

Beit Hamidrash Hameir Laarets | Issue 222

**Devarim** | Irritation – The Source of Destruction



# MESILOT

## *Pathways to the Soul*

Illuminating teachings and insights on the weekly Parsha  
of **Rabbi Yoram Michael Abargel Zt"l**

From the weekly lessons of his son  
**Rabbi Yisrael Abargel Shlita**



# ...PATHWAYS TO THE SOUL...

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# **Parshat Devarim**

## **Opening Words**

Yitzchak had been serving as the Torah reader in the synagogue near his home for many years. And needless to say, habit has its effect — everything seemed natural and straightforward to him. That's why he was quite surprised at himself when one day, Yossi, his neighbor's son, knocked on his door.

"My father," Yossi began, "sent me to ask you a question they asked us today in class."

"What's the question?"

"Today in class, we learned a ruling from the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim, 428:4): Parshat Devarim is always read

before Tisha B'Av, and Parshat Va'etchanan is always read afterward. Our teacher said the reason is that Parshat Devarim contains a verse associated with the destruction of the Temple — namely, 'How can I alone carry your trouble, your burden, and your disputes?' (Deuteronomy 1:12).<sup>1</sup> Since it is fitting at this time, it is read before Tisha B'Av, and it follows that the next Torah portion of Va'etchanan is always read afterward."

"Our teacher finished his explanation, and then a small hand went up at the back of the classroom:"

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### *Wellsprings of Wisdom*

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1. To quote 'Machzor Vitri' (Keriot and Haftarot – Zayin):

The Shabbat following the seventeenth of Tammuz, we read as Haftara "Divrei Yirmiyahu."

We adjust the weekly Torah portions by shortening, lengthening, arranging,

combining, or separating portions so that the portion at the beginning of the book, "Eileh HaDevarim," will be read on the Shabbat preceding Tisha B'Av, and on the Shabbat following Tisha B'Av, "Va'etchanan" is read.



## Parshat Devarim - Opening Words

“‘Rabbi,’ said a classmate, ‘My father taught me yesterday that on the morning of Tisha B’Av, we read a section from Parshat Va’etchanan, starting with the words: “When you beget children and grandchildren.” (Deuteronomy 4:25);<sup>2</sup> this reading is chosen because it contains a prophecy of future destruction.’

“‘So,’ the classmate continued, ‘I don’t understand. In Parshat Devarim, we have the verse “How can I alone carry,” which fits the theme of destruction, but in Parshat Va’etchanan we also have a prophecy of destruction “When you beget children.”’

Each portion thus has its own connection to the theme of Tisha B’Av; why then did the Sages prefer to designate Parshat Devarim as the one to precede Tisha B’Av?”

“The teacher,” Yossi continued, “didn’t know what to answer, and after thinking long and hard, he asked us to try and find the answer ourselves.”

“So I asked my father, and he said: Go ask the neighbor — he’s been reading the Torah for many years, and he most likely would know.”

“So here I am.”

Yitzchak looked kindly at Yossi and said, “Give me a few minutes to think.”

Yossi left the house, and Yitzchak pulled several of the books off his shelf and laid them out on the table.

Thank G-d, in the end, he found an answer — and here it is, for your study as well.

But before we answer, a short preface.

### Wellsprings of Wisdom

2. As stated in the Gemara (Megillah 31b): “On Tisha B’Av itself, what do we read? Abaye said, nowadays the custom is to read ‘Ki Tolid Banim,’ and as Haftara, the passage of ‘Asof Asifeim.”

In Masechet Sofrim (17:7), it says: “On the fast of Tisha B’Av and the last seven fast days of drought, we read the blessings and curses (of Parshat Bechukotai).”



## The Magic Lantern

One device that was common several decades ago was a lantern known as a “magic lantern.” Unlike regular lanterns, it didn’t illuminate the surroundings — but rather projected an image that was inside it.

Inside the lantern were placed pictures or film, and when the lantern was turned on, those internal images were projected onto a wall or screen.

Now imagine if such a lantern fell into our hands — we’d be overwhelmed with curiosity to see what’s inside.

We’re not merely reminiscing about earlier times. This serves as a preface to understand a teaching from Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe (Alei Shur, Part I, page 162):

"Everyone's powers and character traits lie deeply embedded in the soul and are usually hidden from conscious awareness. Even with great attention and reflection, one may not always be able to identify which traits are influencing his actions.

Not only are one’s traits hidden from view; impressions, fleeting thoughts, and entire systems of reasoning and emotions fill the depths of a person’s soul — without him even knowing it — and they shape his actions and interactions with his surroundings.

They are often what causes fear and agitation, depression, and emotional distancing — yet the person remains unaware of the true cause behind these moods.

How, then, can one access these depths and discover what truly lies within the heart?

After much searching, we have found that one of the most effective ways to do so lies in a psychological phenomenon that can be described by no other name than - a magic lantern. Through this phenomenon, we can detect hidden processes that lie within the secrets of our heart's inner chambers."

Bubbling beneath the surface, in the hidden recesses of the heart,



many and innumerable emotions and thoughts swarm, and every now and then, that inner lava erupts with a powerful flame.

When this happens — when the fire of emotion and thought bursts forth — it influences our mental perception; suddenly, the external reality we are conscious of becomes painted in the color of that inner lava that we may not have been aware of.

If deep down we harbor a sense that the world around us is hostile and hateful, corrupt and empty, then at the next eruption of inner emotion, that will be the hue cast over all of reality.

