



Parashat Miketz - #261

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On the Haftarah... Not by Might and Not by Power [Zechariah 2:14-4:7]

The famous verse of the prophet Zechariah: "Not by might and not by power but by My spirit, says Hashem of Hosts" (Zechariah 4:6), seems rather strange. After all, human history has proven through countless examples that spirit alone is not enough. On the contrary! The weapon is the deciding factor of events, and even directs their evolution.

So isn't this a pretty naïve stance? In the verse itself the Master of the Universe, who is the Source of the message to Zerubavel, is called "Hashem of Hosts," i.e. of armies! Did Zerubavel, the prince of the Jews who led the return to Israel after the Babylonian Exile, only utilize spiritual means, or did he also employ a strategy on the ground? Didn't he take pains to build the Temple (Ezra 3-4)? Even when the King of Persia ordered the Jews to cease building, didn't they continue to do so without his permission (ibid. 5)?

Furthermore, against their enemies' threats (ibid. 4:5), those new immigrants initiated rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2:17). It is related regarding those enemies: "And all of them joined together to fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it" (ibid. 4:2). The response of the Jews was not only spiritual: "And we prayed to our G-d and stood on guard against them day and night because of them" (ibid. v. 3).

Those enemies, different non-Jews who dwelled in our Land during our absence in the time of Babylonian Exile and who toyed with the idea that this Land belongs to them, continued planning their pogroms (ibid. v. 5). The Jews responded with strength to

protect themselves: "I stationed the Nation according to family with their swords, spears and bows" (ibid. v. 7).

All of this military preparation did not slow down the rebuilding of the wall. "And from that day, half of my young men did the work and half of them held the spears, shields, bows and coats of mail" (ibid. v. 10). It was an inspiring sight: "Those who build the wall and those who carried the burden arranged it so that he did the work with one of his hands and held a weapon with the other. And each of the builders had his sword girded by his side" (ibid. v. 11-12). Doesn't this picture fill us with incredible pride?

Since this is the Haftarah of Chanukah, we ask the question: did the Hasmoneans defeat the Greeks through spirit alone, without the use of force? And doesn't the Torah itself direct us to use weapons when there is no other way to protect our independence? It commands us numerous times to arrange military censuses: "From twenty years and up, everyone who goes to the army in Israel" (Bemidbar 1:3).

There is therefore a clear misunderstanding in the reading of our verse. In truth, the verse does not say: "Not by might and not by power but by spirit" but rather "but by My spirit." What is worthless is might and power detached from the word of Hashem - violence for its own sake, power as its own ideal. Everything must be illuminated by faith in Hashem, by the most pure ethical standards.

When Nechemiah established defensive units surrounding Jerusalem, he charged them: "Do not be afraid of them. Remember, Hashem, who is great and awe-inspiring, and wage war for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives and your houses" (Nechemiah 4:8). The Rambam, the great halachic authority of the laws of war, emphasizes that a soldier must wage war out of a faith in Hashem (Hilchot Melachim, end of chapter 7).

Our Rabbi, Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Ha-Cohain Kook, never missed an opportunity to be present at the great Tzahal military parade on Yom Ha-Atzmaut. Each time a tank, weapon or army unit passed him, he recited the verse: "Some trust in chariots and horses, but we will mention the Name of Hashem our G-d" (Tehillim 20:8), but he would immediately add the beginning of the verse: "Through chariots and horses," i.e. we rely on Hashem, but this reliance expresses itself in an active manner, through our military efforts.

The Hasmoneans also acted through deep faith, and therefore their small military force with limited weapons succeeded in crushing the powerful Greek army. This is true in our time as well. "The secret weapon of the Israel Defense Force" is morale, faith, the inner conviction that we are fighting for a just cause, and our connection to Hashem – whether all of Israel is aware of it or not.

Rav Aviner on... No to Hellenization and Compromise

[Be-Ahavah U-Be-Emunah – Vayeshev 5773 – translated by R. Blumberg]

"When the Greeks entered the Temple, they contaminated all the oils" (Shabbat 21).

How did they manage to contaminate everything? Maran Ha-Rav Avraham Yitzchak Ha-Cohain Kook explains that when a new yearning for the Greek style penetrates the spiritual nature of our lives, it invalidates not only those points that it touches, but the entire edifice. The weak-minded are tempted to say that the foreign strain will harm only a small portion, and to take comfort from the rest. But that's not how things are. Impurity does not leave even one corner uncorrupted (Ein Aya, Shabbat, Chapter 2, 11).

