

תורת אביגדור

הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

SEFER BREISHIS - THE CHOPP HOLDINGS EDITION

לע"נ ר' מנחם מענדל בן נחמן ע"ה ור' שלום בן שלמה הלוי ע"ה

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SEFER BREISHIS

THE **CHOPP HOLDINGS** EDITON

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Year 3 | Issue 10

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מקץ - חנוכה

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

Pride of Israel

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Part I. Culture Shock

The Story of Chanukah

In Mesichta Shabbos (21b) the question is asked: מאי חנוכה – What's Chanukah all about? And we all know the answer to that – it was יָנִימִים נִקְבְּצוּ עָלֵינוּ, the wicked Greeks gathered against us to destroy us.

We said it today in the siddur: כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת יוֹן הִרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמֵּךְ: יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהִשְׁכִּיחָם תּוֹרַתְךָ. The Syrian Greeks wanted to stamp out the Torah and we battled against them for many years; and finally, בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הַרְבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעֵת צָרָתָם Hashem, in Your great mercy You saved us. It was יָדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תּוֹרַתְךָ and רְשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים – The wicked Yevanim fell into the hands of the tzadikim and the Am Yisroel merited to the miracle of the little bit of oil lasting for eight days. That's the story we all know.

Now, pay attention because the truth is very different – actually the story is not so simple. I must explain something first: The

chachomim who composed our *tefillos* were very careful with the honor of the Jewish people and so they didn't make the truth so open. It's only from people like me who like to rake up mud and tell the dirt that you'll hear this. And the truth is that I wouldn't tell it either, but since it's already told – Josephus and the Book of Maccabees tells the whole story already – so now it's no secret anymore that actually, *it was the Jews who caused the whole thing.*

Civil War in Eretz Yisroel

It was the Jews who were the source of trouble, only that these troublemaker Jews *used the Greeks* as a way of forcing their fellow Jews to forsake the *Torah*. It wasn't the *Yevanim* who were our worst enemies – it was the *Misyavanim*, the ones who wanted to be like the Greeks. And it was only because of these Greek wannabes that our forefathers had to fight.

And therefore when you read in the *siddur* that “the kingdom of the Greeks” arose against the Jewish people, it's only that the *chachomim* wanted to be solicitous with our *kavod* so they let it seem as if *goyim* came. But who *really* were the *zeidim* who fell into the hands of *oskei sorasecha*? Jews! Who *really* were the *resha'im* who fell into the hands of the *tazdikim*? Jews! Our enemies were Jews!

That's why finally at the end of the whole story, after many wars, Antiochus became so disgusted – I'm skipping the whole story now, I'm going to the end – and he said: "What do these Jews want of me? Why are they dragging me into their own personal problems? If the Jews want to keep their religion, what business is it of mine?"

Do you think Antiochus cared if they studied Torah or not? It was the Jews who wanted to get with the times, to flatter the Greeks and imitate them, that's who was bothered by Torah and Mitzvah observance, not Antiochus. And that's why at the end he gave up; just before he died he gave up the whole business – because he wasn't interested in the whole thing. Only that he was being prodded and pushed constantly by these Hellenizer Jews.

Trouble From the Tax Authorities

What caused it all? In those days, over a period of forty years, a group arose within our people that began to follow in the ways of the

Greeks. It began with a small group of tax collectors, the *muchsim*, who came into contact with the Greeks for whom they were collecting the taxes. It was a few families and their friends and associates who began to see the ‘beauty’ in Greek culture – they lost sight of the true beauty of the Am Yisroel – and they began to follow in the ways of the Greeks

And slowly they increased and multiplied and soon a new class arose in the Am Yisroel – a new class of wealthy assimilationists. They were only a small minority, but still it was a strong and powerful minority; and because of their connections to the Greeks, they were the ones that had the say over the government.

