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Toras Aish

תורת אש

Thoughts From Across the Torah Spectrum

RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom

"Menashe, because the Lord has caused me to forget all of my toil and my father's house" (Gen 41:51)

Despite his brothers' callous behavior in casting him into a pit and then selling him into Egyptian enslavement, and despite Mrs. Potiphar's failed seduction and her subsequent revenge leading to his further imprisonment, Joseph once again lands on his feet. He even emerges as Grand Vizier, or CEO, of Pharaoh's kingdom, specifically Minister of Agriculture and Provider of Emergency Food. We are left, however, with one agonizing question: why, at this high point in his career, does Joseph not contact his grieving father and inform him that he is not only still alive, but that he enjoys an exalted position? Joseph must understand that he could put the aged patriarch's fears to rest and simultaneously give him a bit of nachat!

In order to answer our question, we must first analyze the peregrinations of our patriarchs and their lengthy absences from their parents. The Bible seems to be teaching us that the recipient of the birthright blessings must have a profound, personal relationship with the G-d of the Covenant. This is virtually impossible to achieve until he has attained true self-understanding and laid to rest any tensions in his relationship with his parents. One must be at peace with oneself and one's earthly father before one can truly relate to one's Father in Heaven. In order to find that peace, many of our patriarchs left their father's house and spent a long time living in an alien environment.

We have already analyzed how after the trauma of the Akeda, Isaac did not return home with his father. Isaac's G-d is referred to as the "Fright of Isaac" - the G-d who seemed to command his earthly father, Abraham to lift the slaughterer's knife to his throat resulting in awesome fear and trembling. (Genesis 31:53). Isaac wanders around B'eer LaHai Ro'i, the place where G-d promised greatness to Ishmael, fearing that his father really favored his elder brother and wanted him to be the recipient of the blessings. So Isaac is overcome with his jealousy of the elder and more dynamic brother, until eventually Isaac appreciates that his father fully accepted G-d's command to banish Ishmael. Now Isaac sees that his father has bestowed everything of material and spiritual significance upon him, even though Abraham has fathered more children with Keturah (Hagar). (Gen 25:5) With this understanding, Isaac is able to move on and care for his aging father and eventually take his place as the next patriarch. G-d, however, and probably his father Abraham as well, always remain a source of "fright" for the more passive Isaac, who can only be the continuer par excellence of his more creative father's pathways to G-d and to humanity.

Jacob deceives his father in order to acquire the blessings. As a result, he is forced to leave his home, and after his prophetic vision of the ladder ascending to the heavens, he stipulates that he will only establish a "House unto the Lord", if he can "return in peace" to his father's house and if the familial G-d of the Covenant will become his personal G-d. (Gen 28:21) Jacob has great difficulty relating to the fact that his father favored his brother Esau, because he fed him the venison and because he knew how to "entrap" his aged father with his mellifluous and wily tongue (Gen 25:28, Rashi ad loc).

Jacob desperately desires his father's favored embrace, and gladly acquiesces to Rebecca's plan to disguise himself as Esau in order to obtain it. Indeed, from that moment on, and especially during his long reside with the deceitful Laban, Jacob stills his inner voice of the "whole-hearted man, a studious dweller in tents" taking on some of the characteristics of Esau. While Jacob is trying to be someone else, G-d is never described as being his G-d; He is only described as the G-d of his fathers. (Genesis 27:20; 28:13; 31:53) Jacob needs to disgorge his inner Esau by leaving Laban and vanquishing Esau's spirit during a nocturnal wrestling match. Only then can he stand securely as his own man, independent of the approval of other people with the necessary self-confidence to build an altar to his own G-d in his own new name, "the Lord G-d of Israel" (Gen 33:20). At the end of this long journey, Jacob is finally able to forgive his father for his unwarranted favoritism of the older twin who sold and spurned the birthright as well as to feel his father's forgiveness towards him for having deceived him. Jacob can finally

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דוב מתתיהו בן צבי הירש ז"ל
by Saba & Savta Weiss

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come home to his father in peace and establish himself as the next patriarch.

