



SHABBAT PARSHIOT VAYESHEV-MIKETZ · 24 KISLEV-2 TEVET 5777 · DEC. 24-31, 2016 · VOL. 24 NO. 10

PARSHA INSIGHTS

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Vayeshev

A PROBLEM OF PEACE

“And Yaakov dwelled...” (37:1)

The Midrash explains that Yaakov wanted to “dwell” in tranquility, and so G-d sprang upon him the troubles of Yosef.

What was this tranquility that Yaakov wanted, and why was he prevented from having it?

The Talmud (Berachot 64a) describes the different expressions appropriate for taking leave from the living and the dead. When one leaves a dead person, one should say “Go with peace!”, but one should say to a living person, “Go to peace!”

The English translation of the word for “peace” — “*shalom*” — doesn’t capture the nuance of one of *shalom*’s most important meanings, which is “completion” or “perfection”.

The blessing that we give a living person is that they should “go to *shalom*”. Because their life is still storm-tossed with the challenges of this world; challenges that

are necessary for them to achieve their *shleimut*, their perfection, we bless them they should achieve this. That they should go “to” peace.

A person who has left this world has already garnered up as much perfection as he was able, and thus our blessing is that he should take that perfection with him: “Go with *shalom*!” Go with the peace that you have already achieved in this world.

Yaakov Avinu thought that after all the stress and problems of his life, G-d would not challenge him further, and he looked forward to dwelling in tranquility with the fruits of his efforts in this world.

The troubles of Yosef were sprung upon him to teach him that he had still more to achieve here in this world. He was still going “to peace” and not “with peace.”

• Sources: Rabbi Yehoshua Malko on the Rambam as seen in “Shollal Rav”

Miketz

SEVENS AND EIGHTS

“Out of the river emerged seven cows....” (41:2)

The Torah portion Miketz almost always falls during the week of Chanuka. This year it is read on the next-to-last day of the festival. There is obviously a very strong link between the portion of Miketz and Chanuka.

At the beginning of this week’s reading Pharaoh has a dream about seven cows coming up from the river. These cows were healthy looking, robust, full of flesh. After them

emerged seven other cows. These cows were gaunt and ugly. The gaunt, ugly cows ate the fleshy cows and left no trace of them.

Egyptian life was dominated by the Nile. To the extent that the Nile overflowed its banks, to that same degree would there be prosperity and food in Egypt. For this reason the Egyptians worshipped the Nile. On its vagaries depended life and death.

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PARSHA OVERVIEW

Vayeshev

Yaakov 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 exceptional 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.

Miketz

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 over-

lord 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.

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

OIL-RICH OLIVE — PROMISE OF THE FUTURE

Of all the seven species mentioned in praise of Eretz Yisrael the olive alone is referred to not as a fruit but as the oil that comes from the fruit.

To understand this we must analyze a point made by our Sages (*Menachot 53b*) about the comparison that the Prophet Yirmiyahu made (*Yirmiyahu 11:16*) between the olive and the Jewish People. "Just as the purpose of the olive is the oil which is extracted from it," says Rabbi Yitzchak, "so too is the purpose of the Jewish People realized only after it reaches the end of its processing."



Maharsha explains this comparison in the following way: The olive itself has no great value as a fruit, and consuming olives too frequently, say our Sages, can be harmful to the memory. Only after the olive has been squeezed and crushed to extract its very valuable oil is this fruit's potential finally realized. The Jewish People have a great spiritual potential, but it may take the crushing experience of suffering in exile to arouse them to repent their sins and realize that potential. In the days of Mashiach this process will be completed and the "oil" of the Jewish "olive" will come forth.

PARSHA Q&A ?

Vayeshev

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 Vayeshev'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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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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BAVA METZIA 89 - 102

The Sages say, “But we teach him (the worker who is permitted to eat from food with which he is working) to not eat more than the amount of his wages so that the ‘door should not be closed in front of him’ (so that his excessive eating should not cause him to be undesirable to hire as a worker — Rashi).”

This statement is part of a three-way dispute in the *mishna* regarding how much a worker may eat from the food with which he works. The *gemara* explains that the Tana Kama permits him to eat as much as he wants without any requirement to advise him to limit the amount for his own benefit; Rabbi Elazar Chasma permits him to eat only up to the value of his wages; and the above-quoted opinion of the Sages is that he may eat as much as he wants, but we advise him to not overdo it, and not eat more than his wages in order to remain a desirable person to hire. The halacha is in accordance with this opinion.

The right of a worker to eat from the food with which he works is taught in the Torah (Devarim 13:15): “When you enter your neighbor’s vineyard, you may eat as many grapes as you desire, until you are sated, but you shall not put any into your vessel.” The *gemara* explains earlier (87b) that this verse is speaking about a worker who enters his employer’s vineyard to work there. And it is important to note that just as an employee has certain rights, he also has responsibilities to his employer. The Rambam codifies the responsibility of the employee toward his employer as follows: “He must not deprive the employer of the labor due him by idling a bit here and there, thereby dishonestly wasting the day, and he must also work with all his might. The saintly Yaakov said of his service to his father-in-law ‘I served your father with all my might.’ He therefore gained his reward in this world as well by being blessed with great wealth.” (Laws of Hiring 13:7)

• Bava Metzia 92a

Rava said, “A person who wants to borrow an object and be exempt from payment if something happens to it should say to the lender: ‘Please bring me some water’; thus it would be considered as ‘borrowing it with the owner’; and if the owner is smart he will first bring the water and only afterwards lend the object.”

