

## 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 and 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 Chanukah we light one candle, and on the second night two. Thus, after two nights, we have lit three candles. If you add correctly you’ll find that the total number of candles that we light on Chanukah is thirty-six (excluding the *shamash*). The thirty-six lights of Chanukah 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. The light has gone forever and the bad days are now firmly in command.

That’s the message of this week’s Torah portion and it’s also the message of Chanukah. 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.

## GITTIN 2 - 8

*Rav Chisda said, "A person should never cause an atmosphere of excessive fear (of him) in his home, because the husband of the "pilegsh in Givah" caused her excessive fear (of him) which led to the death of tens of thousands of Jews."*

Our *gemara* discusses what she, the *pilegsh*, did that provoked her husband's excessive wrath, and the final chapters of the Book of Judges (Sefer Shoftim) teach in detail how their relationship eventually led to a civil war within the Jewish People that resulted in tens of thousands of battlefield deaths. This halacha is codified in the Rambam's Mishneh Torah, Laws of Marriage 25:19. The statement which follows Rav Chisda's teaching is similar, and concludes by saying that an oppressive atmosphere in the home will eventually lead to three major sins: forbidden intimate relations, spilling of blood and desecration of Shabbat (Rabbeinu Chananel substitutes "desecration of the Name of G-d" as the third item in the list).

• *Gittin 6b*

*Rabbi Abahu said, "A person should never cause an atmosphere of excessive fear (of him) in his home, because a great man did this and was fed a great thing (i.e., forbidden food)."*

The *gemara* identifies this great man as Rabbi Chanina ben Gamliel and the forbidden food as a limb from a live animal (not one from an animal after a *shechita*). Our *gemara* questions this statement based on a rule that G-d does not cause a righteous person to sin due to the actions of his animal, and all the more so would not have a "stumbling block" of prohibited food put in front of a righteous person without his knowing it was forbidden. So how could this happen? The *gemara* answers that he didn't actually eat it, but it was merely offered to him to eat, and he refused to eat it (although he did not know it was not kosher). Rashi explains that this non-kosher limb was brought to him since the original kosher food was lost, and due to fear of negative repercussions (since there was "fear in the air" of his home), the lost kosher food was hurriedly replaced with a non-kosher food.

Tosefot points out (and proves from another case in the *gemara* elsewhere) that this rule that a righteous person will not stumble in a transgression applies only to forbidden food, but not to other transgressions, since eating forbidden food is a very great disgrace to the righteous person.

• *Gittin 7a*

## LOVE OF THE LAND

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

## MODI'IN — FORTRESS OF THE HASMONEANS

The modern city of Modi'in founded in 1994, and the religious community of Modi'in Ilit (Kiryat Sefer) nearby, recall one of the miracles of Chanuka now being celebrated by Jews throughout the world.

As we say in the special prayer of that day, "It was in the days of Matityahu, son of Yochanan the Kohen Gadol, the Hasmonean, and his sons" that the miracle of "the



mighty and numerous Greek forces" bent on forcing assimilation were overcome by "the weak and few".

Mount Modi'in was the place where the Hasmoneans rallied their outnumbered forces and with the help of Heaven achieved victory over their oppressors.

OHRNET magazine is published by OHR SOMAYACH Tanenbaum College

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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?"

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# Abarbanel

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## ON THE PARSHA

BY RABBI PINCHAS KASNETT

### Miketz

After having maneuvered his brothers into bringing Binyamin to Egypt, Yosef devises one more contrived scenario to determine their exact relationship with Binyamin, the remaining son of Rachel, the favored wife. Yosef sends all of them back to Canaan, laden with provisions. Unknown to them, he has their money returned to them in their sacks and has his silver divining cup placed in Binyamin's sack. He sends his messenger to overtake them, discover the cup and accuse them of stealing it. Abarbanel analyzes the nuances, purposes and wisdom of both Yosef and his brothers as they deal with this difficult situation.

