



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

Torah Minute

In memory of *Rabbi Kalman Winter zt"l*

Parshas Devarim 5773

The entire Book of Devarim takes place with the Nation of Israel on the banks of the Jordan, poised to enter the Land and in the last weeks of Moshe's life. Aware of not only the enormous opportunities that settling the Land would present, but the great temptations and challenges that would abound, Moshe addressed his beloved people. He gently rebuked them for their past failures and outlined the pitfalls and traps that they should avoid. Moshe encouraged the nation to place their trust in G-d and to cling to the Torah and its Mitzvos. Interestingly, the Sages in Medrash Tanchuma teach us that when the Torah records that "Moshe began explaining this Torah" (1:5) Moshe actually translated and explained the entire Torah in seventy languages.

What was the objective, though, for Moshe to teach the Torah in the entire lexicon of man to the mono-linguistic Nation of Israel? And why specifically now, when they are imminently entering the Land?

Based on the words of the Ksav Sofer (19th Century, Hungary) we can suggest the following answer. Moshe knew that upon entering the Land of Israel the nation would have a glorious existence. The Tabernacle and, later, the Temple, would become the center of their lives and serve as a spiritual beacon to connect them with G-d. Peace and tranquility would allow for the realization of their hopes and goals. But, Moshe also foresaw invasion and conquest, the destruction of the Temple, and eventually the Exile. He saw a people scattered and dispersed, far removed from their homeland, and bereft of their Temple. How would they remain firm in their identity? What would nourish and guide them in the long and dark years of the Exile? It was for this reason that Moshe translated the Torah into seventy languages. Moshe was conveying to them that there will come a day when the great and beautiful Land will no longer be ours and the glorious Temple will cease to exist. Moshe, with his great wisdom, was preparing the Jewish people for this eventuality and teaching us a vital lesson in the immutable relevancy of the Torah. Although we may find ourselves scattered and subjugated in far and alien lands, we will never be alone. The Torah, G-d's precious gift to us, will accompany us wherever we go. It will always be as relevant to us in exile as it was when our forefathers lived in the Land of Israel, irrespective of the land in which we reside and regardless of the language we speak. The Torah will guide and nourish us; it will illuminate the darkness and give us strength. It will provide us with a national identity and continue to bind us to G-d.

We are now in the Nine Days of Av, a time set aside for the mourning of the Temple. Our hearts are full of sorrow and sadness as we contemplate what was lost. But as we pray for the rebuilding of the Temple and our return to Jerusalem, let us be thankful for the precious gift that has nourished, protected, and preserved us in this dark Exile.

***Have a great Shabbos,
Rabbi Menachem Winter***