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London	3:37	Tokyo	4:10
Miami	5:11	Toronto	4:25
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Weekly Parsha

Vayeshev

RABBI BERNIE FOX

"And they said to him, 'We have dreamed a dream, and there is no interpreter for it.' Joseph said to them, 'Don't interpretations belong to God? Tell [them] to me now.'" (Beresheit 40:8)

Our parasha describes the deterior-

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Weekly Parsha

the Selling of Joseph

RABBI REUVEN MANN

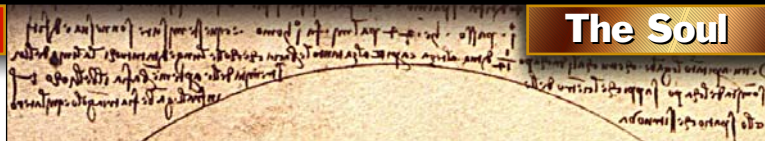
Introduction

The Torah in Genesis Chapter 37 describes in detail the manner in which Joseph was sold into Egyptian bondage by his brothers. After accepting the advice of Reuven not to execute Joseph but to place him in a deep pit they sat down to eat bread. Suddenly a caravan of traders enroute to Egypt appeared on the scene. Judah convinced his brothers to remove Joseph from the pit and instead sell him into slavery. The arguments employed by Judah to achieve his goal warrant careful study.

23. And it came to pass, when Joseph came to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, his coat of colors that was on him; 24. And they took him, and threw him into a pit; and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. 25. And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing gum, balm and myrrh, going to carry

(continued on page 6)

The Soul



RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

The Future: Coming Full Circle

GOD'S PLAN For Mankind

When studying God's original 7 Noachide Laws intended for all mankind, one cannot help but ask why these 7 graduated into 613. Equally perplexing is why God didn't give 613 to Adam commands at the very outset, and why He eventually did to Moses at Sinai. What was the original plan for mankind? We also notice quite a strange phenomenon when comparing the two systems side by side: the 613 Commands are relatively explicit, clearly identifying the commands: Do not steal, Do not murder, Observe Sabbath, wear Tefillin, etc. But the Noachide laws are not clearly stated at all. Talmud (Sanhedrin 56b) derives the 7 Noachide laws from God's commencement of His prohibition to Adam not to eat of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge:

"And God, [the] Governor commanded upon the man saying, 'Of all the trees of the garden you may surely eat.'" (Gen. 2:16)

We are further perplexed: what does this verse have to do with the 7 Noachide Laws governing idolatry, sexual laws, murder, stealing, cursing, courts, and eating of a living animal?

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(Vayeshev cont. from pg. 1)

Weekly Parsha

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ration of the relationship between Yosef and his brothers. Eventually, the brothers conspire to sell Yosef into servitude. Yosef is sold to Potifar – one of Paroh's ministers. In Egypt, Yosef experiences successes and disappointments. By the end of the parasha, Yosef has been imprisoned. But, even in prison, Yosef's talents and virtues are recognized. The affairs of the prison and the care of the inmates are entrusted to him.

Among the prisoners are Paroh's former Cupbearer – his Chief Butler – and his Chief Baker. Paroh has sentenced both to prison as punishment for their carelessness. One night, both have dreams. Each senses that his dream has some significance, but neither can understand the meaning of his dream. Both are seized with distress over the potential portents of their dreams. Yosef senses that his two celebrity prisoners are upset, and inquires as to the cause. They explain to him that they have each had a disturbing dream and that neither can unravel the meaning of his dream. Yosef suggests that they relate their dreams to him. He tells them that perhaps Hashem will reveal to them their meaning.

“In another three days, Paroh will number you [with the other officers], and he will restore you to your position, and you will place Pharaoh's cup into his hand, according to [your] previous custom, when you were his cupbearer. But, remember me when things go well with you, and please do me a favor and mention me to Paroh, and you will get me out of this house.” (Beresheit 40:13-14)

The Cupbearer accepts Yosef's offer and relates his dream to him. Yosef explains to him that his dream is a portent of redemption. He tells the Cupbearer that the dream indicates that in three days, he will be reappointed to his previous

position. Yosef asks the Cupbearer to remember him and bring his case to Paroh's attention. He hopes that Paroh will recognize that he has been unjustly imprisoned and restore him to freedom.

“But the Cupbearer did not remember Yosef, and he forgot him.” (Beresheit 40:23)

Yosef's plan does not unfold exactly as he plans. The Cupbearer is released from prison and is restored to his position. He has ready and

constant access to Paroh. But, he does not act on Yosef's behalf. Instead, he completely forgets Yosef and his request for aid.

There is a significant dispute among the commentaries regarding this episode. Rashi comments that Yosef had acted improperly in asking the Cupbearer for his assistance. Yosef should not have relied on the assistance of the Cupbearer. Instead, he should have trusted in Hashem. As a consequence of this error, the Cupbearer forgot Yosef. Yosef spent an additional two years in prison.[1]

On the surface, Rashi's comments are difficult to understand. Yosef was provided with an opportunity to save himself through the assistance of Paroh's Cupbearer. Through providing the Cupbearer with a proper interpretation of his dream, Yosef hoped that he would win the friendship of Paroh's

servant, and he expected this grateful Cupbearer to plead his case before the king. This seems like a completely rational plan. Certainly, Hashem expects each of us to strive to achieve our own well-being. We are not permitted to simply rely upon G-d for miraculous salvation. Where was Yosef's iniquity in attempting to help himself?

While we are required to do everything in our power to help ourselves, we must concurrently recognize that our efforts alone are not sufficient to secure happiness and success. Only if our actions are accompanied by the favor and grace of

(continued on next page)



Hashem will we secure positive results. Yosef apparently believed that through his wisdom alone he would be redeemed. He felt he had devised a brilliant plan through which his individual efforts would secure his freedom. He envisioned the grateful Cupbearer returning to Paroh, pleading Yosef's case before his master. Paroh would investigate the charges against Yosef and recognize his innocence. He would then intervene to correct the injustice that Yosef had experienced. The process would be gradual, but would inevitably culminate in Yosef's freedom.

No individual controls his or her environment. We are affected by a multitude of factors, few of which are under our control. Yosef's error was in failing to recognize that, despite the brilliance of his plan, success could not be achieved without the assistance and benevolence of Hashem.

Gershonides disagrees with Rashi's position. He maintains that Yosef acted properly. He does not attribute to Yosef any lack of trust in Hashem. He explains that the Cupbearer's failure to recall Yosef's kindness was not a punishment. It was a reward! Yosef had hoped that the Cupbearer would immediately bring his case to Paroh. Had the Cupbearer acted as Yosef planned, he might very well have failed to secure Paroh's sympathy. However, two years later, Paroh had his own disturbing dream. The Cupbearer suddenly recalled Yosef's assistance in interpreting his dream. He related his experience with Yosef to Paroh. Paroh summoned Yosef at a moment in which he was desperately in need of the assistance that Yosef could provide. Yosef was able to provide Paroh with an interpretation of his dream. Paroh recognized Yosef's wisdom and appointed him as his Prime Minister. This outcome would not have been achieved if the Cupbearer had appealed to Paroh on Yosef's behalf at an earlier time.[2]

However, Yosef's interaction with the Cupbearer presents an interesting problem. Yosef believed that the Cupbearer would be grateful for his help and would intercede with Paroh on his behalf. Yosef's premise was that the Cupbearer would recognize that he had assisted him in some manner. What exactly was the assistance that Yosef provided to the Cupbearer? It is true that Yosef had provided a proper interpretation of the dream. But, the dream was only a revelation of the Cupbearer's fate. Yosef's interpretation did not influence this fate. He did alleviate the Cupbearer's anxiety. But, it is unlikely that Yosef believed that because he had relieved his anxiety, the Cupbearer would feel remarkably indebted to him.