They became whom we now call the *Misyavnim*, Hellenizers – it means people who have Greek ideas. And so, the first thing was exercise. Exercise is good for your body but for the Greeks the body was *everything*. They used to exercise naked in order to display their bodies. That’s where the word gymnasium comes from – it means a place of nakedness; *gymnos* in Ancient Greek means naked. Now, nakedness to the Jewish people was a *to’eivah* – it was an abomination among Jews. אֵין לָךְ תְּשֻׁקָךְ – *Nobody is so hated by Hashem as a naked man* (Yevamos 63b). And now there were Jews who were exercising naked in the streets of Yerushalayim.

Greek Ways and Modern Progress

Not only exercise – they admired all of the Greek ways; Greek education, Greek art, and entertainment. They liked the Greek theaters. Jews never had theaters before and now the *Misyavnim* got busy introducing empty ideals into the bloodstream of our nation. The *Misyavnim* were profaning Yerushalayim with everything the Am Yisroel had always kept far away from. The New York Times would have been proud!

You know, when Teddy Kollek was defeated as mayor of Jerusalem, so the ones who sat *shivah* for him most was the New York Times. The New York Times sat *shivah* for him, “Ay, ay, ay. What a tragedy!” They were so sad – they were praising Teddy Kollek – all the good things he did for Yerushalayim. “When he was in power, it started becoming a modern city and today there’s even a little bit of nightlife already in Yerushalayim,” they said. You hear that praise on

him? A little bit of nightlife also was beginning to develop in Yerushalayim! And now, *nebach, nebach*, he was defeated. It was such a sad day for the New York Times. Nightlife! That's what they want! Nightlife in the holy city of Yerushalayim.

That's what the *Misyavnim* wanted for Yerushalayim too! The Greeks were all over the world now and they had the sciences. They also had beautiful architecture. They made buildings that were a beauty to behold. Wherever you went, you could see the results of the great progress and therefore many fell victim to the Greek culture. That's what happened at the time. The *Misyavnim* looked up to the advancing Greeks and they started bringing foreign ideas into *Eretz Yisroel*.

And the good Jews looked on in horror: "What's happening to our country? These *meshugeners* fell for the Greeks and they're bringing in all kinds of abominations now in the country. Who knows what's going to happen to us?!"

Revolt and Miracles

Everybody knows the rest of the story more or less – I won't tell you now in detail. The Am Yisroel revolted against the traitors and many people died at that time. Blood began to pour like water because they didn't want to yield to the Greeks and their Jewish cohorts – the Jews had to go into hiding from the Greeks in order to keep their Torah. And finally, finally, Mattisyahu was helped by Hakodosh Boruch Hu and he drove out the Greeks.

It didn't happen so easily – there were *nissim* and *nissim*. The Greeks of Syria had a big revolt among themselves; they had a lot of internal troubles—it was all Hashem's doing—and finally after many, many years, Mattisyahu was able to enter Yerushalayim victorious. And they dedicated the *Beis Hamikdash* and they lit the *neiros* and the great *neis* took place – that was **נֵאִי הַנוֹרָא**, the great *neis* of Chanukah.

But that's not our subject tonight. Let's go back now to the beginning and remember how it began because that is one of the important lessons of Chanukah. It all started with people who fell in love with the gentile culture. You have to remember that – the people

shepherds, and now he was dealing with an advanced society. He should have forgotten all about them.

What happened to the Jews who came from Europe to America? So many got lost – entire families, hundreds of thousands of Jews, went lost forever when they came to America. In Europe, the *goyim* used to spit on the Jews and now these Jews came to a new country, America, where nobody spat on you – not much anyhow.

A Visit To America

When I was in Slabodka, someone came back from visiting America, and he told me a story. He said it *b'hispaylus* – he was so excited! He said he was in America riding the subway and he got lost; he didn't know where to go. So a policeman came over and said, "What's the matter?" But my friend didn't know any English. So this policeman went away and brought back a Jewish policeman. And my friend was able to speak with him in *Yiddish* and the Jewish policeman took him and helped him find his way.

