



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

RABBI REUVEN TRADBURKS
RCA ISRAEL REGION

In memory of **Evelyn Rivers a"h**
חווה פערסא בת אהרן זלמן הכהן ע"ה
Mother of Reuven Tradburks

PARSHAT DEVARIM

The book of Devarim is Moshe's soliloquy in the last weeks of his life. A rather long soliloquy, the better part of 28 chapters. He will not enter the Land of Israel. The Jewish people will. Moshe has a lot to say before he sends them off without him.

Although the English name for the book is Deuteronomy and the Midrash calls it Mishneh Torah, both meaning two, as if to say this book is the second version of the Torah, or the repetition of the Torah, those names are somewhat misleading. Moshe does not review the *entire* Torah. He relates only *some* stories, reviewing with the people *some* of what has occurred earlier in the Torah. But he leaves out much more than he reviews. He does not mention any of the book of Breishit. Nor any of the story in Egypt; nothing of the slavery. Or the plagues. Or the splitting of the Sea. Or

of the instructions for the Mishkan. Or most of the book of Vayikra relating to Tuma and Tahara and Offerings. So, the review is not of the Torah; the review is of *some*, selected stories and laws of the Torah.

Imagine Moshe's thinking. I am not going to be with the people in this grand adventure of conquering the Land of Israel. And more importantly, of then setting up our unique Jewish society in the Land. And living in a way to gain G-d's favor so we can be successful.

What message do I want to convey? I want to encourage them but should I do that through scaring them, through fear, or should I love them, build them up, tell them how great they are? And where do I start? Should I remind them of their failings? And their high points? Like G-d taking them out of Egypt, giving them the Torah. Should I start there?

Moshe does review many stories but the order is not at all as they occurred; he changes the order.

And noteworthy also, is that the book is mostly told in the first person, by Moshe. It is his language. And his language in the book of Devarim is different. It is emotional. He expresses concern, worry, fear. Concern of failure, challenges that will be unmet, or met with failure. There is love: love of G-d for us and love of us for Him. Lots of zeal and passion; many emphatic forms.

The book of Devarim is Moshe's great speech before taking leave of his people.



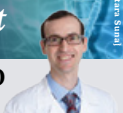
1ST ALIYA (DEVARIM 1:1-10)

Moshe related the events of the journey, the 11-day journey from

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Chorev to Kadesh Barnea. On 1 Shevat, year 40, Moshe related to the people all that G-d had instructed him about them. This was after the defeats of Sichon and Og, on the banks of the Jordan. He related: G-d instructed us to travel from Sinai and to take the Land of Israel, the Land promised to the forefathers. And I said: these people are now so numerous that I cannot bear them alone.

Moshe begins his parting words with a description of the journey to the Land of Israel. Not with the story of the Exodus. Not even with the story of the giving of the Torah. Certainly not with any stories from Breishit.

His emphasis is the journey to the Land. Because that is what is on the minds of the people. They are preoccupied with that. Moshe wants to begin his speech by relating to where they are, addressing their immediate concerns. He'll get to speaking about Sinai and about religious belief and about religious challenges. But right now, let's address the issue at hand: entering the Land.



2ND ALIYA (1:11-21)

I said then: Let's choose wise people to lead you. You agreed that this was a good idea. Wise leaders were appointed over thousands, hundreds, tens and officers of enforcement as well. I charged the judges saying: listen and rule fairly without bias. I commanded you in all the things you are to do. We traveled the desert to the Mount of the Emori, Kadesh Barnea. There I said: let's go without fear and take the Land.

It is curious that the first story Moshe feels a need to review is the appointing of the various upper court and lower court judges. After all, it doesn't seem to have anything to do with the march to the Land. In fact, there are other stories that do occur as part of the march, like the complaints for water that are simply skipped.

Why mention the appointment of judges?

Perhaps Moshe is addressing the unspoken concern of the people; how in the world are we going to manage without the leadership of Moshe? We will not prevail in the battles without him. Moshe, subtly tempers his indispensability. I can't do it all. I couldn't do it all then; I needed help from the beginning. And now too. I am dispensable. You will be fine without me.



3RD ALIYA (1:22-38)

You approached me to send spies to scout out the Land. I thought that was a good idea, choosing the leaders of the tribes for the task. They toured and returned with fruits of the Land exclaiming: The Land G-d is giving us is good. But you refused to go and rebelled against G-d saying: these have damaged our resolve telling us of the large people and the fortified cities. I insisted that G-d will fight the battle as He has done until now. But you did not trust in G-d Who has been guiding you by cloud and fire. You were told that all who do not believe they can enter the Land, will not enter the Land. And I too was told I would not enter; Yeshoshua will lead the people into the Land.

We wondered how Moshe would begin this long address; with encouragement, with high points, great moments in our history? No. The spies. The failure.

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But he abbreviates it. He relates: the spies brought back a good report. And you people decided you couldn't take the Land.

