



Parshas Miketz

For the week ending 30 Kislev 5759
18 - 19 December 1998

Overview

It is two years later. Pharaoh has a dream. He is not satisfied with any of the interpretations offered to explain it. Pharaoh's wine chamberlain remembers that Yosef accurately interpreted his dream while in prison and Yosef is released. Yosef interprets that within a short time there will be seven years of abundance, followed by seven years of severe famine. Yosef 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, Tsafnas Panayach, and selects Osnas, 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, hearing that there is food in Egypt, sends his sons to buy provisions. 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 their father Yaakov and retell everything. Yaakov refuses to let Binyamin go to Egypt, but when the famine grows unbearably harsh, 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.

Insights

My YIDDISHE TATTE

“Israel their father said to them, ‘...Take your brother and return to the man. And may Almighty G-d grant you mercy...’ ” (43:11-14)

One of today's most offensive and inaccurate canards must be the "Jewish Mother." The "Jewish Mother" emasculates her offspring with suffocating affection, refusing to sever the apron-strings that bind her brood. She wields emotional blackmail with the accuracy of a surgeon's knife and the mercilessness of a Machiavelli.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

The Talmud teaches us that someone who does the mitzvah of lighting the lamps of Shabbat and Chanuka will have children who are *talmidei chachamim* (Torah scholars).

What is the specific connection between lighting lamps and being blessed with children who will be Torah scholars?

One of life's great temptations is to think that we control events. "I got up at five every morning and that's why I made a million." "I practiced 12 hours a day and that's why I'm a concert violinist." Who do you think gave you the strength and determination to get up early? Who do you think gave you the gift of music? There are plenty of people who get up at four-thirty who are still paying their mortgage. There are plenty of Yehudi Menuhin wannabes who can't coax an Irish jig out of a fiddle.

Even when we do a mitzvah, we think: It's *me* doing the mitzvah. It's *me* putting on tefillin. It's *me* making kiddush on Friday night. Me. I'm doing it, aren't I?

The mitzvah of lighting Chanuka lights isn't just to light. The Chanuka menorah must also contain enough fuel to *stay lit* for a half hour into the night. Although I might feel that I'm the one lighting the

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candle, *but I can't make it stay lit*. No amount of encouragement from the sidelines will make that candle burn. No rooting, no cheer-leading will keep it lit if the Master of Creation doesn't will it.

Shabbos candles, too, are meant to remain lit. Without their light, someone might trip and fall. *Lighting* the lamps is only *part* of the mitzvah. The lamps must also give us pleasure and benefit; and for this, they need to *stay* alight.

The lights of Shabbos and Chanuka help us realize that we only *start* the process. The rest up to G-d.

Every parent hopes his children will grow to be healthy, wise and upright, but we get no guarantee. We protect our children as much as is reasonable, but we cannot lock them in a padded room. All we can do is to kindle in them the spark. The spark of loving G-d; of loving their fellow Jew. We cannot complete the process. It's up to them — and to G-d. Eventually, all we can do is stand on the sidelines with prayers and tears.

In this week's Parsha, Yaakov reluctantly allows Binyamin to go to Egypt. There was no guarantee Binyamin would return, yet Yaakov let him go. After doing everything reasonable, Yaakov put his trust in G-d.

After lighting Shabbos candles Friday afternoon, women customarily say a prayer which concludes: "Privilege me to raise children and grandchildren who are wise and understanding, who love G-d and fear G-d, people of truth, holy offspring, attached to G-d, who illuminate the world with Torah and good deeds...Hear my prayers at this time, in the merit of Sara, Rivka, Rachel and Leah, our mothers, and cause our light to illuminate, that it not be extinguished ever, and let Your Countenance shine..."

Now that's a Jewish mother.

MEANT TO BE MEAN

"What can we say to my lord?... G-d has uncovered the sin of your servants." (44:16)

The world's number one killer is not cancer or heart disease. It isn't road accidents. The world's number one killer is hatred. More people are lying in their graves because of hatred than any disease or scourge.

We may vehemently disagree with others. We may think they are criminally irresponsible. We may even hate what they *stand* for. But we may never hate *them*. Every person is created in the image of G-d. We can hate an idea, an opinion, a newspaper article, a belief — but never our fellow man.

When the Jewish People are united there is no power in the world that can oppose us. But when there

is dissension, we fall in front of our enemies like wheat before the plow.

G-d is One. His name is One. And who is like His people Israel when they are one People in the Land? When we mirror G-d's Oneness in our behavior towards others, we fulfill our purpose, to be G-d's earthly echo. But when hate divides us, not only do we cease to function as a nation, to reflect G-d's Unity, but we cease to serve any function at all.

History is like an enormous pond. Every action makes an impact on the world like a pebble thrown into the pond. Just as the size of the ripple depends on the size of the pebble and the power of the person who throws it, so too an action's impact on reality depends on the stature of the person and the nature of his action. The fathers of the Jewish People were spiritual giants whose actions created ripples that we feel to this day. Yosef's encounter with his brothers created a ripple which would be felt by the Jewish People across the millennia.

