

# שבת בשבתו



Parshat Miketz

No 1654: 2 Tevet 5777 (December 31, 2016)

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RZA Press Release - sent December 25th

RZA condemns Obama's failure to block Security Council resolution critical of Israel

The Religious Zionists of America (RZA) strongly condemns the failure of the Obama administration to veto UN Security Council Resolution 2334 that calls the establishment of Jewish communities in Judea, the Shomron and Jerusalem "a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-State solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace." This resolution recalls the shameful days when the UN held that "Zionism equals racism."

Martin Oliner, member of the RZA presidium, stated that: "By breaking with decades of precedent and policy President Obama has jeopardized the security of our closest ally. The betrayal of the Jewish people is made more galling by the patronizing comments that accompanied the abstention which characterized the resolution as beneficial to the peace Process."

Jewish communities have never been the obstacle to peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Instead it has been the failure of the Palestinians to accept the existence of Israel in any borders and to negotiate those borders without preconditions.

Israel Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan put it best: "There is so much darkness and so much hypocrisy in the UN's vote on Israel. The Middle East is burning and who do they choose to attack? Israel. It's hypocrisy and shamelessness."

Sadly, with this one action, President Obama has reneged on his promise to protect "Israel's back" and demonstrated the abandonment of America's long-standing value of ensuring justice, righteousness and integrity throughout the world.

## The Power of Taking Sides

Rabbi Steven Miodownik

*Rabbi of Congregation Ahavas Achaim, Highland Park, NJ*

In light of the United States' abstention from the U.N. resolution condemning Israel's "settlement" activity, and failure to exercise a Security Council veto, the events surrounding the sale and fate of Yosef resonate deeply this week.

Although the older sons of Yaakov are held accountable - both by Yosef and by history - for selling their younger brother to a caravan of merchants bound for Egypt, the pasuk in last week's parsha remains remarkably ambiguous. Yes, it was Yehuda who suggested that Yosef be sold, but who actually did the deed?

וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אַנְשֵׁי מִדְיָנִים סוֹחְרִים וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף מִן הַבּוֹר וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף לַיִּשְׁמָעֵאלִים בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף וַיְבִיאוּ אֶת יוֹסֵף מִצְרָיִמָה:

*Then Midianite men, merchants, passed by, and **they** pulled and lifted Joseph from the pit, and **they** sold Yosef to the Ishmaelites for twenty silver [pieces], and they brought Yosef to Egypt.*

The classic commentaries on the Chumash struggle to identify the unnamed perpetrators. They paint a chaotic portrait of multiple transactions as Yosef was traded again and again on the way down. But was it the brothers who initially extracted Yosef from the pit and effected the sale? Who is the "they" in the pasuk?

The Rashbam asserts that the brothers in fact sat on the side (וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לְאָכַל לֶחֶם) and watched as the Midianites pulled up, found Yosef in the pit, and quickly sold him to other merchants. The elder brothers abstained from acting while their younger brother was manhandled and degraded. And that is tantamount to selling him directly. Failure to protest, and protect Yosef when he needed them most, is identical to selling him themselves. The sons of Yaakov, by refraining from taking sides, are judged guilty.

Chazal (Sotah 11a) similarly criticize Iyov for abstaining when Paroh proposed drowning the Jewish babies in Egypt:

**שְׁלֹשָׁה הָיוּ בְּאוֹתָהּ עֵצָה בְּלַעַם וְאִיּוֹב וַיִּתְּרוּ בְּלַעַם שִׁיעוץ נִהְרַג אִיּוֹב שֶׁשֶׁתַּק נִידוֹן בִּיסוּרֵין יִתְרוֹ שֶׁבְּרַחֲזָנוּ מִבְּנֵי בְּנֵי שִׁישְׁבוּ בְּלִשְׁכַּת הַגִּזִּית**

Three people were in the counsel to drown the savior: Bilam, Iyov and Yitro;

Bilam gave the counsel. He was killed;

Iyov was silent. He was punished with afflictions;

Yitro fled. He merited that his descendants sit in the great Sanhedrin

The antidote to abstention and passivity in the face of evil is found in Miketz. It is Yehuda's pronouncement of אָנֹכִי אֶעֱרֹבְנוּ, I will take responsibility for the protection of my brother (this time, Binyamin) that ultimately redeems Yehuda and demonstrates how he has learned from his mistakes. Only when Yaakov senses the brothers' willingness to stick their necks out for



their brother is he convinced that his beloved Binyamin should be brought down to Egypt in response to the viceroy's bizarre request. A careful reading of Miketz reveals the journey in the brothers' minds from self-righteousness, to gnawing doubts, and finally to the shame and regret that are the hallmark of teshuvah.

