

BEFORE YOU REBUKE

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In this week's Parashah, Moshe Rabbeinu begins his farewell address. R' Shlomo Ephraim z"l of Lenshitz (author of the Torah commentary Kli Yakar and other works; died 1619) writes that our verses demonstrate three characteristics of successful rebuke: First, one must correct his own behavior before he rebukes others; otherwise, he will lack credibility. Second, he must combine his rebuke with praise and compliments; otherwise, the intended recipient will become overly defensive. Third, he should cloak his rebuke in hints so that he won't embarrass those he is rebuking, as we read (Vayikra 19:17), "You shall rebuke your fellow and do not bear a sin because of him." Each of these is found in our Parashah:

Our Parashah opens: "These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Yisrael." The fact that he spoke in front of "all" of Bnei Yisrael suggests that he cleansed himself of any imperfections before speaking. Otherwise, with all of Bnei Yisrael present, it would be inevitable that someone would say, "How can you rebuke us when you did such-and-such?"

The verse continues: "Across the Jordan, concerning the Wilderness, concerning the Aravah, opposite the Sea of Reeds, between Paran and Tophel, and Lavan, and Chatzerot, and Di Zahav." Rashi z"l comments that some of these are not real places; rather they are hints to sins Bnei Yisrael committed.

Lastly, Moshe spoke good of Bnei Yisrael: "Hashem, your Elokim, has multiplied you and behold! you are like the stars of heaven in abundance. May Hashem, the Elokim of your forefathers, add to you a thousand times yourselves, and bless you as He has spoken of you." (Ir Gibborim)

"Eileh ha'devarim / These are the words that Moshe spoke to all of Yisrael . . . eleven days from

Chorev . . .” (Devarim 1:1-2)

Literally, “Chorev” is another name for Har Sinai. R’ Shlomo Ephraim z”l of Lenshitz (see front page) notes the similarity of the Hebrew words “Chorev” and “Churban” and suggests that the phrase, “eleven days from Chorev,” alludes to the eleven days on which we mourn the Churban / destruction of the Temple. They are: the 10th of Tevet, the 17th of Tammuz, and the first nine days of Av. He adds: Because this interpretation is far from the Pshat, I have kept it brief. (Kli Yakar)

R’ Chaim Aryeh Lerner z”l (1893-1977, rabbi in Leordina, Romania and Brooklyn, N.Y.) writes: Based on the Kli Yakar’s observation, we can identify a connection between the end of last week’s Parashah and the beginning of this week’s Parashah, which is always read on the Shabbat preceding Tisha B’Av. The Gemara (Shabbat 119b) teaches that the Churban / destruction of Yerushalayim happened because its inhabitants transgressed the Shabbat. R’ Lerner writes: The first two words of our Parashah (“Eileh ha’devarim”) allude to Shabbat observance. The Gematria of “Eileh” is 36. “Devarim” / “the words” is plural, which indicates at least two. Finally, the superfluous letter “heh” adds one more thing. Together, 36+2+1 equals 39, the number of Melachot / categories of constructive activity prohibited on Shabbat. This connects our verse with last week’s Parashah, which ended with the story of the daughters of Tzelofchad. Tzelofchad, our Sages teach, was the wood-gatherer (see Bemidbar 15:32), the first person ever put to death for transgressing the Shabbat. (Imrei Chaim Tinyana)

“I said Aleichem / to you at that time, saying, ‘I cannot carry you alone.’” (1:9)

R’ Yaakov ben Asher z”l (1269-1343; Germany and Spain; author of the Arba’ah Turim, one of the most influential Halachic works in Jewish history) writes: The word “Aleichem / to you” is missing a letter “yud.”. The Gematria of “yud” is ten, and the missing “yud” alludes to the ten times that Moshe Rabbeinu rebuked Bnei Yisrael and the ten times that his death is mentioned in Tanach. [They are: Devarim 4:22, 31:14, 31:27, 31:29, 32:50, 33:1, 34:5, 34:7; Yehoshua 1:1, 1:2.] (Ba’al Ha’turim)

R’ Chaim Zaitchik z”l (1906-1989; Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Bet Yosef-Novardok in Buczacz, Ukraine; later in Israel) notes: It would seem that mentioning Moshe Rabbeinu’s death ten times is an atonement for the ten times that he rebuked the Jewish People. There can be no question that Moshe Rabbeinu rebuked his flock lovingly and for their own good. Even so, his rebuke caused pain to the Jewish People, and that necessarily requires some degree of atonement. (Ohr Chadash)

