



CELEBRATING OUR 25<sup>th</sup> YEAR!

# OHRNET

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*Special Chanuka Issue 5778*

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• SPECIAL CHANUKA ISSUE •

## A Chanuka Thought from the Rosh Yeshiva

BY RAV NOTA SCHILLER

**Y**ehuda HaLevi (1075-1141) described Greek culture as “a flower but without fruit.” Pleasant, aromatic, aesthetic, yet lacking in the spiritual nutrients that provide soul nourishment.

Early on in the Torah our Sages teach that the Creator’s initial plan was for the fruit and the tree to have the identical taste. Somehow the Divine imperative included the option that allowed for this not to be fulfilled. This was the first departure from the “preferred” Divine Plan. Perhaps then we could posit that the ultimate *Tikun* (“restoring to perfection”) for generations would be to have that perfect congruency, coalescing of *means and ends* — i.e.

where *means* already tastes of *ends*.

We are taught that *mitzvot* are the strategies for perfection of the soul. Learning Torah is about knowing how to fulfill *mitzvot* — which bring that perfection of soul. Ideal *Tikun* is then when the learning and the *mitzvot* already merge the taste of the fruit of growth, when juices of joy actually titillate the taste buds of our souls, providing that nourishment while still biting and chewing on the words and ideas of our root existence.

Such is the sweetness in the feasting of learning Torah and the festivity of *mitzvot*.

Happy Chanuka!

*Wishing our readers and all of Klal Yisrael a  
Happy Chanuka!*

חנוכה שמח

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Love of the Land, written by RAV MENDEL WEINBACH, zt”l • General Editor: RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN • Design: RABBI ELIEZER SHAPIRO

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# SEASONS THEN & NOW

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BY RABBI CHAVIV DANESH

## Chanuka: Light and Darkness

*In the beginning of G-d's creating of the Heavens and the earth. And the earth was surprisingly empty and darkness was on the face of the water and the spirit of G-d soared on the face of the waters. (Bereishet 1:1-2)*

The Midrash explains that each of the four phrases that describe the world before Creation refers to one of the four kingdoms that would subjugate the Jewish People. Darkness, says the Midrash, is the kingdom of Greece (Bereishet Rabbah 2:4). This idea is not easily understood. Although Greek culture represents the antithesis of Torah values, they were nevertheless intellectual people who mastered many different areas of secular knowledge. Why then is the kingdom of Greece specifically referred to as darkness, a title that is normally used as referring to an absence of knowledge and depth?

The *pasuk* says that on the first day of Creation: *G-d said, "Let there be light" — and there was light.* Rashi, quoting the Midrash, comments on the *pasuk*: *G-d saw that it is not fitting for the light to be used by the wicked, so He set it aside for the righteous to use in the future.* The Gemara explains that with this light Adam HaRishon was able to see from one end of the world to the other (Chagigah 12a). What is the deeper meaning behind this? The commentaries explain that the Hebrew word for world, *olam*, shares its root with the word *he'elim* (hid) (see Rashi on Shemot 3:14). This is because the natural world is meant to hide G-d's presence, enabling free will to choose between good and bad. As a result, when we look at the physical properties that comprise our world, it is very hard to see G-d's hand at work. Light is the medium that enables us to see. Ordinary light only reveals an object's physical makeup. The *ohr haganuz* (the light that was later put away for the righteous), however, did not only reveal the physical properties of an item, but also its spiritual essence. The *ohr haganuz* had the unique characteristic of being able to reveal G-d in the world. This is the deeper meaning behind the Gemara that says Adam HaRishon was able to see from one end of the world to the other. The *ohr haganuz* shone through the mask of the world of nature that hides G-d, by revealing the guiding Hand of G-d everywhere (See S'fat Emet, Chanuka 5661 and Vayera 5663).

Even though the *ohr haganuz* was hidden away, there are times, places, and mediums that have the ability to

make this special light accessible. One example is the Beit Hamikdash, where the *ohr haganuz* was readily available. This is why the Gemara refers to the Beit Hamikdash as "the light of the world" (Bava Batra 4a). Similar to the *ohr haganuz*, the Beit Hamikdash revealed spirituality in the physical world. In fact, the Beit Hamikdash was built in a way that symbolically portrayed this spiritual idea.

Most buildings in those days were built so that the windows would capture the light from the sun, and project inside as much light as possible by being narrower on the outside than the inside. The Beit Hamikdash lit up the world with this special *ohr haganuz*, so its windows were wider on the outside to spread out this special *ohr haganuz* to the world (See Menachot 86b). Even though the entire Beit Hamikdash was reminiscent of the *ohr haganuz*, it was more specifically the Menorah that was in the Beit Hamikdash that shone the magnificent light of the *ohr haganuz*.

In addition to the Menorah and the Beit Hamikdash, the Torah is another medium that makes the *ohr haganuz* available to us even today (Tanchuma, Noach). This is why Chazal refer to Torah as light, as the Gemara says: *there is no light but Torah* (Ta'anit 7b). Just like the *ohr haganuz* revealed the spiritual depth behind everything in the world, so too the Torah has the unique ability to help us see beyond the physical. As mentioned before, on the first day of Creation G-d created the *ohr haganuz*. After 36 hours He removed this light from the world and hid it away for the righteous in the World-to-Come. The Bnei Yisaschar explains that the 36 *masechtot* (tractates) of Gemara hint to the fact that *Torah* can also reveal that hidden light that shone for 36 hours. Just like the hidden light had the ability to bring the spiritual essence to the surface, Torah learning too enables one to see the depth of the world's spiritual core.

Greek philosophy clashed completely with the idea of the *ohr haganuz*. They embraced the physical world and shunned the notion that there is depth or hidden spirituality. This being said, it is quite clear why the Greeks came to defile the Beit Hamikdash, contaminate the oil for lighting the Menorah, and to try and make us forget the Torah. It is because these were the mediums through which the *ohr haganuz* shone in the world — the light that allowed us to see beyond the physical.

It should be clear now why Chazal refer to the Greeks

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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### 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?

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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Vayeshev’s questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi’s commentary unless otherwise stated.

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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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## PARSHA Q&A?

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### 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?

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## PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Miketz's questions! - All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

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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?"

BY RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR

Vayeshev

## Respect and Dignity

*“After these things, his master’s wife cast her eyes upon Yosef and she said, ‘Lie with me.’”(39:7) “And so it was – she coaxed Yosef day after day....” (39:10)*

**W**ondrous as search engines may be, they don’t find everything. Without success I searched for an article I distinctly remember reading a few years ago. It was about a leading Wall Street law office that had introduced rules of office conduct which bore a striking resemblance to halachic norms of conduct between women and men.

Female employees were encouraged to wear modest and non-provocative clothing, and to communicate in a respectfully polite but non-intimate manner. Staying behind after hours alone in the office to finish work was prohibited, and discussions about private life between co-employees or employees and their bosses were also discouraged. Fraternal pecking-on-the-cheek was frowned upon. (Author’s note: If anyone remembers where this article appeared, please contact me at [yasinclair@gmail.com](mailto:yasinclair@gmail.com))

*“And so it was – she coaxed Yosef day after day....” (39:10)*

The Talmud (Yoma 35b) says that Zuleika (Potiphar’s wife) tried every way possible to entice him. Yosef was outstandingly handsome — so much so that whenever he passed by, women peeling citrus fruit with sharp knives would cut their fingers without feeling the pain, so entranced were they by his beauty.

Zuleika tried to seduce Yosef for over a year. She began by changing her dress three times a day to attract his attention. When this failed, she tried bribing him with a thousand talents of gold. One day, Zuleika found her opportunity. The day of the Nile’s over-flowing was a national religious holiday. Potiphar’s entire household went out to join the singing and dancing in praise of the Nile god. Ever the faithful servant, Yosef excused himself from these festivities and stayed at home to attend to his master’s bookkeeping. Zuleika, pretending to have a headache, also stayed at home, knowing that she and Yosef would be alone together in the house.

