



פרשת כי תשא

WITH

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BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Stiff-Necked Nation

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Part I. The Stubborn Nation

A Surprising Defense Strategy

Our great teacher, Moshe Rabbeinu, when he spoke on our behalf to the Almighty after the sin of the *eigel*, begging forgiveness, he said as follows: יְיָ בְּקִרְבָּנוּ – נָא ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ – You, Hashem, should rest Your Presence amongst us, *בִּי עִם קְשָׁה עֲרַף הוּא* – because this is a stiff-necked nation, *וְסִלַּחְתָּ לָעוֹנֵינוּ וְלִחְטָאתֵנוּ וְנָחֵלְתָנוּ* – and You should forgive us therefore and take us as Your inheritance (Shemos 34:9).

Now, we have to understand what was being said there, “Forgive us because we are stiff-necked”?! What kind of a defense is that? Moshe Rabbeinu after all was the defender of the Jewish nation par excellence. And he was very wise too; he had a very good head and he could have advanced a number of arguments in defense of the nation.

We ourselves with our little heads could think of a number of arguments. And he, who was the great friend of the Jewish people and also a genius of mankind, he surely could have given a defense that

would have provided vindication for the nation. And so if he proposed this reason – “because they are stiff-necked and stubborn” – then we have to listen to it and understand it.

Now, some say that Moshe Rabbeinu here was employing the word *בִּי*, not in its common usage of ‘because’ but in the more unusual sense of ‘even though’: “Forgive us *even though* we’re stiff-necked.” But that’s not much of a defense however; and besides, if the plain translation is ‘because’ then that was surely included in Moshe Rabbeinu’s intent.

Stiff-neckedness! That’s the character trait that Moshe Rabbeinu chose to highlight in his defense of the people, the reason Hakadosh Baruch Hu should not forsake them. The fact that we are a stubborn nation was in the eyes of our great teacher the foremost recommendation for the Jewish nation.

Jews, Dogs, and Roosters

In Mesichta Beitzah (26b), the Gemara makes a statement: *ג' עֲזִין יֵהֱמוּ* – There are three strong ones, *בְּלֶב יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאַמּוֹת* – Yisroel is strong among the nations, *בְּלֶב*

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וְתִרְגֵּל בְּעוֹפוֹת – the dog is strong among animals, בְּחַיִּוֹת – and the chicken is strong among the birds.

Now we're not talking here about physical strength because a lion or an elephant is stronger than a dog; and an eagle or an ostrich is stronger than a rooster. But the word used here for strength is not גְּבוּרָה, but עָז. Az means boldness, strength of character, strength of fortitude.

You know, a dog doesn't give his master any wool; you cannot shear his wool. He doesn't supply any milk and he usually does not pull any vehicles. There may be some minor services here and there that he'll do. This dog is a rat catcher, another dog helps in hunting. But they're all minor things and we find plenty of breeds of dogs that don't do anything at all.

Man's Best Friend

But they have one commodity for which they are prized and that's the commodity of loyalty: A dog is most loyal to its master. And he demonstrates it; he shows that he is fond of his master. And this stubborn loyalty is such a prized commodity that it is appreciated more than any other services that an animal renders.

A sheep clothes his master in wool; he gives him garments. But a sheep doesn't come in and eat by the master's table. The cow supplies milk and butter and cheese and yet she doesn't walk into the dining room and perch on a chair next to her master. He'd beat her out into the stable.

But the dog, on the other hand, even though he doesn't provide these more tangible services, is actually a comrade of the master. I've seen people who came to visit their children. So when they were saying farewell, they kissed their children's dog goodbye. They picked it up and hugged it and kissed their children's dog goodbye!

Now this isn't in vain. You must say that there's something that stirs their emotions. And there's no question that it's the loyalty of the dog – a very great character attribute. The dog is loyal to his master. A dog, once he gets a master, he's loyal to his master. He'll bite other people, he'll bark at other people, but

he comes up to his master and licks his feet and tries to make himself beloved by his master. And he remains that way till the end.

