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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYESHEV CHANUKA - 5763

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"CHANUKAH: A VICTORY OF ILLUMINATION"

BY RABBI SHAUL KAGAN ZT" L

"What is Chanuka?" asks the Talmud in its introduction to a discussion of the holiday (Shabbos 21b), and then responds with a retelling of the Miracle of the Lights: "When the Maccabees entered the Temple they found one cruse of oil, etc."

The holiday and its miracle are surely known to us. In fact, before posing the question "What is Chanuka?", the Talmud completes a discussion of some of the laws of Chanuka. Clearly, as Rashi indicates, the question refers to the significance of Chanuka, its purpose and relevance for all times: What is the significance of Chanuka?

Indeed, many miraculous events occurred during the history of our people. In fact, during the era in which the Chanuka events unfolded, a number of other miracles were recorded. Yet most miraculous events do not merit special commemorative holidays. They are consigned to the history books, where one can surely learn something from them, but they are not particularly relevant to our lives today. Chanuka is.

In truth, we commemorate two miracles on Chanuka: the victory over the Greek Empire -- the most powerful nation of its time, and the miracle of the lights. While we mention the military victory in our prayers, the mitzvah of the day focuses on the latter, with our kindling of the menorah, and it is to the symbol of the menorah that we will devote our primary attention.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

To appreciate the miracles of Chanuka, one must begin with Alexander the Great of Macedonia, who ascended the throne in the year 336 B.C.E. In a short span of time, he wrested power from the Persian Empire, and conquered most of the then-known world, including the Land of Israel. The Persian Empire was essentially a political-economic one, not unlike the British Empire of modern times. Except for Haman's attempt to physically destroy the Jewish people, it had no designs to change the face of its occupied countries. By contrast, Alexander's empire was political, ideological, not unlike the Soviet sphere of influence today. Alexander's goal was no less than to unite the entire world under his rule, and to establish a universal culture and religion based on that of Ancient Greece, with allowances for only minor sub-cultures and religious sub-cults.

Alexander began the process of cultural imperialism with his conquests, and in many ways, paved the way for the subsequent ascendancy of Rome; however, Alexander died young, in 323 B.C.E., and did not live to see the fulfillment of his dream of imposing a universal world order.

But he did leave an important legacy: The spread of Hellenism (Helena is the ancient name for Greece) throughout the Mediterranean Basin. His empire broke up into separate, warring factions, each trying to out-do the other in spreading their ideals and religion. The Seleucid Kingdom, centered in Syria, was ruled by Antiochus Epiphanes, who was battling with the Ptolemaic Kingdom of Egypt over control of central Judea. The events of Chanuka unfolded primarily during the Syrian Greek conquests of Judea.

A PRIMEVAL STRUGGLE

The struggle between Greek culture and Judaism has its roots in the very creation of this world, as is alluded to in the Torah's description of the primeval darkness on the face of the abyss (Genesis 1:2). The darkness, say the Sages, refers to the Greek tyranny over Israel. And the subsequent Divine command of Yehi Ohr - "Let there be light," which dispelled the

darkness, is an allusion to the victory of Chanuka. Indeed, the [Hebrew] word "yehi" is numerically equal to 25, a reference to the 25th day of [the Jewish month] Kislev, when Chanuka begins.

The "Yehi Ohr" of the Torah is speaking of the original spiritual light of Creation, since hidden until the time of the Messiah, yet symbolized by the miraculous lights of Chanuka. But the ascribing of darkness to Greece and Greek culture is surprising. After all, does not Greece represent wisdom, science, philosophy -- every form of enlightenment? It may well be evil in its excesses -- but darkness?

In the final analysis, however, Greek culture is a celebration of the material world. It focuses on external beauty and the arts, on sports and physical prowess; it is obsessed with science and the immutable laws of nature by which the universe operates. Intellectually involved with surface and function, it has beauty of form -- and it has a supportive mythology populated by humanoid gods that reflect man at his most capricious. But it lacks soul.

In short, Greek culture represents denial of the Divine spark in the guidance of human affairs -- a concealment of God's presence, blanketing His domain with a secular darkness.

In his time, Alexander did not attempt to force Greek ways upon Judea. This was due exclusively to the personality of Shimon HaTzaddik, the High Priest and leader of the Jews who met Alexander and deeply impressed him. Antiochus, for his part, was generally tolerant of the religions of his various vassal states. As often as not, he absorbed them into the dominant religion. But he made an exception with Judaism, in his attempt to totally suppress it.

Apparently, he could deal with a shallow, pagan religion, seeing little significant differences between one idol and the other; for that matter, he would have welcomed the Jewish God, as it were, to join the club, if that were possible. But Jewish moral and ethical values were inimical with Greek culture, for Torah represents an ideology that Antiochus could not live with.

The conflict actually goes much deeper. Greece has a special affinity with Judaism. The beauty of Yefet (Greece) is fulfilled, the Sages tell us, when it is found in the Tents of Shem. This affinity even has an application in halacha -- Jewish law -- in that the Torah may be written in Greek and still retain some sanctity, unlike any other language. The core of this kinship lies in Greek wisdom in apposition with the wisdom of Judaism -- Maimonides himself quotes Greek scholars quite copiously -- but this very affinity creates a greater enmity, when the point of parting is reached. For Greek wisdom, dealing with externals as it does, rejected the wisdom of Judaism, which focuses on the spiritual core of existence, linking everything to its ultimate Divine source.

God is concealed behind the laws of nature, giving man the possibility of free will, while the primeval light reveals God's presence in creation. It is here that Torah wisdom departs from the wisdom of Greece, which is content with a surface understanding, and even denies the spiritual. The Torah's approach, then, constitutes a threat so fundamental to Hellenism that Antiochus could not ignore it.

THE WAR AGAINST THE RABBIS

This brings us to another distinctive element in the Greek oppression. The Hellenists made a particular effort to destroy the Sages, the Torah scholars who were the transmitters of the Oral Law from Sinai. The written Torah -- the Chumash -- is ambiguous and can be misconstrued sufficiently to be palatable to others. After all, many nations and religions have claimed "the Bible" as their own.

Not so the Oral Law. Given to Moses by God at Sinai, preserved and expounded by the Sages throughout the generations, the Oral Law not only contains the halachic specifics of Jewish life, without which the Written Law cannot stand, it also contains the philosophic and mystical underpinnings of the Torah, and makes it vibrant, alive. The Oral Law, the Talmud, embodies the quintessential Torah wisdom that quickens the spirit of our people and defines for it the spiritual core of reality.

The Oral Law, in short, is the soul of the Written Torah. Like the soul of a person, it is the critical life-giving element hidden within the Written Torah, which is comparable to the body. The Oral Law and the Sages who expounded it stand in clear challenge to Hellenist philosophy, and was thus seen as a direct threat to their culture. The Hellenist oppressors and their Jewish sympathizers thus promulgated harsh decrees against studying the Oral Law and persecuted its teachers.

THE SOUL OF CONTENTION

There is one more element -- in some ways the most relevant one -- in the Greek oppression. As an individual has a soul, so does a nation. This

is not meant symbolically but as an objective reality. This is a special spiritual quality that serves as its source of energy, that binds the individuals into a single unit, and defines its identity.

It may be said that the collective soul of the Jewish nation is embodied in the Torah, but specifically, the soul of Israel is the unique bond, the special relationship that exists between Israel and God. In short, the Covenant. The Covenant supersedes race, accepting converts of all hues, and includes the non-observant. Jewishness, in fact, can be defined simply as the state of embracing a unique Covenant with God, which the Jew is either born into, or enters into freely. This Covenant expresses itself in a mission -- not to rule or dominate others, but to carry the Shechina, the Divine Presence, in the world and to reveal the Divine spark in nature.

This, then, is the crux of the contention between Greece and Israel. The Hellenists -- enamored with the externals of nature, seeking to deny any Divine presence, attempting to impose a general world order of their own on mankind -- were pitted politically, ideologically and metaphysically against the concept of the Jewish mission -- be it even moral or religious. They were opposed to a unique Covenant between God and Israel, and especially to the idea of a people chosen to carry the Divine message. This mission challenged all they stood for and undermined all their aspirations, whether indulgence in their hedonistic desires, or engaging in world conquest.

If one wants to separate Jews from their God, he can achieve this by destroying the Jews, as Amalek has attempted throughout history and almost succeeded under Haman: or one can take God away from the Jews, suppressing and even attempting to usurp the Covenant, in the manner of Yavan (Greece). (Interestingly, the [16th century commentator] Maharal says that prior to the advent of the Messiah, the Jews will suffer oppression from both Amalek and Yavan, facing the threat of physical and spiritual annihilation, God forbid.) The Hellenists enacted specific decrees against the Jews, suppressing Torah scholarship -- particularly the Oral Law -- and banning Sabbath observance, circumcision and the celebration of Rosh Chodesh (establishment of the lunar calendar), by which the dates of the [Jewish] festivals are fixed. These all are either covenantal in nature, or are uniquely tied to the interpretation of the Oral Law by the Sanhedrin.

