

does it really matter?
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ACCORDING TO THE Vilna Gaon, if the Jewish people do not merit a miraculous redemption, then it has to come through political channels. This means that the nations of the world have to agree to allow the Jewish people to rebuild their commonwealth, as they did, quite remarkably, back in 1948.

That's why even though Jerusalem is the capital of Israel according to the Jews, it makes a difference what the gentile world thinks about the issue. It's not as if we would move the capital to Tel Aviv just because the nations of the world told us to. But, it is significant when the leader of the Western world stands before the world and makes it official.

It doesn't make a difference whether or not a person respects President Trump or not, or even likes him. He was the democratically-elected leader of the United States of America. Legally, he is the Commander-in-Chief of the greatest superpower today, and that is good enough for

history, even if it is not good enough for those who oppose his leadership.

To begin with, for them it is not a matter of what GOD thinks. They are not believers in Divine Providence. They aren't interested in messages of historical importance. They are only concerned about having a government cast in their own image.

"We," on the other hand, are. Hashgochah Pratis is ALL that concerns us. The players are merely pawns in a much larger game than most people perceive. There is an endgame here, one to which the average world citizen is oblivious, but one to which "we" must be attuned. It is the only way to survive the events of history intact for the World-to-Come.

How all of this will play out is anyone's guess, though the antagonists are strongly hinting what they want to do. But, as Shlomo HaMelech made clear, the strongest willed individual is no match for the will of God, and it is HIS plan that will be fulfilled.

One thing is for certain. A US President following through with a promise (the rest promised, but never followed through) to firmly establish Jerusalem as the capital of the Jewish people stirs things up. There has been nothing boring or mundane about Trump's presidency, but this makes it even less so. At least a third of his country is against him. The Mexicans are wary of him. Now the Arabs and their allies can't stand him, if they even could before.

It is not ironic that this has happened as we get ready to light the Ner shel Chanukah. On the contrary, the holiday has what to say regarding the situation and how it might develop.

Although the main antagonist in the Chanukah story

was the Greeks, their agents were the Misyavnim, the Hellenists. These were Jews who capitulated to Greek pressure and ended up embracing their Hedonistic way of life. Once they did that, they had to do away with their conscience, and that meant ridding their lives of those Jews loyal to Torah.

Chanukah says that they were not successful in their mission. It came along to make the point that even when the whole world is against you, including your OWN people, you can and must still stand your ideological ground. Do that and God will make up for what you lack in human support.

It creates a tension. On one hand, because we do not merit an obviously supernatural redemption, we need to take the gentile opinion into account in political matters. On the other hand, we cannot let them dictate terms that run contrary to what is best for the Jewish people. The result is an ideological tug of war, one with serious and perhaps dangerous repercussions.

It all has to do with hidden agendas. If everyone involved in the decision-making process was truly motivated by what is best for the world and what is best for history, then their opinions would certainly matter. But, as is the case with so many of the players, if they are motivated by other concerns, like wresting control of Jerusalem away from the Jews so they can assume it instead, then how much can their opinions really matter to us?

Even those in the States have their own agendas other than world peace. If the Jonathan Pollard disaster has taught us anything at all, it is that there are American politicians who hate Israelis enough, if not Jews in general, to be completely unfair and corrupt in their votes regarding Israel and the future of the Jewish people. They may

make it look like simple politics, but history shows in the end that it is not.

But even all of that is secondary to the real issue over here. The real question, the only one that should really concern us, is, what is God up to? He put Trump into office, and now He has him rocking the boat with American recognition that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel. Which historical target did He hit with THAT political arrow?

The jury is still out. Everyone is still in the planning stage. They have to figure out how they want to respond to Trump's decision, and when. They are all locked into their way of thinking and devoted to carrying out THEIR vision of reality, as if God agrees with them, or He doesn't care one way or another.

The REAL reason why the jury is out is because God hasn't shown us His cards yet. He hasn't told us where He plans to go with this one, what it is meant to lead to, how much is supposed to change because of it.

The truth is, though the Jerusalem issue continues to grab international headlines, the more serious problem is that the Jewish people just lost THE Gadol HaDor, Rabbi Aharon Leib Shteinman, zt"l. There are others already in position to fill the gap somewhat, but it is only somewhat. The spiritual universe just tore, and that ALWAYS has consequences for the world.

It will certainly change the mood of Chanukah. It is hard to celebrate victory just after an irreplaceable loss. But, it also emphasizes an important tenet of Chanukah that often gets overlooked. Sacrifices for God and Torah result in miracles, and give the Jewish people the ability to survive all adversity and bring redemption instead.

It has been so in the past. It should only be so now as well. That's what REALLY matters.

