



From the desk of
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1

Office of the Rabbinate of Elad, Rosh HaAyin and Herzelia

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TORAT

Parashat Devarim

HAMELECH

Dirt, Sand and Stars

We are taught in Yerushalmi Yoma (1:1) that any generation in which the Beit Hamikdash was not built, it is tantamount to having destroyed it!

What can we do to try to build the Beit Hamikdash? Let us begin by trying to help out others instead of being so self-centered!

Moshe Rabbeinu found it difficult to bear the burden of so many Jews, as plentiful as the stars. Throughout the Torah, we find the Jews being compared to dirt, sand and stars. On a simple level, it is praiseworthy to be compared to stars and degrading to be compared to dirt and sand.

But there is another way to look at it. Each star is its own world. It has nothing much to do with any fellow star. This represents Jews who are all caught up with their own lives, leaving no time to think about others.

Dirt and sand, on the other hand, each granule has so much to do with the next. They are all together, side by side, each one feels the impact of the other. This represents Jews who care about each other and do their utmost to help each other out.

In Devarim 28:62 we read, "You will remain few in number because you acted as the many stars of the Heaven, for you did not listen to the Voice of Hashem, your Almighty." There are a number of ways to explain this verse. Our translation here is in line with the aforementioned explanation of

the concept of "stars" in a negative connotation. When it's "each man for himself," we end up with less men. United we stand, divided – we fall c"v.

Who Made the Aron?

We have a number of sources which discuss varying levels within Klal Yisrael, due to their behavior. Gemara Yoma 3b points out that the instruction to construct the Aron which was to host the Luchos appears in one place in singular form and in a different place, in plural form. The Gemara differentiates and explains that in one instance it was discussing a time when all Jews were fulfilling Hashem's Will and in the other instance, they were not. Rashi explains that when they do Hashem's Will, the building of the Aron is attributed to Klal Yisrael at large.

On the Aron...

While we are on the topic of the *Aron*, let us talk about the *keruvim*. There were several sets of *keruvim* in the Beit Hamikdash. We currently are discussing *keruvim* which were painted on the wall of the *Kodesh HaKodoshim*. One verse says that they faced each other, one verse says that they faced the wall (not looking at each other). Here, too, the reconciliation is that the *keruvim* would move about depending upon Klal Yisrael's performance of Hashem's Will. (Bava Batra 99a)
When they did Hashem's Will, the *keruvim* faced each other, representing two facets, both the



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friendly association between man and his friend and between Klal Yisrael and HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Children or Slaves

We find yet another distinction drawn between doing Hashem's Will or not, in Bava Batra 10a. The wicked Tornosrufus exhorted Rabbi Akiva – when you do Hashem's Will, you are like His children. When you do not, you are like His slaves.

Rabbi Akiva had explained that we do *chessed* for one another and Hashem is pleased with us, just as a king is overjoyed when someone has compassion for his son, even if his son had to be punished.

Do His Will

Here's another one. In Berachot 35b, Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai also makes the distinction. He reconciles two *pesukim*, explaining that when Yisrael do the will of their Creator, then Hashem will see to it that others tend to their material needs. When Yisrael do not do *ratzon* Hashem, they must fend for themselves.

In Suka 29a, the Gemara describes numerous meteorological phenomena and how many are omens, predicting difficulty for inhabitants of varying habitations. These include lunar and solar eclipses, partial and total. The Gemara then adds that when Yisrael is doing the Will of Hashem, they have no reason to fear any of these omens.

In Ketubot 62b, we find Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai riding upon a donkey in the outskirts of Yerushalayim, accompanied by *talmidim*. They came upon a young woman who was picking barley out of animal droppings. She saw the entourage, straightened her head covering and approached.

"Rabbi, give me food!" she begged.

"Who are you?" he inquired.

"I am the daughter of Nakdimon ben Guryon."

"My daughter, where is all the wealth of your father's home?" Rabbi Yochanan asked.

The woman said, "One must do kindness in order to preserve one's wealth!"

"And what about your father-in-law's money?"

"Well, along came my father's money and mixed with my father-in-law's money, and it all got lost!"

She then inquired, "Rabbi, do you remember signing on my *ketubah*?"

Rabban Yochanan turned to his *talmidim* and said, "I signed on this woman's *ketubah*. I read that it said that one million dinarim were promised to her from her father's household, besides those from her father-in-law!"

Rabban Yochanan then wept and exclaimed, "Fortunate are you, Israel! When you carry out Hashem's Will, no nation has any control over you. When you fail to do His Will, He hands you over to a lowly nation. Even worse, He places you below the animals of the lowly nation."



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Security Secrets

I remember how, after the Six Day War, there was such *achdut* in Am Yisrael! There I was, a *yeshivah bachur*, and cars would stop to offer us rides. On buses, people would offer other people places to sit, without having to be asked. Everyone was friendly, no animosity.

In the middle of the war, I learned in a *yeshivah* in Lod. An army vehicle pulled up next to a group of *bachurim*. Out stepped a high-ranking officer and he told the *bachurim*: You should know... we won the war in your *zechut*! In the *zechut* of the Torah you learn!

After the war, I felt comfortable walking around the old city of Jerusalem, in Chevron, in Aza! The Arabs showed respect to every Jew, regardless of age. This just goes to show that when we are at peace with each other, Hashem sees to it that our enemies are at peace with us.

Today, unfortunately, we are factional and fractured. This is well-reflected in the Arab-Israeli relationship. These days, no Jew who cares about his life will wander about in any Arab village or neighborhood. But they? Arabs wander around in Jewish neighborhoods. They go wherever they want.

Security and safety have nothing to do with armaments and weapons. They have a lot to do with *achdut*.

Rashi's Neighbor

The story is told how Rashi, in his old age, fasted many fasts, begging to be informed of the identity

of his neighbors in Gan Eden. He was told from Heaven that his neighbor would be a rich man called Avraham of Barcelona.

Rashi was curious. He wanted to know more about this "Avraham." So he travelled to Barcelona, Spain, and inquired about the rich Avraham. Everyone knew about his wealth and his mansion, but not too much about his *yirat shamayim*.

The townspeople came to greet Rashi, the illustrious scholar. Mr. Avraham came, too. A woman came crying and explained that her daughter got engaged to a *yeshivah bachur*, but then broke off the engagement and got engaged instead to the daughter of Mr. Avraham for monetary considerations.

Mr. Avraham said, "I had no idea of this prior commitment. I will go home now and everything will be worked out."

Mr. Avraham went home and convinced his daughter to return the *chattan* to the first girl. Mr. Avraham guaranteed to take care of all the wedding expenses and invited Rashi to attend the *chatunah*.

Rashi saw how much *ahavat Yisrael* this man had and understood why he was *zocheh* to a great place in Gan Eden.

So let us put our own interests aside and focus on how we can help others. That is the true key to success. In this merit, may Hashem build His Home soon.

**Shabbat Shalom,
Mordechai Malka**