



PARSHAS VAYEISHEV & CHANUKAH

5772

SHALOSH SEUDOS
TORAH

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It All Revolves Around the Coming of Mashiach

A Seemingly Disheartening Parsha

A superficial reading of this week's parsha paints a gloomy picture.

After selling Yosef, the tribes understood what had been hidden from them all along, that Yosef was actually the tzaddik of their generation. In addition to the guilt that hounded them, they were forced to endure the pain of seeing their father Yaakov's anguish.

Reuven had made a big mistake in rearranging his father's lodging. He wanted to rectify his sin by rescuing Yosef. Thereby, he would have made his father happy after having angered him. He told his brothers to put Yosef in a pit, instead of killing him, intending to rescue him later. When he returned and found that Yosef had vanished, he was devastated. He thought that Hashem had not accepted his repentance and found no peace.

Yaakov thought that his life's work was destroyed. He knew that his mission on earth was to give birth to twelve tribes who would become the nation of Hashem. World history had been progressing toward this point; and now, when he was so close to this objective, Yosef was gone. Being that one tribe was missing, his mission was a failure. Yaakov knew that if he would succeed, he would be spared from gehinom (purgatory), but now he did not have that assurance.

Yehuda, their leader, was blamed by his brothers for the tragedy and was demoted. He realized what he had destroyed! Now that Yosef was gone, the rectification of the world would be delayed.

However, Yehuda *is* compared to a lion and did not fall into depression. Although it seemed as if he had destroyed everything, he nevertheless strengthened himself and began again from the beginning. The first Mitzvah (commandment) is to marry and have children. He married a woman, the daughter of a man named Shuah, and had three children: Eir, Onan and Shelah.

Alas! The worst pain a parent can endure is the death of a child. However, if a child died because he sinned, the pain is compounded many times. Yehuda's first son died because he had done evil in the eyes of Hashem. Eir's wife, Tamar, remarried Onan, the second son - yet tragedy struck again, and Onan died because of the same reason as his brother. Then Yehuda's wife died.

Meanwhile, Yosef - all alone in Egypt - was enduring a test of such magnitude that anyone of lesser quality would have failed. Surrounded by the suffocating immorality of the Egyptians, his mistress hounded him relentlessly - every single day - for an entire year (!) and then threw him into jail.

The parsha concludes with the tzaddik Yosef languishing in an Egyptian prison.

Transforming the Picture

The Midrash¹ shines a light on this week's parsha, and the entire story takes on much brighter hues.

[On the words] "And it was in that time" [the introduction for the narrative of the demotion of Yehuda], Rabbi Shmuel Bar Nachman began expounding [based on the verse in Yirmiyahu], "I know the thoughts that I think about you [the judgments I decree upon you]", says Hashem. 'They are thoughts of peace, not for bad, to give you eternity and hope'".

The shevatim were occupied with the selling of Yosef, Yosef was occupied with his sackcloth and fasting [he was mourning his fate], Reuven was occupied with his sackcloth and fasting [he was doing teshuvah for the sin of rearranging his father's lodgings], Yaakov was occupied with his sackcloth and fasting [he was mourning Yosef], Yehuda was occupied with marriage.

And Hashem? He was occupied with creating the light of the King Mashiach . . . Before the first enslaver was born, the final redeemer was born.

The Creation of Mashiach

The Jewish People have two redeemers. First, Mashiach ben [the descendent of] Yosef will arrive and wage wars against the gentile persecutors. He will pave the way for Mashiach ben David [of Yehuda].

Yosef did not descend to Egypt in vain. The mother of Mashiach ben Yosef was there.

Dinah gave birth to a girl who was fathered by Shechem. The tribes wanted to harm her, because she was an embarrassment to the family. In order to save her life, Yaakov placed the baby in a סנה, thorn bush, and angels carried her from there to Egypt. There she was adopted by Potifar and his wife, as they were childless. Yosef, seeing her purity - despite the fact that she was raised in the cesspit of Egypt - married her. Her name was אסנת בת פוטי פרע², Asnas, from the word סנה, the [adopted] daughter of Potifar.

After the death of his wife, Yehuda married Tamar and begot Peretz, the ancestor of Mashiach. Mashiach is referred to as איש בן פרצי, from the family of Peretz.

"ויהי בעת ההיא", 'and it was in that time', the words that introduce the narrative of Yehuda's demotion, marriage, son's death and subsequent begetting of Mashiach through Tamar, are gematria (has the same numerical value as) המלך המשיח בן דוד (they both equal 524). The Torah hints to us not to be dismayed as we read further; it is all a plan to bring Mashiach.

Hidden right beneath the gloomy narratives of this week's parsha is the birth of Mashiach.

