lechem HaPanim (left in the Sanctuary for a week at a time, and eaten on the following Shabbat) were never found to be invalid.
8. The people would stand crowded but have room to bow down.
9. Snakes and scorpions never hurt people in Jerusalem.
10. No one ever said to his friend that there is no place for me to stay in Jerusalem.

Why are these so important? I believe that they show us that the Bet HaMikdash was the place where the Jew encountered Hashem. Imagine walking towards Jerusalem and seeing the Temple on the mount in the distance, knowing it was windy but seeing a column of smoke go straight without wavering. Then stepping into the gates and witnessing people from all walks of life looking to connect. Each of the miracles brought Hashem to life. Imagine being packed in and then seeing there was room for everyone to lay down. You were in a place beyond the constraints of time and space. Each miracle experienced, made Hashem's presence real. They say that the time spent in Hashem's house was one of heightened consciousness to the point that we encountered Him just by being there.

If you could meet anyone in history, who would that be? Choose anyone and I have a better choice, G-d! So we mourn the disconnection from Hashem.

And I think part of the problem is that so many of us only mourn the event once a year. We don't take to heart, "If I forget thee Jerusalem". It's a song and a statement before breaking a glass and celebrating. We don't feel ourselves break with that glass. We need to think of Jerusalem and mourn the loss each time we pray the Amidah in the blessings of Boneh Yerushalayim and Masmiach Keren Yeshuah. We need to feel a bit of pain every time we see the Kotel with a golden dome behind it. We need to say Tikun Chasot reading the words, "remember Hashem what we had ... our inheritance has passed to strangers, our house to foreigners ... we are orphans ... why do you abandon us ..." And if not Tikun Chasot at some

point in the day, stop and try to imagine what we had and what we lost and what we want.

Sadly too many of us who call for Mashiach would probably tell him upon his arrival, "wait we need to take care of things, give us some notice and come back when we are ready". We ignore the threats of our enemies which should prompt us to recall that we want and need Mashiach,

We must remind ourselves daily because by nature we forget.

Rabbi Abittan's z'sl teacher, Rav Soloveitchik explained that a mourner is enjoined from crying too much for his relative because, as the Rambam writes death is part of the natural course of events in this world. But the destruction of the Bet HaMikdash was an unnatural event. The Temple was much more than a physical structure. It symbolized the relationship between Hashem and the Jewish people. It was the focal point of spirituality in the world. When we mourn the loss of the Mikdash, we are not crying for the wood and the stones. We mourn the fact that we no longer see Hashem's presence as clearly in the world and that our relationship with Him is strained. We long for the day when the Jewish people will reunite with Hashem and feel his closeness once again. In other words, we hope for the day when the world will return to its natural state. That is why we are obligated to cry on Tisha B'Av (and commanded to remember our loss every day) and there is no limit to our mourning because the loss of the Bet HaMikdash is a reality we can never come to terms with.

Think about that, "the loss of the Bet HaMikdash is a reality we can never come to terms with".

We know that people are born and people die. We know we had ancestors, some we met, some we heard of and some who are both nameless and without story to us. We remember those we can, we respect them and mourn their loss.

But the loss of the Temple is not a loss of a building or even a relative. It's the loss of a connection. It's the loss of clarity. It's the loss of reality.

May we all merit to properly mourn the Bet HaMikdash each and every day and especially on Tisha BeAv and therefore be present to rejoice in its rebuilding.

