

Why 8?

The Beis Yosef asked the famous question: Why eight days of Chanukah? Granted that the Menorah burned for eight days, the first day wasn't a miracle. There was enough oil for one day. Chanukah ought to be celebrated seven days, because the oil miraculously burned for seven additional days.

In answering this question, the Alter of Kelm discussed a fundamental teaching.

Rabbi Chaninah Ben Dosa once found his daughter unhappy. She explained that she had accidentally switched a container of vinegar for oil, and had kindled the vinegar for the Shabbos light. "Don't worry," he said. "The One Who made the oil light, will make the vinegar light." The candles burned the entire Shabbos. (Taanis 28a.)

This story is often taught as a demonstration of the power of faith. The Alter of Kelm, however, saw something different here. Rabbi Chaninah Ben Dosa didn't say, "The vinegar will light," but "Just as oil lights, so vinegar can light." The fact that oil burns, is in itself miraculous.

The first day of Chanukah celebrates that the oil burned the first day. We recognize that all of life is, in itself, a miraculous phenomenon. Ramban states that there are "hidden miracles" - which appear through the medium of nature. As well as "open miracles" which defy nature. "Anyone who does not believe that everything

that happens to us is miraculous, has no share in Torah." (Ramban, end of parshas Bo.)

This is the intention of the brocha: "Who performed miracles for our fathers in those days at this time..." "At this time," alludes to the constant miracles that we ourselves benefit from each and every day.

The Ba'al Shem Tov said something similar. Once, a student cried before the Ba'al Shem Tov, saying that he had lost faith. What had caused the problem? He had heard a scientific explanation of the Splitting of the Sea. Since the story of the miraculous phenomena of the Splitting of the Sea is very basic to Judaism, he felt that his simple faith had been jeopardized. In a drasha, the Ba'al Shem Tov showed from the Talmud that the scientific description of the Splitting of the Sea was, in fact, correct. How is Hashem's constant, miraculous guidance of nature alluded to from the Splitting of the Sea? He answers that the fact that the sea split just as the Jewish People were entering, and returned to its former state as soon as the Jews left. (Ba'al Shem Tov Al Hatorah, parshas Beshalach.)

We find almost identical words from the Alter of Kelm, in his description of Purim. "Initially, we thought that the world continues according to nature - not for the benefit of the Jewish People. Finally, we see that although the world continues according to nature, it is for our benefit..."

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מס' רצ"ט

This week's Parsha begins with the story of the sale of Yosef. Reuven, the eldest brother, was able to convince his brothers to save Yosef from being killed and instead had him thrown into a pit. Yehudah, however, was instrumental in the sale of Yosef to the passing Arab merchants. When Reuven, who was not present at this time, later returned to save Yosef and found that he had already been sold, he proceeded to tear his clothes, which many commentators explain to have been made of sackcloth.

The question is asked as to why Reuven was not present when Yosef was sold? The Shach Hatorah explains that Yosef, being his father's favourite, would tend to his father's every need. Since Yosef was now not able to be with his father, Reuven, being the eldest, assumed this responsibility. An alternative answer given by Rashi is that Reuven was returning from doing Teshuva. This would also explain why Reuven was wearing sackcloth, which he did because he had moved his father's bed into his mothers (Leah's) tent. This was a disrespectful act and so he fasted and wore sackcloth.

There is a midrash which explains that: *Hashem said to him, "Never did man not sin before me and repent and you began repentance in the beginning, your lot will be that your son's son will stand and begin with repentance".*

At first glance the Midrash seems to say that Reuven was the first person to do Teshuvah when he repented for the act of moving his father's bed. However, the Meforshim ask whether there were not others that did Teshuvah before Reuven, for example, Adam and Kayin?

The Alter Rebbe z"l answered that Reuven was the first person to repent immediately after he sinned, for in the very next Pasuk after the Torah

tells us that he sinned the Torah writes, "and the sons of Yaakov were twelve." However, although he repented and was completely forgiven, he never the less felt that he must dress in sack cloth and fast and continue to rectify what he had done. In essence, he was the first person to repent even though he was already forgiven. This is what is meant by the Midrash, never before did man not sin before me and repent. Before Hashem Reuven did not sin for he was forgiven and still, he repented.

The Yismach Yisroel elaborated on this and quoted the Mishnah that states that one Mitzvah leads to the next Mitzvah while one sin leads to another sin. When one sins, he becomes contaminated by that sin and erects walls and barriers between himself and Hashem. These barriers and Tumah blind the person's vision and thus he is bound to stumble and commit another act of sin. Therefore, one that commits a sin must repent in a way that eradicates not only the sin, but even the contamination as well.

Immediately after Reuven removed his father's bed, he returned to Hashem from the depth of his heart. His Teshuvah was so complete that Hashem considered him completely clean from all iniquity. However, he was not satisfied with his Teshuvah and continued the procedures of Teshuvah, for he believed that he was still guilty. Later, when he returned to the pit and found it empty, he was sure that this was the sin that followed the original sin. In other words, he felt the disappearance of Yosef was a result of his first sin of removing his father's bed. In truth, however, he was completely forgiven for the first sin and was not guilty at all. Therefore, he was the first person to repent for something that he was not guilty of.

