

35 – Devarim – Outline

Deuteronomy Intro

- “Devarim” = “Words”
 - “These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazereth, and Dizahab” (Deuteronomy 1:1)
 - tradition says it took Moses over a month to deliver this long speech, which encompasses the whole book
- 2 Interwoven Threads of Deuteronomy (Kehot Chumash)
 - Moses’ exhortations to the people to remain faithful to God and His Torah
 - a review of much of the legal subject matter first explained in earlier books
 - thus, another name for the book is “Mishneh Torah,” “repetition of the Torah, from which we get the word “Deuteronomy,” “2nd Torah”
 - unlike the other books, Moses is here putting the Torah into his own words (rather than transcribing God’s words), so this book is also described as the beginning of the “Oral Torah”

Parsha Summary

- Moses begins his repetition with a review of how God told them to leave Mt. Horeb and go up to take the Land
- he describes how he assigned leaders over 1000’s, 100’s, 50’s, and 10’s, plus officers
- recounting of the “evil report”
- 38 years of journeying summed up with: “Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea, as the LORD told me. And for many days we traveled around Mount Seir. Then the LORD said to me, ‘You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward...’” (Deuteronomy 2:1-3).
- Israel passes through or around Esau, Ammon, and Moab (relatives to whom God had promised territories that Israel would not inherit)
 - the text keeps inserting parenthetical commentary mostly about how giants used to live in this and that place
- defeats of the Amorite (not Ammonite) kings east of the Jordan, Sihon and Og

Authority Emphasized

- it seems odd that Moses’ first main point in this month-long speech is that he put in place a system of leaders over the nations
 - certainly it was a big change for the nation, a structuring
 - Grant: about 78,600 leaders, 13% of the men (<https://bethtikkun.com/devarim-2018-19/11m>)
 - Grant: this authority structure is like a central nervous system for a body; “Authority is very close to God’s heart.”
 - beyond these practicalities, Moses is hinting to the heart of the Torah and the key to living the full life in the Land after he’s gone: servant leadership

- in the Land, Israel is to be a light to the nations and a kingdom of priests; priests are servant leaders
- we are all called to servant leadership, which is how our light really shines
 - the “shamash” is the central stalk of the menorah, God’s design for light; “shamash” means “servant” and “sun;” in Hebrew, the source of light in our universe, the sun, is also the word for “servant”

The Month of Av

- understanding the month will help set the stage for further insights into the parsha
- “Av” = “father”
- the mazal is Leo, the lion
 - in Jewish thinking, the lion is emblematic of overwhelming power and even punishment
 - connection between “lion” and “father,” who is the center of strict authority in the home and that final repository of power
 - the beginning of this month is very top-down, when God shows Himself to be powerful in a disciplinary way
 - Av (5th month) the complement of Nissan (1st month)
 - Nissan is also called “Aviv,” which is much like “Av”
 - Nissan mazal is lamb, so here we have the lion complement to the lamb
 - 9th of Av
 - we see the lion side of God in the destruction of the Temples
 - R’Ginsburgh: the word for “lion,” “aryeh,” equals 216, and the word “gevurah” also equals 216 (<https://www.inner.org/times/av/av.htm>)
 - gevurah is the word for contraction and limitation, the placing of boundaries, the act of judgment and even punishment and destruction
- “chush” (bodily ability) of the month: hearing
 - connected to the tribe of the month, Simeon (Shimon), from the root “to hear”
 - it is a month for God to **speak** with the clarity and even harshness what we need to hear
 - in Hebrew, to “hear” also implies some degree of processing for understanding and also obedience; to “hear” is to “obey”
 - practically: this is also a month to focus on bringing correction and balance to our hearing, meaning we should try to form better habits now regarding what enters our ears
 - Robin: we have lost the awareness of the importance of the words that come out of our mouths, and at the same time, we’ve become spiritually illiterate (so, we don’t recognize the death in deadly speech or the life in the words of life) (<https://torahtodayministries.org/lesson/devarim-2/>)
 - we can do better with the words we allow to enter our ears
 - we need people to speak unvarnished truth, but they need to do so in love, and the love is largely lacking these days