A comment of Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra may help resolve this issue. Before Yosef provided the Cupbearer with an interpretation of

his dream, he explained that the interpretation he would provide would be from Hashem. What message was Yosef relating? Ibn Ezra explains that Yosef did not want the Cupbearer or the Chief Baker to believe that his interpretation would, in some way, influence their fates. He was telling them that their fates were already determined. Hashem was merely revealing their destinies.[3]

Apparently, Yosef was concerned with this issue. He feared that the Cupbearer and the Chief Baker believed that his interpretation would actually influence their destiny. A positive interpretation would secure a positive future, but a negative interpretation would bring about personal disaster. In other words, Yosef feared that they would not recognize that his role was that of a passive interpreter and that his interpretation would not actually influence their fates.

"Now the Chief Baker saw that he had interpreted well. So he said to Yosef, 'Me too! In my dream, behold, there were three wicker baskets on my head.'" (Beresheit 40:16)

Yosef interprets the dream of the Cupbearer. He tells him that his dream foretells his deliverance from prison and his restoration to his previous post. Upon hearing this interpretation, the Chief Baker asks Yosef to interpret his dream. However, the passage adds that the Chief Baker observed that Yosef had interpreted the Cupbearer's dream well. Only then does he ask Yosef to interpret his dream. This translation is consistent with Unkelus' interpretation of the passage. However, Rabbaynu Saadia disagrees with this interpretation of the passage. He suggests that the Chief Baker did not decide to

share his dream with Yosef because he found his interpretation of the Cupbearer's dream compelling. Instead, he revealed his dream to Yosef because he observed that Yosef had interpreted the Cupbearer's dream as a positive portent.[4] This interpretation suggests that the Chief Baker believed that Yosef's interpretation of the Cupbearer's dream was not merely a revelation. He believed that Yosef's interpretation would influence future events. Therefore, once he observed that Yosef had provided a positive interpretation for the dream of the Cupbearer, he was encouraged to reveal his own dream to Yosef.

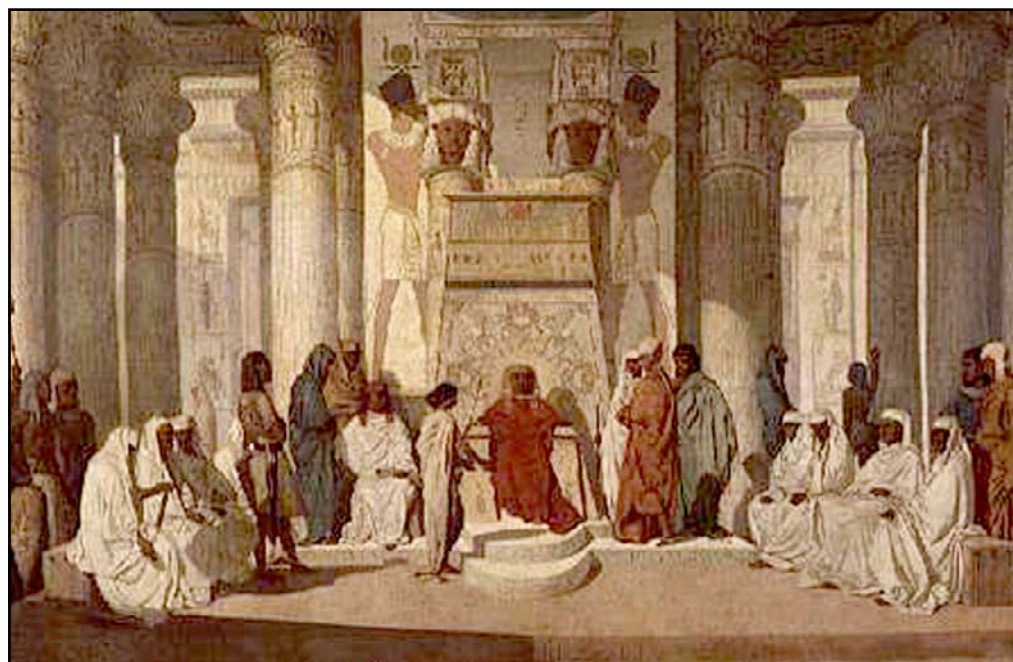
This may explain Yosef's plan. Yosef had told the Cupbearer and the Chief Baker that his interpretation would only reveal the future. It would not influence events. However, he also recognized from the behavior of the Chief Baker that they had not necessarily accepted his assertion. He concluded that the Cupbearer may have also believed that his interpretation actually played a role in securing his freedom and restoration. If this were the Cupbearer's belief, then he would feel indebted to Yosef. Therefore, Yosef believed that he could ask the Cupbearer to respond to this perceived act of kindness and press his case with Paroh. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 40:23.

[2] Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 234.

[3] Rabbaynu Avraham ibn Ezra, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 40:8.

[4] Rabbaynu Saadia Gaon, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 40:16.



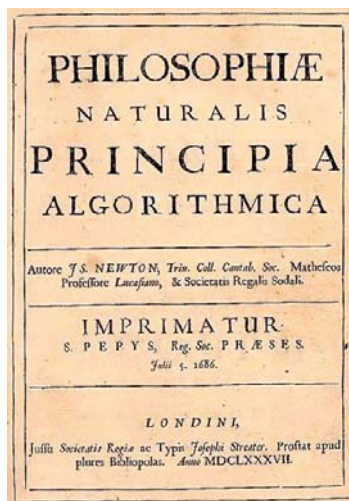
The Talmud answers that each word of this verse may be used to derive one of the seven laws: the word "commanded" is the source for the Noachide law demanding courts are established. The word "command" implies a court system to enforce those commands. The word "God" refers to cursing; "governor" refers to idolatry, and so on. So we wonder at this mode of command via subtle implication, whereas the 613 Commands are explicitly stated: no derivation is required. Why this difference? And this method of subtle derivation is continued with the additional laws of mix-breeding, witchcraft, Sabbath observance and Torah study that other Rabbis add to the 7 Noachide Laws. Subtle implication of God's will is thereby seen as a clear theme in Noachide commands. But why so covert?

A reader raised a question this wee: what is meant by Jeremiah 31:30-33, "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people." (Referring to future times) When he asked this, I associated to a question Rabbi Reuven Mann asked years ago: Maimonides' 13 Principles address our understanding of God: He is the first cause; He is indivisible; He gave the Torah; He gives prophecy; He rewards and punishes, etc. The question is what the belief in the Messiah is doing here, forming one of the 13 Principles. How does this form part of our ideas of God?

Deuteronomy 30:6 reads as follows: "And God will circumcise your hearts, and the hearts of your seed [in order] to love God your Governor with all of your heart and all of your soul, for the sake of your lives". After Adam the First sinned, his imagination took over and he no longer naturally desired to do the good as he did prior to the sin, as God created him. Ramban (Nachmanides) in fact says this metaphoric "circumcision" is a direct reference to the quote above in Jeremiah when in future times, God will make a change in human nature that we will once again naturally desire the good (unlike now when we sin) and He will return us to the state of Adam prior to his sin. In that state, Adam naturally cleaved to God. Here, we are provided with another clue to God's plan for mankind.

However, we notice that Adam's downfall was not through any intervention by God. Man ruined himself. But if this is so, cannot man then reverse this error independent of God's interaction in the future? Keep this in mind. Now, there is just one more source of interest...

In Pirkei Avos (Ethics) in the last few mishnas of chapter six, we learn that "God has 5 acquisitions in His world: Torah, heaven and earth, Abraham, the Jewish nation, and the Temple". What stands out to me, is Abraham. Why him?



And what is this idea of "God's acquisitions"?

"Acquisition" according to Rashi means a "purposeful creation". He states that God created Abraham for the purpose of "attracting mankind to follow God". Of course, Abraham had free will. But God created Abraham as a unique individual with great intellectual powers. Abraham then used his free will and desired to harness his capabilities to discover God, and educate the masses.

What this statement means is that God created five fundamental creations essential for man: 1) Torah as the purpose of the earth's creation; 2) the heavens and earth to further offer man evidence of a Creator; 3) Abraham, who emerged as the sole individual of his time to embody man's purpose and educate others; 4) Israel was created as a means to educate the rest of mankind; and 5) Temple was created for the purpose of man's expression of his attachment to God, in the form of sacrifice and worship.

