



Parshas Devarim

מתוך "ליקוטי שמואל"

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Words, Words, and More Words

Parshas [Devarim](#)

Rabbi Aron Tendler |

When G-d gifted Adam with a Nefesh (human soul) he was also endowed with the power of speech. The ability to speak, the ability to use words to communicate thoughts and feelings, set him apart from every other creature on the planet.

That isn't to say that the human is the only creation with the ability to communicate. As we know, many if not all of G-d's creatures communicate in a manner distinct to each of them. However, the

human is the only creature who can create or destroy through the power of speech. Allow me to explain.

All other creations communicate in some primal but limited fashion. For example: warnings of impending danger, parental and offspring interdependency, litter, flock, school, pod, and nest dynamics. These are the studied and documented settings for the instinctual communication of species survival; however, that is all it is, it is communication not speech. On the other hand, the human can speak. He can choose to speak and communicate or chose not to speak and yet communicate. (And of course the most common and frustrating of all, the human who chooses to speak and still does not communicate). The human is capable of speech not just communication.

The Mishnah in Avos states that, "With ten statements G-d created the world." Whatever that really means, whatever the power of G-d's speech is, however the dynamics of Divine speech may work, Chazal (the Rabbis) referred to it as speech. That means that Chazal compared our speech, as limited and seemingly contained as it may be, to the speech of G-d and His power to create.

Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to view speech as a powerful and potentially dangerous force.

"Who is the one that desires life? Guard your tongue from speaking evil..." Following the verses' line of reasoning we must add, "And who is the one that does not desire life? The one who does not guard his tongue from speaking evil..."

Human speech creates and destroys. With words we can paint unframed pictures that are only limited by the extent of our imagination. With words we create realities of emotion. Words generate love, fear, hatred and courage. Where desire does not exist words can often generate it.

Ambition and determination, success and failure, reputation and its undoing are all the products of words. With words we wound and with words we heal. War and peace can rise and fall on the power of words.

Words allow us to express complex thoughts and feelings. With words we can make the profound simple and the simple profound. Knowledge is conveyed through words and laughter finds its truest expression in the word-talent of the humorists.

With words Avraham argued for justice and compassion. With words G-d commanded the sacrifice of Avraham's one and only, and with words the Satan stole away Sarah. Avraham mourned Sarah with words and with words he negotiated the purchase of Meoras Hamachpeilah.

Eliezar was enjoined through the power of words to seek out Rivkah, and with words Yakov bought the birthright of Eisav and the salvation of a world. With words Yakov promised G-d he would be faithful and with words G-d promised Yakov that his children would become His chosen and inherit the Land. Words were the undoing of Yakov's well-laid plans for first marrying Rachel and besting Lavan, and it was overheard words that warned Yakov when it was time to return to his father's home. Words describing dreams were shared with the brothers and they hated Yoseph because of them. At the same time, the words they hated implied a truth that Yakov could not ignore, "and his father guarded the words."

Conspiring brothers sealed Yoseph's fate with words while Reuven's unspoken words would have saved him. It was Yoseph's words of fear that they then chose to ignore while with words they negotiated his sale for the price of shoes.

Words were the medium of Yoseph's fall and they proved the manner of his stellar rise. Words were given to protect a king's

confidence and the same words would guarantee Yoseph's final confidence to his father. Yakov blessed his children with words and thereby defined the reality of his nation.

With words Pharaoh introduced his nation to anti-Semitism and swayed them to enslave and persecute the Children of Israel. It was their words of anguish that rose up to the heavens and began their redemption.

Moshe killed the Egyptian with words and with words he confronted the seeming hatred between man and his fellow man. Words forced Moshe to flee from his people and G-d's words from a burning bush commanded him to return and save them.

With words Moshe and Aharon awoke their people to the impending redemption and with words they presented G-d's majesty and power.

At the Parting of the Sea, it was the absence of words that revealed G-d's greatness and it was Moshe and Miriam's words which immortalized the moment in divine exaltation and song.

