

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI LORD JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

The story of Joseph is one of those rare narratives in Tanach in which a Jew (Israelite/Hebrew) comes to play a prominent part in a gentile society – the others are, most notably, the books of Esther and Daniel. I want here to explore one facet of that scenario. How does a Jew speak to a non-Jew about God?

What is particular, and what is universal, in the religious life? In its approach to this, Judaism is unique. On the one hand, the God of Abraham is, we believe, the God of everyone. We are all – Jew and non-Jew alike – made in God's image and likeness. On the other, the religion of Abraham is not the religion of everyone. It was born in the specific covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants. We say of God in our prayers that He "chose us from all the peoples."

How does this work out in practice? When Joseph, son of Jacob, meets Pharaoh, King of Egypt, what concepts do they share, and what remains untranslatable?

The Torah answers this question deftly and subtly. When Joseph is brought from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams, both men refer to God, always using the word Elokim. The word appears seven times in the scene,¹ always in biblical narrative a significant number. The first five are spoken by Joseph: "God will give Pharaoh the answer He desires ... God has revealed to Pharaoh what He is about to do ... God has shown Pharaoh what He is about to do ... The matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon" (Gen. 41:16-32).

The last two are uttered by Pharaoh himself, after Joseph has interpreted the dreams, stated the problem (seven years of famine), provided the solution

(store up grain in the years of plenty), and advised him to appoint a "wise and discerning man" (Gen. 41:33) to oversee the project: The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, "Can we find anyone like this man, in whom is the spirit of God?" Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has made all this known to you, there is no one so discerning and wise as you. You shall be in charge of my palace..." (Gen. 41:37-39)

This is surprising. The Egypt of the Pharaohs was not a monotheistic culture. It was a place of many gods and goddesses – the sun, the Nile, and so on. To be sure, there was a brief period under Ikhnoton (Amenhotep IV), when the official religion was reformed in the direction of monolatry (worship of one god without disputing the existence of others). But this was short-lived, and certainly not at the time of Joseph. The entire biblical portrayal of Egypt is predicated on their belief in many gods, against whom God "executed judgement" at the time of the plagues. Why then does Joseph take it for granted that Pharaoh will understand his reference to God – an assumption proved correct when Pharaoh twice uses the word himself? What is the significance of the word Elokim?

The Hebrew Bible has two primary ways of referring to God, the four-letter name we allude to as Hashem ("the name" par excellence) and the word Elokim. The sages understood the difference in terms of the distinction between God-as-justice (Elokim) and God-as-mercy (Hashem). However, the philosopher-poet of the eleventh century, Judah HaLevi, proposed a quite different distinction, based not on ethical attributes but on modes of relationship² – a view revived in the twentieth century by Martin Buber in his distinction between I-It and I-Thou.

HaLevi's view was this: the ancients worshipped forces of nature, which they personified as gods. Each was known as El, or Eloah. The word "El" therefore generically means "a force, a power, of nature." The fundamental difference between those cultures and Judaism, was that Judaism believed that the forces of nature were not independent and



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¹ The word appears nine times in Genesis 41, the last two in the later episode in which Joseph gives names to his two sons.

Please keep in mind
בנימין שמחה בן עדינה מניה
for a refuah shelaima

² Judah HaLevi, Kuzari, book 1v, para. 1.

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NEWSLETTER DISTRIBUTED VIA EMAIL
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autonomous. They represented a single totality, one creative will, the Author of being. The Torah therefore speaks of Elokim in the plural, meaning, "the sum of all forces, the totality of all powers." In today's language, we might say that Elokim is God as He is disclosed by science: the Big Bang, the various forces that give the universe its configuration, and the genetic code that shapes life from the simplest bacterium to Homo sapiens.

Hashem is a word of different kind. It is, according to HaLevi, God's proper name. Just as "the first patriarch" (a generic description) was called Abraham (a name), and "the leader who led the Israelites out of Egypt" (another description) was called Moses, so "the Author of being" (Elokim) has a proper name, Hashem.

The difference between proper names and generic descriptions is fundamental. Things have descriptions, but only people have proper names. When we call someone by name we are engaged in a fundamental existential encounter. We are relating to them in their uniqueness and ours. We are opening up ourselves to them and inviting them to open themselves up to us. We are, in Kant's famous distinction, regarding them as ends, not means, as centres of value in themselves, not potential tools to the satisfaction of our desires.

