



QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

WITH
RAV AVIGDOR MILLER ZT"l



CHANUKAH | חנוכה



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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

CHANUKAH | חנוכה

Practical Lesson of Chanukah



What is a practical lesson that we could take out of Chanukah?



I'll tell you one important lesson. We say to Hashem about our forefathers who fought the Yevanim: "הִנֵּנִי אֶת הַיָּנִים רִבֵּת אֶת רִיבָם" – You, Hashem, judged their quarrels; You fought their fight" (*Al Hanissim*). Now, there's a question here. Because it wasn't *their* quarrel. It wasn't the quarrel of the Am Yisrael. It was *Your* quarrel, Hashem. Because, after all, the Greeks weren't interested in killing Jews. They wanted the Jews to stop keeping the Torah, that's all. If the Am Yisrael would have been willing to behave like the Greeks, they wouldn't have bothered them. So why was the Am Yisrael fighting? They weren't fighting for their safety; they were fighting for Hashem's word. It was for *k'vod Shamayim*, for the

honor of Hashem, that they fought. So it wasn't *רַבְּתָּ אֶת רִיבֶךָ*. It was *רַבְּתָּ אֶת* – Hashem, You fought Your own fight! You fought *Your* quarrel!

But no, we don't say that. We say *רַבְּתָּ אֶת רִיבֶךָ* – You, Hashem, fought *their* fight! Because our forefathers had fulfilled what we say, “*עֲשֵׂה רָצוֹנוֹ*” – Make the will of Hashem your will” (Avos 2:4). Whatever Hashem wanted – that's what they wanted! They weren't merely fighting for what Hashem wanted. What Hashem wanted became their *ratzon*, their own will.

That's a tremendous achievement – to feel that we are keeping the Torah because the will of Hashem is *our* will. Not only that we're doing Hashem's will, but it's *our* will! *כִּי הֵם חַיֵּינוּ* – The Torah is our lifeblood. It's more than our lives. We give our lives for the Torah. So we see that even though they were fighting for *k'vod Shamayim*, but they were fighting for their *ratzon* at the same time.

And that's why it's so important, when you see that it was not only *רַבִּים בְּיַד מַעֲטִים*, but it was *רָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים*. That's important! It was a *kiddush Hashem* that the *tzaddikim* won out. It was great *kiddush Hashem*! It says *עָשִׂיתָ שֵׁם גָּדוֹל בְּעוֹלָמְךָ*. When *tzaddikim* fight the fight of Hashem, when they're willing to give up their lives for Hashem, that's making the name of Hashem great in this world.

We say, *עַל יְדֵי כַהֲנֵיךָ הַקְדּוּשִׁים*. The miracle came by the hands of the holy Kohanim. The Kohanim! Kohanim should fight?! Kohanim are *ovdei Hashem*; they have no business with fighting. But these Kohanim went out with *חֶרֶב וְחִנִּית*, the sword and the shield, and they fought because they were fighting for Hashem's honor. And therefore, Hashem says, “That's a *kiddush Hashem*.”

And that's why the Chanukah lights are *עֲדוֹת לְכָל בְּאֵי עוֹלָם שֶׁהַשְׁכֵּינָה שׁוֹרָה בִּישְׂרָאֵל*, a testimony to the whole world that Hashem dwells among the Jewish people. Because we are the nation that lives for Hashem. We live

for the Shechinah. Our entire purpose is only *k'vod Shamayim*, glorifying the name of Hashem.

And that's the greatness of Chanukah. It teaches that our nation is dedicated to *k'vod Shamayim* more than anything else, even more than our own lives. We live only for Hashem.

The Chashmona'im's Mesiras Nefesh



On Chanukah we hear all the time about the *mesiras nefesh* of the Chashmona'im. Which *mitzvah* could someone take upon himself nowadays to do with *mesiras nefesh*?



Well, it's a good idea to accept all of them. But if you're looking for one, then look in the Chumash (Devarim 6:5): **וְאָהַבְתָּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּכָל** **לִבְּךָ וּבְכָל נַפְשְׁךָ וּבְכָל מְאֹדְךָ** — The *mitzvah* of loving Hashem. That *mitzvah* is one of the most neglected of all *mitzvos*!

And if you want to start on it right away, without delay, so get busy right now thinking of all the things that happened to other people. There are so many things that happened to other people that didn't happen to you.

Love Hashem that you never had an eye operation. That's enough of a reason to love Him. You never had an eye operation?! When someone has an eye operation, he has to go with a bandage on his eyes for weeks and weeks. You can say, "*Baruch Hashem!* I love You, Hashem, that I never had an eye operation."

Some people never had a bone broken — you have to love Hashem for that. “אחת מהנה לא נשברה, שמר כל עצמותיו” — He guarded all of your bones, נשמר כל עצמותיו — and not one was never broken” (Tehillim 34:21). Did you ever think about that? You never had a broken bone in your life?! Yes, there are some people who never broke a bone. And they have to love Hashem for that.

Get busy now; don't waste any more time. This *mitzvah* actually requires everything you have — you have to love Hashem בכל לבבך ובכל נפשך. But if you're not going to do that, at least a little bit you should love Him. And it's not too difficult. On a small scale, it's certainly possible. And of course, if you keep on practicing, you'll become more and more of an expert.

If you're interested in *mesiras nefesh*, if you wish to accept one *mitzvah* to do בכל נפשך, with *mesiras nefesh*, that's it. And make up your mind that when you're 119 years and 11 months and 29 days old — you have one more day left to live, and you're thinking, “My time is up already? Is this fair? I planned on living another thousand years! I have to go away from this world already?! I never agreed to do that. I never signed up in the *chevrah shtarbers*. So why should I have to leave the world?” — at that moment think, “Hashem, I love You anyhow. Even though You're taking me now, I love You anyhow!”

Remember this, *rabbosai*. At your last moment, think this thought. “You're taking my life away, Hashem — and I love You anyhow.” The Gemara says that בכל נפשך means אפילו בשעה שנוטל את נפשך — Even when He's taking away your life, you have to love Him anyhow. Say, “I love You anyhow!” Oh, it's a very great *zechus* if you'll think that way. You're lucky you came tonight just to hear that — to get ready for your last moment.

Pray to Hashem that you shouldn't be in a coma in your last moment, that you should have full awareness. And just before you breathe your last breath, you should say, “I love You, Hashem.”

Of course, you shouldn't wait for that. Don't wait! Practice it beforehand. It's not so easy to love Hashem when you're about to die. So while you're healthy — you're walking in the street, and breathing the air, and you're full of food, and your blood is coursing through your veins — that's when you should learn to love Hashem. When you practice up that way, so in your last minute it's easier.

And in that last minute, you'll acquire a *zechus gedolah ad laShamayim* — a tremendous merit! And that's called dying with *mesiras nefesh*, with a love of Hashem.

Growing from Chanukah



The Rav said tonight that the suffering we endure from the nations is a benefit to us. How could the decrees of Antiochus during the time of Chanukah be considered a benefit if they kept us from observing our religion?



You have to know that there was a tiny group of people among us who sought to adopt the ways of the Greeks — and had there been a stronger enthusiasm among the nation as a whole, then such a group could have never arisen. It's like a sore that arises in your mouth or somewhere else on your body because your body is not sufficiently vigorous. If your body had all the vitamins and other requirements needed for perfect health, then it's quite possible that this sore would never have happened. And so too, if the nation had been healthy and vigorous enough in their love of Hashem, then such a painful sore, a group like the Hellenizers, could never have arisen among us.

And therefore, the people were given now an exercise in virtue — it became very hard to be a Jew, and they began to sacrifice for Judaism. And that brought them back to their original greatness! And so, there's no question that the decrees, the *gezeiros* of Antiochus, were a very big benefit for the Jewish people.

The Chanukah Miracle



Chazal tell us that one of the *nissim* in the Beis Hamikdash was that the *ner ma'aravi* always burned longer than it should have. So why was it such a big *neis* that on Chanukah the oil burned for eight days?



No, no. It didn't always happen. It happened for some time, but later on it stopped. By the end of the second Beis Hamikdash, that *neis* didn't occur any longer. And the *neis* of Chanukah was a different kind of *neis*. The *neis* of Chanukah was a sudden thing, a big surprise. A small amount of oil, which should have only burned for one day, continued to burn and lasted eight days. They needed eight days to prepare the new oil, and the small amount of oil lasted eight days. So that was a separate *neis* from the *neis* of the *ner ma'aravi*. And when they saw the *neis* Chanukah, they went wild with *simchah* because every *neis* is a *matanah*. A *neis* is a gift from Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

I'll explain that to you. The *Chovos Halevavos* at the end of *Sha'ar Habechinah* says the following: Among the biggest gifts that Hashem gave our nation, the two most precious ones are the Torah and *nissim*. Do you hear that?! A *neis* is a tremendous gift. The world doesn't

understand that. People think that a *neis* is merely something that happens when we're in trouble, and Hashem comes and saves us. No, Hashem can save us in other ways — without a *neis*. What a *neis* is, is a gift of *emunah*. *Nissim* are a shot-in-the-arm of *emunah*. Instead of saving us in a natural way, He puts a *neis* there, as a *tovah* for us. A *neis* is a tremendous *giluy Shechinah* to put into our minds a big dose of *emunah*.

And therefore, we should make sure to study the *nissim* and think about them as much as possible. Hashem said, לְמַעַן תִּסְפֹּר בְּאָזְנֵי בְנֶךָ וּבֶן בְּנֶךָ. Hashem wants you to always talk over the *nissim* that happened. Because even though you don't see them right now, just remembering the *nissim* is a tremendous benefit that is on the same level as Matan Torah. The *Chovos Halevavos* says that the Torah and *nissim* are, side-by-side, the two greatest gifts that Hashem gave the Jewish nation.

Mattisyahu's Weapons



Why is it that we find that Mattisyahu and other *tzaddikim* in the older generations carried swords, but today a *rosh yeshivah* would never think about owning a weapon?



The truth is that not only *roshei yeshivah* but even bums shouldn't carry weapons today. Because it's not necessary. Unless you're going to walk at night through Bedford-Stuyvesant or through Harlem — but then a sword wouldn't help you anyway. You'd need a shotgun. Or an armored car. Because they also have shotguns, so what will your shotgun help you?

Besides, Mattisyahu wasn't in the habit of carrying a sword. It was only because he knew what was going to happen that day, so he put a sword under his cloak. But in general, it doesn't pay to carry weapons. If you're a man of peace and you're not armed, you're more likely to survive. Once you pull a knife, you can't tell what the other party might do. He'll get desperate, and who knows what he'll do!

That's also why I don't approve of learning karate for self-defense purposes. What good is it that you know the ways and means of tackling an opponent if the opponent is standing behind a door ready to jump you as you pass by? And these bums won't play by the rules of karate. They hurl knives. Some of them have learned how to hurl knives from a distance. And the knife reaches the victim with the point first. They hurl knives and they shoot guns. So what is it going to help if you learn karate? Karate won't help against the bullet.

The best karate is to stay home at night. Don't go out. And if you're stuck and you're confronted by bums, the best self-defense is to just keep quiet and empty out your pockets and give them everything. That's the best karate.

I always say over the Chinese proverb, "The biggest hero is the one who survives. The one who runs away – that's the hero."

Chanukah Gifts



**The evening of December 25th is the first night of Chanukah.
Should Jews refrain from giving gifts that evening?**

A:

My friends, if you won't give gifts on Chanukah, you won't be transgressing any *mitzvah d'Oraysa* or any *mitzvah d'Rabbanan*. There's no practice, no *minhag*, that Jews give gifts on Chanukah. Chanukah gifts is an American translation of gentile ways.

Now, I'm not saying that if you want to give gifts on Chanukah that you shouldn't give. But don't feel that you're doing a noble and holy thing if you give Chanukah gifts.

Q:

Should someone buy gifts for his children on Chanukah?

A:

There's no harm, but you must be careful that it shouldn't enter into the realm of the season's holiday spirit. It shouldn't be done because of the general atmosphere of the street, because they're doing something like that. You must beware of that attitude.

So, to give cash is a much better idea. Chanukah *gelt* is a well-known *minhag*, so give cash if you can. I don't say it's wrong to give gifts; nothing wrong with giving gifts. But make sure, in your own mind at least, that you're divorced from any thoughts of the season.

Chanukah is not the season to give gifts, no, no. It's not the gift season. You can give gifts anytime. You can give gifts on Shavuot, too, and Purim and Pesach. And if you want to give gifts on Chanukah, as well, I'm not going to tell you no. But if you're going to make a big fuss about it, and make it into an ideal, that Chanukah is the *time* to give gifts, then you might as well sing carols and put up a Chanukah tree, because that's what it really is.

