

O H R N E T

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PARSHA INSIGHTS

IRON YARMULKE

*(Yosef said to the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers): "If only you would think of me... and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building." (40:14)*

Something very strange happens on the twenty-fifth of the Hebrew month of Kislev. Two completely different festivals are observed.

One festival celebrates a military triumph by a small group of partisans who manage by their own bravery to overcome vastly superior forces and restore Jewish statehood to the Land of Israel. The other commemorates a supernatural victory against powers of darkness that wished to adulterate the Jewish People and their Holy Torah.

The bizarre thing is that both these festivals have the same name.

They are both called "Chanuka".

The secular version of the Chanuka story makes Mattityahu and Yehuda Maccabee sound like characters out of a Cyborg movie. True, there's an eight-branched candelabra somewhere there at the back of the set, but Chanuka is really a nationalistic *shoot-em-up* where the good guys win and the bad guys lose and G-d got written out of the plot at the first script meeting.

The other version of Chanuka focuses on the supernatural events that surround Chanuka. The miracle of the oil lasting eight days; of a small minority who manage to hold onto their Judaism against the blandishments of materialism and hedonism. True, there's a military victory somewhere in there, but it's a miraculous victory against impossible odds, a victory which is no more than the revelation of G-d's providential Hand.

There's a fine line between faith and folly. There's an equally fine line between thinking that the Jewish People win wars because we have the best tanks and planes and the best training.

In 1967, the Six Day War opened with a blistering attack on the Egyptian airfields by the Israeli air force. The Israeli air force managed to knock out 90% of the Egyptian planes while they were still on the ground. Now, 90% is an interesting statistic — because it can't happen. Warplanes bombing a tiny ground target under fire can achieve 40%, maybe 50%. But

90% doesn't happen.

After the Six Day War finished, you couldn't buy a set of tefillin in the whole of Israel. There were appeals in the United States for anyone who had a spare pair to send them to Israel. The Jewish People realized that G-d had given them a miraculous victory against five Arab armies on four fronts, and the upswell in the observance of Judaism was remarkable.

Equally remarkable - and predictable - was the short-lived nature of this awakening. Nothing much had changed in three thousand years, and just as the Jewish People were capable of cavorting around a golden calf a few weeks after they had witnessed the splitting of the sea and all the miracles in Egypt, so too the Jewish People very soon forgot Who it was Who fights our wars and were busy bragging about the invincible Israeli army.

So, as it were, to give us a little reminder of Who's really running things, some six years later, the Arabs attacked again. This time they managed to make deep inroads into the heartland of the country. But the Arabs made a fatal mistake. They think that they will attack on Yom Kippur when everyone is fasting and weak.

They forgot two things: One strategic and the other supernatural. Strategically, the most difficult thing about starting a war without a large standing army is to mobilize. The major problem is to find everyone. However, on Yom Kippur you can find *everyone*. Because almost everyone is in *shul*. So all you have to do is to take a truck drive from shul to shul and call out the names at the back. Also the roads are empty so you can mobilize your army in about half the time it would normally take.

Secondly, the Arabs forgot to read their history books. If they'd paid closer attention, they'd have realized that traditionally the Jewish People always used to fast before going into battle to purify themselves before G-d. And even in the secular State of Israel, anyone with the remotest connection to his Judaism is praying his heart out in shul and the angels are taking his prayers upstairs to the King of Kings. Not a good

*continued on page four*

## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**Y**aakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to

Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the *Mashiach*. Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In jail, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is reinstated, and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in prison.

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

### A GROOM TO THE RESCUE

**Y**ears before they had the opportunity of praying at the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov in the Ukrainian city of Uman, the Breslover Chassidim in Eretz Yisrael would gather on Rosh Hashana at the tomb of Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai in Meron. For 62 years the Jew who led the services was a Rabbi Kalmanovitz from Yerushalayim. His grandson, Rabbi Yisrael Gellis, relates a fascinating story about how he merited such a long life.

As a young man his grandfather and other hungry youths seized every opportunity to participate in a wedding where they could enjoy some of the food. At one particular wedding the *chatan* failed to show up. It turned out that he had discovered something about the *kallah* which he

had not been aware of and felt he had been duped.

The rav of Yerushalayim, Rabbi Shmuel Salant, who had been invited to serve as *mesader kiddushin*, turned to the young men surrounding him and cried:

"Have pity on a Jewish daughter! We cannot allow a Jewish daughter to suffer such shame! I promise any one of you who agrees to marry her that he will live a long life and see great-great-grandchildren!"