The word Hashem represents a revolution in the religious life of humankind. It means that we relate to the totality of being, not as does a scientist seeing it as something to be understood and controlled, but as does a poet standing before it in reverence and awe, addressing and being addressed by it.

Elokim is God as we encounter Him in nature. Hashem is God as we encounter Him in personal relationships, above all in speech, conversation, dialogue, words. Elokim is God as He is found in creation. Hashem is God as He is disclosed in revelation.

Hence the tension in Judaism between the universal and the particular. God as we encounter Him in creation is universal. God as we hear Him in revelation is particular. This is mirrored in the way the Genesis story develops. It begins with characters and events whose significance is that they are universal

archetypes: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, Noah and the Flood, the builders of Babel. Their stories are about the human condition as such: obedience and rebellion, faith and fratricide, hubris and nemesis, technology and violence, the order God makes and the chaos we create. Not until the twelfth chapter of Genesis does the Torah turn to the particular, to one family, that of Abraham and Sarah, and the covenant God enters into with them and their descendants.

This duality is why Genesis speaks of two covenants, the first with Noah and all humanity after the Flood, the second with Abraham and his descendants, later given more detailed shape at Mount Sinai in the days of Moses. The Noahide covenant is universal, with its seven basic moral commands. These are the minimal requirements of humanity as such, the foundations of any decent society. The other is the richly detailed code of 613 commandments that form Israel's unique constitution as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Exodus 19:6).

So there are the universals of Judaism – creation, humanity as God's image, and the covenant with Noah. There are also its particularities – revelation, Israel as God's "firstborn child," and the covenants with Abraham and the Jewish people at Sinai. The first represents the face of God accessible to all humankind; the second, that special, intimate and personal relationship He has with the people He holds close, as disclosed in the Torah (revelation) and Jewish history (redemption). The word for the first is Elokim, and for the second, Hashem.

We can now understand that Genesis works on the assumption that one aspect of God, Elokim, is intelligible to all human beings, regardless of whether they belong to the family of Abraham or not. So, for example, Elokim comes in a vision to Avimelekh, King of Gerar, despite the fact that he is a pagan. The Hittites call Abraham "a prince of God [Elokim] in our midst." Jacob, in his conversations with Laban and later with Esau uses the term Elokim. When he returns to the land of Canaan, the Torah says that "the terror of God [Elokim]" fell on the surrounding towns. All these cases refer to individuals or groups who are outside the Abrahamic covenant. Yet the Torah has no hesitation in ascribing to them the language of Elokim.

That is why Joseph is able to assume that Egyptians will understand the idea of Elokim, even though they are wholly unfamiliar with the idea of Hashem. This is made clear in two pointed contrasts. The first occurs in Genesis 39, Joseph's experience in the house of Potiphar. The chapter consistently and repeatedly uses the word Hashem in relation to Joseph ("Hashem was with Joseph... Hashem gave him success in everything he did" [Gen. 39:2, 5]), but when Joseph speaks to Potiphar's wife, who is attempting to seduce him, he says, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against Elokim" (Gen. 30:9).

The second is in the contrast between the Pharaoh who speaks to Joseph and twice uses the word Elokim, and the Pharaoh of Moses' day, who says, "Who is Hashem that I should obey Him and let Israel go? I do not know Hashem and I will not let Israel go" (Exodus 5:2). An Egyptian can understand Elokim, the God of nature. He cannot understand Hashem, the God of personal relationship.

Judaism was and remains unique in its combination of universalism and particularism. We believe that God is the God of all humanity. He created all. He is accessible to all. He cares for all. He has made a covenant with all.

Yet there is also a relationship with God that is unique to the Jewish people. It alone has placed its national life under His direct sovereignty. It alone has risked its very existence on a divine covenant. It testifies in its history to the presence within it of a Presence beyond history.

As we search in the twenty-first century for a way to avoid a "clash of civilisations," humanity can learn much from this ancient and still compelling way of understanding the human condition. We are all "the image and likeness" of God. There are universal principles of human dignity. They are expressed in the Noahide covenant, in human wisdom (hokhma), and in that aspect of the One God we call Elokim. There is a global covenant of human solidarity.

But each civilisation is also unique. We do not presume to judge them, except insofar as they succeed or fail in honouring the basic, universal principles of human dignity and justice. We as Jews rest secure in our relationship with God, the God who has revealed Himself to us in the intimacy and particularity of love, whom we call Hashem.

