



Parshas Vayieshev 2023, the Story of Light

The Parsha Perspective is in honor of our homeland, Eretz Yisroel. May G-d protect our brave soldiers as they eradicate our enemies. May G-d save all the hostages in Gaza and return them immediately. May G-d comfort all those who lost family or friends in the horrific attack. May G-d grant a speedy recovery to all those injured in the attack.

The holiday of Chanukah couldn't have come at a more opportune time; we desperately need its light and lessons to permeate our lives. As anti-semitism becomes mainstream in our colleges and beyond, a Chanukah miracle is vital for the future of our people.

While the war in Israel rages on, a new battle has begun: a fight for our existence in the diaspora. Each day, there are massive protests and rallies all over the world calling for our destruction. From Sydney, Australia, where "gas the Jews" chants were heard, to the million-person march in London for the destruction of Israel, the cries for our demise have never been louder.

Just this week, three Ivy League school presidents from Penn, Harvard and MIT went before the United States Congress and gave chilling testimony. They testified that calling for the genocide of the Jewish people was not against school policy and would not revoke the visas of those who participated in these protests. Despite being offered multiple chances to modify and amend their testimony, they stood firm in their depravity.

As scary, hair-raising, and frightening as our current situation is, this is not the first time in our history that we have faced such evil. In fact, the Chanukah miracle is a victory over the same diabolical and wicked people who wished to remove the Jewish nation from history.

Who hoped to break and end the covenant between the Master of the universe and His chosen people. Who intended to eliminate and extinguish the strongest beacon of light in our dark world, the Jewish nation.

Yet, here we are. We have always survived despite the actions of those who tried to destroy us. Regardless of their numbers, strength or power, we have and will continue to outshine the darkness they release on the world.

The Creator of light and goodness is on our side, and any attempts to eliminate that light will result in a similar outcome to those who attempted in the past. The extent of their existence will be the history books and lessons on how even the biggest, strongest, and most powerful can fail in the least expected ways.

The story of Chanukah is the coordinated attempt to undermine the secret to our existence, the Torah, G-d's Divine Wisdom. The Greeks had no problem with Jews following the Torah for any reason other than G-d. If they followed the Torah for health reasons, as long as they didn't fulfill specific commands that related only to G-d, they were left alone. But fulfilling Mitzvos because G-d commanded it was subject to death and persecution in the most painful way possible.

However, the High Priest, Matisyahu and his sons don't comply or acquiesce to the wicked notions of the Greeks. They stood up and fought; they united the true believers of G-d and battled the Greeks and all those who joined their evil mission.

When the Maccabees were eventually victorious, they returned to where it all began, the Beis Hamikdash, G-d's home. They cleaned it of idols and made it pure once again, making space for G-d's light to permeate the world.

Our existence demonstrates that they have yet to be successful or effective. Yes, our history is filled with tragedy and pain, yet we still walk with our heads held up high. Yes, we are less than one % of the population, yet we are the leaders of each industry we enter. Yes, the darkness of this world is powerful, but it is no match for our soul's light and capacity to illuminate its surroundings.

The flickering flames of the Menorah are telling us a story, a tale as old as time itself. There is an opportunity for light, contentment, and joy whenever there is hardship, pain or darkness.

As we light the Menorah and celebrate Chanukah with friends and family, take advantage of the holiness the candles share. Yes, the darkness of our exile is significant and strong, but your ability to illuminate and transform our world is far greater!

"What Jews celebrate from that victory over the Greeks twenty-two centuries ago is that G-d is not just a G-d of war, but a G-d of light. And only a G-d of light can defeat the darkness in the human soul."

Have a meaningful Chanukah!
Rabbi Sholom Yemini