

הפטורה: ואַרְבַּעָה אַנְשִׁים. בְּמִנְחָה: עֲבָדִים הָיִינוּ.

[On Shabbos Parshas Metzora], the haftarah begins Ve'arbaah anashim (II Melachim 7:3-20).¹

[On Shabbos HaGadol, after] Minchah, [we read part of the Haggadah, from] Avadim hayinu [until lechaper al kol avonoseinu].²

מִזְמַן יְצִיאַת מִצְרַיִם נִקְרְאוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל צְבָאוֹת ה'. הַהִפְרָשׁ בֵּין עֲבָדִים – שֶׁנִּקְרְאוּ כֵן בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל – וְצְבָאוֹת הוּא: עֶבֶד עוֹשֶׂה עֲבוֹדַת רַבּוֹ – וּבְזָה כַּמָּה דְרָגוֹת נֹקֵב מְרָגְלִיּוֹת, עוֹשֶׂה שְׂאֵר מְלָאכּוֹת, עוֹשֶׂה מְלָאכּוֹת פְּשׁוּטוֹת – וַיֵּשׁ בְּזֶה יְגִיעָה וְעֵמֶל רַב, אֲבָל אֵין זֶה עֲנִין שֶׁל מְסִירַת נַפְשׁ. צָבָא הֵם עֲבָדִים שְׁעוֹבְדִים בִּיְגִיעָה רַבָּה וְעֵמֶל וּבְמִסִּירַת נַפְשׁ, הֵן בְּמִלְחָמַת הַגָּנָה וְהֵן בְּמִלְחָמַת תְּנוּפָה, וְעוֹמְדִים עַל מְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּתַכְלִית הַתּוֹקֵף מִבְּלִי הַתְּפִעַל מִהַמְּנַגֵּד וְשׁוֹנֵא, וְעֲבוֹדָתָם זֹו אֵינָה עֲנִין שֶׁל הַשְּׂגָה, כִּי הֵם מְתַנְהֲגִים עַל פִּי הוֹרָאת מְצַבִּיָּאָם. וְהִנֵּה נִשְׁמוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּמִצְרַיִם הָיוּ בְּתַכְלִית הַשְּׁפָלוּת בְּעֵינֵינוּם קִשִּׁים וּמְרִים, וְעַם זֶה לֹא שָׁנוּ שְׁמֵם וּלְשׁוֹנָם וּלְבוּשֵׁיהֶם, וְעֵמֶדוֹ עַל מְשִׁמְרָתָם בְּתַכְלִית הַחוּזְקָה, כִּי יָדְעוּ שֶׁהַקְּדוּשׁ בְּרוּךְ הוּא הַבְּטִיחַ לְגֵאוֹל אוֹתָם, וְהַמְּתַנְהֵג כְּזֶה בְּמִצְבָּב זֶה הוּא מְצַבָּא ה', דִּה' עוֹזְרוֹ בְּדֶרֶךְ מְלַמְעֵלָה מִן הַטֵּבַע בְּטֵבַע.

Ever since the time of the Exodus from Egypt, the Jewish people have been called Tzivos HaShem, “G-d’s army.”³ The Jewish people are [also] called servants.⁴ The difference between servants and an army [can be explained as follows]: A servant performs work for his master on various levels – one pierces pearls, one works in other crafts, another carries out unskilled tasks. These involve considerable labor and effort, but no element of self-sacrifice.

An army, by contrast, is comprised of subjects who expend toil and exertion and self-sacrifice, whether in a defensive war or an offensive one. [Soldiers] discharge their duties with utter resoluteness, unperturbed by their opponents and enemies. Their service does not depend on [their] understanding, for they follow the orders of their commanders.

In Egypt, the souls of the Jewish people were on the lowest of levels, [due to] the harsh and bitter afflictions. Nevertheless, they did not change their names, language, or dress.⁵ On the contrary, they held their ground with the utmost tenacity, for they knew that G-d had promised to redeem them.

A person who conducts himself thus in a similar situation is a member of G-d’s army. G-d helps him in a way that transcends nature, but [that is vested] within nature.⁶
