

Dvar Torah by **Rabbi Chanoch Yeres**

to his community at

Beit Knesset Beit Yisrael, Yemin Moshe

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CHANUKA

Shabbat Chanuka falls out on Parahat Mikeitz, this year (as it does about 90% of the time). We are during the sale of Yosef into slavery in Egypt. The Talmud in Megila (32a) states that Moshe established that the selection of the Torah reading should be relevant to the festival or occasions that occurred in that time period. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l explored the connection between Chanuka and the weekly Torah portion we read at this time.

The entire story of the sale of Yosef is a lesson in doing T'shuva. Rabbi Soloveitchik sees T'shuva as a prerequisite for the ultimate redemption. Yehuda set the example of repentance when he laid down his life to protect Binyamin. Yehuda was not alone in doing T'shuva when the brothers confronted Yosef in Egypt. They also admitted their guilt. "Indeed, are we guilty" (B'reishit 42:21). The divine plan pre-ordained these events with Yosef and Tamar to allow Yehuda specifically - and all the brothers, to recognize the power of T'shuva. Yehuda's willingness to sacrifice himself in Parshat Vayigash would not have been possible without

the lesson of the importance of T'shuva driven home to him by the episode with Tamar in last week's Parsha. The question raised is why Yosef did not reveal himself to his brothers after they expressed their remorse about his forced slavery. The answer is connected to the status of Yehuda and the need for him, especially him, to act in an appropriate repentant fashion. As the leader of the brothers, a higher standard expected from him over the others. In addition, Yehuda was the one who suggested they sell Yosef into slavery. Yosef waited for Yehuda to act of his own willingness to offer his life for Binyamin and thus perform a higher level of T'shuva.

This, according to Rabbi Soloveitchik answers our original question, how this Parsha connected with the holiday of Chanuka. The central theme of the three major holidays (Shalosh Regalim) is to remember our deliverance by the hand of Hashem from slavery in Egypt. Pharaoh sought the physical destruction of the Jewish nation. Chanuka, however, has a new dimension; deliverance of the Jewish people from religious persecution, from without as well as within. This was the first major incident in Jewish history where the goal was spiritual assimilation of the Jew and not his physical annihilation. The Talmud (Shabbat 22b) discusses that Chanuka was established as a

joyous holiday only after a whole year from the conquest over the Assyrians and the miracle of the oil. Why was there a need to wait a whole year before celebrating the holiday formally? Rabbi Soloveitchik explained that it was not enough just to remove the physical impurities and idols from the Temple. The Jewish people had to contemplate where they went wrong and do T'shuva as a community, for their actions during that period. The Chashmona'im led that T'shuva. Chanuka was really the culmination of their T'shuva and therefore it became recognized as a holiday of T'shuva. With this idea, Chanuka takes on a new perspective, not only of celebration but also of introspection to our past as a nation and lessons we can learn to better ourselves spiritually for the future. 🏰