She dressed in her finest clothes and bedecked her hair with a crown of jewels. She perfumed herself with scent and her house with incense, and then she draped herself across the doorway where Yosef would have to pass

to get to his work. Only the vision of the face of his holy father Yaakov prevented Yosef from succumbing to Zuleika’s blandishments.

There can be no doubt of the enormous power of physical attraction. Freud understood that this was *the* fundamental psychological motivation in man.

The Talmud (Kiddushin 30b) says, “(said G-d): *I created the yetzer hara* – (the desire for illicit relations) – *and I created the Torah as its antidote.*”

Interestingly, the word for antidote – *tavlin* – can also be translated as “spice.” The Torah is the “spice of life.” When food lacks taste, quantity substitutes for quality, and we eat more in the vain search for satisfaction. The Torah puts spice into marriage, and in the vast majority of cases this prevents the mistaken search for illicit recreational excursions outside its hallowed boundaries.

My sister (*a”h*) used to say, “Sex is the screen-saver that comes on in a man’s mind when it’s unoccupied.”

Lord Acton said, “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely.” The Ghengis Khans of today ride around Hollywood not on horseback, but in limos.

The more powerful a Jew without Torah is, the more likely he is to fall prey his *yetzer hara* and the easy pickings that surround him. Don’t get me wrong. I am in no way condoning the disgusting behavior of the moguls of Hollywood and Washington, or London for that matter. But without Torah a man’s “screen-saver” will flash across his mind given even minimal visual stimulation — let alone the un-dress code of the typical Hollywood starlet.

While society at large espouses standards of immodesty and fraternization between the sexes, is it any wonder that #MeToo scandals continue to appear with almost boring regularity?

Many is the time when I demur from shaking a lady’s hand, and try to finesse the moment by saying, “Please excuse me but my wife does my shaking for me.” Gila Manolson in her book “The Magic Touch” tells of an interesting experiment back in the days of “call phones”. The subject of the experiment was asked for a dime to make a phone call by the experimenter. If the experimenter touched the arm of the subject of the experiment, it turned out that he was far more likely to give him a dime. Touch is magic. And thus, Jewish Law goes to great — and to the mind of some — absurd lengths to nip any incipient inappropriate feelings in the bud.

If a woman wishes to be treated with the respect that she deserves, she could well take a page out of the book of the “Jewish Woman of Valor”.

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**Miketz**

## A Man of Steel

*Then Pharaoh said to Yosef, ‘Since G-d has informed you of all this, there can be no one so discerning and wise as you.’ (41:39)*

A few weeks ago in the Torah portion of *Lech Lecha* I wrote about a story I heard from my good friend and colleague, Rabbi Yitzchak Dalah. Apparently, there was a wall in a certain town square which was constantly being defaced with graffiti. The local authority had large signs put up on the wall saying, “NO GRAFFITTI!” The result was that on following day the signs were defaced with graffiti. Nothing seemed to work. Threats of fines of hundreds of dollars just brought forth more and more ornate graffiti. Someone in City Hall had a bright idea: They hired an artist to paint a beautiful mural on the wall. The result? No more graffiti.

When you show others how beautiful the world is, you elevate them, you help them to be on a higher level. You empower them.

*“Since G-d has informed you of all this, there can be no one so discerning and wise as you.”*

Yosef’s wisdom and discernment geared up Egypt for a devastating famine, the likes of which had never been known. To achieve the mobilization of an entire country requires a specific kind of wisdom. It is the skill of how to get people to give of their best, and the way you do that is by elevating them.

Jonathan Rosenblum wrote recently of Paul O’Neill, “who became CEO of the aluminum giant Alcoa in 1987. For nearly a century, ever since its founder invented the process for smelting aluminum, the company held a dominant position in the industry. But by the time Alcoa turned to O’Neill, it had become something of a dinosaur, as newer, leaner, more innovative companies cut sharply into its market share and profits.

“At the press conference introducing O’Neill to Wall Street investors and stock analysts, O’Neill set forth his goal for the company: To make it the safest company in America. He said not a word about business strategy or profits. When one perplexed investor asked about capital ratios and inventories in the company’s aerospace division, O’Neill replied that the questioner had not been listening. Alcoa, he reiterated, would be judged by whether it significantly lowered its number of workers injured on the job.

“One portfolio manager rushed from the meeting to advise his twenty largest clients to sell Alcoa shares, as it was clear the new CEO had no clue what he was doing. That proved to be bad advice. Over the course of O’Neill’s tenure from 1987 to 2000, the company’s share value multiplied five times, and its market capitalization increased by \$27 billion.

“And, yes, its worker safety record improved dramatically. Alcoa’s rate of worker injuries dropped to one-twentieth of the national average, despite the fact that Alcoa’s industrial processes involves working with molten metal at 1,500 degrees and many huge machines that can cause injury.

“O’Neill made clear from the beginning that he was dead serious about the goal of reducing workplace accidents. He gave out his private phone number to every Alcoa worker, and invited them to call any time with complaints or suggestions. At an early meeting with senior executives he expressed his fervent belief that no one should ever have to ‘fear that feeding your family will kill you.’ And when accidents plummeted, he sent out a company-wide message: ‘We should celebrate because we are saving lives.’

“He put into place a requirement that whenever a workplace accident occurred, the plant manager had to report it within 24 hours, along with recommendations as to how to prevent a recurrence. When one of Alcoa’s senior and most successful executives failed to report that several workers had been overcome by fumes at the Mexican plant he managed (they eventually recovered), he was summarily dismissed, though he had already taken remedial action.

“And after a relatively new worker was killed while trying to repair a machine, O’Neill summoned all that plant’s top executives and Alcoa’s top officers to a meeting in the company’s Pittsburgh headquarters to review videotapes of everything leading up to the tragedy and to analyze where they had failed. Among the conclusions: the company’s training program had not sufficiently stressed that workers would not be held responsible for stoppages due to machine breakdowns. ‘I caused his death,’ O’Neill proclaimed.

“Though O’Neill had never promised that improved safety would lead to improved profits, the safety campaign helped Alcoa’s earnings directly. Duhigg [Charles Duhigg, a renowned Pulitzer Prize winning journalist – ed.] summarizes the results of the emphasis on safety first: costs went down, quality improved, and productivity skyrocketed.

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ADVICE FOR LIFE

Based on the Talmudic Sages found in the seven pages of the Talmud studied each week in the Daf Yomi cycle

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BY RABBI MOSHE NEWMAN

## Shavuot 2 - 15

### The Order of the Tractates

*“The Tana just completed teaching us Masechet Maccot. What is the connection here that now he teaches us Masechet Shavuot?”*

This is the very first question posed by the *gemara* in Masechet Shavuot. Maccot dealt with *eidim zommemim*, followed by *ari miklat* (cities of refuge), and then concluding with which transgressions are punishable in Beit Din with *malkot* (lashes) — and under what circumstances. The main topic of Masechet Shavuot is “oaths”. Indeed, what is the connection between these two Tractates?

The *gemara* answers this question: At the end of Maccot the *Mishna* states that one is obligated lashes for “the head” (cutting off the sideburns, *pei’ot*), one obligation for each side; and for the cutting the beard with a razor blade the obligation is five — two on one side and two on the other side and one in the middle (the chin). Since the Tana teaches this idea of “for transgressing one *lav* (commandment not to remove his sideburns) he is obligated for two (sets of lashes)”, the Tana begins the next Masechet with a similar construct: “Shavuot two that are four...” — two obligations for violating oaths to be fulfilled in the future (as stated in the Torah), and two more obligations for violation of oaths that refer to the past (based on a derivation from a verse in the Torah). Examples are oaths that: I will eat, I won’t eat, I did eat, I didn’t eat. So the Tana continues from “one that is two” to “two that is a four” — seemingly a helpful way of remembering by heart the Oral Law by its arithmetically progressive organization in this case.

