



Shoshana Poupko- Dor L'Dor
Congregation Ahavath Torah

8 Nights; 8 Ideas for Chanukah 2020

IDEA ONE

1) תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף כא עמוד ב

מאי חנוכה? דתנו רבנן: בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון, דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון. שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל, וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד, **נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים**. לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.

What is [the reason for] Chanuka? Our Rabbis taught: On the 25th of Kisleiv [begin] the days of Chanuka, which are eight... When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oils that were there. And when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against them and defeated them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that still remained with the seal of the *Kohen Gadol*, and it contained only enough for one day's lighting. **But a miracle was wrought through it, and they lit with it for eight days**. The following year they appointed [these days] as festive days, with [the recital of] *Hallel* and thanksgiving.

2) משנה אבות פרק ה משנה ה

עשרה נסים נעשו לאבותינו בבית המקדש. לא הפילה אשה מריח בשר הקדש, ולא הסריח בשר הקדש מעולם, ולא נראה זבוב בבית המטבחים, ולא ארע קרי לכהן גדול ביום הכפורים, ולא כבו גשמים אש של עצי המערכה, ולא נצחה הרוח את עמוד העשן, ולא נמצא פסול בעמר ובשתי הלחם ובבלחם הפנים, עומדים צפופים ומשתתחים רוחים, ולא הזיק נחש ועקרב בירושלים מעולם, ולא אמר אדם לחברו צר לי המקום שאלין בירושלים:

Ten wonders were wrought for our ancestors in the Temple: [1] no woman miscarried from the odor of the sacred flesh; [2] the sacred flesh never became putrid; [3] no fly was ever seen in the slaughterhouse; [4] no emission occurred to the high priest on the Day of Atonement; [5] the rains did not extinguish the fire of the woodpile; [6] the wind did not prevail against the column of smoke; [7] no defect was found in the omer, or in the two loaves, or in the showbread; [8] the people stood pressed together, yet bowed down and had room enough; [9] never did a serpent or a scorpion harm anyone in Jerusalem; [10] and no man said to his fellow: the place is too congested for me to lodge overnight in Jerusalem.

3) מדרש תנחומא פרשת תצוה סימן ג

א"ר חנינא סגן הכהנים אני הייתי משמש בבה"מ = בבית המקדש = ומעשה נסים היה במנורה משהיו מדליקין אותה מראש השנה לא היתה מתכבה עד שנה אחרת ופעם אחת לא עשו הזיתים שמן התחילו הכהנים לכבות (ס"א לבכות) ואמר רבי חנינא סגן הכהנים אני הייתי בבית המקדש ומצאתי מנורה דליקה יותר ממה שהיתה דליקה כל ימות השנה....

R. Chanina, the deputy *Kohen Gadol*, said: "I served in the Temple, and there was a miraculous phenomenon concerning the *menora*. From when it was lit on Rosh Ha-Shana, it would not be extinguished until the next year." Once, the olives failed to produce oil. The *Kohanim* began to weep, and R. Chanina, the deputy *Kohen Gadol*, said: "I was in the Temple, and I found the *menora* burning more than it burned the entire year."

4) Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

There was no reason to suppose that anything would have survived the systematic desecration the Greeks and their supporters did to the Temple. Yet the Maccabees searched and found that one jar. **Why did they search?** Because they had faith that from the worst tragedy something would survive. The miracle of the first night was that of faith itself, the faith that something would remain with which to begin again.

So it has always been in Jewish history. There were times when any other people would have given up in despair: after the destruction of the Temple, or the massacres of the crusades, or the Spanish Expulsion, or the pogroms, or the Shoa. But somehow Jews did not sit and weep. They gathered what remained, rebuilt our people, and lit a light like no other in history, a light that tells us and the world of the power of the human spirit to overcome every tragedy and refuse to accept defeat.