Now we return to Joseph. The Bible has told us that he is the favorite son of Jacob. (Gen 37: 3). Joseph's existential self seems to be bound up in his father's adoring love. From his early teens, Joseph is already given the birthright of familial leadership with the tunic of colored stripes. The accompanying traditions and responsibilities seem to be a perfect fit for this beautiful, intelligent, ambitious and charismatic elder son of this father's most beloved wife. Joseph's bitterly jealous siblings cast him into a pit and I would suggest that it was in that pit, that the son who has always basked in his father's love, suddenly recognizes not only the jealous hatred of his brothers, but also the mistaken favoritism of his father which fanned that jealousy. There, Joseph vows that if he ever gets out of the pit alive, he will never contact his father or his father's house again.

Joseph works hard to forget his formative, early years. He marries Osnat, the daughter of a Priest of On, and names his eldest son Menashe, because the G-d of the universe (Elohim) "has enabled him to forget all of his toil and his father's house" (Gen 41:51). In this alien environment, estranged from his father as well as from the familial, covenantal G-d of his father, Joseph speaks and acts like an Egyptian. He certainly harbors no thoughts of contacting his family, until he sees his siblings, remembers his blameless and beloved brother Benjamin, and hears from Judah how his father is grieving for him. With this news, Joseph realizes that, if his father was guilty, it was because he loved him too much, not too little. Now Joseph reveals himself, and reunites with his estranged family.

The lesson is clear. Our relationship to G-d will always be bound up with our relationship to our parents, our family, and the Sabbath and Festival table of our childhood home. If these memories are filled with love, we will always return, no matter how far we may have wandered. Meanwhile, until we return home, we cannot be true to ourselves, to our deepest DNA, to the essence of G-d within us. Only when we return in love because of loving memories towards our earthly parents will we be enabled to return in love to our Parent in Heaven as well.

RABBI SIR JONATHAN SACKS

Covenant & Conversation

Joseph is languishing in prison. Then, at the beginning of this week's sedra, a sequence of events takes place, leading to the most rapid, radical change of fortune in the Bible. Pharaoh has two dreams that trouble his spirit. None of his priestly retinue can decode the dreams in a way that satisfies him. Pharaoh's butler remembers Joseph. Hurriedly he is taken from prison, given a wash and change of clothes, and brought before the ruler.

Not only does he interpret the dreams: he becomes the world's first economist, inventing the theory of trade cycles. The dreams mean seven years of plenty followed by seven of scarcity. Having diagnosed the problem, Joseph proceeds to solve it: store surplus grain in the years of plenty, then use these reserves in the years of famine. Pharaoh invites him to implement the strategy, appointing him second in command in Egypt. Joseph moves from prisoner to Prime Minister in one effortless leap.

That is the narrative on the surface. One apparently insignificant detail, however, stands out. Pharaoh has had not one dream but two: one about cows, the other about ears of grain. Joseph explains that they are the same dream, conveying the same message through different images. Why then were there two? This is his explanation:

"That Pharaoh has dreamed this twice means that G-d is firmly resolved on this plan, and very soon He will put it into effect." (Genesis 41:32)

At first sight, this looks like just another piece of information. Understood in the full context of the Joseph narrative, however, it changes our entire understanding of events. For it was not Pharaoh alone who had two dreams with the same structure. So too did Joseph at the very beginning of the story: one about sheaves of wheat, the other about the sun, moon and stars.

At that stage we had no idea what the dreams signified. Were they a prophecy, or were they the fevered imagination of an over-indulged, overambitious young man? The tension of the Joseph narrative depends on this ambiguity. Only now, chapters and years later, are we given the vital information that a dream, repeated in different images, is not just a dream. It is a message sent by G-d about a future that will soon come to pass.

Why were we not given this information earlier? It may be that it was only later that G-d disclosed this to Joseph. Or perhaps Joseph has only now come to understand it. Or it may simply be a literary device to create and maintain tension in the unfolding plot. It may, though, signal something altogether deeper about the human condition seen through the eyes of faith.

It is only in retrospect that we understand the story of our life. Later events explain earlier ones. At the

time, neither Joseph nor his brothers could know that his dreams were a form of prophecy: that he was indeed destined for greatness and that every misfortune he suffered had a part to play in their coming true. At first reading, the Joseph story reads like a series of random happenings. Only later, looking back, do we see that each event was part of a precise, providential plan to lead a young man from a family of nomadic shepherds to become second-in-command of Egypt.

