



הַמִּזְרָחִי

HAMIZRACHI

PARSHA WEEKLY

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Parsha Picture

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בראשית מג:יא

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The Impact of so Few on so Many



Rabbi Doron Perez

Executive Chairman, World Mizrachi

There are less Jews in the world than a rounding error of a Chinese population census.

I read a few years ago that an acceptable mistake in such a census is 30 million – double the number of Jews in the world! Furthermore, there are many more children in first grade in China (approximately 20 million) than there are Jews. Israel, one of the smallest countries in the world, can fit a whopping 460 times into China's landmass!

Despite these figures, the remarkable fact remains that this tiny people, of less than one fifth of one percent of the world's population, has impacted the course of humanity's moral and spiritual history significantly more than China and arguably more than any other nation in history. Historian Paul Johnson makes this point in the closing chapter of his monumental work, "A History of the Jews,"¹ when summing up the great Jewish contribution to the world:

"To them we owe the idea of equality before the law, both Divine and human; of the sanctity of life and the dignity of the human person; of the individual conscience and so of personal redemption; of the collective conscience and so of social responsibility; of peace as an abstract ideal and love as the foundation of justice, and many other items which constitute the basic moral furniture of the human mind.

For me, one of the most profound lessons of Jewish history is this – **so few can so**

deeply have an impact on so many. That strength lies not in numbers but rather in the quality of spirit. 20th century American anthropologist, Margaret Mead, made this point well when she famously said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; it is the only thing that ever has."²

This is perhaps the story of the Jewish people in a nutshell.

An explicit verse in the Torah highlights this very point where it states that we are the smallest of all nations.² The verse implies that the basis for being singled out for a unique Divine role is not a result of numerical strength but is rather rooted in the realm of the spirit. It is linked to being an *Am Segula* – a treasured people, which is a unique spiritual and deeply transformative metaphysical trait facilitating the ability to impact far beyond a number quantum.³

One Family, One People

This fundamental idea of so few people having so great an impact is at the heart of Jewish living since time immemorial. Indeed, the whole book of Bereishit is the story of one family. Adam and Eve and their children, Noah and his wife and children and the family of Abraham and Sarah, our forefathers and mothers and their children. Through their passionate belief in one G-d, a personal G-d who created us and the world for a purpose, the

book lays the moral foundations and spiritual building blocks for an entire nation.

The Book of Shemot is about how this family gave birth to a people and nation whose redemption from the clutches of Egyptian oppression, its experience of Divine revelation and acceptance of the Torah at Sinai, would eventually transform the moral and spiritual course of all of human history.

So few impacting so profoundly on so many.

The Hasmoneans

Nowhere is this more obvious than in the Chanukah story. One man, Matityahu the Priest, and his five sons: Yehudah, Shimon, Yochanan, Elazar and Yonatan – one small family known as the Hasmoneans, changed the course of Jewish history forever. An event which took place 2,300 years ago continues to echo into eternity.

It was a time of Greek world domination, systematic global acculturation and the assimilation of the inhabitants of the conquered nations and minorities throughout the Empire. Judea, the Jewish country at the time, was heavily influenced by the enticing hedonistic lure of Hellenistic culture. The Jewish people were in grave danger of losing their national and spiritual identity and – G-d forbid – vanishing as a distinct culture from the platform of human history, the fate of so many ancient nations. Had this small Hasmonean family not placed its finger into the rupturing dyke, and not cemented the breach of the tumultuous and raging waters of cultural assimilation, the flame of Torah and Jewish destiny may very well have been snuffed out forever.

This one family stood up against the harsh decrees of the Syrian Greek King Antiochus Epiphanes, who threatened to uproot every last vestige of authentic Jewish life. They attracted supporters and grew in number, sparked a revolution, rebuilt a Jewish sovereign state, brought cultural independence to Judea and rededicated the Temple in Yerushalayim. They succeeded in not only stemming the tide, but in reinvigorating the



For me, one of the most profound lessons of Jewish history is this – so few can so deeply have an impact on so many.

Jewish people's belief in themselves and G-d, enabling them to survive and push back the military, political and cultural onslaught of the dominant superpower at the time.

Outnumbered by 20-1, Judah made the following remarkable speech before facing one of his many battles: ***“Victory in battle emanates not from the multitude of numbers but rather in the strength given from Heaven...whatever the will of Heaven be, so shall it transpire.”***⁴

With a tiny group of untrained men, the Hasmoneans not only defeated this huge army, but continued for many years to fight even larger forces continually sent to put down the rebellion... and even greater miraculous victories took place. The Book of Maccabees recounts that: “On the 25th day of the 9th month, which is the month of Kislev, and on the very date that the heathens had profaned it (the Temple), on this very day was it dedicated afresh.”

The reason we still observe Chanukah today, over two millennia later, is a testament to the Maccabees' display of incredible courage and faith, and their belief in the justice of the cause of Jewish destiny. It was this that enabled them to prevail in the face of impossible political and military odds.

The few against the many.

The Hasmonean Spirit in our Time

We live in a privileged generation which has seen a remarkable revival of the Hasmonean spirit. After the devastation of the Shoah – the horrific murder of one-third of our people and the destruction

of almost the entire Yeshiva world – we have witnessed two miraculous rebirths. Of Torah and of Israel.

A handful of surviving leaders rebuilt the world of Torah study over the course of a few short decades into arguably the largest cadre of Torah learners our people has ever had. And out of the desolate backwater of the Ottoman Empire, a small band of Zionist pioneers created the miracle of modern-day Israel. Reviving a nation, reclaiming a land, rebuilding a country, revitalizing a language and reigniting our spirit.

Two powerful examples of the essence of Jewish history and Divinely-directed destiny. Of how so few can have such a deep impact on so many.

1. Weidenfeld and Nicolson 1987, p. 585.
2. Devarim 7:6-8.
3. Nevertheless, this verse – “the fewest of all peoples” – needs to be reconciled with the multiple promises made to our forefathers of their progeny being compared to the dust of the earth and stars of the sky, too numerous to count. There are many answers but I will just mention one. Rav S.R. Hirsch (Bereishit 13:16) suggests that these promises refer to the eternal nature of the Jewish people. All other nations, while perhaps much larger in number in any particular generation, eventually die out and cease to exist as a nation. Their numbers are therefore finite. The Jewish people, while small in number in every generation, have a Divine promise to exist eternally, outliving all the other nations. Hence their collective numbers over all generations are infinite.
4. First Book of Maccabees.

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Worse Than Extermination



Rabbi Reuven Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi
Dean of Overseas Students, Yeshivat Hakotel

Chanukah parties with family and friends are one of the highlights of this special time of year. Though an appropriate way to celebrate, the *Shulchan Aruch paskens* that these parties are not obligatory because, as opposed to Purim, Chanukah was not established as “feasting and joy.”

Why was Chanukah instituted this way? Why is the celebratory feast central to Purim, but not to Chanukah?

The Levush suggests that Purim commemorates our salvation from the physical threat of annihilation and so we celebrate it in a physical way. By contrast, Chanukah only commemorates a spiritual threat. The Greeks did not seek to annihilate us, but rather to assimilate us. Because our lives were not in danger, Chanukah is commemorated spiritually, through the *neirot*, but not with physical feasting.

The Taz rejects the Levush in very strong terms: “This is not correct” The Taz felt that the Levush minimized the significance of the Grecian threat by presenting it as “merely” spiritual. He cites *chazal* who say “*Gadol Hamachti’o Yoteir Min Hahargo* — Causing another to sin is worse than killing him.”

The root of this teaching is the *midrash’s* explanation of the Torah’s harsh treatment of the nations of Ammon and Moav. *Sefer Devarim* prohibits marrying converts from these nations — even ten generations after their conversion! The Torah even commands us to ignore their needs and welfare. The *Midrash Tanchuma* explains these verses as referring to a time of war. While we offer peace to other enemies before declaring war, we make no such offer to Ammon or Moav.

By contrast, the following verses exhort *Am Yisrael* to welcome converts from the nations of Edom and Egypt whom we are

permitted to marry after only three generations. Why do we welcome the converts of Egypt, a nation that enslaved us and killed our children, but not the people of Ammon and Moav?

The *Midrash Tanchuma* explains that while the Egyptians attacked us physically, Ammon and Moav did something even worse, conspiring with Bilaam to ensnare our ancestors in sin with Moabite women. Luring another to sin is worse than killing them because killing only removes the victim from this world, while sin removes one from the next world as well.

For this reason, the Taz objects to the implication that a spiritual threat is less significant than a physical one. Chanukah commemorates salvation from a spiritual threat- a greater salvation than that of Purim!

The *midrash* and the Taz remind us to live our lives in this world in a way that enhances our life in the next one for “this world is merely an entryway into the next one.”

For this reason, the *mishnah* teaches that if someone is forced to choose between saving the life of his father (when one’s father did not teach him Torah) or his *rebbe*, he should prioritize his *rebbe*. His father brought him into this world, but his *rebbe* brings him into the next one.

While most enemies of the Jewish people have sought to destroy us, the Greeks tried to change our identity and the nature of our religious conviction. The Chanukah victory was not merely a military victory of the few over the many, but a reassertion of and commitment to our unadulterated Jewish identity.

Chanukah commemoration throughout the generations emboldened our ancestors to resist the temptation to assimilate into

the surrounding culture. It inspires us to remain a distinct people committed to our Torah and traditions.

We can appreciate how Chanukah symbolizes our preservation of our traditions in the face of attempts to erase us from a story told by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks:

Back in 1991, I lit Chanukah candles with Mikhail Gorbachev, who had, until earlier that year, been President of the Soviet Union. For 70 years, the practice of Judaism had been effectively banned in communist Russia.

It was one of the two great assaults on our people and faith in the 20th century.

The Germans sought to kill Jews; the Russians tried to kill Judaism. Under Stalin the assault became brutal. Then in 1967, after Israel’s victory in the Six-Day War, many Soviet Jews sought to leave Russia and go to Israel. Not only was permission refused, but often the Jews concerned lost their jobs and were imprisoned. Around the world Jews campaigned for the prisoners, Refuseniks they were called, to be released and allowed to leave.

Eventually, Mikhail Gorbachev realized that the whole Soviet system was unworkable. Communism had brought not freedom and equality, but repression, a police state, and a new hierarchy of power. In the end, it collapsed, and Jews regained the freedom to practice Judaism and to go to Israel.

That day in 1991 after we had lit candles together, Mr. Gorbachev asked me, through his interpreter, what we had just done. I told him that 22 centuries ago in Israel after the public practice of Judaism had been banned, Jews fought for and won their freedom, and these lights were the symbol of that victory.

Continued on page 9

Chanukah & Chinuch: The Antibiotic vs. Probiotic Approach



Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Educational Director, World Mizrahi

The Talmud¹ explains that the basic *mitzvah* of Chanukah is for the head of the household to kindle one light each night. The *mehadrin* (those who are meticulous in the performance of *mitzvot*), kindle a light for each member of the household. The *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, who are even more meticulous, adjust the number of lights daily. Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagree as to the nature of that adjustment. Beit Shammai say: On the first day one kindles eight lights and gradually decreases the number of lights from thereon until, on the last day of Chanukah, he kindles one light. And Beit Hillel say: On the first day one kindles one light, and gradually increases the number of lights until, on the last day, he kindles eight lights.

Ulla said: There were two Amoraim in the West, Eretz Yisrael, who disagreed with regard to this dispute, Rabbi Yosei bar Avin and Rabbi Yosei bar Zevida. One said that the reason for Beit Shammai's opinion was that the number of lights corresponds to the incoming days... the reason for Beit Hillel's opinion is that the number of lights corresponds to the outgoing days. And one said that the reason for Beit Shammai's opinion is that the number of lights corresponds to the bulls of the festival of Sukkot (13 were sacrificed on the first day and one fewer was sacrificed on each succeeding day) and the reason for Beit Hillel's opinion is that the number of lights is based on the principle that one elevates to a higher level in matters of sanctity and one does not downgrade – מעלין בקודש ואין מורידין.

