



פרשת תצוה-פורים

Intelligent Jews understand the inherent weakness highlighted by the old anecdote of a Goy who declares that he understands all of the Jewish holidays: They tried to kill us, we won, let's eat! Beyond shallow! The layers upon layers of depth and rich *הבנה* which Chazal and libraries of Mefarshim allow us to glimpse the core of every Yom Tov, both M'Dioraisa and M'Drabanan. Once we have entered those gates, we realize that we have barely seen the tip of this majestic iceberg. We need to explore again, with evaluation, beyond the frivolity and sometimes sophomoric levity, what is it in fact we are celebrating.

Our journey begins as we try to examine the words of the Rambam (printed in the regular editions at the end of his *מנין* (המצות), who raises the question as to why adding the Mitzvah of reading the Megilah is not in violation of the *בעל איסור* of adding Mitzvos to the Torah? He explains that as long as the Rabanan did not explicitly say that this is to be one of the 613, it is allowed. They only said to read it - these next words are what Purim is really about - *כדי להזכיר שבחיו של הקב"ה ותשועותו* - *שעשה לנו והיה קרוב לשעונונו* כדי לברכו ולהללו וכדי להודיע לדורות הבאים שאמת מה שהבטיחנו בתורה "ומי גוי גדול אשר לו אלוקים קרובים אליו כה' אלוקינו (דברים ח:ז) to teach future generations (like us) of our special status, the enviable proximity to Hashem Who will listen to our Tefilos whenever we call out to Him.

We cannot let the *עומק* of this Rambam escape us. First a little history - but not too much! The Nes of Purim occurred in the seventy-year gap between the Churban Bayis Rishon and the start of the rebuilding the Bayis Sheini. Nevuchadnezzar had destroyed the Mikdash and drove us into Galus with a much more diabolical agenda. He wanted to bolster his own court with the best young men that Klal Yisroel could offer. His plan, besides for his own benefit, was to purge the remnants of Yisroel of its potential leaders to ensure they would not rise again. He took the finest, the most brilliant young men and installed them in his service. Among these young captives were Daniel, Chanania, Mishael and Azaria. Daniel became a leading figure in Nevuchadnezzar's court and among his fellow detainees. Baruch Hashem, they refused to be intimidated in any way. Daniel even got them to change the menu, and they ate raw seeds (rice, peas and beans) in order not to eat *בישול* (Alshich Daniel I). They went into the *אש*, into the lion's den and remained loyal to Hashem *נפש*, despite their circumstances. It was only Daniel who was able to interpret the handwriting on the wall, for Balshazzer, which

spelled out Bavel's downfall. Even when Modai took the reins from Bavel, Daniel was able to maintain his position. Darius had a special respect for Daniel despite his previous position with the former regime. We now need to focus on an incident recorded in Daniel (6).

We are confronted with an age old problem - the Goy bristles at a Yid having power and authority over him. The other officials plotted to get rid of Daniel, and passed a law that no one is allowed to make a request other than to king Darius. They argued that the rule would solidify and augment the power of the new governing monarch. In reality, they knew that Daniel Davened (three times a day) and certainly would fall into their trap. They caught him, and brought him to trial, much to Darius's dismay. Rashi (Daniel 1:15) quotes a Medrash that in middle of the trial - with Darius trying to defend him - Daniel saw it was getting dark, Mincha time, AND SO HE DAVENS. There went all the arguments to acquit him, right out the window. At the trial for the crime of Davening, with his life at stake, Daniel is unfazed and convincingly shows his true allegiance. Darius has no choice but to throw him into the lion's den - we all know the rest of the story.

There is, however, a glaring Kashya on this entire incident. The Halacha rules that when faced with a life threatening situation ONLY for the big three Aveiros - Avoda Zara, Gilui Arayos and Shefichas Damim - is one required to give up their life. This may also include certain circumstances of *שעת השמד* and Chilul Hashem. However, there is no requirement of *יהרג ואל יעבור* for Tefilah, but Daniel acted as if it were so (at least that second time in court - see Malbim *ibid*). There is a Machlokes in the Rishonim regarding a situation where the Halacha rules NOT TO GIVE UP one's life, and despite that, one DOES GIVE IT UP, what is the status of that person. Rambam (Yesodei Hatorah 5:4) holds it to be an *עבירה* - *הרי זה מתחייב בנפשו*, whereas Tosafos (Avoda Zara 27b), Rosh (פ"ב דע"ז שם) do not consider it to be wrong. The Mechaber (Y'D 157:1) follows Tosafos and the Rosh, while the Rema (*ibid*) seems to agree (See Shach). These Halachos are complicated and must seriously be learned. But we will focus on trying to reconcile what Daniel did by giving up his life with the opinion of the Rambam.

