TORAH TREATS

An Anthology of Short Divrei Torah & Stories

Compiled by Yitzchok Henry





חנוכה

לעילוי נשמת



אבי מורי ר' גדליה דוד ב"ר איסר הענרי ע"ה

ר' איסר ב"ר זרח הענרי ע"ה

ואשתו מרת גאלדא ב"ר יצחק אהרן ע"ה

ר'יעקב שמואל ב"ר צבי הלוי גרינספעלד ע"ה

ואשתו מרת חנה ב"ר דוד ע"ה

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ת*נ*צ*ב*ה

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חנוכה

Fascinating INSIGHTS



Books That Are Booked

There was no longer prophecy at the period of the story of Chanuka. As a result, the story of Chanuka was unable to be written in a way deserving an inclusion in Tanach. This was because there was no one with the level of Ruach Hakodesh required to author a sefer of Tanach. So Megilas Antiyoches is not in the 24 books of Tanach.

R' Yosef Chaim Zonnenfeld teaches that the date of Chanuka, the 25th of Kislev, alludes to the fact that the first 24 books of Tanach can be written down, but not a 25th. The name **חנוכה** is a contraction of **חנו כ"ה**, meaning we must stop (**חנו** means to rest, stop) writing before including a 25th book (**כ"ה** has a gematria of 25).

The Midrash writes that the 24 books of Tanach correspond to the 24 mishmaros, the Kohanic and Levite families who took turns performing the avoda in the Beis Hamikdash. This is because the 24 books of Tanach are *shamur*, guarded. They are protected and one isn't permitted to add to them. In this context we can understand the name **חנוכה** as **חנו**, they rested, **כה**, when they reached the 25th.



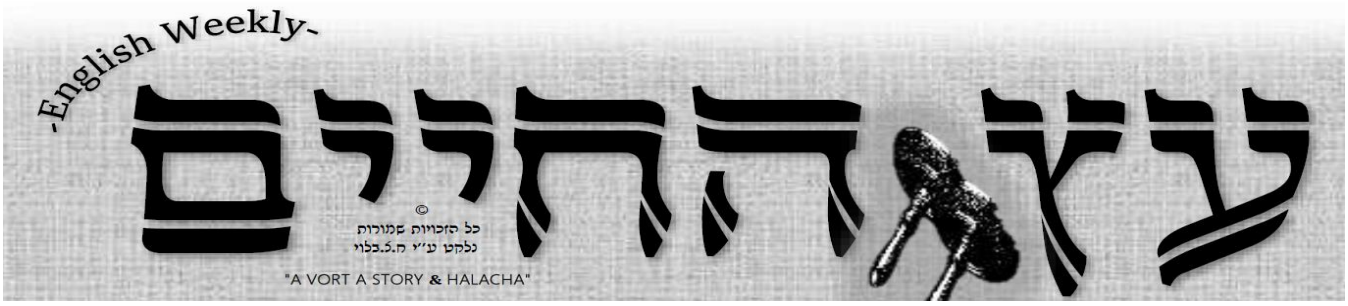


The Rav said tonight that the suffering we endure from the goyim is a benefit to us. How could it be that we benefited from the decrees of Antiochus during the days of Chanukah if we weren't allowed to keep our religion?

You have to know that there was a tiny group of people among us who sought to adopt the ways of the Greeks – and had there been a stronger enthusiasm among the nation as a whole, then such a group could have never arisen. It's like a sore that arises in your mouth or somewhere else on your body because the whole-body tone is not sufficiently vigorous. If the body would have had all the vitamins and all the other requirements for perfect health, then it's quite possible that this sore would never have happened.

And so too, if the nation as a whole had been healthy and vigorous enough in their love of Hashem, then such a painful sore, such a group like the Hellenizers, never could have arisen among us. And therefore, the people were given now an exercise in virtue – it became very hard to be a Jew and they began to sacrifice themselves for Judaism. And that brought them back to their original greatness!

And so there's no question that the decrees, the gezeiros of Antiochus, were a very big benefit for the Jewish people.



We are now nearing the Yomtov of Chanuka. I saw from **HaRav Moshe Lewis Shlit"a** based on the words of **Rav Shimshon Pincus להבח"ל זצוק"ל** that the way the name **יון** (Greece) is written is an indication of how the yetzer hora ensnares people. - The first letter is a **יו"ד** which is a short line. The second letter is a **ו"ו**, a longer line. The last letter is a **נו"ן**, a little longer line.

This is exactly *how* the yetzer hora works: First he entices the person to do a small sin, and then he entices him to do more sins, thus descending further. Then he gets him to do even more and more sins until the person drops down completely. (E.g. first the yetzer hora says: 'Just' watch the news, and then watch something else and the next thing he knows he is wasting hours and hours, of his life…. This is the symbol of a geek; I mean a Greek!)

Chanuka Halachos

Tzdaka

1. There is a special **ענין** to be **מרבה בצדקה** on **חנוכה**. (עיין ברמב"ם, בחיי אדם, במגן אברהם, ובקיצור ש"ע)

Lomdei Torah

2. The **עיקר** people to give **צדקה** to, is **עניים לומדי תורה**.

Flying

3. If one is flying **לצורך מצוה** it is **מותר** to book a flight on **חנוכה**, even if he will be **מבטל** the **עיקר מצוה** of **חנוכה**. (מספר פניני חנוכה בשם ר' אלישיב זצוק"ל)

8 days

4. The **ר״ן** says that the **נס** of the single jug of oil continuing to burn lasted for eight days, since it took eight days total to get the oil.

Job

5. If a lady is **משעובד** to her job during **זמן הדלקה**, she does not need to stop working. (בשם הגריי״ש אלישיב קונטרוס הליכות והנהגות)

Milchigs

6. There is a **מנהג** to eat *milchigs* on **חנוכה**, because that is what **יהודית** used as an aid to kill their leader.

Seudah

7. For **ספרדים** there is no **ענין** to have a **סעודה** on **חנוכה**. For **אשכנזים** – the **רמ״א** says **יש קצת מצוה**. Therefore, the **רמ״א** says to say **שירות ותשבחות**, for then it is surely considered a **סעודת מצוה**.

The Chanuka Story

8. There is an **ענין** to say over the story of **חנוכה** and the **נסים** that **ה׳** did for our ancestors on **חנוכה**.

Bochurim

9. If a Bochur who is learning in a Yeshiva in a different city goes home every night, he should not interrupt his learning but rather he should light in Yeshiva. (חוט שני)

Going away

10. If one's family goes away for **שבת חנוכה**, and they are eating in one place and sleeping in another, according to the **מ״ב** it would seem that the **עיקר** place is the place one eats the meals and therefore, one should light there. (עיין מ״ב ס׳ תרע״ז ס״ק יב)

A Chosson

11. A **חתן** that is getting married on **חנוכה**, should do as follows: If at the time of the **חיוב** of lighting he is still in his parent's home, he lights there. If he left before the **זמן**, he cannot light in his parent's house. (חוט שני)

Shaliach

12. If he is going to his own house after the **חתונה**, he should at least appoint a **שליח** to light for him in his home at the proper **זמן**.

Fasting

13. A **חתן** who is getting married on **חנוכה** does not fast. (רמ״א סי׳ קעג סע׳ א)

No Problem

14. It is not a problem of **לא תתגדדו** for an Ashkenazi who is in a Sefardi home to also light a **מנורה.** (כף החיים סק״ז)

Erev Chanuka

15. It is a dispute amongst the Achronim if one who has Yartzeit on **ערב חנוכה** can fast. עיין בב״ח, פרי חדש, קיצור ש״ע. ועיין עוד במ״ב סימן תרפו

Yortziet

16. One who has Yohrtzeit on **חנוכה** cannot fast.

No Sigufim

17. Someone who doesn't eat meat or drink wine all year round (because of **סיגופים**), is not permitted to continue this practice on **חנוכה**. (עיין בסימן תקכט סק יט)

Milochoh

18. Women should refrain from doing **מלאכה** for half an hour after the **נירות** are **lit**. (מ״ב סימן תרע ס״ק ד)

Why?

19. There are a few reasons why women do not do **מלאכה** during the first half hour 1. To make a Heker not to use the **נרות**. 2. In order that they shouldn't be **מסיח דעת** from the **נס** (לבוש).

Specifically women

20. Our **מנהג** is that specifically the women are not supposed to do **מלאכה** during the first half hour. There are a few reasons for this. 1. Since the **עיקר הנס** happened through a woman – **יהודית**, therefore, it is like a **יו״ט** for them (מ״א, ט״ז, ומ״ב) 2. The **גזירה** was harsher on the women because of the **גזירה** of the **הגמון**.

Cooking

21. However, women are allowed to cook and bake during that half hour. (עיין ט״ז – like by ראש חדש)

Noticeable

22. When one has many people lighting in one area, they should be particular to make sure all the **נרות** have their own **מקום** in order that it be noticeable which day it is. (רמ״א תרע״א סע׳ ב)

Shot glasses

23. In most cases, if each person's **נרות** are on their own **מנורה**, or box it is noticeable what is what. Whereas, if one just uses loose glasses, so they should be careful to apply Halacha #1 in all situations.

Two people – One Menorah

24. Until the third night (including the third night), 2 people can *halachikly* light using the same **מנורה**, each lighting on the opposite side. (משנ״ב שם ס״ק יב)

No Tashlumin

25. If one missed lighting one night on **חנוכה** there is no **תשלומין** the next day, rather he lights like everyone else the following day. (שו״ע תרע״ב סע׳ ב)

Ashkenazi in Sfardi Home

26. An *ashkenazi* who is by a *sefardi* house is permitted to light, even though the minhag by *sefardim* is that only the **בעל הבית** lights. (שערי תשובה תרע״א אות ב)

Beautify Hashem's Mitzvos

27. One should buy a beautiful **מנורה** and make beautiful **נרות** according to as much as he can afford as there is a **מצוה** of **זה קלי ואנווהו**. (ע' משנ"ב תרע"ג ס"ק כח)

Glass cups

28. Using glass cups is not a **חסרון** of beautification according to many **פוסקים**, even though one is not lighting in the actual silver, since the glass cups are **בטל** to the beautiful **מנורה**. [This is the **מנהג**]

Straight

29. **לכתחילה** one's **מנורה** flames should go in a straight line.

Light in the proper place

30. One must not light in one place and then move the **מנורה** to the proper place, since we pasken that **הדלקה עושה מצוה.**

Very important matter

31. If some kind of emergency or important thing comes up, one can light the first light and give someone else to light the rest. (משנ"ב)



There is a minhag to give children Chanukah gelt, and the Rebbe Rashab would do this on the fourth or fifth night.

The Rebbe once noted that the main reason for this minhag is to enable the children to give tzedaka, for what else does a child need money for…?

No Need to be Told

We aren't obligated to have a *seudah* on Chanukah. Shulchan Aruch (670:2) states, "Some say that there is a little bit of a mitzvah to have large meals…" But it certainly isn't an obligation. Why is Chanukah different than all other holidays?

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l answered with a mashal: A simple farmer married the king's daughter. Does anyone need to tell him to celebrate with a *seudah*? He will certainly do so on his own. His heart is full of joy, and he will host big feasts and invite all his friends.

On Chanukah the *Shechinah* comes down to us, lower than ten *tefachim* [which It does not do the rest of the year]. We don't need to be told to have a *seudah*. We are so happy; we will do so on our own! ~ **R' Elimelech Biderman Shlita.**

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל



The Gemorah [Shabbos 23b] teaches that one's children will be *talmidei chachamim* if he be **רגיל** (lit. consistent) in fulfilling the *mitzva* of lighting Chanukah candles.

Rashi tells us that the source of this is teaching is a verse in Mishlei (6:23): **כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אוֹר** - *Because a candle is a mitzva and Torah is light* - by fulfilling the *mitzva* of lighting Chanukah candles consistently, a person merits to have the light of Torah shine upon his children.

The obvious difficulty with this Gemorah is that all of us light Chanukah candles quite consistently, yet only some of us merit to have children who are *talmidei chachamim.*

Let's first understand the connection between the mitzva of lighting Chanukah candles and the 'light' of Torah.

The *Rif* [cited by *Ein Yaakov*, *Shabbos* 23b] explains this connection in the following way: The goal of the Greeks was to make the Torah be forgotten in Klal Yisroel. When we overcame the Greeks and ruined their plot, the candle of Chanukah became a symbol of victory - a victory of the Torah.

When a person is ambitious and consistent in the *mitzva* of lighting Chanukah menorah, he is showing that the Torah is very dear to him — i.e., he rejoices from the fact that the Greeks' plan against the Torah did not succeed. Appropriately, in return for his love of Torah, such a person merits to have the light of Torah shine in his home — i.e., through his children becoming *talmidei chachamim*.

Hence a great lesson emerges from this: A parent should rejoice in the fact that the Greeks' plot failed, and his children have the ability to learn Torah and illuminate the world with its pure light.

The parent should then channel this joy through being consistent from year to year in lighting the menorah with great enthusiasm. If he will act and feel in such way towards this victory, then the Torah will reciprocate correspondingly. Namely, the light of Torah will shine upon his children.

Accordingly, the more a person puts into the mitzva of Chanukah with his heart and actions, such as preparing for this mitzva and beautifying it, the more blessed with the light of Torah his children will be.

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")

Chanukah

R' Alexander Ziskind z"l (Grodno, Poland; died 1794) writes: The sages of the Gemara spoke very emphatically of the care that one should take when performing the mitzvah of Chanukah lights and of the reward for doing so.

They said (Shabbat 23b), **הָרָגִיל בְּנֵר הָוְיִין לֵיהּ בָּנִים תַּלְמִידֵי חֲכָמִים** "***One who regularly lights [Chanukah] candles will have sons who are Torah scholars***."

Rambam writes in the fourth chapter of his "Laws of Megillah and Chanukah": "The mitzvah of Chanukah lights is a very beloved mitzvah and a person must take great care with it in order to publicize the miracle and add to the praise of G-d and the acknowledgment to Him for the miracles that He did for us."

R' Alexander Ziskind continues: Truth be told, there is no doubt that a person who has been given wisdom by Hashem to comprehend the deep secrets of the **Arizal's** meditations should take upon himself to meditate on those concepts. However, my intention in this work is to direct ordinary people like myself down the path that they should

take so that they will not perform the mitzvot of Hashem Elokenu, may His name be praised, by rote. Therefore, I have come to counsel that one should not perform this beloved mitzvah without putting one's heart into it. Rather, it should be done with great joy and with simple intentions in mind, as appropriate for each of the blessings [that are recited]. . .

When one says the words, "L'hadlik ner" / "To kindle the Chanukah light," one should feel immense happiness in his heart over the great miracle that took place at this time of year in the Bet Hamikdash involving the flask of oil as related in the Gemara.

When one recites the blessing, "She'asah nissim" / "That He did miracles for our fathers in those days at this time [of the year]," he should give great thanks in his thoughts and great praise to our Creator for all the miracles and the salvations that He did for our forefathers at this time of year. One also should try to imagine that the miracles and salvations were done for him personally. (**Yesod Ve'shoresh Ha'avodah: Sha'ar Ha'meffaked ch. 1**)

When Hashem performs open, revealed miracles, it generates awareness that even when matters seem natural, it's Hashem's hashgachah (see Ramban end of parashas Bo).

Based on this, the Kedushas Levi (Chanukah, Kedushah 5) explains that we light Chanukah candles to contemplate the miracles, and to acknowledge that everything that happens is hashgachah pratis. ~ R' Elimelech Biderman Shlita.

The world exists in the merit of those who remain silent [and do not answer back] in a dispute. ~ Talmud Chulin 89.

Ramban z"l (1194-1270; Spain and Eretz Yisrael) writes in his commentary to Bamidbar (8:2) that the command to Aharon Hakohen to light the menorah is an allusion to "*the lights of the dedication by the Chashmonaim, which will continue to be lit even after the destruction [of the Temple], when we are in exile.*"

R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach z"l (Yerushalayim; 1910-1995) observes: It appears [from Ramban's statement that the lights *of the dedication by the Chashmonaim* continue to be lit every year] that the Chashmonaim somehow invested every person's Chanukah lights, each in his own home, with a quality equivalent to the Temple service. - Similarly, regarding the Korban Pesach that was offered by Bnei Yisrael in Egypt, the Gemara (Pesachim 96a) says that every person's doorposts and lintel were his altars.

An additional observation: The lighting of the menorah in the Bet Hamikdash could be performed even by a non-kohen. Why?

R' Auerbach explains that this alludes to the fact that Torah–to which the menorah alludes – is accessible to every person. (**Halichot Shlomo Ch.13, note 2**)

Chanukah

R' Yaakov Chagiz z"l (1620-1674; Morocco, Italy, and Turkey) writes: I have heard that it is better to recite the blessing in the form, "L'hadlik Ner Chanukah," rather than, "L'hadlik Ner Shel Chanukah," alluding to the secret of "Nachal." (**Halachot Ketanot**)

R' Ben Zion Alkali z"l (1858-1905; Eretz Yisrael) elaborates: There have been differing opinions among major Halachic authorities throughout the centuries regarding the correct formulation of this Berachah.

One argument cited by **R' Chaim Yosef David Azulai z"l** (1724-1806; Eretz Yisrael and Italy; known as "**R' Chida**") for omitting the word "Shel is that "Ner Shel Chanukah" means "the candle of

Chanukah," just as "Ner Shel Shabbat" means "the candle of Shabbat," whereas "Ner Chanukah" means "the Chanukah candle."



Shabbat has many Mitzvot — for example, Kiddush and the three meals — so the candles do not define the day; they are merely the "candle[s] of Shabbat." In contrast, Chanukah has only one Mitzvah, the candles, and it defines the day. Therefore, it is the "Chanukah candle."

Additionally, R' Alkali writes in the name of R' Chida, reciting a different form of the Berachah than is recited on Shabbat reflects the fact that the candles of Shabbat are specifically intended to give light for our enjoyment, whereas Chanukah candles may not be used as a light source.

Regarding "the secret of 'Nachal'," R' Alkali writes: I am not privy to these secrets. May Hashem show me the wonders of His Torah! (**Halachah Rovachat**)

R' Yitzchak Moshe Erlanger shlita (Chassidic Mashpia in Ashdod, Israel) writes: The word "Nachal" (**נחל**) is made up of the initial letters of "**לְהַדְלִיק נֵר חֲנֻכָּה**," which also are the initial letters of "**נַפְשֵׁנוּ חִכְּתָה לַה'**" / "our soul awaits Hashem."

The word "Nachal" means "river," also known as a "Nahar." We read (Bereishit 2:10), "A Nahar / river issues forth from Eden to water the Gan / garden." And the initial letters of "Eden," "Nahar," and "Gan" spell the word "Oneg" / "pleasure."

He explains: Our Sages teach that the light Hashem created on the first day of Creation was too good to be used by mankind in this world and was concealed for the benefit of Tzaddikim in the future (see Rashi to Bereishit 1:4). It is that "pleasure" which our "soul awaits."

The Chanukah candles give us a glimpse of that holy light, and it is that to which the acronym "Nachal" alludes.

Indeed, **R' Zvi Elimelech Shapira z"l (the Bnei Yissaschar; died 1841)** writes that the word "Chanukah" comes from the word "Chinuch," meaning "education" or "inauguration." - Through the Chanukah lights, we accustom ourselves to the immense light that will be revealed in the near future, G-d willing. (**Kuntresei Chassidut: Mo'adim p.3**)

R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev z"l (1740-1809;) asks: Why did our Sages establish holidays to commemorate certain miracles–for example, the miracles of Chanukah and Purim–but not others–for example, the defeat of the Canaanite general Sisera in the time of the prophetess Devorah (Shoftim, chapters 4-5)?

He answers: Our Sages sensed that some miracles made lasting spiritual impressions on the world, while others, as impressive as they were in the moment, did not make such impressions. Only those whose spiritual "light" returns every year were established as holidays (e.g., Chanukah and Purim); the others were not.

This, R' Levi Yitzchak explains, is what we mean when we recite the blessing (on Chanukah and Purim), "*Who has wrought miracles for our forefathers, in those days, at this time.*" - The miracles were not only "in those days," they repeat themselves in some form "at this time." (*Kedushat Levi: Kedushah Rishonah Le'Chanukah*)





Is giving Chanukah gifts an imitation of gentile practices?

And the answer is, it certainly is. It's the season when the stores are full of good things, and everybody is moved to buy. There's a great campaign to save your money for you. All the stores have big signs in the windows, 'Save!', 'Save!', 'Save!' And so as a result you start spending.

However, this has to be tempered with a little bit of mildness because the children might feel deprived. And therefore it wouldn't be amiss, it wouldn't be out of place to give some presents. But to go around with a long list, a paper a yard long, and say 'I have to do my Chanukah shopping' that's nothing but an imitation of goyim.

You want to give gifts? So, give gifts for Pesach. You can give gifts for Purim. You want to give gifts for Chanukah too? So we won't criticize that. But to make a big fuss about it, Chanukah-giving as an ideal? So you might as well sing carols and put up a Chanukah tree. Because that's what it is.

"Were it not for the dark, the light wouldn't be apparent at all." ~ R' Lazer Brody.



One of the nissim in the Bais Hamikdash was that the ner ma'aravi always burned longer than it should have. So why was it such a big neis that on Chanukah the oil burned for eight days?

No, no. It didn't always happen. Yes, for some time it happened always, but later on it stopped. By the end of the second Beis Ha'mikdash that neis didn't continue any longer. And the neis of Chanukah was a different kind of neis. The neis of Chanuka was all of a sudden. It was a big surprise. A small amount of oil, which should have only burned for one day, continued to burn and lasted eight days. They needed eight days to prepare the new oil and the small amount of oil lasted eight days. So that was a separate neis from the neis of the ner ma'aravi. - And when they saw the neis Chanuka, they went wild with simcha because every neis is a matanah. A neis is a gift from Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

I'll explain that to you: **The Chovos Halevavos** at the end of Sha'ar Habechina says the following. He says that among the biggest gifts that Hashem gave our nation, the two most precious ones are the Torah and nissim.

Do you hear that?! A neis is a tremendous gift. The world doesn't understand that. People think that a neis is merely that we are in trouble and Hashem came and saved us from our troubles. No, Hashem could have saved us in other ways – without a neis. What a neis is, is a gift of emunah. Nissim are a shot-in-the-arm of emunah. Instead of saving us in a natural way, He puts a neis there as a tovah for us. A neis is a tremendous giluy shechina to put into our minds a certain dose of emunah.



What is a practical lesson that we could take out of Chanukah?

I'll tell you one important lesson. We say to Hashem about our forefathers who fought the Yevanim: **רַבְתָּ אֶת רִיבָם דַּנְתָּ אֶת דִּינָם** – "You, Hashem, judged their quarrels; You fought their fight."

Now, there's a question here. Because it wasn't their quarrel. It wasn't the quarrel of the Am Yisroel. It was Your quarrel, Hashem. Because, after all, the Greeks weren't interested in killing Jews. They wanted the Jews to stop keeping the Torah, that's all. If the Am Yisroel would be willing to behave like the Greeks, they wouldn't bother them. So why was the Am Yisroel fighting?

They weren't fighting for their safety; they were fighting for Hashem's Word. It was for kevod shomayim, for the honor of Hashem, that they fought. So it wasn't **רַבְתָּ אֶת רִיבָם**. It was **רָב אֶת רִיבֵךְ** – Hashem, You fought Your own fight! You fought Your quarrel! But no, we don't say that. We say **רַבְתָּ אֶת רִיבָם** – You, Hashem, fought their fight! Because our forefathers had fulfilled what we say **עֲשֵׂה רְצוֹנוֹ כִּרְצוֹנֶךָ** – Make the Will of Hashem your will (Avos 2:4). What Hashem wanted, that's what they wanted! They weren't merely fighting for what Hashem wanted. What Hashem wanted became their ratzon, their own will.

That's a tremendous achievement – to feel that we are keeping the Torah because the Will of Hashem is our will. Not only that we're doing Hashem's Will, but it's our will! **כי הם חיינו**— The Torah is our lifeblood. It's more than our lives. And we'll give our lives for the Torah because it's our fight, it's our will. That's one of the lessons of Chanukah – get busy making His Will your will.

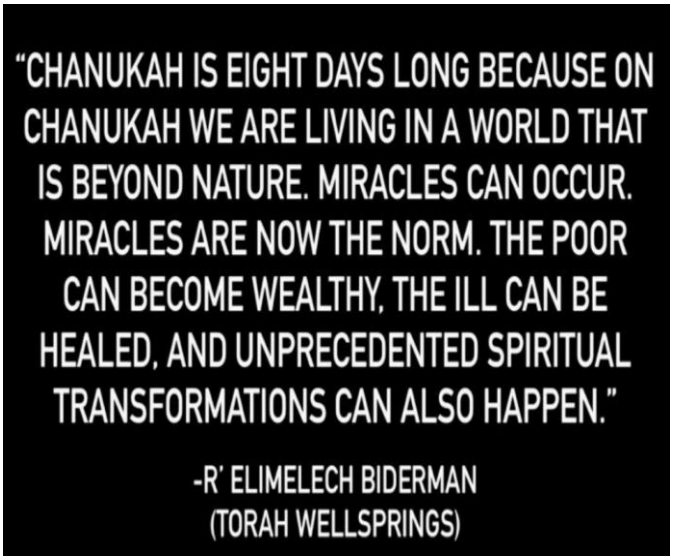


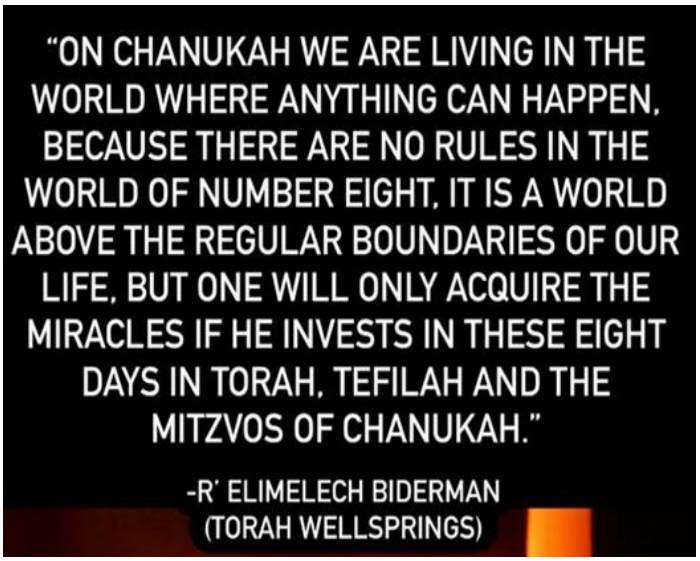
Should someone buy gifts for his children on Chanukah?

There's no harm, but you have to be careful that it shouldn't enter into the realm of the season's holidays spirit. It shouldn't be done because of the general atmosphere of the street, because they're doing something like that.

You have to beware of that attitude. So, to give cash is a much better idea. Chanukah gelt is a well-known minhag, so give cash if you can. I don't say it's wrong to give gifts; nothing wrong with giving gifts. But make sure, in your own mind at least, that you're divorced from any thoughts of the season.

Chanukah is not the season to give gifts, no, no. It's not the gift season. You can give gifts anytime. You can give gifts on Shavuos too, and Purim and Pesach. And if you want to give gifts on Chanukah as well, I'm not going to tell you no. But if you're going to make a big fuss about it, and make it into an ideal, that Chanukah is the time to give gifts, then you might as well sing carols and put up a Chanukah tree, because that's what it really is.





Menorahs From Around The World



Wisconsin



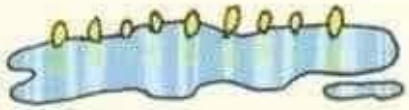
Mexico



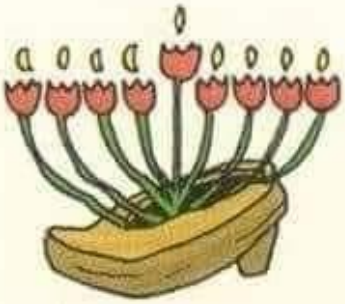
Pisa



Scotland



Iceland



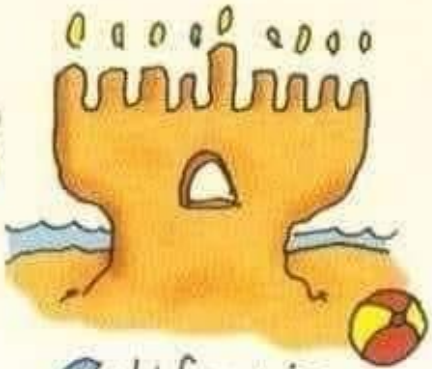
Holland



Alaska



India



California

Parshah Thoughts – Ideas and Reflections - Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn



The game of Dreidel is a traditional game which has been played for hundreds of years. This is the only game we find in Jewish customs.

As with all games, there is a serious basis to this as well. **Rav Moshe Weinberger** explains, based on the teachings of **Rav Yitzchok Ginsberg**, that there is a parallel between what a Dreidel lands on, and our lives.

Sometimes we land a Gimmel, we are blessed with abundance of everything. Our challenge then is to recognize the Source of all the goodness— Hashem, and not think that we accomplished it on our own.

Sometimes we have a Hei, and we have half; we are not wealthy nor poor. We have just average lives. This challenge is to define our role and place in this world and to be satisfied with who we are. We also must appreciate those who complement our half and contribute to our wholesomeness.

Sometimes we land a Nun, nothing. We have no success in anything we try. The challenge at this time is to be patient and to deal with our disappointments. At this time our role should be "**קַוֵּה אֶל־ה׳ חֲזַק וְיַאֲמֵץ לִבֶּךָ וְקַוֵּה אֶל־ה׳**", ***hope to Hashem, and then hope again***.

Unfortunately, sometimes we land a Shin, and we suffer losses. Our responsibility then is to be humble, subservient to Hashem, and to honestly recognize our inabilities.

L'Maaseh



Rav Dovid Hoffman related a story. During World War II in England, many children were evacuated from the larger cities and sent to the countryside to escape the constant bombardments by the Germans.

A group of Jewish children were housed in a Shul complex that had only recently been built. Next door to the main building where the Shul was, there was a smaller, older, two-story building.

On Chanukah, the boys of the Cheder had a Chanukah Mesibah in the Shul. They were just about to light the Menorah, when suddenly, the air raid siren went off. Automatically, they formed a line and went across the courtyard into the Bais Medrash building, where another flight of steps led down to the bomb shelter.

This time, however, the explosions sounded very close. They could hear bombs falling all around them. After taking attendance and checking that everyone was accounted for, the Rebbi said, "And now we will light the Menorah and continue our party."

It was then that they realized that in all the commotion, the Menorah had been left behind in the main Shul. They were very upset

about this, but what could they do? The Rebbi said that Hashem would accept their good intentions and consider it as if they had fulfilled the Mitzvah anyway.

One boy could not accept this. He really wanted to light the Menorah! He decided to sneak out of the shelter, go across the courtyard, and get the Menorah and candles. He couldn't ask for permission, because the Rebbi would surely forbid him to risk his life. But he reminded himself of the words of Chazal, that one who is involved in doing a Mitzvah will not be harmed, and he stepped outside when no one was looking.

The whole sky was lit up by searchlights. It was terrifying. Running as fast as he could, he made it to the Shul and grabbed the Menorah and candles. But as soon as he opened the door, a bomb hit the building next door! His earlier burst of courage had disappeared.

Trembling, he forced himself to run across the courtyard as fast as he could, but he then saw a firebomb land on the roof of the Shul! He stood frozen in place. Should he wait for a civil guard to notice the fire, or should he try to do something himself? Maybe they were too busy putting out fires somewhere else. What about his Rebbi? Was he looking for him at that very moment?

In the meantime, the Shul could burn down! The courageous young boy knew what to do. He strengthened himself, and he quickly ran and followed the fire protocol, as they had all been taught during their fire drills.

With no time to lose. He placed the Menorah and the candles on the ground and grabbed a ladder that had been prepared for just such an emergency, and within seconds, he was on the roof of the Shul.

On every roof was a large bucket of water with a foot pump and a hose. He put the hose in the bucket and started to pump with all his might, spraying water on the fire. He kept on spraying until all the flames had died out. Baruch Hashem, the danger was avoided.

Not wanting to risk getting into further trouble and noticing a guard battling a fire on a nearby roof, he quickly climbed down the ladder, picked up the Menorah and the candles, and ran back to safety. Bursting into the bomb shelter, he triumphantly displayed the Menorah!

That night, the young boy lit the candles in a manner that was reminiscent of the Kohein Gadol in the Bais HaMikdosh. It was truly a Chanukah night to remember!

Parsha Points to Ponder by Oizer Alport

On Chanuka we add a paragraph to our daily prayers in which we thank Hashem for the miracles He performed in the days of Mattisyahu ben Yochanan Kohen Gadol. - To whom does the appellation "Kohen Gadol" refer: Mattisyahu or Yochanan?

Several Rishonim, including the **Rambam, Meiri, and Tashbatz**, maintain that the term "Kohen Gadol" refers to Yochanan, while Rabbeinu Yerucham, the **Sefer HaIkkarim, and the Maharsha** write that it refers to Mattisyahu. Interestingly, the standard text of the Gemora states explicitly that Mattisyahu was a Kohen Gadol; however, the **Dikdukei Sofrim** notes that some editions of the Gemora have a different wording, which says that Yochanan was the Kohen Gadol.

Rav Boruch Epstein argues that a historical study of the time period makes it clear that Mattisyahu never served as Kohen Gadol. However, because Mattisyahu acted bravely for the honor of Hashem in successfully leading the battle against the Greeks, he earned the title "Kohen Gadol" as a way of saying that he was a great and respected Kohen, although only his father Yochanan was a Kohen Gadol in the traditional usage of the term.

Yakov's Small Jugs

In Bereishis (32:25) we learn **ויותר יעקב לבדו** , ***Yakov was left alone***, which Rashi, citing the Gemara, explains to imply that Yakov had returned to fetch some small earthenware jugs that he had forgotten.

Hashem said to Yakov, "*You endangered yourself to return for some small jugs so that you could use them, like all your possessions, for My sake. I will personally repay your descendants in the time of the Chashmonaim when a miracle will be performed with a small jug.*" (**Tzeidah LaDerech**)

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - Miracles in Our Day

The Midrash (*Parshas Tetzaveh*) states that the verse "And you shall take pure olive oil" (Vayikra 27:20) references the Jewish people. In this context, the oil is symbolic of the Jewish nation and the "fire" is Hashem. What, though, connects the olive oil and the fire? The wick, or pesilah in Hebrew. Not coincidentally, the letters comprising the word pesilah (pei, tav, yud, lamed, hei) make up the word tefillah (prayer). Through prayer, a person connects to Hashem during these holy days.

The Chidushei HaRim cites the **Maharal** who notes that the Gemara (Shabbos 23b) refers to the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles as that which is incumbent on a man and his household. The Gemara continues and states that "one who lights in a manner of me'hadrin min ha'mehadrin (the optimum way)—according to Beis Shammai—lights eight candles the first night, seven candles the second night and so on.

A close look at the way the Gemara is phrased is perplexing, questions the Chidushei HaRim. The mitzvah is incumbent on a person and his entire family, thus indicating that it contains a collective element to its mitzvah. Given this, if a person wishes to perform the

mitzvah in the best fashion, they should carry it out in a manner of Mehadrin. Mehadrin is a word that is plural in tense, and rightfully so, because the mitzvah done in lighting encompasses the entire family. But then the Gemara switches and speaks about an individual lighting, as the Gemara says that an individual is to be "madlik," a word which is singular and not plural in tense. But isn't the mitzvah of Chanukah incumbent on the entire household—a collective, plural group of people?

Moreover, the Gemara never uses the term "mehadrin" to refer to extra care and diligence with respect to a mitzvah, but rather "machmir." Why then is the term "mehadrin" used when referring to the mitzvah of Chanukah?

The Maharal cites the verse, "With all forms of wisdom did she build her house; she carved out its seven pillars" (Mishlei 9:1). Hashem created the world in a set of seven days: six weekdays and Shabbos. The number "seven" resembles the fact that Hashem created the world with laws of nature in which to operate.

In the natural ways of the world, there are poor and rich people, healthy and sick people. Moreover, within this natural scope of the world, you will never hear of a poor man suddenly becoming wealthy nor will you hear of a deathly ill patient suddenly becoming healthy. This is because Hashem made the world work within the natural framework, which contains expected laws and rules.

But what happens when we do hear of a poor person becoming suddenly wealthy or a sick man who abruptly experiences a medical transformation? This is because the person reached the point of "eight," in which there is no nature. When this happens, everything can immediately switch, and someone poor can become wealthy and someone sick can become healthy.

How did such a person reach this calibre of the 'number eight'? Either in the merit of guarding his eyes, keeping quiet during an argument, a special davening, tzedakah, or something else that is

singular in merit. It is because of something done meritoriously that such incredible results can occur. We'd think that the person became wealthy because he won the lottery or inherited a family estate or because an expert doctor provided special medical treatment, but that's not why. The reason is because he lifted himself to the point above the natural world—to the degree of "eight," one above the natural 'seven'—and now Hashem is relating to him on that plane. The proper perspective therefore is that because he reached that caliber of "eight," where there are no rules and things spin (a lesson reinforced by the dreidel), various effects come into play.

In light of this, why did the candle burn for eight days? Why not seven or eighteen? The reason, explains the Maharal, is because Hashem wanted to demonstrate to the whole world that these days are 'number eight'. How is it possible that there can be thirteen boys on one side, and a hundred and eighty thousand on the other side along with millions of soldiers and yet the few overcome the many? It's because the thirteen boys prayed and cried out: "And we, in the Name of Hashem, call out." When doing so, they transcended the natural means and realms of warfare and connected which that which is above nature.

This is why the Gemara employs the word "Mehadrin" in the plural followed by the word "madlik" in the singular. "Madlik" does not refer to the person; it refers to Hashem! Before the first night of Chanukah, Hashem takes a candle and ignites 'number eight' upon the world.

The world for the duration of these eight days of Chanukah doesn't operate according to the expected ways of nature. Hashem turns to 'number eight' and the whole world runs accordingly.

But there is more. Someone who acts in a ways that is Mehadrin—cognate to the Talmudic expression 'hadri bi,' to take back—infuses bracha (blessing) into his own life. During Chanukah, you want to "take back" the number eight to yourself. You want to infuse into

your life an attitude and lifestyle that lifts yourself above the natural parameters of the world, and in doing so, Hashem will respond to you in kind. The miraculous 'number eight' now spreads to all areas of your life!

When you close a door, there's a latch that you close. At times in life, the "door" is closed on a person. He's been waiting for a shidduch for so many years, or for children, parnassah or health. But all this is to a Jew is a closed latch. But before the first candle of Chanukah is lit, Hashem opens that lock! Open the door and enter, Hashem says!

The Lev Simcha once came into Shul on Chanukah and exclaimed, "There are treasures floating around down here; go and grab them!" This applies to all areas of our life.

R' Leibel'e Eiger also writes that when we pray to be healed in Shemonah Esrei (according to some versions) we say, "V'ha'alei arucha u'refuah." Both arucha and refuah refer to aspects of healing, but what is the exact difference? Arucha is comprised of the letters "Ohr chaf-hei," light of the 25th (of Kislev), referring to Chanukah. Refuah is composed of the letters "Ohr peh," light of the mouth. What does this mean? We pray with our mouths to be healed, and the auspicious time for the healing to take place is on the 25th of Kislev— during Chanukah.

R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (Kedushas Levi; in Kedusha Sheniyah) offers a parable. Chanukah is akin to a king who opened his treasures one day of the year, and on that day, whoever wants can come and take from those treasures. Just imagine… he can take whatever he wants! Anyone and anything! Woe to the fool, says the Kedushas Levi, who on this day when the treasures are open, doesn't turn to them and just sleeps all day.

We must utilize this time. Now, you will ask, what should I do? Think… if there would be a mountain of diamonds outside, would you be asking, "What should I do?" You'd simply start working and

grabbing. But what if you don't feel 'number eight'? What if you don't feel the special quality that Chanukah is? I told one such person the following.

Someone once went into an elevator on his way to the hundredth floor. When he finally arrived, they told him that he could exit. But he didn't want to. "I don't feel like I'm at the hundredth floor!" he said. We'd all say that such a person is not thinking correctly. Whether he feels it or not, he's there on the hundredth floor! Similarly, if it's Chanukah and Hashem is running the world in a manner which is above the confines of nature, whether you feel it or not, use the time! Anyone can do this.

The Sfas Emes writes, "It's known that this Yom Tov of Chanukah consists of us placing the Menorah below ten tefachim (handbreadths) and on the left side of the doorway. The significance of this is that even if one's spiritual state is "below ten tefachim—i.e. very lowly and poor—and even if one feels like he's on the "left side" and on the outside, he is still part of this Yom Tov of Chanukah!" The Sfas Emes adds, "The main point of this Yom Tov is for the ordinary people and weak people."

We must all make use of our time to the maximum, especially when it comes to the actual mitzvos of Chanukah, especially the Chanukah candles, about which the Gemara (Shabbos 23) guarantees, "One who is accustomed to lighting the Chanukah candles will have sons who are Torah scholars."

This is a promise from the Gemara. But if most of the world lights Chanukah candles, where are all the Torah scholars? **The Meiri** adds a line there: "One who is accustomed to lighting candles—in a manner of endearing the mitzvah and enlightened expressiveness and enthusiasm." A person shouldn't just light the menorah, but should do so with sweetness, love, and through making a whole event out of it. When this is done, you're guaranteed to have children who are Torah scholars.

When **R' Chaim Ozer Grodzinski** was in Krakow, a city home to many Torah sages, his suit ripped and he decided to go to the tailor. It was Chanukah and the tailor said, "I need to light the Chanukah candles now…" R' Chaim Ozer replied, "Of course, I'll wait." R' Chaim Ozer went on to wait and watch him light the candles. First, the tailor took off his weekday clothing and put on Shabbos clothing, then he gathered his children, and they began singing and dancing. When R' Chaim Ozer saw this, he said, "This is when I understood why so many gedolim came out of Krakow!" Why? Because the Gemara guarantees that someone who is accustomed to lighting the Chanukah candles will have sons who are Torah scholars. This is true so long as it is done with exuberance and a lively scene is made from it.

When we light the menorah, we recite the blessing, "Who performed miracles to our ancestors." But, asks the **Chiddushei HaRim**, what does this blessing of "Hashem performing miracles" have to do with the candles? We should recite this blessing in the morning. Moreover, the Gemara says that one who didn't light but merely sees a candle should recite this same blessing of "Who makes miracles." Why then do we make this bracha specifically when we light the candles?

The Chiddushei HaRim explains that the light of the miracles is aroused through the candles. When you light the candles, those same miracles that happened to our ancestors are awakened onto you. Grab the opportunity! **The Yeitiv Lev** adds that "the root of the lighting of the Chanukah candles is to arouse miracles and wonders also nowadays… The main use and purpose of the candles is so that we should be saved and helped today." What a yeshua (salvation) we can achieve!

Therefore, the Rishonim (Sefer Ha'Zechirah, authored by a student of the **Ramban**) write, "It is a special segulah to be protected for the entire year to say the verse of Vihi No'am (Tehillim 90:17) and Chapter 91 of Tehillim—Yoshev b'seser—seven times [after lighting

the Chanukah candles]." How much we need this these days…It's also an auspicious segulah to recite chapter 67 of Tehillim (*Lam'natzeiach B'neginos*).

There's also a well-known segulah of saying "Eloka D'Meir Aneini—The G-d of [Reb] Meir, answer me." **R' Meir Baal Hanes** composed this segulah himself. Someone once needed a salvation and R' Meir said to recite "Eloka D'Meir Aneini" and they merited miracles. The Maharsha (Avodah Zarah 19) asks how R' Meir was able to tell the person to say this. Chazal tell us that Hashem does not associate His name with those who are alive; Hashem only does so once a person has passed away. But R' Meir was alive, so how could he instruct the person to say Eloka D'Meir Aneini?

The Maharsha explains that R' Meir wasn't referring to himself. He rather meant, "The G-d who enlightened for us [from the word 'Meir,' to enlighten'] from the dominion of the Greeks during the miracles of Chanukah." What this therefore means is that by just mentioning the Chanukah candles alone, a person will be assisted and helped by Hashem! When you're standing by the Chanukah candles, take the time to think about what kind of salvations we can achieve.

The same is true of Hallel. Hallel is the main mitzvah during the days of Chanukah, as Chazel state that our Sages "enacted days to sing words of song and praise."

The Tchebiner Rav would announce before Hallel on Chanukah that Hallel should not be recited on Chanukah just like on any Rosh Chodesh. Reciting Hallel on Rosh Chodesh is only a custom, whereas Hallel on Chanukah is either a Rabbinic or Torah commandment.

The Divrei Chaim was once informed of a girl who had a dibbuk (spirit) in her. He tried at first to get rid of it but didn't succeed. As Chanukah approached, the Divrei Chaim said that they should have the girl stand right outside the door when Hallel was being recited. As soon as the Divrei Chaim said the blessing of Hallel, the dibbuk left! How does this apply to us? Everyone has their things

which are "attached" to them and which they can get rid of during Hallel.

The Sfas Emes told everyone that when reciting all the different instances of the words "Ana Hashem" in Hallel, they can be helped by Hashem. This applies to the instances of "Ana Hashem hoshiah na," and "Ana Hashem malta nafshi" and the others.

The ***Sefer Meir Einei Chachamim*** on Chanukah, written a few hundred years ago, brings a fascinating thought. The Yerushalmi states that a certain Tanna (Talmudic sage) said, "I appreciate that my head bows during Modim in Shemonah Esrei." The Meir Einei Chachamin explains that "appreciating the head" refers to Hashem, Who is the "Head of the world." Hashem, so to speak, bends Himself to us when we thank him during Hallel on Chanukah. We are Hashem's delight! We are meant to feel gratitude to Hashem for bending down to us when we say Hallel.

In Parshas Vayeishev, we learn of the test of Yosef HaTzaddik. When he overcame the test, the Torah places a 'shalsheles' (chain) trop overhead the word "And he refused." Why is there specifically a shalsheles? Moreover, asks the Rokeach, why did the Torah tell us about this test of Yosef altogether?

The Torah is teaching us a very important lesson, explains the Rokeach. Yosef eventually became very great because when a person shuts his eyes when tempted, he merits to become great. This is why the Torah wrote this. He refused and he merited to become very great. It didn't happen right away, but it did happen in due time. But why is there a shalsheles over the word, "And he refused?

The Divrei Shmuel explains that in the business world, one who works from the early morning until night will not become wealthy. He'll make ten to fifteen thousand dollars, but he won't become rich. How does someone become rich? From a good business deal in the middle of the day. If it's very successful, then he can become a millionaire.

The same is with a person. Hashem says, "There's learning and davening from morning until evening. That provides a person with a parnassah, but not wealth. What is wealth? Someone who "refuses" during the day. Such a person's achievement is a crowning success that glorifies him, akin to a shalsheles—a crowning chain—which sits on top of everything.

We say in Al HaNissim that the Sages "enacted the holiday of Chanukah the next year [after the miracle] to be with praise and thanks." Why was it established the next year and not the same year of the miracle? The answer is that the Sages saw that it was a different year when they utilized and harnessed the power of Chanukah. Only the following year did they fully appreciate the power of Chanukah, and henceforth established a holiday. When we utilize Chanukah properly, we become able to access and grow beyond the rules and roles of the natural world—the 'number eight'—throughout the entire year.

With Hashem's help, may we utilize this time and achieve the wondrous heightened levels of spirituality and closeness with Hashem we are capable of. And through this, just as our ancestors experienced wondrous miracles and salvations, may Hashem bless us too to experience the same in our day.



Volf was a Jewish teacher in Vienna who arrived home on the first night of **חנוכה** to light his **מנורה** . As he was about to light the candles, Eva, his little 3-year-old daughter, started to throw a tantrum, crying that she had wanted pink candles and her father had brought home blue ones!

Volf tried reasoning with little Eva but she wasn't taking no for an answer, and so he put on his coat and braved the frigid Austrian

winter to make his daughter happy. He met the shul **שמש** who vehemently insisted that he wasn't going to the shul to get pink candles, but Volf pressed a few marks into his hand and he reluctantly agreed to reopen the shul. - A delighted Eva had her pink candles that **חנוכה**.



A year later, the Nazis overran Austria and Volf and his family had to escape. They came across the farmhouse of Volf's former colleague, and Volf begged him to allow them to lodge in their barn. The man was petrified of being caught and refused to hide them, but after Volf pleaded with him to have mercy on them he finally agreed to keep little Eva who had the Aryan features of blonde hair and blue eyes. The girl refused to part with her father, but Volf sadly had to leave his daughter with his gentile colleague.

Volf survived the war and went looking for his daughter. He finally located the farmhouse and knocked on the door. Eva, by now a teenage girl with long blonde braids, opened the door and saw a strange man standing there. She called her 'father', and when the farmer realised that his old acquaintance had come to reclaim his child, he took out his shotgun and threatened to kill him if he didn't leave the premises at once!

Eva looked on in bewilderment, not understanding what all the commotion was about. Volf closed his eyes and thought, **רבונו של עולם** , don't let me lose my daughter after all I've been through. Find me the right words to say.

Suddenly he had a flashback from a wintry **חנוכה** night many years ago, and he stuttered, "Eva, the pink candles! Do you remember the pink candles!"

Suddenly, a wave of memories came crashing down upon Eva, and she ran to embrace her father.

The farmer reluctantly had to agree to let Eva go, who went back to her childhood home.

Sometimes, it's the **פכים קטנים** - the small insignificant things that we are **מוסר נפש** for, either for **הקב"ה**, or to make someone feel better, which bring about remarkable benefits for us in the distant future.



There is a well-known question of the holy **פני יהושע** - "Why was the miracle of the oil necessary?!"

We know that the Halacha says that if most of **כלל ישראל** are in a state of impurity then the service in the **בית המקדש** becomes permissible even whilst in an impure state. Therefore, even if they only had impure oil, it would be permitted for use, because of the concept of " **טומאה הותרה בציבור** ". If so, what was the necessity of the **נס** !?

The **פני יהושע** answers, in short words, that it is true Hashem did not need to perform this **נס** for **כלל ישראל**, however, Hashem gave us this extra miracle just in order to show His tremendous love for us.

Harav Yakov Neiman זצ"ל the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivas Ohr Yisroel expounds on the words of the **פני יהושע**.

He explains that Hashem wanted to teach us through performing this seemingly unnecessary miracle, how we should act in our service

to Hashem. That even if we can find plenty of ways out of Halachic situations, we should not search for loopholes in Halacha, because, if a person searches for the Halachic loopholes, he will end up finding a loophole in anything and everything in his life.

Everything in the world is composed of four elements: (1) fire, (2) water, (3) wind, and (4) earth.

Dovid HaMelech said (*Tehillim* 40:3), וַיַּעֲלֵנִי ... מִטִּיט הַיָּוֵן , "***Hashem saved me from the mud of Yavan***..."

The Sfas Emes explains that mud is made from earth and water, but there's no fire there. This signifies the approach of Yavan. They strived to extinguish the fire of a Yid.



Shulchan Aruch (673:1) states, "If a Chanukah candle gets mixed and lost among other candles, even at a ratio of 1/1000, it doesn't become batel." This is because Chanukah represents the essence of a Yid and his specialty. Even when combined with another thousand, he doesn't lose his unique, individual status and value.

Rebbe Shlomo Karliner zt'l would say, "The greatest yetzer hara is that we forget that we are a ben Melech, children of Hashem, the King."

Many people use cotton wicks on Chanukah, and in Yiddish, cotton is vatte. Vatte also means distant (וויט). - We use vatte wicks to hint that even those distant from Hashem can come close to Him on Chanukah.

The Leket Yoshar (p.43) writes that his rebbe, the Terumas HaDeshen, would say chapter קי"ט in Tehillim every day. Indeed, it is an excellent time to say it while looking at the Chanukah lecht, which is mesugal for success in Torah.

The laws of Chanukah begin in Shulchan Aruch with the simanim (תרע-תרעא) . תרעא or תרע in Aramaic means gate.

The Beis Yisrael zy'a said this is because on Chanukah, the gates of heaven are opened, and everyone can enter.

Once, the **Chofetz Chaim zt'l** was in the home of **Reb Nachumke Kaplan zt'l** on Chanukah. The time to light Chanukah *lecht* arrived, but Reb Nachumke waited to light until his Rebbetzin got home.

The Chofetz Chaim asked his rebbe why he waited since halachah clearly states one should light at the proper time, even if some people aren't home.

Reb Nochumke replied, "My wife will be upset if I light the candles without her. - Chazal say, **שלום בית עדיף** shalom bayis is more important than Chanukah lecht. So, it is better that I wait until my wife comes home and then light.

The Zohar states, "The flame of one candle can light thousands of candles without diminishing itself." - When you give love freely, you lose nothing but gain everything.

למודי משה

Changing Nature

We light candles each of the eight days of Chanukah, in commemoration of the one-day's supply of oil that the Chashmonaim found after they miraculously regained control of the *Beis HaMikdosh*. The fact that this small supply of oil lit for eight days until new oil (which had not been defiled by the Greeks) could reach the *Beis HaMikdosh* was clearly a miracle.

One could ask, though, there were other miracles in the *Beis HaMikdosh*, some of which occurred every day (see *Avos* 5:4). Why is this miracle commemorated and not the others?

Additionally, in the *Shulchan Aruch* (682:1), the *Rema* rules that if one forgets to say *Al Hanissim* in *Birchas Hamazon*, he can say it as part of the requests at the end of *Birchas Hamazon*, after adding the words: "May the Merciful One perform miracles for us as he did in the times of Mattisyahu …"

This means that we're asking for a miracle! How can we do that? *Chazal* teach (*Berachos* 54a) that one must not ask Hashem to change nature for him!



Rav Yerucham Olshin answers that Chanukah is an exceptional miracle. *Yetzias* Mitzrayim, *krias* Yam Suf, those of the *Beis HaMikdosh*, etc., are miracles that Hashem had decreed from the beginning of creation (see *Bereishis Rabbah* 8:5). The Chanukah miracles were not decreed in advance. They came about only in response to the *mesirus nefesh* of the Jews of that era (*Bach*, 670:1).



Rav Shlomah Kluger infers this from the text of *Al Hanissim*, which states that Hashem brought us "salvation as of this day." Meaning, only at that time — as the Chashmonaim were risking their lives to bring back the *avodah* — did Hashem make miracles for them. On Chanukah we commemorate the fact that our *mesirus nefesh* can cause Hashem to change the forces of nature to help us.

This is why the miracle of the oil is commemorated and not other miracles that occurred in the *Beis HaMikdosh*. This was a miracle that we had a hand in bringing about. The Chanukah miracle teaches us that we really can ask Hashem to do miracles for us, just as He did in the times of the Chashmonaim — only we must first be willing to display *mesirus nefesh*. If we show that we can change our nature for Him, He can change all of nature for us.

Rav Yaakov Emden said over 200 years ago, the miracles of Klal Yisroel's being able to exist in *galus* are even greater than the miracles of *yetzias* Mitzrayim. If so, we must all do our part to gain Hashem's supernatural running of the world for the good of Klal Yisroel. The way to do this is by trying to rise above our nature.

When people came to **Rav Shach** with problems that seemed to have no solution within the boundaries of nature, he would advise them to try to take on even more than what they were capable of naturally. **Rav Chaim Kanievsky, *zt'l***, would often encourage *avreichim* facing difficulties to try and author *seforim*. If a Jew in the working world has a problem that seems without a solution, he would often advise him to undertake the financial support of a poor person or family. Trying to rise above their nature can arouse a commensurate

response from on high, and Hashem will relate to them in a supernatural way.

Rav Shabsai Yudeleivitch once spoke with a Jew who was living in Hungary when Soviet troops took control of part of the country. He was well aware of the Soviets' attitude toward religion and knew that he would be unable to keep *mitzvos*. He looked for ways to flee from Hungary.

He eventually joined up with a group of people who were planning an escape, to be done at night. The scheduled departure fell on the fourth night of Chanukah. He felt that he could not simply forego lighting Chanukah candles, as this was the very reason why he wanted to leave. He approached the man in charge of this group and asked if he could light Chanukah candles. "Are you out of your mind?" the leader snapped. "That's the last thing we need — candlelight to give us away!"

After many hours they reached an encampment in the woods, and as the others lay down, exhausted, this Jew walked far to the side and lit candles, trying to conceal them with his body. Others in the group noticed this and were upset, but felt that they could not stop him, since he was willing to risk his life for this.

Suddenly, a tough-looking Soviet officer strode over to him. "You're lighting Chanukah candles?"

Paralyzed with fear, the Jew stood helpless, staring at the officer. The others in the group fell silent as they listened, terrified.

"You should know — it wasn't the candles that gave your group away. I spotted you over an hour ago, but I wasn't in a hurry, since you didn't stand a chance of reaching the border. But when I saw the Chanukah candles…"at this point the officer paused.

"When I saw the Chanukah candles, I realized that it's been 25 years since I left my parents' home to join the communist revolution. My father used to light Chanukah candles. When I saw these candles, I

felt drawn to them." The officer paused again and took out a bottle of Vodka from his overcoat. "Come, let's make a *lechaim*, and then you can go on your way. I'll see to it that no one stops your group at the border."

If before, the others in the group were upset that this Jew had endangered them by lighting Chanukah candles, they now recognized that it was his *mesirus nefesh* that was gaining them their freedom.

Praise and Torah at the Chanukah Meal

Although we have noted that according to the *Shulchan Aruch* (and most *poskim*) there is no obligation to eat a meal on Chanukah, the *Rema* makes the following addition: "Some say that there is a slight mitzvah to augment the [Chanukah] meals, because the rededication of the *mizbe'ach* took place during those days."

Thus, although there is no formal obligation to eat a meal, due to the special nature of the time it is proper to give the joy of Chanukah an expression in terms of adding something extra to one's meals.

The *Rema* proceeds to note: "The custom is to sing songs and praises during those special meals, and then they are considered to be a *se'udos* mitzvah." The *Mishnah Berurah* (9, citing from the *Maharshal*) adds that anything a person does with the intention of publicizing the miracle of Chanukah (or giving praise to Hashem) renders the meal a *se'udas* mitzvah.

The *Maharshal* (85, cited in *Biur Halachah* 670) further notes that the *simcha* of the Chanukah meals should be "completely mixed with the joy of Torah." In other words, in addition to the songs and praises sung at these meals, Torah thoughts should be an integral part of the meal. The *Maharshal* also writes that these meals should not be at the expense of one's fixed Torah learning schedule.

We See the Same Phenomena in Our Times

For almost two thousand years we have existed as a lone sheep amongst seventy wolves. Universally hated and oppressed, the Jewish people have survived. And now, after almost 1900 years of wandering, we find ourselves back in our own land.

Since 1948, the Jewish nation has witnessed profound miracles in the repopulation and development of the land of Eretz Yisroel. But it is the survival of our people that is the greatest miracle.

In 1948, the population in the Middle East numbered roughly 650,000 Jews, surrounded by some 50 million Arabs. On May 15th, 1948, one day after the State of Israel was declared, five nations attacked, each with well-trained armies and air forces, each alone capable of annihilating the small band of Holocaust survivors. At the time there was no Jewish army, navy, or air force. Yet, against all odds, we won that war, and against all odds we continued to win war after war – until now, ironically, when the Jews are considered the superpower in the region.

To most people, Jew and gentile alike, it seems that this is just the way of the world. To the average witness to these events, it isn't a demonstration of the hand of Hashem. It is just the ebb and flow of history.

The lesson of Chanukah is to see behind the veil of nature, to tune our sight into the true cause of events, and to see that it is Hashem Who runs the world and fights our wars – then as now. (**R' Ben Tzion Shafier**)

"When someone gets angry on Friday, realize that it isn't him or her; it's the yetzer hara who is instigating the anger. Recognize this and it will be easier to forgive." ~ The Chida.

A Flash of Light to Tell You That You're Not Alone

One of the first *pasukim* in the Torah is the *pasuk*: **ויאמר אלקים יהי אור ויהי אור** - "And G-d said, 'let there be light' and there was light."

The way we explained the *pasuk* is according to the simple *pshat*, Chassidim however, read the *pasuk* in a way that everything is said in a way of crying out to Hakodosh Boruch Hu. The Yid cries out, Ribbono Shel Olam, it's so dark. I beg you that there should be some light in my life. And Hashem answers that *tefillah* and gives us light.

The Rambam (*Hilchos* Chanukah 4:12) makes an amazing statement: **מצות נר חנוכה מצוה חביבה היא עד מאד** – "***The mitzvah of Chanukah candles is exceedingly dear and precious***." We don't find such a statement by any other mitzvah. Not by Shabbos, Yom Tov, *shofar*, *succah*. Only by *ner* Chanukah.

Moreover, the Gemara in Shabbos (23b) makes a remarkable statement. One who is careful about the mitzvah of candles, will merit having children who are *talmiday chachomim*.

Which candles is Gemara referring to? Rashi explains, that it is referring to the candles of Shabbos and Chanukah. These candles bring the light of Torah into the world, as the *pasuk* tells us (*Mishlei* 6:23): **כי נר מצוה ותורה אור** – "***A mitzvah is a candle, and Torah is light***." In the merit of the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles, one will have children who are *talmiday chachomim* who bring the light of Torah into the world.

This raises a very perplexing question. What is so great about the Chanukah candles? On Chanukah, we merited two miracles. One was the miracle of the military victory, and the other was the miracle of the oil. The military victory was necessary to save Am Yisroel from destruction. The miracle of the oil was not necessary; as the *meforshim* (*Pnei Yehoshua*, Shabbos 21b) explain, we could have used *shemen tomei* [impure oil] if necessary, until more *tahor* [pure] oil was available. The *neis* of the *pach shemen* [jug of oil] seems unnecessary. And yet *Chazal* make such a big thing of this. And

Chanukah lights have such a powerful *segulah*. How are we to understand this?

Chanukah is the last Yom Tov in history. It was instituted during *Bayis Sheini* as the final *golus* was about to fall on Klal Yisroel. It represents Klal Yisroel's struggles and sufferings during this long *golus* in which we still find ourselves. Being the last of all the Yomim Tovim it is very interesting that we find that it is probably one of the most, if not the most widely celebrated of all the Yomim Tovim.

A young *yeshiva bochur* was driving with his family and as they passed by, they made notice of all the electric *menorahs* in people's windows. The boy, having learned the *halachos* diligently, blurted out, "Look at all these electric candles. They're not *yotzei* with electric *menorahs*!"

The boy's father calmly answered. "What are you talking about, *yotzei* or not *yotzei*? Don't pay attention to whether they're *yotzei* or not. Notice all the Jews who still have a spark of Yiddishkeit in them and want to express to the entire world, "Look at me! I'm still a Jew! I have a *menorah* and not a tree!" However far they are, yet they feel the urge to show all their neighbours and passers-by, I'm a Yid! For these lost *neshamos*, Chanukah is the last thing they're holding onto.



Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz (*Sichos Mussar, ma'amar* 16) answers our question. We learned in *Parshas Vayeishev*, that when Yosef was being taken to Mitzrayim by the Yishmo'elim, they were carrying various sweet-smelling spices.

Rashi points out that this was not the norm. In general, in those days the Yishmo'elim carried skins and other foul-smelling items. But, the Medrash

explains, Hashem wanted to help the *tzadik*, Yosef, and therefore Hashem orchestrated that these particular Yishmo'elim would be carrying sweet smelling spices.

Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz asks a very poignant question. This Medrash seems difficult to understand. Yosef is in trouble; Yosef is in the middle of the darkest moment of his life. He's being dragged down to Mitzrayim to be sold as a slave. He's never going to see his family again. Is the sweet smell of spices going to help Yosef in any practical way at that time? Who cares about the smell of some perfume? What is the Medrash trying to teach us?

Rav Moshe Weinberger (Rav of Congregation Aish Kodesh in Woodmere, New York) related the following story: Many years ago, my father shared with me how he was transported to Mauthausen (a Nazi concentration camp – slave labour camp in Austria). They were packed into a cattle car and half the people were already dead. But it was Friday night and they started *davening* Kabbolas Shabbos together.

There was a *tzadik* who led the *davening* and his father said he never heard such a *davening* in his life. This *tzadik's lecho dodi* gave him a tremendous *chizuk* as he was being taken to the concentration camp in Mauthausen.

Rav Weinberger was eleven years old at the time and didn't like that story. But it took some time until he got up the nerve to ask his father about it. "Daddy, what ever happened to that *tzadik* who sang *lecho dodi* that Friday night in the cattle car?" His father answered, "He didn't make it." "And how many of that group who sang *lecho dodi* made it? You got out alive, but how of them made it?" He answered, "A few. I know two or three."

So, he told his father, "I don't see what's so *gevaldik* about that story you told me." Rav Weinberger was bothered by the same question that Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz was. Why should Yosef care about the smell of some perfume? He's being taken away from his

family to Mitzrayim! His father also. Who cares about *lecho dodi*? They were being taken away to a death camp to die!

His father didn't explain this until two years later when it came time for him to put on *tefillin*. It was a month before his bar mitzvah, and he had a brand-new pair of *tefillin* that they bought from a *choshuve sofer* [expert scribe] in Williamsburg. He was all excited to put them on and go to *shul*.

His father said, "Before you put them on, I want you to come with me." Ok. He went with his father to his room. His father took out his *tefillin* and said, "First put on my *tefillin*."

"Why should I put on your *tefillin*? I'm a lefty, you're a righty." "It doesn't make any difference, you're not bar mitzvah yet. Put on my *tefillin*."

So, he put on his father's *tefillin*. And while he was sitting there with his father's *tefillin* on, his father said, "Now listen to me. That question you asked me two years ago, now listen to me."

The Mauthausen *Tefillin*

Then his father told him the following story. When he and all the young men in town were being taken away by the Hungarian army to the German forced labour camps, his grandfather took his father to the train station. He believed like everyone else in the *yeshiva* that they were being taken away for a short time. The war was winding down. They heard on the radio of the advances of the Allied forces. The Americans were coming from the West, and the Russians from the East. It wouldn't be long.

But his grandfather understood the truth. He bid goodbye to his son and told him that they would not meet again in this world. "Why are you saying such things? The war is finishing up and we'll see each other."

"That's not true. We're all going to be taken away. We're all going to be killed. But make sure to put on your *tefillin* every day. If you put

on your *tefillin* every day, then you'll see that Hashem will take care of you and then after 120 we'll be reunited and see each other again."

Rav Weinberger's father told him that when his father told him this he was crying. "Why are you talking this way?" But that was the last time he saw his father. And he put on his *tefillin* every day.

It's written in the history books that there were *tefillin* in Mauthausen. We don't know how he was able to hide them. Not only did he put on *tefillin* every day in Mauthausen, but there were thousands of Jews who risked their lives to put them on, because if you got caught you were shot on the spot.

They would make circles and each one would quickly put on the *tefillin* and say *shema yisroel*… and quickly hand them to the next fellow.

Years ago, there was someone who heard about the Mauthausen *tefillin* and wanted to buy them for the Holocaust Museum in Yerusholayim. His father was offered a large sum of money. But he refused. His father told them there's no money in the world for these *tefillin*. His father told this over to the young Moshe Weinberger while he was wearing the *tefillin*.

Then he told him the following: twice, while he was in Mauthausen, the Germans suddenly barged into the barracks early in the morning and woke everyone up. They were yelling and hitting everybody, and police dogs were barking. They ordered everyone out of the barracks. It was early in the morning, and they had barely slept a few hours on the planks. The Germans, *yemach shemom*, just barged in, beating everyone, screaming at everyone, "*araus, araus*. Out, out!"

His father got very scared. He grabbed his *tefillin* and wrapped them in the *shmatte* pyjamas he was wearing and ran outside. He thought they were taking them to be killed. But really all the Germans wanted was to burn down the bunk. It was infested and infected and the Germans were afraid they would catch it. So, they

were going to burn it down. They were taking the Jews to spray them with some sort of delousing and disinfectant spray.

His father ran outside. It was freezing cold and all they had on were the thin pyjamas. He didn't know what to do. He was trying to think of how he would hide his *tefillin*. The bunk next door was already on fire so he couldn't leave his *tefillin* in his bunk. So, he hid the *tefillin* under his *shmattes*.

Then they ordered everyone to undress and throw all their clothes in a pile. There was a big tractor that was dumping all the *shmattes* into a big pit where it would all be burned. He didn't know what to do. So, he wrapped his *tefillin* in the pyjamas. He thought that this was it, because his *tefillin* were saving him, and now he had to say goodbye. So, he wrapped them up and threw them in the pile. The Germans then dumped everything into the pit, poured some gasoline all over the *shmattes* and lit the fire to destroy their infected clothing.

He didn't know what they were going to do with everyone. He thought they were being taken to be killed. Instead, they took them to be disinfected, and they were given new pyjamas. The Germans were screaming at them ordering everyone to go back. He passed by the pit. Everything had been burnt and the only thing that remained were his *tefillin*. Hundreds of *shmattes* had been burned. He had wrapped his *tefillin* in the pyjamas. Everything was gone except for his *tefillin*, his *tefillin* were still there! He quickly scooped them up and hid them under his pyjamas. - This happened twice!

His father then told him, "I don't have an answer as to why I had to go through what I went through, and why your mother went through what she went through, and what happened to our whole family. I don't have the answer to those questions. And I don't need it. Maybe after 120, Hashem will explain it to us. But I can tell you this, I saw Hashem was with me. And when I saw the *tefillin* I could see that Hashem was telling me, don't give up, keep on pushing."

This is the lesson of Yosef's spices. Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz explained, that the "coincidence" of the spices taught Yosef that Hashem had not abandoned him, *chas veshalom*. Hashem was with him. Yosef understood that this was strange and out of the ordinary. When Yosef smelled the spices, he realized that Hashem was sending him a message. He realized that Hashem is with him and He loves him and He is with him in the midst of the darkness.

This miracle that Hashem performed for Yosef was not necessary. It was not crucial to the survival of Yosef. Why did Hashem do the miracle? To show Hashem's love for Yosef. This was like a "*neshikah*," a "kiss" from HaKodosh Boruch Hu to Yosef. This *neshikah* reflects Hashem's love for His people.

On Chanukah we merited two miracles. One was the miracle of the military victory, and the other was the miracle of the oil. The military victory was necessary to save Am Yisroel from destruction. The miracle of the oil was not necessary. The *neis* of the *pach shemen* reflected Hashem's special love for the Jewish people, the *chiba yeseirah* that Hashem has for Am Yisroel.

This then explains the connection between the story of Chanukah and the *parshiyos* of *Vayeishev* and *Mikeitz*. As Yosef was being taken down to Mitzrayim, Hashem showed His special love for Yosef with the "unnecessary miracle." Yosef realized that all of the difficulties that were befalling him were really part of Hashem's plan, and they were somehow coming from Hashem's love as well.

