

תורת אביגדור
הגאון ר' אביגדור מיללער זצ"ל

Rav Avigdor Miller on the Parsha

Adapted from his Tapes, Seforim and Writings of Talmidim

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בעזה"ש"י"ת

פרשת תרומה

With Rav Avigdor Miller ztz"l

The Shechina Rests on Yisroel

- Part I -

The *Shechina* Finds a Home | 1

- Part II -

Pride of Yisroel | 8

Part I. The *Shechina* Finds a Home

THE MISHKAN IN A NUTSHELL

When Hakodosh Boruch Hu gave the command to erect a *Mishkan*, the first *Beis Hamikdash*, so He stated, *ועשו לי מקדש* - "And they shall make for Me a place of holiness, an especial place for Me, *ושכנתי בתוכם*, and I will dwell in their midst" (Terumah 25:8) Now these words are of the utmost importance because we are learning in a nutshell what is meant by the *Mishkan*, and later the *Beis Hamikdash* - that it's the place of the *hashra'as hashechinah* - the place where the Presence of Hashem comes down to reside. The *Mishkan* wasn't a place of prayer and service; it was that too, but actually it was much more than that. It was *the dwelling place of Hashem*.

This we must know, that there is such a concept, a fact, that although Hashem is everywhere, there is such a thing as Hashem concentrating His *Shechinah* in a certain place. *ושכנתי בתוכם* - "And I will reside among them," He told us. Hashem chose that He should rest His Presence by the *Am Yisroel*. It's an especial afflatus, that Hakodosh Boruch Hu comes to rest in the *Mishkan*, among His people, in an especial way that is not found anywhere else.

A NEW NEIGHBOR FOR THE JEWS

Now among all the statements found in the Torah, none could be as breathtaking as that one: "I will dwell among My

people!" The Creator of the Universe, the מלא כל הארץ כבודו, the One Whose Presence fills the remote distances of space, is coming down to live among us?! Yes, that's exactly what the Torah states, "Make Me a home, and I shall dwell in their midst. I have chosen the *Am Yisroel* as that place where I will take up residence." Hashem forsakes the high heavens and moves into the encampment of the *Am Yisroel*! It's a new "neighbor" for the Jewish people!

You know, we don't really think too much when we read the *chumash*, so we gloss over these words without too much thought, but actually it was an enormous *chiddush* when the Creator of the Universe declared that His Presence would reside in an edifice erected by men. What could be more stunning, more astonishing, than the thought that the Creator of the Universe, whose glory fills the endless remoteness of space, should choose to live in a tabernacle of wood and cloth?! Because what was the *Mishkan* after all? It wasn't even a royal palace; it was a portable house made of boards, bars and sockets. Could Hashem reside in such a place? Hashem is infinite and not physical, and His reality transcends any space measurement. He can't live in a home; it defies all logic.

STUNNING MOSHE RABBEINU

And that's exactly what Moshe Rabeinu said when he heard these words of Hakodosh Boruch Hu: התחיל מתמיה ואומר - "Moshe was stupefied and he said, כבודו של הקדוש ברוך הוא מלא - "The glory of Hashem fills the upper and lower worlds, and yet He says, "Make for Me a place to live?!" It didn't make any sense to Moshe Rabeinu. אמר - "So Hakodosh Boruch Hu said to Moshe, "Not as you think, do I think, אלא עשרים קרש - "Just make for Me twenty planks on the north side, twenty on the south, eight on the west side, and that's enough for Me" (Shemos Rabbah: 34)

Now if these words so stunned Moshe Rabeinu that Hakodosh Boruch Hu had to tell him, "Moshe, My servant, You and I think differently," so we would be well-served if we spent some time studying this stupendous concept that Hashem rested His Presence among the *Am Yisroel*. What's so important about an especial building erected for the *Shechinah*? Why is it so important

that the *Shechinah* should come there more than anywhere else? Of course, like I said before, it's such a vast concept that it can't be explained in a couple of sentences, but whatever it was, it was an enormous demonstration that Hashem was making: "My Presence will dwell in *Machaneh Yisroel*, in the encampment of the Jewish Nation in a way that cannot be found anywhere else." Such a stupendous idea, it pays for us to understand at least superficially.

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Imagine we are standing on a hill, we're visiting in the *midbar*. Let's say we came from Moav or from Edom as visitors. And one of the *Bnei Yisroel* is standing with us and he's pointing out to us the sights. So you're looking out into the distance at the *Machaneh Yisroel*, the camp of the people. Thousands of tents, all arranged in an orderly fashion. There were roads between the tents, and the *shevatim* were all encamped surrounding the *machaneh levi'im*, the place where the *levi'im* lived. And in the middle, in the center of the camp, was the *machaneh shechinah* where a large wooden hut was standing. That's what you saw as you stood on this hill looking out at the *Am Yisroel*.

