Miketz represents the most sudden and radical transformation in the Torah. Joseph, in a single day, moves from zero to hero, from forgotten, languishing prisoner to viceroy of Egypt, the most powerful man in the land, in control of the nation’s economy.

Until now, Joseph has rarely been the author of events. He has been the done to rather than the doer; passive rather than active; object rather than subject. First his father, then his brothers, then the Midianites and Ishmaelites, then Potiphar and his wife, then the prison warden, have all directed his life. Among the most important things in that life had been dreams, but dreams are things that happened to you, not things you choose.

What is decisive is the way last week’s parsha ends. Having given a favourable interpretation to the dream of the chief butler, predicting that he would be restored to office, and realising that he would soon be in a position to have Joseph’s case re-examined and Joseph himself set free, the butler “did not remember Joseph, and forgot him.” Joseph’s most determined attempt to change the direction of fate comes to nothing. Despite being centre-stage for much of the time, Joseph was not in control.

Suddenly this changes, totally and definitively. Joseph has been asked to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams. But he does far more than that. First he interprets the dreams. Second, he maps that onto reality. These were not just dreams. They are about the Egyptian economy in the course of the next 14 years. And they are about to become true now.

Then, having made this prediction, he diagnoses the problem. The people will starve during the seven years of famine. Next, with a stroke of sheer genius, he solves the problem. Store a fifth of the produce during the years of plenty, and it will then be available to stave off starvation during the lean years.

Margaret Thatcher was reported as having said, of another Jewish adviser, Lord (David) Young, “Other people bring me problems, David brings me solutions.” That was magnificently true in the case of Joseph, and we have no difficulty understanding the response of the Egyptian court: “The plan seemed good to Pharaoh and to all his officials. So Pharaoh asked them, ‘Can we find anyone like this man, one in whom is the spirit of God?’” (Gen. 41:37-38)

At the age of 30, Joseph is the most powerful man in the region, and his administrative competence is total. He travels round the country, arranges for collection of the grain, and ensures that it is stored safely. There is so much that, in the Torah’s words, he stops keeping records because it is beyond measure. When the years of plenty are over, his position becomes even more powerful. Everyone turns to him for food. Pharaoh himself commands the people, “Go to Joseph and do what he tells you.”

So far, so good. And at this point the narrative shifts from Joseph, viceroy of Egypt, controller of its economy, to Joseph, son of Jacob, and his relationship with the brothers who, 22 years earlier, had sold him as a slave. It is this story that will dominate the next few chapters, rising to a climax in Judah’s speech at the beginning of the next parsha.

One effect of this is that it tends to move Joseph’s political and administrative activity into the background. But if we read it carefully – not just how it begins, but how it continues – we discover something quite disturbing. The story is taken up in next week’s parsha in chapter 47. It describes an extraordinary sequence of events.

It begins when the Egyptians have used up all their money buying grain. They come to Joseph asking for food, telling him they will die without it, and he replies by telling them he will sell it to them in exchange for ownership of their livestock. They willingly do so: they bring their horses, donkeys, sheep and cattle. The next year he sells them grain in exchange for their land.

The result of these transactions is that within a short period of time – seemingly a mere three years – he has transferred to Pharaoh’s ownership all the money, livestock and private land, with the exception of the land of the Priests, which he allowed them to retain.

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1 In actual fact, the accurate quote was: “other people come to me with their problems. David comes to me with his achievements.” But in journalistic retellings it has been modified to give context. See Financial Times, 24 November 2010.
Not only this, but the Torah tells us that Joseph “removed the population town by town, from one end of Egypt’s border to the other” (Gen. 47:21) – a policy of enforced resettlement that would eventually be used against Israel by the Assyrians.

The question is: was Joseph right to do this? Seemingly, he did it of his own accord. He was not asked to do so by Pharaoh. The result, however, of all these policies is that unprecedented wealth and power were now concentrated in Pharaoh’s hand – power that would eventually be used against the Israelites. More seriously, twice we encounter the phrase avadim le-Faro, “Slaves to Pharaoh” – one of the key phrases in the Exodus account and in the answer to the questions of the child in the Seder service (Gen. 47:19, 25). With this difference: that it was said, not by the Israelites, but by the Egyptians.

