

SICHA SUMMARY

PROJECT LIKKUTEI SICHOS | 5783 - YEAR OF HAKHEL



Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 24

Vayelech, Sicha 2

Cursed or Caused?

Parshas Ki Savo includes the tochecha, the litany of tragedies that will befall the Jewish people “if you do not obey G-d, your God, to observe to fulfill all His commandments and statutes which I am commanding you this day...” (Devarim 28:15)

The Context:

In this week's Torah portion it says: "And now, write this song for yourselves, and teach it to the Children of Israel, put it in their mouths... (Devarim 31:19) The sages understand "this song" to refer to the entire Torah. Therefore, this verse is interpreted as a commandment for each Jew to write a Torah scroll for themselves.

The Question:

This begs the obvious question: why do we not find anywhere that all the Jews began writing a Torah scroll to fulfill this commandment? Furthermore, why have Torah scholars throughout the ages not

fulfilled this mitzvah upon reaching the age of Bar Mitzvah by immediately beginning to write a Torah scroll?

To understand this, we must first address the well-known question: why does every individual not write a Torah scroll? If it is because nowadays we can fulfill this mitzvah by buying books, why do we not see that a thirteen-year-old boy is meticulous in buying books as soon as he becomes obligated in mitzvot? Additionally, there are some authorities who believe that the opinion of the Rosh—that nowadays one fulfills this mitzvah by writing books — is in addition to the requirement of writing a Torah scroll. Why then do we not see that great Torah scholars strive to write a Torah scroll as soon as they have the opportunity?

The Explanation:

In every Jewish community, there are Torah scrolls that were written by the community. Therefore, it is considered that "the court's intention" is that the Torah scroll was written on behalf of each individual. And since the Torah scroll is periodically checked and corrected—and this checking has the

status of writing—it means that even those who were born after the Torah scroll was written fulfill the mitzvah of writing a Torah scroll. This is similar to the law that when there are no available etrogs, the entire community buys an etrog in partnership, "because since they bought it to fulfill the mitzvah, it is considered as if each member of the community has given their portion to whoever takes it to fulfill the mitzvah, with the intention that it will be returned to them."

Although the later authorities differentiate between an etrog and a Torah scroll—arguing that an etrog can be jointly owned because it only needs to belong to the individual at the time of the mitzvah, whereas a Torah scroll must belong to the individual at all times—the truth is that this distinction applied only in earlier generations when people studied directly from Torah scrolls. Nowadays, Torah scrolls are used only for public readings, during which the entire community uses it. As mentioned above, the court's intention is that when an individual is called to the

Torah and reads from it, they fulfill the commandment of "and you shall teach" from the Torah scroll that was written.

Based on this, we can say that when Moshe wrote a Torah scroll and gave it to each tribe, it was with the court's intention that it belonged to each individual. This is why the Jewish people did not begin looking for ways to write hundreds of thousands of Torah scrolls immediately upon receiving this commandment. In fact, it can be said that the commandment to write a Torah scroll was given specifically at a time when it was not possible for each person to write their own Torah scroll, teaching us that from the outset the mitzvah can be fulfilled in this manner (through communal partnership).

Understanding this, we see the significance of buying a letter in a communal Torah scroll. Not only does the community's intention ensure that the Torah is written on behalf of each person, but the act of contributing a coin also makes a practical and tangible connection to this sacred task.
