

OHR NET

THE OHR SOMAYACH TORAH MAGAZINE ON THE INTERNET

By Rabbi David Orlofsky

OILS WELL
that ENDS WELL

Well. It's Chanuka again. The time of year when we gather together to light our little menorahs, eat *latkes* and jelly donuts dripping with oil and get presents. For most people the first two don't have too much meaning, but getting presents — now that's a religious experience. Because it has served as one of the most effective methods to stem the rising tide of assimilation. We tell our kids: "Be Jewish and you'll get presents for eight days."

And yet I can't help but feel that there must be more of a message for our lives to Chanuka. Don't misunderstand me, I'm not saying you shouldn't get me anything.

The Talmud asks the famous question "What is Chanuka?" It then goes on to explain the miraculous victory of a tenacious band of religious zealots over the overwhelming force of the Greek empire. The Jews then returned to the Temple and rededicated it, miraculously discovering one small bottle of pure oil with which to light the menorah in the Temple for one day. But the oil burned for eight days. And so, to celebrate the miracle we instituted the eight days of Chanuka. We light the menorah and eat food cooked in oil.

But the question is, what did we have against the Greeks in the first place? They wanted to bring us the light of Greek civilization and culture. Their drama, sports, education and philosophy. So what was so terrible about Plato? Well for one thing it's almost impossible to get out of the carpet, but more than that, we Jews had our own philosophy. We weren't a pagan people lucky to get

someone to teach us how to throw a discus, we are a holy people reaching for spiritual heights through G-dliness. We want to bring the light of G-d into a world of darkness, and all the light of Greek civilization can't compete with that.

So we eat a lot of oil. Now some people think that's because we wanted to make sure we don't have great physiques like the Greeks, but actually it's because oil is like us Jews. It floats on top of everything else. It doesn't mix well. It burns brightly and can bring light into a world of darkness. Maybe the Greeks had a message of Western Civilization that was a step up if you were an Edomite, but for us Jews it was a step down to a world devoid of holiness and true meaning.



So every year we light those little candles and although they might not light up the world yet, they have the power to chase away some of the shadows. We Jews are a people with an outlook that spans thousands of years. Over the centuries the Greeks have moved on, but we Jews are still around bringing a message of transcendental spiritual fulfillment to a world in darkness. Happy Chanuka!

PARSHA 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.

PARSHA 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 kid-



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In Memory of
MORDECHAI BEN DAVID o.b.m.
28 Kislev 5738

dush 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 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 for Parsha Insights:

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

“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*

I DID NOT 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*

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 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.

PARSHA Q&A?

1. What was symbolized by the fat cows being eaten?
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. Pharaoh gave Yosef the name "Tsafnas Panayach." What did that name 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 the 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. When the brothers were accused of stealing Yosef's silver goblet, they refuted the claim with the logical principle known as *kal v'chomer*. What did they say?

YIDDLE RIDDLE

Last week we asked: This riddle is attributed to the Ibn Ezra. Two characters in Tanach: one's name makes him sound as though he's his own uncle, and the other's would have him appear to be his own grandfather. Who are they?

• Riddle submitted by Dovid Solomon <dsolomon@actcom.co.il>

Answer: King Achav ("Ach" means brother, "av" means father; hence "Achav" means "Brother of father" or "uncle.") (*Melachim I 16:28*) Avner son of Ner ("Avner" sounds like "the father" (av) of Ner). (*Shmuel I 26:5*)

SPECIAL RIDDLE!

As a Chanuka present to our readers, we're offering you another riddle this week, including the answer!

Avraham Rosenthal <rosentha@netvision.net.il> wrote:

Here is a Yiddle Riddle which I heard from a prominent *cheder rebbi* in *Yerushalayim*: Name four people in *Sefer Bereishis* (Genesis) whose names consist of two words.

Answer:

Tuval Kayin (*Bereishet 4:22*); May Zahav (*Bereishet 36:39*); Poti Fera (*Bereishet 41:45*); Tsafnas Panayach (*Bereishet 41:45*).

Ohrnet Notes:

What about *Adam HaRishon*? (Just kidding.) But on a more serious note: Ben Oni! That was Rachel's name for her son Binyamin. (*Bereishet 25:18*) And what about Malki Tzedek, king of Shalem? (*Bereishet 14:18*)

PARSHA Q&A!

