

Toras Aish

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

Yosef's actions towards his brothers are accompanied by much weeping on his part. We can well understand the emotional stress that he undergoes in confronting his brothers decades after they sold him into bondage and abandoned him to his fate. But Yosef weeps not only for himself and his own pain and angst. He weeps just as much for his brothers who also have had to live with their awful torturous secret for so long. And he also weeps for his beloved father, made old and bent by grief and travail.

Tears are seen as a precious commodity in Jewish thought and writings. The Lord, so to speak, counts every human tear and stores them in His eternal container. Tears are not forgotten. They are the true stuff of human memory. Eisav's claim against Yaakov is validated in the eyes of the Talmud because of the tears of anguish that he shed in the presence of his father Yitzchak. Yosef can wash his face and control himself from weeping in public before his brothers but he can never control the weeping of his heart and soul.

Life is truly a vale of tears. Yosef's private tears, more than anything else, are the focal point of his staged reunion with his brothers. When he can no longer control his outward tears and weeps in front of his brothers, the inner tears of his soul are revealed as well. When one's inner tears are also apparent to others, then reconciliation and harmony in a family can be achieved.

Tears do not always signify sadness or tragedy. At moments of supreme joy, happiness and satisfaction, copious tears flow from the eyes of humans. Yosef's tears are thus not only a product of sad memories and tragic situations but are also tears of hope and achievement as he begins to see the realization of his long lost dreams.

My grandfather, a distinguished Lithuanian rabbi in Chicago in the first part of the twentieth century, visited the Land of Israel in the 1930's. Upon his return to Chicago he was asked by one of his

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Dov Klugerman z"l

דוב מתתיהו בן צבי הירש ז"ל

by Saba & Savta Weiss

congregants whether the chalutzim who were farming the land wore kipot on their heads while working. He replied, "When I saw the Land of Israel being tilled by Jewish farmers after two thousands years of exile, my eyes welled with tears. I therefore was unable to see clearly what was worn on the heads of those farmers."

Tears of hope can erase from our vision scenes of trials and tribulations, failures and weaknesses. Yosef's tears will eventually blur the sight of his brothers in a bad and adversarial light and allow him to see them as brothers who made a mistake and have paid in full. Tears are therefore not only the weapon of bitterness and recrimination. They are also the medium of compromise, harmony and reconciliation. And they can be the harbingers of hope and accomplishment if we will them to be that. Yosef's tears have washed the soul of Jews over millennia. They continue to influence our lives even today. © 2006 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/jewishhistory.

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

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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 Jews."

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 G-d. 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.
© 2006 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 DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

“**A**nd Yosef remembered the dreams that he had dreamed for them, and he said to them 'you are spies' (Beraishis 42:9). It seems that

somehow Yosef's dreams were the reason he accused his brothers of being spies. But what connection does one have with the other? The Ramban explains that Yosef knew that his dreams were prophetic and would come true, but so far had not. Even though ten of his brothers had just bowed down to him, since all eleven hadn't, none of his dreams had been fulfilled. He therefore accused them of being spies so that they would have to bring Binyamin down without their father, whereupon they would all bow down to him. Then he could reveal himself and Yaakov could come down too. This, the Ramban continues, explains why Yosef never contacted his father to let him know he was alive and well. Although Yaakov was in great distress over his lost son, in order for his dreams to come true, Yosef had to let things play out.

Many commentators are puzzled by this Ramban, as ensuring that the prophecy comes true is not really up to Yosef, but up to G-d. How could he cause his brothers such pain, and allow his father to remain in such pain, in order to take care of G-d's business for Him, to play G-d? The Abarbanel and Kli Yakar minimize what he did to his brothers by explaining how each step Yosef took corresponded to what the brothers did to him, hoping that this would lead them to realize their mistakes and repent. The Kli Yakar extends this to Yaakov, as Yosef saw that G-d hadn't informed Yaakov that he was okay, so must want him to suffer for 22 years to compensate for the 22 years he was away from his parents. I'm not sure why this is any more of Yosef's responsibility than the fulfillment of the dreams, but aside from that, it would not explain the connection of Yosef's accusation to the dreams (only to their accusations of his spying on them in order to tattle). And the Ramban says explicitly that Yosef's purpose was to be able to fulfill the dreams, so we would still need to explain his approach.

