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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON MIKETZ & SHABBOS CHANUKA 8 - 5770

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Hanukkah and Independence Day By Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik

Is Hanukkah merely a holiday telling us a heroic story of battles won and political victories gained, like the American Fourth of July or the French Fourteenth of July? A political event, even one of the greatest importance, can be celebrated only as long as the people view it as a turning point in history, the beginning of a new epoch in independence, and so long as one still enjoys that independence, as, for example, Independence Day in America.

However, a political victory loses its meaning when the people later lose their independence and the victory ends in a downfall. If Hanukkah had been simply a holiday of political freedom, its whole meaning would have evaporated with the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people.

Where is the logic in celebrating Hanukkah during thousands of years of exile, martyrdom, ghettos, pogroms, and suffering? Could one celebrate a holiday of political freedom when the condition of Jews was the very opposite of freedom and independence? How small and worthless do the Maccabean victories seem when compared to the cruel political downfalls that we have suffered?

The Talmud states: "Megillat Ta'anit has been annulled ... But Hanukkah is different because there was then a public demonstration of God's miracle" (Rosh ha-Shanah 18b). Hanukkah is celebrated today, and that is a sign that the holiday, and its commemoration of God's miracles, belongs to the group of Jewish holidays that have Passover as their pinnacle. These holidays are based on an everlasting value, which no political destruction or military downfall can erase.

If the Halakhah chose to establish Hanukkah as a holiday to be observed whether or not the Temple stands, that is a sign that the Hanukkah that exists for generations, like Passover, holds within it the secret of the

eternity of Israel. The Hanukkah of political freedom, so popular with all, was annulled long ago with the destruction of the Temple, like all the other holidays of the Second Temple era that were mentioned in Megillat Ta'anit. It would seem, then, that the greatness of Hanukkah consists not so much in the importance of the miracles that occurred ba-yamim ha-hem, in the days of yore, over two thousand years ago, but most importantly ba-zeman ha-zeh, in our times, in the meaning of the ancient miracle for the here-and-now, which no destruction can annul or diminish.

Actually, there is a general misconception about the motivation for the Hasmonean uprising. The revolt of Matityahu the High Priest and his sons was not a response to political pressure. From the time of Ezra until that of Matityahu, the kingdom of Israel had never been politically independent. In the beginning it was under the influence of Persia, then of Egypt. Later it was part of Alexander the Great's empire, and after his death it came under Syrian-Greek sovereignty. If the only issue had been political sovereignty, the revolt would never have broken out; the Jews would have continued to accept their suffering "with love" and would have waited for the eventual complete redemption.

The conflict with the Greeks was a different matter entirely. The Greeks hated the Jews' spiritual essence, their worldview, their peculiarity, their being different—in short, their Torah. The motive for their hatred was Haman's complaint: "Their laws are different from those of every people" (Es. 3:8); "they depart from the laws of the king to observe their own" (Megillat ha-Chashmona'im 7). Therefore, the Greeks were not satisfied with political pressure. They began to meddle with the intimate realm of human life, the Jewish people's connection to God, and began to conduct their battle on a new ground: that of religion.

It was this persecution of religion that distressed the Hasmoneans and fanned the flames of battle. Our Sages put it well: "What is [the reason for] Hanukkah? ... When the Greeks entered the sanctuary, they defiled all the oil that was there ..." (Shabbat 21b). The reason for the great revolt was the Greeks' entering the sanctuary, the Jewish Temple, and defiling all the oil, bringing in their pagan cult and weakening the holiness of Israel—its Sabbath, its laws of modesty and family purity. The war broke out because of the Temple, not only because of political freedom.

This being the case, the victory did not consist so much in political achievements as in religious freedom, in the purification of the Temple and re-kindling the eternal Jewish light: "And thereupon Your children came into the sanctuary of Your house, and cleansed Your Temple, and purified Your sanctuary, and kindled lights in Your holy courtyards" (Al ha-Nissim). It is true that political freedom was also achieved, but that was not the major point. The political holiday was the temporary Hanukkah; the Hanukkah for generations is a holiday of purifying the Temple and of lighting candles.

Excerpted from Day of Deliverance: Essays on Purim and Hanukkah by Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik.

More information on the book can be found here:
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from Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org
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Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas Miketz

Forgetting My Father's Household

Yosef had two children, whom he named Menashe and Ephraim. Regarding the naming of Menashe, the pasuk [verse] states [Bereshis 41:51]: "G-d has made me forget (nashani Elokim) all my hardship and

all my father's household." This pasuk should raise an immediate question in our minds: How could Yosef name his child Menashe and proclaim proudly that the Almighty helped him forget the household of the Patriarch Yaakov?

Rav Simcha Zissel in "Som Derech" explains this by citing a Gemara [Bava Metziah 85a]: When Rav Zeira went up to Eretz Yisrael from Bavel, he first fasted 100 fasts - in order that he might forget the Babylonian Talmud that he studied in Bavel. He wanted to be able to study the Jerusalem Talmud without being distracted by preconceived notions that he had acquired while studying in Bablyonian Yeshivos. Rashi explains that the Talmudic methodology in Eretz Yisrael differed from that of Babylonia. In order to acquire the new style of learning that Rav Zeira was hoping to acquire in Eretz Yisrael, the best thing for him to do would be to forget the methodology of the learning he had been accustomed to until now.

This may not be that different from a young fellow who has been studying in America and wants to go to study in a Yeshiva in Eretz Yisrael with a different style of learning. Such a young man needs to pray that he not be "boxed in" by his previous methods of Talmudic analysis so that he might have an open mind for acquiring the methods of study being used in contemporary Yeshivas in the holy land. Rav Simcha Zissel said that Yosef HaTzadik learned in the house of Yaakov Avinu and he learned the Torah of Yaakov Avinu. He learned his way of life and his system of values. But Yosef knew that the approach that worked in the house of Yaakov was not going to work in Egypt. If he tried that approach in this foreign land, he would be doomed.

Yaakov's home was one of sanctity and purity. The approach that worked there worked perfectly for an environment in which one was surrounded by brothers who were all sons of the same father - the Tribes of G-d. But now, Yosef said, I am in a hostile environment. I am in the decadent land of Egypt. If I try to use the same approach and lifestyle that worked for me in my father's house here in this land, it will be disastrous for me and my family.

Therefore the righteous Yosef prayed to G-d for the insight and wisdom to adapt to his new surroundings with a new spiritual approach. In order for him to do that, he needed to forget "all my toil and all the household of my father." Yosef did not proclaim that he named his son Menashe in order to thank G-d for His help in forgetting Yaakov's household because he chas v'Shalom demeaned his father's household, but rather because he now needed a different approach. He now needed a new approach that would enable him to survive and prosper in the environment of Egypt.

Explaining The Relevance of the Choice of the Chanukah Torah Reading

The Derech Hashem writes that the Torah reading for any given holiday serves as an appropriate conduit for heavenly influence unique to that particular holiday. For example, the Torah reading of Purim is "And Amalek came..." [Shmos Chapter 17], because Purim is the day in which the Jewish people did battle with Amalek and it is a day in which we commemorate our continuous battle with Amalek. This Torah reading, which describes the victory of Klal Yisrael over Amalek, serves as a conduit for the influence which originates in Heaven and which grants the Jewish people strength in their perpetual battle with the forces of Amalek.

Likewise, on the first day of Shavuos, we read the chapter [Shmos 19] relating to accepting the Torah (And Israel encamped there opposite the mountain...), because Shavuos is a day which represents accepting the Torah. We read the appropriate Torah section in order to bring that Heavenly influence of what it takes to accept Torah on an ongoing basis.

The Torah reading for each holiday is spiritually appropriate to what is happening on that day. The Torah reading on Chanukah, however, does not have as obvious a connection to the holiday.

The Torah reading on Chanukah is the section of the korbonos [sacrifices] of the Nesiyim [Princes] during the period of the Dedication of the Mizbayach [Altar] [Bamidbar Chapter 7]. One might reasonably

ask oneself -- what does this have to do with Chanukah? Granted that Chanukah is only a Rabbinic holiday so there is obviously not a Biblical source that explicitly discusses the events of Chanukah. However, given that handicap, it might not be seen as such a stretch to read about the Chanukah haMizbeach -- the dedication of the Mizbayach in the times of the Mishkan [Tabernacle] in the Wilderness. But without further insight, the connection does appear rather tenuous.

