

O H R N E T

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SPECIAL CHANUKAH ISSUE · HAPPY CHANUKAH!

PARSHA INSIGHTS

My YIDDISHE TATTE

“Yisrael their father said to them, ‘if it must be so... Take your brother and return to the man.

And may Almighty G-d grant you mercy before the man, that he may release to you your other brother as well as Binyamin.’” (43:11-14)

One of today’s most offensive and inaccurate canards must be the “Jewish Mother”. The “Jewish Mother” emasculates her offspring with suffocating affection, refusing to sever the apron strings that bind her brood. She wields emotional blackmail with the accuracy of a surgeon’s knife and the mercilessness of a Machiavelli.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Talmud (Shabbat 23b) teaches us that someone who does the mitzvah of lighting the lamps of Shabbat and Chanukah will have children who are *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars).

What is the specific connection between lighting lamps and being blessed with children who will be Torah scholars?

One of life’s great temptations is to think that we control events. “I got up at five every morning and that’s why I made a million.” “I practiced 12 hours every day and that’s why I’m a concert violinist.”

Who do you think gave you the strength and determination to get up early? Who do you think gave you the gift of music? There are plenty of people who get up at four-thirty who are still paying their mortgage. There are plenty of Yehudi Menuhin wannabes who can’t coax an Irish jig out of a fiddle.

Even when we do a mitzvah we think it’s *me* doing the mitzvah. It’s *me* putting on *tefillin*. It’s *me* making *kiddush* on Friday night. *Me*. I’m the one that’s doing it. Aren’t I?

The mitzvah of the menorah on Chanukah isn’t just to light it. The mitzvah includes that it should stay lit until people go home from the market. I can light my menorah — it’s *me* doing the lighting. *But I can’t make it stay alight!* No amount of encouragement from the sidelines will make that candle burn if the Master of all Creation doesn’t will it to continue burning. No rooting, no cheerleading can encourage that little fledgling candle to burn if G-d doesn’t will it to be so.

On Shabbat, one of the reasons the woman of the house lights candles is so that there will be light to see. For without

light, someone might trip and fall and this would certainly upset the harmony of the home. In other words, the actual lighting of the lamps is only part of the mitzvah. The lamps must also give us pleasure and benefit as well. And for this, they need to stay lit.

The mitzvah of the lights of Shabbat and the menorah includes the realization that all we can ever do is to start the process. The rest is in the Hands of G-d.

It’s the same with raising children. Every parent hopes that his children will grow up to be healthy, wise and upright, but we cannot guarantee the process. We protect our children as much as is reasonable, but we cannot lock them in a padded room. We cannot put lead suits on them. All we can do is to kindle in them the spark. The spark of loving G-d; of loving their fellow Jew; of being a *mentch*. We cannot complete the process. It’s up to them — and to G-d. Eventually, all we can do is to stand on the sidelines with our prayers and our tears. What they will be is not up to us.

In this week’s Torah portion, Yaakov Avinu reluctantly allowed the brothers to take Binyamin down to Egypt. He realized that there was no guarantee that Binyamin would return to him. And yet he let him go. After doing everything that was reasonable, Yaakov put his trust in G-d that He would protect his son.

After lighting Shabbat candles on Friday afternoon, Jewish mothers have a custom to say a prayer. These are its concluding lines: “Privilege me to raise children and grandchildren who are wise and understanding, who love and fear G-d, people of truth, holy offspring, attached to G-d, who illuminate the world with Torah and good deeds and with every labor in the service of the Creator. Please hear my supplications at this time, in the merit of Sarah, Rivka, Rachel and Leah, our mothers, and cause our light to illuminate that it not be extinguished forever, and let Your countenance shine so that we will be saved. Amen.”

Now that’s a Jewish mother.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

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

HALFHEARTED BENEFACTOR

“Cursed are the wicked for their favors are so deficient.” (Rashi on *Bereishet* 41:12) This is the observation of the *midrash* cited by Rashi in regard to the statement of the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers when he revealed to Pharaoh the dream interpretation power of Yosef. He described Yosef as a “Hebrew” (who does not speak our language), a “youth” (who is not wise enough for authority), and a “slave” (who is disqualified by Egyptian law from ruling or wearing the vestments of authority).

All of this while purportedly fulfilling his promise to help

free Yosef from prison in return for his lifesaving interpretation of his own dream.