From the days of Moses and the bush that burned and was not consumed to the days of the Maccabees and the single cruse of oil, Judaism has been humanity's *ner tamid*, the everlasting light that no power on earth can extinguish.

IDEA ONE: The Jewish people exemplify eternal hope.
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IDEA TWO

(5) שולחן ערוך אורח חיים הלכות חנוכה סימן תרעח סעיף א
מי שאין ידו משגת לקנות נר חנוכה ונר שבת,

	<u>נר חנוכה</u>		<u>נר שבת</u>
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יקנה נר שבת מפני שלום ביתו...

(6) תלמוד בבלי מסכת יומא דף ט עמוד ב
מקדש ראשון מפני מה חרב? מפני שלשה דברים שהיו בו: עבודה זרה, וגלוי עריות, ושפיכות דמים...
אבל מקדש שני, שהיו עוסקין בתורה ובמצוות וגמילות חסדים מפני מה חרב? מפני שהיתה בו שנאת חנם. ללמדך ששקולה שנאת חנם כנגד שלש עבירות: עבודה זרה, גלוי עריות, ושפיכות דמים.

Why was the First Temple destroyed? Because of three things which prevailed there: idolatry, immorality, bloodshed. But why was the Second Temple destroyed, seeing that in its time they occupied themselves with Torah, mitzvot and acts of kindness? Because baseless hatred prevailed. This teaches you that baseless hatred is equal to the three sins of idolatry, illicit relations, and murder.

IDEA TWO: What happens inside our homes defines what happens outside our homes.

IDEA THREE

7) Harav Aharon Lichtenstein

In general, we tend to view Greek culture as corrupt and sinful. Traditionally, Judaism and the Torah have waged war against it in full fury. What is the argument about? What is the basis of this war?

...The Greeks believed that existence in its totality is comprehensible and conquerable. The universe contains no mystery, reflects no greater power. Man can master all creation...That which is revealed and perceptible is all there is...All is within man's grasp to understand.

...Judaism places man at the center of creation as one who dominates the world, but both man and his world are null and void in the presence of God...Religious man experiences humility and insignificance in front of creation...

8) בראשית א

כח וַיְבָרֶךְ אֹתָם אֱלֹקִים וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹקִים פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ וּמְלֵאוּ אֶת־הָאָרֶץ וּכְבֹּשׁוּהָ וּרְדוּ בְּדַגַּת הַיָּם וּבְעוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם וּבְכָל־חַיָּה הַרְמִישָׁת עַל־הָאָרֶץ :

God blessed them and God said to them, "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and master it; and rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the living things that creep on earth."

9) תהלים ח

א לְמַנְצַחַת עַל־הַגִּיתִית מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד : ב ה' אֲדִינִנוּ מִה' אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר־תִּנְּנָה הוֹדֶךָ עַל־הַשָּׁמַיִם : ג מִפִּי עוֹלָלִים וְיִנְקִים יִסְדָּתְךָ עוֹ לְמַעַן צוֹרְרֶיךָ לְהַשְׁבִּית אוֹיֵב וּמִתְנַקֵּם : ד כִּי־אֲרָאָה שְׁמֶיךָ מַעֲשֵׂי אֲצַבְעֶיךָ רָחַם וְכוֹכָבִים אֲשֶׁר כּוֹנְנִתָּה : ה מִה' אֲנוֹשׁ כִּי־תִזְכְּרֵנוּ וּכְרָאֲדָם כִּי תִפְקְדֵנוּ : ו וַתַּחֲסֶרְהוּ מַעַט מֵאֱלֹקִים וְכְבוֹד וְהַדָּר תַּעֲטֶרְהוּ : ז תִּמְשִׁילֵהוּ בְּמַעֲשֵׂי יָדֶיךָ כָּל שֵׁתָה תַחַת־רַגְלָיו : ח צָנָה וְאֵלֶפִים כָּלָם וְגַם בְּהֵמוֹת שָׂדֵי : ט צִפּוֹר שָׁמַיִם וְדִגֵּי הַיָּם לִבְרַךְ אַרְחוֹת יָמַי : י ה' אֲדִינִנוּ מִה' אֲדִיר שְׁמֶךָ בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ :

O God, How majestic is Your name throughout the earth, You who have covered the heavens with Your splendor! When I behold Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and stars that You set in place, what is man that You have been mindful of him, mortal man that You have taken note of him, that You have made him little less than divine, and adorned him with glory and majesty; You have made him master over Your handiwork, laying the world at his feet, O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name throughout the earth!