The Greeks also promoted immorality and intermarriage among the Jews, aimed at violating the sanctity of Jewish life. They even forced the Jews to write on the horns of their oxen, "We have no share in the God of Israel" -- not simply "God," but the God of Israel, attacking the special covenantal relationship. When Israel ultimately prevailed over Greece, it was not the people that were saved from destruction, nor even our religious practice as such, but our very soul.

THE SPIRITUAL ANATOMY

Each of the 613 commandments (mitzvot), we are taught, corresponds to a different component of the human anatomy -- each mitzvah, as it were, sanctifying and elevating a specific element of the human makeup -- physical, emotional, and spiritual. There are two basic mitzvot of rabbinic origin -- Purim and Chanuka -- and one should logically surmise that they, too, play a role in enhancing some aspect of the Jew. One might suggest that the mitzvah of Chanuka, which concerns us here, is meant to enhance and elevate the soul itself, for Chanuka is the celebration of the Jewish soul. Chanuka is alluded to in the Torah in several places in a hidden, almost imperceptible manner, like the soul. It celebrates an event that reinforces how we define our purpose as a people, and it nurtures our individual and collective soul, even as the soul defines and nurtures the body.

Moreover, we commemorate Chanuka with the menorah that glows on Kislev's 25th day -- the Yehi of Yehi Ohr - "Let there be light" -- that primeval light whose purpose is to illuminate the Divine in nature, which is the spiritual core that sustains all of creation. As the [12th century commentator] Nachmanides explains, that original light glows in the miraculous light of Chanuka, demonstrating that nature is a tool in the hands of God, to bend and control as He wishes. To engage in this publicizing the miracle, in the propagation of the awareness of God's animating presence, is the essence of our unique mission in the world. So our soul rejoices with this mitzvah.

MENORAH, MIRACLE AND DIVINE PRESENCE

The menorah is an obvious choice for the medium for the miracle of the victory of Chanuka. Beyond the simple equation of the menorah with light, the menorah is representative of Torah, in keeping with [the Talmudic expression], "Whoever seeks wisdom should go southward" -- the menorah was positioned in the southern half of the Temple.

Moreover, the Talmud tells us that there was a constant miracle with the menorah in the Temple, because the western-most light of the menorah always burned longer than its supply of oil warranted. All seven lamps of the menorah contained equal amounts of oil, and even though the western-most lamp was lit first, all went out at the same moment. Those extra moments of fire constituted a miracle. Its purpose? The Talmud says, "That the Divine Presence resides in Israel."

"What is Chanuka?" Chanuka was established to commemorate the miracle of the lights... because the miracle of the lights expresses the purpose and the essence of the victory of the Jews over the Greek empire. The mitzvah of the Chanuka lights reinforces our Covenant with God, strengthening our sense of Jewish identity, and making us all more aware of our unique mission, so that indeed, the Divine Presence will rest upon Israel.

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From: RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: Thursday, November 28, 2002 Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYeishev

"RavFrand" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYeishev - Annual Sale of Rav Frand tapes (Sale Ends December 10, 2002) These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 352, "Chamar Medina" -- Used for Kiddush? Individual Tapes - \$5.00 Each (Plus S&H) - Save \$2.00 Complete Tape Sets - Take 15% Off (Does Not Include Bereishis XV or Parsha Perceptions Bereishis V) For a catalog or ordering information please call 410-358-0416 or send e-mail to tapes@yadyechiel.org . The Power of an Iota of Jealousy

In this week's parsha we learn of one of the most problematic stories in the Torah -- the sale of Yosef by his brothers. We are paying for the dissension that existed in the Jewish people, which led to brother selling brother into slavery, until this very day. If we wonder why there is such constant dissension and division amongst us, it is because of the seeds that were sown on that fateful day.

It must be stated at the outset that in no way shape or form can we liken our petty disputes to the division that separated the brothers. We sometimes fight over terribly trivial things. We are ordinary people. The brothers were righteous pillars of the world. They are the foundation of our nation. We must never be guilty of superimposing our pettiness on the founders of the Tribes. Our Sages take pains to explain the nature of the situation between Yosef and his brothers. The approach is that the brothers deemed Yosef to have the status of a 'Rodef' [a pursuer bent on murder] and as such, they sat as a formal court that deliberated and sentenced Yosef to death and subsequently sold him. This was done because their best understanding of the situation was that Yosef presented a clear and present danger to the family.

In spite of all this, the Sages are troubled by the fact that the brothers made such a tragic mistake. There are not so many people in Jewish history who were given the title "HaTzadik" [the righteous one]. How could the brothers view one of their own flesh and blood, who was in fact righteous, as a potential threat?

The Sages point to the verse "And the brothers saw that their father loved him more than all the brothers and they hated him" [Bereshis 37:4]. The situation resulted from at least an iota, a drop, of jealousy. The Talmud advises that a father should never show even the slightest amount of favoritism between children because the perceived favoritism that Yaakov showed to Yosef ultimately led to our exile in Egypt [Shabbos 10b].

The following are the words of Rav Elyahu Meir Bloch (1894-1955), the Telshe Rosh Yeshiva, zt"l: The Torah teaches us that the first seed of the mistake of the brothers flowed from a very natural human trait. In spite of the fact that these human beings reached great heights and purity of spirit, nevertheless their human traits were submerged deep inside their

consciousness to the extent that they did not realize that they were there. They thought they were making a perfectly impartial judgment. We see from how these powerful nature's rule is, even over the greatest of people.

We thus see that even an iota of jealousy, in even a great person, can impact his ability to judge even a capital case. The practical lesson for us is clear. We may believe that we are thinking something through and we may believe that we are acting purely with the best intentions and for the Sake of G-d [I'Shem Shamayim]. But we as human beings must always question our motives. We are subject to feelings of jealousy, of questing for honor, and of the whole range of human emotions and character traits. Therefore we must remain on guard.

Rabbi Zev Leff quotes the following Talmudic incident [Brochos 28b]: When Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai was deathly ill, his students came in to visit him. When he saw them he started to cry. They said to him "Candle of Israel, the Right Hand Pillar, the almighty hammer, why are you crying?" Rav Yochanan ben Zakai responded, "If they would be taking me before a mortal judge that is here today and gone tomorrow; who if he would be angry at me, it would only be for a small amount of time; if he tortures or kills me it is not permanent suffering; I would nevertheless cry (in trepidation). Certainly now that they are taking me before the King of Kings, the Holy One Blessed Be He who Lives forever, whose Anger is an eternal anger, and if he tortures me it will be eternal torture, and if he kills me it will be eternal death - should I not cry?"

But the question must be asked, was Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai -- who was one of the greatest Tanaim -- really worried that G-d would kill him with eternal death? Was he really worried that he may deserve the punishment of Kares -- being cut off from any reward in the Afterworld? The sins that result in such punishment are clearly not transgressions that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai ever came close to violating. So is the meaning of this Gemara?

Rav Zev Leff suggests that Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai was worried about a single incident in his life that really bothered him. He knew that he was a pious Jew. He knew that he put on Tephillin. He knew that he kept the Torah.

That did not bother him. He was worried about the following incident. The Gemara [Gittin 56b] states that before the Beis Hamikdash [Temple] was destroyed, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai was given the opportunity to ask the future Roman Caesar for a wish. Jerusalem was under siege and the Beis Hamikdash hung in the balance. Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai was told to make a wish and he would be granted whatever he wished. The Gemara relates that he asked for three things: He asked that the Yeshiva in Yavneh and its Sages be spared; he asked that the House of Rabban Gamliel be spared; and he asked for medical care for a sage named Rav Tzadok. He was granted all three wishes.

The Gemara there asks the obvious question -- why didn't he ask that the Beis Hamikdash be spared? This question was discussed in the Talmud many years later. Some say that he was afraid to ask for the Beis Hamikdash, because he knew that they would not grant such a request. The conclusion of the Gemara however is that he made a mistake. Why did he make a mistake? G-d wanted the Beis Hamikdash destroyed. Through Divine Providence, G-d removed Rav Yochanan ben Zakai's insight to ask for the Beis Hamikdash at that moment.

Now, as Rabbi Yochanan was about to die and he looked back over his lifetime, he recognized that the most crucial decision of his lifetime was his requests to the Roman general. "Maybe I should have asked for the Beis Hamikdash, but I did not. Maybe the reason why I did not ask for the Beis Hamikdash was for personal reasons.

There was an internal struggle within the Jewish people at that time. There were great disagreements and strife between the elders of the community and the group called the 'Biryonim' [young Turks]. The Biryonim wanted to fight against the Romans. The Biryonim thought that they could prevail. Rav Yochanan ben Zakai told them that they were crazy. They would never be able to prevail. Rav Yochanan argued that we should try to make peace. (In fact, the Talmud relates that they had enough provisions to hold out for 21 years but the Biryonim destroyed all the storage of grain and wood - to force the Jews to fight).

