

תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on Parshas Bo

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

THE
Rosenberg
Family
EDITION

Toras Avigdor Al Haparsha

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Mazel tov to **Harav Dovid Galinsky Shlita** on the forthcoming marriage of his dear son. Thank you for your dedication to me and for helping me grow in Torah and Yiras Shamayim.

In honor of my *rebbe*, **Harav Yaakov Yitzchok Englard Shlita** and with sincere gratitude for all of your assistance in helping me continue to shteig.

Mazel tov to **Harav Eliyahu Schneider Shlita** on the upcoming marriage of his daughter Frumy. Thank you for your dedication to me and for helping me grow in Torah and Yiras Shamayim.

Your talmid,

YOSEF DOV FISCH

לזכות רפואה שלימה
חיה מלכה בת בשבע

Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת בא

THE TWO REDEMPTIONS

The Gemara in Brachos (4b) tells us that a person who is careful to be **סומך גאולה לתפילה**, is assured of the World to Come. Our redemption from Mitzrayim is so important that it must be the last thing that you thank Hashem for, before turning to Him in supplication for all of your needs. And therefore we make no interruption at all between the bracha of **גאל ישראל** and **השם שפתי תפתח**.

However, the Gemara (ibid.) points out that this requirement applies primarily in the morning prayer, when we say Shemonah Esrei at Shachris. Everyone knows that at night, by Ma'ariv, after we make the bracha **גאל ישראל**, we still say Hashkiveinu and Kaddish. And only then do we start Shemonah Esrei. We interrupt between geulah and tefillah at night, and the Gemara explains that it's because the **גאולה מאורתא לא הו גאולה מעלייתא** - the redemption of the Bnei Yisroel that occurred in the middle of the night wasn't the true redemption. But in the morning, nothing doing, no interruptions. And that's because our leaving Mitzrayim in the morning, that was the real redemption.

There was most definitely a geulah in the evening. We were redeemed - Pharaoh got up in the middle of the night and he ran through the streets urging the Bnei Yisroel to leave the land. He sent us out and we were free to go. Our stay in Mitzrayim had come to an end, right then and there in the middle of the night. Even though we didn't actually leave Mitzrayim till the morning, we were already free men at night. So why is it that the leaving of

the land is considered a geulah, all the more so that we consider it the true redemption?

RUBASHKIN GOES HOME

Here's a man who's rotting away in prison. He has given up hope of ever seeing the outside world again. His family, his wife, his children - he doesn't know if he'll ever see them again. And then one night, it's the middle of the night, and the warden comes into his cell and tells him, "You've been pardoned. You're a free man now!" Now, this man is shocked beyond words. He probably faints and has to be revived. After so many years, he's free to go. He's pinching himself. "Is this really happening?! It is, it is! I'm a free man!"

Now this man is ready to head straight home but the first ride out will be in the morning. So he waits a few hours, and as the morning sun rises he finally passes through the prison gates and is on his way home.

HE CELEBRATES THE MIDNIGHT CALL FROM THE WARDEN

So what moment of that momentous night will that man remember and celebrate forever? There's no question that his great moment of freedom came in the middle of the night, when the warden opened the lock on the cell door and told him that he was free to leave, that he wasn't a prisoner anymore. So what difference does it make that it took some time to organize his ride home?!

But here we find the opposite. And it's very hard to understand. We were set free in the middle of the night. At midnight, as the anguished cries of the Egyptians reverberated across the land, the cries of joy went bursting forth from the homes of the Bnei Yisroel, when they realized that they had just been set free. They were free men at last! And yet, Chazal are telling us here that the true redemption, the redemption that matters most to us, took place in the morning when they actually left the land.

THE PHYSICAL REDEMPTION

So listen to me well, because what you're going to hear now is very important. There were two parts to Yetzias Mitzrayim. One was that we were freed from the yoke of Pharaoh, freed from slavery. Now, to take us out of slavery, we know what

that means. It was a bitter bondage. Being slaves doesn't merely mean that we worked without getting paid. It means many things. It means being put to shame, and not being able to lead your own life and succeed in what you want to accomplish. You waste your life obeying the wishes of a cruel and materialistic master. It was heartbreaking for fathers to see their children suffering in bitter work, wasting their lives building pyramids for Egypt when they could have been home with their parents studying the traditions of their forefathers. And we can be sure that many succumbed under the lashes of their overseers. And that's why we eat maror, the bitter herb, and tears come to our eyes. We remind ourselves of the bitterness that our forefathers endured and of the tears that poured from their eyes. And our redemption from that bitter bondage happened at night.