When the viceroy of Egypt demanded Binyamin's imprisonment upon the discovery of the goblet in his sack, the unrepentant would have remained passive and allowed their brother to be snatched by another. But the sons of Yaakov, led by Yehuda, learned that their alliances with each other come with strings attached: the expectation that they will be there to stop others from causing harm. This is true on both personal and national levels. Allies have an obligation to take sides and spring into action on behalf of each other.

Despite the silence which is acquiescence, it is our fervent belief that:

הַגִּבּוֹר לֹא יִנּוּם וְלֹא יִישָׁן שׁוֹמֵר יִשְׂרָאֵל

Behold the Guardian of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

## Introducing the New RZA-Aryeh Fellowship!

**The RZA-Aryeh Fellowship is a new initiative of the RZA-Mizrachi to strengthen the mission of Religious Zionism. Fifty college and graduate school students from around the country have been invited to spend their winter-break in Israel where they will be studying Torah and attending intensive seminars devoted to Religious Zionism education. Upon their return the Aryeh Fellows will focus on their year-long Manhigut (leadership) projects designed to bring the message of Religious Zionism back to communities across America. We are excited to profile a different “Aryeh Fellow” each week.**

### Meet Yonina Silverman



Hi, my name is Yonina Silverman and I'm from New Milford, New Jersey. I spent the last 2 years studying at Migdal Oz, a women's Beit Midrash affiliated with Gush - Yeshivat Har Etzion. I was one of a handful of Americans within the Israeli midrasha. Being there gave me a better understanding of the land and those living in it. This place became my home and I hope to move back there one day.

Right after my second year in Migdal Oz, I worked at Camp Stone as a counselor for girls entering 9th grade. Along with my co-counselors, we taught the campers about Eretz Yisrael, its history and its beauty. We also helped instill in them leadership skills which we inspired them through learning about past leaders of Israel.

I am now currently at Hunter College where I am studying psychology. In my free time I like to sing, play hockey, and hang out with my family and friends. My favorite foods are milkshakes and french fries (can't get any better than that!). I am very much looking forward to being a part of the RZA fellowship program and share my love of Israel with others.

# Manhigut Project Update

Our RZA-Aryeh Fellows have been working hard on planning and implementing their Manhigut project. Click the video below and watch to hear an update about one group's project!



## RZA-Mizrachi Yom Iyun in Jerusalem

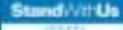
Please join us for a Yom Iyun at the World Mizrahi headquarters in Jerusalem on January 12th, 2017. Open to the general public, this Yom Iyun will explore all topics of Religious Zionism and feature exciting speakers. See program schedule below.



# Recharge

## The Mizrahi World Movement/RZA Winter Break Yom Iyun on Leadership

14 Tevet 5777 / 12 January 2017  
54 King George Street Jerusalem

- 09:00 Bagel breakfast
- 09:30 Rav Doron Perez - CEO Mizrahi World Movement  
> **A Global Vision for Religious Zionism**
- 10:15 Brigadier General (res.) Effie Eitam  
> **Transformational Life Moments**
- 11:30 Rabanit Shani Taragin > **Yosef and Yehuda - the First Religious-Zionist Leaders**
- 12:30 Lunch | Speaker: Rav Yonatan Shulman - OU-JLIC  
Mincha | Sefarim sale
- 13:45 **"Stayin' Alive" Comic Satire Show** > Followed  
by a discussion with the audience led by  
**StandWithUs** Hilarious production by Mizrahi  
World Movement, with top Israeli comedians  
Noam Jacobson & Gady Weisbart, which exposes  
BDS's double standard, the skewed world media's  
coverage of Israel and the hypocrisy of the UN's  
anti-Israel resolutions  

- 15:45 Marc Rosenberg - Nefesh B'Nefesh >  
**"My Heart is in the East but my Body is in the  
West" - How to Keep the Israel Flame Alive  
when in Chutz La'Aretz**  

- 17:15 Special **Bar Mitzvah** dinner celebration for the  
son of IDF officer Eliraz Peretz Z"l  
**Inspirational address** by one of Israel's heroic  
women, Mrs. Miriam Peretz (Eliraz Z"l's mother,  
and grandmother of Bar-Mitzvah boy) > **Musical  
performance** by world-famous musician Yonatan  
Razel
- 19:00 **1967 - Religious Destiny vs. Political Reality.  
What will the next Fifty Years Hold?**  
> A Panel Discussion  
Moderator: Rav Jeremy Gimpel - Founder, Land of  
Israel Network; Co-host, Israel Inspired radio & TV  
  
Rav Ari Abramowitz - Founder, Land of Israel  
Network; Co-host, Israel Inspired radio & TV  
  
Rav Yishai Fleisher - Spokesman, Hebron  
community; journalist & broadcaster, Land of Israel  
Network
- 20:15 Maariv, gifts for participants and concluding words

## Stayin' Alive Comedy Show Coming to Chicago

If you would like to bring this show to your community, please contact our office at  
[office@rza.org](mailto:office@rza.org).

