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Weekly Parsha

Vayeshev

RABBI BERNIE FOX

**Prophetic dreams contain
elements of the imagination**

*And he told it to his father and to
his brothers. His father scolded him
and said to him, "What is this dream
that you have dreamt? Will I, your*

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Channukah



2 Spheres of Perfection

& Purim

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Weekly Parsha

JewishTimes

Weekly Journal on Jewish Thought



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mother and your brothers, come to bow down to you to the ground?" (Beresheit 37:10)

The Torah relates two dreams that occurred to Yosef. In the first, Yosef and his brothers are in a field binding sheaves of wheat. Yosef's sheaf rises up and is surrounded by the sheaves of his brothers. The brothers' sheaves then bow to Yosef's sheaf. In the second dream, Yosef sees the sun, the moon and eleven stars bowing to him.

The first dream he shared with his brothers. The second dream he told to his brothers and to his father. Yaakov rebuked Yosef for attributing any significance to these fantasies. He pointed out that Yosef's mother – Rachel – had passed away. The second dream, in which the moon represented Rachel, was therefore clearly inaccurate and was not prophetic.

Rashi comments that, in fact, Yaakov took these dreams very seriously. Although he pointed out that the second dream was inaccurate, he felt that the dreams could nonetheless be prophecies.[1] Rashi also explains that even a prophetic dream inevitably contains nonsensical elements.[2]

The inclusion of inaccurate and even fantastic elements provides an insight into the phenomenon of the prophetic dream. In a normal dream such elements are not at all unusual. Modern psychology theorizes that the typical dream reflects the fantasies and deep desires of the dreamer. Often the dream utilizes a representational format to express such thoughts.

The inaccuracies and nonsensical material in the prophetic dream indicate that these inspired visions contain the elements of the typical dream. The basic theme of the dream is prophetic and inspired. However, ridiculous or fantastic elements, expressing the personal wishes of the dreamer, are also present.

Yaakov recognized that Yosef's dream, although prophetic, indicated an inflated sense of self-importance. This was dangerous. The leader of the Jewish people must be humble. He or she must place the interests and needs of the Jewish people before personal needs. Therefore, Yaakov quickly pointed out to Yosef the egotistical element within his dream. He encouraged Yosef to recognize his fantasies and to work towards achieving humility.

Yosef's brothers reacted differently to his two dreams

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.[3]

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.[4]

In addition, the Torah implies that even Yosef distinguished between the two dreams. Yosef retold both dreams. The Torah uses different

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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.[5]

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.[6]

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 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 the 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, in 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.

They took him and threw him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it. They then sat down to eat bread, and they lifted their eyes and saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming from Gilead, their camels carrying wax, balsam and resin to take down to Egypt. (Beresheit 37:24-25)

Our parasha discusses the conflict that developed between Yosef and his brothers. Ultimately, this conflict led the brothers to sell Yosef into slavery in Egypt. The parasha begins by describing the tension that existed among the brothers. Yosef believed that he would be the future leader of the family. The brothers distrusted Yosef's motives and resented his aspirations. When the brothers were presented with the opportunity to eliminate Yosef as a threat, they took advantage of it. How did this opportunity arise?

Yosef and his brothers were shepherds. On this occasion, the brothers were shepherding Yaakov's flocks in the vicinity of Shechem. Yaakov had some concern regarding their



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Weekly Parsha

welfare and sent Yossef to Shechem to check on the brothers and to report back.

Yosef found his brothers. At first, they considered killing Yosef. However, Reuven suggested a more indirect approach. He advised the brothers to place Yosef in a pit from which he would not be able to escape. As they were eating, they saw a caravan. Yehudah suggested that rather than letting Yosef die, they should sell him to the merchants. His advice was accepted by his brothers. Eventually, the merchants brought Yosef to Egypt.

Our pasuk tells us that while their brother was imprisoned, they sat down to eat a meal. What is the significance of this detail?

Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehudah Berlin – NeTZiV – suggests that this pasuk reflect the righteousness of the brothers. They were not at ease with their decision to kill Yosef or allow him to die in the pit. They were sitting on the ground and eating a meal. From their position, it should have been difficult for them to see very far. Yet, they observed a caravan approaching. This suggests that they were looking around and seeking an alternative course of action. When the caravan appeared they seized the opportunity and formulated a less drastic solution to their problem.[7]

However, Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno suggests that in order to answer this question, we must consider two issues. First, the brothers were willing to adopt extreme measures to rid themselves of Yosef. Initially, they considered killing him. They spared his life because they felt that selling him into bondage would eliminate him as a threat. What was their fear and how did they justify the actions that they took against their brother?