Rava is giving advice to both a borrower and a lender as to how they can each legally benefit in the case of a loan of an object. A borrower (“*sho’el*”) of an object is one of the four types of *shomrim* or guards: An unpaid guard, a paid guard, a renter and a borrower. A borrower is normally responsible to pay compensation in any event that he cannot return the object intact since “all the benefit is his” — i.e., he receives use of the lender’s object without paying any rent. One case in which the borrower is exempt, however, is if the object “dies while doing its job”.

Rava’s statement above is another example of a borrower’s exemption from paying for the loss of the borrowed object. The Torah states (Ex. 22:14), “If the owner is with him (the borrower) he will not be responsible for payment (if the object “dies”).” A borrower’s exemption from payment, as well any other type of guard, is often referred to as “*ba’alav imo*” — the owner is with him — as is the wording in the verse. The Torah does not explain the reason for the guard’s exemption from payment when the owner is in the borrower’s employ or service. Of course, this mitzvah, as well as every other Torah mitzvah, should be viewed as a Divine decree that does not require our understanding its reason. Nevertheless, many commentaries offer reasons for this seemingly mysterious exemption.

One reason suggested is that if the owner of the object feels so close to the one borrowing it from him that he has placed himself at his service, we can assume that he expects the borrower to return the object only if it is intact when the term of borrowing has concluded, and waives any claim for payment if the object is no longer returnable for any reason. (Seforno)

Rava in our *gemara* teaches what appears to be an application of this halacha. The *borrower* would be “smart” to ask for the owner to bring him some water, and while the owner is involved in bringing the water the borrower takes the object that the owner has agreed to lend him. Since the owner was “with him” in serving him at the time when the borrowing began, the borrower would be exempt for any loss that might occur to the borrowed object. If the *owner* is “smart”, however, he will make sure to finish bringing the water before he gives the object to the borrower of his object, since in this manner the owner is no longer “with him” when the borrower actually becomes a borrower, and the borrower will therefore have all of the normal responsibilities of a borrower.

Although the halacha of the exemption from payment in the case of “*ba’alav imo*” was established and well known before Rava’s statement, it is opined that Rava is teaching that even performing a relatively easy task as bringing a glass of water is considered “*ba’alav imo*”, and qualifies for the exemption of the borrower that is taught in the Torah. (Ritva)

• Bava Metzia 97a

PARSHA Q&A ?

Miketz

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 Miketz'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?"

Vayeshev

YOSEF — THE FAVORED SON

In this Torah portion it is very difficult to understand why Yaakov favored Yosef over all his other sons, and why Yosef's brothers hated him to the point of selling him into slavery after having nearly executed him. Abarbanel makes it clear that even though all of Yaakov's sons had attained a high level of spiritual perfection, Yosef was the only one who totally absorbed Yaakov's teachings. Even though Yosef was only 17, Yaakov recognized his superior intelligence and put him in charge of the family's herds and flocks. Yet he lacked any trace of arrogance, as he is referred to as a "youth" in regard to the sons of the maidservants Bilhah and Zilpah. He attended them and deferred to them even though they were the least significant of the brothers. He considered Bilhah and Zilpah his father's wives, not mere concubines. His self-awareness also allowed him to demonstrate humility and self-effacement.

Even the fact that Yosef brought an evil report about his brothers to his father is indicative of his superior character, for his intention was to improve their behavior. Yosef certainly did not slander them with his own opinion. Rather, he reported to his father in privacy what *others* were saying about them. Yosef's actions were based entirely on his love for his brothers, not by a desire to elevate himself at their expense.

Yaakov's love for Yosef was not the normal love of a father for his son. It was based on something deeper. When Yosef is described as "the son of his old age", this hints at Yosef's ability to relate to everyone in the family uniquely and individually. To his brothers he was a youth who respected their seniority. But he dealt with Yaakov with a gentleness and moderation which indicated that he saw himself as a true son, not just a youth deferring to the seniority of the father. Yaakov perceived this as a sign of his superior intelligence and character, and therefore loved him more than the other brothers. Onkelos in his Aramaic translation conveys this idea as he renders the verse "son of his old age" as "son of wisdom." Yosef had none of the impetuousness of youth. He thought through situations carefully, acting quickly when necessary and being deliberate when necessary.

There are two reasons for the brothers' hatred of Yosef. They were not able to understand that Yaakov did not find anything wrong with them. Rather, he favored Yosef because of his unique and unusual intellectual and ethical accomplishments. The brothers, however, were convinced that Yaakov was reacting to the slanderous accusations that Yosef had brought against them. We can assume that Yaakov

chastised them without revealing the source of the information, as no father wants to create strife in his family. The brothers assumed that Yosef was the source of the accusations, and that was why Yaakov favored him.

Secondly, they believed Yosef would inherit everything and that they would be relegated to the status of sons of concubines. Just as Yishmael and Esav had been sent away, they too felt that they would be completely cut off.

Miketz

YOSEF INTERPRETS PHARAOH'S DREAMS

The main difficulty in this *parsha* is how to understand why Pharaoh accepts Yosef's interpretation of his dreams and subsequently appoints him, a lowly Hebrew slave, to a position of enormous power and responsibility even before he can find out if Yosef's predictions are correct.

The first key to answering the question is to analyze the wine steward's recommendation to Pharaoh that Yosef be permitted to offer an interpretation. Besides the fact that Yosef interpreted the wine steward's dream simply and correctly, he impresses upon Pharaoh several other points in Yosef's favor:

Yosef had no inside information as to the guilt or innocence of either the steward or the baker.