ANSWERS

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 during 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 ten different 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 he was the one who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Alternatively, to separate him from Levi, because together they posed a danger to Yosef.
15. 42:24 - The verse says that Shimon was bound "in front of their eyes," implying that he was bound only while in their sight, but that when they left he was released.
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 - Reuven said: "You can kill my two sons if I fail to bring Binyamin back to you."
18. 43:2,10 - Twice the travel time to and from Egypt.
19. 43:12 - Three times as much. This enabled them to repay the money they found in their sacks and to buy more food even if the price of food had doubled.
20. 44:8 - They said "Look, we returned the money we found in our sacks; therefore, how can it be that we would actually steal from you?"

SHERLOX

Sherlock Holmes and the Mystery In-Law

Watstein scratched his head: “What do you think of this, Mr. Holmes?” said Watstein. “The verse says: ‘And he (Pharaoh) gave him Osnas, daughter of Poti Fera the Priest of On, as a wife.’ (41:45) Rashi says that Poti Fera was really Potifar, Yosef’s former master.”

“I think that’s lovely!” said world famous detective Sherlock Holmes. “Yosef’s enemy becomes his beloved father-in-law! Sadly, in far too many families the opposite is the case.”

“But what forces Rashi to say this? From a simple reading, Potifar and Poti Fera were two different people. Potifar was the chief butcher while Poti Fera was Priest of On. Furthermore, they have different names! Their names may sound alike, but so what? Dozens of people in Tanach share similar sounding names, such as Shalah and Shelah (*Bereishis* 10:24), Yishva and Yishvi (*Bereishis* 46:16). So I ask you, where does Rashi see an indication in the text hinting that Potifar and Poti Fera were the same person?”

Answer

“The verse says that Pharaoh gave Osnas to Yosef as a wife. Why was it Pharaoh himself who gave her as a wife?” asked Sherlock.

“What do you mean?” asked Watstein.

“Wasn’t it generally accepted back then that the *father* gave his daughter in marriage? Surely Poti Fera, Osnas’ father, should have been party to the decision? Why was it *Pharaoh* who gave her in marriage?” asked Sherlock.

“I see,” said Watstein. “Well, perhaps Poti Fera objected, but Pharaoh, being the despot he was, could force the marriage despite the father’s objection.”

“But what father in his right mind would oppose such a match!” said Sherlock. “Yosef was the most handsome, wise, and powerful person in Egypt! He made Prince Charming look like the Hunchback of Notre Dame.”

“I see your point,” said Watstein. “Since the verse emphasizes that *Pharaoh* gave Osnas in marriage, it implies that her father opposed the match. Only one person in all Egypt would oppose such a match: Potifar! Potifar’s wife, with her slanderous accusations, might have soured Potifar from wanting any future relationship with Yosef.”

• Based on *Maskil L'David*, *Sherlox* is by Reuven Subar
Inspired by “What’s Bothering Rashi” by Rabbi Avigdor Bonchek

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

After reading your McDonald’s story (*Feeding You a Whopper — Ohrmet Lech Lecha*) where you speculated what would have happened had a Jew come by while someone was eating a kosher airplane meal inside a McDonald’s restaurant, I would like to tell you exactly what would have happened:

Feeding You a Whopper II

To install a new driveway at a gasoline station he owned, my dad hired some day laborers. At midday the laborers said they wanted to be paid half their day’s wage to buy lunch. My father knew these men to be derelicts and alcoholics. He feared that if he paid them anything they would take the money to the nearest bar and he would never see them again. Instead he offered to buy them lunch and he would pay for it.

As he was leaving to get them lunch he asked my *zaydeh* (grandfather) if he would like to go along. My *zaydeh* got in the car and my father drove off. When he pulled into a nearby McDonald’s my *zaydeh* said, “What are we doing here?” Dad explained he was only getting lunch for the workers.

Zaydeh said “you can’t go in there, its *ma’aris ayin* (for-

bidden due to appearance).” Dad said, “If I don’t get them lunch, I’ll lose them and the whole job will have to be re-done, and besides no Jews ever come out here to the Northeast end of town.” With *Zaydeh* protesting, Dad bought the laborers lunch.

Months later Dad is speaking to a fellow he grew up with but hasn’t spoken to in years. His old friend says: “I’ve got to ask you a question. Do you still keep kosher?”

“Of course,” Dad answers.

