

Hashem, your G-d, has multiplied you and behold! You are like the stars of heaven in abundance. (1:10)

The Torah famously blesses *Klal Yisrael* with two metaphors, which, on the surface, appear paradoxical. In the above *pasuk*, we are compared to the stars of the sky in number. In *Sefer Bereishis* (22:17,) the Torah writes, “I will surely bless you and make your offspring as the stars of the heavens and as the sand of the seashore.” Apparently, being compared to stars alone is insufficient. Our comparison to sand in number is a wonderful blessing, but is it not contradictory to stars? One is elevated, radiant and lofty, while the other is lowly, coarse and trampled upon. Apparently, being compared to both conveys an important lesson concerning our *mahus*, essence, and how we should maintain ourselves. Indeed, these two metaphors allude to the Jew’s dual mission in this world.

Veritably, the star is distant, often unable for us to see it. We know, however, it is present and immense in size and power. Each individual star is a world in itself. Indeed, some stars are larger than earth. Each star is unique in its own right – no two stars are the same.

This teaches us the power of each individual, his potential and value.

A grain of sand is, in its own right, insignificant. However, when grains of sand are clumped together, they become a formidable force. It is the sand that protects the land as it maintains a barrier against the sea. The strength of sand is its ability to cohere with other like particles, which together in collective unity are able to hold back the most powerful forces of nature unleashed against them.

Klal Yisrael is a nation of individuals, each with his own amazing potential, each able to achieve a world. They are also a collective whose strength comes from their unity in diversity. We have a shared destiny; thus, when we work together, we are unstoppable. It is related that the *tzadik*, *Horav Aryeh Levin, zl*, was walking with students through the alleyways of the Old City. As they passed a small home, they noticed a small candle glowing in the window. *Rav*

Aryeh said, “That candle represents a Jew’s potential. Even alone, even in the dark, he offers light. It may appear to be a small flame; in terms of the spirit, however, it is a powerful force that can dispel much darkness.”

They continued walking when they chanced upon a home in which a large candelabra with multiple candles was lit in honor of *Shabbos*. Indeed, the combined glow of these candles lit up the street. *Rav Aryeh* commented, “This candelabra represents *Klal Yisrael*, our collective nation. While each one of us is a small solitary light, when we merge together and align with one another, we create a brilliance whose radiant light can illuminate an entire world. The light of one Jew is holy – but the light of a combined group of Jews working in harmony, united in purpose, is transcendent.”

The mission of a Jew is not to shine as an individual, but to stand together in unity with *Klal Yisrael*. We should never forget the individual, never allow him – or let him allow himself -- to get lost in the shuffle. Each Jew is a star in his own right, with his personal mission to achieve, and purpose to accomplish. On the other hand, one should never lose sight of his role as part of the collective community/nation. Our greatest strength is our unity – but it must be underscored that we unify only under the banner of the Torah. One goal, one purpose, one nation – under the rubric of the Torah.