The Netziv (41:51, 52:9) minimizes the question by positioning the connection as a reluctance on Yosef's part to negate the dreams (by revealing himself) rather than as a desire to fulfill them. If acting otherwise would be an act of defiance against G-d's prophecy, we can understand why he had to do what he did. However, the Netziv also says that the first dream was already fulfilled when the brothers (the same 10 Yosef had told the first dream to and would therefore be the ones whose sheaves bowed to his) just bowed to him, whereas the Ramban clearly says that none of the dreams had been fulfilled. It should be noted that in earlier manuscripts the Ramban also said that the first dream had been fulfilled (see Penei Yerushalayim), but in our editions it is evident that the Ramban (subsequently) felt that neither had been, so it would be more difficult to refer to Yosef's accusations as a means of avoiding preventing their fulfillment. If G-d wants to fulfill them, He can; Yosef should still do what he can to minimize his father's pain. Additionally,

although the wording of the Vilna Gaon (who has a similar approach to the Ramban's) is more easily explained as not negating the dreams, the Ramban's wording certainly implies a desire to make sure they come true.

Among the explanations of the Ba'alay Tosfos (see Da'as Zekainim) as to why Yosef never sent a message to his father is that they proclaimed a "cherem" (excommunication) against anyone who would reveal the sale, as well as forcing Yosef to swear that he wouldn't tell anyone. They also suggest that had Yosef told his father where he was, the brothers would have run away (in all directions) out of embarrassment; it was therefore better that he be without one son than without ten. The Abarbanel suggests that had Yosef revealed himself any earlier, the brothers, who still thought he deserved a death sentence for being a "rodef," would have tried to kill him. Using these elements, perhaps we can provide a possible connection between the dreams and Yosef's accusations that is consistent with the Ramban.

When Yosef was in charge of Potifar's house, and then again when he became king (years before his brothers came down to Egypt), he could have sent a message to his father, who was only several days away in Canaan, telling him that he is okay. But is that what G-d wanted him to do? There were indications that it wasn't.

Originally, the brothers planned on killing Yosef, but decided that selling him would accomplish the same thing. This was only true, though, if no one ever found out what happened to Yosef, so that he could never come back to torment them. In order to make sure that no one found out, they made a "cherem." However, they had one slight problem - a "cherem" needs 10 to be enacted, and they (besides Yosef) were only 9. Reuvain wasn't there, and they couldn't wait till he returned because the caravan was passing by now. So they had to include G-d in the "minyán." G-d must have agreed to it if he was part of it (but not before informing Yitzchok of the sale, see Rashi on 37:35, and then telling him that he can't reveal it to Yaakov because of the "cherem"). This not only bolstered the brothers believing that they were right, but (as G-d was abiding by the "cherem" and didn't tell Yaakov) indicated to Yosef that G-d didn't want Yaakov to know. If G-d didn't want Yaakov to know, how could Yosef tell him?

But that was then. What about after his rise to prominence? Should he send word now that he's okay? He swore that he wouldn't tell anyone, and if he sent a message to his brothers they might try to kill him or run away from home. Besides, his prophetic dreams indicated that his family was supposed to bow down to him. This wouldn't happen in Canaan, but could occur in Egypt. So he waited for them to come down to him. If they didn't realize he was the Viceroy, they could

conceivably come down to him when they needed food. Yosef therefore understood that G-d still didn't want him to inform anyone who and where he was.

Now the brothers come down and actually bow down to him. If the dreams have been fulfilled, there is no longer any reason to assume that G-d still wants his identity kept secret. He can summon his brothers into a private room and tell them who he is without violating his oath (as he will eventually do). However, Yosef remembers his dreams, and that they have not been fulfilled. Either none of them have because Binyamin isn't there, or one of them hasn't because neither Binyamin nor Yaakov are there. If his dreams have not been fulfilled, if G-d's prophecy has not yet come true, then there must still be a problem with revealing himself (maybe because they will still try to kill him or run away).