Dogged Perseverance

The story is told – a true story – of the dog that came daily to the train station to meet his master when he came home from the city. Every day at 5:00, the dog was there.

And one day, the train pulled in and the dog ran around sniffing all the trousers, but his master didn't come. And he never came anymore. But the dog didn't understand; he waited there. He didn't leave the station; he was waiting for his master. He stood and stood there in the train yard, summer and winter. He ran around sniffing and searching. But no master.

And finally when he was old and he could barely totter, he met the last train and he dropped dead in the station. And so the station hand who had witnessed this story dug a grave for him near the tracks and put up a little monument to a loyal servant who never forgot.

Through Thick and Thin

And the comparison is therefore understandable: When you say יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּאֻמּוֹת, it means that the Jewish people are considered the most faithful of all nations. Through thick and thin we're there; even after there commenced the period called *hester ponim*.

You know, up till the end of the first Beis Hamikdash it was *giluy ponim* – the Shechinah was open. But after the first destruction, everything changed and thenceforth, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, although He continued to conduct the affairs of His people and the affairs of the world, He remained concealed. He did no open miracles, no public miracles. He didn't demonstrate His Presence as openly as in the days of old.

And the Jewish nation was driven from one land to another and they were subjected to every ordeal. *But it makes no difference.* We lived among every possible culture and nevertheless, the Torah which is observed in Brooklyn today is the same Torah that they accepted at Har Sinai.

Christianity is Dead

It's impossible to appreciate this unless you compare it with, *lehavdil*, the other nations. It's only because you don't know what's doing in the other religions that you think, "Maybe they too are stubborn and cling to their principles." There isn't a religion in the world that has persisted, that hasn't changed from century to century.

People don't know that. People ask, "What about Christianity? It's not as old as Judaism, but they're just as loyal." The truth is Christianity died out long ago.

You know at the beginning, 'that man' – with quotation marks – spoke only to Jews. During his lifetime he refused to deal with gentiles; anyone who wished to be a follower of his, needed to be circumcised and converted. He didn't have any such, but had they volunteered to join him, he would have required full conversion. He would have been more careful with conversion than the Mizrachi leaders of the State of Israel are today. You couldn't make a one-two-three conversion with Yishu because he didn't know these things yet. It didn't enter his mind! Yishu wouldn't have accepted a follower who had signed a paper. He was a Jew! You had to be a Jew! There's no question!

Yes, he had his eccentricities. He wasn't a normal person. He was a megalomaniac. He was an *am ha'aretz*. He was full of envy. He was a *mevazeh talmidei chachomim*. He was an outcast, a *mamzer*. Some more adjectives too. But whatever he was, he was a Jew and he wouldn't have countenanced anything but Judaism. With all of his ignorance! With all of his hypocrisy! Only Judaism. If Oso Ha'ish, if that man, could get out of his grave, he wouldn't even think of talking to the Pope in Rome. "An *arel*? A *mechallel Shabbos*? I should talk to him?" He wouldn't condescend to talk to the Greek Patriarch. He was a Jew.

The Saint Who Wasn't

Only after he died, there came along a fellow who was later crowned with the name Saint Paul. The title 'saint' fits him like a pair of pants on a horse.

Here's what he says in his own words. "When I spoke to Jews, I behaved like a Jew. When I spoke to gentiles, I behaved like a gentile. I was to all men, what they wanted to see in me, in order to better win them over." In other words, he was fraud number one.

He came into the synagogue and he said, "I'm a real Jew, nothing but a Jew." He didn't say, "I am now working against Judaism" – because he was; from now on, he was building up something entirely different. He was preaching that in order to be a true Israelite, you don't need any Judaism.

Cutting the Circumcision

You don't have to circumcise, he said. And he brought a very 'scholarly' proof. Listen to the proof that circumcision is not necessary. He says, "Our father, Abraham, at the beginning he wasn't circumcised and Hashem spoke to him then, didn't He? So you see it's not necessary to be circumcised."

