

Shabbos: Ta'am HaChaim

Vayeishev-Chanukah 5777

Shabbos and Chanukah: Extending Miracles into Nature

Introduction

In this week's parashah it is said (Bereishis 37:1) vayeishev Yaakov bieretz migurei aviv bieretz Canaan eileh toldos Yaakov Yosef, Yaakov settled in the land of his father's sojourning, in the land of Canaan. These are the chronicles of Yaakov: Yosef.... Rashi cites the Medrash that states that Yaakov sought to dwell in peace and the agitation of Yosef sprung upon him. The righteous seek to dwell in tranquility, and HaShem says, "is it not enough for the righteous what is prepared for them in the World to Come and they still seek to dwell in tranquility in this world?"

The righteous are not connected to this world

The Sfas Emes (5632) writes that the entire separation of a righteous person is to draw holiness into this world and into nature. Prior to drawing the holiness into this world the righteous person must perfect himself to the level that he himself is not connected to this world. This, then, is the meaning of the words of the Medrash that the righteous seek to dwell in tranquility. When the righteous are attached to their roots and are totally disconnected to a place of separation, i.e., this world, only then can they seek

to dwell in tranquility in this world also. Yaakov was above nature, and because of his dissociation from this world, he was not able to draw holiness into this world. The only way for Yaakov to draw holiness into this world was through Yosef HaTzaddik. This is the reason that after deriving from the first verse that Yaakov sought to dwell in tranquility in this world, the Torah states eileh toldos Yaakov Yosef, these are the chronicles of Yaakov: Yosef.... It was through Yosef that Yaakov was able to channel the holiness to the brothers and to all the worlds. It is for this reason that Rashi writes (Bereishis 30:25) that Yaakov was prepared to depart from Lavan once Yosef was born. Yaakov is compared to fire, Yosef is compared to the flame and Esav is likened to the straw that is consumed by the fire. Fire by itself does not travel far. The flame, however, allows the fire to consume even matter that is far away. Similarly, once Yosef was born, Yaakov felt confident enough to return to his father. The Sfas Emes explains that the nature of fire is to ignite anything in its proximity and it is for this reason that the fire requires the flame which extends the fire's ability to consume.

Yaakov was above nature and Yosef was more connected to his brothers than Yaakov

It is said that Yaakov loved Yosef more than all the brothers. Yosef was able to elevate the good deeds of the brothers to

Yaakov, because Yosef was more connected to the brothers than Yaakov. The reason for this is because Yaakov was above nature. Based on this idea, the meaning of vayeishev Yaakov is that Yaakov was connected to his roots, which is the idea of repentance and Shabbos, when everything ascends to its roots above.

Chanukah teaches to reveal the miracles into the realm of nature

We can extend this amazing idea of the Sfas Emes even further. The miracle of Chanukah was that the Chashmonaim found oil that was sufficient for the lighting of the Menorah for one night, and HaShem made a miracle and the oil burned for eight nights. The Sfas Emes (Chanukah 5631 Third Night) writes that the idea that we express in the passage of al Hanisim that Chanukah is a time lehodos ulihallel, to thank and give praise, corresponds to Yehudah and Yosef. The Sfas Emes explains this idea in various places and I would like to suggest a novel interpretation to this idea. The words Hallel and hodaah appear to be similar. Yet, we know that every word in Scripture and in rabbinic literature is used for a specific reason. Hallel is similar to mallel, speech, and hodaah means to give thanks. Yehudah reflected the idea that one must thank HaShem for miracles, as we find that Leah named her son Yehudah because she received more than her share of sons being born. Yosef, however, symbolizes the idea that one must constantly be seeking ways to praise HaShem, even

when things are not going well and one feels that there are no miracles occurring. We know that even what is referred to as nature is essentially a miracle, and it was Yosef who brought out this idea. Regarding the first dream that Yosef had, it is said (Bereishis 37:7) vihinei anachnu mialmim alumim bisoch hasadeh vihinei kamah alumasi vigam nitzavah vihinei sisubenah alumoseichem vatishtachavenah laalumasi, “behold! – we were binding sheaves in the middle of the field, when, behold! – my sheaf arose and also remained standing; then behold! – your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf.” This verse alludes to the idea that while the brothers were gathering their bundles in the field, Yosef would reveal that even nature, reflected in the growth of grain, is a miracle. It is for this reason that the Torah states that Yosef’s bundle arose and remained standing, as we find that the word used for miracle, nes, also is used for something held high, as it is said (Bamidbar 21:8) visim oso al nes, and place it on a pole. Thus, Yosef reflects the idea that nature itself can be extended into the realm of miracle, as nature is also a miracle.