The challenge of an era of conflicting civilisations is best met by following the example of Abraham, Sarah and their children, as exemplified in Joseph's contribution to the economy and politics of Egypt, saving it and the region from famine. To be a Jew is to be true to our faith while being a blessing to others regardless of their faith. That is a formula for peace and graciousness in an age badly in need of both. *Covenant and Conversation 5779 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl z"l ©2018 Rabbi Lord J. Sacks and rabbisacks.org*



RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"**A**nd Pharaoh said to Joseph, I had a dream last night, and no one is able to interpret it...." (Gen. 41: 15) There is an unusual symmetry in the portion of Miketz as well as in Vayeshev, both of

which deal almost exclusively with the rise and fall (in Vayeshev) and the fall and rise (in Miketz) of Joseph.

Vayeshev begins with an introduction to Joseph. Not only is he talented, brilliant and handsome, but he is the beloved son of the beloved wife, Rachel. As the apple of his father's eye, physically as well as spiritually, he can do no wrong. Little wonder that his father adores him and adorns him with the much-prized cloak of many colors.

Yet, by the end of the portion, Joseph is in prison. It is the final degradation in a series of degradations that began shortly after earning the hatred of his brothers for his loose tongue and provocative dreams as a result of which he was cast into a pit and sold into slavery in Egypt.

Miketz ends with Joseph still in prison, but almost immediately we witness his miraculous rise and emergence as a world leader. The former seventeen-year-old dreamer becomes Grand Vizier (second only to the Pharaoh) and Secretary of Treasury, Labor and Agriculture all rolled into one. Pharaoh may be the symbolic head of Egypt, the god of the Egyptian 'pantheon', but because of his total trust in Joseph, the son of Jacob now effectively rules the land, a prime minister without the possibility of anyone casting a no-confidence vote against him.

Rabbi Isaac Bernstein ingeniously suggests the method behind the symmetry. The favored and beloved Joseph is doomed to begin his downward descent because, although he dreams grand dreams, he is totally self-absorbed; his sole interest lies in communicating his dreams of self-aggrandizement to others. By the beginning of Miketz, however Joseph is listening to the dreams of others and using them to help the others. Once one begins listening to other people's dreams one is ready to ascend upwards and achieve true leadership.

I would develop this idea further by suggesting that the real key to Joseph's interpretation lies in his new-found ability to carefully listen. Remember that the prophet Elijah receives a vision from the Almighty at the end of his life teaching him that the Divine Presence is to be found in a small silent voice, Kol demama daka. How can a voice be silent? The adviser's voice must be silent in order to listen very carefully to the words of the supplicant. Proper advice which has God's own stamp of approval can only emerge from careful listening to and empathizing with the individual who speaks out of desperation and travail. Only when one understands what the questioner really wants, can one offer him/her proper advice. Prophecy is based in no small measure upon one's ability to listen.

When the wine steward revealed his dream – and dreams are always a key to the hidden and often subconscious thoughts and aspirations of the dreamer – of 'squeezing grapes into Pharaoh's cup, and then placing the cup in Pharaoh's hand' [Gen. 40:11], it

became clear to Joseph that the wine steward only wanted to continue to serve his master, that he had no trace of a guilty conscience, and so he would be found innocent and returned to service.

The chief baker's dream, on the other hand, is very different. He dreams of birds snatching the loaves of bread from the basket on his head. The birds, or nature, are 'out to get him' – and often people who suffer from paranoia have reason to feel guilty. Joseph listened well and surmised that the chief baker was indeed guilty and so would be hanged within three days.

Similar was the case of Pharaoh's dream. Joseph understood that Pharaoh's chief concern was the economic well-being of Egypt, and this subject had to be the point of a dream which repeated itself so often to the man most responsible for Egypt's well being. And if Pharaoh was frightened of economic disaster – by the way, a cyclical occurrence in Egypt which Joseph was certainly aware of – the best way for Joseph to overcome that concern was to present a plan of prevention: 'Now therefore let Pharaoh seek out a man understanding and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt in the seven years of plenty. And let them store up all the food of those good years that come, and pile up corn under the hand of Pharaoh...that the land shall not be cut off through the famine.' And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh...(Gen. 41:33–37)

The Joseph of Miketz did not shout his dreams to others whom he saw as his servants; he rather listened carefully to the dreams of others, and was ready to be of service to them wherever possible. Only this changed Joseph could be expected to rise and remain on top.

