

# SHABBOS AND CHANUKAH: EXTENDING MIRACLES INTO NATURE

*by Rabbi Binyomin Adler*

## Introduction

In this week's parashah it is said (Bereishis 37:1) vayeishev Yaakov bieretz migurei aviv bieretz Canaan eileh toldos Yaakov Yosef, Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojourning, in the land of Canaan. These are the chronicles of Yaakov: Yosef.... Rashi cites the Medrash that states that Yaakov sought to dwell in peace and the agitation of Yosef sprung upon him. The righteous seek to dwell in tranquility, and HaShem says, "is it not enough for the righteous what is prepared for them in the World to Come and they still seek to dwell in tranquility in this world?"

## The righteous are not connected to this world

The Sfas Emes (5632) writes that the entire separation of a righteous person is to draw holiness into this world and into nature. Prior to drawing the holiness into this world the righteous person must perfect himself to the level that he himself is not connected to this world. This, then, is the meaning of the words of the Medrash that the righteous seek to dwell in tranquility. When the righteous are attached to their roots and are totally disconnected to a place of separation, i.e., this world, only then can they seek to dwell in tranquility in this world also. Yaakov was above nature, and because of his dissociation from this world, he was not able to draw holiness into this world. The only way for Yaakov to draw holiness into this world was through Yosef HaTzaddik. This is the reason that after deriving from the first verse that Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquility in this world, the Torah states eileh toldos Yaakov Yosef, these are the chronicles of Yaakov: Yosef.... It was through Yosef that Yaakov was able to channel the holiness to the brothers and to all the worlds. It is for this reason that Rashi writes (Bereishis 30:25) that Yaakov was prepared to depart from Lavan once Yosef was born. Yaakov is compared to fire, Yosef is compared to the flame and Esav is likened to the straw that is consumed by the fire. Fire by itself does not travel far. The flame, however, allows the fire to consume even matter that is far away. Similarly, once Yosef was born, Yaakov felt confident enough to return to his father. The Sfas Emes explains that the nature of fire is to ignite anything in its proximity and it is for this reason that the fire requires the flame which extends the fire's ability to consume.

## Yaakov was above nature and Yosef was more connected to his brothers than Yaakov

It is said that Yaakov loved Yosef more than all the brothers. Yosef was able to elevate the good

deeds of the brothers to Yaakov, because Yosef was more connected to the brothers than Yaakov. The reason for this is because Yaakov was above nature. Based on this idea, the meaning of vayeishev Yaakov is that Yaakov was connected to his roots, which is the idea of repentance and Shabbos, when everything ascends to its roots above.

### **Chanukah teaches to reveal the miracles into the realm of nature**

We can extend this amazing idea of the Sfas Emes even further. The miracle of Chanukah was that the Chashmonaim found oil that was sufficient for the lighting of the Menorah for one night, and HaShem made a miracle and the oil burned for eight nights. The Sfas Emes (Chanukah 5631 Third Night) writes that the idea that we express in the passage of al Hanisim that Chanukah is a time lehodos ulihallel, to thank and give praise, corresponds to Yehudah and Yosef. The Sfas Emes explains this idea in various places and I would like to suggest a novel interpretation to this idea. The words Hallel and hodaah appear to be similar. Yet, we know that every word in Scripture and in rabbinic literature is used for a specific reason. Hallel is similar to mallel, speech, and hodaah means to give thanks. Yehudah reflected the idea that one must thank HaShem for miracles, as we find that Leah named her son Yehudah because she received more than her share of sons being born. Yosef, however, symbolizes the idea that one must constantly be seeking ways to praise HaShem, even when things are not going well and one feels that there are no miracles occurring. We know that even what is referred to as nature is essentially a miracle, and it was Yosef who brought out this idea. Regarding the first dream that Yosef had, it is said (Bereishis 37:7) *vihinei anachnu mialmim alumim bisoch hasadeh vihinei kamah alumasi vigam nitzavah vihinei sisubenah alumoseichem vatishtachavenah laalumasi*, "behold! - we were binding sheaves in the middle of the field, when, behold! - my sheaf arose and also remained standing; then behold! - your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." This verse alludes to the idea that while the brothers were gathering their bundles in the field, Yosef would reveal that even nature, reflected in the growth of grain, is a miracle. It is for this reason that the Torah states that Yosef's bundle arose and remained standing, as we find that the word used for miracle, *nes*, also is used for something held high, as it is said (Bamidbar 21:8) *visim oso al nes*, and place it on a pole. Thus, Yosef reflects the idea that nature itself can be extended into the realm of miracle, as nature is also a miracle.

### **The Shabbos connection**

The entire week we live, in a sense, under the guise of nature, as we work to earn a livelihood and all our successes and failures appear to be the result of our efforts. When Shabbos arrives we discover that even the natural order of events is essentially miracles, as Shabbos provides all the blessing of the week. It is noteworthy that Yaakov reflects Shabbos and Yosef reflects the idea of Tosefes Shabbos, adding on to Shabbos. By bringing Shabbos into the week we declare that all our natural efforts are facilitated by the light of the Holy Shabbos. Thus, Shabbos is akin to a pole standing high as one can see clearly that Shabbos is the source of all our blessings. Hashem should allow us to observe the Shabbos properly and we should witness miracles with the arrival of Moshiach,

speedily, in our days.

