



פרשת וישלח

WITH

R' AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"L

BASED ON HIS BOOKS, TAPES & WRITINGS OF TALMIDIM

The Ears of a Dog

Contents:

Part I. A Dog's Ears - 1

Part II. Historic Ears - 4

Part III. American Ears - 7

Part I. A Dog's Ears

Grabbing a Dog's Ears

We begin with a *possuk* in Mishlei: **מַחֲזִיק בְּאָזְנֵי עֶבֶר** – It is like taking hold of the ears of a dog, **מִתְעַבֵּר עַל רִיב לֹא לוֹ** – when a passerby becomes incensed over a quarrel which is not his (26:17). Shlomo Hamelech wants to warn us here against getting involved in a quarrel that doesn't involve you; and in order to wake up the reader, to stimulate his mind to perceive the danger involved, Shlomo draws for us a picture. It's not just a person grabbing onto a *machlokes* that he didn't need; it's a person grabbing onto the ears of a barking dog.

Oh, that's something else already! To grab onto the ears of a dog that scared you?! That's quite foolish; it's a decision you'll regret because you're stuck now. For a moment maybe it seems like a solution because his fangs can't reach you; but you're in a big dilemma now. The dog is infuriated with you – a dog doesn't like it when

you grab its ears and so if you let go you'll probably get that bite you were afraid of. But you can't stay there forever; sooner or later you must let go. You're going to have to go to sleep; and you might have to use the bathroom sooner than that. So you're stuck now. It's hard to continue holding the ears but it's still worse to let go.

That's the picture Mishlei wants us to consider if you're ever tempted to stick your nose into an argument that doesn't involve you. It's more than your nose in a place where it doesn't belong; it's a nose that's going to get bitten. And not a little bite; the bite of a wild dog. That's the great benefit of Shlomo Hamelech's *meshalim*; the *mashal* gives a picture, it gives life to the principle involved.

Learning the Mashal

Now, as has been said here before, when learning Mishlei we have to utilize the lesson of the *mashal* itself. Even though the *nimshal* is most important, the *mashal* in and of itself is extremely valuable as well and it was intended that we should use it. The truth is if you study Mishlei just

EasyPrint edition sponsor:

Please contact us for sponsorship opportunities.

Call/Text 732.844.3670

for the *mashal* alone, you're already a fortunate person. Even though you won't investigate what he really wants to tell you, the *mashal* alone is a valuable teaching.

And you shouldn't scorn that; it may come in handy someday. Who knows when you might be confronted by such a situation? You might be carelessly walking down the avenue one day and be confronted by a growling dog – a dog comes too close to your trousers and begins barking – and you're worried; you're thinking, "Maybe he'll bite me." And sometimes he does! I remember when I was bitten by a dog once in East Flatbush. My neighbor, an Irishman, had a big dog that bit my leg. So it could happen; a dog is barking and you're nervous, scared, and you want to grab him by his ears to keep his teeth away.

"Oh no! Don't do that!" says Mishlei. Some other idea maybe, but to grab his ears no, that's very irresponsible; because you'll be sorry. It's no solution because after that you're stuck.

Learning the Nimshal

Now as valuable as that information may be, it's a *mashal* after all. Mishlei is telling us more than that. And so we'll have to look at the *possuk* again but this time we'll look at the second part of the *possuk* too: **מַחֲזִיק בְּאָזְנֵי כֶּלֶב** – *The fool who grabs onto the ears of a dog, that's the same as עֵבֶר מִתְעַבֵּר – *עַל רִיב לֹא לוֹ* – *somebody who gets involved in a quarrel that's not his business (ibid.).**

Let's say you're walking down Ocean Parkway minding your own business and you see two bums fighting in the street. You're a passerby; it's none of your business. But you want to be a hero and act like a big peacemaker. So you walk in the middle and say, "Boys, don't fight. Let's be adults here." Now both start tumbling you.