The content of Joseph's earlier dreams is also an important piece in understanding his downward turn. Joseph's dream is predicated to a certain degree upon his father Jacob's dream, the dream of '...a ladder standing on the ground, its top reached up toward heaven...God's angels were going up and down on it...'. Joseph, too, dreams of the two elements in his father's dream, the earth and the heavens. His first dream is of the earth – stalks of wheat – and his second dream is of the heavens – sun, moon and stars. But there are two major differences between the dreams of father and son. Jacob's dream is one: he yearns to connect heaven and earth. Joseph has two separate dreams. In Jacob's dreams, God and the angels are at its center; in Joseph's dream he himself is at the center, with the eleven stalks of wheat and eleven stars, sun and moon bowing down to him. God is absent from Joseph's subconscious; he, Joseph, wishes dominion on earth and even in the heavenly cosmos.

But as the Joseph stories develop, a much chastened Joseph, as well as his repentant brothers, learn invaluable lessons. The brothers learn that they

should have tried to teach – not tear away – their errant and supercilious brother. Joseph learns that his abilities of economic and administrative leadership must serve the higher power of God and Torah. Joseph's dreams are realized in Egypt – when his family must bow to him as Grand Vizier of Egypt. But in the greater dream of Israel, the vision of the Covenant between the Pieces and the ultimate goal of world peace and redemption, Joseph will serve Judah, the guardian of tradition and Torah. Jacob only gives Joseph the 'blessing' of a double portion; the 'birthright' of spiritual leadership and direction is granted to Judah [Gen. 49:8–10]. When Joseph truly understands his proper position, he is able to rise above his fall into the pit and take his place as the heir to the blessing, but not as the heir to the birth right, as leader of the family-nation. ©2018 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

In this week's Torah reading, we read of the dreams of the Pharaoh of Egypt. The Torah does not identify who this Pharaoh was. We know nothing about him, we know nothing as to how he became the Pharaoh. He is a complete mystery, yet he is the catalyst for everything that will happen. He will be the one who has Joseph released from prison. He is the one that will make Joseph the viceroy of Egypt. In that regard, and because of the dreams that he had, the famine comes to the entire area of the middle east and Joseph and his brothers enact the final drama of their relationship and of the building of the people of Israel.

It is interesting to note that throughout the Bible there are characters who are central to the story but who are basically anonymous. We do not know who they are and why they act as they do. We do not know if they are aware of the central role that they are playing in the history of civilization and of the Jewish people. From everything that we can read and understand, it seems that they are oblivious as to their role. They are behaving as ordinary human beings in what they think are ordinary circumstances and are unaware that somehow cosmic events are occurring because of them.

The Pharaoh simply wants to have a bad dream interpreted. He is not interested and may not even know, regarding the house of Jacob in the land of Israel, nor of the fact that there is a young Hebrew that is a prisoner in one of his dungeons. All he wants is to have his anxieties relieved by having some sort of interpretation of his frightening dream. Here we have a glimpse into how Heaven, so to speak, interferes and guides - without notice - the events of human beings and of civilization.

This is the nature of human life. We always concentrate on the trees and most of the time we're not even aware that there is a forest. What looks to us to

be small and insignificant choices are really magnified because of their effect upon others and upon history. The Pharaoh of Egypt does not realize that he is the center of a drama that will remain cogent and important for thirty-seven hundred years. He is not aware as to what his true role in the matter is. So, he just acts as a normal human being. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy to see how quickly he raises Joseph. He could just have said, "Well, thank you for the interpretation of the dream." He could have just, if he wanted to be magnanimous, freed Joseph from jail.

But here, he elevates him. He makes him second in command of the Egyptian empire. He believes that Joseph is so talented and that the dream is so real that he must act in order to implement it. This, already, is the hand of Heaven. This points out to us how the divine will, so to speak, pushes human beings into behavior that is not quite logical, but that, in retrospect, is important, eventful, and meaningful. And that is really an important lesson that all of us should take to heart because there are no inconsequential actions of human beings. Everything that we do, everything that we say, counts and is recorded for good or for better. ©2018 Rabbi Berel Wein - Jewish historian, author and international lecturer offers a complete selection of CDs, audio tapes, video tapes, DVDs, and books on Jewish history at www.rabbiwein.com. For more information on these and other products visit www.rabbiwein.com

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

It is commonly known that the reason that we call ourselves by the name Yehudim (Jews) is because most of us come literally from the Kingdom of Judah, or more specifically the tribe of Judah. Yet, there is a deeper reason why we have continued to use this term specifically when there are countless other names that our people and religion could go by.

