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פעם אחת הייתי מהלך בדרך מצאני אדם אחד ובא אצלי בדרך (עסק) מצות והיה בו מקרא ולא היה בו משנה ואמר לי רבי מקרא נתן לנו מהר סיני משנה לא נתן לנו מהר סיני ואמרתי לו בני מקרא ומשנה שניהם מפי הגבורה נאמרו. ומה בין מקרא למשנה אלא משלו משל למה"ד למלך ב"ו שהיה לו שני עבדים והיה אוהבן אהבה גדולה ונתן לזה קב חטין ולזה קב חטין ולכ"א מהן נתן ג"כ אגודה של פשתן הפקח שבהן נטל את הפשתן וארג מפה יפה ונטל את החטין ועשאן סולת ובררה וטחנה ולשה ואפאה וסדרה על השלחן ופרס עליה מפה יפה והניחו עד שבא המלך והטפש שבהן לא עשה כלום. לימים בא המלך לתוך ביתו ואמר להם לשני עבדיו בני הביאו לי מה שנתתי לכם אחד מהן הוציא את הפת של סולת על השולחן ומפה היפה פרוסה עליו ואחד מהן הוציא את החטין בקופה ואגודה של פשתן עליהם אוי לה לאותה בושה ואוי לה לאותה חרפה איזה מהן חביב יותר הוי אומר זה שהוציא פת על השלחן ומפה יפה פרוסה עליו.

One time I was walking on the way. A man found me, and went with me on the way of mitzvot, and he had mikra (ie: written law) but no mishnah (ie: oral law). And he said to me, "Rabbi, mikra was given to us from Mount Sinai. Mishnah was not given to us from Mount Sinai." And I said to him, "My son, mikra and mishnah were both of them said from the mouth of God." And what is the difference between mikra and mishnah? Rather he told him a parable: To what is this matter similar? To a human king (lit: a king of flesh and blood) who had two servants, and he loved them with a great love. And he gave to one a kab (a measure) of wheat and to the other kab of wheat. And he also gave to each one of them a bundle of flax. The wise one of them took the flax and wove a beautiful cloth, and took the wheat and made it into fine flour, and sifted it, and ground it, and kneaded it, and baked it, and set it on the table, and spread the beautiful cloth over it, and left it there until the king should come. And the fool of them did nothing. After some time the king came into his house, and said to them, to his two servants, "My sons, bring to me what I gave you." One of them brought out the bread of fine flour, on the table, with the beautiful cloth spread over it. And the other of them brought out the wheat in a pile and the bundle of flax upon it. Woe for that shame! Woe for that disgrace! Which one is more favored? You must admit it is the one who brought out the bread on the table with the beautiful cloth spread over it.

(Seder Eliyahu Zuta, 2)

אמר ר' יוחנן לא חרבה ירושלים אלא על שדנו בה דין תורה אלא דיני דמגזיזתא לדיינו אלא אימא שהעמידו דיניהם על דין תורה ולא עבדו לפני משורת הדין:

Rabbi Yochana said, Jerusalem was only destroyed because they judged [legal cases according to the] law of the Torah. And should they have judged arbitrarily? Rather, say that they stood their rulings upon the law of the Torah and did not go beyond the letter of the law.

(Baba Metzia 30b)

לא חרבה ירושלים. פי', לא חרבה אע"ג שהיה להם חטאים אחרים היה הקב"ה משלם להם בעניין אחר ולא היה החרבן, [אבל] כאשר העמידו דבריהם על ד"ת ולא רצו רק הכל בדין לא היה הש"י עושה להם לפנים

משורת הדין, והדין הוא חורבן, ולפי שהיו נמשכים בכל מעשיהם אחר הדין ודנו בה דין תורה נעשה ירושלים חרב. וזכר לזה כי התורה ניתנה במקום חורבן והוא המדבר, ושם נתן לישראל התורה אבל אם לא היו דנין דין תורה ונכנסו לפני משורת הדין לא חרבה (לא) מחרב. ועוד דע כי בודאי חטאים אחרים היה להם כדמפרש ביומא (ט' א') מכ"מ אם היו עושים לפני משורת הדין גם הקב"ה היה נושא להם פנים וכן דרשו ז"ל במס' ברכות (כ' ב') כ' אשר לא ישא פנים וכתוב ישא ה' פניו אליך אמר הקב"ה איך לא ישא פנים לישראל כי אני כתבתי בתורתך ואכלת ושבעת והם מדקדקים עד כזית ועד כביצה, ולפיכך אם היו עושים לפני משורת הדין היה הקב"ה גם כן עושה להם לפני משורת הדין. אבל השתא שהעמידו דבריהם על דין תורה לא עשה הקב"ה לפני משורת הדין