What's it your business? Two bums fighting? Let them pummel each other. We wish them both *brachah v'hatzlachah*. It's a **רִיב לֹא לוֹ**, *it's a fight that's not yours* and so you're a fool if you grab

onto the ears of that dog, that fight, and allow yourself to become embroiled.

Vu Ein, Vu Ois

Now every case is different. You have to know *vu ein, vu ois*, where to apply it. Of course, if you have a certain authority, you're on a pedestal and you can speak down to them and help them to make peace, very good. When your children fight, absolutely, you should get involved. Children have to learn to get along. I understand that children always are fighting and still you should always mix in, constantly. Talk to them about *shalom*; tell them that **הִנֵּה מָה טוֹב וְיָמָה נְעִים**, there's nothing as beautiful in the eyes of Hashem as **שְׂבִיבַת אָחִים גַּם יָחִיד**, when siblings get along.

You must get involved because your house is the place where you train them for life. If you train them to get along in the house, they'll be able to get along later with their wives and with their *mechutanim* and with their business partners and with their employers and with everybody else. And so you must talk and talk and talk; *sof kol sof* something goes into his little head. Say, "Chaim, you should love your brother." To him it's a joke – love your brother? Smack! He smacks his little brother. Keep getting involved; keep speaking to your children always about *shalom* and *achdus* with their brothers. After a while it will penetrate. It goes in.

And even with adults if you're capable of pouring water on the situation and calming the participants, **הִבָּאת שְׁלוֹם בֵּין אָרָם לְחֵבְרוֹ** is a mitzvah. It's a big mitzvah to make peace between people. Let's say there's a husband and a wife in your neighborhood who are fighting, or two neighbors, or two people in the shul; so if you're a good peacemaker and you have some measure of authority go ahead. But otherwise keep away! And no matter what, don't get embroiled by taking sides.

No Justice, No Peace

Also, sometimes an injustice is being done, a wicked man committing injustice on an innocent person, and you're the only one who can help. Let's say you'll go out in the street at night and you'll see somebody trying to mug an innocent person. There's nobody else to save him and you happen to be well-armed. You carry with you a knife and you're strong and you know karate and you know, you're absolutely sure that you're able to save that man. So then it could be that you must do something.

But Mishlei is talking here not about those situations that require your input. He's talking about two people arguing and nobody is completely right – usually that's how it is in an argument. And so it's better to just move along and mind your own business. That's Mishlei's good advice: 'Don't seize onto the ears of that argument!' Because once you become embroiled, once you take sides in somebody's quarrel, you are acquiring for yourself an unearned enemy. And when you take hold of that enemy's ears, you cannot let go.

Letting Go of the Ears

The truth is even when you think you're already involved you have to know how to not grab on. You can train yourself to turn around, to ignore, instead of grabbing on. You have to imagine that you're only a passerby; keep on moving along.

I was walking home from shul – this was more than ten years ago – with a group of people and there was a gang of *goyim* in the street. They were always there but this time one of them started fighting with one of my men. I have a tough fellow in my shul and the *goy* started up with the wrong one and now they're wrestling; they're duking it out on the street.

So the police started coming. At least fifteen police cars came, fifteen without a *guzma*. On all sides the neighborhood was screaming with

sirens. And the sergeant came over to me and asked me if we wanted to press charges.

So I was thinking about this *possuk* and I was considering the options; and I told the policeman that I didn't want to do that. And I walked over near to where the *goyim* were standing and I said out loud, "We want to be friends with these people." I said it loudly they should all hear. I said, "Let him go. We're OK with them."

Make Peace, Not War

People forget that there's a command of the *Chachomim* of *darkei shalom*. We have to live in peace with gentiles; we want to live in peace with the whites and the negroes and the Chinese and the Irish. And even if they say things sometimes, even if they make trouble sometimes, be careful not to seize the ears of that dog. Learn to swallow down the insult and go home. Because what'll happen otherwise? The courts aren't going to be much help. And even if you'll win out, sometimes they come back and make even more trouble. A Jew shouldn't go and *tcheppe* back against a *goy*; it's grabbing the ears of a dog.

