

O H R N E T

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYESHEV - CHANUKA - MIKETZ · 5761 · VOL. 8 NO. 10

PARSHA INSIGHTS

VAYESHEV

MASTER OF WAR

Yosef said to the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers: "If only you would think of me... and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building." (40:14)

Something very strange happens on the twenty-fifth of the Hebrew month of Kislev. Two completely different festivals are observed. One festival celebrates a military triumph by a small group of brave partisans who managed to overcome vastly superior forces and restore Jewish statehood to Israel. The other commemorates a supernatural victory against powers of darkness that wished to adulterate the Jewish People and their Torah.

Oddly, both these festivals have the same name. They are both called Chanuka.

The secular version of the Chanuka story makes Mattityahu and Yehuda Maccabee sound like characters out of a Cyborg movie. True, there's an eight-branched candelabra somewhere at the back of the set, but Chanuka is really a nationalistic *shoot-em-up* where the good guys win and the bad guys lose and G-d got written out of the plot at the first script meeting.

The other version focuses on the supernatural events that surround Chanuka: The miracle of the oil lasting eight days; of a small minority who manage to hold on to their Judaism against the blandishments of materialism and hedonism. True, there's a mil-

itary victory somewhere in there, but it's a miraculous victory against impossible odds, a victory which is no more than the revelation of G-d's providential Hand.

There's a fine line between faith and folly. There's an equally fine line between thinking that the Jewish People win wars because we have the best tanks, planes and training and thinking that we have Divine help.

In 1967, the Six Day War opened with a blistering attack on the Egyptian airfields by the Israeli airforce. Israel managed to knock out 90% of the Egyptian planes while they were still on the ground. Now, 90% is an interesting statistic — because it can't happen. Warplanes under fire-bombing a tiny ground target can achieve 40% — maybe 50%. But 90% doesn't happen.

When the Six Day War ended, you couldn't buy a pair of *tefilin* in the whole of *Eretz Yisrael*. There were appeals in the United States for anyone who had a spare pair to send them. The Jewish People realized that G-d had given them a miraculous victory against five Arab armies on four fronts, and the upswell in Jewish observance was remarkable. Equally remarkable — and predictable — was the short-lived nature of this awakening. Nothing much had changed in 3,000 years, and just as the Jewish People were capable of cavorting around a golden calf a few weeks after they had witnessed the splitting of the sea and all the miracles in Egypt, so the Jewish

People very soon forgot Who it is who fights our wars. Soon they were bragging about the "invincible" Israeli army.

So, as it were, to give us a little reminder of Who's really running things, some four years later the Arabs attack again. This time they manage to make deep inroads into the heartland of the country. But the Arabs make a fatal mistake. They decide to attack on Yom Kippur when everyone is weak from fasting.

They forget two things: One strategic and the other supernatural. Strategically, the most difficult thing about starting a war without a large standing army is to mobilize. The major problem is to *find* everyone. However, on Yom Kippur — you can find *everyone*. Because almost everyone is in *shul* (synagogue). So all you have to do is to drive from *shul* to *shul* and call out the names at the back. Also, the roads are empty so you can mobilize your army in about half the time it would normally take. Secondly, the Arabs forgot to read their history books. If they'd paid closer attention, they'd have realized that traditionally, the Jewish People always used to fast before going into battle, to purify themselves before G-d. And even in the secular State of Israel, anyone with the remotest connection to his Judaism is *davening* his heart out in *shul*. Not a good day to attack, really...

With the close of the Yom Kippur war, the same thing happens: A realization of a the miracle, followed by a return to "with my own power and

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Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams — of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him — signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has

been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the *mashiach*. Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In jail, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is re-instated; and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in jail.

AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHT DAYS

Ma'oz Tzur, sung by Jews worldwide after lighting the menorah, relates the four exiles to

which the Jewish people have been subjected — Egypt, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece — and of their joyous endings. At the Pesach Seder we do not sing about Chanukah and on Purim we don't mention Egypt. Why is Chanukah the time to learn about Jewish history?

In the *haftara* for the Shabbat of Chanukah, the Prophet Zechariah's vision flickers between the attempt to rebuild the Second Temple, and the euphoria that will accompany the rebuilding of the third Temple in the future. Then Zechariah sees a seven-branched menorah, above which is a large oil container with seven pipes feeding olive oil to each of the seven lamps of the menorah. Zechariah is told that this menorah is a message to Zerubavel, who was instrumental in

rebuilding the second Temple: "Not by strength or by might," says G-d, "but with my spirit."

Consider the shape of the menorah, seven lights branching forth from a central stem. The word menorah can also be read as "*m'nurah*" — from the fire. The menorah shows how light spreads forth from the "fire" of Torah and illuminates the world. If we learn to trace everything back to its Divine source, then G-d will channel His benevolence upon us from above, just as Zechariah's menorah was fueled from above. On Chanukah we sing about all the exiles, for all those exiles could end only when the Jewish People learned the lesson of the menorah. And when we take this message to heart, then our final exile too will end, and the crown will be returned to its former glory.

ZECHARIAH 2:14 - 4:7

"Reuven said: 'Cast him (Yosef) into this pit in the desert; do not actually kill him;' (Reuven said this) in order to save him from them and bring him back to his father (Yaakov)." (37:21-2)

When a person does a *mitzvah*, he should do it with a full heart and with joy; for had Reuven known that his good intentions would be eternally inscribed in the Torah, Reuven would have hoisted Yosef upon his shoulders and carried him home to his father.

• Ruth Rabba 5, Tanchuma Vayikra 25:665

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TWO KINDS OF “MORAH”

Was the Prophet Shmuel a *nazir*? Rabbi Nehorai contends that he was. As proof he cites the vow that his mother Chana made in her prayer to Hashem to be blessed with a child: “No *morah* shall come upon his head” (*Shmuel I 1:11*). This same term *morah* appears in the instructions which the angel gave to Shimshon’s mother before his birth: “No *morah* shall come upon his head” (*Shoftim 13:5*). Since that passage continues with the words “for he shall be a *nazir* to Hashem,” we conclude that just as Shimshon was a *nazir*, so too was Shmuel.