Both of us were held in the exact same place, so Yosef could not draw any inferences from our respective positions in the prison.

He could not make use of any astrological calculations, as we reported our dreams at the same time.

He did not have access to any outside information, as he was with us the entire time.

He is a Hebrew and a slave, and therefore ignorant of the customs and culture of Egypt and the ways of Pharaoh's court.

Pharaoh is impressed and has Yosef summoned. Whereas Pharaoh's astrologers offered deeply symbolic and metaphorical interpretations, Yosef's interpretation is so simple that any Egyptian farmer could have said the same thing. Why then does it resonate so strongly with Pharaoh? First of all, it is important to understand that Pharaoh recognizes that his dream was clearly prophetic, and that the true meaning was blurred by images and metaphors that imitate but still obscure the simple message. Deep down the dreamer has an innate sense of the dream's meaning. The correct interpretation simply triggers the proper response. When the interpretation is correct the dreamer is suddenly

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CHANUKA – LIGHT AND DARKNESS

From: Chaim

Dear Rabbi,

We are told that the main miracle of Chanuka was that even though the one vial of pure oil that they found was enough only for one day, it miraculously lasted for eight days until they could produce new, pure oil for use in the Menora. The question is, why was a miracle necessary when the halacha permits using even contaminated oil for the sacred service when pure oil is not available?

Dear Chaim,

Perhaps the answer lies in what took place when G-d first created light. On the very first day of Creation the Torah tells us, “G-d saw the light was good, and G-d separated between the light and the darkness” (Gen. 1:4). The Midrash explains that prior to that Divinely ordered separation, light and darkness jointly served the world. G-d’s separation of the two created day and night. Rashi explains (ibid.) that since “G-d saw that the light was good”, it was not proper for light to be mixed together with the darkness. He therefore assigned one of them to the day and one to the night. Thus, from the beginning of time, light cannot coexist with darkness.

The Hellenists, whose reign is compared by the Midrash to the primeval darkness mentioned in the account of Creation, attempted to blend light with darkness. They did not destroy the Beit Hamikdash as did the Babylonians

before them and the Romans after them; nor did they did perpetrate the genocide planned by Haman. Their sole aim was, as we say in our “*Al Hanisim*” prayer, to “cause us to forget our Torah and abandon our fulfillment of G-d’s commands” in order to accept their pagan, Hellenistic culture.

To accomplish this goal they selectively prohibited those *mitzvot* that principally set the Jew apart from them – Shabbat, circumcision and the Jewish calendar of months and holidays. They made breaches in the walls of the Beit Hamikdash and contaminated its contents. All this was done in order to have the darkness of their paganism function alongside the light of Judaism.

Once this darkness was removed with the triumph of the Jewish forces, it was understood that there was no room left for any darkness, even in the form of contaminated oil. It is for this reason that G-d performed the miracle for the pure oil to last until a new supply was available.

The message of this miracle was relevant not only in those days, but in our own times as well. We must be careful to prevent the forces of darkness that are so prevalent in the world – lack of belief in G-d, immorality and violence – from infringing upon the pure light of a Torah lifestyle.

In our kindling of the Chanuka lamps and in our daily lives we must uphold the Divine command “Let there be light”, and ensure that it remain unadulterated by darkness!

ABARBANEL *on the Parsha*

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reminded, and feels in the depths of his soul that this was exactly what he saw. Yosef’s interpretation went straight to Pharaoh’s heart. He was not interpreting the dream. Rather he was revealing what Pharaoh already essentially knew.

Pharaoh already believed that dreams were a result of Divine inspiration, and that a correct interpretation could come only through someone with exceptional wisdom and understanding. Yosef informed Pharaoh of the enormous difficulties and complexities that would result from the fourteen-year cycle of plenty and famine. Pharaoh realized immediately that he had to appoint someone with that very exceptional wisdom and understanding to administer a new and comprehensive agricultural program. Yosef informed Pharaoh that whomever he chose would have to deal with the fact that the Egyptians would resist efforts to confiscate

grain in order to prepare for the famine. This would require wisdom and sensitivity to guarantee the cooperation of the populace. He would also have to understand the intricacies of market economics, and would have to know how to store the grain properly to prevent it from spoiling. There would also be considerations in regard to selling the grain to other countries. Finally, there would be the complicated matter of supervising a large number of agents who would be tempted to steal for themselves. The bottom line was that Pharaoh would be faced with a monumental task that would require an extraordinary individual with the power of a king over the entire nation. In Pharaoh’s eyes Yosef was the obvious choice, despite his humble background.

LAWS AND CUSTOMS OF CHANUKA

The Holiday of Chanuka is of rabbinical origin. As such, the question arises: How can we say, “That (G-d) sanctifies us with *His mitzvot*”? Where in the Torah is there a command to light Chanuka candles? Our Talmudic Sages in Tractate Shabbat (23a) ask this question and answer: It is written, “You shall do according to the word that they (the Rabbis) will tell you... According to the teachings that they will teach you and according to the judgment that they will say to you, shall you do; you shall not deviate from the word that they will tell you, right or left” (Devarim 17:10,11). Since the Torah commands us not to deviate from the words of the Sages, it follows that when they decreed that candles are to be lit on Chanuka it is as though the Torah commands us to do the mitzvah. (Ta’amei Haminhagim 844)

Why do we say the complete Hallel prayer on each of the eight days of Chanuka? One reason is that each day that the oil burned there was a new miracle added to the one from the day before (Mishneh Berurah 783:1). Another reason offered is because on each day we add an additional candle (Avudraham).

