

DAF HASHAVUA

דברים | DEVARIM

SHABBAT ENDS:

- London: 9.44 pm
- Birmingham: 9.55pm
- Bournemouth: 9.51pm
- Cardiff: 10.00pm
- Dublin: 10.17pm
- Edinburgh: 10.25pm
- Glasgow: 10.29pm
- Hull: 10.04pm
- Leeds: 10.01pm
- Liverpool: 10.10pm
- Manchester: 10.05pm
- Nottingham: 10.01pm
- Sheffield: 10.05pm
- Southend: 9.39pm
- Southport: 10.13pm
- Jerusalem: 8.15pm

Shabbat Chazon

Tisha B'Av

- Begins on Shabbat in London: 8.47pm
- and in Jerusalem: 7.35pm
- Fast ends on Sunday in London: 9.36pm
- and in Jerusalem: 8.01pm

"Bring us back to you, God, and we shall return; renew our days as of old"
(Eicha/Lamentations 5:21)



Stones from the surrounding wall of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE

Sidra Summary

1ST ALIYA (KOHEN) – DEVARIM 1:1-10

In the 40th year after leaving Egypt, towards the end of his life, Moshe (Moses) gathers the nation together and rebukes them, alluding to the many places where they made mistakes since leaving Egypt (Rashi). Moshe recalls the time spent at Mount Sinai after receiving the Torah, and that the nation could have gone from Sinai straight into the Land of Cana'an. At that stage, Moshe realised that he needed assistance to lead such a big nation.

2ND ALIYA (LEVI) – 1:11-21

Moshe therefore told the people to appoint judges over sub-groups of 1000, 100, 50 and 10 men. He told those judges to be fair and brave in their work, and that any dispute too difficult to resolve should be brought to Moshe himself.

3RD ALIYA (SHLISHI) – 1:22-38

Moshe recalls the sin of the spies. The people had approached Moshe 38 years earlier, wanting to send a mission to inspect the Land. Moshe agreed and selected 12 leading men, one from each tribe. Upon their return, Yehoshua and Calev spoke positively, but the other spies persuaded the people that going into the Land was impossible, due to the giants and the strongly fortified cities. Moshe's attempts to reassure the people of God's protection when they would enter the Land were rejected. God then decreed that the generation who had accepted the negative report of the ten spies would die in the wilderness and not enter the Land.

***Point to Consider:** Why did Moshe agree to sending spies, if he would later rebuke them for the mission? (see Rashi to 1:23)*

4TH ALIYA (REVI) – 1:39-2:1

Those aged under 20 at the time of the sin of the spies would be allowed to enter the Land. Despite Moshe's discouragement, some of the people then attempted to enter the Land, despite Moshe's warning that God would not now allow them to

enter. They refused to listen and were brutally crushed by the Emorites. The nation wept and then turned back towards the Sea of Reeds.

5TH ALIYA (CHAMISHI) – 2:2-30

Moshe then recalls that 38 years later, the Israelites turned northwards and passed by the descendants of Esav in Seir, making sure not to start a war with them, nor to take any provisions without payment. The nation then headed towards the Moabite desert. God instructed Moshe not to start a conflict with Moab. Conversely, on their march towards the Land, God instructed them to pass through the land of Sichon, the king of Cheshbon, albeit this might lead to a war.

6TH ALIYA (SHISHI) – 2:31-3:14

Sichon came out to wage war. The Israelites destroyed him and his nation, taking his entire land, with the exception of Ammon. The nation then successfully defeated the other Emorite king, the mighty Og, king of Bashan, conquering his territory.

7TH ALIYA (SHEVI'I) – 3:15-3:22

Moshe apportioned the land taken from Sichon and Og to the tribes of Gad and Reuven and some of the tribe of Menashe (as detailed in parashat Matot – see Bemidbar 32). However, the men of these tribes were still required to enter the Land of Cana'an to fight with the rest of the nation. Moshe told his successor Yehoshua that just as God had helped them to defeat Sichon and Og, so too He would help them in their conquest of the Land.

HAFTARAH CHAZON (YESHAYA 1:1-27)

This haftarah, taken from the beginning of Yeshaya (Isaiah), is the third of the three 'haftarat of tribulation' and is always read on the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av. The prophet relates God's rebuke of the nation for rebelling against Him and bringing animal offerings without actually addressing their sinful ways. The verses of rebuke are traditionally read to the tune of *Megillat Eichá* (Lamentations), which is recited on Tisha B'Av. Yet the haftarah ends with the hopeful message that Zion "will be redeemed with justice".



