

בעזהשׁי״ת

Parshah Insights

Pertinent Inspirational
Insights on the Parshah

מקץ - חנוכה

Translated from the outstanding Lev Shomaya Parsha series that contain highlights of the lectures and deroshos given by:

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The purpose of this publication is to make these wonderful Divrei Torah and chizuk available to the English speaking public. We are very grateful to Harav Low shlita for allowing us to glean selected inspiring thoughts.

פרשת מקץ - חנוכה

וּקְבַעוּ שְׂמוֹנֵת יְמֵי חֲנֻכָּה - לְהוֹדוֹת וּלְהַלֵּל

With Chanukah slowly coming to a close, may we conclude this auspicious time with some words of inspiration which could perhaps remain as an influence for us for the rest of the year.

The Gemara tells us that following the חשמונאים's triumph over the Yevanim, the Kohanim entered the Beis Hamikdosh eager to resume performing the Avodah which, of course, includes lighting the menorah. Fortunately, they found a small jug of oil though it was only enough for one day. However, as we all know, a miracle occurred and it burned for eight days. The following year, Chazal established the Yom Tov of Chanukah to commemorate this neis (שבת כא:).

Living off Neis Chanukah

Meforshim ask why the Chachamim waited until the next year to establish the Yom Tov Chanukah. Why did they not introduce it immediately?

The Sefas Emess offers an incredible explanation to this by first posing another question: Why did Chazal establish the additional Yomim Tovim of Chanukah and Purim to those already dictated by the Torah?

He explains that the word רגל - which is the word used in the Torah for the Yamim Tovim of Pesach, Shevuos and Succos - also means a leg. Just as legs are the limbs which support and uphold a person, so

too, the Yomim Tovim are the 'legs' of the year, which support and sustain a Yid for the entire year.

Thus, in previous generations, the שלש רגלים were sufficient to support us. However, in later generations, due to ירידת הדורות, the natural spiritual decline of generations, there was a need for more Yomim Tovim to 'uphold' us. Thus, in the year after neis Chanukah, Chazal understood that the miracle which happened the year before was in order to sustain the future generations during their time in Gallus. They hence saw it fitting to add the Yom Tov of Chanukah, which will serve as an additional 'pillar of support'.

Based on this premise, he explains the terminology בימים ההם בזמן הזה, the double description which seems superfluous; it would have been sufficient just to say בימים ההם?

According to the explanation above, we could understand why the phrasing here is necessary. Hashem performed the neis ההם - in those days, for בזמן הזה - this time of year, alluding to 'our times', when the Yidden need a boost to uphold them in Gallus. Meaning, the נס חנוכה was specifically designed to serve as a spiritual 'injection' for the future generations, strengthening them to overcome the darkness of exile.

The Greatness of Chanukah

He then continues that while the שלש רגלים are certainly at a greater spiritual level than Chanukah and Purim, which are only מְדַרְבְּנָן, we could, in a way, benefit more from the latter. This is because we are able to perform them with more שלימות than the former, since, although there are mitzvos by the שלש רגלים, such as offering up קרבנות and being עולה רגל, one could only perform these whilst the Beis Hamikdash is standing. The Yomim Tovim m'd'Rabanan, however, do not require something we are unable to do. As such, whilst in gallus, we are able to 'fulfil' the Yomim Tovim of Chanukah

and Purim more completely. Thus, although the שלש רגלים - even in our days, where there is no Beis Hamikdash - are greater than Chanukah and Purim, we can still merit to spiritually gain more from the latter, since we can perform them with more shleimus.

Simply, עליה לרגל means going up the Beis haMikdash for Yom Tov. However, it holds a deeper meaning as well, since the term עליה means to ascend. Accordingly, at a deeper level, עליה לרגל also means being spiritually elevated. This indicates that in the times of the Beis Hamikdash, one had to become 'uplifted' to merit Divine Blessing. Conversely, by Chanukah, the fact that there is no such requirement implies that we can merit having the השפעות of the Yom Tov bestowed upon us, even in a spiritually low state (שפת אמת לחנוכה) (תרמ"ד ד"ה לשנה). This highlights once again why Chanukah is in a certain respect even greater than the שלש רגלים.

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz presents a similar idea as follows: As ספרים הקדושים tell us, Chanukah is an opportune time during which one could tap into the power of the אור הגנוז, the Hidden Light originally from ימי בראשית. If so, why was this Yom Tov not presented at מתן תורה along with the other mitzvos?

To explain this, he first poses another question. We find in many places, particularly in the works of Kabbalah, that the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos correspond to the limbs of a person. There are 248 מצוות עשה - positive Commandments - and 365 מצוות לא תעשה - prohibitions, in the Torah. Similarly, each person has two hundred and forty-eight איברים - limbs - and three hundred and sixty-five גידים - sinews. Thus, the 248 Mitzvos Asei correspond to the 248 איברים, and the 365 מצוות לא תעשה correspond to the 365 גידים. It would seem to follow that the מצוות דרבנן are also part of this equation. Hence, one may ask: how are the מצוות דרבנן alluded to in the physical makeup of Man?

