



## SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

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**PARSHAS RE'EH**

SERMON TITLE:

***The Good-Luck Nation***

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**Reeh**  
*The Good-Luck Nation*

Good Shabbos!

Have you heard about Hyperloop?

Well, in the past couple of years, Elon Musk—I'm sure many of you have heard of him; he's the global mega-businessman behind the Tesla electric cars—has been working on a revolutionary idea for train travel.

According to the concept, a capsule containing 28 travelers will ride inside a tube with a controlled low air pressure. The system will draw air from in front of the capsule and release it behind the capsule, resulting in travel of speeds up to 970 miles (1,561 kilometers) an hour without expending energy.

This so-called Hyperloop concept would theoretically make it possible to travel the 350 miles (563 kilometers) between Los Angeles and San Francisco in about 35 minutes. Or, to put it in Israeli terms, from Eilat to Tel Aviv in a half-hour or from Beersheva to Tel Aviv in six minutes.

If realized, it would be a transit tool that would quickly change everything. The same technology that is currently used to send documents inside capsules that are sucked through tubes would now be used for trains. Such technology promises that riders inside such capsules would not feel the speed of travel—on the contrary, it would be a very pleasant ride.

The positive and immediate repercussions on the business travel and shipping industries would be enormous. What's more, such technology could change the residential rental and mortgage industries worldwide. That's because today, as a general rule, rents and mortgages are most astronomical in the world's biggest commerce centers—in turn because if you want to work there, you have to live there. But if Hyperloop becomes mainstream, a person could live in the middle of rural Pennsylvania and work in Manhattan.

So one of the companies trying to create this technology also visited Israel to see if it were feasible to build such a train from Eilat to Tel Aviv.

Now, I'm not exactly an expert who could explain how Hyperloop exactly works. They say that within five to ten years, Hyperloop trains will be feasible and affordable enough to build. My thought is that even if I don't understand exactly how this could be possible, I know one thing – if it ends up working, we will all use it. In life, sometimes we don't know how things work, but you can't argue with the results.

And that, of course, takes us right to our Parshah.

But to preface, let's go back to the Book of Shmos.

In the Book of Shmos, in the Torah portion of Yisro, we find G-d speaking to Moshe before the Giving of the Torah. G-d says, "Thus shall you say to the House of Jacob... you have seen what I have done to Egypt... and now, if you will surely hearken to My voice and observe My covenant, you shall be to me a *segulah* [treasure] among all the nations" (Shmos 19:5). And Rashi defines the word *segulah* as "otzar chaviv," a beloved treasure—meaning that the Jewish Nation as a whole will become G-d's "segulah."

So that's the first place in the Torah that we find the word *segulah*. However, it is in our current Book, the Book of Devarim, that we find for the first time in the Torah the well-known phrase *am segulah*—a treasured nation. This expression is commonly used throughout Jewish literature to refer to the Jewish Nation, and it appears in the Book of Devarim alone no less than three times.

Now, the first time we find the expression "am segulah" is actually at the end of the Parshah of Vaes'chanan. Right after the Torah warns us "not to marry them; do not give your daughter to his son, and do not take his daughter for your son, for it shall turn your son away from following me." And Rashi explains, "A grandson who comes from a Kuthite woman is not considered your son but rather, her son." And the Torah continues: "For you are a holy nation unto the L-rd your G-d; in you did the L-rd your G-d choose, to be unto him an am segulah [treasured nation] from among all the nations" (Devarim 7:6).

And the second time the Torah uses the expression "am segulah" is right here in our Torah portion this week. Here, it comes as a preface to the Torah's commandments on which animals are or are not permitted for Jewish consumption, along with which birds are kosher and which are forbidden to eat, along with the signs of kosher fish, and so on. So, one verse before all these kosher food rules, the Torah tells us, "For you are a holy nation unto the L-rd your G-d, and in you did G-d choose to be unto Him an am segulah [treasured nation] from among all the nations that are upon the face of the earth." And immediately after that, the Torah continues, "Do not eat any abomination"; "these are the animals which you shall eat"; etc. (See the beginning of Chap. 14.)