He forgot one little fact – that Hashem told him, "Go and circumcise yourself." But that's his whole argument. In that New Testament, that's the whole argument on which they base the fact that it's not necessary to circumcise. And to him gentiles were just as good as Jews. It was something new! And so, Paul took Oso Ha'ish and he played him up. He cashed in on him and he built a whole new religion on that.

So what do we see here? That in a short period, the old Christianity had disappeared and now something new arose; an entirely new religion.

So how long did Christianity really live? Christianity lived only a few years. And when did it die? It died as soon as Paul came on the scene. That's important. Paul's Christianity is not an old religion. It's new.

Calendar Confusion

"Alright," you'll say, "it's new, but from Paul until now it's a long time already. At least since then it's been a stubborn religion."

But you have to know that Paul insisted that they go to church every Shabbos. Every Shabbos, you had to go to church and if you didn't go, Paul promised

you a lot of hellfire in the other world. And for 300 years, all of Paul's successors insisted on that.

What happened? At the council of Nicaea, they decided to change from Saturday to Sunday. Now Paul himself would have exploded against this but Saturday looked too Jewish, so they did a switch there too.

You can be sure that when they abolished Saturday the original Christians turned – I won't say in their graves; but in their places wherever they are, they turned. Because they kept Saturday, the old ones.

Stubborn Jews

Now imagine if Jews suddenly came and changed from Shabbos to Sunday, *chas v'shalom*. Could anybody say, "It's the same religion"? So when Christianity changed from Shabbos to Sunday the old Christianity died out and a new Christianity was born.

So what do we see? Is that a religion? It's a joke, a system of convenience that's changed at will. It's nothing but accommodation, suiting themselves to the circumstances. When there's enough pressure on the Pope, he convenes a college of cardinals and they make a new dispensation; they do whatever they want. The whole religion is nothing but putty in their hands. There's nothing *az* about a people who can make such changes. It's only the Jew; he's *az*, he's bold. A Jew would never countenance such things. Not only he wouldn't countenance it – he'd give up his life for it. That's the **יְשָׁרְאֵל בְּאַמּוֹת**!

Part II. The Heroic Nation

Emunah in Higher Mathematics

So you'll have some naysayers. They'll say "Paul? That was so long ago. We don't really know what happened. It's too ancient to really know." So let me tell you some recent 'torah's from the Pope. Because only recently, about a hundred years ago, the religion was born again. And not just something 'small' like

moving the Shabbos day. We're talking here the *yesodos ha'emunah*, the whole religion itself.

You know, they always worshiped a corporation; the father, the son and the Holy Ghost. Whatever that is, they themselves don't know how it's not idolatry. It's a big problem and they have written books and books on this because they say it's one but they say it's also three. And the mathematics involved to show that three is one and one is three, it needs a lot of nimble argumentation. They have books and books on that. But at least it was only three.

Women's Rights

Not anymore however. About a hundred years ago, a big agitation began to arise in the church for women's rights. And they said, "What about Mary?" So at first, they met a stony wall of opposition. It's against their religion to worship somebody else. But finally there was so much pressure that they decided to admit Mary into their corporation. Not only as a saint – Mary is worshiped officially as one of the top ones.

Of course you still have to say "trinity". You can't change the old words, but there's some more convoluted logic and books and writing and arguments. Now it's trinity and shminity. It's all the same. It all ends up being the same.

Now the Protestants, when they heard that, they came up with a big protest! *Apikorsus!* Idolatry! There was a wave of indignation all over the world. But after a while, they saw that it's a good business because you have to get in the ladies too. And so, they soft-pedaled it lately and among the high churchers, there's a tendency also to look away when somebody does a little worshipping, bootleg worshipping on the side for Mary too.