Now, the policeman wasn't so happy. He already had the hoodlum by the hand and this young policeman wanted to have at least one arrest to his credit and here was a chance. It was a white boy too; a white boy is a good one to arrest. The other ones, not so much.

But I made a public demonstration about it. I said, "We want to be on good terms with these boys. Let him alone."

And the policeman said to him, "You see how lucky you are. This rabbi wants to be peaceful with you." And that's how the incident ended. From now on when I walk on the street, the same gang is there and everything is quiet. It pays to be on good terms with the gentile neighbors.

Of course, it doesn't mean you shouldn't stand up for your rights. There are good ways of doing it, wise ways and even forceful ways. I say forceful with an accent on the word force, but it's

not to be administered by recklessness. You need sage counsel. Because among the considerations, one of the important ones is this one: 'Don't grab onto the ears of a dog.'

A Dog in the House

In the house, a husband and wife surely have to make use of that advice. Something happened? Someone said something that shouldn't have been said? Don't grab onto those ears. Move along! No matter what happens, the routine of married life should never be interrupted. She should always continue to prepare meals; never go on strike, no matter what. Even though she's boiling with indignation, she should stand at the gas range and prepare the meals just like always. Anything less than that is grabbing onto the ears of a dog, an argument, that will be hard to let go of.

A husband should never refuse, because of a pensive, to give money to his wife, "This week, I'm not giving you anything." Whether it's regular money, or money that she needs for any particular purpose and she comes to him. That has to go on always, without any interruption. Never grab onto the ears of a dog by doing something that changes the regular routine of married life.

That's the great admonition of Shlomo Hamelech! In all areas of life don't grab onto the ears of a dog because you'll get more and more embroiled. You'll save yourself a lot of trouble.

Part II. Historic Ears

Yaakov's Error

Now, when we study the words of our Sages we see that they applied this advice on a national level too. And that's what they tell us in the Medrash on this week's *sedrah*. In the *parshah*, it's related that *וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים לְפָנָיו* – Yaakov sent messengers ahead of him, *אֶל עֵשָׂו אָחִיו* – to his brother Eisav, *אֶרְצָה שְׂדֵה אֶדוֹם* – to the land of Seir, the fields of Edom (Vayishlach 32:4).

Now let's understand the situation. Yaakov was returning home now after a long absence. He had left many years previous when Eisav had threatened his life after losing the blessings and now he's finally returning home to settle in Eretz Canaan. But he's worried. Eisav, after all, had promised to take his life and he was returning to where the trouble had begun.

And so he considered the situation and he made a decision. Before he would even come into the land he would send messengers to appease his brother. His brother wasn't in Eretz Canaan anymore; he had moved to the neighboring land of Seir, but in order to forestall any trouble Yaakov decided to send peace ambassadors to the land of Seir where Eisav was. And he sent them with rich gifts and he commanded them to speak words of appeasement to Eisav. Yaakov made sure that they would speak with humility on his behalf.

Eisav Reacts

What happened? The Torah tells us that Yaakov heard the news that Eisav had received all the gifts and he was now coming to Canaan to meet him. But not to make *shalom*; he was coming with four hundred men. You don't come with four hundred men to make a welcoming party. *וַיִּרָא וַיִּצְרַר לוֹ* – Yaakov became very much afraid, – and he was distressed (ibid. 32:8). He was in big trouble now, serious trouble. *פֶּן יָבוֹא עִשָׂו וְהִכְנִי אִם עַל בְּנֵי* – I'm afraid Eisav will attack me now with his band of soldiers and kill me and my family (ibid. 32:12). Yaakov was greatly distressed by what was happening now, by the situation he had gotten himself entangled with.

