



Vintage Vessel: Chanukah

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles
Summary by Channie Koplowitz-Stein

We are all familiar with the miracle of *Chanukah*, how the Chashmonaim found a small flask of pure oil. Why did this oil become miraculous? Is this flask of oil related to other flasks of oil alluded to in *Tanach*?

The first time we hear about small jugs of oil is when Yaakov Avinu returned to the other side of the Yabok River to retrieve them. The *Dorah Dovid* writes that it was to be used to anoint the matzevah, the memorial he would build to Hashem at *Beit El*, the site of the future *Beit Hamikdosh*. The Megale Amukos notes, that this was the same jug that the Chashmonaim found in the Temple years later.

In fact, notes the *Mesillot Bilvavam*, this dichotomy of purpose was the crux of the battle between Yaakov and Esav. That Yaakov originally forgot/*shochach* these vessels was already the influence of Yavan who wanted to bring *choshech*/darkness into the world. Esau wanted to forget and extinguish the light of Torah just as later the Greeks would try to make us forget/*lehashk(ch)icham* the *Torah*. The angel, although not successful, would injure Yaakov on the *chaf(p)* of his thigh, to profane the pach of oil. The battle was for

control over the purpose of the oil. Would material possessions serve merely physical purposes, or would they be elevated as a means to spiritual ends?

In this context, our Sages note that Avraham served Hashem with all his heart, thereby influencing others to accept monotheism. Yitzchak served Hashem with his soul, willing to sacrifice his life in service to Hashem. Yaakov showed that all our possessions can be used in God's service.

In Chassidic literature, the thigh represents *hod*/glory. This trait is actualized as *emunah*-faith. The Greeks aimed to undermine the faith of *Bnei Yisroel* by introducing foreign ideas into Jewish thought. The foundation of *Torah* is faith, writes the *Netivot Shalom*, just as the thigh and hip joint are the foundation of man's stance. That's why Greeks wanted us to openly declare that we renounce the Torah and have no part in it. Therefore, when we light the *Chanukah* menorah, we should be strengthening our faith and trying to form a closer connection with Hashem. Even today, this is a time for miracles.

The *Dorash Dovid* points out the high level of

self-sacrifice portrayed here. From Yaakov fighting the angel to regain the oil for spiritual uses all the way through to the Maccabbees. The Maccabbees risked their lives to fight an overwhelming army, and then went directly to the *Beit Hamikdosh* to rekindle the *Menorah* to prove that the physical victory was not what was important, but rather the spiritual victory.

Self-sacrifice means going beyond what one can naturally endure. Rabbi Yaakov Tauber quoting the Lubavitcher Rebbe explains the verse to love Hashem with all *meodecha*, beyond his heart and soul, one should stretch his being beyond his perceived capacity. Man has the capacity for self-transcendence. The very word *Odom/Man* is composed of the same letters as *meod*. The *Keriei Moed* notes that it was the lack of passion for *mitzvot* that left us weakened to the Greek advances. But when the Maccabbees put passion and self sacrifice for God in the forefront of their battle, they were victorious.

This *Chanuka*, let's commit to one spiritual resolution beyond our norm, so that we may become vessels of purity to carry on the legacy of our forefathers.

Chanukah Parenting 1

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller-Gottlieb

Chanuka is the holiday of *chinuch*. *Chinuch* means inauguration, donning a new role. Your children's identity is constantly changing. Although your child has his own existing personality and there are other influences, a parent's part in shaping a child's self is critical. Rav Hirsh teaches that *chinuch* begins when the parents reach adulthood. Until then, the parents were still in the process of developing their identity and they will leave a lasting impression upon their children.

The very early years, from birth until age three are a time of spiritual and emotional *chinuch*. Parents teach by modeling. When a mother gets up multiple times in the middle of the night to care for her baby, the baby learns compassion- that his needs matter and that his mother cares. The Tomer Devora writes that the reason why Hashem made human infancy so long is because the most central of

all *midot* is *chesed* (kindness). The child learns *chesed* by watching his parents constantly doing for him. There are no halachot related to parenting, although there are guidelines. This is because there are no two children or set of parents that are exactly alike. Most of life is spent in the world of *divrei reshut*-where one can make one's own choices. That doesn't mean that all choices are equally good, but it does mean that every situation and person is unique and anything that doesn't have halachic framework must be thought out too.

The *Torah* doesn't demand much of children at this age, other than feeding them kosher food and circumcising a baby boy on the eighth day. The number eight is above nature. Hashem created the world in six days and then infused it with sanctity on the seventh day which is *Shabbat*. There's a whole other plane above that, eight, which says "*Hashem mekomo shel*

olam-Hashem is the place of the world." An eight-day old baby is brought into the fold of Judaism subconsciously, by the circumstances of his brit. This signifies that a Jew lives in a world that's above and beyond the limitations of the mind. Yishmael was circumcised at the age of 13 and thought he was above Yitzchak who had no choice. But in truth, doing a *mitzva* because it's intrinsically Hashem's will, is on a higher level. We need to adapt this way of thinking when educating young children. It's not intellectual. There are things we do because that's what Hashem wants. When they see their mother recite a blessing on food, when they watch their father make *kiddush* on *Shabbat*, they're learning that there's a set of rules beyond themselves. They're living in a world that isn't totally their own.

