

THE Chabad WEEKLY

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The Torah portion of Mikeitz begins with a description of Pharaoh's dream. In last week's portion we also read about dreams: those of Joseph, and of Pharaoh's butler and baker.

It was these dreams that ultimately led to the Jewish people's exile in Egypt. Indeed, there is an intrinsic connection between dreaming and the concept of exile.

A dream is the product of the imagination. In a dream, logical contradictions make perfect sense. An elephant can pass easily through the eye of a needle.

In the same sense, the entire period of exile is only "imaginary." It may appear to a person that he really loves G-d, but what he really loves best is himself, i.e., his own physical comfort. He may be so deluded by his wants and desires that he actually transgresses the will of G-d.

Nonetheless, every Jew possesses a G-dly soul that is always whole and intact. The good deeds a Jew does are eternal. The Torah he studies and the mitzvot he performs last forever. By contrast, the negative things a Jew does are only temporary. If a Jew gives into temptation and sins, the evil doesn't last. In the end, every Jew will return to G-d.

There are some people who claim that religious observance must follow an orderly sequence, from the "lesser" mitzvot to the more "major" ones. They say that if a person hasn't reached a state of spiritual perfection, he cannot ascend to the next level. But this approach is entirely wrong. We aren't living in an "orderly" and logical world; rather, the Jewish people is in exile, the entire period of which is likened to a dream. In a dream, two opposites can co-exist peacefully. Thus because we are only "dreaming," we must grab every opportunity that comes our way to do a mitzva, no matter how "illogical" or far removed it seems from our present level of spirituality.

In previous generations, very few people studied Chasidut, the inner, esoteric aspects of Torah. A person had to prepare himself for many years before he could even begin to approach it. In our generation, however, "it is a mitzva to reveal this wisdom." Ever since Chasidut was revealed by the Baal Shem Tov and the Alter Rebbe, the obligation to learn Chasidut falls on each and every Jew, in the same way that every Jew is obligated to study every other part of the Torah.

It is precisely now, at the very end of the exile, that we can "jump" to spiritual levels that in former times would have been beyond our reach. In exile, we are only "dreaming," and anything is possible. Regardless of our individual achievements, it is precisely this approach to Torah and mitzvot that will bring an end to the exile and bring redemption to the world. (Adapted from Vol. 1 of Likutei Sichot, L'Chaim 5759, #650)

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"When they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them." (41:21) Evil exists in the world only by virtue of the small spark of G-dliness hidden deep within. This spark can be so deeply embedded that it is impossible, on the surface, to discern it at all. (Sefat Emet)

"Joseph recognized his brothers, but they recognized him not." (42:8) Joseph's brothers never expected that a man as involved in worldly affairs as the viceroy of Egypt could be their brother. In their world view, the only way to serve G-d properly was to divorce oneself from worldly matters and pursue a life of spiritual contemplation, much as they were able to do in their chosen profession of shepherding. Joseph, however, was on a higher level of spirituality, able to maintain his attachment to G-d even while involved in the day-to-day affairs of state. (Torah Ohr) (www.ascent.co.il)



The Shamash: The "shamash" candle, the one which is used to light all the others, is not part of the mitzva itself. Yet it is precisely this candle which is placed, by Jewish custom, above all the others in a position of honor. We learn from this that a person who lights the "candle" of another Jew, who shares his enthusiasm and love of Judaism with another until he, too, is touched and "ignited," elevates his own spirituality as well. (Lubavitcher Rebbe)

The mitzva of lighting the Chanuka menorah is derived from the menorah that stood in the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. However, there is one important difference between that menorah and the one we light in our homes: the menorah in the Holy Temple consisted of seven branches, whereas the Chanuka menorah has eight. In order to understand why, let's put the miracle of Chanuka in historical context:

The miracle of Chanuka took place after an extended period of time in which the menorah was not lit. It was impossible to do so, as the Greeks had issued harsh decrees forbidding the Jews to learn Torah and observe its commandments.

When G-d granted the Jewish people the strength to prevail over their enemies, it became necessary to perform an act that would bring an additional measure of light to make up for the deficit the darkness had caused. The Chanuka menorah would thus consist of eight lights instead of seven.

This teaches an important point: Above and beyond the fact that every Jew can transform his home into a "Holy Temple" by lighting the Chanuka menorah in commemoration of the ancient miracle, by lighting eight candles he causes an even greater light to shine than existed in the Holy Temple!

In exile, the Jewish people is "weak" and "few in number," while the nations of the world are "strong" and "many." Yet the miracle of Chanuka shows that even in a time of great darkness it is possible to overcome all impediments - even meriting a greater measure of light than existed before.

In the merit of observing the mitzva of the Chanuka menorah may we very soon see the "lights of Zion" in the Third and eternal Holy Temple, with the coming of Moshiach. (From: L'Chaim 5759, #650)

IT IS CUSTOMARY THAT ONE NOT DAVENING WITH A MINYAN SAYS THE OPENING (P. 241) AND CLOSING (P. 245) B'RACHOT OF HALLEL EVEN ON DAYS WHEN "HALF HALLEL" (1) IS SAID. IN THE CONCLUDING PARAGRAPH, YEHAL'LUCHA (P.245) OMIT THE WORD "AL. ALL TEFILLIN (2) SHOULD BE WORN (THEN, LATER, TAKEN OFF) BEFORE MUSAF (P. 245), BUT THE DAILY TORAH LESSONS ARE STUDIED AFTER CONCLUDING THE ENTIRE SERVICE. FOOTNOTES: (1) SEE INSTRUCTIONS, SIDUR P. 241. (2) SEE MENACHEM AV 19. (FROM REBBE'S HAYOM YOM, TEVET 1)

G-d did not give you light that you may hold it up in the middle of the day. When you are given light it is in order to accomplish something, to do something difficult and novel. Go take your light and transform the darkness that it may also shine! - From the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe; rendered by Tzvi Freeman