So listen to what the Sages say about that (Bereishis Rabbah). They apply to Yaakov the *possuk* in Mishlei that we're learning tonight: *מַחְזִיק עֵבֶר בְּאָזְנֵי כָּלָב* – He's taking hold of the ears of a dog, – the passerby, *מִתְעַבֵּר* – who gets involved, *עַל רֵיב לֹא לוֹ* – in a business that wasn't intended for him. And they compare it to the following case. A man is walking along a road and he sees sleeping by the side of a road an armed desperado and so he's

debating with himself: “Should I just try and pass by? But maybe this bandit will awaken and I’ll be in trouble; he’ll start pursuing me.” So he decides, “You know what? I’ll wake him up and offer him gifts. I’ll humble myself and win his favor.”

And that’s what he does. He awakens the bandit and begins to pal with him, to try and show that he’s humbled before him and he’s not looking for trouble.

But once the bandit is awake, he’s not interested in friends or humility. He’s most interested in this fellow’s packages, his money bag and maybe his life too. So the bandit draws his sword and says, “Thank you for waking me up; now I have you.” And now the man is in big trouble.

Avoiding it All

That’s called seizing the ears of a dog. You could have passed by and avoided getting involved. And so, Yaakov is criticized for that. We understand of course that Yaakov was using circumspection. There’s no question that Yaakov weighed his options but the verdict of our Sages is that it should be an eternal lesson for us, an example of someone who grabbed onto the ears of a dog when he didn’t have to. He could have come straight into Eretz Canaan and the whole incident would not have transpired.

Now anyone who learned anything remembers a famous statement made about our forefathers. The statement is *מַעֲשֵׂה אֲבוֹת סִימָן לְבָנִים* – *What happened to our fathers, Avraham, Yitzchok, v’Yaakov is a portent for their descendants*. But even if you’re familiar with that idea I want to explain it so that it should be understood.

The Avos were among the highest of the prophets; of course Moshe Rabbeinu was the highest of all *nevi'im* because he spoke to Hashem face to face, but the Rambam says that the Avos were especially distinguished among the prophets.

Because even though they sometimes foretold the future with words – Yaakov’s prophecy in Vayechi and so on – but their chief mode of

prophesying was not by means of their words but by the acts of their lives. They were so great, so close to Hashem, that not only did they consciously foretell things in prophetic visions, but even what they *did* was a prophecy. To a certain extent Hakadosh Baruch Hu caused their acts to be controlled and He shaped the history of their lives in every detail so that whatever they did would be a portent for the future.

Yaakov’s Portent

And so when Yaakov awakened Eisav and grabbed onto the ears of a dog, that is, when he sent gifts to him and Eisav now came to meet him and Yaakov regretted it, this was a portent for the future. Not only of what would happen in the future – we’ll see soon that it *did* happen again and again; but it was also intended as a portent of what could happen, but wouldn’t – it would be avoided – if the Am Yisroel would study and understand the portent.

What happened in the future? The Am Yisroel was sometimes reckless and grabbed onto the dog’s ears. Every Jew who knows a little about the history of his people knows that for the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash we are indebted to Rome. Rome was the *mashchis* that burned the Beis Hamikdash and sent us out into exile.

Now the question is: How did Rome come to have any business with us? After all, we were an Oriental nation and Rome was in Europe. How did Rome come to gain dominion over our people? The answer is what we’re studying tonight.

Chashmonai Trouble

About two hundred years before the *Churban*, the Chashmonaim, that’s the Maccabees, were having trouble. We are talking now about the early Chashmonaim, the sons of Mattisyahu. They had enemies within, the *Misyavanim*, the Hellenizers; and the Syrian Greeks were a great external enemy. So at that time, as a means of strengthening their position, the Chashmonaim sent a delegation to far-off Rome to request an alliance.

“We’ll be of service to you in your needs here in the Middle East,” the Chashmonaim said, “and you’ll stand on our side in return.” They were looking for a treaty of mutual protection.