History proved Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai to be right. The Jews lost when they fought the Romans. The Beis Hamikdash was destroyed. But, now on his deathbed, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai was analyzing his motives in not asking for the Beis HaMikdash to be spared. "Maybe I did not ask for the Beis HaMikdash because I wanted history to prove me right in my argument against the Biryonim. Perhaps, subconsciously, it was my desire for the honor of being borne out by history that caused me to not ask

for the Beis Hamikdash. Maybe it was a personal motive." If my decision was colored by personal motives then I lost the Beis Hamikdash for the Jewish people! Then I will be deserving of Eternal punishment at the Hand of G-d. That is why I am crying and that is why I am afraid.

The point is that even if someone is on the level of Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakai, he still needs to ask himself some basic questions: Were my motives pure? Were my intentions proper? Did I make a mistake? Did my personal involvement ("negius") color my decision? It can happen to anyone.

This, says Reb Eliya Meir Bloch, was the downfall of the brothers. This was not gross and coarse sibling rivalry, but a miniscule amount of jealousy. Sometimes that is all that it takes to color a perception and to color a decision to the extent that they could feel that Yosef was out to get them and as such they could feel justified in condemning him to death.

Even the greatest of human beings - even the Tribes of G-d - are unfortunately prone to the pitfalls and foibles of all mankind. They are subject to be influenced by things like jealousy, lust, and honor that can drive a person from the world [Avos 4:21].

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The Weekly Internet P A R A S H A - P A G E
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Chanukah 5757 - "The light of Chanukah"
GREEKS & DARKNESS

The world was chaos and void, with darkness over the face of the deep; and the spirit of Hashem hovered over the water. (Bereishit 1:2)

"The world was chaos" -- this is an allusion to the Babylonian exile...
"And void" -- this refers to the Medean exile... "With darkness" -- this is an allusion to the exile imposed by the Greeks, who darkened the eyes of Israel with their decrees. They would tell the Jews, "Write on the horns of an ox that you have no more to do with the G-d of Israel!" (Bereishit Rabba 2:4)

Why is specifically the Greek exile represented by the word "darkness?" Didn't other nations also persecute the Jewish People through their anti-religious decrees? What, then, is unique about the Greek exile that it is likened to darkness?

Rav David Cohen of Cong. G'vul Yaavetz in Flatbush, N.Y., suggests a novel explanation for this Midrash based on the following selection from Massechet Sofrim:

Five elders translated the Torah into Greek for King Ptolemy (a successor to Alexander the Great). The day this was accomplished was as unfortunate for Israel as the day that the Golden Calf was worshipped, because it is impossible to present a truly adequate translation of the Torah in any foreign language.

On another occasion, Ptolemy gathered together seventy-two elders and placed them in seventy-two separate rooms, not informing any of them the purpose of their summons. He approached each of them and said, "Write down the Torah of your teacher Moses for me." Hashem arranged that the same thoughts occurred to all of them and they made the same thirteen modifications in their translations. [This translation is commonly known as Targum Shiv'im, or the Septuagint.] (Sofrim 1:7-8; Megillah 9a)

The Tur (Orach Chayim 580; see also Shulchan Aruch ad loc.) quoting the opinion of the Halachot Gedolot, tells us that one should observe a fast day on the eighth day of Tevet because that is the anniversary of the day that Ptolemy commissioned his translation of the Torah. On the day that the translation commenced, adds the Tur, "A three-day long period of darkness descended upon the world." This, Rav Cohen suggests, is the "darkness" of the Greek exile.

It remains to be explained *why* the translation of the Torah should cause a global darkness. What was the great tragedy of translating the Torah into another language, and why should it cause the world to become dark?

The tragedy, Rav Cohen explains, is implicit in the words of Massechet Sofrim -- "because the Torah could not be translated adequately." Although the written text of the Torah can be translated with reasonable accuracy into another language, all the nuances of meaning -- the double-entendres and the various implicit insinuations in the words of the Torah -- are lost in the process. Gematrias, acrostics and other word-based analyses are impossible to carry over from one language to another. The entire body of the Oral Torah which lies beneath the surface of the written text was thus severed -- and deleted -- from the Torah.

It is interesting to note that, as Rav Cohen points out, the Sadducees (a sect that believed in the literal interpretation of the written Torah and denied the existence of an oral tradition) were a powerful force in Israel only until the Hasmonean uprising which culminated in the Chanukah miracle (Megillat Ta'anit, Ch. 5). Once the Hasmoneans succeeded in uprooting Greek culture from the hearts of the Jewish people, the Sadducees also submitted to the Halachic renderings of the Torah-true elders of the generation. The Greek influence on Torah analysis that caused the Sadducees to give credibility to the written word alone was done away with along with the Greek culture.

The Oral Torah is compared in the Midrash to a light that illuminates the darkness:

The Oral Torah is difficult to learn and its mastery involves great hardship. It is therefore compared to darkness in the verse "the people who walked in darkness saw a great light," (Yeshayahu 9:1). The "great light" is a reference to the great light that is seen by the Talmudic sages [i.e. they understand matters with great clarity], for Hashem enlightens their eyes in matters of ritual law and laws of purity. In the future it is said of them, "those who love Him will shine as bright as the sun when it rises with its full intensity" (Shoftim 5:31)....

Reward for the study of the Oral Torah is to be received in the Next World, as it says, "The people who walk in darkness saw a great light." "Great light" is a reference to the primeval light which was hidden away by Hashem during Creation as a reward for those who toil over the Oral Torah day and night. (Midrash Tanchuma, Noach #3)

Those who "shed a great light" on the Oral Torah are allowed, in return, to benefit from the "great light" of Creation. It is now clear why translating the Torah into Greek caused a darkness to descend upon the world. The darkness was caused by the obstruction of the "great light" of the Oral Torah that resulted from the translation of the Torah into a foreign language. It is this "great light" that shines true once again in our Chanukah candles, in which we celebrate the Hasmonean victory over Greek culture and its destructive effects! (Rav David Cohen in "Bircat Yaavetz," p. 147)

III THE 13 BREACHES

This may be the symbolic significance of a historical fact that is recorded in the Mishnah:

The "13" breaches (made by the Greeks) in the enclosing wall ("Soreg") which surrounded the Temple Mount were repaired by the Hasmonean kings. These kings decreed that one must bow down when passing by each of these repaired breaches; a total of "13" bowings. (Middot 2:3)

The 13 exegetical principles enumerated in the introduction to Torat Cohanim form the foundation of the Oral Law. Through these principles the Oral Law may be derived from the written text of the Torah. (See also the introductory paragraph to Midrash HaZohar on Bereishit, in which "a rose with "13" petals" serves as a metaphor for the Oral Torah.)

The Elders made "13" modifications in the text of the Torah when they translated it into Greek. This number represents the fact that inherent in the translation is the loss of the Oral Torah, which is derived through the "13" exegetical principles. The "13" breaches made by the Greeks and repaired by the Hasmoneans represent the entire focus of the Hasmonean war against the Greeks. The Greeks sought to eliminate the 13 principles through their literal translation of the Torah into Greek, with its resultant loss of the Oral component of the Torah. The Hasmoneans succeeded in restoring these indispensable tools of Torah interpretation. In order to commemorate and give thanks for this victory of authentic Torah ideology over the shallow, incomplete Sadducee misrepresentation of Torah, "13" bowings were instituted at the sites of the repaired breaches.

It may be further noted that according to Rashi (Devarim 33:11), *13* Hasmoneans commanded the Jewish army that overthrew the Greeks. These 13 courageous men enabled the Jewish People to preserve the Oral Tradition and its 13 principles!

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TorahWeb

RABBI YAAKOV HABER

ZEALOTRY: THE DANGEROUS AND THE NECESSARY

Parshas Vayeishev almost always is read on Shabbos Chanuka. Many interconnections between this parsha and the holiday have been offered. Here, we suggest another.

"Vayom?ru ish el achiv hineih ba?al hachalomos halazeh ba. V?ata l?chu v?nahargeihu...." "And they said to one another, behold that master of dreams is coming. Now, come and let us kill him..." (37:19). According to Rashi (Mikeitz 42:24), quoting the Midrash, the speakers were Shimon and Levi. Previously, Shimon and Levi had used their quality of zealotry (kin?a) and rage to wipe out the city of Sh?chem during the rescue of their sister Dina from the hands of Sh?chem and Chamor. Now, they once again unsheathed this quality to plot the murder of their brother, Yoseif. Although the commentaries note that the plot to harm Yoseif was not based solely on jealousy over the favoritism shown to him by their father, but rather on the fact that the brothers viewed him as a threat to their spiritual survival (see Sforno and Malbim), nonetheless their actions were clearly objectionable and, according to various Midrashim, led to the bitterness of the Egyptian exile and even the cruel murders of the ?Asara Harugei Malchus, the Ten Righteous Martyrs, eulogized in kinnot on Tisha B?av and Yom Kippur.

