



פרשת בשלח

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Scoffer

Contents:

Part I. Amalek Scoffs - 1

Part II. The Jew Scoffs - 4

Part III. Healing the Scoffer - 7

Part I. Amalek Scoffs

Choosing Nicknames

The Sages, when dilating on the story of **יִבּוּא עַמְלֵק** in this week's *sedrah*, about how Amalek attacked the Bnei Yisroel on their way out of Mitzrayim, so they give Amalek a title. They call him a *leitz* – it means a cynic, a scoffer (Shemos Rabbah 27:6).

Now, if we had been chosen to attach a description, a name, to Amalek, we most certainly wouldn't have chosen 'leitz'. We have other, worse names, that we would have considered more appropriate for such a wicked nation. But we are not our Sages and they understand better than we do. And they saw something here that deserved the appellation of *leitz*, a scoffer.

Now that has to be understood. Why should it be so? A nation comes and attacks, what's the *leitzanus*? It's wicked, yes. It's savagery, yes. But scoffing? A scoffing nation? But that's the *maskanah*

of our *Chachomim*: Amalek and scoffer are synonymous.

Imagine you looked in a thesaurus – a thesaurus is a book of English synonyms, an innocent book to help you to find a choice of words. It's used by everybody who writes; when you want to find a similar word to what you're thinking, so you look in the thesaurus. And sometimes they'll have 'synonyms' for nations too.

Falsified Entries

I bought a Roget's Thesaurus about sixty years ago; inside it said like this. Under the entry 'Jew' it said like this: deceiver, cheater, rogue, usurer, selfish, avaricious. About six, seven adjectives there to describe the Jewish people. It means if you want some other word for Jew or if you want to say this man's a cheat, don't say 'he's a cheat'; say 'he's a Jew'. Don't say 'he's a rogue'; say 'he's a Jew'. That's called a synonym. You're looking for some other word that you can use instead of this word.

EasyPrint edition sponsor:

koshersafe.com

Discover our free Torah app and find peace of mind with our survival preparedness products.

New product: Kosherfreeze dried food, good for 25 years without refrigeration

And so anybody who looks up the word 'Jew' in that thesaurus – the thesaurus has been published in hundreds of thousands of copies – will see these adjectives. Lately, they changed that; just lately. Because after all, it's too much to say today; today you have to show that you're decent, that you accept everyone. But up until not long ago, that's how it was printed – in my edition it still says that openly.

Now, if there was a Torah thesaurus so we understand that it would be very different. Because a Torah thesaurus would be accurate and truthful – under the entry 'Jew' would be all the true synonyms: *rachamanim*, *baishainim*, *gomlei chassodim*; other words like that.

And what we're learning now is that if you would find the word 'Amalek' in that Torah thesaurus, underneath that entry you'd find the word *leitz*. Maybe other synonyms too but one of the synonyms on the list would be *leitz*, scoffer. And that begs an explanation.

Nations in Panic

When we came out of Egypt, *שָׁמְעוּ עַמִּים יְרֵגוֹן* – *all the nations heard and they were afraid* (Shemos 15:14). What happened in Egypt cast a fear on all the peoples of the world. Egypt was laid low; it was ruined. It's a remarkable thing. For five hundred years subsequently Egypt was not heard from. It was such a catastrophe that for five hundred years we didn't hear from Egypt.

The whole time that Yehoshua was conquering Eretz Canaan right next door to Egypt, not a word out of Egypt. All the period of the Shoftim, three hundred and sixty nine years of the Judges, the time that the Mishkan was in Shilo, not a peep. Eretz Yisroel was invaded by Edom, by Amon, by Moav, by Aram – we were invaded by various foreign nations – but Egypt was right next door and yet, nothing. The first time Egypt let itself be heard was after Shlomo Hamelech. Shisok Melech Pharaoh, the king Mitzrayim; that's the first time we hear from Mitzrayim. Such a ruination they had, that for five hundred years they were laid low.

And the world knew about it because people were talking. Those who were traveling on the road talked it over; from caravan to caravan, from tribe to tribe. Everywhere it was the conversation of the day – “You heard what's taking place in Mitzrayim?! It's almost unbelievable! The land is being turned upside down! And it's all because of the G-d of the Bnei Yisroel.”