The Plan

It appears that God's initially plan was that man approach God using his intellect alone. Yes, we were given commands, but just a few. We were supposed to then use those commands, and our intellects, as a stepping-stone to explore with our minds much further, and arrive at a correct lifestyle, embodied by Abraham. Abraham was an anomaly, but the right type of anomaly. He alone displayed man's potential, as Adam in the garden prior to sin. Abraham's primary lesson to mankind is that God equipped every human soul with the ability to reach God, with no need for instructions at all...and even if immersed in idolatry as Abraham.

God created man and woman with the ability to use mind alone – without 613 Commands – to

live exactly as God intended. This is why just a few commands were necessary. But as time passed, man regressed into an instinctual lifestyle, where his infantile insecurities forced him to resort to idolatry and other deviations from a life of intellect. Eventually, God gave us a law of 613 Commands, many addressing the false beliefs and practices of the Canaanites, the Egyptians, and many other idolatrous peoples. But it appears that this is not the ultimate state for man. Ramban taught that based on the verse above in Deuteronomy, God will eventually step in and make some change in human nature, where we will revert to the state of Adam before the sin. God's plan is that man lives as originally intended, and God will insure this to occur in the future.

The Greatness Within

However, throughout time, we have witnessed rare men and women who have not followed the masses, but engaged their intellects and rose above all others. Einstein, Newton, Freud, Esther, Abraham, Aristotle, Plato and others displayed the great level man has in potential. And since these thinkers reached such levels of thought and breakthroughs – before God made His change as Jeremiah discusses – we learn that just as Adam "independently" caused his downfall, other men and women "independent" of God's future change, can live as God intended for Adam in the garden. Man caused his own downfall, so it appears that man still possesses the potential to reverse his attachment to instinctual drives, reengage the mind, and find far greater satisfaction in life, as these shining examples teach. In other words, we have not lost the capacity to use our minds alone, and arrive at happiness. It is merely the follow-the-leader attitude that jails most cultures into repeating their ancestors' errors. God will make a change in the future, but perhaps this is because most men are too weak to do so alone, and not because we have lost the capacity.

This, Rabbi Mann explains, is why belief in the Messiah forms part of the 13 Principles. It is because man is the one creation still imperfect. And when God perfects us in the future, all of creation will now reflect God's perfection. And as God's perfection is embodied in that perfect state of mankind in the Messianic era, this is a perfection of God, and rightfully part of the 13 Principles.

The Talmudic method of deriving the Noachide laws also points to that original perfection intended by God for man. For if man could derive the laws he is to follow, and need not read them explicitly, this exposes man's great intellectual

(continued on next page)

The Soul

(God's Plan continued from previous page)

abilities possessed by the original Noachides. Since God originally desired mankind to follow his fully capable intellect, mere hints to few laws were all that was required. Had God spelled out those laws, it would imply that man could not engage his mind, but he could. So all that was needed were implications.

Why is Abraham God's acquisition? It is precisely this reason: he demonstrated the potential in man to use his mind alone to discover his Creator, and unearth great truths by merely pondering the universe. This was man's original potential, but man sunk to the instinctual. Yet, even during our darker periods, the potential was not completely lost, as seen in one like Abraham. He, like all the other four acquisitions, remained with his purpose. The Torah, heavens and earth, Israel, and the Temple never lost their true goal...nor did Abraham.

God will eventually insure that mankind lives exactly as intended. Mankind will come full circle. But we don't have to wait. Just as Abraham demonstrated long after Adam's sin, that a human being – every human on some level – possesses the original capacity to discover God independent of a detailed and explicit system of 613 commands, we too can realize and live by God's true intent for man, and we can start the process. Or, we can continue living based on what the other nations and the media pull over our eyes.

We can truly discover the amazing realizations witnessed by Abraham...today. But sadly, most of us are convinced that what matters most is fame, fortune, and emotional gratification. Our Torah study is a token shiur, where we can't wait to return to the world of business. That's where we get excited: at the next deal. That's what overtakes our conversations: dollars, not ideas. We succumb to the media, we are impressed by masses, and we don't think for ourselves. But this is not the true objective, as clearly stated in Deuteronomy. Pirkei Avos also teaches that we are to make our work the lesser part of the day, and Torah is to be the primary focus.

If we admit God is wiser than we are, then we must cast off the desire to impress our neighbors with luxurious cars and affairs, suits, dresses, and homes, and make a change in our lives. We must be as independent as Abraham, and do what God tells us is best, not what society says...even Jewish society. If God is your guide, you have many lessons to follow. Judaism is learned by studying God's word, not religious Jews' actions. But if you wish to placate man, you will remain without the ultimate good.

You have one life. Take some serious time and realize how to make the most, based on God's lessons. Be independent. ■

Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



Split Personality

Beth: Rabbi, I'd like to discuss again the question of why part of Torah is restricted from Noachides. I just read an article on a Noachide website, which concludes...

"It has been demonstrated solidly through relevant sources that there is not any real restriction on the Torah that Noachides can study. The restriction on non-Jewish Torah learning refers only to Idolaters and Noachides are not Idolaters."

Mesora: I recently addressed Maimonides' careful use of the terms "idolater" and "Noachide". One might quickly assume these two terms refer to two, distinct people. However, we learn that these terms are referring to one and the same person, but address two "aspects" of his personality.

The proof is that in his Laws of Kings (10:9) Maimonides says, "either the idolater observes his laws, or becomes a convert." Maimonides does not say there are three options, as suggested: 1) idolater, 2) noachide and 3) Jew. There exists only two types: idolater/Noachide, or Jew. As a further proof, the Talmud states that the idolater cannot learn Torah, but must only study "his" 7 laws. The word "his" clearly identifies the same idolater, as a Noachide.

The reason for the switch in terms is to teach us a deeper lesson: these two capacities of the same Noachide, are respectively responsible for his various restrictions. As Maimonides teaches, it is the "idolater" capacity that creates the restriction in Sabbath observance, while it is the Noachide capacity that creates the obligation in the 7 Laws. Being a believer in alien powers (idolater) is contrary to observing Sabbath - the celebration of a single Creator.

And being a Noachide is the cause of the obligation of the 7 Noachide laws...it is not the previous involvement in idolatry that causes this obligation.

Similarly, it is the "studious" aspect of a teen that earns him his good grades...not his "teen" status, or his social nature. So we don't praise the teen for his social skills when he passes his test, but we praise his studious capacity.

Maimonides too declares it is the idolatrous aspect that restricts the Noachide from Torah study, as his association with beliefs in alien, false powers, is contrary to the purpose of Torah: the approach to God, One power.

When Maimonides or any other great thinker writes, we must know, that they are revealing great insights. Our appreciation for God's infinite wisdom must urge us to delve into these texts.

It is therefore my conclusion that a Noachide and idolater are one and the same...and all laws pertaining to idolater or Noachide refer to one and the same person: a non-Jew. Noachides therefore cannot engage in studying Torah outside his commands, for he is the idolater Maimonides identifies. But as a wise Rabbi taught, areas of human perfection are also allowed for Noachide study. I explain here why gentiles may not study Torah: <http://www.mesora.org/gentilestorahIII.htm>

However, please see my full article here addressing this main topic of this post: <http://www.mesora.org/GentilesandTorahStudy.htm> ■

New Hearts?

Reader: I am trying to understand Jeremiah 31:30-33. What does this mean "I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people."

Does "Torah on our hearts" mean we will love His commands?

Mesora: This means that in the future, God will make some change, whereabouts the Jewish nation will be internally inclined to follow His Torah. "Placing the Torah inside them" refers to the fact that Torah will no longer be something "external", where man needs to continually draw close to it. In the future, Torah will be part of our natures. It will be "internal" and we will require no external impetus to study.

"Writing it on their hearts" is a further level where we will be fluent in the Torah's teachings...its very words. So there are two ideas here: 1) an internal change in our attitude, and 2) a fluency in the actual words of Torah. Expressed by the term "writing it on their hearts." ■

it down to Egypt. 26. And Judah said to his brothers, What gain will there be if we kill our brother, and cover up his blood? 27. Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our own flesh. And his brothers agreed.

