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 (In memory of Moshe Yehuda ben Avrohom Yaakov, Mala Mindel bas Meir, Moshe Tzvi ben Yitzchok Aharon, Gittel bas Sinai,
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Miketz 5785

THE SEVEN FAT COWS

RABBI YANKI TAUBER (Chabad.org)

And, behold, from the River there come up seven cows, beautiful and healthy; and they grazed in the marshland (41:2).

Fat Cow #1: the economy.

Fat Cow #2: freedom and democracy.

Fat Cow #3: modern technology (the automobile, electric can openers, the Internet).

Fat Cow #4: modern medicine (brain surgery, Prozac, tinted contact lenses).

Fat Cow #5: American Jewry (Albert Einstein, Steven Spielberg, Joe Lieberman).

Fat Cow #6: the political state of the nation (Jews living in the Jewish homeland under Jewish rule, etc.)

Fat Cow #7: the spiritual state of the nation (an abundance of Yeshivahs, synagogues, community centers, Parshah classes, Talmud classes, Kabbalah classes, rabbis, rebbes and gurus as never before).

And, behold, seven other cows come up after them out of the River, ugly and lean of flesh; and they stood by the other cows upon the bank of the River (Genesis 41:3).

Lean Cow #1: the economy.

Lean Cow #2: freedom and democracy.

Lean Cow #3: modern technology.

Lean Cow #4: healthcare in this 21st century.

Lean Cow #5: American Jewry.

Lean Cow #6: the political state of the nation.

Lean Cow #7: the spiritual state of the nation.

An important but much-overlooked detail of Pharaoh's famous dream is the fact that the seven lean cows stood side-by-side with the seven fat cows on the bank of the river. In other words, all fourteen cows existed simultaneously in Pharaoh's dream—unlike in reality, in which the seven years of famine came after the seven years of plenty were over.

This is why Pharaoh's wise men, who thought up all kinds of exotic interpretations to his dream (e.g., "seven daughters will be born to you, and seven daughters will die"), did not accept the solution staring them in the face. When are cows fat? When there's been a plentiful harvest! And when are they lean? When there's famine. Ditto with the fat and lean ears of corn. What could be more obvious?

But Pharaoh saw the fat and lean cows grazing together. You don't have years of plenty and years of famine at the same time, said the wise men. The dreams must mean something else—something less obvious, more metaphorical.

Yosef's genius was that he understood that Pharaoh's dreams not only foretold events to come, but also instructed how to deal with them: they were telling Pharaoh to make the seven years of plenty coexist with the seven years of famine. When Yosef proceeded to tell Pharaoh how to prepare for the coming famine, he wasn't offering unasked-for advice; that advice was part of the dreams' interpretation. If you store the surplus grain from the plentiful years, Yosef was saying, then the seven fat cows will still be around when the seven lean cows emerge from the river—and the lean cows will have what to eat.

The Chassidic masters note that the first galut ("exile") of the Jewish people came about in a haze of dreams. Yosef's dreams, the baker and the butler's dreams and Pharaoh's dreams brought Yosef, and then his entire family, to Egypt, where they were to suffer exile, enslavement and persecution until their liberation by Moses more than two centuries later. Yaakov's own earlier exile to Charan likewise began and ended with dreams.

For galut is a dream: a state of existence rife with muddled metaphors, horrific exaggerations and logical impossibilities. A state in which fat and lean cows exist simultaneously—in which a cow can even be simultaneously fat and lean.

Galut is a place where a thriving economy is both a blessing and a curse, where the rising tide of freedom unleashes the best and the worst in man, where a globe-girdling Web conveys wisdom and filth, where we're saturated in spirituality and spiritually impoverished at the same time.

But there's a way to deal with this cosmic mess. Listen to Yosef speak (even Pharaoh recognizes good advice when he sees it). Don't run away from the dream, says Yosef; don't look for some other meaning. Use it. If galut presents you with the paradox of the fat cow and the lean cow grazing together on the bank of the river, use the fat cow to nourish the lean cow. Make the dream the solution.

LIVE TODAY TO LIVE TOMORROW

RABBI NAFTALI REICH (Torah.org)

At the beginning of this week's Torah portion, we read about Yosef being catapulted from a miserable Egyptian dungeon to the highest office in the land—all in the twinkling of an eye. He secured this exalted position not only by interpreting Pharaoh's dream correctly but by offering Pharaoh incisive advice on how to deal with the impending years of famine. He advised the king to appoint a 'wise and discerning' man to implement a nationwide plan that would preserve the country's vast grain resources during the years of abundance. Those supplies would enable the population to survive the subsequent years of famine.

Yosef's advice so impressed Pharaoh, he immediately appointed Yosef to fill this critically important post, announcing that he couldn't hope to find anyone wiser and more discerning.

Pharaoh's behavior elicits an immediate question: Why single out the attributes of being "wise" and "discerning" for the task of securing Egypt's future by storing the overflow of its produce during the seven years of prosperity? This task would seem to require other talents, such as superlative organizational and managerial skills.

Furthermore, what did Pharaoh see in their brief initial encounter that so convinced him so that Yosef was 'wise and discerning'? Would it not have been more prudent for him to research other potential candidates before bestowing upon him such supreme honor and responsibility?

The commentaries explain that excellent administration skills were not the primary qualities necessary to succeed in such a gargantuan undertaking. Pharaoh knew that in the years of plenty, it would not be possible for the average person to visualize the devastating poverty that would soon consume the land. When resources are free and plentiful, it is only natural to squander and splurge.

Yet the message conveyed in his dream clearly told Pharaoh that the only way the nation's survival could be assured in the face of a devastating famine, would be by squirreling away every available grain during the years of plenty. Only one who would have the clarity of vision to see beyond the prosperity of the "here and now" would be capable of implementing the master plan. That plan required that every kernel of grain be accounted for, even in times of prosperity when people tend to be careless with their resources. Success or failure depended upon how truly wise and discerning the person in command would be. It depended upon an ability to detach from the present and stay focused on a vision of the future. Yosef demonstrated this ability by his very demeanor. He had not lost his aristocratic bearing in the squalor and misery of his incarceration-even after twelve years in the filth of an underground pit.

How had he survived such an ordeal? Was it by clinging to hope? Simply hoping that he would one day be released and exonerated would not have shielded an ordinary person from the devastating impact of victimhood that would be the natural side effects of such an ordeal.

Yet Yosef exhibited no such symptoms. Immediately upon his release, he stood before Pharaoh with a regal bearing. He interpreted Pharaoh's dreams while declaring Hashem's omniscience. Such a feat was only possible if during his incarceration he had lived and breathed the freedom he was certain Hashem would send his way.

The commentaries develop this theme further. On a spiritual level, our own existence is akin to Yosef's imprisonment. Our souls are incarcerated within the temporary prison walls of our transient bodies. During our lifetime, we have opportunity to accrue mitzvos and good deeds, knowing these will be the only source of sustenance for our souls in the world to come.

These are truly our 'years of plenty'. Yet we dilly-dally along life's journey, entertaining ourselves with the myriad distractions that life has to offer. We intuitively realize how precious time is, yet inexplicably we postpone and delay our obligations. We squander the most precious gift of time knowing all the while that we will one day have to endure the consequences-years of famine when all we have for sustenance are the seeds we planted today.

Were we as 'wise and discerning' as Yosef, what a difference it would make in how we conducted our affairs!

The Chofetz Chaim provides a beautiful parable to illustrate the wisdom and discernment we need in this world to ensure that we have an eternal source of sustenance in the hereafter.

A successful businessman decided to treat himself to a luxury cruise on a private yacht for his 50th birthday. As he stepped aboard the vessel bound for the Caribbean Islands, the cares and worries of his financial empire melted away. As nightfall approached, the boat was

moving at full throttle through an archipelago of small islands that marks the entrance of the Caribbean ocean. The fellow lay back on the deck, enjoying the night breeze. Suddenly, the boat smashed into a reef that the captain had failed to detect, and the stern instantly split apart. The impact of the crash threw the businessman into the water. He began swimming, hoping he would somehow reach an inhabited island before his strength ebbed away.

Dawn brought a stunning sunrise but no hint of the shore. He kept swimming through the day. The sun beat down on his head and exhaustion and fatigue overtook him. Before nightfall, he spied the outline of an island far ahead. As he drew close he saw a royal delegation descending upon the beach, as if preparing to welcome him. As he stepped out of the water, two attendants donned him with velvet robes and he was escorted to a royal palace, amidst the cheers and delight of the islands inhabitants. He was waited upon hand and foot. Clearly they had assumed he was their long lost king! No longer able to contain himself after a couple of months, he shared the secret of his true identity with the prime minister. The minister gazed at him, astonished. "Don't you know that in our island the tradition is that whoever is washed ashore becomes our king for one year?" he explained.

"And what happens after a year?" asked the king. "Well," the minister said, "after a year, we escort you back to the beach and we place you into a small wooden boat, casting you back to the ocean from where you came!"

The poor king was aghast. "'Do you mean that after a year I am just sent out to sea to die?" he asked incredulously. "Yes," the prime minister answered.

"What do you suggest I do?" the king asked.

"It is simple," said the minister. "Only two miles south, southwest of this island lies an uninhabited island. Since you are the king, you can do whatever you want. Ship out to the island servants, maidservants, construction materials, plants, fruits and all that is necessary for a new life."

The king assiduously applied himself to the task. At daybreak each morning, he oversaw a small army of engineers and craftsmen who boarded boats and journeyed out to the island with shiploads of materials and supplies. At the end of the year, a solemn procession accompanied him down to the beach. Many of the islands inhabitants were crying as he stepped into the simple boat that would whisk him away. Over the course of the year, they had gotten to know the king and loved him dearly. Yet the "king's" heart was singing. He was leaving these people behind but the destination that awaited him was beautiful and secure.

