

O H R N E T

SHABBAT CHANUKAH PARSHAT MIKEITZ · FOR THE WEEK ENDING 2 TEVET 5760 · DEC. 11, 1999 · VOL. 7 NO. 10

PARSHA INSIGHTS

SPARKS IN THE DARK

“And the emaciated and inferior cows ate up the first seven healthy cows. They came inside them, but it was not apparent that they had come inside them, for their appearance remained as inferior as at first.” (41:20-21)

It’s amazing. However far a Jew strays from his or her roots, you’ll still find a menorah burning in their window. There may be a Chanukah bush at the other end of the living room, there maybe cheeseburgers on the table. But while there’s a little spark of Judaism left, a Chanukah menorah still shines there in the window.

When the Ancient Greeks defiled the Holy Temple, they overlooked one little flask of oil. It was that little flask, untouched and untainted, which allowed the Menorah to blaze into light when Judah Maccabee and the Hasmoneans defeated the might of Greece and the Jewish People returned to the Holy Temple.

Inside every Jew there is a little spark of holiness, a flask of pure oil, a light that never goes out. All the “Greeks” of history, in all the lands of our exile, have tried to sully that oil, to put out that little light, but it can never be extinguished. How many millions of our people have given up their lives for that little spark? Evil may trumpet its vainglory to the skies, but it can never put out that light.

If you think about it, probably the biggest miracle of all is that evil itself can exist. The definition of evil is “that which G-d doesn’t want.” If the whole world is no more than an expression of G-d’s will, how can evil exist?

This is a secret which the mind of man may contemplate but never fathom. Maybe one approach is that evil can only exist by virtue of some spark of holiness wrapped inside it that gives it its life force, its ability to exist at all.

In this week’s Parsha we read: *“And the emaciated and inferior cows ate up the first seven healthy cows. They came inside them, but it was not apparent that they had come inside them, for their appearance remained as inferior as at first.” (41:20-21)*

In the above verse, the emaciated and inferior cows symbolize the forces of evil. The healthy cows represent the forces of holiness. The emaciated cows eat up the healthy cows and yet, from the outside, the spark of holiness is totally undetectable: *“It was not apparent that they (the healthy cows) had come inside them...”* Nevertheless, it is the spark of holiness which gives them their life force.

The Jewish People are in their darkest exile. G-d’s presence is so hidden we don’t even see that His concealment is concealed. We live in

a double-blind world where evil seems to thrive; where tragedy abounds; where selfishness and materialism have eaten to the very core. Yet, in the heart of all this evil — there is a holy center. Without that component of sanctity, evil would cease to exist in a second. For by itself, evil can have no toehold in existence.

But that holy spark burns on in the heart of the Jewish people. The menorah represents the heart of the Jewish People, and in that heart burns a little flame that cannot go out. Any day now, that spark will burst into a fire that will consume all the crass materialism like so much straw, and then we will no longer light our menorahs in the windows of New York, London and Buenos Aires. Any day, the *kohen gadol* will once again enter the Holy of Holies and re-light the lights that have burned in holy Jewish Hearts through millennia, sealed inside that flask that can never be sullied or spoiled.

ELIMINATION OR ILLUMINATION?

“Yosef called the name of the firstborn Menashe... And the name of the second son, he called Ephraim...” (41:50-51)

Fire consists of two powers: The power to burn, and the power to illuminate.