The Difficulty of Judah's Statement

The statement of Judah contains two problems: 1) Judah seems to base his argument against killing Joseph on the factor of expediency. It is not profitable to kill him for then we will have to cover his blood i.e. endure the burden of maintaining a cover up. However, after proposing to sell him to the Ishmaelites (verse 27) he offers what seems to be a second reason. For he is our brother our flesh. We may ask: Was the proposal to sell Joseph based on the desire to avoid the practical consequences of hiding a murder, or on the moral prohibition of killing one's brother? These are two entirely distinct ideas and yet Judah utilized both of them. What is the underlying thread that unites these seemingly separate arguments?

2) There is a fundamental problem with Judah's argument about covering the blood. The simple interpretation is that the plan of selling Joseph would remove the need for a cover up. Yet it is clear from the story that such was not the case. After selling Joseph, the brothers dipped the coat in blood and presented it to Jacob, who concluded, a savage beast has devoured him. Thus they were forced to cover up the crime of selling Joseph. It is reasonable to assume that had they adhered to the plan of Reuven and left him to die in the pit they would have followed the identical procedure. In effect, they had to engage in a cover up whether they killed Joseph or sold him. However no one challenged Judah on his argument. It was accepted that his plan removed the need to cover the blood. Yet this is contradicted by the presentation of Joseph's bloody garment to Jacob. We must therefore ask: What did Judah really mean when he said, what gain will there be if we kill our brother and cover his blood?

Who is Wise?

Who is Wise? ask the Rabbis one who foresees the future. This common translation is a bit misleading. For man, unless he has prophecy can not foresee the future. The Hebrew term used by the Rabbis in this teaching is *Nolad* which literally means something, which has come into existence. Thus, the wise person is one who can foresee the outcome of a scenario on the basis of the underlying causes that are already in existence (the *Nolad*). He can anticipate the inevitable results of

his actions because he does not flinch from confronting the consequences that are visible to those who have the courage to discern. The Wise person (*Chacham*) is not merely one who has intelligence; for many intelligent people walk in blindness. Their intelligence operates only in areas that are compatible with their feelings. The *Chacham* bases his entire life on wisdom and subordinates his emotions to the rule of reason. He foresees the outcome because he lives in accordance with the abstract reality though it is not apparent to his senses or pleasing to his feelings. For him the reality that is perceived by the mind is of paramount importance.

Most people err because they operate on the basis of certain false assumptions. This usually happens when they are under the sway of powerful emotions. When a person is in love or under the grip of a compelling fantasy he is convinced that the emotion will stay this way forever and that since it feels so good it is impossible that anything negative can be associated with it. Thus he is unable to anticipate the outcome.

Let us examine the state of mind of the brothers when they decided to destroy Joseph. These were great men who operated on the basis of wisdom. True, they were mistaken about Joseph but they deliberated in accordance with their understanding and found him guilty. The Torah indicates the psychological serenity of the brothers by recording that they sat down to eat bread (verse 25). The point of conveying this detail is to show that they were not in a state of emotional frenzy when they cast Joseph in the pit. In their own minds they felt confident that they had acted correctly in preventing Joseph from realizing his dreams of grandeur.

Judah dissented from the plan they had adopted. He asked: What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? The key word is *kill*. Casting him in the pit where he will die naturally instead of directly executing him does not absolve you from murder, he argued. This may not bother you now but one who is wise anticipates all the consequences of his actions, physical and psychological, visible and hidden. At the moment you feel no guilt. You have entirely disassociated yourselves from Joseph and you imagine that you will feel this way forever. However there are psychological and emotional ties which can be suspended but not permanently broken. Thus we will always have to live with the knowledge that we killed our brother and because this is too painful we will have to repress it from our consciousness. Judah was not referring to a physical cover-up of the murder but to a psychological repression of it when he said, what will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? Verses 26 and 27

now flow smoothly. We can now understand the connection between the two elements in the argument of Judah. It is an impractical plan to kill Joseph, he said, for then we will have to repress the guilt that will surely emerge to haunt us. Let us, therefore sell him to the Ishmaelites for he is our brother, our flesh. This is the essence of his argument. The psychological ties that bind us can never be broken for he is our brother, our flesh. The words *our flesh* would, at first sight, seem redundant. Yet, they are necessary for Judah is seeking to convince them that such a powerful identification cannot be broken.

The Lesson of Judah's Argument

Judah's brilliance consisted of his ability to foresee the hidden consequences of a self-defeating course of action. Most of the suffering people experience in the world is self-induced (see Maimonides: Guide for the Perplexed, Part III, Ch.12). A prime cause of sin is the inability of people to look beyond the immediate effects of their action. The anticipation of pleasure paralyzes the mind. Few people have the ability to think beyond the moment of pleasure and contemplate how they will feel on the morning after. Even those who think in terms of consequences usually can only deal with those that are very obvious. If Cain had known that he was destined to cry, my guilt is too great to bear would he have killed his brother?

The Ultimate Consequence

Since man is a complex being no course of action is ever as simple as it appears. Sin carries many dangers, which are not apparent from the vantagepoint of the one who is in a state of lust. The ultimate effect is one that few people ever consider: the loss of one's relationship with God. This was clearly enunciated by Cain when he said: Behold you have expelled me from the face of the earth and from your face and will I be hidden (Gen. 4:14). The relationship will not be the same. And this relationship is man's greatest need. It is the whole point of his existence. Yet no one thinks about it. Every sin puts at risk one's relationship to the Creator. Cain described this truth after the damage was done. The Torah records his lament because we can profit from his mistake. The truly righteous people are not immune from desire. Their uniqueness lies in how they react to temptation. Jewish law trains one not to act instinctively but to subject our desires to the crucible of reason. This is the meaning of the injunction to circumcise one's heart. We are bidden to conquer and subdue the passions and redirect their energies to the service of our Father in Heaven. ■



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CHANUKAH INSERT



Chanukah

RABBI BERNIE FOX

"During the Second Temple period, the Hellenist kings made decrees against the Jewish people, suppressed their religion, did not allow them to learn Torah or to perform mitzvot, seized their money and daughters, entered the Temple and broke down its walls, and defiled the objects of purity. And, they greatly afflicted the Jewish people and oppressed them tremendously until the G-d of their fathers had mercy upon them, provided salvation and saved them from their hands. And the house of the Hashmonaim – High Priests – triumphed over them, killed them and provided the Jewish people with salvation from their hands. And they established a king from among the Priests. Kingship returned to the Jewish people for more than two hundred years – until the destruction of the Second Temple." (Maimonides, Mishne Torah, Hilchot Chanukah 3:1)

Maimonides describes the events that are recalled through the celebration of Chanukah. He explains that the Hellenist kings ruled the land of Israel and the Jewish people. Their reign was characterized by comprehensive religious oppression and material persecution. Eventually, the Hashmonaim – a family of Kohanim – led a rebellion and overthrew the oppressors. They reestablished the Jewish kingship. They appointed a king from their own family. The kingdom that they established lasted for

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Chanukah & Temple

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

There are a few instances in Jewish history concerning the building and rededication of the Temple. They include David's desire to build the first Temple; Zerubabel's rebuilding of the second Temple; and the rededication of the Temple during Channukah. There is an underlying theme, which permeates all three cases. Let us review a previous lesson concerning the first Temple.

Samuel II, 7:1-17

[1] And it was as the king dwelled in his house, and God gave him respite from all around, from all of his enemies. [2] And the king said to Nathan the prophet, "See how I dwell and a house of cedar and the ark of God dwells inside of curtains." [3] And Nathan said to the king, "All that is in your heart do, for God is with you."

[4] And it was on that night, and it was that the word of God was to Nathan saying: [5] "Go and say to David saying, 'So says God; Will you indeed build me a house that I will dwell? [6] For I have not dwelled in a house since the day I

In three cases, man was prevented from building or rededicating the Temple. God insured all cases were performed by Him. Why?