The lighting of the *Menorah* was not merely a manifestation of the military

miracle against the Greeks, but also a means to overcome the negative Hellenistic influences that had infiltrated the Beit HaMikdash and the entire Jewish culture. Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai differ regarding the most effective means of continuing to commemorate and counter the “darkness” and deterrents in our path toward *Avodat Hashem*.

The Maharal² explains that on Sukkot we ward off the influences of the 70 nations through bringing the equivalent number of sacrifices and decreasing the number of bulls until we are left with one, symbolic of Am Yisrael's exclusivity. So too on Chanukah, we continue to commemorate our victory in a war against the darkness of Hellenistic culture through lighting many lights in our homes to combat the evil. As we minimize the darkness, fewer candles are needed day by day. This is Shammai's “antibiotic” approach to *Chinuch* (education) – ward off the “virus” of darkness through doses of light! As the darkness subsides, fewer antibiotics are necessary! According to Beit Shammai, we light according to the incoming days, anticipating a better state (less negative influences) day by day.

Beit Hillel adopts a more “probiotic” approach to strengthen us – people are naturally good and merely need to boost their immunization against negative influences in a gradual manner, increasing the already-present light day by day, strengthening and elevating themselves above those around them. Each day one becomes stronger, building one's resistance against the surrounding influences through adding more light!

A similar debate between their approaches to *Chinuch* is recorded regarding a gentile who asked Shammai to convert him on condition he be taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot.³ Shammai pushed him away with a measuring stick, believing that he must first display motivation to relinquish his evil past before learning Torah. The same gentile came before Hillel. He converted him and said to him: “That which is hateful to you do not do to another; that is the entire Torah, and the rest is its interpretation. Go study.” Hillel espouses a מעלין בקודש approach to Jewish education – teach a little Torah and gradually increase the student's light as the darkness automatically begins to fade.

Chanukah is an opportune time for us to revisit our methods of *Chinuch*. Beit Shammai's “antibiotic” approach is based on the bulls brought in the courtyard of the Sanctuary. Perhaps combatting external influences is an efficient method to apply in the public sphere, where bombastic measures are sometimes necessary to ameliorate evil and darkness (סור מרע). Beit Hillel's application of מעלין בקודש ואין מורידין is based on the showbreads offered in the inner sanctuary. In the inner sphere of our homes, a more positive means of edification is a gradual increase of light as we encourage our children to extend their strengths (עשה טוב).⁴ Chanukah lights are linked to the home – and thereby Beit Hillel's “probiotic” method of education is deemed the more preferable!

1. Shabbat 21b.
2. Ner Mitzvah II.
3. Shabbat 31a.
4. See Letters of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Chanukah 1961.

Halachic Q&A



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

**Head, Mizrahi Rabbinic Council | Rabbi of the Gush Etzion Regional Council
Rosh Yeshivah, Jerusalem College of Technology | Founder and Chairman, Sulamot and La'Ofek**

Question: Can I drink water before kiddush on Friday night?

Answer: The Gemara in Pesachim (105a) discusses laws pertaining to havdalah and teaches that one may not drink (excluding water) before hearing havdalah. While the Gemara does not discuss kiddush, the Rambam (Hilchot Shabbat 29:5) seemingly equates the laws in writing that one may not eat or drink before Friday night kiddush or havdalah, with the exception of drinking water. The Rashba disagrees and believes that the laws of kiddush are more stringent than the laws of havdalah. The permissibility to drink water only applies for havdalah but does not extend to kiddush. One of the Rashba's proofs stems from the Gemara Yerushalmi in Pesachim where Rav Yudan asked if he could drink to quench his thirst before kiddush and was told that it is assur.

The Shulchan Aruch (OC 271:1) paskins like the Rashba that one may drink water before havdalah but may not before kiddush. The Mishnah Berurah (271:13) allows for one to wash his face with water before kiddush.

Question: What are the laws pertaining to eating/drinking before kiddush on Shabbat morning?

Answer: The Rambam in Hilchot Shabbat (29:10) writes that it is forbidden for one to taste anything before making kiddush in the morning. The Raavid understood that the Rambam equated the importance of kiddush at night and during the day based on the Gemara calling kiddush during the day "kiddusha rabbah." The Raavid

disagrees, claiming that kiddush during the day is only rabbinic, as the Biblical obligation to sanctify Shabbat has been accomplished at night. Therefore, the Raavad paskins that one may eat before kiddush during the day.

The Shulchan Aruch (OC 289:1) paskins like the Rambam, and therefore one should not eat before hearing kiddush during the day.

While this is the halacha, there are a few exceptions. The Magen Avraham discusses one who is waiting for the materials for kiddush to come. On Friday night, if one knows it is coming he must wait even until midnight. On Shabbat day, one must not wait and can eat immediately without kiddush, as we can rely on the lenient opinion of the Raavid. In this case, one should say the pesukim of kiddush before cutting the challah.

Additionally, the Rosh writes that one may drink on Shabbat morning if he does so before tefillah. The obligation for kiddush only applies when one is "b'makom seuda," (SA OC 89:3) and because one cannot have a seudah before tefillah, there is not an obligation for kiddush before tefillah. Therefore, the Rosh writes that one can drink. The Shulchan Aruch copies this ruling lehalacha (OC 289:1).

There is an additional leniency for one who does not think they can make it through the tefillah. The Shulchan Aruch writes (OC 89:4) that one who is hungry and thirsty falls into the category of a "choleh shei'in bo saknaha." Therefore, one could eat or drink before tefillah if necessary, however this should be done with kiddush as it is considered the time for kiddush for this person.

There is a minhag of Chasidim to eat a piece of mezonot before tefillah on Shabbat morning as the tefillah is long and the food will give them greater kavanah. This is generally done without kiddush. This minhag is not recommended. There may be room to understand this practice if one eats foods that do not qualify as a seudah (non-mezonot foods or mezonot less than a kezayit). Then we can say that a person who needs to eat for their strength still has no chiyuv in kiddush. Once a person needs to eat an amount through which one could be yotzei kiddush, they cannot have it without kiddush.

Question: If I do not have a nice cup for kiddush, should I use two disposable cups? Does this change now that the price of disposable cups has been raised?

Answer: There is a machloket regarding how to view a disposable cup for kiddush. Lema'ase, when there is no other cup to use, you can use a disposable cup (Shemirat Shabbat Kehilchata). I do not see any advantage in using two disposable cups over one cup. In fact, it seems less respectful, as nobody serves drinks in two cups.

● *Translated from Hebrew and abbreviated by Yaakov Panitch.*

תקציר פרשת מקץ

הרבנית שרון רימון
Tanach teacher and author



פונה יהודה אל השיקול המוסרי: "וַיִּדְנוּ אֶל תְּהֵי בּוֹ כִּי אָחִינוּ בְּשָׂרֵנוּ הוּא" (שם, כז). כדי לשכנע אנשים לא מספיק להיות צודק, אלא צריך לדעת איך להגיד את הדברים בחכמה ובצורה טקטית שתיכנס ללב השומעים.

היסוד המרכזי אצל יהודה הוא הרגישות והאחוה. יהודה חוזר פעמיים בדבריו על כך שיוסף הוא "אחינו". אחווה זו גורמת לתחושת שותפות של יהודה עם האחים. הוא חלק מאיתם ולא מנותק מהם. כתוצאה מכך האחים מסתכלים על יוסף בצורה אחרת - הוא לא אויב, אלא אח. ואכן, בסופו של דבר האחים מקבלים את דברי יהודה: "וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אָחִיו" (שם). מנהיגותו של יהודה צומחת ועולה מתוך רגישות, אחווה ושותפות עם אחיו, ועל כן הוא מקבל את ההנהגה שניטלה מראובן.

היא חיצונית ואין בה רגש של אחווה ואכפתיות. בסופו של דבר, כאשר יוסף נמכר ראובן איננו מביע דאגה לגורלו של יוסף אלא לעצמו: "וַיֵּאָנֶה אָנְהָ אֲנִי בָּא" (שם, כט-ל). תגובתו של ראובן מגלה כי הניסיון שלו להציל את יוסף נבע מהחשש שיעקב יטיל עליו את האחריות על הנעשה. כשם שראובן מרוחק מן האחים כך הוא גם מרוחק מיוסף. גם לאחר שנים רבות, ראובן עומד מן הצד ואומר לאחיו "...הֲלוֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם..." (מ"ב, כב). מדברי ראובן נראה כי הוא מודע לכישלון הנהגתו ולכך שהאחים לא שומעים בקולו.

בניגוד לראובן, יהודה הוא חלק מהחבורה ויש לו יחסים קרובים עם אחיו. כשהוא מדבר עם אחיו הוא מכליל את עצמו איתם, ומדבר אליהם בגובה העיניים. בשונה מראובן, יהודה לא מטיף מוסר לאחיו, אלא מדבר איתם בשפה שלהם: "מֶה בָּצַע כִּי נִהַרְגְּ אֶת אָחִינוּ וְכִסִּינוּ אֶת דַּמּוֹ?" (ל"ז, כו) מה הרווח שיצא לכם מזה שיוסף ימות? רק לאחר מכן,

ל בני יעקב שותפים בהקמת עם ישראל. אך מי מהם ראוי להיות המנהיג? כמו ברבים מסיפורי בראשית אנו מגלים שדווקא הבכור, ראובן, איננו נבחר להיות המנהיג. בסיפור מכירת יוסף (בפרשת וישב) ובזכרונות האחים מאירוע זה (בפרשת מקץ), אנו מגלים כמה מתכונותיהם של ראובן ושל יהודה כמנהיגים, כאשר שניהם לוקחים אחריות ומנסים להציל את יוסף. ראובן הוא מנהיג טבעי בבית יעקב מתוקף היותו הבכור, והוא זה שמגיב ראשון לרצון להרוג את יוסף, ומנסה למנוע זאת. ואכן, בזכות התערבותו המיידית ניצל יוסף ממוות בטוח. אך למרות זאת ניכר שהאחים לא שומעים אליו, והוא עצמו מעיד על כך באמרו "הֲלוֹא אָמַרְתִּי אֲלֵיכֶם לֵאמֹר אֶל תִּחַטְּאוּ בְּיַדְי וְלֹא שְׁמַעְתֶּם וְגַם דָּמוֹ הִנֵּה נִדְרָשׁ" (בראשית מ"ב, כב). נראה כי האחים אינם שומעים לראובן מפני שהוא מנותק מהם, איננו חלק מחבורת האחים, איננו יודע כיצד לדבר אל ליבם, והעמדה המוסרית שהוא מציג

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Which Come First?



Sivan Rahav Meir and Yedidya Meir
World Mizrahi Scholars-in-Residence

Imagine that you have enough money for just one thing – Shabbat candles or Hanukkah candles. Today we light six Hanukkah candles and after them Shabbat candles, but let's suppose that we don't have enough money for both. Which are more important?

Rabbi Eyal Greiner, head of a hesder yeshiva (that combines Torah learning with army service) in Moshav Tefahot up north, explains in his new book about Hanukkah that the Gemara debates this matter and reaches an unequivocal conclusion: Shabbat candles come first. We should first concern ourselves with lighting up our home on the inside, light that symbolizes shalom bayit (peace in the home), family togetherness, our private world in here. Only afterwards do we concern ourselves with lighting up the street, the world out there.

