

מחבר ספרי שו״ת דרך המלך, אמרי מרדכי, ודרכי המלך על המועדים ועוד רשת מעונות, ורשת גנים, ת״ת פרי תואר, ובית יעקב פרי תואר, תיכון בית יעקב החדש, ת״ת מאור ישראל, ישיבה קטנה ארחות יהודה, ביהמ״ד גבוה לרבנים ודיינים ״לקח טוב״ קופת ״מפעל החסד״ אלעד Chief Rabbi of Elad, Israel MORDECHAI MALKA, Founder & President of Institutions "Or Hamelech"



<u>Parashat Devarim</u>

The Present Security Situation Understood From the Parashah

Our *parasha* states (1:44) "And the Emori, who were sitting on the mountain, went out to face you and pursued you like bees, and they smote you from Seir to Charma."

Question

The Brisker Rav asks that the *pasuk* concludes by stating that we will be punished for not listening to the voice of Hashem and that we will be smote by a very great blow until Charma. On the other hand, the *pasuk* concludes that our enemies will chase us like bees. This sounds like the punishment will not be so severe, for bees are very weak. Is this not a contradiction?

The Present Day War

When we think about the difference in our land over the last several years, we will realize that the type of war has changed from one extreme to the next. In previous years, the war was against a foreign country surrounding us, like Egypt, Jordan or Syria. The way in which the battle was waged was one country against another, one army against another, and the main battle was fought with guns, tanks, planes, etc. However, inside the land, life continued on more or less normally. At the end of the war the enemy would be defeated, and they would flee to save their lives. This is the natural reaction for any creature, even the smallest of them all, which flees from danger to save its life. However, in the last number of years it has become an internal battle and the whole land itself has become a target. Now we are fighting against human beings and not against guns. Despite the fact that we have such a strong army, the Palestinians fight against tanks and planes with their own bodies, and with the bodies of their wives and children. This is something which cannot be understood according to logic, how a person could think that his body could wage war for his nation against a tank and a plane. But we see that they are not afraid, and they are ready to kill themselves just so that they could hurt Jews.

I remember what life used to be like after the Six Day War. After having been defeated, the Palestinians in all the land, from Chevron to Azza and the Old City, were frightened of the Jews. They were terrified of even acting disrespectfully or touching another Jew. As a young man, I would travel from the Central Bus Station in the Old City to Chevron on a bus filled entirely with Arabs. I could have been the only Jew on the bus, but I wasn't scared of them. On the contrary, the elderly Arabs used to make a place for me to sit, out of fear and respect. We walked around Chevron without any fear. I remember travelling with my father *zt*"/ to the marketplace in Azza to buy cheap fabrics, and we were not fearful of anything. This was the case with every Jew in Eretz Yisrael; he was able to go anywhere in the land without fear, and if a police car or army vehicle would appear - the Arabs would flee in fear. However, in our times everything is changed. Now the Arabs walk around amongst us freely without any fear, and there is no Jew who would come close to an Arab city. Even the army does not go to many places because of the certain danger that it would entail. The Arabs are not afraid of the army or guns, and they wage war

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knowing that they will die. This is to the extent that the army has become extraneous since the entire land is now a target, and an army cannot fight inside the land with their guns. We must understand how and why things have changed so drastically. This is a question that the leaders of the nations must ask themselves, and every person as well, and the answer can be found in *parasha* as we will soon explain.

The Strike of Bees

Rashi, on the words of the *pasuk*, "Like bees do," explains that just like a bee, when it stings someone, it immediately dies, so too when the Emorites would touch the Jews they would immediately die." The Rashbam (ibid.) adds that just like bees. when one goes out, they all go out, so too, the enemies that the Jews faced. The Brisker Rav, citing the *pasuk*, "And the Emori, who were sitting on the mountain, went out to face you and pursued you like bees do, and they smote you from Seir to Charma," asks that from the beginning of the *pasuk* it is implied that the Emorites struck the Jews with strong blows, yet the end of the *pasuk* states that they struck them like bees, implying that they struck them weakly. The Brisker Rav explained that when someone hits someone else, but the one who is hit does not respond by hitting back, it does not fully express just how much the one who hit hates the other. But when he knows that after he hits this fellow, he will retaliate in an even stronger fashion – and *still* hits him - this indicates just how much hatred was contained in the initial blow, since he knows that he would be retaliated against, but did so anyway. This is the explanation of the *pasuk* - even though the Emorites saw that when they touched the Jews they died, they nevertheless pursued the Jews at any expense.

