

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha
Adapted from his Tapes, Sforim and Writings of Talmidim

פרשת שופטים

Mishpachat Levy
Edition 

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Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l on

פרשת שופטים

THE GENOCIDE COMMANDMENT

In this week's Parsha we read a *possuk* that at first glance is a difficult one for our modern day, democratic minds to understand. No matter how *frum* we may be, we're living in America and we think like Americans. And therefore, our minds have a hard time accepting the following *possuk*: מערי העמים האלה - אשר השם אלוֹקֵיךְ נתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה לֹא תַחִיָּה כֹל נִשְׁמָה כִּי הַחֵרֵם תַּחֲרִימֵם - "From the cities of these peoples that Hashem your G-d is giving you as an inheritance, *you are not to leave any person alive. Rather, you shall surely annihilate them*" (D'varim 20: 16-17). As they prepared to enter into *Eretz Yisroel* the *Am Yisroel* was commanded to wipe out the men, women and children of the nations that were inhabiting the land.

They weren't given the option of allowing the *Canaanite* nations to remain in the land, even if the *Canaanim* would commit to peaceful coexistence. Hakodosh Boruch Hu warned us: לֹא תַכְרֹת בְּרִית לְיוֹשְׁבֵי הָאָרֶץ - "Don't make any peace treaties with those who are living in the land." No peace treaties with the *goyim* in the land. Now, the gentiles outside of *Eretz Canaan*, you could make peace with them; sure, why not? Nothing wrong. But the gentile nations *in Eretz Canaan*? Absolutely not! Nothing doing!

We have to force them to move out, to run away. Either move or be destroyed!

THE WISE MEN OF AFRICA

To destroy people?! To kill women and children because they didn't move out of their homes, because they didn't leave their land?! Yes! That's what Hashem told us: Either they move or they get destroyed. Now the *Girgashi*, one of the tribes of *Canaan*, were smart. They saw that the Jews meant business and so they picked up and moved away; they made their way to Africa. But the other tribes didn't move; they wanted to stay. And once they made that fateful decision, it became our duty to wipe them out. It's hard for us to even say such a thing, and there's no question that it wasn't easy for the *Am Yisroel* to take such drastic measures. But Hakodosh Boruch Hu said it had to be done. And that begs the question: Why such viciousness? Why did Hakodosh Boruch Hu demand such drastic measures from us?

THE FOUNDATION OF OUR LIVES

A few weeks ago we read the following two *pesukim* in *Parshas Eikev*. And they are so important. These two *pesukim* are the foundation of our lives. You can repeat these words to yourselves over and over all day long, and it wouldn't be enough: **הן להשם אלוֹקֵיךְ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְשָׁמַיִם הַשָּׁמַיִם** - "Behold to Hashem your G-d belong the heavens and the heaven above the heavens." The whole universe, it all belongs to Him. **הָאָרֶץ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר עָלֶיהָ**, the whole world and everything in it is Hashem's. Why is Hashem saying that? Is He trying to show off?

Now pay attention because that *possuk* is only an introduction for the following words, the next few words. **רַק בְּאֲבוֹתֶיךָ חִשַּׁק הַשֵּׁם לְאַהֲבָה אוֹתָם** - "Only in your forefathers did Hashem delight to love them." *Only* your forefathers! The universe is Mine, all of it. And in the whole universe there is nothing like your forefathers; they are all that I care about. **וַיִּבְחַר בְּכֶם כִּיּוֹם - בְּזֵרַעַם אַחֲרֵיהֶם** - "And He chose their children after them, **הַיּוֹם**, you as of this day." "I love you to this day!" says Hashem. (ibid. 10:14-15). This implies clearly that Hashem created the Universe solely because of the Fathers and their seed after them. They, *and they alone*, are the fulfillment of the purpose of Creation; and they justify the existence of the Universe.

EVERYONE IS NOT CREATED EQUAL

Hashem is saying that it is only the *Am Yisroel* that matters to him. We're the nation that is beloved to Him, nobody else. What does the Torah talk about? There's one Torah after all; and what's it all about? It's all about *us*! Two subjects - Hashem and the *Am Yisroel*, that's all! Nothing is said about the Irishmen, nothing about Polish people. Only Jews! Only us! *Am Yisroel*! from the beginning of the *Tanach* until the end!

Shema Yisroel Hashem Elokeinu - Listen to me, Hashem is our G-d. What does that mean, He's ours? It means He's *only for us*. He chose us and that's it! He didn't choose anybody else. Hashem says, "I don't believe in democracy. I don't believe in pluralism. I chose you and that's it!" We are His people no matter what the world says. They don't like to hear it, but we don't care.

