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**Rabbi Berel Wein on**

**Parshat Dvarim**



This last oration of our teacher Moshe reviews the occurrences in history of the Jewish people after their miraculous Exodus from Egypt. The words of Moshe are very personal to him alone and reflect his recollection and viewpoint of all of the events and incidents that occurred during the 40 -year sojourn of the Jewish people in the desert of Sinai.

Nuances of difference sometime appear between the descriptions that Moshe attributed to events that occurred, and the more objective description of those events recorded previously in the Torah. This is natural because of the different personal recollections by humans regarding events that occurred in the purely objective description, giving them a view of the same events but from a different perspective.

There is no need to reconcile the two apparent differing descriptions of the same Torah event. We know that human beings can never really be truly objective, and  that everything that we see, and experience is always filtered through our own personalities, thoughts and even prejudices. As such, we can never claim objectivity in recalling past events and describing them for later generations.

It is not that truth is a subjective value, but, rather, it is not possible within the limitations of human existence, for truths to be accurately described, without the injection of the personality and the subjective viewpoint of the person recalling or describing the truth as to what occurred. Only heaven achieves ultimate accuracy of truth. We human beings strive for such perfection but should be aware that it is beyond our abilities to actually attain.

We see this clearly in how Moshe describes the origin of the debacle that befell the Jewish people regarding the sending of the spies to gain intelligence about the land of Israel. In the Torah previously, it appears that Moshe himself was the instigator and catalyst for this idea that later went so wrong. However, when Moshe relives the matter here in the book of Dvarim,  he casts the incident in a different light completely. It was the people emerging as a mob upon him that forced him to agree to send spies, and to bring back a report about the land of Israel to the Jewish people before their actual entry into the country.

It is not that Moshe was trying to extract himself from blame and participation in this sad incident, which would doom that generation of the desert and never reach the land of Israel. It is simply that he records for us his absolute misgivings when the proposal first surfaced. In his memory, he does not see himself as ever having instigated the proposal and describes himself as an almost unwilling participant in the process that later ensued. In the eyes of heaven, because Moshe later acquiesced to the public demand for the sending of the spies, it made Moshe a prime mover, and instigator, if you will, in the event of the spies.

Oftentimes, in life, we are apparently innocent victims of forces brought upon us, and yet, we are held accountable personally for the consequences of our participation in the event, unwilling and hesitant as it may have been. The book of Dvarim teaches us many lessons in life that otherwise we may overlook, ignore and of which we may not be aware.

*Reprinted from the current website of rabbiwein.com*

**Parshas Devorim**

**Being Part of the Winning Team**

**By Rabbi Bentzion Shafier**

**Founder of TheSmuz.com**



“*HASHEM our G-d has spoken to us in Chorev, saying, “You have had much dwelling by this mountain.”* — Devarim 1:6

On the first day of Sivan, the Jewish people encamped at Har Sinai. Five days later, they received the Torah. They then remained at Har Sinai. Much time was to pass and many events were to transpire before they would begin their travels through the Midbar.

Thirty-eight years later, when the Torah recounts the time spent at Har Sinai, it uses the expression, “You have had much dwelling by this mountain.” Rashi explains this to mean, “There is much reward for your having dwelt at this mountain. While you were there, you acquired much importance and reward. You built the Mishkan, the Menorah and the holy vessels. You received the Torah, and you appointed the Sanhedrin.”

This Rashi is difficult to understand. Moshe Rabbeinu is addressing the entire nation and saying that the years in the Midbar were great for all of them. Every one of the Jewish people received greatness and reward for being there. Yet only a small number of the people actually constructed the Mishkan, and none of them appointed the Sanhedrin. How are they rewarded for what they didn’t do?

The answer to this can best be understood with a parable.

**The Super Bowl Ring**

In America today, entertainment is taken very, very seriously. And probably no event looms larger than the Super Bowl. Receiving more coverage and more notice than any religious event or national holiday, this is the event of the year. The build-up begins months ahead of time, and it’s pervasive. In supermarkets, on billboards, on t-shirts, and in magazines, the big game is touted with pictures of players and offers of memorabilia. Everyone wants to be a part of the hype.

On Super Bowl Sunday itself, life seems to stop. Over one hundred million people watch the game. About half of the households in the country show it in their living rooms and dens.

Needless to say, being on a Super Bowl team is the highlight of an athlete’s life, and being on the winning team means being a part of history. One of the trophies the winners receive is the Super Bowl ring. Typically, the ring is diamond-encrusted and large enough to bear the Super Bowl inscription, the winning team’s name and logo, and the year of the game.

In 2014, the Seattle Seahawks won the Super Bowl. This was their first victory ever, and to celebrate, they hired Tiffany’s to hand-craft each Super Bowl ring. The famed jewelry company produced a masterpiece.