Ya?akov Avinu curses this harsh anger and zealotry in his parting message to his children and decrees on Shimon and Levi that he will "scatter them in Israel" (VaYechi 49:5-7). Anger, zealotry, and willingness to kill are indeed dangerous traits that can cause irreversible harm to individuals and to nations. Ya?akov?s curse of this quality is clearly understandable. But yet, we find this same anger, zealotry, and willingness to kill praised by Moshe Rabbeinu in his final blessings to the Tribes of Israel. "Ha?omeir l?aviv ul?imo lo r?isiv v?es banav lo hikir" -- the tribe of Levi is thus praised for their zealotry in killing all the primary perpetrators of the Cheit HaEigel, the Golden Calf, and are rewarded: "yuru mishpatecha l?Ya?akov" -- "they will teach Your statutes to Ya?akov" thus becoming the primary Torah teachers in Israel (VeZos HaBracha 33:9-10). Shimon, on the other hand, is totally omitted from Moshe?s blessings. Indeed, Rashi (VaYechi 49:7) notes that even Ya?akov alludes to Shimon?s and Levi?s destiny to become Torah teachers throughout Israel. How can we explain Ya?akov?s cursing of their anger, indicating his extreme disappointment in them and, on the other hand, his blessing for them to become Torah-teachers throughout Israel?! How can the same zealotry be cursed by Ya?akov and blessed by Moshe? Why does Moshe bless Levi but omit a blessing for Shimon? Furthermore, Moshe himself used these same qualities in killing the mitzri harming the Israelite, standing up to the sinners in Israel at the Cheit HaEigel, and courageously quashing the rebellion of Korach and his followers.

Middot, character traits, in and of themselves are neither totally good nor totally evil. Even the "good" quality of mercy, when misapplied, leads to cruelty. "Kol ham?racheim ?al ha?achzarim sofo l?hisachzeir ?al harachmanim" -- "one who is merciful to the cruel will ultimately be cruel to the merciful." The goal of the ?adam hashaleim, the complete person, is to utilize all the middot in the proper setting and time. The danger of the "bad" middot is that even when one utilizes them for the correct reasons, once he internalizes them, he may easily misapply them in areas where they are reprehensible. The mishna in ?Avot (Chapter 5) highlights this point by, on the one hand, praising ?azus, boldness, or even audacity, by declaring: "hevei az kanameir", "be as bold as a leopard," but also stating that "?az panim l?geihinnom" -- "The brazen [are destined] for Purgatory." The commentaries note that although boldness can be utilized positively in the pursuit of knowledge and in ignoring the mockery of those who would deride Divine service, it can easily be misused to abuse and even destroy innocents. (Some note that it is for this reason that the mishna ends with a prayer for the rebuilding of the Beis HaMikdash, a reference to the peaceful Messianic era, when all will pursue the service of G-d, and ?azut will not need to be utilized at all, thus eliminating any danger of its misapplication.)

Ya?akov, extremely alarmed about the qualities of anger and zealotry in his two sons, curses, or attempts to minimize, their effect. However, he

does not wish these characteristics to be eliminated entirely. "I will scatter them in Israel." Let them not be concentrated, but, in small doses, they can be utilized properly, and the other tribes can learn from them how to utilize these traits positively. (Also see Parshat Vayishlach - The Principled Pursuit of Principle by Rabbi Michael Rosensweig)

The test for these two tribes is how they will use these qualities in the future. Levi utilizes them properly for the sake of G-d, first by heeding Moshe's call to take up the sword against the idol-worshippers and then by Pinchas' stopping the Divine anger at Bnei Yisrael over the grievous double sin of the worship of Ba'al P'or and concurrent immorality with the bnot mo'av umidyan by killing Zimri and Kazbi. For these actions, Sheivet Levi is awarded the right to be the attendants in the Mishkan and Pinchas is awarded the kehuna.

Shimon, on the other hand, uses zealotry once again for incorrect purposes. When approached by his tribe to do something about the plague befalling Israel, Zimri, the nasi of Shimon, grabs a Midianite woman and mocks Moshe Rabbeinu in public before sinning with her. This misguided zealotry leads to his death, and, according to Rashi (VeZot HaBracha 33:7), to Moshe's omitting the tribe of Shimon from the blessings and to their loss of an independent share in the Land of Israel.

In the events commemorated by Chanuka, once again the positive use of kinas Hashem, emerges. The rallying cry of the Chashmonaim, the descendants of Levi, was "Mi Lashem Eilail", the same slogan uttered by Moshe leading to the gathering of the tribe of Levi to eradicate the sinners of the Golden Calf. The Chashmonaim's refusal to submit to religious persecution and willingness to battle against the formidable Greek war machine against apparently insurmountable forces serve as a source of encouragement throughout the ages to stand up against the enemies of Israel. Once again, the kin'a of Levi serves a crucial role preserving the Torah of Israel for all subsequent generations.

In our era, we see the dangers and havoc wreaked by misguided zealotry. On the other hand, once again we are being charged to battle against our enemies, both physical and spiritual in Israel and in the Diaspora. As we celebrate Chanuka, may Hashem grant us the ability to utilize the full gamut of middos, including the midda of kin'a, only for the correct purposes.

From: RabbiWein@jewishDestiny.com Sent: Wednesday, November 27, 2002 Subject: Rabbi Wein's Weekly Columns

Parsha Archive November 29, 2002 Vayeshev
Print this article There is no more bitter quarrel than one within a family. The dynamics of family life, especially in a large family with strong feelings of competition between siblings, often times create dangerous situations among family members. The famous story of Yosef and his ten older brothers serve as a paradigm for the tensions, misunderstandings, paranoia and jealousy that can haunt even the best of families and the most devoted of parents and children. Great and holy people are blind to a brother's dreams and aspirations. They feel somehow threatened by his youthful exuberance and predictions of success and of having a dominant position in the family. They see him as an enemy, a threat to their very being and to the future of the Jewish people. Thus the tragic drama begins to unfold in the Torah reading of Vayeshev.

This story of Yosef and his brothers, particularly the roles of Yosef and Yehuda, vis a vis their own personal relationship does not end with the narrative of the Torah here in Bereshith. In later Jewish history, after the death of King Shlomo, the Jewish nation is split into two sections - the kingdom of Israel (Yosef) and the kingdom of Yehuda (the house of David.) Thus the competition between the two leading sons of Yakov's family, Yehuda and Yosef, survived centuries of attempted unity. And the eventual result of this split within the Jewish nation was disaster for both sections of that nation. Both sections of the nation were weakened, they had less sanguine influences on each other and they ultimately even went to war with each other, thus creating the woeful situation of Jews spilling the blood of other Jews.

It is a sad situation that is recorded for us in the Tanach. Yosef and Yehuda went their separate ways but the general Jewish nation suffered bitterly thereby. In the literature of the rabbis throughout the Middle Ages and even into our current era, the serious splits and disputes that seemingly have always plagued Jewish life were viewed as continuing echoes of the Yosef-Yehuda difficulty. The rabbis of the Talmud divided the messiah himself into two personages - Moshiach ben Yosef and Moshiach ben Dovid (a descendant of the tribe of Yehuda.) The former was to pave

the way for the latter, but both were part of the envisioned messianic process. Apparently Jewish redemption and fulfillment is dependent on both Yosef and Yehuda and is destined to realization only if both are full participants in the process.

Yosef remains a holy Jew, in spite of his being exposed to the decadence of the prevailing Egyptian culture. He is an integral part of the Egyptian court and world, but he really is only an outsider looking in and not really desirous of "belonging" to the culture that surrounds him. Yosef is the model for the Jew who is successful in the general world but doggedly determined to remain faithful to his own soul, tradition and destiny as a son of Yakov.

Yehuda is much more cautious and conservative. He has seen the outside world, the general society and is frightened to become part of it. Yehuda has lost sons, has suffered tragedy and disappointment, has made errors and risen from sin, and is willing to sacrifice all to remain Jewish and save other Jews. Yehuda does not wish to be Yosef. He sees Yosef's way as being too dangerous, too risky - certainly for the masses of Israel. Yosef, on the other hand, cannot see a future for Israel if it is completely isolated from the general society, of which it is a part, no matter what Israel's preference in the matter may be.

Yosef takes the risks and is successful in maintaining his Jewishness and in raising holy children and grandchildren, in the midst of the squalor of Egyptian culture. But Yehuda is also successful in his way and Yosef and Yehuda therefore march in lock step throughout Jewish history. They remain competitors and sometimes they have harsh things to say to and about each other and their different paths. But in the end, they are both the pillars of Jewish survival and society. They complement each other even if many times they do not utter compliments about each other. They are partners in the messianic and redemptive historical process of Jewish history. They are both still here with us today in our own personal and national struggle to build a Torah nation and a good world. We should appreciate their presence and influence upon us.

Shabat Shalom. Rabbi Berel Wein

<http://www.koltorah.org/ravi/channukahlights.htm>

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THE PROPER TIME TO KINDLE CHANUKAH LIGHTS BY RABBI HOWARD JACHTER

In this essay, we will focus on the dispute over the ideal time for kindling the Chanukah light. We shall focus on when one may delay lighting and how a family should conduct itself when a member will arrive later than the optimal time for lighting.