His friend continues: “You know it’s sad that all of us kids from the old neighborhood are no longer observant, but I always thought that at least you still are. Then a few months ago when I had a job out in the Northeast side of town I saw you coming out of McDonald’s. I felt really sad...”

• Binyomin Friedman from Minneapolis (where the story took place),
Ohr Somayach alumnus ‘76-‘80, now a Rabbi in Atlanta
<bfried2@juno.com>

THE GENEROUS JEW

Two appeals for contributions are recorded in the Torah, and the response of the Jewish nation to each of them raises an interesting point regarding the character of this nation.

When the people became anxious over what they misunderstood as a delay in Moshe's return from Heaven, they initiated the sin of the Golden Calf. As a delay tactic, Aharon appealed for contributions of the gold adorning the women and children, confident that they would not be so quick to part with their jewelry. But the men-folk surprised him by enthusiastically coming forward with their own jewelry. (*Shmos* 32:2-3)

The second appeal to the people for contributions was made by Moshe when Hashem commanded him to solicit gifts for the building of the Sanctuary. Once again there is an enthusiastic response as the people bring all the necessary materials. (*Shmos* 35:21-22)

What is the relationship between these two responses?

One perspective of our Sages is that this is a comment on the unique nature of Jewish generosity.

"They are asked to contribute to the Golden Calf and they give. They are asked to contribute to the Sanctuary and they give!"

A different approach is that the response to the appeal for the Sanctuary was not an expression of the readiness of Jews to contribute to any cause. Rather, it was a calculated effort on the part of a repentant people to atone for misguided generosity.

• *Shekalim* 2b

WHEN A HALF IS MORE THAN A WHOLE

The name of this *mesechta* — the only one in the Daf Yomi cycle from the Talmud Yerushalmi — is "*Shekalim*." Its central topic is the silver coin which

Jews were required to contribute annually to the *Beis Hamikdash* for the purpose of funding the communal sacrifices.

Why did Hashem command us to give exactly a *machatzis hashekel* — a half-shekel coin of silver? Our Sages offer many explanations: Some see a connection with the sin of the Golden Calf which occurred at the end of six hours — half of the day. Others see in this coin's ten *geirah* units an atonement for violating the Ten Commandments with that sin.

Rabbi Pinchas, however, cites the perspective of Rabbi Levi that the atonement of the *machatzis hashekel* relates to a much earlier sin — the sale of Yosef into slavery perpetrated by his envious brothers. They received a total of twenty *dinar* from this transaction, so that each of the ten brothers gained two. Each Jew must therefore contribute two *dinar* — half a shekel — to the *Beis Hamikdash* as an atonement for their sin.

A similar calculation appears in the famous midrash we relate on Yom Kippur and Tisha B'Av about the Ten Martyrs so cruelly slain by the Roman emperor, who claimed that he held them accountable for the sin of Yosef's ten brothers selling him into slavery.

There is an apparent problem, however, in regard to this calculation. Yosef had *eleven* brothers, but the youngest, Binyamin, was home with his father and not an accomplice to the sale. But since the oldest, Reuven, was also not present when the sale took place, we are left with only *nine*.

Two approaches are suggested by the commentaries. One is that although Reuven was not directly involved in the sale, and even tried to save Yosef from his brothers by suggesting that they place him in a pit rather than slay him, his initial conspiring against Yosef made him culpable as well.

Another idea is that Reuven is indeed not in the calculation but the victim, Yosef, is! It was his indiscreet behavior towards his brothers which aroused their envy and he therefore shares in their guilt.

• *Shekalim* 6a

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ASK the RABBI

SHABBOS PARSHAS MIKEITZ - CHANUKA

YOUR FIRST DEGREE

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Where should I light Chanuka candles if I'm not allowed to light them in my room? The dorm policy in my dorm at U. of M. is that we're not allowed to smoke, light candles, etc., in the dorm rooms. Should I light anyway? Or should I not do it at all? Thanks.

Dear Name@Withheld,

Your dormitory policy is very sensible. It's obviously intended to ensure that the first degree you get will be a piece of paper, not a burn. Breaking this rule endangers you and others, besides the fact that it is simply against the rules.

I recommend that you light your menorah at the entrance to the dorm building, or if that's not possible then in the dining room.