This deduction is challenged by Rabbi Yossi who suggests that the word *morah* here refers not to a haircutting instrument, but rather to a deference to human power which Shmuel would not suffer from. Rabbi Nehorai rejects such an interpretation because Shmuel’s fear of human authority is expressed in his reaction to the Divine commandment to anoint David as the successor of King Saul whom Hashem had rejected as Israel’s ruler: “How can I go when it is likely that Saul will hear about it and slay me!” Since *morah* cannot mean that he will not be forced to defer to human authority, it must then be understood as a vow that no instrument will be used to cut his hair because he will be a *nazir*.

In one of the very few appearances of Maharsha in this *mesechta*, he cautions us not to read the term “*morah*” in Rabbi Yossi’s interpretation as “*fear*” of humans, because the term for fear ends with an *aleph*, not a *hei*. He suggests instead that it be read as “*authority*,” that Shmuel will not have to bow his head to human authority. (Malbim, in his commentary on Shmuel, does understand it to mean fear, despite the spelling deviation.)

Maharsha goes even further in suggesting that in Rabbi Yossi’s view the term *morah* used in regard to Shimshon also meant *authority*, indicating that he would be above human authority as long as he respected the constraints of his *nezirut* and did not cut his hair. This was expressed by Shimshon himself when he revealed the secret of his super-human strength to Delilah and told her that his might would disappear if his hair was cut (*Shoftim 16:17*), a condition never made in regard to the spiritual power of Shmuel.

Rashi on Shmuel (*ibid.*) quotes the Targum of Yonatan ben Uziel on the passage regarding the prophet in the manner which Rabbi Yossi interpreted it. Maharsha mentions that although some Mishnaic texts actually incorporate this into Rabbi Yossi’s statement, it does not appear in the classical texts, which explains why our editions do not include it.

• *Nazir 61a*

THE “BASHERTE” MATE

Many traditional Jews refer to the woman whom a man marries as his “*basherte*” — the one predestined by Heaven as his mate.

The background for this term is the statement which Rabbi Yehuda made in the name of the Sage Rav: “Forty days before the child is formed, a Heavenly voice proclaims that the daughter of a designated person will be his wife, that a designated house will be his home and that a designated field will be his source of livelihood.”

In his eight chapter introduction to *Mesechta Avot*, Rambam raises a challenge to the concept of “*basherte*.” Since a man has free will and Hashem does not interfere with his ability to decide against doing what is right or electing to do what is wrong, how can it be predestined whom he will marry, since this implies that he must indeed fulfill the *mitzvah* of getting married in order to produce children? Since this freedom of choice can just as well lead him to marrying a woman forbidden to him by the Torah, can we logically say that this woman was predestined for him?

Rabbi Yaakov Emden agrees with Rambam’s premise that there is no such concept as “*basherte*” meaning that a man must indeed end up marrying the woman predestined for him. A person certainly has the free will to refrain from marrying altogether, or to marry a woman forbidden to him. What our sages meant by the Heavenly pre-natal announcement was that if a man decides he wants to do the will of Hashem and to marry the right woman in fulfillment of Hashem’s *mitzvah*, then Hashem will provide him with the ideal mate designated for him if he takes that proper course.

Tosefot raises the problem of our *gemara*, which establishes the idea of predestination as absolute in regard to man’s first marriage partner, being inconsistent with the *gemara* in *Mesechta Mo’ed Katan (18b)* which seems to indicate that even in regard to the first marriage this predestination can be altered through prayer. We may suggest that perhaps the *gemara* there did not resort to the distinction made here between the first and second marriage because it wishes to teach us that even in regard to the first marriage there is no absolute predestination. Just as a man has free will to not marry, or to marry a forbidden woman, he has the ability to pray to Hashem to alter the predestination to enable him to marry the woman he feels is best for him. (This in accordance with Ritva in *Kiddushin*, but Rashi in *Mo’ed Katan* has a different interpretation.)

• *Sotah 2a*

DELAYED ACTION CONFESSION

To encourage the *sotah*, the suspected adulteress, to admit her guilt — and thus eliminate the need to obliterate the parchment containing the Holy Name of Hashem in the potion she must drink — the Sanhedrin told her of the two great people in history who had the courage to publicly confess their wrongdoing: Yehuda and Reuven.

There is a strong connection, says Rabbi Yonatan, between these two. It was the Yehuda's confession that he had relations with his daughter-in-law Tamar — whom he mistook for a harlot because of her disguise — which was the catalyst for Reuven to confess to his father that he was the one guilty of slighting him.

After Rachel's death during the return of Yaakov and his family to *Eretz Yisrael*, the Patriarch transferred his principal residence from Rachel's tent to that of her handmaid Bilha. Reuven, Leah's oldest son, considered this an affront to his mother. If his mother Leah had only a secondary role to Rachel in Rachel's lifetime, Reuven was certainly not ready to tolerate that she should be secondary to Rachel's maid. He therefore took the initiative of secretly moving his father's bed into Leah's tent. In his parting words to his sons, Yaakov rebuked Reuven for this impetuous rebellion against his decision, a rebellion which caused Reuven to lose the privileges of kingdom and *kehuna* which otherwise would have been his as the oldest.

Tosefot (*Bava Kama 92a*) makes an interesting observation connected to the timing of Reuven's confession, which the *gemara* says was made in order to remove any suspicion that one of his brothers was the guilty party. The Midrash explains that the passage (*Bereishet 37:29*) "Reuven returned to the pit" (in which Yosef had been placed by his other brothers before they sold him into slavery) refers to Reuven returning from his fasting and sackcloth as repentance for his sin towards his father. The selling of Yosef was many years before the incident with Yehuda and Tamar and Yehuda's confession, and although Reuven was already aware of the need for repentance, his *public confession*, however, did not come until Yehuda's confession years later.