The Ideal Time for Lighting The Gemara (Shabbat 21b) writes that the proper time for lighting the Chanukah light is "from the setting of the sun." The Rishonim disagree about how to interpret this somewhat ambiguous phrase. The Rambam (Hilchot Chanukah 4:5) rules that it refers to the beginning of sunset (Shkiah). The Tur (Orach Chaim 672) and Shulchan Aruch (O.C. 672:1) rule that the Gemara refers to the end of the process of the sun setting (Tzeit Hakochovim). This dispute has not been resolved. The Aruch Hashulchan (O.C.672:4) writes that the generally accepted practice is to light at Tzeit Hakochovim, but he notes that some light at Shkiah.

The dispute over the precise time of Tzeit Hakochovim further complicates the question. This important dispute between Rabbeinu Tam, the Vilna Gaon, and the Yereim is summarized by the Biur Halacha (261:2 s.v. Mitchilat Hashkiah). No consensus regarding the exact time to light Chanukah candles has emerged because of these unresolved disputes.

There is a considerable range of opinions regarding the precise ideal time for lighting. When I served as an assistant to Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, he lit very long candles at Shkiah so that the candles should last at least a half an hour after Tzeit Hakochovim. I have heard that this was Rav Soloveitchik's consistent practice throughout his life. The objective of this approach is to satisfy both of the aforementioned opinions of the Rishonim. Rav Ovadia Yosef (Yalkut Yosef 5:208) rules that in Israel the proper time to light is fifteen minutes after sunset. Rav Moshe Feinstein (cited in Rabbi Shimon Eider's Halachot of Chanukah p.20), when living in New York lit thirteen to eighteen minutes after sunset. Rabbi Aaron Felder (Moadei Yeshurun p.7), though, cites Rav Moshe as ruling that the preferable time to light is ten minutes after sunset. Rav Aharon Kotler (cited in Rabbi Eider, ibid.) when living in the New York area lit twenty-five to thirty minutes after sunset. Rav Yaakov Kaminetzsky (cited in Emet

Leyaakov p.251) believes that Chanukah lights in the New York area ideally should be kindled approximately twenty minutes after sunset. One should consult with his Rav regarding which opinion to follow.

An interesting question arises regarding one who is traveling in a time zone farther west than his residence. Poskim (see Rav Efraim Greenblatt, Teshuvot Rivevot Efraim 2:184) debate whether the traveler fulfills the Mitzva of Chanukah lights with his spouse's lighting at home, if at the time of the spouse's lighting it is nighttime at the place of residence and daytime in the place where he is traveling. Rav Moshe Feinstein (cited by Rabbi Aharon Felder, Moadei Yeshurun p.4) rules that the spouse's lighting does not fulfill the traveler's Mitzva in such a circumstance.

The Latest Time to Light

The Gemara (ibid.) writes that the latest time to light is "when the people have left the market." The Rambam (ibid.) rules that this is approximately a half an hour after the ideal time to light. Tosafot (Shabbat 21b s.v. Dee Lo) write that nowadays, since we light inside the house, the lighting is focused on the members of the household. Thus, we may light even after people have left the market. The Rama (O.C.672:2) rules in accordance with Tosafot, but writes that we should nevertheless strive to light at the original ideal time. The Aruch Hashulchan (ibid.) explains that, in general, we strive to fulfill rabbinical Mitzvot in the way that most resembles the manner that the Mitzva was fulfilled when Chazal established it. Since at the time of Chazal, Nerot Chanukah had to be lit at Shkiah or Tzeit we still try to light at that time even though the reason for doing so no longer applies. With the introduction of electric lighting, people travel in the streets long after nightfall. This constitutes yet another reason why it is acceptable (Bedieved) to light later than the ideal time specified in the Gemara.

The Mishna Berura (672:11) cites the Magen Avraham who rules that one may light with a Beracha only if there are others who are awake and see the Chanukah lights. However, the Chamad Moshe (cited in the Shaar Hatziyun 672:17) rules that one may recite the Beracha until dawn even if he is the only one awake in the home. The Chafetz Chaim (author of both the Mishna Berura and the Shaar Hatziyun) rules that since the dispute has not been resolved, one should refrain from reciting a Beracha in such a situation. However, he writes that one should not rebuke one who follows the Chamad Moshe. Indeed, Rav Moshe Feinstein (Teshuvot Igrot Moshe O.C. 4:105:7) rules in accordance with the Chamad Moshe. This dispute hinges on whether one fulfills the Mitzva of Chanukah lighting when one "publicizes" the Mitzva only to himself.

Delaying the Lighting

Many people are unable to light with their families at the ideal time due to work and other obligations. Rav Yaakov Kaminetzsky (cited in Emet Leyaakov p. 251 and 254) believes that theoretically the Halacha requires the spouse who is home at the ideal time for lighting to light on behalf of the entire family and not wait for the latecomer. Nevertheless, Rav Yaakov rules that because of the great value of Shalom Bayit, it is proper for the family to postpone lighting until the latecomer arrives. Common practice appears to accord with this ruling. Rav Yaakov cites the Gemara (Shabbat 23b) as precedent for this ruling. The Gemara states that if a poor individual can afford to purchase either Chanukah candles or Shabbat candles but not both, he should purchase Shabbat candles. The Gemara explains that since Shabbat Candles promote Shalom Bayit they enjoy priority over Chanukah lights. Rav Yaakov reasons that since Shalom Bayit enjoys priority over Chanukah candles, one delay kindling Chanukah lights due to Shalom Bayit considerations.

Yeshiva Students

Every year Rav Hershel Schachter hangs a notice in the Bait Midrash of the Yeshiva University Kollel during Chanukah. The notice relates that when the YU Kollel was established in the early 1960's, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein (the original Rosh Kollel) asked Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik whether the Kollel students should interrupt their studies to return home to kindle Chanukah lights at the optimal time or remain in the Bait Midrash until the conclusion of their scheduled study period. The Rav responded that the students should continue their studies until the conclusion of the usual study time, even though the ideal time to light Chanukah candles will pass. The Rav cited as a precedent the Meiri to Shabbat 21b who noted the practice of Yeshiva students of his area not to interrupt their studies in order to kindle Chanukah lights at its ideal time.

(The story is cited in Rav Schachter's recently published Sefer, Peninei Harav).

Rav Moshe Feinstein (cited in Rabbi Aaron Felder, Ohalei Yeshurun p.8) agrees with this ruling. He reasons that communal Torah study enjoys priority over lighting Chanukah candles at its optimal time. However, when I studied at Yeshivat Har Etzion, the Yeshiva interrupted its studies in order to fulfill the Mitzva of Hadlakat Nerot Chanukah at its optimal time. In addition, Rav J. David Bleich left the Yeshiva University Yadin Yadin Kollel early on Chanukah afternoons, because he did not subscribe to the rulings of Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Feinstein.

Defense of the Ruling of Rav Soloveitchik and Rav Feinstein

The Rambam (Hilchot Ishut 15:2) appears to serve as a sound basis for the rulings of the Rav and Rav Moshe. The Rambam rules that one may postpone marriage in order to spend extra time studying Torah. The Shulchan Aruch (Even Haezer 1:3) codifies the Rambam's ruling as normative. The Rambam bases his ruling on the Talmudic principle of "one who is involved in one Mitzva is excused from performing another." The problem with the Rambam's ruling is that the Gemara (Moed Katan 9a) and the Rambam (Hilchot Talmud Torah 3:4) rule that Talmud Torah excuses one from performing only a Mitzva that others are able to accomplish in his place. The Mitzva to marry and have children is an obligation that devolves upon the individual and cannot be accomplished by others.

Many Acharonim have grappled with this problem and have offered a variety of answers. Rav Aharon Lichtenstein's article on this topic that appears in the Yeshiva University publication Kovod Harav summarizes the classic approaches to this problem and offers a novel solution. The Aruch Hashulchan (Even Haezer 1:13) and Rav Elchanan Wasserman (Kovetz Hearot, Yevamot addendum 1) answer that Talmud Torah does not excuse one from performing a Mitzva, but it permits one to delay performing the Mitzva. The Rambam uses the principle of "one who is involved in a Mitzva is excused from performing another" in the context of Talmud Torah to mean that he is excused from performing the Mitzva expediently.

According to this approach, we have a strong basis for the ruling of the Rav and Rav Moshe. Talmud Torah does not excuse a Yeshiva student entirely from lighting Chanukah lights. It does permit him, however, to delay fulfillment of the Mitzva. We should note that this ruling does not apply to women who study Torah, since they are obligated to light Nerot Chanukah but excused from studying Torah. Voluntary fulfillment of a Mitzva does not excuse one from optimal fulfillment of the Mitzvot he is obligated to observe.

Conclusion

One should try to light Nerot Chanukah at the optimal time. However, defining the precise time has been an elusive task. It appears that common practice is simply to light when the men return from Maariv. Shalom Bayit and male communal Torah study might permit one to light after the optimal time.

