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LETTERS

Happy to Receive Prophecy

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

READER: Rambam said prophecy is possible when one is in the best state of mind and happy. Why then do we see many cases where a prophet foretells depressing news such as Eicha? Also when Yakov was afraid of Eisav and God had to reassure him that he will be with him.

—Omphile Tshipa

RABBI CHAIT: There are two types of prophecy: one [is for] the increase of knowledge of the prophet and to expand his mind. The second is when there is an urgency: a message must be given...something must be done. It is only in the first type that the prophet must be happy and in a good state of mind. An example of the first kind is the brachot where God gave Yakov an in-depth understanding of all the generations of Yakov and Eisav. An example of the second kind was the Megillah Esther which informed them that if they do not surrender to Nebuchadnezer, they are doomed. ■

Kindness & Justice

DANI ROTH

In the beginning of Parshas Vayeira, God gives a vision to Avraham of 3 men on a journey. Avraham stops them, prepares a big meal for them, and sets up a spot for them to rest. Later in the same vision, we see that Hashem teaches Avraham justice concerning the destruction of Sodom, that if there were just 10 righteous men in Sodom, He wouldn't

destroy it. If God's ultimate message was about justice, what is he trying to teach him by the 3 men? Specifically, why does God show Avraham serving strangers?

God always makes everything in a single vision related in some way. The first part of the vision was really showing Avraham why he deserves to gain knowledge from God about justice in the latter part of the vision. Since he was so kind to total strangers—he displayed acts of righteousness—that was really the reason he was worthy of God granting him additional knowledge of justice. Pasuk 18:19 says, “For I have singled him out, that he may instruct his children and his posterity to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is just and right, in order that the Lord may bring about for Avraham what He has promised him.”

We see from this pasuk that this is why God shared additional knowledge of justice with him, because Avraham was a teacher of mankind. The 3 men weren't to teach him about justice, but they represented to Avraham why he deserved to know about God's justice. Meaning, God wished to display to Avraham that his righteousness towards others earned him greater knowledge of God's justice. ■

Did the Split Sea Return Twice?

DANI ROTH &
RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Moses held out his arm over the sea, and at daybreak the sea returned to its normal state, and the Egyptians fled at its approach. But the Lord violently stirred the Egyptians in the sea. The waters returned back and covered the chariots and the horsemen—Pharaoh's entire army that followed them into the sea—not one of them remained. (Exod. 14:27,28)

As verse 14:27 already says, “the sea returned to its normal state,” why does verse 14:28 repeat “The waters returned back”? Furthermore, why does verse 28 change from “sea” to “water,” also adding “chariots and the horsemen”? Verse 28 also differs saying, “the water covered the chariots and the horsemen” while verse 27 says, “stirred the Egyptians.”

To answer Dani's astute questions, we must gain an overview of God's plan at the Reed Sea (Yam Suf):

Now when Pharaoh let the people go, God did not lead them by way of the land of the Philistines, although it was nearer; for God said, ‘The people may have a change of heart when they see war, and return to Egypt’ (Exod. 13:17).

This means that the Jews would have returned to Egypt—as opposed to heading in any other direction to avoid the Philistine war. Had they confronted the Philistine war, the Jews would prefer servitude under Egypt's rule, than freedom elsewhere. This is due to the Jews' veneration for the Egyptians, their former authority. But to accept God and Torah, the Jews could not retain any type of respect for Egypt, as this would inhibit a full acceptance of God as their sole authority. God tells us why He will drown the Egyptians at the Reed Sea:

And I will stiffen the hearts of the Egyptians so that they go in after them; and I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his warriors, his chariots, and his horsemen” (Exod. 14:17).

God wished to remove the Jews' respect for Egypt by obliterating Egypt's “warriors, his chariots, and his horsemen,” their most respected and glorified army, so that He will “gain glory.” Now we can explain our Dani's questions...

The sea returned to its normal state, and the Egyptians fled at its approach. But

the Lord violently stirred the Egyptians in the sea.

God's first step was to display His completed control: not yet drowning, but tossing Egypt around in the sea; in the raging waves, Egypt had no control over their movement, and certainly no control over the Jews. Thereby God displayed Himself as the One in control of the Jews' fate.

The waters returned back and covered the chariots and the horsemen

Next, God now removed the Jews' respect for Egypt's pride—their army—and killed them. Here, as the intent was drown Egypt so they no longer posed any threat to the Jews, "water" is the only reference needed, since "sea" or "river" is irrelevant when discussing drowning. This also explains why "covered" them in water is the selected word, as covered in water means to drown.

Thus, the "return" of the previously split Reed Sea occurred only once, but it had 2 purposes: 1) to toss around Egypt's army displaying their lack of control, and 2) to drown them. Thereby, God achieved His plan to "gain glory" by eliminating the threat to His honor, i.e., the Egyptian army. So revered was Egypt in the Jews' eyes, they preferred servitude in Egypt over freedom elsewhere. This revealed the need for God to eliminate Egypt so the Jews would accept God alone as their sole authority.