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Chanukah & Temple

took the Children of Israel up from Egypt, and until this day, and I traveled in a tent and a Tabernacle. [7] In all that I traveled, in all the Children of Israel, was the matter ever spoken by Me to even one of the tribes of Israel, of whom I commanded (judges) to herd My people Israel, saying, 'Why have you not built Me a house of cedar?'

[8] And now, so shall you say to my servant David, 'So says the Lord of Hosts, I have taken you from the shepherds' huts, from following after sheep, to become a ruler over my people Israel. [9] And I was with you with all that you went and I cut off all your enemies from before you and I made for you a great name like the name of the great ones that are in the land. [10] And I shall yet establish a place for My people, for Israel, I shall plant it there and it shall dwell in its place so that it shall be disturbed no more; crooked people shall no longer afflict it as in earlier times. [11] And also from the day that I appointed judges over My people Israel, and I shall give you respite from all your enemies; and God informs you that God will make for you a house. [12] When your days will be complete and you will lie with your fathers and I will establish your seed after you that come from your loins and I shall make his kingdom firm. [13] He shall build a house to My name and I will establish his seat of kingdom eternally. [14] I will be to him a father, and he will be to Me a son so when he sins I will chastise him with the rod of men and with afflictions of human beings. [15] But my kindness will not be removed from him as I removed it from Saul, whom I removed before you. [16] Your dynasty and your kingdom will remain steadfast before for all time; your throne will remain firm forever.' [17] In accordance with these words and in accord with this vision, so spoke Nathan to David."

The first thing that strikes me is God's use of a rhetorical question, "Will you indeed build me a house that I will dwell? And again in the next verse, "was the matter ever spoken by Me...why have you not built Me a house of cedar?" This is to say that God denounces David's sentiment. God says that He never requested a house of cedar to replace the Tabernacle, making David's sentiment to build a house to God, somehow a wrong idea. When God uses a rhetorical question, He means to indicate that He never requested this Temple, i.e., it is clearly man's wish "and not Mine". However, God says David's son Solomon will build that house. So which is it, wrong or right to build a house? One may simply answer that it was David who could not build the house – the Temple – but Solomon could. So the idea of Temple per se is acceptable, but it is with the 'builder' that God takes issue. We must understand why.

But God goes on in verses 8 and 9, describing how He made David king, and how He made his name great like those famous in the land. Why does God mention this here? What does God's elevation of David have to do with His disagreement that David builds a Temple? We also must understand why David must die, and only then his son will build a Temple. Additionally, what purpose is there in the relationship God describes that He will be a "father" to Solomon, and Solomon will be as His "son"? Was this relationship absent with regards to David? If so, why?

God clearly states that He never requested a house. Simultaneously, He says Solomon will build it. Therefore, the house, or Temple, is not an evil...but simply something God "never requested." Therefore, we cannot understand God to be rebuking David, that Temple is an evil. What then is the rebuke, and I do not mean rebuke in the sense that David sinned, as the Talmud states, David did not sin. I mean rebuke, in the sense that David's proposed building cannot take place for good reason, but not that the reason implies sin. So what is this reason that David cannot build the Temple, but Solomon can? Where do we look for the answer? We look right here...God continued with His response to David through Nathan, describing how He made David a king, and made his name great. Think for a moment...what may this have to do with David building the Temple?

The Temple's Purpose

There is a most primary question, which must be asked before answering our other questions: What is the purpose of the Temple? What did David say? He was bothered that God's ark was housed in simple curtains while he dwelled in a strong, cedar wood home. What was his sentiment? His words are, "See how I dwell and a house of cedar and the ark of God dwells inside of curtains." David equates his dwelling with God's dwelling. Here is another clue.

David meant to say that greater honor was due to God, over himself. He wished to give God's ark greater honor than the simple curtain in which is currently dwelled. But for some reason, God did not approve, at least not that 'David' build this Temple. God says, "Will you indeed build me a house that I will dwell? For I have not dwelled in a house since the day I took the Children of Israel up from Egypt..." God's response focuses on the concept of "dwelling". With His rhetorical words, "Will you indeed build me a house that I will dwell?" I believe God is indicating that David's offer exemplified two errors.

The first error (not sin) is David's attempt to beautify the ark's dwelling. God said, "Was the matter ever spoken by Me to even one of the tribes of Israel...why have you not built Me a house of

cedar?" Meaning, God never asked for something, so man should not attempt any enhancement. God goes on, reminding David of the real truth, "God does good for man" as he cites how He made David so great. Now, just as God bestowed good on David making him so great, this Temple too is "for man", not for God. This is precisely why God reminds David of all the good He bestowed on David; to call to David's mind the real relationship is that God benefits man, and not the reverse. This is the central idea.

While in other areas, the Torah's injunction "Zek Aylee v'Anvayhu" ("This is my God and I will adorn Him") allows man to beautify the commands, God's message here is that one who attempts "enhancement" in relation to Temple alone, is overstepping the line: he misinterprets Temple.

Temple is the one area in Torah where God must initiate change. Perhaps the reason being, that regarding Temple, man may err, feeling he is "offering to God" somehow. Sacrifice, incense and the like are subject to misinterpretation of this kind. However, the opposite is true: Temple is God's gift to man, not man's glorification of God. When we glorify God in Temple, it is for our own good that we concentrate on the proper ideals, and we offer God absolutely nothing. However, David's sentiment was that he should not "dwell" in beautiful cedar wood, while the ark dwells in curtains. He felt that he would be improving the idea of Tabernacle with a Temple, when Temple is in fact for man, and not for God. God reiterates this theme by reminding David that He made David who he is today. It is God who benefited David in the past making him great, and it is God who benefits man in Temple. Perhaps David erred in this matter. We also note that at the very beginning David says to Nathan, "See how I dwell and a house of cedar and the ark of God dwells inside of curtains." It appears David is unsure about building a Temple, and seeks Nathan's counsel. This may teach that David was not certain of his idea at the very outset.

Allowing Error to Surface

Perhaps we may go one step further and suggest that this was the precise sentiment God desired to draw out from David into the open, for David to recognize, and come to terms with. Surely Temple is a good, provided God initiates its activities and enhancements, but God refrained from requesting it of man, until after David had this opportunity to express his thought, and God could respond. Now that David was corrected, Temple may be built, but by David's son. Why his son? Perhaps, since David had the correct idea that Temple should exist, he would impart this to his son who could build it with the proper ideas. And, there was no longer any need to delay its building.

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Chanukah & Temple

"Structure for God": An Oxymoron

But there is a more profound error and lesson here. Improving the Tabernacle into a Temple acceptable to God does not occur structurally alone. Rather, the Temple's very definition as a 'good' depends on it being initiated by God, and not man. What is lacking in Temple when man initiates it, or what is added to Temple when God requests it of man?

It is impossible that man should suggest a structure, without casting the frailties of humans onto that structure. Meaning, once David suggested making a Temple from a more 'durable' cedar and not curtains, for God's "dwelling", he was using 'human terms' for a building that is exclusively identified with God. This may very well explain why the original Tabernacle had no ceiling, as it is not a "dwelling", but a location on which to focus on God. This being the case, such a structure would be marred, had it any semblance of a shelter, which a roof indicates by its very definition. God needs no shelter, He needs no roof, and a structure man envisions, even dedicated to God is inherently flawed. Thus, the original Tabernacle could not possibly have a roof; only curtains covered it. Now, David suggests creating a more permanent "building" of cedar? This violated the very concept of the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle was to remind man of ideas about God. Had the Tabernacle a roof, it would convey an incorrect and heretical idea, that God shares the frail, human need for protection from the elements. Thus, Tabernacle can have no roof. Additionally, if man initiates the idea to create a structure to God, this is equal to suggesting a roof be placed on the Tabernacle. For what difference is there, if I place a roof on the Tabernacle, or create a new structure to God with a roof, now replacing the Tabernacle? There is no difference. Therefore, God refused David's offer to create the Temple. In such a Temple, there would be no way to remove the identity that man conceived it. Thereby, it would eternally reflect man's concept of a "shelter", not true ideas.

