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SPECIAL CHANUKAH DOUBLE ISSUE

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Vayeshev

JOINING THE IVY LEAGUE

“And Yosef had been brought down to Egypt...” (39:1)

In North-West London where I grew up it was not uncommon to find a Jewish home at this time of year that had a menorah at one end of the living room and an Xmas tree at the other.

Chanukah comes at a time of the year where the bombardment of the season to be jolly is unremitting; where renegade reindeers threaten to leap from behind the holly and the ivy and the fake snow of every shop window.

And I have my suspicions that the Jewish custom to give money to children on Chanukah (*Chanukah gelt*) may well be a method of distracting the eyes of the young and the restless from gorgeously over-stuffed Xmas stockings.

Even though the Maccabees managed to overcome the Greeks and rededicate the Beit Hamikdash (“Chanukah” comes from the root meaning “to dedicate a building”), the war is far from over.

Chanukah always falls during the Torah portions of Yosef. What is the connection between Yosef and Chanukah? Another question: Why was it that Yosef was sent into the exile of Egypt and not one of the other brothers? And why specifically was it the Maccabees, who were *kohanim*, who overpowered the Greeks?

The prayer “*Al Hanissim*” emphasizes the role of the *kohanim* in the defeat of the Greeks. Even more than their role in the Beit Hamikdash, the *kohanim* were responsible for disseminating Torah to the Jewish People. We see this in

Parshat V’Zot Habracha, where Moshe first blesses the tribe of Levi that they will “teach laws to Yaakov and Torah to Yisrael.” And only afterwards he says, “They will place before You the *ketoret* and the offerings of the Altar” (Devarim 33:10). The role of the *kohanim* as the teachers of Torah precedes the service in the Beit Hamikdash.

Yosef too represents the power of Torah. Yosef was the brightest and most diligent Torah student of all the sons of Yaakov (Targum – Bereshit 37:7). It was for this reason that he was sent to Egypt, for he alone had the spiritual survival kit to withstand the withering decadence of Egypt.

When Pharaoh elevated Yosef to the greatest position in the land, he applied great pressure on Yosef to make him abandon his faith and become an Egyptian. And so it has been down the ages that apostasy has been the entry fee into gentile society. In every generation there is another Egypt that tempts Jews with the glittering prizes of secular success, only demanding of them that they should break with the outdated and quaint customs of their forbears.

Every Chanukah we commemorate the rededication of the Holy Beit Hamikdash. However, in our own lives the real rededication is to Torah learning and careful observance of the *mitzvot* — for that is the only thing that will keep the Xmas tree out of the living room.

• Source: Based on an essay by Rabbi Shlomo Tanenbaum

Miketz

THE HIDDEN LIGHT

“When behold! Out of the river there emerged seven cows...” (41:2)

One of the most difficult things in life is to take the wisdom of happiness into the despair of depression. The despair of depression and the wisdom of happiness are two different worlds, two different realities. They have no point of contact. It’s like visiting time

at the State Pen when the telephone has broken down. A one-inch wall of glass separates them like a prisoner from his wife. They gesture to each other but their mutual isolation is total. They are like two people on different islands waving flags at each other, but neither understands

continued on page twelve

PARSHA OVERVIEW

Vayeshev

Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's subplot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the *Mashiach*. Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In jail, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is reinstated, and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in prison.

Miketz

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian overlord and acts harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey, they discover the money and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable, he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety, and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks, and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin become his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

ISRAEL Forever

THE FEW AGAINST THE MANY

In the "*Al Hanissim*" prayer that we add to our service and grace after meals, we thank G-d for "delivering the many into the hands of the few."

This is a reference to the miraculous victory achieved by a vastly outnumbered Jewish army over their Hellenist oppressors.

When we repeat this prayer over and over during the eight days of Chanukah we internalize the message that it

was not heroism and military genius alone which achieved this victory against all odds, but rather Heavenly intervention.

In a time when Israel is consistently outvoted in UN bodies and faces diplomatic and military threats from so many countries, it is important to maintain our faith that if we remain loyal to our G-d He will once again deliver the many into the hands of the few and secure Israel forever.

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PARSHA Q&A ?

