

Parshas Mikeitz – Shabbos Chanukah

Chanukah is hinted to in the Torah in the past three parshiyos, and the meforshim explain each one at length. However, if we put all three together, I think we see a very important point about Chanukah which tends to be overlooked, and I was inspired to this particular approach by a shiur I heard from Rav Fishel Shachter Shelitah.

The sefer *Mateh Moshe*, an early posek writes that although there is no obligation to have a seudah on Chanukah, nevertheless if one has a seudah it is a mitzvah, especially if you say Shiros and Tishbachos to Hashem. He then says there is a hint in this weeks parshah. When the Shevatim came to Yosef the second time, the pasuk says that Yosef told his servants to prepare a meal. The pasuk says:

והכן – shecht an animal and prepare it. The ‘ches’ of ‘tevach’, and the word ‘vi’hachen’ together are the letters of Chanukah, and this hints on the mitzvah to indeed have a seudah on Chanukah.

This is very cryptic – what is the connection between the idea of a Seudah on Chanukah to what happened between Yosef and the Shevatim?

The next remez is in Parshas Vayishlach. The pasuk says that Yaakov remained alone, and Rashi brings that he went back because he had forgotten ‘pachim ktanim,’ small jugs. The sefer ‘*Shach al Hatorah*,’ who was a talmid of the Arizal brings that these small jugs were the jug that eventually remained miraculously for the Chashmonaim. Sefer *Tzedah li’Derech* brings from the Maharshal, who quoted a medrash which states:

אמר הקב"ה ליעקב אתה נתת נפשך על פכים קטנים בשבילי חייך אשלם לבניך בפרך קטן בימי חשמונאי
Hashem said to Yaakov, you gave your life to retrieve the small jugs for My sake, on your life I will repay your children with a small jug in the days of Chashmonai.

Here too, this is an unusual reference to Chanukah, and strange as well that this was a special merit which was repaid with the neis of the ‘*pach shemen*.’

The last reference is in Parshas Vayeshev, when Reuven tries to save Yosef. The pasuk in Shir Hashirim says, הדודאים נתנו ריח – and the Medrash says this refers to Reuven who found the

flowers, when he attempted to save Yosef, ועל פתחינו כל מגדים – as a result we merited to have the mitzvah of Chanukah which we place upon the entrance to our homes. Another cryptic reference to Chanukah and an unusual connection between this act and the mitzvah of Chanukah.

In order to understand the connection of these hints, we have to rethink the story of Chanukah. The Greeks oppressed the Jews in Eretz Yisrael for decades – over a century! They decreed terrible anti-Jewish laws as we know and made the Jews lives miserable. The story of Chanukah began with the Maccabean revolt, but the point that the neis of Chanukah happened wasn't the triumph or the end of the revolt by any means. They still had many wars to fight, and they lost a number of them, and most of Mattisyahu's children were killed in these wars. Eventually, after many years, they succeeded in overthrowing the Greek government. Chanukah wasn't the triumph, rather it was the turning point in the war, when the tide began to turn, and they saw success in their efforts to rebel. It was at that moment when they had the miracle of Chanukah and they saw Hashem was truly with them. This was the light of Chanukah!

The Maharal explains that time of year that Chanukah falls out is always when the night becomes the longest. The day is the shortest and the night becomes the longest in the middle of Chanukah – and then the day begins to get longer – it is the beginning of the light! 'Techilas Ha'Ohr' – the moment that light begins to reassert itself and shine through. That is what Chanukah represents. The deeper point is that it is necessary for the darkness to pervade, and become complete, before the light can begin to triumph. It is the nature of the tikkun we need, we require, because only when the darkness is at it's worst, and we cling to our bitachon and emunah, do we merit the light of redemption.

The story of Chanukah itself began with the darkest moment of Jewish history at the time. The midrashim chitzonim, tell how Mattisyahu's daughter whose name was Channah according to this medrash, was about to get married and was being forced to sleep with the local governor first. This was the absolute greatest blow to the Kedushah of the Jews, as the Kohen Gadol represented the highest Kedushah, and he was also the the de-facto leader of Klal Yisrael as there wasn't any kings anymore. The greatest person and holiest man in Klal Yisrael was being subjected to this tremendously degrading decree. It was at this point that they began the revolt

– they refused to be oppressed any longer. It was only when the darkness reached it's worst, that the light began to shine. As the midrashim say, they said, we will be moser nefesh for the sake of Hashem, and He has to have mercy! This was only guaranteed because they had reached the totality of their tikkun in darkness – the bitachon and emunah they demonstrated was the greatest possible.