In the days of Chanukah, the

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is unsatisfied with all attempts to interpret it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison. Yosef is released from prison and brought before Pharaoh. He interprets that soon will begin seven years of abundance followed by seven years of severe famine. He tells Pharaoh to appoint a wise person to store grain in preparation for the famine. Pharaoh appoints him as viceroy to oversee the project. Pharaoh gives Yosef an Egyptian name, Tsafnat Panayach, and selects Osnat, Yosef's ex-master's daughter, as Yosef's wife. Egypt becomes the granary of the world. Yosef has two sons, Menashe and Ephraim. Yaakov sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. The brothers come before Yosef and bow to him. Yosef recognizes them but they do not recognize him. Mindful of his dreams, Yosef plays the part of an Egyptian overlord and acts

harshly, accusing them of being spies. Yosef sells them food, but keeps Shimon hostage until they bring their brother Binyamin to him as proof of their honesty. Yosef commands his servants to replace the purchase-money in their sacks. On the return journey, they discover the money and their hearts sink. They return to Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearable, he accedes. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safety, and the brothers go to Egypt. Yosef welcomes the brothers lavishly as honored guests. When he sees Binyamin he rushes from the room and weeps. Yosef instructs his servants to replace the money in the sacks, and to put his goblet inside Binyamin's sack. When the goblet is discovered, Yosef demands Binyamin become his slave as punishment. Yehuda interposes and offers himself instead, but Yosef refuses.

USER-FRIENDLY TORAH

The highlight of Jewish history was the building of the First Temple by King Solomon. The Temple

bridged the gap between Heaven and earth, allowing us to feel and almost see G-d's presence. All that remains from those glorious days of Temple, prophecy and revelation is one wall of the Temple Courtyard. What is there to guide us through this spiritual eclipse?

The Haftarah describes the construction of the ornate Temple Vessels, according to King Solomon's orders. King Solomon also ordered the construction of ten Menorahs, and had five of them placed on either side of the original Menorah made by Moshe. The five Menorahs on each side represent the "Five Chanukahs" — the five Temple dedications that took place throughout history. It appears that these five Chanukahs all take root in the Torah given to Moshe (represented by the central Menorah).

The Torah was given in the desert, far away from the site of the Temple.

MELACHIM I 17:40 - 50

The Torah is not dependent on the Temple. On the contrary — the rebuilding of the Temple depends on us upholding and "living" the Torah. In the nearly 2,000 years since the destruction of the Temple, the Torah's contents have not changed, but the presentation has. The first major change was the writing down of the Oral Law, the Mishna and Talmud. Then the commentaries of the early authorities, and the codes of Jewish law — Maimonides, Shulchan Aruch, etc. Most recently — quality Torah literature in English, even via the Internet. This "user-friendly" presentation of Torah hides much of its depth and essence. However, G-d's guidebook for life can and must be understood by everyone. Anything that is firmly rooted in Moshe's Sinaiatic Torah will illuminate the spiritual darkness of exile.

Sources: Maharal, Exodus 23, Talmud Chagiga, Leviticus 26, Rabbi S.R. Hirsch

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לע"נ
 הרב ברוך משה בן חיים זצ"ל
 ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

continued from page one

Hasmoneans used both of these powers. Fire to sear and eradicate the impurity of the ancient Greeks, and the fire of the Torah to light up the *Beit Hamikdash* once it had been resanctified.

A fire to burn out Evil, and a fire to illuminate Good.

There is a dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel regarding how to light the Chanukah candles: Beit Shammai says that you start with eight candles on the first night and work down to one on the last, while Beit Hillel says you start with one and work up to eight.

The power to burn always starts with much and reduces it to nothing — to ashes. That’s the idea of starting with eight candles and reducing

them to nothing. Beit Shammai held that the essential aspect of Chanukah to be communicated to future generations was that you can’t leave even the tiniest part of evil in the world. It must be burned until it is totally eradicated, for then Good, perforce, must blaze out and shine.

The power of light, however, is always something which grows stronger and stronger: Beit Hillel considered that the lighting of the menorah should stress the triumph of the light — for where there is light, necessarily the darkness must flee. So Beit Hillel holds we should light one candle on the first night, and that light grows and grows until it fills the world and there is no place left for the darkness.

Yosef’s two sons, Ephraim and Menashe, are these two powers, fire and light, rooted in all Israel. Menashe is the “negative” power, the power to burn and destroy evil, with the result that the light will shine. Ephraim is the “positive” power — the power to illuminate, so that darkness can have no place to rule.

