

Toronto Torah

Yeshiva University Torah MiTzion Beit Midrash Zichron Dov

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This issue of Toronto Torah is dedicated by Mervyn and Joyce Fried
for the shloshim of Mervyn's beloved mother, Itta Vera bat Yisrael Moshe HaLevi z"l

איטה וירה בת ישראל משה הלוי ז"ל

The Ox's Horn: Peshat, Midrash, Chassidut

Adam Friedmann

"And darkness (Bereishit 1:1)' – this is the exile of Greece, which dimmed the sight of Israel with its decrees. They would say to them, 'Write on the horn of an ox that you have no share in the G-d of Israel.'" (Bereishit Rabbah 2:4)

This midrash is one of many similar formulations found throughout the writings of our Sages. (See Bereishit Rabbah 16:14, and Midrash Tanchuma, Tazria 11.) It describes the experience of the Jews under Greek rule, and clearly in a negative light. They were forced to abandon their relationship with G-d, or at least to declare abandonment. Less clear is the imagery of the ox's horn. What does it convey? Here we will consider three options which present different levels of explanation.

The Literal Horn

In the course of his letter to the Jews of Yemen, Rambam interprets the ox's horn literally. Adding to the midrash's imagery, he writes that the Greeks decreed "that every member of Israel should write on his clothing that he has no share in the G-d of Israel, and should likewise inscribe this on the horn of his ox and then use it to plow." Rambam depicts the Greeks as overbearing rulers who directly forced the Jews to consistently and publicly denounce G-d. Useful to these ends is the horn of a work ox, which is regularly seen by workers in the field and by others. [See Megilat Taanit (Tishrei 3) which, without mentioning the ox's horn, simply states that the Greeks forced the Jews to deny G-d altogether.]

The Allegorical Horn

Most interpretations take the ox's horn as an allegory. There are many options to choose from here, but we will suffice with just one. Historically, horns were used as simple bottles to feed babies; the Talmud (Shabbat 35b) makes mention of this practice. In the mythology of the ancient Greeks we find horns playing a similar role. Thus the image of the overflowing horn (cornucopia) represents an abundance of sustenance, physical and otherwise. In this case, our ox's horn may mean this: The Greeks were not interested in oppressing the Jews. They were ready to share the very best of their culture and physical bounty. The price for these luxuries was giving up the distinguishing features of Jewish life, and, along with them, the relationship with G-d. As one hand grasped the cornucopia, the other signed away any share in the G-d of Israel.

The Metaphysical Horn

Several metaphysical interpretations of the horn image emerge from Chassidic writers. Many connect the ox of the midrash with Yosef, who is also described as an ox. (Bereishit 49:22, Devarim 33:17) Rabbi Tzaddok haKohen Rabinowitz (*Resisei Laylah*) explains that the Jewish people have the spiritual capacity to interact with other cultures and influence them positively. This is exemplified by the life of Yosef, who was able to integrate within non-Jewish society and demonstrate to the people he met G-d's interactions with his life and theirs. Our success at influencing others, rather than being negatively influenced ourselves,

depends on the strength of our beliefs and values, chief among them our relationship with G-d. Since the time of Yaakov, who had been injured in his battle with the outside world (the angel of Esav), the Jewish people have had a tendency to overreach, interacting with foreign cultures without establishing the convictions necessary to survive. The ox's horn represents the Greek attempt to put pressure on this flaw and force us to take up the lifestyle of Yosef, the ox, and embrace a foreign culture, without taking care to maintain a robust connection with G-d.

These interpretations are not mutually exclusive. And, in fact, the miracle of Chanukah may be our success in repelling the Greek decree in all three senses. With G-d's help, we were able to cast off oppressive foreign rule, to resist the temptations of a comfortable, but godless, lifestyle, and to effect deep spiritual repairs that enable us to have a lasting impact on the civilizations we encounter without losing our connection to the G-d of our forefathers.

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**הורשתם את הארץ וישבתם בה (במדבר לג)
Marking the State of Israel's 70th Year!**

Israeli Landmarks: The Graves of the Maccabees **Yaron Perez**

Simon sent for the bones of Jonathan his brother, and buried him in Modi'in. All Israel mourned greatly for him, and lamented his loss for many days. Simon built a monument of polished stone back and front, over the grave of his father and his brothers, and made it high enough to be seen from afar. He set up seven pyramids, one beside the other, for his father and mother and his four brothers. And for the pyramids he devised an elaborate setting, erecting about them great columns, and upon the columns he put suits of armor for a permanent memorial, and beside the suits of armor carved ships, so that they could be seen by all who sail the sea. This is the tomb which he built in Modi'in; it remains to this day. (Maccabees I 13, blend of published translations) This is the earliest source regarding the burial location of Matityahu and his family.

