

# OHR NET

SHABBAT PARSHAT VAYESHEV-CHANUKA · 25 KISLEV 5764 · DEC. 20, 2003 · VOL. 11 NO. 9

## PARSHA INSIGHTS

### IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING

*"And Yosef had been brought down to Egypt..." (39:1)*

It never fails to amaze me how our hidden agendas can rule our lives like wolves in sheep's clothing. Rashi explains that the juxtaposition of the incidents of Yehuda and Tamar, and that of Yosef and Potiphar's wife, is to emphasize that both women acted for the sake of Heaven, that their motives were altruistic. If so, why is Tamar regarded as a righteous woman, a *tzadeket*, and Potiphar's wife considered cursed, wanton, and evil?

Even when faced with death by burning, Tamar refused to expose Yehuda as the father of her unborn twins. From her selflessness we learn that it is better to throw oneself into a fiery furnace than to humiliate someone in public (*Sota 10*).

However, there is more to Tamar's action. At this point, Tamar knew that she was pregnant with twins, and that on her progeny was founded the entire plan for Jewish salvation, the lineage of King David and eventually, Mashiach. And with all that she still demurred from humiliating Yehuda in public, even if it meant that Mashiach should not come, and that all that was planned should never materialize. Tamar didn't stop for one minute to weigh up one side against the other. She knew that it was forbidden to humiliate Yehuda.

End of Story.

Potiphar's wife knew by means of astrology that she was destined to have descendants from Yosef. However her astrological predictions were not accurate enough to foretell whether this offspring would come directly through her or through her daughter (as in fact turned out to be the case). Nevertheless, she made every effort to seduce Yosef. The dress she wore in the morning for him was replaced by a different one in the afternoon. At every opportunity she tried to woo him with words, with money, and with threats.

How was she able to determine so definitively that her astrological prediction referred to herself and not to her daughter?

Enter desire.

Exit altruism.

Potiphar's wife's physical attraction to Yosef had no problem convincing her altruism that she, and not her daughter, was to be Yosef's consort.

Nothing is more dangerous, and nothing is more difficult to identify, than selfishness masquerading as altruism. That's the ultimate wolf in sheep's clothing.

Source:

• Based on Lev Eliyahu

## Brighten the Darkness for the Poor of Jerusalem

*Jews light their Chanuka lamps to celebrate the historic triumph of the forces of light over the forces of darkness. You have an opportunity to identify with this "Festival of Lights" by brightening the darkness of poverty suffered by so many families in Jerusalem. Send then your generous Chanuka donation which will make your holiday and theirs so much brighter.*

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## PARSHA OVERVIEW

**Y**aakov 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 inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to

Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha'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. His 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 jail, 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 jail.

## ISRAEL Forever

### MIRACLES THEN AND NOW

**C**hanuka and Purim are two Jewish holidays not mentioned in the Torah. It was the Sages who saw in the miracles of Jewish survival the need to establish these days as holidays for expressing our gratitude to G-d for "making miracles for our ancestors in those days at this time".

Chanuka, which Jews throughout the world will begin celebrating this Shabbat, differs from Purim in a number of ways. The Chanuka miracle took place in Eretz Yisrael and saved our ancestors from the oppression of the Hellenists. The Purim story is set in Persia and relates the deliverance from a genocidal plot of an Amalekite enemy with political power.

The most significant contrast is in the nature of the dan-

ger facing Jewry. Purim celebrates physical survival while Chanuka recalls spiritual survival. The Hellenists were not intent on a holocaust like Haman but rather in a "final solution" of conversion to their pagan ideology. This is why Purim has festive eating and drinking as a central feature of its celebration to express physical deliverance. Chanuka, in contrast, has instead the spiritual features of reciting the Hallel prayer and lighting lamps to remind us of our spiritual salvation.

Israel today is faced by threats to both its physical and spiritual survival. Chanuka is an occasion for strengthening our faith in G-d's ability to make miracles for us as He did for our ancestors and guarantee the physical and spiritual survival of Israel forever.