Yosef had two reasons for putting his brothers, and especially Binyamin, through such tribulation. First of all he wanted to complete the punishment of his other brothers 'measure for measure' for what they had done to him. They had spied on him and brought evil reports to Yaakov; so he had accused them of being spies. They threw him into a pit; so he had Shimon thrown into jail. They sold him into slavery; so he decided to make Binyamin his slave for having stolen the cup. Similarly, Yaakov had sent Yosef on a benign mission to Dotan to check on the welfare of his brothers and flocks. They reacted by selling him into slavery. Here, Yaakov sent Binyamin to Egypt for the benefit of his brothers, and Yosef intends that he end up a slave.

Secondly, he wanted to see if the brothers harbored any resentment toward Binyamin, as they had toward Yosef. If Yosef had not returned their money, they might have reasoned, 'like mother, like son'. Rachel had stolen her father's idols. Maybe Binyamin acted similarly. His guilt would be unassailable. They would have to turn him over; doing so would not have anything to do with resentment or jealousy. However, once they all discover the money in their own sacks, there is a distinct possibility that they are being framed. This is the real test. Even though the whole scenario could be a set-up, here is their chance to get rid of Binyamin as well.

In any case, Yosef still wanted to keep the whole matter private. He sent the brothers away early in the morning and immediately sent his messenger to overtake them. Normally when there is a theft, the pursuer calls out loudly to everyone that a theft has occurred as he tries to overtake the thieves. Here, however, he instructed the mes-

senger to say nothing until he actually confronted them.

There were three dimensions to their alleged guilt. First of all, they repaid goodness and kindness with evil. Yosef took care of them and honored them with meals at his table. Even a professional thief doesn't steal from those who honor him. Secondly, they stole a constantly-used object which would be missed immediately. This is a brazen act. Thirdly, the cup had enormous value to its owner, as it added significantly to his prestige since he claimed it was used for divination. (Even if the brothers were skeptical that he actually divined with it, it still could be viewed as a cherished symbol of his power and status. Stealing it could be viewed as an attempt to usurp that power).

In regard to the money, the brothers protest their innocence. As far as they are concerned, the money is like a found object. It is not the subject of theft at all. The messenger, however, notes that the missing cup is altogether different. The one individual in whose sack it will be found is clearly guilty, while the rest of you, he says, are completely innocent. The brothers realize that there is some kind of trick involved and they all go back with the messenger. In his mind, Yehuda, speaking for all of them, realizes that there is absolutely nothing he can say. As far as they are concerned, Yosef is actually the guilty one for having framed them! They are forced to conclude that their whole predicament was orchestrated from Above. It must be another punishment for what they did to Yosef. Yet they didn't believe for a moment that Binyamin had stolen the cup. When they offer themselves, all of them, as slaves to Yosef, they say, "Here we are. We are ready to be slaves to my lord — both we and the one in whose hand the cup was found" (Ber. 44:16). They should have said, "We, with the one in whose hand the cup was found." They are saying that they (minus Binyamin) are offering themselves as slaves for what they had done to Yosef, and, separately, Binyamin for the theft that, even though they know it is a lie, they are powerless to refute.

Abarbanel concludes by saying that Yosef realizes that they think they were framed. As a result he tells them that in essence he is not sure of Binyamin's guilt. Consequently, he will enslave him rather than putting him to death. The rest of them, however, may go free.

## CHANUKAH - LIGHTING LEFT

**From: Chava**

*Dear Rabbi,  
It seems to me that the right side is usually given precedence in performing mitzvot. Why is the Chanukah menorah lit on the left side of the doorway?*

Dear Chava,

Many people nowadays light inside the house either on a table or in the window. But it is correct that according to the original halacha, and as still practiced by many today, the ideal location to light the Chanukah menorah is on the left side of the main, outer doorway into the house.