This is an important principle: With all due respect to our activity on the outside,

it has no meaning when what goes on inside is lacking in light. We need to first illuminate ourselves and our homes and only then will we illuminate the world.



Yesterday at 5:10 in the evening I put my cell phone aside, charging it in quiet mode. We began to light the Hanukkah candles. After the children had also finished lighting and had sung “Haneirot Hallalu” and “Maoz Tzur,” I discovered that it was already 5:55. 45 magical moments had passed. I checked my cell phone and I saw that I had 52 messages waiting on WhatsApp. More than one message per minute.

There is an ancient custom not to perform work after the candles are lit. For our generation, it seems to me, this custom is more important than sufganiyot and dreidels. It's a piece of Shabbat in the middle of an ordinary day. It's an opportunity to remind ourselves that the light

of the Hanukkah candles shines brighter than the light of a computer screen. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz, one of the originators of the Chasidic movement, once said: “On Hanukkah, at the time of the lighting of the candles, hidden light descends from above, and therefore every person must sit by his candles after lighting them for a full half hour” (the minimum time required to watch the candles).

It's not just about a match and a candle. A magnificent light descends into our living rooms, next to the window or the door, and we need to receive it appropriately. According to Chasidic wisdom, it is our obligation to listen to what the candles are telling us. To this end, we must remain silent, let go, and not run from place to place, from task to task, but rather focus on the chanukiya, and allow the flames to speak to us.

You are invited to try this too, while lighting the candles.

הוא שם אותם שלושה ימים במשמר, בכלא, ומבקש שגם בנימין יבוא למצרים, אחרת הוא יכריז שהם מרגלים. שם במסר מתחולל תהליך שקוראים לו תשובה. לראשונה, בפומבי, בקול רם, באמירה מפורשת – הם מתחרטים:

וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו אֲבָל אֲשֵׁמִים אֲנַחְנוּ עַל אָחִינוּ אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ צָרַת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּהַתְּחַנְּנוֹ אֲלֵינוּ וְלֹא שָׁמְעָנוּ עַל כֵּן בָּאָה אֲלֵינוּ הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת.

האחים מוכיחים כאן שהם אנשים גדולים. קודם כל, אם קורה משהו רע – הם מחפשים אחורה מה קרה, מה הוביל לכך. כמו שכתוב במדרש רבה על האירוע הזה: “אמר זה לזה: נבלוש עצמנו ונראה מה עבירה יש בידינו.”

כמה לא פשוט לומר “אבל אשמים אנחנו”. להודות שאנחנו לא מושלמים.

בפרשה הבאה, כאשר גם המלך פרעה יחלום חלומות לא ברורים, אחד השרים כבר יקרא ויוציא את יוסף מהכלא, ומשם הוא רק יתפתח, יצליח לספק מזון למצרים בשנות הרעב, ויתאחד בהמשך עם האחים שלו שיבואו למצרים רעבים, וכן הלאה, עד ליציאת מצרים. הגאולה מתחילה מהבעת עניין ואכפתיות קטנה כלפי האחר.



וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל אָחִיו אֲבָל אֲשֵׁמִים אֲנַחְנוּ עַל אָחִינוּ אֲשֶׁר רָאִינוּ צָרַת נַפְשׁוֹ בְּהַתְּחַנְּנוֹ אֲלֵינוּ וְלֹא שָׁמְעָנוּ עַל כֵּן בָּאָה אֲלֵינוּ הַצָּרָה הַזֹּאת.

כדי להגיע למשפט הזה, רק נזכיר איפה אנחנו נמצאים מבחינת העלילה. האחים מגיעים למצרים בפעם הראשונה, כולם חוץ מבנימין. הם לא מזהים את יוסף, אבל הוא מזהה אותם: וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת אָחִיו וַיִּכְרַם וַיִּתְּנָם אֲלֵיהֶם וַיְדַבֵּר אֲתָם קִשּׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנַעַן לְשָׂבָר אֲכָל. וַיִּכְרַם יוֹסֵף אֶת אָחִיו וְהֵם לֹא הִכְרָהוּ.

ליוסף יש את כל הסיבות בעולם שלא להסתכל על האסירים החדשים שמגיעים לתא שלו.

הוא הושלך לכלא המצרי על לא עוול בכפו, אחרי שהאחים שלו מכרו אותו. זה אמור להיות מצב של תסכול ומרירות.

ובכל זאת, אחרי ששני שרים של פרעה מושלכים לכלא, התורה מספרת לנו כך: “וַיָּבֹא אֲלֵיהֶם יוֹסֵף בְּבִקְרֹ, וַיֵּרָא אֲתָם, וְהֵנָּם זֹעֲפִים”. כלומר, יוסף מייד שם לב למצב הרוח שלהם,

ואז הוא גם ממחר לשאול אותם: “מִדּוּעַ פְּנִיכֶם רָעִים הַיּוֹם?” הפרשנים מדגישים את ארבע המילים האלה: “מדוע פניכם רעים היום?”

זו תשומת לב קטנה כלפי הזולת, אבל ההתעניינות האנושית הזו – היא זו שמובילה לגאולה.

מכאן העלילה מתפתחת באופן בלתי צפוי וחיובי מאוד. השרים מספרים לו מה קרה להם ומפרטים מה החלומות שלהם, ויוסף מצליח לפתור את החלומות בהצלחה.

For the Shabbat Table



Rabbi Danny Mirvis
Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi
Rabbi of Ohel Moshe Synagogue, Herzliya Pituach

“You shall be in charge of my house, and by your mouth all my people shall YISHAK, only by the throne will I outrank you” (Bereishit 41:20).

After Yoseph successfully interprets Pharaoh’s dreams (that seven years of plenty will be followed by seven years of famine), he recommends that somebody be appointed to oversee the stockpiling of food during the years of plenty in order to sustain the region during the years of famine that were to follow.

Pharaoh, impressed by Yoseph’s discernment, wisdom and Divine assistance, decides that Yoseph himself will be the person to oversee the new economic measures. Our commentators differ as to how to explain the middle phrase of the verse above, based on different understandings of the word “Yishak”.

Rashi (Bereishit 41:40) explains that the word “Yishak” comes from “Meshek” (economy), with the phrase therefore meaning, “By you, all my people will be sustained” in terms of food and finance.

Ibn Ezra (Bereishit 41:40), however, raises two alternative meanings for

“Yishak”- Firstly, from the root “Neshek” (weaponry) with the phrase meaning, “By you, all my people will be armed”. According to this explanation, Pharaoh was not only appointing Yoseph as Minister of Agriculture and Minister of Finance, but also to be the Minister of Defence, in charge of the armed forces tasked to enforce his measures.

Ibn Ezra raises a further explanation, from the word “Neshika” (kiss) with the intention of the verse being, “All my people will kiss your mouth”. This highlights an entirely different role of leadership in that Yoseph was to care for the people in order to win over their popularity and for them to be fond of him.

From these three explanations, we can see the different elements of Yoseph’s role as a leader. His stated role was to provide people with “Meshek” – a secure economic system. However, how was this complete newcomer to the Egyptian political scene going to enforce the necessary measures? One option is by force – “Neshek” – with a strong armed unit to ensure that nobody would go against his will. Another option is to win over the people’s affection – “Neshika” – so that through the fondness

and respect of his people, he could guide them to economic safety.

These options are not mutually exclusive, but can be combined for full impact in any position of leadership, whether it be political, domestic, social or educational. On the one hand, successful leaders need to be able to enforce their measures, yet on the other hand, it is vital not to lose the love or respect of those being led.

Yoseph’s challenges of “Meshek”, “Neshek” and “Neshika” are the same challenges facing parts of the world today. When a country’s “Meshek” faces huge challenges, effective leadership is desperately needed. On the one hand, serious actions and severe measures must be enforced in order to ensure survival and avoid collapse. At the same time, the need to love and care for others is more relevant than ever.

By caring for the needs of others during testing times, may Hashem care for our needs as well.

Shabbat Shalom!

Continued from page 4

And I continued: 70 years ago Jews suffered the same loss of freedom in Russia, and you have now helped them to regain it. So you have become part of the Chanukah story. And as the interpreter translated those words into Russian, Mikhail Gorbachev blushed.

The Chanukah story still lives, still inspires, telling not just us but the world that though tyranny exists, freedom, with G-d’s help, will always win the final battle.

In recent generations, sustaining our unique identity has become more difficult. In many countries, we were freed from the ghettos and offered acceptance within the broader society. Most Jews have taken advantage of the opportunity and assimilated in one form or another. Though we are still attacked and killed because of our ethnicity, we lose far more people to assimilation and intermarriage.

Assimilation and even intermarriage threaten Jews in Israel as well. Though we live as a free nation in our own land,

modern media and the internet constantly expose us to the world’s culture and mores. Chanukah reminds us that what we learn from the world around us must not steer us away from our Torah and traditions.

May this Chanukah inspire us with pride in our unique spiritual identity and strengthen our commitment to our eternal heritage.

Chanukah Sameach!

To Wait Without Despair



Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks zt"l

Something extraordinary happens between the previous *parsha* and this one. It is almost as if the pause of a week between them were itself part of the story.

Recall last week's *parsha* about the childhood of Joseph, focusing not on what happened but on *who made it happen*. Throughout the entire rollercoaster ride of Joseph's early life he is described as passive, not active; the done-to, not the doer; the object, not the subject, of verbs.

It was his father who loved him and gave him the richly embroidered cloak. It was his brothers who envied and hated him. He had dreams, but we do not dream because we want to but because, in some mysterious way still not yet fully understood, they come unbidden into our sleeping mind.

His brothers, tending their flocks far from home, plotted to kill him. They threw him into a pit. He was sold as a slave. In Potiphar's house he rose to a position of seniority, but the text goes out of its way to say that this was not because of Joseph himself, but because of G-d:

G-d was with Joseph, and he became a successful man. He lived in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that *G-d was with him*, and that *G-d granted him success in all that he did*. (Gen. 39:2-3)

Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, and failed, but here too, Joseph was passive, not active. He did not seek her, she sought him. Eventually, "she caught him by his cloak, saying, 'Lie with me!' But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and ran outside" (Gen. 39:12). Using the garment as evidence, she had him imprisoned on

a totally false charge. There was nothing Joseph could do to establish his innocence.

In prison, again he became a leader, a manager, but again the Torah goes out of its way to attribute this not to Joseph but to Divine intervention:

G-d was with Joseph and showed him kindness, *granting him favour* in the sight of the prison warden... Whatever was done there, G-d was the one who did it. The prison warden paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because *G-d was with him*; and *whatever he did, G-d made it prosper*. (Gen. 39:21-23)

There he met Pharaoh's Chief Butler and Baker. They had dreams, and Joseph interpreted them, but insisted that it is not he but G-d who was doing so: "Joseph said to them, '*Interpretations belong to G-d*. Tell me your dreams.'" (Gen. 40:8)

There is nothing like this anywhere else in Tanach. Whatever happened to Joseph was the result of someone else's deed: those of his father, his brothers, his master's wife, the prison warden, or G-d Himself. Joseph was the ball thrown by hands other than his own.

Then, for essentially the first time in the whole story, Joseph decided to take fate into his own hands. Knowing that the chief butler was about to be restored to his position, he asked him to bring his case to the attention of Pharaoh:

Remember me when it is well with you; please do me the kindness to make mention of me to Pharaoh, and so get me out of this place. For indeed I was stolen out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should have put me into prison. (Gen. 39:14-15)

A double injustice had been done, and Joseph saw this as his one chance of regaining his freedom. But the end of the *parsha* delivers a devastating blow: "The chief cupbearer *did not remember* Joseph, and *forgot him*" (39:23). The anticlimax is intense, emphasised by the double verb, "did not remember" and "forgot." We sense Joseph waiting day after day for news. None comes. His last, best hope has gone. He will never go free. Or so it seems.

