

Vayigash 5782

BS"D Parashat Va'yigash 5782

Rabbi Nachman Kahana

A Leap of Faith

Dedicated to my dear friend of many years, Harav Avraham Shalom Isaacs of Yerushalayim, zecher tzadik livracha. A talmid chacham and loyal friend to all who knew him. A man who saw, lived, and taught the impact of Eretz Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael and its implications for our people as HaShem's chosen nation. May his family and friends be comforted by the sweet memory of his character and yir'at shamayim.

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How strong is your faith?

Chanuka of this year ended this week but its message echoes until the end of time. The message of Chanuka is essentially three words – **leap of faith**.

A short story to describe a "leap of faith":

A man was climbing a mountain when suddenly a violent storm overtook him; he very quickly found himself in a free-fall, down and down in the black of night. He came to an abrupt stop when the safety rope became taut, and was swinging like

a pendulum right, left, back and forth.

The man closed his eyes and with bitter tears prayed to God to save him. A voice suddenly echoed from nowhere, "Do you have faith in me?" To which the man relied in a sincere scream, "Yes, Yes I have absolute faith in you". And the voice erupted "cut the rope!"

The next morning, they found the man dangling from the uncut rope – 10 centimeters from the ground.

Chanuka was a national 'leap of faith' against all odds of staying alive. But the holy kohanim led the nation in this moment of truth – believe or don't believe. We believed and obtained the miracles of Chanuka.

The End of Miracles?

Rav Assi (third generation of the Amora era) is quoted in the Gemara (Yuma 29a) that the episode of Queen Esther is the end of miracles. And the rabbis asked, "The miracles of Chanuka followed Purim, so Purim is not the end of miracles?" And the rabbis explained that Rav Assi's intention was that the miracle of Purim was the last of the miracles included in the 24 books that make up the written Torah. However, this answer creates a vicious cycle, because the question repeats, "Why didn't the sages include Chanuka as the last of the 25 written texts of the Bible?"

I submit:

Rav Assi was saying that the episode of Purim had a beginning, a middle and a final outcome, so it can appear as a whole written text. Whereas Chanuka, which records the Greeks' attempt to assimilate the Jewish nation, had a beginning but no end, because goyim in every generation still attempt to

force us to renege on our covenant with HaShem that we shall forever be His visible, active agents in this world.

The days of Chanuka exhibit an extraordinary feature of the Jewish national character – the willingness to make a ‘leap of faith’ – but never give up.

Avraham Aveinu showed the way when he and his 318 student-soldiers waged war on the four foreign nations that invaded Eretz Yisrael.

Yaakov with his miniscule family was prepared to face Aisav and his 400 soldiers if their other tactics failed.

The Jews made the leap of faith when they jumped into the Red Sea, in total faith that HaShem would save them.

David, the shepherd boy from Bet Lechem took his jump when approaching the Philistine giant Golyat (Goliath).

The Chashmonaim and their small band of God-fearing patriots made their disparate ‘leap of faith’ against the superpower of Greece and were victorious.

In every generation, in hundreds and thousands of Jewish communities the world over, Am Yisrael made their ‘leap of faith’, and we survived 2000 years of exile to come home to Eretz Yisrael.

On May 14, 1948, the representatives of the Va’ad Ha’Leumi (National Council) rose to the challenge in a giant leap of faith. They declared the establishment of the State of Israel, despite the immediate invasion of five Arab standing armies into our territory, and despite the United States’ withdrawal of their vote for partition, and the arms embargo they imposed on the nascent Jewish State struggling in its first breaths of life.

In 1967 the Medina made another “irrational” ‘leap of faith’ when we attacked all our neighboring Arab countries in a pre-

emptive strike, utilizing almost all of our aircraft in the attack while leaving a bare minimum to defend the country.

Menachem Begin closed himself off in his office and read Tehillim as our planes took off to destroy the Iraqi nuclear reactor in Bagdad; leaving his room only when the last of our planes landed safely home after completing their mission of faith.

In our time every individual Jew in the exile has the opportunity for his "moment of truth" when he must decide to take or refrain from his "leap of faith". Like our father Avraham and mother Sarah, to "leave his present land, his birthplace and his father's home" and ascend to a higher energy level of Judaism in Eretz Yisrael.

In conclusion: Shortly, Medinat Yisrael will be taking a great "leap of faith," and with the guidance and blessings of HaShem will present to Am YIsrael another holiday more dramatic than Chanuka of old. So, the spirit of Chanuka lives on with no end, hence as stated above it cannot be relegated to the limiting pages of a book.

Chanukah is a holiday of Jewish heroism and faith. "Who is for HaShem? Come to me!", cried the Hasmonean Matityahu. The spirit of the Chashmonaim is alive and beats in our soldiers of Tzahal.

When we light a Hanukkah candle, we reaffirm that this land is ours through an inheritance of our ancestors and ratified by the Creator, as long as heaven and earth exist.

Harav Avraham (Avi) Isaacs z"l would have been among the first to answer Matityahu's call:

"אני אעשה כדברך"

אשר יצא לך מפיך, ואתה עשה כדברך, ואתה עשה כדברך, ואתה עשה כדברך

Shabbat Shalom

Nachman Kahana

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