

Miketz-Chanuka 5775

BS"D Parashat Miketz-Chanuka 5775

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But It Feels So Right

There are entities and concepts which are inherently bi-polar (marked by opposite extremes).

A toxic substance when used in proper dosage can restore one to good health, but when abused can cause death.

Compulsion or desire (*yeitzer*) when directed in the service of HaShem uplifts a person's soul and brings him to *Gan Eden*. But when the *yeitzer* is used to satisfy one's egoistic gratification, his soul feels downtrodden, debased and degraded, paving the way to *Gehennom*.

Even Torah possesses this duality. The Gemara (Yuma 72:b) states that for one who abides by the Torah "*lishma*" (for the proper reason of keeping HaShem's laws) the Torah is an elixir of life, but for one who practices the Torah "*lo lishma*" (for the wrong reasons) the Torah is an elixir of death.

Chutzpa is another example of such behavior. When performed properly it becomes a virtuous act of courage and valor, but when used improperly it is no more than brazen audacity, disrespect, impertinence and shameless presumptuousness.

In our *parsha*, Yosef, the Hebrew slave-convict is brought up from the pit (*bor*), shaved and dressed appropriately and immediately whisked to the royal court. He is set before the

powerful despot Paro and his entourage of priests and royal advisers to perform an act for which there is no room for mistakes – the interpretation of Paro's dreams, in a very hostile environment.

He is told of the previous interpretations of Paro's expert advisers – that seven sons will be born to Paro and will all die, and the other suggestion that seven daughters will be born to him and they will all die.

Paro is dissatisfied with these divinations, and looks to the young Hebrew (Ivri) just released from incarceration to satisfy his intuition.

Yosef, in direct conflict with the established advisers, tells Paro and all those present that there will be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of great famine.

This was the epitome of chutzpa-courage.

Yosef predicted that the great and ever-faithful god of the Nile would disappoint the nation. For seven years the Nile's flow would not bring down the fertile soil and silt from the rich African hinterland of Lake Victoria. The waters would not overflow their banks to drench the land with life-giving liquid. People would die. Moreover, there were also radical religious and political implications: if the great Nile fails the nation, the conclusion is that the god of the Nile is discontent with the monarchy and priesthood, with the obvious conclusion that they must be replaced.

For Yosef to imply all this is chutzpa-courage at its height. But Yosef's courage goes even further. His mandate was to interpret dreams, not to give advice. But knowing that running through Paro's mind was that this interpretation could endanger the monarchy, Yosef immediately followed with a plan whereby the god of the Nile will forsake the nation, but Paro will come to its rescue. Save food from the plentiful years to be sold to the people in the famine years. Paro accepts

Yosef's interpretation and advice, and the rest is history.

The chutzpa-heroism of the Maccabees is unique in history: When a single family of *Kohanim* from the town of Modi'in declared war upon the Greeks who had conquered the land, and together with other faithful Jews drove the Greeks from the land.

In our time, the same can be said of the two underground groups in pre-state *Eretz Yisrael*; the *Etzel* (*Irgun Tzva'i Le'umi*) and *Le'chi* (*Lochamei Cheirut Yisrael*), who succeeded in driving out the brutish-British from the land.

This is the beautiful side of the coin called chutzpa – courage and faith in HaShem.

But there is an ugly side of that coin, where chutzpa is the abandonment of accountability, of dignity, of esteem and reverence.

The titles "*Avienu Malkeinu*" (our Father, our King) which we attribute to HaShem are not mere platitudes of respect. They imply the way that HaShem relates to *Am Yisrael*. He is the ultimate King who conceives and legislates the laws that govern us, and also the judge of how we abide by those laws. But HaShem is also our loving devoted Father who understands the foibles and weaknesses of lowly man, and takes them into account when judging us.

The Gemara (Kedushim 40:a) states:

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R. Avahu said in the name of R. Chanina: It is preferable for a man to commit a sin in seclusion lest he desecrates the holy name in public.

אדם אחד, אשר חש כי כוחות הרע שלו גברו עליו, יצא למקום שבו אינו מוכר, לבוש בגדים שחורים ויעשה כפי שחש כי ה'אלים' מצוים בו, כדי שלא יחלל את שם ה'אלים' בציבור.

Rabbi El'a'i the Elder said: If a man feels that his evil compulsions have overtaken his ability to conquer them, let him go to a place where he is not recognized, don black clothing and commit what his heart compels him to do, lest he desecrate the Holy Name in public.

An individual's sin is between him and His Creator, but when performed in full view of other people, it is the abysmal depth of unadulterated chutzpa.

What makes the people who partake in public "gay parades" and same sex marriages so abominable is not only their sinful, unnatural preferences, it is their spiteful, brazen, audacious attitude of disdain for the values that have been held sacred for thousands of years.

Despite all our other difficulties, the Jewish nation has not had to suffer the long course of civilization's trek to discover what is right and what is wrong, what is moral and what is not. We have the luxury of having had our values presented to us on a golden platter at Mount Sinai through the Written and Oral Torah, the words of the prophets and the guidance of our holy rabbis. Beyond the Torah there is nothing certain in life, not even the iron-clad postulates of physics that change dramatically.

Our Torah value system demands that all Jews live in *Eretz Yisrael*. In addition, the very presence of Jews in *chutz la'aretz* when the gates of the land are open for us, is nothing less than shameful *chillul HaShem* – a desecration of

And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the LORD's people, and yet they had to leave his land.'

I had concern for my holy name, which the people of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone.

Therefore say to the Israelites, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, people of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone.

I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I am proved holy through you before their eyes'.

In verse 20 the prophet says:

And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the LORD's people, and yet they had to leave his land.'