One reason that's given in the sources is in order that a person will be encompassed by *mitzvot* — by the mezuzah, whose place is fixed on the right, and the menorah, which is therefore placed on the left. In this way, a person's goings out and comings in are illuminated by the spiritual and physical light of the mezuzah and the menorah.

In addition, the verse states, "There is length of days in its right hand; in its left there are wealth and honor." "Length of days" refers to the World-to-Come, which was given to Israel. "Wealth and honor" belonged to Yavan (ancient Greece), the descendent of Yefet. But when the Greeks

tuned to evil, Israel merited their portion as well. Hence we have the mezuzah, which mentions length of days, on the right; and we light the menorah to symbolize our victory over Greece on the left, expressing our hope to receive their wealth and honor for the purpose of serving G-d.

Another idea is that since the doorway serves for entry as well as departure, while the menorah is on the left of the doorway going in, it illuminates the right side going out. That is to say, this lamp sheds light upon us even when we are "outside", in exile among the nations of the world. And even now, while the Temple is not built, the light of the Chanukah menorah illuminates our path in exile.

In a similar light, the original altar was consecrated on the 25th of Kislev, the same day on which Chanukah was later instituted. The mitzvah of making a sanctuary for G-d in which He may dwell in our midst is thereby timeless, and every Jew is obliged to yearn daily for the rebuilding of the Temple. One way we do this is by lighting the Chanukah menorah in memory of the miracle that occurred during that rededication of the Temple. And we place it facing outward on the right — like a person on vigil waiting at the door in anticipation of a long-expected wayfarer's return.

May we merit the arrival of Mashiach and the restoration of the Final Temple speedily in our days, Amen!

## 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.

## A PEOPLE OF PURITY

**“When the wicked Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah...”**

There is a general principle that all things created by G-d contain within them the ability to teach us something. The lessons are not limited to one thing. Rather, as endless as is G-d’s wisdom, so too are the lessons we continue to draw out from the wonderful creations G-d has placed before us. Accordingly, even something as simple as a name has deep meaning.

### What’s In a Name?

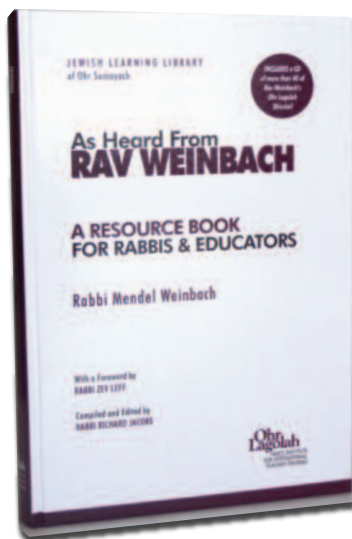
There is a famous saying, “Misery loves company.” And so the Greeks, uninterested in a portion in G-d’s Torah, sought to persuade the Jewish People to abandon a life of holiness and join them in the pursuit of vanity and self-worship.

The Hebrew spelling for Greece is *Yavan*, spelled with a *yud*, *vav* and (“final”) *nun* like this (יון). As can be detected from the spelling above, each of the letters that make up the name *Yavan* descend in a downward position in greater progression. *Yud*, the first letter of their name represents wisdom; the second letter, *vav*, represents action. Thus we see the essence of what the Greeks were all about. They took the intellect that G-d bestowed upon them to use in an evil and forbidden manner, resulting in the final letter *nun*, which equals the numerical value of fifty. They attach themselves to

the fifty gates of impurity through their thoughts and actions, descending to the lowest forms of behavior.