In the past, Super Bowl rings sold for close to $250,000.00, but this was in a class by itself. Set in white gold with over 107 round diamonds and 40 sapphires lining the top, it is enough to make a jewelry enthusiast drool. Tiffany’s refused to give a value on the ring, saying, “It’s truly priceless.”

The question, though, was: who gets a ring? Certainly, the eleven starting players would each receive one. The other fifty or so players who suit up for the game are also part of the team, so each of them should receive a ring as well. But there are also coaches, trainers, executives, and general staff. They too are part of the success, and so they should receive one. In the end, the Seahawks gave a ring to every full-time employee of the organization. All told, four hundred Super Bowl rings were distributed — because all those people were part of the team.

**All Members of the Team**

This seems to be the answer to the question on Rashi. The Torah is telling us that we are all members of one nation. Whether you’re the Gadol HaDor or a simple tailor, you’re a Jew, and every Jew is part of one unit. For good or for bad, we are together. Only too often, we have been punished as a group, but we are also rewarded as a group. What Moshe was saying to the people of that generation was, “During your lifetime these things were accomplished, and you are all a part of it. The nation as a whole is credited with the building of the Mishkan and the establishment of the Sanhedrin. You are all part of the nation, so you receive reward.”

This concept is very applicable to us. In our day, we have seen a resurgence of Torah study that might well be unprecedented in history. Since the great yeshivahs of Sura and Pumpedisa, there haven’t been these many men learning Torah full-time. And we are all a part of that. Whether I learn in the Mir in Yerushalyim, Bais Medrash Govoah in Lakewood, or in Ponevezh or Chofetz Chaim, or even if I have never set foot into a yeshivah in my life, I am part of this nation.

This nation is ascending. This nation has rebuilt Torah institutions. This nation has recreated its own culture and its own ways. We have our own magazines and radio programs, our own authors and songwriters — we have experienced the rebirth of a Torah Nation. And all of this in the turbulent waters of a conflicted society that constantly pulls at us to join in its march of emptiness and frivolity. That society pulls at our youth, and it pulls at our men and women, but despite all its efforts, we have remained loyal to the Torah way. The nation of Yisrael is on the rise, and we are all a part of it. In that sense, we are to be rewarded. May HASHEM speedily bring forth our final Redemption.

*Reprinted from this week’s website of Theshmuz.com.*

# Rav Avigdor Miller on

# Benefits of Persecution



**QUESTION:** **If Hashem cares only about us why doesn’t He have us ruling the world?**

**ANSWER:** Look at the possuk that we spoke about tonight (Amos 3:2): רק אתכם ידעתי מכל משפחות האדמה – It’s only you that I’m interested in from all the nations of the earth, על כן אפקוד עליכם את את כל חטאתיכם – therefore I visit upon you all your sins. It means that He’s doing for us what’s very best for us.

Power is not good for us; the truth is it’s not good for anybody. There was a time, in the first Beis Hamikdosh, when Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave us power but after that it was necessary to give us treatments instead of power. And that’s because He loves us; and He shows us His love in what we are getting.

**It is a Glory to Us and a Big Honor**

The Rambam in his Iggeres Teiman says that if you see that you’re being persecuted or if your property is being appropriated and you’re being despised, he says, תפארת היא לנו וכבוד גדול – it is a glory to us and a big honor.

We have to understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu has singled us out for the purpose of giving us treatments and our nation as a result has become and has remained the best nation. You have no idea how much we benefit by being persecuted! It’s worth studying that; we don’t have time now, but think it over – what persecution has given our nation.

I’ll tell you one thing. I was once walking in a Puerto Rican neighborhood and one of them picked up a ball and threw it at me and it hit me in the back of the neck. So I picked up the ball and I walked over to him – there was a whole crowd of them – and I started scolding him. I was still a little green-horn yet among Puerto Rican neighbors and I was scolding him.

**The Puerto Rican’s Explanation**

Then I stopped a motorist and asked him to please bring the police. The police never came and so I was standing there talking to the Puerto Rican. I said to him, “If you were walking in a Jewish neighborhood, would anyone pelt you with a ball?” Now listen to what the Puerto Rican answered; he was a spokesman for all of them standing there and he said in a broken English, “You Jews, you came from Europe; you were persecuted so you wouldn’t do such a thing.” And it’s true. We wouldn’t do it anyhow, but the Jews were persecuted and that made us better.

If a Jew would ever get drunk in Eastern Europe, it would be the end of him. A drunken Jew staggering among goyim – that’s all you needed. A Jew couldn’t afford to be drunk. A Jew couldn’t afford to be rash. You always had to behave with care and with diplomacy. Do you know what that means, centuries and centuries of living soberly and carefully? You couldn’t afford to do a crime and have a bad name.

