

Sefer Shemos

IN MEMORY OF R' SRULY MILLER A"H

GRANDSON OF RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L
DEDICATED BY HIS CHILDREN

פרשת בא

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

Take Yourselves Sheep

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Part I. Pulling the Sheep

Taking The Sheep

As the day of Yetzias Mitzrayim drew near, Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave a special command to the Am Yisroel: **בְּעֶשֶׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הַזֶּה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם אִישׁ שֹׂה לְבַיִת** – ‘On the tenth of the month of Nissan, every Jewish man should take a sheep for his family.’

Now, from where do you take a sheep? You don't take it out of your pocket. You can't pull a lamb out of your closet like a pair of pants; you have to get it from some place. After all these downtrodden slaves in Egypt probably didn't own flocks and they had to go someplace to buy a sheep.

And so, on the tenth of Nissan the Am Yisroel, everyone, went out to the markets and to the farms, wherever they had to go, to buy sheep. Here is the picture: Jews all over the place are leading sheep through the streets of Mitzrayim. All of a sudden the streets were full of Bnei Yisroel pulling sheep; on all sides they're dragging sheep and the loud cacophony of “baah,” “baah” is deafening.

The Significant Sheep

Now, you can be sure that the Egyptians could not have been happy about what they were seeing on their streets. The Egyptians respected the sheep; more than respected – it was *kadosh* to the Egyptians. It's like in India where the cows are allowed to run wild; a cow could come trampling into your garden but it's forbidden to even throw a stone at it to chase it away. I don't know how it is now, but not so long ago if you kicked a cow in India, that was the last thing you did in your life. And Egypt was no different; only it was the sheep instead of the cow.

To slaughter a sheep?! That was out of the question! The Mitzrim would never allow such a thing! The punishment would be quick in coming. You remember after *Makkas Arov* when Moshe Rabeinu proposed to Pharaoh that he should allow the Bnei Yisroel to leave Mitzrayim in order to make sacrifices to Hashem. Pharaoh was already a little bit softened up from the *makkos* and he was willing to concede something, so he said, “Go and sacrifice to your G-d but do it right here in the land. Why do you have to leave Egypt?”

The Inevitable Backlash

So Moshe Rabbeinu said, **הֲיִנְזַבַּח אֶת תּוֹעֵבַת מִצְרַיִם, לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְלֹא יִסְקְלֵנוּ** – “Can we slaughter the

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abominations of the Egyptians in front of their eyes and they won't stone us?!" (8:22). They would have been stoned, no question about it!

Now, Moshe Rabeinu didn't say these exact words to Pharaoh; he said, "Can we slaughter the gods of Egypt before their eyes and they shouldn't stone us?" Only later when Hakodosh Boruch Hu dictated the Torah to Moshe Rabbeinu, He said "the abomination of Egypt." That's the way of the Torah when it speaks about idols; it degrades them. It calls them *elilim* from the word *al* – the nothing gods. Or *gilulim*, like *gelalim*, manure. Manure gods! Because that's exactly what it is; bowing down to an idol is like bowing down to a full chamber pot of feces. And that's how the Jews call it; at least among ourselves we say the truth.

But when Moshe Rabeinu was standing in the palace he said to Pharaoh, "How can we do such a thing, to slaughter the "gods" of the Egyptians right in front of their eyes?! We will be mobbed! They'll massacre us. The Egyptians will never tolerate such a thing, to stand by while we are in their territory slaughtering their gods?!"

Out In the Open

Now, you might say, "Well, they didn't have to make such a big scene about it; they could take the lamb right before the time comes to *shecht* it, that way the *goyim* won't have a chance to see what's doing. They'll be taken by surprise and before they're even aware what's going on, it'll be accomplished."

No, you can't do that. "On the 10th of this month you must take the sheep." That's four days before the *korban Pesach* will be *shechted*. Four days to take sheep?! For what purpose? They could have done it all in one day!

The answer is that it was done in order to give the Egyptians four days in which they would be apprised of what's doing, so that there should be no way of hiding it. And now the Egyptians are standing around saying, "You filthy Hebrews! What are you

doing to that poor sheep?! Nobody but a Hebrew would be so cruel as to put a halter round a sheep's neck and drag it through the streets!"