Vayeshev

1. "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef...." Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
6. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
7. Why didn't G-d reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?
8. For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
9. Verse 37:35 states "his father wept." To whom does this refer?
10. Who was Tamar's father?
11. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
12. Why is the word "hand" mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
13. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
14. How did Potiphar "see" that G-d was with Yosef?
15. Who in this week's Parsha pretended to be sick?
16. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
17. For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?
18. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler's dream?
19. What prompted the butler and baker to tell Yosef their dreams?
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Vayeshev's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.
2. 37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.
3. 37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.
4. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
5. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.
6. 37:33 - Yitzchak.
7. 37:33 - Because the brothers had issued a ban against revealing the truth to Yaakov, and G-d, so to speak, abided by their ban.
8. 37:34 - Twenty-two years.
9. 37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.
10. 38:24 - Shem.
11. 38:26 - In the merit of her modesty.
12. 38:30 - To allude to his descendent, Achan, who sinned with his hand by taking four things from the spoils of Jericho.
13. 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife.
14. 39:3 - Yosef mentioned G-d's name frequently in his speech.
15. 39:11 - Potiphar's wife.
16. 40:1 - The butler was imprisoned because a fly was found in the king's goblet, and the baker was imprisoned because a pebble was found in the king's bread.
17. 40:4 - Twelve months.
18. 40:5 - The baker dreamed the interpretation of the butler's dream.
19. 40:6 - Yosef asked them why they looked troubled.
20. 40:23 - He remained in prison an additional two years.

חג חנוכה שמח
Wishing our readers a Happy Chanukah!

PARSHA Q&A ?

Miketz

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "Tsafnat Panayach" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?
6. What did Yosef require the Egyptians to do before he would sell them grain?
7. Did Yaakov and his family still have food when he sent his sons to Egypt? If yes, why did he send them?
8. What prophetic significance lay in Yaakov's choice of the word "redu" — "descend" (and not "lechu" — "go")?
9. Why does the verse say "Yosef's brothers" went down to Egypt (and not "Yaakov's sons")?
10. When did Yosef know that his dreams were being fulfilled?
11. Under what pretext did Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies?
12. Why did the brothers enter the city through different gates?
13. Who was the interpreter between Yosef and his brothers?
14. Why did Yosef specifically choose Shimon to put in prison?
15. How does the verse indicate that Shimon was released from prison after his brothers left?
16. What was Yaakov implying when he said to his sons: "I am the one whom you bereaved."?
17. How did Reuven try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyamin to Egypt?
18. How long did it take for Yaakov and family to eat all the food that the brothers brought back from Egypt? Give the answer in terms of travel time.
19. How much more money did the brothers bring on their second journey than they brought on the first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Miketz's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.
6. 41:55 - Become circumcised.
7. 42:1 - Yes, but he sent them because he did not want to cause envy in the eyes of those who did not have food.
8. 42:2 - It hinted to the 210 years that the Jewish people would be in Egypt: The word "redu" has the numerical value of 210.
9. 42:3 - Because they regretted selling Yosef and planned to act as brothers by trying to find him and ransom him at any cost.
10. 42:9 - When his brothers bowed to him.
11. 42:12 - They entered the city through 10 gates rather than through one gate.
12. 42:13 - To search for Yosef throughout the city.
13. 42:23 - His son Menashe.
14. 42:24 - Because he was the one who cast Yosef into the pit and the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger to him.
15. 42:24 - The verse says Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight.
16. 42:36 - That he suspected them of having slain or sold Shimon, and that they may have done the same to Yosef.
17. 42:37 - He said, "Kill my two sons if I fail to bring back Binyamin."
18. 43:2,10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much, in order to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more even if the price had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said, "We returned the money we found in our sacks; can it be that we would steal?"

- Till when can one retract on finalizing a gift
- The inability of a mother to inherit from her son
- The order of heirs
- The debate with the *Tzedukim* re an inheritance law
- Importance of leaving behind a son
- Grandfather's precedence as heir
- The three portions inherited by Tzelofchad's daughters
- How inheritance of Eretz Yisrael was determined
- Danger of the "evil eye"
- Who inherited the portion of Eretz Yisrael denied to the *meraglim* spies and other sinners
- The Shabbat violator in the wilderness and his punishment
- How Tzelofchad's daughters presented their appeal
- The special qualities of those women
- The child-bearing situation of special women
- Whether one can revoke his pledge to the Sanctuary

THE DAUGHTERS OF TZELOFCHAD

The "heroines" of the Torah chapter regarding inheritance are the five daughters of Tzelofchad who initiated the revelation of these laws through their request for a portion in Eretz Yisrael as heirs of their deceased father.

Their righteousness was expressed in the fact that they were so intent on marrying only a suitable mate that none of them became a wife before the age of forty.

