



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 Re'eh

### Each Individual Makes a Difference

#### Question:

The opening *pasuk* in our *parashah* states [11:26], "See (*re'eh*) that I have placed before you (*lifneichem*) today a blessing and a curse." The *Ohr Hachayim* asks why the word *re'eh* is in the singular expression if the rest of the *parashah* is written in plural (*lifneichem*, etc.).

#### Public Reaction

Usually, when an individual is approached about servicing the congregation, he resists. He humbly claims that he is not worthy and lacking in ability. He exclaims that he can barely deal with providing for the needs of his family, and he is incapable of doing anything more. He exempts himself with such claims and additional ones as well, just so long as he is not demanded nor required to exert himself. However, the Torah teaches us that this is not the proper way. Rather, each and every individual has the power to benefit the public. It is forbidden for anyone to belittle himself, for the measuring stick of Hashem is different than that of man. Man values monumental achievements; the greater the accomplishment, the more it is held in esteem. However, Hashem judges each person according to his own abilities. It is therefore possible that a seemingly small action is considered equal to a larger action performed by a different individual, since both were utilizing their abilities to the fullest degree. Therefore, even an individual with lesser ability is capable of benefitting and influencing the Jewish people. So wrote the Steipler in his *sefer, Chayei Olam*, that Hashem does not demand more from an individual than he is capable of. A student who has difficulty grasping the material, yet toiled and achieved according to his capabilities, is beloved by Hashem like a towering Torah scholar who has achieved according to his abilities. In a sense, he is even more beloved than the Torah prodigy, because "according to the merit is the reward" [*Masechet Avot*].

#### Each Person is Required to Think that He Tips the World's Scale

Now we can explain the question that was posed above. I humbly believe that we can explain based on the words of our Sages [*Kiddushin* 40a-b], "Said the Rabbis: An individual should always view himself as if he is half-guilty and half-meritorious. If he does one mitzvah, he is fortunate, for he has placed himself on the side of merit. If he does one sin, woe is to him, for he has placed himself on the side of guilt ... R' Elazer the son of R' Shimon says: For the world is judged according to its majority and the individual is judged according to his majority. If he does one mitzvah he is fortunate, for he has placed himself and the entire world on the side of merit. If he transgresses one sin, woe is to him, for he has placed himself and the entire world on the side of guilt ... Because of a single sin that this one committed, he caused himself and the world to lose much good." The effect that a single individual can have on the public is furthermore stated by our Sages [*Chullin* 92a], "Said Rabbi Shimon ben Lakish: This Nation is compared to a grape vine. Its branches are compared to the laymen; the clusters are the *talmidei chachamim*; the leaves are the unlearned individuals; the thin branches are the degenerates amongst the Jewish Nation." The Gemara furthermore states that the cluster should beseech mercy on behalf of the leaf, because if not for the leaf, the cluster would not endure. This teaches us that all of Israel is like one body (See *Shavuot* 39a, *Shabbat* 54b, and *Yoma* 86b where this theme is similarly illustrated.).

#### Instances When One Man Placed the Jewish Nation Either on the Side of Merit or Guilt

An instance in which we find that a single individual placed the Jewish Nation on the side of guilt was in the episode of Korach. This is as the *pesukim* state there [*Bamidbar* 16:20-22], "Hashem said to Moshe and Aharon, saying, 'Separate yourselves from this assembly, and I will destroy them in an instant; and they fell on their faces and said, 'G-d, G-d of the spirits of all flesh, one man sins, and you are furious with the entire assembly?'"

It is similarly stated regarding Achan in *Sefer Yehoshua* [7:1], "And the Children of Israel misused the consecrated property; Achan ben Zerach ... misused the property, and Hashem's fury flared against the



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

Children of Israel." Furthermore it states [ibid. 22:20], "Did Achan ben Zerch not misuse the consecrated property and fury fell upon the entire assembly of Israel? He was not the only individual to die for his sin."

