

Chagim Chanukah 2013

1. Eturai Torah: Rabbi Aharon Yaakov Greenberg: page 139:

We say in הדליקו נרות 'they kindled lights in the courtyards of Your sanctuary.' על הנסים בהצרות קדשך

What is the connection between the courtyard and lighting the candles? We generally don't light in the courtyard, rather in the Beis Hamikdash itself. That being so, why are we lighting in the courtyard?

The Gemara in Shabbos (21b) says that they used to light at the entrance of their house or courtyard. This was done in order that the light would illuminate towards the public. This would thus publicize the miracle. This is also why they used to light in the courtyard; in order to publicize the miracle.

2. Sefer Ohr haganuz: pnini hamoedaim page 123:

Why do we spin the dreidel? During the time of Chanukah there was a decree that the Jews were forbidden to learn Torah. The chachamim (wise men) began to teach their children Torah shebeal peh (orally). The Greeks realized what was occurring. They therefore made a new decree stating that was forbidden as well. This caused the Chachamim to gather children and learn together. **When the Greeks came, they would stop learning and would begin to play dreidel. It would appear as if there were just kid's innocently playing with toys. In order to commemorate this we play dreidel nowadays.**

An additional reason is that the dreidel cannot stand by itself due to the pointiness on its tip. This alludes to an alteration of nature during the times of the Chashmonaim. Even though we were smaller in number and all odds were against us, we still nevertheless won. (The oil also alludes to this. The oil went beyond nature by staying lit for such a long duration of time.)

What is the explanation of the letters on the dreidel? There are four letters. **The letters נ and ש stand for נרות שמונה (eight candles). The ה and ג stands for הלל גדול.**

Furthermore, **the gematria (numerical value) of these letters equals משיח (50) + ג (3) ה (5) + ש (300) = 358 = מ (40) + ש (300) + י (10) + ה (8) = 358**

3. Otzros Hatorah, Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Cohen page 225:

The custom to eat jelly donuts is because they're made in oil. Therefore, jelly donuts remind us of the oil miracle.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach offers a completely different answer. He explains that the Chashmonaim purified the entire Beis Hamikdash except for the stones of the מזבה (Alter). They were upset that they didn't know how to purify these stones as stated in mesechas Avoda Zara (52b). They ended up hiding them. **It is therefore customary to eat food items that an על המזיה is recited after consumption. The words על מזבהך are said in על המזיה.**

4. Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler Michtav M'elichayhu chelek beis page 115:

The question arises; since they only had enough oil for one day, the other days were considered an אונס (pressure/extenuating circumstance that is out of their control). If something is out of one's control they are patur (exempt). Since they were exempt why did they need the miracle? Similarly, since we hold if everyone is tamei (impure) they are allowed to light even impure oil as stated in mesechas Yuma (6b), why did they need the miracle of the oil altogether!?

The miracle that was seemingly naturally impossible actually occurred; a few Jews were able to defeat the overwhelming Greeks. The Chashmonaim came with the attitude of 'we have no choice even if we believe it is impossible.' Therefore מדה כנגד מדה (measure for measure) (Sotah 8a), they had divine assistance that was above nature. Since they went above nature, they merited the miracle of the oil that was above nature. They merited the miracle of oil even though they were really allowed to light with the tamei oil. **One of the important messages of Chanukah is that even if something seems impossible, one should not give up. Rather, he should put in all his effort and he will have help from Hashem!**

5. Kemetzei Shlal Rav page 86:

Why was the neis (miracle) of the oil necessary at all? They could have dripped the impure oil into the pure oil drop by drop. Each drop of impure oil would have been nullified (קמא בטיל). This larger quantity of oil would have then been permissible to use. Why didn't they do this?

They had a lot more impure oil than pure oil. Therefore, the impure oil is considered as if it's already mixed with the pure oil. Thus, nullification wouldn't apply.

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank answers that from the onset items cannot be nullified medeoriasa (on a Torah level). (אין מבטלין איסור לכתחילה). According to this view it is easy to understand why they didn't nullify the impure oil. What about those who hold that nullifying is only a rabbinic prohibition? Why didn't they nullify the impure oil with the pure oil? It's better to do nothing (שב ואל תעשה) and rely on a miracle than to directly nullify, even if the nullification is only rabbinically prohibited. (Even though Rabbi Yanai says we don't rely on miracles (Shabbos 32a)).

Additionally, the Halacha is that holy oil that becomes impure must be burnt. Everyone agrees (aka even the opinion who says that that nullifying is only a rabbinic prohibition) in this case it will be prohibited medeoriasa to nullify this impure oil through mixing because one will lose out on the mitzvah of burning the impure oil.

6. Nachalas Tzvi page (513):

The Maggid Mesharim (this sefer was taught to Rabbi Yosef Kaaro by a malach (angel)) explains that Chanukah alludes to oil, which ascends. Whereas Purim alludes to wine, that is stored in grapes. The gematria (numerical value) of wine/י"ו is 70; which is also the gematria of the word secret/סוד.

What is the connection between wine and secrets? When one drinks wine secrets come out as stated in mesechas Eruvin (65a). On Purim, the Gemara in Megilah (7b) states that we are obligated to get drunk to the point where we don't know the difference between Haman and Mordechai. Rashi, there, explains that one should get drunk specifically by drinking wine. (The

actual Halachos and their details regarding this if we hold like the literal translation and statement of this Gemara are beyond the scope of this devar Torah.)