- this month we are also focusing on hearing the rebuke of God
 - it's easier to hear words of rebuke and correction when we know that the one speaking loves us
 - as we listen this month, we can keep in the forefront of our minds that God loves us and is bringing limitation out of compassion for us
 - doesn't want us to keep experiencing the death of sin
 - R'Ginsburgh: lion and gevurah both equal 216, and 216 is a multiple of "chesed," which is 72; $72 \times 3 = 216$ (<https://www.inner.org/times/av/av.htm>)
 - chesed = lovingkindness, compassion
 - gevurah is "three compassions"
 - R'Ginsburgh connects the three compassions to the building of 3 Temples
- Av carries a powerful potential for good or evil
 - the massive potential can be seen in another event to happen on the 9th of Av, the evil report of the 10 spies
 - mentioned prominently in this Torah portion
 - they arrive at a vulnerable time for Israel, when God was poised to either unleash His gevurah wrath on the Canaanites if Israel was faithful or on Israel if Israel was unfaithful
 - they came back with fruit of the Land, so the witness of the eyes was that the Land was good
 - but then the men spoke, and Israel, coming from a place of fear, chose to hear only one side of the report: there are giants there!
- the energy of the month shifts abruptly after the 9th of Av to what we might call a much more clearly positive energy
 - 15th of Av, called "Tu B'Av," – anciently one of the most joyous days of the year
 - a day for finding a suitor – young women dance in the vineyards in borrowed white dresses (so that social economic positions were obscured), and young men go to find a wife
 - a lesson: we should never waste an opportunity God gives us to humble ourselves because ashes are very fertile; from the ashes springs vibrant and healthy new life
 - on the 9th of Av, we not only fast, but we lower ourselves down in humility ("We have sinned. We have caused death. We have treated each other coldly and sit in blood and ashes.")
 - if we lower ourselves down, we are in a position to be raised up
 - 9th of Av begins this upcoming Wednesday night (26th) and is a full-day fast, ending Thursday night
 - a fascinating tradition: Messiah is born on Tisha B'Av (9th of Av) while the Temple is burning

- Shimona Tzukernik: not necessarily literal, but somehow the IDEA of the Messiah is born from the smoking ruins of the Temple
- when the world presents us with the image of hopelessness, we calmly close our eyes and say, “Lord, it is too much. Bring the Messiah now. How can we bear this? We long for the return of Yeshua.”
- not an easy month for God, either
 - listen for the tension in God’s heart in the following passage:

“My people are bent on turning away from Me, and though they call out to the Most High, He shall not raise them up at all. How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? MY HEART RECOILS WITHIN ME; My compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. They shall go after the LORD; He will roar like a lion; when He roars, His children shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD” (Hosea 11:7-11).

Placing Av

- 3rd month – become personally responsible to the Torah (Shavuot)
- 4th month – struggling, falling, seeing our lack of heart (by the great light of that season and the chush of the month, sight)
- 5th month – experiencing the PAIN of our sin, which takes our push toward repentance to a higher level
 - God is elevating our sense of our sin to another level, motivating us to repentance from another level
- so we listen carefully now
 - an open and humble attitude helps the one reprimanding to not have to scold so harshly
 - in the reprimand will be the communication of the straight path to healing and victory
 - the parent knows how to communicate to the child
- the natural season reflects the spiritual season
 - the hottest period of the year in Israel, when the lack of rain is felt most keenly
 - agriculturally, it’s the period to prune the vines and begin harvesting the grapes
 - most will be crushed immediately for wine, the crushed grape symbolizing death
 - but always as we focus on death, we cannot lose track of the new life
 - the point of the crushing is to make the wine that will be at its best in 6 months, at Purim, when the wine is used to celebrate the bringing of light out of the darkness, life out of what looked like death, the joy of Purim

Placing Devarim

- 3 emphases for parsha Devarim: rebuke, re-do, and realize
 - Rebuke: evident from the beginning of this portion
 - Rashi: the place names mentioned in the first verse of the book (which becomes the geographical context for the whole book) represent times when Israel angered God
 - a subtle rebuke
 - vs 2: 11-day journey from Horeb to the edge of the Land
 - it took this generation 38 years, another subtle rebuke
 - bringing up failures of the past
 - to encourage them that they can do better; stand on the shoulders of your parents!
 - Kehot Chumash: "...Moses' rebuke is an object lesson in the proper approach to repentance. Although Moses did not omit any detail that could have driven home the need for *teshuvah*, he took care to mention each detail firstly as vaguely as possible, IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE PEOPLE'S DIGNITY AND SELF-ESTEEM; and secondly, always in the context of THEIR GREAT PROMISE, emphasizing how far they fell short of their POTENTIAL rather than how terribly they failed. This perspective, coming as it does at the opening of the book, sets the tone for the "rebuke" that will continue throughout the entire Book of Deuteronomy, even including the dire threats we will hear in its course. Candid and brutal honesty couched in terms that nonetheless convey deep and sincere respect is the surest way to encourage both ourselves and others to repent, to experience true *teshuvah*, and thereby renew ourselves and our relationship with God in the deepest way possible."
 - if you want to help to open someone's ears to rebuke, be subtle at first, and, above all, let the person know that you truly see them, beyond the flesh, their goodness and potential
 - like Peter in Acts 3: "You murdered the Messiah, but you acted in ignorance. Repent. You are the sons of the prophets and heirs to the covenant, and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you."
 - Paul walks a similar fine line of rebuke with the Corinthians
 - Re-do
 - the book of Deuteronomy has many connections to the idea of second chances
 - the book is named for a re-telling of the Torah
 - the audience is the second generation, Israel 2.0
 - the book evokes the New Covenant
 - covenant renewed for this generation in chapter 29
 - this covenant will stay faithful to the covenant under Joshua (a trait of the New Covenant)