Now Rome was always waiting for such an opportunity, a chance to get a foothold in Eretz Yisroel, and so they accepted. The Roman Senate confirmed a treaty and sent a message of alliance to the Jews. “We make with you a treaty of mutual defense. Whoever attacks you is considered as if he attacks us and whoever attacks us, you must come to our help also.” That was the treaty and it was inscribed on copper tablets in Rome.

But in practice, Rome didn’t help one bit. Years and years passed, the wars continued, and from Rome there came no help at all. The Chashmonaim fought all their battles alone. That’s the story of Chanukah, how Hakadosh Baruch Hu came to their aid and finally they gained complete independence. But it wasn’t because of any help from Rome. The Romans never lifted up a finger to help them.

Trouble from Rome

But that was not the end. This sending of those peace messengers had very great consequences because Rome became now a *mechutan*, an unwanted relative. Rome now considered the land of Judea as its bound ally. Up until that time Rome had no business with Jews; they had no contact with the Mediterranean where the Jews lived. But once Rome contracted an alliance they didn’t stop there.

The story takes too long to recount but in the end, Rome finally took over and the land of Judea became a Roman province. And then they oppressed the Jews so much that the Jews were driven to acts of desperation; and then the war came and Rome destroyed a million and two hundred thousand Jews besides a hundred thousand captives sold in slavery. They burned down the *Bayis Sheini* and they crushed the Jewish nation. And we can trace these events step

by step from the first ambassadors, the first embassy which was sent to Rome.

And here’s what our Sages say. The Ramban on this *possuk* וַיִּשְׁלַח יַעֲקֹב מַלְאָכִים brings this whole subject and he said it all began when Yaakov sent messengers to Eisav – that was the cause of the Chashmonaim sending emissaries to Rome. That’s *מִנְעֻשָׁה אֲבוֹת סִימָן לְבָנִים*; what the forefathers did was a portent what would happen to their children. They should have learned from Chumash; that’s what the Chumash is for. The precedent should have been studied and should have been used as a warning.

More Recent Dogs

Now, when we study such things we aren’t too troubled because it’s ancient history. When it’s far off, it’s easier to discount. But the truth is the same thing is in recent history too. Because the same mistake was made in Germany – one of the things that paved the way for the Holocaust was when the Jews got involved in an argument that wasn’t theirs.

In Bismarck’s time the Jews prepared the German people for the advent of Hitler. Do you know how? Otto von Bismarck was a powerful German Prime Minister in the late 1800’s, he was a conservative but the Jews all aligned themselves on the liberal side against Bismarck. They had their reasons and they attached themselves to the liberal politics.

Now Bismarck couldn’t be an open anti-Semite – it was still a cultured Germany – but there was no question he resented it deeply. And more fatefully many Germans resented it too. “What are the Jews getting involved in our country for?!” They didn’t get involved just with voting, like ordinary citizens; they went all out. They grabbed onto the ears of one side of the debate.

Waking Up the Anti-Semites

At that time the Jews also attacked the Catholic Church politically. There were those among the German gentiles who were interested

in weakening the Church and the Jews aligned themselves publicly with that side of the debate and many Germans were infuriated by that. And so, over time, because of this grave mistake, because the Torah lessons were ignored, there developed a deep-seated hatred for the Jews.

Of course the seeds were always there, but they began to take root when the Jews publicly took sides. They were **מְחֻזְקִים בְּאָזְנֵי בֶּלֶב** – they took hold of the ears of a dog and they became embroiled in a quarrel that's not theirs.

Jews! It's none of your business! It's not your business who wins the elections in Germany, the conservatives or the socialists! You can vote, yes, but to grab onto one side publicly and align with one side or another? Jews have other business and by becoming embroiled they gain unnecessary enemies. A whole front of enemies of the Jews began to align: Conservatives, the traditional Catholics, traditional anti-semites. And when Hitler arrived he found a big store of animosity. Actually, they had grabbed onto Hitler's ears – and he was a dangerous and rabid dog.