Israel today is also suffering from the deficient praise of those who purport to be her benefactors. The praise received for making unwarranted concessions to the Palestinians is hardly a compensation for the pressure which forces the Israeli government to act against its best interests.

But just as that damning with praise did not succeed in thwarting Yosef's rise to power, so will Heaven help us survive the pressures of our halfhearted benefactors and secure Israel forever.

LOVE OF THE LAND - THE PEOPLE

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

ELISHA – THE PERFECT GUEST

Should one avail himself of the hospitality of others or to make every effort to fend for himself? The Talmudic Sages point out that there are models in Tanach for either approach. The Prophet Shmuel made his rounds of Eretz Israel each year, judging and guiding his people, but always took his home along with him so that he would not be dependent on anyone. (*Shmuel* 7:16-17)

The Prophet Elisha, on the other hand, accepted the



hospitality of a “great woman” in Shunam who not only provided him with meals but also built for him a special guest-room furnished for his comfort.

Elisha was the perfect guest who insisted on repaying the kindness shown him. Upon discovering that his hostess was childless he blessed her to give birth to a child. When that child was the victim of a sudden death some years later the prophet brought him back to life. (*Melachim II* 4:8-37)

PARSHA Q&A ?

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 Week'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?"

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- If the ritually impure person can send an animal as a *korban Pesach*
- Which sort of disqualification of a sacrifice is prevented by the *tzitz* headplate of the *Kohen Gadol*
- Sitting, improper standing and left-handed handling as disqualifications of sacrificial service
- Sacrificial blood – its reception and application
- Which thoughts disqualify a sacrifice
- Blood applied to wrong part of the altar
- Difference between *passul* and *pigul*
- Torah sources for both
- Lateness in bringing sacrifice

PIGUL – THE HIDDEN MEANING

“If some of the meat of this *shlamim* sacrifice will be eaten on the third day, it is not acceptable... it is *pigul*.” (Vayikra 7:18)

Thus the Torah introduces us to the concept of *pigul*. But the literal interpretation of these words – that one who eats the meat of the *shlamim* sacrifice beyond the two-day limit disqualifies the sacrifice – is an incorrect one.

Our *gemara* points out that this cannot be the meaning of this passage for it is inconceivable that a sacrifice can be disqualified after all of the services — from slaughter to blood application — have been properly performed.

What then is the hidden meaning?

The answer lies in the term *pigul*.

If the *kohen* performing one of the sacrificial services had

in mind that the meat of that sacrifice would be consumed beyond the time limited by the Torah, the sacrifice is considered *pigul*. Anyone who eats the meat of that sacrifice, even within the time frame allotted for eating, is liable for the punishment of *karet* (spiritual excision).

There are other situations in which improper thought affects the status of the sacrifice. In the beginning of this *mesechta* we learned that if the *kohen* performs a service with an intention for a different sacrifice or for a different owner, the sacrifice is valid but the owner is not credited. Another situation is one in which the *kohen* had in mind that the meat of the sacrifice would be eaten outside of the prescribed precincts. This disqualifies the sacrifice but does not render its meat the status of *pigul*.

• Zevachim 29a

What the SAGES Say

“When the Torah states that the *kohanim* have been chosen ‘to stand and serve’ (Devarim 18:15), it means that they have been chosen to do so while standing and not while sitting.”

• Rabbi Nachman - Zevachim 23b

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CHANUKAH GELT

From: Michal

*Dear Rabbi,
My husband and I are not really sure what's appropriate gift giving for Chanukah. Clearly the kids will be there when we light the menorah every night, we'll tell them about Chanukah, and get them some books. But are they supposed to get gifts/gelt/how often/how many? What's too much and what's too little? My husband grew up not celebrating Chanukah and I grew up getting multiple gifts every single night of Chanukah - neither of which seem acceptable to us. We would really appreciate some insight and direction. Thank you in advance.*

Dear Michal,

The extent of gift-giving on Chanukah is a difficult problem for all parents in predominantly Christian countries where such a great emphasis is placed on presents at this time of the year, and particularly in Western, consumer-oriented society.

The more that Jewish children are exposed to this present-under-the-Christmas-tree culture, the more challenging the problem becomes. Therefore, this is one of many reasons why in general it is very important to make sure children get a strong Jewish education, part of which should equip them to maintain Jewish values while being surrounded by a largely non-Jewish environment.

