



Parshas Vayeshev

November 26, 2021

A Taste of Torah

Sign of the Times

by Rabbi Aahron Wilen

The field mouse, visiting his city cousin, steps outside to explore the neighborhood. Strolling down the street, he is fascinated by a pole swinging down at the end of the sidewalk. The pole is topped by two blinking red lights. Mesmerized, he draws closer to get a better look. It rings, too! How peculiar, he thinks to himself - moments before he is run over by the train.

The word in the Torah for miracle is *nais*, which literally means a sign. Just as the lights and bells at the railroad crossing are meant to get your attention and make you realize something important - that you'd better get out of the way of the oncoming train - a *nais*, as well, is a sign to call your attention to something and to create a realization.

Yosef is kidnapped by his brothers and initially thrown into a pit, which, says the Torah, had no water in it. The Talmud (Shabbos 24a) points out that although the pit contained no water, there were snakes and scorpions in it, seemingly a death sentence. Yosef, however, survived by a miracle, as he remained untouched by the deadly creatures. Here, too, the miracle was meant as a sign to call Yosef's brothers' attention to something - in this case, Yosef's righteousness. Had his brothers stopped to contemplate what happened, they would have perhaps realized their motives were flawed and reconsidered their course of action.

They didn't, though, and Yosef was sold, one of the greatest mistakes in the history of the Jewish People.

The aforementioned section of Talmud continues into a seemingly unrelated halacha, teaching that Chanukah lights placed more than twenty *amos* (cubits) from the ground are invalid. Rabbi

Moshe Feinstein (1895-1986) points out that there is, indeed, a connection between these two passages. The reason why a menorah cannot be placed above 20 *amos* is because it is not readily visible to those on the ground below. The lights of the menorah, explains Rabbi Feinstein, are intended as a sign to call our attention to something. We are meant to see the menorah and reflect upon the miracles of Chanukah. The menorah must therefore be placed in a spot that will be noticed by passersby, not above their line of vision.

There is a famous question asked by the Bais Yosef (Rabbi Yosef Karo; 1488-1575). The eight days of Chanukah commemorate the eight days that a single night's supply of miraculously lasted in the *Bais Hamikdash* (Temple). However, there was enough oil to last for the first night; only the subsequent seven days and nights were miraculous as the flames kept burning. Why, then, do we celebrate Chanukah for eight days, and not just seven?

There are many answers offered for this question. Rabbi Feinstein, based on the idea that a *nais* is meant to catch our attention, cites Rabbi Chaim Shmuelevitz (1902-1979) who explains that the extra night of menorah lighting is intended as a sign to call our attention to the greatest miracle of all:

OIL BURNS!

The very existence of the world and the laws of nature that we rely upon at all times is, of course, the greatest miracle of all. Miracles like oil burning longer than it should are in a category known as *yesh miyesh*, something from something; a supernatural event occurring with something that already exists. The world itself, though, is *yesh me'ayin*, something

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Stories for the Soul

Strings Attached

based on a story written by Rabbi Paysach J. Krohn

Zevulun was in the sewing accessory business in Lucerne, Switzerland. His son, Daniel, was an intelligent young man with a knack for the business world, and, at seventeen, he was brought into the business. Before long, Daniel was taking business trips for his father. These trips were day trips, where he left in the morning and returned by evening. One day, Zevulun asked his son to take a week-long trip to close an important deal.

The morning after Daniel left, Zevulun noticed that while Daniel had taken his *tefillin* with him, he had left his *tallis* behind. Wearing a *tallis* during prayers is a custom for many unmarried boys and men of German descent (while most other Jews of Ashkenazic descent do not wear one prior to marriage), and Zevulun was not sure if the *tallis* had been left by mistake or deliberately due to the lack of importance his son may have attached to the custom.

Zevulun immediately appointed an employee to tend to his business, and he got onto the next train to Lucerne, a five-hour trip. Upon arriving there, he took a taxi to the hotel where his son was staying and went to his room. Daniel was quite shocked to see his father, and inquired if everything was okay.

