

# TRIUMPHALISM

A source for the resolve not to be triumphalistic, especially as it relates to the resurgence of Orthodox Judaism in our time:

אבות פ"ד-- שמואל הקטן אומר בנפול אויבך אל תשמה וכו'

The old question about this Mishnah: Why attribute this maxim to שמואל when it already appears verbatim in משלי, and obviously the former is only quoting the latter?

I suggest: King Solomon was referring primarily to mortal enemies, to those who wish to destroy or harm you physically, financially, etc. But what of those who wish you no physical harm or financial damage, but are your sworn enemies on the ideological plane: is it not legitimate to crow in triumph at your victory and their defeat?

The answer is: *NO!* And it is precisely this our Mishnah teaches us. For שמואל הקטן was famous in Talmudic literature primarily because when the Sages of Yavneh were formulating the precise wording of the שמונה עשרה, they asked: כלום יש אדם שיודע לחקן (המלינים)? עמד שמואל הקטן וחקנה (ברכות כ"ה ע"ב) ברכת הצדוקים

The authority to institute the ברכת המלינים resided only in one who could divorce the personal element from the ideological, who could pursue the truth without involving his own or collective ego--and that was שמואל הקטן.

The Mishnah therefore adds considerably to the verse in Proverbs, namely, the need to scrupulously avoid triumphalism even with regard to ideological issues.