

תורת אביגדור הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim



פרשת אחרי מות



Sefer Vayikra The Markovitz Family Edition

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בעזהשי״ת

פרשת אחרי מות

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

Two Goats

- Part I -

- Part II -

Eisav in Our History | 1

Eisav in The Present | 7

- Part III -

Eisav is Destroyed | 12

Part I. Eisav in Our History

THE MOST UNUSUAL KAPARAH

In *Parshas Achrei Mos* we come to the special subject of the *sa'ir l'azazel*, the unique goat offering of Yom Kippur. Anybody who learns *Mesichta Yuma* knows that this *sa'ir* is a very important part of the Yom Kippur *avodah*; even if you'll just read the *chumash* or the *machzor* you can sense the magnitude of the momentous occasion when the *sa'ir la'azazel* was offered. And yet, as important as it is, the truth is that we know very little about its significance.

It's a very unusual *kaparah*, this *sa'ir*. It's *kodshim*, but its procedure is unlike all other *kodshim*. It's a goat; one of the animals that is typically brought as a *korban*, yet nothing else about it is typical. The primary *avodah* of the *sa'ir* doesn't even take place in the Beis Hamikdash. Instead it is taken far away from Yerushalayim to the desolate mountains of *Harei Yehuda*. And the procedure that takes place there doesn't appear to be that of a *korban* altogether; what we do with the goat once it arrives in the wilderness is very strange. All the other offerings that we bring, we slaughter it at the neck, that's *shechita*, and then we put the blood on the *mizbei'ach*, the *z'rikas ha'dam*. And in most cases you burn up the fat, and sometimes the limbs, on the *mizbei'ach* as well.

But the sa'ir la'azazel, you don't slaughter it, and you don't sprinkle any blood. And nothing at all is offered up on the mizbei'ach to Hashem. All you do is lead the *sa'ir* to a precipice, to a high cliff, and you give it a shove; you push it over the edge and watch it roll down the rocky mountainside, crashing against the rocks. By the time it reaches the bottom it's smashed to little pieces. הוא מתגלגל ויוֹרד... עד שנעשה אברים אברים. That's how we bring this offering to Hashem! It's a remarkable thing!

THE POWERFUL GOAT

And yet, this goat that doesn't seem to be a korban at all - it has none of the characteristics of a korban - and yet it achieves what no other korban can achieves. It's so potent that it has the power to be michapeir, to atone, even for people who sin b'meizid, intentionally. You know, all the offerings that bring atonement, they can only atone for sins that are committed unwittingly, b'shogeig. It's an axiom - a korban can not atone for a sin done b'meizid. But the sa'ir la'azazel is the one exception to this rule. And what's more, the sa'ir la'azazel brings you atonement even if you didn't do teshuva! It's unbelievable. No korban is michapeir unless a person does teshuva beforehand.

It's a remarkable thing that you're hearing now. A man sins b'meizid; he shaves his beard with a razor, let's say, and he doesn't do teshuva, he's not even m'harheir b'teshuva. And now, just because a goat is thrown off a cliff, this sinner becomes purified; he's a clean man now. The Rambam says that in Hilchos Teshuva. It's remarkable! It's the one exception in the Torah where such a thing is found. Now it's true, it won't be michapeir for everything; chayvei krisos it won't be michapeir for. But it's michapeir on all esin and lavin; that's a lot of aveiros! And so, something like this, a korban that is so different from all other korbanos, needs a good explanation.

STUDYING THE CEREMONY

Now, I'm not capable of explaining Hashem's reasons, but when we study the sa'ir la'azazel we keep in mind the words of the Rambam: "These ceremonies are of a symbolic nature, and they are intended to teach certain ideas and to induce men to repent" (Moreh Nevuchim 3:46), and we understand that some of the lessons are so self-evident that we are expected to study them well. Because even though the sa'ir can bring atonement without any teshuva, the Rambam tells us that the "ceremony" itself - that means studying the procedure

understanding it - is expected to create for us a new mind, new attitudes and ideals, that should stimulate a person to return to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

The first thing we ask is: What's so special about this goat that it brings such a kaparah? And for the answer to that question we turn to a medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 65:15) that says as follows: הַּשָּׁעֵיר מָּה שָּׁשִׁי - "Who is this goat, this sa'ir, that is being led out to the mountain? It's Eisav." Now, that's a cryptic statement - Eisav is a goat? What does that mean? So we think back to our days in the cheder when we learned chumash and we remind ourselves that we once had an uncle Eisav, who was compared to a sa'ir. You remember when Eisav was born it says about him: וְיֵצֵא הָּרָאשׁוֹן אַדְמוֹנִי כָּלוֹ כָּאַדֶּרֶת שֵּעֶר - "And the first one came out covered all over k'aderes sei'ar, like a hairy coat." (Bereishis 25:25). He was exceptionally hairy, and he was well-known for that. בּוֹן עֵשָׁוֹ אָחִי אִיִי - "My brother Eisav is a hairy man," said Yaakov (Bereishis 27:11). Sa'ar means hair and sa'ir is a goat because the goat is a very hairy animal. And Har Se'ir is the land where Eisav, the hairy man, dwelled.

MORE THAN EISAV GOES OFF THE CLIFF

And so when we lead the *sa'ir la'azazel* out to the desert, we understand now that it's Eisav we are taking out. And when we get to the *tzuk*, to that precipice where the *kaparah* takes place, it's Eisav we are pushing off a high cliff. That's it; that's the whole ceremony! We throw Eisav off a cliff and we have a *kaparah*! It's a remarkable concept! That throwing the goat of Eisav off a mountain cliff should bring such a powerful atonement for the *Am Yisroel*?!

