

Parsha Shiur by Rabbi Mayer Friedman



פרשת מקץ - שבת חנוכה

וירא יעקב כי יש שבר במצרים ויאמר יעקב לבניו למה תתראו
“Yaakov perceived that there were provisions in Egypt; so Yaakov said to his sons, Why do you make yourselves conspicuous?” (42:1)

Rashi comments that Yaakov told his sons that even though they had food, it was not right for them to appear satiated while everyone else was starving. R' Dovid Feinstein points out that Yaakov teaches us how to conduct ourselves among the gentiles. It is best to stay undercover and not to arouse their envy by flaunting what we have. This is also why the brothers entered Mitzrayim through different entrances. They wanted to keep a low profile in order to avoid an ayin hara, as per the instructions of their father.

When Yosef accused them of being spies based on their entrance through different gates, they answered that the reason for this was because they were looking for their lost brother. Why did they not say the reason that Yaakov had given them, namely to avoid an ayin hara? A possible answer could be that the brothers thought that Yosef was just another Egyptian. Egyptians were characterized for their arrogance and they felt that Yosef would be unable to relate to the need to keep a low profile and to the concern for the need to be modest.

**ויוסף הוא השליט על הארץ הוא המשביר לכל עם הארץ ויבאו אחי יוסף וישתחו
לו אפים ארצה**

“Now Yosef - he was the viceroy over the land, he was the provider to all the people of the land. Yosef's brothers came and bowed to him, faces to the ground” (42:6)

The gemara in Sanhedrin 92a says that one who teaches halacha to his students receives the blessings of Yosef as a reward. Regarding Torah, the posuk says (Mishlei 11:26), "One who withholds produce (a metaphor for Torah) will be cursed by the nation, but blessing will be on the head of the provider (משביר)." Since the word משביר describes both Yosef HaTzadik and one who teaches Torah, we learn that one who teaches Torah is rewarded with the blessing of Yosef.

The Maharsha explains why Torah is compared to produce. Just as grain is food for the body without which a person could not function, Torah provides spiritual nourishment that is equally vital for the person's survival. Just as Yosef received a blessing for providing people with food, one who teaches Torah receives the same blessing because he also provides his students with food for the soul. We should feel a hunger for Torah just as we do for food. One should treat Torah as a staple of his daily regimen and never go too long without it.

**ויען ראובן אתם לאמר הלוא אמרתי אליכם לאמר אל תחטאו בילד ולא שמעתם
וגם דמו הנה נדרש**

“Reuven spoke up to them, saying: Did I not speak to you saying: Do not sin against the boy, but you would not listen! And his blood as well is being avenged” (42:22)

There is an interesting midrash in Shir HaShirim that compares Reuven's actions to Chanukah. The posuk in Shir HaShirim (7:14) says: "The flowers have given off a fragrance and by every door are all fruits." The midrash says that the flowers refer to Reuven while the fruits refer to the lights of Chanukah. What is their relevance to this posuk and what is the connection between these two?

Rav Shimon Schwab explains that flowers produce a nice smell but then they wilt and die and it is as if they never existed. This refers to Reuven. Reuven "had a nice smell," he had the right ideas and preached the proper course of action. He rebuked his brothers in this week's parsha and he tried to save Yosef in last week's parsha. However, Chazal still fault Reuven for trying to appease his brothers and take care of Yosef later rather than picking Yosef up and carrying him home. When the time came for action, Reuven was too afraid to fight his brothers. His "smell" was nice but it was not very meaningful. The Chashmonaim were exactly the opposite. They told their brethren to protest against the Greek decrees, to continue learning Torah and to stay true to their way of life. When the time came for action, they backed up their words by taking up arms and leading the troops into battle. Because they were willing to sacrifice their lives for the ideals that they preached, Hashem brought about the salvation of the Jewish people through them. Their "smell" bore "fruits," it had a permanence. These fruits are "by every door" in the form of our menorahs, the lights that remind us how self-sacrifice in the name of the proper ideals saved the day.

The Chashmonaim fought for the right to be able to study Torah and observe mitzvos. Thus, the essence of Chanukah is the celebration of and the time to give thanks for our ability to live the lives of Torah-observant Jews. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch writes that in order to properly give thanks for this, we must truly appreciate the Torah and the role that it plays in our life. Without feeling a joy in the Torah, our thanks are insincere and we have missed the true meaning of Chanukah. Chanukah is a time for introspection, a time to take stock of our lives, and gauge whether we truly have this feeling of appreciation for Torah and mitzvos and what we can do to attain it and/or preserve it.

One way to gain a greater appreciation for Torah is by reaching out to others. When one tries to reach out to other Jews, he appreciates his own way of life more by teaching it to his friend. In order to properly convey his teachings, he will have to really believe what he says and really mean it. Therefore, outreach can benefit both the helper and the person being helped.

