Insights and Inspiration

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"Your friend in Karmiel"

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Parshat Devarim/ Chazon

Baby-Killers!

You're not going to like this E-Mail. And it's not only because it's one of my longest ones. The easily offended people or even those that can usually handle it might really take umbrage about what I'm going to be writing. This is not even going to be one of those typical "*everyone-should-make-aliya-before-they-come-and- kill-you-there*" E-Mails. It's Tisha B'av this week. I have to up the ante. Let's try to upset all of Klal Yisrael together. That's *achdus.* Bringing us all under one big *"offended-by-Rabbi -Schwartz's-E-Mail*" umbrella. What I wouldn't do not to have to fast this Tisha B'Av and bring Mashiach sometimes even surprises me…

Ok, here it is. What's the worst libel, the most offensive slur, the greatest denigration and evil that those who want to degrade and demonize the Israeli army, or for that matter the Jewish people with? Nazi, is not a bad choice, unfortunately it's used by little kids in Meah Shearim to call soldiers that, not having any clue, that those very soldiers are the ones protecting them from the real Nazis outside their houses. But that's not graphic enough. The word or slur that I'm thinking about, that one can hear regularly at your traditional international Free Palestine demonstrations is "Baby-Killers". Ouch! That hurts. That's below the belt and probably the worst libel against us that almost every Jew feels that we have to defend ourselves against.

The reason why it hurts so much is because, number one, it's not only so not true, but actually the opposite is true, for anybody that knows anything about our army here. We're actually providing humanitarian aid, we're forbidding soldiers to shoot at terrorists that are using these babies as human shields. We've lost so many soldiers, because of Israel's stubborn opposition and willingness to sacrifice our own boys so as not to kill, anyone that is not only not just an active present terrorist threat, but even when they are a threat, not even to kill them, but rather to prevent the loss of life at our own dangerous and tragic cost. Let alone, kill babies. The lie that it's what we are doing is as bad as the blood libel, of killing their babies to make our matzos when everyone knows we avoid even eating a bloodspot we find in an egg, let alone a Hamas baby's blood.

The second reason, why this is so offensive is that killing babies to us and to most of the world, seems to be probably one of the most evil things that a human being can do. Excluding "unborn babies" of course, which for many seem to be not a problem at all… Babies are cute. They're innocent. They represent the future. How can anyone with any moral code kill them. The only person that can do that is someone without a soul. A sub-human. An IDF soldier.

Do we all agree on that? OK. So now here's the problem. Don't read our parsha this week. Don't show it to your neighbors, especially in America and certainly not in Europe. Probably not in Tel Aviv either. See, we've somehow managed to doze off when this was mentioned here and there in last week's long parsha. But we begin this week with parshat Devarim. It's Mishne Torah. It's Moshe Rabbeinu's last speech, making sure we don't miss anything. It's also the parsha we need to read every year right before Tisha B'Av. It's called Chazon, because if you open up your eyes, and try hard not to be as oblivious as all of those anti-semites are out there that are calling us Baby-Killers, and that have always called us that, we can see, that maybe they're

right. Even more importantly… maybe we need to truly embrace that title and actually live up to that special holy name…

Click. You unsubscribed. Told you… that you wouldn't like it.

Now most of the first part of Devarim is words of Mussar of Moshe, it's a 40 year old history lesson for all those that don't remember. It's leaving Egypt, it's the spies, Korach, complaints, the golden calf, the ma'apilim- that try to go up without the Ark. It's even Bnot Moav and Pe'or, which happens not so long before this speech. Yet, the end of the parsha is really when it starts to get fun. See, because there's about three *aliyos*, which are a basic recap of the war against Sichon, and Og and the conquering of the lands of Moav and Bashan through them. The problem is that these wars literally just took place week's before. What's the point of the recap?

The answer though is that Moshe is not just speaking to them, he's speaking to us. He's giving us the most important facts and details so we understand today what these wars were all about. What we're meant to be doing. He's the *vaad chakira*- the War Commission Inquiry committee submitting its findings to the nation about what took place during the battle just fought. I'll share with you some of their findings, as did Moshe.