חַיִל אֶחָז יִשְׁבִי פְלִשְׁתִּים – *The people in the land of the Pelishtim were seized by a trembling.* *אֶז נִבְהָלוּ אֱלֹפִי* – *Until then Edom wasn't afraid. But az, at that time they went into a panic.* *אֵילֵי מוֹאָב יֹאחֲזִמוּ רָעַד* – *The strong ones of Moav, who weren't afraid of anyone, were shaking* (ibid. 14-15). In Midian too they were quaking in fear. What is the proof that people in Midian heard? *וַיִּשְׁמַע יִתְרוֹ* it says. Yisro was sitting in Midian minding his own business. He wasn't learning Chumash; he wasn't saying the Hagaddah shel Pesach. But suddenly a thunderclap was heard throughout the world. The G-d of the Jews is wreaking havoc on Egypt! Yisro came because of that.

The Canaanites Buckle

In Eretz Canaan too; *נִמְגַּו בַּל יִשְׁבִי בְנֵעָן*. There was a little girl who heard about Yetzias Mitzrayim, and forty years later she became a *giyoreess* because of that. Rachav, in the city of Yericho, was a little girl; and she heard what took place in Mitzrayim and at the Yam Suf. *בֵּי שָׁמְעֵנוּ אֶת אֲשֶׁר הוֹבִישׁ הַשֵּׁם אֶת מִי יָם סוּף*. *מִפְּנֵיכֶם בְּצֵאתְכֶם מִמִּצְרָיִם* – *We heard how Hashem dried up the sea before you when you came out of Mitzrayim,* *וַיִּנְשַׁמַּע וַיִּמָּס לְבַבְנוּ* – *We heard and our heart melted away* (Yehoshua 2:9-10). She said those words; it was forty years later but she was recalling what happened when they heard about Yetzias Mitzrayim. And so all over the world, wherever there were people, this was the topic of conversation.

Like the Medrash (Mechilta D'Rabi Yishmael 14:2:2) says that at the time of Kriyas Yam Suf, not only the Yam Suf was split apart, but all the waters in the world split apart. Now when people hear that, it's a little difficult for them – why should all the waters of the world be split apart? Because we think

it was to let the Bnei Yisroel cross; so they crossed **בְּיַבֶּשֶׁה בְּתוֹךְ הַיָּם**. But elsewhere, everywhere in the world, who needs it?

The answer is, there are other reasons for the water to split. Hakadosh Baruch Hu didn't have to split the waters so that we should be rescued. He could have made Pharaoh's army all get heavy colds; they would all have to lie down with high fever and finished. He didn't have to make any spectacular business. The purpose of the Kriyas Yam Suf was one purpose, and that was to teach the world that a nation had been born!

That's the reason why the *yam* opened up. It wasn't for the purpose of saving our lives; it was opened up to teach. And so at the same time, the whole world was being taught. That was the purpose. So first of all they heard what took place in Mitzrayim. And secondly, they saw upheavals; water splitting everywhere. And so everybody now kept quiet. They all trembled in fear of the nation of Hashem. Nobody made a move.

The One Chatzuf

Nobody except one upstart, one *chatzuf*, one bold-faced nation: that was Amalek. **וַיָּבֹאוּ עַמְלֵק** – *Amalek came and they attacked the Am Yisroel* (Shemos 17:8). Suddenly one *az panim*, one bold-faced fellow, stepped forward and he attacked us. A remarkable thing. The whole world was boiling in terror and Amalek came along and cooled them off: "It's nothing," he said.

Why wasn't he afraid? Well, he'll tell you he had his reasons. Amalek is the descendant of Eisav, the older brother of Yaakov, and Amalek was following in the tradition of his family, a tradition that said that Yaakov was no good. The younger brother was a fraud, they said, a trickster who knows how to manipulate things.

And so Amalek said, "I'm not *nispael* from the stories; from *makkos* and *nissim*. Maybe you think that the Bnei Yisroel is important but I go back a long time with them. Don't be impressed by these people; they're *frummies*, that's all. We know them.

My grandfather had business with their ancestor, Yaakov. He was a crook, a *ramai*. And so, I'm not impressed with what you think is important."

