



5786 Divrei Torah on Jerusalem by Rabbi Reuven Schreier Parashat Ki Tisa / פרשת כי תשא

The Al-Aqsa Flood, Crusaders in Costume, and the Great Purim Shpiel

As Purim approached, we took our children to buy costumes. Two of my sons immediately gravitated toward the “Yehudah HaMakabi” set, complete with armor, shield, and sword. Upon closer inspection, the costume looked suspiciously like a medieval Crusader knight, *kashered* with Jewish branding to make it palatable to an Israeli audience. Despite initial misgivings, my boys were set on it. Crusaders for Purim it would be.

But as Purim drew closer, and the astounding events in Iran began to unfold, the striking irony of my children’s choice became impossible to ignore. For thousands of years, our enemies have laid claim to Jerusalem, insisting that the Jewish people would never reestablish sovereignty over it. The Crusaders marched to *Eretz Yisrael* – often after slaughtering entire Jewish communities – to conquer the holy city and bring it under the dominion of the cross. And now, centuries later, Jewish children walk the streets of Jerusalem dressed like Crusaders, believing they are garbed as Jewish heroes.

We are living in a surreal Purim *shpiel*, a modern-day *v’nahafoch hu* – where our enemies’ schemes against us spectacularly backfire.

I recently heard the following brilliant insight (I’m unsure of its source). The *Megillah* describes the reversal of fortunes with the immortal words ונהפוך הוא – “and it was reversed.” There is only one place in *Tanach* where those same letters appear in reverse. In *Tehillim* (132:13), the *paytan* declares: קִיְבֹר יְקוֹק בְּצִיּוֹן אֶנֶה – לְמוֹשֵׁב לּוֹ – For *Hashem* has chosen Zion; He desired it for His habitation. The word א-ו-ה, expressing *Hashem*’s desire to establish His dwelling place in the heart of *Yerushalayim*, is א-ו-ה spelled backwards.

The war launched on October 7th was explicitly linked by Hamas to the Temple Mount. They titled their attack Al-Aqsa Flood (Ṭūfān al-Aqṣā). In the twisted calculus of our enemies, the horrific massacres of that tragic day were meant to be a decisive step toward reclaiming Jerusalem and the Temple Mount. Yet we have been *zoche* to see their plans unravel; instead of weakening our hold over the holy city, they have only strengthened it, ensnared by their own designs. Their attempted flood has become אור למושב לו – a further revelation that *Hashem* desires Zion as His dwelling place in the hands of *Klal Yisrael* alone.

Two years ago, I wrote about Haman’s efforts to halt the process of *Shivat Zion*. But instead of preventing the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash*, Haman’s own wealth – including the ten thousand silver coins he pledged for our destruction – ultimately facilitated it. *Amalek*’s tools became instruments of redemption.

This past *Shabbat*, as *minyanei vatikin* completed reading *Parshat Zachor*, our holy pilots roared over the skies of Iran and destroyed a modern-day *Haman*. This Purim shpiel has reached a level of irony I could not have imagined two years ago. What began as a day our enemies framed around Al-Aqsa has unfolded into yet another chapter of ונהפוך הוא.



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Jewish children parading through Jerusalem as Crusaders. A flood meant to drown us, turning back upon its senders. In this stunning Divine drama, the events unfolding before our eyes are revealing the truth that has long been hiding just beneath the surface of history. The final act may be just around the corner. May we merit to witness it speedily in our days.