If within us there's an active volcano of pressure, dread, fear, and anxiety, then at the next eruption of excitement or other emotional flare experience, that too will color all of our reality.

The objective truth is that the problem isn't with reality. The world is a healthy, joyful, and pleasant place; it is only because we, in our inner world, feel darkness and exile — that we have come to see the entire world around us in this way as well.

The moment we understand and discover that all this “negativity” is merely our own inner state — a psychological tendency to project flaws and emotional effects onto others — the nightmare of a hostile world will fade, and we'll once again live in a bright and wholesome reality.<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it turns out that the images and sights that are projected before us are in fact merely a reflection of what's happening within us.

To illustrate this further, let us bring an example.

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### Wellsprings of Wisdom

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**3.** The processes we are discussing occur in the hidden depths of the soul.

We should not think that by superficially examining the thoughts of our hearts we can readily reveal our inner self; rather,

great effort and genuine desire are required.

However, we must also remember that the Holy One, blessed be He, created this reality and empowered us — if we truly desire — to rectify it.



## Why Is Everyone Against Me ?

"You've got to hear what people are like these days," began a guest who had come to visit.

"Last week I had to attend a tour in Netanya. The tour was scheduled to begin at eight in the morning, and I counted on my neighbor from the building across the street to drive me on the way to his job at a factory in Netanya at the time he left every day - 7:15 AM. I had a guaranteed ride - or so I thought.

That morning, around seven o'clock, I sent my son over — just as a courtesy — to make sure

that I could join my neighbor. But what did the fellow say? 'Sorry, I have no room in my car.'

He ruined all my plans; if I had known earlier, I would have taken the bus. But since he told me at the last minute, I had no choice but to call a taxi — I absolutely had to get to the tour on time.

So there I am, in the cab on the way into Netanya, one eye on the meter watching the hole this ride is burning in my wallet, the other on the road. My brain is calculating what this whole mess, thanks to my neighbor, is going to cost me.

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### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

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To illustrate this point, by analogy: A popular Chinese tale tells of a widower living with his two daughters, who were exceptionally wise, curious, and asked many questions.

He could answer some questions, but not all, but since he wanted his daughters to be educated and knowledgeable, he sent them to visit an elderly, wise relative.

The old man could instantly answer all their questions and they determined to challenge him; one daughter brought a beautiful blue butterfly to test the elder.

"What do you plan to do with that lovely butterfly?" asked her sister. "I'll hold the butterfly in my hand and ask the wise old man if it is alive or dead. If he says it is dead, I'll open my hand and let it fly; if he says it is alive, I'll crush it in my hand."

They approached the old man, and one daughter asked: "In my hand is a beautiful blue butterfly. Tell us, wise elder, is it alive or dead?"

The old man smiled and replied, "It depends on you, my child. It is in your hands" ('Benoam Siyach' – Devarim, p. 27).



## Parshat Devarim - Why Is Everyone Against Me ?

And then, who passes us in his big American car ? My neighbor.

I sit up and glance into his car — and explode with rage. The car was completely empty; he was driving alone.

"What a stone-faced liar, what a miserly fellow !' I screamed in my heart," the guest continued.

"Would it have cost him anything to take me along ? I had to waste my money for nothing ?

I couldn't calm down the entire day. What villains walk among us; would it have cost him even a single extra coin to give me a ride ?

On top of his miserliness, he flat-out lied.

What especially infuriated me the most was his hypocrisy. He always acts like a gentleman.

Sometimes, when he sees me coming home, he pulls up and offers me a ride for the final 50 meters.

Hypocrite. That's the kind of world we live in — a world of lies.

For several years I had thought that my neighbor was a model of

decency, then one day, the mask was pulled off of his face.

Whenever he had any trouble filling out his income tax forms, he had no problem coming to me for help; I spent long hours assisting him as a favor.

So much for gratitude; honestly, I can't even look at him anymore."

My guest's voice had become hoarse. He picked up a glass of water and took a sip. He was visibly upset, and his hand trembled as he held the glass.

He continued:

"It's deeply disappointing to discover that a good neighbor has such a bad character and such low morals.

There's more: When I got home later that day, my wife told me that just two minutes after I had left in the morning with the taxi, the neighbor showed up on our third floor and asked for me. He apologized and explained that initially, he had planned to take his sales manager and some buyers with him to Netanya, but just a few minutes earlier, he had



**Parshat Devarim - The Sin of the Spies — A Story Without End**

received a call that the meeting was canceled, so he came up to invite me to join him and profusely apologized.

What a show; who can you even trust these days?"

To our point: Inside this guest's heart was a void — a place that couldn't fathom making space and doing things for others.

His inner "magic lantern" projected exactly that onto his neighbor — "That evil neighbor surely doesn't have any room for me in his car."

If only the guest had refrained from judging others — lest his own flaw be exposed.

In effect, his magic lantern was projecting his own defect outward and attributing it to someone else."

Rabbi Wolbe continues:

"Indeed, we find the concept of the magic lantern clearly reflected in the Torah."

Before quoting his words, let us offer a preface.

**The Sin of the Spies — A Story Without End**

Our Parshah, Parshat Devarim, opens the Book of Deuteronomy — the book in which Moses spoke to the people of Israel in his final days.

It begins: "These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suf, between Paran and Tophel and Laban and Hazeroth and Di-Zahav; eleven days from Horeb by way of Mount Seir to Kadesh Barnea" (Deuteronomy 1:1–2).

