Points to Ponder

Devarim/Chazon 5779

**אֵ֣לֶּה הַדְּבָרִ֗ים These are the words (1:1) - Mrs. Sivan Rahav Meir T’Ch** notes that the same man we are introduced to, with the claim that “I am not a man of words” wrote a whole book dedicated to a 3 month speech at the end of his life? She explains that Moshe was a man who by nature a quiet individual. However, once endowed with a life of meaning and purpose, Moshe had a mission to complete and changed his very nature for the will of Hashem. What an incredible inspiration for someone who begins life thinking or being told that s/he cannot. With the proper mission from Hashem, “Yes we can!”

**הוֹאִ֣יל משֶׁ֔ה Moshe began to explain this Torah (1:5) - Rashi** explains that the word Hoeil means he began just as it meant with Avraham’s pleading on behalf of Sodom. However, in that case, Avraham had already begun his negotiations. How does Hoeil mean began there? **Rav Bernard Weinberger ztl** explained that to begin means to begin anew. The same is true here. Moshe had tried again, beginning anew to translate the Torah into 70 languages so that Torah can be observed anywhere in the world.

**הָב֣וּ לָ֠כֶ֠ם אֲנָשִׁ֨ים Appoint for yourself Anashim (1:13) - Rashi** notes that there was not even a doubt that the judges appointed were not supposed to be female. Thus, the term Anashim must refer to Tzaddikim. **Rav Schachter Shlita** once questioned why it was obvious to the Chachamim of the Sifre cited by Rashi that women could not be the intended judges here? After all, Tosafos (Bava Kama 15a) entertains the possibility of giving Semicha to women. Why would they not be able to serve as judges and rabbis? Rav Schachter Shlita answered that  although we must sometimes compromise on our *midas hatznius* and do certain *mitzvos befarhesia* (in public), this is not required of women. Women are not being discriminated against. They alone, unlike men, are given the opportunity to maintain their *midas hahistatrus* at all times. Rav Schachter added that our generation is so much into publicity that this *midas hahistatrus* is totally unappreciated. We live in a generation in which there is no sense of shame. People will do the most intimate and the most private acts in a most explicit and most demonstrative fashion. Their arrogant attitude has led them to believe that if they were G-d they would always be bragging, boasting, and showing off, always "making a statement". They don't have the slightest notion that G-d exists, is a "*Kel Mistater*", and has created all of us with a *tzelem Elokim*, which also includes this *midas hatznius*.

**בִּגְלַלְכֶ֖ם Hashem got angry at me too because of you (1:37**) - Isn’t Moshe fudging the truth a bit here? Wasn’t he personally responsible for not going into the land because of Mei Meriva? **Rav Chaim Kanievsky Shlita** explains that Moshe was being quite exact here. He didn’t say that he was not responsible for his own sin. Rather, although he had sinned, he had also atoned and offered numerous Tefillos on his own behalf. Hashem would have accepted those Tefillos and let him enter the land but for the fact that he did not want Moshe to be in the land in order to inspire the rest of us who also were not to be let into the land. This is the literal meaning of Moshe’s point to the people that Hashem got angry with them saying Moshe will also not go into the land.

**פְּנ֥וּ לָכֶ֖ם צָפֹֽנָה Turn yourselves Northward (2:2)** - What does turning northward have to do with survival? **Rav Dovid Gross shlita** noted that the word for north (Tzafon) is also the word for hidden (Tzafun) and, citing the Midrash here, offered a different perspective. He noted that when times are good, it is not a time for Jews to be ostentatious and demonstrative. Rather, we have a responsibility to take our success and live with modesty and not flaunt it in front of Eisav who is jealous of material success. **Kli Yakar** notes that we have never taken this advice to heart in our history and have suffered greatly throughout the millenia as a result.  Our job is to take our success and plant it in reinvestment in our communities and Torah institutions.

**בָּעֵ֣ת הַהִ֑וא At that time (3:12)** - There are a number of instances where the timeline does not fit Moshe’s memory here (See also 3:21;3:14). How are we to explain the strange timing? **Rav Schwab ztl.** explained that  Moshe knew he was not speaking at that moment but rather was speaking in a way that would be understood for many generations afterward. Thus, he focused differently and set a tone for all future generations.

**וְשָׁבֶ֖יהָ בִּצְדָקָֽה And its returnees through Tzedaka (Yeshayahu 1:27)** - The Talmud notes that Tzedaka can bring the Geulah. Why is the Mitzva of Tzedaka uniquely that which is attached to the Geulah? **Rav Zilberstein Shlita** cited the **Beis HaLevi** who notes that when it comes to most Mitzvos, it is almost impossible to fulfill them completely. We are missing the Techeiles string of the Tzitzis, we lack the Korbanos to fully observe Shabbos and Yom Tov etc. The One Mitzva we can fulfill fully is that of Tzedaka. There is no Shiur or time frame to the Mitzva and there is no minimum or maximum to its fulfillment. This is Hashem’s Chessed that will allow us to have a means of bringing the Geulah.