A Nation in Upheaval

And a terrible idea began to enter their minds: "Who knows what these depraved people are going to do to these sheep! They certainly don't worship them. Oh no! Could it be that it's true what we've heard that the Hebrews do horrible things; they didn't do it in public, but secretly we hear that they eat sheep! The Hebrews are preparing for a sheep massacre!"

During these four days, the land of Egypt was in an uproar. There were meetings about what to do, how to deal with the Hebrews. The fact that they didn't make a massacre was a *mofes* in itself. The Egyptians didn't make massacres by the way; they were civilized people but this was going too far already! "To slaughter our god in front of our eyes?! And to do it with such brazenness?!"

Shabbos Hagodol

That's one of the reasons why the Shabbos before Pesach is called Shabbos Hagodol, "The Great Shabbos." Because that year Shabbos Hagodol was the 10th day of Nissan. And on that day, on all sides the Egyptians could see the terrible spectacle of Hebrews dragging the sheep through the streets; all that was needed was just one spark to set fire to a great conflagration. And it would have been an explosion, a tremendous eruption of murderous anger. To this day we are amazed at that *neis*; nothing happened!

But the *Am Yisroel* didn't know that nothing was going to happen. All that time, from the 10th to the 14th – the 10th, the 11th, the 12th, the 13th, the 14th – their hearts were in their mouths.

There was anxiety and apprehension: "What's going to happen to us?! The Egyptians will surely lose their patience and they'll wreak vengeance on

us.” For five days the *Am Yisroel* lived in dread of a pogrom, of being stoned in the streets.

Demonstrating in the Streets

Now, it's important to understand that all of this was no accident; it was the plan of Hakodosh Boruch Hu from the beginning. That's why when Moshe Rabeinu called together the *ziknei Yisroel* to make known to them this command of Hashem he said to them **מִשְׁכּוּ וּקְחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן** – Pull and acquire for yourselves sheep.

Now, that word *mishchu*, pull, seems to us superfluous. You understand on your own that you might have to drag the sheep; sometimes the little sheep is trying to hold back – perhaps it senses what's about to happen and wants to bolt so the Jew would have to pull it. But you don't need the Torah to tell you how to get the sheep home through the streets.

So we'll explain as follows, the word *mishchu* means, “I want you to put on this *demonstration* of pulling the sheep through the streets of Mitzrayim.” It doesn't say *ki'chu lachem* which means merely “take”, to take it on the quiet. They could have thought maybe to do it secretly. Why not hire messengers; they could pay people to go out and quietly bring in sheep wrapped up in sacks and smuggle them into their homes where they could slaughter it without anyone knowing.

Concealed Carry

It's like the person who buys a *lulav*, and he's traveling on the bus. He went to Crown Heights to purchase a *lulav* and now he's riding the bus back to Flatbush, a bus full of gentiles. What does he do? He wraps it in paper so that people should think it's a curtain rod. He doesn't have a backbone so he's hiding it. He wants to fit in better with the Italians.

I once got on a bus with a *lulav* and *esrog* – I used to ride the bus to go to shul. As soon as I got on the bus all the Jews on the bus looked for a crack in the floor where they could hide from

embarrassment. I didn't hide my *arba minim* like a curtain rod, you understand. It was killing them! And I enjoyed it. I enjoyed every minute of it.

That was one of the most important lessons of *mishchu*. It means you should grow some backbone. “Everybody get busy and do some pulling on your own; your job is to do it *not* secretly.” And that's why when this command came from Hakodosh Boruch Hu it was a very unwelcome kind of *mitzvah*. It was a *mitzvah* that required readiness for martyrdom; it was actual *mesiras nefesh*.

It Wasn't Easy

It could be there were some who didn't want to go through this *nisayon*, this ordeal of pulling the sheep through the streets. You know what happened to them? They went lost from our people; they didn't leave Mitzrayim. **אֵלֹהֵי הָיָה שָׁם לֹא הָיָה נִגְאָל**. If somebody was too weak, too soft-necked, he wasn't redeemed (Hagadah Shel Pesach). Some people just couldn't do it; who liked to do such unpleasant things?! “Maybe some other way; we want to do it but maybe we could do it secretly.”

