

Lesson 11 - Perek 4:25-40 – Tish’a Be’ab Reading

Background: In this last section of Moshe’s first speech, Moshe uses two different tactics to encourage Bnei Yisrael to follow Hashem. He starts with a warning of the punishment that will come about if Bnei Yisrael anger Hashem. But, Moshe then ends on a positive note by pointing out all the great acts Hashem has done for Bnei Yisrael out of his love for them which should inspire Bnei Yisrael to follow the Mizvot.

Objective: To find structure of this section, capture the central message based on the structure, and appreciate why we read this portion on Tish’a Be’ab.

Activity:

A. For an advanced class, ask them to read through 4:25-40, break it down into sections, label each section, and present the results in an outline form. For a class with less experience preparing outlines, have them complete the table in the worksheet.

<u>Tish’a Be’ab Reading</u>	
Read through the end of Moshe’s first speech 4:25-40. As you read fill in the table below to find the structure of this section.	
Contents	Pesukim, Perek 4
Negative Warning - Sin	25-
Punishment	
Repentance	
Positive Inspiration	- 40
<p>What is the central message of the Negative Warning part? (Is it really so negative after all?) _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>What is the central message of the Positive Inspiration part? _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Why do you think this section was chosen as the morning Torah reading for Tish’a Be’ab? _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Here is the source from the Gemara for our custom to read these pesukim on Tish’a Be’ab. Notice that the Tannaim had different opinions about what to read and it was only during the time of the Abaye, the Amora, that our custom became accepted.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>תלמוד בבלי מסכת מגילה דף לא עמוד ב</u></p> <p style="text-align: center;">בתשעה באב גופיה מאי מפטרין? אמר רב: (ישעיהו א') איכה היתה לזונה, מקרא מאי?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. תניא. אחרים אומרים: (ויקרא כו:יד) ואם לא תשמעו לי, 2. רבי נתן בר יוסף אומר: (במדבר יד:יב) עד אנה ינאצני העם הזה, ויש אומרים: (במדבר יד:כו) עד מתי לעדה הרעה הזאת. 3. אמר אביי: האידיא נהוג עלמא למיקרי (דברים ד') כי תוליד בנים, ומפטרין (ירמיהו ח') אסף אסיפם. <p>Look up the pesukim suggested by the Tannaim for the Torah reading and look at their contexts. Does the portion that we read contain the same message just in different words or is it a fundamentally different message? How does this background help you understand why this section way chosen? _____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>	
<p>Rambam codified this custom for all generations:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">רמב"ם הלכות תפילה ונשיאת כפים פרק יג הלכה יח</p> <p style="text-align: center;">בתשעה באב קורין בשחרית כי תוליד בנים ומפטרין אסף אסיפם נאם יי</p>	

Summary Outline of Tish'a Be'ab Reading

Negative Warning .I

Sin .a

(כה) כי תוליד בנים ובני בנים ונושנתם בארץ והשחתם ועשיתם פסל תמונת כל ועשיתם הרע בעיני יְדוֹד אֱלֹהֵיךָ לְהַכְעִיסוֹ :

Punishment .b

(כו) העידתי בכם היום את השמים ואת הארץ כי אבד תאבדון מהר מעל הארץ אשר אתם עברים את הירדן שמה לרשתה לא תאריכו ימים עליה כי השמד תשמדון :

(כז) והפיץ יְדוֹד אֱתָכֶם בְּעַמִּים וְנִשְׁאַרְתֶּם מְתֵי מִסְפָּר בְּגוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר יִנְהַג יְדוֹד אֱתָכֶם שָׁמָּה :

(כח) וַעֲבַדְתֶּם שָׁם אֱלֹהִים מַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵי אָדָם עַץ וָאֶבֶן אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִרְאוּן וְלֹא יִשְׁמְעוּן וְלֹא יֵאָכְלוּ וְלֹא יִרְיָחוּ :

Repentance .c

(כט) וּבִקְשַׁתֶּם מִשָּׁם אֶת יְדוֹד אֱלֹהֵיךָ וּמִצֵּאתָ כִּי תִדְרָשֶׁנּוּ בְּכֹל לְבַבְךָ וּבְכֹל נַפְשְׁךָ :

(ל) בַּצַּר לָךְ וּמִצֵּאוֹךְ כָּל הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה בְּאַחֲרִית הַיָּמִים וְשָׁבַת עַד יְדוֹד אֱלֹהֵיךָ וְשָׁמַעַת בְּקוֹלוֹ :

