

# O CHANUKAH, O CHANUKAH . . .

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

## FRIDAY NIGHT:

*Yosef remembered his dreams concerning them, and said to them, "Spies! You have come to see where the land is vulnerable!" (Bereishis 42:9)*

To talk about Parashas Mikeitz or Chanukah is virtually the same discussion. I know that on the surface it doesn't seem that way, but then again, the story of Yosef and the message of Chanukah are identical: much is not what it appears to be on the surface. The brothers misjudged Yosef and the Hellenists misjudged Torah Sh'b'al Peh - the Oral Law.

In fact, you can throw Eretz Yisroel into the same category as well, as it was misjudged by the generation of the spies. Indeed, the gematria of Yosef and Tzion are exactly the same - 156, and the Midrash says that all that happened to Yosef will also happen to Tzion. (Tanchuma, Vayaishev 10)

Indeed, the Arizal points out a stunning connection between the brothers in this week's parshah and the spies hundreds of years later in the desert:

When the ten spies went out to spy the land, the souls of the ten corresponding tribes came into them, the actual sons of Ya'akov. This is the sod of what Yosef told them (his brothers), "You are spies" (Bereishis 42:9), to allude to a time in the future when their souls would go into the spies. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 36)

And, as we have pointed out before, the Hebrew word *meraglim* (spies), what Yosef called his brothers actually stands for the following: *m*-imi Rachel *g*evavtem *l'*Midianim *Y*ishmaelim *m*echartem - from my mother Rachel you stole me, to Midianites, Arabs you sold me (Brisi Shalom). Each letter of the word is the first letter of these words, and thus Yosef was not merely accusing his confused brothers, but he was also sending them a message, a clue for the future.

He was also sending them a warning. Yosef was telling his brothers, "If you don't fix the problem you have with me now, it will come back to haunt us later on when real spies go out to investigate the Land of Israel. If they can't see past the surface, they will come back with an evil report and lose the chance to fully inherit it."

What was only theory at that time, is now historical fact. Hundreds of years later, the spies came back with their evil report, and we are still a wandering nation.

It was not a new mistake. It was one that goes back to the original one, when Adam ate from the Aitz

HaDa'as Tov v'Rah and brought upon mankind banishment from Gan Aiden. Thus, after the sin, Adam hid when He heard G-d's voice, and G-d called out to him:

"Aiyekah?" (Bereishis 3:9)

A word that has a gematria that is equal to the number of candles we light over the eight days of Chanukah: thirty-six, because that is the number that is associated with the Ohr HaGanuz, the spectacular light with which G-d made Creation, gave the Torah, and will eventually end the exile and usher in Yemos HaMoshiach. It is the light that banishes all intellectual darkness, the light that allows man to see truth as it is, and that gives him the capability to accept the truth and to live by it.

A light with goodness, like that of Yosef HaTzaddik, of Torah Sh'b'al Peh, and of Eretz Yisroel, that remains below the surface and shines only for those who pursue it:

He [G-d] made a separation in the illumination of the Light, that it should not flow or give off light except for the righteous, whose actions draw it down and make it shine. However, the actions of the evil block it, leaving them in darkness, and it is this that was the hiding the Light. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 133)

### **SHABBOS DAY:**

*"Don't be upset, and don't let it bother you that you sold me. Clearly G-d sent me before you to preserve life . . ." (Bereishis 45:5)*

However, we light the first candle on the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, another number associated with the Ohr HaGanuz, and hence, Chanukah. G-d said:

Vayehi Ohr - Let there be light! (Bereishis 1:3)

However, the gematria of vehi is 25, and therefore, on another level the sentence can be read: 25 is the light. No wonder the Mishkan was completed on the 25th day of Kislev, 2449. No wonder aiyekah can also be read, aiyeh KOH, "Where is 25?" or that there are 25 letters in the Shema.

The Shema is the creed of the Jewish people, our mission statement. It is a reminder that being a light unto nations means making it clear, first to ourselves, and later to the rest of the nations of the world, that G-d is One. This means that, all that happens and all that exists has to be attributed to G-d, not just in the minds of men, but in their hearts as well. This is why the final status of history is defined as follows:

On that day, G-d will be One and His Name, One. (Zechariah 14:9)

The light does that. The Ohr HaGanuz has the power to eradicate doubt - the gematria of Amalek - about G-d's existence and his involvement in history. This is why the goal of the Ner Shel Chanukah is to proclaim the miracle to the world that G-d is alive and well, and He is operating in our world and in our history, and not just on occasion, but every step along the way as well.

Thus, Yosef will tell his astonished and speechless brothers in next week's parshah:

"Don't be upset, and don't let it bother you that you sold me. Clearly G-d sent me before you to preserve life . . ." (Bereishis 45:5)

Even if we intend to harm someone, G-d is involved and orchestrating the events of history, how much more so is He there when we are trying to further the mandate of Creation. This is the essential difference between being a Ya'akov and a Yisroel, and how Ya'akov Avinu became Yisroel. It is Eisavian to see the events of history as being random, without any real meaning on a daily level. A Yisroel sees the hand of G-d in all that happens, good or bad.