At life's inception, we too are washed "ashore" and are indulged for many years in a loving and supporting environment. But as our faculties develop, we question the meaning of our existence. It takes a 'wise and discerning' heart to perceive the world of eternity that lies beyond the borders of our daily existence, and to understand how to fully utilize the present in order to earn our slice of eternity.

WAKE UP CALLS

RABBI YOSSY GOLDMAN (Chabad.org)

Not everyone is lucky enough to get a wake-up call in life. Some people get theirs just in time. Others get it but don't hear it. Still others hear it loud and clear but refuse to take any notice.

Pharaoh got his in this week's Parshah (Torah reading) when Yosef interpreted his dreams and advised him to appoint "a wise and discerning man" who would oversee a macro economic plan for the country. Yosef explained to the King of Egypt that because he experienced two dreams and woke up in between it was a sign from heaven to wake up and act immediately as the matter was of the utmost urgency. Pharaoh took the message to heart and the rest is history.

On the health and well-being level, a little cholesterol, climbing blood pressure or recurring bronchitis might be the not-so-subtle signs that it's time for a change of lifestyle. These are the medical wake up calls we receive in life. Do we really have to wait for a heart attack, G-d forbid, to stop smoking, or start eating less and exercising more? That's what wake-up calls are for, to help us get the message before it's too late.

Then there are the spiritual signs. I will never forget a friend who shared with me the story of his own red lights flashing and how a changed spiritual lifestyle literally saved his life. He was a workaholic driving himself to the brink. Had he carried on indefinitely he simply would not have survived. Then he decided to give Shabbat a try. What he had never previously appreciated about Shabbat was that it is a spiritually invigorating day of rest and spiritual serenity. And in discovering Shabbat, he rediscovered his humanity. (He also discovered he could play golf on Sundays instead of Saturdays.)

A short trigger film I once used at a Shabbaton weekend program depicted a series of professionals and artisans at work. As they became engrossed and immersed in their respective roles they each became so identified with their work that they lost their own identities. Monday through Friday, the carpenter's face dissolved into a hammer, the doctor took on the face of a stethoscope and the accountant's head started looking exactly like a calculator. Then on Shabbat they closed their offices and came home to celebrate the day of rest with their families; slowly but surely, their faces were remolded from their professions to their personalities. Total immersion in their work had dehumanized them. They had become machines. Now, thanks to Shabbat, they were human again. That short video left a lasting impression.

It's not easy to change ingrained habits. But Chanukah, which usually falls during this week's Parshah, carries with it a relevant message in this regard. Take one day at a time. One doesn't have to do it all at once. One light at a time is all it takes. On the first night we kindle a single Chanukah light, on the second night we kindle two lights, and on the third night three. We add a little light each day, and before long the menorah is complete and all eight Chanukah lights are burning bright.

It's ok to take one day at a time. It's not ok to go back to sleep after you get a wake up call. Whether it's your medical well being or your spiritual health, the occasional wake up call is a valuable sign from Above that it may be time to adjust our attitudes, lifestyles or priorities. Please G-d, each of us in our own lives will hear the call and act on the alarm bells with alacrity.

IT'S IN THE GENES

RABBI YAAKOV ASHER SINCLAIR (Ohr.edu)

“...and he (Pharaoh) gave him (Yosef) Osnat, daughter of Potiphar, Chief of On, for a wife.” (41:45)

Osnat was Potiphar's daughter. The Alschich says that by allowing Yosef to marry his daughter, Potiphar vindicated Yosef in the eyes of the Egyptians from the charge that he had molested Potiphar's wife. By resisting a supreme challenge, Yosef bequeathed to his offspring a tremendous strength, one which has halachic ramifications to this day.

It's Chanukah. The whole family gets together for a party. There's music and words of Torah and food. You wash, you eat, and you say birkat hamazon. But, whoops, you forget to say Al hanisim and don't know what to do! You quickly leaf through your Siddur and you see that you can insert in a Harachaman: “The Compassionate One! May He perform for us miracles and wonders as He performed for our forefathers in those days, at this time!

The issue is that there's an explicit Gemara saying that we're not allowed to pray for miracles.

Rabbi Sholomo Kluger answers that the miracle of Chanukah was different from all the other miracles in the history of the Jewish

People. The splitting of the sea, the manna, the ten plagues – all other miracles were preordained from the beginning of the world. They were built into the fabric of Creation.

The miracle of Chanukah was brought about by the Jews' willingness to give up our lives rather than allow the Greeks to eradicate our holy Torah.

From where did this immeasurable strength come? Rabbi Shlomo Harcavi says it was a spiritual inheritance from Yosef Hatzaddik. Yosef withstood an ultimate test for the sake of Hashem, and thus Yosef instilled into the collective DNA of the Jewish People the strength for us to withstand the overwhelming allure of the physicality of the Greek world to this day. Because the Jewish People were prepared to give up their lives on Chanukah, we have the birthright to ask for miracles in return.

ANALYSE THE SITUATION

AVROHOM YAAKOV

As the worldwide famine predicted by Yosef began to bite, the focus of the Torah narrative shifted back to the land of Canaan and Yosef's family there.

Yaakov saw that food was being sold in Egypt ... “Now I hear,” he went on, “that there are rations to be had in Egypt...” (42:1-2)

This seems to be contradictory – either Yaakov saw or he heard. Which was it?

Many commentators answer that the Torah uses hearing and seeing interchangeably.

Others suggest that Yaakov may have seen travellers arriving from Egypt with provisions and was told that food could be purchased there.

However the sequence should have been that Yaakov heard first.

Why lead off with Yaakov seeing?

Rashi explains “How did he see it? Surely he did not see but he heard it, as it is said ‘Behold, I have heard ...’ What, then, is meant by ‘And Yaakov saw’? He saw in a holy dim vision that there was hope for him in Egypt, but it was not a true prophetic vision telling him plainly that it was Yosef in whom his hope lay that the seeing referred to hear what a prophetic vision that Egypt was a source of hope.”

Karnei Ohr has an interesting take on what Yaakov's indistinct vision was.

‘Seeing’ implies looking beyond the superficial facts. Shlomo HaMelech writes (Koheles 2:14) “the wise man has his eyes in his head”. The wise person looks beyond the surface and perceives beyond that which is obvious. He looks at the actions and consequences.

Yaakov saw that something strange was happening in Egypt. Supporting of the world with food in times of famine was not in character with Egypt. Taking advantage of such a situation to conquer others was.

He therefore hoped that other factors were at play leading Egypt act philanthropically, possibly because Yosef was involved.

WHEN WE LOOK at any situation, do we take things at face value, even when circumstances appear strange, or are we to read more into things? All of a sudden, a foe of Israel offers to help. Or a business competitor clues you in on the deal of a lifetime.

What to make of the atypical behaviour? Is the enemy planning an attack and hoping to lull Israel into a sense of peace before striking? (Think October 6.)

Is the business deal really that good?

Yaakov's example tells us that we shouldn't just accept the situation, but we do need to analyse what is happening and take appropriate action.

WHAT YOU SEE & WHAT YOU GET

RABBI MORDECHAI KAMENETZKY (Torah.org)

Almost every year on the week of Chanukah, Parshas Miketz is read.

It contains the story of Yoseph, the viceroy of Egypt, who greet his brothers and accuses them of spying. This story is read annually on Chanukah. There must be a connection between the story of Miketz and the Chanukah story. What is it?

This week the Torah relates how a famine plagued the entire Middle East. Yaakov's children elected to go to the only country that was spared from hunger, Egypt. Through the brilliant vision, organization, and planning of a young Hebrew slave known to Egyptians as Tzafnat Paneach, that country fed both itself and the world. The brothers were ushered into the prodigal viceroy's chambers. He acted towards them like a total meshuganah. He accused them of a heinous plot to spy on Egypt. He incarcerated Shimon, and forced them to bring their youngest brother, the orphaned child of an aged father, to him. Yoseph surely wanted to teach a lesson to the brothers who sold him. But if Yoseph wanted to castigate or punish his brothers for selling him, why didn't he do so openly and directly? Why the senseless charade?

Chanukah is symbolized by the Menorah. It represents a miracle. A small amount of oil, enough for one day, lasted for eight. But there were greater miracles. A small army of Kohanim, priests who were previously involved in only spirituality and had very little experience in battle, defeated the Greek army. Why don't we make a parade or a feast to celebrate a major victory? Why is the main commemoration over a little oil?

In a small village lived a poor groom. Unable to afford a proper tailor to make a wedding suit, he brought material to a second-rate one. The poor boy was shocked to see the results.

"But this sleeve is six inches too short," he cried. "So pull in your arm," smiled the tailor. "But the other sleeve is a half a foot too long!" "So extend it," beamed the so-called craftsmen. "And the pants," screamed the groom, "the left leg is twisted!" "Oh that's nothing. Just hop down the aisle with your knee slightly bent!"

At the wedding, the assembled reeled in horror as the poor groom hobbled down to the canopy in the poor excuse for a suit. "What a grotesquely disfigured young man," gasped one guest. "Oy! Ah rachmunis (pity) on his poor bride," sighed another. The spectators looked once again at the pathetic sight and noticed how well the suit appeared to fit. In unison they all exclaimed. "But his tailor — what an extraordinary genius!"