"Jerusalem was only destroyed..." Which is to say, it wouldn't have been destroyed even if they had other sins [to their names], the Holy One, blessed be He, would have punished them some other way, and there would have been no destruction. But, since they stood their own words up according to the words of the law, and they only wanted to do things according to strict justice, God did not go for them beyond the letter of the law. And strict justice is destruction. And since they were drawn after strict justice in all of the deeds, and they judged according to strict justice, Jerusalem was destroyed. And this is hinted to in the fact that the Torah was given in a place of destruction, which is the wilderness, and there [God] Israel the Torah, but if they had not judged according to strict Torah law, and had they gone beyond the letter of the law, the destruction would not have occurred. Moreover, know that there certainly were other sins, as is explained in Yoma 9a. Nevertheless, if they all went beyond the letter of the law, the Holy One, blessed be He, would have shown them favour.

And so the sages explain in tractate Brachot (20b). It is written that God "shows no favour", and it's also written "May God show favour to you." The Holy One, blessed be He said, how can I not show favour to Israel, since I only wrote that "you shall eat, and be satiated [and bless]", and they are particular [to bless] over an olive-bulk or an egg-bulk. Therefore, if they went beyond the letter of the law, the Holy One, blessed be He, would also have gone beyond the letter of the law. But now that they stood their words up in strict Torah justice, the Holy One, blessed be He, did not go [with them] beyond the letter of the law.

(Maharal, *Hidushei Aggadot* loc. cit.)

In the wilderness it received the Torah, and thus in the wilderness, without land or soil, it became a nation. It became a body, whose soul was the Torah, and, therefore, could be truthfully called "ממלכת כהנים" "a kingdom of priests," for as the priest in the midst of a single people was this nation to be in the midst of universal mankind, preserving the law of God, and practicing and fulfilling its holy precepts. "גוי קדוש," "Holy nation," was also to be its appellation, for, through the fulfilment of the Divine law, it was to become holy, not participating in the worldly doings of other nations, but preaching the sacredness of humanity by the example of its life. The Torah, the fulfilment of the Divine will, was to be its soil and country, and aim; its national existence, therefore, was neither dependent upon, nor conditioned by transitory things, but eternal as the spirit, the soul and the word of the Eternal One.

(Nineteen Letter, 8)

יִשְׂאוּ מִדְּבַר וְעָרְיוּ הַחֲצֵרִים תִּשְׁבַּב קִדְר יִרְנֹו יִשְׁבִּי סֶלַע מֵרֵאשׁ הַרִים יִצְוּחוּ:

Let the desert and its towns cry aloud, The villages where Kedar dwells; Let Sela's inhabitants shout, Call out from the peaks of the mountains.

(Isaiah 42:11)

מָשַׁל לְנִשְׂיָא שְׁנַכְנַס לְמַדִּינָה, וְרָאוּ אוֹתוֹ בְּנֵי הַמְּדִינָה וּבָרְחוּ. נִכְנַס לְשַׁנְיָה וּבָרְחוּ מִלְּפָנָיו. נִכְנַס לְעִיר אַחַד תְּרַבָּה, רָאוּ אוֹתוֹ הַתְּחִילוּ מְקַלְסִין אוֹתוֹ. אָמַר הַנְּשִׂיא, זֶה הָעִיר טוֹבָה הִיא מִכָּל הַמְּדִינוֹת, כָּאֵן אֲנִי בּוֹנֶה לִי אַכְסִינְיָא, וּבְכָאֵן אֲנִי דָר. כִּד כְּשָׁבָא הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לִים, בָּרַח מִלְּפָנָיו, שְׁנַאָמַר: הֵימָּן רָאָה וַיִּנָּס (תהלים קיד, ג). נִגְלָה עַל הַר סִינַי, בָּרְחוּ שְׁנַאָמַר: הַהָרִים רָקְדוּ כְּאֵלִים (שם פסוק ד). בָּא לְמַדְבָּר תְּרַבָּה, קִבְּלָה אוֹתוֹ וְקַלְסָה אוֹתוֹ, שְׁנַאָמַר: יִשְׂאוּ מְדָבָר וְעָרְיוּ וְגו' (ישעיה מ, ב-יא). אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, זֶה הַמְּדָבָר טוֹבָה מִכָּל הַמְּדִינוֹת, כָּאֵן אֲנִי בּוֹנֶה לִי אַכְסִינְיָה יָרֵד לְתוֹכָהּ, הַתְּחִילוּ הַכָּל שְׂמֵחִים, שֶׁהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא יָרֵד לְתוֹכוֹ, שְׁנַאָמַר: יִשְׂשׂוּם מְדָבָר וְצִיָּה וְתַגֵּל עֲרָבָה וְתַפְרַח כְּחַבְצֻלַת (שם לה, א).

