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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,  
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## Parashat Devarim

### The Destruction of the Batei Mikdash was Due to a Destruction of the Hearts

#### Questions:

1 – The commentators point out that Moshe Rabbeinu seems to be contradicting himself in the opening *perek* of our *parashah*. On one hand, he states [1:12], “How can I bear your argumentativeness, burdens, and quarrels by myself?” For [ibid. 11] “Hashem, your G-d, has multiplied you like the stars of the sky in abundance.” Yet on the other hand, Moshe concludes, “May Hashem ... add to you a thousand times yourself, and bless you as He said to you.” Won’t it make things even more difficult for Moshe if the Jews increase so drastically in number?

#### Rule of Society – “If I am Not for Myself, Who Will be for Me?”

Sadly, there is an unwritten rule in society that man’s success is dependent upon his living for himself and worrying only about himself. It is ironically similar to the statement of Hillel the Elder in *Masechet Avot*, “If I will not be for myself, who will be for me?” Therefore man develops his abilities and talents so that he can succeed in business. He worries about his social status to the degree that his entire drive and goal becomes how he can actualize his dream to build his mansions and upgrade his lifestyle in every aspect. Understandably, such an attitude generally causes hatred of his fellow when he competes with him and becomes his business rival, or if he suspects that he presents an obstacle for him to succeed in his endeavors. He is even capable of trampling upon, injuring, or denigrating another individual in order to raise himself up. There are those who even permit themselves to steal from others in order to amass their personal fortune. This undoubtedly causes strife in society. The Torah, however, teaches us the exact opposite – that the secret of success in one’s personal and social life is only possible when individuals help and encourage one another. Man should contemplate how he is capable of benefitting his fellow and not only himself. Only by doing so, will he succeed on an individual and social level in all areas of life – in livelihood, security, peace, and unity, as we will illustrate shortly by quoting statements of our Sages. This is specifically applicable during this time period, the eve of Tisha B’Av. Tisha B’Av is the day on which we commemorate the destruction of the *Batei Mikdash*, which was caused because of a deterioration of the unity amongst the hearts of the Jews. We must therefore contemplate how we can rectify this flaw in society, which ruins the success of our Nation and causes the *churban* to endure. This is to the extent that our Sages have stated, “Any generation in which the [*Beit Hamikdash*] is not built is considered as if it was destroyed in that generation.” The explanation of this statement is as follows: If we were worthy that the *Beit Hamikdash* would not have been destroyed in our days, then it should be rebuilt in our days. But if it is not rebuilt, it is a sign that had it stood in our time, it, indeed, would have been destroyed.

#### Explanation of Moshe Rabbeinu’s Words

Now we can explain the *pesukim* that related the words of Moshe Rabbeinu. The Jewish Nation is blessed in two different ways. Sometimes they are blessed to be like dust of the earth and sand by the sea. However, sometimes they are blessed to be as multiple as the stars of the sky. The commentators explain the difference between the two blessings. They state that the difference lies in the unity of the Jewish Nation. When there is love and unity between Jews, they are compared to the granules of sand which are in extremely close proximity to one another. Whenever one grain of sand moves, the one next to it moves as well; one is affected by the other. This is in contrast to the stars; each star stands and shines on its own. This represents a predicament of hatred and strife amongst the Jewish Nation, when each individual lives his own life, unconcerned about his fellow man. Above, Moshe Rabbeinu was saying that the Jews were marked by “argumentativeness, burdens, and quarrels,” because they were “like stars of the sky, in abundance.” A nation lacking unity is impossible to lead. On the other hand, when Moshe refers to the Jews in a unified state, he says, “May Hashem ... add to you a thousand times yourself, and bless you as He said to you.” Moshe was implying that if Hashem would bless you as He said He would, and make the Jews as numerous as the dust of the earth and the sand by the sea – in other words, they would grow in



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a unified state – then even if they would increase 1000 times in number, there would be no difficulty in leading them.

**"Because" [tachat] of Having Been Like the Stars**

Now we can understand a *pasuk* in *Parashat Ki Tavo* [28:62] which states, "You will be left few in number, *tachat* of having been like the stars of heaven in abundance, for you did not listen to the voice of Hashem, your G-d." There are three interpretations for the word *tachat*: 1- It implies that one is subservient to a ruler [see *Bereishit* 16:9]. 2 – *Tachat* can also mean "instead" [see *Bereishit* 22:13]. 3 – *Tachat* can also mean "because" [see *Devarim* 28:47].

