

Devarim 5773

Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

Sefer Devarim has often been a major subject of discussion among secular ible Scholars. Because of the different writing style and the fact that it is Moshe Rabbeinu farewell address, many of these cholars believe it was written at a different time than the rest of the Torah. Some go so far to even suggest that it was written a few hundred years later. Because of the fact that in Sefer Devarim the place ashem will choose is mentioned many times, they suggest that it was written to encourage people to go to Yerushalyim. Of course, as Torah Jews we know such ideas are heretical as we know that the entire Torah we have today is the Torah Hashem gave to Moshe Rabbeinu. But how are we, as Torah Jews, supposed to understand the textual and stylistic differences of this Sefer?

The Ramban, in his introduction to Sefer Devarim deals with these issues. He explains that this sefer is a repetition of the Torah , a Mishna Torah, addressed specifically to the generation that is about to enter Eretz Yisroel. There was no need to repeat Mitzvos relevant only to Kohanim as they were diligent and did not need additional warnings to follow the Torah in their assigned areas. The aim of the address was to remind the common people of Am Yisroel about Mitzvos relevant to all. Hence, we find so many warnings against idolatry and the punishments that come as a result of this grave transgression. In addition, some mitzvos relating to marriage and divorce are mentioned in writing for the first time as these two are relevant to the people at large. The Ramban writes further that all of these mitzvos, though being read by us for the first time, were given at Har Sinai. They were being restated by Moshe Rabbeinu now as a new *bris*, covenant, was being made. There was no need to address mitzvos that were written in earlier sefarim that were really more relevant to the generation that left Mitzrayim.

The Ramban also writes that Moshe begins with the *tochahcha*, rebuke not to chastise, but to show how much compassion Hashem had for Am Yisroel. Though they sinned many times, they were forgiven. Moshe wanted Am Yisroel to know that Hashem is full of compassion and is forgiving to those who do a real teshuva.

Rabbeinu Bachaya also comments on the different style of Sefer Devarim. He writes that the Torah begins with Sefer Bereishis to let us know that Hashem created the world from nothing, a fundamental principle of our beliefs. Not only did Hashem create the world but he directs all affairs of the world as well as rewards and punishes. These principles are shown in the expulsion from Gan Eden of Adam and Chava, the great flood brought upon the world as well as Noach and his family being saved due to Noach merits. Then we are told of the Avos and Emahos who kept their faith in these principles. Shemos Naturally follows because believing In Hashem direct watch over and involvement in the world events will strengthen all of these beliefs. This belief is highlighted further in Sefer Vayikra by bringing korbonos to Hashem the main subject of that sefer. Then we read Sefer Bamidbar which addresses Eretz Yisroel the only place fit for us to bring korbonos. Had we not sinned in the incident of the *Meraglim*, spies, we would have entered Eretz Yisroel right away. After Sefer Bamidbar, comes Sefer Devarim which is directed at the final settlement of Eretz Yisroel. The First two Batai Mikdashim and the first

two commonwealths came to an end. However, the third Bais Hamikdash and the third settlement of Eretz Yisroel will, Im yirtze Hashem, be permanent. Sefer Devarim, according Rabbeinu Bachaya, is the sefer addressing that time though is given Moshe generation.

Rabbeinu Bachaya also states that Sefer Devarim begins with *Eehla*, these and not *vehleh*, and these, indicating that this sefer is set apart from the other sefarim. This is similar to the Esrog of the four species we take on Sukkos which is taken together but not attached to the other four. Sefer Devarim is rebuke for the past but also a reminder to move on from it into hopefully, a better future.