And so our gratitude to Hashem for redeeming us from slavery, is something that will never die out. And that's why we are always mentioning it. In every generation, we joyfully recall what Hashem did for us, by taking us out from under the yoke of servitude. The strong hand of Hashem is something that we will never forget.

THE SPIRITUAL REDEMPTION

But there was a second servitude, and that was the slavery of living among the gentiles. To live among the gentiles is in itself a tremendous shibud. Egypt was an advanced country, one of the most advanced of the Ancient World. It was a beautiful and fertile land, with huge metropolises. Works of art, ornate temples, large buildings and magnificent pyramids. And don't think it was nothing. Here you have a shepherd nation, living in the midst of a most cultured and advanced people. Wherever the Jew walked, he walked among well-dressed Egyptians, aristocrats, and soldiers riding on horses led by magnificent chariots. And many looked up to their wealthy and powerful masters. The Egyptians were an educated populace and we were only a pastoral people. We didn't have anything. We didn't have any training in astronomy or mathematics. Don't make any mistake about it; we were shepherds. We were trained in serving Hashem and improving our character. We were trained in the many important things that the gentiles don't think about. But they had the materialistic accomplishments that would cause the weaker people to look up to them, to envy them, and worst of all to assimilate their ideas and ideals. And so they were buffeted to and fro by the prevailing

culture of Mitzrayim. It was a difficult job, a daily grind, to root out all of the influences that were seeping into their minds.

And those difficulties weren't an accident, just an accident of history. One of the great reasons, perhaps even the most important reason for our long stay in Mitzrayim was to test us, to see if we could withstand the pressure of being surrounded by a people whose ideals and attitudes were very different than ours.

We say that the Bnei Yisroel kept themselves apart. **לא שינו את לשונם**. They were a great people and they were dedicated to their traditions. **לא שינו**. "We're different and we're not going to change. We're going to remain different". They didn't take the Egyptian names. And they didn't dress like the Egyptians. They spoke in their traditional tongue. They didn't speak Egyptian like we speak English here.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

But still, living in Mitzrayim was very dangerous for the Am Yisroel. The gentile environment surrounded them on all sides. And it was a struggle. Don't think it wasn't a struggle. It's hard not to be affected by the culture that surrounds you. No matter how much you slam the door shut against the insidious influences of the gentiles, it seeps in. It seeps in through every crack.

It wasn't easy at all. Absolutely not. It was a struggle. They had to battle all the time against the influence of the Egyptians, and it was overwhelming. And many went lost because they fell prey to the outside influences. Not everybody went out. There are some statements that declare that a very large number didn't go out. I don't want to say it. It seems terrible to even say it! I'll tell you the minimum statement. **והמושים עלו בני ישראל מארץ מצרים** - "And the Bnei Yisroel went out as one fifth from Egypt" (ibid.13:18). Only one fifth went out! It's a terrible thing. A terrible thing to hear! Four fifth of our people went lost among the culture and ideals of the Egyptians! And there are worse statements than that. I won't quote them because it's very hard for us to accept such words.

And therefore, being caught up in the gentile culture around them was much more dangerous than having to do backbreaking labor. And therefore what is liberty worth? What benefit is there in being free men, if they would simply be free to become even more enslaved by the gentile culture?

The freedom from slavery that took place at night was merely a redemption from the physical bondage. And that's why, when they went out of Mitzrayim in the morning, when they left the land, the environment of the Egyptians, that threatened to wreak havoc on their minds, that was the true redemption. To go out into the midbar, being surrounded by fellow Jews who want only to serve Hashem, that was the only geulah that mattered. The **גאולה מצפרא** was the more important redemption because it was the **גאולה רוחנית**, the redemption of our souls. And therefore in the morning we have to be careful to be **סומך גאולה לתפילה**; we make sure to start **השם שפתי תפתח** right away.

