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Weekly Bulletin on the Parshah

Pachad David

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Under the auspices of Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

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MASKIL LEDAVID

Weekly talk on the Parshah given by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

Rising in Holiness

"Hashem was with Yosef, and he became a successful man; and he remained in the house of his Egyptian master. His master perceived that Hashem was with him, and whatever he did Hashem made succeed in his hand" (Bereishit 39:2-3).

As we know, Parshat Vayeishev is always read close to Chanukah, and some years it is read on the first Shabbat of Chanukah. I would like to suggest a connection between the incident of Yosef Hatzaddik in the house of Potiphar, his Egyptian master, and the Chanukah miracle.

Chazal say (Shabbat 21b) that when the Greeks entered the Beit Hamikdash, they defiled all the oil. And when the Chashmonaim overcame the Greeks, they searched the Beit Hamikdash and found only one bottle of oil that was still untouched with the seal of the Kohen Gadol. This amount of oil was enough to light the Menorah for one day only. But a miracle occurred and the oil lasted for eight days. The following year the sages established that these days of the year would thereafter be celebrated as a festival to thank and praise Hashem.

If we reflect on the essence of the miracle of the oil, we will see that it was truly awesome, absolutely supernatural. When the Greeks entered the Beit Hamikdash, they destroyed and defiled everything. Every single holy item was desecrated. For many years the Beit Hamikdash was locked and bolted and nobody was able to enter.

So when the Chashmonaim overcame the Greeks and entered the Beit Hamikdash, why did they bother searching for untainted oil with which to light the Menorah? Did they not realize their search was futile? The Greeks had defiled everything and did not leave any holy item in the Beit Hamikdash for the tens of years in which the Beit Hamikdash was off-limits and neglected.

However, the Chashmonaim possessed such complete faith and trust in Hashem, that they did not pay any attention to the fact that the Greeks had defiled the Beit Hamikdash and all its holy vessels. They decided to search every corner; perhaps they will find some pure oil to kindle in the Menorah, for certainly Hashem watches over this holy place. And indeed Hashem granted them success. In the merit of their sincere faith and great desire to fulfill the mitzvah, they found a small jug of pure oil, untouched with the seal of the Kohen Gadol, hidden away in a corner. This demonstrated to the Chashmonaim that even in a situation that seems hopeless, we must continue trusting in Hashem.

This was exactly the situation the Chashmonaim found themselves in. This jug of oil was so small, it only contained enough oil for one day. How will they

light the Menorah on the following days? But again, they did not despair but strengthened their complete faith in Hashem and trusted in Him. They knew that if they succeeded in finding this jug of pure oil, it is a sign that they and their deeds are desirable to Hashem. So they prayed to Hashem that He should continue helping them and enough oil would remain in the jug to light another day, and indeed their prayer was accepted and miraculously they were able to light the next day too.

And so on the second day they rejoiced greatly that they were able to kindle the Menorah, and once again prayed to Hashem that enough oil remain to continue fulfilling this mitzvah. This continued for eight days, until they were able to obtain additional oil. The small amount of oil they found miraculously lasted for eight days.

On finding this closed jug of pure oil, the Chashmonaim realized it was nothing less than a miracle and a manifestation of great siyata di'Shamaya. So they seized this opportunity of Hashem showing His closeness to ask Hashem to continue the miracle over the following days so Bnei Yisrael would see that Hashem desires them. They will understand that Hashem is assisting their souls to regain their purity, after they succeeded in detaching themselves from the filth and culture of the Greeks which nearly made them forget Judaism. (The Greeks instructed the Jewish people to inscribe on the horn of an ox that they do not believe in the G-d of the Jews.)

When Hashem blesses a person with siyata di'Shamaya, which sometimes might even be supernatural assistance, he must hold onto it strongly and not let go. Rather he should continue to go from one success to another, as we find with the Chashmonaim. They experienced Hashem's intervention and His great Heavenly Assistance, and this led them to further elevate themselves to ever loftier levels. In turn they merited the great miracle that the oil lasted for eight days.

We should adopt this lesson in our own lives and when we experience Hashem's intervention and Heavenly Assistance, we must go from strength to strength and strive to improve our avodat Hashem. This is why we follow the ruling of Beit Hillel, who established the practice that on the first night we kindle one light, on the second night two lights, on the third night three lights and so forth. Each day we 'add more' (Shabbat 21b), to teach us that we must keep increasing our efforts and continually elevate ourselves in our service of Hashem. This fulfills the principle of 'We go up in holiness,' literally meaning that we can only raise a holy item to a higher level of holiness, and may not lower its level.