This week's Torah portion points to this reason. In the narrative, Yosef (Joseph) takes Shimon (Simon) hostage and demands that the brothers bring Binyamin (Benjamin) to Egypt, as a precondition for both Shimon's release and his (Yosef's) providing of more food for Yaakov's (Jacob's) family.

Yaakov is understandably hesitant. Having already lost Yosef, his favorite, he fears losing Binyamin his only remaining son from his beloved wife Rachel. It is here that Yehudah (Judah) bravely rises to declare that he would act as an "orev," a surety for Binyamin. "If I don't return him," he says to his father Yaakov, "I will bear the sin forever." (Genesis 43:9)

Yehudah's pledge is unusual. Normally when a debtor guarantees collateral, the collateral comes from a party other than the debtor. Here, Yehudah takes his obligation to a higher level. Yehudah himself is both the one who makes the commitment as well as the guarantor. This indicates how seriously Yehudah takes

the pledge or the "arevut" he is offering.

"Arevut," writes Rabbi Ahron Soloveichik. "means more than just another concern for one's fellow Jew. It means that I am a surety-each and every Jew is a surety for every other Jew. Just as a surety in money is held responsible as if he had been the debtor, so, also, every Jew is a surety for all the spiritual obligations of every other Jew."

Of course this does not mean that Jews are not concerned for all of humankind. We are. Every human being is created in the image of God. In the words of our Rabbis, *chaviv adam shenivrah be-tzelem Elokim*. As such, we have very deep obligations to all people. But our obligation to our fellow Jew is unique. As we are more connected to our inner family with whom we share a common tradition, history and destiny, so too concerning our larger family - the people of Israel.

Hence, we are called Yehudim, as we are named after the person who so intensely exemplified *ahavat Yisrael - Yehudah*. We must realize the centrality of the principle of Jewish unity. Rabbi Yehudah Halevi, the medieval poet and philosopher notes that all of Israel can be compared to a human body. When one limb hurts, the entire being is affected. So it is with Am Yisrael. All Jews are one body. He taught that when one Jew is in pain, Jews everywhere feel that pain.

Yet, he also taught us that when a Jew dances and experiences joy, we all dance and feel the joy. Let us hope that we can experience the unity of joy, an important element in our obligations as Yehudim, more and more in the days, months and years to come. ©2018 Hebrew Institute of Riverdale & CJC-AMCHA. Rabbi Avi Weiss is Founder and Dean of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah, the Open Orthodox Rabbinical School, and Senior Rabbi of the Hebrew Institute of Riverdale

RABBI DAVID LEVIN

Yosef's Path

In the beginning of Parashat Mikeitz, Par'oh had two dreams which Yosef interprets for him as really one.

Both dreams indicated the immediacy of seven extremely productive years for Mitzrayim followed by seven years of extreme hardship and famine. Yosef wisely told Par'oh to find someone who could take charge during the plentiful years and plan for the terrible ones. Par'oh appointed Yosef to take control of all of this plan. Yosef set a heavy tax on food for the people so that they would store that food and have it available during the years of famine. During the multiple years of growth, the people did not mind the tax and willingly gave their extra produce to Yosef.

The Torah tells us: "The seven years of abundance



that came to pass in the land of Egypt (Mitzrayim) ended. And the seven years of famine began approaching, just as Yosef had said, and there was a famine in all the lands, but in all the land of Mitzrayim there was bread. All the land of Egypt hungered, and the people cried out to Par'oh for bread. So Par'oh said to all of Egypt, 'Go to Yosef and whatever he says to you, you should do.' And the famine spread over all the face of the land, Yosef opened all that had within them, and sold to Mitzrayim and the famine became severe in the land of Mitzrayim. And all the land came to Mitzrayim to Yosef to buy provisions for the famine had become severe in all the land."