"America, ooh wah!" he said. "What a wonderful country it is! They have full rights in America – you can be an American!" He even described the flashing lights of the stores that lit up the night. He was in love with it – you could see his eyes sparkle when he spoke about that.

But Yosef HaTzaddik had a million times more happiness. He should have fallen for it; he should have kissed the earth of Egypt. Some Jews did that. When some Jews came to America, they kissed the earth of America – a free country!

But Yosef didn't kiss any earth. Yosef remained Yosef. יוסף הוא השליט (Bereishis 42:6). הוא means, he was the same as before. הוא בצדקו מתחלֵתו ועד סופו. Yosef was still a son of Yisroel – he didn't change at all! He wasn't deceived. He knew that there was nothing in the world greater than to be a son of Yaakov, a *ben Yisroel*, and that to admire any other culture, any other way of life, was just foolishness – it's all *hevel varik*.

Part II. Lost Pride

The Jews Loved Germany

Now, this story is told to us in the Torah not merely for itself. It's written to be a model, a lesson, so that a Jew should know never to fall in love with anyplace, with any gentile culture. If you ignore the model that our great men set down for us, and instead walk in the footsteps of the *Misyavnim*, that romance with 'your' country eventually turns out to be a disappointment.

The Jews in Germany fell in love with the Germans – as much as the *Misyavnim* fell in love with the Greeks, that's what happened in Germany. You must know that Germany before Hitler was a very fine country. I was in Germany just before Hitler took over. I remember I was riding in a train and I wanted to pick up my suitcase and put it on the rack. A well dressed German, a professor, came over to me and without my asking, he picked up my suitcase for me. He was much older than me but no matter. "They're so polite these Germans," I thought. He picked up my suitcase and put it on the rack.

When I was in Europe, all the Jews loved Germany. They traveled to Germany, even *yeshiva* boys sometimes. In Slabodka there was a fine *ilui*, a *yeshiva* man, that left the *yeshiva* and went to Germany and he became a PhD, a doctor. In Germany everyone could receive an education! Everyone had full rights! Everyone was law abiding! You couldn't do anything against the law in Germany – no violence in Germany. It was a wonderful country – every kind of progress and modernization. It was clean too. The streets were perfectly clean – you couldn't throw a piece of paper on the floor. In America, you throw paper in the streets. You couldn't do that in Germany.

Forsaking The Faith Of Moses

Germany was a model country and the Jews in Germany fell in love with Germany. They gave their hearts to Germany. At first they said, "We're loyal Jews. We're Germans of the faith of Moses." At least that much they said at the beginning; but later they became Germans *without* the faith of Moses. They loved Germany so much – more than they loved the *Am Yisroel*.

Their hearts were so invested in everything German that even when the trouble began, they thought it was just a small hiccup – a short hiccup of history – and that one day they would be able to mix with the *goyim* again. And when the *rabbonim* would tell them that it's all a mistake, it's all *sheker v'kazav*, they wouldn't hear it. They didn't want to learn the lesson.

Finally they learned. Oh yes, they learned! In the concentration camps the well-dressed German gave good lessons on gentile culture. Hakodosh Boruch Hu sent somebody, a good *rebbe* whose lessons they couldn't ignore. Hitler came and showed them what a German is and the whole romance exploded in the flames of the crematorium.

"Don't make any mistake about it," Hashem was telling us. "It's all *shav v'sheker!*" Like the *medrash* says: *Eisav* – what does *Eisav* mean? **הוֹי שָׂוִיָּא** – How false he is! How false is the gentile culture! How false are their ideals and attitudes! How false they themselves are! And not only Germany – everywhere!

Holocaust of Assimilation

The truth is that more Jews were lost in the crematorium of assimilation in America than were lost in Germany. Most of the Jews who came to America went lost like the *Misyavnim*. They were deceived by the great *Yetzer Hara* that comes along in every generation: "Look," said the *Yetzer Hara*, "Russia is no good. We know Russians are no good." That they learned already. Russians are pogrom *shickers*, anti-Semites, they knew that. But America's a different kind of place. It's wonderful in America. We're going to fall in love with America."