Moreover, whenever Chazal instituted a new mitzvah or תקנה not stated in the Torah, it was with specific purpose in mind. For instance,

they were created when they saw it necessary to put precautions in place to keep people from sinning (למיגדר מילתא). So too the mitzvah of Ner Chanukah must also have been established with a similar idea in mind. What exactly did they wish to 'rectify' by introducing the mitzvah of Ner Chanukah?

An antidote to outside forces

The Sanzer Rav explains this with an analogy. One could at times be stricken by an ailment in one or all of his limbs, which does not endanger the actual limb; it remains whole, but its ability to function properly is nevertheless weakened. In such a case, he will be prescribed medication to heal his body so that it could once again operate in its natural form.

Similarly, performing the 613 mitzvos brings spiritual light upon the person. However, one's physical body is often contaminated by sins and the like and is thus unable to contain so much spirituality. Hence, the Chachamim introduced the Mitzvos d'Rabanan with the aim of strengthening and upholding the six hundred and thirteen mitzvos of the Torah, so that by performing them in the proper manner, one could merit them having a spiritual effect on him.

Furthermore, the fact that one must be prescribed certain remedies to cure physical ailments rather than just eating healthy foods to do the job, implies that the given medication has a stronger effect on the body than healthy foods. Likewise, the מצוות דרבנן which were instituted to 'heal' one's body and soul, in a sense, have a greater power than the מצוות דאורייתא to achieve this curing affect and maintain the body's health and ability to absorb the kedushah of all 613 mitzvos.

Using this analogy, the דברי חיים further explains how this idea applies specifically to the mitzvah of נר חנוכה. When healing physical illness, one is often prescribed medication that is naturally 'opposed' to his ailment, in order to fight against the particular disease afflicting

him at the time. So too, Ner Chanukah, with its great spiritual light, was especially 'prescribed' by Chazal to combat the forces of Darkness. This demonstrates the immense power of this mitzvah to dispel any and all influences from the Outside, thus enabling man to go on in his Avodas Hashem with renewed vigour and zeal, no matter how spiritually distant he may be.

For this reason, they are an integral part of the mitzvos, and as such, very much part of all the existing limbs of a person. (דברי חיים). (לחנוכה ד"ה והלכתא).

Let us gain inspiration from this Yom Tov which, as explained above, is an opportunity for all of us and even those who have fallen to the spiritual 'wayside', to draw close to Hashem and serve Him with renewed commitment.

The Establishing Chanukah - הלל והודאה

Besides for Chanukah itself having a great spiritual influence on us now and for the rest of the year, the central theme of this Yom Tov is praising and thanking Hashem for His great miracles and goodness. The Gemara says לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה - the year following the neis of Chanukah, Chazal established a Yom Tov of praising and thanking Hashem. (שבת כ"א:). In practise, the main reason for the establishment of this Yom Tov is הלל והודאה.

The רמב"ם also defines the essence of this Yom Tov as such. He writes שיהיו שמונת הימים... ימי שמחה והלל - the eight days [of Chanukah were established] to be days of rejoicing and praising Hashem (רמב"ם פרק ג' הל' חנוכה הלכה ג').

Forgetting to Appreciate

Expounding on this subject, there is an incredible insight from the שכן חובת based on the words we say at the end of Nishmas. כל היצורים לפניך ה' אלוקינו ואלוקי אבותינו להודות להלל לשבח, for it is the duty of all creations before You Hashem our G-d and the G-d of our

forefathers, to give thanks, praise, and glorify [the name of Hashem]. He quotes an idea, heard from others, that the **שכן חובת ראשי תיבות** of **שכח** - forgetfulness. **כל היצורים**

The Yetev Lev explains why it is specifically this word, which seems out of context, that is hinted here.

It is virtually impossible for man to properly fulfil his duty of thanking Hashem for the many great kindnesses He bestows upon him. One must constantly thank Hashem, so much so that Chazal teach us one must thank Him for each breath he takes **על כל נשימה יה** (בראשית רבה י"ד ט'). However, it is beyond our reach to proficiently succeed in performing this obligation.

Nevertheless, though we can't fulfil our duty of adequately thanking Hashem, what we can and ought to do is remember all the goods granted to us by Hashem. The purpose of hodoa is to constantly be aware of the goods bestowed upon us, rather than taking it for granted. It is not so much the service of thanking Hashem that is expected from us, it's rather the recognition and gratefulness we need to live with.

The word hodoa also means to admit. An essential part of thanking is admitting - recognising that we are the recipients of Hashem's kindness. Often, we tend to deny this fact by simply forgetting about it. However, remembering all the goods is in essence a form of gratitude.

This concept, says the Yetev Lev, was part of the purpose of Chanuka which was established to correct this middah of forgetfulness. Constantly being aware of the goods Hashem bestowed upon us will strengthen our overall avodas Hashem.

