

THE KEY TO SOMETHING MORE

by Rabbi Label Lam

In order to get a perspective on the Chanukah story it might be helpful to look through the prism of two Chanukah-like stories that are really the same. Allow me to explain.

In Israel there is a man who at one time was Israel's top comedian, entertainer, actor etc. His name is Uri Zohar. In mid career he started to study Torah and became a devoted scholar and educator. When I was in Jerusalem I went to listen to him giving a local class to a small group. At the end of the session he told this most amazing story. He had recently received a surprise call from an old friend from the bohemian days and he told us what it was that had motivated the call.

It was a Saturday afternoon, a Shabbos, and his friend like many others who live unaware of the laws of Shabbos, found himself at the beach for a long afternoon of frolic and fun. As the day was winding down he packed up his stuff and made his way to the car. He reached into his pocket for the keys but came up empty. So he searched the other pants pocket and became concerned as realized the keys were not there either. His wife just shrugged when asked if she had the keys.

They walked back to the place where their blanket had been, turned over the trash can and retraced their steps a few more times before deep panic set in. All the cars had already left the parking lot. The sun was a fiery ball setting over the Mediterranean Sea and soon they would be standing there in darkness.

In a fit of madness and desperation this man began to walk across the beach to the ocean. (Uri got up from his chair with a dramatic flair to act out the next episode.) He waded out into the sea up to his thighs and cried to the heaven with all his being, "Elochim! Elochim! Give me my keys!" Just at that moment, amazingly, the fellow became aware that there were his keys floating atop the water and touching his leg. He returned the car shaken and that night after Shabbos gave a call to his old friend Uri, asking, "Where should I begin...Kashrus....Tefillin...Shabbos!?"

Now if that story sounds farfetched and on the other side of the ocean, I heard the same story here in the New York area. A young family who had recently started observing Torah and Mitzvos also registered their children in Yeshiva a few months before this story happened. The father had taken his children and a few others out to a large park in Riverdale, after school for some recreation before homework dinner and bed.

When it came time to head home. Guess what!? He couldn't find his keys, in either pocket. His son watched him anxiously as his father danced that little jig one does when looking for keys. In a

moment of inspiration the young boy, only a few months new in the art of prayer, taught a lesson even the great ones can learn from. He picked up his ball, the one he had just been playing with and held it to his chest as one would a Psalms or a prayer book and he said ever so sincerely, "Hashem, help my father find his keys, please." Then he flung the ball aimlessly. When he went to pick up the ball, amazingly, there was his father's keys touching the ball.

We ought not to be too surprised that such an event can happen. We say thrice daily in prayer the words of King David in Psalm 145, "Hashem is close to all those who call Him, all who call to Him in truth." The answer is different when the call is a call of truth. In the Chanukah story we find a few good men able to overcome distant odds due to the sincerity of their mission.

When any part of hidden goodness is revealed even under pressure, and the heart becomes pure with purpose, the response can be dramatic. Nothing is lost in Hashem's world. The A-lmighty can find anyone and anything; a jar of oil, a job, a kid, or a set of keys. So when what the person seeks most urgently is delivered magically to his hands-he may have actually found the key to something more.

Good Shabbos!

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