Just as ultimately the Jewish People will be called by the name Ephraim, the power of illumination, similarly, the *halacha* follows Beit Hillel — to start with one candle and add more light every night until the darkness disappears.

Sources:

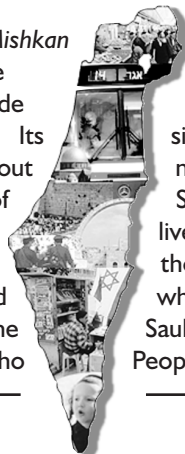
- So This Is Chanukah - Sfat Emet
- Illumination Or Elimination? - Rabbi Shlomo Yosef Zevin in L'Torah Ul'Moadim

LOVE OF THE LAND

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

Nov

When the Philistines destroyed Shiloh, the *Mishkan* Sanctuary was re-established in Nov where it remained during the more than a decade that the Prophet Shmuel led the Jewish People. Its destruction at the end of Shmuel’s career came about through tragic circumstances described in the Book of Shmuel I (21-22). When David fled for his life from King Saul, who saw him as a threat to his sovereignty, David came to Nov where the *kohanim* provided him with food and the sword of Goliath. Although the *kohanim* were not aware of Saul’s feud with David, who



had once been his favorite, the king accused them of conspiring against him and they were put to death. This marked the end of the Sanctuary on this site, and it was transferred to Givon. The bitter aftermath of Saul’s slaying of Nov’s *kohanim* is described in Shmuel II (21). The Givonite converts, who lost their livelihood as woodchoppers and water carriers for those *kohanim*, and suffered three years of famine for what Saul had done to them, demanded the death of Saul’s children as the price of their forgiving the Jewish People.

I DIDN'T KNOW THAT!

Pharaoh’s dream had five indications that it was a true portent of the future:

- It was a repeated dream (once with cows, once with wheat).
- It was a dream explained within a dream — i.e., the vision of wheat explained the vision of cows: Wheat clearly represents the harvest, which clarified that the cows represented plowing, the first step towards harvest.
- He dreamed it close to morning.
- During the dream, Pharaoh experienced it as real; he didn’t realize it was a dream until he woke up.
- Pharaoh was disturbed by the dream even after waking.

• Malbim

SANCTUARY — MAJOR AND MINOR

When the Torah commanded us to respect the Sanctuary, it did not explicitly define the nature of that respect; theoretically, such respect could include prostrating oneself before the Sanctuary as one would before Hashem. To dispel this notion, the Torah coupled in one passage (*Vayikra 19:30*) the command to observe Shabbat and to respect the Sanctuary. This is to teach us that just as in regard to Shabbat there is no obligation to show respect by bowing to the day (Rashi — since the Torah does not mention “respect” in regard to Shabbat) but rather to the One who commanded us to observe Shabbat, so too the respect required regarding the Sanctuary is not respect for the building, but rather for the One who commanded us regarding the Sanctuary.

But how does one show respect for Hashem through his behavior in the Sanctuary?

Our Sages gave us a number of things we must refrain from doing even on the Temple Mount where the ultimate Sanctuary — the *Beit Hamikdash* — stood. This list includes some things, such as the prohibition against wearing shoes, which we do not apply to our “minor sanctuaries” of synagogues. But it also includes not using the Temple Mount as a shortcut for getting from one place to another. This sign of disrespect is prohibited even in regard to a synagogue, and is recorded in *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 151:5)*.

Using the synagogue as a shortcut, or entering it for the purpose of calling someone there to come out, is considered disrespectful, as it is an exploitation of a holy place for a personal need. The *halacha* instructs us to eliminate the disrespect involved in such actions by reading some words of Torah or saying some mishna or halacha before indulging in the personal activity. If a person is not able to thus justify his presence, he should ask a child to recite the Torah passage he has just learned or at least sit down for a few moments, for even sitting in a synagogue is considered a mitzvah as indicated in the passage “Fortunate are those who sit in Your house.” (*Tehillim 84:5*)

• *Yevamot 6b*

DON'T POUR OUT THE WATER

One who has water in his cistern should not dispose of it even if he has no need for it, so long as someone else does have a need.