A careful calculation of the chronology of the aforementioned events indicates that about 25 years transpired between Reuven's misdeed and his confession. The intervening repentance came about nine years after that act and commentaries suggest that the catalyst for it was Reuven's reflection on his brothers' fratricidal plot which he at one stage tried to prevent. When he observed that they and he at the outset were prepared to slay Yosef without regard for the anguish this would cause their father, he began to reflect on where he had gone wrong in earlier years that could have been the seed of disrespect which now had grown to such proportions. The Midrash says that when Reuven started his repentance, Hashem praised him for "starting repentance at the beginning" because Reuven taught all future returnees that they must go to the root of their errors and repent for their past sins.

• *Sotah 7b*

PATRIARCHAL OUTREACH

"He established an *eishel* in Beersheba and there he called out in the Name of Hashem, Lord of the world." (*Bereishet 21:33*)

What did Avraham establish in Beersheba and what did his calling out consist of?

In regard to the first question there are the two opinions of Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Nechemia. One says that he planted an orchard with all sorts of delicacies to entertain wayfarers. The other contends that Avraham's *eishel* was a hotel in which he could provide his wayfaring guests with food, drink and escort. (The first letters of the Hebrew words for these three features spell out the word *eishel*.)

The calling out, explains the Sage Reish Lakish, refers to the impact which Avraham's hospitality had upon his guests. The word "*vayikra*" for calling out should be read "*vayakrie*" to indicate that Avraham caused others to call out to Hashem. After his guests had enjoyed the hospitality of his orchard or hotel, they wished to thank their host. But Avraham refused to take credit, insisting that whatever he gave them belonged to Hashem and that they must therefore thank and praise Him.

What compelled Reish Lakish to interpret Avraham's calling to Hashem in this manner?

Targum Onkelos translates calling out in the Name of Hashem both here and in *Bereishet 12:8* and *26:25* as an act of prayer. This is understandable in those other two places, where the calling out of Avraham and Yitzchak respectively followed the building of an altar which indicates an act of worship. But why should prayer be connected to the setting up of an orchard or a hotel for guests? Maharsha suggests that this is what caused Reish Lakish to look for another meaning, one that would be related to the hospitality of Avraham.

Ramban, in his commentary on *Bereishet 12:8*, digresses from the approach of Onkelos and supplies this concept of patriarchal outreach to Avraham's calling out by the altar. Up until his entry into *Eretz Yisrael* Avraham tried reaching out to the idol worshippers in his native land but found an unreceptive audience. Now that he was in the land where Hashem had promised him that He would bless those who blessed Avraham, he gained the confidence to publicly proclaim his monotheistic faith and teach it to others.

In light of Ramban's approach, we understand Reish Lakish's explanation of our opening passage that the *eishel* was an extension of Avraham's strategy of outreach. Rabbi Zvi Hirsch Chayot suggests that this explanation is the Talmudic source for what Rambam writes (*Laws of Idolatry 1:3*) that after Avraham was miraculously saved from the fiery furnace he had been cast into for his religious belief, "he began to cry out in a loud voice to the entire world and to each them that there is one G-d." When he describes Avraham's outreach efforts upon reaching *Eretz Yisrael*, Rambam indeed quotes our opening passage.

• *Sotah 10b*

AIN'T IT THE TRUTH

From: Name Withheld
<withheld@juno.com>

Dear Rabbi,

At times I find that I question some events mentioned in the Torah because they are out of my realm of experience. Examples might include Noah's ark, Abraham having a circumcision at age 100, Lot's wife turning into a pillar of salt, the splitting of the Red Sea, etc. How does one overcome doubts about events that the Torah describes as being true. I wish to believe in all that the Torah describes but I find that this requires overcoming a great deal of internal questioning. Thank you for your assistance.

Dear Name Withheld,

We know that the Torah's accounts are accurate because we have an unbroken chain of tradition originating with eyewitnesses. The splitting of the sea, for example, was witnessed by an entire nation, our ancestors, who passed this information along from generation to generation until our day. For a fuller development of this idea, please see "A Historical Verification of the Torah:"

<http://www.ohr.edu/ask/ask158.htm#Q1>

But your question goes beyond this. It sounds to me like you're asking: "Logically, I accept our history as accurate. But still, emotionally, how do I internalize a belief in events that are beyond my realm of experience? I know the Torah is true; now how can I *feel* that the Torah is true?"

To try to answer you, let me draw some parallels from science and technology.

Imagine you go to a far off land where the people are totally cut off from the rest of civilization and you tell them about telephones. They might not believe you. Then you tell them that people have been to the moon and back. They may think it's a miracle. Now you tell them that a motionless rock is really a whirling frenzy of particles invisible to the eye: Protons, neutrons and electrons. They might think you're insane.

There are many such examples. People believed that man could never fly and that iron could never float. Some people refused to believe in steam-powered trains even after seeing one. "It's witchcraft," they said.

So, it can be difficult to internalize things outside the realm of our experience. This is normal and to be expected.

Our sense of something being possible or impossible is a subjective intuition. Accepting something as true, then, should be based on logic and observation, not on intuition and imagination.

COLORED CHANUKAH CANDLES

From: Bob & Jeannie Roemmich
<bjmk@tdstelme.net>

Dear Rabbi,

If one has a mixed colored set of small red, green, blue, and yellow Chanukah candles, does it matter as to the order that they are placed in the menorah?

And from which side do you light them, as you look toward the menorah?

Dear Bob & Jeannie Roemmich,

There's no tradition regarding the color of the candles; so any color is okay, including plaid and infra-red! And the color order is up to you.

Although there are other customs, the most common one for placing the candles in the menorah is as follows: On the first day place one candle on the right side of the menorah. On the second day put a candle there and another one to the left of it. On the third day add the third candle to the left of those. And so on. Each night another candle goes on the left side of the last one.

But when lighting, you start with the new one, the one furthest on the left. You then move towards the right, lighting each one in order, the last candle being the one on the far right.

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. So Friday afternoon you should use big white Shabbat candles, or wicks and oil. The candles don't have to be placed in a *menorah*, but should be in a straight line.

