Parshas Vayeshev

VAYESHEV: TURBULENT TRANQUILITY
RABBI SHMUEL SILBER

The Talmud (Shabbas 21b) delves into much detail concerning the Yom Tov of Chanukah. After discussing the types of oils and wicks which may be used and the placement of the menorah, the Gemara asks a simple question: “Mai Chanukah, what is Chanukah? For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of Hanukkah, which are eight on which a eulogy for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one day’s lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recitation of] Hallel and thanksgiving.”

There seems to be a glaring omission. When the Talmud describes the Yom Tov celebration of Chanukah it tells us about Hallel (the recitation of Hallel) and Hodaah (thanksgiving, Al HaNissim prayer) but makes no mention of kindling the Menorah. What is Chanukah without the lights? Aren’t the Chanukah candles the paradigmatic representation of Divine providence and intervention? Why does the Talmud omit any mention of this mitzvah?

To fully answer this question, let us look at the Parsha. The Torah states, “Jacob dwelt in the land of his father’s sojournings, in the land of Canaan” (Genesis 37:1). Yaakov had one simple desire, “dwell in peace and tranquility” (Rashi 37:2). We then go on to read of the disturbing dynamic between Yosef and his brothers. Jealousy and animosity ultimately turn the brothers against Yosef, who is sold into slavery, plunging Yaakov into two decades of mourning for the son he thought had been killed. Was it too much for Yaakov to ask for peace in this world and the next? Why does it have to be an either or? What was wrong with Yaakov’s desire for tranquility and quiet after what had been a tumultuous couple of decades?

To gain insight into Rashi’s comment we must look to the end of the Parsha which found Yosef incarcerated together with the Pharaoh’s baker and butter. One morning the men awoke disturbed by dreams they had the night before. Yosef offered to listen and attempt to interpret their dreams.

“So the chief cupbearer related his dream to Joseph, and he said to him, ‘In my dream, behold, a vine is before me. And on the vine, are three branches. And on the branches, were clusters of grapes. And Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and squeezed them into grapes. And Pharaoh’s cup was in my hand, and I took the grapes and squeezed them into Pharaoh’s cup, and I placed the cup on Pharaoh’s palm” (Genesis 40:9-11). Yosef explained that in three days, the baker would be restored to his former position dutifully serving Pharaoh.

“Now the chief baker saw that he had interpreted well. So, he said to Joseph, ‘Me too! In my dream, behold, there were three baskets on my head. And in the topmost basket were all kinds of Pharaoh’s food, the work of a baker, and the birds were eating them from the basket atop my head’” (Genesis 40:9-11).

Yosef explained that in three days the baker would be executed and the birds would pick Continued on back...>}

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Join Jews from across the world and make a commitment to go screen free for 30 minutes after candlelighting each night of Chanukah. A project of TAG International
Can I light my own Shabbos candle?

(Mir, 8)

“Miri, different families have different minhagim and though some girls do light their own Shabbos candle, I think that it’s a beautiful thing for a mother to light the candles to blanket her whole family in the Shabbos light.”

Submit your ASK to:
office@suburbanorthodox.org

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MAZAL TOVS
Mel & Tania Shichman on the birth of a grandson. Parents are Rabbi Mordechai & Huldie Shichman.

Chaim & Shani Wolffish on the bris of their son, Refael Yehuda

BIRTHDAYS

YAHREZITS
Gedalia Kertesz, Abraham Hertzberg, Terry Sonnenschein, David Siegel, Helen Raab, Abraham Meiese, Isaac Zelcer, Carl Donwitz, Helen Brown, Corinne Rothenberg, Abraham Benn, Edward Kalish, Theodore Fellner, Nathaniel Rothenberg, Shirley Stein, Hinda Esterson, Judith Rosenzweig, Mary Brill, Dorothy Wiseman

TEHILLIM
Please continue to daven for Tinken ben Avital.

The Shul Cholim List will be refreshed on December 15. Please submit all new names to SOTCGabbaim@gmail.com.

SHUL HAPENNINGS
SOTC Book Club
Tues, Jan 9, 2018 | 2:00p
And After the Fire by Lauren Belfer

COMMUNITY HAPPENINGS
JCC Chanukah @ Foundry Row
-Sunday 12/17 | 11:00a - 3:00p
www.jcc.org/event/chanukah-foundry-row

ZECHUS FOR SINGLES
Join a group of dedicated women reciting Sefer Tehillim daily. WhatsApp Adinah Kaplan, 732-266-5404 for details.
Organized in the merit of a refuah for Esther bas Naemi; celebrating 50 engagements already!

ASK THE RABBI

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