My grandfather, Reb Yaakov Kamenetzky of blessed memory, explained to me that Yoseph had a very important message to send his brothers. "More than a decade ago you sat in judgment. You thought you made a brilliant decision and were smarter than anyone else, including your father. You decided to sell me as a slave. Now you meet the most brilliant saviour of the generation, the man who saved the world from starvation, and he is acting like a paranoid maniac. He is accusing you of something that is so hallucinatory that you think he is a madman. Is it not possible to think that perhaps you also made a gross error in judgment? Is it not possible that you saw a situation in a twisted light? Is it the boy or is it the suit that is actually grotesque?" Yoseph showed his brothers that even the best and brightest can misinterpret any situation.

Chanukah delivers a very similar message. The sages were not interested in commemorating a battlefield victory. They had a more powerful message for us. Nothing in this world can be judged at face value. A bit of oil that decidedly can only last one day — may last much longer. They want us to remember that outward appearances, as the opinions of pundits, have no bearing on reality. When that message is understood, it is easy to understand that a small army of Kohanim (priests) can topple a mighty force. We can understand that what we view as weak may be strong and what we thought was insufficient is actually plenty. And that a little bit of oil, like a pesky younger brother, both of whom you thought would not amount to anything, can really light the way. Good Shabbos and a

Freilichin Chanukah!

WHY YOSEF FRAMED BINYAMIN

RABBI MENACHEM FELDMAN (Chabad.org)

The terrible famine brought ten of Yaakov's sons before the viceroy of Egypt to purchase bread. The viceroy, who, unbeknownst to them, was their brother Yosef whom they sold as a slave, accused them of being spies and demanded that they bring their brother Binyamin to Egypt. Before Yosef revealed his identity to his brothers, he framed Binyamin by planting his silver goblet in Binyamin's bag and charging Binyamin with theft. Judah stood up for Binyamin, requesting that he himself be punished instead of Binyamin. Yosef then revealed his identity to his brothers, and the extended family was reunited with Yosef in Egypt.

The conventional understanding is that the entire plot of Yosef and his brothers serves to explain how the Jewish people came to live in Egypt and how they eventually became enslaved to the Egyptians. The Kabbalistic reading is precisely the opposite. Every step that Yosef took was, in reality, paving the way, not for the eventual enslavement, but rather for the spiritual fortification of the Jews in exile, which would ultimately lead to the redemption.

From the mystical perspective, in order for their descendants to survive the harsh exile, Yosef's brothers, who were the heads of the tribes of Israel, had to experience the oppression and accusations of the Egyptian monarch, who was, in truth, their brother in disguise. When the Jewish people, like their ancestors before them, would feel subjected to the Egyptian monarch, they would remember the story of Yosef and realize that there was a deeper reality in play. The oppressive monarch was in reality their "brother," who would ultimately bring benefit to them. The exile was a process that would refine them and lead them to great material and spiritual wealth.

In addition to physical subjugation, exile also has a spiritual dimension. When we are in exile, we are not in our natural environment. We are living a life that is not consistent with our inner core. Our natural, inherent awareness of G-d and connection to the spirituality of our inner soul is compromised, as our emotions and aspirations are directed exclusively to our physical survival.

Yosef empowered the Jewish people to overcome the spiritual numbness that is exile.

The Torah describes how Yosef had Binyamin framed:

Then he commanded the overseer of his house, saying, "Fill the men's sacks with food, as much as they can carry, and put each man's money into the mouth of his sack. And my goblet, the silver goblet, put into the mouth of the sack of the youngest, and his purchase money." And he did according to Yosef's word, which he had spoken.(44:1-2)

According to the mystics, the silver goblet represents passionate love and joy. The Hebrew word for silver (kesef) is the same word that means "yearning" and "longing." The goblet contains wine, which, as the verse says, brings joy to the heart of man. (see Tehillim 104:15)

Yosef's planting the goblet in Binyamin's sack empowers us to realize that hidden within us is a "goblet of wine," the capacity to have a loving, joyful relationship with G-d. Yosef reminds us that we can dispel the darkness of exile by searching for the hidden reservoirs of positive emotions planted within us. When we discover the goblet and taste the wine, the spiritual exile dissolves, paving the way for the physical redemption as well.

Adapted from Or HaTorah, Bereishit VI, p. 2206.

CHANUKAH – G-D FIGHTS OUR WARS

RABBI BEN TZION SHAFIER (Aish.com)

Why do we celebrate Chanukah?

"When the Yivanim entered the Bais HaMikdash, they defiled all the oil set aside for lighting the Menorah. When the Chashmonoim were

victorious, they searched and were able to find only one small jug of oil with the Kohain Gadol's seal intact. It had sufficient oil to last only one day, but miraculously it lasted eight days. In honor of the miracle of the oil lasting eight days, Chazal inaugurated these days for Hallel and thanksgiving.” — Gemara Shabbos 21b

AL HA'NISIM: THE MIRACLE OF THE BATTLE

The Maharal states that this Gemara seems to contradict what we say in Al Ha'Nisim, a tefillah that was written by the Tanaim hundreds of years before. In the Al Ha'Nisim, we proclaim thanks to HASHEM for the miracle of the war. We thank HASHEM for delivering the Yivani armies into our hands. “You fought their battles, judged their judgments, took their revenge. You put the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few...” According to the Al Ha'Nisim, the miracle of Chanukah was that HASHEM delivered us from the armies of the Yivanim. Yet the Gemara in Shabbos says that we celebrate Chanukah because of the miracle of the oil lasting eight days. The Maharal asks, “Which one is correct?”

The miracle of the oil revealed the miracle of the war.

The Maharal answers that both reasons are true, and both are consistent with each other. The actual event for which we give thanksgiving and sing Hallel is the salvation of the Jewish people. We won a war against all odds. However, it wasn't clear that the victory was a miracle. To people living in those times, the military success seemed to be natural. It was attributed to Jewish resilience and bravery. It didn't appear that HASHEM had delivered us from the hands of the Yivanim; rather, it appeared as “their might, and the strength of their arms.” It was only through the miracle of the oil that they came to understand the miracle of the battle. Once people saw the oil last eight days – an overt miracle from HASHEM — they then came to see that their success on the battlefield was from HASHEM as well. The miracle of the oil revealed to them the miracle of the war.

ISRAEL DIDN'T HAVE A STANDING ARMY

This Maharal becomes difficult to understand when we take into account a basic historical overview.

The events of Chanukah take place around the middle of the era of the SecondBais HaMikdash. From the time that Bavel destroyed the firstBais HaMikdash until that point, the Jewish people lived under the reign of gentile monarchies. Our right to exist and our form of self-government was decided by the ruling parties. We were a vassal state under foreign rule, and when the Yivanim entered Yerushalayim, the Jewish people did not even have a standing army. This wasn't a war of a stronger army against a weaker opponent. It was a war in which the most powerful empire in the world was pitted against a band of unorganized, unarmed, private citizens.

While the war itself lasted three years, during the entire first year of fighting, there were no formal battles. Two armies were not squaring off against each other; there was no Jewish army. The fighting consisted of guerrilla skirmishes. Some Jews would sneak up on a lone detail of Yivani soldiers, kill them, and take their arms. Bit by bit, more Jews would join Yehudah Ha'Macabi, but at every point during the war, the Jews were far outnumbered, outgunned, and preposterously less battle-ready than their enemies.

THE LEADERS OF THE REBELLION WERE KOHANIM

Even more startling is that almost all of the original fighters had no battle experience. The leaders of the rebellion were Kohanim. A Kohain is a Torah teacher, one who serves in the Bais HaMikdash, one who guides the Klal Yisroel in ruchniyus (spiritual matters). He isn't a soldier. So this was a war led and fought not by soldiers, but by roshei yeshiva. It was akin to Reb Shmuel Kaminetsky leading the Lakewood Yeshiva in battle against the US Marine Corps.

How could anyone not see the miracle of the war?

No intelligent assessment of the situation would have predicted a Jewish victory. How then is it possible that the Jews at the time saw these events as anything other than the miracles that they clearly were?

THIS SEEMS TO BE NATURAL TO THE HUMAN

The answer to this question seems to be that when one is many years away and far removed, he gains a historical vantage point. He is able to see an event in context and can easily recognize it as a miracle. But to those living in the day-to-day heat of the battle, it is much more difficult to see the event from that perspective.

To those involved, it seemed to be a natural course of events. Granted the odds were slim, but the Jews won. Skirmish after skirmish, battle after battle, the Macabees came out victorious. There is no question that they did well, which is why it seemed that their skill, their cunning, and their wisdom in battle won those wars. And as such, to people living in those times, the miracle was hidden. And then a single event focused their sight.

When the Kohanim returned to the Bais HaMikdash and took out that little bit of oil that couldn't possibly last for eight days and watched it remain aglow night after night, everyone knew it was miraculous. When they experienced the miracle of the oil, it reshaped the previous three years in their minds. Then they could see the battles themselves as the miracles that they were. Exactly as the Maharal said, “The miracle of the oil revealed the miracle of the battle.”

WE SEE THE SAME PHENOMENA IN OUR TIMES

In our own times, we witness an eerie parallel to these events and to the same mistaken interpretation.

For almost two thousand years we have existed as a lone sheep amongst seventy wolves. Universally hated and oppressed, the Jewish people have survived. And now, after almost 1900 years of wandering, we find ourselves back in our own land.

Since 1948, the Jewish nation has witnessed profound miracles in the repopulation and development of the land of Israel. But it is the survival of our people that is the greatest miracle.

In 1948, the population in the Middle East numbered roughly 650,000 Jews, surrounded by some 50 million Arabs. On May 15th, 1948, one day after the State of Israel was declared, five nations attacked, each with well-trained armies and air forces, each alone capable of annihilating the small band of Holocaust survivors. At the time there was no Jewish army, navy or air force. Yet, against all odds, we won that war, and against all odds we continued to win war after war – until now, ironically, when the Jews are considered the superpower in the region.