This is a truth not about Joseph alone but about us also. We live our lives poised between a known past and an unknown future. Between them lies a present in which we make our choices. We decide between alternatives. Ahead of us are several diverging paths, and it is up to us which we follow. Only looking back does our life take on the character of a story. Only many years later do we realise which choices were fateful, and which irrelevant. Things which seemed small at the time turn out to be decisive. Matters that once seemed important prove in retrospect to have been trivial. Seen from the perspective of the present, a life can appear to be a random sequence of disconnected events. It takes the passage of time for us to be able to look back and see the route we have taken, and the right and wrong turnings on the way.

The novelist Dan Jacobson puts this thought in the mind of the narrator of his novel, The Confessions of Josef Baisz:

"Told one way, looking forward as it were, and proceeding from one event to the next, my story may seem to be a mere sequence, without design or purpose. Told another way, looking backwards, it can be made to resemble a plot, a plan, a cunningly involuted development leading to a necessary conclusion. Being both narrator and subject, how am I to know which way to look?"

This is a truth not only about literature but about life. There is an intrinsic connection between time and meaning. The same series of events that once seemed mere happenstance becomes, with hindsight, the unfolding of a script.

This allows us to resolve one of the great paradoxes of the religious life- the seeming contradiction between divine providence and human free will. As Rabbi Akiva put it most famously: "All is foreseen, yet freedom of choice is given."

On the face of it, these two propositions cannot both be true. If G-d knows in advance that we are going to do X, then we are not free not to do it. If, on the other hand, we are genuinely free, then no one can know what we will choose before we choose it.

The paradox arises because of the nature of time. We live in time. G-d lives beyond it. An analogy: imagine going to see a soccer match. While the match is progress, you are on the edge of your seat. You do not know-no one knows-what is going to happen next. Now imagine watching a recording of the same match on television later that night. You know exactly what is going to happen next.

That knowledge does not mean that the players have had their freedom retroactively removed. All it means is that you are now watching the match from a different time perspective. When you were in the stadium, you were watching it in the present. On television you are watching it as an event in the past.

So it is with life itself. As we live it day by day, we choose in the present in order to shape what is for us an unknown, undetermined future. Only looking back are we able to see the consequences of our actions, and realize their part in the unfolding of our autobiography.

It is then, with hindsight, that we begin to see how providence has guided our steps, leading us to where G-d needs us to be. That is one meaning of the phrase spoken by G-d to Moses:

"Then I shall take away My hand, and you will see My back, but My face cannot not be seen." (Exodus 33: 23)

Only looking back do we see G-d's providence interwoven with our life, never looking forward ("My face cannot not be seen").

How subtly and deftly this point is made in the story of Joseph-the supreme example of a life in which human action and Divine intervention are inextricably entwined. It is all there in the verse about the doubling of Pharaoh's dream. By delaying this information until later in Joseph's life, the Torah shows us how a later event can force us to re-interpret an earlier one, teaching us the difference between two time perspectives: the present, and the understanding that only hindsight can bring to the past. It does so not by expounding complex philosophical propositions, but by the art of story-telling- a far simpler and more powerful way of conveying a difficult truth.

These two time perspectives are embodied, in Judaism, in two different literatures. Through halakhah, we learn to make choices in the present. Through aggadah we strive to understand the past. Together, these two ways of thinking constitute the twin hemispheres of the Jewish brain. We are free. But we are also characters in a Divinely scripted drama. We choose, but we are also chosen. The Jewish imagination lives in the tension between these two frames of reference: between freedom and providence, our decisions and G-d's plan.

RABBI KALMAN PACKOUZ

Shabbat Shalom Weekly

Hillel, the great rabbi, taught that on the first night of Hanukah we light one candle and each successive night we add an additional candle until on the eighth night there are eight candles.

Why did Hillel prescribe this method for commemorating the eight days of Hanukah? Wouldn't it have been more impressive to light eight candles each night?

There are two important lessons for us to learn: (1) We must always strive to grow and increase our spirituality. One never stays in the same place- you either improve or you fall behind. (2) It is a mistake to grasp too much too fast. Growing spiritually is like climbing a ladder. If you try to climb too many rungs in one step, you're likely to fall. That is why we increase the Hanukah lights one candle at a time! *based on From Living Each Day by Rabbi Dr. A. Twersky*

RABBI BEREL WEIN

Wein Online

The psalmist asks the question "from where shall my salvation arise?" He has no doubt that salvation will somehow come to him but he does not know how that will occur. Life is so unpredictable and volatile that no person, government or institution can truly plan with certainty its success and salvation. "The best laid plans of mice and men"-certainly are undone by events and circumstances that are completely incapable of being foreseen.