Rav Matsiyahu Solomon provides that insight. He notes a profound connection. Rav Solomon argues that there is a message in the korbonos brought by the Nesiyim that is indeed one of the main concepts of Chanukah. He quotes a famous Bach (Rav Yoel Sirkas) in Hilchos Chanukah who asks why we have a mitzvah to feast on Purim, while there is no such commandment on Chanukah. The Bach explains that Purim came about because of a sin of eating (the Jews partook of the feast served by Achashverosh in which he used the captured vessels of the Bais Hamikdash). Since their bodies benefited from this meal, there was a decree against their bodies and they were sentenced to die. The Jews repented by fasting. The fasting served as atonement for the inappropriate consumption that took place during the party of the King. G-d responded to their Teshuva by miraculously saving them and then gave them a mitzvah to party and feast in commemoration of that salvation.

Chanukah, on the other hand, had nothing to do with food. The punishment that preceded the Chanukah miracle came about because the Jews had become lax in their Service (hisrashlu b'avodah). They did not take the avodah in the Bais HaMikdash [Temple Service] seriously. They were unenthusiastic. They did it by rote. They only lamely went through the motions.

What was the Heavenly decree? "You don't care about the Bais HaMikdash? Okay. I will take it away from you." Consequently, the Daily Offering was nullified and the Menorah Lighting was taken away from them.

The Jews repented. They risked their lives to reinstitute the avodah in the Bais Hamikdash. The miracle of Chanukah provided Divine Assistance in allowing the Priests to properly perform the Avodah - as represented by the miracle of the long-lasting oil in the menorah. The Torah states that the Nesiyim brought Avnei Shoham and Avnei Miluim for the Ephod and the Choshen. However, the word for Princes (Nesiyim) is spelled defectively (without a yud) [Shmos 35:27]. Rashi in Vayakhel explains that when it came time to raise funds for the Mishkan and the Nesiyim were approached for donations, their response was "See us later. First go solicit everyone else and we'll donate whatever is missing at the end."

Lo and behold, the entire budget was met by the initial donations and there was nothing more for the Nesiyim to give. The only thing left to give were the precious stones for the Priestly garments, so that is what they gave. Initially however, they were lax and they did not line up to give at the beginning of the building campaign. The Torah commented on this laziness through the defective spelling of the word Nesiyim.

The Nesiyim, however, learned their lesson. By the dedication of the Mizbayach they lined up to give first. They were not going to allow themselves to make the same mistake twice.

The chapter of the Nesiyim thus is the story of people who learned from their mistake of not being enthusiastic enough when it came to taking part in the Divine Service. This is therefore the appropriate section to read on Chanukah. If Chanukah came about as a result of initially being lax in dedication to avodah in the Bais HaMikdash, it makes sense to read the chapter of the Nesiyim who also once made such a mistake. Just as the Nesiyim atoned for that sin during the dedication of the Mizbayach, so too the repentance that led to the Chanukah miracle taught the Jews of that generation and all future times, not to take the avodah in the Bais HaMikdash for granted.

The lesson of Chanukah and its Torah reading is that we must always serve Hashem with enthusiasm and with "geshmak" [excited emotion]. Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Mitzvos are provided below: Tape # 035 - Chanukah Issues Tape # 077 - Prohibitions During Times of Crises Tape # 126 - Dreams in Halacha and Hashkafa Tape # 173 - Dreams in Halacha II Tape # 219 - Chanukah Issues II Tape # 263 - Women and Chanukah Candle Lighting Tape # 309 - "Lo Sechanaim" Giving Gifts to Non-Jews Tape # 353 - Chanukah and Hidur Mitzvah Tape # 397 - Lighting Neuros in Shul; Other Chanukah Issues Tape # 441 - Taanis Chalom Tape # 485 - Miracle Products and Other Chanukah Issues Tape # 529 - Ner Chanukah: Where, When, and Other Issues Tape # 573 - The Silver Menorah and Other Chanukah Issues Tape # 617 - The Bad Dream Tape # 661 - Davening for the Welfare of the Government Tape # 705 - Chanukah Candles, Hotels and Chashunas Tape # 749 - Solomonic Wisdom Tape # 793 - Oops! 3 Candle on the 2nd Night Tape # 837 - Hairbrushes on Shabbos - Permitted or Not Permitted Tape # 881 - The T'reifa Chicken Scandal Tape # 925 - Kavod Malchus - How Far Can You Go? Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD RavFrand, Copyright © 2007 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org. Doin the Jewish Learning Revolution! Torah.org: The Judaism Site brings this and a host of other classes to you every week. Visit <http://torah.org> or email learn@torah.org to get your own free copy of this mailing. Need to change or stop your subscription? Please visit our subscription center, <http://torah.org/subscribe/> -- see the links on that page. Permission is granted to redistribute, but please give proper attribution and copyright to the author and Torah.org. Both the author and Torah.org reserve certain rights. Email copyrights@torah.org for full information.

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A Lesson for Eternity
Rabbi Zvi Sobolofsky
The TorahWeb Foundation

The culmination of the krias haTorah for Chanuka is the reading of the lighting of the Menorah in the Mishkan by Aaron Hakohen. The Ramban comments that unlike the other parts of the Mishkan, the Menorah has an eternal dimension; even during the period of golus, the lighting of the Chanuka candles accompanies the Jewish people. Why does Chanuka merit to be the vehicle to keep the Mishkan alive through the generations?

Jewish history from yetzias Mitzraim until the destruction of the second Beis HaMikdash consisted of two distinct periods - from yetzias Mitzraim until the first churban, and from the return to Eretz Yisroel with Ezra until churban bayis sheni. There were many similarities between these two periods. Yetzias Mitzraim had a three-fold purpose. The Torah mentions numerous times that a primary purpose of yetzias Mitzraim was kabbolas haTorah. In addition, yetzias Mitzraim was the prerequisite to entering Eretz Yisroel and building the Mishkan and subsequently the Beis HaMikdash. Jewish history repeated itself hundreds of years later. As Jews began leaving Bavel, there was a new kabbolas HaTorah. Chazal comment that the Jewish people reaccepted the Torah following the events of Purim which occurred as this exodus

from Bavel was taking place. Just as the Jewish people had entered Eretz Yisroel under the leadership of Yehoshua, there was a return led by Ezra. The Mishkan which eventually became transformed into the Beis Hamikdash built by Shlomo haMelech had as its counterpart the second Beis HaMikdash built by the Jews who returned from Bavel. Superficially there were many similarities between the events following yetzias Mitzrayim and those associated with the return of Ezra. Yet, there were fundamental differences between them as well. As magnificent as the three accomplishments of post yetzias Mitzraim were, each of them was of a temporary nature, in contrast to those of Ezra which are still present today. Chazal comment that the initial kabbolas HaTorah of Har Sinai was subject to question as to its legal validity. There was a degree of coercion at mattan Torah, as Chazal describe Hashem holding the mountain over the heads of the Jewish people, in effect forcing them to accept the Torah. The Torah was ultimately accepted willingly only after the miracle of Purim. The acceptance of Torah that absolutely binds us legally was the acceptance that occurred during the historical period of Ezra rather than what happened after yetzias Mitzraim.

Although the Jewish People entered Eretz Yisroel twice, halachically the return of Ezra was more significant than the initial conquest of Yehoshua. Chazal differentiate between "kedusha rishona" - the first sanctification of Eretz Yisroel by Yehoshua and "kedusha shניה" - the second accomplished by Ezra. Yehoshua's kedusha disappeared after churban bayis rishon with the halachic result that all agricultural mitzvos no longer applied according to Torah Law. The kedusha of Ezra remained intact and according to many opinions is still binding today.

The Beis HaMikdash of Shlomo was destroyed without any physical remnant. Yet, Bayis Sheni was never totally destroyed. The Medrash in Shir Hashirim teaches us that Hashem swore that the Kosel would always remain from Bayis Sheni. What was the nature of this distinction between Bayis Rishon and Bayis Sheni that accounted for these differences? Why was everything associated with the period of Bayis Sheni destined to remain eternal?