- R'Sax points out that the entire book of Deuteronomy follows the form of an ancient Middle-eastern treaty, a covenant following the traditional steps: preamble, historical review, stipulations of the treaty, deposition of the copies of the covenant, curses and blessings, and witnesses (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fg1G3A4a1WE>)
- in the calendar, we are soon approaching the point in the year we can connect to the inauguration of the New Covenant – the 7th month
 - the Torah context will still be the reading of Devarim
 - Moses brings down the second set of tablets on Yom Kippur
 - Yeshua presents His blood on Yom Kippur, the blood that inaugurates the New Covenant
- Realization of the Goal
 - What is the goal? for us to, in faith, reach down into the stuff of earth (including our bodies) and use it for spiritual purposes, to make a home here for God
 - as the last of the 5 books of Torah, Devarim should carry the flavor of the end times, of the last phase of maturing in our walk, the point of the spiritual being lived out through the physical vessel
 - we read it not at the end of the calendar, but at the end of the first 7-month journey in the calendar
 - it's meaningful that Moses is speaking out Devarim with HIS OWN WORDS rather than transcribing God's words for the people
 - the bride stepping up to bring forth from her own being and will and resources and context a service offering that is unique to her
 - this is what Moses is doing in using His own words to restate the Torah for the specific audience God has given him
 - he colors his restatement by emphasizing the giants that WERE but are no more: "Your fathers feared the giants in the Land. But I want you to see that there have been many giants in these lands, and if God decides to give land to someone like Esau or Moab or Ammon, God will work to take down the giants."
 - Moses a picture of the bride who REFLECTS the Groom
 - "ezer kenegdo" – Eve is a helpmate "opposite" to Adam

- R'Trugman: “Mosheh” backwards is “HaShem,” the circumlocution we use for the Tetragrammaton (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMnCLBZ_LL4&list=PLYztuC2s_vII5s6D-JorYNLwDv3I5E5nyn&index=2 10m)
- R'Trugman: “I will be that which I will be” = 543; “Moshe” = 345
 - Moses is a mirror reflection who pictures the human bride who is the complementary image of God, His helpmate
- “Devarim” means both “words” and “things”
 - we’re seeing a movement from the word received in the wilderness to the “thing,” the word about to be made concrete in the Land
 - “Then the LORD said to me, ‘You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward...’ (Deuteronomy 2:2-3)
 - mountains are spiritual territory; the north is the place of darkness and physicality; the message is: “enough of the spiritual; it’s time to bring it down to earth”

Yeshua

- during this period of the Three Weeks, the Jewish people focus a lot on the Messianic Age
 - when the suffering on earth will be alleviated
 - when the 3rd Temple will be rebuilt
 - the 3 Weeks being connected to the destruction of the Temple
 - the destruction leads us to cry out, “Lord, save. Give me the heart I need to stay faithful to You!”
 - in the calendar, this cry does, indeed, lead to the coming of the Messiah, each year in the 7th month
 - Rosh Hashanah – the trumpet announces that the King is approaching, so get ready
 - Yom Kippur – Yeshua covers His bride on the way down
 - Sukkot—the Incarnation
 - the following days: walking with Him, we are given a new heart, the heart we cried out for on the 9th of Av, the Torah written on the heart and the ability to be faithful, which is the New Covenant

35 – Devarim – Transcript (not exact)

Hello and welcome to Beth Tikkun and the Spiritual Seasons study, where we are opening up the weekly Torah portions with the help of God’s overall pattern of salvation seen in the

calendar and beyond. This week we are in parsha Devarim, the first portion in the fifth and final book of the Torah, which is also called Devarim, or “Deuteronomy” in English. The first portion in the book is chapters 1 through most of chapter 3.

“Devarim” means “words.” The title comes from the first verse of the book, which reads, “These are the words that Moses spoke to all Israel beyond the Jordan in the wilderness, in the Arabah opposite Suph, between Paran and Tophel, Laban, Hazeroth, and Dizahab” (Deuteronomy 1:1). So we are given all these place names as the context for Moses’ words to Israel. Nearly the entire book is Moses’ parting words to the people he had sacrificed so much of his life to shepherd. In the final chapter of the book, he is taken from them, and at the start of the next book, Joshua, they cross into the Promised Land without him. Tradition says that it took Moses a little over a month to deliver the words of Deuteronomy to the people.

The Kehot Chumash says there are two great interwoven threads in the book: the first is Moses’ exhortations to the people to remain faithful to God and His Torah, and the second is a review of much of the legal subject matter first explained in earlier books. Since this legal content is repetition, the book is sometimes called “mishneh Torah,” a repetition of the Torah. And this is where we get our English name “Deuteronomy” from, which means “second law” or “repetition of the law.” The key difference between Deuteronomy and the previous books of the Torah is that with this final book of the Torah, for the first time God’s law is being translated through a human being, Moses. We could say that Moses basically transcribed the other books, writing down what God told him to write. Here in Deuteronomy, Moses is explaining the Torah in his own words. And so some have called Deuteronomy the beginning of the Oral Law.

In this first portion in the book, Moses begins his repetition with a review of how God told them to leave Mt. Horeb and go up to take the Land. Moses chooses to insert here that at that time he assigned a leadership structure for the nation, with commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, along with officers.

He goes on to recount how the people embraced the evil report of the 10 spies and failed to go into the Land at that time, resulting in the punishment of the remainder of the 40-year journey in the wilderness until that generation passed away.