To most people, Jew and gentile alike, it seems that this is just the way of the world. To the average witness to these events, it isn't a demonstration of the hand of HASHEM. It is just the ebb and flow of history.

The lesson of Chanukah is to see behind the veil of nature, to tune our sight into the true cause of events, and to see that it is HASHEM Who runs the world and fights our wars – then as now.

WHAT'S WITH THE CANDLES?

RABBI ARON MOSS (Chabad.org)

Question:

I notice that lighting candles is a big part of Judaism. We light candles every Friday for Shabbat, we light candles on every festival, and Chanukah is all about candles. What is the connection between candles and spirituality?

Answer:

There is something about a candle that makes it more spiritual than physical. A physical substance, when spread, becomes thin. Spirituality, when spread, expands and grows.

When you use something physical, it is diminished. The more money you spend, the less you have; the more gasoline you use, the more

empty your tank becomes; the more food you eat, the more you need to restock your pantry. But spiritual things increase with use. If I use my wisdom to teach, the student learns, and I come out wiser for it; if I share my love with another, I become more loving, not less. When you give a spiritual gift, the recipient gains, and you lose nothing.

This is the spiritual property that candles share. When you use one candle to light another, the original candle remains bright. Its light is not diminished by being shared; on the contrary, the two candles together enhance each other's brightness and increase light.

We sometimes worry that we may stretch ourselves too thin. In matters of spirit, this is never the case. The more goodness we spread, the more goodness we have. By making a new friend, you become a better friend to your old friends. By having another child, you open a new corridor of love in your heart that your other children benefit from, too. By teaching more students, you become wiser.

Keep lighting your candles. There is an endless supply of light in your soul. You will never run out of goodness.

GLOWING IN YOUR HEART

RABBI LABEL LAM (Torah.org)

In the beginning of G-d's creation of the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was astonishingly empty, and darkness was on the face of the deep, and the spirit of G-d was hovering over the face of the water. And G-d said, "Let there be light," and there was light. And G-d saw the light that it was good, and G-d separated between the light and between the darkness. And G-d called the light day, and the darkness He called night, and it was evening and it was morning, one day. (Breishis 1:1-5)

And G-d saw the light that it was good, and G-d separated: Here too, we need the words of the Aggadah: He saw it that it was not proper for the wicked to use it; so, He separated it for the righteous in the future. – Rashi

What happened to that original light from the beginning of creation? Where can it be found?

I asked one of my grandchildren who was learning Breishis in school, "What kind of light was that first light? At that point the sun and the moon and the stars were not yet created!" He answered without hesitation, "Zeidy, it was a different kind of light!" He's 100% right. This light is a hidden spiritual light that is hard for us to describe from a materialistic vantagepoint. Dovid HaMelech writes in Tehillim, "A light is sown for the righteous, and for the upright of heart, joy. (Tehillim 97:11)" Rashi explains, "A light is sown for the righteous: An actual sowing is prepared to sprout for them." This is not a theoretical abstract light. It's real! It exists! It can be found! But where!?

Every Friday Night before making Kiddush I make the same declaration. I can see my children from the corner of my eye mimicking the words and saying it like a parrot along with me. That's OK! It's exactly what I am aiming for. While holding the Kiddush cup, I say in differing ways, "We are remembering now that HASHEM made the world YEISH M'AYIN- Something from nothing." Meaning that before HASHEM decided there was to be a world there was nothing. HASHEM created everything, small and large particles, energy, gravity, human nature, you name it. It's all the precise and explicit work of HASHEM.

That's only the first declaration. Now the second statement goes something like this, "From a physical standpoint HASHEM created the world YEISH M'AYIN- Something from Nothing, but from a spiritual vantage point HASHEM created the world AYIN M'YEISH – Nothing from Something!" That statement is crying out for an explanation! Before the BEIS of Breishis, prior to the Big Bang or the Big Beis, what was there? What comes before BEIS? The Aleph of "Adon Olam Asher Malach B'Terem Kol Yetzir Nivra, Master of the

Universe Who was King before the world was created". HASHEM Who is real, existed, exists, and will exist. This is ultimate and current reality. The Zohar refers to HASHEM as OHR AIN SOF- An endless light! Infinity is beyond our finite minds, but we appreciate that HASHEM's light is the source of all existence!

When we were kids, we used to play a game called "Hot and Cold". I played with my own kids many times. Somebody hides an object and the people who are invited to search for it are given verbal clues that they are getting closer or farther away. The further away you go, "you're getting cooler". The closer you get, "you're getting warmer". When you are so close and maybe even touching it then, "YOU ARE ON FIRE!" You can't get closer than that! It seems you can be that close and not even realize it.

Moshe Rabeinu tells us, "It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us and fetch it for us, to tell to us, so that we can fulfill it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross to the other side of the sea for us and fetch it for us, to tell to us, so that we can fulfill it?" Rather, [this] thing is very close to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can fulfill it. (Devarim 30:12-14)

Whatever we are busy searching for is not in the heavens. It's not far off or transcendent. It's not someplace else. Rather it is very close, not just close, but very close. Moshe is telling us, "You're on fire!" On Chanukah that light shows up in an obvious way. It is not in heaven, in a mystical book, or across the sea. It is in your home, growing in your window, glowing in your heart.

TEACH LIKE A SHAMASH

SAMANTHA BARNETT (Chabad.org)

Colorful posters lined the stark white walls of the courthouse, and I scanned for my "masterpiece" among the other middle school contest entries. I spotted my poster on the bottom row. In the corner was a little blue ribbon with the words "Second Place" written on it. My poster that illustrated the right of free speech in America had actually won something!

A real-life judge presented the awards at the courthouse. He even wore a judge's black robe and a tie. He called my name and gave me my first-ever check. This was cool.

My history teacher had introduced us to the contest and had given us a couple of class periods to work on our posters, entering them into the contest for us when the time came. She had encouraged me to enter, had believed in me. And her belief pushed me to live up to her expectations.

Last year, I was thinking a lot about my teachers, and one day, I decided to look them up. I didn't see this teacher's name on the list of staff at the school, so I did a Google search and found out that she had died of leukemia in the summer. As I read this news, tears streamed down my face, and my mind was flooded with memories. There was another teacher I had who also left this world too soon—my high school music teacher.

There was no one like this teacher. He was smart, witty and very sarcastic. He was not always agreeable or sweet, but he was fair. From him I learned that being a good person doesn't mean being "nice"; it means having others' best interests in mind and nurturing their growth.

When I learned that Moses was picked by G-d to be the leader of the Jewish people because he cared about each and every sheep in his flock, I thought about my music teacher.

I don't know why my teachers died young. What I can tell you is that they lived beautiful lives. They used their gifts and talents and shared them with others. Through their teaching and encouragement, they allowed others to shine. I learned that a great teacher does not just teach the material, but is an example of how to live life fully. A good teacher doesn't just educate the mind, but also speaks to the soul.

My music teacher passed away around Chanukah time. The word Chanukah shares the root of the Hebrew word “chinuch,” meaning “education.” Thinking about these educators of mine during this time, I realize that although I am no longer their student, I still carry their professionalism, passion and concern for others with me as part of my core values.

The menorah has nine candles. Eight of those candles each represent one night of the holiday. However, there is one candle that must sit on a different level than the others. It is a helper candle, used to light all the other candles. It is called the shamash. The shamash is not a mitzvah candle like the others. Yet, it is important because it is the instrument that enables all the other candles to perform a mitzvah.

Good teachers inspire us to grow. By expecting the best from us, they make us better. They give us the spark that enables us to shine. Each of us has the potential to be a shamash. We all have a responsibility to become teachers and make an impact on someone else's life. We don't have to be an expert, either. As the Lubavitcher Rebbe, of blessed memory, said, if we know the letter aleph, then we should teach it to others.

Just as the shamash is usually placed above the other candles, a person who serves others, a teacher, becomes great because he or she is using a set of superior skills to make others great too.

My teachers are no longer around to teach. They can no longer perform earthly deeds. But they are still my shamash. The spark they lit in me will always be there, encouraging me to learn more, do more and live up to my potential.

I know that I am who I am today because of the teachers who inspired me to grow into the best person I can be.

CHANUKKAH ALL OVER AGAIN

RABBI YISSOCHER FRAND (Aish.com)

Popular wisdom contends that "the more things change, the more they stay the same." The Talmud recognizes the value of popular wisdom, often remarking, "Hainu d'amri inshi, this is what people say." Popular sayings are the product of long experience, and they are usually on target.

The more things change, the more they stay the same. Events change. Conditions change. Styles change. But people do not change. Human nature today is no different from what it was a hundred, a thousand or five thousand years ago. Therefore, sooner or later, people driven by the unchanging drives and ambitions of human nature will manipulate the new events, conditions and styles into forms that help them achieve the same goals people have been pursuing since time immemorial.

A little over two thousand years ago, Alexander the Great, at the head of a Greek and Macedonian army, conquered the entire Middle East and introduced it to Greek philosophy and culture. The Greeks transformed the ancient world by rejecting the worship of a Higher Being and making mankind the focus of the culture. The Greeks promoted the importance of the human intellect and the beauty of the human form as ideals to be held up for admiration and even worship. It was the antithesis of Judaism, which focuses on the Creator and gives man value in proportion to the level of his relationship with the Divine.

The Greeks recognized the power of the Torah. They knew it was the mortal enemy of their culture, the force that threatened Greek civilization more than any other, and they mounted a campaign to eradicate Torah observance among the Jews. They passed laws outlawing fundamental Jewish practices such as milah and Shabbos. And they built theaters and gymnasiums throughout Eretz Yisrael to entice the Jews to share in the pleasures and rewards of Greek culture.