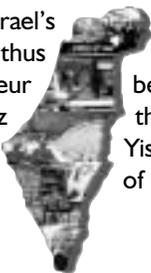
## LOVE OF THE LAND - THE NAMES

Selections from classical Torah sources which express the special relationship between the People of Israel and Eretz Yisrael

### ERETZ HACHAYIM – LAND OF THE LIVING

**A**fter prophesying the utter destruction of Israel's foremost enemies the Prophet Yechezkel thus promises, in the Name of G-d, that the grandeur which was theirs will be bestowed upon Eretz Yisrael:

"I shall establish My glory in the land of the living."  
(Yechezkel 26:20)



Our Talmudic Sages (*Mesechta Ketubot* 111a) explain that Eretz Yisrael is called the "land of the living" because it will be the scene of the eventual resurrection of the dead. The remains of those buried outside of Eretz Yisrael will be transported in miraculous fashion to the "land of the living" for a return to life.

## PARSHA Q&A ?

1. "These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef...." Give three reasons why Yosef is considered Yaakov's main offspring.
2. What was praiseworthy about the fact that Yosef's brothers did not speak to him in a friendly manner?
3. How do we see from Yosef's dream about the sun, moon and stars that all dreams contain some untrue element?
4. Who brought Yosef down to Egypt?
5. Where was Reuven when Yosef was sold?
6. In addition to the brothers, who else knew that Yosef was alive?
7. Why didn't G-d reveal prophetically to Yaakov that Yosef was alive?
8. For how long did Yaakov mourn the loss of Yosef?
9. Verse 37:35 states "his father wept." To whom does this refer?
10. Who was Tamar's father?
11. In what merit did Tamar deserve to have kings as her descendants?
12. Why is the word "hand" mentioned four times in connection to the birth of Zerach?
13. Why does the Torah relate the incident with Potiphar's wife immediately after the incident of Yehuda and Tamar?
14. How did Potiphar "see" that G-d was with Yosef?
15. Who in this week's Parsha pretended to be sick?
16. Why were the butler and the baker imprisoned?
17. For how long were the butler and the baker in prison?
18. How did the baker know that Yosef had correctly interpreted the butler's dream?
19. What prompted the butler and baker to tell Yosef their dreams?
20. How was Yosef punished for asking the butler for help?

## PARSHA Q&A!

### Answers to this Week's Questions!

All references are to the verses and Rashi's commentary unless otherwise stated.

1. 37:2 - (a) Yosef was the son of Rachel, Yaakov's primary wife. (b) Yosef looked like Yaakov. (c) All that befell Yaakov befell Yosef.
2. 37:4 - They did not act hypocritically.
3. 37:10 - The moon represented Rachel. Since she had already died, it was impossible for that element of the dream to come true.
4. 37:28 - A caravan of Midianites.
5. 37:29 - He was attending to Yaakov.
6. 37:33 - Yitzchak.
7. 37:33 - Because the brothers had issued a ban against revealing the truth to Yaakov, and G-d, so to speak, abided by their ban.
8. 37:34 - Twenty-two years.
9. 37:35 - Yitzchak, who wept because of Yaakov's suffering.
10. 38:24 - Shem.
11. 38:26 - In the merit of her modesty.
12. 38:30 - To allude to his descendent, Achan, who sinned with his hand by taking four things from the spoils of Jericho.
13. 39:1 - To teach us that just as Tamar acted with pure motives, so did Potiphar's wife.
14. 39:3 - Yosef mentioned G-d's name frequently in his speech.
15. 39:11 - Potiphar's wife.
16. 40:1 - The butler was imprisoned because a fly was found in the king's goblet, and the baker was imprisoned because a pebble was found in the king's bread.
17. 40:4 - Twelve months.
18. 40:5 - The baker dreamed the interpretation of the butler's dream.
19. 40:6 - Yosef asked them why they looked troubled.
20. 40:23 - He remained in prison an additional two years.

## BONUS QUESTION ?

**"...They put him in jail, the place where the royal prisoners were imprisoned." (39:20)**

Yosef, a Hebrew slave on the lowest rung of Egyptian society, was accused of a capital crime. Why, then, was he given special privileges? Why was he put in the special jail with the royal prisoners?"

## BONUS ANSWER !

Potiphar knew Yosef was righteous and he strongly suspected that his wife was lying. Publicly, however, he needed to pretend that he supported her. Therefore he punished Yosef, but he chose the most lenient punishment possible under the circumstances.

• Ramban

## THE ECONOMIC FACTOR

In its instructions for preparing the showbreads placed on the table in the Sanctuary the Torah uses the term “You will take” (*Vayikra* 24:5) to indicate that there is no need to purchase flour and that it is proper to purchase wheat and process it into flour. This permission to buy wheat rather than flour is limited to this *mincha* because the Torah took into consideration the fact that a considerable amount of money is saved by purchasing the raw material rather than the finished product. Since a very large amount of flour went into the preparation of the showbreads and they had to be prepared every week of the year, this economy was significant.

