



Children of Israel, soldiers of the IDF, leaders of the Israeli people, wake up. Our history, and our very celebration of Channukah attest to God's ability to enable five brothers to defeat armies of our enemies. God is not sleeping. He sees our travail at this time. God's word and history attest to the fact that He saves those who follow him. **Until you follow His Torah, until you see with clear conviction that this is our only salvation, and act accordingly, we will continue to suffer.**

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IN THIS ISSUE:

SELLING OF JOSEPH	1, 4
THOUGHTS ON CHANNUKAH	1, 5
CHANUKA	2, 5
DINAH	3
VAYESHEV	3, 6
ENEMIES OR ALLIES OF HAPPINESS	6

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Thoughts on Channukah

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

When studying the sources dealing with Channukah, there are many questions which surface. I will first outline those questions, and then offer possible answers.

1) The Al HaNissim prayer of thanks included in our daily prayers and Birchot HaMazone primarily discussed the war. And at the end it makes mention of our kindling the lights, but does not mention the miracle of the oil. Does this mean that war is the essence of the day? What was the essential element in Channukah the Rabbis deemed worthy of being instituted as a holiday? Was it the miracle that a few Jews overtook the myriads of Greeks in battle, the duration of the oil, both, or some other factor?

2) What was the purpose in the miracle of oil lasting 8 days? The principle of "ohness rachmana patreh" - one forced by situation is exempt - rendered the priests innocent for not being able to light the Menorah. Since they were exempt from the obligation to light the Menorah until they pressed new oil and were cleansed of tuma from the casualties, why did God create this miracle of the oil's duration?

Can we suggest that the miracle of the oil is to reflect upon the war, that it was won via miracles? If so, why then does Rambam state that we won due to God's salvation, even before discussing the oil? It would



seem that Rambam held that the Rabbis understood our military victory to be caused by God. In such a case, the oil would be superfluous for teaching this. Unless we suggest that the military victory - although executed by God - was not an overt miracle, and itself would be no cause for a holiday. It would be no different than wars won by Joshua for example, when conquering Jericho. A day around which, the Rabbis did not create holiday. What then was so different about the battle of the Maccabees or that entire event in general, that God decided to underline that event by the miracle of the oil, showing thereby such significance? There were many battles in which God made us victors. Yet in those many wars, God did not create an overt miracle after the fact, as is the case with Channukah.

Additionally, in his Mishneh Torah, Rambam indicates that until

the miracle of the oil, the Rabbis would not have instituted the holiday based on military success alone. According to Rambam, what is it about the oil - or the war upon which it reflects - which demanded that Channukah be established as a holiday?

3) The Megilla - the letter - is read on Purim as our halachik observance. The reasoning is that this specific element was the catalyst for the Jew's salvation, as the Talmud in Megilla 12b states, "had it not been for the first letter, not one remnant or escapee of Jews would have survived". Meaning, since the Persians disqualified King Achashverosh's credibility based on a previous letter which was foolish in their eyes, they showed little respect for the Kings subsequent decree to destroy the Jews.

Following this template for establishing a holiday, if Channukah was established by the Rabbis based

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

(continued on page 4)

(continued on page 5)

Chanuka

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"What is Chanukah? Our Sages taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev Chanukah is observed. This is for eight days on which it is prohibited to eulogize or fast. For when the Hellenists entered the Temple they defiled all of the oil. And when the Hashmonaim rose to power and overcame them, they only found one container of oil sealed with the seal of the Kohen Gadol. It only contained sufficient oil for one day. But a miracle was performed with this oil and they lit from it for eight nights. In a different year they established and made these days a festival with Hallel and giving thanks." (Tractate Shabbat 21b)