In those days when famine and disease cut short so many lives, such a blessing was not taken lightly. The young Kalmanovitz agreed to marry the abandoned *kallah* and together they built a happy, wholesome family and lived to see great-great-grandchildren.



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## PARSHA Q&A ?

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

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

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

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

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Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

## SHABBAT 65 - 71

*“One who is afflicted with metzora (leprosy) should declare to the public his spiritual impurity so that people will pray for his recovery.”*

The application of this advice in our *gemara* is the practice of marking with red a tree which sheds its fruits before they ripen so that people will see its sad condition and pray on its behalf. But the *gemara* elsewhere (*Sotah* 32b) extends the application to everyone who is suffering so that others will pray for his relief.

• *Shabbat* 67a

*“If one is walking in a desert and is unaware which day is Shabbat,” states Rabbi Huna, “he should count six days and observe the seventh day as Shabbat.”*

Since any of those days could really be Shabbat, he must restrict himself to activities which are absolutely necessary for survival. This applies to the seventh day as well and it is distinguished from the other days only through *kiddush* and *havdala*.

• *Shabbat* 69b

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

*continued from page one*

day to attack really...

Again the same thing happens. A realization of a miraculous miracle followed by a return to “with my own power and the strength of my own hand” kind-of-thinking.

So next time, G-d, as it were, says “So you think it’s your army that’s winning these wars? I’ll tell you what. Next time, your army will sit on its benches, and I will send the largest and most powerful navy in the world steaming half way around the world and your army and your navy and your air force will do absolutely zero.”

And that’s exactly what happened in the Gulf War. I remember sitting in a taxi at the time, and this secular taxi driver was quoting me a verse, I think it was from the prophet Yishayahu, all about how G-d will tell us to go into a sealed room for a little while until the danger passes. “Who is like your people Israel?! One nation in the land!” Even the taxi drivers quote you the prophets!

I also remember when the day the Gulf War ended. It just “happened” to be Shushan Purim. I went into my own sealed room and ripped the plastic off the window and threw the window open wide to let in the sweet air of freedom wafting in the holy city of Jerusalem.

If I live to a hundred and twenty, I don’t think I’ll ever have a Purim like that one.

And now, G-d has saved us again from rockets aimed at the very heart of this Holy Land. And what is the word on the street, in the media?

“Kipat Barzel is a game-changer.”

What a shame that we think that the “Iron Hat” saved us! The “Iron Hat” didn’t save us. The “Iron Yarmulke” saved us.

The massive amount of Torah learning that the State of Israel supports is the real “Iron Hat.”

*“If only you would **think of me... and mention me** to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building.”*

In this week’s Torah portion, Yosef asks the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers twice to intercede on his behalf to Pharaoh. By his lack of trust in G-d - by asking the Chamberlain twice - Yosef languished two further years in jail.

Rabbi Chaim of Brisk once asked Rabbi Shimon Shkop how long Yosef would have been kept in prison if he had only asked the Chamberlain *once* to help secure his release.

Rabbi Shimon replied that if Yosef had asked only once, he would have spent only one year in prison.

Rabbi Chaim disagreed. “He wouldn’t have had to spend any more time in prison at all. To try to secure his release by asking once is considered to be *hishtadlut* - the human effort that G-d expects of each of us. To ask twice showed a lack of trust in G-d. So it would have been two years or nothing.”

The Jewish People are faced yet again with the threat of war. Again there are those who rise, as they do in every generation, wishing to annihilate us. We must fight. And we must fight with everything we have. With our bodies. With our minds. But mostly we must fight that little voice inside us that tells us that we ourselves are doing all this.

Time to put on the Iron Yarmulke!

## CHANUKA – 7 DAYS OR 8?

**From: Tami**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*I've heard a question about how many days Chanuka should be - since the oil burning the first day wasn't a miracle, we should really only light for seven days. But I don't remember the answer. Could you please "illuminate" this for me? Thanks "a latkes".*

Dear Tami,

A good question – and since you've penned such nice puns, you've spared me from having to do so. So let's get straight to the answer.