WE NEED TO TALK TO OURSELVES IN SHUL

Now, we shouldn't be advertising this today in public. In public we should be cautious with such things. But to ourselves we should be making these statements! And it's not being said enough. In the shuls it *must* be said. In the homes you should always be telling your children who we are. Among ourselves, we'll say it. And most importantly you should be telling this truth to yourself.

Because today, this principle is frequently overlooked. I know that many people here read newspapers, they listen to the radio, and watch the TV, so their minds are brainwashed; your brain is dirt washed, bilge water washed. And so it hurts to hear the words I'm saying here. You all are in constant contact with the outside world, all day you're sitting in your place of work and you're talking to goyim, you're dealing with goyim, so you begin to think that we're the same. Pious Jews will say "Yes, of course, we're the *Am Yisroel*, but they are also a nation. We're chosen to fulfill the commandments, but we have to look at people tolerantly. They also have ways of living, they're also nations, they also have cultures." No! You have to know that **לֹא עֲשֵׂנוּ כַּגּוֹיִם** **הָאֲרָצוֹת**, He did not make us like the nations of the land, **שֶׁהֵם מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לַהֵבֶל וְלָרִיק**, they bow down to foolishness, to empty ideals and attitudes. Their entire cultures are false and foolish.

THIS ISN'T MY TEACHING-IT'S THE TORAH'S

If you don't believe we're His people then you don't belong to us. It's not "Rabbi Miller" speaking, it's the Torah. And not just Torah; it's an elementary teaching of the Torah that we are Hashem's chosen people. If you don't believe that, then goodbye, you don't belong to us. After the principle of belief in Hashem, the very next foundation principle is that *we are His people*, that we are His *only* people. And there's no arguing about that. It's not up for any discussion; you can't budge from this principle that we are what matters in this world.

The drastic measure of the destruction of a whole people; men, women and children, appears wrong in our eyes *only* because we haven't yet internalized the prime importance of the *Am Yisroel* in this world. Once you understand this principle, that to Hashem there is nothing in this universe as precious as the *Am Yisroel*, you'll understand that *there is nothing more important than maintaining the perfection of His people*. and therefore nothing at all can be permitted to stand in the way of our perfection. The perfection of the *Am Yisroel* is to be preserved *at any cost*.

THE ORIGINAL HOLLYWOOD

So how could Hakodosh Boruch Hu allow for his precious nation to come and settle in a land steeped with wickedness? the *Canaanim*, *you must know* were a wicked people. They were immoral through and through, and their society was one of empty pastime and foolish ideals. They worshipped a pantheon of gods, and therefore spent their lives in orgies of *avodah zara*, materialism, murder and immorality. It was almost as bad as Hollywood is today! And so, for the *Am Yisroel*, the influence of the *Canaanim* would have been nothing less than disastrous.

And therefore, even the most extreme measures had to be taken, to remove all traces of such a perilous influence. The land had to be cleared of this danger as soon as the nation of Hashem entered into the land. We don't mind *goyim*, we don't mind them at all. But what we *do* mind, and that's what Hashem minds, is anything that might turn us away from Hashem in even the slightest way. The *Am Segulah* must remain the *Am Segulah*!

I'm not telling you *drashos* here. I'm not telling you far-out explanations. Hashem Himself tells us that this is the reason. And

He couldn't have made it any clearer for us: "You are not to leave any person alive; rather you shall surely annihilate the Chitites, and the Emorites, the Canaanites, and the Prezites, the Chivites, and the Yevusites, as Hashem has commanded you" (ibid. 20:16,18) And He explains: **כִּלְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִלְמְדוּ אֶתְכֶם לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּכֹל** - "In order that they should not teach you to do any of their abominations that they did for their gods, and you will then sin to Hashem your G-d" (ibid. 20:18).

We're not talking here about a massacre by an occupying force. Or of terror for the sake of terror. No, absolutely not! Hashem tells us here that we must remove from our midst the evil-doers, *because our perfection is more important than the lives and culture of the wicked nations.* The *Am Yisroel* is what's important in this world. And the Canaanites forfeited their lives with their wicked behavior because their influence would have been a cancer in the body of our people.

This important idea, that the reason we must drive out the gentile nations from our midst, is for our own spiritual protection is repeated again in this week's Parsha. **כִּי אַתָּה בֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר** **הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ נֹתֵן לְךָ לֹא תִלְמַד לַעֲשׂוֹת כְּתֹעֲבֹת הַגּוֹיִם הָהֵם... כִּי תֹעֲבַת הַשֵּׁם** - **כָּל עֹשֶׂה אֱלֹהִים וּבְגַלְלַת הַתֹּעֲבֹת הָאֱלֹהִים הַשֵּׁם אֱלֹהֶיךָ מוֹרִישׁ אֹתָם מִפְּנֵיךָ** - "When you come into the land that Hashem your G-d is giving you, do not learn to perpetrate the abominations of those nations... because anyone who perpetrates these acts is an abomination to Hashem, and it is because of these abominations that Hashem your G-d is expelling them from before you" (D'varim 18: 9-12).