Chanukah Parties



Is it important to make birthday parties for children?



It's unimportant. I'm not going to say you shouldn't make birthday parties, but I certainly will say that it's unimportant.

Make Chanukah parties for children. Make *Chamishah Asar B'Shvat* parties for children. Make Purim parties for children. Besides the big party that you make for everybody else on these days, you can make a little party for children, too. If you want, it's a good idea to make Rosh Chodesh parties for children. But birthday parties? I won't say it's a good thing to make it. I'm not going to discourage it because I don't want to make people unhappy, but I won't say it's a good thing. Certainly, it's not necessarily a good thing.

Al Hanissim 1



Why do we mention the idea of רָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צְדִיקִים, the wicked falling into the hands of the righteous, in *Al Hanissim*? Isn't the real miracle that it was רַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים, a multitude falling into the hands of the few?



Now, pay attention. Two things are said in *Al Hanissim*. One is the *neis* of רַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים, the miracle of a multitude falling into the hands of the few. That's one miracle. After all, the Greeks had a big and strong

army, and the Jews didn't have any army at all. That's one *neis* — the miracle of **רַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים** and **גְּבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים**, the strong into the hands of the weak and the many into the hands of the few. That's a big *neis*, after all.

But the second *neis* is not only that the *resha'im* were defeated, but the added *simchah*, the added happiness, that they were defeated by *tzaddikim*. And that's why we go out of our way to say **רָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים**. The wicked were defeated by the righteous! A tremendous *kiddush Hashem*!

Look, when a *rasha* is walking in the street and he falls down dead, so we say “*Baruch Hashem!*” We say, “*Baruch Hashem, kein yirbu!*” But suppose a *rasha* starts up with a *tzaddik*; he starts up with a *chassidishe* boy, a skinny little *chassidishe* boy. And this little boy takes his little fist and gives the *rasha* a hit, and the *rasha* falls down dead. That's a *kiddush Hashem*, no question about it! It's **רָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים** — the wicked one was felled by the righteous one! That itself is a special *simchah*!

So, one *neis* is that of **רַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים**, the many falling into the hands of the few; but the other is a *neis* that the *tzaddikim* had their *hatzlachah*, their success. We want to see *tzaddikim* have *hatzlachah* in this world! And therefore, we say **זָרִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתֶךָ**, the wicked sinners fell into the hands of those who study Your Torah. Because it's a great happiness to see the righteous win out in this world.

Al Hanissim 2



If the most important aspect of the Chanukah *neis* is that the oil burned for eight days and not the military victory, why don't we mention the miracle of the oil in Al Hanissim?



I'll tell you a little anecdote that was said over by the Alter of Slabodka. It says in the Torah: "זָכוֹר אֶת הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר יֵצְאתָ מִמִּצְרַיִם — Remember this day when you went out of Mitzrayim ... הַיּוֹם אֲתָם יֵצְאוּ בְּחוֹדֶשׁ הָאָבִיב — It was a spring day when you left Mitzrayim" (*Shemos* 13:3). Hakadosh Baruch Hu told the Jewish people to remember that they were taken out of Mitzrayim during the month of spring. The Alter said that we see that Hakadosh Baruch Hu wants to remind us that it was nice weather when we went out of Mitzrayim.

So here you have a people who were enslaved for so many years בְּחוֹמֹת וּבִלְבָּנִים, with mortar and bricks and עֲבֹדַת פֶּרֶךְ, backbreaking labor. For two hundred and ten years they couldn't leave Mitzrayim; and finally, the time comes to go out — so let's say there was a blizzard. So what?! They would walk out of Mitzrayim singing in the blizzard! So, you're going to stop and take note of the fact that it happened to be a beautiful spring day?!

So the Alter said, yes. Even in a mountain of kindness that someone is giving you, you shouldn't overlook even one grain of kindness. And the fact that the *geulah* from Mitzrayim took place on a beautiful spring day — they were walking out and singing, and then they sang אֲזַיֵּשִׁיר, and it was beautiful all around; nature was blooming; it was Nissan — that helped, too. Yes, that was part of the enjoyment.

And therefore, although the *neis* of Chanukah was nothing but that the oil lasted for eight days, it was still a lot of fun beating the enemy. It was a lot of fun when a handful of men under Yehuda Hamaccabi rushed forward with swords and hacked down an army that was far superior to them. And they left behind a field full of dead bodies. It was a lot of fun! It was an enjoyment, and we don't neglect that. We speak about it and thank Hakadosh Baruch Hu for that, as well.

But because we want to be sure to emphasize the real *neis*, we don't mix the *neis* of the oil into it. We only hint at it: **וְהִדְלִיקוּ נֵרוֹת בְּחִצּוֹת קֶדְשִׁיד** – They kindled *neiros*, too. But we don't want to speak about it at length in *Al Hanissim* because then it would lose its character as being the most important point. We defeated the enemy, and we *also* had the miracle of the oil?! No, no. That would be belittling the *neis* of the oil.

So the *neis* of Chanukah is played out on its own in our homes. Every night it's a ceremony that stands out on its own, and nothing but the oil is commemorated at that ceremony. Only that in Shemoneh Esrei we can afford to mention the other things, too. But we don't mix them because then you'd be making a mistake about what Chanukah is really about.

Al Hanissim 3



Why is *Al Hanissim* mostly about the victory over the Yevanim and not about the miracle of the oil?



You must realize that the miracle of the oil was an especial manifestation of the presence of Hashem among His beloved nation. But the people, at the time when they were rescued, when they expressed their *l'hodos ul'hallel l'shimcha hagadol*, what were they thanking for? Were they thanking Hashem for their spiritual salvation? No, they were thanking Him for their physical salvation.

And therefore, we have two levels. The truth is what the Gemara says: *Mai Chanukah?* What is Chanukah? And Rashi explains the question: *Al eizeh neis kav'uha* – For which *neis* did they establish Chanukah? And

the Gemara says there it's because of the miracle of the oil. That was the most important feature of the miracle. But we should never lose sight of the fact of the physical *porkan* — our battle victories and the physical redemption we achieved from our enemies. If we lose sight of that because of the greater *chessed*, because of the miracle of the oil, so we're making a great error. They were very excited about the fact that they won the war — that's what they thanked Hashem for. And therefore, people should always remember that the *chessed* of *gashmiyus* is a very important *chessed*.

However, there's another factor even more important, and that factor is as follows. What are the true *neiros* of Hakadosh Baruch Hu? The *menorah* of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the Jewish people. *Neir Hashem nishmas adam*. We are His lamp. We are the light for the nations. We are the real miracle — the flame that will never go out. The Jewish people is eternal. Forever and ever the fire of Torah, of idealism, of loyalty to Hakadosh Baruch Hu will burn in our hearts. That's the real *menorah* of Chanukah.

Therefore, when Hakadosh Baruch Hu rescued our people after all those wars against the mighty armies, it was this *menorah* that didn't go out. We, the *menorah* of Hashem, survived.

Only that to appreciate this *menorah* it was necessary for the *neis* to happen inside the Beis Hamikdash, too. But they're all one *neis*. We are the *menorah* that doesn't go out. We'll never be extinguished. And so, the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash burned for eight days to show us that Hakadosh Baruch Hu's Shechinah rests on us and will rest on us forever.

So therefore, when we speak about the miracles of the victories over our enemy, we should feel exactly like we're talking about the candles, the lamps that never went out. They're one and the same thing. Only that one explains the other.

Chinuch on Chanukah



What preventive measure can we do now to avoid our children falling into the hands of missionaries or other foreign ideologies when they grow up?



The most effective method is to influence Jewish children to love their people. Logical arguments are not suitable for children at a young age. We don't go into such details with *tayereh* little boys and girls and teach them to dispute with missionaries. No, what we must do is teach Jewish children to love their Yiddishkeit — that's the best preventive measure.

When a boy just learns Gemara, for instance, even if he's a *lamdan*, but if there's no idealism there, if it's just a matter of getting good marks or of being praised for being a *lamdan*, it's very dry to him. And now along comes somebody who will teach him fake idealism and inspire him with false inspirations, false idealism, false *derech eretz*, so-to-speak, to love your fellow man, so-to-speak. The truth is that it's all garbage — they don't love anybody except themselves — but he is deceived by that because he didn't hear about it in at home. So he thinks that Judaism is dry-as-dust, full of things that have no spirituality, and so he doesn't get any inspiration from it. He doesn't love his people. It doesn't mean he will become, *chas v'shalom*, a *meshumad*, but if he doesn't love his people, then he's vulnerable to outside influences.

A Jewish child must learn idealism — it's a very important element. Idealism is a very important subject, and you must know how to teach it. Every parent can undertake to make his child a lover of Jews, an **אוהב עמו**

יִשְׂרָאֵל. He should love the Jewish nation, to see the beauty of everything in the Am Yisrael.

When Chanukah comes, don't merely teach him to light the candles, to be a *מְהַדְרִין מִן הַמְהַדְרִין*, to use *shemen zayis*, to make a *brachah* correctly, to have his own *menorah* — all that is wonderful, but it's not enough. You must teach him the background of the Chanukah story, the heroism of our forefathers who fought and gave their lives. Inspire him! That's already a preparation for the battle against the influence of the nations. You must inspire the child. You have to talk to him.

Of course, we have to keep all the *halachos* and *minhagim*, everything, but you have to add the explanation. Everything should be full of idealism; and by teaching the child the ideals of the Torah, then he will be 100% warned and armed against other foreign ideologies.



חנוכה

CHANUKAH

SUFFERING OF CHANUKAH



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SUFFERING OF CHANUKAH

Part I. Suffering of the Greats

Re-evaluating the Miracles

When we contemplate the story of Chanukah, it is important to first dispose of a common misconception. People have the impression that the *neis Chanukah* marks a celebration of a triumphant victory — our enemies were vanquished, and the Jews in Eretz Yisrael were now finally able to live in peace. That's what many of us think.

But that's an error — the truth is that after the *neis* happened, there were even more *tzaros* and over a longer duration than before. You know, the battles of the Chashmona'im against their enemies lasted thirty years, and what happened on Chanukah took place at the beginning of this period; about five years, or four years, after the war began, which means that for twenty-five years or more they continued fighting.

And during all those years, the people continued to be persecuted by the Syrians and the Hellenizing Jews, the Misyavnim. Many, many

Jews were tortured, and many lost their lives during these twenty-five years after the *neis shemen* occurred. And our heroes, the Chashmona'im, fell in battle too; all the brothers were killed eventually, one after the other.

I'm telling you this because it's important for understanding the entire subject of Chanukah. We must keep in mind that the *neis* of the *shemen*, the little bit of oil that lasted eight days, didn't come in the midst of victory. It came amidst great suffering. And so, we must re-evaluate the place that the *neis shemen* occupies in the framework of the events as they took place.

Slaughtering Syrians and Sycophants

Everyone knows the story of how the rebellion against the Syrian Greeks began; it's related in the book of Maccabim, the *Sefer Chashmona'im*, how a Syrian officer summoned the Jews of Modi'in to come forth and offer up a sacrifice on an idolatrous altar. And when one Jew, a sycophant, stepped forward to perform the offering, Mattisyahu pulled his sword from under his coat — he had prepared for this moment — and plunged it into the heart of that renegade Jew; and then for good measure he finished off the Syrian officer, too. That's how the story began.

But it was just the beginning. The Jews immediately had to escape to the mountains; they had to leave their homes and hide out in caves in the wilderness. And some even blamed Mattisyahu for that. Some of his own people were dumbfounded at what he did; they were shouting at him, "Are you crazy? To bring such *tzaros* upon us?! גְּזֵרוֹת עֲבִירָא דְּבִטְלָא — A decree eventually will be abolished (*Kesubos* 3b); sooner or later the *gezeiros* always pass, but now you are bringing down the wrath of Antiochus on our heads. We must leave our homes now and live like hunted animals in the desert! And who knows how many of us will survive because of what you did!"

Running Into Danger

Now, we shouldn't hear these words and imagine that Mattisyahu acted carelessly. Mattisyahu was certainly a *ben Torah*. וְזָרִים בֵּינָה עוֹסְקִי תוֹרָתָךְ, it says. You can be sure that Mattisyahu wasn't just a hothead looking for some excitement. He was a *talmid chacham* who acted with forethought, with *cheshbon*. He saw that the Jewish nation in Eretz Yisrael was at its breaking point; the people were collapsing under the pressure of the Misyavnim, and soon all would be lost. And therefore, Mattisyahu and his fellow *talmidei chachamim* had calculated beforehand that it had to be done — they had to put the brakes on this downward spiral.