The Shabbos connection

The entire week we live, in a sense, under the guise of nature, as we work to earn a livelihood and all our successes and failures appear to be the result of our efforts. When Shabbos arrives we discover that even the natural order of events is essentially miracles, as

Shabbos provides all the blessing of the week. It is noteworthy that Yaakov reflects Shabbos and Yosef reflects the idea of Tosefes Shabbos, adding on to Shabbos. By bringing Shabbos into the week we declare that all our natural efforts are facilitated by the light of the Holy Shabbos. Thus, Shabbos is akin to a pole standing high as one can see clearly that Shabbos is the source of all our blessings. Hashem should allow us to observe the Shabbos properly and we should witness miracles with the arrival of Moshiach, speedily, in our days.

Shabbos in the Zemiros

Kel Mistater

This mystical Zemer was composed by Avraham Maimin, whose name with the addition of chazak, is formed by the acrostic. Avraham was a student of Rabbi Moshe Kordevero, a member of the Kabbalistic school of the Arizal, and he lived from 5282-5330 (1522-1570 C.E.)

מְרוֹם נֶאֱדָר בְּכֹחַ וּגְבוּרָהּ. מוֹצִיא אוֹרָה מֵאֵין תְּמוּרָה, the lofty One adorned with strength and power, He draws forth light from the unequalled Torah. This passage implies that HaShem draws forth light from the Torah, which is puzzling, as one would think that the Torah, so to speak, draws its light from HaShem. Yet, the answer to this question is that the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 1:1) states that HaShem looked into the Torah and created the world, so in

essence, Hashem draws the light of the world from the Torah.

Shabbos Stories

This is my baby!

Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky writes: A man once approached my grandfather, Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetzky, of blessed memory, quite distraught.

“I know this may not sound like a major problem,” he began, “but my 17-year-old daughter is very upset with me. It has come to a point that she hardly talks to me. It began a few nights ago. My wife and I were with a number of old friends at a wedding when my daughter walked by. I introduced her to them by saying, ‘his is my baby.’”

“I could see that at the moment she became very upset. Moments later she pulled me to aside and was crying. ‘You still think I’m a baby!’ she sobbed. ‘I am almost eighteen already, and all you do is call me your baby! Won’t I ever be a grown-up in your eyes?’ Ever since then she doesn’t want to talk to me.”

The man shrugged as he pleaded with the sage. “I really don’t want to make this into a major issue, but I’m not sure how to resolve this. Perhaps the Rosh Yeshiva can guide me.”

Reb Yaakov put his hand on the man’s shoulder. “You live in Flatbush, don’t you?”

At the time Reb Yaakov was staying at his youngest son, Reb Avraham’s home, and he invited the man to visit him there together with his daughter. He assured him that he would not discuss the

incident but was confident that by the time the visit was over the matter would be resolved.”

The next day the man and his daughter visited Reb Yaakov at Reb Avraham’s home. Reb Yaakov invited the man and his daughter into the dining room where they discussed a variety of issues from school work to life in pre-war Europe, everything but the incident at the wedding.

About 10 minutes into the conversation, my uncle, Reb Avraham, came down the stairs. Reb Yaakov looked over to him and invited him to join the conversation. But first he introduced Reb Avraham to his guests.

“This is my baby!” exclaimed the revered sage as he gave a warm hug to his 55-year-old son. (www.Torah.org)

Dr. Henry Heimlich: Saving Lives, Saving Worlds

The maneuver of Dr. Heimlich, who recently passed away at age 96, wasn't his great contribution to saving lives.

by Menucha Chana Levin

Dr. Henry Heimlich, inventor of the famous Heimlich maneuver, was once described as “the man who saved the lives of more human beings than any other person.”

Henry Heimlich, born into a working-class Bronx Jewish family, struggled through the Depression.

Heimlich first saved a life at age 20 while returning to New York after working as a summer camp counselor in

Massachusetts. The train derailed, pinning a fireman underneath one of the cars in a swamp. Heimlich held the man’s head above water for an hour until help arrived.

He joined Navy ROTC in medical school and, after being inducted in 1944, was sent on a top-secret mission to the Gobi Desert. The plan was to establish a medical camp that would later treat injured American soldiers during the expected invasion of Japan.