A DIFFERENT REASON FOR VOMITING

Now some have misunderstood these *pesukim* to merely be telling us that Hashem punished the Canaanite nations because of the abominations they were committing in the holy land, a land that wouldn't sustain such wickedness. And that therefore they were finally vomited out from the holy land of Eretz Yisroel. But when we read the *possuk* carefully we see that it is much more than that.

Listen to the words of the Torah: "It is because of these abominations that Hashem your G-d is expelling them *from before*

you." "From before you," says Hashem! Because of you! Their sins were not enough to cause them to be expelled. They had lived on the land for hundreds of years - steeped in their wickedness - and they could have continued to live there for hundreds more. But now My people are coming into the land, and what was once *Eretz Canaan* must now be a place of potential perfection for the holy nation. And the people would not be able to climb the ladder of perfection in a land saturated with wicked people and their false and foolish attitudes and ideals. And any impediment to their holiness, is an impediment to My plan and purpose in the creation of this world and everything in it. And therefore I am expelling them "from before you." From before my precious children.

THE CENTRALITY PRINCIPLE

A nation that has been chosen by Hashem to be His "treasure" must do everything possible, they must take all measures available to them, to remain worthy of this distinction. The perfect nation must remain perfect. And therefore, we must remove from our midst, even in the most extreme manner, any influence that might turn us away from Hashem.

The centrality-principle, the principle that we, the Jewish People, stand at the center of the Universe and are the purpose of all existence, *demand such extremism*. The most kind-hearted and perfect people must sometimes take the most extreme measures, **על פי השם**, if we wish to remain forever the most kind-hearted and perfect people.

THE REAL REASON FOR THE CHURBAN

Now what happened? In *Sefer Shoftim* it says that the Jews were reluctant to kill goyim. Jews are kind hearted, compassionate people. They were reluctant; they didn't want to kill. But we learn here that even a man's emotions are subject to the will of Hashem. The commandment to destroy the *Canaanim* was the greatest act of compassion - upon the people the matter most in this world, the *Am Yisroel*. And when the *Am Yisroel*, were lax in fulfilling the will of Hashem to preserve their perfection, they weren't praised for their compassion. No, the results were terrible. At the end of *Melachim* when it talks about the *Churban*, the *churban* of the first *Beis Hamikdash*, it says that it was because they didn't drive out the *goyim*. The *darshanim* like to tell you about *sinas chinam*, and other

sins - it's true, it's also true - but look at the end of *Melachim* and you'll see it describes that the *Churban* came because they let the *goyim* survive and it spoiled the *Am Yisroel*. They were ruined just because they allowed the gentile influence to remain, and eventually seep into their homes.

The uprooting of the wicked from our midst is not rooted in the hatred of gentiles, *chas v'shalom*. Why should we have anything against the *goyim*?! As long as they're not hurting us, we have nothing against them. Let them be happy! But they *are* hurting us; maybe not always in a physical way, but the disastrous influence of their culture - their materialism and immorality is more damaging than any physical harm they could possibly inflict upon us. And therefore we need to do whatever possible to preserve the greatness of the *Am Yisroel*.

IT'S A B'FEIRUSHE RAMBAM

When discussing this *mitzvah* of destroying the *avodah zarah* from *Eretz Canaan*, the Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 1:35) teaches us this idea succinctly: "For it is the principal objective of the Torah, as well as the axis around which the Torah revolves, to blot out all of the empty ideals and foolish attitudes from the minds of the *Am Yisroel*, and to make the existence and ideals of these falsehoods impossible to exist. This is the fundamental principle of the entire Torah."

Here the Rambam is telling us that the fundamental purpose of our stay in this world is to purge falsehood from our minds. And the reason why it is so fundamental is because we are in this world only as a preparation for the Next World. And the way we prepare is by perfecting our minds. The more you fill your mind with Torah attitudes, the ideals of Hashem, the more prepared you will be to stand before Hashem on that great and fearful day when you leave this world.

THE FIRST STEP TO PERFECTION

And the first step in perfection of your mind is to stand guard dutifully against the false ideas that are *always* encroaching upon your mind from the outside environment. Because a mind that is an *irbuoyah*, an admixture of foreign ideas and attitudes, is not the mind that Hashem desires from you. And it is not the

mind that you will wish to stand with before Hashem in the Next World.