In this week's Parsha it's difficult to understand why Yosef is so hard on his brothers. He practically makes them jump through hoops before revealing his identity. It cannot be that he acted out of spitefulness. Why does he wait so long and cause them such anxiety?

When the brothers sold Yosef, they made a gaping hole in the unity of the Jewish People. That schism could only be healed by forgiveness, and true forgiveness can only come where there is love. Yosef knew that he could never forgive his brothers unless he saw that the brothers felt remorse for selling him; that they still loved him. Furthermore, Yosef knew that the brothers would never believe he had forgiven them unless he demonstrated his love in a palpable fashion.

Thus, Yosef waited until he heard Yehuda say "*G-d has uncovered the sin of your servants.*" When Yosef heard these words, he knew the brothers still loved him, and that they realized they were being punished for their transgression.

However, that wasn't the only reason Yosef waited so long. He also wanted to show that he loved them, for then they would accept that he had truly forgiven them. Thus, Yosef waited till the brothers were totally vulnerable, till the point that he could have made them into slaves. In this way they realized that he truly loved them and had forgiven them.

Yosef was sending a message across the millennia that the Jewish People can only fulfill its purpose when united. And there is no unity without love.

We are not a nation of yes-men. "Where there are two Jews, there are three opinions." Our success, however, as a holy people lies in viewing each other as G-d's children come what may.

Sources

My Yiddishe Tatte - Talmud Shabbat 23b; Rashi *ibid.*; Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 263:1; Mishna Berura, *ibid.* 1,2; Rabbi Mordechai Pitem
Meant To Be Mean - Rabbi Mordechai Perlman

Haftorah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7

“Chanuka” means dedication. The festival that we call Chanuka is really the *fourth* Chanuka. The first Chanuka dedication was in the desert when Moshe dedicated the *Mishkan* — the Tent of Meeting.

The second was the dedication of the First *Beis Hamikdash* (Holy Temple). The third Chanuka is the subject of our Haftorah. It refers to the times of the Second *Beis Hamikdash* and the inauguration of the Menorah at the time of Yehoshua the *Kohen Gadol*, and the nation’s leader, *Zerubavel*, who is referred to in “*Maoz Tsur*,” the traditional Chanuka song.

MOTHER NATURE’S FATHER

After a small band of Jews had beaten the might of Greece, one small flask of oil for the Menorah was discovered in the Holy Temple. One small flask, not defiled by the Greeks.

That flask contained enough oil to last just one day. But it burned and burned for eight days. To commemorate that miracle we kindle the lights of Chanuka for eight days.

But if you think about it, really we should only light the lights for seven days, because that first day the lights burned completely naturally. After all, there was enough oil for one day! So why do we light candles for eight nights since one of those nights was no miracle at all?

One answer is that the eighth candle is to remind us of a miracle that is constantly with us. The problem is that a lot of the time we don’t see it as a miracle at all. We don’t call it a miracle. We call it *nature*.

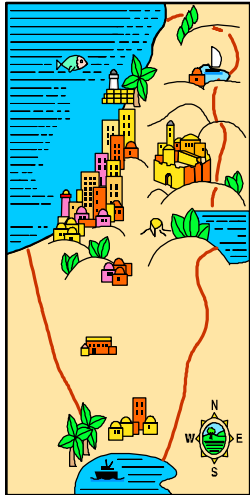
In this week’s Haftorah, Zechariah is shown a vision of a menorah made entirely of gold, complete with a reservoir, tubes to bring it oil, and two olive trees to bear olives. A complete self-supporting system.

The symbolism is that Hashem provides a system which supports us continuously. However, we have to open our eyes to see where that support is coming from. And that’s the reason we light the eighth candle. To remind ourselves that “Mother Nature” has a “Father.”

Based on the Beis Yosef and the Artscroll/Stone Chumash

LOVE OF THE LAND

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



MODI'IN

Modi'in is the historical name of the mountain stronghold of the Maccabeans whose victory over the vastly superior forces of the Hellenist Greek oppressors is celebrated on Chanuka.

In his historical account of the that epic struggle between pagan idolatry and Hebrew faith, Josephus describes how the wicked Antiochus ordered his officers to wipe out any trace of Judaism. They did indeed slay anyone who remained faithful to Torah observance, except for those who fled to the mountain area of Modi'in together with Matityahu, the son of Yochanan.

It was from this Modi'in that Matityahu and his five sons led their small band of faithful Jews in a seemingly hopeless war of “the mighty against the weak, the many against the few, the impure against the pure, the wicked against the righteous, the sinners against those who adhered to the Torah” — a war ending in a miraculous victory, climaxed by the miracle of the oil in the Menorah which burned for eight days.

Since the Six-Day War, the Modi'in area has been intensely developed and is the home of the fast-growing town of Modi'in, the chareidi community of Kiryat Sefer, and the soon to rise community of Ohr Somayach.

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