

Torah Thoughts from SEED on Parshas Devarim

In the beginning of Sefer Devarim the Jews were about to enter into Eretz Yisroel. Being that Moshe wasn't going to be entering and was about to die, he used this opportunity to make his last speech to the Jews, in which he rebuked them for the sins that they did in the past. The question is, why did Moshe wait till right before his death to rebuke them? Rashi explains that one should wait till right before his death to rebuke so that the person he rebuked won't bump into him later and be embarrassed. We see how careful and sensitive one must be, and especially now during the 9 days, in order that his friend not be embarrassed even though he did something wrong.

Chaim Schwartz

The Talmud (Sanhedrin 90b) finds in this week's Torah reading an implicit reference to the revival of the dead. In the 8th verse, Moshe recounts G-d's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob--to give them and their descendants the land of Israel. A careful reading of the verse will note that G-d's promise is to the forefathers themselves, not simply their descendants. However, history tells us that the forefathers passed on without ever gaining control over Israel. The only way to explain this discrepancy is that G-d's promise will be made good at a future point in history – when the dead are revived.

Shmuel Baumman

The Torah tells of how the Jews were forbidden to bother the nation of Ammon at all. The reason given is because the Ammonites had an extra merit from their ancestor, one of the daughters of Lot. When Lot fled from Sodom with his two daughters, they thought that all humanity had been wiped out and that they were the sole survivors. To repopulate the Earth, they intoxicated their father, and lived with him incestuously. The ancestor of Ammon named her son *Ammon* (from within) a name that hid the act that she did, as opposed to her sister who named her son *Moav* (*from father*) a name that didn't hide the act that she did. Rash"i says that this merit protected the Ammonites from the potential attack of the Jews at that time. We see from here how far the affect of a single positive action goes, even effecting a merit to protect them many generations later. Our actions often have affects that we cannot see but that does not mitigate the power that they have.

Paysach Feinberg

In this week's Torah portion, it is mentioned that after the spies gave their report about the land of Israel, the Jewish people said, "because of Hashem's hatred for us. He took us out of Egypt..." Rash"i explains that they went as far to claim that if Hashem really loved them He would've given them Egypt because it's richly irrigated and He would have made the Egyptians move to Canaan. This is hard to understand, as we are talking about the same nation that left Egypt, saw all the miracles performed with their own eyes, and received the Torah at Mount Sinai. Yet they still claimed that Hashem didn't love them?! Perhaps an explanation to this is that they made up a reason to claim that Hashem didn't love them in order to justify not entering the land of Israel. We see from here how a person's ulterior motives can affect them on such a deep level. They did not realize their motivation and could actually believe that such a claim like this. May we merit to be able to understand where our thoughts are coming from and be able to see the truth clearly in all situations.

Daniel Feldman

In this week's haftorah, which relates the prophecy of Isaiah regarding G-d's disappointment with the Jewish People's behavior, the passuk says, "For what were you hit, [yet] you continue to increase your waywardness"(Isaiah 1:5). The Peirush Binas Hamikraos explains, if a person gets hurt for doing a particular action, and then proceeds to do the very same action again, his friend will say to him, "Look at what happened to you from doing this before! Why would you do it again? Don't you realize what will happen?" In the same vein, Hashem says to the Jewish People, "You know you were punished because of your sins, yet you continue to commit the very same sins?! Realize the consequences of your actions!" Too often, when we are tempted to sin, the yetzer hara gets us to somehow forget about the punishment we receive for our sins, even though we were previously fully aware. He has the power to confuse us and fog our vision to the extent that what we once knew as clear as day could become vague, if not completely forgotten. Hashem should help us always see the truth, especially when we are tempted greatly by the yetzer hara.

Aryeh Singer