



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 Shemot

The Foundation of Our Nation

The *parasha* states (5:4), "And the king of Egypt said to them: 'Why are Moshe and Aharon disturbing the nation from their activity? Go to your bondage.'" In *Shemot Rabbah* (5:16), the Midrash states, "Go to your bondage." Said Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi: The Tribe of Levi was free from engaging in oppressive labor. Pharaoh said to them, 'Because you are standing here free from work, you say, 'Let us go and offer sacrifices to our G-d' (*Shemot* 5). 'Go to your bondage,' he said to the Jews." This is also as stated by Rashi (ibid.), "Go to your bondage.' Go to your work that you must do in your homes. However, the work of Egyptian slavery was not placed upon the Tribe of Levi. You should know that this is so, because Moshe and Aharon left and came without permission."

Questions:

- 1- The most pressing question in our *parasha* is how it is possible that the Tribe of Levi was not enslaved. How were they different than the rest of the Tribes, and how did Pharaoh forgo enslaving an entire Tribe?
- 2- We must also understand why the members of the Tribe of Levi, from all the other Tribes, were chosen to be Hashem's attendants.

Central Issues in Society

One of the issues that surfaces from time to time in the media is society's question why a portion of the people does not participate in the security or the economy of the state. As we know, the finger points at the *Chareidi* community. There are surveys performed how many *chareidim* go to the army and how many work and the like. This is to discern whether they contribute to the prosperity of our Holy Land. Is it possible that a portion of society sits and studies Torah, and not only do not help, but even receive allotments and support from the State? Why does the rest of the population not receive equal treatment? This is something which, for a segment of our Nation, defies logic. In addition, from the same root which stems the previous claim, causes the battle over the sanctity of the Kotel and of Shabbat. However, our Torah teaches us how to truly estimate participation in the economy and about the responsibility to guard the sanctity of the Kotel and Shabbat. Furthermore, we will discover how the kings of the nations of the world act when it comes to matters of equality. It was not long ago that Obama, the exiting President of the US, celebrated Chanukah. He lit candles and spoke about the greatness of the holiday of Chanukah, which is a light and symbol of freedom of religion to all the nations of the world in general and to the Jewish Nation in particular. For it was on Chanukah that the *Chashmonaim* defeated the Greeks, who wished to prevent the Jews from practicing their religion and faith. He said that this is a symbol and guide for all the nations; just like it is in the US, where each man and congregation is free to practice their religion. If President Obama understands this, how much more so, should the Jewish people. The media has already made famous the meeting between the President of Russia, Putin and the Chief Rabbi of Russia. Putin expressed his amazement how it is possible that the Jewish Nation had survived for 2000 years, unlike many nations who have been wiped out without a trace. He said that it seems that this is because the only nation who lives according to its Torah is the Jewish Nation, and in the merit of the Torah it survives forever. This is, once again, the understanding of a gentile and the world's grasp of the Torah of the Jewish people.

Why the Tribe of Levi Was Not Enslaved

I believe that we can now understand why the Tribe of Levi was chosen to be Hashem's exclusive attendants. We will begin by citing the *Midrash Aggadah* (*Shemot* 1:13). The *pasuk* states that the Egyptians subjugated the Jews with oppressive labor [בפרך]. *Be'farech* can be divided up into two words, *be'feh rach* [בפה רך], which means a "soft mouth." Pharaoh said to the Jews, "I will give you gold coins for each brick that you make." Therefore, the Jews rushed to make bricks. One Jew made 100, the other 200. Pharaoh then immediately decreed that they should bring the same amount of bricks each and every day. **This teaches us that the enslavement of the Jewish people began when they were drawn after money, forsaking Torah study in order to profit financially. The Egyptians then tricked the Jews. First they deducted from the payment; afterwards they delayed payment. This**



