

תשובה



אור ישראל
Self Inspired

PARSHAS
DEVARIM

BY RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
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FORGIVENESS AND FEAR

Seper Devarim is known as *Mishneh Torah*, as the narrative repeats many events and *mitzvos* that *Klal Yisrael* experienced throughout their travels in the desert. In opening *Sefer Devarim*, *Moshe Rabbeinu* notes the various spots *Klal Yisrael* encamped along their journey.¹ Rashi² explains that each area mentioned is a hidden reference to a particular sin committed in that region.

Why was *Moshe Rabbeinu* reminding *Klal Yisrael* of their sins? What purpose did this serve at this time? In his introduction to *Sefer Devarim*, the Ramban (R' Moshe ben Nachman, 1194–1270) explains Moshe's purpose. On the one hand, Moshe was indeed condemning the Jewish people's past behavior. This was a reminder, "You are about to enter the holy land of Israel. Do not allow yourselves to become complacent; sin will cause your exile."

However, there was another message along with the first. *Moshe Rabbeinu* implored the nation to look to their past. Despite their sins, despite their rebellions and headstrong nature, Hashem has forgiven them. They were alive, Hashem had not abandoned them, and not only that, Hashem was prepared to perform miracles as they conquered *Eretz Yisrael*.

Despair will cause a person to cease serving Hashem — a person will think, "Why bother, I will fail at some point or another!" To counteract this, Moshe pointed to Hashem's infinite mercy, and that Hashem is always ready to accept a person's *teshuvah*.

In fact, says the Ramban, this is the meaning of the *passuk*, "For with You is forgiveness, that You may be feared."³ One would think that if someone were forgiving, it would cause less fear. After all, I can get away with anything! However, points out the Ramban, too much fear leads to hopelessness. And a hopeless person will not even care to do what is right and just.

This message was not just given to the Jewish nation before they entered *Eretz Yisrael*. It is a timeless message, applicable to everyone, at any moment. A person might feel down after not succeeding, or may think, "Why bother?" Yet we find that Hashem is cheering us on, wishing our success. And when we do *teshuvah*, He is ready to accept us, no questions asked.

1 *Devarim* 1:1

2 *ibid.* s.v. אלה הדברים

3 *Tehillim* 130:4

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Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

The *teshuvah* process can be an emotional and tasking endeavor, and there is always a fine line between choosing to right one's wrongs, and despair. How do we go through the process of regret and remorse, but at the same time, keep ourselves from discouragement?

There are two strategies that one can employ. The first is to use our feelings to accept upon ourselves a concrete plan for the future.¹ By channeling our remorse into a plan of action, we distance ourselves from despondency and put ourselves into the mindset of *avodas Hashem*.

Another strategy is to focus on previous times where Hashem, despite our failings, has had His hand in our lives.² When we can recognize that Hashem is still looking out for us, even though we may have fallen short before, we can use that knowledge to bolster our confidence that Hashem still loves us, and energize ourselves to try again.

1 *Chidushei HaLev, Devarim* 29:11

2 *Bamidbar Rabbah*, 23:3, *Maharzu ibid.* s.v. כך אמר לו



**"Chazak," "Be strong" — in Torah.
"V'ematz," "And be mighty" — in
Yiras Shomayim.**

- Hashem's charge to Yehoshua Bin Nun upon Yehoshua's appointment as Moshe Rabbeinu's successor, *Sifri, Va'eschanan* ch. 5

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A MILLION DOLLAR EDUCATION

In 1911, the consolidation of four separate businesses created the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company. Under the leadership of Thomas J. Watson, Sr. the name was changed in 1924 to the more polished International Business Machines, known to many as IBM.

When the Great Depression drove the general populace to ruin, IBM was able to weather the storm under Mr. Watson's leadership. In fact, while many businesses shuttered their doors forever, IBM continued to grow, and produce more machines, in anticipation of the world economy getting back on track.

Indeed, IBM was subsequently faced with a surplus of machines, and it was important to free up space — not only to lower their storage costs, but also to make room for new and improved technologies.

Though faring better than most, IBM still needed to sturdy their financial footing, and if they were able to sell their surplus of machines they would solve multiple problems with one sale. Their lifeline came in the form of a potential government contract. A million dollars was on the line, if they could secure the deal. They sent their best salesman to represent the company, with confidence that he will be successful.

Unfortunately, he lost the bid. Knowing what faced him back in the company, the salesman returned with sorrow on his face, and an envelope in his hand. Sitting down with Thomas Watson in his office, the salesman handed him the envelope, which contained his resignation.

Mr. Watson knew the contents of the envelope. Without looking inside, he asked the sales rep, "What happened?"

The sales rep outlined every step of the deal. He explained where things went right, but then highlighted where mistakes had been made and what he could have done differently. Finally he said, "Thank you, Mr. Watson, for giving me a chance to explain. I know we needed this deal. I know what it meant to us." He rose to leave.

Tom Watson met him at the door, looked him in the eye and handed the envelope back to him saying, "Why would I accept this when I have just invested one million dollars in your education? We can be sure you will never make those mistakes again."

"Why would I accept this when I have just invested one million dollars in your education? We can be sure you will never make those mistakes again."

DID YOU KNOW?

- There is no sickness as difficult as despair.¹
- Hashem wants our success, but a person cannot simply say that Hashem will forgive all *aveiros* without one doing *teshuvah* first.²

¹ Reb Yisroel Salanter, quoted in *Tenuas HaMussar*, Vol. 1, pg 345

² *Bava Kamma* 50a

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