Moses sums up 38 years with two quick, poetic lines: “Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea, as the LORD told me. And for many days we traveled around Mount Seir- ” many days, indeed. Moses continues, “Then the LORD said to me, ‘You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward...’” (Deuteronomy 2:1-3).

Chapter 2 goes on to detail how Israel passed through, or tried to pass through, the descendants of Esau and Lot, the people from Lot being the Moabites and Ammonites. These were relatives, and God had promised each of them certain territories that would not belong to Israel, so Israel was not to make war against any of them. The Amorites who were east of the Jordan are a different story. Don’t confuse the Amorites with the Ammonites. The Ammonites

and Moabites were descended from Abraham's nephew Lot, while the Amorites were a Canaanite group. The Amorites lived both east and west of the Jordan. Those east of the Jordan were the Amorite kingdoms of Sihon and Og. The rest of portion Devarim describes how Sihon and Og came against Israel, and with God's help, Israel destroyed them, with Moses eventually granting their lands to the 2½ Transjordan tribes. What sort of sticks out to us here in the repetition of these historical events is that the text includes some commentary, which some translations feel the need to even put in parentheses. These comments usually explain a bit about the groups that used to live in this area or that area but were defeated by Israel's relatives or Israel, themselves, especially the former inhabitants that were regarded as giants. In fact, the text seems almost preoccupied with these giants.

Authority Emphasized

Before we get into the calendar connections and the portion, itself, let's notice here that Moses is really emphasizing the idea of authority and leadership at the beginning of this book. It seems downright strange that in beginning this re-telling, Moses' first point is that after God tells them to leave Mt. Sinai, Moses paused to appoint a system of leaders over the nation, according to the advice of his father-in-law Jethro. Why is this appointing of leaders the first thing Moses mentions in this giant month-long speech? Now, to be sure, this was a radical change for the nation, a great structuring that they didn't have before. It must have brought a lot of order to some chaos, and one thing Moses is doing here in mentioning this first is saying, "When I'm gone and you pass into the Land, don't let this authority system lapse! It's a backbone and source of strength for you, and without it, you will be weak and easily fall to your enemies." Grant points out that if leaders are appointed over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens, you've got about 78,600 men in positions of authority, about 13% of the fighting-age men. He says this type of authority structure is like an internal nervous system for a body, and he adds "Authority is very close to God's heart."

Beyond these practicalities of organizing the body of Israel, on another level, by making this appointing of leaders the first item he emphasizes, Moses is hinting here to the heart of the Torah and THE KEY TO THE FULLNESS OF LIFE IN THE LAND: and that's servant leadership. Israel is to be a nation of priests. When they get into the Land, this is what their future will be. A nation of priests is a nation of servant leaders.

In a certain way, we are all called to be servant leaders. This idea is the essence of Yeshua's life on earth. By laying down His life as servant to all, He becomes the leader of all, the One before Whom every knee will bow. It is in servant leadership that our light really shines. And recall that the center stalk of God's pattern for shining light, the menorah, is called the "shamash," which means both "servant" and the "sun." In Hebrew, the source of light in our universe, the sun, is also the word for "servant."

The Month of Av

Before we head deeper into the book of Devarim and this portion, let's take some time to talk about the new month we just entered Tuesday night, the month of Av. Having a little understanding of the month will help set the stage for further insights into the parsha.

First, “Av” means “father,” and the mazal of the month is Leo, the lion. In Jewish thinking, the lion is emblematic of overwhelming power and even punishment, and so there is something of a connection between the idea of “father” and the lion. Within the family unit, the father is the center of that strict authority and, in some ways, the final repository of power. So this is a month that, at its beginning at least, is very top-down, a month in which God shows Himself to be powerful in a disciplinary way.

In many ways, Av is the compliment of Nissan, the first month, which is also called “Aviv” in the Bible – first month, Aviv; fifth month, Av. You can hear the similarity. But whereas the mazal of the first month is the LAMB, the mazal of the 5th month is the lion. So this month is the lion compliment to the lamb.

Of course we do see this lion side of God particularly on the 9th of Av, which is when the Temples were destroyed. R’Ginsburgh points out that the word for “lion,” “aryeh,” equals 216, and the word “gevurah” also equals 216 (<https://www.inner.org/times/av/av.htm>). Gevurah is the word for contraction and limitation, the placing of boundaries, the act of judgment and even punishment and destruction.

The chush of the month, the bodily ability anciently associated with Av, is hearing, and this is connected to the tribe of the month, which is Simeon, Shimon, which comes from the root “to hear.” Simeon, by the way, has a connection to Judah, the tribe of the first month, in that Simeon, uniquely, receives its inheritance entirely within another tribe, Judah. This is an important thread in the essence and energy of the month of Av: it is a month for God to **speak** with the clarity and even harshness what we need to hear, as difficult as that may be to hear. Our part is to both listen with humility and begin to obey. In Hebrew, the idea of “hearing” implies not just physically hearing but also doing the work of understanding and further, obedience. To “hear” is to “obey.”

