



Kinder Torah



Dedicated in Loving Memory of Ralph and Anita Siegel ob"m.

Light up the Darkness

"Abbas, the sun goes down so early these days."

"These are the shortest days of the year, Avi."

"These are also the days of Chanukah, Abba."

"Yes, Avi. Not only are they days of physical darkness, but there was a time when the Greeks caused great spiritual darkness for Klal Yisrael."

"Please tell me the story, Abba."

"The Greeks craved wisdom, Avi. They wanted to gather all of the knowledge in the world, study it, and claim that they were the wisest people. They even wanted to study the Torah...as a textbook. Can you imagine that? Talmei HaMelech translated Hashem's Holy Torah into Greek. That was their way of saying that there was nothing holy about the Torah. It was just a textbook in the Greek library."

"How awful!"

"They did not stop there, Avi. Having denied the holiness of the Torah, they now proceeded to uproot Klal Yisrael's *kedusha* (holiness). The Maharal explains that the Greeks claimed that we were no longer Hashem's Holy Nation because we sinned with the *Chet Ha'egel*. Therefore, they launched a spiritual war against us. They made decrees against the observance of our holy day - Shabbos, against the holiness of our bodies - *bris milah*, and attacked our holiest place - the Beis HaMikdash. They then tried to defile all of the pure oil stored there."

"Why were they so interested in the oil, Abba?"

"The oil burned in the lamps of the menorah, whose light represented the Torah. The windows of the Beis HaMikdash opened outward, because the menorah cast the spiritual light of Torah upon the entire world. We know, and they knew that the Torah is our strongest connection to Hashem."

"Therefore, when the Greeks defiled the Beis HaMikdash and the oil, they were attacking the root of our holy connection to Hashem."

"Precisely, Avi."

"Now I see why we celebrate Chanukah by lighting the lamps, Abba. The miracle of the oil was no small detail of the Jewish victory over the Greeks; rather it was the theme of the whole struggle."

"I could not have said it better myself,

Avi. That is why the Rambam calls the mitzvah of Chanukah lights '*chavivin ad meod*' (very, very dear). They celebrate the victory over the forces that tried to sever our special relationship with Hashem. By overcoming them, we came to a new closeness with the Almighty and His Torah. There is nothing more dear to us than that."

"Abba, may our Chanukah lights inspire us to push away the darkness, and illuminate the world with more and more Torah learning."

"Amen."

Kinderlach . . .

Chanukah is a time of renewal. The Greeks tried to cut away everything that was holy, and make the Jewish people into a nation like all the others. We stood up for Hashem's Honor, and in return, He gave us miraculous victories. He fought for us and purified all that was impure. This renewed our relationship with Him.

Therefore, kinderlach let us celebrate this Chanukah by strengthening our strongest connection to Him - the Torah. May the lights of Chanukah inspire us to learn Torah with a big bren (fire) and thereby light up our souls, Klal Yisrael, and indeed the world with the light of Torah.



Provisions for the Journey

Paroh's dreams foretold seven years of plenty in Mitzraim, followed by seven years of famine. What was Yosef's advice? "Let Paroh appoint overseers on the land and work quickly during the seven plentiful years. Gather all the food during the upcoming good years and store it under Paroh's authority" (Bereshis 41:34-36). The people of Mitzraim had seven years of famine ahead of them; therefore, they had to store up provisions while they were able.

This cycle of gathering for a future time when there will be no provisions is similar, in a certain sense, to a person's stay in this world. Now are the "years of plenty". Now is the time when mitzvos are readily available. When we move on to the next world, we will be able to enjoy the fruits of our labors. However, there will be no more mitzvos to gather.

The Gemora (Kesuvos 67b) relates a compelling story about Mar Ukva. He was at the very end of his life. What did he ask for? His *tsedaka* records. They were brought to him; he examined them and saw that he had given 7000 *dinrei sianki* - quite a respectable sum of money - to *tsedaka*. However, he was concerned. "The provisions are small, and the road is long," he said. Perhaps he did not have enough mitzvos for the long journey in *Olam Habbo*. He arose and gave half of his money to *tsedaka*. He knew that now is the time to gather mitzvos. Later will be too late.

Kinderlach . . .

We should all live to the nice ripe old age of 120. That seems like a long time. It is. However, 200 years is longer than 120. Can you imagine living 500 years? A thousand years is called millennia. Three thousand eight hundred years ago was Matan Torah. That was a very long time ago. The whole world is 5765 years old. That is all of time, as we know it. However, it is nothing compared to eternity. Olam Habbo is forever. That is a very, very, very long time. This is what Mar Ukva meant when he said, "The road is long." The mitzvos that we gather here give us unbelievable pleasure over there - forever and ever. Once we arrive there, we can no longer gather mitzvos. Our time here is short, compared to eternity. Use your time wisely. Store up as many provisions as you can for the long road ahead.

Parasha Questions

- Why did Yosef cry when he met Binyamin? (Rashi 43:30)
- Why did Binyamin sit near Yosef? (Rashi 43:33)
- According to the brothers, for what reasons were they brought to Yosef's house? (43:18)
- Did the brothers regret selling Yosef? (Rashi 42:3)
- Why did the brothers not recognize Yosef? (Rashi 42:8)
- When did Yosef swear in Paroh's name? (Rashi 42:15)