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CHANUKAH

Chanukah will start on the 20th of December evening, remembering that the first day of the feast will on December 21. That means that when Christians will celebrate Christmas the Jewish people will celebrate Chanukah another feast of the light. The question I would like to answer today is what is the connection between Chanukah and Yeshua. It is clear that Yeshua wanted to celebrate Chanukah. In John we read “Then came the Feast of Dedication at Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon’s Colonnade.” (10:22-23) What we learn in these verses is that it was the time of Chanukah, which is the Hebrew word for “dedication”. The second indication is that it was winter time, that means it was cold. I am in Jerusalem right now, and I can tell you, we are already in the winter time, it is cold right now in Jerusalem. Now the third indication is that this feast was important for Yeshua. Jerusalem was not his city of residence. Yeshua lived in Capernaum in the shore of the lake of Galilee. Capernaum is always warm, the temperature will be there next week between 21° and 22° (70°-72°), that means it was much more comfortable for him to stay during the winter time in Capernaum. But in fact he decided to go up to Jerusalem for Chanukah, even though it was winter and cold, remembering that going from Capernaum to Jerusalem is a long way, walking 8 to 10 days under wind, and rain.

Why this feast, which is not mentioned in the Bible, was important for Yeshua? The prophets have spoken about the Second Temple. The prophet Haggai said “I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,” says the LORD Almighty.” (2:7) “The desired of all nations” is the Messiah, he “will come”, and when he will come he will enter the Temple of G-d, that is why the text tells that “I [G-d] will fill this house [Temple] with glory.” And the prophet continues saying “The glory of this present

house will be greater than the glory of the former house,’ says the LORD Almighty. ‘And in this place I will grant peace,’ declares the LORD Almighty.” (2:9) How can we understand this affirmation? The first Temple was built by Salomon, when Salomon dedicated the Temple, G-d revealed himself to Salomon, promising wisdom and blessings. The first temple had the ark of the covenant which was built by Moshe Rabenu, with inside the Ten commandments which were engraved by the hand of G-d on the mount Sinai. All these points tell us about the glory of the first Temple. But the prophet, says under G-d’s inspiration “The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house” How? The second Temple had no Ark of covenant, the Holy of Holy place was completely empty. The only way to understand how the second Temple was more glorious than the first one, is when we understand that the Messiah called “The desired of all nations” will enter the Temple and what he will do there? “And in this place I will grant peace”. “I” means the L-rd Almighty, the Messiah will grant peace in the Temple, this Messiah is the Lord.

Now we can go a little further. Chanukah is the celebration of the dedication of the temple during the time of the Greek. The priest family Maccabee, did not accept that the temple would be profaned and desecrated by the Gentiles. They fought the Greeks, they won, they purified the Temple and they dedicated it. In remembrance of this dedication, they decided to establish a feast, the feast of the dedication or Chanukah.

If the temple was not purified and dedicated, Yeshua could not have his ministry in the Temple, the prophecy could not have been fulfilled and never the second Temple would be filled with more glory than the first Temple, and G-d and the Messiah could not grant peace in the Temple, that is why Chanukah was important for Yeshua. That is why we must see this feast with great respect.

OVERVIEW

VAYECHEV

Genesis 37:1 - 40:23

Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips.

Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king.

The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead.

Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites.

Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast.

Yaakov is devastated. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers.

In the Parasha's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage.

He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the Mashiach.

Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master.

Joseph's extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned.

In prison, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is reinstated, and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in prison.

JUDGED BY APPEARANCE

How painful it is and how destructive it is to have to be judged merely by appearance. Appearances often times deceive the beholder. In this week's parsha this human tendency to rush to judgment on the basis of external appearances and physical circumstances plays an important part in the narrative of the Torah.