On Chanukah, Hashem showed His special love for Am Yisroel with the "unnecessary miracle" of the oil. That is the special quality and *segula* of *neiros* Chanukah. When one looks at the *neiros* Chanukah one should think about and focus on the special love Hashem has for His people and we should be more *b'simcha* with this knowledge of Hashem's love for His people. (**R' Eliezer Parkoff**)

Days Of Miracles

There is a well-known *segula* that when a person is in a pressing situation, he should give or pledge *tzedokah* and then say, **אלקא דמאיר ענני**.

There is a source for this *segula* in the Gemara where Rabbi Meir told somebody else to say it and it would save him from harm.

The *Maharsha* asks, how was Rabbi Meir able to associate his own name with Hashem's in his lifetime. Don't *Chazal* tell us Hashem does not attach His Name to a *tzadik* until after the *tzadik* passes away?

One of the answers the *Maharsha* gives is that Rabbi Meir was not referring to himself when he said those words, rather he was referring to the *nes* Chanukah as the word **מאיר** means to shine. He was saying, May Hashem who caused the lights of the *menorah* to shine for eight days answer me and bring me a salvation as well.

We see from here how powerful the days of Chanukah are. We can even *daven* during the rest of the year that Hashem should answer us in the *zechus* of the *neiros* Chanukah. And if that is the power of the *neiros* Chanukah the rest of the year, imagine their power on Chanukah itself.

The *Rema* rules that if a person misses out *Al HaNissim* in *Birchas Hamazon* on Chanukah, he can make an insert in the *HaRachamans* to make it up. And he begins with the words: **הרחמן הוא יעשה לנו ניסים כמו שעשה לאבותינו בימים ההם** – "***Hashem, please do miracles for us like You did for our ancestors in the past***."

The *Bechor Shor* asks, how can we make that request? Doesn't it say in the Gemara we are not supposed to ask Hashem to make open miracles?

The *Shoel U'Meshiv* answers that during the rest of the year when Hashem runs the world naturally, we are not supposed to ask Him to break nature, but during these days of Chanukah, the world down here, as well as the Upper Worlds are operated on a system above

nature, and since that is the norm during these days, we are allowed to ask Hashem for open miracles.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman relates a story that a man from England told him. The man said that fifty years ago he had a baby girl who, *lo alenu*, was born without intestines. The doctors told him that, in all probability, she would not survive more than a few days.

He went to **Rav Itzikel from Poshivarsk** to tell him what happened and asked him if he should give her a name right away, being that she might not make it until Shabbos. The Rebbe told him he should wait until Shabbos and she would still be alive. Every day this baby survived was another miracle. Then, on the first day of Chanukah the doctors told her parents they had just witnessed a miracle – she had the beginning of intestines growing inside of her. **יש מאין** – something from nothing.

A little more grew until two weeks later she was pronounced healthy. And *boruch* Hashem, today she is alive and well.

The next time the father went to the Rebbe, he told him about the miracle. The Rebbe said he waited until the Days of Miracles to ask Hashem for a miracle to save his daughter and on the first night of Chanukah his *tefillos* pierced the Heavens and indeed brought about a miracle.

Let us take advantage of these glorious days to *daven* with all our heart and soul for Hashem to bring about *yeshuos* for all of Klal Yisroel.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l said: From the Shabbos candles, one can know what will happen during the following week, and from the Chanukah candles, one can know what will happen during the following year.

Chanukah is a Special Time to Fight Against *Teva*

On Chanukah Hashem gives us extra special strength to fight against the *ko'ach* of *teva* - the *ko'ach* which the Yevonim lived with.

We have to learn from the Chanukah story, that even though sometimes a person feels that he has limited strength and there are certain things that he is unable to achieve, that's only if one lives according to *teva*. However, if one attaches himself to Hakodosh Boruch Hu and his Torah, he will realize that he can achieve much more than he ever thought he could.

For 13 old weak men to go out and fight against the mighty army of the Yevonim is something which is completely illogical, a person who thinks logically would never even dream of doing such a thing. However, sometimes one has to act like an animal and do something which doesn't seem to make any sense, and rely on Hashem, and if it's the right thing Hashem will help him out. The more one acts like an animal (does things which seem illogical) in order to serve Hashem, the more Hashem will help him.

We have to use the special *ohr* [light] of Chanukah, and fight against our *teva*. Often a person's *teva* overtakes him and he says things like "I can't do this, it's impossible, I don't have the strength for this". However, a person has to realise, that it's not true and even if according to *teva* something is impossible, if a person tries hard enough, Hashem will help him, and he will succeed.

[Often people say they can't carry out a certain task, as they simply don't have the time and strength for it. Even if it may be true that one doesn't have the time and strength, if one try's Hashem will grant him extra strength. Sometimes, however, even without Hashem granting one extra strength, one really has the strength and just doesn't realise.

A good way to test oneself, is to translate it into money. Often one might say to himself, "I am too tired, I can't carry on learning", or "I can't get up on time for *Shacharis*, I just about fell asleep". If

one finds himself in such a situation, he should think to himself, if I would get paid $500 for learning a bit more, if I would get paid $500 for coming on time to *Shacharis*, would I still have no strength? If the answer is yes, for $500 I would be able to learn a bit more, I would be able to get up on time, then it shows that one really does have the strength.

R' Yaakov Galinsky relates a remarkable story which brings out this very point: Once there was a *Yid* who was diamond merchant. After working for a large part of the day he would come home for a few minutes, and then go out to learn from 5 - 7:30. Day in, day out, after he would leave his house to go and learn, his wife would call him up and tell him that he needs to come home, "I can't cope with the kids, 5 - 7:30 is there naughtiest time of the day. I just can't cope, you need to come home straight away. Sorry but no learning tonight".

Every time this *yid* would go out to learn he would get disturbed, and he didn't know what to do, so he went to ask R' Yaakov for some advice. R' Yaakov told him, he should tell his wife that his boss has offered him longer hours and is happy to employ him until 7:30 (R' Yaakov added that it wouldn't be considered lying as learning is like working with diamonds). He should ask his wife, if it's ok to stay out till 7:30. If she says "yes", then he should go and learn until 7:30 without coming home, if however, she says "no way I need your help at that time", then he should stop learning and should help out at home.

The *yid* went home and told his wife that his boss had offered him more hours, and she was over the moon. She said, "Yom Tov is just around the corner, and we need new clothes and shoes for all the children etc. etc. any extra work that you can do would be amazing, you can even stay out till 9:00."

Listening to what R' Yaakov said, the *yid* was now able to learn every day until 7:30 undisturbed. After a few weeks, his wife asked him where the extra money was, and he said, "I'm sorry but I don't

actually have any, I didn't actually work more, I went to learn instead".

His wife was shocked and upset, however, he explained that R' Yaakov told him to do this. His wife then said, "if I would have known how dear it is to you to be able to learn I would never have stopped you".

We see from here, how even though sometimes certain tasks seems impossible, if one translates it into money somehow one magically manages to find the strength for it.]

It's Not the One Who Can that Does, It's the One Who Does that Can

Once a *yid* came to **R' Shach** and R' Shach assigned him to carry out a certain task. The *yid* was already very busy with something, and he said that he doesn't have the strength to undertake another task.

R' Shach said back to him, "***you should know, it's not the one who can that does, it's the one who does that can***".

The above *yesod* is something that R' Shach himself lived with. Do you think R' Shach believed that he could undertake what he did? To achieve what he achieved? To give as much to others as he did?

R' Shach did things way beyond what he was able to do and it didn't effect his learning. How did he manage? The answer is, a person needs to do, and then Hashem will give him the strength needed to be able to carry out the task. If a person does what Hashem wants from him, Hashem will give him extra strength.

R' Chaim Volozhiner writes in his *hakdomah* to *Sifra De'tzniyusoh* about the Gaon and how he was able to accomplish so much. One of the things he writes is: **כאשר אדם מוסר עצמו לתורה הקב"ה נותן לו כוחות למעלה מדרך הטבע** - "***if one devotes himself, and gives***

everything up for Torah, Hashem gives him special strength, above nature".

This is something we need to learn from the *nes* of Chanukah. The Yevonim wanted to limit the Torah to something which can be understood very easily. However, the truth is, that is not the way it is supposed to be. One has to do as much as he can, and then Hashem will grant him with *ruchniyus lemaloh min hateva*.

The days of Chanukah are *mesugal* [set aside] for *nissim*. On these special holy days Hashem acts with us *lemaloh min hateva*. If we prepare ourselves to be *oved* Hashem, if we *daven* better, learn more, and try and improve in our ways, even slightly more than we are accustomed to, then Hashem will grant us with special *siyata dishmayah*, *lemaloh min hateva*.

May we be *zocha* to: **ניסים ונפלאות כמו שעשה לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה** – "***miracles and wonders, like Hashem performed for our ancestors, in those days at this time***." (Based on a *shmooze* given by **R' Naftoli Kopshitz**)

MEOROS HATZADDIKIM
Lights Of Our Righteous

Chanukah Is a Segula For Having Children

Rav Yehoshua Osher Rabinowitz, the Porisover Rebbe

On Zos Chanuka, the Porisover Rebbe declared that Chanuka is a segula for having children. He explained that the reason is because peru urevu, the commandment to be fruitful and multiply and have a family, is the first mitzva in the Torah, whereas Chanuka is the final mitzva enacted by Chazal.

Sefer Yetzira teaches us that we must connect the beginning to the end and the end to the beginning. There are Keser Mitzvos in total.

Keser is 620 in gematria, which includes the 613 biblical commandments and the seven mitzvos deRabbonon. A keser ("crown") is a circle, where the end and beginning meet. Thus, the first mitzva and the last mitzva meet each other, where the beginning and end of the circle join. (VaYakhel Shlomo BeSofo)

מנהג ישראל תורה היא ..... The **משנה ברורה** quotes the **מגן אברהם** that says that the **מנהג** is that **עניים** would go collecting during **חנוכה**. The **פרי מגדים** explains the reason for this **מנהג** is that since the **יונים** had tried to uproot the three pillars of **כלל ישראל** - **תורה עבודה וגמילת חסדים**, so we look to strengthen ourselves in all these areas on **חנוכה**. Therefore we must add **תורה**, we add **תפלות**, and we must also add **צדקה**.

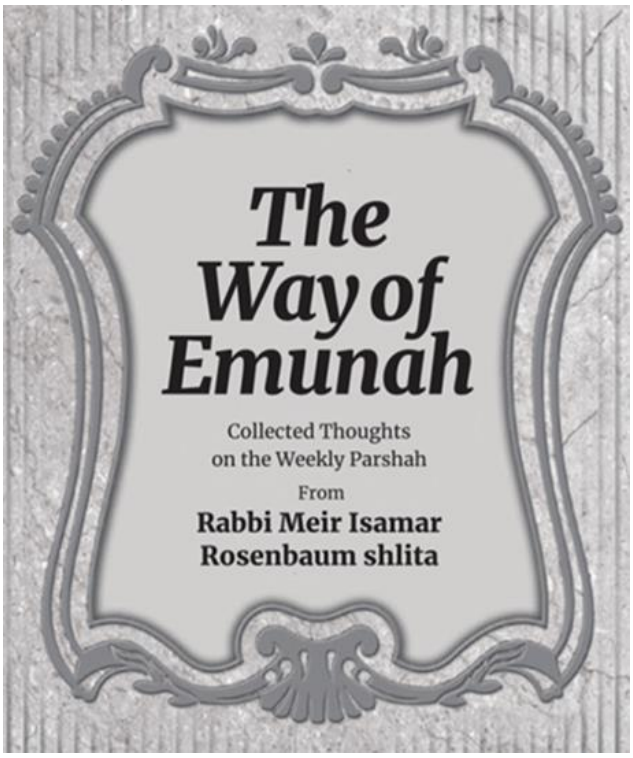
The **שפתי חיים** adds that this also the reason of giving "Chanuka gelt" to children. After we defeated the **יונים** we were able to send our children back to **חדר**. Being that the **יונים** had closed the **ישיבות** they were not used to going. So to give them extra encouragement they were given money incentives.

Other reasons for this **מנהג** of chanuka gelt is by giving them money they would show more interest in **חנוכה** and it would bring to more **פרסומי ניסא**. Also it would be bring them to **שמחה** which is a **מצוה** on everyone to be **בשמחה** the entire **חנוכה**.

Bais Aharon - Karlin

להעלות נר תמיד - מדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה מאליה (שבת כ"א): רש"י שמות פכ"ז פ"כ

One lights until the fire rises on its own. Every person has a torch and warmth in their heart. One must kindle himself with Mitzvos to the extent that it will make the flame rise from his heart to his mind, for the name of Hashem.



On Chanukah, the Gates of Kiruv Rechokim are Open

The Magen Avrohom (Orech Chaim 670) writes that there is a custom for the children of poor people to go collecting from door to door on Chanukah.

Sefer Sifsei Tzadik writes that when the Magen Avrohom refers to children, this can be understood as a reference to those who are "young" in the sense that they do not possess many mitzvos, due to having left the proper path. They are poor in the sense that they lack proper wisdom to do what is right.

On Chanukah, they are able to come to the door. With the mezuzah on one side of the door and the menorah on the other, the door is open to bring back those who have strayed.

This idea is seen from the explanation of the **Chidushei Harim zy"a** on the Gemara's words (Shabbos 21A) that the types of wicks and oil that may not be used for Shabbos may be used for Chanukah. He understands this to mean that even if there are people who cannot be brought back through the holiness of Shabbos due to the fact they have strayed so far, they can be brought back through the light of Chanukah. - Therefore, Chanukah is a truly auspicious time for kiruv rechokim.

"Don't complain about how much darkness there is – simply add a little more light." ~ Rabbi Avraham Chaim Tanzer Zt'l.

The Light of Chanukah Saves Us from Despair

Rav Shalom of Kaminka zy"a (Ohev Shalom, Chelek 2, Perek 10) writes that after Sukkos, we enter the cold, winter months. At this time, when we think about the long cold winter that is about to start, we are reminded that we are in a long, cold golus, and we will not have any holy days to provide us with strength, encouragement and warmth until Pesach.

This could cause us to fall to despair, which is why we need much Divine mercy during this time of year. Therefore, Hashem had mercy upon us and provided us with a small light during the long winter in the form of the holiday of Chanukah.

This light warms us and illuminates the winter months and provides us with the chizuk we need to make it until Pesach.

Making a Small Opening

We find that during Chanukah, the gates of teshuva are open, and everyone can draw close to Hashem through full repentance.

Sefer Pri Tzadik writes that everyone can rectify their ways on Chanukah and completely purify themselves.

At this time, one only needs to make a small opening, like the eye of needle, to allow Hashem into his life, and Hashem will help him to do full teshuva and transform his aveiros into merits.

Shabbos Chanukah - Akin to Rosh Hashanah

Sefer Kobetz Sichos Kodesh quotes the **Magid of Kozhnitz zy"a** as saying that when Shabbos Chanukah falls on Shabbos, we read from the three sifrei Torah and this is a bechina of Rosh Hashanah, when the three books are open.

Hamaayan -The Torah Spring ~ Edited by Shlomo Katz



Hamaayan is prepared by laymen and published weekly for the edification and enjoyment of the reader who is lacking the time or ability to study the weekly parashah on his own. Hamaayan's goal is to acquaint the reader with a broad spectrum of traditional Torah commentary — classical, recent and "obscure" — as well as with aspects of Jewish history and thought. The editors hope these brief 'snippets' will engender further study and discussion of Torah topics ("lehagdil Torah u'leha'adirah")

וְעַל הַנִּסִּים וְעַל הַפֻּרְקָן וְעַל הַגְּבוּרוֹת וְעַל הַתְּשׁוּעוֹת וְעַל הַמִּלְחָמוֹת שֶׁעָשִׂיתָ לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בִּזְמַן הַזֶּה *"For the miracles, and for the salvation, and for the mighty deeds, and for the victories, and for the battles"*

It is understandable that we thank Hashem for miracles, salvation, etc., but why do we thank Him for the battles?

R' Baruch Mordechai Ezrachi Zt'l (a rosh yeshiva in Israel) explains: Part of Hashem's kindness to us is that He not only takes care of us, He does so in a way that makes us feel accomplished. Hashem could have rained stones from the heavens on the Greeks just as He did to the Canaanites, but He wanted us to feel as if we had defeated the Greeks. This what we acknowledge when we thank him for "the battles." (Birkat Mordechai p.191)

"Just as we love ourselves despite the faults we know we have, so we should love our fellows despite the faults we see in them." ~ The Baal Shem Tov zt"l.

The last day of Chanukah is known as "Zos Chanukah." This name is taken from one of the verses in the Torah reading for the eighth day of Chanukah (Bamidbar 7:84), "**זֹאת חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ**. . ."- "***This was the dedication of the altar*** ..."

R' Zvi Elimelech of Dinov z"l (died 1841) elaborates on the significance of that name and of the day:

The Torah reading for the eighth day of Chanukah (the maftir, when it falls on Shabbat) begins with the sacrifice brought by the prince of the tribe of Menashe. The twelve tribes correspond to the twelve months, and the month that corresponds to Menashe is Cheshvan. (This is true when one counts Nissan as the first month and the tribes in the order that they traveled in the desert and also brought their sacrifices, as related in the Torah reading for Chanukah.)

Cheshvan is the month when, according to tradition, the Bet Hamikdash will be rebuilt. (The first Bet Hamikdash was dedicated in Tishrei, which corresponds to Ephraim, while the second Bet Hamikdash was rededicated in Kislev, which corresponds to Binyamin. Thus, all three Temples were or will be dedicated in months that are connected with the children of Rachel, the "**עֲקֶרֶת הַבַּיִת**'"/"Mistress of the House" [i.e., the Temple].)

On the eighth day of Chanukah, when we read about the sacrifice of Menashe's descendant, we allow ourselves to look forward to the future redemption, which also is connected with Menashe, as explained above. We say, "This is the dedication" – Let us soon see the Temple's final dedication. (**Bnei Yissaschar**)

The Rebbe, R' Heschel of Krakow ZT"L would say: "All eight days of Chanukah, we light a total of 44 candles. We see this from the posuk: **הפח נשבר ואנחנו נמלטנו** - The **פח** (flask of oil) which is gematria 88, is **נשבר** - broken in half, **ואנחנו נמלטנו** - and we are saved!"

Chanukah vs. Purim



Why is Chanukah celebrated less festively than Purim?

R' Azaryah Figo z""l (Italy; 1579-1647) offers four answers:

(1) The more people that a miracle benefits, the greater should be its commemoration. Achashveirosh reigned from one end of the known world to the other. Thus, virtually all Jews lived within his realm and were subject to Haman's conspiracy. For this reason, too, the Purim miracle was the salvation of all of the Jews.

On the other hand, a relatively small part of the world's Jewish population lived in Antiochus' realm. Thus, the miracle of Chanukah, as great as it was, was less significant for the survival of the Jewish people.

(2) Antiochus' oppression of the Jews took place (a) in Eretz Yisrael and (b) at a time when the Bet Hamikdash stood. The merit of the Land and of the Temple undoubtedly assisted the Jewish people in being saved. Thus, the Chanukah miracle is less surprising and wondrous than the Purim miracle, which took place in Persia.

Indeed, the Purim miracle is significant because it represents the fulfillment of a Biblical verse (Vayikra 26:44), **וְאַף גַּם־זֹאת בִּהְיוֹתָם בְּאֶרֶץ אֹיְבֵיהֶם לֹא־מְאַסְתִּים וְלֹא־גְעַלְתִּים לְכַלֹּתָם לְהָפֵר בְּרִיתִי אִתָּם כִּי אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיהֶם** "***But despite all this, when they will be in the land of their enemies, I will not have been revolted by them nor will I***

have rejected them to obliterate them, to annul My covenant with them – for I am Hashem, their G-d."

(3) Antiochus' decrees were against the spirituality of the Jewish people. They were, in reality, decrees against Hashem Himself. Obviously, then, Hashem had to (so-to-speak) defend Himself. The Chanukah miracle therefore was not surprising and was not per se a kindness to us.

Haman's decree, on the other hand, was directed against the Jewish people, not their religion. The kindness that Hashem showed by saving us was therefore greater.

(4) The Chanukah miracle came about when one group of people – the Macabees – defeated the plans of a different person – Antiochus. This is certainly worth celebrating.

The Purim miracle, however, involved a person – Achashveirosh, who hated the Jews as much as Haman did – acting against his own wishes (when he agreed to Esther's request to save the Jews). This is an unusual miracle indeed, for one of the fundamental axioms on which our world operates is man's free will. (**Binah La'ittim: Drush Sheni Le'Chanukah**)

R' Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev z"l (1740-1809) notes that our commemoration of the Chanukah miracle is different from that of any other miracle on any other festival.

On Pesach, for example, we only talk about the miracles that occurred, but we do nothing to imitate the miracles of the Exodus. Why don't we do something with water on the seventh day of Pesach to commemorate the splitting of the Yam Suf on that day?

On Purim, we read about the miracle of Haman's downfall, but, again, we do nothing to relive the miracle. Why don't we do something with wood to commemorate the gallows?

Only on Chanukah do we light a menorah to commemorate the miracle that occurred with the Temple menorah.

Why is Chanukah celebrated in this unique way?

R' Levi Yitzchak explains: The Pesach and Purim miracles were necessary for our survival. G-d had to do them, so-to-speak. In contrast, the miracle of the oil burning for eight days was not necessary. Rather, it was an expression of Hashem's love for us and for the mitzvot we do. - To acknowledge this love, we mark the festival by imitating the miracle as best we can. (**Kedushat Levi: Kedushah Chamishit**)

Based on this, suggested **Mr. Eliezer Katz** she'yichyeh (this writer's son; yeshiva student and sofer in Yerushalayim), we can answer the famous question of **R' Yosef Karo z"l** (1488-1575; author of the Shulchan Aruch): If there was enough oil to last for one day and the menorah burned for eight days, then the actual miracles was for seven days! Why, then, does Chanukah have eight days?

Mr. Katz explained: We have one other holiday whose sole purpose is to demonstrate Hashem's love for us, i.e., Shemini Atzeret. Why is there a holiday of Shemini Atzeret?

The midrash teaches that after we have spent the seven days of Sukkot at the Bet Hamikdash in Yerushalayim, Hashem says, so-to-speak, "Don't leave just yet! Stay one more day!" This is an expression of His love for us. Thus, concludes Mr. Katz, just as Shemini Atzeret is the eighth day of Sukkot, so Chanukah has an eighth day.

When we say על הנסים, we don't add a line for Chanukah (as we do on Shabbos, yom tov, etc.) This is because when one praises Hashem, it shouldn't be one-line shortcuts. Praise needs elaboration.

The Gemara (Berachot 63a) states, **כָּל הַמַּרְפֶּה עַצְמוֹ מִדִּבְרֵי תוֹרָה, אֵין בּוֹ כֹּחַ לַעֲמוֹד בְּיוֹם צָרָה, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: ״הִתְרַפִּיתָ בְּיוֹם צָרָה צַר כֹּחֶכָה״. אָמַר רַב אַמֵּי בַּר מַתְנָה אָמַר שְׁמוּאֵל: וַאֲפִילּוּ מִצְוָה אַחַת** "***If someone loosens his grip on the Torah, he will be unable to stand at a time of trouble. Some add: Even if he loosens his grip on only one mitzvah***."



Commentaries explain that if a person has a chance to learn Torah or do a mitzvah, but he puts it off, he will find it more difficult to perform that mitzvah the next time around. This is also true of a person who does study Torah or perform the mitzvah at hand, but in a lacklustre way.

This teaches us, says **R' Gedaliah Schorr z"l** (1911-1979; rosh yeshiva of Torah Vo'daas), that if a person does not take advantage of his spiritual strengths, he will lose them. This is why Hillel said (in Pirkei Avot), **וְאַל תֹּאמַר לִכְשֶׁאִפָּנֶה אֶשְׁנֶה, שֶׁמָּא לֹא תִפָּנֶה** "***Don't say, `When I have time, I will learn,' because perhaps you will never have time***." The same learning will be harder tomorrow because today's strength is lost if it is not used.

Chanukah is a time of rededication. (The root of Chanukah is "chinuch" / "dedication.") It is a time to combat our tendency to perform mitzvot in a lacklustre fashion, merely out of habit.

This is alluded to in the statement of the Gemara (Shabbat 23b) that the Chanukah candles must burn "until the last foot (`regel') leaves the street." Literally, this means until the streets are empty and there is no one left to see the Chanukah lights. - Homiletically, though, "regel" is related to "hergel" / habit.

Our task on Chanukah is to work on rededicating ourselves until hergel / habit is banished. (**Ohr Gedalyahu: Chanukah**)

Chanukah

The mitzvah of lighting Chanukah lights is unique among mitzvot in that a person has three options for how to perform it. One can fulfill the mitzvah in a complete manner by lighting one light per household per night.

One who chooses to perform the mitzvah in a more beautiful manner may have each member of his household kindle one light each night.

Finally, one who wants to do the mitzvah in the most beautiful manner will add an additional light each night.

Why was this mitzvah "designed" this way?

R' Yitzchak Isaac Sher z"l (rosh yeshiva of the Slobodka Yeshiva; died 1951) explains: We read in Yeshayah (26:20), חֲבִי כִמְעַט־רֶגַע לָךְ עַד־יַעֲבָר־זָעַם "***Hide for a brief moment until the wrath has passed.***"

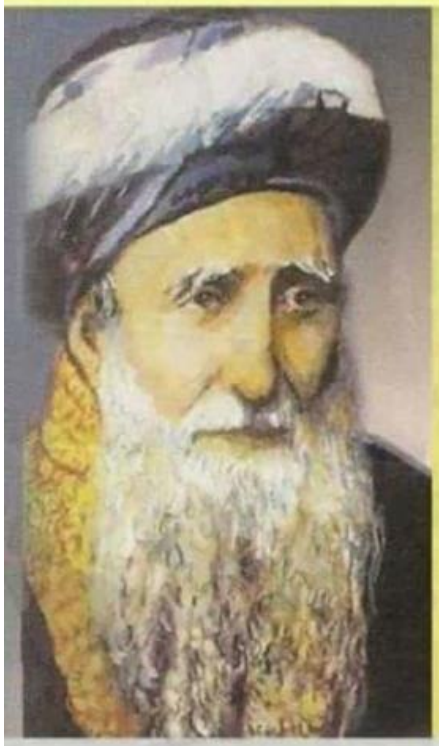
The Chashmonaim could have followed this approach and hidden in caves until the danger had passed. However, like Chananyah, Mishael and Azaryah who chose to be thrown into a furnace rather than run away (when Nevuchadnezar ordered them to bow to his statue), the Chashmonaim stood up to resist.

Because they went beyond the letter of the law, the mitzvah that resulted gives us an option to go beyond the letter of the law. (**Lekket Sichot Mussar II p.151**)

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman-The Miracle of Chanukah

The miracles of Chanukah occurred in the merit of the Chashmanoim's bitachon. They were cohanim, and **כהן** is gematriya seventy-five, the same as **בטחון**. They had bitachon, they trusted in Hashem and that is the reason they succeeded in this miraculous war.

סגולה ענקית ומיוחדת לראש חודש טבת - חובה קריאה!



רבנו חיים פלאג'י זצוק"ל בספרו מועד לכל חי אומר מקובל מצדיקים קדמונים שביום ראש חודש טבת יש להדליק כוס שמן זית לכבוד נשמת רבי מאיר בעל הנס ולתת ח"י שקלים לכבוד נשמת רבי מאיר בעל הנס, ולבקש בזכותו לכל הדברים, ודבר זה בדוק ומנוסה ואין תפילתו חוזרת ריקם בכל מה שיבקש.



רֹאשׁ־חֹדֶשׁ גַּם־כֵּן. וְכֵן יַרְבֶּה בְּרֹאשׁ־חֹדֶשׁ טֵבֵת, שֶׁהוּא בְּתוֹךְ יְמֵי הַחֲנֻכָּה, בִּשְׁבִיל פִּרְסוּם הַנֵּס. וּמִנְהָגֵנוּ לְהַדְלִיק שֶׁמֶן לַמָּאוֹר לִכְבוֹד נִשְׁמַת רַבִּי מֵאִיר בַּעַל הַנֵּס זיע"א בְּיוֹם רֹאשׁ־חֹדֶשׁ טֵבֵת. וְיִזָּהֵר בְּהַלֵּל שֶׁל חֲנֻכָּה, כִּי אֲפִלּוּ בְּחַג־הַמַּצּוֹת אֵין אוֹמְרִים הַלֵּל גָּמוּר, וְכָאן אוֹמְרִים הַלֵּל גָּמוּר שְׁמוֹנָה יָמִים, עַל־כֵּן יֹאמַר אוֹתוֹ בְּכַוָּנָה וּבְשִׂמְחָה רַבָּה.

["בן איש חי" הלכות - פרשת וישב - שנה א' - אות כ"ח]

"How wonderful it is that a person can tell all his worries before the Master of the world as one speaks with his friend." ~ The Chazon Ish zt"l.





One of the nissim in the Bais Hamikdash was that the ner ma'aravi always burned longer than it should have. So why was it such a big neis that on Chanukah the oil burned for eight days?

No, no. It didn't always happen. Yes, for some time it happened always, but later on it stopped. By the end of the second Beis Ha'mikdash that neis didn't continue any longer.

And the neis of Chanukah was a different kind of neis. The neis of Chanuka was all of a sudden. It was a big surprise. A small amount of oil, which should have only burned for one day, continued to burn and lasted eight days. They needed eight days to prepare the new oil and the small amount of oil lasted eight days. So that was a separate neis from the neis of the ner ma'aravi. And when they saw the neis Chanuka, they went wild with simcha because every neis is a matanah. A neis is a gift from Hakodosh Boruch Hu.

I'll explain that to you. **The Chovos Halevavos** at the end of Sha'ar Habechina says the following. He says that among the biggest gifts that Hashem gave our nation, the two most precious ones are the Torah and nissim. Do you hear that?! A neis is a tremendous gift. The world doesn't understand that. People think that a neis is merely that we are in trouble and Hashem came and saved us from our

troubles. No, Hashem could have saved us in other ways – without a neis.

What a neis is, is a gift of emunah. Nissim are a shot-in-the-arm of emunah. Instead of saving us in a natural way, He puts a neis there as a tovah for us. A neis is a tremendous giluy shechina to put into our minds a certain dose of emunah.

And therefore, we should make sure to study the Nissim, and **וּלְמַעַן תְּסַפֵּר בְּאָזְנֵי בִנְךָ וּבֶן בִּנְךָ**, Hashem wants you to always talk over the nissim that happened. Because even though you don't see it right now, but just remembering the nissim is a tremendous benefit that is on the same level as Matan Torah.

The Chovos Halevavos says that the Torah and nissim are side by side the two greatest gifts that Hashem gave the Jewish nation.

The promise of Hanukkah and of Jewish history is that Hamas will ultimately fail and fade into oblivion. by Jeff Jacoby



A few years ago, with good intentions but woeful misjudgment, the Catholic News Service sent out a greeting for the Jewish festival of lights.

"Hanukkah began at sundown," it read. "Happy Hanukkah to those who celebrate!" Accompanying the tweet was a photograph of the Arch of Titus in Rome, which celebrates the defeat of Judea and the sack of the Temple in Jerusalem by Roman legions in 70 CE. A relief on the arch

shows soldiers triumphantly holding aloft artifacts plundered from the Temple, most prominently its great golden menorah.

The news service quickly realized its blunder. Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Temple during a much earlier conflict — the Maccabean revolt against the religious tyranny of the Seleucid Empire in the 2nd century BCE — so an image of the Temple's later devastation was wholly inappropriate. The tweet was deleted and the news service apologized.

Yet in retrospect the Arch of Titus *does* symbolize a key message of Hanukkah, one intensely relevant amid today's rising tide of antisemitism and hostility toward Israel: However genocidal and powerful their enemies, the Jews and the Jewish faith have endured.

Under Antiochus IV, the Seleucids (also called Syrian-Greeks) were determined to replace Judaism with the pagan culture of Hellenism; under the Roman emperors Vespasian and Titus, Jewish ties to the Jewish homeland were to be crushed forever. Two millennia later, those emperors are dust, and their grandeur lies in ruins. But the Jews and their religion still live, and their bond with the land of Israel is as indissoluble as ever.

Hanukkah arrives this year amid a terrible eruption of Jew-hatred. The horrific pogrom of Oct. 7, when Hamas terrorists murdered, tortured, and kidnapped some 1,200 residents of southern Israel, was the bloodiest massacre of Jews since the end of the Holocaust.

The reaction in much of the world, and especially in many bastions of elite culture and higher education, has been an unprecedented wave of antisemitic vituperation, intimidation, menace, and glee. and overseas, Jews feel threatened to a degree unprecedented in generations.

Throughout history, the "forces of antisemitism" have expressed themselves in three different ways: They have targeted the religion of the Jews, the physical existence of Jews, or the national state

of the Jews. In America and the West today, they focus their enmity on Israel, the world's only Jewish country. By contrast, the revolt of the Maccabees against the Seleucid emperor Antiochus 22 centuries ago — the events commemorated at Hanukkah — was a response to explicitly *religious* persecution.

Antiochus had proclaimed himself the manifestation of the Greek god and demanded that his subjects make him the highest focus of their worship. But in Judea, faithful Jews balked. Loyal to their Torah and their one G-d, they rejected Hellenism, with its network of pagan gods and its cult of the body.

In response, Antiochus embarked on a campaign to destroy Judaism. He forbade Jewish services in the Temple. He punished observance of the Sabbath, circumcision, and the study of Torah — mainstays of Jewish religious life — with death. He declared the Temple to be a shrine to pagan gods and ordered Jewish leaders to defile the holy place by sacrificing swine.

In his acclaimed history of Jerusalem, the historian Simon Sebag Montefiore conveys the savagery of repression. "Those practicing the Sabbath were burned alive or suffered a gruesome Greek import: crucifixion. An old man perished rather than eat pork; women who circumcised their children were thrown with their babies off the walls of Jerusalem. The Torah was torn to shreds and burned publicly; everyone found with a copy was put to death."

This was the first instance in Jewish history of *religious* antisemitism. Its aim was neither to exterminate the Jews nor to drive them from their land. It was to replace their monotheism with the idols and gods of Hellenistic paganism.

In 167 BCE, a rebellion to reclaim Jewish religious autonomy began when an elderly priest named Mattathias refused a Syrian order to sacrifice to an idol. When a Hellenized Jew stepped forward to do so, Mattathias killed the man and dismantled the altar. Then he and his sons — led by Judah Maccabeus, a nickname meaning "the

Hammer" — organized a guerrilla war against the empire. Eventually the Temple was reclaimed and restored. Ever since, Jews have celebrated the festival of Hanukkah to mark the victory over religious persecution.

Those who seek to destroy the Jews have been responsible for oceans of suffering and death. But none of them has outlasted the Jewish people.

In later centuries, there would be many instances of such persecution. Jews in Europe were slaughtered by Crusaders en route to the Holy Land, etc.

Yet the promise of Hanukkah and of Jewish history is that Hamas will ultimately fail and fade into oblivion. Those who seek to destroy the Jews have been responsible for oceans of suffering and death. But none of them has outlasted the Jewish people.

The Seleucids today are virtually forgotten. The Arch of Titus is an antiquity for tourists to gawk at. Hamas, too, will disappear in time. And long after it is gone, Jewish families will continue to kindle the Hanukkah menorah, celebrating the Festival of Lights at the darkest time of the year.

"The Menorah of Hakadosh Baruch Hu is the Jewish people. We are His lamp. We are the light for the nations. We are the miracle; We are the flame that will never be extinguished.

When Hakadosh Baruch Hu rescued our people after all those wars against the mighty armies, it was the Menorah that didn't go out. – We the Menorah of Hashem survived." ~ Rabbi Avigdor Miller Zt'l.



There is a praiseworthy minhag of giving gifts to our children's melamdim (R' C. Palaggi zt"l). This sets an example of hakaras hatov for your child and displays the importance of chinuch.

A gift accompanied with warm words of thanks is a tremendous source of chizuk for our Rebbeim and teachers.

"Chanukah is eight days long because on Chanukah we are living in a world that is beyond nature. Miracles can occur. Miracles are now the norm. The poor can become wealthy. The ill can be healed, and unprecedented spiritual transformations can also happen." ~ Rabbi Elimech Biderman.

What the tzaddikim of the generation accomplish through their lofty Neilah prayers on Yom Kippur, a simple Jew can ask and accomplish with his prayers on Zos Chanukah, the eighth day of Chanukah. ~ Rav Yisroel Rhiziner zt"l

When we spin the dreidel this Chanukah, keep in mind that the gematria of the four letters on the dreidel, Nun, Gimmel, Hay and Shin is 358 which equals the word Moshiach, for which we eagerly await.

Rabbi Label Lam - Model Mitzvah

A Chanukah candle is not just a stand-alone mitzvah. It is an example, of all mitzvos as Shlomo Hamelech tells us, **כִּי נֵר מִצְוָה וְתוֹרָה אוֹר** - ***For a candle is a mitzvah and Torah is light***" (Mishlei 6:23).

If someone is putting on Tefillin, which is made of the skin of a dead cow, he is igniting a candle and generating a sublime light. It is a vehicle for revealing and releasing the deep, hidden light of Hashem. And the Maharal explains that although the mitzvah itself has parameters and is finite, the light that it produces continues to travel forever.

On Chanukah, the custom is to play with a dreidel. When one spins the dreidel, there is nothing that he can do to influence the dreidel to fall on the winning letter. Even if he is the best spinner in the world and spins the dreidel with all his might, he still cannot predict or arrange the outcome.

Similarly, one works for a living, and one makes hishtadlus, but the results remain in Hashem's hands. **~ R' Elimelech Biderman.**

Someone came to the Chazon Ish zt'l complaining about his poverty. The man said, "I need a miracle, and לאו בכל יומא מתרחיש ניסא, miracles don't happen every day."

The Chazon Ish corrected him and said that this phrase should be read as follows:

לאו - it isn't as people think! בכל יומא מתרחיש ניסא, Miracles occur every day!" And this is undoubtedly true on Zos Chanukah, a day of miracles, a day beyond the laws of nature. **~ R' Elimelech Biderman.**

The Ribnitzer Rebbe Zt'l

A father brought his infant son to the **Ribnitzer Rebbe zt'l**, when the rebbe was in Los Angeles for Chanukah. The father told the rebbe that his son was born prematurely, and he was placed in an incubator, which has an intense heating light to keep the child warm. A bandage was placed over the child's eyes because the strong light is dangerous for the eyes. However, the bandage fell off, and the child went blind in both eyes.

The rebbe looked forcefully at the Chanukah lecht, then he looked at the child, again at the Chanukah lecht, and once again, at the child. After repeating this several times, the rebbe announced, "Baruch Hashem, the child sees with his right eye." - The rebbe continued looking at the lecht and then at the child, and then he said, "The child still doesn't see with his left eye, but eventually he will."

Twenty years later, the rebbe received an invitation to the chasunah of this child, who could see well with both eyes.

Obviously, we aren't on the level of the Ribnitzer Rebbe zt'l; however, it is a lesson that the lights of Chanukah can lighten up the darkness and bring salvation to Klal Yisrael.

The Beis Aharon zt'l teaches that we should say Tehillim on Chanukah. Certainly, one should say Tehillim on זאת חנוכה because Hashem bestows His kindness on us on this day.



Imagine if your cell phone battery was on 10% and it lasted for 8 days. Now you understand Chanukah.

Moshiach

The *Chesed L'Avraham* (Rebbe Avraham of Radomsk *zt'l*) states that Zos Chanukah is *mesugal* for hastening the redemption because this day we read **וזאת חנוכת המזבח ביום המשח אותו** (*Bamidbar* 7:84) and **המשח** is similar to the word **משיח**.

Another hint to **משיח** is from **מַדליקין שַמונת יַמי חַנוכה**. The first letters spell **משיח**.

The gematriya of the letters **נגה"ש** on the dreidel is **משיח**.

Rav Avigdor Miller on Lessons of the Lights



QUESTION: ***Is there any connection between lighting the menorah on Chanukah and the kohanim who light the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash?***

ANSWER: We must know that the fact that both yield light is significant. Because why do you have to have a *menorah*? You could have, let's say, a flower. Or you could put let's say a *peri*, an olive. Every day add another olive. The answer is there's something about fire, about light, that's very important.

And light has many significances. Light can be first of all gratitude for the light of the Torah: *Torah ohr.* And therefore, certainly the *menorah* of Chanukah shares a significance with the *menorah* of the *Beis Hamikdash*. Because the light of the Torah, that's what we are loyal to. And we thank Hashem for the Torah by means of the *menorah* that the *kohen* lights every day in the Beis Hamikdash. We thank Him for giving us the light of the Torah.

The light also signifies the light of *seichel*. *Baruch atah Hashem chonen hada'as*. How happy we are with the ability to think. It's the first *brachah*, the first *tefilah* of the weekday *bakashos*. And many people ignore that, and they don't realize how important it is to be sane. *Baruch atah Hashem chonen hada'as,* that we have sanity. The ability to think is one of the biggest *matanos* of all. Without that what is life worth?

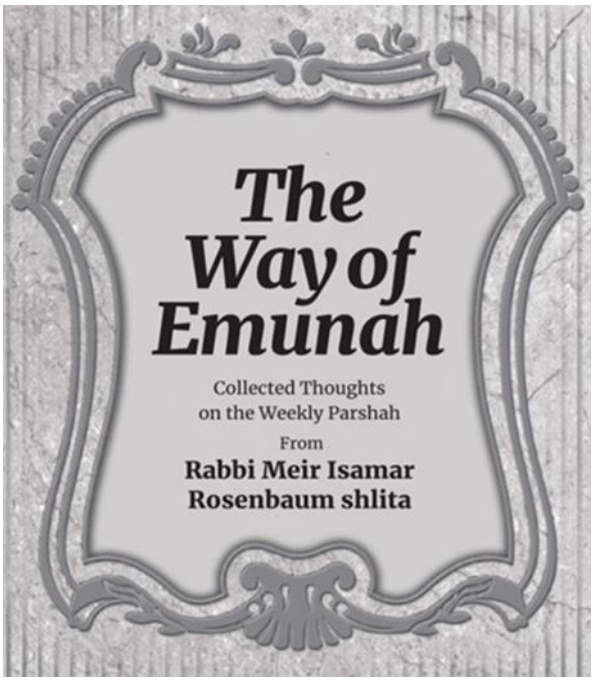
That's also a significance of lighting the menorah in the Mikdash. We thank Hashem for giving us the light of the *seichel*. And on Chanukah too, we thank Him for the light of the *seichel* because it's only by means of our *seichel* we're able to utilize our great principles of resisting the power of the *goyim*. And therefore, these two *menorahs* certainly signify using your *seichel*.

Also, the light of the two *menorahs* speaks about the Shechinah, that the Shechinah dwells in the Am Yisroel. Every day when they lit the *menorah*, all year round, it was for the purpose of letting us know that we are always blessed that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is with us. He's constantly with us forever and ever.

And of course, on Chanukah people waited for some sign that Hakadosh Baruch Hu was with them. They won battles, all right. But maybe the battle is *koach basar vedam*. Where do we see the *yad Hashem*? But when they saw this *nes* of Chanukah, they saw that the Shechinah is still here with us.

There are many more significances which the *menorah* shares with the *ner Chanukah* but all together they come to teach the great lesson that we and Hakadosh Baruch Hu should always be together; and that's the *emunah*, the loyalty. He is loyal to us, and we are loyal to Him.

"Who is kind to the poor lends to the L-rd. " (Mishle) 19:17



Experiencing the Miracles Today

There is a widespread minhag to sit and look at the neiros after lighting the menorah.

Sefer Yitav Lev Panim writes that the reason for this is to connect with the miracles and wonders, as looking at something has a power of connecting to its influence.

Lighting Neiros Under the Nazis



The following story involving my great-grandfather, **Rav Tzvi Hirsch (Rosenbaum) of Kretchnif zy"a**, which occurred 80 years ago in a Nazi death camp, was printed in a certain newspaper: The paper tells the story of an elderly Jew named R' Shalom Ungarischer of Bnei Brak, who is originally from Lithuania and whose family had no connection to chasidus. While he still has no ties to chasidus, he went every year to attend the hadlakos neiros of the Kretchnifer Rebbe zy"a, and he remained at the hadlakah from beginning to end.

People wondered about this. Why did this Litvisher Yid come to the Rebbe's hadlakah every year?

One year, someone asked him about this, and he told him his story. He related: I was with the Rebbe in a Nazi camp. I was an expert electrician and, therefore, the Nazis ym"sh gave me the job of camp electrician. I was in the same barracks as the Rebbe and drew close to him, even though I am a full-fledged Litvack.

One day, the Red Cross visited the camp and gave each prisoner a few supplies, including a piece of margarine. When the Rebbe saw the margarine, his face lit up. He said, "Gevaldig! We will be able to light Chanukah licht!" I told the Rebbe that it was important for him to eat the margarine because the body needs a little fat, and he replied, "The neshama also needs nutrition", and he refused to eat it.

On the first night of Chanukah, we arrived at the barracks very late, after a full day of labor, and the Rebbe began to pace back and forth, reciting the "L'shem Yichud" with the Kretchinfer nusach, with much passion and enthusiasm. He then placed a bit of margarine is a bottle cap, twined together a few strings to make a wick, loudly said the bracha, and lit the ner. He then sang all of the traditional songs "with the Kretchnifer feeling".

Suddenly, the door opened, and a Nazi guard rushed in. He screamed, "Who is singing like he thinks he is at a concert?" When he saw the fire that the Rebbe had lit, he hit him in the stomach with his gun, knocking him to the ground. He then walked out while still screaming. With much difficulty, the Rebbe revived himself.

The next day, the Rebbe lit the neiros again. As he was singing the last song, the same Nazi ran in. When he saw the two lights, he hit the Rebbe in the stomach twice, knocking him unconscious.

On the third day, he hit the Rebbe three times… The other inmates begged the Rebbe not to light neiros again the next night, but he

told them, "All the rasha is doing is hitting me. It's worth it to get hit in order to fulfill this mitzvah."

When the Nazi came in the next day, he got so angry that he threw the Rebbe to the ground and hit him three times in the head. The Rebbe lay unconscious until midnight when he finally got up.

The next day, the Rebbe said, "I don't think I can survive any more blows. But the **Rambam** writes that in a time of *shmad*, one must risk his life to do any mitzvah. But I will light as early as I can, and I won't spend a lot of time singing."

Surprisingly, the Nazi came in early that day and saw the Rebbe lighting the neiros. He was flabbergasted and said, "I have a lot of respect for you, rabbi. I see that you are willing to die for your religion. I admire you for that! - He walked out of the barracks and did not return for the rest of Chanukah. - The Rebbe lit the neiros on the remaining nights with much joy, using up the rest of the margarine.

The old man concluded, "After witnessing this, isn't it appropriate for me to come here every year to see the tzadik light the Chanukah licht?"

Hallel and Hodaah for Every Person on Their Level

We recite that the eight days of Chanukah were established "l'hodos u'lehaleil" (to praise and glorify).

Rav Henoch of Alexander zy"a asks why the holiday of Chanukah was established as a time for praise and glory, while Purim was established as a time for feasting and rejoicing.

He answers that Purim commemorates how we were saved from a decree of physical destruction. Since this decree applied to every Jew equally, we commemorate the salvation with feasting and rejoicing, which is equally possible for every Jew.

On Chanukah, however, we commemorate how we were saved from a decree of spiritual destruction. This did not apply equally to every Jew, as it pertained to each individual on his own level of ruchnius. -- Therefore, we celebrate with hallel and hodaah, which is done by each individual on his level.

From Darkness to Light

Sefer Kovetz Sichos quotes the **Bais Avrohom of Slonim zy"a** as saying that **Rav Levi Yitzchok of Berditchev zy"a** asks why there is no "Megillas Chanukah", like there is on Purim.

He answers that although the victory over the Greeks was won by the Chashmonaim, it clearly came from Hashem, as they could not have won on their own. They were concerned that if they chronicled the victory in a megillah, people might read it and say that their army won the war. Therefore, they did not write one so that no one should think that man can fight wars on his own and that one can only be victorious with Hashem's help.

The Bais Avrohom adds that the word "Chanukah" has a root of "chinuch" (education). This indicates that one must educate himself to believe and trust in Hashem. Even if one doesn't see any light in the distance and feels like he is immersed in darkness, He should trust that Hashem will provide the illumination.

While it is very hard to reach this level of emunah and bitachon, one must work to educate himself to believe this.

In this vein, a man once approached the **Kobriner Rebbe zy"a** and asked for guidance regarding how to serve Hashem properly.

The Rebbe told him that he should always be happy with whatever Hashem sends his way. The man said, "Isn't that very difficult?" The Rebbe replied, "Yes. That was my intention."

An Auspicious Time for Miracles

The Shulchan Aruch (Orech Chaim 682:1) rules that if one forgets to recite Al Hanisim in Birchas he should recite "Harachaman hu ya'aseh lanu nissim."

The Tevuos Shor asks how we are permitted to ask for miracles that are beyond the laws of nature?

The Shinover Rebbe zy"a (quoted in Divrei Yechezkel Hachadash, Imyanei Chanukah) answers that the reason we don't ask Hashem to perform miracles for us is because this would deduct from our merits. On Chanukah, however, we are permitted to do so because On Chanukah, we experienced supernatural miracles, and the spirit of this day is aroused anew every year. Therefore, miracles are natural on these days, and it is permitted to daven for them without any fear of losing our merits.

A Gift of Life by Rabbi Yosef Weiss Zt'l



In the year 1928, the entire Jewish world was horrified to hear that the saintly Chofetz Chaim, at the age of eighty-eight, was terribly ill. All around the globe, prayers streamed heavenward as Klal Yisrael begged Hashem to spare the Chofetz Chaim and allow him to recuperate and receive a complete refuah shelemah.

One young man of twenty-three, who lived next door to the Chofetz Chaim was particularly distressed. R' Mordechai had long since cherished the unique opportunity to attend to the Chofetz Chaim and fulfill his

every need. Now, his beloved Rabbi was close to death. How could Klal Yisrael survive without the Chofetz Chaim's guiding hand?

R' Mordechai entered the bet midrash and spent the entire night engrossed in the recital of Tehillim, tears streaming down his cheeks as he fervently prayed to Hashem for the Chofetz Chaim's recovery. By morning R' Mordechai was still hunched over his Tehillim in the deserted bet midrash, immersed in earnest prayer.

Seeing that the bet midrash was empty, he hesitated for a moment, then slowly approached the aron hakodesh. He felt that he must do more than just pray for the Chofetz Chaim. Now, with nobody else to witness what he was about to do, he opened the aron hakodesh and lovingly kissed the sifrei Torah.

"Ribbono Shel Olam," he whispered, "Klal Yisrael needs the Chofetz Chaim. I am thereby giving up five years of my life for him so he should have a recovery." - Without another word, R' Mordechai closed the aron and returned to his seat. People would soon be coming, and he did not want anyone to know what he had done.

Days later, the news raced through Radin. The Chofetz Chaim was recuperating! The danger was past! Within a few weeks, the Hafess Hayim had fully recovered.

R' Mordechai happily looked forward to resuming his holy duties for the Chofetz Chaim, but a nagging thought troubled him. He had granted five years of his life to his beloved Rabbi, but he was only a young man in his early twenties. What good could five of his years be for a gadol of the Chofetz Chaim's stature? Perhaps someone on a higher level would be required to donate years for the Chofetz Chaim. On the other hand, if the value of the years would be measured by the level of the recipient, there would be no problem. R' Mordechai would have given his Rabbi five years which the Chofetz Chaim could use at his own sublime level. But how could he know which theory was correct?

He decided to approach the Chofetz Chaim and ask him a "theoretical question." As R' Mordechai approached the Chofetz Chaim's desk, the gadol gazed steadily at him and said, "Mordche, you should know that your prayers were accepted in heaven."

At first, R' Mordechai assumed that the Chofetz Chaim referred to his prayers which, like those of all Klal Yisrael, had been dedicated to the gadol's recovery. But the Chofetz Chaim continued, "I will give you my word, Mordche, that in the merit of what you have given me, you will live to be as old as I am now."

R' Mordechai stared at his Rabbi in shock. How had he known of the offer he had made to Hashem several weeks ago?

The Chofetz Chaim lived for five more fruitful years, before his passing in 1933 at the age of ninety-three. R' Mordechai Londinski never breathed a word about the incident that had taken place, although he did relate the story to his oldest son, Moshe.

In Sivan of 1995, when he had just turned eighty-nine, R' Mordechai passed away. He was one year older than the Chofetz Chaim had been during his near-fatal illness.

At R' Mordechai's funeral, R' Moshe Londinski repeated his father's story for the first time, then added, "My father would have wanted this story to be told for only one reason: to show the world more of the holiness of the Chofetz Chaim.(Visions of Greatness II)

"The message of Chanukah is that although our actions seem like they don't make a difference, they make a massive difference to Hashem and to the world.

Just like a small candle can light up a dark room, our Torah and Mitzvos light up the world." ~ R' Yaakov Rahimi.

My Personal Hannuka Miracle by Rabbi Yosef Farhi



A little personal story that just happened to me. I prayed at the Kotel Sunday, Rosh Hodesh, the 7th day of Hannukah, at Sunrise Minyan. The Kotel is full on Hanukah, and fuller on Rosh Hodesh.

After Amidah of Shaharit, I needed the restroom badly, so I quickly took off my tefillin, and without wrapping them, just placed them in their bag, amongst the many Tefillin bags that were on the mini Bimah/stand. When I came back, the Tefillin were not in the bag, but outside the bag. Strange. I figured that they must have fallen, as there were a lot of tefillin on that stand, and maybe someone pushed them and they must have moved.

Being that it was next to the Tefillin station of Chabad at the Kotel, for those who don't have with them Tefillin, and the tefillin station was not yet open so early in the morning, someone comes over and asked me, if they can use my Tefillin. For sure! Especially because I wanted to put on my second pair, my pair of Rabbenu Tam.

Wearing my Rabbenu Tam Tefillin, I finish up Hallel and Torah reading, and I then came back to take off and wrap up my second pair of Tefillin. By that time, the person who used my Tefillin, wrapped up my first pair and put them on my bag. I wrapped up my second pair, and put my two pairs and my Tallit in my bag, and continued on my way.

The next day, on the 8th day of Hannuka, by Sunrise Minyan by the Kotel, it was pouring rain. Everyone who could, packed inside the tunnel, by the Kotel. I finished praying, and after all the moving around, I noticed as I wrapped my first pair of Tefillin, that the

Tefillin straps of the Tefillin shel Rosh, looked strange! My straps are black on both sides, and this one's tefillin were black only on one side, but white on the other! It must be that someone switched my Tefillin shel Rosh, of my first pair!



But it can't be! I did a mitzvah, letting someone wear my Tefillin, and now, … this is what happens? Whose Tefillin is this anyway? Did I even get the Mitzvah wearing this other person's tefillin? What Kashrut standards on his Tefillin does he have, anyway?

His Tefillin looked old. They looked worn out. But before going to my Soffer to check them out and tell me what I should do, I went immediately to the lost and found of the police of the Kotel to report the story and left my phone number. I went to all the leaders of the Sunrise Minyanim in that area of the Kotel to take down my number if anyone contacts them, noticing that their straps are not identical. It was raining really hard, and I was soaked and cold!

My Sofer said, not to worry. The Tefillin Shel Rosh, that I see here are old, but they are an even higher-level standard of Kashrut than yours! From the way the Shin is, the person's Tefillin are Ashkenaz, and yours are Sefardi. From the look of the straps, the Tefillin are of an elderly man.

But you don't have to wear another pair, for today. Wait a couple of days, don't buy a new pair for 4500 shekels just yet, because I guarantee you, that person is going to be hunting after his Tefillin once he recognizes the straps, that they are not the same! He invested so much in his Tefillin, he will be looking for them, more

than you are looking for yours! Unless one thing. Because this person is an older man, he may not notice that the straps are not the same!

I was broken. These are my Tefillin from my Bar Mitzah, and the Tefillin cases were new, and were from the highest levels of Hidur! My Tefillin's standard is one of the things I am proud about, and now, I don't have my Tefillin Shel Rosh, of my Rashi Tefillin! Because of doing a mitzvah!?!

I called my Rabbi, and he said, that in the meantime, it was okay to wear that person's tefillin every day, as he is probably wearing mine, and is forgiving me to use his, just like I am forgiving him to use mine.

Every day that I could, for the week, I came back to the Kotel for Sunrise. I would call out, in the area of the switch, if anyone heard someone coming to that spot, looking for the person who switched his Tefillin. No one knew. I would look at people praying in the area, seeing if the straps of their Tefillin of the head and the ones of the hand, were not the same.

People got annoyed at me for staring at them and their Tefillin, asking what I want from them. I was looking foolish. And I was frustrated. People took down my phone number, and told me they would call me, if someone does come by looking for his. I kept checking my phone every day, but no phone calls.

I turned to Hashem at the Kotel, knowing that he never leaves that place, saying, I know that You know what happened here, as it happened right under "Your Nose". I know that you saw me do that mitzvah of letting that boy wear my Tefillin. And I know that everything that happens is for the best. I did all that I could to get back my Tefillin. And I feel bad for that person, who I have his. Please Hashem, give him back his Tefillin, and give me back mine!

And then I remembered how, when someone loses something, G-d has something that the person gains more than he lost! The first day when I came to Israel as a Yeshiva student, I lost my watch in the

Minyan Factory in Bayit Vegan, Jerusalem, next door to the Yeshiva I attended. I must have left it on the Bimah, and did not put it on after putting my Tefillin in their bag. I came back and noticed then, 20 years ago, a sign on the wall, that read "We found your watch! Come and claim it with Simanim! If you know the signs, that will show that it is your watch, we will return it to you!"

I came over to that family, and gave them the signs, and they gave me my watch. Over the next year and a half, they invited me for Shabbat meals often, and before I returned to America for Pesach a year and a half later, they asked me if I would date anyone, when back home for Pesah break. When I told them that if something came up I would consider it, they offered my Dolly, my wife, from Bayit Vegan. I dated her, and two weeks later, we were engaged.

I pretty much was ready to give up on my Tefillin, after a week of waiting. And then, Sunday morning, I got a phone call. "Is this Farhi? Did you pray on Sunday morning by the Kotel, by sunrise? Are your Tefillin Shel Rosh switched?... I am the relative of the person who switched Tefillin last week with you, accidentally at the Kotel. My relative lives in Monsey. He was here in Israel, for his father's yahrzeit, but he had to run back.

He noticed when he got back to Monsey, that the straps were not the same. We called the lost and found of the Kotel, and they did not remember anyone saying that they had their Tefillin shel Rosh switched. Sorry!... But before they hung up, they said, "Wait a second! You said Sunday, on Hannuka? Yes! There was someone Farhi... here is his number!"

I got in touch with this person in Monsey, and we exchanged pictures of the Tefillin to make sure, that we switched with each other, and not with a third person. This man had mine, and I had his. He said to me, "Know, that the Tefillin, are not mine. They were my father's, who was a great man. He moved to Bnei Brak many years ago and was from the closest people with **R' Chaim Kanievsky**. He is buried right next to R' Chaim, as he was very close to him. He bought the grave

when R' Chaim bought his. I am wearing my father's Tefillin, as I know that his Tefillin were very important to him, and that my father had the highest level of Hiddur on his Tefillin. I was broken to find, that the day of my father's yahrzeit, I lost his tefillin!

"It was almost as if his tefillin were taken away from me, on his Yahrzeit! And I could not understand it! Being that I was standing next to the Chabad Tefillin stand, someone at the kotel asked me if they could use my Tefillin, and I let them use it, knowing that that was what my father would want me to do with his Tefillin… And now, after doing the mitzvah, my Tefillin were lost! But know this… you have been wearing Tefillin of my father, who was a great man!

I told my Rebbi the story, and who the man was who's Tefillin I was wearing, and my Rabbi said, "Sure! I know who he was! He was close to R' Chaim's father, **the Steipler**, and when he asked the Steipler where to give his Tzeddaka money, the Steipler said, that he should support his son, R' Chaim, which he did the whole life of R' Chaim!"

I had just two more days to wear that man's Tefillin. I kissed those Tefillin and thanked G-d for giving me the merit! Within 48 hours, I had a knock on my door! The man from Monsey already had my Tefillin sent back, and I gave him back his Tefillin to the messenger!

"Chanuka is at the time of the year where we have the longest nights. Sometimes we feel in life that the struggles and the pain that we are going through are very long, and it doesn't seem like there will be a light at the end of the tunnel. - This is why we light Neiros Chanuka. – When everything around you is surrounded by darkness, you have the true light." ~ R' Uri Lati.

True greatness lies in recognizing the greatness of others. ~ Lubavitcher Rebbe, Reb Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

Rabbi Paysach Krohn – Project Mesorah



Have we ever, ever, gone through a Chanukah like this, with so much darkness, and yet we're hoping for so much light. How sad is it that we are going through a war in Eretz Yisrael, where there is so much killing and wounding, shiva being sat, and convalescing by so many families. - Yet we make the bracha at night, in the dark - **שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה**, which means that Hashem can do anything. Even when it's still dark, Hashem can do miracles.

And that's what we have to hope for. We must hope that with this Yomtov of Chanukah, we will see these miracles.

Horav Chacham Ovadiah Yosef once said: The word Moshiach **משיח** stands for - **מדליקין שמונת ימי חנוכה**. So even though that it's very dark, especially in Eretz Yisrael, and for Yidden all over the world with the rise in antisemitism, we still must hope that Hashem will make miracles now, just like He did in those days.

A Different Spin on The Dreidel – Rabbi Shlomo Landau



A freilechen Chanukah. Here is a little bit of a different spin on the dreidel:

There is an incredible Yerushalmi that writes that nothing that Hashem created is perfectly square. Any angles or corners that are perfectly square are man-made. – Hashem creates things circular. The globe, trees etc. That's **יד השם**.

Rav Meilech Biderman says something magnificent… Take a look at your dreidel, it's square. It's certainly man-made. But then you spin it, and that square turns into a circle.

And that shows us what Chanukah is all about. Even the things that we think that we create, that are man-made with perfect right angles, corners, squares, ultimately everything comes from Hashem.

So, as we spin our dreidel round and round, everything that's man-made turns into **יד השם**.

Chanukah is a time to look at our lives, and even to look at our accomplishments, and to understand that everything that we have comes from Hashem.

בס"ד

Menucha

A Shabbos table companion for the whole family

לע"נ ר' ברוך חיים בן סלמון ז"ל

One Chanukah, the **Brisker Rav** met the **Gerrer Rebbe** on a street. They began conversing in Torah. During the conversation, the Brisker Rav took the opportunity to pose the following question to the Rebbe: "I have heard that his honor hosts large tishen on the nights of Chanukah which continue on until very late hours of the morning. The Chassidim turn up in throngs, and a spiritual uplifting time is enjoyed by all. It is certainly appropriate to host a festive seuda on Chanukah as cited by the Rema (O.C. 670:2), but he also says there, that it is a 'bit' of a mitzvah. This closer reading of the Rema indicates that he recommends short celebrations...."

On a cue, the Rebbe - who was known for his sharp wit - was ready with an answer: "I always teach my chassidim to avoid the temptations of the yetzer hora like a plague! Even a miniscule aveira must be viewed as a terrible sin. Flee, Flee! But the converse is also true: every mitzvah, even a 'small' one, must be viewed of considerable size. Every mitzvah is great enough to make a big celebration over it!"



● Why did Chazal not enact that Chanukah should be celebrated with joyous feasting like they did with Purim? (First explanation)

Many answers have already been given to this question, but we can give another answer based on the rule that it is forbidden to benefit from the Torah, because the Torah was given only in order to rectify the soul and not for the benefit of the body.

For this reason, the Torah does not write that the reason for the festival of Shavuos is to celebrate the giving of the Torah, but instead wrote that it is to celebrate our bringing of "a new meal offering to Hashem" (Bamidbar 28:26). Because if the reason for making the festival was because of the giving of the Torah it would look like we are benefiting from the Torah since we are gaining a festive day because of it, and therefore this cannot be the reason for making the festival. Instead, it is because of the bringing of a new offering, and thus the celebration is for the material benefit that we gain by meriting the bringing of a new offering.

Similarly, the festival of Succos is described in the Torah as "the festival of ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your produce from the field" (Shemos 23:16), so that the main rejoicing of the festival is because of the material benefit derived from the ingathering of the year's produce, and not because of the spiritual benefit that we derive from the fulfillment of the mitzvos of Succah and the four species.

And similarly with the mitzvah of Bris Milah the main rejoicing is because the father merited to be given a son, who was circumcised on the eighth day.

Therefore, since on Purim it was our lives which were saved, it was appropriate for Chazal to establish a festival which is celebrated with feasting, to celebrate the bodily benefit that we received on that occasion. But on Chanukah it was our souls which were saved, and since the Torah was given only for the benefit of the soul and not for the benefit of the body, if we would celebrate the occasion with feasting it would seem as if the Torah was given for the benefit of the body. Therefore, Chanukah was established to be celebrated only with thanksgiving and praise, rejoicing that the soul benefits from.

● **Why did Chazal not decree that Chanukah should be celebrated with joyous feasting like they did for Purim? (Second explanation)**

An additional reason is because when our enemies make a decree whose purpose is to coerce us to change our religion, the law is that even if the decree is to wear a certain color of shoelace one should give up one's life rather than follow the decree. Thus, since the decrees of the Greeks was for this purpose, many Jews gave up their lives in order to sanctify the name of Hashem, and many endured much affliction and suffering.

Therefore, if when the decree was annulled Yisrael rejoiced with feasting it would seem that their main rejoicing was because they no longer had to suffer and no longer had to give up their lives for the sanctification of Hashem's name. Thus it would appear as if giving up one's life for the sanctification of Hashem's name is a bad thing, and therefore they rejoiced when they were saved from this.

But the truth is that it is a very good thing, and the reward for one who publicly sanctifies Hashem's name is so great that if a person would realize how great is the reward that he receives for this he would constantly wish for the opportunity to sanctify Hashem's name, even though it may entail much suffering. Therefore, it is

certainly inappropriate to rejoice when such opportunities cease because of the annulment of the decrees.

However, although the reward for one who publicly gives up his life to sanctify Hashem's name is very great, the soul does not benefit from this, because it much more prefers to continue living in order to do more mitzvos and good deeds than die and receive a great reward. As Chazal teach in Pirkei Avos 4:17 "One hour of repentance and good deeds in this world is better than all the life of the world to come". Thus, although the lowly body desires the great reward, the soul desires doing mitzvos and good deeds than all the reward of the world to come.

Whilst the decrees of the Greeks were in force and people gave up their lives for the sanctification of Hashem's name, it was good for the body since it received a great reward for its suffering, but bad for the soul since it could no longer continue doing mitzvos. Thus the soul benefited from the annulment of the decrees because it could continue to do more mitzvos and good deeds, and so Chazal enacted that the festival of Chanukah should be celebrated with thanksgiving and praise which gladdens the soul but not the body.

But if they had enacted that we should celebrate it with joyous feasting it might have seemed that our main rejoicing is the rejoicing of the body because they no longer needed to give up their lives, and this would have implied that giving up one's life for the sanctification of Hashem's name is bad, G-d forbid, and worse still people might have mistakenly concluded not to give up their lives any longer. Therefore they established that Chanukah should be celebrated only with rejoicing for the soul and not for the body in order to impart the message that the body did not benefit from the annulment of the decrees because it is good to give up one's life for the sanctification of Hashem's name.

But on Purim there was no decree to convert to another religion or be killed, and thus no opportunity to sanctify Hashem's name. It was simply a decree of annihilation. Therefore when our lives were saved

from this evil decree our bodies definitely benefited, and therefore Chazal established that the occasion should be celebrated with joyous feasting to gladden the body.



◣ Ability To Begin Anew - Rabbi Yehoshua Starrett

Ideally, the Chanukah menorah should always look new. However, it is permissible to light from one that does not look new. But an earthen menorah should not be used, since after its first use it will never look new again (Orach Chaim 573:3).

An earthen receptacle is disqualified because it cannot be made to look new again. However, a glass or metal receptacle may be used, even if it does not look new, because it can be made to look new again.

The same is true with us: when we believe that we can always change, and turn over a new leaf, the Light of G-d will shine upon us, no matter how old we are. (Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom)

◣ Light Of Awakening - Rabbi Shlomo Eiger of Lublin

There are two ways to awaken someone: Either with a loud sound or by turning on the lights. On Rosh Hashana, we are awakened by the call of the Shofar. On Chanukah, we are awakened by the bright lights of emunah (faith) that shine from the Chanukah menorah.

◣ Blessings For All - Ruzhiner Rebbe

The Machzor Vitri teaches that the name Chanukah stems from Chanina or Chanan, to give gratuitous gifts. This is because on Chanukah, Hashem sends divine bounty, comparable to the blessings that descend on Rosh Hashana. - However, on Rosh Hoshana only those who are deserving receive these blessings, whereas on Chanukah we receive regardless of our merits or worthiness.

◣ Stop, Think, Thank - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

On the dreidel is says, "Neis Gadol Haya Sham - There was a great miracle there." But while the dreidel is spinning, we can't see what it says; only once it stops, can we see the reminder of the great miracle. - Similarly, when a person is busy to and fro, he can become so busy that he doesn't get a chance to see all the miracles happening to him. If he stops for a moment, he will see the miracles.

We need to stop, think, and thank Hashem!

◣ It's Within Our Reach - Sefas Emes

Chanukah - unlike other Jewish holidays - represents complete happiness. The reason is that it is the only holiday that we can fulfill completely.

Passover, Shavuos, and Sukkos, according to the Torah, all require that we offer sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem. Because we are currently unable to offer these sacrifices, our enjoyment of these holidays is incomplete. But to fulfill the requirements of Chanukah according to Torah law, all we need to do is kindle the Chanukah lights properly and thank and praise Hashem - mitzvos that are within the reach of every Jew who wishes to perform them.

◣ Become A Shamash - Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

The shamash [which is used to kindle the other candles] is customarily placed higher than the other lights.

This is because one who spends his time helping others "shine their light," will be raised even higher.

TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

Twelve Seconds - Thoughts of an 8-Year-Old Running to a Bomb Shelter



Avreimi Fizm is 8 years old. He lives in Sderot, southern Israel at the border with Gaza. A few weeks ago, he came to the USA to speak at a Chabad convention, to explain to hundreds of people what's it like to grow up and live in Sderot, where thousands of rockets are launched incessantly at your streets, homes, schools, gardens and backyards. You have only 12 seconds to run and find shelter. 12 seconds that could spell the difference between life and death!

He spoke of the thousands of times in his 8 short years that he made it to the bomb shelter after hearing the sirens, and many other times when he could not find shelter, and he had to fall to the ground, putting his hands over his head for protection.