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United Synagogue Daf Hashavua

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First things first



**RABBI PINCHAS
HACKENBROCH**

Woodside Park
Synagogue

One of the most astonishing openings to a *parasha* occurs this week in the very first verse. The Torah states that Moshe (Moses) spoke to the Jewish people as he began recounting a whistlestop tour of Jewish history. The Torah enumerates the places where the Jewish people had angered God. Rashi (1040-1105) notes that the sins were alluded to rather than being stated explicitly. This in itself is baffling, considering that the list of sins included the transgression of the spies, who brought a slanderous report about the Land of Israel – a sin with devastating consequences that doomed an entire generation to perish in the wilderness, denying them the chance to enter the Land.

Moshe also alluded to the sin of the Golden Calf, which continues to blight the Jewish people to this day. Yet, in neither instance did Moshe explicitly mention the sins, choosing instead to rebuke the people through veiled references to their past misdeeds. Why the beating around the bush? Would it not have been more effective and impactful if he had clearly stated each incident?

The question is strengthened when we see that, in both cases, Moshe *does* criticise them for

these sins, the spies in this week's *parasha* and the Golden Calf in *Parashat Eikev*.

Even so, the presentation at the beginning of this week's *parasha* is to provide a lesson: Moshe is teaching us to avoid, wherever possible, causing unnecessary embarrassment, even for the benefit of rehabilitating the Jewish people.

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (1902-1979) noted that the overarching responsibility to respect the feelings and dignity of every human being is applicable not only to the righteous but even to the lowest and most crass members of the Jewish people.

Quite remarkably, this holds true even for those that have betrayed our people. Bar Kamtza was such a person, a lowly miscreant, as we see from his response to being publicly humiliated. He slandered his own people to the Roman Caesar, sowing the seeds of enmity and animosity in the Roman Empire towards the Jews. This led to the eventual destruction of our people. Yet the public humiliation that Bar Kamtza suffered due to a petty feud was not to be ignored. God still viewed his basic dignity as important enough to allow his humiliation to be avenged. Tragically, it brought upon Israel the destruction of the Second Temple and exile. Such was the paramount importance of maintaining human dignity at all costs that God felt, even for a renegade of our people, it must be upheld.

Moshe is teaching us to avoid, wherever possible, causing unnecessary embarrassment, even for the benefit of rehabilitating the Jewish people.

The notion of respecting the human dignity in a person does not end with the need to refrain from insulting or degrading one's fellow human being. One is also expected to respect and bestow honour on another person. This stems from a recognition of the Godly image inside everyone. Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein (1933-2015) pointed out the requirement to recognise man's unique stature as a *beriya*, a creature cognisant of being fashioned by the Almighty. Human beings are created by God and in the image of God for a purpose.

TIMELINE OF THE THREE WEEKS



9th Av 2449

Sin of spies (Bemidbar ch. 13-14)

9th Av 3338

1st Beit Hamikdash destroyed



9th Av 3830

2nd Beit Hamikdash destroyed



9th Av 3893

Beitar, the last Jewish stronghold against the Roman conquerors, fell

17th Tammuz 2448

Sin of the Golden Calf - Moshe (Moses) breaks the *Luchot Habrit* (Tablets containing the Ten Commandments)

17th Tammuz 3338 (before destruction of 1st Beit Hamikdash, Temple)

Daily offerings ceased due to the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem



17th Tammuz 3830 (before destruction of 2nd Beit Hamikdash)

Walls of Jerusalem breached by the Romans

NB: according to one school of calendrical calculations.

Eicha – When styles tell the story



**RABBI DANIEL
EPSTEIN**

Western Marble
Arch Synagogue

Tisha B'Av, the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, is shaped not only by the historical tragedies it recalls but also by the haunting poetry of *Eicha* – the Book of Lamentations. In five chapters, *Eicha* gives voice to a city's desolation and a people's unhealed wounds. Yet each chapter speaks differently, offering a layered portrait of grief.

Chapter 1 is perhaps the most personal and intimate. It opens with the iconic cry: "*How lonely sits the city...*" The chapter is a lament in the form of a funeral dirge, describing Jerusalem as a bereaved widow abandoned by her lovers. The verses shift between a narrator's description and the city's own anguished voice. The

poetry is orderly – an acrostic – but the content is raw, painting Jerusalem's shame, betrayal and loss in vivid detail.

Chapter 2 is angrier, almost a theological accusation. While chapter 1 grieves, chapter 2 protests. The poet lays the destruction squarely at God's feet: "*The Lord has swallowed up without pity...*" It, too, is an acrostic, but more intense – the devastation is described as deliberate divine wrath. The tone is bitter, sometimes bordering on defiant. The city's defenders and prophets are condemned alongside the people, who sit stunned amid the ruins.