Shabbat Shalom and East Fast

David Bibi

## Summary of the Perasha Nathan Dweck

Sefer Devarim takes place over the course of 36 days where Benei Israel is encamped outside Erets Israel awaiting to enter the land. While the general theme of the Sefer is that Moshe is rebuking Benei Israel before his death the Sefer seemingly can be divided into 3 parts. The first three parshiot (Devarim, Va'etchanan, Ekev) involve Moshe rebuking Benei Israel reminding them of all the sins they did in the Midbar (and warning them not to stray once they get into the land of Israel). The next 3 parshiot (Re'eh, Shoftim, Ki Teseh) deal with Mitzvot. The mitzvot are largely related to mitzvot Benei Israel will need in the land of Israel (i.e., mitzvot related to the land, to establishing a society and related to relationships between people). The last 5 parshiot deal with Moshe saying goodbye before his death. Ki Tavo and Nitsavim generally deal with Benei Israel renewing their covenant with Hashem (seemingly to strengthen our commitment to Hashem considering Moshe will no longer be with them) and in Va'yelech, Ha'azinu, and Ve'zoat Ha'beracha, respectively, Moshe says goodbye, gives Benei Israel a prophecy of what will be in the future and blesses Benei Israel. The Sefer sadly ends with the death of Moshe. The books of Neviim continues on to tell the story of Benei Israel's journey in conquering the land of Israel under the leadership of Yehoshua.

### **Devarim- Moshe rebukes Benei Israel recounting the sin of the spies and their stay in the midbar as a result**

- 1- Moshe begins to indirectly rebuke Benei Israel before his death recounting the various places where Benei Israel sinned
- 2- Moshe recounts the appointing of judges and how they left Sinai poised to enter Israel
- 3- Moshe recounts the sin of the spies
- 4- Moshe recounts how they were forced to turn back into the midbar as a result of this sin
- 5- Moshe recounts when, in the 40th yr, Hashem told them to turn northward passing Seir and Moav towards the land of Sichon as they stopped circling and began back on their path towards Israel.
- 6- Moshe recounts how they conquered the lands of Sichon and Og on the way to Israel. And how Reuben, Gad and part of Menashe inherited this land.
- 7- Moshe recounts how he commanded Reuben and Gad to come conquer the land of Israel.

Le'refua shelema Elisheva bat Esther and Eliyahu ben Yvonne Chava

## FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

### **“She weeps bitterly in the night, and her tear is on her cheek.” (Eichah 1:2)**

Immediately following the destruction of Jerusalem, the great philosopher Plato came to visit the ruins of the Temple. While inspecting the ruins he noted a man crying bitterly. He walked over to the man and asked him who he was. “I’m Jeremiah, the prophet of the Jews.” Plato couldn’t believe what he heard. “Jeremiah, your wisdom is known throughout the world. I must ask you two questions. Firstly, how could you cry over stones and mortar? Second, why do you cry over something which has already happened?”

Jeremiah looked the man squarely in the eye and said, “Plato, wisest of men, are there any philosophical puzzles you haven’t answered?” Plato asked his most difficult questions to Jeremiah and the prophet answered them immediately. Jeremiah then said to the astonished Plato, “All this wisdom has come from these bricks and mortar. As for your second question, I’m afraid there is no way for you to comprehend this.” (Rama, Quoted from Lev Eliyahu vol. I pg. 29)

The Rambam tells us regarding the redemption that there are two obligations: We must believe in its coming and await its arrival. What is the difference between these two things? The Hazon Ish writes that there are two concepts, emunah and bitahon (belief and faith). The Hazon Ish says that these two are the same thing, but emunah is the theory and bitahon is the practice. A man can be a great philosopher about G-d but not put it into practice. It’s all theory. The same is true here. Believing is the philosophy of the geulah, awaiting it is the practical reality. To cry is not to analyze or contemplate, to philosophize or to interpret. To cry is to feel. To shed a tear is practical. Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

“Enough of your circling this mountain; turn yourselves northward.” (Debarim 2:3)

On the simple level, this pasuk is relating the instructions Hashem gave the nation regarding their travels in the desert. However the Keli Yakar explains that it is teaching a critical lesson for all generations. As long as the Jewish nation is circling, meaning that they are wandering from place to place due to the fact that they are still in exile, they should make themselves tzafun (hidden). The nations of Esav and Yishmael harbor a tremendous amount of jealousy towards us. Therefore, when a Jewish person is successful, he should not display it in the eyes of the other nations, so as not to arouse their bad feelings toward us. The Keli Yakar then adds, “This is the opposite of what the Jewish people are

doing in this generation (over 400 years ago!). If someone has one manah (a small amount of money), he wears fancy clothing and builds palatial homes as if he were very wealthy, causing resentment among the goyim. This is a cause for all of the suffering and oppression that we have experienced. The wise will take note and amend their ways."