Ok first on our list is Sichon. Hashem gives us our marching orders

Devarim (2:24-25) *Arise, journey, and cross the Arnon River. Behold, I have delivered Sichon the Amorite, king of Cheshbon, and his land into your hand. Begin to take possession of it, and provoke him to war. Today I will begin to place the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the nations that dwell under the entire heaven, who will hear reports of you and tremble and be in trepidation because of you.'*

Fascinatinly enough Moshe doesn't head right out to war. He instead turns to them and offers them an option. Let us travel through your land in peace and nothing will happen to you. Rashi notes that he learned this concept of asking for peace first perhaps from Hashem or the Torah itself in Midbar Keidmus- which is a hint to an early desert- rather than calling it Sinai.

From the Kedemot Desert- *Although Hashem did not command me to make overtures of peace with Sichon, I learned that I should do so from what happened in the Sinai Desert – from the Torah that preceded the world. When Hashem, came to give it to the Bnai Yisrael, He first offered it to the descendants of Esau and Ishmael, and although it was clear to Him that they would not accept it, He nevertheless made overtures of peace to them. I, too, made overtures of peace with Sichon.*

*Another explanation: What is the meaning of "Midbar Keidmus? I learned from You, who preceded (*kodamta*) the world. You could have sent one bolt of lightning and consumed the Egyptians, but You sent me from the desert to Pharaoh, to say to him: "Send forth My people!" treating him in a restrained manner*.

Both of these explanations in Rashi seem strange. After-all Hashem didn't tell him to reach out and offer peace first. Yet, Moshe does so either because he learned it out from the Torah, which Hashem offered to the nations first. Or alternatively it's because he learned it out from Hashem who didn't wipe out Egypt and rather sent Moshe to Pharaoh first. What' difficult about these peshatim is that according to the first *pshat*, the reason Hashem seemingly offered it to the nations first is so that they wouldn't be able to later claim that they didn't have the first chance at it. Yet, here as we shall see there isn't anyone left that would ever claim that. As Moshe and the Jewish army wipes them all out. The second *pshat* is even more problematic, as by Egypt, Hashem explicitly tells Moshe the reason why he doesn't just wipe out Egypt is because He wants to preform great miracles and show the world His greatness and control of the world with the plagues and splitting of the sea. Seemingly here, that's not the case. So what's the comparison and the reason that Moshe would disregard Hashem's command to wipe them out?

Yet, as we see, Sichon doesn't learn. Og doesn't learn as well. And that's where the fun begins. That's when we become baby-killers.

Devarim (2:33-34) *But Hashem, our God, delivered him to us, and we smote him, his sons, and his entire people. We conquered all his cities at that time and*

<u>utterly destroyed every city: men, women, and infant; we left no survivor.</u>

Genocide.
It gets even better when it gets to Og. Because whereas by Sichon we took the animals and their plunder. By Og we just had fun, as Rashi tells us.

Regarding what was plundered from Sichon, it says: "we took as pillage for ourselves," from "plunder," for it was important to them and each person took plunder for himself. But when they came to the plunder of Og, they were already satiated and full with booty, and thus it was contemptible in their eyes. They ripped and threw away animals and clothing, taking only silver and gold. It therefore says there "scorn."

We burnt their Kibbutzim, and massacred their cattle and destroyed their possessions. Nice. We October 7th them.
By Og it tells us as well explicitly in the verse

Ibid(3:4,6) *We conquered all his cities at that time. There was not one communal city that we did not seize from them—60 cities, all the territory of Og's royal palace—the kingdom of Og in Bashan…We utterly destroyed them, as we did to King Sichon of Cheshbon**, utterly destroying every city—the men, the women, and the infants.***

We're baby-killers. Moshe is a baby-killers. The army of Israel is baby-killers. Cattle-burners. Plunderers and pillagers. And lest you think this is a one-time anomaly. Our parsha ends off with the command to Yehoshua, that this is indeed what Hashem has planned for us to do when we come into the Land of Israel. As the last verse in this pre-Tisha B'Av schmooze Moshe Rabbeinu gives us is.

