

The Divine Hand

Rabbi Pinchos Lipschutz

We are still living in the shadow of the historic attack that occurred last year on Simchas Torah in Eretz Yisroel. Twelve hundred Jews were slaughtered, thousands were wounded, and hundreds were taken captive. Small villages were destroyed, and in Israel's southern towns, the damage inflicted remains fresh and evident.

Israel launched a bloody, bitter war to eradicate Hamas, the terror group responsible for the massacre.

Ever since that bitter day, we have been witnessing the Yad Hashem, the Divine Hand, at work. Today, we see it more clearly than ever.

It is staggering that thousands of terrorists participated in the attack, yet nobody noticed. The attackers came by land, breaching the world's strongest border at eighty points and rushing through. No alarms went off. Nobody monitoring the area saw anything. How can this be?

Terrorists came by air, flying over the border on paragliders, yet nobody saw them coming. No radar detected them. No human intelligence and no one guarding the border saw them. How is this possible?

People then, and until today, wonder how it was possible that Israel's widely praised army and intelligence apparatus allowed such a catastrophe to happen. "How can it be?" they ask. No answer will satisfy them, regardless of how many commissions of inquiry are conducted or how many reports are issued.

That is because it had nothing to do with the army, the police, or the Shin Bet. The reason it happened was because Hashem willed it so. When Hashem is on the side of the Israeli defense apparatus, they are the mightiest army around, performing miracles and fighting like no other. But when Hashem wants to teach Am Yisroel a lesson about Who their real Protector is, Who truly fights their battles, and Who keeps their enemies at bay, then things that defy logic occur, and the strongest, brightest, and most courageous are rendered helpless and powerless.

On that day, it should have been abundantly clear that the reason calamities of this magnitude do not occur more often is that Hashem prevents them from happening. It is the Yad Hashem that keeps us and our Israeli brethren safe. But when Hashem has a different plan, everything falls apart quickly and effortlessly.

Since that day, the plague of anti-Semitism has reemerged with a vengeance. Jews who had become so comfortable among the nations that they barely identified as Jewish were shocked to face torrents of anti-Semitic invective and hate in intellectual cathedrals and modern countries around the world. Jews have been savagely attacked and beaten for no reason other than their religion.

And just as people wonder where the Israeli army was on October 7th, they wonder what happened to reawaken the ancient canards about the Jewish people. Why here and why now? And they have not been able to arrive at a satisfactory answer.

We have discussed here many times the exegesis of the Netziv that anti-Semitism is always present. At times, Hashem causes it to be hidden, and other times, He allows it to be apparent. We are now living in one of those periods when Hashem allows it to be apparent.

This week, we witnessed once again the revealed Hand of Hashem manipulating what is happening in Eretz Yisroel and its neighboring countries. Today, there is a new Middle East, and miraculous occurrences have made it happen.

Israel has been engaged in a multi-front war, leading to the downfall of Hamas and the weakening of Hezbollah. Key figures such as Hassan Nasrallah, Yahya Sinwar, Khaled Meshaal, Ismail Haniyeh, Mohammed Deif, and others who devoted their lives to undermining Israel's existence have been killed. For years, these leaders operated with impunity, but in a remarkably short span, they were eliminated one by one.

The impact of these events was magnified by the fall of Assad in Syria, marking the collapse of Iran's allies and its regional influence. Just over a year ago, Iran was in a dominant position, surrounding Israel with its proxies, arming them, and positioning itself to achieve its long-term objectives. Assad in Syria served as a vital conduit for Iran, facilitating the arming of Hezbollah and posing a constant threat to Israel from the west. Hezbollah, situated on Israel's northern border in Lebanon, was armed with 150,000 rockets and missiles, and supported by a highly trained force of tens of thousands.

The ruthless dictator who followed on the heels of his father, who took power fifty-three years ago, fled from the country he thought he owned and escaped to the country millions thought would be the utopian haven. Just as Hashem caused the all-powerful Soviet Union to collapse with just the snap of a finger, so too, the evil Syrian dictator and sworn enemy of Israel has fallen.

For decades, the brutal, corrupt Assad family has been battling Syria's citizens, killing hundreds of thousands and causing millions to flee as refugees. Then, in a flash, their murderous regime crumbled. Iran and its mercenaries from Lebanon, Afghanistan, and Pakistan quickly melted away and were unable to keep their man in power. Russia, which has been a large factor in Assad's ability to maintain power, was of little help as the rebels closed in. Such a neat collapse could only have been brought about by the Creator of all.

Throw into the mix the election of Donald Trump as president of the United States. This came about despite everything that was done to derail him. The current president, his Justice Department, and local prosecutors worked to undermine him and keep him tied up in civil and

criminal court cases with the goal of ruining him and having him locked up in jail. He was shot and almost killed by an assassin, and a second would-be assassin came close to killing him.

Yet, that same Divine Hand caused him to live and win the election. Before he has even taken office, he has shaken up the world and is working feverishly to return justice and responsibility to government and repair the economy and much else that the current president and his team ruined.

Having a genuine friend of the Jewish people and Israel in the White House at such a critical time like this is fortuitous and can only be Divinely orchestrated.

