

OHRNET

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OHRNET CHANUKA *Special*

Cast a Giant Shadow

BY RABBI REUVEN LAUFFER

Chanuka – the Festival of Lights. Wicks floating in golden olive oil and the mystical and mysterious flames that flicker and let their pure glow permeate our lives.

Chanuka seems to touch an inner dimension of nearly everyone regardless of the level of their observance. Just look at the anticipation on the faces of all the participants whilst the Menorah is being lit! Why is that? What is it about Chanuka that makes it so captivating?

Perhaps the secret of Chanuka is that it is a festival that we can all partake of without anyone having to feel “religiously-inadequate” or ignorant. In effect, Chanuka is our “Jewish passport”. When we all light the Chanuka lights together we are uniting in a way that transcends each individual’s religious observance. We become one Nation reveling in the fact that we belong to each other.

Mel Brooks, the famous comedian and actor, wrote about his Jewish identity and the way that impacts on his professional life, “I’m sure that a lot of my comedy is based on anger and hostility. It comes from a feeling that as a Jew and as a person I don’t fit into the mainstream of American society. Feeling different, feeling alienated, feeling persecuted, feeling that the only way you can deal with the world is to laugh – because if you don’t laugh you’re going to cry and never stop crying – that’s probably what’s responsible for the Jews having developed such a great sense of humor. The people who had the greatest reason to weep, learned more than anyone else how to laugh.”

What an incredible insight! It is possible that Mel Brooks does not realize that *not* fitting into mainstream society is exactly what we, as Jews, are supposed to do. Yes, we are supposed to enhance the world and to make the world a better place for our having been in it. And, yes, we are definitely

supposed to help build the world up into a place in which all humans can feel the benefit. However, we are not supposed to be so culturally assimilated that we lose sight of who we are. That is exactly what the beauty of Chanuka is. We come together and we light the Chanuka lights because we *don’t* fit into mainstream society!

But there is something even deeper about Chanuka. Something so mystical, something that is so exquisitely other-worldly that it can only be represented by something as equally ethereal. The flickering flames of the Chanuka lights.

The brilliant and famed Gaon from Vilna writes that before the final redemption there will be a darkness deeper than anything else ever experienced. Accordingly, the only way that we can combat such darkness is by spreading light, small flame by small flame. And each small flame will be added to the next until there will be such a burst of brilliant light that the darkness will be dispelled for ever.

The Sages teach that the windows in the Holy Temple were constructed in an unusual way; the windows were narrow on the inside and widened out so that they were at their widest on the exterior. This was to teach us a lesson of monumental importance. The Golden Menorah in the Temple did not add any physical light to the light that already exists in this world. However, the Menorah added a new dimension to the true function of the Temple. The Temple was the meeting point of the spiritual world with the physical world, and the Golden Menorah was the point where the spiritual light and the physical light combined in order to be able to spread throughout the world. We have no Temple today, so the little

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A END TO THE DARKNESS

“And it was at the end of two years and Pharaoh dreamed...” (1:1)

He has placed an end to the darkness' (lyov) He gave to Yosef a set time how long he would sit in shadow in prison. And since the end arrived, Pharaoh dreamed a dream. (Midrash Rabba)

In our world, it's easy to mistake cause and effect.

The literal translation of the verse in this week's Torah portion is, “And it was at the end of two years and Pharaoh dreams.” Why did the Torah choose to describe Pharaoh's dream in the present tense even though the Torah is written in the past?

Pharaoh's dream was not a mere event in a sequence of events; rather it was an ever-present reality, ordained from the beginning, a living reality all through the two years that Yosef languished in jail, waiting for the moment of Yosef's

redemption to arrive.

G-d places an end to the darkness even before the darkness begins; its end is already an existing reality.

The reading of the Torah portion of Miketz always falls out during the festival of Chanuka. Chanuka, the Festival of Light, takes place in the depth of the darkness, at the darkest time of the year.

We live in times of darkness; the future of the Jewish People both in our Holy Land and in the Diaspora looks bleaker than it has done for fifty years. Yet while we watch the machinations of the Pharaohs of our world we must remember that G-d has already prepared an end to the darkness. It already exists.

The time for our redemption is at hand.

PARSHA 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.

לע"נ
 הרב חנא מנחם מנדל בן ר' יחזקאל שרגא זצ"ל
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ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

Love of the Land, written by Rav Mendel Weinbach, zt"l • Parsha Insights written by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair

General Editor and Talmud Tips: Rabbi Moshe Newman • Design: Rabbi Eliezer Shapiro

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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?"