Beginning with yetzias Mitzraim, everything that occurred during this period was miraculous with very little human input. Kabbolas haTorah, entering Eretz Yisroel and building the Mishkan and subsequently the Beis HaMikdash didn't require great effort from the Jewish People. Eretz Yisroel was conquered through miracles and Shlomo hamelech was well respected by the non-Jewish nations who assisted him in constructing the Beis HaMikdash. In contrast, everything concerning the second Beis Hamikdash was only accomplished through great self-sacrifice. Those who returned from Bavel suffered greatly at the hands of their enemies in Eretz Yisroel. The land was never truly conquered but rather the settlers were at the mercy of the Persian rulers. The second Beis HaMikdash was built while overcoming great political, security, and economic obstacles. Similarly, Torah study throughout the period of Bayis Sheni required tremendous effort. The clarity of Torah that existed during the era of prophecy no longer existed. Torah knowledge was obtained by constant toil and self-sacrifice. Although the Bayis Sheni era lacked the glory of Bayis Rishon, everything that was accomplished was done so through "mesirus nefesh" - self sacrifice of the Jewish people. It was in the merit of this mesirus nefesh that made the accomplishments of Bayis Sheni eternal.

The period of Bayis Sheni which began with mesirus nefesh reached its climax during the events of Chanuka. Those who gave up their lives rather than succumb to the decrees of the Greeks, and those who risked their lives to fight back, reached the greatest heights of mesirus nefesh. This mesirus nefesh, which resulted in the victory of Torah and rededication of the Beis HaMikdash, was symbolized by the miracle of the Menorah and became an eternal part of the Jewish people through the celebration of Chanuka.

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein

<info@jewishdestiny.com>

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subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein - Parshat Miketz

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DEBUNKING THE DEBUNKERS :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The Jewish world suffers from a plague of debunkers, both Jewish and non-Jewish. The occasion of the wonderful holiday of Chanukah brings out the debunkers in their hordes. Chanukah never happened or at least not in the way that the Talmud and tradition transmit its happenings.

A noted op-ed Jewish (?) columnist in the New York Times wrote that in his opinion the Hellenist Jews were the good guys and the Maccabees were the bad guys and that it is certainly somewhat regrettable that the bad guys won. The secular Jewish press here in Israel and in the Diaspora is also always busy every Chanukah denying tradition and fashioning the struggle of the Maccabees in their own image and in their own current political correctness.

The Jewish debunkers are always busy destroying our faith and heritage. A noted Conservative rabbi in The United States denies that the exodus from Egypt ever occurred. He chose Pesach as the time to deliver this pearl of wisdom in his holiday sermon to his congregation. In fact his opinion is found in an essay of his included in the Conservative Chumash. And then they wonder why the movement is being riven with apathy and intermarriage.

As long as the main task of the secular non-traditional Jewish world is to debunk all Jewish tradition and to hollow out all holiness from Jewish life, they are doomed not to be able in the long run to replicate themselves as Jews. And that sad fact of Jewish history is that no holy value is immune from being debunked.

Archaeologists discovered in the Negev artifacts that prove that a Maccabean kingdom existed and flourished. This was reported in the Israeli press in the same newspaper that in another article debunked the whole Chanukah story as being rabbinic myth. Oh well, everyone is entitled to read whatever section of the newspaper one wishes to.

Last week a noted Jewish historian and scholar, Yosef Chaim Yerushalmi, passed away in New York. He wrote a small thin volume called "Zachor" that dealt with the importance of tradition as opposed to pure currently agreed upon historical fact in Jewish life. He attempted somehow to reconcile these two streams of Jewish scholarship. He came to the clear conclusion that the collective memory of a people – certainly of the Jewish people – a memory that we call and identify as tradition and not only the study of dry historical facts, is the key to the survival of that people.

It is the only proven method of transmitting values, identity and national pride and self-worth to succeeding generations. The debunkers are in essence therefore debunking themselves. And they are creating a climate of self-doubt, cynicism and defeatism that imperils the entire Jewish future. That is what happened here in Israel when the post-Zionists debunked Zionism.

This attitude – clever by half – has led to wars, tragedies, diplomatic weakness and isolation, as well as to creating an unnecessary and most harmful division in Israeli and Jewish society. Of course they maintain that we are all aware that our grandparents and their ancestors were liars and that the correctness of present day liberalism is to be unquestioned. The traditionalists are always wrong even when history and facts prove them right while the new boys are never wrong even when the facts clearly point to the fact that they are wrong – dead wrong.

Our task is therefore to debunk the debunkers. That in essence is what Chanukah teaches us. The Hellenists were the debunkers of Torah and tradition. The Maccabees rose up to debunk the debunkers whether they were Jews or Syrian Greeks. The lights of Chanukah are meant to dispel doubts. They stand as stark evidence that the collective memory of the Jewish people which recalls the exodus from Egypt, the revelation and granting of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the entry of Israel into its promised land, the two temples that graced Jerusalem and the heroism

of the Maccabees and the miracle of the lights of Chanukah is the cornerstone of Jewish belief and integrity.

The debunkers are perpetrators of national suicide. No matter their wisdom and talents they do us great harm even if that be not their stated intention. It is therefore incumbent upon us to continue to debunk the debunkers. In the words of Tevye, that caricature of the holy Jew of Eastern Europe, it is all about "tradition, tradition." It really is all about that and we should never allow ourselves to be misled that bunk, even for what passes as scholarly bunk, can replace tradition.

Shabat Shalom & Happy Chanukah

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein

<info@jewishdestiny.com>

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subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein - Parshat Miketz

Weekly Parsha :: MIKETZ :: Rabbi Berel Wein

The psalmist asks the question "from where shall my salvation arise?" He has no doubt that salvation will somehow come to him but he does not know how that will occur. Life is so unpredictable and volatile that no person, government or institution can truly plan with certainty its success and salvation. "The best laid plans of mice and men..." certainly are undone by events and circumstances that are completely incapable of being foreseen.

This is one of the salient lessons of this week's parsha. Yosef is saved from a life of slavery and prison and transformed into a royal magistrate in an instant. He is certain that somehow God will redeem him that his dreams were not merely youthful folly and that he is destined for greatness and fame, but he has no concept how this can occur.

It takes a confluence of strange and even mundane events – Pharaoh's stewards being imprisoned in the same cell block as Yosef, their strange dreams, Pharaoh's birthday, Pharaoh's own disturbing dreams, the confessions of the wine steward as to his earlier misdeeds and Yosef's boldness in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams – to vault Yosef into rulership in the land of Egypt.

Who could have scripted such a drama in advance of its actual happening? But in reality is this not the way that life always plays itself out for all of us personally and certainly for the Jewish people nationally? We are all Yosef, confident of redemption and vindication but terribly confused as to how this will actually come about.

There are many participants in a person's redemption and success. This is true certainly so in the national life of the Jewish people. We may naively think that it is always completely up to us but God has His ways and in the words of the rabbis "God has many messengers that do His bidding." Many times they do so unwittingly and certainly unaware that they are fulfilling Divine destiny.

The wine steward, the warden in Yosef's prison, even the Pharaoh himself, are apparently unaware of the roles and actions that destiny has assigned to them. There is an unseen rhythm that guides Jewish life and every person in the world is potentially God's messenger to help realize and actualize Jewish destiny. We may not like all of the actors in this script but they all play a role nevertheless.

And because of this we are constantly reminded of the eternal question "from where will my salvation and redemption come?" Usually it comes from unforeseen circumstances and people who are strangers to us and our ways and even our hopes and goals. The drama of life is unending and complicated.

The Torah warned us of this by stating that "the hidden things belong to God but what is clear is that Jews should observe the Torah and transmit it to their following generations." But there always is a "miketz" – an ending, a fulfillment and an achievement of goals. How that "miketz" occurs is the everlasting mystery of life itself.

Shabat shalom & Chanuka sameach

from **Rabbi Dovid Horwitz** <yutorah@yutorah.org>
reply-to yutorah@yutorah.org
to internetparshasheet@gmail.com
date Wed, Dec 16, 2009 at 12:25 PM
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Brothers "Move On."**

Parashat Miqetz 5770: God Did Not Let
Joseph's Brothers "Move On."

A student I had quite a number of years ago, who had confided in me that he had experienced much bullying, especially during his high school years, shared a crucial insight with me, one which was the fruit of "wisdom born in pain." "Bullies," he remarked, "move on. It's easy for them. They forget about the incidents in which they were cruel to someone, and don't give it a second thought. But it is harder for the bullied to move on!"

