

Jewish Brainwashing

Under the inspiration of his visit to the Rebbe in 1984, Bibi Netanyahu stands in the United Nations and repeated the basic truths of the Jewish connection to the Land of Israel. The Midrash relates a story which has striking similarities, where the Jewish people successfully pushed back on their enemies claims by pointing out basic truths. The lesson – don't be embarrassed to stick to the basics. Stick to them, and they will ultimately stick.

Bibi at the United Nations

Good Yom Tov!

Every time an Israeli Prime Minister addresses the United Nations, it makes headlines—but when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke to the U.N. in 2009, it really made headlines. Remember that? It was around this time of year.

Anyways, the whole world was set on fire by his words. But if you really listened, you would have notice that he only said simple, well-known things.

Among these, he “proved” that the Holocaust actually happened. He presented construction plans for Auschwitz and Birkenau, the death camps the Nazis built so they could murder over one million Jews. He also brought minutes of the infamous Wannsee Conference meeting, at which the Nazis decided to “solve” the Jewish problem. He asked, “Is all this a lie?”

And, of course, his words deeply offended the president of Iran, who had spoken the day before to the U.N.

Netanyahu said that the Land of Israel belongs to the Nation of Israel by the strength of its historic right, by the strength of the Torah, Prophets and Scriptures, yet another thing that everyone sitting in the U.N. knows. He then said that the Jewish Nation is a peace-seeking nation ready to sacrifice much for the sake of peace.

Essentially, he didn't say anything new. Everything he said is well known and famous—so much so that every little kid knows it. And indeed, there were those who later asked him why he repeated things which were common knowledge.

The Source of Inspiration

That same night, Netanyahu appeared before a group of presidents of American Jewish organizations—and there, to everyone's surprise, he shared an experience he had in 1984, when he was Israel's ambassador to the United Nations and new on the job.

One day, his secretary informed him that someone claiming to know him wanted to see him. He agreed to see the stranger—and in walked a Chabad Chasid with a long beard. The Chasid said to him: "Bibi, you don't remember me?"

Netanyahu could not remember who he was—until the man reminded him that he had been one of his soldiers in the Sayeret Matkal, the elite commando unit of the Israeli military, and that he, Bibi, had been his commanding officer. But since

then, Shmaryahu Harel had become what in Israel is called a “chozer bitshuvah,” a returnee to religious practice. He had gone on to become a Chabadnik, complete with long beard—which is why Bibi didn’t recognize him.

Shmarya told him that the following night would be Simchas Torah, at which the Lubavitcher Rebbe would be holding the Hakafos observances, and that he was invited to participate in Hakafos by the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Bibi asked Shmarya, “What time would that be? Around eight?” But Shmarya told him, “Not eight. Midnight.”

So they arrived together at 770 Eastern Parkway, the Rebbe’s synagogue. The place was packed with thousands of Chasidim awaiting the Rebbe’s entrance. Shmarya pushed them both in until they got through the crowd to the platform where the Rebbe would stand. “Stand here,” Shmarya told Bibi.

Suddenly, the Rebbe entered the synagogue. A wide path in the crowd opened, and the Rebbe briskly walked through to his place.

Shmarya then told Bibi, “Now step up to the Rebbe!” Bibi hesitated. But Shmarya pushed him: “Do it now!” So Bibi approached the Rebbe and introduced himself, saying, “I came to see the Rebbe.” The Rebbe looked at him and said, “Why only see? Maybe also talk!”

And indeed, the Rebbe spoke with Benjamin Netanyahu for close to 40 minutes right there, while thousands of people were waiting for Hakafot to begin.

It was only when Netanyahu met with the Jewish leaders that he revealed what the Rebbe had told him all those years ago.

“You are entering the House of Lies,” the Rebbe had said, referring to the United Nations. “The only way to defeat these lies is to light the candle of truth—simply to state the truth and repeat it again and again.”

Alexander and the Jews

And just as everything in Judaism has a precedent, this story also has a precedent.

The Talmud (Tractate Sanhedrin 91a) tells us that over 2,500 years ago, at the beginning of the Second Temple Era, Alexander the Great conquered the world and became the one ruler of all civilization. The Talmud says that representatives of the world’s three leading cultures appeared before Alexander with a complaint against the Jewish Nation.

Now Alexander, the most powerful man in the world at the time, told the Jews to send their own representatives to the debate. It was like a summit of the world’s superpowers just like the U.N., with everyone coming with complaints against the Jews as always.

