Jewish Tribune – Mikeitz/Chanukah

**Above and Beyond**

The number eight is central to Chanukah. The yom tov itself lasts for eight days and we light an additional candle each night, culminating with eight candles. Chanukah itself comes to a climax on the eighth and last day, which is given the title “Zos Chanukah” – “this is Chanukah”, suggesting the number eight is wrapped up in the essence of the festival.

What is special about the number eight and what is the link to Chanukah?

I once heard the following explanation from Rabbi Pinchos Roberts שליט"א.

The Greeks espoused a philosophy of rationality and denied the possibility of “l’maala min hatevah”, the concept of the supernatural.

This was the target of the three edicts the Greeks decreed against Klal Yisroel. Shabbos, Milah and Chodesh. Each represent an aspect of l’maala min hateva.

Tell a shopkeeper who shuts his store early that this act of mesiras nefesh will actually bring blessing. As the Maharal notes, the very number eight represents “beyond nature”.

And milah too. The number six represents the physical, seven is injecting spirituality into the physical and eight is the level beyond nature. That is what milah is – on the eight day.

And “chodesh” represents a Supernatural Power governing the solar system.

The very purpose of Chanukah is to counter that philosophy. To proudly declare that HKBH runs the world and proclaim the message of number eight. “Zos Chanukah” – this is Chanuka, this is the very essence of what Chanukah is about. The eighth day epitomises the concept of “l’maala min hatevah”, the supernatural.

And perhaps this is the connection to the parsha too. Mikeitz invariably falls on or around Chanuka. The story is dramatic and our parsha ends on a knife edge.

The cup is found in Binyomin’s sack and the brothers are brought back to Yosef. This was their worst fear. The nightmare scenario is unfolding as Binyamin’s fate hangs in the balance. And then the sedra ends. The curtains go down and the audience will have to come to shul next week to find out what happens next.

Krias haTorah is not a serial vying for high audience figures! Why does last week’s sedra of Mikeitz end in the middle of the story, rather than with Yosef revealing himself?

Rabbi Leff quotes the Chafetz Chaim who explains that the story of Yosef and his brothers contains an important lesson for the future.

Life is full of dilemmas, difficulties, and vexing problems. Many think that when Mashiach comes it will take days, if not weeks, to explain the many questions and tragedies of our history.

With merely two words “Ani Yosef” – “I am Yosef”, Yosef cleared up all his brothers’ questions. So too, when Hashem reveals Himself and the complete picture of the world becomes known, only two words “Ani Hashem” – “I am Hashem” will be necessary.

The Chachomim who divided the weekly Torah leining, intentionally ended Mikeitz with a cliffhanger to teach that although all is ultimately for the good, sometimes one must wait until “next week’s sedrah” to understand how this is so. Sometimes this takes a week and sometimes it takes much longer.

Ultimately this is an expression of HKBH running the world. It is a manifestation of “l’maala min hatevah”, something that cannot be examined or proven in a laboratory.

That really is the message of Chanuka. As much as we live and engage in this world, we recognise that there is a concept of “l’maala min hatevah”, and that should be felt not just at Chanukah but all year round.

Wishing everyone a lichtige Chanukah and a wonderful Shabbos.

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