The Talmud explains that the celebration of Chanukah recalls the miracle of the oil. The Hashmonaim defeated the Assyrians and reoccupied the Bait HaMikdash. They wished to rekindle the Menorah – the candelabra – of the Temple. They required ritually pure oil. The Assyrians had defiled the oil in the Temple. The Hashmonaim found only a small container of oil that remained fit. It held sufficient oil to fuel the Menorah for a single night. They would require eight days to procure additional oil. A miracle occurred and the small container of oil provided sufficient fuel for all eight nights. The Talmud explains that the days on which this miracle occurred were established as a holiday. The festival is celebrated through reciting Hallel and offering thanks to Hashem. How do we offer thanks? We add the prayer of Al HaNissim to the Birkat HaMazon and the Amidah. It is clear, from the discussion in the Talmud that, the miracle of the Menorah is the central event commemorated by Chanukah. We would expect that Al HaNissim would thank the Almighty for this miracle. However, a review of Al HaNissim reveals that the miracle of the Menorah is not even mentioned. Instead, the prayer deals exclusively with the salvation of the Jewish people from their enemies. The Talmud indicates that this prayer is a fundamental aspect of the celebration of Chanukah. Why does this prayer not mention the central miracle? Furthermore, the comments of the Talmud are difficult to understand. It is true that the burning of the oil for eight nights was a miracle. However, far greater miracles are recorded in T'NaCH. These more impressive wonders are not commemorated through any celebration. For example, Yehoshua split the Jordan, he stopped the sun in its passage through the sky, and he brought down the walls of Yericho with a shofar blast. None of these awesome wonders are commemorated through their own celebration. The miracle of the oil is

quite modest compared to these other events. Why is this miracle commemorated with its own holiday and not these other wonders?

Chanukah is one of two holidays established by the Sages of the Talmud. Prior to creating the celebration of Chanukah, the Sages instituted Purim. Maimonides discusses the reason the Sages established Purim. He explains that the Torah assures us that the Almighty will never forsake His people. In times of suffering Hashem will redeem us. The events of Purim provide testimony to the truth of this promise. In discussing Chanukah, Maimonides mentions the miracle of the oil. However, he also stresses our salvation, through Hashem, from our enemies. It seems that Maimonides is explaining an important concept. The celebrations of Purim and Chanukah share a common theme. The Almighty will never allow the Jewish people to be destroyed. Both celebrations reinforce this covenant. Both recall episodes from our history. In each incident Bnai Yisrael's existence was in peril. The Almighty intervened to save us. Both reinforce the reality of the Torah's promise. We can now begin to answer our questions.

Every miracle is not the occasion for the establishment of a holiday. The celebrations of Purim and Chanukah do not commemorate miracles. They testify to the truth of the Almighty's promise that He will never abandon His people. Other miracles, of greater magnitude are not commemorated by holidays. This is because these miracles did not involve the salvation of the Jewish people. We can now understand the Al HaNissim prayer. This prayer captures the essential theme of Chanukah. It discusses the rescue of the Jewish people from their oppressors. This prayer is also recited on Purim. This is appropriate. Purim also communicates the same theme of salvation. We must still explain the comments of the Talmud. The Talmud relates the celebration of Chanukah to the miracle of the Menorah. Maimonides also acknowledges the fundamental role of this miracle. This miracle would not seem to be an appropriate reason for creating a holiday!

Let us return to Purim. How do we know that the Almighty was the cause of our salvation? Perhaps events just unfolded, by chance, in a manner that saved the Jews from Haman! The answer is found in Megilat Esther. The Megilah reveals Hashem's manipulation of events. It provides us with insight into the events. Based on the Megilah, we know that our

salvation was through the Almighty. This revelation was fundamental to the creation of Purim. Only a rescue clearly engineered by Hashem confirms the promise of the Torah. Two criteria must be met to establish a holiday. There must be redemption from certain destruction. This rescue must clearly be through the Almighty's intervention. The events of Purim meet these criteria.

We can now appreciate the fundamental role of the miracle of the oil. Victory in battle is not a sufficient foundation for the creation of Chanukah. The Almighty must reveal Himself as the cause of the triumph and salvation. This revelation took place through the miracle of the oil. With this miracle, Hashem indicated His influence and role in the events of Chanukah. Just as the Almighty had performed the miracle of the oil, so too He had been the force behind the salvation. We can now understand the comments of the Talmud. True, Chanukah celebrates our salvation. However, the celebration could not have been established without the miracle of the Menorah. This miracle indicated that the salvation was through the intervention of the Almighty. Only on the basis of this revelation could the celebration of Chanukah be created.

