

Lessons From The Chanukah Story

based on the weekly Shmuess given by HaRav Shaya Cohen, Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva Zichron Aryeh

לעילוי נשמת גיטל בת הרב אליעזר מנוח | הרב יוסף חיים בן מאיר | רפאל חיים דוב בן בן-ציון שלום | ר' ברוך בן ר' יהודה | שרה בת ר' יחזקאל | לרפואה שלמה יוסף בן מלכה מטל

The Medrash tells us, “Bogrus, the general of Antiochus’s army, ran to Antiochus after Matisyahu and his son’s decided to fight. He said to King Antiochus, ‘If we attack the Jewish people with a small army and we lose, your kingdom will suffer embarrassment.’ Bogrus suggested that King Antiochus should send a letter to all of his cities requesting the people to come fight the Jewish people. Ten million, eight hundred thousand people gathered to fight Matisyahu and his small army. Bogrus said to Matisyahu, ‘You have no chance, your G-d said He would not bring a Mabul, and the angel Gavriel cannot burn us, as we spread the blood of pigs around us.’ At this point Klal Yisrael lifted up their eyes to Hashem and said, ‘Not for our sake Hashem, not for us, but for Your name give honor. Hashem, save us so You will not be disgraced in front of the Goyim, and they do not say that Hashem is unable to beat us.’ Hashem responded, ‘My thought is greater, I am concerned about you.’ As the Pasuk says: Hashem will not forsake his nation.”

A tremendous insight into the greatness of Klal Yisrael can be learned from the above Medrash. Klal Yisrael was facing an army of almost eleven million people. Yet despite their lives being at stake, their main concern was Hashem’s honor, and not the personal danger that they were encountering. This speaks volumes of the depth of appreciation of Kavod Shamayim that lies within the Jewish soul.

The Medrash continues, “Klal Yisrael was looking towards the east to see if their salvation would come from the Persians. Matisyahu got angry with them and quoted the Pasuk, ‘Cursed

is the man that trusts in people, and turns his heart from Hashem, praiseworthy is the man who trusts in Hashem.”

Matisyahu’s criticism of Klal Yisrael necessitates some explanation. Klal Yisrael’s only concern was Kavod Shamoyim. We can assume they were looking towards the east to see if Hashem was sending the Yeshua through the Persians. Where in their looking towards the east for their salvation do we see any trust in people? Why did Matisyahu feel that they were in violation of the above Pesukim? We see from here that on the highest level, even merely looking towards a specific place to see if Hashem is sending our salvation through that means is a breach in Bitachon. The highest level demands a complete focus on Hashem to the exclusion of everything else.

The Medrash continues and says, “Matisyahu said, ‘We have twelve people, we will take on the enemy and trust that Hashem will do a miracle for us.’ They fasted and davened for compassion from Hashem, then they got up and strengthened their resolve and fought the enemy.”

It is apparent from here that Matisyahu was doing Hishtadlus and that it was not a violation of Bitachon. So why was looking to the east for the Persians a deficiency in Bitachon?

It is clearly evident that the correct outlook on Hishtadlus is that our actions have nothing to do with the outcome. In addition, we are not even looking for the victory to come through our means of Hishtadlus.



Shir HaShirim Insights

In loving memory of Mr. Marvin Halpern

"The Dudaim yielded their fragrance, and at our doors are all choice fruits; both freshly picked and long-stored have I hidden, my beloved, for you." (Shir Hashirim 7:14)

The Seforim bring a perplexing Medrash Pliah: ***The Dudaim yielded their fragrance*** - these are the Dudaim of Reuven, ***and at our doors are all choice fruits*** - this refers to the candle of Chanukah, ***both freshly picked and long-stored have I hidden, my beloved, for you.***

Perhaps we can suggest the following explanation: In Bereshis, the Torah tells us that Reuven found Dudaim which his mother then gave to Rochel in exchange for Yaakov's being with her. Chazal tell us that caused Yissachar to be conceived. We say in the Piyut after lighting the Chanukah candles: "Bnei Binah" established eight days of song and praise. Who are the Bnei Binah who established Chanukah?

The Pasuk says: And from the sons (B'nei) who knew how to interpret (Binah) the signs of the times. (Divrei HaYamim I 12:33) Rashi in Devarim (33:18) brings from the Medrash Rabah that this means they know how to intercalate the years and to fix the day of New Moon.

Based upon the above we can explain the first half of our Pasuk: ***The Dudaim yielded their fragrance*** - these are the Dudaim of Reuven, - which caused the birth of Yissachar whose descendants were the ones who established the years and months - ***and at our doors are all are all choice fruits*** - this refers to the candle of Chanukah - celebrated on a specific day of the month that they established.

With this idea we can explain the rest of the pasuk as well: ***...both freshly picked and long-stored have I hidden, my beloved, for you.*** Rashi explains: Both new and old. Those which the Sages innovated, with the old ones, which You wrote for me. The Ramban (Devarim 4:2) explains that Chazal cannot add a Yom Tov to the Jewish calendar unless they find a hint to it in the Torah. The Ramban in Bamidbar (8:2) explains where Chanukah is hinted to in the Torah. So, Chanukah, which was established by the sons of Yissachar who was born as a result of the Dudaim of Reuven is the perfect example of a Mitzvah innovated by the Sages which Hashem had hidden in the Torah for them to find.



ELIEZER INSTITUTE Emunah Highlights

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When my present state is bleak, my emotional depression leaves no room for the logical reasons I know should give me hope that my situation will change, based on my Emunah. What is the best way to deal with this?

The obvious way to deal with this is to prevent the original depressive feelings in the first place, but how is this possible when, in fact, your present state is bleak?

Well... is it really?

On the Pasuk, "And Yisroel said, 'Why did you cause me harm?'" (Bereshis 43:6), the Medrash (Bereshis Rabah 91:10) says: "Yaakov never said anything in vain except for this. Hashem said, 'I am busy crowning his son in Mitzrayim and he says, 'Why have you caused me harm?'" Regarding this the verse (Yeshayah 40:27) states, 'My way is hidden from G-d...'"

The Ramchal (Da'as Tevunos 286) explains: The entire time Yaakov Avinu was suffering over Yosef's separation from him, Hashem was only setting the process in motion to crown Yosef in order to provide Yaakov a life of peace. However, since it was a profound plan, Yaakov experienced pain. This teaches us a general rule: Every time Hashem wishes to uplift a person or the world, behold every time good occurs - it only occurs and arrives, only through the depth of a hidden plan, and therefore it will be preceded by suffering. And it is like the concept that Chazal (Berachos 5a) teach, "Three good presents Hashem gave Klal Yisroel and all of them He gave only through suffering."

It is extremely hard to focus on the many reasons to believe one's bleak state will change, however, by honestly analyzing our present state according to the guidance of Chazal, we will realize that we need no change to take place. In fact, Hashem is right now saying, "I am busy crowning you - My dear child for whom I created the entire world just to benefit - with success and you are saying, 'Why have You caused me harm?!'"