It's only religion in the sense of an organization. They don't have any G-d-given code. Yoshke didn't say, "**בְּהָ אֱמֹר ה'**, worship just three." He didn't say that. There's no law. There's no Sinai law. There's no set principles. It's only a question of waiting; wait long enough and things will be changed. That's what it really is. Because it's a man-made religion. It was made by men and it's changed by men.

Reformed Religions

Now, Christianity is just one example; it's the example that teaches the rule. Because it's the same all over the world and all throughout history. There isn't a single religion that has persisted, that has stubbornly stuck to its principles. The old name, the old trademark, still continues, but the product is not the same.

If Confucius would come out of wherever he is, he wouldn't recognize the Chinese religion as his own. If he came back to this world – he'd have to cool off a little while first – he wouldn't even recognize that these are his people. They're idol worshippers and he didn't advocate idolatry; he was a philosopher. And even the images, they've been adding and subtracting for centuries.

A historian once said that the Chinese religion honors Confucius only in name, but his teachings are not followed by those who worship that religion. It's an entirely different religion! It's been changing all the time!

Ben-Gurion the Bhuddist

And Buddha! Some people think that Buddha is nothing but pure principles. Like that 'noble' soul, Ben Gurion, *alav hashnubbel*, who went for three weeks to study in a Bhuddist monastery. He didn't spend three weeks in Mirrer Yeshiva or three weeks in Slabodka yeshiva.

But he traveled to the Far East and he entered a Buddhist monastery for three weeks! For three weeks the Prime Minister of Israel studied in a Buddhist monastery. He put on the robes and was '*mekadesh shem Shomayim*'; he 'raised up the *keren haTorah*' and he proved an example for the whole Jewish nation how to be loyal to Judaism.

What he did there I can only imagine but about those three weeks, I can tell you one thing for sure: what he saw there was not what Buddha had dreamed of. It wasn't the same. It's been through one reincarnation after the other.

The Mirror and the Moon

Because what does religion mean among the nations? It means a mirror. You know what a mirror is? It depends what kind of a face you make, that's the face it shows you. It reflects the will of its worshippers. They're all man-made religions and so they're spurious, synthetic; they've been tailored from generation to generation to suit the desires of their worshippers.

But the Torah is like the sun and like the moon. We don't change them and we won't change the Torah. Because we are the *az b'umos*; we're loyal like the dog. What kind of a dog? A bulldog. Ask somebody, a gentile, who owns a bulldog, what are its qualities. He'll tell you. Tenacity, fierce loyalty. That's what it means *az ba'umos*.

The Orthodox Jew today puts on *tefillin* that they put on thousands of years ago. The same *tefillin* could have been worn a thousand years ago. We do *mitzvos* today like our forefathers did. The same Shabbos, same *davening*, same *mezuzos*. There hasn't been a change! We live among all the other cultures, all the other religions, and yet we hold on for dear life.

Haman Testifies

If you don't believe me, then ask the most reliable witness – Haman! You remember what Haman said to Achashveirosh? **אָהָר יִשְׁנוּ עִם אֶחָד** – *There's one nation, מְפֹזָר וּמְפֹרָד בֵּין הָעַמִּים* – *scattered, dispersed among the peoples ...*, **וְדִתֵיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל עַם**, – *and their laws are different from all the nations* (Esther 3:8). These words of Haman are very important to us because we have here a testimony of one who was least interested in praising the Am Yisroel and therefore it's reliable testimony. And we should be proud of that.

It's like the man who was accused by someone of being too *frum*, too pious. So the accused one says, "Please, when you come to the Next World, I want you to testify to that. Accuse me of being too pious in the Next World."

If your wife says, "You're too busy learning all the time," so tell her, "My dear, please don't forget that complaint. Just wait 120 years and in the Next World,

you should remember to say these words. It's an accusation that will come in handy for me."

Haman Accuses

And so if Haman makes this accusation, we can appreciate it as a magnificent testimony about our forefathers. He testified that the Jewish nation, dispersed as they were – you know, if you live among 127 different cultures it's very hard to cling to one set of principles – but Haman said **וְדִתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל עַם**, that they stubbornly clung to the Torah, the same Torah, wherever they were. No matter what, they refuse to adopt the principles and the practices and the attitudes of the people around them!