Other Torah instances appear to contain repetitions too, such as "And God created man in His image" (Gen. 1:27) followed by, "The Lord God formed man from the dust of the earth" (Gen. 2:7). But in fact, God created man only once, as reason demands. But the repetition is to highlight different aspects of man's creation. Repetition is one of God's method's of attracting our curiosity so we might delve into Torah and gain greater wisdom. ■

Channuka Lights: A Halachic Analysis

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

"How many lamps should one light on Channuka? Its command is that one light be kindled in each and every house" (Rambam, Hilchos Channuka 4:1)

What is the structure of the Channuka lights mitzvah: Is it an obligation that applies to the house, or in the person; a chovas bayis or a chovas gavra? Some wish to suggest that the obligation falls upon the dweller, similar to mezuzah. Thus, if no one dwells in house, there is no obligation that the home per se has a mezuzah affixed to it, or that the house has Channuka lights. Another suggestion was that it is an obligation that does in fact apply to the house, and this would mean that even if one is not living in his vacation home, he would still be obligated to light Channuka lights there. Rabbi Chait agreed [with the ramifications of this theory].

Rabbi Chait offered a different definition: The simplest formulation is that every person is obligated to light, but the fulfillment—kiyum—is via the house. Therefore, if one lives in a house and the house already has a Channuka light lit [by another household member], he is exempt.

There is a concept of a cheftza shel pirsum, an object of publication, which is the light in the house. Now, who is obligated to create this object of publication? It is the dweller of the house. So if there are multiple dwellers, each one is obligated. But once one person lights, all others become exempt.

The question was raised based on this theory why a guest would require to give money to the house owner to fulfill his obligation. [As he too is a dweller—albeit temporary—why is he not of equal dweller status to those who live there year-round who are exempt once a candle is lit, without payment?] Rabbi Chait agreed with this question. Furthermore, if one is a traveler—such as this person who needs hospitality—why is he even obligated in lighting? Giving money to the house owner to join in his lights, means that one fulfills his obligation through the house owner's lights, via payment. But in fact, it should be that the traveler is not even obligated [like the year-round dwellers]. Therefore, this question proves that the obligation to like Channuka lights is an obligation on the person—chovas gavra—not an obligation in the house—chovas bayis. But the fulfillment—kiyum—takes place only through the house.

Therefore, 5 house dwellers each have their own obligation, but they have a kiyum through the light that is lit in the house. But why not say [instead] that the other 4 [who did not light] are exempt, as opposed to saying that they "fulfill" an obligation? And once again we have the question of why the traveler must give money (priti) to the house owner, unlike year-round house dwellers who do not need to give money to the house owner, whom, without giving money, have their

obligation fulfilled.

So it is apparent that the Channuka lights mitzvah is an obligation which applies to the person (not a chovas bayis) but the fulfillment—kiyum—is only possible through the house.

Now a separate question: Since the fulfillment is in the house, if one does not own a house, meaning he has no vehicle of fulfillment, is he obligated in lights at all? Does this obligation that falls upon the person exist only for one possessing the vehicle of fulfillment? Meaning, did the Chachamim not obligate one without a house, like a homeless person? Meaning, that the entire entity of mitzvah [including the means for fulfillment: a house] must relate to a person, otherwise he is exempt, just as a sailor is exempt.

Regarding mezuzah, one's obligation is generated from the house [one with no house is not obligated in mezuzah, nor must he buy a house to fulfill mezuzah]. But regarding Channuka, we cannot say this, based on the question above of why the traveler must join with the house owner through payment. For if the house generates the Channuka lights obligation, like mezuzah, the traveler has no house and he should not need to join by giving money; he should be exempt. Also, why can't the traveler be exempt through the house owner's lighting—without payment—just as the year-round dwellers are exempt without payment? Why is the halacha that the traveler must give money to join? The dwellers' obligations are fulfilled as they are connected to the house. Therefore the traveler [who is not connected to the house] must join through giving money.

That the halacha is that Channuka lights are obligatory on the person, fits with Maimonides' formulation: "Anyone who is obligated in the reading of the Megilla is obligated in Channuka lights" (Hilchos Channuka 3:4). It's clearly implicit that the obligation of Channuka lights is an obligation in the person, but the fulfillment is via the house. Maimonides' words "each and every house" (Ibid 4:1) are ambiguous. Regarding mezuzah, the entity of house demands mezuzah. But regarding Channuka, we are not saying that the house demands the lights. Regarding mezuzah, one with no house has no practical case of obligation, and this is equivalent to a parapet. [A parapet is obligated upon a house owner, not that one must buy a house in order to create a parapet]. The phrase "each and every house," is an equivocal term, as Aristotle calls it. On the one hand, it means the structure of house obliges a mitzvah. In connection to mezuzah that is a genuine "obligation of the structure." But regarding Channuka lights, "each and every house" does not mean that. Rather, the

person is obligated, but the house is the vehicle through which one fills his obligation. The house is not the source of the obligation, rather it services the person. But the question still remains if one is obligated to begin with if he has no house. But that is a separate question [from the question of how we formulate the obligation].

But you do not have to say this; you could say that everyone must obtain a home [a cheftza shel mitzvah]. So as Rabbi Shirkin has it in his notes, one dwell with a host, or he can build a house. This view maintains that even one without a cheftza shel mitzvah—a home—one is still obligated in Channuka lights.