Thus, Ya'akov's name change is only acknowledged by G-d after the episode in Shechem, and not after his battle with the Angel of Eisav. The angel also indicated that this would be the case, telling Ya'akov:

He told him, "No longer will you be called Ya'akov, but Yisroel, because you have struggled with [an angel of] G-d, and with men, and have prevailed." (Bereishis 32:29)

Notice how the reference to the human struggle is mentioned last and out of order? The struggle with the angel had just occurred, and Ya'akov had won. However, the struggle with men was about to come up in Shechem over the cruel violation of Ya'akov's daughter, Dina. How would Ya'akov respond to that in an Eisav-like manner, as his sons Shimon and Levi?

Shimon and Levi are brothers; instruments of violence are their swords. (Bereishis 49:5)

The business of murder was not really theirs; it was part of the blessing conferred upon Eisav. It is his business and you usurped it from him. (Rashi)

Or, as a true Yisroel, as a true Ner Shel Chanukah?

For the Midrash says:

G-d said to Ya'akov, "For endangering yourself for a small container, I Myself will repay your children with a small container to the Chashmonaim!" (Midrash Tzeidah LaDerech, Maharil)

No longer will you be called Ya'akov: He strove with an angel and overcame it; "He cried (Bais-Cof-Heh) and pleaded (vayitchanain) with him (lo)" (Hoshea 12:5). (Rashi)

This posuk from Hoshea recounts the supernatural struggle between Ya'akov and the angel, and that is obviously why Rashi has referred to it. However, amazingly, the Hebrew words can be read as: On the TWENTY-FIFTH, there was a chayn of THIRTY-SIX, which might have seemed like a strange interpretation had the Maharil not added:

The sun shone for him (Lamed-Vav) as he passed Penuel and he was limping on his hip. (Bereishis 32:32)

The word "lo" refers to the THIRTY-SIX candles of Chanukah. (Maharil, Avodah Zarah 3b)

So, it seems that Ya'akov was not only part of the 36 righteous people that greet the Presence of G-d on a daily basis (Succah 45b), but he was also a repository of the Ohr HaGanuz.

Thus, he returned to Eretz Yisroel in his 36th year away from home.

The gematria of Leah is 36.

Rachel died at the age of 36, at the border of Eretz Yisroel.

The question may have been asked to Adam HaRishon: Aiyekah - 36? However, it was answered by Ya'akov Avinu, who as a result, rose to the level of a Yisroel.

### **SEUDOS SHLISHIS:**

*"And the house of Ya'akov shall be a fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Eisav will be straw." (Ovadiah 1:18)*

But, there is a missing component. For, before Ya'akov even arrived at the Yabok river he was set to combat Eisav, as Rashi explains:

When Rachel gave birth to Yosef, Ya'akov said to Lavan, "Send me and I will go to my place and my land." (Bereishis 30:25)

After the birth of Yosef who was to be Eisav's adversary, as it says, "And the house of Ya'akov shall be a fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Eisav will be straw" (Ovadiah 1:18). (Rashi)

What difference did it make if Yosef had been born or not? This difference:

$36 - 25 = 11$ .

For, Yosef was the eleventh son born to Ya'akov. Ya'akov is 25, the light that G-d has put into and hidden within Creation. Yosef is 11, the awareness and projection of that light. As a result, Eisav -who is the antithesis of that light and whose tribes just happened to be listed in Chapter 36 of Sefer Bereishis, will be destroyed.

Then Israel will dwell in safety and great goodness, and da'as, wisdom, purity and holiness will greatly increase and become the way of the world . . . (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 491)

Da'as, also referred to as the eleventh sefirah, will increase the wisdom, purity, and holiness of the world, which is another way of saying that Eisav's way of life will be no more at the end of history, for that is one of the main roles of Moshiach Ben Yosef.

And thus the Arizal revealed:

Since these ten colleagues are from the level of the Chassadim of the Upper Zivug that is Yisroel with Rachel, all the secrets of Torah were revealed and explained to them without any suffering. This

will not occur again until the Generation of Moshiach, as mentioned in the Zohar in many places. (Sha'ar HaGilgulim, Ch. 26)

Kabbalah, meaning Sod, is also Da'as:

Anyone who becomes settled through wine has the knowledge (da'as) of his Creator . . . has the knowledge (da'as) of the Seventy Elders; wine was given with seventy letters (Rashi: the gematria of yai'in wine, is 70), and the mystery (of Torah) was given with seventy letters (sod mystery, also equals 70). When wine goes in, secrets go out. (Eiruvin 65a)

After all, Yosef's other name was: Tzafnas Pane'ach, Revealer Of Hidden Things - things that Eisav would rather hide:

. . . As it says, "Eleven days journey from Chorev to Kadesh Barnea by way of Mt. Seir" (Devarim 1:2). It says in the Sifri: Had Israel merited the ELEVEN days, they would have entered the Land, because the eleven days would have overcome the ELEVEN k'lipos, which are the ELEVEN chieftains of Eisav. (Sha'arei Leshem, p. 421)

For, as we have spoken about it before, when the negative eleven is added to 25, it results in 14, and that is a number that is associated with the worst of Eisav's grandsons: Amalek.

