

The Fault in Our Stars



**TOVA
LIEBERT**

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Synagogue

This week's parasha sees Moshe rebuke the *Bnei Yisrael* (Children of Israel) in his final closing speech before his death. He tells the people:

"I cannot carry you alone. Hashem, your God, has multiplied you and behold! you are this day like the stars of heaven in abundance" (Devarim 1:10-11).

Rabbi Yehuda Leib Adel (1759-1827), in his work *Afikei Yehuda*, asks a seemingly obvious question on these words. *Bnei Yisrael* have recently been counted and numbered only 600,000, a number which is far smaller than the number of stars in the heavens. Is Moshe lying when he

claims that *Bnei Yisrael* are as numerous as the stars of heaven?? Surely not!

Rabbi Adel offers an incredibly insightful answer. He explains that *Bnei Yisrael* are sometimes compared to the dust of the earth, and at other times are compared to the stars of the heavens. The difference between the dust and the stars is that dust particles stick to each other and are only visible when in a cluster, whereas the stars in the heavens are separate, individual entities that do not interact with one another. Thus, Rabbi Adel suggests that when *Bnei Yisrael* are compared to the dust, the Torah is teaching us that they are unified. Similarly, when Moshe here likens *Bnei Yisrael* to the stars, he is not simply making a numerical comparison but rather is rebuking *Bnei Yisrael* for their lack of

unity. It is this lack of unity that makes it impossible for Moshe to carry the nation singlehandedly.

It is striking that the parasha of Devarim always falls on Shabbat Chazon, the Shabbat before Tisha B'Av, when we mourn the destruction of the Temples that were destroyed due to the *Sinat Chinam*, baseless hatred, within *Am Yisrael* (the Jewish people). Unfortunately, these similar patterns of divisiveness, hostility and conflict still exist within pockets of *Am Yisrael*. In order to become a nation worthy of redemption, the most important thing we must do is abandon our petty fights and grudges against a particular person or group, and come together as one nation, the Children of Israel.

Scrambled Names

Parashat Devarim begins Moshe's speech, which is a summary of the story of the Jewish people so far. Can you unscramble the names of these characters from the Torah that we have met on our journey?

1. TOYRI
2. MADA
3. SHOPJE
4. HAOPRAH
5. EUSA
6. RASHA
7. HANO
8. BAOCJ
9. MEBINNAJ
10. AMMIRI