So your Jewish tour guide says, "You see there, over there, that's *Reuven* in that corner. All those thousands of tents, that's *Shevet Reuven*. And over there, on the other side, that's the *rivevos Efraim*. And look on that side, over there, you can see the *alfei Menasheh*." And then he says - he tells you to look through the binoculars, "You see that tent over there, that's where Betzalel lives. And over there on the left, that's where Aharon Hakohen resides. And that tent, that's where Moshe Rabeinu is right now teaching Torah to the *zekeinim*."

THE EDMITE LAMDAN

And then, the guide who is showing you the sights, points with his finger, and says, "And there, you see that tent in the middle, that's where Hakodosh Boruch Hu, the Creator of the World, lives." So you gasp; you weren't expecting to hear *that!* You're only a visitor after all. So you look at your guide incredulously, "What do you mean He *lives* there?" So he tells you matter of factly, "Yes, that's His address. That's where the Creator of the world lives!"

So let's say you're a bit of a *lamdan*. Imagine such a thing, a *lamdan* from *Edom*. So you ask, "Doesn't it say (Yeshaya 66:1): כה

אמר השם השמים כסאי - "Hashem says, 'The heavens is My throne,' and the earth is just a resting stool for My feet.'" The heaven is nothing but a throne for Hashem, and the earth is where He rests His feet. איזה בית אשר תבנו לי - "What kind of house could you build for Me?" So you have a *kasha*, it's a very good *kasha* you asked. But the guide stubbornly tells you, "Look, you can quote all the *pesukim* you wish, but this is what Hashem told us. He forsook the high heavens; He has left all of space, the billions of space miles, and He has come down and He has chosen *this place* to dwell. He lives there, among the people." Now if you were not from the *Bnei Yisroel*, if you were a visitor from some other nation, so you might shrug your shoulders. It's an interesting thought, but it doesn't mean much for you. But you'd still be impressed by the conviction and sincerity of the Jewish people.

THE MEN OF PERFECTION

But let's understand not what a tourist from *Edom* or from *Aram* would see. What would *the Bnei Yisroel themselves* see? When the *Bnei Yisroel* looked at the various tents of the distinguished ones of the *Am Yisroel*, it wasn't merely as a person seeing the sights; for them it was a great pride and encouragement. Because these were very great men who lived among us, men of great stature, men of perfection. And our nation was inordinately proud that these great men lived among them. It was such a happiness to pass by the tent of Betzalel and to know that we possess a Betzalel, the man of unmatched artistic abilities who built the *mishkan* - that Betzalel was ours, was a great pride. We were so lucky to have such a rare personality among us.

And they were even more proud when they could point to Aharon Hakohen. Aharon is unequaled in history. *Aharon k'dosh Hashem*, Aharon the holy man of Hashem. Aharon was cited as the apotheosis, the summit of kindness. בשלום ובמישור הלך עמדי ורבים. השיב מעוון (Malachi 2:6) Aharon was an *oheiv shalom* and a *rodef shalom*, a man who loved peace. But not in the sense we understand it. Everyone loves peace. But Aharon loved peace with every fiber of his being. He was a man who pursued peace, which means he did everything possible to cause peace, tranquility and happiness between human beings. His life was devoted to that. ומקרבן לתורה, אהב את הבריות, He loved people, and he brought

them close to Torah too. And therefore when they pointed to his tent and they said, "This is the residence of *Aharon k'dosh Hashem*," they said it with an inspiration and a pride.

SMELLY NEIGHBORS

Suppose somebody would be able to point out, "In my neighborhood there lives, let's say - now I'm sorry I have to use such a comparison; I want to wash my mouth when I get through, but let's say someone would say, "You see down the block; Beethoven lives over there!" Beethoven! The rents would go up in all the apartments in the neighborhood; the price of real estate would skyrocket. Now really it should plummet! Everybody should move out as quickly as possible. Because wherever these big musical geniuses lived, if you had an especial ability to smell, you would have to hold your nose. Because musical ability and purity of character by no means have to go together. And often they don't. Like somebody gave me a clipping this week; the great musician Leopold Stokowski, the conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, acclaimed the world over as a musical genius. So he boasted, he himself boasted to his musician friends, that he utilized the wives of the members of his orchestra. You understand now, that's the bravado, the boasting heroics from one musician to another. So I'm sorry that we have to sink to such depths in order to appreciate this subject. But it's important for us to understand the subject at hand.

Now if Stokowski lived on this block I'm afraid people would not hold their noses. I'm afraid they would vie with each other to try to move in. And they'd like to be somewhere on the block when pictures are being snapped of him. At least they could point someday and say, "You see that little dot way out in the background? That's me!" And it would be such a pride that they'd show it to their grandchildren. That's because people today lost their sense of smell altogether.

