



“Light from Darkness”

There have been many times that oppressive nations sought to destroy Israel, and we were miraculously saved from their designs. Upon two of these occasions, the Rabbis saw fit to establish an annual holiday commemorating the miraculous salvation, providing us with an opportunity to remember hwhy's kindness to us, and thank him for saving us. These holidays are Purim and Chanukah.

Purim commemorates the time that Haman, minister to King Achashverosh, enacted a decree calling for the extermination of the entire Jewish people. Had the Jews agreed to renounce their religious practices, and adopt the customs of the nation amongst which they resided, the murderous Haman would not have been satisfied, and would still have called for annihilation of the Jews. Thus, when hwhy miraculously caused Haman's fall from power, and the subsequent salvation of the Jews, it was a salvation of their physical beings; their spiritual existence was never in danger.

Chanukah commemorates Israel's victory over the Syrian-Greeks. The oppressive acts of Antiochus and the Syrian-Greeks, were to get Israel to abandon Torah, and become integrated into the Greek lifestyle. The oppressors sought only to destroy Israel spiritually. And so, when hwhy granted MattinYahu and the Hasmoneans victory over the Syrian-Greeks, He was preserving the spirituality of the Israelite nation.

The year was about 165 BCE. A large group of men led by Judah the Maccabee climbed to the top of a mountain overlooking Yerushalayim (Jerusalem). It was the same mountain from which, many centuries later, the Crusaders would launch their attack against the Moslems and from which, and the Jordanian artillery would shell Yerushalayim in 1967. In 165 BCE, however, Judah and his men, with the help of hwhy, were about to complete a great victory, a triumph that lives on as the miracle of Chanukah.

After the death of Alexander the Great, conqueror of the world and friend of Israel, his Empire was divided among his generals. Eretz Yisroel (the land of Israel), - the Kingdom of Judea - was added to the Empire of Antiochus III. When Antiochus Epiphanes became king of the Syrian-Greeks, he was not content to accept the taxes and loyalty of the Jews as his predecessors had done. He wanted the Jews to lay aside their Torah and ancient religion, and, in their place, substitute the Hellenistic Greek culture and Grecian idols.

King Antiochus bore down on his Jewish subjects with a measure of ruthlessness, stubbornness and cruelty that earned him the nickname Antiochus the Madman. He defiled the Beit Hamikdash (Temple) - by filling it with pagan idols and sacrifices of pigs. He forbade Israel to observe the commandments of Brit Milah (circumcision), Rosh Chodesh (the New Moon), and the Shabbat. Jewish women were systematically mistreated.

Jews who dared to remain loyal to the Faith of hwhy were brutally tortured and murdered. If a woman had her infant circumcised, she was murdered, the baby publicly hanged, and all who participated in the Brit ceremony were executed and their property confiscated. Against this backdrop, Jewish resistance began to ebb and it seemed inevitable that the last remnants of resistance would soon be wiped out.

Then, one courageous old man turned the tide. His name was MattinYahu and he was a Kohen - head of the Hasmonean family, from the Judean town of Modi'in near Lod. The Syrian-Greek governor of MattinYahu's region set up an idol in Modi'in, rounded up the townspeople, and introduced an "enlightened" Jew who would sacrifice a pig on the idol in recognition of the decree of Antiochus. Old Mattinyahu stepped forward and slew the traitor.

With the rallying cry of, "Mi La'Yahweh Ay-li (Whoever is for Yahweh, let him come to me)," he called the people to rebellion. A pitifully small number responded at first - the people were numb with fear

and hopelessness - but MattinYahu's five sons led the way. They fought the Syrian-Greeks, retreated to the mountains, and began a guerrilla war against the Syrian-Greeks and their Jewish allies. Mattinyahu had not long to live, but on his deathbed he charged his sons to carry on the struggle. The glorious brothers heeded his command. He passed on the leadership to his second son, Judah the Maccabee, who was a mighty warrior and a charismatic leader.

Many miracles happened. Outnumbered a hundred to one, Judah and his men won many battles. Jews came to join him. In a few years, he had defeated the mightiest armies of Syria. Victory belonged to the Jew, the pure, the righteous, and the loyal defender of the Torah. Following the rebellion, the kingdom of Israel was restored for 200 years, until the destruction of the Second Beit Hamikdash.

So it was that Judah and his men climbed the mountain above Yerushalayim and saw that there was no resistance. On the 25th day of Kislev, they marched into the Holy City and immediately made their way to the Beit Hamikdash where they saw a sight that left them shocked and angered. Idols, filth, impurity were everywhere. They rummaged through the ruins seeking at least one flask of pure olive oil with which to light the makeshift menorah they hastily put together.

Flask after flask they found - every one of them defiled. Finally - another miracle! One small jug, sufficient for only one day, remained with the seal of the Kohen Gadol intact! Quickly, with trembling hands, they poured it into the menorah and lit it. It would be eight days before they could manufacture more oil for the next lighting, but meanwhile, they lit what they had.