And therefore, the Rambam tells us that not only was it urgently important to smash to pieces all of the images and symbols of idolatry that the *Am Yisroel* came upon when entering the land, as commanded in *Parshas Vaeschanan* (7:5), but there was something even much more essential. The obliteration of the altars and figurines that the *Am Yisroel* found in *Eretz Canaan* was merely a *mashal*, a symbol, for what Hashem really wants from us. And that is to smash to pieces *all of the foreign ideas and attitudes* that permeate into our minds. It is *that* destruction that is actually the most essential element required for living lives of service of Hashem.

MEGILLAS KOHELES AND THE GOYISHE SIYUM HASHAS

Everyone knows there's a *megillah* called *Koheles*. And the purpose of this work is spelled out right away, up front. הבל הבלים אמר קהלת. The purpose of *Koheles* is one thing - to counteract the attitudes and ideals of the outside world which make the unimportant things important. All those things, all the ideals of the gentile world - entertainment, amusement, money, immorality - the whole culture through and through is *hevel havalim*.

For instance, what's most important by the *goyim*? What brings together thousands of gentiles? Do they gather together for a *siyum hashas*? Or maybe to do *chesed*? No, nothing doing. They come together to see a man, a bum holding a stick and hitting a baseball. He has nothing in his mind at all. No intelligence at all. But when he holds a bat he's able to smack the ball. He gives the ball a smack and everybody goes crazy! Home run! They go *meshugah* over *nothing*!

Thousands of people coming together for absolutely nothing. And the newspapers have it on the headlines as if it was the biggest news of the day. Yanks, Mets, this and that. That's what occupies the minds of the gentiles. And it's so deeply ingrained in their psyches that they can't imagine that others aren't equally stupid! When I came back from Slobodka, I was in the street, in the busy street, in the summertime and a man shouted to me from across the street, "What's the score?!" He's shouting to me about the score! I'm supposed to know the score!

The score is what's important to them. That's the important news for the people around us. The whole world is *oisek in hevel*. Who cares what the score is?!

THEIR HEROES

Same thing when the gentile comes to a boxing match. One man is punching the other and everybody is shouting and applauding. He's hitting another person, and people are applauding. And now the man is in the corner, about to faint, and the other one is hitting him again and again - And they start shouting. "Ohhh! That's our hero." They're delirious with *simcha*. Excited over what? Over *nothing!* And even in the comics, look in the comic books, in the last picture the hero gives a punch to somebody. That makes him a hero. And that's what the *goyim* are busy with; it's on these *yesodos* that their lives are built.

You could look at the front cover of a newspaper any day - don't buy it - just take a look and you'll see what's important to them. The front page tells you about a certain man; he was a top basketball man and he was captured by another team. Ohhh! Big news! It's big bold red letters: I thought maybe there was a nuclear war, some terrible danger. And *who* is this basketball man? A nobody, a zero. When he went to high school he didn't attend any classes. Every afternoon he spent in the playground throwing a ball into a hoop. A bum, that's all! And this bum is on the front page because all the other bums want to see him. He's a "hero", and they can't stop talking about him!

NOT FOR YIDDEN!

And what do we see today? Jewish boys, good Jewish boys, who are excited over the same nothingness as the *goyim*. A boy should walk in the street wearing a shirt with the name of his favorite sports player on the back. Is there a bigger *meshugas* than that?!

Here's a man who has a stamp collection. So when a guest comes to his house he shows him his various stamps. Now where do you think this came from? From somewhere in the Torah he got the idea that collecting stamps is an ideal?! No, it came directly from the *hevel* of the *goyim*. Now, I'm not saying you're an *avaryan* if you have a stamp collection. For a *goy* it's very good,

excellent. He should be busy in his room going through his stamps and moving them from album to album. Excellent. Anything to keep him off the street. But for an Orthodox Jew?! It's a waste of precious time. It's a waste of the precious mind of the Yisroel.

THE YITZRAH OF ARAYOS IS MAGNIFIED

The whole world is engaged in *nothingness*. Their lives are *hevel v'rik*. They are excited over nothing. Even some things that are naturally attractive, there are some things that by nature a person has a temptation, a passion. I'll give you an example. There was a time, in all races of man, when the physical differences between men and women was a practical consideration. It was taken as a natural and practical consideration. And although there was always a *Yetzer Ha'rah*, and mankind always had to resist temptation, but still it was on a humble, on a very plain scale. But now these things have been magnified tremendously by the *yetzer ha'rah*.

What is the subject that takes up most of the literature of the *goyim*; most of their theater and movies and TV? Nothing but *arayos*, only that they don't call it that, they call it romance. But it is merely the depiction of women in the most crass and animalistic way. It's the subject that fills the entire world of the *Umos Ha'olam*. Forests are chopped down every day to supply paper for the books that they print on this stupid subject. The most humble thing in the world, the most unimportant thing, is the most important subject by the gentiles. The truth is, if you think about it, the same procedure for procreation is followed by dogs and cats also. But here they make it with songs and poetry and movies, and it occupies all of the literature.