# MIZRACHI WORLD MOVEMENT PRESENTS



## AN ISRAELI COMEDY SHOW

"Stayin' Alive," an Israeli multi-faceted comedy show in English—hilarious, wacky, blunt and self-confident with a healthy dose of chutzpa—celebrates Israel: a small country, surrounded by enemies, grappling with constant terror, UN and world media bias, and BDS half-truths and distortions yet with the temerity to go on living a normal life, insisting on forever Stayin' Alive...

### SATURDAY NIGHT BET CAFE

**JANUARY 21, 2017**  
**MAYNE STAGE**  
**1328 W. MORSE, CHICAGO**  
**DOORS OPEN 8PM**

Complimentary Valet Parking  
Light Supper Served  
Tickets \$36  
Limited seating

For sponsorships and tickets  
call 847-674-9733 x2  
or visit [betcafe.rzc.us](http://betcafe.rzc.us)



## Rabbi Gideon Shloush Featured on Two Radio Programs

On Sunday December 18th Rabbi Gideon Shloush, National Director of the Religious Zionists of America - Mizrachi, was interviewed on W-ABC Radio 770. The interview ([found here](#)) is 20 minutes long and the topic of discussion is "Chanukah." The radio program, entitled "Religion on the Line," takes



place every Sunday morning from 7:30AM-9:00 AM. Midway through the program Rabbi Shloush makes a plug for the RZA-Mizrachi and encourages listeners to appreciate the significance of the State of Israel. The weekly show is co-hosted by Deacon McCormack and Rabbi Joseph Potasnik.

Additionally, this morning, December 29th, Rabbi Shloush was featured on JM in the AM with Nachum Segal. The interview ([found here](#)) focuses on World Mizrachi's Mega Mission for Yom Yerushalayim. This radio program takes place Monday through Friday, 6:00 AM-8:30 AM.

## Join us for Yom Yerushalyaim!

Please ask your Shul Rabbi and local school to include this in their weekly emails. Make sure to join us for this once in a lifetime opportunity!



**JOIN THOUSANDS FOR THE MEGA-MISSION OF A LIFETIME**



**May 22-25  
Iyar 26-29**  
Celebrating 50 YEARS of a reunited Jerusalem



**For more details and to book:**

[www.mizrachi.org/YY50](http://www.mizrachi.org/YY50)



**In light of the UN Security Council vote, our support for Yerushalayim is needed now more than ever. Register now for this once in a lifetime opportunity. Join Jewish people from around the world as we gather in our holiest city to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. The time is now. Show your support!**

SPACES LIMITED



## WE INVITE YOU TO JOIN US THIS YEAR IN JERUSALEM

FOR A MEGA-MISSION OF A LIFETIME  
Be Front and Center, Celebrating 50 years of a reunited Jerusalem  
over Yom Yerushalayim  
**MAY 22-25, 2017**

Dear RZA-Mizrachi Friends,

We very much look forward to having you take part in our Mizrachi World Movement's "This Year in Jerusalem" Mega-Mission over Yom Yerushalayim. Our aim is to bring thousands of people (including rabbinic and community leaders) from hundreds of communities from across the global Jewish community to learn, experience and celebrate together at this momentous time in Jewish history.

Please see below a personal invitation from Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, one of the global leaders of the mission, inviting you to join him on this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

More details about the program can be found at the following link - [www.mizrachi.org/YY50](http://www.mizrachi.org/YY50) - including the draft schedule, highlights, pricing options and booking procedure.

Please note the following:

1. There are 10 hotel options, with a price range depending on hotel choice. Each hotel package includes breakfast, lunch and dinner (excluding Wed evening). The hotel packages also include the entire 4 day program at discounted rates.
2. There is also an option for people who are not staying in hotels - if they have their own accommodation - to join for the 4 day program, at a cost of \$630 per person. It does not include hotel, breakfast and dinner, but does include transport from central meeting points to and from all the venues, lunch each day, and participation in the full program.
3. For those shuls/communities/groups who wish to bring missions and want to extend their trip either before or after our 4 day mission, that can also be arranged by contacting us at [YY50@mizrachi.org](mailto:YY50@mizrachi.org), and we - together with our partners - will put together a tailor-made package for your group.

Looking forward to celebrating together – in Jerusalem – on this historic occasion.