And that's why when Hashem spoke to us at Har Sinai, He said the following: "I am Hashem who took you out from the land of Egypt, from the house of slavery" (ibid. 20:2). Two separate statements are being made here: "From the land of Egypt," and "from the house of slavery." These are two unrelated kindnesses. One is that I took you out from the **בית עבדים**, from slavery. But the first and more important kindness was "I took you out from the land of Egypt." Of course, it's a very great deal to be freed from bondage, from the **בית עבדים**, but it's minor when compared to the geulah of being freed from **ארץ מצרים**, from the environment of Egypt. Because living among the gentiles, breathing the air of the gentile culture, and absorbing the gentle attitudes, is the epitome of failure in this world.

GENTILES FOR DUMMIES©

And now we come to the very important subject of the gentiles. What's the place of gentiles in this world? What do we need them for? We're the chosen people of Hashem, and yet we're only a small fraction, a tiny infinitesimal amount of people, surrounded by a raging sea of large nations. The Americans, the Russians, the Europeans, the Israelis, the Canadians, the Mexicans. We are the **מעט מכל העמים**, the smallest of all people (D'varim 7:7). Did you ever wonder why the Torah refers to us as the **מעט מכל העמים**, the smallest of all the nations? Are we really the smallest? Are there not tribal nations out in the Far East that are smaller than us? In the jungles of Africa, you'll find smaller nations than the Am Yisroel.

But what **מעט מכל העמים** means is that we are a small nation, facing off against the influence of the rest of the world. All the nations are one! They are all leitzim and ba'alei ta'avah. They are all sunken in every form of wickedness, and they always were.

And we, the little Am Yisroel, are nothing in numbers when compared to the rest of the world that stand together.

Now, we should be asking ourselves: Why is that? If we are the purpose of creation, why are we such a minority? Why are there billions of goyim, and hundreds of cultures out there, and we, the chosen people of Hashem, are a miniscule people in this world? It's a good question, isn't it? Of course, there are a few answers to this question, all true, but I'm going to tell you right now the most important one.

THE GENTILES ARE OUR TROUBLE

It says (Brachos 17a) אמר כנסת ישראל לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא - "The Jewish Nation calls out to Hashem" רבונו של עולם, רצוננו לעשות רצונך - "Master of the Universe, We want to do Your will. And what's one of the things that hold us back from serving You? שעבוד מלכויות! The fact that we are subject to the nations of the world. The gentiles! That's our trouble."

Now you might think that this means that it's because, let's say, the gentiles force us to go to school. We're not free to do what we want. Suppose you live in Topeka where there are no yeshivos, no day schools. So you'll be forced to send your children to public school. Or you think that we're busy working to pay taxes to the government. So much of our time is spent supporting government programs. And we've been persecuted in our history. Many persecutions that have made our lives very difficult. And this is true. It's true that all of that is included in שעבוד מלכויות.

WE ARE DROWNING

But there is something more than that, much more than that. What is the שעבוד מלכויות, the subjection to the gentiles that causes us the most trouble? It is the fact that there are gentiles around. We're surrounded! And every goy comes with a goyishe kup. A gentile always comes with gentile attitudes. We're living in a sea of gentiles, and we're drowning in their influence! And to keep our Jewish heads above water, and not to go under, is a very difficult task. Not to become a goy! And almost all of us are drowning. It's not pleasant to say, but we are drowning.

The gentiles are our big problem. If you analyze every Jewish boy who is having problems, you'll see that they are gentile problems. Every Jewish family is suffering from gentile influence. We speak their language. We usually look like them.

And in almost all cases, and this is the worst problem of all, we think like them. And once we think like them, we are thinking the opposite of the Torah.

IT'S ALL A TEST

And that's why we say to the Almighty: "Ribono Shel Olam, we want to do what's right. We want to dedicate our lives to your service! But what holds us back? The fact that there are so many gentiles in the world. It's a big world, full of culture, and ideals, and sports, and so many ideas that are trying to drown us out with their overwhelming numbers."

And Hashem answers us back: "My beloved children, that's exactly why I put them in this world. They're here for you - to test you." Because this struggle to oppose their influence, that's why we're in this world. And the test is this: Who can be the least like a goy as possible? That's the test. Not only outwardly, but more importantly, in his thoughts and attitudes.