This lesson of consideration, states Rabbi Yosef, was conveyed to us by Rabbi Yehuda Hanasi, the compiler of the Mishna, in a halacha dealing with the laws of *yibum* and *chalitza*, which form the main subject of our *mesechta*. Should a man die childless, his brother is supposed to perform *yibum* by marrying her. Should he be reluctant to do so, he must perform the act of *chalitza* that then releases the widow from her bond to the family and enables her to marry someone else.

But not just anyone else. Even though the Torah did not prohibit her marriage to a *kohen*, the Sages decreed that she may not do so. Her similarity to a divorced woman is so strong that if she would be permitted to a *kohen*, there is a danger that people may mistakenly extend such a right to a divorcee, who is forbidden to a *kohen* by Torah law.

A *mishna* later on (*44a*) discusses the case of a man who was married to two wives, one of whom was a divorcee from a previous marriage. In the event of his death without children, his brother must perform *yibum* or *chalitza* with one of the widows, automatically freeing the other one to marry at will. It is his choice as to which he prefers to make his wife through *yibum*. But if he chooses to perform *chalitza*, he is encouraged to do so with the divorcee. Even though this has no ramifications for him, he should take into consideration that by performing *chalitza* with the one who is eligible to marry a *kohen*, he thus renders her ineligible, a situation he could have avoided by performing *chalitza* with the previously ineligible widow.

This is indeed a case of preserving the water for others even if you don't need it yourself.

• *Yevamot 11b*

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PARSHA Q&A ?

1. What did the fat cows being eaten symbolize?
2. How did Pharaoh's recollection of his dream differ from Nevuchadnetzar's recollection of his dream?
3. What was significant about the fact that Pharaoh dreamed repeatedly?
4. What does "Tsafnat Panayach" mean?
5. What happened to the Egyptians' grain that was stored in anticipation of the famine?
6. What did Yosef require the Egyptians to do before he would sell them grain?
7. Did Yaakov and his family still have food when he sent his sons to Egypt? If yes, why did he send them?
8. What prophetic significance lay in Yaakov's choice of the word "redu" — "descend" (and not "lechu" — "go")?
9. Why does the verse say "Yosef's brothers" went down to Egypt (and not "Yaakov's sons")?
10. When did Yosef know that his dreams were being fulfilled?
11. Under what pretext did Yosef accuse his brothers of being spies?
12. Why did the brothers enter the city through different gates?
13. Who was the interpreter between Yosef and his brothers?
14. Why did Yosef specifically choose Shimon to put in prison?
15. How does the verse indicate that Shimon was released from prison after his brothers left?
16. What was Yaakov implying when he said to his sons: "I am the one whom you bereaved?"
17. How did Reuven try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyamin to Egypt?
18. How long did it take for Yaakov and family to eat all the food that the brothers brought back from Egypt? Give the answer in terms of travel time.
19. How much more money did the brothers bring on their second journey than they brought on the first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 41:4 - That all the joy of the plentiful years would be forgotten. (Not that the good years would provide food for the bad years.)
2. 41:8 - Pharaoh remembered the contents of his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot even the contents of his dream.
3. 41:32 - It showed that the seven good years would start immediately.
4. 41:45 - He who explains things that are hidden and obscure.
5. 41:55 - It rotted.
6. 41:55 - Become circumcised.
7. 42:1 - Yes, but he sent them because he did not want to cause envy in the eyes of those who did not have food.
8. 42:2 - It hinted to the 210 years that the Jewish people would be in Egypt: The word "redu" has the numerical value of 210.
9. 42:3 - Because they regretted selling Yosef and planned to act as brothers by trying to find him and ransom him at any cost.
10. 42:9 - When his brothers bowed to him.
11. 42:12 - They entered the city through 10 gates rather than through one gate.
12. 42:13 - To search for Yosef throughout the city.
13. 42:23 - His son Menashe.
14. 42:24 - Because he was the one who cast Yosef into the pit and the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger to him.
15. 42:24 - The verse says Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight.
16. 42:36 - That he suspected them of having slain or sold Shimon, and that they may have done the same to Yosef.
17. 42:37 - He said: "Kill my two sons if I fail to bring back Binyamin."
18. 43:2, 10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much, in order to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more even if the price had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said "We returned the money we found in our sacks; can it be that we would steal?"

