



PARSHAS MIKEITZ, CHANUKAH & TEVES

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Chanukah Radiates Light into the Dark Month of Teves

The Appeasement of Yosef and the Jewish People

Yosef had spent thirteen difficult years in Egypt. He had been kidnapped as a teenager by his own brothers who sold him as a slave. He endured a year of harassment by his mistress and was thrown into a prison dungeon for refusing her. Twelve long years had passed without him seeing the light of freedom.

Suddenly, he was hoisted out of the pit and taken to be of service to no less than the king himself. After years of being disheveled, he shaved and changed his clothes.

"ויריצהו מן הבור"¹, 'he was rushed from the pit'. In explaining this, the Zohar² cites the verse from Tehillim, "רוצה ה' את יראיו את המיחלים לחסדו"³, 'Hashem favors those that fear Him, those that await His salvation'.

That chapter of Tehillim begins with the discussion of the rebuilding of Yerushalayim. When Yerushalayim will be permanently erected at the Ultimate Redemption, after the long exile, Hashem will appease His newly-freed nation. He will enable the Jewish People to understand the purpose for every pang and twinge of pain they suffered throughout the lengthy exile. Thus, Hashem will placate them. The word רוצה can thus be understood as מרצה, appease.

The word וירצו can also be understood as 'they appeased him'.

When Yosef was appointed top minister in Egypt, the pain he had endured for the past thirteen years was retroactively alleviated. He understood that his having been sold as a slave and harassed by his mistress - which led to him being thrown into the pit - was all a catalyst for his being appointed second-in-command of the country. From this position, he would be able to ease his father and brothers' descent into the Egyptian exile.

Chanukah is an Appeasement

Our bleak state of exile is temporarily interrupted each Chanukah. The lights of Chanukah dispel the gloom of exile with the radiance of the light of Mashiach.

King David tells of Hashem's promise to His anointed one, "ערכתי נר למשיחי"⁴, 'I arranged a candle for My Mashiach'. The Maor Vashamesh explains that this verse homiletically refers to Chanukah, when we prepare and arrange the candles which contain the light of Mashiach.

Although the physical eye may not actually observe this light, the eye of the soul perceives it.

Three Questions

The Gemara⁵ states the date of Chanukah, saying, 'On the 25th day of Kislev are the eight days of Chanukah'. The wording of the Gemara seems obscure. All eight days of Chanukah are on the 25th of Kislev? Shouldn't it have said, 'On the 25th of Kislev begin the eight days of Chanukah'? The Shulchan Aruch⁶ also uses this wording in its opening of the discussion of the laws of Chanukah.

A mitzvah (commandment) cannot be fulfilled through supernatural means. Commentators therefore question: How did the Kohanim (priests) fulfill the mitzvah of lighting

the menorah in the Bais HaMikdash (Holy Temple) on the second day if the only oil they had was through the miraculous fact that the oil was not used up on the first day?

Furthermore, used oil is invalid for the fulfillment of the mitzvah of lighting the menorah in the Bais HaMikdash. Even if the oil was not completely used up on the first day, it would still be unacceptable for lighting on the second.

Times Will Move Slowly After the Arrival of Mashiach

At the end of Parshas Vayishlach, the Torah lists the kings of Edom, the nation that descends from Eisav. For each king that reigned from the children of Eisav, a king reigned from the children of Yaakov. From this we infer that for every king that reigned from the children of Eisav during the exile, there will be a corresponding king for the Jewish People after the ultimate redemption.

The exile lasted for almost two millennia, during which hundreds of kings reigned in Edom. The world was created to last for only 6,000 years, and we are up to year 5772. There is only a maximum of 228 years left in the future. How will there be enough time for hundreds of Jewish kings to reign?

The answer - the Ohr Hachaim⁷ teaches - is that after the Ultimate Redemption, time will progress very slowly. The good days after the arrival of Mashiach will be greatly lengthened.

Sefarim (holy books) infer this from the first four words of our parsha, "ויהי מקץ שנתיים ימים", which can be translated homiletically, 'In the days after the 'keitz' – the end of exile – days will be as long as years'.

Chanukah is One Long Extended Day of the 25th of Kislev

During the miracle of Chanukah, the Jewish People merited a temporary revelation of the era of Mashiach. For the entire world, time continued at its usual pace; day turned to night - generating eight days. However, in the Bais HaMikdash, where the menorah burned, time marched according to the tempo of the days of Mashiach. The 25th of Kislev was stretched and continued for eight days.

This answers the questions raised above.

They did not use miraculous or used oil to light the menorah on the morning of the 26th of Kislev - because they were not required to light the candles at all - since at the menorah it was still in middle of the long 25th Mashiach-like day.

The Gemara is also very accurate in stating that on the 25th of Kislev *are* all eight days of Chanukah. Every year, a glimmer of this longest 25th of Kislev in history descends for eight days. Appropriately, the entire eight days of Chanukah, from the 25th day in Kislev until the 2nd (or 3rd) of Teves, are all named "חנו כ"ה", they rested on the 25th - because the 25th day accompanies all the days.

