

Chanukkah Everday

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"Those who do not learn from history are doomed to repeat it," source unknown.

"The thing that has been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See this is new?' It has been already of old time, which was before us," Keheleth (Ecclesiastes) 1:9-10, Restoration Scriptures Version.

The year is 173 BCE.

A vicious war is just beginning. This clash began not the battleground with weapons and slaughter but first in the battleground of the mind.

The Greek King Antiochus Epiphanies is championing the cause of Greece. He and the people of His day are pushing the Middle East towards hellenization. In other words, Antiochus is trying to make all the people of his kingdom like the rest of the Greeks. His cause is to conquer the minds' of the people and make them live like the 'civilized' Greek world.

History teaches that Antiochus founded more Greek cities than any previous ruler. He also brought great persecution to the Bible believers in the Land of Yisra'el. First, the temple high priest was replaced by a Greek named Jason. Jason strived to change the religion of the Hebrews to be more accepting towards the worship of other gods. By 167 BCE things had gotten really bad as the Hebrews were forced under the penalty of death to "to depart from the laws of their fathers, and to cease living by the laws of Torah (law). Further, the sanctuary in Jerusalem was to be polluted and called after Zeus Olympus," says the book of 2 Maccabees 6: 1, 2.

Antiochus entered the Temple, even the Holy of Holies, offered unclean animals and performed sexual acts upon the altar of sacrifice. He forbade the Hebrews to circumcise their sons. He stopped Sabbath worship. He even required the new brides to spend the night with a Greek general before any marriage took place. Clearly, this was a bad dude with a bad cause!

Many Hebrews quietly gave in to the ways of the King. They compromised their beliefs by departing from the true faith and accepting the many gods of Greece. Instead of fighting back they gave in. Some even had painful surgeries to reverse their circumcisions!

However, there was a family that refused to concede.

One man, from a priestly lineage, named Mattathais (Mattitياهو in Hebrew) and his five sons resisted. Their opposition started a rebellion that would be inscribed in the history books as one of the greatest military battles of all time. Their refusal to go along with Greek ways would kindle a flame of hope within the persecuted people of Judea. This flame continues to shine even to this day.

The story is told that the Greeks came to the city where Mattitياهو and his family lived. The evil army told everyone to bow down and worship a huge statue of Zeus. When Mattitياهو saw a fellow Hebrew begin to worship the idol, he quickly went into action. Mattitياهو killed the Hebrew and declared to those around him, "Mi la YHWH elai," or whoever is for YHWH join me. He took his son Judah (Yahudah in Hebrew), his family, and other loyal Hebrews with him as they fled to the mountains. In the caves they could plan and wage a war. "These men believed that they could not free Israel from foreign rulers, but they were willing to risk their lives so that the Jewish people could enjoy spiritual freedom and control of their Temple. Mattitياهو died, but the sons continued to fight under the leadership of Yahudah the Maccabee. The Maccabees, with four battalions of 1,000 men each, defeated an army of 40,000 soldiers and 7,000 cavalry. Then in 165 BCE, Yahudah gathered a force of 10,000 Jews and defeated an army of 60,000 soldiers and 5,000 cavalry," wrote Rabbi Moshe Koniuchowsky.

Finally, after three years of fighting, the Maccabees were able to overthrow the Greeks. The Hebrews regained control of Jerusalem and the holy Temple site. Upon entering the Temple they found it to be in disarray. This area of Biblical worship had been desecrated and destroyed. So, they began the tedious task of setting up the sanctuary in the prescribed way. They remade certain items that were missing, they washed dirty utensils, they cleaned the whole place and set a date to set it apart and re-dedicate the temple to YHWH. Their celebration was to be eight days of prayer and worship during which they would consecrate the place to YHWH.