Zevulun assured Daniel that all was in order, but told him that he had forgotten something at home.

"What did I forget?" said Daniel. "Perhaps an important document, or a sample?"

"No, you forgot this!" replied his father, handing him the *tallis*.

"You travelled all the way here to give

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Kollel Happenings

DEATH THREAT: SHABBOS OBSERVANCE & LAW ENFORCEMENT AT THURSDAY, DEC. 9 T4T ON ZOOM

Join Howie Shapiro, Intelligence Analyst for the FBI, and Rabbi Mordechai Fleisher, Senior Educator for the Denver Community Kollel, as they negotiate the ins and outs of conflict resolution on Thursday, December 9 at 7:30 pm via Zoom. Visit denverkollel.org or email info@denverkollel.org for details and Zoom info.

RABBI YOSSI EPHRATHI NOW TEACHING LEARN 2 LEARN GESHMAK

You may have limited experience learning Talmud. You may think that you don't enjoy serious Talmud study, that it's just not for you. But you haven't tried Learn 2 Learn Geshmak. A gemara program crafted to give you the satisfaction and joy of learning, Learn 2 Learn Geshmak is now being taught by Kollel Scholar Rabbi Yossi Ephrathi, and is beginning a new topic. Contact Rabbi Nesanel Kipper at rnk@denverkollel.org for further details.

BUILD YOUR LEGACY AND SECURE THE FUTURE OF TORAH WITH LIVE ON/LIFE & LEGACY

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Halacha Riddles

Last week's question: What element of *Birkas Hamazon* is relevant to women only when men are not involved?

Answer: If three women eat together, they may (but are not required) to have a *mezuman* on their own, with one of the three leading (Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 199:7).

There are some who say that three women may even separate and make their own *mezuman* even when men are already making their own *mezuman* (see Mishna Berura *ibid.*:18 with Sha'ar Hatziyun 9). However, Hashem's name

is not added for a group of ten women as it is for ten men.

A group of three men who ate a bread meal together are required to recite *Birkas Hamazon* with a *mezuman*; if there are ten men, Hashem's name is added, as well. Women are not counted for a men's group (*ibid.*:6), though women are required to respond to a *mezuman* comprised of men (*ibid.*:7).

This week's question: How would there be a difference between one who drank water versus some other beverage regarding the laws of *mezuman*?

Lives of Our Torah Leaders

Rabbi Meir Shapiro - Part XXVII

Afterwards, the Chofetz Chaim, who had been part of the meeting, privately shared a suggestion with Rabbi Shapiro. He told him not to walk into the assembly room where the speeches were taking place until everyone else was already seated. Rabbi Shapiro did so, and as he entered, the Chofetz Chaim stood up in his honor! Seeing the Chofetz Chaim rise for this young

rabbi, everyone else rose, as well. This gave Rabbi Shapiro instant credibility and prestige, setting the stage for his speech to the audience. Using his great oratorical skills, Rabbi Shapiro painted a glorious picture of what his *daf yomi* program could accomplish. As he finished delivering his impassioned address, the assembly erupted in enthusiastic applause.

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from nothing. The creation of something from nothing occurred only once in history, when Hashem created the world! This is the greatest miracle of all, one which we usually fail to appreciate.

We are so used to the regular rules of

nature running as we expect them to that we rarely pause to appreciate and thank Hashem for them. The Chanukah menorah offers us a chance to stop and do just that.

Stories for the Soul

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me my *tallis*!?" said Daniel incredulously. Reb Zevulun said no more. He removed the *tallis* from his briefcase, gave it to his son and bid him goodbye.

Rabbi Mordechai Schwab, who knew the story, once related it to Rabbi Naftali Zev Leibowitz, and expressed how remarkable it was to make such a long trip just for a *tallis*. Rabbi Leibowitz replied, "That is

not why he made the trip! He made the trip for generations. His descendants will treasure the custom of wearing a *tallis*!"

Yosef was sent into the spiritual morass of Egypt at the young age of seventeen. During his time there, he overcame numerous challenges, largely due to the strong spiritual influence his father, Yaakov, had imbued in him.

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