We all interact with non-Jews in our daily lives. It's obvious that we should not try to give them the impression that we feel superior to them in any way. Rather, we should always be courteous and friendly, and be careful to treat them with respect. In this way, their resentment that may lie beneath the surface will not be aroused, and we will sanctify Hashem's name by displaying ourselves as an honorable and respectable people. Let's work on glorifying the Jewish nation in the eyes of the world and through that, we will merit to see the rebuilding of the Bet Hamikdash very soon. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

### Looks Like Trouble

"How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens and your quarrels?" (Debarim 1:12)

The Midrash in Eichah distinguishes the context of Moshe's use of the word "eichah" from the ways in which Yeshayahu and Yirmiyahu the prophets used the same word. Moshe was lamenting his obligation to deal personally with B'nei Yisrael's petty complaints. On the other hand, Yeshayahu lamented Israel's unfaithfulness to Hashem. "How (eichah) had the faithful city become like a harlot," he cried out. Yirmiyahu, who saw their humiliation and destruction, cried out, "Eichah yashbah badad - Alas, she (Israel) sits in solitude." The commentators differentiate among these three eichahs as referring to distinct stages of Klal Yisrael's iniquity.

Harav Ze'ev Weinberger adds an interesting thought. The three laments focus upon when the people realized that Israel was in "trouble." Yirmiyahu acknowledged it only when he saw the actual destruction. Yeshayahu was able to recognize the dangerous route on which they were traveling much earlier. He noted when B'nei Yisrael acted like a harlot, when they sought the approval of the gentile nations who surrounded them. Indeed, when they wanted to be like the pagans, then Yeshayahu grieved. He saw where the gradual assimilation was heading. One cannot be a Jew and act and live like a gentile. One cannot have one foot in shul and the other in a pagan house of worship.

It was Moshe Rabenu, the father of all prophets who predicted the downfall. As soon as the people clamored for intermediaries, officers for tens and officers for hundreds and thousands, he sensed a slow departure from tradition. He knew what had motivated their request. He saw the beginning of a

digression which would ultimately lead to the destruction of the Bet HaMikdash.

It is important to note every change in our own behavior and attitude. The slightest deviation from the path of truth results in an insurmountable chasm that will ultimately devastate our spiritual well-being. (Peninim on the Torah)

### Listener

Speech, which differentiates man from all other creatures, is very often taken for granted, and abused. It's so easy to talk, so natural, that we give it little thought. Consequently, almost all of us say some pretty foolish things during the course of a day. And sometimes we get so caught up in trying to express our own thoughts that we don't listen to what others are saying.

The trick to being a good talker is to learn how to be a good listener. Everyone works at teaching children to talk, but you have to search far and wide to find someone who spends any time at all teaching their children the art of listening.

To improve your ability to listen, try these exercises:

- 1) Don't finish other people's sentences for them. It is written (Abot 5:7), "A wise person...does not interrupt his friend..."
- 2) Don't answer until you have heard the complete question.
- 3) Don't pre-judge a conversation. Don't jump to conclusions about its outcome before even having the conversation.
- 4) Listen to your children carefully. Count to six before answering them.

Everyone agrees that you should look before you leap. It is just as important to think before you speak! (One Minute With Yourself - Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

### The Four Seasons

"Wool has kinky hairs that trap the air so that it serves as an insulator to keep in the body heat. Thus, wool is especially suitable for keeping people warm when the weather is cold. The sheep doesn't know there are seasons. Hashem knows, and He has designed clothing that are appropriate to man's needs in each season."