Unfortunately, the Greek campaign was very effective. Many Jews, among them High Priests and others holding the highest offices in

the land, abandoned the ways of their fathers and assimilated into Greek society. These Jews were known as Hellenizers, since the Greeks referred to Greece as Hellas and themselves as Hellenes. As time went on, it seemed as if the juggernaut of Greek culture and values would completely absorb the tiny Jewish commonwealth and Torah would be forgotten. But then the Chashmonaim, a small band of staunch Jews loyal to the Torah and Jewish tradition, rose up against the Greek oppressors nearly two hundred years after the Greek conquest, and they restored the supremacy of the Torah among the Jewish people. The festival of Hanukkah celebrates this triumph every year.

In our own days, we have seen similar events take place. One hundred years ago, a new philosophy called communism appeared on the stage of world history. The appeal of communism was in the simplicity and apparent justice of its ideas. The rich should not exploit the poor. All the people should own all means of production. Everyone should work according to his ability and consume according to his need. In all else, everyone in society would be equal. As you can well imagine, this was an extremely attractive system for the masses in impoverished and exploited societies, and it spread like wild-fire. It scored its first victory in Russia and then spread to Eastern Europe, China and countries in Southeast Asia, the Caribbean and Africa, as well as innumerable "liberation movements" across the world.

Sad to say, many Jews were drawn into the communist movement during its early stages. Young men and women chafing under the repressive Czarist and other totalitarian regimes and too restless to adapt to shtetl life sought fulfillment of their natural idealism in the communist ranks. For a while, there was even a Jewish section in the Communist Party called the Yevsektzia. This went on until the 30's when Stalin purged the party of its Jews. Afterwards, the Jews were only on the receiving end of communist repression.

Ultimately, communism was discredited by the old nemesis of all starry-eyed systems, the avarice and ambition of human nature. In the end, the communist system engendered more exploitation and less justice than any other system in history. It remained in force for nearly a century by virtue of state terrorism, and then it collapsed. But in the interim, it brought untold devastation and ruin to the world for an entire century.

Hellenism rose, and Hellenism fell. Communism rose and communism fell. All changes are impermanent. The more things change, the more they remain the same. The only constants are Torah and Judaism. The Rambam writes (Yad, Hilchos Mezuzah 6:13), "[By affixing a mezuzah,] he will be reminded of the Name of the Holy One, Blessed is He, every time he enters or leaves. He will be stirred from his slumber and realize that nothing endures forever other than the knowledge of [Hashem]." All ideologies are like a fleeting shadow, but Torah endures. Many Jewish brothers and sisters forgot this during the times of the Greeks, with disastrous consequences. Many more forgot it in the last century, with consequences that were perhaps even more disastrous.

For those of us that grew up during the Cold War, the fall of communism was a thing of absolute wonder. Among my childhood memories are Khrushchev pounding the lectern in the United Nations with his shoe. I remember listening to the radio during the Soviet invasion of Hungary in 1956. I remember the Prague Spring of 1968, when Soviet tanks crushed the rebirth of democracy in Czechoslovakia. For me, communism was a fact of life, something I expected to prey on my consciousness for the rest of my life.

And then it was gone. Just like that. Poof! The Soviet Union, that dreaded "evil empire," crumbled to dust.

In December of 1989, I was riding in a cab in New York. The driver had a thick Eastern European accent, and I thought he might be a Russian Jew. We began to talk, and it turned out he was a

Romanian. By then, Hungary, East Germany and Czechoslovakia had already gone the way of the Soviet Union and I remarked that Romania would be next.

He guffawed. "If you knew that tyrant Ceausescu, [the Romanian president], you would never say such a thing. He is another Stalin!" Well, it didn't take long before Ceausescu fell and Romania discarded communism. Stalin himself could not have stopped this disintegration of a movement that had once seemed poised to take over the world.

What was happening here?

Why did communism have such phenomenal, almost supernatural success in the beginning, and why did it experience such a phenomenal, almost supernatural collapse in the end?

Rav Shimon Schwab believed that communism enjoyed such great success because the early communists were true believers; they were doing it lishmah, for altruistic reasons. They were willing to forgo personal gain and honor for the sake of the greater cause. Altruism can energize any idea, even if it is the greatest falsehood.

Rav Schwab asks a question. The first time Balak's messengers asked Bilam to curse the Jewish people, Heaven forbid, Hashem did not grant him permission to go with them. But when they returned a second time and offered Bilam money and honor, Hashem let him go. What changed?

The first time, Rav Schwab explains, they did not offer Bilam any reward. His curse would have been delivered altruistically. This would have been a dangerous curse. The second time, however, they offered him rewards. Now, his curse would be delivered for self-interest. Such a curse would not have nearly the same power and effectiveness.

The Kotzker Rebbe was once asked why other religions, which are based on sheker, falsehood, are so successful, while Judaism, which is the emet, the truth, doesn't attract others and even loses many of its own. "True, they serve sheker, falsehood," the Kotzker snapped, "but they serve it as if it were emet. True, we serve emet, but we do it as if it were sheker."

This was the power of the early communists. They were sincere. They were altruistic. They believed in what they were doing. They believed they were creating a utopian society on earth. It was a fantasy, an illusion, a mirage, but their idealism gave it reality for almost a century.

So why did communism fall so precipitously? Granted that the idealism had dissipated over the years, to be replaced by cynicism and corruption, but how do we explain the sudden collapse?

Rav Schwab contends that the only antidotes to falsehood are Torah and mitzvos. During the last years before the collapse of world communism, there was a revival of Torah in the Soviet Union. A small group of people returned to Torah with great mesiras nefesh, dedication at tremendous personal risk. They underwent circumcision even when there were no anesthetics available. They abstained from family relations when they had no access to a mikveh. They studied Torah diligently, even if it meant losing their jobs or being expelled from universities and other institutes of higher learning. They did it because they believed in it, not for personal gain, and their Torah lishmah brought down communism. All the other factors about which one reads in articles and books - economics, finance, geopolitics, military preparedness - are just window dressing. The Torah of the dissidents brought down communism. They are the Chashmonaim of our generation. They wrought the modern miracle of Hanukkah.

News, Views & Opinion

TERRORISTS INVOKE "INTERNATIONAL LAW" TO CONDEMN ISRAEL ATTACKING HOUTHİ TARGETS - EVEN AS THEY PRAISE HOUTHİ MISSILE ATTACKS ON ISRAEL

ELDER OF ZIYON (ElderofZiyon.blogspot.com 19-12-24)

The complaints out of the Iranian axis of resistance in response to Israel's attack on Houthi positions last night are about as ridiculous as you can imagine.

Hamas issued in a statement on Thursday: "The aggression on Yemen is a dangerous escalation and an extension of the aggression on our Palestinian people and the aggression on Syria and the Arab region."

Islamic Jihad "condemned the barbaric aggression that targeted Yemeni sites and facilities in the capital, Sana'a, and the port of Hodeidah, by the criminal Zionist entity." At the same time, it praised the Houthi missile attack on Israel, saying "the blessed missile strike by the Yemeni Ansar Allah Movement, which targeted the depth of the enemy entity with all boldness and courage.....the great destruction it caused confirm the bravery of the free Yemeni in confronting the Zionist enemy entity."

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said the strikes "constitute a blatant violation of the international law and the UN Charter."

Keep in mind that Iran has been promising a massive attack on Israel for nearly two months now. Apparently that is somehow not a violation of the UN Charter.

As for the Houthis themselves, they did some creative editing of the timeline. "The Government of Change and Construction in Sana'a condemned the Israeli aggression on civilian facilities in Yemen, calling it a blatant violation of international law and human rights. It also praised the military operation that targeted occupied Jaffa with "Palestine-2" hypersonic missiles as an initial response."

The Houthi attack on Israel came before Israel attacked Yemeni targets.

Perhaps the Houthis are slightly more self-aware than Iran on the hypocrisy of shooting missiles to Israel and then complaining that Israel's responses are violations of international law.

BEN-GVIR SLAMS SUPREME COURT OVER PRISON CONDITIONS RULING

RAPHAEL POCH (JNS.org 20-12-24)

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir launched a sharp rebuke against Israel's Supreme Court on Thursday after it issued a conditional order demanding an explanation for prison conditions of Hamas Nukhba Force terrorists, intensifying the debate over judicial oversight during wartime.

The Supreme Court, sitting as the High Court of Justice and responding to a petition from the Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), questioned the provision of "basic food" to security prisoners, citing reports of "significant weight loss" among detainees. The ruling prompted immediate pushback from government officials and right-wing organizations.

"The Supreme Court has become the guardian of these Nukhba scoundrels who slaughtered, raped, burned and kidnapped our sons and daughters," Ben-Gvir declared. He emphasized that under his leadership, the Israel Prison Service provides minimum legally mandated conditions for terrorists, marking an end to what he termed "the era of feasts."

Earlier on Thursday, activists from the Im Tirtzu Zionist NGO demonstrated outside the home of Supreme Court Justice Ruth Ronen, protesting her recent surprise visit this week to Ofer Prison, where she inquired about winter clothing and toilet paper for detained terrorists from the Gaza Strip, and whether they have pen

and paper to make legal appeals.

Protesters chanted, “Winter equipment for terrorists? What about the hostages?”

Im Tirtzu director general Matan Jerafi criticized Justice Ronen’s personal inspection of prison conditions, calling it “an indelible ethical stain on the Supreme Court.”

The organization argued that such judicial oversight undermines efforts to maintain pressure on Hamas regarding hostage negotiations.

