



Yeshivat Ateret Yerushalayim

IN THE HEART OF THE OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

Ha-Rav Shlomo Aviner on...

Rosh Chodesh Tevet 5769

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Chanukah: Chareidi or Secular?

[Be-Ahavah U-B-Emunah – Parashat Miketz 5769 – Translated by Rafael Blumberg]

I.

- Daddy, how did we beat the Greeks?
- With the help of G-d, obviously.
- And who was G-d helping?
- The Hasmoneans, as is well known.
- Who were they?
- Al HaNissim calls them "Holy priests". They were great saints.
- Weren't they soldiers?
- Yes... They were soldiers.... Yes.
- And they fought with weapons?
- Yes.... With weapons.
- So they were secular or National Religious?
- Who says! They were Chareidim!
- Chareidim went to the army?
- So they went.
- Why'd they go?
- To save the Jewish People, obviously.
- So why don't we go?
- No need. The Torah we learn protects us.
- So we don't need an army?
- No! The Torah protects us.
- And back then, the Torah DIDN'T protect us?

-- Certainly it protected us. That's how they won – thanks to the Torah.

-- So why did they fight with weapons?

-- Because... thanks to the Torah... they won with weapons.

-- So why shouldn't we go to the army and win thanks to the Torah?

-- No need. The secular and the National Religious go and they win thanks to our Torah.

-- So why didn't the Hasmoneans sit and learn Torah, so that the secular and National Religious of those times could win, thanks to the Torah?

-- There were none. Back then, everyone was Chareidi.

-- The Hasmoneans weren't National Religious?!

-- G-d forbid! Adding nationalism to Torah is a new invention.

-- What is nationalism?

-- A country, an army – things like that.

-- And the Hasmoneans didn't fight in an army and didn't establish a country?

-- Actually they did... Maybe they didn't really want it... but there was no choice.

-- And now there is a choice? Now we don't need an army? We've got enemies!

-- I told you. If we learn Torah, G-d will perform a miracle and destroy all our enemies.

-- So why didn't G-d destroy all the enemies in the days of Chanukah? Maybe they didn't learn Torah?

-- G-d forbid! It's a fact that "the wicked Hellenic regime rose up against Your People Israel, to make them forget Your Torah and violate the laws of Your will" (Al HaNisim).

-- So if the Hasmoneans fought, they must have been National-Religious?

-- G-d forbid! G-d forbid! They were Chareidim... Entirely Chareidim...

II.

-- Daddy, how did we beat the Greeks?

-- With the army, obviously.

-- We had an army back then?

-- No... The Hasmoneans organized one...

-- But why didn't they organize it before? What happened?

-- The Greeks didn't let the Jews keep the mitzvot – Shabbat and things like that.

-- Things the religious do?

-- Yes.

-- And over that we went to war?

-- Yes. The religious make an issue of everything. Demonstrations, wars...

-- So the Hasmoneans who fought the Greeks were religious?

-- No way! You know the religious don't go to the army.

- So maybe the Hasmoneans were National-Religious?
- No way! Adding religion to nationalism is a new invention.
- What's wrong with that?
- It's wrong. It's wrong. Religious confuses and weakens nationalism and militarism, which are good and healthy things.
- But you said that the rebellion broke out because the Hasmoneans wanted to keep mitzvot?
- Yeah, so?
- So if they went with religion, how did they win?
- How should I know? G-d helped them...
- Is there such a thing?
- Of course not. I meant they THOUGHT G-d helped them, so they won...
- But precisely those assimilated to Greek culture didn't fight?
- Obviously. They were in favor of the Greeks!
- So they weren't nationalists? And precisely the religious were the nationalists?
- So what?
- So why shouldn't we be religious? Then we'd be more nationalist!
- Now things are different. You've got to be a secular nationalist. That's the healthiest.
- But I understand that the Hasmoneans were National-Religious, right?
- No way! They were secular... Maybe secularists of a different type... but still secular.

(based on an anonymous source sent me by a friend)