

מעשה אבות ... סימן לבנים

חשוף ורוע קדשך וקרוב קין הנאולה. נקם נקמת דם עבדיך מאמה הרשעה ... (תפילת מעוז צור)

As Chanukah 5678 (1917) rapidly approached, the holy city of Jerusalem was thrown into turmoil. The first world war was still raging in the European theater, but the battle for Jerusalem was over. The ruling Turks of the Ottoman Empire began their retreat in early December 1917 as British General Edmund Allenby led his Egyptian Expeditionary Force (EEF) to the gates of the city. Overnight on December 8 and 9, the Ottoman Turks evacuated Jerusalem and handed its mayor, Hussein El-Husseini, a letter of surrender to give to the conquering British, ending 400 years of Ottoman rule over Jerusalem.

On the morning of December 9 - the first day of Chanukah - the mayor visited the American Colony, where a hospital nurse aware of the proper protocol for surrender, took a sheet from a hospital bed, tore it in two, and gave the mayor half to use as a white flag, held aloft on a broomstick. Back then, there was a code of honor, and a city's surrender was only accepted by officers on both sides with similar ranks. As mayor of the city, the honorable thing would have been for El-Husseini to meet with General Allenby to tender the city's surrender. But after enduring the full brunt of the British onslaught, El-Husseini was incensed at the Ottoman Governor who had fled like a coward, and decided to make the Turkish defeat and surrender in Jerusalem as humiliating as possible. As El-Husseini, flanked by a group of city dignitaries and an American photographer named Lewis Larson, made their way to British military headquarters, the delegation chanced upon two British soldiers, kitchen cooks in the 60th Division who were on a mission to find eggs for their commander's breakfast. Seizing the opportunity, El-Husseini immediately tendered the city's resignation to the cooks who were aghast and refused to accept the city's surrender.

Left with no choice, the delegation moved on and soon encountered two more British soldiers (from the same division), sergeants Sedgwick and Hurcomb, who were scouts for their unit. After being offered the white flag and letter, they too, refused to accept the surrender of Jerusalem but were willing to be photographed with the delegation and even accepted cigarettes from them. Years later, a monument was erected at the very spot where this chance meeting took place, as a memorial of the surrender of Jerusalem to the British army and the soldiers of the 60th division who fell in the first world war. The monument can still be found today behind Jerusalem's central bus station, in the Romema neighborhood.

After being further rejected by a British artillery officer, the delegation met Brigadier General C.F. Watson, commander of the 180th brigade. Brigadier Watson was surprised, but also honored, and immediately accepted the surrender of Jerusalem. The group quickly set up a small impromptu ceremony, and El-Husseini handed over the letter, officially surrendering the city. Following the ceremony, Watson informed his commanding officer, General John Shea, commander of the 60th division, that he had accepted the surrender of Jerusalem on behalf of the British command. When General Shea heard this, he was incensed and canceled the surrender to Watson insisting the code of honor demands that El-Husseini surrender to him.

Well, El-Husseini and his delegation were not too pleased with this development, but made their way again through the streets of Jerusalem and out the city gates where they surrendered to General Shea. Shea entered Jerusalem and subsequently informed General Allenby that he had accepted the surrender of Jerusalem. General Allenby was a morally upstanding man and an avid student of history. He understood the significance of the Holy City and was equally shocked and horrified to learn that its surrender was accepted by anyone other than himself - the Commanding General of all British Forces in the region.

He immediately canceled the first two surrenders and demanded that the city surrender to him and only him. At this point El-Husseini became ill and the third surrender took place without him. Historians believe that he became ill with pneumonia due to his frequent exposure to the cold December mornings, but his illness became exasperated due to the humiliation he suffered during the surrender of the city. He succumbed to his illness a short time later. Two days later, General Edmund Allenby walked through Jerusalem's Jaffa gate and declared martial law ushering in the era of the British Mandate in the region.

לא בחיל ולא ככה כי אם ברודי אמר ה' צבאות ... (זכרי' ב.ד-ה)

A PENETRATING ANALYSIS OF THE WEEKLY HAFTORAH BY AN UNEQUALLED HISTORIAN

Zechariah HaNavi, in the Haftorah, details a vision he had in which he beheld the sight of a golden menorah with seven branches protruding from it. Interestingly, the Navi then says that the word of Hashem came to Zerubavel saying that "Not by might, nor by power, but [only] by My spirit ...". It seems like the vision of the golden menorah and the statement of the mighty strength of Hashem go hand in hand.

R' Meir Simcha HaKohen z"l of Dvinsk (Imrei Daas) explains that Klal Yisroel is compared to an olive that is filled with oil, for just like oil doesn't mix with other liquids, Klal Yisroel is a pariah in the world, a nation separated from all the other nations. Furthermore, the menorah represents both a physical aspect, the actual flame of the menorah, as well as

a spiritual one - the light of the flame which serves as a representation of the light Klal Yisroel brings into the world.

Thus, the word of Hashem stating that nothing in the world matters in comparison to the holy spirit of Hashem, is a true connection between the golden menorah and the lack of physical might and power. Although the menorah is a physical entity, its use is purely spiritual, thereby teaching us that physicality isn't always the answer.

During the days of Chanukah, Torah Jews know that this sentiment is most certainly true. The few Maccabees overcame the mighty Yevanim - but not through physical strength. Rather, they were successful because the holy spirit of Hashem was with them.