<http://www.tanach.org/breishit/vayesh.txt>

THE TANACH STUDY CENTER [<http://www.tanach.org>] In Memory of Rabbi Abraham Leibtag Shiurim in Chumash & Navi by RABBI MENACHEM LEIBTAG

PARSHAT VA'YESHEV - Who Sold Yosef?

After throwing your brother into a pit to die, would you be able to 'sit down to eat'? The brothers did, so does the Torah tell us (see 37:24-25)! But when they sat down to eat, the Torah DOES NOT tell us if they sat NEAR the pit, listening to Yosef's screaming and pleading; OR if they sat FAR AWAY from the pit - to enjoy some 'peace and quiet'? So what difference does it make? Believe it or not, this tiny detail affects our understanding of almost every aspect of the story that ensues. In this week's shiur, as we study the story of Yosef & his brothers, we will entertain each of these two possibilities - showing how this 'missing detail' leads several commentators to conclude that the brothers may never have sold Yosef after all!

INTRODUCTION Did we hear correctly? The brothers DID NOT sell Yosef! [Unless you've heard this shiur before,] this statement shocks most anyone who is familiar with the story of Yosef & his brothers. However, the closer we scrutinize the details of this narrative, and the more we take into account geographic considerations, the more convincing this possibility becomes. In the following shiur, we take for granted that the reader is already familiar with the story. We begin our study by paying careful

attention to the brothers' various plans to 'get rid' of Yosef, but as we continue we will focus primarily on Reuven's plan.

PLAN A - THE BROTHERS / FIRST DEGREE MURDER Recall that as soon as Yosef arrives at Dotan, the brothers conspire to kill him (see 37:18-20). However, their plan HOW to kill him is revised several times. Let's begin with PLAN A: "They (the brothers) saw him from afar, and before he came close... they conspired to kill him. And they said to one another, behold the 'dreamer' is coming. Now, let's KILL him and throw his body into one of the pits..." (see 37:18- 20).

Note that the brothers first plan to kill Yosef on the spot and 'bury him' in a pit, and thus 'cover-up' any future evidence against them. Although Reuven opposes Yosef's murder, he realizes that the brothers will not accept his opinion. Therefore, instead of arguing with his brothers, he devises a shrewd plan that will first postpone Yosef's execution, and later enable him to secretly bring Yosef back home. [See further *iyun* for an explanation of WHY specifically Reuven wants to save Yosef.]

PLAN B - REUVEN'S PLAN / SECOND DEGREE MURDER As you read Reuven's plan, be sure to differentiate between what Reuven SAYS (to his brothers) and what Reuven THINKS (to himself): "... And Reuven said... 'Do not shed blood, cast him into a pit [in order that he die] OUT IN THE 'MIDBAR' (wilderness), but do not touch him yourselves' [End of quote! Then, the narrative continues by informing us of Reuven's true intentions...]" "in order to save him [Yosef] from them and return him to his father." (37:22).

Reuven's 'official' plan is to let Yosef die in a less violent manner, i.e. to throw him alive into a deep pit to die instead of murdering him in cold blood. However, Reuven's secretly plans to later return to that pit and free him. Note how Reuven even suggests the specific 'pit' in which to throw Yosef - "ha-bor HA-ZEH asher ba-midbar"! Most probably so that he can later sneak away to that pit and save him. [Compare this to the brothers' original plan to throw him into "one of the pits" (37:20) - possibly a pit closer by.]

Unaware of Reuven's true intentions, the brothers agree. Yosef arrives, and - in accordance with PLAN B - the brothers immediately strip Yosef of his special cloak and throw him alive into the pit (see 37:23-24). Afterward, they sit down to eat (see 37:25). [A "seudat mitzva" most probably - 've-akmal!]

WHERE ARE THEY EATING? Until this point, the plot is clear. Now, two important details are missing which affect our understanding of the rest of the story. a) WHERE did they sit down to eat, i.e. close by or far away? b) WHERE is REUVEN, eating with them, or off on his own? To answer these two questions, let's employ some 'deductive reasoning'.

(a) Where are the brothers eating? Considering that they threw Yosef into a pit 'out in the MIDBAR', most probably they returned back to their campsite in the Dotan area to eat (see 37:16-17). [Besides, it would not be very appetizing to eat lunch while listening to your little brother screaming for his life from a pit nearby - see 42:21 for proof that he was indeed screaming. [Later in the shiur we will bring textual proof for this assumption as well.]

b) Where is Reuven? Considering that Reuven's entire plan is to later save Yosef from the pit, then it would only be logical that he either stay near the pit, or remain with his brothers (wherever they may be). Certainly it would not make sense for him to go anywhere else, surely not far away! However, from the continuation of the story we know for sure that Reuven did not stay near the pit, because he RETURNS to the pit only AFTER Yosef is sold! Therefore, if the brothers are indeed eating away from the pit, he must be eating lunch with them! After all, not joining them for lunch could raise their suspicion. Furthermore, the Torah never tells us that he left his brothers.

Hence, it would only be logical to conclude that Reuven remains with his brothers, as they all sit down to eat AWAY from the pit.

PLAN C - YEHUDA'S PLAN / A 'QUICK BUCK' Now that we have established that Reuven and the brothers are sitting down to eat at a distance far away from the pit, we can continue our study of the narrative: "And the brothers sat down to eat, and they lifted up their eyes and saw a caravan of Yishmaelim coming from the Gilad carrying [spices]... to Egypt. Then Yehuda said to his brothers, 'What do we gain by killing our brother ... let us SELL him [instead] to the Yishmaelim; after all, he is our brother, our own flesh, and his brothers agreed'" (37:25-27). [From Yehuda's suggestion, it becomes clear that the brothers truly planned to allow Yosef to die and were totally unaware of Reuven's intention to save him.]

PLAN C (to sell Yosef instead) puts Reuven in a predicament. On the one hand, he cannot disagree with the brothers; if he would, they may

begin to suspect his true plan. On the other hand, he cannot allow them to sell Yosef, for he feels responsible to save Yosef. Reuven has only one alternative - he must quickly excuse himself and run to the pit to free Yosef before his brothers sell him. What happens when Reuven returns to the pit? We'll soon see. But before we continue, we must provide a little background on Israel's geography, which is essential towards understanding the psukim that follow.

THE ANCIENT TRADE ROUTE Recall that Yosef met his brothers while they were grazing their sheep in the hilly area of Dotan (see 37:17), north of Shchem. Recall as well that during their meal, the brothers 'lifted up their eyes' and noticed a caravan of YISHMAELIM traveling down from the GILAD (today, the northern mountain range in Jordan), on its way to Egypt (see 37:25). Now, when we read this story in Chumash, most everyone assumes that this convoy will soon pass nearby the spot where the brothers are eating. However, when we consider the geography involved, it is more probable to arrive at a very different conclusion! This CARAVAN of Yishmaelim (camels et al.) most likely should be traveling along the ancient trade route (better known as the Via Maris), which crosses through Emek Yizrael (the Jezreel Valley) on its way toward the Mediterranean coast. Therefore, this convoy, now sighted by the brothers as it descends from the Gilad Mountains in Transjordan, must first pass through the Bet She'an valley, continuing on towards Afula and Meggido in Emek Yizrael, on its way towards the coast. Certainly, it would NOT pass the hilly area of Dotan, for it would make no sense for the caravan to climb the Gilboa mountain range to cross through the Dotan area to reach the coast. Let's explain why. Dotan, today the area of Jennin (about 20 kilometers north of Shchem) lies about 10 kilometers SOUTH of this main highway (the Via Maris) as it crosses Emek Yizrael. In altitude, Dotan sits about 200 meters above Emek Yizrael. Hence, from the hills of the Dotan area (where the brothers are eating lunch), one has a nice view of both the Gilad and parts of the Emek Yizrael. However, the trade route itself follows through Emek Yizrael that cuts between the mountains. This explains why the brothers (in Dotan) are able to see a Yishmaelite caravan (convoy) as it was descending from the Gilad towards Bet Shean on its way to Emek Yizrael. Even though it was in sight, it was still far enough away to allow the brothers at least several hours to meet it as it would pass 10 kilometers to the north. Therefore, in order to sell Yosef to that caravan, the brothers would have to first fetch Yosef from the pit, then take the short trip from Dotan to Emek Yizrael. They have ample time to first 'finish their meal', go fetch Yosef from the pit in the 'midbar' (on their way to the Emek), and then meet the convoy to sell Yosef.

SOMEBODY GOT THERE FIRST With this background, we now return to the story of 'mechirat Yosef' in Chumash. Let's take a careful look at the next pasuk, noting its grammar: "And a group of MIDYANITE TRADERS passed by, and THEY pulled, and they lifted Yosef out of the pit, and THEY sold Yosef to the Yishmaelim for twenty pieces of silver, and brought Yosef to Egypt." (37:28) [Carefully read this pasuk again, noting the difference between the Midyanim and Yishmaelim and the startling fact that the brothers are never mentioned!]

