

Good Shabbos Everyone. Anyone wishing to see proof of the existence of Hashem, need only look at the Jewish people. We are a nation that by all estimates, should have been destroyed long ago. We are small among the nations. However, after years of persecutions, banishments, burnings, gassings, torturing and exterminations, Am Yisroel is alive and well.

We read about the indestructibility of the Jewish nation in our Torah portion this week Shemos. The Torah tells us about how Moshe Rabeinu (our teacher) saw a prophetic vision in the form of a burning bush.

The verse tells us "...behold! The bush was burning in the fire but the bush was not consumed." (Shemos 3:2) The Midrash tells us that the bush symbolizes Yisroel. Although the nations may try to destroy us, we are not consumed... we will never be consumed. (Midrash Rabbah, Shemos [Margolios] 2,14) We are the eternal nation.

The Sages teach us that there is wisdom among the Nations of the world. (Eicha Rabba 2:13) In light of that, we bring this week the worlds of the American author and commentator Mark Twain, who spoke about the immortality of the Jewish nation in his short essay entitled: Concerning the Jews.

"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk. His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?" (Mark Twain)

The following amazing story illustrates the concept of the "Burning Bush," namely, that we are the eternal nation.

When the clouds of war gathered over Europe in 1939, young Moshe Rabi and other German Jews were lucky enough to escape to London, England. Shortly after his arrival in England, the British authorities placed the 16 year old Moshe along with the other refugees, in a refugee detention camp.

The conditions in the camps were horrible; young Moshe and the other German Jewish refugees suffered greatly. Soon however, the British authorities offered the German Jewish refugees a chance to leave the horrible camps. Any inmates who wanted to leave the camps could be deported to Canada. Many Jews, including young Moshe, decided to emigrate to Canada.

The German Jews were taken to an island where they boarded a ship called the Dunera. The passengers were surprised when they noticed that the ship was heading south, instead of west towards Canada. After asking many times, the passengers on the ship were told the truth: the ship was headed to Australia.

Throughout the journey to Australia, the British crew of the Dunera harassed and badly mistreated the German Jewish passengers. The Jews were forced to stay on the lower decks of the ship; the British sailors denied them the chance to breathe fresh air on the top deck. The British crewmen even began to steal the personal items of the Jewish refugees. The lonely travelers were frightened and worried about their future.

Late one day, as the Dunera made its way towards Australia, a German submarine fired a torpedo at the ship. Miraculously, a large wave cast the ship out of the way of the torpedo, which just grazed the Dunera but did not explode.

The British crew on the Dunera were furious and embarrassed by the torpedo attack. The sailors became even more cruel to the German Jewish refugees, blaming them for the German submarine attack. As a punishment, the British sailors threw the personal belongings of the Jewish refugees into the ocean. Young Moshe and the other passengers sat and watched as their letters and treasured books and other personal items were lost forever in the ocean.

Eventually, the Dunera arrived in Sydney, Australia, with its cargo of broken souls. Moshe and all the other passengers got off the ship in Australia. A day or so later, a German submarine torpedoed the Dunera with its British crew members aboard. The ship exploded, and all the British sailors were killed.

Several years later, the diary of the German commander of the submarine which torpedoed the Dunera was made public. It seems that the commander of the German submarine had actually tracked the Dunera on its way down to Australia. The German commander had tried once to torpedo the Dunera but he was surprised when the torpedo harmlessly brushed off the side of the British ship.

As the German submarine was preparing to fire at the Dunera again, the German sailors on the German submarine noticed that there were personal items floating on the surface of the water. Thinking that the items were possibly a valuable source of intelligence on the British war effort, the German submarine commander ordered divers to retrieve the items. The Germans saw that among the material gathered were personal letters written in fluent German, German books and other items from Germany. The German submarine commander assumed that there were German prisoners of war on the Dunera. Wishing to protect the lives of the German nationals on board the Dunera, the German submarine commander radioed all German boats in the area, telling the German ships not to harm the Dunera. The German submarine then proceeded to follow the Dunera from a distance, all the way to Australia.

Once the boat had docked in Australia and the passengers got off the ship, the German submarine commander felt assured that there were no more Germans aboard the Dunera. The German submarine then torpedoed and totally destroyed the Dunera and its British crew.

Moshe Rabi, along with many of his family members, still live in Australia today where they are an integral part of the Melbourne Jewish community. (Around the Maggid's Table, R.P.Krohn, p.194-7) The bush may burn, but it is not consumed and it will never be consumed. We are the eternal nation. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**