The third time the Torah mentions this phrase is also in the Book of Devarim, but in the Parshah of Ki Tavo. There, Moshe Rabbeinu informs the people that they'll be crossing the Jordan River and entering the Holy Land, he charges them with a reminder from G-d to keep the entire Torah. But before doing so, Moshe says, "You have selected the L-rd this day to be your G-d... and the L-rd has selected you this day to be unto him an *am segulah* [treasured nation], as He spoke to you" (Devarim 26:18).

So, when it is exactly that the Torah bestows the title "am segulah" on us? Precisely when we are charged with three things: Not to assimilate or intermarry; not to eat non-kosher; and to enter and inherit the Holy Land. In all three things, we are separated and distinguished from all other nations.

So we thus have it that refraining from intermarriage preserves the People of Israel, eating kosher preserves the Torah of Israel, and entering the Land preserves the Land of Israel. And these are the things that define us as a “treasured nation.”

And the Rebbe took the concept of *am segulah* to another level altogether.

In Hebrew, the word *segulah* doesn’t just mean “treasure,” but also has another meaning that many are familiar with: When a person may have trouble with his income, someone will typically suggest to him a “segulah” for income—that if he does such-and-such, whatever it may be, he’ll have better luck in business. (It doesn’t quite translate accurately to English, but “talisman” or “good luck charm” come to mind; a *segulah* typically involves reciting certain specific prayers or verses, or performing specific actions or rituals.)

So, the Talmud tells us, one such *segulah* for better income is to treat your wife really nicely. But in the tractate of Bava Metzia (59a), the Sage Rava is recorded telling his fellow citizens of Mechuza (a city in ancient Babylon), “Honor your wives so that you become rich.” So even though there’s no apparent logical or scientific connection between what you do—and earn—at the office and how you treat your wife at home, the results prove that it works.

Another *segulah* actually comes right from our Parshah. In our Torah portion this week, the Torah says, “*Aseir t’aseir*” —“you shall surely tithe.” And the Sages (Talmud, Tractate Taanis 8b) explain that this means, “*Aseir bshvil she’tis’asher*” —“tithe so that you become rich.” It’s a bit of a play on words that means that someone who gives *maaser* (a tenth) to charity will become an *ashir* (a rich person).

Now one might point out that if you give money to charity, you now have less money—so how exactly does giving a tenth to charity make you have more money? And even though that’s logically correct, one still senses that it’s true and that it works—rich people are known to testify from personal experience that the more they give back to the community, the more money they earn.

Another *segulah* for income mentioned in classic Jewish holy books is to observe the traditional “Melaveh Malkah” post-Shabbos meal. This is a meal held every Saturday night in which we “melaveh” (escort) the “malkah” (queen), and being particular about it is considered to be a *segulah* for income.

Now again, we can ask, what’s the connection? There’s no logical link. But the facts prove that it works. So we thus have it that a *segulah* by definition is “something beyond logical understanding.”

The Rebbe explains that the Jewish Nation is called an *am segulah* because the very fact that the Jewish Nation endures is itself a matter of *segulah* (in the sense that “segulah” means “good fortune”). It’s a matter that supersedes logic, because by all estimates, the Jewish Nation should

have disappeared a long time ago. But still, despite all the bleak predictions, we still exist. The Jew survives and thrives in a manner of segulah—in a way above and beyond the laws of nature.

And the fact that the Nation of Israel, the Torah and Israel and the Land of Israel—the three things with which the expression “am segulah” are associated—still exist is a matter of segulah. There is no rational explanation for it.

It's above reason and logic. But ultimately, in the final test, not only have all three survived, but have also thrived. (See Sichas 13 Tammuz, 5712, Toras Menachem Vol. 6, pg. 60 et al.)

Good Shabbos!