THE GENTILE BAR-MITZVAH BOCHUR

You pass by a yeshiva today and you see things going on. טייערע boys, טייערע boys. And yet, they're behaving like goyim. I don't want to say why and how. But they're good, sweet boys behaving like gentiles. Their games are goyishe games. Their sports are goyishe sports. They are imitating their heroes, the goyim who can hit a ball with a stick.

When you go to a Bar Mitzvah, you see that the music is goyishe music. The dancing is goyishe dancing. A chasuna as well. It's all gentile ways, and Jews should have other ways of doing things. Boruch Hashem, we're happy with them. I'm happy with them. בן ירבו וכן יגדלו. I love them! Good טייערע boys. But they don't realize how much they are being influenced by the goyim around them.

Fishing?! Hobbies?! Amusement parks?! Restaurants?! To go out on a regular basis to eat in a restaurant?! What for?! To waste your life with emptiness?! A man who climbs into his car every Sunday, every day of Chol Hamoed, with his family, and they're off for another day of suicide. He's sitting behind the steering wheel, bumping up and down on the country roads, thinking he's going to live forever, and that he's already accomplished all that he has to in life. Where's this all coming from, if not from the goyim? We see everyone around us doing

these things and we think it's fine; what's wrong with it? We're aping the goyim!

I'm not saying that a person might not need to relax, to take a walk, to breathe the fresh air, but all of these forms of entertainment are much more than that. It's assimilation, that's all.

IT'S TIME TO DE-AMERICANIZE

And just the fact that you can sit here and look at me, and think that I'm being too extreme, is the most definitive proof that you have all been assimilated into the American culture. Of course, we pay our taxes, and of course we keep the laws. And you should even put out a flag on the Fourth of July. Certainly you should be loyal to your country. We're just as loyal as the others; we should be even more loyal than others. A Jew should be grateful to America; we should kiss the earth of America for all that it gave us. And you should do everything that a loyal citizen is expected to do - except for becoming influenced by American society. You must de-Americanize yourself!

WEARING A KAPOTEH AND WORSHIPPING IDOLS

And nobody is immune to this test of the multitudes of goyim and their ideals and attitudes. Nobody! Even the man with a long beard and payos, a frum eved Hashem, is subject to this great test of being influenced by the goyim around him.

The Gemara in Sanhedrin (102b) tells us of the time that Rav Ashi announced that the following day he would say a lecture about Menashe, "our colleague," one of the kings who ruled in Eretz Yisroel. He wanted to speak about how Menashe had strayed after idolatry and had caused the Jewish nation to fall into very serious sins. But knowing that Menashe had eventually done teshuva, he made sure to honor Menashe by calling him "our colleague."

That night Menashe appeared to Rav Ashi in a dream and he asked him a question in halacha. And Rav Ashi was unable to answer it. So Menashe said, "You call me your 'colleague'?! I'm your teacher in Torah." So Rav Ashi asked Menashe, "If you were so great in Torah, how could you have done such a thing? Idolatry?!" And Menashe responded, " If you would have been there, if you would have been around at that time, you would have grabbed onto my coattails, you would have held onto the edge of my kapoteh and you would have ran after me."

Now this is not just jest. Rav Ashi, was the leader of the Am Yisroel, the great Rosh Yeshiva, and the one who presided over the completion of the editing of the Shas Bavli. All of the Torah was in his head. And Menashe testifies that this great Torah personality would have run after him to serve idols.

Now that's a remarkable statement! And we have to understand that Hakodosh Boruch Hu was behind this. It wasn't an accident. It states openly that Hashem said that He gave idolatry as a test. A test to see if the Am Yisroel would withstand the influence of the gentiles.

THE AVODAH ZARA IN MY POCKET

Now let me explain something to you. Do you know why idolatry doesn't appeal to us anymore? It's because it doesn't appeal to the gentiles anymore! That's the secret, and don't make any mistake about it. If all the goyim would be bowing down to idols like they did in the days of old, we would be in great trouble. We would have frum Jews with black hats and beards who sometimes would be keeping a little avoda zara in their pockets. And although they daven three times a day, and they eat glatt kosher, but sometimes when business is not doing so well, and they're having an important meeting with a customer, they would take out their little avoda zara from their pocket and kiss it and say, "Please avoda zara'leh, please help me. I'm not forsaking Hashem, no. But I want to bet on both horses. So maybe you'll help me too."