Sforno writes that Yosef's brothers did not sin in the actions that they took against him. They looked upon Yosef as a devious, egotistical foe, determined to destroy them. He had admitted to dreams of grandeur and dominance. On numerous occasions he had attempted to undermine their position with their father. Yosef used his relationship with Yaakov to accuse his brothers of wrongdoing. The brothers saw in these actions and fantasies a consistent and determined plan to destroy them. The Torah tells us that if one is accosted by someone who wishes to take his life, then the threatened person may take the life of his pursuer. In capturing Yosef and ridding themselves of their enemy, they acted to protect themselves.[8]

But were the brothers correct in their conclusions or were they deceived by their own jealousy into thinking the worst of Yosef? Sforno points out that it seems that even years later – after the brothers had ample time to reconsider their actions toward Yosef – they still believed that they had made the proper decision. Years later, the brothers did conclude that they had acted improperly. However, they did not conclude that their analysis of the danger posed by Yosef was incorrect. Neither did they conclude that the action that they had taken against Yosef was improper. Instead, they were critical of themselves for being callous towards Yosef.[9],[10]

This leads to the second issue we must consider. The reaction of the brothers is difficult to understand. In what way were the brothers insensitive? What did they do that indicated this insensitivity? Sforno explains that our pasuk provides the answer to this question. The brothers sat down to eat a meal while they were contemplating and planning the destruction of their brother.[11]

However, Sforno recognizes that this explanation presents a second, more difficult problem. The brothers remained convinced that their analysis of Yosef was justified. If this is the case,

why was their eating a meal an act of insensitivity? They had no reason to question their decision. They were confident that they were acting properly. Why should they have refrained from eating?

And his sons and daughters rose up to comfort him. And he refused to be comforted. And he said, "I will go to my grave mourning my son." And his father cried for him. (Bereshiet 37:35)

Sforno suggests that the answer lies in appreciating another incident in our parasha. The brothers deceive their father into believing that Yosef was killed by a wild animal. Yaakov refuses to be comforted. He declares that he will mourn Yosef for the remainder of his life.

It seems that Yaakov's reaction was unreasonable. We are required to mourn the loss of a relative. But we are also required to limit our mourning to appropriate boundaries. Why did Yaakov insist that these boundaries did not apply to him?

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Rashi seems to suggest that Yaakov was not completely convinced that Yosef was dead. When we know we have lost a loved one, we mourn the person and eventually come to terms with our loss. However in order for this process to take place, we must be certain that the person has been taken from us. If we merely conclude that his death is likely – but remain unsure – it is difficult to move on. We cannot completely abandon hope. With this lingering hope comes the continue pain of separation.[12]

Rashi's explanation is somewhat difficult to reconcile with the actual wording of the passage. Yaakov seems to say that he is justified in mourning Yosef for the rest of his life. He does not allude to any doubt as a justification. Instead, he seems to assert that his attitude is justified by the gravity of the tragedy. But it is difficult to understand this justification. Of course, the loss of a son is a terrible tragedy. But are we not required to eventually end our mourning and move on?

Sforno suggests that Yaakov was deeply bothered by his role in this tragedy. He had instructed Yosef to travel to his brothers. He believed that Yosef had been killed by a beast while fulfilling these instructions. In other words, he had – to some extent – played a role in Yosef's death. Sforno explains that although tragedies do occur, the righteous do not want to be the cause of these tragedies. Ideally, Hashem's providence protects the righteous from such roles. Yaakov concluded that his role in this tragedy was a reflection on his own shortcomings. He had not received the benefit of Hashem's providence in this instance. He had not been spared playing a role in this disaster.[13]

Sforno contrasts Yaakov's reaction to the attitude of the brothers. He explains that the sin of the brothers was that they did not realize the tragedy of these events. They may have felt compelled to sell Yosef into slavery, but they did not grasp that this act of violence against their brother should be a source of sorrow and mourning. Rather than bemoaning the tragedy that had befallen them, the brothers indulged in their afternoon meal.

