

# A Taste of Text: Source based learning for Shabbat

*This weekly sheet is brought to you by Rabbi Dr. Moshe Freedman of the New West End United Synagogue in conjunction with Shapell's/Darché Noam*

## PARSHAT DEVARIM

### DVAR TORAH: WHY DID MOSHE AGREE TO SEND THE SPIES?

Moshe, when he recounts the story of the sending of the spies, says, ותקרבוני אלי כולכם, “All of you came close to me . . .” Rashi explains that this formulation indicates that they came to Moshe as a disorganized group, young people pushing aside the elderly, and old people pushing aside the leaders. But what was Moshe trying to get across by mentioning this point? And why did this lack of derech erez, respectfulness, surface here during the sin of the spies?

Harav Yaakov Kamenetsky, זצ"ל, suggests that Moshe’s critique cut much more deeply. Moshe observed that the people came to him frantically, with confused fear, disorganized and in a panic. They lacked trust in G-d. Had they trusted in G-d they would have acted differently, following standard procedure. Their leaders would have presented their case to Moshe in an orderly fashion. Moshe thus showed them, as he recounted the story here in Devarim, that the source of their sin was a lack of trust in G-d and His abilities.

However, this raises another, more powerful question. If the source of their request was lack of trust, why did Moshe assent? He should have stopped the process at that point and refused to send spies.

The answer lies in a principle the Ramban sets down in his commentary on Vayikra (26:11). The amount of human initiative a person should put into his practical life is directly proportional to his degree of trust in G d. For instance, because we are not on the level of total and absolute trust in G-d, we use doctors and this worldly medicine. But there is an ideal reserved for a few of our greatest tzadikim and for some historical periods (like the Jews in the desert) to have the high level of trust in G d where human involvement is left to the bare minimum. Moshe thought the Jewish People were on that high level.

But once he perceived that the nation was on a lower level of bitachon, trust, than he had thought, he realized that the conquering of the land of Israel would also have to work differently than planned. Originally, the land was to be conquered in an extremely Divine-centered, highly miraculous way. Now, though, it was clear that they would not succeed unless they acted in the way armies usually do. That would include scouting out the territory and planning a military strategy (for Israel this also includes consulting the Urim Vetumim – see how Rav Yaakov weaves this into his commentary). Therefore, Moshe agreed to send the spies, for now they really needed them.

Lack of trust in Hashem breeds panic and fright; panic causes disorganization, chaos, and confusion; and chaos results in mob-like behavior where “the young push the elderly and the elderly push aside the leaders.” Moshe saw how the nation was acting and realized its source. He realized that the nation’s trust in G d was not appropriate for the miraculous conquest originally planned – and therefore assented to the spies. But there is a flip-side to the sin of the spies: Trust in Hashem creates calm and composure, even in the face of adversity and challenge. That calm leads to orderly, thought-out, and deliberate action. When good people don’t panic, they can retain their natural atmosphere of respectfulness, deference, and derech erez.

## SOURCE GUIDE: HOW WILL WE BE REDEEMED?

The haftarah of Shabbat Chazon ends with “Zion shall be redeemed through justice, and its exiles through tzedakah (righteousness or charity)” (Yishayahu 1:27). This verse is the basis for the Talmudic statement: Jerusalem will only be redeemed through tzedakah (Sanhedrin 98a). Question: **Why, of all the 613 mitzvot, is tzedakah the one that will bring the redemption?** This source guide is built on two solutions to this problem, one based on a drashah of Harav Yosef Halevi Soloveitchik, זצ״ל, (1820-1892, the rav of Brisk, also known as the *Beis Halevi*, the title of his responsa and commentaries), and the second drawing from a teaching of his grandson, Harav Yitzchak Zev Halevi Soloveitchik, זצ״ל, (1886-1959, known as the Brisker Rov).