VISITING PARSHANDASA'S HOME

Boruch Hashem, we don't have to take pride in Stokowskis. We can take pride in those who are truly great men. If we could visit the sanctuary where Rashi Hakodosh spent his years! It's in a little town in Germany, in Worms, Vermeiseh. It's kept as a museum today, but that means nothing to us. If we would walk into that place, we'd walk in on tip-toe; it's *admas*

kodesh. You're walking into a place that is the heart of the Jewish people, the *kodesh kodoshim* of our nation. The place where Rashi sat and studied the Torah, and the room where he wrote his commentaries on the entire *Talmud Bavli* and the entire *Tanach*. Rashi is the teacher of the whole *Am Yisroel*. Every word in Rashi is sweet as honey. If you're an expert in *language* you could appreciate how Rashi made hard things soft, he made the difficult things unravel. Rashi was a master expert in explaining. He's called *Parshan Dasa*, that's the nickname he was given. It means "The one who explains the Torah."

And so if you walk into that holy of holies, to Rashi's study in his *Beis Hamedrash*, it's the greatest of privileges. You can feel the *kedushah* of these ancient walls permeating your personality, entering the marrow of your bones. You're not the same person once you visited Rashi's *beis hamedrash*. Of course, I'm talking about someone who knows what it's all about. Rashi is the beloved teacher of the *Am Yisroel*. You have to appreciate the great personality who once lived here and expressed his soul here, in his writings. Only that it's pity that it's there in Europe. Had that place been in *Eretz Yisroel* it would have become a shrine. No question people would come there in the hundreds of thousands and pour out their hearts to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And with the *zechus* of Rashi their prayers would go up to Hashem. Only that it's in the accursed land of Germany, in the unclean *golus*. And even there, it's *kodesh kodoshim*.

TENT OF INTOXICATION

And so now we come back to the *Machaneh Yisroel* in the *Midbar*. We could point to the tent of Moshe Rabeinu, the place where Moshe Rabeinu resided. The tent of Moshe Rabeinu! The intense emotion of pride that such a thing caused is indescribable! "I'm living in the neighborhood of Moshe!" It was a great happiness, a great pride, to know that Moshe lived among us.

But to be able to point out the tent of Moshe Rabeinu was nothing at all when compared to being able to point at the tent of Hakodosh Boruch Hu! No concept could be more astonishing than the thought that the Creator of the Universe, Whose glory fills the endless remoteness of space, would choose to dwell in a tabernacle. We can picture the intoxication of ecstatic excitement that seized upon Moshe and the people at this announcement. The

knowledge, more than knowledge - the sight - of the residence of Hashem in the midst of the camp was a vivid reminder for the people that they were chosen by the Creator of the Universe forever. We shouldn't overlook the effect of the *Mishkan* upon the tent-homes of the Am Yisroel. The *Mishkan* was of course a larger tent, but because it stood among the tents of the camp it had an unflinching effect on every tent in the camp. And the most outstanding effect was the demonstration that Hashem had chosen us from all the nations. We are the center of the Universe, for Hashem here declared **וּשְׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכְכֶם** - "I will dwell in your midst." Because even more than a demonstration of His presence, even more than the constant reminder that we were standing before Hashem, was the pride that the *Mishkan* generated in the people: "Hashem chose us; He chose to dwell among us!"

Now there's no question that the nation gained many blessings by having the Presence of the *Shechinah* among them. I'm not capable of telling you everything that was gained but there's no doubt that every individual gained a great deal of perfection of soul; the mind of every man, woman and child was filled with an Awareness that would have been otherwise impossible to achieve. But of all the blessings, of all the achievements, most important was the knowledge that Hashem chose to live among us forever. The fact that there was a special abode, a house where the King of the Universe resided *among us*, was so impressive that all of the *Bnei Yisroel*, even those who never had the chance to come visit that house, were entirely transformed because of that. It made such a deep impression that it lasted with them all throughout their lives and it accompanied them into the world to come.

THE SIMPLE FACT

Now when the *Bnei Yisroel* saw the house of Hakodosh Boruch Hu - and they saw it every day - so they certainly became accustomed to it. There's no question that seeing the same thing every day is going to make you hardened and you're not going to be excited anymore. But that's what Hakodosh Boruch Hu wanted, that they should become so accustomed to the thought that Hashem dwells in their midst that it should be beyond any doubt in their minds. It became a simple matter of fact that Hakodosh Boruch Hu resides among us.

And for forty years the *Bnei Yisroel* in the *midbar* were able to point out to their children, “My son, over there, that’s the tent of Aharon Hakohen. And there’s the tent of Moshe Rabeinu. And over there, that’s the Mishkan, the tent of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. And it became a phlegmatic matter of fact, it became part of their world outlook that Hashem the *Borei Kol Ha’olamos*, the One who had created all the worlds, had forsaken the infinity of all the universes, all the remoteness of space, and He now dwells *b’soch Bnei Yisroel*. It went into the marrow of their bones.