At first glance, these verses seem to give us the name of the location where Moses spoke.

But there had not been any place that was known with all of these names combined. So what's the meaning behind these verses?

Rashi explains: "Because these are words of rebuke, and he mentions here all the places where the Jewish people angered the Al-mighty, he therefore veiled the references, mentioning



them only allusively — out of respect for the Jewish people."

In other words: Moses, at the end of his life, wished to rebuke the people of Israel for all the misdeeds they had committed during their forty years in the wilderness. But

he also wanted to preserve their dignity. So he rebuked them by hinting at the names of the places where they had erred, trusting they would understand.<sup>4</sup>

Rashi continues, interpreting each location:

### Wellsprings of Wisdom

4. Moses, through his rebuke, paved a path for salvation for all generations.

In this connection, we relate the following story:

A chassid once came to Rabbi Shlomo HaKohen of Radomsk, the author of "Tiferet Shlomo," complaining of his poor state.

He had a daughter at marriageable age and no resources.

The chassid handed the rabbi a note describing his poverty, whereupon the tzaddik asked the man: "You worry about marrying off your daughter? Tell me, do you have bread to eat?"

The man stammered, answering, "Truthfully, I don't even have bread."

The tzaddik asked: "But don't you recite 'HaMotzi' every day? Do you not have bread to bless 'HaMotzi' on?"

The man replied: "My main source of livelihood is from my wife, who works and earns a little."

The tzaddik asked: "And how does your wife earn?"

"She goes to the 'courtyards' of nobles, selling vegetables, and makes a bit of money," replied the man.

"If so," said the tzaddik, "It's written, 'And Hazeroth and Di-Zahav' (Devarim 1:1) — (interpreting the verse literally to mean) if one goes to the 'courtyards,' there will be 'enough gold.' Go home in peace, and may G-d help your wife succeed with 'enough gold.'"

The man returned home, and some time later, his wife brought home a bundle she found lying in the mud on her way to sell her produce.

Opening it, they discovered three hundred gold coins, a significant sum in those days.

They allocated 150 gold coins for a dowry and wedding expenses, and with the remainder, the man conducted business and financially prospered all of his days (Sippurei Chassidim, Torah vol. 2, p. 187).



**Parshat Devarim - The Sin of the Spies — A Story Without End**

"In the wilderness" — a hint to when they complained, saying: "Would that we had died by the hand of the L-rd in Egypt; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this entire assembly with hunger" (Exodus 16:3).

"In the Arabah" — a reference to the sin with Baal Peor, in the plains (Arabah) of Moab.

"Opposite Suf" — they rebelled at the Red Sea, both upon arriving and leaving: "Were there no graves in Egypt that you took us to die in the wilderness?" (Exodus 14:11); and: "They rebelled at the sea, at the Red Sea" (Psalms 106:7).

"Between Paran" — a reference to the incident of the spies in the wilderness of Paran.

"And Tophel and Laban" — they slandered ('Tophel') the manna (which was white, 'laban'), saying: "Our soul loathes this miserable bread" (Numbers 21:5).

"Hazereth" — refers to Korach's rebellion and to the sin of speaking lashon hara, not

learning from Miriam's error; all of which occurred in Hazeroth.

"Di-Zahav" — a reference to the sin of the Golden Calf, which was made due to their abundance of gold: "I lavished silver and gold upon her, and they made it into a G-d" (Hosea 2:10).

"Eleven days from Horeb... to Kadesh Barnea" — G-d wished to bring you into the Land of Israel quickly, but because of your sins, a journey of eleven days took forty years, causing Him great sorrow.

The following verses detail the subjugation of Sihon and Og, the command to journey toward and conquer the Land, the appointment of judges, and the Jewish people's march to the border of the Holy Land.

Then comes a long section — consisting of 42 verses (Deuteronomy 1:21–45) — entirely about the sin of the spies and its consequences.

This raises a question: Why did Moses return to discuss this sin in such great detail when he



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had already alluded to it earlier ("between Paran" hinting at the spies), something that he didn't do for all of the other sins.

Furthermore, an entire Parshah — Shelach — is dedicated to the

tale of the sin of the spies. Why then, was it repeated here?

To answer these questions, we must once again examine the nature of the sin of the spies.

**The Sin of the Spies — A Catastrophic Blow**

On the fiftieth day after the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, they received the Torah at the foot of Mount Sinai.

The great moment of the Sinai Revelation came to an end — but the Israelites did not move on.

They remained encamped at the mountain for about 355 days, and only in the second year after leaving Egypt, on the 20th of Iyar, did they resume their journey.

Moses gathered the Israelites and said to them: "We are about to arrive in the Land of Israel, the wonderful and magnificent land, of which it is said: 'A land that the L-rd your G-d cares for; the eyes of the L-rd your G-d are always upon it, from the

beginning of the year to the end of the year'" (Deuteronomy 11:12).

Whereupon the Jewish people approached Moses and said: "Moses, we would like to send spies to scout out the land."

On the 29th of Sivan, the spies set out, and for forty days they toured the Land, returning on the eve of the 9th of Av.

The Maharsha explains (Taanit 29a):

All of the elders of Israel gathered around them, eager and attentive, waiting to hear their report.

And the spies began their horror story: "The people who dwell in the Land are powerful, and the cities are very greatly fortified, and we also saw the



**Parshat Devarim - The Sin of the Spies — A Catastrophic Blow**

children of the giants there. Amalek dwells in the south of the Land; the Hittites, the Jebusites, and the Amorites dwell in the hill country; and the Canaanites dwell by the sea and along the Jordan" (Numbers 13:28–29).