Rashi explains that the meaning of *one* in the expression of “one that is two” for removing sideburns (“Do not round the corner of your head and do not destroy the borders of your beard” — Vayikra 19:27) refers to there being only one statement of warning in the Torah (meaning only one “negative” commandment). And despite transgressing only one warning in the Torah, a man who intentionally removes his two sideburns could be obligated for two separate sets of lashes.

I have heard a question that is raised in comparing these two phrases in the nearby *Mishnayot*. The case at the end of Maccot is not really that similar to the case at the beginning of Shavuot, since the case in Maccot is saying that one *prohibition* leads to two sets of *lashes*, whereas in the Shavuot the Tana is saying that two *prohibitions* (those that are more readily seen in the Torah) are really four *prohibitions* altogether. The former phrase is commenting on the resulting *punishment*, but the latter is focused entirely on the number of *prohibitions* that exist. However, the *gemara* in Maccot (20a) teaches, based on the *plural* verb — “*lo takifu*” — that not only does the person who does the act of shaving transgress Vayikra 19:27 and is punished with lashes (even if he is not being shaved), but also a person who allows himself to be shaved (even if he is not doing the act of shaving) transgresses and deserves lashes. Therefore, the statement “one that is two” does not only mean he deserves two sets of *lashes* for transgressing one statement in the Torah, but that he is actually transgressing two *prohibitions* which are included in the one plural commandment in the Torah. “One that is two” refers to the *prohibitions*, just as the Shavuot phrase that “two are four” refers to the prohibitions.

• *Shavuot 3b*

### Yom Kippur, Atonement and Repentance

*Rava said, “Rebbi agrees that the day of Yom Kippur does not atone for the karet transgressions done on that same day of Yom Kippur, because if it would indeed atone, there would never be a case of a karet obligation for these transgressions (and the Torah certainly did not write this punishment of karet for Yom Kippur in vain).”*

Although the ruling of the *Chachamim* (majority of Sages) is that Yom Kippur atones only with *teshuva* — and this is the halacha — Rebbi disagrees and holds that Yom Kippur atones for a person’s transgressions whether or not he did *teshuva* for them. There are two *beraitas* in our *sugya* that seem contradictory, but Rava reconciles them in the above manner.

One *beraita* states that Yom Kippur atones for a person’s transgressions, with or without *teshuva*, according to Rebbi (with the exception of three sins: rejecting G-d, the Torah and *brit mila*). Another *beraita* states that Yom Kippur *does not* atone without *teshuva*. Rava says that in fact both of these teachings could be attributed to Rebbi, and the one that requires *teshuva* refers *only* to atoning for the *karet*-transgressions of Yom Kippur (eating, drinking and doing *melacha*). Yom Kippur atones for them, “deleting” the *karet* punishment, only with *teshuva*, because if this were not so, asserts

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## LOVE of the LAND

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

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### Oil from the “Mount of Olives”

**C**hanuka is the time when so many Jews are performing the mitzvah of lights with olive oil as a way of recalling the fuel used to light the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash.

The Mount of Olives in Jerusalem may not nec-



essarily have been the only source for the Menorah oil, but tradition has it that oil from the mountain's olive trees was used for anointing kings, *kohanim gedolim* and Beit Hamikdash implements; hence its other name – “Mount of Anointment”.

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

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### Vayeshev

**Y**aakov 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.

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### Miketz

**I**t 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.

BY RABBI YIRMIYAHU ULLMAN

## Wisdom Oil

**From: Martin in St. Louis**

*Dear Rabbi,  
A central theme of Chanuka seems to be the victory of Torah over the philosophy of the Greeks. Does that mean that Judaism rejects the wisdom of the nations? Is there no redeeming value to that wisdom according to the Torah? Thank you.*

Dear Martin,

True, Chanuka commemorates the victory of Torah over those who wanted to uproot it. However, the battle was not against the wisdom of ancient Greece per se, but against the “philosophy” which asserts that the wisdom of the nations is superior to that of the Torah; that the pursuit of wisdom is an end in and of itself, and the intellectual arrogance which that breeds.

According to the Torah, G-d is the source of all wisdom, and it is G-d Who imparts wisdom to mankind, as in the verse: “In the hearts of the wise-hearted I have put wisdom” (Ex. 31:6). Furthermore, wisdom is not an end of its own, but rather a means to achieve spiritual heights. Therefore, our Sages remarked (Berachot 17a), “The goal of wisdom is repentance and good deeds”. And elsewhere they warned (Avot 3:11), “One whose fear of sin takes priority over his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; but one whose wisdom takes priority over his fear of sin, his wisdom will not endure”.

While the highest form of wisdom according to Judaism is that of the Torah, one can only achieve it through humility. In the verse, “Where shall wisdom be found” (Job 28:12), the Hebrew word for “where” is “*m’ayin*” which also means “from nothingness”. From this the Talmud (Sota 21b) comments that true Torah wisdom can

only be found in one who “makes nothing” of himself, i.e. is humble. This idea is echoed in the words of the prophet, “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom...but let he who glories, glory in this — that he understands and knows Me” (Jeremiah 9:22).

However, the Torah also recognizes the importance of the wisdom of the nations. Just as one recites a special blessing upon seeing an outstanding Torah scholar, there is a blessing upon seeing an outstanding secular scholar: “Blessed are You...Who has given of His knowledge to human beings” (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 224:6-7). However, just as wisdom in Torah is only valued when it is accompanied with righteousness and humility in the service of G-d, so too secular wisdom is only valued when it is subservient to spirituality – for the betterment of mankind, and as a means for appreciating the wonders of G-d’s Creation.

Perhaps this is one of the many ideas alluded to in the seven-branched Menorah, which symbolically radiates the light of wisdom into the world.

The purpose of each branch of the Menorah in its service in the Temple of G-d is to support the vessels of pure olive oil placed upon them, in which the flame of G-d was kindled. Our sources identify among the nations seven branches of wisdom (grammar, rhetoric, logic, arithmetic, music, geometry and astronomy). These branches correspond to the seven branches of the Menorah; while the pure, illuminating olive oil transcending above them symbolizes Torah wisdom. This reveals that the wisdoms of the nations only fulfill their role in the world when they serve, and are subservient to, the wisdom of Torah placed above them, through which Divine light emanates into the world.

TALMUD TIPS Continued from page eight

Rava, there would never exist the possibility of *karet* for these Yom Kippur infractions according to Rabbi. All other transgressions, however, are atoned for by Yom Kippur even without *teshuva*.

The *gemara* proceeds to argue that Rava’s claim is not an air-tight proof for explaining the opinion of Rabbi in this unique manner, that Yom Kippur without *teshuva* atones for all sins except for the *karet*-sins associated with Yom Kippur and transgressed on that day. There are *three* different scenarios proposed by the *gemara* to demonstrate how one could be obligated *karet* for eating on Yom Kippur even if Yom Kippur atones without *teshuva*, as Rabbi clearly states in one of the *beraitas*.

One case proposed is if a person ate at night and died that

same night. The *day* of Yom Kippur would provide no atonement for the *karet* punishment, since the person was not alive during the *day*. (This is based on the verse, “For on this *day* He shall effect atonement for you to purify you from all of your sins.” — Vayikra 16:30) A second case is if a person ate something during the *day* and choked to death on it. Since no time passed between the eating and the choking, there was no time during the day for the day of Yom Kippur to atone for this act. A third proposal offered by the *gemara* is if the person ate at the very end of the day of Yom Kippur, and there was no time remaining in the day for the atonement of the day of Yom Kippur to transpire.