Understanding the normal harvest in Mitzrayim can help us to comprehend why Par'oh was so shocked at the news that a famine would occur in Mitzrayim for seven years. We are told in Parashat Lech L'cha that Mitzrayim was compared to Gan Eden. There were three places on the Earth where there was no need for rain: Sodom, Egypt, and the Garden of Eden. Rain is called "gishmei b'racha, rains of blessing." Sodom and Egypt did not receive gishmei b'racha because they were not worthy of receiving a blessing. Evil was so prevalent there that Hashem could not bless them. In the Garden of Eden there was no right and wrong until Adam and Chava ate from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, at which point they were held responsible for any sins and were expelled from the Garden. Since there was no right or wrong, there could also be no reward and punishment. The Garden of Eden had four rivers which surrounded it and watered the plant life inside. Sodom had the Jordan River which made the entire valley well-watered. Egypt had the Nile which overflowed and gave enough irrigation to the land that it was fertile around the river. In this way Hashem could still supply the people with food just as He sustains everyone, yet this was done without the b'racha of rain.

HaRav Zalman Sorotskin explains that the Egyptians always expected that there would be enough food for them to live comfortably. That is why they were not surprised by the seven plentiful years. They placed no faith in Yosef's prophecy of what was yet to come. Only at the beginning of the years of famine did they suddenly remember the words of Yosef and looked upon him in a different light. The Or HaChaim explains that they did not recognize the truth of Yosef's interpretation of the dreams until the famine arrived. The good years were attributed to normal occurrences until the bad years came. The people still had some food, but they were not accustomed to feeling unsatisfied. Now they understood the overabundance of the first seven years and accepted that the next seven years would be years of starvation. The Ramban stresses that Yosef did not open the warehouses of food until "the famine had become severe in all the land." He wanted the people to be void

of food so that they would be willing to buy their supply of food at the cost that he would establish.

HaRav Shmshon Raphael Hirsch explains that "sold" here was from the root word shavar (vayishbor) which means to break or split up. Hirsch understood this to mean that Yosef sold the grain to the people in small quantities "required for the immediate requirements of each family." He did this to control the price of the produce rather than leave it to the open market which would have raised the price of food so that the rich would eat and the poor would starve. S'forno explains that Yosef only opened the warehouses so that the people would all see that there was easily enough food for the seven lean years and a panic would not set in. Rav Sorotzkin suggests that Yosef waited until the famine had struck even the rich who could have afforded any price for the food. The Moshav Z'keinim of the Ba'alei Tosofot tells us that when the brothers came to Egypt, they saw that this "ruler" took complete charge of every aspect of the distribution of the food. The brothers could understand that this was done to keep the prices in a range that the poor could also afford. "In this way the brothers recognized his righteousness even before he revealed himself to them."

We see here Yosef's sensitivity to the needs of the people around him. He could have been haughty or stern with them for not preparing properly for the years of famine that he had predicted. Instead he saw to their needs personally and did so in a humble manner. We see also that the experiences that Yosef endured enabled him to mature into the sensitive nature that he now displayed. Had he possessed that sensitive nature as a young boy, he might have thought more carefully about sharing his dreams with his brothers and would have avoided any appearance of a threat to them. Here we can see that even though the experiences that Yosef had were horrible and painful to him, he was able to learn from them and grow to be the man whom we see before us now.

Yosef and his children never became the leaders of the B'nei Yisrael, nor were they ever intended to be. His brothers' fear of him was unfounded. He was needed to save them, not to lead them. Yosef grew to understand the true meaning of his first dream, and through that, his purpose in life. It is hard for us, too, to understand our purpose in life, but we are led on that path by Hashem. May we be wise enough to see His guidance and follow that path.

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ENCYCLOPEDIA TALMUDIT

Chanukah

*Translated for the Encyclopedia Talmudit
by Rabbi Mordechai Weiss*

Outside of Israel in the Diaspora we celebrate two days of Holiday ("Chag") during the three major

festivals of Pesach, Shavuot and Succot. In ancient times the new month was proclaimed by the Beit Din in Jerusalem. Messages were then sent to all the surrounding communities and also the communities outside Israel. Because of the time factor in reaching these communities in time for the Chag, those living outside Israel celebrated two days of Chag. Though today we have a calendar, we still maintain this tradition in the Diaspora.

However with reference to the holiday of Chanukah we only have eight days and we don't add any additional days. Some believe that the reason for this is that we only add additional days on holidays that are dictated by the Torah ("Deorayta"), not those that are dictated by the Rabbis (as Chanukah).

Others state that the number eight has special significance, since one of the evil decrees against the Jews was to obliterate the Mitzva of Circumcision which is on the eighth day, and also the holiday of Succot is eight days as well.