Yes, it was a tremendous temptation in those days. The multitude of nations, all across the globe, who made claims about the power of their idols, were convinced of the truth of the avoda zara. And it seemed so true, so evident. There were millions of people clamoring about the truth of their idols. Only that we don't appreciate what that means because today the rest of the world laughs at avodah zara as well. But today there are different forms of avodah zara, and those are nothing to laugh about. Because whatever it is that is normal for the rest of the world, seems normal to us and begins to seep into our homes.

And Hakodosh Boruch Hu did this on purpose! It wasn't an accident. Now pay attention to a very important principle. That is the main purpose of the goyim in this world - to test us! They are here, overwhelming us in their numbers, in order to make it difficult for us to remain loyal to Him and His Torah.

THE GENTILE TSUNAMI

And the Am Yisroel was always the little island of decency surrounded by a huge ocean of filth and depravity. Always! And our big test was always, and always will be the following: As the ocean waves rush up on the beach, as they roar and they splash, will they wet us as well? Or will we retain our purity despite the overwhelming numbers and power of those who stand against our ideals. That's our big test.

OUR GRANDCHILDREN WILL LAUGH AT US

And one day, not long in the future, your descendants will look back at you, and the lives that you lead, with the same disdain that Rav Ashi looked at Menashe with. "How could you have been so foolish to run after all the false ideals that pervade Western culture. It's so stupid, mamash nothing." Only that we are walking blindly through life, and therefore, the multitudes of people, their great numbers, are fooling us. And we don't even realize how blind we are. We think we see everything clearly.

But you must know that Hashem always provides His people with the **רפואה קודם למכה** - the solution is always offered to us before the difficulty, before the test. And that is one of the secrets of the korban pesach that the Am Yisroel ate on this great night of the birth of our nation, as they prepared to escape the environment of the gentile world that was engulfing them on all sides. The Am Yisroel crowded into their homes, and they closed the doors behind them; better yet, they slammed the doors shut behind them, shutting out the outside world forever.

A JEW IS A MIZBEI'ACH

And what did they do in their homes? They sat down to eat the meat of the Pesach offering with their families. You must know that this was the first instance of the meat of an offering being eaten. Hitherto, all the offerings had been Olos, burnt-offerings, because no one would dare to profane an offering made to Hashem, by putting it into his mouth. You know that **אדם הבל** and **קין הראשון** brought offerings, as well as **נה**. And by **נה** it says openly that he brought offerings. But nobody ever dreamed of putting an offering into their mouths. Who would have the audacity to put the food of Hashem into his own mouth? But the korban pesach now came as a declaration of the great status of the Am Yisroel. On this great night, the night of the birth of our nation, Hashem was telling us that we are a "holy people"

(Shemos 19:6), whose bodies were now elevated to the holiness of that of an altar. And that's because they were now to be distinguished from the rest of the world in their complete dedication to Hashem. When they put the meat of the korbon into their mouths, it was an exact parallel to the burning of the offering upon the mizbei'ach. The eating of the korbon pesach in the seclusion of their homes, separate from the gentiles outside, declared this great principle of **בנים אתם לה' אלוקיכם**.

And that's one of the reasons that we have to eat the korban pesach in the manner of kings. We recline as we eat, and we eat the roasted mutton prepared in the most tasty fashion. Because we are the princes in this world, the children of Hashem. We are the true aristocrats of society. **כל בן נכר לא יאכל בו** - "No gentile is allowed to eat from the meat of the korban pesach." It was a demonstration of the superiority of the Am Yisroel. **בנים אתם לה' אלוקיכם**. No matter what they're saying in the street, the truth will never go lost from the Am Yisroel. We are the **בני א-ל**. The world was created for the us! Everything else, the birds, the trees, and all the nations of the world are only the backdrop, the scenery, for the true actors on the world stage, the Am Yisroel. We are the heart of Mankind, the pulse of the world, and we are what Hashem is always thinking about. You might get angry at that statement - such chauvinism! - but what could I do?! It says it clearly in the Torah. I won't falsify the Torah!

LAUGHING AT THE GENTILE STUPIDITY

And it is the recognition of this truth, that Hashem has chosen us to be His people, and that we are the purpose of the universe, that must guide us throughout our lives. Because that is the only solution to this age old problem of the gentile influence. When a Jew recognizes his greatness, and his function in this world, he looks down at the gentile ways. He disdains their ideals and laughs at their attitudes.