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,
שיבה 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

spiraled downward until they grew accustomed to working for free, at which point the Egyptians enslaved them oppressively. This is similarly stated in the commentaries of several *Rishonim* on the *parasha*. On the other hand, the Tribe of Levi was not lured. They remained strong when tested with whether or not they would yield to the temptation of financial profit at the expense of their Torah study. In the merit of guarding their essence and refusal to yield to the lure of *bitul Torah*, the Tribe of Levi was not affected by the decree of slavery. This is due to the fact that they lived a life of poverty in order not to serve the Egyptians. They clung to their way of life and their perspective, and they therefore merited that Torah study be their sole occupation. They were therefore not enslaved, due to Pharaoh and the Egyptian's respect for those who study Torah and lead the generation. This is as the Tanna states in *Pirkei Avot*, "All those who accept the yoke of Torah, has the yoke of the kingdom and yoke of livelihood removed from him." The opposite applies to one who throws off the yoke of Torah; upon him is placed the yoke of the kingdom and of earning a livelihood. This is why the Tribe of Levi was chosen to be Hashem's attendants in the *Mishkan* and in ensuing generations. This is similarly stated in the Ramban. The Rabbeinu Bachya (*Shemot* 5), after citing Rashi, adds that the custom of each nation is to have wise men who teach the nation their Torah. Therefore Pharaoh left the Jews the Tribe of Levi so that they would be their sages. He writes that all of this was intentionally arranged by Hashem. You see, then, that the kings of the other nations know to value those who study Torah and guide the nation. This is because religion is the backbone of each and every nation. All the more so does this apply to the Jewish Nation. The Jewish Nation merits existence and are distinguished from amongst the Nations of the World only due to its sages and scholars; for they are the heart of the nation. In order to ensure that the remainder of the nation remained slaves, the Egyptians allowed the religious leaders to remain free so that they could service the nation and guard the character of the nation. This was a practice also followed by Yosef in the years of famine. He bought the Egyptian's animals and land in exchange for food, until they all became the slaves of Pharaoh, required to give a fifth of all that they grew to Pharaoh. However, he stressed that the priests, who were the religious leaders of the country, would not be enslaved according to the law of Pharaoh and the Egyptians. This is because they served an important purpose; retaining the character of the land, by leading it according to their rulings, advice, and guidance. They would assist the nation in guarding its religious principles and would protest against those who acted improperly. This is because the sages are responsible for the nation; to guard the inner essence of every nation in the world. Therefore, the religious are not the recipients of unequal treatment. On the contrary, it is total equality, for the nations understand that the religious leaders exhibit self-sacrifice for the sake of leading the nation, without taking into account the hours spent in doing so. This understanding has resulted in laws permitting religious leaders more freedom than the rest of the nation.

The Lofty Level of the *Ben Torah*

Well-known are the words of the Rambam, that in present times, *bonei Torah* and rabbis are comparable to the Tribe of Levi. This is because they are the teachers and the leaders of the Jewish Nation. Therefore, every Jew can raise his level and importance to match that of the Tribe of Levi. However, the matter is dependent on how he studies Torah and climbs the ladder of Torah greatness. This is as the Rambam states (*Hilchot Shmitta ve' Yovel* 13:12), "Why did the Tribe of Levi not merit a portion in the Land and in the spoils with his brethren? This is because he was separated to worship Hashem and to serve Him and to teach His upright ways and righteous laws to the masses ... **Therefore they were separated from the ways of the world. They do not wage war like the rest of Israel.** They do not inherit, and they do not merit on their own with their bodily strength; rather, they are the soldiers of Hashem ... **And He, Blessed is He, merits them, as it states, "I am your portion and inheritance."** In *halacha* 13, the Rambam adds that this does not apply only to the Tribe of Levi. Rather, each and every individual in the world who wishes to separate himself to serve and know Hashem, act with uprightness in the manner that Hashem created him, and remove from himself the myriad worldly considerations that people are involved in **"he is sanctified, the holy of holies, and Hashem will be his portion and inheritance forever and ever. He will have what he needs in this world, like the *kohanim* and *leviim* merited ..."**