The brothers should have recognized that Hashem's displeasure with them was implicit in their situation. How could He allow the children of Israel to destroy one of their brothers? How could Hashem allow fraternal strife among Yaakov's children? Certainly, He had turned his back upon them, and was punishing them for some sin. Yet, the brothers showed no introspection or regret.[14] ■

[1] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 37:11.

[2] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 37:10.

[3] Rabbaynu Avraham ben HaRambam, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 37:11.

[4] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 37:11.

[5] Sefer Beresheit 24:66

[6] Sefer Shemot 18:8.

[7] Rav Naftali Tzvi Yehuda Berlin (Netziv), Commentary Hamek Davar on Sefer Beresheit 37:25.

[8] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 37:18.

[9] Sefer Beresheit 42:21.

[10] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 37:18.

[11] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 37:24.

[12] Rabbaynu Shlomo ben Yitzchak (Rashi), Commentary on Sefer Beresheit 37:35.

[13] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 37:35.

[14] Rabbaynu Ovadia Sforno, Commentary on Sefer Beresheit, 37:25.

Agudat Rambam



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Channukah

Megillas Antiochos



*Introduction and Translation
by Rabbi Moshe Ben-Chaim*

Introduction

Upon hearing the threat of destruction of the Jewish nation, the five sons of Mattisyahu displayed much courage, although greatly outnumbered. They were inspired to battle against those who wished to strip them of their Jewish identity. The Greeks were intent on preventing Torah observance, and coercing idolatrous practice. However, Mattisyahu's sons displayed unwavering devotion to what their minds held as true. We read in verse 39, "we remember that which G-d commanded us on Mount Sinai." They were convinced of the reality of G-d's revelation, His existence, and His commanding us in His Torah at Mount Sinai. No enemy could erase G-d's revelation, or the truths contained in His Torah. Without Torah observance, one's life is meaningless. Mattisyahu's sons took it upon themselves to fight to preserve Torah at all costs.

We must take this lesson to heart, as this is the sole reason for our celebration of Channukah: to proclaim G-d's performance of miracles and intervention when we adhere to His word. Conversely, our current leaders omit G-d from all political considerations, as if our history is false. Venomous Arabs attack us daily, but our leaders abandon Torah as a guide for their reactions. To them, world opinion and foreign dollars outweigh human life and Torah truths. These leaders possess no regard for G-d's word, nor the courage befitting a true leader, as displayed by Mattisyahu's sons. This devotion to G-d's word earned the Jews of Channukah their salvation. But our leaders do not learn from history, and keep Israel under the sword. As long as G-d's word is not the essential consideration for all of their actions, G-d will not assist them. Their stubbornness is disturbing, and the silence of world Jewry compounds this crime.

Our leaders' reality is dichotomized; they celebrate Channukah, a publication of G-d's intervention when Torah is upheld, yet, they do not uphold the Torah. By our very act of lighting the menorah with our families, we testify to G-d's intervention, saving those Jews who followed Him by risking their lives. Those of us today cowering from following G-d's Torah due to political pressure, violate G-d's will. It is clear from the Channukah story recorded below, that G-d would have let die, those with no devotion. It was not until the five sons of Mattisyahu risked death for Torah, that G-d stepped in. The abandonment of G-d and His laws makes life worthless. Until the Jews demonstrated their devotion, there was no divine intervention. Once these five, brave souls declared the essentiality of Torah adherence through action, G-d protected them, and gave "the many into the hands of the few, the wicked, into the hands of the righteous."

Today we are slaughtered a great slaughter at the hands of those like Antiochos. Children of Israel, soldiers of the IDF, and leaders of the Israeli people must wake up. Our history and our very celebration of Channukah attest to G-d's ability to enable five brothers to defeat the armies of our enemies. G-d is not sleeping. G-d is not weak. He sees our travail at this time too. G-d'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 not based on military tactics alone will we be saved, but with Torah as our guide, we will continue to suffer.

Our nation must no longer deny G-d's ability to save us. See your contradiction, as you light the menorah, while you abandon so many historical events instructing us how we must now act. Have you forgotten Abraham defeating tremendous forces with just a few men? Or Jacob's salvation from his twin Esav? Recall the Ten Plagues, the Manna in the desert, and the splitting of the Red Sea, where every Egyptian soldier perished. And recall this: our claim to Israel is from no other source than G-d's Torah - His promise to Abraham. Yet you refuse His Torah, but desire His land?

