

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

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בעזרה שׂיית

פרשת ראה

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

Parallels In the World

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נא לא להרוא בעת התפלה וקריאת התורה

Part I. Who We Are

THE CLOSE GODS AND THE FAR-OFF ONES

In *Parshas Re'eh*, the section of the *meisis u'meidiach* – the one who attempts to persuade a fellow Jew to worship *avodah zarah* – begins like this: **לֵאמֹר בִּי יִסִּיתְךָ אָחִיךָ בֶּן אִמְךָ** – *When your brother will try to persuade you, saying,* **נִלְכֶּה וְנַעֲבֹדָה אֱלֹהִים אֲחֵרִים** – *Let us go and serve other gods,* **מֵאֱלֹהֵי הָעַמִּים... הַקְּרֹבִים אֵלֶיךָ ... אוֹ הַרְחֻקִים מִמֶּךָ** – *from the gods of the nations that are nearby or those that are far-off.*

Now, we know that every phrase in the Torah is measured; every *word* is valuable. And that's why the *gemara* (Sanhedrin 61b) asks the following: "What difference does it make whether the instigator is telling you about idols that are near, or idols that are far away?" What's the *nafka minah* between an idol in the mountains of Tibet or a fortune teller in Bensonhurst?

Now, we'll get to the answer soon; the significance of those extra words will be our subject for tonight. But first, we'll listen to an introduction that will help us understand the importance of the answer we're going to hear.

THE UNIQUE ROSH CHODESH OFFERING

Everyone knows that on *Rosh Chodesh* a special offering is brought in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Why do I say special? Because it

says there (Bamidbar 28:15) that it's a **הַטָּאת לַיהוָה** – *a sin offering for Hashem*. Now, that's very unusual because we don't find such a language anywhere else. *Every* offering is made to Hashem but on Rosh Chodesh it's the only time it says "a sin offering for Hashem." It's something unique in the Torah.

And so the *gemara* (Shavuos 9a) tells us that it means that Hashem is saying, "Bring a sin offering on My behalf; a *korban* to atone for Me." Now, that's certainly something out of the ordinary – actually it makes no sense at all! What did Hashem do that He needs an atonement?!

So Hashem tells us: **עַל שִׁמְעַטְתִּי אֶת הַיָּרֵחַ** – *Because I made the moon so small; that was My sin*. The moon should have been as big as the sun, like it says **אֶת שְׁנֵי הַמְּאֹרֹת הַגְּדֹלִים**, *the two great luminaries*. "But I made it small," says Hashem. "And therefore I want to atone for the wrong I did. That's My misdeed, *k'viyachol*; bring a *chatas* for Me."

EXPLAINING THE SECRET

Now, we understand that there are secrets here and so we'll explain it as follows. It's a parable, a lesson intended to teach us a very important principle.

We know that the *umos ha'olam* have a solar year; they calculate the year by the sun. Their months are sun months, whereas our months are lunar months. That's why the little moon is a peculiarly Jewish symbol. And what does it symbolize? That the *Am Yisroel* has been made by Hashem the **מְעַט מִכָּל הָעַמִּים**, the smallest of all people.

The nations of the world, you have to know, no matter how diverse they are and no matter how many they are, but all together they comprise one vast majority in opposition to the *Am Yisroel*. It makes no difference whether they are Mohammadians, Christians, Buddhists, Evolutionists, Humanists or just plain materialists, all the people of the world stand on one side of history and we stand facing them on the other.

There's nothing among the nations of the world that can equate to what the Jewish people stand for. Because it's only the Jewish people who stand for Hashem who gave us the Torah at Sinai. That's how we sum it up in one sentence: We're the nation that accepts to live by the attitudes that Hashem delivered to us at

Har Sinai. And that means that we, the smallest nation, have to stand up against the whole world – all the falsifiers who stand up against us.

Now, whether an individual is a *chassid* or a *misnagid* – it doesn't make any difference. You could be *Sephardi*, *Ashkenazi*, no difference. All together we were *mikabeil* the Torah at Har Sinai and we are standing faithfully by that. But no matter, even when you look at all of us, it's still a very small number; it's the Jewish people and nobody else. There's only one little nation! That's what makes us the **מְעַט מִכֹּל הָעַמִּים**, the smallest of all nations – because we're the only ones in the universe who stand for the truth.

IT DOESN'T MAKE SENSE!

Now the question is: Such a nation, such a historic nation that was created to stand by the most important principle in the world, does it make sense that we should be in the minority? It didn't have to be this way! According to what we imagine should have been the best plan, the *Am Yisroel* should have been *at least* as numerous and powerful as all the other nations of the world together. After all, we are the people of the Torah; we are the nation that bears the truth. So, let's say, all of Asia, all of Europe, maybe Australia also, should be for us. If Hashem wishes, He could give the *goyim* Canada and America, as a consolation prize. Maybe South America too – maybe.

