

# PARSHAS KI SEITZEI

*by Rabbi Dr. Meir Tamari*

Rashi (Devarim, 25: 17) explains the proximity of the injunctions regarding weights and measures, to the verses concerning Amalek at the end of the sedrah as follows: ' If you falsify your weights and measures, then you should beware of the approach of the enemy'. It is difficult to understand why this sin of weights and measures should be more serious than any other shortcomings, so that it should be singled out in this way. This is because observance of this mitzvah requires more wisdom than do those concerned with issur and heter or with tahor and tamei. It is easier to distinguish between that which is forbidden and that which is permitted than it is to decide the rightful owner of money that both claimants have earned in holiness. So the mitzvah of the weights demonstrates that a person is able to find the wisdom and strength to breakthrough the circle of habit in order to seek out the intentions of the Torah.

The only reason why the nations of the world are able to battle against Israel and to subject or oppress us, is because of a justifiable argument that just as there are saints and sinners amongst them, so too is the case in Israel. However, the nations of the world do righteous and correct things when these are required of them, or are obviously legal or there is reciprocal utility. Israel is different. They possess a desire, a passion and fervor to carry out the will of G-d, so they are able to sanctify even those things that are permitted to them. Nevertheless, when Israel is not able to do this, they can be equated with the nations of the world, who are then able to battle with them and oppress them. A person who executes weights and measures is considered to be a judge (Rashi, 19: 35). When one does this according to the Torah way, through these acts one shows that they are capable of judging their own acts. However, people who sin with weights and measures, unfortunately demonstrate that they are unable to control and evaluate correctly their own actions. So delinquency in weights and measures permits the enemies to attack Israel.

There is a further perspective to this relationship between these mitzvot and the enemy's ability to attack Israel. We must remember that the name Amalek has the same root as 'akalkal'- crooked or distorted. The misuse of weights and measures is a distortion of the acts of a judge. and therefore they bring with them a parallel punishment that may be seen as a miscarriage of justice, when it is not commensurate with the crime. The Avnei Nezer sees this as perfect justice, the payment of midah k'neged midah. This can be understood if we remember that there is a sin of superficiality that can breed hypocrisy and self-delusion even in things spiritual and religious. This is especially true considering the many outward expressions of Jewish observance. The distortion of judgment in material things through spiritual superficiality, shown in incorrect weights and measures is reflected

in Heaven and brings with it Divine Judgment. So too a person should weigh and measure each of their own acts and analyze them to determine the justice of these acts.

They should prefer to avoid the superficiality of their actions and to search out to do them in the most spiritual ways. So they will avoid hypocrisy and flattery, neither cheating themselves nor others. The Holy Admor Menachem Mendel of Kotsk changed the ayin in - fellow, in the verse, 'You shall not cheat your fellow' (VaYikrah 25:16), to an aleph to read, 'Your truth'.

A distortion of such justice will bring about a judgment on them in the Day of Judgment that will also be a distortion. We see this in the case of the Ten Martyrs [??] who were punished for the sale of Joseph by his brothers, though those Sages themselves had nothing to do with that sale. However, the brothers had allowed themselves to distort the motives of Joseph and then judge him in superficiality, accordingly. Joseph intended only to correct the actions of his brothers, but he did not have the courage to tell them directly, so he told his father Ya'akov instead. Had they carefully analyzed the case they would have realized this and not found him guilty as a 'rodef', the punishment for which is in justice, death. However, they attached themselves to superficiality and thereby distorted justice. It was that distortion and superficiality, that justified the persecution of their descendants at the time of the Romans.

*Shem Mi Shmuel, 5677, 5683,*

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