A famous question is posed by the "Beit Yoseph": Why should Chanukah be celebrated for eight days since they found enough oil to last for one day? The first day therefore would not be a miracle and hence we should celebrate Chanukah for only seven days?

Perhaps we can answer this question by citing the controversy between the school of Shammai ("Beit Shammai") and the school of Hillel ("Beit Hillel") as to the exact way the Menorah should be lit on Chanukah. "Beit Shammai" state that on the first night we light eight candles and each succeeding night we decrease this number by one until the last day when we have only one candle lit. "Beit Hillel" on the other hand state that every day we add a candle until the eighth day when all candles are lit (this is the tradition that we follow).

It would therefore follow, that if we only celebrated seven days of Chanukah then on the fourth day there would be no discernable difference between "Beit Hillel" and "Beit Shammai" (since both would light four candles). The same would be true if we would add a day (as we do on regular holidays) and celebrate nine days, for then the fifth night there would be no difference. Hence we insist of having exactly eight days of Chanukah. ©2016 Rabbi M. Weiss and Encyclopedia Talmudit



RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“When the Greeks entered the [Temple] sanctuary they ritually contaminated all of the oil in the sanctuary, and when the House of the Chashmona'im became stronger and defeated

them, they searched and only found one jar of oil that was left with the seal of the Kohain Gadol, and there was only enough [oil] in it to light for one day; a miracle occurred with it and they lit from it for eight days." Almost as well known as the miracle described in the Talmud (Shabbos 21b) is the question asked by the Bais Yosef (Orach Chayim 670): Since there was enough oil for one day, the miracle only occurred for seven days, not eight; why do we celebrate Chanukah for eight days if the miracle only lasted seven days?

Ultimately the answer is likely based on the Jews celebrating an eight-day holiday after liberating the Temple even before they knew how long the "miracle of the oil" would last (see <http://tinyurl.com/pjxqv4b>); the miracle allowed the oil to burn for eight days, matching the length of their "new" holiday. Nevertheless, more than a hundred other answers have been suggested throughout the centuries. However, even as a kid I never really understood the question. After all, the oil burned for eight days, which indicated that on each day only one eighth of the normal amount of oil was consumed; the same miracle occurred on day one as on day eight! Why invent possible scenarios whereby all of the oil was left after the first day just to be able to ask the question of why we celebrate for eight days? I know this is one of the answers given (although this is not the first answer of the Bais Yosef, who suggests that they only put one eighth of the normal amount into each cup of the menorah on each day), but I never thought of it as an "answer," it is the reason why there is no question. If there was enough oil for one day and it burned for eight days, the starting point should be that on each day only one eighth of the oil was consumed, meaning that there was a miracle on all eight days! Why is there even a question?

There are several reasons why this "simple" scenario may be problematic. First of all, the wording of the Talmud is that "they lit from it for eight days," not that it burned for eight days, indicating that something additional was done each of the eight days, not that it just lasted for eight days. [This is likely why the Bais Yosef suggested that only some of the oil was put into the menorah each day rather than that all of it was put in right away. The Bais Yosef's second answer is that the jar remained full even after the menorah was filled up, making the "it" that the menorah was lit from for eight days the jar. Even though this explains how there was a miracle on the first day too, there would now be no miracle necessary on the eighth day; the menorah was filled from the miracle that occurred on the seventh day. His third answer, that the cups of the menorah were still full in the morning, shares this issue.] Another issue that needs to be addressed is that the menorah must have the full amount of oil to last through the night (a half a "lug," see Rambam, Hilchos T'midin u'Musafin

3:11), and after the first night only seven eighths (seven sixteenths of a "lug") were left, with another eighth of the oil (which is another sixteenth of a "lug") less after each subsequent night. Even though they had no more uncontaminated oil to fill up the menorah with, since ritually contaminated oil can be used if need be (see Rambam, *ibid*, 3:10), how could they have let the menorah burn without enough oil to last the night? [This issues applies to the Bais Yosef's first answer as well.] According to some (see Meiri on Shabbos 22b), any flame still burning when it was time to light the candles again is extinguished, and the old wick, any remaining oil, and the ashes are cleaned out. If so, the oil must not have been left to burn continuously for eight days.

