

You shall not contaminate yourselves through any teeming thing that creeps on the earth. For I am Hashem who elevates you from the land of Egypt. (11:44.45)

What is the relationship between the exodus from Egypt and the prohibition from eating insects? **Horav Mordechai HaKohen** in his *sefer Al HaTorah* cites a thoughtful response. Certain individuals are extremely careful not to eat any insect. They painstakingly check vegetables with a microscopic lens to make certain that even the tiniest bug, not visible to the naked eye, enters their mouth. Regrettably, these same people have no problem swallowing up a person, enslaving their brethren, spilling their blood and flaying their skin. They have no feelings for their fellow Jew. Disparaging comments can destroy a life. Subjecting a fellow Jew to the most menial forms of labor, stepping on him, taking away his dignity, is "at least" as bad as swallowing an insect.

For this reason the prohibition of eating insects is juxtaposed upon the exodus from Egypt. As Hashem punished the Egyptian nation for enslaving the Jews, so too, will Hashem exact punishment from those who take advantage of their fellow man.

Perhaps, this is the underlying message of David *Hamelech* when he cried out to his enemies, "*I am a worm, AND NOT A MAN*" (*Tehillim*22;7). "Why do you chase after me, tearing at my heart, spilling my blood, saying that you would swallow me up alive? Make believe that I am nothing more than a mere worm. Perhaps then your noble efforts and sentiments on behalf of "harmless" insects might be aroused, so that you would spare me. Regrettably, David *Hamelech's* critique is just as compelling and warranted today as it was then.