Not only here. How many became the victims of England? How many Jews got lost in Canada? And in Paris, Jews got lost. They fell in love! France Jews, they were Frenchmen. Yes, we belong to the Israelite religion, but we're Frenchmen; and they went lost.

Insular Society

Now, when the Jew insulates himself from the outside world, when he remains in his ghetto, so he remains strong and healthy. Because what does he care what the *goyim* are saying! In fact, when

we were in the ghetto, we didn't even have the opportunity to hear *what* they were saying. When the Pope, or Martin Luther, or any of the bishops preached slanders against us, we didn't even hear the accusations. All that the Jews saw were the end results – when their holidays came, the inflamed mobs poured out of the churches with their holy zeal to kill Jews – that's when the Jews found out that something was wrong. But the Jew didn't hear the sermon and so he didn't have any cause to have an inferiority complex; he had a cause to be afraid, that's all.

People don't understand that. What the *goy* thought didn't mean a thing to the proud Jew! You know, the old time Jew in the ghetto when he walked out of the ghetto, he walked with his head down. If he picked up his head, the gentile would yell at him, "What are you looking at you dirty Jew?!" He could get hit for that. You had to walk with your head down when you were outside the ghetto. And if a tough *goy* was coming by, you had to get off the sidewalk because he could demand that you move over for him. And if you wouldn't move over he'd push you off.

But does that mean that the Jew was broken from this? No, not at all! The Jew knew that he was a prince! Only that now, he left his palace, he left the ghetto, and he was walking among animals. You can't expect, let's say, that dogs and squirrels should be polite. They bite, what could you do?! Some bark, some bite, so you have to be careful and watch out for them. The proud Jew learned how to handle that.

And when he got back to the ghetto his head was up; he was back in the palace, a prince among princes. He knew that outside was a savage world and here, inside, was the civilized world – and he couldn't be prouder to be a *ben Yisroel!*

Self-Hating Jews

But once the Jew began to have contact with the gentile world, to mingle with them, that situation didn't continue any longer because now the insulation was removed. And once the insulation is taken away, everything begins to weaken. When the Jews began to cozy up to the gentile culture and to hear all the attitudes of the *goyim*, that's when the self-respect of the Jew began to weaken

because now he was opening himself up to the ideals and attitudes of the gentiles. Once the Jew began to listen to what the gentile said – and he listened well and nodded his head because he wanted to be accepted – so the opinions of the gentiles began to enter. From now on the Jew began to hear what the gentiles said and what gentiles wrote and he became sensitive to it. The gentile opinion began to cause the Jew to despise himself.

And after a while the Jews became almost hopelessly poisoned with self hate. Sometimes even more than the gentile hates the Jew, the Jew hates the Jews. Why is that? Because the gentile has other things to think about – he doesn't think about Jews day and night. He has work to do, and he has to drink booze, other pastimes too he has; he's a busy man. But the Jew who has now learned gentile attitudes is living with himself always – he can't escape it and so he learns to despise himself, to hate his own people.

And in some cases with a violent hatred. That's why the Jewish radicals – today, just like in the time of Chanukah – are the most dangerous. Right now in Paris there are taking place riots – this whole week there were leftist riots in favor of the Arab terrorists. And who are the main leaders? Jews! Now, how did it turn out that we don't find Arabs leading groups of other Arabs in defense of the Jewish people? Why is that we only have Jews who are leading other Jews in defense of terrorists whose only desire is to murder other Jews? The answer is that Jewish self hate develops from contact with the gentiles. The more a Jew listens to gentile ideas the more he learns to hate his people.

Slandering the Orthodox

I was once walking in the street one night. I was coming back from the *yeshiva* and coming towards me was a woman with her daughter. She was speaking *Yiddish* to her daughter and she said aloud so that I should hear, "*Un de ergste ganavim zenen di frumme*" – the *frum* are the worst thieves. That's the Torah they taught the children – the worst crooks are the orthodox.

