

Hanuka - The Forgotten Lesson

by HaRav Ariel Bar Tzadok

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Today, for the most part, people are mentally dim and are easily led. Our modern media intoxicates the world which for the most part has become dull and desensitized to the all fundamental provocations going on around us and around the world. Today the world shakes from the battles between the religious and the atheist/secular or between western Christian based culture and eastern Muslim based culture.



Two great giants loom on the horizon growing bigger and stronger politically and economically and yet, no one in the east or west seems to care or express concern. Yet, when over the next few decades China and India emerge as the two new world superpowers many are going to awaken to the fact they they are no longer “king of the hill.”

With new powers in place and new cultural practices expected as the norm, many will either go with the flow and abandon their traditional old way or they will stick to their traditions and possibly promote conflict with the new and encompassing. What I speak of now belongs to our future, but this type of conflict in nothing new. It is old as humanity itself. The big boy always wants to dominate in every way and the little boy had better follow suit, or else.

This is exactly what happened in ancient Israel. In those days the Grecian empire of Alexander the Great served as the world superpower and after the founder's death continued in the forms of the governments established by his generals. Alexander was considered by most to be an enlightened ruler. Although he militarily conquered many nations, he was warmly embraced by many. This was not the fortune faced by his surviving generals. Their rule was not one of benevolence or enlightenment. They imposed their rule, their culture and the laws by force, regardless of public opinion.

Then, as today, most had no stomach for a fight, so most simply decided to ignore the provocation and to go with the flow, abandoning their traditional old culture and embrace the new. Well, ancient times did not have the modern media to distract the minds of gullible masses. So there was still a strong popular resentment to the imposition of the new and the desecration and abandonment of the old. Such impositions were provocative offenses and the populace suffered much insult and misery.

Yet, there comes a time when as we say, the final straw breaks the camels back. Rebellion occurs, violence erupts, the social order is challenged and anarchy reigns. Ruthless violent repression can restore order for the immediate time being, but unless issues are addressed to appease an aroused public, the repressed resentment only simmers, looking for any and all opportunities to rise again in whatever clandestine and sinister form that it can. This is how terrorism is born. And terrorism can take numerous forms other than outright violent attacks.

Social resistance in the form of passive but consistent allegiance to the “old ways” and equally ignoring or avoiding the edicts of the new regime is as successful in thwarting a social take-over as is any military intervention. Both Russian and American troops have learned this lesson recently in Afghanistan. Try as they may to break the will of the people and all invaders ever succeed in doing is breaking the backs of the people, but never their resolve.

The nature of resistance against an overwhelming authority is also not lost to the so-called Palestinian people. Their resolve against modern Israel is so strong that in the end their resolve alone is turning world public opinion in their favor, in spite of their usage of terrible violent attacks upon innocent civilians. Modern Israel, at one time the tiny David in a sea of Arab Goliaths has now been transformed into an evil Goliath itself against the small and mighty so-called innocent Palestinian people. It seems that the so-called Palestinians have learned lessons from the likes of Judah Macabee and use his very tactics against his descendants.

What an irony of history; the descendants of those enemies defeated by the Jews now use Jewish wisdom and resolve against the Jews, who themselves are acting with the carelessness and lack of insight of their ancient enemies. It so proves what George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it."

Here we come to the crux of the issue. Hanuka is not just a commemoration or celebration of a victory long past. Rather Hanuka is and must be remembered as a lesson that teaches us that only resolve and perseverance can resolve a violent conflict. In order to win the fight, any fight, battle must be absolute and victory must be no less absolute. Seeking peace at any cost is the tolerance of weakness and a clear sign of lack of resolve. The modern forms of conflict that involve all sorts of talk about peace would have been viewed as insanity in ancient days. After all they suffered, the ancients were not willing to forget and not willing to forgive. Theirs was an all or nothing fight. And only after great sacrifice and loss did they succeed in victory.

As for us today, the public media had pretty much deadened our resolve in most arenas of social and political interest. Today we do not understand the passion of our ancestors and we do not sympathize with their resolve and sacrifice for victory and freedom. As such, we live today more like psychological slaves, oblivious to our actual condition and happy to just express token verbal objection to our condition rather than express any exertion to actually do something about it.

Yes, Hanuka was a lesson of the past that most likely will not be repeated any time soon. In spite of the present conflict in the Holy Land, today's Jews are no Maccabees. Indeed, they are more like the enemies of the Maccabees in their complacency and lack of commitment to fight the good battle sufficiently to win the day. So, barring any Divine Intervention the enemies of today's Jews who fight to make Jerusalem theirs might actually succeed in their endeavors. After all, their resolve is stronger and their sacrifice greater. Wars are won by the mighty, regardless of their force of arms. **When there is a will, there is a way; when there is no will, there is no way.** Ancient Israelis understood this message. Modern Israelis and Jews have forgotten it.

I for one do believe in Divine Intervention and I do believe that the Hand of Heaven will express itself yet again to save a most undeserving people from a most deserved fate. Thank G-d for His Divine Mercy for Israel would not survive now or ever without it.

Hanuka is a time to remember the price of victory. It is not cheap! We can light all the Hanuka lights that we want but we must remember that the purpose of light is to cancel out darkness. We will never cancel out darkness or defeat evil all the while that we lack the resolve, the commitment and the sacrifice necessary to win the day. All our Hanuka lights will be nothing but hollow and empty shells if we fail to remember what it is that they are supposed to really be.

Victory requires pride, sacrifice and resolve. Compromise is a weakness that victors cannot afford. Freedom is reserved for those who fight for it. Standing up against all the odds is the Macabee way. Who today amongst the descendants of the Maccabees stands up to be a Maccabee?