Returning to Rambam, Rabbi Shirkin says (quoting the Rav on “each and every house”), “It is apparent from Rambam that it is an obligation on the house.” I disagree. I don’t see how you can deduce from Rambam that it is an obligation in the house. All Rambam is saying is that the “vehicle of fulfillment” is house. But Rambam is not discussing whether one is obligated, if he does not have the vehicle. He is not addressing that issue. According to Rabbi Shirkin, you end up with a contradiction in Rambam, because he cites another Rambam that one is obligated to build a house (meaning it is an obligation on the person and not the house [unlike Rabbi Shirkin first suggested]). The Rav cites Rambam in Hilchos Berachos, that even without owning a home one is obligated in Channuka lights.

The question was raised regarding why Pirsume ha’Nais (publicizing a miracle) relating to Channuka lights is unachievable alone, whereas it is achievable alone regarding Megilla. Regarding Channuka, one cannot be the publicizer and also the observer; by definition these are two different people. But Pirsume ha’Nais is different regarding Megilla, and requires an answer.

A final question was raised why in Halacha 4:1, Rambam formulates Channuka lights as “each and every house lights,” as opposed to “a person is obligated to light.” And Rambam is consistent, as he says in Hilchos Channuka 3:3 “and the lights are lit at evening on the houses entrances.” Again, Rambam formulated Channuka lights in public terms, not as an individual’s obligation. Rabbi Chait answered that Pirsume would be lacking, had members of the Jewish nation not lit. The Jewish nation (all houses) must be isolated in performing Channuka lights to be identified by others, as Rambam says “to display and reveal the miracle” (Ibid). ■

Channuka & Purim 2 Spheres of Human Perfection

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Why were Channuka and Purim alone made into holidays? Joshua experienced a miraculous victory over Jericho when the walls sank into the ground. God sent giant stones from the heavens on behalf of Joshua as well (Joshua, 10:11). There were many instances of miraculously-won wars. What is present in the Channuka and Purim miracles, that they alone deserved to be rendered into perpetual holidays of Pirsumey Nase—proclamations of God’s miracles? And what is the objective of Pirsumey Nase?

Examining these two holidays more closely, we find additional features that increase our questions...

During that Maccabean war upon which Channuka was created, we note an oddity. Channuka’s famous miracle of oil occurred “after” the war had already ended. For what need was this miracle, being that the Jews were victorious?

We also note that it was the Hasmonian Cohanim—the priests—who fought that war. We understand this was a fact, but why was this necessary for Maimonides to state in his Laws of Channuka? And why does he mention that lighting the Channuka light is a “Mitzvah Chaviva”—a beloved mitzvah? In what manner does this mitzvah surpass all others?

Turning to Purim, Mordechai omitted God’s name from the Megilla. For what reason did he do so? While we appreciate the fact that there were no overt miracles, nonetheless, it was God who orchestrated the timing of many events to deliver the Jews from their enemies. God orchestrated Mordechai’s hearing of Bigsan’s and Seresh’s plot to murder the king. God orchestrated King Achashverosh’s reading of Mordechai’s unpaid act of saving the king to coincide Haman’s midnight appearance to request Mordechai’s death. He orchestrated the king’s return to the wine feast, to coincide Haman’s collapse onto the Queen’s bed, angering the king and priming him to convict Haman to his hanging. Other events were orchestrated as well. However, after Mordechai and Esther realized that it was God’s hand that saved them, why was God’s name omitted?

Channuka

During Channuka, God used oil—Temple—for the miracle. For it was the Cohanim who demonstrated their adherence to God by taking on such outnumbered odds. Cohanim represent those dedicated to God’s service. They fought to preserve the Torah system prohibited by the Greeks. But there was no necessity for the oil in terms of salvation. This “unnecessary” miracle taught the Rabbis that this miracle was of a different nature, and not as Joshua’s wars, where the miracles was performed to save the Jews. Of course we understand that God caused our military victory. But the subsequent “unnecessary” nature of this miracle of oil was indicative. Thereby, the Rabbis understood that this victory deserved greater significance than other wars. That significance is that the Cohanim fought for the “system of Torah,” unlike other wars that were for land, defense or justice. The oil represents the Jews’ reestablishment of the Torah system, and was therefore what God used to indicate His providence. The Rabbis grasped this message, and instituted our remembrance of God’s salvation by creating the law around those lights.

This mitzvah alone of Channuka lights refers to upholding the “system of mitzvah.” All other mitzvahs have as their goal some idea extraneous to the ‘total’ Torah system. Succah is to recall God’s ability to shelter us. Mezuzah reminds man of God’s unity. But Channuka highlights our ability to perform the Torah system. This would explain why Maimonides calls this a “Mitzvah Chaviva”—a beloved mitzvah, as it embodies Torah as a whole, and not individual objectives, as is the case with regards to other mitzvahs.

Purim

Perhaps Mordechai omitted God’s name from the Megilla for two reasons. First, to display how exactly God intervened—in a covert manner. Second, to embody the concept that God’s providence works with man when he utilizes intelligence, as expressed by Mordechai and Esther’s intelligent plan. Through the omission of God’s name, man is thereby highlighted in Megilla to stress this point. Mordechai and Esther interacted with the world and society—nature and psychology—using much wisdom. This is the path of life—the derech hachaim—which God desires man to engage in all areas, not only when observing His commands. We thereby observe a new idea derived from Channuka and Purim...