With words G-d revealed Himself to all from atop a mountain and the tragic response to Chur's words forced Aharon to use other words in hope of delaying further disaster.

Moshe's Prophecy, the Written Torah, recorded G-d's words to His chosen children while the Oral Torah explains those very same words in a way that the Jews can understand.

Miriam's questioning words were intended to help Moshe and Tziporah but it was Moshe's few words that were then needed to heal her leprosy.

The Miraglim destroyed a generation with the timing and inflections of their words, and the lone challenging words of Kalev and Yehoshua earned them personal greatness and deliverance.

With words Korach rebelled against G-d and Moshe and for all eternity his words rise up from the depths of Gehenom (Hell) to confirm the trueness of Moshe's prophecy.

The evil Bilam attempted to destroy us with the power of his words but instead those same words were converted into an eternal source of encouragement and strength. It was with final words that Bilam advised Balak as how to destroy the Jewish people but words alone would not have sufficed to save the nation from G-d's anger. Pinchas's zealous action proved to be more powerful than words, and with words of love G-d conferred upon him His covenant of peace.

With words the Jews complained for water and with words Moshe was to have quenched their thirst. Instead, Moshe's unspoken action would silence his words and left Yehoshua to write the final words of his prophecy.

Concern for promissory words began last week's two Parshios, because words are powerful, plentiful, and cheap. Yet, words are also the medium of our service to G-d, the manner in which we convey wisdom to our children, the expressions of our heart, the brilliance of our minds, and the only way we ever heard G-d speak. As Moshe began to relate his final prophecy to the Bnai Yisroel he described where and when he was doing so. The place and time of Moshe's final words that begin the end of the Torah were to be inscribed in the collective memories of the nation and their descendants so that the stark majesty of the Moabite plains and mountains would forever echo with the awesome humility of G-d's most trusted servant.

"With Moshe's death, all of his physical personality will depart. Only a description, recorded in the most precise terms possible, of the place where the people heard the last of his faithful words, will be handed down to posterity so that, if someday a late descendent of

the Children of Israel will come to this place, it may perhaps echo for him these words and inspire him to follow them faithfully in the midst, and for the good, of his people.” (Rav S.R. Hirsch 1:1)

1st and 2nd Aliyot:

Moshe recounts the history of the 40 years from after the 2nd Luchos, until the request by the people to send the Spies. (Pasuk 12 is read to the tune of Eicha – Lamentations) He notes the establishment of the Sanhedrin and the Judicial system.

3rd and 4th Aliyot:

The incident of the Miraglim – Spies and its terrible consequence is related. Remember, the sin of the Spies and the decree for that generation to die out in the desert occurred on Tisha B’Av 2449, 3316 years ago.

5th and 6th Aliyot:

Moshe’s historic review jumps 38 years during which the decree of the 40 years was carried out and focuses on Israel’s encounter with the nations of: Eisav, Moav, and Amon. The battles with Sichon and Og and the acquisition of Trans-Jordan are retold.

7th Aliya:

Trans-Jordan is given to the 2 1/2 tribes, and Yehoshua is encouraged to view these victories as a promise of future success in taking Land.

Haftorah Devarim – Isaiah 1:1 – 1:27 – The Third Haftorah

The Shabbos preceding Tisha B’Av receives its name, “Chazon”, from the opening verse of the Haftorah. Starting with the words “Chazon Yishayahu – A vision of Isaiah”, we fearfully hear the echo

of the Prophet as he decries Israel's betrayal of G-d. (1:11-15)
 Boundless selfishness, greed, misuse of power by those in authority, and oppression of the defenseless widow and orphan is why the Navi characterizes the people as "the lords of Sodom and the people of Gomorrah." (1:10)

Hearing Yishayahu's indictment of the people, one would think that the end was near. In truth, Yishayahu began to prophesies in 3142 (619 b.c.e.) and the Bais Hamikdash was destroyed in 3338 (423 b.c.e); 196 years before the end! Clearly, the Navi's intent was to effect change in hope of averting the destruction. If so, our reason for mourning on Tisha B'Av must be better defined.