And they knew what would happen — they understood what it meant to incur the wrath of a king with an army. It meant *tzaros*, a lot of *tzaros*. Mattisyahu and his *chaveirim* were clear-eyed about the consequences of defending the honor of Hashem, and they willingly accepted all the consequences. They were ready for everything. And those consequences came — *everything* came.

And don't think they accepted *tzaros* merely for other people to endure. Mattisyahu and his sons were at the front of the battle. They didn't stand in the back and give orders; Mattisyahu's life was in danger all the time, until he finally died. And his sons lived the rest of their lives battling in the mountains; they were killed one after the other fighting for Hashem.

Blessing in Babylon

Now, we must understand an important point; they didn't *have* to die. The story of Chanukah took place in Eretz Yisrael, but we must know that not all Jews were in Eretz Yisrael at that time. There was a very big *yishuv* of Jews in Bavel — it could very well be that they were even more numerous in Bavel than in Eretz Yisrael. Jews had come back from *galus*

Bavel and settled in Eretz Yisrael. But not the majority – the majority of Jews remained in Bavel.

And in Bavel there was no persecution; there were no Hellenizers ruining the people. The Gemara (*Pesachim* 56a) says, בְּנֵהֲרֵדְעָא דְּלִיכָא מִינֵן – In Nehardea, the main town where Jews lived in Bavel, there were no *minim*. They didn't have any Christians, or Tzedukim; they didn't have anybody but Jews. That's how it was in Bavel.

Eretz Yisrael, on the other hand, was a land that was favored with all kinds of *tzaros*. It's like today – the worst *apikorsim* in the world are in Eretz Yisrael today. That you must know – there is nothing as poisonous in the world as the Israeli Hebrew press against religious Jews. That is how it always was because the land of *kedushah* always presents the greatest *nisyonos*; the greatest obstacles are there. But Bavel was a country where you could live, and nobody would bother you. You could keep Yiddishkeit; nobody would bother you.

Accepting Affliction

So the question is, if Mattisyahu was interested in living a life of *shleimus*, a life of Torah and *mitzvos* without being hindered, he could have run away. Many Jews fled; this, we know. Every time there were *tzaros*, many Jews fled to Bavel. And so, Mattisyahu could have gone with all his children to Bavel and lived a quiet, happy life. He needed the *tzaros* of battling the Yevanim like a hole in the head.

But Mattisyahu was a leader, and he didn't want to forsake the rest of the people. There were many Jews who would remain there, and they would be subjected to the pressure and influence of the *resha'im*. What would happen to the Jews in Eretz Yisrael if Mattisyahu abandoned them to the power of the assimilated Jews who were infiltrating and destroying the *kedushah* of the people?

And therefore, Mattisyahu chose *yissurim*; he knew that at that time, being a servant of Hashem meant suffering for Him, and so he chose to

remain in Eretz Yisrael along with other *ovdei Hashem*. And his decision to remain wasn't about gaining power and glory, and certainly not about settling down to a life of peace. In fact, by the time the victory came, they were all dead. Of course, they were in Gan Eden, but in this world they didn't have any pleasure from this fighting, from the *yissurim* they chose to undergo.

And so, it was a case where they accepted *yissurim* willingly. Great people are capable of that.

The Tanna's Friends

The Gemara in *Bava Metzia* (84a) tells about a certain *tzaddik*, Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon. He was a unique personality who strove to achieve perfection, but he suspected that he had certain flaws. There's an entire story there, and it's worth studying. He was blamed by some of the Chachamim for a certain behavior that he followed, and therefore, in order to convince himself that he was purified and free of any blemishes, the Gemara says he undertook a few courses of action.

The first thing he did, you'll have to read about in the Gemara if you are interested. But despite that first test, Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon did not rely on his judgement, and he took upon himself *yissurim* to purify himself further. Just like Mattisyahu, he was a great man, and he willingly accepted a career of suffering.

The Gemara says that every night when he lay down, he said, **בֹּאִי אֲחֵי וְרַעִי בֹּאִי** — Come my brothers, my friends." He invited the *yissurim* to come. And in the morning, he told them to depart. Now, this little story is part of a long narrative that's worth studying, but for our purposes this little piece will suffice.

Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon had work to do in this world; he couldn't spend his days suffering. And therefore, he chose to suffer at night. At night the *talmidim* went home; the *yeshivah sederim* were over. I'm sure there were people who studied all night, too, but they didn't

need his company, so at night he invited the *yissurim*; he suffered. And then, every morning, he told them to leave.

The Daytime Break

Now, I understand this as follows: Rebbi Elazar ben Rebbi Shimon suffered all the time, but he had great willpower and a very strong intellect, so in the morning he decided to ignore his suffering and apply himself to the business of life, which is achieving *shleimus* in serving Hashem. And because suffering would be an impediment to that, he trained himself to ignore the troubles. In the morning he steeled himself to the day's work, and he told his *yissurim*, "Disappear! Don't interfere with my business!"

That is how many people are; they have things they suffer from, but while they are working they are not overwhelmed by their pains because their occupation, their busy-ness, causes them to forget to some extent about their suffering.

At night, however, Rebbi Elazar willingly accepted it and his mind dwelt on them, like someone who enjoys a luscious dish. He focused on his pains and tried to get as much zest, as much benefit, as he could from his *yissurim*. He was alone on his bed and his wounds were aching and he thought about it; he didn't want to ignore it — he wanted to gain the most perfection from his situation.

Relishing the Pain

There are various forms of perfection that a person can achieve from *tzaros*. There's perfection in the tremendous achievement of *anivus*, in humbling yourself before Hashem. You cannot be a *ba'al ga'avah* when you are suffering; even a millionaire when he is in pain is a humble fellow. There's also perfection in unquestioning loyalty to Hashem. There's perfection in empathy, in appreciating the aches and pains of others, and perfection in appreciating the gift of good health. There's *kaparah* for your sins, too. There's more than that, and I'm sure Rebbi Elazar gained

in every aspect, but our point here is that he accepted the suffering. He willingly accepted upon himself the *yissurim* sent upon him. That is what the Gemara is telling us.

Now, of course, everyone here must go to the doctor if he's sick. Like the Torah says (*Shemos* 21:19), “וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא – You must heal your illnesses.” Your body is not yours to do with it as you wish just because your *neshamah* wants *shleimus* and perfection. The poor body can complain, “Why should I have to suffer because of your *neshamah*?” and so, וְרָפָא יִרְפָּא – you must go to a physician. וְאָהַבְתָּ לְרֵעֶךָ כָּמוֹךָ – you have to love your fellow Jew, and your body is a Jew, too. And therefore, you have to see that your body is always happy and well cared for.

The Gemara (*Bava Kama* 91a) says: “אָסוּר לְאַדָּם לְחַבֵּל בְּעַצְמוֹ – It's forbidden for a person to wound himself.” And I am certain that Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon didn't wound himself, either; it's *assur*. He wouldn't take a knife and cut himself to have *yissurim*; that nobody would do, not a Jew. Only that he accepted these *yissurim*. He didn't run away from them. That's a different story. To revel in *yissurim*, to relish them because of the opportunities they bring – that's what he did.

We wouldn't be able to relish it like Rabbi Elazar and Mattisyahu did. But even *we* can gain immensely by studying the subject of how great men were willing to accept upon themselves *yissurim*. And so, we will attempt to study this together now.

Part II. Accepting Suffering

Life Includes Difficulty

How does a person accomplish such a thing? What is the secret to being a Rabbi Elazar ben Rabbi Shimon and a Mattisyahu, someone who is willing to accept a career of *yissurim* and to revel in it – not to be afraid and to break down?

It's an important subject because who doesn't experience hard times? Everyone is subject to periods of difficulty, difficulties that come because he wants to serve Hashem. It doesn't mean you have to seek it, but they will come — to a certain extent they will come.

A woman who wants to have a big family knows it's not going to be easy — but she does it anyhow. She willingly accepts the difficulties. A woman who marries a *talmid chacham*, someone learning in *kollel*, might have to accept a life of minimal sustenance. And even if her husband is a working man, he gets up when it's dark outside to go and learn in the *beis haknesses* before davening. He might stay out late in the *beis medrash* as he makes his way through Shas. He's not always available to help. It's not easy for her. And he, too — he would like to sit on the couch all evening with his feet up on a chair. But he doesn't; he's in the *beis medrash* because he has accepted a way of life that involves struggling for *avodas Hashem*.

So, even if you're not from the great ones, you still experience the challenges of living a Torah life. It doesn't mean you'll ever slaughter a Greek and have to hide out in the mountains, but you'll suffer to a certain extent. There are periods in our lives — sometimes years and years — when we are placed in difficult straits for the service of Hashem. And so, the one who wants to be a successful *eved Hashem* must be prepared for such eventualities. He wants to discover the secret that Mattisyahu and Rebbi Elazar knew.

It's All a Preparation

The *Mesillas Yesharim* makes a fundamental statement. He says, “We are here in this world only for one purpose, and that is to *prepare for the World to Come*.” You should never forget that! He tells us that *Olam Haba* must be the constant focus of our lives. “וְלִזְזָה יְשׁוּעָה מִבְּטוֹ וּמִגְמוּתוֹ כָּל יְמֵי חַיָּיו.” — For this purpose, to remember we are preparing for the next world, you should put your glance, your look, your gaze *all the days of your life*.” Whatever you do, he says, “בְּכָל אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹמֵל” — *in anything you are working*

at, whatever you're struggling with, keep in mind that your purpose is the World to Come."

That itself is a thundering statement. When you go to the *beis haknesses* to *daven*, when you're working in your office, when you sit down to do homework with your children, keep in mind that your purpose is Olam Haba. When you sit down to eat breakfast, when you're going to the *chuppah* to get married, you're preparing for Olam Haba.

And not only is what you *do* a preparation, what is *done* to you is also a preparation. When it rains and when it snows, you are being prepared for Olam Haba. How does that work? It takes time to explain. When there is war, *chas v'shalom* — you didn't ask for it, but that war is preparing you for Olam Haba. And peace prepares you, too. When a man's time comes and he knows that his days are numbered, when he is on the operating table — all the vicissitudes, all the changes that he undergoes in life — he should keep in mind, always, that everything is a preparation for Olam Haba.

Isn't it worth coming here just to hear that? "This world is a vestibule" — we should never forget that. It's good to live with that ideal.

We're Just Passing Through

I told you a number of times the story of the Chafetz Chaim. Once a visitor came, a rich man, to see the great Chafetz Chaim and he entered a room. He saw the Chafetz Chaim sitting at a table of planks, a makeshift table, on an old wooden bench. It looked like he had moved out of his home temporarily while they were making some renovations.

Then he discovered that this room *was* his home! So he asked the Chafetz Chaim, "Where is your furniture?"

The Chafetz Chaim said, "Where is *your* furniture?"

So the man said, "I'm just a traveler here."

The Chafetz Chaim said, “Well, so am I.” He understood that this entire world only in a vestibule, so he had no furniture.

Now, I am not saying that you must make yourself uncomfortable in this vestibule. Many times, in order to achieve what you have to achieve, you must have a certain amount of comfort to encourage you – I might talk about that yet someday. And therefore, I don’t know if we can demand of ourselves to immediately begin living like the Chafetz Chaim did – it took a lot of hard work and struggles for the Chafetz Chaim to achieve such an attitude; but we should know what we’re aiming for. We should never forget that whether we live in more comfort or less comfort, we are here for a purpose – this world is only a waiting room to get ready for the World to Come.

Vestibular Vicissitudes

Now we begin to understand what our great heroes, the Chashmona’im, understood. They understood that this world is a *prozdor*, a hallway into a more important place, and in a hallway, you don’t become broken from vicissitudes. Those who lost sight of that would be terrified, would be overwhelmed at the prospect of confronting years and years of war. That’s what it means to start up with Antiochus – it means years and years of war.

Antiochus, of course, was not eternal, and the truth is that soon after the beginning of the war, he got what was coming to him. He was a failure; he died far away from home. He regretted what he did to the Jews – that’s what Josephus writes. But even if he didn’t, it makes no difference; he was a failure, and you can be sure that after he left this world in misery, the hot days were waiting for him. There is no question that he is still suffering in Gehinnom for what he did.