Oh! You're not impressed with what's important? That, our Sages say, is called a *leitz*.

A *leitz*?! How is that a *leitz*? When we think the word *leitz* so we picture loafers standing on the corner, people who wish to enliven their day with a little fun or with a lot of fun at somebody else's expense. Whether they're drinking bottles out of bags or just leaning against walls and ogling at passersby, they're grinning and looking for opportunities to ridicule. Sometimes even with practical jokes, to stretch out a foot when a passerby comes along or to jostle; sometimes even to throw objects at passersby. We know those *leitzim* because Jews have encountered these on every corner.

The Common Denominator

That however is only the lowest level, the crassest level. You know, Rabbeinu Yonah in his *Shaarei Teshuva* when he teaches us about the sin of *leitzanus* so he mentions various categories of this sin. But when you study all of them you'll see that there is a common denominator there – it's a general attitude of belittling things or people, of not taking them with the seriousness they deserve.

That's the commonality between all the categories of *leitzanus*. A *leitz* means somebody who takes something that's important and makes it unimportant or even just less important; somebody who refuses to be impressed. And because Amalek refused to be impressed with the importance of the Bnei Yisroel they became the epitome of the *leitz*.

Looking Inwards

Now, when our Sages called Amalek a *leitz* it wasn't merely so that we should have another reason to hate Amalek; it was intended also *that we should understand what it is that makes someone a leitz*. We should know what it is that might make us *leitzim*, *chas v'shalom*. After all, we're the ones who study the words of the Sages – the lessons are intended for us.

And therefore if a Jew doesn't have a feeling of the greatest respect for the aristocracy of the Jewish people – let's say he walks in the street, a street full of gentiles, and he doesn't feel like he is especially chosen by Hashem, then he's a *leitz*. He's belittling what Hashem declares important in this world.

No matter how big their cathedrals are, he knows that they're only big *beis hakiseis*. No matter how tall their skyscrapers are, he knows that they're tall barns of *beheimos*. No matter what, he walks with the understanding that he is a king among commoners. Of course he shouldn't show it. You shouldn't make the nations hate you; but if in your mind you weaken in that attitude that Hashem took us out of Mitzrayim to be His chosen ones so you're also a *leitz*. After all, we too are included in **וְאַתְּמוֹתַי וְאַתְּמוֹתַי**. We also have to understand what Hashem was showing.

Orthodox Leitzim

Don't say we're all brothers. That's *leitzanus*. Yes, we're brothers in the sense we all come from Adam and Chava but that's all. Hashem has said clearly as could be that we are the ones! **בְּנֵי אֱתָם לָהּ** – *You are the children of Hashem*. **אֲתָם** means only you. **בְּנֵי הֵם** – ‘They're My children,’ Hashem says. ‘My children!’ ‘Children’ is not a word that we take lightly. It's a very serious word to say.

So along comes a Modern Orthodox rabbi and he says it's just a ‘form of speech’. That's an Orthodox *leitz*! Because Hakadosh Baruch Hu tells us in the Torah how to regard the Jewish people and this *leitz* wants to make it into nothing.

And that's the lesson we learn from Amalek. A person who minimizes any of the values of the Torah, that's the definition of a *leitz*.

Part II. The Jew Scoffs

Ultra-Orthodox Leitzim

Now according to this definition of a *leitz* – someone who scoffs at important things, at things that Hakadosh Baruch Hu says is important – so a

man with a big beard and *peyos*, a *shtreimel*, a long *kapote*, he can also be a *leitz*.

Of course, the not-observant people, the people who don't wear any *yarmulkes* at all, these people are the biggest *leitzim* because the whole *avodas Hashem* they're *mevatel*; to them it's all not important and that's the worst kind of a *leitz*. But we're not addressing our words to them tonight; we're speaking to ourselves.

We're the better people and yet even we are *leitzim* to a certain extent. It could be that the same person who's reading this week's *sedrah* and studying how the Sages describe Amalek – he's shaking his head, “Such a *leitz*, that Amalek!” – he himself can be the biggest *leitz*.

Underestimating Prices

How is that? Because it's not only regarding this one thing, the aristocracy of the Am Yisroel – a *leitz* can be very many things.