The reason the Rabbis instituted lighting Chanuka candles in the *Beit Haknesset* is for travelers who did not have a house to light in. This is similar to the custom of

making Kiddush in the *Beit Haknesset* on Friday night, which was originally established for travelers who ate and drank there. (Lavush 681:8)

On the first night of Chanuka three blessings are recited: “To light the Chanuka lights...”, “Who has performed miracles...” and “Who has kept us alive...” One who forgot to say the blessing “Who has performed miracles” on the first night should say it the second night (when lighting or while the candles are still lit), or when he remembers (even on the first night as long as the candles are still lit. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 676:1; see Kaf HaChaim)

Someone who did not light on any of the nights, and does not plan to light that night, should make the blessing “Who has performed miracles”, and on the first night also “Who has kept us alive” when he sees the Chanuka lights. This rule applies only when he does not have someone else lighting for him. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 676:3)

We don’t mention Chanuka or Purim in the “*al hamichya*” after-blessing said after eating foods made from the five grains, such as cakes and pastas (other than bread), since these holidays are not mentioned in the Torah. (Machatzit HaShekel 208:18)

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:

אחינו כל בית ישראל

“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.”

CHANUKA - OLIVES AND OIL

During these days of Chanuka everybody is talking about the miracle of the Menorah and the jug of *shemen zayit zach* (pure olive oil). What people don't realize is that the word *shemen* is not the only Hebrew word for oil — the word *yitzhar* bears the same meaning. In this special Chanuka feature we will explore the difference between the two words and their usage.

The common Hebrew word for oil is *shemen*. We may be familiar with that word from the phrase "*shemen zayit zach*" (pure olive oil) which the Torah requires for the lighting of the Menorah in the Tabernacle and Holy Temple. However, the Bible also uses another, less common word for oil — *yitzhar*. While the word *shemen* and its derivatives appear close to two hundred times in the Bible, the word *yitzhar* is only found in about one-tenth as many instances. As we have already encountered many times, the Hebrew language is not mere happenstance but is a Divine language created by "intelligent design". How then can we understand the true meaning of these two different words for oil, and the exact differences between them?

Rabbi Menachem ibn Saruk (920–970) defines *yitzhar* as olive oil. On the other hand, the word *shemen* is correlated to the word *shuman/shamen* (fat), and refers to the fatty, glyceride property of oil. Based on this we can argue that the word *yitzhar* by definition refers to olive oil, while the word *shemen* may refer to any type of oil. In fact, the very phrase *shemen zayit zach* implies that *shemen* alone does not intrinsically mean olive oil. The word *yitzhar*, on the other hand, is never juxtaposed to *zayit* (olive) in the Bible — rather it inherently refers to olive oil.

Radak (1160–1234) in *Sefer HaShorashim* writes that *yitzhar* is the word for oil immediately as it emerges from the press. Indeed, all instances of the usage of the word *yitzhar* in the Bible are in the context of olive oil as an agricultural product — the fruit of the olive press. Moreover, a verb form of the word *yitzhar* is found in Job 24:11, which Rashi explains refers to the act of producing olive oil. According to this explanation, both *yitzhar* and *shemen* may refer directly to olive oil, but *yitzhar* refers to olive oil specifically in its freshest state immediately after production.

Radak's father, Rabbi Yosef Kimchi, writes (in *Sefer HaGilui*) that the root of the word *yitzhar* is *tzohar* (light). Radak explains his father's assertion by commenting that oil is a particularly clear and shiny substance, and noting that, for

the same reason, olive oil is elsewhere called "gold" (Zecharia 5:12). The word *tzohar* also means "noon", so Ibn Ezra (to Job 24:11) writes that olive oil is called "noon" because it is used for lighting candles, which offer light resembling the sun at noontime.

Rabbi Yitzchak Zev Yadler (1843-1917) writes that the word *yitzhar* does not inherently mean olive oil, but simply refers to whatever oil is commonly used to light candles in any given locale. Since in the Holy Land olive oil was normally used for lighting candles, when the Torah refers to *yitzhar* it means olive oil. However, in other places other oils were used for lighting candles: In Babylon, people used sesame oil; in Media, nut oil; in Alexandria, radish oil; in Cappadocia, naphtha (see *Shabbat* 26b).

To sum up, we discussed three possible ways of differentiating between *yitzhar* and *shemen*. First, we proffered the argument that the word *yitzhar* inherently refers to "olive oil", while *shemen* simply means "oil". Second, we cited Radak's explanation that *yitzhar* refers specifically to olive oil right after production, while *shemen* may refer to olive oil in later states (e.g., in packaged form, etc...). Third, we cited the view of Rabbi Yadler that *yitzhar* does not inherently refer to olive oil, but only as a result of societal norms in the Holy Land does the word bear that meaning.

But wait — there's more!

The word *yitzhar* also appears nine times in the Bible as a proper name; Yitzhar was the grandson of Levi and the father of Korach (Exodus 6:18, et al.) The Midrash relates a fascinating idea connecting Korach, his father, and oil: Korach saw that his father's name Yitzhar is related to oil and took that as an omen that he will be successful in his rebellion against Moses. This is because Moses' name was given as a result of him being "drawn from the water" (Exodus 2:11), associating Moses with water. Korach thought that just as oil always sits on top of water, he will be able to come out on top in a battle against Moses.