Source:

- Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 671:5

STRAIGHT ANSWER

Allan Grant

<agrants@pop.mindspring.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Where can I, a complete novice, find the rabbinic or halachic rulings on the construction of a chanukia (chanuka menorah)? I've enclosed a photo of a chanukia that I had custom-built for my wife and I can't find anyone to give me a straight answer.



I have been told that they've got to be in a straight line, that there is no variation from this style. But I've also been told that there can be different

shapes and alignments as long as each candle is separate and can be viewed as such. Obviously, I'm confused.

I've been told that there are rules and regulations in the Talmud, Shabbat 23b, but I don't have a Talmud near me, and the closest shuls are more than 20 miles from here, so that's out.

What are the requirements? Where can a layman find them? How do the above opinions get resolved? Where do I go? HELP!! Please help with a good explanation, not just a one word sentence that doesn't tell me why.

Dear Allan Grant,

Traditionally and ideally, the chanukia is a straight line. The one pictured which you made is also OK, because each candle is distinct from the others.

The idea is, that the onlooker can see which night of Chanuka it is by looking at the candles, which is easiest if in a straight line. For the same reason, the shamash must be distinct, preferably a little higher than the other candles.

Sources:

- Rema, Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 671:4
- Mishna Berura *ibid.* 17

WHERE IN BLAZES?

Evan Sehgal <Bns357@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

In the Shulchan Aruch it says a chanukia must be no higher than 20 amos (cubits). Is this height measured from the base of the chanukia, the base of the candle, the base of the flame or the top of the flame? Is this an issue as the candle burns down? Does this have implications for the giant menorahs lit in public places?

Dear Evan Sehgal,

The flame must not be higher than 20 amos (approximately 30-40 feet) above ground level of the public thoroughfare. If the flame is higher, the person has not fulfilled the mitzvah. Large public menorahs are anyway not intended to fulfill the mitzvah because they are not in or next to any individual's dwelling. The mitzvah is to light the menorah at home.

GLOWING REPORT

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

How soon after the Maccabean victory was Chanuka celebrated on an annual basis? When were the first chanukiot created and used? When was the ban on constructing a seven-branched menorah rescinded?

Feldi3 <Feldi3@aol.com> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

I have to do a project for my Torah teacher on the menorah, could you send me some pictures, and information on the menorah. Thank you for your time. Sincerely, Feldi3

Name@Withheld wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Can you give me information on the significance of the 7-branched menorah, as opposed to the 9-branched chanukia?

Dear Feldi3 and Names@Withheld,

The original Menorah was the golden candelabra that G-d commanded the Jewish People to make and place in the Holy Temple. It had six branches and a stem, making seven lamps in all. The kohanim (priests) lit it once a day. The Torah relates its measurements and design in Exodus 25:31-40.

The Sages teach that the Menorah was the vessel that G-d used to blend the spiritual light of the World to Come with the physical light of this world. For this reason, the windows in the Temple were narrow on the inside and wide on the outside — to spread out this blended light to the world.

There is a prohibition against making a metal seven-branched menorah. This prohibition is part of the general prohibition against making vessels like those of the Holy Temple, and it was never rescinded.

Chanuka was instituted as an annual holiday the very first year after the Maccabean victory (165 BCE) to celebrate the victory and the miracle of the oil that burned for eight days.

The Chanuka menorah has place for

ASK the RABBI

SHABBOS PARSHAS MIKEITZ - CHANUKA

eight candles and for a ninth candle set off somewhat from the rest. The eight candles commemorate the miracle of the oil while the ninth candle, the *shamash*, is for light. The first use of an eight-armed menorah for Chanuka is not known, although there are some dating back over 500 years.

There's no absolute requirement to use a Chanuka menorah, because you can fulfill the minimal requirement with one candle per night. But since it's ideal to add a candle each night, the custom arose to use an eight-branched menorah. A friend of mine from Yeshiva used to line up eight soda cans as his menorah!

For more information, look at Ohr Somayach's Chanuka web pages at: www.ohr.org/special/chanuka/index.htm

And Feldi, let me know what grade I get, er, I mean, what grade you get, on the report!