Yosef remembered his dreams, and tried to find a way to fulfill them so that he can finally come clean. Perhaps once the brothers see that they were prophecy and not perfidy they would no longer hate him. In any case, the indication that he couldn't reveal himself would no longer apply. So he devises a plan to get the dreams fulfilled, whereby he can finally tell his father that he is still alive. © 2006 Rabbi D. Kramer

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

The festival of Hanukkah celebrates the victory of a small band of Hasmonean believers in G-d and in the Jewish traditions against the massive forces of the Hellenistic ruling class of Judea together with the military might of Greek - Syria whose misguided goal was to transform Jerusalem into a Greek city-state. As we recite in our "al ha-nissim" ("for the miracles...") prayer in each Amidah and Grace after Meals throughout the eight days of the holiday, it was a victory of the powerful in the hands of the weak, the many in the hands of the few, the impure in the hands of the pure, the wicked in the hands of the righteous, the guilty sinners in the hands of those who were occupied in your Torah..." As such, Hanukkah fits perfectly into the rubric of all Jewish holidays: the bad guys wanted to destroy us, G-d enabled us to beat them, so let's eat (latkes), and give praise to our Divine Protector.

The question is: why wasn't that great military victory sufficient? Why did G-d have to create yet another miracle - which effectively teaches the same lesson about the small amount which stretches and expands to become a much more significant amount - of the small cruse of pure oil sufficient for one day which managed to bring light to the menorah for eight days (a period of time necessary for the Judeans to procure more oil which would enable the menorah to remain enkindled, as explained by Maimonides in his Laws of Hanukkah)? Furthermore, they did find enough oil for one day; hence, if the miracle was only for the

requisite seven additional days, why do we celebrate the festival for eight (and not merely) seven days?

The sainted Rav Elijah of Vilna, Eighteenth Century, known as the Vilna Gaon, suggests that if one counts twenty-five words from the very first word of the Bible, Bereishit (In the beginning), the twenty fifth word is ohr, light, as in the verse, "and the almighty declared 'Let there be light' (gen 1:3)." When we remember that the military victory - and onset of the festival of Hanukkah - takes place on the twenty-fifth of the Hebrew month of Kislev, and that Hanukkah is known by the Book of the Maccabees and the Second Commonwealth historian, Josephus as the Festival of Lights (Hag Ha Urim) after the miracle cruse of oil, the "coincidence" noted by the Vilna Gaon is nothing less than startling. And in order to understand in depth the message of the "coincidence," we must bring to mind a most profound insight of my teacher and mentor, Rav J. B. Soloveitchik.

Why does our Bible open with the story of the creation of the cosmos and not with the first of the commandments?, queries our classical commentary Rashi. Answers Rav Soloveitchik, the story of the creation of the world includes the very first commandment as well. After all, the central injunction of our Bible is the command that we "walk in (G-d's) ways," act in accordance with the basic "traits" attributed to the Divine: "just as He is compassionate, so must we be compassionate, just as He is filled with loving kindness, so must we be filled with loving kindness."

Similarly, if G-d created the world, we too must emulate that creativity, we too must become creators. And if the Almighty stood at the abyss of the darkness of the deep and created light - and indeed that was His first act of creation - so must we enter places of darkness and bring light. This is precisely the meaning of "perfecting the world", tikkun olam, the G-d-given task to Israel to be "a light unto the nations." (see the Alenu prayer, prescribed to be recited after every statutory prayer). And it takes only a little bit of light to push aside a great deal of darkness.

Rav Prager, sainted editor of the Beit Yaakov magazine and acclaimed witness of the holocaust, writes of a young boy in Auschwitz whose bar-mitzvah was the first day of Hanukkah. He painstakingly collected scraps of oil to craft a make-shift "candle," and invited a small group to celebrate with him after midnight in his "bunk". In the blackness of the night, in the hell-hole Auschwitz, a small band of wasted, frightened Jews huddled together to watch the bar-mitzvah light the "candle", intone the blessings and join with him in the traditional Hanukkah songs. Just as they were beginning to feel themselves transported to an almost forgotten time of love and light, a Nazi guard entered, shot into the air, and barked at the youth at the center of the nocturnal activity to put out the candle.