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We do not rely on miracles; this is against Judaism, and not what I suggest. Living by Torah ideals is the best life, and we do not uphold Torah simply to remove our current pain. But as the Torah is absolute truth, we must be frightened by G-d's promise to abandon us if we abandon Him. But G-d also promises His protection when we live according to His word. In line with this promise, we may seek His assistance. We live by G-d's word, as it is absolute truth, which enables our best existence. When living in line with G-d's word, He has many vehicles to protect us. But as the Shema says, He certainly will not shield us when we abandon His word. Of course it is preferred that we attach ourselves to the truth of Torah when prompted by its perfect and pleasing laws, not because we need salvation. But many times G-d removes His protection to instruct us to return to Him. Now may be such a time.

Remember Chanukah. Remember and proclaim it not just with your menorah, but with your daily actions. As someone wishing salvation for yourself and your fellow Jews, act now in accordance with G-d's law. As Mattisyahu's sons lived, and were saved by the Torah, with G-d's help we too can triumph over our enemies. But any leader wishing to lead based solely on political considerations, denying these truths, history, and G-d's abilities, is destined for failure.

Follow His laws, and even the few will be victorious over the many.

Megillas Antiochos

Megillas Antiochos was found in an old edition of a siddur printed in Solonika, Greece. Otzar HaTfilos refers to it as a "precious letter". The Hebrew version is below. *(Arbitrary paragraph breaks have been added every 10 verses for ease of reading. These breaks do not exist in the original.)*

1. And it was in the days of Antiochos, king of Greece, a great, mighty king was he, and he was strong in his reign and all kings listened to him. 2. And he conquered many cities and mighty kings, and he destroyed their palaces 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

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(Antiochos cont. from previous page)

Channukah

and they say, "When will our King rule the seas and dry land, and the entire world will be given to our hand?" 10. It is not honorable to the kingdom to leave them be on the face of the earth.

11. And now let us come and we will ascend on them and nullify their treaty that was cut with them concerning Sabbath, the new Month and circumcision. And the matter was good in the eyes of his officers and in the eyes of his entire army. 12. At that time, Antiochos the king arose and he sent Nikanor his second with a great army and many people and they came to the city of Judah, to Jerusalem. 13. And they slaughtered a great slaughter and built an altar in the Temple in the place where the 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 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

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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, Antiochos the king heard that Bagris the wicked was killed and all officers of war with him, he entered into a ship and fled to the cities of the sea, and it was that each place he came to there, they mocked him and called him "the runaway". 66. Afterwards, the children of the Hasmoneans came to the temple, and they built the broken gates and they closed the breaches, and purified the courtyard from the casualties and from the impurities. 67. And they searched for pure olive oil to light the candelabrum, and they did not find but one canister that had the seal of the ring of the High Priest and they knew that it was pure, and it contained a measurement to light for one day. 68. And 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." ■



Channukah



Channukah & Purim

2 Spheres of Perfection

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

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

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

During that Macabean war upon which Channukah was created, we note an oddity. Channukah's famous miracle of oil occurred "after" the war had already ended. For what need was this miracle, being that the Jews were victorious?

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

Turning to Purim, Mordechai omitted God's name from the Megilla. For what reason did he do so?

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

Channukah

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

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

Purim

Perhaps Mordechai omitted God's name from the Megilla for two reasons. First, to display how exactly God intervened — in a covert manner. Second, to embody the concept that God's

providence works with man when he utilizes intelligence, as expressed by Mordechai and Esther's intelligent plan. Through the omission of God's name, man is thereby highlighted in Megilla to stress this point. Mordechai and Esther interacted with the world and society — nature and psychology — using much wisdom. This is the path of life — the *derech hachaim* — which God desires man to engage in all areas, not only when observing His commands. We thereby observe a new idea derived from Channukah and Purim...

Pirsumey Nase — proclamation of God's miracles

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

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

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

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

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

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

Channukah

5769

RIVKAH NACHMIAS

We are almost there. What a glorious Holiday it is. The children love it...the dreidel game and the potatoe pancakes...and the glow and warmth of the candles.

What does it mean to us ? Have we any idea what we have been able to attain as a result of the accomplishments of our forefathers who risked their lives for Torah so that we can enjoy a Torah life?

We will always have the Torah, but baruch HASHEM, we can honor it and observe it in peace in our times now.

In prior years, our forefathers lost their lives in order to protect the Torah so that we could have it today. We almost lost everything, but we were saved by their heroic feats and today we are able to live a Torah life and teach it to our children.

