Summary

I

Parshas Miketz — 30 Kislev 5756, 22 & 23 December 1995

Commentaries

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

“And may Almighty G-d (Kel Sha-dai) grant you mercy…” (43:14)

When Hashem brought the universe into existence, if left to itself, Creation would have continued to expand ad infinitum. Hashem said “Enough!” and Creation stopped expanding. The name of Hashem that expresses the power of this cosmic limitation is the name Sha-dai - meaning: He who said to the world “Enough!” The essential purpose of the world’s creation was for man to recognize the magnitude of its Creator. Thus, when this point was reached, it was enough - the creation did not need to be any larger to evoke man’s recognition of the power of the Almighty. Similarly, when a person experiences adversity, it is to purify him and to bring him to recognize his Creator. That is why Yaakov uses the name Sha-dai in this verse: Enough! The troubles that I have undergone are enough to bring me to the recognition of the Creator of All...

(Rashi, Ozer HaChasidus in the name of Admo”r Rabbi Mordechai M’Pschiske, in Iturei Torah)
CANDLE IN THE NIGHT

“And Yosef called the name of his firstborn Menashe...and the name of the second son, he called Ephraim.” (41:51,52)

Fire consists of two powers - the power to burn, and the power to illuminate. The Chashmonaim in the days of Chanukah used both of these powers. Fire to sear and eradicate the impurity of the Greeks, and the fire of the Torah to light up the Beis Hamikdash once it had been re-sanctified. A fire to burn out Evil, and a fire to illuminate Good. There is a famous dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel over how to light the Chanukah candles. Beis Shammai says that you start with eight candles on the first night and work down to one on the last, and Beis Hillel says you start with one and work up to eight. The power to burn always starts with much and reduces it to nothing - to ashes. That's the idea of starting with eight candles and reducing them to nothing: Beis Shammai held that the essential aspect of Chanukah to be communicated to future generations was the eradication of even the smallest particle of evil, for then, automatically, Good must blaze out and shine.

The power of light, however, is always something which grows stronger and stronger: Beis Hillel considered that the stress should be on the triumph of the light - for where there is light, necessarily the darkness must flee. So they say we light one candle on the first night - and that light grows and grows until it fills the world and there is no place left for the darkness.

Yosef’s two sons - Ephraim and Menashe are these two powers - fire and light - rooted in all Israel. Menashe is the ‘negative power’ - the power to burn and destroy evil with the result that the light will shine. And Ephraim is the ‘positive power’ - the power to illuminate, so that darkness can have no place to rule. Just as ultimately the Jewish People will be called by the name Ephraim, the power of illumination, similarly, the Halacha is like Beis Hillel - we start with one candle and add more light every night until the darkness disappears.

(Adapted from Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in L'Torah ul'Moadim)

Haftorah: Zecharia 2:14-4:7

Please note: Although Shabbos Chanukah this year falls on Rosh Chodesh, we still read the Haftorah of Shabbos Chanukah rather than Isaiah 66:1-24 which is the Haftorah for Shabbos Rosh Chodesh.

MO THER NATURE’ S FATHER

T he Prophet Zecharia is shown a vision of a Menorah, made entirely of gold, complete with a reservoir, tubes to bring it oil, and two olives trees to bear olives. A complete self-supporting system. The symbolism is that Hashem provides a system which supports man continuously. However, man has to open his eyes to see from where this support emanates. In other words, Mother Nature has a Father...

(Adapted from the ArtScroll/Stone Chumash)

AN UNWELCOME GUEST

“And behold seven other cows arose after them... and they stood next to the cows on the bank of the river. And the cows of ugly appearance ate the seven cows of beautiful appearance and robust.” (41:3,4)

The negative impulse comes to you first as a ‘sleep-over’ guest - someone just passing through. If you allow him to stay, he becomes a lodger; and finally, if you don't kick him out, he takes over, becomes the master of the house and dominates you completely. The seven ugly cows are a representation of the evil powers of the negative impulse. First, like the cows, it rises up, appearing out of the distance like a wayfarer on his travels, then it stands next to you - on an equal footing - like a guest sharing all the facilities of your home. Lastly, just as “the cows of ugly appearance ate the seven cows of beautiful appearance” - so eventually, if you don't stop him, the negative impulse will devour its victim completely...

(In the name of the Sfas Emes in Mayana shel Torah)