(לא) כִּי אֵל רַחוּם יְדוֹד אֱלֹהֵיךָ לֹא יִרְפֶּךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁחִיתֶךָ וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח אֶת בְּרִית אֲבֹתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לָהֶם :

Positive Inspiration .II

(לב) כִּי שָׂאֵל נָא לְיָמִים רַאשֵׁינִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ לְפָנֶיךָ לְמֹן הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אָדָם עַל הָאָרֶץ וְלִמְקַצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם וְעַד קִצֵּה הַשָּׁמַיִם הִנְהִיָּה כְּדָבָר הַגְּדוֹל הַזֶּה אוֹ הַנִּשְׁמַע כְּמָהוּ :

(לג) הַשְּׁמַע עִם קוֹל אֱלֹהִים מְדַבֵּר מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ כְּאֲשֶׁר שָׁמַעַת אֶתְּהָ וַיְחִי :

(לד) אוֹ הַנְּסָה אֱלֹהִים לְבוֹא לְקַחַת לוֹ גוֹי מִקְרֵב גוֹי בְּמִסֵּת בְּאֵתוֹת וּבְמוֹפְתִים וּבְמִלְחָמָה וּבְיַד חֲזָקָה וּבְזָרוּעַ נְטוּיָה וּבְמוֹרָאִים גְּדֹלִים כָּכֵל אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה לָכֶם יְדוֹד אֱלֹהֵיכֶם בְּמִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֶיךָ :

(לה) אֶתְּהָ הִרְאֵת לְדַעַת כִּי יְדוֹד הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים אֵין עוֹד מִלְבָּדוֹ :

(לו) מִן הַשָּׁמַיִם הַשְּׁמִיעַךְ אֶת קוֹל לִיסְרָךְ וְעַל הָאָרֶץ הִרְאֵךְ אֶת אִשׁוֹ הַגְּדוֹלָה וּדְבָרָיו שָׁמַעַת מִתּוֹךְ הָאֵשׁ :

(לז) וַתַּחַת כִּי אֶהָב אֶת אֲבֹתֶיךָ וַיִּבְחַר בְּזָרְעוֹ אַחֲרָיו וַיּוֹצֵאךָ בְּפָנָיו בְּכַחוֹ הַגְּדֹל מִמִּצְרַיִם :

(לח) לְהוֹרִישׁ גוֹיִם גְּדֹלִים וְעַצְמִים מִמֶּךָ מִפְּנֵיךְ לְהַבְיֵאךָ לְתֵת לָךְ אֶת אֶרֶצְךָ נְחֻלָּה כַּיּוֹם הַזֶּה :

(לט) וַיִּדְעַת הַיּוֹם וְהַשְּׁבִיב אֵל לְבַבְךָ כִּי יְדוֹד הוּא הָאֱלֹהִים בְּשָׁמַיִם מִמַּעַל וְעַל הָאָרֶץ מִתַּחַת אֵין עוֹד :

(מ) וְשִׁמְרַת אֶת חֻקָּיו וְאֶת מִצְוֹתָיו אֲשֶׁר אֵנְכִי מְצוֹךְ הַיּוֹם אֲשֶׁר יֵיטֵב לָךְ וּלְבָנֶיךָ אַחֲרֶיךָ וּלְמַעַן תִּאָּרִיךְ יָמִים עַל הָאָדָמָה אֲשֶׁר יְדוֹד אֱלֹהֵיךָ נָתַן לָךְ כָּל הַיָּמִים : פ

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The central message of the Negative Warning section is that there is always hope. Even when Bnei Yisrael are in the depths of despair, exiled from their land, oppressed by the nations, we can be assured that Hashem remembers the covenant and will save us if only we seek Him out. This section does not dwell on the punishments but rather on the positive message that we can always repent.

The central message of the next section is to remind Bnei Yisrael of the great miracles that Hashem did for them. This should inspire them to want to follow His Mitzvot. The overall message of the entire reading can be summarized as follows: Don't despair when things are bad. Think about how Hashem saved our nation during hard times in the past. Repent and trust that things will get better.

It seems that the Rabbis chose this as the reading for Tish'a Be'ab because they didn't want us to dwell only on the negative. Thinking only of our past suffering can lead to depression and a desire to just give up. Rather, the Rabbis wanted to give the nation hope that they should still stick to the Torah and look forward to better times.

