

Chanukah 2015

1. Atara L'melech, Rav Pam pages 189-190:

The holiday of Chanukah and its mitzvos was enacted because of the miracle of finding a pure jug of oil with the seal of the Kohan Gadol. Therefore, every night of Chanukah we recite the beracha of 'Who made miracles for our forefathers in those days at this season' 'שעשה נסים' לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה'.

The question arises; **why is this miracle so important? Meaning, what is the significance and importance of this miracle that occurred? The Mishna in Avos (perek hay) relates every single day there were ten miracles that occurred in the Beis Hamikdash. What is so significant about the miracle of Chanukah that it deserves its own holiday?**

Rav Pam explains by asking another question. The Pnei Yehoshua (on the Gemara in Shabbos on 21b) asks **why we needed the miracle of Chanukah oil at all. The Gemara in Yuma relates that if everyone is impure it is permitted to light impure oil!?**

The Pnei Yehoshua says that true, we didn't need the miracle. However, Hashem wanted to show us how much he loves us, so He caused a miracle.

Rav Pam offers a mashal of a quarrel between a husband and a wife. Due to the help of a third party they made peace. However, sometimes there can still be an indirect resentment amongst them due to strong harsh words that were uttered. Even after peace was made between them, at certain times words can never be taken back. Even after an apology, if very hurtful words were uttered, they will never be forgotten. Sometimes it is too late once those negative comments come out of one's mouth. The level of love and tranquility that this couple once possessed perhaps might never be attained again. The relationship between us and Hashem differs in this regard. Once we repent, Hashem considers as if we never sinned! This is the chiddush (insight) of the Chanukah miracle. **The oil miracle alludes to Hashem's acceptance of our repentance.** Even though we sinned, it's always possible to return. **Hashem demonstrated His acceptance by performing an unnecessary miracle.** The other ten daily miracles that occurred were all necessary miracles. The Chanukah miracle showed Hashem's love for us and His complete forgiveness.

2. **Why didn't they make thinner wicks in order that the oil could last eight days even without a miracle!?** This would be halachically preferable and proper since the Gemara in Shabbos (32.) quotes Rabbi Yanai who says that we do not rely on miracles because maybe the miracle will not occur, and even if it will occur it will detract from our merits (רבי ינאי לטעמיה) דאמר לעולם אל יעמוד אדם במקום סכנה לומר שעושין לו נס שמא אין עושין לו נס. ואם עושין לו נס מנכין לו מהדרין? The Beis HaLevi says **they wanted to light in the most fitting and מהדרין (preferable) manner, even if it would only be for one night.** This why everything on Chanukah is מהדרין מן המהדרין (best of the best). It is in order to commemorate the preferable manner in which they performed the miracle!

The obvious question on the Beis HaLevi is how did they were rely on a miracle!?! It is prohibited to rely on a miracle as mentioned above. The Chidushei Ha'Rim offers a fascinating answer. **Really they made smaller wicks and they did split up the oil into eights portions. However, the minimal oil and thin wicks lit and illuminated and lasted as if there was a lot of oil and thick wicks!** It is for this reason that everything on Chanukah is מהדרין מן המהדרין; in order to commemorate the miraculous episode that transpired.

3. **Even though they found pure oil, how could they light an impure menorah? The Maharsha (Shabbos 21b) answers that they actually made a new pure menorah and that they transported it in a way that it would remain pure!**

4. Kuntros benyonai Chanukah (Rabbi Karelenstein) pages 53-57: **We recite in על הניסים the Greeks wanted to cause us to forget the Torah and they wanted to remove us from doing the chukim (mitzvos we don't understand why we do them) (להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי) (רצונך).**

Several questions arise.

Firstly, why didn't the Greeks want us to do perform the chukim?

Secondly, the Midrash Chanukah relates that the Greeks focused on annulling three mitzvos: Rosh Chodesh, Shabbos, and Milah. Why specifically these three mitzvos? What is the significance of these three mitzvos as opposed to all other mitzvos?

Some explain that chukim doesn't refer to all chukim; rather it refers to the three mitzvos mentioned above. There are various pesukim which indicate that these three mitzvos are called chukim.

