

REBUKING 101

by Shlomo Katz

Parshas Devarim

Rebuking 101

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Today's Learning:
Bikkurim 1:5-6
O.C. 394:3-396:1
Daf Yomi (Bavli): Shabbat 103
Daf Yomi (Yerushalmi): Avodah Zarah 20

This week's parashah begins 36 days before Moshe's death, and in it Moshe begins his farewell address. He opens by rebuking Bnei Yisrael for their prior follies and warning them not to stray from the Torah once they enter Eretz Yisrael. R' Yishayah Halevi Horowitz z"l (1560-1630; the Shelah Hakadosh; Chief Rabbi of Prague and Yerushalayim) writes that these verses teach us how to rebuke. Moshe says (1:9-13), "I said to you at that time, saying, 'I cannot carry you alone . . . How can I alone carry your contentiousness, your burdens, and your quarrels? Provide for yourselves distinguished men, who are wise, understanding, and well known to your tribes, and I shall appoint them as your heads'." [This is a rebuke hidden within a compliment. By implication, Moshe is telling them, "Despite your contentiousness, there are among you men who are distinguished, wise and understanding." Alternatively, he is telling them, "Despite your contentiousness, you are fit to be led by men who are distinguished, wise and understanding."]

This teaches us that one who wants to rebuke another should not say, "You are no good." That will

only make the other person hate the speaker, and he certainly will not listen. This is what Shlomo Ha'melech meant when he said (Mishlei 9:8), "Do not rebuke a fool, lest he hate you." Do not rebuke someone by telling him he is a fool. Rather, says King Shlomo, "Rebuke a wise man and he will love you." Rebuke someone by telling him how wise he is and that his deeds are unbecoming a person of his wisdom. Then he will listen to you and will love you. (Mussarei Ha'Shelah Al Ha'Torah)

"Hashem, our G-d, spoke to us in Chorev, saying, 'Enough of your dwelling by this mountain'." (1:6)

R' Avraham ibn Ezra z"l (1089-1164) writes: "Chorev is Sinai."

R' Moshe ben Nachman z"l (Ramban; 1194-1270) disagrees. He writes: In my opinion, Chorev is the name of the place close to Har Sinai where Bnei Yisrael camped for a year. The desert is a large place, and it contains the mountain that Hashem desired - Har Sinai. Therefore, the whole desert is also called Sinai. Perhaps, writes Ramban, they both take their name from the shrub known as "sneh." In any case, the specific location where Bnei Yisrael camped opposite the mountain is a nearby place--maybe even a town--called "Chorev."

We read near the beginning of the Book of Shmot (3:1), "[Moshe] guided the sheep far into the wilderness, and he arrived at the Mountain of G-d, toward Chorev." Says Ramban: Moshe was shepherding Yitro's flock at, or in the direction of, Chorev when he saw from a distance the sneh that was burning on the Mountain of G-d, i.e., Har Sinai. That is why Moshe said there (verse 3), "I will turn aside now and look at this great sight -- why will the bush not be burned?" [Moshe had to turn towards Har Sinai to investigate this sight because he was not already on the mountain as people assume.]

Ramban concludes: This explanation is proven by the Midrash which comments on the verse (Yishayah 48:8), "You have not heard nor have you known, nor was your ear opened to them from before . . ." The Midrash comments: "You have not heard - at Sinai; nor have you known - at Chorev; nor was your ear opened to them from before - in the Wilderness of Moav." This indicates that Sinai and Chorev are two distinct places. Specifically, Chorev was the encampment near Sinai where the Mishkan stood and where Hashem spoke to Moshe during the year after the Torah was given. This is what is meant by the verse (Malachi 3:23), "Remember the teaching of Moshe, My servant, which I commanded him at Chorev . . ."

(Peirush Ha'Ramban Al Ha'Torah)

"Enough of your circling this mountain; turn yourselves tzafonah / northward." (2:3)

"Tzafon" / "North" also is the root of the verb, "to conceal." Thus the Midrash comments, "Conceal

yourselves! Where can one conceal himself? If one sees that the enemy is attacking, one should conceal himself in the Torah."

R' Yitzchak Eliyahu Landau z"l (Lithuania; 19th century) explains: Our Sages say that as long as the voice of Yaakov may be heard in the bet midrash, the hands of the idol worshippers (represented by Esav) cannot get the upper hand. Chazal have similarly said, "The sword and the book came down from Heaven together." Therefore, when the enemy attacks, run to Torah study.