I cannot grasp the sorrow of those who went through war and starvation and loss of life because they wanted to simply live a Torah life.

I cannot grasp the sorrow of those who yearned to live in peace and were prevented from doing so simply because they were Jews.

Baruch HASHEM, we are here today with our beautiful precious children.

It is not enough just to love them...we must teach them. It is not only our responsibility to protect them, but it is our responsibility to teach them. Why are so many parents not doing so? Why are so many parents too much involved in the secular, materialistic life to stop and think about the future of these precious souls?

I remember, I was a little girl. I watched as my dearest father, of blessed memory, placed the candles into the menorah. The simple menorah was placed in a wide tray upon the stove to prevent any possibility of the candles falling off and starting a fire. I remember standing next to my dearest father, of blessed memory, as he lit the Chanukah menorah, the Chanukadiah, as he called it. My dearest mother, of blessed memory, stood beside



him with my older sister. We each watched attentively as my father went through the beautiful prayer singing it slowly and softly as he lit each orange colored candle with delicate care. They were so alive and it seemed as if they were calling to me. I remember how I quietly remained there and watched the menorah each night as they gradually went from one candle on the first night, and all lit up by the eighth night. I was a little girl and I was so impressed with all of it. I needed to understand more. Even though it was so beautiful and holy, I wanted answers.

I wanted to know why we were doing this. I wanted to know what meaning it had. I asked my dearest father, of blessed memory, and he asked me to sit near him, as he would whenever I had important questions. He explained that "Chanukah" comes from the word "Chinuch", which means "to teach" or "to install". Yes, teaching means to install wisdom into someone's mind. I did not know what he was saying at first, but then he explained further. Chanukah is a time to remember how we were in harm's way because of the non Jews who wanted to prevent us from following the laws of our CREATOR: they wanted to kill us. My father further explained that our family name meant "to have ONE HASHEM": there is only ONE CREATOR, ONE HASHEM. We are expected to honor HIM and follow HIS laws because this would enable us to live a happy life. My father tried to explain it in simple terms for a child, as I was, so I could understand. He reminded me that whenever he had to fix something that was broken, he would examine the parts and try to come up with a solution. He explained that if he had instructions to follow it would make it so much easier. "Well", he continued, "the Torah and Torah laws are the instructions on how to live a good and happy life". I guess I was too young to truly understand what he was trying to teach me, but I listened and accepted every word he spoke, as I would with everything he said, and I hear his words in my heart until this day.

Words are not just words when they are spoken by the ones who you trust and who you know truly care for you. Whatever my parents taught me will remain with me until the day I die. Their words were meant to teach me how to live the best and happiest life possible. Their words are with me always because I know that they were spoken with an unselfish and undying love and of true devotion to HASHEM.

Their words and their deeds taught me their true values of Torah and Mitzvot.

Teach it to your children: they will value each syllable of each word as they go through their lives and see that all you say is really true.

May you and yours be blessed with all of the Torah Blessings Always and in all ways.

AND PLEASE, keep the menorah in a safe place that cannot be reached by tiny, inquisitive, loving hands.

ALSO, do not place menorah on a tablecloth that hangs down and can be pulled. ■

Letters



Letters

from our

READERS



Gentile Equality

Reader: Dear Rabbi,

I really enjoy your website and its wonderful articles. I just wanted clarification on a certain issue I came across in your writing. I understand your idea about how the Jew and a Gentile have the same soul. I am confused though when you write that God cares for Jew and Gentile equally. I am troubled by this because the way I see it, there is one and only one way to perfect oneself, and that is through Yediyas Hashem (Torah). Now, Hashem only gave this means of perfection to the Jewish people (so much so, that its actually forbidden for a Gentile to learn Torah- other than the parts pertaining to his 7 commandments). Furthermore, you brought a number of proofs I have trouble accepting: You cited the Gemara in Sanhedrin as saying that a Gentile who learns Torah is akin to a High Priest. I feel that this statement is taken out of context as the Gemara (in Sanhedrin, as well as in Bava Kama 38a and Avodah Zara 3a) go on to qualify the statement. They are rewarded on a lower level as they were not commanded and

its only when they learn Torah pertaining to their 7 commandments (Rashi in Sanhedrin explains that they should learn the laws of the 7 commandments so that they become experts in them). I was further bothered by your other proof. You explained that the fact that G-d sent Yonah to persuade Gentiles to convert demonstrates that G-d cares no less for Gentiles. Frankly, such a statement is illogical. While such instances demonstrate that G-d cares for Gentiles, it does not prove that he cares for Gentiles equally to how much he cares for Jews. Please, keep up the great work with the site and I hope to get a response from you.