The High Court’s action follows several controversial decisions regarding terrorist detainees. In May, a Hamas operative underwent surgery at Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center (Ichilov Hospital). In July, reports emerged that more than 100 attackers who infiltrated the Gaza border and took part in the assault in southern Israel on Oct. 7 received state-funded legal representation, costing approximately one million shekels (\$275,000).

Knesset Constitution, Law and Justice Committee Chairman Simcha Rothman said the situation demonstrates “an enormous disconnect between the Supreme Court’s ivory tower and the common sense and feelings of the people of Israel.”

The Movement for Governance and Democracy (Meshilut) warned that the court’s focus on terrorist conditions “undermines deterrence and demonstrates reckless conduct that harms Israel’s security,” particularly following the Oct. 7 attacks, which IDF investigations indicate involved approximately 7,000 Gaza participants.

Btsalmo, a civil-rights organization, suggested that the court’s decision could impede hostage negotiations, arguing that Hamas would see less urgency to reach an agreement while the judiciary oversees prisoner conditions.

UN FAKES GAZA FAMINE BY REFUSING TO DELIVER FOOD

DANIEL GREENFIELD (Frontpagemag.com 24-12-24)

If it’s Tuesday, then it must be time for more cries of a fake famine in Gaza.

Gaza, as you know, has been starving to death now since Oct 2023 which is the longest rate of starving to death on record.

Weeks after the brutal Hamas assault of Oct 7, Cindy McCain who heads the UN World Food Program, falsely claimed that Muslims in Gaza were “literally starving to death as we speak...”

Next month, McCain contended that “food and water are practically non-existent in Gaza” while CBS News reported the claim by a British NGO that “more than half a million people... ‘face death by starvation.’” In December, the UN WFP claimed 570,000 Muslims were “starving” in Gaza and at risk of “famine”. “It doesn’t get any worse,” the UN WFP’s Arif Hussein argued.

By the end of January, the UN claimed that “this is a population that is starving to death.”

A year later, Gaza is notable for having some of the fattest starvation victims around.

The Biden administration, its congressional allies and the media have continued to lambast Israel for ‘blocking food’ from entering Gaza despite undeniable evidence of a constant flow of food into Gaza.

But that only matters so much when the UN refuses to deliver it. Again.

Why isn’t the food being delivered? Because the UN only wants Hamas to be able to deliver it.

The New York Times comes closest to admitting what’s going on in its latest article.

The U.N. agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, said this month that it would no longer deliver aid through Kerem Shalom, the main border crossing between Israel and southern Gaza, because of the breakdown in law and order.

Hundreds of truckloads of relief are piling up at the crossing in part because aid groups fear they will be looted.

Remember all the claims that UNRWA, which is filled top to bottom with terrorists, is the only thing standing between the Arab Muslim colony in Gaza and death?

UNRWA won’t even deliver food. Why not?

The situation in Gaza deteriorated after the Israeli military invaded Rafah in May, seeking to oust Hamas from one of its final strongholds. Hamas’s security forces fled, and organized gangs — with no one stopping them — began intercepting aid trucks as they headed from the main border crossing into southern Gaza. They are stealing flour, oil and other commodities and selling them at astronomical prices, aid groups and residents say.

The actual choice here is between the ‘armed gangs’ (many of whom consist of the same people as Hamas) taking the aid and reselling it at astronomical prices... or Hamas seizing the aid and reselling it at astronomical prices.

And, unsurprisingly, the UN prefers that Hamas seize the aid.

A third option would be for Israel to provide security for food deliveries, but the UN rejects that.

International aid workers have accused Israel of ignoring the problem and allowing looters to act with impunity.

The United Nations does not allow Israeli soldiers to protect aid convoys, fearing that would compromise its neutrality, and its officials have called on Israel to allow the Gaza police, which are under Hamas’s authority, to secure their convoys.

Israel, which seeks to uproot Hamas, accuses the group of stealing international aid and says that the police are just another arm of the militant group

The UN refuses to allow Israel to protect aid convoys. It wants only Hamas to protect them. Then it blames Israel when the convoys are raided because its goal is to preserve Hamas authority.

Read that again.

The UN is refusing to conduct food deliveries in order to manufacture a famine in Gaza with the aim of preserving Hamas.

THANK YOU, ISRAEL, FOR SAVING THE WORLD, DEFENDING FREEDOM AND RESHAPING THE MIDDLE EAST

MAJID RAFIZADEH (GateStonelstitute.org 21-12-24)

After Hamas carried out its horrific October 7, 2023 massacre by invading Israel, murdering hundreds of people and kidnapping individuals from various countries, Israel reached a breaking point. This act of terrorism ignited a wave of decisive actions across the Middle East that catalyzed remarkable developments, aimed at countering and eliminating terror networks.

For decades, the region has been plagued by violence and instability, but Israel's response marked a significant turning point, showcasing its resolve to confront terrorism head-on and help usher in a new era of security.

Israel has consistently demonstrated its commitment to thorough and resolute action. When it comes to national security, appeasement is not an option. Bribing aggressors only finances their militaries for attacks on the West in the future. Israel's approach to combating terrorism has always been characterized by thoroughness and determination -- for which is usually put through the tortures of hell by the very countries it is working to save.

Refusing to leave any task incomplete, Israel, in its counteroffensive against Hamas, targeted and significantly diminished the terrorist group's military capabilities and crippled its ability to function effectively. The Iranian regime, a staunch supporter of Hamas, reacted by activating other proxies, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen, to attack Israel. In an unprecedented move, Iran also launched ballistic missiles from Iranian soil into Israel, thereby escalating the conflict.

Iran's regime, however, underestimated Israel's resilience. As a Persian proverb says, "Iran was playing with the lion's tail." The

consequences were severe.

Israel's broader objective appears to be not merely to respond to isolated acts of terrorism, but to dismantle the infrastructure of terror in the region. With a vision of ultimately fostering peace, harmony, security and prosperity throughout the region, as in the Abraham Accords, Israel expanded its military operations beyond Hamas. It launched targeted strikes against Hezbollah, significantly weakening its military capabilities, and extended its efforts to Syria, striking Iranian military bases and weapons-supply chains. These decisive actions underscored Israel's commitment to reshaping the Middle East into a region free of the grip of terror.

One of the most extraordinary developments spurred by Israel's actions was the unexpected collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria. Within a week of launching an offensive last month, armed rebel groups achieved what for decades had seemed impossible: the conquest of key cities and the end of Assad's reign. This monumental shift not only dealt a devastating blow to Iran's regional ambitions but also signaled the possibility of a brighter future for the region.

The ramifications for Iran were profound. Losing Syria, one of its closest allies, severely weakened the regime's ability to project power and support its proxy Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In just over a year, Israel has succeeded in reducing Iran's regional influence, effectively dismantling or weakening the pillars of its strategy—the Syrian regime, Hezbollah, and Hamas. This achievement is unparalleled. It disrupted decades of Iran's poisonous dominance in the region. Thanks to Israel's strategic and calculated actions, Iran's regime, which had survived Western sanctions and interventions since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, now faces unprecedented challenges to its survival, which cannot come to an end soon enough.

Israel's efforts to eradicate terrorism and destabilize its sources have largely been accomplished without substantial assistance from Western democracies. It is now time for the West to step up and support Israel and most of the Iranian people in addressing the root of the problem: the Iranian regime. This final step requires decisive action to dismantle Iran's nuclear program and empower the Iranian people to achieve freedom. Make Persia Great Again!

So long as Iran's regime remains in power, brutalizing its people and making plans for global expansion, there can be no chance for peace in the region. Removing the regime, often described as the "mother of all terrorism" and the G-dfather of terrorist groups, would bring lasting security and prosperity to the Middle East and beyond. With the regime's collapse, its proxies would be starved of funding and weaponry, paving the way for a more peaceful Middle East. One could then set about subduing Turkey and its terrorist proxies in Syria.

Israel's contributions to global peace and the fight against terrorism are unparalleled. This small nation has accomplished what many larger powers have failed to do: confronting evil, dismantling terror networks, and advocating for freedom and security. The world owes Israel an unpayable debt of gratitude for its unwavering courage and commitment to these ideals.

It is time for Western nations to align with Israel, offer their full support, and take the necessary steps to ensure a safer, more secure future for all. Bravo, Israel! Thank you for your remarkable efforts in making the world a safer, freer, better place.

INSIDE MOSSAD'S DECADE-LONG DECEPTION: THE PAGER MISSION THAT CRIPPLED HEZBOLLAH

EREZ LYNN (IsraelHayom.com 23-12-24)

In an extraordinary "60 Minutes" broadcast on Sunday, former Mossad agents pulled back the curtain on one of Israel's most sophisticated covert operations, targeting Lebanon's Iranian-backed

Hezbollah terrorist organization.

According to the CBS News report, the intelligence agency spent a decade infiltrating Hezbollah's supply chain with weaponized communication devices that ultimately helped turn the tide of war in Lebanon. In a devastating moment for the organization's leadership, Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah was reportedly forced to witness the deaths of his own security detail inside his bunker as their compromised communication devices detonated.

Speaking through masks and using pseudonyms, two retired senior agents described to CBS correspondent Lesley Stahl how they transformed walkie-talkies and pagers into precision weapons.

"A walkie-talkie was a weapon just like a bullet or a missile or a mortar," explained the agent identified as Michael, describing the operation's first phase. When Stahl pressed for details about the device's construction, Michael revealed that "inside the battery, there is an explosive device," which was "made in Israel" at a Mossad facility.

Lebanese Hezbollah members carry the coffin of their comrade Hussein Amhaz during his funeral in Baalbek, in Lebanon's Bekaa valley, on Sept. 19, 2024. Hundreds of pagers and walkie-talkies used by Hezbollah exploded across Lebanon in unprecedented attacks that spanned two days, killing 32 people and wounding more than 3,000 others. Photo by AFP via Getty Images.