The Shem Mishmuel (Chanukah 674) explains that these three mitzvos are the foundation of the importance of the Jewish people. Torah learning, which the Greeks wanted us to forget is also the foundation of the importance of the Jewish people. Why these three? Shabbos and milah are called an os (sign). They are a sign and connection between us and Hashem. Rosh Chodesh shows the great level of the Jews that we have the ability to sanctify the months and the Yomim Tovim! This all depends on Beis Din! The sanctification of the months can also alter nature itself! The Shach (Yoreh Deah hilchos Nidah siman 189 sif katan 13) relates that the sanctification of the month can impact the menstrual cycle of a woman! There are additional examples as well. Tosefos (Sanhedrin 11b and Rosh Hashana 25b) says that on the 31st of the month, the month is automatically sanctified, if it wasn't sanctified yet. Seemingly only an insignificant halachic ramification results due to the lack of sanctification, a mere one day discrepancy. Meaning, if the month is not sanctified on the 30th day, then it will be automatically sanctified on the 31st. **The Ritva (Chulin 101b) argues and says that the month will not be automatically sanctified. If Beis Din does not sanctify it, then the previous month will just continue! Consequently, all the Chagim won't happen! Therefore, according to this, the Greeks really wanted to uproot everything! They wanted to prevent us from fulfilling Rosh Chodesh, thereby directly causing a ripple effect on us to not fulfill any of the Yomim tovim! The Midrash Chanukah (quoted by the Eliyahu Zuta 670 sif katan 1) relates that the Greeks wanted to cancel Sukkos. What does this mean? Based on what we said, they wanted to cancel Rosh Chodesh which would end up actually canceling Sukkos!**

An additional answer of what it means that the Greeks didn't want us to keep the chukim, explains Shem Mishmuel (Chanukah 673) is as follows. He quotes his father, the Avnei Nezer, who explains that **really the Greeks didn't want us to keep all of the chukim. They didn't care if we kept Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and Mila. Why? We say in על הניסים, they wanted us to forget our learning. The question arises; seemingly it is more logical that they would want to completely stop us from learning. Why did they specifically try to cause us to forget our learning?**

The Greeks understood that as long as we remember the Torah, they wouldn't be able to prevent us from learning. They therefore tried every tactic they thought of to try to get us

to forget the Torah we learned. Their plan and ideology was that after we forgot our learning, we will completely forsake the Torah and Mitzvos. How would they accomplish this? The pasuk says “with darkness upon the surface of the deep.” "והשך על פני תהום." (Berashis 1, 2) The Berashis Raba explains “with darkness” refers to the Greeks. The letters of השך (darkness) are the same letters as שכח (forget).

How could the Greeks cause us to forget our learning? The Midrash Raba says that the Greeks wanted us to write on the horn of an ox that we have no portion amongst the God of the Jews (כתבו לכם על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלוקי ישראל). The Mefarshim ask; why specifically the horn of an ox? Rashi explains that the ox alludes to the חטא העגל. (Sin of the golden calf in the desert) The Maharal (Neir mitzvah page 15) explains that the bull horn reminds them of the sin of the golden calf. The Greeks wanted to strengthen the prosecution against the Jews. Why specifically the חטא העגל? The intent of the Greek attempt strengthen the prosecution against the Jews was in order to cause us to forget our learning. How so? The חטא העגל caused the breaking of the Luchos. The breaking of the Luchos caused Torah to be forgotten as stated in mesechas Eruvin (54a). This was the intent of the Greeks! Furthermore, this is why the Greeks specifically didn't want us to perform the chukim. Rashi (Bamidbar 19, 22) quotes Rebbi Moshe Hadarshan who explains that the mitzvah of para aduma fixes the חטא העגל. The explanation of how this is so is as follows. The broken Luchos caused an improper Torah understanding. This improper Torah understanding caused us to forget the Torah. This is based on the Yerushalmi in Berachos (perek 5 halacha 1) that says someone who goes deep into learning will remember it longer. (הסובר). The Pnei Yehoshua explains that this refers to one who learns with logic and depth (לומד בסברה ובעיון). The Pnei Moshe says that someone who learns in depth will learn and remember better than one who doesn't. A result of the Luchos being broken was an improper Torah understanding. This caused us to forget our Torah learning. The para aduma fixes the חטא העגל. Why? When the punishment is similar to the negative effect that was caused due to the sin, the negative effect gets fixed. The para aduma is illogical. It is the quintessential chok. It purifies those who are impure and it makes impure those who are pure. Even Shlomo Hamelech didn't understand this. Shalomo said “I thought I could become wise, but it is beyond me.” (Koheles 7, 23) "אמרתי אהכמה והיא רחוקה ממני." The Midrash (pashas Chukas 3) says that this pasuk refers to Shlomo not understanding the para aduma. The Gemara in Yuma (14a) explains that para aduma was beyond his comprehension because he didn't understand how it can purify the impure person and make impure the pure person. The chukim have reasons behind them, but we can't understand them. The Medrash Raba (Chukas 19, 6) relates Hashem telling Moshe I will reveal the reason to you, but not others. Perhaps the explanation of why we don't know the reason for the chukim in general and specifically the para aduma is as follows; in order to fix the improper Torah understanding that resulted from the sin of the golden calf. The way to fix this is to perform mitzvos for which we don't understand the reason why we are performing them. It's very difficult to do mitzvos we don't know the reason for. When we do them it's as if we are getting 'punished' for the sin that caused improper Torah understanding! This is why the para aduma fixed the sin of the cheit haegel!! (See our writings on Parshas Chukas 2016) This is why the Greeks specifically targeted preventing us from performing the chukim. This is the only way we would forget our learning; if we didn't perform the chukim.