Part III. American Ears

Igniting Anti-Semitism

The same thing is happening *chas v'shalom* in America. You know there's a big movement today among the anti-semites, a great deal of resentment against Jews and I'm sorry to say that they have some grounds. The liberal Jews are at the forefront of the breaking down of American standards, of belittling the American flag, belittling religion, being easy on criminals. These upstarts, who call the police 'pigs', who urge to set fire to government buildings and fight for every new attitude that is counter to America's ideals, they will be to blame if, *chas v'shalom*, it comes back to haunt us.

The American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress – they're not American and they're not Jewish – all these pseudo-Jewish

organizations began meddling in the problems of America. They began interfering in things that were not their business. They began spending big sums of money and became embroiled in other people's business and they are the ones who gained for us a bitter foe. If you want to trace anti-semitism to any one source, you can point at these Jews and these so-called Jewish organizations.

The Coxcombs in Selma

Actually it's old news in America. Who asked Jews to grab onto the ears of the dog in Selma? Now the younger generation has forgotten what Selma is but it's good to remind you. Selma is a small town in Alabama and there were some disturbances there. The blacks were trying to make demonstrations for their rights and this became a focal point for all so-called liberals. From all points every coxcomb hastened to Selma to march in the protest on behalf of the blacks. Anyone who was a showoff, who was ambitious for cheap and easy glory, took a plane to Selma.

Now I'm not saying the blacks themselves shouldn't go all out fighting for equal rights. They should, absolutely. But why did the Jews get involved? 'Jewish' organizations, Young Israel rabbis, modern Orthodox rabbis everywhere, they came to Selma. It was a sign of distinction, "I was in Selma." And they came as Jews; they portrayed themselves as Jews who were getting involved.

Hitherto it was a problem, a lot of bad blood, between the Southern Whites and the Southern Blacks but we had nothing to do with it. It's not our fight. Let the black people and the Americans argue out their own problems. What is it our business to get involved?! What do Jews have to do with their problems? We take care of Jewish problems.

But along came these liberals, these Jews, meddlers who never asked for Torah advice; they didn't come to the Torah leaders who know, Torah leaders who learned the lessons of Yaakov's

mistake and understood that it was a **מַעֲשֵׂה אָבוֹת** **סִימָן לְבָנִים**, and instead they put their noses into somebody else's business and they polarized the entire problem and made it a problem of Southern Whites against Jews.

A New Enemy

And now the Jews gained a new enemy. Of course anti-Semites don't need much encouragement, that's true. But it is certainly of no advantage to our people to give encouragement to our enemies and that is exactly what these busybodies did when they came to Selma; and it's what many Jews are doing today. Of course, the *goyim* are saying this much worse than I'm saying it. They're exaggerating it. But we have already seized hold of an ears of a dog that we cannot let go. The Jews grabbed on to that fight.

And so it's very easy to blame the not-*frum*, the liberals, because they deserve a lot of blame. If I was invited to speak to the American Jewish Congress or the ADL I'd give them a piece of my mind. But they're not our concern now; we have to look inwards. Because today the *frummeh* too are getting involved. And we're more blameworthy because we are expected to learn the lessons that our *chachomim* taught us. We're expected to learn the lessons of **מַעֲשֵׂה אָבוֹת סִימָן לְבָנִים**; of when and how to get involved.

It's a sensitive topic and it needs sagacious advice to know when yes and when no. Because absolutely there are times we have to stand up for ourselves, for our needs, for Torah ideals. But it has to be done only according to Torah precedents and that's not being done.

Grabbing the Ears

Of course, when we see an issue that involves morality, we should always vote. It's a mitzvah. You have to know that Hakadosh Baruch Hu expects Jews to participate in improving the moral environment. If your vote can help out, it's your job to vote for morality.

Not only voting. A quarrel that's for Hakadosh Baruch Hu, that's something else. That's what I said in the very beginning of this talk. If you see wrongdoers, you must take some action.