Meanwhile, in his spare time, Heimlich began treating the local Chinese farmers. At first they were suspicious, but when he cured a young girl of a huge stomach abscess, the camp suddenly found itself facing a line of Chinese peasants at its door each morning seeking treatment for various ailments. Heimlich soon recognized a local epidemic of trachoma, an eye infection that eventually causes blindness. He cured it by pulverizing a recently developed antibiotic and mixing it with shaving cream.

When he returned to the U.S. after the war, Heimlich had difficulty finding a position. Doctors who had not been in the military had already built large practices.

Finally landing an internship with a thoracic surgeon, Heimlich began to take interest in patients whose esophagus had been damaged by drinking household lye. This was unfortunately a common accident before child-proof bottles. He developed a procedure in which a strip of the lower stomach was used to

construct a new esophagus so these people could eat normally again.

Ironically, Heimlich's greatest contribution to life-saving was not the renowned Heimlich maneuver. He was curious about the complex hospital equipment needed to drain the fluid from injured chests to prevent a potentially fatal lung collapse. The old method involved an electrically powered suction machine that presented problems moving it from room to room. Heimlich, observing that chest injuries drain naturally, wondered if a type of valve could prevent the deadly backflow.

He bought a flutter valve – a flexible “Bronx cheer” rubber tube – in a five-and-dime store and attached it to a hypodermic inserted into the chest of a patient. Then he kept vigil at the patient's bedside for two nights. The device worked successfully and in 1965 the Army ordered thousands. The Heimlich Valve became standard equipment in every soldier's pack in Vietnam, saving thousands of lives. When Dr. Heimlich visited Vietnam 24 years later he was astounded to find that his name was familiar there. The Quakers had supplied Heimlich Valves to North Vietnam, saving thousands lives there too. Heimlich felt that was the one of the most emotional experiences of his life.

In the early 1970's, he was disturbed to learn that nearly 4,000 Americans die each year from choking on food or small objects. He researched ways to use diaphragmatic pressure to save victims

of choking. In 1974, he developed a method that allowed air trapped in the lungs to be used to expel the object from the victim's airway. This method would be called the Heimlich Maneuver. Simple and easy to perform, the Maneuver has saved countless lives around the world including President Ronald Reagan, Elizabeth Taylor, Nicole Kidman, Halle Berry, basketball sportscaster Dick Vitale, New York Mayor Ed Koch, and news anchorman John Chancellor. It is estimated that his famous Heimlich maneuver saves one choking victim in the United States each week.

Heimlich, who demonstrated the “Heimlich Maneuver” numerous times over the years, had never personally used it in an emergency situation. Not until a week ago.

The 96-year-old Heimlich was sitting at a communal dining table at Cincinnati's Deupree House, an upscale senior living center where he has lived for the past six years.

Then he noticed fellow resident, Patty Ris, 87, was choking while eating a hamburger.

Immediately Heimlich jumped up, put his arms around her and pressed on her abdomen below the rib cage, as per his own instructions displayed on posters in most American restaurants.

Commented Dr. Heimlich afterwards: “I sort of felt wonderful about it.

After three compressions, this piece of meat came out, and she just started breathing, her whole face changed. I just felt a satisfaction.”

Ris said she randomly selected the seat in the dining room on Monday because she is a new resident at Deupree.

“When I wrote my ‘thank you’ note to him for saving my life, I said, ‘God put me in that seat next to you, Dr. Heimlich, because I was gone, I couldn’t breathe at all,’” stated Ris gratefully.

As Dr. Heimlich explains in his biography:

“My interest in saving lives goes beyond simply being fascinated with science. As my parents taught me from a young age, we each have an obligation to give back, to help others in whatever way we can. True happiness comes from giving of oneself.”

Judaism believes that, “He who saves a life saves an entire world.” In that case, Dr. Heimlich has been saving countless worlds throughout his lifetime. (www.aish.com)

Shabbos in Halacha

Wringing and Laundering

4. Activities Affected by this Prohibition

A. Cleaning a Stained Tablecloth

Tablecloths that are made of absorbent fibers, i.e. linen, may not be moistened

at all, for wetting them is, by itself, a form of *laundering*.

Plastic and vinyl tablecloths may be wet and rubbed lightly to loosen dirt, but not scrubbed forcefully even with one’s hand. One must also avoid wetting any trimming made of absorbent fibers.



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