However, Rabbi Yadler explains, in reality the name Yitzhar alludes not to Korach himself, but to Korach's descendant the prophet Samuel, who would later use specially-made ritual olive oil to anoint King David and begin the Messianic line.

NOSON TZVI BRINN

**Age 43 - Huntington, New York - Cornell University, BS Computer Science 1996
Bryant University, MS Information Systems - Graduate of Surface Warfare Officer School
Engineering Instructor for Diesel Propulsion at Surface Warfare Officer School
Graduate of Naval Postgraduate School - Space Systems Certificate - Commanding Officer, USS Carter Hall
Center Program – Ohr Somayach Jerusalem**

There is no uniform more handsome than the “dress whites” of a US Navy officer. At least, that’s what Neal Brinn thought while sitting in his guidance counselor’s office as a senior at Walt Whitman High School in Huntington, Long Island, New York. He had just been accepted to Cornell, one of the Ivy League schools in New York. Unfortunately, his parents could not afford to pay the high priced tuition. Neal needed a scholarship. The guidance counselor suggested that he join ROTC — the Reserve Officer Training Corps, in which college students agree to attend military-oriented classes, receiving military training during their college years, and, upon graduation, are awarded a commission as an officer. They are expected to serve a certain number of years of active duty in one of the service branches. In return, the students receive a full scholarship for university.

That morning was the first time that Neal had considered the idea of joining ROTC. When the guidance counselor asked which branch of the armed services he would prefer, he asked her to Google the uniforms for the different branches. He chose Navy.

He majored in computer science, and in addition to his academic workload for his degree he also took classes in Mathematics, Physics, National Security Policy, American Military Affairs, Naval Science and Naval Engineering. Each summer he attended a four to six-week training session. Neal graduated from Cornell with a BS in Computer Science and a commission as an ensign in the US Navy.

Of course, the Navy isn’t all parades and “dress whites”. It’s a strenuous and disciplined life, but it appealed to him. After his mandated period of active duty, he re-enlisted and became a career officer. He started out his naval career as a communications officer, climbing through the ranks, and eventually became the Captain of the USS Carter Hall, a battleship with a crew of more than 300.

During the course of his career he was stationed in various bases that, in retrospect, he saw that the Hand of G-d had directed him to. One of the first stops was Newport, Rhode Island, the home of a large Naval base and the location of Touro Synagogue, the oldest shul in the United States. It was here that Noson Tzvi reconnected with his Jewish roots. In another post, at the Naval base in Norfolk, Virginia, Neal became seriously involved with a traditional synagogue, serving as President of the congregation. Through Chabad in Alexandria, Virginia he began to understand the nature of *mitzvot* and became more observant. Neal became Noson Tzvi and was introduced to the “waters of Torah”.

Rabbi Gershon Litt, an Ohr Somayach graduate and the Executive Director of the Norfolk Kollel, had a major influence on Noson Tzvi. With the encouragement of his wife, Noson Tzvi decided to take an early retirement from the Navy to move to Israel with his young family and learn Torah. Rabbi Litt contacted Rabbi Saul Mandel, and today Commander Noson Tzvi Brinn is studying seriously in the Center Program at Ohr Somayach, learning to navigate the “Sea of Talmud”.



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CHANUKA: THE NEED FOR PURE OIL

BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH

The Gemara says that Chanuka was instated as a holiday to commemorate the miracle of the pure oil that lasted eight days (Shabbat 21b). The commentaries, though, question the need for this miracle. The halacha states that the service of the congregation supersedes the laws of impurity. According to one opinion in the Gemara, this means that it becomes completely permissible without any notion that one should even try to perform the services in purity (Yoma 6b). If so, we need to ask why did the Chashmonaim exert so much effort to search for a pure jar of oil when they were allowed to light even with impure oil? Furthermore, why did G-d go out of His way, so to speak, to perform a miracle to enable them to light with pure oil, when it really wasn't necessary? (Re'em on Smag Hilchot Chanuka, Pnei Yehoshua on Shabbat 21b and Teshuvot Chacham Tzvi 87)

Before answering the above questions, we need a brief background in Jewish thought. Everything in the physical world has its source in the spiritual realm. Furthermore, everything in the spiritual realm is a direct outcome of our physical actions and moral decisions. This is the reason why the Jewish approach has always been to attribute spiritual reasons to our physical struggles with enemies. After all, the enemies are only an outer manifestation of an inner deficiency in the Jewish People. Therefore, since G-d always deals with the world measure-for-measure, by studying the method employed by the enemy in how they attack us, who attacks us, and where they attack us, we can gain insight into the deficiency within that was the real cause of their assault. This is the kindness of G-d dealing with us measure-for-measure, which allows us to understand exactly what to fix. (See Michtav M'Eliyahu II p. 51)

Based on this idea the *Bach* says that before the Chanuka miracle took place there was laxity on the Jewish People's part in their services in the Beit Hamikdash. Therefore, G-d allowed the Greeks to defile the Beit Hamikdash and the oil for the Menorah, so as to hint to them their shortcoming in this area. It was also befitting for the Greeks to be the messengers because they preached denial in a spiritual reality, with only a belief in what may be seen, heard, or felt by the physical senses. Through the Greeks, the nation that denied the spiritual world, defiling the Beit Hamikdash, the ultimate place where the spiritual and physical met, G-d

constructed the perfect consequence that was measure-for-measure for the Jewish People's laxity in the Beit Hamikdash services.