When Yaakov Avinu was about to face Esav, it was one of the lowest moments of his life. He didn't know he would triumph, and he was afraid. He returned alone to find the jug he had left behind – why? Rashi says because Tzaddikim, '*mamonum chaviv alaihem ke'gufam*,' tzaddikim's money is beloved to them like their lives, because they recognize it is a gift from Hashem, and every tiny jug has a purpose and a reason why Hashem has given us that kindness. This was Mesiras Nefesh on the part of Yaakov – but was the Mesiras Nefesh? It was to recognize and treasure every tiny bit of goodness Hashem had bequeathed him with. Yaakov was afraid because he had '*shakach pachim ketanim*,' he had forgotten about the small jugs, meaning he had overlooked how Hashem was with him in every part of his life. When he recognized how Hashem never abandons him, and every little thing has a reason and a purpose, he was Moser Nefesh to retrieve them. This moment was the turning point in the darkness, the angel warred with him, he triumphed, and wasn't scared anymore. This was the zchus that created the miracle of Chanukah. When the darkness is at it's greatest, and the tzaddikim remain steadfast in their trust and hope in Hashem, recognize that everything Hashem is doing is for their greatest tikkun, that is when the turning point arrives, and the light begins to shine.

The Sfas Emes says that '*timu kol hashemanim*' they defiled all the oil – is hard to understand, because they didn't actually defile all the oil – they left one jug! True, it means they defiled almost all the oil, but why would it say 'kol hashemanim' instead of 'hashemanim' if indeed they didn't defile all of them? The Sfas Emes says that in truth they did defile all the oil! If any oil had been left, they would have defiled that too! It only appeared miraculously after the redemption. Why wasn't it there before? Because that is the nature of the redemption – it has to be totally dark, all the oil defiled, before the beginning of the light, and the oil can be miraculously found!

Likewise, when Reuven was faced with the decision of saving Yosef, he was at the lowest point of his life. He had made a mistake with Bilhah, and was fasting and repenting for that sin. Now

he was faced with another decision, which was the mistake that the Shevatim made, the mistake of their lives, and he chose correctly – he saved Yosef! He triumphed over the confusion and difficulty created by the darkness and chose to stay with Hashem. That also represented the decision that Mattisyahu made at the moment of greatest darkness to change their path and approach, and begin the revolt with Mesiras Nefesh. It was Reuven's mesiras nefesh that gave us the power of Neis Chanukah.

Lastly, when the Shevatim sat down to have a seudah with Yosef, it was at the lowest point in their lives. They didn't know it was Yosef, and they knew they were being set up – as was the truth. They were about to lose not only Yosef, but Binyamin, and with that their father Yaakov Avinu – and it was all their fault. This was the darkest moment for them. Yet they had to go through all this, as the dreams predicted, in order that they should achieve their total tikkun for the sin they had done with selling Yosef.

Rashi says that they drank with Yosef, but all the 22 years he was sold they hadn't drunk wine at all. Why then did they drink now? They didn't know it was Yosef! Many meforshim wrestle with this question. But the answer I heard, which is basically like an answer that a number of seforim adopt, is that they recognized with the greatest darkness comes the light. They saw that they must be reaching their tikkun, and that was reason to rejoice. Some seforim say that they saw Binyamin getting five times as much as them and they weren't jealous in the slightest – they understood that they had achieved their final tikkun – and therefore they drank! This was the joy of Chanukah in its greatest form – even before understanding and seeing the change, they knew with total emunah it was about to be and rejoiced.

Chazal didn't obligate us to make a seudah on Chanukah, because essentially, we are still in galus (whereas Purim was a redemption from galus with Amalek being defeated.) But this kind of seudah, meaning if we make it of our own volition, to recognize and see all the kindness of Hashem in our lives, Shiros and Tishbachos – the pachim ketanim in our lives, when we celebrate the darkness itself because we know it will be the beginning of the light, the kind of seudah the Shevatim had – that is appropriate on Chanukah – but it has to come from us!

I just want to end with a wonderful story which emphasizes how the darkness itself can create the light – we don't understand how Hashem runs the world! Reb Meir Abuchatzeiro was the Rav in Morocco after Israel became a state, and many people were leaving Morocco as it became more and more unfriendly to Jews. One such person approached him and asked if he should emigrate to Eretz Yisrael, and Rav Meir told him, absolutely! Follow your friends to Eretz Yisrael. 'But rebbe,' the man explained, 'I don't know how to read or write at all, and I don't have any profession! There's absolutely no way I can support myself!' Rabbi Abuchatzeirah told him, 'Hashem provides parnassah for the greatest of animals to the lice that crawl – they don't have a profession either! You will see that what you think is your greatest drawback will become your greatest asset!'

The man went to Eretz Yisrael and when he applied to the office of becoming a citizen they asked him what he can do. He told them, 'Nothing! I can't even read or write!' They said, 'Really? You don't know how to read or write? If so wait in this room until we call you.' They put him in a room, and he waited. One hour, two hours, he was becoming increasingly nervous – what were they going to do with him? Finally, after three hours, they called him out and told him, 'We have a job for you. You are going to work for the government shredding classified documents. (This is before the days of automatic shredders!) We needed someone who couldn't read or write! We left you in that room with books and newspapers to see if you would try to read any – and you didn't.'

He was so successful with this, that even when he wanted to retire, they didn't allow him to, and instead granted him his pension while continuing to pay him his salary!