The Nation of Israel, on the other hand, was created to be a “holy nation and kingdom of priests”. What are the Jews about? Let us start with where our name comes from. “Jew”, *Yehudi*, is from the name *Yehudah*, spelled *yud*, *hei*, *vav*, *dalet*, *hei* (יהודה). These letters make up the Tetragrammaton, the holiest of the Divine names, with the addition of the letter *dalet*, which represents the idea of humility (*dal* is Hebrew for poor or humble). A Jew must humble himself before G-d, accepting the yoke of Heaven through the fulfillment of both the positive and negative commands of the Torah. Through our Divine service we establish an eternal bond with G-d, transcending the limitations of the mundane world, to ascend to the higher spiritual realms above, and in so doing we connect to the fifty gates of holiness.

Like day and night, light and darkness, the Greeks, and all those that continue to follow in their ways, fulfill the verse in Kohellet 2:14, “The fool walks in darkness.” In contrast to them, the Jewish People fulfill the verse in Mishlei 6:23, “For the (Divine) command is a candle, and the Torah is light.” As we light our Chanukah candles this year may we merit walking in the light of the first days of creation, in the era of redemption, speedily, in our days.



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## YAACOV MORDECHAI MOGUNOVSKY

Age: 24 - Born: Moscow - Raised: Munich, Germany

University: Technical University of Munich, BS in Biochemistry - Currently in the Center Program

Yaacov Mordechai was born in Moscow and moved with his parents and older brother to Munich when he was six years old. His parents grew up in atheistic Soviet Russia devoid of Jewish tradition, with the exception of the knowledge that they were Jews — a fact they couldn't forget in the virulently anti-Semitic Russian society. When they moved to Germany, a place in which it was easy to hide one's Jewish identity, they did just that. Although they belonged to the Jewish community, they didn't attend a synagogue nor did they observe Jewish traditions. In fact, until he was in the 11th grade in high school, no one in his class knew that Yaacov Mordechai was Jewish. (Of course, then he wasn't known by his Hebrew name).

In Germany, in the 11th grade, students in gymnasium (academic high school) must take a class in religion. Yaacov Mordechai was the only student in his class who chose to study Judaism. His classmates were astonished to find out that he was Jewish. In fact, he was the only Jew in his school. To the credit of the German educational system, he observed no change in his classmates' behavior towards him.

While still at this school, his older brother, who had begun attending Shabbat prayer services in Munich, suggested that they attend a student Shabbat event in Florence, Italy. While at the synagogue that Friday night, a religious Israeli tour group "happened" to be visiting the city, and invited the brothers to Shabbat dinner at their hotel. Shortly thereafter, Yaacov Mordechai started to attend Shabbat services with his brother in a synagogue in Munich, and heard weekly Torah lectures there. The process of becoming religious took a few years, but gradually the brothers started to put on *tefillin* daily, kept *kashrut* and Shabbat, and continued their learning thanks to encouragement of the rabbis and warm Jewish families of the Munich Orthodox community.

His brother, a banker, lives and works in Zurich, and has continued on his path of spiritual growth. He and his family are established members of that community, and he is well-known

as a host for those who need a place to stay in Zurich on Shabbat and Yom Tov.

Yaacov Mordechai came to Ohr Somayach in April of 2015 and joined the Center Program. Among the students here, he is known for his *hatmada* (diligence). As a result, he has made rapid progress. "I have really improved my reading of *gemara*, and my Hebrew has improved to the degree that I can now pick up a *sefer* and read it on my own." He is very impressed with the quality of the teaching and the *achdut* (unity) he feels among the students. "The *rebbe'im* here are fantastic and impressive *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars), and are available to me at all hours of the day. The only thing that could make the Yeshiva better is more money to improve the material situation here." As for the future, Yaacov Mordechai says, "I want to learn as long as possible and live in a very strong Jewish community."



There is an expression, "The apple never falls far from the tree." Yaacov Mordechai

attributes his return to the path of his forefathers to his sainted grandfather, Reb Mottel Lifshitz, *zatzal*, who is buried in Rostov on Don. In an incredible show of *mesirat nefesh* (extraordinary dedication), he managed to keep all the *mitzvot* in Communist Russia.