The Gemara says that when someone repeats a sin, he becomes desensitized to it, and feels as though the act is actually permissible (Yoma 86b). Therefore, the way to perform proper *teshuvah* for a sin is to go to the opposite extreme to counterbalance one's natural desire for it, and thus re-sensitize him in that area (Chovot Halevavot, Sha'ar HaTeshuva, I). Based on this, if a person is lax in observing a certain mitzvah he should go to the other extreme and observe that mitzvah with extra care, even when halacha does not require it. This is meant to instill within the person the importance of the mitzvah, and thereby prevent any sort of laxity in it in the future.

The *kohanim* personified this idea during the Chanuka story. They understood that it was their laxity in their services in the Beit Hamikdash that led to the Greek attack. Therefore, they decided to complete their sincere *teshuvah* by risking their lives to battle against the Greek's mighty army to rededicate the Beit Hamikdash. Also, following their victory, the *kohanim* understood that it was crucial to fix their past mistakes by going to the opposite extreme and performing the service in purity — even if was not halachically necessary. It is for this reason that they searched so tirelessly for pure oil to light the menorah.

And why did G-d respond with a miracle that seemingly wasn't necessary? The commentaries explain that while certain conditions may become halachically permissible when someone is in a compromising situation, he must still ask himself why G-d put him there, as the very fact that he was put there may be an indication that his actions in that area are lacking (Alshich on Vayikra 4:1-2, Siddur of Rabbi Yaakov Emden, Peleh Yoetz "shogeg"). Based on this idea we can explain that while it was permissible for the Chashmonaim to light the Menorah with impure oil under their given circumstance, the circumstance itself may have signified that G-d was unhappy with them. Therefore, to show them that their *teshuvah* was fully accepted, G-d performed a miracle and allowed them to light with pure oil. In this sense the miracle was a demonstration of G-d's affection for them, thus indicating G-d's acceptance of their *teshuvah*.

A BRIEF HISTORY AND BACKGROUND OF THE CHANUKA STORY

BY RABBI MOSHE LAZERUS

In general, Jewish national history may be broken down into four major periods of exile: the first is the Egyptian exile (15 century BCE), while the second may be divided into three sections: the Assyrian exile (564 BCE) during which the ten tribes were exiled, the Babylonian exile during which the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed (The First Temple) in 422 BCE, and the Persian exile, ending with the return to Eretz Yisrael and the beginning of the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash in 351 BCE, 70 years after its destruction in fulfillment of the prophecy of Yirmiyahu.

After the death of Alexander the Great, his short-lived world-conquest was fragmented into three large sections and one small section. The Land of Israel became a continual battleground between two parts of the Greek Empire — the Ptolemies based in Egypt and the Seleucids based in Syria. Ptolemy Lagos, who ruled Egypt, gained first control over Israel. During the next century, domination of Israel changed hands several times, as Egyptian Greek and Syrian Greek wrestled for control. Near the end of the reign of Ptolemy Euergetes, the Egyptian ruler levied oppressive taxes upon the Jews. The weak High Priest, the political leader, was unable to collect this tax. His ambitious nephew, Joseph ben Toviah, an exceedingly cruel man, volunteered to supervise the collection of taxes in exchange for governorship over Israel. He created an army of tax gatherers called *Muchsanim* who mercilessly plundered the people. This new class of Jews began adopting the lifestyle of their Greek patrons. The family of Toviah was able to keep its control over Israel through the invasion of Antiochus the Great of Syria. During the administration of Chonio, the great-grandson of Shimon HaTzaddik, the oppression of the Tobiads relented. However, they were not to be done away with. They conspired against their own people, and sent to Antiochus Epiphanies, grandson of Antiochus the Great, who had succeeded Selucus as ruler of Syria, a *kohen* (priest) named Jason to buy the office of High Priest. With this done, this corrupt small party was back in power.

Under Antiochus the Great, the Sanhedrin, the Jewish High Court, had been officially recognized as the rightful leaders of the Jews. His grandson, Antiochus Epiphanies, was

a ruler who flaunted his Athenian citizenship and worshipped Greek culture. The Tobiads were able to influence him to make decrees against the religious foundations of Judaism. An overt campaign to eradicate the spiritual life of the Jews was initiated. Extreme decrees forbidding study of Torah, *brit mila*, and observance of Shabbat, were issued. In addition, the effects of Hellenism were being felt. In general, two camps polarized into the vast majority of observant Jews called Chassidim, and the smaller but influential Hellenists. Idolatry was introduced in the Beit Hamikdash. A famous story of the heroism of Chana and her seven sons who refused to bow before the idols, which resulted in the death of all seven sons, is background to the Chanuka story. There was no organized resistance since the Jews had been bled of all money and were not able to keep weapons. But a single, seemingly insignificant event kindled a spark. In the town of Modi'in a Jewish Hellenist attempted to offer a swine as a mock-offering to G-d. An outraged Mattisyahu, the leader of the house of the Hasmoneans, arose and killed him. He fled with his sons and followers to the hills and waged guerrilla warfare until he died. His son, Judah, carried on the war and rallied more support to his side. After three years of war, in the year 3596 (165 BCE) the Jewish People re-entered the city of Jerusalem. During the war their chief strength had been prayer, and now repentance was the tone.

As they entered the Temple, the most sacred place in the world, they immediately began purifying it from the defilement of the Greeks. They found one small crucible of oil, enough for one day, and kindled it. It was the only pure oil found, and it would take eight days to make new pure oil. They had fought a war not for national independence but because of their loyalty to G-d. Therefore, they merited having a miracle, a sign that G-d was still with them. The oil burned for eight consecutive days. A year later, in commemoration of the miracle, the Sanhedrin instituted the holiday of Chanuka. The main importance of the Chanuka story is not the victory of the war, as miraculous as it indeed was, but the sign that G-d gave the Jewish nation: "I am with you if you are with Me".

