

Bamidbar & Yom Yerushalayim 5774

BS"D Parashat Bamidbar & Yom Yerushalayim 5774

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

Binyamin and Dan, an Impossible Scenario

Four times in the Book of Bamidbar, where tribal matters are discussed, the verses which deal with Binyamin and Dan are written consecutively. In the Book of Yechezkel, Binyamin and Dan appear in the same verse. The two closing chapters in the Book of Shoftim (Judges) deal with episodes involving the tribes of Binyamin and Dan.

Why this affinity between these two tribes who were born from different mothers – Dan from Bilhah and Binyamin from Rachel?

I suggest:

Binyamin had 10 sons (Beraisheet 46:21-23). Dan had one handicapped son, Chushim.

Imagine this scene on a seder night in the house of Yaakov. The patriarch is surrounded by his four wives, his 12 sons and daughters and grandchildren. Binyamin looks around with great satisfaction, thinking that since he has 10 sons – the most children of any of Yaakov's other sons – his descendants will eventually comprise the largest and most influential tribe of Yisrael. Dan looks around in envy. He has this one son, Chushim. What kind of a future is in store for his tribe?

Dan indeed had reason for pessimism.

But no! Not in God's world where no mission is impossible.

When the Jews left Mitzrayim, the tribe of Dan had already

outnumbered the tribe of Binyamin by 27,300.

The Book of Shoftim relates that at the end of the civil war between the tribe of Binyamin and the Jewish nation at large, the tribe of Binyamin was reduced to 600 men. In contrast, the tribe of Dan was so numerous that a part of the tribe was forced to leave the tribal area in the center of the country to conquer additional area in the far north to accommodate the overflow of Dannites.

The lesson arising out of the dry numbers of the parsha and the Book of Shoftim is the most fundamental in Judaism – that the most improbable scenario is possible in God's world!

More Impossible Scenarios

Some impossible scenarios:

Gideon, the Judge, defeated the entire Midianite army with only 300 soldiers (Judges Chapter 7).

Yehonatan, son of King Shaul, with only his shield bearer with him, vanquished the entire Philistine army (Shmuel 1 chapter 14).

David, the young shepherd, vanquished Galyat the Philistine human war machine, with one well-placed stone from his slingshot.

The Macabim drove out the Greeks from Eretz Yisrael, despite the enemy's awesome numbers and military might.

As impressive as these episodes are, they possess a common denominator which weakens their influence on future generations. No one alive today witnessed them, so they remain in the domain of belief.

However, miracles have occurred in our own time which rank

among the most impressive that HaShem has ever wrought for His people, to name just two – the War of Independence and the Six Day War.

If you were there, the memories will never be forgotten. If you were not there, you will never know!

In 1967, the Medina was a mere shadow of what we are today. The army was small, the economy stagnant, and the population unprepared for war.

Tensions began to rise three weeks before the beginning of armed conflict, when President Nasser of Egypt ordered the UN peace-keeping troops to evacuate the Sinai Peninsula. Nasser blocked the Straits of Tiran, Israel's gateway from the Red Sea to the Indian Ocean, which is considered in International Law to be *casus belli* (justification for war).

Nasser led a coalition of four Arab States: Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Iraq.

Here are the statistics as they were at the opening of the 1967 hostilities:

Resources	Israel	Arabs
Soldiers	275,000	456,000
Tanks	1093	2750
Cannons	681	2084
Warships	15	118
Fighter planes	228	488
Bombers	19	80
Helicopters	45	101

The situation at the time of the War of Independence was even more desperate:

Resources	Israel	Arabs
Soldiers	30,573	40,000
Tanks	1	200
Cannons	5	140
Warships	3	12
Fighter planes	0	60
Bombers	0	14
Helicopters	0	0

In both wars, the world waited impatiently to see the demise of the impossible Jewish state.

However, our Father in Heaven had other plans. Our enemies were defeated in shame and dishonor, and the fledgling Jewish State was catapulted to a higher quantum level within the community of nations.

I was a ten-year-old living in New York in 1948. HaShem granted me the gift to live at the time the Star of David flag was hoisted in Yerushalayim. I was 29 in 1967, living in Eretz Yisrael and was granted the gift to see the flag hoisted above the Temple Mount.

No one can explain these victories rationally. It was like Gideon, Yehonatan, David and the Macabim coming together to assist the Jewish nation in returning home to continue our historic religious mission to the world. A mission which might appear to be an impossible one: the task of raising up humanity from the quagmire of idolatry and paganism to stand before HaShem in consciousness of His glory.

As great as the miracles were, let us not forget for a moment the human sacrifices which were offered upon the altar of the Jewish nation's return home. Each son and daughter who fell in

battle is “kedosh” and the pain lingers on. But let us also not forget that our losses did not equal the number of Jews who died in one day in Auschwitz-Berkenau. The naked fact which rises from this is that there were, and always are, two alternatives for the Jewish nation – life in Eretz Yisrael under HaShem’s protective hand vs. the spiritual and physical death camps of the galut.

Let no man or woman say, “My situation makes it impossible for me to come on aliya.”

There are difficulties in life; however, when a Jew wants with all his heart to perform a mitzva, Hashem will open the path for him.

Remember Chushim the handicapped son of Dan, who begot the largest tribe in Yisrael.

Shabbat Shalom,

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