

GREAT FOR SHARING
AT THE SHABBOS TABLE!

בשבת



אור ישראל

Self Inspired

PARSHAS
DEVARIM

BY RABBI AVICHAI BENSOUSSAN
RABBI NETANEL NAAMAT
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ENJOYING IT ALL

Parshas Devarim features the beginning of Moshe Rabbeinu's farewell message to Klal Yisrael. Moshe recounted the journey of the Bnei Yisrael, referencing different events that occurred during their travels. In one particular scenario, Moshe Rabbeinu described how Klal Yisrael were told not to wage war against the land of Seir. To get food, drink, or safe passage through this land, they would have to ask permission, which Seir denied. Thus dissuaded, the Bnei Yisrael turned away, having to go around Seir on their journey to Eretz Yisrael. The next *pasuk*, though, seems odd. At this point, the Torah says, "Hashem has been with you these past forty years: you have lacked nothing."¹

What, then, was the solution? More gold?

What is this *pasuk* doing here? Though this is true, why is the Torah this here?

Rashi² explains that Klal Yisrael may have felt deprived by the fact that they had to purchase food and drink, and had to travel around the land of Seir. Therefore, the *pasuk* responds to this potential complaint by pointing out all the good Hashem had done; Hashem had taken care of their every need. They should not feel any sort of lack, rather, they should notice and appreciate the abundance they had received.

This Rashi is eye-opening, both to a pitfall of human nature, and to a solution. Klal Yisrael were steeped in wealth. Besides the gold they emptied out from Mitzrayim, or what they had gathered from the sea, gems would fall with the *mun* for some of them. Furthermore, they had no expenses! Their food and water was taken care of, as was their school tuition. What possible deprivation could they have felt?

Nevertheless, it is a part of human nature to see an issue, and ignore the context. Yes, they were well cared for, but there was still the possibility they would feel needy for their inability to get their way.

What, then, was the solution? More gold? A new type of food? Not at all. Hashem simply reminded the Bnei Yisrael of all they have, something which they knew, but now it was brought to the fore.

We can sometimes face hurdles and setbacks in our own lives. Sometimes those challenges can indeed be quite difficult, and during those times, it can be hard to be thankful. Yet we find that sometimes, the only difference between gratitude and ingratitude is a gentle reminder.

Mind the Gap - Taking the Next Step

It is clearly quite easy to fall into the trap of ingratitude. We simply become accustomed to the great bounty we already have, but are frustrated when things don't go our way.¹

And indeed, there are times when a person can be in a particularly difficult situation — how is one supposed to feel gratitude at that point?

Sometimes it helps to start the day on the right foot. When we say *Modeh Ani*, it can be worthwhile to understand that Hashem owes us nothing, and yet He gave us life. And though we may be in dire circumstances, we are alive, and for that we are grateful.

As we make our way through the first *berachos* — that we can stand, walk, and see, take a moment to appreciate what that truly means.²

By starting our day with gratitude, it will bleed into those moments when we are feeling challenged, softening the difficulties, and sometimes even erasing them.

1 Ruach Chaim on Avos 4:1

2 Olam HaMiddos, pg. 127

1 Devarim 2:7

2 *ibid.* s.v. 'ד כז

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I bring heaven and earth to testify that despite my grandfather's colossal knowledge in Shas and halacha, there was not a day that he did not study mussar. - R' Chaim Palagi, about his grandfather R' Refoel Yosef Chazan, the Chikrei Lev. *Tochachas Chaim*, Vol. I, pg. 11-12

SEEING THE GLASSES HALF FULL

It was the big day, the day Gavriel was waiting for his entire life. Having met his future wife just a couple of months prior, Gavriel could not stop thinking about his wedding day since that time. The wedding was an out-of-town affair, but he had arrived two days earlier, to make sure that there was no chance he would be late to his own wedding.

As the *chossan*, he sat at the head of the table with well-wishers coming in and wishing him well. Suddenly, Gavriel looked around and motioned to his younger brother, Asher, to come over. In Gavriel's hands were the broken parts of his glasses, the temple had broken off, and his glasses were not wearable. "Can you please find someone to take care of this? I can't see!" Asher nodded, and promptly headed away on his mission.

Asher quickly spotted a family friend at the wedding, an optometrist by trade. However, without his tools, he was just as inadequate as the next guy. After some attempts, Asher finally ran out of the wedding hall, and drove to the closest pharmacy. Unfortunately, the glasses repair kit they stocked was not fit for the job, and Asher had to return with the next best thing — some clear tape.

By this point, Gavriel was ready to walk down the aisle and head to the *chuppah*. Needless to say, he was quite disappointed with the glasses. The tape was noticeable, and simply did not look right. Though he was finally able to properly see, Gavriel voiced concern with how it would come out in the pictures, would it hold up right, and why did it have to happen today!?

Seeing the issue, Gavriel's father stepped in. "Gavriel, it's really unfortunate this happened, and today of all days. But this day will stick in your mind to the end of your days. Don't let this be the part that you remember!"

Gavriel looked up from the glasses in his hands and stared at his father through squinting eyes. He took a deep breath, and nodded.

"You're right. It's not worth it. I'm ready."

He replaced the delicate glasses on his face, and stood up, ready to start a new family in *Klal Yisrael*.

**Based on a true story, names have been changed.*

DID YOU KNOW?

- Hashem didn't bring the first rains after Creation until there was a human who would recognize Hashem's goodness, and be grateful.¹
- Yosef did not take payment for food given to the priests of *Mitzrayim*, because they saved his life, even though they still allowed him to languish in prison for twelve years.²

¹ *Rashi on Bereishis 2:5, s.v. לא כי*

² *Chizkuni on Bereishis 47:22, s.v. לא קנה*

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