I'll give a *mashal*; we'll grasp it better because it's about money – money is close to the heart and so we'll understand it. Imagine you have a house, real estate, that you have to sell. And you know it's worth a million dollars at least, probably more. That's the market value.

So someone approaches you and he makes an offer. He says, “I'll pay you \$250,000. That's how much I think it's worth.”

“You *leitz*! What are you thinking? You're making a joke? Go away from my face.”

You know he's an unserious person. It could be he's serious about some things but when it comes to appreciating the value of houses, he's a *leitz*, a scoffer.

Underestimating Ideals

And that's why I said before that a picture of a very *frum* Jew could be a *leitz* too. Of course a non-*frum* Jew is a thousand times more of a *leitz*, but everybody must know that he himself underestimates the great ideals and attitudes that a Jew must live with.

I'll give a few examples. Remember however, that they're only examples. The road to idealism is as big as the Torah is big – there's no end to the road that we have to travel towards Torah idealism. But at least we should hear a few examples.

When it comes to *mitzvos*, what's a *frum leitz*? He puts on *tefillin* every day of course. And he wears *tzitzis*, absolutely. He keeps Shabbos and *kashrus*. Everything he does. But he never learned to appreciate what it means a *mitzvah*, what it means to be a *metzuvah ve'oseh*, someone who fulfills what his Creator commanded him.

The Commander-in-Chief

That word alone is enough: *V'tzivanu!* I'm doing something now that the Creator of the universe commanded me to do. That's enough to transform your entire attitude towards *mitzvos*: "I'm doing what You, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, commanded me!"

And therefore we shouldn't be like sleepwalkers in this world. A *mitzvah* should be approached *b'hadras kodesh*; with a sense of awe, of respect. And it's a vital sense to acquire because if you don't think about that before you do a *mitzvah* so that's already *leitzanus*. You're belittling the *mitzvah* because if you would understand it properly, if you have a sharpened sense, then every *mitzvah* becomes magnified.

And so let's say you're putting on *tefillin* in the morning, or *tzitzis*, or a different *mitzvah*, whatever it is; every time you should think, **בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה ה' אֱשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו וְצִוָּנוּ** – *How happy I am that He commanded me.* Such a delightful word – *v'tzivanu!* It's a *taanug* as it rolls off the tongue.

And even *mitzvos* that don't need a *brachah*. Some *mitzvos* don't require a blessing beforehand for technical reasons – when you give *tzedakah* or you're *bentching* or a lady who is putting on a *sheitel* or her snood; other *mitzvos* – but still you should be thinking the same thing: *V'tzivanu!* Ahh!

Acquired Holiness

And even though you're doing the *mitzvos* every day, you don't allow it to wear off; you don't allow

leitzanus to creep in just because it's the thousandth time you're doing it. Actually, it should become greater and greater in your eyes each time because the more you do it the more *kedushah* you're gaining. Because it's not only *v'tzivanu* – it's *kideshanu* too! **אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו** – Every time you do a *mitzvah* you become more *kadosh*. An old Jew is more *kadosh* than a young Jew; he did more *mitzvos*. And it adds up; the *kedushah* that you gain each time adds up. It's not lost.

You should think about that before you do a *mitzvah*: "How fortunate I am that I can do a *mitzvah*. *Boruch atah* – I thank You, Hashem! I'm full of gratitude to You, *asher kideshanu bemitzvosav* – that You made me holy by means of commanding me."

But the *frum leitz* doesn't appreciate that. He wears *tzitzis* but it becomes *mitzvas anashim melumadah*; *tzitzis* are hanging out and that's all. He *davens* and gives *tzedakah* and eats only the best *hechsher* but he's lost his sense of what's important; his senses are dulled.

Magnifying Aveiros

Same thing with *aveiros*. It's not enough to know what is an *aveirah*; you have to know the *chomer ha'aveirah*, the seriousness of a sin. If a person speaks against his fellow Jew, he has to know it's not only a *cheit* of *lashon hara*. You have to know how big the *cheit* is – it's a rebellion against Hakadosh Baruch Hu! A very important *limud!*

Otherwise he's a *leitz* when it comes to *lashon hara*. "I spoke *lashon hara*," he says. "*Al cheit shechatasi*. It wasn't right what I did."