Sources:

- Tractate Shabbat 21b
- Tractate Avoda Zara 43a
- Shulchan Aruch Yoreh Deah 141:2
- See also Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 3:33

RUDOLF THE RED-NOSED ROAST BEEF

Heather Coats from Anchorage, Alaska <hcoats@micronet.net> wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
Do you know if reindeer sausage is kosher? It is made locally at Indian Valley Meats. Thank you.*

Dear Heather Coats,

Reindeer is a kosher-type animal. But, like all kosher-type animals, it isn't actually kosher until it is ritually slaughtered and goes through a special process. If it doesn't go through this process, then it's not kosher. That's why all meat needs Rabbinic supervision.

If it's difficult in Anchorage to find meat that is actually kosher, I am including an address of a Rabbi in Anchorage who will be able to help you obtain kosher food (address omitted from published version).

HASMONEAN KINGS

Russell Gold from Bala Cynwyd, PA <russgold@acm.org> wrote:

*Dear Rabbi,
Why was the Davidic line not restored to the throne after the Maccabean revolt overthrew the Syrian-Greek occupation? Why did the people accept the Hasmonean line instead?*

Dear Russell Gold,

The Hasmoneans were the military commanders of the coup; they kept the throne for themselves being the family in power who had the capability of maintaining law and order. In fact they were punished for not returning the throne to the house of David, and eventually not only lost the throne but the whole family died out. The people themselves had little to say about the matter, as the monarchy could not have been retrieved by force (i.e., a civil war) out of gratitude to the Hasmoneans.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

Re: Providence:

This isn't a question but it's a true story that I heard that I'd like to share. My friend received a 500 Rand inheritance and decided to give 50 Rand to charity. His parents said they thought that was too much but he told them that whatever you give to charity, Hashem gives back to you. So he gave it to charity and later, when cleaning his drawers and going through cards from his past birthdays, he found a 50 Rand note that he had not seen.

- R. Berzack from South Africa <robert.berzack@pixie.co.za>

Re: Sanctifying the Moon Versus Moon-Worship (Ohrnet Vayera):

Many people are careful to face away from the moon while saying *Kiddush Levana*. The reason is to avoid giving the appearance of moon worship.

Rabbi Yitzchok D. Frankel, Cedarhurst, NY
<Ydfrankel@aol.com>

Re: B'SD (Ohrnet Vayeitze):

In a recent Ask the Rabbi regarding the letters "beit, samech, dalet," you wrote: "It's a custom to write it on top of the page as a prayer for success in what we are about to write, but it's not an absolute requirement. I've never noticed anyone writing it when they write a check."

An interesting thing just happened to me before I read the above. A gentleman from Spain came into my Judaica store and wrote "beis samech dalet" above his signature on the credit card slip. He said that he has officially incorporated it as a legal part of his signature and showed me that it appears above his name on his driver's license and on other documents.

- Michael Katz <M613K@aol.com>

I'd like to note that Rabbi Yitzchak Karo in his sefer "Toldot Yitzchak" (*Vayikra 14:34*) says that the reason to write either "beit hey" or "samech dalet" is from the verse in Mishle (3:6) "In all your ways know Him..." However, if writing "beit hey" one should be careful not to put the paper in the garbage (see *Igrot Moshe Yoreh Deah 2:138*).

Also what you wrote about using the names of people from before Avraham, see *Pitchei Teshuva Yoreh Deah 365:6* in the name of *Teshuva Me'ahava (1:35)* that one may do so, and not like the *Mabit (1:276)*. Thanks for your wonderful weekly newsletter.

- Moshe Reich, Kiryat Sefer, Israel

Ask the Rabbi

Greece My Palm

Helena from Troy, MI wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
What's the source for "Chanuka gelt" — giving money or presents on Chanuka? Does it have a Jewish source, or is it something we copied from others so Jewish kids wouldn't feel left out?

Dear Helena,

I heard the following from Rabbi Dovid Cohen, *shlita*. "Chanuka gelt" is a Jewish custom rooted in the Talmud. The Talmud states that even a very poor person who can't afford it must light Chanuka lights. He must borrow, or go "knocking on doors" collecting *tzeddaka*

(charity) until he collects enough to buy at least one candle per night of Chanuka. Therefore the custom arose to give presents on Chanuka, so if someone needs money for Chanuka candles he can receive it as "Chanuka gelt" without feeling embarrassed.

I've heard a theory from Professor Edward Simon that "Chanuka gelt" originates from the triumphant coinage of silver by the Maccabees.

Chanuka or Hanuka?