That's how it should be. And who should be sitting on the thrones? The *roshei yeshiva*, the big *rabbonim*. They should have golden crowns on their heads. Who should be in the White House? Rav Pam, let's say, the *Rosh Yeshiva* of *Torah Vodaas*. He's the one who should be sitting in the White House. Yes, Rav Pam. Why not? He's a *tiere yid*, a big *chochom*. We'd have Rav Pam in the White House and a whole world full of Jews!

But instead we're the **מְעַט מִכֹּל הָעַמִּים** – the smallest people. In the eyes of the *umos ha'olam* we are the lowliest of nations – we're vilified and calumniated. We live in a world where there are churches everywhere. There are colleges in every little city. Atheism, materialism, and false ideals surround us on all sides. And it's the *frum* Jews, those who are the purpose of Creation, who are a small minority.

WHO IS TO BLAME?

And who's to blame that it's not that way? Hakodosh Boruch Hu. That's what *He* says! And that's why on every *Rosh Chodesh*, Hakodosh Boruch Hu says, "You *should* have been the biggest! That's what should have been. And so, bring a sin offering to atone for Me, for having made the moon - that means the Am Yisroel - small."

Let's understand that. We know very well that Hashem doesn't need any *kaparah*. צְדִיק הַשָּׁם בָּבֶל דִּרְבָּיו יְחִסִּיד בָּבֶל מְעֻשָׂו - He is righteous and kindly in all of His ways and everything He does. So if He made the *Am Yisroel* small, we know that it's a great benefit for us; it's righteous and kindly, absolutely.

And so we'll have to understand what this "righteous and kindly" purpose that Hashem intended was: When Hashem made the moon small it means that He's making it dark in this world. And if the *Am Yisroel* is small, it means that this world is covered with a veil of *choshch*. The fact that Jews don't occupy all the seats of power - I'm talking about real Jews - means that the world is stumbling, floundering around in darkness.

And there's no reason why it should be so. We would have already illuminated the whole world with our Torah ideals by now. We have authentic Jews who are brilliant men. Our *gedolim* have excellent minds! Rav Yisroel Salanter could have taught philosophy in the universities; no question about that. And he would have lit up the world!

And instead, who's teaching the world? *Shikkurim*, beer drinkers. Immoral professors, *menuvalim*; low-class bums are 'educating' the world. We have great men who could have been a light to the nations and Hashem deprived the world of that. And so, "Bring for Me an atonement," says Hashem, "because I deprived the world of this great light that could have been a benefit for them."

THE GRAND PLAN

And yet we understand that this is all the plan of Hashem! What we're learning now is that Hakodosh Boruch Hu was "forced" to make the *Am Yisroel* small because this world can only thrive in darkness! Otherwise the entire purpose of the world is

vitiated – the world would lose its purpose if there would be too much light.

If the *Am Yisroel* would be *yadam ramah*, if they would spread over the world just like Christianity and Islam did, then we would lose out inestimably. It's a great benefit that we're small; it's the darkness that makes this world great.

And that's because we're going to gain a great reward for standing firm against the *apikorsim* and atheists; against the colleges and the libraries and the newspapers. We achieve perfection by not bending before the big churches and cathedrals, by not submitting before the mosques and all the falsehoods of the *umos ha'olam*. And that's the purpose of our being a minority. It was made that way by Hashem in order that we should have the opportunity to stand up against the whole world and proclaim, *הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶחָד*, and get the great reward of *l'fum tzaara agra*.

L'fum tzaara agra means that *according to the difficulty will be the reward*. By standing in opposition to the great empires of the world, by being surrounded on all sides by false ideals and cultures that try to tempt you, and despite everything, you stand up and say, "I'm not interested! No matter what the world says, I'm proclaiming that *Hashem Echad!*" that's our greatness, our loyalty. So Hashem says, "For that, you are going to get a reward that you could have never gotten had you been a great and powerful empire. The fact that you're *מְעַט מְקָל הָעַמִּים* – that's your greatness and that's your success."

THE JEWISH MOON

Now, there's a *possuk* that we all know, we say it every morning – it's an important verse and you should think about it: *הוּא הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֵינוּ בְּכֹל הָאֲרָץ מִשְׁפָּטֵי* "He is Hashem our G-d, and He's conducting all the affairs of the world." The two parts of the *possuk* explain one another. "For what purpose does He conduct all the affairs of the world? Because He is Hashem our G-d." It's not in the role of 'the Creator' alone that He runs the world – it's in the role of *Hashem Elokeinu*, Hashem our G-d.

