

Rabbi Elchanan Shoff

PARSHAS KI SAVO

Ripening all at once

From the first of... (Deut. 26:2). Rashi explains that when a person goes down to his field and sees a fig beginning to sprout, he ties on it a band as a sign that it will be *bikkurim*. Rashi's source for this understanding are the Mishnah (*Bikkurim* 3:1) and *Sifrei* (§301). Rabbi Yaakov Solnik in *Nachalas Yaakov* (to Deut. 26:2) explains that Rashi specifically used the case of a fig as an example¹ instead any other one of the seven species for which the Holy Land is praised because figs on a tree do not ripen evenly, and one fig may ripe one day, but the other figs will only become later in the summer (see also Rashi to *Pesachim* 56b). Other fruits, by contrast, tend to ripen all at once such that all the fruits on the tree will become ripe at the same time and it is harder to determine which one(s) became ripe first to make them *bikkurim*. The same explanation is also offered by Rabbi Yaakov ben Shmuel in responsa *Beis Yaakov* (63). However, Rabb ben Shmuel complicates the matter a bit.

There is a Halacha called *Peah* which requires a farmer to leave a “corner” (*peah*) of his field unharvested so that the poor may come and reap the benefits of his field for themselves. The Mishnah in *Peah* rules that this Halacha only applies to a crop which is harvested all at once, such that when the harvest season arrives, the farmer must leave the corner of his field unharvested for the poor. As the Mishnah explains, this ruling is intended to exclude figs from the laws of *peah* because figs on a tree do not all become ripe at the same time, rather each individual fig becomes ripe separately. When

¹ The Arizal teaches that the commandment of *bikkurim* serves to rectify the sin of the spies because they despised the Holy Land, while *bikkurim* shows our appreciation and dearness to the Holy Land. HE explains that because *bikkurim* is a way of showing our love of Eretz Yisroel, it only applies to the seven species for which the Holy Land is praised, and not to all agricultural products. Rabbi Menachem Ziemba adds that in the Mishnah when narrating the *bikkurim* process, the Mishnah cites examples of a fig, a grape cluster, and a pomegranate because specifically those three species were the fruits that the spies brought from the Holy Land to show the Jewish people, and since the commandment of *bikkurim* serves to counteract their sin, the prime examples of fulfilling that commandment will be given as the three fruits with which the spies sinned (this ideas is also cited in *Yalkut Chamishai, Parshas Shelach* p. 177 in the name of *Amirah Yafel*).

Similarly, Rabbi Shimon Sofer (a son of the *Chasam Sofer*) writes in *Michtav Sofer* (*Drush* 1, p. 3) that when bringing *bikkurim* one stresses to the Kohen “I have told you today that I came to the land...” (Deut. 26:3) even though this is plainly obvious to the Kohen because the one offering *bikkurim* means to highlight the fact that his actions in appreciating the Holy Land and going there of his own volition stands in stark contrast to the spies who tried to thwart the Jews’ sojourn to the Holy Land and denied its importance.

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it comes to figs, there is no one harvest season when they are all picked, so the rules of *peah* do not apply to figs. This, of course, jives with what we wrote above concerning figs.

However, *Beis Yaakov* points out that this gets more complicated when we start talking about olives. Rashi (as cited by *Tosafos* to *Menachos* 86a, which is different from Rashi as printed in his own commentary) writes that olives are picked at three different junctures during the year. This would imply that olives on a tree, like figs, do not all ripen at the same time. Based on the above, one would conclude that olives, like figs, are not included in the laws of *peah*—yet the Mishnah (*Peah* 1:5) clearly implies that only figs are excluded for the laws of *peah* and olives are not.

Rabbi ben Shmuel resolves this difficulty by honing in on Rashi's wording. Rashi wrote that olives are picked *in the field* at three different times during year, but this still leaves room for the possibility that all the olives *on one tree* become ripe at roughly the same time and are harvested together. Rashi only meant that one will harvest different *trees* at different, but when harvesting each tree, all the olives on that tree will be ripe in tandem. By contrast, when excluding figs from the laws of *peah*, the Mishnah means that since figs *on one tree* do not all become ripe at the same time, figs as a whole are exempt from the commandment of *peah*. Accordingly, this exemption only applies to figs because a fig tree will never uniformly be ripe. However, when it comes to olives, since olive trees could be uniformly ripe (albeit different trees will ripen at different times of the year), olives are included in the commandment of *peah*.