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

We must apparently ask where the Rambam knows that the aforementioned principle applies not only to the Tribe of Levi, but to all those whose hearts desire engaging in the study of Torah as well. It would appear that the Tribe of Levi was chosen by Hashem to do His service, and perhaps this is why they merited all of the above? However, we explained above that the entire reason that the Tribe of Levi were not enslaved in Egypt is specifically because they separated themselves from worldly matters and engaged in Torah study. This is why they were chosen from above all the other Tribes. Therefore, it is clear that this is not something which applies only to the Tribe of Levi; rather, each person who chooses this path will be included in the category of the Tribe of Levi. Proof that Levi's lofty standing was not due to their being selected for service in the *Mishkan*, is that in Pharaoh's time Levi had not yet been chosen for the service in the *Mishkan*. The firstborns had been intended for this service, and the Tribe of Levi were nevertheless not enslaved. We see, therefore, that it was the power of Torah learning, which protects and saves an individual from all subjugation. Therefore, the Rambam is teaching us why the Tribe of Levi did not receive an inheritance like the rest of the Jews. It was only because of their lofty status. For Hashem is their inheritance, as it were, because they are the army of Hashem and his soldiers, whose job it is to learn, teach, and disseminate Torah rulings amongst the Jewish people. This is also why they did not fight in the army.

One Who Studies Torah is the Holy of Holies

Who can read the Rambam's description and not wish to be amongst the soldiers of Hashem, described by the Rambam as the "holy of holies." Imagine if a *gadol ha'dor* would call a *bachur* or kollel fellow on the phone and request to speak to the "holy of holies." They would not understand what the *gadol* is talking about and why he is calling them. He would also wonder why he is referring to him with such a lofty title; it must be a mistake. Imagine if we would receive this phone call from the Ben Ish Chai or the Chofetz Chayim – we would certainly be astounded. All the more, if we would be called by the Vilna Gaon or R' Akiva Eiger. He would be even more shocked if it was from *Maran HaChida* or the *Ohr HaChayim Hakadosh*. All the more so, if it was from *Maran the Beit Yosef* or the Arizal. All the more so, if the phone call was from one of the *Rishonim*, especially the Rambam. However, this *gadol hador* calls and says, "Shalom, holy of holies." Bewildered, he will ask the *gadol ha'dor*, "Perhaps his honor is making a mistake. I am but a simple kollel fellow." The *gadol* will respond, "I am not mistaken. For this is how the Rambam describes each *ben Torah* who sits and studies Torah. And who is greater than the Rambam who bestowed this description upon all those who desire to learn Torah and be amongst the soldiers of Hashem."

One Who Learns Torah is Exempt From the Army

Much to our sorrow, in our days there has risen individuals who are distant from Torah and from understanding what the value of the Torah and those who study it are. Nor do they understand the true character of the nation, and what makes us greater than the other nations. Without the Torah, the Jewish Nation is turned into a nation like all the other nations and is even worse than other nations. They do not understand this and therefore wonder why *beni Torah* do not go to the army like everyone else. However, if they would learn our holy Torah, if they would see the words of the Rambam who is considered by the entire world to be the greatest of the sages and doctors – he says that every *ben Torah* is like a soldier of Hashem to whom army service does not apply. For this was the practice from the time that the Jewish people became a nation. It is understood by all that those who study Torah are the central pillars of the Jewish Nation, and that they are the soldiers of Hashem. Their job is more important than joining the army with the rest of the Jews. Furthermore, even Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, who ruled over the entire world, understood that the Tribe of Levi studied Torah and that it was impossible to subjugate them. He therefore did not forcibly draft them into the king's army. Until this day, all countries know and recognize that Jews cannot serve in the army because they are restricted by their religion. Only those who wish to serve go. The only country in which there is an uprising of this sort is in *Eretz Yisrael, rachmana litzlan*. This stems from a lack of awareness of what the true value of *beni Torah* is, which the Rambam described above.