Many scholars have sought to locate these graves over the centuries, including a 14th century venture by a Jew named Ishtar haParchi. On the 25th

of Kislev, 1907, a student expedition from Gymnasia Herzlia set out to find the graves in the Modi'in area. Near the Ben Shemen Forest, they encountered shepherds from a nearby Arab village. The shepherds directed them to an area of concentrated graves, known as *Kubur al-Yahud* ("the Jews' graves"). Overwhelmed, the students lit the first candle of Chanukah on the site, which has become accepted as the Maccabees' gravesite. Today the site is marked with an official monument, even though most scholars do not accept the identification of this site as the burial place of the Maccabees.

In 1944, the Maccabee Yisrael movement organized a torch race for Chanukah. Seeing themselves as heirs to the fighting role of the Maccabees (if not their religious philosophy), they came to the graves despite their location in hostile Arab territory. They raced from the graves to Ramlah, Lod and Tel Aviv, using the torch to light Chanukah candles. After the Six Day

War, this annual race was resumed; it is scheduled for the seventh night of Chanukah this year.

In 1995, construction excavations near the gravesite revealed burial chambers and ossuaries, marked with Greek names as well as two Jewish names: Shimon (son of) Eliezer. Today, some scholars assume that this is where the Maccabees were buried. The structure is large and ornate, and it indeed looks out upon the Mediterranean Sea as described in the Book of Maccabees.

A burial cave near the purported graves of the Maccabees was uncovered in the 19th century; at the time, it was thought to be a sheikh's tomb. In recent years, *Ha'Agudah L'maan Kivrei Tzadikim* has refurbished this cave, viewing it as the grave of Matityahu, but this identification is unclear. Near the grave, one can see a monument in memory of 24 soldiers who fell there during the 1948 War of Independence.

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The Zionist Idea: From Chanukah to Yom ha'Atzmaut **Rabbi Jonathan Ziring**

When Religious Zionists encountered the modern miracles of the founding of the State of Israel and the recapture of Jerusalem, they looked to history for guidance about how to respond. Often, their outlook was shaped by viewing these events through the lens of Chanukah.

While some hesitated to celebrate the establishment of the State, arguing that the leadership was not religiously perfect and the victory not complete, the precedent of Chanukah suggested it was nevertheless worth rejoicing. The monarchy of the Hasmoneans was limited in scope and length, and many of their later kings were wicked. Still, Rambam (Laws of Chanukah 3:1) wrote that we celebrate Chanukah because "sovereignty returned to Israel for more than 200 years" and for that alone, we thank G-d. (This author heard this idea from Rabbi Yehuda Amital zt"l many times.)

Many halachic authorities, both in 1948 and then again in 1967, used Chanukah as precedent to argue that Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim should be established and that Hallel should be recited on those days. Chatam Sofer (Yoreh Deah 233) contended that while Chanukah and Purim are rabbinic holidays, they are fulfillments of a basic biblical obligation – to thank G-d for the wonders He has performed. Rabbi Meshulem Roth (Shut Kol Mevaser 1:21) extended this to the wonders of modern Israel:

It is obvious in our case, which is relevant to the entire community of Israel and includes deliverance from slavery to freedom (we were redeemed from the subjugation of kingdoms, and we have become free men and have

achieved political independence) as well as deliverance from death to life (we were saved from the hands of our enemies who sought to exterminate us) – certainly we have an obligation to institute a holiday! (Translation, Koren Yom HaAtzmaut Machzor)

Rabbi Chaim Druckman sees further parallels in the words of Al HaNissim which we recite on Chanukah:

"The Many into the Hands of the Few": On the eve of the declaration of independence of the State of Israel, the Arab countries declared that within a week, they intended to wipe out the entire Yishuv (Jewish population) in the Land of Israel. The Arab armies' proclamation, "We will drive you into the sea," was not a figure of speech, but rather a serious threat to invade the Land of Israel from the north, east, and south, so that the Mediterranean Sea to the west would be the Jews' last refuge... Is there a better example of "the many into the hands of the few"?... The Hanukka miracle took place more than two thousand years ago – but this wondrous event has happened also in our time! G-d delivered the many into the hands of the few, and thus saved us from certain death and gave us the gift of our own lives – is it not appropriate that we thank Him for this? (Translation, *ibid*)

May we continue to celebrate our ancient and modern miracles!

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Biography

Rabbi Shmuel Bornzstain

Rabbi Adam Frieberg

Rabbi Shmuel Bornzstain, the second Rebbe of the Sochatchov chassidic dynasty, was born on the fourth of Cheshvan, 5616 (October 16, 1855). The son of Rabbi Avraham Bornzstain, the first Sochatchover Rebbe, he was brought up by his parents in his maternal grandfather's home. This grandfather, the famous Kotzker Rebbe, supported the family, while Rabbi Avraham spent his days in his studies.