CHANUKA: WORD WARS

BY RABBI RICHARD JACOBS

The clash between the ancient Greek civilization and that of the Jews is a conflict of epic proportions, of diametrically opposing viewpoints and philosophies. The Greeks were polytheistic, the Jews monotheistic. The Greeks glorified the physical and sports, and worshipped at the temple of the human body; the Jews prized the soul and the synthesis between body and soul. The Greeks valued literature, drama and poetry, and pioneered the world of mathematics and philosophy; the Jews cherished morality.

Hellenism was the infusion of Greek values into the cultures that had been conquered and brought under Greek rule. Large numbers of Jews began to combine elements of religious Jewish tradition with Greek culture. These Jewish Hellenists sought to seduce the traditional Jews away from their way of life, and convert them to the Hellenist and Greek way of thinking.

On Chanuka we celebrate both our military victory over the Greeks, and the miracle of the oil. And we won. To quote Mark Twain from his essay “Concerning the Jews”: “If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one percent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of star dust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of; but he is heard of, has always been heard of. The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind.”

The time of Greek rule was tremendously challenging for the Jews. Persecution, fear, and decrees prevented even the basic observance of Jewish Law — Shabbat, *brit mila* and Rosh Chodesh.

One of the greatest tragedies from the time of the Greeks (occurring around 90 years before the Maccabean victory) was the translation of the Torah into Greek. We still commemorate this tragedy when we fast each year on the tenth of Tevet. What was so terrible about translating the Torah into Greek? Surely this made the Torah more accessible to many more Hellenized Jews. Compare this to the many languages that we find Torah publications available today. Furthermore, we see that Moshe commands the Jewish People that one of the first actions they should take

when they enter the Land of Israel is to inscribe the words of the Torah into 70 languages.

So what was the tragedy?

On a simple level, translating the Torah into Greek not only made the Torah accessible to the non-Jewish world (the emperor Ptolemy II was a bibliophile who was interested in different cultures and literature), but it also taught the Jews Greek, exposing them more readily to Greek culture and ideas.

Slightly deeper, we know that there are many different facets to the Torah, and explanations of the text. Translating from *lashon hakodesh* (“the holy language”) to a foreign language limits the potential interpretations, restricting our understanding.

Probing further, we find that the consequences were far reaching indeed.

Language sets Mankind apart from the rest of Creation. The ability to convey complex thoughts and emotions from one to the other, to communicate strategy and to develop meaningful relationships are only some of the major benefits of language. And that’s just verbal communication. The invention of the alphabet and writing enabled concepts to transcend time; surpassing human lifespan and ensuring the immortality of many ideas. However, there is a growing body of evidence that language affects not just the way we communicate, but also the way that we actually think, shaping our thoughts without either our knowledge or consent. When given a series of pictures which show temporal progressions and asked to lay them out in chronological order, a native English-speaker will lay them out from left to right, with the first picture in the story on the far left; a native Hebrew-speaker will lay them out from right to left, with the first picture in the story on the far right; and an aborigine from Pormpuraaw in Australia will lay them out from east to west — i.e., depending on which direction he is facing. If he is facing east, the first picture in the sequence is placed directly in front of him but furthest from where he is sitting, the last picture in front of and adjacent to the person; if he is facing south the pictures are ordered from left to right; if he is facing west the pictures are ordered from closest to the aborigine in a straight line directly away from him; and if he is facing north, then the pictures are ordered from right to left.

In English we mark a verb for tense. In French we add gender to this. In Russian we need to note whether the event was completed or not. In Turkish the verb would include how we acquired the information. Did we see the

Continued on page fifteen

CHANUKA Q&A ?

1. Which miracle do we celebrate with the lighting of candles?
2. How did they know that the oil found was uncontaminated?
3. Who led the battle against the Hellenites?
4. During which of the "four exiles" did the miracle of Chanuka take place?
5. Name two non-halachic customs connected with Chanuka.
6. How many blessings are made before lighting candles?
7. Why do we light the extra candle known as the "shamash"?
8. What is added to our regular prayers at least three times a day?
9. What is the special reading of the Torah each day?
10. Is it obligatory to eat a meal like on Purim?
11. When do we have occasion to use three Sifrei Torah on Chanuka?
12. What three mitzvot did the Hellenites decree against?
13. What damage did the Hellenites do to the Beit Hamikdash?
14. What two military advantages did the Hellenite army have over the Jews?
15. Is it permissible to do work on Chanuka?
16. Why is there no Mussaf prayer on Chanuka except for Shabbat and Rosh Chodesh?
17. How does the name Chanuka indicate the date when this holiday begins?
18. What special prayer do we add to the morning services?
19. What did the Jews do after victory that explains the name Chanuka?
20. Which regular prayers in the morning service do we omit on Chanuka?

CHANUKA Q&A!

Answers to Chanuka's Questions!