Now, simple 'pshat' is that the Midyanim and the Yishmaelim are two DIFFERENT groups of people! To support this, note how the Torah describes the Midyanim as local 'traders' ("socharim"), while the Yishmaelim are described as international 'movers' ("orchat Yishmaelim - a transport caravan). Hence, a simple reading of this pasuk implies that a group of Midyanite traders happened to pass by the pit (they most probably heard Yosef screaming), and pulled him out. As these Midyanim are 'traders', they were probably on their way to sell their wares (now including Yosef) to the Yishmaelite caravan. If this explanation is correct, then the MIDYANIM themselves pulled Yosef out of the pit and sold him. [After all, the brothers are never mentioned in this pasuk.] [This interpretation also explains why the Torah needs to tell us about both MIDYANIM and YISHMAELIM, for understanding that these are two DIFFERENT groups is a critical factor in the story.]

So where were the brothers during all of this? Most probably, still eating! Recall our explanation above: the brothers had thrown Yosef into a pit out in the 'midbar' and returned to their grazing area to eat. They are far enough away that they do not see or hear what transpired between Yosef and the Midyanim! And WHERE was Reuven? Again, as we explained above, he must have been eating WITH his brothers. However, as soon as he heard Yehuda's new plan (and the brothers' agreement) to sell Yosef, he had to act quickly. According to his own plan, Reuven would have to get back to the pit before his brothers to save Yosef - and that's exactly what he does! [But it's too late.] Note how this explanation fits perfectly

into the next pasuk: "And Reuven RETURNED ("va-yashov") to the pit, and behold, Yosef was no longer in the pit!; Then, he tore his clothes." (37:29)

Reuven is not the LAST brother to find out that Yosef was sold (as commonly assumed). Rather, he is the FIRST brother to recognize that Yosef is missing! [Note: The commentaries that explain differently, i.e. that Reuven was not eating with his brothers, are troubled by the word 'va-yashov', and need to explain where Reuven had gone. Rashi, for example, claims that it was Reuven's turn to learn with his father, see further iyun section.]

What can Reuven do? Shocked, he immediately returns to his brothers [probably by now eating dessert] with the terrible news: "And he RETURNED ('va-yashov') to his brothers and said, 'The boy is gone! And for myself, what am I going to do?'" (37:30).

Note the word 'va-yashov' [and Reuven RETURNED] in both 37:29 and 37:30. This verb proves that the brothers could not have been eating near the pit, for if so, Reuven would not need to 'RETURN' to them. However, based on our explanation above, 'va-yashov' in both psukim makes perfect sense. Since Reuven and his brothers are eating away from the pit, Reuven must first RETURN to the pit, then he must RETURN back to his brothers to tell them the news - hence TWICE the verb 'va-yashov'!

At this point in the story the brothers must be totally baffled, for they have no idea what happened to Yosef. Nonetheless, they don't want their father to think that he is missing, nor would they want their father to accuse them of killing him - so they plot once again. They will trick their father into thinking that Yosef had been killed by a wild animal. They dip Yosef's coat in blood and have it sent to their father (see 37:31-32). This plan works: "And he (Yaakov) recognized it and said, 'My son's "ktonet", "CHAYA RA'A ACHALATU; tarof, taraf Yosef" - he was surely devoured by a wild beast (37:33).

Ironically, the end result of this final plan echoes the brothers' original plan (see "ve-amarnu - chaya ra'a achalatu" 37:20 -compare 37:33). But even more ironic, Yaakov reaches the same conclusion that the brothers themselves may have reached, but for a very different reason!

In retrospect, one could even suggest that the brothers may have never been able to 'gather the courage' to either kill or sell Yosef. Despite their various plans and intense hatred of Yosef, just as they had quickly retracted from their first two plans to kill Yosef (see 37:22 & 26), they most probably would have retracted from their plan to sell him as well. Nevertheless: they talked; they planned; they plotted - and are therefore considered guilty - even though they never did actually kill Yosef or sell them.

WHAT DOES YOSEF THINK? So far, our explanation has followed Rashbam and Chizkuni. [I recommend that you read their commentaries and note how they differ slightly from our presentation above.] Even though this interpretation seems to explain the psukim quite well, there is a pasuk in Parshat Vayigash that seems to 'ruin' this entire approach. When Yosef finally reveals himself to his brothers, he states explicitly: "I am Yosef your brother, whom you SOLD to Egypt"(45:4)

Clearly, Yosef thinks that his brothers SOLD him! But if our above interpretation is correct, Yosef should have thought that the Midyanim had sold him, and not his brothers! In fact, this pasuk is most probably the primary basis for the more popular interpretation (advanced by Rashi and Radak - see Further Iyun section) that the brothers indeed did sell Yosef.

The Chizkuni, bothered by this pasuk, explains that Yosef means to say, "who CAUSED me to be sold to Egypt". However, that explanation is clearly 'reading between the lines', and does not appear to be 'pshat'..

Based on the above shiur, one could suggest that Yosef truly did think that his brothers had sold him, even though they themselves never knew what really had happened. To explain why, let's consider these events from Yosef's perspective. Yosef was not aware of any of the brothers' conversations. All that he knew was that, as soon as he arrived, his brothers took off his coat and threw him into the pit. A short time later, some Midyanim passed by, took him out of the pit, and sold him to the Yishmaelim who, later, sold him to the Egyptians. Yosef, trying to piece together what had happened, probably assumed that his brothers had set it all up beforehand. Since his brothers did not have the 'guts' to watch him scream as he was taken away, they preferred to let the Midyanim do the 'dirty work' instead. According to this 'shitta', Yosef was totally unaware that it was only 'by chance' that the Midyanim were passing by. In fact, he had no idea that his brothers originally planned to kill him. Therefore, he thought all along that his brothers had sold him, even though they had no idea what had happened. [In next week's shiur, we will see how this

understanding helps explain Yosef's behavior during his many years in Egypt.]

HASHEM'S PLAN Even though the brothers had three different plans for 'getting rid' of Yosef, God had a different plan. The Hand of Providence led the brothers to believe that THEIR 'dream' [to rid themselves of Yosef] had come true. In reality, it was their plotting that eventually led to the fulfillment of Yosef's dreams to come true. Finally, as will be seen in the Parshiot to follow, it is God's long-term plan for the people of Israel that is now beginning to unfold.
shabbat shalom
menachem

FOR FURTHER IYUN

A. RASHI'S SHITTA To explain Rashi's 'shitta' (opinion) that the brothers sold Yosef, we must return to the two questions raised earlier in the shiur: (a) where are the brothers eating and (b) where is Reuven - and change our basic assumptions. According to this opinion, the brothers sat down to eat nearby the pit, and for some reason (see below) Reuven left them. Then, there are two ways to explain what happened next. Either when the Midyanim came by, the brothers employed their services as 'middlemen' to sell Yosef to the Yishmaelim (see Rashbam's second explanation), OR possibly, the term Yishmaelim is synonymous with the term Midyanim (see Radak).

To explain why Reuven had left his brothers, Rashi offers two reasons- either he went 'home' to learn with his father, or he had taken a short walk to do some 'soul-searching' (see Rashi & Radak).

Re: Rashi's quote of the Midrash that it was Reuven's turn to go home to learn with his father, answer the following questions. 1. How far is it from Chevron to Dotan? (how many days' travel?)

2. Does it make any sense that Reuven would leave for such a long time while Yosef was in the pit? 3. Do you think that this Midrash is coming to explain pshat about what 'happened' or does it give us insight regarding how 'frum' the brothers were, and the fact that they were 'makpid' on 'kibud av'. If the latter is true, what point is this Midrash making regarding the nature of 'sin'at achim'.

4. Try now to explain the second possibility raised by Rashi.

B. For some reason, Reuven is interested in saving Yosef. Why does Reuven suddenly become so dedicated to his father? One could suggest that Yaakov was quite angry with Reuven since the incident with Bilha (see 35:22), after which he was most likely cursed by his father (see 49:4), and hence lost his 'bechora'. Reuven may have hoped that by saving Yosef from the brothers, he would 'prove himself' once again worthy to his father. This would explain his reaction when he tells his brothers that Yosef is missing - "va-ani ana ani ba". This was his big chance to redeem himself. Now, it only looks worse for him. After all, should Yaakov find out what happened, bottom line, it was Reuven's idea to throw him in the pit! For Reuven, this could have been 'strike three!' [Just a thought.]

C. For next week's shiur (from this week's Parsha) - preparation: 1. Examine Yosef's dreams. Compare them to Yitzchak's original bracha to Eisav/Yaakov, and the standard blessing of bechira. To which are they more similar?

2. What conclusion do you think the brothers arrived at?

3. How do you think Yaakov reacted?

4. Do the brothers have reason to believe that Yaakov is making a mistake by favoring Yosef? Do they have a precedent?

From: ohr [ohr@ohr.edu] Sent: Wednesday, November 27, 2002 To: weekly@ohr.edu Subject: Torah Weekly - Parshat Vayeshev
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The Light of Truth

"...then they brought Yosef to Egypt." (37:28)

Charisma in the eyes of secular society is a dangerous blessing for a Jewish leader.