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

Sue (Shoshana) Zakar <suezakar@clark.net> wrote:

When Rachel was hiding the idols she took from Lavan's house, and Lavan came looking for them, Yaakov said that whoever they were found with would die. Since Rachel indeed did die early, this is used as proof that the curse of a *tzaddik* (righteous person), even if unintentional, has an effect. A similar situation occurred when Yosef planted his goblet in Binyamin's sack and Yehudah said that the person in whose possession it was found would not live. Did Binyamin die at an early age? If not, then what was the difference between the two situations? I've asked a number of people, including several rabbis, about this and no one has found a definitive answer. I'm hoping you

can help.

Dear Sue (Shoshana) Zakar,

Rachel actually took her father's idols, whereas Binyamin had not taken the goblet – it had been placed in his sack without his knowledge. Yehuda's intention was only for whoever took the goblet. Another difference between the two cases is that immediately after Yehudah uttered his curse, Yosef's servant refuted it by saying it should not come to fruition. This is in keeping with the rule that a statement is null if it is retracted immediately. Yaakov's curse, however, was never retracted.

• *Sefer Haparshiot*

Do you have a KASHA? Write to kasha@ohr.org.il with your questions on any Parsha!

BRANCHES OF LIGHT

Paul Schreiber from N. Miami, FL
<nalafunding@hotmail.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I own a seven-branched menorah for decorative purposes. A friend recently told me that this menorah should never be lit. Is this true and if so, why?

Dear Paul Schreiber,
The Torah commands that in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem there should be a seven-branched menorah, and that making such a menorah for private use is prohibited. Having six or eight branches is fine, so bring your menorah to a silversmith and add a branch, or take one off!

Sources:
• Shulchan Aruch Yoreh De'ah 141:8
• Numbers 8

SHADES OF LIGHT

Shelby from Atlanta, GA
<shetlandsheepdog@yahoo.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
Hi! My close college friend is Jewish and resides in Montgomery, Alabama. She asked me to investigate if there is a particular tradition behind the colors of Chanukah candles sold in the retail stores. Or is it important that the candles be a certain color? I look forward to your reply.

Dear Shelby,
There's no tradition regarding the color of the candles; so any color is okay, even plaid! Actually, it is preferable to use olive oil lamps, to commemorate the miracle of the oil.
Please note that the small colored Chanukah candles

aren't long enough to use on Friday, because the candles must be lit before sunset and must remain alight for a half hour after dark. This year, this applies both to the first day and the last day of Chanukah.

A STITCH IN TIME

Skip <Druss2889@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I am doing a cross-stitch picture for a resident at a nursing home for Hanukkah and am curious as to what this means: "Nes Gadol Hayah Sham." Thank you.

Dear Skip,
It means "A great miracle happened there," referring to the miracle of the oil and the Jewish defeat of the ancient Greeks. Good luck with your picture. You are doing a wonderful mitzvah, a good deed of loving-kindness.

OLD MENORAHS NEVER DIE

Arthur P. Katz from New Jersey <Apkat@Juno.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
How do you properly dispose of a menorah you no longer want/need? (I bought a nicer one.)

Dear Arthur P. Katz,
Though an item not used directly for a mitzvah (such as a talit, without the tzitzit), may be discarded, it just should not be treated with disrespect. Why not give the Menorah to someone poor, who cannot afford one, or to a child?