At home, before and during Chanukah, you should be explaining to you children in a way each child can understand, that the main theme of Chanukah is about the way in which non-Jews attempted to impose their culture and values on the Jewish People against their will, and how the Jews resisted this with great self-sacrifice. While the ancient Greeks espoused this-worldliness to the point of excessive indulgence and impurity, the Jews sought to cultivate spirituality and holiness.

Explain that today, the general situation is different, but the dynamic and the dangers are the same. Chanukah is not

about grandiose gifts, glittering decorations and gluttonous consumption, but rather about kindling and revealing the spiritual light out of this culture of darkness. Its message is our hope that no matter how small and seemingly unimpressive this light may be, the simplicity, purity and holiness of this light will eventually illuminate the entire world.

I suggest you really try hard to create the proper environment at home to inculcate these values – and a great part of this is the example you show as parents. During Chanukah make every effort to show your children that your Jewish home is more important than your work and other interests. Make every effort to come home as early as possible to spend the evening together as a family – and this means shutting off the TV, computer, and even the phones.

Teach your children to love the lighting of the menorah not because it's accompanied by gift giving, but through your beautifying of the mitzvah and fulfilling it with joy. Include them in the mitzvah of lighting as well, according to what's appropriate for each age. Afterwards, eat a festive meal together, read books and stories about the holiday and play fun, Jewish games together.

That being said, children are children, and Judaism does harness their desire for sweets and presents toward appreciating holidays. One small gift per child (and books should be viewed as gifts) on a few of the eight nights, and/or one or two larger gifts to be shared by several children, together with some occasional sweets seems just fine. If you anticipate the kids getting gifts and sweets from other sources like school, grandparents, etc., than these should be factored in to the total and there's no reason kids should expect a set amount from the parents plus these "windfalls".

In all cases, you should (politely) regulate the type and cost of the gifts to ensure they are harmonious with Jewish values. If the gift-giving is modest and in moderation, and if it is done within the context I've described, the gifts will enhance the holiday rather than the holiday becoming the conduit through which to get gifts.

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THE PARAMETERS OF PRIVACY

Question: Whenever an ambulance appears in a neighborhood there is a tendency for people to rush to see who is being taken to the hospital and to stare at the figure on the stretcher. Is this considered an invasion of another person's privacy?

Answer: In the Talmud (first *perek* of *Mesechta Bava Batra*) we learn of restrictions imposed by halacha on home builders and expanders in order to avoid "hezek *ra'iyah*" the invasion of another person's privacy. While the main basis for these restrictions is to protect the neighbor's ability to have free use of his own premises without fear of being observed by others, these laws also show consideration for the embarrassment suffered by one who is watched by others in situations where he does not wish to be seen.

Based on this consideration it follows that staring at an ill person being taken to a hospital by ambulance is improper because it is a source of embarrassment for him to have people see him in such a helpless state. The halacha attaches

great importance to a sick person's peace of mind even in regard to Shabbat violation when there is a serious danger to life. Since the shame caused to the patient by staring at him while he is being placed in the ambulance can disturb his peace of mind, such behavior harbors on aggravating his condition and must be avoided. It therefore follows that a responsible adult at the scene should take the initiative of urging all the spectators, especially the naturally curious children, to leave the area and allow the ambulance crew to work in privacy.

As a footnote we might add a couple more examples of invasion of privacy that go beyond building restrictions. Looking at someone's passport or any other identification in order to find out how old he is.

Taking out of the Kotel a "kvittel" on which someone has written a personal prayer.

- Based on the response of Rabbi Yitzchok Zilberstein, Rabbi of the Ramat Elchanan Community in Bnei Brak

THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY _____

THE "PINTELE YID"

What gives everyone in the field of outreach the confidence that alienated and assimilated Jews can be reached is their faith in the Pintele Yid, literally the Jewish remnant residing in the heart of every Jew.

A best-selling book, "Sandy Koufax - A Lefty's Legacy", written by Jane Leavy, calls attention to the Pintele Yid in a Brooklyn boy who became a hero to Dodger fans, but an even greater hero to Jews everywhere.

On October 18, 1965, this legendary Los Angeles Dodger lefty was scheduled to pitch the opening game of the World Series against the Minnesota Twins. Koufax was not observant and did not even have a Bar Mitzvah ceremony.

