Chanukah: Chareidi or Secular?

[Be-Ahavah U-B-Emunah – Parashat Miketz 5769 – Translated by Rafael Blumberg]

I.

-- Daddy, how did we beat the Greeks?
-- With the help of G-d, obviously.
-- And who was G-d helping?
-- The Hasmoneans, as is well known.
-- Who were they?
-- Al HaNissim calls them “Holy priests”. They were great saints.
-- Weren’t they soldiers?
-- Yes… They were soldiers…. Yes.
-- And they fought with weapons?
-- Yes…. With weapons.
-- So they were secular or National Religious?
-- Who says! They were Chareidim!
-- Chareidim went to the army?
-- So they went.
-- Why’d they go?
-- To save the Jewish People, obviously.
-- So why don’t we go?
-- No need. The Torah we learn protects us.
-- So we don’t need an army?
-- No! The Torah protects us.
-- And back then, the Torah DIDN’T protect us?
-- Certainly it protected us. That’s how they won – thanks to the Torah.
-- So why did they fight with weapons?
-- Because… thanks to the Torah… they won with weapons.
-- So why shouldn’t we go to the army and win thanks to the Torah?
-- No need. The secular and the National Religious go and they win thanks to our Torah.
-- So why didn’t the Hasmonaeans sit and learn Torah, so that the secular and National Religious of those times could win, thanks to the Torah?
-- There were none. Back then, everyone was Chareidi.
-- The Hasmonaeans weren’t National Religious?!
-- G-d forbid! Adding nationalism to Torah is a new invention.
-- What is nationalism?
-- A country, an army - things like that.
-- And the Hasmonaeans didn’t fight in an army and didn’t establish a country?
-- Actually they did… Maybe they didn’t really want it… but there was no choice.
-- And now there is a choice? Now we don’t need an army? We’ve got enemies!
-- I told you. If we learn Torah, G-d will perform a miracle and destroy all our enemies.
-- So why didn’t G-d destroy all the enemies in the days of Chanukah? Maybe they didn’t learn Torah?
-- G-d forbid! It’s a fact that “the wicked Hellenic regime rose up against Your People Israel, to make them forget Your Torah and violate the laws of Your will” (Al HaNisim).
-- So if the Hasmonaeans fought, they must have been National–Religious?
-- G-d forbid! G-d forbid! They were Chareidim… Entirely Chareidim….

II.
-- Daddy, how did we beat the Greeks?
-- With the army, obviously.
-- We had an army back then?
-- No… The Hasmonaeans organized one…
-- But why didn’t they organize it before? What happened?
-- The Greeks didn’t let the Jews keep the mitzvot – Shabbat and things like that.
-- Things the religious do?
-- Yes.
-- And over that we went to war?
-- Yes. The religious make an issue of everything. Demonstrations, wars…
-- So the Hasmonaeans who fought the Greeks were religious?
-- No way! You know the religious don’t go to the army.
-- So maybe the Hasmoneans were National–Religious?
-- No way! Adding religion to nationalism is a new invention.
-- What’s wrong with that?
-- It’s wrong. It’s wrong. Religious confuses and weakens nationalism and militarism, which are good and healthy things.
-- But you said that the rebellion broke out because the Hasmoneans wanted to keep mitzvot?
-- Yeah, so?
-- So if they went with religion, how did they win?
-- How should I know? G–d helped them…
-- Is there such a thing?
-- Of course not. I meant they THOUGHT G–d helped them, so they won…
-- But precisely those assimilated to Greek culture didn’t fight?
-- Obviously. They were in favor of the Greeks!
-- So they weren’t nationalists? And precisely the religious were the nationalists?
-- So what?
-- So why shouldn’t we be religious? Then we’d be more nationalist!
-- Now things are different. You’ve got to be a secular nationalist. That’s the healthiest.
-- But I understand that the Hasmoneans were National–Religious, right?
-- No way! They were secular… Maybe secularists of a different type… but still secular.

(based on an anonymous source sent me by a friend)