The bar-mitzvah looked unwaveringly into the eyes of the nazi. "We Jews do not extinguish light," he said. "We make light..." Inexplicably, the Nazi guard turned and strode out without a word.

The Jewish mission in the world is to add to G-d's light and push away the world's darkness - which unfortunately remained from the beginning and threatens to overwhelm creation. That is what it means for us to function as G-d's partners. And that was the higher meaning of the miracle of the menorah light; we added our "human" light and our act of "enlightenment," to G-d's initial light at the time of creation. And that is likewise the miracle of the first day: our realization that we must add our own light to the already existent divine light in order to perfect an imperfect (incomplete) world.

That too is the link between Hanukkah and the Joseph stories. G-d provides Joseph with miraculous opportunity: Joseph adds to G-d's provision with his own wisdom and insight as to how to maximize his G-d given opportunity. Yes, G-d has given Joseph the prophetic insight to enable him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams; but Joseph built upon that to set up the case for his appointment as Guardian of the Grain and Grand Vizier (Gen. 41:33-36).

And we learn from Joseph that the Jewish light can even illumine the corridors of Egypt (and hopefully Iran), and from Hanukkah that even a small amount of Torah light can push aside a great deal of Islamic-fundamentalist terror darkness. ©2006 *Ohr Torah Institutions & Rabbi S. Riskin*

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Daf HaShavua

by Rabbi Nissan Wilson, Clayhall Synagogue

In times gone by, the Chanukah lights were lit outside the front door, shining out into the public thoroughfare. Today, however, most of us light the Chanukah Menorah inside the house, out of public view. The Code of Jewish Law tells us that although where possible, the Menorah should face out onto a public place, where there is any threat or danger, it should be placed out of view.

There is, though, a much deeper significance behind this development. The Jewish home should be an oasis of sanctity, a place where the door can be shut to the madness of the street and the frenzy of the marketplace. We should come home at the end of the day, out of the darkness and into the warm light of our own Jewish home.

If every home was such an ideal paradise, there would be enough light to illuminate the dark world outside too. We could place our Menorahs by the door and beam our radiant light into the streets beyond.

Nowadays, though, when we take a candid look, we are often forced to admit that our homes could do with some brightening up. In such times, the

Menorah is best placed inside, where it can light up the home and rekindle the spark in our souls.

This year when we reflect on our Chanukah lights of the past eight days, let us meditate on the sweet light of the Almighty's Torah, and let it fill our hearts and our homes with wisdom and warmth. Sources: Shulchan Aruch; Sefat Emet © 2006 Produced by the Rabbinical Council of the United Synagogue - London (O) Editor Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis, emailed by Rafael Salasnik

RABBI ABBA WAGENSBERG

Between the Lines

This week's parsha always falls out at the Chanukah season. The Talmud (Shabbat 22a) teaches that the Chanukah Menorah should ideally be lit on the left side of the doorway to one's home, resulting in the home's entrance being surrounded by objects of mitzvah: the Menorah on the left side, and the Mezuzah on the right. The Midrash adds further that a person wearing a Tallit is in the center.

On a practical level, we know that the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah involves all three of these elements. The Talmud (Shabbat 21b) introduces Chanukah with the statement "ner ish u'beito" ("a light, a person, and his home"). But what is the deeper message of this imagery? What lesson are our Sages trying to convey?

The Talmud (Shabbat 21b) teaches that the mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lights can be performed on three different levels: basic ("mitzvah"), extra good ("mehadrin"), and super-deluxe ("mehadrin min hamehadrin").

Hillel and Shammai disagree regarding the fulfillment of this last, most ideal level. Hillel claims that we should kindle one light on the first night of Chanukah and add one light on each successive night, resulting in eight lights by the end of the festival. His opinion is based on the principle that kedusha (holiness) is only increased, never decreased.