There are other peculiarities regarding how the miracle is described. Rambam (*Hilchos Chanukah* 3:2), rather than saying that with the ritually pure oil in the jug "they lit the menorah for eight days," says "they lit from it the 'neiros ha'Ma'aracha' for eight days." Why did the Rambam use the term "neiros ha'Ma'aracha" rather than the more straightforward "menorah"? (G'vuras Yitzchok, Chanukah #26 and #27, discusses this issue at length.) Sh'iltos (*Vayishlach* 26; page 173 in Netziv's edition) first says that there was enough oil to light for one day, then later (page 178) says there wasn't even enough for one day. Although the latter reference is used to explain why it was a miracle even on the first day (since it lasted longer than it should have), why did Rav Achai Ga'on describe how much oil there was in the jug two different ways? Additionally, when telling us that there was enough to light for one day, he says that there was a "lug" of oil, which is only enough for two of the seven lamps in the menorah! Since each lamp needed a half a "lug," three and a half "lugin" were needed to light the menorah, not just one. (Although the term "lug" might be a borrowed term, referring to the jug the oil was found in not the amount of oil in the jug, since the term "lug" likely came to mean "jar" because of how much liquid it held, it would be very misleading for Rav Achai to use the term "lug" instead of another term for "jar" if he didn't mean to indicate how much oil was in it.)

Tzofnas Paneyach (a commentary on the Rambam, but since some have requested that I somehow connect Chanukah with the Parasha, I will point out that it is also the name Paro gave Yosef, see *B'reishis* 41:45), within his attempt to explain why the Rambam uses the term "neiros ha'Ma'aracha," suggests that it was only the "ner ma'aravi," the "western lamp," that was lit by the Chasmona'im, not the other six. However, since the word "neiros" is plural, I find it difficult to accept that Rambam (or anyone else) would suggest that only one of the seven lamps of the menorah was lit. (Rambam himself says that when the menorah is inaugurated all seven lamps must be lit, see *Hilchos T'midin u'Musafin* 3:11.) Nevertheless, as G'vuras Yitzchok (#27) points out, since the Rambam

was of the opinion that the menorah was lit twice everyday (once in the morning and once in the evening), and a half a "lug" was needed for each lamp for each lighting, if we are discussing just one lamp then one "lug" would be enough for one day, while for the menorah one "lug" wouldn't be enough for even one day. I would therefore suggest (and you can decide for yourself whether this qualifies more as Chanukah Torah or Purim Torah) that the ritually pure oil they found was used only for the "ner ma'aravi," which was the only lamp that could not be lit (or relit) from the other lamps, but had to be lit from the fire of the outer altar (see *Hilchos T'midin u'Musafin* 3:13). As previously mentioned, if ritually pure oil was not available, ritually impure oil could be used, and it was -- for the other six lamps. Because of the difficulty involved in keeping the uncontaminated oil ritually pure, rather than pouring it into the "ner ma'aravi" twice, they poured the whole "lug" into it once, lighting it from the fire of the outer altar after that was re-inaugurated. If this is true, all of our issues have been resolved.

The Sh'iltos calls it a "lug" because that's how much oil there was, which was enough for one day for one lamp, but not enough for even one day for the whole menorah. Rambam refers to them as "neiros ha'Ma'aracha" in order to distinguish them from the "ner ma'aravi." The "miracle oil" was in the "ner ma'aravi," and burned for eight days even though there was only enough for one. The "neiros ha'Ma'aracha were lit from the "ner ma'aravi" (which is how they were normally lit), and since the "ner ma'aravi" had the oil from the jar that was found, it could accurately be said that "they (the "neiros ha'Ma'aracha) were lit from it (the oil that was found, which was in the "ner ma'aravi)" for eight days." (Even those of the opinion that the lamps must be extinguished for the next lighting agree that this does not apply to the "ner ma'aravi.") Since only half a "lug" was needed per lighting, when they saw that there was still seven eighths of a "lug" left in the "ner ma'aravi" after the first day, there was no need to add any more oil to it. The same is true when they saw three quarters of a "lug" left after two days, five eighths of a "lug" after three days, and a half a "lug" after four days. Once four days had passed and only one eighth of a "lug" was being consumed each day, there was a "chazakah" (precedent that could be relied upon) that this oil only needed one eighth of a "lug" per day, so they didn't need to add more oil to it on the fifth, sixth, seventh or eighth days either. And since this same miracle of only one eighth of a "lug" being consumed per day occurred on all eight days, there is no reason to question why Chanukah is eight days long instead of seven.

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... "Anybody got a match?"