On the more practical side, this is also a month to focus on bringing correction and balance to our hearing, meaning we should try to form better habits now regarding what enters our ears. We have come to take words lightly, both our own words and the words we allow into our ears. In Grant and Robin’s talk this week, Robin was lamenting how it is that we have lost the awareness of the importance of the words that come out of our mouths, and at the same time, we’ve become spiritually illiterate. So, to build a little on what Robin was saying, we have become numbed to the cutting harshness of words that bring death, and humanity in general is having much trouble recognizing the great value of life-giving words. We can do better with what we are allowing to enter our ears. We can and we must, because the words out there are largely not getting softer and kinder. Now, I know that we need people to speak truth. On the other hand, we need them to speak truth in love, without the mocking tone, for example. It’s that love part that’s so often missing. So we have this practical aspect to the month – working on what we literally allow into the portals of our ears.

But back to the earlier point about hearing, in this month where God is apt to discipline us, we are working on hearing in another sense: we focus on hearing the rebuke of God now. If we want to live, if we want life, we don't close our ears to the harsh reality that we sometimes need to hear.

And it's easier to hear words of rebuke and correction when we know that the one speaking loves us and has our best interests in mind. We go into this season understanding that God's rebuke has at its heart compassion. He doesn't want to see us wallow in our sin. He doesn't want to see us weak and wobbly and always slipping and falling away and being separated from Him. And He doesn't want to see us taking life from each other and consuming each other like animals do. His chastening is the vessel for His compassion.

R'Ginsburgh fascinatingly uses more numbers to show that God's compassion is the root of His discipline. He adds to the insight that *aryeh* and *gevurah* both equal 216 the insight that 216 is a multiple of *chesed*, lovingkindness. "Chesed" equals 72, and 3×72 is 216. So, *gevurah*, God's discipline and restriction, is composed of three "compassions." And to go even a step further, R'Ginsburgh connects the three compassions to the building of three Temples, which is a bit mind blowing.

In the end, the month of Av is a very powerful one, holding a great potential for both good and evil, both possibilities. The massive potential of the month can be seen in another event to happen on the 9th of Av, one that is mentioned prominently in this Torah portion, the evil report of the 10 spies. The 12 spies arrived back at camp at a vulnerable time for the nation, a moment where God was poised to either unleash His *gevurah* wrath on the Canaanites if Israel was faithful or on Israel if Israel was unfaithful. They arrived back at camp carrying poles weighed down with the physical evidence of the goodness of the Land, and all the people could see that it was good. But then the spies opened their mouths, and the people turned their ears to them, and they made choices for how they would hear the report. We call it an "evil" report, but in fact, there were two sides to their statement, though the people chose to hear only one. The faithful spies said, "We can do this! If the LORD delights in us, He will bring us into this land. The people will be like bread for us. Their protection is removed from them, and the LORD is with us. Don't fear them!" And Moses, himself, added, "Do not be in dread or afraid of them. The LORD your God Who goes before you will Himself fight for you, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the LORD your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place" (Deuteronomy 1:29-31).

But the other story resonated with the fearful hearts of the people. The 10 said, "It is a land that devours its inhabitants!" And above all, what the people chose to hear was, "The people who live there are strong. There are GIANTS there! We saw the sons of Anak there! They looked at us and saw grasshoppers, and we felt like grasshoppers!" My point here is that either way they chose to hear would have led to vast, vast consequences: either they would have gone directly into the Land under Moses, or they would suffer in the wilderness until the midbar

swallowed up all their bodies. Av is a month that carries great possibilities, either way. We need to listen carefully now, particularly with ears controlled by faith and peace and joy.

Now, after all of that, let me add that the energy of the month shifts abruptly after the 9th of Av to what we might call a much more clearly positive energy. One of the most joyous times in the whole calendar is somehow birthed out of the ashes of the burning Temples. It's called Tu B'Av, the 15th of Av, less than one week after the 9th of Av. Anciently, this was one of the most joyous days of the year, a day for finding a suitor. The unmarried young women would borrow a white dress. They borrowed dresses so that potential suitors wouldn't know where they fell on the economic scale. Dressed in white in this way, they would go out to the vineyards to dance. And the young unmarried men would go to look for a bride.

I think one of the lessons to take from the closeness of Tu B'Av to Tisha B'Av is that we should never waste an opportunity God gives us to humble ourselves because ashes are very fertile, and from the ashes spring vibrant and healthy new life. If we are disciplined and we truly hear, and we are humbled, and we lower ourselves down and say, "Lord, indeed we have sinned. Indeed we have caused death. Indeed we have bludgeoned each other and starved each other and treated each other coldly! We sit in our blood and ashes." If we open ourselves to what He says to us in the Three Weeks and on the 9th of Av, in particular, then we place ourselves in a position to be lifted up. The 9th of Av is not just a time to fast. It's a time to listen and to humble ourselves before Him. The fast is a full day, by the way. This year it begins this Wednesday night the 26th and ends Thursday night.

There is a fascinating Jewish tradition that the Messiah is born on Tisha B'Av, WHILE THE TEMPLE IS BURNING. Imagine what it would have been like if a mother would have gone into labor while the Romans were lighting the first torch that brought the flame against the precious cedar of the Temple. And as that child comes into the world with a wail, the night is lit up behind that mother by the burning of the connection between heaven and earth. The parents have to wonder in such a bittersweet moment what kind of world this child is being born into.