"How many candles does one light? On the first night, one lights one candle. Thenceforth, one adds one candle each night so that on the last night there will be eight candles. And if there are many household members, they should not light more than this number. Some say each household member should light." (Shulchan Aruch Orech Chayim 671:2)

The Talmud explains that the commandment to light the Chanukah lights can be fulfilled on three levels. The basic level requires that each night a single candle is lit for the entire household. The preferred method is to light a number of candles corresponding to the number of members of the household. This number of candles is lit every night. The optimal method is to light a number of candles corresponding to the night of the festival. The first night one candle is lit. The second night two candles are lit. One candle is added each night until, on the last night, eight are lit. An illustration will demonstrate these various levels. Consider a household composed of a father, mother and two children. The basic level of performance requires that this household light a single candle each night of Chanukah. This number never increases. The preferred method requires four candles to be lit each night. This number corresponds to the size of the household. The number remains constant throughout the festival. Applying our illustrative case to the optimal level presents a difficulty. The Shulchan Aruch maintains that our family will light a single candle the first night. An additional candle is added each night, until a total of eight is reached. Rav Moshe Isserlis, in his glosses on the Shulchan Aruch,

disagrees. He maintains that the household must still light a number of candles corresponding with the number of its members. Therefore, the first night four candles are lit. This number represents the four members of the family. On subsequent nights one candle is added to each of the four. Following this plan, on the second night eight candles are lit – two candles for each family member. On the third night twelve candles are lit. On the eighth night thirty-two candles are lit. Superficially, the position of Ramah – Rav Moshe Isserlis – is more logical. The preferred method of lighting requires a candle be lit for each member of the household. The optimal level requires that the number of candles correspond with the night of the festival. Ramah assumes that these two methods should be combined. Performance of the commandment at the optimal level should not preclude the inclusion of the preferred method. Therefore, each night, the number of candles corresponds with both the number of members of the household and the night of the festival. This makes sense!

Shulchan Aruch insists that once the optimal level is selected the preferred method must be abandoned. At the optimal level, the number of candles can only correspond to the number of nights. Any reference to the number of household members must be abandoned. What is Shulchan Aruch's reasoning? The source of the dispute between Shulchan Aruch and Ramah is found in the early commentators on the Talmud. Shulchan Aruch's position is expressed by the Tosefot. They explain that when performing the mitzvah at the optimal level, the preferred method must be abandoned. Their conclusion is based on a practical consideration. The candles can only represent a single numerical value. It is simply not possible to simultaneously represent the number of family members and the day of the festival. Therefore, when performing the mitzvah on the optimal level any reference to the number of family members must be abandoned. If reference to the number of household members remains included at the optimal level, complete confusion results. Consider a simple example. The second night a household lights two candles. This could represent a single individual lighting on the second night. This could also represent a family of two and one candle is lit for each member. In order to avoid this confusion, all reference to the number of household members is omitted. Now, there is no longer any confusion. The number only represents the night of the festival.

Ramah adopts the opinion of Maimonides. He does not seem concerned with the issues raised by Tosefot. According to Ramah, how can a single number of candles represent two numbers? How can it represent both the number of household members and the night of the festival?

(continued on page 5)

Dinah

RABBI ISRAEL CHAIT

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Dinah went out amongst the people of the land and Shchem seduced her. Shchem was so attracted to Dinah that he ultimately wanted to marry her. Jacob consented because he felt that Shchem was capable of doing teshuvah and it was an opportunity for them to elevate themselves and live according to Jewish law. Shimone and Levi in their outrage determined that Shchem and his people must be obliterated. Their immoral behavior demanded their destruction. Thus Shimone and Levi deceived their father and suggested that Shchem and his people circumcise for the purposes of conversion. However, it was merely a ploy and Shimone and Levi killed them while they were still weak and recuperating from their circumcision.

After they killed Shchem and all his people, Jacob chastised them. His rebuke reflected his concern that their actions will provoke the other nations to attack them. However, Shimone and Levi merely respond that they could not allow Dinah to be treated as a harlot.

Years later when Jacob was on his deathbed, he again chastised Shimone and Levi. He curses their anger, for under it's rage, they unjustifiably killed Shchem. This poses a problem. At the time of the event Jacob rebuked them because he felt their actions placed them in jeopardy. However, later on, he condemns them for committing an injustice. Based upon his earlier rebuke, it would seem that Jacob did not feel that their actions were unjust but rather not politically astute behavior. This apparent contradiction must be explained.