In each season, Hashem provides mankind with clothing to wear to keep us comfortable. In addition, He has given us the holy Torah with instructions to maintain our spiritual comfort throughout the year. (By Norman D. Levy, based on Rabbi Miller's Duties of the Mind)

**RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

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Completing the Divine Name**

The Hachamim were very particular in the way they scheduled the weekly Torah readings, ensuring that each week's reading would be relevant to that season. There is always some connection – either obvious or subtle – between the weekly Parasha and the time of year when it is read.

Each and every year, we begin the Book of Devarim on the Shabbat before Tisha B'Ab, during the period of mourning for the destruction of the Bet Ha'mikdash. Undoubtedly, some connection exists between this transition from Bamidbar to Debarim, and the period of mourning for the Temple.

Our Sages teach us that while we are in exile, the Name of G-d is not complete. The final verse of Tehillim states, "Kol Ha'neshama Tehalel Y-H" (literally, "Every soul shall praise G-d"). The word "Neshama" is related to the word "Shama," which means "desolate," and it thus alludes to our period of exile, when the Mikdash lay in ruins. The verse tells us that during this period of "Neshama," of destruction and desolation, "Tehalel Y-H" – we can only praise "Y-H," the first two letters of the divine Name of "Y-H-V-H." In the times of Mashiah, the final two letters – "Vav" and "Heh" – will be added to the "Yod" and "Heh" to complete the divine Name. This is what we pray for in the Kaddish prayer, when we say, "Yeheh Shemeh Rabba." The word "Shemeh" means "Shem Y-H," and we pray that this Name shall be made "Rabba" – great, or complete, with the arrival of our final redemption.

In truth, the divine Name has five letters, not four. The Sages teach us that the letter "Yod," with which this Name begins, is written in the Torah scroll with a decorative "crown," which may be perceived as an independent letter. And thus the divine Name of "Y-H-V-H" may be viewed as a five-letter Name. These five letters correspond to the five books of the Torah. Bereshit corresponds to the "crown" of the "Yod"; Shemot parallels the letter "Yod" itself; Vayikra represents the first "Heh"; Bamidbar symbolizes the "Vav"; and the final book, Debarim, is associated with the fifth and final letter, the second "Heh."

The reading of Sefer Debarim, then, expresses our hopes for the completion of the divine Name. This book represents the final letter of

Y-H-V-H, and thus symbolizes our longing for the Messianic Era, when G-d's Name will be complete, when Y-H will be transformed into Y-H-V-H.

Moshe Rabbenu himself alludes to this concept in the beginning of Parashat Debarim, when he recalls how close Beneh Yisrael were to the Land of Israel, noting, "Ahad Assar Yom Me'Horeb...Ad Kadesh" ("It is a mere eleven-day journey from Horeb [Sinai]...until Kadesh"). The deeper meaning of this verse is that the path from "Horeb" – referring to the state of "Hurban" ("destruction") – to "Kadesh" – referring to Kedusha, the period of Mashiah – is through the number 11, the combined numerical value of the "Vav" (6) and "Heh" (5). We achieve redemption by bringing these two letters back to "Y-H" to form the complete Name of Hashem.

This is why we always begin the Book of Debarim at this time, when we mourn the destruction of the Mikdash, as it expresses our fervent hope for the end of the exile and the arrival of Mashiah, which will occur with the completion of the divine Name, symbolized by the reading of the Book of Debarim. How do we bring back these two letters in order to achieve our final redemption?

The "Vav" is represented by the six books of the Mishna, and the "Heh" symbolizes the five books of the Humash. And thus the way we restore the missing letters is through our Torah study, by devoting time to learning the holy words of the Humash and the Talmud. This is the way we "rescue" the missing letters of "Vav" and "Heh" and bring them back to combine with the half-Name of Y-H, thereby bringing Mashiah and our final redemption, speedily and in our days, Amen.

**VICTOR BIBI  
SOD HAPARASHA**

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**Rabbi Wein****THE ABSENCE OF CIVILITY**

There was a time, well within recorded memory, when political differences and legislative proposals that people had could be discussed and decided with a modicum of civility and even courtesy. That seems not to be true anywhere in the world any longer. Here in Israel we are accustomed to bitter politics and a great deal of personal venom. Yet, somehow this pales in comparison with the current political climate in the United States.