To understand the power of this anticlimax, we must remember that only since the invention of printing and the availability of books have we been able to tell what happens next merely by turning a page. For many centuries, there were no printed books. People knew the biblical story primarily by *listening* to it week by week. Those who were hearing the story for the first time had to wait a week to discover what Joseph's fate would be.

The *parsha* break is thus a kind of real-life equivalent to the delay Joseph experienced in prison, which, as this *parsha* begins by telling us, took "two whole years." It was then that Pharaoh had two dreams that no one in the court could interpret, prompting the chief butler to remember the man he had met in prison. Joseph was brought to Pharaoh, and within hours was transformed from zero to hero: from prisoner-without-hope to viceroy of the greatest empire of the ancient world.

Why this extraordinary chain of events? It is telling us something important, but what? Surely this: *G-d answers our prayers, but often not when we thought or how we thought*. Joseph sought to get out of prison, and he did get out of prison. But not immediately, and not because the butler kept his promise.

The story is telling us something fundamental about the relationship between our dreams and our achievements. Joseph was the great dreamer of the Torah, and his dreams for the most part came true. But not in a way he or anyone else could have anticipated. At the end of the previous *parsha* – with Joseph still in prison – it seemed as if those dreams had ended in ignominious failure. We have to wait for a week, as he had to wait for two years, before discovering that it was not so.

There is no achievement without effort. That is the first principle. G-d saved Noah from the Flood, but first Noah had to build the Ark. G-d promised Abraham the land, but first he had to buy the Cave of Machpelah in which to bury Sarah. G-d promised the Israelites the land, but they had to fight the battles. Joseph became a leader, as he dreamed he would. But first he had to hone his practical and administrative skills, first in Potiphar's house, then in prison. Even when G-d assures us that something will happen, it will not happen without our effort. A Divine promise is not a *substitute* for human responsibility. To the contrary, it is a *call* to responsibility.

But effort alone is not enough. We need *siyata diShemaya*, “the help of Heaven.” We need the humility to acknowledge that we are dependent on forces not under our control. No one in Genesis invoked G-d more often than Joseph. As Rashi (on Gen. 39:3) says, “G-d’s Name was constantly in his mouth.” He credited G-d for each of his successes. He recognised that without G-d he could not have done what he did. Out of that humility came patience.

Those who have achieved great things have often had this unusual combination of characteristics. On the one hand they work hard. They labour, they practise, they strive. On the other, they know that it will not be their hand alone that writes the script. It is not our efforts alone that decide the outcome. So we pray, and G-d answers our prayers – but not always when or how we expected. (And of course, sometimes the answer is ‘No’.)

The Talmud (Niddah 70b) says it simply. It asks: What should you do to become rich? It answers: Work hard and behave honestly. But, says the Talmud, many have tried this and did not become rich. Back comes the answer: You must pray

to G-d from whom all wealth comes. In which case, asks the Talmud, why work hard? Because, answers the Talmud: *The one without the other is insufficient.* We need both: human effort and Divine favour. We have to be, in a certain sense, patient and impatient – impatient with ourselves but patient in waiting for G-d to bless our endeavours.

The week-long delay between Joseph's failed attempt to get out of prison and his eventual success is there to teach us this delicate balance. If we work hard enough, G-d grants us success – not when we want but, rather, when the time is right.

AROUND THE SHABBAT TABLE:

- How can humility and faith bring about patience?
- Can you name some other biblical figures who, like Joseph, both prayed to G-d for help, and took action themselves?
- When have you achieved success? Can you attribute this to both G-d's help and your own hard work?



Mizrachi Chanukah Challenge

בימים ההם בזמן הזה
In those days and at this time

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These and Those



Rabbi Hershel Schachter

Rosh Yeshivah, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University

When one asks a *sheilah* (*halachic* question) to a *Rav* and receives a *psak* (ruling), that *psak* is binding, because we assume that the *Rav* was correct in his ruling. This assumption is based on the verse, - ליראיו - סוד ד' ליראיו "The secret of G-d is [revealed] to those who fear Him."¹ This verse is quoted by the Talmud² in this context, to demonstrate that G-d reveals the correct solution to those who fear Him.

If the principle of ליראיו סוד ד' serves as the basis of our reliance upon a Rabbinical *psak*, how do we understand the existence of *machloket* (disagreement) in *halacha*? If each *Rav* has a measure of Divine assistance to enable him to issue the correct *psak*, how can disparate rulings ever exist?

The Talmud answers this question with the phrase: אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים - "These and those are the words of the living G-d" (*Eiruvin* 13b). For example, regarding the many disputes between *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel*, we assume that both sides of the *machloket* have validity.

This does not mean that one has the option to follow either opinion. The *halacha* is usually in accordance with the opinion of *Beit Hillel*. What it does mean is that when we study *Beit Shammai's* opinion, it is equally considered a fulfillment of the *mitzvah* of *Talmud Torah*, because this opinion has legitimacy as well. As long as both sides of the *machloket* arrive at their positions by working with the מידות בהן (exegetical principles through which the Torah is expounded), each is considered to have a bona fide point of view, and each opinion constitutes a *cheftza shel Torah* (an "object" of Torah), even though in practice we follow the majority opinion.³

The concept of אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים is particularly relevant to Chanukah. The Talmud discusses the origin of the holiday:⁴

When the Greeks entered the *Heichal*, they rendered all the flasks of oil there impure. When *Beit Chashmonai* gained the upper hand and vanquished them, they searched and found only one flask of oil with the *Kohen Gadol's* seal still intact, containing only enough to kindle [the *menorah*] for one day. A miracle occurred with this oil, and they kindled [the *menorah*] with it for eight days.

G-d is generally not interested in changing the rules of nature that He established at the time of Creation. The Rambam writes that the eight-day miracle was necessary because this was the amount of time necessary to manufacture and transport additional *tahor* (pure) oil.

The *Acharonim*⁵ ask a most basic question regarding the disqualification of the *tamei* (impure) oil. The Talmud teaches that there is a *machloket Tanna'im* regarding whether liquids contract *tumah* on a Torah level or only on a rabbinic level.

The accepted opinion, based on Yosi ben Yoezer's testimony, is that liquids are susceptible to *tumah* only rabbinically, and this rabbinic enactment was never instituted regarding liquids in the *Beit HaMikdash*. משקי בי מדבחיא דכן - "The liquids [offered upon] the altar (blood, water, wine, and oil) are *tahor*." Thus, the *halacha* is that the oil of the *Beit HaMikdash* does not contract *tumah*.

Accordingly, the entire Chanukah miracle was unnecessary. *Tamei* oil does not exist in the *Beit HaMikdash*!

Acharonim explain that the *halacha* that *Beit HaMikdash* oil always remains *tahor*

was in fact a subject of debate over several generations. It is true that if the Chanukah episode would have occurred 100 years later in the time of Yosi ben Yoezer, G-d would not have performed the miracle, because according to the accepted ruling at that time, the oil could not contract *tumah* and there would have been no need for the miracle.

Nevertheless, in the era in which the Chanukah episode did take place, the consensus was that the oil in the *Beit HaMikdash* could contract *tumah*, and thus G-d performed the miracle because of their *psak*. This ruling was later reversed when the majority opinion shifted and their view was outvoted.

It turns out that the whole story of Chanukah is truly fantastic. Remarkably, G-d changed the rules of nature in deference to the principle of אלו ואלו דברי אלקים חיים!

1. Tehillim 25:14.
2. Sotah 4b, Sanhedrin 48b, Chagigah 3b, Niddah 20b.
3. See *Belkvei HaTzon*, p. 259; See *Nefesh HaRav*, 1994 ed., p. 41.
4. Shabbat 21b.
5. *Mor UKetziah, Orach Chaim, siman 670; Beit Yitzchak, Orach Chaim, siman 110; Shoel UMeishiv, mahadurah 1, 3:42.*

● Adapted from Rav Schachter on the Moadim.

The Light of Love



Rabbi Yisroel Reisman
Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva Torah Vodaas

Chanukah, 25th Kisleiv, marks the anniversary of the day that the building of the Mishkan was completed. In order to understand the significance of these two events sharing the same date, we must first develop a thought regarding Pesach.

The main theme of Pesach זכר יציאת מצרים - remembering our exodus from Egypt. In fact, every day of the year we are instructed to remember our coming out of Egypt through our recitation of the third paragraph of the Shema. Every time we remember Yetziat Mitzrayim, we then mention קריעת ים סוף - the splitting of the sea. At the Seder, we do this at great length. After talking about Yetziat Mitzrayim, we then speak about the plagues which took place at the splitting of the sea. We speak at great length regarding the different calculations as to how many plagues took place at the sea. Similarly, every day of the year, after mentioning Yetziat Mitzrayim during the Shema, we say afterwards:

”וְיָזַם סוּף לָהֶם בְּקִרְעָתוֹ, וְזָדִים טָבַעְתָּ, וְיַדֵּי יָם הָעִבְרִית.
וְיָבִסוּ מִיָּם צָרֵיהֶם אֶחָד מֵהֶם לֹא נֹתַר.”

“The Sea of Reeds, You split for them, and the wicked, You drowned. You caused the beloved ones to pass through, while the waters covered their enemies; not one of them remained.” Why do we always juxtapose our remembrance of Yetziat Mitzrayim with a mention of Kriyat Yam Suf?

When the Jewish people left Mitzrayim, they were not yet confident of G-d’s love. They had seen Hashem’s miracles but were not yet convinced that they were due to His love for them. They told themselves that perhaps the miracles were a result of the promise G-d made to the Avot and this was G-d keeping His word. But maybe



The miracle of the oil demonstrated to the Jewish people that everything that had got them to this moment had been done out of love.

it was nothing more than that. Maybe it was a begrudging fulfilment of a historical promise and not an expression of love.

When they reached the Yam Suf, Hashem performed wondrous miracles to show the Jewish people that everything that they had witnessed in Mitzrayim was indeed out of love. Up until the splitting of the sea could have been interpreted as a result of the promise to the Avot. But the promise was only to leave Egypt. It had already been fulfilled by the time they reached the sea. The miracle of Kriyat Yam Suf showed that even the miracles that occurred in Egypt were done for love; not begrudgingly.

Chazal taught that 25 Kislev was the day on which the Mishkan was completed, just that its construction was delayed until 1 Nisan. During that time period of waiting, the Jewish people started to question themselves. Why isn’t the Mishkan being put up? Maybe we don’t deserve to see its construction? When Rosh Chodesh Nissan arrived, Hashem declared that this was the right time for the Mishkan’s construction. In reward of the people’s waiting, they were compensated with the miracle of Chanukah which would start on the 25 Kislev and last for eight days.

Rav Schwab provides a beautiful explanation for this. After the war with the Greeks, the Jewish people re-entered the Beit Hamikdash. It appeared to be all business back to usual. However, the people were questioning where they stood. Even though the Beit Hamikdash was back in service, it was a shadow of what it had been. It no longer had a real Menorah; the Gemorah says they took spears and stuck them together to create a Menorah. The people were unsure of Hashem’s love towards them at that moment. The miracle of the oil demonstrated to the Jewish people that everything that had got them to this moment had been done out of love. One act of love is indicative of the actions that came beforehand.

Rav Schwab explains that between 25 Kislev and 1 Nissan when the Bnei Yisrael were waiting for the Mishkan, Hashem wasn’t telling them they didn’t deserve the Mishkan; just that its construction had to start in Nissan. Hashem therefore tells them that there will come a 25 Kislev in the future where I will show you my love for Klal Yisrael.