During the famine itself, the Egyptians say to Joseph (in next week’s parsha), “Buy us and our land in exchange for food, and we with our land will be slaves to Pharaoh…. Thus Joseph acquired all the land of Egypt for Pharaoh, for every Egyptian sold their field…and the land became Pharaoh’s.” (Gen. 47:19-20).

This entire passage, which begins in our parsha and continues into next week’s, raises a most serious question. We tend to assume that the enslavement of the Israelites in Egypt was a consequence of, and punishment for, the brothers selling Joseph as a slave. But Joseph himself turned the Egyptians into a nation of slaves. What is more, he created the highly centralised power that would eventually be used against his people.

Aaron Wildavsky in his book about Joseph, Assimilation versus Separation, says that Joseph “left the system into which he was elevated less humane than it was by making Pharaoh more powerful than he had been.”\(^2\) Leon Kass, in The Beginning of Wisdom, says about Joseph’s decision to make the people pay for food in the years of famine (food that they themselves had handed over during the years of plenty): “Joseph is saving life by making Pharaoh rich and, soon, all-powerful. While we may applaud Joseph’s forethought, we are rightly made uneasy by this man who profits from exercising his god-like power over life and death.”\(^3\)

It may be that the Torah intends no criticism of Joseph whatsoever. He was acting loyally to Pharaoh and judiciously to Egypt as a whole. Or it may be that there is an implied criticism of his character. As a child, he dreamt of power; as an adult he exercised it; but Judaism is critical of power and those who seek it. Another possibility: the Torah is warning us of the hazards and obscurities of politics. A policy that seems wise in one generation discloses itself as dangerous in the next. Or perhaps Leon Kass is right when he says, “Joseph’s sagacity is technical and managerial, not moral and political. He is long on forethought and planning but short on understanding the souls of men.”\(^4\)

What this entire passage represents is the first intrusion of politics into the life of the family of the covenant. From the beginning of Exodus to the end of Deuteronomy, politics will dominate the narrative. But this is our first introduction to it: Joseph’s appointment to a key position in the Egyptian court. And what it is telling us is the sheer ambiguity of power. On the one hand, you cannot create or sustain a society without it. On the other hand, it almost cries out to be abused. Power is dangerous, even when used with the best of intentions by the best of people. Joseph acted to strengthen the hand of a Pharaoh who had been generous to him, and would be likewise to the rest of his family. He could not have foreseen what that same power might make possible in the hands of a “new Pharaoh who knew not Joseph.”

Tradition called Joseph ha-tzaddik, the righteous. At the same time, the Talmud says that he died before his brothers, “because he assumed airs of authority.”\(^5\) Even a tzaddik with the best of intentions, when he or she enters politics and assumes airs of authority, can make mistakes.

I believe the great challenge of politics is to keep policies humane and that politicians remain humble, so that power, always so dangerous, is not used for harm. That is an ongoing challenge, and tests even the best. Covenant and Conversation 5780 is kindly supported by the Maurice Wohl Charitable Foundation in memory of Maurice and Vivienne Wohl.

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin

"Yosef was served by himself and the brothers by themselves… the brothers were seated before Joseph (with Yehuda at head of

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4 Ibid., 633-34.
5 Brachot 55a.
Egypt instead of Israel; narcissistically worshipping himself instead of God. They hated with the righteous hatred of children who see their ancestral religion of compassionate righteousness and moral justice being hijacked in favor of Egyptian wealth and physical productivity.

Just as Esau had been ejected from the family, so too must Joseph be ejected, if the vision of Abraham is to endure and eventually prevail in subsequent generations.

Joseph on the other hand, seems to be blithely unaware of the complex interpretation his brothers give his dreams; he merely sees himself as achieving economic, earthly mastery as well as spiritual, heavenly domination over his siblings, the two areas of control which Jacob had wrested from Isaac: the physical blessings and the spiritual “firstbornship.” And it was precisely this faith in the ultimate realization of his two dreams which fortified him to overcome all of the setbacks he suffered after he was sold into Egypt.

Now to return to our portion, When Joseph saw his brothers bowing before him in order to purchase grain (Genesis 42:6), he believed that his first dream of economic and political power had been realized. But what he really desired was the spiritual leadership, the essence of the “firstbornship,” the universal assemblage of all the nations under the sovereignty of God, with him – Joseph – being the earthly, He unfortunately never dreamt of Israel as the place from which God’s sovereignty would emerge; he was really intoxicated with Egypt!