Chapter 3 stands apart in structure and voice. It is the longest, with triple acrostic verses and a chant-like rhythm. Here, an unnamed sufferer (many say it was the prophet Jeremiah) speaks in the first person, embodying communal pain through his own affliction. Yet amid this darkest

lament, a fragile hope flickers:

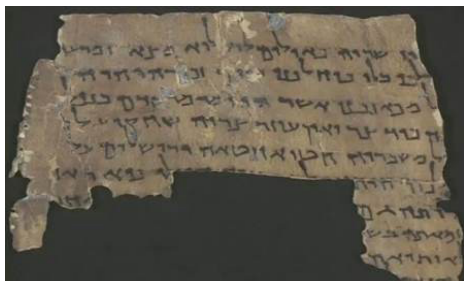
"The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases..." This pivot makes chapter 3 unique – despair tempered by a whisper of faith.

Chapter 4 returns to the third-person narrative but with

a stark, almost resigned tone. It recounts scenes of horror with an eerie calm – princes now grovel for food, mothers eat their children, the Temple is defiled. Compared to chapter 2's raging accusation, chapter 4 has the detached clarity that almost sounds like a post-mortem. The structure remains an acrostic, but the words are spare, almost numbed by repeated suffering.

Chapter 5 breaks the pattern entirely: no acrostic, no rigid structure – just a final communal cry. It is a short, desperate prayer: "*Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us...*" Here, the collective voice pleads for God's notice. There is no illusion of order; the poetry itself unravels, mirroring a people's exhaustion and brokenness. The closing line is unresolved: "*Restore us... renew our days... unless You have utterly rejected us...*" It leaves us suspended, forced to sit with an unanswered question.

Together, these five chapters map the contours of loss: grief, anger, loneliness, numbness and the stubborn hope that ruin is not the end. On Tisha B'Av, when we sit low and read *Eicha* with lights dimmed, we hear not just ancient lament but the timeless cry of all who have tasted destruction yet refuse to abandon the dream of rebuilding. A powerful and prescient expression of these challenging days. May we merit to celebrate instead, soon.



Oldest known scroll of Eicha (2,000 years old). Courtesy of www.sajr.co.za

Texts of the Three Weeks

Kinot



**PNINA
SAVERY**

Ma'ayan and
US Educator

Tisha B'Av is the most sorrowful day in the Jewish calendar – a day that holds the weight of centuries of pain. These past two years, we have endured further pain, but we also celebrate that we live in an era when we are able to confront our enemies and we thank God for many miracles. Even so, on Tisha B'Av, we will spend the morning sitting on the ground and reciting *Kinot*, poetic laments to the various tragedies of our long and sorrowful history. The centuries have been littered with bitter persecutions, wars and torments.

It can be difficult to recite the *Kinot*, both in terms of the dense language and the emotional content. But this difficulty is part of their power. Tisha B'Av is not supposed to be smooth or comfortable. The discomfort mirrors the experience of exile, displacement and grief.

Some *Kinot* focus on the destruction of the Temples in Jerusalem; others describe medieval tragedies: the Crusades, expulsions, massacres. Still others reflect on more modern tragedies, such as the Holocaust. Yet we share the pain together; we jointly recite the *Kinot* as

a community. This collective cry connects us together, Jews across the world. We hope that as we mourn together, so too we will rebuild together.

This is illustrated in the well-known *Kinah* "*Alei Tzion*", recited at the close of the morning's *Kinot*. The refrain compares the destruction of Jerusalem to a woman in labour: "Wail, O Zion and her cities, like a woman in the throes of labour". This is a powerful image of pain, but also of potential. A woman in childbirth experiences immense pain, yet she understands that it is for a great purpose.

So too, we hope and pray that our pain and suffering, especially of the present time, will come to an end with the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash* (Temple). While we do not know for certain, it is believed that this *Kinah* was composed by Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi (1075-1141, Spain), author of the *Kuzari*. He himself yearned greatly for Jerusalem, composing the well-known poem "My heart is in the East, and I am at the ends of the West".

At the end of his life, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi made the journey to Eretz Yisrael. Legend states that, on his arrival, as he bowed down in front of the *Kotel* (Western Wall) in Jerusalem, he was killed by an Arab horseman. He lived and died with a love of the Land of Israel. Indeed, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi wrote another

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well-known *Kinah*, "*Tzion, ha'lo tishali?*" *Zion, shall I not yearn for you?* (*Kinah 36*) in which he expresses his great love for the Land of Israel.

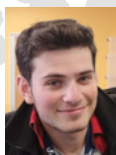
This represents a key theme of Tisha B'Av: while we are fasting, mourning and crying over our suffering, we must never lose sight of the end goal. We draw inspiration from Yirmiyahu (Jeremiah). As we have seen in this short series, Yirmiyahu also hints to the hope within the suffering, the light amidst the darkness. Our focus is on a return to Jerusalem, to a rebuilt *Beit HaMikdash*, to build a better society. We must continue to hope and pray that this will be achieved.