It wasn't right?! That's all? That's the *viduy* of a *leitz*. A *viduy* is dependent on how much he understands what he did, how much he appreciates what it means to do a *mitzvah* or the opposite *chas v'shalom*. It's not a sin; it's a smash up. It's a big car accident, a big tragedy.

Excited About Sinning

That's what it says **וְאַל תִּהְיוּ רַגְזִים** – *get excited, and don't sin.* Why say 'get excited'? Because it's not enough for a person to be cold, to be stoic. "Yes," he

says, “I’ll do what’s correct, but what’s to be excited about?”

No, says Dovid Hamelech, that’s not living; that’s *leitzanus*. רָגַזוּ – Be excited about what’s important; be excited about good things, וְאַל תִּתְקַטְּאוּ – and then you won’t sin.

But suppose a person is not excited about it? He does the good things only correctly without emotion? Then he’s in great danger; not only because he’ll fall into *cheit* more easily but even if he doesn’t, he’s not living life.

The Authentic Kosher Dining Experience

What does it mean when you sit at a Jewish table and you eat kosher food? It’s one of the greatest honors we could imagine! And yet we do it every day – some people many times a day – like sleepwalkers.

Eating only kosher food means that כָּל יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּנֵי הַמַּלְכִּים הֵם; that we are princes and therefore what the common multitudes eat is not our diet. It means that every time you eat kosher food, every time you check for a *hechsher*, it’s a demonstration of your greatness; a reminder of your elevated status.

And therefore we have to be impressed with the dietary laws. Some Jews ridicule, they say “The Orthodox are only ‘*kishkeh* Jews’, only intestinal Jews. All they worry about is food, kosher food.” Now, those people are absolutely *leitzim*, but we also; if we don’t think about that every time we eat, so we’re also failing in that. It’s not a small thing. It’s important; very important, very, very important. What you eat, that’s a mark of royalty; it’s the sign of distinction from the nations of the world. And so, the Jew who’s not a *leitz* eats his kosher food with reverence. Eating food becomes a very important subject.

Mesichta Beitzah at Breakfast

And it’s a bigger subject than you imagined. Because here’s a *frum* yeshiva man who’s not impressed with the egg that he eats for breakfast. You know when you sit down to eat an egg you’re expected to study it first. Look at the egg; it’s a

testimony to a Creator. Why does the egg have a shell around it? It could have been born without a shell and it would have been squashed at birth. Why not? It could have been squashed at birth.

Or if it had a shell, why was the shell just strong enough to resist the stress of birth? Why don’t the shells crack? Eggs have to be squeezed out of the chicken and in the process of squeezing out, they should be crushed.

The answer is the eggshell is planned, it’s so engineered, that it’s just strong enough to withstand the birth process. But not too strong; if the eggshell would have been a little stronger, there never would have been any chickens. You know how chickens come? Chicks pick their way out of the eggshell. But to pick at the shell, you need a pick. And so a few days before it’s ready to come out, the little chick grows a projection on the edge of its beak, an egg-tooth. And even though the beak itself is not so strong yet, this egg tooth is stronger than the beak; just strong enough and sharp enough to break the shell.

Testimonials of an Egg

I’ll tell you something else. You’ll be surprised when you hear this. The eggshell was actually too strong, too thick, for the chick to crack through. Only that what happened? A few days before its time to hatch, the chick begins to absorb calcium; by means of its thin blood vessels still attached to the inside of the shell, it absorbs calcium from the shell. And this calcium, besides for going into the bones of the chick making it stronger, the loss of calcium makes the shell just a little bit thinner and the chick just a little bit stronger, exactly in the right proportion.

If you would give this little chick a stronger eggshell, he’d pick and pick and pick and pick and he would remain trapped. It’s just thick enough to resist being broken when it’s born and it’s just thin enough to let that little chick pick his way out. And then once it hatches, the egg-tooth falls off. Its job is finished. A remarkable process!

And that's why I always say that eating an egg shouldn't be a lost opportunity. Of course it's a kosher egg. You're not eating an ostrich egg. That's already a testimony to the aristocracy of the Bnei Yisroel. But you should also marvel at the egg because it's one of the greatest testimonies to the *emunah*!