It is contrary to the true ideas of God that a building is made to Him, as "building" carries with it the notion that it is for man's purposes; a building is a human structure. However, if God initiates such a structure, as he did with the Tabernacle, then it is no longer "man's" idea of building. In that case, it may look like a shelter, but it is more akin to a museum, which contains prized objects, and does not function to provide a haven for inner dwellers. And when God initiates such a structure, man is then building the structure due to a command, and not any other source in him, traceable to the human frailty requiring shelters. Therefore, Solomon was able to build the Temple, as it was now God's wish, and not David's.

How does this relate to Channukah and Zerubabel's construction of the Temple, which we read on Shabbos/Channukah?

David, Zerubabel and Channukah

The prophet Zechariah, the Haftorah of Shabbos/Channukah, concludes with the words "Not by army, and not by strength, but with My spirit..." This refers to Zerubabel's Temple construction that it would be accomplished, but not through succeeding over the enemies or by human might. Its construction would be achieved by God creating peace under Darius' reign, and this Divine backdrop would enable Zerubabel's successful and easy construction.

On Channukah as well, God created the miracle of the oil again as a lesson that God orchestrated those entire events. That rededication was not accomplished by Macabees, but by God's intervention on behalf of those five sons of Mattisyahu; "and the many [God handed] into the hands of the few"... "the wicked into the hands of the righteous..."

Rededication and building of the Temple require God's involvement, in order that man's fame does not overshadow the true purpose of Temple: "knowledge of God". God's fame must be the exclusive identity of Temple, and in all three cases, God insured this to be so. God did not allow David to be credited with temple; He did not allow Zerubabel to be credited with it; and God insured that Chanukah's rededication was accomplished only through His miraculous intervention.

We should come away with a deeper appreciation for the amazing style and the height of Torah precision. In all three cases, the Torah discloses precise wording that uncovers the underlying messages: messages, which lead to truly happy lives, and truly make sense. If we are discerning, and patient in our studies, "the words will speak to us", as a wise Rabbi once taught.

This is truly the design of the Torah: its messages and lessons run deep, but are available if we approach each area with the appreciation that the words are Divinely written. With careful study under wise Rabbis, we too will see these lessons.

God's Torah "words" must be our focus in Torah study...in contrast to many classes, which seek to startle ignorant Jews with mystical fabrications. God did not seek to teach mankind using mystical, and inexplicable stories. Too many Jews miss out on learning "how" to learn Torah, because too many classes seek large audiences, which they lure with eye-stopping lecture titles, and with fantastic stories which the educators themselves cannot explain. What good is it to render Judaism into a religion like the others, where metaphors are taught as literal fact, and where incomprehensible mysticism overrules sensible thought? The Rabbis spoke against this type of an approach, since such classes teach nothing that engenders any appreciation for God's wisdom. All these classes do is dupe the attendees into believing that the lecturer is superior to them, since he can quote matters they cannot comprehend.

But should not a class leave its attendees with "greater" knowledge? If you attend such classes, cease from doing so, for it is a grave waste of your time. It matters none if such a teacher is called "Rabbi". It is the path of reason that we are to follow, not reputations, since this is the only distinction we possess over animals. Believing magical and fantastic stories, is akin to a dog believing his master will feed him...no intelligence is required. But God gave us each the Tzelem Elokim, "intellect". Failing to engage your intellect, you fail in what you owe your Creator, and are judged for this, as Rabbi Bachya states in his intro to "Duties of the Heart".

God did not formulate His Torah to astound people with inexplicable and grand stories. God taught us a system that makes sense. His system opens our eyes and minds to matters that resonate truth within us. And the Talmudic Sages clearly warned in numerous cases not to understand metaphor as literal, and not to even approach such areas, until one has mastered the basics. Can you open a Talmud and explain Tosfos and Rashi? Can you make sense of Talmudic argumentation? Can you explain a series of verses in any area of the Five Books, Prophets, or Writings? If not, then seek a teacher who can train you in the basics. And decades later once you have reached a level of proficiency, again, seek a Rabbi who can explain a metaphor like King David, King Solomon, Maimonides, and others who held fast to the true path of Torah...the path that makes sense to human minds.

All other religions are based on belief and blind faith, for they have no proofs to their lies. Judaism offers the indisputable proof of Sinai. Judaism is supposed to be different, where we do not simply accept anything that anyone teaches. But where our commands are viewed by the other nations as "righteous statutes" as God said in Deuteronomy.

Why is the Torah written so cryptically? Well, if it were not, then our knowledge would end with the final chapters of each work. But since God's wisdom is infinite, and He desires our lives to be led from birth through death by wisdom, He designed the Torah to yield new insights throughout our lives. Weaving the Torah's words with His wisdom, in a cryptic but rational manner, God did not only give us words, but also the "keys" to unlock far greater wisdom. As we learn truths and uncover the methods of God's instruction, our minds become sharper, and we become more independent in our studies. The appreciation of God's unlimited knowledge is essential, if we are to be fueled to seek further insights. And the acquired, Torah thinking patterns and Talmudic reasonings are essential, if we are to understand the truths God embedded in His Torah.

Channukah celebrates God's salvation and the reestablishment of a Torah culture. This culture is one of intelligence. This should be your path, and these reasons alone should be the basis of your Channukah celebration. ■



LIGHT & WISDOM

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

In Talmud Sabbath 23b, Rav Huna makes an enigmatic statement:

“One who is zealous with lights will have sons who are wise students.”

Rashi comments: “lights” refers to the two commands of Sabbath and Channukah lights. Rashi quotes King Solomon’s “Proverbs” (6:23) “For a command is a flame, and Torah is light...” Rashi’s meaning is that the former generates the latter: the act of igniting a flame on Sabbath and Channukah results in wise sons who possess Torah wisdom. Rashi may have found a supporting verse for Rav Huna, but what is the sense of this verse, and Rav Huna’s statement? How does the simple act of lighting Sabbath and Chanukah lights create sons who are wise? What is the relationship between lights and wise sons?

Let us examine the context of the quote (Proverbs, 6:20-23):

“[20] My son, guard the commands of your father and do not forsake the Torah of your mother. [21] Tie them to your heart often; bind them on your neck. [22] When you walk, it will guide you, when you repose, it will guard you, and when you awake, it will converse with you. [23] For a command is a flame, and Torah is light, and reproofs in moral instruction are the way of life.”

We note many ideas, even within a single verse. For example, verse 20 compares “guarding father’s commands” to “not forsaking mother’s Torah”. We learn that Torah as a complete system straddles both: 1) commands and 2) Torah, or moral instruction. It is insufficient that God give a system of commands, without also offering us a moral code. This necessity of a dual approach, or

borne out of man’s dual nature: he is intellectual and emotional. Both aspects of man’s nature are molded through, 1) following commands, which enlighten our minds to new, intelligent insights, and 2) moral restrictions, necessary for transforming our raw, emotional natures into individuals with refined, moral codes. The term “guard” applies to commands, as we must adhere meticulously to Torah performances. “Guarding” is applicable to that which must be carefully performed. We must not deviate, as God knows which commands will benefit our human nature, which He too created. Knowing both as the Creator, it is foolish for man not to cleave to and guard the 613 Commands. The term “do not forsake” is applicable to moral instruction. For it is here that man feels emotionally restricted, thereby wishing to abandon and forsake these stressful restrictions. As such, man is warned by King Solomon not to “forsake”, since his natural, yet infantile emotional make up yearns for instinctual gratification. He will desire to run from imposed, Torah morality, as it stifles his current drive towards instinctual satisfaction...at every turn.