Jacob really felt an injustice was perpetrated by the brothers. He favored their plan to convert them, for he felt they were capable of repentance. He therefore criticized Shimone and Levi for allowing their anger to overwhelm them and

dictate their behavior. On his deathbed, when blessing his children, he was giving them insight into their personalities, which would help them in their struggle to live proper lives. He thereby told Shimone and Levi that they were short tempered and should not allow their emotions to control their actions. At the time of the incident, he was unable to tell them that their response was improper because it was being provoked by anger. When a person is under the influence of an overwhelming emotion he is incapable of detachment and objective reflection of the situation. Therefore, Jacob proffered a political reason, which he felt was also compelling. However, Shimone and Levi felt compelled to demonstrate strength. They felt an injustice was committed against their sister. If they would not respond, they felt it would be viewed as an admission of weakness and ultimately cause great aggression against them. However, Shimone and Levi failed to appreciate that the danger of strength is over-retaliation. This was Jacob's argument. If a person's response is perceived as harsh, then it will cause enmity. The retaliator will be seen as egotistical and professing a superior attitude. That is why Jacob uses the term "thavishani", that your actions will make me hated amongst the nations. Your excessive retaliatory actions wreaks of superiority and will create a desire in people to destroy you. Jacob thereby felt that their actions were not only politically incorrect but were also unjust.

In contemporary times we see that Israel faces similar problems. Any act of retaliation, no matter how justified under the circumstances, poses the problem of being perceived as professing superiority. Thus retaliatory actions many times are unjustifiably viewed as unfair and only provokes hatred. This was Jacob's fear as expressed to his sons.

This is the fear expressed by our Chazal in formulating the concept of Ayin Hara. Psychologically people resent an arrogant person and seek his ultimate downfall,

albeit purposefully or even at times unconsciously.

An analysis of this event affords us the opportunity to appreciate the intellectual acumen of Jacob in perceiving human behavior. □

Vayeshev

RABBI BERNARD FOX

"And his brothers were jealous of him. And his father studied the issue." (Bersheit 37:11)

Yosef had two dreams. In the first dream he and his brothers were in a field. They were binding grain into sheaves. Yosef's sheaf arose and stood. The brothers' sheaves surrounded Yosef's sheaf and bowed to it. Yosef told his brothers of his dream. The Torah tells us that the brothers' hatred for Yosef was heightened by this dream. Yosef's second dream involved the sun, moon and eleven stars. Yosef envisioned these bodies bowing to him. Again, he related the dream to his brothers. He also retold the dream to his father. The Torah tells us that after hearing this second dream the brothers were jealous of Yosef. Apparently, the brothers had different reactions to the two dreams. They hated Yosef after the first dream. After hearing the second dream, they were also jealous. Why did the dreams evoke these different reactions?

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam addresses this issue. The brothers understood the first dream as an expression of ambition. Yosef's dream reflected a desire to dominate his brothers. They rebuked Yosef for his ambition. They accused him of wishing to rule over them. They hated him for this desire. However, they believed that the dream was only an expression of Yosef's fantasies. They did not believe that the dream was prophetic or a harbinger of the future. Therefore, they had no reason to actually feel jealousy toward Yosef. The second dream produced a different reaction in the brothers. Now they became jealous. Jealousy implies an actual fear. The brothers suspected that

the second dream represented more than a mere fantasy. They detected some element of truth in the second dream. Their hatred was now accompanied by jealousy. Our pasuk tells us that Yaakov studied the issue suggested by the dream. This indicates that Yaakov also suspected that the second dream was prophetic. In addition, the Torah implies that even Yosef distinguished between the two dreams. Yosef retold both dreams. The Torah uses different verbs for the two instances. In Yosef's retelling of the first dream, the Torah uses the verb "vayaged". This term means to tell or impart information. It does not indicate that the speaker has any particular expectation from the audience. In the second instance, the Torah uses the verb "vayesaper". This term also means to tell. However, it is used in the Torah in a completely different manner. It indicates that the speaker expects the audience to carefully consider the material.