The only *עונש* we find that was given to Daniel was because after Nevuchadnezzar had a dream about his downfall, and that he would roam like the beasts of the field and eat grass, he gave him advice of how to avoid it (or at least postpone it). He





told him to give Tzedaka, so that his philanthropy would help him escape retribution. See Rambam (Rotzaiach 12:15) explain that this was Daniels test, and he should have never advised a Rasha to do a Mitzvah. For that transgression, the Gemara (Bava Basra 4a) says that Daniel was either demoted and his jurisdiction was limited – called התך, or he was thrown into the lion's den. This was all for the advice, however, we don't that he was faulted for the forfeiture of his life.

We might suggest that during this period, Klal Yisroel felt themselves in no-man's land. The Gemara (Sanhedrin 95a) tells of Yiden who were urged by Yeshaya to do Teshuva, and their response was: Does a slave whose master has sold him or does a wife whose husband has divorced her, do they still have to be loyal? Do they still have any responsibility to their past masters? Do we still have to answer to the G-d who allowed us to be conquered, driven from our land and allowed us to watch the temple we built for our Almighty razed to the ground? The Gemara (Yuma 69b) tells us that Daniel refused to say הגבור - where is His גבורה, as Goyim parade around in our מקדש. (This is before there was an organized סדר התפילה, taught to us by the אנשי כנסת הגדולה, and everyone's Tefilos were freelanced, dictated by whatever feelings they had). But Yeshaya (50:1) told them that you do not have a גט, you are only separated – איזה ספר כריתות אמכם. We need to appreciate that the feeling of being abandoned, being discarded, totally forsaken had enveloped Klal Yisroel at that time, like an ominous, dark cloud that felt like it would never go away. Hashem no longer cares about us, period, they thought. In that somber state of mind, did it make sense to Daven? The entire institution of Tefilah was being undermined! Could it be that Hashem would still listen to our שם ישבנו גם בכינו? Came along Daniel, leading by example, and shouting from the highest hilltop: YES! YES! Even now, it is still בכל קראנו אליו. His מסירות נפש was not for any individual Tefilah, but to save, to rescue Davening from the paralysis of יאוש that might have overtaken Klal Yisroel.

We now have a different level of understanding of the Gemara (Meggilah 12b) which Darshens Mordechai's name. Mordechai and Esther also lived in those shadowy years of ambiguity of rejection by Hashem. Their dilemma was complicated by other events as well. Belshazzar made a party, using כלים from the Bais Hamikdash, calculating the non-rebuilding of the promised Bais Hamikdash Hasheini. That very night, he and his kingdom became history. Achashveirosh made a party, using the same כלים, also celebrating the non-rebuilding of the Mikdash according to his calculations – AND NOTHING HAPPENED! He had some trouble with his wife וער נישט.

- indicating that he may be right that the ירמיה of נבואה of seventy years is not coming true. We had been discarded yet again. Then, for the first time in our history, a law is passed for the complete annihilation of ALL JEWS. Mordechai now must teach Klal Yisroel that no matter how hopeless it may seem, we still CAN AND MUST DAVEN. Says the Gemara; בן יאיר, שהאיר עיניהם של ישראל, he OPENED OUR EYES to see that we can still Daven. Hashem heard בן שמעי, ששמע קל תפלתו. he banged on the gates of mercy and they opened. But doesn't the Gemara (Berachos 32b) state, that from the day of the Churban, the gates of Tefilah are closed? Mordechai's Chidush was that the doors may be closed but never, never locked. Banging on them with our Davening - ממעמקים - will always open them, no matter how many reasons we can imagine that Hashem would ignore them. Torah Temima suggests that this may be reason the Yerushalmi (Shekalim 5:1) refers to Mordechai as פסחיה, because he opened the gates for our Tefilos.

There is another "Nekudah" that I just cannot resist sharing with all of you. The חיד"א, in his Sefer 'כה', כח', מדבר קדמות מ' כה', כח', in his Sefer 'חיד"א' and many others, teach that Mordechai was a Gilgul of Yaakov. By the virtue of לא יברע ולא ישתחוה to Hamman (Eisavs Einikil), he was מתקן the act of Yaakov bowing before Eisav. Therefore, he is called איש ימיני, from Binyamin, because Binyamin was the only one who did not bow to Eisav (see Sefer מה שהיה הוא פרק ג'). We've learned already that Yaakov is the Av of מעשה אבות סימן לבנים for Klal Yisroel in Galus. Hashem had the sun set earlier, so that Yaakov could create Maariv – the Tefilah that symbolizes Daveing in the dark of Galus (see Meshech Chochma there) - a time when man can think there is no point in Davening. You can almost hear the recording (where do they find people that talk like that?), "the number you have dialed is no longer in service". So we've found another parallel between Yaakov and Mordechai: Both taught us about Davening when it seemed there was no point.

The lesson here is evident. We need to take the משלוח מנות from Mordechai and Yaakov and Daven, as the Rambam says that is the message of Purim – להודיע שכל קויד לא יבושו - Hashem will heed all of our Tefilos so that we may speedily see ליהודים היתה אוררה ושמחה.

Among those that are מצפים לישועה.

אמני דאניקה
תיים טאג לויתן