Now, to know how far this goes, we'll pay attention to what we say in *Borchi Nafshi*: *עָשָׂה יְיָ לְמוֹעֲדִים* – Hashem made the moon for the festivals. *Mo'adim* means *אֵלֶּה מוֹעֲדֵי הַשֵּׁם*, the Jewish festivals. That's a remarkable statement! *עָשָׂה יְיָ* – Why did

Hashem make the moon? לְמוֹעֲדִים - So that the *Am Yisroel* should utilize the moon to know when *Rosh Chodesh* is - when we know *Rosh Chodesh*, so we'll know when *Pesach* comes, when *Shavuos* comes and when *Sukkos* comes.

THE JEWISH UNIVERSE

Now, that may sound to you very chauvinistic, very parochial and narrow minded. Here is a little nation down below, looking up at the moon, saying "It's *our* moon; it's a Jewish moon." If a gentile would hear that he would give a big guffaw; ha, ha, ha! If we would say it aloud - we're ashamed to say such a thing out loud - the whole world would laugh at us. The New York Times would make a cartoon about that: a little Jew in a *kapoteh*, surrounded by all the nations, and this little Jew is pointing at the moon saying, "It's *my* moon." They would put a *yarmulkeh* on the moon and ridicule us.

But the truth is that it *is* for us. The whole universe is for us. That's the truth. Hashem is ours and everything that He does in this world is done because of us. And therefore when there comes an Eastern Religion, or a new ism, a new fad, a new ideology - it doesn't come merely to tempt the gentiles. Some gentiles fall for it, that's true, but that's not the purpose however. The purpose is to tempt Jews.

If there are missionaries walking around, they're not sent here merely to tempt the Mohammedans or to trap atheists. They're here to offer a trial to Jews! If the colleges are so busy today propagating the theory of evolution, you think it just happens to be a scientific theory for the people in the world to be tested? No, it's only because of us. Darwin was given the idea of expounding his theory only because of us. We have to get that into our heads!

And our success depends on confronting all of these ideals with the knowledge that they were made because of us. Because no matter where we are, no matter how secluded we try to remain, the attitudes of the outside world seep into our minds. And the difficulty of fighting against the hundreds of thousands of ideas that percolate in the air around us, that's our success. That's the great happiness of succeeding in this world. And that's why Hashem made the *Am Yisroel* little. It should be a dark world

and we should live successful lives by battling, by saying, “Nothing doing! I’m not accepting the foolishness of the tremendous outside world!”

THE APIKORIS YOU KNOW BEST

We always must remember what the *chachomim* admonished us: דַּע מָה שֶׁתִּשָּׁיב לְאַפִּיקוֹרִים – You should know what to reply to an *apikoris*. Now, the Slabodka Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Isaac Sher, *zichrono l’vracha*, used to say that it means, “Know how to answer up *this apikoris* right here” (*The Rav pointed at himself*). Because inside of everybody there’s a *yetzer hara* that’s talking. All the ideas of the outside world are seeping into our minds and therefore you have to answer yourself.

The *Chovos Halevavos* in his *Sha’ar Yichud Ha’maaseh* says: “Do not ignore the promptings of the *yetzer hara*.” Because it’s like a snake bite – you have to do something about it. You can’t just ignore it and let the poison spread. And if you will turn away your ear from the argument that you feel the *yetzer hara* is generating within you, so it begins to gain a foothold. That’s why the *Chovos Halevavos* says that immediately you should take care of it.

ONE VALID ANSWER

Now how to take care of it, there’s more than one method. Of course, some will say that the answer to all of the *apikorsim*, our response to all the false attitudes of the outside world is one: That we the *Am Yisroel* rely on our solid historic tradition. That’s it – we don’t have any questions! “I’m loyal to the Torah and that’s it!”

And that’s a very valid and very strong answer; it’s the answer that should stand always at the forefront of our minds – because it’s true. But because we were placed in a world where we live side by side with those who live lives of materialism, and because we are forced to contend with so many falsehoods, Hakodosh Boruch Hu provides us with other methods as well.

UNRAVELING THE MYSTERY

And that brings us back to the question of the *gemara* on our *possuk* that we asked in the beginning of the lecture. If you fell asleep already, wake up now because we’re coming back to the answer. When the Torah tells us about the persuader, the one trying to introduce into our heads the ideas of the outside world,

why does the *possuk* take the trouble to enumerate that there are “gods that are nearby and those that are far-off”? It seems to be words that are unnecessary.

And the *gemara* answers like this: מְטִיבֵן שֶׁל קְרוֹבִים אֶתָּה לֹמֵד מֵהּ – From the nature of the nearby gods, you can learn about the nature of the far-off ones. Just as there is no substance in these, so also is there no substance in those. That means, the Torah inserts these words in order to give us direction for how to refute all the persuaders of the world, all the *meisisim u’meidichim*. Just as you know that the nearby gods are nothing, so too you can understand that the far off ones are also worthless – they’re just the same.

