

ISSUE #64

כ"ז כסלו תשפ"ה  
28/12/24



## A VORT FROM THE ROSH YESHIVA מורינו הרה"ג ר' אברהם גורביץ שליט"א

### פרשת מקץ - חנוכה

יָנִים נִקְבְּצוּ עָלַי אֲזֵי בִימֵי חֲשֻמְנַיִם וכו'. ומנותר קִנְקְנִיִם נִעֲשָׂה גַם לְשׁוֹשְׁנִים. (מעוז צור)  
*Greeks gathered against me, then in the times of the Chashmonaim .. and from the remnant of the flasks a miracle was wrought for the roses. (Ma'oz Tzur)*

On Chanukah, in the *zemer* of Ma'oz Tzur, we refer to the *tzaddikim* in Klal Yisroel as “שׁוֹשְׁנִים,” meaning roses. Additionally, on Purim, in the *zemer* Shoshanas Yakov, we say: שׁוֹשְׁנַת יַעֲקֹב צָהֳלָה וכו', again using the term “roses” to refer to Klal Yisroel. What is the significance of this title, and why is this expression particularly used in these contexts?

The Rosh Yeshiva *shlita* clarifies the meaning of שׁוֹשְׁנָה, based on the Meforshim's interpretation of the *possuk* (*Shir Hashirim* 2:1): אֲנִי חִבְצֹלֶת הַשָּׁרוֹן שׁוֹשְׁנַת הָעֲמָקִים: *I am a rose of the Sharon, a rose of the valleys*. Rashi explains that the words חִבְצֹלֶת and שׁוֹשְׁנָה are synonymous, both referring to roses. The key difference is that the שׁוֹשְׁנַת הָעֲמָקִים, *rose of the valley*, is a superior species. Sharonite roses grow in open plains and are exposed to the scorching sun, which dries them out, causing them to lose their beauty and become discoloured. In contrast, “valley roses,” sheltered from harsh elements, retain their moisture and remain vibrant and fresh, showcasing a more beautiful variety.

The Vilna Gaon explains that the two ways roses present themselves serve as a metaphor for Klal Yisroel in different situations. When Klal Yisroel are left exposed, away from Hashem, they are vulnerable to the elements and may wither, dry up, and lose colour. However, when they immerse themselves in the “עֲמָקִים” – depths of Torah wisdom and knowledge, staying connected to Hashem, they flourish and appear in their most beautiful form. Accordingly, the *possuk* in Shir Hashirim emphasises that, at their core, Klal Yisroel are the most beautiful roses; any blemishes arising are only from external influences that soil them. The metaphor continues: for something to be susceptible to being burned or affected by the sun, it must possess lightness and beauty. Similarly, Klal Yisroel's vulnerability to external influences signifies their delicate and refined nature.

The Gaon further elaborates on the unique characteristics of Klal Yisroel. When they fall victim to external influences, due to their sensitivity, they can deteriorate to the lowest level. Conversely, when they are at their best - connected and close to Hashem and the Torah - they can reach great heights and exhibit their most exquisite beauty.

R' Elyah Lopian *zatzal* illustrates this concept with the famous words of the Kuzari. Popular belief is that there are only four categories of creations: 1) דוּמָם - inanimate objects (e.g., stones), 2) צוֹמֵחַ - growing things (e.g., plants), 3) חַי - living beings (e.g., animals), 4) מְדַבֵּר - speaking humans. However, the Kuzari clarifies that in addition to these, there is a fifth category that stands alone: Am Yisroel. Just as each of the four groups is distinct and incomparable to one another, so too, Klal Yisroel occupies a unique category entirely different from other human beings. R' Elyah expounds that when, for example, a חַי (living being) loses its life function, it doesn't merely downgrade to a צוֹמֵחַ (growing

thing); instead, it loses its entire identity and becomes worthless. The same applies with a Yid. When *chas veshalom*, a Yid fails to live up to the unique abilities bestowed upon him as a member of Hashem's nation, he does not simply become like a non-Jew; rather, he falls to a level far below that, descending into unfathomable and incomparable depths. Due to Klal Yisroel's greatness, when they do not adhere to the ideals of the Torah, they experience significant decline.

R' Elyah further explains how the natural and inherent nature of a Yid is different. Hashem has embedded incredible powers within our very makeup, intended to assist us in serving Him. However, when these powers are not utilised for the good, they can lead to extremely harmful consequences. For instance, Yidden possess immense innate strength to be *moser nefesh* for Hashem and the Torah. This inner strength has historically held our nation together, even in the face of terrible suffering and persecution. We find countless examples of how, throughout the generations, Yidden sacrificed their lives and possessions to serve Hashem and sanctify His Name. How did these Yidden find the courage to defy cruel and powerful leaders despite the painful repercussions? It was only through the tremendous reserves of willpower granted to Klal Yisroel, enabling them to withstand temptations designed to lure them away from the Torah. Unfortunately, when a Yid does not follow the Torah, these strengths can be channelled in profoundly destructive ways. The idealism and boldness of Jews who have abandoned the path of the Torah have led to incredibly harmful revolutions that have wreaked havoc on the world (e.g., Communism). R' Elyah discusses at length various other instances where unaffiliated Yidden have misused the special powers bestowed upon them in extreme, damaging, and shameful ways.

Klal Yisroel are unique and blessed with remarkable qualities that, when grounded in the teachings of the Torah, can yield beautiful results, and elevate individuals to a higher level than their counterparts. However, *due* to these exceptional qualities, when a Yid's incredible energies and abilities are not guided by the Torah, they can tragically lead to harmful actions and outcomes.

With this introduction, the Rosh Yeshiva discusses the connection between *tzaddikim* during the times of Chanukah and Purim and the concept of the שושנת – rose. We refer especially to the שושנת הָעֵמֶקִים, the valley roses, which are beautiful flowers that remain unaffected by external influences, preserving their perfect features and qualities. The miracle of Chanukah was bestowed upon the “valley roses” – the Macabi'im, who, with *mesirus nefesh*, refused to let the Greeks change their way of life. Similarly, during the time of Purim, salvation came through the *mesirus nefesh* exhibited by those who refused to bow to Haman and were determined not to be influenced by the ways of the nations.

Let us embrace the lesson of our uniqueness and specialness. We, Klal Yisroel, are different from the other nations, and Hashem has endowed us with incredible strengths and immense potential. However, we can only retain our beautiful essence when we protect ourselves from external influences and live according to the ideals of the Torah. May we strive to live by the Torah, bring out our best *kochos*, and through this, merit the ultimate *yeshuah, bimheirah veyameinu!*

א פרייליכן חנוכה!

This Devar Torah is adapted from ספר וענפיה ארזי אל על המועדים and is presented by the Gateshead Yeshiva Alumni Association. To receive by email, please register your interest by sending an email to [parshasheet@gyalumni.org](mailto:parshasheet@gyalumni.org).