

SICHA SUMMARY

Likkutei Sichos, Vol. 27

Kedoshim, Sicha 2

The Context:

The Torah forbids a person from harboring false weights and measures. The Torah concludes this prohibition with the following phrase, “You shall have true scales, true weights... I am the G-d, your G-d, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt.” (*Vayikra 19:36*)

Quoting the Midrash, Rambam explains the linking of false weights to the Exodus:

“Whoever denies the mitzvah of just measures is considered as if he denied the exodus from Egypt, which is the first of G-d’s commandments. Conversely, one who accepts the mitzvah of just measures is considered as if he acknowledges the exodus from Egypt, which brought about all of G-d’s commandments. (*Hilchos Geneiva 7:12*)

The Question:

What is the thematic relationship between false scales and the Exodus from Egypt? Why is this particular sin compared to the

rejection of the first, and therefore all subsequent, mitzvos, and its observance compared to the foundation of all mitzvos?

The Explanation:

There is a fundamental difference between the prohibition of false weights and other prohibitions relating to theft. In the latter, the prohibitions guard against the loss of the victim — do not steal, do not cause damage, due not overcharge. But the transgression of false weights does not only prohibit the act of measuring merchandise falsely, it litigates against even making and owning the weight, regardless if it is used or not.

Thus, the Torah seems to be saying that false weights pose a unique danger to the moral constitution of a person, and therefore even possession of the weight is forbidden. The reason lies in the deception that characterizes false weights: in other acts of theft, the damage is blatant and obvious. But when one uses false weights, they give the pretense of doing business fairly, but actually take advantage of that ethical facade to cheat their fellow. The Torah is guarding not only against harmful practices, **but the very corruption of the**

heart that leads to those practices in the first place.

How does this relate to the exodus? In his laws of Teshuva, Rambam explains how G-d could punish Pharaoh and the Egyptians for their enslavement of the Jews if G-d had decreed that the Jewish people were to undergo this very experience. Rambam does not offer Ra'avad's explanation that the Egyptians used their own free choice to subjugate the Jews with excessive cruelty. Rather, it seems that he maintains that everything that occurred to the Jewish people was decreed by G-d, yet the agent of that persecution was not ordained. The Egyptian's moral corruption is what allowed them to fulfill that role, and they are responsible for that choice.

Thus, just as the prohibition of false weights aims to eradicate the inner corruption of the heart, so is the experience of the Exodus a warning against the intentional moral corruption that Egypt displayed.

A further similarity is expressed in Rabam's formulation that "one who accepts the mitzvah of just measures is considered as if he acknowledges the exodus from Egypt, **which brought about all of G-d's commandments.**" Based on the above, we now understand that the harboring of false

measures is the beginning of all evil, since it exhibits the essential corruption, dressed in a cloak of justice, that can lead to an escalation of negative behaviors. Thus, it is linked to the Exodus which is the origin of all mitzvos/positive behavior.

A deeper reading of the prohibition of false weights: in parshas Ki Teitzei the Torah repeats this prohibition and then narrates Amalek's attack on the Jewish people. The idea of "false weights" alludes to the practice of assigning varying levels of importance and priority to our spiritual pursuits and our material pursuits. Amalek, the origin of rebellion, is famously synonymous with doubt. Amalek sows doubt in a Jew's resolve by first suggesting that there is genuine value and weight to their spiritual pursuits and Torah study, but there is a different weight and importance to one's material needs. By donning this cloak of reasonableness, Amalek invades the soul and eventually dispenses with the importance of Torah altogether.

Thus we are commanded to not even harbor false weights in our home, because the notion that there is equality between our spiritual and material needs is the origin of all negative choices.