Source:
• Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 21:2

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Jericho Yiddle Riddle (Ohrnet Vayeshev):

In answer to a recent Yiddle Riddle, you wrote that Joshua's troops encircled the city of Jericho 13 times. True, they marched around the city once a day for six days, and on the seventh day they *marched around* seven times. However, on the seventh day they *encircled* the city only once. To encircle means to encompass, envelope, enclose, etc. I surmised that the number of Israelites was sufficient

to encompass the entirety of the city walls; thus, they had already *encircled* it the moment they got into formation to march.

• Stan <altermar@dataex.com>

Re: ChoppedLiver®:

Congratulation on Ohr Somayach's ChoppedLiver® educational cartoons that you post on your Web Site. They

PUBLIC DOMAIN

are really great! I would like to publish them on our shul's billboard.

• Daniel Cohn, Uruguay

Re: Art for Art's Sake (www.ohrnet.org):

I would like to ask for your permission to translate your beautiful Ohrnet article Art For Art's Sake (Kislev 5760) into Spanish, to be included in a newsletter for the members of our community, Sucath David, here in Buenos Aires. I don't know much about the Greeks and their art, but I frankly think this article is a piece of Jewish art which really deserves to be shown. Thank you, Ohr Somayach, for your

great publications and the deep insights and teachings conveyed in them.

I wish you all the best, with Torah blessings!

• Malka Armoza <shseider@criba.edu.ar>

Re: Triple Header (Ohrnet Vayishlach):

In a recent Parsha quiz, you asked: "Who was born along with Binyamin?" and answered "His two twin sisters." With all due respect to the you, the two sisters born with Binyamin were not twins. Why not? Because they were part of a set of triplets!

• David Grossman <davidg@mofet.macam98.ac.il>

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

The misconception that others should be, think and act just as we do is an obstacle to judging them favorably, as an Ohrnet reader points out:

SMILE!

Not everyone in this world is a jovial person or "all smiles" all the time. Some people may be more serious by nature than others. They say, "You can't turn an orange into an apple." I have had the experience more than a few times while walking down the street, feeling content, when some tactless do-gooder walking past me says, "It can't be all that bad...Smile!" Or, I am at a *simcha* (celebration) feeling happy (and at least I think I am smiling) and another tactless person comes up to me and says, "Smile,

after all this is a *simcha*." In each case, I am instantly plunged into depression and despair. Don't these people realize that comments like these are like saying, "Smile, you look like a truck just ran over you."

You may want to be helpful, but if you don't know the person's nature you may be guilty of speaking *ona'at devarim* (hurtful words). Before making tactless comments, first stop and think. You never know what's on another person's mind or from what situation they just left. Wouldn't it be better to compliment the person instead? Saying something like, "Those colors look beautiful on you," or "Is that a new tie (outfit, etc.), it's very nice," would be much more effective in getting the desired results.

A naturally happy or jovial person might not relate to this; however, just know that people out there are working on themselves and trying to improve.

• Anonymous from Jerusalem <Anonymous@inter.net.il>

To our Ohrnet Readers
A Happy and Healthy
Chanukah

“Beautiful Inside and Out”

“If eyes were made for seeing, then Beauty is its own excuse for being.”

(Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Poems, The Rhodora*)

The renowned 19th century American poet and essayist herein expresses one of the main philosophic tenets of the Western World: “Beauty is its own excuse for being.” Indeed, Western Civilization appears to be built on the adoration of Beauty. From fair Helen of Ancient Troy — dubbed by 16th century British bard, Christopher Marlowe, “the face that launched a thousand ships,” — down through the meanderings of time until today’s *Miss Universe Beauty Pageant*, beauty has played a central role on the stage of history.