He said, "I want to ask of you all a small favour - close your eyes for 12 seconds. The lights will be turned off, and we'll begin…"

After the 12 seconds counted down, he shocked his audience. Instead of sharing the depth of fear and anxiety during those 12 seconds, he told the audience how, during the course of these 12 seconds over the years, he discovered the power and potential contained in 12 seconds – how much can be achieved in 12 seconds.

"I'm sharing this with you to inspire growth. For the sake of learning, to cherish 12 seconds! - In 12 seconds, you can smile from ear to ear towards a fellow human being. In 12 seconds, you can uplift another soul with a loving word or gesture. In 12 seconds, you can recite a blessing with him or her. In 12 seconds, you can embrace your fellow Jew, bring them joy and offer support and love. In 12 seconds, you can give him or her their soul back, breathing new life into them. In 12 seconds, as you lie on the ground and protect your head, you pray that the rocket does not fall on an innocent human being."

And in the Jewish tradition, we say when we wake up every morning - **מוֹדֶה אֲנִי לְפָנֶיךָ מֶלֶךְ חַי וְקַיָּם שֶׁהֶחֱזַרְתָּ בִּי נִשְׁמָתִי בְּחֶמְלָה, רַבָּה אֱמוּנָתֶךָ**

It consists of 12 words and takes 12 seconds to recite! – You have given me another day – Thank You!

I Want to Hug Every Jew in the World

Yair Einsbacher is a soldier in the IDF. On the morning of Oct 7th 2023 – Simchas Torah, he woke up early to go to shul to daven and dance Hakafot. When he left his home, the sirens sounded. In an instant, Yair knew that life wouldn't be the same again. – He was right.

Yair and his colleagues arrived at Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak, near the border with Gaza. The battles were intense. He personally eliminated many of the terrorists. Finally, after a full day of fighting, all the terrorists were eliminated. He entered a house

where many Jews were trapped inside, hiding in a locked bomb shelter.



He shouted to them, "It's the IDF, we've come to rescue you!" – They didn't believe him. They thought it was the enemy. So we screamed, "Shema Yisrael – we are Jews, we're here to get you to safety." But they were too scared to open the door, they still didn't believe them. Finally, after reciting enough pesukim from the Torah, they were convinced that it really was the IDF. – They opened the door.

Yair, sharing the story, broke down crying… and he says, "Do you know what we did when we entered that room? We fell on each of their shoulders, hugging them, kissing them and embracing them, with such love, excitement and tears, as though they were our own children whom we had just rescued."

"I left there with one desire – to hug and kiss every single Jew in the world! Don't talk to me about any separation, - I'm not interested."

Yair at that moment discovered what we're all discovering during this time – 'Beyond all the layers, we are a single organism. We are one soul that is manifested in many diverse bodies, but we have acted in ways that we've never acted before. We have become inspired with feelings that we've never felt before.'

As we face adversity, the outer shell melts away like wax in fire. I love my people. I want to hug and kiss every Jew – because you are a bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh!

Our nation was not designed to be splintered. You don't believe me?,- ask Hamas! They hunted down, and murdered with glee, every single Jew that they could without caring if he was on the right or on the left, secular or religious.

The Jewish woman who sent toys to the children of Gaza was slaughtered with the same joy as so many infants and babies whose only crime was Jewish blood running through their veins. – So, we ask ourselves – 'what is it that we all share in common? What is it about all of us that they hate so deeply?' – The infinite Divine holiness that is embedded in every Jewish soul!

Embrace the person near you, for the single reason that he or she is Jewish. Because as Hamas taught us – that's more than enough.

"Don't wait for Hamas to bring us together; Let Hashem bring us together."

L' Maaseh

One Chanuka, **Rav Moshe Feinstein's** yeshiva celebrated the Chanuka mesibah with an elaborate fleishig meal. Rav Moshe attended. The food was enjoyable and served with elegance. Of course, there was divrei Torah and the bochurim danced. Eventually, R' Moshe made his way out of the dining hall to the awaiting car and the bochurim escorted him, dancing around the car, until it pulled away.

The next day, the phone in the yeshiva rang and the bochur who picked up heard R' Moshe on the other end, and he wanted to speak to the woman who worked in the yeshiva's kitchen. - After she hung up the phone, the bochur curiously asked the woman why the rosh yeshiva called her, and she told him that since he had allowed to bochurim to dance him to the car, he had neglected to come in and personally thank her for the delicious meal, and so now he was calling to apologize and express his appreciation for a job well done.

Parsha Knowledge

STORIES & INSPIRATION ON THE WEEKLY PARSHA

Torah study on Chanukah

As Chief Rabbi of the city of Tzvas and a proficient mohel, Rav Shmuel Heller zt"l was constantly in demand to perform circumcision on the baby boys in his city. However, he always begged off attending the festive meal afterward, claiming that he had many important needs to attend to. In truth, R' Shmuel just wanted to get back to his learning, for every second of Torah study was precious to him.

He was once a mohel at a bris during Chanukah, and as soon as the ceremony was over, he packed up and began to leave. Someone asked him why he isn't staying. After all, there is a mitzvah to eat a meal on Chanukah, as well as at a *bris milah* (circumcision). R' Shmuel smiled and replied that he was following the dictum of our Sages on Chanukah. "The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) asks the famous question: *Mai Chanukah?*– 'What is Chanukah?' What is the purpose and meaning behind this festive holiday?" As he turned to leave R' Shmuel concluded, "And what is the answer given by the Sages? *D'tanu Rabbanan* – 'for the Rabbis learned.' In other words, the purpose of Chanukah is to learn the holy Torah!

Sefer Torah Tavlin explains that Indeed, our Sages tell us that the focus of the Greek Hellenists was *l'hashkicham Torasecha* – to uproot the primacy of Torah study from amongst the Jewish nation and make them no different from any other nation. But Hashem would allow no such thing and He defeated them with a mighty hand. Thus, writes the Kedushas Levi, it is incumbent upon us to increase our Torah study during Chanukah to commemorate, as well as to reestablish, that Torah learning is not the greatest thing in life – it is the *only* thing in life!



The Ladder

It is well known that the *Yamim Tovim* are not randomly positioned in the Jewish year. They form a cycle that begins with Pesach and continues throughout the year. This cycle does not simply repeat itself each year. Instead, it takes the form of a ladder which begins at the month of Nissan and ascends through the year, with each Yom Tov representing one rung on the ladder.

As stated, the cycle begins with Pesach - a Yom Tov which commemorates Klal Yisrael's birth as a nation. It thus falls during the spring, when everything in nature is reborn, from animals to trees and every living thing.

Shavuos commemorates *Matan Torah*. This represents the "Bar Mitzvah", the time when we take the yoke of Torah upon ourselves. However, although receiving the Torah makes this *chag* extraordinarily important, it still does not provide the ultimate connection to Hashem. At this time, we still occupy the lower rungs of the ladder of the *Mo'adey haShanah*.

The closest relationship that exists is that of husband and wife, created through marriage. The Yom Tov of Sukkos celebrates Klal Yisrael's marriage to Hashem and the Sukkah represents our *chuppah* - a place designated for Klal Yisrael and Hashem to spend

time together. This is why there is a Mitzvah of *teshvu ke'en taduru* - making the Sukkah one's true place of dwelling.

A chassan must arrive at his *chasuna* clean and well dressed. If he is a garbage cleaner, he simply cannot arrive at his *chuppah* straight from work – it is imperative that he shower and change his clothes. Likewise, before we enter our wonderful marriage with Hashem, we must ensure that we are spiritually clean. Since, unfortunately, we have slipped and committed *aveiros* during the year, we have become soiled and dirty and are in no state to get married or to enter the *chuppah* with Hashem.

This is why, prior to the wonderful days of Sukkos, we experience the *Yamin Noraim*, when we purify ourselves, do Teshuvah, and ask Hashem for forgiveness. And most importantly, on the awesome day of Yom Kippur we affirm, "*mi metaher eschem, Avichem shebaShamayim*" – "*Who purifies us? Our father in Heaven*!" Then, once we have undergone this cleaning process, and spent a full Elul and *Yamim Noraim* with Hashem, we can begin the Yom Tov of Sukkos and celebrate our marriage - the onset of another level of connection to Hashem.

Our wonderful marriage to Hashem climaxes on *Hoshana Rabah* which represents the *cheder Yichud*. This day, as we grasp our *aravos*, is a moment of almost unimaginable closeness, to Hashem.

What could be More?

In light of the above, *Hoshana Rabah* would appear to be the highest rung on the ladder. What could eclipse the *Chasuna* and *cheder Yichud* with Hashem? But this does not appear to be the case. Not long after Sukkos another Yom Tov begins - apparently a higher rung on the ladder. We refer of course to the Yom Tov of Chanukah. How are we to understand this Yom Tov's enormous significance?

R' Shimshon Pincus offers the most fascinating and enlightening explanation into the Yom Tov of Chanukah, which resolves our question.

The Happiest Day?

It is commonly believed that the happiest day in a couple's life is the day they get married. Their wedding is the moment they have been waiting for, a plan that has finally come to fruition. They smile together and are surrounded by singing, dancing, and celebrations.

However, although this is certainly a joyous day and a highlight in their lives, it is far from the happiest. While they are overjoyed with one another, this is somewhat due to the fact that they are at their best. They are dressed in the finest *chasuna* clothes and smiling for the camera, they are surrounded by friends and family and in celebratory mood, and they are each having a wonderful time.

Their mood and the atmosphere of joy will not last forever. The day will come when they will not both be smiling. In the back of their minds, on their very wedding day, they are worried about what will happen when she burns his favourite food three consecutive times. What will happen when they have their first fight? Will they manage to prevail through darker times and make theirs a lasting marriage? Thus, although their wedding day is certainly joyous and exciting, this niggling worry somewhat dampens their spirits. - So which is, in fact, the happiest day of a couple's life?

A short while later the couple's first disagreement will break out. She will no longer see the smiling and gleaming *Chassan* she saw a few weeks ago and he will no longer see the wonderful *Kallah* which he knew during the engagement time and the first days of their marriage. In the words of R' Pincus they will each wake up in the morning *and see a monster in front of them*!! This is when their marriage is truly put to the test. Do they have a *kesher shel kayama*? Do they have what it takes to make it a lasting marriage?

The Real Happiest Day!

On that fateful day, if the *Chassan*, now husband, apologizes to his wife and she forgives him, they will know that theirs is a lasting marriage. **This is truly the happiest day in their lives.**

This is also the meaning of the wonderful days of Chanukah and the reason it is a rung above the previous *Yamim Tovim*. Previously, we experienced powerfully important days with Hashem. We celebrated Pesach and Shevuos. We underwent a deep-cleaning process during the *Yamim Noraim* and then went under the *Chuppah* on Sukkos and into the *cheder yichud* on *Hoshana Rabah*. These were wonderful days, to be sure, but we were still unsure if our marriage with Hashem would endure.

During the shofar blowing on Rosh Hashanah and during Ne'ila as we make our *kabbalos* for the year, we wonder, "*Is this for real?*" "*Are we truly heading towards permanent change?*" During the climax of Sukkos as we are married to Hashem and feel a deep and intimate connection to Him, we make strong resolutions and commit to a deeper and stronger connection to Hashem in the future. We promise ourselves that things will be different. However, in the back of our minds we are scared and unsure if our commitments will last. Will we manage the long and dark months of the winter *zman* whilst holding on to our *kabbalos*? What will happen on the day that we fall? What will happen during a day in Cheshvan or Kislev when we will, *kaveyachol,* have a "fight" with Hashem? Is ours a lasting relationship?

Chanukah is a time of light amidst the darkness. It is a period when we repair the damage and make up the "fight" we had with Hashem. We may have fallen, we may have experienced harder and darker times, but now we are making up with Hashem. This is a tremendous *simcha*. Now that we have returned to Hashem **we see that we have a lasting relationship with Him. We have proven that even if we fall, even if we, *kaveyachol,* "fall out" with Hashem, we know how to make up and return to Him.** This is why Chanukah is an even happier day than the other *Yamim Tovim* and why it must follow them in the cycle of the year. It is a time of true "*simchas libo*".

It is no secret that we are currently experiencing a particularly bitter part of the *galus*. We have suffered terrible losses and are

greatly distressed. There is no question that the Yom Tov of light within the darkness is refreshing for Klal Yisrael. However, there is much more than that too.

As we enter the wonderful days of Chanukah, the days in which our steadfast connection to Hashem is manifested, let us commit to utilizing them to the maximum. **Even if we have fallen and are not upholding the high standards we pledged during *tekias shofer* and Ne'ilah, now is the time to return to Hashem and make up. Though we may not have kept our resolutions, not fulfilled our ambitions, we now have the great opportunity to return and light a flame during a moment of great darkness!**

Close to forty years ago two friends served together in the Israeli army. One of them, Matti, was a religious Jew who believed in Hashem and did his best to keep all the mitzvas despite the challenging situations in which he often found himself. His friend, Yoram, was quite the opposite. He despised anything even remotely connected to Judaism. Yoram taught his children that the Jews are no different to any other nation and Eretz Yisrael is no different to any other country and did not involve himself or his family with anything related to kedushah. Despite their differences, the two friends had a close relationship and respected one another. However, this changed on the 6th October 1973 with the sudden outbreak of the Yom Kippur war.

Matti, Yoram and their entire unit were sent to the front lines to the scene of an intense battle. Every day at dawn they would awaken and begin fighting from the trenches. The conditions were terrible, and other soldiers, including their closest friends, were falling every day.

Matti made sure that he continued to learn and daven devotedly, even arising before dawn to don tefillin and daven Shacharis. During the fierce battle, he did not just fight with his gun, but with his

mouth as well. As he picked up his gun to shoot, he would cry out, "Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeynu Hashem Echad". As he saw the bullets flying pasts his head, he would heartfully say "Shema Yisrael". Throughout the war these precious words were his constant refrain.

His dear friend Yoram who was fighting alongside him was deeply bothered by this. He exclaimed, "I understand that you are religious and I respect that, but your constant recital of Shema Yisrael is bothering me, please stop". To this, Matti replied, "You fight your way, I fight my way".

As the days went on and the fighting intensified, Yoram slowly became accustomed to his friend's 'fighting method'. It no longer bothered him as much and he even began to slightly appreciate it.

On one particularly difficult day the two friends were fighting side by side. People were falling all around them and morale was low. Suddenly Yoram felt something was missing - he could no longer hear the cry of Shema Yisrael. He looked for his beloved friend and found him lying on the trench floor. He had been shot and was about to depart from the world. Yoram bent down towards his dying friend and felt deeply that he had to do something for him. He tearfully exclaimed, "My dear friend, in your final moments, what can I do for you?" Matti responded, "My dear friend, you can continue saying Shema Yisrael in my place". And with those words he closed his eyes for the last time and returned his Neshama to his Creator.

At that moment Yoram`s life changed. He began saying Shema Yisrael to honour the dying wish of his dear friend Matti, but he did not stop with that. He began davening, learning and faithfully serving Hashem and, as he later recounted, "It was not that I began believing at that point, but at that moment the heavens opened and I saw Hashem!" In other words, at that moment the spark hidden deep within Yoram was reignited and the burning flame of a loyal Yid rose to the surface. And likewise, throughout the generations, even

from within the deepest and darkest moments, the spark of the Yid rises and ultimately prevails.

Let us remind ourselves that despite the nisyonos we experience we are the nation of Yaakov, and the kedusha within us is who we really are. Just like during the times of the Chashmonaim when the light overcame the darkness, may Hashem similarly help the light overcome the darkness that surrounds us today, and most importantly, let us daven that Hashem ignite the spark within Klal Yisrael and inspire us to return to Him.

Look at Your Pocket!

Moshe had a very large Judaica store, and, before Chanukah, he ordered a huge amount of menorahs, dreidels, oil, wicks, and other Chanukah goods. In the days preceding Chanukah, and of course on Chanukah itself, he was very busy - people came in crowds, purchasing his merchandise.

Finally, at the end of Zos Chanukah, when the very last customer had left, he looked through his store and saw that every last menorah and dreidel had been sold. Then he began to cry. A customer came in, saw Moshe crying, and asked him why he was sad. Moshe replied, "I had so much merchandise, so many menorahs and dreidels, and now nothing is left". The customer laughed. "Yes", he said, "but look at your pocket! This period of the year has given you a great amount of revenue!"

We go through different, special times in the year, and often, as we leave those periods, we feel sadness, disappointment at leaving the Yom Tov, the closeness to Hashem, and the beauty of the *moed*. However, we must always remember to look at what we have in our pockets. Hashem does not just send us the Yamim Tovim to enjoy, but to take them with us and act upon the lessons and influences which we have experienced.

All the more so with the *chag* of Chanukah; the entire essence of which is persevering during dark times.

Although Chanukah is indeed a very special time, it is not a complete Yom Tom. Other than some changes to the tefillos and lighting the *menorah*, we keep to our regular schedule. The reason for this is that we seek to take the lessons and *kedusha* of the time and integrate it into our regular lives.

Let us indeed maximize these lessons, take all that we have learned during this special time into the upcoming year, and thereby, b'Ezras Hashem, reach great heights.



What's Better: To Prepare Wicks for the Chanukah Candles by Oneself, Or to Buy Ready-Made Better Quality Wicks

They say over that the **Chofetz Chaim** would spend lots of time preparing wicks from cotton wool for his Chanukah candles. After hearing this, a particular Yid decided to copy, and it also took him a lot of time. Each wick needs to be more or less the same size, the same width, and they need to be cut in order to be made straight etc. all this takes time.

The wife of this particular Yid approached her husband, and she said, "You are a big masmid, is it not a waste of your precious time? Especially today, when it's very easy to buy ready-made cotton wicks, and they are very nice, and not even to expensive. Moreover, they burn much better than the wicks that were available in the days of the Chofetz Chaim."

Taking into account the words of his precious wife, this avreich decided to ask **R' Yitzchok Zilberstein** if it was worthwhile spending

time preparing the wicks, or if he should listen to his wife, and buy ready-made ones.

R' Zilberstein responded as follows:

The Importance of Preparing for a Mitzvah



Preparing for a mitzvah is a very important and special thing. Proof can be brought from the Mordechai. The Mordechai (Succah 769) asks: Why is it that when making a succah one can recite the berachah of she'hechayanu, however, when preparing Chanukah candles one can't, surely both mitzvos only come from time to time? The Mordechai answers: When preparing candles, it is not clear that it is being done for Chanukah, as perhaps one is lighting for his own need, however, when building a succah, it's clear that it's being done for Succos.

We see the importance of preparing for a mitzvah, so much so that the Mordechai entertained a possibility that one should make a berachah on it However, it doesn't prove that making the wicks is also important and special, as perhaps the Mordechai is talking about putting the wicks into the oil and filling up oil, but not the preparation of the wicks themselves.

What Is Better, To Make Not So Beautiful Wicks by Oneself, or To Buy Beautiful Wicks?

The Chayei Adam (Klal 68:7) discusses this question. He asks, is it better for one to write a Sefer Torah by himself, although it won't be so mehudar, and fulfil the concept of mitzvah boi yoser mibishluchoi [it's better for one to perform the mitzvah himself,

then through an agent] or if it's better to hire a sofer [scribe] to do it on his behalf. He concludes "tzorich iyun" [the matter needs looking into].

The Shu"t Dovev Meishorim (1:47) writes: It is obvious that one should hire a sofer. He cites proof from the Yerushalmi. The Yerushlami (Yoma 6:1) writes: When bringing the korban omer, if one finds ready cut crop which is wet and fresh, and he also has the option of cutting dried out crop, it is better to bring the fresher crop. The Korban Eidah explains: Although there is a mitzvah to cut the crop, fresh wet crop is better, therefore, it comes first.

We see, that although cutting the crop for the korban omer is a mitzvah, it's better to use the better crop, therefore, concludes the Dovev Meishorim, the same thing is with mitzvos, and although it is best for one to do the mitzvah himself, if by someone else doing it, it will be better and more mehudar, one should get someone else to do it.

There is a story with **R' Chaim Kanievsky**: At one point in his life he decided that he wanted to write a Sefer Torah and he went to learn by various sofrim how to write. When he finished learning he sat down and started to write a Sefer Torah. However, at some point, he realized it wasn't as easy as he thought, and that his writing wasn't so beautiful, and he decided it would be better if a professional sofar would do it. He then gave over the job to a sofar.

Conclusion

We see from here says R' Zilberstein, that if one can do the mitzvah in a more mehudar fashion, it is better to do it using an agent than for one to do it himself. Therefore, since nowadays, we can very easily buy mehudar wicks, it is best to do so. And with the extra time one has, he should either learn Torah or teach his children about the importance of the days of Chanukah.

Tzedokah on Chanukah

The *Magen Avraham* (670) notes that there is a special custom to give *tzedokah* on Chanukah, writing that the *Sefer Chanukas HaBayis* explains the reason for this custom.

The *Sefer Chanukas HaBayis* references the system of *gematria* known as **א"ת ב"ש** , *at-bash*. Letters are exchanged according to a system where the first letters of the *aleph-beis* is exchanged for the last, the second for the second to last, third for the third to last, etc.

The *Chanukas HaBayis* applies the system of *at-bash* to the word Chanukah, and says that by doing this we can work out what the secret is behind Chanukah.

Using the *at-bash* system Chanukah becomes a collection of the letters **סטפלצ**, which is numerically equivalent to the *gematria* of **סוד צדקה**, *sod tzedokah*: 269. Thus, Chanukah alludes to the *sod*, secret, of *tzedokah*.

This is an incredible revelation. Not only is there a mitzvah of *tzedokah* on Chanukah, but the name Chanukah hints at it being the "secret of *tzedokah*," as if that is the whole essence of the Yom Tov.

Based on the above, we see that not only is there a special mitzvah to give *tzedokah* on Chanukah, but Chanukah is the very foundation of the mitzvah of *tzedokah*.

"The blessing recited over the Chanukah candles is not to "light" the candle, but rather to "ignite" the candle. This is because the Chanukah lights ignite the soul, the hearts of the Jewish nation, with a burning passion, drawing them towards Hashem." ~ The Beis Avraham, Reb Avraham Weinberg of Slonim (1884-1933)

The Weekly Vort

● The Place of The Miracle

The Bnei Yissachar asks why *Al HaNissim* on Purim mentions Shushan as the miracle's location, while Chanukah's *Al HaNissim* does not mention Eretz Yisroel?

The Bnei Yissachar explains: *Hallel* is recited only for miracles in Eretz Yisroel. During Hallel on Chanukah we say *l'hodos u'le'hallel* – that we offer praise and thanksgiving to Hashem, which implies that the miracle must have occurred in Eretz Yisroel, so the place of the miracle is already specified. However, on Purim, since the miracle took place outside Eretz Yisroel, *Hallel* is not recited, and we must specify that it occurred in Shushan. (**The Commentators' Al Hanissim**)

● The Shabbos of Moshiach's Time

Yakov Avinu had longed to institute that every day of the week be like the Shabbos of the times of Moshiach – totally saturated with the holiness of that Shabbos – but he was unsuccessful, for it was premature.

He was successful, however, in that his descendants would be able to experience some taste of this Shabbos of Moshiach's time even during the week, at such times as Chanukah and Purim. (**Sfas Emes**)

The most significant miracle on Chanukah was that Hashem mercifully saved the Jewish People from the Greeks' evil efforts to eradicate the Torah and mitzvos from their lives. - Chanukah is therefore especially suited for increased Torah study, and every Jew should increase his study of Torah during Chanukah. (**Kedushas Levi**) [Sefer Orah Ve'Simcha]

Pearls of Wisdom…A Word for the Ages

Rav Dov Berish Weidenfeld, zt"l, the Tchebiner Rav, said that on Chanukah, Hallel should not be said like Hallel is said on Rosh Chodesh. This is because Hallel on Rosh Chodesh is a Minhag, while the Hallel we say on Chanukah is a Mitzvah!

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman



There was once a talmid of Novardok, a 'Novardoker' who was extremely poor. He lived with very little. He and his wife survived on a bit of bread and butter, which they put away in portions every day.

Once, he came home after a long day of learning, and his wife told him, "A cat ate your butter today."

He said, "My butter wasn't eaten by the cat."

She got anxious, thinking he meant that the cat ate her butter.

"I'm sure of it!"

She said, "My butter was in a different place – it ate yours!"

"My butter wasn't eaten!" he repeated. "I promise you! My butter was somewhere else!"

"It couldn't have eaten my butter", he explained, "If the cat ate it, it was the cat's butter – not mine!"

We need to realize that this is true not only with animals, but with people too. If a person took something away from you, it isn't yours. And if it really is yours, it will be returned to you. – Everything is from Hashem!

Thought of the Week



"One candle can light up a whole room. One kind word can brighten up someone's whole world."

The menorah in the Beis Hamikdosh had 7 lights which burned for 8 nights, totalling 56 lights. Hence the word CHANUKA spells out CHES (8 nights) NUN VOV (56 Lights) CHOF VOV (25 kislev). ~ Rav Y C Sonenfeld.



We know that one of the main campaigns of the Greeks during the story of Chanukah was against Shabbos.

The main point of conflict between the Greeks and the Jewish people was the 'philosophy of life'. To the Greeks, it was all about the *panim* – the externalities – the face, body sculpture, the Olympics.

To the Jewish people, it was all about the *peninim* – the internalities.

The Greeks focused on the body, whilst the Jewish people focused on the *Neshama*. Therefore, what follows is, that for a whole weeklong they were in conflict, but the conflict wasn't so intense. But on Shabbos we get a Neshama Yeseira! – An expanded dose of spirituality, when are souls become larger and more powerful.

That was a day that irked them to no end.

Toras Avigdor Snippets

A sampling of previous Toras Avigdor booklets



Culture Shock

In Mesichta Shabbos (21b) the question is asked: **מַאי חֲנוּכָּה** – What's Chanukah all about? And we all know the answer to that – it was **יְוָנִים נִקְבְּצוּ עָלַי**, the wicked Greeks gathered against us to destroy us.

We said it today in the siddur: **כְּשֶׁעָמְדָה מַלְכוּת יָוָן הָרְשָׁעָה עַל עַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל לְהַשְׁכִּיחָם תּוֹרָתֶךָ**. The Syrian Greeks wanted to stamp out the Torah and we battled against them for many years; and finally, **בְּרַחֲמֶיךָ הָרַבִּים עָמַדְתָּ לָהֶם בְּעֵת צָרָתָם**, Hashem, in Your great mercy You saved us. It was **וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתֶךָ** and **זֵדִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים** – The wicked Yevanim fell into the hands of the tzadikim and the Am Yisroel merited to the miracle of the little bit of oil lasting for eight days. That's the story we all know.

Now, pay attention because the truth is very different – actually the story is not so simple. I must explain something first: The chachomim who composed our tefillos were very careful with the honor of the Jewish people and so they didn't make the truth so open. It's only from people like me who like to rake up mud and tell the dirt that you'll hear this. And the truth is that I wouldn't tell it either, but since the Book of Maccabees tells the whole story already – so now it's no secret anymore that actually, it was the Jews who caused the whole thing.

Civil War in Eretz Yisroel

It was the Jews who were the source of trouble, only that these troublemaker Jews used the Greeks as a way of forcing their fellow Jews to forsake the Torah. It wasn't the Yevanim who were our worst enemies – it was the Misyavnim, the ones who wanted to be like the Greeks. And it was only because of these Greek wannabes that our forefathers had to fight.

And therefore when you read in the siddur that "the kingdom of the Greeks" arose against the Jewish people, it's only that the chachomim wanted to be solicitous with our kavod so they let it seem as if goyim came. But who really were the zeidim who fell into the hands of oskei sorasecha? Jews! Who really were the resha'im who fell into the hands of the tazdikim? Jews! Our enemies were Jews!

That's why finally at the end of the whole story, after many wars, Antiochus became so disgusted – I'm skipping the whole story now, I'm going to the end – and he said: "What do these Jews want of me? Why are they dragging me into their own personal problems? If the Jews want to keep their religion, what business is it of mine?"

Do you think Antiochus cared if they studied Torah or not? It was the Jews who wanted to get with the times, to flatter the Greeks and imitate them, that's who was bothered by Torah and Mitzvah observance, not Antiochus. And that's why at the end he gave up; just before he died he gave up the whole business – because he wasn't interested in the whole thing. Only that he was being prodded and pushed constantly by these Hellenizer Jews.

Trouble From the Tax Authorities

What caused it all? In those days, over a period of forty years, a group arose within our people that began to follow in the ways of the Greeks. It began with a small group of tax collectors, the muchsim, who came into contact with the Greeks for whom they were collecting the taxes. It was a few families and their friends and associates who began to see the 'beauty' in Greek culture – they lost

sight of the true beauty of the Am Yisroel – and they began to follow in the ways of the Greeks

And slowly they increased and multiplied and soon a new class arose in the Am Yisroel — a new class of wealthy assimilationists. They were only a small minority, but still it was a strong and powerful minority; and because of their connections to the Greeks, they were the ones that had the say over the government.

They became whom we now call the Misyavnim, Hellenizers – it means people who have Greek ideas. And so, the first thing was exercise. Exercise is good for your body but for the Greeks the body was everything. They used to exercise naked in order to display their bodies. That's where the word gymnasium comes from – it means a place of nakedness; gymnos in Ancient Greek means naked. Now, nakedness to the Jewish people was a to'eivah – it was an abomination among Jews. אֵין לְךָ מְשֻׁקָּץ – Nobody is so hated by Hashem as a naked man (Yevamos 63b). And now there were Jews who were exercising naked in the streets of Yerushalayim.

Greek Ways and Modern Progress

Not only exercise – they admired all of the Greek ways; Greek education, Greek art, and entertainment. They liked the Greek theaters. Jews never had theaters before and now the Misyavnim got busy introducing empty ideals into the bloodstream of our nation. The Misyavnim were profaning Yerushalayim with everything the Am Yisroel had always kept far away from. The New York Times would have been proud!

You know, when Teddy Kollek was defeated as mayor of Jerusalem, so the ones who sat shivah for him most was the New York Times. The New York Times sat shivah for him, "Ay, ay, ay. What a tragedy!" They were so sad – they were praising Teddy Kollek – all the good things he did for Yerushalayim. "When he was in power, it started becoming a modern city and today there's even a little bit of nightlife already in Yerushalayim." And now, nebach, nebach, he was

defeated. It was such a sad day for the New York Times. Nightlife! That's what they want! Nightlife in the holy city of Yerushalayim.

That's what the Misyavnim wanted for Yerushalayim too! The Greeks were all over the world now and they had the sciences and beautiful architecture. They made buildings that were a beauty to behold. Wherever you went, you could see the results of the great progress and therefore many fell victim to the Greek culture. That's what happened at the time. The Misyavnim looked up to the advancing Greeks and they started bringing foreign ideas into Eretz Yisroel.

And the good Jews looked on in horror: "What's happening to our country? These meshugeners fell for the Greeks and they're bringing in all kinds of abominations now in the country. Who knows what's going to happen to us?!"

Revolt and Miracles

Everybody knows the rest of the story more or less – I won't tell you now in detail. The Am Yisroel revolted against the traitors and many people died at that time. Blood began to pour like water because they didn't want to yield to the Greeks and their Jewish cohorts – the Jews had to go into hiding from the Greeks in order to keep their Torah. And finally, finally, Mattisyahu was helped by Hakodosh Boruch Hu and he drove out the Greeks.

It didn't happen so easily – there were nissim and nissim. The Greeks of Syria had a big revolt among themselves; they had a lot of internal troubles—it was all Hashem's doing—and finally after many, many years, Mattisyahu was able to enter Yerushalayim victorious. And they dedicated the Beis Hamikdash and they lit the neiros and the great neis took place – that was **מַאי חֲנוּכָּה**, the great neis of Chanukah.

Suffering of Chanukah



When we contemplate the story of Chanukah, it is important to first make a quick disposal of a misconception from our minds. People have the impression that the *nes* Chanukah marks a celebration of a triumphant victory; our enemies were vanquished and the Jews in Eretz Yisroel were now finally able to live in peace. That's what many of us think.

But that's an error — the truth is that after the *nes* happened there were even more *tzaros* and over a longer duration than before. You know, the battles of the Chashmonaim against their enemies lasted thirty years and what happened on Chanukah took place at the beginning of this period; about five years, or four years, after the war began; which means that for twenty-five years or more they continued fighting.

And during all of those years the people continued to be persecuted by the Syrians and the Hellenizing Jews, the Misyavnim. Many many Jews were tortured, and many lost their lives during these twenty-five years after the *nes shemen* occurred. And our heroes, the Chashmonaim, fell in battle too; all the brothers were killed eventually, one after the other.

I'm telling you this because it's important for understanding the entire subject of Chanukah. We must keep in mind that the *nes* of the *shemen,* the little bit of oil that lasted eight days, didn't come in the midst of victory. It came *in the midst* of great suffering. And so, we have to re-evaluate the place of the *nes shemen* in the framework of the events as they took place.

Slaughtering Syrians and Sycophants

Everyone knows the story of how the rebellion against the Syrian-Greeks began; it's related in the book of Maccabi'im, the Sefer Chashmonaim, how a Syrian officer summoned the Jews of Modi'in to come forth and offer up on the altar of idolatry. And when one Jew, a sycophant, stepped forward to perform the offering, Mattisyohu pulled his sword from under his coat — he had prepared for this moment — and he plunged his sword into the heart of that renegade Jew; and then for good measure he finished off the Syrian officer too. That's how it began.

And in fact, it was just the beginning. The Jews had to escape to the mountains now; they had to leave their homes and hide out in caves in the wilderness. And some even blamed him for that. Some of his own people were dumbfounded at what he did; they were shouting at him, "Are you crazy? To bring such *tzaros* upon us?! **גְּזֵרָה עֲבִידָא דְּבָטְלָא** – *A decree eventually will be abolished* (Kesubos 3b)*;* sooner or later the *gezeiros* will pass but now you are bringing down the wrath of Antiochus on our heads. We have to leave our homes now and live like hunted animals in the desert! And who knows how many of us will survive because of what you did!"

Running Into Danger

Now, we shouldn't hear these words and imagine that Mattisyohu acted carelessly. Mattisyohu was certainly a *ben Torah.* **וְזֵדִים בְּיַד עוֹסְקֵי תּוֹרָתֶךָ** it says. You can be sure that Mattisyohu wasn't just a hothead who was looking for some excitement. He was a *talmid chacham* who acted with thought, with *cheshbon;* he saw that the

Jewish nation in Eretz Yisroel was at its breaking point; the people were collapsing under the pressure of the Misyavnim and soon all would be lost. And therefore, Mattisyohu and his fellow *talmidei chachomim* had calculated beforehand that it had to be done — they had to put the brakes on this downward spiral.

And they knew what would be; they understood what it meant to incur the wrath of a king with an army. It meant *tzaros,* a lot of *tzaros*. Mattisyohu and his *chaveirim* were clear-eyed about the consequences of defending the honor of Hashem, and they willingly accepted all the consequences. They were ready for everything. And it came – *everything* came.

And don't think they accepted *tzaros* for other people. Mattisyohu and his sons always were at the front of the battle. They didn't stand in the back and give orders; Mattisyohu's life was in danger all the time until he finally died. And his sons lived the rest of their lives battling in the mountains; they were killed one after the other fighting for Hashem.

Blessing in Babylon

Now we have to understand an important point; they didn't have to die. The story of Chanukah took place in Eretz Yisroel but we have to know that not all the Jews were in Eretz Yisroel at that time. There was a very big *yishuv* of Jews in Bavel – it could very well be that they were even more numerous in Bavel than in Eretz Yisroel. The Jews had come back from *galus Bavel* and settled in Eretz Yisroel. But the majority didn't come; the majority of Jews were still in Bavel.

And in Bavel there was no persecution, there were no Hellenizers ruining the people. The Gemara (Pesachim 56a) says, **בִּנְהַרְדָּעָא דְּלֵיכָּא מִינִין** – in Nehardea, that's the main town where the Jews lived in Bavel, there were no *minim*. They didn't have any Christians, they didn't have any *Tzedukim*, they didn't have anybody; just Jews. That's how it was in Bavel.

Eretz Yisroel on the other hand was a land that was favored with all *tzaros*. It's like today; the worst *apikorsim* in the world are in Eretz Yisroel today. You must know; there is nothing as poisonous in the world as the Israeli press against religious Jews. That is how it always was because the land of *kedusha* always presents the greatest *nisyanos;* the greatest obstacles are there. But Bavel on the other hand was a country where you could live and nobody would bother you. You could keep *yiddishkeit;* nobody would bother you.

Accepting Affliction

The question is, if Mattisyohu was interested in living a life of Torah and *mitzvos* without being hindered, he could have run away. Many Jews fled, this we know. Every time there were *tzaros* many Jews fled to Bavel. And so Mattisyohu could have gone with all his children to Bavel and he could have lived a quiet happy life. He needed the *tzaros* of battling the Yevanim like a hole in the head.

But Mattisyohu was a leader and he didn't want to forsake the rest of the people. There were many Jews who would remain, and they would be subjected to the pressure and influence of the *reshaim;* what would happen to the Klal Yisroel in Eretz Yisroel if Mattisyohu would abandon them to the power of the assimilated Jews who were infiltrating and destroying the *kedusha* of the people?

And therefore Mattisyohu chose *yissurim;* he knew that right now, being a servant of Hashem meant suffering for Him and so he chose to remain in Eretz Yisroel along with other *ovdei Hashem*. And the remaining wasn't a remaining where they gained power and glory and they settled down to a life of peace. No. They were all dead by the time the victory came. Of course they were in Gan Eden, but in this world they didn't have any pleasure from this fighting, from the *yissurim* they chose to undergo.

And so it was a case where they accepted *yissurim* willingly. Great people are capable of that.

102 Stories That Changed People's Lives – Rabbi Tzvi Nakar



The Banker

Reb Shmuel Strauss, a great-grandson of the Baal Shem of Michelstadt, lived in Karlsruhe, Germany, and managed a small bank that his affluent father-in-law had founded. In those days, to run a small bank, a person needed three things: a government license, official receipts, and a suit with at least two pockets to hold the money that people gave him until it could be safely deposited in the bank.

From the start, it was evident that Reb Shmuel possessed unrivaled business acumen. As a man of integrity, many entrusted their entire savings with him, enabling him to support his family in comfort.

One Friday morning, Reb Shmuel donned his Shabbos clothing to attend a relative's bris and headed straight to his office for several hours before returning to prepare for Shabbos. That evening, on Leil Shabbos, Reb Shmuel was returning home from shul when he suddenly felt something in his pocket. To his shock and horror, he realized all the monies from the morning's deposits were still in his coat, neatly that wrapped in a cheesecloth and fabric pouch.

Reb Shmuel instinctively froze, and his heart pounded wildly in his chest. His life and future, his reputation and integrity, all hung in the balance. Dropping that pouch was tantamount to throwing his entire life, everything he had worked to build, into a raging river. In his mind's eye, he could already imagine the storm in the bank, his faithful clients-simple farmers and proprietors, professionals and small-time businessmen who had put aside penny after penny over the course of many years-gathering around his house and shouting, "Thief!" "Swindler!" "Criminal!"

He closed his eyes and conjured other images in his mind-the burning flames of Shabbos candles, a majestic Shabbos table, zemiros Shabbos, and the black-on-white letters in a sefer Torah commanding, "Shamor es yom haShabbos l'kadsho."

Standing on the sidewalk in the heart of Karlsruhe, several paces away from the teeming town square, Reb Shmuel Strauss made his choice. His hands didn't even tremble and he felt no regret as he gently shook out his pocket and watched the money pouch fall to the ground. Without delay, he continued on his way, without casting another look behind him. Only in the back of his mind did the thought glimmer that he'd just switched fates with some Karlsruhe gentile who was about to catapult to wealth, while he'd plummet to poverty.

The Shabbos candles cast their ethereal glow upon the house as Reb Shmuel entered and wished his family a cheerful, "A gutten Shabbos!" and then immediately began a rousing rendition of Shalom Aleichem, whose uplifting melody floated to the streets.

That Shabbos was unlike any Shabbos the Strauss family could remember. Reb Shmuel sang every zemer and melody with extra fire and passion, and divrei Torah spilled from his lips as pearls and gems. His wife and children were all blissfully ignorant of the sacrifice he'd made on the way home from shul, and they couldn't help but be infected by his unusual enthusiasm on that uplifting Shabbos.

Three stars glittered like diamonds in the Karlsruhe sky as Reb Shmuel held his gleaming silver becher and recited Havdalah. Droplets of red wine trickled down his hand and palm as he recited the blessings, inwardly thanking Hashem for infusing him with the strength of character and spiritual fortitude to fulfill His will.

He recited a brachah acharonah and dipped his fingers into the wine, and touched his temples, chest, and then pockets, as a segulah for wealth. Then, to his family's surprise, Reb Shmuel asked everyone to be seated and listen as he told them what he'd done on Leil Shabbos.

A tempest of emotions, eddies of shock and fear, joy and consternation, terror and gratification, mingled in those moments as the family sat at the table still bedecked in its white tablecloth, and absorbed the enormity of their father's decision, his sacrifice, and future consequences. Hot tears left their eyes-tears of joy and pride, and tears of fear and sorrow. Yet Reb Shmuel urged them to wash away their anxiety, fear, and anger, and exhorted them with stirring words of mussar and the teachings of Chazal that underscore that Hashem is the One Who supports every living being and will continue providing for them.

A long, meaningful silence ensued as everyone sank into their thoughts, reflecting on what Reb Shmuel had said. They were startled by the sudden scraping of a chair against the floor as Reb Shmuel stood up abruptly and walked to the ornate coat closet, removing his hat and coat.

"I must still do my hishtadlus," he said. "I'm going to look for the money pouch. Maybe, by some odd chance, it's still there." The door closed behind him. His wife and children exchanged doleful looks, fearing for their future and their father's disappointment upon discovering that the money was gone.

Reb Shmuel, however, strode quickly toward his destination, still buoyed by the spiritual elevation of Shabbos Kodesh.

It was quite late at night, and the streets were nearly deserted, illuminated by the yellow streetlamps. Reb Shmuel hurried toward the spot where he'd dropped the money pouch several paces away from the town square, and, sure enough, right there in the corner where he'd dropped it nearly twenty-four hours earlier-was his pouch!

He knelt to the ground and picked it up. The familiar feel and thickness were sufficient for him to know that every bill was still there! Reb Shmuel lifted his eyes Heavenward. Tears shone in his eyes, and his lips murmured the timeless words of Mizmor L'sodah,

expressing his boundless gratitude to Hashem for standing guard over his money, just as Reb Shmuel had guarded Shabbos.

In a magnificent expression of Hashem's love to those who sanctify His Name, the following morning the Finance Minister of the district visited Karlsruhe. He'd heard about the honesty and integrity of the Jewish proprietor of a small bank and requested a meeting with him.

Deeply impressed by Reb Shmuel's character, the minister promptly decided to open a government account and deposit government funds in his bank. Word of the government account spread like wildfire, attracting numerous clients, who all opened accounts in Strauss Bank, ultimately causing the business to triple and then quadruple in size, catapulting Shmuel Strauss to fame and fortune. With the proceeds, Reb Shmuel donated the historic Strauss Courtyard in Yerushalayim, at the request of mussar giant Rav Yisrael Salanter, which housed numerous tzaddikim and geonim, among them Rav Itzele Blazer and Rav Naftali Amsterdam.

(Rav Moshe Turk, Rav Shmuel Strauss's great-grandson)

A Historical Background of Chanukah by Rabbi Dovid Sapirman

Some Historical Background

The war of *Chanukah* occurred in the middle of the era of the Second *Bais Hamikdash,* in the year 3622 (134 BCE). However, to really appreciate this story, it is helpful to know the historical background of the three hundred years preceding that war.

When the Jewish nation was defeated by *Bavel* in 3338 (418 BCE), the First *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed and *Yerushalayim* was burned. The Jews who survived the slaughter in *Yerushalayim* were marched off to *Bavel*, where they settled in Jewish cities. The seventy-year period between the destruction of the First *Bais Hamikdash* and the building of the Second *Bais Hamikdash* is known

as *galus Bavel*. The Babylonian empire lasted another fifty-one years, until it was conquered by the Persian empire, nineteen years before the building of the Second *Bais Hamikdash*. At this point, *Bavel* was no longer a kingdom unto itself, but merely another province in the vast Persian empire. All Jews that had previously been under *Bavel's* dominion now came under Persian rule. The Persian empire consisted of one hundred twenty-seven provinces, and Jews were scattered throughout these provinces.

One year later, a king named *Koresh* became the emperor of Persia. *Koresh* had been mentioned explicitly by name in the prophecy of *Yeshaya Hanavi*. He foretold, about two hundred years in advance, that *Koresh* would give permission to rebuild the *Bais Hamikdash*.

When *Koresh* was shown the scroll of *Yeshaya*, he was willing to comply with *Hashem's* ancient instructions.In 3390 (366 BCE), he gave permission for any Jew wishing to return to *Eretz Yisroel* to do so. He also returned the vessels of the *Bais Hamikdash*, which he had acquired when *Bavel* was conquered.

The first group that returned to rebuild the *Bais Hamikdash* and *Yerushalayim* was led by *Zerubavel*. *Zerubavel* was a descendant of *Dovid Hamelech*, and *Koresh* appointed him governor of the Province of *Yehudah*. The trip from *Bavel* to *Eretz Yisroel* was dangerous, and there were many foreign peoples living in the land. They resented the arrival of the Jews and the authority they had been given by the king.

It was a great sacrifice to make this trip and settle in *Eretz Yehudah*. The group that went along with *Zerubavel* was relatively small, because most people were not willing to relinquish the comfort of their homes in *Bavel*.

It wasn't long before our enemies wrote a slanderous letter to *Koresh*, accusing the Jews of planning to rebel against him as soon as they would complete the wall of *Yerushalyim* and the building of the *Bais Hamikdash*.

Koresh believed the slander and issued an order that all construction must be stopped. This order remained in effect for the rest of *Koresh's* life, during the entire time that *Achashverosh* was king, and until the second year of *Daryavesh* II.

It was during this time that the story of *Purim* took place. Subsequently, *Daryavesh* II, a son of *Esther* and *Achashverosh*, gave permission for the Jews to rebuild the *Bais Hamikdash*. He even gave funds to assist in its construction. He stipulated, just as *Koresh* had done before him, that the first story be built of wood, so that if the Jews would ever rebel against him and try to regain their independence, it would be easy to destroy their *Bais Hamikdash* by setting it on fire. The Persian empire lasted a total of 54 years until it was defeated by the Greeks.

The Kingdom of Greece

Far away to the west, across the Mediterranean Sea, there was a people that lived on very rocky, mountainous terrain, on the Aegean peninsula and its nearby islands. Today we call this country Greece. At that time, however, these people were divided into many city-states and kingdoms. They did not live in harmony, but were usually warring with each other. Because they were not united, it was easy for King *Daryavesh* to conquer them and impose taxes on them.

One of the kingdoms in the northern part of Greece was called Macedonia. Their king was Philip, who managed to conquer and unify the entire country into one united people. Now that Philip had the entire nation behind him, he turned his attention towards the enemy - Persia.

As Philip was engaged in war with Persia, he was killed by one of his assistants, and it seemed that all his efforts would now be thwarted. Philip had a nineteen-year-old son, whose name was Alexander. Alexander was exceptionally talented at battle, and immediately assumed the leadership of his father's armies. Although vastly outnumbered, his soldiers went to battle against *Daryavesh* and

defeated the Persian army in 3448 (308 BCE). This brought an end to the Persian empire forever.

Doniel's Visions of the Four Kingdoms

All this history had long been foretold by the prophets, especially *Doniel*. During *Galus Bavel*, prophetic visions were shown to *Doniel*, informing him of the four nations that would enslave the Jewish people. In one vision, he saw four wild animals, each one destroying the one that came before it. *Bavel* was shown as a lion, Persia as a bear, Greece as a leopard, and the fourth as an awesome animal with iron teeth, which would trample and consume everything in its path. - This fourth animal symbolized the mighty, vicious kingdom of Rome.

In his first vision, he was not shown many details about the second and third wild animals. In the second vision, he was shown much greater details about those two nations. This time, they were portrayed in a different form. The second beast was a ram which would gore with its horns, and all the other animals would be unable to stand up to it. This represented Persia, which would be extremely successful in conquering many nations, and amass a huge empire of one hundred and twenty-seven provinces.

Doniel prophesied that a he-goat would come from the west so rapidly that it would appear to be flying, without its feet touching the ground. The goat would attack the ram with tremendous rage, and the ram would not have the strength to withstand the attack. This prophecy referred to Alexander and the Greek army.

Alexander's Conquests and *Shimon Hatzadik*

Alexander travelled far and wide, conquering nation after nation. He amassed a vast empire which spread from Greece all the way to India, and down to Egypt. As soon as Persia was defeated by Greece, all of Persia's possessions automatically came under Grecian rule. In the course of his conquests, Alexander came to *Eretz Yisroel*. There was no thought of resistance or rebellion; the Greeks were simply too mighty.

At that time, the community in *Eretz Yisroel* was still very young, as the *Bais Hamikdash* had been built only thirty-four years earlier. They were also living among bitter enemies, the *Kusim*. (When the ten tribes had been sent into exile almost 240 years earlier, the conquerer *Sancheriv*, king of *Ashur*, imported a people called the *Kusim* to settle *Eretz Yisroel*. The *Kusim* had been living there ever since, and bitterly resented the return of the Jews to their ancestral homeland. They were sly and ruthless, and tried to interfere with the rebuilding of *Yerushalayim* and the *Bais Hamikdash* in any way that they could, even resorting to violence.)

Now, with the arrival of Alexander, the *Kusim* found an excellent opportunity to slander the Jewish people. They told Alexander that the Jews were planning a rebellion and did not respect the king. Alexander gave them permission to kill the Jews and do with them as they please.

The slander became known to *Shimon Hatzadik*, who was a grandson of the *Kohen Gadol*. He dressed himself in the garments of the *Kohen Gadol* and marched out to meet Alexander, followed by a parade of the most distinguished Jews and young *kohanim* holding torches. When Alexander saw *Shimon Hatzadik*, he hurried down off his horse and bowed down to the ground before *Shimon*. His officers said to him, "A king such as yourself bows before this Jew?!!" He answered them, "Before each victorious battle that I fight, I see a vision of this man leading me into victory."

Alexander asked *Shimon* why he came to him. *Shimon* answered, "Is it possible that, because of idol worshippers' slander, you would destroy a house (the *Bais Hamikdash*) where they pray for you and for the success of your reign?

"Who are they?" Alexander asked. "These *Kusim* who stand near you right now!" said Shimon.

Alexander replied that the Jews could punish the *Kusim* for their treachery in any way they wished. - From that time on, Alexander

gave power to the Jewish people to rule over the *Kusim* and deprive them of their independence.

When Alexander was taken on a tour of *Yerushalayim* and the *Bais Hamikdash*, he stated his intention to have a statue of himself built in memory of his visit. Of course, it was strictly forbidden to have a statue erected in the *Bais Hamikdash*! The Jews appeased him by promising that every male child that would be born to the *kohanim* in the coming year would be named Alexander in his honor.

After Alexander's Death

Although the *Yevanim* remained in control of *Eretz Yisroel* for 180 years, Alexander himself reigned for a total of only twelve years. One of his officers put poison in his wine, and he died at the age of thirty-two. As he was dying, he wrote a last will and testament in which he divided his empire into twelve parts.

Alexander's wishes were not carried out, and after much fighting the empire was finally split into four parts. The land of Egypt was given to an officer who adopted the name *Talmei*. The Egyptian kings who followed him were also known by the name *Talmei*. The second portion consisted of Syria, *Bavel*, and also the Jewish land of *Yehudah*. The third was an empire carved out of Persia and eastward into Asia, and the fourth consisted of Greece and Macedonia. *Eretz Yisroel* was situated right between the southern empire in Egypt and the northern empire in Syria. Therefore, at times the Jews were under the rule of the southern king of Egypt, but sometimes shifted back to the rule of the northen empire in Syria.

Not too long after the division of the empire, *Talmei* defeated the northern kingdom and took the land of *Yehudah* for himself. (Much later, at the time of the war of *Chanukah*, the king of the Syrian Greeks to the north was *Antiochus*, and *Eretz Yisroel* was in his domain.)

The Septuagint תגרום השבעים

Talmei II was a scholar who loved books of all sorts. He had a deep respect for the *chachomim* and for the *Torah*, and wanted, more than anything, to be able to study the *Torah* in Greek. So, he commanded the *Kohen Gadol* to send him seventy of the greatest *chachomim*.

When they came, he put each one in a separate place and commanded them to translate the *Torah* into Greek. All the *chachomim* understood that there are things in the *Torah* which could not be translated literally for a gentile king, because he would not understand them. He would belittle and make fun of the Torah.

Although they could not confer with each other, each of the *chachomim* altered the text from a literal translation to a loose translation, and all seventy versions were identical! -This translation is called the Septuagint, which in Greek means "the translation of the seventy."

From that time on, the words of the *Chumash* were accessible to the nations of the world as well as to the Jewish people. *Chazal* tell us that when the *Torah* was translated into Greek, darkness settled upon the world for three days. It was considered a tragic time, as sad as the day when *Bnei Yisroel* made the golden calf.

Although we don't begrudge other nations the opportunity to learn from our *Torah* and be influenced by it, the *Torah* was greatly cheapened by this translation. *Torah* is infinite, with an infinite number of meanings and lessons to be learned from each word and every letter. The translation limits the *Torah* to just one, superficial meaning. Also, the fact that the *Torah* was now in the hands of the gentiles meant that they could distort it if they wanted to.

This they certainly did, in the course of time! The Christian religion is based on a very distorted understanding of the *Tanach*. Islam also is based, to a great extent, on a distorted view of the *Tanach*.

The צדוקים

During the period when the *Yevanim* were in control of *Eretz Yisroel*, new heretical ideas arose, for the very first time in history. One was the prevalent denial of the belief in *Olam Haba*.

In order to counteract this belief The Men of the Great Assembly decreed that after each *bracha* in the *Bais Hamikdash*, the people should respond by blessing *Hashem* "*min ha'olam v'ad ha'olam*".

Early in the era of the second *Bais Hamikdash*, two groups arose that corrupted our *mesorah*. These were the *Tzadokim* and *Bitussim*. The founders of these two groups, *Tzadok* and *Bituss*, were *talmidim* of *Anitgnos Ish Socho*. When he taught, "Do not be like servants who serve the master with intention of receiving reward," they declared that he meant to say that there is no such thing as an afterlife. Of course, *Antignos* meant no such thing! He only meant that we should serve *Hashem* out of love, and not for the reward. However, these two *reshaim* actually understood from *Anitgnos*' words precisely that which they wanted to hear. (The belief in the Afterlife is a major hindrance to one who desires to live a life of indulgence and constant partying. After all, if there is an Afterlife, then this world is merely a preparation, a temporary stopover, where we earn our place in eternity. Reward and punishment need not necessarily be meted out in this world, since *Hashem* has forever to settle the accounts.

If, on the other hand, this life is the only existence, and since we see no obvious pattern of reward and punishment, then the only sensible thing to do is to indulge in as many pleasures as we can while we are alive.

This was precisely what *Tzadok* and *Beitus* wanted to do, so they grabbed at the opportunity to misinterpret *Antignus*' words to that effect.) Although they claimed to believe in *Hashem* and in the written *Torah*, they really did not believe in anything at all. However, they knew that the people would not tolerate them if they told the

truth, so they said that they do not believe in the oral *Torah* and in the right of the *chachomim* to enact Rabbinic laws.

They broke away from the *Torah*, and their followers became known as *Tzadokim* and *Bitussim*. These two groups were greedy and ruthless, with no other interests but money, power, and indulging themselves in the pleasures of this world. They were a constant source of trouble to our people up until the time that the *Bais Hamikdash* was destroyed.

The New Ruling Class

When the Jewish people were under the Greek-Egyptian rule of *Talmei*, he demanded that they pay him very heavy taxes. *Chonio*, a son of *Shimon Hatzadik*, was a very selfish and irresponsible *Kohen Gadol*. He refused to bother collecting the taxes for *Talmei*, even though this posed a threat to national security.

Chonio had a nephew named *Yosef ben Tovia*, who was brilliant and charming, yet sly and without scruples. He convinced his uncle to let him go to Egypt to appease the king, and was given money for expenses from government funds. With this money, he first bought lavish gifts to win over the king's messenger so he could obtain an extension of time to pay the taxes. Then he went to the *Kussim*, with whom he was very friendly, and negotiated an enormous loan.

When he went down to Egypt, he had enough money to buy lavish gifts for the king and his ministers, and also to purchase the concession of collecting the taxes in the land of *Yehuda*.

Of course, a tax collector needs a police force behind him, so the king supplied him with an army of three thousand soldiers to help him collect the taxes.

He returned to *Eretz Yisroel* with an army behind him. The first place he went to collect taxes was the city of *Aza*. He demanded that they pay seven times the original amount of the tax. The people there did not respond to this request, so he took ten of their leaders

and had them hanged. He also robbed the citizens of their money. - The news spread across the land, and the people were terrified.

From then on, whenever *Yosef* approached a city, the people came out to greet him with the tax money in advance. In this manner, he gained control over the entire *Eretz Yisroel*. All of *Yosef's* assistants became very wealthy, and they became the ruling upper class among the Jewish people.

The *Misyavnim*

Yosef and his followers became the first *Misyavnim*. The word "*Misyavnim*" means "people who make themselves into Greeks." These Jews longed to be part of the Greek culture, and live the same lifestyle as the Greeks. They cast away observance of *Torah* and *mitzvos* in order to live their lives like their gentile conquerors.

When the Jews had lived under the Babylonians and the Persians, they never tried to assimilate into these cultures. The Babylonians and Persians were coarse, rude people, in whom there was nothing to admire. Not so the Greeks. Greek culture was very aesthetic and attractive. The Greek language was very beautiful. In this language, they wrote poetry and ballads about their heroes. They staged plays and sang songs of bravery. The Greeks were experts in architecture and built magnificent buildings. They revered physical beauty, especially the human body. The men spent their days in gymnasiums in sports, games and bodybuilding.

The Greeks worshipped many gods. They attributed to their gods all the faults that humans can have. Their gods were immoral and fought in rivalry over girlfriends. They robbed, lied, and deceived one another. It goes without saying that, if the Greeks imagined their gods behaving this way, they would not hesitate to act this way themselves. They had no guilty conscience when they did something wrong, because their belief did not teach right and wrong, only indulgence.

Such a lifestyle is tempting to people. Although every person has the capacity for greatness and nobility, there is also a side of the human personality which longs for a life of indulgence without restrictions.

Violence and Corruption

Chazal tell us that enemies that come from outside are not nearly as harmful as those that come from within the Jewish people. The *Misyavnim* were not content to live their lives unhindered by the restrictions of their ancient faith. They wanted to take control of the whole country, and force everyone else to live as they themselves desired to live. They accomplished this through the influence they gained by giving significant bribes to the king in Syria.

In the long period between the appearance of the first *Misyavnim* and the war of *Chanukah*, life as an observant Jew became increasingly difficult. These evil, power-hungry Jews manipulated the Syrian-Greek kings to give them control over the nation, and particularly over the *Bais Hamikdash*. The position of *Kohen Gadol* was sold to the highest bidder, regardless of how corrupt an individual he was. They introduced foreign innovations into the *Bais Hamikdash* and *Yerushalyim*.

The atmosphere in the Jewish land rapidly deteriorated to be more Greek-like than Jewish. Any resistance from the G-d fearing *tzadikim* was put down by brutal force. This was the situation even before the beginning of *Antiochus*' reign.

Antiochus

Antiochus would not have forced the Jews to forsake the *Torah* of his own accord. It was the *Misyavnim* who incited him to do so. The real enemies in the story of *Chanukah* were the *Misyavnim*, even more that the Greeks.

A very corrupt individual from the *Misyavnim* purchased the appointment of *Kohen Gadol* through a massive bribe. The king then gave him control of the entire land. The *Sanhedrin* was stripped of

all its power, and the *Misyavnim* went all out to desecrate everything holy to the Jewish people.

At the insistence of the new *Kohen Gadol*, a gymnasium was built right near the *Har Habayis*, where young *kohanim* were encouraged to spend their days in body building and sports competitions, rather than studying the *avodah*.

Soon a feud arose, and a new *Kohen Gadol* (who was not even a *Kohen*) was appointed. It was only then, in 3616 (140 BCE), that Antiochus began making decrees against *mitzvah* observance.

Mesirus Nefesh for *Mitzvos*

There were three years during which the *korban tamid* was not brought at all. In addition, there were numerous decrees the *Yevanim* instituted to prevent *Bnai Yisroel* from doing *mitzvos*. Many courageous and pious Jews made every effort to circumvent these decrees. When the king forbade bringing *bikurim* to the *Bais Hamikdash*, Jews loaded their wagons with *bikurim* covered with dried figs to conceal the *bikurim*. When the guards on the highways asked them where they were going, they responded that they were going to the pressing house to press the dried figs into round cakes. The guards let them through, and they brought their *bikurim* to the *Bais Hamikdash*.

When the *Yevanim* decreed that no one was permitted to bring wood for the *mizbeach*, they made the wood into ladders and pretended they were going to pigeon coops in the area. When they got through, they took the ladders apart and brought the wood to the *Bais Hamikdash*.

Both of these exploits are remembered in the *Kinos* we read on *Tisha B'av*.

The *Yevanim* decreed that no one may perform a *bris milah*, on pain of death. Many Jews risked their lives, and indeed many lost their lives, performing this precious *mitzvah*. They had to do it secretly,

and devised various methods of letting people know there was to be a *bris*. In some places, they lit candles, (which is the reason there is a *minhag* to light candles at a *bris*). In other places, they would make noise with a grinder to grind the medicine powders that would be sprinkled on the baby's wound. - Some Jews chose death rather than surrender their faithfulness to *Hashem*.

Megilas Antiochus is a historical document written about *Chanukah*. It is recorded there that when the *Yevanim* decreed that every Jew must openly break the *Shabbos*, one thousand Jews went to hide in a cave. The *Misyavnim* tattled on them, and troops were dispatched to the opening of the cave. The Jews were given the choice of compliance or death, and they all chose death. (This was *halachically* correct, because in a time of forced conversion, one is obligated to give up one's life.)

When the *Yevanim* saw that the Jews were not buckling under, they made new and even harsher decrees. They did not allow any *Torah* study, and they interfered with Jewish family life. Life became basically unbearable for anyone who wanted to keep *mitzvos*.

Matisyahu and His Sons

Matisyahu, son of *Yochanan* (a former *Kohen Gadol*), was already a very old man at the time of the war of *Chanukah*. He and his five sons were hiding in the village of *Modeyin*. Their distress over what was happening knew no bounds.

Matisyahu secretly sent his son *Yehudah* through all the Jewish cities to gather all who feared *Hashem*, with the ancient battle cry, "Whoever is for *Hashem* come to me!"

A group of the devoted ones came with him back to the village, and *Matisyahu* blessed them and encouraged them. He told them to *daven* to *Hashem* and to fight against their enemies.

The treacherous *Misyavnim* informed the government of an impending rebellion, so they sent an army to *Modeyin* to forcibly

convert *Matisyahu* and his followers to their idolatry. When they arrived, they built an altar to the Greek god and commanded that a pig should be offered up on it. They asked *Matisyahu* to be the first, but he refused, saying, "You do what your king commands you, and we will do what our King commands us."

One of the wayward Jews now slaughtered the *chazir* and brought it up on the altar. *Matisyahu* was enraged and zealously acted for the *kavod* of *Hashem*. He and his sons pulled out small swords that they had concealed under their garments. *Matisyahu* jumped onto the altar and chopped off the head of the Jew who had offered the sacrifice. Then he proceeded to kill the commanding Greek officer.

The rebellion was on! *Matisyahu* and his sons attacked the Greek army so fearlessly, and killed so many, that the rest ran away. *Matisyahu* broke apart the altar, and proclaimed, "Whoever cares about the *Torah* of G-d, and upholds His covenant, should come and join me."

Matisyahu lived only one year after the beginning of the rebellion. Before his death, he appointed his son *Yehuda* to lead the war effort.

A Long War

There were many episodes of attacks by the massive armies of the *Yevanim*, compared to the very small group of *Chashmonaim*. The help from *Hashem* was unmistakable and miraculous. Just as we say in *Al Hanisim*, it was "the mighty in the hands of the weak and the many into the hands of the few."

After much fighting, the Jews were finally able to reach the *Bais Hamikdash* and cleanse it from the mess that the *Yevanim* had wrought there. - The miracle of the oil is well known to all Jews, young and old. However, we need to understand why this miracle was necessary.

The general rule is that *Hashem* does not want the world to run miraculously and only performs a miracle when there is a dire need. Was it really necessary for Hashem to make a miracle so that they could light the *Menorah* all that week? What would have happened if they would have had to wait another week until they could produce a fresh supply of oil? After all, the *Menorah* hadn't been lit for so long! Was it *pikuach nefesh* that it be lit during that week?!

There is a very important message here, one of the most fundamental messages of the *Yom Tov* of *Chanukah*.

The war of *Chanukah* was not fought for independence from foreign rule. *Eretz Yisroel* had already been under the dominion of alien rulers for almost three hundred years, since the fall of the First *Bais Hamikdash*. It was fought exclusively so that *Yidden* could continue to learn *Torah* and keep *mitzvos*, just as they had always done since *Matan Torah* at *Har Sinai*.

Matisyahu and his followers had been *moser nefesh al kiddush Hashem*. They spared no effort, and no sacrifice was too great. Their comforts, their possessions, and even their very lives were all secondary to their desire for *k'vod Shomayim*. They gave their all and held nothing back. They deserved a heavenly sign of approval.

The oil of the *Menorah* symbolizes the light of *Torah*, which was precisely what they had preserved with their superhuman sacrifices. In response, *Hashem* also did something He generally prefers not to do; He made a miracle to show them how great was their *z'chus* in preserving the *Torah* for all future generations.

One of the greatest lessons we can learn from *Chanukah* and the *Chashmonaim* is that we should always do our utmost for *kiddush Hashem*. This should be first and foremost in our minds, in all that we do. Then *Hashem* will bless our efforts, and we will be *zocheh* to the final *geula*, when we will all join to greet *Moshiach Tzidkainu*. *Amen!*

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt -The fire of Torah



Shavuos is the Yom Tov associated with **תורה שבכתב** whereas Chanuka is connected with **תורה שבעל פה**.

The Trisker Magid (1806-1889) points out that Sivan which is when Shavuos occurs, is the 3rd of the summer months. Kislev which is when Chanuka takes place, is the third of the winter months Chanuka is associated with **תורה שבעל פה** as it is not written anywhere in the Torah. In fact, the 36 candles of Chanuka correspond to the 36 Mesachtos of Shas.

תורה שבעל פה requires toil. The Menora was made by being thrown into fire. This refers to Torah with toil. Thus, Torah is called fire as in **אש דת למו**. In fact, the words **דת למו** form the term **תלמוד**; Gemara, **תורה שבעל פה**. How was the Torah given? Amidst fire! For this reason, Har Sinai is called **חורב** as in **אכלני חרב**; scorching heat.

In regard to the Menora, it states **מקשה תיעשה המנורה**; it is made beaten out. This refers to toil. If one does this, then as the Pasuk there says, he will build a **מנרת זהב טהור**; Menora of pure gold.

We know that **יון** wanted **להשכיחם תורתך**; to make us forget Torah. Indeed, the exile of **יון** is called **חשך**; darkness. In fact, **חשך** and **שכח** are composed of the same letters as they tried to make us forget the Torah.

The Pasuk states **גל עיני ואביטה נפלאות מתורתך**; *uncover my eyes and I will see the wonders of your Torah*. This is the opposite of **יון** who bring about darkness causing us not to see the light of the Torah. With this we can then fulfil **העם ההלכים בחשך ראו אור גדול**; *the people who walked in darkness (because of* **יון***) have seen a great light.*

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Victory of the few

We say in **על הנסים - רבים ביד מעטים** ; you delivered the many into the hands of the few. Another meaning is that the impurity of the **רבים** can be delivered into the purity of the **מעטים** . One campus Rabbi in a University can bring a hundred secular Jews closer to their roots.

Here are some other instances of this concept. **R' Ahron Kotler** opened up the Lakewood Yeshiva in America in a time of spiritual desolation in America. Taking a look at the thousands learning there today we see a fulfilment of **רבים ביד מעטים**.

Another example of this idea was the **Ponovicher Rav** who arrived in Eretz Yisrael after having lost his wife and children in the holocaust. He went on to build the Ponovicher Yeshiva where thousands learn today. That is **רבים ביד מעטים**.

One last modern day example of this is **R' Elyashiv** who was the only child born to his parents. Yet, when he died at 102 in 2012, it is said he left behind 1,000 descendants.

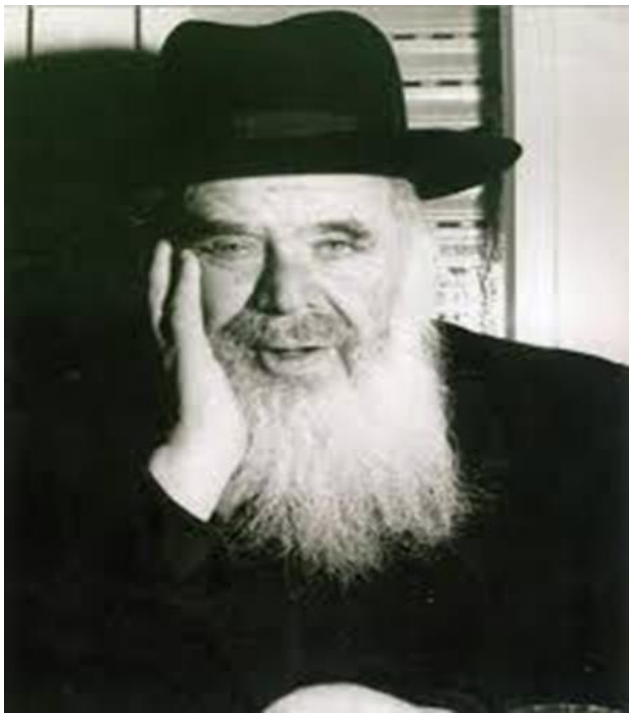
The Parshios that fall out Chanuka time deal with the tests of Yosef. Yosef personified this as he was alone in Mitzrayim- **ערות הארץ** yet he was able to overcome that. That is **רבים ביד מעטים**



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

People often use cotton for the wicks on Chanukah. In Yiddish, cotton is vatte. Vatta also means distant (**ווייט**). We use vatte wicks to hint that even those who are distant from Hashem can come close to Him on Chanukah.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo



Leah Imeinu taught us the middah of appreciation when she had her fourth son and named him Yehudah. Appreciation is the hallmark of a Jew - thus, we are known as "Yehudim." Human relationships are cultivated when one gives to another. The ensuing feeling of gratitude becomes the catalyst for more giving. In our relationship with Hashem, we have no way to cultivate and deepen our bond, since we have nothing we can possibly GIVE to Hashem.