The idea of "moving on," of simply not thinking of the pain that one has caused someone else, is not limited, of course, to bullies, but the basic idea remains the same. Classic illustrations of the type in secular literature are the characters of Tom and Daisy Buchanan as depicted in F. Scott Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby*. Fitzgerald's unforgettable description of them is as follows:

"They were careless people, Tom and Daisy- they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made." (F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby* [New York, 1925, repr., 1953, pp. 180-81.]

Did Joseph's brothers' simply "move on" after what they had done to him in Parashat Va-Yeshev? The answer to this question might be a mahloket bein ha-mepharshim ha-rishonim. In the beginning of Genesis Chapter 38 (verse 1), the Torah states: About that time Judah left his brothers and camped near a certain Adullamite whose name was Hirah. Why did Yehudah leave his brothers? According to Rashi (following Bereshit Rabbah, ch. 85), this separation was not initiated by Yehudah. When the other brothers of Joseph saw Jacob's intense grief; they deposed Yehudah from his position as the unofficial head of the fraternal clan. "Had you advised us to let him go, we would have listened to you." According to this opinion, the brothers, immediately after the sale had begun to regret their action, and had definitely not "moved on" in the aforementioned careless way.

On the other hand, R. Abraham ibn Ezra, Ralbag, Shadal and others (essentially for chronological reasons that will not be discussed here) all maintain that the events depicted in Genesis 38 (viz., Yehudah's marriage to the daughter of Shua, the story of Er and Onan, and the episode with Tamar) reflect events that transpired before the sale of Joseph. In my opinion, an important corollary of this view is that the evidence that is brought to suggest that the brothers at that point in time already had a change of heart automatically disappears. Thus, it may very well be that until the encounter of the brothers with the mysterious ruler of Egypt, the brothers had in fact "moved on," in spite of Jacob's obvious pain! They did not even think about their treatment of Joseph, much less regret it!

In Parashat Va-Yeshev, the case of Joseph and his brothers can be viewed, from one perspective, as a classic example of "the bully, the bullied and the bystander." As the bullied, Joseph had an imperative, no matter how hard, to "move on." And, thank God, he did so as best as he could. (With all appropriate diffidence, I wonder if Joseph's self-perception as "the bullied" might be a reason why he did not try to contact Jacob his father during all the years that he was in Egypt, an issue discussed by Ramban and R. Yitzhak Arama, the author of the work *'Aqedat Yitzhak*, among others. Perhaps, for reasons of psychological survival, Joseph had to "move on" and not let the fact that he was bullied so cruelly by his brothers defeat him. But by contacting Jacob, while of yet not knowing if his brothers were still intent upon bullying him to death, he would be returning to the system that had almost resulted in his demise!)

But although originally Joseph was "the bullied," the wheel of fate starts to turn in Parashat Miqetz.

Now Joseph was the vizier of all the land; it was he who dispensed rations to all the people of the land. And Joseph's brothers came and bowed low to him, with their faces on the ground. When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but acted like a stranger toward them and spoke harshly to them. He asked them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to buy food." For although Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. And Joseph recalled the dreams that he had dreamed about them (Genesis 42:7-8).

When Joseph, the second-in-command to Pharaoh, realizes that the ten men in front of him are indeed his brothers, he also realizes that his successful endeavor to "move on" is threatened by the mere appearance of his brothers. He must, consequently, see if they have no longer "moved on," that is, if they had, in retrospect, thought about their previous actions and had realized that they had acted horribly towards their younger brother. Thus, the elaborate scheme in which Joseph tries to replicate, as best as possible, the events leading up to his own sale. He does this by first getting his brothers to bring Benjamin to Egypt, and then, casts Benjamin as the "Joseph figure" in the restaging of the play. Would the brothers resent that Benjamin's initial preferential treatment by the mysterious ruler of Egypt? Would they leave him in Egypt, presumably to a short hard life of slavery, followed by an anonymous death, as they had left the scene and after he was sold so many years ago?

The original test that the brothers must pass to prove that they are not spies is to bring Benjamin to Egypt. Robert Alter, "Joseph and his Brothers," *Commentary* 70:5, (November, 1980), pp. 59-69, on p. 64, wrote the following analysis: "The test has a profound logical function in the oblique interrogation of the brothers: if in fact they have left Benjamin unharmed all these years, the truth of their words will be confirmed, that, despite past divisiveness, "we are twelve...brothers, the sons of one man." (Genesis 42:11). I would add that moreover, if there was an indication that brothers were kind to Benjamin, the child who now structurally occupied the same position that Joseph had (viz., a son of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, and the son of his old age), there would be evidence that, if they could do it again, they would not repeat their behavior towards Joseph.

At the conclusion of Parashat Miqetz, Joseph ensures that his silver goblet is placed in Benjamin's sack. He now construes another test: how far would the brothers go to save the other son of Rachel?

Regarding the subsequent confrontation between the ruler of Egypt and the brothers after the goblet is found in Benjamin's sack, Alter writes: "This is the final confirmation by the brothers themselves of Joseph's dreamt-of supremacy, their necessary subservience. It is also an open admission of guilt which at least psychologically must refer to the real crime, the selling of Joseph, and not to the imputed crime of stealing the silver goblet. Judah may understandingly feel that he and his brothers cannot prove their innocence in regard to the stolen goblet, but he could not seriously believe that it is an act they have knowingly committed, and the crime that God Himself has at last found out is certainly the making away with Joseph."

Thus, the brothers have indeed no longer "moved on." They are approaching the moment of self-reckoning where they truly realize how horribly they had acted. It is Judah, who initiated the sale of Joseph, who, speaking on behalf of his brothers who subsequently steps forwards and completely renounces his previous behavior.

When Judah and his brothers re-entered the house of Joseph, who was still there, they threw themselves on the ground before him. Joseph said to them, "What is this deed that you have done? Do you not know that a man like me practices divination? Judah replied "What can we say to my lord? How can we plead, how can we prove our innocence? God has uncovered the crime of your servants. Here we are, then, slaves of my lord, the rest of us as much as he in whose possession the goblet was found." But he replied, "Far be it for me to act thus! Only in he in whose possession the goblet was found shall be my slave; the rest of you may go back unhindered to your father" (Genesis 44: 14-17).

The full dénouement of the story will occur when Judah will offer to stay by himself alone in Egypt (re-creating what had actually happened

to Joseph), and will plead for Benjamin to return to Canaan with the rest of his brothers. At that point, Judah will have fully renounced the way of the bully, and will have fully empathized with the person that he had participated in bullying. This culmination of the story will be treated at length in Parashat Va-Yigash.

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Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future
500 W 185th St. New York, New York 10033

from Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
to weekly@ohr.edu

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**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Mikeitz
For the week ending 19 December 2009 / 1 Tevet 5770
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
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.

Insights

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 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 rule of the gaunt and evil cows will be revealed as no more than a dream.

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from Shema Yisrael Torah Network

<shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

to Peninim <peninim@shemayisrael.com>

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subject **Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum - Parshas Mikeitz**

Since G-d has informed you of all this, there can be no one so discerning and wise as you. (41:39)

The Maggid, zl, of Dubno, once went on a fundraising trip for a matter of great urgency. During his travels, he chanced upon a large store filled with all types of merchandise. Since the owner of the store was Jewish, the Maggid approached him and asked for a handsome donation. When the would-be-benefactor heard the amount the Maggid was requesting, he became quite disturbed. He responded somewhat incredulously, "Does the Maggid think that I am a wealthy man? Does the rav think that I own all of the merchandise in the store? Is this why I am being asked to contribute such a significant sum of money? Let it be known

that it is a great error to assume that I am wealthy. Most of the merchandise is bought on credit. I do not own it. It is on loan." The man's declaration did not faze the Maggid. He replied with a smile, "I now know what Pharaoh meant when he said, 'Since G-d has informed you of all this, there can be no one so discerning and wise as you.' How did Pharaoh know for certain that Yosef was discerning and wise? Was it not Yosef who explicitly told Pharaoh, 'That is beyond me; it is G-d Who will respond with Pharaoh's welfare' (ibid 41:16)? In other words, Yosef was merely a medium for conveying the word of G-d. How is this an indication of his own exceptional cognitive abilities? The answer is that the individual who possesses wisdom, who is discerning, he can be entrusted with even greater wisdom. Pharaoh told Yosef, the mere fact that G-d has 'lent' you an uncanny brilliance, albeit briefly, is a clear indication that you are not a simple individual. G-d does not lend wisdom to a fool. Likewise, my friend, it might be true that most of your merchandise is sold to you on credit, but one does not give credit to a poor man. The fact that people trust you with such great amounts of money proves that you are, indeed, a wealthy man."