A few examples will illustrate this point. Eliezer returns with Rivka. He tells Yitzchak of the wondrous events that resulted in the selection of Rivka. He wants Yitzchak to listen carefully so he can appreciate the providence involved in his marriage to Rivka. The Torah uses the verb vayesaper to describe Eliezer's retelling of the events. Yitro, Moshe's father-in-law, joins Bnai Yisrael in the wilderness. Moshe tells Yitro of all the miracles experienced by Bnai Yisrael. He wants to impress Yitro with these events and their implication. Again, the verb vayesaper is used.

Apparently, Yosef did not attach tremendous importance to the first dream. He viewed it as an interesting curiosity. However, the second dream made an impression upon him. He felt this dream had meaning. He carefully described it to his listeners. He asked them to consider it carefully and help him interpret its meaning. This leaves one question. What property of the second dream indicated its prophetic nature? Both seem to be expressions of ambition. Why did Yosef, his brothers and his father suspect the second dream contained, at least, an element of

(continued on page 6)

The Selling of Joseph

RABBI REUVEN MANN

□
(continued from page 1)

□ 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 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. □

Chanuka

RABBI BERNARD FOX

(continued from page 2)

Ramah suggests a simple solution to this problem. He requires each household member be represented by a separate set of candles. The separation between the sets removes any confusion. On the second night a family of four does not merely light eight candles. It lights four separate sets of two candles. The number of sets represents the number of family members. The number of candles in each set, corresponds with the night of the festival. This discussion suggests an interesting insight. Shulchan Aruch and Ramah dispute the requirements of the optimal method of performance. However, the basis of their disagreement is their interpretation of the preferred method. Shulchan Aruch understands the preferred method to require lighting a single set of candles. This set corresponds to the number of household members. The optimal method cannot be superimposed on the preferred method. Only one set of candles is lit. It cannot represent two numbers – the members of the family and the night of the festival. Ramah maintains that the preferred method requires lighting multiple sets of candles. Each family member is represented by a separate set. This allows fulfillment of the optimal requirement without abandoning this preferred method. Each separate set can be expanded to represent the night of the festival. There is no cause for confusion. The number of sets represents the number of family members. The number of candles in each set represents the night.

Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on the Talmud, Mesechet Shabbat 21b. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Introduction. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Chanukah 3:1-3. Mesechet Shabbat 21b. Tosefot, Mesechet Shabbat 21b. Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Chanukah 4:1-2. Rav Moshe Isserles, Comments on Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 671:2. Rav Israel Chait, Chanukah Shiurim 1974.

Thoughts on Channukah

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 1)

on the success of the war, why is there no mention of the Channukah battle as part of our halachik performance?

Lighting oil or candles is divorced from the battle. Why are these lights selected by the Rabbis as the performance of the halacha, and not something germane to the war, like carrying a sword or the like? Purim's laws were organized around elements which caused our salvation. Why are Channukah laws centered around a miracle subsequent to our salvation?

4) What is the concept of having "mehadrin" - the concept that there are multiple levels of fulfilling the obligation of Channukah flames, each more preferred than the previous? We do not see this concept in connection with the Megilla. Additionally, why focus on the 8 day element, to the point that 8 days became an essential aspect of our halachik performance, as we light for 8 days, but only read the Megilla on one day? Additionally, why does a single Channukah Menorah satisfy an entire household's halachik obligations, whereas this does not work in the case of Lulav? Here, each member must have his own four species?

Although possible to enact a miracle in the war itself, God chose to enact a miracle in the lights to emphasize our adherence to the Torah commands as the essence of that event, not mere bodily rescue. Life alone is not the goal for man. It must be a life of understanding and adherence to God's Torah. Without Torah, our lives are meaningless. Perhaps for this reason the Rabbis understood the oil miracle in this light, and sought to build the laws of Channukah around this reuniting of the Jews to their laws, illustrating thereby that the initial act of Torah adherence - lighting the Menorah - was the goal of the victory.

This follows well with Purim, as we state therein, "kimu v'kiblu mah shekiblu kvar", "they (the Jews) rose up and accepted that which they previously accepted", i.e., the Torah. Purim was an event where the Jews saw that a life permeated with wisdom proved to be the source of their salvation, as Mordechai's and Esther's cunning saved the Jews. The statement of "kimu v'kiblu mah shekiblu kvar" displays again that mere victory is not the goal, but rather, the highlight of that military success was the reacceptance of Torah.