(Kiflaim Le'teshuah)

"The days that we traveled from Kadesh-barnea until we crossed Zered Brook were thirty eight years, until the end of the entire generation, the men of war, from the midst of the camp, as Hashem swore to them." (2:14)

R' Aharon Lewin z"l hy"d (rabbi of Rzeszow, Poland; killed in the Holocaust) writes: The Torah tells us in Parashat Shelach (14:34) that Hashem decreed 40 years of wandering on Bnei Yisrael because they accepted the negative report of the Spies who had toured Eretz Yisrael for 40 days. In fact, however, as our verse indicates, Bnei Yisrael wandered for only 38 years after the sin of the Spies. Where are the missing years?

The answer is as follows: Two years before the sin of the Spies, Bnei Yisrael had made the Golden Calf. And, although Hashem forgave them for that sin, it was not a complete forgiveness. Rather, Hashem told Moshe that the punishment for the sin of the Golden Calf would be distributed among the punishments for future sins. Thus, when Bnei Yisrael sinned by accepting the Spies' report, that was the last straw, and the sin of the Golden Calf was reawakened. Therefore, their 40-year long punishment was calculated retroactively from that earlier sin.

Still, from the sin of the Golden Calf on the 16th of Tammuz in Year Two until Bnei Yisrael's entry into Eretz Yisrael in Nissan of Year 40 is only 39 years and nine months. Where are an additional three months accounted for? R' Lewin answers:

Presumably Bnei Yisrael were punished only for the daylight hours that the Spies were away. After all, the Spies did not sin when they were sleeping. Thus, each twelve-hour day that the Spies were touring the Land parallels one twelve-month year in the desert. It follows that the three months that are missing from our calculation parallel three hours of one day. Our Sages say that when the Spies left the Sinai Desert to begin their journey to Eretz Yisrael, they were still righteous. If so, then they must have prayed Shacharit that day, and they did not depart until after the time for the morning prayers. When is the time for Shacharit according to halachah? Up until the end of the third hour! In those three hours of the first day, the Spies did not sin, and therefore the decree was actually for three months short of forty years.

(Ha'drash V'ha'iyun)

R' Eliyahu Guttmacher z"l

R' Eliyahu Guttmacher was born near Posen (Poznan) in eastern Germany (today, Poland) on Rosh Chodesh Av 5556 / 1796. After studying in the yeshiva of Rawicz, he became, at age 19, a student of R' Akiva Eger, rabbi of Posen. He remained in R' Eger's yeshiva for four years and was a favorite of the teacher.

Even as a youth, R' Guttmacher studied assiduously and remained awake late into the night writing down his Torah insights. A turning point in his life occurred when he discovered a copy of the Zohar with the marginal notes of his teacher, R' Eger. R' Guttmacher had previously believed, as did most people, that R' Eger was opposed to the study of Kabbalah. However, upon realizing that his teacher did, indeed, delve into that subject, the student began his own study of Kabbalah.

As an outgrowth of this study, R' Guttmacher began to reflect upon the causes of our exile and the steps that we can, and must, take to end it. He came to believe that the spiritual state of the Jewish People was declining rapidly and it was necessary to force the arrival of mashiach, something that could be achieved only if the Jewish People strengthened their attachment to Torah and returned to Eretz Yisrael. He strongly encouraged the establishment of both yeshivot and farming communities in the Holy Land, and when most leading rabbis either did not support his call (and many openly opposed it), he declared that the Sattan / the prosecuting angel had blinded them in order to delay the Redemption.

R' Guttmacher's study of Kabbalah also drew him close to the chassidic movement, and he became surrounded by chassidim of his own. He discouraged people from seeking his blessings, saying that he was an ordinary person. He also said that just in case his prayers carried any weight in Heaven, he was already praying for all Jews; thus, there was no need to visit him. But all of his efforts to be left alone were futile.

R' Guttmacher published several pamphlets describing his ideas about the Redemption and the return to Eretz Yisrael. He also left behind many manuscripts on "traditional" Torah subjects, and some of his commentaries are published in the back of the standard Vilna edition of the Talmud. (Some of his larger works were first published in the 1970's and 80's.) He also kept a diary, which he closed with the words: "I am leaving for my world [i.e., Olam Habal] comforted that the Shechinah pines for those who love It. I feel that the three part cord - the Torah, the Holy One, blessed is He, and Yisrael - is in the process of being tied again." (Encyclopedia La'chassidut p.643)

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The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ('lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah'), and your letters are appreciated. Web archives at **Torah.org** start with 5758 (1997) and may be retrieved from the [Hamaayan](#) page. Text archives from 1990 through the present may be retrieved from <http://www.acoast.com/~sehc/hamaayan/>.

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