

Vayakhel 5779

BS"D Parashat Vayakhel 5779

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Fear of the Jews

The Megillah records that Achashverosh permitted the Jews to defend themselves on the 13th of Adar against their murderous neighbors in the 127 areas under the King's control. On that day, the Jews killed 75,000 of the enemy in the outlying areas. An additional 800 were killed in Shushan, the capital, in the two days of fighting there on the 13th and 14th of Adar.

75,800 in two days! That number is vastly larger than what we are seeing today in the Arab countries, yet there is no recorded call by the people of his kingdom for Achashverosh's head or for the end of the monarchy.

Why not?

We can conclude why the gentile of these lands did not rise up from what it is stated in the Megillah (8:17)

וְכָל־הָעַמִּים־הַהֵם־שָׂמְחוּ־וְשִׂיחוּ־וְשִׂבְּחוּ־וְשִׂמְחוּ־בְיָמֵינוּ
וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם־הַהֵם־שָׂמְחוּ־וְשִׂחוּ־וְשִׂבְּחוּ־וְשִׂמְחוּ־בְיָמֵינוּ
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And in every state and in every city wherever the King's decree reached, the Jews were happy and joyful feasting and celebration, with many of the gentiles drawing close to Judaism because fear of the Jews was upon them."

The gentiles undoubtedly wanted the King's head, but did not dare to challenge the establishment, especially when the Queen was a Jewish daughter; because "fear of the Jews was upon them".

Fear of the Jew is a mighty weapon. It is alluded to in the Song at the Sea (shirat hayam) recited daily in the morning prayer (Shemot 15:14-16)

וְהָעַמִּים יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיִרְדְּפוּ; אֲנִי אֶפְרָיִם אֶפְרָיִם אֶפְרָיִם אֶפְרָיִם אֶפְרָיִם
וְהָעַמִּים יִשְׁמְעוּ וְיִרְדְּפוּ; אֲנִי אֶפְרָיִם אֶפְרָיִם אֶפְרָיִם אֶפְרָיִם אֶפְרָיִם
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The nations will hear and tremble; anguish will grip the people of Philistia. The chiefs of Edom will be terrified, the leaders of Moav will be seized with trembling, the people of Canaan will melt away. Terror and dread will fall on them. By the power of your arm Eretz Yisrael will be petrified as stone, until your people pass by, LORD, until the people you acquired pass by."

What are the lessons for our time?

Medinat Yisrael was awarded the rare opportunity of "fear of the Jews was upon them", when we could do no wrong, and the opportunities for a major leap towards our final redemption was in our hands.

It happened in 1967, as a result of the Six Day War. The world, both Jews and Gentiles, were preparing for the devastating, unspeakable destruction of the nascent Jewish State and the annihilation of all its Jewish citizens. Preparations were being made in the U.S. to save the surviving Jewish children, as if there would have been any Jewish children left to save had we lost the war. I recall reading that funds were being collected to erect a great memorial for

the gallant State of Israel which is no more!

Israel at that time was tiny in area with a small population. Our army and air force were a mere shadow of what we have in Eretz Yisrael – today.

The war erupted in the early hours of Monday morning, the 25th of Iyar (June 5th) when Israel made a preemptive attack on all our enemies, destroying the air forces of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Jordan and Saudia.

The ground war commenced, and on the days of that week we liberated Yehuda, Shomron, the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights and Azza. On Wednesday the holy soldiers of Tzahal liberated the Old City, and for the first time in 2,000 years the Temple Mount was in our possession. Tzahal, with the huge aid of HaShem, did in six days what took Yehushua Bin Nun seven years to accomplish!

The world was aghast; as if they had seen a ghost. For indeed we had emerged from the grave of history to take our rightful place at the peak of God's miracles.

During those six days and even a bit later we could have removed the desecration of HaShem's holy Mount by demolishing the Al Aksa mosque and the golden domed building.

And the world would have been silent.

We could have conquered Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and established pro-Israel puppet governments. And the world would have been silent.

We could have transferred all of the alien peoples from our lands and had a totally Jewish country. And the world would have been silent.

We could have expelled the murderous Arabs of Hevron and other potential threats across the Jordan River. And the world would have been silent.

But we did not do any of these justified acts because we were afraid to act like proper Jews. The concept of “fear of the Jews was upon them” did not register with our leaders.

Today Israel is being accused of war crimes. I admit that we perpetrated two similar unforgivable war crimes – in 1948 and again in 1967.

During the War of Independence and the Six Day War we did not expel all our enemies from the country. This is our war crime, for which we, our children and grandchildren might yet have to pay the full price.

We did not learn the real lesson of Purim; that when HaShem performs miracles, it is incumbent upon us to advance the opportunities afforded us and proceed with conviction and courage along the path of Jewish redemption.

The Pasuk (verse) says (Devarim 28:10)

וְכָל עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ יִרְאוּ אֶת שֵׁם יְיָ וְיִרְאוּ אֶת עַמְּךָ כִּי יִקְרָא בְּשֵׁם יְיָ וְעֵרֶץ יִשְׂרָאֵל תִּירָא אֶתְּךָ.

And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and – Eretz Yisrael shall be afraid of you.”

And Rabbi Eliezer the Great explains that the object that will instill fear into the hearts of our gentile enemies is the tefillin (phylacteries) placed on one’s head (Tractate Berachot 6a).

The opportunity for “fear of the Jews was upon them” will present itself again, as stated by the prophets.

Next time, in view of the many religious officers and fighters in Tzahal, I am quite certain that we will know how to seize the opportunity to sanctify HaShem’s holy name in Eretz

Yisrael.

While in the Purim mode, I would like to conclude with a light story, but with a very serious message.

An Arab once entered a bank in Yerushalayim, just as the automatic mechanism had closed the safe until the following morning. In reply to his demand to receive some cash, the teller told him that the safe was locked and could not be opened until eight o'clock the following morning. The Arab became very belligerent and vocal, and threatened the life of the teller. At this point, the bank manager approached the Arab, picked him up and threw him on the sidewalk outside the bank.

While the Arab was nursing his wounds, the bank teller approached him saying: "Didn't I tell you that the safe is closed until tomorrow morning?" The Arab turned to the teller and said: "Yes. You told me, but he explained it."

There is no rhyme or reason to tell our anti-Jewish enemies of the folly of their ways. They will understand only when it is explained to them, in the spirit of "Fear of the Jews was upon them."

Shabbat Shalom,

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