"The Jew does not mourn that thousands of years ago the Temple was destroyed but that it had to be destroyed. Not over the destruction, but over the causes of its destruction". (S.R. Hirsch)
 If only the people would have heeded the cry of the Navi! If only they could have foreseen with the clarity of a prophet's vision what it means for G-d to "draw back his protecting hand" (1:25) from Israel! Shabbat Chazon transports us back in time. We stand in the shadow of the Bais Hamikdash. We hear the word of G-d as the Navi beseeches His children to do Teshuva (repentance). Will we listen? Would we listen?

Laws of Erev Tisha B-Av on Shabbos & Tisha B'Av

Some Poskim forbid learning Torah after 1:00 PM (Chatzos) on Erev Tisha B'Av, except those topics permitted on Tisha B-Av. However, many others permit it.

This year, Erev Tisha B-Av is Wednesday, July. 22. Mincha will be at 6:00 to give enough time to eat Shalosh Seudos. The fast begins at 7:44. Not eating and drinking and all other restrictions, except wearing leather shoes, go into effect at sundown, 7:44. The prohibition against wearing leather shoes begins at the beginning

of Mariv immediately after Borchu. Leather shoes should be removed after 8:29 PM.

Tisha B'Av

Tisha B'Av, like Yom Kippur, is a 24+ hour fast, with additional restrictions.

The following are prohibited: Eating, drinking, wearing leather shoes (referring to leather construction such as the soles or uppers, not leather strips or ornamentation), washing any part of the body, marital relations, and the use of creams, lotions, or oils. Anti-perspirant and medicinal ointments for rashes and irritations are allowed. Netilas Yadayim is performed by washing fingers till the knuckles. Women do not go to Mikvah on Tisha B'Av night. On Tisha B'Av the following additional customs reflect our status as mourners:

- 1.** Until 1:00 p.m., we sit on the floor or a low stool (not higher than 12").
- 2.** Like an Avel, we should not greet each other all of Tisha B'Av.
- 3.** It is forbidden to learn Torah all day except for those topics relating to the laws of mourning or the destruction of the Bais Hamikdash.
- 4.** One should not go to work on Tisha B'Av; however, if you must, it is best do so after midday – 1:00 p.m. Tisha B'Av is not to be used as a day to catch up on housework or repairs.
- 5.** Tallis and Tefillin are first worn at Mincha, and Tzitzit should be put on in the morning without a Bracha.

Geography Lessons

Parshas [Devarim](#)

By Rabbi Berel Wein

This week's Torah reading begins the oration by our teacher Moshe during the final months of his life. In this oration, he reviews the 40 years sojourn of the Jewish people in the Sinai desert, and prophesies regarding their future, first in the Land of Israel. and then throughout succeeding history. The Torah tells us that Moshe began his speech when the Jewish people were located between certain landmarks in the desert of Sinai. Rashi, following the ideas of the Midrash, explains that the locations that were identified were not meant to be specific geographic localities, but, rather, they were intended to highlight events that occurred to the Jewish people during their 40 years in the Sinai desert.

We have a rule that while there is a myriad of interpretations to the eternal words and depth of the narrative verses as written in the Torah, the Talmud cautions us that while we should always be aware of what the Torah really means, the simple explanation of the words is also primary to our understanding of its values and message.

The listing of these geographic locations where Moshe begins his oration to the Jewish people is an intrinsic value by itself. Moshe wants us to realize when and where, and under what circumstances, the message to the Jewish people is being delivered, by describing the place from which he is speaking, and giving it context and background. All statements, no matter how profound and eternal, must be understood within the context of place and time.

It is difficult to communicate any message to a generation that is living miraculously in a barren desert. The audience must require

great imagination be able to deal with promises and issues concerning a country that they have never yet seen. It is also very difficult to speak to people about the future, which is always so uncertain, and, to a great extent, mysterious. But Moshe's oration addresses both concerns.