The people's reaction to these words was dreadful. As it says:

"The entire community raised their voices and wept aloud, and the people wept that night. All the Israelites grumbled against Moses and Aaron, and the whole community said to them, 'If only we had died in Egypt, or in this wilderness, if only we had died.'" (Numbers 14:1–2).

They didn't stop there; they weren't content with their own bitterness — they wanted everyone to share in it.

They ran to their tents, gathered their young sons and daughters, and began to cry together.

The Midrash states:<sup>5</sup>

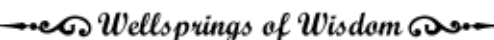
They sat in their tents and wept. They took their sons and told them: "Woe to you, poor afflicted ones — tomorrow they'll kill you, enslave you, and crucify you."

They took their daughters and said: "Woe to you, wretched girls — tomorrow they'll kill you or disgrace you with shame."

A dark atmosphere descended upon the camp of the Jewish people — an air of hopelessness and despair, described by the Sages as "complaining."

As a result of the spies' report, the attribute of strict judgment was aroused against the Jewish people, and a decree was issued: no man over the age of 20 would enter the Land of Israel. All would die in the wilderness.

Thirty-eight years passed and that entire generation perished; then, in the fortieth year, a new generation emerged, as it is written: "The L-rd's anger



5. 'Pesikta Zutrata' (Devarim 1:27).



**Parshat Devarim - A Harmful Trait Called Complaining**

burned against the Jewish people, and He made them wander in the wilderness forty years until the entire generation

that had done evil in His sight was gone" (Numbers 32:13).

Before we continue, let us pause to reflect for a moment.

**A Harmful Trait Called Complaining**

The emotional phenomenon that emerged in the Israelite camp after hearing the spies' report is referred to in the Torah as "complaining," as it says: "And you complained in your tents" (Deuteronomy 1:27).

Like all emotional phenomena, complaining can appear on two levels: between a person and G-d and between a person and others.

Between a Person and G-d:

Rabbi Eliezer Shlomo Schick writes (collected from his commentary on Pirkei Avot 5:4):

"Our ancestors were tested with a terrible trial: whether to complain or not.

This test recurs in every generation, in every place, and in every person. G-d is good and bestows good upon all. He is merciful toward His creations.

Yet people, because of their many sins, become spiritually and mentally dulled and begin to question G-d and fall into grumbling and complaints.

There is no one who does not, at some point, struggle with doubts about G-d's ways.

Because of our many sins, each person experiences troubles and suffering, bitterness and hardship, poverty and distress.

Everyone bears some painful burden — be it from himself, his children, or his spouse; and the most bitter of all is the inner suffering — sadness, bitterness, and depression.

Sometimes a person is overtaken by thoughts of heresy or apostasy — thoughts that completely destroy him; this is something that can affect every Jew, knowingly or unknowingly.



Parshat Devarim - A Harmful Trait Called Complaining

When doubts about G-d's providence creep in, it is truly a test from the Holy One Himself.

One must strengthen oneself with simple faith in G-d and believe that everything G-d does is for the good, as it says: 'In order to afflict you and test you — to benefit you in your end' (Deuteronomy 8:16).<sup>6</sup>

We must have complete faith that everything that happens comes from G-d.

Nothing — neither large nor small — occurs on its own; it is rather solely through the supervision of the Divine.

Therefore, we must strengthen ourselves with even greater force, never questioning or

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

6. In Sefer HaTanya (Iggeret HaKodesh – section 11), this matter is explained as follows:

"Accepting the bad with joy is based upon pure and true faith in the Creator, who created existence ex nihilo, known as 'Reishit Chochma' — and His wisdom is beyond comprehension by any creation.

This creation continues every moment, sustaining all creations from nothingness through His blessed wisdom, giving life to all. When a person deeply contemplates and visualizes his constant creation from nothing at every single moment, how can he even conceive that something is bad or that he suffers hardships with children, health, livelihood, or any other hardship in this world? Indeed, the nothingness (from which all was created) — which is G-d's wisdom — is the source of life, goodness, and pleasure and is the heavenly Eden that surpasses that of the world to come.

Only because it is beyond comprehension does one perceive it as evil or suffering. Yet truly, no evil descends from above; all is good, merely beyond our grasp due to its infinite goodness.

This is the core of the faith for which humanity was created — to believe that "no place is devoid of Him" and that "in the light of the King's face is life," thus "strength and joy are in His place," since He is entirely good.

Therefore, first and foremost, one must always rejoice, living genuinely in faith in G-d, who sustains and benevolently treats him at every moment.

Anyone who becomes sad or complains reveals he believes he has some evil or suffering and lacks some good, which is akin to heresy, Heaven forbid. Hence, the sages of Kabbalah vehemently distanced themselves from the trait of sadness".



## Parshat Devarim - A Harmful Trait Called Complaining

doubting G-d, but instead always remember: ‘The L-rd is righteous in all His ways and kind in all His deeds’ (Psalms 145:17), and: ‘The Rock — His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice; a faithful G-d without wrongdoing, righteous and upright is He’ (Deuteronomy 32:4).

It is merely a person’s sins that distort his view of reality, leading to doubts and confusion.

Some people become so broken they even lash out at G-d out of anguish; but this, too, is part of the test — to see how they react when things don’t go as they hoped or planned.