Channukah is therefore celebrated via lights (the goal of the victory) which was the reestablishment of the laws of the Temple.

The talmud in Shabbat asks, "what

was Channukah established upon?". Meaning according to Rashi, "upon which miracle". Answering our question, that without a miracle, military success would not qualify as a holiday. Only through the event of the miracle of the oil did the Rabbis deem Channukah worthy of institution as a holiday, and did so via lights as this was the goal of the victory.

The essential miracle was the war, as it was the catalyst for our adherence to Torah. So when offering thanks, we thank God for the success of the war, but not the lights, as lights are not grounds for thanks. But in recalling the goal of the day through observance generation after generation, we make recourse to lights to pronounce the goal.

So what was present in Channukah which surpassed the battle at Jericho for example? Or when God stopped the Sun and Moon in Gibeon and Amek Ayalon respectively? All had miracles! Why then was Channukah established as a holiday, but not Jericho or other events which included miracles?

The answer could be the following: The miracle of the oil was subsequent to the war when we were already victors. All other wars which had miracles, only had miracles for the sake of winning the war. The fact that God enacted a miracle unnecessary for salvation may have been perceived by the Rabbis as a Divine indication that Channukah was different, and worthy of institution as a holiday. A difference was discussed by a Rabbi, that during Channukah, the Greeks sought to strip us of our Judaism, not so in other wars, where the enemy simply was fighting for land.

The elements of a subsequent miracle (not necessary for salvation) compounded with the fact that we were saved from oppression (not mere military victory) were recognized by the Rabbis as grounds for instituting Channukah as a holiday. That special quality of God's salvation from oppression, enabling us to follow the Torah also existed during Purim.

Therefore we have only two holidays subsequent to the giving of the Torah; Purim recalls our bodily salvation, whereas Channukah recalls our religious salvation.

While discussing this further with Rabbi Mann, we came to the observation that "holiday" means that which is instituted for generations to observe. This needs explanation, as it would have sufficed to celebrate

Channukah just that one year. The concept of a perpetual celebration must be adding another point. That is that the future celebrants have what to celebrate, somewhat on par with those who actually experienced the salvation so long ago.

What do we - the future celebrants - have in common with the Jews alive at that event? It is that our existence and ability to practice our laws is a direct result from the miracles of Channukah. As were are direct beneficiaries, we must also show thanks to God for these acts of kindness. This also explains why Passover has two modes; "Passover of Egypt", and "Passover for Generations". We see this idea is consistently part of our laws.

The concept of mehadrin teaches us that there are levels of fulfilling the obligation of Channukah. The reason mehadrin exists for few commands is as follows: When a Torah obligation deals with qualitative act, such as donning tefillin, one either dons them or does not. There is nothing more to be added after one has put on tefillin-you cannot wear tefillin more, once they are on. A quantitative increase is impossible, you either wear them or you don't. The same applies to kosher, either one eats kosher or he doesn't.

But an act which is of a quantitative measure is different. Such acts as discussing the Exodus, Channukah lights, and purchasing a finer Esrog, all lend themselves to quantitative increase. One may discuss the Exodus until morning, or buy a better Esrog, or light multiple candles. But there still must be sound reasoning behind such increase.

The fact is that there is one goal with the lighting of the candles, that is to publicize the miracle to others. There are two ways in which we can increase this publicity: 1) By having more individuals spreading the story through multiple Menorahs, and 2) By increasing the content of the story publicized, which is achieved by increasing the number of lights each night. This teaches a passerby that there were a number of days which the miracle lasted, thus, teaching a new element. By lighting only one candle each night, all one knows when he passes by your house is that there was a miracle of Channukah. But if he sees five candles on the fifth night, he now learns something new, that there were many days to the miracle. This increases the content of the story taught through the lights. ■