So to better understand what's happening here, we note that the sa'ir la'azazel, the goat of Eisav doesn't just go out the wilderness unencumbered; וְנָשָׁא הַשְּׁעִיר - "And the goat carries something out to the desert." When we push the sa'ir off the cliff, with him goes tumbling down a heavy load. And what is in that load that goes over the cliff with Eisav? וִנְשָׁא הַשְּׁעִיר עֲװְנוֹתְם - "Eisav carries away on his back, וִנְשָׁא הַשְּעִיר בְּשוֹנוֹתְם, עֲװְנוֹתְם, עֲװְנוֹתְם, יְשוֹנוֹתְם, יְשוֹנוֹתְם, יְשוֹנוֹתְם, לוֹנוֹת הָם - the word avonosam, 'their sins,' should be read 'avonos tam,' the aveiros of the ish tam, that's Yaakov. On the back of Eisav we load all of our sins, even sins b'meizid, and we lead them away to a high rocky cliff.

And so how is this extraordinary atonement accomplished? By blaming Eisav! We put the blame for our *aveiros* onto Eisav; and we push the goat, and along with it, our sins, off a mountain. Eisav and his load of

our *aveiros* roll down the mountainside smashing to pieces, and we are left clean and purified.

IT'S NOT FAIR!

Now we wouldn't be wrong if we asked a question: Is that fair? Why should Eisav be blamed to suffer for the sins of Yaakov? And that's a big question - at least *I* think it's a big question. What is it Eisav's fault that the *Am Yisroel* has sinned during the year? We throw Eisav off a cliff, and our sins go down with him? Where is the *yosher* here?

And the answer is, it's all *yosher*. Because if you want to know the reason for almost all the sins of Yaakov, it's only because there's an Eisav around. Now I don't mean to blame only our Uncle Eisav; he's a *mashal* for the *goyim*, for all the nations of the world. It's the *goyim* who bear the responsibility for all those Jews who were misled by their false ideas. The shortcomings and imperfections of the *Am Yisroel* are almost always traced back to the *umos ha'olam*.

THE VICTIMS OF EISAV

You know, it was only seventy years ago (1905) that in the small towns, and even in the big towns, most Jews put on *tefillin*; most of them kept Shabbos, ate kosher and learned Torah every day. The Jews once kept everything! And what happened? You think all of a sudden, they just threw away everything?! The answer is that it's not the fault of the Jews; they are victims of Eisav.

In Cracow, three hundred and fifty years ago, to go without your head covered in the street you had to be a hero, a real *gibor*! That's how it used to be. In those days you needed very little *bechira* to resist the blandishments of the *goyim*. So let's say the *satan* would come over to you in Cracow and say, "Take off your hat," so you'd put up a big fight; because to walk bareheaded in Cracow meant that you were liable to get a broken head! To be a Jew meant you had to act like a Jew - there were no two ways about it.

BABY-TALK IN CRACOW

The whole atmosphere of a Jewish community was different when the influence of Eisav was kept far away. Cracow was a town where children in the street babbled *divrei Torah*. It's not what I say; Graetz, the *sonei hatorah* said that. A fact, a verifiable truth like that, even the enemy of Torah couldn't dispute. He said that children babbled *divrei Torah* in the street! Women, when they spoke, they spoke *gemara*

language because that was the language of the people. Every third word in Yiddish is a gemara word. And that's because when the people weren't busy with gentile ideas, when they lived in a pure environment, they were able to remain the nation of the ish tam.

Now, why did they leave their environment in Europe? Why did they have to come to America? It's because of the persecutions that were visited upon them by Eisav. It was Eisav who disrupted the Jewish communities; communities that had existed for hundreds of years; communities with set ways. Who broke up the yeshiva in Slabodka? The Russians! The yeshiva has just finished building a beautiful building; it was a very poor yeshiva and it had taken them fifteen years to gather together money to build the building. I was there at the chanukas habayis; it was a big simcha! And then, not long after I left, the Russians marched in. And the Communists took it away from the yeshiva and they made it into some workers place or something. Who ruined the yeshivos? Who ruined Judaism in Russia? The govim! Who ruined everything that we had built up so painstakingly where all our traditions were observed? Eisav!

AMERICAN JEWS WERE DEVOURED ALIVE

So now these Jews came to America and there was no community, no organization. And there's a law in America that you must send your child to school, and to organize functional yeshivos you need money; they weren't experienced, nobody ever did it before. And so children went to public school and that was the beginning of the whole ruination of American Jewry.

In America itself hundreds of thousands of families have disappeared. They moved out, settled among the gentiles and went lost; many intermarried - a tragedy of tragedies. Until the gedolim came from Europe and founded frum communities, American Jews were being eaten up; devoured by the ways of Eisav.

If you look on the street today so you see the Jewish American youth - today it's not only the youth, it's the old generation too - many of them are getting ruined. Look in Bensonhurst, look in the Bronx, look in the suburbs, so many Jews are lost. Blocks and blocks of not even one Shabbos observer. Take a look at what happened in America; so many Protestants go to church on Sunday, so many Catholics are going to Mass. But on Shabbos so few Jews go to shul.

