



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
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Parashat Re'eh

The World Was Created For Me

Our *parasha* begins (11:26), "See [*re'eh*] that I have placed before you a blessing and a curse. (27) The blessing will be if you will listen to the mitzvot of Hashem, your G-d, that I have commanded you today. (28) And the curse will be if you do not listen to the mitzvot of Hashem and you veer from the path that I have commanded you today, to go after false gods that you did not know."

Questions:

- 1- The *Ohr Hachaim* asks why the Torah (11:26) states, "See that I have placed ..." Why is there an emphasis on "seeing" here? 2- Furthermore, the word *re'eh*, "see," is in the singular. This appears odd, since the rest of the *parasha* is in the plural expression. What is the reason for this?

Way of the World

When we take a moment to think about what is going on in the world, we will notice that man lives his life and is confident that he has chosen the correct path for himself. This is as Shlomo Hamelech stated in *Mishlei* (21:2), "All of man's paths are upright in his eyes." Therefore man can live his entire life without ever demanding of himself to improve or change his ways. However, our holy Torah teaches us that man must think that the entire world was created for him and that he is the sole purpose of creation. He must believe that it is up to him to act properly and thereby justify the world's creation.

If There are Two, Then They are Me and My Son

Our Sages teach in *Masechet Sukkah* (45b) that Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said that he could exonerate the entire world from Hashem's strict judgment and retribution from the time that he was created until the present time. He added that if his son Elazer was together with him then he could exempt the world from strict judgment from the time the world was created until now. He concluded by stating that if Yotam ben Uzziyahu was with him then he could exempt the world from judgment until the end of time. The Sages then quote another statement from *Rashbi*, that he saw that there were not many individuals in his generation who could be described as deserving of perceiving the Divine Presence (see Rashi there). However, said *Rashbi*, if there were 1000 such individuals, he and his son were amongst them. If there were 100, he and his son were amongst them. If there were only two, then they were him and his son.

Now we must ask on these statements of *Rashbi* – do they not sound like arrogance, *chas ve'shalom*, as if he was saying that he was better than everyone? 2- Furthermore, it sounds like he was



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denigrating all the previous generations – can it be? 3- Finally, since he was able to exempt the world from strict judgment and retribution, why didn't he? What was stopping him from doing so?

We can begin by saying that we find a similar statement said by Hillel in *Masechet Sukka* (53a). There we learn that when Hillel was in a state of joy at the *Simchat Beit Hashoeva* on Sukkot, he would remark, "If I am here then everyone is here, but if I am not here – who is here?" The *Shu"t Maharlbach* (*kuntrus ha'semicha*) asks how Hillel could have spoken in such a fashion. Did this not belittle the other Sages of the generation? Especially Hillel, who is quoted in *Masechet Shabbat* as having said, "That which you hate do not do to your friend" – how could he now make such a statement? See there what the *Maharlbach* answers.

The World Continues to Exist in Man's Merit

We will start to answer this question by citing the Mishnah in *Sanhedrin* (37a) which states, "Therefore man was created by himself; to teach you that anyone who murders one Jew is as if he destroyed an entire world, and anyone who sustains one Jewish soul is as if he sustained an entire world." The Rambam in *Hilchot Sanhedrin* (*perek* 12), quotes the aforementioned Mishnah and then continues, stating, "Every human being is created similar to Adam *Harishon*, and there is not one human being whose face is exactly the same as his friend. Therefore, each and every person can say 'For me the world was created.'" We see, then, that the Rambam is teaching us a very great principle, namely, that each person is required to demand of himself that he utilize his abilities and potential, and he should think that he world was created for him. Everything else in the world is his staff, so to speak, to carry out his will. Obviously, the intent is not to denigrate others or to belittle them. Rather, it is to teach us that man is forbidden to act lazily or to display lack of self-esteem, thereby convincing himself that he does not possess the capabilities to act and achieve on behalf of the public. Accordingly, we can understand both the words of Hillel as well as those of *Rashbi*. These tzaddikim demanded the maximum from themselves, telling themselves that the entire world was created for them and stood in their merit. Therefore, *Rashbi* stated that it was in his ability to exempt the entire world from retribution, because the whole world stood in his merit. He was, in essence, demanding from himself to reach the level where he could free the entire world from retribution.

Man is Required to Demand Growth From Himself

We learn from *Rashbi* that each man is required to demand from himself that he utilizes his strengths and abilities to service the public. It is forbidden to assuage his fears by telling himself that he is not capable, for man is required to say that the world was create for him and him alone. If he was the only one in the world, would he be able to excuse himself by saying that he is not capable and therefore he cannot accomplish in the world? Certainly not; he would demand this of himself since there would be



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no one else to rely upon. Therefore the same thing applies when the world is populated with many others besides him – he must make demands of himself and not just sit back and relax.

Parable About Villagers

This idea can be grasped by means of a parable: There was a small town that had two *batei knessiot*, one used by the wealthy men of the town, the other by the poor. Each Simchat Torah, the wealthy *beit kneset* carried on dancing and rejoicing for a long time since they had whiskey, which helped set a festive atmosphere. However, the poor *beit kneset* finished rather quickly and grew jealous of the other *beit kneset*. One of them rose and suggested the following: since none of them were wealthy enough to buy liquor, they would place a barrel at the entrance of their *beit kneset*. Throughout the year, the members of the congregation would occasionally bring cups of whiskey and pour them into the barrel, until Simchat Torah would arrive. At that point, they would then have enough whiskey to rejoice on Simchat Torah like the wealthy men. The idea was received with excitement, and indeed, the congregation began bringing cups of whiskey and pouring them in into the barrel. They were happy at the prospect of having whiskey for the coming Simchat Torah. Yet there were those who began to think that it was a pity to give away their whiskey. They decided to put **water** into the barrel instead, figuring that with all the whiskey that had been amassed, the water would simply become nullified by the whiskey and have no effect. This is exactly what they did. However, unbeknownst to them, these individuals were not the only ones who thought this way; rather, **all of the Jews** from that *beit kneset* thought the same way, considering it a shame to part with their whiskey. Therefore, all of them brought water, until the entire barrel was full. When Simchat Torah arrived, they joyously opened the barrel and began to drink – but soon realized that the barrel contained nothing but water. Each one of them thought that he was the only one who was doing this and relied on the fact that his friend would supply the whiskey. But if each of them would have said, "If I will not bring whiskey then there will not be whiskey then the entire barrel would have been filled with whiskey. This is what Hillel said, "If I am here than everyone is here." If they would all have thought that he matter depended only on them then they would have been dancing with great joy. However, "If I am not here than no one is here" – if each one feels that he does not have to be the one to contribute then they will ultimately wind up with nothing.

Words of Mussar

We have learned that each individual is required to demand of himself spiritual achievement and not just to rely on others. He must know that even though he lives in a world with others, he has no substitute and without him the world cannot exist. Therefore the *pasuk* we started off with begins with word "see" and in the singular and only afterwards switches to the plural. For man must see



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himself as the only Jew in the world, for whom the entire world was created. Then he will succeed. We must say as Hillel said, "If I am here then everyone is here," and if he was not there then it was as if no one was there. Or we should imitate *Rashbi*, who said that he was the lone individual upon whom the entire world stood. They demanded of themselves that they actually be deserving of upholding the entire world. Only by doing so, will we be able overpower our *yetzer hara* and succeed in performing the Will of Hashem, thereby meriting both this world and the next, *amen*.

With blessings for a *chodesh tov*, a *ketivah va'chatimah tovah* and a Shabbat Shalom,

Rav Mordechai Malka