And the women in the street are doing their best to show that they are drowning in the filthy sewer of Hollywood. And it's nothing, it's *lo klum*. Their romantic love is *lo klum*, it's nothing at all. It's *sheker v'chazav*. Like the Gemara says (Eruvin 19a), all those people who go to *Gehanim* because of *arayos*, because of immorality, for them it's called *Gei-Chinam*, the vale for those people who go down for *nothing*. *Arayos* is absolutely nothing at all. It's played up today. They're making the biggest fuss out of

nothing. The whole world takes something that is a natural function of procreation, and they make it a thing for itself.

BEING "MEKAYIM" TWO OUT OF THE THREE AVEIROS CHAMUROS

Today, one more thing has come along to compete with romance, and that's crime. Shooting! Shooting is also a very important subject by the goyim. Killing people is another important subject in the movies today. So it's *arayos* and *shfichas domim* - their two important subjects!

The *Am Yisroel*, up until recently, had nothing to do with this foolishness. The *pesukim* warning us to wipe out the *Canaanim* and every last bit of their influence was the guide for *Am Yisroel* in all of their dealings with the surrounding environment. "Have *nothing* to do with them," Hashem told us. "Wipe out every last influence." And that was the attitude of the *Am Yisroel* always!

WE'RE ALL LIVING IN HOLLYWOOD

But today, we're not listening to the advice of the Torah! We're living in the midst of this filth *and we're not wiping out from our minds the influence of the gentiles around us*. I don't care if you're living in Williamsburg or in Boro Park, you're wallowing in the cesspool of Hollywood. We're drowning in the muck of *Canaanite* ideals right here in America. They are our neighbors, our environment, and we think along with them. It's seeping in and it's affecting you!

It's a tragedy that the good Orthodox Jews today, are living like the goyim around them. Just the fact that I'm speaking to you in English now, is already a sign of our decline. I don't speak English at home, only Yiddish. I speak to my children only in Yiddish. Maybe they answer me back in English, what could I do, but I speak only Yiddish.

THE LAND OF THE BIG MOSQUITOES

If you live among the fools of America then you become a fool yourself. All the *hevel* of this world becomes important, and if someone speaks up against stupidity, he's the *meshugeneh*! I'll give you an example. You see signs outside: "Why stay home? Why not travel!" Why should I? I have to be a *meshugeneh* just because everyone else around me is?! The travel places are busy selling

empty promises to you. There's nothing to travel for! What is there in traveling? To go let's say to Hawaii. It's hot there. There are bigger mosquitoes there than there are here. There is nothing in Hawaii at all. Nothing at all, except that it's far away. הרוצה לשקר ירחיק עדותו - "If you want to say a lie, make sure to talk about far off things." Travel is nothing but *sheker*.

There's nothing to travel for. No place is worth going anywhere. The travel company is offering you to go to Cuba. What's there in Cuba? Maybe some diseases they have there that you can't find in America! What's good in Cuba? It's an impoverished country, a dictator, people are starving there, many go in rags. All the Cubans would love to come to America if they could.

Wherever you go in the world, you find people who desire to leave that country to come here, but the Americans are paying money to visit their country! Americans are stupid. It's a simple as that. But what's that got to do with you?! Why do *you* also have to be stupid?

THE REASON YOU GO TO THE COUNTRY

I don't want to criticize people who go to the country, but there's nothing in the country. Unless maybe you're going to Yeshiva in the country, or maybe some other purpose for your *avodas Hashem*. It's all the *yetzer ha'rah*, the influence of the environment. You have to go away; that's what the *goyim* are doing, so me too! עיני כסיל בקצה הארץ - "The eyes of a fool are at the end of the world" (Mishlei 17:24). The fool always looks over there, somewhere else, not here.

And as if there wasn't enough stupidity in the street, in case you haven't become a real *Amerikahner* from mingling with *goyisheh* ideas all day long, so you go ahead and invite the *goy* back to your home at night. You sit down on your couch at night, and you listen to this gentile for a full hour. You're sitting there like a lump on a log, and your mind is wide open to all of this *goy's* ideas. He comes in through a little hole in the roof, through a little wire in the roof, and he sits in your living room and talks and talks and you sit there quietly and obediently. You listen with respect. After listening to this *goy* for an hour every day so you

lose your mind after a while. You don't have a Jewish mind anymore.

And that's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu is warning us about in our *parsha*. Don't yield at all to the *sheker* of the outside world! How is it that things that are so worthless, so empty, attract your attention? To be busy with things, to have a *k'vius* and an excitement for something that has no value at all for your *avodas Hashem*?! And the answer is that *that is whole purpose of the sheker* - to test you to see if you will yield.