R' Chaim Shmuelevitz ZT"L, this is precisely what Hashem had in mind; that we mortal humans should not feel indebted to Him, with no way to repay Him back. Therefore, He commanded us to build a Mishkan and light a Menorah.

The Medrash Raba states that Hashem tells His beloved nation that although He does not require our light - Hashem lights up the entire world - He is giving us the opportunity to provide Him some measure of light when we light the Menorah. This is our way of expressing our Hakaras Hatov to Him.

As we enter the month of Kislev and begin polishing up our Menorah in anticipation of the great "Festival of Light" that is soon to be upon us, we must recall how Hashem gave us this mitzvah so that we may show our appreciation to Him. Perhaps the message of the Medrash is that WE need to become THE Menorah that projects and shines this incredible light of Hashem out to the world. May we be zoche to truly express our Hakaras Hatov to Hashem, through our pleasant actions and exemplary behaviour.

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - Veering Off Little By Little



The Greeks didn't want to kill us rather they wanted to take us away from Judaism. This is indicated in the letters of **יון** as each letter that follows is bigger than the previous- as it begins with a **י**, then a **ו**, and finally the **ן** as this is how one drifts away from Judaism. One who goes off the track of Judaism doesn't do so in one shot rather in a series of events that make him drift further and further away. For example, one doesn't start with eating a cheeseburger rather he first uses the bathroom in the non-Kosher restaurant. Then he may get soda. Later, he decides to buy a salad. Next, he is onto the French fries until he finally actually eats the cheeseburger.

In this light we can explain **ופרצו חומות מגדלי וטמאו כל השמנים** as each breach leads eventually to a defiling of everything. Accordingly, the word **יון** means quicksand as in **מטיט היון** , since it makes one descend lower and lower. Now we can grasp on a deeper level why the Greeks prohibited the Mitzvos of **מילה, שבת, ראש חודש** since these separate us from the non-Jews. **ראש חודש** was given to us so that we now rule over time as in **מקדש ישראל והזמנים** . Next is Shabbos in which the law is **עכו"ם ששבת חייב מיתה**; a non-Jew who observes it, is liable to death. Last is **מילה**, which is what makes us distinct.

This is why Chanuka contains these three. Since Chanuka is 8 days, it therefore contains at least one Shabbos. It also contains **ראש חודש טבת**. Finally, the 8 days hints to **מילה** which is performed on the 8th day.

The following are some hints to the three Mitzvos of Shabbos, Mila and Rosh Chodesh:

1) The miracle of Chanuka was through five **5 - חמש** . **חשמונאים**- forms an acronym of **חודש, מילה שבת**.

2) The miracle of Chanuka was with oil. Oil anoints- **משח . משח** forms the acronym of **חודש ,שבת, מילה**.

3) In addition to the decrees on the three Mitzvos, the Greeks also wanted them **להשכיחם תורתיך** ; to forget the Torah, as we say in **על הנסים** .This is hinted to in **מזמור שיר חנוכת הבית** which we say on Chanuka, where it says **ולא שמחת אויבי לי** ; *do not let my enemies rejoice over me*, as **שמחת** are the first letters of **שבת, מילה, חודש, תורה** . The Greeks were not happy because they were unsuccessful at taking these away from us as we still have Torah and Mitzvos.

Look Deeper



The Bnei Yissoschar asks on the terminology of **ומנותר קנקנים** (in **מעוז צור**) that **ומנותר השמנים** or **פכים** would be more appropriate since they didn't have a **קנקן**; barrel?

The Arizal comments on the Mishna **בקנקן אלא במה שיש בו אל תסתכל** - *don't look at the barrel rather at what is in it*, that it is referring to the trait of **ונקה לא ינקה**. If we take the Mishna literally and remove the letters **קנקן** from the phrase **ונקה לא ינקה** , we remain with **א-ל** (name of **חסד**) and **י-ה-ו-ה** name of **רחמים**.

These names of Hashem bring light that sweetens up a hard judgement (**דין**) as it says **ויאר י-ה-ו-ה א-ל**. This now gives us a

deeper meaning into **ומנותר קנקנים** as it could be understood as the letters left over from **ונקה לא ינקה** , that is after deleting the letters **קנקן** (since **אל תסתכל בקנקן אלא במה שיש בו**). The remaining letters spell **א-ל** and **י-ה-ו-ה** in which through the **דין** is sweetened with **רחמים**.

As a result of this **נעשה נס לשושנים** (as the **פיוט** continues), as this brought about the miracle. We should always merit to have Hashem's mercy and kindness.

Rabbi YY Jacobson- The new Antisemitism



They say- *show me who your enemies are, and I will show you who you are.*

One has to look historically, who were the enemies of the Jewish people, and you can find out who the Jewish people are. People talk about the new antisemitism. The new antisemitism is frightening and tragic, but it also has a very profound message to tell; and that is this. People often wonder if the Jewish people, historically are still the same people that stood at Sinai.

Are we the same Jews that celebrated Purim in Shushan with Morchai and Esther? Are we the same Jews from whom Rabbi Akiva was produced? Rabbi Yochonon ben Zakkai was produced? Dovid Hamelech? Rambam? Rashi? The Rashbo? The Ramban? The Arizal? The Baal ShemTov? The Vilna Gaon? etc . Are we those same Jews? It doesn't always look that way.

It has been thousands of years, and maybe our role has more or less ended. Eat some sushi, eat some Chinese food, celebrate some Jewish holidays. Our role in which G-d appointed us to change the world, has changed. It has ended perhaps. But the new antisemitism shows that the Jewish people has lost not an ounce of our vigour, of our stamina and most importantly, our holiness. Because how else can you explain the obsession with a nation that does not even constitute one quarter of one percent of human civilisation. ***Realise how holy we are and let us act like it.***



The Gerrer Rebbe, R' Yehudah Aryeh Leib Alter ZT"L (Sefas Emes) would say:

"Chazal teach us that the placement of the Chanukah lights is by the door. Thus, the Mezuza is on the right, the Menorah is on the left, and man with his Talis and Tzitzis is in the middle. This corresponds to the three dimensions: space, time, and spirit. The manifestation of Hashem's holiness must encompass all three. **Space:** The Mezuza brings holiness into the space of a household. **Time:** The Chanukah lights are within the holy period of the year in which we celebrate. **Spirit:** Tzitzis and Talis represent the special soul of the Jewish people. This is what the Greeks were fighting for, to rob us of our special dimensions. Therefore, we publicize our uniqueness by lighting the lamp near the door."

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - See The (*hidden*) Light



For each Yom Tov, there is a parallel Masechta. Purim has Megilla, Yom Kippur- Yuma, Pesach- Pesachim and so on. Chanuka on the other hand is addressed in only a couple of pages in Masechta Shabbos. We are left to wonder why Chanuka doesn't have its own Masechta?

The Gemara teaches that when Hashem looked at the **דור המבול** and **דור הפלגה** and saw their actions were perverse, He hid the light He created on the first day for the Tzadikim in the future. This light is known as the **אור הגנוז**. With this we can grasp on a deeper level **יהי אור ויהי אור** as according to the rules of Dikduk a **ו** can change the tense of a word (known as the **ו ההפוך**). Thus, this can now be understood as the **אור** that is stored away for Tzadikim.

With this light, we see things as they are in reality. Before Adam sinned, this light permeated existence as the clarity of Hashem was so clear in the world. An example to help us understand this is that today we say a Bracha on food in order to recognize Hashem. However, back then, they didn't have to say a Bracha because when they saw, for example, an apple, it was so clear that it was from Hashem.

For the first 36 hours of the world's existence- we had this light- from the time Adam was created on Friday until Motzai Shabbos. Although he sinned on Friday, the light wasn't removed until after Shabbos. This explains why it doesn't say **ויהי ערב** in regard to Shabbos since there was no **ערב** as there was only light.

The Rokeach links the 36 candles of Chanuka to the 36 hours we had the **אור הגנוז**. In fact, he calculates that it says **אור, מאור, נר** - terms of light- 36 times in the Torah as a hint to the candles of Chanuka. The 36 candles also correspond to the 36 Masechtas of Shas; **תורה שבעל פה** - that which is hidden. Additionally, it also connects to the 36 hidden **צדיקים**. Incidentally, **כסלו** is derived from the term **כיסוי** - covered, hidden since the **אור הגנוז** is the light that is hidden. This light of Chanuka which is the light of the **אור הגנוז** , is the future light of Moshiach and as it says ...**לדוד למשיחי ערכתי נר** *; there I shall cause the power of kingship to sprout for Dovid, I have prepared a lamp for my anointed.*

Is it any wonder that **משיח** are the first letters of **מצות שמונת ימי חנוכה**. An additional allusion to this can be found on the letters of the Dreidel- **ג,נ,ה,ש** .- which yields a sum of 358, the same as **משיח**. **R' Pinchos Koritzer** informs us at the time of lighting, the **אור הגנוז** is revealed.



In the home of **R' Shlomo Kluger**, the **נר חנוכה** once caught fire. Although it was quickly extinguished, a small burn mark, nevertheless, remained. Contrary to the reaction of many, R' Shlomo Kluger was elated since now Chanuka, the days of the **אור הגנוז** , could linger on in his home even after Chanuka was over.

Chanuka is closely associated with **תורה שבעל פה** -that which is not written. This is because it stems from such a high place, a place of beyond- **אור הגנוז**. It therefore can't be written. For this reason, it doesn't have its own Masechta.

Do You Love Him? – Rabbi YY Jacobson

The Towering Servant - When You Helps Others Find Their Dream, Your Dreams Will Reach Infinity

Tonight is the second night of Chanuka, and there are two flames glowing away in the night. "But tatty, there are three flames, not two?"

"Ah, you mean the Shamesh. He doesn't count."

And so it is every night of Chanuka. We have the Shamesh- the servant, who lights all the other lights. He is the one who brings them to life. And he stands watch over them lest they falter. He is there to protect them to make sure that their flame endures. And yet, he is never counted. He is not considered as one of the boys. He never acquires the status as one of the flames of the Chanuka menorah.

And yet, the Shamesh always towers above all the other flames – why? There is a profound lesson here.

Some of us dedicate our lives for self-enhancement, for self-perfection. That is beautiful but is not what will ultimately allow you to reach your greatest hights. However, when you become a Shamesh, and dedicate your life to kindle the light of others, and focus not only on yourself, but you define yourself as a conduit to bring light, love, hope and inspiration to others, that is when you rise to your greatest hights to reach your potential.

In your life's dedication to inspire others, something happens to you, that helps you transcend the orbit of your own spiritual perfection.

To dream alone is awesome, but when you empower others to find their dream, and actualise their light, you don't only bring out the best in them, you bring out the best in yourself.

Illumination

The gemara describes the main facet of our celebration during the Yom Tov of Chanukah:

"When the Kingdom of the House of the Chashmonaim overpowered the enemy, they searched and only found one flask of oil, enough for one day's lighting. A miracle occurred and they lit from it a full eight days." In commemoration of this incredible miracle, we, too, light the menorah for eight straight days. But there is an underlying current to the words of Chazal, one that in itself should make us celebrate our Jewish heritage.

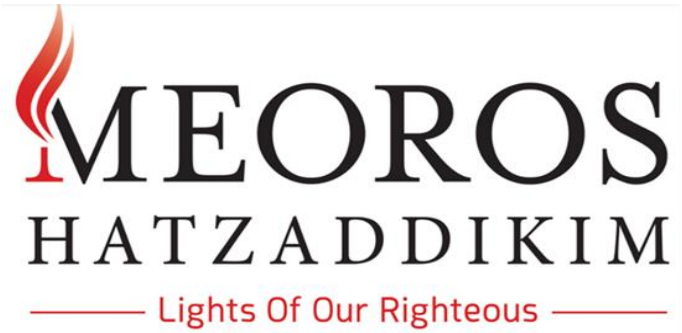


The Satmar Rebbe, R' Yoel Teitelbaum ZT"L illuminates our eyes with the following thought: The special flask of oil which was sealed with the signet of the Kohen Gadol, remained hidden for many, many years; not just from the Greek invaders, but also from the Jewish protectors. All the years that the Syrian-Greek Hellenists decreed against the Jewish People, forcing them away from the Torah, and making their lives difficult, this flask of oil remained hidden. For Hashem was preparing the seeds of redemption. Hashem saw what was happening to His people and kept a watchful eye; albeit from a hidden, distant perspective. In the end, when the time was ripe, Hashem revealed, in all His Glory, the true light of His love and guidance, and brought about the salvation of Klal Yisroel. There are times when a person thinks that no one is there for them, no one is watching over them, life has become unmanageable, impossible.

The lesson of the Chanukah licht is that even when things are tough, Hashem is there, watching, waiting and, of course, protecting. Until

the time when He will reveal His true intentions, bringing simcha and joy to His children.





Hachona Shel Mitzva - Preparing for Mitzvas Hadlakas Neiros Chanukah

Rav Yisroel Shapira of Grodzhisk says: Whenever a person performs any *mitzva,* no matter which, even if he does not fully understand the meaning behind the *mitzva* or even if he fails to comprehend its essence – so long as he understands that this is a divine commandment and that Hashem ordered him to do it, he fills the entire world with holiness, which spreads throughout the world.

When a person purchases oil to light the Chanuka candles and receives this oil in hand, this act has the power to bring holiness into the entire world and to cause them all to return and do *teshuva.* This requires *dveikus* and attachment to Hashem, to cleave and bind oneself to the Creator of Genesis and to perform the *mitzva* for the sake of His blessed Name.

Regarding this awesome act and moment, it is said **יש קונה עולמו בשעה אחת**- "***there are those who acquire their [share or portion] in the [coming] world in one moment***".

In this one moment we can acquire the entire world and bring about *teshuva!* (**Binas Yisrael Chanuka** page 67b)



Kind words are a creative force, a power that concurs in the building up of all that is good, and energy that showers blessings upon the world.



Unnecessary

1) Although we can fulfil the Mitzva of lighting Chanuka candles with one person lighting for all, we nevertheless perform it **מהדרין מן המהדרין** - everyone lights a new candle each night. Why is this done only with Chanuka?

2) **The Pnei Yehoshua** (1681-1756) asks: following the principle of **טומאה הותרה בציבור - טומאה** ; impurity is permitted in regard to the



community (the Torah sets aside the **טומאה** restrictions), it is permitted for the Jews to light even if the oil was **טמא**. So why was this miracle necessary?

3) **The Kedushas Levi** wonders why is it that by Chanuka we celebrate the miracle through the object itself- candles? We don't find this in other places. For instance, by Purim Haman was hung on the same piece of wood as he planned for Mordechai. Yet we don't commemorate Purim with wood? Another example is the 7th day of Pesach when the splitting of the sea occurred as we don't celebrate with water- the object of the miracle?

4) We know that Succos corresponds to the **ענני כבוד**; clouds of glory. **The Mabit** (1500-1580) asks why is there only a Yom Tov for the **ענני כבוד** and not for the **מן** or the **באר**; well of water, as these were also in the **מדבר** at that time?

There is that which is expected of us and that which is above expectations. It is expected that a mother provides shelter for her child. However, when she buys ice cream and adds the sprinkles her child enjoys, that is above what is expected. This demonstrates the mother's love for the child. It is the unnecessary details that are

done that show love. With this we can answer our questions. In the desert, the **באר** and the **מן** were necessities since we can't live without food or drink. The **ענני כבוד** however, was an unnecessary detail. This showed Hashem's love for us. For this reason, we have a Yom Tov- Succos- only for the **ענני כבוד**.

In the episode of Yosef being sold, the Pasuk highlights that the **ישמעאלים** were carrying spices that didn't smell bad. This was to show that Hashem was with Yosef although he was going through a tough time. That is- although it was decreed that Yosef be sold, this detail of the spices wasn't necessary- demonstrating Hashem was with him.

In our life as well, many times we go through suffering. However, if we are attentive, we can feel Hashem along the way in the varying details.

Being that it was unnecessary for us to find oil that was pure on Chanuka since the impure oil was acceptable, it shows our love. The miracle Hashem performed for us on Chanuka displayed His love for us since it was unnecessary. So how do we reciprocate? We light **מהדרין מן המהדרין** as this is going beyond the call of duty since it is extra. This also explains why we use the **נר** itself to celebrate in contrast to other holidays. We should all merit to go beyond our call of duty in our service for Hashem.

whY I Matter - Young Israel of Midwood- Yedidye Hirtenfeld

R' Alexander Ziskind z"l (Grodno, Poland; died 1794) writes: The sages of the Gemara spoke very emphatically of the care that one should take when performing the mitzvah of Chanukah lights and of the reward for doing so. They said (Shabbat 23b), "One who regularly lights [Chanukah] candles will have sons who are Torah scholars." Rambam writes in the fourth chapter of his "Laws of Megillah and Chanukah": "The mitzvah of Chanukah lights is a very

beloved mitzvah and a person must take great care with it in order to publicize the miracle and add to the praise of G-d and the acknowledgment to Him for the miracles that He did for us."

R' Alexander Ziskind continues: Truth be told, there is no doubt that a person who has been given wisdom by Hashem to comprehend the deep secrets of the Arizal's meditations should take upon himself to meditate on those concepts. However, my intention in this work is to direct ordinary people like myself down the path that they should take so that they will not perform the mitzvot of Hashem Elokenu, may His name be praised, by rote.



Therefore, I have come to counsel that one should not perform this beloved mitzvah without putting one's heart into it. Rather, it should be done with great joy and with simple intentions in mind, as appropriate for each of the blessings [that are recited]. . . When one says the words, "L'hadlik ner" / "To kindle the Chanukah light," one should feel immense happiness in his heart over the great miracle that took place at this time of year in the Bet Hamikdash involving the flask of oil as related in the Gemara. When one recites the blessing, "She'asah nissim" / "That He did miracles for our fathers in those days at this time [of the year]," he should give great thanks in his thoughts and great praise to our Creator for all the miracles and the salvations that He did for our forefathers at this time of year. One also should try to imagine that the miracles and salvations were done for him personally.

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman- Torah Wellsprings

The Gemara says, "Haragil beneir havyan lei banim talmidei chachamim — he who is careful with the candles [of Shabbos and Chanukah (Rashi)] will be given children who are Torah scholars" (Shabbos 23).



Reb Chaim Ozer zt"l was once in Krakow, Poland on Chanukah. He needed a new suit, so after he lit the Chanukah lecht at sunset (shekiyah), he went to a tailor and asked him to sew a new suit. "But I didn't light Chanukah lecht yet," the tailor said. (He was accustomed to light at tzeis hakachavim). "You can light. I'll wait," Reb Chaim Ozer answered. Reb Chaim Ozer was very impressed with the love and joy for the Chanukah lecht expressed by this tailor. He didn't just light the candles. He first put on his Shabbos clothing and said the shem yichud. Then the brachos were recited out loud and fervently, and he stayed near the candles for a half-hour. Everything was done with joy, love, and awe.

Reb Chaim Ozer said, "Now I understand why so many talmidei chachamim were born in Krakow." Because "Haragil beneir havyan lei banim talmidei chachamim — he who is careful with the candles will be given children Torah scholars", doesn't only mean if one is careful to keep its laws – although that is certainly the foundation. It also means that he keeps the mitzvah with love, respect and joy. The Gemara promises that in the merit of the Chanukah lecht, one will have children talmidei chachamim. But everyone lights Chanukah lecht, so where are all the Torah scholars?

The Meiri answers that this is a guarantee only when one keeps the mitzvah "bederech chivuv mitzvah"; when the mitzvah is kept with love and with joy. The Rambam writes, "mitzvas neir Chanukah mitzvah chavivah hi ad me'od vetzarich adam lehizaher bah kedei lehodiyah haneis velehosef beshevach haKeil — the mitzvah of Chanukah lecht is an extremely beloved mitzvah, and one must be careful to keep it, to praise Hashem for the miracles, and to increase Hashem's praise…" (Hilchos Chanukah 4:12).



Rav Ozer Alport - Parsha Points to Ponder

On Chanuka we add a paragraph to our daily prayers in which we thank Hashem for the miracles He performed in the days of Mattisyahu ben Yochanan Kohen Gadol. To whom does the appellation "Kohen Gadol" refer: Mattisyahu or Yochanan?

Several Rishonim, including the **Rambam, Meiri, and Tashbatz,** maintain that the term "Kohen Gadol" refers to Yochanan, while **Rabbeinu Yerucham, the Sefer HaIkkarim, and the Maharsha** write that it refers to Mattisyahu. Interestingly, the standard text of the Gemora states explicitly that Mattisyahu was a Kohen Gadol; however, the **Dikdukei Sofrim** notes that some editions of the Gemora have a different wording, which says that Yochanan was the Kohen Gadol.

Rav Boruch Epstein argues that a historical study of the time period makes it clear that Mattisyahu never served as Kohen Gadol. However, because Mattisyahu acted bravely for the honor of Hashem in successfully leading the battle against the Greeks, he earned the title "Kohen Gadol" as a way of saying that he was a great

and respected Kohen, although only his father Yochanan was a Kohen Gadol in the traditional usage of the term.



Midei Shabbos - HaRav Eliezer Chrysler -Chashmonah, Oil & the Number 8

In Parshas Mas'ei, the Torah lists the placenames of the forty-two stops that Yisrael made during their travels in the Desert. The commentaries observe that the twenty-fifth stop was in Chashmonah, an obvious hint to the Chanukah miracle, in which the famous family of Chashmona'im were instrumental, that took place on the twenty-fifth of Kislev.

The word 'Chashmnah' note, contains both the words 'Shemonah' (eight) - the number of days that the miracle of the oil lasted, and Shemen (oil) - the material chosen by G-d with which to perform it. Oil, for its part, is the only liquid that cannot be mixed with another liquid. Not only that, but if one does try to mix it, it will always rise to the top. This epitomizes K'lal Yisrael, who by virtue of their having received the Torah at Har Sinai, do not mix with the other nations. And it truly defines the small group of Jews who stood firm against the tide of Hellenism at that time, and who ultimately rose to the top with the defeat of the mighty Greek army.

The miracle of the oil that followed in its wake was not an independent one. It was the natural sequel to the physical victory that preceded it, conveying the message that the physical victory was based on the spiritual supremacy - that 'the mighty into the hands of the few' and 'the impure into the hands of the pure' were one and the same. And it also explains why one of the meanings of the word 'shemen' is 'good quality/the best', which as we just explained, describes the spiritual qualities of Yisrael as against the other nations.

One of the basic distinctions given by the commentaries between Chanukah and Purim is that whereas the latter was a physical battle

between the forces of evil (who threatened the Jews' bodies) and those of good, the former was a spiritual battle (where they tried to convert them to Hellenism). It was a battle of the natural against the supernatural (the Neshamah - which incidentally, also contains the word 'Shemen'). And as is well-known, whereas the physical world is symbolized by the number seven, the supernatural is symbolized by the number eight.

Little wonder, therefore, that the miracle of Chanukah reached its zenith with oil and that it lasted for eight days. Many answers are given to resolve the Beis Yosef's question as to why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days, seeing as there was enough oil to last for one day, and that the miracle therefore lasted only seven days. According to the above, the eight-day miracle was obvious, and the question is not that Chanukah ought to last for seven days, but how to explain that it lasted eight.

Perhaps the most basic of the numerous answers is that, bearing in mind the extensive efforts of the Greeks to defile the Beis-Hamikdash - including all the oil for the Menorah - the fact that they found a jar of pure oil was, in itself, a miracle. Let us take this one step further. Even assuming that it was not, the fact is that they did find that jar, and that without it, the seven-day miracle would not have occurred.

Perhaps Chazal instituted the first day because it is our task to sanctify the physical objects that exist and to use them in our Avodas Hashem. The Celestial bodies in Heaven can exist independently; here on earth, the spiritual can only exist on a material base, just as the Neshamah can only exist and thrive in a physical body. In the same way, the jar of oil, enough to last for one day, was the physical base that enabled the seven-day miracle to take place. The seven-day miracle had to have oil to last for one day in order to take effect. Consequently, Chazal fixed Chanukah for eight days.

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

כדי להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול על נסיך ועל נפלאותיך ועל ישועתיך

Every day of this beautiful Yom Tov of Chanukah, we are privileged to say Hallel and Al Hanissim. We thank and praise Hashem for the miracles that He did for us, in those days, at this time. The purpose of setting aside these very special days of Chanukah is explained in the Al Hanissim prayer: **וקבעו שמונת ימי חנוכה אלו להודות ולהלל** - The eight days of Chanukah were set aside, "To thank and to praise." Why do we need both - L'hodos and L'Hallel? What is the difference between to thank and to praise?



The Chiddushei Harim, R' Yitzchok Meir Alter zt"l gives a beautiful explanation. He says that the word **נס** is comprised of two letters, a nun and a samech. The nun stands for **נפילה** - falling down, and the samech stands for **סמיכה** - supporting! We thank Hashem for the nefila and we praise Him for the semicha! Why should we thank Hashem for falling down, for all the difficulties and challenges that we go through in life?

Every yeshua and hatzala that we experience had a **מלחמה** first! If not, what is it that we were saved from? We thank Hashem for taking us out of Mitzrayim, but He was the one who put us there in the first place! We thank Hashem for the miracle of Chanukah, for helping us win over the vaunted Greek army and find a **פח שמן** that stayed lit for 8 days. And yet, Hashem is the one who put us in Golus Yavan and all of the exiles and difficulties that we endure. Why do we thank Him for saving us? Maybe we should ask Him why He gives us all of these tzaros in the first place?

The answer to this question is the reason that we must THANK and PRAISE Hashem. We understand that we need the nefila as much as we need the semicha. Every challenge that Hashem puts before us is truly the very best thing that could happen to us. We may not appreciate the hardship as we are going through it, but only Hashem, in His infinite wisdom and kindness, knows that this is exactly what our neshamos need to fulfil our mission in this world.



When Hashem gives us a "shot in the arm," it is in order to protect us from deadly spiritual diseases! He is inoculating us! Is the vaccination pleasant? NO! But without it we would really be sick! Had we not gone down to Egypt and been enslaved for 210 years, we would never have become a Klal Yisroel - zoche to receive the Torah. Had we not suffered at the hands of the Greeks, we would never have been zoche to all the light that Chanukah shines! This is why in Al Hanissim we thank Hashem for the gevuros and yeshuos and MILCHAMOS! Yes, we thank Hashem for the WAR itself, for the hardships, for all the battles and nisyonos that we had to suffer, because we know that this is all part of the nes! It is all part of Hashem's kindness to us even when it is difficult.

Whether I am experiencing the nefila or the semicha, it is all a miracle, a gift from Hashem, for which we need to thank and praise Him! May we always see the kindness of Hashem clearly in our lives and may we always remember when it is dark, that it is our job to shed some light from the Chanukah nes and thank and praise Hashem for everything He does.

The Ohr Somayach Torah Magazine on The Internet



Of all the seven species mentioned in praise of Eretz yisrael the olive alone is referred to not as a fruit but as the oil that comes from the fruit. To understand this we must analyse a point made by our sages (Menachot 53b) about the comparison that the Prophet yirmiyahu made (Yirmiyahu 11:16) between the olive and the Jewish People. "Just as the purpose of the olive is the oil which is extracted from it," says Rabbi yitzchak, "so too is the purpose of the Jewish People realized only after it reaches the end of its processing."

The Maharsha explains this comparison in the following way: The olive itself has no great value as a fruit, and consuming olives too frequently, say our sages, can be harmful to the memory. Only after the olive has been squeezed and crushed to extract its very valuable oil is this fruit's potential finally realized. The Jewish People have a great spiritual potential, but it may take the crushing experience of suffering in exile to arouse them to repent their sins and realize that potential. in the days of Mashiach this process will be completed, and the "oil" of the Jewish "olive" will come forth.

R' Naftali Tzvi Hurvitz ZT"L (Ropschitzer Rebbe) would say: משיח spells out: **מַדליקין שַמונת יַמי חַנוכה** - for lighting the Chanukah licht will bring Moshiach!"

"Truth lives long and yet does not grow old." ~~ Imre Binah



Rabbi Doniel Staum - "Still Fighting"

In 1944, as the Nazi's realized that their defeat was imminent, they escalated their barbaric efforts to eradicate as many Jews as they could. It was during that time that Hungarian Jewry was systematically transported to the infamous Bergen-Belsen concentration camp for destruction.



One of those Hungarian prisoners was a sixty-year-old scholar named **Rabbi Shraga Shmuel Schnitzler zt'l**. Reb Shmelke, as he was affectionately called, was an extremely pious man with a fiery and zealous love for G-d. He was exceptionally friendly and offered encouragement to everyone in the camps, especially the dispirited souls, inspiring them not to lose faith. Even in the Nazi inferno, Reb Shmelke retained his faith and dignity. On Shabbos he would sit with the other inmates and create some semblance of Shabbos by regaling them with words of Torah and recounting stories of the Baal Shem Tov, as well as of his great-grandfather, **Rabbi Shmelke of Nikolsburg zt'l**. For those few moments each week, the physically and spiritually starved inmates would be uplifted from their despondency. His amiable ways garnered Reb Shmelke 'special privileges' from the ruthless Nazi commanders.

Reb Shmelke used this rare privilege to ensure the proper burial of his fallen comrades. He also kept a record of the names of the

deceased by scribbling them on small scraps of paper, using the charred tips of discarded matches that he collected for this purpose. In so doing he hoped to avert disastrous consequences to war widows who would be spared the agony of having to endure an agunah status.

With the advent of Chanukah, Reb Shmelke was determined to light a Menorah. However, he could not imagine how he would be able to gather the necessary materials. The dilemma weighed heavily on him, even as he was in the process of burying a recently deceased inmate during the day before Chanukah. Reb Shmelke found himself short a couple of stones to complete the partitioning of the gravesite and scoured his immediate surroundings, to no avail.

But from a distance a pile of rocks caught his eye. As he removed some of them, he was shocked to uncover a small bottle of oil. Shoving aside some more of the stones, he discovered cups - and soon he unearthed a pack of wicks. A stunned Reb Shmelke could hardly believe his eyes. He recited a silent prayer of gratitude and quickly hid his newfound treasure.

Later that evening, after the guards had left, a crowd of inmates stealthily gathered around as Reb Shmelke fervently and lovingly recited the blessings and lit the candles. Needless to say that moment infused the battered inmates with tremendous encouragement.

When the war ended, Reb Shmelke returned to Hungary where he would become widely known as the **Tchaber Rav**. He eventually immigrated to Israel and moved to Jerusalem. Upon a subsequent visit to America, the Tchaber Rav looked up an old acquaintance, the Satmar Rebbe, **Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum zt'l**.

At some point during their emotional reunion, the Satmar Rebbe remarked, "You know that I too was in Bergen-Belsen but was rescued on the twenty-first of Kislev, four days before Chanukah. Obviously, I was unaware that I was to be saved and during my final

weeks in the camp I expended tremendous effort, including bribing, to gather together oil, cups, and wicks to use for the mitzvah of Menorah. When I was saved, I buried my Menorah materials in the ground. But I always felt badly that those materials were never used.

Words failed the Tchaber Rav as tears flooded his eyes. After a few moments he softly replied, "I assure you Rebbe, those materials were put to very good use."

שֶׁעָשׂה נִסִּים לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה



The simple origin of the dreidel is that it was a decoy used by children learning the aleph beis in case Greek soldiers happened upon them. As ever, there are deeper concepts involved. The four sides of the dreidel feature the letters nun, gimmel, shin and hey. These correspond to the four forces within a person. Nun is nefesh (spirit). Gimmel is guf (physicality). Shin is seichel (intellect). Hey is hakol, representing a higher spirit that combines the other three. Each of the four nations of Bavel/Babylon, Yavan/Greece, Edom/Rome, and Modai/Medea opposed one of these forces. Moshiach, with a gematria of 358 equal to that of the sum of nun, gimmel, shin and hey, will finally annul these negative forces forever. Then Hashem's reign will be accepted by all.

Kindness in words creates confidence. Kindness in thinking creates profoundness. Kindness in giving creates love.

Parsha Potpourri - by Ozer Alport

Rashi writes (Bereishis 1:4) that when Hashem created the universe, He initially created an extremely powerful and holy light, but He subsequently realized that it would be inappropriate for wicked people to benefit from this light, so He decided to hide it away for the righteous to enjoy in the World to Come. Nevertheless, there are still a few places in this world where this light is hidden, and we can tap into its special holiness and sanctity.



The Rokeach (Hilchos Chanuka 225) writes that before it was concealed, this light burned during Creation for 36 hours, which correspond to the 36 candles that we light on Chanuka. This light is also hidden in the 36 tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, and in the 36 hidden tzaddikim (righteous people) in every generation in whose merit the world is sustained.

My dear cousin **Shaya Gross z"l** of Baltimore points out that Chazal (Yoma 35b) describe Yosef as the epitome of moral fortitude and hidden righteousness, and he is discussed at length in the Torah portions that we read on Chanuka. Not surprisingly, the Talmudic discussion of the episode in which his master Potiphar's wife unsuccessfully attempted to entice him to sin is found in the Gemora in Sotah on daf (page) 36, and the **Imrei Noam** writes that this incident occurred on Zos Chanuka, the last day of Chanuka. Additionally, Yosef is mystically associated with the middah (attribute) of yesod (foundation), which is the sixth of the seven kabbalistic middos. The day of Sefiras HaOmer that corresponds to

yesod sheb'yesod, of which Yosef was the embodiment, is the 36th day.

With this introduction, Shaya notes that Chanuka offers an unparalleled opportunity to tap into multiple sources of this hidden light. This unique possibility is alluded to by the fact that the name of this month – Kislev – is comprised of two words: כס, which means concealed, and לו, which has a numerical value of 36, hinting that this is the month in which the hidden holiness of 36 is uniquely accessible.

Precisely in the cold winter with its long dark nights, when the Greeks unsuccessfully attempted to contaminate and defile us, we have the ability to tap into an unparalleled confluence of holiness. Let us all try, each on our own levels, to imbibe the special Chanuka kedusha that permeates the air.

The Kedushas Levi says that women have a tremendous ability to gain from the lights of Chanukah. He states that each night of Chanukah is mesugal for different things for women to daven for.

- 1st night – Not to be lonely or depressed;
- 2nd night – Shidduchim and Shalom Bayis;
- 3rd night – Healthy, happy and good children. (**The Chasam Sofer** says when you cry in front of the candles - you can be sure your teffilos will be answered);
- 4th night – (Four Imahos) To be a conventional woman within her own space who is true to her essence;
- 5th night – (Chamisha Chumshei Torah) Daven your husband and children should be a talmidei chachamim. (By the 5th night, more of the menorah is lit up. You can daven for more revelation and light in your life);
- 6th night – Simcha. (You can have everything and still be sad, so this is an opportunity to daven for simcha);

- 7th night – Blissful Shabbos Kodesh infused with zmiros, divrei torah by your seuda. Shabbos is source of all bracha;
- 8th (Zos) night – Mesugal for barren women. (The number eight is above nature. According to Kabbalah: because the world was created in seven days, so the number eight is considered beyond creation). Very powerful day to daven for yourself and others who weren't yet zocheh to children. The Kedushas Levi says if you are planning to start something new, if you start on Chanukah it will surely be blessed.

Torah Tavlin



R' Moshe Sherer zt"l (President of Agudath Israel) would say: "The battle of Chanukah, although blessed with temporary victory in the days of the Chashmonaim, never really ended - it continues to this very day. It was essentially a struggle against the forces that had set as their goal to assimilate the Jewish masses by subterfuge and internal subversion.

Thus, we find no specific command of simcha on Chanukah since this battle to confuse and betray true Judaism still rages in our times, and while engulfed in the smoke of battle, one does not pause to rejoice. In such a continuing crisis, one must concentrate with greater vigour towards the Geulah goal: total Torah commitment must replace tokenism; complete consecration must replace crippling compromise."

Rabbi Yehoshua Alt - To Remove the *Greece* Stain

 In **על הנסים**, we say that the Greeks wanted to make us forget our Torah- **להשכיחם תורתיך**. **The Sfas Emes** asks how is it possible to make someone forget that which they already know?

When Noach got drunk and was unclothed, his sons, Shem and Yafes covered him. Shem's reward was that he merited the Mitzva of Tzitzis while Yafes merited burial for his children. Why did each get a different reward for doing the same action?

We sing…**בני בינה ימי שמונה**. Grammatically speaking, wouldn't it be more correct to say **שמונה ימים** when saying 8 days?

The Greeks were all about externality. Their motto: what you see is what you get. They believed there is no depth beyond the surface view. A donut is a donut. Why would there be jam inside if you can't see it? They made statues of unclothed bodies because they glorified the external. They shaved their heads as a symbol that the highest is their intellect. It ends with what they can understand.

In contrast, a Jew wears a *yarmulke*- **ירא מלכא** - *fear of the king*- to show that there is a higher being. A Jew says, **ראשית חכמה יראת ה'** – real **חכמה** is that which connects to Hashem.

Where did these Greeks come from? They were descendants of Yafes. When Shem and Yafes covered up their father in his drunken state, their action- the external- was identical. However, the internal- the intention- was quite different. Shem understood that his father needed to be covered because it is a **צלם אלקים** - *image of Hashem*. He did it for spiritual reasons. He therefore received a spiritual reward, the Mitzva of Tzitzis. Yafes, on the other hand, covered the body because to him it was a symbol of beauty. Since he did it for a materialistic reason, he was awarded in the same way- meriting burial.

The word **יון** means quicksand as in **מטיט היון**. Quicksand pulls a person lower and lower until he becomes one with the medium. Nothing is seen beyond the surface. This is what **יון** is all about- nothing more than the external.

Remarkably, the letters of **יון** get lower and lower just as someone caught in quicksand. On the other hand, we believe in elevating all physicality. We sleep to serve Hashem, have a family to raise them to serve Hashem and so on.

R' Tzadok Hakohen interprets **מלאה הארץ קנינך**; the earth is filled with Your possessions that the world is filled with ways to acquire Hashem. But the Greeks don't see that. To them it is possessions. To us it is a means to acquire a connection to Hashem and reach life's goals.

The term **עליון** means supreme, above. It is a contraction of **על יון**; above the Greeks. Above **יון** who only sees surface. In this way we can grasp **יושב בסתר עליון בצל ש- די יתלונן** - if you sit in the refuge of **על יון**, if you can live your life seeing beyond the surface, then you will be dwelling in the shadow of Hashem.

In **מעוז צור** we say **יון . בני בינה ימי שמונה** yields a total of 66 whereas the word **היכל** ; sanctuary has a Gematria of 65. So, **יון** is one above **היכל** as this is what they penetrated and as the Gemara says **טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל**; they contaminated all the oil that was in the sanctuary. Does that mean they overcame us? Not at all. **בינה** has a sum of 67. The **בני בינה** overcame the Greeks. How? **יון** is all about **טבע** ; nature. The **בני בינה** overcame them by making these days supernatural. Consequently, it doesn't say 8 days; **שמונה ימים**, rather **ימי שמונה**; days of 8- days of supernatural.

The Greeks live with **טבע** but our miracle of Chanuka was **למעלה מן הטבע**; supernatural. Chanuka is 8 days because 8 is supernatural. The word **שבעה**; seven vowelized differently spells **שביעה**; satiate. **שמונה 8** on the other hand, is related to **שמינה**; fat- that which overflows.

Chanuka is spread over two months– Teves and Kislev, because it is supernatural and cannot be contained within one month.



The miracle of Chanuka was with oil. Looking at the root of **שמונה** we see the word **שמן**; oil. Oil rises to the top- above nature. The word **חשמונאים** is rooted in **חשמן**. This is a contraction of **שמן ח** as they were men who rose above (**ח** has a Gematria of 8, referring to rising above) just as oil does.

The Gemara says that when placing the Menora in its proper place, we have the Mezuza on the right and the Chanuka light on the left. We rule according to Beis Hillel and light one on the first night followed by adding one each night…leading up to eight lights on the last night. Eventually, the light reaches the point which is closer to the Mezuza. The Mezuza contains Shema, which symbolizes Emuna, our connection to the beyond. It is specifically on Chanuka that we break free from "The Greek View", connecting more each night to the beyond.

The Greeks themselves may be a thing of the past, but sadly their culture is not- Hollywood, New York City, the entertainment industry as well as the sports world. The darkness is everywhere. Our job is to keep focusing on that jam that is oh so sweet and ignore all those messages that spew falsehood, telling us to focus on "The Donut." Thankfully, it is not hard to fight darkness. All it takes is lighting even one candle (yours!).

Our Torah and the like may be done through Greek eyes although we may not realize it. Example: when we say "Mazel Tov" with a Greek mindset, we think we are saying "congratulations" or "good luck." In reality, Mazel means an energy flowing from heaven. We are wishing that the flow should be a positive energy. When we remove our

"Greek lenses", we start to see the world in a Torah view- in its reality and not with the Greek view; the lie.



The Midrash tells us that Galus Yavan is called **חשך** ; darkness. With this we can grasp **לא יכבה בלילה נירה** - don't let the darkness of Yavan extinguish our light. How do we do that? By lighting **נר חנוכה**. In this way we can understand **גולל אור מפני חשך** (Maariv)- the light of Chanuka- (**אור**)- rolls off the darkness of the Greeks- **חשך**.

להשכיחם תורתיך is to forget the Torah way of thinking- that of internality and instead to think in a Greek way. To think in terms of the Donut, forgetting about the jelly contained within. For eight days, we celebrate having won the war. The question is: have we personally won this ongoing war? What weaponry do we need to fight this darkness? When we light the Menora, think: we are now fighting the darkness of Yavan. I am lighting up my Neshama. I am using my **נר פתיל שמן** - candle, wick and oil to light up my **נפש**. This may very well be the only time that oil can take away a Greece stain!

Fifty years ago, a Yid from Eretz Yisrael travelled to Australia. He didn't know anyone in Australia, and he didn't know where he would stay. Shabbos was approaching, and he still didn't have where to be. He decided to go to a fish store on Friday morning and wait to see someone buying a large fish. That person, he assumed, will probably be a Yid buying a fish in honour of Shabbos. He will approach him, and request to be their guest for Shabbos. The planned worked. He approached a customer who was buying a large fish and asked whether he can stay with him for Shabbos. "Definitely," the man replied, and he joyously brought him to his home. And what a home it was! The Yid from Eretz Yisrael had never

seen a house like that before. It was enormous and beautifully decorated. His host, he realized, was a very wealthy man. They spent a very pleasant Shabbos together, singing zemiros and speaking divrei Torah.



On Motzei Shabbos, he thanked his host, and said that he has a question. "Go ahead and ask" the man replied. The guest asked, "Why do you keep a broken oil bottle in your China showcase?" The china closet was filled with silver items, fine china and crystal, but the broken oil bottle was out of place. He wanted to know its significance.

The man replied, "This oil bottle tells the story of my life." And he told him the following: "My father died when I was young, and I had to support my mother. I tried my hand in business and was baruch Hashem very successful. But together with my financial success went my spiritual decline. The first thing to go was my kappel and gradually I dropped the rest of the mitzvos.

"One day, I saw a young child crying. Since I was an orphan, I knew what it means to cry, so I asked the child what the problem was. He said, 'My father gave me money to buy olive oil for Chanukah and he warned me to be careful not to break the bottle since he doesn't have money to buy another one. As I was walking home with the olive oil, a cat ran towards me. I ran away from the cat, and I fell, and the bottle broke. That's the reason I'm crying. How can I face my father without the bottle of olive oil'?

"The child's words went straight to my heart, because I realized that I should be asking myself the very same question, 'How can I go to my Father in heaven without olive oil, without the mitzvah of Chanukah lecht?' I saw my father light Chanukah lecht each year. The mitzvah of Chanukah isn't foreign to me. How could I stop? "I gave the child some money and said, 'Buy two bottles; one for your father and one for me,' and I took the broken bottle for myself.

That year, I lit Chanukah lecht. Immediately after Chanukah, I began keeping Shabbos. Then I started wearing tefillin. And now I am Torah observant Jew, with a beautiful family following in the ways of my father." This is an example of the power of teshuvah which is available for us on Chanukah, and in particular, on Shabbos Chanukah.



R' Yoelish Teitelbaum zt"l (Satmar Rebbe) would say: "Why is that when a person wishes to stay up all night and learn Torah, he tends to get very drowsy and often falls asleep in the middle, even for a short time. On the other hand, when a person decides to stay up all night and play kvitlach on the night of Chanukah, he never gets tired and sails through the night strong as ever?

The reason is because a Yid's neshama is always cleaving to attach itself to its source of kedusha. Thus, when a Yid learns Torah, the neshama is excited to go up to shamayim quickly and feel the warm embrace of Hakadosh Boruch Hu. He falls asleep and allows his

neshama to do just that. But when a person plays cards, his neshama is embarrassed and tries to stay away from it divine source, thus it keeps him strong and sharp and won't allow him to fall asleep!"

Preparing for Mitzvas Hadlokas Neiros Chanuka



Whenever a person performs any mitzva, no matter which, even if he does not fully understand the meaning behind the mitzva or even if he fails to comprehend its essence – so long as he understands that this is a divine commandment and that Hashem ordered him to do it, he fills the entire world with holiness, which spreads throughout the world.

When a person purchases oil to light the Chanuka candles and receives this oil in hand, this act has the power to bring holiness into the entire world and to cause them all to return and do teshuva. This requires dveikus and attachment to Hashem, to cleave and bind oneself to the Creator of Genesis and to perform the mitzva for the sake of His blessed Name.

Regarding this awesome act and moment, it is said yesh koneh olomo beshaa achas – *"there are those who acquire their share in the coming world in one moment"*. In this one moment we can acquire the entire world and bring about teshuva! (Binas Yisrael Chanuka)

From The Wellsprings of R' Guttman - Ramat Shlomo

The 25th word in the Torah is **אור** - Light, from the posuk, ***"And Hashem said let there be light and there was light."*** This was the very first creation for it was this light that the Jewish nation would utilize throughout their long and dark history of exile and banishment in order to survive and overcome their enemies. In Tefillas Al Hanisim we say: "And You made a great salvation – **כהיום הזה** - like this very day."



Rabbi Zev Leff explains that this means UNTIL this very day. Indeed, we relive the miracles of Chanukah every single year because we actually experience all the evil decrees that were decreed against the Jews then, during this time. Chanukah is a time of salvation because we prove to the world that WE WON. Torah life and Yiddishkeit live on while our enemies are long gone and forgotten. The three main decrees of the Greeks were that the Jews may not keep Shabbos, celebrate Rosh Chodesh and perform bris milah. Every Chanukah we keep one Shabbos, one Rosh Chodesh and rejoice for 8 days to allude to the 8 days of milah. Women have a special connection to Chanukah by not doing melacha after the candles are lit, to commemorate how the Yevanim tried to defile the Jewish women and failed. And the reason we specifically light our candles by the **פתח הבית** - the doorway to our home, is because the Greeks did not allow Jewish homes to have any doors. They tried to destroy any sense of privacy and modesty. They tried to attack the greatest power that we have: the Jewish home.

Therefore, we celebrate Chanukah UNTIL this very day by coming together, eating latkes and playing dreidel, laughing, singing and sharing divrei Torah. This is our revenge - this is our victory! The Hellenists of Greece did not wish to exterminate our physical

bodies; they wanted us to stay alive - as Greeks - devoid of all spirituality and connection to the One above.



We celebrate this Yom Tov by living as proud Jews and making sure all our days are filled with light. The light of Torah. The light of the Shechina. The light of the neshama that burns bright inside every single Jew. This is the special **אור** - the light of Chanukah that was created at the very beginning of time. It is our most precious commodity, and we must guard it carefully in order to utilize it wisely. May the light of Chanukah and its message fill our lives with **אור** all year long.



In numerous Chassidic communities, there is a custom till this very day that when the shamash is ready to light the Chanukah Menorah in shul, children and others throw hand towels and other items at him both before and during the lighting.

The custom is cited in the name of the **Sanzer Rav zt"l** as well as the **Klausenberger Rebbe, R' Yekusiel Halberstam zt"l** and the purpose of this custom is brought down to vividly demonstrate how terrible things were during the time of the Greeks and the Hellenists when a Jew wished to perform a mitzvah. He was mocked and jeered, and yes, objects were thrown at him in derision, unless the mitzvah was

done the way the modern Hellenizers wanted it. It was also a way to minimize the potential for arrogance by the one lighting.

In the court of **R' Itzikel of Pshevorsk zt"l**, it was customary for different people to light the large Menorah in the Bais Medrash every night of Chanukah. The Rebbe would specifically choose people who needed a yeshua for one thing or another and he would join in as the people would toss towels and other pieces of cloth at the individual. Many would laugh and for some it was an act of jest, but not for the Rebbe of Pshevorsk. His face, illuminated by the glow of the Menorah and his eyes bright with spiritual intensity, would say softly, *"Just as we throw down here [on this world], they should throw [blessings] from above."* After his passing, his son-in-law, **R' Yaakov Leiser zt"l**, became the new Rebbe and he continued his father-in-law's custom on Chanukah. Many people would come from far and wide and vie for the opportunity to light the Menorah and have towels thrown upon them. Some said it was a segulah for wealth and others felt that they were saved from various predicaments when they lit the Menorah.

R' Yankele, as he was known, would sometimes choose older single bochurim and instruct them to light the Menorah. He would say that it is a segulah for a shidduch and whenever his holy father-in-law would choose a single bochur to light, that bochur would inevitably become a chosson.

One year, on the final night of Chanukah, a huge throng of people came to the Pshevorsk Beis Medrash, hoping to be chosen for this coveted act. The Rebbe remained in his room, oblivious to the jostling and noise coming from outside his room, as he made his own personal preparations for the mitzvah of Hadlakas Ner Chanukah. Suddenly, the door swung open and R' Yankele walked over to an older single man and asked him to light the Menorah. At first, the man demurred, feeling he was not up to the task, but the Rebbe insisted. "By my shver, whoever lit became a chosson the following year. Some Chassidim want to say that it works for business too, and maybe it

does ..." The bochur proceeded to light the Menorah, amid a raucous crowd of noisy, rowdy, towel-throwing chassidim, and when he was finished, R' Yankele smiled and said to him, "*The Almighty should help that next year at this time, we should throw good things at you again!*"

Indeed, during the course of the year, the man got engaged and his wedding was scheduled for right after Chanukah. The Shabbos before his wedding, which fell out on Zos Chanukah, the last day of Chanukah that year, he was called up for his aufruf, at which the chassidim all threw nuts and candy at him - the "Guta Zachen" - just as R' Yankele had predicted.

Rabbi YY Jacobson - The Menorah & The Swastika

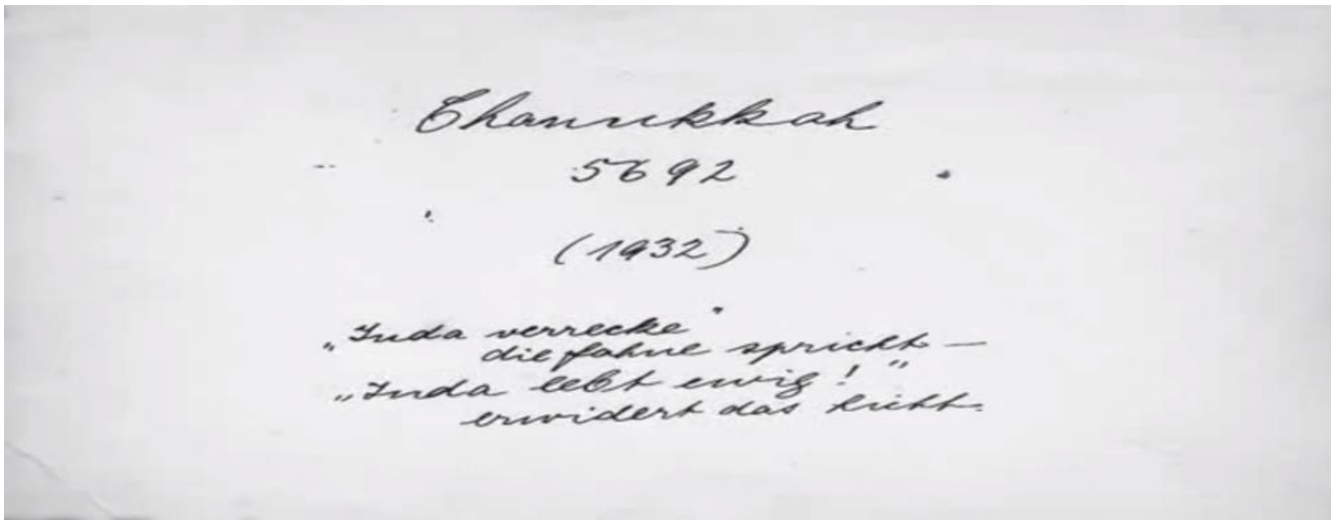


5779 - Every Chanukah, I am reminded once again of this extraordinary and dramatic photograph. The story of this picture takes us back to the 31st December 1932, in a city in Germany named Kiel. It was the eighth night of Chanukah that coincided with

Shabbos. Rebbetzen Rochel Posner set up the menorah on the ledge of the window of their home.



Her husband, the Rov of the community, Rabbi Akiva Boruch Posner, kindled all the eight flames. His wife, Rochel, looked out the window, and what she saw was something surreal. Across the street was the headquarters of the Nazi party and a large flag, the Swastika draped down over the building. For Rochel Posner, this represented the stark contrast between two world orders.



She decided that she had to immortalise the moment through a photograph. She snapped the picture, and then she ran to light the Shabbos candles moments before the sun set over the horizon in Kiel, Germany.

She developed the film and on the back of the photo, she wrote these words in German- I will translate them into English. ***Chanukah 1932 – Judah will die, thus says the flag – Judah will live forever, thus say the lights.*** Indeed, just a few days later Germany went to

elections. It was the election that appointed Adolf Hitler as the Fuhrer and chancellor of Germany on the 30th of January 1933.

And over the next fifteen years, the flame of Judah came so close to extinction.



More than eighty years have passed, and a few days ago, I was schmoozing with an old friend of mine. We grew up together in yeshiva in New York. He is today, the chief rabbi of Berlin- Rabbi Yehudah Teichtel, and he shared with me, that a little while ago, he was invited by the president of Germany. The president said, "Rabbi Teichtel, this year commemorates the eightieth year since Kristallnacht, which essentially represented the onset of the Holocaust.



How do you think Germany should commemorate this eightieth anniversary since Kristallnacht?" So Rabbi Teichtel told him, " I was sent here to Berlin by my teacher and mentor – the late Lubavitcher Rebbe. He always taught, in places and situations where one observes the greatest darkness, it is only a calling for us to introduce into those places and situations – ***the greatest light.***

Why don't we erect a large Chanukah Menorah at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin?!" President Steinmeier was enthusiastic.



At the very spot where Hitler stood and gave his fiery sermons, presentations, and speeches. Enticing a nation to violence , genocide, bloodshed, and hatred. At the very spot where so many of the parades took place. The motorcades, inspiring thousands of Hitler youth to murder, kill, destroy, and decimate.

At that very place, the president of Germany, the government of Germany, would erect a menorah, representing the freedom of the human spirit. The power of light over darkness. The power of love to triumph over hate.

And He says, "Rabbi, can I have the privilege of kindling the menorah at the Brandenburg Gate this year?"

Rabbi Teichtel said, "Mr President, you will be kindling that light that imparts light to all the others- called the ***Shamesh***."

Indeed, tonight at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, a cherry picker will lift up the Chief Rabbi Teichtel and President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The President will light the *shamesh*,then give it to the Rabbi, who will kindle the first light. Thousands of Jews and people are expected to be present there.

I want you to think about this moment. Eight decades after the holocaust, the successor, the leader of Germany today, turns to a Chabad Chasidic Rabbi in Berlin, and asks him for the privilege to light the menorah at the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. ***If this is not a miracle -what is a miracle?***



And now come with me from Brandenburg Gate in Berlin to the holy Land, our eternal homeland. In Haifa lives a Jew, his name is Yehudah Mansbach. He is also lighting his menorah this evening in his home in Israel. On the ledge of his window is a menorah, look at the menorah, which is it?



It is the menorah of his grandfather and grandmother – Rabbi Akiva Boruch and Rochel Posner, that was saved and came to the Holyland, and he lights it and kindles it every single year. And each year when Yehudah lights the menorah in the presence of his children and grandchildren, he takes out the photograph and he reads the note of his grandmother.

Judah will die, thus says the flag – Judah will live <u>forever</u>, thus say the lights. Who was right? Happy Chanukah.

Yosef, Chanuka and Emuna



The Megale Amukos tells us that Chanuka corresponds to Yosef Hatzadik. This is portrayed in the following:

1) In regard to lighting Chanuka candles, the Halacha follows Beis Hillel who rules **מוסיף והולך . מוסיף** alludes to **יוסף**.

2) The Pasuk states **בית יוסף להבה**; Yosef is compared to a flame. On Chanuka, we light a flame.

3) When Yosef was thrown into the pit there was no water inside- **מים אין בו אבל נחשים ועקרבים יש בו**. This Gemara is found in the middle of the Gemaras dealing with Chanuka.

4) It states **מציון מכלל יופי**; beauty comes forth from **ציון.** Yosef is described by his beauty. Yosef is the positive side of beauty; the internal, which is the antithesis of the Greek external focus on beauty. Parshas Miketz comes out annually during Chanuka as it speaks about Yosef- beauty. **יון** is from **יפת** the son of Noach and **יפת** means beauty. The letters **יון** backwards spell **נוי**; beauty. Yosef is called **יוסף הצדיק**. Take the letter **צ** Tzadik and put it with the word **יון**. What do we get? **! ציון** Furthermore, the Gematria of **יוסף** is 156, the same as **ציון**. Moreover, 156 is also the same total as **מלך יון** as well as **אנטיוכס**.

5) **שבע יפול צדיק וקם**; A Tzadik falls seven times but he rises up to the number 8- above nature. Yosef is referred to as **יוסף הצדיק** and there are 8 days of Chanuka! Additionally, through the 8 days of Chanuka, we say in **על הנסים - ורשעים ביד צדיקים**; the wicked fell into the hands of the Tzadikim- those who lift themselves up to the number 8, above nature.

Every year, when the holiday of Chanukah comes around, conventional wisdom tells us that the minhag to eat latkes on Chanukah is based on the fact that latkes are made with oil. Who can resist a whiff of the frying pan that was doused in cooking oil, as the latkes simmer to their greasy perfection? This makes sense as oil was part of the great miracle, when one day's worth of oil burned for eight days. However, little do people know, this is not the reason for the minhag of latkes on Chanukah.



Rabbi Baruch Lederman Shlit'a (Kehillas Torah, Denver) relates in the name of **R' Dovid Feinstein Zt'L**, Rosh Yeshivah of Mesivtha Tifereth Jerusalem, that in truth, latkes have nothing to do with oil. Years ago, in Eastern Europe, they did not have cooking oil as we do now. In fact, they barely had any oil at all. If they wished to fry food, they used either chicken schmaltz or butter.



Latkes were fried with butter. Indeed, R' Dovid recalled, that when he would come home and smell latkes, he knew it was going to be a dairy meal. A typical combination was latkes and sour cream. Having grown up in Eastern Europe, R' Dovid was surprised when he came to America and saw latkes in meat delicatessens. Somehow in America, latkes got switched from a dairy food fried in

butter, to a pareve food fried in oil. That is why you will often see latkes and applesauce with brisket of beef. R' Dovid explained that the whole reason for the minhag of latkes on Chanukah is because they were fried in butter and there is a minhag to eat dairy foods on Chanukah.





Why is there a minhag to eat dairy on Chanukah? To quote the **Sefer HaToda'ah**, the daughter of Yochanan Kohen Gadol was especially beautiful, and the tyrant-king desired her. She seemingly acquiesced, came before him and fed him heavy cheese and other dairy foods which made him thirsty. She then plied him with wine to drink until he passed out, whereupon she severed his head and brought it to Jerusalem. When the Syrian soldiers saw that the king had perished, they fled. Since part of the Chanukah miracle was brought about through dairy, it is customary to eat dairy foods, like latkes fried with butter, on Chanukah.

R' Meir Hurvitz ZT"L (Dzikover Rebbe) would say: "The days of Chanukah are **מסוגל** for healing. The gematriya of **מלך רופא נאמן** (518) is equal to **להדליק נר חנוכה**

Did you ever wonder why we say "A freilichin Chanukah"? We don't say "A freilichen Pesach" or "A Freilichen Shavuos" so why do we say it by Chanukah?



The Nesivos Shalom, R' Sholom Noach Berezovsky zt"l tells us that the essence of Chanukah is simcha! In fact, this was exactly what the Greeks were trying to rob us of! We know that the Yevanim placed many terrible decrees upon the Jewish people. They forbade us to celebrate Shabbos, Mila and (Rosh) Chodesh. The first letters of these words spell out **שמח** - they were forbidding us to have SIMCHA! The foundation of all spiritual success is simcha. It is truly the way that a Jew connects with Hashem and serves Him properly! Dovid HaMelech tells us in Tehillim (100): **עבדו את ה' בשמחה** - ***"Serve Hashem with happiness."***

Rabbi Ezriel Tauber shlit'a says that this is not just a command - it is an explanation of HOW to carry out the command! We must serve Hashem. HOW? With simcha! True avodas Hashem brings a person to joy! Chanukah is called the festival of lights!

The famous Gemara in Shabbos asks: **מאי חנוכה** - *What is the essence of Chanukah?* The Gemara goes on to describe the miracle of the oil and how they found a single sealed jug. It doesn't mention the military victory at all, even though we know that this was a huge part of the miracle! So why is it not mentioned? Because Chazal are not asking, "Why do we celebrate Chanukah?" The Sages are asking: **מאי חנוכה** - "*What is the essence of Chanukah?* What is this special holiday all about? What does it stand for, represent?

And so the Gemara discusses the oil, because the essence of the Chanukah miracle was the LIGHT, and light is an expression of joy. Light is represented through Simcha, as we say, **ליהודים היתה אורה ושמחה** - The Jewish people had LIGHT and JOY! **אורה** - light, means the inner happiness of being a Yid! The inner joy of having a relationship with Hashem!

The word CHANUKAH can be divided into two words: "Chinuch Hashem" - an education of G-dliness! What is the education of G-dliness? It is about living a life filled with light, with joy, with clarity, with the peace of mind and knowledge that I have a relationship with Hashem. My life is not about my body, my materialistic success, or my level of intelligence.

That is what the Yevanim wanted us to think! They tried to make us act this way - but they were unsuccessful in the end! On Chanukah we celebrate the victory of Yid over Greek! Of spirituality over physicality! Of simcha over misery! May the lights of Chanukah continue to light up our lives!



On the day R' Nosson Tzvi Finkel ZT"L passed away, 11 Cheshvan 5772 (November 8, 2011), a large funeral procession left from the Mir Yeshivah after the hespedim that began at noon, and made its way to the Har Menuchos cemetery in Givat Shaul. Reportedly, over 100,000 people were in attendance to pay their final respects to the great Mirrer Rosh Yeshivah. Many people were crying incessantly, and many others were relating stories - in most cases first-hand experiences - about the greatness of the Niftar. During those mournful hours, hundreds

of outstanding stories describing R' Nosson Tzvi's diligence, personal warmth, self-sacrifice, and tireless Harbotzas Torah surfaced.

In one story after another, people described how the Rosh Yeshivah inspired thousands of young men to reach heights in Torah they had never dreamed possible. How he learned with so many chavrusos every day and was prepared to help each student reach his fullest potential. How he constantly strove to find ways to increase the immersion in Torah and how he would offer monetary rewards for knowing a sizable amount of Gemara and writing monthly papers (chaburos) on relevant topics. How he instituted a half-day study program in yeshivah during the summer break followed by a heavily subsidized trip for relaxation.

On and on, story after story, tearful students remembered how R' Nosson Tzvi, in his tremendously weakened state due to his severe case of Parkinson's Disease, never stopped learning, growing or building the yeshivah he loved so dearly.

One man, though, had a story to tell, but it had nothing to do with learning, hasmadah (diligence), or excellence in studies, like most of the other stories being told. This man was quite a bit older and he did not appear to be a student of the Mir Yeshivah - of any yeshivah for that matter. Nevertheless, he was crying like the others and without provocation, he began to speak. His first words immediately caught the attention of those standing nearby.

"The kitchen in the Mir Yeshivah is like an extension of the Beis Medrash," he said, tears staining his cheeks. Many people craned their ears to hear his story. The man began by proudly informing all those around him that he currently works in the kitchen in the Mir. It was due to this fact, that he alone knew the details of the story he was about to tell; R' Nosson Tzvi had been the only other person to know it.

A number of years ago, during the Yom Tov of Chanukah, one of the female cooks in the kitchen of the Mir, was inspired to make latkes for the entire yeshivah body.



It was a daunting task indeed, and the exuberant woman slaved over the potatoes and the hot oil for hours upon hours. In total, she made three thousand latkes! The rest of us watched in awe as she worked tirelessly, he said, and when we offered to help her, she refused. This was her mitzvah, she said, and she wanted to perform it to the fullest. Well, it took hours, but she finally finished.

With much excitement, the woman sent the platters of oil-laden latkes up to the main dining room. She was understandably exhausted and soon left for a break. It was a good thing she did. Somehow, she had forgotten a key ingredient in the delicacy, and after the first few intrepid bochurim tasted the latkes and realized that they were not very good, nobody took anymore latkes from the pan. Can you imagine, three-thousand latkes - and no one was eating them! It was then that the Rosh Yeshivah, R' Nosson Tzvi, happened to walk into the dining room and he saw the large platters of latkes. He also saw that no one was eating them and with keen insight and intellect, he understood that all those latkes were probably not very good. Something had gone wrong in the recipe.

Realizing how painful this would be to the cook, R' Nosson Tzvi quickly called a nearby caterer and ordered three thousand latkes to be delivered to the yeshivah, post haste. When they arrived, he paid for them out of his own pocket and very discreetly had the tasteless latkes removed and replaced with the new ones. As the

bochurim soon began streaming into the dining room to eat dinner, it didn't take long for the tins of three thousand latkes to be reduced to empty platters as word got out that the latkes were really very good. The fine young men, who were unaware of the drama behind the latkes, were quick to compliment the woman on the delicious Chanukah treat she provided, and needless to say, she was more than delighted with their reaction. "Nobody ever knew what happened and nobody ever found out. I was there," said the kitchen staffer, "and I saw it all play out in front of my eyes. This is the reason why I love working in the Mir kitchen." The man blinked back his tears, but it was no use. R' Nosson Tzvi was so beloved and worthy of the same respect, time and compassion, from every individual, just as he was known to provide to his own students.



One of the most famous Chanukah songs is the holiday tune known by its first line: "*I have a little dreidel, I made it out of clay …*" It is the first Chanukah song that preschool toddlers learn; it's the song that is so old that it's no longer attributed. But it's actually called "*My Dreidel*" - it exists in both English and Yiddish versions. "And," says Mrs. Susan Wolfe excitedly, "I know who wrote it! She relates:

When he was a young man growing up on the Lower East Side, my grandfather, Sam Goldfarb, my grandfather wrote a song which he called, "My Dreidel." In fact, along with his brother, Israel (Yisroel), he wrote many liturgical and holiday melodies, including the famous and haunting tunes used all over the world for "*Shalom Aleichem*" *and* "*Adon Olam.*" But there is no doubt that "My Dreidel" is the most famous of them all.

Grandma and Grandpa moved west just after the stock market crash of 1929. They settled in Seattle, Washington, where he took a job as a music director at a local synagogue organizing and directing adult and children's choirs, producing holiday plays, and training boys for their bar mitzvah, until his retirement in 1969. I remember well how he loved Chanukah. Making the blessings on the candles was never enough - we always sang loads of Chanukah songs as we gathered around the Menorah, burning brightly on the piano while Grandpa played. I remember when I was in fifth-grade, my music teacher introduced the song to our class which we would sing at the holiday program. I raised my hand to get her attention. "My Grandpa wrote My Dreidel!" I boasted enthusiastically. "No one 'wrote' My Dreidel," she answered condescendingly. "It's a Jewish folk song." It took a call from my father to convince her otherwise.



Years later, as the mother of a pre-schooler, I found myself frying latkes at my son's school's Chanukah party. While the children and their mothers all sat in a circle enjoying hot latkes, the teacher read a story to the children. Then she began to sing, "I have a little dreidel ...." My son Sam, named for his great-grandfather, the composer, waved his hand wildly. "My mother's Grandpa wrote My Dreidel," he squealed with delight, and before he could be contradicted, I nodded my acknowledgment. People were surprised and I recounted what I knew about Grandpa's early days and how he composed the famous tune. What I didn't know was the impact this story would have just a few hours later.

That afternoon, the same teacher taught another class of pre-schoolers. At their Chanukah party, someone mentioned the song and

one of the dads' hands shot up in the air. "You know," he began, "My wife's great-uncle Sam wrote My Dreidel."

The teacher responded by informing him that earlier in the day, another child with his mother, had already laid claim to their grandfather's song. He had no idea - and neither did I - that I had a cousin living in the same city, with children in the same preschool! That's how we discovered a new set of cousins, three thousand miles and eighty-seven years removed from a modest New York apartment, where so many family stories began, with a young man scratching out a cheerful tune in his well-worn composition book.



Noda B'Yehudah, R' Yechezkel Landau zt"l (Drushei Tzlach Chanukah) would say: "During the days of Chanukah, a person should attempt to rectify any and all faults that may cause the Shechina to leave Klal Yisroel, as this was the primary goal of the Greeks.

Now, as we know, since the holy Temple was destroyed the place where Hashem rests his Divine Spirit is in the shuls and Batei Medrashim of Klal Yisoel. As such, one who talks inside a shul or during davening is literally rebelling against Hashem and causing the Shechina to move away. He is accomplishing what the Greek armies could not! He is making the air impure and putting idols in the courtyard for in every sin, one causes a klipah and impure spirit!"



The following story was found in "Kehillas Kodesh Torna V'Hasevivah," the Pinkas (ledger) of the Hungarian city of Torna. There was a friendly Polish gentile living in Torna by the name of Stefan Romak, a truly righteous gentile, who disappeared while he was serving a sentence for forced labour because he had helped a Jewish friend escape across the Polish border for France. Despite the sentence, though, he made it clear he didn't regret what he had done. "I believe that the G-d of Israel will help me one day, too," he would say after he was released. Everyone loved Stefan.

One year, during Chanukah he was invited to a Jewish family to enjoy the holiday food. It was strange to hear Yiddish coming from Stefan's mouth, since he always made it known that he was "one hundred percent gentile" by his own testimony. He claimed to have learned it back in Poland. Stefan regaled the family with stories, although the highlight of the night was when he taught them a song about Chanukah in Yiddish. It was a song full of emotion, its words evocative of the Jewish soul and its strength.

The members of the Jewish family could not understand how a gentile like Stefan could sing such a decidedly Jewish song, but they held their tongues, not saying a word.

