

## Parshat Toldot

### United we Rise; United we Fall

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In four places in Sefer Bereishit, G-d compares Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov's offspring to the stars of the heavens and sand of the seashore:

I will make your offspring as the dust of the earth, so if one can count the dust of the earth, then your offspring, too, can be counted. (13:16)

[G-d] took [Avraham] outside, and said, "Gaze now, toward the heavens, and count the stars if you are able to count them!" and He said to him, "So shall your offspring be!" (15:5)

I will increase your (Yitzchak's) offspring like the stars of the heavens; and will give your offspring all these lands; and all the nations will bless themselves by your offspring. (26:4)

You had said, "I will surely do good with you (Yaakov) and I will make your offspring like the sand of the sea which is too numerous to count. (32:13)

Why does Hashem compare the Jewish people to the sand and the stars? Furthermore, why do the verses use the construct form (*semichut*), *kochevei hashamayim* (stars of the heaven) instead of the simple plural form, *kochavim* (stars)?

The word *kochavim* connotes a plural constituted by individuals, while the word *kochevei hashamayim* means many that are joined as parts of one heaven. The Torah words it in this manner to show us that we are a plural "one." We are not many separate individuals, but one man with heart one.

This concept can also be seen by the verses, "**dust** of the earth" and "**sand** of the sea." The singular forms of the words sand (*chol*) and dust (*afar*) are used also to refer the vast expanse of many grains of sand or dust.

Why, though, are the Children of Israel compared to sand and stars, and not anything else – for example, microscopic organism which are very numerous?

The Children of Israel can be compared to the stars because we have the ability to rise towards the heavens – but only if we do so together. However, we are also like the sand when, G-d forbid, we sink and we fall together.

In conclusion, as Aesop and Dumas almost said in their works: United we stand and united we fall. We, as a people, are just a whole bunch of musketeers.