Retrieving the Forgotten Jugs

Based on the words of the Yetev Lev, his son the **קדושת יום טוב**, explains a seemingly enigmatic Midrash in regard to the 'cause' of the

incident of Yaakov Avinu's wrestling with the malach in Parshas Vayishlach. The Torah tells us that, after taking his family across the river, Yaakov Avinu remained alone - ויותר יעקב לבדו. Chazal teach us that the reason he remained alone is because he went back to retrieve little jugs. It appears that when doing so, Yaakov placed himself in great danger (see זוהר בראשית דף קסט:). The Midrash tells us that many years later he was rewarded for this with the miracle of finding the פך שמן in the Beis Hamikdash; the neis we commemorate on Chanukah.

Why did Yaakov put himself into such great danger for a seemingly insignificant reason of merely retrieving jugs?

Furthermore, how is the פך שמן connected to the פכים קטנים of Yaakov Avinu, that it is considered his reward for them?

The טוב יום קדושת explains this by first quoting the words of Rashi on the passuk ויותר יעקב לבדו. Rashi explains עליהם וחזר קטנים ויחזר עליהם - he forgot small jugs and went back for them (רש"י בראשית ל"ב כ"ה - ד"ה ויותר). Why did Rashi find it necessary to stress on the fact that he **forgot** small jugs'? Would it not be enough to say that he went back to retrieve small jugs?

He expounds on this based upon the aforementioned words of the Yetev Lev, that Yaakov Avinu fought the ultimate battle against forgetfulness. It is for this reason that Yaakov put himself into such grave danger - to overcome man's natural habit of forgetting. He found it so important to combat this habit since it is this characteristic which causes man to forget to appreciate Hashem's bountiful kindness.

Hence, it was not the jugs themselves that he went back for, but rather to combat שכחה, forgetfulness, for which it was worth jeopardizing his life. This is why Rashi stressed on the fact that 'Yaakov Avinu **forgot** the small jugs'.

Appreciating Hashem's Bounty

Accordingly, we can now understand this connection to neis Chanukah and why it is Yaakov's reward for this act. For, since Yaakov was מוסר נפש to overcome the faculty of שכחה which, as explained, causes one not to have the sufficient gratitude to Hashem, he was rewarded with the neis of finding the jug of oil, which we commemorate by thanking Hashem in these days specifically designated להודות ולהלל, for thanking and praising Him. Hence, he was rewarded with this Yom Tov of הלל והודאה where the cherished quality of gratefulness is reinforced within his children. (קדושת יום טוב לחנוכה אות י"א)

Exclaiming our gratitude

We say in Nishmas ...לשונינו רנה כהמון גליו... אילו פינו מלא שירה כים ולשונינו רנה כהמון גליו... even if our mouths would be full of song like the sea, and our tongues would be full of joy like its many waves etc. we would still not be unable to express even a little bit of thanks and praise for all Hashem has done for us. Later on, however, we say על כן איברים שפלגת בנו ורוח ונשמה שנפחת באפינו... הן הם יודו ויברכו וישבחו. Here we're basically stating that our limbs and soul will sing the praises of Hashem and thank Him for all the good He has bestowed upon us.

This seems to contradict the previous statement; we just said that it will never be possible for us to adequately thank Hashem, yet here we are expressing that we will do just that?

The meforshim offer various ways of answering this question. One answer given is that while indeed we cannot thank Hashem sufficiently, when we think of the bountiful wonders and goodness He bestows upon us, the praise simply comes gushing forth.

Thus, first we say that it is impossible for us to thank Hashem, which is undeniably true. Yet, after acknowledging some of the great wonders Hashem has done for us, as we mention there, we exclaim

that our praise and thanks to Him exuberantly bursts forth from the depth of our very being.

Hence, whilst experiencing Chanukah which was specifically designed and designated to thank Hashem for His great miracles, let us train ourselves not to lose focus of the 'mundane' miracles He is constantly performing for us. Once acknowledging them, let us ensure to appreciate them and thank Him for them too.

Being that Chanukah was granted to us as a support for the whole year, this is perhaps what we can take along with us to sustain us for the entire year. We should train ourselves not to lose sight of the many חסדים which Hashem grants us with every day, and acknowledge them by constantly thanking and praising Him for all He does.

Let us utilize the rest of Chanukah to focus on the many great kindnesses which Hashem does for us, and try to express to Him a little bit of our immense gratitude for them. In doing so, we will hopefully merit to tap in to the 'Hidden Light' of this Yom Tov, and carry it with us through the rest of the year as a source of hope and healing. And surely, let us try incorporate this practice and live with this middah of gratitude throughout the year. And finally, let us pray that we be rewarded with אור חדש על ציון תאיר with the coming of Mashiach, speedily in our days.

גוט שבת, א גוט חודש

&

א פרייליכן חנוכה!