Shimona Tzukernik says that the teaching that the Messiah is born on the 9th of Av is not necessarily literal, but somehow the IDEA of the Messiah is born from the smoking ruins of the Temple. And isn't it the case that when the world presents us with the image of hopelessness, with the gray stench of death, what else do we have in that moment but the urge from deep within to calmly close our eyes and say, "Lord, it is too much. Bring the Messiah now. How can we bear this? We long for the return of Yeshua."

One more thought here: this month isn't easy for God, either. I happened to read a moving passage this week in Hosea that I thought was particularly appropriate for the month of Av, this month of Leo. In Hosea 11, God actually calls Himself a lion. He decides He won't destroy Ephraim, though they deserve it. He has said earlier that He will not send Ephraim back to Egypt; that's a place Israel is never to return to. But instead, He will allow the king of Assyria to be their king. I'm going to read a few verses, and listen for the great tension here God is expressing, a tension in His own heart. In the end, God decides to give the gift of life.

“My people are bent on turning away from Me, and though they call out to the Most High, He shall not raise them up at all. How can I give you up, O Ephraim? How can I hand you over, O Israel? How can I make you like Admah? How can I treat you like Zeboiim? MY HEART RECOILS WITHIN ME; My compassion grows warm and tender. I will not execute my burning anger; I will not again destroy Ephraim; for I am God and not a man, the Holy One in your midst, and I will not come in wrath. They shall go after the LORD; He will roar like a lion; when He roars, His children shall come trembling from the west; they shall come trembling like birds from Egypt, and like doves from the land of Assyria, and I will return them to their homes, declares the LORD” (Hosea 11:7-11).

Placing Av

Moving forward now, let’s do just a little more work to fit the month of Av into the flow of the calendar by reaching back to the third month and Shavuot. It’s one thing for us to become personally responsible to the Torah in the third month and then to struggle with that and stumble in the ensuing days and weeks, and for us to SEE our own stumbles and be humbled by that. And remember that the chush of last month, the fourth month, was seeing, and we talked about the longest day of the year and God shining a big light on our lack of ability and lack of heart that leads to sin. But it’s one thing for us to see that ourselves as God shines the light for us to see, and it’s another FOR GOD TO ARTICULATE that and bring consequences that we can feel, consequences that bring restriction into our lives. What does the Jewish soul feel when they ponder the destruction of the Temples? This is God elevating our sense of our sin to another level and motivating us to repentance from another level.

So we listen carefully now because, for one thing, an openness to reprimand helps the one reprimanding to not have to be so stern. Imagine you’re scolding and punishing a teenager, and that teenager’s attitude is “Please tell me. Instruct me so that I can be better at this. I’m genuinely sorry, and I’m listening.” Are you going to have to raise your voice quite so loud? We also listen intently now because in the reprimand will be the communication of the straight path to healing and victory, exactly what we need to hear in the moment. God the Father is the parent who knows how to communicate to His children as only a parent does.

And finally on Av, we can see something of the spiritual energy of the month being reflected in the physical land of Israel, especially. This is the hottest period of the year in Israel, when the lack of rain at this time is most keenly felt. As we have said many times, that lack of rain reflects the separation of the heavens and the earth; the land yellows and cracks under the lash of the sun. Agriculturally, we are in the period of pruning of the vines and the early harvest of the grapes. Most of these grapes are used for wine, so they are crushed immediately. The crushed grape symbolizes blood and death, which, again, is separation.

But always as we focus on the death, we cannot lose track of the new life. And this is beautifully pictured in the grape harvest. The point of the crushing of the grape is joy, but it takes time, some time in the darkness to ferment. The best these grapes being harvested now and next month have to offer will come with about six months of aging, meaning their best product will

be ready directly opposite on the calendar (<https://homebrewadvice.com/wine-home-how-long>). Directly opposite these two months are the months of Shevat and Adar, the 11th and 12th months, which puts us at which holiday? Six months opposite puts us right near Purim, the holiday where wine plays a particular role in expressing the joy of darkness turned into light, death turned into life. There's no detail of this world that God has not carefully orchestrated to speak forth the Word, which is salvation! The sadness of Av, in a way expressed as the crushed grape, becomes the joy of Purim expressed as the juice is transformed into wine. What's required is a trip into the darkness of the wine cellar over a dark winter. Be patient, and as the cold breaks and the sun begins to climb on the horizon, as the light returns, bring that wine out into the light and rejoice in the transformation God has brought about.

Placing Devarim

Well, after setting the stage in a general way regarding the season, let's do a little more specific connecting to the portion. I want to focus on three ideas in the portion. Forgive me for doing this, but the three start with "R:" rebuke, re-do, and realize – three "R's" connected to the portion.

First, the rebuke of the season of Av is evident from the beginning of this first Torah portion in the month. The Sages have seen strong elements of rebuke from Moses to the people in this portion, rebuke that is sometimes subtle and even gentle, and rebuke that is also at times quite clear and forceful. For example, Rashi mentions that the place names mentioned in the first verse of the book, the place names that set the stage for Moses' speaking out of the whole book, represent times when Israel angered God. It's a subtle rebuke, but these names are given as the geographic context for the whole book.