Thus, history is a really a battle over the Ohr HaGanuz, with Eisav trying hard to smother it with his eleven curtains of impurity, and Yosef battling back with his access to the eleventh sefirah, Da'as. Depending upon who is winning, there is either the darkness of 14, or the light of 36, either a subjugation of nature, or the rising above it.

### **MELAVE MALKAH:**

*The daughters of Tzelofchad, the son of Cheifer, the son of Gilad, the son of Machir, the son of Menashe, from the family of Menashe, the son of Yosef, approached. These are the names of his daughters: Machlah, No'ah, Chaglah, Milkah, and Tirtzah. (Bamidbar 27:1)*

This is why Yosef is associated with Eretz Yisroel:

FROM THE FAMILY OF MENASHE, THE SON OF YOSEF: Why did it have to mention this, since it already said "the son of Menashe"? To tell you that Yosef loved the Land, as it says, "Bring my bones up" (Bereishis 50:25), and that his 'daughters' also loved the land, as it says, "Give us our possession" (Bamidbar 27:4). (Rashi)

The Vilna Gaon felt that the final battle against Amalek will be over Eretz Yisroel, as learned from the way the Torah goes from Parashas Amalek at the end of Parashas Ki Seitzei, to settling the land at the beginning of Parashas Ki Savo.

Do you think it is a coincidence that most of the people who make aliyah, that is, those who are not running away from another country or being thrown out from a host nation, do so for IDEOLOGICAL

reasons? They love Eretz Yisroel, but not the same way they loved America, Canada, or England, etc. Those countries they loved and were loyal to because of the security they enjoyed, and also because of the materialism that was available there. They love Eretz Yisroel because of what it means to the Jewish people.

It is no different with Torah Sh'b'al Peh. Lets' face it, accepting Torah Sh'b'al Peh may make halachah clearer, but it doesn't make life any easier. Few people accept the Oral Law because it makes their lives more comfortable. They accept it because of what it means to G-d and the nation as a whole, and the role it plays in the rectification of history. It is an intellectual decision, one of da'as.

Even the lighting of the Menorah symbolizes this. The ideal location to place the Menorah is between 3 and 10 tefachim from the ground, which is about 12 inches to 40 inches from the ground. Being about 5 feet 9 inches, this forces me to bend down when lighting the candles, which is not an ideal position to be in for such an act. On windy days, I have to bend even closer to the ground to light the candles.

Technically, we light close to the ground instead of beautifying the miracle on top of some pedestal, like we do with Shabbos candles, to make it clear that we do not need the light for the sake of walking down the street, etc. This is an act of *pirsumi nissah* - proclaiming the miracle, a banner made of light that says, "G-d saves His people from troubles."

When we light the Shabbos candles, we acknowledge the light that has pushed its way into our daily reality. When we light Ner Shel Chanukah, we acknowledge our ability to reach from our mundane reality into the hidden spiritual reality, and to pull that light from within that reality into our own. On Shabbos, the Ohr HaGanuz pursues us; on Chanukah, we pursue the Ohr HaGanuz and draw it down from the upper realms into our own. Shabbos is passive; Chanukah is active. On Shabbos we abstain from creative activity and let the holiness of the Ohr HaGanuz envelope us, but on Chanukah, it is the very act of lighting the Menorah that draws down the kedushah that envelopes us.

In a sense, this was the basis of the disagreement between Yosef and his brothers. The brothers took a more passive approach to history, a Shabbos- type of approach, if you will. Yosef's approach was more Chanukah- oriented, demanding that the Jewish people go out and draw the light of the Ohr HaGanuz into reality. Neither approach is wrong, but each one has its time and place: it can never be Shabbos during a weekday, and it cannot be a weekday on Shabbos.

Yosef appreciated the need for the approach of his brothers; there are times when a Jew must simply sit back and enjoy the kedushah G-d has sent us. However, the brothers could not appreciate Yosef's approach, and even saw it as being dangerous to the future of the Jewish nation, and therefore took action against him to stop it.

Until the Ohr HaGanuz burst forth from within him as he revealed his real identity with the words, "I am Yosef." Then, the combination of Yosef's spiritual success and physical accomplishments, the way he so elegantly synthesized both, his world and that of the Egyptians, and turned it into the

service of G-d while the the brothers floundered. Lost in Divine Providence, they could not understand until it was revealed to them, how central Yosef's approach was, and will continue to be to Jewish history.

"There's light in them thar hills." And Chanukah, like Yosef, reminds us of this light and of the need to go after it in order to reveal it to the whole world.

Chanukah Samayach and Shabbat Shalom,  
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