Now this is what you should be thinking about always. The Torah is full of *pesukim* dedicated to this idea, and it’s a shame to let it go to waste. And even though we have never seen the *Mishkan*, but the *pesukim* we have read hundreds of times, and it pays to think into it a bit. That the Creator of the Universe, the One who fills the whole universe with His presence, מלא כל הארץ כבודו, He created the stars in the remotest distances of space; He is the ruler of millions of star worlds, and nevertheless He has forsaken everything and He has chosen to reside on our people. Now no matter how difficult that concept is, that’s the fundamental teaching of the Torah. You can’t be a Jew unless you understand the teaching that Hashem is with us forever. Not just that He will help us forever, no, it’s much more than that. *He dwells among us forever*. The Presence of Hashem - His actual Presence - is upon our nation forever.

PART II. Pride of Yisroel

CRASH COURSE IN BRACHOS

And it’s something we thank Hashem for every day. Every day we say it, only we don’t realize what we’re thanking for. And that’s a tragedy, because it’s such an important attitude that we should be living with, that it pays to make use of every opportunity to impress it upon our minds. Every day in *shemoneh esrei* we say the *bracha* ברוך אתה השם האל הקדוש. Now all the *brachos*, you know, are *blessings of gratitude*. *Boruch* means we’re *thanking* Him. In *Magen Avraham*, we thank Hashem; He’s the shield of Avraham, it means He’s the shield of our nation; He protects us because of Avraham.

מחיה המתים, the second *bracha*, we thank Hashem for giving us food, and for healing the sick and for giving us rain; all the good things enumerated there. And one day He'll revive the dead, and we thank Him for that too. And then there's ברוך אתה השם חונן הדעת - You, Hashem bestow sanity! You're thanking Hashem that you're not in an insane asylum, that you're not depressed. You're full of gratitude that you're not crazy, that you're not paranoid or psychotic. You don't think about that, do you? So you're not *davening* properly. And when you look, you'll see that every *bracha* is a *bracha* of gratitude.

But there's one *bracha* that's difficult to understand: ברוך הקדוש הא-ל השם הא-ל - We thank You Hashem that You are the holy G-d. We're thanking Him because He's holy?! What gratitude is required because He is Holy? I want you to hear the question. On everything in *shemonah esrei* there is a benefit for which we are thanking. *Boruch* means that we are grateful, and we bend our knees to You in gratitude. But when we come to the *bracha* of הקדוש הא-ל we find that the entire *bracha* speaks of no kindness at all - all we do is speak about the holiness, the perfection of Hashem. So what are we thanking Him for? What gratitude is it that we're supposed to be feeling?

ARE YOU PROUD OF YOUR BOSS?

So listen now and you'll learn what you're thanking Hashem for when you say הא-ל הקדוש. Tonight when you daven *maariv*, for the first time in your life you'll be able to thank Hashem for being the הא-ל הקדוש, the Perfect G-d. And if you forget to have it mind, there's *shacharis* tomorrow, and *mincha* too. Don't squander the opportunities. So we'll explain it like this. Let's say you have a boss over you. The boss himself is an underling, a nobody, but he's your boss, what can you do. There's no great pride there. You won't pride yourself that you work for the colored man in the warehouse. Nothing wrong with working for a colored man, but it's no great pride.

But let's say somebody is an assistant to the president, so he feels important already. And if he's an assistant let's say to *Dovid Melech Yisroel, lehavdil*, so he's surely important. It's like a man who was elevated by the king. The king chose a certain man, let's call him Wilfred, and made him a duke. So instead of being a commoner, now he's Duke of Worchester. Instead of being

Wilfred, now he's nobility; connected to the royal family. And he walks the streets of England with pride: "I was chosen by the king!"

WE'RE ECSTATIC WITH OUR LOT!

Now, if we're assistants to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, if He chose *us* and He considers *us* His beloved ones and His entire interest is only in us, as we're going to see *bli neder*, so that's our pride in this world; we're happy - not happy, we're ecstatic - that we have such a G-d. That's what it says להודות לשם קדשין להשתבח בתהלתך - "We give thanks to Your holy name, and we commend ourselves, we praise ourselves, by Your praise" (Tehillim 106:47). According to the holiness, the perfection, of Hashem, so much greater is the honor, pride and security of the nation He chose to rest His Presence on. And that's why we say thank you to Hashem for being so perfect. Because *His* perfection is *our* glory. We boast in the praise of Hashem because that's our honor and glory. The Holy One, the Perfect G-d, that's our G-d. And we thank Him because of that, we say, "Thank You Hashem for being הא-ל הקדוש, for being so great. We take pride that we have such a G-d, שאין כמוהו, and it's our happiness. He chose us; we are His people and that's an unequaled pride. "Thank You Hashem for being so perfect that it's a glory for me to be connected to You."

And so we begin to see what it means when people say it's not easy to be a Jew. A person said once that: *s'iz shver tzu zein a Yid*, it's difficult to be a Jew. But he didn't understand what it meant. What it means is that there is a great responsibility in being part of the nation upon which Hashem actually rests His Presence. A Jew has to have in mind a great deal of meditation, a great deal of reflection, in order to appreciate his position in this world. He must constantly be aware of the greatness of his history. The reason that you find Jewish people who are ashamed of their Jewishness is because they're ignorant of their past. If you learn *Chumash* properly, if you learn *Tanach* properly, you'll begin to understand what a great privilege it is to belong to the *Am Yisroel*. מי כמוך, אשריכם ישראל, how fortunate you are Yisrael, מי כמוך, who is like you?" Moshe Rabeinu said that. Who is like you?! Nobody! אשרי העם שככה לו, how fortunate is the nation that thus is his lot. And what is that lot that makes us so fortunate? אשרי העם שהשם אלקיו, because Hashem chose you.

