

Like the Stars

PARSHA INSIGHTS - DEVARIM (5759)

A WHOLE CONGREGATION OF “RABBIS”

Moshe *Rabainu* [Moses our teacher] remarks to *Klal Yisroel* [the Jewish people] that Hashem has blessed them in many ways. He tells the second generation, to whom he talks throughout the entire *Sefer Devarim* [the Book of Deuteronomy], that “Hashem your G-d has increased you, and behold you are today like the stars of the sky for abundance” (1:10). With these words, he is actually recounting what he had declared to the first generation, those who left Egypt. This is obvious from the text.

Numerous interpretations and comments can be made on this *pasuk* [verse]. We will analyze it through the eyes of the *Netziv*. “Hashem your G-d has increased you” - the *Netziv* interprets this to mean **quantity**. In other words, that first generation had multiplied wonderfully (particularly during their stay in Egypt, as is well known).

“Like the stars of the sky for abundance” - this means **quality**. Even though not EVERY person of that generation was a “*gadol*” [an exceedingly outstanding personality], there were MANY *gedolim* [great ones] among them, says the *Netziv*. There were more such people in that generation than in other time periods of Jewish history. That is the significance of the word “*larov*” [for abundance]. **Many of you** are like the stars of heaven. Why were the eminent Torah giants of the nation compared to stars? *Gedolim* illuminate the world with Torah, similar to shining stars.

For what reason did Moshe praise the *Bnai Yisroel* [the Children of Israel] in this manner? The *Netziv* explains that he was justifying the need to appoint judges to assist him. Due to the large number of exceptional personalities among them, how could a leader manage all their lofty needs? I have heard this compared to a *rav* [rabbi] trying to effectively lead a congregation made up entirely of high caliber Torah scholars. In a way it is extremely challenging, since the congregants themselves are all capable of directing their own congregations! Will it be easy for them to submit to the authority of a *rav* who (they perceive) might know even less Torah than they do? This is not to say that such an attitude is correct. To the contrary, a *rabbinic* leader should be invested with all the power to which he is entitled, as long as he is competent. However, that does not mean it will be a simple task to “take command” of such a *kehila* [congregation].

May Hashem bless us in “*kamus*” [quantity] and “*aichus*” [quality], just as He bestowed His favor upon the generation that left *Mitzraim* [Egypt].

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