—Aaron Weiss

Mesora: Aaron, Thank you for you kind letter. Allow me to explain.

If any Gentile wishes, he may observe all 613

commands. In which case, he will then be obligated to study Torah equally as the Jew. This new role of "convert" or "Jew" now places the Gentile on equal footing as the born Jew. Therefore, with no change to his being (as conversion only changes one's obligations) a Gentile is equal to the Jew.

My intent is to teach that God did not create the Gentile with limited capacity. Adam, Noah and Abraham were Gentiles. Yet, they reached human perfection.

Any Gentile can. All humans share the same soul.

Similarly, if a Jew does not study, and a Gentile studies his laws, the Gentile is on a higher level than the Jew. Perfection is not a birthright, but an accomplishment. ■

See: www.mesora.org/perfection2.htm



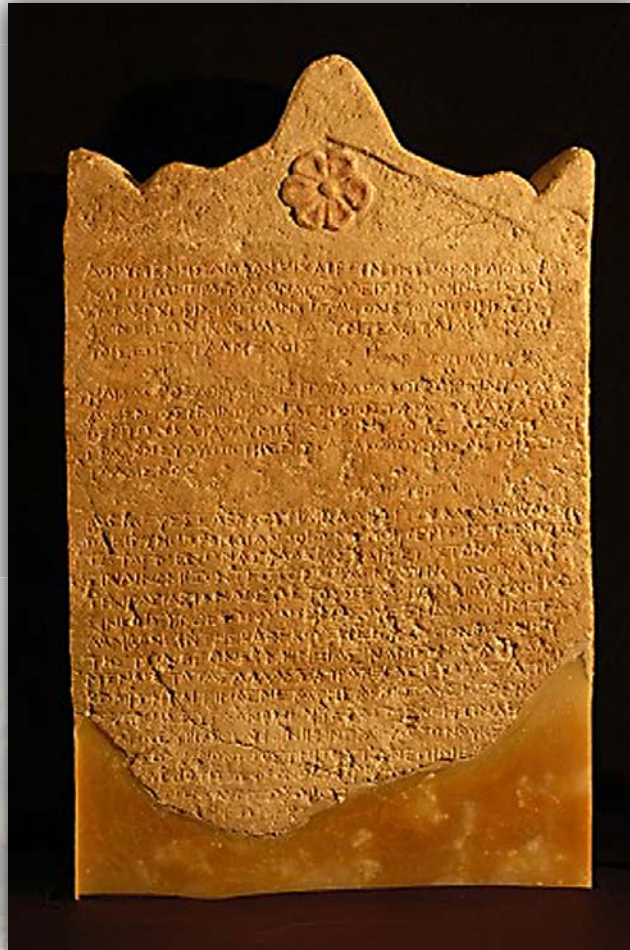
We wish a joyous Channukah to everyone

As our ancestors reestablished the Temple service back then, may this holiday rejuvenate our spirit to reestablish our adherence to a life of wisdom and love of truth. May we all examine our ways and determine if what we cleave to is comfortable and popular...or true Torah fundamentals. And may we find in our souls the same courage as the Hasmonians to do so.

Proclamation of the miracle is for the sake of publicizing God's intervention when we observed His true Torah ideals. Mordechai openly rejected idolatry and man, and the Hasmonians refused to follow the Greeks. God must always be the center of our lives; not man...no matter whom.

King Solomon taught that all men err. If we make man the center of our lives, we must forfeit truth to preserve his reputation when he errs.

Deciphered



“The Heliodorus stele is one of the most important and revealing Hellenistic inscriptions from Israel,” said James S. Snyder, Anne and Jerome Fisher Director of the Israel Museum. “It contextualizes the Second Book of Maccabees and provides an independent and authentic source for an important episode in the history leading up to the Maccabean Revolt, whose victorious conclusion is celebrated each year during the Jewish festival of Hanukkah.”

First Wall
City of David and
Solomon.

Second Wall
built by Jotham,
Hezekiah, and
Manasseh. Both
walls after the
exile rebuilt by
Nehemiah.

Third Wall
built by Herod Agrippa
A.D. 45

Circumvallation of the City
by the Romans under Titus

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