Pirsumey Nase—Proclamation of God's miracles

This is to give praise to God for His unnatural providence in cases where He saved our nation, but it is applied to the two spheres in which man operates:

- 1) interaction with the world and society: nature and psychology (Purim)
- 2) adherence to God: Halachic performances (Channuka)

Man lives in two worlds: worldly performances and halachic performances—mundane and holy. God intervenes to save us when we deserve it. He intervened—covertly—with Mordechai and Esther to emphasize their cunning and insight when interacting with the world. And God intervened with the Hasmonian priests when they sought to preserve our Torah system.

The Rabbis deemed it proper to highlight God's intervention in these two areas of human activity when performed according to God's will. Pirsumey Nase is our obligation of praising God for His salvation. We publicize how God interacts with man; He even creates unnatural occurrences when we live according to wisdom, and halacha.

Rabbi Israel Chait taught that Channuka and Purim were elevated over other wars, since it was in these two events alone that annihilation of Jewish nation was threatened: religious annihilation during Channuka, and physical annihilation during Purim. Therefore, greater thanks are due to God in these two events. We proclaim His wonders to praise His salvation.

Aside from praise, we are also required to give "thanks" to God. However, Al Hannissim omits any mention of the miracle of oil. Why? This is because the oil is not something for which we thank, but it was used by God to indicate a number of ideas. Thanks is therefore inapplicable to the oil miracle. Thanks is used when man benefits, and our benefit on Channuka was salvation. Therefore, the Al Hannissim does not mention the miracle of the oil. It focuses on our military victory, and that God caused this salvation of our lives and Judaism. ■

Why Yaakov Favored Yosef

RABBI REUVEN MANN

The Parshiot pertaining to the extended story of Joseph and his brothers are the most gut wrenching and down to earth narratives, in the entire Torah. The accounts are gripping, and engage the student, in a manner which is not common to other Biblical subjects.

So many of us, can identify with Yosef, the favored son, who seemingly could do no wrong in the eyes of his father. He appears to have been bent on winning his father over to his side, by bringing back "evil reports" about the doings of his siblings; an activity, which will never win any prizes for popularity.

We are astounded at Yaakov's passivity in this matter. Isn't there supposed to be some fatherly rebuke? Yet Yaakov, seems to display great tolerance for Yosef's wrongdoings; apparently unconcerned about the dangerous rift, that was developing between him and his brothers.

As if that wasn't enough, Yaakov goes ahead and commits the worst mistake a parent can make. "And Yisrael loved Yosef more than all of his sons, and he made for him a coat of many colors." The response of the brothers should have been easily predictable; "And the brothers saw that their father loved him from all his sons, and they hated him, and they could not speak peacefully with him."

The Rabbis derive from this, that it is never acceptable to display any type of favoritism, to one child over another; and the same should apply to teachers, coaches and all those in positions of authority over others. Nothing causes demoralization and dissension, more than the feeling that some are unfairly entitled to "special treatment".

So, to a very large extent, blame for the subsequent mistreatment of Yosef by his brothers, must be laid at the doorstep of his loving father, Yaakov. His "sins" were of omission and commission. He failed to discipline Yosef, for his wrongful habit of being a snitch on his brothers. And he actively, though unintentionally, promoted resentment, by (apparently) indulging his favoritism in a blatant and demonstrable manner. How are we to understand the disconcerting actions of Yaakov?

The seemingly strange parenting of Yaakov, must be seen in the context of the entire story. At the time of Yosef's interactions with his brothers, he was only seventeen. "These are the offspring of Yaakov, when Yosef was seventeen he shepherded the sheep with his

brothers but he was youthful and was with the children of Bilhah and Zilpah the wives of his father, and Yosef brought bad reports about them to his father." (Bereishis 37:2)

Sforno points out, that even though Yosef was highly intellectually developed, he still lacked the habit of carefully calculating the consequences of his actions. Yosef, was no ordinary person. He had a prodigious intellect, which enabled his father to share with him, the most advanced teachings of the school of Shem and Ever; and to have genuine prophetic dreams. However, there was a gap between his intellectual and emotional development. The verse attests that he was a "naar," i.e. childish. (After telling us that he was seventeen, there would be no need to mention that he was young. Thus, the term naar, must be understood in its more derogatory sense. See Rashi on this expression).

The entire "dispute"—between Yaakov and his sons—about the character of Yosef, revolved around this point. Was his current inappropriateness, an indicator of a basically corrupt personality, who sought glory and power, at the expense of others; or was this just a temporary manifestation of "youthful craziness", which he would outgrow with the onset of maturity?

Evidence, that this was the point of contention, can be seen from the rebuke that Reuven delivered to his brothers; when they were first accused of being spies, and placed in detention by Yosef in Egypt. Suddenly, they were smitten with remorse, over what they had done to Yosef so many years before. "The men said to one another, 'we are guilty concerning our brother in that we saw the suffering of his soul, when he pleaded with us but we did not listen; therefore has this calamity come upon us.'" (Bereishis 42:21)

The brothers, had not acknowledged that their assessment of Yosef was wrong, only that they had lacked the element of mercy in condemning him. Reuven, who had opposed the brothers judgement of Yosef, now chimed in. "Reuven responded to them saying, 'Did I not say to you, do not sin against the lad but you did not listen; and now his blood is being demanded.'" (Bereishis 42:22)

Rabbi Israel Chait explained, that Reuven was recounting—what his argument had been—when he defended Yosef, against the brothers harsh judgement. The key word in his statement, is "naar" (lad). Reuven had argued, that Yosef was essentially decent, but his inappropriate behaviors could be attributed to his "youthful craziness".