In 127 different environments, they all kept one Torah! **וְדִתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל עַם** – *Their laws are different from all the nations*. If it was up to me, I would say this is the most important sentence in the whole *megillah*. Not only now that I'm thinking about it, I'm saying it. A long time ago already I've written this in one of my books. If you live in 127 different cultures and you cling to your particular set of laws then you don't need any better recommendation.

From Hodu to Kush

When the Megillah says **מְהוֹדוּ וְעַד כּוּשׁ**, it means from India to Ethiopia; it means that the Jewish women in India, all of them had long dresses, just like they had back in Yerushalayim. They didn't put on the Indian sari or whatever they wore back then. No; **וְדִתֵּיהֶם שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל עַם** means they refused to change. They refused to adopt anything of India.

And the Jews who lived in Ethiopia, in Kush, they didn't put bones through their nostrils. And they didn't wear grass skirts and they didn't eat anybody. They remained Jews, authentic Jews, they remained perfectly loyal to Judaism. That's why they are compared to the boldness of a dog. They never give up their loyalty to their master.

On Har Sinai, when the Jewish people said, "**נִעְשָׂה וְנִשְׁמָע**" they weren't joking. They weren't being polite. They meant it from the bottom of their hearts. And they meant it not for now, not for the next hundred years. They meant from now until the end of time.

How do we know? Because our people never let up; they kept everything! And with an *azus*! And that's why all over the world, Jews have always provided scenes of the greatest heroism, living their lives under circumstances that we couldn't picture.

The Stubborn Ghetto

And in the ghettos in medieval Europe when they were crowded into stinking little streets and they were forbidden to make a decent living; they had to sell old rags. And they couldn't move out; you couldn't even walk outside a ghetto without permission. And if they did sometimes go outside, they had to get off the sidewalk for the gentile boys. A gentile boy would drive you off the sidewalk.

Any gentile could set his dog on a Jew and laugh at the Jew running with his trousers torn. There was no redress. You were lucky if the judge would let you go home alive.

And every one, if he would have said one word, "I accept baptism," he could have gained honor and wealth! But they didn't. They chose the ghetto.

Every Jew would let himself be skinned alive in order to remain in the ghetto among the Jews. He was screaming from pain, but he wouldn't say yes.

The Stiff-Backboned Nation

Not only great Sages and *tzaddikim*. Women, boys and girls. Not rabbis. Not world scholars. Plain people. I say 'plain'. It's impossible for us to assess the nobility of these 'plain' people! But these idealists, that's the Jewish nation.

And it was in very great numbers. How do we know? We don't have to believe our sources because the Gentiles have made these statements again and again. Josephus quotes the ancient Greek writers, a whole list who describe how Jews went to death by torture rather than to say one word against their Torah. And Josephus adds that among the Greeks there's not one who would suffer the least pain for such a thing. If you tell a Greek to curse Homer or else you'll take a quarter out of his pocket, among the Greeks, not one would suffer the least loss on that account.

Our forefathers however were tenacious and lived with great idealism, with heroism, every moment!

Encouraging Stubbornness

And we are expected to nurture and encourage that *middah* of stubbornness. Whether we live in Canada or in New Zealand, whether we live in South America, wherever Jews go, his core is, he is a Jew, he is a Yid, he's a Zhwid, he's Zhid, he's a Judean, a kike, a Jude. But whatever he is, he is in all languages, in all climes, he remains what he always was.

The Jew in Canada, he's loyal to his country but he doesn't admire anything of Canadian culture. The Jew in South Africa, same thing; he's a loyal citizen but he doesn't hark after South African culture. Even if the Jews are spread out among 127 provinces, same story. We must be loyal citizens of every country, but wherever we are, we don't imitate the environment. We're **רְתִיבִים שְׁנוֹת מִכָּל עַם**.

