



Why are we in the middle of every conflict?

Vayikra

When the Big Eat the Small

For some reason, wherever a war takes place in the world, Jews are always involved.

In this war, which seems to have nothing to do with the Jews, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett flew to Russia and met with Putin to try to mediate a ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine. And this is not the only time we've been involved in conflicts that are not our own; it seems to be the fate of the Jewish people and the Land of Israel.

A similar war occurred more than thirty years ago: the dictator of a strong country in the Middle East attacked and conquered a weaker country on the pretext that the small country belonged to the bigger one. It was Saddam Hussein's Iraq that decided to occupy Kuwait. In August 1990, the Iraqi army conquered Kuwait within 48 hours, the Kuwait ruler fled to Saudi Arabia, and the country was completely overrun. Six hundred Kuwaiti

civilians were abducted by the Iraqi army and disappeared forever, and, obviously, the world was vehemently opposed.

The United States formed a coalition of 34 countries, and the UN Council issued an ultimatum to Saddam Hussein: if he did not leave Kuwait by January 15, 1991, the coalition member states would use all available means to force him to do so.

In front of a huge army of close to a million coalition soldiers, Saddam Hussein announced that he would in no way give up his 'rights' to Kuwait, and even worse, he took Israel hostage. He announced that if Iraq was attacked, he would attack Israel. The big fear was that Iraq would launch chemical or biological warheads towards Israel.

All the experts claimed that he was a "crazy dictator," and when threatened, might do anything (sounds familiar...). The whole world worried and feared the worst, Israel began to distribute gas-masks to its citizens for fear of gas attacks, and everyone was worried and paranoid.

The only one who said that there was nothing to fear was the Rebbe. The Rebbe repeatedly declared that the Land of Israel was the safest place in the world; the Torah says, "The eyes of the L-rd your G-d are upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year" (Deuteronomy 11:12), which means that G-d constantly watches over the Land of Israel at all times.

As the days passed and the date of the ultimatum approached, a state of emergency took over the public in Israel, and great concern spread among Jews throughout the world, but the Rebbe repeated that there was nothing to worry about, and

encouraged Jews to travel to visit Israel.

Rabbi Leibel Alevsky (Head Shliach of Cleveland and Northeast Ohio) brought Mr. Michael Segal, the chairman of Israel Bonds in the United States, to visit the Rebbe at 'dollars.' He asked the Rebbe how to attract investors, and the Rebbe told him, "My advice is that the land of Israel is one of the surest places on the globe; that means that anyone who deposits his money in the Land of Israel — it's the surest bank that exists in our time" (24 Av 5751, chabad.org/394470).

On January 17, the ultimatum expired and war broke out, and on the second night of the war, Israel was attacked with six Scud missiles. The miracles began immediately.

Three fell in the Tel Aviv area, one in Haifa and two fell into the sea. One of the missiles that fell in Tel Aviv fell in a densely populated area, but thank G-d, there were no casualties; people escaped with very minor injuries. In contrast, 4 women unfortunately suffocated as a result of wearing the mask incorrectly.

For 40 days, 39 Scud missiles fell on Israel. Buildings were destroyed and turned into heaps of rubble, yet people miraculously emerged from them unscathed. (Meanwhile, the United States urged Israel not to respond to the missile attacks because it would hurt the coalition of the 34 countries which included Arab states hostile to Israel).

A three-year-old girl named Bat-El was seriously injured, and she was flown to England in an attempt to save her injured eye. Within a few days, she became a symbol of the war, and the

English newspapers wrote in astonishment that she was actually recovering, “A little girl with G-d at her side.”

Another miracle became apparent after the war, when it turned out that a Scud missile had landed one meter away from central Tel Aviv’s main gas depot, but due to an unclear malfunction, the gas pipeline had been closed two days earlier. Just imagine what could have happened...

Rabbi Yaakov Goldstein, a Chabad Chassid who served as a chaplain in the United States Military, was supposed to accompany a battalion of soldiers to Saudi Arabia. Before leaving, he came to the Rebbe for a blessing, and he told the Rebbe that he was taking along a Megillah to read on Purim for the Jewish soldiers there.

The Rebbe asked: “Are you sure you are going there?” Goldstein replied, “Yes.” The Rebbe smiled and said, “I hope Moshiach will come sooner.”

There were some who immediately interpreted the Rebbe as saying that on Purim there would be no more war, and the news was immediately published in the Israeli media. One of the secretaries told the Rebbe that this was being said in his name, and the Rebbe was surprised, “I said that?” But then he waved his hand in dismissal and added: “Nu” (seeming to say, Let it be so) (Birega Haemet pg. 382). Unbelievably, in the midst of Purim, the war officially ended.

What’s With the Jews?

The question arises: Why does this happen to us? Every global

crisis, in one form or another, involves the Jews. A war between Iraq and Kuwait — Israel is stuck in the middle. A war between Russia and Ukraine — Jews are involved on all sides. Why?

This week, we will celebrate Purim. The word *pur* means lots in Persion; Haman cast lots to determine the right day to annihilate the Jews — he didn't want to decide himself, and decided to instead leave it to G-d. And that's how this holiday got its name.

The Rebbe points out that this is very bizarre: Every holiday is named for the miracle of that occasion or for the unique mitzvah of the day. Passover is named for the miracle in which G-d passed over the Jewish firstborns. Shavuos (Weeks) represents the mitzvah to count the weeks from Passover until Shavuos. Sukkos is named for the unique mitzvah of Sukkah, Chanukah (Inauguration) is for the inauguration of the Temple, Rosh Hashanah is the new year and Yom Kippur reflects the theme of repentance.

But Purim stands out. It's not named for the mitzvot of giving gifts to friends or to the poor, it's not named for the miracle of salvation, but instead, it's named for the lots — *which Haman cast to annihilate us!* (Toras Menachem v. 2 p. 305).

The explanation: Purim, lots, sends us a very important message: Our identity as Jews is our lot. As Proverbs says (16:33), "Lots are cast into the lap; the decision depends on G-d." There is no rhyme or reason to why G-d chose us or why He cares — the reality is that we are G-d's chosen people; He holds us close and we hold Him close as well (Likkutei Sichos v. 6 p.

189, Toras Menachem v. 63 p. 280).

A Jew must remember, says the Rebbe, that the whole reality of the people of Israel transcends reason. It is a reality that is above nature. The fact that we exist to this day defies all odds and predictions.

Therefore, there is no point in trying to understand the secret of the Jewish people or why G-d treats the Jewish people one way or another; it's beyond rhyme and reason.

Purim symbolizes the idea of "Jewish destiny." There is no rational explanation for why Haman wanted to destroy the entire Jewish people. Because one Jew named Mordechai does not kneel to him, he wants to kill them all?! If Mordechai annoys you, get rid of him, but what do you want from the other Jews — many of whom *did* bow to Haman?!

This hatred has no rationale, and nor does the miracle of Purim, the upheaval in which Haman hung on the tree, the Jews fought their enemies, and no Jew was harmed. It is a "lot" — it has no logical explanation.

Esther and Mordechai chose the Persian word "Purim," and not the Hebrew name "Goral," because they wanted both Jews who did not understand Hebrew and non-Jews to know and internalize that the existence of the people of Israel transcends logic. That is Purim.

May G-d help us that this year, too, we will see a miracle of Purim, that the war will end and that all Jews, even those in Ukraine, will be able to happily celebrate Purim.