And therefore at all times we sing **אשרינו מה טוב חלקנו**, how fortunate we are. A Jew has to sing at all times! At least in his heart he should always be singing in happiness because of the great honor that he possesses. His heart should sing within him because Hakadosh Baruch Hu has elevated him. A proud Jew, a Jew who understands that Hashem resides among us always, walks the streets, whatever street it may be, he's walking on air. He's happy always!

HASHEM SAYS SHEMA TOO

Now in our *tefillin* it's written, *Shema Yisroel, Hashem Elokeinu* - "Listen all of you, Hashem is *our* G-d." He doesn't belong to the Polish people, or to the Mexicans or the Israelis. He's ours. *Hashem Echad* - He's One. What does that mean, "He's One"? It means a lot of things but we'll say now one of the important *peirushim* that you should think about always. And that is that He is The Only One in all of our thoughts and deeds. He is the one purpose of our lives, and we must love Him and serve Him with all of our strength - everything we do should be for Him. That's not such an easy task, but that's what you're saying every day, so it's a good idea to get busy thinking about how to do that.

So that's our *tefillin*. But the *gemara* (Brachos 6a) says Hakadosh Baruch Hu puts on *tefillin* too. That's a remarkable statement: Hakadosh Boruch Hu wears *tefillin* on His head. And why shouldn't He? *Tefillin* is a sign of royalty, so He surely deserves to wear *tefillin*. Now what's written in His *tefillin*, the *gemara* asks? What's written in His *parshiyos*? So the *gemara* says in His *tefillin* is the *possuk*, **מי כעמך ישראל גוי אחד בארץ** - "Who is like you My nation Yisroel; You are the one nation on earth. *Goy echaaaaaddddd*. The one and only nation in the world! That's how Hashem says it. Only He says it longer than we do. We get tired but Hashem doesn't get tired: *Echaaaaaaaaadddddddd!* He says it forever and ever, "They're My One nation in the world. That's all I care about. *Echad* - "They are My *one* concern. Everything is done for you, My children." Now when Hashem chooses us, it means much more than we could imagine, but what it surely means is that we are the center of His thoughts, and that everything He does - and He does *everything* - is for us.

JEWS REALLY DO CONTROL THE WORLD

That's what it says, **הוא השם אלקנו**, He is ours, **בכל הארץ** - **משפטי** - In all the world are His judgments (Tehillim 105:7) Whatever happens in the world, we shouldn't make any mistake, it's *mishpata*, it's His judgements; Hashem is pulling the strings. But the preface to that is: *Hu Hashem Elokeinu*, He is Hashem our King, and therefore anything that happens in the world is done *because of us*. Everything that happens *b'chol ha'aretz*, in the whole world, are His judgements. And how does He do the judgments? In the role of *Hashem Elokeinu*, of being *our* G-d!

And so if you hear that there is a lack of rain in a certain state and people are suffering, Hashem is doing it *because of us*. Now how that works, that's a question. It's a good question. But it's because of us. If gold was discovered in a certain state, it's because of us. If there's a hurricane, it's because of us. There's no question about that. Because it's made by Hashem; and who is Hashem? **הוא השם אלקנו**, He is our G-d, and **בכל הארץ משפטי**, His judgments throughout the world are all being done as "our G-d". Now I know that most people don't think this way. They think like *goyim*; even the *frum* Jews think like *goyim*. But you have to study what is written in the *kisvei hakodesh* and you have to attune your mind to this truth of the Torah.

IT'S A RACHMANUS ON THEIR PRIDE

Now, if that's the case so we begin to see what an obligation there is upon the Am Yisrael to be proud. *Ga'avah!* Now that doesn't mean the Jewish pride you find outside in the street. For a Jew just to be proud that he's a Jew, that doesn't mean much. Because we're not talking about the pride like the African-Americans say, "We're proud that we're black." They're not proud anyhow. They're doing their best *not* to be black. You see they go to beauty parlors and they spend millions of dollars on lotions in order to lighten their complexion. Thousands and thousands of dollars on creams to cause their hair to straighten out. Some put on wigs that you shouldn't see their kinky hair. They do everything to look like whites. They would give their souls if they could turn white. What could they do *nebach*, so they say "We're proud to be black." And it's the same with every nation. Every Puerto Rican says the same thing, "I'm proud to be a Puerto Rican." He waves a little flag, he eats Puerto Rican food; that's his pride. And the Israeli is proud to be Israeli. Every nation, they're

proud to be what they are. Alright, let them be proud. It's a *rachmanus* on them.