It means that whatever they'll try to tempt us with, whatever blandishments of good times and equality and entertainment and fads – it means nothing to us. Why? Because we are the *am k'shei oref*. We already chose once; we chose Hakadosh Baruch Hu and we're stubborn about it. And that's why we're compared to the boldness of a dog. Because we're tenacious and bold and we'll never give up our loyalty to our master.

Part III. The Loyal Nation

The Rousing Rooster

Now, when the Sages called us the **עַז בְּאַמוֹת**, the most stubborn among the nations, you'll remember that they compared us not only to the **בְּלֵב בְּחַיִּוִּת**, the tenacious bulldog. There's a second metaphor there: 'The Am Yisroel among the nations' is set side by side with the **תְּרַנְגוֹל בְּעוֹפוֹת**, 'the rooster among the fowl'. And so we'd be remiss in our study of the stiff-necked nation if we didn't examine also the habits of the rooster.

What's one of the functions of the rooster? In my neighborhood, we have a lot of Jamaicans. So they brought in a rooster lately; they smuggled in a Jamaican rooster from the island. What for, I don't know. But I know that he crows.

You know when he crows? When the sun is about to rise. He has an instinct in him that tells him the day is coming and that he has to announce it. So he gets up early in the morning while it's still dark and says, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Get up! Get up!" That's what Hashem wants the rooster to do – to announce.

Now, imagine the farmer, or even I, we're lying in our beds; it's nice and warm inside the bed and outside is nice and cold. And we think there's a long night ahead of us. We think it's only 3:00 at night and we have hours and hours of sleep. All of a sudden, this little rooster pops on top of a fence and opens his brass whistle and lets go. It's a raucous cacophony. It's not a melodious tune that will soothe you to sleep like a lullaby. It jolts you out of bed.

The Stubborn Rooster

So the poor farmer opens his eyes. "It's still dark outside! What do you want of me?" And he opens the window and takes a shoe and he hurls it at this bird.

But the bird refuses to budge. It has a function in life and that's to let the world know that life is not all for sleeping. The day is soon coming; whether you care to hear the truth or not, I'm going to force it into your ears with my brass whistle: "You have to get up and accomplish!"

And the *nimshal* is, the Jewish people proclaim to the world – a world of idolaters, of materialists, of evolutionists – "Whether you like it or not, we proclaim every day, **שְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל** – there's Hashem Who created the world; there's only One and He's ours."

A Nation of Roosters

Now the world doesn't like that. The big cathedrals would like that the rooster should stop crowing because it jolts them out of their sleep. They say three and here the Jews are proclaiming One. They say that He rejected us and we went lost and

meanwhile we're still crowing as loud as ever: "There's only One and He's ours."

And the evolutionists are ridiculing too: "What three? What one? There's nobody!" they say. But we're stubborn; we hop on the fence and let out a screech, "There's One and He's *Elokei Yisroel*."

And the materialists, people who want nothing except money and good times and they want to sleep away the whole life, to lie in bed; fun, pleasure, movies, entertainment. They're saying we want only good times in this world because this world is it. But the Jewish people climb up on the fence and announce that this world is only a temporary place; that the daylight is soon coming and you have to get busy because this place is a place of achievement.

You Can Run...

A lot of people don't like to hear it. So they moved out of Brownsville and they moved as far as they could go. In the good old days, they went to Amityville, Long Island; as far as they could go from the Orthodox roosters.

Today they go somewhere else; they get lost in Florida someplace. Not Miami. Miami is a ghetto; too many Orthodox roosters. Way out in some suburbs, they get lost. They want to forget. "Don't remind me!" They get lost in California, in deserts near California. Wherever they can run to so they should be able to forget that they're Jews, that they have to be Torah Jews.

... But You Can't Hide

But it's a queer thing that this noise pursues them all the time. And even in the most far-flung suburbs, there's an echo of that voice that comes; the rooster's call.