• *Shavuot 13 a-b*

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# CHANUKA Special

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BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

## Chanuka: From Clouds to Candles

Of all the different festivals mandated by the Torah and by Rabbinic fiat, there are only two holidays which last for exactly eight days: The Festival of Succot and Chanuka. This simple fact implies that there is a special connection between the essences of these two holidays. Some even explain that Chanuka was originally instituted as a substitute for the Festival of Succot, because in the year of the Maccabean victory the Jews were unable to celebrate Succot. Regardless, the shared number of days which these holidays last certainly alludes to a shared principle behind both of them.

Let us begin by searching for the deeper meaning behind the holiday of Succot. There are several different commandments associated with the holiday of Succot, including taking the palm branch and the citron, dwelling in a succah, special happiness, reading the Torah once every seven years, pouring special water libations, circling the Altar with *aravot*, and more. Why, then, does the succah element lend its name to the holiday, while none of the other elements of the holiday are expressed in the name “Succot”? Why do we not call the holiday *Chag Ha’Etrog* in homage to the commandment of the citron, or *Chag Ha’Simcha* in recognition of the special commandment to rejoice?

Moreover, the Talmud (*Succah* 11b) teaches that the commandment to dwell in a Succah on the holiday of Succot serves as a reminder of the Clouds of Glory within which the Jews were engulfed while they traveled through wilderness after the Exodus. Why does the Torah specifically call for a special holiday to commemorate the miracle of these Clouds of Glory, but not for any of the other miracles which G-d performed daily in the wilderness, such as the manna which fell from the heavens or the rock which gave forth water?

To answer this last question, Rabbi Moshe ben Yosef of Trani (1505-1585), known by his acronym as Mabit, offers a fascinating insight. The manna and rock-water were indeed great miracles which G-d continually performed on the Jews’ behalf, but those miracles were necessary for the Jews’ continued survival in the desert. Without those miracles the Jews would have perished from lack of food or water. Because those miracles were so integral to survival they do not warrant a special commemoration. The miracle of the Clouds of Glory, on the other hand, was technically unneeded. The Jews could

have survived their journey through the desert without special Clouds of Glory. Nonetheless, G-d gave them special Clouds of Glory as an “extra”. This special miracle showed that G-d was not performing miracles simply to ensure the survival of the Jewish People, but rather He performed these miracles because He loves the Jewish nation. The extra miracle is a special sign of love. For this reason the Torah calls for a special holiday to remember the Clouds of Glory, but not to remember the other miracles of the desert. We may add that the importance of recognizing this extra miracle is so overpowering that it gives the name Succot to the holiday — overshadowing all other aspects of the festival.

We may now turn our attention to the holiday of Chanuka. The Talmud (*Shabbat* 21a) asks, “What is Chanuka?” and proceeds to answer this question with a Tannaic teaching about how the Rabbis instituted the holiday of Chanuka to remember how the candles of the Menorah miraculously lasted for eight days. After the Maccabees successfully fought for their independence from the Seleucid Greeks, they went to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem in order to rededicate it, and sought to light the Menorah. Yet, they could not find any undefiled jars of oil with which to light the candles. After much searching, they finally found one untouched jar, which had only enough oil to light the candles for one day. They lit the candles, and, miraculously, the candles stayed alight for eight days.

In this, the Talmud tellingly glosses over what would seem to be the main impetus for instituting the holiday of Chanuka: the military victory over the Greeks. A small rag-tag militia led by a family of *kohanim* was able to defeat one of the most prominent kingdoms of the time. This monumental triumph (described in the “*Al Ha’Nissim*” prayer) could only have been a miracle. Then why does the Talmud choose to focus on the lesser miracle of the candle which lasted eight days, instead of on the greater miracle of the Maccabean victory?

Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (1902-1979) provides a penetrating answer. The miracle of the Maccabean victory over the Greeks was integral to the survival of the Jewish People. Without it, the Jews would have succumbed to the brand of Hellenism espoused by the Greeks and likely would have eventually been subsumed by the paganism of their Greek overlords. The victory of

Continued on page twenty

BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

## Chanuka, The Power of Minority

**W**e Jews represent a mere .02% of the world population. A minute minority indeed. Not for naught has this been the case since the inception of our history. The fact of our minority was revealed as an essential feature of our mission. *Not because you are more numerous than any other peoples did G-d take delight in you and choose you; for you are the smallest among all the peoples (Devarim 7:7).*

What better time than Chanuka, when we celebrate the victory of the few over the many, to reflect on this unique aspect of our nationhood?

Our minority status begins way back with our forefather Avraham the *Ivri*. He was called *Ivri* — the one from over there — our Sages note, because the entire world stood at one side, championing polytheism, and Avraham stood alone, on the other side, resolute in His monotheistic truth and piety. Within our people too, it was the minority that preserved G-d's Will against rebellion of the masses. After the debacle of the golden calf, Moshe called out, "Whoever is for G-d, join forces with me!" Only a single tribe, the Levites, responded to the call. Out of the twelve spies sent to assess the Land, only Yehoshua and Calev remained loyal to G-d, standing firm against a panicked people prepared to return to Egypt. The events recorded in the books of the Prophets repeat this phenomenon over and over again. One man, with firm conviction and passionate commitment, stood up for the Law of G-d and saved the people: Gidon, Ovadiah, Eliyahu, Elisha — each resisted the misguided masses, and set the nation straight.

In the Chanuka story, this hallmark of our history is most apparent. The nation was rapidly assimilating to the Hellenistic culture surrounding it. One man, Matisyahu, raised five sons so mighty in spirit, so staunch in their commitment, that they took on G-d's cause *alone*. It is the victory of these few great and pure souls, the victory won for the loyalty to G-d's Law, that we celebrate on Chanuka.

Our history of three and a half millennia attests time and again to the triumphant perseverance of a tiny, powerless minority. Every page of our history reminds us: the fate of truth and right can never be hopeless, even if their cause is supported only by a minority.

But what *advantage* does a minority confer? Is there no merit and power in numbers?

A minority is likely the most fertile ground for cultivating spiritual truth. A victorious majority will all too

often become unfaithful to its own cause. Once its struggle is a matter of the past, the members of the majority lend their minds and spirits to new aspirations. The core values which were once the fuel of its life, now immune from challenge, are left to wither — no further development or nurturance are pursued. A majority often imagines that its cause owes its victory to its numbers, when in fact its numbers were once won on account of its cause. Because the focus is on numbers, a majority is often content to preserve its numbers, or perhaps increase them. But the underlying cause remains just that — underlying. It lies buried under new ambitions, often of a different character. This may explain why some of the largest religions are underdeveloped theologically.

Not so for the minority. By virtue of its continuing struggle, it perpetually breathes new life into its cause. Survival of the minority depends on its ability to keep awake within it a vibrant spiritual reserve. Because the numbers and power of the majority always beckon, the minority is impelled to immerse itself, over and over again, in the content of its cause. A minority must educate its ranks not only to the truth of its cause, but to the character required to defend its cause. This, in turn, requires that each individual have access to knowledge and research — to make these truths personal ones. There can be no mindless masses if a minority is to survive. Hence, in our Jewish minority, the teaching and dissemination of our cause — Torah, G-d's truth — occupies the most splendid and prominent place in life. The mind and spirit of the Jew are immersed so in this fountain of truth, that there is not one house of study without new insight. The result is a rich and ever growing reservoir of spiritual thought and strength. And, precisely because membership in the minority often requires sacrifice — material wealth and prosperity usually reside in the majority — the minority will likely be composed of more purely motivated supporters.

The fact of our minority is hardly a cause of despair. Its unique features have enabled us to live a noble existence for millennia. We are assured:

There is still within it a tenth consecrated to G-d; even though it will be destroyed again and again as the oak and the beech tree, whose trunk remains though they shed their leaves, still the trunk will remain holy seed. (*Yeshayahu 6:13*)

• Source: *Collected Writings II, Kislev IV, pp. 233-248*

## The Miracle(s) of Chanuka

**W**e all know that the reason we celebrate Chanuka is to commemorate and thank G-d for all of the *nissim* — miracles — that He performed for our ancestors upon saving them from the Greeks and their harsh decrees.