Up until recently the Jews were a proud people. They were well aware of their worth and of the unique superiority of the Torah. The lesson of our greatness that is taught by the eating of the korban pesach lived with them all the days of their lives. But since the advent of the Reform and the Haskalah approximately two hundred years ago, the Jewish world began to suffer pangs of inferiority. Our pride went lost and many began to look up to the ways of the gentiles and to scorn our own people and its ways.

THE PRINCE AND THE PAUPER

And that's the great danger of not always being aware of the greatness of our people and the unique function we have in this world. Because once a person loses this feeling of pride, he falls prey to all of the foolish things that the outside world takes pride in. It's like the story of the prince who for some reason had to leave the palace and go into exile. And he took with him some of the royal jewels with him so that he would always be able to reach his hand into his pocket and feel the diamonds and remember that wherever he ended up, he was still the son of the king.

Now, after a while the prince doesn't look like so much of a prince anymore. His clothes wear out, and he takes on the look of a bum. So the people begin calling him a vagabond, a man worth nothing. And he says, "What do you mean?! I'm a prince. My father is the king!" And they laugh at him, "What prince? What king? You're just a bum. Stop with your craziness. Even if you were a prince once, you're nothing now."

So this prince feels in his pocket and pulls out the diamonds to show them. "Look at these diamonds from the palace! Only a prince would have such valuable diamonds." And they deride him, "Diamonds?! That's what you call a diamond? Those diamonds aren't worth anything. We'll show you some diamonds." And they bring out some cubic zirconias. Some big half pound zirconias that are worth next to nothing. But they're big and they're glittering in the sunlight. They're so attractive, so exciting. And they say, "Look; you give us those little things, and we'll give you some good diamonds, big ones." And so this foolish prince makes the trade with them. He gives up his precious diamonds for their empty promises and shiny stones.

And that's what the nations of the world are doing. They're telling us that it's all nothing; that we're living in the past. That the world is advancing and leaving us behind. "Your diamonds are not diamonds," they say. And they're convincing us to trade our greatest pride of being the children of Hashem, with the garbage of the Knicks and entertainment and all the other filth and foolishness of the world. And because we don't know what we have, we throw it all away. We're bamboozled by the umos ha'olam to walk with them straight into Gehenim.

Let's imagine Eretz Yisroel long ago, when we came into the land. And there are still some goyim who have not yet been

driven out, not destroyed. In ancient times, there were soft-hearted Jews who did not fulfill the command to drive out the inhabitants of the land. And therefore Hakodosh Boruch Hu warned that they would be a mokesch for us, a snare. "If you let the people remain in the land, they will be a snare, a trap for you."

JEW'S JOINING THE CANA'ANITE HARVEST FESTIVAL

Now you have the Bnei Yisroel living in Eretz Yisroel, and some of them see that there is a village of these original goyim that is still there. And the goyim living there have an idol. Let's say the Ba'al. And now they're making a festival, a harvest festival, as they bring in their crops from the fields. And as they bring in their produce they dress themselves in gay raiment and they bring in food and drink. Men and women get together and they're having a very good time. It was a lot of fun there and they're doing it with a big parade. And they take their god and they mount it on a platform, and carry it on their shoulders back and forth through the village. And there is a big procession to the middle of the town and everyone gives it great honor and bows down to it. And there is one Yisroel who wandered over just to look. Let's say it was a youth, a boy who was lazy to sit in the beis hamedrash and learn. So he went out and now he's watching the parade.

Now this boy comes back and he finds some more boys of his ilk; boys who don't learn, who are not ambitious. So when everyone is sitting in the beis medrash learning, he's talking with two or three of his chaverim who have come together in the corner of the beis medrash to talk. So he tells them what he saw. And he says, "Let's go together and take a look next time there's a festival."

Now suppose they would approach one of the successful boys in the yeshiva, "Do you want to come along with us?" He would say, "Who cares what those stupid goyim do? Those foolish idol worshippers! They're minds are full of garbage. It's such stupidity!" So his pride doesn't even permit him to consider such a thing. He doesn't dream of such a thing. It's so below him. A person who knows why he's here in this world, a person who is proud of his purpose in life, looks at all of these foolish gentile ideals with disdain. It's a joke to him, a stupidity. The theater?! It's mamash crazy! Reading newspapers? Sports teams?! The Mets and the Yanks?! The names of the goyim and the way they dress?! Their carnivals and their stadiums?! Bowling and roller-skating?!