This is one of the salient lessons of this week's parsha. Yosef is saved from a life of slavery and prison and transformed into a royal magistrate in an instant. He is certain that somehow G-d will redeem him that his dreams were not merely youthful folly and that he is destined for greatness and fame, but he has no concept how this can occur.

It takes a confluence of strange and even mundane events-Pharaoh's stewards being imprisoned in the same cell block as Yosef, their strange dreams, Pharaoh's birthday, Pharaoh's own disturbing dreams, the confessions of the wine steward as to his earlier misdeeds and Yosef's boldness in interpreting Pharaoh's dreams-to vault Yosef into rulership in the land of Egypt.

Who could have scripted such a drama in advance of its actual happening? But in reality is this not the way that life always plays itself out for all of us personally and certainly for the Jewish people nationally-We are all Yosef, confident of redemption and vindication but terribly confused as to how this will actually come about.

There are many participants in a person's redemption and success. This is true certainly so in the national life of the Jewish people. We may naively think that it is always completely up to us but G-d has His ways and in the words of the rabbis "G-d has many messengers that do His bidding." Many times they do so unwittingly and certainly unaware that they are fulfilling Divine destiny.

The wine steward, the warden in Yosef's prison, even the Pharaoh himself, are apparently unaware of the roles and actions that destiny has assigned to them. There is an unseen rhythm that guides Jewish life and every person in the world is potentially G-d's messenger to help realize and actualize Jewish destiny. We may not like all of the actors in this script but they all play a role nevertheless.

And because of this we are constantly reminded of the eternal question "from where will my salvation and redemption come?" Usually it comes from unforeseen circumstances and people who are strangers to us and our ways and even our hopes and goals. The drama of life is unending and complicated.

The Torah warned us of this by stating that "the hidden things belong to G-d but what is clear is that Jews should observe the Torah and transmit it to their following generations." But there always is a "miketz"-an ending, a fulfillment and an achievement of goals. How that "miketz" occurs is the everlasting mystery of life itself.

MACHON ZOMET

Shabbat B'Shabbato

by Bar-on Dasberg; Translated by Moshe Goldberg

The story of Pharaoh's dreams, their interpretation, and their coming true raises several questions:

(1) Why were Pharaoh and his sorcerers so greatly impressed by Yosef's interpretation of the dreams? The simplest meaning of fat sheaves eating lean ones is to assume it is a reference to abundance and scarcity!

(2) Why was Yosef's suggestion to gather the produce for later use considered so brilliant? Anybody who thinks logically can understand that when years of abundance are followed by poverty and famine the best policy is to save up during the good times for the bad ones that will follow.

(3) How is a famine possible in Egypt in the first place? The agriculture there depends on the constant flow of the Nile and not on the haphazard fall of rain.

The answer to these questions is that the possibility of famine was indeed completely unknown in Egypt, and that is why the wise men of the land did not consider it in trying to explain the dreams. Only a Jew, who was familiar with the phenomenon, could think of the idea. But one question still remains: How could a famine take place in Egypt?

Irrigation in Egypt was performed through the use of irrigation channels. The success of the process depended on good maintenance of the channels. It is clear from the history of Egypt that when a strong central government took charge of the fields there was

abundance and wealth in the land. When there was anarchy and everybody was required to look after his own fields, the economy lagged.

Yosef told Pharaoh and his slaves that there would soon be a period of seven years of abundance. This would cause the people to work less, specifically not to perform maintenance operations on the water channels, so that the fields would be damaged and a famine would come. It would take a long time (seven years) for the farmers to become organized once again and to repair the fields. And that is why Yosef proposed his brilliant idea. Pharaoh could take advantage of the situation to expand his rule over Egypt. During the time of plenty he could collect a tax on the produce, since the people will not object because of the great wealth. During the time of the famine, he could use the grains to strengthen his government by overcoming the problems of the famine.

Yosef carried out the plan to perfection during the famine. Within two years he had taken possession of all the land in Egypt and transformed all the inhabitants into tenant farmers. He was then able to control the maintenance of the fields and to make sure the channels were operated properly. In the end, the famine then ended after two years instead of the seven that had been predicted.