As the source for this oft-quoted principle that “the Torah showed consideration for the money of Yisrael”, Rabbi Elazar cites the passage in which G-d told Moshe to bring water forth from a rock in the wilderness “to provide water for the people and their cattle” (*Bamidbar* 20:8).

An interesting question is raised in regard to this source. Our Sages (in *Mesechta Brachot* 40a) have told us that if someone has animals which are dependent on him he must feed them before he eats his own meal since the Torah in the second parsha of the *Shma* (*Devarim* 11:15) conveys the reward for mitzvah observance as “I shall give grass in your field for your animal and you shall eat and be satisfied” – a sequence giving precedence to the animal’s feeding. The *Sefer Chasidim*, however, notes that this is true only in regard to food. In regard to drinking, however, man comes first. The proof is the behavior of Rivka who first provided Eliezer with water and his camels only afterwards.

How then does our *gemara* conclude from the passage about Moshe drawing water for the people and their cattle that this shows G-d’s consideration for Jewish money when the purpose of mentioning the animals may be to teach us that in regard to drinking man takes precedence over his livestock?

The answer given by Eliyahu Rabbah (*Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 167) is that the Torah already taught us this lesson in recording Rivka’s behavior. This leaves us with no other option for explaining the mention of the animals in the later passage except for teaching us how much the Torah cares about the money of Jews.

• *Menachot* 76b

## GUARD OR HEED?

When a Jew offered a *todah* thanksgiving sacrifice he was obligated to offer along with it forty *chalot* loaves. What if he vows to offer the *todah* without the loaves and when told that he must bring both he responds that had he been aware that he would be thus obligated he would not have made such a vow?

The rule is that we compel him to nevertheless bring the *chalot* since he has obligated himself to offer a *todah* and the *chalot* are an inseparable component of this sacrifice. The *gemara* adds, however, that we accompany this coercion with a quote from the Torah. After relaying to the people a number of commands regarding the consumption of meat and the offering of sacrifices Moshe urged them to “guard and heed” all the matters which he had commanded them (*Devarim* 12:28).

There are two approaches in regard to how these words apply to this case of enforcing the offering of *chalot* along with the *todah*. The Sage Abaye sees “guard” as a reference to his obligation to offer the *todah* which he is now trying to back out of, while “heed” refers to the obligation of *chalot*, which he never wished to accept. The Sage Rava, however, states that “guard” refers to both the *todah* and the *chalot* while the “heed” relates to the warning we give this fellow not to ever again vow to bring a *todah* without the *chalot*.

In his commentary on the above-mentioned passage, Rashi cites a *midrash* which explains “guard” as an order to preserve what one has learned to assure that he does not forget. Only by retaining his Torah knowledge can one be capable of fulfilling the following command to “heed” the *mitzvot*, for without learning there can be no practice.

This relationship between learning and observance is expressed in the relationship between the *todah* and the *chalot*. It is clear from the *gemara* that the essence of the sacrifice is the animal and that the *chalot* are an accompaniment. In the same way it is the study of Torah and the retention of the knowledge gained from it which is the starting point from which practice will flow. But should someone think that study is sufficient and need not result in observance of the *mitzvot* this is as futile as trying to offer a *todah* without the *chalot*.

• *Menachot* 81b

## DOG GONE

**From: Margie in MA**

Dear Rabbi,  
Why do religious Jews I see seem to have an aversion to pets?

Dear Margie,

Your question is not a petty one. There are undoubtedly significant benefits to owning pets. Children can learn responsibility and sensitivity by caring for pets. Pets bring joy into the home and also can provide company for the lonely. The Talmud notes that dogs in particular are sensitive to danger and guard against intruders. Our Sages further assert that one can learn good traits from animals. "Had the Torah not been given, we could have learned modesty from the cat, honest labor and industriousness from the ant, fidelity from the dove, and consideration for one's mate from the rooster".

Jews in all periods and places owned nearly all types of animals; they raised them, worked with them, and otherwise derived benefit from them. Nevertheless, keeping pets in the home for enjoyment involves certain considerations that may not be worth it to everybody. A Jewish home should be a sanctuary full of Torah study, prayer, and blessings – all of which can not be recited in the presence of refuse which pets either intentionally or unintentionally leave in the house.