1. The brothers of Yosef misinterpret the cloak given to him by their father as a symbol of hatred towards them. „Why should he be allowed to dress differently than we?“ is their complaint. Yosef's attitude and his dreams certainly did not help the situation, but in the judgment of the Torah and its commentators, the brothers misread the situation and badly overreacted. Yosef's physical beauty, his attention to his appearance and his brilliant and charming personality only intensified the hatred of his brothers towards him. He was far too **“different”** than they were and in the words of the Torah itself, the brothers never really recognized Yosef as the great, noble and holy person that he was until very late in their relationship with him.

2. In the Torah, we are told of the instance where Yehuda sees a woman sitting at the crossroads of a highway. He does not recognize her even though she is his daughter-in-law. She is dressed in a **“different”** manner and he immediately comes to the conclusion that because of the circumstances, she must be a harlot. He will be eternally and publicly shamed for mistaking Tamar's appearance — and out of this unlikely union the future of the Jewish people will arise. but it is obvious that this was not Yehuda's finest hour. He judged the woman by her appearance and he was mistaken. He will later admit publicly that she was the more righteous one.

3. Yosef is attractive and charming and well liked by all who come into contact with him. He is entrusted with everything in Potiphar's house. The wife of Potiphar misreads Yosef's appearance and is convinced that he will succumb to her seductions.

4. When Yosef is the Vice-Roy in Egypt, Yosef recognizes his brothers but they do not recognize him. They see only a person clothed in the garb of an Egyptian viceroy standing before them. How painful it is and how destructive it is to have to be judged merely by appearance and raiment.

Rabbi Berel Wein says “In truth, the Torah teaches us that ‘humans only see physically what appears before their eyes but that the Lord, sees into the heart and essence of the person.’”

SUPER HUMAN POWER TO OVERCOME THE TEMPTATION

Rabbi Yissocher Frand reminds us that the Talmud relates that a certain Roman matron asked Rav Yosi the following question: How can it be that a 17-year-old boy, who has been away from his family and all family influence, immersed in the sensuality of Egyptian society — how was it possible for him to be able to withstand this temptation? The Talmud [Sotah 36b] elaborates that it was that vision of his father in the window telling him “Yosef, in the future your brethren will want to inscribe your name among the stones of the Ephod worn by the Kohen Gadol, together with the names of the other tribes. Do you want to do something that will cause your name to be blotted out from amidst the names of my other sons? Do you want to have the title a shepherd of prostitutes?” When Yosef heard that, he backed off. This fear of losing his connection to his father is what held him back from sinning.

By natural instinct and logic, as the Roman matron asked Rav Yosi, this temptation required super human powers for a 17-year-old young man to resist. However, it was the image of Yaakov — how can I do this to my father? — that held Yosef back.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky makes two interesting observations. This image only works if the father has “currency” with his son. If the father does not have “currency” with the son, his appearance in the window is not going to save the day. Just as there is a concept [Chagiga 15b] that “If a teacher appears (in stature) as an Angel of G-d, then one seeks the words of Torah from his mouth,” so too it is the case that if a FATHER appears (in stature) to his children like an Angel of G-d, then and only then will be able to have influence on them. We as parents need to act in a manner that will cause it to be simply impossible for our children to contemplate “how could I ever let my father down and do this to him?”

This is one of the foundations of child rearing —that a father needs to gain respect and prestige in the eyes of his children. He has to maintain credibility and inspire love and admiration, such that one’s children would never contemplate harming their father’s reputation or expectations of them.

There was once a Jew who live in Baltimore, who came here in the 1920s. For many years, he was the chairman of the Board of a Rabbinical College. He was a student of Rav Leibowitz, the Rosh HaYehsiva. When the student came to Baltimore in the 1920s, it was almost impossible to make a living without working on Shabbat. Like so many people of his generation, he faced the great test of earning a living

that “If you do not come on Saturday, do not bother coming on Monday either.” He relates that he was on the verge of taking such a job that required a six-day workweek. However, he was stopped by the image of his Rebbe, Rav Leibowitz. He could not do it to his Rebbe. That literally held him back and he remained a Sabbath observant and honest Jew for all of his 101 years.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand says that rather than Yaakov Avinu appearing in the window as by Yosef haTzadik, Rav Leibowitz appeared in the window. This story is telling us that we need to have that type of relationship with our children, such that they love and respect us and want to remain attached to us, thereby never doing anything that puts that relationship at risk.