As the circle seeks completion, the Israeli army, which was impotent on Simchas Torah last year, is now triumphant. Then Hashem said, as recounted by the novi Yeshayahu (6:10), “Hashmeiv lev ha’am hazeh v’oznov hachbeid v’einov hosha pen yireh b’einov ub’oznov yishma ulevavo yovin – Fatten the heart of Am Yisroel, and harden their ears, and block their eyes, so that they will not see with their eyes, and will not hear with their ears, and their hearts will not understand.” What the Hamas terrorists were planning was plainly evident, but Hashem caused the Israeli defense and intelligence leaders to not see or hear what was going on.

But this time, we are meriting the pesukim that Dovid Hamelech wrote so many years ago: “Ya’ancha Hashem beyom tzorah yesagevcha sheim Elokei Yaakov. Yishlach ezricha mikodesh umiTziyon yisodeka – Hashem will answer you on the day of distress and the Sheim of Elokei Yaakov will render you indestructible. May He send your help from Kodesh and support you from Tzion.”

Lest you doubt me, as the world undergoes profound changes and Israel continues to fight multi-front wars, the political establishment within the country is attempting to constrain the prime minister who has steadfastly led the nation and its military during these turbulent times. The current prime minister is the longest-serving in Israel’s history, bringing unparalleled experience in wartime leadership and expertise in navigating both domestic and international political landscapes. He is uniquely equipped to manage the shifting tides of American administrations and has been working tirelessly towards dismantling the Islamic Iranian power structure and its regional hegemony. He has been planning for this for over three decades.

Yet, as Hashem’s plan unfolds, the Israeli political swamp insists that Prime Minister Netanyahu spend three days each week in court, battling a case that has lingered for five years and is widely regarded as weak. This surreal situation highlights a larger, almost incomprehensible truth: Nothing unfolding on the battlefield or the political chessboard is the result of the abilities of the individuals involved. The remarkable victories and transformations we are witnessing are not happening because of the people in power, but despite them.

That brings us to this week’s parsha of Vayishlach, which discusses the relationship between Yaakov and Eisov. This is most relevant to us at this time, as the Ramban writes that the parsha “contains a hint for future generations, for all that transpired between our forefather Yaakov and

Eisov will occur to us with Eisov's children, and it is fitting for us to follow the path of the tzaddik (Yaakov)."

The posuk says, "Vayishlach Yaakov malochim lefonov el Eisov ochiv" (Bereishis 31:4). Yaakov sent malochim to his brother, Eisov, to inform him that he was returning to Eretz Yisroel and was looking forward to a peaceful brotherly reunion.

Yaakov sent his wicked brother Eisov a message in a bid to convince him to retreat from his threats to harm Yaakov. He told the malochim to tell Eisov, "Im Lovon garti, although I lived many years with the wicked Lovon, taryag mitzvos shomarti, I observed all the 613 mitzvos."

Why did Yaakov think that the wicked Eisov would be impressed that he was able to maintain his holy levels and observe the 613 commandments while living by Lovon?

Perhaps we can provide an explanation based upon the Chazal that each time we perform a mitzvah, we create a good angel who will defend us when necessary. Yaakov's message was deeper than it appears. He was telling his brother that if he would attempt to battle him and attempt to kill him, he wouldn't only be fighting Yaakov and his family, but would be battling the many malochim who were created by the mitzvos he had performed over the past twenty years since they had last met.

Yaakov was telling Eisov that he was the same tzaddik dedicated to Torah study and observance as he was as a single bochur back home. He was telling him that their father Yitzchok had blessed Yaakov that as long as he was loyal to Torah, he would not fall to Eisov. Yaakov was informing Eisov that he would not be able to succeed against Yaakov, because he was as dedicated to Torah as ever.

The Vilna Gaon taught that every word of Torah we study creates for us a good malach. This contributes to the idea that we have stronger protection than that of Torah. The Gemara (Sotah 21a) teaches that Torah and mitzvos are "magna umatzla," Torah and mitzvos protect a person. Torah study and mitzvah observance create a fortress, an impenetrable protective wall. Yaakov rose above the distractions and oppression in the home and employ of Lovon and thus was creating malochim the entire time he was away. Eisov would never be able to overcome that.

In our time as well, as we observe the world in a state of turbulence and see plainly how Hashem is preparing the world for the coming of Moshiach, we wonder what we can do to stay safe and help bring about the outcome we have been awaiting for thousands of years.

Chazal teach, "Mah yaaseh adam v'yinotzeil m'chevlei shel Moshiach. What should a person do to be saved from the rough period that will exist in the world before the coming of Moshiach? He should busy himself with Torah and good actions."

In this time, we can do nothing better than learn Torah and help other people. By doing so, we make ourselves and the world holier. We create malochim who stand by us and help to ensure that we don't get swallowed by the vagaries of the time.

We study the parsha and think of Yaakov Avinu, imagining what it was like, not only working for Lovon, but living with him. As bad as our boss might be, nobody can say that they have a worse boss than Yaakov had. Regardless of how uncomfortable our family situation may be, nobody can say that they have it worse than Yaakov Avinu, with a brother who wanted him dead and a father-in-law who was the toughest crook alive, cheating him at every opportunity.

Yet, despite it all, Yaakov was able to tell Eisov that he was as good as he was before he began facing the numerous stressful pressures that could have broken him. It was because he remained loyal to Torah and maintained his faith in Hashem that he was able to surmount all his challenges and return to Eretz Yisroel with his blessed family as the bechir sheb'avos.

Let us learn from Yaakov's example and bulk up so that we can all merit a personal neis Chanukah, with good health, nachas, success, and the merit to be here when Moshiach arrives to bring this golus to a swift end.