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SPECIAL GUEST DVAR TORAH



The Gevura of Resilience

Every Chanukah, we commemorate the ancient victory of the few against the many during the times of the Chashmonaim. However, over these two plus years of war, the concept of Gevura has become all too real, as seen in the faces of the soldiers and their families that are our neighbors and friends or even in our own families.

But there are many different kinds of Gevura including a level revealed in these parshiyot of “Sippurei Yosef”.

If Yosef were a teenager today, he could win the “prize” of the one who has it the worst. By little fault of his own, he is thrown into a pit by his brothers, sold by them to Egypt (or at least they plan to), and then when the handsome 17 year old heroically resists temptation, he is thrown into a prison for a crime he did not commit. He interprets dreams and

despite being forgotten in return, he doesn’t despair and Hashem’s name is constantly in his mouth. What’s more, despite probably wondering if his father knowingly sent him to his brothers to be sold, Yosef continuously keeps his father’s image as an inspiration to stay true to his values. Yosef refuses to be a victim. As a result, he rises to the highest level of success in a foreign culture in the Torah.

But Yosef is not the only main character of the “Sippurei Yosef”. Running parallel is the story of Yehuda, the fourth brother with leadership qualities who is the one who suggests selling Yosef to Egypt. Despite his father’s heartbreak, Yehuda does not admit guilt but ends up in a downward spiral. In a story that appears as a non-sequiter (and a story that we somehow “didn’t have time to cover at school”), Yehuda marries a Cnani woman, which has only been done before by Esav before him. He has two children that each marry Tamar and then subsequently leave her as a childless widow as they engage in behavior that is evil in the eyes of Hashem. Yehuda does not offer Tamar to his youngest son as he promises but rather leaves her in a state of limbo, an agunah of sorts. Yehuda then unknowingly impregnates his daughter-in-law thinking she is a prostitute and just when it seems he is beyond repair, he stunningly chooses to publicly admit guilt, saving Tamar. Yehuda emerges from this story as a different person- one who subsequently takes responsibility and stands up for Binyamin in a way that he chose not to stand up for Yosef.

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These two stories of Yosef and Yehuda are both stories of Gevura in the image of resilience. Yosef refuses to be defined by what happens to him and Yehuda refuses to be defined by his mistakes. They both overcome. From these two men, come Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yosef.


Fittingly, we always read these stories around Chanukah.

On Chanukah we celebrate the dual miracles of the oil lasting for 8 days- and also the victory of the few fighting against the many. While both miracles show a tremendous level of Hashgachat Hashem, Rabbi Sacks adds that there is an additional miracle. What made the Chashmonaim continue to search for sealed oil when none could be found- and why did they light the Menorah when it wouldn't last for the eight days it would take to make more oil? And what made the Maccabim think that it was worth fighting against the superior Syrian-Greek army? What unites both miracles, says Rabbi Sacks, is the fact that despite all odds, that they even tried.

We are living in difficult times. In Israel, we are divided from within and have countless enemies facing us from the outside. In the Diaspora, Jewish communities are facing anti-Semitism the likes of which we have never seen. In our homes, parents are facing the threat that smartphones bring into them with over-exposure and addiction. The challenges our generation face sometimes seem insurmountable.

But if there is anything we learn from the parshiyot surrounding Chanukah and Chanukah itself is the message of resilience. That gevura means not giving up and always looking for the light, no matter how dark our surroundings may be. We are living in





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difficult times but also in uniquely miraculous times when we have been privileged to see yad Hashem in ways that have been unparalleled in our history. Here in Eretz Yisrael, we have been a part of kibbutz Galuyot and in the wake of this war, we can almost hear the footsteps of Mashiach.

In the spirit of the Maccabim of old and the modern day heroes around us, may we continue to display Gevura in our homes and around the world by standing for the values we believe in and never giving up. ■

Ariela Davis is a passionate Jewish educator and writer, who also served as a Rebbetzin before her aliyah in 2020. She is the Menahelit of Ulpanat Orly in Bet Shemesh.

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