“Never mind!” Moshe said to the people, “Everyone, *mishchu*!” Each father, each head of the household, had to risk his life and go through this ordeal. Everybody, from the ordinary *Yisroel* to the *z'keirim*; even the elders, the old and saged leaders of the Jewish people; *everybody* had to go through this. They all dragged the sheep through the streets and took it home with them, and then on the 14th day of Nissan they slaughtered the sheep for Hashem.

It was a tremendous demonstration of *azus*, of *chutzpah* in face of the opposition of the nation. We don't realize how much boldness it required. We say they had *bitachon* in Hashem; very good, they had *bitachon*. It's easy to say it but when you're faced with the fact that millions of gentiles will spit at you and despise you, it's not so easy anymore.

Be A Patriot!

It's like the Orthodox Jew who wears a big beard. A beard is a flag. You know, if you walk down the street waving an American flag, then you're going to be the target of all the bums, of all the beatniks, of all the liberals. Whereas if you carry the American flag inside, beneath your lapel, you might be a big patriot, but you're not suffering for it.

A Jewish patriot is willing to suffer for it – it happened to me more than once. Three times people spat in my face. I was walking once up the subway stairs and a woman looks at me and spits directly into my face. In those days people didn't wear beards. Today, *meshugaim* also wear beards, but in those days it was different. Another time I was standing by the roadside and a motorist spits in my face as he passes by. He wouldn't spit in *your* face – because he thinks you're a brother Italian!

Stones have been thrown at me. Once I was bruised! All because of the beard. Now, you think I would sell that? I wouldn't sell any one of these incidents! It could be that if you offered me a very big sum I might weaken but for a mere five hundred dollars I wouldn't sell it because that's what it means to be a proud *eved Hashem*.

That's the lesson of *mishchu*; it means that if you're interested in being redeemed from Egypt, if you don't want to be destroyed when the destroyer passes over the land, you'll have to be willing to stick your neck out for Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And all the people who keep their necks inside their collars and try to hide, those who are only interested in their own protection, the end will be that they will go lost.

Part II. Pulling Away From the Sheep

Pull Back From Idolatry

Now, the *chachomim* tell us that in the word *mishchu* there's a hint of something else; something that is going to give us an added insight into the lesson that the *Am Yisroel* was expected to learn from this *mitzvah*. Now, we're not undertaking here to explain a *mitzvah* of the Torah thoroughly; far be it from anybody to have such pretensions. The Torah is so deep that no matter what you'll say you're going to fall short of the truth; that you have to know. But we have a right to say something, and that's what we will attempt tonight.

So far it's been demonstrated quite clearly that the sheep was a deity of Egypt. It was demonstrated also that they were commanded to take the perilous step of slaughtering it by means of *mishchu*: “You should pull the sheep through the streets in public and be willing to suffer whatever opprobrium may come your way.”

But now we're going to see that there's an added layer of meaning that *Chazal* saw in the word *mishchu*. When Moshe Rabbeinu told the *Am Yisroel*, מִשְׁכוּ וּקְחוּ לָכֶם צֹאן – Pull for yourselves sheep, so the *Chazal* say that Moshe was telling the people: מִשְׁכוּ יְדֵיכֶם מֵעֲבוֹדַת זָרָה – “You should draw yourselves away from *avodah zarah*.”

American Jews and Egyptian Jews

You know, the *Am Yisroel* lived for many years in *Mitzrayim*. For 210 years they lived among the gentiles in Egypt and when you rub shoulders with gentiles for a long time it's not easy to remain stiff necked against the gentile attitudes. Imagine a Jew moved to America, he came here from wherever he came 210 years ago. Let's say in 1770 a family came to settle here. And now it's 1980 in the gentile calculation. Now, this family, in all that time, would find it extremely difficult not to adopt some of the customs of the gentiles.