Even at this young age, children pick up on emotional conflict. If you're going to have a

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fight with your husband, don't do it in front of the baby. Although he may not understand what you're saying, he will sense the underlying hostility between the two most significant people in his life.

According to *halacha*, babies should not be

fed non-kosher food, unless there's danger to life. The underlying statement is, don't have your baby ingest what the non-Jewish world has to offer. Living as we do in exile, there are things we may pick up that might become part of their backdrop. We need to question whether we want that. Halacha states that

when a child begins to speak intelligibly somewhere between 1.5 and 3 years of age, one should teach him, "*Torah tzivah lanu Moshe morasha kehilat Yaakov*." With adults, everything is comparative. With a baby, everything is new. Feed them with holy, pure, ideas and it will be their backdrop forever.

Chanuka: Learning About Our Own Struggles with Evil

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

Chanuka is about our victory over the Greeks. If we want to understand what *Chanuka* is about, we have to understand who the Greeks were, in what way they challenged the Jewish people. and what it means for us today.

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi writes that the wisdom of the Greeks is compared to flowers that don't yield fruit. It's external, temporal, beauty lacking substance and continuity. Rav Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin further adds that Greek philosophy as propounded by Aristotle and Alexander Mokdon (Alexander the Great), was only peripheral wisdom which never penetrated the heart or affected action.

Let's explore this further by examining several interactions between the Greeks and other people as discussed in Chazal. The first story is brought in Gemara Yerushalmi and it's about Alexander Mukdan who was a philosopher and a powerful conqueror. He came to the country of Katsya and observed an interesting court case. One person sold a field to another. The buyer found a treasure in the field and wanted to return it to the seller. Both argued that the treasure didn't belong to them. The king of Katsya ruled that they make a shidduch between their children and give the treasure to the young couple. When Alexander Mukdan heard this, he began to laugh and said, "I would've killed both of them and taken the treasure for myself." The King of Katsya then said, "The sun rises in your country in the merit of your animals, not in your merit."

The King of Katzya wanted the genes of these two special people to multiply so that more light and righteousness would come into this world. In contrast, Alexander Mukdon felt threatened by such moral behavior. This story by definition was the conflict between the Greek philosophy and Jewish way of thinking. Our very existence threatened them.

The Greeks espoused survival only of the fittest because it was all about externals. The soul didn't exist. They prohibited, Shabbat, milah, and *Rosh Chodesh* because these mitzvot indicate that our focal point in life is our relationship with Hashem and with it comes a code of behavior that the Greeks would not accept. It challenged their very lifestyle and who they were.

Chazal tell another interesting story with Alexander Mokdon. As he approached the land of Israel, hoping to conquer it and destroy the *Beit Hamikdash*, Shimon Hatzadik came out to greet him. Alexander got off his horse, blessed him, and said this was the man he saw in his dreams in whose merit he had been victorious in battle. This was Hashem's way of preparing the ground for the Jewish people. At the very start of the exile, He showed them clearly that at the end the Greeks would succumb and the Torah and Jewish way of life would prevail.

The *mitzva* of *parah adumah* (red heifer) is the quintessential chok (cannot be understood logically). The person who is sprinkled with its waters becomes pure and the person who sprinkles becomes impure. Still, we fulfill it recognizing that our greatness is a result of the

fact that we have a relationship with Hashem and that He dwells inside us. We are not just flesh and blood but contain within us something divine which is unlimited. The birth of a red heifer was a rare occurrence. But we find that in the time of Shimon Hatzadik and Yochanan *Kohen Gadol*, three were born. This indicates that Hashem is with us in the process of trying to be holy and maintaining who we are.

Matisyahu and his children felt that there was no point to their existence if they couldn't actualize their purpose. Their self sacrifice made them worthy of Hashem's miraculous salvation. *Chanuka* always falls out during the *Parshiot* about Yosef. Yosef, a young 17 year old boy, who had spent in his formative years in the righteous home of Yaakov, was thrust into the pit of immorality and idol worship. Why? By sending him to Egypt prior to the Jewish people, they already had something to connect to. Yosef overcame his challenges and as our forefather implanted the same strength within us. We can do it too. And if a person believes in his ability, he really can.

Chanuka is about holiness and maintaining who we are. Technology is a real test today. It's not easy to overcome and the "Greek" philosophy is, if you don't accept it how it is, you're living in the dark ages. We can transcend that. It's about believing in our capabilities and dedicating ourselves to live with truth.