THE TRIBE WEEKLY

PARASHAT DEVARIM

1-2 AUGUST | 8 AV

Moshe's history lesson: How to succeed



**SAM
STONEFIELD**

Tribe Fieldworker

This week's parasha makes up the first of three central addresses Moshe (Moses) gives to the Israelite nation. In this speech, he provides a historical overview to the generation that grew up in the desert.

Moshe's history lessons aren't like those in a modern classroom. Rather than simply narrating the nation's history, he gives a selective retelling, omitting significant details like the adventures of our forefathers, the Exodus and the giving of the Torah. He begins from their departure from Mount Sinai and focuses on a few key events: the leadership crisis and appointment of judges, the journey

to Canaan (later the Land of Israel), the sin of the spies, the sin of those who entered the land against God's word, forty years in the wilderness, and confrontations with the nations around Canaan (Sichon, Og, Moab, Edom, etc.).

Why did Moshe specifically choose these events to recount to the Jewish people? In an insightful article by one of my teachers, Rabbi Alex Israel notes that in each event, Moshe emphasises the importance of listening to God's instructions.

For example, following the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai, God tells Moshe to instruct the Jewish people: *"You have stayed long enough at this mountain. Start travelling..."* (Devarim 1:6-7), *"You have been circling this mountain long enough, start out to the north..."* (2:2-3)

And with the spies and those who entered the land against God's

word: *"You did not wish to enter the land and rebelled..."* (1:26), *"Tell them not to go... I am not with them... they did not listen."* (1:42)

How would the nation know when to journey and when to stay put? How would they know when to enter the land of Israel and how to deal with the hostile nations that surrounded them? In every case, the answer is the same - listen to the word of God.

Moshe's message is clear: failure came from ignoring God. Human reasoning is valuable, but not infallible; following God's instructions is the surest way to succeed. Moshe isn't giving a history lesson for its own sake. He has spent decades reflecting on the mistakes that kept the nation wandering and now hopes this new generation will learn from them - so that they can thrive in the land of Israel.

Parasha Puzzle

The name of this week's parasha, Devarim, means **'words'**.

How many **words** can you make out of the letters of the phrase:

PARASHAT DEVARIM

Can you find any seven letter words?
How about eight?!





THE TRIBE SCRIBE

DEVARIM: LOOK ON THE BRIGHT SIDE!

BACK IN THE 1700'S WHEN THIS STORY TOOK PLACE, PEOPLE HAD NO IDEA THAT SMOKING WAS HARMFUL. OF COURSE, TODAY WE KNOW THAT SMOKING IS VERY BAD FOR YOUR HEALTH!



The famous rabbi, Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (1740-1809) was well known for his love and care for others. One Shabbat...

MY FRIEND, I'M SURE YOU'VE FORGOTTEN IT'S **SHABBAT** TODAY?

NO, I KNOW WHAT DAY IT IS.



THEN I'M SURE THAT YOU'VE FORGOTTEN THAT SMOKING IS FORBIDDEN ON **SHABBAT**.

THEN I'M SURE YOU MUST HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE WHEN YOU LIT THE CIGARETTE?

MASTER OF THE UNIVERSE, LOOK HOW WONDERFUL YOUR PEOPLE ARE! I GIVE THIS MAN EVERY CHANCE AND STILL, HE CANNOT TELL A LIE!



NO, I KNOW THAT SMOKING IS FORBIDDEN.

NO, I KNEW WHAT I WAS DOING.

IN THIS WEEK'S **PARASHA**, **MOSHE** (MOSES) RECOUNTS THE EVENTS OF THE LAST 40 YEARS. BUT HE DOESN'T GLOSS OVER THE DIFFICULT TIMES, HE ADDRESSES THEM HEAD ON AND CRITICISES THE **CHILDREN OF ISRAEL** TOO.



Rabbi Sacks zt"l



MOSHE WAS ABLE TO DO THIS BECAUSE, LIKE **RABBI LEVI YITZCHAK**, **MOSHE** KNEW THE SECRET: IF YOU REALLY WANT SOMEONE TO CHANGE... START BY SEEING THE GOOD IN THEM.

IF YOU SEEK TO CHANGE SOMEONE, MAKE SURE THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO HELP THEM WHEN THEY NEED YOUR HELP, DEFEND THEM WHEN THEY NEED YOUR DEFENCE, AND SEE THE GOOD IN THEM, NOT JUST THE BAD. ANYONE CAN COMPLAIN, BUT WE HAVE TO EARN THE RIGHT TO CRITICISE.



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www.tribeuk.com

Tribe is the Young People's Department of the United Synagogue: Creating a future for our community through engaging, educating and inspiring the next generation.