Yosef also took the opportunity to teach the Egyptians another lesson. When there is a central governmental authority life becomes better and simpler. Belief in one G-d is the best option-"It is G-d that I fear" [Bereishit 42:18].

THE AISHDAS SOCIETY

Aspaqlaria

Rabbi Micha Berger

The third stanza of the piyut "Maoz Tsur" describes the Hellene attack on the Beis Hamikdash with the words "ufartzu chomos migdalai—and they tore open the walls of my citadel."

Powerful words. Tore Open the Walls of my Citadel. Conjures up pictures of an arming storming the mighty walls of a fortress to get at the oil and defile it.

The picture we get from the mishna is very different than this.

"Within this [the wall around the Temple Mount] was the soreg, which was 10 tephachim high. Thirteen openings were in it, that the Hellenist Kings opened up. They restored them and closed them up, but legislated opposite them 13 bowings." (Midos 2:3)

The Bartenura explains that it was called a soreg, an open weave, because it was made of widely spaced wooden slats. It was 10 tephachim, 31 inches high or so. This is the "walls of my citadel"?! A waist-high open-woven fence? And why, when they converted the Beis Hamikdash into a temple for their pantheon was the soreg the one thing they destroyed?

The Tosfos Yom Tov explains that the soreg served to demarcate the cheil, the inner part of the Temple Mount, that was open only to Jews. (See the Rosh for an alternative explanation.) The soreg was 10 tephachim high because that is the minimum height for a mechitzah.

Tearing down the soreg was very much symbolic of the troubles we faced. The whole effort was to force Jews to assimilate, to blur the line between Jew and non-Jew—the very separation indicated by the soreg!

This is not to imply that there should be no interaction between Jew and non-Jew. We are supposed to be a "Kingdom of Kohanim and a Holy Nation". As individuals, we are to be kohanim, serving the religious needs of the world at large. But as a unified nation we are to be holy implying separate. How then can we be priests, serving the world's religious needs?

I'm reminded of a subtle change that came over American political rhetoric about a decade ago. Whereas the country used to call itself "The Great Melting Pot", it suddenly became "The Glorious Mosaic". A melting pot connotes the loss of individual ethnicity. The new model is one of many subcultures, each working together for the good of the larger picture.

I believe this is what Noach had in mind when he blessed his older two sons, "G-d gave beauty to Yefes, but lives in the tents of Sheim" (Bereishis 9:27). Yefes, whose philosophy was epitomized by his grandson Yavan, the father of the Greeks, was blessed with beauty, with aesthetics, the development of the mind, of Greek philosophy. Sheim, the first Semite, was also the grandfather of a founder of a nation—Eiver, the first Hebrew. In Noach's picture of the world, each would contributed to the betterment of man. Yefes would provide the intellectual foundations, and the Jewish people would be the source of spirituality, growth and purpose.

Perhaps this is the reason behind the choice for the opening verses of the haphtorah for Chanukah, to remind us of the balance, the sh'vil hazahav, the golden mean between assimilation and isolation.

"Be joyous and happy, Daughter of Zion; because here, I am coming and I will dwell among you, by the trust of G-d. And many peoples will gather to Hashem on that day, and they will be for Me a nation; and I will dwell among you, and you will know that Hashem-of-Hosts sent me to you." (Zecharia 2:14,15)

The Radak explains that this is a prophecy about the Third Temple era. The purpose of this separateness is so that "from Zion shall come forth the Torah", so that we can radiate the truths, as a "Light for the Nations", to a world unified under the flag of the G-d of Israel.

The Ibn Ezra comments that this promise to dwell amongst us is conditional. We must first gather ourselves from among the nations, which has not yet

happened. First we must build up the chomos migdalai, return to the land of Israel and the Torah of Israel.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

Taking a Closer Look

On Chanukah, we recite Hallel, making a blessing and reciting a specific set of praises that comprise several chapters of Psalms. Although Hallel is said on the Shalosh Regalim (the three holidays of Pesach, Shavuos and Succos) and on Rosh Chodesh (the first and 30th days of the Hebrew month), Chanukah is the only (universally accepted) time we say Hallel when there is no Musaf (the additional prayer that corresponds to the additional, special offering of the day). Why does Chanukah contain this anomaly? To get even more technical, why do we say the "full" Hallel on Chanukah? The Talmud (Arachin 10a-b) discusses when we "finish" Hallel (i.e. say all of it) and when we skip two chapters in the middle. Based on the guidelines given there, we should only "finish" Hallel on the first day of Chanukah (if at all), not all eight days.