הם יצאו את העיר לא הרחיקו ויוסף אמר לאשר על ביתו קום רדף אחרי האנשים והשגתם ואמרת אליהם למה שלמתם רעה תחת טובה

“They had left the city, they had not gone far, and Yosef said to the one in charge of his house: Arise, chase after the men; you shall overtake them and say to them: Why do you repay evil for good” (44:4)

The Mincha Belula asks: Why did Yosef tell his messenger "you shall overtake them and say" instead of simply instructing him to pursue them and relay the message? Obviously, the messenger could not speak to them without first catching up to them?! He suggests that Yosef instructed his messenger not to call them thieves and embarrass them in public. He was to wait to accuse them until after he had overtaken them. Yosef did not

want to put them to shame by screaming at them through the streets. He said to wait until overtaking them before accusing them so that they should not be shamed. The lesson to be learned from this is that even though we may occasionally have to rebuke people, there is a proper way to do it. Yosef had a whole plan in mind but he made sure to do it in a way in which he minimized the embarrassment of his brothers. Similarly, the Rambam writes that rebuke must be given privately. If we need to criticize another person, we must remember that nobody else needs to know about it. It should remain a private matter.

ויאמר גם עתה כדבריכם כן הוא אשר ימצא אתו יהיה לי עבד ואתם תהיו נקים
“He replied: What you say now is also correct. The one with whom it is found shall be my slave, but the rest of you shall be exonerated” (44:10)

Rashi comments that Yosef’s messenger, his son Menashe, explained that although they were correct that all ten should be enslaved, Yosef would act compassionately and only keep the culprit. R’ Moshe Feinstein questions that there is no such halacha that if one of a group of ten steals, they are all responsible? He answers that this does not mean that they all have to pay back. Rather, it means that if stealing was repudiated by the entire group, one of their number would never have stolen. If it was frowned upon, none of them would have had the gall to steal. If the theft did indeed occur, then they would all bear responsibility for the actions of a member of their group. We have to feel responsible too when one of our friends does something wrong. We must analyze whether we have played a part in his misdeeds and what we can do to correct it.

The word “nekiyim,” “innocent,” is spelled with only one “yud” even though it is usually spelled with two. This emphasizes Rashi’s point. It means to say that even though they would be let go, their innocence was not complete.

חנוכה

The following Divrei Torah were said at Rabbi Friedman's Chanukah Dinner this Tuesday

Rabbi Yechiel London

(Rabbi Friedman's father-in-law, Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshivas Heichal HaTorah & Shabbos Yeshiva)

When we commemorate historical events, we do not just remember the days of old. We must feel as if we ourselves are experiencing what our ancestors went through. Part of the miracle of Chanukah is that the tiny Jewish army was able to overcome the powerful military might of the Greeks. They struggled and suffered losses, but they prevailed in the end. This is an important life lesson. We may be bruised and suffer casualties, like Matisyahu and his followers, but we must come out victorious in the end. Life is a struggle. There will always be problems, there will always be ups and downs. However, if we put our minds to it, we can be victorious in the end. We must remember that our enemies are not only external, but internal as well. Life is not easy, learning Torah is not easy, doing mitzvos is not easy. One has to work hard to accomplish great things. We must be willing to make sacrifices for Torah and mitzvos, just like the Chashmonaim did. When a person gives up something that he enjoys or that he thinks is important in order to

sit and learn Torah or do a mitzvah, those words of Torah and those mitzvos become extremely precious and valuable.

Rabbi Mayer Friedman

The 25th of Kislev has been a day full of special events throughout our history. The Mishkan was completed on that day. The foundation of the second Bais HaMikdash was set on the 24th of Kislev and a celebration was held the following day. This was a particularly special occasion because the work had been begun 22 years earlier but had been halted for all those years due to a Babylonian decree. It is interesting to note the parallel to the 22 years for which Yosef was separated from his father. That separation happened because of sinas chinam, the baseless hatred that the brothers harbored toward Yosef. It was this problem of sinas chinam that eventually led to the destruction of this Mikdash. Perhaps the 22 year break during its construction was a sign of the weakness of the second Bais HaMikdash.

During the time of Chanukah, when we celebrate the rededication of the second Bais HaMikdash, we should take the time to contemplate why we no longer have this Mikdash and what we can do to get it back. We should use Chanukah as a time to rectify the problem of sinas chinam which still exists among us. Eliyahu Kitov, in his Sefer HaTe'udah, records that "it is customary among the Sephardic communities of Jerusalem for communal meals to be arranged during the days of Chanukah. Friends who quarreled during the year become reconciled at these meals." We should take advantage of these special days of Chanukah to bring the Bais HaMikdash back to us.

Yonah Kupferstein

R' Avigdor Miller points out that we only say Hallel for a continuous celebration, not for an event that happened once upon a time. The miracle of Chanukah still continues today because we celebrate our continued religious freedom. The Jews overcame the Greeks so that they could serve Hashem openly without having to worry about oppressive laws preventing them from doing so. Today, we have an unprecedented amount of freedom, the likes of which our ancestors never experienced during the long exile. This is another aspect of what we are celebrating on Chanukah. As Jews, we do not merely celebrate the past. We live in the moment and celebrate the ramifications which a miracle that occurred thousands of years ago still has to this very day.

Kesharim Baruch College/NYU Parsha Shiur

Rabbi Mayer Friedman.....Magid Shiur

Michael Gutmann.....Editor