Say it loud

***And you shall answer and you shall say, 'An Aramean [tried to] destroy my father...'* (Deut. 26:5).** Rashi explains that this must be said in a loud voice. Rabbi Naftali Katz writes in *Smichas Chachamim* (*Brachos* 24b) in the name of his grandfather who was also named Rabbi Naftali Katz the following idea: The Gemara (there) says that if a person allows his voice to be heard during *Shemonah Esrei*, then he is of the people will small *emunah*. This is because by making his prayer audible, he implies that God cannot read his thoughts otherwise, He can only *hear* prayers uttered audibly. This, of course, is heretical because one of the Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith is that God knows man's thoughts. However, when it comes to *bikurim* the opposite is true. When a person loudly declares "An Aramean [tried to] destroy my father" he essentially affirms his belief that God knows man's thoughts and therefore He knew that Lavan

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tried to destroy the Jewish People. Because of this, of all the different prayers, the *bikkurim* confession is most appropriate to say out loud, for it affirms one's *emunah* and does not deny God's power.

Reasons for the exile to Egypt

An Aramean [tried to] destroy my father and they descended to Egypt... (Deut. 26:5). In what way did Lavan try to destroy the Jewish People and what does Lavan's actions have to do with the Jews going down to Egypt? The Ostrovtzer Gaon (cited in *Chayei Olam*, p. 23) explains this dynamic in light of a Talmudic passage which reads: "A person should not treat one of his sons differently, for because of the weight of 2 selas of fancy clothes that Yaakov gave Yosef, his brothers became jealous of him... and our forefathers went down to Egypt" (*Shabbos* 10b). The Ostrovtzer Gaon explains that all of this was Lavan's doing, because Lavan gave Leah to Yaakov first instead of Rachel. The result of that was that Yosef was not Yaakov's firstborn, so when Yaakov gave Yosef some extra clothing, his brothers became jealous and at the end of the story Yaakov and his whole family came down to Egypt. However, if Lavan would have first given Rachel to Yaakov as he promised to do, then Yosef would have been born first and Yaakov would have been justified in giving him extra clothing, because the firstborn deserves more. Accordingly, it was Lavan's trickery which caused this entire episode to happen, and he served as the cause of the Jews going down to Egypt.

In the Haggadah *Chalifos Smalos Binyamin* he explains the matter slightly differently. He writes that because Lavan tricked Yaakov by giving him Leah first instead of Rachel first, this led Leah's sons to believe that when Yaakov gave Yosef extra clothes, it was because he *bates* Leah and this aroused their jealousy and led them to *hating* Yosef. In the Haggadah *Gvul Yam* he explains that Lavan caused the Jews to go down to Egypt because as the father of Yaakov's wives, he was a partner progenitor of the Jewish People and his bad character traits became embedded into Jewish DNA such that because of him, his grandsons was stricken with their jealousy over Yosef that led to the events leading to the Jews going to Egypt. See also Bei Chiyya of R. Elisha Horowitz to this weeks Parsha who elaborates on this theme at great length.

All of these sources assume that the Jews' exile to Egypt is somehow related to the sin of Joseph's brothers selling him as a slave. The Abarbanel (to Gen. 15:12) elaborates on this point and makes several points that illustrate this connection:

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- Because they sold Yosef as a slave in Egypt, they became slaves in Egypt.
- Because they threw Yosef into a pit, Hashem punished them that the Egyptians decreed all Jewish boys should be thrown into the Nile.
- Because they caused Yosef to go to Egypt, he ended up causing them to go Egypt.
- Because they sold Yosef when he can to inquiry after them while they were tending to their sheep, Hashem punished them in that they will end up going to Egypt because of their sheep. This came about in the fact that the famine that served as the catalyst for their immigration to Egypt made it too difficult to feed their sheep in the Holy Land. Yaakov's sons even cited this as their reason for coming to Egypt when asked by Pharaoh (see Gen. 47:4).
- Because they slaughtered a goat to convince their father that Yosef was dead, Hashem made Yosef into the king of Egyptians who worshipped the ovacaprine beasts (and later gave us the Korban Pesach to symbolize His mastery over the Egyptian gods).

Indeed, the *Haggada Nogaid VeNofaik* also brings several places in which the Arizal and his students assert that the exile of Egypt was a punishment for the sin of selling Yosef.