In the aforementioned *pasuk*, we can explain the word *tachat* to mean "because." In other words, because you are acting like stars – stricken with strife – the Torah's curse that they will diminish in number applies to them.

**The Direction in Which The *Keruvim* Were Facing Depended on The Jews**

Similarly, we find that our Sages teach us in *Masechet Baba Batra* [99a]: How were [- the *Keruvim*] standing? R' Yochanan and R' Elazer stated their opinions. One said that they faced each other, and the other said that they were facing the *Bayit* [*Beit Hamikdash*]. According to the one who said that they faced each other, does the *pasuk* not state explicitly that they were the facing the *Bayit*? It is not difficult – when they performed the Will of Hashem, they faced each other. When they did not, they faced the *Bayit*." Our Sages intention is that when there was unity and each individual faced the other, concerned for his fellow's welfare, then the *Keruvim* faced one another. However, when each person placed his own concerns first, and did not face his fellow, then the *Keruvim* faced the *Bayit*.

**The Jewish People Can be Similar to One Individual Or to Many Individuals**

This is also stated in *Masechet Yoma* [3b]. Our Sages point out that in one place [*Devarim* 10] the *pasuk* states, "And make for yourself an Aron of wood," in the singular form. Yet in another place [*Shemot* 25] it states, "And they made an Aron of *Shittim* wood," in the plural form. Our Sages explain that the singular form is speaking about a time when the Jews perform the Will of Hashem, but the plural form is used when the Jews are not performing the Will of Hashem. The explanation for this is as before, namely, that when the Jews are doing the Will of Hashem by acting with unity, then they are referred to as a single individual. Yet when they lack unity, the *pasuk* refers to them in the plural.

**Whether the Jews are Referred to as Sons or Slaves Depends upon Their Level of Unity**

R' Meir states [*Baba Batra* 10a], that despite Hashem's love for the impoverished, He does not provide them with ample sustenance, so that we can be saved from Gehinnom in the merit of sustaining them. This is the question that the wicked Turnusrufus asked R' Akiva: "If your G-d loves the impoverished, why does He not support them?" R' Akiva answered, "In order to save us from judgment in Gehinnom." "On the contrary," replied Turnusrufus, "this is what will sentence them to Gehinnom. I will draw an analogy. To what can this be compared? To a mortal king who became angry at his servant and placed him in prison. He issued a command not to feed him or give him anything to drink. But one person went and fed him and gave him something to drink. When the king hears about this, will he not be angry at him? And you are called 'servants,' as the *pasuk* states, 'To me are the Jewish people servants.'" R' Akiva responded, "I will draw an analogy for you. To what can this be compared? To a mortal king who got angry at his *son* and placed him in prison. He issued a command not to feed him or give him anything to drink. But one person went and fed him and gave him something to drink. When the king hears about this, will he not send him a gift? And we are called 'sons,' as the *pasuk* states, 'You are sons to Hashem your G-d.'" Turnusrufus replied, "You are called sons and you are called servants. When you are performing the Will of Hashem you are called 'sons,' but when you are not performing the Will of Hashem, you are called 'servants.' Now you are not performing the Will of Hashem. R' Akiva replied, "The *pasuk* states, 'Surely you should break your bread for the starving, and bring the moaning impoverished into your house.' About when can it be stated, 'and bring the **moaning impoverished** into your house?' Presently. Yet the *pasuk* states 'Surely you should break your bread for the starving.'"



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We see from here that in order for a person to perform acts of charity and kindness for his friend, there must be unity amongst Jews. This way they are considered as 'sons' and Hashem is happy with their deeds. However, if there is strife and hatred, they are referred to as 'servants.' If someone performs charity and kindness for an impoverished servant of the king, he is considered as if he is rebelling against the king.