But he refused to pitch that day because it was Yom Kippur.

Koufax became a hero for all Jews, even those with the remotest connection to their heritage. One example of his influence is cited by the author in the preface to her book. She was covering the U.S. Tennis Open for the Washington Post in 1983 on Yom Kippur. Then she remembered that 18 years earlier Koufax had declined the opportunity every American kid dreamed of. "I have not worked on the High Holidays since", she writes. "Sandy Koufax had made himself at home in my soul."

The Pintele Yid.

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The LAST DROP

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Excruciatingly slowly, the train to Siberia pulled out of Telz station, saving Rabbi Chaim Stein and his friends from certain death.

The train was a “local”, meaning it stopped at every “*stodt and shtetl*” along the way. Getting to Siberia and freedom would take many days, but for the moment they were safe. The friends sunk back in the chairs, their hearts filled with thanks to G-d for their delivery.

Several days passed. The unremitting boredom of the landscape was alleviated only by their learning of Torah and davening. Then someone remembered that the first light of Chanukah would be that night.

But how to light a candle here on this train?

They racked their brains trying to come up with an idea. Someone cut a small patch from his shirt and pulled it to pieces thread by thread and he twisted a wick from the threads. Someone else found a small discarded metal can that would do for a cup. But what about oil for the candle’s light?

They thought and thought but no one could come up with a solution. They sat in silence for many minutes, with only the sound of the engine chuffing up ahead.

The engine! Engines run on oil! Maybe there would be a way to get some of that oil!

It wasn’t long till the next stop. As soon as the train came to a rest, they all jumped down and examined the engine from every possible angle. One of them found a small venting pipe from which a minuscule amount of oil was dripping. They placed the cup under the pipe and collected as many drops as they could until the conductor blew his whistle and they hastily scampered back onto the train.

This ceremony was repeated throughout the day. They worked out that there were enough stops along the line to gather the minimum amount of oil needed to light the menorah.

With hearts full of thanks to G-d they lit the first light and made the three blessings. “Who has sanctified us through His commandments and commanded us to light the lights of Chanukah;” ...Who performed miracles for our fathers in those days at this time;” “...Who kept us alive and given us existence, and brought us to this time.”

They repeated this daily ritual of collecting the oil (with the exception of Shabbat) throughout the days of Chanukah.

The weather was deteriorating rapidly. In this wilderness stops were few. The frosty chill of Telz was replaced by the biting cold of the Siberian wasteland. And biting it surely was, for anyone who left the train for more than a few seconds without protective clothing would suffer frostbite.

On the last day of Chanukah one of them volunteered to try and get some oil. Someone wrapped his head with his own coat. Someone else lent him an extra pair of pants even though the temperature in the railway carriage was already subzero. When the train stopped he clambered down and pushed through the snow to the engine.

Nothing. Not a drop was leaking from the pipe, It was too cold even for the oil.

As quickly as he could, he made his way back to their carriage with the bad news.

As night loomed, their gloom deepened. The time for lighting came and went. There was nothing they could do.

Despair is not a Jewish thing.

If they couldn’t light the last candle physically, they would light in their hearts instead. They started to sing and dance and recount all they knew about Chanukah — including the halachic, ethical and mystical interpretations of the miraculous events of the festival.

They stayed up all night.

Around four o’clock in the morning there was a knock on the door of their carriage. They opened the door and filling the entrance was this enormous Russian with a candle in his hand.

“Do you need a candle?” he said.

Without even answering him, they grabbed the candle set it on the small table by the windowsill, made the blessings, and lit the candle.

Literally seconds later the ‘morning star’ rose – after which you can no longer light the Chanukah lights.

They had made it with only a few seconds to spare.

They turned around to thank the burly Russian, but he was nowhere to be seen.

The next day they scoured the train, but they could not find him, and he couldn’t have left the train, for there no more stops that day.

The story of Chanukah is a story of self-sacrifice. The *Chashmonaim* were prepared to give up their lives, and because of this, G-d gave them a miraculous victory.

But self-sacrifice doesn’t just mean being prepared to die — it means being ready to give up what we want for what G-d wants.

The more we are prepared to give up our own comfort or our desires, and if necessary even our lives, the more G-d will reveal to us the miraculous workings of His wonderful world.