Everybody here remembers the ads for the suntan lotion Tanya, those wicked pictures on the buses. So I wrote letters. I wrote letters to the mayor. I wrote letters to the transit authorities. They said it's none of their business, that it belongs to the advertising company.

So I began writing letters to the advertising company. Finally the president himself answered me. He said that my letter was 'interesting' but there's nothing wrong with the advertisement because the same thing is on the beaches.

Grabbing the Marketers

So I wrote to him, "What's on the beaches can't be on the public buses." And I said that it must be removed. This time he didn't answer and the ads continued until the end of the summer.

Next summer came around, again the ads showed up. But this time we took action. We mimeographed a lot of letters and we sent them out to people – and also to the advertising people – saying, "We urge you to mimeograph this letter, to reproduce it and send it in the thousands to every congregation in the country urging everyone to patronize only Coppertone because of their decent advertising."

A couple of weeks later, the Tanya pictures were off the bus in the middle of the summer. Now I don't know what happened. Maybe there were other reasons, but it was off the bus.

So somebody will say, "Is that your business, Rabbi Miller? You have to stick your nose in advertising? What the *goyim* do is none of your business."

No; sometimes you have to be involved. When it's Hashem's fight we have to be involved; certainly. And therefore if you can help out in the great battle against immorality, against any form

of wickedness, then you surely are *oveid Hashem* by doing it. We have to speak up.

Nothing Else Matters

But not in a **רִיב לֹא לוֹ**, in things that are none of your business. What's none of your business? All the things that are not related to *avodas Hashem* are none of your business. Jews don't get involved in America's business. In politics per se we have no interest. What's our business all of their problems? We have our own, more important business, to deal with. We're here for *avodas Hashem* and nothing else.

And this brings us to the next meaning of Shlomo's *mashal*; actually I intended this to be our subject for tonight because it's the entire subject of our lives but we have no time left so we'll say it quickly and we'll come back to it in the future, *bli neder*. It's another layer of this *possuk* but it's probably the most important one: **מִחֲזִיק בְּאָזְנֵי כֶּלֶב** – *Who else can we say about him that he's taking hold of the ears of a dog?* **עֹבֵר** – *If you are a passerby in this world, לֹא לוֹ – *and you become embroiled in a world that's not your business.**

Do you know who the **עֹבֵר**, the passerby, is? Me, you, everyone. And who is the dog, the dangerous dog, that we'll be stuck with? *Olam Hazeh*. We're only passing through this world – if it's eighty years or a hundred and twenty years, whatever it is, we're only passersby – and yet we're grabbing onto the ears of this world with two hands. And some of us are holding on very tightly! They're involved!

We Fools Are Involved

The Jew today – it doesn't matter if he's a Jew in America or Australia or Meah Shearim – is too involved in things that don't involve him. The Jew has grabbed onto the ears of *Olam Hazeh*. You'll have to excuse me for saying it – I don't like stepping on your toes – but I know that right here in this room, among my people, there are fools who read the newspapers and listen to the radio. They read magazines and the advertisements and

they're involved in *Olam Hazeh* like nobody's business.

What do they think about? What do they talk about? Politics, shopping, travel, other *narishkeit*. The *frum* Jews today have grabbed onto the ears of *Olam Hazeh*. They don't understand that they're only passing by in this world and that most of the things they get involved in are not important at all.

A Jew is involved in nothing except *avodas Hashem*. We have to sit and learn Torah and make a living; we have to raise our children to Torah and *yiras Shamayim*. We have to be busy with good deeds and kindness and *davening* and strengthening the *Am Yisroel*. That's more than enough. There's nothing in this world that's your business except for *avodas Hashem*; Torah, *mitzvos*, *chessed*, *mussar*. And if you want to be successful in that most important business, then you must remain un-entangled from this world.