Now, are the Jews such a disloyal nation?! No, there's no nation as loyal as we are. Jews wouldn't be *michaleil Shabbos* and throw away their *tefillin*; we're not a wicked people! So who deserves the blame for this great desolation, the great ruination of a Jewish street that forsook the whole Torah? The blame has to be laid squarely on the back of Eisav. It's the *goyim* who are wicked and it's only due to the effort of Eisav, who would never let us alone, that so many Jews have become ruined. Eisav is the one who broke up the communities. They physically smashed up our lives; they exiled us, driving us from town to town, from country to country. And in our new homes we had to start building all over again from scratch. It was Eisav who ruined the Jewish communal life in Cracow and Slabodka and forced us to rebuild from new.

THE SPANISH GOATS

And the truth is, what were Jews doing in Cracow and Slabodka anyhow? They didn't belong there; they had been in Spain. And in Spain there were old organized communities with prestige. But Eisav threw them out. Ferdinand, *y'mach sh'mo v'zichro*, and his wonderful wife Isabella, *y'mach sh'mah v'zichrah*, threw them out. The persecution in Spain broke up the Jewish communal life.

And further back, why were they in Spain? They should have been in Bavel where they had been for a thousand years. A thousand year old community, now *that's* a settled community; everybody kept everything. So why didn't they remain there? Eisav again! And what were they doing in Bavel? They all should have been in Eretz Yisroel, with the Beis Hamikdash, organized under the *chachmei hatorah* who were in charge. Every little detail of Jewish life was under the supervision of the Sanhedrin. You couldn't just do whatever you pleased - the Sanhedrin was in charge!

THE ROMAN GOATS

And who abolished the Sanhedrin? You know who it was who abolished the Sanhedrin? It was Gabinius, the Roman governor of Syria. He abolished it. And whose orders was he following? Antipater, the father of Hordus, who didn't want the Sanhedrin in his way. Antipater, where does he come from? He's an Edomi, from Eisav. And Rome is also Eisav. So these two minions of Eisav got together and they abolished the Sanhedrin.

So who broke up the Am Yisroel's established system of avodas Hashem? Who destroyed our communities of kedusha? Who broke us

down and drove us out among the dirty minded goyim with their filthy ideas, their polluted minds, that polluted us? Eisav! And so it's Eisav who has to carry our sins upon his shoulders because he is the one to blame. Of course, bechira still exists, no question about it. We have the free will to resist. But suppose someone comes and disturbs your good intentions; he's rodeif you, and then he tempts you, and pressures you, and now you yield. Is he innocent? You're to blame for not fighting back, but if he tempted you so he's the guilty one here. He's the one who has to go over the cliff.

Part II. Eisav in The Present

WE WANT TO DO YOUR WILL

That's what the gemara in Mesichta Brachos (17a) says: It says there that the Knesses Yisroel, the Jewish nation, declares to Hakadosh Baruch Hu: רָבּוֹנוֹ שֵׁל עוֹלֶם רְצוֹנֵנוּ לְעֲשׁוֹת רְצוֹנֵךְ – "Ribono Shel Olam, we want to do your will." By nature, the Am Hashem, the holy nation, desires to do the will of Hashem. אלא מי מעכּב - "But what prevents us?" Something is hindering us; take a look around on the street and you'll see that something is wrong; a great many Jews are very far from doing Hashem's will. And even the frummeh, it's not so easy; we're not always doing the ratzon Hashem. But we want to! רצוננו לעשות רצונך - "Hashem, we want to do whatever You want!"

So what is it that prevents us, asks the *gemara*. And the answer given there is that one of the most pressing ikuvim is shibud malchiyos, the fact we are subject to whims of the nations. Now, shibud malchiyos means a lot of things. It's a sheim ha'kollel for a lot of what we suffer from the nations of the world. I mentioned already the shibud of being moved from one place to another, and the breakdown of our communities. And they didn't move us gently. No, they did it with Crusades, pogroms and Inquisitions. They did it with yellow stars and crematoria. And just because of that they will bear eternal responsibility for preventing us from doing the will of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

THE DANGER OF LIBERTY

However, there's another shibud that has wreaked even more havoc on the Am Yisroel than that. Because a few hundred years ago, into the world came a very great sakanah, the era of tolerance. Napoleon others as well - broke down the walls that the Church had erected; and the breakdown of those barriers did as much damage to us as the forced destruction of our communities in the past. The Enlightenment; tolerance, freedom and equality, has been one of the worst of all tests in our history.

Here in America we're free, we have liberty. We have almost a hundred percent freedom, and we have to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for that. After all, America is a good country. We came from countries where we were persecuted, and this country gave us all the rights. I would say we should kiss the ground of America for all that it gave us. I was in Europe for some time; I went to study in the yeshiva in Slobodka. And when I came back, I saw even more that this was a blessed country; it's a gift from Hashem to us. Shouldn't we appreciate it?! Of course, we pay taxes, of course we keep the laws. I even say that a Jew should hang out the flag on the Fourth of July. I won't say you're a sinner if you don't, but I think it's a good thing to hang out the flag. It's not a contradiction to being a frum Jew by any means. We hang out the flag from this shul on the Fourth of July. Certainly you should be loyal to your country.

THE MABUL IN AMERICA

So you'll ask me, what's the problem then? Freedom, liberty! It's all good; what's the *shibud*?! And the answer is that that itself is the worst *shibud*! There's nothing worse than being free to follow the ways and attitudes of the *goyim*. אַבְּרֵי הַשִּׁיִא - To a certain extent we are slaves today; we're slaves to our environment. You're not really free if you live among gentiles because the worst slavery of all is being enslaved to gentile influence.

