**S.A.L.T. – Pesach 5779 (continued)**

**PARASHAT ACHAREI MOT**

**By Rav David Silverberg**

Motzaei Shabbat

 The Gemara in Masekhet Pesachim (120a) establishes that although the Torah writes that we are to eat *matza* for the seven days of Pesach (“*Shivat yamim matzot tokheilu*” – Shemot 12:15), this does not mean that one is actually required to eat *matza* for all seven days. The obligation to eat *matza* applies only on the first night of Pesach, whereas throughout the rest of Pesach, eating *matza* is optional. Of course, we must refrain from eating *chametz* throughout the seven days of Pesach, but the obligation to eat *matza* applies only on the first night.

 The Vilna Gaon is famously cited as having asserted that eating *matza* on Pesach after the first night fulfills a *mitzva*, despite its not being obligatory (*Ma’aseh Rav* 185). The Torah does not require one to eat *matza* beyond the first night, but we nevertheless fulfill a Biblical *mitzva* by doing so.

 This view appears in the works of several other *Acharonim*, as well, including the *Avnei Neizer* (O.C. 377), who compares the *mitzva* of *matza* to the *mitzva* of *sukka* on Sukkot. On the first night of Sukkot, the Torah obligates us to eat bread in the *sukka*, whereas throughout the rest of Sukkot, the requirement is that if we wish to eat a meal, or sleep, we must do so in the *sukka*. Likewise, the *Avnei Neizer* writes, the Torah requires us to eat *matza* on the first night of Pesach, and throughout the rest of Pesach, the requirement is that if we wish to eat one of the five principal grains, we must eat the grain in its unleavened form. And thus just as we fulfill a *mitzva* each time we eat in the *sukka* on Sukkot, even though we are obligated to do so only on the first night, similarly, we fulfill a *mitzva* each time we eat *matza* on Pesach, even though we are obligated to do so only on the first night.

 In truth, this issue appears to be subject to a debate among the *Rishonim*. A number of *Rishonim* raised the question of why we recite a *berakha* (“*lei-shev ba-sukka*”)each time we eat in the *sukka* on Sukkot, even beyond the first night, whereas a *berakha* over *matza* (“*al akhilat matza*”) is recited only the first night of Pesach, at the *seder*, and not during the rest of Pesach. The Maharil (*Hilkhot Sukkot*) answers, very simply, that one fulfills a *mitzva* each time he eats in the *sukka* throughout Sukkot, which is not the case with *matza* on Pesach. The clear implication of the Maharil’s comments is that eating *matza* does not fulfill a *mitzva* after the first night of Pesach. This answer is given also by Meiri (Sukka 27a), who compares eating *matza* after the first night to eating kosher meat all year round. Eating kosher meat avoids the prohibition of eating non-kosher meat, but does not fulfill a *mitzva*; likewise, according to Meiri, eating *matza* on Pesach (beyond the first night) avoids the prohibition of eating *chametz* on Pesach, but does not fulfill a *mitzva*, and so it does not warrant a *berakha*.

 The *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* (Pesachim 26b in the Rif), however, answers differently. He explains that the seven-day obligation of *sukka* includes activities that one cannot avoid for seven days – specifically, sleeping. In effect, then, the *mitzva* of *sukka* is obligatory even beyond the first night of Sukkot, as one by necessity will need to use the *sukka*. This “obligatory” quality of *sukka* renders this *mitzva* worthy of a *berakha*, even beyond the first night. On Pesach, however, one can easily subsist on other foods, and does not require *matza*, and thus eating *matza* is truly optional after the first night of Pesach. For this reason, the *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* writes, no *berakha* is recited when one eats *matza* beyond the first night.

 Significantly, the *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* accepts the premise that eating *matza* after the first night of Pesach fundamentally resembles eating in the *sukka* after the first night of Sukkot. In his view, there is only a practical difference between them – that one can be avoided, while the other cannot, a difference that affects the specific issue of reciting a *berakha*. It seems clear that the *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* acknowledged a *mitzva* to eat *matza* even beyond the first night of Pesach, just as one fulfills a *mitzva* by eating and sleeping in the *sukka* beyond the first night of Sukkot.