The Leitz Remains Unimpressed

You want to become a *maamin*? You want to become a person who is convinced of the Creator and His wisdom? Study the things that are put on the table for you to eat. That's the primary purpose of food, of eating.

But all these ideas go lost on the *leitz*. When the *leitz* hears these things he scorns it. He's not impressed. "It's true" he says, "but it's not important like Rabbi Miller says. Food is food. It's for eating."

That's already like the *leitzanus* of Amalek. When he says it's not so important then he is doing the job of a *leitz* – taking something which is *chashuv* by Hashem and saying it's not *chashuv*. And the fact that he's wearing a big black hat – not the kind that bends down in the front; he wears the hat that goes up all around – it won't help him.

Part III. Healing the Scoffer

Life of Excitement

Now some people, when they hear all this, they become somewhat irritated: "That's what you're going to expect of us now? It's not enough that we *do* everything accurately but now you want us to *appreciate* everything accurately too?"

"We have to be *excited* about *mitzvos*?! Excited about *tefillin* and *tzitzis* and kosher cereal? We have to be *excited* about *aveiros*? Even *eggs* we have to be *excited* about?! There are so many things to think about! What kind of life is that?"

And the answer is, that's the life that we're expected to live. That's the purpose of living – to value the things that are valuable; and not to undervalue them. Not just to do, not just lip-service.

It's a matter of degrees of understanding. Otherwise it's *leitzanus*.

No Middle Class

And therefore the only way is to spend time thinking about the ideals and attitudes we see in the Torah and to train ourselves to appreciate them fully. That's why learning Torah and learning Torah ideology are of the utmost necessity. In order to appreciate what should be appreciated, the only way is to listen to the Torah and to learn what is worthwhile in this world, what's important in the world. We're all *leitzim* unless we learn not to be.

That's what Dovid Hamelech says in the beginning of his Tehillim. He's talking there about keeping away from *leitzim*, about how important it is to not sit with scoffers. So you might think that's all; if you say good-bye to the *leitzim*, you're good.

"No!" says Dovid. בְּיָמֵינוּ וּבְתוֹרַתוֹ יְהוָה – *Only in the Torah of Hashem should be his desire and in His Torah he should meditate by day and by night.* You hear that adjunct? Here we're talking about avoiding *leitzim* and he suddenly jumps to something else – to studying Torah.

So you see it's a straight jump from *leitzim* to a man whose only desire is *Toras Hashem*. What about in between? What about the nice middle class? The answer is *there is no middle class*. If it's not *Toras Hashem*, it's *leitzanus*.

Keep Gluing Yourself

And so, it's not as simple as people think. You need a great deal of training of the mind to not be a *leitz*. Without Torah understanding, it's impossible because everything important becomes trivialized, minimized. You must sharpen your *chush*, your sense of *da'as*, in order to realize the tremendous value of Torah attitudes.

And therefore the only way not to be a *leitz* who downplays this and downplays that, the only solution is to keep glued to the Torah. Otherwise he's thinking, "Yes, I understand. Yes, you must do this and that but why do you need to talk about it so

much? Why do you have to make a big deal about it? It's self-understood."

No, it's not self-understood *at all*. Maybe you'll know something, you'll be able to say it over, but you'll never appreciate it enough. To a certain extent you'll always be a scoffer. It's only by learning and concentrating on these subjects that a person becomes excited about these things.

You Think You Know

That's why I recommend coming to these lectures not once. Some people come once, they come a few times, and they think that it's enough. "I got the *schnitt*," he says. "I know Rabbi Miller's Torah, his message. I know all about it." No, that's nothing yet. Just because you imagine you know something doesn't mean you value it.

The truth is that if you walked in here and heard just a few lectures your mind is not going to change so quickly anyhow because in your head is all the stupidity of the street. All the foolishness, all the crazy ideals that you've gathered from the magazines and from the television and from what other women at the Mizrahi Ladies' Society will tell you – all the *leitzanus*. If you go to Mizrahi women's teas, you're going to pick up all the 'good' ideas; not to have babies and to have expensive furniture and so on and all the other ideals that empty-headed people cherish and think that's what you should live for.

