

SHABBAT PARSHAT MIKEITZ-CHANUKA · 2 TEVET 5764 · DEC. 27, 2003 · VOL. 11 NO. 10

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

## THE HIDDEN LIGHT

“When behold! Out of the river 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, 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 Chanuka, 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 Chanuka is thirty-six (excluding the *shamash*). The thirty-six lights of Chanuka 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. That the light has gone forever, that the bad days are now firmly in command.

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

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

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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.

### THE PROBLEM OF PROMISES

Promises, promises and more promises. We live in an age of promises broken as soon as they are made – and sometimes even before!

A few days after an Arab terrorist was arrested on his way to blow up a high school in the northern community of Yokneam some of the terrorist organizations meeting in Egypt announced that they were ready to offer a cease-fire in their activities against Israeli civilians within the "green line". The other groups refused to go along with even such a minimal promise and the Israeli government rejected it because such a proposal condones the continuation of murderous acts against soldiers and settlers. There is no doubt, however, that behind this rejection is the suspicion that any such promise coming out of Egypt from terrorists with blood on their hands is absolutely worthless.

In this week's Torah portion we learn of the price that Yosef paid for relying on the promise of an Egyptian. After interpreting the prophetic dream of the king's chief butler

sharing his prison cell, to the effect that he would be pardoned and reinstated, Yosef pleaded with him to speak up for him to be released. Despite his promise to do so the fellow failed to keep his word. In his commentary Rashi cites the *midrash* which states that Heaven punished Yosef with an additional two years in prison for thus misplacing his faith. "Fortunate is the man who places his faith in G-d," states King David (*Tehillim 40:5*) "and does not turn to the boastful and the liars." The "boastful" are identified in the *midrash* as the Egyptians, as personified by that minister of Pharaoh who boasted that he would help Yosef gain his freedom and then let him down.

Today's Egyptians too have been exposed as empty boasters by their failure to unite the terrorist gangs to make even a token overture of ending hostilities. The Israeli government would be wise to continue regarding with great suspicion any promises coming from that direction. Only faith in the promises of G-d will guarantee Israel forever.

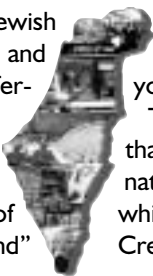
### LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

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

### MATANA TOVA – THE GOOD GIFT

“Three good gifts were presented to the Jewish People by the Holy One, Blessed be He, and all of them were given only through suffering.”

One of the gifts mentioned in this statement by Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai (*Mesechta Berachot 5a*) is Eretz Yisrael. This is based on the Torah promise of "For Hashem, your G-d, brings you into a good land"



(*Devarim 8:7*) being preceded by the assurance that "As a man chastens his son so Hashem, your G-d, chastens you" (*ibid.* 8:5).

The great Talmudic commentator Maharsha points out that such suffering has always been necessary to avoid the nationalistic conceit described in the following passages which may cause Israel to forget its dependence on the Creator who gave Jews the land.

## 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?"

## BONUS QUESTION ?

"And the bad-looking, thin-fleshed cows ate the **seven** beautiful, healthy cows...." (41:4) "And the thin stalks swallowed the **seven** healthy, full stalks...." (41:7) Why, when recounting Pharaoh's dream, does the Torah use the number '**seven**' to describe the good cows, but omits it when referring to the bad cows? And the same question can be asked about the stalks?

## BONUS ANSWER !

Although destined for seven years, the famine ended when Yaakov came to Egypt and blessed Pharaoh (Rashi 47:7,19). Hence, the Torah omits the word **seven** in reference to the bad cows and the bad stalks. This hints that the bad years would be no more than two. Nevertheless, those two years would be severe enough to 'swallow up' any trace of the **seven** good years.