### A. Sources

Our haftarah, whose main body is a sharp critique of Jerusalem’s spiritual and moral state, still ends with a prophecy of redemption:

<p><b>1. Yishayahu 1:26-27</b>                  (26) I will return your judges as they once were and your advisors as at first. Afterwards you will be called the city of justice, a trustworthy city. (27) Zion will be redeemed through justice, and its exiles (according to Radak, penitents according to Rashi) through righteousness (or charity – see below).</p>	<p><b>ישעיה א:כו-כז</b>                  (כו) וְאַשִׁיבָה שְׁפָטֶיךָ כְּבָרְאשְׁנָה וְיַעֲצִיבֶיךָ כְּבַתְחִלָּה אַחֲרַי כֵּן יִקְרָא לְךָ עִיר הַצְדָקָה קָרְיָה נְאֻמָּה. (כז) צִיּוֹן בְּמִשְׁפַּט תִּפְדָּה וְשָׁבִיָּה בְּצִדְקָה.</p>
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This verse, says Ulla in the Gemara, teaches us how the redemption will come:

<p><b>2. Sanhedrin 98a</b>                  Ulla said: Jerusalem will only be redeemed through tzedakah, as it says, “Zion will be redeemed through justice, and its exiles through righteousness.”</p>	<p><b>סנהדרין צח.</b>                  אמר עולא אין ירושלים נפדית אלא בצדקה שנאמר, “ציון במשפט תפדה ושביה בצדקה.”</p>
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### B. Solution 1 – Two Types of Redemption

In one of his drashot (Drush 16) he describes two possible scenarios for the final redemption – one, where the Jews merit salvation because of their own righteousness and a second where the Jews are saved only because of how low the rest of the world sinks. He harnesses a number of verses and midrashim to prove and develop this point.

But he adds one qualification for this second type of redemption, that Israel itself must retain a certain level of righteousness. Hashem agrees to redeem the people of Israel when He is – so to speak – horrified by how the world’s poor are treated: Because of the plunder of the poor, from the cry of the destitute, now I will rise up and give them salvation ...”(Tehillim 12:6). But Israel themselves – even if they are not worthy of redemption because of their own merits – must at least not have stooped so low that their own poor have been ignored and cry out. “Israel is only redeemed through tzedakah (translated as ‘charity’) so they can at least allow Hashem to bring the redemption because of the world’s sorry state.

### C. Solution 2 – Tzedakah and Belief

There seems to be a contradiction between Ulla’s statement and one quoted in the Mechilta (Beshalach), “The exiles will only return because of [Israel’s] trust in Hashem.” What will bring the redemption – trust or tzedakah? The Brisker Rov is quoted as saying that hesitation to give tzedakah is not only a symptom of stinginess, but also of lack in trust that Hashem will provide. If one trusts that G-d is the source of all abundance he will not worry about a perceived financial strain coming from keeping the halachot of tzedakah. It follows (see Rinat Yitzchak on our Haftarah, p. 198) that these two statements are two sides of the same coin: Israel will be redeemed through tzedakah, and also through their trust in Hashem that creates the spiritual openness to give tzedakah.

## THE POWER OF REAL TEARS BY RABBI ASHER BRANDER

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Chormah. The name doesn't ring many bells – but it is a sad place – a very sad place. It's another good reason to read Devarim before Tisha B'av. Here's the story: *"But you were unwilling to go up, and you defied Hashem, your G-d. You grumbled in your tents and said, 'Because of Hashem's hatred of us, He took us out of the land of Egypt to put us in the hand of the Emorite to destroy us.' Hashem said, 'That [no] man will see – of these men, this wicked generation – the good land that I swore to give to your forefathers.' And each of you girded his weapons, and you got ready to go up the mountain. I told you, but you did not obey. You defied Hashem, and deliberately went up the hill. The Emorites came out – those who live in those hills – toward you, and chased you as the bees do; and they crushed you in Se'ir until Chormah. You returned and wept before Hashem, but Hashem did not accept your prayer"* (Devarim 1:34-46).

A simple question: Bnei Yisrael, why do you cry? Why storm the mountains? You so much wanted to not go into Eretz Yisrael. You cried not to go into the land (Bamidbar 14:1). You got what you davened for and you still cry?!

Go back some 325 years earlier to another dramatic cry scene: It was when Yitzchak had finished blessing Yaakov, and Yaakov had just left the presence of Yitzchak, his father, that Eisav came back from his trapping. Yitzchak, his father, said to him, "Who are you?" He said, "I am your son, your firstborn, Eisav." Yitzchak was seized with a powerful trembling; and said, "Who, then, is he who trapped [deer] and brought it to me?" When Eisav heard his father's words, he wailed a most loud and bitter cry, and he said to his father, "Bless me too, my father." [Eisav] said, "Have you not saved a blessing for me?" Eisav said to his father, "Do you have only one blessing, my father? Bless me too, my father," and Eisav raised his voice and wept (Bereishis, 27:30-40). Eisav's cry penetrates the heart and leaves a lasting impact. To this very day, we may still suffer from those cries.