In life, very often, there are difficult moments and challenges. Hakadosh Baruch Hu gives a little kiss on the side; He does something on the side. It may not be the Chanukah miracle, but it’s a little show of love. From that glimpse of love we should understand that the challenges and difficulties are also all from Hashem, and all out of His great love for us.

● Edited by Yehuda Kaufold and Josh Harris.

The Three Foundational Mitzvot



Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapira zt"l
Former Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel

In *Al HaNissim*, we say the Greeks sought to “violate the laws of Your will.” This expression shows that the Greeks did not actually fight *mitzvah* observance, but rather the root of that observance, the Will of G-d.

Hence they decreed a ban against Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and circumcision: “And Antiochus answered and said unto his ministers... Let us rise upon them, and cut them off from the covenant which was made for them: Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and *Mila*” (Antiochus 7:11).¹ The Greeks waged war precisely against these three *mitzvot* because they are the root of the Torah.

The Maharal² argues that the first appearance of anything is also the root and purpose of the same thing, and includes everything about that thing. This principle is clearly illustrated in the Torah. The first manifestation of the Torah is in these three *mitzvot*, given even before the Torah was given: the *mitzvah* of circumcision was given to our Avraham Avinu, the *mitzvah* to sanctify the New Moon was given to the Children of Israel in Egypt and the *mitzvah* of Shabbat was given at Marah. All three of these *mitzvot* are the root and purpose of the Torah, and so the Greeks sought to uproot them all.

The Greeks wanted to disconnect Israel from the Torah, for without these foundational *mitzvot*, it is impossible to access its depths. They did not want to destroy the Jews; they wanted to destroy Judaism, the uniqueness of *Am Yisrael*. As the Midrash says,³ ‘darkness’ refers to the Greek exile, which darkened the eyes of

Israel with their decrees and would say to them: ‘write on the horn of the bull that you have no part in the G-d of Israel’ and regarding the verse, “And behold a great terror of darkness fell upon him,”⁴ the Midrash explains⁵ that the Greeks fought against the Torah, determined to cause a rift between the Torah and the people of Israel.

Hence the Maccabean victory over the Greeks was a victory for Torah and *Bnei Torah* over the kingdom of Greece. Chanukah is therefore a holiday of *Bnei Torah*, which is implied in two places:

First, the victory of the *Chashmonaim* is hinted upon in the blessing of Moshe to the tribe of Levi: “Bless, O L-rd, his resources and favor his undertakings. Smite the loins of his foes and enemies so they rise no more.”⁶ Rashi comments: “Moshe saw that the *Chashmonaim* would fight the Greeks, and he prayed for them since they would be few – 12 *Chashmonaim* and Eleazar – against several tens of thousands.” It is well known that Moshe’s blessing to the tribe of Levi is guaranteed to all who set themselves apart from the affairs of the world for the purpose of studying the Torah.

Secondly, it is implied in the Gemara (Shabbat 23b), when it says, “One who is accustomed to kindle lights will be rewarded with children who are Torah scholars.” Rashi explains that lights refer to Shabbat and Chanukah candles.

According to the Rambam: “The precept of lighting the *menorah* is exceedingly precious, and one should carefully observe

it to acclaim the miracle, ever praising and thanking G-d for the miracles He has performed for us. Even if one has nothing to eat except what he gets from charity, he should borrow, or sell his garment, to buy oil and lamps and light them.”⁷

Why does the Rambam consider lighting Chanukah candles a precious *mitzvah*? The Maggid Mishne explains that his source is the above Gemara. In contrast to all the other *mitzvot*, for which we receive our reward in the World to Come, upon lighting the Chanukah candles we receive our reward immediately through our children becoming *talmidei chachamim*. A direct response to the Greeks’ intention to detach Am Yisrael from Torat Yisrael.

● Adapted from “*Shiurei HaRav Avraham Shapira on Ketubot and Kiddushin*”

1. See also Sfat Emet, Miketz 5662, and Chanukah, 5647 and 5648.
2. Netzach Yisrael, 3 and other places.
3. Bereishit Rabbah, 2:4.
4. Bereishit 15:12.
5. Bereishit Rabbah, 44:17.
6. Devarim 33:11.
7. Hilchot Chanukah 4:12.



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Turn Dreams into Reality



Rabbi Shalom Rosner
Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh

The parsha opens with Pharaoh dreaming - literally! Rav Zalman Sorotzkin in Oznayim LaTorah points out that the word the Torah uses is not ופרעה חלם (*chalam*) - that Pharaoh dreamt in the past tense, but rather ופרעה חולם (*cholem*) with a *ketiv maleh* (with the letter vav), which depicts an action taking place in the present. He was *currently* dreaming. Perhaps this is to highlight that Pharaoh was immersed in a **constant** dream. He lived a life that was far from reality. In a sense, we may even refer to it as being “spaced out”. As the leader of Egypt, he felt as if he was a god. There was no greater being on earth. The midrash tells us that Pharaoh used to attend to his bodily needs at the Nile early in the morning so that people would think he was a god and that he did not need to relieve himself throughout the day.

Pharaoh's entire life was one long dream. He imagined that he was god and he acted accordingly. The world revolves around him. He is the center of the world's existence. The ministers were appointed solely to serve Pharaoh. We are informed of the *Sar Haofim* (minister of Pharaoh's food) and *Sar Hamashkim* (minister of Pharaoh's beverages). Pharaoh's perception is that the people exist to serve him. The king has no responsibility to his people. There was no minister of welfare, or minister of housing. Only servants to attend to Pharaoh's needs.

Perhaps this is why Pharaoh accepted Yosef's interpretation of his dreams over the interpretations provided by his advisors. Yosef's interpretation taught Pharaoh something totally new. It was



When one is in a position of power, they should use it not for their personal benefit, but to benefit others.

a “wake-up call”! Your power is not to be used solely for your personal benefit. A true leader is empowered to serve his people. The famine will not just affect you, Pharaoh, but it will impact the entire country and region. You have the ability to take precautionary measures to ensure the well-being of your nation.

This message resonated with Pharaoh. He finally recognized that living the “dream” meant reaching out to others not just being concerned with oneself. It made sense to Pharaoh that he would receive a celestial message that placed the responsibility of saving the world on him. The mighty Nile, which was also viewed by his people as being a god, could not prevent the famine. If he adopted Yosef's plan, he would be more powerful than the Nile. His arrogant vision remained, but he realized he had to act for the welfare of his nation.

Yosef himself learned this lesson through his own dreams. After Yosef shares his dreams with his brothers, boasting of his potential dominion over them, he experiences a downfall. First to the bottom of a pit, then to a prison cellar. After he focuses on other people's dreams (Sar Haofim, Sar Hamashkim and Pharaoh) he rises to become viceroy of Egypt. It was

this lesson that Yosef was transmitting to Pharaoh. When one is in a position of power, they should use it not for their personal benefit, but to benefit others. If modern day politicians would understand this responsibility, society would benefit tremendously.

When one achieves success or attains a leadership position in a company or organization, one should understand his or her obligation. I recall when I was receiving *smicha* at YU, one of the senior Roshe Yeshiva offered a powerful message to the young new ordained Rabbis. He said - “take your position seriously, but don't take yourselves too seriously.” It was important that we conduct ourselves in a way that would enable us to earn the respect of our congregants, but we should not let the honor they bestow upon us get to our heads. We are there to teach, assist and inspire others.

Pharaoh mistakenly perceived reality as an imaginary dream, with himself at the center. Yosef taught him that a true “leader” is someone who cares for, empowers and serves the best interests of his “followers”. A leader is someone who can help others turn dreams into reality.

Miketz: Interpreting Dreams



Michal Horowitz
Judaic Studies Teacher

In this week's parsha, Yosef's fate seemingly changes overnight. With hardly a moment's notice, he goes from being slave-boy turned prisoner to viceroy of the most powerful country in the ancient world!

When no one can interpret Pharaoh's dreams to his liking, the Butler recalls that there is a Hebrew lad, a slave, in prison, who can interpret dreams.

Immediately, Pharaoh sends for Yosef. "And Pharaoh sent and called for Yosef, and they rushed him out of the pit, and he shaved, and he changed his clothing, and he came to Pharaoh" (Bereishis 41:14).

Pharaoh, very disturbed by his strange dreams, relates them to Yosef the לַעֲזָרָה מֵלִמְנוּחָיו - "the master of dreams".

In his first dream, he sees seven skinny, gaunt cows consuming seven healthy, robust cows, along the shores of the Nile River. In his second dream, he sees seven ears of grain, beaten by the east wind, consuming seven healthy ears of grain. Greatly unsettled by these dreams, Pharaoh declares to Yosef: "and I heard about you saying: that you hear a dream to interpret it" (41:15).

Yosef immediately declares that interpretations are to G-d (v.16), and then proceeds to explain the dreams to Pharaoh. He tells Pharaoh that Egypt will see seven years of great plenty, followed by seven years of famine. Yosef suggests that Pharaoh appoint a wise and discerning man over Egypt, who will stockpile, ration and distribute the food, so that Egypt will survive the seven years of famine.

"And the matter was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants" (v.37), and Yosef - renamed Tz'fanos Pa'nei'ach - is appointed Egyptian viceroy.

What is the deeper meaning and message of Pharaoh's dreams? What do these dreams tell us about our lives, our society, our failures and success?

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik teaches, "The manner in which we enjoy G-d's blessing, the seven good years, determines how we will manage to survive the seven lean years. If one is wise and lives in accordance with the morality of the plentiful in times of abundance, if one does not cross the boundaries of moderation and measure; if one does not surrender to irresponsible and boundless hedonism - then the onslaught by the seven thin-fleshed ugly cows will be a limited one, and man can manage to survive and pursue a good, knowledgeable, civilized life. However, if man fails during the seven good years of success, if he remembers only the dream of the seven good and happy years, if he exploits nature and reaches out for a voluptuous life, if he remains insensitive to the ethical norm and tries during good times to empty the cup of pleasure to its last drop - then the seven ugly cows will attack him ruthlessly and mercilessly. A cow is not a carnivorous animal; it is herbivorous. Yet suddenly the seven bad cows became cannibals, like predatory animals, because society did not know how to behave during the seven prosperous years. The capacity of an excited, persecuted, and abused crowd to commit cruelty and to take vengeance is unlimited.

"That is what Joseph told Pharaoh: your dream reflects human destiny. Conquest quite often ends in humiliation, prosperity in famine, happiness in distress. Man is indeed a creator; however, he is a destroyer as well. He moves fast, but he pays an enormous toll on his journey. The seven good cows are always followed by seven

bad ones. Whatever is accomplished by the good is annihilated by the bad. This tragic dialectic is part of human destiny. However, there is a way to avoid the distress and disaster which will be caused by the seven cows, and that is the intelligent handling of human success. Of course, you can, if you decide to ignore my interpretation, enjoy the seven years of abundance with a careless attitude - not anticipating trouble and not preparing yourself for disaster. Pharaoh and the aristocracy would be provided with nourishment, but the crowd may be nonchalantly left to starve. If this is the way you are planning to meet the future, then you may expect the worst - destruction and revolution. However, if you decide to meet the famine intelligently and feed the people, if you accumulate lots of food for people to survive the times of need and distress but without profiteering or speculation, then the damage which the seven cows inflict will be very limited. On the contrary, the onslaught of the satanic forces upon civilization will, instead of annihilating, strengthen the constructive elements in our civilization. Whether the hostile demon abiding in our midst will succeed in destroying Egypt depends upon our action.

"Pharaoh apparently understood Joseph. He said to his servants, 'Is there another one like this, a man in whom the spirit of G-d dwells?' (41:38). He then put Joseph's plan into effect" (Vision and Leadership, p.26-27).