KEEPING FAITH

From: Shaul ben Abraham in Sao Paulo, Brazil
<schf@bol.com.br>

Dear Rabbi,

At the end of parshat Vayeshev, Yosef begs Pharaoh's wine minister to help him get out of jail. Because of this lack of faith, say our Sages, Yosef was punished to stay in jail two extra years.

Did Yosef actually fail in his faith in G-d? It seems to me he was just trying to do anything that he could do at that moment. "Pirkei Avot" says: "If I am not for myself, who will be for me; And if not now, when?" Our faith in G-d is total and forever, but, where does faith end and our efforts begin? Where is the border between total faith and our efforts?

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Dear Shaul ben Abraham,

Great question which many commentaries speak about. I will give you one approach. G-d judges each person on that person's level. For a person with a lot of faith, G-d expects him to display a lot of faith, and he needs to take less action. For someone with less faith, he needs to take more action. If someone with less faith had done what

Yosef did, it may have been considered that he didn't do enough. But for Yosef, who had a lot of faith, it was too much.

Some commentaries say the it was the fact that Yosef asked twice "*ki im zechartani*" — "if only you will mention me." For Yosef, once would have been enough.

TITUS' ARCH

AN ANCIENT MYSTERY SOLVED

The Maccabees' Menorah and Titus' Menorah

When the victorious Maccabees returned to the desecrated Temple they found that much of its wealth and splendor had been plundered by the Greeks. Among the artifacts that had been stolen by Antiochos was the golden candelabrum, likely the same one that had been fashioned by the returning Babylonian exiles in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. Until a new candelabrum could be crafted, the soldiers improvised a makeshift device out of hollowed spearheads. Only later was a new golden replica manufactured, which was probably lit at the official rededication of the purified Temple, the first Chanukah.

The last Hasmonean king, Mattathias Antigonus (40-37 BCE), chose to place an image of the Menorah on the coins minted under his regime. The symbolism was quite appropriate: In addition to its associations with the Temple (the coins proudly proclaimed Mattathias' position as High Priest), the Menorah served as a reminder of the heroic exploits that had brought his family to power as liberators of their people.

The representation of the candelabrum on the Hasmonean coins provides us with our oldest picture of the Menorah. One notable feature of that depiction is that it seems to be standing on a sort of tripod. This would agree

with the evidence of the Talmud (which speaks of an indeterminate number of "legs"), as well as with the three-legged Menorah images that were incorporated in much of Jewish art in later centuries.

This portrayal of a Menorah supported by a tripod base is not the one that springs most naturally to our minds. Most of us imagine the Menorah with a broad, solid base, like the one that appears in the official seal of the State of Israel. The source for this image is the Arch of Titus, erected around 81 CE to commemorate the Roman triumph over the Jewish insurrection. On that arch we can see a meticulously detailed relief of the spoils of Jerusalem's Temple being carried through the streets of Rome, and the Menorah is perhaps the most prominent of the treasures. However the base of Titus' Menorah is not a tripod, but the now-familiar two-tiered hexagonal structure.

There are many factors that testify to the authenticity of the depiction in Titus' arch: In general, Roman triumphal arches were designed as historical documents and towards that end strove to be as accurate as possible. In this case, almost all the details demonstrate to the sculptors' intimate knowledge of the Temple's vessels as described in the Bible and other Jewish sources. Moreover, the proportions of the cande-

labrum, with its oversized base, are in such blatant conflict with the classical notions of aesthetic form that it is inconceivable that a Roman craftsman would have invented them.

How then are we to explain the discrepancy between these two different renderings of the Menorah's base?

Some clues to this mystery are suggested by the ornamental designs that appear in Titus' Menorah. Though the images have been eroded over time, it is possible to discern vestiges of such figures as eagles and fish-tailed sea serpents or dragons. A similar base has been excavated from a Roman temple at Didymus, now in southern Turkey.

The eagles were, of course, the best-know symbol of Roman sovereignty. The dragons were a popular decorative motif in Roman art, and the whole candelabrum seems to testify to the strong Roman influence.

There are however some striking differences between Titus' candelabrum and its pagan counterparts. The Didymus lamp, for example, features a human figure seated on the back of the monster. It also portrays this creature with spiky rills issuing from its neck, an image that was explicitly prohibited by Talmudic law. Both these features are lacking in the image of the Temple Menorah. While the lack of these pagan

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images, plus the general Roman tendency toward pictorial accuracy, both argue for its Jewish origins, they cannot offset the strong Roman influence perceptible in the design.

As some scholars have observed, this mixture of a positive disposition towards things Roman, mitigated by a Jewish antipathy towards pagan images, fits the personality of King Herod, the despotic monarch whose prolonged and unpopular rule over Judea was made possible by his slavish obedience to his Roman masters. Throughout his career he tried to

impose Roman social and religious institutions upon his reluctant subjects.

It is thus entirely characteristic of Herod's approach to introduce into the Temple itself a candelabrum that was adorned with the symbols of Roman authority and values. As in similar cases, Herod was unable to completely ignore the popular resistance to human images or explicitly pagan motifs.

If this is correct, then the Menorah that was plundered by the Roman legions was not the symbol of religious freedom that had been created by the

Maccabees, but a despot's monument to foreign oppression.

This fact might account for the absence of the Menorah from the coinage of the Jewish rebellions in 69-70 and 135, which made much use of other symbols from the Temple worship.

When the Menorah did regain popularity as a decorative theme in Jewish art from the third century onwards, it was the original three legged lamp that was chosen by the Jewish craftsmen as a symbol of religious pride and messianic hope.

PUBLIC DOMAIN

Comments, quibbles and reactions concerning previous "Ohrnet" features

RE: The Tzitzit (Ohrnet Parshat Toldot):

In a recent Yiddle Riddle you wrote that, according to Ashkenazic custom, the blessing on tzitzit is *Le'hitatef Ba-tzitzit* (to enwrap in THE tzitzit). It's interesting to note that the Sefardic custom is to say *Be-tzitzit* (to enwrap in tzitzit). According to the Sefardic custom, only if one wears THE authentic tzitzit would he say *Ba-tzitzit* (THE tzitzit). Authentic tzitzit have not only white strands, but have a strand of blue-*techelet* as well. If one can obtain *techelet* and puts it on his garment, then the Sefardic custom would be to say *Ba-tzitzit*, since he would be fulfilling the commandment in the most perfect manner.

