



SERMON RESOURCE FOR SHLUCHIM

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PARSHA:

Re'ei

SERMON TITLE:

OVERCOMING TERRORISM

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Overcoming Terrorism

Good Shabbos!

While things may be quiet right now on Israel's southern front, the war with the terror organization Hamas is never quite over.

The underlying problem with Hamas is the philosophy by which they fight. They use women and children as shields for themselves, putting these defenseless individuals in the line of fire. They then draw out the Israeli military to overpower the weak, thus putting Israel in a moral dilemma every time they have to take a shot—because no one wants to fight against people who are not able to defend themselves.

But, ladies and gentlemen, this deplorable tactic is nothing new. It was already used in the era of the Tanach.

To preface: Jerusalem is the holiest and most sacred city to the Jewish Nation. In our prayers, we mention Jerusalem several times a day. We pray facing in the direction of Jerusalem, and, of course, we visit Jerusalem.

But this begs a question: How long after the Jewish Nation first entered the Holy Land did they conquer Jerusalem? The Jewish Nation entered the Holy Land with Yehoshua, right after Moshe Rabbeinu passed away. So how long do you think it took until they got to Jerusalem? [Interact with audience]

The answer is: 400 years.

Now seemingly, this is not at all understood! True, the name “Jerusalem” is not mentioned in the five books of the Torah at all—but still, the Jewish Nation knew all along that it was a holy place for the Jewish Nation. They knew that it was there that Avraham had offered up his son as a sacrifice (on the Temple Mount). And so, even those Jews who didn't know that Yaakov's dream occurred on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem and didn't know that Noach brought sacrifices to G-d after leaving the Ark on the Temple Mount, still, the story of the Akeidah (the Binding of Yitzchak) is stated explicitly in the Book of Bereishis. That, everyone knows about.

And so how is it that the Jewish Nation didn't immediately try to take Jerusalem?

Now, when we look into the Book of Yehoshua, we discover something very interesting. We are told there how the Tribe of Yehudah conquered all the cities surrounding Jerusalem. But then, at the end of Chapter 15, the Tanach tells us, “As for the Jebusites the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the

children of Judah could not drive them out; but the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Judah in Jerusalem to this day.”

Strange, isn't it? The Jewish Nation was able to conquer everything else—but when it came to Jerusalem, of all places, they got a rap on the knees! What happened that specifically Jerusalem they couldn't conquer?

The answer to this is found in a Rashi for this week's Torah portion of Re'ei.

On the verse, “You may not eat within your cities...” (Devarim 12:17), Rashi says something very interesting: “You might think you may, but you are not allowed... because Avraham forged a covenant with them when he took the Double Cave from them.” It's mentioned in Pirkei D'Rabbi Eliezer that when Avraham wanted to purchase the Meoras Hamachpeilah, the Double Cave, from the Sons of Cheis, they agreed to sell it to him only on the condition that he not try to purchase or conquer Jerusalem. And so Avraham struck a deal with them that he would not do so.

What's more, Rashi on the Book of Shmuel adds: “For Avraham had sworn to Avimelech, and therefore they did not drive them out” (Shmuel II:5:6). And in the Torah portion of Vayeira, right after the story of the Akeidah, there's another story of how King Avimelech forged a pact with Avraham that said (among other things) “...that you will not lie to me or to my son or to my grandson” (Bereishis 21:23). Says Rashi: The oath was that Avraham's children and grandchildren would never conquer Jerusalem.

And thus it was well known among the Yevusim, the residents of the land, that Avraham had promised that neither her nor his descendants would ever conquer Jerusalem. And in order to assure that this oath would never be forgotten, Rashi says, the Yevusim many generations later set up “two icons, one blind and one lame, to invoke Yitzchak and Yaakov, and in their mouths was [inscribed] the oath that Avraham had sworn to Avimelech.”