In truth, a person must nullify himself before the Infinite One,

always offering thanks to G-d for the undeserved kindnesses He performs. The true believer — who sees no reality outside of G-d and recognizes His presence in every moment — sees only open miracles from G-d.

Simply existing in this world is a great miracle. Given the multitude of spiritual impediments and destructive forces that abound — illnesses and physical and spiritual dangers — no one is truly guaranteed survival, even for a moment.

Therefore, anyone who reflects upon G-d’s kindness must continually thank, praise, and glorify Him — for every step and every breath.”<sup>7</sup>

### *~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

7. We bring an excerpt from a talk by my esteemed father, Rabbi Yoram Abargel (Betzur Yarum, vol. 5, chapter 26):

They tell of a wealthy man who, in addition his great wealth, was also proficient in Torah study.

Each time he completed studying a tractate, he would come to the Maggid of Mezritch to inform him he had completed

a certain tractate and receive a blessing for the next one, thereby receiving direction and encouragement from the Rebbe.

Upon completing Tractate Berachot, he approached the Maggid and said, "Honored Rabbi, I more or less studied Tractate Berachot well, but one thing I couldn't grasp: it says there that a person must bless over misfortune just as he blesses over good fortune, and I can't understand how this can



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be. When someone earns a significant amount of money, he is very happy, but when he suffers a loss or receives a large fine, his feelings are completely different. How can one expect a person to be equally happy in both situations?"

The Maggid told him, "I will tell you what to do. There is someone who can explain it to you very well, his name is Rabbi Zusha, and he lives in Anipoli. He is a brilliant man, and it's worthwhile for you to go to him."

The wealthy man traveled there in his stately carriage, thinking along the way that if the rabbi had sent him there to learn a lesson about blessing G-d over the bad the same as over the good, Rabbi Zusha must surely be wealthy with a large guarded estate.

Upon arriving in Anipoli and being pointed in the direction where Rabbi Zusha lived, he found himself standing before a dilapidated hut at the edge of the town.

He knocked on the door, and Rabbi Zusha, the homeowner, opened the door with a wide grin.

The contrast revealed before him was stark; at the doorway stood Rabbi Zusha, his face glowing with shifting hues, radiating joy and humble awe. From his heart flowed streams of love toward all creations, enveloping his surroundings.

Yet behind him was a dismal material reality — a small and miserable house

with a few old crates serving as tables and chairs by day and as beds by night.

The man with the radiant face turned to him and asked, "What merit do I have that you came to visit me?"

The wealthy man replied, "The Maggid of Mezritch sent me to you. He said you could explain how one blesses over misfortune just as over good fortune."

When Rabbi Zusha heard this, he responded with great astonishment, "This is a very difficult task for me. I don't understand why the Maggid specifically sent you to me; after all, I have everything good and lack nothing. I've never seen misfortune nor suffered any hardships; how can I teach you how to accept them lovingly?"

Perhaps you should return to the rabbi and tell him that I don't understand why he sent you to me because I am a happy person and am always joyful and have suffered no misfortune."

As the wealthy man left Rabbi Zusha's home, he began to cry, thinking to himself, "With all my wealth, I haven't experienced even a thousandth of the joy that this Jew, living in such poverty and neglect, has. There are no signs of sadness on his face — he is simply happy and filled with joy." Then he understood why the rabbi had sent him specifically there, for Rabbi Zusha lived with genuine faith in G-d, who does only good, so much so that he did not feel he was suffering; he felt only the goodness within it. He therefore said that he had never suffered any hardships.



**Between Man and His Fellow**

Turning now to interpersonal relationships, the "Yad

HaKetana" (Hilchot De'ot, Chapter 10:37) explains:

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*Wellsprings of Wisdom*

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Conversely, some people have everything good at home yet remain filled with sorrow and grief because they constantly complain about every small thing that they lack.

The foundational idea is this: When a person feels that he is important and entitled to everything, every minor lack causes him sadness and depression, but when a person doesn't hold highly of himself and knows that he deserves nothing, joy can begin.

One can then appreciate even the smallest kindness that G-d bestows upon him, becoming joyful and filled with gratitude toward G-d.

This was Rabbi Zusha's feeling, and thus he was always joyful.

This is the aspiration a Jew should aim for: to live with pure faith in G-d and to know, believe, and internalize that G-d does only good for a person.

Strive with all your might never to complain, whether livelihood is abundant or scarce, whether studying is easy or hard; even if things at home are difficult, one must not complain.

One must strengthen oneself in every situation, never falling into sadness, for it enters the person into the category of spiritual death, lacking hope and vitality.

When Jacob, our forefather, the chosen among the patriarchs — was saddened and mourned over his son Joseph, the Divine Presence departed from him, and G-d did not speak with him for twenty-two years.

Only after hearing Joseph was alive did his spirit revive, as it is said: "And the spirit of Jacob their father revived" (Genesis 45:27), implying he was considered dead until then.

This is the essential point: whatever happens, one must never become embittered by any circumstance but accept everything joyfully. One must always think that his situation is better than others — G-d gave him intelligence, understanding, Torah, and so on; appreciate what you have, don't look at what little you lack.

A person might endure a bit of suffering in life, but it is what allows him to enter paradise; one must remain patient until the divine wrath passes and accept everything joyfully.

One must live with faith, feeling that G-d does only good for him, and feel that, thank G-d, his condition is excellent.

The demand from a person is to live with faith to such an extent that he is able to uplift everyone along with him.



A complainer is someone whose nature and habit is to constantly complain and grumble about others.