Chazal teach us (Megilla 14a): "A prophecy with relevance for all generations was recorded, and one that does not have relevance for all generations was not recorded or written down." Pharaoh's dreams, and Yosef's interpretations, have relevance for all generations, and so, they were recorded for posterity in the Torah. How we behave

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Chanuka and the Prophecies of the Second Temple Period: Part II



Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
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Unfortunately, the prophecies of Chagai and Zecharya – of prosperity, sovereignty and the shekhina returning – were not fulfilled during that generation, nor in the following generations. Israel remained under Persian rule, and later under Greek rule, for several hundred years. The condition set by Zecharya and earlier by Yirmiyahu, that Israel must repent to be worthy of a full redemption, seems not to have been met.

Although left unrealized, these vital prophecies most likely were remembered, as they reflected the most optimistic goals of the Second Temple period. One might conjecture that the anniversary of the original construction date, the 25th of Kislev, was also remembered. This may have also been viewed as an appropriate date to recall the optimistic prophecies of Chagai, pronounced on the preceding day, the 24th of Kislev.

Later during the Second Temple period, when the Jews were subject to Greek rule, Hellenistic culture slowly became dominant. The rise of Hellenism climaxed with the famous decrees of Antiochus IV in 167 BCE, the details of which are recorded in Sefer Ha-makkabim I. We are informed that after the decrees were enacted, the Hellenists erected an idol on the mizbeyach on the 15th of Kislev of that year. They waited, however, until the 25th of Kislev before sacrificing upon it. On that same day they began killing women who circumcised their children. Apparently, the Hellenists selected the 25th of Kislev intentionally. The choice of this day again may be just coincidental, or it might be that the Hellenists chose

this date specifically le-hakh'is (to spite), being aware of its religious significance.

The Hasmonean revolt began that same year, and three years later Judah was able to secure control of Jerusalem and purify and re-dedicate the mikdash. It is commonly assumed that the battle to liberate the Temple Mount from the Greeks ended on the 25th of Kislev and on that same day they began the daily sacrifices (including the lighting of the menorah). According to this account there was no intentional selection of this historic date.

However, according to other traditional Jewish sources a slightly different picture emerges. Megillat Ta'anit records the 23rd of Cheshvan of that year as well as the 3rd of Kislev as days of rejoicing, marking dates in which various idols erected by the Greeks on the Temple mount were dismantled. It appears from the account in Sefer Ha-makkabim that the dedication ceremony was set for the 25th of Kislev, in order to coincide with the very same day on which it was defiled, three years prior. It also seems from Sefer Ha-makkabim that construction of the new vessels and mizbeyach took several weeks.

Considering the fact that the Temple Mount was already under the control of the Hasmoneans in Cheshvan, and from the account in Sefer Ha-makkabim, it appears that the dedication of the mikdash on the 25th of Kislev was intentional. This day not only marked the date of its original construction, but also reflected the prophetic ideals and aspirations of Bayit Sheni. The reason they selected this date, as well as the reason that the Hellenists had picked this date three years

earlier, was due to its prophetic and historic significance since the time of Chagai.

Choosing specifically the 25th of Kislev to dedicate the restored mizbeyach and vessels, demonstrated their belief that the military victory that they had achieved was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Chagai.

Had the Shekhina also returned as foreseen by Zecharya? The miracle that took place with the cruse of oil and the menorah could have been perceived as a divine indication that the shekhina was also returning. Recall that the central vision of Zecharya is that of the menorah. In that prophecy, not only does he envision the return of the Shekhina, but also the return of sovereignty. The discovery of the cruse of oil with the seal of the kohen gadol, and the ensuing miracle which took place when lighting the menorah, although not the reason for establishing Chanuka, most likely was a strong enough sign to the Sages that the military victories of the Hasmoneans were divine, and worthy of commemoration.

As mentioned earlier, the central vision of Zecharya is that of the menorah surrounded by two olive branches. The main message of this prophecy was that Bayit Sheni should be characterized by the predominance of spirituality (ruach), over physical strength (chayil and koach). It is through this predominance of spirit that the pitfalls of the monarchy of the First Temple could be avoided. The miracle of the oil was reflective of this prophecy.

It is understandable therefore, that the Sages placed such a heavy emphasis on the miracle of the oil. In the eyes of the Hasmoneans, and the people living at the

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Cause and Effect



Rabbi Eli Mansour

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We read in Parashat Miketz of Yosef's sudden rise to power from the lowest depths of despair. After spending years in an Egyptian dungeon, he is suddenly brought before Pharaoh to interpret his mysterious dreams, and he impressed Pharaoh to such an extent that he was named the country's vizier.

The Zohar, commenting in this Parasha, briefly cites the verse, "Ketz Sam La'hoshech" – "He made an end to the darkness" (Iyob 28:3). Clearly, the Zohar refers here to the "darkness" of Yosef's imprisonment. He languished for many long years in a dark, dreary dungeon, until finally this period of darkness ended and gave way to the light of redemption. The question, however, arises, what message does the Zohar seek to convey by citing this verse in reference to the story of Yosef? What does this Pasuk add to our understanding of the story?

The Zohar here is teaching us the proper perspective on the "cause-and-effect"



**No matter what happens,
there is always only a single
cause – Hashem's will
that it should happen.**

processes in life. We generally tend to assume that our success or failure is the result of the circumstances that unfold. A businessman finds large quantities of merchandise for a terrific price, buys it, sells it for a very large profit, and becomes wealthy. If we would analyze this series of events, we would instinctively say that the man became wealthy because he was fortunate enough to find low-cost merchandise. But from a Torah perspective, the precise opposite is true. Hashem decreed that the man should earn money, and therefore He orchestrated events in a way that led to that outcome. The man did not become wealthy because he found

cheap merchandise; he found cheap merchandise because it was time for him to become wealthy.

This is the Zohar's intent in citing the verse, "Ketz Sam La'hoshech." Outwardly, it appears that Yosef was freed and rose to power because the butler and baker who were with him in prison had dreams which he successfully interpreted, and then Pharaoh had an unusual dream that needed an interpretation. The Zohar teaches us that it was just the opposite. G-d decided it was time to bring an end to Yosef's darkness, and He therefore had this series of events unfold to achieve that objective. Yosef's release from the dungeon was not the result of these events; it was the cause of these events.

This is a fundamental lesson in Emuna that we must all learn and internalize. No matter what happens, there is always only a single cause – Hashem's will that it should happen. And the circumstances that allow that to happen are only the effect triggered by the Divine Will.

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in times of plenty, how we utilize the bounty G-d blesses us with, what we spend and what we wisely save when we have more than enough, will determine if we will survive the lean times that will surely follow.

It is not the Torah way to live a gluttonous life, and freely overspend. One who utilizes what he has for avodas Hashem, in a measured and tzanuah fashion (see Ramban to Vayikra 19:2), will always live with a feeling that he always has more

than enough. And then, he will surely survive all times – both the times of plenty and those times when there is less.

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time of the revolt, the primary reason for celebration was due to the military victories, the return of Jewish sovereignty, and the re-dedication of the mikdash – the fulfillment of the prophecies of Chagai. The Sages were aware of the dangers of the political power now achieved by the

Hasmoneans. As time passed and there was a decline in the religiosity of the Hasmonean Dynasty, the Sages needed to emphasize specifically this message of Zecharya – "lo be-chayil ve-lo be-koach ki im be-ruchi."

Even after the destruction of the Temple, we continue to celebrate Chanuka, since we are assured that another opportunity for the realization of these prophecies will arise.

Chanukah Dreams



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger
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The story of Yosef and his brothers stretches over four parshios and the central theme of these parshios relates to the interpretation and unfolding of dreams. In the words of the Abarbanel, “the primary aspect of this story is dreams and their interpretation.” The dreams in the story act as catalysts, setting each step of the story into motion. While dreams have no significance in halacha (Sanhedrin 30a), “matters in dreams cannot elevate or cause descent,” the dreams in these parshios cause the elevation of Yosef and his and his family’s descent into Egypt.

In order to understand the role of dreams, we must first understand a little bit more about the nature of day and night. There are places in the world where it is day for the entire summer and night for the entire winter. In the Jewish calendar, we have a similar phenomenon. From the month of Nissan till the month of Tishrei, throughout the spring and summer months, we have all of the Torah-based holidays: Pesach, Shavuos, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos. The summer months are filled with light. In contrast, from Mar-Cheshvan till Adar, during the fall and winter months, we have no Torah-based holidays. The wintertime is like one long night. It is a cold, hard, difficult and confusing time, a time of darkness, with short days and long nights. The holidays of Chanukah and Purim are like the dreams of the Jewish people in the long night of the winter.

There are, however, two aspects to dreams. On one hand, they are filled with nonsense (Zacharia 10:2, Brachos 55b) “dreams speak emptiness.” On the other hand, some dreams have the power to reveal the truth of one’s life, as the Gemara (Brachos 57b) says, “a dream is one-sixtieth of prophecy.” And as the pasuk (Bamidbar 12:6) says, “If there shall be prophets among you, I,

Hashem, make myself known to him. I will speak to him in a dream.”

Sometimes we cannot attain higher levels when we are active, when life is filled with light. It is like when a rebbe begins speaking and the student’s hand shoots in the air, thinking he knows the answer, so he does not hear anything else the rebbe says. While it is good that his mind is active, he is so filled with his own thoughts that he cannot listen to his rebbe. Similarly, sometimes one has a conversation, and at the beginning of the conversation, he has already thought of his response. He therefore fails to listen to anything else the other person is saying because all he can hear is the product of his own active mind.

Therefore, sometimes we can only attain a new level of understanding when we slow down, when the night, a time of inactivity comes. When the race of life quiets down, during the “night” of the year, we can begin reflecting on the truth of life and dream of how things should be and where we are headed. The name of our parsha is Mikeitz, which means “at the end of,” but it can also mean to “wake up.” When we have a dream about how life can or should be, and then we wake up, such a dream can act as the catalyst for a person to fulfill his dreams during his waking hours.

Sometimes, if a person is wrestling with a particularly difficult problem, and he cannot come to a solution, he eventually goes to sleep without an interpretation, without a resolution. But after sleeping and dreaming, suddenly everything becomes clear. The same thing happens to the Jewish people. We sometimes experience a time of great confusion and descent. But then we begin to dream of how it could be, how it should be. Such a dream is not nonsense or idle imagination. Such a dream can lift a Jew or the entire nation

to new heights and from these heights, everything becomes clear.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook, in Oros Hakodesh (53), in a selection called “Great Dreams,” writes that we must lift up our nation’s lofty dreams, to clarify our purpose and direction. Chanukah is our great dream during the long winter night, which illuminates the darkness of Greek secularism, who attempted “to darken the eyes of the Jewish people.” Chanukah awakens the great light and paves the way for “the establishment the candle of the son of Yishai Your anointed.”

Rav Tzvi Hirsch Koidinover, the Rav of Frankfurt, wrote in the Kav Hayashar (section 96):

In each and every thing that we do during the eight days of Chanukah relating to the lighting of the candles... in many places, we find that the Chanukah candles are precious before Hashem... It has a great and wondrous holiness without measure. If we had Divine inspiration, we would make the blessing over the candles and then understand and comprehend, through the mitzva, the kindling of the future candles [of Moshiaach] because the Chanukah candles prophesy like a human prophet.

We see from this that by spending a few quiet moments with the candles, we can see the future and access the dreams of what we could be. Dovid Hamelech tells us that when we reach the times of Moshiaach (Tehilim 126:1) “we will be like dreamers.” This eighth day of Chanukah, which is called “Zos Chanukah,” we can access (Tehilim 118:23) “This [“Zos”] was from Hashem, it is wondrous in our eyes.” May Hashem open our eyes to stop and contemplate during this quieter time of the year in order to dream of what our lives can be like so that we may begin to work to actualize that dream.