A JEWISH BODY WITH A CANAANITE HEAD

And so when you show your guest your stamp collection or your coin collection, and he just looks with a blank face, deadpan, he doesn't say anything. So you, with your *Canaanite* head, you think that he doesn't appreciate things, he doesn't have a taste for good things. No, you have to know that *he's* the sane one here. He's the one who's following the attitude of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. He's not excited about it, because he doesn't get excited over zero. Don't think he's lacking in intellectual development - on the contrary, he's super developed. He won't waste his time on nothingness. אל תשמח ישראל אל גיל כעמים - "Don't enjoy the things that make the nations excited" (Hoshea 9:1). And that is why *Koheles* repeats again and again: It's all *hevel*.

And we are the ones who have to learn this lesson more than anyone else! Don't look at your neighbor and the man at shul and at work. *You're* the one who has to learn the lesson of *hevel havolim*. Our lives are being wasted on foolishness, on things that are worthless. And so, because the world is busy with all of these things that they deem so important, so *Koheles* comes along and tells us that we have to know, we have to get into our heads, that *Hakol hevel*, it's *all* emptiness. The world, the Orthodox world, are wasting their lives on foolishness. And because of that, it's time to start saying the truth!

EVERY EVED HASHEM NEEDS TO BE A LEITZ

כל ליצנותא אסירא - Any form of scoffing is forbidden. You can't just walk around making light of things, using jokes and mocking words to ridicule ideas. If you do that, you're turning yourself into a *leitz*, a scoffer. And a *leitz* will not be זוכה לראות פני

השכינה, he will not behold the Divine Presence in the Next World (Sotah 42a). *Leitzanus* is a terrible *middah*. A wicked *middah*.

However, Chazal tell us that there is one exception: לִיצְנוּתָא דְעִבּוּדָא דְכוּכְבִּים. To ridicule and scoff at *avodah zarah* of wrong things. That's the one form of *leitzanus* that is permissible; and not only permissible but it's a mitzvah. It's not good to be a milk toast, to be a weakling. You have to speak up, you have to be strong. You must be strong-minded against evil. אוֹהֲבֵי הַשֵּׁם שְׂנְאוּ רָע - "You who love Hashem, hate evil" (Tehillim 97:10).

WHOM SHOULD YOU FIGHT?

Now, some Jews become all excited when it's a good *machlokes* between my Rebbeh and your Rebbeh. They become so agitated they'll do anything. They'll call up at all hours of the night on the telephone - they'll harass you to death because you have the wrong Rebbeh.

But when it comes to speaking up against the *resha'im*, it doesn't even occur to them. They don't have the compunction to degrade the ugliness and wickedness of society around them. The real wicked, the enemies of our society, who are surrounding us with all of their filth - they're pouring filth into our minds - against *them* they don't open their mouths. They dress nicely, and they speak politely because they want your votes, so you don't even begin to think how ugly they really are.

THE MITZVAH OF LEITZANUS

And that's why we have to teach ourselves the great principle of כָּל לִיצְנוּתָא אֲסִירָא בְּרַ מְלִיצְנוּתָא דְעִבּוּדָא זָרָה. That's a Torah teaching. Not only is it permitted, *it's a mitzvah!* (Megillah 25b). To ridicule wrong ideas is a mitzvah. You *must* make *leitzanus* at the proper time. You must belittle the evil! עוֹזְבֵי תוֹרָה - "Those who forsake the Torah, they are the ones who praise the *rasha*." And what about those who keep the Torah? Of course, they're not praising the *rasha*, but do they just sit back and content themselves with not praising the *rasha*? No! וְשׂוֹמְרֵי תוֹרָה - "Those who keep the Torah, they incite themselves against the evil ones." Now, we're not walking around looking for fights with the *resha'im*. 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! The more you belittle the wicked and the wickedness they promote, the more your mind becomes a mind that belongs to Hakadosh Boruch Hu.

It's so important to belittle what's wrong. Among ourselves we must say the truth, and we must say it over and over again, and loudly! Belittle evil things. *Yisgaru bom!* If you keep the Torah then you must excite yourself to battle with the ideas of the reshaim. The things that are *hevel havalim* should be treated by you like the *hevel* it is.

SPIT AT THE BUS STOP

For instance, a movie star. An Hollywood actor appears on the screen or on the stage in a most beautiful guise. The person has been prepared with makeup by beauty experts and now he or she looks like a shining star. And the whole world is impressed with this lie. But actually he is a low character, an ugly fellow inside, corrupt from inside out. The lowest characters are the actors. If you knew who this person really was you would consider it beneath your dignity to even mention his name, no less to walk into a movie theater or watch him on the television. It would be preferable to sit next to a pile of cow dung than to sit next to him.