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Hilula

23 - Rabbi David Tevli Shiff

24 - Rabbi Chaim Chizkiyahu Medini,
author of Sdei Chemed

24 - Rabbi Zecharya Mendel of Podheitz,
author of Menorat Zecharya

25 - Rabbi Avraham Harrari Raful

26 - Rabbi Yehoshua Zelig Diskin

27 - Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen
Kahen, the Admor of Toldot Ahron

28 - Rabbi Ezra Chamou, Av Beit Din
of Aram Tzova

29 - Rabbi Yisrael Friedman, the
Admor of Husiatin



Walking in their Ways

Tidbits of faith and trust penned by Moreinu v'Rabbeinu
Hagaon Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya Pinto, shlita

The Lobby and the Banquet Hall

I once went to visit a very sick Jew who did not have long left to live.

I sat by his bedside, encouraging him with words of faith and trust in Hashem, but he seemed lost in thought and it was obvious something was bothering him.

"What are you thinking about?" I asked him.

He replied: "My thoughts are preoccupied with the day after my death. Who knows what will happen to my parents? Who will take care of them once I am no longer here?"

Upon hearing his answer, I understood that he felt his time had come to leave the world, and so he was preoccupied with thoughts about the future of his parents who would remain in the world without his help.

I learned a great lesson from this. Just as this Jew thought about his parents in his last moments and was concerned for their well-being, in the same way every Jewish person should think about his life in the Next World, taking care to prepare a respectable place for himself through studying Torah and observing the mitzvot. Our Sages have told us (Avot 4:16), "This World resembles a lobby before the World to Come; prepare yourself in the lobby so you may enter the banquet hall."

Just as a person straightens his clothing and makes sure he looks presentable before entering the king's banquet hall, so too This World is like a lobby before the Next World. Here is where we must ensure our spiritual clothes are respectable, by polishing our deeds and cleansing our souls. In this way we will be well prepared to move on to the World that is entirely Good.

The Haftarah

"Thus said Hashem: For three transgressions"
(Amos 2,3).

The connection to the Parshah: The Haftarah hints to the selling of Yosef Hatzaddik, as it says, "for their selling a righteous man for money." The sale of Yosef Hatzaddik is described in detail in the Parshah.

The Path of the Upright

The main factor causing us to judge others negatively stems from a lack of contemplation and the inclination to notice people's shortcomings rather than their virtues.

So if you see someone committing an offense and find it hard to judge him favorably, you should remind yourself of Chazal's statement, "Do not judge your friend until you reach his place."

We would also do well to remember Chazal's ruling that one who wrongly suspects his friend must appease him and bless him.

Vilna's Chanukah Miracle

A large Chanukah menorah, spectacular in its beauty and made entirely of copper, adorned the Beit Knesset Hagadol of Vilna. Standing to the right of the Aron Hakodesh, it was affixed to a special stone base and shaped like the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash, with all its goblets, knobs and blossoms.

When World War I broke out, the menorah was transported to Moscow by order of the Russian government. It was relocated to the kingdom's treasury, together with other holy relics of historical significance taken from various synagogues.

Thus this beautiful menorah belonging to the Beit Knesset Hagadol was lost, but a fascinating story involving the menorah remains with us until today. It happened about three hundred years ago:

Hagaon Rabbi Yehoshua Heschel zt"l held the position of chief rabbi in Vilna at that time. Those were difficult times for the Jews of the city. Frederick August, king of Poland, imposed his own heavy tax on the city's Jews. After exploiting all the funds available, there was no one left from whom they could collect the remaining sum. The enemies of the Jews shrewdly confiscated the Beit Haknesset itself as collateral, until the Jewish community would pay the tax.

The gates of the Beit Haknesset Hagadol were closed and the sound of prayer and Torah could no longer be heard from that holy edifice. It is easy to imagine the tremendous anguish of the city's Jews, lacking even a place to pour out their grief.

One day an astonishing rumor spread in the city. It spread by word of mouth and fueled the public's imagination. According to the rumor, every night, close to midnight, the sound of crying and supplication emanates from the Beit Haknesset Hagadol. Various bizarre rumors circulated concerning this mysterious voice.

Few knew the true origin of the voice. About ten of the city's elders used to fast on Mondays and Thursdays, due to the situation. And every night, as midnight approached, they would traverse a long secret tunnel leading to the basement of the Beit Haknesset Hagadol. In the Beit Knesset they would recite tikkun chatzot. (A special prayer recited at midnight, bemoaning the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash.)

The rumor about the wailing voice reached the ears of the Duke of Vilna. One night he set out, accompanied by his servants, to the Beit Haknesset Hagadol. The duke first checked and found that all the synagogue doors and windows were closed and locked. Then he waited for midnight and indeed the rumor was verified: a muffled weeping sound suddenly broke through the stillness of the night.