Why Was Pharaoh Blown Away by Joseph?



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It is a riveting story. Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, has two dreams, we learn in this week's Torah portion, Miketz. The Biblical commentators struggle with four major questions concerning this remarkable story.

A) It is difficult to understand how following his interpretation of the dreams, Joseph proceeded to give Pharaoh advice on how to deal with the impending famine. How is a freshly liberated slave not scared of offering the king of Egypt unsolicited advice?

B) It is clear from the narrative that Pharaoh was thunderstruck by Joseph's solution to the problem. But one need not be a rocket scientist to suggest that if you have seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine, you should store food during the time of plenty for the time of hunger. What's the genius in Joseph's advice?

C) Pharaoh also was amazed by Joseph's interpretation of the dreams themselves, which none of his own wise men could conceive. But Joseph's interpretation seems simple and obvious. So why was Pharaoh astonished by Joseph's rendition of his dreams? And why could no one else conceive of the same interpretation?

D) How did Pharaoh confer upon Joseph the highest position in the land not even knowing if his interpretation will materialize? Why did the Egyptian king immediately appoint Joseph as viceroy without any evidence that this young slave was the right man for the job?

On Shabbos Parshas Miketz, 27 Kislev, 5734, December 22, 1973, the Lubavitcher

Rebbe presented the following possible explanation.

The dream experts of Egypt did conceive of Joseph's interpretation to Pharaoh's dreams, that seven years of hunger would follow seven years of plenty. Yet they dismissed this interpretation from their mind because it did not account for one important detail of the dream.

In Pharaoh's first dream, he saw how the seven ugly and lean cows that came up after the seven handsome cows "stood near the other (fat) cows upon the bank of the River." There was a moment during which both sets of cows coexisted simultaneously, and only afterward did the lean cows proceed to swallow the fat cows.

It was this detail of the dream that caused the wise men of Egypt to reject the interpretation that Joseph would later offer to Pharaoh and compelled them to present all types of farfetched explanations.

This is where Joseph's brilliance was displayed. When Joseph proceeded to tell Pharaoh how to prepare for the coming famine, he was not offering him unwellcome advice on how to run his country; rather, the advice was part of the interpretation of the dream.

Joseph understood that the coexistence of the two sets of cows in the dream contained the solution to the approaching famine: During the years of plenty Egypt must "live" with the consciousness and awareness of the years of famine as though they were already present. Even while enjoying the abundance of the years of plenty, Egypt must experience in its imagination the reality of the upcoming

famine, and each and every day store away food for it. The seven lean cows ought to be very much present and alive in people's minds and in their behaviors during the era of the seven fat cows. Conversely, if this system was implemented in Egypt, then even during the years of famine the nation would continue enjoying the abundance of the years of plenty. The seven fat cows would be very much present and alive even during the era of the seven lean cows.

To begin with, Pharaoh was struck by Joseph's ingenious accounting for that one detail of the dream that had evaded all the wise men of Egypt. But what thrilled him even more was Joseph's demonstration that Pharaoh's dreams not only contained a prediction of future events, but also offered instructions on how to deal with those events. The dreams did not only portend problems, but also offered solutions.

The stories of the Torah describe not only physical events that took place at a certain point in history, but also detail metaphysical and timeless tales occurring continuously within the human heart.

The wisdom of Joseph's presentation to Pharaoh becomes strikingly clear when we reflect on the spiritual message behind the story.

All of us experience cycles of plenty and of famine in our lives. There are times when things are going very well: We are healthy, successful, and comfortable. Often during such times, we fail to invest time and energy to cultivate genuine emotional intimacy with our spouse, to develop real relationships with our children, to bond

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Chanukah: Lit



Rabbi Judah Mischel

Executive Director, Camp HASC; Mashpiah, OU-NCSY

The Honorable Yehudah Avner, z'l, was a legendary ambassador, diplomat and political insider. A consiglieri for Prime Minister Menachem Begin, z'l, Avner also filled advisory roles to a gamut of Israeli leaders across the political spectrum, playing an integral role and was present for major decision-making moments that shaped Israel's foreign policy for more than half a century. Avner was a lifelong activist, a wise, colorful, larger than life personality dedicated to building the State of Israel and ensuring the wellbeing of Am Yisrael. In his trusted role as a perennial insider with prime ministers and other dignitaries, he would often accompany them on trips abroad and meet other world leaders. He met with the Lubavitcher Rebbe many times, and shared the following moving anecdote from one particular *yechidus*, or private meeting.

Late one night, after more than two hours of intensive conversation on an array of topics ranging from geopolitics to personal matters, I posed a direct question to the Rebbe: "What is it that the Rebbe seeks to accomplish?"

The Rebbe smiled and pointed toward one of the many *sefarim* shelves in the office. "Yehuda, look there, on the shelf. What is that you see?"

"A candle," I replied.

"No, no, it's not a candle," the Rebbe said, shaking his head, "it is simply a lump of wax with a string in the middle of it... When does a lump of wax become a candle? Only when you bring a flame and ignite the wick does it become a candle."

The Rebbe continued his point in a Talmudic sing-song: "The 'wax' is our

body...and the 'wick' is our soul; the 'flame' is the fire of Torah and Mitzvos. When the soul is lit up by the flame of Torah, achieving the purpose for which we are created, that's when the person becomes a 'candle'. This is the goal, to help every man and woman achieve the purpose for which they were created."

An hour or so later, as the sun was about to rise, the *yechidus* drew to a close. As I stepped back and out of the Rebbe's office, our eyes met again, and I asked, "So... has the Rebbe lit my candle?"

Once again, The Rebbe shook his head, and answered in a quiet, serious tone, "No, no...I am only able to give you the match. It is you who must light your own candle."



In Yidishkeit, the lights we kindle as part of our Divine service are meant to be understood as manifestations of our soul: נר ה' נשמת אדם "The lamp of Hashem is the soul of man" (*Mishlei*, 20:27). Furthermore, the letters of נפש, *nefesh*, soul, is a *roshei teivos* acronym of *Ner* (the *kli*, vessel), *Petil* (the wick), *Shemen* (the oil).

Chazal present specific, demanding requirements for the materials that may be used for kindling Shabbos lights. In general, we must use oils and materials for wicks that are of high quality and known to produce a sustainable, clean and constant flame. *Bameh Madlikin*, the second chapter of Masechet Shabbos, lists oils, fuels and wicks that, due to their inferior quality, are not permitted to be used for kindling Shabbos lights. One of the main concerns is that low-quality materials will not last long enough or the light

may flicker, leading one to unthinkingly perform a *melachah*, a prohibited labor, to correct it once one has already accepted or entered Shabbos.

For the sake of *k'vod Shabbos*, the flame must draw the oil properly. However, when it comes to *hadlakas neiros Shabbos Chanukah*, kindling the lights of the Shabbos that falls within the eight days of Chanukah, the *halachah* reflects a different paradigm. Even oils and wicks that do not burn well may be used.

The first Gerrer Rebbe, Reb Yitzchak Meir, the Chidushei haRim, teaches that the lights of Shabbos and the lights of Chanukah are representative of different spiritual archetypes — different ways that Jews experience Yidishkeit.

Tragically, the majority of Jews don't yet appreciate the holiness and central role Shabbos holds in our identity, tradition and spiritual role in the world. The radiant and awesome light of the weekly holy day of Shabbos remains a challenge for many to internalize. Therefore, to help everyone understand the light of Shabbos, this light must be channeled through proper wicks and refined oils.

The light of Chanukah, however, has a quality that resonates with all Jews, regardless of their current ability to appreciate Shabbos. Beyond the universal appeal of a light that banishes darkness, and especially during this season, there are deeper reasons for this resonance.

While there are many opinions on the ideal placement and height of the Chanukah menorah that we use, all agree that the optimal way to achieve *pirsumei nisa*, publicization of the miracle of Chanukah, is as stated in *Shulchan Arukh* (671:6): 'It is

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Constant Connection

Mrs. Shira Smiles

International lecturer and curriculum developer

“**B**aruch Hashem”. It is our automatic response when asked how we are. What exactly does this refrain mean? Do we even think about what we are expressing when saying it? Yosef Hatzadik is paradigmatic of one who used this phrase in a real and meaningful way.

Chazal teach that Yosef would always have ‘the name of Hashem on his lips’ in whatever he did (Rashi, Bereisheet 39:3). The commentators explain how Yosef would turn to Hashem requesting assistance before initiating any activity. When he accomplished what he set out to do he would then thank Hashem for his success. Indeed, Rav Friedlander in Siftey Chayim exhorts all of us to follow Yosef’s example. He notes how people tend to daven for help when faced with major decisions in life, whether finding a job, choosing a life partner or a place to live. The key is to train oneself to ask Hashem for help in the small things as well. Before going to the store to buy bread, for instance, ask Hashem for there to be fresh bread and that no obstacles should get in the way of this purchase. The Chazon Ish once told a bachur, the key to emunah is exactly this;

when looking to buy a pair of shoes, ask Hashem for success to find good shoes at a good price and then be mindful to thank Hashem when the purchase is completed.

Rav Wolbe in Shiurei Chumash explains that many people use phrases that reflect awareness of Hashem, yet much of the time it is merely lip service. One may say, “Baruch Hashem I finished this deal”, and go on to praise his brilliance and ingenuity for being so successful. Someone once quipped, EGO stands for easing G-d out; although we say we are indebted to Him for our successes, we often take the credit and accolades as if we are solely responsible for what we have done. Rav Wolbe emphasizes that Yosef Hatzadik felt Hashem’s presence in real time and was keenly aware of the direct hasgacha that regularly surrounded him.

Rav Matisyahu Salomon in Matnat Chayim shows us to what extent Yosef Hatzadik took himself out of the equation and was truly connected to Hashem. For twelve years Yosef Hatzadik languished in prison not knowing when or if he would be released. Finally, the day came when he was brought to Paroh who extolled

his dream interpretations in glowing terms. Immediately Yosef Hatzadik corrected him making clear that it was Hashem who interpreted the dreams, not his own insight or skill (Bereisheet 41:15). Rav Simcha Zisel of Kelm comments that Yosef did not want Paroh to believe even for a moment that the greatness was his own. Here Yosef Hatzadik displays mesirut nefesh to generate a great kiddush Hashem; acknowledging Hashem’s distinction is his first and highest priority. Fascinatingly, Paroh responds in kind; he recognizes that it is Hashem who has made Yosef Hatzadik a receptacle for Divine wisdom (Bereisheet 41:38).

Chidushei Rav Yosef Nechemiah shares that using Hashem’s name or expressions such as “baruch Hashem” and “im yirtzeh Hashem” without thinking or meaning is not to be taken lightly. It may even transgress an auxiliary prohibition of mentioning Hashem’s name in vain, “lo tisa et shem Hashem lashav”. Yosef Hatzadik teaches us to connect with what we are saying, thereby reaching a place of feeling Hashem’s presence in all we attempt to achieve.

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deeply with friends, and to create a sincere bond with G-d. We feel self-sufficient and don’t need anybody in our lives.

Yet when a time of famine arrives, when a crisis erupts (heaven forbid) in our lives we suddenly feel the need to reach out beyond ourselves and connect with our loved ones and with G-d.

But we don’t know how to. Because when we do not nurture our relationships and our inner vulnerability during our years

of plenty, when the years of famine confront us, we lack the tools we desperately need to survive the crisis.

This is the essence of Joseph’s wisdom: You must never detach the years of plenty from the years of famine. When you experience plenty, do not let it blind your vision and desensitize you from what is important in life. The priorities you cultivate during your “good times” should be of the kind that will sustain you during your challenging times as well. If you are

investing your time and energy in things that will prove futile when the climate of your life changes and will not hold you up when challenges come, you might want to re-examine your present choices. Why wait for the day you will have to say, “If I would have only realized?”