People never satisfy him, and their ways and behaviors are almost universally seen by him as flawed or disagreeable.

Even if his friend interacts with him sincerely, never intending harm, the complainer still consistently finds fault with him, criticizing his actions and words, always judging negatively, and interpreting innocent mistakes as intentional wrongdoings. A person who behaves in this way is called a complainer.

On this subject, the wisest of men said: "The words of a complainer are like wounds; they descend into the innermost parts" (Proverbs 18:8).

This means that the complainer portrays himself as if he is oppressed and injured as if weighed down by his friend's wrongdoing.

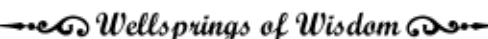
In truth, however, it is he himself who is inflicting harm since his harsh words pierce deeply. One who lodges complaints against another, especially undeservedly, and when the other has only done him good, stirs a great storm in the heart, and his words penetrate deeply, like sparks descending into one's innermost parts.

Indeed, it is evident from these words that the complainer's speech has the power to trigger a significant emotional upheaval in the hearts of listeners.

The saintly Rabbi Moshe David Vali elaborates that this "stormy phenomenon" manifested in the incident of the spies' sin:<sup>8</sup>

"And you murmured in your tents" (Deuteronomy 1:27) — they complained, along with their wives and children, whom they taught their negative views, thereby causing harm to themselves.

About them, the Torah says: "The words of a complainer are



8. In his book *Mishneh Lamelech* (p. 20).



## Parshat Devarim - Decoding the Image on the Wall

like wounds," "like wounds" in the Hebrew reflexive form, indicating they were actively affected and harmed by their negative speech.

Indeed, they fell into the power of the evil forces (*sitra achra*), listened to its temptation, and died in the desert.

Their harmful words penetrated their innermost being like the venom of the primordial serpent, driving away holiness and causing their death.

It is well-known that a person's

strength depends upon his heart; if the heart is strong and courageous, all of the limbs strengthen and are empowered by the light radiating from the heart. However, if the heart is weak and sickly, all of the limbs weaken and lose their strength, and soon find themselves unable to move.

This is precisely what the Israelites admitted when they said: "Our brethren have melted our hearts" (Deuteronomy 1:28).

We return to the events of the fortieth year.

## Decoding the Image on the Wall

At the end of the forty years, Moses stands before the new generation, saying:

During the sin of the spies, you were mere children, young people. You might be wondering why I am mentioning this sin — what does this have to do with you?

Let me tell you all: At that moment, when your parents wept, they embedded within you sparks of disconnect from G-d.

This hidden hatred led you to mistakenly believe that G-d hates you in turn.

Thus, whenever you recall the spies' sin, you say: "Because the L-rd hates us, He took us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us" (Deuteronomy 1:27).

This is a grave mistake — you carry sparks of hatred, but in truth, G-d genuinely loves you.



Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe explains in "AleI Shur" (Part 1, page 163):

This internal psychological process (the "magic lantern" effect) is found explicitly in the Torah itself: "Because the L-rd hates us, He took us out of Egypt." Rashi explains: "He in fact loved you; it was you who hated Him."

In the hearts of the wilderness generation, a subtle dislike toward G-d accumulated, unknown even to themselves, given their lofty spiritual stature.

Deep within their psyche, hidden from conscious awareness, this hatred nested. Then suddenly, like a "magic lantern," their internal state was projected outward, and they reversed facts.

They said that G-d hated them, believed it, and suffered terribly as a result.

They thought that they loved G-d deeply and aspired wholeheartedly towards Him, yet inexplicably, G-d had abandoned them, hiding His face and sentencing them to destruction, causing their world to darken completely.

But all of this anguish, profound disappointment, and fear of annihilation was nothing but an illusion. There was neither divine hatred nor any real threat of destruction.

G-d continued to love them fully and genuinely; it was merely the internal "magic lantern" that took effect, revealing their hidden hatred externally."<sup>9</sup>

The sparks of hatred planted within them later led to immense troubles.

—*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*—

**9.** Rabbi Wolbe continues in 'AleI Shur': The same way that this is true regarding G-d, it is also true regarding others.

The Rambam rules (Hilchot Issurei Biah 19:17): "Whoever habitually condemns others, casting aspersions on families or

individuals, we suspect his lineage; for anyone who disqualifies others does so with his own flaws."

This is precisely as we explained; one who condemns others is surely unaware of his own flaw, for if he would have been aware,



## Roots of the Destruction of the Second Temple

Thus, the Talmud (Taanit 29a) says: Rabba said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: That night that the Jewish people wept was Tisha B'Av. G-d said to them: "You wept for nothing; I will establish it as a night of weeping for generations."

The Maharsha explains the equivocation in this statement: "The baseless hatred that the Jewish people held towards G-d during the spies' incident resulted in baseless hatred later, during the Second Temple, ultimately leading to its destruction."

G-d's message to the Jewish people was: Now (on Tisha B'Av),

your weeping is baseless and rooted in hatred. This hatred will generate baseless hatred in your hearts during the Second Temple era, causing its destruction and leading the Jewish people into a bitter exile. Thus, this day will indeed become a night of weeping for generations.

In a discourse delivered by Rabbi Nosson Meir Wachtfogel, he stated the following:<sup>10</sup>

The primary cause of the destruction was encapsulated by the statement: "You wept a gratuitous weeping, and therefore I establish for you a weeping for generations."

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### *Wellsprings of Wisdom*

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he would have avoided mentioning it in others so his shame would not be revealed.