(continued from page 3)

prophecy? This is a difficult question to answer. However, there are two crucial elements in the second dream that may suggest a response. In the first dream, only Yosef and his brothers were represented. The brothers had a long-standing suspicion of Yosef's desire to dominate them. This dream only confirmed their critique of Yosef's personality. The second dream included Yosef's father and mother. Yaakov had dotted over Yosef. They shared a loving relationship. The brothers did not ascribe to Yosef any desire to dominate Yaakov. This indicated that the dream was not merely an expression of personal wishes. Yaakov reinforced this interpretation. He pointed out that the message of the dream was that Yosef's brothers, father and mother would bow to him. The dream did not imply that Yosef would assert himself over the family. It indicated that the family would acknowledge Yosef's leadership. In other words Yaakov did not assume that the dream expressed a desire to dominate. Instead, it foretold that future events would somehow conspire to place Yosef in a position of authority. The brothers realized that this was not an absurd possibility. Second, in the first dream the brothers were represented by sheaves. In the second dream the brothers were represented as stars. Yaakov was the sun and Yosef's mother was the moon. This dream venerated the brothers, Yaakov and Yosef's mother. This representation was not consistent with mere rivalry and a desire to overcome the brothers. Perhaps, these characteristics of the second dream distinguished it from the first. As a result it was not as easily dismissed.

"And Midyanite men – merchants – passed. And they drew Yosef from the pit. And they sold Yosef to the Yismalites for twenty pieces of silver. And they brought Yosef to Egypt." (Beresheit 37:28)

Yosef's brothers travel to Shechem to graze their flocks. Yaakov sends Yosef to Shechem to check on the brothers. Yosef finds his brothers. They devise a plan to rid themselves of Yosef. Their initial plan is to simply kill Yosef. However, Reuven convinces the brothers that they should not directly take Yosef's life. Instead, they throw Yosef into a pit. They will allow Yosef to waste away. A caravan of traders approaches. Yehudah suggests that they should not kill Yosef directly or indirectly. He suggests that the brothers sell Yosef to these traders. The merchants are traveling to Egypt. The brothers expect that the merchants, when reaching their destination, will resell Yosef as a slave. Gershonides explains that the behavior of the brothers was a reaction to their fear and jealousy.

The brothers suspected that the dreams might contain an element of truth. They decided to protect themselves from the message of the dream. In order to accomplish this, they conspired to place Yosef in a position that would prevent his ascension over the family. Selling Yosef to the merchants accomplished this end. As a slave, Yosef would have little opportunity to gain power. Even if Yosef could overcome this obstacle, he would be far away from the brothers. He would not be able to bring his brothers under his rule. However, the brothers' actions had the opposite affect. In Egypt, Yosef achieved power and authority. When a famine struck the region, Yosef prepared Egypt for the ordeal. The brothers were forced to travel to Egypt to seek sustenance. There, Yosef's dream was fulfilled. ■

Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 37:11. Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 37:11. Sefer Beresheit 24:66 Sefer Shemot 18:8. Rabbaynu Levi ben Gershon (Ralbag / Gershonides), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, (Mosad HaRav Kook, 1994), p 221.

Enemies or Allies of Our Own Happiness

RIVKA OLENICK

"The Almighty created man straightforward, but they invented many calculations." Koheles 7:29 What does it mean: "The Almighty created man straightforward" God created mankind to live the best existence with everything necessary given in the greatest abundance, e.g. air, water, food, etc. All of these things take very little effort to acquire yet they are always taken for granted. What if there wasn't enough air, then we would die. But there is plenty of air. What if we had to search for water? We don't, it is also plentiful and fortunately, we don't have to search for food either. Listen to what the Rambam says: "The more necessary a thing is for living beings, the more easily it is found and the cheaper it is; the less necessary it is, the rarer and dearer it is." Air is found more easily than water, water is found more easily than food. All three are plentiful. God gave us the strength, capacity and motivation within our nature to pursue our livelihood, to provide for oneself and family without tremendous burdens. In addition to God providing us with the means for physical sustenance in life, we were also given a guide that teaches us how to live the kind of intelligent life most appropriate for our nature. This guide is called the Torah, given to us so that we could live our lives based on truth, *emes* by acquiring knowledge. This is the only reason we were created, to seek and obtain knowledge in order to live the correct life. Living an existence where there is a priority in life. This priority is to live

"straightforward" and live a life straightforward in *emes*, because this is what makes a person truly happy. Truth is the meaning of "straightforward." Living a simple, contented life in the middle path that revolves around the service of God, which is God's will for His created beings. This kind of "straightforward" life can produce satisfaction and fulfillment and gives a person the strength to face the many challenges of life. "All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth." Psalms 25:10 The Rambam says: "All of the evils to which individual persons are exposed are due to the defects existing in the persons themselves. We complain and seek relief from our own faults; we suffer from the evils which we, by our own free will, inflict on ourselves and ascribe them to God, who is far from being connected with them!" Guide For the Perplexed pg. 268.