There is a custom by many to recite chapter 91 of Tehillim after the lighting of the candles. The last verse is 'Lengthy days I will satisfy him with and I will show him My salvation'. This hints to the aura of Mashiach that surrounds the menorah - in whose era days will be lengthy.

Two Sets of Six Months

The year is divided into two parts. The first six months - from Tishrei until Adar - are referred to as the masculine months. The second six months – from Nissan until Elul – are the feminine months. These two groups mirror each other in many ways.

The first three months of each group belong to Yaakov; the last three to Eisav. The third month of the first group, כסליו is gematria (has the same numerical value as) תמוז the third month of the second group (they both equal 126).

Both the month after Kislev – Teves - and the month after Sivan – Tamuz - are difficult months. On the seventeenth of Tamuz the Romans broke through the fortifications of Yerushalayim. The destruction of the First Temple began in Teves, when the Babylonian armies besieged Yerushalayim.

The Difficult Month of Teves

Teves is an even more difficult month than Tamuz. The Zohar states that it belongs to the Sitra Achra – the ‘other side’ – the forces of impurity and evil that are on the side opposing holiness.

The fast of the Tenth of Teves is the only one of the four fasts which commemorate the destruction of the Temple that would be enforced were it to occur on Shabbos. This is because the destruction of the Temple actually *began* on this day with the besieging of Yerushalayim. (Due to the fact that now we have a fixed calendar, the tenth of Teves never occurs on Shabbos.)

The longest, darkest nights of the year are in Teves when the sun is farthest from earth. The longest night of the year - known as ‘Nittel’ - is in Teves. On this night, there is such a strong dominance of impurity that many have the custom of not learning Torah (much as one may not do so in the bathroom, a place of impurity).

The dominance of the ‘Sitra Achra’ - which is also referred to as ‘Kalbin D’Chatzufin’, impudent dogs – is strongest in this month and peaks on the night of ‘Nittel’. Indeed, there are reports of tzaddikim who studied Torah on this night, whose homes were then intruded by dogs⁸.

Every one of the twelve months corresponds to another of the Twelve Tribes. The Tribe Dan that is termed ‘the lowest of the tribes⁹’ corresponds to Teves.

Smashing the Head of the Snake

The light of Chanukah shines into the dark month of Teves. It is a tremendous blow to the ‘Sitra Achra’ that Chanukah - the holiday of Kislev - stretches out of the holy confines of Kislev into its territory of Teves.

The beginning of the three-month period that belongs to Eisav is conquered by the holiness of Chanukah. This phenomena is referred to by the Prophet Chabakuk, מְחַצֵּת ראשׁ "מְחַצֵּת ראשׁ" ¹⁰מְחַצֵּת ראשׁ, ‘You shattered the head of the house of the evil one’.

According to our explanation - that the 25th of Kislev accompanies all eight days of Chanukah - the subjugation of the ‘Sitra Achra’, which rules in Teves, is even stronger. Not only the holy Yom Tov of Chanukah - but also the blessed month of Kislev itself - traverses the boundaries of Teves and weakens the foundation of the power of tumah.

When something is repeated three times it is reinforced. The 25th of Kislev sometimes takes over the first *three* days of Teves. With the first three days of Teves infused with the light of Chanukah, the gloom of Teves is greatly lifted.

The Seven Healthy Cows that were Swallowed by the Seven Emaciated Cows

The parsha begins with Pharaoh's dream of seven withered cows swallowing seven vigorous ones. The seven worn-out cows - which in the story of Pharaoh represented the seven years of destructive famine - hint at the month of Teves, the month of destruction. The seven healthy cows were swallowed by the emaciated ones, hinting that the celebrated days of Kislev go into the destructed days of Teves.

After they swallowed the seven robust cows, the seven emaciated ones still seemed thin and withered as before. Although the holiness of Kislev enters Teves, it is not noticeable. Teves seems to remain the same gloomy month despite the light of Chanukah that shines into it.

However, just as the famine in Egypt was discontinued - after Yaakov's arrival in Egypt - and lasted for only two years instead of seven; so too, the darkness of Teves will be dispelled with the coming of Mashiach.

May we merit "מחצת ראש מבית רשע", that our enemies be destroyed speedily with the coming of Mashiach. Amen.

¹ בראשית מא:יד

² לספר בראשית ח"א דף קצד ע"ב

³ תהלים קמז:יא

⁴ תהלים קלב:יז

⁵ שבת דף כ"א ע"ב

⁶ סימן תר"ע סעיף א'

⁷ סוף פ' וישלח

⁸ ספר רגל (לבני יששכר) ישרה ערך 'טבת'

⁹ רש"י שמות לה:לד

¹⁰ חבקוק ג:יג