More people went lost in the crematoria of tolerance, than were destroyed in the Holocaust. The spiritual Holocaust has no equal. I remember in 1930 when you couldn't find a frum girl to marry. A frum girl was impossible to find. A frum boy was also a rarity. There was only one yeshiva in America. Outside, everyone was going lost. America was devouring the Jews. *Nebach*, a loss, a terrible loss. The *shibud malchiyos* of being enslaved to the influence of the *goyim* is our most dangerous enemy today. The whole *svivah*, the whole environment, is trying to drown out our ideals. We're being inundated on all sides by *apikorsis*, *ta'avos*, *shtus*, *avodah zarah*; there's wickedness all around us. And it's flooding our homes; most of us are being affected.

On all sides you see gentiles, and gentile ideals. Money, clothing, sports, entertainment, movies, *leitzanus*, atheism, evolution. In the winter

seasons you're inundated with season's greetings, signs of the holidays of course it's all business; it's not genuine, it's all for money, but still you can't help yourself from being drawn along. The atmosphere is avodah zarah and atheism and materialism on all sides.

GOYISHE BAR MITZVAHS

You pass by a yeshiva today, you see things going on. Tiereh boys, precious boys, and yet, they're behaving like goyim. I don't want to say why and how but they're tiereh boys, behaving like goyim. Their games are goyishe games. Their sports are goyishe sports. The way they speak, what they speak about, it's words of Eisav. When you go to a barmitzvah, you see that their dancing is goyishe dancing. It's all gentile ways. Jews should have other ways of doing things. And instead, they're thinking in goyishe ways, with goyishe thoughts.

Boruch Hashem, we're happy with them. I'm happy with them. Kein yirbu. And kein yigdilu. I love them! Tiereh boys, a thousand times better than the best goyim. And yet, they don't realize that they're being influenced by the outside world tremendously.

אחרים אחרים שם אלוהים אחרים - "And you will serve there, in golus, strange gods" (Devarim 4:28). Now, you won't actually bow down to avodah zarah there, but being among the gentiles is like serving strange gods - you can't help yourself. The attitudes of Eisav are being pounded into your head day and night, and you're bowing down to the gentile ideas. Some of us less, some of us more, but everyone is being affected.

THE AMERIKAHNER REBBEH

It's the Rambam who says that: נוֹהג כּמנהג אנשׁי מדִינָתוֹ – "A person will always behave like the people of the country where he lives." It can't be helped! Even when the tzadikim from Europe came to America, you should know that as soon as they got off the boat they had to fight against the environment. That's why I always say that a tzadik, even the biggest tzadik, when he comes to America, is already an Amerikahner, he's already spoiled. The Satmar Rov, zeicher tzadik l'vracha, as soon as he put his foot down on the soil of America had to fight back. All around him was the environment of Eisav and everyone in America was filling their minds with the American ideals.

I'm telling you right now - it's affecting all of us. It's taking place this minute. If you're living here in America, then you're going to be an American. It's impossible for a person to avoid the influence of the

country in which he lives. It enters your ears, it enters your eyes, and worst of all it enters your mind. Don't fool yourself. It's happening in every part of your life. Just the fact that I'm speaking to you in English right now is a sign of our environment pressing down upon us.

I remember many Jews in Europe who couldn't speak Lithuanian, they couldn't speak Polish. I saw many people who couldn't speak the language of the land, and it was a great barrier, a wall, between the *Am Yisroel* and *Eisav*. And they were proud of it, it's a fact. I remember the old generation. They were proud of the fact that they couldn't speak *goyish*.

THE YIDDISH PRINCIPLE

The fact that I speak English here you should know is done against my will. I would never speak English in public! Only because this is a Syrian place - they don't speak Yiddish here and I can't speak Syrian - so I have to speak English. In my shul I speak English too, but that's business; it's *parnasa*, so I can't help myself. What you do for business is something else. But if I'm invited out to speak, it's only Yiddish. It's a principle of mine. In the house also - I speak only Yiddish to my children since they were born. They answer me in English, what could I do? But I speak Yiddish; it's a principle.

Now, they must learn English in the schools; I'm not saying English is a bad thing to learn. But the problem is that you have to learn for the Regents. So they tell you to read books, novels. And you have to learn evolution too. *Apikorsis* has to be taught in the *yeshivos*, in the *Beis Yankivs*. Of course the teacher says, "We don't believe in it; but when they ask you the question on the examination, you have to say this and this - you have to write this and this *apikorsis*." And once you can read English you have the opportunity to read all the filth of the *umos ha'olam*. We need to know that this *shibud malchiyos* is hollowing out our nation!

