

The Shul
at the Lubavitch Center
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December 5, 2015

VaYeshev — Shabbat M'vorchim

23 Kislev, 5776

The Lessons from Chanukah

On the 25th of Kislev, we begin to celebrate the festival of Chanukah. Chanukah is one of the most beloved holidays among the Jewish people, yet few are aware of its inner meaning.

It is common knowledge that Chanukah commemorates the victory of the Jewish people over their Hellenistic oppressors and, in particular, the miracle that occurred in the Holy Temple: After the Greeks contaminated all the oil, a single cruse of uncontaminated olive oil was discovered, which in spite of its small size, miraculously produced enough oil to light the Menorah for eight days, the amount of time needed to press and ship ritually pure oil to the Temple. But what is the deeper meaning of the war with the Hellenists and the miracle of the oil and what impact can it have on our lives today so many years later?

An in-depth evaluation of the events of Chanukah reveals that the war between the Jews and the Greeks was first and foremost a spiritual war. At odds were Torah and Greek philosophy - two entirely different conceptual schemes of human life. To fully understand the significance of the miracle of the oil, we have to see it in context of this battle of the spirit.

In Kabbala, oil symbolizes wisdom. The defilement of the oils by the Greeks represents the clouding of our original Jewish mode of thought by Greek philosophy, creating an unbridgeable gap to be opened between our intellect and our faith. The uncontaminated cruse of oil therefore represents a concentrate of pure Jewish thought that remained (and still remains) immune to the devastating influence of Greek philosophy. Just like the small quantity of oil in the cruse, this concentrate of Jewish thinking may seem at first small and inconsequential, but miraculously, it too can illuminate a great deal of human experience.

The sages explain that given the manner in which the Temple sanctuary was built, the Menorah did not illuminate its inside, but rather most of its light was cast outside. In more spiritual language, they say that it is not G-d's sanctuary that needs light from the Menorah, for G-d Himself is all light, rather it is the outside world that needs the light of the Menorah. Thus, the Menorah is the vessel that symbolizes the spreading of the word of God to even the farthest and darkest corners of humanity and human nature, while the oil that burns in it and emits the light symbolizes the type of wisdom that can be seen by everyone. In the time of the Macabbees, the oil that burned in the Menorah was able to illuminate the world enough that there was no choice but to accept the presence of a ritually and theologically independent Jewish entity in the Land of Israel, an entity that survived for many years.

In the blessings on the Chanukah candles, we say: "for the miracles that you performed for our fathers, in those days, at this time." The message of celebrating Chanukah today is that what was true then is still true (and perhaps even more so) today. Though the success of the Macabbees led to the formation of an independent Jewish state in the Land of Israel, a state that remained intellectually and ritually unique in a sea of Hellenism and Greek philosophy, ultimately, from a secular perspective, it was the message of Greek culture that was triumphant on the global scale.

Still, the miracle of finding a cruse of pure, uncontaminated oil calls upon us today to search for the ancient Jewish wisdom that can shed Divine light and rectify the seemingly endless volumes of philosophy and science whose source lies in the ancient Greek tradition. This mysterious and pure flask of Jewish wisdom has the ability to reconnect humanity's intellect with its faith. When utilized correctly it sheds new light on every topic.

(by Izzy Greenberg from <http://www.lchaimweekly.org/>)

New Shoes for Old Souls

"Then Yehudah said to Onan, 'Consort with your brother's wife and enter into levirate marriage with her, and establish offspring for your brother' (38:8)

The Torah relates that Yehudah takes Tamar as a wife for his eldest son Er. Er is "evil in the eyes of Hashem", and Hashem causes him to die. Yehudah then asks his second son Onan to enter into a levirate marriage - "yibum" with Tamar to establish offspring for his deceased brother. Onan too is evil in the eyes of Hashem and is punished with death. Since Yehudah refuses to allow his youngest son Shelah the opportunity to marry Tamar, Tamar takes the