With excitement and anticipation,

Rabbi Gideon Shloush  
Mizrachi – Religious Zionists of America

Rav Doron Perez  
Mizrachi World Movement

**Click below to see our video!**



## POINT OF VIEW

### The Poverty Level: Is it an Act of Fate? Or a Natural Disaster

*By Zevulun Orlev*

The poverty report prepared by Bituach Leumi – the National Insurance Institute of Israel – has not received much attention or any public discussion. The difficult findings did not shake the foundations of our country, since the public has become used to accepting such harsh findings, which have become a regular routine in the last two decades. We hold the record in the level of poverty in the world among the developed nations, from three points of view: gaps and polarization, the severity of poverty, and its widespread occurrence. It occurs for every third child, every fourth citizen, and every fifth family **in all the sectors** (including the Jewish population, and not only Arabs and Chareidim). And in addition to the point of view of halacha and morality, there is another troubling issue – The situation has led to a weakening of the cultural stability which could also lead to a dangerous population explosion. Those who feel deprived, convinced as they are that they and their children will never have an opportunity to exist with the honor, might act in illegitimate ways, such as by staging a revolt. We saw a hint of what this might be like in the social protests of the summer of 2011.

#### **The Fault of the Government**

**Poverty is not a matter of fate or a natural disaster.** It is a direct result of a purposeful government policy as is seen in the budgets and in the accompanying special laws passed together with the budget. All of the Welfare Ministers have warned about the negative effect that the budgets would have on extending the range of poverty, and on the increased social gaps. In meetings of the government, slides by Bituach Leumi were presented showing that the liberal economic policies would maintain poverty levels and the social gaps forever. In the best case, they threw some “bones” in to take care of poverty, together with some media spins about how the budgets are socially positive and that they include “reforms” which will decrease the level of poverty. **But these were empty words – there has been no decrease, and the situation has only gotten worse!**

I can suggest two moves that will take guts and determination to perform, which have the power to improve the situation starting at the very roots. The first step is **to establish measurable social goals by law**, as is being done to enhance economic stability. In order to achieve the economic goals, there are a series of tough government decisions and laws which prevent going beyond the permitted limits (with respect to growth rates, percentage of annual deficit, inflation rate, unemployment, and more). In the social realm, on the other hand, the government never committed itself in the budget law to any measurable goals in fighting poverty and how the social gaps are to be reduced (for example, by use of the Gini index). The government and the Knesset have never even discussed establishing a declared social policy for the country that will be made into law and that includes proper measures. Rather, they have merely mouthed meaningless slogans. Establishing such goals by law will ensure, with a high degree of certainty, that the goals will be met, like the country has managed to build economic goals.

### **Non-Equal Financial Benefits**

**The second vital step to be taken is to cancel the uniform and universal allowances by the Bituach Leumi**, for such items as child support and old-age pensions, which are distributed in a uniform manner to the poor and the rich alike. They should be made progressive, given out in a way that depends on other existing sources of income – the rich will receive less and the poor will receive more. No payment of any kind will be immune from such criteria, and only people who have a need will receive an appropriate sum of money.

It is true that there is some rationale for establishing uniform benefits for all. First of all, this is a form of insurance, and like all cases of insurance paid for by the clients, they want to get back their money's worth, no matter what their financial situation is. In addition, the universal character of the benefit guarantees that the stronger segment of the population will object to any decreases in the amounts, since it is easiest for the government to mandate cuts in funds meant for the weakest segments of the population such as guaranteed wages, unemployment insurance, and so on. However, in spite of these considerations I feel that the benefit of cancelling the universal distribution of money outweighs any possible shortcomings. A simple calculation shows that by such a method it will be possible to gain about seven billion Shekels every year to be used in the struggle against poverty. This would be a proper source for added funds to be budgeted to cope with poverty. A government committee to halt the spread of poverty, led by MK Eli Alaluf, estimated that this is the amount of money needed for an efficient struggle to combat poverty and the economic and social gaps.

Unfortunately, we have learned from experience that more people oppose my proposal than the number of supporters. My question for those who are against the idea is: **Can you suggest any better alternative** that will allow us to perform this vital change in our policies in order to reduce poverty and social gaps, other than disseminating meaningless spins and untrue declarations? There are no magical answers, and I am not familiar with any other ways to cope that have been used in developed nations.

## **As Shabbat Approaches**

**"From what Remained in the Jug a Miracle was Performed for the 'Roses'"**

*By Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg, Rosh Yeshiva, Kerem B'Yavne*

"And it happened, at the end of two years" [Bereishit 41:1]. "In all toil there is something gained" [Mishlei 14:23]. Every sad event will in the end lead to a benefit. And that is how Yosef's salvation came about, from within the Egyptian prison. (Bereishit Rabba 89:2).

"Happy is the man who put his trust in G-d" [Tehillim 40:8]. This refers to Yosef (Bereishit Rabba 89:3). Yosef is the essence of the trait of faith, and he was able to find solace from within his troubles. In fact, the deepest part of the trouble was the beginning of his salvation.

The Chassidim claim that the passages of rebuke – "*tochachah*" – will eventually be revealed to be blessings. "The stranger in your midst will rise up higher and higher, and you will descend lower and lower" [Devarim 28:43]. This too is a source of consolation for Yisrael,

like when a point on a spinning wheel reaches the bottom and immediately starts to rise.