But our fathers knew that somebody else would take his place, and that is what happened. There is no lack of *resha’im* in this world, and once you start up with the *umos ha’olam*, it’s not that easy to stop it. And therefore, they knew what was going to happen.

But they understood that this world is a *prozdor*. And they understood what it says in *Pirkei Avos* (4:16) about that statement. The Tanna there adds an admonition. Since this world is a vestibule, “הִתְקַן עֲצֻמָּה בְּפֶרוֹזְדוֹר” – Be sure to prepare yourself in this vestibule, כְּרִי שֶׁתִּכְנַס לְטָרְקֵלִין – in order that you should enter the banquet hall.” הִתְקַן! In this waiting room, you don’t just sit. הִתְקַן – Your business here is to get ready, to prepare yourself, from the word *tikkun*. And sometimes the *tikkun* of this world is when a person uses his body to defend the honor of Hakadosh Baruch Hu. That is one way – it’s one of the biggest ways of gaining *shleimus* – to fight for the glory of Hashem.

Friendly Fire

That’s what it says in *Mishlei* (27:6), “נֶאֱמָנִים פְּצָעֵי אוֹהֵב” – The wounds of a friend are trustworthy.” It means if a friend wounds you, you can trust in him.

Now, we’ll explain these words of Shlomo Hamelech as follows: Who is the *ohev*, the friend, who’s wounding you? We know who that is – there is only one Friend in this world, and that is Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Especially for the Am Yisrael. He is אוֹהֵב עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל. And so, when this Friend sends wounds, we must understand that they are נֶאֱמָנִים, trustworthy. It means they are for our benefit. And that is what the *passuk* says, נֶאֱמָנִים פְּצָעֵי אוֹהֵב – How loyal, how trustworthy, are the wounds of a good friend.

Hakadosh Baruch Hu made the Chashmona’im great through this long period of suffering, thirty years of terrible *tzaros*, the worst kind of difficulties – and they understood that. They knew that when suffering comes from their Friend, He is trustworthy, and it’s for our benefit.

Gaining Gold

Now, let’s see what happened afterwards. The Syrian kings began quarrelling with each other; there was a war among them, and each one began bidding to get the Jews to be on his side. And as a result, finally the

Jews were given all their rights. They became independent, and now one of them was made king.

Suddenly, we had kings now. There had been no king in the Am Yisrael since the last king Tzidkiyahu had gone into exile. So many years had passed and suddenly we were restored to the status of a monarchy! In those days that was the glory of a nation, to have a king.

And who were the kings? The Kohanim Gedolim were kings! And they had wealth. Yochanan Hyrcanus used to feast every year on the anniversary of their victories. And he had golden tables; not inlaid with gold – *solid* gold tables. And now the Chashmona'im were basking in the sunshine of prosperity.

Enemy Kisses

But now they began to experience the second part of that *passuk*. It says, “The wounds of a friend are beneficial,” but “וְנִעְתָּרוֹת נְשִׁיקוֹת שׁוֹנֵא” – the kisses of the enemy are overabundant.” They’re *not* going to be to your benefit. Now came the kisses instead of the wounds – and everything changed. I don’t want to mar the story of Chanukah by relating the downfall of this great family, but in their prosperity they were ruined. They became the opposite of what they had been – they became Tzedukim eventually, enemies of the *chachmei haTorah*. In prosperity, they became so spoiled that they became enemies of the *chachmei haTorah*.

Of course, Mattisyahu and his sons had already gone to the next world with their crowns of glory on their heads; they could never lose what they achieved in the midst of their *yissurim*. But their descendants squandered away those crowns; they exchanged them for crowns of gold, for the physical crowns of kings. That’s what happens during good times. Wealth, good times, is a more difficult test. By the way, that’s why wealthy Jews – it means Jews in America; Jews who have plenty to eat – must constantly apply themselves to the great task of showing their

appreciation to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. They must apply themselves to the *emunah* that it all comes from Him, and their mouths should constantly be full of בְּרָכוֹת וְהוֹדָאוֹת מֵעַתָּה וְעַד עוֹלָם. If you do that, then maybe, maybe, you'll succeed even in good times. But it's not easy to achieve crowns of glory when everything is going well.

The Chashmona'im achieved their real crowns, the crowns that mattered in Olam Haba, during the years of פְּצִיעֵי אוֹהֵב – that's when they achieved their greatness. And they were able to do it because they remembered always that this world is only a *prozdor*, a hallway, into the *traklin*, the great palace of Olam Haba.

Part III. Day-to-Day Suffering

Fighting the Good Fight

And so, we go back to the *Mesillas Yescharim* now, and we understand that those words – “You should set your gaze, your focus on the ideal of Olam Haba, all the days of your life” – are the key to success. The way to Olam Haba is only by means of Olam Hazeh. You can't skip the stage of going through this world – and this world sometimes includes difficult times.

Now, if things are going smoothly and you don't have difficulties, naturally you must do something; you have to sit and learn. You must use the opportunity of peaceful times to gain *shleimus*. Even then, many times it's a struggle. If you are studying Torah, you are giving your life to know Shas, that's not an easy thing – it's a struggle. You think it's easy to become great in Torah?

And for some it's especially hard; if you come in from the outside, often you'll face terrible hardships involved in trying to become a yeshiva man. You must struggle with the idioms of the Gemara, with the concepts of the Gemara. Let's say a boy comes in from a small town in Nebraska.

He never learned anything, and he leaves home to go to yeshiva; he doesn't have a brilliant mind, either. Maybe he has a slow head and the Gemara is very difficult for him. In addition, he struggles with the environment. He has a lot of people, including his uncles and aunts, who are attacking and belittling him. Sometimes his own sisters and brothers try to dissuade him from living a Torah life.

The Slap Sale

Even his mother. A boy once told me his mother slapped him for sitting up late at night learning Gemara. She didn't like that. He wasn't making noise; he wasn't keeping his brothers and sisters up. But his mother was an irreligious woman, and she wasn't happy that he was dedicating himself to Torah. She wanted him to be a doctor, or at least a lawyer. And now he was learning Gemara late at night. So she lost herself and slapped him.

So I said to the boy, "Will you sell me that slap?"

He thought it over and said, no, he wanted to keep it. That was a smart young man. That slap is worth an endless amount of money.

Now, imagine that many years have passed; throughout all the difficulties, despite everything, he continued to forge ahead in *yedias haTorah* and in *emunah* and *avodas Hashem*. And now, let's say he finally manages to be a *far-zichnik* — he can learn a piece of Gemara on his own. He's already giving *chaburos* in the yeshivah; he's from the better ones in the yeshivah; he thinks he's not suffering like the "bad old days."

The Good "Bad Old Days"

Don't think that! Those are the *good* old days! That was the best time of your life, the apex, the summit of your success. Your throne in the next world is built on *tza'ar*, on sacrifice and difficulties. You'll be sitting on a golden throne because you had to struggle in order to arrive at even a little bit of success in *avodas Hashem*.

So when you look back and you see: “There was a time when it was so difficult to be *frum*. I was in a bad environment, and still I fought back; I resisted the adverse influences and now, *baruch Hashem*, I came out of the woods and I’m keeping everything.” — be *grateful* for all the difficulties that faced you then. It was a *brachah min hashamayim* that made a man out of you. It gave you so much *zechus*.

When we are young, let’s say, and just married; a young couple is struggling to establish themselves as a *frum* family, to build a loyal Torah home. And they have opposition many times from their relatives — they’re too fanatic, too *frum*, for their relatives’ taste. And they don’t have much money, either. And they look forward to the good days when they will be established finally and have a big bank account and property. Oh, no! You must know that the good times are right then, when you were struggling for Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

When you are sitting in a *kollel* and learning, or when you’re fighting for any ideal, that’s the time when you are making the greatest headway in life.

Hectic Happiness

And so, even when things are hectic and difficult — here’s a young lady who has one baby after the other and she’s thinking, “This is not what I *really* want. I want my children to grow up, to have big married children so I can have *nachas* from my grandchildren. It’s too hectic right now! Every day, all day long, I’m busy!”

She should know that *this is the happiest part of her life*, right now! When she’s tired all day long and worn out, nervous, excited. This child has a cold. That child fell down and cut his finger, but he has to catch the bus to the yeshiva. All day long there’s excitement. In the midst of that excitement, that’s her success. That’s the cream, the summit of the perfection of her life. And later, when life becomes easy, she’s losing out on all that achievement that she had in the hectic days.

So we have to learn that while we're experiencing the hardships, whenever we're suffering for an ideal, we should consider it the best time of our lives. Our merits are multiplied by the numbers of our opponents. And the more we're ridiculed, the more we're opposed, the bigger is our reward.

Rav Miller's Yeshivah

I look back. We founded a *yeshivah* in Chelsea during my first *rabbanus*. What *tzaros* we had! What opposition! There was a week that I didn't sleep. A whole week I couldn't sleep because of the opposition. They wanted to take away the funds that we had collected to buy a building.

The day that we were buying the building for the *yeshivah*, I had to hide out all day. I was afraid that they would force me, that they would come to me and say, "Rabbi! You must back out. The public is against it."

So I was hiding out that whole day in a friend's house. And I waited for a telephone call that would let me know that the papers had been signed. Only then was I able to come out. It was too late for our opponents! The deal was done!

At the time I was young, and I couldn't appreciate what a big gift it was. But looking back — *baruch Hashem!* *Chasdei Hashem!* Of course, we stayed the course and won. But it wasn't only the winning that mattered. It was the *struggle* that mattered! Every opponent, everyone who slandered us, everyone who tried to put obstacles in our way was a *matanah!* (Ed. Note: For more details, see Rav Avigdor Miller: *His Life and His Revolution*, chapter 7: "A Rav in Chelsea")

Miracles Amidst Persecution

And so, we come back to the period of the *Chashmona'im* during the period of struggle, the period when their blood was being shed. Their relatives were being slaughtered; thousands and thousands were tortured to death for keeping *mitzvos*. And all over the land a cry went up

to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, a cry because of their persecutions, terrible persecutions.

And in the midst of everything, Mattisyahu, and his sons, and many other loyal Jews were fighting with the sword to uphold the Torah. They could have run away to Bavel and lived in security. But they fought and suffered for the Torah.

The Chashmona'im were enduring the **פְּצָעֵי אוֹהֶב**; there were wounds aplenty for a long time. But the result of all these wounds was an entirely new level of perfection for our people. Each one of them became *niskadesh* and the Am Yisrael as a result became so elevated that what happened then was so unusual that it's considered one of the great *nissim* of history – for eight days, the Menorah miraculously remained lit.

The Eight-Day Moment

Now, this was a most remarkable phenomenon. We are accustomed to the idea of *neis Chanukah* because we consider it just a continuation of the old *nissim* of the days of the Bayis Rishon. But you must realize there was a great gap between the old *nissim* and the *neis* of Chanukah.

You must understand that *nissim* of that kind no longer happened! The Shechinah was only in the Bayis Rishon. The Gemara says that during Bayis Sheini, even though Ezra and the Anshei Knesses Hagedolah with some *nevi'im* were still present at the early part, still, there were no more open *nissim* like those of the first Temple. Of course, *nissim* were and are happening all the time – **עַל נֶסֶד שֶׁבְּכֹל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ** – but open miracles that demonstrated the presence of Hashem stopped at the end of Bayis Rishon. And the nation had lost all hope of such *nissim* ever returning. The days of open *nissim* of that kind were gone.

And then suddenly, it happened again. In the midst of the darkness a light appeared, and that was the *neis Chanukah*. It was entirely unexpected, and everybody went wild when it happened! In a certain

sense, it meant a restoration of the days of old. Like Dovid said, הַשִּׁיבָה לִּי, שְׂשׂוֹן יִשְׁעֶךָ — *Bring back to me the joy of Your salvation*. That's a great joy, when the yeshuas Hashem was openly displayed. And here for a moment, for eight days, it returned.

Cause of the Miracle

Now, if there was this one time that a miraculous light came forth amid the darkness, after the Shechinah had already departed, we can understand why celebrating the *neis Chanukah* is such a big thing. And it's even a bigger thing to remember what it was that *caused* this light to reappear.

It was because these great people chose the system of accepting the *yissurim* that came to them in their service of Hashem. That's why they became so purified; because they willingly, of their own volition, chose this career — many years of being in constant peril of their lives to fulfill the will of Hashem. And so, we understand that they became so great as a result that this remarkable event of the *neis shemen* happened.