Tosefot points out that their father died at the beginning of the forty-year wandering in the wilderness and they married at the end of that period, thus making the youngest at

least forty years old. As proof that Tzelofchad died early, Tosefot cites a midrash that identifies the mysterious public violator of the Shabbat (*Bamidbar* 15:32-36) who was executed for his sin as Tzelofchad, and explains his well-meaning motive. That incident took place at the very beginning, right after the entire generation was condemned to wander and die in the wilderness for accepting the slander of the *meraglim* spies. Many Jews felt that since they were not going to enter Eretz Yisrael they were no longer obligated to keep G-d's commands. To demonstrate that this was not so, Tzelofchad sacrificed his life to show that responsibility was still in effect.

• *Bava Batra 119b*

What the SAGES Say

"In Torah gatherings the precedence in seating is granted to the outstanding scholar but at wedding feasts this honor is given to the very old."

• *Rabbi Ami - Bava Batra 120a*

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BAVA BATRA 121 - 127

- Why the fifteenth of the Month of Av was such a special day
- Seven men who spanned all of history
- Who was exempt from the decree to die in the wilderness
- How Eretz Yisrael was divided amongst the tribes and how it will be divided in the future
- Designating one child as the only heir
- Why the firstborn birthright was transferred from Reuven to Yosef
- When the oldest son gets a double portion of the inheritance
- Designating the order of recipients of a gift
- The firstborn who waived his right to double portion
- How one can determine who will get his property when he dies
- A father's credibility in regard to status of son

THE MISTAKEN VOICE

The Patriarch Yaakov was about to marry Rachel for whose sake he had worked for her father Lavan for seven years. He was afraid, however, that his deceitful employer might try to switch Rachel with her older sister Leah. To foil such a plot he made up with Rachel that she would say some secret *simanim* code words known only to the both of them. When it came time for the marriage ceremony, however, Rachel was afraid that her sister, who indeed replaced her at the command of her devious father, would be embarrassed if exposed, and revealed to her the secret code.

The question raised by the commentaries is why such a strategy was necessary when Yaakov could have detected the swindle by recognizing the voice alone.

The same question arises in regard to the failure of Yaakov's father to recognize his voice when he impersonated his brother Eisav in order to gain the blessing intended for him. Ramban's approach there is that siblings have similar voices or that Yaakov was capable of impersonating the voice as well. Maharsha's solution is that in both cases there was a slight suspicion because of the variance of the voices, but it was dismissed in favor of the hairy arms in the case of Yitzchak's blessing and the *simanim* code in the case of Yaakov and Rachel.

• Bava Batra 123a

What the SAGES Say

"The descendants of Eisav will be overcome only by the descendants of Yosef."

• Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachmani - Bava Batra 123b

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PLACES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

MACCABEE – A NAME AND BATTLE CRY

The military miracle of Chanukah is always associated with Yehuda Maccabee, the heroic son of Matityahu, the *Kohen Gadol*, who led the revolt against the Hellenist oppressors.

One explanation for the name Maccabee is



that it is an acronym of the Hebrew verse *Mi chamocho ba-eilim Hashem* ("Who is like You among the gods, Hashem!")

This was apparently the battle cry of the army led by Yehuda that puts its faith in G-d as the source of their success.

MIGHT OR LIGHT

From: Matthew

Dear Rabbi,

Why do the traditional sources seem to downplay the military aspect of Chanukah and focus more on the theme of oil and light?

Dear Matthew,

Clearly, one of the main reason for establishing Chanukah as a festival for all Jews in all generations was to commemorate the miraculous military victory of the Maccabees over the Greeks. In fact, the special additions to be recited in the prayers and the blessing after meals during Chanukah make explicit mention of the military aspect of the victory: "You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few...".

However, the continuation of the same prayer states: "[You delivered] the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton into the hands of those dedicated to Your Torah." The fact that the prayer enumerates more, and crescendos with, matters of spiritual victory does indicate as you suggest that the main emphasis is on the miracle of the oil, menorah and light. Why?

While initially the military victory resulted in both the physical and spiritual independence of the Jewish people such that their enemies were defeated and the decrees against Torah observance were nullified, eventually the Hasmonean dynasty declined, the Temple was destroyed and the Jews became subjugated again to the nations. What was primarily left of the Chanukah miracle for the Jews to celebrate was the spiritual victory which continued to kindle light into the darkness of exile.

The light of the menorah represents the illumination of the Torah in the hearts and minds of the Jewish people. The Greeks entering the Temple and defiling the oil correspond-

ed with the penetration of Greek culture into Israel which blemished their hearts and minds with the impure notion that the "wisdom of the Greeks" surpassed that of the Torah, G-d forbid.

