

From Bugs to Blasphemy: How to Not Be Like the Egyptians

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ויקרא י"א:מ"ה

(מה) כִּי | אֲנִי יְהוָה הַמַּעֲלֶה אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לְהִיט לְכֶם לֵאלֹהִים
וְהִיִּיתֶם קְדוֹשִׁים כִּי קְדוֹשׁ אֲנִי

Leviticus 11:45

(45) For I the LORD am He who brought you up from the land of Egypt to be your God: you shall be holy, for I am holy.

רש"י על ויקרא י"א:מ"ה

(א) כי אני ה' המעלה אתכם. על מנת שתקבלו מצותי העליתי אתכם; דבר אחר, כי אני ה' המעלה אתכם: בכלן כתיב "הוצאתי" וכאן כתיב הַמַּעֲלֶה "תָּנָא דְבִי וְ יִשְׁמַעֲאֵל אֶלְמְלִי לֹא הָעֲלִיתִי אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל מִמִּצְרַיִם אֲלָא בְּשִׁבִיל נְשִׂאִין מִטְמְאִין בְּשִׂרְצִים כְּשִׂאֵר אַמּוֹת דְּיָם, וּמַעֲלִיּוֹתָא הִיא גְבִיּהוֹ, זֵהוּ לְשׁוֹן מַעֲלָה:

Rashi on Leviticus 11:45

(1) FOR I AM THE LORD THAT BRINGETH YOU UP [OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT] — On condition that you should accept My commandments did I bring you up (Sifra, Shemini, Chapter 12 4). Another explanation of: FOR I AM THE LORD THAT BRINGETH YOU UP — In all other places it is written, "I brought (you) forth", and here it is written "that bringeth (you) up" — in reference to this it was taught in the school of R. Ishmael: If I had brought up Israel from Egypt only to effect this one thing — that they do not defile themselves by reptiles as do the other

peoples, that should be sufficient for them (Bava Metzia 61b), and it should be regarded by them as an elevation for themselves — this is what is implied in the expression used here: מעלה (I raised you above the people of the land of Egypt).

בבא מציעא ס"א ב:ח'-י"א

רבינא איקלע לסורא דפרת א"ל רב חנינא מסורא דפרת לרבינא יציאת מצרים דכתב רחמנא גבי שרצים למה לי א"ל אמר הקב"ה אני הוא שהבחנתי בין טפה של בכור לטפה שאינה של בכור אני עתיד ליפרע ממי שמערב קרבי דגים טמאין בקרבי דגים טהורין ומוכרן לישראל אמר ליה אנא המעלה קא קשיא לי מאי שנא הכא המעלה דכתב רחמנא א"ל לכדתנא דבי רבי ישמעאל דתנא דבי רבי ישמעאל אמר הקב"ה אילמלא (לא) העליתי את ישראל ממצרים אלא בשביל דבר זה שאין מטמאין בשרצים דיי א"ל ומי נפיש אגרייהו טפי מרבית ומציצית וממשקלות א"ל אע"ג דלא נפיש אגרייהו טפי מאיסי למכלינהו:

Bava Metzia 61b:8-11

The Gemara relates: **Ravina happened to come to Sura on the Euphrates. Rav Ḥanina of Sura on the Euphrates said to Ravina: Why do I need the mention of the exodus from Egypt that the Merciful One wrote in the context of creeping animals:** “Do not make yourselves detestable with all the creeping animals that swarm...for I am the Lord Who brings you up from the land of Egypt” (Leviticus 11:43–45)? **Ravina said to him: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: I am He Who distinguished in Egypt between the drop of seed that became a firstborn and the drop of seed that did not become a firstborn, and I killed only the firstborn. I am also He Who is**

destined to exact punishment from one who intermingles the innards of non-kosher fish with the innards of kosher fish and sells them to a Jew, who is unable to distinguish between them.

Rav Ḥanina said to him: I was not asking about the very mention of the exodus. Rather, I was asking about the term **“Who brings you up”** mentioned in that verse; that is what is **difficult for me. What is different here, that the Merciful One wrote: “Who brings you up** from the land of Egypt,” as opposed to the other three instances cited by Rava where the exodus is mentioned in the context of mitzvot and prohibitions, where it is written: **“Who brought you out”?**

Ravina said to him: It is **to teach as it was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael. As it was taught in the school of Rabbi Yishmael: The Holy One, Blessed be He, said: Had I brought the Jewish people up from Egypt only for this matter, so that they would not become impure** by consuming **creeping animals, it would be sufficient for Me,** as observance of this mitzva elevates their spiritual stature.