You have to understand that this is what happened in Mitzrayim; they were there “from 1770 until 1980” in Mitzrayim. Now, of course we'll say that many of them still remained loyal; there's no question that they wouldn't bow down to a sheep. When Chazal say that Moshe said, **מִשְׁכּוֹ יִרְיָכֶם מִעֲבוֹדָה זָרָה** – “Draw your hands away from idolatry,” it doesn't mean that the *Am Yisroel* worshiped idols, that they bowed down to sheep *chas v'sholom*. But what we're learning now that it's not enough; it's not enough to not bow down.

Showing Deference

You have to imagine what was doing in Mitzrayim. You know whenever an Egyptian saw a sheep in the street – the sheep were left to run wild in the streets – the Egyptian would bow down; some would kiss the sheep, that we know. It says in the *navi* (Hoshea 13:2) that **זֹבְחֵי אֲרָם עֲגָלִים יִשְׁקֹוּן** – *Even people who slaughter man, they kiss calves*. It means that even though when it comes to killing a man they had no scruples but they would kiss animals in reverence. That's the deference that was shown to sheep in Egypt.

Now, even though the Bnei Yisroel in Mitzrayim were loyal to Hakodosh Boruch Hu, it was very difficult to avoid having a certain affection for the sheep. You see it today too; you never saw a Jewish woman standing on a corner and a colored woman or an Italian woman is wheeling a baby in the carriage so the Jewish woman stops and bends over and coos about the baby, “Oh! He's the cutest thing!” What he looks like, I don't have to tell you, but that's how they are; they want to *chanfe*, they want to lick the toes of the gentiles.

You never saw that? A liberal Jew patting a pickaninny on the head! “Ahh! Ahh! So cute; so delicious.” He pats him on the head with affection because the liberals are weak minded; they have no backbone and so they say to the gentiles, **וְאֶנְחָנוּ כֹּרְעִים וְמִשְׁתַּחֲוִּים וְמוֹרְדִים** – *we bow down to you; you have the power, so I worship you*.

And so it could happen in Mitzrayim that a Jew would pass by and he would see an Egyptian throwing, let's say, cabbage to a sheep wandering on the street. It's a *mitzvah* for him to honor his deity so he throws the sheep some cabbage that he was bringing home for supper. And the Jew might pass by and say, “Oh, what a nice looking sheep.” Just to flatter the people of the land he would say that. He might even bend over and pat the sheep; after all, the sheep is certainly as good looking as that thing in the baby carriage.

Sunday and X-mas

And so, even though you weren't an *ovaid avodah zarah*; no, certainly not, but there's still a deference to the ideals of the gentiles. And that's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted to uproot from the Bnei Yisroel before they would leave Mitzrayim and become a nation.

And yet for us today it's so hard to avoid little things like that. It's like the *shomer Shabbos* Jew who walks out of his house on a Sunday morning and he's happy; it's so peaceful and quiet. The factories are closed, the streets are quiet and he enjoys the peace. Sunday is a part of his life; it could be he gets up a little later for davening; other things too. That's a good thing about going to *Eretz Yisroel*; the first thing you notice in *Eretz Yisroel* is that there's no Sunday. But if you walk on the street in Flatbush or even in Williamsburg on a Sunday so you appreciate it; it's a nice quiet holiday. That's already a connection to gentile attitudes that we're expected to withdraw from: **מִשְׁכּוֹ יִרְיָכֶם מִעֲבוֹדָה זָרָה** – “You should draw yourselves away from *avodah zarah*.”

It's like the man who says, “I don't have, let's say, a Christmas tree in my house. Never!” But as he passes by the stores and he hears the holiday music coming out of the stores; they play it in order to entice the customers in order to buy gifts for the season; so the carols are coming out of the stores and it's hard not to have some sentiment about it; you become sentimental about the season. So even

though you certainly are a religious Jew; you don't subscribe to that at all, but a certain sentiment you have.

Pull Away!

But that's also idolatry; if you have some respect for the *gilulim* of the *ovdei avodah zarah*, the abominations that they worship, the ideals and attitudes that they live with, that's already a mistake. "I don't subscribe to it," you'll say, "but there's a certain beauty, a certain poetry in it." Ooh, once you say that, you're hooked – you're in trouble.