They Did Not Recognize Him



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrachi
Popular Torah teacher and author

How is it possible for a family to behave like strangers (nochrin)? How is it possible that they sell each other so easily (mochrim)? How can you continue an old family feud when you do not even remember how it started? The root נכר keeps popping up in our parshiot: "הכר נא - Examine these!" The brothers asked about a blood-stained shirt. "הכר נא - Examine these!" Tamar said to Yehudah about the seal, the staff and the fuses. Yosef in our parashah is estranged (מתנכר) from his brothers and they do not know (מכירים) him...

In my time as a lawyer, I witnessed families fighting in court for years over ownership of a particular piece of property, all the while the property was vacant. An asset that yielded nothing.

In many cases, I would understand that the dispute was never about trees and stones, but that behind it there was always the question: who did our parents love more...? The children are already grown up, the parents are no longer with us, and yet we still try to win their love. There is no more important message

to parents than this: you don't need to inherit houses. There is no inheritance more fruitful than love.

Regarding the words "And Yosef recognized his brothers, and they did not recognize him", Chazal say something terrible: "And Yosef recognized his brother - now, but they did not recognize him - at the time of the sale..."

So they know him well! But they do not recognize him... they hang on to the idea they had of him, and are not able to recalculate the course.

And this is the message of Parashat Mikeitz. It is a unique expression: not the end, but after the end! After what seems to be the end of the relationship, a new acquaintance is possible. Yosef starts at the end and reacquaints himself with the strange brothers. How will he do this? He will make his father show his other children his concern and love for them... He will tell them the phrase he did not know how to say back then, before they went to Dotan: "Do not get angry on the way!" He will accompany them on their way, perhaps learning with them about the overturned wagon, as he did when he

recently parted from his beloved Yosef. He will remind himself that he is everyone's father.

Yosef does not alienate himself in order to teach his brother something new. He wants to "teach" his father to acknowledge his other sons, to care for them until death, to pray for them "and may G-d have mercy on you."

Sons can also bequeath paternity to their parents. Even a familiar perception of parents can change. The symbiotic relationship between parenthood and brotherhood is inseparable.

I remember how excited I was when at the beginning of the will of my father, Rabbi Eli Rothschild zt'l, appeared the words, "I wish to declare that I loved all my children equally..." At that moment I felt like the heiress of millions, I felt that I had inherited a fortune that had nowhere to be shifted or fought over.

Leave the same love to everyone. Nothing will perpetuate your memory more.

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a *mitzvah* to light ones candles within ten *tefachim* from the ground.'

Chazal explain that the *Shechinah*, the Divine Presence in this world, never descended below ten *tefachim*, hand-widths. The lights of Chanukah, however, draw the Divine Presence to a level below ten *tefachim* and thereby illuminate even the 'lowest' or most basic regions of our spirituality. This awakens the latent *keshet*, connection to the Divine, in

our heart, no matter what level we may find ourselves on. Even if we feel distant from Jewish practice, are experiencing 'spiritual burnout', or sense that our relationship with G-d has become dim — the light of Chanukah, the light of the inextinguishable essence of the soul, touches the level of *nefesh* that can remain unmoved by Shabbos.

Shabbos demonstrates that Hashem created the world and everything in it. To

live with this recognition is a lofty level. But Chanukah, concludes Reb Yitzchak Meir, is an expression of the relationship Hashem has with Am Yisrael, standing by us even when we are at our lowest point. Every one of us can see and feel this miracle, each in our own way — and light our own 'candle'.

Hebrew Language in the Parsha



David Curwin
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Parashat Miketz begins with the story of Pharaoh’s mysterious dreams. The first dream involves both healthy and thin cows. The second, parallel, dream includes healthy and thin ears of grain:

וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּחְלֶם שְׁנֵית וְהִנֵּה שִׁבְעַ עֲבָלִים עֲלוֹת בְּקֶנֶה אֶחָד בְּרִיאֹת וְטֹבוֹת:

“He fell asleep and dreamed a second time: Seven ears of grain, solid and healthy, grew on a single stalk.” (Bereshit 41:5)

The word for “ears of grain” is שִׁבְלִים, or in the singular שִׁבְלָה. The word appears 19 times in Tanakh. Sometimes, like here, it means “ear of grain.” Other times it means “flood or flowing stream” (e.g., Tehilim 69:3) or “twigs, branches” (e.g., Zechariah 4:12)

All of those disparate meanings can be explained by looking at the root of the

word. The root שבל means “to hang down, stretch along, move along.” (The Hebrew word for path, שְׁבִיל, is also related.) Ears of grain and tree branches hang down from the plant, and a flowing stream is moving along quickly.

The most famous use of שבלָה is in the book of Judges. The soldiers of Gilead were trying to isolate the Ephraimites from the local residents, and made a test based on pronunciation:

וַיִּלְכְּדוּ גִלְעָד אֶת-מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן לְאֶפְרַיִם וְהָיָה כִּי יֹאמְרוּ פְּלִיטִי אֶפְרַיִם אָעֲבָרָה וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֲנָשִׁי-גִלְעָד הַאֶפְרַתִּי אַתָּה וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא: וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אֶמְרָנָה שִׁבְלָה וַיֹּאמֶר סְבִלָה וְלֹא יָכִיחַ לְדָבָר פֶּן יִיָּאחַזוּ אוֹתוֹ וַיִּשְׁחַטוּהוּ אֶל-מַעְבְּרוֹת הַיַּרְדֵּן וַיִּפֹּל בְּעֵת הַהִיא מֵאֶפְרַיִם אַרְבָּעִים וּשְׁנַיִם אָלֶף:

The Gileadites held the fords of the Jordan against the Ephraimites. And when any fugitive from Ephraim said, “Let me

cross,” the men of Gilead would ask him, “Are you an Ephraimite?”; if he said, “No,” they would say to him, “Then say *shiboleth*”; but he would say “*sibolet*,” not being able to pronounce it correctly. Thereupon they would seize him and slay him by the fords of the Jordan. Forty-two thousand Ephraimites fell at that time. (Shoftim 12:5-6)

Since the Ephraimites couldn’t properly pronounce שבלָה, they were discovered, and suffered a terrible defeat.

This story became a famous example of a catchword that is only known to one group of people (or that group is only one who can pronounce it properly.) And so in English, that is the meaning of “shibboleth” today – a custom or tradition that distinguishes a particular group.

Parsha Riddle



Reb Leor Broh
Mizrachi Melbourne

What description is given to two of the brothers?
In each occasion, the word is used in the course of a conversation.

Answer to the Parsha Riddle

(no derogatory description intended)

The second time this description is used is when Yehudah in 43:8 asks his father to let them take **Binyamin** with him and describes him as a “ער”.
The description “ער” is used by the chief butler to describe **Yosef** in 41:12. There Chazal explain he meant it as a derogatory term, to mean a fool.
Interestingly, the Hebrew word for fool, “דורש” has the same numerical value as ער, whose letters add up to 320.



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Rabbi Daniel Litvak

SERBIA

BELGRADE

Rav Isak Asiel

SOUTH AFRICA

JOHANNESBURG

Mizrachi Glenhazel Shul

SWEDEN

The Jewish Community of Stockholm

SWITZERLAND

BERN

Jüdische Gemeinde Bern

ZURICH

Mizrachi

UNITED KINGDOM

Mizrachi UK

UNITED STATES

NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

Kol Hatorah Kulah

National Council of Young Israel

RZA-Mizrachi USA

CALIFORNIA

Beth Jacob Congregation
Harkham Hillel Hebrew Academy
West Coast Torah Center
Young Israel of North Beverly Hills
YULA High School
Young Israel of Century City

COLORADO

DAT Minyan
East Denver Orthodox Synagogue
The Denver Kehillah

CONNECTICUT

Beth David Synagogue
Congregation Agudath Sholom
Young Israel of West Hartford

FLORIDA

Beth Israel Congregation
Hebrew Academy RASG
PlayHard PrayHard
Congregation Torah Ohr
Sha'arei Bina Torah Academy for Girls
Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft. Lauderdale

GEORGIA

Congregation Beth Jacob
Congregation Ohr HaTorah

HAWAII

Kehilat Olam Ejad Ganim

ILLINOIS

Mizrachi-Religious Zionists of Chicago

MARYLAND

Kemp Mill Synagogue
Pikesville Jewish Congregation
Bnai Jacob Shaarei Zion Congregation

MASSACHUSETTS

Congregation Beth El Atereth Israel
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe
Congregation Shaarei Tefillah
Young Israel of Brookline

MICHIGAN

Young Israel of Oak Park
Young Israel of Southfield
Congregation Kadimah-Toras Moshe

MINNESOTA

Congregation Darchei Noam

MISSOURI

Yeshivat Kadimah High School Nusach

Hari B'nai Zion Congregation
Young Israel of St. Louis

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Hillel at Dartmouth

NEW JERSEY

Ahavas Achim
Volunteer Chaplain Middlesex County
Congregation AABJ&D
Congregation Adath Israel of the JEC
National Council of Young Israel
Congregation Ahavat Achim
Congregation Ahavath Torah
Congregation Brothers of Israel
Congregation Darchei Noam of Fair Lawn
Congregation Etz Chaim of Livingston
Congregation Israel of Springfield
Congregation Ohr Torah
Congregation Sons of Israel of Cherry Hill
Ma Tov Day Camp
Ohav Emeth
Pal Foundation
Shomrei Torah of Fair Lawn
Synagogue of the Suburban Torah Center
Yavneh Academy
National Council of Young Israel
Young Israel of Teaneck

NEW YORK

Congregation Anshei Shalom
Congregation B'nai Tzedek
Congregation Bais Tefilah of Woodmere
Congregation Beth Sholom
Ramaz
Ma'ayanot Yeshiva High School for Girls
MTA – Yeshiva University
High School for Boys
Young Israel of Merrick
Congregation Beth Torah
Congregation Etz Chaim of
Kew Gardens Hills
Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun
Congregation Ohab Zedek
Great Neck Synagogue
Iranian Jewish Center/Beth
Hadassah Synagogue
Irving Place Minyan
Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach
Kingsway Jewish Center
Lincoln Square Synagogue
Merkaz Yisrael of Marine Park

North Shore Hebrew Academy
Young Israel of Merrick
NYC Department of Correction
OU-JLIC at Binghamton University
OU-JLIC at Cornell University
Queens Jewish Center
Stars of Israel Academy
The Riverdale Minyan
Vaad of Chevra Kadisha
West Side institutional Synagogue
Yeshiva University High School for Girls
Young Israel of Hillcrest
Young Israel of Jamaica Estates
Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst
Young Israel of New Rochelle
Young Israel of North Woodmere
Young Israel of Oceanside
Young Israel of Scarsdale

OHIO

Beachwood Kehilla
Congregation Sha'arei Torah
Congregation Torat Emet
Green Road Synagogue
Fuchs Mizrachi School
Heights Jewish Center

PENNSYLVANIA

Shaare Torah Congregation

SOUTH CAROLINA

Brith Sholom Beth Israel
Congregation Dor Tikvah

TENNESSEE

Baron Hirsch Congregation

TEXAS

Mayerland Minyan Synagogue
Robert M. Beren Academy
United Orthodox Synagogues of Houston

VIRGINIA

Keneseth Beth Israel

WASHINGTON

Bikur Cholim-Machzikay Hadath
Northwest Yeshiva High School
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation

VENEZUELA

CARACAS

Ashkenazi Kehilla
Mizrachi Venezuela



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