And that's why it happened not after they won the battles and the kings made peace treaties with them and they gained wealth. No, then the *neis Chanukah* couldn't have happened. It was while they were suffering that the *neis* took place. It was in the midst of shedding their blood, in the midst of not sleeping, in the midst of constant fear of death, *that* is when the *neis shemen* occurred, because that's what merited them the miracle.

The Symbolism of Chanukah

And so, we can conclude now with a better understanding of the symbolism, the secret of the olive oil that remained lit. The oil of the Menorah was שֶׁמֶן זַיִת זָךְ כְּתִיב לְמָאֹר — pure olive oil that had been produced from squeezed olives. And everyone knows what Chazal say about this, that the olives are a symbol of the Am Yisrael — that when they are squeezed and pressured, they give forth the pure olive oil of illumination.

Because these Yidden suffered for Hashem's name, they produced that pure oil of *kedushah* that ennobled them so greatly.

That's the simplest understanding — the voluntary assumption of difficulties and *yissurim*, that's what produced the *shemen zayis* that brought forth the *neis* of Chanukah. The *ner Hashem* was kindled from the *shemen* of their idealism — that is the symbolism of the whole story of Chanukah.



חנוכה



CHANUKAH

THE CHANUKAH BATTLE



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אין מלדין לו לאדם לא כסף ולא זהב ולא אבנים טובות ומרגליות, אלא תורה ומעשים טובים בלבד
When a person passes from this world neither silver, nor gold, nor precious stones, nor
pearls accompany him, only Torah and good deeds -Avos 6:9

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CHANUKAH | חנוכה

THE CHANUKAH BATTLE

Part I. Deplored by the Deplorables

Yosef Escapes

As an introduction to the subject of Chanukah, we must remind ourselves of a certain incident that happened way back in our history.

Do you remember when Yosef Hatzaddik refused to yield to the wife of Potiphar? His master's wife was always trying to persuade him to do a sin with her, but וַיִּמָּאֵן — he refused (*Bereishis* 39:8). But she continued to try to seduce him — day after day, that wicked woman tempted him with her blandishments.

Finally, what happened? One day she finally lost her patience and took hold of his outer garment and attempted to pull it off him, and Yosef had no choice but to make a quick escape. “וַיַּעֲזֹב בְּגָדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ” — He left the garment in her hands, וַיֵּצֵא הָחוּצָה, וַיֵּנָס — and he fled out into the street” (*ibid.* 39:12).

Dragging the Slave

Now she knew she was in big trouble. Yosef's garment was in her house, and he was out on the street. The evidence was there, and she could be accused of trying to persuade him; she had to do something. So she ran out into the street and began to raise a big howl about how Yosef had made an attempt on her, and she used the garment as evidence. "When I tried to save myself by shouting," she said, "he became afraid and ran out in the street." That was her story. "He took off his garment. And when I saw him take off his garment, I began to cry out and then he fled."

So now this poor, innocent woman was standing on the street shouting to everybody, pointing at this dirty fellow who had tried to violate her. The *medrash* describes what happened next. Potiphar rushed home from work, and when she told him the story, all the details about what this wicked Ivri had tried to do, he became full of rage; he seized Yosef and began pummeling him. And after a good beating, he grabbed Yosef by the ear and she grabbed him by the other ear, and they dragged him to the police station, to come before the judges to be sentenced.

I'll portray the scene for you. She and her husband are dragging Yosef through the streets by his ears. Potiphar was an important official and his servant was well known, so this disturbance certainly drew a crowd. Women and children were staring from the windows; the men were rushing out of their houses to the streets to see what was going on.

Spitting and Insults

And Chazal tell us that as Yosef was being dragged through the streets, Potiphar and his wife were heaping contumely upon his head. She was shouting accusations, and Potiphar was gnashing his teeth. "Look what we did for him! We elevated him! We made him the *majordomo*, the manager of our house, and that's how he tried to pay us back?! By acting so lowly?!"

And the Egyptians who witnessed this spectacle were looking on and shaking their heads. “Well, that’s what you get for taking him as a slave in your house. What else could you expect from a Hebrew? Only a dirty Ivri could be that wicked and do such an uncivilized thing.” *Ivri* means a Hebrew, but to the Egyptians it meant a hated nation, a corrupt people. And they were kicking Yosef and spitting at him, insulting him as he was being dragged through the street.

The Immoral Moralizers

Now, our Sages tell us that at that time, as the accusations were being hurled at him, Yosef uttered a certain *passuk*. It’s really a verse in *Tehillim*, but our Sages attribute it to Yosef; it means that at that time he said this *passuk* or its equivalent: “חֲרַפַּת נָבָל אֶל תִּשְׁיִמְנִי – The reproach of low people should not come upon me” (*Tehillim* 39:9). Yosef was calling out to Hashem, “I beg of You, Hashem! Do not make me the target for ridicule, for calumny, at the hands of immoral people. Why should I be put to shame by such low people?”

After all, the wife of Potiphar herself was the lowest of women. *She was the one* who had proposed this misdeed. And she had done her best to achieve it. וַיְהִי כִּדְבָרָהּ אֵל יוֹסֵף יוֹם יוֹם, she spoke to him every day (*ibid.*, 39:10). Not only that, she changed her outfit every morning and evening to attract his attention (*Yoma* 35). And now this low woman was dragging the virtuous Yosef through the streets and shouting, “Look at this Ivri who was brought into our house; look what he tried to do!”

And the Egyptians who joined in heaping calumny on the head of Yosef – who were they? They were *shtufei zimah* – steeped in immorality. You remember that the *parshah* of *arayos* in the Torah starts with a preface, “Don’t follow the *toa’vos Mitzrayim*, the abominations of the Egyptians, that you saw in Egypt” (*Vayikra* 18:3). It means they were the *shpitz*, the apex of immorality in the ancient world. And so, it was these immoral people, the bottom of the barrel, who were the ones shouting accusations of immorality at Yosef.

And so Yosef cried out, “Hakadosh Baruch Hu! Please! חֲרַפַּת נָכָל אֵל – Save me from being rebuked by low people.”

Dirty Jews?!

Now we must be *medayeik* in the language of this *passuk*. To be insulted is never a pleasant experience. But when someone who is himself guilty of that very crime of which he is accusing you groundlessly, that's an especial heartache. To get *cherpah*, to be put to shame, by a *naval*, a low and wicked man, to be accused of the very sins that that person himself commits – that's especially hurtful. And Yosef prayed that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should protect him from such accusations.

But we must know that this *passuk* was not only about Yosef; it was a portent for the future, as well. As was mentioned here previously, our Chachamim tell us that כָּל מָה שֶׁאַרַע לְיוֹסֵף אֶרֶץ לְצִיּוֹן – whatever happened to Yosef, happened to the Jewish people, too. יוֹסֵף בְּגִימָטְרִיָּא צִיּוֹן – Yosef and Tzion are the same in *gematria*. That's a hint, say the Sages, that the incidents in Yosef's career are symbols of what would transpire to the Jewish people. The ones who are very far from being clean will always call the clean ones “dirty Jews.”

I was once walking on the Bowery – this was about seventy years ago –and I saw this drunk. He could hardly walk, and he was disgusting. A filthy and bad-smelling drunk. I couldn't stand near him, he smelled so bad. But when he saw me, he yelled out, “Dirty Jew!”

Criminal Recriminations

And that's what Yosef foresaw; that what was happening to him now on the streets of Mitzrayim was going to happen in the streets of Bavel, too. It would happen in the streets of Spain and Germany and Syria and America, too; it was a model for all of history. “I am a symbol,” said Yosef, “of what's going to happen to my people.”

Cherpa naval is an important principle throughout history. The anti-Semites are always going to conjure up lies against the Jewish

people; but they won't have to think too much because the things they themselves do, things that are true about *them*, they're going to hurl as accusations against *us*. That's the principle that Chazal are teaching us here.

And so, when we read the history of our people, we shouldn't be surprised — we should *expect* that the accusations directed against our nation should actually reflect the misdeeds and crimes of our accusers. It's a principle that always holds true.

More Pious Than the Pope

When Pope Gregory — the number after his name I don't recall — wrote to King Louis of France — I also forget the number after his name — that “the Jews commit the most terrible crimes, which are too horrid to speak about,” we shouldn't dismiss such a statement as mere prejudice, which of course it is. We shouldn't merely discount it as a falsehood, which it is. Instead, we must study the statement as a reflection of the accuser!

From the Pope's accusations we can already deduce something about Pope Gregory and his minions. They were committing unspeakable crimes, too horrible to relate. Not only the nations of Europe, not only the barons, not only men of violence and power, but this statement of the Pope we must take seriously as a description of what the Popes were doing.

Now don't think for a moment that this is an exaggeration. There is an extensive literature of the misdeeds of the pontiffs of the Church. Not only against us; against us there is no end of crimes. The multitude of decrees against us in Christian Europe is common knowledge. But even among themselves they were busy all the time with the worst forms of behavior.

There is extensive literature on this subject, only that you can't get it. It's very hard to buy these books that speak about the crimes of the

Church. There's a powerful organization that sees to it that this literature is not available and therefore to get books that reveal the deeds of the papacy is almost impossible. One historical work that I wanted to see when I was writing one of my books was very hard to get my hands on. There's one copy in the public library in the main branch, and you can't take it out. That's what an organization can accomplish.

Loving Lutherans?

And so, while they were accusing our forefathers in Europe of murdering Christians, at the same moment they were busy murdering Jews; and they were busy murdering each other, too.

By the way, Martin Luther was no better. Don't think that the Protestants were any better. Martin Luther was famous for his accusations against the Jews. Again and again he made pronouncements. We have records because they were official statements. They were publicized and read in the churches. They were printed and posted on the doors of the cathedrals. Martin Luther wanted the Protestants, the reformers, to know that "the Jews attempt at every opportunity to murder Christians in secret." Now you know what the *tzaddikei umos ha'olam* are. From the accusations they heaped on the innocent Jews, you know already about their *tzidkus*.

Hitler's Accusations

That's a principle of world history. Don't think it ended with the Middle Ages. Hitler walked the same beaten path as his Christian predecessors. You know Hitler was one of the main accusers that Jews are murderers. He accused the Jews of attempting to murder Germans while he and his nation built gas chambers and crematoria.

And that's because what happened to Yosef Hatzaddik is a model for all the nations of the world. They're going to accuse us unjustly of all the faults that they themselves have. And because this is going to be the pattern throughout the generations, Yosef prayed that when such

incidents would arise, Hakadosh Baruch Hu should do something to stamp out these accusations.

Part II. The Deplorable One

Yiddish or Italian

But now we're going to study an ideological aspect of this principle. And we'll soon see how it relates to what Chanukah wants to teach us. When the nations of the world accuse the people of Yisrael, it is very important to keep this principle in mind, that all the calumnies, all the accusations, all the slanders, all the defamations, all the canards, all the lies that are uttered against our nation are but a reflection of what the defamers themselves are. But we must also realize that the effect of constant accusation is that the accused one tends to weaken after a while *and begins to believe the accusation*.

Why is it that irreligious Jews are ashamed of Judaism? I was riding the bus last week and noticed a Jewish girl sitting with her mother there. The mother attempted to speak to her daughter in Yiddish, but her daughter said, "Shh!" and looked around to see if anybody had noticed that her mother was speaking Yiddish.

Now, her mother was well dressed. Her hair was neatly combed. And sitting right in front of them was an Italian girl and her mother. It was an old Italian woman with frazzled hair, uncombed. And she was rattling off Italian at the top of her voice. And her daughter was sitting and listening respectfully. She wasn't ashamed; she's Italian, after all. Now, is Italian a more honorable language than Yiddish?

Convinced by the Wicked

And the answer is that after a while, the accused becomes so beaten down that he begins to believe he is inferior. He becomes ashamed. The

cherpas naval, the accusations of the *nevalim* against us, finally penetrate, and the weaker Jews become persuaded that we are no good. After all, so many people are saying we're no good. And they've been saying it for so many years! Maybe there's something to it. And so, the good ones become convinced that the accusers are right. They might not admit it; they might not even know it — but they've been duped.

That's what Yosef Hatzaddik meant when he prayed those words, “חֲרַפְתָּ נָכַל אֶל הַשִּׁמְיָנִי.” Not only that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should protect us that we shouldn't be put to shame at the hand of wicked people who themselves are guilty, but more importantly *that we shouldn't be affected by the accusations*. It's bad enough to be accused by people who are wicked themselves *but when we ourselves become dupes of these wicked people*, that's the biggest disgrace of all. That's the biggest danger of the *cherpas naval*.