Abarbanel

ON PARSHAT MIKETZ

By Rabbi Pinchas Kasnett

When Joseph's brothers come to Egypt to buy food due to the famine in Canaan, they encounter Joseph, now the Viceroy of Egypt: "Joseph's brothers came and they bowed down to him...Joseph saw his brothers and he recognized them, but he acted like a stranger toward them and spoke with them harshly...Joseph recognized his brothers but they did not recognize him. Joseph recalled the dreams that he had dreamed about them, so he said to them, 'You are spies...'" (Gen. 42:7-9)

Joseph had two reasons for making sure that his brothers did not recognize him. First of all he recognized that it was clearly G-d's plan that he end up in Egypt, become Viceroy, and have the ability to save his family from starvation. Thus his brothers did not deserve the death penalty for having sold him into slavery. They did, however, deserve punishment for their negative intentions. Even though the anticipated result of their action never came to fruition, the intent remains. As a result, Joseph formulated a plan to punish them measure for measure: They had accused him of spying on their activities and reporting back to their father, so he accused them of being spies as well. They had originally 'imprisoned' him in a pit with little hope for escape, so he took Shimon as his prisoner, allowing the others to return to Canaan. They had sold him into slavery, so he took Binyamin as his slave.

The second reason for withholding his identity was to test them to determine if their attitude toward him had changed and they actually regretted what they did to him. Joseph arrived at the decision to test them after having eliminated three other possibilities. The first possibility was to never reveal his true identity and to treat them harshly and take his revenge. However, he felt that because so many people were coming from Canaan to buy food, someone else might

recognize him. It would be disgraceful for the brothers to find out who he was from a source other than himself. Also, how could he not reveal his identity, knowing how his father was suffering from his absence? Finally, as one who feared G-d, how could he continue to harm his brothers?

The second possibility was to reveal his identity immediately, supply them with adequate provisions and send them back to Canaan without bringing the rest of the family to Egypt. He rejected this because he might be perceived by some evil individuals in Egypt as having dual loyalties. By using Pharaoh's resources to strengthen his family in Canaan he would be placing himself in grave danger. If war broke out between Egypt and Canaan it would appear that he was aiding the enemy. The third possibility was to bring the entire family to Egypt immediately. However, he was afraid that perhaps the brothers' jealousy and hatred toward him would continue and they might try once again to kill him, or that they would accuse each other and bring about more hatred. He would find it contemptible to have to witness such destructive behavior in his own family.

Joseph's plan to test them — which begins with his accusation of spying — is precipitated by his recall of the dreams. Here the Torah emphasizes that the dreams were *about them*. They were not intended for Joseph. Rather they were intended to inform the brothers that they should not hate him, as they would bow down to him and he would rule over them, but not in the threatening manner that they had imagined. When he saw that one part of the dreams had been fulfilled when they bowed down to him, he needed to find out if his other brother Binyamin and his father were alive so that the possibility would exist for the last part of the dreams to be fulfilled. Then they would finally realize that the dreams were prophetic and there was no basis for their hatred.

Please daven for a refuah shleimah for

Chaim Yechiel ben Malka (Ohr Somayach alumnus Chaim Howard Rothman)

Chaim Eitan ben Sarah - Yitzchak ben Chaya

Shmuel Yerucham ben Baila (Rebbetzin Heller's son-in-law)

May we all hear Besoros Tovos.

HASMONEAN VICTORY?

From: Bracha

Dear Rabbi,

The holiday of Chanuka has a lot to do with the rededication of the Temple and re-assertion of Jewish independence from the Greeks. But although we're told why the first and second Temples were destroyed, I am not aware of what happened after the Hasmonean liberation such that the Romans ended up ruling over Jerusalem and ultimately destroyed the Temple. What went wrong, and why or how was this light of Chanuka extinguished?

Dear Bracha,

As you know, the Hasmonean revolt against the Syrian-Greek occupation of Israel was led by the sons of Matityahu, the High Priest. This family of *kohanim* and their followers recaptured the Temple in 165 BCE when the miracle of Chanuka occurred. Their victory was consolidated over the next 25 years when the Sanhedrin and the people declared the last surviving son of Matityahu "Prince of the Jews" in the year 140 BCE.

The Hasmonean dynasty continued to rule for a total of about 130 years until these *Kohen-kings* were overthrown in 36 BCE. From this time Israel was ruled by various Roman governors for about 100 years until the Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 68 CE.