“She has fallen and will not rise, the virgin of Yisrael’ [Amos 5:2]. In Eretz Yisrael this is explained as follows: She will fall and not fall any further. Let the virgin of Yisrael rise up.” [Berachot 4b].

In the thirteen traits of mercy, one trait seems at first glance to be completely out of place. “And He will not forgive asin at all” [Shemot 34:7]. This would seem to mean that G-d will never relent from punishing the sins. However, we are taught in the name of the ARI, “Do not look at a jug but only at what is inside it.” But this statement is not very clear.

In his book *Gelilei Zahav*, Rebbe Moshkowitz from Transylvania explains this as follows: “For I will destroy all the nation except for you, and I will not leave you unpunished” [Yirmiyahu 30:11]. Rashi notes that this is referring to destruction – that is, G-d will not remove them from the world. In this way, this trait is indeed an element of mercy, it does not mean that Yisrael will not be forgiven for their sins but rather that they will never be removed from the world.

If we look at the letters of the words “*Nakeh...Yenakeh*” we find that they are made up of the letters of G-d’s name (yud-heh-vav-heh) and the letters kuf-nun twice. And that is what the ARI meant: Do not look at the “kankan” (the jug) but what is inside it. Look for the holy name which appears together with “kankan.” Even at a time of exile and punishment, G-d’s name remains with them. As is written, “I will descend with you, and I will surely raise you up again” [Bereishit 46:4].

And that is the meaning of the line quoted above from the song “Maoz Tzur” -

“From what remained in the jug a miracle was performed for the ‘roses.’” Chanukah was a miracle performed for Yisrael, who are nicknamed “roses,” by the name of G-d left over from the letters “kankan” in the trait, “*Nakeh Yenakeh*.”

The Beit Yosef asks a famous question: Why do we celebrate eight days of Chanukah, if the miracle was only seven days (since there was enough oil to burn for the first day)? The TAZ replies that on the first day a small bit of oil must have been left over, since a miracle would not take place in a vessel that was completely empty, as can be seen from the story of Elisha and the oil. Thus, a miracle already took place on the first day too. But we may well ask: This might be true for a miracle performed by a prophet, but how can we suggest that G-d cannot create a miracle starting from nothing? The answer that is given is that a miracle performed with the Name yud-heh-vav-heh can indeed be a creation of something out of nothing. Thus, when the people poured out the oil into the Menorah on the first day the container immediately filled up again. And in this way the miracle was indeed for eight full days. “And from the remains of the jug a miracle was performed” – “kankan” which is the remainder of the holy name of G-d. Therefore we add, “Wise sons called for song and praise for eight days” – and not only for seven days.

## A PARSHA INSIGHT

### Transforming a Bitter Lemon into Sweet Lemonade

*By Rabbi Asaf Harnoy, Post-Graduate Beit Midrash for Torah and Leadership,  
Jerusalem*

Our life mission as Bnei Yisrael is to follow in the footsteps of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and to cling to Him (Devarim 11:22). Clinging to G-d and following in His path is listed in the counts of the mitzvot as a separate mitzva.

The sages realized the difficulty of this task – how can we cling to an abstract spiritual entity, which is impossible to describe, let alone to cling to Him? The sages answered this question by teaching us that in order to cling to G-d **we must behave like Him and perform deeds that are similar to His actions.** “Just as the Holy One, Blessed be He, is merciful, so you should also show mercy...” [Sifri, Torah portion of Eikev].

This mitzva requires us to read and study this week's Torah portion with our eyes wide open, in an attempt to learn as much as possible about the ways of the Holy One, Blessed be He, so that we can act in the same way and thus cling to Him.

By studying this week's Torah portion we can learn about a very special trait in the way that G-d acts.

### **Bundles of Troubles**

The Torah portion of Vayeishev is set in one of the most difficult times which were the lot of our forefathers. It describes a very tough chain of events – hatred among brothers, a desire to kill Yosef, and a “compromise” of merely throwing him into a pit. Vayeishev describes unimaginable sadness by a father for the loss of his son, while the brothers conceal the truth from their own father. In Vayeishev we hear about Yehuda, who was caught in a compromising situation when he went to visit a harlot. The Torah portion ends with a tremendously complicated situation in which Yosef finds himself, where he is in an Egyptian prison.

If we would stop reading at this point, without skipping ahead to the “happy ending” of the story in the Torah portion of Vayigash, we would see that **we are in one of the most complex, complicated, and terrifying moments in the lives of our forefathers.**

### **What was G-d Doing at that Point?**

If we, with our miniscule minds, would try to imagine what the Holy One, Blessed be He, was doing at this time, we probably would assume that He – as it were – was unhappy and angry, and might even be having second thoughts about His choice of the children of Yaacov for greatness.