That's why Chazal say, **מְשַׁכּוּ יְדֵיכֶם מֵעֲבוֹדַת זָרָה** – "Draw your hands away from idolatry." By pulling the sheep through the streets and making a demonstration that it means *nothing at all* to you, that's pulling your hand away from idolatry.

And not only in the matter of slaughtering a lamb. That's just a symbol. In general it's a *klal gadol* that the *Am Yisroel* disregards the *umos ha'olam*. The loyal Jew is expected to slaughter all the ideals of the gentile world. And so, when a Jew walks by on December the 27th, let's say, and he sees a *kratzmach* tree that somebody put on his sidewalk for the sanitation men to pick up so he looks around to see that nobody's looking and he gives it a good kick and it flies into the gutter. Among ourselves, that's what we have to do.

Slaughter Their Ideals

You have to slaughter the ideals of literature, of drama. It never happened, it's all false. Now, I understand that people are already accustomed to fiction but it's time now to get unaccustomed. You have to slaughter their movies; when you pass by the advertisements of the movies, you should take a look around to make sure no gentiles are watching you, and you should spit on the ground in front of the pictures.

We disregard their music and their sports. A Jew doesn't have any interest in sports, unless it's for exercise for himself, for health. We disregard

their holy feelings. We disregard their worship. We disregard the honor they give to their religion. We disregard their heroes and their culture. To us, it's nothing at all. It's *hevel v'rik*. You say it's not a sin? Certainly it's a sin to be gentilized! It's more than a sin; to be stiff-necked and unyielding is the foundation of being a loyal Jew and therefore as much as possible we stiffen our neck and rid ourselves of all gentile ideas.

Of course we're loyal citizens. We follow all the laws – we should follow them more than the gentiles do. And we're polite too, we treat everyone with decency and respect. But we are different; we are fundamentally different from the *umos ha'olam*; the *korban pesach* means to ignore, to oppose with a complete disregard, all of the ways of the *umos ha'olam*.

The Constipated Nothing-god

The *gemara* in Megillah says, *Kol leitzonusa asira* – *All leitzonus is forbidden* Jews are not scoffers; they don't make fun of things. You can't just walk around making light of things, using jokes and mocking words to ridicule ideas. But there's one exception to this rule: *bar m'leitzonusa d'avodah zarah* – *Except scoffing at idolatry*. At wrong ideas, at wicked ideas, at *sheker*, you can scoff and ridicule; *you should!*

And the *gemara* brings a proof from the *navi*. Yeshaya (46:2) is making a joke of the idols; he says the idol has to move his bowels: **בָּרַע בַּל** – *Beil is kneeling*. It means he's kneeling to perform his needs, **קָרַם נְבוֹ** – *Nevo is down on his knees*, **לֹא יָבִילוּ מִלֵּט מִשָּׂא** – *and he cannot get rid of the load*. He's describing how the poor idol has constipation. Now, that's a queer thing because *nevi'im* don't talk that way; never do you find a description in the Torah or *Neviim* of a man doing his needs in the bathroom. It's always *loshon nekiyah*; after all, it's *kodesh kedoshim*.

And yet suddenly we find this; he's describing how the idol is constipated. The *navi* is teaching us

that when it comes to degrading wicked things, we don't pull any punches. That's the one form of *leitzanus* that is permissible; not only permissible but it's a *mitzvah* because that's how you build up your muscles. It's not good to be a milque toast, a weakling. You have to be strong-minded against evil. אַהֲבֵי הַשֵּׁם שְׂנְאוּ רָע - "You who love Hashem, hate evil" (Tehillim 97:10).