MOSHE RABEINU'S LAST WARNING

And now we can begin to understand the words of Moshe Rabeinu when he spoke to the Bnei Yisroel just before they entered the land of Eretz Yisroel. "You're coming now into Eretz Yisroel, and you're going to settle in your own land," he said. "But I must warn you." And he said as follows: אַכָּי יְשַׁבְּעֶם בְּשֶּׁרֶץ מִצְּרָיִם - "You know very well that you once lived in Mitzrayim, שַּׁתְּעָלְיָהֶם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהֶם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִיִּלְיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִּיְלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִיִּלְיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִיְלְיִיְהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִיִּלְיִהָם וְשִּׁתְ נִיּלְיִהָם וְשִּׁתְ נִיְּלֵיִהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִיְּלֵיִיהָם once lived in Mitzrayim, יְבְּעִיְהָם וְשָּׁתְּתְ נִיְלְיִיְהָם וְשָּׁתְ נִיְּלְיִיְהָם וְשִּׁתְּתְ נִיְּלְיִיְהָם וְשִּׁתְּתְ נִיְּלְיִיְהָם וְשִּׁתְּתְ מִשְׁרִיִּבְּיִים בְּשִׁבְּתָם בְּשִּׁתְ נִיִּבְעִּתְם בְּשִׁרְיִם בְּשִּׁתְ נִיִּבְעִיְם בְּשִּׁרְיִם בְּשִּׁבְּתָּם בְּשִּׁתְּיִם בְּשִּׁרְיִם בּשְׁרִיִּם בְּשִּבְיִיהָם וְשָּבְּיִבְּיִם בְּשִּבְּיִבְּיִם בְּשִּבְיִיהָם וְשִּבְּירָם בְּשִּבְיִבְּים בְּשִּבְיִיהָם וְשִּבְּירָם בְּשִּבְיִיהָם וְשִּבְּירָם בְּשִּבְייִם בְּשִּבְיִיהָם בְּשִּבְּירָם בְּשִּבְּיִבְיִם בְּשִּבְיִבְּשִּים בְּשִּבְיִיהָם וְשִּבְּירִם בְּשִּבְיִיהָם בְשִּבְייהם וְשִּבְּירִם בְּשִּבְיִיהָם בְּשִּבְּייהם וְשִּבְּיִים בְּעִּבְּיִים בְּשִּבְּיִים בְּשִּבְייִם בְּשִׁבְּיִים בּיִים בּשְׁבִּים בְּשִׁבְּיִים בְּשִּבְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּעִּבְּיִים בּיּשְׁבִּים בּיִּים בּיּבְּיִים בְּעִיּים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּעִּבְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִּבְּיִים בְּעִיּים בְּעִּים בְּיִּבְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִּים בְּעִיּים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִּים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִּבְיִים בְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִּבְיִּים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִבְּים בְּיִים בְּיבְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִבְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיִים בְּיבְּים ב

away from Mitzrayim and now they're going to their own land, into Eretz Yisroel. Who cares what they once saw?

No! Because once you see something, even if you saw it forty years ago, it's already in your mind. It's called mental assimilation. It's not only physical assimilation you have to worry about, that you're mixing among the goyim, but it's your mind that you have to be worried about. Your head is becoming assimilated. You could have peyos down to your belt, what does it help if they're growing out of a gentile mind?! פַּן יִי "There might be a poison root growing in your minds" (Devarim 29:17). What you see, what you hear, could bear poison fruit in your mind. The seeds are planted, all types of seeds, and now you have a gentile jungle growing in your head.

That's a remarkable thing; we wouldn't say such a thing! It's forty years already since they left Eretz Mitzrayim. And they've been all together in the wilderness. The encampment in the midbar was like a kollel under Moshe Rabeinu's personal supervision. There was no mingling in the midbar and now they're going straight into Eretz Yisroel. So what's the problem?! "No," said Moshe Rabeinu said, "it's a big problem." הַּבְּרָאוֹ אֶת שִׁקוֹצִיהֶם - Once you saw with your eyes the gentile culture, their attitudes and ways, so the picture of those abominations remain in your mind. And that picture is a sakanah. It could very well be a root of poison and it'll grow in your mind and who knows what dangerous fruit it might bear in the future.

IF MOSHE SAYS IT'S A BIG DEAL IT'S A BIG DEAL

We think it's too much, too extreme, that Moshe Rabeinu was making a big deal about nothing. But that's only because we are already assimilated with gentile ideas. They're already a part of our lives so we think it's normal. But if you listen to Moshe Rabeinu's words you'll see how careful you must be. It's remarkable how much you have to be afraid; once you saw the gentile ways they're going to persist in your mind even though you didn't follow those ways. And even though a long time has transpired since you saw it. The fact that you once saw it already presents a peril what may come of it in the future. And that's why Moshe Rabeinu warned them again and again! "You might have poison in your head!"

And so we begin to see that in addition to the danger of being persecuted by the gentiles, there is the bigger danger of having your minds follow the attitudes and the ways of the gentiles - even if it's from

a distance. If you live in Long Island, in Westchester, or in West Orange, so of course you have to beware; but even in Boro Park and Williamsburg and Lakewood, you're in grave danger.

Part III. Eisav is Destroyed

WE HAVE NOTHING AGAINST THE GENTILES

It's a very important point you're hearing now. We're expected to fight back against the great influence of Eisav that fills the world, and the *sa'ir la'azazel* is the one *korban* that is made to emphasize, to underscore this point. We're being told, "You know what the remedy to all this is? Take Eisav as a *korban*, but don't offer him on the *mizbei'ach* - Eisav has no place in the *mikdash*. Instead you take him far away - lead him away from Yerushalayim as far as possible - and throw him off a mountain; get rid of him so that you shouldn't be tempted again. And when you see him tumbling down the steep mountain smashing to pieces, that's the atonement for your wicked ways.

If we wish to be rid of our sins, if we wish to achieve a *kaparah* for the wrong things we did, so one of the most important things that we have to do is to get rid of Eisav. Now that doesn't mean that you should go out to the street and get rid of *goyim*. We're not going to take *goyim* and throw them off the roof. Leave them alone; that's not our business here. Don't fight with goyim! You have to fight with the *goy* inside you that's the toughest *goy* there is - and get rid of *him*. Once you find him and take hold of him, you'll find that he's a tenant that refuses to move. And the truth is that you love that tenant. You'll be surprised how much you love that *goy* inside of you - you refuse to part with him.

It's like a landlord who's complaining about his tenant and he calls the marshal to dispossess the tenant. But then, when the marshal comes the landlord starts hemming and hawing, "No, I can't let him go. I want him." We want that tenant in us! That's the real problem here, the *goy* inside of our heads - not the *goy* on the street.

