

TorahFax: Mikeitz
Rabbi Zalmen Marazov

Tuesday, Kislev 29, 5784 / December 12, 2023

HAPPY CHANUKAH. Today (Tuesday) is the fifth day of Chanukah. Today we are over the half point mark into Chanukah, when more than half of the Menorah is lit.

This Shabbat we will read from the Torah Parshat Mikeitz. In the Parsha, Pharaoh dreams that he stood next to the Nile River and he observed seven fat, healthy cows emerge from the river to feed at the river bank. Seven lean cows followed close behind, only to swallow the seven fat cows. Pharaoh awoke and realized that it was merely a dream. When he fell asleep again, he dreamed that seven ears of good corn came up on one stalk and were swallowed by seven thin and scrawny ones. Pharaoh awoke and realized that this too was a dream.

When no Egyptian advisers or magicians could explain the dreams to Pharaoh, his chief butler, whose dreams were correctly interpreted by Joseph (Yosef), two years before while in prison, recommended that he call Joseph.

At Pharaoh's command, Joseph was taken out of jail to interpret the dreams. Joseph prophesied that seven good years would come upon Egypt when food will be plentiful. However, seven years of famine will follow. The famine will be so harsh that the good years will totally be forgotten due to the severity of the famine.

After interpreting the dreams Joseph suggested that Pharaoh implement a detailed taxation system during the seven good years to store food for the seven famine years.

Pharaoh told Joseph, "Being that G-d has revealed this to you, there is no one as wise as you are." Pharaoh appoints Joseph ruler of Egypt. He makes a decree that no one shall make any decisions without Joseph's approval first.

Joseph puts his plan into motion right away. During the seven plentiful years the Egyptians store enormous amounts of food. Indeed, when the famine came, Egypt was ready. The country not only could supply the needs of its citizens, but also supplied the needs of the surrounding countries. Hearing that Egypt has food, Joseph's brothers travel to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognizes his brothers, but they do not recognize him, as Joseph is now 39 years old and has been away for 22 years. Joseph did not reveal his identity to them. Only in the next week's Parsha did he reveal himself to them.

Lesson of this story: Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery to prevent Joseph's dreams in which they would be bowing to him, from coming true. In the end it was G-d's will which prevailed, and his brothers came to Egypt and did bow to him. Thus we see that G-d's plan prevails in the end.

Point of interest: The numerical value of the four Hebrew letters on the dreidel (Gimel, Shin, Daled, Nun) equal 358; The numerical value of the four Hebrew letters which spell, Moshiach, also equal 358. May we merit the coming of Moshiach this Chanukah. Amen.

Wednesday, Tevet 1, 5784 / December 13, 2023

Today is the sixth day of Chanukah. Today is also Rosh Chodesh – the first day of the month Tevet.

There is always a Rosh Chodesh during the Chanukah holiday. In fact, one of the many mitzvot Jews were prohibited from keeping at that time was the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh. When G-d performed the miracle of Chanukah, the prohibition of Rosh Chodesh was also removed. By Divine Providence, one of the eight days of Chanukah is Rosh Chodesh, thus, commemorating this mitzvah too.

Two Torahs will be removed from the ark for this morning's service. In the first Torah we read the Rosh Chodesh reading. In the second Torah the Chanukah reading is read.

This week's Parsha is Parshat Mikeitz. In the Parsha, Pharaoh had a dream that while he stood next to the Nile River, he observed seven fat, healthy-looking cows emerge from the river to feed at the riverbank. Seven lean cows followed, only to swallow the seven fat cows. He also dreamt that seven ears of good corn came up on one stalk and were swallowed by seven thin and scrawny ones. Pharaoh awoke and realized that it was all a dream.

Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams. Seven good years would come upon Egypt when food will be plentiful. However, seven years of famine will follow. Joseph suggests that Pharaoh implement a detailed taxation system during the seven good years to store food for the famine. Pharaoh appoints Joseph ruler of Egypt.

Indeed, when the famine came, Egypt was ready. The country not only could supply the needs of its citizens, but it could also supply the needs of the surrounding countries. Hearing that Egypt has food, Joseph's brothers travel to Egypt to buy food. Joseph recognizes his siblings, but they do not recognize him as Joseph is now 39 years old and has been away for 22 years. Joseph did not reveal his identity to them. Only in next week's Parsha, Vayigash, we read how Joseph revealed himself to them.

The Parsha teaches us that although the brothers sold Joseph into slavery to prevent his dreams from coming true, in the end it was G-d's will which prevailed, and his dreams did come true.

The brothers, Rabbi Elimelech and Rabbi Zusia were two great Chassidic Rabbis. One cold night, they stopped at an inn, during one of their travels, and rested near the fireplace. That night, a party of local peasants took place at the inn. Every once in a while, during the party, the

drunken peasants made a circle and danced. One of them kicked Rabbi Zusia every time he passed him by.