This is confirmed by analyzing the Gemara that provides the source for our custom. The other opinions in the Baraita suggest readings which focus on the negative.

Leviticus 26:14-41 is a horrific list of punishments which causes the reader to cringe. Only the very end 42-45 offers a glimpse of hope. The major focus there is to instill fear of punishment, whereas the focus of our reading is to provide hope. Numbers 14 is about the punishment Bnei Yisrael receives after the sin of the spies. The first opinion suggests reading the pesukim where Hashem wishes to wipe out the entire nation except Moshe. The second opinion suggests reading the compromise punishment that the entire generation will die in the desert. Once again these suggestions focus on the fearful punishments as opposed to our custom which offers hope and ends with positive inspiration.

Add to this that Tish'a Be'ab is considered a holiday and we don't say Tahanun:

שולחן ערוך אורח חיים סימן תקנט סעיף ד

אין אומרים תחנון (ולא שליחות) (הגהות אשרי) בת"ב, ואין נופלים על פניהם משום דמקרי מועד.
הגה: וקורין בתורה כי תוליד בנים, ומפטירין בירמיה אסוף אסיפם.

B. Point out other pesukim that are part of the prayers. Pesukim 35 and 44 are also part of the prayers. Sepharadim sing them when taking out the Sefer Torah on Shabbat. Pasuk 39 is at the end of alenu.

C. The placement of pasuk 28 in the punishment section, even though it looks like it is part of the sin, has generated many creative solutions by the Rishonim. See Nehama Leibowitz, Vaethanan 2, for an explication of Abarbanel's explanation and its implications.

Pasuk 28

Pasuk 28 looks like it is part of the sin. However, if it is part of the sin, why is placed after the punishment in 26-27 and not before it?

Many Rishonim have dealt with this questions and their answers are very interesting. They all use the same strategy which is to explain that this pasuk is actually part of the punishment.

1. אונקלוס

ותפלחון תמן לעממיה פלחי טעותא עובד ידי אנשא אעא ואבנא דלא חזן ולא שמעין ולא אכלין ולא מריחין :

רש"י דברים פרק ד

(כה) ועבדתם שם אלהים - כתרגומו. משאתם עובדים לעובדיהם כאלו אתם עובדים להם :

There you will serve gods – [The proper explanation is] like the translation [of Onkelos]. Since you are serving their [the idols'] worshipers, it is as if you are worshipping them [the idols].

2. רמב"ן

ועבדתם שם אלהים - משאתם עובדים לעובדיהם אתם עובדים להם, לשון רש"י. וכבר פירשתי סודו כי היושב בחוצה לארץ כאלו עובד עבודה זרה,

There you will serve gods – Since you are serving their worshipers it is as if you are worshipping them” – these are words of Rashi. But I have already explained its secret that one who dwells outside of Israel it is as if he worships idolatry.

3. Abarbanel

As a result of their terrible sufferings, many Jews (so Holy Writ foretells) will be brought to forced conversion, worshipping idols but knowing full well that they are made of wood and stone. Their idolatry will be committed just to escape death... It is not mentioned here as a part of their sin but as the punishment for their misdeeds. This would constitute the climax of their sufferings – to be inwardly aware of the true faith and have to pay lip service to idols...

The phrase “from thence (משם) you will seek” goes back to the previous statement: “And there (שם) you shall serve gods.” While in that situation of worshipping other gods, in the midst of those sufferings and persecution, you shall seek the Lord and still remain loyal to Him. He reassured them that they would find Him: “if they would seek Him with all their heart and soul”. How appropriate is that phrase: “With all you heart and soul!” Those Marranos (forced apostates) are unable to practice the observances of Judaism. Indeed their seeking of God can be in their hearts and souls alone!

Exercise: For each of these three Rishonim, try to summarize in one sentence how each deals with seeming misplacement of pasuk 28.

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This pasuk presents idolators as believing that the idols themselves are gods and makes fun of such a view. Indeed, it is difficult for us to imagine how anyone could believe such an absurdity. It seems that at least the more educated idolaters thought the gods had a separate existence but that their spirit dwelt in the idols. The masses, however, lost sight of the distinction between the deity and the statue. See JPS Commentary and Encyclopedia Judaica, “Idolatry”, for more details on the character of idolatry in the Ancient Near East.

This marks the end of Moshe’s first speech. This is a good time to stop and review.

Project: Students should prepare a review sheet of all sections and how they fit into the general message of the first speech