Hence, when “Joseph remembered his dreams” and prepared for their realization, he said to his brothers “you are spies” and insisted that they return with his beloved full brother, Benjamin. He wrongly calculated that the old father would not send Benjamin alone, but would opt to accompany him. Then Jacob, too, would bow down to the “Grand Vizier” and the second dream too would be realized – in Egypt!

Alas, Jacob does not go down to Egypt at this point, and Joseph never achieves spiritual mastery in Israel. Now Joseph certainly does come a long way in religious development when he understands that it is God and not him or any other human being who rules the world!

You will remember that when Joseph stands before Pharaoh to interpret his dream, he insists that it is not his wisdom, but God who will interpret the dreams for the well-being of Pharaoh. He also comes to recognize the importance of the Land of Israel when, with his very last breath, he asks to be buried there. Nevertheless, Joseph invested most of his most productive years on behalf of Egypt and the Egyptians rather than on behalf of...
Israel and the Israelites. And he also enslaved the Egyptians to Pharaoh for economic reasons, which was hardly the legacy of Abraham’s “compassionate righteousness.” And so despite his positive growth and spiritual development, he is not to receive the spiritual birthright of Israel; only the physical blessing of the Ten Tribes. It is Judah who will receive the ultimate gift of the “ingathering of the nations” in reverence to God and the Holy City of Jerusalem!

Ultimately, it seems that worthiness and not “dreaminess” is the deciding factor for the future Jewish leadership. © 2019 Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin

RABBI BEREL WEIN
Wein Online

Yosef’s dramatic ascent to power in Egypt is noteworthy is that Yosef does not appear to be at all surprised or amazed by the sudden turn of events in his fortunes. A person who lives by dreams is never surprised when the dreams turns into reality. Yosef always expected his dreams to come true in this world. So did his father Yaakov. And in truth so did the brothers, and that is why Yosef discomfited them so deeply. Had they felt the dreams of Yosef to be utter nonsense they would not have reacted as strongly when Yosef related what he had dreamt.

They were threatened not because the dreams were nothing, but, rather, because they were something. Their apparent blindness and the stubbornness they displayed by not recognizing Yosef standing before them, stemmed from their necessity to deny the validity of his dreams. When Yosef will eventually reveal himself to his brothers, they will instinctively believe that he is Yosef, because of the stock they subconsciously placed in his dreams all along.

Practical people are afraid of dreamers, not because of the dreamer’s ridiculousness, but, rather, because the dreamer may turn out to be right after all. This has been proven time and again in Jewish history. The holiday of Chanukah that we are currently celebrating proves that the dreams of the Maccabees overcame the practicalities of the Hellenist Jews, who were willing to survive by becoming more Greek than Jewish. Jews over the ages could have reasonably quit and given up the struggle to survive as Jews countless times. It was always the dreamers that persevered, and they have always been proven to be right.

The Torah attributes the success of Yosef to the fact that he remembered his dreams. It is one thing to remember dreams of grandeur when one is poor and imprisoned. Those dreams provide hope and provide the necessary resilience to somehow continue. Yosef’s greatness lies in his ability to remember and believe those dreams after he has risen to power. He could easily have ignored his brothers and could have put his past behind him.

He was now a great success. So why continue to pursue his dreams which, by so doing, ultimately could sorely endanger his position and achievements? Nevertheless, Yosef doggedly pursues the full realization of his dreams. Many times in life we are frightened of advancing because we think we might risk what we already have. Judaism preaches caution when formulating the tactics necessary to achieve certain goals, both spiritually and physically. But it never advocates compromising the great Jewish dreams as outlined in our Torah and tradition.

We are bidden to be prudent about life’s decisions, but the goal of ascending the ladder of Yaakov is never erased from our consciousness. When seeing his brothers before him, Yosef has the choice to leave them and let everything be as it is. But he chooses to pursue his dreams to their fateful end. That has become a lesson for all later generations of Jews as well. Only the full realization of Yosef’s dream becomes the catalyst for reuniting all of Israel as a nation. © 2019 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

In this week’s portion, Ya’akov (Jacob) hesitates to allow Binyamin (Benjamin) his youngest child, to return with his brothers to Egypt. Reuven, the eldest of the brothers, guarantees he’d bring Binyamin back home—proclaiming, “Let two of my sons be killed if I fail to bring him back to you.” (Genesis 42:37) Ya’akov rejects Reuven’s offer. In the end, Yehuda (Judah) steps forward and declares, “If I do not bring him (Binyamin) back to you…I will have sinned to you forever.” (Genesis 43:9) These words are accepted by Ya’akov.