It's beneath our dignity to even see their faces. And we must make that known - at least to ourselves. We should spit when we see their faces. Even outside 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. It's important for a Jew to understand that all his life must be dedicated to fighting evil, not merely working for good. Because however good you want to be, if the ideals and attitudes of the environment around you are not degraded by you, then they will eventually permeate into your mind. And once they do, you can't be an *eved Hashem* - you can be *frum*, you can be Orthodox, you can even be ultra-Orthodox, but you won't be an *eved Hashem*.

So let's say a yeshiva man ridicules sports, romance, love stories, newspapers, songs, poetry, entertainment. So other Orthodox Jews are up in arms. "Why do you ridicule? If you don't

like it, so just don't do it! Why are you opening your mouth?" No! He should open his mouth! He's right, he's a hundred percent right. That's *leitzanus* is not wrong. That's the *mitzvah* of *leitzanusa d'avodah zarah* that makes you great. And there's so much to ridicule in this world, so much to separate from.

AVRAHAM AVINU SEPARATED FROM THE TZADIKIM

And you have to realize that even from the Orthodox you have to separate. You know, Avraham Avinu made it a policy of his to remain aloof from society. He could have settled in *Ir-shalem*, the city of *Malkitzedek*. Malkitzedek was a good man, a *tzadik*, and Avraham would have been welcomed in that city. But Avraham chose to remain separate even from the good ones. He lived alone in his tent and never settled among people - even among good ones.

And why is that? Because Avraham didn't want to *just be an Orthodox Jew*. He wasn't destined for that. That's not enough for Avraham. To be an Orthodox Jew would be the greatest failure for him. He had much greater plans - he wanted to be an *eved Hashem*, a great servant of Hashem. And that would be impossible if he was going to have regular Orthodox people hanging around him. You hear that?! How did Avraham succeed at becoming Avraham Avinu? By *not* listening to his environment. By thinking independently from all the people around him. On the contrary, whatever society around him said, Avraham was willing, prepared to oppose it. He used his judgment to see how empty were the ideals around him. And it's not only the gentile world; it's the frum Jewish world as well. Most of the Orthodox have not even begun to concentrate their minds on what's really important in life.

DON'T GO TO THOSE MELAVA MALKAS

So you're a yeshivah man and it's Saturday night. Now, you live in Boro Park and you have relatives and all of them are observant. Their homes are not only kosher - they're perfectly glatt kosher. And your relatives have beards too. Every woman has her hair covered, fully covered. They're all frum, just like *Malkitzedek* was. But they are relatives and they gather at each other's homes, *melaveh malkah*, to visit. Who doesn't visit with relatives? You visit your in laws. You visit your cousins. You "have to" visit,

certainly. *And that is the great misfortune of one's life.* If you have to waste your life and dilute your idealism by mingling with people who are on a mediocre level, it's a tragedy. It's a great tragedy. If you want to be something, you must cut loose from the Orthodox!

The Jew who wants to make something out of his life, he must know that he has to cut loose from company. That's the bane, that's the destruction, of a man's ambitions and idealism. You want to be something? *You have to go ahead of your environment.* If you'll always be hampered, if you'll always be limited by the ideals of the people around you, you're not going to get anywhere.

KEEP AWAY FROM RELATIVES

So, if you have to sit, let's say, with your parents or with your brothers and sisters or with your in-laws, even with your own children. Ok, you have to; it's family. But to sit for hours upon hours and engage in small talk?! You're letting your mind be chewed up by their conversation, and you deteriorate as you're sitting with them. Of course you must spend a few minutes with your grandchildren or with your nephews, with your nieces. You have to say a few kind words to people. Certainly! And you should buy them small gifts, and compliment them. All the time! Write short notes of encouragement to your children and grandchildren. It works wonders! You must recognize your family. **אל תתעלם**, don't hide yourself from your family (Yeshaya 58:7). But men and women - women too - if you want to be something, you must cut loose from company because this is one of the biggest hindrances that hamper your progress towards greatness. To become great, we must walk in the footsteps of Avraham and live lives of *hisbodedus*, solitude. The best way to protect your mind from all the negative influences of the environment: the *Canaanim*, the Americans, and even the Orthodox, is by remaining aloof and separate.