Preparing for History

Now, we're not walking around looking for fights with the *reshaim*. That's not what we're talking about here. But you have to talk against them – to your wife, to your children, your *chaveirim* – and if nobody wants to listen, you make *leitzanus* about them to yourself! Among ourselves we must say the truth, and we must say it over and over again. And loudly! The more you belittle the wicked and the wickedness they promote, the more your mind becomes a mind that belongs to Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

Now, there are many orthodox Jews to whom these words are harsh to the ears. You mean to say that we cannot go along with the culture of the country? The answer is no! What can we do? We are a Torah people and the Torah is teaching us that this is the lesson of the *korban pesach*. *Mishchu!* As much as possible withdraw from them from the environment by means of being strong-willed, by living with backbone.

And this fundamental truth is so important that it had to be set down in the beginning of our history. Before we would leave Mitzrayim and become a nation we had to learn this lesson and it was emphasized to us with the *korban pesach*. And it was that *mitzvah*, among other things, that prepared the *Am Yisroel* for its history.

A Stiff-Necked Nation

Now we can understand why the *Chag Pesach*, the 14th of Nissan, is a separate *Yom Tov* altogether. That's what you'll find if you look in the Chumash, you know. *Chag Hamatzos* is one thing; it's a seven day *yom tov* celebrating *Yetzias Mitzrayim* that begins on the 15th of Nissan. But before that, on the 14th, there is *Chag Hapesach*; a separate celebration. That's when we commemorate the day that we slaughtered the idols of the *goyim* – the culmination of that great *avodah* of *mishchu*, of pulling ourselves away from the gentile attitudes. We made an open demonstration that what's important to them, what's untouchable to them, what's impossible for them to think of slaughtering – we go ahead and we disregard it completely.

The *Am Yisroel* revolts against the world *al pi Hashem*; that's the *mitzvah* of *korban pesach*, to slaughter what is considered by the *umos ha'olam* to be so precious. And to do it with *chutzpah*, with a brazen boldness! We go ahead and proclaim openly that we act only according to the *ratzon Hashem*.

And that is what makes us the nation of Hashem! A people that is capable of dragging the Egyptian god through the streets with *mesiras nefesh* and not being overwhelmed by public opinion, that's a sign that you're עַם קָשָׁה עֲרֵף, a stiffnecked nation that will be able to maintain its loyalty forever.

Attaching Yourself To Eternity

Now, since that's the case, since the *Am Hashem* will be around forever, then the wise investor will put his eggs in the right basket. We understand that it pays to identify *only* with the eternal people. If anybody has in his heart a sympathy, a hankering after the outside world, you should know that it's a waste of a life. Of course if you're a history teacher, that's your *parnassah*, you can't help yourself, you

have to involve yourself in their histories. But to feel sentimental, “My heart is in English literature. Ah! Merry Old England! Shakespeare’s time! Dickens! Ah, ah, ah!” – no, that’s nothing.

Actually it’s nothing but a dream; it’s a *sheker*, it’s *kazav*! When you think about the philosophers of Greece, how great they were, how noble they were – they weren’t noble, by the way. They were very far from noble people. You think about them, you’re thinking about insects that once lived. They’re gone forever! They’re off the map! They disappear like the webs of a spider. You give it a brush with the broom and so long – the entire edifice of the spider disappears in one wisp with a broom.

Even American history. What’s American history? There’s nothing to it. The whole thing is nothing but a comedy of errors. Why did you have to revolt against England? Did Canada revolt against England? Canada is just as free as America today. The revolution was a mistake. The whole war was a mistake. Was it necessary to have a revolutionary war? A civil war? It was unnecessary; let every state has its own laws and after a while, they would have abolished slavery gradually and they wouldn’t have to kill so many people.

The Disintegration of America

America doesn’t know what it’s doing at all. It’s destroying itself. Why did you have to make it that women should vote? You hear the *apikorses* that I’m saying now? It’s a very big mistake women should vote because once they let women vote it opened the floodgate. Now you have women judges; *meshugeneh* women judges. A woman judge who says you can spit on an American flag and get no punishment at all!

Listen to this *chochma* from a woman judge: A black man assaulted somebody in the subway and the police guard said, “Stop;” so the black man is running away and the police guard shot him and wounded him. What should he do? Let him go and

assault someone else?! So this female judge comes along and gives him four million dollars to make up for the wounds that he got. That’s what happens when you have soft-hearted women judges. And then the liberal men judges want to imitate the women and be even more liberal and it’s finished. A whole nation is ruined.