The catalyst for all of this has been the election of Donald Trump as president. However the underpinnings of hate and vitriol all have been in the making for many decades. Fueled by ideology and the certainty of beliefs, encouraged by people who make a living out of rabble rousing, this situation approaches a dangerous one. Violence is never far from the surface and in the society where there are more guns than people, the domestic situation can readily deteriorate.

American democracy has been the strongest form of democracy in world history. However, the United States once fought a bitter and protracted civil war that killed over 600,000 of its citizens. As President Lincoln himself put it in his remarkable second inaugural address: "Both sides prayed to the same God for victory and each was convinced of the righteousness of its cause." The same can be said of much of the political dispute currently wracking the American public. And, what happens in the United States has consequences here in Israel as well.

The great Rabbi Naphtali Zvi Yehuda Berlin in the introduction to his commentary to the Torah points out that the basis for the destruction of the Second Temple was the baseless hatred that existed between scholars and different sections of the Jewish people at that time. He points out that the underlying cause for this baseless hatred was the inability to discuss and disagree on issues in Jewish life in a sensible and civil manner.

Rather, the contending parties resorted to name-calling and even demonization of their ideological opponents. Those that disagreed with one side were immediately labeled by them as heretics and nonbelievers. Such an attitude inevitably leads to personal and eventually baseless hatred. This was the main reason why the Jews were unable to successfully resist the Romans. The Temple was destroyed and our long exile amongst the nations of the world began.

The lack of civility in public discourse, the personalization of disagreements with others and vehemence of partisanship over all else creates a society consumed by hatred of others that will eventually morph into self-hatred as well. The hallmark of all totalitarian states is the demonization and eventual destruction of all those that do not agree with the stated policies and worldview of the state itself. One need only view the wreckage of the 20th century and its wars of extermination in order to realize the danger that begins with the lack of civility in political and even religious issues and discussions.

Our religious world suffers from these deficiencies in a very intense manner. One of the hallmarks of the great men of the Mishnah and the Talmud was how they tolerated each other personally even though they may have strongly disagreed on matters of law and principle.

Shamai and Hillel disagreed on three matters of Jewish law. Their disciples in later generations disagreed on 312 matters of Jewish law. Yet we are told that in spite of these strongly held views and disagreements both groups tolerated each other and were willing to hear and sometimes even adopt their opponents' viewpoint.

It is this nobility of spirit and selflessness that allows these two groups to march in unison throughout Jewish history till this very day. Politicians and communal leaders make their living off of the differences – many times minor ones – that exist between groups in society. It is those differences that justify their presence in leadership positions. However, for the good of the society similarities should be emphasized and differences minimized and managed.

When the sole purpose of remaining in power is paramount then differences are not only pointed out and sometimes even manufactured, these differences very soon sink to the level of incivility. From there it is a very short road to bitter dispute, demonization of the others and even to violence and the shredding of the fabric of the very society that these types of leaders claim to guide and protect.

**Rabbi Yosef Farhi**  
**JUST ONE MORE PRAYER**

A central theme of our daily prayers is the Final Redemption. Eight Berachot, three times a day, revolve around this subject. Reeh Nah, Teka B'shofar, Hashiva Shoftenu, Laminim Valamalshinim, Al Hatzadikim, Tishkon Betoch, Et Tzemach and Retzeh. We implore G-d for mercy on Jerusalem

each time we have a sandwich or doughnut, in the grace after the meal, and we even stress our agony over the loss of Jerusalem in Birkat Hamazon on Shabbat, despite the tranquility that Shabbat requires. Ignoring Jerusalem, the Temple, or the Mashiach is ignoring a central part of the prayers and a major theme of Judaism.