Ibid (3:21-22) I commanded Joshua at that time, saying, '*You have seen with your own eyes all that God, your God, has done to these two kings. So will God do to all the kingdoms through which you will pass. Do not fear them, for it is God, your God, who is fighting for you*.

Even more fascinating is that if you connect this with the beginning of next week's parsha. Shabbos Nachamu, Moshe asks Hashem if he could come into the land. If this is seen as the following *pasuk* to this story. He's asking to come into the land and to continue killing all their babies. Nice. Perhaps he rightfully doesn't trust us to do that holy special job he did. Yehoshua, doesn't have the guts or determination to do what Moshe's army did. It's why he has to keep telling him to have strength and fortify himself. As the command in Israel is to come and wipe everyone out. To be genocidal. To kill them all. Happy Tisha B'Av. Wow!

OK, so I imagine the few of you that are still left here reading, are either psychopaths like me, or are truly curious as to what's going on here? Is this what the "most moral army on the earth" is supposed to look like?

There's one more anomaly about this parsha and whole speech of Moshe that seems to be perplexing and that perhaps upon resolving can shed light on this entire story and mandate. See, there is an inordinate amount of time and ink spent giving us the ancient history of the Middle East, that seemingly none of us seem to be interested. It's kind of like when my tourists ask me what the name of that Arab village we're passing in our car on our drive to our destination is. I tell them it's called Allah Aqbar. They're all called Allah Aqbar. Sometimes I say Al Jazeera. See, they don't care and I don't care. They're just trying to test me. I don't take tests. They're all the same. Who cares what their name is?

The same thing here. We have verse after verse about nations and previous conquests that seemingly we don't care about. Some of them are not even here on the other side of the Jordan, Look,

Ibid (2:9-12) God said to me, *'Do not distress the Moabites by provoking them to war, for I will not give you any of their land as an inheritance, because I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot as an inheritance. The **<u>Eimim</u>** formerly dwelt there. They were a people as great, numerous, and tall as the giants. They were also considered **<u>Rephaim</u>**, just like the giants. The Moabites called them **Eimim**.*
*The **Horite**s formerly dwelt on Mount Se'ir, but the descendants of Esau dispossessed them. They destroyed them and settled in their place, just as the Israelites did to the land of your inheritance that God gave you.*

Ibid (20-23) *It too is considered the land of the **Rephaim. Rephaim** formerly dwelt in it; the Ammonites call them **Zamzumim.** They were a people as great, numerous, and tall as the giants, but God destroyed them for them, and they dispossessed them and settled in their stead,*
*just as He did for the descendants of Esau, who dwell on Mount Se'ir, when He destroyed the **Horites** for them and they dispossessed them and settled in their stead, living there to this day.*

And just when you thought you had too much information already about this area. Moshe and Hashem jump to Gaza, which is nowhere near here and we aren't even attacking yet… or ever..

Ibid(24) *The **Avim** were the dwellers in the open cities until Gaza. The **Kaftorites,** who hail from **Kaftor,** destroyed them and dwelt in their stead.*

Really who cares about Gaza? Why now why here. It feels like I'd be telling you on a tour this is the Abbasid Muslim dynasty, this is the Ayubbi, the Mamluk… who cares? Even worse is after we conquer Og it gives us a list of names of what those arabs used to call the mountains there.

Ibid (3:8-9) *We took at that time the land out of the rule of the two kings of the Amorites who were on the east side of the Jordan River, from the Arnon Brook to Mount Hermon. The **Sidonians** called Mount Hermon '**Mount Sirion**,' and the **Amorites** called it '**Mount Senir**.'*

Sidon, Amori, Hori, Aimim, Zamzumim… What's all this information? Why is this important. As you can see there's a lot of ink here and we're not meant to ignore it. In fact, I believe it's the essence of it all.