I remember those days – if you wore even a little beard, you were a *meshugener*. I was standing once, with a little beard, not like this – a much smaller beard. I was waiting for the trolley and a man

across the street was looking at me. Finally he couldn't contain his anger any longer and he shouted to me from across the street: "Meshugener!" he shouted. Everyone knew straight away that the Orthodox Jews are no good, that's all. They're all crooks. They're fakers and *meshugeners*.

That's the *torah* that the world teaches. The Orthodox are no good! In *Eretz Yisroel* the newspapers are saying it every day. The leaders of the State of Israel have been poisoned through and through. Golda Meir and Ben-Gurion, all of them, want to break from the Jewish past and create something entirely new. In their eyes the Jew is something despised, something to be hated. They hate anything Jewish and the newspapers are teaching this new Israeli *torah*. That's why so many Israelis today - if you meet them on the buses there or when they come to visit here - they're not proud to be Jews. They're Israelis! That's a new thing - nothing to do with Judaism. They want to disassociate themselves from the ancient Jew, from the Jewish people.

Boro Park and Williamsburg

And in America it's been picked up now and it's repeated here too. One man wrote in the newspaper that he never went to Brooklyn! He was so proud of not going to Brooklyn. "The Orthodox are smelly," he said. And the Jewish people read the newspapers and it seeps in - it seeps in!

Even if you're a *yeshiva* man, as long as you're living among the gentiles, so you can't help but being poisoned by the attitudes of despising the truly Jewish ideals. That's why you see observant Jews criticizing the *frum* Jews. A woman from Virginia, an observant woman, she visited Boro Park and now she is going back to Virginia, so she calls me on the telephone and she says to me, "Boro Park is full of people who live on programs and they deceive the government." I said, "You know what you are saying? You are doing a terrible crime! You are talking about the best people in America!" Except for the Jews of Williamsburg - those Jews are even better. But the Boro Park people are very holy people; you walk by blocks and blocks, all *shomrei mitzvos*. Every house is a *beis hamikdash* of *kedusha*. That's how you speak about our best people?!

The Honest People

It's an upside down world! The world looks at *resha'im* with a kindly attitude. On *reshoim*, the world says they are polite, they are friendly, and on *tzaddikim* they say, they don't have good manners. They are dishonest. It's all *sheker!* The truth is that many of the non frum are *resha'im* – you don't have to be a murderer to be wicked. I watch the *resha'im* every day on the street on Kings Highway. They go by the fruit stand and they take apricots off the fruit stand and they eat them. They walk away without paying. They eat peanuts, grapes. Every day I see it. The non-frum Jews don't have any inhibitions. They are like *beheimos*, “וּבֵעֵר בְּשֵׂדָה אֲחֵר” – *they eat from other people's food*” – there is no *yosher* to them. No Orthodox Jew does such a thing.

“Oh no,” they say, “The gentiles have the *yosher*. Only the Orthodox have no *yosher*. Everybody knows that *frum* are dishonest” – *ad kan divrei yetzer hara* – those are all words of the evil inclination.

The *Yetzer Hora* is very busy in this world. There's a *malach* called the *Yetzer Hora* and his job is to mislead people. And one of his biggest functions is to make Jews dislike themselves – one of the biggest successes of the *Yetzer Hora* is to cause Jews to think less of themselves than they should.

Part III. Jewish Pride

Yosef's Policy

The outside world is always hammering away that the Jewish people are the worst and after a while some of it begins to seep in from the outside world; there begins to enter into the heart of the Jews an echo of all the gentile attitudes about the Am Yisroel. After a while Jews become inferior in their own esteem. How long can you be impervious to the world's opinion? After a while it seeps in.