Rav Ḥanina said to him: And is the reward for abstaining from consuming creeping animals **greater than** the reward for observing the *halakhot* with regard to **interest and ritual fringes and weights?** Let the Merciful One write: Who brings you up, in the context of those mitzvot as well. **Ravina said to him: Even though their reward is not greater,** it is more **repulsive** for Jews **to eat** creeping animals. Avoiding those animals brings them up, in the sense that it is praiseworthy and enhances the transcendent nature of the Jews.

מכות כ"ג ב:ג'

ר' חנניא בן עקשיא אומר רצה הקב"ה לזכות את ישראל לפיכך הרבה להם תורה ומצות שנאמר (ישעיהו מב, כא) ה' חפץ למען צדקו יגדיל תורה ויאדיר:

Makkot 23b:3

Rabbi Ḥananya ben Akashya says: The Holy One, Blessed be He, sought to confer merit upon the Jewish people; therefore, He increased for them Torah and mitzvot, as each mitzva increases merit, as it is stated: “It

pleased the Lord for the sake of His righteousness to make the Torah great and glorious” (Isaiah 42:21). God sought to make the Torah great and glorious by means of the proliferation of mitzvot.

גיטין מ"ו ב:י"ח-מ"ז א:ג'

ההוא גברא דזבין נפשיה ללודאי אתא לקמיה דרבי אמי אמר ליה פירקן אמר ליה תנן המוכר עצמו ואת בניו לעובדי כוכבים אין פודין אותו אבל פודין את הבנים משום קלקולא וכ"ש הכא דאיכא קטלא אמרו לי רבנן לר' אמי האי ישראל מומר הוא דקא חזו ליה דקאכיל נבילות וטריפות אמר להו אימא לתיאבון הוא דקאכיל אמרו ליה והא זמנין דאיכא היתירא ואיסורא קמיה ושביק היתירא ואכיל איסורא א"ל זיל לא קא שבקי לי דאפרקינך:

Gittin 46b:18-47a:3

The Gemara relates: **A certain man sold himself to gladiators [*luda'ei*]. He came before Rabbi Ami and said to him:**

Redeem me. Rabbi Ami said to him: **We learned** in a mishna: With regard to **one who sells himself and his children as slaves to gentiles, he is not redeemed. However, his children are redeemed due to the harm** of becoming assimilated among the gentiles, **and all the more so here, where there is** a concern that leaving him in bondage may lead to his **death**, he should be redeemed.

The Sages said to Rabbi Ami: This man is a Jewish apostate, as they saw him when he was eating unslaughtered animal carcasses and animals with a wound that will cause them to die within twelve months [*tereifot*]. He said to them: Say that he was eating them due to his appetite, not because he is an apostate, but because he was overcome by temptation.

They said to him: But there are times when there are permitted and forbidden foods before him, and he sets aside the permitted food and eats the forbidden food, indicating that it is not temptation alone that causes him

to transgress. Once he heard this, Rabbi Ami **said to** that man: **Go**, because **they do not allow me to redeem you**.

שבת פ"ח א:ה'

ויתיצבו בתחתית ההר אמר רב אבדימי בר חמא בר חסא מלמד שכפה הקדוש ברוך הוא עליהם את ההר כגיגית ואמר להם אם אתם מקבלים התורה מוטב ואם לאו שם תהא קבורתכם אמר רב אחא בר יעקב מכאן מודעא רבה לאורייתא אמר רבא אף על פי כן הדור קבלוה בימי אחשורוש דכתיב קימו וקבלו היהודים קיימו מה שקיבלו כבר

Shabbat 88a:5

The Gemara cites additional homiletic interpretations on the topic of the revelation at Sinai. The Torah says, “And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet God; **and they stood at the lowermost part of the mount**” (Exodus 19:17). **Rabbi Avdimi bar Hama bar Hasa said:** the Jewish people actually stood beneath the mountain, and the verse **teaches that the Holy One, Blessed be He, overturned the mountain above the Jews like a tub, and said to them: If you accept the Torah, excellent, and if not, there will be your burial. Rav Aha bar Ya’akov said: From here there is a substantial caveat to the obligation to fulfill the Torah.** The Jewish people can claim that they were coerced into accepting the Torah, and it is therefore not binding. **Rava said: Even so, they again accepted it willingly in the time of Ahasuerus, as it is written: “The Jews ordained, and took upon them, and upon their seed, and upon all such as joined themselves unto them”** (Esther 9:27), and he taught: The Jews **ordained what they had already taken upon themselves** through coercion at Sinai.