GENUINE ALTRUISM

As the saga of Jacob’s sons unfolds, we encounter two women, one portrayed as righteous, the other as an adulteress. And yet, on closer examination, there is a striking resemblance between them. Why was Tamar so determined to conceive a child by Judah? Our Sages tell us that Tamar knew prophetically that the Davidic dynasty was to descend from her. Therefore, when her father-in-law refused to let her marry his last son, she resorted to desperate measures.

Why did Potiphar’s wife try to seduce Joseph? Once again, our Sages discern a desire to share in the ancestorhood of the Jewish people. Potiphar’s wife knew great leaders of the Jewish people would be descended from her and Joseph, and she wanted to fulfill that destiny. In actuality, however, Joseph’s union was to be with her daughter, not her.

Rabbi Naftali Reich says “In our own lives, when we examine our innermost thoughts and motivations, we should ask ourselves how we would react to failure. If we sense we would feel frustrated and angry, our motives are indeed suspect. But if we are convinced we would feel only sadness and disappointment, we can rest assured that our altruism is genuine.”

Sources: These comments of the parasha are based on comments published by Rabbi Noson Weisz, from Aish HaTorah. By Rabbi Naftali Reich, Rabbi Berel Wein and Rabbi Yochanan Zweig, Rabbi Yissocher Frand from Torah.org (Project Genenis).

FAITH AND TRUST IN G-D

A father had two sons. One was clever while the other was foolish. The foolish son thought that he was the smartest person on earth and that everyone else was foolish. One day, the father said to the smart son, "Take your brother to the big city and show him around. Perhaps he will realize that he does not know everything."

They came to the big city and passed by a store that made furniture. The silly brother said, "Look how people are taking good and expensive wood, piercing holes through them and cutting them into pieces! I told you everyone was foolish!" The brother didn't say anything but continued on. They came to another store that made clothing and again the foolish one exclaimed, "Look! Here, too, the people are taking beautiful pieces of cloth and cutting them up!"

"Wait here a while," answered the intelligent brother, "and you will see who is the fool." Before long, they saw that the cut pieces were sewn together and, in time, beautiful garments were produced. "Now lets go back to the furniture store." There too, they saw that carpenters were using the pieces of wood to create beautiful furniture. "Now I see," said the silly son. "Perhaps it is I who is the fool and not everyone else!" The fact that we know that everything is from G-d, regardless of the uncertainty and confusion the world is going through, should give us good reason to have faith and trust in G-d that, in the end, things will turn out for the best.

IF YOU SEE THE DONKEY OF YOUR ENEMY...

One Thursday a Magid (preacher) had to travel to Minsk to deliver a sermon on Shabbat. It was a cold winter day and a heavy snow was falling. As a result, no

coachman wanted to travel to the city. In desperation, the Magid hired a poor Jew with an old horse who was willing to make the trip.

Driving on the icy road was very difficult. The horse wasn't in great shape to begin with, and certainly wasn't fit for traveling in such treacherous conditions.

Not too long after they set out, they came to a hill. "We have to get out and help push the carriage," said the coachman to the Magid. "My old mare isn't strong enough to pull the wagon up the hill."

The Magid had no choice but to get out and help push. They finally managed to get to the top of the hill. The Magid couldn't wait to climb back into the wagon, but the coachman said, "I'm sorry, you can't get back in yet. I need your help to hold the carriage back so it doesn't slide down the hill. My horse is in no shape to make it down the hill on her own."

Groaning under the strain, the Magid held on to the wagon so it wouldn't slide down the hill.

Many times throughout the trip, the Magid was forced to assist the horse and carriage through mud and snow. At last, totally exhausted, the Magid arrived at his destination.

