



פרשת וישב-חנוכה

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A great dilemma: These Parshios are filled with so many lessons for us, and we really want to expound upon them and bring them to the forefront of our minds. On the other hand, how can we just ignore the glorious Yom Tov of Chanukah, with its myriad life-lessons for Yidden to see the light (pardon the pun)? How do you choose? I thought and thought and slowly I felt myself being drawn to feel the בקשה of הזה ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה ופורקן כהיום הזה in facing the world and its מגפה. We could all use a miracle at this point, the kind that would be מוסיף והולך to light up our world shrouded in darkness that comes from too many places. So Chanukah it is בס"ד.

What did the Yevanim really want? To understand the real עומק, beyond the Mitzvos they tried to prevent us from doing and their inexplicable being מטמא the Mikdash instead of destroying it, we turn to the Maharal. The Medrash (BR"R 2:4) teaches that the חושך that enveloped the world refers to the Yavan who ordered us to write על קרן השור אין לנו חלק באלקי ישראל – on the horn of a bull that we have no part in the G-d of Israel. The Maharal elucidates that the עגל is the grown up שור, used by Klal Yisroel as they committed the cardinal sin of at the foot of the mountain, having just received the Torah. The Yevanim held that the status of the “Chosen Nation” that Klal Yisroel HAD was forever taken away from them because of the עגל - we can no longer claim that Hashem is the אלקי ישראל. This contrived deception was adopted by other religions also vying to establish their validity: The Jews lost it, and we took their place. In Yiddish we say: אויס קאפעלוש מאכער - not going to bother to translate that. The Yevanim argued in their theological debate that the NEW chosen people must be the intellectuals – who else could it be? That meant them, as they were famous for חכמת יון (I try and think that's the meaning of רבת את ריבם, which usually means

a debate, an argument.) They used the catastrophe of the עגל as their theme for usurping Yisroel (see Maharal Ner Mitzvah p. 15). This was also their underlying reason for the תרגום השבעים, translating the Torah into Greek, as if it was theirs ה"ו. This gives an additional understanding to מסכת סופרים (א:ז) that teaches that the tragedy of the תרגום is compared to חטא העגל.

One of the גזרות the “sophisticated intellectuals” made was תבעל לטפסר תחלה - every bride had to submit to the Yevani Governor on the night of her wedding before she could be with her husband. The Gemara (Shabbos 23a) says that women are required to light Neiros Chanukah because אף הן היו באותו הנס - they too were “involved” in the נס. Many of us know that the Rishonim argue as to what exactly that means. Some say that they too were SAVED by the נס, while others say it means that they were the SAVIORS that contributed to the נס. Rashi in Shabbos (ibid) assumes BOTH, and says the Yevanim targeted the brides (as above) and he refers to the fact that a woman (יהודית) killed a Yevani. The first Mishna in Kesubos states that the Chachamim set a time for get married on יום הרביעי (see there for reasons). However, at the time of the above גזרה, the Chachamim advised everyone to push up the Chasuna date earlier in the week to thwart the advances of the governor. We wonder, how did that work? The governor will come on יום הרביעי, and inquire where is the Chasuna only to be told it was already, you're too late. Does anyone think his response was: Oh! Mazel Tov, Gezunt and Nachas from the Kinder and head back home? The answer is based on a Medrash (Shir Hashirim) on the Pasuk (1:12) - עד שהמלך במסבו נרדי נתן ריחו - while the king was at his party, the spice gave forth its bad odor. The Medrash compares the חטא העגל to a כלה שזינתה during her own wedding. The Matan Torah was our wedding, and dancing to the עגל (as all עבודה זרה) is constantly

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compared to infidelity throughout Tanach. So it seems that this גורה was not just motivated by animalistic lust, but it was an attempt to make every wedding a replica of the העגל, and instill the union with טומאה forever. See Maharsha (Kesubos 7b) that the Beracha recited under the Chuppah of קדושין וקדושין על ידי חופה, seems to be out of order. חופה precedes קדושין – because by Matan Torah, when Hashem held Har Sinai over our heads – the חופה – and then He gave us the Torah – the ring for קדושין. Yidden want EVERY Chuppah to be a replica of Matan Torah, while the Yevanim want EVERY Chuppah to be a replica of העגל. Thus, the second night does not correspond to the Eigel.

There is a שיטה מקובצת in Kesubos (12a) that quotes Rav Yonason, who explains the odd Minhag in Yehuda about a Chosson and Kallah. The גזירה of להגמון focused on the region of Yehudah, more than other places, because the Yevanim knew that from Yehuda will come משיח who will redeem Yisroel and judge the nation of Eisav (see Gevuros Yitzchok Chanukah ' ענין ז'). The words of the Rambam (Chanukah 3:1) in describing what the Yevanim did to us are: ופשטו ידם בממונם ובבנותיהם. We might suggest another עומק in this based on the Halacha in Shulchan Aruch (O.C 417:1) that women have the Minhag not to do מלאכה on Rosh Chodesh, and it is a מנהג טוב. This is based on a Pirkei D'Rav Eliezer (45) that teaches that the women did not want or allow their gold to be used for making the עגל, and therefore they were given an "extra" Yom Tov of Rosh Chodesh in this world and an extra שכר in הבא (see Eliyahu Rabbah O.C ibid for what their reward will be). If so, the women cannot be faulted for the עגל, and the Yevanim could not disqualify them. It would make sense, then, that the Yevanim invested extra effort to being מטמא the בנות ישראל with their Gezairos, and have them participate in their own חטא העגל. This also somehow connects with one of the

Mitzvos the Yevanim tried to prevent – Rosh Chodesh. Rav Tzadok Hakohein explains, in so many places, that Rosh Chodesh is the symbol of rebirth; it represents the ability to come back after being diminished to near nothing and growing into a full moon that can light up the darkest night. Our using the lunar calendar – it is even our first Mitzvah, החדש הזה ראש חדשים – is to encourage us, to strengthen our resolve to fulfill all 613 Mitzvos DESPITE sometimes missing the mark. The Yevanim promoted the idea of one strike and you're out – FOREVER - while we Yidden hold that you are not out EVEN after three strikes. We look heavenward to the Levana, and realize that Hashem gave us a monthly reminder that דבר העומד לפני התשובה אין לך דבר העומד לפני התשובה, we can come back and we will. They wanted us to think that our Mikdash still stands, but it is of no use, it is טמא and FOREVER disqualified. So, Hashem made the השמן נס - which was not necessary because הותרה הותרה בציבור as Mefarshim point out - sending the message, loud and clear that the Shechina returned to the place, to the people that you hoped were cast out and permanently rejected, removing the darkness you subjected them to.

What we need to see in the flames of our Menorahs is the hope, despite all odds, the little sheep outnumbered רבים ביד מעטים was still able to prevail. The hope that the ultimate חנוכה הבית will happen בקרוב and אור חדש of the Geulah will be ours forever.

Among those that are מצפים לישועה.

אמני דאפקיה
תיים טאג איתן