By Daniel Lefkowitz

Times for Shabbos - זמני שבת

In: 3:38

Out: 4:47

The Last Detail

...והנה ארחת ישמעאלים באה מגלעד וגמליהם נשאים נכאת... (ל"ז:ב"ה)

...And behold a caravan of Yishmaelim was coming from Gilad, and their camels were carrying perfumes... (37:25)

Rashi quotes from the Midrash: Why was it necessary for the posuk to tell us what the Arab traders were carrying? The Midrash then explains – to teach us the way in which Hashem treats צדיקים. Even though these merchants would usually be carrying foul smelling chemicals, Hashem arranged it so that they would be carrying fine smelling perfumes at that time, so that Yosef would not suffer.

On the surface it seems a little strange. Here we read about Yosef, a nice frum Jewish boy, being dragged away from his parents and family, to be sold into slavery to מצרים, a most immoral and depraved country.

Imagine the pain that he felt? Would he ever see his beloved father again? How would his spirit survive in a place like מצרים? Surely the last thing on his mind was the type of merchandise that was being carried by his captors? Does it not seem a little trivial and insignificant if there was or was not an unpleasant odour on his tragic journey?

In military jargon there is a concept of collateral damage. This means that sometimes the army will have to carry out an operation against the enemy but damage may also result to neighbouring civilian property. They do not intend it and they try to avoid it but it is often inevitable. A Jew has to realise that when Hashem carries out justice there is no such thing as chance. Everything that happens, down to the tiniest incident is all decreed by Hashem, and planned well in advance. The

גמרא says that even if someone puts his hand into his pocket to take out three coins but only comes up with two and has to fish around in his pocket to find the third coin, he should understand that this is a punishment from Hashem. Another גמרא says that if a person hurts his little finger, he can be sure that it was decreed from above. (חולין ז:)

Such astounding precision! Such exacting justice!

When it was decreed that יוסף should be taken down to מצרים and suffer at the hands of his captors the pain of being separated from his father and of isolation in a strange land, the sentence was very precise. Isolation and degradation – yes, suffering from an unpleasant odour – no. Hashem did not want יוסף to suffer a single iota more than what had been decreed.

In the same way, you can be sure that this did not go unnoticed by יוסף. How *did* he cope in מצרים through all of his travails? One of the ways was that he remembered how even when he was being taken down to מצרים, the pleasant scent of sweet smelling perfumes accompanied him. Everything was under control. There was no need to worry, as everything was planned with absolute precision, down to the last detail. When a person has these thoughts and focus it is possible to weather any storm with בטחון and אמונה.

By Rabbi M.Cohen

Candy Game

Menashe and Ephraim are playing a fun and delicious game Before them are two bags of candy; one is filled with 32 candies and the other with 51.

The rules of the game involve taking turns removing up to 25 candies from either one of the bags.

Whoever empties the bag of the last candy wins! Assuming that Menashe is the first player, how many candies must he pick out to ensure that he wins?

(answer in next issue)

The Black Van

...ויהן חנו בעיני שר בית הסהר (ל"ט:ב"א)

...And Hashem gave him favour in the eyes of the prison warden (39:21)

It was the custom in Russia that political prisoners were transported to and from jail in a special black van, to denote that they had betrayed their motherland. One time the Alter Rebbe, Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liady, the Baal HaTanya, was denounced by his enemies and accused of treason. He was sentenced to serve time in a special jail in a distant city and had to be transported there by this infamous black van.

The Rebbe, behaved like a good prisoner throughout the journey. However, on Friday afternoon he made a special request; could he and his guards rest over Shabbas and continue afterwards?

His simple plea was rejected. The wagon continued travelling along the road when suddenly a wheel broke. They brought a carpenter from a nearby village to fix it. The wagon started rolling along when suddenly the horse fell in its tracks and died. Thus, the guards had to stop and go and purchase another horse. This new animal was hitched to the black van and the driver flicked his whip over its back and the animal began straining forward but the van refused to move! The guards got off and tried to push the van, thinking that it had got stuck

in some pothole in the road but no, the road was smooth and still the van would not budge! By now they realised that they could not fight against the Rebbe's strong will. They asked him if they could at least travel to a town and stay at an inn. The Rebbe saw that it was already too late and that they would not make it in time for Shabbas and so replied in the negative.

The drivers lamented "but we will have to spend the next twenty five hours in the middle of the road, out in the open!"

The Rebbe answered that they could go off the road into the meadow and camp out there, off the road. As soon as he gave his permission, the horse suddenly leaped forward, as if suddenly released from his invisible bonds. The van was taken off the road and they settled down for the night and the day, until Shabbas was over.

The Rebbe remained in jail until the nineteenth of Kislev, a date which is still celebrated today by Lubavitcher Chassidim all over the globe as the Celebration of Redemption.

(Adapted from tales of Tzaddikim-Bereishit)

Riddle of the Week

Where is daveining do we say two words 44 times?

(answer in next issue)

Answer to Last Week's Riddle

What tragedy in history that is mentioned in the Torah caused the annihilation of one quarter of mankind?

Answer: Kayin killed Hevel. As Adam, Chava, Kayin and Hevel were the only people alive, when Kayin was killed, a quarter of mankind was killed. However, this is problematic as Kayin and Hevel were born with twin sisters.

Prizes have been sponsored by various local Jewish shops to be raffled off monthly to those who successfully answer the weekly general knowledge question!!! Everyone is welcome to submit an answer by emailing us at LIVINGTORAH@HASMONEAN.CO.UK