Rabbi Shmuel and his father, Rabbi Avraham had an extremely close relationship, and Rabbi Avraham was Rabbi Shmuel's primary Torah teacher throughout his life. When Rabbi Avraham became Rabbi in a new town, Rabbi Shmuel uprooted his family to follow his father, in order to continue to learn with him on a daily basis. When Rabbi Avraham died in 1910, Rabbi Shmuel was crowned the Rebbe of Sochatchov and was immediately accepted by all of his father's students. After his father's death, Rabbi Shmuel spent many hours compiling and then publishing his father's manuscripts. This work, which Rabbi Shmuel named Avnei Nezer, is a seven volume set of responsa covering all four sections of the Shulchan Aruch. When not writing, Rabbi Shmuel made his living from a wine store run by an associate of his.

Rabbi Shmuel is best known for his nine volume Shem MiShmuel. This collection of homiletic teachings on the weekly Torah portion, as well as the holidays, was written between 1910 and 1926, and it includes many of his father's teachings. Shem MiShmuel has become an extremely important and widely studied chassidic work, unique in its combination of the Chassidut of Pshischa and Kotzk. This blend would become Sochatchover Chassidut.

The outbreak of World War I affected Rabbi Shmuel greatly. He was in Germany when the war began, and he was arrested as a Russian citizen. He eventually made his way back to Poland, but he could not return to Sochatchov due to persecution by the Czarist government. He resettled in Lodz with his family, and there he acted as a guide and rebbe to his own chassidim and well as many other chassidim and non-chassidim who sought guidance and strength at that difficult time. As his health deteriorated, Rabbi Shmuel moved to the countryside, where he passed away on the 24th of Tevet, 5686 (January 10, 1926).

Torah and Translation

Cancelling Chanukah?

R' Shmuel Bornzstain, Shem miShmuel Chanukah, 5th Night

Translated by Rabbi Adam Frieberg

בש"ס ר"ה (י"ח ב) [אפי' למ"ד בטלה מגילת תענית] אמר רב יוסף שאני חנוכה דאיכא מצוה. א"ל אביי: ותיבטיל איהי ותיבטל מצותה! אלא א"ר יוסף, שאני חנוכה דמיפרסם ניסא.

ונראה לפרש דהנה תורה היא נצחית ואין בה ביטול לעולם, כי הביטול הוא מצד הטבע שאין בו קיום, ותמיד הוא פושט צורה ולובש צורה, אבל תורה, שכל עצמו של הטבע ומציאותו הוא מן התורה, כאמרם ז"ל (ב"ר פ' א') "הביט בתורה וברא את העולם", על כרחך אי אפשר שיהי' הטבע מתנגד לה ומבטל אותה.

וכמו בכלל כן בפרט, האדם שהוא עולם קטן, שגשמיית האברים אינם יכולים לבטל את מצות התורה ולשכחה, כמ"ש (דברים לא) "כי לא תשכח מפי זרעו", וברש"י "הרי זו הבטחה לישראל שאין תורה משתכחת מזרעם לגמרי." אבל תקנות ומנהגים אינם במדרגה זו, ויכול להיות להם ביטול והסרה באחד הזמנים, וכמו כן האברים הגשמיים שבאדם הם ביכולתם לשכח אותם.

וזהו שהקשו "ותיבטל איהי", שכמו שיש מציאות הביטול לגוף התקנה, כן נמי למצותה, "אלא א"ר יוסף שאני חנוכה דמיפרסם ניסא", והיינו כמו שמיפרסם ניסא לחומר העולם בכלל, כן הוא באדם עצמו שחומר האדם מרגיש ומפרסם הנס ומתפעל, ע"כ אין טבעו משכח ונשאר לעולם רושם באדם, ע"כ לא נכון לבטלו. ואולי יש להעמיס זה בדברי רש"י ז"ל עיי"ש:

The Talmud (Rosh HaShanah 18b) states, "[Even according to the position that the holidays described in Megillat Taanit have been abrogated,] Rabbi Yosef said: Chanukah is different in that there is a mitzvah associated with it. Abbaye replied: [The mitzvah of lighting the menorah is merely an accessory to the festival itself,] so let Chanukah be abrogated and let its mitzvah be abrogated as well! Rather, Rabbi Yosef said: Chanukah is different because its function is to publicize the miracle."

It appears correct to explain that Torah is eternal, and it can never become nullified, as nullification is an aspect of the natural world, which does not endure; it constantly removes forms and takes on new forms. Torah, however, is the essence and original source of the natural world's existence, as our Rabbis taught (Bereishit Rabbah, chapter 1), "[G-d] looked into the Torah and created the universe." This being the case, it is impossible that nature could work against and nullify the Torah.