In explaining the poem *Chad Gadya* customarily recited at the end of the Passover Seder, the Vilna Gaon writes that the cat alludes to Yaakov's sons who sold Yosef, and the dog who ate the cat alludes to the Egyptians who enslaved the Jews as punishment for what the cats did to Yosef. Rabbi Aryeh Leib Tzintz similarly writes in *Birkas HaShir* that each line in *Chad Gadya* refers to something concerning the sale of Yosef, and he notes that the *mispar katan gematria* of the name Yosef (i.e. where the zeros in the numbers are removed) equals 30 (יֹסֵף = 30) which is also the *gematria* of the phrase *Chad Gadya* (חַד גַּדְיָא = 30).

Chazal basically say so as well, as the *Midrash Shochber Tov* (to Ps. 10:3) relates: God said to the tribes, “You sold him [Yosef] as a slave... I swear you will read about yourselves every year, ‘we were slaves...’ (עַבְדִּים הֵיינו)” which is a passage said in the Passover Haggadah. The Yalkut Shimoni (169) relates concerning the verse “and behold the bush (*snah*) was burning” (Ex. 3:2) that Hashem said because of his brother's hatred (*sinah*) towards Yosef, they descended to Egypt.

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Rabbi Efraim Lunshitz (author of *Kli Yakar*) writes in *Sifsei Daas* (Parshas Bo 95) that the whole issue started with Yosef speaking “evil speech” by slandering his brothers. This set up an “evil star” in the Jews’ horoscope which led them to being enslaved in Egypt and the killing of their sons in the river, until they appropriated the “bloody” implications of that astrological reading into referring to their fulfillments of the commandment of circumcision and Korban Pesach.

The *Yalkut Reuveni* cites the *Zohar Chadash* (*Vayeshev* 36a) as explaining that since by selling Yosef into slavery, his brothers caused Yosef to be separated from Yaakov for 22 years, which caused the great *tzaddik* much pain and suffering, they were punished with the decree that they be in Egypt for a period of time that equals 22 years per person involved in selling Yosef ($22 * 10 = 220$), which comes out to a total of 220 years. However, since Yaakov’s sons died in the impure land of Egypt, this caused some suffering for their *neshamah* and their sentence was commuted by ten years, so the Jews were only in Egypt for 210 years ($220 - 10 = 210$).

Toiling for Tots

And our toiling (Deut. 26:7). The *Haggadah Shel Pesach* explains that one’s “toiling” refers to one’s children.² Rabbi Yom Tov ben Avraham of Seville, better known as the Ritva, explains that one’s children are called his “toiling” because one toils very much to raise children and teach them the ways of the world and teach Torah, plus whatever toiling one undertakes in his lifetime yields money that will be left over as an inheritance for his children after he dies. The *Menoras HaMaor* (174) offers an exegetical explanation of the verse “You sons are like olive seedlings” (Ps. 128:3) by noting that just as olives are bitter at first, but after putting in much effort in smashing them and grinding them, they become sweetened and give oil which can be used to honor people and God, so too are children a first bitter, as it says, “For man’s heart’s inclination is evil since his childhood” (Gen. 8:21), but through much effort and suffering one teaches his children Torah and *mitzvos* which are sweet, as it says “And they are sweeter than honey and nectar” (Ps. 19:11). Similarly, in *Haggadas Gedolei Yisroel*, it is brought in the name of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach that *amal* (“toiling”) refers to the effort put in towards

² Others, including *Orchos Chaim*, Abudraham, Rabbeinu Yonah and *Shibbolei HaLeket* explain that *amal* (“toiling”) refers to work hard to no avail, for no reason. This refers specifically to the efforts the Jewish parents took to raise their young sons, but those sons ended up cast into the river, so all their efforts were for naught.

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the advancement of reaching something positive. He explains that *ameilus bTorah* is an example of such usage, as one must put in effort to master Torah. Similarly, he explains, *amal* refers to raising children, which is difficult and sometimes even painful, but ultimately brings one towards a better good.

Keep the Zohar, Don't be an animal

I excupated the holy from the house (Deut. 26:13). Rabbi Chaim Yosef Dovid Azulai in *Dvash LeFi (Maareches Beis, 4)* writes that the first letters of the phrase “I excupated the holy from the house” spells out the word “animal” (בערי הקדש מן הבית = בהמה) because anyone who takes out the Holy Zohar from his house is like an animal. See also Rabbi Chaim Palagi’s *Yismach Chaim (Maareches Beis, 9)* who writes that a wicked person and an ignoramus are called “animals”. See also Rabbi Chaim Palagi’s *Amudei Chaim (Amud Avodah 11)*.