We have nothing against the *goyim*, no resentment against them. As long as they're decent, they're our fellow citizens. We don't hate them; why should we? Of course, the criminals we hate. And the liberals who are destroying America, I'm not too fond of them either. But decent *goyim*, we have nothing against them.

Good gentiles are a *bracha* for the world. I could mention a number of good gentiles. Sometimes there's a good *goy* who comes along and he says good things that you should listen to; to vote in a certain way, he gives *eitzos* for safety, ideas how to fight against evolution; all good things.

THE CONTAGIOUS GOY

But even good *goyim*, as much as possible, have nothing to do with them, because they have different ways. I once saw a *goy* who was fighting very hard against evolution. He wrote books against it; he was defending *Bereishis*. He looked like a big *tzadik* and I appreciated what he was doing. But then I saw that in one of his books he made a joke about Yaakov Avinu. I won't repeat the joke, but it was a shame. And I learned that *a goy iz fort a goy*. Here he's fighting for *ma'aseh bereishis*, fighting for *emunah*, and he makes a joke about Yaakov Avinu. And so it never pays to be close to a *goy*, it doesn't pay at all. He's like a person who has a very heavy cold and he's sneezing and coughing - you don't want to catch his contagious ideas. That's how the *goy* on the street becomes the *goy* inside your head.

If you have to do business, so you're nice and polite, you have derech eretz, and you're mikadeish sheim shamayim. You show that you're decent, and you make a good impression, but don't be interested in him at all. Be friendly to him, but don't become friends. "Hello," you say, "Good morning, Joe." "Have a nice day, Fred. You're doing great work!" Be nice to him, congratulate him, whatever it is, but watch out! Don't associate with him; don't have any private connection with them at all. The further away we are from the good gentiles too, the better off we are.

THE RUINED STEAK

Now the Torah tells us a general principle: לֹא תָבִיא תּוֹעֶבָה אֶל - "Do not bring any abomination into your house" (Devarim 7:26). Of course, the plain meaning is that you don't bring an idol into your house - even if you're just holding it as a memento, a souvenir. But the lesson here is that nothing abominable, nothing of Eisav, should be brought into your house. And the Torah says why: because you're going to make your house abominable. What you bring into your house changes the nature of your house. You could have a beautiful home, and you bring in something from Eisav and now it's all ruined. It's like a good piece of meat, a piece of steak, but it fell into the toilet. It's nothing now!

And therefore, as much as possible you should keep the *goy* out of your home, out of your thoughts. And that's a very big job today because the gentile attitudes are permeating our lives. The air is *tamei* and it's creeping under the door - I'm sorry to say that in many homes the *goyim* are not creeping in; the door is wide open and we invite them to walk right in.

SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT TV

Of course, you shouldn't have any TV, chas v'Shalom. לֹא תָּבִיא טִינּ י You shouldn't bring the abomination of television into your home." Don't allow Eisav into your house, because his big mouth opens up and he pours out all of his leitzanus into your dining room. Surely you wouldn't take the sewer main, with all the filth from people's toilets and let it empty into your dining room.

If you have a wire bringing Eisav into your house you can forget about it altogether because ein lo cheilek l'olam habo. No question about it. If הַקּוֹרָא בַּפְּבָּרִים חִיצוֹנְיִים אֵין לוֹ חֵלֶק לְעוֹלְם הַבָּא, and this man brings them into his home every night - he sits and looks at their shows and their movies, surely he can forget about olam habo! No question about it at all; and spread the word by the way. It's impossible to have a Jewish home with a television in it. There are no two ways about it; either you have a mikdash or you have a television. It can't be both.

CLEANING THE HOME WHEN YOUR WIFE IS OUT

And if *chalilah* you're still living with Eisav in your home so you should take that TV and you throw it off a cliff. You don't live near a mountain? So throw it out your window. If you live in a basement or on the first floor so you lug it up to the roof, and make sure that nobody is walking on the sidewalk below. If the coast is clear, you throw it over and watch it become *eivarim eivarim*; it becomes smashed to pieces. Or you can take a hammer and smash it; smash out the inside and use the box as a shelf for *seforim*. Your wife won't let? So you give her some money to go shopping and when she's out spending your money, you throw it out the window. It's worth all the money in the world to get that *to'eivah* out of your home.

Included in the abominations that we send out on the back of the *sa'ir la'azazel* and throw over the cliff is the reading material of the *goyim*. Magazines, novels, even children's books. In the public library there is no end of dirty books. Today, that's what they offer to children in the libraries; the library books are full of *tum'ah*. Once upon a time the

libraries had good books; I know, they didn't let any immoral books into the library. They weren't always too wise, but they were good books. They taught you how to work hard and make a living, how you can get rich with good character. That was the old time books in the library. But today it's terrible what's available there, terrible.

CLEANING OUT YOUR HEAD

But as much as we have to throw Eisav's books and magazines out of the Jewish home, just as important is to throw the attitudes of Eisav out of our mind. We're expected to throw over the cliff all of the ideals of the umos ha'olam. We laugh at what they think is important. Sports is false. Entertainment is false. Literature is false. The literature of the gentiles is sheker v'chazav; it never happened. What can I tell you already; American Jews are accustomed to fiction; novels, drama, plays, movies. People write stories from their own imagination, or people are being paid to act in a certain way, and you sit there reading, watching, b'koived rosh, as if it was something important.