Look, I know that every speaker has to be careful because he has to make a hit with the ladies too but I’m talking to ladies in the Torah world now. Women should not be judges! That’s out of the question. Woman have much more important things to do than to be judges! They can be mothers! And even voting is a mistake. And then they lowered the voting age and now little bums, mischievous young bums can vote. And now they voted for a President who is nothing but a bum himself. The truth is that American history is just a downward spiral of errors. It’s a country that’s being shorn of its greatness because of the liberals.

The Red Country Goes Lost

So why do we have to look at them?! Why do we have to be attached to them and feel sentimental to them? Of course we should be loyal to our country. We have to support all the good things but we have to know that it’s not forever; it’ll be like England. Great Britain today is almost nothing.

Who would believe it? When I was a boy, not only did it rule the seas, it ruled the continents. The King of England would proclaim, “I, King so and so of England, Ruler of this country and that country.” He ruled all of India, all of Australia, all of Canada. When I was a boy and we learnt geography, the color red on the map meant possessions of Britain. Most of the world was red. Today, it’s so little; it’s almost nothing. It means that Great Britain was not real and America is not real – it’s all a dream.

Connecting With Our Leaders

You want to see something tangible, something real, something permanent? *Am Yisroel!* All of our people in all the generations! That’s what we’re

sentimental about! That's what's going to last forever. So the more you identify with Rashi by looking in Rashi in the *gemara*, the more you identify with *chumash*, looking in the *chumash* whenever you can, the more you identify with all the *seforim* and all the *tefillos*, all the practices of our nation, then you are forever and ever.

I once asked a young yeshiva man who was eighteen years old, I said, "Who came first – Hillel or Rav Ashi?" He couldn't answer. You know why he couldn't answer? I saw him standing on the street corner looking in the comic book. He was looking with a friend. What's a comic book? Nothing but *sheker v'kazav*. A waste of time.

The *chumash*, the *Gemara*, the *seforim*, those are the only books we care about. All our ambitions have to be identified with our forefathers. Go back! Go back as far as you can! Go back to your great-grandfathers! Go back to the Baal Shem Tov and the Vilna Gaon! Go back! Go back! Oh yes, go back to them. Go back to the Pnei Yehoshua! Go back to Rashi! Go back to the Rashba! To the Rambam! To Rabbi Yehuda HaChassid! Go back to the Chovos Halevovos! Go back to Rav Ashi! Go back to Rava and Abaye! Go back to Rabbi Yehuda and Rav Huna! Go back to Rabbi Yishmael! Go back to Rabbeinu HaKadosh! Go back to Rabbi Meir and Rabbi Yehoshua and Rabbi Shimon! Go back to Rabbi Akiva! Go back to Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai! Go back! Moshe and Aharon! Avrohom Avinu! Ah! Yaakov Avinu and Yitzchok Avinu! Your entire interest should be in our nation because that means you're attached to the proud nation, the nation with a backbone that will be forever!

Passover Forever

And that's what Pesach means; it means to "pass over." The most simple explanation is, אֲשֶׁר אֶלְפָּסַח עַל בְּתֵי בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל, that Hashem skipped over the Bnei Yisroel (12:27) in Mitzrayim. But it means that it's going to be that way forever. A very important lesson! One after the other every nation eventually goes down into the dust but Hakodosh Boruch Hu

passes over the Bnei Yisroel; the destroyer will not touch them and they continue forever. The *malach hamashchis* destroys all the nations but our homes he'll always pass over. Just like He passed over the houses of the Bnei Yisroel in Mitzrayim, that's how it's going to be forever.

He won't pass over the Germans; Germany is going to be destroyed eventually. Rome was destroyed and they were more powerful than the Germans. Bigger nations than Rome have gone down the drain. America too. Someday Manhattan will be a heap of ruins. All the nations and all their ideologies will crumble eventually. וְהָאֱלִילִים כָּלֵל יִהְיֶה – All their religions will finally come to an end (Yeshaya 2:18). You see them today and it's hard to believe. There's a pope and there are all kinds of churches. And there's Islam with the mosques. And of course, the universities with their *avodah zarahs*, every kind of false ideology, it's all a temporary thing, a passing ship in the night. But for the *Am Yisroel* there is a *pesach*, a passing over forever. We're still here! That's what the *korban Pesach* comes to tell us.