To summarize: the Greeks wanted to remind the Satan of the חטא העגל which would cause us to forget our learning. They additionally didn't want us to perform the chukim because if we wouldn't perform the chukim then we would not be able to fix the sin of the חטא העגל, and we would forget our learning!! **The Greeks wanted us to forget our learning by getting us to not**

keep the chukim. How so? Step one: they wanted us to write on the ox we have no portion amongst the God of Israel. Step two: this would cause the Satan's prosecution for the חטא העגל. Step three: the cheit haegel caused the Luchos to be broken. Step four: this would cause an improper Torah understanding. Step five: this would then result in us forgetting our learning!! Step six: by performing chukim, in particular para aduma; our learning would be remembered! Para Aduma is a 'punishment' which is similar to the result of the sin! The Greeks didn't want us to perform the chukim precisely for this reason. They knew that if we did we would fix the חטא העגל and then we would remember the Torah!

Why didn't the Greeks want us to keep Shabbos, Rosh Chodesh and Milah? These three Mitzvos help us remember Torah. The Sfas Emes (end of parshas Ki Sisa) explains that the Torah one learns on Shabbos will be remembered more than the Torah learnt during the week. We sing on Shabbos זכרו תורת משה במצות שבת גרוסה (remember the Torah of Moshe as the precept of Shabbos is expounded in the oral Torah). Furthermore we say on Shabbos יום שבתון אין לשכוח (the day of Shabbos should not be forgotten). The Iben Ezra (Shemos 20, 8) explains that on Shabbos we can reach higher levels than we are capable of reaching during the week. The Chazon Ish says that certain matters that we are unable to comprehend during the week we are able to understand on Shabbos. The Kedushas Levi (parshas Korach) quotes the Arizal who says that talmidim will understand what their Rebbeim taught them the previous week. The Maharal (Tiferes Yisroel perek 27) says this as well. **Since on Shabbos we can learn better and remember more, the Greeks wanted to abolish Shabbos in order that we would forget our learning. (See our writings on parshas Ki Sisa 2015.)**

This also applies to Milah. **Milah is the foundation of our holiness.** The Ramban (Bereishis 17, 9) states that a reason behind the precept of mila is that Hashem placed a reminder in the organ of desire, which is abundant in its potential for agitation and sin, that people should use it only for following God's command and for that which is permitted. (ואמרו בטעם המילה, ששם זכרון באבר). (התאווה רב המהומה והחטא לבל ישתמשו בו רק במצוה ובמותר). One of the sources of this Ramban is the Kuzari (mamer alef os 115). The Kuzari says that one of the conditions of mila – and its rationale – is that the individual constantly remember that it is an emblem of Divinity, which God deliberately mandated to be placed on the organ of the body which is controlled by human desire. One must gain control over this organ, and use it for the right purposes, by depositing his seed properly (in the right woman), at the right time (for example, a man may not have relations with his wife when she is menstruating (Vayikra (18, 19). The Kol Yehuda explains that it is also prohibited to have relations on Tisha B'Av and Yom Kippur.), and in the proper conjugal way (See Shulchan Aruch and mefarshim, Orach Chaim siman 240). By using his organ in this fashion, one may succeed in producing an offspring that will receive Divinity. (ומתנאי המילה) וסבותיה שיזכור תמיד כי היא אות אלהית, שמה האלהים באבר התאווה הגוברת, לגבור עליה ולא ישתמש בה אלא כראוי, בהנחת הזרע במקום הראוי ובעת שראוי וכאשר ראוי, אולי יהיה זרע מצליח, יצלה לקבול הענין האלהי, ומי (שדבק בדרך הזה יהיה לו ולזרעו חלק גדול מן הקורבה אל האל יתברך). The Otzer Nechbad explains that this is the foundation of the mitzvos and male Jews. One who is careful with the aforementioned is called a tzadik. (שהוא יסוד כל המצות וזה כל אדם, אם שומר הברית הזה נקרא צדיק). There is actually an earlier source of one who is careful with the aforementioned is called a tzadik. The Zohar (beginning of parshas Noach) explains that all Jews have a portion in the world to come because they are circumcised and are careful not to have illicit relations. Those who are careful with this are called tzaddikim. How do we know that one who is careful with this is called a tzaddik?