Kendra from Crosby, TX
<oilslick@gte.net> wrote:

Dear Rabbi,
I am doing a report on Chanuka for school and have found quite a lot of

information. My questions are: Is there any difference between Chanuka and Hanukkah, besides the spelling? If the spelling is the only difference, why the two ways to spell it and which is preferred or proper? Thanks alot. I think it is great that you help kids in this way.

Dear Kendra,

There is no difference between the two. The first letter of Chanuka in Hebrew is a "chet" which is a guttural sound that does not exist in English. It is pronounce at the back of the throat like the "ch" in the Scottish "loch." Some transliterate it as an "h" some as "ch" although neither is completely accurate.

Have a great Chanuka!



by O. Werner © 1998

Yossi & Co. is available weekly on the Ohr Somayach Web Site at www.ohr.org.il/yossi



Simcha's Torah Stories®

Outnumbered

Okay fellows; let's choose up sides for the ball game. Everybody who is on Chaim's team stand on this side, and Danny's team go to the other side.

Chaim, we're really outnumbered. Not only does Danny's team have more guys; they also have better players. What are we going to do?

Avi, it's only a sports game. The main thing is not whether we win or lose, but that we get some exercise and fresh air. Let's not take these things too seriously. However, since you brought up the subject of being outnumbered, you remind me of another time when the Jewish people were very outnumbered, and the situation was serious.

When was that, Chaim?

About 2100 years ago, during the time of the Greek empire.

Are you talking about the Chanuka story, Chaim?

I sure am. Try to imagine yourself at a meeting of Jewish leaders of the time.

Some 2100 years ago ...

Let us have a status report of the latest activities of the Greek rule over the Jewish people here in the Land of Israel.

The Greeks, although they outnumber us, do not threaten us physically. They want us to assimilate and be good citizens of Greece. They are interested in beauty, esthetics, and scholarship. They want our Torah to be a part of their library. They made us translate the Torah into Greek, so that they could read it and include it among their studies.

The Torah can only be properly

understood in the Holy language. Each word has many deep meanings. A translation captures only one or two meanings, and is just a shell of the real Torah. We hope this will not discourage Jews from studying the Torah in all of its depth.

Some time later ...

The Greeks have stepped up their assimilation campaign. They have appointed many Jews to official positions, encouraging them to assimilate by rewarding them with positions of honor. These Jews, and others, call themselves "Hellenists." They have joined forces with the Greeks and are encouraging other Jews to assimilate. The majority of Jews are still loyal to G-d and the Torah.

Another meeting ...

The Greeks realize that they cannot succeed in assimilating us as long as we are keeping all 613 *mitzvos*. Therefore, they have outlawed three *mitzvos*. It is now illegal to keep Shabbos, perform *bris mila*, and sanctify the New Moon. We must defy this religious persecution. They must not succeed in uprooting even one of our holy *mitzvos*.

Some time later ...

Antiochus, the Greek ruler has realized that his efforts will not succeed in separating the Jews from the Torah. He has now begun a campaign of violence. He has slaughtered tens of thousands of men, women, children, and infants. The Hellenists are helping his armies track down Jews who are in hiding. The enemy has entered our Holy Temple and defiled it in the most gruesome way. It

seems there is no alternative except to wage warfare against this evil oppressor.

How can we ever hope to win an open war against Antiochus? Do you realize how mighty the Greek Empire is? They have conquered many countries, and rule of a large part of the world. They are trained warriors with weapons far superior to ours. To fight against them would be suicide.

You are forgetting one thing. We are fighting for the Honor of G-d and His Torah. He is on our side. He is more powerful than any weapon or army. We must go to battle. We have no choice.

Back to the present ...

As we all know, Avi, the Jews, led by the Maccabees, defeated the mighty Greeks and liberated the Land of Israel from their rule. G-d was on their side. In our days we are still facing assimilation. Guess what? He is still on our side. No matter what the odds are against us. When we come to do *mitzvos*, learn and teach Torah, He gives us special assistance. Against all the odds.

Simcha's Quiz

Question of the Week

A snail once fell to the bottom of a pit ten feet deep. The snail was able to climb up three feet every day. Unfortunately, he slid back down two feet every night. How many days did it take him to get out of the pit?

Write Simcha with the correct answer:

simchag@netvision.net.il

CHANUKA CHAOS!

Unscramble the following Chanuka words and write them in the blanks:

ILO KAELT AECLDN

Once you've unscrambled the above words, take the circled letters and put one letter in each of the blank spaces below to get a Chanuka message!