Memory and Mitzvos

I did not deviate from Your commandments and I did not forget (Deut. 26:13). The Gerrer Rebbe *Lev Simcha* (Ki Savo 5780, p. 56) related that Rabbi Yosef Rosen of Dvinsk (also known as the Rogatchover Gaon) remembered all of Shas and one time he visited the Gerrer Rebbe *Sfas Emes* who remarked about him that from his memory it is evident that he is entirely holy. He found an allusion to this connection between impeccable memory and keeping oneself holy in the verse at hand “I did not deviate from Your commandments and I did not forget” which puts together deviating from the *mitzvos* with forgetfulness. The *Lev Simcha* also relates that he once saw written that somebody came to Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz and complained that he is suffering from memory loss, and Rabbi Pinchas of Koretz told him that he should repent his sins, for, as Chazal say, repentance reaches Hashem’s Throne of Glory, and as we say in the Yamim Noraim prayers, “There is no forgetting before Your Throne of Glory”, so if a person reaches those heights, he can forget about forgetfulness.³

³ We may add that *tzitzis* is supposed to remind us of all the *mitzvos*, and Chazal say that the blue string of the *tzitzis* resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the heavens, and the heavens remind us of His Throne of Glory, so again we see a connection between memory and Hashem’s Throne of Glory. We also see the connection between purity and memory because in the same passage as the commandment of *tzitzis*, the Torah warns us “do not stray after your eyes” which refers to sins of a sexual nature.

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Peaceful Iron Man

Do not wave upon them iron (Deut. 27:5). Here the Torah says that we should use uncut stones, because when stones are complete and uncut, this represents peace because everything is united and not splintered. Here the Torah says that when uncut stones are used, Hashem will withhold punishment from the Jewish People, so certainly if they themselves actually keep peace between man and his wife, between cities, between families, and between principalities, then Hashem will refrain from wreaking upon them punishment (*Yalkut Reuveni*). See also Rabbi Chaim Palagi's *Amudei Chaim* (*Maareches peh 2, Maareches Alef 4*).

The Sins of the Jerusalmmites

Cursed is the man who makes an idol and molten-image—the abominations of Hahsem—handiworks of carpentry, and he puts it in a hidden place, and the entire nation answer, ‘amen!’ (Deut. 27:15). Rabbi Ovadiah Sforno writes that these sins generally applied to the noblemen of the Jewish People, and not to the masses as a whole. He explains that in the Book of Ezekiel, we find accusations levelled against the princes of the Jewish People for committing most if not all the sins for which curses are prescribed, and these sins are ascribed to the people of Jerusalem. This does not mean that the entire population of Jerusalem was equally guilty, but that the noblemen in specific were sinful. The *Dorshei Reshumos* offer a hint to this idea by noting that the last letters of the words in the phrase “...of carpentry, and he puts it in a hidden place, and answer” (ידי חרש ושם בסתר וענו כל) spells out the word Jerusalem (ירושלם).

Hello! Goodbye!

Blessed are you in your arrival, and blessed are you in your departure (Deut. 28:6). Rashi explains that this means that you are blessed if your departure from This World mirrors your arrival to This World in that you are still free from sin. Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrachi asks how this explanation can be used to understand the converse in the curses which reads: “Cursed are you in your arrival, and cursed are you in your departure”. One would assume this means he is full of sin by his departure just as he was full of sin in his arrival, but when a person is born, he cannot be full of sin, he begins life with a clean slate? So how can Rashi's explanation of this blessing be sustained if its parallel in the curses would then be nonsensical? Chida, explains in *Pnei David* (6) that when a child is still inside his mother's womb, an angel teaches him the entire Torah and makes him swear that he will be a *tzaddik* and will not be a *rasha*.

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Accordingly, if somebody does end up becoming a *rasha* during his lifetime, then he has retroactively violated this oath that he undertook *in utero*, and so when he arrived into This World, he was already full of sin. In light of this, the cursed are those who leave This World full of sin just like when they entered This World.

