

War Against Hashem

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Adapted from a Thursday Night Vaad, Oct. 12, 2023

The Rambam writes in *Hilchos Melachim* (7:15):

ומאחר שיכנס בקשרי המלחמה ישען על מקוה ישראל ומושיעו בעת
צרה וידע שעל יחוד השם הוא עושה מלחמה

The Rambam tells us that what's contested in the *milchamah* is not territory, not land; what's being contested is *Yichud Hashem*. He follows up several lines later:

וכל הנלחם בכל לבו בלא פחד ותהיה כוונתו לקדש את השם בלבד

It's a context of *kiddush Hashem*.

What the Rambam says here reflects a historical framework that he elaborates on in *Iggeres Teiman*, which was written when there was a *shmad* against the Jews in *Teiman*, and the Rambam wrote an *Iggeres* to be *mechazek* them. So maybe we'll just read a few lines together:

זו היא תורת ה' האמתית הנתונה לנו על ידי אדון כל הנביאים
הראשונים והאחרונים, אשר הכדילנו ה' בה מכל בני העולם כאמרו
"רק באבתיך חשק ה' לאהבה אותם ויבחר בזרעם אחריהם בכס מכל
העמים כיום הזה" ולא היה זה בעבור שהיינו ראויים אליו רק מחסדו
ה' עלינו, בגלל מה שקדם לאבותינו מידיעתו ועבודתו וכאשר יחדנו
במצוותיה וחקיה, ונגלתה מעלתנו על זולתנו בסדריה ועניניה, כאמרו
יתעלה, מזכיר חסדיו לנו ומי גוי גדול אשר לו חקים ומשפטים צדיקים

² Note: this adapted transcript was not reviewed by the speaker

ככל התורה הזאת אשר אנכי נתן לפניכם היום. התקוממו כל האמות
עלינו בעבורה על צד קנאה ורשע

There's been a constant provocation to arouse enmity and hatred towards us, and, in reality, and here let's pay very, very careful attention *Rabbosai*:

ונחלצו מלכי הארץ להלחם בנו בגללה על דרך חמס ופשע רוצים
לחלק על ה',

Their true desire in rejecting *bechiras Yisrael* is really waging war with *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*; in their war against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*, they target us. The Rambam continues:

ולא היה זמן מאז עד עתה,

There isn't, there hasn't been a hiatus since *Matan Torah* until the mid-12th century and, again, that's only the cutoff point because that's what the Rambam is talking about, but he would update it if he were here today;

שלא שם כל מלך עז, או איש רשע מתגבר, ראשית כל כונותיו ואחרית
מצוותיו, לסתר תורתנו ולנתץ דתנו בכח הזרוע ותגברת החרב

There isn't any powerful *melech oved avodah zarah*, without exception, who has not tried to annul the Torah, to try to overturn our religion by force...

That's what's reflected in *Hilchos Melachim*, when the Rambam says "*yeidah she'al Yichud Hashem hu oseh milchamah*", because the hatred for us is rebellion against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*; the hatred for us is a challenge to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*'s sovereignty over the world, to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*'s prerogative of *bechira*. It's a

rejection of *Yichud Hashem*. The Rambam warns: don't be misled by how it's packaged, how it's camouflaged. It's got nothing to do with Al Aqsa, it's got nothing to do with territory; they weren't interested in Al Aqsa mosque when it was under the British and under the Turkish, they didn't discover it until it was under Jewish sovereignty. *Retzonam l'hilachem ba'Hashem*, they're waging war against Hashem. That's what he says *le'balachab* in *Hilchos Melachim*— that a *chayal* should know that he's engaged in an act of *kiddush Hashem*.

The *emes* is that this historical scheme of the Rambam is the focus of the *kapitel* we've been saying this week (*Tebillim* 83, *pesukim* 1-4 cited here *Ed.*):

שיר מזמור לאסף א-להים אל דמי לך אל תחרש ואל תשקט א-ל כי
הנה אויביך יהמיון ומשנאיך נשאו ראש על עמך יערימו סוד ויתיעצו
על צפוניך

”*Oivecha*”, “*Elokim al dami lach*,” “*oivecha*,” “*misanecha*”... how is their enmity towards *You*, how is their hatred towards *You* expressed? “*Al amcha yarimu sod*,” they're plotting against *Your* people. It's a *merivah* against *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. That's what it is, that's what it always has been, and that's what it continues to be.

Every *chayal* who has been killed, has been killed *al kiddush Hashem* because the *milchamah* is *al Yichud Hashem*. It's got nothing to do with land, nothing to do with anything else- it's about *malchus shamayim*. And for that matter, this is true even regarding those killed in the *pigu'im*, or the civilians who have been massacred. Every Jew living in *Eretz Yisrael* knows that there's a target on his or her back—every Jew knows that—a target drawn by Hamas, Hezbollah,

Jihadists, and they are *moser nefesh* to live there with that awareness. And if that willingness to be *moser nefesh* results in actual *mesiras nefesh*, they also died *al kiddush Hashem*, because by staking our claim that *Eretz Yisrael* was also given to us as part of *bechiras Yisrael*, they too are standing up for *Yichud Hashem*.

The knowledge that those who were killed—and killed with savagery that matches and arguably surpasses that of the Nazis, *yemach shemam*—died *al kiddush Hashem* in no way diminishes the grief, the pain, or the tragedy even one iota, for two reasons. First of all, on a human level, there are *shkulim* (bereaved): the ones who were massacred on *Shemini Atzeres*, overwhelmingly young people, it means that there are parents who are *shkulim*. Some of those killed were young parents, which means that there are children who are orphaned. The Torah recognizes that we're human and validates the human reaction— that's what *bechi* is about in the context of *aveilus*; the knowledge that those killed were killed *al kiddush Hashem*, doesn't diminish the grief, the pain, or the suffering. That's first on the human level.

But it's also true on a religious level. While, unquestionably, they died *al kiddush Hashem*, the fact that *nishpach damam ka'mayim*—and, in some cases, because of the brutality and the savagery, it's literally true that *ein koveir*—the fact that Jews were subjected to that fate is also a *chillul Hashem*. They themselves were *mekayeim* the *mitzvah* of *kiddush Hashem*, but the fact that that happened at all is a *chillul Hashem*. So religiously as well, the awareness that they're all *mekadshei Sheim Shamayim* doesn't lessen the grief, the anguish, the pain, because such an occurrence is itself a *chillul Hashem*.

In terms of our reaction and our *avodah*, maybe one thing which is suggested by this perspective is—not to the exclusion of so many other things that we should and need to be doing—that maybe we should be particularly conscious and sensitive in our behavior in looking to make a *kiddush Hashem*. A *kiddush Hashem* shouldn't have to be a *kiddush Hashem* whose flip side is *chillul Hashem*; *kiddush Hashem* shouldn't have to be with the loss of precious souls of our brothers and sisters. And maybe that's something that we should be—obviously we should always be—focused on, maybe with a heightened sensitivity; maybe part of our reaction and our *avodah* is that, through our behavior, through our conduct, through our interaction—especially *klapei chutz*—that we elicit a reaction of *ashrei aviv she'limdo Torah, ashrei rabo she'limdo Torah*; of *Yisrael asher becha espa'er*.