While the Hasmoneans were certainly righteous, G-d-fearing and imbued with fervent dedication to G-d and the observance of Torah, Ramban (on Gen. 49:10) attributes their downfall to the fact that, as *kohanim* (making them Levites), they had no right to continue to rule as kings over Israel. Despite their praiseworthy self-sacrifice for the restoration of Jewish physical and spiritual independence, after the liberation they were required by the Torah to transfer rule over Israel to a worthy descendent of David from the tribe of Judah.

Because of their refusal to do so, G-d undermined their dynasty as described by the Talmud (Bava Batra 3b-4a) in

the following manner:

Herod was the slave of the Hasmonean house, and set his eyes on a certain daughter of that family. One day he heard a voice from Heaven say, "Any slave that rebels now will succeed." So he rose and killed all the members of his master's household, but spared that maiden, intending to marry her and thereby gain royalty and the right to rule. When she saw that he wanted to marry her, she went up on to a roof and cried out, "Whoever comes and says, 'I am from the Hasmonean house', is a slave, since I alone am left of it, and I am throwing myself down from this roof."

Having usurped the throne, Herod sought to eliminate any opposition. He said, "Who are they who teach, 'From the midst of your brothers you shall set up a king over you?', (stressing the word 'brothers', excluding a slave such as himself from being king). The Rabbis!" He therefore arose and killed all the Rabbis, sparing only Baba ben Buta, that he might take counsel of him. He placed on his head a garland of porcupine bristles and put out his eyes in order to deter his rebellion.

Intending to test the blinded Rabbi, Herod disguised himself and engaged Baba in a lengthy Torah discourse aimed at getting him to curse Herod, which was met by the Rabbi's rigorous, scriptural-based refusal. Astounded by the Rabbi's loyalty, Herod regretted his crime against the Sages and confessed, "I am Herod! Had I known that the Rabbis were so discreet, I would not have killed them. Now tell me what amends I can make!" He replied, "As you have extinguished the light of the world, for so the Rabbis are called this as it is written, 'For the commandment is a light and the Torah a lamp', go now and restore the light of the world which is the Temple, of which it is written, 'And all the nations will be enlightened by the Temple'."

And even though Herod did actually rebuild the Temple, thereby forging a physical renaissance, his rule was founded on spiritual depravity. And his ruthless murder of his masters ended the Hasmonean dynasty, which was followed by increasingly oppressive Roman rule. Thus, from the Hasmoneans and Herod, we see a message that is no less relevant today — no matter how well-intended and inspiration-filled a movement for Jewish renewal might be, if it is not consistently guided by Torah, its light can only be relatively short-lived...

*The Ohr Somayach Family wishes
you and yours a Happy Chanuka*

SHEMONAH ESREI - SEVENTH BLESSING - PART 3

(G-d) Fight Our Battle

We find in Jewish history two distinct types of battles fought against our enemies. One where G-d does the fighting, and another where it seems as though we do.

In Egypt, G-d showed the world His might and power as He struck the wicked Egyptians with ten plagues. Each of the plagues showed undeniably G-d's total control over the forces of nature. Clearly, it was G-d Who was doing the fighting both in Egypt and at the splitting of the Sea of Reeds, as the verse indicates: "Moshe said to the people, 'G-d will make war for you, and you will remain silent.'" Thus, at the exodus G-d took center stage as He wrought great miracles, while, we, the Jewish People, watched as spectators.

In contrast to this, we find an extraordinary story which took place before the Common Era (174-138 BCE). Antiochus IV, the Syrian ruler, was a wicked tyrant who ruthlessly persecuted the Jews. He outlawed religious worship like Shabbat, *brit mila*, and *kashrut* and even decreed that pigs be slaughtered upon the holy Altar. The Jews stood strong in the face of death, refusing to abandon G-d or His Torah. Throughout the more than thirty years of persecution thousands of Jews died as martyrs, until a small group of righteous believers began to fight back.

Mattityahu, the son of Yochanan, the high priest, and his five sons, began a rebellion against the mightier and more numerous Syrian army. With a display of immeasurable courage and strength the Jews somehow managed to kill

thousands upon thousands of enemy soldiers, eventually recapturing Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

After the Temple was rededicated, the Jews witnessed the only open miracle throughout the thirty-year struggle against their enemies. Though there was only enough uncontaminated oil found to light the Menorah in the Temple for one night, it remained lit for eight nights until more pure oil was prepared. It is this miracle that we commemorate each year as we light the Chanuka lights.

Our Sages explain that pure oil was not required for the lighting of the Menorah at that time. As such, they ask why the holiday of Chanuka was established to commemorate a seemingly unnecessary miracle. Surely Chanuka should have instead been established to commemorate the military victory led by Mattityahu and his sons, for that is obviously the main event of the story.