I believe, that Yaakov viewed the situation this way; and this is the key to resolving the questions we have raised, regarding his parenting. For Yaakov, alone, recognized the true greatness of Yosef, and that he was

destined to be the next leader of the Abrahamic movement.

This explains, why he did not rebuke Yosef, for the evil reports that he brought. He recognized, that rebuke from his father, could be harmful; and possibly put a damper on his continued growth. He knew that at bottom, Yosef was a Tzadik, and with maturity would outgrow these childish habits.

On a personal note, I want to add that as a Rebbe of advanced students for fifty years, I have encountered many who were especially brilliant, and could have become Gedolei HaDor (leaders of the generation); but had been stifled by overly harsh parental discipline. Unfortunately, they never realized their full potential; because they lacked the basic self-confidence essential to success.

But what prompted Yaakov to favor Yosef with the special garment? Was he unaware of the great dangers of singling out one child for special recognition? Rambam writes, in Hilchot Deot 3:3, that when engaged in procreation, one should have in mind, that “he may have a son, and perhaps he will be a Chacham (wise individual), and a (Torah) giant, in Israel.”

In my opinion, Yaakov raised Yosef with this consideration in mind. He realized, how vital it was to convey his approval to him, and to elevate his sense of confidence in his own capabilities. Yosef, was not “just another child”, but someone special and unique, indeed a national treasure.

Bear in mind, that Yosef was also an orphan, whose mother, Rachel, died when he was very young; and clearly, did not have the friendship and support of his siblings. Yaakov felt, that he must increase his love for Yosef, and do something; which demonstrated his endorsement of his character and wisdom. For he, was his prized prodigious student, who was capable of understanding the advanced metaphysical teachings, of the academy of Shem and Ever.

But what about the danger, of instilling jealousy among the siblings? I believe, that Yaakov felt that the brothers, who had each other, were themselves on a high level; and would be able to accept it and overcome their petty resentments. But there is a deeper point here. Again, this is just my opinion, but I believe, that Yaakov regarded the necessity of raising a Gadol BeYisrael, as overriding the possible emotional fallout. Faced with the choice, of facilitating the emergence of a Torah giant, and causing the brothers to experience some envy, he chose the former.

Yaakov, generally comes in for harsh criticism, because of his display of parental favoritism; but I believe it is mistaken. In my opinion, that coat was responsible for saving the Jewish People. That is because the great mystery of the story focuses around Yosef's

inexplicable rise from obscurity to supreme power. How can someone, who has experienced the most harsh and heartless treatment from his own flesh and blood, manage not to be crushed by it? From whence can this person draw the inner reserves of confidence and determination to rule, virtually by himself, a great country? And to shepherd it through the severe national calamity of an extended famine which could have brought the nation down to its knees?

Yosef, seemed to be unscathed, by the torments to which he had been subjected. He was unbroken by the mistreatment. He emerged, neither depressed nor lacking in self-confidence. His talent, at managing the affairs of Potiphar, garnered promotion after promotion; until he had absolute control over his household.

In my opinion, Yosef derived his strength, from the unequivocal endorsement of his father. His conviction, that Yaakov believed in him, stayed with him throughout the darkest moments of his ordeal; and enabled him to remain assured in his own judgement, and be optimistic that he could still succeed. Ramban points out that in taking the risk of interpreting the dreams of the the Butler and the Baker (had his predictions been wrong imagine the consequences) Yosef was batuach b'chachmato (confident in his wisdom).

Indeed, Yosef's remembrance of his father, played a role in enabling him to withstand the seductions of Potiphar's wife. The verse states, in Bereishis 39:11, “There was an opportune day, when he entered the house to do his work...” And Rashi comments; “This is a dispute between Rav and Shmuel, one says, his actual work, and one says to do his work with her, but he suddenly saw the image of his father (and refrained from sinning).” Yosef knew, he would lose Yaakov's approval, if he were to violate the Torah; and this provided the inner resolve, to abstain.

Let us remember, that after the sale of Yosef, the Tribes of Hashem—who were destined to become the Jewish People—had been torn asunder. There was no great leader, who had the ability to mend the breach and restore unity to the family. Yaakov, was now out of the picture; as he fell into a permanent state of mourning, because of the loss, of his most beloved son.

And Yehuda, separated himself from his brothers, at that point; because, as Rashi indicates, the brothers, after seeing the devastating effect of Yosef's loss on their father, now blamed Yehuda, for not preventing them from doing it. There was then, no leader out there, who could effectuate a family reconciliation and reunion...except for Yosef HaTzadik, who had outgrown all of his childish proclivities, and now desired nothing more than to forgive and

reconcile with his brothers. He had overcome all his challenges, and risen to true greatness. This was possible, because his self-esteem was never broken, by the indignities that were visited on him. The unbounded love of Yaakov, was essential in protecting his inherent sense of worthiness; which enabled him to be the instrument of the “great salvation”, which preserved Klal Yisrael. In that sense, we can say, that the coat of many colors, was responsible for saving the Jewish People.