Shammai's opinion is the exact opposite. He claims that we should begin Chanukah by kindling eight lights, and then subtract them one by one as the festival progresses. Shammai compares Chanukah to Sukkot, when the number of offerings in the Holy Temple decreased over the course of the holiday.

Shammai's connection between Chanukah and Sukkot will help us understand the symbolism of the Menorah on the left, the Mezuzah on the right, and the person wearing a Tallit in the middle.

According to the Sfat Emet, this world is composed of three dimensions to be sanctified and elevated: the dimension of PLACE, the dimension of TIME, and the dimension of SELF. All three of these elements are mentioned in the Talmud and Midrash, hinting that Chanukah affords us with the opportunity to sanctify all three dimensions at once: The Mezuzah is affixed on the doorpost of a house, representing the

sanctification of PLACE. The Menorah, which is used to count the days as Chanukah progresses, represents the sanctification of TIME. The person wearing a Tallit represents the sanctification of SELF.

Based on Shammai's approach, Chanukah can be understood as a culmination of Sukkot, since Sukkot also symbolizes the unity of the three dimensions. The Sukkah represents the dimension of Place; the seven-day duration of the holiday represents the dimension of Time; and the four species symbolize different parts of the human body, corresponding to the dimension of Self. These three dimensions are expressed on Sukkot, and they culminate on Chanukah, when the spiritual potential for unity is once again brought into physical reality.

May we all learn to carry the message of Sukkot into our daily lives and to see it manifest in Chanukah. May we succeed in elevating all three dimensions- our homes, ourselves, and every moment of our lives- and may that sanctity and unity create a strong, radiant light to shine through all generations.

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YESHIVAT HAR ETZION

Virtual Beit Medrash

STUDENT SUMMARIES OF SICHOT OF THE ROSHEI YESHIVA HARAV AHARON LICHTENSTEIN SHLIT"A

Adapted by Shaul Barth with Itiel Gold

Translated by Kaeren Fish

The joy of Chanuka focuses on two miracles: the miracle of the menora and the miracle of the war.

These two elements would seem, at first glance, to contradict one another. The menora stands inside the Holy Temple, in a place that only the kohanim are permitted to enter. The war, in contrast, is waged outside: everyone participates in it, and it influences the entire region.

However, there is also an aspect of each of these concepts that makes them compatible. The Gemara attributes to the lighting of the menora a task that is directed towards the whole world: "It is a testimony to the people of the world that the Divine Presence rests in Israel" (Shabbat 22b). The menora has relevance for all nations; its function is to illuminate outward, and not only within the Sanctuary. The Chashmonaim, who fought outside of the Temple, did so in order to purify the Temple. Thus, despite the seeming contradiction, the two phenomena also share an essential connection.

In fact, severing the two concepts carries great danger. It would be disastrous for each party to focus only on its own problems, ignoring those of the other side- the kohanim interested only in purifying the defiled Temple, in finding "pure olive oil," while making no effort to help mold the surrounding culture and nor to connect with those outside of the Temple, and the rest

of the nation caring only about external matters, with no thought for the Temple.

Such divisiveness would be bad and dangerous, and therefore the Chashmonaim- who understood the problem-took upon themselves the responsibility for political leadership along with their priestly role, in order to create a bridge between the two sides. While Ramban expresses harsh criticism for their taking this step, in view of the clear biblical indication that the king of Israel should be a descendant of the tribe of Yehuda (Bereishit 49:10), it seems that the Chashmonaim regarded it as a necessity in light of their situation. They aimed to lead to an optimal situation amongst Am Yisrael, whereby they would be connected to the Temple and what it symbolizes, on the one hand, while maintaining contact with the nation and its culture in accordance with the guidelines of Torah.

Today, too, we encounter a similar problem in our society. There are people who occupy themselves only with the "pure olive oil," taking no interest in matters of the world-including contributing to Jewish culture and art in Israel, or lending assistance in areas that are not "pure." On the other hand, there are other people who lean too far towards secular and universal trends and values, abandoning their tradition and severing themselves from the "pure olive oil."