In 1944, the Germans deported most of Hungarian Jewry to Auschwitz and other death camps. The daughter who had been present that special Chanukah night, whom we shall call Malka, fell

sick at Auschwitz and ended up in a hospital in the Gypsy camp. Her toes were frostbitten due to the ice and snow that was everywhere. A young woman from Poland was in the bed next to hers. She was suffering from depression, to the point where she hated the idea of living. Nothing could lift her spirits, not even the tiny Chanukah Menorah Malka had cobbled together, or the blessings she chanted when she lit. Not even the festival songs she had learned at home. The Polish woman just lay in her bed, silent, uncaring - until Malka began quietly singing the Chanukah song Stefan Romak had taught her back in Hungary.

This song, of all things, awoke the woman from her depression. She even began to sing along and then asked Malka to tell her where she had learned the song. When Malka told the woman about Stefan, tears welled up in her eyes, and she choked out, "He was my fiance!"

Seeing Malka's astonishment, she explained that Stefan Romak was actually a Jew; he had disguised himself as a gentile in order to escape the Nazis. Sharing her memories planted the seeds of her renewed will to live and she made a full recovery. Malka survived the war, married and moved to the southern part of Israel, the Negev.

One year, during Chanukah she attended a play put on by the local Bais Yaakov students. It was a nice performance, nothing too exciting, until one little girl suddenly burst out onto the stage. Everyone applauded the song she performed, but Malka wept over it.

Word for word, it was Stefan's Chanukah song, the one the "Polish gentile" had taught her. Malka went over to the girl after the play to ask her where she had heard the song and was astonished to come face to face with the girl's parents: it was the prisoner woman from Auschwitz and her husband, Stefan, at her side. They had found each other after the war, married, and created a fine religious family. It was truly a Chanukah miracle in our times!





נר ביתו ונר חנוכה נר ביתו עדיף משום שלום ביתו [שבת כג:]

The Gemara quotes the words of Raba *"It is obvious to me (that if one must choose between) the house light and the Chanukah lights, the former is preferable, on account (of the importance) of peace at home."* Rashi explains that "House light" refers to lighting the Shabbos candles on Friday night. Thus, it is not a chiddush to Raba - it is obvious to him that on Shabbos Chanukah, if a person cannot afford to buy neiros for both Shabbos and Chanukah, he should only buy Shabbos candles, because they promote shalom bayis, which affects the entire family, and forgo lighting the Chanukah Menorah.



By way of illustrating this point, **R' Avraham Pam zt"l** once told a story about **R' Nochum Kaplan zt"l**, the Rebbi and teacher of the saintly **Chofetz Chaim, R' Yisroel Meir Kagan zt"l**. It happened one night during Chanukah that R' Yisroel Meir was in the home of his Rebbi, R' Nochumke (as he was known). The zman for lighting the Menorah came and went and R' Nochumke still hadn't lit. The talmid was a bit surprised that his Rebbi would let the time slip by, but he didn't dare say anything. Occasionally, R' Nochumke would look out the window

or say a little Tehillim, but he seemed to be in no rush to light. Suddenly, the Rebbi's wife arrived and entered the house. Immediately, R' Nochumke proceeded to bentch Chanukah licht. R' Yisroel Meir was perplexed by his Rebbi's delay, knowing he never missed the preferred zman of hadlaka and he asked him for an explanation. R' Nochumke replied, "You saw that my Rebbetzin was not home and we recently learned the halacha that in order to preserve shalom bayis one is even permitted to forgo the entire mitzvah of Ner Chanukah in order to light Shabbos candles. Since there was no question in my mind that had the Rebbetzin walked in and saw that I did not wait for her to light the Menorah, her feelings would be hurt, I decided that it was certainly permissible to delay my usual preferred zman of lighting so as not to hurt my wife's feelings."



R' Shalom Shwadron zt"l would add his own part to the story. Even after R' Nochumke lit the Menorah, he didn't ask his wife why she was late. He simply continued the simchas Chanukah as if nothing happened. We should learn a lesson from this to never cause stress at home - even if it might be justified - because shalom bayis overrides all. As it says, "Gadol hashalom bein ish l'ishto...

The world says that time is money, but I say that money is time. In order to earn enough money to satisfy his desires, one must sacrifice inordinate amounts of time. For me, that sacrifice is too great.~~ The Chofetz Chaim

וקבעו שמונת חנוכה אלו להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול [על הניסים]



Unlike the festival of Purim, which is designated as a day of **משתה ושמחה** (feasting and gladness), the theme of Chanukah is expressing thanks and praise - **להודות ולהלל**- for the miracles Hashem did for us. The question many commentators ask is: what is the difference? They are both Rabbinical holidays - why can't we "feast and be glad" on Chanukah the same way we do it on Purim? Do we not "thank and praise" on Purim, like we do on Chanukah?

The Levush, R' Mordechai Yoffe zt"l, explains that on Purim, the wicked Haman wanted to destroy our nation, to exterminate our people. Since the miracle of Purim saved them from physical annihilation, we commemorate the day with physical celebration. Our feasting - eating, drinking and performing physical mitzvos of kindness - correlate to the wondrous miracle of our physical salvation. On Chanukah, however, the Jewish nation was saved from spiritual destruction, for the Greek Hellenists compelled them to abandon the Torah and outlawed the performance of mitzvos. It was not a physical salvation but the fact that the Jewish people will live on in a spiritual sense. The Torah reigned supreme, the religion was saved. Chanukah is therefore celebrated in a spiritual way, with praises and thanksgiving to Hashem.

R' Chanoch Henach Hakohen Levine zt"l, the saintly Rebbe of Aleksander (Chashava L'Tova), offers a deeper insight into the nes of Chanukah. In truth, writes the Rebbe, Haman's death sentence affected all Jews equally, touching everyone with the same severity. The Purim miracle is therefore commemorated with something that

is enjoyed equally by everyone - the physical acts of eating, drinking and rejoicing. The miracle of Chanukah is different. The Yevanim (Greeks) wished to impose their irreligious culture on the Jews by abolishing the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos.

The Chanukah miracle saved the Jews from spiritual ruin. Unfortunately, not all Jews reacted to the Chanukah miracle in the same way. For those who were devoted to Hashem and the Torah, the Greek decrees were a source of anguish and distress. They could not learn their beloved Torah or perform their righteous mitzvos. They were relieved and ecstatic over the miracle of Chanukah. But those who were indifferent about the Torah and mitzvos were not concerned about the Greek decrees; the miracle of Chanukah did not excite them.

As a result of these divergent attitudes toward the miracle, the Sages instituted that Chanukah should be celebrated for its spiritual aspect, **להודות ולהלל**, which is not felt by every Jew with the same intensity. A person on a high spiritual level will chant Hallel with fervour and ecstasy; another person might rush through Hallel, mumbling and mispronouncing the words. The more a Jew appreciates the miracle, the more heartfelt and jubilant is his praise of Hashem.

קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה' [תהילים כז]

Isn't it interesting that Chanukah, the holiday of light arrives at the coldest and darkest time of the year? The days are short, the nights are long, and the holy lights of the Chanukah Menorah remind us that the Jewish people are **למעלה מן הטבע** - *above the natural order of the world*. In the darkest periods of our history, it was the spark of emunah, the belief and trust in Hashem, that kept the Jewish people alive. We are steeped in the long, dark and bitter golus. Jewish suffering, on a collective and even individual level, is far from ceased. And yes, it is the same spark of faith and connection to Hashem that continues to illuminate the darkness of this world.

This past week, here in Eretz Yisroel, tragedy struck with the sudden petirah of Rabbi Alter Kaufman Z"L from Beit Shemesh, who fell off a ladder. I heard an interesting episode that happened the day before he passed away.



His daughter was making a coffee and he said to her, "Do you know why we drink coffee? In order to learn a very important lesson. There are four steps to making coffee, and they each combine two opposites. We put wet liquid on top of a dry solid. We put hot water onto cold coffee granules. We put white milk into black coffee, and we put sweet sugar into bitter coffee. In each step, we transform the dry, cold, dark, and bitter coffee into something palatable, moist, heart-warming and delicious! However, although they may be opposites in every way, on each one of these, we recite the blessing **שהכל נהיה בדברו** - EVERYTHING is from Hashem!"

His daughter will never forget his final message, for it is not just a beautiful idea, it is truly what Yiddishkeit is all about. The word "Chanukah" has the same root as "Chinuch," and the message of Chanukah, bringing light into darkness, is something we should all speak about and give over to our children at this auspicious time. This ability to place our trust in Hashem will be the light that illuminates the darkest and most difficult aspects of life and our children will learn to grow immeasurably from these "lichtiga" lessons. And, of course, if you drink Nescafe, remember the "Nes" (miracle) that happened on "Kaf Hey" Kislev and have a beautiful and uplifting Chanukah.



R' Yisroel Friedman of Tchortkov ZT"L would say: ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם בלבד - The nature of light is to illuminate a person's spirit and bring him joy and gladness. It follows, then, that the spiritual light of the Chanukah Menorah has the power to illuminate a Jew's heart and bring a special type of simcha to his soul. Therefore, one who suffers from depression should be vigilant in staring at the Chanukah candles, because they will bring simcha to his downtrodden spirit."

נֵס גָּדוֹל הָיָה שָׁם

On Chanukah, every child is taught to "spin the dreidle," the timeless Jewish pastime that is wholly associated with this most wonderful holiday. It appears to be a seemingly innocent child's game, however, we find throughout history that even our greatest Torah leaders in all generations would involve themselves with the dreidle game. There have been variations, but the basic rules are the same: the dreidle has four Hebrew letters on its four sides – **נ-ג-ה-ש**.



A person spins the dreidle and if it lands on **נ** (**נישט**) he gets nothing. If it lands on **ש** (**שטעל**) he puts some coins in the pot. If it lands on **ה** (**האלב**) he gets half of the take. But if it lands on **ג** (**גאנץ**) he wins the game and takes the whole prize. The game of dreidle is also an allusion to the "game" of life. There

are four types of sojourns that a person may experience on this earth. There are those who know only of the negative, the sorrow and the pain; whatever they touch turns to dust, and they are unsuccessful at every turn נ Then, there are those who have lost a lot in their lives, but they haven't given up; they continue to look ahead, to make sacrifices until they see the light at the end of the tunnel ש. The next type is the one who is moderately successful; he has just enough to sustain him and his family ה, although he has never quite reached the highest level - that of the person who has כל טוב - all the blessings of Heaven, both in material wealth and in spiritual riches. He has reached the pinnacle of what a person can achieve in this world ג. The four letters are also an allusion found in the posuk: להורות לפניו ג ש נ ה (בראשית מו-כח) - which refers to when Yehudah was sent down to the Land of Goshen by Yaakov Avinu, to set up houses of prayer and Torah study, for the soon-to-be-arriving Bnei Yisroel.

When a person merits the ג (from the dreidle) and achieves Heavenly blessings, he must use them to lead the other aspects of his life, both good and bad, by making Torah and Tefillah his first priority in life.

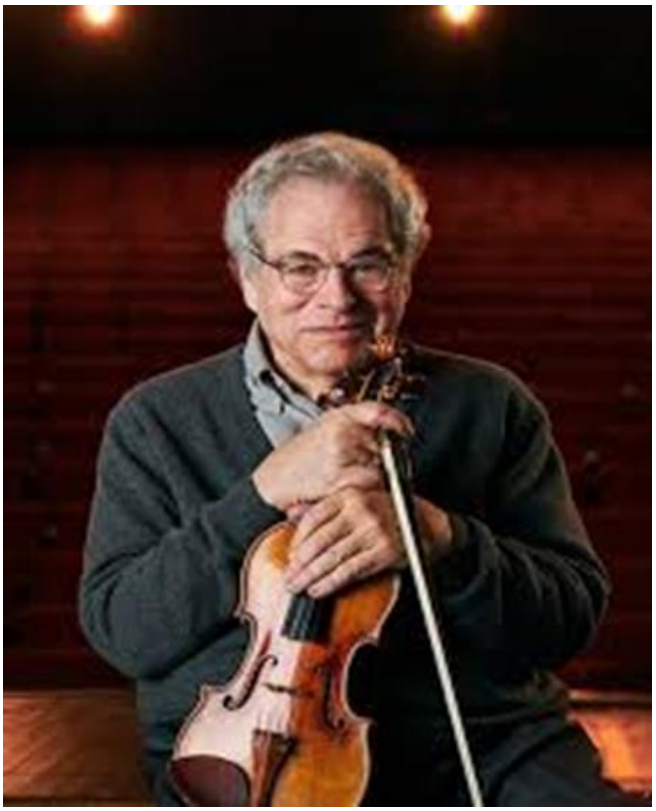
Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld The Candle of Trying

While Chanukah offers many life lessons which specifically pertain to us in our day and age, there is one very fundamental law relating to the Chanukah candles which sends a simple, yet profound message. The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) rules that in the event the Chanukah candles blew out after lighting them, one is strictly speaking not obligated to relight them.

Considering this, one foundational concept which Chanukah brings to the fore is trying. Do the best you possibly can and become the best person you are capable of. That is all Hashem asks of us. If the flame goes out, yet you did your best, you achieved something which is

valuable and precious in Hashem's eyes. The attempt, the effort and the work are what earns esteem in Judaism.

It need not be said that many times in life we experience challenges. Life is oftentimes dark and difficult. However, many a time, a slight beacon of light shines forth and casts aside the darkness. It pushes aside the overbearing difficulty and reminds us that there is Someone who always cares about us and is looking after us. All we must do is try, try and try. When that becomes our attitude, we may surprise everyone, including ourselves, of what we can accomplish.



Years ago, the famed violinist Itzhak Perlman was slated to play at a well-attended and high anticipated grand concert. Having contracted polio at the young age of four, Itzhak Perlman's manoeuvrability has ever since been compromised. Yet, despite any apparent difficulty, he never fails to amaze and dazzle his listeners with the brilliance of his music.

Yet on one occasion, he did more than just surprise his listeners. As Perlman seated himself to play, he motioned to the conductor to begin. Yet just a mere few minutes into the first piece, one of Perlman's violin strings snapped. It was in no way rehearsed and was certainly something which immediately drew all attention to Perlman to see what he would do.

He did not halt the other musicians from playing but did what a true master musician is capable of. He improvised. Playing with one less string, he immediately readjusted and thought of what notes could instead be played to still retain the flow of the music. With no notes

in front of him and without missing a beat, he patched together new notes with just three strings.

The audience was overawed. In just a matter of moments, Itzhak Perlman rearranged everything he planned on playing and seamlessly went ahead as if nothing had happened. When the piece finished, the audience was left enthralled and incredulous. Perlman, having received a standing ovation, raised his violin, and said aloud, "It is the task of an artist to make beautiful music with whatever he has left." While not all of us may be professional musicians or artists, we are all our artists of our own life. We all have a life to beautifully compose and share with ourselves, with our family and with the world. Yet, at times, a string may snap, leaving us in a hard-pressed situation. When that occurs, how we react is of paramount importance and sets everything else to follow in motion. Instead of staying stuck on the snapped string and allowing it to hamper us, we would be much better off learning how to make the best of what we have.

Hashem has given all of us beautiful strings to create a beautiful life for ourselves. Chanukah reminds us of what we can do to attain that goal of ours. Even if the flame goes out, so long as we try, we are heading in the right direction. There will inevitably be difficulties throughout our journey in life, but the candle of trying, of effort and of hard work holds the potential of breaking through the darkness and creating a room full of light and full of life.



In 1944, the first night of Chanukah fell on December 10.

Several days beforehand, in Nieder-Orschel, part of the Buchenwald concentration camp complex, seventeen-year-old Simche Unsdorfer decided to light a Chanukah candle to restore the desperate morale in the camp. He confided in friends who agreed to help, but besides the danger it would put their lives in if caught,

they needed a way to obtain the oil and a place where the lighted wick would not be seen and discovered.

The small group of friends drew lots. The first name drawn would have to steal the oil from the factory in which they worked, the third name would be responsible to hide the oil until the first night of Chanukah, and the fifth name drawn, which turned out to be Simche himself, would have to light it under his bunk in the barrack.

The first boy convinced the Nazi factory foreman that the machines would work better if oiled regularly each morning, and this could be best arranged if a small can of fine machine oil was allotted to them. The third boy kept some of this oil hidden until Chanukah eve. The boys knew that Jewish law did not compel them to risk their lives for the sake of fulfilling one commandment, and a rabbinical one at that. Yet, they had an urge "to reveal the spirit of sacrifice implanted in our ancestors throughout the ages". Under indescribable physical and spiritual distress, they "felt that a little Chanukah light would warm our starving souls and inspire us with hope, faith, and courage to keep us going through this long, grim, and icy winter".

Finally, the first night of Chanukah arrived, and Simche put the oil in the empty half of a shoe polish tin, took a few threads from his blanket and rolled them into a wick, made the three benedictions, and lit the little Chanukah light which flickered slowly under his bunk. Everyone in the room, not just the religious ones, hummed together the traditional Chanukah songs.



The Nazi untersturmfuhrer smelled the burning oil and was about to barge in and discover it when an air-raid warning sounded. The search was called off and the boys' lives were spared. Simche

grabbed his Menorah, and with the drone of the Allied bombers overhead, kept on muttering the blessing to the G-d who performed miracles for His people in past days and in our own time.



R' Menachem Nochum Twersky ZT"L of Chernobyl (Meor Einayim) would say: "*A person who is careful to fulfil the mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah lights will merit to have sons who will sit and learn Torah and light up the world.*" Why? Because, as Chazal tell us, the proper time of day to light the Menorah is when people stop walking in the marketplace and if one merits to have a son who sits in the Beis Medrash and leans Torah all day, undoubtedly he will not be found walking in the marketplaces. Therefore, one who takes care to light on time will have children who will become great Torah scholars."

Chanukah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections *By: Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*

Chanukah is a holiday that is celebrated for eight days, which commemorates the miracle of the oil which burned for eight days, after the *Chashmonaim's* victory.

The *Bais Yosef* (*Orach Chaim* 671) is bothered by a well-known question about the one flask of pure oil that was found, which they used to light in the *Bais HaMikdash*. There was enough oil to burn

for one day. Why then do we celebrate Chanukah for eight days? There were only seven days of miracles!

One of the many answers offered is that the first day that the oil burned, we are celebrating a different type of miracle. It is the miracle that seems to us as 'nature'— the very fact that oil even burns. These miracles are not always appreciated as miracles, yet they are remarkable just the same.



It is told that when the eldest son of the Sanzer Rav, R' Chaim Halberstam ZT"L, was a child, he was involved in a terrible accident that threatened his life. Yechezkel Shraga, who went on to become the renowned **Shinover Rebbe**, was once walking in the marketplace of his town of birth, Rudnik, when a wagon loaded high with daily supplies came charging down the dirt path where he was walking. The boy did not have enough time to get out of the way, and he was literally run over by the careening cart. He was knocked unconscious and hovered between life and death for some time.

R' Chaim came running when he heard what had happened to his oldest son, and he began a program of devout and constant prayer, moving heaven and earth to effect a cure for his son. He even traveled to many great Rabbanim and Torah scholars, begging them

to pray on his son's behalf, and gathering berachos for the boy's well-being.

When the **Rebbe of Ropshitz, R' Naftali Tzvi Horowitz ZT"L** heard about the accident, he sent a messenger to Rudnik, armed with a flask of leftover olive oil that he had used for the Chanukah lights. He told the messenger to give it to the boy's family and instructed them to rub this oil all over the young boy's body as a segulah for a refuah shleimah.

The family did as they were told and immediately after this was done, the child saw improvement, eventually healing entirely, and living for many long, righteous years as the Rebbe of Shinov, one of the greatest Admorim of Poland.



Many years later, when R' Yechezkel Shraga ZT"L was becoming weak from old age, he would recall the wonderful oil, the **שמן זית** of the Ropshitzer Rav that saved his life, and how he felt his entire body strengthening and healing inside even as the Chanukah oil was being applied.

The great Shinover Rebbe would turn to his attendants and with a wry smile he would sigh and say, **ווי נעמט מען היינט אזא ביסל שמן זית** - "Where can one get such olive oil in today's day?"

"אֵין שׁוּם יְאוּשׁ בָּעוֹלָם כְּלָל" -"If only we knew how much Hashem cares, we would never despair." – Rabbi Uri Lati



In the court of R' Itzikel of Pshevorsk ZT"L it was well known that anyone who needed a **ישועה** from a pressing dilemma, would come to the Rebbe's Beis Medrash and be honoured with lighting the Chanukah Menorah. However, in Pshevorsk, they did things a little differently.

The person who was so honoured, would don beggar's clothing, and as he would approach the Rebbe, others would ridicule him, heap scorn upon him and even throw small objects at him, as a form of derision. A newcomer to the Rebbe's court watched this unusual scene unfold before him and couldn't help but ask the Rebbe what it was all about. R' Itzikel closed his eyes and intoned, "*When a person is in dire need of Heavenly salvation, the lower he falls, the greater he is lifted. Az men varft fun unten, varft men fun oiben!" (the more [suffering] that is 'thrown' upon him down here, the more [assistance] is 'thrown' upon him from up above.)*



R' Menachem Mendel Morgenstern ZT"L (Kotzker Rebbe) would say:

"A segulah for one who is afflicted with a 'Rose' (an acne-like skin condition, often referred to as Rosacea) is to take oil from the flask that is used to pour into the Menorah, and rub it on the affected area, and one will get healed. This is alluded to in the words, **ומנותר קנקנים** - From the leftover in the flasks, **נעשה נס לשושנים** - a miracle will occur to (heal) the Rose!"





When R' Yisroel Spira ZT"L, the Bluzhover Rebbe, was forced to relocate from Istrik, Poland, to Lvov, it was then under Soviet rule. According to Soviet practice, each person was to be employed in a productive job; otherwise he was classified as a parasite and was liable to be exiled to Siberia. There were no exceptions. All Chassidic rabbis had to find productive positions in the Communist utopia and were forbidden to use the title "rabbi". And so, the Rebbe of Bluzhov became an insurance agent. At the end of each month, he had to prove that he had earned at least one thousand rubles. In those days the Rebbe still had many followers. To produce a receipt at the end of the month for one thousand rubles, together with a list of insured individuals, was no great task for him. In this way, the Rebbe was able to satisfy the Russian demands while continuing to serve his Chassidim. One December's evening, the Russian commissar called for a regional meeting of all insurance agents. Attendance was mandatory.

Among the insurance agents was one other Chassidic Rebbe, **the Boyaner Rebbe, R' Avraham Yaakov Friedman ZT"L**. The night of

the regional meeting coincided with the first night of Chanukah. It was customary for many Chassidim to assemble at their Rebbe's house for the festive kindling of the first Chanukah light and for the celebration that followed. The Bluzhover Rebbe searched for any way in which to excuse himself from the forthcoming meeting so that he might celebrate the first night of Chanukah in the company of his Chassidim.

Suddenly he had an idea. He smiled to himself and left for the commissar's office. On the way there he took from his pocket his snuff box and began to sniff tobacco without stopping. By the time he reached the commissar, his nose was red and he kept sneezing.





Between one sneezing attack and another, R' Yisroel explained to the commissar that he had a very bad cold and would be unable to attend the evening meeting. The commissar listened to the rabbi with an obvious expression of disbelief. "A strange coincidence," he said while looking straight into the Rebbe's eyes.

"Only a few minutes ago another insurance agent was here, an agent with a beard and side locks, and just like you, his nose was red as a flag and he did not stop sneezing. He, too, claimed that he had caught a cold and asked to be excused from tonight's meeting."

It was probably the Boyaner Rebbe, thought the Bluzhover thought to himself as he tried to conceal his smile. He composed himself and replied, "It is quite natural for two people to catch a cold at this time of the year."

The commissar did not reply. He got up from his chair and walked out of the room. After a short while he returned with a mischievous

smile plastered on his face and resumed his seat beneath the huge portrait of Stalin. "Now I understand the cause of your sickness," he said. "I have just checked my Jewish calendar. Tonight, is the Jewish holiday of Hanukah and the kindling of the first light.

Rabbi, you should have known better. In Russia, when concocting a story, one should make sure it is a solid one." R' Yisroel paled at the thought of being caught red-handed and what the possible consequences for his "crime" would be. But then, the commissar relaxed his expression and lowered his tone. He said, "A word of advice, if I may? One can never be sure who is hiding behind the uniform of a Soviet commissar. If another commissar were sitting in my chair, you and your other sneezing friend would be nursing your colds in the Siberian plains. However, I am the son of the shochet of Mezhibuzh. Go home and kindle the first light of Chanukah."



The year was 1777. The month was December. The American Continental Army under General George Washington was awaiting the battle at Valley Forge. The future president was deeply concerned about the welfare of his troops. The bitter cold and the poor provisions with which his revolutionary army soldiers had been provided did not bode well for the outcome of the critical battle that awaited them.

Wrapped in his officer's cape and wearing his three-cornered hat, Washington went outside to see first-hand how his men were faring. As he went from tent to tent, he saw men dressed in rags, huddling around small fires, trying to keep warm with a hot meal of any sort. He continued to walk about when suddenly he encountered a single

soldier bent over a small metal apparatus in which he had lit a few small tallow candles. Intrigued, General Washington walked over to the young private for a better look. Startled, the man jumped to his feet and saluted. The general said, "Explain to me why you are lighting those little candles here, in the middle of nowhere."

The soldier was, of course, Jewish. He began to relate the age-old tale of foreign Greeks who, upon conquering the Land of Israel, had entered the Jews' holy Temple and placed their idols in the most sacred place of worship. He told how the valiant Maccabees, no longer able to bear the evil decrees forbidding the performance of Jewish ritual and the study of Torah, rose up against the evil Greeks even though they were greatly outnumbered and poorly armed.

"Just like here, only more so," the private interspersed. "Nevertheless, through the grace of Heaven, they succeeded in removing the Greeks from their land." The soldier then explained how the Maccabees purified the sanctuary and finding only one undefiled container of oil, used it to light the Menorah. Miraculously that one small container of oil, which should have been enough for one day, instead lasted for eight full days - until new oil could be made. - In commemoration, he was lighting those little lights.

General Washington stood enthralled. He looked at the little flames, and at the face of the Jew. Then, he laid a firm hand on the man's shoulder. "You are a Jew," he exclaimed, "from a nation of prophets! I treat what you just said as a prophetic message from the Almighty Himself! With your little lights and your inspiring story, you have struck new courage in my troubled heart."

The General shook the young soldier's hand, saluted, then turned to continue on his rounds. What happened after that is history: It took a number of weeks, but General Washington's forces outlasted the British and thus scored a decisive victory at Valley Forge, the beginning of an overall pattern of success in battle. Eventually it led to independence from Great Britain for the fledgling colonies who were soon to become the United States of America.

One evening, some two years after that fateful December night, the young Jewish soldier, who had since returned from the war to his home on Broome Street in New York City, was sitting with his family around the dinner table. It was Chanukah and the family had just lit their Menorah in the window for all to see.

Suddenly, there was a knock at the door. The soldier opened the door and was shocked: General, President, George Washington, was standing in the doorway, in all his glory. "Behold the wonderful candles. The candles of hope of the Jewish people," he proclaimed joyously as he gazed admiringly at the Chanukah candles in the window. The General walked into the brightly lit home and surveyed his surroundings approvingly. Then, he placed his hand upon the soldier's shoulder and said, "The candlelight and your beautiful words lit a flame in my heart that night.



Surely, you and your comrades will receive due recognition for all of your valour at Valley Forge. But this night, accept from me, this medallion."

He proceeded to hang a medallion of gold upon the soldier's chest and shook his hand. Tears came to the younger man's eyes; he couldn't say a word. The General saw his emotion, shook his hand once again and left the house. The soldier stirred as if coming to from a memorable dream. He then looked down at the medallion and saw a beautiful engraving of a Chanukah Menorah with the first candle lit. Below was written, "As an expression of gratitude for the candle of your Menorah." This medallion is part of the permanent collection in the Jewish Museum in New York.

A young Jewish soldier was enlisted in the U.S. Army and found himself marching through Western Europe at the end of World War II, liberating towns and villages from German control.

At one point, Private Winneger's unit was assigned to a small German village with orders to secure the town, search for any hiding Nazis and help the villagers in any way they could.



One night, out on patrol, Winneger saw a slim figure running through a field just outside the village. He gave chase and shouted, "Halt or I'll shoot." The figure ducked behind a tree. Winneger waited and eventually the figure came out and looked around to see if he was still being pursued.

Figuring that the soldier was no longer nearby, he went to a spot near a large tree and started to dig. Winneger waited until the figure had finished digging and removed an object from the ditch. Then, he was once more on the move.

Winnegar stepped out from a nearby patch and again shouted, "Halt or I'll shoot!" The figure ran. Winneger decided not to shoot but to try to catch the furtive figure. He shortly caught up and tackled him to the ground. To his surprise, he found that he had captured a young boy.

An ornate Menorah had fallen from the boy's hands in the scuffle. Winneger picked up the Menorah. The boy tried to grab it back shouting in an unfamiliar dialect, "Give it to me. It's mine!" Winneger assured the boy that he was among friends. Furthermore, he told the boy, he himself was Jewish. The boy, who had just survived several years of the Holocaust and had been in a concentration camp, was mistrustful of all men in uniforms. He had been forced to watch the shooting of his father. He had no idea what had become of his mother. Winneger calmed the boy down and brought him back to his barracks.

In the weeks that followed, he took the young boy, whose name was David, under his wing. As they became closer and closer, Winneger's heart went out to the boy. He had lost everything in the war and he needed a stable home with which to grow up in. The soldier offered David the opportunity to come back to New York City with him after his tour of duty and David gladly accepted. Winneger went through all the necessary paperwork and officially adopted David. After the war, Winneger settled down and became active in the New York Jewish community.

An acquaintance of his, a curator of the Jewish Museum in Manhattan, once happened to see David's precious Menorah. He told David it was a very valuable, historic, European relic and should be shared with the entire Jewish Community. He offered David $50,000 for the Menorah. But David refused the generous offer saying the Menorah had been in his family for over 200 years and that no amount of money could ever make him sell it.

That year, when Chanukah came, David and Winneger lit the Menorah in the window of their home in New York City. The candles burned bright and for David, the memory of this family heirloom put to use in happier times, was an emotionally draining experience for the young boy. Afterwards, he went upstairs to his room while Winneger stayed downstairs in the room with the Menorah. Suddenly, there was a knock on the door and Winneger went to answer it. Standing

by the door, he found a woman with a strong German accent who said that she was walking down the street when she saw the Menorah in the window. She said that she had once had one just like it in her family and had never seen any other like it. Could she come in and take a closer look?

Winneger invited her in and said that the Menorah belonged to his adopted son who could perhaps tell her more about it. Winneger went upstairs and called David down to talk to the woman. David walked down the steps and abruptly stopped short. Then he shrieked, "Mama!" She, in turn, began crying hysterically as she was reunited with the son she thought she had lost forever.

The only surviving members of their family, mother and son had both come to these shores independently, yet through the miracle of the precious Menorah, they found each other once again.

The main source of our historical account of the miracle of Chanukah comes from the gemara **שבת כא:** "*When the kingdom of the House of the Chashmonaim overpowered and defeated the Greeks, they searched and found one flask of oil that was set aside and sealed with the (private) seal of the Kohen Gadol.*" Many Meforshim comment on the enigma of the "seal of the Kohen Gadol" since nowhere do we find that the Kohen Gadol maintained a private seal.



The Bobover Rov, R' Benzion Halberstam quotes from the Sefer **Bas Ayin** who surmises that the seal of the Kohen Gadol was actually a reference to his unique station as the one who wears many articles

of clothing - eight in all. Thus, his seal was the letter ח which equals the number eight. For this reason, Chazal established the Yom Tov of Chanukah for eight days, to commemorate the letter ח on the flask of oil.

But even more than that, the letter ח accurately portrayed the role of the Kohen Gadol. His purpose was to unify the people in the service of the Almighty. The letter ח when written by a scribe in the Sefer Torah, is a combination of the letter ו and the letter ז. A tiny bridge connects the two letters זו which amount to thirteen, the same as the gematria of the word אחד - the symbol of unity.



When the Greek Hellenists entered the Bais Hamikdosh, they performed 13 desecrations פרצות which tore apart the nation. Matisyahu, the Kohen Gadol, and his sons, fought and defeated the evil invaders and by doing so, they unified the people. Hashem chose to reveal one hidden flask of oil with the symbolic seal of the Kohen Gadol - the unifying letter ח which totals 13 - to demonstrate that the miracle of Chanukah was much more than a war victory - it forged the Achdus of Klal Yisroel!

Besamei HaTorah … by R' Shmuel Winzelberg

R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zt"l, would say: Chanukah means that the Chashmonayim rested from their war on the 25th day of Kisleiv. This is alluded to in the Torah in Parashas Bamidbar (33:29), where the journeys of Bnei Yisroel are listed. The 25th resting place that the Bnei Yisroel encamped in the desert— was Chashmonah.



R' Simcha Bunim of Pshischah ZT"L asks the following question: An article that was moved or touched by an idol-worshiper becomes impure. How then was the Menorah lit with the oil that was found? Weren't the Jews concerned that possibly the Greeks had touched the jar of oil, making it unclean? Perhaps the fact that no one raised this question is itself a miracle! If someone had brought up this point, the Jews may never have lit the Menorah at all, and the entire miracle of Chanukah may never have come about!"

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages



Rav Yissochar Frand cited the Medrash (Bereishis Rabbah 2:4), "One of the terrible decrees of the Yevonim was, 'Write on the horns of your ox: I have no portion in the G-d of Israel.'" The Yevonim tried to influence us into believing that our Parnasah, which is symbolized by the ox since we were an agricultural economy, had nothing to do with Hashem. We, of course, as we celebrate Chanukah, note the exact opposite, that our Parnasah has everything to do with Hashem, and in fact, Chanukah is an opportune time to Daven for financial success. Rav Frand adds an explanation to this Medrash.

In ancient times, baby bottles used to be made from horns. It was the desire of the Yevonim to instill in young babies ideas that went against Hashem, so they instructed that these messages be inscribed on the bottles they would drink from every day. The root of the word Chanukah is the same root as the word 'Chinuch', which means education. We try to impress even on our very youngest the spirit of Hashem and His miracles that have occurred in this very special time!

Rabbi YY Jacobson- The Ninth Invisible Flame



I heard the following story from my brother, Rabbi Simon Jacobson, who in turn heard it from the man himself:

With the help of G-d, I survived the Auschwitz death camp. I still remember the day. It was the last Chanukah in Auschwitz, Chanukah 1944. All we were focused on day and night was survival. We tried time after time to get our hands on another morsel of food and stave off the starvation which was unbearable. We could not think of anything else but finding a little food and keeping ourselves alive. We could not calculate what day, week or month we were in. However, there were a few people in the camp who seemed to operate on a higher level of consciousness. Despite the horrors, they would remind us when it was Shabbos and when it was a holiday.

One morning, I tried stealing some balm from the infirmary to help my father who had horrible sores on his body. I tried to relieve him

from his pain, and I managed to get some balm. Yet when I returned to the barracks where my father previously lay, he was not there. Until today, I do not know what happened. Perhaps it was a Nazi bullet, typhus or some other horrible ailment. All I knew was that my father was gone and I was frantic. I was holding onto life because I had my father, but now he was no longer with me.

An older gentleman approached me and tried comforting me. I did not know his name, but I knew that he would quite frequently converse with my father. He looked me in the eyes and said, "Son, I don't know where your father is and I don't know what happened, but I do want to tell you one thing. Today is Chanukah, and Chanukah represents the victory of the few against the many, the righteous against the wicked, the weak against the strong, and light against the darkness. We are in the thicket of the greatest darkness in history. Your father would be so proud knowing that you will live, and you will allow light to defeat darkness."



The man's gentle voice consoled me, and in excitement I said, "You know what? Let's light the Chanukah menorah here in Auschwitz. The man smiled a smile which camouflaged deep grief, and he said, "It is too dangerous to try. This is not the place to light the Chanukah

menorah." But I was so enthusiastic and excited that I told him I would go look for oil. I would go to the factory and get machine oil, and we would light the menorah.

Miraculously, I ran to the factory and obtained a little oil, after which I came back to the barracks. For a few seconds, I forgot my grief and the horror I was in. The gentleman continued to make a few wicks from some old, tattered uniforms. Now we had wicks and we had oil. All that remained was fire. I saw that at the end of one of the buildings there were smouldering cinders. We decided that at the time for lighting the candles after dusk, we would get some fire and light our Chanukah menorah. At that time, it would also be more quiet, and less dangerous.

At the opportune time, my older friend and I left our barrack and carefully walked to the cinders. But we didn't last long before an SS guard caught us. He was sadistic, ruthless and barbaric. He began hollering at us and snatched the wicks and oil.

But then, almost all of a sudden, it seemed like a miracle was happening. A superior of the SS guard barked a command and he was ordered to follow along. We were relieved, but not for long. He turned around and said, "I will soon be back to get you!" He then went on his way, leaving us both terrified. I trembled and thought life was over. The older gentlemen, however, was serene and calm.

We returned to the barrack, whereupon the gentleman looked at me and said words I never forgot, and I will never forget for the rest of my life:

"Tonight, we performed a miracle that was far greater than the Chanukah miracle. For the Chanukah miracle, they had oil which could not last for more than one night, though it burned for eight nights. But they had a menorah, they had oil, they had a wick, and they had a fire. Here in Auschwitz we performed an even greater miracle. We managed to light a menorah without oil, without a wick and without a flame. I call it the ninth invisible flame. The Chanukah menorah

consists of eight candles, but tonight we lit the ninth candle which is so deep and so real it is invisible. You are going to come out of here alive and wherever you go, I want you to tell the world what happened. In the deepest darkness of Auschwitz, the fire and the flame of the Jewish spirit could not be extinguished. My child don't think that we did not kindle a flame. We did. It was the ninth flame, and it was deeper than any flame that has been kindled in Jewish history. And with that, the man concluded:

"I want you to hold onto this flame of home, of passion, of love and of light. Take it with you wherever you go and share it. Whenever you meet someone who is in despair, tell them about this flame that we lit in Auschwitz. Tell them about the flame that was inextinguishable and the fire that could never die."
As he finished these words, the SS guard returned. He walked into the barrack, and shoved the gentleman outside. I never heard of him again. I myself, though, managed to escape. A few weeks later, on January 22, 1945, the Soviets liberated Auschwitz.

That is the story about the menorah we lit, Chanukah 1944, in the deepest darkness of the death camp Auschwitz.

Last Chanukah, during the cold Winter of 2016, I took a group of around sixty secular Jewish students from American campuses and universities to Poland. It was Chanukah time, and we made our way to Auschwitz. It was a freezing cold day, yet there we stood in front of one of the barracks. I asked two grandchildren of Holocaust survivors who had been in Auschwitz to please come light the menorah. It wasn't easy to light the menorah in the stormy winds, but we managed to get two candles lit. The students then asked me to share a few words. But what words could I share in such a place? I then remembered this story that my brother heard from this survivor.

When I finished relating the story, I concluded, "My dear students, I am telling you this story because I want you to understand what type of people you come from. You belong to a people who managed

to light a candle of hope and faith, and of commitment and passion, even in the darkest and thickest of nights. I want you to take this menorah wherever you go and share it with everybody. Share this hope and this light. Become ambassadors of Yiddishkeit to the entire world and teach every person, even those who look at their lives and see no wick, no flame, no oil, and no menorah. To people who have been hurt and look at their lives and see no potential for illumination, teach them this lesson. The flame of a Jew never dies."



Parsha Pshetel – Rabbi Yankie Shechter

שמן הנרות ורמזיו – אדרת אליהו

It is known that the Zechus that caused Klal Yisroel to be victorious over the Yevanim was their Mesiras Nefesh for Torah and Mitzvos. This alluded to in the word **שמן** - **שלמים מסרו נפשם**– "The complete ones were Moser Nefesh in order to be Mekayeim the Mitzvos of Hakodosh Boruch Hu. It was because of that **שמן - שלמים מסרו נפשם** – " the true King watched over them and saved them from their enemies.

Pearls of Wisdom …*A Word for the Ages*

R' Shalom Mordechai Schwadron, *zt"l*, in his *sefer Lev Shalom*, asks, "Why was there no *seudas mitzvah*, a designated festive meal associated with the *Yom Tov* of Chanukah?" He answers, "If there would be a *seudas mitzvah*, then Chanukah would take on a physical nature, while the whole essence of Chanukah is spiritual."

The final day of Chanukah is called Zos Chanukah.



The Vayaged Yaakov of Pupa zy"a explained that when the final day of Chanukah comes around, people often look back and feel disappointed, because they wish they would have taken better advantage of Chanukah. The final day is called Zos Chanukah ("This is Chanukah!") to tell people, "Don't be upset. Even on the final day, you can accomplish so much.

When Chanukah is over, and we look back, we shouldn't have to mourn and bemoan the fact that a great opportunity passed us by. We say (in the Moaz Tzur) "bnei vinah yemei shemonah kavu — the wise men established the eight days…" The wise men take advantage of these special days, and they are kavu (establish and acquire them) so it will remain with them, throughout the year. But we must know that even if we are up to the last day, even in the very final moments, we can still acquire its greatness.

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin zy"a taught: The tefillos of a simple person on Zos Chanukah, is comparable to the tefillah of a tzaddik hador on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur.

The Machzer Vitri (from the Rishonim) says that Chanukah is from the word chaninah. Chaninah is when Hashem grants us goodness because He loves us, even when we don't deserve it. The holy sefarim list the many yeshuous one can attain on Chanukah, such as wealth, refuah, children, etc. These blessings are available for us throughout Chanukah, certainly also on Zos Chanukah.

Chanukah Treasures - Rabbi Yehuda Winzelberg



The Aruch HaShulchan (Orach Chaim 673:1) writes that it is preferable to use olive oil when lighting the Menorah because it is easily drawn into the wick, it's light burns clearly, and the miracle of Chanukah happened with olive oil. There is another aspect to olive oil that makes it an appropriate choice for use on Chanukah. The Medrash Rabbah (Vayikra 31:10), when discussing the use of olive oil for the Menorah in the Mishkan, relates a Mashal: 'Rav Avin taught that using olive oil is similar to a king whose citizens rebelled against him. However, one group remained faithful and did not rebel. The king said about this trusted group that he will appoint from them people to be rulers and governors.



This is what Hashem is signifying— an olive brought light to the world in the time of Noach, as the dove came back to the Teivah with an olive branch in its mouth.' **The Radal** explains that in the time of Noach, the entire world was corrupt. Chazal explain (Talmud Yerushalmi) that not only did mankind engage in immoral and corrupt behaviour, but the animals and plants did as well. Different species of animals tried to breed with other species, and different types of plants attempted to graft itself to other forms of vegetation.

The only plant that withstood the corruption that permeated the entire world at that time was the olive tree, and it remained pure. The olive remained faithful to Hashem and the way He created the

world, and for that reason, the olive tree is considered the 'group that did not rebel', and survived the Mabul. This earned the olive a special place in history and because it remained faithful to Hashem, the olive was chosen to be the sign of renewal after the Mabul, and it was chosen to be the source of light for generations to come. Chanukah is a time for us to renew our dedication and devotion to Hashem and not give in to outside pressures which may drive us away from Hashem, and olive oil is the symbol for this. May we each be inspired by the olive oil to rededicate ourselves to serve Hashem better and better!

Simchah

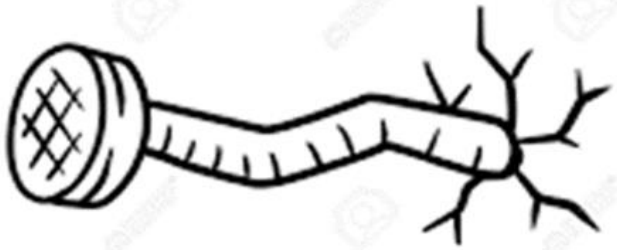


It is told that **Rebbe Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev zy"a** once saw a group of chassidim talking together, and he asked them what they were talking about. They said, "We are discussing the great wealth of Graf Pototsky, how there isn't a pleasure in the world that he hasn't yet enjoyed." (It is known that the Graf would pour sugar over mountains in the summer, to be able to ski.)

The Berditchever asked them, "Does he light Chanukah lecht?" "No." Graf Pototsky wasn't Jewish. "Then he doesn't know what true enjoyment is." Perhaps we aren't on this high level, but it is a reminder of what is truly joyous in the world. It isn't skiing over sugar in the summer, or any other worldly enjoyment. Far greater is the joy of keeping Torah and mitzvos.



The Divrei Shmuel's son, the Beis Avraham of Slonim zy"a. One year, on Friday afternoon, the rebbe was ready to light the Chanukah menorah, when his son ran by and accidentally knocked over the menorah and spilled the oil. There wasn't enough time before Shabbos to prepare the menorah again and to light it. The Beis Avraham didn't become angry. He was calm. With a smile he said, ***"The same Creator who commanded us to light, commanded that we shouldn't become angry."***





Someone asked the Chazon Ish: "How does one know when the hishtadlus is good and when it isn't?" The Chazon Ish replied, "It is like a nail that you want to knock into the wall. You keep hammering the nail again and again, but if it becomes crooked, you immediately stop and you throw the nail away. The same is with hishtadlus: when things become crooked, you know that it is time to stop." For example, if the hishtadlus will cause him to miss davening with a minyan, or to answer cell phones in the middle of the tefillah, or to miss Torah shiurim, it means that hishtadlus has become crooked, and it is time to stop. Likewise, if hishtadlus will lead him to shady attempts at parnassah, this means it is time to stop. That isn't called hishtadlus.



On Chanukah, the custom is to play with a dreidel. There are several things that we can learn from a dreidel. **The Skulener Rebbe zy"a** once said that the dreidel teaches, One turn to Hashem, and we spin away from all our troubles. The dreidel cannot stand on its own. Someone needs to hold it from above. This reminds us that we are totally in Hashem's hands. The dreidel also reminds us that the results of our hishtadlus are in Hashem's hands. When one spins the dreidel, he cannot plan for the dreidel to fall on a gimmel or on a shin. Even if he is the best spinner in the world, and he holds the dreidel with all his might, he still cannot predict the outcome. Similarly, one can work for a living, one can make hishtadlus, but the results are in Hashem's hands.



The ideal that one doesn't need to overdo his hishtadlus, is also seen by the dreidel. With one twist of the fingers, the dreidel spins round and round. Similarly, in regards to parnassah or any other hishtadlus, we don't need to do every step ourselves. We set the matter into motion, and Hashem does the rest.

Pearls of Wisdom… A Word for the Ages

Rav Moshe Meir Weiss quoted Rav Shach, zt"l, who offers a fascinating approach to why we eat Sufganiot, donuts, on Chanukah, aside from the reason that they are fried in oil and commemorate the miracle of the oil. Rav Shach explains that we eat them in order to be able to say the Brachah of Al HaMichyah afterwards, which is the only Brachah that mentions the Mizbei'ach of the Bais HaMikdash.



Since on Chanukah, the Chashmonaim joyously rededicated the Mizbei'ach, we eat things that will enable us to recognize this in the Brachos we say.

Sufganiot have a double meaning to them on Chanukah because they are made with oil, and the Brachah after eating them mentions the Mizbei'ach!

A parable is told about a very poor person who couldn't eke out a living; whatever he tried failed. He decided to visit the sar hamazalos (the angel appointed over mazel) to ask him where he should go and what he should do to find his mazel.

As he was walking to the sar hamazalos, he saw a beautiful, large tree, but the tree had no fruit on it. The tree requested, "When you meet with the sar hamazalos, tell him my name as well. Ask him why my mazel is so bad; why I can't grow fruit." "No problem," the man replied. "When I meet with the sar hamazalos, I'll ask him."

The man walked further and met a princess who was banished from her palace. She also requested, "When you meet with the sar

hamazalos, ask him why my mazel is to be cast out of the castle. Ask him what I should do to return to my greatness." "I will do so" the man replied, and he walked further.

He met a lion. It was lying on the ground, ill and in pain. The lion said, "When you meet the sar hamazalos, ask him what I can do to cure myself." "I will do so," the man promised, and he went to the sar hamazalos.

When he returned, he saw the tree and he said, "The sar hamazalos told me that near your roots is a box filled with gold and diamonds. This blocks the nutrients in the ground from reaching your trunk and branches. When someone will dig up the treasure, you will bear fruit." The tree pleaded, "Please dig up the treasure. You will become wealthy and I will be cured." "No! No!" the man said. "I don't have time for that. I am too busy looking for my mazel."



He walked further and found the princess. "I spoke with the sar hamazalos. He said that you will return to your greatness when you marry, because your husband will become the king and you will be the queen." The princess pleaded, "Please marry me. I will return to the palace, and you will become the king and be very wealthy..." "I'm really sorry," the man replied, "But I am too busy for that. I need to find my mazel."

Then he met the lion. "Did the sar hamazalos tell you what I should do to be cured?" the lion asked. "Yes, he did," the man replied. "Your remedy is to eat the brain of someone who throws away every good opportunity that comes his way." The lion quickly gobbled him up.

Let's not be like the fool in this parable. The opportunities are right here, in front of us. It is Chanukah, and we can gain so much. Let's

take advantage of these days and attain all the greatness that Chanukah offers.

The final day of Chanukah is called Zos Chanukah. **The Vayaged Yaakov of Pupa zy'a** explained that when the final day of Chanukah comes around, people often look back and feel disappointed because they wish they would have taken better advantage of Chanukah. The final day is called Zos Chanukah to tell people, "Don't be upset. Today is an extremely special day. Even on the final day, you can still accomplish so much.

כדי להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול



During the days of Chanukah, the **Chofetz Chayim** used to relate with much emphasis the tremendous victory of the small band of Chashmonoyim over the vast number of soldiers in the Greek army. He used to say that the whole basis for their victory was that the Chashmonoyim were solely intent on causing a public sanctification of Hashem's name. They did not desire to be in power, nor to demonstrate their strength and courage. Rather their fervent wish was to cleanse the Jewish people of every scintilla of Greek influence for the glory of Hashem's presence in the world. It is not just an obligation to thank and praise Hashem for the miracle He performed, it is a recognition that this was the raison d'être of the Chashmonoyim.

Chanuka – The Festival of Light - by Rabbi Moshe Kormornick



Chanuka is often described as the Festival of Lights. We find "light" being used in regard to the mitzvah of Pesach where the Gemora learns that one should use a light to search for *chametz* based on the verse in Mishlei which says, "Man's soul is Hashem's lamp which searches all the innermost parts." Accordingly, **Rav Pincus** learns that Chanuka, which the Gemora describes the mitzvah as ***ner** ish ubeiso, **light** for a man and his household,* also requires us to search for something.

What are we supposed to be searching for?

The *seforim hakedoshim* describe Chanuka as the Festival of the Oral Torah. Furthermore, the entire battle between the Greeks and the Jews was because the Greeks attempted to make the Jews forget the Torah. Therefore, it stands to reason that the light of Chanuka should be used to search within ourselves whether we are learning enough Torah and showing suitable appreciation towards it and its scholars. We are told that the spiritual entities of each festival return each year; therefore, in essence, we — this year — are once again fighting the Greeks who are trying to make us forget our Torah. As such, it's specifically during Chanuka that we should strengthen our learning and our appreciation of Torah. And just like the negative spiritual entity of the Greeks is present during Chanuka, so is the positive spiritual entity of the Maccaabim who were willing to sacrifice everything to protect the Torah.

Therefore, this Chanuka, if we make a commitment to increase our Torah study, no matter how hard it is, we will surely achieve the Heavenly help we need to be successful.

It's all Greek… to the Greeks! - by Rabbi Daniel Leeman



After the Greeks banned Torah study, they came to check on the Jews to make sure that they were complying with the decree. When the Greeks arrived, the Jews took out their dreidels (spinning tops) and began playing with them.



In truth though, the Greeks allowed Torah study for the purpose of an intellectual exercise, (devoid of any spiritual motivation,) so instead of playing with a dreidel, why did the Jews not continue learning and just pretend they were merely learning the Torah intellectually (rather than for spiritual fulfilment)? Furthermore, the Greeks knew that the Jews were a spiritual people – and if so, surely they did not believe that the Jews would genuinely be playing meaningless games like spinning a dreidel?

When the communists began to gain power, they attempted to close down the yeshivas. There was a yeshiva directly opposite the communists building – becoming an obvious target, but the Rosh Yeshiva nevertheless instructed his students to continue learning, with even more zeal than usual. The communists indeed burst in and they saw the students learning with great zeal, the way only a yeshiva student does: some were standing; others were sitting deep in thought; others in group discussions; others in heated debates; others waving their thumbs; others shouting; others singing; others pacing back and forth – quite an exhibit for a person who has never witnessed such a thing before! The communists took one look and concluded that there was no learning going on at the yeshiva, and on the contrary: it must have been a mad house – and so they left!

(Unfortunately, two of the students were afraid to learn in the study hall, and instead hid in their room. They were caught by the communists and suspected of learning Torah {!} and were subsequently killed.)

Why did the spiritually inclined Torah scholars choose playing dreidel to trick the Greeks, and how did the Greeks fall for this ploy? To an outsider, when two people are studying Torah with their whole being, it looks just like a very involved game of spinning the dreidel, or in other words like a mad house!

Perhaps it is not just from an outsider's perspective – as we have been taught: if a person experiences the sweetness of the Torah, he would go crazy after it! [Ohr haChaim, Devarim 26:8]

This also explains why the Jews chose to play dreidel rather than study Torah intellectually: they were concerned that it might significantly whet their appetite for the sweetness of the Torah and that they might subsequently get carried away and not be able to resist learning with a spiritual motivation!

Have a crazy Chanukah!

Until the feet leave the marketplace - by D Fine



There is a great chassidishe saying based on a gemarra shabbos relevant to chanuka. The gemarra asks how long should the chanuka candles burn for, and answers until the feet of people ['haregel'] are no longer around in the marketplace. Now, this word 'haregel' (the foot) can also be read as hergel (habit). And so the chassidim say; how big an impact should the chanuka candles burn internally for; until habit is removed – ie until we stop performing our mitzvos out of habit and go back to the fire of enthusiasm and vitality of spirituality that we are.



Greece enlightening - Written by D Fine

One of the reasons the Greeks targeted the Mikdash to defile was because the Mikdash ran contrary to their philosophy and outlook on life. The Greeks believed in aesthetics and beauty, which meant that only that which is appealing to the eye is beautiful and praiseworthy.

Thus, the Mikdash, with all its accompanying laws of tumah which the eye cannot see, was a threat to their very beliefs – hence their need to divide, conquer, and defile it. Us Jews know that beauty does not begin or end with the eye.

The greatest beauty is the beauty of soul; a spiritual beauty that is covered up and hidden, yet it is beautiful, nonetheless. Real beauty is spiritual beauty.

Chanukah – Publicity Stunt! - by Yaakov Hibbert

Why is it that by the Mitzvah of lighting the lights on Chanukah there is a special emphasis on **פרסומי ניסא** – publicising the Miracle? We don't find that we have to eat the korban Pesach on the street. We don't have to put the story of Yetsias Mitzrayim on the billboards of city. Leining Megillas Esther doesn't have to be done in the town square. These miracles were of no less importance than that of Chanuka?

The Chasam Sofer explains that there is a major difference between the miracle of Chanuka and that of Yetsias Mitzrayim for example. Unlike all other miracles the miracle that occurred with the jug of pure oil that burnt for eight days was a miracle seen by very few. Only the Cohanim who were in the Beis Hamikdash saw the miraculous burning of oil. In actual fact it is specifically a miracle of this nature

This is unlike the Jews who [even according to all religions of the world] stood as a together as a complete nation at **הר סיני**, and witnessed the giving of the Torah. It is therefore precisely because the **נס** was done on a small scale, that we have to do it on a large scale, so as to establish it as true, to give it validity by ensuring that all Yidden get to know about it.

But perhaps it goes even deeper. An "on the quiet" miracle can achieve something that a large public one cannot. A big miracle is

often done to prove a point. **קריאת ים סוף** made the whole world tremble. **מתן תורה** was to reveal the Jews as the Chosen Nation.

But a small miracle on one level is much more personal, much closer to the person. It's not always the big actions that speak but the small ones. This shows real endearment from Hashem when He does even a small thing that no one knows about, except you. The act may be less, but the **פנימיות**, the inner love that Hashem has to us is seen more clearly.

Chanuka: Growth! - by Ben Rose

A great rabbi, HILLEL, taught that on the first night of Chanukah we light one candle and each successive night we add an additional candle until on the eighth night there are eight candles. Why did Hillel prescribe this method for commemorating the eight days of Chanukah? Wouldn't it have been more impressive to light eight candles each night?



There are two important lessons for us to learn: (1) We must always strive to grow and increase our spirituality. One never stays in the same place -you either improve or you fall behind. (2) It is a mistake to grasp too much too fast.

Growing spiritually is like climbing a ladder. If you try to climb too many rungs in one step, you're likely to fall. That is why we increase the Chanukah lights one candle at a time!

The Beis Yosef's Question

The Taz (670:1) quotes the following Zohar: Elisha asked (ibid, Melachim 4:2) **מה יש לך בבית**, "What do you have in your home?" because Hashem sends his blessings onto something that is already there. As we see in this instance, the small amount of oil turned into a lot of oil. Hashem doesn't perform a miracle by creating something brand new.

With this concept, the Taz answers the Beis Yosef's question. The Beis Yosef asks that since they found a jug of oil that had enough in it for one day, it seems that there was no miracle on the first day of Chanukah. The Taz answers, "Looking back, they realized that a miracle happened on the first night… If the oil had been totally consumed on the first night, there wouldn't be any substance left for the miracle to grasp onto the next night. It is therefore certain that some oil remained from the first night, and the miracle occurred from what remained, to increase it…" Thus, the miracle of the first night was that the oil wasn't totally consumed, allowing room for a miracle to take place on the following nights.



Reb Aryeh Leib Tzinz explains this with a mashal: Someone had ten crates filled with gold coins. Nine were stolen. Using the gold coins in the tenth crate, he hired police to search for the nine stolen crates. He also vowed that he would give three gold coins from each crate to tzedakah if they are found.

The nine crates were found, and true to his promise, he gave a gabbai tzedakah 27 gold coins, three from each crate. The gabai wasn't satisfied with that and asked for another three gold coins from the

tenth crate. The man didn't understand. "That crate wasn't stolen. My gratitude to Hashem is that He brought back the nine crates. Why must I thank Hashem for that tenth crate, which was never stolen?" The gabai tzedakah explained, "If that was stolen, you wouldn't have money for the search. The fact that it wasn't stolen is part of the miracle, and you should thank Hashem for that, too."

On the first night of Chanukah, we thank Hashem for the oil leftover because, without that oil, the miracle couldn't have occurred.

Quick few words on Chanukah - by Daniel Sandground



A time of candle lighting, doughnuts, latkas and celebration but what is really going on behind the scenes in our celebration of Chanukah and what should we actually be focusing on?

Chanukah is a celebrating of two miracles; the more highlighted of these is that of the miracle with the oil which kept burning for 8 days in the Beis Hamikdash even though the amount present would not usually be able to last more than a day. More importantly however, we celebrate our victory over the Greeks in war.

The word **חנוכה** when broken down means; **חנו** – they rested, on the 25th day **כ"ה** which literally means we won the war against the Greeks on this day, hence why Chanukah is celebrated on the 25th Tammuz. The reason the celebration is 8 days is in memory of the 8 days in which the oil burnt (which was also the amount of time it took to go and get new oil from reserves in the Judean Hills). The Menorah is therefore specifically designed to symbolise this miracle and is not a replica of the Menorah from the Beis Hamikdash which

had 6 arms, not 8! The lights are also seen as a symbolism of our relationship with Hashem;



• The oil is symbolic of Jews- just like oil, we as Jews always float to the top in whatever society we appear in, from Yoseph to Einstein… and sometimes unfortunately in less pleasant ways for example we love to get put in prison for fraud. It is said that a Jew has the ability to rise much higher than a goy but he can also sink much lower.

• A wick in Hebrew is spelt **פתילה** which can be rearranged to spell **תפילה**/teffilah which means prayer… this is the connection from the oil to the flame just as prayer is our connection to Hashem.

• And the flame is… yep you guessed it… Hashem, the powerful energy above.

Throughout the generations we have predominantly experienced two types of persecution; efforts to actually destroy us physically (for example Haman during Persian times, and more recently the Nazis) and then there have been attempts to destroy us spiritually as Jews… the difference between trying to murder us all and trying to stop us being Jewish is that the Greeks were quite happy for us to live, as long as it wasn't as Jews… they wanted us to assimilate into their way of life with all forms of Torah, Mitzvahs and Teffilah being banned.

We have to remember that the Hamoneans who fought under Mattisyahu were frum people fighting for the ability to follow the Torah… they were fighting against the Greek philosophy on physicality based around vanity, immorality, sports etc… some of

things which suck us into society today and make us forget our role as Jews.



As you sing **מעוז צור** /Maoz Tzur this year, take a look at the translation and what you are actually singing and read through all the evil empires which rose up against us… the Egyptians, the Babylonians, Haman and the Persians, the Greeks, the Romans… and that isn't even mentioning the Spanish Inquisition, all the atrocities committed by the Poles and the Russians over the years, The Nazis and the Arabs…the list is almost endless!!

This is a time of the year to thank Hashem for saving us from all these great evils who weren't great enough to destroy his chosen nation. Remember who you are, what our people went through to protect that identity and how you are going to pass it on to the next generation. Surely, we have a responsibility to at least study what it means to be a Jew in appreciation to generations of martyrs and all the suffering we have endured.

The First Chanukah Light In Bergen Belsen By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach

Chanuka came to Bergen Belsen. It was time to kindle the Chanuka lights. A jug of oil was not to be found, no candle was in sight, and a Chanukia belonged to the distant past. Instead, a wooden clog, the shoe of one of the inmates, became a Chanukia, strings pulled from a concentration camp uniform, a wick, and the black camp shoe polish, pure oil.

Not far from the heaps of bodies, the living skeletons assembled to participate in the kindling of the Chanuka lights.

The Rabbi of Bluzhov lit the first light and chanted the first two blessings in his pleasant voice, and the festive melody was filled with sorrow and pain. When he was about to recite the third blessing, he stopped, turned his head, and looked around as if he were searching for something.

But immediately, he turned his face back to the quivering small lights and in a strong, reassuring, comforting voice, chanted the third blessing: "Blessed are Thou, O L-rd, our G-d, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive, and has preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season."

Among the people present at the kindling of the light was a Mr. Zamietchkowski, one of the leaders of the Warsaw Bund. He was a clever, sincere person with a passion for discussing matters of religion, faith and truth. Even here in camp at Bergen Belsen, his passion for discussion did not abate. He never missed an opportunity to engage in such conversation.

As soon as the Rabbi of Bluzhov had finished the ceremony of kindling the lights, Zamiechkowski elbowed his way to the Rabbi and said, "Spira, you are a clever and honest person. I can understand your need to light Chanuka candles in these wretched times. I can even understand the historical note of the second blessing, "Who wrought miracles for our Fathers in days of old, at this season."

"But the fact that you recited the third blessing is beyond me. How could you thank G-d and say "Blessed art Thou, O L-rd, our G-d, King of the Universe, who has kept us alive, and hast preserved us, and enabled us to reach this season"? How could you say it when hundreds of dead Jewish bodies are literally lying within the shadows of the Chanuka lights, when thousands of living Jewish skeletons are walking around in camp, and millions more are being

massacred? For this you are thankful to G-d? For this you praise the L-rd? This you call "keeping us alive?"

"Zamietchkowski, you are a hundred percent right," answered the Rabbi. "When I reached the third blessing, I also hesitated and asked myself, what should I do with this blessing? I turned my head in order to ask the Rabbi of Zaner and other distinguished Rabbis who were standing near me if indeed I might recite the blessing. But just as I was turning my head, I noticed that behind me a throng was standing, a large crowd of living Jews, their faces expressing faith, devotion, and deliberation as they were listening to the rite of the kindling of the Chanuka lights.

"I said to myself, if G-d has such a nation that at times like these, when during the lighting of the Chanuka lights they see in front of them the heaps of bodies of their beloved fathers, brothers, and sons, and death is looking from every corner, if despite all that, they stand in throngs and with devotion listening to the Chanuka blessing "Who performed miracles for our Fathers in days of old, at this season"; indeed I was blessed to see such a people with so much faith and fervor, then I am under a special obligation to recite the third blessing."

Some years after the liberation, the Rabbi of Bluzhov received regards from Mr. Zamietchkowski. Zamietchkowski asked the son of the Skabiner Rabbi to tell Israel Spira, the Rabbi of Bluzhov, that the answer he gave him that dark Chanuka night in Bergen Belsen had stayed with him ever since, and was a constant source of inspiration during hard and troubled times.

"The essence of Bitachon is the realization that there is nothing in the world that can harm us – except our lack of trust in Hashem." – Rabbi Nachman of Breslov



Oil Spill - by D Fine

Rashi seems to hold that the main miracle of Chanukah was the miracle of the oil; the miracle of victory in battle is not the main thing we are celebrating on Chanukah, according to Rashi. The question is why this is so? – after all, the battle was a huge, world-changing and lifesaving miracle which essentially ensured our survival. Whilst the oil miracle, on the other hand, was seemingly unnecessary – we could have survived without pure oil; the worst that would have happened was that we'd have had to wait another week or so for pure oil to be produced. Why is the miracle of the oil something to celebrate at all, and why does it take centre stage?



Rav Chaim Shmulevitz explains that it is precisely the unnecessary nature of the oil miracle that sees it thrust into the foreground. The very fact that HaShem went out of His way, so to speak, to provide us with pure oil showed us that He loves us and cares for us.

For a father who really loves his son makes sure to tend to every little detail – even seemingly the smallest and most unnecessary – of his son's needs and wants. Thus, the miracle of the oil showed us a fuller extent of HaShem's love for us.

Rabbi Shimon Rosenberg of Afula, Israel, the father of Rivkah Holtzberg, lights a 25-foot steel menorah during Chanukah 2008 in front of the Gateway of India in Mumbai just weeks after his daughter and son-in-law, Rabbi Gavriel Holtzberg, were killed in a terrorist attack.



Gavriel Holtzberg would light that menorah each year.



Chanukah: Celebration of…what?! - by Aviv Bar-Ilan

Why do we huddle round our menorahs every year? Lighting candles for what exactly? So…most of us probably think because we won a war against the Greeks, and then when we went back to the temple to relight the menorah, there was a miracle

and the last jug of oil (holding only enough for 1 day), lasted for a whole 8 days!!! Wow!!!!

So what a nice reason for us to commemorate this 'happy ending story' every year round our only little mini-menorah! That might do it for 5-year olds but we (and our developed adult minds) need to ask a few questions and get this whole story straight!!!

1) There is a principle in Jewish thinking that we don't commemorate historical events unless there is a strong relevance to our lives today! How in the world is this story related to my life now?

2) We won more impressive battles – so why only celebrate this one?!

To begin to answer the above questions and to begin a journey of understanding our tradition from a more complex and mature perspective, we must first understand the nature of the war:





Nature vs Supernatural- The Greeks worshipped nature. They worshipped the natural world and its beauty. They worshipped man and his body. The original Olympics featured naked participants! The Greeks worshipped the human mind. They believed that G-d had created this wonderful world and then left it for us to run. He was now a non-executive director with no voting rights!

The study of Science, arts & philosophy proliferated within the Greek empire. The Greeks conquered most of the known world and

after much success, came up against the Jews! Now, while the rest of the world was quite pleased to adopt Greek culture with its advanced and 'enlightened' way of thinking, the Jews were…well…stubborn!!!

Why? Shema Yisrael Hashem Elokeinu Hashem Echad Not just because we like to be awkward! But rather because we are the proponents of the idea that G-d is still very much involved with the world! When we say the Shema, we don't mean "Hashem is our G-d and Hashem is one" i.e. there are no other gods just ours!!! We mean something much deeper – we mean that there is only G-d – i.e. in reality – there is nothing else!!! G-d is one as in G-d is everything and nothing else really exists – it's all an illusion!!!!!!!!!!

Now the Greeks found this way of thinking very offensive – they wanted us to acknowledge that *nature* is to be worshipped in its own right! In biblical Hebrew, there isn't even a word for nature because we don't believe that it even exists! The Greeks were not impressed and so made various decrees that we were not allowed to practise our religion eg. we were forbidden to learn Torah, to carry out Bris Milah (thinking we could perfect what nature already 'dictated') etc.

They may have won the Battle, but the war goes on. We celebrate Chanukah now because we believe that this war is still very much going on! This is a war going on inside the heart of every one of us! Ancient Greek culture infiltrated the world – or as our Sages said – the Greeks brought darkness to the world! They have made us believe that only that which can be measured and only that which can be sensed directly by our physical senses can be true – everything else must be disregarded.

Any chance of spirituality or G-dliness in the world is called nonsense. But is nature so self-explanatory? Are we just evolved apes? Is that all we are? Are we just more intelligent and evolved versions of an ape – or is there a voice deep inside us telling us the truth – that we are uniquely human – we do have souls and that our lives have meaning and purpose? Maybe? Maybe not? The sceptical



Greek within each of us works tirelessly to make sure we remain sceptical! Every Chanuka we light the small candles in our private home and we send a cosmically powerful message out to the world and more importantly to ourselves – the flame is representative of the neshama – we are making a statement – There is something behind the scenes! The world is not random and by chance!

We have a light inside of us and it burns on through the darkness! And one day, it will burn brightly for all to see!!! This is the message that the Jew brings to the world!

Vedibarta Bam - A Compilation of Torah Insights in Question & Answer Format By Moshe Bogomilsky

"מאי חנוכה" "Meaning of The Name *Chanukah*"

What is the meaning of the name *"Chanukah"*?

1) For a long period of time the Jews were at war with the Syrian-Greeks. Finally on the 25th of *Kislev* in the year 3597 (165 B.C.E.) the Hasmoneans vanquished the enemy, recaptured the *Beit Hamikdash,* and rested from the warfare. Thus the word *"Chanukah"* is a composite of two words: *"chanu"* — "they rested" (חנו) *"chof hei"* — "[on] the twenty fifth" of *Kislev.*

2) *"Chanukah"* derives from the word *"chinuch"* — "dedication" — on this day they dedicated a new Altar.
The *Gemara* (*Avodah Zarah* 52b) says that the Greeks defiled the Altar by using it to sacrifice offerings to an idol. The Rabbis prohibited using that Altar, and its stones were hidden away in the

north-eastern chamber that opened to the *Beit Hamoked* — Hall of the Fire. When the Hasmoneans seized control, they immediately built a new Altar, which was dedicated on the 25th of *Kislev*. (**מהרש״א**)

In our case, "*chinuch*" does not mean formal consecration and rededication, but rather renewal of use — the putting back of the items into use again by the Jews after a long period of interruption and after the *Beit Hamikdash* was thoroughly cleaned up.

3) There is a dispute between *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* concerning how many candles the *mehadrin min hamehadrim* — extremely scrupulous — should kindle each night. *Beit Shammai* say to kindle eight the first night and each night thereafter to decrease the number by one. *Beit Hillel* say to start with one on the first night and add another candle each succeeding night.