Firstly, for the miraculous and crushing defeat of the mighty Greek army at the hands of the Maccabees — a small army of religious Jews led by Yehuda HaMaccabee and his father Mattisyahu. Secondly, for the miracle of the Menorah:

When the Maccabees returned victorious to the Beit Hamikdash, they found it completely defiled by the Greeks. After much searching they managed to find a small jar of pure, untouched olive oil with the seal of the *Kohen HaGadol* still intact. This jar contained enough oil to last for only one day. However, as we know, it burned for eight straight days. Because of these miracles, the Sages established the holiday of Chanuka, in order to thank G-d.

The Gemara in Shabbat (21b) asks “*Mai Chanuka*”? In commemoration of which of these miracles did the Sages institute Chanuka?

The Gemara answers, “For the miracle of the oil.” The fact that the oil should have burned for only one day, and instead burned for eight, was the reason why the Sages instituted the festival of Chanuka.

However, during Chanuka there is an additional prayer, called *Al HaNissim*, which is inserted into the *tefilla* (prayer) that is recited in the Grace after Meals as well as in the *Shemoneh Esrei*. In this prayer we thank G-d for the miracles of Chanuka. Yet, in *Al HaNissim* there is only mention of the miracle of the war, how G-d “placed the mighty in the hands of the weak and the many in the hands of the few”.

Nowhere in this *Al HaNissim* prayer does it mention the miracle of the oil. This is quite peculiar because the aforementioned Gemara states that the holiday of Chanuka was instituted exclusively because of the miracle of the oil! How could this be? The Gemara and *Al HaNissim* seem to be at odds with each other!

Nonetheless, drawing from concepts taken from the *Shalmei Torah* and the *Kuntros Chanuka*, we can attempt to suggest an answer for these seemingly contradictory passages.

It is well known that miracles take on different forms, resulting in different categories of miracles. One type of miracle shows the greatness of G-d (“*gevurot Hashem*”) — the strength of G-d — and at the same time is a *yeshua l’Yisrael* — a salvation for the Jews. One such miracle was the split-

ting of the Red Sea, where G-d saved the Jewish People from the wicked Egyptians in a public manner by utterly decimating their army.

Another example is the miracle of the mighty Greeks’ defeat at the hands of the Maccabees. For miracles such as these we are required to say *Shira* — a song of praise and thanksgiving to G-d. We therefore say “*Az Yashir*” every day in our morning prayers to thank G-d for splitting the Red Sea and for saving our ancestors from the bloodthirsty Egyptians. Likewise, the Sages instituted the *Al Hanissim* prayer on Chanuka to thank Him for saving us from the Greeks.

Another form of a miracle is when G-d reveals Himself to us through a miracle to show that He is pleased that we are doing His will properly. It also is a symbol of His relationship to us, so that we should draw even closer to Him by performing His *mitzvot* (commandments).

Such was the miracle of the oil. Instead of just lighting the Menorah with any oil, the Maccabees searched until they found an untouched jar of pure oil. Only with this special jar did they light the Menorah. In return, to show how pleased He was with their diligence, G-d performed an open miracle and made the oil last for eight days instead of one, in order that the Jews would realize their intimacy to G-d and draw even closer to Him.

Based upon this explanation, there really is no inconsistency. The Gemara in Shabbat asks: “To commemorate which miracle did the Sages establish the holiday of Chanuka?” The Gemara answers: “The miracle of the oil.” Because of the efforts of the Jews to ensure the purity of the oil, G-d, in return, manifested His Divine pleasure through a miracle — the miracle of the oil.

To commemorate this, the Sages instituted the eight days of Chanuka to draw us ever closer to G-d.

However, *Al Hanissim* is the *Shira*, the prayer of thanksgiving and praise to G-d, instituted for saving us from the Greeks. And we only say *Shira* for a miracle that publicly showed that through the might of G-d were the Jews saved. That was only the miracle of war, not the miracle of the oil.

That is why we mention only that specific miracle in *Al Hanissim*.

In any case, we must thank G-d for *all* the miracles, and therefore we celebrate the eight days of Chanuka “*l’hodot u’lhallel*” — to give thanks and to give praise. It is appropriate that the holiday of Chanuka generally falls out during the doldrums of winter and lights up the darkness. It behooves us all to glean from this enlightening holiday a small spark of “thanksgiving and gratitude”, and reflect about the miracles in our daily lives.

BY RABBI YITZCHAK BOTTON

## Chanukah Today

*Many miracles have occurred for the Jewish People over the years, and the Rabbis did not institute a holiday for each of them. So why did they institute a holiday for the miracles of Chanuka? What was different about them?*

Rabbi Yosef Chaim of Bagdad, also known as the Ben Ish Chai, points out something unusual about the wording of the Talmudic passage that discusses the holiday of Chanuka. It is stated in Masechet Shabbat 21a: “The following year the Sages established the days of Chanuka, declaring it an official holiday.” He asks: Why didn’t the Rabbis institute the holiday in the first year, when the miracles occurred?

The Men of the Great Assembly were able to see things as they were above in their spiritual source. They experienced *ruach hakodesh* – a form of Divine communication. Thus, with this form of prophetic vision they were able to perceive a return of the revelation of a special Divine light, a light that was shining in Heaven the preceding year, and which was involved in the occurrence of the miracles of Chanuka. They understood that in Heaven it was decreed that this light return each year, and so they instituted these same days as a holiday below, in this world. This is similar to the days of Purim, of which

it is said, “These days are remembered *above* (in Heaven) and *fulfilled* below (on earth).”

With this special understanding of why Chanuka was made into a holiday, we can better appreciate the essence of a “Jewish holiday”. Chanuka is not just a time to light candles and enjoy the donuts and latkes. Time is an ongoing circle; each year we come back to the special spiritual strength of Chanuka, which helps us to be victorious over our spiritual enemies. The self-sacrifice of Matityahu and the Chashmonaim in those days serves as a sign, and helps to channel Divine assistance in our times as well.

A Jewish holiday is not merely a commemoration of something that happened “Once upon a time”. It is a celebration of something taking place in the present. Chanuka, as is with all Jewish holidays, happens each year anew. When we light the Chanuka candles this year, let us take a moment to contemplate the fact that — at the very same moment — G-d is shining the light of Chanuka Above in Heaven.

“Blessed are You, Hashem, our G-d, King of the universe, Who has wrought miracles for our forefathers - *in those days, in this time.*”

*Chanuka Somayach!*

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PARSHA INSIGHT continued from page seven

“The process of pouring molten metal from huge vats was redesigned to remove the danger of spillages — but that also resulted in savings in raw materials. O’Neill instituted a rule that any machine that was breaking down regularly had to be replaced to reduce the likelihood of a broken gear snagging the arm of a worker. But that, too, paid dividends, as more efficient machines resulted in higher quality products. In short, it turned out that the same factors that made a production process unsafe also made it inefficient.

“There were indirect benefits as well. The safety campaign required that plants be able to share information rapidly to discuss what worked and what did not, and to warn of possible dangers in the production process. In order to facilitate that rapid exchange of information, Alcoa became one of the first companies to introduce a company-wide e-mail system.

“The unions, which had always resisted any productivity initiatives, stopped doing so when they saw the linkage between efficiency and safety, and when they realized that the latter was no less important to Alcoa than the for-

mer. When workers saw that their safety suggestions were taken seriously and acted upon, they began to offer suggestions in other areas as well. One worker recommended placing all the machines for painting aluminum siding in the same area of each plant to facilitate switching between colors, as customer preferences changed. The profits of the aluminum siding division doubled as a consequence. It turned out that the worker had been discussing the idea with his fellow workers for years, but had not done so with management because he did not believe anyone would pay attention to him. The response to the safety suggestions convinced him otherwise.”