The very presence of a Jew in chutz la'aretz is per se a chillul HaShem. Every shul, yeshiva and shtiebel there cries out "chillul HaShem."

And all the more so when the continuation of the prophet's words have come alive:

וְהָיָה כִּי יֵלְכוּ בְּתוֹכָם בְּאֶרֶץ הַגּוֹי וְהָיוּ לְעַלְמוֹת הָעַלְמוֹת וְהָיוּ לְעֵלְמוֹת הָעַלְמוֹת וְהָיוּ לְעֵלְמוֹת הָעַלְמוֹת 'וְהָיוּ לְעֵלְמוֹת הָעַלְמוֹת וְהָיוּ לְעֵלְמוֹת הָעַלְמוֹת

וְיִבְנוּ אֶת-הָעָרִים הַנְּשָׁפוּתִים

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"This is what the Sovereign LORD says: 'On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt.

The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it.'

They will say, 'This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.'

Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the LORD have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the LORD have spoken, and I will do it."

In addition, the Gemara in several places states that a Jew who lives in *chutz la'aretz* is tantamount to worshipping

idolatry.

What arouses my anguish and frustration are the public conventions, meetings, assemblies, convocations and councils of major religious organizations in the US, such as Agudat, Young Israel, Orthodox Union, Chabad etc., held so brazenly in the best and finest hotels for all the gentiles to see how the “chosen” of HaShem have so graciously accepted the dire circumstances of their exile.

What would the prophet Yechezkel say? Would he accept an invitation to be the guest speaker? What would Mattityahu and his five sons, who fought and died in the sanctification of the Holy Name, say?

All those present at these assemblies will utterly reject what I say here, because “it felt so right and good” to be in the presence of the American *gedolim* and take pleasure in their words of Torah. And something that “feels so right and good” must have the blessings of HaShem.

I recall that once a young man who was a *Kohen* came to me after the rabbinate rejected his application for marriage to a divorcee. He explained how spiritual their relationship was. They discussed Torah ideas and had a meeting of the minds in all issues. His question was, how can the Torah prohibit such a union when “it feels so right?”

After 66 years since the establishment of *Medinat Yisrael*, it is obvious that nothing short of a catastrophe will release the Jews from the *galut* of America.

So my only intention with this message is: if you are going to violate the word and spirit of the Torah, do it without **chutzpa**. Have your conventions, and arrive at your earth shattering, world changing decisions, but not at luxury hotels for all the gentiles – Christians and Moslems – to see how God’s chosen people turn their backs on the Holy Land.

I can even recommend a place to hold all future conventions. Twenty five years ago, when visiting New York, a friend took me to a *minyan* for *Mincha* in Manhattan. We entered into an elevator of a huge skyscraper and he pressed the button for minus 5, which is five stories below ground level.

We emerged from the elevator into very large subterranean basement, filled with Jews preparing to pray to the God of heaven and earth, as in the words of *David HaMelech*

’וּמִיְסוּדֵי אָרְצָה קָרָאתִי לָךְ יְיָ

“From out of the depths I called out to You, HaShem”

Here is the perfect place for conventions. The gentiles will not see you and they will have no recourse to repeat what the Prophet Yechezkel said:

And wherever they went among the nations they profaned My holy name, for it was said of them, ‘These are the LORD’s people, and yet they had to leave His land.’

If Not for Godly Intervention

If not for Godly intervention Yosef could never have been saved in the pit and if not for God Yosef would certainly have rotted in prison instead of becoming viceroy of Egypt. Surely, if not for Godly intervention, I would not be writing this and you would not be reading it; for our ancestors would all have disappeared long ago together with all the others of the extinct nation called Israel. And if not for God there would not be a place today in the Middle East where Jewish tourists could spend their vacations.

Were there a Sanhedrin today, and if I was a member, I would propose the enactment of a *gezayra* (amendment) prohibiting Jews in chutz la'aretz from celebrating Chanuka! (The Sanhedrin has the authority to prevent the fulfilling of an affirmative mitzvah through inaction, as in the case of the prohibition on blowing the shofar when Rosh Hashanah falls out on Shabbat). Because in the minds of Jews who prefer not to return to Eretz Yisrael after witnessing God's miracles here, Chanuka is no more real than the existence of Helen of Troy or the long lost Atlantis. If one does not believe that God can provide him with *parnasa* (sustenance) and security in Eretz Yisrael, how can he believe that God was able to save Yosef from the pit and or delivered the mighty Greek army into the hands of Yehuda Ha'Maccabee and his small band of warriors?!

Do not be agitated at the suggestion that there could be mitzvot which are required to be kept in Eretz Yisrael but not in Cleveland, Brooklyn, Monsey or Baltimore. Does it really bother anyone there that we in Eretz Yisrael are required to apportion a part of our produce for *truma* and *ma'aser* which is not required in the exile? Does any great Torah scholar in chutz la'aretz lose sleep once every seven years in the knowledge that there is no mitzvah to keep *Shemitta* in L.A.? The halogen lights in the study halls in the great seats of learning outside the Holy Land would continue to burn bright even without the little, half hour, flickering Chanukah candles.

If the contemporary victories of the War of Independence, the Six Day War, and the Yom Kippur war, the six million who have come home and the huge strides made here in Eretz Yisrael in all fields of endeavor, are not real enough to activate one to return to Eretz Yisrael in order to be part of these ongoing miracles, why should a galut Jew believe that something miraculous occurred 2200 years ago?!

My brothers and sisters abroad, have a happy "Festival of *Gevura*" (heroism) far away from where the action was and is

today. And for my brothers and sisters in Eretz Yisrael, know that all the miracles we are merited to observe and participate in are just the “coming attractions” of what we will soon see in this holy land of Hashem.

Chanuka samai'ach ve'Shabbat Shalom,

Nachman Kahana

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