

RED ALERT!

D'varim-Chazon

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DIVREI TORAH

- The entire Chumash of D'varim was delivered by Moshe during the last 5 weeks of his life. It comprises many Mitzvot, most of which are introduced for the first time in Moshe's life. The Ramban (Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman, 1194-1270, Spain, Israel) raised the question about when Moshe received these Mitzvot. He responded that he received these Mitzvot either at Sinai or in the Mishkan prior to the sin of the spies, some 39 years before. Moshe did not give these Mitzvot to the generation that left Egypt and was not entering the Promised Land.

The Radvaz (Rabbi David ben Shlomo Ibn-Zimra, 1479-1573, Spain, Israel, Cairo) disagreed and wrote that these Mitzvot were given to Moshe at the Plains of Moav during the final months of his life. Neither answer covers the issue completely, leaving us to ponder the question.

- In the Sefer HaChinuch written by Rabbi Aharon HaLevi of Barcelona (1235-1300), the author writes about each of the 613 Mitzvot in an organized fashion as they appear in the Torah. As such: in Sefer B'reishit

there are only 3 Mitzvot. In Sh'mot there are 111 Mitzvot. In Vayikra 247 Mitzvot. BaMidbar contains 62 Mitzvot, and finally D'varim has 200 Mitzvot, nearly 1/3 of all the Mitzvot of the Torah. One would get the impression that Moshe was making up for lost time by rushing into a litany of commandments, especially in Parshat Ki Teitzei which has 74 Mitzvot all by itself. Moshe systematically introduces the Mitzvot with a thorough recap of the short history of the dramatic narrative that occurred when Bnei Yisrael left Egypt.

- Moshe begins mentioning the sins of Bnei Yisrael while in the desert, but he saves the worst sin for last: the Golden Calf. We need to address this choice of order. True, the spy mission was extremely bad, earning the large majority of the nation a death sentence while trekking through the desert. But the sin of the Golden Calf was catastrophic as well, earning a punishment that would linger with the nation for many years. Our Sages state that any person who is giving Mussar to another should begin with a "lighter" sin, working up to a more terrible sin, just as Moshe Rabbeinu had done. This way the person on the receiving end won't be terrified at the outset of the talk. So Moshe was quite deliberate in his speech to the people, even though the offending sinners were no longer present, having died during the desert trek.

- Moshe also determined when to admonish the people. One was near his death, similar to Yaakov speaking to his sons in Parshat Vaychi, right before he died. Rashi commented on this, saying that this way the people will not be required to hear the admonition repeatedly. A second point was that Moshe delivered his speech after his victories over Sichon and Og. Now Moshe could admonish the people right after experiencing two victories, after seeing that Hashem still loves them and will protect them as they will fight victoriously over the Canaanite nations. This is the right moment to talk to them about their future, when they are on a high, flush with a victory and looting the enemy of all their materialistic resources. Their psychological state is now positive and more likely to listen to what Moshe has to say to the people.

- Moshe was now going to deliver the Torah and explain it to the people in 70 languages. (Rashi on 1:5). Why was it necessary to hear it explained to them in languages that the people did not understand? In his Sefer HaKtav V'HaKabala, Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Macklenburg (1785-1865, Western Europe) explained Rashi differently. Rashi did not mean 70 foreign languages, but rather in multiple interpretations. This is more in line with the Midrash stating that there are 70 faces to the Torah (Bamidbar Rabba 13:15). The

Torah is a very rich sacred book, having multiple interpretations to its simple text. Moshe wanted to clarify all that was in the Torah in a way that was available for each person to comprehend and likely to absorb. Moshe, as a master teacher, took the time and effort to give over a very comprehensible text.

- When Moshe retold the story of the spies, he related that Hashem decreed that this generation will die in the desert and not be allowed to enter the Promised Land. And then Moshe said that “With me, as well, Hashem became angry because of you, saying: You, too, shall not come there” (1:37). Commentators take this statement seriously. Moshe was not going to enter Canaan due to Moshe’s allowing the spy mission, and not because he hit the rock. (Kli Yakar, Abravanel...). This changes things quite a bit. But this was Moshe’s comments on the matter, not necessarily Hashem’s. We do not see Hashem’s hand in Moshe’s rendition. This could possibly be the way it was. The Malbim stated that the punishment for hitting the rock was really against Bnei Yisrael. With the hitting of the rock, the people will suffer in losing Moshe as their leader when they enter the Promised Land. Moshe was not destined to enter the Land due to his part in the failed spy mission. The punishment for the rock incident was felt more by the people.