After a while, Rabbi Elimelech couldn't bear his brother's pain. "Zusia, it is not fair that you should get all the beatings. Let's exchange places," he suggested. They changed places. However, the next time around, the drunken peasant said, "It's not fair that I should continuously hit the same one. I should kick the other one, too!" Once again, Rabbi Zusia got the blows! "You see," Rabbi Zusia said to his brother, "One cannot outsmart G-d! What is Bashert (destined) for Zusia will come to Zusia!"

Thursday, Tevet 2, 5784 / December 14, 2023

Happy 7th day of Chanukah.

Q. The reason we celebrate Chanukah eight days is to commemorate the miracle of the oil in the Holy Temple, when a jar of oil which had enough oil for only one day lasted for eight days. The obvious question is, if the jar contained enough oil to burn one day, then the miracle only occurred for seven days! Why do we celebrate the miracle of Chanukah for eight days, when the miracle was only seven days?

A. There are many answers to this question. One is that the first day of Chanukah we celebrate finding the one jar of oil, which was the only one not defiled. On the other seven days, we commemorate the miracle of the burning of the oil.

The following parable explains the importance of the miracle of finding the oil, for without it the other miracle couldn't take place.

A wealthy merchant traveled to the fair in the big city carrying eight sacks of money. As he passed through a forest, he was held up by robbers. He prayed, "Oh G-d please perform a miracle and help me get back the money which was stolen and I promise to give 10% of it to charity."

The robbers took seven sacks, but somehow overlooked one sack. When the merchant came to the nearest city, he used the money from that one sack, to hire people to chase after the robbers. They captured the robbers and returned all seven sacks of money.

When the merchant came home, he told the charity collectors his story and gave them 10% of the 7 sacks that were retrieved.

The charity collectors weren't satisfied. "You have to give charity from all eight sacks," they said to him.

"But one sack was never stolen from me!" protested the merchant. "Why should I give charity from this one too?"

"The fact that the robbers overlooked one sack," they answered, "is the greatest miracle. For this money enabled you to retrieve the other seven sacks. If you wouldn't have this sack of money with which you hired the people to chase after the robbers, you couldn't have retrieved the others! Therefore, you have to thank G-d even more for the sack that wasn't taken in the first place!"

The same is true with Chanukah. Finding the jar of oil is as important a miracle as the burning of the oil because without it we couldn't have the miracle of Chanukah. Thus, we celebrate the first day of Chanukah, the great miracle of finding one jar which was not defiled in the first place.

Another answer to the above question is that after the first day, they found that the oil in the Menorah was barely consumed. It burnt the entire night without consuming the full amount of oil. This miracle happened each night of Chanukah. Thus, there was a true miracle every night of the eight nights of Chanukah.

Friday, Tevet 3, 5784 / December 15, 2023

Happy 8th day of Chanukah. The Torah portions which we read each year, before, during and after Chanukah are Parshat Vayeishev, Parshat Mikeitz and Parshat Vayigash. This Shabbat we read Parshat Mikeitz. They all tell the story of Joseph.

In Parshat Vayeishev, the Torah tells us how Joseph invoked the jealousy of his brothers by publicly announcing his dreams, and by the special treatment with which their father, Yaakov, treated him. As a result, the brothers were jealous of Joseph and sold him into slavery. Joseph ends up in Egypt, first as a slave and then in prison, where he endured many hardships.

In this week's Parsha, Mikeitz, Joseph correctly and wisely interpreted Pharaoh's dreams and was made viceroy of Egypt. The Torah tells how his brothers came to Egypt to buy food during the great famine. He recognized them but they didn't recognize him. He gives them food but tells them that next time they must bring their younger brother with them.

In this next week's Parsha, Vayigash, after being separated from his family for twenty-two years, Joseph finally reveals his identity to his brothers and exclaims, "I am Joseph!" The long-lost brother and son is finally found! He is the ruler of the Land of Egypt.

The story of Joseph being sold into slavery by his brothers is a very sad tale and caused Yaakov to mourn for his beloved son for 22 years. Yet, in the end it turned out to be a life saver for Yaakov's family and for all the people of that region during the years of famine.

This story is everyone's story. Throughout life, we experience events which we feel, "should have been different or could have been different." The story of Joseph teaches us, as Joseph told his brothers, "It was not you who sent me here, but G-d!"

We must believe and understand that our vision of things is very limited at best. Only G-d knows what is truly good for us and acts in our interests.

In Psalms, King David states, "From G-d are man's footsteps established." Although it may seem that we decide where we go, King David tells us that G-d is really the One who guides our footsteps.

The story is told of a governor who met a rabbi walking in the street, "Where are you going?" he asked the rabbi. "I don't know," the rabbi replied. The governor became angry at the rabbi's answer and had him arrested and thrown into jail. A day later, the governor had the rabbi brought before him; "How come, when I asked you yesterday where you were going, you didn't tell me?"

"Had you asked me where I hoped to go, I would have told you," said the rabbi. "But you asked me for a definite answer and only G-d knows that! You see for yourself that I ended up in jail --and that is not at all where I had intended to go!"