However, the picture that is presented to us by the Midrash is very far from this.

Amidst all the sadness, the gloomy outlook, and the pain in this week's Torah portion, the Holy One, Blessed be He, is involved in one of the most wonderful, refreshing, and encouraging phenomena in the whole of creation – He sits and creates the light of the Mashiach!

“The tribes were busy with selling Yosef. Yosef was busy with his sackcloth and his fasting. Reuven was busy with his sackcloth and his fasting. And Yaacov was busy with his sackcloth and his fasting. Yehuda was busy looking for a wife. And the Holy One, Blessed be He, was busy creating the light of the King, the Mashiach...” [Midrash Rabba, Vayeishev, 85].

### **Even Cloudy Skies can Produce a Pleasant Light**

This surprising description about creating the light of the Mashiach at such a harsh and dark moment can teach us about a novel way that G-d is revealed in the world. And we must learn to cling to this too.

There are many suggestions about the question of why G-d created this very precious light of the Mashiach specifically from within the black of night. The SHELAH writes about this at length in his book “Assarah Ma'amarot,” and Ramchal devotes long chapters to it in his books “Daat Tevunot” and “Derech Hashem.” **However, for us simple folks the message is clear and definite. Even during the greatest possible tragedies and even in places where it is impossible to see any light – we must make the effort to expose whatever light there is, we must even make an effort to create light from out of the darkness and to bring out sweetness from what starts out being bitter.**

### **The Chanukah Lamps**

This trait of lighting up the darkness and the most difficult and complex situations is the very essence of the role played by the Chanukah lamps. This small flame which we are commanded to light **at night** and which is set in a **low place** (less than ten tefachim, a level to which the Shechina does not descend), is part of the only holiday which begins at the end of a month, **when the moon is waning and darkness increases.** More than anything else, this teaches us that **even in the midst of the most absolute darkness it is possible to find a great light.**

# ZIONIST CHASSIDISM

## What is (the Essence of) Chanukah?

*By Rabbi Rafi Ostroff, Head of the Religious Council of Gush Etzion*

Various communities within Israeli society have a habit of emphasizing their “own miracle” at the time of Chanukah.

The famous song, “*Anu Nos'im Lapidim*” – “We carry torches” – is an example of the revolt against the exile and the Jewish tradition. This is seen, for example, in the following words:

“No miracle happened to us, we did not find a cruse of oil / We went to the valley, we climbed the hill / We discovered the caves of the hidden lights.

No miracle happened to us, we did not find a cruse of oil / We carved into the rock until our blood came out – and then there was light!”

The song, which was written in the thirties of the last century by Aharon Zeev, and was put to music by Mordechai Ze'ira, emphasizes the miraculous victory of the modern Zionist Maccabees.

In the Chareidi sector the emphasis is usually only on the miracle of the cruse of oil. Maintaining the purity of the oil is symbolic of keeping the Jewish soul pure, opposing the modern winds which blow across the earth in an effort to turn Judaism away from “pure” halacha.

What did the religious Zionists do? They continued to attempt to live in all the worlds. They extolled both the victories of the war against the Greeks and the Divine miracle which was characterized by finding the cruse of pure oil.

### **The War of Holiness Fighting Impurity**

The Rebbe of Husiatyn, as a Chassidic rabbi who took care first and foremost of the soul of the nation of Yisrael, emphasized the bad influences of the Greek culture on the soul of the nation of Yisrael. He wrote:

“It is well known that the war of the Chashmona'im against the Greeks was really a holy war against impurity, a war of faith against heresy, a war of modesty against immorality, a war of asceticism against lust. For the evil kingdom of Greece led many of the people of Yisrael astray with the external beauty of the Greek culture. And because of the merit of this holy goal of preparing the lamps and lighting them – that is, the removal of the Greek filth from the souls of Yisrael and lighting them with a holy light – miracles were performed for Yisrael and they were saved.”

### **Is it In fact “Ours?”**

Are we still involved in a controversy with the Western World, which has inherited the culture of Greece? On one hand, many of our values are shared with the rest of the world. We are happy to live in a democratic society and enjoy our freedom, as opposed to living in a land which is dictatorial or a monarchy. We are happy that we have been granted a freedom of choice in all stages of our lives, and that we do not live at the behest of an authority which forces its ways on us or even a court system which forces the public to accept its own commands. Faith is a matter for each individual, and we do not force our views on others to be implemented in their private lives. If so, is our war against the Greeks still relevant in modern times?

“Note that the mitzva of lighting the Chanukah lamps is not merely a memory of the past, it is also relevant for the present. A memory of the past includes remembering external events and also internal ones. External events took place when the Kingdom of Greece invaded Yisrael. ‘They made evil decrees and did not allow the Jews to involve themselves in Torah and the mitzvot, and they desecrated all the pure objects.’ [Rambam, Hilchot Chanukah]. The

internal events, consisting of the faulty opinions of the Greeks, penetrated into the minds of the Jews and made their intellects impure. At first, 'they did not allow them to be involved in Torah and the mitzvot,' and then the Jews turned their backs on these matters on their own... The signs of a sickness of the soul include a loss of a desire for Torah and the mitzvot, which are in reality the nourishment that can make the souls of Yisrael healthy."