The ingenuity of the operation lay not just in the technical execution but in the elaborate deception campaign that accompanied it. Through a network of shell companies and fake business entities, Mossad managed to sell more than 16,000 explosive-laden devices to Hezbollah over several years, "60 Minutes" reported.

By 2022, emboldened by the success of the walkie-talkie operation, Mossad expanded its strategy to include pagers. However, the transition wasn't smooth. "I remember the day that I came to our director, put it on the table. And he was furious," recalled the second agent, identified as Gabriel. "He was telling us, 'There is no chance that anyone will buy such a big device. It's not comfortable in their pocket. It's heavy.'"

Despite initial skepticism, Gabriel spent two weeks convincing Mossad leadership that the pager's apparent drawbacks could be turned into selling points. The agency launched a sophisticated marketing campaign, creating fake YouTube advertisements that promoted the devices as premium products.

"We make advertising movies and brochures, and we put it on internet. And it became the best product in the pager area in the world," Gabriel told Stahl. The marketing was so effective that Mossad had to field purchase requests from legitimate customers, which they deflected by quoting exorbitant prices.

The operation's success hinged on maintaining an impenetrable facade of legitimacy. Mossad established a partnership with Gold Apollo, a Taiwanese pager manufacturer, through front companies. "When they are buying from us, they have zero clue that they are buying from the Mossad," Gabriel explained. "We make like 'Truman Show,' everything is controlled by us behind the scenes. In their experience, everything is normal. Everything was 100% kosher, including businessmen, marketing, engineers, showroom, everything."

NEW TAIPEI CITY, TAIWAN – SEPTEMBER 18: A person tries to exit the office of Gold Apollo on September 18, 2024 in New Taipei City, Taiwan. Pager bombings across the Middle East have sparked new widespread worries about spiralling violence in the region, with Hezbollah pinning the blame on Israel. Reports in American media said that the pagers had been tampered with after they were ordered by Hezbollah from the Taiwanese firm Gold Apollo, a maker of pagers and other similar equipment. (Photo by Annabelle Chih/Getty Images)

The technical sophistication of the operation extended to the

devices' design. Each pager underwent extensive testing to ensure precise effects. "We test everything, triple, double, multiple times in order to make sure there is minimum damage," said Gabriel. The agency even conducted research on average response times to pager alerts—approximately seven seconds—and engineered specific ringtones to maximize user engagement.

When Stahl inquired about the detonation mechanism, Gabriel revealed that users received messages claiming to contain encrypted information that required pressing two buttons to access. However, as Gabriel explained, "It's the same effect. It's gonna explode anyway." The final detonation signals were triggered from Israel.

On Sept. 17, at precisely 3:30 p.m., thousands of pagers began beeping across Lebanon. The following day, the decade-old walkie-talkies were activated, some detonating at funerals for victims of the pager attacks. The precision of the devices was evident in videos reviewed by "60 Minutes," showing explosions that wounded pager carriers while leaving nearby individuals unharmed.

"A day after the pagers exploded, people were afraid to turn on the air conditioners in Lebanon because they were afraid that they would explode," Michael told Stahl, describing the psychological impact of the operation. "So there was real fear."

A Lebanese soldier gestures at the scene of a reported pager device explosion in Saida in southern Lebanon on Sept. 18, 2024. A second wave of device explosions killed three people in Hezbollah strongholds of Lebanon on Sept. 18, raising fears of an all-out war between Israel and the Iran-backed militants. Photo by Mahmoud Zayyat/AFP via Getty Images.

The aftermath of the attacks demonstrated their strategic effectiveness. According to Gabriel, the operation wasn't primarily about inflicting casualties. "If he's just dead, so he's dead," he explained. "But if he [is] wounded, you have to take him to the hospital, take care of him. You need to invest money and effort. And those people without hands and eyes are living proof, walking in Lebanon, of 'don't mess with us.'"

The combined attacks resulted in approximately 30 fatalities, including two children, and wounded around 3,000 people. In the aftermath, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah delivered what former agents described as an uncharacteristically subdued speech, before being killed in an Israeli airstrike on his bunker on Sept. 27. A ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah took effect at the end of November.

DEMOCRATS FEAR TRUMP WILL WEAPONIZE DEFENSE DEPT AGAINST AMERICA'S EXTERNAL FOES

DAVE SWIDLER (PreOccupiedTerritory.com 22-12-24)

Senior Biden administration officials expressed their concerns today that as part of an anticipated revamping of government institutions that the president-elect and his associates have promised, the federal agencies that oversee US military operations might be repurposed for missions and policies aimed at undermining or curtailing opponents of the US and aiding her allies.

Outgoing Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin has cautioned media and government figures ever since Election Day that Donald Trump will weaponize the US Army, Navy, Air Force, Marines, Coast Guard, Space Force, and other forces under Department aegis against America's enemies, in a sharp break with policy under outgoing President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris, the latter of whom Trump defeated in the election.

"That's not what government institutions are for," insisted Austin. "Government institutions, as Presidents Obama and Biden have repeatedly modeled for us, serve the primary purpose of containing, weakening, and ultimately eliminating domestic political opposition. That can be through the Department of Justice, obviously, but the

Internal Revenue Service of the Department of the Treasury also has an important role to play in targeting both individuals and organizations hostile to the Obama-Biden vision for America."

"It's dangerous to weaponize this department in particular against our rivals and foes," he continued. "I dread the thought of sanctions enforcement actually taking place against Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs, for example, or their facing American-led consequences for their decades-long destabilization of Iraq, Yemen, Syria, Iran, and the Palestinian Territories. Perish the thought of US military action to block the export of Iranian oil to China, or Iranian drones to Russia!"

Other defense officials fear that Trump might remove any restrictions Biden had placed on Israel or Ukraine in confronting enemies of the US. "If, as threatened, Trump insists on full supply of Israel to achieve victory, or Ukraine to strike anywhere in Russia," acknowledged one senior Pentagon official, "then our enemies might be effectively deterred. Our defense contractors would never stand for such a thing. Also, the grievance narratives that drive both Right and Left politics will have to find new conflicts to carry the valence necessary for grifting and generating clout. We can't have that."

Administrators at the Department of Defense and in the various Commands of the military have already ordered plans drawn up to defend against an anticipated "weaponization" of the Department that they expect will take the form of eliminating DEI programs.

Kosher & Halacha Korner

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INTENTIONAL NULLIFICATION OF PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

RAV DAVID BROFSKY (etzion.org.il)

In previous shiurim, we discussed the laws of "bitul," i.e., under which circumstances may we permit the consumption of a mixture into which a prohibited substance was unintentionally introduced. In a related vein, we must ask whether one may intentionally introduce an issur into a permitted mixture. While it may seem inappropriate, is it actually prohibited? This question has great ramifications for those who produce food as well as for the kosher consumer. In this shiur, we will explore the basic principles and applications regarding intentional nullification of issurim.

The gemara (Betza 4b) assumes that it is prohibited to intentionally introduce an issur into a mixture; in other words, "ein mevatin issur le-khat'chila." What is the source for this halakha? Is its origin biblical or rabbinic? Why is it prohibited? Does this halakha relate to all methods of nullification and/or to all prohibited substances alike? While most rishonim explain that this halakha is only of rabbinic origin, the Ra'avad asserts that mi-de'oraita one may not intentionally nullify an issur.

He derives this from a rather complex halakha involving the ram offering of a nazir. The Torah (Bemidbar 6:13–20) relates that after a period of abstention from grape products and haircuts, a nazir must bring three korbanot: a sheep and an ewe as sin offerings (chatat), which he does not consume, and a ram as a peace offering (shelamim), from which he must partake. After the ram is cooked, the kohen takes the upper foreleg (zero'a) and waves it (hanafa). This zero'a is to be consumed by the kohen and is prohibited to non-kohanim (zarim). The rest of the ram is consumed by the nazir. This upper foreleg, according to one opinion in the gemara, is cooked WITH the rest of the animal, and is therefore known as the "zero'a beshela" – the "cooked limb." Is it not true, the gemara asks, that this foreleg, which permitted to the kohen but prohibited to the nazir, lends taste to the rest of the ram, thereby prohibiting the entire ram to the nazir?

Since this is not the case, the gemara deduces that a prohibited substance can be batel in an overwhelming majority of heter, and goes on to debate whether the ratio of permitted meat to the prohibited "zeroa beshela" is one to sixty, or one to one hundred. In any case, the Torah seems to permit the nazir, when cooking the foreleg with the rest of the ram, to intentionally nullify the taste of issur.

The gemara is aware of the uniqueness of this case, and describes this phenomenon as a "chiddush," i.e., something we would not have known or permitted had the Torah not stated it explicitly. However, it is unclear what exactly is the nature of this chiddush.

The Ra'avad claims that the chiddush is that while the Torah generally prohibits "bitul issur le-khat'chila," in this case the nazir is permitted to intentionally nullify the taste of the "zero'a beshela." Elsewhere, it is prohibited.

The majority of rishonim disagree with the Ra'avad, and understand the chiddush differently. Ordinarily, they explain, while there is no explicit prohibition against intentionally nullifying issurim, the nazir would not do so, as such an act is viewed as inappropriate. Here, however, despite our general negative assessment of intentional nullification, the Torah commands the nazir to cook the foreleg with the rest of the ram. According to these rishonim, the Talmudic principle of "ein mevatlin issur le-khat'chila" is of rabbinic origin. The halakha is in accordance with this opinion.

Beyond the source of the prohibition, we must ask ourselves, what is the nature of this statute? What is wrong with the intentional nullification of issurim?

One could suggest a number of possibilities.