Verse 21. “Tie them to your heart often; bind them on your neck.” King Solomon advises us to tie the Torah’s principles to our “heart: and “neck”. What is the metaphor of these two locations? The heart is our very life source, more than all other organs. King Solomon advises man to tie the Torah’s principles to our very being. These ideas must penetrate our soul, until they become our very values. Only when man values something, can it be truly said that he has changed himself. Simple utterances are meaningless, if we do not truly believe what we enunciate. Additionally, as my close friend Rabbi Roth taught me, Maimonides teaches in his Commentary on the Mishna, (last Mishna in Talmud Maccos) that

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when man performs a Mitzvah for no other reason than his love of that command, only then does he entitle himself to the Next World. Again we see that Torah demands honesty, and that one truly values his performances. But performance alone is insufficient. King Solomon states that we must also "bind them on our necks." The neck is the seat of what activity? Speech. Meaning, we must not only confirm with our hearts the truths of Torah, but our "speech", or primary mode of expression and activity, must be engaged in Torah discussion. Only when man reaches this level, do we say he truly values Torah, to the point that he engages regularly in Torah discussions. Man's activity is the barometer of his convictions.

Verse 22. "When you walk, it will guide you, when you lie down, it will guard you, and when you awake, it will converse with you." How do we define these three states? "Walking" refers to our conscious, daily life. In this state, Torah "guides" us. This is easily understood. When we "lie down" to sleep, we now enter the stage where we lose our control; we are vulnerable. The Rabbis teach on the first page of Talmud Brachos, that we must recite the Shema prayer before going to sleep. We must ponder the Torah fundamentals, which the Shema contains at the time that our consciousness state slips away. At this critical moment, our emotions gain the upper hand. Sleep and falling into it, are emotional states. And at such a time, we must strengthen our bond to the Torah principles, lest we allow our emotions to destroy us. Thus, King Solomon chooses the expression of "guard". At this time, we are in desperate need of a guard against our emotional impulses. And the opposite state of falling to sleep is our waking up. If we earnestly study, delving into God's wisdom, applying His absolute, Torah truths during our daily lives, these ideals make their mark so indelibly, that they are the first thing on our minds when we awake. We are caught up with brilliant insights that we cannot wait to reengage in further study. This concept that the Torah is personified, as "speaking to us", teaches that one who is devoted to his studies, has an additional ally: his studies take on a 'life of their own'. Their appeal is so great, that his mind, unconsciously, initiates him back into Torah thought - even upon his waking. Just as one is impatient about an upcoming trip - waking on the day of his journey with great anticipation - so too the Torah student. Upon his waking up, he is immediately drawn back by the appeal of Torah, as if it "speaks to him". King Solomon sums up the three states of our existence: consciousness, losing consciousness, and regaining it. In all three, the King advises us to insure we never abandon Torah thought.

This may seem insurmountable to many of us, but think about how King Solomon referred to

torah as a "plaything" of God (Proverbs, 8:30). Just as a child with a new toy is engulfed with an exhilarated exuberance, so too were the Rabbis and our prophets. This must teach us that although we misdirect our childlike, excitement towards mundane activities and values, it is quite achievable that we too may reach an attachment to wisdom with this very same emotional draw. Do not be misguided by the fact that you do not see many adults - if any at all - with a youthful excitement about life. Children possess this excitement, and we are but older children in this respect. We have not lost this capacity for zest and abandon. What we have lost is our accurate selection of what object truly fuels the fire of our passions. King Solomon refers to wisdom as "playing" before God. It is something God created, containing unlimited enjoyment. Let us heed his words, and not the misguided masses.

Verse 23. "For a command is a flame, and Torah is light, and reproofs in moral instruction are the way of life." A command offers illumination. Yet...it is but a single flame. It possesses the characteristic of illumination, but falls short in terms of giving us a full picture. However, Torah as a complete system is "light". Only when one embraces the complete system, is he afforded with sufficient light for his life's journey. Life has many twists and turns. Our nature as human beings is very complex. Knowledge is not readily available without due study of many hours. To live life properly, making correct decisions in all areas, to guard against destructive emotions, and to take a course that ensures success for our families and us...we require a charted map. One command is beneficial, but it cannot imbue us with the complete knowledge necessary for a full lifespan. The Torah is a complete system, addressing each and every aspect of our existence. Following a few, or even most of God's law, we will fail. No, we cannot do it in a day. But our mind's eye must be focused on this essential idea: everything in the Torah is absolutely necessary. Unlike the bores who ridicule "all those restrictions", God's opinion is different. He knows our nature, and created the Torah as a remedy. Just as a doctor would be listened to when he warns us that we will avoid death from disease by talking 10 pills daily, and we do, certainly, we must have greater conviction in what our Creator advises...not just for physical life, but the life of our soul.

"For a command is a flame, and Torah is light, and reproofs in moral instruction are the way of life." Notice that this verse commences with "For", meaning, it comes to explain the King's previous statements. He is explaining exactly why Torah will guide, guard and engage us: it is that which "illuminates". Without knowledge of reality, what use is our life? The world operates by a design, and

only through understanding this design, adhering meticulously to a system, which follows this design, will we find happiness, avoiding the conflicts experienced by those devoid of understanding. And as we said, intelligence is but one half of the equation...we also require moral instruction to restrain our instinctual impulses. Thus, the King concludes this verse with, "and reproofs in moral instruction are the way of life." Following our emotions can remove us from life, both here and in the next world.

We may now return to our very first question: What does Rav Huna mean by "One who is zealous with lights will have sons who are wise students"? We mentioned that Rashi comments: "lights" refers to the two commands of Sabbath and Channukah lights. Rashi quotes King Solomon, "For a command is a flame, and Torah is light..." Thus, if one is careful with these two commands (flame), he will beget wise sons (light).

What is specific to Sabbath and Channukah lights, that these two commands were designated as essential to begetting wise sons? I believe by defining the nature of both Sabbath and Channukah, we will arrive at one possible answer.

Sabbath celebrates God as the 'Creator'. Channukah celebrates God as the 'Worker of miracles'. We must appreciate that God does both: He created the universe, and by definition, controls it, at times, creating a suspension in the very universal laws: what we refer to as miracles. On a deeper level, God's act of creation teaches us that the universe operates by set laws, by wisdom. Our lives must be led by this truth, and by our relentless search for new knowledge. Whether we are walking, lying down, or rising up, we must never lose sight of this, our essential goal in life. But not only is God the Creator of all, including knowledge, He is also very much involved in our lives. He performs miracles. Thus, our knowledge of God is twofold: 1) He is Creator and 2) He is our God, readily available to intervene with miracles for those who follow Him.

If we possess an accurate knowledge of God as Creator, and the One who intervened at Sinai with His gift of the Torah, and guarding all of His followers with miracles, we then gain a true appreciation and knowledge of Judaism's fundamentals. We then will pass this on to our children, and they too will become wise.

One who is careful with the Sabbath and Channukah lights is one who understands Judaism's fundamentals concerning the most essential of all ideas.

What is God? He is the Creator of all: "Sabbath celebrates Creation". He is the Controller of all: "Channukah celebrates Miracles." ■



*Ancient coin with
Antiochos stamped
on coin face*

over two hundred years and only ended with the destruction of the Second Temple.

It is clear from Maimonides' comments that he views the two hundred year rule by the kings of the Hashmonaim positively. Maimonides' inclusion of this assessment in his discussion of Chanukah also seems to indicate that the longevity of their rule is somehow relevant to the celebration of Chanukah.

There are a number of problems with Maimonides' position. One of these problems is his indication that the longevity of the rule of the Hashmonaim kings is relevant to the celebration of Chanukah. It is not immediately obvious why this factor should be worthy of note. The Jewish people were oppressed by the Hellenists – both spiritually and materially. Hashem had mercy upon His people and through the Hashmonaim, he rescued them from oppression. This seems to be an adequate reason to give thanks to Hashem through the observance of a celebration. Why is the length of rule of the Hashmonaim relevant?