However, although this awareness is hidden from one's conscious level, it remains in the hidden depths, projecting outwardly through the condemnation of others.

Thus, we learn the way to self-correction; each and every time that we project flaws and emotional feelings onto others, we receive an excellent lesson about our own dire state.

When we harshly judge others, we must know that our heart's flaws are revealed.

Recognizing this truth saves us much pain and sorrow so that we can avoid mistakenly thinking that everyone hates us and that the world around us is hostile and responsible for our failures.

**10.** 'Leket Reshimot B'Inyanei Beit Hamikdash' (p. 99).



**Parshat Devarim - Roots of the Destruction of the Second Temple**

It is explained in the Torah (Deuteronomy 1:28-33) that the Jewish people thought that they could not defeat the giants inhabiting the Land, as written: "Our brothers melted our hearts... a nation greater and taller than we, cities great and fortified to the heavens" (Deut. 1:28).

Moses argued against them: Why are you afraid? Your entire life in the wilderness has been above and beyond nature, with overt miracles — such as the pillar of cloud, the pillar of fire, manna, and the miraculous well.

Can the Al-mighty do everything except overcome fortified cities? As the verses say: "Then I said to you at that time... Yet in this matter, you do not believe in Hashem your G-d" (Deut. 1:29, 32).

Here, the Torah addresses the generation of the desert, a generation of prophets whose bodies did not decay after death (Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer, Chapter 41), and demands of them: "What are you afraid of? Why do you weep a gratuitous weeping?"

Certainly, they erred, but why did they indeed weep?

The answer is that when one experiences goodness, one often fails to recognize it!

As our sages say (Sanhedrin 108a) about the Generation of Dispersion, due to the abundance of good bestowed upon them, they rebelled. Their rebellion stemmed from their failure to appreciate the goodness they had received.

A person possesses the tendency not to recognize what it has until it is taken away.

G-d therefore said, "I will establish for you a weeping for generations," - this is not merely a punishment; it is a rectification!

You will all go into exile, and there, within the darkness of exile — when the Divine Presence is distant, and everything is diminished and lacking — you will understand and appreciate the goodness you once had. You will recognize the blessings you experienced when G-dliness was openly manifest among you.



## Parshat Devarim - The Reason – That's the Essence

This pain and longing will build within you all the vessels of the soul to appreciate every good thing that is bestowed upon you.

Upon reading all of this insight, Yitzchak's heart filled with joy; he closed the books and headed to his neighbor's home.

### The Reason – That's the Essence

Yossi was expecting the visit and opened the door smiling, and Yitzchak entered and began enthusiastically explaining the answer he had gleaned from what he had learned:

“Indeed, both Parshat Devarim, as well as Parshat Va'etchanan include a prophecy about destruction, but the reason that our sages preferred to establish Parshat Devarim before Tisha B'Av is simple: while Parshat Va'etchanan indeed contains the prophecy of destruction, Parshat Devarim contains the reason for the destruction as well.

Thus, clearly, before Tisha B'Av, we must focus on the reason and cause of the calamity in the first place.

'I still would like to understand this wonderful explanation better,' said Yossi:

Firstly, where precisely is the reason for the destruction of the Temple that you elaborated upon so nicely, mentioned in Parshat Devarim? And secondly, why is it important to focus on the reason and cause of the destruction?

Yitzchak explained: Parshat Devarim states, 'How can I bear alone your trouble, burden, and strife?' (Devarim 1:12).

Rashi explains this verse as follows:

'Trouble' – This teaches that the Jewish people were troublesome. If one saw he was losing in court, he would say, 'I have more witnesses, and I have more evidence to bring; I need more judges to rule my case.'

'Burden' – This shows they were heretics. If Moses left his tent early, they would say, 'Why did Amram's son leave



**Parshat Devarim - Notice the Message**

early? Perhaps there is trouble in his home.' If he left late, they said, 'Why is Amram's son late? Maybe he's plotting evil schemes against us.'

Now although these expressions may seem like three separate issues (troublesome, heretics, and argumentative), in truth, they stem from one common negative trait — complaining, the constant feeling that 'things simply aren't good for me.'<sup>11</sup>

Our sages reveal that the trait of complaining and inappreciation

toward G-d is what caused the Temple's destruction.

Therefore, they decreed that Parshat Devarim should always be read before Tisha B'Av.

The purpose is for the Jewish people to awaken, repent, and strive to restore pure faith in their hearts, transforming their intellectual belief into tangible and palpable faith.

Let us now go on to answer the two questions we posed at the beginning:

**Notice the Message**

Although nearly an entire Torah portion, Shelach, deals with the sin of the spies, Moses repeated once more at length this sin in his words of rebuke before his passing. Why so?

Parshat Shelach addressed the Jews in the second year after leaving Egypt, but now, in Parshat Devarim, Moses was addressing the new generation; all those who were above age

*~ Wellsprings of Wisdom ~*

**11.** We quote again from 'Yad Haketana':

A complainer habitually grumbles and protests against others; he is never comfortable with people, and almost everyone's ways and behaviors appear wrong and displeasing to him.

Even if his friend behaves innocently and does no harm, he will still always find fault in his friend's actions and words, judging everything negatively rather than positively, transforming every error into deliberate wrongdoing.

One who behaves this way is called a complainer (נרגן).



twenty upon exiting Egypt had already passed away.