“G-d was with Yosef and he became a successful man...” (39:2)

The Hebrew word for ‘successful’ in this verse is *matzliach*. Grammatically, the translation of “successful” is *mutzlach*. *Matzliach* is the causative voice, meaning “to cause to be successful”. Yosef’s greatest success was that he empowered others to be successful.

• Source: *heard from Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz*

BY RABBI YOSEF HERSHMAN

*Vayeshev***Sympathetic Agony**

Yosef's brothers have sold him into slavery, and have returned home to their father Yaakov with Yosef's blood-stained coat. Dipped in goat's blood, this coat elicited the intended reaction from Yaakov: *My son's coat! A wild beast has devoured him! Yosef has been torn! Torn!* Yaakov enters an abyss of grief, with no reprieve. His sons and daughters-in-law try unsuccessfully to console him — his final statement on the matter reveals inescapable sorrow: *I shall go to my grave, mourning for my son.* Seeing their father enslaved by sorrow would surely lead his children to agonizing remorse. Why didn't any of them attempt to assuage his agony? Why didn't they reveal to him that Yosef was still alive? Of the two options before them, this must have been the more compassionate choice. Either they reveal that Yosef is alive, that his brothers, out of hate and jealousy, have sold him into slavery, or they keep silent, allowing Yaakov to mourn the loss of his beloved son. The brothers understood that the physical loss of a cherished child is deeply painful. But they also understood that the wickedness of a child is pain far more difficult to bear. A child torn by wild beasts is never lost, but a child who is wicked is worse than lost. Had they told Yaakov then about the crime they committed, Yaakov would have felt as though he had lost not only one son, but ten sons at one time.

This preference — to bear the pain of death of a child over the pain of spiritual decay of a child — was imprinted on the Jewish conscience. This perhaps explains why, throughout the ages, our people were willing to allow their children to be killed rather than submit to forced conversion. A Jew's choice between physical and spiritual loss of a child is no Sophie's choice.

• Source: *Commentary, Bereishet 37:35*

*Miketz***Restoring Brotherly Love**

The drama in this week's *parashah* is spellbinding. Upon recognizing his brothers, Yosef designs an elaborate plan to test their allegiance, and seemingly bring about the realization of the dreams of his youth. But, how are we to understand Yosef's behavior? He has been viceroy in Egypt for nine years — did it not occur to him to send a message to his grieving father that he was alive and well? Or at least now, reveal himself to his brothers immediately, if only for his father's sake? Surely, a man of Yosef's intelligence could not have

believed that he was obliged to put himself at the service of his dreams; if the dreams had fateful significance, their realization could have been left to the One Who sent them. And a man of Yosef's character surely could not have intended senseless harassment in retaliation for his brothers' wrongs.

If Yosef wished only superficial restoration of the family relationship, this could have been achieved immediately, even years earlier. But Yosef wished to restore a warm and healthy family relationship. For this, two things would be required: he would have to change his opinion of his brothers, and they would have to change their opinion of him.

After experiencing the shocking callousness which met his entreaties from the pit, the only way for Yosef to overcome his natural feelings of resentment to his brothers was to be convinced that they had changed. Only if he could prove that their hearts had been warmed and their souls had been moved could he erase those feelings.

And so, he devised the test: when faced with the real prospect of life imprisonment and their families' starvation, would they still choose not to deprive their father of another son? When their actions proved their allegiance and change of heart, Yosef could banish from his heart the bitterness that remained.

But what about their feelings towards him? The feelings that led to his alienation in the first place? Yosef remembered his dreams (*Ber. 32:9*). He remembered how they had caused his brothers to suspect him of lust for power, how they had felt so threatened by him that they were driven to sell him. These feelings would be magnified tenfold now, if, as viceroy, with good reason to take his revenge, he revealed his identity to them. The rift of their youth would have become an unbridgeable gulf.

First, Yosef makes known to them the extent of his governing power in Egypt. It must be made abundantly clear to them that this man can do with them as he wishes. Then, through the course of events, Yosef reveals his true character. When he deals kindly with them and repays evil with good, he hopes they will change their view of him. With all of the pieces in place, the stage is set for his revelation in next week's *parashah*. At that moment, when the blindfold would drop, it would be possible for both Yosef and his brothers to restore the warm, brotherly relationship that would be essential to the survival and flourishing of this emerging nation of Bnei Yisrael, *the sons of Israel*.

• Source: *Commentary, Bereishet 42:9*

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# WHAT'S IN A WORD?

Synonyms in the Hebrew Language

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BY RABBI REUVEN CHAIM KLEIN

## Around in Concentric Circles

Long before the fidget spinner became the world's favorite pastime, Jewish children played with spinning tops on the holiday of Chanuka. Such a spinning device is known in Yiddish as a *dreidel*, while in Modern Hebrew it is called a *sevivon*. The word *sevivon* is derived from the Hebrew *saviv* ("around"), which appears in the Bible. There is, however, another Hebrew word which also means around: *haikef*. The circumference of a circle is known as its *haikef* (which is, of course, "Pi" times the diameter), and the traditional circuits around the *bimah* (*almamar*, or "table" upon which the Torah Scroll is read) that are performed during Succot and on Simchat Torah are likewise known as *hakafot*. So what is the difference between *saviv* and *haikef*, and are there any other words which also mean "around"?

Rabbi Meir Leibush Weiser (1809-1879), better known as the Malbim, explains that *haikef* denotes a complete circle, while *saviv* is not necessarily a complete circuit (though, he notes the phrase *saviv saviv* indicates a full circle).

Rabbi Shlomo Pappenheim of Breslau (1740-1814) also explains that the word *saviv* does not denote a complete circle, but simply means going around the center in a circular way, which could include a semi-circle or even just an arc. When the Jews circumvented traversing Philistine land by traveling *around* them (Ex. 13:18), it is described as a *sivuv*, even though they obviously did not make a full circle. This is because any round-about movement whose purpose may be to avoid a certain point (conceptually, "the center of the circle") can be called a *sivuv*. The term *saviv* can also be used metaphorically, such as when one speaks in a round-about way without saying one's point explicitly (II Sam. 14:20).

Nonetheless, Rabbi Pappenheim writes that *saviv* or *saviv*-related words usually refer to complete circles. To this effect, the Hebrew word *siv* refers to the bast of a palm tree, which is a fibrous material that surrounds the branches. Similarly, a drunkard is called a *soveh* (see Deut. 21:20, Proverbs 23:20, and Isa. 56:12) because he circulates around the taverns and bars (to taste different types of intoxicating beverages, to avoid being recognized by the bartenders, or because he uses up his credit in one shop and must drink elsewhere). An elderly gentleman is called a *sav* (Job 15:10) or a "grandfather" — *saba* — because he is nearing the completion of the circle of his lifecycle.

By contrast, the word *haikef* always refers to a full circuit. The seven circuits around the *bimah* (mentioned

above) are called *hakafot* (or *hakafah* in singular) because they ought to be complete circuits. By contrast, the word for a spinner is *sevivon* because it need not necessarily make any full circles but might stop spinning in the middle of rotating without completing the last circle. Interestingly, Rabbi Pappenheim writes that a frozen or congealed substance is described as *kafah/kafui*, which is related to the word *haikef* because it is *completely enclosed* within the framework of its current state and cannot change shape as easily as a liquid can do so.

As the *Targumim* imply and Radak confirms, the Aramaic equivalent to the Hebrew root-word *saviv* is *sachor*, and *sachor*-related words appear in the Bible in the general meaning of round: a *socheirah* (mentioned in Ps. 91:4) is a type of round shield, and a merchant is called a *socher* because he travels around trying to sell his merchandise.