When the Hasmoneans regained the Temple and found even just a small quantity of oil untouched and undefiled by the Greeks, this symbolized the fact that despite all the Greeks had done to contaminate the hearts and minds of the Jews, there still remained a source of potential purity which could be sparked to rekindle the unique Jewish role as a Light unto the nations.

However, this "oil" seemed barely enough to last for those days alone. Where would Israel find enough to burn through the completion of the world as we know it into Messianic times? [This concept is symbolized by the eight days of the festival, because seven represents the natural cycle of time whereas eight symbolizes things that transcend time.] G-d came to their assistance in this darkest hour to ignite the spark of true Torah wisdom in the hearts and minds of the Jews which He fanned into a flame that illuminates their path through exile till redemption.

This miracle of purifying the heart and mind with the oil of Torah is necessary for Israel in every generation – especially when Israel is subjugated and threatened by the nations of the world. As long as Jews' faith and wisdom is purely Jewish, it is through this light that they will find liberation. But when the Jewish People's faith and wisdom become defiled by the impurity of beliefs and practices antithetical to the Torah, they perpetuate their own subjugation.

Therefore, it is through the unique illumination of Torah that the sanctity and unique identity of Israel among the nations is preserved. This dynamic is a miracle which endures through the generations and can find its expression in every age. Yet not every generation is worthy of complete and enduring military victory. It is for this reason, then, that the commemoration of the Chanukah miracle relates primarily to the vigilant rekindling of the Menorah whose illuminating message shines through all generations till the Day of Redemption.

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Question: If I place my Chanukah lamp outside the entrance to my home as is preferred by *halacha* am I responsible for any damage resulting from a fire caused by a vehicle passing by and colliding with the lamp?

Answer: Your question is the subject of a debate between Rabbi Yehuda and other Sages (*Bava Kama*). The subject there is a shopkeeper who placed his Chanukah lamp outside his shop in the public thoroughfare. A camel loaded with

flax passed by, its load caught on fire from the lamp and caused a conflagration that destroyed a building. Rabbi Yehuda's position is that while the shopkeeper would be held responsible in ordinary circumstances, he is free of responsibility when he places his lamp in the street in order to fulfill a mitzvah. He is, however, overruled by the majority of the Sages because he still had the responsibility of guarding his lamp to assure that it would cause no damage. (See *Shulchan Aruch Choshen Mishpat* 518:12).

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

LOOKING FORWARD TO THE REDEEMER

An interesting way for a Jew to demonstrate his faith that Mashiach may arrive any day was described by Rabbi Yitzchak Zilberstein, the rav of the Ramat Elchanan community in Bnei Brak.

On a visit to a farmer who raised sheep, the rabbi suggested to him how to fulfill what is ruled by the Rambam (Laws of Kings 11:1) that one must not only believe in the

inevitable arrival of the Redeemer but must also look forward to it. Since a lamb that is more than one year old is not eligible for offering as a *korban Pesach*, it would be wise for the farmer to record the date of birth of his lambs so that when the Beit Hamikdash is built upon Mashiach's arrival he will be able to provide a qualified candidate for the altar.

