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Joseph dreamed a dream, and told it to his brothers... "Behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and bowed down to my sheaf." (37:5-7).

We live in a disjointed and fragmented world. Its countless components each seem to be going its own way, each creation seeking only its own preservation and advancement. Our own lives include countless events and experiences, espousing different priorities, pulling us in different directions.

But this is but the most superficial face of reality. The deeper we probe nature and its laws, the more we uncover an underlying unity. The more we assimilate the lessons of life, the more we discern a "guiding hand" and a coherent destiny. The more we utilize our talents and resources, all the more do the various aspects of our uniquely individual role fall in place.

This is the deeper significance of Joseph's dream. We are all bundlers in the field of life. Here, each stalk grows in its own distinct little furrow; our challenge is to bring focus to this diversity, to gather these stalks together and bind them as a single sheave.

But this alone is not enough. As Joseph saw in his dream, his brothers' individual bundles stood in a circle and bowed to his. This means that while every individual should view the various components of his life as a distinct "bundle," the piecing together of his life is not an end in itself, but the means to a higher goal. In the words of our sages, "The entire world was created only for my sake; and I was created only to serve my Creator." So while every person should view his entire world—the resources and opportunities which Divine Providence has sent his way—as being there for him, this "bundle" must in turn be dedicated to the fulfillment of his Divinely ordained mission in life.

The way this is achieved is by subjugating one's own bundle to "Joseph's bundle." The Torah is G-d's communication of His will to man, and charts the course for man to serve his Creator. And each generation has its "Joseph," an utterly righteous individual whose life is the perfect embodiment of Torah's ethos and ideals. This is the tzaddik whom the "bundles" of the various tribes of Israel surround and subjugate themselves to, turning to him for guidance as how best to realize the purpose of their lives. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe) chabadonline.com

And Joseph brought to his father their evil report (37:2) Said the sages: two righteous men were punished on account of the bearing of malevolent reports: Jacob and Joseph. Because Joseph spoke evilly of his brothers, he was incarcerated in prison for 12 years; and because Jacob listened to these reports, the Divine spirit departed from him for 22 years. This teaches us that one who speaks negatively of another is punished once, while someone who listens to negative talk of another is twice punished. (Pirkei d'Rabbeinu HaKadosh)

A many-colored coat (37:3) Ketonet passim, in the Hebrew. The word passim can be translated as "colorful" (Radak; Septuagint), "embroidered" (Ibn Ezra; Bachya; Nachmanides on Exodus 28:2), "striped" (Ibn Janach; Radak, Sherashim), or "illustrated" (Targum Yonathan). It can also denote a long garment, coming down to the "palms" of the hands (Rashbam; Ibn Ezra; Baaley Tosafoth; Midrash Rabbah), and the feet (Lekach Tov). Alternatively, the word denotes the material out of which the coat was made, which was fine wool (Rashi) or silk (Ibn Janach). Hence, Ketonet passim, may be translated as "a full-sleeved robe," "a coat of many colors," "a coat reaching to his feet," "an ornamented tunic," "a silk robe," or "a fine woolen cloak." (The Living Torah)

And they took him, and cast him into a pit; and the pit was empty; there was no water in it (37:24) From the implication of what is said, "And the pit was empty," do I not know that there was no water in it? What then is taught by, "there was no water in it"? There was no water, but there were snakes and scorpions in it. (Talmud, Shabbat 22a)

The mind and heart of man are never empty. If there is no life-nourishing "water," there are "snakes and scorpions in it" (The Chassidic Masters) - chabadonline.com

The Obligation to Illuminate the World

Excerpt of a letter by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory

...Chanukah, the Festival of Lights, recalls the victory -- more than 2100 years ago -- of a militarily weak but spiritually strong Jewish people over the mighty forces of a ruthless enemy that had overrun the Holy Land and threatened to engulf the land and its people in darkness.

The miraculous victory -- culminating with the rededication of the Sanctuary in Jerusalem and the rekindling of the Menorah which had been desecrated and extinguished by the enemy -- has been celebrated annually ever since during these eight days of Chanukah, especially by lighting the Chanukah Menorah, also as a symbol and message of the triumph of freedom over oppression, of spirit over matter, of light over darkness.

It is a timely and reassuring message, for the forces of darkness are ever present. Moreover, the danger does not come exclusively from outside; it often lurks close to home, in the form of insidious erosion of time-honored values and principles that are the foundation of any decent human society. Needless to say, darkness is not chased away by brooms and sticks, but by illumination. Our Sages said, "A little light expels a lot of darkness."

The Chanukah Light reminds us in a most obvious way that illumination begins at home, within oneself and one's family, by increasing and intensifying the light of the Torah and Mitzvot in the everyday experience, even as the Chanukah Lights are kindled in growing numbers from day to day. But though it begins at home, it does not stop there. Such is the nature of light that when one kindles a light for one's own benefit, it benefits also all who are in the vicinity. Indeed, the Chanukah Lights are expressly meant to illuminate the "outside," symbolically alluding to the duty to bring light also to those who, for one reason or another, still walk in darkness.

What is true of the individual is true of a nation, especially this great United States, united under G-d, and generously blessed by G-d with material as well as spiritual riches. It is surely the duty and privilege of this Nation to promote all the forces of light both at home and abroad, and in a steadily growing measure. - chabadonline.com

DAY OF FARBRENGEN, TAL UMATAR (SIDUR, P. 54). CHANUKA LIGHTS AFTER HAVDALA (P. 234), BEFORE V'YITEIN L'CHA (P. 235). IN SHUL, CHANUKA CANDLES BEFORE HAVDALA. ON SHABBAT MEVARCHIM, (WHEN THE NEW MONTH IS BLESSED) (SIDUR, P.191), CHASSIDIM ARE TO ASSEMBLE IN SHUL EARLY IN THE MORNING TO SAY THE ENTIRE TEHILLIM. AFTERWARDS, STUDY FOR ABOUT AN HOUR A MAAMAR CHASSIDUS THAT EVERYONE CAN UNDERSTAND, AND THEN DAVEN. THE TIME TO FARBRENG IS TO BE DETERMINED ACCORDING TO THE CIRCUMSTANCES IN THE PLACE THEY LIVE (FOR MATERIAL AND SPIRITUAL SUCCESS). AFTER CONCLUDING THE TEHILLIM ON SHABBAT MEVARCHIM, SAY MOURNER'S KADDISH; IF THERE IS A YAHRZEIT OR MOURNER - KADDISH AFTER EACH OF THE FIVE BOOKS OF TEHILLIM. TEHILLIM 95:3, OPENING FRIDAY-NIGHT PRAYERS. IN SHUL THE (CHANUKA) CANDLES SHOULD STAND EAST TO WEST, AS IN THE SANCTUARY. WHY WE ARE NOT PARTICULAR ABOUT THIS AT HOME IS NOT CLEAR. SEFER HAMINHAGIM P. 70. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, KISLEV 26).

Each one of us is both the sun and the moon. The sun is constant - every day the same fiery ball rises in the sky. But the moon cycles through constant change - one day it is whole, then it wanes until it has disappeared altogether. Yet, then it is renewed, reborn out of nothingness.

So too, we learn and progress by quantum leaps and bounds, yet the timeless, constant wisdom of Torah doesn't budge from its place. On the contrary, the more we move forward, the deeper we fathom the truths behind us.

-Bringing Heaven Down to Earth