Let me ask you a question. Pretend I'm a CNN or BBC guy and I ask you what right do we have to the land of Israel. To Yerushalayim. To the Temple Mount. To come in and kill everyone. To be baby-killers. To be Genocidal murders of men women and children. To throw an indigenous society out of their land? Do you have anything in your repoitoire of Torah and morality and ethics to justify and defend your position? Our position?

I'll tell you what answers don't work. The first is that they're trying to kill us and they attacked us first? Not true. Hashem is commanding us to hit them and attack them and kill them- all of them- including their babies- even if they don't attack us first. Which they didn't in all of these places. It's also not because they will become future terrorists. I imagine, that if we killed all of their men and was nice to their women and children and set them up in nice villages, then we might be able to re-educate them maybe, at least it's worth a try. It's not because this land was promised to Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. Or that we were there first. Or that it was never theirs and they threw us out. Because ultimately, and I think we have to recognize this. They were here first. Hashem gave it to them. It's called the land of Canaan, not Israel throughout the entire Torah. There were Eimim, Zamzumim, Horim, Emorim and Edomites there long before Avraham and the Jewish people existed. So back to our question Mr. Ben Shapiro podcast debater guy. What right do we have to the land? To be Baby-Killers. To throw them out.

The answer is the first Rashi in the Torah tells us, is "*that Hashem created the world. He gave the land to whomever He wants. He gave it to them and then took it from them and gave it to us*."

That's it. The reason and only real reason that can ever justify throwing out and killing all of these people, is that the only moral code in the world is the word of Hashem. The function of the entire world is to reveal His presence, His plan and yes, His existence to humanity. That's why we were created. That's why He took us out of Egypt. That's why He chose Avraham. We're here for one purpose and one purpose only. To reveal Him to the world. To show that we follow His marching orders. To sublimate, or will, our knowledge, our self-perceived sense of morality for His greater command and will. It's why Avraham is chosen and that his final test where he will pass on that legacy is through his willingness to even sacrifice his only beloved son Yitzchak because of Hashem's command. If he can do that, then he shows, that there is nothing that is moral in this world besides what Hashem decrees.

Unfortunately, we inherited that trait that we can sacrifice our own children. Yet, we have a much harder time, killing and sacrificing theirs. That's a far harder task. Yet, ultimately if we can do that, then the message Hashem wants to be broadcasted to the world will finally be achieved. We live only by His

will. We are here only to carry out His will. We want to be Home so that His will can be revealed.

Moshe, in this final pre-Tisha B'Av speech that starts off with all of our sins in wilderness is meant to give us this perspective. He wants us to feel strong enough to be able to do the work that stands ahead of us that is to come to the land of Israel and declare this message. He thus shows us first of all of how Hashem has been running this entire Middle East, before we got here. He had one nation here, and then He gave it to another. The Hori, got taken over by the Edomi. The Avim, by the Pelishtim, The Refaim, hit the Zamzumim and the Eimim. It's Hashem's world. It's a Game of Thrones. He's changing one for the other. The thing is they are all calling things by their new names. The Senir, the Hermon etc… but ultimately, it's Hashem who has created the world and is handing out the seating positions. He want's Edom here, Lot, there and us in Israel. He wants only us in Israel. He wants a private suite with us. So everyone has to be cleared out. They have to leave the King's private palace and bedroom with us. He doesn't want any crying babies around. They're too distracting. They prevent revelation. They take away from our alone time with Him. They prevent His presence and His entire purpose of being here in the first place.

Moshe reaches out to Sichon before wiping him out and Rashi gives us two *peshatim*. They're both based on the idea that this conquest goes back to the beginning of time. It's really the only reason why we should reach out first in peace rather than to go out right in and kill them all out and liberate Hashem's land for His presence to be revealed. The first is the Torah. Hashem offered it to the other nations first. It wasn't so that they wouldn't have any excuses later. He knew they wouldn't accept it. It's setting up them up for the fall. Rather, it's because the Torah itself should be revealed as a way of pleasantness. It demands and is revealed by first giving everyone an opportunity to have it. To be a part of its program. To sublimate their own desires and will to Hashem. The nations balk because they don't want to. They wish to have immorality, murder, idolatry. Their refusal and Klal Yisrael's *na'aseh v'nishma* acceptance, stands in contrast to that and reveals Hashem.