He wants the listener to know that he is speaking from the desert, but that his message is also for the future of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. And Moshe also looks far into the future, warning them of destruction and exile, horrendous events, but yet the eventual redemption and hope. It is the greatness of Moshe that he is able to speak in the present from an identifiable geographic location, and, yet project a message that will last for thousands of years, valid and vital wherever one finds oneself on this planet. This is what makes Moshe the greatest of all prophets of the Jewish people, in all areas of life and faith, and for all eternity.

Shabbat shalom,
Rabbi Berel Wein

How Devarim connects to the 9 days

Written by Daniel Shasha

Parashas Devarim is usually read in the nine days. Is there any connection between them? The parashah recounts the different travels of Klal Yisrael through the barren desert and how Hashem was always with us and we had everything we needed. As the verse states, 'for Hashem your G-D has blessed you in all your endeavors, He knew your way in this desert for 40 years, you didn't lack anything' (2:7). For many years, Klal Yisrael were forced to wander around a barren wasteland, due to the sin of the spies; yet Hashem was with them the entire time, providing us all our needs. Therefore, specifically in this challenging period, we need to remember that Hashem is

always watching out for us, no matter how bleak things look. That is why Devarim is usually read at this time. (Avodas Yisrael, Devarim)

Focusing on Hashem's kindness specifically during challenging times brings a closeness with Hashem. As the Shlah writes (Haggadah Shel Pesach)" recounting Hashem's miracles forms a special closeness with Him, and all barriers are removed!' So, one mustn't think that since we are in such a long dark exile the Shechinah is distant from us. Really the Shechinah is very accessible to all of us. As Chazal (Megillah 29a) teach, when we were exiled, the Shechinah went into exile with us, and will return with us during the geulah.

Even when we are forced into exile, Hashem is right here with us, holding our hand each step of the way. In the krias haTorah of Tishah Be'av, which foretells how Klal Yisrael will sin and be exiled, the verse says, "for Hashem Your G-D is a Merciful G-D, He will not abandon you or destroy you". (Devarim 4:31)

Rashi explains "He will not abandon you,' means, 'from holding your hand.' Therefore, it is very suitable that we read this on Tishah Be'av, since when we cry, Hashem is so to speak crying with us and it is a great time of closeness. In fact, Rav Pinchas of Koritz teaches, when we sit on the ground during Tisha Be'av, the Shechinah sits together with us! It is a special Eis Ratzon when we can pray for whatever we are lacking! The Shechinah, so to speak, joins in our mourning. After all, Hashem continues to yearn for us and for the day we will finally be redeemed. Imrai Pinchas, Tisha Be'av 380 It is clear that Hashem has been 'holding our hand' throughout this long galus. When we think about it, it is really mindboggling Throughout our history, many mighty nations have tried to destroy us. The Greeks, Romans, Babylonians, Germans: the list goes on and on. Yet, where are they nowadays? Miraculously, the Jewish nation is still here and thriving! We are fortunate to have many strong Torah communities with flourishing Torah institutions, Shuls etc. The Chovos HaLevavos (Shaar Bechina ch.5) writes that the fact that our nation has survived and thrived amongst the nations of the world throughout such a long exile is even more miraculous than Yetzias Mitzrayim!

In fact, Rav Chaim Freedlander explains that this is one reason why Tishah Be'Av is referred to as a Moed. On Tisha Be'av we contemplate the fact that the Jewish nation has survived such a long exile and numerous attempts of our enemies to wipe us out. When we reflect on these tremendous miracles, we will be filled with comfort and hope for the geulah (Sifsai Chaim Moadim vol.3 p.295). Therefore, even now Tishah Be'Av has the status of a moed, somewhat: therefore, we do not say tachanun.