**What’s the Purpose of Existence?**

And therefore the Jewish people prospered under those conditions; their character prospered. Because after all, what’s the purpose of existence? Just power? Material happiness? They were happier than the goyim because they were succeeding and building up what’s most important – that’s character. There’s no question that the persecution of our people has made us the best nation; we were the best nation beforehand anyhow but it made us better.

*Reprinted from the July 8, 2021 email of Toras Avigdor. Adapted from Tape #161.*

**The Jew’s Challenge of Transforming the Mundane Aspects of Life into Spiritual Glory**

**From the Talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe**

**Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt”l**



This week's Torah portion begins the fifth book of the Torah, Devarim (Deuteronomy). The Book of Devarim is also called Mishne Torah, meaning "Repetition of the Torah"; Moses began to repeat the Torah to the Jewish people on the first day of the Hebrew month Shevat.

The timing of the Repetition of the Torah was especially significant for the Jewish people in that it served to prepare them for their entry into the Promised Land. During their years of wandering in the desert, all their needs -- food, water, clothing and shelter -- were miraculously provided for them by G-d.

Now the Jews were on the verge of leaving this place where for years they had had no material cares. They were about to settle in a land and a way of life which necessitated tilling, sowing, reaping and all the other mundane preoccupations of life. It was now that they were exposed to the Repetition of the Torah, for they needed an additional and special measure of spiritual re-invigoration and inspiration, so that they would not become materialistic and debased in the material world that lay ahead.

Even more so, the whole purpose of their coming into the Land was to instill holiness, to elevate and make more spiritual the material aspects of daily life -- thereby transforming the material into the spiritual. This would be accomplished through the study of the Torah, worship of G-d, performance of His Divine precepts, giving charity and doing acts of loving kindness.

The Divine purpose of our entry into the Holy Land -- to elevate the environment and transform the material into the spiritual -- is the very same purpose that every individual Jew has in his performance of day-to-day activities.

Rabbi Shneur Zalman, founder of Chabad Chasidut, explained: "The material things of Jews are spiritual; G-d gives us material things, that we may transform them into spiritual." G-d grants the Jew his livelihood and he, in turn, utilizes the money for mitzvot in general and for the support of Torah-study in particular. In this way, one truly converts the material (money and worldly possessions) into the spiritual.

Transformation of the material to the spiritual can be achieved by other means, also. One can elevate and refine one's professional environment by setting a personal example of Torah-guided honesty and good conduct.

In all matters of sanctity, one must go from strength to strength, constantly increasing in holiness. In this way, the blessing of "prosperity through charity" becomes realized, with G-d giving material blessings in a growing measure, enabling us to create more, and still more, spirituality, at a reciprocal pace.

*Reprinted from the 5756/1996 Parshat Devorim edition of L’Chaim Weekly. Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.*

**Rabbi Mark Wildes Offers**

**A 40-Day Program to Max**

**Your High Holidays**

**By Daniel Keren**

(The 40 Day Challenge: Daily Jewish Insights to Prepare for the High Holidays, 167 pages, paperback, Kodesh Press, 2021)

A favorite mantra of the life insurance industry is “Nobody prepares to fail. Rather people fail to prepare.” And that is the ultimate recipe for major failure.

And that is certainly very true for what all Jews consider to be the most important days of our calendar – the Yomim Noraim or the High Holidays of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

 

How many times have you promised to look into the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur machzorim (prayer books) in order to get clarity on the special prayers recited on those two important holy days? How many times have you promised to attend special pre-High Holiday shiurim (lectures) or view them on websites such as Torahanytime.com?

And how many times have those good intentions never materialized and you found yourself in shul desperately opening your prayer book on these holy days with no significant preparation or hopes of decent kavanah (intentions) when praying to Hashem with pleas for another good year of health and prosperity?

**For Jews Who Are Deeply Rooted in the American Culture**

For the many secular Jews or even Orthodox Jews who are deeply rooted in the American culture and could use an aid to help them speak to G-d with more confidence on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, Rabbi Mark Wildes, a long-time kiruv activist has published an easy-to-read but meaningful 167-page paperback titled “The 40 Day Challenge: Daily Jewish Insights to Prepare for the High Holidays.”

The author is the founder and director of the Manhattan Jewish Experience (MJE) that specializes in engaging and reconnecting unafilliated Jewish men and women in their 20s and 30s with Judaism and the Jewish community. He brings to his work the expertise from a BA in Psychology from Yeshiva University, a Law Degree from the Cardozo School of Law, a Master’s degre in International Affairs from Columbia University and rabinnical ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary (Yeshiva University).

For more information on the impressive work of Rabbi Wildes and his colleagues, you can google MJE Manhattan Jewish Experience.