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik Zt"l offers and interesting explanation of Maimonides' position. He bases his explanation upon a teaching from the Talmud. Like Chanukah, Purim recalls the salvation of the Jewish people from an enemy determined to destroy them. Haman carefully planned the destruction of the Jewish people. Through Hashem's intervention, Mordechai and Esther succeeded in defeating his designs and destroyed the enemies of the Jewish people. It would seem appropriate to commemorate the salvation of the Jewish people with the recitation of the Hallel. Why is the Hallel not recited on Purim? The Talmud offers three possible explanations. First, the events of Purim occurred in the exile. The Hallel is not recited on miracles that occur in the exile. Second, the Hallel is not needed on Purim. The reading of the Meggillah replaces the Hallel. Third, the salvation commemorated by Purim was not complete. The Jewish people were rescued from Haman. However, they remained in exile – subjects of the heathen

king.[1]

Rav Soloveitchik suggests that Maimonides, apparently, adopts the Talmud's final explanation. Hallel is not recited on Purim because the Jewish people remained the subjects of a foreign king. Rav Soloveitchik contends that Maimonides extrapolated from this ruling a general principle. The Hallel cannot be recited to commemorate any miracle that does not result in complete salvation – leaving the Jewish people under the rule of a foreign king. Based on this interpretation of Maimonides' position, Rav Soloveitchik suggests that we can understand Maimonides' reference to the two hundred years of rule of the Hashmonaim kings.

According to Rav Soloveitchik, Maimonides is applying his understanding of the Talmud to the practice of reciting the Hallel on Chanukah. The Hallel is recited on each day of Chanukah. This is only consistent with Maimonides' understanding of the Talmud's ruling if Chanukah commemorates a complete salvation. A complete salvation must restore the Jewish leadership. Had the Hashmonaim not succeeded in reestablishing Jewish rule, it would not be appropriate to recite the Hallel on Chanukah. But, because the Hashmonaim did reign over the Jewish people for over two hundred years, the requirements for the recitation of the Hallel are met and the Hallel is recited on Chanukah.[2]

Rav Soloveitchik's interpretation of Maimonides' comments resolves another problem. Nachmanides comments that the Hashmonaim did not have the right to elevate themselves to the position of kings. He explains that once Hashem chose David as king, the institution of kingship was awarded to David and his descendants in perpetuity. In assuming the kingship, the Hashmonaim were usurpers. Nachmanides argues that they were severely punished for this trespass.[3] Of course, it is possible that Maimonides does not agree with Nachmanides' position regarding the prohibition against the appointment of a king from outside of the family of David. Maimonides seems to indicate that although kingship will ultimately return to the family of David, it is not inappropriate to appoint a king from another family or shevet, if necessary. The Torah instructs us only that the kingship cannot be permanently transferred to another family.[4]

However, according to Rav Soloveitchik's interpretation of Maimonides' comments, there is no reason to assume that Maimonides disagrees with Nachmanides' position. It is possible that Maimonides would agree that the Hashmonaim were not entitled to assume the mantle of kingship. Maimonides is not endorsing

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ing their behavior. Instead, he is dealing with a different issue – was the salvation commemorated by Chanukah complete. The complete salvation required for the recitation of the Hallel requires the reestablishment of Jewish rule. This was done by the Hashmonaim. Whether they were correct in their behavior or were usurpers is not relevant to this issue. Irregardless of the advisability of their behavior, kingship was restored.

Rav Soloveitchik points out that there is a serious problem with his interpretation of Maimonides' comments. Maimonides discusses the omission of the Hallel from the observances of Purim. According to Rav Soloveitchik's interpretation of Maimonides' position, we would expect Maimonides to explain that the Hallel is not recited on Purim because the salvation commemorated by Purim was not complete. However, Maimonides does not offer this explanation. Instead, he explains that the Hallel is not recited on Purim because the reading of the Meggillah takes its place.[5]

In order to attempt to resolve this problem, it is important to define the question more clearly. Maimonides' comments in regard to Purim seem to indicate that the deficiency of the salvation commemorated by Purim does not prevent the recitation of the Hallel. In fact, there is an obligation to recite Hallel on Purim. However, this obligation is fulfilled through the reading of the Meggillah. In contrast, his comments in regard to Chanukah seem to indicate that an incomplete salvation would not have sufficed for the recitation of the Hallel. How can this contradiction be resolved?

The Talmud explains that, in general, when the Jewish people are rescued from an affliction, we are required to recite the Hallel.[6] In other words, the Talmud is identifying two elements that together create an obligation to recite the Hallel. First, there must be an affliction. Second, the Jewish people must be rescued from the affliction. It follows that in order to determine whether the redemption is complete, it is necessary to determine the nature of the affliction that the redemption addresses. For example, if the Jewish people are faced with religious persecution, then redemption would be defined as the rescue from this religious persecution. Alternatively, if the Jewish people were confronted with annihilation, then redemption would be defined as the rescue of the nation from this destruction.

Let us apply the same analysis to the events commemorated by Purim and Chanukah respectively. Haman's design was to totally destroy the Jewish people. Redemption from this affliction would be defined as the rescue of the nation



from Haman's elaborate plans to destroy the nation. In contrast, the Hellenists did not wish to destroy the Jewish people. They practiced religious persecution and they attempted to subjugate the Jewish people. Rescue from this affliction would be defined as the cessation of religious persecution and the freeing of the nation from foreign domination.

As Rav Soloveitchik explains, Maimonides maintains that the Hallel is not recited for a salvation that is not complete. But, the completeness of the salvation must be evaluated relative to the affliction. The events commemorated by Purim represent a complete salvation. The Jewish people were in exile. Exile is a tragedy. But, Purim is not designed to recall our return to the land of Israel. Instead, it recalls that Haman wished to destroy the nation. Hashem intervened and defeated Haman. Was this rescue complete? When evaluated relative to the affliction, it is clear that it was. It is not relevant that the Jewish people remained in exile, ruled by a foreign king. The tragedy of exile is not the affliction that is recalled on Purim. However, the events commemorated by Chanukah occurred in the land of Israel. The

affliction consisted of religious persecution and an attempt to subjugate the people in their own land. In this instance, the definition of salvation includes not only the cessation of religious persecution, but, also, the restoration of the independence of the nation and its regaining of freedom from foreign domination. In such an instance, the reestablishment of Jewish kingship is an essential element of the salvation. If the Hashmonaim had succeeded in bringing an end to religious prosecution, but had failed to rescue the nation from foreign domination, the salvation could not have been regarded as complete.

This explains Maimonides' position. Maimonides maintains that only a complete salvation obligates us in the recitation of the Hallel. On Purim, the salvation was complete. The Jewish people were saved from destruction at the hands of Haman. That they remained in exile does not negate the completeness of their salvation from Haman. Therefore, Maimonides rules that Purim requires the recitation of the Hallel, and this obligation is fulfilled through the reading of the Meggillah. However, the salvation of Chanukah was only completed through the reestablishment of Jewish rule in the land of Israel. Therefore, the restoration of the kingship is cited by Maimonides as an essential element of the salvation. ■

[1] Mesechet Meggilah 14a.

[2] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, Harerei Kedem, volume 1, p 272.

[3] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 49:10.

[4] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Melachim 1:7-9.

[5] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Meggilah 3:6.

[6] Mesechet Pesachim 111a.

*Megillas Antiochos
was found in an
old edition of a
siddur printed in
Solonika, Greece.
Otzar HaTfilos
refers to it as a
"precious letter".*

MEGILLAS ANTIOCHOS

THE CHANUKAH STORY



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 and 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 gave face 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 circumci-

sion. 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 G-d 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 G-d and he said, "My G-d and the G-d 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 that corpse into the sanctified courtyard. 25. Before the G-d of heaven, Yochanan answered and he said, "My G-d, do not place on me sin that I have killed in the sanctified (area), now, so also give 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 G-d, 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

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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 G-d 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 like 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 G-d 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 G-d of heaven did not think so. 49. And when the five sons of Mattisyahu heard, there 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 G-d 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 G-d 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 G-d 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, Antio-

chos 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 candelabrum, and they did not find but one canister that had the seal of the ring of the High Priest and they knew that is was pure, and it contained a measurement to light for one day. 68. And G-d 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 G-d 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 G-d.

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 G-d 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." ■

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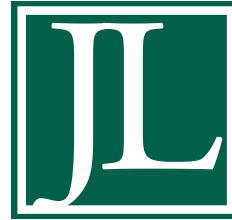


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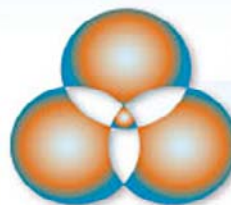
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