The story is told that when the priests went to light the Menorah that stands in the holy place, they did not have enough set apart oil to last for the whole feast. The priests trusted YHWH and the oil burned for eight days. This was just long enough to

consecrate new oil as prescribed by the Torah. The Temple was dedicated to YHWH for 8 days. In Hebrew the word for dedication is "Chanukah." It is from these events that have the Festival of Chanukah as celebrated Jewish people for over 2,000 years. Chanukkah was even observed by our Messiah Y'shua in John 10.

This powerful story of a miraculous military battle and oil multiplication has been told and retold as the reason for the season of the eight-day celebration of Chanukah.

But please, please don't just dismiss these events as only for holiday time. Don't think of the Chanukah story as even a fable for children to replace Christmas.

The miracles that took place during the revolt of Judah and his army are too special to remember only once a year. They should have lasting impact and memory all year long. You've heard of Christmas in July, well, its time to have Chanukah everyday. We can learn much from the Maccabees if we will just gleam from the glamour and glimmer of the menorah the message of perseverance.

As this historic account unfolded many miracles occurred like the military victories and the oil lasting eight days. But, perhaps these outward marvels are secondary when compared to the miracles that took place within the Hebrew people at that time. As this teaching brings understanding, wisdom, and knowledge may it be Chanukah all year long within the people of Yisra'el. May we learn from the Maccabees how to conquer compromise!

The Real Deal Miracle

You see, King Epiphanies' goal was not to necessarily kill the all the Hebrews. His real purpose was to change them. He wanted them to be like the rest of the worldly Greeks. Epiphanies, who was renamed Epimanes or "madman" by his contemporaries, did not allow the Hebrews to keep Shabbat or study Torah. He thought that by passing faith-damaging laws and even destroying their place of worship that he could defeat the Hebrews faith and cripple their culture. The king was wrong.

The king did not understand that the Biblical faith is not about buildings but about being. The king soon found out that even though the Temple was desecrated, the people remained faithful. Even though the Temple Menorah was obliterated, the oil remained. The faith of the Hebrews was within the people and not based on something on the outside.

It is this miracle, the miracle of opposition, that stands out greater than the oil and the

military battles. Antiochus wanted compromise or middle ground. He did all he could to get the Israelites to assimilate, to mix, to pollute their faith, to give in, and walk the middle of the road. Some of the Jews did this. They accepted the Greek ways and they traded their tallits for togas. They mixed in with other peoples and other faiths and lost their identity. Others did not.

Let us learn from the examples of Mattitياهو and his sons as they refused to give in to compromise. The times may have changed but our enemy has not. The battle is still the same. Will we follow the words of the Bible and walk out our Hebrew lifestyle or will we compromise and mix with the world? This is a daily fight for faith. "Therefore come out from among them and be set-apart, says the Master YHWH, and touch not the unclean things; and I will receive you, and will be an Abba to you and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Master YHWH the Almighty," 2 Corinthians 6:17-18, Restoration Scriptures Version.

In Hebrew the word for compromise is "p'shara." This term means to "expose or make liable to danger, suspicion, or disrepute." It also means to, "resolve differences by mutual concessions esp. to prevent or end a lawsuit." How? P'shara is a choice to give in and even give away. Compromise, as the definition states, is a mutual agreement. It is an action that must be taken and accepted - compromise is not forced. Some Hebrew chose to p'shara and others did not.

Interestingly, there is not a word for "compromise" in the ancient Arabic language that the Muslims speak. In the truest sense, Islam does not teach compromise. One reason why there is no compromise in the Middle East today is because the Islamic belief system does not support in giving in. They don't even have a word for compromise in their dictionary.

The war against p'shara is one of the greatest fights Torah followers face today. The world is calling us to conform. Our children are bombarded with musicians, actors, and the media who set the trends and fan the fads. We must resist.

Make the Decision

First we must decide not to compromise. In a split second Mattitياهو the priest rose against the Greeks and killed a public sinner. He then went to battle against those who persuaded the Hebrews to worship zeus. Mattitياهو wasn't doing anything spectacular; he was just walking in his heritage as priest of YHWH.