Someone who becomes the darling of the chattering classes walks a tightrope. On the one hand, the chattering can turn to gnashing when the fangs of anti-Semitism emerge quite suddenly from behind the gin-and-tonics.

On the other hand, the court Jew can find himself so enamored with his own brilliance and societal acceptance that he unknowingly betrays his heritage and promotes a counterfeit Judaism estranged from the Torah's eternal truths. Currying favor with the media can be an overwhelming, if unconscious, temptation.

When a Jewish leader is overflowing with Torah like wine from a cup, however, no alien ideas will take hold in his worldview. There is simply no room for them to gain a foothold. The Torah is like a mikveh ritualarium that purifies and refines his thought process. When he is nothing but Torah he is immune to both the approbation and the opprobrium of secular society. His universe is the four cubits of halacha, all that is left of true spirituality in this world.

A Jewish religious leader with a largely secular background and lacking the Weltanschauung of deep Torah knowledge is a half-empty cup waiting to be filled with an alien brew, as current events have shown.

In this week's Torah portion, Yosef begins his rise to power in Egypt. Yosef represents the ideal relationship between the Jew and society. He has the ear of the nation. He is celebrated and showered with accolades wherever he goes, but he never forgets Whom he represents.

There can have been no more difficult place to bring up Jewish children than Egypt three thousand years ago. And yet when a father blesses his son on Friday night, the universal paradigm of blessing is that his sons should be like Ephraim and Menashe, the two Egyptian-born (but far from bred) sons of Yosef.

This year, as Shabbat comes in, Chanuka comes in as well. Both Shabbat and Chanuka are statements. Every time we keep Shabbat, we are making the statement that there is a Creator who created everything in existence from nothing. This statement disputes the Greek contention that the world was always here. If the world was always here there can be no absolute. Everything is relative. Ultimate good and bad have no meaning in a steady-state world, a world where there is no G-d. When you take G-d out of the world, things just are "better" or "worse" and dictated by pragmatism or sentiment. Without G-d, nothing is ultimately good or bad.

The symbol of Chanuka is the pure flask of oil hidden in the Holy of Holies. Chanuka is the festival of light, the unadulterated light that shines in our Holy Torah. Chanuka says that not only does absolute truth exist, but it exists in this world.

It's exclusive, but it's also available.

It's exclusive because it exists only in the Torah, not in the Koran nor the New Testament nor the Bagavad Gita nor the Tibetan Book of the Dead. It's only in the Torah.

Of all the places that a searching Jew looks for spirituality, the Torah is probably the last. Nowadays, all the holiest things are hidden. Nowadays, anything that smacks you in the eye is the opposite of the Truth.

If you look hard enough, however, if you seek it like pearls and precious stones. There is absolute truth in this world.

That truth was clear for all to see when it shone once at the dawn of Creation in the "hidden light" and was sequestered for the righteous in a future world. That same light shines on in the lights of Chanuka.

And, most of all, it shines on in the depths of our Holy Torah.

Written and compiled by RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR
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From: Rabbi Riskin's Shabbat Shalom List

[parsha@ohrtorahstone.org.il] Sent: Wednesday, November 27, 2002 To: Shabbat_Shalom@ohrtorahstone.org.il Subject: Shabbat Shalom: PARSHAT VAYESHEV - HANUKKAH BY RABBI SHLOMO RISKIN

Shabbat Shalom: Parshat Vayeshev - Hanukkah (Genesis 37:1- 40:23) By Shlomo Riskin

Efrat, Israel - Tell me your dreams, and I'll tell you who you are; tell me who stands at the center of your dreams, and I'll tell you who stands at the center of your life! The Bible - as well as the Talmudic Sages (B.T. Berakhot, Ninth Chapter), William Shakespeare, (I?havdil) and Sigmund Freud - recognize the fact that one's dreams are the clue to understanding one's personality. And so it is with Father Jacob, and so it is with his son Joseph; indeed, if we desire an insight into the tragically bitter sibling conflict between Joseph and his brothers, we'd best search for the reason by analyzing Joseph's dreams, the focus of their enmity.

Joseph dreams two dreams: in one he sees his brothers' sheaves of grain bowing down to his sheaves of grain, and in the second he dreams of the sun, moon and eleven stars bowing down to him. There are two distinct elements in each of these two dreams: the first is earth, agriculture oriented, and the second is heaven, cosmic oriented. These are precisely the two elements which previously informed father Jacob's dream when he

left his ancestral home: a ladder standing on the earth whose top reached to the heavens. Superficially the dreams of father and son appear similar - but the differences speak volumes providing the key to the brother's hatred.

Father Jacob dreamed one dream: a ladder uniting heaven and earth, with ascending descending angels creating the bridge between the spiritual and material realms. The Almighty stands upon the ladder, promising to give Israel to Jacob and his descendants - as well as to return the patriarch to his homeland. The obvious message of the dream is that the Land of Israel is the connective point between heaven and earth, and that G-d is the central being? who guarantees the land of Israel to the children of Israel. (Genesis 28:12-16).

This dream or vision of Jacob is the fundamental mission of the Israelites, his children. The Rabbinic Sages cite a fascinating difference of opinion in which the Academy of Shammai argues that the heavens were created first (Genesis 1:1), the Academy of Hillel argues that the earth was created first (Genesis 1:2), but Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai declares, "Let them both stand together!?" The task of Torah, by sanctifying the physical, is to unite heaven and earth, to bring the spiritual dimension of the Divine into the kitchen by means of the laws of Kashrut, into the bedroom by means of the laws of family ritual purity and into the market place by means of the laws of business relationships (Hoshen Mishpat).

And the land of Israel is the most obvious unifier of the heavenly and earthly domains. After all, the laws of tithing of agricultural produce (terumot and maasrot), the Sabbatical year when the land must lie fallow and whatever grows on it must be permitted to anyone who takes it, the Jubilee year when the land returns to their original owners literally sanctify the very land of Israel and express the spiritual Divinity within the soil of the material earth. Even more to the point, the Almighty will actually dwell on earth when the Holy Temple of Jerusalem fulfills its function of serving as a beacon to all the nations of the world and teaching them at least the seven Torah laws of morality; at that time, when "from Zion shall come forth Torah and the word of G-d from Jerusalem, nation shall not lift up sword against nation and humanity will not learn war anymore... The Knowledge of G-d will fill the earth as the waters cover the seas (Isaiah 2:3,4; Isaiah 11:9). This will truly be a fulfillment of the Biblical challenge, "Let them build for Me a Temple so that I may dwell in their midst?" (Exodus 25:8).

Joseph, on the other hand, has an entirely different dream, despite the apparent similarity of the earth and the heavens appearing in his vision as well. Joseph dreams not one but rather two distinct dreams: the first is clearly agriculturally oriented, dealing as it does with sheaves of grain; when we remember that, while Israel may have been a good source of grazing land for shepherds, it was the more advanced Gift-of-the-Nile Egypt which served as the center of farming activities and crop production, we realize that Joseph is apparently dreaming of leaving his ancestral Israel for the greener and more sophisticated pastures of Egypt! Joseph's second dream takes him even farther away than Egypt, catapulting him onto the arena of the entire cosmos. And in both of Joseph's dreams, it is not G-d who stands center-stage but rather Joseph; it is Joseph, not G-d, who is venerated and worshipped by both earthly produce and heavenly luminaries! Is it any wonder that his brothers hate him even more because of his dreams? (Genesis 37:9) and his father "lashes out at him?" (Genesis 37:10)?!

Fascinatingly enough, the clash between Hebraism and Hellenism - which plays out in the Festival of Hanukkah which we begin to celebrate on the Sabbath of Vayeshev - parallels this very contrast between the visions of Jacob and young Joseph. Whereas Hebraism demands that G-d the creator formed the human being in his image and that we "must walk in G-d's ways" of compassion, loving kindness and truth- that G-d must stand at the center of our universe - Hellenism with its pantheon on Mount Olympus formed the gods in the image of human beings and declared "man as the measure of all things" (Heraditus). The sculptor Praxitales saw the human image as ultimate perfection as it was, and the chorus of Sophocles' play Antigone sings out that "although many are the wonders of the universe, (deina, the Greek for our Hebrew nora), nothing is as wondrous as the human being!?" G-d is the center of the Hebraic universe, while man is the center of the Greek cosmos.

And happily, an older and wiser Joseph corrects his earlier misconceptions. When standing before Pharaoh, Joseph insists that it is G-d who is responsible for all of his dream interpretations, "It has nothing to do with me: G-d will answer in accordance with Pharaoh's welfare" (Genesis 41:16). And at the end of his life, realizing that the land of Israel is the eternal home of his people, Joseph's final request of his family is that

?when G-d will surely remember you, and brings you from this land (of Egypt) to the land He has sworn to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob..., you shall bring back my bones from this place.? (Genesis 50: 24, 25).

Shabbat Shalom. You can find Rabbi Riskin's parshiot on the web at:
<http://www.ohrtorahstone.org.il/parsha/index.htm>

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