



The (Al-)Mighty and the Weak

Dear Parents,

A dilemma that we have all been grappling with since Simchas Torah, is the question of how much to share and how much to shield from our children. We should all know with certainty that images of victims and suffering must be avoided on the one hand, and encouragement to daven and say *Tehillim* are always appropriate, in moderation, according to the child's age and temperament, on the other. What is not so clear is how much to discuss, how much to draw out and analyze from what is happening. What lessons and takeaways should we be sharing with our children.

Chanuka is a celebration and commemoration of a military victory from long ago. The Jewish Army, led by the *Chashmonaim*, was victorious against the mighty Greek Army and it behooves us to understand what their attitude was concerning their fight and the successful outcome of their military campaign.

In *Sefer Imrei Mordechai*, the collected *shiurim* and *drashos* of HaRav Mordechai Shapiro, zt'l, Rav of Beth Israel in Miami Beach for a quarter century, Rabbi Shapiro quotes the *Siach Yitzchak*, a commentary found in the *Siddur HaGra*. In the *tefilla* of *Al HaNissim*, the miracle of the *Chanuka* victory is depicted, among other descriptions, as one of *גבורים ביד חלשים* – the mighty into the hands of the weak. The *Siach Yitzchak* asks who are these weak ones? The *Chashmonaim* are described in various *Medrashim* as being exceedingly strong and powerful. (Yes, they were the few who vanquished the many, but they were very strong!) What does it mean when it refers to the mighty *Chashmonaim* as “weak ones?”

The *Siach Yitzchak* explains that the weakness of the *Chashmonaim* was related to their understanding of themselves. They were firmly convinced, despite their physical strength and military capabilities, that their victory had nothing to do with them and everything to do with

Hashem. They were absolutely certain that their power alone could not have earned them a victory, if not for *Hashem* making it happen. Their strength was irrelevant because they were weak without *Hashem's* intervention on their behalf.

We worry about, support and send resources to the soldiers who are fighting in Gaza, because we are obligated to participate, to strive to achieve victory through natural means. When the war is over, and victory will hopefully be ours, it will be critical that our attitude mirrors that of the *Chashmonaim*. Our soldiers fought bravely, we had sophisticated arms, our training and intelligence was top notch. What brought victory however, was none of the above. It was because *Hashem* caused us to be victorious.

This is the timely *Chanuka* lesson we can and should share with our children. When the Jewish People are victorious over our enemies, it makes little difference how many soldiers, how advanced our armaments and how clever our tactics. **Victory is a result of Hashem's will that it be so.** We must try our very best, and every soldier's effort is incredibly valuable. However, we must “weaken” our belief that our own efforts were the cause for victory and understand it is all from *Hashem*.

May we experience a new miracle this *Chanuka* and may peace and security return to our brethren in *Eretz Yisrael*. May we and our children experience and feel with strength and depth, the hand of *Hashem* bringing salvation.

Best wishes for a *Shabbos* of rejuvenation and a *Chanuka* of miracles,



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