From Yosef who was tested in this regard. Potiphar's wife tried to have relations with him, but he refused. He is therefore called Yosef the tzaddik. (כל ישראל אית לון חולקא לעלמא דאתי מאי טעמא) בגין דנטרין ברית דעלמא אתקיים עליה כמה דאת אמר (ירמיה ל"ג) אם לא בריתי יומם ולילה חקות שמים וארץ לא שמת, ועל דא ישראל דנטרי ברית וקבילו ליה אית לון חולקא בעלמא דאתי, ולא עוד אלא בגין כך אקרון צדיקים, מכאן אוליפנא כל מאן דנטיר האי ברית דעלמא אתקיים עליה, אקרי צדיק, מנא לן מיוסף בגין דנטר ליה לברית עלמא. The question arises; why is the Zohar discussing this in the beginning of parshas Noach? The Masok Medevash explains that Noach is someone who overcame this. Meaning, since all of the people in that generation were having illicit relations, they therefore died during the flood. Conversely, Noach; since he was holy, he therefore survived the flood. The Zohar also says (parshas Vayeishev page 189b) that one who isn't careful with the aforementioned is causing a separation between himself and Hashem because it is as if he bowed to other Gods. Conversely, if he is careful, Hashem will shower him with gifts. ותא חזי אינון דלא נטרו להאי קיימא דקודשא גרמי פרישו בין ישראל לאבוהון דבשמיא בגין דכתיב) וסרתם ועבדתם אלהים אחרים והשתחיתם להם וכתוב ועצר את השמים ולא יהיה מטר, דהאי איהו כמאן דסגיד לאלהא אחרא דמשקר בהאי את קיימא קדישא וכד קיימא קדישא אתנטיר בעלמא כדקא יאות כדון קודשא בריך הוא. Another source for the Ramban is the Rambam (Moreh Nevuchim 3, 49). The removal of the foreskin lessons the desire for physical gratification. Mila thus represents the potential within every Jew to dominate his physical desires and direct them toward the purpose for which God intended. המילה אצלי אחד מטעמים למעט המשגל ולהחליש זה האבר) והיות המילה מחלשת כח הקושי, ופעמים שתחסר ההנאה, הוא דבר שאין ספק כפי היכולת עד שימעט במעשה הזה וכו'. (בו, כי האבר כשישפך דמו ויוסר מכסהו מתחלת בריאתו, יחלש בלי ספק וכו'.

Adam was created circumcised as the pasuk states "God created man in His image" (Berashis (1, 27)). The Avos D'Rebbi Nossan (2, 5) says that this pasuk implies that he was in a state of completeness. After his sin, however, the Gemara in Sanhedrin (38b) explains that he pulled his skin over the area of his circumcision, making himself appear uncircumcised, as implied by the pasuk "and they, like Adam, violated a covenant (i.e., bris mila)." (Hosea (6, 7)) רבי יצחק אמר) The mitzvah of mila requires the removal of the existent foreskin. Adam, who was born without a foreskin, created one. The question arises; why did Adam do the opposite of what Avraham would later be commanded to do? In Hebrew, the foreskin is called ערלה. This name indicates what it represents. Wherever the term ערלה is used in pesukim, it refers to a barrier standing in the way of a beneficial result. The first three years of a tree's produce are called ערלה because the Torah prohibits people from enjoying it in any way (Vayikra 19, 23). One's resistance to repentance is described as ערלת הלב (orlah of the heart) (Devarim (10, 16)). The 'heart', if left to its purest impulses, would long for the ideal state of closeness to God. As a result of having fallen in sin, which creates an emotional and intellectual barrier that stifles the heart's instinctive cry for repentance; people do not feel this urge. That barrier is the ערלת הלב. Adam was created without a foreskin because he was as close as a physical being can possibly be to God. He was so great at the time of creation that the angels thought that he was a Divine being before whom they should sing praises (Yalkut Shimoni, Koheles (6)). When he disobeyed Hashem's commandment his nature changed. Temptation became natural to him and Hashem became distant. His personal failure created a barrier to the spirit, and he felt that he no longer deserved to be without the corresponding barrier in his body. Mirroring his spiritual downfall, he covered the physical symbol of his closeness to God, his circumcision, with a growth of flesh. Adam's sin was the failure of mankind. This is evident from the retribution to his sin, which affects all of mankind

attitude. This is what the Greeks wanted to prevent. The Sifri (parshas Va'eschanan 6, 6) states every single day the Torah must be new in our eyes and not like something old that the heart of a person is fed up with because the truth is that every single day you will find a chidush (insight).)

The Midrash Chanukah says that the Greeks also wanted to abolish the Korban Tamid. The Chozen Lemoed based on the Medrash Tanchuma (parsha Tetzava perek 14), says that the Korban Tamid fixes the חטא העגל. This would cause us to forget the Torah as well. Therefore, the Greeks wanted to cancel the Korban Tamid.

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.