Stay Out Of It

There used to be a saying, on the side of the buses they had a saying, 'Get involved.' But our motto is: 'Don't get involved – stay out of it!' It's a very busy world and it's calling to us but *Mishlei* is telling us that when we become unnecessarily embroiled with the things of this world then we have seized the ears of a dog that we cannot let go of. We must have many things in our mind; but whatever is superfluous should be excluded from the mind because there is just not enough place for it. And once a man is concerned about something in this world it's **מִחֲזִיק בְּאָזְנֵי כֶּלֶב**; he's seizing the ears of a dog. This world is a dog. It's a dog with teeth and if you seize the ears, you'll find it's hard to let go.

Of course, you have to make a living and get along with everyone and live normal lives in this world. But you don't have to grab; you don't have to get entangled. You know when you discover that it's nothing at all? When you get old then you start looking through a clear window pane. When

you're young you look through a colored window pane – all the various hues give everything a colorful look. But after you pass a certain age, then you start looking through a clear window pane and you see that all those visions were nothing.

But the wisest of all men doesn't want us to wait for old age; it's too late then – it's never too late but it's very late. And that's why he wrote this *possuk*. Many lessons he wants us to learn. Don't get involved in arguments where you don't belong. Don't get involved in places where you're not needed. But most of all – and really everything is included in this one – don't grab onto the ears of Olam Hazeh.

Have A Wonderful Shabbos

LET'S GET PRACTICAL

Don't Grab On

Yaakov grabbed onto the 'ears' of the sleeping bandit and 'awakened' Esav. But Shlomo Hamelech teaches us "Don't get involved!" There are so many important Olam Haba things to grab onto in this world and every time we grab a dog's ears we're getting stuck in situations we don't belong.

This week I will keep this *possuk* in my mind as I make my way through this test of life and I'll try, as much as possible, to apply its lesson by beginning to leave go of superfluous things I've grabbed onto. I will *bli neder* make a practical *kabbalah*, at least for this week, to minimize my involvement in "the dog's ears" in a way that's applicable to my situation in life.

This week's booklet is based on tapes:

R-46 - Seizing a Dog's Ears | 41 - Avoiding Entanglement
E-65 - The World Diverts the Mind

Listen: 718.289.0899 Press 1 for English and 2 for Thursday Night Lectures



What does the word 'boruch' mean in all the brachos that we say?



The word *boruch* comes from the word *berech* which means a knee. Fundamentally, 'boruch' means 'the One to Whom our knees are bent.' *Boruch atah Hashem* means 'You Hashem are the only One to Whom we bend our knees.'

We don't actually bend the knees except where Chazal tell us to, but the expression of this word is that we have an attitude of humility. Why do we bend our knees? In *hachna'ah*, in humility. Because You, Hashem are the One Who gives; You are the *nosein* and we can't give anything back to you in return. *מָה אֶשִׁיב לָהּ כֹּל תְּגִמּוּלוֹהֶי עָלַי* – *What can I recompense Hashem for all that He bestowed upon me?* (Tehillim 116:12). What can I give back to You, Hashem, for all the good that You've done for me?

You can't give back anything! All you can do is be *nichna*. And the Chovos Halevavos says that this is called *avodas Hashem*. What is *avodas Hashem*? You're an *eved Hashem* if you're *nichna* to Him because of all that He does for you and your realization of your inability to pay Him back.

So, 'Boruch atah Hashem' means, "You are the One to Whom our knees are bent;" and to nobody else in the world. Of course, we thank those who You tell us to thank. We thank our father and our mother because You told us to thank them. We thank our *rebbe* because You told us to thank him. We thank the black bus driver and Italian fireman because You told us to.

But whatever we do to thank anybody in the world, it's really because we are thanking You. Everything is really only from You. And every time we say the words 'Boruch atah Hashem' we're thinking, You're the only One in the universe Who deserves the bending of our knees.

APE # E-178 (February 25, 1999)

Toras Avigdor : Parshas Vayishlach