The word "*Chanukah*" is an acronym for "*Chet neirot vehalachah kebeit Hillel*" (**חֵ׳ נֵרוֹת וַהֲלכָה כְּבֵית הִלֵּל**) — "Eight candles [should be lit on *Chanukah*] and the *halachah* is like *Beit Hillel*" [to increase the number each night]. (**אבודרהם והובא בעטרת זקנים על שו״ע סי׳ עת״ר או״ח**)

4) In the days of *Chanukah* they miraculously kindled the *Menorah* for eight days. The *Menorah* had on it seven lamps, so during the period of the miracle they kindled seven lights for eight days, a total of 56 candles, which in Hebrew numerals is **נ״ו**.

Thus the name "*Chanukah*" connotes that —

ח — for eight days

56 — **נ״ו** candles were miraculously kindled

כ״ה — this all started on the 25th of the month. (**בני יששכר**)

5) Daryavesh (Darius) the king of Persia (according to the *Midrash* [*Vayikra Rabbah* 15:4] he was the son of Esther and Achashverosh) sanctioned and encouraged the construction of the second *Beit Hamikdash* which had begun in the

days of Koresh (Cyrus, king of Persia) and which subsequently ceased for eighteen years.

The prophet Chaggai writes (2:14-18) that the *Beit Hamikdash* was completed on the 24th of the ninth month (*Kislev*). Thus, it was dedicated the next day with the offering of sacrifices, and the kindling of the *Menorah* took place in the evening, as the *Gemara* (*Menachot* 49a) states, that the dedication of the *Menorah* can only be accomplished with the evening kindling.

Consequently, because of the *chinuch* — dedication — of the *Beit Hamikdash,* which took place on this day many years earlier, the festival marking the miracle of the lights which takes place also on the 25th of *Kislev* is called "*Chanukah*."

6) The original light Hashem created was extremely powerful; one could see with it from one end of the world to the other. Reflecting upon the wickedness of man, Hashem hid it for the future, when *Mashiach* will reveal himself (*Chagigah* 12a). According to the *Midrash* (*Tanchuma*, *Parshat Noah* 3) it was hidden in the Torah to benefit those who toil in the Oral Torah day and night.

The Syrian-Greeks endeavoured to detach Jews from Torah and wanted them to deny their belief in Hashem and *Mashiach.* When the miracle of the kindling of the *Menorah* took place, Hashem revealed a semblance of the great hidden light which will radiate in full glory in the Messianic Era. Likewise, every *Chanukah* when the *Menorah* is kindled, there is a revelation of that great light in this mundane world.

"*Chanukah*" comes from the word "*chinuch,*" which means preparation and education. A minor is exempt from fulfilling the *mitzvot* of the Torah. Nevertheless, he goes through a process called "*chinuch*" in which he is trained and taught how to properly fulfil *mitzvot* when he will become *Bar-Mitzvah* and thereafter, for the rest of his life.

Similarly, the festival is called "*Chanukah*" because on it Hashem provides *chinuch* to the Jewish people. He prepares and educates them about the great hidden light by giving a foretaste on *Chanukah* of that illumination which they will merit to enjoy speedily in the days of *Mashiach.* (**בני יששכר**)

Vedibarta Bam

"מאי חנוכה? בכ"ה בכסליו..." ***"What is Chanukah? On the 25th of Kislev..."***

Why did the miracle of *Chanukah* take place on the 25th of *Kislev*?

In the wilderness, the construction of the *Mishkan* was completed on the 25th of *Kislev*. Hashem told Moshe to wait with the dedication till the auspicious day of *Rosh Chodesh Nissan* the month in which the Patriarchs were born (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a). The 25th of *Kislev* was somewhat offended. To appease her, the rededication of the second *Beit Hamikdash*, in the days of the Hasmoneans, took place on the 25th of *Kislev*.

(**ילקוט שמעוני, מלכים סוף רמז קפד, ועי' לקוטי שיחות ח"י ע' 279**)

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It is interesting to note that the words "**זאת חנוכת המזבח**" — "this is the dedication of the Altar" — (*Bamidbar* 7:84) which refer to the *Mishkan* — Tabernacle — (and are part of the Torah reading for *Chanukah*), have the numerical value of 954, which is the exact numerical value of "**זאת יהיה בימי חשמונים**" — "this (dedication) will be in the days of the Hasmoneans." (**רוקח**)

"A generation is only redeemed by grace of the righteous women in it." ~~ Yalkut Shimoni

Vedibarta Bam

"נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים" ***"A miracle occurred with it, and they kindled with it for eight days."***

Why was a miracle needed for eight days?

For the kindling of the *Menorah* not only was the purest oil used, but also the best quality. Such oil was manufactured in the city of Tekoa (see *Menachot* 85b), which was in the tribal portion of Asher, who was blessed with an abundance of oil (*Bereishit* 49:20, Rashi).

Tekoa was a four-day trip from *Yerushalayim*. Thus, it required four days to reach Tekoa and another four to return back to *Yerushalayim*. Since all this time the single flask lasted miraculously, it was decided to make *Chanukah* eight days in commemoration. (ר״ן)

Vedibarta Bam

"כשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים" ***"When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary they defiled all the oils."***

If the purpose of the Greeks was to extinguish the light of the *Menorah* and prevent its rekindling, why did they *defile* the oil? They could have accomplished this more effectively by using it up or destroying it.

The true objective of the Greeks was not to *prevent* the rekindling of the *Menorah*, but rather that it should be rekindled with *defiled* oil. Hence, they purposely left a supply of defiled oil in the Sanctuary to be readily available for this purpose.

The Greeks were willing to recognize the Torah as a beautiful literary creation, with exceptional wisdom and profound philosophy, provided only that it was considered as a *human* creation, like their own mythology. As such, the Torah could be changed and modified from time to time, so as to harmonize with the character of the

ruling class and the novel ideas and morals of the period. Thus, it was not the suppression of the Torah that they aimed at, but *"lehashkicham Toratecha"* — "to make them forget *Your* Torah" — and not treat it as G-d-given.

Their objective was, thus, not to prevent the rekindling of the *Menorah*, but that its light should come from oil that had a Greek "taint." (**לקוטי שיחות ח"ג**)

Vedibarta Bam

"פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול" "One flask of oil that lay there with the Kohen Gadol's seal."



What exactly was the flask of oil, and which *Kohen Gadol's* seal did it bear?

The Torah relates that when Yaakov set out to meet his brother Eisav, he had his family cross over the stream, and he sent over all his possessions. [Then], *"vayivateir Yaakov levado"* — "Yaakov remained alone" *Bereishit* 32:25). Rashi cites a *Gemara* (*Chullin* 91a) that actually Yaakov crossed over the stream together with his family but had forgotten some *"pachim ketanim"* — small earthenware jugs — and he returned to fetch them. Thus, the word *"levado"* — "alone" — is read as *"lekado"* — "for his jug" (see *Da'at Zekeinim Miba'alei Hatosafot*).

The reason that Yaakov endangered himself for these seemingly inexpensive possessions was that when he was travelling from Beer-Sheva to Charan he slept over on Mount Moriah, where eventually the *Beit Hamikdash* would be built. Early in the morning he took the

stone that he placed around his head and set it up as a *matzeivah* — pillar, and he poured oil on its top (Ibid. 28:18). This oil was from a jug which miraculously appeared to him. After pouring from it on the stone, it miraculously filled itself up again. Years later this jug of oil was used to anoint the Tabernacle and its vessels, Aaron the *Kohen Gadol* and his sons, and also kings. The container of oil is still existing in its entirety, and it will be used to anoint King *Mashiach* (see *Shemot* 30:31, Rashi, Ramban). Yaakov thus realized that it was special oil which was destined for blessings, and he decided not to leave it there. When he realized that he had forgotten the oil, he risked his life to go back and retrieve it. (**שפתי כהן עה״ת פ׳ וישלח**)

This jug was the single flask of oil that miraculously appeared to the Hasmoneans and though it was sufficient only for one night's kindling, it lasted for eight nights. The flask bore the seal of Aharon the *Kohen Gadol*. - According to another opinion it bore the seal of the Patriarch Yaakov, who was also considered a *Kohen Gadol*. Of course, the popular opinion is that the flask of oil had on it the seal of Matityahu. (**עי׳ בני יששכר מאמר ד׳ אות ט״ו**)

This can also serve as another answer to the *Beit Yosef's* question *(Tur, Orach Chaim* 670) that the Festival of *Chanukah* should be only seven days since they had a flask of oil that was sufficient for one day. In reality the Syrian-Greeks defiled *all* the oils, and there was not even a single flask of pure oil. However, miraculously this flask appeared, and it lasted for eight days until a new supply arrived. (**ים התלמוד עמ״ס בבא קמא,**)

Incidentally, according to a *midrash*, Hashem said to Yaakov, "You endangered yourself to return for a small jug for my sake (the jug of oil he used to pour on the pillar); I will personally repay your descendants in the time of the Hasmoneans when a miracle will be performed with a small jug." This shows another connection between Yaakov and *Chanukah*. (**מהרש״ל**)

Vedibarta Bam

"נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים" ***"A miracle occurred with it, and they kindled with it for eight days."***



To commemorate this miracle we kindle a total of 36 candles during *Chanukah* (excluding the *Shamashim*). What is the significance of the 36 candles of *Chanukah?*

The *Gemara* (*Chagigah* 12a) says regarding the light that Hashem created on the first day that man could use it to survey everything from one end of the world to the other. Once, however, He looked at the Generation of the Flood and the Generation of the Dispersion and He saw that their deeds were perverse, He proceeded to hide the light from them, and hid it for the righteous people in the future. According to the *Zohar* (*Shemot* 148-49) not only will the righteous enjoy it in the World to Come in the Messianic Era, but it is hidden in the Torah. Whenever people exert themselves in the study of Torah, a ray shines forth from that light and rests upon them.

When the miracle of *Chanukah* occurred and the *Menorah* was kindled with the oil of the flask, Hashem revealed some of the exalted hidden light of the future. Also, on every *Chanukah,* during the kindling of the *Menorah,* there is a revealing of the hidden light — the light of *Mashiach.*

The name "*Chanukah*" etymologically stems from the word "*chinuch*" — education and preparation. A parent educates and prepares a young child prior to the time when he will be obligated to perform *mitzvot* so he will have all the knowledge he needs when the

time actually comes. Likewise, Hashem reveals on *Chanukah* some of the "hidden light" which we will enjoy in the exalted days of *Mashiach*.

According to the *Midrash* (*Rabbah Bereishit* 11:2) the great light which Hashem created functioned for Adam a total of 36 hours: twelve hours on Friday day and the twenty-four hours of *Shabbat* (and then was darkness — see Jerusalem Talmud, *Berachot* 8:5). In addition, the words "*ohr*" — "light" — or "*neir*" — "candle" — or "*me'orot*" — "luminaries" — appear in the Torah a total of 36 times. The Greeks wanted to stop us from studying Torah and thus fail to benefit from the great light which is hidden in the Torah, and which served Adam for 36 hours. Therefore, on *Chanukah,* when Hashem reveals to us some of the great light that will radiate in the days of *Mashiach*, the custom is to light a total of 36 candles (without the *shamashim*). (**בני יששכר בשם הרוקח**)

Vedibarta Bam

"בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון" -*"On the 25th of Kislev [begin] the days of Chanukah, eight in number."*

Because of a doubt as to which days the *Beit Din* declared as *Rosh Chodesh* in the Diaspora every *Yom-Tov* is celebrated two days. Why isn't *Chanukah,* too, nine days in Diaspora?

All *Yomim Tovim* except for *Chanukah* and *Purim,* are Biblical. There is more stringency concerning a doubt related to a Biblical matter than one concerning something Rabbinical. Therefore, out of doubt as to what day is actually the first of the month, the *Yom-Tov* is celebrated for two days. This stringency is not extended, however, to *Yomim Tovim* which are merely of Rabbinical origin. (**אבודרהם**)

Some say that really *Chanukah* should only have been seven days since without any miracles there was sufficient oil in the flask they

found for one night. Thus, the eighth day was added only because of the doubt of which day in the month was designated as the day of *Rosh Chodesh*. Hence, there is no need for a ninth day because the eighth day was already added to satisfy the doubt. (**ערבי נחל**)

Vedibarta Bam

"ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה" ***"[The eight days] were rendered festival days with respect to recital of Hallel and thanksgiving."***

Why wasn't *Chanukah* also declared a day of feasting just as *Purim* was?

Haman plotted to annihilate the Jewish people physically. A Jew's religious convictions didn't matter to him. If one was a member of the Jewish people, regardless of age or gender, he wanted that person wiped off the face of the earth.

Chanukah on the other hand was a totally spiritual war. The ambition of the Syrian-Greeks was "to make them forget Your Torah and violate the decrees of Your will." The Jews who Hellenized and joined with them were to be spared.

Since *Purim* commemorates the salvation of the Jewish people from physical annihilation, the celebration is in a physical form — eating and drinking — things that the body enjoys. In contrast, with regard to *Chanukah,* the Jewish body was not in danger, but rather the soul. Thus, the commemoration and celebration is not expressed by the physical acts of eating and drinking but by spiritual activities, kindling the *Menorah,* recital of *Hallel,* and thanksgiving.(**ב"ח וט"ז סי' עת"ר**)

A Wise Man would say: "Compromise is important in marriage. I admit I'm wrong and my wife agrees with me!"

Vedibarta Bam

"מצותה עד שתכלה הרגל מן השוק" "The commandment of Chanukah lights extends until the passersby have vanished from the market." (Shabbat 21b)

Why did the *Gemara* use an obscure way of measuring the time? Why not simply say "until ½ hour after nightfall?"

It is common for people to work during the day to earn a livelihood. However, some unfortunately, are so engaged in materialism that they "moonlight" on another job and work nights to reach their financial goals. Often this pseudo-success is at the cost of their Torah learning, *davening* with a *minyan*, etc.

It was the goal of the Syrian-Greeks to cause the Jews to forget Torah and to cease the observance of Hashem's statutes.

The miracle with the flask of oil and the kindling of the *Menorah* emphasizes the importance of Torah study and *mitzvot* performance. The candles of the *Menorah* and the light it emanates represent Torah and *mitzvot,* as King Shlomo says "For the candle is a *mitzvah* and Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23). The *Gemara* (*Megillah* 16b) says that "*orah*" — "light" — means Torah. The pure oil miraculously found is also a hint to Torah, as the *Gemara* (*Berachot* 57a) says, "One who sees olive oil in a dream can anticipate receiving the light of Torah."

The *halachah* conveys the message that one can be said to have properly fulfilled the essence of *Chanukah* only when he comes to the realization that "*tichleh regel min hashuk*" — his "foot" should not be roaming around in the evening in the marketplace seeking opportunities for material gain; rather after a day's work his feet should be leading him in the direction of the *shul* and *Beit Midrash* to study Torah and pray with a *minyan*.

One should always remember that excessive involvement in business does not make one successful. Rather Hashem is the one who

provides each of us with our "flask of oil," and success can come miraculously without working tirelessly day and night.

(פון אונזער אלטען אוצר בשם ר׳ משה ליב זצ״ל מ׳סאסוב)



Vedibarta Bam

"שמן זית מצוה מן המובחר"
"Olive oil is the most preferable" (Orach Chaim 673:1)

Why is olive oil the most preferable for *Chanukah* candle lighting?

The *Midrash* (*Shemot Rabbah* 36:1) says that the Jewish people may be compared to [olive] oil. Unlike all other liquids, which mix very well one with another, oil does not. It forever maintains its identity and will ultimately float on the top. Likewise, all the nations of the worlds mix with one another through intermarriage, and the Jews are forbidden to intermarry or assimilate with other nations. According to the *Gemara* (*Menachot* 53b) Jews are compared to olive oil, because just as the olive gives its oil only after it is crushed and beaten, likewise, when Jews are, G-d forbid, crushed and beaten, they do *Teshuvah* — repent — and their real glory comes to bear.

Thanks to the devoted Jews who refused to assimilate and accept the Greek ideology, Hashem brought about the salvation. Since they maintained their separateness, similar to oil, and went through an excruciating struggle for Torah and *mitzvot*, like the olive, Hashem made the miracle with the olive oil. To commemorate this we prefer to use olive oil for kindling the *Chanukah Menorah.*

Vedibarta Bam

בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול ***"In the days of Matityahu, the son of Yochanan the High Priest."***

The *Al Hanissim* recited on *Purim* just says "In the days of Mordechai" without mentioning his father; why on *Chanukah* do we mention that Matityahu was the son of Yochanan the *Kohen Gadol*?

A group of young *kohanim* of the Chashmoneam house went out before *Yom Kippur* to fight the Greeks and waged war on *Yom Kippur*. When Yochanan the *Kohen Gadol* came to the *Beit Hamikdash* to perform the special service of the day, he heard a Heavenly voice emanating from the Holy of Holies, proclaiming: "The young men who went to wage war in Antioch have been victorious" (see *Sotah* 33a).

Since Yochanan merited to be informed of a victory of the Hasmoneans over the Greeks, his name is mentioned in the prayer of praise to Hashem for the victories. (**בני יששכר מאמר ד' סי' כ"ח**)



Vedibarta Bam

"ברוך... להדליק נר חנוכה" ***"Blessed... to kindle the Chanukah light."***

What message does the wording of the *Berachah* impart when the word *"shel"* is omitted?

The *Arizal* writes in his *siddur* that during *Chanukah* the thirteen attributes of mercy *"mei'irin"* — radiate. Each day one of the thirteen shines and on the eighth day — *Zot Chanukah* — the balance from *notzer chesed* — Preserver of

Kindness — until *venakeih lo yenakeai* — Who Absolves, but does not absolve completely — shine.

When we omit the word "*shel*" from the *berachah* pronounced for the candle lighting, the *berachah* contains thirteen words, corresponding to the 13 attributes of mercy that shine during *Chanukah*. (**שם משמואל**)

Incidentally, the second *berachah* of "*she'asah nisim*" which is recited every night of *Chanukah* also consists of thirteen words. Thus, the two *berachot* together have a total of 26 words. The holy four-letter Name, the Tetragramaton (**י-ה-ו-ה**), also has the numerical value of 26 and connotes His mercy. With the 26 words in the two *berachot* we are indicating that all the events of *Chanukah* were thanks to His mercy for his dedicated servants, and we thank Him profusely for it.(**כף החיים סי' תרע"ו בשם קב הישר**)

Alternatively, on *Chanukah* we light thirty-six candles and eight *shamashim,* a total of forty-four candles. Since the *Zohar* (1:77b) says that when there is an *itaruta deletata* — an awakening from below — it evokes an *itaruta dele'eila* — an awakening above, Hashem also, so to speak, kindles forty-four candles during *Chanukah*, bringing the total candles lit to eighty eight. The first letters of the words **לַהדליק נֵר חַנוכה** add up to 88 to allude to this concept.



"חנוכה - סוכות" ***"Chanukah — Sukkot"***

"ויעקב נסע סכתה ויבן לו בית" ***"Yaakov journeyed to Sukkot and built for himself a house." (Bereishit 33:17)***

The word "*lo*" — "for himself" — seems superfluous; it could have just said "*Vayiven bayit*" — "He built a house"?

Here is a *remez* — hint — that Yaakov celebrated *Sukkot* and *Chanukah*. According to the *Zohar Vayikra* 100b the first point of the *pasuk*, "Yaakov

journeyed to Sukkot," is a hint that Yaakov observed *Sukkot*, the festival that corresponds to him (see above).

The second part of the *pasuk*, "He built, *lo* — for himself — a house," can be explained as a hint to *Chanukah*. According to the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 21b) the proper way to fulfil the *mitzvah* of kindling *Chanukah* candles is to place them "*al petach* ***beito*** *mibachutz*" — "by the entrance of one's house from the outside." During the eight days of *Chanukah* we kindle a total of 36 candles (without the *shmashim*). The numerical value of the word "*lo*" (**לו**) — "for himself" — is 36.

Thus, the Torah tells us not only did Yaakov journey to Sukkot, a hint that he observed *Sukkot*, but he built ***lo*** *bayit* — a house for himself — where he could kindle 36 candles at the entrance for the eight days of *Chanukah*. (**שפת אמת**)

Vedibarta Bam

"הנרות הללו" "*These lights.*"

The words "*Haneirot Halallu*" — "these lights" — are plural. On the first night when we only kindle one light, shouldn't we say "*haneir hazeh*" — "this light?"

When a Jew performs a *mitzvah* on earth he evokes a spiritual awakening in heaven, and Hashem, so to speak, also performs the *mitzvah*. This is the concept of "*itaruta deletata itaruta deli'eilah*" — "the awakening below causes an awakening above."

Thus, when we kindle *Chanukah* lights, Hashem also does so in heaven. Hence, already on the first night two lights are really being lit and the expression *Haneirot Halallu* — *these* light**s** — in plural is in proper order.

Vedibarta Bam (מהרי״ל)

"The shamash should be placed a little higher than the other lights, in order that it may be obvious that it is not one of the required number of candles. (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 139:14, Maharil)

Where is there a hint in Torah that the *shamash* should be placed *higher* than the other candles?

There is an expression in (Isaiah 6:2) שְׂרָפִים עֹמְדִים מִמַּעַל לוֹ "The word **לו** has the numerical value of 36, which is the total number of candles lit during the eight days of *Chanukah*. "*Serafim*" means "the fiery ones," a reference" that the *shamashim* that kindle the candles — "*mema'al*" — should be placed above — "*lo*" — the 36 candles.

"מרבים בצדקה בימי חנוכה" ***"Charity should be dispensed liberally on Chanukah." (Kitzur Shulchan Aruch 139:1)***

The numerical value of the words "*neis Chanukah*" (**נס חנוכה**) is 199, the same as the word *tzedakah* (**צדקה**). This indicates that when the miracle of *Chanukah* is celebrated, *tzedakah* should be given. (**ר' שלמה זצ״ל מבאבוב**)

The numerical value of the word *tzedakah* (199) implies the following message:

The *Mishnah* (*Pei'ah* 8:8) says that one who has two hundred *zuz* (Talmudic currency) should not take any charity. However, one with only one hundred and ninety-nine *zuz* who is given one thousand *zuz* at one time may take it.

The word "*tzedakah*" (**צדקה**) has the numerical value of one hundred and ninety-nine, which teaches us that as long as a person has no more than one hundred and ninety-nine, he may be a recipient. (**מהר״ל**)

Vedibarta Bam

" יש אומרים שיש לאכול גבינה בחנוכה לפי שהנס נעשה בחלב שהאכילה יהודית את האויב" ***"Some say that cheese should be eaten on Chanukah because the miracle occurred thanks to the dairy that Yehudit fed the enemy." (Orach Chaim, 670:2)***



The oppressors had decreed that a maiden before her marriage must first be taken by the Governor, but the daughter of Yochanan the *Kohen Gadol* outwitted him. She was a very beautiful woman, and she reluctantly pretended to accede to the request of the head oppressor. She prepared dishes of cheese for him, which made him thirsty. He then drank wine, became intoxicated, and fell asleep — whereupon she cut off his head and brought it to Jerusalem. Finding that their commander was dead, the armies became panicky and fled (*Mishnah Berurah*).

Since nothing is accidental and everything is a part of Divine Providence, why is the miracle of the *Chanukah* victory connected particularly with milk?

On the first day of *Shavuot* it is customary to eat a dairy meal. One explanations for this custom is based on a *Midrash* that when Moshe came up to heaven to receive the Torah, the angels objected, claiming "keep your glory in heaven." They wanted the Torah for themselves and opposed its being given away to humans. Hashem told them, "How can you request the Torah if you violated it when you visited the house of Avraham to inform him of the forthcoming birth of Yitzchak? The Torah forbids the eating of meat with milk, and the Torah says 'He took cream and milk and the calf that he

prepared, and placed these before them, and they ate' " (*Bereishit* 18:8).

Consequently, we received the Torah and not the angels because of the milk they ate together with the meat. Therefore, on the first day of *Shavuot*, which commemorates our receiving the Torah, we eat a dairy meal.

The Greek-Syrians intended to stop the Jews from studying Torah so that it would be forgotten, and their plan was nullified with the victory of the Hasmoneans. Thus, in a sense, *Chanukah* is the day when Torah was again given to the Jewish people. Hence, there is a parallel between *Chanukah* and *Shavuot:* on both occasions we received the Torah thanks to milk, and on both holidays we commemorate this by eating cheese and dairy products. (**בני יששכר**)

Vedibarta Bam

"חנוכה געלט" *"Chanukah Gelt — money"*

What is the reason for the universally popular accepted custom of giving children *Chanukah* gelt?



Chanukah is a period of preparation for the days of *Mashiach* when we will enjoy the *Ohr haganuz* — the revelation of the hidden light. At that time Hashem will make His beloved children — the Jewish people — the beneficiaries of the world's wealth. Thus, to demonstrate our eager anticipation for the glorious period when Hashem will give His children *gelt* — money — we have the custom of giving our children Chanukah gelt.(**עי' בית יעקב, בראשית מסלתון, אוהל יעקב - המגיד מדובנא -**)

Vedibarta Bam "דריידל" "Dreidel"

What is the significance of the letters **ג,ש,נ,ה,** on the *dreidel?*

The four letters **ג,ש,נ,ה** represent the four Monarchies of the secular world who exiled the Jewish people and caused us anguish. The *"Gimmel"* is for Greece-Syria — who are headed by Gog (**גוג**). Yavan — Greece — was a descendant of *Yafet* son of Noach (*Bereishit* 10:2). Gog was from the land of Magog (a Yafet descendant) and was a king over families of Yafet (Ezekiel ch. 38).



The *"shin"* is for Sei'ir (**שעיר**), which represents Rome-Edom, as is stated (*Bereishit* 36:8-9) "Eisav settled on Mount Sei'ir — Eisav, he is Edom. And these are the descendants of Eisav, ancestor of Edom, on Mount Sei'ir."

The *"nun"* is for Nevuchadnetzar (**נבוכדנצר**) the ruler of Babylon

The *"hei"* is for Haman (**המן**) of Media-Persia. (**ספר נרות שמונה**)

The *dreidel* consists of a core — a central piece of wood — and each of the four pieces attached to it bears a letter representing one of the above mentioned four Monarchies. It revolves on the central point that unites them all. The central point on which the entire world revolves is the Jewish nation.

Ultimately, each side will fall and become nullified to the central point, which is the Jews. This will occur when **גשנה** — which has the numerical value of 358 (as does *Mashiach* [**משיח**]) will be revealed. At that time the prophecy will be fulfilled that "For then I will

change the nations [to speak] a pure language [they will no longer speak of idols] so that they will proclaim the Name of Hashem, to worship Him with a united resolve" (Zephaniah 3:9).

When the revelation of *Mashiach* (358) will occur, the glory of Hashem will be in its fullest measure and all will recognize and declare that "**י-ה-ו-ה מלך, י-ה-ו-ה מלך, י-ה-ו-ה- ימלך**" — ***"Hashem is the King, Hashem was the King and Hashem will be the King."*** This statement, too, has the gematria of 358.

Thus, on the festival of *Chanukah,* which is a *chinuch* — preparation — to the coming redemption, the *dreidel* has a special significance. It emphasizes that the great miracle we are anticipating is the coming of *Mashiach,* who will ultimately unite the entire world to serve Hashem. (**בני יששכר**)

Vedibarta Bam

"א, ב... ת" - *"Alef Beit... Taf."*

The entire *alef-beit,* comprising the letters with which the Torah was written, is a hint to *Chanukah* and some of its major laws.

The first eight letters (**א'ב'ג'ד'ה'ו'ז'ח**) add up to 36. During the eight days of *Chanukah* we kindle a total of 36 candles (excluding the *shamashim*).

The letter **ט** is a hint that the *Menorah* should be placed less than 10 *tefachim* (handbreadths) off the ground.

The letters **י'כ** stand for "*Yud kasher*"- **יִ כָּשר** - 10 *tefachim* [and more is also] *kasher.*

However, the letters **ל'מ'נ'ס'ע'פ** stand for "*Lema'alah mei'esrim, neir, sukkah, eiruv, pesulah*" **לְמַעלה מֵעשרים נֵר סֻוכה עֵירוב פְּסולה** — Above 20 [*amah*-cubits] a *neir-*

candle, *sukkah*, and *eiruv*-crossbeam to enclose the entrance to a public area — are disqualified.

Finally, the letters **צ'ק'ר'ש'ת** teach that "*Tzorech kedushah ra'u shamash tosif*" **צורך קדושה ראוי שמש תוסיף** — "because of the holiness of the candles [which may not be used for personal needs], it is proper that a *shamash* be added." (**עטרת זקנים סי' תרע"א – מדבר קדמות**)

"יהי אור" *"Let there be light." (Bereishit 1:3)*

The *Midrash* (*Bereishit Rabbah* 2:4) says that the phrase "And darkness [on the face of the abyss (1:2)]" symbolizes Greece, which darkened the eyes of the Jewish people with its decrees, ordering Israel "write on the horn of an ox that you have no portion in the G-d of Israel," i.e. Antiochus requested from the Jews a public disclaimer of Hashem and Torah.

Immediately following this the Torah says, "And G-d said "*Yehi ohr*" — "Let there be light" (1:3). The word "*ohr*" — "light" — is the twenty fifth word of the Torah. Moreover, the word "*yehi*" (**יהי**) — "let there be" — numerically adds up to twenty five. All this alludes that the darkness caused by the Greeks will be illuminated with the light (of the *Menorah*), which will be kindled by the Jews on the 25th [of *Kislev*]. (**מהר"ל – הגר"א**)

"ה' חנוכה" "Fifth Day of *Chanukah*"

What is the uniqueness of the fifth day of *Chanukah?*

The fifth day of *Chanukah* can never occur on a *Shabbos*. When *Chanukah* occurs on days that are even only *potentially Shabbos* days, the light of *Chanukah* combines with the light of *Shabbos* for a powerful illumination. So the fifth night, which can *never* be *Shabbos*, represents great darkness relative to the

other nights. Thus, the fifth light of *Chanukah* has the unique task and power to illuminate and instil spirituality even in such a time of darkness.



"זאת חנוכה" *"Zos Chanukah — This is Chanukah."*

Why is the eighth day of *Chanukah* called ***"Zos** Chanukah"*?

The construction of the *Mishkan* — Tabernacle — which the Jews built in the wilderness was completed on the 25th of *Kislev*. However, it was not officially dedicated until *Rosh Chodesh Nissan*, the month in which the Patriarchs were born (*Rosh Hashanah* 11a). Hashem paid back the month of *Kislev* with the rededication of the *Beit Hamikdash* through the Hasmoneans on the 25th of *Kislev* (*Yalkut Shimoni, Melachim,* 184).

For the dedication of the *Mishkan*, on every day of the first twelve days of the month a *Nasi* — prince of a tribe — brought a battery of offerings. Thus, it is customary to read on each day of *Chanukah* a Biblical portion which describes the offering of one of the *Nessi'im* (*Bamidbar* 7:1-8:4).

The Torah reading on the eighth day starts with the offering of the *Nasi* of the tribe of Menasheh and goes through all the other *Nessi'im*. Basically every offering was the same and the language of the portion is identical except for the change of name. This is followed by a tally of all the items brought by all the *Nessi'im* together, which is also read on the eighth day. Since it starts with the word ***"Zos** chanukat hamizbei'ach"* — "This was the dedication of the Altar" (7:74), the eighth day is named ***"Zos** Chanukah."*

Alternatively, there is a popular question asked by the *Beit Yosef* (*Tur Orach Chaim* 670) that *Chanukah* should only be celebrated seven days since they found a single flask of oil which was sufficient for one day, and thus, the miraculous kindling was only

for seven days? One of the answers is that *Chanukah* is really only seven days and the holiday lasts eight days because of *sefeika deyoma* — a doubt as to which day was declared as *Rosh Chodesh* and thus a lack of clarity as to which day of the month is really the 25th of *Kislev*.

Most commentaries do not accept this theory, and therefore the eighth day is called **"*Zos* *Chanukah*"** — **"*This* is *Chanukah*"** — to emphasize that it is an actual day of the eight-day celebration and not merely a day celebrated due to ambiguity in the calendar. (**עיטורי תורה בשם לחם אשר**)

"זאת חנוכה" "*Zos Chanukah* — **This is *Chanukah*."**



What is the uniqueness of the eighth day over the previous seven days of *Chanukah*?

The significance of the number eight is that it transcends the realm of this mundane and physical world and alludes to the exalted and holy. In the natural world, time is based on a seven-day week and all occurrences are controlled by *sheva kochavei lechet* — the *seven* orbital planets. Hashem transcends all this, and therefore the number eight represents His lofty Holiness.

In the era of *Mashiach* we will merit a higher revelation of G-dliness, and therefore *Mashiach's* harp will consist of eight strings, one more than the seven-stringed harp of the *Beit Hamikdash* (*Arachin* 13b).

Chanukah is a preparation for the forthcoming Messianic era. These days are called "*Chanukah*" because they are a *Chinuch* —

education/preparation — accustoming us to the final redemption. During the candle lighting we are treated to a resemblance of the illumination of the *Or Haganuz* — hidden primordial light — which will radiate in full glory in the days of *Mashiach*.

The candles and light of *Chanukah* are analogous to Torah and *mitzvot* as King Shlomo said, "For a *mitzvah* is a candle and Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23). During *Chanukah* an increase in Torah study is preferred since through the *Ohr Chadash* — new light of Torah that we add in the world we will accomplish the purpose of creation and merit the revelation of the new light which transcends our mundane world — the light of *Mashiach*.

The correlation of *Chanukah* and *Mashiach* is most evident on day eight, because the number eight represents that which is above the chain of creation (**סדר השתלשלות**). Similarly, the Messianic era will usher in a new order which will also transcend the chain of creation.



"שמן זית זך כתית למאור" ***"Pure olive oil, crushed for illumination." (27:20)***

Rashi explains that the first drop of oil which was extracted when crushed in a mortar is the finest, and such oil was used to kindle the *Menorah*. The remaining oil of the olive which was extracted by grinding the olives in a mill, was not as pure, and was used for *menachot* — meal offerings.

Normally, one uses the best oil for baking and cheaper oil for burning or lighting. Why in the *Mishkan* was it the reverse?

The *Menorah* is the prototype of spirituality. It represents Torah and *mitzvot*, as King Shlomo states, *"Neir mitzvah veTorah or"* — "A candle is a *mitzvah* and Torah is light" (Proverbs 6:23). *A Karban Minchah* is eaten and represents the material and physical needs of a person.

Unfortunately, there are people who plead poverty when they have to spend money for Torah and *mitzvot,* but have plenty of money when it comes to personal matters. From the way things were done in the *Mishkan,* we can learn true priorities. For Torah and *mitzvot* one should spend money and use the best and purest. For personal pleasure, a Jew should practice restraint and learn to suffice with less. (**כלי יקר**)

Project Mesorah–Chanuka in Westerbork–Rabbi Paysach Krohn



This picture was taken in the Westerbork concentration camp in 1943. The capital of Holland is Amsterdam. One hundred and ten miles north of Amsterdam is a town called Westerbork.

In 1939, Holland tried to be kind to the Jews. They used the town of Westerbork as a haven – a place where Jews who were running from Nazi Germany, to use it as a refugee camp. And they were safe

there, until July 1940. At that point, Germany conquered Holland, and they turned this place that had been a refugee camp into a concentration camp.

Unfortunately, it became a transit camp. A place where over 100,000 Jews were sent to the concentration camps of Auschwitz and Sorbibor. Not only were Jews from Nazi Germany brought to Westerbork, but many, many Jews from Holland were there as well. Many were killed there. There was one famous person who was a prisoner in Westerbork, and that was the young girl- Anne Frank. For two years, Anne Frank and her family, were hidden in an attic in a house in Amsterdam. The Nazis somehow found them and transferred them to Westerbork. Unfortunately, in 1945, Anne was sent to Bergen-Belsen Where she lost her life.

From the summer of 1942 until September of 1944, over 100,000 Jews were sent to extermination camps. In a sense, Westerbork was not only a prison camp, but was a waystation to death. Yet the Rabbonim and teachers that were there, tried to give over as much encouragement and pride in Yidishkeit as they could.

On Chanukah in 1943, they gathered the children together and on the seventh night, this picture was taken and eventually, it was smuggled out of Westerbork.

Perhaps we should keep this picture near the Chanukah Menorah. Let The children see how fortunate we are, that we are able to light Chanukah Licht as free people, not in fear and trepidation. How the Rabbonim tried to bring the light of the past, so that there should be a glow in the future.

I want to share something I heard from Rav Todros Miller of Gateshead. He showed me a fascinating **Ramban** in Parshas Bahaloscho Perek 8 posuk 2. The Ramban points out something remarkable. Of course, when we had the Beis Hamikdosh, we had all the services, the Korbonos, Lechem Haponim, Ketores – but now we have nothing, because we no longer have the Beis Hamikdosh.

But there is one thing that we do have today that remains, that one thing is the lighting of the menorah!

We bring the light of the past into the present and prepare for the future. This is the remnant that we have today from the Beis Hamikdosh. This is the true light and future of Klal Yisroel.

The War Of The Candles



The Bais Yosef famously asks why if there was enough oil for one day do we celebrate the Nes of the Chanuka for eight days since only seven days were a miracle. One of the answers given is that the eighth day is in celebration for the victory in war. But this begs the question why do we celebrate the victory with an extra light? Another issue that is unclear is what is the essence of the Chanukah miracle, is it the war or the oil? In Al HaNissim we focus on the war but the mitzva of Chanukah is all about the oil, so which is it?

The Nesivos Shalom of Slonim explains that the defilement of the oil by the Yavanim was not incidental to the war, it was the main objective and at the heart of the war on Judaism. Before creation, only the light of Hashem existed. Creation meant Hashem creating a pseudo-darkness, the appearance of space devoid of Hashem's presence. Humanity is tasked with seeing the light of Hashem through the darkness, and Klal Yisroel is meant to lead the way. Since creation Bnei Yisroel's mission has been to inject the light of Hashem into the world. "Yehi Ohr" refers to the light of Hashem.

The Menora is the symbol of the light of Hashem in creation. It is the light that gives life to the Jewish nation. It is light, as Chazal say, that enable us to see from one end of the world to the other, through all the darkness and beyond the distractions. It is this light that the Yevanim so desperately want to extinguish for it reveals the triviality, shallowness, and emptiness of their entire world.

This Chanukah like we did over two thousand years we light our candles in the darkness under the threat of the Yevanim. May we all lighten up our own lives and stand tall and proud, appreciating the beauty of our ways and our tradition, filling up our days and lives with true substance.

And just like the Chashmanaim who prevailed despite being outnumbered and overpowered by the forces of evil who stood shoulder to shoulder with the majority of Jews who joined their side, we too will prevail. A little light will cast away the darkest shadow and truth will reign supreme.

Rav Elyashiv: Am Yisroel Celebrates Peace, Not War

The Ran in Masechta Shabbos says that the word Chanuka is a combination of two words, Chanu, they rested from the war and Kuf Hey on the 25th day of Kislev. Why, asks **Rav Elyashiv**, do we celebrate the day we rested, shouldn't we celebrate the day we won the war?

The Shalal Rav says that Rav Elyashiv says, we learn from this a lesson regarding war. The great warriors in history saw war as a means of showing off their awesome power and ruling their conquests. They celebrate the crushing of their enemies which is their goal in war. However for some, war is just a means to remove a threat interfering with their real goals in life. For them victory in war is not an accomplishment, it is what they will achieve afterwards with their new-found peace that is the fruit of their victory.

The Chashmonaim may have been great warriors but only for the sake of Hashem. They did not enjoy battle. They enjoyed serving Hashem in the Bais HaMikdash. They enjoyed dveykus with Hashem through the light of Torah. All this was not possible with the Yevanim ruling the land through harsh decrees meant to snuff out the light of Torah.

"Binfol Oivecha Al Tismach", do not rejoice in your enemies downfall. Our victory was achieved not when the Yevanim were defeated on the battlefield, but rather the day we got back to the Bais HaMikdash and cleaned it up and started offering Korbanos once again. Chanukah is a celebration not of heroic victory, but about the freedom to learn torah and do mitzvos.

Contrary to popular opinion, most of Am Yisroel in Eretz Yisroel and the rest of the world, live today in a greater state of peace than ever before, since the time of the Churban. We have freedom to learn torah and do mitzvos without any opposition. Chanuka is a celebration that our generation should celebrate with unbridled happiness, more so than almost any generation since the days of Yehuda HaMacabi.



Rav Chaim Brisker Miraculous Oil And Oil From Gan Eden

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik asks how were the Chashmanaim able to light the oil for eight days, the menora must be lit with oil from olives and not oil that came about from a miracle? He answers that we see from here that there was no miracle with regard to an increase in the amount of oil, but rather the very same oil became empowered to light with one eighth of the amount (answering the famous Bais Yosef's question).

The Shalal Rov says that **Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin** asked on Rav Chaim that the medrash says that the Avnei Shoham and oil for the Menorah was brought from Gan Eden via the clouds. We see from here that super natural oil is kosher for the menorah?

To this **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank** answers that the Medrash says the olive leaf brought by the Yonah to Noach, came from Gan Eden. If so, we see that there are olive trees in Gan Eden, and it is possible to get fresh squeezed olive oil from Gan Eden. Since it came from an olive tree, it would be kosher, even if it originated from a most exotic locale, and Rav Chaim's question is valid.

Rav Chaim Kanievsky: Why Is There No Thanks For The Nes Of The Oil in Al HaNissim?



In Al HaNissim we thank Hashem for miraculous over the mighty the Greeks. What seems to go by without any thanks is the great Nes of the oil that lasted for eight days. Why do we not mention that?

Rav Chaim Kanievsky answers that while we can commemorate the Nes of the oil and make Pirsumei Nisa, one of the highlights of Chanuka, we can only thank Hashem for what he has done for us. Today over 2000 years later we cannot thank Hashem for that miracle. We would be the same either way. Similarly on Succos we sit in a Succah so that everyone should know about the great Nes of the Ananei HaKavod in the Midbar, but we don't do anything to thank Hashem for that since we would be the same no matter how our ancestors travelled in the desert.

The victory in the war with the Greeks, however, is something that we have a great debt of gratitude for. Had the Chashmana'im been defeated, the fate of Jewry would have been in grave danger. We thank Hashem that Yehadus survived and we are the benefactors

two thousand years later. Chanuka is similar to Pesach where we give non-stop thanks to Hashem for delivering us from the stranglehold of Paroh. U'L'Amcha Yisroel Asisa Tshua Gedola UFurkan K'Hayon Hazeh!

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach Tells Us The Secret Behind Chanukah's Jam Doughnuts



Jam Donuts or "Sufganiyot" are customarily eaten on Chanukah. Why? Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach says the gemara (Avodah Zara 52b) says that when the Chashmonaim were victorious they entered the Bais HaMikdash and cleaned it up and purified it from the Tumah. However they had no viable solution to salvage the stones of the Mizbei'ach and had to bury them.

After eating Donuts we make an "Al HaMichya" where when we ask Hashem to rebuild Yerushalayim and the Bais HaMikdash we specifically ask for rachamim "Al Mizabachacha" on the Mizbei'ach unlike Birchas HaMazon where we don't find specific mention of the Mizbei'ach.

What about the Jam? The gemara in Sotah says that since the Bais HaMikdash was destroyed the taste of fruits have never been the same. Fruit is associated with the Mizbei'ach. Therefore we add fruit jam to our donuts. (Shalmei Moed)

Yehudis Saves Yerushalayim



One of the cruel decrees during the Syrian-Greek rule was that every Jewish kallah was required to submit herself to a Syrian-Greek officer before her marriage. Special officers in each town were appointed for this purpose. The Jewish people refused to submit to this outrageous decree and married secretly or delayed marriage in the hope of better times.

Mattisyahu's daughter was engaged, and before the wedding, the officer appeared to enforce the decree. Mattisyahu and his sons battled the officer and his soldiers, and miraculously defeated them. The king was informed and sent his general to besiege Yerushalayim with a huge army. In due time, the Jews inside the city began suffering from hunger and thirst; surrender seemed imminent. A beautiful and righteous almanah, Yehudis took the initiative to intervene to save her people from surrendering to the notoriously cruel general.

Yehudis dressed herself in her finest clothes, adorned herself, and left the city together with her maidservant, who carried a basket with food and aged wine. They reached the enemy camp, and informed the guards that they had a vital and secret message to convey to the general.

The guards allowed them to enter the general's tent, where the general eyed the beautiful Yehudis with interest. Yehudis told the general that she had come to him because the conditions in the city were extremely difficult, and the Jews were becoming desperate. She wished to save her people from the general's anger at their stubbornness, and she was willing to tell him the best way to defeat

the city quickly. She told the general that she had heard of his valiant and brave war career, and she wished to get to know him better.

The general was entranced by Yehudis and accepted her offer to share a meal of bread and cheese. Yehudis then offered him strong wine to quench his thirst. The general drank liberally and quickly became completely intoxicated.

When the general was in a deep drunken slumber, Yehudis quickly uttered a tefillah for success, and withdrew the general's sword from his sheath, and bore down on his neck. She cut off his head, wrapped it in cloths, and concealed it in the basket. Yehudis and the maidservant then quickly returned to the city where they immediately went to the Jewish commander. Yehudis showed him the evidence of what she had done and advised him to prepare his army to attack the enemy early in the morning. The enemy, who was not expecting the attack, turned to their general for direction, and panicked when they found him dead. In this confused and frightened state, they fled from the Jewish army. It was a miraculous victory wrought by a brave and righteous woman.

Chanukah Treasures - An Inside Look

The *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 22a) states two teachings in the name of R' Tanchum. The first is that it is *halachically* unacceptable to place the Chanukah *menorah* higher than twenty *amos*, just as a *succah* is *pasul* if the *s'chach* is higher than twenty *amos*. The very next teaching relates that when Yosef was thrown into the pit by his brothers, there was no water in it; however, it *was* filled with snakes and scorpions. What could be the possible connection between these two ideas?

Rav Meir Shapiro, *zt"l*, explains that when Reuven was trying to save Yosef from his brother's plot to kill him, he suggested throwing him in the pit with the intention to secretly rescue him and return

him to Yaakov. However, what type of plan could Reuven have had by throwing Yosef into a pit full of dangerous animals?! They could have killed him! The answer must be that Reuven didn't see the snakes and scorpions, because otherwise he never would have cast Yosef into them.

The reason for this is because the pit was deeper than twenty *amos*, which is too much of a distance for one's eyes to see well.

We can now understand the teachings of R' Tanchum. The Chanukah *menorah* may not be placed higher than twenty *amos*, since one's eyes can't see that far very well, and he will be unable to notice what is there. It is now understandable as well why Reuven wanted to throw Yosef into the pit. Since its bottom was greater than twenty *amos* away, he couldn't tell that there were snakes and scorpions there! Indeed, R' Tanchum was teaching that the two ideas are connected.

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

Prior to World War II, **Rabbi Yisroel Spira, the *Bluzhever Rebbe***, was the *rav* in Galicia. After the war broke out, he was captured and transported to Bergen-Belsen, a concentration camp. There, the *Rebbe* worked very hard to help other Jews in any way that he could, and everyone in the camp quickly began to treat him with much respect.

One year, as Chanukah approached, the prisoners in Bergen- Belsen had no candles or oil to light for Chanukah, and they turned to the *Bluzhever Rebbe* for advice. They did not want to miss the mitzvah of lighting the *menorah* on Chanukah, even though there was great risk involved, since any practice of Judaism earned a sentence of death from the Nazis, *ys"v*.

The *Rebbe* somehow managed to get a little shoe polish, and realized that it was oil-based which could be used as oil. By taking a few

strands from his clothing he was able to twist them together and make a wick. Word quickly spread that the the *Bluzhever Rebbe* would be lighting the *menorah* for anyone who would like to observe, and late on the first night of Chanukah, everyone gathered quietly around the *Rebbe*.

They were all terrified that the Nazis might find out what they were doing and punish them, but that didn't stop anyone. The *Rebbe* set up his make-shift *menorah* with the shoe polish and wick, and quietly said the *brachos*. However, when he reached the *brachah* of *Shehechiyanu*, he paused, turned around to look at everyone who had gathered, and then turned back to continue the *brachah*. Everyone answered *amein*, but someone asked the *Rebbe* what made him pause before the *brachah* of *Shehechiyanu*?

The *Bluzhever Rebbe* responded, "The truth is that I had trouble saying *Shehechiyanu* with *simchah*, since in that *brachah* we thank Hashem for keeping us alive to experience this moment. I thought to myself, 'How can I thank Hashem for this? We are all so hungry and scared for our lives!' But when I looked around and saw so many people who risked their lives to come see the lighting of a *menorah*, I became very happy! I was able to say *Shehechiyanu*, thanking Hashem for keeping me alive to see the greatness of the Jewish people— a people who never give up and try their very best to keep Hashem's *mitzvos*, even in the direst of situations. Great people like this will surely overcome this horrendous ordeal and will one day rebuild their lives!"

Years later, the *Bluzhever Rebbe* received a letter. It was from a man who was present at that secret Chanukah candle lighting in the concentration camp. He wrote, "*Rebbe*, I just wanted to let you know that on that night when you lit the *menorah* and explained your joy over being able to say the *brachah* of *Shehechiyanu*, you saved my life. I did indeed rebuild my family and I wanted to thank you, because I was ready to give up!"

Pearls of Wisdom …A Word for the Ages

The flickering flames of the *Chanukah menorah* remind us that we each have within ourselves a flickering *neshamah*, which is always looking to reach 'upward' in *ruchniyus*, just like a flame always dances upward. It is as the *pasuk* describes in *Mishlei* (20:27), *ner Hashem nishmas adam, the candle of Hashem is the neshamah of a person.*

This is the *Pintele Yid* that always remains inside each Jew, no matter where life takes him and is the connection that never breaks between a *Yid* and his Creator.

The following story illustrates this point. Once, a gruff looking man who had served in the Russian army, entered a Jewish Inn and ordered a meal. When young Jewish boys were drafted into the Russian army, it was usually the end of their *Yiddishkeit*, their religious observance. The army brainwashed and tortured them in order to make them forget their Jewish roots. The soldier slumped down in a chair and ate without any manners at all. It was revolting to everyone there, that this man, a Jew, could conduct himself in such a repulsive way. The innkeeper and the others present were embarrassed by this display, but none of them dared to say anything.

The *Chofetz Chaim* happened to be a guest at that time, and he slowly approached the soldier. Everyone wondered, what could the *Chofetz Chaim* possibly say to this man? Surely he would not listen to any rebuke, even from such a holy man.

The *Chofetz Chaim* asked him, "Is it true that you served in the Russian army?" "Yes," snorted the man, bracing himself for the oncoming admonishments that he was fully expecting.

"Tell me," began the *Chofetz Chaim*, "How did you manage to keep your Jewish identity in those difficult circumstances? So many Jewish boys entered the army, only to eventually give up their Judaism. They are forced to serve for 25 years without any kosher food, Jewish holidays, or any other vestige of Judaism. Yet, when

you could have easily gone to any Inn to eat, you chose a Jewish one! You still identify as a *Yid*. I don't know if I could have done what you did. You are an inspiration to me! Where did you find the strength?"

The soldier was completely caught off guard and was clearly moved. He looked straight at the *Chofetz Chaim* and said, "It was so difficult! They did everything to pound it out of us to make us forget that we were ever Jews!" The *Chofetz Chaim* responded, "It is a miracle that you made it through. Now you can begin to learn Torah and observe the *mitzvos* that you were deprived of all these years."

The soldier began to cry bitterly and said, "But *Rebbi*, how can I possibly do that?!" He continued through his tears, "I want to return to my heritage, but I am so far removed! Surely it isn't possible for someone like me to learn," he sadly sobbed.

The *Chofetz Chaim* said, "It is still possible— it is always possible! I can show you how." As the soldier spoke to the *Chofetz Chaim*, his heart began to melt. The warm, sensitive, and caring approach of the *Chofetz Chaim* helped the hardened soldier begin to turn his life around.

From that day on, the soldier began a path of true return, and as the years went by, he developed into an observant, well learned Jew. The *Pintele Yid* had finally shone through.

שבת- ר'ח-חנוכה- אצל הרבי!

A Karliner Chossid from Eretz Yisroel went for Chanukah to the Frankfurter (Yenukah) ZY"A in Stolin. He stayed in the hospitality with **Reb Mordechai Kapitchkivitcher Z"L**.

That year Rosh Chodesh Teives came out on Shabbos Chanukah. The Chossid from Eretz Yisroel said that he was not able to sleep. As every short time R' Mordechai awoke and shouted "Shabbos!", "Rosh Chodesh!", "Chanukah!", "By the Rebbe!". – •

Another Maaseh! A Tale to Remember

Many years ago, a *Yid* moved to Bnei Brak and rented a store to open a small grocery. He hired a carpenter to construct shelves, and in order to construct shelves in those days, they set up tall hollow pillars which would support the large wooden shelves. These shelves would then be able to hold the heavy items, like sacks of flour and sugar, and large jugs of oil, for an extended period of time. While the carpenter was still setting up these hollow pillars, a delivery man arrived with the jugs of oil. He waited while the carpenter set up the top shelf, and then climbed up a ladder to put jugs of vegetable oil and olive oil. Afterwards, the carpenter finished constructing the shelves, and more groceries were set up.

Time passed, and the grocery store had now been open for many years. One winter, there was a shortage of many basic items, and the store's shelves were half empty.

One day, a young man walked in and urgently asked for some olive oil. There had been at least fifty similar requests in the past week because it was almost Chanukah, and everyone in Bnei Brak wanted olive oil for their *menoras*, but there was none left in the store to buy. The young man pleaded, "I didn't come to ask for oil for myself. **The *Chazon Ish*** sent me *here*, to *this store*, to buy olive oil for Chanukah. I told him that there is a shortage, but he specifically instructed me to come to this store anyway."

The storekeeper was disappointed. He would have loved to have the *zechus* to fulfill the request of the *Chazon Ish*, however, he didn't have a bit of olive oil left in the store. The young man was determined and asked, "Maybe you have a little in storage?" "There is definitely none left," said the storekeeper regretfully. "There's the top shelf where I store the oil, and it's completely empty. You can climb up and see for yourself if you like."

The young man climbed the ladder, glanced at the empty shelf, and out of despair, moved his hand over it, proving to himself that there

was no oil. His hand absently passed over the hollow pillar, when suddenly, the storekeeper, who had been watching him, called out, "The missing jug of oil!" The young man was confused, but the storekeeper had suddenly remembered a long-forgotten memory. In the year that he had first opened the store and had finished selling all the olive oil that he had originally ordered, he was a little distressed because he had thought he ordered more than he had sold and should not have run out so soon. He distinctly remembered having more olive oil being delivered, and he had watched closely as it was placed on the shelf. He re-ordered, and eventually forgot about it. Only now did it occur to him that the jugs of oil had been delivered while the carpenter was still constructing the shelves— it was possible that one jug had fallen into the hollow supporting pillar which had not yet been closed off by the carpenter!

Though the shopkeeper was reluctant to dismantle the shelves since he was uncertain that the jug was actually there, he could not help get excited about the fact that the *Chazon Ish* had specifically sent this young man specifically to this store. Perhaps the *Chazon Ish* had *known* that olive oil could be found here.

Together, they dismantled the shelves, and to their great happiness, they found the lost jug of olive oil! It had been lying there for many years and was now available for the *Chazon Ish* to use to light his *menorah*!

L'Maaseh… A Tale to Remember

The eighth day of Chanukah, in the year 1938, fell out on December 25th, a day celebrated by gentiles all around the world. This was also the day that the Geier family was to escape Germany.

After *Kristallnacht*, the Geiers had received their passports and visas to leave Germany for the United States. Their train bound for Holland pulled out of the Berlin station. Mr. and Mrs. Geier and their two children, a twelve-year-old son and a fifteen-year-old daughter

shared their second-class compartment with two stern-looking citizens.

Mr. Geier was inwardly upset that he would not be able to light his Chanukah candles that evening, and Mrs. Geier quietly reassured her husband that Hashem would forgive him for not lighting the *Menorah* that night. In any case, Mr. Geier had packed a small menorah and some candles in his briefcase, just in case.

They travelled in silence for a few hours. Not long after dark, the train slowed and pulled into a special station at the German- Dutch border. The Geiers braced themselves for their final inspection of papers by the dreaded German police, Nazis and Gestapo. This was their final block before freedom.

The train sat in the station, and the Geier family watched as the Border Police and the Gestapo compared lists and prepared to check everyone's passports and papers. Finally, a small group of officers boarded the train for the inspection. Mr. Geier looked tense and broke out in a sweat. His wife and children, too, became very afraid.

Then, without warning, all the lights in the station and on the train went out. A number of people lit matches for light, the glow on their faces making for an eerie sight.

In the confusion, Mr. Geier suddenly stood up, terrified but very wilful, and pulled nine small candles out of his pocket. He struck a match and lit one candle. Using that candle, he warmed the bottoms of the other candles and lined them all up on the windowsill of their compartment. Mrs. Geier and the children began to comprehend Mr. Geier's actions, and they all stood up in unison. Queitly, Mr. Geier recited the Chanukah *brachos* and lit the candles.

For the first time in a long while, Mr. Geier smiled. Then, someone shouted, "Look, there is light over there!" The border police and the Gestapo officers soon came to the Geiers' compartment and used the light of the candles to conduct their inspection of everyone's passports and papers.

One of the officers commended Mr. Geier on his resourcefulness for thinking ahead and packing "travel candles." He quickly looked over their papers and was gone. After about a half hour, as suddenly as they had gone off, the lights came back on again. The officers thanked Mr. Geier once again for the light he provided, and left the compartment to finish their inspection throughout the rest of the train.

"Remember this moment," Mr. Geier said to his children. "Just like in the times of the Maccabees, 'a great miracle happened here!'" (*Torah Tavlin Vol. I – Chanukah*)

Chanukah Thoughts Ideas and Reflections By: *Rabbi Aron Moshe Jacobsohn*



One of the common customs regarding Chanukah is playing with a *Dreidel*. A thought which is shared regarding the *Dreidel* is that it teaches us a lesson in how we live our lives.

Just as a *Dreidel* needs effort to begin its spinning, so too in our lives we have a need for *Hishtadlus*, exerting effort for livelihood or any other endeavour. However, we must remember that in reality the outcome is out of our control. We cannot determine or control what letter a *Dreidel* will land on, so too we are not truly in control of our livelihood.

Hashem is the ultimate Source of everything. Rav Fischel Schachter comments, "Live life as if it is a game of chess, but remember that it is really a game of *Dreidel*!"

Torah wellsprings – Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

Chanukah: *A Time for Teshuvah*

A woman approached the **Yesod HaAvodah (Slonim) *zt'l*** asking for help with her daughter who had strayed off the path and ran away from home.

The Yesod HaAvodah asked, "Do you have at home a garment that belongs to your daughter?" She replied that she did. "Cut off some pieces of fabric from the garment and roll them into wicks and use them to light the Shabbos *lecht*.", the Rebbe instructed. She did so.

That Friday night, the girl returned home while the family was in the middle of their Shabbos *seudah*. She said, "I regret running away. I acted foolishly. I want to return home and to Yiddishkeit." The joy was immense. Mother and daughter embraced. **The Beis Avraham *zt'l*** repeated this story and added that this is implied in the *brachos*, **להדליק נר של שבת.**

להדליק doesn't mean "to light," it means "to ignite." The Shabbos *lecht* ignites the *neshamah* of a Yid. The Beis Avraham adds that on Chanukah we say **להדליק נר חנוכה** , because the Chanukah *lecht* ignite the *neshamah*, the hearts of the Jewish nation, and draws them to *teshuvah*.

The *Meir Einei Chachamim* (12:2) writes, "Believe with *emunah sheleimah* that when you stand to light Chanukah *lecht*, all the sparks of your soul and of your fathers' and grandfather's *neshamos*, all the way up to Adam HaRishon are standing there with you.

This applies for every Yid who lights Chanukah *lecht*, as these *neshamos* hope that perhaps with your inspiration by the Chanukah *lecht*, they will merit a rectification and reach their origin and source."

Maoz Tzur - The timeless song of the Maccabees' fight for freedom.

This well-known Chanukkah song, whose words were composed in the late twelfth- or early 13th century, summarizes historical challenges faced by the Jewish people that have been overcome with G-d's help. *Ma'oz Tzur* is an intense anti-Christian text reflecting the mood and experience of Ashkenazi Jews during the Crusades, when dozens of Jewish communities were slaughtered in the name of the cross. The author of this song was named [מרדכי], 'Mordechai'. His name can be formed from the first letter of the first five stanzas, though little if anything is known about the identity of this Mordechai.

Yet this joyous song also contains a later addition, a sixth stanza composed three centuries after the original Maoz Tzur was written. To the best of my knowledge, the sixth stanza first appeared in print in Amsterdam in 1702. The fact that the sixth stanza was only first printed hundreds of years after the hymn was written has led some scholars to suggest that it is not original but a later addition.

Nevertheless, the intricate style of the sixth stanza is identical to that of the first five stanzas, and it complements almost perfectly the topic of the first stanza. Thus, the last stanza may not be a later addition, but rather a unit intentionally repressed and passed by oral tradition for almost five centuries (!) due to its strong anti-Christian theme. The tune's origins are not documented, but it is believed to be an adaptation of contemporary folk songs or hymns.

The appearance of this little-known, rarely sung stanza, which calls on G-d to wreak vengeance on enemies of the Jews and, as some translations word it, "thrust the enemy into the shadows of death," poses a challenge to modern Jewish sensibilities.

It is a raw, emotional reaction to persecution faced by the Jewish community in Christian Europe. While being able to identify with the emotions that arise out of the historical circumstances, the call for Divine retribution is foreign to the modern ear. Nonetheless, the

theological question of G-d's role in history raised in the last stanza of this song is a question that is still asked today.

מעוז צור ישועתי לך נאה לשבח תכון בית תפלתי ושם תודה נזבח לעת תכין מטבח מצר המנבח עז אגמור בשיר מזמור חנכת המזבח

O Fortress, Rock of my salvation, unto thee it is becoming to give praise: let my house of prayer be restored, and I will there offer thee thanksgivings when thou shalt have prepared a slaughter of the blaspheming foe, I will complete with song and psalm the dedication of the altar.

רעות שבעה נפשי ביגון כחי כלה חיי מררו בקשי בשעבוד מלכות עגלה ובידו הגדולה הוציא את הסגלה חיל פרעה וכל זרעו ירדו כאבן במצולה

Full sated was my soul with ills, my strength was spent with sorrow; they embittered my life by hardship during my subjection to the dominion of Egypt, but G-d with his great power brought forth the chosen race, while the host of Pharaoh and all his seed sank like a stone into the deep.

דביר קדשו הביאני וגם שם לא שקטתי ובא נוגש והגלני כי זרים עבדתי ויין רעל מסכתי כמעט שעברתי קץ בבל זרובבל לקץ שבעים נושעתי

To his holy oracle he brought me, yet there also I found no peace, for the oppressor came and led me captive, because I had served strange gods: I had to quaff the wine of bewilderment; well nigh had I perished, when Babylon's end drew near; through Zerubbabel I was saved after seventy years.

כרות קומת ברוש בקש אגגי בן המדתא ונהיתה לו לפח ולמוקש וגאותו נשבתה ראש ימיני נשאת ואויב שמו מחית רב בניו וקניניו על העץ תלית

The Agagite (Haman), the son of Hammedatha, sought to cut down the lofty fir tree (Mordecai); but his design became a snare to himself, and his pride was brought to an end. The head of the Benjamite thou didst exalt, but the enemy's name thou Midst blot out: the many sons he had gotten thou didst hang upon the gallows.

יונים נקבצו עלי אזי בימי חשמנים ופרצו חומות מגדלי וטמאו כל השמנים ומנותר קנקנים נעשה נס לשושנים בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו שיר ורננים

The Grecians were gathered against me in the days of the Hasmoneans; they broke down the walls of my towers, and defiled all the oils; but from one of the last remaining flasks a miracle was wrought for thy beloved, and their men of understanding appointed these eight days for song and praises.

חשוף זרוע קדשך וקרב קץ הישועה נקום נקמת דם עבדיך מאמה הרשעה כי ארכה לנו הישועה ואין קץ לימי הרעה דחה אדמון בצל צלמון הקם לנו רועים שבעה

Expose your holy arm and bring the end of the redemption. Avenge the blood of your servants from the evil nation. Because the salvation has been a long time coming and there is no end to the days of evil. - Push Edom into the shadows and bring the seven shepherds.

Rabbi YY Jacobson - Chanukah at the Kremlin

I once had a conversation with the chief rabbi of Russia, Rabbi Berel Lazar, and he shared with me a marvellous experience that happened a few years ago on Chanukah. He was invited by the Kremlin for a personal audience with President Vladimir Putin. The time for the audience was Friday afternoon, but he took a look and saw that that Friday – a winter in Moscow – Shabbos was to begin at 3:00 p.m. It was also Chanukah. As such, he'd need to get home early so both the Chanukah and Shabbos candles could be lit. Considering this, he asked the Kremlin if the meeting could be postponed to another day. But President Putin insisted that he had to see him that day. It would be 12:00 p.m. sharp, so he would have enough time to get back from the Kremlin and light the Chanukah and Shabbos candles and prepare himself to welcome our holy day. And when Putin says you got to come, you got to come.

Rabbi Lazar arrived at the Kremlin at 12:00 p.m. sharp. But as he was about to enter the office of the President, he heard loud arguments and disputes. Apparently, the Labor Organization was inside the

office and there was intense bickering and arguing, and the meeting kept on being pushed off. From 12:00 to 1:00 and from 1:00 to 2:00. At this point, Rabbi Lazar began growing anxious, but they told him not to worry. "Putin will be sure to keep the meeting with you succinct. It is extremely important, as Putin has to communicate a vital message to the Russian Jewish community." So Rabbi Lazar remained and arranged for his wife to deliver a menorah to the Kremlin so that if he sees the time to Shabbos is too short, he'll be able to light the menorah in the Kremlin. Sometime later, he was admitted to the Office of President Putin and they held the meeting.

When Putin and Rabbi Lazar finally came out of the meeting, he took a look at the clock and knew instantly that it was too close to Shabbos to get home in time. He wouldn't be able to kindle the menorah before Friday sunset. He immediately told the aids of the president, "I have a menorah here. Please prepare it for me as I need to light." The aids agreed to set it up, yet requested that Rabbi Lazar address the press in the meantime. So as requested, Rabbi Lazar spoke to several reporters for a few minutes. Afterwards, they directed Rabbi Lazar to a beautiful room right near the office of Vladimir Putin. The menorah was set up right in the middle of the table for him to light. But as soon as he saw what they had done, Rabbi Lazar knew they'd made a mistake. "I need to light Chanukah candles, not Shabbos candles. I also have to do it at the window, or actually as my custom is, by the door." But to put it by the door, Rabbi Lazar would need a small table. And even though it's the Kremlin, go find an available small table in the Kremlin.

And so, the Kremlin officials began a search. Fortunately, they found a small table and they set it up by the door. And now the menorah was by the door and there was oil and wicks. But that wasn't everything. "I need a match!" Rabbi Lazar needed a match to light the Shamash. "Rabbi, we aren't allowed to smoke in the Kremlin, there's no fire and there's no match. Sorry. Is there any other way to do this? Can you just make the blessing and the prayer without

the fire?" But Rabbi Lazar knew the answer. At this point, there was only four minutes left to Shabbos.

Then Rabbi Lazar remembered the security guard out front. Perhaps he smokes? But as the officials began making their way outside, Rabbi Lazar knew that if wouldn't do something himself, he wouldn't make it. So Rabbi Lazar began running. He took the elevator, ran down, retrieved a lighter from the guard, and ran back up and lit the menorah.

Rabbi Lazar made the blessing, expressing the truism that we light these candles for all of the beautiful miracles that Chanukah commemorates. Rabbi Lazar looked outside as the sun slowly set on the horizon of Moscow and the new Shabbos descended into the world. Now Rabbi Lazar needed to walk home. A walk of an hour and a half. In Moscow. During the winter. At night.

Knowing this, Rabbi Lazar spent a few minutes next to his menorah candles, enjoying his final moments of warmth and comfort. He bid the Kremlin officials goodbye, thanked them for their assistance and began his walk home.

But minutes later, hearing someone approaching him, he noticed the Russian Minister of Religion. "You're not walking home alone!" Rabbi Lazar was taken aback. "You're not Jewish! You can drive; you don't need to walk with me!" But the Russian Minister was adamant. "You're here because of us. We brought you here and we are the ones responsible for this chaos and mess, and it is therefore my responsibility as Minister of Religion to walk home with you on Shabbos."

On the trek home, it was freezing home. But Rabbi Lazar had a nagging question. Turning to the Minister, he said, "I made a real commotion there, between my menorah, table, window, matches, fire and walking home. Are you a little annoyed with me? How do you feel about it?" The Russian Minister looked back at Rabbi Lazar. "You think we can't deal with Jewish spiritual leaders who don't take

Judaism so seriously? We don't want to, because we can't really trust them. You're a man we know we can trust. You have principles; you have values. You are going to walk home on the Sabbath! You are the types of leaders we trust and we want to deal with."

The world respects Jews who respect Judaism; the world is embarrassed by Jews who are embarrassed by their history, heritage and faith. Never be ashamed to be like the loyal: true to your identity.

Torah wellsprings – Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

What should a person do when he stays near the *lecht*?

The Sefer Zechirah (69:1) writes, "A helpful *segulah* to be protected the entire year is to say seven times chapter (*Tehillim* 91) **יושב בסתר עליון** , each night of Chanukah after lighting the candles." Some say chapter **קי"ט** in *Tehillim*, because it has many requests for success in Torah and mitzvos.

The Leket Yoshar (p.43) writes that his Rebbe, the Terumas HaDeshen would say chapter **קי"ט** in *Tehillim* every day.

Certainly, it is an excellent time to say it while looking at the Chanukah *lecht*, which is *mesugal* for attaining success in Torah.

This is also a good time for tefillah. The Tosefta (*Maasar Sheni* 5:15) writes, "When one performs a mitzvah, it is an ideal time to daven to Hashem."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (19:3) writes, "When a woman lights the Shabbos candles, she should pray that she merit children *talmidei chachamim*, who shine in Torah because *tefillos* are more accepted after performing a mitzvah."

Primarily, as you look at the *lecht*, it is important to be happy with the *lecht*. As the Chavas Yair writes, "In my opinion, the primary

mitzvah is that the one who lit the *lecht* should be near the *lecht* for a half-hour, and he should look at the *lecht* and be happy with them."

The laws of Chanukah begin in *Shulchan Aruch* with the *simanim* **תרעא** or **תרע** in Aramaic means 'gate'. **The Beis Yisrael *zy'a*** said that this is because on Chanukah, the gates of heaven are opened, and everyone can go inside.