**The Power to Change and You Can Run, But You Can’t Hide**

Getting back to Rabbi Wildes new book, for the American accultured Jew, it is not only an easy-read but an enjoyable read, with such interesting chapter titles as “Second Chance (Rosh Chodesh Elul Day 1), “Making Music with What Remains,” “The Real You,” “Learning from Our Enemies,” “Bringing Redemption,” “Play the Ball, Not the Person,” “Not in Heaven,” “The Purpose of Rosh Hashanah,” “The Message of the Shofar,” “Working with What You’ve Got (First Day Rosh Hashanah,) “The Power to Change,” “You Can Run, But You Can’t Hide,” and “Reuniting the King and Queen (Erev Yom Kippur).

Rabbi Wildes has filled his new book with chockful examples of contemporary cultural figures, often non-Jewish who demonstrate qualities from which we can all learn in order to prepare and improve ourselves in the crucial 40 days of introspective to make our coming Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur a more positive experience that can not only make our own lives better but perhaps even bring Moshiach bimhera (speedily in our days).

For example in the introduction to “The 40 Day Challenge,” the author highlights the example of the “One player [who] stands out when it comes to preparing for the Super Bowl – Tom Brady, the famed quarterback who competed in ten Super Bowls, seven of which he won. In Februry of 2021, at the age of forty-three, Brady led his new team – the Tampa Bay Buccaneers – to victory and was elected MVP. What is less known is to the extent towhich Tom Brady prepared.

**The Super Bowl of All Prayers Services**

After describing the intense and serious efforts Brady used to prepare for his Super Bowl games, Rabbi Wildes explains, “Each year, Jews of all backgrounds attend High Holiday services – the Super Bowl of all prayers services. For some, Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are powerful spiritual experiences, but for many others, it feels like something is missing. Maybe we blame the rabbi for being less than inspirational or we don’t like the tunes the cantor chose to sing. But what could we do ourselves to get more out of the High Holiday experience.”

To discover the suggestions of the author on how to make this coming Rosh Hashanah (September 6-7) and Yom Kippur (September 16) more spiritually powerful, by embarking on a 40-day journey beginning with this cominng Rosh Chodesh Elul (Sunday, August 8th), you will want to get a copy of “The 40 Day Challenge” that will be available in Jewish bookstores or the publisher’s (Kodesh Press) website.

If you want to share the book with family members, neighbors, colleagues at work or whomever you think might benefit from a book that aims to help befuddled Jews to utilize this special time on the Jewish calendar to become the very best version of yourself and connect to G-d at a time when He is closest; you can contact the MJE (Manhattan Jewish Experience) to inquire about discounts for purchases of 10 or more copies.

*Reprinted from this week’s edition of The Jewish Connection.*

**Thoughts that Count**

Akavya ben Mehalel said: Reflect upon three things and you will not come near sin...(Ethics 3:1)

Three things cause a person to sin: arrogance and disdain for others; indulgence in pleasures and worldly acquisitions; imagining that there is no ultimate judgment and accounting. Hence, when a person reflects upon the three things written in our Mishna, he will uproot the causes of sin from his soul. *(Midrash Shmuel)*

Reflection in this sense is indicative of the deepest levels of meditation. When a person takes the mission for which his soul descended to this world seriously, he will reflect upon the ultimate elevation of his soul -- which comes about through his being in this world -- and he knows that eventually he is destined to give an accounting.

By reflecting thus, he will certainly not come near sin -- he will not transgress inadvertently, and he will fulfill his mission in life fully. *(Ma'amarim of the Previous Rebbe, 5705)*

Rabbi Chanina, the deputy Kohen Gadol, said: Pray for the welfare of the government, for were it not for the fear of it, men would swallow one another alive... (Ethics 3:2)

Our Sages state that the authority on earth is like the authority in Heaven, since the former derives from the latter. Therefore, when a person "prays for the welfare of the government" below, he comes to the awareness, not only of fear of authority in this world, but also awe of the King of kings. And by virtue of this fear and his subservience to G-d, his feelings of superiority and disdain for others -- due to which "men would swallow one another alive" -- is suppressed and subdued.

*(Likutei Sichot vol. 17)*

Rabbi Elazar of Bartosa said: Give to Him of that which is His, for you and whatever is yours are His... (Ethics 3:7)

A person should not be miserly in charitable matters and in spending money for the honor of G-d. A person should realize the truth -- that what he gives is really G-d's, and therefore, he must give generously and joyfully. The Midrash also states, "Does anyone precede Me, so that I have to pay you back? You never had to place a mezuza on the door post until I gave you a house, nor a railing around your roof before I gave you the roof, nor tzitzit on the four corners of your garment until I gave you the garment!" *(Meiri)*

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