

IT'S CHANUKAH!

An Olive's Perspective

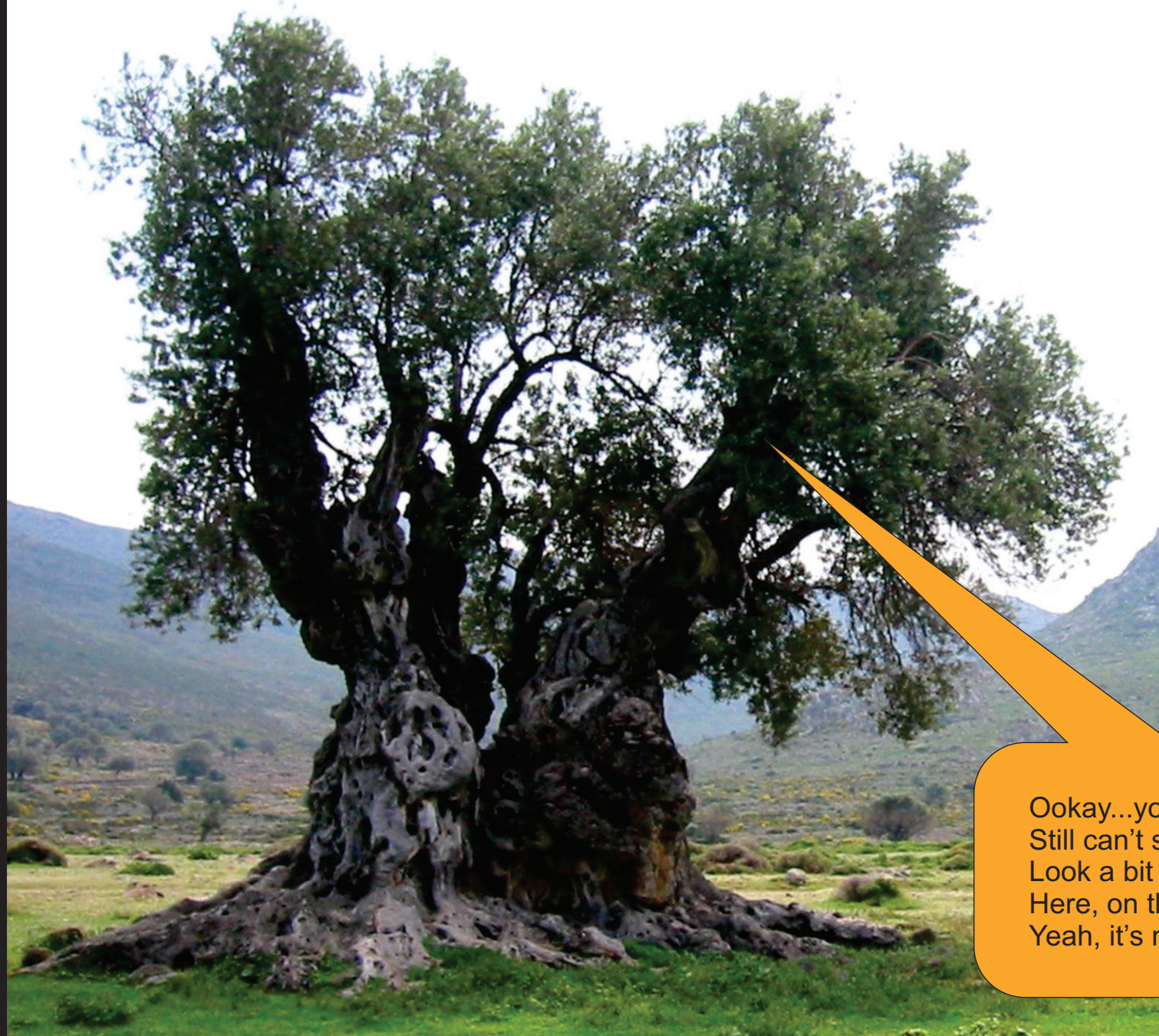
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THE DIALOGUE

A WEEKLY MAGAZINE FOR THE CHABAD HEBREW SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Hey, you... yeah, you,
the one looking at the screen.
Let's talk...
Can you see me?
I'm tiny, but I'm here...



Ookay...you're zeroing in.
Still can't see me?
Look a bit closer.
Here, on the middle branch...
Yeah, it's me. You got it.



Let me introduce myself. I am an olive, a fruit that grows on one of the strongest trees around! Olive trees can resist harsh winters, burning summers, drought, disease and fires - we don't get as easily affected by the same things as other trees. Even when our above-ground system gets destroyed, our root system is capable of regenerating the tree! We've been around for a lo-o-long time. Some of us have even lived to be thousands of years old! But enough about my tree, let me tell you a bit about me... Delicious oil comes from me. This oil is often referred to as "liquid gold". Olives and olive oil are mentioned very often in the Torah. King David and King Solomon actually had guards watching over the olive groves and warehouses, making sure that the trees and oil were kept safe!



Fascinating, you say. But so what? Good question. Chanukah is coming up. This is the season that my oil is taken out of the kitchen cabinet and put front-row and center in Jewish life. So, I just want to add some perspective... In ancient Israel, olive oil was part of daily life. It was a staple of their diet, it was used to produce cosmetics and ointments, and it played an important role in religious rituals. Its most well known role was in the daily lighting of the magnificent golden menorah in the Beit Hamikdash! Lit with...your's truly!





A piece of an ancient olive oil press.
Maresha Tel archaeological dig site, Israel



But the Menorah wasn't kindled with just any olive oil. Only the first oily drops that were extracted from the olives, were suitable for the Menorah's lighting. Only the purest. Here's the process: A rounded stone was rolled back and forth over the olives (Ouch! that hurts!), crushing us, and extracting our juice. The oil was stored in clay flasks - one day's worth of oil in each flask - and sealed with wax. Then, every day, the oil was poured into each of the seven cups of the Menorah, the wicks were kindled and the whole Temple was bathed in its light.



So, what can we learn from all this? Deep within the olive is her oil. Her oil has the power to bring light and goodness to the world. It may be quite a tedious process to extract the oil from the olive, but look what we get if we go through that process!

With people, it is much the same: Each of us has the ability to bring light to the world. Sometimes, it feels like a struggle to do good. Sometimes it may feel like we are being "crushed" in the process. But, if we persist, we can make this a brighter world!

THE DIALOGUE

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- ◆ Bringing light to the world is a metaphor. What kinds of things can we do to bring light to the world?

- ◆ The lesson of the olive-oil-extraction-process is that it is not always easy to do good. Sometimes, it is quite challenging to make good choices.
 - Can you think of situations in which it was easy to do the right thing?
 - Can you think of situations in which it was not as easy?
 - Once you succeeded in doing good, how did it feel?
 - Did it feel differently when you had greater obstacles to overcome?
 - Did this exploration teach you anything about yourself and your abilities?