The Rambam teaches that we can learn love and fear of God through observing nature...Paradoxically, the Torah wants man to work on nature and improve it, to conquer the earth and understand it, but at the same time to perceive the world in its hidden and obscure state, thus maintaining man's lowliness and humility... The Greek stance was immoral not in and of itself, but rather in the priorities that it set. Greek values were imbalanced, to such a degree that they became totally corrupt. The dominion of man and his mastery over nature can be part of worship of the Creator, but man's greatness can become so central that it becomes a religion in itself.

IDEA THREE: דע לפני מי אתה עומד (brachot 28)- Humanity has been empowered by God to partner WITH God in dominating the world...always guided by remembering from where he came and to where he will one day return.

IDEA FOUR

(10) על הניסים

בִּימֵי מַתִּיתָהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן כֹּהֵן גָּדוֹל, חֲשֹמוֹנָאֵי וּבְנֵיו, כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת יוֹן הַרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמֶּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשְׁפִּיחַם תּוֹרָתְךָ, וּלְהַעֲבִירָם מִחֻקֵּי רְצוֹנְךָ...

In the days of Matityahu, the son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Hasmonean and his sons, when the wicked Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them **forget Your Torah** and **violate the decrees of Your will**...

(11) דברים ד

ט רַק הַשְׁמֵר לָךְ וּשְׁמֹר נַפְשְׁךָ מְאֹד פֶּרַת שִׁפַּח אֶת־הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר־רָאוּ עֵינֶיךָ וּפְרִי־סוּרוֹ מִלְּבָבְךָ כֹּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ וְהוֹדַעְתָּם לְבָנֶיךָ וּלְבְנֵי בְנֵיךָ: י יוֹם אֲשֶׁר עָמַדְתָּ לִפְנֵי ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ בְּחֹרֵב...
Beware and watch yourself very well, lest you forget the things that your eyes saw, and lest these things depart from your heart, all the days of your life, and you shall make them known to your children and to your children's children. The day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb...

Beware and watch yourself very well, lest you forget the things that your eyes saw, and lest these things depart from your heart, all the days of your life, and you shall make them known to your children and to your children's children. The day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb...

(12) רמב"ן

הכתוב הזה לפי דעתי מצות לא תעשה, הזהיר בה מאד, כי כאשר אמר שנוהר בכל המצות ונשמור החוקים והמשפטים לעשותם, חזר ואמר רק אני מזהירך מאד להשמר ולשמור עצמך מאד מאד לזכור מאין באו אליך המצות,

This verse in my opinion is a negative commandment, concerning which Moshe exhorted the people greatly. For, having said that we must be careful concerning all the commandments and that we should observe the decrees and the judgments, to do them in the land. Moshe said further, "Only I am exhorting you greatly to beware for yourselves and to greatly beware for your soul very, very much to remember from where these commandments came to you.

שלא תשכח מעמד הר סיני מכל הדברים אשר ראו שם עיניך הקולות והלפידים את כבודו ואת גדלו ודבריו אשר שמעת שם מתוך האש, ותודיע כל הדברים אשר ראו עיניך במעמד הנכבד ההוא לבניך ולבני בניך עד עולם.

I warn you that you should not forget the assembly at Mount Sinai any of the things that your eyes beheld there - the thunder and the flames. His glory and His greatness. And His words that you heard there from the midst of the fire. And you shall make known to your children and your children's children forever, all that your eyes saw at that assembly.