Thus, Moshe offered Sichon that same opportunity to get out of the way and let Hashem's light be revealed through us. Moshe learned, from the Torah, that it is proper to show and reveal its immense light, through their rejection of it first and our unwavering determination to do and give all it takes to fulfill the will of Hashem. Even if it means killing their babies, burning their cities throwing them out of their land.

The other *pshat* in Rashi though is so much more powerful. There Moshe learns that out from Hashem Himself. From the *kadmono shel olam*; the One who preceded the world. Hashem didn't just want to destroy Pharoah and wipe him out and bring us home. He could've done that with one lightning bolt. Rather His will is to be revealed in our Exodus. He wants us as a nation to shine out His power, light and control to the whole world. Thus, He sent Moshe first to tell and command Pharaoh to let us out. Similarly, Moshe understood that was our job here before attacking Sichon, before killing Og, before conquering the land. He needed to tell them first. We're coming. Hashem has sent us. We will kill, murder, genocide, destroy and burn, because we work for Him. He created the world. We are His mere pawns and servants and soldiers here. Avraham, was willing to sacrifice his son for Hashem's mission. We certainly have no problem sacrificing all of yours. We're not baby-killer. We're God revealers.

Do you know why the Temple was destroyed? Why it's still not rebuilt? It's because we don't really appreciate, and perhaps since we came into the land, never really appreciated what it's true function is. It's a place where we can reveal to the world, that we are a nation of Hashem's and all we do and all we exist for is to carry out His world and light to the world. Idolatry, Licentiousness, murder, *sinas chinam, lashon harah,* not keeping Shemitta... all the sins in the world are all sourced in one fundamental mistake. We're doing what we want, not what He wants. We define our moral code by what the world decides is moral, what we feel is right and wrong, and we're not recognizing what His will truly is. What He wants from us.

What does that mean for us today? I'm not advocating baby-killing. Rabbis, far greater than me need to discuss that, as do politicians, military experts, prophets and judges. Rather, quite the opposite. We have to know what we're mourning for. What we're davening for. What the *chilul* Hashem that we're facing in the world, that seems to have no

moral compass, but yet is the most judgmental morally of Hashem's nation. It's perhaps because we haven't corrected them. We haven't felt strong enough to stand up and say Hashem created the world, and He took it from you and gave it to us. We don't feel as morally righteous and confident as Klal Yisrael did under Moshe with the "baby-killer" title the nations of the world gave us then. We're not wearing that as badges of honor as fulfillers of the directive of Hashem. As liberators of His Holy Land. As revealers of His light.

The Arabs, the Crusaders, the Jihadists, the Inquisition, all had no problem with that title for their false gods and religions. Perhaps that's why we're so intimidated to take that birthright from them that they stole from us. But we need to at least long for it. Perhaps then will Hashem, finally feel confident enough that we will complete the job, that Moshe started on the other side of the Jordan and then we will finally be returned home.

Have an eye-opening Shabbat Chazon and hopefully a celebratory Tisha B'av redeemed,

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This week's Insights and Inspiration is dedicated with gratitude to Hashem in honor of the Bris of my latest grandson Dovid Meir this past week to Yaakov and Shani Berger. Mazel Tov to his siblings Yoel, and Moishie & Ari, as they welcome another brother to the family. Mazel Tov to my parents and inlaws and all the bubbies and Zaidies and Omi! May Dovid Meir, named after Omi's father be a source of light, may he herald in the Ben Dovid Mashiach we are waiting for and may the month of his birthday turn into one of Simcha and Bracha and Geulah soon. May Shani and Yackov continue to build a beautiful family of Torah, Middos, and Simcha and Bracha!
Mazel Tov!!
By Mommy and Me!