The Talmud asks why we say the full Hallel on Succos, but not on Pesach, with the answer being because the additional offerings brought on Succos are different each day (see Bamidbar 29:12-38), whereas the same additional offering is brought every day of Pesach (27:19-24). [Although somewhere along the line someone suggested that it would be inappropriate to say full Hallel when such destruction befell the ancient Egyptians, who are also G-d's creatures, the Talmud attributes the reason we only say "half" Hallel the rest of Pesach to the offerings being the same. The Talmud does tell us (Sanhedrin 39b) that G-d does not rejoice over the downfall of the wicked, quoting a midrash that says that that He didn't allow the angels to sing praises to Him while "the work of My hands are drowning in the sea," but that didn't stop the Children of Israel from singing G-d's praises over the downfall of the Egyptians, praises we still say every morning ("Uz Yashir"). It is clear that those that benefit when G-d punishes the wicked can and should praise G-d; only the third-party angels were not allowed to] Since there are no additional offerings at all on Chanukah, we shouldn't say full Hallel every day of Chanukah either!

Several answers are suggested (see Bais Yosef O"C 683). The most widely quoted one is that there was a new miracle each day, although it would seem to be the same miracle (the amount of oil that should have lasted for three hours lasted for 24 hours). Perhaps it is considered a bigger miracle for three hours worth of oil to last the whole day on the eighth day than for six hours worth of all to stay lit for the whole seventh day (et al, working backwards), even if only three hours worth of oil was used up. (There are some indications that the level of oil didn't go down at all, which is why we have the famous question about celebrating a miracle on the eighth day if there was enough oil left to last the whole day.)

Another answer suggested (and the first one quoted by the Bais Yosef) is based on the fact that we light a different amount of lamps/candles each night, similar to the differing amount of bulls offered on each day of Succos. However, the basic requirement is to light just one each night. Even though most do the "mehadrin min hamehadrin" of adding another lamp/candle each night, it would seem a bit awkward for this to be the basis for saying full Hallel every day of Chanukah. [As a side note, there are some that suggest that lighting a Chanukiah didn't start until after the Bais Hamikdash was destroyed (see Hararay Kedem 191), as there would be no reason to commemorate the lighting of the Menorah while it was still being lit. If the reason we say full Hallel is based on our lighting a Chanukiah, since full Hallel was said from the time of the Maccabees (hundreds of years before the Bais Hamikdash was destroyed), it is clear that the Bais Yosef (and the Shibalay Haleket, whom he is quoting) were of the opinion that the mitzvah to light candles/lamps on Chanukah was instituted right away.]

Still another answer given is based on the fact that the Torah reading on Chanukah is of the offerings brought by the Nesi'im (Heads of Tribe) when the Mishkan was dedicated, and each of the Nesi'im said full Hallel on the day they brought their offering. I'm not sure how that warrants our saying full Hallel every day.

The Aruch Hashulchan brings another reason, based on what he had written earlier (O"C 670:5): "They made Chanukah eight days to replace the days of Succos (i.e. seven days of Succos and Shemini Atzeres) which they didn't do then (because of the defilement of the Bais Hamikdash); it follows that we say full Hallel as we do on Succos." If they said full Hallel then because they celebrated a psuedo-Succos, it makes sense that "the next year" (see Shabbos 21b), when they established Chanukah as a permanent holiday, including saying Hallel because of the miracle (see Arachin 10b), it was the same kind of Hallel that they said originally, i.e. full Hallel. However, the notion that they celebrated "Succos" in Kislev seems rather strange, and the fact that the sages authorized this (that first year and as a permanent part of Chanukah) seems even stranger.