"I want to ask you a question," said the Magid to the driver. "I had a good reason to travel to this city, because I have to give a sermon in the synagogue. You also had a good reason to travel because you needed the money to feed your family. But, can you think of one good reason why the horse had to come all the way to Minsk?"

In this week's Parsha, Mishpatim, the Torah commands, "If you see the donkey of your enemy lying under its burden, and you may not want to help him, you have to make every effort to help him."

EDITOR

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HAFTARA

Amos 2:6 - 3:8

It is interesting in this text of Amos to see how the Lord remembers what happened because he knows that will happen again. The children of Yaakov sold Yoseph for some coins (Gen 37:28), Judas will do it again when it will be about the Messiah (Matt 27:5-7), that is why Amos recalls this experience saying that “They sell the righteous for silver” (Amos 2:6). But they are doing much more than selling the righteous, they “deny Justice to the oppressed”, they commit incest (2:7), they profane the altar of God and go after idols. (2:8).

But G-d is good with his people, he reminds them how to lead them out of Egypt when they were slaves, he guided the people of Israel through the desert during forty years. He gave them the land which belonged to the Amorites (2:10). He gave them prophets, but even with the prophets the people of Israel were not nice “But you made the Nazirites drink wine and commanded the prophets not to prophesy.”(2:12). G-d is going to punish his people for what they have done. “I will crush you...” (2:13)

G-d does not understand (humanly speaking) why Israel is reacting this way. God has chosen Israel to be his people, I would say his partner. And normally when we are partners we don't do things without consulting our partner, talking is the best way to avoid mistakes, that is why God says to Israel Do two walk together unless they have agreed to do so? (3:3), from the very beginning G-d has announced to Israel what would happen, hoping that they will understand and they will avoid doing mistakes “Surely the Sovereign LORD does nothing without revealing his plan to his servants the prophets” (3:7)

Once again we see that it is not easy to be god's people, it gives us more responsibilities and from time to time Israel did not use their privilege properly.

BRIT HACHADASHA

Heb 7:24-26

Joseph is a special figure in the Jewish and biblical tradition. In the Bible, especially in the book of Genesis he is a very important character. 14 chapters of the book are dedicated to Joseph and his story.

Exactly the same number of chapters dedicated to Abraham the “father of believers”. In the Jewish tradition he is called “Yosef Hatsadik” that means “Joseph the righteous”. It is true that Joseph is one of the rare biblical characters who has not sinned (the Bible does not describe his sins). That is why in the Jewish tradition Joseph becomes the “father” or “type” of the Messiah. And one of the Titles of the Messiah is “Son of Joseph” (Sukkah 52a and 52b).

In the Brit Hachadasha we have this reminiscence and link between the Mashiach and Joseph. In the genealogy of Yeshua, we learn that Yeshua is the son of Yoseph (Luke 3:23). When there was discussion about him in the crowd he was presented as the son of Yoseph (John 6:42). And when he was introduced to the first disciples as the Messiah, he was introduced as the son of Joseph, as if the title “Son of Joseph” was more important than “Son of David”. It is said “Philip found Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote — Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.’” (John 1:45).

As Yoseph was called “Yoseph hatsadik” (the righteous), when we read the Brit Hachadasha we discover that Yeshua is also the tsadik par excellence. Jochanan called him **Yeshua Hamashiach Hatsadik (the righteous)** (1 John 2:1). Righteous means that Yeshua is the perfect priest, who can intercede perfectly for us. He is at the right hand of G-d pleading in our favor on behalf of each one of us. Because Yeshua is the righteous, his ministry is much more superior to the ministry of any other high priest. The book of Hebrew says “**but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.**” (Heb. 7:24-6). Yeshua lives, he is officiating in the heavenly sanctuary and he performs a unique ministry of intercession because he is HOLY, BLAMELESS, and PURE, he is HaTsadik, The Righteous.