Another Hebrew root word related to circles is *afef*. We say in Hallel, "The pains of death encircled (*afefuni*) me... and I would call out in the name of G-d, 'Please G-d, save my soul'" (Ps. 116:3-4). Malbim explains that the encircling denoted by *afef* always has a negative connotation. Regarding its etymology, Malbim explains that *afef* is related to the Hebrew word *peah* "corner" (in plural *peyot*) because it denotes enveloping someone or something from all possible corners.

Rabbi Yom Tov Lipmann Heller (1578-1654) writes that the original meaning of the word *chag* ("holiday") is "circle", which conjures the circles of dance which people enjoy on holidays (*Sefer Ha'Aruch* and Radak to I Sam. 30:16 offer similar understandings). For this reason, he explains, of all the holidays called a *chag* in the Torah (i.e., Pesach, Shavout, and Succot), the Mishnah consistently uses the term *chag* to refer to Succot in particular, because that is the holiday which is the most associated with happiness (see Deut. 16:15), and, thus, with dancing. Rabbi Yaakov Tzvi Mecklenburg (1785-1865) slightly disagrees with this when he writes that the word *chag* for "holiday" conjures the celebratory gait with which celebrants would walk on their thrice-yearly pilgrimages to Jerusalem. (Chanuka is never called a *chag*, and for that reason, the customary greeting on Chanuka is not "*Chag Sameach*" — "Happy Holiday" — but is something along the lines of the Yiddish expression: *A Lichtege Chanuka*, "An Illuminating Chanuka").

Relatedly, Radak writes that *chug* is something that orbits around another body, like a planet. Malbim explains

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# CHANUKA Q&A

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- Q**
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?
- A**
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 *sivivon* (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 Chanukah 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 25<sup>th</sup> 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 *U’va Letzion*. (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 683:1)

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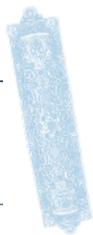
What’s In a Word...continued from page sixteen

that *chug* or *machug* denotes a circle with a focus on the center of the circle. And, as we mentioned in an earlier essay, the word *chagorah* refers to a “belt” because it *encircles* a person’s body.

Rabbi Wolf Heidenheim (1757-1832) writes that because the letters *CHET* and *AYIN* are sometimes interchangeable, the word *chag* is the same as the word *ag*, which means circle. Thus, *ugah* is a circular food (e.g., a

cake), *agil* refers to an earring, and when the Mishnah (*Ta’anit* 3:4) relates the story of Choni HaMe’agel (Onias the Circlemaker), it says that he was *ag ugah* (which basically means that he circumscribed himself within a drawn circle).

*Ellyu Nishmat* my mother Bracha bat R’ Dovid and my grandmother Shprintza bat R’ Meir



BY RABBI ZE'EV KRAINES

## Spiritual Resistance

During Chanuka we celebrate the spiritual resistance of the Jewish People in the face of religious persecution in ancient times. Over the centuries we have faced similar repressive decrees outlawing Jewish observance, often at penalty of death. Proudly affixing a mezuzah on a doorpost is a very public religious sign that can arouse resentment and even peril under anti-Semitic regimes. The question arises: Must the mitzvah be fulfilled if it entails risk of dangerous repercussions?

A little background is needed in order to address this question. In general, a person is not required to risk his life in order to avoid transgressing a Torah prohibition, with the exception of the sins of idolatry, sexual immorality and murder. Nevertheless, in times of religious persecution one must be ready to give up his life to avoid even a minor transgression.

However, *Shulchan Aruch* rules that this readiness only applies to one being forced to violate a transgression, and not to one threatened by a decree against the performance of positive *mitzvot* like mezuzah and *tefillin*. This means that a person would not be obligated to endanger himself by affixing a mezuzah in a time of persecution. In fact, in most cases one would be forbidden to risk his life for the performance of a positive mitzvah, unless he judges that there was a particular need for him to do so in an extraordinary circumstance. As an example of this exceptional act of self-sacrifice, the Talmud relates the story of a great *tzaddik* named Elisha:

*The wicked state (Rome) once proclaimed a decree against Israel that whoever donned tefillin should have his brains pierced through; yet Elisha put them on and went out into the streets. A Roman soldier saw him; he fled before him, and the latter gave pursuit. As he overtook him, he (Elisha) removed them from his head and held them in his hand, "What is that in your hand?" he demanded. "The wings of a dove," was his reply. He stretched out his hand and the wings of a dove were found therein.*

During the Spanish Inquisition it is well known that thousands of *conversos*, Jews who had feigned conversion to Catholicism, continued to practice Judaism in secret. Many of them concealed their *mezuzot* in ingenious ways at great risk. They also kept the ancient custom, still practiced today, of being careful not to sweep the dirt of their doorsteps towards the doorpost concealing the mezuzah. One poignant story of faith and devotion from this period

has been recorded for posterity:

*It is well known that in Spain during the Inquisition, when they checked and found one of the Conversos who swept dirt to the side away from the mezuzah, they reported that he was still keeping the Jewish religion, and he was martyred "al Kiddush Hashem" — in sanctification of the Divine Name.*

The threat of mezuzah theft is a more common, if less dramatic, act of anti-Semitism or vandalism. (It has been suggested that *mezuzot* are often stolen by people who imagine that they are some type of lucky charm.) If this is a real concern, ideally one should protect the mezuzah by carving out a space in the doorway for it. One must be careful not to insert the mezuzah into the hole more than a handbreadth (*tefach*, about three inches), as it would then be considered in the *wall* and not in the *doorway*. It is also important that the Divine Name of *Sha-dai*, written on the outside of the mezuzah, or the letter *Shin* on an opaque cover, should remain visible.

Alternatively, one may affix the mezuzah on the continuation of the doorpost behind the closed door, as it would still be within the doorway, though not visible from the street.

If this is not possible, in the absence of other options, one may place the mezuzah on the inner wall of the house facing the room, within a handbreadth of the doorway opening. One should place it on the inner door frame rather than on the wall itself. In this case, one should not recite a *beracha*, since according to many authorities the mezuzah is within the house and not within the doorway. As Mark Twain observed, the Greek and the Roman empires made a vast noise, but now are gone. He asked, "What is the secret of Jewish immortality?" Surely, our spiritual courage and determination in the face of crushing repression is part of the answer.

- Sources: *Shabbat* 130a; *Shulchan Aruch* Y.D. 157:1; *Mezuzas Melachim* p. 66; *Agur B'O halecha* 14:2 and 14:12; Mark Twain, "Concerning the Jews," <https://ohr.edu/judaism/concern/concerna.htm>.

Got a mezuzah question or story?  
Email [rabbi@ohrsandton.com](mailto:rabbi@ohrsandton.com) or submit  
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BY RABBI SHLOMO SIMON

## Eitan (Marc) Brueggemann

**Age 30 - Born: Munster, Germany - Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich BA,  
MA History and German Literature 2015 University of Berlin  
Hebrew University PhD candidate in Sociology and History (expected graduation in 2018)  
Mechina Program**

Munster, a large city on the Aa River in Western Germany near the Dutch border, was a city that was made famous by its cheese. It now has a new claim to fame — it's the hometown of Eitan Brueggemann, a recent arrival in the Mechina Program at Ohr Somayach in Jerusalem.

Marc (Eitan) was born into a very secular, but nominally Catholic family. Religion played almost no part in his early life. His father, an engineer and applied mathematician, was adamant about the value of secular education and dismissive of religion. As a future historian and a naturally curious boy, Marc had many questions about his family's role in the Second World War. But that subject was *verboten*, in his words: "a sealed box". Of his three grandparents alive when he was young, no one would speak about it. His parents, born after the war, were also mute on the subject. The most he got out of his grandfathers was that one was a soldier on the Eastern Front and the other was a Home Front soldier in Munster. No one spoke about the Jews.