The source for the Aruch Hashulchan's contention that they celebrated a "psuedo-Succos" is "Sefer Chashmonai." This is one of the Hebrew names used to refer to the First Book of the Maccabees, a non-Biblical book that describes how the Maccabees regained control of Israel. It is assumed that it was originally written in Hebrew. All that remained, though, were translations into Greek (and from Greek into other languages). Nevertheless, celebrating a "psuedo-Succos" is not mentioned there. It is mentioned in the Second Book of Maccabees (10:1-8), a separate non-Biblical book that was written in Greek. There, not only

did they "keep eight days with joy, after the manner of the feast of tabernacles, remembering that not long before they had kept the feast of the tabernacles when they were in the mountains" (10:6), but they "carried boughs, and green branches and palms for Him that had given them good success in cleansing the place" (10:7). Although no mention is made of the esrog, the lulav (and possibly the hadasim and aravos) were "carried," as they were on Succos. How did the sages (including the Maccabees) allow them to do this in Kislev?

"When Adam saw that the days kept getting shorter and shorter, he said, 'woe is me; perhaps because I sinned the world is becoming darker on my behalf and is returning to formlessness and emptiness (its state at creation), and this is the death that was decreed upon me in heaven.' He spent eight days fasting and praying until he saw the winter solstice and [then] saw the days getting longer and longer. He said, 'this is the way the world operates," and celebrated for eight days. The next year, he celebrated both sets of eight days. He did it for the sake of heaven, and they (the non-Jews that celebrated holidays on both of those eight-day periods) did it to worship their deities." The Talmud (Avodah Zara 8a) is telling us that the 8-day holidays celebrated around the winter solstice were valid, instituted by Adam, until they were co-opted by idol worshippers. Just as we praise G-d every night and every morning for the darkness of evening and the light of the day, for the changing of day to night and night to day, we should praise G-d for the changing seasons. However, once associated with idol worship, it was no longer a valid option.

The 25th day of Kislev is significant for many reasons. It was the day the Mishkan was finished, but because it wasn't dedicated until Nisan, G-d "paid Kislev back" by having the rededication of the Bais Hamikdash by the Maccabees on the 25th of Kislev. Some want to suggest that the Maccabees purposely waited until the 25th of Kislev because that was the day, three years earlier, that the heathens had sacrificed a pig on the holy altar. Aside from the fact that an idol was set up on the altar 10 days before that, I find it hard to accept that they would have the ability to bring the required daily offerings earlier, but were negligent in bringing them just for the sake of calendar symmetry. Instead, I find it much more likely that even though they drove the enemy off the Temple grounds earlier, it took time to cleanse it and rebuild the altar. The 25th of Kislev was the first chance they got to bring offerings on the rededicated altar, and there was a great celebration.

Although they hadn't had access to the Bais Hamikdash for several years (and therefore were unable to celebrate any holidays there, missing at least three years of Succos celebrations), until that year they were able to celebrate the holidays in their homes. Recently, however, they had to escape to the mountains in order to keep the Torah, and had to celebrate the most recent Succos in hiding; when they recaptured the Temple grounds, this Succos-in-hiding was fresh in their minds. They were overcome with joy, yearned to show their thanks to G-d, and asked if they could celebrate a psuedo-Succos then. The Maccabees knew that the Mishkan had been finished on the 25th of Kislev, and was "owed" a celebration. They also knew that Adam had instituted 8-day celebrations that could be reintroduced if any connection to idol worship were severed. And this was the perfect opportunity. G-d gave them back the Bais Hamikdash, with the first chance to bring offering to Him being on the 25th of Kislev. And the people wanted so much to express their joy and thanks that they requested an 8-day holiday. The Maccabees therefore allowed it, and made the celebration permanent the next year. A celebration done the way it had been done the previous year, giving praise and thanks to G-d with a full Hallel.

RABBI DOV KRAMER

What You See and What You Get

Every year on the week of Chanukah, Parshas Miketz, which contains the story of Yoseph, the viceroy of Egypt, greeting his brothers and accusing them of spying, is read. It can not be mere coincidence. There must be a connection between the the two. I have a question about both episodes and, of course, I have a story.

This week the Torah relates how a famine plagued the entire Middle East. Yaakov's children elected to go to the only country that was spared from hunger, Egypt. Through the brilliant vision, organization, and planning of a young Hebrew slave known to Egyptians as Tzafnat Paneach, that country fed both itself and the world. The brothers were ushered into the prodigal viceroy's chambers. He acted towards them like a total meshuganah. He accused them of a heinous plot to spy on Egypt. He incarcerated Shimon, and forced them to bring the youngest brother, the orphaned child of an aged father, to him. Yoseph surely wanted to teach a lesson to the brothers who sold him. But if Yoseph wanted to castigate or punish his brothers for selling him, why doesn't he do so openly and directly? Why the senseless charade?