First of all, a less well-known source offers a less well-known explanation as to why we observe Chanuka for eight days. Megillat Ta'anit (ch. 9) records, "Why did the Rabbis designate that Chanuka should be observed for eight days? Did Moshe not designate that the dedication of the Tabernacle [the precedent for re-dedicating the Temple in Greek times] be only seven days? Rather, during the days of the Greek Empire, the Hasmoneans entered the sanctuary, rebuilt the altar, repaired its walls, replaced the sacred vessels, and were engaged in this work for eight days". Therefore, the Chanuka we observe commemorates not only the dedication of the Menorah, but also the dedication of the altar and the sacred vessels that extended a full eight days.

But the explanation that you refer to, found in the Talmud, that we commemorate the miracle of one day's worth of oil lasting eight, raises the question you mention which is asked by the commentaries - namely that we should only light for seven days. Many explanations are suggested. Here I'll mention just a few.

The first day of the festival commemorates the miraculous military victory of the few and unarmed over the many massively armed. This first day thus celebrates their resting from their enemies. The remaining seven days commemorate the actual miracle of the oil lasting another seven days.

Another explanation posits that while the lighting of the first day was not particularly miraculous, the discovery of the one remaining jar of untainted oil marked with the seal of the High Priest was a miracle. Accordingly, the first day commemorates the miracle of finding of the oil, and the following seven commemorate the miracle of its lasting.

Other explanations suggest either that a small amount of oil went a long way on each day, or that the full amount was miraculously spared. According to the first approach, the discovered one-day's oil was divided into eight small portions with the intention that the Menorah be lit for only a short time each evening until new oil could be produced. Miraculously, each day's small amount burned the entire day. According to the second approach, the full one-day's worth was used on the first day with the intention that it burn only that day, but miraculously, each day only a small amount was consumed such that the limited amount burned a full eight days. Either way, the miracle of the lighting occurred on the first day as well, hence our commemoration of the miracle of the lighting for eight days.

These last explanations imply yet another underlying miracle as well. The very fact that they did not despair from lighting the Menorah despite their knowledge that they would not be able to fulfill the Torah command to light a "perpetual lamp" was itself a miracle which enables Israel to endure all generations of exile. Had Jews always based their present service of G-d on what they surmised the future had in store for them, they would long since have lost the will to survive. However, miraculously, the people of Israel have placed their trust in G-d, and have thus persevered through all times against all odds.

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**Answer:**

Cheating on exams is absolutely forbidden because it constitutes what halacha calls *geneivat da'at* — deceiving someone — even when there is no financial gain. The copier is deceiv-

ing the person marking the exam by posing as someone who has demonstrated a mastery of the subject when this is really not the case. By helping him in this deception you become an accomplice to the sin.

Try your best instead to help your classmate study for the exam and point out to him that he now faces a challenge which will be repeated many times in his lifetime, a challenge which can only be successfully met by realizing that in the long run no one gains anything from doing things in a dishonest manner.

Life is full of tests and how he deals with the one coming up will prepare him for all the rest.

## THE HUMAN SIDE OF THE STORY

### FOR WHOM TO VOTE

Parliamentary elections were being held in and no agreement had been reached between the religious community and the irreligious socialist “Bundists” to continue their tradition of presenting a united Jewish slate.

The Bundists, who were extremely bitter about the refusal of the rabbis to accept their terms, held a pre-election meeting. Their leader concluded a fiery campaign speech by declaring: “Cursed be the hand that casts a ballot for the Rabbis’ Party.”

When word of this came to the rabbis, a meeting was held at which some participants suggested that a proclamation be issued that a curse be upon anyone voting for the Bundist list. Rabbi Yosef Kahaneman, the founder of the Ponovez Yeshiva in Bnei Brak, was then the rav of the Ponovez community and the youngest member of the rab-

binical group. “Let them curse,” he told his colleagues, “and we shall bless.” His suggestion was accepted and the meeting ended with a proclamation that anyone voting for the rabbinical list would be blessed.

After this meeting a woman approached Rabbi Kahaneman and told him she really wanted to vote for his list but her husband insisted that she vote for the Bundist list. Aware of the mentality of his people, Rav Kahaneman told the woman that in accordance with the advice of our Talmudic Sages she should vote as he had instructed her. When she later related to her husband the ruling she received from the rabbi, he excitedly exclaimed, “If that is what the rabbi told you we are going to vote for the Rabbis’ List!”

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# My Son the Jewish Hero

BY RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER

**S**top any Jewish child and ask them what Chanuka represents. The chances are that they will tell you that Chanuka is all about heroism. It's about the Maccabees going to war against an enormous, well-oiled and powerful army and winning against all the odds.

