



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT DEVARIM

Guarantors

David HaMelech writes in Tehillim (Psalm 137):

"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat and wept as we remembered Zion. On the willows (Aravim) we hung up our harps. For there, our captors demanded songs, our tormentors asked us for joy: 'Sing us one of the songs of Zion!' How can we sing the song of Hashem on foreign soil?"

It's a strikingly emotional scene. But why does David include such a specific detail—that they hung their harps on the Aravim trees? What difference does it make which trees they used?

R' Yaakov Mizrahi offered a meaningful insight. The word "Aravim" shares a root with "Arevim" (ערבים) — meaning guarantors, as in the phrase "Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh"—"All Jews are responsible for one another." With that in mind, the verse carries a deeper message: They hung their instruments on the trees of arvut, of mutual responsibility. It's as if they were saying — We will not be able to sing again until we, as a people, feel that sense of responsibility for one another. Only then will the music return, and only then will we be worthy of playing our instruments once more in the rebuilt Beit HaMikdash.

Unlike angels, who each serve Hashem in an individual capacity ("mal'achim hamonei ma'alah"), we are described as "Yisrael k'vutzei matah" — a people gathered below, serving as one unit. Our avodat Hashem isn't just a personal journey; it's a shared mission.

Let's hold on to that message: the redemption won't come through isolated efforts alone, but through genuine unity — when we carry each other, care for one another, and build together. In that spirit, may we merit to bring the Geulah with true, lasting unity.

"The world will be a better place when we focus on what we can give rather than what we can get." (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Today

In the aftermath of World War II, a group of 200 Jewish orphans in Italy — children who had lost everything — were trying to hold on to whatever remnants of their past remained. As the High Holidays approached, they decided to form a minyan for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. But they needed an adult to lead them. After searching, they found an older Jewish man — a survivor, deeply broken by what he had seen and endured, now alone in the world with nothing left.

They approached him and asked if he would lead the services. "I'm not a rabbi or a rosh yeshiva," he said, reluctant. "Reb Yid," they pleaded, "you're all we have."

He agreed.

Before the shofar blowing on Rosh Hashanah, they asked if he could say a few words. He stood up, looked around at the young faces, and immediately broke down in tears. No words came. The boys cried with him. The same scene repeated on the second day of Rosh Hashanah.

Then came Yom Kippur. Before Kol Nidrei, the children begged him again — "Please, just a few words." This time, he spoke. He began: "The officer in charge of Gehinnom gathered his advisors. 'We have a serious problem,' he said. 'Gehinnom is empty! No one is coming anymore. Every soul that's entered the World of Truth in recent years has died al kiddush Hashem, sanctifying G-d's name. They're going straight to the highest places in Gan Eden. Enrollment is low here; What should we do?'

"One advisor suggested, 'Introduce them to the pursuit of money. That always works; people fight, cheat, and turn on each other.'

"'No,' said the chief. 'These people want nothing but to survive. They're grateful just for bread and water.'

"Another said, 'What about jealousy? Anger? Ego?' One by one, each idea was dismissed. Then, one advisor leaned in and whispered in the Chief Officer's ear. The officer's eyes lit up. He banged on the table. 'That's it! We will give them the yetzer hara of Tomorrow: the temptation to procrastinate. To say: *Tefillin? Tomorrow. Shabbat? Maybe next week. Learn Torah? In a month or two. Rebuild your life? Not yet... maybe later.*'

The man paused, looked around at the orphans, and through his tears said:

"Don't wait. Seize the moment. Tomorrow belongs to the yetzer hara, but today is yours for the taking."

There wasn't a dry eye in the room. And years later, many of those children would look back at that very moment — the tears, the story, the call to act — as the turning point in which they chose to begin rebuilding their lives.

(Story recounted by R' Yechiel Spero)

Dedicated in Loving Memory Le'iluy Nishmat **Ezra ben Yosef**