

This Week's Parshah - Parshas Ki Savo

Welcome to Eretz Yisrael

Although not always the subject of much publicity, there were certain characters that played a major role in the dramatic events surrounding *bnei Yisrael's* initial entry into Eretz Yisrael: Rocks.

Monumental Feat

Sefer Yeshoshua describes our ancestors' miraculous crossing of the Yarden River, which ushered the Jewish people into the Land of Israel. The *pesukim* explain (4:3) that twelve stones were to be hoisted from the riverbed. This week's *parshah* details the exact procedure that was to be done to these stones:

“And it shall be on the day that you will cross the Yarden... you shall set up the large stones... on Mt. Eival... From the stones, you shall build an altar... upon which you shall offer sacrifices... And you shall write the entire Torah on the stones, in an explicit way.” (*Devarim 27:2-8*)

The Mishnah in Sotah 7:5 provides further clarification concerning the stones' inscription:

“Once Yisrael crossed the Yarden, and came to Mt. Gerizim and Mt. Eival... they brought the stones, constructed the altar... and inscribed upon it the entire Torah in all seventy languages of the nations, as the Torah (*Devarim ibid.*) had instructed, ‘(Write them) in an explicitly clear way.’”

Eventually, these stones completed their journey when they were brought to the Jews' encampment at Gilgal and were set up there (*Bartenura to Sotah, ibid.*).

The upshot of all this is that upon entering the land, *bnei Yisrael* performed a quite interesting and miraculous mitzvah. The entire Torah *from Bereishis until the end of Devarim* (according to the opinions of the Ramban and Rabbeinu Bechaye) *was written in every single existing language*, all on a space of twelve medium-sized stones. Furthermore, all of this writing was completed in a single day (*Tiferes Yisrael, Sotah, ibid.*).

This whole elaborate monument was set up near the border of Eretz Yisrael. The question which begs asking is: What was the purpose? Why adorn the entranceway to Eretz Yisrael with an inscription of the Torah's full text in Japanese and Swahili (etc.)?

The idea behind this set-up may be understood by examining a particular institution of conventional daily living.

Identify Yourself

There exists a certain device — simple in its concept and design, yet brilliant in its practicality and usefulness — that we generally take for granted.

Imagine that someone has moved to a new locale. Shortly after arriving, he needs to do some shopping to stock up on basic food necessities as well as home furnishings and the like. He travels into town for his first shopping excursion. When he arrives at the shopping center, however, he is bewildered by the sight that meets his eyes.

This homeowner needs drapes, light fixtures, carpeting, etc. He needs groceries, beverages, and appliances to store them in. Although he sees many large stores and shops, *not a single one is marked*. The entire shopping center consists of buildings with blank walls, leaving him totally confounded. He doesn't know where to begin to find the items he needs. All around him are throngs of people milling about in a similar state of confusion. Finally, he decides to leave this pandemonium, and head on to the next town.

Upon arriving at his next destination, our protagonist feels a surge of relief. On one corner he sights a building sporting the 'Walmart' logo; on a second corner there is a Shop Rite; and down the road he spies a shop with a sign above the storefront stating, 'Bob's Refrigerators'. Now he knows that everything will be alright.

Amazing what a difference this device known as a sign can make in our lives.

Another illustration: the classic office. A plain room with a desk, a couple of chairs, some papers, etc. Ostensibly, it may appear rather innocuous and nondescript. Yet, once you take a simple piece of brass, engrave the word 'Principal' on it, and attach it the door, the nature of this room suddenly becomes crystal clear: a place that strikes terror into the hearts of children (and teachers!) alike. The institution of a nameplate goes a long way towards informing those outside as to the atmosphere and content to be found within.

R' Yerucham Levovitz, the *Mirrer Mashgiach*, attributes a similar function to the recording of the Torah on the stone monument (*Da'as Torah, Devarim vol. 2, p.38*). Stationed at the entrance to the Land, the stones with their Torah inscription serve as a type of sign, 'advertising' and announcing what lies within the borders of this land. In mandating this *mitzvah*, it's as if the Torah affixed a nameplate to the perimeter of Eretz Yisrael, upon which is inscribed a description of exactly what takes place within. The multi-lingual monument was a sign for all the world to see and know precisely what the this land is all about—and that is Torah and *mitzvos*. Whereas other countries might be known for their military prowess, their technological advances, or whatever, this place is to be known for one thing in the eyes of the world: its dedication to the study and fulfillment of the entire Torah.