Seeing the Sign

And the nations of the land will see that the name of Hashem is called upon you, and they will be fearful of you (Deut. 28:10). Rabbi Chaim Palagi in *Tenufah Chaim* (Ki Savo 33) explains this based on what the Chida (*Chomas Onach, Parshas Bereishis* 17) writes in the name of the manuscript of *Netzach Yisrael* by Rabbi Yehuda Mehalles who writes that he heard from a very wise person that the sign that Hashem gave Kayin that nobody should harm him was Hashem's four-letter name the Tetragrammaton. Anytime an animal or something would come up against him to harm him, he would strengthen himself to meet the challenge face-to-face and he would aim his ears which represent the letter *yod*, and then align his eyelashes with his cheeks on one side to make a *hey*, and then his forehead would make a *vav*, and then his eyelashes with his cheeks on the other side to make another *hey*, such that he now had Hashem's four-letter name on his face, and the animal would become scared of him. Similarly, Rabbi Chaim Vital in *Shaar HaKedushah* (end of ch. 7, p. 186b) proves from various rabbinic statement in the *Tikkunei Zohar* that every limb of a person has the Tetragrammaton in it, and that this idea should inspire a person to refrain from sinning with his body, for once he realizes that his entire body is comprised of Hashem's name, he will realize that his sinning defiles Hashem's holy name. If a person merits to keep himself free from sin, then "And the nations of the land will see that the name of Hashem is called upon you [i.e. appears in each limb], and they will be fearful of you."

Head not the Tail

***And Hashem will place you as the head and not the tail* (Deut. 28:13).** Rabbi Pinchas HaLevi Horowitz of Frankfurt writes in *Panim Yafos* that the *neshamah* is called a "head" and the body is called a "tail" and if a person does *mitzvos* and/or gives *tzedakah*, then he shows that his thoughts are with his *neshamah* and identifies himself with the "head" but if he does not, then he shows that his body or "tail" is his main identity and therefore he will be considered a "tail".

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Worshipping Hashem out of Happiness

Because you did not worship Hashem your God with happiness and will a good heart, through everything (Deut. 28:47). Rabbi Tzvi Elimelech Shapiro, author of the *Bnei Yisaschar*, writes in *Agra deKallah* that the word “because” in this case literally means “under that” (תחת אשר). He explains that this alludes to the fact that the letters “under” (i.e. *after*, in the order of the Hebrew Alphabet) the word “that” (אשר) spells out the word “Shabbos” (שבת). This hints to the idea that the calamities described in the Parshah are to befall the Jewish People when they did not properly *enjoy* Shabbos like they are supposed to and rejoice over that holy day. He also notes that “under” *gematria* of the word “that”—i.e., the “deeper” *gematria*, that is the form of *gematria* calculated by spelling out each letter and adding the words of the letters that those letters are comprised of, minus the letters themselves—equals 480 (אֵלֶף + שֵׁן + רִישׁ = 480), which is the *gematria* of the word root פת (“convince” or “seduce”). He explains that this refers to the 480 forms of evil that Lillith may assume, and anybody who is seduced by her to stumble in sins of a sexual nature will not be happy when he engages in Torah Study and worshipping Hashem.

We may add that the 480 is also the *gematria* of the word “Talmud” (תלמוד = 480), and one of the main purposes of Shabbos is for a person to sit and study Torah without other distractions. This, it seems, is the most effective way to counterbalance the influence of Lilith.

The Mishnah (*Avos* 2:4) says that a person should not say, “When I have time, I will study” for maybe he will never have time. Rabbi Yosef Binyamin Reich in *Bnei Yosef al HaTorah* (Parshas Chayei Sarah) writes that he heard from his father in the name of the Vilna Gaon that this Mishnah means that a person should never think to himself that he could delay studying Torah until he has extra time, because maybe his whole *raison d’etere* is to be busy his entire life, but still make time to study Torah. Meaning, a person ought to worship Hashem “with happiness and will a good heart, through *everything*”—despite *everything* else going on his life, he is still expected to live up to what is expected of him.