One wonders, why? Why does Ya’akov embrace the argument of Yehuda and not Reuven?

Ramban notes that Reuven impetuously makes his comment while there is still food left from their trip to Egypt. Yehuda leaves Ya’akov alone waiting until all the food is gone to make his plea. Ramban concludes that only after the food was gone would Ya’akov be ready. This teaches the importance of timing. What we say and what we do may be rejected at one moment, but embraced at the next.

Another suggestion is in order: It can be posited that the greatest consequence of doing wrong is to be constantly wracked by the sin itself. And so, Ya’akov rejects Reuven’s argument as he offered a punishment if he fails. Yehuda on the other hand, is saying that his punishment will be his ever-present guilt in having sinned to Ya’akov. In the words of
And Pharaoh called Yosef’s name Tzafnas Panai’ach, and gave him Osnas the daughter of Potiphera the Priest of On as a wife and Yosef went out [and ruled] over the land of Egypt. (Beraishis 41:45) Yosef interpreted Pharaoh’s dreams and displayed such wisdom and humility that Pharaoh had no qualms about immediately appointing him to a high government position. His honesty and integrity, as well as his lack of ambition for honor despite his high government position. His honesty and integrity, as well as his lack of ambition for honor despite his well-earned reputation for great knowledge as well as integrity and humility (evidenced by the fact that he didn’t try to take revenge on his former master) the populace was more ready to follow Yosef’s guidance.

Why were these important? Because when it comes to leadership, there will always be detractors. In this case, in order to make Yosef less subject to scrutiny and disparaging remarks by the populace, Pharaoh ensured that they had less to talk about. He was a foreigner – but he had an uncanny special ability that Egyptians didn’t. He was a former convict – but by marrying the daughter of the one who accused him it showed there was no truth to the accusation.

By preempting the opposition, Yosef was assured a smoother ascent to power. As one who had a reputation for great knowledge as well as integrity and humility (evidenced by the fact that he didn’t try to take revenge on his former master) the populace was more ready to follow Yosef’s guidance.

The lesson for us to take is that as a people charged with being a “light unto the nations,” we must ensure that they are able to follow our lead. That means maintaining an aura of respectability and integrity. It means being above reproach and not acting questionably.

On Chanuka we light candles commemorating the fact that Hashem miraculously helped us fulfill His mitzvah in the purest and more exalted way possible. This is how we should live all the time, so we may be the light which disperses the darkness of the world.

Chanuka is a time of feasting and celebration. It is a time to reflect on the miracle of Chanuka and to give thanks for the freedom we have been granted. It is a time to remember the struggle of our forefathers and to be grateful for the blessings we have been given.

Chanuka is also a time to give. It is a time to share our blessings with others and to help those in need. It is a time to spread joy and happiness to those around us.

So, let us celebrate Chanuka with joy and gratitude. Let us remember the miracles of Chanuka and the freedom we have been granted. And let us give thanks for the blessings we have been given. May Chanuka be a time of happiness and joy for all.

RABBI JONATHAN GEWIRTZ

Migdal Ohr

“Yosef reached Pharaoh and sat down by his feet. The ministers were convinced.”

However, that was not enough. This posuk tells us what else happened. Pharaoh gave him a special name which referenced Yosef’s ability to discern the truth and decipher secrets. Then he gave Yosef a wife. It was Osnas, daughter of Potiphar, the former employer who had Yosef thrown in prison. [The Midrash tells us that she was his foster daughter, but her mother was Dina, daughter of Yaakov, so she was of Yaakov’s family.]
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 DAVID LEVIN

Overcoming Hatred

In parashat Miketz, we find the brothers of Yosef going to Egypt to buy food for their families. The brothers hoped to also locate their brother Yosef to determine his fate. HaRav Zalman Sorotzkin points out that the brothers were already sorry for having sold Yosef and were starting to do teshuvah. The pasuk says “Yosef’s brothers”, an indication of their reassessment of their actions. As it happened, they did not have the opportunity to locate Yosef before they were captured and brought before him. Yosef accuses them of being spies and the brothers understand that they are being punished by Hashem for selling Yosef.