The true victor of the war against the Syrians was G-d, for it was He that did the fighting which led to our victory. How else could a small group of untrained and barely armed men have defeated an entire army of over fifty thousand men? However, unlike in Egypt, G-d fought from 'behind the scenes' and allowed us to take center stage. Since one might mistakenly think that G-d left us to fight our battles by ourselves, He chose to show Himself at the end with the miracle of the oil, as if to say that "I have been here all along fighting your battles." Our wise Sages knew this and chose this one act of G-d as the symbol of the holiday to teach us that it was His Divine providence which transcends nature that was behind the Jewish triumph of Chanuka.

OHRNET CHANUKAH *Special*

continued from page one

Menorahs that we light in our homes every Chanuka take the place of the Golden Menorah in the Temple, and they have exactly the same effect in the spiritual realms!

Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, known as the Ba'al haTanya after the seminal work that he authored and one of the towering personalities in the world of Chassidism, was once asked why it was that thousands of followers streamed to Liadi to learn Torah from him but the local townspeople did not seem to pay very much attention to him. Rabbi Shneur Zalman answered that a candle can illuminate an entire room, but there is one place it *cannot* illuminate – the shadow that it casts. The people of Liadi were shrouded in the shadows of his great luminosity and they could not identify the light that was pouring out of him.

In this same way we are all capable and able to light up the

world around us – *we just need to want to*. Perhaps the time to begin is now, on Chanuka by lighting the Chanuka lights, one by one, night after night. And, by doing so we are attaching ourselves to the myriad of Jews around the world who are doing exactly the same thing. And the more candles that are lit, the more the darkness will be driven back. And, who knows? Perhaps we can generate enough light between all of us to dispel the darkness entirely!

Winston Churchill, the mythical British prime minister said, "A nation with no past is a nation with no future". And I say that a nation that has Chanuka is a nation that has both a past and future!

So, let's cast shadows, all of us. Because if we cast shadows it is because we are truly generating light.

YEVAMOT 79 - 85

“This nation (the Jewish People) has three signs: they are merciful, humble and love to do kindness.”

King David listed these three specific character traits which are recognizable in the Jewish People, as opposed to the other nations of the world. He learns these traits from three different verses in our *sugya*. Based on this reasoning he concluded that since the Givonites made a cruel and revengeful request it would be wrong to let them be attached to the Jewish People.

The second trait is called *“busha”* (lit. embarrassment) in the *gemara*, which is a recognizable trait that can be seen on a person’s face if he is embarrassed when transgressing. But don’t think that the Jewish People are born with this trait of humility. In fact, the opposite is true; a Jew is born with the greatest brazenness of any nation. However, the Torah that G-d gave the Jewish People humbles the hearts of the Jewish People and changes their nature for the better. (Maharsha)

• Yevamot 79a

“A person does not have the ability to make forbidden something that is not his.”

This is the ruling of Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Shimon on our *daf*, regarding a person who grows his grape vine onto his neighbor’s field of grain. Rabbi Meir rules that the mixture becomes a forbidden mixture of grape and grain (*“k’lei hakerem”*) and the responsible party must pay for the resulting damages. Rabbi Yossi and Rabbi Shimon disagree and state the above principle that a person cannot forbid something that is not his.

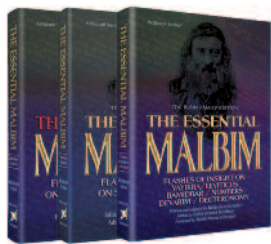
Tosefot asks, “Why not? If a person puts non-kosher food into the pot of kosher food another person is preparing, certainly the other person’s food becomes forbidden!” Tosefot clarifies that this principle of Rabbis Yossi and Shimon was said only when a “thought” is essential in causing the prohibition. For example, worshipping another’s animal, and likewise in the case of forbidden mixture of grains, which is also thought-dependent as Tosefot elucidates. However, when “thought” is not a factor in the prohibition — such as adding non-kosher food to another’s kosher food — then a person indeed has the ability to make the other person’s item forbidden and would be responsible for the consequences.

• Yevamot 83 a-b

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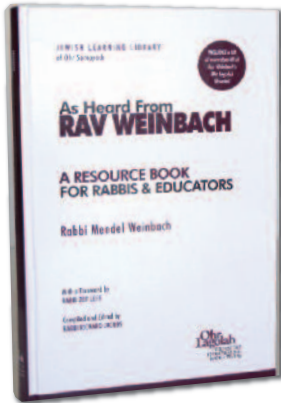
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In the Ohr Somayach Dining Room

Mincha at 1:00 PM in the Beis Hamedrash