Rabbeinu Bachaye, quoting the Midrash Tanchuma [2], writes in *Devarim* [29] that all of the Jewish Nation is held accountable for the sin of one man. Proof to this is Achan; he alone misused the consecrated property, and yet Hashem said to Yehoshua [7:11] that "Israel has sinned," and all of Israel were held accountable for his sin. This is also the meaning of the *pasuk's* expression [*Vayikra* 26:37], "Man will stumble over his brother," on which our Sages [*Sanhedrin* 27b] expound, "Over the sin of his brother. This is to teach that all of Israel is responsible for one another." If this is the case when it comes to retribution, all the more so are the masses saved through the merits of one individual. So said Elifaz to Iyov [*Iyov* 22:30], "Those who are not innocent will be saved through the pureness of your hands." In other words, one innocent individual can save so many others. This is also expounded upon by our Sages [*Yoma* 38b] who taught, "Because of one *tzaddik* the world stands, as it states [*Mishlei* 10:25] 'The *tzaddik* is the foundation of the world.' This is certainly so because the measure of good always exceeds the measure of retribution.

On the other hand, we find that the entire Jewish Nation was saved in Pinchas's merit. This is as the *pasuk* states [*Bamidbar* 25:10-11], "And Hashem said to Moshe saying, 'Pinchas the son of Elazar, the son of Aharon HaKohen turned back My fury from the Children of Israel when he zealously avenged Me amongst them, and I did not destroy the Children of Israel in My vengeance.'"

**R' Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l on the Power of a Single Individual**

I saw in the name of R' Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l, the Mirrer Rosh Yeshiva, words that he spoke regarding the power of a single individual. R' Chaim mentioned the words of Rashi on the *pasuk*, "Bilam arose (*va'yakam*) in the morning, and he saddled his donkey." Rashi comments, "From here we see that hatred distorts the proper way of acting, for he saddled the donkey himself. Said Hashem, 'Wicked one, Avraham their father has already preceded you. This is as it states, 'And Avraham arose [*va'yashkeim*] in the morning, and he saddled his donkey.'" Said R' Chaim Shmulevitz: Here wages a great struggle between Bilam and Avraham. Out of his love for Hashem, Avraham went to fulfill his commandment to sacrifice his son, and, by doing so, saved the Jewish Nation from the danger that Bilam intended to wreak. We can explain the words, "Avraham has already preceded you" in a simple manner, namely, that Avraham preceded Bilam by 400 years, and the one who comes first is stronger. However, we can also explain this in a different manner. About Bilam it states, "*Va'yakam*," but about Avraham it states, "*Va'yashkeim*." *Va'yashkeim* implies rising at an earlier time than does *va'yakam*. In other words, Avraham woke up earlier than Bilam did. What does this indicate? Avraham woke up early to do what was dear to him, similar to the way small children will rise earlier on the day of a trip than on a regular school day. The fact that Avraham rose before Bilam shows that his love for Hashem was greater than Bilam's hatred for the Jews. Both acted with self-sacrifice, saddling their own donkeys. However, the power of Avraham was greater. This points to the power of a single individual. When he displays great self-sacrifice his power is very great; great enough to be a source of protection and spiritual revival. To the extent that his self-sacrifice and love are greater, so too, is his power greater. So said R' Chaim Shmulevitz zt"l. Indeed, we find a number of examples in the Torah which prove just how great the power of a single individual has been throughout history. One example of an amazing, positive accomplishment effected by a lone individual in recent history was that of Sarah Schnierer a"h. It was a time when Jewish education for girls was in a dismal state. Yet on her own, without any organization or framework, she began to teach a group of 25 girls. From there sprouted the gigantic *Beit Yaakov* school system for girls which exists throughout the entire world.

**Concern Over One Student Affected the Entire Generation**

Additionally, we wrote last week that our Sages [*Eiruvim* 54b] teach us that not only monumental accomplishments benefit the public; rather, even an action which is seemingly small can merit the Jewish people. R' Preida had a student who needed to be taught a lesson 400 times until he finally grasped the material. One



## 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

day, R' Preida was needed to assist in a matter which was a mitzvah. He taught the student 400 times, but he still did not understand. R' Preida therefore asked him why he was having a more difficult time today than usual. The student answered that from the moment R' Preida was asked to assist in the mitzvah, he wasn't able to concentrate, thinking that at any moment he would pick up and leave. R' Preida therefore taught the student an additional 400 times. A Heavenly voice then asked R' Preida if he wished to live 400 years or if he preferred that he and his entire generation merit the World to Come. He answered that he preferred that he and his generation merit the World to Come. Therefore Hashem said that he should receive both.