HISBODIDUS: WHETHER YOU'RE BRESLOV OR NOVARDOK

When a woman is by herself in the kitchen, it's a glorious opportunity. Do you know what she's doing? She's practicing one of the biggest virtues, the virtue of *hisbodedus*, solitude. The old *nevi'im*, the old prophets, used to go out in the wilderness. Even the *gedolei acharonim*, the Ba'al Shem Tov, went into a forest for

weeks to be away from people. Rav Yoizel Novardoker had a hut hidden in the forest. He had two huts. One that his wife knew about. He was unlisted. Nobody knew how to get him, but his wife knew. But there was another hut that even his wife didn't know about. Only his *talmid*, Rav Yoel Boronsik, knew about that hut, the second one. Even his wife wasn't told about that one. He had two degrees of *hisbodedus* because that makes a man great. A woman in a kitchen, all day long she's alone. All day she has an opportunity. She can listen to Torah tapes. She can think noble thoughts. It's a great thing for a woman to be alone if you utilize it properly. But there's a terrible danger, a great peril, cradled under her ear, on the shoulder, as she's going around. She can't even think what she's saying. She's measuring out the batter, she's putting in spices, what is she doing to the food? She's not thinking. It's a thoughtless conversation. At the other end; the same lack of brains, and it's mingling two currents of thoughtlessness and for hours and hours. It's a tragedy.

NOW IS YOUR CHANCE TO LIVE WHAT YOU LEARNT

The telephone has invaded the kitchen, and these *tzidkoniyyos*, these women who were in *Beis Yaakov* and who learned all about idealism, never had a chance. They never had the chance to live these Torah ideals. They never had an opportunity to think much about it. They were busy. The poor *Beis Yaakov* girl. They're loading her head with great idealism, and then keeping her busy with Rambans and *Kli Yakars*, and then she's worried how to get a chosson; she's busy looking for a chosson. She's loaded and she finds it hard to create a Torah mind. And finally, she has a chosson and she has a home and she has her own kitchen, she has solitude. So why is she wasting her life away talking and talking; when she could be thinking and thinking? If she feels she has to talk, let her talk to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. After all, He's really listening to you. Your friend on the other side of the telephone, doesn't want to really listen. She just wants to say her piece.

And so this woman, in the solitude of her kitchen has a great opportunity. Now you'll say "It's boring"; well, sometimes if solitude becomes overpowering, so you pick up your telephone and exchange a few words with a friend, and that's all. But to talk for a *long time*, means you're sacrificing the great opportunity that

is available to you. Now, ladies, those of you listening here, I know that it's a waste of time telling you all this; it's only said for exceptional people. But in every group of women there are exceptional souls. Same by every group of men; most of the things that are said here are a waste of time for most people to hear. But there are always some exceptional people who are fertile ground for some seeds to fall and sprout.

YOU WON'T BE BORED WITH THE RABBI MILLER SIMCHAPOD

For men there's no problem what to do. If he has a tape recorder, let him put in the ear attachment and listen. An excellent thing to do. If he has a sefer, a thousand times better. Let him look in the Mesillas Yesharim or any kind of a sefer. There are plenty of things for a man to think about. You can think about how lucky you are, how happy you are that you are perfect physically and mentally. You can compare yourself to so many unfortunate people in the world who are lacking one of your attributes. A man always has something to do, and a woman too. Think how lucky you are to have a home, how lucky you are that you're married. It's very hard to get married, and finally you're married. Of course she should make her best efforts to remain married, but while you're in your kitchen or you're in your office, you have a few minutes to yourself, if you don't have any sefer with you or you're hanging from the strap in the subway, there are a lot of things to do. I recommend the tape Walking Secretly with Hashem, and it will tell you what to do in your spare time when nobody is around. Walking Secretly with Hashem. It's tape # 17.

And so, we spoke tonight about a program for life - a program of separation from all of influences that seep into our minds from the environment surrounding us. And that's the program for greatness that Hashem taught us in this week's *parsha* - the vast importance of the *Am Yisroel* requires that we do everything that we are capable of to destroy the negative influences that push against us constantly and attempt to dilute our greatness. *Leitzanusa d'avodah zara!* Making mockery of all the wrong attitudes around us, and ridding ourselves of the foolishness and emptiness of it all. *Mitzvah hee!* That's the only *leitzanus* that finds favor in the eyes of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And for those who want to stand tall even among the great ones, *hisbodedus* is the key to success. To not be hampered by even the

good ones around, to be alone with Hashem as much as possible, is the true secret to growth and perfection. And that is the secret of life, the secret to success, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu revealed to us in this week's *parsha*.

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Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Ztz"l

Q:

Should I buy a house in Eretz Yisroel?

A:

And the answer is that you should buy a house in the place where you're making a living. To go to Eretz Yisroel and become a *schnorer* doesn't pay. No, no. It doesn't pay. You must make a living. And therefore whether you buy a house or rent a house, make sure that you're in a place where you can make a living.

And you should always make sure to find a frum neighborhood. It's very important. *S'vivah*, environment, is everything. Not only for your children but for you as well. People who live around a Yeshiva are different than people who live someplace else. You see *tzitzis* out. Everyone is wearing a black hat. Shabbos is a different kind of Shabbos. It's a different kind of life. It's very important to live in a *frum* neighborhood. And even though sometimes it may be more expensive to live there, it's worth it. I cannot overemphasize that. A *frum* neighborhood is most important.

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