The priests were to teach Yisra'el to be kadosh or 'holy or set apart.' The people were

not to mix with the world. They were not to mix the clean with the unclean or even yoke different animals together. They were forbid to intermarry with pagans and were not to wear garments of mixed materials. Yisra'el was to be different. Stopping the blending of the truth with falsehood was just part of being a priest. As Mattitياهو stood up against the opposition he proclaimed "Mi la YHWH elai," or whoever is for YHWH join me! Like Mattitياهو we have to overcome our fears and make a firm commitment not to give in.

Press On

Second we have to persevere. Making a decision is one thing. Sticking by that decision is another. For the Hebrews, victory was not easy nor was it fast. It took the Israelites three years of warfare to defeat the Greeks. They were outnumbered, unarmored, and outsmarted but they still won. Even Mattitياهو their leader was killed in battle. They could have given up at any moment but they did not. Through all that happened to them, the Maccabee army persevered and eventually conquered the king. After many fierce battles they reclaimed what was rightfully theirs in the first place. And it is no different today. We must fight to reclaim the lifestyle that is rightfully ours. And we have to keep fighting. The opposite of compromise is perseverance. We have to be the same; we have to be 'preserved' through the events of life. Perseverance is a daily struggle. Yet it is a worthy struggle. "Fear none of those things that you shall suffer: see, s.a.tan shall cast some of you into prison, that you may be tried; and you shall have tribulation ten days: be faithful to death, and I will give you the keter chayim. He that has an ear, let him shema what the Ruach says to the Yisraelite congregations; He that overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death," Revelation 2:10-11.

Clean Up

Thirdly, we will need to clean up. Compromise is messy because it blurs the lines between right and wrong. This chaos and confusion has to be cleaned up. When the Israelites regained the temple they found it to be in a total wreck. It had been desecrated and needed to be rebuilt. This took a lot of hard work and a refusal to take shortcuts. Throughout this process the Hebrews could have compromised by using furniture and items other than what was prescribed in the Torah. They could have compromised. When the priests only had enough sacred oil for one day they had to make a decision. Should they mix the sacred oil or just used regular lamp oil for the menorah?

They might have compromised the holy but they did not. They believed and trusted in YHWH with what they had. Because of this trust we commemorate this miracle every year around the month of December. Think for a minute though if the Hebrews would

have compromised and not trusted YHWH to multiply the oil. Do you think we would have the eight-day celebration of Chanukah with a special menorah? Probably not.

Indeed, the greatest miracle of Chanukah is what occurred INSIDE the people. Their resistance against compromise of the spiritual world led to physical wonders in this world. Like the widow whose meal did not run out and like the fishes and loaves that multiplied to feed thousands - the single cruz of oil was enough. As the Passover song and phrase say - "Dayenu" - it is always sufficient. When you trust YHWH and do not compromise your needs will always be met.

A Remnant and a fall

Something important to remember is that all of these events centered on a remnant. A remnant is a 'small piece of an original that has not been mixed.' A remnant is like the beginning, yet remains through the end. It was a remnant of the original oil that was used by the priests. And even the priests themselves were a remnant of the original bloodline that served at the tabernacle in the wilderness. Like their ancestors the priests had to stand up and defy the world of compromise. They also had to 'tikkun' or fix/rectify the errors of their past.

During Yisra'el's journey from Egypt the priests gave in to the people and compromised true worship. "And when the people say that Moshe delayed to come down out of the Mount, the people gathered themselves together to Aharon, and said to him, Get up, make us elohim, that shall go before us; for as this Moshe, the man that brought us up out of the land of Mitzrayim, we do not know what has become of him. And Aharon said to them, Break off the golden earrings, which are in the ears of your wives, and of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring them to me. And all the people broke off the golden earrings that were in their ears, and brought them to Aharon. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a golden calf: and they said, These be your elohim, O Yisrael. Which brought you up out of the land of Mitzrayim," Shemot / Exodus 32:1-4.