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- Q**
- Which miracle do we celebrate with the lighting of candles?
 - How did they know that the oil found was uncontaminated?
 - Who led the battle against the Hellenites?
 - During which of the “four exiles” did the miracle of Chanukah take place?
 - Name two non-halachic customs connected with Chanukah.
 - How many blessings are made before lighting candles?
 - Why do we light the extra candle known as the “*shamash*”?
 - What is added to our regular prayers at least three times a day?
 - What is the special reading of the Torah each day?
 - Is it obligatory to eat a meal like on Purim?
 - When do we have occasion to use three Sifrei Torah on Chanukah?
 - What three *mitzvot* did the Hellenites decree against?
 - What damage did the Hellenites do to the Beit Hamikdash?
 - What two military advantages did the Hellenite army have over the Jews?
 - Is it permissible to do work on Chanukah?
 - Why is there no Mussaf prayer on Chanukah except for Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh?
 - How does the name Chanukah indicate the date when this holiday begins?
 - What special prayer do we add to the morning services?
 - What did the Jews do after victory that explains the name Chanukah?
 - Which regular prayers in the morning service do we omit on Chanukah?
- A**
- The oil for lighting the menorah in the Beit Hamikdash after the victory over the Hellenites was only enough for one day and it miraculously lasted for eight days until a new supply of pure oil was available. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:1)
 - Its container had the seal of the *kohen gadol*. (*Mesechta Shabbat* 21b)
 - Matityahu, the *kohen gadol* and his sons. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:1, and the “*Al Hanissim*” prayer in the Siddur)
 - The third exile under Hellenite oppression during the era of the second Beit Hamikdash. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:1)
 - Eating either donuts or potato pancakes made with oil and playing with the *sivivon* (dreidel).
 - Three blessings the first night and two the other nights. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:4)
 - Since it is forbidden to benefit from the light of the candles we light an extra one so that if we do benefit it will be from that one called the *shamash* because it is sometimes used to serve as the lighting agent. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 673:1)
 - The prayer “*Al Hanissim*” (Ibid. 682:1)
 - The gifts of the *nesi'im* (heads of the twelve tribes at the inauguration of the Sanctuary as recorded in *Bamidbar* 7:1-8). (Ibid. 684:1)
 - No. But if the meal is accompanied by songs of praise to Heaven it is considered a *seudat mitzvah*. (Ibid. 670:2)
 - When Rosh Chodesh Tevet is on Shabbat and we read selections for Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and Chanukah. (Ibid. 684:3)
 - Shabbat, circumcision and Rosh Chodesh. (*Midrash*)
 - They made breaks in the walls and contaminated the sacred items. (Rambam, Laws of Chanukah 1:1)
 - They were stronger and more numerous. (“*Al Hanissim*” Prayer)
 - It is permissible to work but women have a custom of refraining from work for the first half hour that the candles are burning. (*Mishna Berurah* 670:1)
 - Because there were no additional sacrifices in the Beit Hamikdash during Chanukah. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 682:2)
 - If we break up the word into two parts — *Chanu*, and the letters *chaf* and *hei*, we read that they rested from the war on the 25th day of the month.
 - Hallel (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 683:1)
 - They rededicated the altar in the Beit Hamikdash, which the Hellenites had defiled. (“Chanukah” means inauguration.)
 - Tachanun and Psalm 20 before *Uva Letzion*. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 683:1)

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Light and Darkness

BY RABBI MENDEL WEINBACH

Chanukah is celebrated with the oil lamps or candles which Jews throughout the world light in remembrance of the miracle of the oil in the Beit Hamikdash that occurred more than two millennia ago. After miraculously overcoming the superior forces of their Hellenist oppressors our ancestors anxiously looked forward to once again lighting the sacred menorah. Not only had their enemies denied them the opportunity to do so during their evil reign but they also contaminated all the oil that they found. Miracle followed miracle as one flask of oil was found with the seal of the *kohen gadol*. It had just enough oil to light the menorah one day but it lasted for eight days until a new supply of pure oil was available.

Why, ask our commentaries, was a miracle necessary when the halacha permits using even contaminated oil for the sacred service if pure oil is not available?

Perhaps the answer lies in what took place when light was first created by G-d. On the very first day of creation, the Torah tells us, “G-d saw the light was good and G-d separated between the light and the darkness” (Bereishet 1:4). The Midrash explains that prior to that Divinely ordered separation, light and darkness jointly served the world. G-d’s separation of the two created day and night.

In his commentary Rashi writes that “G-d saw that the light was good” (ibid.) and that it was not fitting for it to be mixed together with the darkness and He therefore assigned one of them to the day and one to the night.

From the beginning of time light cannot coexist with darkness. The Hellenists, whose reign is compared by

the Midrash to the primeval darkness mentioned in the account of creation, attempted to blend light with darkness. They did not destroy the Beit Hamikdash as did the Babylonians before them and the Romans after them, and they did not perpetrate the genocide planned by Haman. Their sole aim was, as we say in our “*Al Hanissim*” prayer, to “cause us to forget our Torah and abandon our fulfillment of G-d’s commands” in order to accept their pagan Hellenistic culture. To accomplish this goal they selectively prohibited those *mitzvot* that principally set the Jew apart from them – Shabbat, circumcision and the Jewish calendar of months and holidays. They made breaks in the walls of the Beit Hamikdash and contaminated its contents.

All this was done in order to have the darkness of their paganism function alongside the light of Judaism. Once this darkness was removed with the triumph of the Jewish forces, it was understood that there was no room left for any darkness, even in the form of contaminated oil. Heaven therefore made a miracle for the pure oil that was found to last until a new supply was available.