That's why as long as Yosef was alive, it was his policy to keep the *Bnei Yisroel* far away from the *Mitzrim*. Even personalities as great as the *shevatim* had to be on guard always. Remember when

Yosef's brothers came down to Mitzrayim so he called them together and said to them – “Look, all of you are smart men, very capable fellows. And when Pharaoh is going to put his eyes on you, he will want you to take positions of responsibility in his government; he's going to want to keep you close. But that's exactly what we don't want because we don't want to mingle with them.”

“So when Pharaoh will call you and ask you what's your profession,” Yosef told his brothers, “Don't say, ‘Oh king, we are ready to do whatever you ask of us.’ ” Because Reuven would have been made a governor of a province in Egypt, and Shimon would be appointed a general in an army; and so on. They would have been the best at these jobs and they would have been appointed to these positions of power. But Yosef had a good head and he foresaw all this. So he told them, “Nothing doing!”

The Jewish Treasury Secretary

Let's say you are now by some stroke of luck the Secretary of the Treasury – you, Mr. Cohen or Mr. Levine have been chosen by the President to be the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States. And the president likes the way you're doing things. So he says, “Look, Cohen. I see you have a good head for money. Maybe you can bring in your family; if they're half as smart as you, we could use them. I need people like you to help straighten out the tangled finances of this country. We're going crazy. We're spending one third of the budget on HEW alone. One third of the huge American budget is on the Health, Education and Welfare Department which is almost 100% waste!

It's that department, by the way, that is ruining America. The Health, Education and Welfare Department is undermining the health of the nation, it's ruining their education, and it's against the welfare of the American people. And that's where your money is going. One third! Billions are going down the rat-hole in that wicked department.

And so I'm imagining we would have a president who has a lot of brains and he's saying to Cohen, his Secretary of the Treasury, “Get me some of your family, those geniuses who know how to handle

budgets and lets see if they can do something about this. Maybe we can pare off some of the billions that are going lost.”

So Cohen says like this to the president: “You want to know the truth, Jimmy? All my relatives are in the junk business – they’re *shomrei Shabbos* and they can’t go into retail business, so they sell *shmatehs*. They are not good for any government jobs, forget about it.” True or not true, that’s the smartest thing for Cohen to tell the President.

Abominable Shepherds

So Yosef Hatzadik said, **אֲנַשֵׁי מִקְנֵה הַיּוֹ עֲבָרִיד** – “Tell Pharaoh you are shepherds and that’s all you know.” In Egypt the nastiest thing you could do for a living was a shepherd. There was nothing lower, nothing more contemptible, than that. **כִּי תוֹעֵבַת מִצְרַיִם כָּל רֵעָה צֹאן** – *it was an abomination in Egypt*. If you told the Egyptians that you had a skunk farm, you wouldn’t be less popular.

And Yosef coached them, he told his brothers to tell Pharaoh that. And what’s the purpose? **בְּעִבּוֹר תֵּשְׁבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ גֹּשֶׁן** – “In order you should continue to dwell in the land of Goshen, in the ghetto.” You hear a politician like that? That was Yosef Hatzadik guiding his brothers so that the Jews should not leave the confines of the Goshen Ghetto and begin to absorb gentile attitudes.

Unfortunately many Jews have strayed from that lesson that Yosef taught the *Bnei Yisroel*; and the more we came into contact with the *umos ha’olam* the more we lost the unique pride that only a *Yisroel* can have. The *gemara* (Chagiga 5b) says that Hakodosh Boruch Hu weeps because of that: **מִפְּנֵי גְאוּתוֹן שֶׁל יִשְׂרָאֵל** – *Hashem cries for the pride of the Am Yisroel that went lost*. Not only for the *meshumadim* and the assimilationists who give up entirely their pride in being a part of the holy nation, but even us Hashem cries for. We had a *ga’avah* once upon a time – we once knew who we were.

Study the Truth

However, the truth has not changed. Hakodosh Boruch Hu already promised that no matter where we are, no matter how scattered we are all over the earth, He is with us. And *only* with us – forever and ever. We have to realize how lucky we are to be the

children of Hashem. There's no honor bigger than that in this world – and the Next World too.