If someone tells you that someplace in a far off country, in a distant shrine there is an idol that eats what is put before it and it can speak too, and he tells you, “There are even witnesses who can testify that it’s so,” so the Torah says, “Look at the ones nearby, because their worshippers also have the same claim.” And you know that they’re false because the nearby gods are already familiar; they’ve been observed by you. So, מְטִיבֵן שֶׁל קְרוֹבִים אֶתָּה לֹמֵד, מֵהּ טִיבֵן שֶׁל רְחוֹקִים, from the nature of the near ones you can know about the far off ones. Just like the near ones are nothing, the far-off ones are also nothing.

THE REFUTATION IS AT HAND

We’re now learning about the great plan of Hashem to supply us with edifying parallels. One of the important ways that Hashem picks up the veil of darkness in this world and lets us have a glimpse of the truth, is by means of parallels. The Rambam says this in his *Moreh Nevuchim*. He says Hashem lifts up the veil of darkness for you to see the truth; you get a glimpse of the truth and that little bit opens up your eyes to everything else.

And so if we encounter a certain system, a certain philosophy or ideology that seems to contradict the Torah, we may be discouraged. However, we’re hearing now an important principle that’s very useful – it’s one of the *darkei Hashem*. In order to expose the falsehood of the gentile ideologies, Hakodosh Boruch Hu has given us certain ways of fortifying our *emunah* by refuting them. He supplies us with ways of discovering the *sheker* of the *umos ha’olam*. And one of these ways is being taught to us in

our *possuk* – the *krovim*, the few things we *do* see, should serve as parallels. And that’s the subject of this talk, learning to draw parallels – and we say, "Just as these are nothing, so too the others are nothing."

JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER

Now, don’t say, “Could we do such a thing?! Can we make such rash and general judgments about whole groups of people, and about ideologies that we know *nothing* about, just because of one thing that we *do* know”? Yes, we do that because *that is the intention of Hashem!* Hashem is supplying these lessons to us so that we should make these general judgements and dismiss the ideals of the outside world. The falsifiers whom we do know, are intended by Hashem to serve as examples of the falsifiers who are not nearby; and the falsification, the emptiness, of even one ideal is intended to demonstrate the emptiness of all of them.

And so, we don’t have to study the details in order to disprove it all. We could – we could sit here for hours and talk about the foolishness of their ideas; I could show you endless examples – *but we don’t have to*. The lesson from this week’s *parsha*, *מְטִיבֵן שְׁלֵ קְרוֹבִים*, allows us to study one thing, or a few things, and to use those as parallels to understand that everything they have to offer us is mixed with *sheker*.

Part II. Who They Are

THE SHEKER SPREADS

Now, this principle is something that we have to make use of all the time. It’s not just claims of meat-eating idols and wizards and fortune tellers. All the isms, all the religions, can succeed. They can gain adherents and spread all over the world, but we always fall back on this principle of studying what we see – the ideologies that already took over the word – and drawing parallels to everything else.

Here you have a religion that took over the world – the whole Western world was taken over by Christianity. It’s so big, it’s tremendous – and yet if you study it a little bit you see it’s nothing at all.

We might be impressed by their propaganda; a religion of love, of turning the other cheek. It’s so beautiful, you think. And

such a religion, you'll say, maybe they have saints after all. If you hear of a saint about whom you know nothing and you're told that he performed miracles and he was elevated to sainthood and a cathedral was built in his honor, so without knowing anything about saints, you might think, "Well, there are some good *goyim*. Maybe he *was* something." That's what you would suppose - why not? And so we make use of this Torah principle of drawing parallels and we investigate the matter.

THE QUICK ROAD TO TZIDKUS

In Rinn - that's a municipality in Austria - there's a big cathedral that was erected in honor of a certain saint, Blessed Andrew. And how did this Andrew acquire sainthood? By what virtues did he distinguish himself? Did he hide away in a room for many years praying and studying? Or maybe he did some other great deeds that earned him the approbation of the Vatican? Maybe he wrote some learned works? No, nothing like that. He earned sainthood in a more expeditious way - when he was still a young boy he was found slain.

They found this poor boy dead and he became a saint immediately. So any *goy* who's found dead becomes a saint? No, here was something different, because attached to his death there was a canard, a slander on the Jewish community. The Christians began to spread the word that this boy had been killed "in order to have blood for *matzos* for Pesach." The papal bull *Beatus Andreas* (February 22, 1755) stated clearly that he was killed by the Jews for his blood. And if that's the case, so the whole thing, the whole process of sainthood was speeded up.