Don't tell me you just read it or watch it but it has no effect. It has an effect! It leaves over a bad smell. You can't have a nice home that smells like tzo'ah; it doesn't work. It smells up your house. Now some people are so accustomed to the bad smell of Eisav so they think it's natural. If you have to have a book by Eisav - I'm not giving you a heter, but if for whatever reason you have something from Eisav in your home - so make sure to keep it in the bathroom, where the smell won't bother you. The bathroom, that's the *goyishe* library. Otherwise it will be *mitamei* the atmosphere of the whole house.

As much as possible try to isolate the ideas of Eisav from your house. Even mannerisms and habits we should distance ourselves from, even those which have been made kosher already. Kosher Chinese food. What does that mean kosher Chinese food?! It's like kosher ham. There shouldn't be a remez of Eisav in your life. Forget about Thanksgiving; forget about anything that smells of gentiles in your house. Forget about Manhattan. Forget about the Yankees; baseball is nothing. The pitcher throws the ball and the man at the base gives a whack with a stick and everybody goes crazy: "Whoooo!" They're shouting! They stamp their feet and he's running and you are ignited. Your blood becomes ignited by the excitement, which means you are participating in the hevlei hagoyim, the emptiness of the gentiles. To be excited over nothing means that you're becoming a nothing!

BASEBALL WASN'T INVENTED BY THE ROSHEI YESHIVA

And it's the influence of Eisav that is making us into nothings. They're coughing germs all the time; poisonous things, and we're getting sick. Any wickedness you see among the Jews is only because they're imitating the gentiles. Who invented baseball? Did the *Roshei Yeshiva* sit down, an *asifah* of *talmidei chachomim* sitting *b'koved rosh*, and come up with such a foolish thing?!

Why are there so many divorces among Jews today? Jews don't divorce; it's not the nature of Jews to divorce. Only that they're learning from the gentiles to divorce. Many other wicked things too, we're learning from the gentiles. All entertainment is from the gentiles. There's no Jewish entertainment! Of course, today already there is; but it's all from Eisav, it's all imitations of the *umos ha'olam*.

And so this very important offering, although it's not a korban on the mizbei'ach, but it's michapeir more than all the korbanos. Throwing the influence of Eisav off a mountain and smashing him to pieces, that's our kaparah. Getting rid of the influence of Eisav as much as possible, that's the true path to teshuva. Because our faults, our sins, our indiscretions, they're all imitations of the umos ha'olam. Eisav and the goyim are to blame, for our lapses and our dereliction of duty to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And therefore יְּנְשֶׁא דַשְּׁעִיר אֶת עֲוֹנוֹתְם - "Eisav the sa'ir carries away our sins, el eretz gzeirah, to a desolate land."

And so, the *derech hatorah* is to fight back against the outside influence as much as possible. Of course, the hot-heads, they like to hear that; they want to go out and make trouble and fight. But that's not what we're saying here. There's room for that too, for standing up against the abominations of the *umos ha'olam* - I write letters all the time to the mayor, to others, protesting against how they're ruining America - but that's not what we're saying here. The most important way to free ourselves from the *shibud malchiyus* of living among the gentiles is by shaking ourselves loose from the shackles of Eisav's ideas that fill our mind. And by means of that, the Knesses Yisroel comes back to what we told Hakodosh Boruch Hu: *Ritzoneinu la'asos ritzonecha* - "We want to do your will."

THINKING ALONG WITH HASHEM

In Mesichta Avos (2:4) we learn: אָשֵה רְצוֹנוֹ בִּרְצוֹנוֹ בִּרְצוֹנוֹ בִּרְצוֹנוֹ בִּרְצוֹנוֹ בִּרְצוֹנוֹ רִא - "Make the will of Hashem your will." Now there are a number of *peirushim*, all true, all right. But right now we'll learn the *peirush* that we need for our subject of

today - for how to rid our lives, our minds, of Eisav's influence. "Make His will your will," means this: Make Hashem's will your will. In your mind, what He wills, what He wishes, that should be your wish. What Hakodosh Boruch Hu considers important, that's what you should consider important. What Hakodosh Boruch Hu admires, that's what you should admire.

For instance, Hakodosh Boruch Hu loves the Am Yisroel. He's oheiv amo Yisroel. He loves the Jewish people. It says that openly - again and again it's stated that He loves the Am Yisroel more than anything else. So you should train yourself, you should work on thinking the same way as Him. You should also love the Am Yisroel. Become a patriot for the Am Yisroel. Love the Am Yisroel. You're making His will like your will.

Hakodosh Boruch Hu loves the places of Torah. צָּיוֹן - Hashem loves the she'arim hamitzuyanim b'halacha. So you pass by a yeshiva where people are learning, practice loving that place. You're not going in - you're on your way to work, or you're just passing by on the way to shopping, love that place. Even though you have no money to give to them, love them anyhow. Have a feeling, "It's a beautiful place, an excellent place. I love the people inside, all those who are learning Torah. Because Hashem loves yeshivos, so I love the yeshivos too." Say it; it's fine, nobody will hear you. Say, "I love this yeshiva; I love the people in the yeshiva."

BUILDING THE BEIS HAMIKDASH ON OCEAN AVENUE

Now, once you're doing that, little by little you're beginning to think the way Hakodosh Boruch Hu thinks. Like it says (Yeshaya 56:4), יוֹבְאַשֶּׁר הַפְּצְהַיּ - "They should choose what I choose." And even if you're not doing anything about it, but in your mind you're emulating the thoughts of Hashem. You can walk down the street in Flatbush and you're thinking, "I'd like to build *yeshivos* all over the world. I don't have any money, but that's what Hashem wants, so I want it too."