But unless we get busy studying the *emes* of the Torah and understanding the pride of the *Am Yisroel*, then we're going to fall into that error of the *Misyavnim* sooner or later. And don't think it's a small thing. It's one of the biggest errors that a Jew can make if he doesn't think well of his people. It's one of the very worst iniquities because it means you're not thinking like Hakadosh Baruch Hu thinks. **מִי כְעַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בְּאָרֶץ** – *Who is like the nation Yisrael, one people in the world.* That's what Hashem says (Brachos 6a).

And Chanukah tells us that great lesson, that beauty is only by us! We always have to be on guard not to look for beauty and culture and perfection outside of our people. You have to fall in love with the *Am Yisroel* – that's what Chanukah is telling us, that we have to fall in love with ourselves.

The Most Beautiful Nation

Now the question is – how do you do that? The only way is by studying our people. We must always have echoing in our minds the great lesson of *Shir Hashirim*: **הַיְיִפָּה בְּנָשִׁים** – *You most beautiful among women.* Women mean the nations of the world and the most beautiful of all is us. **יְפָה אַתְּ רַעֲיָתִי**, Hashem says to us, *You are beautiful, My mate, יְפָה אַתְּ* – *You are the most beautiful of all nations.*

Today, *boruch Hashem*, you see *tznius*, you see *mesiras nefesh* for Torah and *mitzvos*. *Boruch Hashem!* No question about it. I was walking in the street one day and a little eight year old girl was sitting on the steps with her playmates. As I passed by, she said to her friend, “A *bas Yisrael* shouldn't do things like that.” Oooh – I was so happy! She didn't say it for me! She was telling her friend, “A *bas Yisrael* shouldn't do things like that.”

We're so lucky to be part of such a nation! And therefore we should be constantly expressing our deep gratitude to Hashem for that. Of course you have to thank Him for everything – that you're able to walk, that you're able to hear, able to see, for *everything* you have to thank Hashem. But of all the things that Hakadosh Boruch Hu expects you to demonstrate gratitude for, the most important

thing is that you're a Yisroel. "I am a Yisroel and I'm proud of it. Thank you Hashem!"

Learning The Lesson

People who walk with their tzitzis out, that's showing a pride. It's a pleasure to see the *chassidishe* Jews demonstrating that they're proud of who they are. Even a black hat is a proud demonstration that you belong to the *Am Yisroel*. Anybody who demonstrates that he's proud to be joined to the *Am Yisroel*, that he's not looking elsewhere for culture and attitudes and ideals, that's already a great perfection of character.

The feeling in the heart should always be bubbling with joy that Hakodosh Boruch Hu chose you. Not only that He chose you as עַמִּי, His people. "My people" is constantly reiterated in the whole Tanach, but even more than that, Hashem says בְּנֵי – "You're My children." Every Jewish man and woman is a child of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And it's not merely a form of speech; it's an attitude that must be number one in all our service of Hashem.

Now that's a very important lesson because if we had learned that previously, a great many people would have survived. Otherwise, they got lost. The *Misyavanim* became *Tzedukim* – they all became *Tzedukim* and went lost from the *Am Yisroel*. At the *churban bayis sheini*, the *Tzedukim* all went lost. They were placed into the dustbin of history and we never heard about them again. And on the other hand, Yosef Hatzadik and Mattisyahu and all of those who walked in the footsteps of these great leaders are still around to tell the story. חַיִּים בְּלָדְכֶם וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבִקִּים בַּהֲשֵׁם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם – You, who are loyal to Hashem, חַיִּים בְּלָדְכֶם – you are the ones who will remain forever and ever.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

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וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַתִּים יָמִים

***And it was, at the end of two years, that Pharaoh dreamed
(Mikeitz 41:1)***

Pharaoh was not worthy of any true dream, and surely not a prophetic dream. None of Yosef's brothers had such dreams. Even Yaakov Avinu's ladder dream was a one-time rarity in his life.