(Based on [Rav Asher Weiss’ essay on the topic](http://beinenu.com/sites/default/files/alonim/148_59_79.pdf))

Sunday

 Yesterday, we noted the position famously attributed to the Vilna Gaon (*Ma’aseh Rav* (185) that although there is no obligation to eat *matza* on Pesach after the first night, nevertheless, one fulfills a *mitzva* by doing so. The Torah (Shemot 12:15) writes, “You shall eat *matza* seven days,” and thus despite the fact that the Gemara interprets this command as optional, it nevertheless constitutes a *mitzva*. As we saw yesterday, this issue appears to be subject to debate among the *Rishonim* who gave different reasons for why no *berakha* is recited over the consumption of *matza* after the first night of Pesach.

 [Rav Asher Weiss](http://beinenu.com/sites/default/files/alonim/148_59_79.pdf) further noted that this question seems to have been debated by the Tosafists, in their discussion of the issue of wearing *tefillin* on Chol Ha-mo’ed. The Gemara in Masekhet Menachot (36b) famously establishes that *tefillin* are not worn on Shabbat or Yom Tov, since the purpose of *tefillin* is to serve as an “*ot*” (“sign”) of our relationship with God, and Shabbat and Yom Tov are themselves a sign of this relationship. Tosafot assert that Chol Ha-mo’ed resembles Yom Tov in this regard, and *tefillin* are not worn on these interim days of Pesach and Sukkot. In Masekhet Menachot, Tosafot explain that Chol Ha-mo’ed resembles Yom Tov with respect to *tefillin* because “there is a ‘sign’ on Pesach, that it is forbidden to eat *chametz*, and on Sukkot, that one is obligated to reside in a *sukka*.” The “sign” during the interim days of Pesach, Tosafot write, is the *chametz* prohibition. This formulation also appears in Tosafot’s comments to Masekhet Eiruvin (96a). By contrast, in Masekhet Mo’ed Katan (19a), Tosafot write that there is a “sign” on Chol Ha-mo’ed “since one eats *matza* and resides in a *sukka*.” In this context, Tosafot speak not of merely avoiding *chametz* during Chol Ha-mo’ed Pesach, but rather of eating *matza*, which, in their view, serves as a “sign” of our relationship with God. Possibly, the different formulations in these two passages reflect different opinions regarding the status of eating *matza* beyond the first night of Pesach. Tosafot in Mo’ed Katan seem to suggest that eating *matza* even after the first night constitutes a *mitzva*, even if it is not obligatory, thus serving as a “sign” of our covenant with God. In the other contexts, however, Tosafot mention specifically avoiding *chametz* during Chol Ha-mo’ed, and not eating *matza*, seemingly because there is no *mitzva* involved in eating *matza* beyond the first night. Apparently, the Tosafists debated the question of whether one fulfills a *mitzva* by eating *matza* beyond the first night of Pesach.

One could argue, though, that in Masekhet Mo’ed Katan, too, Tosafot’s intent is that one avoids *chametz* by eating *matza* as opposed to leavened bread, but not that the consumption of *matza* actually fulfills a *mitzva*. The point Tosafot is making is that Chol Ha-mo’ed Pesach, like the first and last days of Pesach, are clearly special and distinct, as evidenced by the food eaten due to the prohibition of *chametz*. It thus does not necessarily follow that Tosafot viewed eating *matza* as a *mitzva* beyond the first night.

Monday

 The Gemara in Masekhet Pesachim (28b) cites the view of Rabbi Shimon that the Torah prohibition against eating *chametz* on Pesach applies only on Pesach itself. Although it is forbidden also to eat *chametz* on the afternoon of the Erev Pesach, and to eat after Pesach *chametz* that had been owned by a Jew on Pesach, these prohibitions were – according to Rabbi Shimon – enacted by the Sages, and do not apply on the level of Torah law. This is in contrast to Rabbi Yehuda, who maintained that even the *chametz* prohibitions on Erev Pesach and after Pesach apply on the level of Torah law.

 Rabbi Shimon draws proof to his position from a verse in Sefer Devarim (16:3) which appears to link the consumption of *matza* and refraining from *chametz*: “Do not eat *chametz* with it [the *pesach* sacrifice]; for seven days you shall eat with it *matzot*…” The implication of this verse, Rabbi Shimon contends, is that the *chametz* prohibition applies only when the *mitzva* of eating *matza* applies. In his words: “At the time when one is commanded to go ahead and eat *matza*, he is commanded not to eat *chametz*; at the time when he is not commanded to go ahead and eat *matza*, he is not commanded to eat *chametz*.” Therefore, the Torah prohibition of *chametz* is limited to the seven days of Pesach, and the prohibitions that apply before and after were enacted by the Sages.

