

A Taste of Torah

Nothing Short of Miraculous

By Rabbi Mordechai Mandel

Wouldn't we all love if G-d himself came to us and said, "Son, I love you!" while placing a kiss on our forehead. The Maharal (Chiddushei Aggados) explains that the combination of miracles that transpired during the time of the Chashmonaim was just that.

There was the miracle of the war - a small army defeating a large one; there was the miracle of finding the one pure jug of oil; and, finally, the miracle of that small jug that held only enough for one day, yet lasted for eight days.

The Menorah we light on the eight days of Chanukah is to commemorate the last miracle, that of the jug lasting for eight days. Which begs the question: Why do we specifically focus on that event; why don't we also stress the victory in battle, and the discovery of the jug?

When the Jewish people analyzed the miracle of the war, wondrous as it was that Yehuda the Maccabee and his brothers were able to defeat an entire army of Greek warriors, they may not have been convinced that this was clearly the Hand of G-d. Perhaps their success could have been attributed to their strategies, their keen war plans, their guerilla warfare tactics.

Upon returning to the Temple and seeing everything destroyed and in disarray, they gave up on finding the pure, untainted oil needed to light the Menorah, since the Greeks had intentionally contaminated everything. Their joy was unimaginable when they actually found one pure jug - what a

miracle! Yet, once again, they could have written it off as mere coincidence. They could have misunderstood that event, as well, as being a natural occurrence, and not directly from G-d.

But when the Jews saw that the oil supernaturally lasted for eight days, this confirmed that yes, indeed, G-d was behind it all! G-d loves us, cares for us, and performed all these miraculous events for us!

A clear, open display of G-d's hand solidified the realization that G-d was behind it all. That was the "kiss on their foreheads", a show of G-d's extraordinary feeling of love toward them.

This is why our Sages decided that for all future generations, we must commemorate the sequence of events with the lighting of the menorah. The menorah is not just a commemoration of the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days. It is remembering the message imparted by G-d, that due to his great love for the Jewish People, He intervened and engineered all that had occurred.

As we think about our situation as Jews in our day and age, our comfort and strength should come from our realization that we have G-d on our side. When we light the menorah we should remember G-d's love for us, and strengthen our love and connection to him. Through that, we will surely overcome our enemies and be redeemed speedily!

Stories For The Soul

A Menora Miracle

Private Stephen Winneger was on patrol one night during WWII when he saw a figure running through a field. He shouted, "Halt or I'll shoot." The figure ducked behind a tree and began to dig.

Stephen again shouted, "Halt or I'll shoot!" He didn't halt.

Stephen tackled the figure. To his surprise, he had captured a young boy. An ornate menorah had fallen from the boy's hands and Stephen picked it up. The boy shouted in Yiddish, "Give it to me! It's mine!" Stephen assured the boy that he was among friends, and that, furthermore, he himself was Jewish.

The boy had survived several tortuous years of the Holocaust in a concentration camp. He had come back to retrieve the menorah. It was all he had left. He had been forced to watch the shooting of his father, and had no idea what had become of his mother.

Stephen took the boy, whose name was David, under his wing. As they became closer, Stephen's heart went out to the boy, and he later adopted him.

Back home in New York City, a curator of the Jewish Museum in Manhattan saw the menorah and offered David \$2,500 for it - a staggering sum of money in the late 1940s!

But David refused, stating that the menorah had been in his family for over 200 years and that no amount of money could ever make him sell it.

When Chanuka came, David and Stephen lit the menorah in the window of their home. An hour later there was a knock on the door. A

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Kollel Happenings

GETTING MAD, GETTING EVEN, GETTING IT RIGHT: DEALING WITH CORPORATE BETRAYAL AT DECEMBER 12TH TORAH 4 TYCOONS

Join Dov Mowzowski and Rabbi Aron Yehuda Schwab on December 12th as they journey through this real-life dilemma. For more information or to register call 303-820-2855 or email info@denverkollel.org.



DENVER JEWISH CHILDREN'S ANNUAL EXTRAVAGANZA

Join the Jewish Community on December 25th from 11 am-3 pm at South Suburban's Family Sports Center, 6901 South Peoria (at Arapahoe Road) in Centennial for a day of fun you won't want to miss! From ice skating, laser tag, and rock climbing for teens, to Lollipop Park for younger children, and much more, there's something for kids of all ages. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-668-1878.



TRUST THY FATHER

Join Rabbi Shachne Sommers for "Trust thy Father," a series based on Chovos Ha'Levavos/Duties of the Heart. Discover and delve into vital Jewish concepts of Bitachon. The classes takes place on Tuesdays, from 7:55-8:25 a.m., at Aish. For more info, email info@denverkollel.org or call 303-820-2855.

Interpersonal Issues Payment for Returning a Lost Object

The finder may not charge for the effort expended in retrieving, safeguarding, or returning the item. Nonetheless, if the owner realizes he needn't pay anything, and nonetheless

offers him something for his trouble, he may accept it.

Adapted with permission from "The Halachos of Other People's Money" by Rabbi Pinchas Bodner (Feldheim Publishers)

Ask the Rabbi Chashmanoim's War Power

Jechezkel Frank from Holland wrote:

Dear Rabbi,

Did our Sages exercise at all? How could the Maccabeans be so strong and know about warfare without practicing and working out? Of course this was one of the miracles which happened on Chanukah, but is there more we can say about this? Are there any sources about rabbis who knew how to sport or exercise? Or sources about the importance of exercising?

Dear Jechezkel Frank,

In the Chanukah prayers, we say that G-d delivered the "strong into the hands of the weak." So it is clear that the Maccabees were "weak." In fact they had no military training, since the only people who did not go to war were priests, and the Maccabees were all priests.

This is not to say that they weren't

healthy and vital. Maimonides writes: "Having a healthy and complete body is following in the ways of G-d, as it is impossible to understand and to perceive the knowledge of the Creator when one is sick; therefore people must distance themselves from things that are destructive to the body, and conduct themselves in ways that are strengthening and therapeutic."

Maimonides highly recommends exercise as part of his overall prescription for health. He even ranks it higher than proper diet, saying that, "anyone who exercises and engages in a lot of physical activity, doesn't overeat and maintains regularity, sickness will not come upon him, and his strength will increase, even if he eats unhealthy foods."

Sources:

Maimonides, Hilchot Deot 4:1, 2, 15

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Stories for the Soul

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woman with a strong German accent said that she had once had a menorah like the one in the window. Could she possibly come inside and take a closer look?

Winneger invited her in. And that is how David was reunited with his mother.

When our ancestors found only

enough oil for one day, though they needed eight days' worth, they did not give up, and used the oil nonetheless. Hashem performed a miracle and the oil lasted for eight days. When people extend themselves to do the right thing, amazing things happen.

Adapted with permission from ShulWeek by Rabbi Baruch Lederman.