Let's take a look at Chanuka, symbolized by the Menorah. It represents a miracle. A small amount of oil, enough for one day, lasted for eight. But there were greater miracles. A small army of Kohanim, priests who were previously involved in only spirituality and had very little experience in battle, defeated the Greek army. Why don't we make a parade or a feast to celebrate a major victory? Why is the main commemoration over a little oil?

In a small village lived a poor groom. Unable to afford a proper tailor to make a wedding suit, he brought material to a second-rate one. The poor boy was shocked to see the results.

"But this sleeve is six inches too short," he cried. "So pull in your arm," smiled the tailor. "But the other sleeve is a half a foot too long!" "So extend it," beamed the so-called craftsmen. "And the pants," screamed the groom, "the left leg is twisted!" "Oh that's nothing. Just hop down the aisle with your knee slightly bent!"

At the wedding, the assembled reeled in horror as the poor groom hobbled down to the canopy in the poor excuse for a suit. "What a grotesquely disfigured young man," gasped one guest. "Oy! Ah rachmunis (pity) on his poor bride," sighed another. The spectators looked once again at the pathetic sight and in unison all exclaimed. "But his tailor-what a extraordinary genius!"

My grandfather, Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky of blessed memory, explained to me that Yoseph had a very important message to send his brothers. "More than a decade ago you sat in judgment. You thought you made a brilliant decision and were smarter than anyone else, including your father. You decided to sell me as a slave. Now you meet the most brilliant saviour of the generation, the man who saved the world from starvation, and he is acting like a paranoid maniac. He is accusing you of something that is so hallucinatory that you think he is a madman. Is it not possible to think that perhaps you also made a gross error in judgment? Is it not possible that you saw a situation in a twisted light? Is it the boy or is it the suit that is actually grotesque?" Yoseph showed his brothers that even the best and brightest can misinterpret any situation.

Chanukah delivers a very similar message. The sages were not interested in commemorating a battlefield victory. They had a more powerful message for us. Nothing in this world can be judged at face value. A bit of oil that decidedly can only last one day-may last much longer. They want us to remember that outward appearances, as the opinions of pundits, have no bearing on reality. When that message is understood, it is easy to understand that a small army of Kohanim (priests) can topple a mighty force. We can understand that what we view as weak may be strong and what we thought was insufficient is actually plenty. And that a little bit of oil, like a pesky younger brother, both of whom you thought would not amount to anything, can really light the way. Good Shabbos and a Freilichin Chanukah!

RABBI AVI WEISS

Shabbat Forshpeis

Which of the eight Hanukka lights is your favorite?

The first? After all, the miracle began with its fire. The second? With enough oil for day one, the miracle really started on day two. Or perhaps it the eighth? Surely there is special significance to the completion of the miraculous event.

For me it's none of the eight. Rather it's the shamash—the extra candle used every night to kindle the other lights.

But isn't it strange to favor the very candle which is not part of the original eight?

Indeed, but the shamash posesses a significant and unique feature. All the other candles take light—the shamash alone gives light. In a world that is too often selfish, the shamash teaches selflessness. In a world where people invariably ask, "what's in it for me," the shamash asks "what can I do for you?"

There is one other important lesson the shamash teaches. Many believe that the more you give the less you have. The shamash teaches the reverse.

Look closely at the shamash wick as it touches any of the eight candles and ignites their fire. As the shamash touches the other candle its flame doesn't dim, it brightens. In the same way, the power of giving is that it does not diminish us in any way, rather it expands us.

A reflection of this idea may be seen in the topography of Israel where there are two major bodies of water. The one up North has clear water, its atmosphere is pure; foliage abounds and birds chirp everywhere. The one down South on the other hand, stagnates. Its atmosphere is heavy; the area is arid with little sign of natural life. Why are they so different?

The northern body receives water from the Jordan and then channels it to the Jordan which continues on at its southern tip. The one in the South, however, is fed by the Jordan but the water remains there.

The one in the North takes but also gives water. It is alive and is called the Kinneret, the Sea of Galilee. The one in the South on the other hand, only takes but does not give and hence is called the Dead Sea.

So the next time we think of the eight candles of Hanukka perhaps we ought also remember the importance of the ninth, the shamash. Like the Kinneret it teaches that to give is much more satisfying than to take. *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.*

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