It is a nice story with a thoughtful lesson. I think we might offer an alternative exegesis concerning Pharaoh's awareness of Yosef's unique insight. The Midrash distinguishes between a navon and a chacham. A chacham is one who possesses wisdom. A navon is one who is meivin davar mitoch davar, able to understand one thing from another, one who possesses common sense. The Midrash asserts that one who is a navon, but does not possess added wisdom, is similar to a strong warrior who has no weapons. A chacham who lacks binah, common sense, is likened to one who has weapons, but is too weak to really use them. Clearly, the individual who possesses both qualities, navon and chacham, is prepared for battle, since he is strong and armed.

When Pharaoh addressed Yosef, he commented on the fact that Yosef not only was wise, but he was also able to make use of his wisdom, since he was a navon. Pharaoh was emphasizing that had Yosef only possessed wisdom, it would have been of little benefit, since he would have lacked the common sense to use it properly, to the greatest advantage. Hashem had not placed wisdom in a vessel that had limited potential for generating positive growth.

Common sense plays a critical role in the personal and public life of the individual. Chazal's analogy to one who is armed, but has no strength, is very appropriate. I would go so far as to say that one who lacks common sense is destructive. In fact, his wisdom can engender negative consequences, because he lacks the common sense to channel it properly. In his commentary to Parashas Yisro, Sforno makes an insightful comment. Yisro noted that Moshe Rabbeinu chose judges to assist him with the heavy judicial workload. He mentioned four qualifications which were the criteria for choosing judges: able men; who fear G-d; men of truth; who hate bribes. Regrettably, Moshe was not able to find individuals who possessed all four attributes. He, therefore, chose those who possessed the most important quality: anshei chayil, able men, who are meivin davar, well-versed in the law, who could determine the veracity of a matter and bring it to a definite conclusion. In other words, he chose a navon over a yarei Shomayim, G-d fearing man of truth, who hates bribes, because one must possess seichel, common sense, a strong character and the ability to make a decision. Wisdom, without the ability to execute it, is insufficient to meet the goal of achievement.

You shall be in charge of my place and by your command shall all my people be sustained; only by the throne shall I outrank you. (41:39)

Pharaoh elevated Yosef to an unprecedented position of power. He was as close to being the monarch as one could be. Pharaoh added one strange comment: He was going to remain king; Yosef could be everything else, but absolute monarchy, the final control, was in Pharaoh's hands. He controlled the sovereign scepter. What makes this comment unusual is that Pharaoh could have simply said that Yosef would be second-in-command. He was the viceroy, a heartbeat away from ultimate leadership. Why did Pharaoh emphasize that he would

retain the throne, that he would be king? It seems unnecessary for Pharaoh to mention his own position. This was about Yosef - not Pharaoh.

Furthermore, Pharaoh was not acting in a manner typical of the average pagan. Clearly, he lost no love for the Hebrew slave who had just the other day been taken from the dungeon. When the wine steward introduced Yosef as the interpreter of his dream, he prefaced his words with: naar, eved Ivri; a fool who was not suitable for leadership of any kind; a slave, who, according to Egyptian dictate, could never ascend to a position of leadership, or don the regal garb of monarchy; a Hebrew who was not versed in the Egyptian language. In other words: Yosef did not possess the characteristics required of Egyptian hierarchy. If so, why was Pharaoh lauding him?

Horav Simcha HaKohen Shepps, zl, asserts that herein emerges the ugly truth about anti-Semitism. Pharaoh was well aware of Yosef's exceptional qualities. He even publicized them to his nation. Why did he do it? It was purely for selfish reasons. He wanted Yosef elevated to viceroy for personal reasons. If he was so prodigious, if he was so superior to the average citizen, then Pharaoh wanted everyone to know that he/Pharaoh was still one step above Yosef. As great as Yosef was - Pharaoh was even greater. This move was not for Yosef's benefit. It was purely to stroke the evil Pharaoh's insatiable ego. This is what Pharaoh meant when he said, "By your command shall all my people be sustained; only by the throne shall I outrank you." Only because of the throne: I am doing this so that my throne will be above yours.

We have been witness to this phenomenon throughout Jewish history. Our host nations would elevate select members of the Jewish community in order to squeeze whatever they could from them. It was never for us. It was always for them. As soon as the despots received what they needed, they immediately began to establish decrees and instigate pogroms. After all, they no longer needed us.

This is the underlying meaning of the prayer which we say: Nechshavnu katzon la'tevach yuval, "We have been considered like sheep being led to the slaughter." Why are our troubles in galus, exile, compared to that of sheep being led to the slaughter? Veritably, it is specifically in this area that the gentile nations take advantage of us. A sheep is not slaughtered as long as it produces wool, milk and its other by-products. The little sheep is allowed to grow as long as its owner benefits. As soon as he sees that he has nothing more to gain, he gets rid of the sheep. Lamentably, the Jewish People have suffered like the sheep. The nations among whom we have dwelled have taken whatever they could extract from us and, when there was nothing left to drain, they have discarded us like sheep. This phenomenon started with Pharaoh and has continued to haunt us until this very day.

Yosef recognized his brothers, but they did not recognize him. (42:8)

The question is clear: How could the brothers have been so oblivious to the obvious? The Torah responds to this pressing question with an answer that strengthens the question: They did not recognize him. How could they not recognize Yosef? Everything he had told them pointed to one solution: he was Yosef. One only has to peruse the Midrashim and Chazal to recognize the depth of the dialogue that ensued between Yosef and his brothers. How could they be so blind to something so self-evident? Chazal tell us that Yosef now had a beard. The change in his facial countenance - coupled with his royal garb - rendered him somewhat unrecognizable. This also seems farfetched.

I think the answer is obvious: When someone is blind, he cannot see. The brothers were myopic concerning their brother, Yosef. It was a blindness that was the result of years of postulates, assumptions, conjectures, misjudgments and rationalizations. They had invested so much time and energy in seeing things their own way that there was no longer any space for any other perspective. It reached the point that the most transparent of disguises would mask even the most obvious. They did not see Yosef because, according to their reasoning, he simply could not possibly be there! Cognitive dissonance did not allow the brothers to acknowledge the reality of their brother's presence.

A similar type of astigmatism happens to some of us when it affects our spirituality, our children, ourselves. We develop a lifestyle that conforms to our way of thinking, our perspective of the priorities in life for us and for our families, and nothing can prove us wrong. It is my way or no way. Even when the obvious is glaring at us such that we see the folly of our ways, the mess we have made of our lives, and what we have imposed upon our children, we still refuse to admit that we have been wrong, that we are irresponsible. We always have some sort of rationalization, some way to squirm out of stepping up to the plate and standing accountable for our error in judgment. As long as this myopia prevails, we will neither accept any advice nor implement any changes. We can identify two levels of blindness: one who cannot see; and one who does not want to see. Some people have lost their sight through years of exposure to the wrong elements. They are not blameless, but rather, they are victims of their own folly. Those, however, who could see, but refuse to open their eyes for fear of confronting the truth, are far from inculpable. Their refusal to acknowledge the truth only serves to reinforce their own delusions.

There is another form of myopia, perhaps of a more positive nature, but no less myopic. In his sefer, Dudaei Yitzchak, Horav David Yitzchak Nebentzhl, zl, writes that Yosef's brothers sensed that they were in the grip of a chain of tzaros, troubles. Indeed, they themselves conceded, "Indeed we are guilty concerning our brother, in as much as we saw his heartfelt anguish when he pleaded with us, and we paid no heed; that is why this anguish has come upon us" (ibid. 42:21). They were worried. Something was wrong. One tzarah had led to another. Clearly, they must have done something wrong, and it was consequence time. At no time did they contemplate that there might have been something positive about the travails which they were undergoing. Had they known that Yosef had been orchestrating the travail precisely for the purpose of catalyzing their contrition, and bringing about their repentance for selling him as a slave and causing severe anguish to their aged father, they might have responded differently. Only after Yosef saw that they were willing to sacrifice their lives to protect their brother, Binyamin, did he conclude that they had rectified their original sin. The brothers' perspective on their ordeal was quite different from Yosef's outlook. They sensed negativity, pain and misery. Yosef saw the cleansing powers which were purifying their neshamos, souls, elevating them to their original position. The difference between them was v'lo hikiruhu, "they did not recognize him." They had no idea who was behind their travail. Had they known that it was Yosef, their outlook would have been much more positive.

Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, takes this idea to the next level: our relationship with Hashem. Life is filled with adversity and travail. Regrettably, when we confront these ordeals, we often do not realize that they are coming from our loving Father in Heaven. Therefore, we view these afflictions that are visited on us as tzaros, troubles. If we would, however, equate them with Hashem, our whole attitude would change. After all, does a father act negatively to his child? Surely not! This is all part of the crucible of purification, meant to do just that, cleanse us, so that we will ultimately merit to bask in the glory of His Presence.

A believing Jew understands that whatever comes his way is from Hashem and has a positive function to it. While it may externally appear to be of an adverse nature, he knows deep down within his heart that a loving father does not hurt. His potch, slap, is therapeutic and for a purpose. When a Jew trusts in Hashem, he merits to see how everything ultimately turns into "good."

The following two vignettes present two different perspectives, but reinforce the same lesson: There is a Master Plan. We are part of it. If patience and trust prevail, we will see how the story ends - on a positive note. The Strauss brothers, Nathan and Isadore, were two of America's most prominent merchants and philanthropists. They supported primarily cultural and charitable deeds, the religious community never really benefitted from their contributions. The poverty in Eretz Yisrael was reaching epidemic proportions. Hunger had become a way of life, as people were literally starving to death. The heads of the old yishuv in

Yerushalayim decided to approach the brothers when they next visited the Holy Land. It was 1912 when they returned, and a delegation of Yerushalayim's most prominent rabbinic leaders presented their case for a soup kitchen to feed the many starving Jews in the city. Nathan Strauss was sensitive to their pleas, while Isadore felt other areas in the Holy Land deserved greater subsidy. Nathan wrote out a check from his personal funds to cover the cost of establishing the kitchen.

When the edifice was completed and running, the heads of the community invited the Strauss family to join in its dedication. Isadore joined his brother for the festivities. Nathan was visibly moved with the effect the kitchen had on the people. Jews from all walks of life, subject to abject poverty, lined up to eat what was probably their only nourishing meal of the day. Regrettably, Isadore felt that seeing one poor man was seeing them all. He was into supporting culture. On their way out of the building, Nathan tripped on the steps, fell and dislocated his shoulder. Isadore had no qualms about reminding his brother that he had fallen on the steps of the building which he had endowed. The doctors were concerned about his shoulder, insisting that Nathan remain in the hospital for a few days. Unfortunately, Isadore could not wait. He told his brother that he had tickets to return to America out of England on the new oceanliner, Titanic. It was a shame that Nathan was laid up and could not join him.

We all know the rest of the story. The Titanic tragically did not complete its maiden voyage. Nathan recovered from his "fortunate" injury and went on to endow many projects in the Holy Land. What appears to us as adversity is often Hashem's way of protecting us. We just have to believe that a loving Father does not hurt His children. Another interesting story concerns Horav Mordechai Benet, zl, Rav of Nicholsburg, a contemporary of the Chasam Sofer, and one of the leading sages of that era. He rarely left Nicholsburg because it was a large city. He felt that whatever he might need, he could find in Nicholsburg. One time, he had occasion to leave town for an important function in a small community quite some distance from Nicholsburg. While he was there, he suddenly died. Since it was Erev Succos, he was buried in the local cemetery.

When word reached the community of Nicholsburg, the residents were distraught beyond belief. They were doubly troubled, because, in addition to losing their beloved Rav, they could not travel to his grave to petition him to intercede on their behalf before the Heavenly Throne. The heads of the community asked the Chasam Sofer to render a decision permitting the body of the deceased to be disinterred and brought to Nicholsburg. The Chasam Sofer acquiesced. After researching the law, he wrote a response permitting the body to be moved and brought "home." As he was about to place the letter into an envelope, his inkwell spilled, destroying the entire letter. The Chasam Sofer viewed this as a sign from Heaven that he should not send the letter.

The subject seemed closed until three months later, when Rav Mordechai Benet appeared to the Chasam Sofer in a dream. He explained the reason that his sudden death took place in this small community, far from his home. Apparently, Rav Mordechai had originally been engaged to a young lady from that town. He broke the shidduch, terminated the engagement, prior to his wedding, an action which caused the would-be bride great anguish. As penance for his actions, it was decreed from Heaven that he should die in this town and be buried next to the woman, who had already passed away. The decree, however, was only for three months. His body could now be removed and buried in the cemetery of Nicholsburg. The Chasam Sofer rewrote his response, mentioning that it had been prepared three months earlier, but he had been delayed in sending it.

This is a powerful story with an inspiring message. Nothing goes unrequited. There is a reason for everything. It is all part of the Divine Plan. What seems strange to us really has a very good explanation - once we look at it through the prism of Heaven. We just have to have faith.

They said to one another, "Indeed we are guilty." (42:21)

The brothers took the first step towards resolving their predicament and repenting for the sale of Yosef: they accepted responsibility. We often fail to realize that one cannot make amends until he confronts the reality that he "might" have erred. He is not blameless. "It is I who is at fault - not someone else." This applies in our personal lives, as well as in our spiritual relationship with Hashem. We like to blame the community, the Rav, the teacher, the friends, everybody - but ourselves. We act smug, placing the onus of guilt on the "other guy," while we continue the same sinful behavior, deplorable parenting, irresponsible relationships.

After the bloody riots which took place in 1929, during which many Jews were brutally murdered by bloodthirsty Arabs, a group of young, married students gathered together at Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld's house to discuss the tragedy. As in most such discussions, the issue of blame came to the fore. "It is because of the ballgames that are held on Shabbos that all this is happening to us!" one declared. He felt confident that he had discovered the reason for Hashem's disapproval of His people. Immediately, the others nodded their agreement with his statement. There is nothing like faulting others.

At that point, Rav Yosef Chaim arose from his chair and exclaimed, "I disagree with your statement that faults others for catalyzing Hashem's negative response. It is easy for you to blame the non-observant camp for what is actually your fault! Did you take into consideration why these people desecrate? Most of them were conscripted into the army during World War I. Clearly, kosher food and Shabbos were not available to them. Thus, through the course of time, their observance weakened, as their bitterness increased. When they were finally released from the army, observance of Torah and mitzvos was one of the furthest things from the minds of these men. They returned home to confront the infamous pogroms of Petlyura, a Ukrainian despot, who, together with his cronies, butchered innocent Jewish women and children. Who knows? Perhaps one of the victims was someone's father who was killed while he was wrapped in his Tallis and Tefillin.

"The attitude of these people is a product of their collective tragedies. I ask you: what do you want from them? Have they not suffered enough? After all they have experienced, do you think that their iniquity is so great that all of the Jewish people should suffer on their account?" Hearing these searing words, the students did not know how to respond. One of them had the courage - or perhaps the temerity - to ask, "So, with whom does the blame lie? If it is not them, so who else could be responsible for Hashem's wrath?"

Aval asheimim anachnu, "Indeed, we are guilty!" Rav Yosef Chaim's voice thundered in response, paraphrasing the response of Yosef's brothers. "We have never been forced by extenuating circumstances to desecrate Shabbos, eat non-kosher, or violate any other mitzvos. Our parents were not murdered by anti-Semitic mobs in front of our eyes. We have been privileged to live in the Holy Land in peace and tranquility. What more can we ask? How dare we blame others, when we have had it so good? Much more is expected of us. We must be perfectly righteous in our mitzvah performance and religious demeanor. Who knows whether our own imperfection might have brought this curse on the Jewish People!"

This was a typical response from Rav Yosef Chaim. He had little tolerance for those who would render incriminations about the spiritual failings of our people. Some people unfortunately "live" off this type of behavior, always looking to denigrate somebody, so that the guilt will be laid at his doorstep. Rav Yosef Chaim likened this to a son who had disgraced and cursed his father. Anyone who relates what the son did only increases the father's shame. When we focus and dwell on the shortcomings of others, we do not build the glory of Hashem.