But that's not what we mean! When we say we're proud, we have to understand that we're saying it because *Hakadosh Baruch Hu said that to us*. Hashem told us we're great. And if He said it, we believe it. It's not our fault, we didn't do it ourselves. Hashem said it and we won't argue with Him. **בָּנִים אַתֶּם**, "You are My children of Mine!" Hashem said. If He says we're His children, are we going to argue with Him?!

And so we look up to what we possess, we look up to the *Shechinah* that is *shoreh* by us, and we have to know that He is our greatness - our greatness in this world and our greatness in the World to Come. You have to study that; you have to take the time to ponder and understand what it means to believe implicitly that Hakadosh Boruch Hu chooses a certain place, a certain people, on whom He is concentrating the Presence of His *Shechinah*. And that it is a covenant that He has made forever and ever with our nation. "For the mountains may depart and the hills may be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed, says Hashem who loves you" (Yeshayah 54:10).

DON'T BE A DEMOCRAT!

When you get an *aliyah* to the Torah you say **אֲשֶׁר בָּחַר בָּנוּ**. What is it? Just a formula to knock off, just to be *yotzei*? *No, it's our duty to impress onto our minds that Hashem was בָּחַר בָּנוּ מִכָּל הָעַמִּים, that Hashem chose us from all the nations. You can't just say the words - you have to live with that thought! As you walk in the street you must think you're a prince. And that *ga'avasan shel Yisroel*, that pride of being a true Torah Jew, knowing that Hashem lives only among us, should make us look down on everything outside of our world. Because we know that there is *absolutely nothing* to look for among the nations of the world.*

Ga'avasan shel Yisroel, the pride that we're speaking about here, is an *ikar ha'emunah*; it's a fundamental attitude that a Jew must have. Without it you're missing the fundamental of Judaism. You must hammer that into your head because to be proud that you're a *Yisroel* means that you believe in one of the most important cardinal principles of the Torah. And it's so stupendous of a concept that when we say it today, even among Orthodox

Jews, it's not well received. With the spirit of democracy and western ideals it's not easy to convince people about this great principle. I'm not talking now about asking them *actually feel it*, that I'm not even speaking about. But even to convince them that it's a true principle is not easy. And that is the principle that the world was created for the Jewish people. Don't say, "Everybody is the people of Hashem." Don't be a democrat! You have no right to give away what doesn't belong to you. You have no right to hand out honors to the other nations of the world.

JEWISH CHUTZPAH

Now that's not easy for us Orthodox Jews to accept. Do we have the nerve, do we have a boldness, to be so conceited and praise ourselves? And the answer is absolutely! And if we don't, then we are backsliding, we're being remiss in our duties as Jews. And let that sink in! It's going to hurt. You're going to rebel, you're going to kick when you hear that. So take a deep breath, pay attention, and hold on tight.

All of Mankind is considered nothing compared to the *Am Yisroel!* I'll say it again to make sure you hear me: All the nations of the world are nothing in the eyes of Hashem when compared to us. So you'll ask me, "Rabbi Miller, where do you get the audacity to make such a statement?" Look in the *chumash!* The Torah was given to us for the purpose of letting us know the great principles that otherwise we would not know. What is the Torah after all if not the thoughts of Hashem? And in the thoughts of Hashem you see that the histories of the *umos haolam* are ignored completely. Now if there was a lot of Torahs in the world, a Polish Torah that Hashem gave, all right. In the Polish Torah He would talk about the Polish. If there would be an African Torah, so He talks about Africa in the African Torah. But there's only one Torah however, and even the Polish say that there's only one Torah. They don't say there are two Torahs. They agree that there was only one Torah. And the Africans agree with the Polish. All the Christians and Mohammedans says there's only one Torah. Only that Mohammed came along and wrote something later; but they agree that the Jews received the Torah. And what was written in the Jewish Torah? It's written that Hakadosh Baruch Hu chose us - forever.

HASHEM NEVER SPOKE TO PATRICK

And so, anybody who feels he wants to be an *anav*, he wants to feel meek and humble and not be superior to anybody else, then that person is a *kofer b'chol hatorah kulah*, from *Bereishis bara* until *l'einei chol Yisroel*, the last words in the Torah. What does the Torah talk about? There's a Torah after all; what's it all about? Isn't that a queer question? Now pay attention. The entire Torah talks only about two subjects. The Torah is about two subjects and nothing more. One subject is Hashem, that's the main subject of the Torah. But it talks about something more than just Hashem. It also talks about the *Am Yisroel*. The whole Torah is nothing but the Jewish Nation. The whole Torah is **וידבר השם אל משה לאמר**. The whole thing! Look through every page and you won't find even once *Va'yidabeir Hashem el Patrick leimor!* The Torah is filled with nothing but the Jewish nation. Wherever you look, it's only our people, our people. Nothing is said about Irishmen, about Polish people, nothing. Only Jews! From beginning to end, the entire *Tanach* deals only with our people.