The Rebbe takes note of the external influences as typified by the wisdom of Greece. However, in the end we incorporate their approach in our own lives, and we become convinced that it is our own Torah. The Jews themselves take on the approach of Greece, so much so that they begin to speak Greek in the name of Judaism.

We too, in our existence during Chanukah, must take care to identify what comes from the original Jewish source and what elements we are using. Is it counterfeit olive oil and not pure oil from the Land of Israel? Can whatever we use in the religious community, which by its very nature lives in more than one world at a time, be considered "our own" or not? On Chanukah we should remember not only the miracles of the war of the Maccabees, so similar to the war of our own generation, but also exactly what they fought for.

Have a happy Chanukah!

**Note: A summary of the life of Rebbe Yaacov of Husiatyn and his community appeared in issue 1646 for the Torah portion of Noach.**

## THE ROOTS OF FAITH - Basic Tenets of Jewish Philosophy

### Philosophy and Prophecy

*By Rabbi Oury Cherki, Machon Meir, Rabbi of Beit Yehuda Congregation, Jerusalem*

It is true that the nation-state which the Chashmona'im established was destroyed long ago, and this is very likely the reason that "Megillat Ta'anit" was removed from the holy books, but the holiday of Chanukah has not been cancelled. The inner spiritual reason for this, which appears in the statement in the Talmud that the basis of the holiday is "in order to publicize the miracle" [Rosh Hashanah 18b], is that the cultural war which began in the days of the Chashmona'im did not end in their era but rather continued for a very long time.

It would seem that this can best be understood based on the analysis by Rabbi Avraham Bibago, a great Spanish Torah scholar, in the book, "Derech Emunah" – the way of faith. Rabbi Avraham asked why the exile of Edom lasted for such a long time as compared to the exiles of Egypt and Babylon, which lasted for 210 and 70 years, respectively. He replies that the purpose of each exile was to clarify the difference between the Divine intellect - that is, prophecy - and one of the approaches that competed with it.

In Egypt, the competing element was sensory feeling. That is, the ancient Egyptian culture developed the abilities of the senses to their ultimate level, as could be seen in the magic and the wisdom of the sorcerers of the Land of Egypt.

In Babylon, prophecy competed with imagination. This consists of the ability of the Babylonians to develop the world of imagination in such fields as dreams, astronomy, and in their studies of angels.

These conflicts could be resolved in a relatively short time, with prophecy gaining the upper hand over the alternatives. However, the objective in Edom is to show the difference between the exalted intellect which is a unique trait of Yisrael, and what Rabbi Avraham Bibago calls the "sense of understanding." It is clear that he intends this as a shorthand description of Greek philosophy, which presents itself as being equal to Jewish philosophy, but in the end is merely related to the senses, in that its first contacts begin with the senses. However, since the distinction between these two approaches is a very fine line, this exile will continue until they can be differentiated.

This approach of Rabbi Bibago was vindicated as the generations proceeded. The failure of the philosophical approach became clear through the thinking of Immanuel Kant. He tried to find the roots of pure understanding and in the end concluded that this is impossible,

because all understanding is based on the senses. And from then on, philosophy reached a dead end, from which it has not been able to recover.

Near Kant's death, an idea came up for the first time in the international realm to establish a renewed state for the Jews, in a statement by Napoleon when he captured Eretz Yisrael. When the controversy with philosophy came to an end, there was no longer any need for the exile. The miracle of the cruse of oil had achieved its goal and the time had come to return to Zion and renew the nationalistic significance of Chanukah.

In recent generations there have been attempts to revitalize the subject of "Jewish philosophy," based on an assumption that there is no significant difference between the lessons to be learned from the Tanach and the values of humanism. However, in truth, the word of G-d – that is, prophecy – cannot be minimized to fit into the dimension of human understanding. Speech is a manifestation of Divine will and not a general law of nature. Therefore the mission for our generation is to renew the culture of prophecy, which will be the source of the dissemination of Torah from Zion, with the goal of lighting up the moral darkness and the understanding of the world.

## NATURE AND THE TORAH PORTION

### Wax

By *Dr. Moshe Raanan, Herzog College and the Jerusalem College for Women*

"Take from the glory of the land in your baggage...some balsam, some honey, wax, laudanum, pistachios, and almonds." [Bereishit 43:11].