But just as Bileam's donkey spoke not because it was capable of speaking, but because Hashem thereby gave a message to the Am Yisroel forever, so too Pharaoh was sent a meaningful dream for the ultimate purpose of the sojourn of Yaakov's children in Mitzrayim where the small tribe of seventy people became a nation of millions.

It was Pharaoh's dream that caused Yosef to be elevated, and because Yosef was elevated, Yaakov and his sons come down to Mitzrayim. And because of their stay in Mitzrayim they became a nation that was prepared for Matan Torah.

Thus, like everything else that takes place in palaces all over the world, Pharaoh's dream was an essential link in the chain of events intended for the future benefit of the Am Yisroel.

וְאֵת גְּבִיעֵי נְבִיעַ הַכֶּסֶף תְּשִׂים בְּפִי אֲמַתְחַת הַקֶּטָן

***And my goblet, the goblet of silver, put in the mouth of the
youngest (Mikeitz 44:2)***

Yosef's plan here was to give the brothers an opportunity to prove their purity of heart to Hakodosh Boruch Hu by exerting themselves to rescue Binyomin.

The story of Yosef's descent to Mitzrayim had been in a large way founded on the envy of the brothers toward Yosef which had its

roots in their sympathy with their less-loved mother Leah. It wasn't easy for them to see Yosef and Binyomin, the sons of the favored wife Rochel because it was a constant reminder of their mother's status in the home as the less beloved wife.

And now they were being tested whether they would overcome the old ingrained attitude and rise to the defense of Rochel's son, Binyomin. Because the penalty for theft was death (44:9), Yehuda and his brothers offered to lighten Binyomin's penalty by offering themselves to Yosef as slaves. They were thereby proven to be loyal brothers to the son of Rochel.

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Continued from back cover

And therefore, we should make sure to study the *nissim* and think about them as much as possible. Hashem said, לְמַעַן תִּסְפָּר בְּאָזְנִי, בְּנֶדֶד וּבֶן בְּנֶדֶד. Hashem wants you to always talk over the *nissim* that happened. Because even though you don't see it right now, but just remembering the *nissim* is a tremendous benefit that is on the same level as *Matan Torah*. The Chovos Halevavos says that the *Torah* and *nissim* are side by side the two greatest gifts that Hashem gave the Jewish nation.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

שאל אביך ויגדך ויקניך ויאמרו לך

Q:

One of the *nissim* in the Bais Hamikdash was that the *ner ma'aravi* always burned longer than it should have. So why was it such a big *neis* that on Chanukah the oil burned for eight days?

A:

No, no. It didn't always happen. Yes, for some time it happened always, but later on it stopped. By the end of the second Beis Ha'mikdash that *neis* didn't continue any longer. And the *neis* of Chanukah was a different kind of *neis*. The *neis* of Chanuka was all of a sudden. It was a big surprise. A small amount of oil, which should have only burned for one day, continued to burn and lasted eight days. They needed eight days to prepare the new oil and the small amount of oil lasted eight days. So that was a separate *neis* from the *neis* of the *ner ma'aravi*. And when they saw the *neis* Chanuka, they went wild with *simcha* because every *neis* is a *matanah*. A *neis* is a gift from Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

I'll explain that to you. The Chovos Halevavos at the end of Sha'ar Habechina says the following. He says that among the biggest gifts that Hashem gave our nation, the two most precious ones are the Torah and *nissim*. Do you hear that?! A *neis* is a tremendous gift. The world doesn't understand that. People think that a *neis* is merely that we are in trouble and Hashem came and saved us from our troubles. No, Hashem could have saved us in other ways – without a *neis*. What a *neis* is, is a gift of *emunah*. *Nissim* are a shot-in-the-arm of *emunah*. Instead of saving us in a natural way, He puts a *neis* there as a *tovah* for us. A *neis* is a tremendous *giluy shechina* to put into our minds a certain dose of *emunah*.

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