



הרב הראשי עיה"ק אלעד מרדכי מלכא שליט"א נשיא וראש מוסדות "אור המלך"

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"



עיר התורה שקרובה אליך

Parashat Noach

"One Who Amasses Wealth Unjustly - in the Middle of His Days it Will Leave Him"

It is stated in our *parasha*, "And the land became corrupted before *Elokim*, and the land was filled with violent theft. And *Elokim* saw the land and behold, it was corrupted, for all the flesh [of mankind] had corrupted their ways on the land. And *Elokim* said to Noach, "The end of all the flesh [of mankind] has come before Me, for the land is filled with violent theft ..."

Theft Is the First to Accuse

The corruption mentioned in the Torah is corruption in the area of *arayot* [forbidden relations]. This corruption was so intense that it caused the ground itself to become corrupt. In addition to the corruption in the area of *arayot*, the land was also filled with violent robbery and theft. Rashi writes that despite the terrible corruption in the area of *arayot*, theft was what caused Hashem to seal the decree of the *mabul*, the flood.

Questions

1- Rav Aryeh Leib Tzintz tz"l asks why theft was the sin that sealed the decree; the Torah seems to emphasize the corruption of *arayot*, and this seems to be the generation's primary sin. Why was *arayot* not the sin that sealed the decree?

2 - Yirmiyahu (17:13) says, "One who amasses wealth unjustly - in the middle of his days it will leave him." This means that if a person acquires wealth through improper means, he will be physically punished and his life-span will be shortened. Why is he punished in such a harsh manner? Wouldn't a more fitting punishment, *midah k'neged midah* (measure for measure), be that he should lose all his money?

A Common Mistake

When we take a look around the world today, we see people looking and trying any and every possible to get rich. People allow themselves to engage in questionable business dealings, and bending and breaking the law to make money. They do this despite knowing that what they are doing is forbidden, and they also know that if they will be caught, Heaven forbid, there will be a tremendous desecration of Hashem's Name. They reassure themselves that their life comes first, and with Hashem's help, no one will look too carefully at what they are doing and that they will escape detection. Unfortunately, reality flies in the face of such thinking, and many people are caught and publicly humiliated, losing 10 times more than whatever they gained. Moreover, this kind of thinking is based on *kefirah* (heresy) - as it's the same as believing that Hashem needs their improper actions to be able to provide them with decent living. Such people even believe that Hashem will help them out to make sure that they are not caught! If they would really have faith in Hashem, they would conduct their business affairs with honesty and integrity and trust in Hashem, Who sustains and provides for all His creations. On top of all this, in the long run the person doesn't gain anything financially, as all crooked money will cause their owner's downfall as we will explain.



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A Person Is First Punished Through His Possessions

In *Piskei Rabati* (17) it's written, "And at midnight'... The Master of Mercy doesn't start by striking a person directly [but starts first with his possessions] ... *Negaim*, leprous marks, first start with the house ... then with his clothes ... and then with his body ... In Egypt, the attribute of justice first affected their possessions, 'And [He] struck their vines and their fig trees ... They locked away their livestock from [fear of] of the hail ...' and [only] afterwards [did Hashem strike their bodies, as it states,] 'He struck all the first-born in Egypt.'" Using this *Chazal*, Rav Aryeh Leib Tzintz answers his aforementioned question: Hashem's way is to first punish a person by afflicting his possessions. Hashem does this to give the person a chance to change his ways and encourages him to repent. However, when his possessions come about through ill-gotten money, none of his possessions are considered to be his, and Hashem gives the person the punishment that he deserves right away, giving him no chance to save himself and repent. The main sin of Noach's generation was indeed *arayot*, but if they would have been honest and avoided theft, Hashem would not have punished them so quickly, but rather afflicted their possessions first. However, since they were guilty of theft, and their possessions were not considered their own, their fate was sealed. This is also the explanation why "One who accumulates wealth unjustly - in the middle of his days it will leave him" - since his money is ill-gained, Hashem can't afflict him first through his possessions and therefore the sinner gets punished with full force right away.

Non-Kosher Wealth

Rav Elchanan Wasserman *zt"l* writes in his *Kobetz Ma'amarim* (10) that when Yirmiyahu says, "One who accumulates wealth unjustly - in the middle of his days it will leave him," he is telling us a fact – non-kosher money does not stay with its owner; either the money is taken away from the owner or the owner is taken away from the money. The word "unjustly" [*she'lo be'mishpat*] indicates that this is true for all money that is not earned according to the laws [*mishpat*] of the Torah. If the money came through theft, interest, overpricing, infringing on another's business, desecration of Shabbat, etc., it will eventually disappear; worse, it will cause any kosher money that was mixed with it to be lost as well. Rav Elchanan writes that even money that one is obligated to give to charity or Torah causes but keeps for himself instead is considered "*she'lo b'mishpat*" and is included in Yirmiyahu's warning.

