

ה' טבת תשע"ט
JOINED AT THE NECK

ויפל על צוארי בנימין אחיו ויבך ובנימן בכה על צואריו¹

We find throughout Judaism many parallels amongst the holidays and other

commemorative days throughout the year. It is no different when it comes to the טוב of חנוכה, which we just finished, and the upcoming fast of בטבת. My goal in this piece is to attempt to answer the question surrounding the relationship between these two very diametrically opposed times, hoping to glean lessons not just for חנוכה or בטבת, but for our everyday lives, in the process.

The story begins in our פרשה. When יוסף finally reveals himself to his brothers, we see יוסף doing something with בנימין different from what he does with the rest of the brothers. By the other brothers, יוסף just kisses them and cries.² However, by בנימין, he falls "on his necks". I get if the פסוק would have said "on his neck", as בנימין was his only younger brother, and his only brother from his mother. What does it mean when it says "צוארי", "necks"? Most people don't have 2 necks! The גמרא³ brings down that יוסף saw that in the future, the two בתי מקדש that were in the נחלה of בנימין were destined to be destroyed, and he was crying over their destructions. Through this, we understand the reference שלמה המלך made when he said "צוארך כמגדל השן", "your neck is like a tower of ivory".⁴

As a side note, when the פסוק says "and בנימן cried on his neck" (a reference to משכן שלה being destroyed), it spells בנימן without the second "י". We know the "י" is representative of the Name of הקב"ה. Perhaps because of the removal of השראת השכינה in this world, the "י" is left out. Also, on another side note, the מדרש⁵ says that because יוסף appeased his brothers by crying, the גאולה will ultimately come about through crying.⁶

Back to our main topic, the crying between יוסף and בנימין foretold the destruction of the בתי מקדש. This destruction started with the siege of ירושלים by the Babylonians, which occurred on the tenth of טבת. That's the tragedy we commemorate with a fast.⁷ However, the טור also brings down that on the eighth of טבת, the evil תלמי המלך commissioned the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the תורה. He did so by selecting 72 men, and locking them all in separate rooms, hoping to find some discrepancies in their translations. However, הקב"ה made it that all 72 wrote the exact same thing. Not only did they all write the same translations, but they all mistranslated certain things so the אפיקורסים wouldn't be able to refute the seemingly contradictory language of the תורה, and to avoid persecution.⁸ Even with the deliberate mistranslations, miraculously one version did not contradict another.

The connection of the Greek persecution of חנוכה and the Greek translation is fairly obvious. However, why is it that one pursuit failed, while the other succeeded? Both attacked our central methods of עבודה; what's the difference between the two? Oftentimes, people tend to think that there is one way of life, and that is a strict adherence to the תורה and its rulings. However, people sometimes fail to realize that the תורה is more than a law book, but a way of life. In certain situations, it may actually be the right thing and the רצון של הקב"ה to not do that which the תורה says. This is a very gray area, and judgement shouldn't be made in any of these cases without first properly consulting a

¹ בראשית מה.יד

² שם טו

³ מגילה טז:

⁴ עיין שיר השירים ז.ה עם פירוש רש"י

⁵ בראשית רבה צג.ב

⁶ עיין ירמיה לא.ט

⁷ טור א"ח תקפ.א בשם הבה"ג

⁸ מגילה דף ט עמוד א ועמוד ב בגמרא

ה' טבת תשע"ט
JOINED AT THE NECK

knowledgeable רב. The תורה was able to be corrupted to show that it's not the be all and end all, but the corruption of the המקדש בית and yiddishkeit as a whole had to fail, because the way we serve ה"קב in our everyday lives is the עיקר, and sometimes we need a few reminders to illustrate this concept.

I heard a story recently of one of my rebbeim encountering a גר. After schmoozing with him for a little bit, he decided to ask the man what made him decide to become Jewish, and taking on the responsibility of all of the מצוות. The גר answered that he read a book that totally changed his perspective on life. That book was the קיצור שולחן ערוך. How he got the book, I have no idea; all I know is that it was מן השמים. The man told my rebbe that after reading the קיצור, he realized that everything we do in our day, from waking up in the morning to going to sleep at night, all has meaning to it, as we serve the בורא עולם in every action that we do. Unfortunately, a majority of us, myself included, are lacking in seeing the קדושה of every moment of our lives. To put the point we said before in a more positive light, the way we serve ה"קב in our everyday lives is so fundamental, that we דוקא had to translate it so every Jew (and even some non-Jews) are able to look at the תורה and glean lessons from it to take to our lives. The whole reason the fast days were instituted is to commemorate the tragedies that happened, which should arouse us to do תשובה.⁹ In order to do a proper תשובה, we have to examine our actions, and our thoughts.¹⁰ While the רמב"ם refers to thoughts that are bad, even though they don't translate to actions, perhaps it can also be talking about the motivation behind sinning. In order to get rid of the motivation of sinning, we have to really live with a mindset of שויתי לנגדי תמיד. We should be עשרה בטבת זוכה to do תשובה and eradicate all sin and thoughts of sin, achieving an unprecedented level of דביקות בהשם, and fulfilling the words of the צום " of נביא¹¹ "הרביעי וצום החמישי וצום השביעי וצום העשירי יהיה לבית יהודה לששון ולשמחה ולמעדים טובים speedily, in our days. Everyone should have an easy fast, and a truly meaningful fast that transforms our lives.

⁹ משנה ברורה תקמט.א.

¹⁰ רמב"ם הלכות תשובה ז.ג.

¹¹ זכריה ח.יט