A Chanukah Story

Agitated, the duke instructed his attendants to bring him a long ladder. He climbed up to a high window in the eastern wall and peeked inside. He gasped at the sight: mysterious figures, clad in white and white-haired, huddled at the foot of the Aron Hakodesh around a lit candle and wept softly.

Pale as a ghost the duke descended the ladder, mounted his horse and galloped quickly to his house. But even there the incredible sight that his eyes beheld in the beit kneset did not leave him. That night he slept fitfully. At a certain point he woke up covered in sweat from a nightmare, in which one of the figures in white appeared before him, warning him to stop harassing the Jews.

The next morning the duke called for the community leaders. He informed them that he would be willing to reopen the beit kneset, but on condition that they give him one of the beit kneset's expensive holy objects as collateral.

On the advice of the Chief Rabbi, Hagaon Rabbi Yehoshua Heschel zt"l, they decided to pawn the ancient copper menorah. The duke was happy with the decision and chose to place the menorah in one of the statue galleries in his house. When they tried to light it, the menorah began to emit thick smoke and blackened the statues. It did not help to change the oil; the menorah continued blackening the hall and its sculptures. And so, left with no choice and prompted by a deep inner fear, the duke moved the menorah out of this indecent room to a different, more modest room in his castle.

Chanukah arrived. The Jews of Vilna wished to light the menorah but remembered that they had given it to the duke. They lit a different menorah instead, but the lights went out after a short time and did not burn for the minimum time fixed by the Sages. They changed the wicks but these too did not burn for long. The Rav declared: "Heaven is hinting that we must redeem the large menorah. We must not leave a holy item in the hands of non-Jews."

The very next day the Ner Tamid association of the Vilna community began collecting money to redeem the menorah. Six long years passed from that day until the poor local Jews succeeded in amassing the full sum of the heavy tax imposed on them.

On the evening of the first night of Chanukah 5493, the Jews of Vilna celebrated. In a memorable procession, accompanied by a group of musicians, the menorah was brought from the duke's house and returned to its honorable place at the right of the Aron Hakodesh.

That year the entire community gathered in the Beit Haknesset Hagadol to see and hear the lighting and blessing of the Chanukah lights in their ancient copper menorah.



PIYUTIM

**A Piyut Recounting the Chanukah Miracles,
Composed By Rabbi Chaim Pinto Hagadol zy"a**

**א-לי ארוממנהו אין יחיד כיחודו נס לבני
מתתיהו עשה פלא לבדו פדה עדה נדה מלא ארץ
כבודו**

הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

**נועצו יחד רעה היוונים עלינו מצות א-ל גדול
דעה להעביר ממנו אנו קמנו ששנו גבר חסדו
עלינו**

הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

**יוונים בית א-ל באו טמאו השמנים בדקו והנה
מצאו פך מפכים קטנים אטום חתום סתום כה
כוננה ידו**

הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

**חלק ושיעור לילה אחת לבד היה בו ברכת נורא
עלילה, שרתה תוך הנשאר בו רמו עצמו עמו
קמו ויתעודדו**

הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

**יחיד מסר גיבורים, ביד אישים חלשים קרן
ישראל הרים על הצרים הנוגשים אפילו כולו
נפלו, נגרשו ושוודדו**

הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

**ימים אלה נקבעו, בהלל ובהודאה כי נפשותם
נושעו מיד צר גאה גאה חילו גילו סולו לא-ל גדול
כבודו**

הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

**משתה ושמחה יהיו בם מטעמים אמורים
הנרות הם חיובים נעשים ונזכרים צאו בואו ראו
התורה הזאת למדו**

הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

**פתילות יחד נמנו טוב טעמים ונימוקם במספר
לו ימנו כי כן דינם וחוקם שמרו הורו עזרו אשר
לא תשיג ידו**

הודו לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו

Treasures

Based on the teachings of
Moreinu v'Rabbeinu Hagaon
Hatzaddik Rabbi David Chananya
Pinto, shlita



The Torah: Safeguard against Worldly Temptations

Kabbalah sources explain that Egypt is called the 'the nakedness of the earth', meaning an impure land full of idol worship, lewdness and the most severe sins, a land of slaves without any inhibitions.

The question is, if Egypt was such a terrible country and so full of sin, it was certainly very difficult to withstand its strong immorality and other terrible sins. So how could Hashem present Yosef Hatzaddik with such a challenge by sending him down to Egypt? To make things worse, he was also sold as a slave to Egyptians, alone in a place devoid of Torah, without parents who could watch over him. Being in such a terrible place gives rise to serious concern that he may deteriorate spiritually and assimilate with the Egyptians. Why did Hashem bring upon him such a difficult test?