#### "Drugstore Prices"

In Shabbat-B'Shabbat for Mikeitz 5773 (issue 1453), I discussed the identity of "*botnim*" (pistachios) in the above list of gifts that Yaacov sent to Yosef. I suggested that all the elements of the gift were valuable as medicines and were therefore expensive, at a "drugstore price" level. I continued with this same line of reasoning in 5776 (issue 1602) with respect to honey made by bees. Today we will turn to the term "*nechot*" – translated above as "wax" – which evidently can also be used for medical treatments. Onkeles translates this as "*sha'af*," which is wax ("sha'ava" in Hebrew). This corresponds to the second interpretation given to Rashi: "Any collection of many spices is called 'nechot,' as is written, 'He showed them all of his treasures... and the spices...' [Shmuel II 20:13] – and Onkeles translates it as wax." The idea of translating *nechot* in the verse in our Torah portion as a collection of spices is less reasonable in view of the fact that balsam and laudanum, which are perfumes, are mentioned separately. Perhaps the appearance of wax and honey together is related to the fact that the two are byproducts from the same source.

#### Easy to Form

"Wax" is a general name for a category of organic compounds whose chemical makeup consists of long chains. It is a solid that is hydrophobic. However, it becomes soft at relatively low temperatures, and it can therefore be formed into many different shapes. (Evidently this is one of the reasons that wax is used as a raw material in wax museums with sculptures of famous people all over the world.)

There are three sources for wax.

(1) A mineral source (mostly petroleum), like the paraffin which is used to make candles.

(2) A vegetable source. From an economic point of view, the most important plant wax is Carnauba, which is produced from a large palm tree that grows only in northeastern Brazil. This wax is used as a food additive, as a shiny finish for various items (such as cars, dishes, furniture, and floor tiles), as a coating for paper goods, and more.

(3) Wax which is produced by living creatures. Many living creatures produce a variety of waxes which serve various purposes and which have different chemical structures. Many types of aphids have a protective cover made of wax. Another type of wax from a living

source is lanolin, which is produced by distilling oil that covers the fur of sheep. This serves as a basis for medicines and many types of cosmetics, since it is easily absorbed in the skin. Another wax from living creatures, used for cosmetics and candles, is produced from sperm whales. Human ears also produce wax in very small amounts, but of course this has no commercial value.

## **Beeswax**

The best known wax produced by a living creature is beeswax, which is made by honeybees. In the literature of the sages, beeswax is considered waste material (see Shabbat 20b), and in fact it is a byproduct of the industry of honey. In modern beehives, the wax is obtained from the layers which seal the honeycombs and which are released during the process of collecting the honey, and from old honeycombs that are no longer in use. In ancient Egypt, wax was used for sealing amulets, and later on for coating texts written on tablets. Wax was also used to set colors in making boats and ships. A mixture of wax and stone dust was used to attach blades to knife handles. Wax was also used in making medicine. Evidently at this time it was not used for lighting.

In later times, the main use of beeswax was for making candles. Beeswax has an advantage over wax from mineral sources such as paraffin in that it has a higher melting point, which helps avoid dripping and a leak of wax which is not burned. The advantage of mineral wax is that it is much cheaper than beeswax. Candles can be made from beeswax at many different levels of purity, but solid contaminants (such as body parts of the bees) rise up with the wax and collect in the wick, blocking the passage of the wax. Thus, in order to make candles that burn well, it is important for the beeswax to be as pure as possible. Small amounts of beeswax are used in the food industry to coat products, since it creates a sealed and insulated layer which is not felt when it is swallowed with the food.

## **Medical Uses**

Beeswax has a long history of use in medicine, especially in conjunction with honey. Beeswax has antibacterial properties. It has been used, and still is, in medicines and cosmetic products, such as creams, various types of lipstick, and the production of medical salves. In the internet there is a natural prescription based on beeswax for treating "hay fever" (a cold due to an allergy). Hay fever is a very common allergic reaction to the eggs of the microscopic dust mite, which are carried on dust particles, pollen, particles of mold, and spit of living creatures. Depending on the severity of the sickness, it is recommended to chew on a honeycomb, but if possible it is best to chew the beeswax which seals the honeycomb. If there is no other alternative, one can manage with a spoonful of honey at every meal.

The bees add to the wax which they use to build the honeycombs material that inhibits the development of allergic reactions, asthma, sinusitis, and more. Beeswax includes other useful compounds which are components of what is called the "propolis." Perhaps the ancients called this material wax too. The propolis is a mixture gathered by bees consisting mainly of tree ashes, beeswax, and spit of the bee which does the collecting. Among other names, propolis has been called "the antibiotic of nature." Propolis has been used by human beings since the days of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, as a medicine, as a material for gluing and for sealing utensils, and for embalming, since it inhibits spoilage.

For more information in Hebrew and for pictures, and to regularly receive articles about plants and animals linked to the Daf Yomi, write e-mail to: [raananmoshe1@gmail.com](mailto:raananmoshe1@gmail.com)



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