

HOLIDAY IN WAITING

by Rabbi Pinchas Winston

"Bring the men into the house and [give orders] to slaughter an animal and to prepare, because the men will eat with me at lunch." (Bereishis 43:16)

AS PREDICTED THE food ran out. As predicted, Yosef's 10 brothers who had kidnapped him had returned to Egypt for more. And, as demanded by the viceroy of Egypt, they had returned with the 12th brother, Binyomin. They now stood before the Egyptian leader and waited to see what would happen next.

That is when Yosef, a.k.a. Viceroy of Egypt, turned to his house overseer, a.k.a. his son Menashe, and said:

"Bring the men into the house and [give orders] to slaughter an animal and to prepare—u'tvoach tevach v'hachein—because the men will eat with me at lunch." (Bereishis 43:16)

The Talmud explains Yosef's instructions to slaughter the animal in front of his brothers, so they could supervise the shechitah, and to remove the Gid HaNashe before them as well, so they would know that the hind quarter was kosher. They did not know who they were dealing with, but Yosef did, and he knew they would not eat unless they were certain the meat was halachically fit.

It makes sense, but there is another level of drush here as well, and just in time for Shabbos Chanukah:

The gematria of the first seven letters [of "u'tvoach tevach v'hachein"] is 44, the number of candles kindled over the eight days of Chanukah [including the shamashim]. The last five letters [of "u'tvoach tevach v'hachein"] can be arranged to spell "Chanukah." (E"R O"C 670:10)

Who was this for? Were the brothers supposed to figure this out? Even if they had deciphered Yosef's command, what meaning would it have had for them a millennium before the holiday even occurred? Chanukah isn't even a Torah holiday!

What about Ya'akov Avinu? After his night-long struggle with the Angel of Eisav, he walked away injured. There was no emergency room in the area but fortunately for Ya'akov, the light of the Ner shel Chanukah shone on him, and healed him (Midrash Tzeidah Ladereh). What Ner shel Chanukah?

The same question can be asked regarding Adam HaRishon. After he ate from the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra, God asked him only one question: Ayekah? It's translated as, "Where are you?" but the word doesn't really exist. It's a gematria, the Midrash says, equal to 36, the number of candles kindled over

the course of the eight days of Chanukah. Why the allusion?

People think that Chanukah is a holiday that was never meant to exist, but which was forced into the Jewish calendar because of certain events. After all, if God wanted the Jewish people to celebrate Chanukah, would He have not included it in the Torah?

Yes, AND no. God wanted Chanukah to be a holiday from the time of Creation. That's why the Torah is loaded with hints to the holiday all over the place. He didn't make it a holiday until after the close of the Torah, because that is when history could allow it. Chanukah was a holiday in waiting, and in the making, and took 36 centuries before it was ready to emerge into history.

Adam should have made the first Chanukah. If he had obeyed God and not eaten from the Aitz HaDa'as Tov v'Ra, he would have. Instead of concealing the Ohr HaGanuz, the Hidden Light of Creation and banishing man from Paradise, the "Light of 36" would have shown forever from that point onward, as it will in Yemos HaMoshiach.

This is what "Ayekah" meant. "You had a chance to perfect Creation and keep the Light of 36," God told him in a single word. "Instead it will have to be hidden, to be revealed at a later time by someone who does not make the same mistake."

Noach had a chance to be "that" person. He found "chayn" in the eyes of God, which is the basis of "Chanukah." Thus, the Midrash says:

He waited another seven days and again sent the dove . . . (Bereishis 8:10)

Into the exile of the Greeks who blackened the faces of the Jews. (Tikunei Zohar 13)

The dove came to him in the evening and behold, there was an olive leaf torn off in her mouth. (Bereishis 8:11)

Had not God enlightened the wise to light the candles with the oil of the olive, the "Survivors of Yehudah" would have been lost forever . . . From the moment the leaf was torn off in her mouth, "25" was made to dwell upon the Jewish people—the 25th of Kislev. (Tikunei Zohar 13)

Avraham tried to be "that" person with the Akeidah:

Avraham told the men, "You stay poh—here—with the donkey, while I and the lad will walk until koh—there, prostrate ourselves and then return to you." (Bereishis 22:5)

"Koh," spelled Chof-Heh, has the gematria of 25, the day of Kislev on which Chanukah falls. It is the day the construction of the Mishkan was completed, because it is the other number that represents the Ohr HaGanuz. Avraham wasn't just going "there." The hope was that he was going to the Ohr HaGanuz, which he did. It is just that the world was not yet ready for Moshiach at that time.

The reason why revealing the Hidden Light of Creation is so important is because it represents the tikun of ALL of Creation. It turns the world around, as Avraham tried to do through his great acts of

ched. But even he fell short, evident by the fact that we are still in exile, and still living in darkness.

Our fathers didn't completely fail. Each one contributed to the tikun to some degree, because it is accumulative. Ya'akov did as well, evident by all the times the number 36 shows up in his life. Yosef continued the progress of tikun, and really tried to bring it to an end in his day, which brings us back to his command and its allusion to Chanukah.

What had to happen? What was Yosef trying to do?

Change the state of mind of his brothers from "seeing is believing," the Greek approach to truth, to "believing is seeing," the Torah approach. It is the only way to merit to see the Ohr HaGanuz, which was hidden on the first day of Creation from the evil of history. The righteous, by virtue of their emunah in God merit to see it at all times. That's why there are 36 in every generation.

Hence it says in the 36th chapter of Tehillim:

With Your light we see light. (Tehillim 36:10)

The second reference to light is to the "Ohr HaGanuz." The first reference is to a person's emunah, because through it people are enlightened to the existence of God and the truth of Torah.

God said, "Let there be light!" and there was Avraham. (Bereishis Rabbah)

It was the Chashmonaim through their emunah and great act of mesiras nefesh that completed the process that finally allowed Chanukah to surface and become an official and recognized holiday unto itself. But it had been there the entire time, in the background, the basis of all other holidays and Divine revelations. It may be the flame of a shamash that lights the Ner Chanukah. But it is the fire of our emunah and light of our mesiras nefesh for Torah that makes them glow and illuminate the world.