Moses revisited this particular sin extensively because the trait revealed through the spies' sin ultimately caused the Second Temple's destruction, and Moses sought to emphasize this lesson so the Jewish people would correct this undesirable trait of complaining.

We conclude with the words of Rabbi Shmuel Markovitz:<sup>12</sup>

We stand in the days before Tisha B'Av, searching for the sins that caused the destruction, to rectify these misdeeds.

Everyone knows that the First Temple was destroyed due to three sins: idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed, while the Second Temple fell due to baseless hatred.

But what is the original root cause of the destruction?

The Gemara (Taanit 29a) states: 'The Holy One said, "You cried

baseless tears; I have established a crying for generations.'"

What does 'baseless tears' imply?

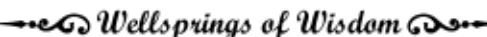
In Parshat Devarim Moses recounts and rebukes the Jewish people for murmuring after the spies returned from the Land: 'You murmured in your tents, saying, "Because G-d hates us, He took us out of Egypt to hand us to the Amorites, to destroy us"' (Devarim 1:27).

Everyone cried then. Why did they cry?

Because they wrongly believed that all of G-d's miracles and wonders in Egypt were merely to 'hand us over to the Amorites to destroy us.'

Precisely the opposite of the simple truth — that everything was done to them out of G-d's immense love for the Jewish people.

How did they reach this colossal error?





**Parshat Devarim - Notice the Message**

'You murmured' — due to the trait of complaining.

Such is the complainer's nature: failing to recognize kindness and the benefactor's love, thus crying baseless tears.

This negative root later grew into grave sins, leading to the Temple's destruction centuries later.

Without this faulty beginning, the chain of sins wouldn't have occurred.

As an analogy, someone with a healthy immune system can handle bacteria, but one with a weak immune system is endangered even by a small amount of harmful germs.

Spiritually, the same is true as well, someone without proper spiritual "immunity" is vulnerable to great and severe sins and troubles.

Here, the Torah reveals to us an underlying cause for a weak spiritual immune system: chronic complaining and ingratitude.

Habitually crying baseless tears causes one to be spiritually vulnerable to grave sins, which, further down the line, causes destruction.

Thus, it is not merely a punishment — it's a state of being.

Someone prone to blaming others, complaining, and ingratitude will easily succumb to idolatry, immorality, and bloodshed, for he has become vulnerable to every severe sin and affliction.

May G-d grant us a most tangible faith and complete spiritual fulfillment, preceded and led by a profound sense of gratitude to G-d and awareness of his deep and undying love for us, each and every member of the Jewish people.

**Shabbat Shalom!**



**Summary and Practical Conclusions**

1. The initial cause for the Temple's destruction was, as G-d declared: 'You cried baseless tears; thus, I establish crying for generations.'

The complaining following the spies' report was called 'Futile complaining' by the Torah and eventually served as the root of the baseless hatred during the Second Temple era.

2. Complaining, like any emotional trait, manifests on two levels: between man and G-d and between man and his fellow.

Between man and G-d: G-d is good, kind, and compassionate, but human sins cloud the mind, leading to complaints against G-d. No person entirely escapes doubt about divine conduct; due to sins, every person endures bitterness, poverty, personal struggles, and even depression. Occasionally, this leads to thoughts that question divine justice, thoughts that may destroy a person's spirituality entirely. But complaining against G-d is the root of heresy.

3. Between man and fellow likewise: A chronic complainer always criticizes others, finding no peace with people. Most other people's ways and actions will appear wrong and displeasing.

Even if a friend acts sincerely and innocently, the complainer will find faults, judge negatively, and assume malicious intent.

4. A complainer's words have great power to deeply stir and distress listeners' hearts.

5. The reason why Parshat Devarim is read before Tisha B'Av is precisely because it includes the verse: 'How can I bear alone your trouble, burden, and strife?' — describing the evil and corrupt trait of complaining that had caused the destruction.

Thus, our sages ordained the reading of Parshat Devarim before Tisha B'Av in order to inspire the Jewish people to repent and transform their inner faith into a real and tangible belief and trust in G-d.





B"H

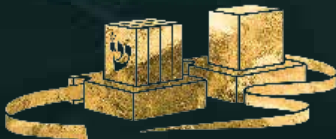


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## Shabbat Times Devarim

8<sup>th</sup> of Av, 5785



City	Candle Lighting	Shabbat Ends	Rabbeinu Tam
New York	7:53 pm	8:56 pm	9:22 pm
Miami	7:49 pm	8:43 pm	9:18 pm
Los Angeles	7:36 pm	8:34 pm	9:05 pm
Montreal	8:04 pm	9:12 pm	9:33 pm
Toronto	8:22 pm	9:28 pm	9:51 pm
London	8:30 pm	9:48 pm	9:58 pm
Jerusalem	7:20 pm	8:10 pm	9:02 pm
Tel Aviv	7:18 pm	8:08 pm	9:00 pm
Haifa	7:18 pm	8:11 pm	9:03 pm
Be'er Sheva	7:16 pm	8:09 pm	9:00 pm

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**HaRav Yoram Abargel zt"l**

*We can readily observe that homes and families that are imbued with faith in the sages, and who share tales of the righteous, merit to have their children follow the straight and proper path.*

*They remain steadfast in their faith and connected to their roots, much more than those children who are taught depth and Torah erudition, but any mention of miracles and tales of the righteous is omitted from their education.*

*Through erudition and scholarliness one may reach a mighty and far-reaching grasp, but it does not necessarily lead to genuine faith and belief.*



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