ופירש הטעם כי השם עשה המעמד ההוא כדי שתלמדו ליראה אותו כל הימים ואת בניכם תלמדון לדורות עולם, אם כן עשו אתם ככה ואל תשכחו אותו.

And Moshe then explains the reason that it is so crucial to remember this and pass it on to the succeeding generations: For God made that assembly so that you shall learn to fear Him all the days, and you shall teach your children for all generations. Therefore, do as such and don't forget this assembly.

13) Rav Lichtenstein

To forget what has been learned- that is serious. But if we forget "the things which your eyes have seen" and their existential and spiritual significance, the connection to God which follows upon the Sinai experience, then we are faced with a crisis with no promise of remedy...

IDEA FOUR: We have to make sure that Torah enters our hearts and not just our minds; then it will not become easily removed.

IDEA FIVE

14) Greek Tragedy

Greek tragedy as we understand it today, was not merely a show, but rather a collective ritual of the polis - the administrative and religious city center, as distinct from the rest of the city. It took place in a sacred, consecrated space; the altar of the god stood at the center of the theatre.

(15) תלמוד בבלי מסכת שבת דף כא

בית שמאי אומרים: יום ראשון מדליק שְׁמֹנֶה, מִקָּאן וְאֵילָךְ פּוּחַת וְהוֹלֵךְ. וּבֵית הַלֵּל אֹמְרִים: יוֹם רֵאשׁוֹן מִדְּלִיק אַחַת, מִקָּאן וְאֵילָךְ מוֹסִיף וְהוֹלֵךְ.

Beit Shammai say: On the first day one kindles eight lights and, from there on, gradually decreases the number of lights until, on the last day of Hanukkah, he kindles one light. And Beit Hillel say: On the first day one kindles one light, and from there on, gradually increases the number of lights until, on the last day, he kindles eight lights.

IDEA FIVE – עוד לא אבדה תקוותנו – We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. (MLK)

IDEA SIX

16) Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

There's a fascinating argument in the Talmud:

תלמוד בבלי שבת

רב אָמַר אֵין מִדְּלִיקוֹן מִנֵּר לְנֵר, וְשְׂמוּאֵל אָמַר מִדְּלִיקוֹן.

Can you take one Chanukah light to light another? Usually, of course, we take an extra light, the shamash, and use it to light all the candles. But suppose we don't have one. Can we light the first candle and then use it to light the others?

Rav said no. Shmuel said yes. Normally we have a rule that when Rav and Shmuel disagree, the law follows Rav. There are only three exceptions, and this is one.

Why did Rav say you may not take one Chanukah candle to light the others?

Because, says the Talmud מְשֻׁם אֶכְחוּשֵׁי מִצְנָה, you may diminish the first candle.

Inevitably you spill some of the wax or the oil. And Rav says: don't do anything that would diminish the light of the first. But Shmuel disagrees, and the law follows Shmuel. Why? Think of it this way – when I use the flame of my faith to light a candle in someone else's life, my Jewishness is not diminished. It grows,

because there is now more Jewish light in the world. When it comes to spiritual goods as opposed to material goods, the more I share, the more I have. If I share my knowledge, or faith, or love with others, I won't have less; I may even have more. That's the view of Shmuel, and that is how the law was eventually decided.

IDEA SIX: (ישעיהו מט:ו) – ויִתְּתִיךָ לְאֹר גֹּלִים (ישעיהו מט:ו) – Fear not sharing the flame of your faith, living by example...it is what has brought light to the world for centuries.

IDEA SEVEN

בראשית מא: יב

וְשָׁם אִתָּנוּ נַעַר עִבְרִי עֶבֶד לְשַׂר הַטְּבָחִים וְנִסְפְּרוּ לוֹ וַיִּפְתְּרֵנוּ אֶת־חֲלֻמֹתֵינוּ אִישׁ בְּחֻלְמוֹ פִּתְרָה.
And there, with us, was a Hebrew youth, a slave of the butchers; we related it to him, and he interpreted our dreams for us; each in accordance with his dream.