### The Secret to Success in Business

It is furthermore stated by our Sages [Berachot 35b] that the Jewish Nation's success in business is dependent upon unity. Our Sages state that, on one hand, the *pasuk* states [Hoshea 2], "I will take My grain in its time..." On the other hand, it states [Devarim 11], "And **you** will collect your grain." The Gemara answers, "It is not difficult: one *pasuk* refers to when the Jewish people are performing the Will of Hashem. The other refers to when the Jews are not performing the Will of Hashem." Our Sages continue, "Our Rabbis have taught: 'And you will collect your grain' – You should work for a living, so says R' Yishmael. R' Shimon bar Yochai says: If an individual plows in the plowing season, plants in the planting season ... and winnows the grain when the wind blows – what will be with the Torah? Rather when the Jewish people perform the Will of Hashem, their work is performed by others ... And when they do not do the Will of Hashem, they do their own work. Not only that, but they will have to perform other people's work. This is as the *pasuk* states [Devarim 28], 'And you will serve your enemies...' It is clearly stated that the success in financial endeavors is dependent on unity. When there is unity, then sustenance will be attained and will flourish, and everyone will have a livelihood. He will be able to manage a business and employ foreign workers to perform difficult labors. However, when there is disharmony, the businesses collapse. There will also be no opportunity to employ workers, and he will be forced to do all the work on his own.

### Story About Rashi

It is related that at the end of his life, Rashi fasted many fasts in order to discover in whose company he would be in *Gan Eden*. Eventually, it was revealed to him that his neighbor would be a wealthy man named Avraham from Barcelona, Spain. He decided that he must travel there and learn about this individual. Despite his family's attempts to prevent him because of his weakened state, he did not heed them and, indeed, travelled to Barcelona. When word spread that the *gadol hador* would be arriving, there was great joy in Barcelona. The entire city went out to greet Rashi with musical instruments in order to escort him to his place of lodging. Meanwhile, Rashi began to inquire about the wealthy man Avraham, asking people if they knew him. He was certainly known to all, and they told Rashi about his great wealth and about his beautiful mansion. However, when Rashi asked about his level of Heavenly fear, they avoided the question. From this, Rashi understood that he was not a decent individual, and this caused him anguish. Meanwhile, the wealthy man also arrived to greet Rashi. When he came, the people told Rashi that this was the wealthy man that they were talking about. Rashi immediately called him over to converse with him, in order to find out more about him. As they were speaking, a woman burst into the inn, crying in a loud voice. Rashi asked her why she was crying. She answered that she was crying because she is a widow, and she has a daughter of marriageable age. Her daughter met a young man from the yeshiva and they set a date for the engagement. However, he suddenly backed out of the engagement and instead got engaged to the daughter of a wealthy man who had promised him a large dowry. They were now set to be married. Rashi asked to which wealthy man she was referring, and she responded that it was the very man with whom Rashi was presently sitting. Rashi was shocked how the man could have taken away the match of a poor, orphaned girl. However, the wealthy man responded that he had no idea that the young man was already engaged. In any event, he guaranteed to rectify the situation. Rashi asked him how he intended to do this. But the man assured him that there was nothing to worry about and that he would invite Rashi to the wedding, which would take place in two days' time. The man returned home and related what had happened. He therefore convinced his daughter to forgo the match, and he persuaded the *chatan* to return to his former *kallah*. He promised to give him the entire dowry that he would have given him had he married his own daughter. After he persuaded them, he invited the widow and her daughter to his home. The *kallah* was immediately ushered inside, and given bridal clothing. The mother was also given clothing for a wedding, and she then married off her



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daughter in the wealthy man's home. Rashi attended the wedding in order to see how the issue would be resolved. When he saw the man's love for his fellow man and what a great *baal chessed* he was, he said that now he feels at peace, and he understands why the man will be his neighbor in *Gan Eden*. We see from here just how great loving one's fellow man is in the eyes of Hashem. The wealthy man was involved in business his entire life, and the people never recognized his greatness, yet he would ultimately go to *Gan Eden* and be the neighbor of the *gadol hador*, Rashi, the Torah giant.

#### Words of Mussar

We now see just how much individuals err by thinking that their success depends upon concerning themselves with their own welfare, despite the fact that this is a path fraught with disharmony and one that breeds hatred amongst brethren. For the Torah teaches us the exact opposite, that the secret to personal and communal success, whether it be in areas of livelihood, security, or the greatness of man, depends upon love, unity, and a concern for the welfare of one's fellow Jew. Only in this way, will Hashem hasten our redemption and build our *Beit Hamikdash* speedily in our days. For the *Beit Hamikdash* was destroyed because of a destruction of the Jewish hearts, and it will be rebuilt through unity of the hearts. *Amen ve'Amen*.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rav Mordechai Malka