

Good Shabbos Everyone. The Klausenberger Rebbe, Rabbi Yekusiel Yehudah Halberstam (1905-1994), was legendary for the encouragement he gave to the thousands of shattered Jews who came to the Displaced Persons camps after their liberation from the horrors of the concentration camps. To each of the bereaved, the Rebbe had different words of comfort and consolation. Everyone knew that it was the Rebbe, more than anyone else, who could give people hope and strength to renew their lives. At times, the Rebbe would refer to the unspeakable tragedies that he personally suffered. He lost his wife, Rebbetzin Pessel, and 11 children!

The Klausenberger Rebbe had a special interest in children. Even under dismal and sorrowful conditions he opened a yeshivah, Sh'eiris Hapleita, for 100 boys, and a Bais Yaakov school for 120 girls. One day, two men told him about Meshulam Yalver. (name has been changed). When Meshulam was 16 he was known as an exceptional masmid (diligent scholar), punctilious in his mitzvah observance; a boy who had a bright future as an exemplary Jew. Now, having gone through suffering, loss, and catastrophe, he rejected his Judaism and resisted any attempts to bring him back to the fold of observance.

The Rebbe asked the men to bring Meshulam to him.

When Meshulam entered the Rebbe's room, the Rebbe motioned for Meshulam to sit down next to him. "I'm told that you are the son of Reb Laibish, whom I knew," the Rebbe said. "Yes," Meshulam answered. Meshulam did not want to be lulled into a conversation where he would have to debate the Rebbe in topics of emunah (belief) and bitachon (faith). For him the world of religion ended in Auschwitz; there was nothing to discuss. "They say that you were a great masmid (diligent scholar), back home. Is that so?" the Rebbe asked in a non-confrontational tone. Meshulam just nodded.

"But now you are angry?" asked the Rebbe softly. "Of course, I'm angry," Meshulam blurted out heatedly, unable to contain himself any longer. "The best were taken away, the finest are lost forever." The Rebbe extended his palm and touched the boy's face and said, "You are so right. Look at me; They left me alive while my wife and all 11 children were taken away. You are right," the Rebbe said again, "the best were taken away and look what's left..." And with that the Rebbe burst into tears and began sobbing. And then together the Rebbe and the boy cried without stop on each other's shoulders.

No more words were spoken - for no words had to be spoken - for no words could be spoken. Two tortured hearts joined in a stream of tears. An hour later, Meshulam left the Rebbe's house. That night when Meshulam was alone, he recited Krias Shema (the Shma) for the first time in months. Within a few days he was wearing his yarmulka again. Eventually he became fully observant again. Years later, Meshulam then in his 70's, commented: "There was nothing anyone could say to me, and the Rebbe understood that. Everyone spoke to my head; the Rebbe touched my heart." (The Echoes of the Maggid, Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn, p.272)

Although the Klausenberger Rebbe went through horrible suffering and lost his entire family, he survived to rebuild his Chassidic community as well as spread Torah to thousands of Jews around the world. If anything, like many other survivors, the Klausenberger Rebbe's belief in Hashem was only strengthened by his life experiences. The Rebbe saw the beautiful Torah families, which sprouted like flowers from the ashes of war. The Rebbe then believed even more strongly that the hand of Hashem was on the Jewish people.

In fact, the miraculous continuous existence of the Jewish nation against all odds points to the existence of an all-powerful being, namely G-d. (Reb Yakov Emden siddur) A simple parable to illustrate this point: When a storm came, all the ships were washed away except for one. There is only one possible explanation of why the one ship survived the storm: It had an anchor. So too with the Jewish nation, the winds of history have blown, nations have risen and fallen, yet our ship has survived. The only possible explanation for the continued existence of the Jewish Nation is

In memory of Shusha Malka bas R' Avrohom ob'm

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that there is an omnipotent Power which has ensured our nation's survival, namely Hashem.

In our discussion of this week's parsha Tetzaveh, we will see that eternal status of the Jewish nation is hinted to several times in the Torah and the Prophets. As we see when Hashem commands Moshe this week regarding the lighting of the Menorah in the Mishkan - Tabernacle. The verse tells us that the Menorah is to be set up "in the tent of the meeting outside the curtain, near the testimony." (Shemos 27:21) What relationship does the Menorah have with testimony? The Talmud teaches us that the Menorah gave "testimony" to Hashem's existence. This is because Hashem caused a miracle, that the westernmost light of the Menorah should never be extinguished. (see Menachos 86b) Miracles are events that are above nature. Hashem uses miracles to demonstrate His power over the universe. When something happens which is above nature, it can only be explained as being a miracle. Therefore, the miracle of the ever-burning Menorah gave "testimony" to Hashem's existence.

Even though the Menorah has been lost to history, the Miracle of the Menorah still testifies Hashem's existence. In order to see how the Menorah still testifies, we must now delve even deeper into the wisdom of the Torah. The prophet Yirmiyahu compares the Nation of Israel to an olive, as the verse states, "Hashem called your name, a leafy olive tree, beautiful with shapely fruit." (Yirmiyahu 11:16) The Midrash explains from this verse that Israel is compared to an olive. How does all of this relate to the Menorah? The Torah tells us that the Menorah should be lit with "refined olive oil." (see verse 27:20) As we mentioned above, Hashem made a miracle so that the westernmost light of the Menorah should never burn out. The Menorah gave testimony to Hashem's supremacy. What oil was used in the Menorah? Olive oil. What is Israel compared to? An olive.

Hashem commands Moshe to prepare olive oil for the Menorah which will be a "Ner Tamid," (27:20) an eternal light. The Jewish Nation can therefore be compared to the olive oil, the source of the "eternal light" in the Menorah. As the prophet describes Israel, we are to be "a light unto the nations." After thousands of years of persecution, Jewish communities thrive around the world, while keeping the same Torah. The miracle of the everlasting flame of the Menorah continues in the Jewish people! The Sages tell us: One who wants to lie, will distance his witnesses. (Rav Amnon Yitzchok citing Rosh, Shavuos 6,13) In other words, if someone wants to lie, he will make it difficult for someone else to disprove him. Hashem, on the contrary has preserved His witnesses the Jewish Nation and made them available, so as to prove that He is the One and only Power in the universe.

This point is further strengthened by what Hashem tells us through the Prophet Yeshayahu "You are My Witness. ... and [you are] My servant whom I have chosen, so that you will know and believe in Me, and understand that I am He; before Me nothing was created by a god nor will there be after Me!" (Rav Uri Zohar citing Yeshayahu 43:10) The ever-burning Menorah therefore continues to give testimony in the form of the Jewish People. (see also Tosafos on Chagiga 3b)

The only way to explain the continued existence of the Jewish People is to say that there is a G-d Who is guiding this world and Who has chosen the Jewish People. The Jewish people has come under attack in almost every generation and every land. Losses have been horrible and we bear the scars inflicted upon us by the nations. Yet, we are still here. We have the same Shabbos and the same Kashrus and the same tefillin. We are the eternal nation. **Good Shabbos Everyone.**