

## You shall be holy for Me;.....and I have separated you from the peoples to be Mine. (20:26)

*Rashi* cites *Chazal* who explain this *pasuk* in the following manner: If you keep yourselves separate from the nations and their life styles, you will be Mine; otherwise, you will belong to Nebuchanetzar and his ilk. Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya adds, one should not say, "I do not eat pig because I do not like pig meat." Rather, one should say, I would like to eat pig meat, but Hashem has prohibited me from eating it and has commanded me to separate from the other nations to be His, and only His" **Horav Eliyahu Meir Bloch, zl**, remarks that essentially *Chazal* are teaching us two lessons.

First, it is not only important to serve Hashem and observe His *mitzvos*, it is necessary for every Jew to realize and feel his distinctiveness, his separation from the nations of the world. Hashem wants us to feel distinct from the rest of the world. A person should not observe *mitzvos* merely because he was commanded to do so, since such an attitude cannot guarantee an enduring relationship with Hashem. People, by nature, do not want to be different; no one wants to stand apart. After awhile, his commitment will weaken. If, however, one's observance is motivated by his membership in a nation that is separate from the world, then he is different. People have a problem acting different, not being different. By viewing ourselves as distinct from the nations of the world, we will enjoy a lasting commitment to Hashem's *mitzvos*.

Second, we note an addendum to this *havdalah*, separateness. We are not to view ourselves as a nation like other nations that have a specific set of laws which permit -- and in some instances prohibit -- certain activities and foods. This means that as other nations have their code of ethics and laws, so do we. Essentially, we are just another nation. This is not the *Torah* perspective. We distinguish ourselves only by a single reality -- we serve Hashem. We are His servants - we are His nation. This is the only justification for being called a nation. As *Rabbeinu Saadya Goan* writes, "We are a nation only because of the *Torah*". The *Torah* is not simply our code, it is our license to nationhood. We are not citizens of our respective countries who just happen to believe in the Jewish religion. This belief defines our nationhood, our citizenship, and our allegiance to Hashem.