The message of this miracle is that in our own days we must be careful to prevent the forces of darkness so prevalent in the world – lack of faith in G-d, immorality and violence – from infringing upon the pure light of a Torah lifestyle.

In our kindling of the Chanukah lamps and in our daily lives we must offer a proud response to the Divine command:

“Let there be light.”

Chanukah

THE TRANSCENDENT HOLIDAY

by Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

In America today there is an unfortunate tendency to secularize and equate Xmas and Chanukah under the heading of “The Holiday Season”. It is no longer politically correct to wish someone a “Merry Xmas” or “Happy Chanukah”. Instead, one must substitute something like “enjoy your holiday”. This is unfortunate for two reasons. Firstly, it undercuts a cherished American value: freedom of religious expression. Secondly, equating Chanukah with Xmas completely distorts the meaning of Chanukah and the enormity of the difference between the two celebrations.

It may come as a surprise to most Americans, but the celebration of Xmas is based on a pagan festival which was celebrated centuries ago in northern Europe. The legend of Jesus’ birth at that time of year was superimposed on this pagan festival as Christianity spread into Europe. The shortest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere is December 21, the winter solstice.

From that point on, the days begin to lengthen again, a cause of great celebration for these primitive pagans who feared that the earth would be swallowed up by cold and darkness. For the first couple of days after December 21, there is no measurable difference, but by

December 25 it was clear that the days were longer. Hence the great celebration. All the appurtenances of the celebration: the tree, the wreaths, the gifts and the feast are pagan in origin. As a matter of fact there are thousands of devout Christians throughout the world who refuse to celebrate Xmas because of its essential pagan nature.

The essence of Chanukah could not be more different. On Chanukah we celebrate the triumph of the eternal spiritual truths of Judaism over the enticing, but pagan beliefs of Greek culture. The light of the menorah represents the transcendent truths of Judaism, which go beyond the observable truths of the natural world. Even secular scientists realize that light itself defies categorization. It combines properties of matter and energy. It is transcendent. Chanukah is not about giving and receiving presents. It is about gaining an understanding of the immutable triumph of Judaism and the Jewish spirit in the face of centuries of persecution and enticement.

Christian society has made secular Jews aware of Chanukah on one level. It is our responsibility to deepen this awareness and explain the true meaning of this celebration.

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The Hidden Light...continued from page one

the other's signal. They are like two people who don't know a word of each other's language, trying to hold a conversation using a dictionary in which every word is completely mistranslated.

Seven cows emerge from the river. They are beautiful to behold, strong and healthy. Then, seven other cows emerge from the river. These cows are as dissimilar from the first cows as is possible. They are gaunt, skinny, and malnourished. And then, these evil looking creatures devour the fat cows. Nothing is left. The fat cows are gone and the thin cows are as thin and as miserable-looking as before.

In life, a person must use his days of optimism, the good days, the days that are full of holiness and closeness to G-d, to fix in his heart the light of that holiness so that when lean gaunt days come upon him he is prepared. Then he will understand that the light has not vanished; it is only hidden. The light seems to have been swallowed up completely by evil but in fact it is merely in exile.

At the beginning of time, there shone a unique light called the *Ohr Haganuz* — the Hidden Light. This light was not like any light that you or I have ever seen. With this light you could see from one end of the Creation to the other. In other words, you could see how one end of the Creation was connected to the other. It was a spiritual light that revealed the existence of the unseen world of spirituality. G-d hid away the *Ohr Haganuz* after the first

thirty-six hours of Creation so that evil would not be able to exploit its power. However, there are times when you can still catch glimpses of its hidden glow.

On the first night of Chanukah we light one candle, on the second night two. Thus after two nights we have lit three candles. If you do your sums right, you'll find that the total number of candles that we light on Chanukah is thirty-six (excluding the *shamash*). The thirty-six lights of Chanukah correspond to the thirty-six hours during which the *Ohr Haganuz* shone.

The power of depression is that it tries to usurp the light. It tries to usurp the true reality of things. It tries to tell us that the good days have been devoured by the bad. The light has gone forever, That the bad days are now firmly in command.

That's the message of this week's Torah portion, and it's also the message of Chanukah. The thin cows want us believe that the healthy cows are gone forever. That they rule in their stead. The nations of the world want us to believe that we no longer have any portion in the G-d of Israel. That He has hidden the light forever.

However, those thin cows will only be in business for just as long as G-d allows them to keep the good years in exile. They have no independent power. One day, very soon, that Hidden Light will blaze once more in this world of darkness, and the rule of the gaunt and evil cows will be revealed as no more than a dream.

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