Accordingly, the Brisker Rav explains the *pesukim* in *Tehillim* (118:10-12) "All the Nations surround me; in the Name of Hashem, I cut them down. They encircle me encircle me and also surround me; in the Name of Hashem, I cut them down. They encircle me like bees, but they are extinguished as a fire does thorns; in the Name of Hashem I cut them down." What does it mean that the enemies surrounded David like bees? The Brisker Rav explains that this third *pasuk* represents the greatest hatred of all. For here the the gentiles know that they will be killed, just as a bee knows that it will meet its end when it stings someone. Nevertheless, they strike anyways, just as long as they fulfill their wicked desire of killing a Jew, *chas ve'shalom*.

The Reality of Our Generation

To understand this, let us begin by quoting the words of the Navi (*Tzefania* 3:6), "I have decimated nations; their towers have become desolate. I have destroyed their streets so that there is no passerby. Their cities have become ruined; they are without people and without inhabitants." Accordingly, it states in *Masechet Yevamot* (63a), "Said R' Elazar bar Avina: Retribution only comes to the world because of Israel. This is as the *pasuk* states, (ibid.) 'I have decimated nations; their towers have become desolate. I have destroyed their streets.' It also states (ibid. 3:7), 'Just fear Me; accept reproach.'" Rashi explains that this is intended for the sake of Israel; that they should fear their enemies' evil plots and repent. We see therefore that it is our deeds and actions that are responsible for our enemies **persecution of us.**

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The Present Day Situation is Measure for Measure

I was once contemplating the war against Chamas, and thought that we must ask ourselves what logic there is behind such a war. Chamas knows that they do not have planes or tanks. They surely realize that against such a huge army like the Israeli army, they have no chance of being victorious. Why, then, do they still fight us - it is pointless! To answer this, we must understand why Hashem punished the Generation of the Desert by having to wage war against enemies who were similar to bees, in the sense that they were willing to die, just as long as they were able to inflict damage. This is something that is unnatural, for the nature of a living being is to flee from danger and try to save itself. I believe this can be explained by stating that we know Hashem punishes *midah keneged midah*, measure for measure. The sin of the spies was speaking lashon hara against *Eretz Yisrael*, a land flowing with milk and honey. This prevented the Jews from going into the land. They were therefore punished by enemies who fought like bees. The word in lashon hakodesh for bees is devorim, whose root is the same as the word dibur [speech]. A bee is referred to as such, since it stings with its mouth. This is a form of war that is full of hatred and defies logic, just like the bee's sting defies logic. Sadly, in our generation lashon hara destroys every good thing. Take for example the *lashon hara* within the secular community against the chareidi poplation. They battle and denigrate the chareidim in a manner like never before. For in the past, both sides were able to live in peace with mutual respect. Much to our dismay, in present times, the government is trying to enact new draft laws, as if the army really needs more soldiers. On the contrary, the army should try to conserve funds and limit the number of soldiers it drafts. For there is no need for so many soldiers, since the primary battle is being waged internally and not against foreign countries. If there would be a need for more soldiers, they could call up reserves, and that would be enough. This type of war does not require a large army at such a massive cost. At this point, the army is the main expense for those living in the land. This war has been changed by Hashem to make them realize that they should not bother the *lomdei Torah*. However also within the *chareidi* camps there is much strife and each person fights against the next like bitter enemies rachamana litzlan. This is a very great claim that Hashem has against our generation, and it is because of this that our enemies fight against us like bees. They are willing to die to hurt *Klal Yisrael*. It has gotten to the point where the Jewish people are afraid to go any place where Arabs might be. Arabs are not afraid of us, nor our army or guns. Hashem has done this to arouse Jewish hearts and especially in the time of Bein Hamitzarim, when the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed because of baseless hatred. There is therefore an obligation for each person to examine his deeds and to change the situation that has developed in our time, so that we can be like one nation with one heart, with mutual respect for one another.