• Ha'amek Davar

## FOOD FOR THOUGHT

In its instructions regarding the mitzvah to bring an *omer mincha* offering on Pesach, the Torah does not explicitly state from which grain the flour of this *mincha* should be processed. When the *omer* is first mentioned, however, as a “*mincha* of the first crop,” a hint is given in the use of the word “*aviv*” to describe the growth stage of the intended crop at that time of the year (*Vayikra 2:14*). This same word “*aviv*” is found in the Torah’s account of the Egyptian crop destroyed in the seventh plague of deadly hail and there it appears in connection with barley (*Shmot 9:31*).

This solves the mystery of which grain was used but raises another mystery. Why was it that the Torah designated barley for the *mincha* offered on Pesach and wheat for the offering of the two loaves on Shavuot?

In his commentary in *Mesechta Rosh Hashanah (16a)* Maharsha explains this in the connection between the nature of these offerings and the historical events commemorated by the Festivals in which they were offered. He cites Talmudic references to the effect that wheat is the basic food of humans while barley is commonly identified as animal feed. Pesach is the Season of Our Freedom celebrating our liberation from Egyptian bondage, while Shavuot is the Season of the Giving of Our Torah. Even though Jews gained freedom at Pesach time they were still without the Divine guidance of *mitzvot*, and their level of freedom was not above the physical, animalistic level represented by barley. This freedom finds expression in the barley offering of the *omer* on Pesach. Only when they received the Torah did they reach the true level of human intelligence associated with wheat. For this reason it is wheat which is used to prepare the two loaves offering of Shavuot.

• *Menachot 84a*

## OLIVE OIL AND ROYAL DIPLOMACY

Tekoa was the town in Eretz Yisrael that was the source for the best quality olive to be used in the Beit Hamikdash for lighting the menorah and preparing the *mincha* flour offerings.

As a scriptural source for Tekoa’s fame for oil the *gemara* cites a passage relating the brilliant diplomatic ploy of King David’s chief of military staff: “And Yoav sent to Tekoa and took from there a wise woman.” (*Shmuel II 14:2*) Why did he send to Tekoa? asks Rabbi Yochanan, and answers that because the people there are so accustomed to consuming olive oil, wisdom can be found there (because olive oil makes one wiser – Rashi).

The background for the passage cited is the effort of Yoav to effect reconciliation between David and his son Avshalom who fled to a foreign land after murdering his half-brother Amnon as revenge for violating his sister Tamar. Although David long mourned for his slain son, after three years had passed and he had become reconciled to his passing the stage was set for Yoav to initiate reconciliation between the king and his son’s slayer.

When a wise woman was brought to him from Tekoa he instructed her to dress and take on the appearance of a mourner and to practice making the lamentations of someone who has been grieving for many days. In this disguise she was to come before the king and deliver the script Yoav had so cleverly prepared for her.

This wise woman played her role to perfection and tearfully told the king that she was a widow with two sons and that one of them had slain the other in a quarrel. The murderer had fled and the widow’s relatives were pressuring her to reveal his whereabouts so that they could put him to death. This would mean wiping out whatever she had left and she appealed to the king to intercede on her behalf. Only after the king promised to save her remaining son did she draw the parallel to his own situation with Avshalom. Her clever performance achieved its purpose and Avshalom returned to his father.

There is no doubt that this was a very clever woman, but where do we see that Tekoa was a place of wisdom and that she was not an exceptional person in an ordinary town whom Yoav had chosen for this mission? Maharsha explains that if it was the particular woman and not the place the passage would have reported that Yoav sent for this woman in Tekoa. By relating that he sent to Tekoa for a woman it teaches us that Tekoa, because of the olive oil consumption there, was a place of wisdom where such a woman could be found.

• *Menachot 85b*

## WISDOM OIL

From: Martin in St. Louis

Dear Rabbi,

A central theme of Chanukah seems to be the victory of Torah over the philosophy of the Greeks. Does that mean that Judaism rejects the wisdom of the nations? Is there no redeeming value to that wisdom according to the Torah? Thank you.