 The *Penei Yehoshua* noted that Rabbi Shimon here speaks of the *mitzva* of eating *matza* as a seven-day obligation. As we have discussed over the last two days, the Gemara elsewhere (Pesachim 120a) establishes that the obligation to eat *matza* in truth applies only the first night of Pesach. Rabbi Shimon, however, clearly states that there is a *mitzva* to eat *matza* all seven days of Pesach. The *Penei Yehoshua* explains that Rabbi Shimon apparently felt that although there is no obligation to eat *matza* after the first night of Pesach, one fulfills a *mitzva* by doing so. Rabbi Shimon’s inference might then provide us with a Talmudic basis for the view famously attributed to the Vilna Gaon that one fulfills a *mitzva* by eating *matza* anytime throughout Pesach, even after the first night.

 The *Rishonim* disagree as to the final halakhic conclusion regarding the point of debate between Rabbi Shimon and Rabbi Yehuda. All agree that *Halakha* follows Rabbi Shimon’s position vis-à-vis the status after Pesach of *chametz* that had been owned by a Jew during Pesach. Such *chametz*, according to all opinions, is forbidden only by force of Rabbinic enactment, in accordance with Rabbi Shimon’s ruling. However, when it comes to the prohibition against eating *chametz* on the afternoon of Erev Pesach, several *Rishonim* accept Rabbi Yehuda’s view, that this prohibition applies on the level of Torah law. These include the Rambam (*Hilkhot Chametz U-matza* 1:8) and the Rosh (Pesachim 2:8). By contrast, the *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* and *Ba’al Ha-ittur* (cited by the Rosh) disagree, and maintain that *Halakha* accepts Rabbi Shimon’s view in its entirety, such that even in the afternoon of Erev Pesach, eating *chametz* is permissible according to Torah law and forbidden only by force of Rabbinic enactment.

 If so, then it stands to reason that the *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* and *Ba’al Ha-ittur* accept the premise that eating *matza* constitutes a *mitzva* throughout all seven days of Pesach. After all, as we have seen, Rabbi Shimon’s view is predicated on his inference that the Torah prohibition of *chametz* is linked to the *mitzva* of eating *matza* – an inference which rests on the assumption that eating *matza* fulfills a *mitzva* all seven days. Seemingly, then, the *Rishonim* who accept the entirety of Rabbi Shimon’s opinion must accept this premise.

 Indeed, as we saw earlier this week, the *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* (Pesachim 26b in the Rif) strongly implies that eating *matza* on Pesach after the first night fulfills a *mitzva*. The *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* draws a comparison between eating *matza* after the first night of Pesach and eating in the *sukka* after the first night of Sukkot. Just as one is not obligated to eat in the *sukka* after the first night of Sukkot (unless he wishes to eat a meal), but fulfills a *mitzva* by doing so, similarly, the *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* indicates, one fulfills a *mitzva* by eating *matza* after the first night of Pesach, even though this is not obligatory. The *Ba’al Ha-ma’or* is consistent with his acceptance of Rabbi Shimon’s view, which appears to be rooted in the assumption that eating *matza* fulfills a *mitzva* throughout the seven days of Pesach.

(Based on an article by Rav Yechiel Michael Rothschild in *Kol Ha-Torah*, vol. 65)

Tuesday

 Yesterday, we noted the Gemara’s discussion in Masekhet Pesachim (28b) regarding the *chametz* prohibitions that apply before and after Pesach – the prohibition against eating *chametz* the afternoon of Erev Pesach, and the prohibition against eating after Pesach *chametz* that had been owned by a Jew on Pesach. Rabbi Shimon, as we saw, understood that the Torah prohibition of *chametz* is linked to the *mitzva* of eating *matza*, and thus the Torah prohibition applies only when there is a requirement to eat *matza* – meaning, on Pesach itself. The prohibitions which apply before and after Pesach, according to Rabbi Shimon, were enacted by *Chazal*. Rabbi Shimon stated: “At the time when one is commanded to go ahead and eat *matza*, he is commanded not to eat *chametz*; at the time when he is not commanded to go ahead and eat *matza*, he is not commanded to eat *chametz*.”