Wait, that's not what I remember. The spies came back with a long and eventually pessimistic report. In Bamidbar it sounds like their bad report started a cascade of fear. Here, Moshe places the guilt at the feet of the people.

Perhaps Moshe is deliberately emphasizing responsibility. Just like I, Moshe says, admitted I needed help adjudicating all of you, you too need to know that it was not the fault of the spies but of you that we spent 40 years in the desert.

Blame for national failures cannot be laid only at the feet of the leaders. The people need to also bear full responsibility for their decisions.

So how does Moshe begin his great speech? Responsibility. I admitted my weakness and agreed to a system of judges. You too need to accept your responsibility for this great adventure in the Land to succeed.



4TH ALIYA (1:39-2:1)

Upon hearing that you would not enter the Land, you regretted your sin. You said: let us go to the Land. But you were warned that G-d would not be with you in this and the Emori chased you away like bees to the region of Seir. We dwelt in Kadesh and Har Seir for a long time.

Here is lesson two. When we follow the

Divine plan, we will succeed. When we venture off on our own, devoid of Divine support, then we will be chased away like bees. The image of the people scampering away as if chased by bees is satirical; with Divine assistance you have no defense. You ran defenseless, arms flailing.



5TH ALIYA (2:2-30)

It was time to travel northward.

Do not confront the descendants of your brother Esav who dwell in Seir. Circle their land; pay for the food and water that you need from them. In addition, do not confront Moav for it is the rightful possession of the descendants of Lot. Past the land of Moav is Amon; do not confront Amon for it too is the rightful possession of the descendants of Lot. The region north of the Arnon is the land of Sichon and Og; those lands I have given to you. I offered to Sichon to pass through his land, but he refused; G-d made him stubborn so that we could take his land.

This description of our family ties with Esav and Lot is surprising; don't engage in war with Esav's descendants nor Lot's descendants. They are relatives. And we are to give regard to those relatives. Yaakov's brother Esav settled in Seir. He deserves brotherly deference and hence leave him alone. Moav and Amon are nations from Lot, Avraham's nephew. Leave them alone as well; they are your relatives. Brothers, even when pursuing entirely different legacies, remain brothers nonetheless.



6TH ALIYA (2:31-3:14)

G-d told us to take the lands of Sichon in war. The lands were conquered up to the Gilad. Og confronted us in the region toward the Bashan and he too was conquered. Their lands were given to Reuven, Gad and half the tribe of Menashe.

These confrontations with Sichon and Og are the last stories in the book of Bamidbar, not too

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long ago. Moshe relates these stories right at the beginning of his long speech, even though if he were reviewing our history chronologically, they would have to wait 25 chapters. He does so to begin his long speech with success and with encouragement. Even though we spent 40 years in the desert as a result of the spies, but we then marched to the Land. With success.

Moshe will eventually want to warn the people, chastise them, tell them of their future failures: but that can all wait. Start with encouragement.



7TH ALIYA (3:15-22)

The lands on the east of the Jordan including the Gilad and the lands from the Kineret to the Dead Sea were settled by Reuven and Gad and half of Menashe. I instructed these tribes to join the battle for the Land of Israel and then to return to their lands.

This is a very large patch of land: on the east side of the Jordan from the Dead Sea all the way up to the Hermon has been conquered and will be settled by the Jewish people. These early victories and Moshe's repetition of their stories allows Moshe to begin his long directives to the

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people on a high note, an optimistic one. The description until here is how we got to where we are. Now he will focus on the much more crucial directives: how to live *in* the Land. ■

A SHORT VORT

BY RABBI CHANOKH YERES
RAV, BEIT KNESSET BEIT YISRAEL, YEMIN MOSHE

This Motzei Shabbat we will be sitting on the floor, wearing our non-leather footwear and chanting Megillat Eichla. In the second Pasuk of Megillat Eichla, it is written "Bacho Tivke BaLayla, V'Dimata al Lechaya."—"She weeps sore in the night, and her tears on her cheek."

Why does the text stress that the tears are on her cheek? Is it not obvious? Where else would tears be found? What is Jeremiah telling us?

Perhaps the meaning is that the tears are still found on her cheek, even now, never wiped away and never dried. As Rashi points out "Because she is always crying".

Other nations celebrate their victories but do not commemorate their sad days. We as a people never let our tears dry. Even at a wedding we recite the words "If I Forget thee O Yerushalayim, let my right hand forget its skills." (Tehillim 137)

Now we can understand the words "AL Naharot Bavel, Sham Yashavnu Gam Bachinu" "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept." Even though we dwelt in Babylon as citizens enjoying peace and tranquility, there we still wept for Zion.

Gemara Taanit 30b "Everyone who mourns for Yerushalayim, merits to share in her Joy."

Perhaps this is the message of Jeremiah in Megillat Eichla, to never dry our tears and let them stay on our cheeks over the loss of Zion and our past tragedies so we may merit seeing the rebuilding of Yerushalayim in our days.

- Shabbat Shalom