It's all mamash nothing to the one who is aware of his own greatness, and his true potential.

THE QUEER PARADOX

But these boys have no pride. They're failures. They don't think much of themselves. And so off they go to the festival. And they even participate in the fun. And now, something happens to their character and it's a queer paradox. They begin thinking that they're better than the boys in the yeshiva. As a substitute to the pride of achieving in service of Hashem, they have the pride of imitating the goyim. "We're like everyone else, like the rest of the world. After all, these goyim are not the only ones. They're a big nation. And all of the countries do the same. It's only us, the **מעט מכל העמים**, who deny the idols." So they begin to identify with the vast majority of mankind who pursue these vanities. And therefore as a substitute for the pride of being the Am Hashem and of pursuing perfection and becoming great in the service of Hashem, they begin to feel a new pride, the pride of **נהיה ככל הגוים**, of being like their empty neighbors.

HASHEM WEEPS

And when we are not willing to stand aloof from the gentiles, and instead we take pride in the same foolish ideals as them, Hashem weeps for our pride that has gone lost. Yirmiyahu Hanavi tells us what Hashem is saying: "My soul weeps in secret because of your pride" (Yirmiyahu 13:17). And Chazal explain (Chagiga 5b) that Hashem is weeping because of the pride that was taken from His children and given over to the nations of the world. Hashem says, "I am weeping because of this false pride that My children now feel; the pride of assimilating the ideas of the goyim, instead of their pride in Me." The pride of the liberals who try to be like all the goyim. The pride of the Jew who reads the New York Times editorials praising homosexuality and promiscuity. The pride of those who honor the academic world, the humanists and the atheists who say there are no absolute standards of human behavior. The pride of the young Jewish men who identify with the sports teams of their cities. The pride of the Jew from Manhattan who thinks he is more cultured than the Jew in Williamsburg because he goes to the theater. The pride of all those fools who go to the opera, and they say "Ooh" and "Ahh" when somebody is singing in Italian, and they don't even understand. And it's as boring as could be. But just because all the other shoitim are saying "Ooh" and "Ahh," they also do the same.

Or the pride of those who go to the ballet where the most silly posturing takes place. The pride of the culture of music, and the art, and the museums and all the other empty ideals that we are being tested with.

OPERA AND BALLETT IN THE HAMPTONS

All these forms of pride are as ridiculous as could be. It's so foolish! But that is the test that we are all facing, and that is the test that so many are failing. I say opera and ballet, so that you people here in Flatbush can point at the Jews in Long Island and pat yourselves on the back. But this false arrogance and pride in empty things is affecting all of us.

IS IT ICE-CREAM OR MANURE?

All these vanities, all these stupidities, all these anonities of the non-Jewish world are seeping into all of our homes. And all of our heads. And we all are living with the sense of false pride in all of these foolish ideas. And Yirmiyahu says that Hashem cries about that, because it is exactly the opposite of the pride that He bestowed upon us, the pride of being the separate and unique people of the world. Hashem cries because we swallow this manure that the nations of the world offer to us, and we think it's ice-cream. And we're busy licking the plate clean.

JEWISH PRIDE

Now, this bochur in the Yeshiva, who laughed at the boys who showed interest in the harvest festival, how did he achieve that great excellence of mind and character? From where does this true pride develop, the pride that allows one to laugh and disdain those who go to sporting events and those who always want to know the score? Not just to ignore these foolish ideas, but to actually recognize the utter stupidity and emptiness in these things. From where does it come?

And the answer is that the true Torah Jew knows that all the greatness, all the achievement, and all the happiness is found among ourselves only. Because all of the great things come from Hashem's Torah. All the greatness that you came into this world to achieve will be found only in the Torah attitudes and the Torah culture. All of the good middos, all of the da'as, all of the madreigos ha'emunah, and all of the levels of perfection, are found by us.

"AND HASHEM SAID TO PATRICK SAYING..."