We are obligated-each of us personally, and also communally-to engage in both tasks: both our inner, spiritual development and the building of Am Yisrael, its culture and its land, in the spirit of the Torah.

This message has become especially pertinent in recent years, as we witness an ideological trend towards redefining the State of Israel as a secular entity, severed from Torah. In the wake of this grave development, each of us is obligated to contribute towards the building and molding of the land- even if this entails rendering one's "olive oil" slightly less "pure."

RABBI ADAM LIEBERMAN

A Life Lesson

One night Pharaoh had two dreams that disturbed him greatly. The first dream was of seven thin and ugly cows who were eating seven large, healthy cows. The second dream was of seven thin, wilted ears of grain swallowing up seven healthy and full ears of grain. Pharaoh was desperate to find someone to interpret these dreams, but he couldn't find anyone.

Pharaoh was told that Joseph was successful in analyzing dreams, so he had him summoned. Joseph told Pharaoh that his dreams meant that Egypt was going to have seven years of great abundance, which would then be immediately followed by seven grueling years of famine. After Joseph interpreted these dreams for Pharaoh, Joseph then offered some unsolicited advice and said: "Now let Pharaoh seek out

a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt." (Genesis 41:33)

The only thing Pharaoh asked Joseph to do was to interpret his dreams for him. And then, without ever being asked, Joseph went on to advise Pharaoh on just how he to deal with the impending situation.

Most people standing before a king would only do what he or she was told, and nothing more. It is a unique person who identifies a problem and who also has the courage to actually come up with a solution and verbalize it.

There's so much to do, fix, and change in the world and there certainly isn't a shortage of people who can point out all of the problems that exist. They're only too excited to share their negative thoughts with anyone who'll listen. But how many of these people will just as eagerly and readily offer up solutions? Very few.

The tendency to be problem-oriented and not solution-oriented usually parallels our own lives. It's not that we proactively choose to focus on negative things (although a lot of people do just that), but negativity and problems are just the default thoughts for our brain.

Our minds can be likened to a garden-whatever seed you plant in a garden, that seed will grow. But if don't plant anything in the garden, then weeds grow in abundance. Our minds work the same way. Absent of our thinking of productive thoughts, our minds will naturally drift toward something negative and unproductive.

People who are moving and growing tend to have many positive and productive thoughts while those who are stuck and not moving will usually focus only on negative thoughts.

There's a surefire way to instantly rid yourself of negative, unproductive, and unhealthy thoughts. Since our brain is capable of having only one thought at a time, focus on a positive future, be action-minded, and work each day toward meaningful objectives.

We live in a world where people love to point out all the things that are wrong. Be that rare person who offers up concrete answers and will even commit to being a part of the solution. This can easily be achieved once you plant productive seeds in your mind which are then certain to yield a large and full crop of productive and happy thoughts. And this will make you want to go out there and change the world. © 2006 Rabbi A. Lieberman & aish.com

RABBI MORDECHAI KREITENBERG

InnerNet

The light of Chanukah serves as contrast to the way of life of the Greeks, who are referred to as "darkness." Our Sages explain that the concept of darkness is the one which most embodies the Greek challenge to the values of Judaism and the Torah. This, however, is difficult to understand, for we know that the Greeks were a very enlightened people. They

introduced to the world the sciences of geometry, philosophy, architecture, astronomy, and more. This would seem to be anything but darkness! Why, then, were they referred to as "darkness" by our Sages?

Aristotle said, "I am only interested in knowledge from the sun and below." Knowledge that described the metaphysical reality of the world did not interest him. That which could not be measured, quantified, or fully grasped by the human intellect was not of interest to him, for he maintained that if it is not tangible, then it does not exist. This is darkness.

The word Torah comes from the word "heirayon," which means "conception." Conception is the point where the creative energies that form life come together; all that comes out of the union of the seed is there in potential. There are genes that "program" what sex, color, intelligence, and personality the new person will have. Torah, like the conception of a baby, teaches us that the world mirrors a deeper reality, one of direction and purpose; all that exists in the physical world is rooted in a higher world, one that we cannot see or touch despite the fact that it is real.