[The matter] is comparable to a prince who entered a metropolis. When the inhabitants of the metropolis saw him, they fled. He entered a second one, and [again] they fled from him. He entered into another city that was ruined (harevah); and when the inhabitants saw him, they praised him. That prince said, "This city is better than all the metropolises. Here I will build myself a lodging place; here I will dwell." Similarly, when the Holy One, blessed be He, came to the sea, it fled from Him, as stated (in Ps. 114:3), "The sea saw [Him] and fled." He revealed Himself on Mount Sinai, [it also] fled, as stated (in Ps. 114:4), "The mountains danced like rams." When he came to the desert wasteland (harevah), it received Him and praised Him, as stated (in Is. 42:11), "Let the desert and its cities lift up [their voice]." He said, "This city is better than all of the cities. Here I will build a lodging place." When He came down into its midst, they began rejoicing, because the Holy One, blessed be He, was dwelling in their midst, as stated (in Is. 35:1), "The desert and the arid land shall be glad, and the wilderness shall rejoice and blossom like a crocus."

(Tanchuma, Bamidbar 2)

וְהִיָּה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא מְבַקֵּשׁ לְגַאֲלוֹ וְלֹא הִיָּה לָהֶם זְכוּת, מִה עֲשֵׂה הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא קָרָא לְמֹשֶׁה וְאָמַר לוֹ לֵךְ וּמְהוּל אוֹתָם... וְהִרְבֵּה מִהֵן לֹא הָיוּ מְקַבְּלִים עֲלֵיהֶם לְמוּל, אָמַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא שְׂיַעֲשׂוּ הַפֶּסַח וְכִיּוֹן שְׂעֲשֵׂה מֹשֶׁה אֵת הַפֶּסַח גָּזַר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא לְאַרְבַּע רוּחוֹת הָעוֹלָם וְנוֹשְׁבוֹת בִּגְן עֵדֶן מִן הָרוּחוֹת שְׁבִגְן עֵדֶן הִלְכוּ וְנִדְּבְקוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַפֶּסַח... וְהִיָּה רִיחוֹ הוֹלֵךְ מִהַלֵּךְ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם, נִתְכַּנְסוּ כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶצְל מֹשֶׁה אָמְרוּ לוֹ בְּבִקְשָׁה מִמֶּה הָאֲכִילֵנוּ מִפֶּסַח, מִפְּנֵי שֶׁהָיוּ עֵיפִים מִן הָרִיחַ, הִיָּה אוֹמֵר הַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא, אִם אֵין אַתֶּם נְמוּלִין אֵין אַתֶּם אוֹכְלִין, שְׁנַאָמַר: וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֵל מֹשֶׁה וְאֵל אֶהְרֹן זֹאת חֻקַּת הַפֶּסַח וְגו', מִיָּד נִתְּנוּ עֲצָמָן וּמְלוֹ, וְנִתְעַרְבַּ דָם הַפֶּסַח בְּדָם הַמֵּיִלָּה, וְהַקְּדוֹשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא עוֹבֵר וְנוֹטֵל כָּל אַחַד וְאֶחָד וְנוֹשְׁקוֹ וּמְבָרְכוֹ, שְׁנַאָמַר (יחזקאל טז) וְאֶעְבֵּר עֲלֵיךְ וְאַרְאֶה מִתְּבוֹסֶסֶת בְּדַמֶיךָ וְגו', חֲיֵי בְּדָם הַפֶּסַח, חֲיֵי בְּדָם מֵיִלָּה.

The Holy One, blessed be He, wanted to redeem [the Jewish people] but they had no merits [in virtue of which they could be redeemed]. What did the Holy one, Blessed be He, do? He called to Moses, and said to him, "Go and circumcise them."... And many of them would not accept circumcision upon themselves. [Consequently] the Holy One, blessed be He, said that they should make the Passover offering, and as soon as Moses made the Passover offering, the Holy One, blessed be He, commanded the four winds of the world, and blew them through the Garden of Eden, and from the winds of the Garden of Eden, they went and clung to the Passover offering... and its fragrance spread over a radius of a forty-day walk. All of Israel gathered upon Moses and said to him, "Please let us eat from your Passover offering," for they were exhausted from the smell. [But Moses] said, "If you're not circumcised, you're not eating, since it is written (Exodus 12:43-48), "The LORD said to Moses and Aaron: This is the law of the Passover offering... [But no uncircumcised person may eat of it.]" Immediately, they gave themselves over for circumcision, and the blood of the Passover offering mixed up with the blood of the

circumcision, and the Holy One, blessed by He passed over, and gave each and every person a kiss, and a blessing, as it is said (Ezekiel 16:6) “And when I passed by you, and saw you wallowing in your bloods, I said unto you: “In your bloods, live”; I said unto you: “In your bloods, live.””

(Shemot Rabba 19:5)