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by Rabbi Yaakov Finestone

SMILE WHEN YOU DO THAT!

PARSHAS MIKETZ

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzatto zt"l (Derech Hashem 4:8:5-6) writes that the spiritual level attained by the Jewish People on a particular holiday is rekindled each year on that holiday. Reading the Torah portion each Shabbos and each holiday, serves as a conduit to strengthen the illumination of holiness of that day. For example, reading the Torah portion on Purim, about the war against Amalek, grants us the power to battle the modern-day manifestation of Amalek

On Chanukah, the Kohanim prevailed over the Hellenists who tried to dissuade us from serving Hashem. The Kohanim overcame them and brought the Jewish People back to Torah and devotion to Hashem.

The Torah portion that is read on Chanukah refers to back when the Jews were in the desert, after leaving Egypt. It gives the account of the first sacrifices which were offered by the Nesi'im, princes of each of the Tribes, in the newly inaugurated *Mishkan* (Tabernacle).

What is the correlation of this Torah reading to the holiday of Chanukah? What spiritual influence do we tap into by reading this portion on Chanukah?

Rav Mattisyahu Solomon provides us with an answer. During the time of Purim, our enemies wanted to annihilate us. However, during the time of Chanukah, they wanted us to remove Hashem and the Torah from our lives. They wanted us to replace that with Greek "culture". They wanted us to focus on the body and not the soul. Unfortunately, many Jews were influenced. The Heavenly decree against that generation was a punishment for becoming lax in the service of Hashem. They had become unenthusiastic about their service in the Beis HaMikdash, doing it by rote. Hashem felt that if they were not interested in doing the service in the Beis HaMikdash, then it should

"And the leaders [of the tribes] brought onyx stones, and stones for setting into the ephod and breastplate".
(Shmos 35:7)

be taken away from them. The daily Tamid sacrifice was nullified, and they were unable to light the Menorah. The Greeks entered and desecrated the Beis HaMikdash, bringing idols inside and by sacrificing pigs on the *mizbayach*.

The Maccabees atoned for the laxity of service by risking their lives to reinstate the service. Hashem gave them Divine assistance enabling the few and the weak to defeat the many and mighty. Then, they were able to do the service of lighting the Menorah with pure oil that was miraculously found and which lasted for 8 days.

How does this connect to the Torah reading about the Nesi'im? When Moshe had asked for donations to build the *Mishkan*, the Nesi'im did not donate immediately. **Rashi** (Shmos 35:27) says that the Nesi'im said that the rest of the nation should donate first. Then, the Nesi'im would donate whatever was lacking. However, the rest of the Jewish people donated everything that was needed for the *Mishkan*. The Nesi'im felt bad that there was nothing for them to donate. In order that they not feel bad, Hashem sent them precious stones that they could donate to be used for the garments of the Kohain Gadol. The **Da'as Zekanim** and **Bechor Shor** (Shmos 35:27) say that each prince brought the jewel that was used for his tribe on the Kohain Gadol's breastplate. Together, they also brought the two precious stones that were

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placed on the Kohain Gadol's shoulders. They also contributed the oil for anointing the *Mishkan*. The initial response of the Nesi'im showed a slight degree of laziness. They should have given a donation immediately and then said that they would donate more at the end. The Nesi'im learned their lesson. After the *Mishkan* was completed, they were the first to dedicate offerings to be brought on the Mizbayach.

This, says Rav Mattisyahu Solomon, is how the Torah reading on Chanukah correlates to the miracles that we commemorate. The people of that generation had to learn the same lesson as the Nesi'im, not to approach the service of Hashem with laziness, rather with joy and love for Hashem.

(based on Rabbi Frand on the Parashah 3)

Boruch Hashem, we have many opportunities to achieve holiness and closeness to Hashem. Throughout the day we have mitzvos that we can do. At designated times, we can daven. These are all opportunities to cherish. However, human nature is such that when we do something many times, it loses its excitement. A person is apt to act by rote. He may go through the motions while his mind is "thousands of miles away", thinking about things that are totally unrelated to the mitzvah.

We should stop to think about what we are doing and to Whom we are speaking. Many great people used to spend time thinking about Hashem's glory, greatness, and kindness before they davened. Every single day, Aharon HaKohain would light the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash. He was praised for lighting it each day with the same excitement and fervor as he had the first time. We, too, should aspire to always serve Hashem with great excitement and fervor.

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Rabbi Yaakov Finestone is the director of JEP Queens. For almost 50 years JEP Queens has been in the forefront of kiruv. JEP has changed the lives of thousands of Jewish children enrolled in public schools and kiruv schools. Many are shomrei Torah and mitzvos today because of JEP.

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