Instead of many years of fasting and praying in a monastery, he took the shortcut and was immediately elevated to sainthood - he's an official saint in Christian theology. Because anybody who's killed by Jews, he's walking in the footsteps of the first one - you know who I'm referring to. And he was declared forthwith, to be a saint - officially. That's why they built a great cathedral in his honor in Austria. It's still standing there. When you walk in there's a big inscription telling you that it was built in honor of this-and-this saint who was murdered by Jews for his blood. It's still there. And of course because of this accusation, Jews were executed; plenty of Jews lost their lives because of this.

There were others too. There's the great *tzadik*, Saint William of Norwich in England. What were his good deeds for which he was elevated to the sainthood? You might think he was a man who went around giving charity to the poor, picking up stray dogs and taking them home, doing other kind deeds. No; he also got there by the quick way; he possessed the great qualities of Andrew. He was also claimed to have been killed by the Jews for their "Pesach pastries."

THE TRUTH BEHIND THE FICTION

Well, we know the whole story. We know that it was *sheker v'kazav*. Never in history did Jews do anything even slightly, even faintly resembling it. Jews wouldn't even touch a drop of blood in an egg. To make *matzos* with blood is out of the question. It's as ridiculous as the most silly fairytale, and yet this fairy tale is a great lesson for us. Because if that is the basis for big cathedrals – it's not a small place by the way; it's a huge cathedral, one of the most impressive buildings in Christendom – if that's the basis for sainthood, then we have to know that it's a parallel to all the cathedrals; they're all the same. It's meant for us as a lesson so we should know what all the cathedrals are about.

You're obligated, it's your duty to take the lesson of Blessed Andrew and Saint William of Norwich, *aleihem ha'shnubbel*, and say, בָּשֶׁם שְׂאִין מִמֶּשׁ בְּקְרוּבִים – just as these are nothing; they're just *shkatzim*, plain bums who were killed by other bums, and the other bums blamed it on the Jewish people. That's all it was – *goyim* stabbing each other. It's all *sheker v'kazav*. They're not much of saints. The dog in the street is more saintly than they were – בְּךָ אֵין מִמֶּשׁ בְּרְחוּקִים that's the same amount of holiness and sainthood in all of their saints and cathedrals.

So, עַל פִּי שְׁנֵי עֵדִים אִו עַל פִּי שְׁלֹשָׁה עֵדִים יְקוּם דְּבָר, – now we have two great men who testify about all the others. We look back and see that they were sent for a purpose. And the purpose was to let us know who the great men, who the church saints are. And don't think it's an unimportant piece of information. To the church, these bums are *kedoshim*. They're listed among the saints of the church and we're supposed to learn from them that this is what a Christian Saint is. All the rest of the saints, even those about whom we know nothing are all in the same boat as these. That's how we're supposed to judge them. בָּשֶׁם שְׂאִין מִמֶּשׁ בְּזָה בְּךָ אֵין מִמֶּשׁ בְּזָה.

LIFTING UP THE CURTAIN

And if we follow this example, laid down for us in our *parsha*, we're going to discover that the world is full of them. History is full of such things. And they're not isolated phenomena – they're valid parallels given to us to study. Wherever we look, we're going to see examples of things that serve as parallels to open our eyes. And that's our obligation – to study them and see the great bluff, and then from those *krovim*, to make parallels to everything else we haven't studied.

That's how we look at all of the ideologies of the gentiles and the secular Jews. In order to help us recognize the worthlessness of the ideas they promote and teach, Hakodosh Boruch Hu grants us examples; He lifts up the curtain – and we see that the ideals they promote are nothing at all.

For example: If you want to know the value of the Nobel Prize for Literature, so we choose just one of the writers who was awarded that coveted prize, Isaac Bashevis Singer. What did he write? Smutty Yiddish novels, that's all – and so we already understand what the Nobel Prize for Literature means. It's worthless; it's nothing at all.

The whole business today of entertainment, of movies and television – all of the books too – are based on *arayos*. What that means is that the whole world is engaged in nothingness. Their lives are *hevel v'rik*. They are excited over nothing at all. Even some things that are naturally attractive, there are some things that by nature a person has a temptation, but they have been taken tremendously out of proportion. Now, we won't speak about this particular branch of foolishness anymore, but you have to know that a great amount of trees, very many forests have been cut down for books about this wickedness.

THE PATRIOT WHO TELLS THE TRUTH

We'll take one more example. We'll come back to our good old America. America – I'm a patriot. I believe in America. But there are some things that are *sheker*. They're not harmful, but they're *sheker*. And that's what matters to us – to recognize that the gentile culture, their history, their ideals, are all devoid of substance.

The literature of adventure is largely a falsehood. The tales of the Old West comprise a literature – a historical literature – about something which never existed. Do you know how much of American literature is built on the tales of the Old West? The Wild West, cowboys and heroes and sheriffs! The whole story is *lo haya v'lo nivra*, it never was. You might be surprised to hear that. Yes, there was a west. Do you know where the west was? Way out west there were Spanish communities and Mexicans. You know Spain owned a big part of America in the west – and there were settled communities, more or less settled communities.