The greatest revelation of modern science lies in discoveries in the science of atomic physics, the realization that all matter can be broken down into energy. The majority of the size of any particular atom is not constituted by actual matter, but by energy. The nucleus of the atom only constitutes one-sixtieth of the mass of the atom. This is a crucial message for the modern Jew. The physical world is not static as man once thought it was. In fact, the vast majority of all matter is composed of energy.

This is the reason we light candles on Chanukah. The job of the Jew is to unlock the potential in the physical world and bring out the holiness that lies within it. This world is not devoid of spirituality and purpose. This world acts as a veil that we are meant to remove in order to reveal an inner, more spiritual world that ultimately connects us to G-d. The Hebrew word for "world," *olam*, has the same etymology as the word hidden, "*ha'aleim*," because it is the world that masks G-d. We light candles to reveal this deeper world that lies in potential in the physical world.

Light is always the metaphor for wisdom, and yet we see that the nation that brought so much wisdom to the world is referred to as "darkness." The metaphor for wisdom is light because light enables a person to relate to the reality around him. Similarly, by understanding the world better, one has more of a connection to reality.

The more I learn about the complexity of the development of a baby in the womb, the more joy I experience when my child is born. When I understand and recognize how all the millions of chemical processes must be perfectly executed, each one dependent on the other, in order for a baby to be born, I appreciate it more.

The Greeks only used their wisdom to increase a "horizontal" understanding of the world—"only knowledge from the sun and below." They answered many of the "how" and "what" questions with tremendous sophistication and depth, but they did not believe that questions in the realm of "why" had any relevance to their lives. The Greeks understood the world as being devoid of a connection to the infinite. This is why they are referred to as "darkness." When you are in a dark room, you can only be certain of the existence of yourself and what you can touch, but nothing beyond that. This is the "man-centered" world of the Greeks—a world devoid of meaning.

In contrast, we light candles with the realization that the greatest joy in life is realizing that this physical world is an opportunity for spiritual development. It is a world exploding with spirituality. Our job in this world is to elevate ourselves, and the world, by bringing out the spiritual potential that lies within it.

All the latkes and all the dreidel playing can become pretty frivolous, and we start to celebrate Chanukah as if it is just another excuse for a party. I once asked Rabbi Shlomo Wolbe, "How should a Jew ignite genuine joy in his life?"

He said, "Thank G-d that He gave us the Torah that guides us how to live our lives according to the will of G-d."

Take thirty seconds to look at the Chanukah candles that you light and think of all the blessing and good you have in your life, due to your connection to Torah. Excerpted with permission from "JERUSALEM JEMS," compiled by Menachem Nissel. Published by Targum Press, Inc.-<http://www.targum.com> © 2006 Rabbi M. Kreitenberg & Heritage House

RABBI LEVI COOPER

Four Cubits of Halacha

And they shall make for Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell amidst them (Exodus 25:8). With the destruction of the Temple, our nation was left bereft of a central abode for the Almighty's presence. Our sages tell us where G-d resides in the aftermath of the destruction of His sanctuary: "From the day that the Temple was destroyed, the Holy One, blessed is He, has nothing in His world, except for the four cubits of halacha (Jewish law)" (B. Berachot 8a).

In our vast world, a mere four cubits hardly seems a fitting dwelling place for the omnipresent Almighty! Indeed, in talmudic parlance "four cubits" is a code word for an individual's personal space (B. Eruvin 48a). Thus our sages are telling us that instead of a focal national center for the Almighty's presence, G-d finds a dwelling place in each person's personal four cubits.

We are left wondering: Why only four cubits of halacha? What of the other disciplines of Torah study? Is this teaching implying that G-d does not dwell in the

realm of non-normative Torah? This suggestion would be astounding to say the least, for elsewhere in rabbinic literature we find the following passage: "If you want to know who spoke and the world came into existence - study aggada" (Sifrei, Devarim 49). It would seem that G-d also dwells in non-normative spheres of Torah study, and maybe even more in the realm of aggada than in the four cubits of halacha.