Studying Spiritual Law

But let's go a little more deeply into the subject. Because so far we've explained it only in a superficial manner— that over time the accusations of the nations against us penetrate, and the weaker Jews become persuaded that we are no good. And while that's the truth, it's not enough. We must realize that things are not as simple as they seem, because this world is a spiritual world. Despite all that we learn of the workings of physical law, we must understand that this world is subject more than anything else to spiritual laws.

And one of these laws — although many Jews are entirely unaware of it, and even those who learn don't understand it properly — is that there is a tremendous force that operates in all the affairs of mankind, all the affairs of history, and controls all that transpires in the world.

The Mysterious Force

Do you know what that force is called? It's called the *yetzer hara*. The *yetzer hara* is not imaginary. It's not a parable or a form of speech; it's a

real force. You can call it an angel, if that will make it easier you to understand. But whatever you call it, it's a force that Hakadosh Baruch Hu put into the world for the purpose of creating tests and ordeals for His people. The *yetzer hara* is what makes life worth living. Without the evil inclination, life wouldn't be worth living because what's the purpose of existing in this world if not to be tested?

So, what is the source of this lunacy that this Jewish girl with her respectable looking mother was ashamed? The answer is — it's the *yetzer hara*. It could only be due to a mysterious force, a force that has caused her to view Judaism with eyes of reproach, and distrust. What else could it be that would accomplish such a seemingly ridiculous thing, something so illogical?

The Yeshivish Evolutionist

And therefore, you must know that when Jews become duped by scientists, by evolutionists, they're actually being fooled by the *yetzer hara* of *cherpas naval*. I was once speaking against evolution in a certain *yeshivah*, so one boy came back the next day and he told me that his father — who was an old *yeshivah* man — said, "What difference does it make if you come from a fish or if you don't come from a fish? We still believe that Hashem does everything."

Isn't that the most ridiculous thing?! Here's a Jew, a *ben Torah*, who capitulated to foolishness. Why should evolution seem to him to be no contradiction to the Torah? I know this man — he didn't come to that conclusion because he studied it. Only because he was weak; he was never prepared to fight this *yetzer hara*, and since there are so many people who believe in this false ideology, so if you're a weakling it becomes your ideology, too.

The Ethical Scientist

Evolutionists claim they're speaking the truth; they tell you that you're following a primitive way of thinking and that they're merely

searching for the truth, wherever it leads them. But they are the ones least interested in the truth. Do you know that? I know you don't. You're not convinced yet because you've been duped, too.

I'll convince you immediately that an evolutionist cannot seek truth at all. Do you know why? Because when you seek something, you must have a motivation. That's a fundamental principle of human character. Nobody does anything without motivation.

Now, what is the motivation of the evolutionists? They want to reject all the teachings about Hashem and about creation. They're not interested in the concept of a Creator because they want to be free to do as they choose. And therefore, they had to find some means of explaining the purposefulness, the wonderful wisdom that is evident in all things. And so, when the theory of evolution was advanced by Darwin, these men seized upon it as their way out, as the solution to their dilemma. Not that the facts caused them to believe in evolution — no, the necessity for atheism forced them to look for a theory, to seek arguments that would support their motivation. The scientific world, the academic world, accepted a theory that was forced upon them by necessity.

But truth? Where does truth come in at all? Where is there anywhere, in all the literature of science, such a statement that it's wrong to tell an untruth? Why should it be wrong? If you are descended from a fish, which is descended from algae, why do you have to be truthful? The algae never received any law from Heaven; it never was *mekabel* any Torah that said it's wrong to tell a non-truth. So why shouldn't an evolutionist tell a non-truth? A Catholic might be against lies because he has a religion. A Mohammedan, a Protestant, a Buddhist, maybe — I don't know if they actually keep their laws, but at least they claim certain principles.

Angry Frog-Men

But when an evolutionist says that he seeks the truth, then you know it's 100% untrue. He's seeking something else, but not the truth, because

he doesn't feel that there's any duty to speak the truth. He'd be the last one to uphold the principle of truth because truth is only an ethic. That's all it is. Truth is an ethic. If you have no ethics, if nothing is an absolute concept, if nothing is G-d-given, if everything is only the result of taboos and tribal acceptances, customs and practices that developed on the way up from the swamp, then what validity does the ideal of truth possess?

Of course, these men, the ones least interested in truth, get angry when you cheat on their tests. They say to the student, "You're deceiving! You're not being truthful." So the student should tell him, "Should a frog be true? Should a gorilla be true? Why should I be true?" After all, he says we're all frogs, so we can behave like a frog.

The evolutionists have no principles. Their principles are as artificial and malleable as could be. So why should they seek truth? They don't. They accuse us of being purveyors of falsehood when they are the biggest liars.

The Great Hoax

Now, this needs time to take it apart, and I'll be happy to do it with you. We should sit one evening and dedicate an entire lecture to this subject — to the falsehoods, the foolishness of the entire theory of evolution. Actually, in geology and in biology there isn't the slightest evidence to back up any one of their statements. Stripped of the noise and propaganda, the entire evidence of prehistoric times and prehistoric man and of evolution in general is easily demonstrated as a hoax.

And yet today there are even some Orthodox Jews who believe in evolution. Today, even a decent *frum* Jew who may have learned a lot, but whose *neshamah* has been weakened from the *cherpas naval* of the outside world, thinks, "Maybe, maybe, maybe ..." It means that these liars have duped us. We're weakening. When the OU magazine, *Jewish Action*, publishes an article that says, "If the Ramban was here today, he would

say that it makes no difference to him if Adam Harishon and the apes came from the same ancestor,” that’s the result of *cherpas naval*.

In the *yeshivos* and in the *Beis Yaakovs* they’re bending, too. They’re caving in to the *cherpas naval*. The *menahalim*, the *roshei yeshivah*, must wake up and begin exercising control over their English departments.

Beating the Cook

Let’s say somebody would come and say, “I know that the cook didn’t salt the meat; she served unsalted meat,” so would the *rosh yeshivah* say, “Look, it’s not my department — I don’t deal with the kitchen”?!

Now, salting meat is certainly less important than the teaching of evolution — salting the meat is only a *d’Rabbanan*. *Dam shebishlo* is only a *d’Rabbanan*. And still, people understand that if they cook meat in the *yeshivah* kitchen without salting, there’ll be a scandal. There’d be an explosion. The *rosh yeshivah* would run into the dining room with a broom and start giving it to the cook and drive her out — he’d hit her over the head and drive her out.

Beating the Teachers

So, he should do the same thing to the English teachers who teach evolution. The *tarfus* served by teachers in the secular department is much worse than *tarfus* served in the dining room! And so, he should rush into the high school department with a broom and start banging them over the head and throwing them out.

Why isn’t it done? I’m sure they’ll give you reasons, but in a very big way it comes from the *cherpas naval*. It’s a stupid foolishness that’s induced by the *yetzer hara*. We become convinced that maybe the truth is somewhere there, on the other side.

And therefore, the great lesson of *cherpas naval al t’simeini* is that we must not allow ourselves to be influenced by the ideals of the outside world, by the *cherpah* they try to foist upon us. The world is full of *sheker*.

Their ideals, their attitudes, their dress, their speech, their materialism, their universities. Today you see it more and more. Every type of desire, every type of foolishness and wickedness is promulgated until even the good ones are cowed into submission. How does such a thing happen? Because the good Jews are duped by the very great *pitui hayetzer*, the *cherpas naval* of the outside world.

Part III. Overpowered by the Deplorables

Rav Miller's Regents Prep

Now, we must know that in this world there are two important subjects, two great truths that should always be uppermost in our minds. The first one, of course, is Hashem. *Bereishis bara Elokim* — that's number one! And because it's the most important principle, the *yetzer hara* battles against this truth more than anything else.

The *yetzer hara* is using all the levers of government to fight against this fundamental Torah truth. It's funding big universities. Millions of dollars are being dedicated to preaching that man is nothing but an accident, that once upon a time he was nothing but a germ floating in a mud puddle. Every day, the presses are churning out new books, big expensive books, and the entire public is being indoctrinated against the idea of a Borei.

Today, even *yeshivah* boys when they graduate high school have to answer questions on evolution. They ask me, "What should we do?! To answer the question is like being *modeh in avodah zarah*. But we have to take the Regents!" I told them, "Answer like this: 'The books say this and this.' Don't say, 'This and this is the case.' Write 'the books say this.'" Their books are full of lies, so what you mean is, "The lying books say this and this." That's how to answer their test questions.

All over the world, the opposition to Hakadosh Baruch Hu is tremendous because it's the most important of all principles. It's the first theme of the Torah, so the yetzer hara is battling against it day and night.

Another Great Principle

Now, what's the second most important truth after Hakadosh Baruch Hu? After *Bereishis bara Elokim*, the most important thing is the Am Yisrael. How do I know it? Just open the Chumash. Does the Chumash say "*Vayedaber Hashem el Patrick leimor*" or "*Vayedaber Hashem el Murphy leimor*"? Never. Hashem only speaks to the Am Yisrael. Hashem doesn't speak to anybody but the *zera Avraham*. The entire Chumash, the entire *Nevi'im*, and the entire *Kesuvim*, are only about the B'nei Yisrael.

Now, because this principle of the greatness of the Jew is so paramount in the Torah, so the world rose up in anger and rebellion against this truth. If it's a principle that the Am Yisrael is the most perfect, most beloved nation, then the yetzer hara will attempt to attack that principle with all his forces.

Anti-Semitism in Literature

That's why throughout history — and today, as well — the theme of much of the world's literature was focused on denigrating and belittling the Am Yisrael. We've suffered from *cherpas naval* throughout the ages. All over the world, and long before the Christians came along. If you read Josephus in his book *Contra Apion*, he enumerates all the ancient anti-Semites among the Greeks. The Greeks wrote books full of hatred against the Jews, full of all kinds of falsehoods and foolish lies. And it had an effect; don't think it didn't make its way down to today.

Take, for example, *Roget's Thesaurus* — it's a book of English words and their synonyms, an innocent book that helps you to find a choice of words. A thesaurus is used by anyone who writes. If you want to find some other word that you can use instead of this word, so you look in a thesaurus.

I bought a Roget's *Thesaurus* about 67 years ago. Inside it said like this. Under the word "Jew," it gave you synonyms. You could look up the word "Jew" and see what the synonyms for Jew were: Deceiver, cheater, rogue, usurer, selfish, avaricious. About five or six adjectives there, all very complimentary to the Jewish people. The opposite way, too. If you wanted some other word for a cheat; let's say you wanted to say, "This man is a cheat," so you might say, "He's a Jew." Don't say, "He's a rogue"; say, "He's a Jew." That's called a synonym.

Lately, they changed that. Just lately. Because after all, it's too much to say that today. You have to show that you're decent, that you're democratic. But in my edition, it still says that openly.

Secret Anti-Semites

Today, *baruch Hashem*, in America, it's still in fashion not to speak against Jews. Not because of a special love for Jews. It's an American tradition that it's considered obscene to attack any individual people. But don't think the congressmen and senators who speak so politely about the Jewish people have any interest in them. In their hearts, the nations despise Jews. And when you invite a congressman to come and give you compliments, you can be 100% sure that it's not sincere. When he gets home, it's "the damned Jews." Don't have any doubts about that. He can't help it. That's his mother's milk, and that's how his children and his grandchildren will continue to speak. Only, we hope that Hakadosh Baruch Hu will cause it to continue only in secret, not in public.

The Yetzer Hara of the Nations

Now, why is it always against the Jews? There's nobody else to hate? And the answer is that the *yetzer hara* is fighting against the second most important principle of the Torah, the ideal of **מִי כְעֵמֶךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל**. When you pass down the street and somebody says, "Dirty Jew," you know why that is? Because the Jews are the cleanest, the most perfect nation — **עַם קָדוֹשׁ**

אַתָּה לֵה' אֱלֹקֶיךָ. We're a holy nation. And because we're the chosen ones, that's why the *yetzer hara* tries his best!

However, we're going to let go now of the nations and follow the footsteps of the *yetzer hara*. If you look in *masichta Sukkah* you'll see a remarkable statement. It says there like this: מִיָּדָה אֶת אֻמּוֹת הָעוֹלָם – The *yetzer hara* ignores the nations, וּמִתְנַגֵּה בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל – and he incites the Jews.

It doesn't mean that the nations don't have a *yetzer hara*. He's busy with them, too, and he always was. The *yetzer hara* is behind all the skinheads, behind all the white American supremacy groups. He's busy among them, too. But he doesn't have to worry about them too much – they take care of themselves; they supply their own *yetzer hara*.