ויאמר אלהם ראובן אל תשפכו דם השליכו אתו אל הבור הזה ... למען הציל אתו מיים וכו' (לו-כב)

Rashi explains based on a Medrash, that the words "למען הציל אותי" are obviously not Reuven's spoken words, but rather a spirit of Ruach Hakodesh testifying to the noble intentions of Reuven, the first-born son of Yaakov. What is the basis of this Medrash? Why is this so important to relate, and what can we learn from it?

The Sefas Emes z"l writes that there are times when a person does something good or abstains from doing evil, but he does so L'shem Shamayim. In other words, he does have good intentions. Yet, instead of seeing positive fruits of his labor, it appears as if his valiant efforts go up in smoke and the opposite of what he hoped occurs. The Torah is conveying here that one need not despair and become discouraged. He will eventually witness the positive results of his actions, no matter if it is on this world or in the next. When a person does something for Hashem, he only gains. Reuven acted courageously by trying to save Yosef, however, when he came back later to rescue him, Yosef was gone. Nevertheless, says the Torah, "למען הציל אותי" - a good result came out, as this was the catalyst for Yosef becoming the viceroy in Mitzrayim, ultimately saving them all.

What was Reuven's motivation? Rashi tells us that he told himself, "I'm the bechor, the first-born, and I will be blamed for Yosef's tragic demise. Therefore, I must not stand by idly." Perhaps, there's a message to be learned here. If individually and collectively throughout life, we would constantly internalize who we are, that we are all bnei malochim, then במהרה נחטא. In other words, not sinning because Hashem is All-Seeing and All-Knowing is admirable, but let's step it up a notch. As a princely Yid, an actual מלך בן, how can I sin? I am someone so special; it is beneath me to transgress and disobey Hashem.

Yehi Ratzon that our maasim will reflect who we intrinsically are, and with that clarity of heart and pureness of soul, may we merit to bring a true and everlasting nachas ruach to the Ribono shel Olam.

משל למה הדבר דומה

ויקה אדני יוסף אתו ויתנהו אל בית הסדר ... (ל"ג-ב)

משל: On the first night of Chanukah, 1944, excitement gripped the inmates of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp as they watched R' Yisroel Shapira z"l, the Bluzhever Rebbe, prepare to light a single candle in honor of the chag. The inmates gathered around the makeshift menorah in what felt like the darkest setting in the world. Then, the Rebbe pronounced the three berachos and lit a flame which seemed to shine brighter than the brightest light in the world.

One inmate turned to the Rebbe with tears in his eyes. "Rebbe," he cried out, "how can you recite the beracha of Shehecheyanu under such circumstances? How can you thank Hashem for helping us reach a time like this?"

"The same question occurred to me as I was about to recite the beracha," replied the Rebbe, "but then I remembered that

standing here with me is a large group of Jewish prisoners determined to perform a mitzvah despite their hideous and inhumane situation, and their captors' efforts to break their spirit. This was reason enough. Thus, I decided to recite the beracha of Shehecheyanu with great fervor."

נמשל: The parsha of Vayeishev coincides with Chanukah as they both share a similar theme. Yosef was stuck in a mess that seemed to darken his entire world in the worst way possible. Yet despite his predicament, he remained strong and unwavering until he was finally redeemed. The Jewish people experienced a similar theme during the story of Chanukah. For this reason, we commemorate that redemption by lighting up the dark night and illuminating the ambiguous galus we live in. It is for us to take a lesson - to learn from that era - and in a more individual way, learn from Yosef to better ourselves, one at a time. This will bring the final redemption soon!

והדליקו נרות בהצרות קדשך וקבעו שמנת ימי תנוכה אלו להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול (על הנסים)

EDITORIAL AND INSIGHTS ON MIDDOS TOVOS FROM THE WELLSPRINGS OF R' GUTTMAN - RAMAT SHLOMO

דרגה יתירה

Aren't the days of Chanukah such an exciting time? Our children are counting down the days and the adults as well. On Chanukah, aside from the parties and the doughnuts and all the latkes that we eat, there is something more. Much more! The Yom Tov of Chanukah is the time that we feel ruchnius in the air. The 36 candles that we light in 8 days tap into the 36 hours of light that Hashem created on Day One of Creation. That light was so holy and so spiritual that Hashem hid it away for the tzaddikim in the world to come. But once a year that light comes into the world and that happens on Chanukah!

These are not regular days, my dear friends. These are days of miracles and revelation. These are days that we can feel the holiness of Hashem's light and spread it to others. One fascinating thing about light that we do not see with any other material in this world is the fact that when you give it away to someone else, you lose nothing. In fact, when a candle ignites another candle, not only does it not lose any fire, but the fire gets stronger at the place where the candle shares its light. When you touch one wick to another, the fire becomes stronger, and when the original candle is removed, it does not lose any light!

A candle is compared to a neshama. A neshama has the power to light up the light of another neshama, and at the place where they unite, the bond gets stronger. One of the great ways to spread the light of Chanukah is through thanking the people that we owe Hakaras HaTov to. In fact, we say at the very end of Al HaNissim, "V'kavu shemonas yemei Chanukah ailu l'hodos u'lehallel l'Shimcha HaGadol." Chazal apportioned these 8 days of Chanukah to thank and praise Your Great Name. We are meant to thank and praise Hashem for 8 days! Of course, this spills over to all the people Hashem put into our lives that we must be grateful for. It is to them, as well, that we can use this time of great light to praise and thank for all they do for us.

May we use these special days to shower those that we appreciate with the knowledge of how much we appreciate them.