The flames of the menorah burned and burned and burned and burned and burned and burned and burned and burned. For eight days they burned. (I bet you counted). Those eight miraculous days were chosen as the eternal symbol to commemorate the miracle of Chanukah and to celebrate the vengeance of Yahweh - the eight day long Festival of Lights, where we light the Menorah each evening, publicizing the miracle hwhy performed over 2100 years ago.

Today, there are Americans that are worried that our actions in Iraq will cause a backlash of terrorism in the US. That is exactly what we shouldn't be worried about.

Do you remember when Jacob's two sons, Shimon and Levi, killed all the men folk of Sh'chem; he was terribly concerned about Canaanite terrorism in response to their actions. But he need not have worried. As it turned out, the Canaanites did not lift a finger against him. The vengeance had worked. It had cowed the barbarians. It had focused their minds.

Now that we have captured another villain of Israel, Saddam Hussein. The man that inflicted 39 lashes of Scuds on the Nation of Israel in 1991. What a great day to be an American! What a great day to be an Israelite! What a great day to be a Believer!

I wonder what thoughts are bebopping in the heads of the leading barbarians of the Arab and Islamist world, the leaders of Iran, Syria, Libya, and the many terrorist groups. I wonder what Osama ben Laden is thinking? You think the paulsy stricken Yasir Arafat slept good this week? Here we had the man who had defied the United States, who had thumbed his nose at the democratic West, reduced to a the lifestyle of a rat, the suitcases full of \$750,000 cash nearby notwithstanding.

Sure our success is twelve years too late, and sure it proved how foolish President George Bush Senior had been to fear carrying the first Gulf War to its natural conclusion. That foolishness had allowed Saddam to morph into the great hero of the fascist Arab world, resisting all the efforts of the US and the UN.

However, those who laugh last, laugh best. The ultimate object lesson of the monster from Baghdad is, we now know, to illustrate for the Middle East's barbarian hordes and their leaders what fate awaits them. The man who fired missiles into Israel received what can only appear as Divine vengeance. Confined to a hole in the ground with rodents scurrying about, living for months in conditions far worse than those to which he will now be receive from the US as a prisoner, his two sons assassinated, left alone by his people. A Haman-like denouncement if ever there was one. Who says the modern world does not resemble the Holy Scriptures?

I watched as the different News Agencies showed the faces of Arabs and Islamists around the world. They were thrown into deep remorse and anger and shock. Their faces showed their sorrow.

The sorrow of the Arabs at seeing their hero captured was not to be restricted to the Middle East. Pity those poor peace demonstrators on Western campuses. You might want to write off Gov. Howard Dean off as a viable presidential candidate because he is extremely on the wrong side of this issue.

The Catholic Church is on the wrong side of this issue. Cardinal Renato Martino, the president of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, said that while the arrest was a major step, it "does not mean a complete solution to the problem" in Iraq. The cardinal-- who was one of the Vatican's most outspoken

critics of the war in Iraq-- said that the dictator's capture was not an adequate compensation for "the defeat that the war itself represented" for the cause of peace.

Cardinal Martino acknowledged that the bloody record of the former Iraqi regime indicated that Saddam Hussein "bears a heavy responsibility" for his actions. But he cautioned against "brutal consequences" that could follow from his arrest. He said that he felt "compassion" for the deposed Iraqi leader after seeing television footage of his first hours in captivity, saying that Saddam had been treated "like a beast" when television cameras showed him being given a physical examination.

A beast, Saddam looked like a beast. He looked ever so much like one of those homeless men that you see living under the underpass, who eat out of garbage bins. The tyrant of Iraq reduced to dressing like a derelict, hiding in the mud, pouring dirt on himself to try to escape capture.

Could there be a better image to focus the minds and to deter the Islamo-fascist leaders of the Arab world? An image to throw the fear of death and humiliation into them? Could there be any better way to deter their terrorism?

I am willing to put all the enemies of Israel in a hole under the farmhouse and I think a 200 megaton bomb would dig a nice one.

As we celebrate all the victories Yahweh has given at this time of year our appreciation for these gifts, the opportunity to serve hwhY and recognize him as our Elohim, is best acknowledged through spiritual expressions of praise & worship.

All of our holiday-related activities on Chanukah should carry this significance with it. We should take the opportunities we are granted to praise Yahweh and re-affirm our commitment to Him.

All observances connected with Chanukah, whether physical or spiritual, be a point of inspiration to carry us through until we reach the next holiday which celebrates our physical salvation - Purim.

The so-called peace movement was wrong. Shimon and Levi were right. MattinYahu and the Hasmoneans were right. And our President was right. If we stand with hwhY in the Darkness He will lead us to the light of victory. Blessed be the name of Yahweh!