And who came out from America? Who were the pioneers who headed out West? Desperados – drunks and criminals. And they disrupted the Mexican and Spanish communities. They came in and they committed acts of terrorism, of vandalism, of immorality, and the Spanish did not know what to do with them. And finally, the Spaniards were driven out.

THE NOBLE AMERICANS VERSUS THE GREASERS

After many years, better elements came and settled; but as a result of the early invaders from our side, a big literature developed, a literature of heroes who came and fought against the Greasers, that's the Mexicans. The Mexicans are called Greasers and they're portrayed as low characters. I don't know if you people see it anymore in the movies, but in the olden day movies of fifty years ago all the Mexicans were portrayed as low people. And the Americans were all noble people. By the way, they were all clean shaven too. I don't know how they were clean shaven out in the west in those days but that was part of the history – they were all were clean shaven and good looking.

So the clean-shaven American came out – a cowboy of course – and he fought against the wicked Mexican, the wicked Spaniard. And of course wicked Indians – that's no question. The Indians were all wicked; you had to kill them all so they had to be wicked. And who were the American heroes? The sheriffs. Who was your sheriffs in those days? He was a low character, only he could shoot faster than somebody else so they made him a sheriff – one reason for his appointment was to prevent him from shooting innocent victims; he wasn't a man of virtue.

The whole story from the top to the bottom never happened. It's *sheker v'kazav*; it has no foundation. This is from

good authority – I’m not saying my own – it’s from good authority. The whole story is made out of thin air and it’s *one of the biggest branches of our literature here in this country.*

So if we take out of the libraries all the stories of the Wild West that never were, that never happened, and we would subtract all the novels that revolve around the subject of *arayos* and empty adventures, we would be left only with the lies of the scientists.

THE WEAK FOUNDATION

Ah, the tremendous and empty theory of evolution. It’s one of the foundations of Western society today – accidental evolution. Among the so called educated, in all of the colleges and universities, evolution is a given, it’s an axiom.

And yet we take a look and we see something that’s so superficial and yet it’s so fundamental. It’s so simple, it’s so close to our eyes to see, but it’s so true that it should knock all of the scientists out of their chairs in the colleges. It should unseat them and send them out to work for the Sanitation Department. And if you think that this is mere facetiousness then you should listen to this.

THE FRUIT PROOF

One of the most simple observations is that all the fruits all over the world, when they become ripe, they either fall down from the tree on their own or they become so loose that one shake makes them come down. It’s an observation that anybody can make.

And so the question now arises: could that be the result of accident? Why is it that all the apple trees, as long as the apple is green and hard and sour, the tree holds on tightly to it; the same is with the orange tree and the cherry tree. But when the fruit becomes ripe and fit to eat, it either comes falling down or it’s so loose now that with one shake it all comes down. Why is it that all the trees that produce fruit don’t continue to hold on tightly to the fruit after they ripen?

The reason is because the world is purposeful, it’s as clear as can be! The world is designed with plan and purpose. When we need the fruit, it drops! Is that because of an accident? If so, where

are the trees that have not yet learned to drop their fruits and seeds? There should be some that are still on the way in. There are millions of different types of trees and shrubs and grasses that produce fruits and seeds, so why is it that at this stage in history all we have are ones that drop or loosen their fruits or seeds. Why isn't there one that doesn't? And we'd say that that one is still evolving. But there's not a single case and the scientists have never found one exception to this rule.

THE APPLE TREE THAT CLOSED DOWN A UNIVERSITY

But do you know what the consequences of that is. The consequences are that you have to close down all the colleges. Because from the *טִיבָן שֶׁל קְרוּבִים*, from the things we see with our own eyes, we should be drawing parallels to everything they're trying to teach - we're suspicious of everything.

Now, we don't say that everything that the *goyim* say is false; we wouldn't say such a thing. But the parallels that Hahem shows us, makes us aware that the foundation of the outside world is *kulo sheker*. When you see such *sheker* why do you have to look further? *בָּא זֶה וְלִמַּד עַל זֶה*, this one detail that we do know comes to teach us about all the other details that we're not aware of, *בְּשֵׁם שְׂאִין מִמָּשׁ בְּזֶה כֵּךְ אֵין מִמָּשׁ בְּזֶה* - the whole thing is a *sheker* and it's as silly as can be. There's nothing even to talk about. This proof is on the surface - it's *krovim*. And therefore it's as clear as could be that the evolutionists are open liars in contradiction to the most open facts that our eyes can see.