The Revelation of Mashiach

The confusion of this week's parsha continues into next week's parsha, Mikeitz, and is only interrupted in parshas Vayigash with the words, "אני יוסף", 'I am Yosef'. When the Egyptian despot revealed himself as Yosef, the questions of the brothers weren't answered - they dissolved.

In exile, so many things occur that seem to have no meaning, especially in our times - the era immediately preceding the coming of Mashiach. There is so much tragedy! Everyone knows of much personal suffering endured by friends and family and wonders, "Why? What is the purpose?"

Our difficulties will not be resolved; they will disappear entirely with the revelation of Hashem. When Mashiach will come, Hashem will reveal Himself and say, "אני ה'". What you thought was disaster, was 'I, Hashem' in disguise preparing you for an eternity of goodness.

Mashiach is the Center-Point Around Which all of World History Revolves

History travels, seemingly aimlessly. Generations come and go. As a wide circle, history repeats itself. Is there an objective? Is the world aiming toward a goal?

On Chanukah we turn the dreidel. The ה, ג, נ, and ש engraved on the dreidel come and go as it spins. The dreidel seems to be spinning aimlessly. However, the Bnei Yissaschar points out that ה, ג, נ, and ש are gematria משיח (they both equal 358).

It's true; world history - as symbolized by the dreidel - seems to be spinning aimlessly. However, there is a center point around which it all turns – the world's redemption through Mashiach.

Mashiach is Hidden

On the first day of creation, Hashem created a great and powerful light with which it was possible to see from one end of the world to the other. Foreseeing that there would be evil in the world, Hashem hid this light until the final redemption. This light is called the אור הגנוז, the hidden light. It is the light of Mashiach who is concealed.

Yosef's saintliness was undetected by his holy brothers. They even thought him to have the makings of a dangerous dictator, and therefore sold him in self-defense. Mashiach ben Yosef was hidden from the tribes.

They therefore did not recognize him in Egypt either, as the verse states, "לא הכירוהו"³, 'they did not recognize him'. לא הכירוהו is gematria אור גנוז (they both equal 273). They did not recognize him, because he is Mashiach, who is hidden.

Tamar, seeing that Yehuda was not letting her marry Shelah, disguised herself as a harlot and waited for Yehuda at the crossroads. She did this with the purest intentions; with the goal of bringing Mashiach ben David into the world.

Yehuda did not recognize Tamar. The verse expresses its dismay "ויחשבה לזונה!⁴?", '[Yehuda saw the mother of the kingdom of Mashiach] and thought her to be a harlot?!' How could that be? The answer is, as the verse continues, "כי כסתה פניה", 'She covered her face'. Mashiach is unseen.

ויחשבה לזונה is gematria בן דוד המשיח (they both equal 429). Mashiach can be so hidden, that its matriarch can be mistaken for the lowest of the low.

כי כסתה פניה is gematria אור מלך המשיח (they both equal 660). The light of Mashiach is hidden; it is the אור הגנוז.

In the Chanukah Candles the Hidden Light of Mashiach is Revealed

Chanukah is a Yom Tov that draws power and inspiration from the days of Mashiach.

The physical world is comprised of seven dimensions. Eight is a number which represents the sublime heavenly spheres of Mashiach. The essence of Chanukah is eight. It

has eight days, and the miracle of Chanukah took place with שמן, oil. The word שמן is similar to the number שמונה, eight.

Therefore, by the light of the Chanukah candles, one can peek into the future and catch a glimpse of the אור which in our times is usually גנוז.

Lighting the אור הגנוז in Low Depths

The chapter narrating the demotion of Yehuda and his subsequent travails begins with the words "וירד יהודה", Yehuda descended. The section discussing the descent of Yosef to Egypt begins with the words "ויוסף הורד", and Yosef was taken downward.

Although the Divine Presence never descends beneath ten handbreadths, Chanukah is the exception. We light the candles specifically below ten handbreadths. The light of Mashiach descends to rock bottom, in order to infuse hope and brightness into the heart of the tired exiled Jew. מאשפת ירים אביון, the destitute are raised from the very depths.

Hashem arranged it so that both Yehuda and Yosef ignite the Hidden Light of Mashiach in the depths, Chanukah-style.

Shechem – the Place of Mashiach ben Yosef

Before his death, Yaakov bequeathed the city of Shechem to Yosef. When the Jews left Egypt, Yosef's remains were taken along and eventually interred in Shechem.