• Baruch Serman <baruch@deltathree.com>

MASTER OF WAR...continued from page one

the strength of my own hand" kind-of-thinking.

So next time, G-d, as it were, says: "So you think it's your army that's winning these wars? I'll tell you what. Next time, your army will sit on its benches, and I will send the largest and most powerful Navy in the world steaming half way around the world and your army and your navy and your airforce will do absolutely zero." That's exactly what happened in the Gulf War.

I remember sitting in a taxi at the time, and this totally secular taxi driver was quoting me a verse, I think it was from the Prophet Yeshayah, all about how G-d will tell us to go into a sealed room for a little while until the danger passes...

"Who is like Your people Israel?! One nation in the land!" Even the taxi drivers quote you the prophets!

I also remember the day the Gulf War ended. It just happened to be Shushan Purim. I went into my own

sealed room, ripped the plastic off the window and threw the window open wide to let in the sweet air of freedom wafting in the holy city of Jerusalem. If I live to a hundred and twenty, I don't think I'll ever have a Purim like that one.

And now, that same holy air is filled with the sounds of *jihad*, the smell of tear gas and the sound of distant, and not-so-distant, gunfire. Isn't it clear the message that Hashem is sending us?

"If only you would **think of me**...and **mention me** to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building." In this week's Torah portion, Yosef asks the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers twice to intercede on his behalf to Pharaoh. By his lack of trust in Hashem —by asking the Chamberlain twice — Yosef languished two further years in jail.

Rabbi Chaim of Brisk once asked Rabbi Shimon Shkop how long Yosef would have been kept in prison if he

had only asked the Chamberlain *once* to help secure his release. Reb Shimon replied that if Yosef had asked only once, he would have spent only one year in prison.

Reb Chaim disagreed. "He would not have had to spend any more time in prison at all. To try to secure his release by asking once is considered to be *hishtadlut* — the human effort that Hashem expects of each of us. To ask twice showed a lack of trust in Hashem. So it would have been two years or nothing."

The Jewish People are faced yet again with the threat of war. Again there are those who rise, as they do in every generation, wishing to annihilate us. We must fight. And we must fight with everything we have. With our bodies. With our minds. But mostly we must fight that little voice inside us that tells us that we ourselves are doing all this. The greatest fight is the fight to remember that whatever we do — there is only one Master of War.

1. "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef..." Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
6. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
7. Why didn't Hashem reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?
8. For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
9. Verse 37:35 states, "his father wept." To whom does this refer?
10. Who was Tamar's father?
11. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
12. Why is the word "hand" mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
13. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
14. How did Potiphar "see" that Hashem was with Yosef?
15. Who in this week's Parsha pretended to be sick?
16. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
17. For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?
18. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler's dream?
19. What prompted the butler and baker to tell Yosef their dreams?
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Vayeshev's Questions!

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

1. 37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.
2. 37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.
3. 37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.
4. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
5. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.
6. 37:33 - Yitzchak.
7. 37:33 - Because the brothers had issued a ban against revealing the truth to Yaakov, and Hashem, so to speak, abided by their ban.
8. 37:34 - Twenty-two years.
9. 37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.
10. 38:24 - Shem.
11. 38:26 - In the merit of her modesty.
12. 38:30 - To allude to his descendent, Achan, who sinned with his hand by taking four things from the spoils of Jericho.
13. 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife.
14. 39:3 - Yosef mentioned Hashem's name frequently in his speech.
15. 39:11 - Potiphar's wife.
16. 40:1 - The butler was imprisoned because a fly was found in the king's goblet, and the baker was imprisoned because a pebble was found in the king's bread.
17. 40:4 - Twelve months.
18. 40:5 - The baker dreamed the interpretation of the butler's dream.
19. 40:6 - Yosef asked them why they looked troubled.
20. 40:23 - He remained in prison an additional two years.

KASHA! (KASHA MEANS "QUESTION")

How would you answer this question on the Parsha?

"They put him in jail, the place where the royal prisoners were imprisoned." (39:20)

Yosef, a Hebrew slave on the lowest rung of Egyptian society, was accused of a capital crime against the wife of a royal minister, yet he was not put to death. On the contrary, he was given special privileges, and he was placed in the special jail with the royal prisoners. Why?

Answer:

Potiphar knew Yosef was righteous and he strongly suspected that his wife was lying. Publicly, however, he needed to pretend that he supported her.

Therefore he punished Yosef, but he chose the most lenient punishment possible under the circumstances.

• Ramban

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

SEVENS AND EIGHTS

“Out of the river there emerged seven cows....” (41:2)

The Torah portion *Miketz* almost always falls during the week of Chanukah. This year it is read after the end of the festival.

For *Miketz* to fall after Chanukah, three events have to coincide: Rosh Hashana must fall on a Shabbat, and both the months of *Cheshvan* and *Kislev* must have only 29 days instead of 30.

There is obviously a very strong link between the portion of *Miketz* and Chanukah.

At the beginning of this week’s reading, Pharaoh has a dream about seven cows coming up from the river. These cows were healthy looking, robust, full of flesh. After them emerged seven other cows. These cows were gaunt and ugly. The gaunt ugly cows ate the fleshy cows and left no trace of them.

Egyptian life was dominated by the Nile. To the extent that the Nile overflowed its banks, to that same degree would there be prosperity and food in Egypt. For this reason, the Egyptians worshipped the Nile. On its vagaries depended life and death.

Seven cows emerged from the Nile. Seven is the number which connotes *this-worldliness*. There are seven colors in the rainbow; seven notes in the diatonic scale; seven days in the week.