Explaining the singling out of halacha as the domain of the Almighty, Maimonides (12th century, Cairo) states that the theoretic study of halacha coupled with its practical application is the ultimate synthesis between the noble pursuit of wisdom and the translation of that knowledge into practice. This dual achievement is the pinnacle of service of G-d and the culmination of all creation. Thus G-d can be located where this lofty ideal is being pursued. Lauding this approach the Rashba (13th century, Barcelona), in his pioneering commentary to the aggadic portions of the Talmud, comments that this talmudic passage has already been elucidated by Maimonides, and there is nothing further to add.

One of the early hassidic masters, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef of Polonnoye (d.c. 1782) offers an entirely different approach that does not seek to justify the isolation of the world of halacha for the presence of G-d. In the first published work to give voice to the teachings of Hassidism, the Toledot Yaakov Yosef, Rabbi Yaakov Yosef categorically states that the term "halacha" refers to the entire gamut of Torah disciplines. G-d therefore dwells in the domain of all areas of Torah study.

Still, the use of the term "halacha," which normally denotes but one discipline of Torah, to reflect all areas of Torah is puzzling. The Toledot explains that this purposeful usage hints at the fundamental essence of the pursuit of Torah. The term "halacha" comes from the same root as halicha - walking, going or progressing. Plumbing the depths of the tradition should be an exercise in growth. Even if one begins studying the texts of our heritage for the wrong reasons - such as a desire for communal recognition or worldly fame, the ultimate goal is to progress from these initial incentives, forsaking them in due time. While Torah study may begin for the wrong intent, it should evolve towards the ideal goal.

From here the Toledot continues to a second explanation of the unexpected usage of the term "halacha" as a reference to the entire Torah. In this approach, the Toledot reveals the ultimate objective of Torah study.

The Toledot begins by transposing the letters of the term "halacha" to arrive at hakala - the bride. A bride adorns herself in preparation for meeting her groom. A bejeweled bride bedecked in finery provides the invitation for the groom, which leads to the consummation of their relationship. The initial attraction

between a young bride and groom is an integral step in the process of forming a deeper union and a lasting, genuine partnership.

Thus with Torah, there are many trimmings that gild the ultimate purpose of encountering the texts of our tradition. The Toledot says that these ornaments may be in the form of intellectual casuistry or the recognition and communal respect that is afforded a Torah scholar. The Toledot goes further, suggesting that the pursuit of reward in the World-to-come is also a decoration and perhaps even finding personal meaning in a text is an adornment. While we recognize that such ornaments are an inherent part of the process, and hence bring us closer to G-d, the true objective of Torah study, opines the Toledot, is connecting to the Almighty.

Another hasidic master, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Lyady (18th-19th centuries, Byelorussia), would cry out while praying: "I don't want Your Garden of Eden, I don't want Your World-to-come, I only want You!" Promises of reward are incentives that encourage us on the path to deepening our connection with G-d, not ends in themselves.

Finally, the Toledot combines his two explanations - "halacha" as halicha (progress) and "halacha" as hakala (the bride): A bride's finery is an external adornment, providing an opportunity for attraction on the way to developing a true relationship. Similarly, the trimmings of Torah study are the first stop on the journey toward the ultimate aspiration of connecting to the Divine.

The Toledot does not in any way condemn or negate these adornments; they are a necessary stimulus for initial attraction. Ideally, however, these decorations should be recognized for what they are: adornments of the real thing. Thus the Almighty's presence can be found even in these ornaments and in the process of piercing the external nature of this gilding one can connect to the Divine essence of Torah.

In a Temple-less reality the Holy One, blessed be He, may have nothing in His world except the four cubits of halacha, but this seemingly small area, according to the Toledot, is an entire realm that opens up to the Infinite Divine. © 2006 Rabbi L Cooper. Rabbi Levi Cooper teaches at Pardes. His column appears weekly in the Jerusalem Post and Up Front Magazine. Each column analyses a passage from the first tractate, of the Talmud, Brachot, citing classic commentators and adding an innovative perspective to these timeless texts.



... "Anybody got a match?"