

Miketz, Chanukah, by The Rav

- Submitted by Nisson Shulman.

A Hanukah shiur which can easily be made into a derasha, delivered in Moriah Synagogue, originally in Yiddish, transcribed and translated by Nisson Shulman. The hidden world of Hanukah, the Jewish turncoats, Mityavnim, who defiled, while the Romans would later destroy. For Gentiles destroy. A Jew has the power to defile. This is illustrated, not only by the historical record, but also by the tefilah, BIYEMEI MATITYAHU...

MIKETZ, HANUKAH, by Harav Joseph B. Soloveitchik
Delivered (in Yiddish) at Moriah Synagogue, circa 1950.
(Reconstructed from my notes. Nisson Shulman)

The Talmud contains an entire tractate devoted to Purim, MEGILLAH, but scarcely two and a half daf for HANUKAH; merely a BERAITA, MAI HANUKAH, some discussion about how you light the lights, that you may not benefit from them, how long they are to remain lit, and that is all. Why? In KITVEI HAKODESH, too, we have an entire MEGILLAH for PURIM, and we have none for HANUKAH. Even MEGILAT HASHMONAIM is not considered part of KITVEI HAKODESH, although it was written by a contemporary. It is not given any importance by our Sages. Why?

I suggest the GEMARAH purposely hid the miracle of HANUKAH, covering it up, and told us only certain things but not everything about it. For there are two worlds, ALMA DEISKASYA VEALMA DEISGALYA, the apparent world, and the world beneath the surface. Man sees the NIGLE, the apparent, but often overlooks the NISTAR, the hidden world. And because of this limited vision, much distortion ensues. In consequence, only the NIGLE, the superficial, is usually celebrated on Hanukah, and this causes us to overlook the real miracle of the holiday.

What do we see in the account of HANUKAH? The obvious story; slavery, revolt, military victory. Even the miracle of the cruse of oil is part of the ALMA DEISGALYA of the HANUKAH miracle. It is important to perceive the ALMA DEISKASYA, that which lies beneath the surface, as well.

Why go into it? Because if only according to the ALMA DEISGALYA, we would no longer have a HANUKAH. We had other, and greater military triumphs in our history, from Joshua and King David and onward. Yet we do not celebrate them today, for we commemorate only those events which have consequences that have lasted throughout the ages until today.

The Rambam declares that the part of Israel conquered by Joshua is sanctified only as long as we remained on the land, but that KEDUSHAH was removed as soon as we were exiled, since it was a KEDUSHAH of KIBUSH. So we do not celebrate KIBUSH once the fruits of conquest have been lost. According to this, we would not be able to celebrate the victory of HANUKAH today since we had later been driven from Eretz Yisrael!

Our sages tell us that there were ten miracles which daily used to happen to our forefathers in the

Temple, and one of them is exactly like the miracle of the cruse of oil. The NER TAMID burned for 24 hours while it contained only enough oil in its reservoir to burn for half that time. That took place every day during the centuries the Temple stood. Yet the miracle in the BET HAMIKDASH is not celebrated because Today we have neither the BET HAMIKDASH nor the NER TAMID. This should also apply to the miracle of the HANUKAH lights. There is no reason to celebrate a miracle that no longer exists. So the only reason for celebrating HANUKAH today depends on the ALMA DEISKASYA of this holiday.

ZARIM, strangers, entered the BET HAMIKDASH twice. Once, as described in the BEREITA in the tractate SHABBAT in the time of the HASHMONAIM; KESHENICHNESU HAYEVANIM BAHEYCHAL..., and a second time when the Roman General Titus entered the Holy of Holies.

There is a difference between these two events. Titus entered the Holy of Holies, and destroyed the BET HAMIKDASH.. This is expressed in the passage describing how NATAL TITUS SAYIF, VEKARA ET HAPAROCHE. But the Greeks didn't destroy; they defiled. TIM'U KAL HASHEMANIM.

The consequence of Rome's entry was HURBAN. The Greek entry produced TUM'A. Why? And why didn't the Greeks destroy the HEYCHAL?