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

1. The oil for lighting the menorah in the Beit Hamikdash after the victory over the Hellenites was only enough for one day and it miraculously lasted for eight days until a new supply of pure oil was available. (Rambam, Laws of Chanuka 1:1)
2. Its container had the seal of the kohen gadol. (Mesechta Shabbat 21b)
3. Matityahu, the kohen gadol and his sons. (Rambam, Laws of Chanuka 1:1, and the "Al Hanissim" prayer in the Siddur)
4. The third exile under Hellenite oppression during the era of the second Beit Hamikdash. (Rambam, Laws of Chanuka 1:1)
5. Eating either donuts or potato pancakes made with oil and playing with the sivion (dreidel).
6. Three blessings the first night and two the other nights. (Rambam, Laws of Chanuka 1:4)
7. Since it is forbidden to benefit from the light of the candles we light an extra one so that if we do benefit it will be from that one called the shamash because it is sometimes used to serve as the lighting agent. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 673:1)
8. The prayer "Al Hanissim" (Ibid. 682:1)
9. The gifts of the nesi'im (heads of the twelve tribes at the inauguration of the Sanctuary as recorded in Bamidbar 7:1-8). (Ibid. 684:1)
10. No. But if the meal is accompanied by songs of praise to Heaven it is considered a seudat mitzvah. (Ibid. 670:2)
11. When Rosh Chodesh Tevet is on Shabbat and we read selections for Shabbat, Rosh Chodesh and Chanuka. (Ibid. 684:3)
12. Shabbat, circumcision and Rosh Chodesh. (Midrash)
13. They made breaks in the walls and contaminated the sacred items. (Rambam, Laws of Chanuka 1:1)
14. They were stronger and more numerous. ("Al Hanissim" Prayer)
15. It is permissible to work but women have a custom of refraining from work for the first half hour that the candles are burning. (Mishna Berurah 670:1)
16. Because there were no additional sacrifices in the Beit Hamikdash during Chanuka. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 682:2)
17. If we break up the word into two parts — Chanu, and the letters chaf and hei, we read that they rested from the war on the 25th day of the month.
18. Hallel (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 683:1)
19. They rededicated the altar in the Beit Hamikdash, which the Hellenites had defiled. ("Chanuka" means inauguration.)
20. Tachanun and Psalm 20 before Uva Letzion. (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 683:1)

CHANUKA: WORD WARS... Continued from page thirteen

event ourselves? Or did we read about it or hear about it from others?

Language also shapes how we understand causality. Ask anyone who has married someone who speaks a different native language. They are sure to be able to recount entertaining tales of miscommunication. English describes events in terms of the agents carrying out an action, Spanish from the perspective of the thing being acted upon. This can lead to such profound consequences, such as how the speakers understand events, what they remember as eyewitnesses and how much they blame and punish others.

If people learn another language they learn a new way to think. When bilingual people switch from one language to another, they start thinking differently.

Let's return to the translation of the Torah to Greek. *Lashon hakodesh* is written from right to left. In a written Torah scroll there are no vowels and no punctuation. The only way to tell the meaning of a word or sentence is from context, or because there is an accompanying oral tradition. Greek, on the other hand, reads from left to right, the words have written vowels, and what is written is what it says. The

Greek way of thinking is very different from ours.

Three thoughts to ponder:

How much is our different ways of thinking a function of language?

If our way of thinking is indeed a function of language, once the Torah was translated to Greek it was this translation that formed the basis of Western civilization's understanding of religion, and the subsequent development of religious thought progressed with thought processes foreign to Torah. The ramifications of this are enormous. When we encounter a clash between Western thought and religion, there may not be a genuine clash, because the clash is only between Western thought and the wrongly understood translation of monotheism.

How important it is for us to know *lashon hakodesh*, and to be able to understand our holy texts in their original form, because anything less cannot lead to a true understanding. On Chanuka we celebrate both our military victory over the Greeks and the miracle of the oil. We won the battle, but have we won the war?

PARSHA INSIGHTS

Continued from page one

Seven cows emerged from the Nile. Seven is the number that connotes *this-worldliness*. There are seven colors in the rainbow, seven notes in the diatonic scale and seven days in the week.

Chanuka is the festival where we celebrate eight. It is a time when we connect to that which is beyond this world. Chanuka is where we take one step beyond. The one flask of pure oil that was found in the Holy Temple could only burn for one day, but it burned for eight whole days. It was not just a miracle, but a "miracle of eight".

The idolatry of Egypt was to take the natural world, the Nile, the world of seven, and worship it — to take nature and make into a god. Pharaoh said to Moshe, "Who is Hashem? I do not know Hashem..." (Ex. 5:2) Pharaoh recognized that there was a "god" in the world, but he

only recognized a god of nature. In Hebrew the word "Elokim" (a Name of G-d) has the same *gematria* (numerical equivalent) as the word "hateva", which means "nature." When we make nature into supernatural force we take the world of seven and make that into eight.

In a year when Miketz occurs during Chanuka, the *haftara* read is Zechariah 2:14-4:7. Zechariah is shown a vision of a Menorah made entirely of gold, complete with a reservoir, tubes to bring it oil and two olive trees to bear olives.

A complete self-supporting system.

The symbolism is that G-d provides a system which supports us continuously. However, we have to open our eyes to see where that support is coming from.

To remind ourselves that "Mother Nature" has a Father.

ONE ISRAEL

An old friend's wedding, an uncle's funeral, Passover at the family homestead — these are but a few of the challenging real-life events that are fraught with conflict and anxiety for the newly observant.

After returning to the faith of their ancestors, many re-enter the secular world without the tools to respond to the inevitable challenges to their newly adopted set of beliefs.



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After the Return

BY RABBI MORDECHAI BECHER AND RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN
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TO PURCHASE A COPY CONTACT:

Ohr Somayach Jerusalem (main office)
22 Shimon Hatzadik Street, Jerusalem
Tel: 02-581-0315 ext. 0 • ohr@ohr.edu