Once I was sitting in my *shul*. Wednesday morning, I teach Gemara in my *shul* and I say it in English. So a *Satmarer chossid* came in – a black hat, long *kapote*, no necktie, a black beard – a young fellow. He sat down. Well, I was ashamed to speak English in his presence, so I began speaking in Yiddish.

He opened an American mouth and said he doesn't understand a word of Yiddish.

I said, "Where are you from?"

He's from California. His parents are assimilated Jews. Like the world says, 'they don't want to know from nothing'; that's the colloquialism. But all of a sudden, in that home, a tragedy took place. There grew up a boy who decided to be a *Satmarer chossid*. A *Satmerer chossid*?! Not just a modern Orthodox. A *chossid*! And not any *chossid*. A *Satmarer*! You understand what happened in that house? "S'iz *gefahren oif reder*," The house was going on wheels!

The Jew Crows ...

They were lying in bed in that home hoping that this night would last forever, that they'll never have to climb out from underneath the down quilt. And all of a sudden they hear a voice. Their own son is transformed into a rooster and he's standing near their bed and he's shouting, "שָׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל." In their own home!

So they throw things at him. They make life unbearable for him. But he doesn't change his habiliments. He may move out of the house, but he crows someplace else. You know why? Because he became a Jew now and a Jew is always announcing to the world. That's his job.

Now, it doesn't mean that you have to climb to the rooftops and crow. Just the fact that you're a *frum* Jew – you look like a *frum* Jew, you talk like a *frum* Jew, you act like a *frum* Jew – that's already a cock-a-doodle-doo.

The Jew is so busy with his G-d. The gentile sees the Jew every morning, he goes to *shul*. Every morning he goes to *shul*! Every morning?! What's all this about? And then in the afternoon he's going back again. And in the evening too!

The world is frustrated with that. "What are you doing?" they say, "Keep quiet, you Jews! Why are you talking so much about going to *shul* and keeping *mitzvos* and so on?"

... And Crows and Crows

So the farmer opens up the window and throws a shoe at him. But he continues; he doesn't stop. That's his nature. He's an *az*, stubborn. The farmer says, "Shut up! I want to sleep a little longer." The shoe didn't do the trick so he throws a rock at the rooster. Sometimes he throws more than shoes and rocks. He builds inquisition stakes ghettos and crematoria.

But that doesn't stop the stubborn rooster. The rooster keeps on announcing the truth to the world. Yes, the Jewish people are like the rooster! You don't want to listen? We'll announce anyhow. We say, "Cock-a-doodle-doo! Hashem is One! Hashem is the Master of the world, no matter what you say!"

Nobody wants to listen to him but we don't care what the world says! The world can say whatever they say; all the colleges and all the newspapers, all the books, all the big cities and universities and stadiums. But we say "בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹקִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ," and we'll continue to announce that to the world forever and ever!

We Don't Care

We are loyal people! That's why Hakadosh Baruch Hu chose us. *Yisroel b'umos* – we are stubborn among the nations. And that is a *middah* we have to continue to nourish. We have to try to become more and more stubborn. Not only in general to remain *frum* Jews, but to stubbornly go against everything that comes in from the outside world. We don't care what the *goyim* do! We don't care what the styles of the *goyim* are! We have our own ways, our own styles.

And that's why when we describe our nation in the *hoshanas*, we say אִם אֶנִּי חוֹמָה – the nation that said, "I am a wall." We're not a door; we're not a revolving door that opens and closes adopting the fads that come and go. We already adopted our way of living and that's how it's going to be forever.

What's a fad? It means that you have no backbone. Why do you see on Ocean Parkway a man with long hair? Long hair is nothing. It's just a trap for lice and bacteria. But it's a fad; monkey-see-monkey do. Tomorrow if they'll revert to the Ivy League haircut

or to crew-cuts, so he'll follow them too. So this person has nothing in him. He's just a weakling who's buffeted by circumstances.