The Three Weeks

R’ Yechezkel Sarna z”l (1890-1969; Rosh Yeshiva of the Chevron Yeshiva in Yerushalayim) lists thirty items/areas to which one should pay particular attention during the period of the “Three Weeks,”

each with a source in the Book of Eichah, the text of the Tisha B'Av Kinnot, or the Talmud. (Items 1-9 were presented last week.) The list includes:

10. Recognizing and believing that Hashem acts toward us Middah-K'negged-Middah / measure-for-measure.

11. Recognizing that greater people are punished more severely for their sins. This is alluded to in the Kinnah "Zechor Asher Asah Tzar Bifnim," which compares the fates of Nadav and Avihu, on the one hand, and the Roman General Titus, on the other hand. The former died immediately when they entered the Ohel Mo'ed without permission, while the latter entered the Holy of Holies and committed immoral acts there with seeming impunity.

12. Sharing in the Shechinah's "pain." [Hashem is, so-to-speak, pained by the fact that He created the world in order to share His goodness with us, but our sins frustrate His plans.]

13. Sharing in the troubles of our fellow Jews and helping them carry their "burdens."

16. Remembering the great care that righteous people must take not to be caught up in the sins of the generation's scoffers. This is alluded to in the Kinnah regarding King Yoshiyahu, which states that he did become entrapped by the sins of that group.

17. Recognizing the severity of sinning against other people, especially embarrassing them. This is learned from the consequences of the story of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza (Gittin 57a).

18. Feeling awe and honor for "temples of Torah" and "minor temples," i.e., Batei Medrash and Batei Kneset. These are the places where the Shechinah resides during the period of exile.

19. Taking care not to cry over things that do not deserve to be cried over. This is learned from the Gemara (Ta'anit 29a) which teaches that the night when Bnei Yisrael cried over the Spies' report was the ninth of Av. Hashem said, "You cried for nothing? I will give you a reason to cry!" [Ever since, the ninth of Av has been the date of repeated calamities.]

25. "Tzidduk Ha'din" / acknowledging the justice of any suffering that Hashem brings upon us--a recurring theme in Eichah and the Kinnot.

28. Recognizing the need to repent in times of trouble, as we read in Eichah (3:39-41), "Of what shall a living man complain? A strong man for his sins. Let us search and examine our ways and return to Hashem. Let us lift our hearts with our hands to Kel in heaven." (Daliot Yechezkel p.266)

A Torah Tour of the Holy Land

The Mishnah (Middot 2:2) states: "The area of Har Ha'bayit / the Temple Mount is 500 Amot by 500 Amot." Har Ha'bayit had a wall, and in it were five gates: two on the south and one on each of the other sides. Each gate was 20 Amot tall and 10 Amot wide. Authorities differ whether the thickness of

the wall was counted in the 500 Amot.

Today, the Temple Mount enclosure is not a square, but a quadrilateral. The northern wall is longer than the southern wall, and the western wall is longer than the eastern wall. Thus, its sides are not parallel to each other. While Halachic authorities disagree as to the length of an Amah in today's measurements, all agree that the length of the present-day Temple Mount enclosure is more than 500 Amot. The width of the enclosure at the Dome of the Rock is 298 meters, which is approximately 500 Amot according to one opinion.

The common explanation for the difference between the area of Har Ha'Bayit as described in the Mishnah and that of the current Temple Mount enclosure is that the 500x500 area referred to in the Mishnah is the area that was sanctified when the First Bet Hamikdash was built. The dimensions we see today result from an expansion of the Temple Mount in the Second Temple era. Some attribute this to Shimon Ha'Chashmona'i, whose fortification of the Temple Mount is described in the Book of Maccabees. The place where the original wall meets the extension can be seen along the eastern wall, near the southern end. On the western side, the dividing line was obscured during King Herod's renovations.

In the time of the Chashmona'im, the northern wall of the Temple Mount was also the northern wall of the city. Outside the northern wall, a deep moat was dug to provide added protection. In order to conquer Yerushalayim in 63 B.C.E. [approximately 135 years before the Second Temple was destroyed by Titus], the Roman General Pompey filled-in that moat. Pompey also destroyed the bridge that connected the western gate of the Temple Mount with the Upper City [today's Old City]. (Encyclopedia Talmudit: Otzar Yerushalayim Ve'hamikdash p.293)