 As we discussed, the *Penei Yehoshua* noted that Rabbi Shimon here seems to speak of eating *matza* on Pesach as a *mitzva* which applies for all seven days – despite the Gemara’s comment later in Masekhet Pesachim (120a) that eating *matza* is obligatory only on the first night of Pesach, and optional the rest of the holiday. The *Penei Yehoshua* suggests that Rabbi Shimon may have felt that although eating *matza* during the rest of Pesach is not obligatory, it nevertheless fulfills a *mitzva* (a position famously attributed to the Vilna Gaon).

 However, the *Penei Yehoshua* then proceeds to propose a different – and bolder – possibility, suggesting that Rabbi Shimon held a different opinion regarding the status of eating *matza* after the first night of Pesach. As opposed to the Gemara’s conclusion that eating *matza* beyond the first night is optional, Rabbi Shimon may have maintained that one is obligated to eat *matza* all seven days of Pesach – as his remark “go ahead and eat *matza*” strongly indicates.

 The *Penei Yehoshua* substantiates this theory by noting the source of the Gemara’s conclusion that eating *matza* is obligatory only on the first night. Although the Torah in several contexts seems to require eating *matza* all seven days (Shemot 12:15, Vayikra 23:6, Devarim 16:3), in one place it requires eating *matza* only for six days (Devarim 16:8). The Gemara explains that when the Torah in that verse excludes the seventh day from the obligation to eat *matza*, it effectively excludes all seven days, the exception being the first night (based on Shemot 12:18). And when the Torah speaks of eating *matza* for seven days, it actually refers to refraining from *chametz*, but not to an actual obligation to eat *matza*.

 Accordingly, the *Penei Yehoshua* writes, we can understand why Rabbi Shimon did not subscribe to this view. The *Sifrei* (to Devarim 16:8) cites Rabbi Shimon as offering a different approach to reconciling the different verses that speak of the requirement to eat *matza*. Rabbi Shimon explained that the verses which mention eating *matza* for seven days refer to *matza* produced from the previous season’s grain harvest. The grain of the current year’s harvest, by contrast, becomes permissible for consumption only on the second day of Pesach – the 16th of Nissan – as the Torah instructs in Sefer Vayikra (23:14). Therefore, the Torah in one place speaks of eating *matza* for six days – referring to the current year’s grain, which is permissible for consumption for only six of the seven days of Pesach. Rabbi Shimon reconciled the different verses without reinterpreting them as referring to the optional consumption of *chametz* – implying that he accepted the straightforward reading of the text, whereby there is a Biblical requirement to eat *matza* on each of the seven days of Pesach. Consistent with his view, the *Penei Yehoshua* explained, Rabbi Shimon states in Masekhet Pesachim that the seven-day prohibition against eating *chametz* is linked to the seven-day requirement to eat *matza*.

 It should be noted, however, that according to some versions of the *Sifrei* – including that of the Vilna Gaon – the author of the relevant passage in the *Sifrei* is not the same Rabbi Shimon (Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai), but rather Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar (a disciple of Rabbi Meir). According to this version, of course, we cannot necessarily point to a connection between the passage in the *Sifrei* and Rabbi Shimon’s remark in the Gemara.

Wednesday

 The first section of Parashat Acharei-Mot outlines the *avodat Yom Ha-kippurim* – the special service to be performed by the *kohen gadol* in the *Beit Ha-mikdash* each year on Yom Kippur. The Torah commands, “And no man shall be in the Tent of Meeting when [the *kohen gadol*] comes to bring atonement in the Sanctuary until he leaves” (16:17). This means that during the Yom Kippur rituals, when the *kohen gadol* entered the *kodesh ha-kodashim* (the innermost sanctum of the Temple), nobody was permitted to be present inside the *Beit Ha-mikdash* (though people were allowed to be present in the courtyard outside the *Mikdash* – Yoma 43b-44a).

 The Talmud Yerushalmi, in a famous passage (Yoma 5:2), comments that this refers even to the angels. At the time the *kohen gadol* entered the inner chamber of the Temple to perform the Yom Kippur rituals, even angels were barred from the *Beit Ha-mikdash*. When the Torah says that “*kol adam*” – “any person” – may not be present in the Temple at this time, the Yerushalmi establishes, it refers even to angels.

