



CLASSIC DAF KESHER

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פרק דברים PARSHAT DEVARIM

DVAR TORAH KAMTZA'S SON

Rabbi Yochanan (Gittin 55a) tells the tragic story of Bar Kamtza, the Jew who was mistakenly invited to his enemy's party. When ousted by the host and none of the guests objected, Bar Kamtza maligned the Jewish People, telling Caesar that they rebelled. Commentators ask: Why does Rabbi Yochanan introduce the story with: "Yerushalayim was destroyed because of **Kamtza and Bar Kamtza**" since, it was only **Bar** Kamtza who went to Caesar? Kamtza had no active role in the story; he was just mistakenly not invited.

Harav Aryeh Tzvi Frumer, זצ"ל ה"י"ד (1884-1943, Rov of Kozhoglov and Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Chachmei Lublin) joins those who raise this difficulty, and answers by taking a position on another question that commentators dealt with: Were Kamtza and Bar Kamtza father and son?

Rashi says that Kamtza and Bar Kamtza were the names of two Jews. Even though the Aramaic word בר is translated as son, he does not say that Kamtza and Bar Kamtza were father and son. Perhaps, as super-commentators suggest, Rashi held that, if that was the case, the Gemara would have used a simpler formulation, "קמצא ובריה ... Kamtza ... and his son."

But the Maharsha (Harav Shmuel Eidels, זצ"ל, 1555-1631), in his commentary on that aggadta, does say that Kamtza and Bar Kamtza were father and son. Kamtza was the host's friend and his son, Bar Kamtza, was his enemy. Rav Frumer, in his Eretz Tzvi on the Chumash, takes the position of the Maharsha to answer his original question: Why was Kamtza faulted for the destruction of Yerushalayim, "because of Kamtza and Bar Kamtza Yerushalayim was destroyed"? He asks an additional question: How did it turn out that Kamtza was the host's friend, and his own son, Bar Kamtza, was the host's enemy?

Kamtza's love for the host, suggests the author of Eretz Tzvi, was superficial. He exhibited signs of friendship towards the host in social situations. Externally, he related to the host in a friendly way, but inside he did not think highly of him. Their friendship was one of convenience or, perhaps, flattery. He acted nicely towards the host but did not really like him.

A son, says the author of Eretz Tzvi, reflects the פנימיות, the inner essence of his father. Kamtza's son sensed the true nature of the relationship between his father Kamtza and the host; so Bar Kamtza, in his own relationship with the host, shaved off the phony exterior and simply became an enemy. It was Kamtza's own two-faced relationship that brought about the enmity between Bar Kamtza and the host; that enmity played itself out at the party and festered into the tragic follow-up when Bar Kamtza went to Rome.

True friendship, inner love that reflects itself in external acts of connectedness, the antithesis of "Kamtza and Bar Kamtza," will, with G-d's help, bring about the rebuilding of Yerushalayim, speedily in our days.

SOURCE GUIDE: NOT LIKE THE SUN AND MOON BUT LIKE THE STARS

Moshe Rabbeinu compared the Jewish People to the stars: "Hashem has made you as numerous as the stars." One midrash notes – with surprise – that they are here compared to the stars and not to the sun and the moon. This source guide is built on two approaches to interpreting that midrash.

A. Numerous as the Stars

Moshe Rabbeinu, in a group of verses mixing rebuke with blessing, compares Israel to the stars:

1. Devarim 1:9-13 <p>(9) I said to you at that time, saying: I am not able by myself to bear you.</p> <p>(10) Hashem your G-d has multiplied you and behold today you are as numerous as the stars of the heavens.</p> <p>(11) Hashem the G-d of your fathers should add to you a thousand fold; and he should bless you as He has spoken concerning you.</p>	דברים א:ט-יא <p>(ט) וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיכֶם בְּעֵת הַהוּא לְאָמֵר לֹא אָכֶל לִבְדֵי שָׁאת אַתֶּכֶם. (י') הִי אַלְקִיכֶם הַרְבָּה אַתֶּכֶם וְהַנְּכֶם הַיּוֹם כְּכֹצְבֵּבִי הַשָּׁמַיִם לְרַב. (יא) הִי אַלְקִיכֶ אַבּוֹתֶכֶם יָסֶף עַלְיכֶם כֹּךְ אַלְפִּים פְּעֻמִּים וַיִּבְרַךְ אַתֶּכֶם כַּאֲשֶׁר דָּבַר לְכֶם.</p>
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A string of midrashim in Devarim Rabbah expound on this verse. We'll focus on the following one:

2. Devarim Rabbah 1:14 <p>"Hashem your G-d has multiplied you [and behold today you are as numerous as the stars of the heavens]" (Devarim 1:10) ... He (Moshe) said before Him: "Master of the universe, why did you not compare Your People to the sun and moon that are greater than the stars? The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "By your life, the sun and moon have shame in the future that is to come. From where do we know this? For it is written, "The moon will be embarrassed and the sun will be ashamed ..." (Yishayah 24:22). But the stars have no shame forever. From where do we know this? For it is written, "And you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and I am Hashem your G-d and there is no other ..." (Yoel 2:27).</p>	דברים רבה א:יד <p>ד"א "ה' אַלְקִיכֶם הַרְבָּה אַתֶּכֶם [וְהַנְּכֶם הַיּוֹם כְּכֹצְבֵּבִי הַשָּׁמַיִם לְרַב]" (דברים א:י) ... אמר לפניו: רבש"ע, למה לא משלת את בנך בחמה ובלבנה שהם גודלים מכוכבים? אמר לו הקב"ה: חיריך מה ללבנה יש להם בושה לע"ל. מנין? דכתיב, "וחפרה הלבנה ובושה החמה וגוו" (ישעיה כד:כב); אבל הכוכבים אין להם בושה לעולם. מנין? שכן כתיב, וַיַּדְעָתָם כִּי בְּקָרְבֵּן יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנִי וּאַנִּי אַלְקִיכֶם וְאַנִּי עוֹד וְגוו" (yoel ב:כז).</p>
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Here, in context, is the verse about the sun and moon:

3. Yishayah 24:21-22 <p>(21) And it shall come to pass on that day, that Hashem will visit punishment upon the host of heaven on high and upon the kings of the earth on the earth.</p> <p>(22) And they shall be gathered a gathering [as] prisoners into a dungeon, and they shall be shut up in the prison, and [sins] of many days shall be visited [upon them].</p> <p>(23) And the moon will be embarrassed and the sun will be ashamed, for Hashem of Hosts has reigned in Mount Zion and in Yerushalayim, and before His elders will be glory.</p>	ישעיה כד:כא-כג <p>(כא) וְהַנִּהְיוֹן בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יַפְלִיקֵ ה' עַל אָכֶבֶת הַמְּרוּם בַּמְּרוּם וְעַל מַלְכֵי הַאֲקָמָה עַל הַאֲקָמָה. (כב) וְאָסְפוּ אָסְפוּ אָסְפוּ אָסְפוּ אָסְפוּ אָסְפוּ אָסְפוּ אָסְפוּ עַל מִסְגָּר וּמִרְבֵּן יָמִים יְפָקֹדוּ. (כג) וְחִפְרָה הַלְבָנָה וּבֹשֶׁה הַחַמָּה כִּי מֶלֶךְ ה' אָכָבָות בַּהּר צִיּוֹן וּבַירוּשָׁלָם וּבְגַד זָקְנָיו כְּבוֹד.</p>
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The second verse the midrash quotes follows the section of the Book of Yoel that tells of a terrible locust plague that will strike Israel, and how Hashem later has mercy on His People. The prophet goes on to speak about Israel in the end of days:

4. Yoel 2:26-27 <p>(26) And you shall eat, eating and being satiated, and you will praise the Name of Hashem your G-d, Who has done wonders with you, and My people shall never be ashamed.</p> <p>(27) And you will know that I am in the midst of Israel, and I am Hashem your G-d and there is no other. And My Nation will never be ashamed.</p>	יוֹאֵל ב:כו-כו <p>(כו) וְאָכְלָתֶם אָכֶל וְשָׁבֹעַ וְהַלְלָתֶם אֶת שֵׁם ה' אַלְקִיכֶם אָשֶׁר עַשְׂתָּה עֲמָלָךְ לְהַפְלִיא וְלֹא יִבְשֶׂוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם. (כו) וַיַּדְעָתָם כִּי בְּקָרְבֵּן יִשְׂרָאֵל אָנִי וּאַנִּי ה' אַלְקִיכֶם וְאַנִּי עוֹד וְלֹא יִבְשֶׂוּ עַמִּי לְעוֹלָם.</p>
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Even though, elsewhere, the sun and moon are positive images – Hashem Himself is compared to the sun (Tehillim 84:12) and Israel is compared to the moon (see Sukkah 29a and the blessing said at Kiddush Levanah) – in this passage the stars emerge as superior. Why are the sun and moon shamed in the end of days, whereas the stars are never ashamed?

B. Sun and Moon vs. the Stars

Here is a suggestion that rings true in light of our present understanding of the relative sizes of the sun and moon on the one hand, and the stars on the other: The sun and moon seem giant to the observer on earth. The sun is so powerful that there are times we cannot even look straight at the sun without it blinding our eyes. The moon, for all of its waxing and waning, appears as a large heavenly body. And compared to the moon, so prominent in the night sky, the stars seem to be mere points of light. In truth, though, the stars are massive. Our sun is classified by astronomers as a yellow dwarf star. Billions of stars are larger than it; many are hundreds of times its size; and some are over a thousand times the sun's size. But we perceive the sun and moon as giant.

All that will change in the World to Come. When Hashem's Presence is no longer hidden, as it is today, the sun and moon will no longer appear massive. For all of history they appeared to the inhabitants of earth as "the two great luminaries"; but in the face of the future Divine revelation they will be dwarfed.

The stars, on the other hand, despite their greatness in size and power, always appeared to the observer on earth as points of light in the night sky. Stars are models of humility, for they are great but appear small. In the end of days they will not be ashamed, for, in contrast to the sun and moon, they never seemed to be so large.

Israel shares this star-like characteristic of the stars, humility that accompanies greatness (thanks to Rabbi Hirshfeld for connecting this idea with the following passage in the Midrash):

ילקוט שמעוני דברים - פרק ז - רמז	תמה
5. Yalkut Shimoni Devarim – Chapter 7 – Section 845 Rabbi Elazar, son of Rabbi Yossi Haglili expounded: What is meant by the verse, "Not because you are more numerous than all of the nations [did Hashem desire you and choose you; for you are the smallest among the nations]" (Devarim 7:7). Said the Holy One, blessed be He, to Israel: I desire you, for even when I bestow upon you greatness, you diminish yourselves. I gave greatness to Avraham, and he said, "I am dirt and ashes" (Bereishit 18:27). I gave greatness to Moshe and Aharon, and they said, "What are we?" (Shemot 16:7). I gave greatness to David, and he said, "I am a worm and not a man" (Tehillim 22:7). But that is not the case for the idolaters. I gave greatness to Nimrod, and he said, "Let us build a city" (Bereishit 11:4). [I gave greatness] to Pharaoh and he said, "Who is Hashem that I should listen to His voice?" (Shemot 5:2 – it continues to speak about other kings of the nations) ...	דרש רבי אלעזר בנו של ר' יוסי הגלילי: מאי דכתיב "לא מרובכם מכל העמים"? אמר הקב"ה לישראל: חושך אני בכם, שאפילו בשעה שאני משפיע לכם גדולה אתם ממעתין עצמאם, נתתי גדולה לאברהם אמר "ואנכי עפר ואפר" (בראשית יח:כז). נתתי גדולה למשה ולאהרן אמרו "ונחנו מה". נתתי גדולה לדוד אמר "ואנכי תולעת ולא איש" (תהלים כב:ז). אבל עובדי אלילים אין כן, נתתי גדולה לנמרוד, אמר "נבנה לנו עיר" לפרעיה, אמר "מי ה' אשר אשמע בקולו" ...