We must ask, what are Yosef’s motives in arranging these encounters? Rashi and others imply that Yosef’s purpose is to have the dreams totally fulfilled. Yosef believes that the fulfillment of the dreams will help the brothers to do teshuvah. There are several aspects to the dreams which cannot be fulfilled when only ten brothers enter Egypt for the first time. The brothers do not yet realize the extent of Yosef’s position. He could be an underling with powers that only covered supplying grain to those who came to buy. They do not yet realize that he is second in power to Pharaoh and can do with them as he wishes. To prove his power, he imprisons them for three days. In addition Yosef demonstrates that he can change any decree he makes, first saying that all but one of the brothers will remain in prison and only one return to their father, and then changing his mind and declaring that all but one will return to their father and only one brother remain in jail. Only a leader would have this kind of power. Once the brothers realize this fact, they will bow down to him with respect and fear of his position.

The second aspect of the dreams that could not yet be fulfilled is the numbers of brothers who bow to him. Binyamin is not present, so only ten brothers could bow at this point. In the second dream, there were eleven stars that bow to him, so Binyamin must also bow. At no time do we find that Yosef is insistent that his father and his “mother” come to Egypt so that they can bow with him. Only one could understand that he does not want to insist that his father come before he realizes that it is Yosef who beckons him. Part of Yosef’s plan, then, is to insist that the brothers bring Binyamin back with them to prove their veracity.

The third aspect that must be fulfilled is not in the dreams themselves but instead in the repercussions of those dreams. The brothers committed a horrible sin by kidnapping Yosef and selling him into slavery. We are told that with every punishment given to the Jewish people, there is always a small repayment of the sin of the brothers and of the later sin of the Golden Calf. With that in mind, we can understand that one of Yosef’s concerns is that the brothers do teshuvah for abandoning one of their brothers. This requires that Yosef first change his decree that only one brother would return, and secondly that he take Binyamin into presumably permanent custody. This second act is specifically done while their father is not present so that he cannot influence their actions. The brothers must change of their own accord, and since they did not consult their father when they made the decision to abandon Yosef, they must not be able to consult their father now.
HaRav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch discusses a fourth motive for Yosef’s actions which to me seems to be the most compelling. The brothers must do teshuvah gemurah (complete repentance) by protecting Binyamin and not abandoning him. But this action might not yet repair the relationship that Yosef has with his brothers. They may still hate him even though they may accept him back as part of the family. They still fear Yosef’s future control over them and the possible revenge that he might take on them if he rises to power. We see this when the brothers feel compelled to lie to Yosef after their father dies. They are afraid that Yosef was only civil to them to protect their father from grief but will now carry out that revenge on them. Yosef wishes to show them that he does not harbor a grudge against their actions but is there to benevolently help them and their families through this famine.

But this benevolence is not so simple. Yosef must know that in his own heart there are feelings of hatred for the way that his brothers disregarded his pleas for mercy from the pit. Yosef knows that it is only natural for him to have these feelings. Even if he acts generously towards his brothers, there may always be this feeling of resentment towards them. Yosef does not want to hate his brothers. He wants to be able to forgive his brothers completely. This forgiveness could only take place if he were to see that his brothers not only do teshuvah but also have a complete change of attitude towards him. This must end the rivalry between Leah’s sons and Rachel’s sons. Only then could Yosef forgive his brothers completely. As Hirsch says, “This test was necessary for Yosef’s feelings, so that, if they withstood it, the last drops of bitterness would be eradicated from his heart.” To me this is the most important factor in Yosef’s actions.

Hirsch’s insight speaks volumes. The hatred that the brothers had for Yosef combined with their actions must have had an effect on Yosef. We are all subject to these feelings of hatred and bitterness caused by the actions of others that have harmed us in some way. Sometimes these actions have caused us irreparable damage. We must come to realize that this hatred harms us much more than the actions did. It is even worse when this hatred builds up between members of a family. We must first try to never develop these feelings, but if they do occur and we do not work to eradicate them, we will cause ourselves even greater damage. Too often families seem to be separated because of the strife caused by an incident that no one even remembers. As we learn from Yosef, it is never too late to change this situation. There are very few things in life that are more important than family. We must take the initiative and not wait for someone else to make the first move. We must demonstrate our willingness to forgive and reunite, and others will eventually follow. May we set forgiveness and reconciliation as a goal for our families and for all Israel.