In the Talmud, MOED KATAN, we find: AMAR RAV HUNA, HAROEH SEFER TORAH SHENISRAF, HAYAV LIKROA SHTEI KERIOT; AHAS AL HAGEVIL VEACHAS AL HAKETAV, SHENEEMAR (when the King Yehoyakim burned Yirmiyahu's megillah), AHAR SEROF HAMELECH ET HAGEVILIM VEET HADEVARIM.

At first glance this is contradicted by the episode recounted in the Talmud, AVODA ZARA, BESH'A SHESARFU RABBAN HANANYA BEN TRADYON, SHAALUHU TALMIDAV, REBBI, MA ATA ROEH... He answered, GEVILIM NISRAFIM VEOTIYOT PORCHOT. So we see that when you burn a SEFER TORAH you can only burn the parchment! Then why did Rav Huna who was a later sage, demand two KRIYOT, if you can't burn the letters?

The answer is, that it depends on who burns the SEFER TORAH. If Gentiles burn it, as when Rabban Hanania ben Tradyon was martyred, then only the parchment burns. A Gentile only has power over the GUF, the GEVILIM. The OTIYOT, the letters, remain whole. They fly, not heavenward, but into the hearts of the students.... The more the GEVILIM are burned, the mightier the OTIYOT.

But when Jews themselves begin to burn SEFARIM, VAYEHI KISROF HAMELECH ET HAMEGILLAH, then the OTIYOT are also destroyed. For not only the GUF, but also the NESHAMAH, is destroyed. Gentiles can only destroy. A Jew can also defile. GEVILIM NISRAFIM, VEOTIYOT NITMA'IM.

MIZMOR LEASAF, ELOKIM, BAU GOYIM LENAHALATECHA. Said our Sages, MIZMOR? KINA MIBAYA? ELA SHESHAFCHU HAMATAM AL HAETZIM VEAL HAAVANIM. Hasam Sofer says, MIZMOR LEASAF, why? Because only GOYIM came into

your NAHALA and not Jews. Therefore, SHAFCHU HAMATAM AL HAETZIM VEAL HAAVANIM.

When the Romans came into the BET HAMIKDASH, there were no Jews helping them, so it was only GEVILIM NISRAFIM, because BAU GOYIM BENAHALATECHA. But in the case of HANUKAH, it was not only Greeks who entered the HEYCHAL. The GEZEROT HASHEMAD began not with the GOYIM, but rather in YERUSHALAYIM, and the first who began it were Jews.

The nephew of YOSI ISH TZEREDA was YEHOYAKIM BEN AHOS YOSI ISH TZEREDA. He was the one who revealed the secret that there were a group of Jews who would not defend themselves on Shabbat, and to him are attributed the murder of the thousands in the cave on that Shabbat...

The problem of HANUKAH was not destruction, but defilement, TUM'A; TIM'U KAL HASHEMANIM. KESHEAMAD MALHUT YAVAN? LOHI, ELA KESHEAMDU HAMITYAVNIM... But our rabbis sought to hide this as much as possible because DIBRU BELASHON NEKIYA.

ALMA DEISGALYA was the war against the Greeks. ALMA DEISKASYA was the war against the Hellenists.

So why don't we see this in the texts? We do, but we must lift the cover, since our sages did not want to speak evil about the Jews, even about the wicked ones, and so they hid the real story between the lines.

The whole story of Hanukah was euphemised. This is particularly apparent from the prayer, BIYEMEY MATITYANU... The excessive repetition expresses it very well. "You, in Your great mercy, stood by them in the time of their distress; "RAVTA ET RIVAM - you fought their battle". More explicitly, "DANTA ET DINAM - you judged their case." Do you want us to be even more explicit? "You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak". Even more explicitly? "The many into the hands of the few". Still not satisfied? "The pure into the hands of the impure". Do you, then, demand an even more explicit statement? Very well, but we say it sadly and very reluctantly, RESHAIM BEYAD TZADIKIM, VEZEIDIM BEYAD OSKEI TORATECHA.

From the time the Jews re-entered the HEYCHAL, the war against the MITYAVNIM was virtually won, and MITYAVNIM were nevermore in the majority. So this is an eternal miracle. That is why we still celebrate it....