So the Yevusim, the residents of Jerusalem in later generations, set up two statues. One had the appearance of a blind person, symbolizing Yitzchak who lost his sight in his later years, and the other one had the appearance of a handicapped person, symbolizing Yaakov who, during a certain period in his life after he had physically struggled with an angel, “he limped on his leg” (Bereishis 32:32).

The Yevusim chose these images depicting the Patriarchs in their most difficult moments so as to break the Jewish Nation's spirit. And in the mouths of these statues they engraved the oath that Avraham had sworn to not conquer Jerusalem.

Continues Rashi: “And thus they did not drive them out when they conquered Jerusalem.” Now we can understand why the sons of Yehudah did not conquer Jerusalem—because no one wanted to be the one who violated the oath to which Avraham Avinu had bound himself.

Until Dovid HaMelech came along.

King David decided that he indeed would conquer Jerusalem. As for what the Yevusim argued that Avraham had taken a vow, King David acknowledged that it was a true story, but that Avraham's vow was only valid for three generations: “Me, my son and my grandson”—but by

the time of King David, it was already 800 years after Avraham's vow, and so he was not bound by it whatsoever.

And so Dovid HaMelech indeed notified the Yevusim that he was going to conquer them. So they said to him (Shmuel II:5:6), "You shall not come here unless you remove the blind and the lame." And Rashi (Divrei HaYamim I:11:5) explains that the Yevusim "saw that they could not stand before Dovid, and [so] they put blind and lame people before the city gate as if to say, 'Dovid will not come here unless he fights with these blind ones,' because they knew that it would be disgraceful for the king to fight with the blind, and as a result of that, he would return and not do battle with them."

It's hard to believe the story—the same thing that Hamas does today!

The Yevusim knew that they had no chance against Dovid HaMelech's military—so they came up with another idea. They knew that the Jews were sensitive people of very high moral character and that they would never attack blind people. So they came up with the idea of locking the gates of Jerusalem and stationing blind and crippled people on the walls because Dovid would not have the heart to attack them, and he would thus be forced to backtrack.

Rashi continues, saying: "Dovid said in his heart: It's true that it's not right and proper for me to attack blind and lame people." Dovid HaMelech felt that it wasn't right to go to war against people who could not defend themselves. So then Dovid declared that anyone who succeeds in conquering the Yevusim will be made a head and ruler.

So along came the legendary Yoav Ben-Tzeruyah, who became King David's general. The Radak (a commentator) says, "Yoav jumped up and got to the top of the wall and was jumping along the wall; they were trying to kill him, but Yoav was a mighty warrior and fought back, and he opened the gates; and the warriors of Israel came and helped him." Yoav succeeded in bypassing the blind and lame people by jumping over the wall so as to open the gates and thus conquer Jerusalem. And indeed, he was appointed as commander of the military.

(Some say that Yoav entered Jerusalem through a tunnel to circumvent the blind and the lame people; to this day, there is a natural space in the rock called Warren's Shaft that you can visit in Jerusalem that some say is the site of Yoav's entry.)

But ultimately, even after Dovid conquered Jerusalem, he still purchased the site of the Temple for its full price from Aravna the Yevusi (Rashi, Devarim 12:14). And the Rebbe explains that he did so because in reality, among the Yevusim it was commonly believed that Avraham had sworn to not conquer Jerusalem—so even though it was a false belief, Dovid paid for it with gold he collected from the entire nation. (See Likutei Sichos Vol. 29, pg. 86.)

So the lesson from the whole story here, my friends, is that "there is nothing new under the sun."

The techniques being used by Hamas today were used long ago by the Yevusi residents of Jerusalem. And just like Dovid HaMelech was not subdued back then but on the contrary, found the way to overpower them and ultimately conquer Jerusalem and build the Beis Hamikdash, so too in our day is it forbidden to give in. Rather, we must find the way to victory over Hamas!

Let us hope and pray that this victory occur speedily in our day, with the ultimate victory of good over evil that is the coming of Moshiach, speedily in our days, amen!

Good Shabbos!