Beauty, however, is not limited to the appearance of women. Its significance may be recognized as well in a Western World that has given primacy throughout the ages to music, literature, drama, painting, and the other “fine arts.” Upon close examination, much of today’s world seems to be focused on “aesthetics,” the celebration of the various faces of Beauty.

What is the true purpose of Beauty? Does the Torah also give it primacy?

Shlomo Hamelech, the “wisest of men,” warns us: “False is grace, and vain is beauty, the woman who fears the Lord shall be praised” (*Proverbs 31:30*). The Torah seems to take the opposite stance; not only is Beauty not a prominent factor, it is even dangerous in that it is “false.” It would seem that its importance is to be denigrated.

Yet, the Gaon of Vilna takes us deeper when he brings Shlomo Hamelech’s statement in juxtaposition to the Torah’s description of the Matriarchs. Why, asks the Gaon, should the Torah make note of the beauty of the Matriarchs, calling Sarah, Rivka, and Rachel “beautiful in form, and beautiful in appearance,” if this beauty is “vain” and “false?” He answers that there are different types of physical beauty. There is physical beauty that is

only “skin deep,” only physical with no spiritual concomitant. There also exists physical beauty which is at base spiritual, an emanation of an inner beauty, causing observers of this individual to remark: “What a perfect Creation, beautiful inside and out.” This, concludes the Gaon, was the startling beauty of the Matriarchs, a beauty that emanated from the inside out.

How radically different than a woman who has only physical beauty, whom Shlomo Hamelech compares to a “gold ring in the nose of a sow.” What is this metaphor meant to illustrate? Gold symbolizes honor and importance; it adorns thrones, scepters, and crowns. A nose ring which was a symbol of beauty, especially one made of gold, is most incongruous in the snout of the swine, a disgusting beast that uses its snout to dig in revolting places. So is the physical beauty of a woman who does not aspire to the pursuit of Truth a falsification, an enticing peel devoid of its nourishing fruit.

The nation of Israel descends from Shem, the youngest son of Noach; ancient Greece was descended from Yefet, Noach’s oldest son. The Torah traces the roots of their national character to a single incident: Upon hearing from their brother Cham that their father lay intoxicated and exposed in his tent, they remedied the embarrassing situation by covering him. “And Shem and Yefet took a garment, and put it upon both of their shoulders, and went backwards and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father’s nakedness” (*Bereishet 9:23*). Rashi tells us the consequences of this action for the descendants of the three sons: Cham who disgraced his father is cursed that his descendants will be led into slavery naked and barefoot; Yefet who assisted

his brother in covering his father’s disgrace merits honorable burial for his descendants, and Shem, who initiated the action, merits *tzitzit* for his descendants.

While we can understand the consequences of Cham’s action, the distinction between that of Shem and Yefet is more subtle, for, did they not both together perform the same dignified deed?

In truth, the actions of Shem and Yefet were vastly different. Shem who initiated the meritorious deed was motivated by an internal stimulus, seeing beyond the physical disgrace to the degradation of the “image of G-d,” the entire spiritual domain. His reward is *tzitzit*, a physical tool that enables him to see beyond the physical world to the spiritual world above. Yefet, who follows Shem’s lead, concurring that human disgrace must be removed, is responding merely to the external stimulus. He is rewarded with the external trappings of human dignity — honorable burial.

“G-d has granted Beauty to Yefet, and he will dwell in the tents of Shem” (*Bereishet 9:27*). The Beauty granted Yefet, and his progeny, the nation of Greece, is external; the Beauty of the fine arts, the worship of the physically beautiful — Beauty which is “its own excuse for being.” Yet, this Beauty is intended to dwell in the tents of Shem and those of the nation of Israel, to assist in the glorification of True Beauty — the inner beauty of the soul and spirituality. As history so clearly demonstrates, from the ancient political and cultural struggles between Classical Greece and Israel, down through the ages until that of the contemporary Jew surrounded by Western Civilization, True Beauty must either emanate from *within* or at least assist and glorify this inner Beauty — the Eternal Truth of Torah!