



GROWTH

At The SHABBAT TABLE

PARSHAT CHUKAT

The Miracle on Ice

R' YY Jacobson shared something remarkable.

There was a legendary coach for the U.S. Ice Hockey Team named Herb Brooks, who led his team to victory against the Soviets in the 1980 Olympics. At the time, the Soviets had been unbeatable; in ice hockey, they had won the past 6 Olympics consecutively. Brooks was the heroic coach who astonishingly took an amateurish American team and guided them to triumph against the skaters of the Soviet Union. In fact, it was so unbelievable that at the time, they called it the "Miracle on Ice."

One of the players once addressed how Mr. Brooks was able to accomplish such an incredible feat. He explained that Brooks took a divisive, conflict-ridden team, in which none of the players liked each other, and worked them exceptionally hard – forcing them to perform practice rounds again and again and again. One night, he wouldn't let them go, and their feet just couldn't bear it anymore. "Do it again!" he said. One of the players turned to him and asked, "Coach, when are you going to let us go home already?" That's when he responded with a line they would never forget. "My teammates, I will let you go home when you all realize that the name on the front of the jersey is more important than the name on the back of the jersey." The players understood the message, took it to heart, and brought it to the ice, carrying it all the way to victory.

In life, individuality is crucially important. Notwithstanding, we cannot afford to lose sight of the imperative team-name on front of the sweater, which unites us all for a common goal. Of course, we may disagree with one another and reflect differences of opinion, but to allow that to transform into a resentful hatred would be a tragic mistake. Let us embrace our differences and allow them to strengthen us collectively rather than disintegrate our unity and drive us apart.

Refuah Sheleimah, b'toch she'ar cholei Yisrael:

Ariel Ben Frida Rachamim Ben Shifra Yitzchak Ben Naama Frida Bat Yaffa
Miriam Bat Bakol Dov Ber Ben Devora Riva Revital Bat Adina

"G-d chooses each of us to fulfill a specific mission in this world, just as a composer arranges each musical note. Take away even one note, and the entire composition is affected." (R' Simon Jacobson)

Freezing the Competition

In August 2003, a massive and sudden blackout struck New York. The city was thrown into chaos. Without electricity, businesses scrambled to respond—but few panicked more than Klein's Ice Cream. Without power, their entire frozen inventory was at risk. Mr. Klein, the owner, knew that the freezers would hold for 24 hours, but beyond that, everything would melt. The financial loss would be devastating.

Thankfully, after several tense hours, electricity returned to Klein's facility. The ice cream was saved. But for Mr. Klein, the story didn't end there.

Turning to his son, he said, "There are still so many people and businesses without power. What's going to be with them? Can you find out if Mehadrin has their electricity back?"

His son was puzzled. "Mehadrin? They're our competition!" Mr. Klein nodded. He knew that. But competition wasn't on his mind at the moment.

His son made a few calls and discovered that Mehadrin's power was still out. Without hesitation, Mr. Klein picked up the phone and called Mehadrin's owner directly. "Our electricity is back," he told him. "We've got space in our warehouse — we can move things around. If you want to bring your ice cream here before it melts, we'll store it in our freezers."

The Mehadrin owner was stunned. He quickly loaded his inventory into trucks and rushed it over to Klein's facility. The teams worked together, rearranging storage space and hiring electricians to rewire the trucks to serve as additional freezer units. Thanks to Mr. Klein, a major loss was averted — for his competitor.

Later, Mr. Klein explained to his son, "We had to help them. Our income is not impacted by our competitors — it comes from Hashem. If another Jew needs help, we help them. I'm not afraid of losing business, because Hashem runs the world, not them."

He could've taken advantage of the moment. He could've said, "Let Mehadrin go under — then we'll dominate the market." But he didn't. Mr. Klein understood that success doesn't come from strategy or sabotage; it comes from Heaven. What looks like competition is just an illusion. Blessing only comes from one place: Boreh Olam. And our role in life is to follow His will and strengthen our bond with Him.

So the next time you walk into a store and see Klein's and Mehadrin ice creams sitting side by side in the freezer, think about what that represents. It may look like rivalry, but it's really a reminder of faith, unity, and the understanding of Who truly runs the world.

(Story recounted by R' Yehoshua Nissan)