Shabbat Shalom. ■

The Ancient Channuka Story

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Introduction

As the Jews faced religious persecution, the five sons of Mattisyahu displayed much courage, although greatly outnumbered. They were inspired to battle against those who wished to strip the Jewish nation of its Torah and identity. The Greeks were intent on preventing Torah observance and coercing idolatrous practice. However, Mattisyahu's sons displayed unwavering devotion to what their minds knew was true. We read in verse 39, “We remember that which God commanded us on Mount Sinai.” They were convinced of the truth of God's revelation, His existence, and His commanding us in His Torah at Sinai. No enemy could erase history or Torah's truths. Without Torah observance, one's life is meaningless. Mattisyahu's sons took it upon themselves to fight to preserve Torah, at all costs.

We must take this lesson to heart, as this is the sole reason for our celebration of Chanuka: to proclaim God's performance of miracles and intervention when we adhere to His word. Devotion to a Jewish life—God's words—earned the Jews of Chanuka miraculous salvation. Many leaders have not learned from history, and keep Israel under the sword. As long as God's word is absent from national interests, God may not assist us. This is the dichotomy: most Jews today celebrate Chanuka, recalling God's intervention when Torah was defended, while much of the other Torah laws are ignored. Lighting the menorah with our families, we testify to God's providence, saving those Jews who followed Him by risking their lives to preserve Judaism for all. There-

fore, God stepped in. Until the Jews demonstrated their devotion, there was no divine intervention. Once these few brave souls declared the essentiality of Torah adherence through action, God protected them, and gave "the many into the hands of the few, the wicked, into the hands of the righteous."

Today we perish by the hands of those like Antiochos. Children of Israel, IDF, and leaders of our people are wise to heed Chanuka's lesson. Is this not why we celebrate? God enabled five brothers to defeat the armies of our enemies. God is not sleeping. God is not weak. He sees our travail at this time too. God's word and history attest to the fact that He saves those who follow him. Until we follow His Torah, until we see with clear conviction that not based on political and military strategies alone will we be saved, but also with Torah as our guide, we may continue to suffer. We must include the Torah's direction when determining our course of action in all national matters.

Let us recall Abraham defeating tremendous forces with just a few men. Jacob's salvation from his twin Esav. Recall the Ten Plagues, the Manna in the desert, and the splitting of the Reed Sea, where every Egyptian soldier perished. And recall this: our claim to Israel is from no other source than God's Torah: His promise to Abraham. These Torah accounts are "lessons." But many Jews resist, and without basis.

We do not rely on miracles; this is against Judaism. Living by Torah ideals is the most fulfilling life, and we do not uphold Torah to avoid pain. But as Torah is absolute truth, we must be concerned by God's promise to abandon us if we abandon Him. He says this in the Shema. But God also promises His great providence when we live according to His word. In line with this promise, we may seek His assistance. God's word is absolute truth, which enables our existence. When living in line with God's word, He has many vehicles to protect us. This is the message of so many Torah stories. But as the Shema says, He certainly will not shield us when we abandon Him. Of course it is preferred that we attach ourselves to the truth of Torah when prompted by its perfect and pleasing laws, not only for salvation's sake. But many times God removes His protection to instruct us to return to Him. Maimonides teaches that national catastrophe must not be viewed as "natural," but as God's instruction that we return to Jewish life. And if we dismiss such catastrophes as mere chance, we will make matters worse and He will hide from us. For God did not create man so as to ignore His gift of intelligence, and ignore God and His Torah. This removes His providence.

Remember the Chanuka Story. Its celebrates God, who protects those who follow Him. Proclaim its message not just with your menorah, but with your daily actions all year. We all wish happiness, health and success for our people. As Mattisyahu's sons lived and were saved through Jewish values, with God's help, we too can triumph over our enemies. If however, we solely engage political and military considerations, denying these Torah truths, Jewish history, and God's abilities...we ignore Chanuka's primary message.

God commanded Torah observance for our benefit, and it is pleasing and sweet to all who investigate and appreciate it's perfect sensibilities, and the beauty of all its laws. God knows what is best for His creation, for mankind, and He designed Torah as which provides man the richest life. We have free will to succumb to laziness and the desire to be "free of restriction." But with minor effort of study, we each can appreciate the purpose of every law, and we will then truly view our previous non-observant lives as empty, feeling fortunate we finally made the first step towards observance. We will no longer view Torah laws as restrictive, but as a great fortune, as we come to understand how each law benefits us is in the most profound manner. King David referred to Torah study as a "plaything" and King Solomon described it as the greatest mitzvah. If the wisest men had such an estimation of Torah, should we not investigate what exactly Torah study is, and how we can attain a most fulfilling and happy life, as God designed us to enjoy?

Following His laws, even the few will be victorious over the many. Happy Chanuka to all!

MEGILLAS ANTIOCHOS

Found in an ancient siddur printed in Solonika, Greece, Otzar HaTefilos refers to it as a "precious letter."

(Arbitrary paragraph breaks have been added every 10 verses for ease of reading. These breaks do not exist in the original.)