The Arizal states that Yeravam ben Nevat, the first king of the ten tribes, was a reincarnation of the soul of Yosef. Later, when he sinned, the neshama of Yosef flew out of him. It will be reincarnated into Mashiach ben Yosef.⁵

Appropriately, Yeravam chose the City of Shechem as the city where he established his kingdom and residence.⁶

After Yosef was born, Yaakov felt ready to face his brother Eisav, because Yosef is the contender of Eisav⁷. After Yaakov vanquished Eisav with the power of Yosef, he went to Shechem, the home of Yosef's kingdom.

Dinah Contained the Spark of Mashiach Ben Yosef

Dinah was very closely tied to Yosef. In fact, it would be accurate to say that Dinah was Yosef. Leah became pregnant with Yosef, and Rachel with Dinah. Leah prayed that her sister at least merit mothering two of the tribes, and the fetuses were switched. As a fetus, Dinah occupied the place of Yosef.

It was in Shechem, the city of Yosef, that Dinah was impregnated with Asnas, the wife of Yosef.

Within the kelipah (impure spirit) of Shechem ben Chamor was trapped a holy spark of Mashiach ben Yosef. Dinah *had* to be violated by him in order to extract this spark and give birth to the mother of Mashiach ben Yosef. שמן בן יוסף is gematria משיח בן חמור (they both equal 666).

ותצא דינה, and Dinah went out, the words that introduce the narrative of her kidnapping by Shechem, are gematria, משיח בן יוסף (they both equal 566). Hashem caused Dinah to go out because she had to extract the spark of Mashiach Ben Yosef from Shechem.

The Torah hints to this specifically in the opening of the narrative to indicate the primary purpose of the event. (As mentioned the opening of the narrative of Yehuda and Tamar also contains this hint. However, being that Mashiach ben Dovid will be the supreme monarch, that opening hint includes the word "HaMelech".)

The kidnapping of Dinah was a great tragedy for Yaakov. Commentators find fault with Dinah for not being careful enough. However, it was all arranged by the hidden Conductor of the world.

When he encountered Eisav, Yaakov hid Dinah so that Eisav should not want to marry her. Although each tribe was born with a twin sister, Yaakov did not need to hide them. Only Dinah had to be hidden because she is the אור הגנוז - she contains the spark of Mashiach, who is concealed.

Dinah - already at birth - was prepared for the great task of mothering Mashiach. "ואחר" "המלך המשיח בן יוסף", 'and afterwards [Leah] gave birth to a daughter [Dinah]', is gematria' "ילדה בת" (they both equal 666).

Tamar Prepared Chanukah

Tamar sat at the crossroads waiting for Yehuda. The verse uses the words פתח⁹ "עינים", the opening of the eyes, to denote crossroads. The Midrash¹⁰ sees great meaning in the Torah's choice of words, and states, "She directed her eyes to the opening that all eyes are directed toward"; she prayed that she merit giving birth to the ancestor of Mashiach.

It can be that by using the word "פתח", the verse is hinting that Tamar prepared the light of Mashiach which is contained in the candles of Chanukah. וצונו בפתח עינים is gematria "להדליק נר חנכה", 'and He commanded us to light the candles of Chanukah' (they both equal 670). This is because according to halacha (law) the Chanukah candles should preferably be lit at the פתח, doorway.

Chanukah is a Yom Tov of Shirah (Singing to and Praising Hashem)

The Midrash states that the reason Devorah the prophetess merited saying shirah was because she prepared wicks for the menorah in the Bais HaMikdash.

Chanukah, when we prepare the wicks and light the flames of the menorah, is a Yom Tov that was established for "שיר ורננים", singing and praising Hashem.

A crucial part of Chanukah is the reciting of Hallel in the morning. הלל comes from the words "בהלו נרו", igniting a flame¹¹. In order that our recital qualify as Hallel, it needs to be with flaming enthusiasm and moving song.

Reciting such a Hallel requires preparation and anticipation.

Chanukah is the Mitzvah for the Last Generation

We know that there are 613 mitzvos. However, if we include the seven mitzvos that were enacted by the Sages, there are 620 mitzvos - the numerical value of כתר, a crown. The last mitzvah instituted by the Sages, is the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles.

Corresponding to the כתר mitzvos are the 620 letters of the Aseres HaDibros (Ten Commandments). The last letter of the Aseres HaDibros is the ך of the word לרעה. This ך

corresponds to the mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah lights, which is the last mitzvah that the Sages instituted.

As mentioned above, Chanukah is the Yom Tov when we descend beneath the usual boundary of ten handbreadths and light up the darkness in the depths. The letter that corresponds to Chanukah is ך, a letter which descends lower than the other letters of the Aleph Beis.

Chanukah, the last mitzvah, corresponds to our generation - which is the last before the redemption.