Rabbi Label Lam - Days of Eight

In Maoz Tzur, we refer to Chanukah as "Yemei Shemoneh – "The Days of Eight." **The Sfas Emes** points out that there's a world of difference between saying Shemoneh Yamim, Eight days, and Yemei Shemonah, Days of Eight. The former tells us about the quantity of these days. There are eight. The latter tells us about the quality of this time.

Somehow, everything is connected to Shmona, Eight. If we anagram the letters of the word Shmona, we come up with neshama, soul. If we jumble them again, we come up with the word Mishnah, the building block of the Oral Torah, which is inside every Jew. The word Shemen, oil, is also in the word Shmona, because it rises to the top and it goes beyond this world of teva, the natural world of seven. There's something beyond, something transcendent about these times. Chanukah, being "days of eight" is penetrating and impacting and saturating the world of seven.

The Siddur Speaks - A Closer Look at Davening

In *Al HaNissim* we thank Hashem for the miraculous victory over the mighty Greeks. Why do we not make mention of the great *neis* of the oil that burned for eight days?

Rav Chaim Kanievsky answers that while we can commemorate the *neis* of the oil through *Pirsumei Nisah*, publicizing the miracle, which

is one of the highlights of Chanukah, we thank Hashem in *Al HaNissim* for saving us and for our very existence.

The victory in the war with the Greeks is something that we have a great debt of gratitude for, because had the *Chashmonaim* been defeated, the fate of Jewry would have been in grave danger. We thank Hashem that Judaism survived and that we are the benefactors two thousand years later.

Chanukah is similar to Pesach where we give non-stop thanks to Hashem for delivering us from the dominion of Pharaoh. This is the meaning of the words, **וּלְעַמְּךָ יִשְׂרָאֵל עָשִׂיתָ תְּשׁוּעָה גְדוֹלָה וּפֻרְקָן כְּהַיּוֹם הַזֶּה** "And for Your nation, Yisroel, You have brought about great salvation and redemption ***as this very day***".

The miracle of the oil is good to commemorate, but it was a one-time event. *Yiddishkeit* is here to continue on, and this is what we are thankful for!

Rabbi Frand on Chanukah: Once the Shirah Starts – It Must Keep Going

The Rambam writes [Hilchos Chanukah 4:12]: The mitzvah of Chaunkah is very precious. A person must be particularly careful to publicize the miracle and to add to the praise of the Almighty and thank Him for the miracles He did for us; even if he has nothing to eat other than from charity funds – he must borrow or sell his clothing to be able to buy oil and wicks and light.

If we pay close attention to these words, we notice a discrepancy. The Rambam begins by saying the goal of the mitzvah is to publicize the miracle (nes), singular. Then he says that we are to add to the praise of the Almighty and thank Him for the miracles (nisim), plural, that He did for us. So, which is it? Is it nes or is it nisim?

I heard a second question on this Rambam from Rav Daniel Lander of Monsey: After lighting Chanukah candles, we say "HaNeiros

Halalu" and then we recite "Maoz Tzur." Maoz Tzur recounts the miracle of the Exodus from Egypt, the redemption from the Babylonian exile, the story of Purim, and the Chanukah story of the struggle with the Greek empire. Basically, it is a brief synopsis of Jewish history: Egypt, Bavel, Purim, and Chanukah.

On Purim we say "Shoshanas Yaakov". We only mention the story of Purim. What about the rest of the miracles of Jewish history? Why in the Chanukah Pizmon (liturgical poem) do we mention all the major miracles of Jewish history and by Purim, the holiday Pizmon is exclusively about Purim?

Rabbi Lander offered the following answer: The Gemara says [Megilla 14a] that there is a fundamental difference between Chanukah and Purim – namely on Chanukah we recite Hallel and on Purim we do not. There are several explanations why this is the case. Rava, in the Gemara there, explains why unlike the commemoration of the Exodus, where we recite Hallel, in commemorating the Purim deliverance we do not: When we left Egypt, we could indeed say Hallel because we were no longer servants to Pharoah, but even after the "deliverance" of the Purim story, we were still servants of Achashverosh.

The "deliverance" of the Chanukah story was more similar to the Exodus: After the successful Maccabean revolt, we were free men, we were in our own country, and we had our own government. We had the Beis HaMikdash. We were not enslaved to anybody! Therefore, on such a Nes, we say Shirah. On Purim, we were very happy that the decree of annihilation was cancelled. That was a terrific miracle. But after all is said and done, we still were in exile, subject to foreign domination by a Gentile king!

Shirah is an expression of the heart. When you say Shirah, you sing! You express your deepest emotions, your feelings of gratitude to the Almighty for all He has done for you. When people engage in Shirah they do not stop with a single expression of thanks. They give thanks for everything! Therefore, on Chanukah, which justifies

Hallel, which is Shirah, once we begin singing His praises, we must express thanks for all the tova He has done for us throughout the ages! Purim has various mitzvos commemorating the event, but they are localized to the exact event that happened "in those days at this time of year." An obligation to say Shirah does not exist "for we are still slaves of Achashverosh."

So, this is what the Rambam means: A person needs to be particularly careful to publicize the miracle (i.e. – of Chanukah) and to add to the praise of the Almighty and thank Him for the miracles that He did for us (i.e. – during the rest of Jewish history as well)." A Freileche Chanukah!

Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin

הַנֵּרוֹת הַלָּלוּ אֲנוּ מַדְלִיקִין עַל הַנִּסִּים *"These lights we kindle upon the miracles*…"

There is a famous joke:

Yoni (not his real name) was a good Jew. He would do all the misvot he could and occasionally find time for some learning. However, with every misvah, he would always look for the most lenient opinion, always happy to rely on the one Rabbi who said that it was ok to do less. But at least he had someone to rely on in every misvah, and he was happy with how he lived his life.

After 120 years, Yoni was summoned to the Heavenly Court. Yoni wasn't scared; he knew that he had kept all the misvot, even if every one of them had been according to whichever leniency he could find. So he waited for the verdict. "Gan Eden" was the call. Just as Yoni had expected! So off he went with his accompanying angels towards Gan Eden. After a long journey, the angels finally showed him a wooden door with a little window and ushered him inside. Slightly surprised, Yoni peeked inside and saw a small room containing a bed and a desk and nothing else. As the angels turned to leave, he

exclaimed, "I think there has been a mistake. Didn't you hear I was told that I can go to Gan Eden?" With a smile on their faces the angels responded, "This is Gan Eden according to the most lenient opinion!"

Hanukah is a time of Mehadrin min Hamehadrin, where we light our Menorahs using all the stringencies we can. Many light with oil and everyone increases the number of candles each night, even though only one flame is necessary. In fact, most things we do on Hanukah are far beyond the strict letter of the law. Why is this?

R' Moshe Kormornick explains: The Greeks did not try to physically kill us. They tried to prevent us from learning Torah and keeping misvot They tried to destroy us, something far worse than a physical death. This is why we specifically perform the misvot of Hanukah to the best of our ability. Because by showing Hashem how much we value our spiritual lives and treasure our connection with the Torah and its misvot, we demonstrate our value for the relationship we have with Hashem. Happy Hanukah. *Rabbi Reuven Semah*

Yom Tov Inspiration With Rabbi Zisha Kohn: Chanukah - The Holiday That Makes Every Day Into A Holy Day

Little Moishe was praying when Arthur, the town "grouch," passed by. "You're wasting your time," taunted Arthur. "G-d forbid!" Moishe replied. "I'm praying to the Al-mighty G-d, who led the Jews out of Egypt and helped them cross the Red Sea."

Arthur scoffed "Please, you think that really happened? I read that the Red Sea was only 10 inches deep when the Jews left Egypt - there was no miracle at all!"

Arthur walked towards the bus stop but looked back and saw Moishe still praying. "Why are you still praying? I told you that G-d didn't perform any miracles in Egypt!" "Oh no," said Moishe, "G-d is far

greater than I thought. How miraculous is it that He was able to drown an army of Egyptians in only 10 inches of water!"

History is replete with miraculous events wherein the Jewish people were saved and incredible Nissim (miracles) were performed on their behalf. Some stories mentioned in Nach include the fall of the Walls of Yericho, the demise of Sisera and thousands of his generals, and the downfall of Sancheiriv's army and family. None of these episodes, though, warrant a Yom Tov celebration or any sort of commemoration.

Yet, when it comes to the story of Chanukah, which is also a Neis, we stop for eight days to honour it by lighting the Menorah, publicize the salvation that took place, and enjoy joyous meals with such goodies like latkes and donuts.

What's so different that on the 25th day of Kislev we celebrate this Neis more than all the other Nissim? To deepen the question, once we are celebrating a holiday for this miracle, why don't we make it into a full holiday like the other holidays?

On other holidays, we dress in our Yom Tov best, partake of full-fledged meals, and daven extended prayers, whereas Chanukah comes across as a regular day besides for a few additions in prayers and lighting the Menorah. We must ask: why isn't Chanukah like all the other Yamim Tovim?

The Midrash (Koheles Rabba 1:1) tells the story of the righteous Rabbi Chanina Ben Dosa who was penniless (all his reward was reserved for the World-to-Come). Rabbi Chanina saw that all his friends were bringing up Karbonos and painfully, he himself couldn't afford an animal to bring to get close to Hashem. He went out to a dilapidated city and found a large rock. He then smoothed, sanded, and painted it until he made it exceedingly beautiful. He wanted to bring this rock as a present to Hashem, but the rock was extremely heavy, so he tried getting workers to help him bring it to the Beis Hamikdash. The workers wanted to be paid, but he didn't have any

so they didn't do the job. Hashem then dispatched five Malochim (angels) in the form of humans and they appeared to Rabbi Chanina. They told him that they were on the way to the Beis Hamikdash anyway and that they'd gladly take the stone for a few shekels - on the condition that he helps them carry it, which he did. Instantly, they found themselves and the stone in Yerushalayim.

At this point, let's ask: why did the Malochim "need" Rabbi Chanina's help? Let's explain with an anecdote. There was once a poor family who had nothing to eat, so the father came to his Rebbe to ask him what to do and to ask for a blessing. The Rebbe said to "play the lottery," and he will intensely daven for him to win. Two weeks passed and the man again came despondent to the Rebbe. The Rebbe promised him that he will daven more and more and that he should acquire another ticket.

The process repeated itself a few weeks later, at which point the Rebbe was very perturbed, pacing back-and-forth, trying to figure out why his prayers weren't effective. Finally, the Rebbe had a dream and a Heavenly voice came to him and explained the issue that was going on: the guy had never purchased a ticket to begin with!

To bring it all together, there have been many Nissim that were performed for the Jewish people, which show us that Hashem can do whatever He wants whenever He wants. However, Hashem is not interested in running the World through the "open miracle mode." The angels taught R'Chanina that Hashem doesn't need him to get a stone to Yerushalayim; rather, He wants his effort in getting the stone there.

Relating this to our lives, Hashem doesn't want us to go to work or sleep for the results – such as making money and gaining energy. Hashem can finance and energize us without those means. Rather, these "efforts" are simply the motions He wants us to go through, all the while keeping in mind that He is the only One that truly makes it all happen.

Similarly, Chanukah is the hybrid of us celebrating a Yom Tov by lighting the Menorah, but in a weekday setting. Shabbos and other Yamim Tovim are times when we leave the mundane world behind and enter a realm of spirituality, days when we may not create or produce anything. Chanukah is the opposite. It's the holiday when we stay with what (until now) we considered to be mundane, only to realize that with the right Kavanos it's really holy. It's also precisely the work that Hashem wants of us, and that's the true kindling of the lights in the darkness. A Freilichen Chanukah!

Doughnuts on Chanukah



Many of us think that eating doughnuts is a minhag for children, and not at all for adults who want to watch their weight. So listen to what **ר' יוסף בן מימון זצ"ל** - the father of the **רמב"ם** writes:

"Doughnuts are a **סגולה** for **פרנסה**, you should not be **מזלזל** in the **מנהג** and **סגולה** of this sponge-food. This is a **מנהג** from the **קדמונים** and if the doughnut is soaked in a lot of oil, it will bring you a **ברכה** of **פרנסה** the entire year and whoever rushes to keep the **מנהג** of doughnuts, will see **ישועות** !

The Sefer Charedim writes, if someone would stay connected to Hashem and think about Him, even while he is experiencing trouble, אין לך עבודה גדולה מזה - there is no greater service than that." And in that merit, Hashem will save the person and bring him honour.



Take it with You

Chanukah is for eight days, but the holiness should remain with us for the rest of the year.

The Kozhiglover Gaon *zy'a* (*Eretz Zvi*, *Moadim*, p.270) proves this from the name of the holiday: **חנוכה** , which is similar to **חנוכת המזבח** or **חנוכת הבית** . When one buys or builds a new house, he makes a **חנוכת הבית** . People come to celebrate, *divrei Torah* is spoken, and the house is inaugurated on the foundation of gratitude to Hashem. But the purpose isn't the two-hour **חנוכת הבית** celebration. The goal is that afterwards the family should raise children, study Torah, keep Shabbos, and live as Yidden in that home.

Similarly, when a *mizbeiach* is dedicated, *korbanos* are brought **לחנוכת המזבח**, to sanctify the *mizbeiach*. But the purpose is all the *korbanos* that will be sacrificed after the dedication. So too, **חנוכה** isn't solely for eight days. It is a dedication of holiness that should remain with us long afterwards.

The Sfas Emes says that the holiness of the Chanukah *lecht* doesn't disappear when the *lecht* go out. As he writes, "The mitzvah of Chanukah leaves a light of holiness by the doorway throughout the year." - The Chanukah *lecht* aren't there right now, but the light of the mitzvah remains throughout the year, bringing holiness into your home.

We are permitted to work on Chanukah. **The Shem MiShmuel** explains that the Chachamim didn't want to institute that work is forbidden on Chanukah, because then, at the end of Chanukah, we

would have to make havdalah. We don't want to say havdalah after Chanukah passes because we want its holiness to remain with us throughout the year.

The Kedushas Levi says that each night of Chanukah is Mesugal for different things to Daven for.

Night 1 - Not to be lonely or depressed.

Night 2 - Shidduchim & Shalom Bayis.

Night 3 - Good children, happy children. Good health.
Chasam Sofer says when u cry in front of the candles you can be sure your tefilos are answered.

Night 4 - Four Imahos
To be a healthy woman, in my four walls, of true essence

Night 5 - Chamisha chumshei Torah
Daven your husband should be a talmid chacham children.
By the 5th night more of the menorah is lit up can daven for more light in your life, for a revelation.

Night 6 - Simcha
You can have everything and still be sad, so opportunity to daven for simcha.

Night 7 - Happy Shabbos
Zmiros, Divrei Torah by your seuda.
Shabbos is source of all bracha.

Night 8 - Mesugal for barren women
8 is above nature, powerful day to Daven.

Kedushas Levi says if you are planning to start something new, start it on Chanuka as it will be blessed.

Salvations on Zos Chanukah

זאת חנוכה is a special day. **בזאת אני בוטח** , on Zos Chanukah, I trust in Hashem's salvation. **The Beis Ahron *zt'l*** teaches that we should say *Tehillim* on Chanukah. We add that surely one should say *Tehillim* on **זאת חנוכה** because Hashem bestows His kindness on us on this day.

The Maharal teaches that the world was created with the number seven (seven days in the week, seven *chachmos*, etc.). Eight represents a world of beyond nature, a world where miracles occur.

Zos Chanukah is doubly eight (**שמיני שבשמינית**) as it is the eighth day of the eight days of Chanukah. Therefore, Zos Chanukah is certainly a day beyond nature, a day for miracles.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev Teives* 2:10) writes, "The earlier rabbanim often said that Chanukah is *mesugal* for **פקידת עקרות** , for barren women to bear children.

Someone came to the **Chazon Ish *zt'l*** complaining about his poverty. The man said, "I need a miracle, but miracles don't happen every day."

The Chazon Ish corrected him. He said the phrase should be read as follows, **לאו**, it isn't so! **בכל יומא מתרחיש ניסא**, miracles occur every day!" And this is surely true on Zos Chanukah, a day for miracles.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said that Zos Chanukah is also *mesugal* for *parnassah*. The other days of Chanukah are also *mesugal* for *parnassah*. It states (*Bereishis* 45:5),

כי למחיה שלחני אלקים לפניכם, "for the sake of *parnassah*, Hashem sent me before you." The *Arugas HaBosem* says **שלחני** is *roshei teivos* for, **לְהַדְלִיק נֵר חֲנוכה שְׁמונת יָמים**, "To light the candles of Chanukah eight days." **כי למחיה שלחני** tells us that with this mitzvah, we receive *parnassah*.

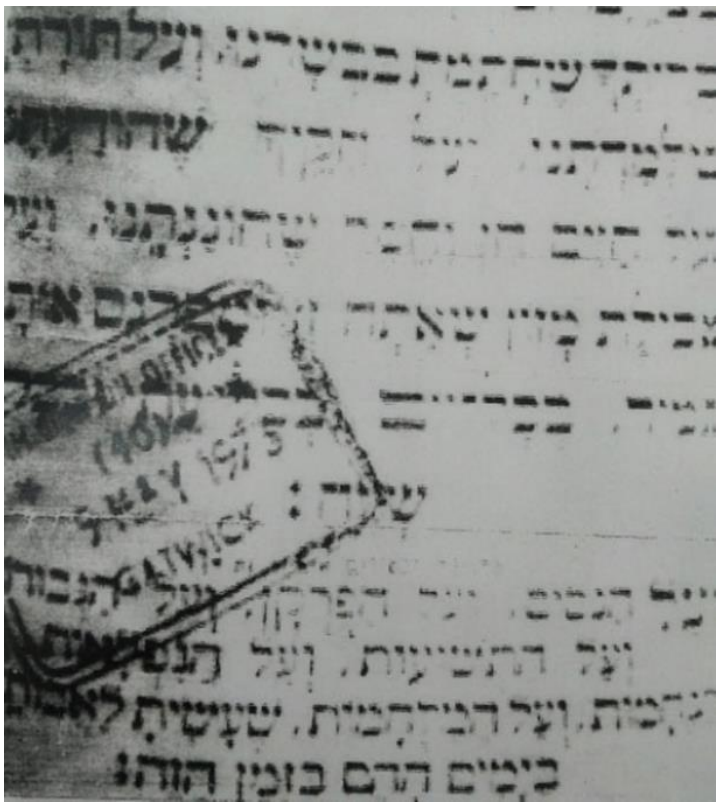
The Imrei Noam writes that **בנים פרנסה** is *gematriya*, **זאת חנוכה** hinting that on Zos Chanukah one can merit bearing children and

earning *parnassah*. - On Chanukah, and especially Zos Chanukah, it is a time that's *mesugal* for *refuah*.

A story took place in Paris, in the yeshiva of **Reb Chaim Yitzchak Chaykin *zt'l*** (a student of the **Chofetz Chaim *zt'l***). *A bachur* in the yeshiva became ill; a tumour was found in his neck. The doctors said he needed surgery immediately, however, they cautioned that the operation itself was dangerous.

At the time, **Reb Itzikel of Pshevorsk *zt'l*** lived in Paris, and they asked him for advice. He replied, "It is only three weeks after Chanukah, and I still have my wicks from Chanukah. Place the wicks on the tumour, and the bachur should stay home for three days. They did so, and the tumour disappeared, to the astonishment of the doctors.

The following amazing story occurred in **תרפ"ג**. A person came to **Rebbe Itzikel of Antwerp zt'l** and told him that he needs to travel immediately (he provided the reason the trip was an emergency) but he expressed his distress that he doesn't have a passport, and to order one would take too long.



With a smile on his face, and in a calm, happy demeaner, Rebbe Itzikel told him, "If you need a passport, take this," and handed him a bencher. - With emunas chachamim, the man handed the border police his "passport" which was a bencher, and the policeman accepted it.

We still have a picture of this "passport." The policeman stamped it on the page of **על הניסים**.

This miracle didn't happen on Chanukah, but the origin of the miracle came from Chanukah. On Chanukah we draw miracles that will happen throughout the year.

We add that throughout the year, one needs a tzaddik like Reb Itzikel to perform a miracle like this one, but on Chanukah, a time of miracles, everyone can perform miracles. As the **Ruzhiner** said, "What tzaddikim accomplish on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, simple people can accomplish on Zos Chanukah."

We can daven for *yeshuos* and *refuos* and they will come, *be'ezras Hashem*. As the *Shaul u'Meishiv* (**Divrei Shaul**) *zt'l* teaches, although we generally don't daven for miracles, but on Chanukah we may, because on Chanukah miracles are the norm and the standard way Hashem leads the world.

Short Story Of The Week - Rabbi Mordechai Levin

Rav Pinchus Lipschutz writes about a story that he heard from Rav Eliezer Sorotzkin, head of Lev L'Achim. During Operation Cast Lead, as Israel was at war with the Arabs of Gaza, Israeli schools in the line of fire were forced to close. Kollel people from Ashdod went into bomb shelters in Ashkelon and began learning Torah with secular teenagers. The boys showed up for pizza and entertainment, and then stayed for the Torah study.

Amazingly, after the war, the boys requested that the classes continue! Their friends also joined, and a year after they began, they finished a masechta.

They held a Siyum on Chanukah in the home of **Rav Aharon Leib Shteinman, Z"TL**, in Bnei Brak. Rav Shteinman was emotional as the teenagers proudly proclaimed "Hadran aloch -we will return to you beloved masechta." One of the teenagers asked for a Bracha that his parents' resistance to his Torah learning should weaken. He said

that if his parents knew where he was at that moment, they would be furious, as he had told them that he was going to play soccer.

Rav Shteinman answered, "You have just answered a question that I have always had. Why do we thank Hashem in Al Hanissim for the milchamos, the battles? Now I know that it is for battles such as yours, wars waged by teenagers determined to be loyal to Torah, that we thank Hashem."

Comment: The lessons of the courage of the Chashmonaim in the Chanukah story are as timely today as ever. We must wage the good fight and stand up for Torah values and ideals. Even if the odds are stacked against us, even if the naysayers far outnumber those who represent our way of life, we cannot lose hope. Hashem recognizes those who are doing His work, and He will ensure our ultimate victorious success.

Margarine Pot in Bergen-Belsen - Rabbi YY Jacobson

At the conclusion of every 16-hour workday in Bergen-Belsen, the block commander liked to have some fun with his Jews. The meal at the end of the day consisted of old dry bread, filthy watery soup, and a pot of something like margarine made from vegetable fat.

The margarine was scooped out of a large tub, and after the meal had been distributed and the tub was empty, the commander allowed the starving prisoners to jump into the empty tub and lick the remaining margarine from the walls of the tub.

The sight of starving Jews licking up bits of margarine provided nightly entertainment for the commander and his guards. One prisoner, however, refused to be a part of the commander's show. Though like all the rest he was a withered, starving shadow of a man aged far beyond his years, still, he would never allow himself to scavenge for a lick of margarine.

The other prisoners called him Elijah. In some unspoken way, the others drew strength from Elijah's refusal to join the frenzy. Then, one night, something happened that seemed to shatter whatever spirit remained in the prisoners.

Elijah cracked. All at once, he threw himself into the greasy vat and furiously rolled around like a crazed beast. And how the commander howled. It was a deep belly laugh of satanic satisfaction. The last of the Jews had been morally broken.

Later, after the guards left and the Jews were in their barracks, Elijah took off his shirt and began to tear it to shreds. The others looked on in silence. Had Elijah gone mad? He would study the shirt for a moment, carefully looking it over, as if searching for some exact location, and then tear that area into a strip. He looked up. His eyes were on fire.

"Do you know what tonight is? Tonight is the first night of Chanukah."

Elijah studied the shirt again, finding another choice spot to tear. A spot he had purposely saturated with grease from his rolling in the margarine tub. That night Elijah led the others in the lighting of the Chanukah flames. The wicks came from the strips of his shirt, and the bits of margarine Elijah had furiously scavenged was the oil.

Elijah's light sustained by his faith, continues to shine to this very day.

A Wise Tzaddik would say:

"In Haneiros Halalu, we say that we have no permission to use the lights of the Menorah, only to look at them (**אלא לראותם בלבד**). It is a segulah to look at the lights for healing damaged eyes and protecting one's eyes for the future."

Project Mesorah – Rabbi Paysach Krohn

Why is the eighth day of Chanuka called Zos Chanukah? The simple reason is because on the eighth day of Chanukah we read the words **זאת חוקת המזבח.**

We know that in the Torah, there were times when oil actually burnt for a duration of 7 days. Of course, we have a precedent by Sarah and Rivka, the Torah tells us that when they lit candles, they burnt all week. So if the nes of chanukah would have been for only 7 days, it wouldn't have been that much of a chidush. But now in the mizbeach, where the flames burnt for 8 days, so -zos- That is the miracle of chanukah. That it never happened before.

We know that there are two ways to give somebody a gift. You can give it with a big smile and a warm face, or you can give it reluctantly. We want that there should be the light of countenance in our smile when Hashem gives us something. And when you give to somebody else, it should be with a hadras panim- with shining light of your face.



In שִׂים שָׁלוֹם that we say everyday there are 8 different brachos - שָׁלוֹם טוֹבָה בְּרָכָה חַיִּים חֵן חֶסֶד וְרַחֲמִים– that's 7, you know what the eighth is? בְּאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ. Isn't that great? It is the eighth day of chanukah. A day of tefilla and coming close to Hashem. Many people say that that is a day that is mesugal to become close to Hashem.

So on the eighth day of chanukah, Hashem gives us gifts with בְּאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ– a shining countenance.

And that is the bracha that I give you, with a shining face with love and concern, for every single one of you.

And so to the men, I say יְשִׂימְךָ אֱלֹקִים כְּאֶפְרַיִם וְכִמְנַשֶּׁה and to the women and girls I say ישימך אלקים כשרה, רבקה, רחל ולאהyou should all have a freilichin and lichtige Shabbos and chanukah. And make sure that you daven on the eighth day, because that is when you get בְּאוֹר פָּנֶיךָ– the light and shine of Hashem's countenance.

Extending your Arm to Reach the Impossible – Rabbi YY Jacobson



We all know the story. The Chashmonaim liberated Yerushalayim and the Beis Hamikdash from the Syrian-Greeks. When they came into the Beis Hamikdash they found only one jug of oil, and there was only enough oil to burn for one night. They kindled the menorah, and it burned for eight nights. Hence we celebrate eight nights and days of Chanukah with kindling the menorah each evening.

Most of us understand the significance of that miracle to be attributed to Heaven. There was enough oil to burn for one night, and it lasted for eight nights. Amazing. Incredible.

But there is also a second miracle. And in a way, a deeper miracle. And this is the human miracle. You see, the Chashmonaim could have easily said to themselves, "We only have enough oil to last for one night. What's the point? "We'll kindle the menorah, the oil will be depleted, and then for the next seven days, we won't light the menorah."

"Why don't we wait until we get sufficient oil, and then we'll begin lighting the menorah with much gusto and joy in an uninterrupted fashion?"

The miracle was that they did not think this way. You have oil, light the menorah. Where did they acquire this attitude? Perhaps from the Genesis of all Jewish history.

Moshe Rabeinu was born in Egypt. The Egyptians were then casting every Jewish male new-born into the Nile Delta. Moshe's mother takes little baby Moshe, he is all but three months old. She puts him in a basket, and places him in the Nile River hoping for the best.



Paraoh's daughter, Batya, comes to bathe in the most exquisite beautiful Nile. And she sees this little basket. The Pasuk says: **וַתִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֲמָתָהּ וַתִּקָּחֶהָ** [Shemos 2:5] - She stretches out her arm and she fetches the basket. But the Talmud in Sotah and the medrash say something fascinating. And that is that her arm was not long enough to reach the basket. She stretched

out her arm -**שנשתרבבה אמתה אמות הרבה** - and her arm grew many cubits (**אַמּוֹת**). Maybe 30, 40, 50, 60, 100 feet, until it reached the basket, and she retrieved the basket. She opened it up and rescued little Moshe from death and raised him as her own child in the palace of Pharaoh.

And I want to ask you a question. What is the point of this medrash? The Torah doesn't indicate such a miracle. The Torah says, 'She stretched out her arm, and she took the basket.' Why the need to say that her arm stretched out and extended beyond nature? And besides, if you went to the beach, to the river and you saw a basket and you stretched out your hand and suddenly your hand started to extend 50 feet, what would you do? I know what I would do. I would run for my life and call 911! Was Batya not scared?



The great master, Reb Simcha Bunim of Peshischa, once gave a marvelous interpretation. He said that the sages weren't trying to create a story that didn't happen G-d forbid. They were actually conveying the true essence of the story.

Batya was Pharaoh's daughter! Imagine the daughter of Stalin or the daughter of Hitler yms rescuing a Jewish child in the middle of the Second World War and raising him in the Bavarian home of Hitler.

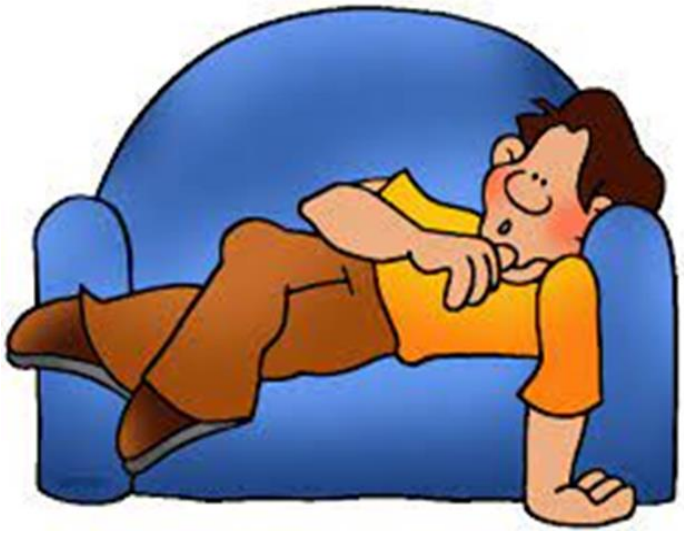
It doesn't make sense. There are certain things that you can do that make sense. They are within human reach. But there are certain things that you just can't do. That is what Batya should have been thinking. But she didn't.

There is a child here, and he's going to die. And I need to do whatever I can to save him. So she stretches out her arm. And you

know what happens. Hashem allows that arm to extend beyond her normal reach.

There is an invisible arm that connects to your limited arm. And the impossible happened. Moshe was saved. He liberated his people from slavery. He moulded them into a nation. And here we are 3330 years later, because of the courage, the resilience, the faith and the fortitude of that heroine, the Egyptian princess, the daughter of Pharaoh, who did not fail to extend her hand, by saying, "It will never happen anyway."

Isn't this true about so many of our lives? I look at goals and tasks. They are formidable, they are amazing. But I say, " What's the point of extending my arm? What is the point of beginning a journey that I will never complete?"



What is the point of putting in oil into a candelabra so that there is a flame of light that only burns for one night? It's going to be depleted. It is going to be extinguished. It's going to fail.

Let me just sit on my couch and do nothing. Maybe one day, the great hero will come and light up the world.

Judaism is an exercise in an opposite way of thinking. You have a little oil? You light your menorah, and you cast your light. And Hashem's invisible arm will attach itself to your visible arm, and the world will be transformed.

"Heaven is wonderful, but getting there is most of the fun." ~~ The Chofetz Chaim

Darkness Is an Invitation, not a Destination – Rabbi YY Jacobson



There is something strange about the Chanukah tradition. We light the menorah every single night to commemorate the kindling of the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash.

But there, they used to kindle the menorah during the daytime in the afternoon before sunset. We kindle the Chanukah menorah after sunset. Why this anomaly?

There is a very profound message here. You see, there are times in your life that can be compared to daytime. The sun is shining brightly. Things are looking good, clear and wonderful. But then the sun sometimes sets over the horizon of our lives. There is uncertainty, there is confusion. There is bleakness, there is pessimism. There is darkness.

And here comes the great lesson of the Chanukah story, and tradition.

All darkness is an invitation for you to enter into that space, and kindle there, a flame of love, light and hope – after sunset.

Never fear darkness. Not your own and not others. Never fear dark thoughts, emotions, trauma. You see, you are not the darkness. You were sent into the darkness to transform it to the best of your ability. You are never a victim of the darkness around you. You are an ambassador. Darkness is an invitation, not a destination.

Some of us, when we face this adversity, we surrender, we despair. Some of us fight or flee.

Do neither. You are divine. You are completely beyond it. Hence, you can go into it. A challenge only becomes an obstacle when you bow to it.



One day, the president of Israel called Zalman Shazar, came to visit the Lubavitcher Rebbe. It was a freezing cold New York winter day. He tells the Rebbe in an eloquent Russian- Lithuanian Yiddish , " It is freezing cold, and the cold penetrates and cuts through all of your bones. It is intolerable."

Without skipping a heartbeat, the Rebbe smiled and tells the president, "That is exactly why Hashem sent down the neshama of a Yid – to bring warmth to a cold world."

Next time you feel cold, or get cold, don't deny it or run from it. Remember, that's why you're here. Your soul is invincible. It can melt the ice, and create a glowing warmth in your life, in the darkness and the world around you.

Thought of the Week

"Harchev picha" - Widen your mouth with joy – smile, even when it seems impossible. Focus on the blessings you already have, and watch Hashem fill your life with more. That's the power of gratitude, the power of a smile, the power of seeing the good in every moment!

To Live an Oily Life – Rabbi YY Jacobson



Oil, oil and more oil. Many of us light the menorah with oil. The wicks are dipped in oil. And then of course are the latkes, fried in oil. And then there are doughnuts, fried in oil.



This is the holiday of shemen-oil. Of course, because the miracle of Chanukah revolves around the oil. There was only enough oil for one day, but the oil burnt for eight days.

There is also a profound message here on how to live. You see, there are four qualities and characteristics of oil.

1. Olive oil is produced by crushing and beating the ripe olives. The olives must be severely humbled and pressed in order to emit its oil.
2. Olive oil as well as many other oils extracted from minerals plants and animals, can penetrate solid substances very deeply. We all know how difficult it is to remove the oily grease that makes its way into our fingers or clothes. Various oils have been used throughout history as remedies. Because oil penetrates the body far deeper than its external tissue.

3. Oil does not mix with other liquids. When you attempt to mix oil with water, the oil will remain distinct, it will not dissolve.

4. It will rise, and float to the top.



These four characteristics of oil contain four cardinal lessons and principles in life.

1. Life humbles you. Sometimes life crushes you. Never despair. The purpose of humbleness is to turn you into oil, into a source of light, and a source of warmth.
2. Fear not to connect to others deeply. Let people into your life. And allow yourself to connect to others in a deep way.
3. In your journey of life, don't allow yourself to dissolve and lose your identity. You have a unique contribution and light to give to the world. You have a duty to Hashem, the world and humanity to share this light. You are born an original – don't die as a copy.
4. You can always rise to the top. You are an ambassador of the Divine. And just as nobody can destroy the Divine, nobody can destroy your soul. Cherish yourself. Remember your exaltedness as an emissary of G-d in this world.

Do You Love Him? – Rabbi YY Jacobson



There is an old Chasidic saying, "There are two ways to deal with darkness – You can curse it, or you can ignite light in the darkness."

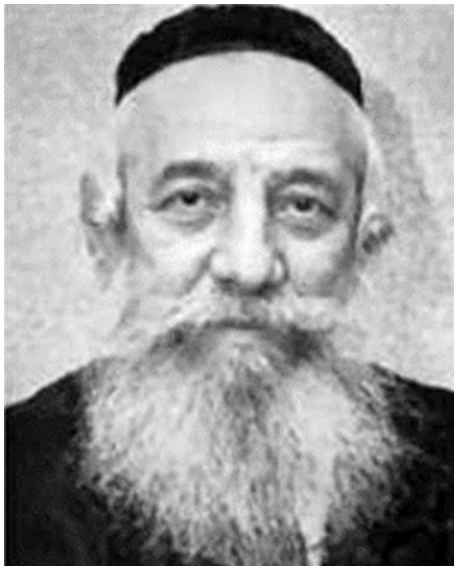
Darkness is never expelled by cursing it or trying to chase it away with sticks or stones. It is light that dispels darkness.

There was a large shul in Haifa, Israel that attracted many people to come and daven there on Shabbos and Yomim Tovim. There was

an Israeli Jew nearby who kept his clothing store open on Shabbos. It attracted a lot of people. It was extremely disrespectful and distasteful for the spirit of our holy day.



The Rabbi of the shul went to this Jew, and he pleaded with him to close the store on Shabbos, at least during the hours of davening. But this Jew absolutely refused. "I'm not religious, I'm a secular Jew. I don't keep Shabbos, and my store is going to remain open on Shabbos."



In desperation, the Rabbi went to a chassidic master living in Haifa called the **Seret Vishnitzer Rebbe – Rabbi Boruch Hagar**. [1895-1963]. He says, " Rebbe, what am I supposed to do with this situation. It is so uncomfortable for our shul. It is so uncomfortable for all the Yidden in the area. It is a public desecration of Shabbos?"

The Rebbe looks at him, and says, " I want to ask you a question – Do you love this Jew who keeps his store open on Shabbos?"

He says, " Love him? How can I love him when he spits in the face of our community every single Shabbos. How can I love him when he shows such disdain for our religion, faith and heritage? – No, I don't love him."

The Seret Vishnitzer Rebbe looks at him, and says, " Well Rabbi, maybe it is the other way round. How do you know that's it because he violates the Shabbos that you don't love him? Maybe it is the exact opposite. Maybe it is because he feels that you don't love him that he violates the Shabbos? Maybe his disrespect for Shabbos is a reciprocal response to your inner animosity towards him?"

It was not what the Rabbi expected to hear. And he says to the Rebbe, "So, what should I do?"

"Start loving him!" So the Rabbi says, "But I don't."

"So start." "How do I start?"

"Well sometimes, you have to begin with the words, but they have to be genuine. So, next Shabbos on your way to shul, go into his store and tell this Jew… that you love him"

The Rabbi was very hesitant, but to his credit he did it. The next Shabbos, he walks into the store, and the owner sees him and shouts to the Rabbi," **תעוף מכאן** – Get out of here, I am not closing the store for Shabbos. Forget about it."

The Rabbi lokks at him, and says, "No, no, I came here for one reason only – to tell you , **שאני אוהב אותך** – **I love you!**"

He looked at the Rabbi, and said, "Are you insane, why do you love me?" He said, "I love you because you are my brother. You are a Jew, I am a Jew. We are both children of Hashem. I love you, because that I know that you have a holy and great gigantic soul, and I want to give you a hug."

The shopkeeper melted, and the two of them embraced. The Rabbi then went to shul. The next Shabbos, the Rabbi did the same thing.



And every Shabbos morning he would go into the store, and give the Jew a hug, and tell him, "I love you."

Six months later the store was closed on Shabbos!

You see, the Rabbi could have easily concluded that loathing him was surely justified. He might have never entertained the idea that his hate was not the result – but the cause of the problem.

I wish every one of us would realise the incredible things that we could accomplish through truly loving other people.

Caring Words Can Make All the Difference.



One day, as a small child, Thomas Edison came home from school and gave a paper to his mother. He said to her "Mom, my teacher gave this paper to me and told me only you are to read it. What does it say?"

Her eyes welled with tears as she read the letter out loud to her child … ***"Your son is a genius. This school is too small for him and doesn't have good enough teachers to train him. Please teach him yourself."***

Many years after Edison's mother had died, he became one of the greatest inventors of the century. One day he was going through a closet, and he found the folded letter that his old teacher wrote his mother that day. He opened it … The message written on the letter was ***"Your son is mentally deficient. We cannot let him attend our school anymore. He is expelled."***

Edison became emotional reading it and then wrote in his diary: ***"Thomas A. Edison was a mentally deficient child whose mother turned him into the genius of the Century."***

A positive word of encouragement can help change anyone's destiny.

The Torah shows us the importance of showing concern for others.

Yehoshua was going to take-over the reins of leadership from Moshe. Numerous times, Yehoshua was encouraged to be "strong and courageous".

The **Chidushei HaRim**. questions why it was necessary to encourage Yehoshua so many times with the words "Be strong and resolute". Yehoshua had already proven that he was a capable leader.

The **Chidushei HaRim** says that this teaches us an important lesson. **No matter how capable a person may be, he can always benefit from words of reassurance and encouragement.** Even one as great as Yehoshua could benefit from it.

If even someone as great as Yehoshua could benefit from words of encouragement, how much more so we can also benefit from it. Let's take this lesson to heart and give words of encouragement to our friends, our acquaintances, our students, our families, and especially to our spouses. Our words will not cost us anything. The benefits will be endless, for others as well as for us.

One Liner, Nothing Finer – Rabbi Paysach Krohn

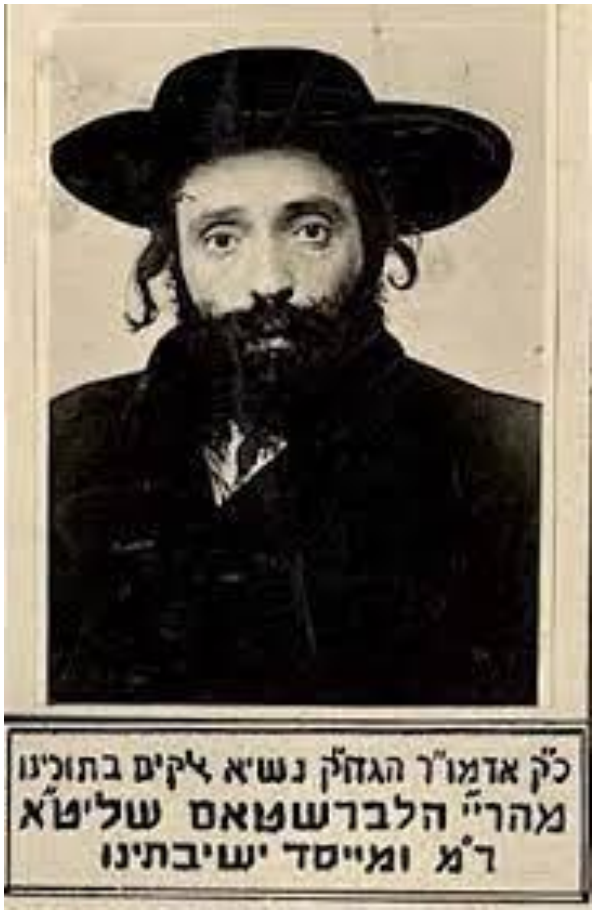
On my birthday (Tu Bishvat) somebody told me, ***"The day you were born is the day that Hashem decided that the world can no longer exist without you!"***

I also quote from what **Reb Chaim of Volozhin** used to say- **האדם לא לעצמו נברא "*Man was not created for himself*, אלא להועיל לאחרים ככל אשר ימצא בכוחו לעשות - *but to benefit others as much as he finds it in his power to do.*"**

These statements have inspired me greatly, and I say this to every man woman and child, "***Just remember this: Each and every person has a purpose in this world. Hashem needs us. He wants us, and He wants us to do good for others***.

Just look at yourself and realise that **you** are special. Hashem created **you** because He needs **you**. There will never be anyone like **you**, and there never has been anyone like **you**. We must all feel special about ourselves for that reason."

The Best Ones – Rabbi Paysach Krohn



After WW II, the **Klausenberger Rebbe** was in the D. P. camps trying to be mechazek Yidden. There was a young 15-year-old boy, who because of everything that he had gone through, threw away his yarmulke, threw away his tzitzis and everything else to do with Yiddishkeit.

The people in the Displaced Persons camp recognised him and knew who he was. They knew what kind of frum family that he came from. They tried to talk to him, but he wouldn't listen. He was no longer interested in Yiddishkeit.

So, they went over to the Klausenberger Rebbe and asked him to see what he could do. The Rebbe asked for the boy to be brought to him. The boy understood what the Rebbe wanted from him but was adamant that he would not be swayed from his new ideals. He decided that he would not get into a conversation with the Rebbe.

The Rebbe said to him. "Your name is Leibish, right?" The boy nodded in confirmation.

"I knew your father." - The boy nodded.

"I remember that when you were a little boy, you used to be a *masmid*." - The boy nodded without saying anything.

The Rebbe put his arms around him, hugged him and said, "You're angry right? The boy looked up at the Rebbe and nodded.

"You're angry because they took the best ones – right?" What should I say? I lost my wife and eleven children, they took the best ones, and they left us – me and you!"

The Rebbe started crying together with the boy. They continued to cry for over 20 minutes all the time repeating the words- 'They took the best ones, and they left us!'

After half an hour, the Rebbe kissed the boy, and he sent him on his way.

That night, for the first time in ages, the boy said kriyas shema. A few days later, he was wearing tzitzis, and eventually, he put on his tefillin.

This boy lives in Baltimore today. He is a 75-year-old man. He told me this story. He said everybody else spoke to his head – but the Rebbe touched my heart, that's why I came back!

The Amazing Return of The Yabloner Rebbe – Rabbi Pini Dunner

Yechezkel Taub was born on Oct. 7, 1895, in Nowe Miasto (Neishtot in Yiddish), a small town in Poland just east of Płońsk, north of Warsaw. His father, Rabbi Yaakov Taub, was "Rebbe" of Jabłonna (Yablona), a small rural town close to Warsaw that was home to a vibrant Orthodox Jewish community.



The Yabloner Rebbe, Rabbi Yaakov Taub (1860-1920), father of Rabbi Yechezkel Taub of Jabłonna

Revered across Poland as a mystical Hasidic leader, Rabbi Yaakov was a great-grandson of the original Yechezkel Taub—after whom he named his newborn son—the illustrious Rebbe of Kuzmir (Kazimierz Dolny), progenitor of several Hasidic dynasties, most famously the Modzitzer sect, renowned for their love of music and for their numerous beautiful musical compositions sung at Sabbath and festival gatherings.



In the summer of 1920, at the age of 60, Rabbi Yaakov passed away, and due to family bereavements, the Rebbe's title and responsibilities and burden of expectation suddenly fell upon Yechezkel.

Yechezkel, not quite 25 years old and barely prepared for the position, suddenly found himself at the head of one of Poland's prestigious Hasidic sects.

With the help of his wife, Pearl, a Kozhnitz descendent whom he had married in 1915, Yechezkel threw himself into the task of leading and inspiring his followers, intent on living up to the legacy of his father and the Kuzmir Hasidic heritage.

Genuinely concerned for the welfare of his followers, he was very warm and personable, in addition to being learned and highly intelligent. He became involved in every aspect of his followers' lives, making sure that the rich helped the poor, and that the less well-off devoted time to community affairs so that they wouldn't feel like takers.

The Hasidim adored him and flocked to his weekly Friday night *tisch* gatherings, where he sang with them and regaled them with Torah discourses. The new Yabloner Rebbe was considered a rising star among the Hasidic Rebbes of Poland, and a future leader of Polish Jewry.

Yet everything changed in 1924, with the visit to Jabłonna by a distant relative of the young Rebbe, the charismatic Rabbi Yeshaya Shapira, a crown prince of the Polish Hasidic world.

Rabbi Yeshaya became consumed by the idea of Jews resettling the Land of Israel. His ultimate dream was the relocation of an entire Hasidic sect from Poland to a new home in Palestine, together with

their Rebbe, so that the stigma attached to Zionist immigration would be offset by the success of a mature Hasidic community who had immigrated en masse, without any depletion of their Torah observance or Hasidic identity. With this in mind he set out on a mission back to Poland in 1924 and came upon the Yabloner Rebbe and his community.

The impact of Rabbi Yeshaya's visit to Jabłonna was electric. He regaled his hosts with vivid descriptions of the Holy Land, and told them about the opportunities available to those who bought land and created agricultural settlements.

The Ottoman Turks were gone, and the British were now in control. In 1917, Great Britain's foreign secretary, Arthur J. Balfour, had dispatched a letter to Lord Rothschild in London, a letter that would later become known as the Balfour Declaration, which formally declared that the British government viewed "with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people," and would "use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this objective."

Rabbi Yeshaya's passionate presentation and infectious enthusiasm had a profound effect on the Yabloner Rebbe, and on many of his Hasidim. The Rebbe immediately called together a gathering of all his followers, during which he forcefully

advocated for the Yabloner sect to immediately begin preparing to move to Palestine. Initially, he suggested, the less well-off members of the sect would go together with him and lay the necessary groundwork. The purchase of the land and all the initial expenses would be funded by the wealthier members of the community, who would ultimately join the new settlement once everything was set up.

But the Yabloner Rebbe encountered unexpected disapproval at a meeting with the esteemed leader of the Gur Hasidic sect, Rabbi Avraham Mordechai Alter. Known as the Gerrer Rebbe,

After probing the Yabloner on every aspect of the proposed project, the Gerrer Rebbe dismissed it as a terrible idea.

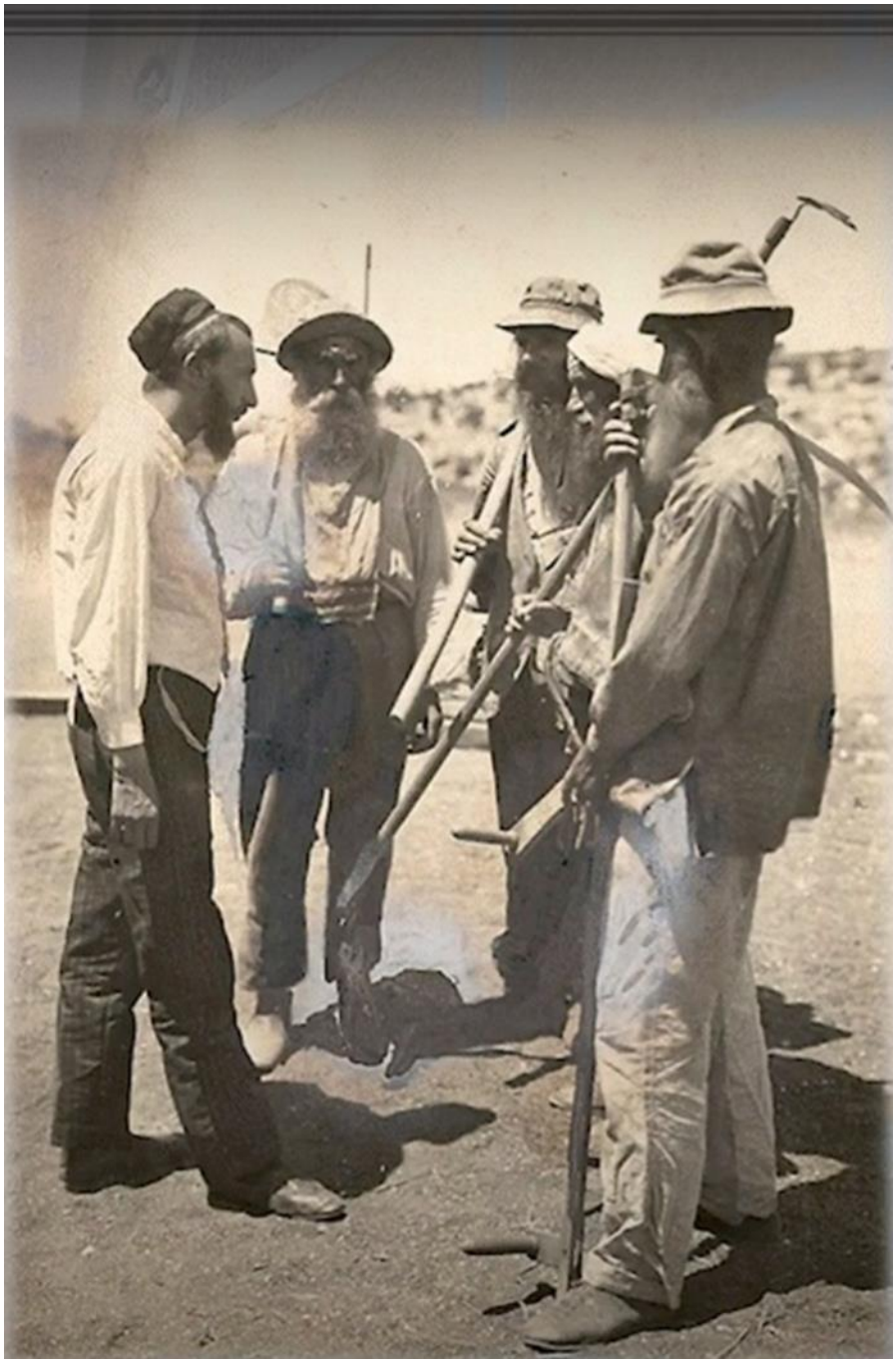
"Don't take any money or help from the secular Zionists," he warned ominously, "they do not have your interests at heart and any financial dependence on them will be an utter disaster."

Surprised by the harsh advice, the Yabloner Rebbe was still determined to carry out his plans. Within months he was on a boat to Haifa with a couple of hundred Yabloner Hasidim, armed with cash from hundreds more who wanted to own some holy land and to participate in this unique endeavour.

Travelling with him on the boat was Rabbi Yisrael Eliezer Hopstein, who was en route to Palestine with a group of Kozhnitz followers. The two rabbis decided to join forces and build a Hasidic settlement together. They purchased land and eventually called it Kfar Chasiddim (Village of Hasidim). (Later on, the Kozhnitzers left)



At centre, the Yabloner Rebbe with Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Palestine, 1925. Tothe right of Rabbi Kook is the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of British Mandate Palestine, RabbiYaakov Meir.



High-profile visitors flocked to the new settlement, to see the remarkable phenomenon of Hasidic Zionist farmers for themselves. Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Kook, Ashkenazi chief rabbi of Palestine, visited the settlement together with his Sephardic counterpart, Rabbi Yaakov Meir, and a large delegation of Jerusalem rabbis. The future president of Israel, Chaim Weizmann, even visited with Lord Balfour, whose 1917 declaration had been the catalyst which led to the British control of Palestine along with the new wave of immigrants after WWI.

Conscious of the animosity the project was generating, in 1926 JNF published a gushing pamphlet—"*Hasidim Alu El Ha'aretz*" (Hasidim Have Gone up to the Land).

The Yabloner Rebbe featured prominently in the pamphlet, and was described as the engine of the enterprise, working from the early morning until late at night, focused on the minutest details, and available for every single one of his devoted followers, young and old, as they struggled to turn the dream into a reality.

Tragically, however, whatever could have gone wrong went wrong. The former Arab tenant farmers refused to leave their land and villages, despite the compensation they had received. There was heavy rain and the Kishon River overflowed, flooding the valley and turning it into an unmanageable swamp. The Hasidim made a vain attempt to drain the swamp, but to no avail. Soon the water-sodden land was infested with mosquitoes, malaria broke out among the settlers, and some of them succumbed to the sickness and died.

The bridge they had built over the Kishon River was wrecked by Bedouins who were camping locally. The heavy rain continued, and the swamp grew. Meanwhile, the Arabs killed one of the cows and threw it into the well, contaminating the fresh water supply. Venomous snakes hidden among the ubiquitous thorns bit farm workers, killing more than one. Bedouin marauders murdered some of the newcomers. Money was scarce, and the dairy farm seemed unable to make ends meet.

Despite the initial enthusiastic moral and financial support from Yabloner Hasidim in Poland that continued after they arrived, funding from abroad slowly dwindled and then dried up completely, and soon the Hasidim were literally starving.

In 1928, the Rebbe went to the United States, where he visited various communities to raise money for the settlement. Although he was warmly welcomed wherever he went, he had limited success finding philanthropic support and returned empty handed. In desperation, the Yabloner Rebbe turned to the Zionist organizations for help, but soon discovered that they were going through their own challenges. Palestine was experiencing a serious recession, and financial support from Zionist philanthropists in Europe and the United States had decreased. Nevertheless, the Rebbe was unrelenting and would not let the mounting challenges destroy his dream, nor would he let the difficulties devastate the lives of all those who had joined him to realize it.

We don't have any money, and we are drowning in difficulties," the Rebbe told Zionist officials when they met, "but we have come this far, and we are not giving up now."

But the Yabloner Rebbe had a plan up his sleeve. He would arrange for a skilled group of Hapoel HaMizrachi religious Zionist farmworkers to be brought in, he told them, to train and work alongside the Polish Hasidim. Each of the new farmworkers would be given their own plot of land to build a home, free of charge, in addition to some land that they could farm for themselves. The mountaintop village would move down into the valley, which would give farmers easier access to the farms, and the Rebbe would trade excess land with JNF and the Jewish Agency for food and other supplies.

"We may not have any money to give you," he told the Zionist officials, "but we have plenty of land—far more than we need to make our community successful. We can give JNF land in exchange for whatever is needed to turn our project into a success."

Suddenly the Yabloner Rebbe became emotional, as he explained what was at stake. "Please don't abandon us to our fate," he pleaded, "my Hasidim are dying, and I need to save them!"

Ultimately the two sides reached an agreement. The Zionist administrators insisted that the elderly and infirm would have to return to Poland until everything was sorted out, as they were a drain on resources. Secondly, the dairy farm would need to close and make way for orchards and crops. Thirdly, the land would have to be signed over to JNF ownership, pending future developments. The Yabloner Rebbe reluctantly agreed to all of these conditions.

Sadly, although matters had improved for residents of Kfar Hasidim, the Yabloner Rebbe soon found himself in the midst of a financial scandal. With the situation for Jews in Poland rapidly deteriorating, especially after 1935, Hasidim from Jabłonna began

turning up in Palestine, expecting to take possession of the plots of land they had paid for over a decade earlier.

Since the Yabloner Rebbe was unable to give them any land nor refund their money, they accused him of being a thief. He begged them to understand that their land had been used to help the settlement survive, but in their eyes the rebbe was a crook who had fraudulently taken their money and not given them what he promised in return.

Long-time residents of Kfar Hasidim also demanded money from the rebbe so that they could go back to their families in Poland. But he had no money for them either. Kfar Hasidim was just beginning to pay for itself; there was no money to spare. With outstanding debts to JNF and the Jewish Agency and the threat that they would repossess land and homes in Kfar Hasidim, while at the same time battling accusations of theft from his own followers, the Yabloner Rebbe travelled to the United States in 1938 to see if he could interest some wealthy Zionist Jews to offer him financial support. He would not return to Kfar Hasidim for over 40 years!

Tragically, his plans never had the chance to materialize. Two months later the German army marched into Poland, and the Yabloner Rebbe now found himself stuck in the United States as a war refugee. He immediately abandoned his fundraising campaign and attempted to volunteer for the war effort. At first he attempted to join the army and the navy, but they were not particularly interested in the idea of conscripting a Polish Hasidic Jew in his mid-40s. Undaunted by this rejection, the the Yabloner Rebbe moved out west, where he found work in Californian shipyards.

In June 1942, the BBC broadcast a report claiming that over 700,000 Polish Jews had been deliberately and systematically exterminated by the Nazis. By November American newspapers had confirmed the slaughter but revealed that the BBC had underestimated the true magnitude of the genocide. **Millions** of European Jews had been murdered by the Nazis, they reported, and

the grisly rumours that had been emerging from the European continent for over a year were all true, and the full horror of the Holocaust was confirmed.

For Polish-born Jews the board report was a devastating bombshell. It substantiated once and for all what they had most feared, namely that all the Jews of Poland were dead—gassed, shot, burned—murdered like animals in death camps and killing fields. Before the war Poland had been home to the most vibrant and most populous Jewish community in the world. Now that community was gone, wiped out.

For the Yabloner Rebbe, erstwhile Rabbi of Jabłonna near Warsaw, the emerging news of the Holocaust came as a double blow. Besides the fact that the entire Jabłonna community had been obliterated along with the rest of Polish Jewry, there were those—including the extended families of many of the Kfar Hasidim pioneers—whom he had sent back from Palestine to Poland, because they served no useful purpose in the farming settlement and were a pointless drain on its resources. This had been a non-negotiable condition for the continued involvement of JNF and the Jewish Agency with the Hasidic settlement, and however reluctant the Rebbe may have been to go along with it, he had allowed it to happen.

Not only that, but his wife Esther had also become disillusioned early on and had returned to Poland. In his own mind the Rebbe began to believe that the deaths of those who had gone back to Poland were his fault.

The pain was overwhelming. And moreover, where was G-d in all this? Did He even exist? If He did, was it not crystal clear that He had utterly abandoned the Yabloner Rebbe? So many people's lives had been lost or devastated—and he, Yechezkel Taub, had been the agent of their destruction. His entire Hasidic sect had been wiped out, and those who remained alive in Kfar Hasidim despised him for his role in wrecking their lives.

In late 1944, as the full weight of his distressing predicament became clear, and his anger at G-d grew and kept on growing, the Yabloner Rebbe decided on a drastic course of action. Without Hasidim, he decided to himself, he was no longer a rebbe—a rebbe must have Hasidim, and his Hasidim were gone.

Meanwhile, his Kfar Hasidim project in Palestine was an utter failure—whoever remained there certainly didn't need him, and it was more than likely that they didn't want him either. The best thing for him to do, he concluded, would be to disappear into oblivion in the United States of America, like millions of other faceless immigrants who had done the same.



George Nagel in Los Angeles, 1950s

And just like that, one day, Rabbi Yechezkel Taub—the revered Yabloner Rebbe, scion of the Kuzmir Hasidic dynasty, at one time the leader of thousands of devoted followers, and trailblazing Orthodox Zionist settler—removed his yarmulke, cut off his sidelocks, shaved off his beard, quietly changed his name, and filed immigration papers to become a naturalized citizen of the United States.

He avoided all contact with the Jewish community of Los Angeles and severed all contact with Kfar Hasidim. He stopped keeping kosher, and also stopped observing Shabbat and festivals, including Yom Kippur! He abandoned the study of Torah or any religious texts, and almost never visited a synagogue.

For all intents and purposes, the Yabloner Rebbe was no more, replaced by an urbane Polish immigrant called George Nagel with slicked-back hair and a sad, faraway look in his eyes.

With WWII over, the shipyard no longer needed George Nagel, but his many years working in construction and engineering would not go to waste. Southern California was in the midst of a massive construction boom. The need for new housing was urgent, and meeting that need could be extremely profitable.

George Nagel immediately seized his opportunity. He borrowed money to buy plots of land, on which he constructed the type of modest homes that were becoming ubiquitous across the valley. His knowledge of construction had its origins in the difficult, hands-on work he had supervised during the early years at Kfar Hasidim, and this experience ensured that his development projects were all successful, quickly making him a wealthy man with an ever-expanding empire of development projects.

The California economy took a nosedive in the late 1960s, and unemployment began to climb. The housing boom was slowing down.

A couple of years earlier, George had decided to invest in an apartment complex development project, which was quite an upgrade from his previous focus on subdividing small lots to build cheap single-family homes. As the economy deteriorated, George discovered he was in over his head. Substandard contractors did not meet deadlines, and when the apartments were finally ready, they looked terrible and didn't sell.

Eventually the banks foreclosed and took possession of the apartments. George was almost completely wiped out financially.

Suddenly, without any warning, George was taken ill and rushed to hospital. It took weeks for him to be properly diagnosed and treated. In his 70s, and acutely aware that both his father and paternal grandfather had died young, he did not believe he would ever make it out of the hospital alive.

As he lay sick in hospital, George was regularly visited by his great-nephew, Ehud Yonay. Ehud was the grandson of his older sister, Michal Rachel, whose daughter Erella had married Ehud's father,

Mordechai, the rebellious son of an ultra-Orthodox Russian Jewish pioneer who had joined the Kfar Hasidim settlement soon after it was founded. The very secular Mordechai was considered scandalous by the devout Hasidim of Kfar Hasidim. His son Ehud, who was also not observant, had moved to California after his army service. It was in California that Ehud met his great-uncle for the first time. They spent a lot of time together, becoming very close. As soon as Ehud heard that George was in hospital, he rushed over to see him. As the weeks went by, Ehud dropped in regularly to spend time with George in an effort to cheer him up.

"Why don't you come back to Israel?" he asked George. "What are you still doing here in America by yourself, with no family?"

"I can't go back," George replied. "I messed up their lives, and they all think I stole their money. There's no way I could ever go back. Forget it. That part of my life is done."

"How about you just come back for a visit?" Ehud suggested.

George looked at his nephew. "I'll think about it," he said.

But Ehud wouldn't relent. The topic kept coming up. No one cared about the past, Ehud maintained—life had moved on. But George wasn't convinced. After decades of self-imposed exile, he just could not see himself returning to Kfar Hasidim, the source of so much painful anguish and trauma.

"So what are you going to do if you get better and get out of the hospital?" asked Ehud.

"I'm not getting better so fast," said George, "and maybe I'll never get out—except in a box."

"Don't be so morbid! Don't be silly! What if you do get better?

Will you go back into business?"

"Never!" said George emphatically.

"Then what?" The journalist in Ehud could not leave a question unanswered.

"I think I want to go to college and study psychology."

Ehud laughed. "Are you kidding? College? Psychology? Why don't you just come home to Israel?"

George sighed. "All my life I've been interested in studying psychology. I've got just about enough money to live, so if I don't die in hospital I'm going to apply to university and study psychology. That's what I want to do."

George looked across at Ehud, his face resolute and determined. Ehud shrugged his shoulders. The idea seemed utterly preposterous. But as soon as George was discharged from hospital he applied to San Fernando Valley State College.

Before long George had become a minor celebrity at the college. But none of them knew who George really was. He had stripped his backstory to the most basic information so that no questions were asked. He told everyone that he had arrived in the United States via Palestine just before WWII—a poor refugee with no wife or children, and no money or prospects. He was the embodiment of the American Dream—he had become a successful businessman and now wanted to spend the remainder of his life studying, catching up on all the time he had lost in his younger years, educating himself in subjects that had always interested him, but for which he had never had the time.

The only person who knew anything about the unique history of the Yabloner Rebbe and his alter ego, George Nagel, was his great-nephew, Ehud.

In 1975, George T. Nagel graduated with a bachelor's in psychology. It was a landmark event, and Ehud believed that with the education bug out of his system, George would finally agree to come back to Kfar Hasidim. Immediately after the graduation, Ehud brought up

the subject again. It was time to visit Israel. Unexpectedly, George was more open to the idea than ever before, and he promised Ehud that he would visit Kfar Hasidim at some point very soon.

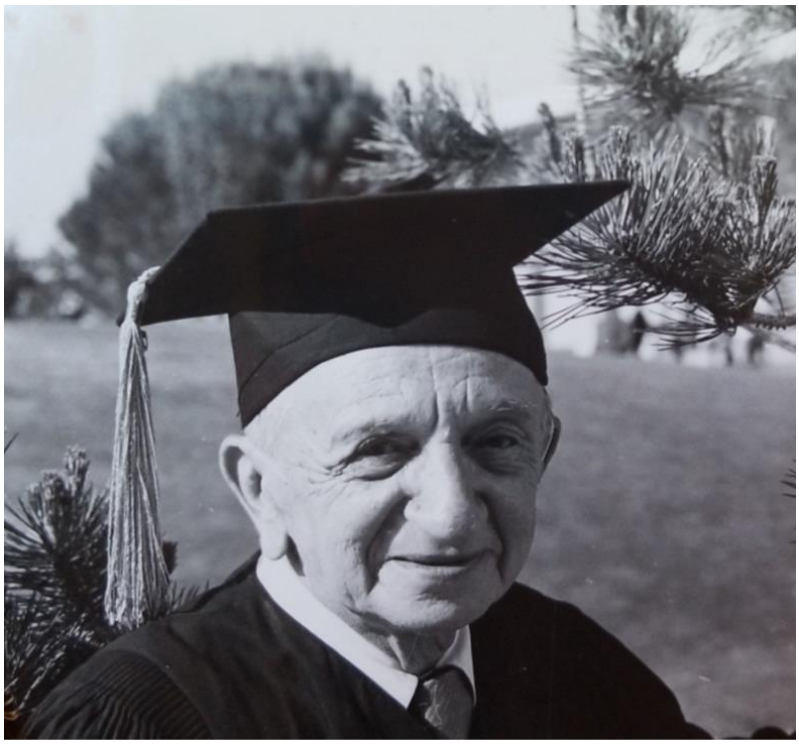
But he was still anxious. "What will I do if they all still hate me? If they treat me with contempt? If they still think I'm a thief!" he asked Ehud.

"What's the big deal?" Ehud replied. "If you're not comfortable in Kfar Hasidim, you'll take a taxi to Haifa, stay in a hotel, and take the next flight back to L.A."

George shook his head. He still wasn't sure.

"I'm not moving back—you know that," he said.

Ehud smiled. "We'll see."



George was not quite ready yet. He had decided to go for a master's degree, but rather than attend classes and take exams, he contributed volunteer hours at a drug-rehabilitation facility, where he counselled recovering drug addicts from the margins of society.

George had come full circle. Suddenly he was back in his role as a Hasidic Rebbe, even if he did not realize it himself. He was helping people to improve their lives by healing them, teaching them, and bringing the best out in them. In this guise he was no longer George Nagel, the immigrant businessman escaping from his miserable past; instead he was the Yabloner Rebbe, giving people with no hope a better vision of the future.

It was 1978, and he was ready to return to Kfar Hasidim. He told Ehud tha the had booked a round trip ticket to Israel, and the dates. Quietly, without letting George know, Ehud informed his mother that her uncle was coming back.

The day arrived, and George landed at Ben-Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv. They arrived at the hall, which was packed with hundreds of people who had gathered to meet the man who had put Kfar Hasidim on the map. Old and young, religious and secular—everyone connected to the village was there. A seat at the front was left empty for George, and as a hush descended he slowly made his way toward his seat and sat down under the large welcome sign that adorned the front wall. An elderly man stood up and turned towards George.

"Rebbe, do you remember me?" he asked.

George looked at him, trying to figure out who he was.

"I'm not sure," he said. "Are you Chaimke? Chaimke Geldfarb?"

Chaimke smiled. "Yes, Rebbe, it's me." His voice was hoarse with emotion. "On behalf of all the residents of our Kfar, I want to welcome you back home. You were probably nervous to come here. You probably think we are angry with you. You probably think that because you brought us here from Poland, away from our homes, away from our families, to build your dream, not ours. And then it all went wrong, so you think we are angry that it all went wrong. But Rebbe, if that's what you think, you're mistaken. Because Rebbe—you saved our lives—if it were not for you, we would all have been killed by the Nazis."

"Look over there …" Chaimke pointed toward a group of people in the middle of the hall. "That's my son with his wife and children, and next to him my two daughters with their husbands and children. My parents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, and their children—all murdered by the Nazis. But we came with you, Rebbe. We built this place. We founded this village. We survived. And you were the one

who saved our lives. And for that we thank you. Thank you for our lives, and for the lives of our children and grandchildren. We can never thank you enough."

Chaimke sat down, and an old woman rose to speak.

"Rebbe, do you remember me?"

George looked carefully at her.

"Sheindel, is that you?"

"Sheindel, yes, but now they call me Shoshana."

Sheindel had a lump in her throat as she spoke, and she struggled to get the words out. "Rebbe, Rebbe, where have you been for so many years? We missed you! We needed you! Without you we would all be dead, and we would not have had our beautiful lives in our beautiful Israel. Why did you leave? Everything turned out OK in the end. Look at us, look at how lucky we are. We escaped from the murderers and built our own homes in G-d's promised land. You said we could do it, and we did it."