In the next verse, we're told that it's 11-days journey from Horeb to the edge of the Land. Moses is addressing the people who have once again arrived at the edge of the Land, but 38 years later! In other words, again we have another subtle rebuke: what should have taken 11 days took 38 years. And the tone of reproach continues in the portion and, to some degree, for the next several portions. Moses is bringing up failures from the past, and he's saying, "Don't do that again. You, yourselves, have lived through the consequences. Learn from those mistakes. Stand on your parents' shoulders. You have the benefit of having walked with God a lot longer now than they did before they made those mistakes. You can do better because you've been given more!"

The Kehot Chumash describes Moses' artfulness here in his reproach of the people. It says, "...Moses' rebuke is an object lesson in the proper approach to repentance. Although Moses did not omit any detail that could have driven home the need for *teshuvah*, he took care to mention each detail firstly as vaguely as possible, IN ORDER TO PRESERVE THE PEOPLE'S DIGNITY AND SELF-ESTEEM; and secondly, always in the context of THEIR GREAT PROMISE, emphasizing how far they fell short of their POTENTIAL rather than how terribly they failed. This perspective, coming as it does at the opening of the book, sets the tone for the "rebuke" that will continue throughout the entire Book of Deuteronomy, even including the dire threats we will hear in its course. Candid and brutal honesty couched in terms that nonetheless convey

deep and sincere respect is the surest way to encourage both ourselves and others to repent, to experience true *teshuvah*, and thereby renew ourselves and our relationship with God in the deepest way possible.”

What the Kehot Chumash is bringing out here is so true. If you want to help to open someone’s ears to rebuke, be subtle at first, and, above all, let the person know that you truly see them; you recognize the good in them beneath the mess-ups, and you see their great potential. This is good advice for effectively bringing correction, and we see Peter in our Acts study doing this when he says in his second sermon in Acts 3, “You killed the Messiah and demanded that a murderer go free, but I know you acted in ignorance. Repent. You are the sons of the prophets and heirs to the covenant, and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you.” Peter is not holding back. He’s telling it like it is, but at the same time, he’s pointing to their great potential as descendants of Abraham and heirs to the promises God made with the patriarchs. He’s letting them know that he sees them, their inner being that God created good. Paul walks this same fine line of rebuke with the Corinthians very carefully and expertly, both rebuking them and expressing his great love for them and his faith in them that they will right the ship.

Rebuke is closely connected to repentance and getting a re-do. This book has many connections to the idea of a second chances. For one thing, the entire book is named for the re-telling of the Torah, the telling of it a second time. It’s being told again because standing before Moses is Israel 2.0, the next generation who will have a second chance to go into the Land.

I want to make a slightly more distant connection to the idea of 2nd chances here. If this is the second giving of the Torah, we can see in this book a kind of a veiled reference to a second covenant. Moses is bringing this generation to the point of renewing the covenant, which we see happen in chapter 29. And so we need to see here a picture of a second covenant, a renewed covenant. I’m talking about the New Covenant now. There are echoes here of the covenant that will not be broken. This generation will, in fact, be faithful to the covenant. In this vein of seeing an allusion to the New Covenant in this book, R’Sax points out that the entire book of Deuteronomy follows the form of an ancient Middle-eastern treaty, a covenant. Archaeologists have discovered ancient treaties between kingdoms in the Middle East dating to even before Moses’ time which contain the following steps: preamble, historical review, stipulations of the treaty, deposition of the copies of the covenant, curses and blessings, and witnesses. R’Sax points out how Devarim follows this same structure. The whole book is a covenant. We can think of it as a renewed covenant for a second generation.

But this renewed covenant is not just happening for this historical generation of Israel; we, too, are coming to that moment in the calendar before long that we can connect to the enacting of the New Covenant. It happens every year, every year in the 7th month. We will still be reading Devarim in the 7th month, so this book provides the Torah context for the fall feasts. It is at that time that Moses brings down from the mountain the SECOND set of tablets that represent the New Covenant, according to tradition on the actual day of Yom Kippur. And it is on the day of Yom Kippur that Yeshua presents His blood in the Heavenly Holy of Holies, the blood that inaugurates the New Covenant. So, as we read in Deuteronomy, let’s be thinking of how the

book connects to the second chance that we are given in the form of the New Covenant in Yeshua's blood.

Lastly here, before we move on to a direct connection to Yeshua, Deuteronomy is picturing for us to some degree the REALIZATION of the goal, the attaining of the goal. What is the goal? In many ways, the goal is for us to, in faith, reach down into the stuff of earth and use it for spiritual purposes, to make a home here for God. Devarim is the last book of five, and so it carries the flavor of the end times with it and the last phase of maturing in our walk. We're not at the end of the calendar now, but as we read through Devarim, we will come to the end of the first 7-month journey in the year. And so we're seeing the spiritual lived out through the stuff of earth here. We're seeing the spiritual given a physical vessel through which it can express itself.

