

# The Vayeishev-Chanuka Connection

by Yisrael Cohen • from Shabbat MiTzion (Torah MiTzion)

In Parashat Vayeishev we read how Yosef was sold by his brothers and found his way down to Egypt. At the time Yosef was still fairly young to have left the protection of his father's home; Yosef who had lost his mother at a young age, was favored by his father Yakov, but despised by his brothers.

One would expect that this forced departure from his home and the ordeals that he suffered would have had a negative impact on him. He found himself alone, surrounded by a foreign Egyptian culture in the wealthy home of Potiphar. It would not have been unexpected for him to have left his roots as a Jew in search of a more promising life. But Yosef withstands the test and the temptation by Potiphar's wife. In fact the Torah relates just the opposite. With all of Yosef's troubles he remains a Tzadik loyal to Hashem, his father and family. Unfortunately there are very few tzadikim like Yosef.

In today's society how often do individuals find themselves totally engulfed by the secular world. What happens to someone who does not have Yosef's strength in turning away from temptation? What happens to a Jew who does not succeed in remaining on the proper "derech", in the ways of the Torah. Is that Jew totally lost to Klal Yisrael? I think not!

I believe we can see this if we look into the miracle of the "pach hashemen" - the flask of oil - of Chanuka. Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohein Kook zt"l in his commentary on Mesechet

Shabbat writes concerning the miracle of the jar of oil. The hidden secret to our knowledge of Torah, our will to follow in its ways, is found deep inside every Jew, stored carefully in each of our souls. This relates to the one jar of oil that was found by the Maccabees amongst all the oils that had been totally contaminated. One jar was found bearing the seal of the Kohen Gadol. The Greeks influenced the Jewish people and almost totally destroyed them spiritually, but they were unable to destroy that single jar and make it impure. The deep roots and love for Hashem could not be stamped out.

That jar of pure oil represents the pure Jewish "neshama" soul that is inside of each Jew, no matter how far he has strayed. However having this "pach", jar inside of us is not enough. Inside, we would not see its true strength. Rav Kook asks how can we maximize it to its true strength? He responds that by kindling it even at first with a little spark, slowly, slowly it will return to its full strength.

Most of us B"H are fortunately not distant from the light of the Torah, but certainly we can all find those with whom to share the spark. We can also all find ways to improve ourselves in the derech of Torah and mitzvot. Like the one pure jar of oil that spread out to last eight days, each one of us can strive to extend our chesed, Torah and mitzvot to speed the long awaited Geula.