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initiative, creating a subterfuge that induces Yehudah himself into performing his levirate obligation to her. As a result of this union, Tamar gives birth to Peretz and Zerach. The Torah lists all seventy souls who descended to Mitzrayim. When recording Yehudah's children, the Torah lists Er, Onan, Shelah, Peretz, and Zerach, stating that Er and Onan are deceased. Why does the Torah record the deceased brothers if they are not included in the seventy souls? Compounding this difficulty, we find Er and Onan mentioned again in the census of Bnei Yisroel taken in the desert. This census is taken in order to account for those who would receive a portion of land upon entering Eretz Yisroel. What possible benefit could there be in listing Er and Onan in this situation? When Yehudah tells Onan to marry Tamar, he explains to his son that by performing this levirate marriage he will be "establishing an offspring for his brother". Rashi comments that the child born from this type of union is named after the deceased. The Ramban explains that there is no source which requires that the child born from a levirate marriage be named after the deceased brother. Rather, even prior to the Torah being given, the mystical understanding of the levirate marriage was already known; the child born from a levirate union receives the transmigrating soul of the deceased. Yehudah is instructing Onan to have a child with Tamar. In this manner the continuity of Onan is assured. Both Er and Onan die childless. Consequently, Yehudah's act of yibum is performed for both of his deceased children. This results in Tamar giving birth to twins, for each child represents the transmigrated soul of one of the deceased brothers. Zerach and Peretz are, in reality, Er and Onan. Therefore, whenever listing Zerach and Peretz, the Torah juxtaposes the deaths of Er and Onan to teach us that whatever potentials and capacities were contained within Er and Onan, were resurrected in Yehudah's latter children, Zerach and Peretz.

(by Rabbi Yochanan Zweig from Project Genesis at www.torah.org)

Community Information of Interest

The Last Years of the Old Order: Israel and the Jews 1962-1966. Lecture by Rabbi Dovid Katz.

December 12: "Secret-Service and Secret Diplomacy: Israel's Unconventional System of Foreign Relations 1962-66, Part I. This lecture will begin at 8:30 p.m. and be held at the Congregation Shomrei Emunah.

December 12: The Role of the IDF in Combatting Antisemitism in Europe & the US" by Seargant Benjamin Anthony. This talk will be given at the Congregation Shomrei Emunah at 3:30 p.m.

"The Rav's Friday Night Hashkafa Q&A Shiur for Men"

will take place this Friday night (VaYeshev, December 4) at 8:00 p.m. and will be held at the home of **Mr. and Mrs. Yossi Kelemer** at 6217 Green Meadow Way.

Yahrzeits This Week:

Ethel Fischer	26 Kislev - Monday night/Tuesday	for father	Avrohom ben Moshe
Irving Hain	28 Kislev - Wednesday night/Thursday	for father	Uri ben Hechover Moshe

Davening and Shiurim Schedule

Friday, 12/4 — 22 Kislev

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
Candles — 4:26 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:30 p.m.

Shabbat, 12/5 — 23 Kislev

Shacharit — 8:40 a.m.
Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:34 a.m.
Berachot Gemara Shiur — 3:45 p.m.
Minchah & Seudah Shilishit — 4:15 p.m.
Ma'ariv — 5:27 p.m. **ותן טל ומטר** starts tonight

Sunday, 12/6 — 24 Kislev

Shacharit — 8:00 a.m.
Shulchan Aruch Shiur — 8:45 a.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:25 p.m.
First Chanukah Candle — at night

Monday, 12/7 — 25 Kislev

Shacharit — 6:45 a.m.
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:50 p.m.
Second Chanukah Candle — at night

Tuesday, 12/8 — 26 Kislev

Shacharit — 6:45 a.m.
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:50 p.m.
Third Chanukah Candle — at night

Wednesday, 12/9 — 27 Kislev

Shacharit — 6:45 a.m.
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:50 p.m.
Fourth Chanukah Candle — at night

Thursday, 12/10 — 28 Kislev

Shacharit — 6:45 a.m.
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 8:45 a.m.
Ma'ariv — 8:50 p.m.
Fifth Chanukah Candle — at night
Tanya Shiur — 9:00 p.m.

Friday, 12/11 — 29 Kislev

Shacharit — 6:45 a.m.
Parshat HaShavua Shiur — 7:45 a.m.
Sixth Chanukah Candle — 4:23 p.m.
Candles — 4:25 p.m.
Minchah / Ma'ariv — 4:25 p.m.