The truth is that I could even more easily bring you proofs but it's not needed. Because from the little we do know we realize that it's all garbage. Oh is it garbage! It's a dismal picture of degradation. There's nothing to look for among the gentiles and we have to take an example from what we know, and we're supposed to say, *בְּשֵׁם שְׂאִין מִמָּשׁ בְּזֶה כֵּךְ אֵין מִמָּשׁ בְּזֶה* - just as the fairytales of *arayos*, and just as the mirages of the old Wild West never existed, they're *sheker v'kazav*, we have to know that the writings of the scientists - I'm talking about the evolutionists and psychologists, the psychology section in the library is also extensive in some libraries - are *sheker v'kazav*.

LET'S NOT FORGET ALGEBRA

Of course, there are some things that are exact. Algebra, you can't throw away those books, they have to remain. A lot of books on chemistry have to remain. You know chemistry also has a big mixture of *sheker* today, but we'll be charitable, we'll let some of them remain. Books on physics, many must remain. Books on other sciences, the more or less practical branches, will remain as well. But even many books of science will have to join the march out of the library into the great garbage can together with romance and the Wild West.

Now once we start cleaning out the libraries and cleaning out the literature of the gentiles, we're going to find that a great many forests in North America are going to be rescued. If you're an environmentalist who's worried about the forests going lost, you should know that this would be the first step - to recognize that all of Western literature is built on false premises.

Now people will say: "Rabbi Miller! What are you saying? You're making a blanket indictment!" Yes, that's the purpose of it; so that you should suspect all of it as *sheker*. Because it's not only the corrupt theory of evolution which is befouled, but *even their practical writings misrepresent the issues of life*. Travel for example. All the travel books represent foreign places in the most alluring terms which are entirely untrue. Now, are we going to waste our lives traveling to Paris and to the Amazon to recognize this truth? No, says Hashem. All you must do is take a look at the *krovim*, the one or two examples which you *do* know about and use those to say, בְּשֵׁם שְׂאִין מִמֶּשׁ בְּזֶה פֶּךָ אֵין מִמֶּשׁ בְּזֶה, - just like there's nothing here, so too there's nothing there either. There's nothing to look at.

VISITING THE KIND-HEARTED AUSTRIANS

Somebody once gave me a travel book. I don't know why I kept it but I was reading it and I saw an interesting thing. He was describing two tours he took through Germany and Austria. How he loved the people! Ah - such nice people! One tour was in 1930 and the second was in 1968 - that means one was before the great affair, the great prank, and the second after the great prank. And there's one word that recurs, it's repeated again and again. And that word is *gemütlichkeit* - It means the good nature, the kindliness of the Germans. Wherever you go, in Germany and Austria all he could find was such good natured people.

Now *we* happen to know how good natured the Germans and Austrians are. By the way, the Austrians were worse than the Germans. The Austrians, those who loved song, you know, song and wine; the good nature of the gay people. Ah, the best of people, the books tell us. They were the worst of Jew-*fressers* in the world! They were the most wicked people in the world!

So what do we see from the travel literature? It's just *sheker*. It's the opposite. *Gemütlich*?! They're the most cruel in the whole world. What he describes with such love and admiration, we know should be described in terms of abomination, the deepest hatred and indignation – burning indignation.

And so we learn that it's *sheker v'kazav*. All the travel literature is false. Even what's not against us – they happen to be against us, so we know it's false, what's not against us is false. It's all *sheker v'kazav*.

THE GEMÜTLICHE CRIMINALS

Because we know that the Germans and Austrians are a nation of the lowest, the most depraved criminals. When the Germans came into Lithuania and any other country, we know what they did. We have reports from survivors. The first thing they did was, they sent around soldiers and took away children from their mothers – little children. And they never came back.

What happened to the children? Is it a mystery? Maybe they were put in some home, with nice clean beds, blankets on each one, and they're eating altogether in the dormitory, in the dining room? No! They were murdered! Immediately! All the Jewish children, a million Jewish children were killed by the Nazis, by the *gemütliche* Nazis.

It's better to live among the Zulus than among these *gemütliche* West Europeans. Why should I blame the poor Zulus? The Zulus are nice people. Like the Altshtater Rav once said, the last Altshtater Rav, from Altshtat in Hungary, wrote a book *Lo Sishkach* about his experiences during the Holocaust. He said, from now on he's going to refer to the Austrians as wild animals. But he makes an apology first of all to the wild animals because there's no comparison. No comparison!

But we *do* make a comparison; because the *possuk* in *Parshas Re'eh* teaches us to draw parallels. If the travel books can speak the praises of such countries, if they can tell us about the *gemütlichkeit* of a nation of criminals who slaughtered six million innocents in cold blood – an act in which the entire German nation cooperated willingly – so we can draw a parallel to all the travel books. To us, these phenomena are important gifts from the Creator to open our minds to all the things we don't know about, all the good hearted nations of the world who we don't have the time – or the stomach – to visit.

