

Parashat Devarim 5782, 2022:

*For the Honor of the Jewish People*

Rabbi David Etengoff

Dedicated to the sacred memories of my mother, Miriam Tovah bat Aharon Hakohen, father-in-law, Levi ben Yitzhak, sister, Shulamit bat Menachem, sister-in-law, Ruchama Rivka Sondra bat Yeziel, Chana bat Shmuel, Yehonatan Binyamin ben Mordechai Meir Halevi, Shoshana Elka bat Avraham, Tikvah bat Rivka Perel, Peretz ben Chaim, Chaya Sarah bat Reb Yechezkel Shraga, Shmuel Yosef ben Reuven, Shayndel bat Mordechai Yehudah, the *Kedoshim* of Har Nof, Pittsburgh, and Jersey City, the *refuah shlaimah* of Mordechai HaLevi ben Miriam Tovah, and the health and safety of our brothers and sisters in Israel and around the world.

Our *sefer* and *parasha* begin with the celebrated *pasuk*: “These are the words (*aleh hadevarim*) which Moshe spoke to all of the Jewish people on that side of the Jordan in the desert, in the plain opposite the Red Sea, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan and Hazeroth and Di Zahav.” (*Sefer Devarim* 1:1, this and all Tanach and Rashi translations, *The Judaica Press Complete Tanach*, with my emendations) The *Midrash Sifrei* on our verse asks a straightforward question:

And is it the case that Moshe prophesied only these words; did he not write the entire Torah?! As the text states: “Then Moshe wrote this Torah...” (31:9) As such, what is the Torah imparting when it writes, “*aleh hadevarim* which Moshe spoke?” It is coming to communicate that these were specifically words of admonition, as we find in the verse, “And *Yeshurun* (the Jewish people) became fat [that is, economically and politically powerful] and rebelled...” (32:15 *midrash* translation my own)

Rashi *zatzal* (1040-1105) expands on the *Sifrei*'s statement, “it is coming to communicate to us that these were specifically words of reprimand,” and suggests this explanation as to why the Torah employs the phrase, “*aleh hadevarim*”:

Since these are words of rebuke and he [Moshe] enumerates here all the places where they angered the Omnipresent, it, therefore, makes no explicit mention of the incidents [in which they transgressed], but rather merely alludes to them, [by mentioning the names of the places] out of respect for the Jewish people (*mipnei k'vodon shel Yisrael*).

In his posthumous Torah commentary, *Darash Moshe*, HaRav HaGaon Moshe Feinstein *zatzal* (1895-1986) notes that the concept of *mipnei k'vodon shel Yisrael* in Rashi's gloss is quite difficult to understand:

For is it not the case that soon thereafter the Torah mentions the Sin of the Spies at great length? And, so, too, in Parashat Eikev, does not the Torah cite the complete narrative of the Golden Calf? If so, why at the beginning [of the *sefer*] does it utilize allusion alone and concern itself with the respect of the Jewish people (*v'chas al k'vodom*)? (Rav Moshe Dovid Yitzchak Tendler *zatzal*, Rav Dovid Feinstein *zatzal*, and Rav Shalom Reuven Feinstein *shlita* editors, Parashat Devarim 1:1, page 140, this, and the following translation and brackets my own)

Rav Moshe offers the following answer to his question:

... while it is true that this generation, [on the verge of entering *Eretz Yisrael*,] did not commit these earlier sins, and, therefore, could not be directly reproved for them, none the less, they [that is, these sins] are alluded to at this time (*amar b'kan b'remez*). For even the new generation needed to be admonished regarding the sins that were done by the previous generation, since it is necessary for each person to know that if they see someone sin, they should never say concerning themselves that it would be impossible to sin [in this manner, simply] because one knows that this matter is proscribed and believes in Hashem and His Torah... And this reproach was based on the notion that they, too, could sin; as such, [at the beginning of *Sefer Devarim*] they were reprimanded through allusion, to maintain their honor, as they had not yet sinned in actual practice.

I believe that Rav Moshe is teaching us a crucial lesson for this Shabbat day before Tisha b'Av: "It is necessary for each person to know that if they see someone sin, they should never say concerning themselves that it would be impossible to sin because one knows that this matter is proscribed and believes in Hashem and His Torah." Instead, we must be vigilant in studying and fulfilling Hashem's Torah and ever seek to be His true servants, for this, too, is *mipnei k'vodon shel Yisrael. V'chane yihi ratzon.*

Shabbat Shalom

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Please contact me at [rdb718@gmail.com](mailto:rdb718@gmail.com) to be added to my weekly email list.

\*\*\* My audio *shiurim* on the topics of *Tefilah* and *Tanach* may be found at:  
<http://tinyurl.com/8hsdpvd>

\*\*\* I have posted 164 of Rabbi Soloveitchik's English language audio *shiurim* (MP3 format) spanning the years 1958-1984. Please click on the highlighted link: [The Rav](#)