"I'd like to have the Beis Hamikdash and bring *korbanos* again." Work on creating that desire in your mind. At first, you don't mean it, you don't desire the Beis Hamikdash - you desire maybe to eat in the restaurants of Eisav, or to put on the radio to hear Eisav speaking. You desire to sit in a stadium with thousands of Eisavs, watching Eisavs hit balls with a stick. Or maybe you're more "sophisticated" than that so you want to go see Eisav at the theatre. A lot of things you desire, but not

the Beis Hamikdash, not to build *yeshivos*. But if you put effort in, if you begin to think along with Hashem and you say the words, so little by little you begin to shape your thoughts to the thoughts of Hashem.

So you walk down Ocean Avenue and you say יָהִי רַצוֹן מִלְפַנֵיך and you say it with a desire, a cheishek. Instead of looking around at the goyim, at their cars, and their billboards, and their advertisements in the store windows inviting you to come in to waste your money on things that one day you'll have to send off on the back of the sa'ir la'azazel anyhow, instead of all that you're filling your mind with Torah ideals, the attitudes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

THE ASSIMILATION ANTIDOTE

Train yourself to think how Hashem thinks. You're training your mind that His will should become your will. You begin to love all the ideals of the Torah because Hashem loves them. You can train yourself to do that little by little. Make that your goal, that whatever Hashem considers right, in your mind it also should be right. And what Hashem doesn't like, I also don't like. And little by little you become transformed.

When a person as much as possible learns learn to think like Hashem thinks, that is the very great antidote against mental assimilation. Otherwise, your mind is a blank, it's empty; and the outside world comes into your mind and you begin thinking like the world thinks. I'm telling you now that your mind won't remain a vacuum; it's impossible. Something has to come into an empty mind. So either your mind is filled with the ideals of the Torah, or it's filled with all the foolish and empty ideals of the world. Don't think you can avoid it! You can't avoid thinking; and so you'll think about your environment, what you hear, what you see. It all floods into the empty mind. And therefore the only way to counteract mental assimilation is by filling your mind with Torah ideals. Otherwise it's the outside world, the ideals of Eisav that fill your mind.

ATTITUDE PROBLEMS

The lesson of the *sa'ir la'azazel* is the lesson of what our great test in this world is - to fight back against the influence of the umos ha'olam. The nations of the world are no accident of history. Hakodosh Boruch Hu put them in this world for our benefit, to give us the opportunity to fight back, by living a life of filling our minds with His attitudes instead of the attitudes of the street.

There's a plan in history, and the plan is that this world should be a world of accomplishment. We're alive for a purpose. We're not here merely to have a good time, to make a good living, to have a nice home, to have friendly people around us; we'll say, "Good morning," and they'll like us, and we'll like them. Life will be all friendly and good and you'll live a long happy life - and accomplish nothing.

No; Hakodosh Boruch Hu put us in this world to test us - and one of the most important tests is how far away, how separate you can keep from the umos ha'olam; to what extent will you be able to resist the influence of the atmosphere of the *goyim* around us. It's a very important part of our existence to be tested and to overcome the test; to fight back and to not allow ourselves to be influenced, and thereby achieve the great perfection or which we were created. It's not enough that you're a frum Jew with a black hat and a beard; it's not enough that you're a good Beis Yaakov girl. You have to be a frum Jew inside too! Which means that your mind has to be a Jewish mind.

YOM KIPPUR ALL YEAR LONG

And by means of this act of saying good riddance to Eisav the goat, by pushing him off a cliff and watching him smash to pieces, we symbolize the necessity to rid the Am Yisroel of all gentile influence entirely. And that's why it is the most powerful of all kaparos; it was an atonement that was unparalleled anywhere else in the Torah. וְנַשֵּׁא הַשְּׁעֵיר שת עוונותם - "The goat carries away all their sins," because it is the influence of the umos ha'alom that has stifled our ratzon to do the will of Hashem.

And therefore all year long - not only on Yom Kippur - we take this sa'ir and we hurl him off the mountains, and he carries away our sins. When you smash the influence of Eisav, when you get rid of the hashpa'ah of Eisav, that's the kaparah, that's the way to take away your sins. Because a very big part of our sins is on the head of the gentiles; most of our sins are their sins. And it's only when a person takes Eisav far away from the Jewish camp, far away from Yerushalayim, and throws him off the cliff - he gets rid of the influences of Eisav, that he is prepared now to achieve the greatness that Hashem brought him into this world to accomplish: Ritzoneinu la'asos ritzonecha - "Hashem, what we want in this world is to do Your will."

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תורת אביגדור



Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

Why did the Rav choose to mention the Jewish Press as the newspaper of choice to secretly send to an intermarried couple in order to *mikareiv* them to Yiddishkeit?

A:

Because I think that the Jewish Press is a good newspaper for people who are intermarried; it could have a good effect on them. Yes, it definitely could.

And I want to tell you something else. The Jewish Press does good things too. Some years ago I got some scientists and some professors together to make an official declaration that Hashem created the world. It was a declaration by scientists that all the available evidence proves that Hashem created the world. I still have copies of that. And the Jewish Press gave us a free of charge a half page ad to publish it. That's a big ad. So they do good things too. Try to get one of the other newspapers to do that. What other newspaper will give you a half page ad, free of charge?!

It was a half-page signed by scientists, doctors and professors. And they all signed a declaration stating that all the evidence that we have available to us shows that Hashem created the world. It was a kiddush Hashem and they printed it for nothing. So don't criticize them too much. Don't think that they're nothing. Rav Shalom Klass, *alav hashalom*, did good work.

TAPE #E-234

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