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,
שיבה 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

The Response of the Sheik From the Galil

The *rav* of Tzfat, R' Shmuel Eliyahu, told me that he met with the greatest religious leader of the Islamic religion in the North [I do not remember the name of the Sheik]. They had a debate over whom the entire Land of Israel belonged to. R' Shmuel claimed that the Sheik knew what it states in Tanach that Hashem gave *Eretz Yisrael* to the Jews; if so, why were they fighting over it? He responded that even though it is true, but the problem is with the Jewish Nation. For Hashem only gave the Jews the Land when they observe the Torah and mitzvot. However, in present times, the government and politics are trying to transform the Jews into a nation like the other nations of the world. They do not observe the Torah and mitzvot of Hashem, and they therefore do not have the right to possess *Eretz Yisrael* and rule it. Much to our sorrow, this is the perspective of a gentile on the predicament in the Land. Similarly, I read in the *Mishpacha* weekly (29 Kislev), in the excellent article of R' Moshe Grylick, that one of the Israeli professors asked the professors in Oxford, why the British intellectuals hate the State of Israel. They responded, "We believed that when the Jews returned to *Eretz Israel*, they would create a 'new Tanach'; for you are the chosen nation only with the Tanach. Yet what have you actually made – a nation like all the other nations." He adds that after the Six-Day War, a delegation of Methodologists was sent to the Middle East to see the religious perspectives of the nations living there. They arrived in *Eretz Yisrael*; they were shown the *kibbutzim* and the industrialism that had blossomed. Yet their reaction was that this did not interest them, because this existed in many places. They wished to see the spiritual nature that characterized the State after conquering the Land. They did not receive an answer. They therefore turned to the son of the Chief Rabbi, R' Hertzog, Dr. Yaakov Hertzog, who was the secretary of the Prime Minister, David Ben Gurion. He had authored a small work entitled, "*Am Ievadad yishkon, A Nation Which Dwells Alone*," which describes the uniqueness of the Jewish Nation. He writes that they are unique because their way of life is separate from that of the Nations of the World. This answered their question.

Words of Mussar

We have learned that the Tribe of Levi decided their fate by valuing Torah study more than money. They remained true to their essence and did not follow the lure of the Egyptians, who wished to pay a large stipend for each brick that they would produce. This is what we are witness to in our times with the Torah world. Despite the heavy influence of the media and politics to leave the benches of the *beit midrash* for the sake of business, livelihood, and status, the *bnei Torah*, nevertheless, prefer to live in poverty and with self-sacrifice for the sake of Torah study. This is why the Tribe of Levi merited being Hashem's attendants and were not enslaved, since they were valued even by Pharaoh and his servants. This is because the backbone of every single country and nation is religion, religious leaders, and its scholars. For they are the guides of the nation, and their status is greater than that of the rest of the nation because of their self-sacrifice to serve, advise, and guide the nation. All the more so, does this apply to *Am Yisrael*, whose entire essence is based on the holy Torah and those who study it. All those who wish to be a soldier in the army of Hashem is called "holy of holies," as the Rambam wrote. This is because they are the select members of the Nation who will lead the Nation in the future. They therefore should not be subjugated with anything else so that their hearts can be free to study the holy Torah. This is true equality. What we have seen in present times – the subject of the holiness of the *Kotel* and Shabbat, with the claim that all should receive equally – stems from an uprooting of our Nation's foundation. Who will stand guard if not for the Torah world and its leaders? They are the ones who guard the Nation. If not, our Nation will turn into a nation like all the other ones, and we will lose our value and uniqueness in the eyes of Hashem and the nations of the world. This is because we will no longer be a unique Nation, as we stated. Therefore, praiseworthy is the one who toils in Torah, because he merits being a soldier of Hashem, as long as he stands firm and overcomes all of the trials and lures that stand in his path.

Shabbat Shalom,
Rav Mordecai Malka