Another important idea to contemplate as we approach Tishah Be'Av is that our mourning actually helps rebuild the Beis HaMikdash. As the Chasam Sofer teaches, "The tears we shed over Yerushalayim are its building blocks; our tears and mourning are another brick in the Beis Hamikdash! This helps us understand why many of the berachos we recite discussing the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash such as Boneh Yerushalayim or Hamahazir Shechinaso letzion are in the present tense. It is a process that is happening as we speak, through our mourning. The more we strengthen our yearning and longing for the Beis Hamikdash, the more we hasten the geulah!

The Chazon Ish was attending a simchah where the band was playing a stirring tune for Yibaneh Hamikdash for a very long time. Someone asked the Chazon Ish if it was disturbing him and he should ask them to stop. The Chazon Ish replied, but they are building the Beis Hamikdash'. It was not the manner of the Chazon Ish to be sarcastic. Rather, he meant that when people sing Yibaneh Hamikdash, it is a fervent emotional prayer for the building of the Beis Hamikdash and this tefillah helps build it!

Happy Sadness

Written by Julian Alper

As we mourn for the loss of the *Beit HaMikdash* in the days leading up to *Tisha B'Av*, it seems strange to say that in a funny sort of way we should be happy that the *Beit HaMikdash* was destroyed. Perhaps, rather than say

that we should be happy it was destroyed, we should say we're thankful it was destroyed. Though, even that, seems strange to say.

Let's try to explain why this is so, by addressing a difficulty in the wording of a *pasuk* in this week's *parasha*, Devarim. Our *parasha* opens with Moshe's rebuke, in which he reprimands the people for various sins, including the sin of the *Meraglim*. He tells the people that because of them, Hashem won't allow Moshe to enter *Eretz Yisrael*. He says (Devarim 1:37): **Hashem was also angry with me because of you, saying, "Neither will you go there"**.

Was this really the reason why Moshe couldn't go to *Eretz Yisrael*? Wasn't it for Moshe's own sin that Hashem told Moshe he wasn't to step into Israel? When Moshe hit the rock instead of speaking to it, we read (Bamidbar 20:12):

Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, "Since you did not have faith in Me to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this assembly to the Land which I have given them".

To answer our question, we draw on the words of the Ohr HaChaim. Don't read the *pasuk* as **"Hashem was angry with me because of you"**, instead read it as **"Hashem was angry with me for your sake"**. The Ohr HaChaim (to Devarim 1:37) writes that, had Moshe entered Israel and built the *Beit HaMikdash*, it could have never been destroyed. Although this sounds wonderful, that would have come at a price. Had Israel deserved punishing, G-d would have had to destroy Israel if He couldn't have destroyed the *Beit HaMikdash*.

The Midrash^[1] tells a story about Shlomo *HaMelech* – Shlomo was so wise that he was able to understand the chatter of birds. One day a man came to Shlomo and asked him to teach him how to interpret birdsong. Shlomo refused, but the man persisted, and ultimately, Shlomo did teach him how to understand what the birds were saying. One day the man was walking in the fields and overheard two birds talking about him. One of them said, "this man coming towards us is going to suffer from a fire tomorrow, that will destroy all the crops of his field". The man acted quickly and immediately sold all his fields. The next week, he was walking in the town and overheard two birds

talking about him. One of them said, “the animals of the man coming towards us are going to die from an animal plague tomorrow”. The man acted quickly and immediately sold all his animals. The next week, he was walking in the fields and overheard two birds talking about him. One of them said, “this man coming towards us is going to die tomorrow”. The man was distraught and immediately ran to Shlomo *HaMelech*. He asked him what was going on. Shlomo told him that it’s better not to understand what the birds are saying. G-d wanted to punish him by hitting his crops, but he sold his fields so that G-d couldn’t punish him in that way. Then G-d decided to punish him by afflicting his animals, but he sold them. G-d was left with no choice but to afflict the man himself.

The lesson for us is that we should be thankful when we suffer material loss – it’s far better than losing our lives. And so, we *can* be thankful that the *Beit HaMikdash* was destroyed, and that we, the People of Israel, were allowed to live.