I would like to suggest that this is the reason why the Torah begins with a long introduction about Yosef being sold a servant to Potiphar, the Chamberlain of the Butchers. The Torah praises Yosef Hatzaddik (Bereishit 39:2-3), "Hashem was with Yosef, and he became a successful man; and he remained in the house of his Egyptian master. His master perceived that Hashem was with him, and whatever he did Hashem made succeed in his hand."

Yosef Hatzaddik followed the ways of Hashem and did not veer from the path of Torah and mitzvot to the right or left. He constantly mentioned the name of Hashem and rose in levels of holiness and purity. Therefore, even in Egypt Yosef Hatzaddik merited that "Hashem was with Yosef... Hashem was with him." In Egypt too, Hashem and His Shechina protected Yosef Hatzaddik so he should always remain righteous and see success, not only in material endeavors but also in his spiritual efforts.

This was the greatness of Yosef Hatzaddik. Even when he went down to Egypt he guarded himself from deteriorating spiritually. If we wonder where he obtained the strength to retain his level even in this most immoral land, the answer is that he took along with him 'provisions' from his father's house – the Torah he had studied with his father Ya'akov.

This enabled him to "adamantly refuse," flee from his master's wife like from fire, and withstand this difficult test.

When a person is beset with challenges he must not despair or grow despondent. Rather he should know that Hashem is the One who sent him this test, to examine his sincerity and devotion to Torah. He must also understand that although Hashem sends him challenges, on the other hand He also protects him so he can withstand the test.



Hagaon Rabbi Ezra Chamou zt'l

For forty-five years the Gaon Rabbi Ezra Chamou zt'l, one of the foremost sages of Aram Tzova, was a partner with Hashem in the creation of the world. For forty-five years he served as a halachic authority and ruled in Jewish law, and as Chazal say (Shabbat), "Every dayan who judges the absolute truth, it is as if he becomes a partner with Hashem in the creation of the world."

Under Rabbi Ezra's direction, his rabbinical court deliberated on all rulings for the Jews of Hallab, including monetary law, matters pertaining to marriage, and kashrut issues. Rabbi Ezra and the other Jewish sages were also approached, with great reverence, by their non-Jewish neighbors who were impressed with the just rulings handed down by the Jewish court. Besides his extensive knowledge and deep acuity in all areas of the Talmud and Torah topics, Rabbi Ezra was also well versed in worldly matters and the customs and lifestyles of the inhabitants of the surrounding villages, Jews and Gentile alike.

May the Memory of a Tzaddik be for a Blessing

The following story testifies to this and was the talk of the day among the Jewish and Gentile inhabitants of Hallab, who marveled at the great wisdom and insight of the Jewish rabbi. They did not cease praising and glorifying his virtues.

One of Rabbi Ezra's neighbors, a distinguished Arab, loved alcoholic beverages and was a frequent drinker. One evening he returned home in a fit of rage, and in his drunken state turned to his wife and ordered her to serve him, at once, a cup of steaming coffee. He even threatened her unequivocally that if she did not bring him what he requested by the time he finished eating the dry bread roll in his hand, horrible and bitter would be her end...

The frightened woman hastened to prepare the cup of coffee for her husband. She hurried over to the charcoal stove in the corner of their house, lit the coals, and placed a kettle of water atop the fire. Her husband sat on his bed munching the dry roll, which he finished before his wife served him the cup of coffee he asked for.

The husband's honor, which supposedly had been trampled underfoot by his wife, made him boil with anger. In a fit of rage he yelled: "You are divorced! You are divorced!" Three times, lending legal validity to the divorce, according to Islamic laws.

When the husband sobered up from his intoxication, he realized the seriousness of his actions. As a result of his hasty words, he had divorced his wife and they could

no longer live together! But he had never intended to divorce. What should he do? How can he take back his words?

In his distress the Arab hurried to the residence of the local sheikh, to ask his advice on how to annul his words and continue living with his wife.

But to his great sorrow, his mission saw no success and the sheikh ruled: "According to Islamic laws, you have divorced your wife. There is no way you can undo this, for your wife did not fulfill your request."

In his desperation the Arab turned to his neighbors who suggested that he go to the Jewish sage. He took their advice and went to speak to Rabbi Ezra Chamou, who listened attentively to the story. However, Rabbi Ezra did not want to express his opinion before obtaining the consent of the Muslim sheikh.

The sheikh agreed and then Rabbi Ezra turned to the husband with a question:

"Tell me please, was the roll you were eating fresh or dry?"

"It was dry. And that is why I was so thirsty," the husband apologetically explained.

"If so," Rabbi Ezra ruled, "your marriage is still valid, for naturally when you eat dry food crumbs fall to the floor. And those crumbs you have not yet eaten..."

Rabbi Ezra lived to a ripe old age, and his light was extinguished on the fourth day of Chanukah. He was laid to rest on the Mount of Olives.