בראשית מג: לב

וַיַּשְׁמִימוּ לוֹ לִבְדּוֹ וְלֵהֵם לִבְדָּם וְלִמְצָרִים הָאֲכָלִים אֹתוֹ לִבְדָּם כִּי לֹא יוּכְלוּן הַמִּצְרִים לֶאֱכֹל אֶת־הָעִבְרִים לֶחֶם כִּי־תוֹעֵבָה הוּא לַמִּצְרִים.

They served him (Joseph) by himself...and the Egyptians by themselves, for the Egyptians could not dine with the Hebrews, since that would be abhorrent to the Egyptians.

בראשית מא: מה

וַיִּקְרָא פְּרַעֲהַ שְׁם־יוֹסֵף צָפְנַת פַּעֲנָח וַיִּתֶּן־לוֹ אֶת־אֲסֵנַת בַּת־פּוֹטִי פְּרַע פְּתָח אֵן לְאִשָּׁה וַיֵּצֵא יוֹסֵף עַל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם.

Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-paneach and he gave him Asenath daughter of Poti-phaera as a wife.

בראשית מב: ח

וַיִּכְּר יוֹסֵף אֶת־אָחִיו וְהֵם לֹא הִכְרִהוּ.

Joseph recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him.

18) Professor Nehama Leibowitz

בראשית לט

ח וַיִּמְאֵן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־אִשְׁתׁ אֲדֹנָיו הֵן אֲדֹנִי לֹא־יַדַּע אֶתִּי מִה־בְּבֵית וְכָל אֲשֶׁר־יֵשְׁלוּ נָתַן בְּיָדִי: ט אֵינְנִי גָדוֹל בְּבֵית הַזֶּה מִמְּנִי וְלֹא־חָשַׁךְ מִמְּנִי מְאוּמָה כִּי אִם־אוֹתָךְ בְּאֶשֶׁר אֶתִּיאֲשֶׁר וְאִיךָ אֶעֱשֶׂה הַרְעָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְחָטָאתִי לֵאלֹהִים:

But he adamantly refused, he said to his master's wife, "look, my master concerns himself about nothing in the house, and whatever he has he has placed in my custody. There is no one greater in this house than I and he has denied me nothing but you, since you are his wife; how then can I perpetrate this great evil and have sinned against God!"

בראשית מא

כה וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל־פְּרַעֲהַ חֲלוֹם פְּרַעֲהַ אֶחָד הוּא אֶת אֲשֶׁר הָאֱלֹהִים עֲשָׂה הַגִּיד לְפְרַעֲהַ:

Joseph said to Pharaoh, "the dream of Pharaoh is a single one; what God is about to do, He has told Pharaoh."

כח הוא הדבר אשר דברתי אל־פרעה אשר האלקים עשה הראה את־פרעה :

It is this matter that I have spoken to Pharaoh: What God is about to do He has shown to Pharaoh.

לב ועל השנות החלום אל־פרעה פעמים כִּי־נִכּוֹן הַדְּבָר מֵעַם הָאֱלֹקִים וּמִמָּהֵר הָאֱלֹקִים לַעֲשׂוֹתוֹ :

As for the repetition of the dream to Pharaoh-two times-it is because the matter stands ready before God, and God is hastening to accomplish it.

לח וַיֹּאמֶר פְּרֹעֶה אֶל־עֲבָדָיו הֲנִמְצָא כָּזֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹקִים בּוֹ :

Pharaoh said to his servants, Could we find another like him-a man in whom is the spirit of God?"

בראשית מב: יח

וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף בְּיָוֶם הַשְּׁלִישִׁי זֹאת עֲשׂוּ וְחִיּוּ אֶת־הָאֱלֹקִים אֲנִי יִרָא :

Joseph said to them on the third day, Do this and live; I fear God.

