

Samson: Somebody's Sunshine

Category: Bamidbar, Naso

Do you feel like Samson? Probably not. But you can tap into his strength.

Roger Waters

Roger Waters is a name that I learned this week in the news, and whenever I told that to people, they began to laugh. You see, Roger Waters is an incredibly famous musician from England, and the reason for his recent publicity is that he has taken his dislike for Israel to a whole new level.

During a performance in Berlin, Germany, in front of tens of thousands of people, Roger Waters appeared dressed in a black coat with a red armband, reminiscent of the attire worn by Nazi officers, along with other anti-Semitic displays. As a result, he is currently under investigation by the Berlin police on suspicion of inciting hate.

By Divine Providence, the White House announced a comprehensive plan to combat anti-Semitism in the United States. This plan includes raising awareness and education against anti-Semitism, as well as defending Jewish communities. The primary goal is to ensure that anti-Semitism is not normalized; social media companies will be encouraged to be more sensitive to expressions of anti-Semitism, and so on and on. I must say that this plan is truly commendable; the fact that the President himself has taken a strong stand against the phenomenon is a very positive development.

Now, this is all about what the government does for us. However, with all said and done, there's one thing that no one else can do for us; which only we can do for ourselves:

No Victimhood

When a child comes home crying and tells his parents that his friends bullied him at school, the parents will immediately contact the teacher and request his intervention. If that doesn't help, they will speak to the principal. They may even

try to talk to the students in the class, and figure out ways to ‘bribe’ them into liking their child. But in the end, what’s most important is that they teach their child not to be a victim, and not to wait for others to come and defend him. He needs to know how to defend himself. They need to instill in their child the self-confidence to know that he is in the right and that all those bullies are—unprovoked—just looking for ways to bother him. They need to provide him with the tools to cope with reality.

Psychologist and Holocaust survivor, Mrs. Edith Eva Hagar, writes in her bestselling book, “The Choice,” that the critical message she tries to impart is that you cannot control whether you will be someone else’s victim. It is very likely that at some point in your life, someone will wrong you. You cannot control their actions; however you can control whether you feel like a victim or not. And that is a person’s most important role — to prevent himself from falling into the mindset of a victimhood.

Each individual holds the key to their self-perception and personal power. No external force has the ability to turn us into victims unless we allow it. Mrs. Hagar’s argument is that victimhood is not imposed upon us by the actions of others; it arises when we internalize and embrace that mindset. It occurs when we adopt a negative perspective, remain trapped in the past, and resist moving forward.

When thinking about antisemitism, we mustn’t let the notion of victimhood dictate our lives. The power to choose lies not in the hands of any government; it is a responsibility that we need to take ourselves, for our sake, and for the sake of future generations.

Samson

This week, we read Parshat Naso, the longest Torah portion, and among its many topics is the portion about the Nazirites — individuals who willingly dedicate themselves to the divine service. As a sign of their commitment, they adhere to certain restrictions such as abstaining from wine, avoiding contact with the deceased, and refraining from cutting their hair. Interestingly, among the many themes in this Torah portion, the sages selected a Haftarah reading that focuses specifically on the concept of Nazirites. This Haftarah, found in Chapter 13 of the

Book of Judges, recounts the story of the most renowned Nazirite in the Torah—Samson.

The Haftarah opens with the story of Samson's birth. One day, while his mother was alone in the field, an angel appeared to her and conveyed a divine message: "Although you have been barren, you will conceive and bear a son."

There is a similar occurrence in the Torah when angels appeared to Abraham and Sarah to announce the birth of Isaac. Likewise, there is another instance where an angel appeared to Hagar, proclaiming the birth of Ishmael. However, the case of Samson's birth stands out as the only occurrence in the Torah where the angel provides specific instructions to the mother regarding her conduct during pregnancy.

The angel advises Samson's mother to abstain from drinking wine and consuming impure substances, for her child will be a Nazirite from the moment of conception, because he will deliver Israel from the oppressive Philistines. The Philistines posed the most significant threat at the time to the Israelites, and her son was to be their savior.

Filled with excitement, she hurried to share the news of the angel's visit with her husband, Manoach, who prayed to G-d, asking that the divine messenger return to provide them with the instructions once again. Soon enough, the angel appeared once more to Manoach's wife, and this time she wasted no time in summoning her husband.

Manoach asked the angel for guidance on how to raise their extraordinary child, and the angel reaffirmed the previous instructions. Then, when Manoach prepared an offering to G-d, the angel caused fire to emerge from the rock where the offering was placed, and in an amazing spectacle, ascended in the flames toward the heavens. Witnessing this extraordinary event, Manoach and his wife realized that this encounter was not an ordinary prophet, but an angel sent by G-d Himself.

Following the remarkable encounter, a dialogue unfolds between Manoach and his wife. Filled with fear, Manoach exclaims to his wife, "We will surely die because we have seen G-d." Overwhelmed by the belief that encountering an angel leads to certain death, Manoach begins to panic.

However, his wife, more practical and grounded, offers a reassuring perspective. She calmly responds, "If G-d intended to kill us, He would not have accepted our offering and provided us with these instructions."

This may sound familiar to many of us in our own homes - while one spouse panics and expects the worst, the other one is rational and grounded.

The Haftarah portion concludes with the birth of Samson, but the actual story of his life begins in the next chapter. Samson was renowned for his supernatural strength. It wasn't natural might; it emerged from his status as a Nazirite, dedicated to G-d. He possessed incredible powers bestowed upon him by the Almighty, and with those powers, he was able to single-handedly fight against the Philistines. Samson didn't have an army, nor did he have soldiers. He was a one-man show who brought terror upon the Philistines, and his story became one of the most famous stories of the Torah.

But I'm No Samson!

But sitting in the synagogue, listening to the haftarah, you might think to yourself: "Well, it's a beautiful story. We once had Samson, a mighty hero who saved us from all the anti-Semites. But what message does it have for me? I'm not Samson; I lost my hair a long time ago, and I never had such strength in the first place. What am I supposed to do with this story?"

In a talk (Toras Menachem v. 20 p. 90), the Rebbe once repeated the Talmud's statement regarding Samson, "Samson is called by the name of G-d, as it is said, '*Ki Shemesh umagen Hashem Elokim, For G-d is a sun and shield*' (Psalms 84:12)" (Sotah 10a).

The name Samson is derived from the same root as the word 'sun,' and in the Book of Psalms, King David refers to the Almighty as 'sun.' The prophet Malachi also speaks of the sun as a source of "charity and healing," long before doctors recommended sunlight for the production of vitamin D in infants; our sages knew that the sun possesses healing powers. Samson being called by the name 'sun' symbolizes his role in bringing healing to the people of Israel through the power of the Almighty, whose name he bears.

In other words, the message from the Haftarah is that while we may not possess

the physical strength that Samson had, each one of us has the power to be someone's "sunshine." With a single smile, we can brighten someone's day, warm their heart, and bring healing to their soul. We can each be Samson.