



A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA

מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

פרשת מקץ - חנוכה

The Sefer Tashbatz Koton (258) cites the Maharam of Rottenberg who states that when the Chashmonaim waged war against the Greek army, they recited 7 times the *possuk* of **וַיְהִי נָעַם ה'** Chashmonaim, they recited 7 times the *possuk* of **וַיְהִי נָעַם ה'**, **אֱלֹקֵינוּ עָלֵינוּ, וְמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ, וְמַעֲשֵׂה יְדֵינוּ כָּגֹנְהוּ**, *May the pleasantness of my Lord, our G-d, be upon us – may He establish our handiwork for us; our handiwork may He establish* (Tehillim 90:17). After reciting this, they achieved miraculous success. This is also mentioned in the Siddur of the Arizal.

What does this *possuk* mean, what is its significance, and what lesson can we learn from the fact that the Macabiim said this phrase when entering battle?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* explains this topic by referencing a fundamental concept in Yiddishkeit: life without Avodas Hashem cannot be considered true living. Adhering to the Torah and performing *mitzvos* is not merely a sacrifice of enjoyment for the sake of earning a place in Olam Habah. Instead, one should recognise that even in Olam Hazeh, the best life can be achieved by living according to the ideals and directives of the Torah.

When the Chashmonaim fought against the Greeks, they were the few against the many, the weak against the strong. Their approach required immense dedication and sacrifice – an ultimate *mesirus nefesh* for Avodas Hashem - and could have easily been misunderstood. During the Chanukah story, the lives of the Yidden were not in physical danger; the Greeks were more than willing to let them live, but only if they adopted a Hellenistic lifestyle devoid of Torah and *mitzvos*. Thus, the Chashmonaim's war was not for their physical existence but for their spiritual freedom.

Onlookers might have perceived the Chashmonaim as noble-minded individuals sacrificing their lives in this world to regain the ability to serve Hashem and, in doing so, merit Olam Habah. Since their *mesirus nefesh* could easily have been misinterpreted, they declared the *possuk* of **וַיְהִי נָעַם** multiple times to clarify their true motives for engaging in this dangerous conflict.

The *possuk* with which the Chashmonaim embarked on their battle revealed their driving force. In the phrase **וַיְהִי נָעַם**, Dovid HaMelech expresses the ultimate desire of every Yid: to feel the pleasantness of Hashem. As Dovid expressed elsewhere, **וְאַנְּכִי קָרְבָּת אֱלֹקִים לְטוֹב**, *But as for me, nearness to Hashem is my good* (Tehillim 73:28). The utmost goodness a person can experience is the spiritual bliss attained through closeness to Hashem. Torah, *mitzvos*, and fulfilling Hashem's will provide the path to the greatest enjoyment achievable.

This was the essence of what the Chashmonaim conveyed: "We are going into battle not to sacrifice for Olam Habah, but for Olam Hazeh." They expressed that their fight for spiritual liberty was fundamentally about enhancing their quality of life in *this* world. Unlike the Greeks, who believed enjoyment stemmed from a life of permissiveness without restrictions, the Chashmonaim recognised that a life without Torah and *mitzvos* is wholly deficient. This understanding fuelled their conviction

and dedication in battle. They fought not as martyrs but as warriors for a satisfying and meaningful life, driven by their recognition of the vitality of the Torah way of life. After expressing their motivation for this war, they *davened* that Hashem would grant them success in their mission, acknowledging that this struggle could only be won with His assistance.

The idea presented above, regarding the Chashmonaim's recognition that life in this world is most enjoyable when lived according to a Torah lifestyle, can be further elaborated. The fulfilment derived from living according to the Torah brings a deep sense of satisfaction with one's personal circumstances. As a result, individuals feel content with their spiritual accomplishments and do not sense a deficiency when they are not granted material wealth and pleasures.

R' Elyah Lopian *zatzal* (*Lev Eliyahu - Vayetzei*) emphasises that the *possuk* states about the righteous: **יראו את ה' קדשו, כי אין מיחסור ליראיו**, *Fear Hashem, His holy ones, for there is no deprivation for His reverent ones* (*Tehillim 34:10*). He cites the Shelah, who notes that the *possuk* doesn't claim that the **tzaddik has** all good; rather, it highlights **אין מיחסור ליראיו** – the **tzaddik does not lack** any good. The appreciation of his spiritual accomplishments fulfils him in a way that leaves no sense of lack. The meaningfulness of being close to Hashem, achieved through Torah and *mitzvos*, provides a level of satisfaction that is unmatched by any materialistic pleasures.

R' Elyah illustrated this concept with a parable. Once, a person visited his friend's house and, upon leaving, expressed jealousy about the variety of pills, medicines, and remedies his friend possessed, while he had none. An onlooker would likely say to him, "You fool! How fortunate you are not to suffer from any illness that requires treatment!" Having a wide array of medicines does not signify wealth or goodness; rather, it reveals the unfortunate reality of someone who needs these remedies to address their ailments. Those who do not require such interventions are undoubtedly better off. In a similar vein, the more one finds fulfilment in *ruchniyus* matters, the less one depends on material possessions. The Ben Aliyah does not lack physical comforts and luxuries; in fact, he is truly more affluent. He does not need the crutch of materialism to find happiness.

We learn from the Chashmonaim about how our perspective on dedication and sacrifice for Yiddishkeit should be. *Mesirus nefesh* is not martyrdom; rather, it should be the outcome of a profound appreciation for Torah and *mitzvos*. Any lifestyle not conducted by the Torah is severely lacking in comparison to what the Torah lifestyle offers. We should also strive to find satisfaction in our appreciation for *ruchniyus* achievements, which will prevent us from feeling a lack due to an absence of materialism.

א פרייליך!
Chutzpah!