[1] See <https://torah.org/torah-portion/ravfrand-5770-shoftim/>

Heart of Hearing

Written by Rabbi Daniel Leeman

For the benefit of the Children of Israel “Moshe explained the Torah well” [1]. To explain the Torah “well” is interpreted that Moshe translated the Torah into seventy languages [2].

The question has been asked: who stood to benefit from all of these translations; we have been taught [3] that the other nations of the world refused to accept the Torah [4]?

Furthermore, whilst a translation of a text can indeed help people understand something in their own language that they otherwise might not have understood, how can a simple translation of a text EXPLAIN it any better than the original text itself?

When certain restrictions were placed upon the Jews of Russia, a group of honorable Jews from Kovna were requested by their brethren to approach the governing body. Heading the group was R' Yitzchak Elchonon Spektor escorted by one of his family members.

Not fluent in the local language, the Rabbi affectionately pleaded the case of his Jewish brethren in Yiddish. When he was finished, his family member began translating the words of the Rabbi into Russian.

“It is not necessary to continue translating” the minister interrupted, “I fully understand the message of the Rabbiner, even without translation.”

Similarly, ninety years ago, the Polish government proposed a law that Jewish teachers would require official certification that they were fluent in the Polish language. Being that the spoken language of the Jews was Yiddish, this proposal was not only unnecessary, but would (at least in the short term) also be detrimental to the entire system of Jewish education, causing a major lack in available educators.

A group of Rabbis, headed by the Chafetz Chaim (R' Yisroel Meir Kagan) journeyed to Warsaw with a view to annulling the decree. The Chafetz Chaim was indeed granted an audience with the Prime Minister of Poland where he emotionally pleaded the case of his Jewish brethren.

Afterwards a translation was offered.

“I do not need a translation,” forwent the Prime Minister, “I understand the message already.”

A message is conveyed in its clearest form through a special ‘language’: the ‘language’ of the heart. This is a ‘language’ above all languages; the language of truth; the language of the Torah.

And so, the language of the Torah even if it is not ‘understood’ in the conventional manner, its message is nonetheless conveyed. Indeed, we have been taught that words of truth are recognized [5] – even without complete understanding.

In other words, the Torah was not actively ‘translated’ per-se into other languages as much as its message was intrinsically manifest so-to-speak into other languages, i.e. ‘understood’ by everyone. All that is left for us to do is to open our hearts to it...

Have a heartfelt Shabbos,

Humor

Boys Behaving Badly

Little Moishie Goldberg had been misbehaving again and was sent to his room. After a while he emerged and informed his mother that he had thought about what he did and then davened.

"Fine", said the pleased mother. "If you ask God to help you not misbehave, I am sure He will help you."

"Oh, I didn't ask Him to help me not misbehave," said Moishie. "I asked Him to help you put up with me."

Bribing the Teacher

Sol Sapperstein was a new teacher at the Lincoln Heights high school. Sol was giving a big test one day to his students. He handed out all of the tests and went back to his desk to wait. Once the test was over, the students all handed the tests back in. Sol noticed that one of the students had attached a \$100 bill to his test with a note saying "A dollar per point." The next class the professor handed the tests back out. This student got back his test and \$56 change.

Bubbie Knows Best

Rivky Adler went to spend a few weeks with her Bubbie Miriam. They had a lot of time together so Bubbie Miriam decided to teach Rivky how to sew. After the first day, having gone through a lengthy

explanation of how to thread the machine, Rivky stepped back, put her hands on her hips, and said in disbelief, "Bubbie, you mean you can do all that, but you can't figure out how to use an iPhone?"

Bubbie's Dentures

Little Moishie Epstein was sleeping away from home for the first time – sleeping at his Bubbie and Zadie's.

Little Moishie and Bubbie got ready for bed at the same time. Moishie brushed his teeth, and then Bubbie brushed her dentures. Moishie was fascinated by the site of his Bubbie cleaning her dentures. He sat riveted as she carefully took them out, brushed and rinsed them, and then popped them back in.

"Cool, Bubbie!" Moishie said. "Now take off your arm."