When Mashiach comes, and the Temple will be rebuilt, not everyone will be allowed inside. Only those whose thoughts were centered around Jerusalem, those who mourned, get an entrance pass. The first thing upon approaching the Heavenly Court each Jew is asked, Did you anticipate the Final Redemption? If not, you cannot get into Paradise. Why are our prayers and anticipation of the rebuilding of the Temple so central in Judaism? The answer is that each prayer, of each person, is another step closer to the way things are meant to be. A King without a castle, a King without a throne, is a King with a kingdom that is incomplete. As dedicated and loyal servants to G-d, this should be unsettling. The job of the Jew in this world is to build that kingdom of G-d. How? Just by sincerely asking G-d to allow the Final Redemption to happen. Each time we say Amen Yehei Shemei Rabba, May the Great Name of G-d be blessed forever and ever, we are pledging allegiance to that Kingdom. And each time we say those words by Kaddish in synagogue, G-d cries and wails, "Woe is to Me, that I allowed the gentiles to destroy the Temple, and exiled My Nation from the Land."

We do not have the Temple, we do not have Mashiach – for one of two reasons. Either because we don't really want the Final Redemption, or because we do not believe that our prayers can make it happen. Noach was held responsible for the Flood, (the "flood of Noah") because he did not pray to G-d to annul the decree. Why did he not pray? Because he did not believe that his prayers would have any effect. And, our Rabbis teach us, that every generation in which the Temple was not rebuilt is considered a generation in which the Temple was destroyed. We are held responsible. If we pray for the Mashiah, with the belief that our prayers can bring him faster, and because we really want the Final Redemption, it will happen! Any minute. Especially during these three weeks, let us at least try to have more concentration when we pray for Jerusalem

### Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks The Effective Critic

The first verse of Devarim, the fifth and culminating book of the Torah, sounds prosaic. "These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan—in the wilderness, on the plain opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Di-zahav." There is no hint of drama in these words. But the sages of the Talmud found one, and it is life-changing.

What is odd in the verse is the last place-name: Di-zahav. What and where is this place? It hasn't been mentioned before, nor is it mentioned again anywhere else in Tanakh. But the name is tantalizing. It seems to mean, "Enough gold." Gold is certainly something we have heard about before. It was the metal of which the calf was made while Moses was on the mountain receiving the Torah from God. This was one of the great sins of the wilderness years. Might the enigmatic mention of a place called "Enough gold" have something to do with it?

From these clues and cues, the sages inferred a remarkable drama. This is what they said:

Moses spoke audaciously [hiti'ach devarim] towards Heaven . . . The school of R. Jannai learned this from the words Di-zahav. What do these words mean? They said in the school of R. Jannai: Thus spoke Moses before the Holy One, blessed be He: "Sovereign of the Universe, the silver and gold [zahav] which You showered on Israel until they said, 'Enough' [dai], was what caused them to make the calf . . . R. Hiyya bar Abba said: It is like the case of a man who had a son. He bathed him and anointed him and gave him plenty to eat and drink and hung a purse around his neck and set him down at the door of a house of ill-repute. How could he help sinning?[1]

Moses, in this dramatic re-reading, is portrayed as counsel for the defence of the Jewish people. Yes, he admits to God, the people did indeed commit a sin. But it was You who provided them with the opportunity and the temptation. If the Israelites had not had gold in the wilderness, they could not have made a golden calf. Besides which, who needs gold in a wilderness? There was only one reason the Israelites had gold with them: because they were following Your instructions. You said: "Tell the people that every man is to ask his neighbour and every woman is to ask her neighbour for objects of silver and gold" (Ex. 11:2). Therefore, do not blame them. Please, instead, forgive them.



This is a wonderful passage in its own right. It represents what the sages called *chutzpah kelapei Shemaya*, “audacity toward heaven.”[2] (We tend to think of *chutzpah* as a Yiddish word, but it is in fact Aramaic and comes to us from the Babylonian Talmud). The question, though, is: why did the sages choose this passage to make the point?