"1. And it was in the days of Antiochos, king of Greece, a great, mighty king was he, and he was strong in his reign and all kings listened to him. 2. And he conquered many cities and mighty kings, and he destroyed their palaces, their temples he burned with fire, and their men he imprisoned in jails. 3. From the days of Alexander the King, there arose no king like

him on all sides of the river. 4. And he built a great city on the sea shore to be his house of kingdom, and Antiochos called the city by his name. 5. And also his second in command Bagris built another city next to it and Bagris called it by his name, and so is its name until this day. 6. In the twenty third year of his reign, it was the two hundred and thirteenth year of the building of the Temple, he considered to ascend to Jerusalem. 7. And he answered and he said to his officers, "Do you not know that there is the Jewish people in Jerusalem amongst us? 8. To our god they do not sacrifice, and our religion they do not practice and the king's decrees they forsake, to do their religion. 9. And they also hope for the day of the dethroning of the kings and rulers and they say, 'When will our King rule the seas and dry land, and the entire world will be given to our hand?'" 10. It is not honorable to the kingdom to leave them be on the face of the earth.

11. And now let us come and we will ascend on them and nullify their treaty that was cut with them concerning Sabbath, the new Month and circumcision." And the matter was good in the eyes of his officers and in the eyes of his entire army. 12. At that time, Antiochos the king arose and he sent Nikanor his second with a great army and many people and they came to the city of Judah, to Jerusalem. 13. And they slaughtered a great slaughter and built an altar in the Temple in the place where the God of Israel said to His servants, His prophets "Where I will cause to dwell My manifested presence eternally", in that place, they slaughtered the pig and they brought its blood to the sanctified courtyard. 14. And as this occurred, when Yochanan son of Mattisyahu the High Priest heard these doings occurred, he was filled with anger and rage, and the countenance of his face changed, and he counseled in his heart what should be done on this. 15. And then Yochanan son of Mattisyahu made himself a sword two spans long, one span wide, covered under his clothing. 16. And he came to Jerusalem and stood in the gate of the king, and he called to the gatekeepers and he told them "I am Yochanan son of Mattisyahu, I have come to come before Nikanor." 17. And then the gatekeepers and watchers came and told him the High priest of the Jews stands in the opening, and Nikanor answered and said to them, "Let him surely enter." 18. And then Yochanan was brought in before Nikanor and Nikanor answered and said to Yochanan, "Are you one of the rebels that rebels against the king and desires not the peace of his kingdom?" 19. And Yochanan answered before Nikanor and said, "I am he, now I come before you, that which you wish I will do." 20. And Nikanor answered and said to Yochanan, "If as my will you will do, take a pig and slaughter it on

the altar and robe in the king's clothing and ride of the king's horses, and as one of the kings beloved you will be."

21. And as Yochanan listened, he responded a thing, "My master, I fear from the children of Israel, perhaps they will hear I have done so and they will stone me with rocks. 22. Now let all men leave from before you, perhaps they will make the matter known." Then, Nikanor caused all men to leave from before him. 23. At that moment, Yochanan son of Mattisyahu lifted his eyes to the heavens and assembled his prayer before his God and he said, "My God and the God of my fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, please do not give me into the hand of this uncircumcised, because if he will kill me, he will go and praise in the house of Dagon his god, and say 'My god has given him to my hand.'" 24. At that moment, he stepped towards him three steps and plunged the sword into his heart, and he threw his corpse into the sanctified courtyard. 25. Before the God of heaven, Yochanan answered and he said, "My God, do not place on me sin that I have killed in the sanctified (area), now, so also do similarly to all the people that come with him to pain Judah and Jerusalem." 26. Then went out Yochanan son of Mattisyahu on that day and warred with the people and slaughtered in them a great slaughter. 27. The number of the slain that he slayed on that day was seventy two thousand seven hundred that were killed these to these. 28. On his return they built a pillar on his name and called it "Maccabee Killed the Mighty." 29. And it was that king Antiochos heard that his second in command Nikanor was killed, it grieved him much, and he sent to bring Bagris the wicked that mislead his people. 30. And Antiochos answered and said to Bagris, "Do you not know, have you not heard what the children of Israel have done? They killed my army and looted my camp and my officers?"

31. Now, on their money you are trusted or their houses are yours. Come, and ascend upon them and nullify the treaty which was cut with them (by) their God, Sabbath, the New Month and circumcision." 32. Then Bagris the wicked and all his camp came to Jerusalem and slaughtered in them a great slaughter and decreed a complete decree on Sabbath, the New Month and circumcision. 33. When this occurred that the matter of the king was urgent, there was found a man who circumcised his son and they brought the man and his wife and they hung him in front of the child. 34. And also the woman who bore the son, after her husband died and circumcised him at eight days, she went up to the walls of Jerusalem and her circumcised son in her hands. 35. And she answered and said, "To you, Bagris the wicked, you intend to nullify from us the treaty that was

cut with us, the treaty of our fathers will not be nullified from us, Sabbath, the New Moon and circumcision from our children's children, it will not be removed." 36. And she dropped her son to the ground, and she fell after him and they both died together. And many of the children of Israel that did similarly in those days, and they did not veer from the treaty of their fathers. 37. At that time, the children of Israel said, "These to these, let us go and rest in the cave, lest we desecrate the Sabbath day, and they slandered them before Bagris. 38. Then Bagris the wicked sent men girded for battle and they came to the opening of the cave and said to them, "Come out to us, eat of our bread and drink of our wine and our actions you shall do." 39. And the children of Israel answered, "These to these, we remember that which God commanded us on Mount Sinai, 'Six days you shall work, and do all your labor, and on the seventh day rest'. Now it is better for us that we die in this cave than desecrating the Sabbath day." 40. When this happened that the Jews did not come out to them, they brought wood and burnt it at the opening of the cave and there died about a thousand men and women.