Live By Your Blood

And why did He skip over us? Because the *pesach* was a demonstration that we are able and willing to fight back against the world's influence and to resist all the ideas of the world. We will remain loyal to Hakodosh Boruch Hu! That's what it means that we slaughtered the god of the Egyptians in their presence. הֵן נִזְבַּח אֶת תּוֹעֵבַת מִצְרַיִם לְעֵינֵיהֶם וְלֹא הֵן יִסְקֻלְנוּ – The Egyptians should have stoned us for killing their idols and we did it anyhow. That's why Hashem skipped over us and that's why we're going to live forever. The Navi said, בְּרַמְיָךְ חַיִּי – you will live forever because of the blood you shed. You were ready to shed your own blood! Of course it means *dam milah* too, but that's something else. But the *dam hapesach* was the most perilous thing to do and that's what made us who we are today.

You know, when you have to fight back against the public so you gain a certain hardness. And you

need that to survive because there's a lot of propaganda; the poor Jew is kicked around and scorned. And if an Orthodox Jew maintains his principles in the face of all of that, that's one of the greatest achievements of life; that's why we're going to have a *kiyum* – that's why the *Am Yisroel* will survive. Everyone else, every nation, every country will go lost one day, but the *Am Yisroel*, the ones who have backbone, will remain forever and walk on their ruins.

So what does *mishchu* mean? What does it mean when you're pulling a sheep through the streets? It means, you're a success, that's what it means. If you're able to drag it through the streets and keep it four days in your room and then slaughter it, that's a sign that you're tough and fit to be part of the **עַם קָשָׁה עֲרֵף**. And sheep or no sheep that's the principle we live with all our lives. "If you're stiff-necked in your loyalty to Me," says Hashem, "then you're Mine and that's why you're going to remain forever."

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Proud To Be Jewish!

This week, once every day as I'm walking down the avenue, I will remember to walk at least a half block thinking about how proud I am to be a frum Jew. It doesn't matter what the world thinks about it – when it comes to being a servant of Hashem and being connected to the eternal nation, I'm as stiff-necked as could be.

— This week's booklet is based on tapes: —

308 - Preface to Pesach 8 | 909 - The Pesach Seder

E-133 - Haggadah of Pesach

Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

How do we benefit from this cold weather?

A:

The benefits of cold weather are tremendous. Cold weather causes the earth to stop producing. If the earth would continue to produce all year round, it would use up all of its resources – all of its nutrients and energy. And that's why deserts are found in hot climates. You won't find any deserts in cold climates. Because in temperate climates the earth always has a chance to recuperate its powers. In the hot climates however, sometimes the sun shines continuously with such heat, and the earth continues to produce and produce until it becomes arid and finally loses all its energy.

So the cold weather is *mamash* a *yeshuah*, a lifesaver. The cold weather is the reason that next year there will be crops again. The crops are a result of the cold weather that gave the earth a chance to recuperate. So next summer, when you're about to bite into a delicious peach, remember to thank Hakodosh Boruch Hu for the cold winter that prepared the earth to give you this peach. And when you walk in the cold today, remember to thank Hashem for all the delicious fruit that the cold weather is preparing for you.

You know, the earth uses up all of its energy to produce for us. But when the cold comes, all the leaves fall onto the ground. And the leaves are fertilizer. After a while they melt away into the ground. And now comes the cold weather and there's no more growing. Everything stops growing. The earth stops producing. What does the earth do? It recycles. It recycles all the energy that it had lost and the earth becomes fertile once again. And now in the springtime it is ready to produce again. So the cold is actually a lifesaver for us. Without cold there would be deserts all over America. But the dry deserts are found only in the areas with hot climates like the Sahara or the Arabian deserts because the sun is shining there all year round.

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