We should think how we should improve our speech by not speaking *lashon hara*. Only then will the situation in our land go back to the way it used to be where we will rule over our enemies. They will be afraid of us, and we will not be afraid, nor will harm befall any Jew.

The True Reason for Suicide Bombers and the Like

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Rav Yitzchak Zilberstein *shlita*, said in the name of his father in law, Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv *zt"l*, an explanation for suicide bombers in present times. The gemara in *Masechet Berachot* (7) asks why David Hamelech, when fleeing from his son Avshalom, sang a chapter of *Tehillim* which begins *Mizmor Le'David*, implying a joyous song that David sang to Hashem. Would it not have been more appropriate to begin, *Kinah Le'David*, "A lamentation of David"? After all, David was fleeing for his life, and from his very own son! The gemara explains that David was nevertheless happy, because when Hashem told him that he would be punished by retribution that would come from his very own home, he feared that perhaps it would be a slave who would not display any mercy on him, but when he saw that it was his son Avshalom, he was happy. Therefore he said *Mizmor LeDavid*.

Rav Yonatan Eibshitz *zt*"*l* asks why David was happy when he saw that retribution was being carried out by his son – after all, he was trying to kill him! He explains that there are two types of punishments that Hashem metes out. The first is a punishment that is meant to purify a Jew from his sins. However, the second is when Hashem removes His Divine Providence from the person and allows him to fall prey to the lurking dangers of this world. Now if the punishment that befalls man seems out of the ordinary and not in conjunction with the normal way of the natural world, then it is a sign that it has been sent from Heaven and is being controlled by Divine Providence. Therefore, David was originally fearful that he would be pursued by a slave, for that would indicate that Hashem left him unprotected and subject to the evil threats of this world. But when he discovered that it was his very own son who was trying to kill him he rejoiced, for this was something that was unnatural, and it indicated that Hashem was still exerting His Providence over him. Since Hashem displays more mercy than retribution, David rejoiced knowing that his salvation was soon to come.

Since the suicide attacks that have plagued our Holy Land recently are acts which are inconsistent with the laws of nature, explained Rav Zilberstein in the name of Rav Elyashiv, it shows that we are still being guarded by Hashem's Providence, and that He wishes we repent fully.

During the Period of Bein Hamitzarim One Must be Twice as Careful

It is known that the *Arizal* wrote that the number of hours of *Bein Hamitzarim* are divided into two parts. The first part consists of the 13 days in the month of Tammuz, which amount to a total of 312 hours. This number corresponds to the *pasuk*, "And he took from them a captive ['שב']." שhas the numerical value of 312, alluding to the fact that Esav has taken the hours of this month into "captivity." The second part are the nine days of the month of Av. These days are more even more serious, and we are accustomed to show signs of mourning by not cutting our hair, laundering our clothes, nor eating meat, etc. The total amount of hours in these days are 216. If one subtracts the four afternoon hours of Tisha B'Av (since during these hours the glimmer of redemption begins to flicker), he is left with 212 hours, the numerical value of which corresponds to the *Middat HaDin* is strong. They are times that have seen very harsh decrees generation after generation, dating back to the episode of the spies in the desert who sinned with their speech. They spoke negatively about *Eretz Yisrael* and aroused the Jews to

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rebel against Hashem by crying needlessly. It was then decreed that since the Jews cried needlessly, Hashem would give them an actual reason to cry each subsequent generation. Since the source of these decrees was a sin with speech, the number of hours in the month allude to *dibur*, speech. Therefore, man must be extra careful during this period – and indeed, he should warn others – not to stumble with improper speech and desecrate it; for this is the key to rectifying this period. The more we guard our tongues, the more we will merit annulling harsh decrees and ushering in the redemption speedily.

> Shabbat Shalom, Rav Mordechai Malka