41. Afterwards, there came out five sons of Mattisyahu, Yochanan and his four brothers and they warred with the people and slaughtered a great slaughter and drove them to the isles of the sea because they trusted in the God of heaven. 42. Then Bagris entered one ship and fled to king Antiochos and with him were men, escapees of the sword. 43. And Bagris answered and said to king Antiochos, "You the king, placed a command to nullify from the Jews Sabbath, the New Month and circumcision, a great deceit and rebellion in its midst. 44. That when there went all the people and nations and languages, they could not defeat the five sons of Mattisyahu. From lions they are stronger, and from eagles they are more swift, and from bears they are more quick. 45. Now king, I offer you good counsel, and do not war with few men, for if you war, you will be embarrassed in the eyes of all kings. 46. Therefore, write and send books in all cities of your kingdom, that there come officers of war and not leave one of them, and also elephants wearing armour with them." 47. And the matter was good with king Antiochos, and he sent books to all cities of his reign, and there came officers of all the people and kingdoms, and also elephants wearing armour came with them. 48. A second time Bagris the wicked arose and came to Jerusalem, he broke the wall, and he cut off the water supply, and he broke in the Temple thirteen breaches and also from the stones he broke until they were like dust and he thought in his heart and said, "This time I will not be overtaken because of the numbers of my army and might of my hand." But the God of heaven did not think so. 49. And

when the five sons of Mattisyahu heard, they arose and came to Mitzpeh Gilead, that were there the remnant of the house of Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet. 50. They decreed a fast, and sat on ashes to seek out mercy from before God of heaven.

51. Then there fell good counsel in their hearts, Judah the firstborn, Simon the second, the third Yochanan, the fourth Yonasan, the fifth Elazar. 52. And their father blessed them and so he said, "Judah my son, I liken you to Judah son of Jacob who was equated to a lion. 53. Simon my son, I liken you to Simon son of Jacob who killed the inhabitants of Shechem. 54. Yochanan my son, I liken you to Avner son of Ner, officer of the army of Israel. Yonasan my son, I liken you to Yonasan son of Saul, who killed the Philistine people. 55. Elazar my son, I liken you to Pinchas son of Elazar who was jealous for his God and saved the children of Israel." 56. On this, there went out the five sons of Mattisyahu on that day, and warred with the people, and slaughtered in them a great slaughter, and there was killed from them Judah. 57. At that moment when the sons of Mattisyahu saw that Judah was killed, they returned and they came to their father. 58. And he said to them, "Why have you returned?" And they answered and they said, "On account that our brother was killed who was equated to all of us." 59. And Mattisyahu their father answered and said to them, "I will go out with you and I will fight with the people, lest the house of Israel perish, and you are frightened on your brother." 60. And Mattisyahu went out on that day with his sons and fought with the people.

61. And God of heaven gave all the mighty of the nations into their hands. And they slaughtered a great slaughter, all who seized the sword, and all who drew the bow, officers of war and the seconds in command, there was not left one remnant, and there fled the rest of the people to the cities of the sea. 62. And Elazar was involved in killing the elephants and he was submerged by the chariots of the elephants, and when they returned, they looked for him among the living and among the dead, and they could not find him. And afterwards they found him that he was submerged by the chariots of the elephants. 63. And the children of Israel were gladdened that there was given to their hands their enemies. From them they burned with fire and from them they pierced with the sword, and from them they hung on trees. 64. And Bagris the wicked that misled his people, the children of Israel burned him with fire. 65. And then, Antiochos the king heard that Bagris the wicked was killed and all officers of war with him, he entered into a ship and fled to the cities

of the sea, and it was that each place he came to there, they mocked him and called him "the runaway." 66. Afterwards, the children of the Hasmoneans came to the temple, and they built the broken gates and they closed the breaches, and purified the courtyard from the casualties and from the impurities. 67. And they searched for pure olive oil to light the menorah and they did not find but one canister that had the seal of the ring of the High Priest and they knew that it was pure, and it contained a measurement to light for one day. 68. And God of heaven Who causes to dwell His name there, gave a blessing and they lit from it eight days. 69. Therefore there established the children of the Hasmoneans a fulfillment, and they forged a law, and the children of Israel with them as one, to make these eight days days of drinking and happiness as the appointed days written in the Torah, and to light on them lights to make known what was done to them (by) the eternal God of heaven. 70. And on them, one may not eulogize, nor to decree fast days, or have a fast, except if it was accepted on it prior to this and pray before their God.

71. But the Hasmoneans and their children and their brothers they did not decree on them to nullify service of work. And from that time, there was no name to the kingdom of Greece. 72. And there received the kingdom, the children of the Hasmoneans and their grandchildren from that time until the destruction of the Temple two hundred and six years. 73. Therefore, the children of Israel from that day in all their exiles guard these days and call them days of drinking and gladness from the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, eight days. 74. From that time and eternally, there should not be removed from them, that were in their Temple, priests, Levites and their wise men who established upon them and upon their grandchildren eternally."

Other prayer books add these verses:

And these days, they arose and accepted on themselves and on their children and on their grandchildren eternally, the priests, Levites and wise men that were in the temple, and they were not removed forever. The God that did with them a miracle and a wonder, He should do with us miracles and wonders and sustain with us the verse that was written as the days of your Exodus from the land of Egypt, "I display wonders," Amen. ■