

Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim Mikeitz-Chanukah 5773

(From the archives)

Shabbos in the Parasha

This week is Chanukah, the festival when we commemorate the Jewish People's victory over the Syrian-Greek army and subsequently, the miracle of the oil in the Menorah burning for eight days. Regarding Chanukah, the Arizal (Shaar HaKavanos Derushei Chag Chanukah Derush 1) mentions that the blessing that we recite over the Chanukah lights ends with the words *lihadlik ner Chanukah*, to kindle the candle of Chanukah. The Arizal notes that the first letters of these three words spell the word *nachal*, which means a stream. It is noteworthy that the word *nachal* is equal in numerical value to the word Chanukah (88-89) and furthermore, in the form of *at bash*, the word *nachal* equals the word Chanukah. The Arizal explains on a kabbalist level the association of Chanukah to *nachal*, but perhaps there is also an explanation on basic level. The word *nachal* means stream, and amongst bodies of water, a stream is unique that it is constantly flowing. In Parashas Toldos we learn about the wells that Yitzchak dug. It is said (Bereishis 26:15) *vechol habieiros asher chafru avdei aviv bimei Avraham aviv sitnum Pelishtim vayemalum afar*, all the wells that his father's servants had dug in the days of Avraham his father, the Philistines stopped up, and filled them with earth. One must wonder

why the Torah states that the Philistines stopped up the wells and filled them with dirt. It is not sufficient to state that they filled the wells up with dirt? It is interesting to note that later on in history, the Philistines are once again stopping up, as we read regarding Shimshon (Shoftim 16:21) *vayochazuhu Pelishtim vayinakru es einav*, the Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes. Why are the Philistines constantly stopping up and gouging out eyes? When one scrambles the letters of the word *Pelishtim*, we find the words *Yefes Mosheil*, *Yefes* (Greece) rules. Although the *Pelishtim* are descendants of Cham and Greece is a descendant of *Yefes*, the Torah chose to allude to the Chanukah miracle in the passage that discusses the struggle that occurred between Yitzchak and the *Pelishtim*. The Baal HaTurim writes regarding the wells that Yitzchak dug: "The first well was referred to as *Eishek*, which corresponds to Babylonia, who oppressed the house of Yehudah, *umiyad oshkeiehm koach*, and their oppressors have the power (Koheles 4:1). The second well was referred to as *Sitnah*, and this corresponds to the decree of Haman, and it is said (Ezra 4:6) *uvimlachus Achashveirosh bitchilas malchuso kasvu sitnah al yoshvei Yehudah ViYerushalayim*, during the reign of Achashveirosh, at the beginning of his reign, they wrote a calumny against the

inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem. The third well corresponds to Yavan, Greece, as the Greeks decreed that the Jewish People could not use the mikveh, and a miracle occurred and a mikveh appeared in every Jew's house. This is the meaning of the verse that states (Bereishis 26:22) *vayateik misham vayachpor beer acheres vilo ravu aleha vayikra shamah rehovos vayomer ki atah hirschiv HaShem lanu ufarinu baaretz*, he relocated from there and dug another well; they did not quarrel over it, so he called its name Rechovos, and said, "for now HaShem has granted us ample space, and we can be fruitful in the land." The miracle of the Mikvaos allowed the Jewish People to continue procreating. It is evident from the words of the Baal HaTurim that although the Greeks attempted to "darken the eyes" of the Jewish People, they were ultimately unsuccessful, as HaShem allowed the "stream" of Jewish life to continue. Thus, Chanukah is not merely about victorious battles in the physical realm. Rather, the festival of Chanukah is about the flow of Jewish continuity, and this flow is precipitated by our engagement in HaShem's mitzvos. Although Yefes (Greece) attempts to be Mosheil (rule) over the Jewish People in spirit, we are governed by a higher Source, Who protects us and allows us to continue in His service. Throughout the week we are confronted by challenges that threaten our spiritual citadel. Upon the arrival of Shabbos, however, no force in the world can dominate the Jewish spirit, as all harsh judgments are removed with the

onset of Shabbos. It is noteworthy that the law is (Shulchan Aruch O. C. 678:1) that if one only has sufficient money to purchase provisions for Chanukah lights or for Shabbos lights, one is required to purchase provisions for the Shabbos lights, as the precept of domestic harmony supersedes the requirement of Chanukah lights. Similarly, the Greeks sought to extinguish the light of the Jewish People by inhibiting the Jewish People's efforts towards perpetuating Jewish life. HaShem saw to it that the light of the Jewish People would continue to be illuminated, as the restoration of sanctity in their midst warranted that the Jewish People should be blessed with even greater light. Thus, the light of Chanukah continues to flow like a stream in our lives, illuminating every area of darkness in the world. In the same vein the light of Shabbos illuminates our lives and transforms us into completely different beings. HaShem should grant us this Chanukah the fulfillment of the first words of the Chanukah hymn, *maoz tzur yeshuasi lechah naeh lishabeiach tikon beis tefilos visham todah nizabeiach*, O Mighty Rock of salvation, to praise You is a delight. Restore my House of Prayer and there we will bring a thanksgiving offering.