Jewish Anti-Semites

But whatever he's doing among the nations is only a minor part of his efforts. That's not his success. The *yetzer hara* forsakes the nations of the world and says, "My chief efforts are going to be devoted to Yisrael." The *yetzer hara* is most active among Jews, and his greatest success is if he can worm his way into Jewish minds to cause them to become anti-Semites.

And I want to tell you – he's succeeding! He succeeds so well that very many Jews of the weaker kind have yielded to him. And that's why irreligious Jews become big anti-Semites.

Irreligious Jews have listened to the torrent of anti-Semitism and have become ashamed of being Jews. Irreligious Jews hate *frum* Jews because they're poisoned by anti-Semitism. Well, that's their funeral; that's what happens to weaklings.

Yidel and the Basketball

I was walking in the street some years ago on Ocean Parkway before davening on Shabbos morning. A group of Jewish boys about twenty

years old were walking on the street with a basketball, and one of them said to me, “Yidel!”

I was thinking, “What are you?”

Now, no gentile ever accosted me on Ocean Parkway with the word “Yidel” or “Jew.” I have been walking Ocean Parkway for twelve years — it never happened once that a gentile called me “Jew.” The only one who accosted me was a Jewish boy. He called me “Yidel.”

Now, how did that happen? After all, the ignorant Jew is also condemned and insulted by gentiles. He should feel a certain brotherhood with other Jews. But it’s because the *cherpas naval* has done its work on the weaklings.

He’s Very Powerful

But we must realize that it’s a little more painful than that. *Because* it’s us, too! The *cherpas naval* that Yosef prayed that we should be protected against, the danger of being duped, is a danger for all of us. Even the *frummeh* are subject to this *yetzer hara*. And we must not underestimate the power of this *yetzer hara* because it’s very powerful, and everybody is vulnerable to that kind of attitude. We are products of our environment, and our environment is anti-Jewish and anti-Torah. And when I say “our environment,” it means even those who are privileged to sit all day in the *yeshivah* — because we are not able to isolate ourselves entirely from the outside world.

And therefore, we have to know that the *yetzer hara*, as much as he exerts efforts on the nations, is exerting more effort on us, to make us dislike ourselves. The *yetzer hara* attacks *frum* people and makes things difficult for them; they begin to see only good things in the outside world, and inside, by the Am Yisrael, it’s only criticism.

Part IV. The Deplorable Greeks

The Uncomfortable Kohen Gadol

And that brings us to the story of Chanukah. Now, pay attention. **מאי יונים נקבצו עלי** – What's Chanukah? So, everybody knows that it was **הַנִּכְבָּה** – the Greeks came together against us. They tried to oppress us.

But I must explain something to you. The people who made our *tefilllos*, the Chachamim, were solicitous of the Jewish people's honor so they didn't state things so openly. They let it seem as if the nations came and made all the trouble. But really who were the **יְזִידִים בֵּינָה עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרַתָּךְ**? Who were the **רָשָׁעִים בֵּינָה צַדִּיקִים**? I'll let you in on a secret now; they were Jews. Jews were our enemies. It wasn't the Yevanim. The whole story of Chanukah came only from wicked Jews. The story is very different than what you thought.

Here's what the story was. In those days, Egypt was a Greek province, and it ruled over Eretz Yisrael. And the Kohen Gadol – his name was Shimon ben Chonya – was responsible for collecting the taxes from the Am Yisrael and handing them over to the Egyptian king.

Now, to collect taxes, you know, is a very uncomfortable business. You have to come to your fellow Jews and force them to pay. And it wasn't easy. This one said, "Look, I have no money now; come next week." This one was never home. This one didn't give you the full amount.

The Capable Nephew

But kings don't take any excuses. And so, it's necessary to be harsh with people. You must punish, and threaten, and fine them. You must beat them, too. That's the only way to collect taxes. But this Kohen Gadol was a weak man; he was kindhearted, and he was a failure at collecting the taxes.

So the king of Mitzrayim became angry and said, “If you’re not going to pay the taxes by this-and-this date, I’m going to take all of Eretz Yisrael and divide it among the soldiers of my army, and they’ll throw you all out.”

When people heard that, there was a big tumult. Everybody was excited — a catastrophe, *chas v’shalom!* They started running to the Kohen Gadol, “Why aren’t you doing things? Why don’t you save us?” They didn’t know what to do.

Now, Shimon ben Chonya had a nephew called Yosef ben Tuvya. This nephew was not a big *tzaddik*. He was a politician, not such a *frum* man. He used to visit Mitzrayim whenever he could. He was enamored with Greek culture, and he went all out for it. I won’t tell over the things he did in Mitzrayim, but what he did there is not such a big credit to him. But he was close to the Egyptian royal house, and so he said to his uncle, the Kohen Gadol, “Let me take care of the taxes for you. Don’t worry — I’ll handle it.”

The Greek Jews

Then Yosef ben Tuvya went to the king of Egypt and said, “Sell me the franchise. Let me buy from you the right to collect taxes. I’m going to give you a sum of money — whatever you ask — and let me collect the taxes for myself.” That’s called farming out the taxes. In those days, they used to do that. The king was happy with the plan, so Yosef ben Tuvya went and paid him a big sum of money. And now this Misyaven, this wannabe Greek, was the boss of Eretz Yisrael.

Now, listen to what happened. Over the forty years that followed, he established administrative offices all over Eretz Yisrael to help him to collect the taxes. Tax gatherers, “*muchsins*,” they were called. All over Eretz Yisrael there were officers appointed by him, men whose job it was to force the people to pay taxes.

But the taxes weren’t the worst of it. These were people like him. He didn’t appoint *talmidei chachamim* to these positions. He picked tough

men, who weren't *frum* — people who were already caving to the pressure of *cherpas naval*, of Greek culture, an “advanced” culture that made them feel inferior.

The Horrid Epiphany

For forty years, this group increased and multiplied. Then, when Eretz Yisrael fell into the power of Syria instead of Egypt, they saw an opportunity to gain even more power. At first the king of Syria was a decent man, and he allowed the Jews to keep their laws. But when that king died, a wicked fellow who took over the throne — Antiochus Epiphanes. It's a Greek word, *Epiphanes*; it means “the handsome one” — he called himself handsome. The Jews called him *Epimanes*. *Epimanes* means a different kind of name, something not so handsome. But whatever his name was, he became the king now.

And the Misyavnim saw that he was a man they could talk to — a low character and a mischief-maker. And most important, he was money hungry. So they sent a messenger to him, and they told him, “Do you know,” they said, “that there's a great deal of money — millions and millions of *shekalim* — stored up in the Beis Hamikdash in Yerushalayim? Why shouldn't you get it?”

The Beis Hamikdash in those days was the center of the nation, and a great deal of money was stored away there. In those times, they didn't have banks. Sometimes when a man died, he left over his whole fortune in the hands of the Kohanim. There was also a great deal of money in the Beis Hamikdash that they kept in trust for various heirs and *yesomim*. Also, the *machatzis hashekel* donations came in every year. From all over the world, Jews sent their *machatzis hashekel* to Yerushalayim.

The Wicked High Priest

Now, these Misyavnim had always wanted to take over the power of the Beis Hamikdash, but the *frum* Kohanim wouldn't let them. But now the Misyavnim saw their opportunity to take over. Now, to us it seems

queer — the Beis Hamikdash? What business did these wannabe Syrian-Greeks have with the Beis Hamikdash?

The answer is that the Beis Hamikdash meant power and prestige. And by means of that prestige, they could bring even more Jews under their influence, more Jews who could be pressured to look down at themselves and imitate the modern culture.

And so, they told Antiochus about the wealth in the Beis Hamikdash, and he became ambitious to get that money. So he saw to it that one of the *resha'im* was appointed Kohen Gadol. Imagine, a *rasha* of the Misyavnim became the Kohen Gadol!

And now he gave the Misyavnim even more power over the people. They were only a small minority, but they were a powerful minority. Now they had the Beis Hamikdash; they had the prestige. They were the ones who had power over the government of Eretz Yisrael.

Nightlife in Yerushalayim

And so, a new class of people arose now in the Am Yisrael, Jews who looked down at themselves. They traveled back and forth to Egypt and were influenced by Syrian Greek ideas, that the Jews are backwards. The Greeks had spread all over the world by now, and they had “education.” They were scientists and talented architects. They built buildings that were a beauty to behold. Wherever you went, you could see the results of their great progress, and therefore these Jews fell victim to the Greek culture. That’s what happened at that time. They were infatuated with the Greek ways.

A new era dawned as these *resha'im* started bringing foreign ideas into Eretz Yisrael. The Misyavnim began taking over. These people, the *muchsins* of Yosef ben Tuvya’s family, and all his friends and associates, became now Misyavnim, Hellenizers. It means people who liked the Greek ideas — Greek education, Greek ways. These were people like Yosef be Tuvya who looked down at themselves; they were impressed

with the higher class Egyptians; they liked the theaters. Jews had never had theaters before. These people liked entertainment. They liked nightlife.

You know, when Teddy Kollek was defeated as mayor of Jerusalem, so the ones who sat *shivah* for him most were the *resha'im* at the *New York Times*. “Ay, ay, ay, what Jerusalem lost!” They were praising him for the good things he did for Yerushalayim. “When he was in power, it started becoming a modern city, and there was even a little bit of nightlife already in Yerushalayim,” they said. You hear that praise on him — a little bit of nightlife was beginning to develop in Yerushalayim and now, *nebach*, he was defeated. That’s what they want in Yerushalayim Ir Hakodesh — nightlife.

The Revolt

And it was the Chashmona'im who said no! That’s what saved us. Not only did they say no — they said it with pride. “There’s nothing to look at over there by the Yevanim. Everything good is already by us.”

The Syrian Greeks came to all the towns and set up altars and called the townspeople to come and be present when the first *korban* to *avodah zarah* would be offered up. They wanted to make a demonstration in every town that the new culture had won out — but there were some who didn’t weaken.

When they came to the town of Mattisyahu, and he looked at what was going on and saw them getting ready to make a *tikroves*, an offering to *avodah zarah*, he understood how far this *cherpas naval* had reached. Jews were willing to give up everything for the new culture. And so Mattisyahu pulled out his sword from under his coat and plunged it into the heart of the first man who tried to bring the offering. And then he killed the Greek officer, too.

You know what that means? It means you’re looking for trouble, immediate trouble. And so, he raised up his hand and said, “If you’re with

me, let's run away; all of us, and we'll hide from the Greeks and from our quisling brothers." So they fled into the mountains, into the caves, and the revolt was on.

The Chanukah Story

What happened then was very sad. When the king heard that, he sent expeditions to pursue them. Thousands of Jews went into hiding from the Greeks in order to keep their Torah. Many times, when they were hiding in the caves, the king ordered that a fire be made at the mouth of the cave and the smoke suffocated all the people inside. Many people died at that time. Blood began to pour like water because they didn't want to yield to the Greeks.

That's how the story of Chanukah began. There's a big story to tell here. It didn't happen so easily — it happened with *nissim* and *nissim*. Finally, finally, Mattisyahu was helped by Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and he drove out the Greeks. The Greeks of Syria had a big revolt among themselves, too; it was all Hashem's doing to bring succor to those who stood up for Him.

Everybody knows the rest of the story, more or less, which I won't tell you now. But let's go back now to the beginning and remember that it all started with people who were duped into not appreciating the Torah nation. They were duped into looking down at themselves, but not because there was anything better there; they were simply duped. The weaklings were fooled by the *yetzer hara* of *cherpas naval*.

The Chanukah Miracle

And so, the great lesson of Chanukah is that the people who caused us the greatest trouble were the Misyavanim, those who fell in love with Greek culture because of *cherpas naval*. And they began to look down on their fellow Jews — they found fault with their own people. They belittled them and criticized them. It was the weak Jews who were duped by the *cherpas naval* who brought ruin upon our nation.

And it was those who had a backbone, those who appreciated the greatness of the Am Yisrael, who understood that there's nothing to see over there — those were the ones who brought the salvation. They stood up to all the Potiphars who were heaping calumny on the “dirty Jew,” “the low Ivri.” And because they disregarded the *cherpas naval* of the Yevanim and Misyavnim, that's why Hakadosh Baruch Hu took action for them.

The *neis* of Chanukah took place because there were some who stood up and said, “No! We're not going to bend before the *cherpas naval* of the outside world and the milquetoast Jews who have no backbone. All greatness is with us, all perfection is in Torah living, and we're going to give up everything for that.” That's what they did; and that's why they were *zocheh* to miraculous victories. Finally, after many years, Mattisyahu was able to enter Yerushalayim, and they re-dedicated the Beis Hamikdash, and they lit the *neiros*, and the great *neis* took place.