What are the underlying ideas in: "but they invented many calculations?" It seems that "but" implies a change, or an opposition that we insist on creating for ourselves. We push ourselves in a different direction that is contrary or opposite of straightforward. People create and "invent" many calculations, deviations or different ways not to proceed straightforward in life. People spend their entire life pursuing unlimited, clever ways not to live a straightforward life. The Rambam's statement above makes perfect sense. We constantly involve ourselves in things that are unnecessary. Things that are unnecessary usually have no limit, meaning that we fall into the habit of desiring those things that aren't really needed to preserve our life, like the many endless possessions and excessive desires. Unfortunately, the reason these desires become endless is because we are constantly looking for the approval of others. The only way to have the approval of others is by having more things, and better things. Unfortunately, this way of life produces endless envy, jealousy and psychological pain because, there will always be others who have "more and better." These are the traps or the "calculations" that people invent. There are those who make their entire life a career out of this to the point of putting oneself in physical and psychological danger because they see no end in sight. We don't stop, we just "keep going" because to stop implies that: "There's something wrong here."

What, me wrong?" Of course, when things do go wrong all of these "calculations" that we've inflicted on ourselves we automatically and foolishly blame on God. Then we say: "Why has God done this to me?" No, God has not done this to you. We do this to ourselves because we refuse to examine closely the real purpose of our lives. We are in denial. The denial is with regard to the use of our free will, which was given to us to be used appropriately. We leave most "thought and knowledge" in understanding our life and the world to

chance. Instead, we make these "calculations" our "priority" in life. We use endless energy to acquire, accumulate and possess so much that is not necessary. But when our situation changes, or a crisis strikes, we complain bitterly and groan: "Why me?" and blame God. We blame God because He hasn't given us relief from our own self-inflicted insanity! Do we objectively use our free will given to us as a "gift" from God or did we misuse it? Do we contemplate life, and reflect on life or do we leave "life" to chance? But, God did create us "straightforward" "but they invented many calculations." Isn't it true? "The many calculations are the enemies of our happiness." Samson Raphael Hirsch from The Wisdom of Mishle pg.160.

So, where do we find the "allies of our happiness?" Hasn't God already given the "allies" to us? We can use our mind in the pursuit of Torah knowledge, which satisfies our intellectual capability. In prayer, in the Shema, we are asked to concentrate and comprehend that God is King, and that He is trustworthy. That everything we are and all that we have is because of God alone, nothing and no one else. He rules, leads and supervises the entire world and everything in it, not man. We petition Him in the Shemoneh Esrei for what we really need as we ask for insight, forgiveness, for health and healing, to restore justice in the world, to be redeemed, for the Messiah, for peace, prosperity and then we give thanks to God and ask that He accepts our prayer. Do we actually focus clearly on what we are asking for? Do we understand why we should ask for insight and why justice should be restored? Insight and justice are the foundations of reality. Insight allows us to understand truth, *emes* which is what justice is based on. This is what we should think about and reflect on. This is what we should pour out our heart to Him for; that our lives be directed by truth, *emes* and that the world be restored to that *emes* which is justice. This is the purpose of Klal Yisroel. This is the goal all Jews should all strive to meet. We use our body as an *eved*, a servant of God, and what we understand through knowledge we actualize in the performance of the commandments. We are to serve God in our human life with our human life. Each person should ask him or herself this question repeatedly: Do I understand the purpose of a straightforward life? and at the same time try to recognize that these are truly the "allies" of our happiness. Rabbi Eleazar HaKippur said: "Envy, desire and honor drive a man from this world." Rabbi Meir said: "Minimize your business activities and occupy yourself with the Torah. Be of humble spirit before every person. If you should neglect the study of Torah, and you will have many causes for neglecting it confronting you, but if you toil much in the Torah, there is ample reward to be given you." (Pirkei Avos) ■