

## ADDICTED TO OLAM HAZEH

### Background

**T**he Torah lays out our attitude and approach to the different nations and tells us, “The *Mitzrim* cannot be totally rejected because you lived in their country.”

Rashi is bothered by this mixed expression. If we are supposed to be grateful for the good that the *Mitzrim* did for us, why use the expression “don’t *reject* them?” This doesn’t sound very appreciative.

Rashi answers that the Torah is teaching us precisely that point. Our attitude toward the *Mitzrim* should be mixed. On one hand, we cannot forget that they threw our infant boys into the Nile. But on the other, they did provide a home for us. So we have ambivalent feelings. We don’t completely accept them, but we can’t reject them either.

### Questions

**T**his Rashi is very difficult to understand. Our stay in *Mitzrayim* was not pleasant. Tortured and bled, oppressed and hounded, the Jews were treated far worse than beasts of burden. We had no rights. We had no life. We couldn’t choose our destiny or protect our children. What possible debt do we owe them?

But even more telling is that the *Mitzrim* weren’t doing us a favor by allowing us to stay in their land. We were the backbone of their economy. Their entire production was based on slave labor, and we were the slaves. They didn’t feed us for our good; they did it so that we could produce for them. They didn’t give us a place to sleep for our comfort; they did it so that we could be awakened at dawn to the crack of the whip and slave away in the sweltering heat. In plain language, we were property – owned by the *Mitzrim*, kept for their profit. Any good that they did for us was only for their selfish interests. Do we owe such people *ha’karas ha’tov*?

#### ספר דברים פרק כג

לא תתעב אדמי כי אחיך  
הוא לא תתעב מצרי כי גר  
היית בארצו:

*“You shall not reject an Edomite, for he is your brother; you shall not reject an Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in his land.” – Devarim 23:8*

#### רש"י על דברים פרק כג פסוק ח

לא תתעב מצרי -  
מכל וכל וע"פ שזרקו  
זכוריהם ליאור מה טעם  
שהיו לכם אכסניא בשעת  
הדחק לפיכך:

**Rashi - Do not reject the Egyptian completely, even though they threw the male infants into the Nile. They provided you with a dwelling place of sorts.**