Hallelu es Hashem min ha'Shomayim halleluhu ba'meromim - Praise Hashem from the heavens. Praise Him in the heights.

Horav Avigdor Miller, zl, comments that this Psalm is teaching us an unusual lesson: that man is able to harness and activate all of the many forces of Creation for the purpose of praising Hashem. We see man standing on earth and commanding all of the creations Above to praise

the Almighty. What is gained by this phenomenon? When men utilize the phenomena of Heaven and earth with all the creations - in all their remarkable detail - for the purpose of praising Hashem, by meditating on them in order to perceive and acknowledge the gadlus Ha'Borei, the greatness of the Creator, it is precisely then that the heavens and earth fulfill their purpose. When a man gains perfection of soul by considering the works of Hashem, he thereby causes Hashem's creations to praise their Creator no less than if they would have opened their mouths in praise. In this aspect, man controls the entire universe. He sets everything in motion. The flipside is obvious. If man ignores his obligation, if he acts complacently, not taking into account the greatness of the vast universe of Hashem's creations, he prevents their praise. Therefore, not only is he not praising Hashem, but he is obviating the praise of Hashem's creation and keeping them from fulfilling their purpose. This is a powerful and demanding indictment against man. Sponsored by Dr. and Mrs. Herbert Taragin & Family I'zechar nishmas his parents his father - Asher Dovid ben HaRav Menachem Mendel z"l & his mother - haisha Chaya Bluma bas HaRav Moshe Zelig z"l

From admin admin@matzav.com date Wed, Dec 16, 2009 at 4:55 PM

subject [Matzav.com - The Online Voice of Torah Jewry] Twice Daily Digest Email

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Chanukah - 5770: A Special Light By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky

One of the most joyous moments of the Chanukah experience, at least for this writer, is not only the actual lighting of the menorah, but rather the immediate moments after when all the children have completed the lighting and we as a family sing the traditional zmirah, Haneiros Hallalu. The song is named "Haneiros Hallalu — These Candles" and is basically about the Chanukah candles. We sing about the candles that we light to commemorate the wonders and the miracles the wars and the salvations that Hashem brought to our fathers in those days at this time of year.

Indeed the small flickering lights represent great miracles and a small light can light up the darkest night and inspire the most downtrodden soul.

But there is an interesting line in the song that highlights a halacha regarding the neiros. "And all the eight days of Chanukah these candles are sacred. And we have no permission to use them, only to look at them in order to convey our thankful recognition and to praise Your holy name."

Indeed the halacha, Jewish law forbids us to utilize the light of Chanukah candles for personal employ. In fact, for that very reason, we light an extra candle - the Shamash . It is a superfluous light and is part of the lighting process and we need it in case we indeed accidentally utilize some of the light of the Menorah. In this manner the light of the holy candles can be mitigated by the light of the mundane.

What troubles me, however, is the juxtaposition of the two phrases, "we have no permission to use them; only to look at them; in order to convey our thankful recognition and to praise Your holy name." What does the prohibition of using the light have to do with conveying our recognition and praise to Hashem's Holy name? Aren't they two separate issues?

A young American student visiting the Beethoven Museum in Bonn was fascinated by the piano on which Beethoven had composed some of his greatest works.

Handing the guard a wad of bills, she asked if she could play a few bars on it. The guard agreed and the girl carefully sat down at the piano and cautiously fingered the keys, playing the opening of Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata.

Quite pleased with her touching history, she got up and beamed.

As she was leaving the hallowed instrument, she proposed to the guard: "I assume that all the great pianists who come here want to play on that piano."

The guard shook his head. "For one thing, Paderewski was here a few years back and he said that he wasn't worthy of touching it."

If we understand the sanctity of something that to us is mundane and to others considered sacred, we can understand how important and sacred the true holy lights are.

Perhaps, just looking, revering and reflecting upon those lights — the very ones that represent the original lights of the Menorah in the Holy Temple — and not subjugating them to our personal use is the greatest expression of our reverence of them. And the reverence of those candles is a declaration that the Master of those lights has a special sanctity in our hearts and in our souls and in our lives.

from Rabbi Chanan Morrison <ravkooklist@gmail.com> to Rav Kook List <Rav-Kook-List@googlegroups.com> date Wed, Dec 16, 2009 at 7:01 AM

subject [Rav Kook List] Mikeitz: Joseph and the Evil Eye
Rav Kook on the Torah Portion
Mikeitz Joseph and the Evil Eye

Gold from the Land of Israel 368 pages, hardcover, online price: \$20.50 "This is the best English-language introduction to the thought of Rav Kook!" - Rabbi Dovid Sears

Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion Mikeitz - Joseph and the Evil Eye

Rabbi Yochanan, the third century scholar, had an unusual custom. He would sometimes sit down outside the town mikveh (ritual bath). This way, he explained, the Jewish women will see me as they leave the bath and will have children as beautiful as me. Rabbi Yochanan's colleagues asked him: Are you not afraid of the Evil Eye?

"I am descended from Joseph," he replied, 'and the Evil Eye had no power over him.'" [Berachot 20a]

Apart from the issue of Rabbi Yochanan's beauty, this story raises some interesting questions. What is the Evil Eye? Is it just a primitive superstition? And why was Joseph, more than any other Biblical figure, immune from it?

The Talmud explains that Joseph merited protection from the Evil Eye since "his eye did not wish to benefit from that which did not belong to him." Despite Mrs. Potiphar's attempts to seduce him, Joseph remained faithful to God and his employer. Truly an act of great moral integrity - but what does this have to do with the Evil Eye?

Rav Kook explained that the Evil Eye is an example of how one soul may affect another through unseen connections between them. We are all influenced by our environment. Living among the refined and the righteous has a strong positive effect, while living among the crass and the corrupt has a negative one. The Evil Eye is simply the venomous impact from malignant feelings of jealousy and envy of those around us. A person who has hardened his inner resolve and does not allow himself to be misled from the correct path, despite outside pressures - such a person has built a 'firewall' protecting his soul from external influences. The Biblical hero who most prominently demonstrated this strength of character and refusal to be led astray is Joseph. Seventeen years old, young and handsome, estranged from the protective framework of his family and culture, a slave propositioned by a powerful and attractive woman, Joseph nevertheless beat the odds and remained faithful to his ideals. Joseph determined that he would not be swayed by his surroundings, no matter how persuasive. Through his heroic stance, he merited that the Evil Eye would have no power over him and his descendants.

[Gold from the Land of Israel, pp. 86-87. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. I, p. 102]

Comments and inquiries may be sent to: RavKookList@gmail.com

Weekly Halachah - Parshat Mikeitz & Chanuka 5750
Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)
Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Conflict: Individual vs. Congregational Customs Part 1

Which customs should one follow when praying in a shul where the nusach and customs are different from his own? While many people are faced with this issue only occasionally, others must contend with it on a daily basis. Often, the only available [or the most accessible] shul is one that prays a different nusach from one's own. It is difficult and uncomfortable for a person who is accustomed to pray in a certain way to suddenly pray in a nusach with which he is unfamiliar. In addition, it is a general rule that one should not deviate from the customs handed down to him by his parents and grandparents. But the halachah may require one to pray according to the nusach of the congregation where he finds himself regardless of personal considerations. Let us therefore examine the sources before resolving the problems caused by these conflicting demands.

A terse command in Parashas Re'eh,1 Lo siggededu, is interpreted by the Sages as Lo sa'asu agudos agudos, do not splinter off into separate groups that perform mitzvos and serve Hashem in different, somewhat conflicting ways. The Talmud discusses the nature of this prohibition. Abayei maintains that Lo siggededu applies when two different Jewish courts in one city issue conflicting rulings. This makes the one Torah that was received at Sinai appear as if it were "two Torahs"2 and causes confusion and discord.3 Rava, however, does not object to different courts - even in the same city - issuing contradictory rulings, since it is within the very nature of the Torah that different rulings will be rendered by different schools of thought, as Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel did for many years. In Rava's opinion, the prohibition of Lo siggededu is meant to discourage one court from rendering a split decision. For the reasons stated above, the Torah did not want different factions of one court to issue conflicting opinions, giving people a choice of which ruling to follow.