Dear Martin,

True, Chanukah commemorates the victory of Torah over those who wanted to uproot it. However, the battle was not against the wisdom of ancient Greece per se, but against the philosophy that the wisdom of the nations is superior to that of the Torah, that the pursuit of wisdom is an end in and of itself, and the intellectual arrogance this philosophy breeds.

According to the Torah, G-d is the source of all wisdom, and it is G-d who imparts wisdom to mankind: "In the hearts of all the wise-hearted I have put wisdom" (Ex. 31:6). Furthermore, wisdom is not an end of its own, rather a means to achieve spiritual heights. Therefore our Sages remarked, "The goal of wisdom is repentance and good deeds". And elsewhere they warned, "One whose fear of sin takes priority over his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but one whose wisdom takes priority over his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure".

While the highest form of wisdom according to Judaism is that of the Torah, one can only achieve it through humility. In the verse, "Where shall wisdom be found" (Job 28:12), the Hebrew word for "where" is "m'ayin" which also means "from nothingness". From this the Talmud comments that Torah wisdom can only be found in one who "makes noth-

ing" of himself, i.e. is humble. This idea is echoed in the words of the prophet, "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom...but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me" (Jeremiah 9:22).

However, the Torah also recognizes the importance of the wisdom of the nations. Just as one recites a special blessing upon seeing an outstanding Torah scholar, one recites, "Blessed are you...Who has given of His knowledge to human beings" upon seeing an outstanding secular scholar. However, just as wisdom in Torah is only valued when it is accompanied with righteousness and humility in the service of G-d, so too secular wisdom is only valued when it is subservient to spirituality – for the betterment of mankind and as a means for appreciating the wonders of G-d's Creation.

Perhaps this is one of the many ideas alluded to in the seven-branched Menorah, which symbolically radiates the light of wisdom into the world.

The purpose of each branch of the Menorah in its service in the Temple of G-d is to support the vessels of pure olive oil placed upon them. Our sources identify among the nations seven branches of wisdom. These branches correspond to the seven branches of the Menorah, while the pure, illuminating olive oil upon them symbolizes Torah wisdom. This reveals that the wisdoms of the nations only fulfill their role in the world when they serve and are subservient to the wisdom of Torah placed above them.

Sources:

- Berachot 17a
  - Avot 3:11
  - Midrash Tanchuma, Parshat Vayelech ch. 2
  - Sota 21b
  - Pri Tzadik, by Rabbi Tzadok HaCohen, Parshat Acharei Mot, section 5
- The seven wisdoms are: grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy. See Tzaddik, p. 80 note 7.

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### THE PRAYER PACT

“Years have passed since we were married and we still have not been blessed with a child.” This was the tearful lament that the head of a yeshiva in Jerusalem heard from a former student of his now living in the north of Israel.

“I have a suggestion for you,” the Rosh Hayeshiva replied. “I heard a story about someone in your same predicament who went to consult a rabbi in his community. The rabbi told him that he has a son with the same problem, and suggested that he make an arrangement with his son that each of them pray for the other to be blessed with children. This fellow understood that this suggestion was

based on the Talmudic dictum that one who prays for another and is in need of the very same Heavenly response is answered even before the one he prays for is answered. He therefore rushed to the home of the rabbi’s son and came out of it in a short time with an agreement of mutual prayer. A year later both of them were blessed with children.”

“There is another childless former student of our yeshiva in your town,” continued the Rosh Hayeshiva, “and I suggest that you make such an arrangement with him.”

Sure enough, hardly a year went by and both couples celebrated the long-awaited birth of a child.

## WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### HELPING THE SICK

**Question:** I have heard that it is considered a very meritorious act to visit the sick. My experience in doing this has taught me how much such visits achieve in cheering up the patient. What is the right thing to do for the sick person in addition to just being there?