Chanukah is the festival where we celebrate eight; when we connect to that which is beyond this world. Chanukah is where we take one step beyond. The one flask of pure oil that is found in the Holy Temple can only burn for one day, but it burns for eight whole days. It is not just a miracle — but a miracle of eight.

The idolatry of Egypt was to take the natural world, the Nile, the world of seven, and worship it. To take nature and make into a god. As Pharaoh said to Moshe: “Who is Hashem? I do not know Hashem...” (*Shemot* 5:2) Pharaoh recognized that there was a “god” in the world, but he only recognized a god of nature. In Hebrew the word “*Elokim*” — G-d — has the same *gematria* (numerical equivalent) as *hateva* which means “Nature.” When we make nature a supernatural force, we take the world of seven and make that into eight.

In a regular year where *Miketz* does occur during Chanukah, the *haftara* read is *Zechariah* 2:14-4:7. *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.

To remind ourselves that Mother Nature has a Father.

PARSHA OVERVIEW

MIKETZ

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.

חנוכה שמח

Best wishes for a Happy Chanukah

MELACHIM II 3:15 - 4:1

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

The king said, "This one claims: 'This is my son who is alive, and your son is the dead one,' and this one claims: 'It is not so! Your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one'." ... "Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other." (3:23-25)

It is usually assumed that King Solomon ordered the baby to be cut in half in order to determine the real mother.

In reality, it was already clear to the king who was the true mother from the way the two women had expressed themselves:

The first one started by saying "This is my son who is alive" and only then "and your son is dead;" whereas the second mother commenced her claim by saying "Your son is the dead one" and only afterwards said that "my son is the living one."

The second woman, who was lying, wasn't really interested in getting the living child, for why should she want to expend the considerable effort of raising a child which wasn't really hers. Rather, out of jealousy alone, she

wanted to prevent the other woman from keeping the living child.

For that reason her focus was on "Your child is dead," rather than "My son is the living one," since her whole point was to prove the dead child belonged to someone else.

On the other hand, the real mother was only concerned to prove that her child was alive.

From these tell-tale subconscious hints, King Solomon was able to discern the true mother. It was only to prove to the world that his analysis was accurate that he went through the theatrics of calling for the sword to divide the living child, knowing that the real mother would far prefer that the child should live, even if it meant having to give him up.

However Solomon, the wisest of men, had already arrived at the truth of the matter as soon as the two women had opened their mouths.

• *Kochav M'Yaakov in Mayana shel Torah*

THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

Giving People the Benefit of the Doubt

The "sting" of being misjudged can last for years, like in the story of...

THE "STING" OF THE BEE

I come from a family of picky eaters. When I was growing up, my mother knew what she was up against, and only served us "plain" sorts of food. We ate chicken, rice, potatoes and spaghetti, but the menus didn't get any more daring than that.

In sixth grade, I was a conscientious student, but one subject that I found a little bit difficult was *Brachos* (Blessings to be made before and after eating foods). I had never even heard of many of the foods in the little "*Brachos* booklet," and it made the studying a lot harder.

Instead of being able to apply the *Brachos* fundamentals when studying, I had to memorize the *Brachos* for the unfamiliar foods.

We used to have "*Brachos Bees*" (same idea as spelling bees) in school about once a week. I remember that at

one "*Brachos Bee*" the teacher asked me the blessing for "shnitzel" (breaded, fried chicken cutlet). I wasn't familiar with this food, and my memory had failed me. I thought maybe it was some kind of fruit dessert, so I guessed "*Ha'eitz*." The teacher got very angry, and said "I am going to give you a zero on your report card, because I can tell that you're not even trying." I remember feeling very hurt and confused. Now, many years later, when I recall the incident, I understand why the teacher reacted this way: She would have accepted an educated guess, but my answer was so far off it seemed like a "cop out." Her mistake was that she assumed I knew what shnitzel was.

Now, as a teacher myself, this has taught me an important lesson. A teacher has to be very careful to give her students the benefit of the doubt. Because you never know...falsely accusing your student may just be the only thing she'll remember years later.

• *Name@Withheld*

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 spying?
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 choose specifically 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 on their first journey? Why?
20. How did the brothers defend themselves against the accusation of theft?

PARSHA Q&A!

Answers to Miketz'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 his dream but didn't know its meaning. Nevuchadnetzar forgot 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 who said, "Here comes the dreamer." Or, to separate him from Levi, as together they posed a danger.
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, 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")

How would you answer this question on the Parsha?

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 gob-

let — 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!

Chanukah's Historical Background

by Rabbi Avraham Zuroff

Yefet, the son of Noah, had seven sons. The fourth son was Yavan (Greece). G-d bestowed upon the Ancient Greeks the trait of aesthetics. For 1700 years the Ancient Greeks played a relatively minor role in world history. But by the time Greece had conquered the Persian Empire, Greece had become a significant contributor to the annals of world civilization, culture, and philosophy.

At the beginning of the Second Temple Period, Israel was under Persian rule. After the Persian Empire's downfall, Israel was subjugated to Greek rule. In 3442 (318 BCE), the 19-year old Alexander succeeded his father, Phillipus, as Greek ruler. Alexander of Macedonia transformed the Greek Kingdom into a mighty empire which spread across Africa and the Middle East. The Emperor Alexander showed reverence towards Israel's Sages, especially towards Shimon Hatzadik, the Kohen Gadol (High Priest). After Alexander was poisoned to death in 3454 (407 BCE), the Greek Empire was divided into four among the rulers Ptolemy, Seleucus, Antigonus, and Philippos. Their kingdoms eventually became known as Egypt, Greece, and Syria.

The Seventy Two Sages

The Egyptian King Ptolemy Philadelphus amassed a vast collection of books on the sciences. He concentrated his collection in books on religion, and he was especially impressed by the logic of Judaism. There was one crucial book that was lacking from Ptolemy's library: The Five Books of Moses, otherwise known as the Torah. Before the advent of ArtScroll or Feldheim, the Torah, written in Hebrew, was inaccessible to the Hebrew-illiterate Ptolemy. It was "Greek" to him! Ptolemy wished to make the treasured Torah just that: Greek to him! He ordered seventy two Sages to come to his seaside resort near Alexandria. Each of the 72 Sages would be quarantined in a separate house, unaware of his purpose until arrival.