So what do we see? That's the importance of the *Am Yisroel* is *kol hatorah kulah*. And therefore we have to say that the pride in being a Jew is just as fundamental as believing in *kol hatorah kulah*. And anyone who doesn't understand this concept in its fullness, so he doesn't really understand the Torah. Actually he's a *kofer b'ikar*; he's rebelling against the whole *Tanach*. It's as open as could be that this is the chief function of all the writings in the *Tanach*, to tell us first that there is a Creator, and number two that He has a chosen nation.

WE DON'T CARE WHAT THEY SAY

Now, today this second principle is frequently overlooked. Pious Jews will say, "Yes, certainly; we're chosen to do commandments. But you have to look at everyone else tolerantly. They're like us. They also have ways of living, they also are nations and they also have cultures." Now I know that some people here read newspapers, they watch television and they listen to goyim talking on the radio. So their minds are brainwashed- not brainwashed, dirt washed, bilge-water washed, and therefore it hurts them to hear the words I'm saying here. But what could I do? After all, it's an elementary principle of the Torah that we are Hashem's chosen people. And if you don't

believe that, then goodbye! You don't belong. If you don't believe we are His people, then you don't belong to us.

We don't care what the world says. We believe implicitly in these two cardinal principles - we believe in Hashem and we believe we are His people. No matter what the world says. They wouldn't like to hear that, but we don't care, we still know that *we* are His people. That's the Torah! That's the purpose of the Torah, to tell us who we are.

SOME THINGS NEED TO STAY A SECRET

Now, of course you shouldn't despise anybody. You shouldn't show contempt for anybody, The public disrespect that is evident among some of our fellow Jews is not prudent. Not at all. It's silly and it's not a *k'vod shamayim*. However, in your heart there's no question what you should think. Because there is no question that when you know that you're superior, then definitely you consider the other one inferior. It's unavoidable!

Now, that doesn't mean that you're going to go around shouting from the rooftops that someone else is inferior. It doesn't mean that you're going to have to upset the gentile nations. We're not looking to start up with nations of the world today; they have their own religions and they'll become angry at us. But amongst ourselves, when we speak to each other, of course we say the truth. Among ourselves we speak about the truth *all the time*. We must spread the good news among our families and among our friends, of course. Absolutely we must do that. No doubt about it! Only that one has to be wise enough and respectful enough to not let our gentile neighbors know what we are thinking.

THE GREAT TEST OF OPPOSITION

Now the truth is that nobody is capable of appreciating what this means, but at least to a certain extent a Jew must understand that he is an aristocrat, the chosen of Hashem. However, there's a great test, a very great test, because of the opposition of the *umos haolam*, the constant hammering away of the anti-Semites and also the Jewish anti-Semites today who are constantly belittling the *frum* Jews, all the time.

And now we begin to understand what the *nisayon* of life is. We're being tested all the time. Because if we were the majority, it would be easy for us to be superior. We would easily

fulfill this *emunah* that we are the chosen people. We're the bosses, we dominate the world, so what's the question?! Only that if you're a minority and you walk in the street and a WASP driving by in a car calls you "Kike" or a boy riding by on a bike says "Get out of my way, Jew," there's a tendency to feel a little bit inferior. If you see all around you people who look down on you; some of them are nice enough not to say it, but in their hearts you know what they're thinking. They despise you. They hate you. There's no question about it. And don't tell me not; I know the gentiles much better than you. And the truth is that today we have so many Jews who hate us; we have a double test. Once upon a time only *goyim* hated us. Today Jews hate us and the majority of Jews hate *frum* Jews. It's a constant barrage, a great *nisayon*, and that's why we're in this world, to overcome the *sheker* of the world and to never lose sight of the great principle that Hakadosh Baruch Hu has taught us: that we are His people, His only people forever and ever.

BANG ON THE TABLE!

That's what Moshe Rabeinu said when he came to Pharaoh. He hammered on the table and said: **כה אמר השם בני בכורי ישראל**, like it or not, this is what Hashem said: "The *Am Yisroel* is My firstborn, My favorite." And that's what we have to be telling ourselves always. We have to hear it though. We have to bang on the table and say it to ourselves again and again, and remind ourselves who we are at all times. We are the **בני א-ל חי**, we are the children of the living G-d. **בנים אתם להשם אלוקיכם**, we are children to Hashem. And we have to walk with our heads high, always cognizant of the great pride that Hakadosh Baruch Hu bestowed on us, no matter what the world says. Don't believe in democracy; don't believe in pluralism. He chose us, and that's it!