**Answer:** Just being there, say our Talmudic Sages, can have a healing effect, as the visitor removes one sixtieth of the illness in some mystical way. But there is certainly more that you can do. One of the main objectives of *bikur cholim*, as visiting the sick is known, is to discover what his medical needs are and to help provide them. This is certainly true when the visit is in a home, but even in a hospital there may be a need to alert a doctor or nurse to the special needs of the patient or to help him on or off his bed. The psychological and emotional support provided by just keeping him company also has an impact on his recovery. The visitor

could also offer to run urgent errands that the patient has been unable to attend to such as paying bills.

One often overlooked opportunity to help the sick person when visiting him is to pray to Heaven for his recovery. While it is possible to pray for him wherever you are there is a special dimension to doing so when you are in his company. First of all we have a tradition that the *Shechina* – the Divine Presence – is at the head of the sick person’s bed. This allows us to be much closer to the objective of our prayers. There is also the consideration that when one actually sees the sick person in front of him he is inspired to a more sincere prayer.

Remember that just saying “*Refua Shleima*” (“Have a complete recovery”) may be a nice parting remark but it is not a prayer. The proper text is to ask in any language that “Heaven send a *Refuah Shleima* to the patient together with all the other sick people of Israel.”

## Brighten the Darkness for the Poor of Jerusalem

*Jews light their Chanuka lamps to celebrate the historic triumph of the forces of light over the forces of darkness. You have an opportunity to identify with this “Festival of Lights” by brightening the darkness of poverty suffered by so many families in Jerusalem. Send then your generous Chanuka donation which will make your holiday and theirs so much brighter.*

[www.kerenyehoshuavyisroel.com](http://www.kerenyehoshuavyisroel.com)

# The Secret of the Dreidel

A Children's Game That Contains the Story of the Jewish People

By  
**RABBI  
YAAKOV  
ASHER  
SINCLAIR**

## The Dreidel

A children's game, played in the firelight of a cold winter night, the Chanuka Menorah silently glowing in the window... The dreidel. Its four sides spinning around the still point in the turning circle; spinning so fast that its sides blur into nothingness... The dreidel. So seemingly insignificant, and yet this little dreidel contains the story of the Jewish People; the history of the whole world.

Our story starts not with the miracle of Chanuka, but 1,437 years earlier with Jacob's ladder. Jacob had a prophetic dream of angels ascending and descending a ladder that reached from the ground to the Heavens. These angels weren't Hollywood extras with fluorescent tubes over their heads. They were, in fact, incorporeal spiritual messengers, the protecting forces of four great kingdoms.

Four kingdoms that would in the future dominate and exile the Jewish People: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.

At first, Yaakov saw the angel of Babylon ascend the ladder 70 steps and then he came down: The Jewish People were in the Babylonian exile for 70 years.

The protecting angel of the Empire of Persia and Media then climbed up the ladder 52 steps before he descended: The Jewish People were in exile in Persia 52 years.

Then the angel of the Empire of Greece climbed 180 rungs. The domination of Greece lasted 180 years.

Finally, the protecting angel of the Roman Empire climbed up the ladder, but he didn't come down. Yaakov feared that this final exile would never end, until G-d promised Yaakov "If he [Rome/Esav] will rise up like an eagle and make his nest among the stars, even from there I will bring him down."

We are still in that final exile, in the softly asphyxiating embrace of Rome's spiritual heirs.

## The Four Kingdoms Babylon

In the year 3338 (587/6 BCE), the Babylonian Emperor Nabuchadnezer razed the first of our Holy Temples to the ground, and the Assyrian Emperor Sancheriv led the majority of the Jewish People into exile. Why was it such a tragedy that the Beit Hamikdash (Holy Temple) was destroyed? The Beit Hamikdash represents a unique pipeline between G-d and Man. When it was destroyed, this flow of spiritual energy was severed. The level of this connection is linked to the word "*nefesh*" — soul — ("When a soul will bring an offering" ...*Vayikra* 2:1).

*Nefesh* begins with the letter *Nun*, and *Nun* represents the kingdom of Babylon.