The Perceived Efficacy of Idolatry

And bad, trustworthy sicknesses (Deut. 28:59). The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 55a) teaches that when Hashem sends suffering to a person, Hashem makes the suffering “take an oath” that it will only take leave of its victim on a specific day at a specific

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time and through a specific healer and with a specific remedy. If when that time arrives, the afflicted person goes to an idolatrous temple and tries to heal his suffering through idolatrous rites, Hashem does not make the suffering stay extra long, but rather since it agreed to leave at a certain time, it will go away then, even though this foolish person had done something stupid by appealing to idolatrous rites to help him and even though if the malady would disappear right then and there, it would lend credence to the perceived efficacy of idolatry. Rabbi Yochanan adds that for this reason, sicknesses are called “trustworthy”—because they adhere to their original oath as to when they will leave the afflicted person, and they do not stay on extra-long just to avoid lending credence to *avodah zarah*.

Now, the Tosafists (to *Rosh HaShanah* 16a) write that we are justified in praying for the recovery of the sick in our liturgy even though those sickness are preordained and decided on by Hashem because He only decrees when a person will get sick, but He does not preordain exactly when the person will be healed, so we can pray for their recovery to arrive more speedily. This presumes that He does not preordain from the beginning when a person will be healed from his maladies. However, Rabbi Chaim Palagi (in *Einei Kol Chai* to *Rosh HaShanah* there) points out that this contradicts the above-cited idea that Hashem makes the suffering swear that it will leave the afflicted at a certain time before He afflicts that person with said malady. This clearly understands that He does preordain from the beginning when a person will be healed from his maladies. How then can these two paradigms be reconciled?

Rabbi Chaim Palagi answers that when we pray for somebody sick to have a recovery, we do not literally mean that they should recover from the illness, because when they will recover has already been preordained. Rather, our prayers are intended to lighten the effects of the suffering on the ill that they should not be in so much pain or be otherwise bothered by their sickness (or even, sometimes, that they die and thus avoid the full brunt of their sickness).

We might also differentiate between “the termination of an illness” and “healing”. The Gemara in *Avodah Zarah* which describes Hashem making the illnesses take an oath before afflicting people primarily refers to non-Jewish people who Divinely afflicted with certain illness for a specific amount of time and then at the end of that duration of time, automatically comes “the termination of an illness”. However, when it comes to the Jewish People, there is another factor in play and that is Hashem’s role as the

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Rofeh Cholei Amo Yisroel (“Healer of the sick of His nation Israel”). Besides an illness running its course, a Jew has another way of recourse and that is to appeal to Hashem as the Healer with a capital H to relieve him of his illness even within the duration of time that illness was originally destined to last, and it is specifically this type of healing which the Tosafists meant to justify. (I heard this idea about *Rofeh Cholei Amo Yisroel* in the name of the *Chasam Sofer*)

The Unwritten Punishment

A punishment which is not written... (Deut. 28:61). The *Nachal Eshkol* (Laws of *Sbiluach HaKen*, also cited by the Maharsham in *Techeles Mordechai* to Parashas Ki Sisa 44) writes in the name of one *gadol* that the Midrash explains that the this punishment refers to the death of the Torah Scholars. This is because the greatness of the Torah Scholars is only through the Oral Torah (for the Written Torah is an open book available to all, like Yannai said when he killed out the Torah Scholars, see *Kiddushin* 66a). Accordingly, the advantage of Torah Scholars is that they represent that which is “not written” in the Written Torah, and so the “punishment which is not written” refers to their untimely death.

Individuals vs. the collective

And you will remain just a little bit, instead of having been numerous like the stars of the Heavens, for you did not listen to the voice of Hashem your God. And it will be that just as Hashem rejoiced over your to do good to you and to multiple you, so will Hashem rejoice over you to destroy you and annihilate you... (Deut. 28:62–63). Rabbi Moshe Alshich notes that all the curses in this Parshah are written in singular form (“you” singular), except this curse in the verse at hand is written in plural form (“you” plural “will remain”). He explains that this is because when the Jews adopt a divisive outlook and begin baselessly hating each other, they will be viewed as a collective comprised of multiple individuals, instead of a unified collective as though they were one individual. He explains that making the Jews less numerous sends the message that if they couldn’t unite when they were numerous, at least now that their numbers have drastically dropped, they should join together and unite. Yet, but using the plural form, Moshe is criticizing the nation and pointing out that even when their numbers drop, they will still not unite.

*Much of the material presented in **Oneg!** has been translated by Rabbi Reuven Chaim Klein from Rabbi Elchanan Shoff's weekly Hebrew 'Aalefcha Chochma' parsha sheet. To sign up to the **Oneg!** weekly email list, or to sponsor a week of **Oneg!** send an email to rabbishoff@ncsy.org*