C. Further Learning: Bushah and Bitachon – Shame and Trust

See the Beer Moshe commentary on Devarim (p. 13), where the Ozhorover Rebbe (Harav Moshe Yechiel Halevi Epstein, זצ"ל, 1889-1971), points out the special connection between ביטחון, trust in Hashem, and avoiding בושה, shame. He cites "They trusted in You and were not ashamed" (Tehillim 22:6); "My G-d, in You I trust. I will not be ashamed" (Tehillim 25:2) and the Midrash Shochar Tov on that verse; as well as "We will not be ashamed for we trust in You" in the Shemoneh Esrei. See also the section in Olat Tamid (a commentary on the Siddur by Harav Shmuel Hominer זצ"ל, 1913-1977, Yerushalayim) on that line in the Shemoneh Esrei.

A LIVING LIFE BY RABBI YITZCHAK HIRSHFELD

The Tribes of Gad and Reuven held protracted negotiations with Moshe Rabbeinu over the right to secure their portion of the Land on the East Bank of the Jordan River. Finally, an arrangement was reached, conditions were made. If they would join the other tribes in the conquest of Eretz Canaan their request would be fulfilled. And then we read at the end of Parashat Matot (32:33), "Moshe gave the Sons of Gad and the Sons of Reuven and to half the Tribe of Menashe, the kingdom of Sichon the King of the Emori and the the kingdom of Og the King of the Bashan..." How did the Menashites enter into the picture?

The Netziv (Harav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin, זצ"ל, 1816-1893), in his Haamek Davar at the end of Parashat Devarim (3:16), notes that in Chapter 3, verses 12-16 follow a peculiar order. Verse 12 describes how Moshe gave the Land of Sichon and Og to Reuven and Gad; verses 13-15 tell how Moshe gave a section to half of the tribe of Menasheh; and then verse 16 returns to the giving of portions of the Land to Reuven and Gad. Why the jump back and forth?

The Netziv answers: Contrary to Gad and Reuven who requested Ever HaYarden, it was Moshe who asked Menasheh to agree to join Gad and Reuven there. Eretz Yisrael carries within it a powerful receptiveness towards Torah. The Land is fertile ground for spirituality. But, as can be seen from Chazal's teachings, the spiritual energy of Ever HaYarden was much weaker than that of Eretz Yisrael proper. And let us not forget that Gad and Reuven themselves were not bnei Torah. Moshe feared that without an actual Torah presence in their midst, their connection to Torah and the spiritual center of Am Yisrael would ultimately be weakened. Enter the Bnei Menasheh who, as the Netziv outlines, were connected to great Torah scholars. They would provide the Soul for the physical endeavors of Gad and Reuven. Menasheh's Torah would be the spiritual life force which would ensure that the inhabitants of Ever HaYarden would remain connected to Torah and mitzvot.

So, Moshe is telling us that as he was talking to Gad and Reuven he realized that he would have to pause to speak with Menasheh. Would they agree to be his "kollel" in Ever HaYarden? Only if they would agree could Moshe go on to finish his discussions with Gad and Reuven. Very artfully, by interrupting the flow of the narrative of Gad and Reuven, Moshe Rabbeinu lets us know how crucial it was that Menasheh join the other two tribes. And this is one of the cardinal lessons of Jewish history. No community has been able to endure without being connected to a Torah center.

But this is true not only on the communal level. Pirkei Avot teaches that any essentially physical activity is "dead" unless vitalized by words of Torah. Eating food without divrei Torah is tantamount to offerings to "dead" idols. For the same reason, the Rosh (Harav Asher ben Yechiel, זצ"ל, 1259 – 1327), in Orchot Chayim, exhorts us to speak words of Torah before going to sleep. Even concerning תפילה, prayer, the verse (Mishlei 28:9) reads, "If one turns aside his ear from hearing Torah, his prayer will be an abomination."

Let us strive that there not be even a small corner of our lives which is not infused with the life giving force of Torah.

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The Daf Kesher, a project of Shapell's Darche Noam, is written by
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