Oh no, that's not the way. We are the *az ba'umos* and that means we're going to do what we're supposed to do according to our own ways and we are going to ridicule, we're going to laugh at the *umos ha'olam!* כָּל בַּר מְלִיצְנוּתָא דְעֵבוּרָת, לִיצְנוּתָא אֲסִירָא – all *leitzanus* is *assur*, אֶלְיָא – except *leitzanus* of *avodah zara*. And so we ridicule the *avodah zara* and *apikorsis* of the world. We laugh at them! It's the laughter of a stubborn nation, a stiff-necked people who maintain that we are the ones that have the only truth in the world.

The Best Defense

And so we come back now to the beginning of the subject, to our question: What was this defense – "forgive them because they're stiff-necked" – that Moshe Rabbeinu chose as his vindication? And it's even a bigger question because Hashem made use of those same words to criticize the nation (see *Shemos* 32:9).

The answer is that there is stiff-neckedness and there is stiff-neckedness. If you're going to be stubborn in a way that can cause the making of an *eigel* then that's a stubbornness that we're not interested in. That's misusing the *middah* of stubbornness and a person who is stubborn about the wrong things, Hakadosh Baruch Hu won't praise that. But if he takes that *middah* which was put into him by Hakadosh Baruch Hu for that purpose of being the *az b'umos*, the nation that turns its back, its stiff-neck, on the rest of the world, so stubbornness was made just for that purpose.

Writing In Stone

Absolutely! It's a *middah* that makes us the best nation in the world. Because a nation with a streak of stubborn loyalty, that's the nation that will persist forever because when you write on a stubborn material, it's hard to engrave in stubborn material, but once it's there it'll be there forever.

Did you ever try writing on butter? It's easy to write on butter. You want to engrave something in a

cake of butter, it's a pleasure. But it doesn't last. When you have to engrave in stone however, you need chisels and hammers. You break fingernails. You bang your fingers. It's a difficult job. But once you have it engraved, it's there.

So Moshe Rabbeinu told the Almighty, "Look," he said, "It's true, they are stiff-necked. But just *because* of that that's why you should forgive them and rest Your Shechina on them forever. There's no better investment than in the עם קשה ערף because once they accept it, they'll keep it forever. The greatest asset of Your nation will be their stubbornness in maintaining their traditions."

That was Moshe Rabbeinu's defense that Hakadosh Baruch Hu accepted and we haven't disappointed Him. We promised נְעֻשָׂה וְנִשְׁמָע and the *am kesheh oref* will never let go. The stubborn nation will be around forever. Through thick and thin the Jewish nation, the עַז בְּאַמּוֹת, will cling to the promise they made at Sinai until the end of time.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Emunah: Stubborn Loyalty

In this week's *parsha* we learn that one of the supreme qualities of the Jewish People is our stubborn tenacity. Moshe Rabbeinu begged Hakadosh Baruch Hu that He should Rest His Presence among us, just because of this trait. Like the dog and the rooster, we cling fiercely to our Emunah and will never cease to proclaim it.

This week, twice a day, as I recite the Shema, I will *bli neder* take ten seconds to reflect on the proclamation I am about to make, and how the Jewish nation has stubbornly persisted throughout the ages in proclaiming "Hear, O' Israel, Hashem is our G-d, Hashem is One!"

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

R-1 - Emunah | R-63 - The Stiff-Necked
22 - A Stubborn Nation | E-31 - He Loves the Loyal

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



I am meeting a nice girl who has yiras Shamayim but she cannot hold a conversation. Should I continue with the shidduch?



I would say you should grab her before somebody else gets her.

A woman came to me. She was fighting with her husband and she told me, "The trouble in my marriage is that there's no communication between me and my husband."

I said to her, "There's *too much* communication between you and your husband." That's why they're arguing all the time. Stop arguing! Stop with all that communication! Just keep quiet and everything will be alright. Communication is the trouble, not the solution.

A girl who doesn't make good conversation, if she's a normal girl – that you have to find out, if she's a normal girl – the fact that she can't hold a good conversation? Very good!

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