

# Parsha Pearls

Chanukah 5768

## **A man may not go out on Shabbos wearing a nailed sandal (Shabbos 60a).**

The Gemora explains that the Sages enacted this law in memory of a tragic incident that occurred during the Greek era. A large group of Jews were hiding in a cave, and they all agreed that no one should leave the cave, lest the Greeks see him come out and thus discover the entire group. But they allowed other Jews to enter the cave and join them, because they would of course make sure that no Greeks were watching before entering the cave. The Jews were wearing sandals that consisted of a piece of leather nailed onto a wooden sole, such that the foot could go into the sandal from either side. However, the sandals did have a recognizable front and back. Once a Jew entered the cave wearing his sandals backwards. Someone saw his footprints and noticed that they faced outwards, making it appear as though someone had left the cave. Immediately they all panicked, fearing the Greeks were coming, and tried to escape. In the process they trampled over each other and many were killed.

The Gemora asks: if the Sages wanted to memorialize this incident by forbidding this reversible type of sandals, why then did they forbid them only on Shabbos? They should have forbidden them all the time! The Gemora replies: because the incident occurred on Shabbos.

This answer seems strange: this law has nothing to do with the laws of Shabbos,

so why did they make the law only on Shabbos? Why is it so important to remember that the incident occurred on Shabbos?

Rabbi Ahron Katzenellenbogen explained that Shabbos observance was one of the major targets of the Greek decrees. These Jews were hiding in the cave in order to keep Shabbos. Superficially, this would seem to be a heroic deed. However, G-d wanted the Jews to keep Shabbos in order to declare before the entire world that G-d created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. He specifically wanted their Shabbos observance to be public, so that it should be a statement of acceptance of His kingship. These Jews should not have hidden, but rather they should have openly resisted the decree and kept Shabbos in public. Although this would seem to be more dangerous, the fact is that when Jews risk their lives to demonstrate loyalty to G-d's Torah, G-d intervenes and makes miracles for them, as he did for the Hasmoneans when they fought off the Greeks.

This mistake has been made by Jews at other times in history. During the Spanish Inquisition, when the Jews were expelled from Spain and those who remained were forced to convert to Christianity, many Jews succumbed to this ordeal and converted openly, but continued to keep all of the Torah in secret. Some of them were able to escape

from Spain later, but those Jewish families who chose to stay in Spain gradually forgot about all of Judaism. Similarly, in Soviet Russia there were at first many Jews who continued to keep Shabbos and study Torah secretly, but their children and grandchildren grew up with almost no knowledge of Torah.

There are many Jews who are privately opposed to Zionism, but do not wish to speak out publicly. Sometimes they do

not want to offend friends and relatives; other times they want to maintain their job or position. The story of the reversible sandal teaches us that this approach is wrong. G-d wants the Jewish people to publicly accept the yoke of exile and hope for His redemption alone, not for any substitute. Jews must speak out on this subject and accept whatever risk is involved, and then G-d will intervene and come to their aid.