After high school he went to university in Munich to study History and German Literature. There was no real spiritual dimension to his life as a student. He studied and socialized like most of his contemporaries. The university required that each student do a four month internship. A friend of his uncle was active in sending volunteers and interns to the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul Home for mentally and physically disabled children in the Ein Kerem neighborhood of Jerusalem. His uncle suggested it and Marc agreed. As its name implies, it is a Catholic institution run by nuns. Its staff includes many Jews, some of them religious.

Upon arriving in Israel, in 2011, Marc experienced an immediate emotional connection to the place. He didn't know why, but he now felt he was home. Working with

disabled children was very fulfilling and the staff was very friendly. His supervisor, a frum woman originally from South Africa and former classmate of Rabbi Reuven Gefen of our staff, invited him for many Shabbat meals. He loved the Shabbat experience. When the internship ended, his supervisor remarked to him that she sensed that he had a Jewish *neshama*.



Returning to Munster, he recounted his experiences in the Holy Land and how much the experience affected him. At this point, his maternal grandfather revealed to him that his first wife — Marc's mother's mother — was actually Jewish! She died in the 1960's, well before Marc was born. As a baby in the 1930's, she had been left with a Catholic family in the area by her parents who were afraid that the Nazis were going to implement the "Final Solution" that Hitler, *yemach shemo*, had written about in *Mein Kampf*. They never came back to reclaim their daughter and were presumably murdered. The family raised her as its own. By this time, Marc knew that according to the Jewish religion if his mother was born of a Jewish mother, she would be Jewish, as would all of her offspring. As an historian he wanted to see proof. He managed to find his grandmother's birth certificate. In the space for "parents" it was blank. In the space of "religion" it was also blank. Further investigation was impossible because the municipal offices of the city of Munster had been bombed by the allies and all the records from that period were destroyed. Although he had no evidentiary proof, all indications were that he was Jewish.

With this newfound knowledge of his background and the experiences he had in Israel, his spiritual journey began in earnest. In 2013, when he had to do a semester abroad for his Master's degree, he choose to do it at Hebrew University in Jerusalem. By what he sees now as

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@OHR...continued from page nineteen

*hasgacha pratit*, the school housed him in a “*Shomer Shabbat*” dormitory and he started participating in the prayers at the shul on campus. Yom Kippur and its prayers were particularly moving. He would come often to the Maalot Dafna neighborhood for Shabbat meals at the Machlis home, a family that hosts hundreds of people for Shabbat meals every week. He also started attending *shiurim* given by Rabbi Machlis.

In 2014, when his semester ended, he returned to university in Munich and contacted Rabbi Levinger, the Chief Rabbi of Munich about the conversion process. Since he couldn't prove that his mother was Jewish, he would have to convert. He started learning with Rabbi Levinger and with other rabbis in the community. In 2015 he returned to Israel as a PhD candidate in a joint program of the University of Berlin and Hebrew Uni-

versity. Someone he knew suggested that he study at Ma-chon Meir. He did that for a year. He tried to open a file for conversion with the Rabbanut, but there were many bureaucratic obstacles. Rabbi Zalman Weiss, an Ohr So-mayach alumnus whom he had befriended, suggested that he do his conversion through the *Beit Din* of Rabbi Nissan Karelitz in Bnei Brak. He studied hard and passed his oral examination for the conversion, followed by *milah* and then, the last step in the process, his *tevilah*, was on the 4<sup>th</sup> of Kislev 5778, just a few weeks ago.

Eitan, formerly Marc, entered the Mechina program at the start of the Winter Zman. He loves it. “It’s amazing”, he says. “It’s real and takes an open approach to Judaism and Torah learning. It’s clear and straight and not filtered through any political perspective.” Eitan has come home.

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FROM CLOUDS TO CANDLES...continued from page eleven

the Maccabeans and the establishment of Hasmonean rule was truly a historical landmark. However, the miracle of the Menorah was even more special. In the miracle of the Menorah, G-d showed that He was willing to perform miracles for the Jewish People not only to guarantee their existence, but to show them how much He loves them.

Rabbi Shmuelevitz offers a parable to illustrate this concept: Imagine that a family loses a precious gem which they had in their possession. They spend days searching and searching for the gem — but to no avail. Finally, after some time, one of the children finds the missing stone to the great joy of his parents. When the child will present the gem to his father, not only will the father rejoice in the jewel’s reappearance, but he will also give his young child a special “kiss”. Of course, that kiss pales in comparison to the value of the precious stone,

but, in truth, some things are priceless. The extra kiss shows the child how much his father loves him.

In the same way, the Maccabean military victory over the Greeks alone is indeed a reason to celebrate, but the special “kiss” which we received from Above, is an even greater reason to celebrate. The miracle of the Menorah is that special kiss.

Just as the holiday of Succot is named after the technically-unneeded miracle, so is the holiday of Chanuka named after the technically superfluous miracle. When the Talmud asks, “What is Chanukah?” — the answer is that “the kiss is Chanuka”. Nothing else. All other aspects of the holiday, like the miracle of the military victory, pale in comparison to the kiss. In this way, the essence of Chanuka echoes the essence of Succot. Both holidays celebrate the extra-special miracles which G-d does for us.

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CHANUKA: LIGHT AND DARKNESS continued from page three

as darkness. In the physical world, light reveals and enables people to see; darkness on the other hand hides what is truly there. Similarly, when Chazal refer to light they are referring to mediums that enable the *spiritual* world to be seen, and when they refer to darkness they are referring to mediums that prevent the *spiritual* world from being visible. With this new definition of darkness we can see that Greece, more than any other nation, personified the idea of blocking out the light through which spirituality can be seen with their evil decrees.

Based on the above we can gain a deeper understanding of the mitzvah of lighting the lights on Chanuka. The Maharal explains that as winter settles in, the nights get longer and longer until the 25th day of Kislev, at which

point light begins to increase in the world. Based on the idea that what takes place in the physical world is a reflection of what is happening in the spiritual realm, this phenomena hints at the availability of the *ohr haganuz* at this time. The Chanuka lights are a continuation of the light of the Menorah of the Beit Hamikdash that was itself a reflection of the *ohr haganuz* (Ran on Shabbat 9 in *dapei HaRif*; Ramban to Bamidbar 8:1). In fact, the Rokeach explains that the 36 lights that we light throughout Chanuka correspond to the 36 hours that Adam HaRishon experienced the presence of the *ohr haganuz* before it was removed. May we all merit utilizing this time to see beyond the physical world and ultimately overcome the Greek ideologies that still plague us today.

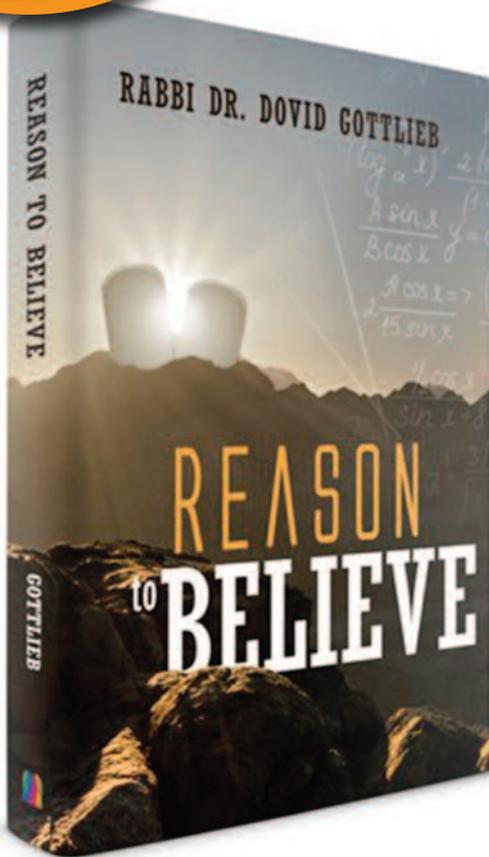
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