 The *Yismach Moshe* (Rav Moshe Teitelbaum of Ihel), commenting to Parashat Re’ei, offers a meaningful insight into the significance of the Yerushalmi’s remark. The *Beit Ha-mikdash* is often referred to as “*Beit Ha-bechira*” – the building of “choosing.” The simple explanation of this name, as the *Yismach Moshe* notes, is that the Torah refers to the *Beit Ha-mikdash* (numerous times throughout Parashat Re’ei) as “*ha-makom asher yivchar Hashem*” – “the site which the Lord shall choose.” The name “*Beit Ha-bechira*” thus refers to God’s having chosen this site as the place of His “residence” on earth. However, the *Yismach Moshe* adds that on a deeper level, this name may also point to the human being’s choice to draw close to God. The *kohen gadol*’s entrance into the *kodesh ha-kodashim* on Yom Kippur represents the pinnacle of the human being’s quest for closeness with the Creator, and for this reason, the *Yismach Moshe* explains, the angels are excluded from the Temple grounds at this time. The special relationship with God signified by the *kohen gadol*’s service in the inner sanctum is something which the angels cannot ever achieve, because they have no free choice. Closeness with the Almighty is experienced through the process of *bechira*, by choosing proper conduct over improper conduct, by making what is often the excruciatingly difficult decision to forego on one’s instinctive wishes and desires for the sake of serving God. This experience is therefore unique to human beings, who must wage an internal struggle and make the choice to enter the “*kodesh ha-kodashim*” – to live a life of devotion to the Almighty. And thus the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, the symbol of our close relationship with God, is called “*Beit Ha-bechira*,” the place of “choice,” because our relationship with the Almighty depends on our willed decision to build such a relationship.

 The *Yishmach Moshe* references the Yerushalmi’s remark also in a different context – in discussing the symbolic significance of Yaakov’s dream of a ladder extending from the ground to heavens, on which angels traveled upward and downward (Parashat Vayeitzei). One explanation suggested by the *Yismach Moshe* is that the dream symbolizes the *Beit Ha-mikdash*, the Temple on earth with is linked to the “*Mikdash shel ma’ala*’ – the “heavenly Temple.” The angels are seen traveling back forth from one *Mikdash* to the next, but Yaakov beheld that “*hinei Hashem nitzav alav*” (Bereishit 28:13) – God was alone with Yaakov, without the angels being present, symbolizing the *kohen gadol*’s private communion with God in the *kodesh ha-kodashim*.

 Yaakov beheld this dream as he was forced to flee from the comfort and security of his saintly parents’ home and live with his wily, corrupt and pagan uncle, Lavan. He was being shown that even under these circumstances, he can reside in the “*Mikdash*,” he can live a life of sanctity, because such a life depends purely on “*bechira*,” on one’s personal choice, as evidenced by the angels’ exclusion. Whatever our circumstances are, we can make the decision to devote ourselves to the Almighty and live in the “*kodesh ha-kodashim*,” experiencing the comfort of closeness with the Creator. We must never assume that our situation prevents us from entering the “*Mikdash*,” from living lives of spiritual devotion, because the “*Mikdash*” depends solely on “*bechira*,” on our will and resolve, and not on any external factors or conditions.

Thursday

 Parashat Acharei-Mot begins with the description of the special service performed by the *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur, and it introduces this section by telling that these commands were given “after the death of Aharon’s two sons, when they approached the Lord and died.” This refers, of course, to Nadav and Avihu, Aharon’s two older sons who, on their first day serving as *kohanim*, brought an incense offering which God had not commanded, for which they were killed (Vayikra 10:1-2).

 The Midrash (*Vayikra Rabba* 20:8) cites Rabbi Elazar Ha-modai as noting the significance of the Torah’s making a point to clarify the reason why Nadav and Avihu deserved their tragic fate:

Come see how grave the death of Aharon’s sons was before the Almighty – for in every instance when He mentions their death, He mentions their failing. Why all this? In order not to allow people the possibility of saying that they were guilty of secret evil deeds for which they died.

After Nadav and Avihu’s death, people might have assumed that Aharon’s sons must have been guilty of more than just the single infraction of bringing an unwarranted incense offering to deserve such a harsh punishment. God therefore made a point of repeatedly emphasizing that they were punished solely for offering incense, and not for any other misdeed. (It should be noted that we indeed find *Chazal* attributing to Nadav and Avihu several other violations, including drinking wine before bringing an offering, and refusing to marry; Rabbi Elazar Ha-modai appears to express a different view, insisting that they were guilty only of bringing a prohibited incense offering.)