After all, the episode of the Golden Calf is set out in full in Exodus 32-34. The Torah tells us explicitly how daring Moses was in prayer. First, when God tells him what the people have done, Moses immediately responds by saying, “Lord, why should Your anger burn against Your people? ... Why should the Egyptians say, ‘It was with evil intent that He brought them out, to kill them in the mountains and to wipe them off the face of the earth?’” (Ex. 32:11-12). This is audacious. Moses tells God that, regardless of what the people have done, it will be His reputation that will suffer if it becomes known that He did not lead the Israelites to freedom, but instead killed them in the desert.

Then, descending the mountain and seeing what the people have done, he does his single most daring act. He smashes the tablets, engraved by God Himself. The audacity continues. Moses goes back up the mountain and says to God, “These people have indeed committed a great sin. They have made themselves an idol of gold. But now, please forgive their sin – but if not, then blot me out of the book You have written.” (Ex. 32:31-32). This is unprecedented language. This should be the passage to which the sages attached an account of Moses’ boldness in defence of his people. Why then attach it here, to an obscure place-name in the first verse of Deuteronomy, where it is radically out of keeping with the plain sense of the verse.[3]

I believe the answer is this. Throughout Devarim Moses is relentless in his criticism of the people: “From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the Lord... You have been rebellious against the Lord ever since I have known you.” (Deut. 9:7, 24). His critique extends to the future: “If you have been rebellious against the Lord while I am still alive and with you, how much more will you rebel after I die!” (Deut. 31:27). Even the curses in Deuteronomy, delivered by Moses himself,[4] are bleaker than those in Leviticus 26 and lack any note of consolation.

Criticism is easy to deliver but hard to bear. It is all too easy for people to close their ears, or even turn the criticism around (“He’s blaming us, but he should be blaming himself. After all, he was in charge”). What does it take for criticism to be heeded? The

people have to know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, that the leader is always ready to defend them. They have to know that he cares for them, wants the best for them, and is prepared to take personal risks for their sake. Only when people know for certain that you want their good, do they listen to you when you criticise them.

That is what led the sages to give the interpretation they did to the place-name *Di-zahav* in the first verse of Devarim. Why was Moses able to be as critical as he was in the last month of his life? Because the people he was talking to knew that he had defended them and their parents in his prayers for Divine forgiveness, that he had taken the risk of challenging God, that he had declined God’s offer to abandon the Israelites and begin again with him – in short, that his whole life as a leader was dedicated to doing what was the best for the people. When you know that about someone, you listen to them even when they criticise you.

One of my all-time heroes is the great Hassidic rabbi, Levi Yitzhak of Berditchev (1740-1809). Many stories are told of how he interceded with Heaven on behalf of the Jewish people. My favourite, doubtless apocryphal, story is this: Levi Yitzhak once saw a Jew smoking in the street on Shabbat. He said, “My friend, surely you have forgotten that it is Shabbat today.” “No,” said the other, “I know what day it is.” “Then surely you have forgotten that smoking is forbidden on Shabbat.” “No, I know it is forbidden.” “Then surely, you must have been thinking about something else when you lit the cigarette.” “No,” the other replied, “I knew what I was doing.” At this, Levi Yitzhak turned his eyes upward to heaven and said, “Sovereign of the universe, who is like Your people Israel? I give this man every chance, and still he cannot tell a lie!”

The great leaders of Israel were the great defenders of Israel, people who saw the good within the not-yet-good. That is why they were listened to when they urged people to change and grow. That is how the sages saw Moses. This was the man who had the audacity to win forgiveness for the people who had made the Golden Calf.

It is easy to criticise, hard to defend. But the Midrash about Moses tells us a life-changing idea: If you seek to change someone, make sure that you are willing to help them when they need your help, defend them when they need your defence, and see the good in them, not just the bad. Anyone can complain, but we have to earn the right to criticise

### Rav Kook on the Perasha Mipi Atzmo

Already from its opening sentence, we see that the final book of the Pentateuch is different from the first four. Instead of the usual introductory statement, "God spoke to Moses, saying," we read: These are the words that Moses spoke to all of Israel on the far side of the Jordan River ..." (Deut. 1:1)

Unlike the other four books, Deuteronomy is largely a record of speeches that Moses delivered to the people before his death. The Talmud (Megillah 31b) confirms that the prophetic nature of this book is qualitatively different than the others. While the other books of the Torah are a direct transmission of God's word, Moses said Deuteronomy mipi atzmo — "on his own."