## Persia

As we know from the story of Esther, Haman was interested in finding the final solution of the Jewish problem — genocide.

The exile of Persia and Media represents the threat to the "*guf*" — the body of the Jewish People, the physical threat of annihilation. *Guf* begins with *Gimmel*, which stands for the kingdom of Persia and Media.

## Greece

Greece, on the other hand, represents the attack on the Torah itself — *the sechel* — the wisdom of Israel. The Greeks weren't interested in the physical destruction of the Jewish People; rather they wanted to destroy the spiritual core of Judaism — the Torah — and leave a Hellenized hulk that would conform to the Greek norms of aesthetics



continued...

# The Secret of the Dreidel

A Children's Game  
That Contains  
the Story of the  
Jewish People



— drama and the superficial wisdoms. *Sechel* begins with the letter *Sin*. That's the letter of the kingdom of Greece.

## Rome

The fourth kingdom, Rome, is a summation of all the other exiles. At the beginning of their domination, the Romans, like the Babylonians, stopped the bringing of offerings in the Temple. Then they destroyed the second Holy Temple and inflicted unthinkable carnage on the “*guf*”, the body of Jewish People. After the massacre of Betar, they used Jewish blood as fertilizer for seven years.

At first, Rome was the intellectual scion of Greece, but with the conversion of the emperor Constantine to Christianity in 313 CE, the Catholic Church became the spiritual heir of the Roman Empire. After the demise of the influence of the Church, the mantle of Rome was subsequently worn by secularism and materialism, the spiritual incarnation of Rome in our own times. Rome is all the exiles rolled into one and thus it is represented by the Hebrew word “*Hakol*” which means “all”. Its first letter is the letter *Heh*.

## The Dreidel

Where is the point at the center of a circle?

Can you define it? And yet it exists. Just like the letter *yud* in the Hebrew alphabet — a single dot from which the whole universe was created, the threshold of existence. The still point in the turning circle — and around that dot turns the whole world. The Jewish People are that little dot — so infinitesimally small, and yet around this dot, the world turns.

What is the opposite of that little dot?

What is the opposite of the central point that occupies no space? Direction — North, South, East and West. Expansion in four directions. Four is the antithesis of the One. Four is the number of the Kingdoms who stand eternally opposed to the Jewish People. Eternally opposed to He who is One.

And to His reflection in this world — the Jewish People.

Take another look at our dreidel spinning.

What do you see? Four sides. Spinning around a central point that occupies no space. And when those sides spin, they themselves cease to have direction anymore. Now, in the blur of their whirling. They are a circle, a reflection of the still small point at its center.

What is it that is carved on the sides of our dreidel?

*Nun, Gimmel, Shin, Heh...* On the surface, those letters stand for “*Nes Gadol Hayah Sham - A great miracle happened there.*” The commemoration of a miraculous victory of a faithful few over the might of the Greek Empire. But on a deeper level, the dreidel is a microcosmic representation of the four kingdoms, Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome spinning around the center, the Jewish People.

And the Hand that spins the dreidel comes from Above...

Every empire thinks that it will last forever, but the Hand that spins only spins the dreidel of history for a predetermined time, and then, each Empire, despite its vainglorious boasting, falters on its axis...and finally crashes.

The dreidel. A children's game, played in the firelight of a cold winter night, the Chanukah Menorah silently glowing in the window... The dreidel. Its four sides spinning around the still point in the turning circle; spinning so fast that its sides blur into nothingness... The dreidel. So seemingly insignificant - and yet this little dreidel contains the story of the Jewish People; the history of the whole world...

Happy Chanuka!

## Sources:

- *Ramban Bereishet 28:12*
- *Pirkei D'Rebbe Eliezer 35*
- *Maharal in Ner Mitzvah*
- *Bnei Yisasschar, Kislev/Tevet, Essay 2:25*
- *Ibid. Commentary on Bnei Yisasschar; Rav Nachman Bulman zt'l*