May we all strive for ahavat chinum, unconditional love, and learn this lesson of forgiveness from Yosef. © 2019 Rabbi D. Levin

Yeshivat Har Etzion
Virtual Beit Medrash
Student Summaries of Sichot of the Roshei Yeshiva
Based on a Sicha of Harav Aharon Lichtenstein Ztl
Adapted by Dov Karoll

There are two miraculous events commemorated by Chanuka: ner, the miracle of the oil, and milchama, the military victory. What characterizes each of these miracles?

The miracle of the ner was defined and limited in its scope. It took place in the inner sanctum of the Temple, and was visible to a very limited group of people, namely, the Kohanim performing the Temple service.

The military victory, on the other hand, was very broad in its scope, both in terms of the nation and the land. Their victory stretched out across the entire country. Everyone was involved in and affected by the victory.

These two elements reflect different foci for the miracle: the ner focused on the Temple, while the milchama was relevant to the nation as a whole. Despite the apparent disparity between these two elements, there is a strong bond between them.

In one sense, the Temple is the focal point of the nation. This idea is reflected in Shlomo’s prayer upon the completion of the first Temple (I Melakhim 8:12-53). This notion is also reflected in the prophecies of Yeshayahu and Mikha that speak of everyone’s eyes being turned to the Temple. The Gemara (Shabbat 22b and Torat Kohanim, Emor 13, cited by Rashi, Vayikra 24:3) speaks of the menorah, the candelabra of the Temple, as providing testimony to the world that the Divine Presence resides amongst the Jewish people.

In another sense, “light” emerges and spreads from the Temple. That is, the Temple serves as source of inspiration and instruction for the Jewish people. Correspondingly, the nation is gathered and centered around the Temple. The nation’s existence is dependent on its loyalty to the principles of the Temple, to its absolute purity, represented by the strictly pure olive oil (“shemen zayit zakh”).

These elements are meant to coexist, and severing them from each other leads to severe problems. Some people are connected to and involved with the Temple, yet are disconnected from, and uninvolved with, the nation. Those who focus on “strictly pure olive oil” sometimes forget about the rest of the nation. Others have the opposite problem: they are disconnected from the Temple and its “strictly pure
olive oil."

To a certain degree, these are practical differences: those who work in the Temple tend to be more in touch with the issues there, while those who live far away will tend to be more involved with the issues that relate in an immediate sense to their own existence. The question is to what extent there is also a deeper chasm, on the existential plane and in the world of values. If these gaps exist on the axiological level, there can be a danger for each camp, Heaven forfend. The Temple cannot exist without a nation; conversely, the nation of Israel cannot exist without identification with the Temple and its related codes.

There is only one Chanuka, during which we relate to both of these themes and to their intertwined nature. We need to relate to the entire Jewish community, and formulate one integrated worldview.

The Chashmonaim were devoted to the Temple and the Kehuna, the priesthood, and succeeded in political and diplomatic terms as well. The Ramban (Bereishit 49:10) criticizes the Chashmonaim for taking political control, violating the warning of Yaakov, "Rule shall not stray from Yehuda." Nonetheless, the Chashmonaim took political power, for they saw the existential dangers that could result from a separation between these two elements.

In our time we can speak of similar issues. Let us focus on the Religious Zionist community in Israel. This community has prided itself on attempting to create a single Chanuka, with the "strictly pure olive oil" along with concern for the larger Jewish community, for its physical and spiritual welfare. That is its manifesto and its goal.

What have been its accomplishments? Over the last generation or two, the progress has been significant. The quantity and quality of Torah study in our community has risen significantly, as has the level of religious observance. The situation in this regard is sparkling, relative to what it used to be.

However, I am concerned by signs of a retreat from these accomplishments, by certain negative trends that have emerged in the last five to ten years. One problem is that many Religious Zionists have ceased to act out of concern for spiritual condition of the community -- even of the religious community, and how much more so for that of the non-religious community. Another problem is a weakened sense of loyalty and devotion to traditional learning, to "the disputes of Abbaye and Rava," straying instead in other directions, of unfounded "spirituality" and baseless opinions.

We have a clear responsibility to Chanuka: both to the ner aspect, as well as to the national struggle. We must protect our people against external enemies, as well as against foreign spirits that may not enter through the door, but somehow slip through the window.