In that vein, let me point out that it's meaningful that Moses is speaking out Devarim with HIS OWN WORDS rather than transcribing God's words for the people. At the end, at the place of maturity, the bride steps up to bring forth from her own being and her own will a service offering that is unique to her as she utilizes her own body and her own possessions and resources. It is the Torah she is expressing, but she's doing so from the depths of her own heart in a way that only she can. That's what Moses is doing here in his restatement of the Torah. He's even including a bit of commentary along the way, especially in terms of the giants who were but who are no more. In other words, Moses colors his restatement of the Torah by emphasizing for his specific audience exactly what they need to hear: "Your fathers feared the giants in the Land. But I want you to see that there have been many giants in these lands, and if God decides to give land to someone like Esau or Moab or Ammon, God will work to take down the giants." Moses is saying, "Don't sweat the giants. There may be some in Canaan, but there were giants in Moab, but they are no more. And together, with God's help, we took down Sihon and the giant Og." Moses gears his repetition of the Torah to the people God gave him to serve. This is what the bride does at the end as she interprets the Torah for her own time and place.

And let me point out that, in some fascinating ways, Moses is a picture of the bride. The bride reflects the groom. She's a mirror reflection for him, "ezer kenegdo," a helpmate opposite to him. Amazingly, R'Trugman points out that "Mosheh" backwards is "HaShem," "The Name," which is the phrase we often use to refer to God a bit indirectly. Even deeper, R'Trugman says that when Moses asks God at the burning bush, "Who shall I say sent me?" God answers: "I Will Be That Which I Will Be." In Hebrew, it's three words that add up to 543, 5-4-3. What does Moshe equal, the Hebrew name "Moses"? 3-4-5. The Name God gives to Moses when he asks for a name is 5-4-3, and Moses' own name is 3-4-5. In some ways, then, Moses represents the human bride who is the complementary image of God, and His helpmate.

Speaking of this movement toward making the spiritual concrete, the word "devarim" means not only "words" but also "things." The word is the middle-ground expression, the soulish expression of the spirit, and the "thing" is the tangible manifestation of that word, the physical side. We're moving here from word to thing. Israel has been given the Word from on high, and Moses is preparing them to really be able to live it out in its fullness in the Land. They're about

to make the Word real and tangible. He's preparing them to start living the life of the stationary Temple (eventually) and the priesthood and the Cities of Refuge and the pilgrimage festivals and the leaving of the corners of the fields for the poor, and the Jubilee, and all the rest that God has communicated to the people about how to live in the Land. The Word is becoming the Thing.

And we see an allusion to this idea of "enough of the spiritual; it's time to bring it down to earth" in a fascinating verse in chapter 2. See if you can hear that idea in these verses: "Then the LORD said to me, 'You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward...'" (Deuteronomy 2:2-3). They've been traveling in the mountains long enough. What are the mountains? They are the spiritual. "Turn northward." What's the north? It's the direction of darkness and physicality. But you see, when we turn to the darkness, that's our chance to master it and cleanse it and use it for spiritual purposes. The embrace of the darkness and the truly spiritual life go hand-in-hand, the life of actually putting the spiritual into practice.

Yeshua

Lastly here today, let's turn our focus directly to Yeshua. To do that, let's circle back to the discussion about the month of Av. It's fascinating that the Jewish people have this tradition that the Messiah is born on the 9th of Av, or, as Shimona Tzukernik put it, the IDEA of the Redeemer is born at this time. During this period of the Three Weeks, the Jewish people focus a lot on the Messianic Age. They teach about it at this point in the calendar because they recognize that the suffering on earth and the suffering of the Jewish people will only end when the Messiah comes. His coming is closely connected in the Jewish mind to the rebuilding of the Third Temple and a general healing of the world.

Well, what would be a little hard for them to see is that this heart cry for the Messiah is followed every year by His arrival in the fall. Again, we have evidence pointing us to Yeshua's incarnation, the birth of the Messiah, near Sukkot, the Feast of Tabernacles. At the low point in the year in Av we look around us at the devastation of the Temple and all the destruction wrought by our inability to fully live up to the Torah with all of our hearts, and we cry out, "Lord, save. Save us. Give me the heart I need to stay faithful to You! Give me that heart so that I won't sin against You and be separated from you like this again!" It's the low point we need to reach before God opens the doorway for the Messiah to step through. And each year, the trumpets of Rosh Hashana announce that our King Yeshua is coming. On Yom Kippur, He does a work in the heavenlies to cover His bride. And on Sukkot, He arrives to dwell with us. And in the life we go on to live with Him, we are given the heart that we cried out for, the Torah on the heart and the ability to keep the covenant faithfully, the fruit of the New Covenant.

Well, that's all for today. Thank you for listening. There is a link to an outline posted below the video. May God bless us in this season of Av with a great humility toward our leaders and toward the Father Who brings loving correction. May He open our ears to hear the rebuke we need to hear now. And too, may we hear His voice telling us to not fear the giants in our lives because He fights with us against them. May we fully trust in the thorough depth of salvation purchased by our Messiah. And may we rise up to be the people He has made us to be. Shalom.