Shabbos in the Zemiros

Eishes Chayil

Composed by Shlomo HaMelech in Mishlei

וְרַחֵק מִפְּנִינִים מְכָרָה
*far beyond pearls is
her value.*

It is noteworthy that pearls are also used as a contrast to a Torah scholar, as it is said (Mishlei 3:15) וְיִקְרָהּ הִיא מִפְּנִינִים, it is more precious than pearls, and the Gemara (Horayos 13a) states that from this verse we learn that one who studies Torah is greater than the Kohen Gadol who entered into the Holy of Holies. Here the verse states that her value is beyond pearls. We can suggest that the verse alludes to the idea of which the Gemara (Shabbos 10b) states, HaShem said to Moshe, “I have a wonderful gift in My treasure house and Shabbos is its name.” The Sfas Emes writes that although HaShem was bestowing the Shabbos upon the Jewish People, He still referred to the Shabbos as a wonderful gift in My treasure house. We can interpret this declaration to mean that Shabbos is still a mystery, as Shabbos is not something that one can truly see. Rather, Shabbos is something that if one merits, he can know, as it is said (Shemos 31:13) אֶת-שַׁבְּתוֹתַי, תִּשְׁמְרוּ כִּי בֵּינִי אוֹת הוּא, לְדַעַת, כִּי אֲנִי ה' מְקַדְּשְׁכֶם וּבִינֵיכֶם לְדֹרֹתֵיכֶם, *however, you must observe My Sabbaths, for it is a sign between Me and you for your generations, to know that I am Hashem Who makes you holy.* Thus, the Shabbos in essence is far beyond the value of what HaShem has bestowed upon us from His treasure house, because we can only know the Shabbos, but the true light of Shabbos can be only experienced and seen by our neshamah yeseira, the extra

soul that HaShem awards us with on Shabbos.

Shabbos in Tefillah

Vizichricho malkeinu yispaar bashamayim mimaala vial haaretz mitachas, and may Your remembrance, Our King, be glorified in the heaven above and upon the earth below. The Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 59:8) states that Avraham told Eliezer that initially HaShem was only the G-d of the heavens as His Name was not yet known amongst the people. Now, however, Avraham had made HaShem's Name known amongst people, so HaShem had become the G-d of the heaven and the earth. In a similar vein, we declare here that HaShem's Name and remembrance should be known in the heavens and in the earth. One must talk to people about HaShem and His wonders so that His Name will be known throughout the land.

Shabbos Stories

Shalom Bayis Before Chanukah Lighting

The world renowned Chofetz Chaim, Rabbi Yisroel Meir (HaKohen) Kagan (1838-1933), had a rebbe who was not nearly well known as he was. His rebbe was a saintly man from the town of Horodna, Lithuania, named Rabbi Nachum Kaplan (1812-1879). Those who knew him referred to him lovingly as Reb Nachumke. The Chofetz Chaim made it a point to observe carefully Reb Nachumke's every action and deed, for

he knew that anything that Reb Nachumke ever did was done with forethought and good reason. It happened one night during Chanukah that the Chofetz Chaim was in the home of Reb Nachumke. The time for lighting Chanukah candles came and the Chofetz Chaim waited for his rebbe to recite the blessings and light the candles, but Reb Nachumke let the time pass and made no move to light the menorah. The Chofetz Chaim was a bit surprised that his rebbe would let the time slip by - but he did not dare say anything. More time elapsed, and still Reb Nachumke went about his regular routine without saying anything about the lighting of the Chanukah candles. An hour went by and then another hour, still the menorah was not lit. The Chofetz Chaim simply could not understand his rebbe's inaction and apparent inattentiveness to this mitzvah. Finally, deep into the night, there was a knock at the door. The Chofetz Chaim ran and opened it; it was Reb Nachumke's wife. Almost immediately after she came in, Reb Nachumke began his introductory prayers, recited the appropriate blessings and then lit the Chanukah menorah. The Chofetz Chaim felt that there had to be a lesson here and so once the flames were flickering, he respectfully asked his rebbe to explain to him why he had let so much time elapse before finally lighting his menorah. Reb Nachumke explained patiently to his beloved student. "The Talmud (Shabbos 23b) poses a question: What is the law if a man has money to use for only one candle on the Friday night of Chanukah?