IGH IGH IGHTS!

It's the Real Thing!

by Rabbi Pinchas Kantrowitz

“It’s the real thing — Coke!” A human tooth placed in a vessel containing Coca Cola for an extended period eventually disintegrates, utterly disappears! Place a lot of sugar in water, put in a special secret admixture of chemicals and, voila! — the “real thing!” But the world has bought this slogan, as well as cans and bottles by the billions. How did the Coca Cola company manage to convince the world that their product is the “real thing?” Perhaps we can blame the ancient Greeks. The Greeks? Please allow us to explain.

What remains from Ancient Greece? What are the legacies of the Greek Empire to the Modern World?

One can’t stroll far into a great art museum without bumping into a colossal marble or bronze statue (minus the nose perhaps) dating to the Greek Empire. Greek sculpture is today omnipresent in Athens and other cities of modern Greece, and ubiquitous in the great art museums worldwide: The British Museum in London, the Louvre in Paris, and the Metropolitan in New York City to name a few.

The basis of this legacy is the ancient Greek reverence for the human form. The ancient Greeks idolized the human body; they saw it as perfect and beautiful. So enamored were they with the natural form that during their occupation of the land of Israel they prohibited *bris mila*, circumcision. How could one improve upon Divine Creation, they argued?

The Olympic Games certainly rank among the more popular legacies of the ancient Greeks, so popular worldwide that the Winter and Summer Games were recently split, enabling aficionados to enjoy this entertainment every two years instead of every four. The Olympic Games are the world’s symbol of sports, the epitome of athletic competition. “Sound body, sound mind:” To be of sound mind one must develop a sound body.

However, sports today has become more than a means to a sound body, it has become one of the world’s largest industries with top athletes earning

millions annually. The Greek adoration of the human form has become a worship of the athlete, the individual of great physical prowess who has trained the body to attain its maximal physical capacities. Not only is the physical form to be admired through sculpture, but the master of the physical is to be idolized through sport!

The Greeks left us an intellectual legacy as well. They made contributions in mathematics, literature, and science. Perhaps their greatest intellectual legacy, however, was in the field of philosophy.

“Philosophy,” said 20th century Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce, “removes from religion all reason for existing...As the science of the spirit, it looks upon religion as a phenomenon, a transitory historical fact, a psychic condition that can be surpassed.” (*Esthetic Ch. 8*) Here, Croce expresses the modern intellectual legacy of the Greeks. According to Croce “ideas do not represent but are reality. Art is the expression of a Creative Mind outside of which nothing exists; thus reality is history and all knowledge historical knowledge.” (*The University Encyclopedia*).

If ideas are reality, then reality becomes history, and religion can be seen as “a transitory historical fact,” a “psychic condition” to be surpassed and replaced by philosophy, “the science of the spirit.”

The “sound mind” is one which believes only in the concrete, and experiences a “reality” of the five senses. Even the esoteric idea, even the

lofty ideal, must be understood as concrete expressions of a concrete world. Thus, the “sound body” is celebrated only as a tool to experience the concrete, the “sound mind” to understand the concrete.

“It is also necessary to know that G-d must be absolutely one. It is impossible that there exist more than one being whose existence is intrinsically imperative. Only one Being can possibly exist with this necessarily perfect Essence, and therefore the only reason all other things have the possibility of existence is that G-d wills them to exist. All other things therefore depend on Him, and do not have intrinsic existence.” (*The Way of G-d, 1:1:6*)

Hashem, the intangible, unknowable, and indescribable is the only “intrinsically imperative” existence; all else depends entirely on Hashem’s will; as long as Hashem wills it, it exists. Art, philosophy, history, even the human body are not “real,” as they are only temporal expressions of the Will of the True Existence, Hashem. The concrete world is ephemeral, transitory. The intangible world of the Creator is eternal, “real!”

So it’s all the Greeks fault! They convinced the world that the human body should be worshiped for its own sake (sculpture), that one who maximizes the utilization of the human body becomes the idol of society (Olympics), and that the idea is reality (philosophy). They turned Coke into the “real thing.”

One nation isn’t “sold.” The Jewish people. We say the “Real Thing” is Hashem! Hashem adds life! Therefore, we as a nation must “teach the world to sing in perfect harmony” the song of Hashem.