Causing pain to animals is a Torah prohibition. Therefore a Jew is required to feed his animals before eating his own meal, and delaying their food even once is a serious transgression. For this reason Rabbi Eliezer Papo (b. 1785 Sarajevo) advises against raising birds, and the same can be

said of other pets. In addition, keeping pets penned in all day in the house or in cages may also constitute causing anguish to animals, which a person would certainly wish to avoid.

Also, if a pet gets loose on Shabbat, trapping it is forbidden in many cases. Even handling an animal on Shabbat can be forbidden, due to the prohibition of *muktza*. Furthermore, one must make sure his pet doesn't cause damage. For this reason, the Sages looked unfavorably on raising certain animals, such as dogs, unless one needs them for protection. Yet another consideration is the Torah prohibition to have an animal sterilized. A last point to ponder is that according to the Kabbalah, one shouldn't look at non-kosher animals.

Some practical reasons why religious Jews may refrain from keeping pets has to do with having larger families. In homes where older children often take a significant role in caring for younger siblings, there is ample opportunity to learn responsibility and sensitivity. Obviously, a house full of children is itself a blessing of joy and happiness where there is never a dull moment, let alone boredom or loneliness. Furthermore, young children are often afraid of some pets, while infants sharing the floor with animals may be outright inadvisable. A last reason might be economic. A large family may forego the cost of pet food, veterinary care and other expenses in favor of providing more for the children.

Sources:

- Baba Kama 60b
- Eruvin 100b
- Pele Yoetz, Ba'alei Chaim
- Beit Yosef, Yoreh De'ah 107
- Shulchan Aruch, Choshen Mishpat 409:1,3
- Shulchan Aruch, Even HaEzer 5:11,14
- Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 316:12, M.B. 54,57
- Shmirat HaGuf V'haNefesh 237:2

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### “BUT NOT THE PEYOT!”

“Come in and take a look at this child!” This was the excited invitation issued by the great Torah Sage Yaakov Yisroel Kanievsky, of blessed memory, commonly known as “The Steipler”, to the members of his household.

Standing before him was a seven year-old Bnei Brak boy and his father who had come to this leader of the Torah community to tell their moving story.

The terrible illness that had struck the child made it necessary for him to undergo chemotherapy treatment. When his parents relayed to him what the doctor had warned them about the pain he would suffer and that he would lose all his hair, the boy began to weep.

“I am not afraid of the pain or the embarrassment of

being bald,” he explained, “but how can I give up my *peyot* (sideburns) which are the mark of a Jewish child?”

As his parents watched in awe their son then turned his eyes heavenward and thus addressed his Creator:

“Father in Heaven, I accept with love the pain and the embarrassment because I know, as my parents have always taught me, that You are merciful and do what is best for me. But how can I give up my *peyot*!”

This heartfelt prayer achieved its purpose. All of the boy’s hair vanished with the chemotherapy treatment and only his *peyot* remained. The hospital staff said they had never before seen such a thing and the father rushed to the “Steipler” to share with him his experience in the power of prayer.

## WHAT’S THE RIGHT THING TO DO?

REAL-LIFE QUESTIONS OF SOCIAL AND BUSINESS ETHICS

### JUDAISM’S GOLDEN RULE

**Question:** When I finish my workday I try to spend as much time as possible studying Torah with a partner in the Beit Midrash of my local synagogue. My partner often takes a Talmudic volume from one of the shelves in order to look up some reference and then leaves it on our table to be returned to its shelf when we conclude our learning session. Is this the right thing to do in order to avoid an interruption of our studies or must he return it as soon as he has finished using it?

**Answer:** While it is certainly important to avoid any unnecessary interruptions in the sacred activity of Torah study, it is also important to avoid being the indirect cause of others having to interrupt their study. It may be assumed that you and your partner are not the only people studying in that Beit Midrash and there is a likelihood that at least one of them will also be interested in referring to the particular volume which your partner took from the shelf, the only one of its kind on the shelves. The failure of your partner to immediately return it to its place after using it may thus

cause this other fellow to lose precious time touring the Beit Midrash to find what he is looking for.

This caution for consideration of others has extensions into other matters both within a Beit Midrash or any public place. Many such places offer the people who study or work in them facilities for hot beverages but do not supply disposable cups. Should someone avail himself of one of the limited supply of glass cups and fail to return it to its place – washed and ready for use – he is guilty of causing an inconvenience for the next person interested in a drink.