As it says in the Book of the Prophet Malachi, "*V'heishiv lev avot al banim, v'lev banim al avotam*" — G-d will turn the hearts of the parents to their children, and the hearts of the children to their parents. This has been interpreted to mean that in the end of days the children will encourage their parents to return to the heritage of our ancestors. "Our parents weren't so happy at first at our choice of a religious life, but now they have accepted us and even keep a kosher home and help and support us with great love and care. We are very thankful for that and we know that we can never repay their many kindnesses. I'm also very thankful to my brother who cared and cares for me a lot, and to *Hakodesh Boruch Hu* who is showing His goodness to me."



Highlights from the 43rd Anniversary Gala Dinner

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# NOT FOR THE SAKE OF VICTORY

BY RABBI CHAIM GROSS

## Question #1:

Miracles, salvation, wars, the threat of the Greeks, Divine assistance, the mighty defeated by the weak, the victory of Torah and the rescuing of the Jewish People. These are just some of the dramatic points touched upon in the *Al Hanissim* prayer that we say during Chanukah. It is descriptive, emotive and uplifting. Yet the prayer ends with the words: “and they (the Sages) established these eight days of Chanukah to express thanks and praise to Your great Name.”

This seems to be a surprising ending. After the preceding drama, it appears anti-climatic. Moreover, why does the official legislating of Chanukah as a festival have anything to do with the miracles to which the prayer is supposed to relate? Wasn't that just a historical, legalistic afterthought?

## Question #2:

The origin of the name Chanukah is discussed by the *Rishonim*. The Ran writes that חנוכה refers to “resting on the 25<sup>th</sup> (of the month of Kislev).” Later commentators explain this to mean that the Jews stopped fighting on that date. Why do we refer to the date on which fighting *stopped* as the first day that we celebrate?

## Question #3:

Famously, the Bach explains the contrast between Purim and Chanukah. On Purim, the Jews sinned by indulging in material pleasures and were thus threatened, measure for measure, with physical extinction. On Chanukah, they had become weak in religious observance, and were therefore subject to Greek decrees against spiritual life. Yet we also find that the Greeks fought a physical war against us. How does this fit into the picture?

## Answer:

These three questions all point us in a similar direction and bring out a crucial message of Chanukah.

Certainly there was a long drawn-out physical war waged

by the *Hashmonaim* against the Greeks. However, the importance of the victory in the war, as elucidated by Rabbi Chaim Frelander, was not the actual overcoming of the enemy. It was, rather, that now the Jews could free themselves from the shackles of the spiritual Greek decrees. The war was not for its own sake; it was for the sake of the spiritual freedom that it enabled. The main theme, as the Bach writes, was the spiritual agenda.

“Victory in Europe Day” marks the day that Germany surrendered to the Allies. “Victory in Japan Day” marks the day that Japan surrendered to America. Historically, nations have emphasized military *victories* over their enemies. In contrast, victory over the Greeks was not a cause of celebration in its own right. It was a means to an end. It was the means to enable living a free spiritual life – “they rested on the 25<sup>th</sup>” (חנוכה) – the whole goal of the war was the right to rest, not the need to be victorious.

This explains why *Al Hanissim* ends by reporting that the Sages instituted an eight-day festival. The Greeks had waged a fierce campaign against the Torah and its scholars, “to make them forget your Torah and to make them stray from the statutes of Your will”. While the Greeks had some footing in the Written Torah (even translating it into Greek), the Oral Torah eluded them, going against their entire approach to wisdom and scholarship. The real victory of Chanukah was the return to a situation in which once again those Sages could learn, disseminate and legislate the Oral Torah. The ability of those in charge of the Oral Torah to institute an eight-day festival was not a mere historical response to the victory over the Greeks. It was the very purpose of the entire clash.