We find in halachic literature that Lo siggededu applies even to deviations from mere custom, not only from prohibitions and rulings of a Jewish court. Rama,4 for example, rules that during the mourning period observed between Pesach and Shavuot (sefirah), all members of a community should follow the same custom and observe the mourning restrictions during the same time period. Chayei Adam5 rules that in a minyan reciting Tachanun, the practice of nefilas apayim should be performed in a uniform manner, all using either the right or the left arm.

This application of Lo siggededu is hotly debated by the poskim. Many are of the opinion that it does not apply in these situations at all. They base their reasoning on some of the following arguments: Lo siggededu applies only when a scholar instructs his followers to deviate from local custom6; it applies only to prohibitions, not to mere customs7; minor differences, such as a different nusach, are not significant enough to invoke Lo siggededu8; it concerns only different actions, not different words.9 But other poskim take a more stringent approach; in their view any deviation from the accepted custom, as minor as it may seem, may constitute Lo siggededu.10 While the Mishnah Berurah does not discuss the particular question of nusach, his rulings on related issues11 point to a stringent view on this subject.

In pre-war Europe, Lo siggededu was much more of an issue than it is today. Most communities, especially in the small towns and villages, had only one rabbi and one local custom, and individuals who practiced their own customs while disregarding local practice may have possibly transgressed Lo siggededu. But nowadays when there are many

shuls and rabbis in every city each following ancestral tradition, the situation is similar to the case of two Jewish courts in one city where Lo siggededu does not apply¹² [according to Rava's opinion.¹³] Still, it is possible that within the confines of a single congregation, e.g., when an individual prays in a nusach which is different from that of the congregation's, Lo siggededu may still apply.

But even in situations where the Biblical prohibition of Lo siggededu does not apply, we still find¹⁴ an additional exhortation – this one established by Rabbinic edict – which calls for uniformity within the same congregation: Le'olam al yeshaneh adam mi-pnei ha-machlokes – One should never deviate [from local custom] because it leads to discord. As the Vilna Gaon warned¹⁵: "Differences in customs lead to estrangement between Jews." Practicing different customs, even minor ones, could lead to strife and discord.

1 Devarim 14:1. 2 Rashi Sukkah 44a; Yevamos 13b. 3 Rambam, Hilchos Avodah Zarah, 12:14. 4 O.C. 493:2. See Magen Avraham 6 and Peri Megadim for an elaboration. 5 32:33, quoted by Mishnah Berurah 131:6. 6 Keren Orach, Yevamos 13b [see also Tosafos Rid, ibid.]; Da'as Torah O.C. 493:3. 7 See Meishiv Davar 17. 8 See Eishel Avraham O.C. 51; Teshuvos u'Vacharta b'Chayim O.C. 24; Kaf ha-Chayim 661:2 (concerning different customs in a sukkah). See also Aruch ha-Shulchan 651:22 (concerning different customs of shaking the lulav). 9 Shalmas Chayim 22-23. 10 Pe'as ha-Shulchan 3:14. See also Chayei Adam 32:33, mentioned above. 11 See 31:8; 131:6; 493:16; 624:16; 661:2. 12 See Sha'arei Teshuvah 693:1; Be'ur Halachah 468:4 (s.v. v'chumrei); Igros Moshe O.C. 1:159; E.H. 1:59; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (Yom Tov Sheini K'hilchaso, pg. 179). 13 Generally, the halachah is like Rava when he disagrees with Abbaye. The ruling of the Rambam concerning this issue, however, is unclear and subject to much debate by the later commentators. 14 Pesachim 51b, and quoted in O.C. 468:4. See Avnei Nezer O.C. 424:7. 15 See Keser Rosh 37.

From **Kol Torah** Webmaster <webmaster@koltorah.org> date Thu, Dec 17, 2009 at 11:25 PM

Subject Kol Torah Parashat Mikeitz-Chanukah Parashat Mikeitz-Chanukah December 19, 2009 2 Teiveit, 5770 Vol. 19 No. 12 This week's Halacha file: Where to Place the Menorah

Celebrating Teva by Rabbi Sarel Malitzky

On all eight days of Chanukah we recite a complete Hallel. Most assume that the reason for this obligation is to praise Hashem for the miracle of the oil since the last usable jug of pure oil lasted for eight days instead of just one.

The Maharal (commenting on Shabbat 21b) is bothered by this obligation to sing Hallel on Chanukah. The Maharal points out that the obligation to recite Hallel is a salvation that the Jewish people experienced (see Pesachim 118a). We don't find an obligation to recite Hallel because of our ability to perform a Mitzvah. Throughout Jewish history where for a myriad of reasons the Jews could not perform certain Mitzvot. However, we do not find an obligation of Hallel when they specifically could. After all, had we not have found the requisite oil, we would have surely been exempt from the Mitzvah to light the Menorah, as we are not responsible for those things which are beyond our control (Oneis Rachmana Patrei).

The Maharal explains that in truth Hallel is sung to praise God for our military victory. In a war which we had no chance of winning, we emerged victorious. In fact, Al HaNisim, which we recite in Tefillah and Birkat HaMazon, is almost entirely dedicated to the miracle of the war. However, explains the Maharal, if not for the miracle of the oil, people would have attributed the victory to our military prowess. Granted, we were the underdogs, but upsets happen throughout history. Perhaps we had better strategy than theirs, which led us to victory. It was only

through the recognition of the outright miracle of the oil that we were able to realize that the military victory was also a miracle.

It is often not until we see an open miracle that we are able to see hidden miracles. Often, when a sick individual regains their health, they begin to realize how miraculous it is that our bodies work in the way that they do. Ramban (at the end of Parshat Bo) writes that it is through the open and public miracles that a person can recognize concealed miracles.

Chanukah is a time when we break down the barriers between that which we view as miraculous and that which we think is nature. The Maharal teaches us that the victory in war was a miracle as well. In reality, what seems to be Teva (nature) is also a Nes (miracle). This theme of Chanukah manifests itself in the miracle of the oil as well. We know that we celebrate Chanukah for eight days because of the miracle of the oil. Although the flask of oil should have supplied enough oil only for one day, it miraculously lasted for eight days. The Beit Yosef (Orach Chaim 670) poses a well known question. Surely, oil that should last one day yet lasts eight is miraculous, but how long did the miracle itself last? The Beit Yosef points out that, in truth, the miracle of the oil was only seven days long. But if this is the case, why do we celebrate Chanukah for a full eight days?

There are many answers to this question. In fact, there is a Sefer that offers as many as one hundred answers to this question. I believe that based on a penetrating insight from the Alter Mikelm we can offer yet another answer. The Alter MiKelm (Rav Simcha Zissel Ziv Broida, one of the foremost students of Rav Yisrael Salanter and one of the primary figures of the Mussar movement) offers the following insight. In truth, there was nothing so wondrous about oil burning for eight days. Just as the Almighty made it so that oil will burn for one day, he can make it burn for eight days. The Alter explains that the very fact that oil burns is a miracle. However, since we have become accustomed to seeing oil burn, we no longer are in awe when we see it happen. Man usually fails to be awed or inspired by that which he constantly experiences or sees. However, this is not the correct attitude. Even those things that can be explained by science or nature are really from HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

Based on the Alter's insight, the difficulty raised by the Beit Yosef can be resolved. Granted, the oil burned for only seven more days than it should have. However, we celebrate one additional day to signify and celebrate the very fact that oil burns, since that too is miraculous. It was only through the obvious miracle of oil burning an extra seven days that we were able to see the miracle of oil burning.

As mentioned above, one of the messages of Chanukah is to see past the mask of nature and recognize that everything comes from Hashem. The military victory was not attained because we were stronger or smarter than our enemy. Oil does not just burn because nature states that it should. Rather, both of these, and everything else in the world, come directly from Hashem. The fact that oil burnt on the first day should inspire us to realize this, and all of the wonders of Hashem.

We light the candles on Chanukah at night until "SheTichleh Regel Min HaShuk," "until the feet cease from returning from the market place." In the Sefer Hashgachah Pratit (on Parashat Hashuva and Yom Tov) the author suggests that perhaps this statement can also be understood not only until "Regel" ceases, but also until "Hergel," the normality of things, ceases. We light the candles until we realize that nothing happens by itself. Though there are many things that we see all the time and therefore are not awed by their occurrences, the reality is that they too are miracles.

Eli Lehman Shaul Yaakov Morrison Kol Torah Webmaster
webmaster@koltorah.org.