I always tell the same stories so you heard this already. But I'll tell it again. Reb Moshe Montefiore was the Lord Mayor of England. And he was also a baron. He was knighted by the king. That's why he was Sir Montefiore. When he heard that in Russia they were persecuting the Jews, he decided to go to Russia and intervene with the Czar on behalf of his fellow Jews. So he travelled all the way across Russia with his own chariots. His own horsemen and a fancy carriage. The horsemen sat in the front, driving. And he was in the back. And on the side of the carriage

were like private guards who could protect him if needed. And he was riding through Poland. He was riding through the streets of Warsaw. In Warsaw, in Poland of old, they were all anti-Semites. They hated the Jews. And here they saw a Jew riding in a carriage. A Jew who's a big k'nocker. So there was a goy who couldn't contain himself. A boy, a shaygetz, came running after him and he shouted, "Zhid!" Zhid means Jew in Polish. It was a derogatory way of referring to a Jew. So Reb Moshe Montefiore stopped the carriage and told his footmen to go run and catch the goy. They caught the goy and he was trembling because he knew that this Jew was a powerful Jew. They brought him to Reb Moshe and his hands and feet were trembling. So Reb Moshe Montefiore said, "Look here. In London they call me the Lord Mayor of London. The Sheriff of this and this district. Baron and Sir and so on and so on. But the biggest, the most important title, is the one you called me. *Zhid!* There's nothing greater than that in the world." And Reb Moshe Montefiore gave the boy a quid - a half pound - and he sent him away. He thanked him and sent him away.

THE CENTER OF THE UNIVERSE

Oh, how important it is for the Jew to recognize his greatness. A Jew must always remember how important he is, and never lose sight of our distinctiveness as the central feature of the universe. That's why the universe exists, for the sake of the *Am Yisroel*, and you should be proud and arrogant, and therefore you know that you have to always strive for perfection and not be satisfied to remain mediocre. The *Am Yisroel* must always remind themselves that they are superior and that they should never lower themselves to the level of the nations.

And what our *parsha* is teaching us is that one of the most important lessons of the *Mishkan* was this lesson of the pride of the *Am Yisroel*. It was the symbol of our glory.

וּשְׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכֶם. Hashem lives with us! Those two words are a stunning declaration of the principle that Hashem's interest is not in the vast distances of space and in the millions of star-worlds, but in Man alone. And of all men, Hashem chose the *Am Yisroel* and made them the center of the universe by bringing His Presence to rest among them.

GETTING DIZZY FROM THE MISHKAN

“Behold, the Lord your God possesses the heavens, and the heavens above them, and the earth and all therein, but in your fathers alone did He delight to love them, and He chose their seed after them, *you*, above all the nation, even to this day” (Dvarim 10:14-15). This stupendous but abstract concept was now concretized in a visible form. “They shall make for Me a sanctuary and I will dwell among them” (Shemos 25:8). Thenceforth, the multitude of Israel, whenever they saw the Mishkan, pointed to it as the dwelling place of the Master of the Universe. And in this tangible form, this dizzyingly sublime idea was hammered constantly into the mind of the *Am Yisroel*.

Now the nations of the world will never yield to that thesis. But the time will come however when **יושב בשמים ישחק**, the One who dwells in the heavens will laugh at them, **השם ילעג למו**, Hashem will mock them. And the *Am Yisroel* will then open its mouth in happy laughter as well, as the glory of ours that we were always well aware of, now becomes visible to all. And when Hashem laughs at the nations of the world, we too will indulge in laughter to our hearts content. We will laugh and laugh in proud happiness about the glory that was always ours! **אז ימלא שחוק פינו**, then our mouths will be full of laughter. And we will laugh forever and ever rejoicing in the fact that in this world and in the next world the *Shechina* rests only on the *Am Hashem*.

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Q&A With Rav Avigdor Miller Tz"

Q:

How does one cope with the stress of having *chovos*, debts?

A:

Number one, is that you have to have a job. It's very important to learn a *parnassah*. There are so many ways of making a living. America is the land of opportunity. You will only have a problem if you think you're a *choshuve* person and that it's beneath your dignity to work. You want to act like a *talmid chochom* and live on charity and live in debt! You should know, Hakodosh Boruch Hu is not satisfied with you. טוב תורה עם דרך ארץ. You have to work and make a living, together with learning. כי גיעת שניהם משכחת עוון. Because that will keep you far away from sin (Avos 2:2). And if you work, you'll pay off your debts. But if you don't work, your debts will increase and multiply. It's a very important principle in life to not live a life of idleness. So you'll tell me, "I'm learning all day long. I have *bitachon*." No, no. That's not *bitachon*. It's just wildness. Just wildness. It's just yielding to the *yetzer hora*.

And therefore, it's so important for people to learn a *parnassah*. Now, you might say, "That's a contradiction to our function in life. We should sit and learn all day long, all our lives." No! You're contradicting the Torah. It says הרבה עשו רבי שמעון בר יוחאי ולא עלתה בידם. Many people didn't succeed in following the path of רבי שמעון בר יוחאי of dedicating their lives completely to *limmud hatorah* at the expense of a *parnassah* (Brachos 35b). It's not for many people. It's for a *mi'ut* – a small minority. The majority of people cannot do that.

And therefore, it's necessary for people to be honest with themselves and go out and make a living. The best way to deal with debt is by not getting into debt in the first place.

TAPE #E-173

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