Part V. Deploring the Deplorables

Activity for Chanukah

And so, we come now to one of the important lessons that Chanukah is telling us. On Chanukah we're expected to grow great in combating the *yetzer hara* that caused the trouble of Chanukah. It means we must begin falling in love with the Am Yisrael — that's what Chanukah is trying to teach us. And if we don't get busy studying the *emes* of the Torah, then sooner or later the *yetzer hara* will win out, and we're going to fall into that error of the ancient Misyavnim.

And don't think it's a small error. It's one of the biggest mistakes, one of the worst sins; you're coming into conflict with Hakadosh Baruch Hu! He says, **מִי כַעֲמֹד יִשְׂרָאֵל גּוֹי אֶחָד בָּאָרֶץ** — Who is like You, Yisrael, one people in the world. It means nobody compares to us. “Us” means the *frum* Jews. The irreligious Jews are the same as gentiles. But the observant Jews, the

shomrei Shabbos, the *frum* communities, all the *frum* Jews of today — who can compare to them? That's what Hakadosh Baruch Hu is saying. But here you come along with the *yetzer hara*, and you don't know; you're not so sure.

And so along comes Chanukah to remind us that we have to get that idea into our heads. Otherwise, you'll light the candles, you'll go to parties, and you'll say *divrei Torah* — very good, excellent; but you're forgetting about one of the most important purposes of the *yom tov* — you must appreciate that all the greatness, all the perfection, is found only by the Am Yisrael.

The Holy Textbook

Now, the question is — how do you do that? So, you have to study; you have to open the right textbook. You know where you'll find a textbook, a *makor*, a source, to understand our nation? There's one place. That's *Shir Hashirim*.

A great man, Rabbi Akiva, once declared that *Shir Hashirim* is *kodesh kadashim*. He said (Mishnah, *Yadayim* 3:5), “*Kol hasefarim kodesh* — all the books of the Scriptures are holy — *v'Shir Hashirim kodesh kadashim* — but the Song of Songs is ‘holy of holies.’”

Now, that's hard to understand. Is there anything more holy than the Torah itself? How could Rabbi Akiva say that *Shir Hashirim* is *kodesh kadashim*, more holy than any other *sefer*?

And the answer is: In *Shir Hashirim* there isn't one word of criticism against the Am Yisrael. Nothing but praise. The Torah is full of criticism. The *sifrei nevuah* are always lambasting us. And that's good. Criticism is very good; it makes a man better. And that's why the system of the Torah is to find fault with us; that's why all the *nevi'im* found fault with us — because they wanted us to become better.

But along comes *Shir Hashirim*, and what does Hashem say in that *sefer*? *Shir Hashirim*, you know, is a poetic presentation — a story of a

young man who has a beloved bride and is speaking of her virtues, of her beauty and so on. And he calls her, “הַיָּפֶה בְּנָשִׁים, *the most beautiful of women*.”

Alone in Shul

Now, who is this young man? It's Hakadosh Baruch Hu. And the young woman, his bride, is the Am Yisrael, the Jewish nation. And He says, “She's the most beautiful of all the nations of the world.” That's what Hashem is saying. יָפֶה אַתָּה רַעֲיָתִי — “You're beautiful, My mate.” אַתָּה יָפֶה — Only you are beautiful!” At means you. It's a *miut* to exclude everybody else. Nobody is beautiful in this world except you. And it's stated again and again.

Now, most people never bother to learn *Shir Hashirim*. They hear it once a year, maybe, in the *beis haknesses*, and that's all. When I was a boy, every Friday I went to the synagogue before everybody came. I was alone. The *shamash* was sitting over there in the front. On Friday afternoon the *shamash* swept out the *shul*, cleaned it all up, went home, put on his *bigdei Shabbos* and then came back to *shul*, the first one. And he would sit down and sing *Shir Hashirim*. So I wanted to do that, too. I was sitting in the back all alone, a little boy; and he was all the way up front. I sat there and did the same as he did. I said the whole *Shir Hashirim* every Friday afternoon. *Shir Hashirim asher l'Shlomo*. Ah! How beautiful the tune is!

I learned to love *Shir Hashirim*. It's an experience! You learn to love your people from *Shir Hashirim*. It's a wine of love that you're drinking, that you're imbibing when you say *Shir Hashirim*. Isn't it a pity that your generation grows up without *Shir Hashirim*? You would learn to love your nation.

The Patriots and the Liberals

Now we begin to understand what Rabbi Akiva said. *Kol hasefarim kodesh heim*, all the *sefarim* of Tanach are holy *sefarim*, but *Shir Hashirim* is *kodesh kadashim*. It's holy of holies because *Shir Hashirim* concentrates on that one point — how much Hashem loves His people. That's the

holiest of holies, the experience of loving your people. You become a patriot, a real patriot, a Torah patriot for your nation.

Now, it takes a good deal of loyalty for Jews to hear that, especially today when the Jews in America are so liberal-minded and democratic; they're fair and they don't want to be selfish and grab the limelight; they want to give other people a chance, too. Of course, we're proud to be Jews, but we want to be fair, too, and not to make unwarranted boasts. And therefore, it's not easy for us to hear such things.

But after all, it's not what *we* are saying. We are just listening to the words of the Torah. And this is what Hakadosh Baruch Hu has stated. He loves us because we are the **יְפֵה בְּנֵשִׁים**.

Seeing the Shechinah

We are the most decent and charitable people. The Jews have all the good *middos*. *Frum* Jews are the beautiful ones in this world. There's nothing like them. No comparison, no comparison! *Baruch Hashem!* Today, *baruch Hashem*, you see *tzniyus*, you see *mesiras nefesh* for Torah and *mitzvos*. No question about it. Here you have a woman pushing a baby carriage. Her hair is covered. Inside the carriage are two babies, and alongside the carriage five or six more are running, all together. There's a *kedushah* in that. There's the Shechinah in that, and it's not exaggerating at all. That's the truth.

I was walking on the street one day here. A little eight-year-old girl was sitting and talking on the steps with her playmates. As I passed by, she said, "A *bas Yisrael* shouldn't do things like that." Oooh — I was so proud! A little girl! "A *bas Yisrael* shouldn't do things like that," she said. She didn't say it for me. That's the Am Yisrael; that's the holy nation Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves.

The Least Criminal

There's no question about it. We are the most perfect, most well-behaved, most decent, most law-abiding people; The Jews are the least

violent people. Pick the nicest street in the finest gentile neighborhood, and you think you'll walk there at night and nothing will ever happen to you? Don't be too sure. In the finest neighborhoods among the gentiles, if you walk at night, even if they don't recognize you as a Jew, you never know what's going to be.

But a Jewish neighborhood is the safest place in the world. That's the only place where you have really civilized people. The young Jewish boys – you can walk among them and you're safe, because it's an *am kadosh*. No gentile ever walks through a Jewish neighborhood afraid that a *yeshivah* man or a Jewish accountant will come around the corner and beat him up. The Jews are the least criminal people.

Get Brainwashed

Now, when you hear this for the first time, it may fall flat on your ears, so you must hear it again and again. You must realize there's nothing wrong with these ideas. There's something wrong with your mind. You must start retraining your mind. Whatever you read until now, whatever you heard on the street, in the place of business, is all 100% the result of the *yetzer hara*.

The *yetzer hara* is very busy on that front. Let's say, the *New York Times*: Are they speaking in praise of the Orthodox Jews – how decent they are, how they all have families, how they don't have criminals? How they have a good married life. How their children are loyal to their parents. There are so many beautiful things to say. They don't talk about that. They speak about gays all the time – gays and gays and gays. That's the only thing they talk about. When do they talk about the Orthodox? When they find something nasty to write.

That's the *yetzer hara* of *cherpas naval*. He is *meganeh es Yisrael*; that means he tries to put Yisrael to shame and belittle us. And he's doing it on a very big scale. This *frum* Jew is a crook, and that pious Jew is a cheater, and so on.

The Worst Crooks

I was walking in the street one evening coming back from the *yeshivah*, and coming towards me was an elderly Jewish woman speaking Yiddish to her daughter, a grown daughter, and the mother said this loudly as she was passing me — she said it in Yiddish; she wasn't speaking Yiddish the whole time but she switched for my benefit: "*Di frummer* (which means the Orthodox) *zeinen di ergste ganavim*, are the worst *ganavim*." And her daughter was listening to her "*torah*," the "*torah*" of the *yetzer hara*, that the worst crooks are the Orthodox. They're all crooks. They're fakers.

Today this mother, this poor victim of the *cherpas naval*, is sitting somewhere where it's very hot. This happened forty years ago — so today she's sitting in Gehinnom, and she has *nachas* because her daughter is certainly living by this *torah* that her mother taught her — that the Orthodox are the very worst crooks.

Now I know that you people who are listening are not convinced yet because you're already propagandized plenty by the outside world. You're thinking, "What about this?", "What about that?", "What about him?" You're thinking that there are so many exceptions to the rule. But you better watch out! Listen to what I'm telling you tonight. You must get rid of that prejudice you have against *frum* Jews.

We say to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, אֵל תִּרְאֵנִי שְׁחֹרְחֹרֶת, — Don't look at me that I am blackened. We are a little bit scorched by the sun. We are sunburned. Our minds have been darkened by the *yetzer hara*, and we don't fully believe that we are the most beautiful people.

So we say like the bride in *Shir Hashirim* says, שְׁחֹרְחֹרֶת אֲנִי וְנֶאֱחָה, — "We are blackened — they are trying to darken our minds — but we know we are beautiful. I am blackened, but I am beautiful." The Jewish nation is really a beautiful nation, only that we've been blackened by slanderers, by the calumnies of the enemies — and sometimes by our own.

Repeat It Again and Again

And therefore, we say **אַל תִּרְאֵנִי**, don't look at us and see that we are somewhat darkened by sunburn, by the *cherpas naval* of the nations. We tell Hashem that we are disregarding everything that they say about us, and we recognize what You, Hashem, say, that we are the **יָפֶה בְּנָשִׁים**. We are the most beautiful people.

Chanukah tells us that we must revive the concept that Shlomo Hamelech taught us in *Shir Hashirim*. We must praise *frum* Jews! We must talk about the virtues of *frum* Jews, how charitable they are! They're giving *ma'aser*, a tenth of their income! Talk about that! Speak about how Jews are busy raising families, how they're loyal to their children, and children are loyal to their parents! How decent *frum* Jews are! *Frum* Jews are more decent than any nation in the world! Nobody can approach us!

We possess the summit of civilization! The world should look up to us for good character, for kindness, for chastity, for decency. Nobody can even remotely equal to Jewish people. And therefore, we must speak about that constantly. The *yetzer hara* is pounding away, and he's enlisting even Orthodox Jews in the campaign against *frum* Jews. So our job is to speak constantly to the world, and especially to ourselves. We must speak the same way Hashem speaks. **יָפֶה אַתָּה רַעֲיָתִי** – You, My Beloved, the Am Yisrael, are beautiful. Nobody in the world can compare to you. **הֵי יָפֶה בְּנָשִׁים** – You are the most beautiful of all the nations in the world.

The Loyal Survive

Our nation is walking in the right direction. And the time will come when the whole world, **יָבִירוּ וְיִדְעוּ כָּל יוֹשְׁבֵי תֵבֵל** – everybody will recognize the truth, and everybody will come bent over to us and admit the truth. "You were always the best, *va'anachnu va'avoseinu chatanu*. We were wrong all along."

Now, that's a very important lesson we must learn. If we had learned that previously, a great many people would have survived. Those who

didn't learn it went lost. That's what happened. The Misyavnim became Tzedukim. They all became Tzedukim, and the Tzedukim all went lost. I read it in a gentile book. At the *churban Bayis Sheini*, he said, the Tzedukim all went lost. A gentile wrote that. We never heard about them anymore. *Baruch shepatranu!*

And it was only the Chashmona'im, the ones who appreciated the perfection of the Am Yisrael and fought off the *yetzer hara* of *cherpas naval* – they were the ones who raised up the pride of the Jewish people. They are the ones who brought the light of pride back to our eyes. And that's why we were *zocheh* to *nissim*. Because **וְאַתֶּם הַדְּבָקִים בַּהֵשֶׁם אֱלֹהֵיכֶם** – you who are loyal to Hashem, **חַיִּים בְּלַכְּם הַיּוֹם** – will remain forever and ever.