1. The halakha of "ein mevatlin" is meant to protect one from a situation in which one miscalculates the quantity of heter necessary to nullify a prohibited substance.
2. The halakha of "ein mevatlin" may reflect the Torah's disapproval of intentionally nullifying that which the Torah prohibited, or may even reflect a broader disapproval of any form of consumption of issur, even when batel, if done deliberately.
3. The halakha of "ein mevatlin" may reflect an inherent problem of intentionally relying upon the mechanisms of "bitul be-rov" and "shishim," which were intended only for "be-di'avad" scenarios.

Seemingly, the majority of rishonim, who believe that "ein mevatlin" is of rabbinic origin, may adopt any of these understandings. Yet, according to the Ra'avad, who maintains that "bitul le-khat'chila" is prohibited mi-de'oraita, it would seem that the reason must be fundamental rather than technical. In other words, it seems unlikely that the Torah would prohibit the intentional nullification of issurim lest one miscalculate the quantity of permitted substance required.

Are there any practical differences between these approaches? I would like to note two interesting opinions that may shed light on our question.

1. The Rashba, who incidentally explains that the chiddush of "zero'a beshela" is that it is "inappropriate behavior" (genai) to intentionally nullify an issur, notes an exception to this halakha. He claims that if an extremely LARGE pot that is ALWAYS used for large quantities absorbs a very SMALL amount of issur, one may continue to cook in this pot. Although every time it is used the small amount of issur enters the mixture, is rendered batel in the large quantity of heter cooked in it. This, the Rashba claims, is not prohibited by the principle "ein mevatlin issur le-khat'chila". Rav Yosef Karo (YD 99:7) writes that the halakha is in accordance with this opinion. A number of acharonim disagree with this ruling.

How can we understand the opinion of the Rashba? While one may attempt to employ his interpretation of chiddush, cited above, and suggest that nullifying such a small quantity of issur is not considered inappropriate, alternatively, we may suggest that since there is no fear of miscalculation in this scenario, the halakha of "ein

mevatlin" should not apply. Those who reject the Rashba's opinion may either believe that nullifying even the smallest amount is still deemed inappropriate, or, that bitul by its very nature is only to be invoked in a situation of "be-di'avad," not "le-khat'chila."

2. Rabbi Yehezkel Landau, author of the Noda Be-yehuda, offers another intriguing distinction. He suggests (Mahadura Tinyana YD 45) that while intentional nullification of a prohibited substance that is absorbed into another substance (lach be-lach) is certainly prohibited only rabbinically, intentional nullification of a piece of issur in a mixture of dry substances (yavesh be-yavesh) is biblically prohibited.

He argues that the Torah permits one to consume a mixture of kosher and non-kosher pieces, as long as the majority of pieces are kosher, based on the biblical principle of "acharei rabim le-hatot" - one should follow the majority. However, "If Elijah the prophet would arrive" and identify the issur, it would surely still be prohibited! If so, it is inconceivable that the Torah would permit one to intentionally rely upon this principle! The reliance upon a majority is clearly intended for situations in which there is no other choice; "bitul be-rov" is not to be invoked intentionally.

In other words, the Noda Be-yehuda suggests that intentional nullification of prohibited substances is not permitted because it contradicts the very nature of "bitul be-rov." However, regarding a mixture in which the substances merge completely and the prohibited substance disappears into an abundance of heter, it is difficult to find a fundamental reason why it is not permitted, and therefore is only prohibited rabbinically.

INTENTIONAL NULLIFICATION OF RABBINICALLY PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES

May one intentionally nullify a rabbinically prohibited substance?

The gemara (Beitza 4b) posits that if branches, which are deemed muktzeh on Shabbat and Yom Tov since they serve no purpose if they are not prepared for use before Shabbat or Yom Tov, fall into one's "oven" (or "campfire") on Yom Tov, one may add pre-prepared twigs (which are not muktzeh) to the oven, thereby nullifying the presence of the prohibited branches and permitting one to move the entire pile of branches. Isn't this a form of intentional nullification? The gemara answers that one may nullify rabbinically prohibited substances.

The gemara, however, does not explain whether this exception applies to all rabbinically prohibited substances, or just to muktzeh and the like. Additionally, the gemara does not indicate whether one may intentionally add the issur to a mixture, or only add heter to a mixture into which prohibited matter accidentally fell.

The Rishonim debate this issue.

The Rambam (Hilkhos Ma'akhalot Assurot 15:25), for example, permits adding heter to a mixture containing any rabbinically prohibited substance. Therefore, he permits adding milk to mixture in which chicken and milk were combined, since a mixture of chicken and milk is prohibited only mi-derabanan. Tosafot (Beitza 4b) limit the gemara's ruling to cases in which the issur's entire origin is rabbinic ("ikro mi-derabanan"), (as opposed to a rabbinic issur that is an extension of a Torah issur) such as muktzeh. This excludes Rambam's case of rabbinically prohibited milk and chicken, which is clearly an extension of the biblical prohibition of milk and meat. Others, such as the Rosh, claim that one is never permitted to nullify a prohibited substance, and that the gemara was lenient only in a case in which the issur would be destroyed (i.e., burned).

The Mechaber (Shulchan Arukh YD 99:6) accepts the ruling of the Rambam, permitting one to add heter to a mixture into which issur accidentally fell. The Rema adopts a more stringent ruling, unequivocally prohibiting the intentional nullification of issurim.

THE CONSEQUENCES: IF ONE INTENTIONALLY NULLIFIED A PROHIBITED SUBSTANCE

Based on a mishna (Orla 3:8) cited by the gemara (Gitin 54:), most rishonim rule that if one intentionally nullifies an issur, the mixture remains prohibited. This is in order to discourage such behavior. While many rishonim (Rambam, Rosh, etc.) assume that the mixture is prohibited only to the person who nullified the issur, the Rashba insists that the mixture is also prohibited to the party for whom the issur was intentionally nullified (nitbatel bishvilo)! The Shulkhan Arukh accepts the position of the Rashba.

The acharonim debated a fascinating, and very practical, question. Who constitutes "nitbatel bishvilo"? Must the person know that the issur was nullified for his sake? What about a baker who intentionally adds a minute quantity of a non-kosher ingredient to his baked goods? The Taz (Y"D 99:10) rules that while his family may not partake of the food, others may. Rabbi Akiva Eiger (YD 99), though, insists that the food is prohibited.

Some Acharonim are more lenient if the baker is not Jewish (see Darkhei Teshuva 108:2).

The application for today's manufactured foods market is obvious. Incidentally, a parallel debate exists regarding food cooked on Shabbat. Generally, the halakha states while one who cooks on Shabbat may never partake of that food (Shulkhan Arukh OH 118), those who did not do the cooking may benefit from the food after Shabbat. The acharonim debate whether the Rashba's opinion, which is accepted regarding intentional nullification of issurim, should be applied in a similar fashion to our case. Should food cooked on Shabbat be prohibited to those for whom the food was cooked? Is there a distinction between a factory or an inn that cooks for its customers, and an ordinary person who cooks for his neighbor?

INNOCENT INTENTIONS

The Shulkhan Arukh (YD 84:13) rules that one may heat up honey into which ants, a prohibited substance, have fallen in order to make it easier to remove the undesirable substance. Clearly, the acharonim point out, heating will cause a transfer of taste from the ants to the honey. The Shakh (99:7) explains that since one's intention was to improve the mixture, and not to nullify the issur's presence, one is permitted to heat the honey. Similarly, the Ran (Avoda Zara 33b) notes that while the process of "hag'ala," i.e., "kashering" utensils by immersing them in boiling water, usually entails "bitul," (as the prohibited substance is expelled into the water), since one's intention is not to benefit from the issur, but rather to eject it and permit the utensil, it is permitted.

The acharonim debate the scope of this heter. Is one permitted to introduce the prohibited substance to the mixture only when there is no alternative? Some even permit producing juice from fruits that are generally infested with bugs, as it would be very cumbersome to check each and every fruit (see Pit'chei Teshuva YD 99). Others disagree.

NULLIFICATION OF PERMITTED SUBSTANCES

The Rema (YD 99:6) rules that if milk fell into water and was nullified in it, and afterwards that water fell into a pot of meat, even if there are not 60 parts of meat per part of milk, since the milk has been nullified in the water, the mixture is permitted.

The Shakh adds that one may even intentionally use the water with meat, since the milk has already been nullified by the water. However, some acharonim claim, one may not add milk to water with the intention of adding that water to meat.

If so, it would seem that one may intentionally fry meat with margarine that contains 1% milk! Similarly, it would seem that one may use non-stick sprays marked "dairy," if their dairy content is less than one sixtieth of the content of the spray, for frying meat! If so, one may question why the product is marked "dairy" at all?

The OU, for example, in an email response to an inquiry (6/17/00),

explained their policy.

This the OU's Policy. When a manufacturer wishes to add an ingredient where the dairy component had become batel, he can get a Pareve Status for his product. But a company producing a product where the recipe calls for a tiny drop of dairy among vastly more of Pareve ingredients, he wants to be "mevateil le-khatchila" the drop of dairy - that is halakhically not permitted. Which is why such products get the OU-D designation.

One may wonder whether the consumer should ALSO be considered a "mevateil," i.e., one who is intentionally nullifying, since he is using a product to which milk was intentionally added, along the lines of adding milk to water in order to add it to a mixture of meat, which most poskim prohibit.

In any case, certainly "be-di'avad" the food (and utensils) may be used. One should consult a rabbinic authority regarding the intentional use of such margarine or non-stick sprays, although such a practice would seem to be inappropriate due to the confusion it may cause.

Candle lighting Mikeitz 27/12/24 27 Kislev 5785 8.26p/9.32p