Another simple question: Eisav, Eisav explain your tears! Didn't you sell the birthright for good reasons – you despised it: *"Eisav said, 'Here I am about to die, what [good] is this birthright to me.' He swore to him, and sold his birthright to Yaakov. Yaakov then gave Eisav bread and a pottage of lentils. He [Eisav] ate and drank, got up and left. Eisav scorned the birthright"* (Bereishis 25:32-34).

One final question: A beautiful piece of Talmud (Berachos 32b) relates that the gates of tears are never locked. The Kotzker Rebbe asked: Why are there gates (similar to "Why there are locks on the doors of 7-11s")?

Rabbi Avraham Willig once shared with me an approach that cuts to the core of human emotions. There are so many reasons to cry. Just ask a baby, a kallah, a mourner or a mother. Jews, obviously, do not have a monopoly on tears. But neither tears nor passion are a litmus test of truth. The mother of Sisera also cried for her boy. PETA cries for the donkey blown up in a failed terrorist attack. Islamic Jihad mothers also cry. Said the Kotzker, the gates of tears are locked to false tears.

Apparently, then – there are tears and there are tears, a point so aptly noted by the Rabbis in their characterization of Tisha B'av (Taanis 28b): "אתם בכיתם בכיה של חינוך אני אקבע לכם בכיה לדורות" "You wept in vain, I will establish it for you as a time of weeping for all generations."

Tell me, did you ever meet someone that cried without reason or one who possessed baseless hatred? The only people I ever spoke with that cried or hated without basis were the other people. Yet the Rabbis use the same term for both – chinam. Further, they teach that the Second Temple was destroyed because of baseless hatred.

Apparently, the human ability to fabricates truths and create needs is uncanny. As molders of our own destiny, we run the risk of hinging our existence on facades of falsehood and artificial needs. The Jews at the end of the Second Commonwealth were a fractured bunch. Read the Talmudic sources in Gittin and one gets a sense of the scope. A personal interview of any of the main players in the schism (the Biryonim, Bar Kamtza, Saducees, etc.) would surely have revealed rationales for hatred. Ultimately, Chazal call this *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred – because unvarnished from its personal agenda, that’s what it was.

Eisav was a busy man, He had places to be, worlds to conquer and empires to build. He couldn’t be bothered with the detailed spirituality of the bechorah, the birthright. It held him back. Klal Yisrael didn’t want Eretz Yisrael – for whatever reason. Maybe they were scared. Maybe it was great in the desert. Their cry was a rejection of Eretz Yisrael.

Both Eisav and Klal Yisrael convinced themselves that it was bad. But these were delusions. Later, it all came crashing down. When it was finally taken away, what did Eisav do? He cried. In his heart of hearts he knew what was right and where he should be. Alas it was too late. When Klal Yisrael realized that Eretz Yisrael was taken off the table, it finally dawned on them what they had done. They cried, mourned and cajoled, but it was too late.

Tisha B'av is about undoing what is ultimately baseless crying and purposeless hatred. It's about personal and national redemption. It's about taking personal responsibility and recognizing what is ultimately important in our lives and having the courage to face the difficult reflective questions that form the stuff of life. Have we been honest in our assessments of other people and ourselves? For what do we cry? For what should we cry?

When we figure that out, it will be a joyous cry. When we figure it out as a nation then we will merit the fulfillment of the verse "אז ימלא שחוק פינו ולשונינו רינה" – “Then our mouths will be full of mirth and our tongues will cry with joy” (Tehillim 126:2). May it come so soon!

This issue is dedicated in memory of  
Miriam bat Yaakov, ז"ל

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*This publication is compiled by the staff and Rabbonim at **Shapells/Yeshivat Darché Noam** for men and **Midreshet Rachel v'Chaya Seminary** for women in Jerusalem. Find out more about the **married couples' programme** and the **Pathways Israel** and **Pathways Plus** programmes offered at [www.darchenoam.org](http://www.darchenoam.org) +972-2-651-1178, 5 Beit Hakerem Street, Jerusalem.*

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