What is the deeper interpretation of this statement of the Maggid Mesharim who says that Chanukah alludes to oil and Purim alludes to wine? (The simple explanation is that wine played a significant role throughout the story related in Megilas Esther, and oil symbolizes one of the major miracles that transpired on Chanukah.) Additionally, why on Chanukah do we hold the dreidel from the top and it spins on the bottom, unlike Purim when we hold the grogger from the bottom and it spins on the top? Furthermore, what is the primary avoda (service) on Purim? Lastly, what lessons can we learn from the Megilah and take and keep with us for the rest of the year?

Rav Yaakov Emden (Yabetz) explains the difference between the dreidel and the grogger. On Chanukah there was no 'איתערוותא דלתתא' / 'awakening down below'. Rather, it was all an 'איתערוותא דלעילא' / 'awakening from above'. We were saved due to Hashem's mercy. Therefore, on Chanukah we specifically hold the dreidel from the top in order to allude to the fact that Hashem mercifully saved us. Conversely, on Purim, Mordechai and Esther were the ones who gathered all the Jews and had them fast and repent as stated in Megilas Esther (4, 16). **Since there was an awakening down below (human repentance), and we merited salvation through our own actions, we therefore hold the grogger from the bottom.**

With this we can explain why Chanukah alludes to oil. Oil, by nature, always rises to the top. We are recognizing that salvation results completely from Hashem's mercy.

Dissimilarly, wine comes from squeezing a grape and then gravity pulls the juice down. On Purim we drink wine in order to demonstrate that we played a major role in the story by repenting.

The avoda of Purim is to lovingly and fearfully repent (see Yuma 86). We can accomplish this through learning, davening, and performing chessed (acts of kindness). It says in Megilas Ester (perik nine) that the Jews fulfilled the Torah and accepted it. The Gemara in Shabbas (88) says that they fulfilled what they already received. Purim is a time to repent and take this chizuk (strength and momentum) with us the entire year.

7. Torah Temimah, Rabbi Baruch Epstein, the son of the Aruch Hashulchan, parshas vayeishev 37, 24.

The Gemara in Shabbos (22a) quotes Rabbi Tanchum who darshens (expounds) the pasuk "Then they took him, and cast him into the pit; the pit was empty, no water was in it."/"ויקחהו וישלכו אתו הברה והבור רק אין בו מים." If the pit was empty, then it certainly didn't have water in it!? There wasn't water, but there were snakes and scorpions in it!

Several questions arise. Firstly, Reuven tried saving Yosef from his bothers by throwing him into a pit. How is having Yosef thrown into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions considered saving him!? Furthermore; why is this seemingly random piece of agateta right in the middle of the sugyas of Chanukah!? Lastly, what does the parsha of Vayeishev have to do with Chanukah?

In reality, Reuven wasn't aware that the pit had snakes and scorpions. He was under the impression that Yosef would survive. The Mefarshim in Mesechas Tamid say that whenever the word throwing/השלכה is used; it refers to a toss that is minimally a distance of twenty amos (approximately thirty feet). Therefore, this pit was at least twenty amos deep.

In the Gemara that preceded this derasha, Rabbi Tanchum said that a Chanukah candle that is above twenty amos is pasul (invalid). Rashi explains that it is invalid because eyes can't see it. (This same Halacha and reasoning applies to a Sukkah or cora (crossbeam by the mavoy (alleyway)) which is above 20 amos, which is also invalid.) The source for this Halacha is the derasha of Rabbi Tanchum! Just as Reuven couldn't see that there were snakes and scorpions in the pit, so to, if the Chanukah candle is above twenty amos high it is invalid. This is why Reuven had Yosef thrown into a pit of snakes and scorpions; it is because the pit was too deep for him to realize that there were snakes and scorpions there. This derasha of Rabbi Tanchum is in the middle of the Chanukah sugyas because it is part of the Chanukah sugyas! This is also why we learn parshas Vayeishev near Chanukah time. Another reason why this derasha of Rabbi Tanchum is in the middle of the Chanukah sugyas is because he said the previous statement in the Gemara as well. Meaning, even though his derasha is unrelated to Chanukah, nevertheless, it is quoted adjacent to one of his statements regarding Chanukah. (See Rashi in Chagiga 3a.) Lastly, this pasuk is in parshas vayeishev which is learned around the holiday of Chanukah.

8. Mearechi ley chelek beis 45:

Why did the Greeks specifically try to make the oil impure as stated in Maoz Tzur 'they defiled all the oil'/'וטמאו כל השמנים'?

The Greeks main goal was to stop all of the avodah (service) in the Beis Hamikdash. They therefore went after the oil in order to disallow the Jews to light the menorah. The Vayikra Raba states that the Greeks commanded the Jews to write on the horn of an ox 'we have no portion with the God of Israel.' Why did they want us to write with the word חלק (portion)? The word חלק is used in Bamidbar perek 18 by the Leviyim. The tribe of Levi didn't have a portion in Israel. Even though the land is very holy and many mitzvos only apply in Israel, still the Leviyim couldn't have a portion because land is still physical. The Leviyim are all about the spiritual. So too, the Jews are more spiritual than other nations. The explanation of the decree regarding writing we have no portion with the God of Israel was in order to try to stop this spiritual specialty of the Jews. The Greeks tried to accomplish this by making the oil impure!

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.