

COINCIDENCE?

by Rabbi Dovid Green

This week's reading is filled with points in Jewish perspective which we can gain from. First, a brief synopsis of the story.

Balak the king of Moav fears for his kingdom after seeing what the Jews had done to Sichon and Og at the end of last week's parsha. Sichon and Og had been the protectors of their neighbors, and now they were gone. Balak was afraid his turn was coming. What could he do? He decided to hire Bilaam the Prophet to curse the Jews. Then he would be able to at least weaken the Jews, and prevent them from destroying him. Bilaam eventually comes, but instead of cursing the Jews, he may only say what G-d lets him say, and he ends up blessing them.

Bilaam was a true prophet who had contact with G-d. His blessings and curses were fulfilled. However, he was not permitted to curse the Jews, and the harm which awaited them was averted. There is a great lesson in this story, based on the following passage. "Praise G-d all you nations, Laud Him all kingdoms, for His kindness has been powerful over us etc.(Psalms 117:1-2)" The obvious question is why should the nations praise G-d for the kindness He has shown US? It should have said "for His kindness has been powerful over you."

The following story is taken from "Lieutenant Birnbaum", Mesorah Publications. "War sensitizes one to the workings of Divine Providence, on both the individual and communal level, more intensely than any other human experience. And at no time in our lives was Divine Providence so real as during the invasion at Normandy. Though we did not know it, the German defenders were leaderless at the time of the invasion. The supreme commander of the German forces defending the French coastline was perhaps the greatest of Hitler's generals, Field Marshal Erwin Rommel, known as the Desert Fox for his campaigns in North Africa. Several weeks earlier, Hitler (ym"sh), had removed Rommel's beloved Afrikan Tank Corps from his command so that it was not available to in the defense of the French coastline.

Realizing that the weather on June 5 ruled out any possibility of a landing, Rommel took the opportunity to return to Berlin and plead with Hitler to place the Afrikan Tanks Corps back at his disposal. June 6 was his wife's birthday, and he decided to remain in Berlin to celebrate with her rather than rush back to France. So on the morning of June 6, he was still in Berlin. The German second-in-command retired early on the night of June 5 leaving instructions that under no circumstances was he to be disturbed. When his adjutant first received orders of the impending

attack, he was afraid to awake his commander knowing his ferocious temper and fearing he might be hungover from the previous night's partying. For his part, Hitler refused to believe the first intelligence reports of a likely allied invasion of Normandy. He had convinced himself that the invasion would take place at Dunkirk, much closer to England, and that any move toward Normandy was at most a feint and diversion. In addition, many of the best German generals had recently been sent to the Russian front where the German forces were suffering heavy losses.

On the day of the invasion, the German forces were left without any air support, and the skies belonged completely to the Allies. The major German airfield was further down the peninsula. As the invasion was taking place, only two planes were on base. The rest were elsewhere in training maneuvers and did not become available until the landing for which they were training was a fait accompli. The weather also conspired to aid the success of the invasion and to increase the element of surprise. The strong winds of June 5 abated for only a couple of hours the next day. But when General Eisenhower received weather reports that the gales would stop for those few hours, he decided to go ahead, knowing that the element of surprise would be increased by the bad weather.

Every seeming coincidence can be explained by itself, but taken together they constitute an unmistakable pattern of Divine Intervention, which anyone with the slightest sensitivity can perceive. Just consider all of the apparant coincidences involved.

1. Who inspired Rommel to choose precisely that day to return to Berlin to present his case to Hitler for the return of his beloved tank corps?
2. Who prompted Hitler to take command of the tank corps away from Rommel in the first place and thereby occasion the latter's visit to Berlin?
3. Who brought into the world 50 years ealier a baby girl who would grow up to be Rommel's wife and whose birthday would cause him to remain in Berlin on June 6 rather than return immediately to France on the night of June 5?
4. Who put in in the mind of the Rommel's second-in-command to seclude himself on the night of June 5 and order his aides not to disturb him?
5. Who convinced Hitler to ignore the first reports of the invasion?
6. Who led the German commanders to schedule war games for June 5-7 and leave only two planes in the area?

Truly, "the horse is prepared for battle, but victory belongs to G-d" (Proverbs 21:31).

The answer to our above question is that Kind David knew that his enemies were planning against him, but G-d was thwarting their efforts. The enemies themselves knew better how powerful G-d's kindness is over us seeing that they could not bring their evil plans to fruition. They were better equipt, in a sense, to praise G-d for His kindness toward the Jewish people.

The student of Torah takes this as a life's lesson, and he knows that even a traffic jam can be slowing him down and preventing him from colliding with a car at a particular intersection. His perspective is that G-d is doing much much more for us behind the scenes than He is in comparison to the things we are aware of. May we merit to recognize them.

Good Shabbos!

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