BE ON THE LOOKOUT

When we scan the literature of the nations, we have to be on the lookout for similar things; to find parallels that reveal to us the falsehood of the *umos ha'olam*. We're supposed to start with the premise that the *goyim* are full of *sheker*, number one. Yes, sometimes there are good things, but everything that the *goyim* say must be taken with utmost caution because the *sheker* is much more than the *emes*.

And it's the *Am Yisroel*, the most important people in the world, who are given the opportunity to discover the falsehoods of the gentiles. Because although we could easily demolish their ideologies, Hakodosh Boruch Hu taught us the important lesson that the nations of the world are not to be suspected of truthfulness when they present to us their history, their culture, their ideologies, their religions, and their ideals.

That's the way of the darkness of this world. There will always be new and spectacular claims – there will always be new attitudes, new ideals, new isms and new desires that arise to mislead Mankind. And this endless process of new ideologies and new ways of finding happiness and success in life is part of the test of virtue which the *Am Yisroel* endures in this world of darkness. But the Torah people, no matter how small we may be, have been in this business for thousands of years and we've already weathered many such *meisisim* and *meidichim* who tempt us to "Come and serve the gods of others... those that are near to you or those far from you."

And one of the most important methods we use is the one Hakodosh Boruch Hu teaches us in this *possuk*: מְטִיבֵן שֶׁל קְרוֹבִים אֶתָּה

לוֹמֵד מֵה טִיבֵן שֶׁל רְחוּקִים, בְּשֵׁם שְׂאִין מִמֶּשׁ בְּזוֹה כִּן אֵין מִמֶּשׁ בְּזוֹה – *From the nature of the nearby gods, you can learn about the nature of the far-off ones. Just as there is no substance in these, so also is there no substance in those.* The Torah inserts these ‘extra’ words in order to give us direction for how to refute all the persuaders of the world, all the *meisisim u’meidichim*. בְּשֵׁם שְׂאִין מִמֶּשׁ בְּקְרוֹבִים כִּן אֵין מִמֶּשׁ בְּרְחוּקִים – *Just as you know that the nearby gods are nothing, so you can understand that the far off ones are also worthless.*

REORIENTATION

Now, I know that it will take a long time for people who have been oriented in other directions to feel this. I can’t come here and in one lecture take minds that have been corrupted by so many years of miss-education, minds that have been made filthy by the bilge-water of the outside world, and make you understand everything. But the first step is to learn the lesson of this week’s *parsha* that, בְּשֵׁם שְׂאִין מִמֶּשׁ בְּזוֹה כִּן אֵין מִמֶּשׁ בְּזוֹה – that’s the foundation. That’s how to approach the whole problem of “What does the gentile world say?”

In this world of false ideals where it’s hard to see the truth, this is one of the great methods of strengthening our *emunah* and seeing through the darkness. And one day, when this world’s history comes to an end, there will begin a new period of history which will be all light. The time will come when the truth of Hakodosh Boruch Hu will shine and the world will realize that they have been bamboozled all along. And at that time the *Am Yisroel* will be established as the nation chosen by Hashem forever. But in the meantime we receive our reward by using the methods of the Torah, the methods Hakodosh Boruch Hu teaches us, in order to fortify ourselves against all of the falsehoods of the outside world and to remain loyal to Hashem until that great day of בְּיוֹם הַהוֹיָא יִהְיֶה הַשֵּׁם אֶחָד וְשִׁמוֹ אֶחָד.

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שאל אביך ויגדך זקינד ויאמרו לך

Q&A

With
Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l



Q:

When is it considered proper for a person to fast a *ta'anis yochid* [a personal fast day]?

A:

I can't tell you all the things, but sometimes a person did something wrong and in order to make him realize how wrong it was, he should feel obligated to fast a *ta'anis*. Now I personally would not say to fast a *ta'anis*. A man did a very big sin and called me up. He wanted me to tell him how to do *teshuva*. I told him he should learn Mesillas Yesharim ten times from cover to cover. He said, "Ten times?!" I said, "Yes, ten times. And don't be in a hurry, go slowly." That's what I told him. Ten times Mesillas Yesharim is better than fasting a *ta'anis yochid*.

But sometimes a person who sinned is not willing to learn Mesillas Yesharim. And he needs something as a *k'nas*, a fine, to make him feel that he lost something. A day when you're not eating should help you realize you lost something. You lost breakfast, you lost lunch, you lost something. And you're sorry you did this sin that caused you to lose those meals. The truth is that a sin causes a loss of much more than a meal. But at least a meal is a *mashal*, so that you should know what you lost by the sin. So a *ta'anis* for a *cheit*, *chalilah*, is worth doing. Although it's better, as I said, it's better to learn Mesillas Yesharim a number of times; that's the very best.

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