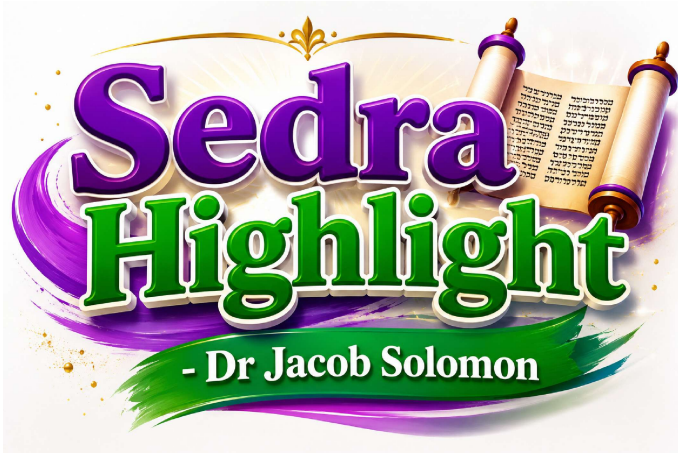




KI TAVO

HASHKIFA: *Look down from Your MA'ON - holy residence, and bless Your people Israel and the land that You have given us (26:15).*

The Torah commands the people at the end of the three-year periods following Sh'mita to ensure that they have indeed duly given the required produce to the Leviyim and to the poor and vulnerable members of society. Remember that in those days, settled society was largely farming based. And those in need were to be taken care of in the disciplined way that the Torah set down. At the Beit HaMikdash, the people would declare that they did all they could to keep these mitzvot for the benefit of those members of the community that depended on their support. And in having done so, they invoked G-d to look down and confer His Blessings on the people of Israel and on the land of Israel.

The Ha'amek Davar observes that the word HASHKIFA, loosely translated as look down, is severe, especially in

this situation (c.f. Rashi to B'reishit 18:16). There are other words in Hebrew that occur in the Torah when the looking down means to be benevolent. This particular HASHKIFA is used as a prelude to disaster: that word was employed when G-d looked down on the people of Sodom and overturned the city with brimstone and fire, and when He looked down on the pursuing Egyptians with their horses and chariots and overturned them at the Red Sea. Is the Torah inviting disaster on Am Yisrael for diligently keeping mitzvot, especially those that could diminish their physical prosperity?

In response and as an insight, the Ha'amek Davar pays special attention to the word MA'ON that the Torah uses for the holy residence that G-d is invoked to look down from. It does not only use the expected word SHAMAYIM, heaven, but adds MA'ON. The Gemara (Chagiga 12b) in describing the seven heavens, identifies that the word MA'ON refers to the fourth of the seven heavens that are presented there. The fourth level, the Gemara explains, is the level of heaven that is shared by the ministering angels. And as Ha'amek Davar explains, the ministering angels themselves don't always get it right. For example, when they destroyed S'dom, the angels erred when they told Lot that they themselves were about to destroy the place (B'reishit 19:13, Rashi)

rather that they were solely G-d's agents.

So, the Ha'amek Davar explains, we ask G-d to sit in the company of His ministering angels and observe that even they can make their mistakes. Despite their being entities created to perfection. And if even they who have no physical needs and who serve G-d in perpetuity don't get things right all the time, surely He can find room to forgo the mistakes of Klal Yisrael who are not malachim, but human with physical needs. And who despite their own pressing needs and commitments, make time and share resources according to the guidelines You set down in the Torah.

This D'var Torah is written in loving memory of my dearest Mother, HaRabanit Devora Solomon ztl. who ascended to the Yeshiva Shel Ma'ala on Shabbat Ki Tavo 28 years ago. May her memory be blessed, and be a source of blessings. 🌿📖