



RABBI SHALOM

ROSNER

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Extinguishing Evil or Spreading the Light?

It is interesting to note that Yosef is the only one of the twelve *shvatim* to whom the Torah attributes two reasons for his choice of name. First we are told that Rachel selected the name Yosef “*asaf Elokim es herpasi*” (God has taken away my reproach; Bereshis 30:23). In the very next *pasuk* Rachel provides an additional explanation for naming her son Yosef - “*yosef Hashem li ben acher*” (may Hashem grant me yet another son!). Essentially these exemplify Yosef’s two strengths, one with respect to the past – (removing Rachel’s past suffering) and a second looking towards the future (Rachel requesting another son in the future).

Yosef transmitted these two strengths to his sons as evidenced by their names. One was called Menashe “*shenashani Elokim es kol Amali*” (God has caused me to forget all my toil and all my father’s house; Bereshis 41:51), relating to forgetting a painful past. The other was named Efraim - “*ki hifrani*

Elokim (God has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction), relating to Yosef’s present and future.

We know that the actions of the fathers portend for their descendants; in this case, these two children represent *middos* that we all have to internalize. We’re referred to as *she’eris Yosef* and *haben yakir li Efraim*. We are all Yosef’s children, so we are all Menashe and Efraim. They represent two of our *kohos*: Menashe represents turning from evil – help me root out my pain, my difficulties, the negative. Efraim represents doing good, gaining the positive. We need to incorporate both “*sur me’ra*” (avoiding evil) and “*asei tov*” (actively pursuing good).

Klal Yisrael is never referred to as Menashe’s children because turning from evil is not the *ikar*. We are called the children of Efraim because the *ikar* is the obligation, the doing good, the light of Torah. Focusing on doing good will eventually lead to eradicating the evil and the difficulties.

Rav Zevin and the Shemen Hatov both suggest that these two *middos* may serve as the root of the well-known *makhlokes* between Hillel and Shammai. (Shabbos 21).

Fire does two things – on one hand it

destroys and removes, yet in addition, it illuminates and shines. Both aspects are necessary. We have to root out our *yetzer hara* and our negative tendencies, and of course, we have to focus on the positive, to spread the light of the Torah.

The Maccabim did both. They had to burn out the Greek mentality, the Hellenistic nature of some Jews, and then they had to purify the *Beis HaMikdash* and rekindle the Menora's lights and the light of Torah and *mitzvos*.

What was the Maccabim's primary objective? Which aspect do we remember? That's the *makhlokes* between Hillel and Shammai. Shammai posits that we descend from lighting eight candles to one, to underscore that the main objective is to root out the negative, symbolized by this descending kindling of the menorah. Hillel believes that the main objective is to spread the light, and the darkness will automatically disappear with the addition of light, so we are to increase the light by increasing a candle each night.

Our custom follows that of Hillel - the main objective is the element of Efraim (spreading the light) over Menashe (extinguishing evil). This Chanuka let's take that active approach and share inspiring thoughts so that we can **enlighten** those around us with the beauty of the Torah. ■

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