### **Shabbos in the Zemiros:**

#### **Menuchah Visimchah**

**Composed by an unknown author named Moshe  
HaShem is good to us through the gift of Shabbos**

Hu asher diber liam segulaso shamor likadisho miboo viad tzeiso, it is He Who spoke to His treasured nation: stand guard to hallow it from arrival to departure. The words Hu asher diber are said regarding the preparation of the manna for Shabbos in the Wilderness. It is said (Shemos 16:23) vayomer aleihem hu asher diber HaShem Shabbason Shabbas kodesh laHaShem machar eis asher tofu eifu vies asher tivashilu basheiulu vieis kol haodeif hanichu lachem limishmeres ad haboker, he said to them, "this is what HaShem had spoken; tomorrow is a rest day, a holy Shabbos to HaShem. Bake what you wish to bake and cook what you wish to cook; and whatever is left over, put away for yourselves as a safekeeping until the morning. It is noteworthy that the words hu asher diber equal in gematria Shabbos tov, Shabbos is good (719). Perhaps the author of this zemer intended with these words that HaShem is good to the Jewish people by giving them the gift of Shabbos.

### **Shabbos in Tefillah:**

#### **Unifying ourselves in praising HaShem**

Yishtabach shimcho laad malkeinu yotzeir misharsim vaasher misharsav kulam omdim birum olam umashmiim biyirah yachad bikol divrei Elokim chaim umelech olam, may Your Name be praised forever, our King, O Fashioner of ministering angels; all of Whose ministering angels stand at the summit of the universe and proclaim - with awe, together, loudly - the words of the living G-d and King of the universe. The amazing thing about the angels is that they are all in unison, proclaiming the greatness and awe of HaShem. Human beings are challenged when it comes to unity. We should emulate the angels to at least be able to praise HaShem together as one.

### **Shabbos Story:**

#### **This is my baby!**

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: A man once approached my grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, quite distraught.

"I know this may not sound like a major problem," he began, "but my 17- year-old daughter is very upset with me. It has come to a point that she hardly talks to me. It began a few nights ago. My wife and I were with a number of old friends at a wedding when my daughter walked by. I introduced her to them by saying, 'This is my baby.'

"I could see that at the moment she became very upset. Moments later she pulled me to aside and was crying. 'You still think I'm a baby!' she sobbed. 'I am almost eighteen already, and all you do is call me your baby! Won't I ever be a grown-up in your eyes?' Ever since then she doesn't want to

talk to me."

The man shrugged as he pleaded with the sage. "I really don't want to make this into a major issue, but I'm not sure how to resolve this. Perhaps the Rosh Yeshiva can guide me."

Reb Yaakov put his hand on the man's shoulder. "You live in Flatbush, don't you?"

At the time Reb Yaakov was staying at his youngest son, Reb Avraham's home, and he invited the man to visit him there together with his daughter. He assured him that he would not discuss the incident but was confident that by the time the visit was over the matter would be resolved."

The next day the man and his daughter visited Reb Yaakov at Reb Avraham's home. Reb Yaakov invited the man and his daughter into the dining room where they discussed a variety of issues from school work to life in pre-war Europe everything but the incident at the wedding.

About 10 minutes into the conversation, my uncle, Reb Avraham, came down the stairs. Reb Yaakov looked over to him and invited him to join the conversation. But first he introduced Reb Avraham to his guests.

"This is my baby!" exclaimed the revered sage as he gave a warm hug to his 55-year-old son.

### **Shabbos in Navi: Shmuel I Chapter 21 Changing for Shabbos**

In this chapter we learn how Dovid fled from Shaul to the city of Nov, and Dovid requested from Achimelech the Kohen food and a sword. After receiving these items Dovid fled to Achish the king of Gas. Dovid was afraid of Achish and he feigned madness. When Achish saw Dovid's behavior, he was enraged and he forced Dovid to leave. Regarding the change in Dovid's demeanor it is said (Shmuel I 21:14) *vayishano es taamo bieineichem*, so he changed his demeanor in their eyes. It is noteworthy that at times one has to change his demeanor so that he is perceived differently. On Shabbos we are required to change our dress, our speech and our manner of walking. By changing our dress and our mannerisms we are demonstrating that on Shabbos we are on a higher spiritual level than during the week.

### **Shabbos in Agadah:**

The third meal of Shabbos is when is closest to us in our times of distress

In the mincha prayer on Shabbos we recite the words *atah echod vishimcho echod umi kiamcha Yisroel goy echod baaretz*, You are One and Your Name is One; and who is like Your people Israel, one nation on earth. The Pinei Menachem cites the Zohar that states that the third meal on Shabbos is referred to as *zieir anpin*, the small face. The Imrei Emes explains that that this means that by the third meal there is *tzimtzum*, constriction, as HaShem, so to speak, diminishes Himself, and He

participates in the distress of the Jewish People. HaShem is with us in our troubles so that we can overcome all the difficult times. This is similar to what the Gemara (Shabbos 118a) states that one who fulfills the three meals on Shabbos is saved from three retributions. These three sufferings are the birth pangs of Moshiach, the judgment in Gehinom and the battle of Gog and Magog. The Sefarim write that the third meal encompasses all three meals.

### **Shabbos in Halacha:**

#### Pouring water into cholent

We learned previously that one is forbidden to stir food while it is above a fire, even if the food has been fully cooked. This ruling applies when pouring hot water into cholent, as the cholent ultimately is 'stirred' in some fashion by the water that was poured in. Thus, while pouring, one should lift the pot off the blech, or move the pot to the area not directly above the fire. If this is not possible, one should pour the water into the cholent very slowly.

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