From this episode, our Sages are teaching the following lesson: It may have seemed that the tremendous investment of time and energy in this sub-par student was in vain and squandering time which could have otherwise been spent studying Torah. Nevertheless, R' Preida taught the student 400 times, and in this case, 800 times, even though the student ought to have been paying attention. This pure act of teaching Torah to a single individual had the power to earn the entire generation eternal life. It also gained R' Preida 400 more years of life. This was a greater reward accrued than if he had taught Torah to the masses. One pure act for the sake of a mitzvah has inestimable worth in Heaven. We must also consider the fact that the reward accrued was not due to the Torah study of R' Preida. Rather, it was on account of the Torah study of a student who had difficulty grasping the material. It was in merit of the fact that he was capable of listening to the same lesson 800 times in order to understand a small section of Torah. That learning generated gratification for Hashem, to the extent that it benefited the entire generation. This teaches us something amazing about the Torah learning of even a simple student, one who will undoubtedly not become the *gadol hador* according to society's definition of the term, due to his limited breadth of knowledge and depth of understanding. It was **this** student's Torah which transformed him into a *gadol be'Yisrael* more than the *gedolei ha'dor*. Because it was **that** Torah which merited his entire generation a portion in the World to Come. Therefore, one never knows – with each action that an individual performs with self-sacrifice, even the simplest of men, and the simplest deed, perhaps it will be that specific deed which places the entire world on the side of merit.

### One Man Can Save the Jewish People Through His Actions

Now we can explain the expression of the *pasuk*, "See (*re'eh*) I have placed before you today a blessing and a curse." We have learned that it is in the power of even one individual to place the world on either the side of merit or guilt through his actions. This is why the Torah states *re'eh* in the singular expression. This is because the Torah is speaking to every single individual, telling him that the status of the Jewish Nation depends on his deeds. He doesn't only affect himself; with one sin he can place the entire world on the side of guilt, and with one mitzvah he can place the entire world on the side of merit. Especially now, as we are approaching the days of *selichot*, a time about which the *darshanim*, finding an allusion in the words of our Sages, have said, "[Walk] after a lion and not after a woman." This hints to the month of Av, whose *mazel* is a lion, and following this month, one must start intensifying his service of Hashem. However, "not **after** Elul," whose *mazel* is that of a young maiden. Elul is the time to intensify our performance of mitzvot.

### Story About R' Chaim Shmulevitz and the Power of One Individual

R' Chaim once remarked that in the Six-Day War, he took shelter in one of the bomb-shelter rooms next to the Mir Yeshivah. It was a small area, and there were 200 frightened people crowded inside. The shelling was very heavy, with bombs and shells falling constantly. The fear of death was tangible, and everyone had already recited *Kriat Shema*. The Arabs were only a number of meters away. Suddenly, a woman rose and burst into tears. Before everyone, she said in a loud voice, "Master of the World, my husband left me and fled to America many years ago. For more than 20 years I am an *agunah*, without sustenance or a *get*. I have no money to marry off my daughters. But despite the great injustice that he has caused me, I forgive him with a full heart. So too You, Master of the World. Forgive the inhabitants of this building." Immediately, the shelling ceased. R' Chaim remarked, that it is clear to him as day, that the prayer of that *tzaddaket* was accepted before the Throne of Glory, and in her merit the shelling stopped.



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

**Words of Mussar**

We have learned from the *parashah* and the statements of the Sages that we quoted, just how much each individual must demand from himself all that he is capable of doing for the public. For it is not the result or the size of his accomplishment which determines how great his deed is in the eyes of Hashem. Rather, each individual is judged according to his ability. The deed of a simpler individual could spark a spiritual upheaval. Therefore the weak one should say, "I am strong." By doing so, we can begin our preparations for the *Yamim Noraim* which are soon to arrive. As is well known, from the beginning of Elul start days of mercy and forgiveness, and each man examines his deeds. Hashem should help that we should all merit benefiting the Jewish Nation as a whole and specific individuals in particular, and that we should merit a *ketiva va'chatima tovah*. Amen ve' Amen.

Shabbat Shalom,  
Rav Mordechai Malka