Should he spend it on a Shabbos candle and fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles? Or rather spend the money on a candle for his Chanukah menorah and thereby fulfill the mitzvah of Chanukah candle-lighting?" Reb Nachumke continued. "The Talmud states unequivocally that one is obligated to spend the money for a Shabbos candle, the reason being that the Shabbos candle, aside from the mitzvah involved, adds to shalom bayis (peace and tranquility of the home). Thus a candle that fosters shalom bayis takes precedence even over the mitzvah of lighting a Chanukah candle." (See also Shulchan Aruch O.C. 678:1) "I have no doubt," continued Reb Nachumke, "that had my wife come home and realized that I did not wait for her with the Chanukah candles, she would unquestionably have been distraught. There would have been tension, and perhaps even anger on her part that I did not show her the courtesy to wait until she returned. Thus I delayed and delayed until she came home." "You see," added Reb Nachumke, "the Talmud itself used Chanukah candles as a focal point to emphasize the importance of marital harmony. Should I then have taken these same Chanukah candles and through them caused a lack of shalom bayis? I had no choice but to let the ideal time for candle lighting pass, and wait until later to kindle them at a time that was still consistent with Jewish law. When Rabbi Sholom Schwadron retold this story he would add an interesting insight. "Shalom bayis in this instance also

meant that Reb Nachumke did not complain to his wife - when she finally arrived - that her lateness had caused him to wait so long to perform a mitzvah. He understood that to complain would have fostered ill will as well and minimized shalom bayis.”

Shabbos in Navi

Shmuel I Chapter 18

On Shabbos we are satisfied with our portion

In this chapter we learn of Dovid becoming successful and popular amongst the Jewish People, and Shaul becoming intimidated by Dovid. Shaul then decided that he would not kill Dovid directly. Rather, Shaul would have Dovid wage war with the Plishtim and Dovid would be killed by the Plishtim. Shaul had his servants tell Dovid that in lieu of a dowry, Dovid would have to kill one hundred Plishtim and then Dovid could have the hand of Shaul's daughter in marriage. Dovid and his men proceeded to kill two hundred Plishtim and Shaul gave Dovid his daughter Michal as a wife. The episodes involving Shaul and Dovid are a lesson for all of us. One has to be satisfied with the portion in life that HaShem has given him and not be jealous of other people's accomplishments. Shabbos is a time when we are all equal in our portion, as the entire day of Shabbos is a gift from HaShem. Thus, we should focus on being satisfied with what we have, as we say in the Shabbos Shemone Esrei *sabeinu mituvecho visamcheinu*

bishuasecho vitaheir libeinu liovdecho biemes, satisfy us from Your goodness and gladden our souls with Your salvation, and purify our hearts to serve You sincerely. Once we are satisfied with our portion we will be able to help others to become satisfied with their portion.

Shabbos in Agadah

Seeing the Difference is Peace

The Gemara (Shabbos 20b) states that we light candles prior to the onset of Shabbos, and Rashi (Ibid 25b s.v. hadlakas ner biShabbos) writes that the reason for this lighting is that one should not stumble in the darkness. This explanation is difficult to understand, as in earlier times, once it became dark, one would have to light a candle every day of the week so there would be light in the house. Why is Shabbos unique that the Chachamim necessitated the lighting of candles? The Maharal (Ibid) writes that the function of light is to distinguish between various items. When one can distinguish between various items, this is deemed to be peace. For this reason the Shabbos lights are referred to as peace. Perhaps based on the words of the Maharal we can interpret the words of Rashi homiletically. When one distinguishes between what is permitted to do on Shabbos and what is forbidden, he has attained true peace. Lighting the Shabbos candles itself requires knowledge of the laws of Shabbos, such as the earliest time to light the candles on Friday and until what time of the day

one can light candles. HaShem should allow us to see the light and merit observing the Holy Shabbos so that we will have peace in our lives.

Shabbos in Halacha

Returning in a Different Pot

When one is permitted to return a pot, one would also be allowed to pour the food from one pot to another and return the new pot to the blech. This halacha has important ramifications. If cholent or any food is on the verge of drying out, one is allowed to take a kettle from the blech and add some of its boiled water to the cholent.

Shabbos Challenge Question

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Last week we posed the question: the Medrashim mention associations between Avraham and Yaakov to Shabbos. It would seem that Yitzchak is not mentioned regarding Shabbos. What could possibly be the association between Yitzchak and Shabbos and why is not mentioned?

It is noteworthy that in the Shabbos mincha prayer we recite the words *Avraham yagel Yitzchak yiranein Yaakov uvanav yanuhcu vo*, Avraham would rejoice, Yitzchak would exult, Yaakov and his children would rest on it. The word *yiranein* is equal in gematria to 310, and this is the same gematria as the word *yeish*. The Mishna (Uktzin 3:12) tells us that HaShem will give as a heritage to the righteous three hundred

and ten worlds, as it is said (Mishlei 8:21) *lihanchil ohavai yeish*, I have what to bequeath to those who love me. Yitzchak was deemed to be completely detached from this world. In a sense, then, Yitzchak was on the level of Shabbos, as Shabbos is a semblance of the World to Come. Thus, we see an allusion to Yitzchak being associated with Shabbos.

This week's question is, every week we recite Kabbalas Shabbos as we greet the Shabbos. What is the idea of greeting the Shabbos, which we do not find by any other commandments and we do not greet the festivals? If you have a possible answer, please email me at ShabbosTaamHachaim@gmail.com and your answer will be posted in next week's edition of Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim.

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