Come Again

But when you'll come *frequently* to good places – I don't say only here; there are other good places but here I take the liberty to lambast you sometimes and so maybe here you'll get it more forcefully than elsewhere. And maybe you'll learn that there are better things in life, there are greater things in life. You'll learn what it is that's valuable in this world.

That's why I think we should prize these Thursday night talks. Idealists come here and therefore I try to raise myself up to the quality of my guests and I talk to you on the subject of Torah idealism. And so it's a good idea to come here again and again. It seems to be repetitive? Good. Repetition

is very good. It's the way to build up a skyscraper of a Torah mind.

But even that is not enough. Because *leitzanus* is always lurking. And that's the biggest danger to idealism – the *leitzanus* that says, 'Nah, it's not so important.' And the power of *leitzanus* is that it can upend a skyscraper of idealism that took a lot of effort and a long time to build up.

The Mesillas Yesharim puts it this way: לִיצְנוּת אַחַת הַדּוֹחָה מֵאַה תּוֹכַחוֹת – One *leitzanus* can set aside one hundred lessons of *tochacha*. A *tochacha* means if a Sage is talking to the public – let's say, Yeshaya HaNavi is addressing a number of people; you understand if Yeshaya HaNavi is talking so he has something good to say. So imagine now after Yeshaya got through talking once and the people absorbed the lesson and they were mightily impressed, tremendously impressed. And this happened a hundred times. These people came one hundred times to listen to the *navi* to his *tochachos*, his *hartzaos*.

Demolishing Skyscrapers

After the hundredth time – the listeners are riding high now. They look at the world with different eyes; the important things are now important in their eyes. But as they're walking out from the hall where Yeshaya was talking or away from the field where he's giving his *nevuah*, a *leitz* was standing there and he makes some kind of a wisecrack: "Ho, ho, ho, you heard some good stuff from Yeshaya in there? Now you can be an even bigger *frummak*."

It doesn't mean he's an *apikoris*. It doesn't mean he mocks you about keeping Shabbos or learning Torah. But he ridicules your idealism. "You have to think about Hashem all the time? You have to think about the eggshell when you're eating breakfast? That's a good one!"

The entire skyscraper comes crashing down! Whatever was erected in your mind – idealism, understanding, attitudes of intending to accomplish in your life, wanting to make something out of

yourself, attitudes of appreciating what's important in this world – it all comes crumbling down. That's the power of *leitzanus*. A *leitz* will say just one word to you, one wisecrack, and he knocks down the skyscraper of idealism. The whole thing explodes into smoke. Nothing remains.

Dovid's Advice

And therefore it's of the utmost necessity to keep away from shallow and foolish people, from *leitzim*. It doesn't mean people who murder or people even who make fire on Shabbos. It means people who don't study Torah; people who don't appreciate that it's in the Torah where a Jew finds all his idealism, all his excitement, all his sense of what's important. People who don't study Torah are considered as *leitzim* because without Torah it's impossible to not minimize what's important.

And that's what Dovid Hamelech said, 'You're not a *leitz* בְּתוֹרַת ה' הַפְּצוּ – only if the Torah of Hashem is your *cheifetz*, your desire.' Not just something you think about on the side, a book to look into once in a while. He needs to find a *heter* to do something, so he looks in. No, that's nothing. *Cheftzo* means it's his desire to look into the Torah because he knows that the *Toras Hashem* is the only way to not be a *leitz*. He understands that that's his road to being *ois leitz*; if you want to travel the road of idealism in this world, of valuing the things that are valuable and not undervaluing, the only road to take is בְּתוֹרַת ה' הַפְּצוּ.

And once you understand that, so you're not interested in anything else. וּבְתוֹרַתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה – As much as you possibly can, you're always looking into the Torah. Day and night you're busy with it because that's the only place to find out what's important.

Toras Nashim

So the ladies will ask, where do we come in? The answer is, there's a big Torah for a girl to learn, a tremendous Torah. A girl doesn't learn technicalities of the Torah that are not *l'maaseh* but

the things that she has to know are endless. The *halachos* she has to know are endless – studying *halacha* makes a person not a *leitz* because suddenly things that were till now unimportant become most important.

