Points to Ponder

Devarim/Chazon 5780

**הוֹאִ֣יל משֶׁ֔ה בֵּאֵ֛ר אֶת־הַתּוֹרָ֥ה הַזֹּ֖את On the other side of the Jordan, in the land of Mo'av, Moshe began to declare this Torah, saying (1:5) -  Rashi** explains that Moshe explained the Torah in seventy languages. Am Yisrael certainly did not know seventy languages, and even if they had – what would be the purpose of translating into seventy languages, since they surely understood Hebrew best of all? **Rav Yehudah Amital ztl.** explained that the seventy languages represent the seventy cultures of the world. Moshe wished to teach Am Yisrael that the Torah has something to say in every culture. Throughout history, many different cultures have arisen, each in conflict with Judaism from a different point of view, and therefore Judaism has had to address each in an individual way. Moshe's message was that the Torah has an answer for every nation and for every culture.

**עַד־הַנָּהָ֥ר הַגָּדֹ֖ל נְהַר־פְּרָֽת Turn and go to Har Emori until the great river Peras (1:7) -** Rashi explains that it is called HaGadol because of its connection to Eretz Yisrael. This is true eventhough it is the weakest of the rivers in Eden. **Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel ztl** adds that being connected to Eretz Yisrael makes things great. When we are connected to Eretz Yisrael it makes everything we do greater. Even the nations of the world understand it and that is why they fight giving us any connection or sovereignty over it.

**וַתִּקְרְב֣וּן אֵלַי֘ כֻּלְּכֶם֒ You came to me all of you (1:22) - Rashi** explains that the people came in a mob with people pushing in no order. This stands in contrast to the same Vatikrivun of Matan Torah. Why does the order or lack thereof affect the message that the order presented? **Rav Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Shlita** explained that there is a well known Chazal that Derech Eretz Kadma L’Torah. In other words, the way we ask for something determines how we will utilize it. When we do it carefully and respectfully, there is growth and hope for positive impact. However when we cannot even ASK for things properly and only come as a messy mob, no good comes from that.

**בִּגְלַלְכֶ֖ם  Hashem got angry at me too because of you (1:37)** - Was Moshe correct? Was he punished because of the Miraglim? Isn’t that an incorrect attribution of blame? **Rav Nissan Alpert ztl** says that the word “B’Glal” does not mean “Because” but rather “for”. (Think Avraham and the fact that he would be allowed to live “for” not “Because of” Sarah.) Rav Alpert explains that Rambam notes that Moshe was replaced by Yehoshua as Moshe was demanding more than that which the people could handle. Hashem made the change in leadership for the benefit of the Jewish people.

**וְלֹֽא־שָׁמַ֤ע יְהֹוָה֙ בְּקֹ֣לְכֶ֔ם וְלֹ֥א הֶֽאֱזִ֖ין אֲלֵיכֶֽם: And they sat and cried in front of Hashem and Hashem didn’t listen to you (1:45)** - The cries of the Miragim lead to the cries of the future. In Eicha too, we note that one of the punishments of the time is that our Tefillos are not listened to, by Hashem. **Rav Menachem Genack Shlita** noted in the name of Rav Soloveitchik ztl. that this might be the reason that we do not say Tachanun on Tisha B’Av -- because Hashem is not listening. This is different from the other suggested reason - that Tisha B’Av is called a Moed. The Nafka Mina, say Rav Genack, is whether one says Tachanun on Erev Tisha B’Av at Mincha. If it is a Moed, you would not but if Tachanun is not said because Hashem doesn’t listen on Tisha B’Av that is only true on that day. What is the Moed aspect of the day about? Rav Genack added that even when Hashem is not listening, that which we know, that he still cares for us to punish us, is still a reason to call the day a Moed.

**וְנִשְׁמַרְתֶּ֖ם מְאֹֽד And you shall be on guard (2:4)** - On guard for what? **Rashi** explains that you need to be on guard when they are afraid of you and certainly when they are successful and not afraid. **Rav Bernard Weinberger ztl.** explained that in these cases we are told to turn Tzafona -- or northward. But perhaps we are told to turn inward (Tafon from Tzafun). In other words, even when we are successful we need not be demonstrative and ostentatious for whether superior in Ruchniyos or Gashmiyus it is not a good idea to be demonstrative of it -- be careful here the Torah warns,

**וַיְדַבֵּ֥ר ה' אֵלַ֥י לֵאמֹֽר Hashem spoke to me (2:17) - Rashi** notes that during the middle 38 years that Bnei Yisrael were in the desert, Hashem did not speak to Moshe face to face to teach us that the Shechina speaks to a leader as a merit of the masses. **Rav Moshe Schwab ztl.** explained that sometimes we wonder why we bother getting involved in community issues. Wouldn’t our lives be more spiritual and useful if we WERE NOT involved in the community? However if Moshe Rabbeinu himself derived his spiritual sense from his communal involvement than certainly we too, need to think of our role in the community first.

**Haftara: מִי־בִקֵּ֥שׁ זֹ֛את מִיֶּדְכֶ֖ם רְמֹ֥ס חֲצֵרָֽי When you come to see me who asked you (Yeshayahu 1:12) - Rashi** comments that Hashem doesn’t need the visit of someone whose heart is not Shalem with Him. **Rav Schachter Shlita** explained that the Beis Hamikdash was a special place not only for bringing Korbanos but also for Tefillah. Hashem desires the Tefillah of Tzaddikim and in the Beis Hamikdash, one is able to be sincere with Him there (Nevuash which also emanates from the Mikdash is the other side of the coin insofar as that is how Hashem communicates with us.) Our problem is that we did not and do not take Tefillah seriously and hence, Hashem asks us why bother coming to him with that which is insincere?