

Maamarei Mordechai

הסבר לפי ממש פשוט

Parshas Eikev 5784

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Moshe gives chizuk to Kalal Yisroel.

כִּי תֹאמַר בְּלִבְבְּךָ רַבִּים הַגּוֹיִם הָאֵלֶּה מִמֶּנִּי אֵיכָה אוֹכַל לְהוֹרִישָׁם:

“Because you will say to yourself (lit. in your hearts), ‘These are greater nations than me. How is it possible that I can inherit them?’” (Devarim 7:17).

Why does it say “in your hearts?” Can the fears not be said aloud? Also, what are the great nations that the pasuk is referring to? Aren’t the Bnei Yisroel past this and the fears of the evil scouts and their pessimistic view of conquering Eretz Yisroel? Also, why does it say to “inherit” the Land and not “conquer” it?

Moshe is not only giving chizuk to the nation before it is about to conquer the Land but teaching them about faith. He knew that this nation is not war experienced. The fight with Amalek was before their time. The revenge on Midyan and the destruction of the Amonim were routes. Besides, it is easier to fight an enemy in open field than to try to route them on their home turf. Bnei Yisroel’s task would be to uproot all of the Canaanite nations from their own land. It is a fight to the last man and the Canaanites would be defending their homes and families. Further, individuals in Bnei Yisroel may think the fight is unjust. There may be among them those who think that it is not right that they possess the Land with the blood of those already living there. The Torah is full of justice between man and his fellow; how is this war just?

The answer, obviously, is Hashem told them to do it that way. (Ibid 7:16). However, there will be those who talk in private and may even simply say to themselves that the nations they face are too great. The task is too hard. Individuals will have the fear and that fear from individuals fear will spread like a disease in the camp. Even having the thoughts to oneself is too much of a lack of bitachon. Hashem required full bitachon, publicly and privately. Their fear will not even be about strength.

They are not too strong but, the word used is רַבִּים “numerous.” This word means numerically great. They are more numerous than Bnei Yisroel and so there is no room in the Land for both nations. They may be made up of thousands of weaklings, but they will be great. The fear is that Hashem would not want so many of His children to perish. The cost of taking the Land is too many lives. The Canaanites already fill up the Land, how can Bnei Yisroel take it? What rights do they have (a promise to their forefathers aside)?

The other issue is not *conquering* the Land but *inheriting* it. This again is contrary to strong versus weak. It is about inheritance, which is seemingly a smooth transition. It is more a legal construction than a violent result of war. However, individuals may think to themselves whether they truly have a right to Eretz Yisroel. The next pasuk says, לֹא תִירָא מֵהֶם זָכַר תִּזְכֹּר אֶת אֲשֶׁר-עָשָׂה ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ לְפָרְעֹה וּלְכָל-מִצְרָיִם: “You shall not fear them. You shall surely recall all that Hashem, your Lord, did to Pharaoh and to the entire Egypt.” (Ibid

7:18). Moshe tells them not to fear, but not because of a stronger enemy. He explains that they should recall what Hashem did to Egypt. That does not seem to answer the question because Mitzrayim was a stronger nation, and they were not trying to take that land.

The answer is that Hashem does battle for them. It is the signs and wonders that Hashem performed. (Ibid 7:19). If the Creator of the world did battle for them and then gave them Eretz Canaan, then surely, they have a right to inherit it. Remembering that it is the same Hashem that took them out of Mitzrayim that is giving them this Land, is what gives them the right to have it. Moshe explains it further.

“And you shall know today that it is because Hashem, your Lord, is crossing before you, a devouring fire. He shall destroy and remove them from before you, and you shall inherit and dispossess them quickly.” (Ibid 9:3). A Yisroel should not fear about the costs of war. It is Hashem that will be really doing the heavy damage. It is the nation’s obligation to then settle the Land, take possession of it, and make it theirs. “And Hashem will disinherit all of these nations from before you, and you will inherit in place of the local nations, who are larger and mightier (גְּדֹלִים וְעֲצֻמִּים מִכֶּם:) than you.” (Ibid 11:23). Bnei Yisroel, behind Hashem’s might, will take over Eretz Canaan from enemies that have more numbers, and certainly are mightier. Strength and cost will not be deterrents.

The pasuk also uses the word אִיכָּה “how is it possible?” When Hashem was searching for Adam, the Torah says, “And Hashem, G-d, called to the man, and He said to him, ‘Where are you?’” (Bereishis 3:9). The pasuk does not say “to Adam” but to “the man.” Because the Torah is timeless, this pasuk can be talking to any particular person in any generation. The pronouns are undefined so the pasuk can also mean, “and he (the man) said, ‘Where are you?’” It is the man, not Hashem, asking the question. Hashem (YKVK) – in His relationship to mankind--and as Elokim--His relationship to the world itself – calls to man. Man responds אִיכָּה “Where are you?” When a person responds to the call of Hashem, either through a direct event on his person (YKVK) or an event that happens to the world around him (Elokim) with “Where are you?” the answer must be that Hashem is omnipresent and the solution. A person must find Hashem in these situations and then Hashem can be the solution to whatever issues, obstacles, or challenges he faces. Hashem is the one, really, that will solve the matter. Man is following behind Hashem and merely takes possession of his new responsibilities, priorities, or situation. This only works, though, if the man knows its Hashem. He has faith.

This is why, in the Torah, when a person calls out אִיכָּה “how is it possible” (the same letters) that person is asking for Hashem’s help with a burden. Moshe does so (Devarim 1:12) and received assistants and chiefs to help him administer to the nation. A person asks this about the desire to idol worship (ibid 12:30) and receives special help restraining himself. Similarly, how can Yerushalayim be destroyed? (Eicha 1:1). How can one soldier route a thousand, or two defeat ten thousand? (Devarim 32:30). In all cases, including our pasuk, man is asking how is it possible, to Hashem. He is seeking help or answers from Hashem. The answer always is: Hashem does it. A Yisroel will fear privately in his heart that the inheriting of Eretz Canaan cannot be done. Then answer is, faith in Hashem will lead the way to easy victory.