The Sages' work of seventy two days commenced. A total of thirteen textual changes were made in translation, in order to minimize heretical misinterpretations by the Greeks. Although the Sages wrote in solitary confinement, their thirteen changes were miraculously identical!

Syrian Greece

The Syrian dominion became known as the Selucidian kingdom, after Seleucus, founder of its royal family. In contrast to Alexander's relatively cordial relationship

with his Jewish subjects, Antiochus, the tyrannical Syrian-Greek ruler, resented the Jews' separatist policies. The tiny Judean kingdom in the midst of the mighty Empire became a thorn in his eyes.

Although there existed a noticeable segment of the Jewish population who embraced Hellenism — Greece's values of paganism, strength and assimilation — the majority of Judea rejected its foreign ideas. In 3610 (151 BCE), the Northern ruler, Sylvacus-Sautier, was murdered. Sylvacus's brother, Antiochus Epiphanies, replaced him. In contrast to his brother's relatively positive philosophical position towards Jewish ideas, Antiochus, often drunk from his frequent partying, was a pure Hellenist.

Kohen Gadol for Hire

It's told that a Jewish businessman once walked into the Rabbi's office in a New York synagogue. Approaching the Rabbi, the businessman asked how much of a donation would be necessary to become a *kohen*. The Rabbi, quite amused by the proposition, asked the potential donor, "In all honesty, what is your motivation to become a *kohen*?" Answered the businessman: "My father was a *kohen*, my grandfather was a *kohen*, and I want to be a *kohen*!"

Of course, the title of *kohen* is a result of Jewish patrilineage; its title could never be bought. Even more so, the title of *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) would only be granted to a *kohen* who was a Talmudic scholar fit for such an important position; however, in the Hellenistic era, the title of *Kohen Gadol* could be bought!

Yeshua-Jason, a Hellenistic Jew, made a pact with Antiochus. Jason bought the position of *Kohen Gadol* for the price of 60 silver *kikar*, with a promise to raise an additional 80 silver *kikar* from donations! Under Jason's leadership, an Olympic stadium was built in Jerusalem. The Olympics represented the Greeks adulation of the body and a form of worship to their gods. The Greeks would play sports naked, anointing their body with oil. Jason encouraged the strong youth to exercise in the stadium. Many *kohanim* exchanged their holy tasks in the Temple for sports. The Jewish participants would hide their circumcision, in order to be further accepted into Greek Society. The effects of Greek culture were felt. Many Jews refused to circumcise their sons. Others would bathe with the Greeks on the Judean seashore, from Akko (Acre) to Gaza, under the impression that it would be easier for a Jew to assimilate rather than maintain one's separate identity.

Internal Strife

Jason the *Kohen Gadol* still owed the king payment for his position. The greedy Antiochus was offered an even higher amount from Jason's friend, Choniov, who had recently become a complete Hellenist, changing his name to the Greek "Menileus." Menileus was instated as the new *Kohen Gadol*, notwithstanding his not being even a *kohen* by descent. Not even Menileus could raise the promised funds, which was a sore point for money-hungry Antiochus. The Greek ruler appointed Jason's brother, Lizimakeus, in his place. Menileus was not to despair. Pillaging from the Temple's treasury, he hoped to obtain the required funds, but was killed in the interim. Lizimakeus was indebted to Antiochus for his position, and also pillaged the Temple to attempt "compensation." Jerusalem's residents could not stand idly anymore. The Jerusalemites caught Lizimakeus in the act of pillage, killing him. In the interim, Antiochus went to battle in Egypt. Rumors spread that Antiochus had died. Jason and his army went to reclaim his title as *Kohen Gadol* from Menileus. The Jewish Hellenists told Antiochus that the Jews were happy about the false rumors. As a result, Antiochus took revenge in 3616, when he waged a surprise attack against Jerusalem. Antiochus did not even have to barge through Jerusalem's fortified gates, as the Hellenists had already opened them. Jason, in the meanwhile, had fled for his life. History has shown that the Jew is the Jew's worst enemy!

Spurred by the Hellenists, Antiochus proclaimed an official ban on observing the Sabbath, calculating the New Moon, and circumcision. Recorded in Megilat Antiochus is Antiochus' libelous decree:

"Are you aware that the Jewish People amongst us in Jerusalem don't offer sacrifices to our gods, they don't observe our religion, and even abandon it for their religion? They are even waiting for the day that our rule will end, saying 'When will our King rule, we shall rule over the sea and land, the entire world shall be given to us.' Since our army is vastly superior, let us arise against them and ban their covenant — their Sabbath, the New Moon, and circumcision."

Nikanor's Arrival

Megilat Antiochus relates that in the year 3618 (143 BCE), Antiochus sent his general, Nikanor, to Jerusalem, along with military support. Many Jews were killed. A pagan altar was erected in the Jewish Temple. Nikanor brought a pig on the altar, offering its blood to the Temple's Holy Courtyard. The *Kohen Gadol*, Yochanan ben Mattityahu, was outraged at this breach of holiness. Concealing a sword, Yochanan requested an appointment with Nikanor. Surprised by the rebel's arrival, the evil Nikanor questioned Yochanan's motives. Yochanan replied by stating that he has come to heed the ruler's command.

Nikanor stated, "If you wish to heed my rule, then slaughter a pig and offer it on the altar! You will be clothed with royal raiment, ride the king's horse, and become one of the king's friends."

Yochanan replied: "My lord, I fear the children of Israel, lest they find out and stone me for my deeds. Remove all the people amongst us lest they inform others."

After Yochanan was alone with Nikanor, Yochanan beseeched G-d's Mercy that he should not fall into the tyrant's hands. Yochanan took three steps forward, and lunged his sword into Nikanor's heart.