Just as this is true as a general rule, so it also applies to the specific case of man, who is a microcosm of the universe. The physicality of his extremities are not able to nullify the mitzvot of the Torah or cause them to be forgotten, as it is written (Devarim 31:21), "for it will not be forgotten from the mouth of their offspring". Rashi explains, "This is a promise to Israel that the Torah will never be entirely forgotten from their offspring." However, decrees and customs are not at this level, and it is entirely possible that they will be nullified and removed at some point in time, and so the physical limbs of man are able to cause them to be forgotten.

The challenge [that Abaye presented to Rabbi Yosef, saying], "So let Chanukah be abrogated," was saying that just as the concept of nullification can apply to the decree itself, so, too, it should apply to the mitzvah that comes from the decree. However, "Rabbi Yosef said: Chanukah is different because its function is to publicize the miracle." This means that just as the miracle is publicized to the material world in general, so too is it regarding the person,

that his physical body is moved to feel and publicizes the miracle. Therefore, his nature is not to forget it, it leaves an everlasting impression on him, and it would be incorrect to nullify it [Chanukah]. And perhaps we can incorporate this into the words of Rashi; see his words there.

(continued from last week)

It is popularly understood that the king reads the Torah for Hakhel, and this is indicated in a midrash. (Sifri Devarim 160) The role of the king is also implied by Moshe’s instruction to Yehoshua to perform this mitzvah, and we are taught that King Yoshiyahu read for Hakhel. However, some authorities contend that a king is not essential; the role of the king may simply be to add dignity to the occasion. (Tiferet Yisrael Sotah 7:8; Minchat Chinuch 612; Haameik Davar to Devarim 31) Accordingly, Chief Rabbi Herzog ordered Hakhel performed as a memorial to the Beit haMikdash in 1946, despite the lack of a king.

At least four benefits of this mitzvah are identified by commentators:

- To re-live the presentation of the Torah at Sinai (Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Chagigah 3:6)
- To demonstrate our commitment to Torah education, particularly at the end of the shemita year, when we return to work in the fields (Ibn Ezra to Devarim 31:10-12)
- To celebrate our national unity, consistent with the egalitarian themes of our abandonment of our fields in shemita and our abandonment of our homes for Succot (Kli Yakar to Devarim 31:9)
- To re-start the world with Torah after the conclusion of the shemita cycle (Rabbeinu Bechaye to Devarim 31:10)

Weekly Highlights: Dec. 16 – Dec. 23 / 28 Kislev – 4 Tevet

Some of our classes are on Chanukah break, but opportunities abound!

Time	Speaker	Topic	Location	Special Notes
שבועה Dec. 15-16				
After Hashkamah	Adam Friedmann	Parshah Analysis	Clanton Park	Not this week
After Musaf	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Derashah	BAYT	Main Shul
Before minchah	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Daf Yomi	BAYT	Rabbi’s Classroom
After minchah	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	“The Jew in December”	BAYT	Simcha Suite
Motzaei, 6:30 PM	Yaron Perez	Parent-Child Learning	Shaarei Shomayim	Not this week
Sun. Dec. 17				
8:45 AM	R’ Josh Gutenberg	Contemporary Halachah	BAYT	
8:45 AM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Responsa	BAYT	Hebrew
Tue. Dec. 19 Last night of Chanukah				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Nechemiah: Building a Wall	Shaarei Shomayim	
7:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Yehoshua: Defeat	129 Theodore Pl.	For men
Wed. Dec. 20				
2:30 PM	R’ Jonathan Ziring	Exploring Bamidbar	32 Timberlane Ave.	Not this week
8:00 PM	Adam Friedmann	Why do we do that?	Shaarei Tefillah	
8:00 PM	Yaron Perez	הפרשה ואני	Shaarei Shomayim	Not this week
Thu. Dec. 21				
1:30 PM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Shoftim: Dan’s Invasion	49 Michael Ct.	For women
Fri. Dec. 22				
10:30 AM	R’ Mordechai Torczyner	Melachot of Shabbat	Yeshivat Or Chaim	Advanced

For University Men, at Yeshivat Or Chaim

***11 AM Sunday, Contemporary Halachah—Not this week
8:30 AM Monday, Rabbi Jonathan Ziring, Nefesh haChaim—Not this week
8:30 AM Friday, Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner, The Book of Yeshayah***

For University Women, at Ulpanat Orot

***9:30-11:30 AM Monday, Mrs. Ellieza Perez, From Rachel Imeinu to Racheli Frenkel
9:30-11:30 AM Tuesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Shabbat
9:30-11:30 AM Wednesday, Mrs. Ora Ziring, Contemporary Halachah
9:30-11:30 AM Thursday, Mrs. Ellieza Perez, Parshah in the Eyes of Chassidut***

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