One can apply this to so many areas of life, from returning a book to a library or an item borrowed from any one of the “Gemach” free loan services which are a common feature in religious communities. No one wants to be told when looking for an item he needs that it is unavailable because some previous borrower was lax in returning it. So remember how the Sage Hillel encapsulated the entire Torah for the conversion candidate with Judaism’s “golden rule”: “Don’t do to others what you don’t want done to you.”

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POB 18103, Jerusalem 91180, Israel • Tel: +972-2-581-0315 • Email: info@ohr.edu • www.ohr.edu

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# Talmudic Insights Into Chanuka

By  
**RABBI  
MENDEL  
WEINBACH**

The basic mitzvah of Chanuka is to celebrate “the miracle that happened then,” by lighting the *chanukia* for eight days. Interestingly enough, though, there is a dispute in the Talmud between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel whether to increase the number of candles each day from one to eight, or to start with eight and remove a candle each day for eight days. Although the definitive Halacha rules according to Beit Hillel, who argues that we add a candle each day, it is worthwhile to look at the dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel for the many insights into Chanuka that it brings to light.

Beit Shammai’s rationale for going downward relates to the *parim*, the bulls, offered as sacrifices on Succot in the Temple, which were offered in descending order from 13 to 7 on each of the 7 days of Succot totaling 70 bulls in all, corresponding to the 70 Nations of the world. There are two dimensions to the *parim*. One dimension is that we have a concern for the material and spiritual well being of the entire world. (The Talmud tells us that the 70 Nations of the world are in a perpetual state of decline). When we offer sacrifices, we unlock an energy which brings blessings from Heaven for the entire world. (If the Babylonians and the Romans, who each destroyed the Temples in their own time, had understood what was being achieved for them with the sacrifices, they would have come with guards to protect the Temple rather than come to destroy it). Therefore, this is an expression of concern for the entire world, because, without the energy created by our sacrifices, the world is in a state of decline. The second dimension of the *parim* sacrifices is to infuse a special nationalistic energy into the Jewish People to remember that they are an elite corps chosen by G-d to be a light unto the Nations, so as to inspire them, and to strengthen their resistance to the negative corrupting pagan influences of the 70 Nations, expressed in the declining pattern of the sacrifices. Thus, lighting the *chanukia* in descending order would symbolize the decreasing effect that entropy has on the world and the decreasing influence that the 70 Nations have on the Jews.

Unfortunately, the 70 Nations of the world did not understand the nature of the sacrifices in the Temple. As such, the Jewish People have suffered countless pogroms throughout the ages and the destruction of two Holy Temples. Although the Greeks did not actually destroy our Temple, they contaminated it. Chanuka celebrates the return of holiness to the Temple after the contamination of the

Greeks. Hence, Beit Hillel argues that since holiness was returned to the Temple, and since we move upward in matters of *kedusha*, (holiness), then we should light in ascending order to illustrate this increase in *kedusha*.

Chanuka took place in Israel during the Hellenistic oppression called *galut Yavan*. This third exile lasted 180 years, and was dubbed “the exile of darkness” because the Greeks made every effort to make Jews see and understand the world in a way which was alien to the Torah. Darkness, because nothing is as dark as the enslavement of the human mind. The *galut Yavan* is always referred to as “darkness” because it took away the “light of Torah”.

Darkness is the absence of light. Things that are negative we call darkness. They are opposite of good. Evil is darkness. But you can combat Evil in the world. You can attack it by fighting whatever is wrong in the world; or, you can create such a tremendous light where you are that the darkness just fades away. Chanuka expresses the victory of light over darkness. But the question lies in what strategy is most successful: to burn away and destroy Evil; or, to create a greater light so that the darkness just vanishes?

Look closely at the nature of a flame. It has two very distinct properties: it can burn, and it can illuminate. In combating Evil in the world, do we destroy it, do we burn it, or do we illuminate Torah creating a greater light in the world to dissipate the darkness? This is the nature of the *machloket* (dispute) between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel. Both methods are valid, but what is supposed to be the main thrust of a Jew, what is to be learned from what happened in Chanuka?

Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel are both agreed on the purpose of kindling the *chanukia*. It is to rekindle in ourselves the light of the triumph over darkness. And they both agree that the number of candles should be different each night to signify that each day of the miracle is unique. But its uniqueness can be expressed either by adding or subtracting a candle each day. Beit Shammai learns that when we fight the negative corrupting aspects of the prevalent pagan world-culture — either through sacrifices, (or prayer when we have no Temple) — we are steadily wiping out their influence on us, which is reflected in the decreasing pattern of the *parim* sacrifices on Succot. Thus, we should light the *chanukia* in the same way: starting with eight and reducing the number of candles each night. In this way, the burning quality of the flame symbolizes the diminishing effect that

continued...

# Talmudic Insights Into Chanuka

the negative forces of the world have on us, the destruction of Greek paganism, and ultimately the destruction of Evil in the Universe.

On the other hand, Beit Hillel sees the battle against immorality in the world not as a confrontation, but, rather, as an important reason to raise ourselves spiritually, to become the embodiment of morality in the world by living according to Torah principles. This way, the entire world would see us and want to imitate us. So, says Beit Hillel, the more successful method of wiping out darkness is by increasing the illumination of Torah everywhere, not by burning away Evil, but, rather, by increasing our light as a Torah Nation. For this reason we increase the number of candles each night to remind ourselves of our responsibility, as Jews, to steadily increase the light of Torah knowledge and understanding in the world; banishing the darkness of Evil by becoming a light unto the Nations.

When *Mashiach* comes, all the Nations of the world are going to realize that whatever they did in the world — succeeding in enriching themselves, building a world military-power, making scientific discoveries, becoming an economic-power, whatever — they are going to see that the point of it all had to do with what impact it would have on the Jews. We're supposed to be "A Light Unto The Nations." That's our own particular G-d given role in the world. That's what light is all about. When we perform as light, when we do something about bringing the light of Torah into the world, that's when there is light! And when there isn't, when we aren't learning Torah or performing *mitzvot*, when we assimilate, G-d sends us the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans, the crusaders and the pogromists, Enlightenment and Emancipation, and the Western World, and all the other threats that happened throughout history. They are sent to stimulate us, to wake us up, and to arouse us back to our original purpose.

If we are going to forget our purpose, and if we are going to try to become the 71st Nation of the world, then G-d will stop us. He won't tolerate that. We can't be a 71st Nation because then the entire world will surely sink into the morass of immorality and corruption. There has to be at least one Nation that is pulling everybody up and not copping out of its responsibility. And if we don't do this, then somebody is going to come around and remind us that we're Jews and that we have this responsibility. Why do you think that all the attempts of Jews to become the 71st Nation — to assimilate —

have failed? And don't think that they haven't tried hard enough — Jews have tried, oh have Jews tried — in our time perhaps harder than any other time there has been an attempt of Jews to disguise or to forget their Jewishness and to just blend in to the melting pot, to just blend in with the rest of the world. You know why it has failed? It has failed for one very simple reason: "You can change your Moses, but you can't change your noses." Meaning, you can say all the protestations you want about what you believe, and you can try to dress like them, eat their food, sing their songs, speak their language, and do everything like them, but there is always going to be somebody who will recognize some feature of your Jewishness, and he is going to be the one who reminds you. That is his purpose. G-d sends them to shake us back into a realization of what we're all about and that we can never be part of those 70 Nations because we have a unique role to play in the world.

In the end of days our Sages tell us that there is going to be a world trial, like a post-Nuremberg trial, except that there is going to be only one judge: The One Judge; G-d. And G-d will ask the 70 Nations: "What did you do to promote Torah in this world?" And the Talmud says that all the Nations will come forward with their new understanding of world history, and they will try to take credit for having enabled Jews to learn Torah by providing them with such necessities as marketplaces, roads, bridges, and bathhouses. But G-d will reject their claim telling them: "Although your achievements did actually benefit the people of the Torah, it was only because My Divine Plan of World History put you in a position to do so; but, in fact, your motivations were purely selfish ones: either for economic exploitation or physical gratification." In a broader sense, throughout history, the persecution of Jews, although motivated by primitive anti-Semitism, has also been part of The Divine Plan for reminding Jews of their special mission in this world.

Hence when we are lighting our *chanukia* this year, we should have in mind that, in our encounter with "darkness", we don't want to use the flame to burn and destroy the world, rather, we want to use it to illuminate the whole world with Torah. We want to light the way for all the Nations so that they can prosper materially and spiritually. The prescription for overcoming "darkness" in our time is the same as it was in the time of the Hellenistic oppression: by increasing our light. If we increase our learning, and if we increase our holiness, then we will truly be "A Light Unto The Nations." HAPPY CHANUKA!