- When we read of the war between Israel and the armies of Sichon and Og, we do not link those events to the encounter between Israel and Edom. Maybe we should. When Sichon heard about Israel circumventing and avoiding a confrontation with Edom, he probably thought that he would be spared a war. He thought that Israel would likely avoid his army as well. Maybe this was part of the divine plan to orchestrate the encounter between Israel and Sichon. Sichon thought wrong and possibly was not really prepared for a war. Hashem misled Sichon and therefore Sichon was caught by surprise and was totally unaware and was trounced in a battle that was short and decisive. After the victory Israel did not travel west to Canaan, but instead went north, out of the way, to attack Og who was also not really prepared for battle.

- MIDRASH. Bamidbar Rabba 1:15. The Midrash tells the well known story of Dama ben Nethina of Ashkelon who did not wake his father to sell a precious stone to the Kohanim who wished to buy it for a set price to replace a stone for the Kohen Gadol's breastplate. The Kohanim thought the young man was stalling for a higher price, and the Kohanim offered more money. The father woke up, and told them he would take the lower price for the young son did not want to disturb his rest. Within the year

Nethina's cow gave birth to a Red Cow and he sold it for a fortune. So was the reward for honoring the father!

Questions by RED

From the Text

1. How long did it take for Moshe to deliver the entire Chumash of D'varim? (1:3...)
2. Which direction did Bnei Yisrael travel after the failed spy mission? (2:2)
3. When Bnei Yisrael annihilated Sichon and all his people, what did the Jews take in their victory over the enemy? (2:35)
4. Who settled the lands of Sichon and Og? (3:12-13)
5. What message did Hashem give to Yehoshua after the victories over Sichon and Og? (3:21)

From Rashi

6. How did Rashi interpret that Bnei Yisrael are like the stars in Heaven? ((1:10)
7. Why did Moshe agree to send a spy mission to Canaan? (1:23)
8. What portion of Eretz Yisrael was promised by Hashem to give to Kalev? (1:36)
9. How did Hashem communicate with Moshe during the 38 year trek in the desert? (2:17)

10. After looting so much from the war with Sichon, what did Bnei Yisrael take from the victory over Og? (3:7)

From the Rabbis

11. How can we explain the need for so many judges: 131 per 1000 people? (Vilna Gaon)

12. Why was Og's bed made out of metal? (Ramban)

13. Where was Bashan, Og's country?

From the Midrash

14. The desert was full of snakes and scorpions. Why were they not a threat to Bnei Yisrael?

From the Haftara (Yeshayahu)

15. What does Yeshayahu lament with the loss of the Holy Temple?

Relationships

a) No'ach - Nimrod

b) Terach - Lot

c) Milka - Nachor (2 answers)

d) Bilha - Naftali

e) Guni - Chushim

ANSWERS

1. Five weeks, from 1 Sh'vat until Moshe's death on 7 Adar.

2. North, toward Sei'ir.

3. All the cattle and the booty from the cities.

4. The tribes of Gad and Reuven and half the tribe of Menashe.

5. That Hashem will similarly lead Bnei Yisrael with victories over the Canaanites.

6. That Bnei Yisrael would be permanent, eternal, as the stars in Heaven.

7. Moshe thought that if he agreed to send spies, the people, seeing that Moshe was so confident about invading Canaan, will relent, realizing that a spy mission was superfluous.

8. Chevron

9. Not with love as before. Now the communication was through the Urim v'Tumim or a night vision.

10. Only gold and silver.

11. The Gaon stated that each "judge" had a function. The leaders of thousands were commanders of 1000s of soldiers. The leaders of hundreds were judges. Leaders of fifties taught Torah; and those over tens were policemen.

12. Og was so huge that a wooden bed could not support him.

13. Going north, from the modern country of Jordan until Mt. Hermon.

14. Because the pillar of cloud killed all dangerous animals in their way.

15. He lamented the sins that caused the loss of the Temple.

Relationships

- a) Great-grandfather & great-grandson
- b) Grandfather & grandson
- c) Husband & wife; Uncle & niece
- d) Mother & son
- e) First Cousins (Guni was a son of Naftali, Chushim was the son of Dan)