It starts with little things - with claims that you have to follow the spirit of the times, to flow with life, with beauty and with progress, and it ends with the most severe problems there are. True, one should always maintain friendly relations with people, but, as the Mesilat Yesharim explained, this is referring to people who behave properly and in accordance with the Torah and purity (Chapter 5).

Compromise is good when people are arguing with each other over money. After all, in this case a person is regarding what is his to give. Yet one cannot compromise regarding the Torah, which is not his but G-d's.

A joke is told about a meeting between the Pope, the Imam in charge of all of Islam, and the Chief Rabbi of the whole world, in order to find ways to bring world peace. The Pope said, "I am willing to forgo belief in Jesus the Christian." The Imam said, "I am willing to give up on Muhammad." The Rabbi was unwilling to concede on anything. Yet finding himself against the wall, he said, "I am willing to concede the second "Yekum Purkan" on Shabbat." His doing so raised the ire of all the Jews of the world. They asked, "How did he dare?!"

Yet the Reform movement began by nullifying that prayer, arguing that it mentioned the yeshiva heads in Babylonia.

In such matters there is no room for compromise. We obviously cannot solve all of the problems overnight, and have to equip ourselves with patience. Yet Rabbenu Ha-Rav Tzvi Yehudah Kook emphasized: being patient does not mean giving in. We are patient because we have no choice, but we must always speak the truth, and not surrender to the voice of the masses.

The Rabbis spoke of the generation in which the Messiah arrives as one in which "the face of the generation is like the face of a dog" (Mishnah at the end of Sotah). Some explain that a dog runs ahead of its master, as though it is leading, but truthfully it constantly looks back to make sure of the direction in which its master is running.

Thank G-d, the National-Religious public is not being Hellenized. It is full of religious and nationalist courage and fortitude. Yet it is still a lukewarm compromiser, as Rav Kook wrote to the Mizrachi Movement:

"Compromising, average views, marked by physical and spiritual weakness, will never emerge triumphant as we move towards our national rebirth." (Igrot HaRe'eiyah vol. 2, p. 164).

"We have to be radicals. With half-baked compromises we will never rectify a thing" (ibid., pp. 123-124). "The Mizrachi, from within the World Zionist Federation, must make its voice heard. It must be the voice of fortitude, not a voice of whimpering and waffling" (ibid., vol. 3, p. 217).

We mustn't close ranks with the masses! "One should not be embarrassed before people who mock him in his service to G-d!" (Orach Chaim 1:1, Rema).

G-d's Torah is perfect. All that G-d said we must do and we must obey. We mustn't subjugate ourselves to the spirit of the times. Better to find the small container of holy oil. In the end, we vanquished the Greeks – and gained another holiday! The more they wanted to make us forget the Torah, the more did Torah study spread to the entire Nation (Rabbi Tzadok of Lublin, Pri Tzadik, Vayeshev, Chanukah).

One should relate to G-d with perfect faith.

Shut She'eilat Shlomo - Questions of Jewish Law

Shut Rabbenu Tam Tefillin

Same Time or One after the Other

Q: Should one put on Rabbenu Tam Tefillin together with Rashi Tefillin, or one after the other?

A: Some have the custom to put on Rashi Tefillin for the davening and Rabbenu Tam Tefillin at the end, since our Tefillin is large and there is not enough space on one's head and arm for both (Shut Yabia Omer Vol. 1, Orach Chaim #3). Based on Kabbalah, some have the custom to be particular to put them on at the same time. And it is possible to find small Tefillin, since there is enough space on one's head for two pairs of Tefillin, as it says in the Gemara in Eruvin (95b. Shut Yashkil Avdi Vol. 8, Orach Chaim #22 and Yoreh Deah #8. And see Shut Divrei Chaim Vo. 2 Orach Chaim #6 and Shut Divrei Yoel, Orach Chaim #4).

Paragraphs to be said with Rabbenu Tam Tefillin

Q: What should one recite while wearing Rabbenu Tam Tefillin?

A: People generally say the four paragraphs which mention the mitzvah of Tefillin (Shaarei Teshuvah 38:14. Pri Megadim 25:6 Ashel Avraham). And some add Parashat Tzitzit.

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