We, the Am Yisroel, were created as the distinctive creation, and we were therefore bestowed with especial qualities for this especial function. We are constantly saying **אשר קדשנו** במצוותי, You Hashem made us a distinct people with Your mitzvahs. All day long **אשר קדשנו**. All day long **ברוך אתה** - You! You! What people in the world can say "You" to Hashem! Only us! Only us! Does it say anywhere in the Torah "And Hashem spoke to Patrick saying..."? No! It's only the Am Yisroel who were chosen for the great function of being the ones who can achieve perfection. And once a person recognizes that important truth, he will recognize the emptiness of the ideologies and institutions of the nations of the world, and his mind is swept clean of all the frivolities, affectations and misconceptions that surround him. **אשר קדשנו** במצוותי - Hashem, You have made us holy, and lifted us from the muck and mud of the nations of the world. And this yeshiva man, who is always repeating and reiterating these great ideas every time he says **אשר קדשנו**, spits at the foolishness of the goyim. His pride in being a servant of Hashem overwhelms all of the "fun times" offered to him by the outside world.

THE TRUE PURPOSE OF MITZVOS

We now begin to realize that the purpose of every mitzvah includes the important function of being different. **אשר קדשנו** במצוותי - "He made us holy with His commandments." You say it every day, many times, but do you know what you're saying? How did He make us holy? What does "holy" mean? You think that when you do a mitzvah, you become filled with a certain aura, some spiritual halo that surrounds your body? Could be, could be; I'm not saying not. But that's not what holy means. Holy means that we are separate from everybody. When we do mitzvot we distinguish ourselves as the people who are in this world for the purpose of being Hashem's servants. "That You made us holy," means that You separated us from everybody. And that's one of the most important functions of any mitzvah; to demonstrate to ourselves, and to anyone else, that we are Hashem's especial people, and that we are devoted entirely to Him. You can't say **אשר קדשנו** במצוותי and then go put on the TV or the radio. You can't say **אשר קדשנו** and then catch a train to Manhattan to see a play on Broadway. You can, of course you can. But that means that you have no idea what you are saying. And it means that you are completely unaware of your greatness.

ואבדיל אתכם מן הגוים להיות לי. Hashem says. I separated you from the goyim so that you should be mine. Now, that's written by the laws of kashrus. Now kashrus is important for many reasons. And if you're going to explain by reasons of health, you won't be wrong. Absolutely you'll find good rational explanations for the mitzvah of kashrus.

IF YOU'RE SEPARATE FROM THE GOYIM THEN YOU'RE MINE

But in these words of Hashem we find the most important reason: **ואבדיל אתכם מן העמים**, we should be different from all the nations of the world. We're given a more restricted diet, an aristocratic diet, to demonstrate that we are different, that we are set apart from the rest of the world. And that is so important, that it is the secret of the entire history of our survival. "I am separating you from all the nations to be Mine." "Mine," means Mine forever. It says **אם אתם מובדלין מן העמים אתם שלי**. If you are separate from the nations, then you belong to Me (Toras Cohanim Kedoshim).

The **גאוותן של ישראל**, the pride that only a Torah Jew can have, that is what will give us the strength we need to look down in disdain at the outside world. And we look down, knowing that there is absolutely nothing to find among the nations of the world. And instead, we look up to Hashem, up to what we possess, and we know that only He is our greatness - in this world and in the World to Come.

Have a wonderful Shabbos.

תורת אביגדור

"שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך"



Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

What should a person do if he feels like he's going through a lot of difficulties raising his children?

A:

If a person is bringing up children בתורה, only that it turns out that it's a difficult job to do, he should know that his reward is tremendous. The Gemara says that if a person has צער גידול בנים, if he has difficulties in raising his children, then אינו רואה פתחה של גהינם - "he won't even have to walk past the door of Gehenim." So when you pass out of this world, you will go straight to Olam Habah.

The mitzvah of גידול בנים, raising up children, is one of the biggest mitzvos of the Torah! You know what it means to make Jews?! You suffer from them. But the more you suffer, the greater is the reward. Now, if you have a good boy or a good girl, and they caused you no suffering because they themselves chose to do good all the time, you'll still get reward. But not a reward like that one who suffers. צער גידול בנים makes you a wealthy person. You should know that the reward in Gan Eden is to sit on a golden throne just because you suffered in this great cause of raising up children for the service of Hashem. Because that's the true success of a Jew in this world, to raise up a family that will serve Hashem and remain after him forever and ever.

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