However, we cannot take this statement — that Deuteronomy consists of Moses' own words — at face value. Moses could not have literally composed this book on his own, for the Sages taught that a prophet is not allowed to say in God's name what he did not hear from God (Shabbat 104a). So what does it mean that Moses wrote Deuteronomy mipi atzmo? In what way does this book differ from the previous four books of the Pentateuch?

Tadir versus Mekudash - The distinction between different levels of prophecy may be clarified by examining a Talmudic discussion in Zevachim 90b. The Talmud asks the following question: if we have before us two activities, one of which is holier (mekudash), but the second is more prevalent (tadir), which one should we perform first? The Sages concluded that the more prevalent activity takes precedence over the holier one, and should be discharged first.

One might infer from this ruling that the quality of prevalence is more important, and for this reason the more common activity is performed first. In fact, the exact opposite is true. If something is rare, this indicates that it belongs to a very high level of holiness — so high, in fact, that our limited world does not merit benefiting from this exceptional holiness on a permanent basis. Why then does the more common event take precedence? This is in recognition that we live in an imperfect world. We are naturally more receptive to and influenced by a lesser, more sustainable sanctity. In the future, however, the higher, transitory holiness will come first. The First and Second Luchot - This distinction between mekudash and tadir illustrates the difference between the first and second set of luchot (tablets) that Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. The first

tablets were holier, a reflection of the singular unity of the Jewish people at that point in history. As the Midrash comments on Exodus 19:2, "The people encamped — as one person, with one heart — opposite the mountain" (Mechilta; Rashi ad loc).

After the sin of the Golden Calf, however, the Jewish people no longer deserved the special holiness of the first tablets. Tragically, the first luchot had to be broken; otherwise, the Jewish people would have warranted destruction. With the holy tablets shattered, the special unity of Israel also departed. This unity was later partially restored with the second covenant that they accepted upon themselves while encamped across the Jordan River on the plains of Moab. (The Hebrew name for this location, Arvot Moav, comes from the word 'arvut,' meaning mutual responsibility.)

The exceptional holiness of the first tablets, and the special unity of the people at Mount Sinai, were simply too holy to maintain over time. They were replaced by less holy but more attainable substitutes — the second set of tablets, and the covenant at Arvot Moav.

Moses and the Other Prophets - After the sin of the Golden Calf, God offered to rebuild the Jewish people solely from Moses. Moses was unsullied by the sin of the Golden Calf; he still belonged to the transient realm of elevated holiness. Nonetheless, Moses rejected God's offer. He decided to include himself within the constant holiness of Israel. This is the meaning of the Talmudic statement that Moses wrote Deuteronomy "on his own." On his own accord, Moses decided to join the spiritual level of the Jewish people, and help prepare the people for the more sustainable holiness through the renewed covenant of Arvot Moav.

Moses consciously limited the prophetic level of Deuteronomy so that it would correspond to that of other prophets. He withdrew from his unique prophetic status, a state where "No other prophet arose in Israel like Moses" (Deut. 34:10). With the book of Deuteronomy, he initiated the lower but more constant form of prophecy that would suit future generations. He led the way for the other prophets, and foretold that "God will establish for you a prophet from your midst like me" (Deut. 18:15). In the future, however, the first set of tablets, which now appear to be broken, will be restored. The Jewish people will be ready for a higher, loftier holiness, and the mekudash will take precedent over the tadir. For this reason, the Holy Ark held both sets of tablets; each set was kept for its appropriate time. (Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 287-290. Adapted from Shemuot HaRe'iyah, Devarim (1929))