As the Rambam writes, the main feature of Messianic times will be the ability of the Jewish people to learn Torah and perform *mitzvot* in a manner free from the pressures exerted by other nations. For the Jew, as Chanukah demonstrates, victory is always only a means to something greater — never an end in itself.



# CHANUKA

## *Rededication of the Beit Hamikdash*

BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH

There is a principle in Jewish thought that states that one's name represents its essence. Rabbi Dessler explains that, similarly, the name of a holiday captures the spirit of that time period. Based on this idea, the name "Chanukah" (literally "inauguration", referring to the inauguration of the Beit Hamikdash) needs further analysis. This name neither makes any direct reference to the miracle of the oil, nor to the miracle of the victory of the war that so apparently symbolize the essence of the holiday of Chanukah. Why was this name chosen to refer to these days?

In order to answer the above question we first need a background in what the empire of Greece represented. The Greeks were very intellectual people when it came to studying and explaining the physical world. They made major advances in the sciences and other fields that focused on physical phenomena. However, as the Ramban explains, Greek philosophy strongly rejected the existence of anything that could not be seen, heard, felt, measured, or tested in the laboratory. Using this philosophy, the Greeks rejected the existence of a spiritual world.

The Greeks tried to contaminate spirituality and bring it down into pure physicality to give credence to their way of thinking. The name for Greece in Hebrew, "Yavan", hints at this idea as well, as the word "yaven" is used in Tehillim to describe slimy mud that sinks anyone who stands on it (Metzudat David to Tehillim 40:3). This was the Greek approach to anything having to do with spirituality. Thus, the Greeks did not destroy the Beit Hamikdash, but rather contaminated it. They did not throw us out into exile from Eretz Yisrael. They rather brought exile into Eretz Yisrael; they did not destroy the Torah but rather defiled it by translating it in such a way that it seemed just like another book of legends. To the Greeks the Beit Hamikdash was just another building, Eretz Yisrael was just another country, and the Torah was just another storybook.

The place that most apparently went against this Greek ideology was the Beit Hamikdash. When a person visited the Beit Hamikdash it was almost impossible for him not to see beyond the physical world. The Beit Hamikdash was the place where spirituality was brought into physicality. In fact, this is precisely why in Shir Hashirim (4:4, 7:5) the Beit Hamikdash is referred to as "the neck". The Shem M'Shmuel explains that just as the neck connects the higher faculty of man, namely the head, to the more physical part of man, namely the body, so too the Beit Hamikdash connected the spiritual world to the physical world. This is also why there were ten constant miracles in the Beit Hamikdash. Being an intermediary between the spiritual and physical worlds, the Beit Hamikdash was in some ways above the laws of nature. Through its spiritual nature the Beit Hamikdash countered the Greek motto that physicality is everything.

We can now begin to understand the depth behind the name "Chanukah". The battle between the Macabees and the Greeks wasn't just a physical battle, but rather a clash of ideologies. While the Greeks came to separate the physical world from its spiritual root, the Macabees, all of whom were *kohanim*, were the ones who dedicated themselves to the task of connecting the physical world to its spiritual core through their service in the Beit Hamikdash. The Greeks came and defiled a Beit Hamikdash that went against everything Greek ideology stood for, while the Macabees rededicated the Beit Hamikdash, thus declaring that there's more to the physical world than meets the eye. Chanuka is named after the rededication of the Beit Hamikdash. It is the rededication of the place where the physical and spiritual meet, which best describes the victory over the Greeks who didn't see past the physical world. The name Chanuka is therefore the name that most accurately encapsulates the essence of this holiday.

## PLEASE JOIN US...

...in saying Tehillim/Psalms and a special prayer to G-d for the safety and security of all of Klal Yisrael in these times of conflict and conclude with the following special prayer:

*"Our brothers, the entire family of Israel, who are delivered into distress and captivity, whether they are on sea or dry land – may G-d have mercy on them and remove them from stress to relief, from darkness to light, from subjugation to redemption now, speedily and soon."*

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