

דרכים בפרשה דברים

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אלה הדברים אשר דבר משה אל כל ישראל בעבר הירדן במדבר בערבה מול סוף בין פארן ובין תפל ולבן וחצרת ודי זהב (א:א)

These are the words which Moshe spoke to all Yisroel on that side of the Yarden in the desert, in the plain opposite the Yam Suf, between Paran and Tofel and Lavan and Chatzeros and Di Zahav (1:1)

Rashi explains that because the Torah was about to relate to us all the locations that we angered HaShem, the Torah used veiled references to the places so as to protect the honor and dignity of Klal Yisroel. The Otzar Hemesholim further explains our pesukim with the following *mashal*:

A king had a beautiful prize orchard that would give off the most beautiful and exotic fruits. There were signs posted throughout stating, "Do not enter". At the entrance to the garden, the king placed a ferocious watch dog that was trained to ward off any thieves from entering.

Very late one night, the king heard loud barking coming from the garden. Stepping onto his balcony, he watched how his dog was ripping away at the perpetrator. Looking closer, the king realized that it was actually one of his close friends who had tried to enter the garden to steal some of the fruits. The friend was no match for the dog and barely made it out alive full of scratches and torn clothing.

The next day, when the king saw his friend, he had the following dilemma. "If I chastise him about going into the garden and stealing the fruits, he will be very embarrassed. If I do not say anything, he will think that this time he was unlucky and perhaps next time he can actually get away with it."

What did the king do? He went over to his friend and told him that he feels horrible that his dog scratched him up and ripped his clothing. The friend understood that the king was witness to what he had done. At the same time, his dignity remained intact.

The Midrash relates that in our pesukim, אלה הדברים - the word "devarim" is similar to the word "devorim" which means bees. Bees produce sweet honey but they

also carry a very sharp stinger. Our pesukim are sharp and sweet at the same time.

Looking at our pesukim, we can easily see both the sweet and sharp. **Midbar** was the place that HaShem gave them something sweet, i.e. the *mann*. Upon recalling this, they will feel sharpness because they will remember that it came about after they sinned with their "dibur", when they complained about their lack of food. **Arava** refers to their stay in Shittim when they took the spoils and loot from Sichon and Og. This sweet time will also remind them of their sins with the Bnos Midyan. **Mul Suf** refers to their gathering of the spoils of the Yam Suf, which was even greater than the spoils of Mitzrayim. Aside from this sweetness, they also received *nevuah* at *krias Yam Suf*. These memories will force them to remember how they rebelled by asking, "Were there no graves in Mitzrayim that we needed to come here?"

Similarly, the seforim (Parparaos L'Torah) expound: the word אלה is the acronym for אבק לשון הרע, So Moshe Rabbeinu was alluding to the sin of Lashon Hara. I believe we can explain his mussar as follows: One might say that it is merely the "dust of lashon hara", so how bad can it really be? We know that the word *dibbur* connotes a harsh word. Furthermore, as we have mentioned, it is like a bee which can sting. Perhaps Moshe Rabbeinu was telling them in a gentle way that אלה הדברים - אבק לשון הרע is even דברים - harsh and stinging.

It is interesting to note a comment of Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berditchiv zt"l regarding this possuk: Moshe Rabbeinu only rebuked and admonished Bnei Yisroel directly at them. However, when he spoke to Hashem, his only words in reference to Bnei Yisroel were in praise of them.

Moshe Rabbeinu had a task to perform and it was not pleasant. It is never fun to give *mussar*, and if it is, then it probably is not being given properly. However, giving mussar does not mean that there is a licence to verbally assault the next person. Let us learn from this midrash that our "diburim" can be like "devorim". It is up to us to choose how we want them to come out. Will we choose to use our words stingingly or in a sweet manner? If we all choose the method of sweetness, we will merit to speedily see the third Beis Hamikdash rebuilt in our day.

Good Shabbos, **מרדכי אפּעל**