Our Sages on "Falsehood" and "Destruction"

We can add to this the words of the *Yalkut Shemoni* (*Noach* 7): "When Noach entered the ark, all the animals came. Falsehood [*"Sheker"*] also came and wanted to go inside the ark. Noach told him that he couldn't come in because he has no partner. Falsehood went out in search of a partner and found Destruction [*"Pechat"*] and asked it to be his partner. Destruction asked what it would get out of the deal and Falsehood promised that he would give Destruction all his [Falsehood's] profits. Destruction agreed to the deal and together they entered the ark. When they left the ark, Falsehood was very successful. As per their agreement, he gave his profits to Destruction, who in turn destroyed all it received." From the *Medrash* it is clear that any money gained through falsehood will be lost and be of no use to its owner. This fits in with the words of Rav Aryeh Leib Tzintz, that money gained unjustly cannot save its owner and give him a chance to repent. This holds true not just for money but for anything gained by going against the Torah and truth. Any such gain will not bring success but only destruction.



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If Wealth is Coming to You, You'll Get it

In the *Ben Ish Chai's "Nifla'im Ma'asecha"* (Volume 3, pg. 197) he tells the story of a very diligent student who would wake up every day at midnight and learn throughout the night. This special young man was also always the first and last person in the *Beit HaMedrash*. One night when he was going at midnight to the *Beit HaMedrash*, he noticed a house whose owner forgot to close the door. This house belonged to a rich widow who lived alone with her maid. Immediately, the evil inclination awoke and began convincing the young man to take advantage of this opportunity - there was lots of money and valuable objects for the taking and no man in the house to stop him. The evil inclination got the best of him and the young man walked inside. He found the chest holding the money and precious items and broke it open. The noise awoke the widow but she was scared for her life and remained in her bed. After he broke the chest, the young man began to think about a statement of our Sages that his *Rosh Yeshiva* often quoted, "A man can't touch anything that is reserved for another." *If that's the case*, thought the student, *why should I steal? If the money is coming to me, I'll get it in a permitted fashion; and if I'm not supposed to get it, what use is it to take it now.* He thought for a while and finally decided not to take anything and continued on his usual way to the *Beit HaMedrash*. The next day, the widow got up and went to see how much was stolen from her. To her shock she saw that nothing was missing. Still, the break-in convinced her that she could no longer remain alone. She went to the *Rosh HaYeshiva*, told him about her wealth, and asked him to find her a *chatan*. At this time, all the students had already left, except the young man mentioned earlier, whose custom was to be the last one to leave the *Beit HaMedrash*. The *Rosh HaYeshiva* suggested him as a match; both sides agreed and they got married. This is just as our Sages said, if something is coming to a person, he doesn't have to do anything forbidden, but will get it in a permitted manner.

Words of Mussar

We have learned from our *parasha* how careful we must be not to fall into the traps of the evil inclination. It tries to persuade us to increase our wealth in whatever way we can, regardless of whether it's right or wrong. There is no blessing in such money. On the contrary, this kind of money brings death and destruction to a person and his family, as he and his family will suffer in place of his money and possessions. Without a doubt, if a person was given a choice whether to be afflicted physically or financially, he would prefer to lose some money and retain his good health. How can a person not think about his Creator Who runs the world and still conduct his business dishonestly, thinking that only through his cunning will he be able to achieve his goal? Everything is dependent on the kindness of *Hashem Yitbarach* and He lowers the proud and raises the lowly. A person doesn't have to get out and push the train. It's enough for a person to put in the necessary effort, and if it is decreed that he will become rich, even dealings with dust will turn into gold. However, if it is decreed otherwise, dealings with gold will turn into dust. This is true in all areas of life - what is fixed for a person, be it in health, wealth, and honor, is exactly what he will get. Therefore, all the dishonest toil and crooked efforts of a person will be useless in helping him reach his goals, as destruction will come and do away with all his ill-gotten gains. However, whatever Hashem gives will remain in his possession. Therefore, a person should pray to the Creator of the World, Who owns everything in the world, that He should grant him wealth, blessing, and success in his endeavors. And if in the end he is unsuccessful, he should know that this is to arouse in him a desire to repent and do *teshuva*.



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Shabbat Shalom,

Rav Mordechai Malka