And besides all the *halachos*, she has to know the Torah of good character; *middos tovos* is a tremendous subject. The Torah of *emunah* and *daas Hashem* is an endless subject. There is so much to learn about that; so much to study, so many things to learn. Like the Gra used to say to his daughters; he told them that they should always learn *mussar seforim* – all the *mussar seforim* are available to girls. Today it's available in English – there's no excuse for anyone to be a *leitz*.

Bittul Torah = Leitzanus

That's why Rabbeinu Yonah says that when people have time to learn and instead they waste their time for something else, that's called *leitzanus*. If you have opportunity to learn, he says, and you don't do it, it shows that it's not so important to learn. It's not important to you to not be a *leitz*.

“Oh but I go sometimes to hear the rabbi speak or I look in the Chumash,” he says. “I'm *maavir sedrah*.” No matter – if he doesn't study Torah day and night, whenever he can, then he's a *leitz* because he shows that's not important.

Other things are more important than that. He watches his show, his football game. So he becomes a bigger *leitz*. He has to read the newspaper. So he's climbing higher on the ladder of *leitzanus*. Absolutely! Newspapers today, especially today, are *leitzanus*; even the *frum* ones. The gentile ones are *malei toeivah*; you don't need me to tell you that. But even the *frum* ones, they're *leitzanus*.

Frum Newspapers

How so? Do they mention the Borei in the newspapers? So it's *leitzanus*. They're *mevatel* the whole *inyan* of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The name of Hashem is not mentioned once. How could you read for a half hour or an hour and omit the name of Hashem? That's *leitzanus*.

I know a man who is active in a big Orthodox organization – I won't say the name – and he said that before he goes out in the morning, every morning, he reads The New York Times. So it means before he does anything he's osek in *leitzanus*. He fills his head with *leitzanus*. How could you be a Jew afterwards? He's already ruined for the rest of his day.

That's the choice we have. There's no middle class, no middle ground. A Jew can walk in the way of Amalek, *chas v'shalom*, and be a *leitz*, someone who doesn't value what's valuable. Or he can walk in the way of Dovid Hamelech who said, **וּבְמוֹשֵׁב לְצִיִּים לֹא יִשָּׁב** – that there's no hobnobbing with the attitude of scoffing at all. And the only way is **כִּי אִם בְּתוֹרַת ה' הִפְצוּ וּבְתוֹרָתוֹ יִהְיֶה יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה** – to look only in the Torah for what's important. That's my only desire; to look into the Torah and learn how to be the opposite of a *leitz*.

Have a Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Excited for a Mitzvah

The Chachomim teach us that Amalek was a *leitz*. A *leitz* is not merely a crass scoffer. In the dialect of our Sages, a *leitz* is one who devalues what's truly important. Once a day this week, I will *bli neder* choose one mitzvah that I do and spend sixty seconds before I do the mitzvah reflecting on the importance of doing this mitzvah; about how *this* is what's important in the world. And I will do it with the intention of making a general change in my attitude towards what is important in my day-to-day living.

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

213 - The Scoffers I | 408 - The Scoffers II | 535 - Leitzim: Opposition to Idealism | E-17 - Not With the Scoffers | 953 - The Letz Is Not Excited
Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



Is it good to weep when one prays or says Tehillim if he's praying for a *refuah shleimah* for a loved one?



The truth is it's good to weep anytime that you're saying Tehillim. It's good to weep when you're standing *shmoneh esrei*. It's a lost art. Jews used to weep a good deal when they prayed.

But they didn't weep only from sadness; they wept from gladness too. They wept from happiness. It's a remarkable fact. In the olden days, I remember there were Jews who wept in *shmoneh esrei* on the weekdays. And they enjoyed it.

These were tears of love of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And they expressed their love in such a heartfelt manner that they were so moved that their tears flowed copiously.

But certainly if a person is praying for a loved one, he should shed tears because Hakadosh Baruch Hu listens to prayers accompanied by tears. Why? Because it's more heartfelt. It's not a dry request like somebody writes on a slip of paper and he hands it in at the window. No. It's something that comes from the heart and it enters into Hakadosh Baruch Hu's own heart.

TAPE # 492 (January 1984)

Sign up and get a new Q&A every day for free:
signup@torasavigdor.org