



KINDER TORAH.™

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PARASHAS KI SISA

CROSSING BRIDGES

"Don't look down."

"Why not?"

"It's a long drop. Just keep your eyes ahead and keep moving."

"We have such a long way to go. Will we ever cross this bridge and get to the other side?"

"B'eZRas Hashem (with Hashem's help)."

Life's challenges are often compared to bridges. Learning an entire *mesechta* (tractate of the Talmud) is a big bridge to cross. Finding a *parnossa* (livelihood) may take some work. Finding a suitable marriage partner, buying a home, settling in a foreign country – these can all seem like impossible goals. They are bridges that are too long to cross. What can we do? We pray to Hashem for *Siyata Dishmaya* (Heavenly Assistance) and then we set foot onto the bridge. Step by step, we receive His help as we navigate our way across the bridge. If we merit, we find ourselves on the other side, having successfully met the challenge.

"Every (firstborn) that opens the womb is Mine" (Shemos 34:19). This verse refers to the holiness of the *bechor* (firstborn son). We have a mitzvah of *pidyon ha'ben* (redeeming the firstborn son). The Sefer HaChinuch comments that this mitzvah is a remembrance of the great miracle that Hashem performed in Mitzraim. He killed the *bechoros* of the Mitzrim, and saved our firstborn sons. This mitzvah is an expression of our gratitude to Him.

Three times a day we stand before Hashem in prayer. Blessing number eighteen thanks Hashem for all of the good that He has done for us. "For our lives which are in Your hands, and for our souls . . . and for Your miracles which we experience every day, and for Your wonders and Your good deeds which are always with us" (excerpt from the blessing). We thank Hashem for His daily *chasodim* (acts of kindness). We can also take this opportunity to thank Him for those *chasodim* which He has done in the past. All of those bridges which seemed impossible to cross. He picked us up and carried us over.

Kinderlach . . .

Your whole life is ahead of you. A life which will include many challenges and many bridges to cross – some easier; some more difficult. B'eZRas Hashem you will meet those challenges. You will cross those bridges. Always remember how you felt when you were standing before the bridge. It seemed impossible to cross. Afterward you realized that Hashem pulled you to the other side. Remember those bridges, kinderlach. Express your gratitude to Hashem.

THE PERCENTAGES

"Avi, I must be making a mistake in my *cheshbon* (calculation)."

"That's possible, Chaim. Can I help you?"

"Sure, Avi. How many nations are in the world?"

"Seventy."

"That means that Klal Yisrael is outnumbered seventy to one. That puts our number at 1.4 percent of the world's nations."

"So far, so good."

"Additionally, the number of people in Klal Yisrael is smaller than the population of other nations. We are actually far less than one percent of the world's population."

"Correct."

"If so, how have we survived for 2000 years of exile? We were taken out of our



homeland and left without a source of income, defense force, formal government, and many other institutions necessary for the survival of a nation. We have been hated and persecuted by virtually every nation on the face of the earth. How could we possibly have survived against such odds? The percentages are way against us!"

"Correct again!"

"So I ask you Avi, if all of my *cheshbonos* are correct, how are we still here today, learning Torah and performing mitzvos?"

"Correct for the fourth time, Chaim!"

"What do you mean? I did not give an answer, I asked a question."

"Yes, but the answer lies in your question. Rav Zalman Sorotzkin addresses your point. He explains that Klal Yisrael's accounting is not quantity, but quality. If you look at our quantity, our situation looks hopeless, as you very accurately described. However, our numbers are measured in quality. The second verse in this week's parasha describes how a cen-

sus was taken in Klal Yisrael. 'When you take a census of the Children of Israel according to their numbers, every man shall give Hashem a ransom for his soul when counting them' (Shemos 30:12). Each man gave a sum of money – half a shekel. This money was referred to as, 'Every man shall give Hashem a ransom for his soul.' This is a description of the essence of a Jew. Every person in Klal Yisrael is prepared at any moment to sacrifice his life for *Kiddush Hashem* (Sanctification of the Holy Name). He is ready to give everything that he has to his Creator. What courage! What selflessness! What holiness! Such a person is worth more than hundreds of thousands of cowards, who selfishly take everything that they can. They care nothing about other people, and even less about The Almighty. They stand no chance against a holy *Yid*."

"Yes, I see."

"And so, the *cheshbon* is different. When it comes to quality, we far outnumber the seventy nations. Their only power is their physical weapons. They are limited by their numbers. Contrast this to Hashem's chosen people. Each and every Jew is a superpower. He is connected to Hashem, the All Powerful. We are the majority. The percentages are on our side. How have we survived? It is quite simple. We outnumber them."

Kinderlach . . .

Who is the world's most powerful nation? Who is the superpower of superpowers? China numbers over a billion people. Russia has vast expanses of land and nuclear weapons. The United States has great wealth and super weaponry. The Middle Eastern nations own vast resources of petroleum fuels. However, all of these nations are puny weaklings against Klal Yisrael. What do we have? Hashem. We uphold His Honor in this world. We are prepared to sacrifice everything that we have for Him. Each one of us has Kiddush Hashem inside of us. That is a power far stronger than physical numbers, wealth, or weapons. We are the world's strongest nation. We far outnumber them in terms of quality. We are the only superpower. We are Klal Yisrael - the greatest nation on the face of the earth.

Parasha Questions:

- How did the Kohanim wash their hands and feet? (Rashi 30:19)
- How many luges are in a hin? (Rashi 30:24)
- How many ingredients are in the ketores and what are they? (Rashi 30:33)

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