Chanukah was Wrought Through Self-Sacrifice

If not for the self-sacrifice of the Chashmonaim, there would be no Chanukah. In fact, there would be no Jewish Nation. Mattisyahu and his handful of fighters risked their lives in battle to preserve the Jewish People and fought the Greeks who were coercing them to assimilate.

The parsha we read on Shabbos is always intertwined with the occurrences of the week in which it is read. On the Shabbos before and during Chanukah, we read about Yosef - the one who put his life on the line to preserve his purity.

Self-Sacrifice is Required in Our Generation

To preserve one's purity in our times demands overcoming difficult temptation. Since Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, mankind has been subjected to the seducement of the Yetzer Hara (evil inclination). For 5,700 years or so, mankind wrestled with a consistent temptation to immorality, some falling and some withstanding.

Enter the era of technology, especially the era of the internet, and a new Yetzer Hara unfurled its claws. Every day it spews a newfangled venom, adding countless victims to its conquest. We are not yet inoculated to yesterday's poison, and yet we must already deal with the new toxic weapons of today.

Our foremost effort must be focused on maintaining our purity, despite the countless hazardous technological devices trying to undermine it. Maimonides¹² points out that the Yetzer Hara only finds residence in a heart that is empty of the wisdom of the Torah. Learning Torah diligently is the best antidote for the Yetzer Hara.

The Importance of Following the Guidelines of the Gedolei Hador (Greatest Torah Scholars of the Generation)

Chanukah is a Mitzvah instituted by the Sanhedrin (supreme court) of the era of the Chashmonaim. The Midrash¹³ urges each generation to carefully hearken to the commandment of the Torah leaders of its time. G-d alters reality to conform to the rulings of the Gedolei Hador.

Each generation had its unique challenges. Their leaders, understanding the psychology of their generation and the difficulties of their trials, instituted regulations to secure the people against the onslaught they faced.

The Jewish People in recent centuries faced many challenges to Torah adherence. The powerful waves of the enlightenment, communism and Zionism rose and fell, drowning millions of spiritual victims. Who were the ones that persevered?

R' Shach ztz"l was questioned if he had ever heard Trotzky speak. He replied that anyone who had ever gone to any of the great communist leader's speeches was lost to Judaism forever. Only those that followed the directives of the Torah leaders of that generation, who instructed them to keep far away from the communists, survived spiritually.

Only one who adheres to the instruction of the Gedolei Hador of *his* generation can hope to survive the spiritual tests of his time.

The last trial before the final redemption is the one our generation is facing – internet addiction; the lure to immorality and heresy that is promoted through the various technological devices invented daily.

There are those that see themselves immune to the trap of these devices and feel, "I have self-control!" History has proven that he who disobeyed the guidelines of the leaders of his time was ensnared by its temptation. This is because, as mentioned above, G-d alters reality; in this case - the limits of his self-control - to be according to the regulations set forth by the Gedolei Hador.

The leaders of our time have set forth directives by which technology is to be used. It is our imperative to follow them.

Rabbeinu Yonah¹⁴ teaches that disregarding the safeguards instituted by the Sages is a sin deserving of a most serious penalty even if no other sin was committed.

Collect the Diamonds of Chanukah

The radiance imparted by the candles of Chanukah enlightens one's eyes. One can benefit much spirituality by gazing at them.

Just as Tamar entreated G-d for success as she stood at the פתח עינים; **when we stand at the door before kindling the light that will illuminate our eyes, it is an auspicious time for prayer.**

The Bnei Yissaschar provides a prayer for us to recite before kindling the candles: "May it be your will, Hashem, ...that you reckon it as if I concentrated upon all of the intentions that the Kohanim, the servants of Hashem, did when they gave their lives for the honor of your name..."

The Rebbe of Skver ztz"l stated that these days are diamonds; what a shame not to gather them!

With the holiness of the candles, the fire of Hallel, and the eating of Chanukah meals that include singing and praising Hashem, may each of us merit that the hidden light of our neshama shine and

אור חדש על ציון תאיר ונזכה כלנו יחד במהרה לאורו

¹ מדרש רבה בראשית פרשה פה סימן א

² בראשית מא:מה

³ בראשית מב:ח

⁴ בראשית לח:טו

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- ⁵ ספר הגלגולים פרק ס"ז
⁶ מלכים א' יב:כה
⁷ רש"י בראשית ל:כה
⁸ בראשית ל:כא
⁹ בראשית לח:יד
¹⁰ רבה בראשית פ"ה סימן ז'
¹¹ ספר שפת אמת
¹² הלכות איסורי ביאה פרק כ"ב סעיף כ"א
¹³ תנחומא פ' נשא
¹⁴ מס' ברכות פרק א'