After Nikanor was slain, Bagris was appointed in his stead. Bagris enforced the banning of the Sabbath, circumcision, and New Moon calculations. Any circumcised infant would be hanged, along with his parents. Nevertheless, many Jews risked their lives in order to fulfill this precious tenet. Megilat Antiochus relates that many Jewish women would throw their circumcised infants, and subsequently themselves, from Jerusalem's walls, rather than be killed by Bagris' henchmen.

Secret Sabbath Cave

Many Jews who held Shabbat (Sabbath) precious hid in a cave in the wilderness in order to keep the Shabbat precepts. Unfortunately, informers notified Bagris of their hidden location. As a result, Bagris sent troops to the cave's opening, calling out: "Come out! Eat our bread, drink our wine, join our ways." Nonetheless, the cave's residents remained steadfast to G-d's commandments at Mount Sinai: "Six days shall you work, doing your creative acts; however, the seventh day shall be a Sabbath for Hashem, your Lord."

Although the Talmud states that "saving a life takes precedent over Sabbath observance", since the cave's residents were sure that their lot would be death by the Greek army, they calculated that it would be better for them not to violate the Sabbath, even in these dire circumstances. On that day, approximately one thousand men, women, and children decided to sanctify Hashem's Name by dying a martyr's death. The Jews were burned alive by the enlightened Greeks.

Jewish Response

Mattityahu, son of Yochanan *Kohen Gadol*, dwelled in Modi'in, located in the Judean hills. Mattityahu was also known as Mattityahu Chashmonai (the honorable). Mattityahu had five sons: Yochanan Kodshi, Shimon Tasi, Yehuda Maccabi, Elazar Chorni, and Yonatan Hufsi. Mattityahu was outraged by the desecration of the Holy Temple, the religious persecution, and assimilation by the Hellenists. Although Mattityahu was advanced in years, in 3621 (140 BCE), he and his sons led guerilla warfare against the mighty Greek Empire. Hiding in caves throughout the

continued on page fourteen

Judean plains, Mattityahu and his sons, known as the Chashmonaim, would mobilize at night, setting fire to the Greek encampments. Their movement was far from being purely military. They would promote the clandestine teaching of Torah and perform ritual circumcisions.

Yehuda Maccabi & Valor

After a year of physical and spiritual fighting, the aged Mattityahu realized that his end was near. Mattityahu appointed his son, Yehuda Maccabi, as leader of the Jewish People. In 3622 (139 BCE), Mattityahu had died. Yehuda assumed his father's position as restorer of Israel's glory. Josephus writes that "Maccabi" is Greek for valor. Emblazoned on Yehuda's flag was "MaCaBi," which some explain as an acronym for: "*Mi Camocha Ba'elim Hashem*" — Who is like You among the heavenly powers, Hashem! (*Exodus 15:11*).

Yehuda Maccabi enlisted an army of 7000 Jewish fighters. With Divine aid, the out-numbered army was able to overthrow the Greek army positions in Judea, killing many, and causing the rest of the Greek soldiers to flee to Gaza. In 3622, in an act of Divine Providence, Antiochus's horses, apparently afraid of the elephants used as Greek 'tanks', threw Antiochus out of his carriage. The fallen Antiochus suffered mortal wounds from his smashed bones. His wretched carcass was left for days in the sun.

The End of the Third Exile

Antiochus' death symbolized the end of the Greek Empire of 180 years. Thus, the prophecy of Yaakov (Jacob) was fulfilled: The Yalkut Shimoni gives us an historical insight into Yaakov's dream of angels ascending and descending a stairway to Heaven. The first group to ascend and descend represents the Babylonian Exile of the Jewish People; the second group represents the Persian-Median Exile; the third group represents the Greek Exile. In his dream, Yaakov saw the third group of angels ascending the ladder 180 rungs and then descend. So, too, the Greek

nation would become a world power for 180 years, then fall; However, Yaakov's descendants will always remain.

Temple's Re-Dedication

Megilat Ta'anit (*chapter 9*) relates: "During the days of the Greek Kingdom, the Chashmonaim entered the Sanctuary, rebuilt the altar, repaired the Sanctuary's walls, replaced the sacred vessels and were engaged in its rebuilding for eight days."

The Chashmonaim fashioned a make-shift pipe menorah and, miraculously, found a small flask of undefiled olive oil, closed with the *Kohen Gadol's* seal. The day was the 25th of Kislev, the same day that Aaron Hakohen, the brother of Moses, was commanded to dedicate the original altar. The small flask contained enough oil for only one day's lighting. Miraculously, the minuscule amount lit the *menorah* for eight days, ample time to press a new supply of oil.

Chanukah: Banishing the Darkness

A year later, the Sages enacted the eight-day festival of Chanukah, in commemoration of the miracle of oil. Chanukah means "dedication." It also means "*Chanu-Ka'H*" or "They encamped on the 25th (day of Kislev)." When the Torah was translated into Greek, three days of darkness emerged into the world. The Greeks outlawed three precepts: Shabbat, calculating the New Moon, and circumcision. On the 25th of Kislev, the Jewish People's Third Exile ended; the mighty Greek Empire had been extinguished by the small light of the Jewish People.

Sources:

Chanukah: Halachot, Minhagim, V'Megilat Antiochus, Rav Zvi Cohen, Bnei Brak
HaRav Shlomo Rotenburg, Toldot Am Olam, volume 2
HaRav Eliyahu Kitov, The Book of Our Heritage, volume 1

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YIDDLE RIDDLE

Question:

A Rabbi had the custom to study privately with his top student each year. One year he couldn't decide between three students. So he tested them. He showed them five yarmulkes, three black and two white. He told them that he would put one on each of their heads, and the one who could tell him first what color yarmulke he was wearing would be the student he would study with. He did this, putting the three black ones on their heads, and hiding the white ones away. Within fifteen seconds, one of them said to him, "I know for sure that I am wearing a black yarmulke." How did he know? (There was no way that he could have seen it).

• Riddle submitted by Moshe Steinhaus

Answer Next Week...