GIVING IT ALL YOU’VE GOT: FINDING YOUR OWN NICHE IN YIDDISHKEIT

# RABBI YITZCHOK MILLER SHIUR 394 DALED TEVES 5776/ 12/16/2015

We just finished the Yom tov of Chanukah, which Hidden around the world, from and non-from participate in. Rabbi Miller explained, that many of us ‘want to be like a Maccabi’-a hero who stood up to the bad man, found the holy flask of oil, experienced the miracles of Chanukah and established one of our favorite Yom Tovs.

Rabbi Miller explained that we tend to think that in today’s day and age and especially in America which is a ‘goldena medina’ for the Yidden; where we have tremendous freedom of religion, Boruch Hashem, where Yidden can enter any higher level of education, where all job opportunities are open to them-even allowing them to be the President of the United States of America, that there are no opportunities to be a Maccabi-to be a Jewish hero.

This Rabbi Miller said is incorrect thinking. We have a lot of opportunities to be a hero in our everyday lives and not only are there opportunities, but is the responsibility of every frum Yid to be a Jewish hero and he went on to explain how.

He started by telling us a true story that happened to him. He is a mashgiach for food companies and once he found himself in Seymour WI. This is a small town of 3-4000 people. At the entrance to the town there is a big sign, “WELCOME TO SEYMOR, HOME OF THE HAMBURGER.’ The sign fascinated him. He knew about meat because he was the sign of a butcher and he knew that the big meat packing companies were in Texas not in Wisconsin, so when he got to his destination-a vegetable canning factory-he asked the plant manager about the sign. And this is the story, there were a few cities who felt they had this claim to fame and so they all went to court, with their lawyers, with all their papers, each side proving that their city is the ‘home of the hamburger’ and the judge ruled that Seymour is the winner and thus the big sign at the entrance to the city.

Rabbi Miller explained that in Seymour, being home to the hamburger is much more than the sign. They are very serious about this and have many functions about it.

On his 4 hour drive back to Chicago, Rabbi Miller was thinking, ‘why is it so important for Seymour to be the home of the hamburger.’ Truthfully, who cares? No one is flocking to Seymour to go their hamburger museum.

The answer explained Rabbi Miller is contained in Gemara, Masechetes Sanhedrin: There are 2 yidden who come to Bais Din and testify that A killed B. The judge has to interrogate them separately to make sure that their answers corroborate and in addition, each witness is given a ‘mussar shmooze’ explaining to them the consequences of their words-that if A is found guilty, he will be killed. What are they told, that when Hashem created the world, he created 1 man-Adam and 1 women-Chava-why only one of each gender-to teach us that if you kill 1 person, you kill the whole world. The Mishna transgresses and says, חיב אדם לאמר בּשבילי נברא העולם

For me the whole world was created. Since each individual is equal to all of humanity a person has to realize that the whole world was created for me. Rashi explains that each person has to realize that each person has something to contribute in this world. Each person is obligated to understand that this is a reality. Modern psychology will agree that each person needs to feel a self-worth and the Mishna is transgressing here and telling us this, to tell us that the reason a person needs to feel he is important, is because Hashem put that feeling into the world when he created the world.

Most people, especially non-Toradik people, have this need to feel important and since they don’t know what to do about, they will associate themselves with people who are important and that gives them a feeling of self-worth i.e. ‘I am from New York’ (that makes me feel more important than if I came from Dayton Ohio) ‘I come from the city of the winners of the Super Bowl’.

That explains Seymor WI. They need to feel important and they found something that gives them a feeling of importance, ‘being the home of the hamburger’. They have something that no one else has. This title is so important that they even went to court for the title. Wow!

So for a frum Yid-how to fill this need of feeling important? Rabbi Miller explained that each person was created with his own talents, strengths, abilities i.e. organizational, artistic, social etc. It is incumbent on each individual to find where their strengths lie and use them to make the world a better place. Rabbi Miler gave a few examples; he cited our Aneinu shiurim, where we gather together to learn together, to strengthen each other in mitzvos and tefila; there is a women’s group in Buffalo Grove Ill, where women gather to learn hilchos loshon horo-he explained that some of the women are not yet frum, but try speaking loshon horo in front of them and they will stop you in your tracks.

Another example he sighted is that for men, learning Gemara is where they can excel. In Buffalo Grove, there is an ongoing chavrusashaft of 20 years. Each time they finish a mesachta, they go to Eretz Yisroel and go to different rabbonim for brochos. They are an example of what someone does to celebrate-not making a lavish party, but going to Eretz Yisroel, davening, getting brochos. They are an inspiration for the whole community.

In business, Yidden have tremendous opportunities to make a Kiddush Hashem. Rabbi Miller told over that the Paul and Albert Reichman were famous-that when they gave a handshake to close a deal-it was as if the hand shake was written in stone. Everyone knew that by the Reichman brothers, ‘a word was a word’-what an inspiration.

Many people give tzedakah with a flair, there are an abundant of good writers today, graphic artists, accountants who use their talents to help Jewish institutions.

A most recent example was the recent wedding of Soro Litman. We all know the story, her father and brother were killed on the way to the aufruf. Soro and her choson did not flinch. Not only would the wedding take place, but they changed the venue to the biggest hall in Eretz Yisroel-Binonei HaUma and invited the whole Jewish world. Over 10,000 people came-from North American, from as far as Australia bearing gifts and good wishes. Soro Littman and her choson are Maccabees, they are heroes, who can truly say, after what they went through, that they ‘are having a bad day.’ There are no bad days, each day is an opportunity to make a Kiddush Hashem.

 Rabbi Miller went on to explain the flip side. If we have a talent and don’t use it l’shem shomayim, we will be held accountable. Rav Elya Meir Bloch needed signs put up in Telz Yeshiva and he asked a talented bochur to make him some signs. They boy agreed but he asked to be paid. The Rosh Yeshiva said, no. So the boy persisted and he asked the Rosh Yeshiva, why not? The boy used as an example, that boys in yeshiva who are waiters get paid for their time, so why shouldn’t he get some monetary compensation for his work

And this was Rav Elya Meir’s answer:

It is not the same thing. When a bochur is asked to put tuna fish on a plate that takes no talent. The only incentive we have to give him is to pay him. You on the other hand, have a G-d given talent. What you can do, no one else can do and since the Yeshiva needs your talent at this time you have a RESPONSIBILITY to use it to make our signs. The Rosh Yeshiva explained, each person has an obligation to use his talents to ‘Marba Kovod Hashem, כּבּד את ד' מכּמך

 It is incumbent for each person to look within himself, to find his kochos and use them to inspire others. Each one of us can become a Maccabi-a hero. We should merit being an inspiration for others, increasing Kiddush Hashem in this world and hastening the final Geula.