That is something to be proud of. A bunch of wimpy Jews besting the Ancient Greeks at what they do the best – warring. The Maccabees were a small band of Priests who knew nothing whatsoever about warfare or military tactics. Yet they had no fear and led their tiny group of like-minded followers in a guerrilla insurgency which, to everyone's amazement, led to driving the Greeks out of Jerusalem and re-dedicating the Holy Temple. What an incredible feat!

Many times over the years around Chanuka I have heard comments like, "You know, we Jews, when our backs are to the walls, we can fight as well as anyone else!" I have even seen Menorahs built of figurines of Maccabees who seem to share a striking similarity to the Greeks that they were fighting against – tall, muscular, well-armed!

But that is really not what Chanuka is about at all. The battles and the wars are a "small, side-issue". What is often overlooked is the reason that the Priests chose to go to war against the Greek Empire. After all, the Greeks had no interest in annihilating the Jews in Israel at the time. Quite the opposite – their interests were that the Jews would stay put and live in their land. But with one caveat – they had to live as Hellenists. They had to embrace Greek culture, to let go of their "old fashioned" ways. Yes, to retain their Jewish "flavor" but their first responsibility had to be to the Greek Empire and not to Judaism.

In order to implement their plan the Greeks outlawed many basic Jewish rites such as circumcision and keeping Shabbat. And, most dastardly of all, they forbade the learning of Torah because they knew that Jewish identity comes, first and foremost, through the Holy Torah. They understood that if they could disconnect the Jews from their Torah they would ultimately be able to disconnect them from everything.

And they almost succeeded.

If it weren't for a band of non-violent Priests who had never witnessed warfare up close before. When it became clear what the Greeks were attempting to do the Priests raised up the banner of service to God and for the first time in Jewish history went to war to be able to continue the study of the Holy Torah. They didn't go out to battle to stay alive physically as had always been the reason for going to war up until now. Rather, they fought in order to allow themselves and all the future generations to learn God's Torah and lead lives that grant us the spiritual blessings that God promised us.

It transpires that real heroism in Judaism is not quite the

same as in the outside world. Our heroes are those who, like the Maccabees of old, are prepared to sacrifice everything in this physical world in order to retain their spiritual identities.

During the days of Chanuka, Rabbi Yisrael Spira – known as the Rebbe of Bluzhev (the place where he served as Rabbi until the Holocaust) – lit candles in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. "Candles" was perhaps, a rather grandiose term for what they had. They had managed to secrete a few smears of boot polish for the fuel of their "candles" and their "wicks" were strands of cloth taken from their own threadbare uniforms. Once, when he recited the blessings, a Jew asked him a question: "Rabbi, even if you stubbornly lit the Chanuka candles and recited the blessings of *Lehadlik Ner Shel Chanuka* and *She'asa Nissim Le'avoteinu*, what justification do you have in reciting the third blessing, *Shehecheyanu Vekiyemanu Vehigiyanu Lazman Hazeh* – Who has kept us alive and preserved us and enabled us to reach this time? During a time in which thousands of Jews are dying terrible deaths, why would you say *Shehecheyanu*?"

"I too asked myself this question," the Rabbi replied. "I had no idea when I stood in the barracks and started to recite the blessings how I was going to say *Shehecheyanu* until I looked behind me and I saw that a large crowd had gathered – risking their own lives in so doing – to watch the lighting of the candles. By the very fact that God has such loyal children – prepared to give their lives for the lighting of the candles – by that very fact alone we may recite *Shehecheyanu*!"

Much has been written post-Holocaust about the way that the Jews went to their deaths in the camps. Some of it has been terribly derogatory but none of it is true. The Jews went to their deaths in as heroic a way as is possible. They died knowing that they were being murdered simply because they were Jewish. On Chanuka – when we commemorate the heroism of the Maccabees – it is imperative that we understand clearly that their heroism was of a spiritual nature. Not physical. Their motivation was based solely on the fact that without the Torah we have no future, and, if we have no future, then we have no present either.

This year, as we recite the blessings for the very first time and we say those immortal words – *Shehecheyanu Vekiyemanu Vehigiyanu Lazman Hazeh*, perhaps it would be correct to pause for a moment and to contemplate how much we truly have to thank the One "Who has kept us alive and preserved us and enabled us to reach this time" and to offer up a prayer of thanks to all our Jewish heroes throughout history. They have all given us our future, but, by doing so they have given us our present as well – and for that we must be truly grateful.