19) Rabbi Alex Israel

Joseph is not the assimilated Jew, but rather the Jew who lives in Galut. He must obey the codes, the fashions and the haircuts, the etiquette of Egyptian high society. He is fully integrated into that society; yet, at the same time, the name of God never leaves his lips, he upholds moral standards and a yearning for his homeland. Of all the sons of Jacob, Joseph is the only one who demands from his children an oath, that they will take his bones out of Egypt and bury them in the Holy Land. Joseph has a strong sense of Jewish identity.

Joseph is a Jew who lived steeped in foreign culture and remained true to his religion. Joseph is the person who knows how to take "Greece" absorbing what it offers him, but still retaining his Jewish identity. He knows what to take and what not to take. He is critically selective. He knows how to adopt those aspects of a foreign culture that are beneficial to a person, to a society, and he can identify and reject those aspects that are antagonistic and corrosive to the Jewish way of life.

Is Greece bad then? Is everything that came out of their rich world of ideas to be seen as threatening to Judaism? We would have to answer "no!" Judaism recognizes the power of Greece, its beauty and order. The Mishna states that: "A Torah scroll can be written in Greek" (Megilla 8b) and the rationale given by the Gemara for this ruling states that Greek beauty should find a place in Judaism. Likewise Maimonides adopted many principles of the thought of Plato and Aristotle. There are elements of the Greek culture that are welcomed in the world of Judaism. But the paganism, the infatuation with beauty which lead to the worship of the body, these are simply unacceptable.

For us who live in a world of other cultures, Joseph's message is crucial. His path is a difficult one to tread but tread it we must if we are to create a harmony between our faith and the culture of the Western world.

IDEA SEVEN: Modern Orthodoxy done right facilitates engagement with the outside world not as a threat to spirituality, but rather as a sacred opportunity to expand it.

IDEA EIGHT

(20) פניני הלכה – רב אליעזר מלמד

והיו עוד הרבה ימים טובים שתקנו חכמים לישראל בימי הבית השני להודאה ושמחה על הישועות שנעשו בהם לישראל, וכולם נזכרו במגילת תענית... שאחר שנחרב בית המקדש השני, בטלה מגילת תענית (שו"ע או"ח תקעג, א). כי אחר החורבן נתבטלו כל הדברים הטובים שנעשו באותם ימים, ואין יותר מקום לשמוח בהם, ואף מותר להתענות ולהספיד בהם. ורק ימי החנוכה נותרו מכל אותם ימים טובים.

And there were many good days that the sages of Israel established in the days of the Second Temple to acknowledge and rejoice in the salvations that were made for them in Israel, and they are all remembered in *megilat taanit*. However, after the destruction of the Second Temple, the scroll of Ta'anit was annulled. For after the destruction, celebration of all the good things done in those days were abolished, and there was no more room to rejoice in them, and it is even permissible to fast and eulogize in them. And only the days of Chanukah remained as a holiday from all of the celebrations.

IDEA EIGHT: Chanukah is as relevant today as it was in its time.

SUMMARY



The Jewish people exemplify eternal hope.



What happens inside our homes defines what happens outside our homes.



דע לפני מי אתה עומד (brachot 28)- Humanity has been empowered by God to partner WITH God in dominating the world...always guided by remembering from where he came and to where he will one day return.



We have to make sure that Torah enters our hearts and not just our minds; then it will not become easily removed.



עוד לא אבדה תקוותנו – We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope. (MLK)



וְתַלִּיד לְאִוֵּר גּוֹלִים (ישעיה מס:ו) – Fear not sharing the flame of your faith, living by example...it is what has brought light to the world for centuries.



Modern Orthodoxy done right facilitates engagement with the outside world not as a threat to spirituality, but rather as a sacred opportunity to expand it.



Chanukah is as relevant today as it was in its time.