Aharon gave in to the nation's request and gave them the idol of the golden cow. Remember, if you don't learn from the past then you are doomed to repeat it. If we don't tikkun the errors of our ancestors then we may replicate them. Compromise cannot be tolerated within the family of Yisra'el. It not only has to be stopped, it also has to be fixed. Because of the sin of the golden cow, the nation was in need of tikkun.

Perhaps part of Yisra'el's tikkun was the actions of Pinchas. "And when Pinchas, the son of El-Azar, the son of Aharon the kohen, saw it, he rose up from among the

congregation, and took a javelin in his hand; And he went after the man of Yisrael into the tent, and thrust both of them through, the man of Yisrael, and the woman through her belly. So the plague was stopped from the children of Yisrael," Bamidbar 25:7-15. Tikkun of Aharon's sin took place as Pinchas the priest killed a public sinner. Then in the reflection and shadow of the remnant, Aharon's descendant Mattitiyahu also rose to the occasion and killed a public sinner. Pinchas and Mattitiyahu refused to compromise. Remarkably, Mattitiyahu then even echoed Moshe's response to the sin of the golden calf. " Mi la YHWH elai," or whoever is for YHWH join me," Shemot / Exodus 32:26.

The remnant continues now as you face the monster of compromise. Everyday you have an opportunity to learn from the past and change the future. Here at the present time you can actually recreate the miracle of Chanukah by strengthening your faith and making up your mind up not to compromise. "Do not love the olam hazeh or the things in the olam hazeh. If anyone loves the olam hazeh, the ahava of Abba is not in him. For all that is in the olam hazeh; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of chayim; is not of Abba but is of the olam hazeh," 1 Yochannan / 1 John 2:15-16.

Rejecting the world

Rejecting the world is not easy but it is necessary.

In a sense we as Yisraelites have to defy gravity. We must resist the pull of the world. We have to reject mixture. It is hard to swim up stream and resist the influences of those around us. The Talmud says, "All beginnings are difficult." Yet it will get easier each time we choose not to p'shara. There is a principle of momentum that states every time you perform a mitzvot or refuse to go along with the ways of the world your spirit is strengthened. Barriers are broken down as you reject the urge to compromise. Take for example the feasts of YHWH. At first they are new and perhaps even difficult to celebrate. But as time goes by, the new actions become habit; they become part of you and don't seem so strange. As the actions are repeated, it gets easier each time to just perform the mitzvot. And each time you refuse to allow your life to mix with the world, you stand as a witness and example of how a follower of YHWH should live.

Resist the urge when you are confronted with the option to forsake YHWH. Do not allow the adversary a foothold. "Do not give s.a.tan a chance or opening," Ephesians 4:27.

Be faithful in the small matters. Most people won't compromise their faith by disobeying a 'big' commandment like murdering or stealing. Yet will your faith stand strong when faced with small choices about Sabbath observance or words that are

spoken? It is hard to resist p'shara in the small areas of life. The next time you are tempted to cross the line remember how the priests would not even compromise the oil they used in the temple.

As you are faithful to YHWH, you can expect miracles to happen. In fact, you can make miracles happen through your devotion. Expect the unexpected and experience the unthinkable as your heart is molded in the Father's hands. Just as the Yisraelite rededicated the Temple, recommit yourself to YHWH and His service. Clean out the areas of compromise and evil influences. Turn off that racy TV show. Put away those clothes that reveal too much. Look at how much money you spend on things that are just not necessary. Say 'no' when friends and co-workers tease or tempt you to disobey Torah.

In conclusion, when it comes to life there is nothing new under the sun. The struggles we face today like understanding our heritage or being in this world but not of this world, are not new. The powers and the many peoples around us despise how we act and they want us to change. We too must stand like the Maccabees and hammer our life through the persecution of the world. We need to learn from the mistake of Aharon and tikkun olam or 'fix the world' through our resistance to compromise.

Can you proclaim as Moshe and Matiyahu did? " Mi la YHWH elai," or whoever is for YHWH join me," Shemot / Exodus 32:26.

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