The Jewish sages did not know who to send. But at the time, there was a Jewish man named Geviha Ben-Pesisa. Geviha was a guard at the Temple. He was also a hunchback. He suggested that he be the one sent to represent the Jews at this debate, reasoning that if he lost, the Jews would be able to say, “He was just an average guy!” because Geviha was an ordinary man, not

one of the sages.

Thus, if he lost the debate, no one would be able to say, “We’re right and the Jews are wrong”—but if he won the debate, it would be a win-win situation. So the sages agreed and granted him permission to represent the Jewish Nation before the entire world.

The first person to speak at the beginning of the debate was the ambassador of the “Sons of Africa,” meaning descendants of Canaan, son of Cham and grandson of Noach. We all remember that Noach had three sons: Shem, Cham and Yafes. The Jewish Nation comes from Shem, while those of African heritage are the descendants of Cham.

Now, the African representative got up and said, “We have a complaint against the Jewish Nation.” He went on to say that the Torah of the Jews calls the Land of Israel “Canaan”—and that the people of Africa are descendants of Canaan. Therefore, the Land of Israel belongs to them, not to the Jewish Nation—meaning that the Jews need to give the entire land back to them.

Geviha Ben-Pesisa got up to respond: “True, that is what is written in the Torah,” he said, “but in the same Torah, it is also written that the Land of Canaan is given over to the Jewish Nation by G-d, and so it now belongs to us. So if you are basing your complaint on the Tanach, you can’t pick and choose which verses you accept and which you do not!”

Next to take the stand was the representative of the Sons of Yishmael, the Arabs. For their part, they didn’t claim ownership

of the entire land—they only demanded dividing it with the Jews. (Sounds familiar, doesn't it?)

They claimed that G-d had promised the Land to Avraham—and Avraham had had two sons: Yishmael and Yitzchok. And if that were the case, it would only be right that both nations divide the Land equally—half for each.

Geviha Ben-Pesisa rose again to repeat, “You're picking and choosing only those verses that suit you! Did you forget that Sarah said to Avraham, ‘Banish the son of this maidservant, because this son of this maidservant will not inherit with my son, with Yitzchok’? And did not G-d tell Avraham to listen to Sarah? We thus see that Yishmael is not considered an inheritor!”

After that, the Egyptian ambassador got permission to speak. But he didn't want territory—he wanted money.

He also quoted from the Torah. He said: “The Bible tells us that before the Sons of Israel left Egypt, they borrowed gold and silver vessels from the Egyptians. They cleaned out Egypt. But it was all on loan—and ever since, they have not returned a thing! Give us back the silver and gold that you took!” The Egyptian also said that if you add the percentages lost if the money had been invested in stocks, the Jews would owe them a sum of trillions.

So Alexander the Great turned to the Jewish representative at this ancient U.N. of sorts and asked him, “Nu? What do you have to say on the matter?”

So Geviha got up and said, “Again you’re choosing to avoid the details that don’t serve your purpose! In the same Torah, it is written that the Jews were slaves in Egypt for 430 years—and if so, you owe us pay for the slave labor of 600,000 men over hundreds of years!” The accountants present at that summit calculated that if the Egyptians were to pay one dollar for every slave per day, they would owe an endless amount to the Jewish Nation.

At this point, the Africans, Arabs and Egyptians realized they’d lost their case, and they turned tail and ran.

Stick to the Basics

Now, what happened here? Geviha only said the most obvious things that every kid knows!

The moral here is that you don’t always have to always come up with deep philosophical arguments and archaeological proofs. You just need to repeat simple truths again and again, and only like that can you possibly defeat the lies that others try to spread. The light of truth will always shine away and defeat the darkness of lies.

Now you’re probably sitting there and wondering, “Rabbi, what on Earth does all of that have to do with Sukkos?” So I’ll tell you.

We often get bored of celebrating the same holidays again and again: “Oh no, not Sukkos again! Yes, very nice. G-d took us out of Egypt and protected us in the desert with the Clouds of Glory. Could you please tell us something new already, Rabbi? Why is

it always the same story?”

In the same vein, you may tell your kids, “Jews only marry other Jews,” and they give you “that look”—you know, the look that says, “Stop bothering me, you pest! I heard you a thousand times already!”

But here we get to the point of all this.

Whether it’s the Jewish right to the Land of Israel today or thousands of years ago, whether it’s our holidays, whether it’s our marriage within our people, we have not kept our identity alive with complex arguments and philosophical debates. We simply say the truth. And we repeat it again and again.

So this Sukkos, my friends, the message is, let us go back to our very Jewish basics.