 When righteous people fail, it might be tempting to cynically scorn all ostensibly pious individuals. We might be led to dismiss “piety” altogether as a façade, and allege that all those reputed to be righteous are, in fact, evil sinners. Rather than hold evidently righteous people in high esteem, as role models who challenge us to reach higher, we could choose instead to point to the examples of “Nadav and Avihu,” reputable spiritual figures who failed, as demonstrating that all piety is a charade. This way, we can conveniently absolve ourselves of the quest for spiritual greatness, seeing spiritual greatness as nothing more than a phony outward disguise. Rabbi Elazar Ha-modai warns against this reaction, urging us not to utilize the failures of the righteous as a basis for dismissing altogether the possibility of righteousness. The fact that Nadav and Avihu committed a grave offense does not undermine their accomplishments. Falling far short of perfection is not the same as evil. The Torah makes it very clear to us that evil great people are capable of grave failures, and expects us to recognize and condemn such failures while still recognizing and appreciating the greatness of the individuals. And thus Rabbi Elazar Ha-modai teaches us to maintain a balanced perspective on “Nadav and Avihu,” on the unfortunate phenomenon of righteous individuals who commit grave mistakes, that we should acknowledge the mistakes without rejecting outright the possibility given to all human beings to pursue and achieve greatness.

Friday

 The opening section of Parashat Acharei-Mot outlines the procedure of the *avodat Yom Ha-kippurim*, the special service performed by the *kohen gadol* on Yom Kippur to earn atonement on behalf of the nation. One of the unusual features of this service is the *sa’ir ha-mishtalei’ach*, the goat which was sent out into the desert east of Jerusalem and killed, symbolizing the “destruction” of the nation’s misdeeds. The Torah instructs that the *kohen gadol* should place his hands on the goat’s head as though placing all of *Benei Yisrael*’s sins on the goat, which would then bring the sins, as it were, into the wilderness, signifying their banishment (16:21-22).

 *Tanna De-bei Eliyahu Zuta* (19) draws an association between this *sa’ir* (goat) and the nation of Edom – the descendants of Esav – which was situated in the region of Se’ir (Bereishit 36:8). When *Benei Yisrael* repent on Yom Kippur, *Tanna De-bei Eliyahu* comments, God takes their sins and places them on Esav, charging him with *Benei Yisrael*’s misdeeds. But Esav then protests, asking, “How much strength do I have, that you place upon me all the iniquities of my brother Yaakov?” At that point, *Tanna De-bei Eliyahu* concludes, God places *Benei Yisrael*’s sins on Esav’s garments.

 One approach taken to understand this Midrashic passage is that it refers to the partial blame borne by the enemy nations for our wrongdoing. As a result of our repentance, God transfers the “blame” for our sins onto “Esav,” the enemy nations whose pressure and intimidation often make it difficult for us to properly devote ourselves to *mitzva* observance. However, as the Midrash indicates, there is a limit to the blame that can be placed upon “Esav.” After all, we do not commit sins only because of the pressure exerted on us by other peoples. Our moral and spiritual failings result also from our own faults and shortcomings. At a certain point, “Esav” can justifiably absolve himself of blame for our sins, which are of our own making. God then places the blame on Esav’s “garments” – on the appeal and attractiveness of Esav’s way of life, which so often leads us away from the Torah way of life. Beyond directly exerting pressure on *Am Yisrael*, “Esav” can also lure us through his “garments,” by making his values, beliefs and lifestyle seem preferable and advantageous to ours. And thus even when the other nations’ direct pressure cannot be blamed for our misdeeds, our sins can be partially blamed on the nations’ “garments,” the misleading, attractive image they project, which can cause us to question our own beliefs and practices and abandon them in favor of those of other peoples. (See a variation of this approach in Rav Yisrael Yehuda Karfunkel’s *Chemdat Yisrael*)

 If so, then *Tanna De-bei Eliyahu* here alerts us to the lure of the “garments” of other peoples, to the way their pride and confidence in their lifestyle could cause us to lose pride and confidence in ours. We must retain our steadfast, passionate commitment to our traditions even in the face of the “garments” of “Esav,” the lure and appeal of other nations’ values and conduct, and confidently trust that we are fulfilling God’s will and living the life He wants us to live.

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