Sheindel began weeping. Tears flowed down her cheeks, as her daughter next to her put an arm around her shoulder.

"Rebbe, come home," Sheindel sobbed, "you've been gone for far too long. It's time to come home."

There was dead silence, besides Sheindel's muffled sobs. George looked around the hall. Everyone was looking at him. He looked down at his hands, and then at the floor. Slowly he got to his feet.

"My friends, my dear, dear friends," he began, "I am so moved by this warm welcome. I don't have very much to say. I have missed this place and all of you so much for all these years. I never understood how much this place meant to me, and how much I meant to you—until now. I never thought about what you just said. I never thought about the fact that I saved your lives, only about all the lives that

were lost. I never thought about what I gave you, only about what I took away from you. But now it's all become clear."

He paused for a few seconds. You could have heard a pin drop. Then George whispered, slowly, deliberately, "It's time. I'm ready. I'm coming home. I'm ready. I'm coming home," and he sat down.

There was a moment of silence, and suddenly the hall erupted in applause. Everyone rose to their feet and applauded. It went on and on, as George made his way through the hall and shook everyone's hand, smiling broadly. The Yabloner Rebbe had returned to Kfar Hasidim, and now he was going to move back.



George flew back to Los Angeles to wrap up his affairs and prepare for the move to Israel. But sorting everything out took him longer than expected. Although he had wanted to finish his master's at CSUN, he soon realized that this was not going to happen, and that he would have to make the move to Israel before he became too old. Over the next couple of years George visited Israel for extended periods, until, in November 1981, he gave away his last few possessions and flew off to Israel to settle there for good. He had just turned 86.

After more than 40 years away, he was finally back living in Kfar Hasidim, loved and valued. It was at this point that George Nagel returned to his roots, changing his name back to Yechezkel Taub. Moreover, he became the revered Yabloner Rebbe once again.

He grew back his beard and sidelocks, his yarmulke returned, and so did his religious observance. The Rebbe was given a seat at the front

of the Kfar Hasidim synagogue, where he prayed regularly, and several times a week groups of eager youngsters would gather on a patch of land outside the house in which the Rebbe lived, and he taught them Torah, and told them stories of their heritage in the Hasidic tradition.

Very few people knew about his return to Israel, and truthfully, few would have cared. The pioneering challenges of Palestine in the 1920s and '30s were a distant memory, replaced by the flourishing and vibrant State of Israel. The Yabloner Rebbe was a relic of the difficult past best left forgotten, of interest to no one outside his own family and the residents of Kfar Hasidim.



In early 1986, the Rebbe began to weaken and decline, and he passed away peacefully on May 22. He was 90 years old. The funeral was modest, attended by the residents of Kfar Hasidim, with a low-key service. The Rebbe was buried in the heart of the cemetery, among the graves of all those who had followed him from Europe to create a Hasidic settlement in Eretz Yisrael over 60 years earlier. Although things had not turned out quite as planned, together they had dared to dream, and to persevere. Kfar Hasidim had endured despite the many hardships and challenges, and despite the absence of its foremost activist and leader for so many years. But he had ended his life in their midst, closing the circle that had begun in 1924.

The Rebbe's headstone was installed within a month of his burial, as is the custom in Israel. The inscription focused on the Rebbe's distinguished lineage and his single greatest achievement:

'Here lies Grand Rabbi Yechezkel Taub, the 'Rebbe of Yablona,' son of Grand Rabbi Yaakov Taub. Last scion of the dynasty that began with Grand Rabbi Yechezkel of Kuzmir, disciple of the 'Seer of Lublin' … in 5685 he led his Hasidim up to Eretz Yisrael where he redeemed the lands of Harbaj, Harchieh and Sheikh Abreik. Founder of Nachalat Yaakov, later known as Kfar Hasidim.'



His remarkable trajectory from revered Polish Hasidic leader, to Zionist pioneer, to reviled failure, to war refugee, to shipyard worker, to successful real-estate developer, to bankruptcy, to geriatric college student, and back to his roots as a revered Hasidic Rebbe, is surely one of the most astonishing Jewish stories of the modern era.

Rav Hutner's "Mitzvah L'Farsem" [Mitzvah to Publicize] Story by Rav Yissochor Frand

When Rav Hutner was learning in Slabodka he remembers that Rav Avraham Elya Kaplan went from Slabodka, Lithuania to Berlin to be with Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffman. He came back to Slabodka for an Ellul and the Alter from Slabodka asked for his impressions of the German people.

Among other things, Rav Kaplan told them that the Germans were a kind people. They had a polite way of speaking. If someone asks directions from a German, he doesn't just give orders (go two blocks and take a right); after he finishes the instructions, he will politely ask "nicht wahr?" (Is this not so?) This showed refinement. He would not say anything definitive; he would always end the sentence with a tentative, 'nicht wahr?'

At that point an argument broke out between the students of the Yeshiva. Was it right to praise the Germans? There were those who argued that it is wrong to praise them. We don't learn manners from other communities. [Their spoken customs might be only skin deep. We need to look into our own sources for ethics that penetrate.]

There was one student who persisted and argued that if one sees something nice in another culture, that should be learned and accepted and even praised. "Nicht wahr?" is a sign of politeness and thoughtfulness. It showed modesty and was admirable – why not learn it from the Germans?

Fifty years later, Rav Hutner was saying a shiur in the Chaim Berlin Yeshiva. A Jew walked in and said, "Do you remember me? I was that student in Slabodka that complemented the custom of the Germans and insisted that their way of speaking showed how gentle and fine a people they were."

Rav Hutner indicated that he did remember this student and he stuck out his hand to greet him. The Jew stuck out his hand and

there was a hook in place of a hand! He lost his hand in the concentration camp.



He told Rav Hutner, "When the German cut off my hand in the concentration camp, do you know what he said?" The German said, "It hurts – nicht wahr? – Is it not so?"

"You, Rav Hutner were right, and I was wrong."

When there is no Fear of G-d, when there is no Divine Authority, when there are no absolute laws, then there are no guarantees. It is not up to us to decide "Never Again". We cannot guarantee that it will be "Never Again". Only the Ribbono shel Olam can determine whether it will be "Never Again".

One Kind Gesture



The Golden Gate Bridge is a majestic attraction and iconic landmark in San Francisco. It's also the world's leading suicide location. Every two weeks, someone jumps to their death. Almost everyone living in the Bay area knows someone who has jumped.

Kevin Hines was 19 when he stood by the edge of the Golden Gate Bridge and jumped. He is one of few people who survived the drop. In an interview he said that the moment his feet left the ledge he regretted jumping.

He stated, ***"If just one person had showed me an ounce of concern, I wouldn't have jumped!"***

Hines believes that caring words can make all the difference in dealing with those suffering from suicidal thoughts. When he was hospitalized from injuries, he received a note that said, ***"You're a good person and you matter."*** This made all the difference in his recovery. "A note is tangible, something you can hold onto, and read over and over for support." Today he travels around the country talking about suicide prevention and the lifesaving benefit of caring letters.



Rabbi Shais Taub tells the following poignant story:

Dr. Jerome Motto, was a forensic psychologist who worked with the San Fransisco Police Department. His job was to ascertain whether someone who committed suicide, had intended to or not.

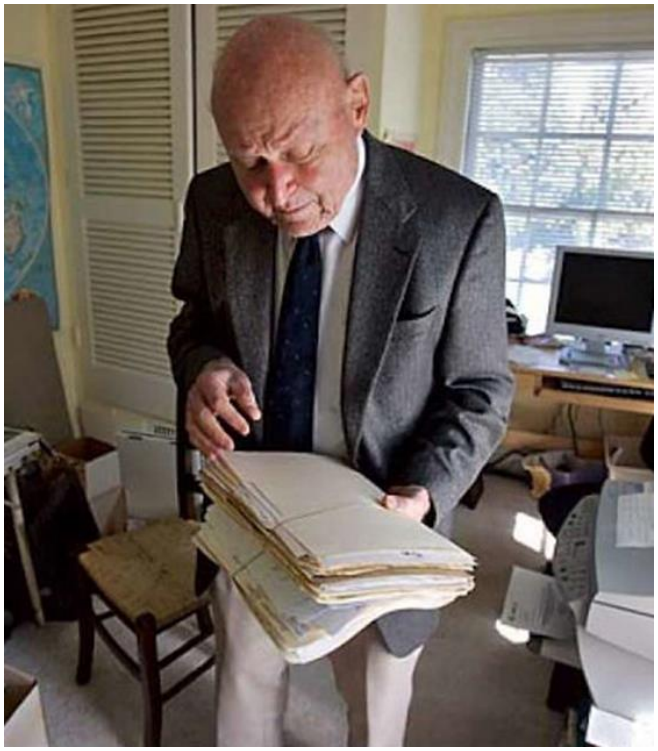
He said that he saw so many hundreds of jumpers, that he became numb to it.

He recounts the story of one patient who jumped from the Golden Gate Bridge to his death. He said that it shook him to the core, and he could never forget what happened.

"I went to this guy's apartment afterward with the assistant medical examiner to prove that there was no foul play. The guy was in his thirties, lived alone, pretty bare apartment. He'd written a note and left it on his bureau. "I've seen this a hundred times before - a note on the dresser – nothing new."

But then I read the note, and it completely shook me to my core. It said, ***'I'm going to walk to the bridge now. If one person stops me on the way, smiles at me or says hello, I will not jump. I will turn around and go home!'***

Motto said, "That was it. It's so needless, the number of people who are lost."



Caring Letters Dr. Jerome Motto

This story sparked Motto to discover and develop a system that has proven to effectively prevent suicide; it's called "The Caring Letters" Model.

During service in World War II, he received letters from a woman he had met before being drafted. He maintained that those letters gave him the will to survive. After the War they never reconnected but he attributed his life to her.

The letters were not romantic and were often simply a few sentences about her daily routine or mundane topics. She had been persistent in writing them, regardless of whether or not he responded. He felt this proved her genuine concern for him.

Using this as his inspiration, his theory was simple. Therapists would send short letters expressing interest in the patient contemplating suicide. The letter was to merely try to connect with the patient applying zero pressure for the patient to change their ways.

"Caring Letters" that Motto later instituted has positively impacted the world. The program directly correlates to the decrease the number of suicide in patients and is currently the only proven method in suicide prevention.

Don't underestimate the power of a good word, a caring letter, or a smile.

It's not enough to refrain from speaking negatively; use your words to invigorate someone with positivity.

My older sister was once walking in New York City with a friend. They passed a woman who was wearing a flower pin, a trend at the time. My sister paused, flashed her a bright smile, and said, "Hey! I like your flower pin, it's so cute!"

They kept walking in opposite directions, but the woman turned around and raced back towards my sister. "I want you to have this." She began to remove the flower pin.

My sister quickly responded, "No, no, you don't understand! I don't want it, I just wanted to give you a compliment!" The woman said, "You have to have it, I insist. I want you to remember what you did for me today. You'll never really know what your smile did for me, today specifically. My day is now transformed."

Showing people that we see them, and care has a transformative power.

My sister gave me the flower pin after telling me the story. It's a reminder that the power of a good word is infinite. ***With a quick hello we can literally infuse someone with life. Showing people that we see them and care has a transformative power.***

A woman named Jackie suffered an unimaginable horror when her three daughters were killed in a car accident. Her sister-in-law, the driver, was operating the vehicle under the influence of both alcohol and drugs. Jackie's life was shattered and her depression was severe.

In an interview, Jackie described the outpouring of love and support from her family, friends and community. Collectively, they lifted her from the depths of unimaginable pain and carried her back to life. They sent gifts, made meals, wrote cards, and took turns spending time with her to make sure she was psychologically okay. They never left her side.

At one point, Jackie was determined to end her life and join her children in heaven. But she was adamant to first write a thank you

note to everyone who helped her. "I may have been suicidal, but I wasn't rude."

She thanked every person who helped in her time of need. By the time she was finished writing her cards, her words of appreciation had lifted her out of despair, and she no longer wanted to die. This woman literally thanked her way through depression.

Light at the End of the Tunnel

In the midst of his bouts of suicidal thoughts, Kevin Hines says that he did not see hope or a future. Hines reflects that even today "there are days that I do not see light at the end of the tunnel. I just know it is there." And with that knowledge, he is able to press forward.

We each have an incredible power to brighten the lives of the people around us. We can say 'Hello' and say it with a smile.

'Do not underestimate the fact that you could be that person for somebody else. You can be the one who cares. You can be the one who reaches out to somebody else.

To the world you may be one person, but to one person- you may be the world!'

May we all have the strength to encourage others and help save lives.

The Life Insurance Policy By R' Yaakov Mizrahi

At the beginning of the Holocaust, The Nazis got to the middle of the small town square, and told all the Yidden, "You have until 5am tomorrow morning to bring 20lbs of clothing and belongings with you. We are moving you all out to work camps,"

While they were packing their clothes, most of them tore open the linings of their clothes to hide money and valuables just in case it would be needed in an emergency – to live off or to use as a bribe.

One father called over his son, and said, "I want a favour from you – please can you iron my shirt."

The son replies, "Daddy, we are going into the trains. We are going into the cattle cars. We are going to *Gehenem* – who cares about your shirt. What difference does it make if your shirt is ironed or not?"



He looks at his son, and he says, "Please just iron my shirt."

The son repeats, "but daddy, nobody cares if your shirt is pressed or not."

"Please just iron my shirt."

The son says, "Ok."

He takes the shirt, irons it, and gives it back to his father. His father says, 'Thank you', and inspects it, and says, "there are still a few creased bits, please can you iron it again!"

The son says, "Daddy, nobody cares if you look spic and span."

The father says, "Please iron my shirt again."

The son takes the shirt, and he irons it again. He gives it back to his father – practicably perfectly ironed.

His father looks at his son, and he says, "My dear son, I'm not naive. I know very well that we are probably going on our last journey and what might happen. Everybody is looking for a life insurance policy by hiding their valuables. But I'm ensuring that you have a life insurance policy that they cannot take away from you! I want to give you the zechus of the Mitzva of **כיבוד אב ואם**. I don't care about my shirt. I want you to have the mitzva of **כַּבֵּד אֶת אָבִיךָ וְאֶת אִמֶּךָ לְמַעַן יַאֲרִכוּן יָמֶיךָ** so that you should have long life!" 'This is my gift to you!'

Sure enough, the son lived through the horrors to tell the tale. He was the only survivor of that town.

He said over this story by his grandson's wedding.

Every mitzva counts. Loading up on Mitzvot is the best life insurance policy.



Inspiration in the Air



Greetings. Erev Yom Kippur Asres Yemei Teshuva 5783. My name is Chaim Shapira. I live today in Yerushalayim. I was born in Kiryat Sanz, Netanya, as a Sanz Chossid.

I have the privilege of recounting a great miracle that I had with the Rebbe. I want to recount it so people will recognise the greatness of the Rebbe, and what Hashem did, thanks to the Rebbe.

In 5729, my mother was diagnosed with a uterine tumour. This meant that they had to remove the whole uterus. If that would have happened, I wouldn't be standing here now talking to you.



My father went to **The Sanzer Rebbe Zt'l** and asked for a bracha. The Rebbe told him, "She won't need surgery, everything will be fine. Go to the USA for treatment. When you are in the United Staes, make sure to go to the Lubavitcher Rebbe and ask him for a bracha."

My father and mother went to the USA. They stayed with the late Rabbi Herschel Spritzer in Crown Heights, who was one of the oldest chassidim. Rabbi Herschel had a yechidus (private audience)

with the Rebbe that day, and he gave it over for the sake of my mother due to the urgency.

When my parents entered the Rebbe's room, my father was a young man of 23 years old. The Rebbe stood up and said to him, "Welcome to the guest who comes from Eretz Hakodesh and a messenger from a great man."

How did the Rebbe know that the Rebbe of Sanz sent my father to the Rebbe - only Hashem knows!

My father showed the Rebbe all the medical records. The Rebbe said to him, "What are afraid of, Your Rebbe said everything will be fine?"

My father said, "I want a promise!"

The Rebbe stood up and affixed his holy eyes on my father and said to him, "Young man, don't worry, you will have children, grandchildren and great children doing Torah and Mitzvahs."

My mother was healed Boruch Hashem and I was born from the Rebbes bracha.

Fast forward twenty years.

My brother was getting married in New York – Lag B'Omer 5748. We had cousins in Crown Heights, and they took us on the night of Lag B'Omer – the night before the wedding, to the Rebbe for Dollars and to hear a Sicha from the Rebbe. When we come in front of the Rebbe, he suddenly asks my father, "How is your wife?"

My father was shocked. He points to me to indicate that I was the first miracle, "He was born from the Rebbes Bracha." My name is Chaim – the Rebbe didn't ask me for my name. The Rebbe says to me straight away, "***כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לְמֹצְאֵיהֶם וּלְכָל־בְּשָׂרוֹ מַרְפֵּא*** ***For they are life – Chaim – for those who find them, and health to all their flesh***."

My father passes him and receives a dollar. The Chassan receives a dollar and one for the kallah, for after the chuppah.

I pass by, and the Rebbe repeats, " **כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לִמְצֹאֵיהֶם וּלְכָל־בְּשָׂרוֹ מַרְפֵּא-** Do you hear what I am telling you?" And he gives me a dollar. I move forward, but the Rebbe calls me back. "An extra dollar "**כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לִמְצֹאֵיהֶם וּלְכָל־בְּשָׂרוֹ מַרְפֵּא-** Do you hear what I am telling you?" - I didn't understand what the Rebbe wanted. We leave. The Wedding, Shabbos, Sheva Brachos…

On Sunday, we went to be with the Rebbe to daven and to receive dollars on Sunday as usual. I pass the Rebbe, and once again the Rebbe says to me with a smile, "A third dollar, **כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לִמְצֹאֵיהֶם וּלְכָל־בְּשָׂרוֹ מַרְפֵּא -** Do you hear what I am telling you?"

I don't understand, but should I question the Rebbe? I don't ask, because I am afraid to. I move on.

The Rebbe calls me back again. "A fourth dollar **כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לִמְצֹאֵיהֶם וּלְכָל־בְּשָׂרוֹ מַרְפֵּא -** Do you hear what I am telling you?"

I did not understand what the Rebbe meant, but I didn't dare ask. I went home and forgot about the whole story.

I got married in 5751, and by 5758, I was blessed with three sons and one daughter. My daughter was three months old when she contracted a terrible streptococcal infection which turned into pneumonia. She was in the hospital, but the situation got worse and she went into Septic shock.

They rushed us to a specialist unit, but the prognoses was that she wouldn't live more than 24 hours! I don't know what to do. I raised my hands upon High, and said, "Riboino Shel Olam, if Hashem will be with me, and my daughter will be healed and will remain healthy, I will *bli neder* dedicate my life assisting the people of Israel with medical needs."

On Friday night, I'm sitting by my daughter's bed, full of despair. I don't know what to do, I feel so helpless. I say, " Riboino Shel Olam, what's going to be with the good resolution?"

I fall asleep, and I see the Rebbe at 770 in a dream. The Rebbe says to me, "Young man, why are you so broken?"

I said, "My daughter in in grave danger – what should I do?"

The Rebbe tells me in the most life-like way, **כִּי־חַיִּים הֵם לִמְצֹאֵיהֶם וּלְכָל־בְּשָׂרוֹ מַרְפֵּא** – Do you hear what I am telling you? You took upon yourself today a good resolution, and thanks to that, your daughter will get better." I awoke from my dream.

I tell my wife that I had a dream with the Rebbe. She said to me, "What's a dream? Look at the reality of the situation. The pulse is weak, the blood pressure is almost non-existent – what are you talking about?"

I said, "If the Rebbe promised, Hashem will help."

On Sunday morning, the doctor rushes into the ward and says, " I had to hurry here to see you. Don't move from here, I will be back in a few minutes."

Those minutes felt like an eternity.

He comes back in and says to us, "Listen, I am a complete heretic. I don't believe in G-d. But today, I have discovered that there is a leader to this world. There is a G-d after all: - All your daughters test results are completely negative, we have had a complete reversal, and she will recover!"

Boruch Hashem she recovered and became healthy again. She is currently married to a Chabad Chasid from Maayonei Yisroel, and has her own two daughters. They are Chabad Shiluchim (emissaries) in Alma Ata, Kazakhstan!

I was privileged to establish a big organisation called 'Rafeinu Ve'nivoshea' which gives medical advice to all Jewish people. We have already helped more than 26,000 patients! All thanks to the Rebbe and his prophecy.

Escape from Gehenem

For more than four years, **R' Shloime Halberstam zt"l**, his young son Naftulche (**R' Naftoli Halberstam zt"l**), and a large number of family members, had been continuously on the run from the dreaded Gestapo who were looking for them since their escape from Poland.

In mid-1944, through constant miracles, R' Shloime and his son managed to reach Rumania and found themselves hiding out in the city of Arad. R' Shloime urgently needed to reach the capitol, Bucharest, to obtain legal residency papers and focus on helping his family trapped in Rumania and Hungary. The problem was getting there.

Late one night, the Rebbe sat with his host, Reb Mottel Farkash, to discuss the limited options. "There are two ways to get there," Mottel said. "One is impractical and the other one is impossible!" The Rebbe looked at him puzzled. "You mean by train or by ... air?" asked the Rebbe. Mottel nodded.

It was well known that the Rumanian police were avid Nazi sympathizers who patrolled every train headed to the capital. At every approaching stop, they would board to check every passenger's papers and examine every person's face. Papers can lie but a Jewish face tells it all; and they were experts in this sort of determination. Traveling by train was truly impractical, but the other alternative - flying on an airplane - was even more dangerous and virtually impossible. How would the Rebbe get on an airplane? Every airfield was controlled by the Nazis. To board an airplane, one would need a special government permit, which was impossible for a Jew to attain. Only military officials, Gestapo agents and wealthy German businessmen were allowed to fly the decidedly "unfriendly" skies. But the Rebbe began pacing, his mind working furiously, a plan forming.

A few days later, a "gentleman" arrived at the government airfield with an airplane ticket in hand. While the technicians checked the

military craft, the controller announced in guttural German, and then in his native Rumanian: "Flight from Arad to Bucharest, leaving Airstrip 14 at 17:20 hours." All the passengers prepared to board their flight. A number of Army officials in full dress regalia, and some others dressed in civilian clothes, milled about. Yet, they were all most obviously Nazis. Who could fail to notice their arrogant strut or their steely blue eyes?

After the customs official checked their permits, he left. The "gentleman" - clean-shaven and dressed in a crisp civilian suit, found a seat on the small aircraft and breathed a sigh of relief. Obtaining the gentile papers and permits had been difficult, but that was nothing compared to what would come next. Here, literally inside the lion's den, sitting among the very officials he has been hiding from, the Bobover Rebbe felt an urge to daven to Hashem, but he was afraid to draw attention to himself. Putting a cigar between his lips, he began to murmur silent prayers with all his heart and soul. The turbulence of the flight did little to calm the Rebbe's nerves.

Since the Rebbe could not possibly procure a military pass for the child, Naftulche had to travel by train, escorted by a gentile woman. He sat tensely for the duration of the flight, and it took all his composure to maintain a calm and even casual exterior.

Stealing a furtive glance at the other passengers, R' Shloime noticed that one was staring at him. Slowly, he turned back towards the window, his heart pounding furiously. Ostensibly to stretch his legs, he left his seat and wandered down the narrow aisle. Sure enough, the man's gaze remained fixated on him. R' Shloime tried to stay calm as he returned to his seat.

Along the way, the plane made a short stop and the watchful Gestapo officer disembarked. A few minutes later, out of the corner of his eye, the Rebbe noticed a crew of policemen boarding the plane. Were they coming to arrest him? Incredibly, the police boarded the plane, chatting congenially among themselves. They found seats, settled down, and thankfully paid the gentleman with the cigar no heed.

Finally, the plane touched down in Bucharest. Just as planned and right on schedule, Hatzoloh activist Sammy Baraf was waiting with his car to whisk the Rebbe away to safety. Not until they arrived at his pre-arranged lodgings, did the Rebbe discard his disguise and relax.

It was a truly terrifying ordeal, but one that only a man with the courage and audacity of the Bobover Rebbe, would be able to pull off. Not until 1947, after great self-sacrifice, did R' Shloime finally leave the blood-soaked shores of Europe for America, where he was reunited with his son, Naftulche, and other members of his family.

Full of Regret – Rabbi Shlomo Farhi

I once gave a drosho about a Rabbi that goes into a shul, to preside over a levayah. He names all the family members who will sadly mourn and miss the deceased. He finishes his hesped, and everybody starts walking out. There is one man who remains at the back of the hall. He is crying his eyes out.

The Rabbi runs up to him and says, "I sorry, but I can see that you are very moved and upset. Was the departed somebody that you knew well?"

He said, "No. he was my brother!"

The Rabbi feels terrible. He had one job to mention all the family members, and he forgot a brother! – "I'm so sorry I missed you out."

"It's ok Rabbi, nobody, not even the family knew that I was coming!"

"What are you talking about? This is your brother's funeral?"

"They didn't know that I was coming because we haven't spoken together in over 40 years!"

"40 Years is a long time – What happened? What could a brother do to another brother that you haven't spoken for so long?"

The man says, "That's why I'm crying- I can't even remember!"

I finished the shiur, and out of the corner of my eye, I see a very elderly gentleman. And when I say elderly, he made *Mesushelach* look young!

He comes up to me, and says, "Rabbi, I didn't speak to my sister for over 60 years!" - I feel like I'm the Rabbi in the story. I say to him, "Tell me, what could a sister have done to her brother, to make him not talk to her for 60 years?"

He said, "When my father died, there was only one thing that I wanted as a yerusha – his Menorah. She was tasked with clearing out the house. She brought in the cleaning crew and disposed of everything that she didn't want – including the Menorah. I told her that this was the only thing that I wanted. How could I forgive her?"

I said to him, "Tell me, was the Menorah made out of Gold, Platinum or some other precious metal?"



He said, "No, in fact it was a simple brass Menorah."

"So why are you so upset with her?"

"I'm so upset with her because that Menorah was brought out of Europe by my father. It belonged to his father and grandfather for many generations prior. It is a family heirloom – ***That Menorah was like family to me, and she threw it out***! That's why I haven't spoken to her in over 60 years."

I said to him, "***Excuse me, but for something that's <u>like</u> family – You are going to throw away actual family?***"

I will never forget his eyes filling with tears as he looked up at me, and said, "***There is a phone call that I think I need to make***!"

When Chanukah Lasted 10 Days By Elchonon Isaacs

The following account was shared by the late Rabbi Yoel Frankenthal, a Holocaust survivor, who went on to rebuild a full Jewish life in the Holy Land.

By the time the war ended, I had worked in about ten Nazi labour camps. The first one, in Obornik, about 30 km north of Poznań, is where we had a ten-day Chanukah.

We were a group of boys from the Chassidic Yeshiva of Gur, living in the Pabianice Ghetto. We managed to gather daily on the roof of a private house near the market square, hidden from sight, to study and pray. Even as our bellies were empty, our hearts were full of spiritual nourishment.

Many others were forced to labour for the Nazis, but we stayed in our little hideout and studied Torah and prayed.

The sadistic soldiers loved to abuse the Jews during their forced labour and came up with all kinds of creative ways to do so. For example, they derived perverse satisfaction from humiliating the workers who were cleaning the streets. To that end, any Jew who was assigned to street cleaning had to walk through the streets with a large broom over his shoulder.

This gave me an idea. I got hold of a large, bulky broom, and early in the morning, when many others were out cleaning the streets, I would quickly make my way to the hideout with my broom over my shoulder. Now and then I'd pause to sweep, pretending to be engrossed in my cleaning task, until I made my way safely to my destination.

Things could only carry on for so long, and in the end our little hideout was raided and we were transported, as a group, to the Obronic labor camp. In the camp we were forced to labor from morning to night; there was no room for shenanigans.

Only our bodies were enslaved, however. Our spirits remained free. Our dank barrack was without windows, and our only companions were insects and rodents. At nights we were not closely supervised by the guards and this worked to our benefit. Every night we were provided a small amount of oil, which we placed in an ink container and used to provide a single flame of light. Every evening, as soon as the flame was lit, we would make the best of our short time before darkness prevailed and held a nightly Talmud class.

There was a fellow Jew named Yankelowitz who smuggled in a small volume of the Talmudic tractate Shabbat. As soon as the wick was lit, Yankelowitz would begin his lecture.

How he was able to make out the tiny words with that weak light, I do not know. Maybe the letters jumped out at him, or perhaps he knew the tractate by heart. Either way, we would listen to every word he said. When the light sputtered out, leaving a puff of smoke in the velvety blackness, we'd discuss and review what we had learned.

Chanukah was approaching and naturally, our minds turned to the subject discussed in the second chapter of Tractate Shabbat: which oil and wicks one may, or may not, use to light Chanukah candles.

The problem was that we had no wicks or fuel to light, save our nightly ration of oil, which was tiny enough as it was.

Furthermore, we could not use the same flame for both a Chanukah lamp and to provide lighting, since one may not benefit from the light of the Chanukah flames. But giving up our daily Talmud class, which gave so much spiritual satisfaction and meaning to our lives, was not an option either.

We decided to begin saving a few drops of oil every night in the lead up to Chanukah so that we'd be able to have our class *and* light a candle each night of the festival. We stored the oil in the empty shoe polish jar we had, hoping we'd have enough.

Now another problem arose. When did Chanukah begin? We were not sure which day of the Jewish month it was to begin with, and our problem was compounded by the fact that the month of Cheshvan, which precedes Chanukah, can have either 29 or 30 days. We decided to play it safe and add an extra day on either end of the eight days we thought would be Chanukah.



The first night, based on our calculation, arrived. With great excitement, our hearts filled with pride as Yankelowitz lit the first candle.

We continued this practice for ten nights. In lieu of fulfilling the mitzvah properly, with rows of flickering flames for each of us, we enthusiastically learned the laws of the Chanukah candles in our precious volume of Tractate Shabbat.

Our small flames only burned for a few short minutes each night, but at least we fulfilled the mitzvah to publicize the miracle of Chanukah, feeling deep in our hearts that miracles could still happen to us and that all was not lost.

Rabbi YY Jacobson - Finding Its Light

Nathan Sharansky, the famous refusenik, shares the following story in his book, Fear No Evil. He suffered many years in the communist prisons from 1977 to 1986, most of the time in Siberia. One year, Chanukah, he was the only Jew in this prison, but when he explained to the other inmates the significance of Chanukah – a holiday representing religious liberty – they became so enthusiastic about the symbolism of Chanukah, they all helped him construct a wooden

menorah. They also managed to get their hands on some wicks and some oil, and the first night of Chanukah, Nathan Sharansky lit the menorah. It was a celebration for the entire prison.

He continues with the celebration, the second and third and fourth and fifth nights of Chanukah. The sixth night, the guard on duty comes in and confiscates the burning menorah. Sharansky was furious. He goes to the guard and says, "Why did you do this?" The guard tells him, "Because you used state material to build your menorah. That itself is illegal. You can be punished for that. Besides, your fellow prisoners are complaining that you're going to start a fire and endanger their lives."



Sharansky says, "Come on, I'm watching the menorah and the state is going to get back all of the materials. I promise you. There's only two nights left for Chanukah." He calls his superior, and the superior tells him, "This is not a synagogue. We will not let Sharansky pray." So Nathan Sharansky declares hunger strike. Now, when you declared a hunger strike in the Soviet gulag, it could go one of either two ways. Either it was futile, and they just let you die, or they actually surrendered. They'd acquiesce to you. You never knew how it went. Sharansky had good fortune that he was unaware of.

Two days later, a committee was coming from Moscow to visit this particular gulag in Siberia. And the last thing the supervisors of the prison needed was that the Committee for Moscow should hear that the prisoners are not content and they're revolting on hunger strikes. Sharansky had mazel, which is why two days later, the eighth night of Chanukah, he was summoned to the office of Major Olsen, who was the man in charge of the entire prison. Olsen,

Sharansky says, was a criminal. He liked to see people suffer. But for him, the advancement of his career was the most important thing. And he always knew how to take care of a crisis to make sure it doesn't endanger his career and his future. But Olsen was a real, real communist, and Olsen put on this fake smile on his face as he told Sharansky, "Don't worry, in the future you're going to have religious liberty. Everything will be good. You could quit your hunger strike." Sharansky says, okay, great, so give me back my menorah. Olsen says, "I can't give you back the menorah, but in the future, everything will be good." Sharansky understood his thinking. If he would give him back the menorah, it would be an embarrassment. He would be embarrassed and humiliated in front of all of the prisoners.

So Sharansky has an idea. "Major Orson, why don't you give me the menorah right here in your office? I'm going to light the menorah the last night of Chanukah in your presence, and nobody's going to see." Sure enough, Olsen opens the drawer. Out comes the menorah. Sharansky says, we need a candle. So Olsen has the guard bring in a candle. He says we need eight candles. Olsen takes a knife and he cuts the candle into eight very beautiful, even parts. Sharansky sets up the menorah, Olsen gives him fire, he makes the blessings, and he lights all eight candles of the menorah.

And then, seizing the opportunity, he says a prayer in Hebrew. And the content of this prayer in Hebrew is, "Almighty G-d, just as You saved us from the Syrian Greeks during the times of Chanukah, please deliver us from all of our enemies and our oppressors today. Let them all watch us light the menorah and let us worship our G-d and freedom and let us say Amen."

When he finishes his prayer, Sharansky hears somebody say Amen. He takes a look. It was Major Olsen. For a while, they both looked silently and humbly at the burning menorah without saying a word. And after a few minutes, Olsen caught himself and he called in the guard and said, "Come on, clean this up."

When I read this story, I remembered that the Talmud says there are types of oils and wicks that were not allowed to be used for Shabbos candles because they don't flicker well. They don't create a sturdy flame. And we're afraid on Shabbos, somebody is going to tamper with it in order to enhance the fire. But on Chanukah, you can use all types of oils and all types of wicks. We don't care. One of the great Chassidic masters, R' Nachum Chernobyl, sees spiritual symbolism here.

The Jewish person, the Jewish soul is called a wick. On Shabbos, you can't always kindle all wicks; but on Chanukah, you can kindle all wicks, which means every type of wick, every type of soul could be inspired.

Even somebody, when you look at them and you don't see any light, you don't see any potential for light. But on Chanukah, every soul can be inspired if you only believe in the power of that soul to find its light.



Chanukah 1944 in Buchenwald - How a brave group of Jews outsmarted their S.S. captors By S. B. Unsdorfer

There appeared to me to be two ways of surviving these camps of death. The first was to forget or abandon all laws of decency, respect, and trust in your fellow men, and fight recklessly and ruthlessly for your own skin, irrespective of any consequences to your fellow inmates. You had to rob, steal, and "organize" for extra food and better working conditions, curry favor with your *Meisters*, and squeal on your colleagues for the price of an apple or slice of bread.

The second was to hang on to dear life by trying to find hope and courage beyond human power.

There were plenty who adopted the law of the jungle, and they became the terror of the camp. I—and many like me—could never bring myself to pick someone else's pocket while standing to attention at *Appell*, or rob him of his last piece of bread or *wurst*, or indulge in tricks which those who had been in the camps much longer than we appeared to accomplish so easily, and without conscience pricking them.

Some of us preferred to adopt the old and tested Jewish method of finding hope and strength in G-d, and in prayer to Him. Thus, every morning and evening, fifteen or twenty of us crouched together quietly between the bunks to recite some parts of the prayers, and then go to work or to sleep, encouraged by the knowledge that the G-d for Whose sake we suffered was listening to our pleas.

Some laughed and mocked us. Kapo Otto, the faithful Communist, could cripple you for finding you at prayer; the S.S. would send you to the "cooler" for a couple of days for it, yet most of those sitting at what was called the "religious" table joined us regularly for a prayer session. There were: Benzi, the Table Elder; Baruch Stern, my former neighbour; Modche Fischhof, my "sleeping partner"; Hugo Gross, who wondered what his former Sudeten-German boss would say when he received his letter; Weinberger, the optician who was always hungry; Max Schiff, who was considered foolish for admitting having been a secretary, and yet was rewarded for his frankness by getting an office job with no night shift, with the solace of working in a warm room. Then there were old Mr. Friedman, the eldest in the camp, who escaped the death chambers after showing an S.S. man his rough hands to prove that he was still able to work; young Walti Braun, who often wet his bed at night to the disgust and annoyance of Benzi, who slept in the bunk directly under him. There were Herlinger, the pessimist; Akiba Simcha Ungar, the young rabbi whose prison number was one less than mine—95602; Gestetner,

Modche Fischhof's brother-in-law; thin Mr. Herzog; Federweiss, who wanted to chisel his way out of the transport between Sered and Auschwitz; Dr. Tauber, who often repeated to me some impressive words which he heard from my late father's sermons; and, of course, Joszi Grunwald.

As winter advanced and grew colder, life became much more difficult. The midday soup ceased, and we had to spend the half-hour break inside *Halle* One watching the *Meisters* eating their sandwiches and smoking their cigarettes. We now felt the effects of working for twelve hours without food or drink. The skin on our hands began to peel, and every tiny cut or prick became septic, and took days to heal. The evening soup became thinner and thinner, and most of us had to run four or five times every night to the toilet. The thirty-minute *Appell* in the knee-high snow froze our feet. This, and the absence of any news about the progress of the war, reduced our nerves to breaking point.

Escape was completely ruled out, not only because of the strong guard and high wire fences, but because we had no chance of replacing our striped clothing, or of obtaining money or documents to get us past the first road control into a train.

When writing the little diary in which I entered the Hebrew dates and festivals, I discovered with great delight that Hanukkah, the Festival of Lights, the festival on which we commemorate the recapture of the Temple from the mighty Greeks by a handful of faithful Jews, was only a few days ahead. I decided that we should light a little Hanukkah lamp even in *Nieder-Orschel*, and that this would go a long way towards restoring our morale.

Benzi was immediately consulted because he had become the most reliable and trusted person in the block. Even those at the other two tables—the "intellectuals' table," where the doctors, lawyers, dentists, architects, and businessmen ate, and the "free table," where the non-believers sat—even they came to Benzi to settle their quarrels, which were mostly about the distribution of their rations.

Benzi would stand no arguments at his own table. He cut every loaf into eight portions and shared it out indiscriminately. He who complained received the smallest portion.

"If you are dissatisfied," Benzi would shout angrily, "go and join another table, where they have scales and judges."

Nobody ever left our table.

Benzi was enthusiastic about my idea. "Yes, we should get a Hanukkah light burning," he said. "It will boost our morale and lighten the atmosphere. Work on a plan, but be careful."

Two problems had to be overcome: oil had to be "organized," and a place had to be found where the lighted wick would not be seen.

There was no lack of oil in the factory, but how could we smuggle even a few drops into our barrack in time for Monday evening, December 11, the first night of Hanukkah?

We knew, of course, that Jewish law did not compel us to risk our lives for the sake of fulfilling a commandment. But there was an urge in many of us to reveal the spirit of sacrifice implanted in our ancestors throughout the ages. We who were in such great spiritual, as well as physical distress, felt that a little Hanukkah light would warm our starving souls and inspire us with hope, faith, and courage to keep us going through this long, grim, and icy winter.

Benzi, Grunwald, Stern, Fischhof, and I were in the plot. We decided to draw lots. The first name drawn would have to steal the oil; the third would be responsible for it, and hide it until Monday evening; and the fifth would have to light it under his bunk. I was drawn fifth.

Grunwald, who was to "organize" the oil, did his part magnificently. He persuaded the hated *Meister* Meyer that his machine would work better if oiled regularly every morning, and that this could best be arranged if a small can of fine machine oil was allotted to us to be kept in our toolbox. *Meister* Meyer agreed, so there was no longer the problem of having to hide it.



S.B. Unsdorfer following liberation.

On Monday evening after *Appell*, everyone else sat down to his much awaited portion of tasteless but hot soup, while I busied myself under the bunk to prepare my *menorah*. I put that oil in the empty half of a shoe-polish tin, took a few threads from my thin blanket and made them into a wick. When everything was ready I hastily joined the table to eat my dinner before I invited all our friends to the Hanukkah Light Kindling ceremony. Suddenly, as I was eating my soup, I remembered we had forgotten about matches.

I whispered to Benzi.

"Everyone must leave a little soup," Benzi ordered his hungry table guests, and told them why.

Within five minutes, five portions of soup were exchanged in the next room for a cigarette. The cigarette was "presented" to the chef, Josef, for lending us a box of matches without questions.

And so, as soon as dinner was over I made the three traditional blessings, and a little Hanukkah light flickered away slowly under my bunk. Not only my friends from the "religious" table were there with us, but also many others from the room joined us in humming the traditional Hanukkah songs. These songs carried us into the past. As if on a panoramic screen, we saw our homes, with our parents, brothers, sisters, wives, and children gathered around the beautiful silver candelabras, singing happily the *Maoz Tzur*. That tiny little light under my bunk set our hearts ablaze.

Tears poured down our haggard cheeks. By now, every single inmate in the room sat silently on his bunk, or near mine, deeply meditating.

For a moment, nothing else mattered. We were celebrating the first night of Hanukkah as we had done in all the years previous to our imprisonment and torture. We were a group of Jewish people fulfilling our religious duties, and dreaming of home and of bygone years.

But alas! Our dream ended much too soon. - A roar of "*Achtung*" brought our minds back to reality, and our legs to stiff attention. "The Dog"—that skinny little *Unterschaarfuehrer* stood silently at the door, as he so often did on his surprise visits, looking anxiously for some excuse, even the slightest, to wield his dog-whip. Suddenly he sniffed as loudly as his Alsatian, and yelled:

"*Hier stinkts ja von Oehl*! " ("It stinks of oil in here.")

My heart missed a few beats as I stared down at the little Hanukkah light flickering away, while "The Dog" and his Alsatian began to parade along the bunks in search of the burning oil.

The *Unterschaarfuehrer* silently began his search. I did not dare bend down or stamp out the light with my shoes for fear the Alsatian would notice my movements and leap at me.

I gave a quick glance at the death-pale faces around me, and so indeed did "The Dog." Within a minute or two he would reach our row of bunks. Nothing could save us… but suddenly…

Suddenly a roar of sirens, sounding an air raid, brought "The Dog" to a stop and within seconds all lights in the entire camp were switched off from outside.

"*Fliegeralarm! Fliegeralarm!*" echoed throughout the camp! Like lightning I snuffed out the light with my shoes and following a strict camp rule, we all ran to the open ground, brushing "The Dog" contemptuously aside.

"There will be an investigation…. There will be an investigation," he screamed above the clatter of rushing prisoners who fled out into the *Appell* ground.

But I did not worry. In delight, I grabbed my little menorah and ran out with it. This was the sign, the miracle of Hanukkah, the recognition of our struggle against the temptations of our affliction. We had been helped by G-d, even in this forsaken little camp at Nieder-Orschel.

Outside, in the ice-cold, star-studded night, with the heavy drone of Allied bombers over our heads, I kept on muttering the traditional blessing to the G-d who wrought miracles for His people in past days and in our own time. The bombers seemed to be spreading these words over the host of heaven.

Imprisoned and tortured by the Nazis while still a teen, Simche Bunim Unsdorfer survived the Holocaust with his faith intact. He made his way to London England where he learned English and started a family. He served as general secretary of Agudath Israel in Britain and was founder of its community newspaper, *The Jewish Tribune*, which he edited until his untimely death from a camp-related illness at the age of forty-three.

Stories from the Life of Rav Shimshon Pincus *zt"l* - Bring Them Home

Chesed was part and parcel of the Pincus household, a permanent fixture no different from the walls and floors. One Chanukah evening, when the Pincuses were still a young couple, a pauper with a sack of troubles weighing heavily on his heart knocked on the door and asked for *tzedakah*.

"*Reb Yid,*" Rav Shimshon turned to him with a smile, "have you *bentched Chanukah licht* yet?"

When the man replied negatively, Rav Shimshon immediately ushered him into the house, reminding him that even a pauper is obliged to light Chanukah candles. However, to ensure that the man could at least be called a "houseguest" who is *Halachically* permitted to light

candles in the home of his host, Rav Shimshon rolled out the red carpet, set the table with a generous spread of food and drink, and offered him a room and bed for the night.

For the next few weeks, the homeless man, whose name Rav Shimshon did not even know for the first few days, dwelled happily in the Pincus home, enjoying kind and generous treatment from his hosts.

Random guests from all walks of life drifted in and out of the Pincus house during the early years of their marriage, all benefiting immensely from the Rav and Rebbetzin's matchless care, warmth, and generosity. As the years progressed, and the children grew older, it became unfeasible to host such an assortment of people in the house, yet the door was always open to accommodate the those who came for help, advice, support, and hot meals.



Short Message For Chanukah - Harav Hagaon R' Shmuel Kamenetsky Rosh Yeshiva of Philadelphia

The **פני יהושע** and others ask, that the **נס** of finding a jug of pure oil was completely unnecessary - According to Halocha the **עבודה** in the **בית המקדש** may be carried out even with impure oil in pressing circumstances. So why did Hashem perform the miracle of helping the Yidden find pure oil and making it last for eight days?

The Meforshim explain that Hashem performed this miracle just to demonstrate his love for the Jewish people, by enabling us to carry out this Mitzvah in an optimal way.

R' Yitzchok Hutner Zt"l gave a Moshol to reflect this Yesod:

When a baby has to be cleaned and given a bath, there is a big difference who gives the bath. When the maid gives the bath, she washes, dresses the baby and then hands over the child to the mother. However when the mother gives the child the bath, after she washes the baby, she then gives a kiss. That kiss is forever lasting!

Rav Hutner said that the same is true by Chanukah. Chanukah is a time that Hashem displayed His love by giving us **שמן טהור**.

This is what Hashem gave us; He gave us the kiss, after the Milchomo. We live with this and demonstrate to the whole world that these candles are our **נרות נס**

The most important thing on Chanukah is to strengthen ourselves in Torah and Yiras Shomayim. Every stage in life brings with it new opportunities, and the potential to achieve something unique and special. Likewise, in the larger spectrum of Klal Yisrael, every individual plays an important role and can contribute to achieving great success at a community level and national level. In growing and developing as a Jewish nation, we need our youth. We must pass down the Torah tradition to the next generation and allow the upcoming young adults to learn how to lead the Jewish people. But even as we grow older in years, we must always remember, we can be old and be youthful. So long as we are alive and breathing, we can achieve and accomplish that which we set our mind to do.

"A day should not pass without acts of loving-kindness, either with one's body, money, or soul."

How the Gulag Judge Lit Menorah - Asharon Baltazar



Repeatedly arrested for his "counter-revolutionary" activities to preserve the flickering flame of Judaism in the Soviet Union, Reb Mordechai Chanzin frequently found himself behind bars. His first sentence amounted to 10 years in a forced-labour camp. After his release, Reb Mordechai was again found guilty and punished with five more years. His third and final sentence resulted in six years. Overall, between the years 1935 and 1956, he spent 21 years in Soviet prisons and camps. In his short stints of freedom he selflessly devoted himself to preserving Judaism behind the Iron Curtain.

Among his many experiences, there was one story that he would tell again and again:

As the Siberian winter deepened, Chanukah came, and a group of young Jewish men, all prisoners of the Gulag, convened for a short meeting. The topic: how to obtain and light a secret menorah. One promised to supply margarine to be used as fuel. Some frayed threads from standard-issue camp garb would suffice as wicks. Even small cups to hold the margarine were procured from somewhere. Of course, all this was against camp regulations, and they all understood the implication of their actions should they be caught.

Reb Mordechai was the eldest of the group of 18 men, and was therefore honoured to usher in the holiday by lighting of the first candle. In the dead of night, in a small garden shed, the hardy crew crowded around their makeshift menorah and listened to Reb Mordechai's emotional voice as he recited the first blessings, tears trickling down his cheeks. Reb Mordechai and his comrades gazed silently at the small yellow light, each one recalling Chanukah in his parents' home.

The loud crash of the door opening shattered the men's reverie. Camp guards rushed through the doorway and flooded the cramped space. The Jewish inmates were grabbed by brutish hands and shoved through the camp. When they reached a small dank cell, they were ordered to pile inside.

The first to be brought to trial was the ringleader, Reb Mordechai. Inside the small courtroom, which consisted of the judge's desk and a bench for the defendant, the proceedings were all but pro forma. Reb Mordechai had already predicted his indictment, and solemnly awaited the verdict.

"This is an act of treason," said the prosecutor. "By lighting the candles, you intended to signal to enemy forces. The penalty for this is death."

The judge regarded the young man standing in front of him. "Do you have anything to say for yourself?"

Reb Mordechai's heart pounded in his chest as he approached the judge. "Is it just me, or is it the rest of the group too?"

"*All* of you," enunciated the judge dryly.

Reb Mordechai was devastated.

The courtroom began to spin around him. Whatever indifference he was able to afford until then vanished in the terror-stricken realization that his fellow brothers would be led to their deaths. He blamed himself.

Reb Mordechai burst into bitter tears, and for a few minutes he stood in front of the judge, sobbing uncontrollably. Years of crushing pain and pent-up emotions overwhelmed him and couldn't be stopped.

"Come close," said the judge.

Reb Mordechai took a step towards the judge's desk. Softly, the judge asked about his relatives, their means of livelihood and other personal details. Reb Mordechai answered the judge's inquiries.

"What do you have to say for yourself?" the judge pressed on.

Mustering temerity he did not feel, Reb Mordechai addressed the judge, "We are Jews, and we lit the candles that night to observe the holiday of Chanukah."

"You lit Chanukah candles? You lit Chanukah candles?" the judge repeated to himself, clearly unsettled. "You don't say . . . Chanukah candles."

Recomposing himself, the judge called to the two guards present in the courtroom and asked them to stand outside. When the door clicked closed, the judge turned his attention back to Reb Mordechai.

"If you lit Chanukah candles, let me demonstrate the right way to light them."

Reb Mordechai watched the judge light a small lamp. Picking up the incriminating documents gingerly, with trembling hands, the judge slid the first one off and held it to the flame. The paper caught fire and disappeared quickly in an orange blaze and a few wisps of smoke. As if he were afraid to delay lest he change his mind, the judge worked quickly through the pile, saying "You see? This is how you light Chanukah candles." Soon there was nothing remaining of the pile.

Finished, the judge scooped up the scattered ashes, strode over to the window and tossed them into the Siberian wind. Sitting down,

the judge reached for the buzzer on his table and summoned the guards.

"Take this group of 18 men," the judge barked, "and separate them, making sure that it would be impossible for them to see one another. There's no point in killing them; they are not worth even one bullet."

The guards marched out, and Reb Mordechai was again left alone with the judge. The latter faced Reb Mordechai and said in a trembling voice, "I too am a Jew, and I beg you to make sure that the future generations of our people will know to light the Chanukah candles."

In 1956, a few years following Stalin's death, hundreds of thousands of prisoners were pardoned and their names cleared. Among them was Reb Mordechai Chanzin, who was finally given permission to leave the camps that had robbed him of decades of life. Chanzin moved to Moscow, where he became secretary to Chief Rabbi Yehudah Leib Levin. A decade later, he was allowed to immigrate to Israel, where he was reunited with his brother Dovid, the rabbi of Petach Tikva.



Location...Location...Location...

Reb Shimon Daskal, a Satmar chassid from Bnei Brak, was once deliberating whether he should buy a store on Reb Akiva corner Yerushalayim St., a prime location, or if he should buy a store three times the size, on a side street.

The Satmar Rebbe told him, "The *Tana'im* and *Amora'im* created tefillos (see *Brachos* 17.), but few people say them. But there's a tefillah written by an *acharon*, the Chayei Adam, it is called **תפילת זכה**, and many people say it.

This is because **תפילת זכה** is said when Yom Kippur is approaching. So you see that it's all about the location... Buy the store that's in a better location."

When one lights Chanukah lecht, he is in a *good location*, and he should take advantage of this location and special time for tefillah.

Bitachon



Many people say **יושב בסתר עליון** (*Tehillim* 91) after lighting Chanukah *lecht*, which talks about *bitachon*. **כי אתה ה' מחסי** "***You Hashem are my shield*** **לא תירא מפחד לילה** , ***therefore I am not afraid***."

The Abuderham writes that we don't find the letter ז in this kappitel because when one trusts in Hashem he doesn't need **כלי זיין** – weapons!

Seeing the Miracles



There's a popular question people ask on Chanukah. It is known as "The Beis Yosef's question." More than a hundred answers have been written over the years.

The Beis Yosef asks: The Yidden found a jug that contained enough oil for one night, which miraculously burned for eight days. Thus, the lights burned naturally for one day and

miraculously for another seven days. So, why do we celebrate Chanukkah for *eight* days?

The Alter of Kelm *zt'l* answers that on the first night of Chanukah, we celebrate the miracle of creation, the miracle that oil can give light because that is also a miracle. Why should oil give light? It's a miracle, and we must train ourselves to recognize these wonders.

The Alter of Kelm adds that the miracles of creation are more significant than all other miracles because it is **יש מאין** - something emanating from nothingness.

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* says that on Chanukah, we must train ourselves to see the world correctly. We should look at nature and recognize that it is miraculous.

Shulchan Aruch (676:3) teaches, "Someone who isn't going to light Chanukah *lecht* on one of the nights of Chanukah, should make the *brachah* **שעשה ניסים** when he sees Chanukah *lecht*"

We don't say a *brachah* for seeing any other mitzvah. What is unique about the Chanukah *lecht* that one makes a *brachah* simply for seeing them?

It is because on Chanukah we correct our vision and perception of the world. Thus, *seeing* is a major component of the mitzvah.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 22) say, "Chanukah *lecht* that was placed above twenty *amos* is *pasul*." This is because it is so high that people won't see them, and it won't publicize the miracle. The problem is that people won't see it, and on Chanukah we need to ***see***.

Lighting Chanukah *lecht* can be compared to switching on the light in a dark room. Before we lit the Chanukah lecht, we didn't recognize the miracles surrounding us, but now we do. However, even if the lights are on, but someone closes his eyes, he still won't see.

On Chanukah, we have the potential to see the world with all its miracles, but it is up to us to open our eyes and see Hashem's hand in the world.

On Chanukah, we are awakened by the bright lights of *emunah* that shine from the Chanukah *lecht*.

The *Tzror HaMor* says **חנוכה** spells **חנו כ״ה** , and there are **כ״ה** - twenty-five, letters in **שמע ישראל ה׳ אלקינו ה׳ אחד** . So **חנו כ״ה** means the Chashmanaim won the war in the merit of their belief in Hashem. And each year, on Chanukah, we should improve and enhance our *emunah*.

One way to accomplish this is to ***open our eyes and see*** the miracles Hashem performs for us all the time.

Chanukah: A Time for Teshuvah

The *Meir Einei Chachamim* (12:2) writes, "Believe with *emunah sheleimah* that when you light Chanukah *lecht*, all the sparks of your soul and of your fathers' and grandfathers' *neshamos*, all the way up to Adam HaRishon are standing there with you.

This applies for every Yid who lights Chanukah *lecht*, as these *neshamos* hope that perhaps with your inspiration by the Chanukah *lecht*, they will merit a rectification and reach their origin and source."

חנוכה comes from the word **חינוך** , which means training, to train oneself, or to train children, to act properly. The holiday is called **חנוכה** because during these eight days, we teach ourselves to serve Hashem properly.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* adds that since Chanukah is a time for *teshuvah*, it is recommended to say *Tehillim* on Chanukah because *Tehillim* helps a person in his path of *teshuvah*.

"***A person must believe that by saying Tehillim, he can leave all his foolish ways and all his problems and overcome thoughts of yeush that the yetzer hara brings onto a person***."

Rabbi Yechiel Emanuel- Leil Shishi Series [לעילוי נשמת ר׳גרשון בן ר׳אריה ליב ע״ה] Chanukah 5775



I heard the following amazing story from **Rabbi Yossi Chazzan** about 8 years ago. He heard it from the Rav of the family.

There is a family that lives in America. Unfortunately, they didn't have children for many years. Eventually, they were blessed with quins! This became quite a burden for the mother who had five toddlers running about the house. So, she employed an older lady to help with the day-to-day tasks. This lady would take them out daily to the park. This would give the mother a bit of breathing space to get the house in order.

Once when she came back from their outing, the mother was not at home as she had errands to do. When she eventually returned, she found mayhem and bedlam in the house. The children were all over the place – with no sign of the lady!

She eventually found her in the front room – unconscious on the floor! She called Hatzalah, and the medics took her to hospital for observations.

A few days later, when she had recovered somewhat, the mother went to visit the lady.

The lady was happy to see her employer, but she said, "I must ask you something really important… - There is a picture of a lady hanging up in your dining room. Please reveal to me who it is.

The mother answered, "I don't mind you asking, but why is it so important that you know who it is?"

I will tell you a story: I am a holocaust survivor. I went through one of the camps. It was a labour camp for young girls as opposed to an extermination camp.

It was coming up to Chanukah, so my four friends and I decided that we needed to light Chanukah lights. This would be a very difficult if not impossible task to accomplish in that Gehennim.

One of the girls said that she would fashion some wicks from threads that she pulled from her overall. Another girl said that she works in the factory workshop, and she would smear some grease from the cog wheels onto her overall each day. She would later squeeze this out to collect sufficient fuel. Another girl came up with the ingenious idea to use dried potato skins to act as oil receptacles. They would attempt to get these from the kitchens. Matches would be procured by bartering extra rations.

On the day that they decided to steal the potatoes – the guard caught them red-handed! The guard said that he would make an example of all five of the girls. He would publicly hang them all tomorrow in the main yard in front of the whole camp.

The girls went crazy and were thinking of any way that they could save themselves. Who could they turn to for help?

There was a certain girl in the camp who had special privileges as she was multi-lingual and helped the officers to listen in on the allied radio broadcasts. They decided to ask her for assistance – maybe she could help them.

They went to her cabin, but she was not there. So later when it was dark, they decided to go looking for her in the forest. They eventually found her, but she looked very fearful and guilty of some crime. They could smell the embers of something that had just been extinguished.



They retold her the whole story, and explained to her that in the morning, they were all going to be executed by public hanging. They begged her for help.

She said, "I'm sorry but it is too risky to help you. What do you think I've just been doing? Can't you smell it? I just lit my own lights and had to quickly extinguish them when I heard someone coming. I'm sorry, but I can't risk my life for you. There is nothing I can do for you."

5am the next morning, the sadistic guard comes in to wake them up and tells them that their time is almost up. They were blindfolded, dragged to the gallows and ropes were tied around their arms and legs, and the nooses were put around their necks.

Just as he was about to do the dastardly deed, we heard shrieks and shouting. This girl was shouting at the guards, and they were shrieking back. After a few moments, which felt like an eternity, we were untied and led back to the barracks!

We don't know what she said, but she saved our lives and we survived. That picture up on the wall in your dining room is an older image of that girl. Of that I'm absolutely sure. I will never forget her face. When I saw the picture of her, it brought all those appalling memories from the holocaust flooding back – and I passed out!

The mother broke down crying and was inconsolable. After some time, she said to the older assistant lady, "The night before I gave birth to the quins, I had a dream. In that dream, my mother appeared to me looking serene. She said one sentence to me that I never understood… until now: ***'five neshamos for five neshmos***'! She

then disappeared. I now understand that in the zechus of my mother saving you and your four friends, it made it possible that I should bring five neshamos into the world!"

Chochmas Yevonis



There is a story brought in the gemorah as follows: There was a siege around the walls of the Bais Hamikdash and every day they would send money over the wall to purchase two animals for the tamidin Korbanos. One day an elderly fellow sent a message using Greek code stating, "If you continue sending the animals you will never overcome them." The next day they sent a pig instead, and that was the beginning of their victory.

From this story, Chazal forbade learning chochmas Yevonis. The question is; why? The old fellow could have used any code? What did Chazal see in chochmas Yevonis that they were goizer this gezaira?

Story #2

There is another story in the gemorah as follows: a great Sage went over to another gadol and said, "I have learned everything in the Torah, now can I go and learn chochmas Yevonis?" The second sage answered, "When you can find a time that is not day and not night then you can go learn that Chochmah." i.e. never. The question is, did he not know Chazal said it was forbidden because of the previous story?

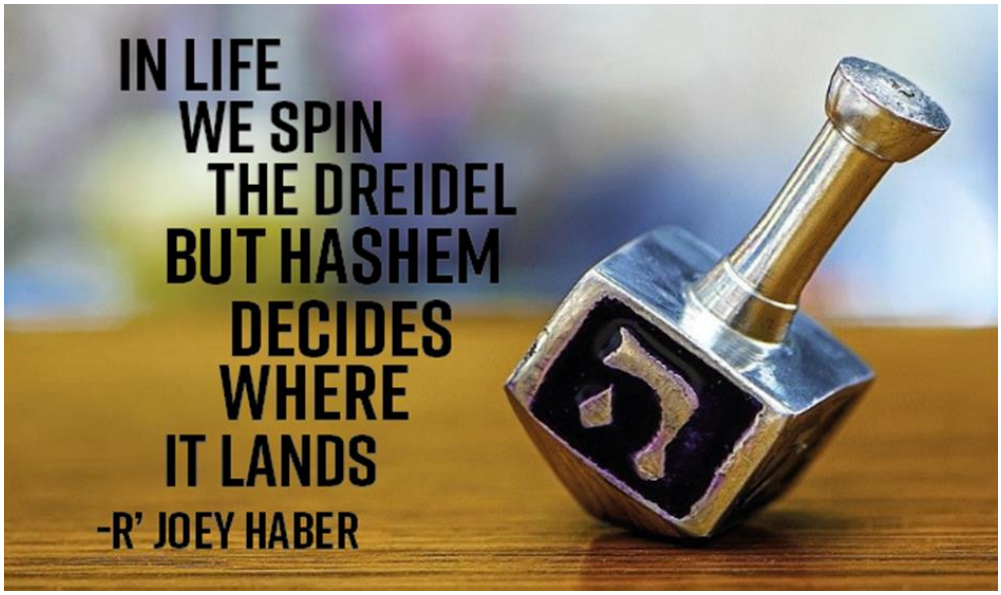
The answer is that chazal understood that it was the chochmas Yevonis itself that pulled the elderly fellow to do such a low act. This sage thought, since he already learned Torah, and he lifted himself up, maybe now he can learn Chochmas Yovonis and it won't have any effect on him.

The other sage replied, "When you can find a time a time that is not day and not night then you can go learn that Chochmah." The Sage was telling him that no matter how much Torah one learns, the bad influences can still have a bad effect on them and is still strictly forbidden.

Someone met **ר' יוסי בן קסמא** and asked **ר' יוסי** to move to his hometown that wasn't a town of **תורה**, and he would pay him one million golden dinars, precious stones and pearls. **ר' יוסי** answered, "Even if you would give me all the gold, silver, precious stones and pearls in the whole world, I would only live in a place of **תורה**."

So, if there is a message we can take away from Chanukah this year, then it's this. To carefully choose our surroundings. Never to believe "I've made it, and nothing can have a negative effect on me."

That is the darkness of Yovon. It's better to hang around people who will give us the influence of Torah, every time that is day and is night and then we will be transformed into greater people.



The 'Megilah' Of Chanukah



Megilas Antiochus recounts the story of Chanukah and the history of the miraculous victory of the Chashmonaim over the Yevanim, the Greek Empire.

This Megilah (which is actually a Midrash, not a Megilah) is mentioned by the BeHag (Hilchos Sofrim) where he writes that it was compiled by the "elders of the School of Shammai and the elders of the School of Hillel."

Rav Saadia Gaon maintained that it was composed in the Aramaic language by the Chashmonaim themselves and is entitled 'Megillas Bais Chashmonai'.

There was an ancient custom (brought by the Tosefos Rid Sukkah 44. See also Shibolei Haleket Siman 174) to read this Megilah on Chanukah. Some Sephardic congregations still have this custom nowadays. The text of this Megilah is widely available.

Haderech Chanukah Sparks of Inspiration

What did we do on Chanukah? We rested on the 25th! Why do we focus on the resting? Why don't we focus on the Menorah or the Nissim?

The Greeks were coming after Klal Yisrael, and the ***Bach*** says that the reason why all the decrees were upon us was because we became lazy and lax in our avodas Hashem. We went to shul, but we came in late. We kept kosher, but when things got tough, we cut some corners. They did Yiddishkeit, Yiddishkeit was done, but Yiddishkeit

wasn't lived! It wasn't loved. It wasn't experienced. We were just going through the motions.

Hashem said, "You want the Beis Hamikdash? -Show that you really want it. Prove it, fight for it, even when it's tough. Let me see the מְעַטִים going against the רַבִּים.

Therefore, the miracle came out through the Cohanim, through their fire and passion, showing us what it means to do the avoda. The only way to fight the Greeks was with passion.

The Greeks represented the physicality of this world. But once we followed that trend, our avodas Hashem diminished.

Which world are we living for? Are we living for Olam Habah or Olam Hazeh? Yes, we are allowed to enjoy Olam Hazeh, but we must realise what is really more important. The Chovos Halvavos says that you can't love both. You can love one, and enjoy the other one. This was the fight between Yavan and Klal Yisrael.

We must live to experience Yiddishkeit. A Yiddishkeit that is on fire. This is represented in the flames of the menorah – the fire. Our Yiddishkeit should be burning like a fire!

This is what Chanukah is all about. As long as we were running after Olam Hazeh, we couldn't rest. But when we are living a life of avodas Hashem -That's tranquillity! What is Menucha? A life of Torah! I can enjoy my food, house, Shabbos – why? Because my **love** is with Hashem.

We are Yidden. We have to live with this excitement, this passion , this fire!

"Who welcomes his friend with a smile is as one giving him the finest gifts in the world." ~~ Avos D'rabbi Nasan

Illuminating a Dangerous Night During the Crusades by Rabbi Dovid Hoffman



The following story is said to have taken place during the 1200's. The Second Crusade was under way. Thousands of peasants became soldiers overnight and marched across Europe to fight the Muslims who had conquered the Holy Land. It was an adventure for them, and their religious leaders promised them great rewards if they were successful.

So, the ignorant peasants banded together and marched - and the first thing they did was massacre the Jews wherever they went. The ancient community of Eisenstadt, Germany, was a proud and vibrant kehillah; yet they now lay directly in the path of the marauding crusaders.

The Jews, terrified and frantic, ran to their rabbi for advice. Calmly, the rabbi replied, "It is late in the afternoon. Let us assemble in the shul for Mincha/ Maariv prayers. As Hashem wishes, so shall be our fate."

Swiftly the men, women and children came to the shul. The davening that afternoon was unlike any other. Every word was said slowly, clearly, tearfully, from the worshipers who were facing massacre and death, the children did not know what was happening, but the fright and terror of their parents spread to their hearts.

The shammas bolted and barricaded the heavy doors. There was no need to leave the doors open any more. Every Jew in Eisenstadt was inside that shul. It was the first night of Chanukah. Whatever will happen, the first candle must be lit! The rabbi motioned to the

shammas, who nodded and brought a box of candles. Then the Rabbi walked toward the menorah that always stood on a shelf on the south wall - but it was gone!

What had happened to it? But there was no time to think about that now. The mob would be here at any moment. Men, women and children



cried and wailed. The rabbi went up before the Ark and asked for silence. The trembling assembled looked up, wondering what the rabbi would say in these, their final moments.

"Tonight," the Rabbi began, "is the beginning of Chanukah. At this time many years ago, our forefathers were saved from a terrible fate. Tonight, we cannot celebrate this holiday, because our menorah is lost. But if we are worthy, another Chanukah miracle can happen tonight.

Even when the sword lies on the throat of a Jew, he does not give up hope. We are Hashem's children so we must not give up hope. Until the last moment let us pray; and if that moment should come, let us know and understand that it is the will of the Holy One, Blessed is He. Let us meet our death as loyal Jews!"

Everyone remained silent. Then the shammas suddenly cried out, "Now, I remember!" Everyone looked at him, startled. He went on, "There is another menorah in the Aron. I know I saw it, but I couldn't remember where."

He opened the Aron and reached down into the left-hand corner. His hand grasped the menorah and pulled. The menorah wouldn't budge.

It stuck fast. He tried to turn it. And strangely, it turned freely. He looked down and couldn't believe his eyes.

The platform in front of the Aron, on which he was standing, was moving inward. Below was a stone staircase. The news spread through the crowd. The Rabbi and the shammas began directing everyone down the stairs, and as each one went down, he took with him one of the Sifrei Torah from the Aron.

When the last person had descended, the rabbi calmly shut the doors of the Aron, went down the stairs, and pulled the platform board to its regular position. As he did so, the shul doors crashed and splintered. While the mob let their wrath out on the empty seats, the Jews walked along an underground tunnel until they reached a large chamber, with ladders all around leading to trap doors.

But before the people could rest, the rabbi said, "In peril we turned to our Creator; now we must thank Him. Let us say Hallel." In that underground room cut out in the earth, they all recited Hallel with great fervour.

Afterwards, the rabbi made two indentations in the chamber's wall with his fingers. In each he stuck a candle, and lit the top one. With tears in his eyes, he chanted the blessings for the Chanukah candles and then lit the other candle. While the menorah burned brightly, lighting up the dim chamber, no one spoke. They just gazed at the candles and seemed to absorb what it was saying - the message of Chanukah - the promise of rescue to those who deserve it.

Wise sayings often fall on barren ground, but a kind word is never thrown away.

The Origin of the Dreidel?



The dreidel or *sevivon* is perhaps the most famous custom associated with Hanukkah . Indeed, various rabbis have tried to find an integral connection between the dreidel and the Hanukkah story; the standard explanation is that the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin,* which appear on the dreidel in the Diaspora, stand for *nes gadol haya sham*–"a great miracle happened **there**, "while in Israel the dreidel says *nun, gimmel, hey, pey,* which means "a great miracle happened **here**."

One 19th-century Rabbi maintained that Jews played with the dreidel in order to fool the Greeks if they were caught studying Torah, which had been outlawed. Others figured out elaborate *gematriot* [numerological explanations based on the fact that every Hebrew letter has a numerical equivalent] and word plays for the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin.* For example, *nun, gimmel, hey, shin* in gematria equals 358, which is also the numerical equivalent of *mashiach* !

Finally, the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin* are supposed to represent the four kingdoms that tried to destroy us [in ancient times]: N = Nevuchadnetzar = Babylon; H = Haman = Persia = Madai; G = Gog = Greece; and S = Seir = Rome.

The dreidel game, besides being connected with Hanukkah, has been played by various people in various languages for many centuries.

In England and Ireland there is a game called *totum* or *teetotum* that is especially popular. In English, this game is first mentioned as "*totum*" ca. 1500-1520. The name comes from the Latin "*totum,*" which means "all." By 1720, the game was called *T- totum* or *teetotum,* and by 1801 the four letters already

represented four words in English: T = Take all; H = Half; P = Put down; and N = Nothing.



Our Eastern European game of dreidel (including the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin*) reminds us its universality, as the German equivalent of the *totum* game: N = Nichts = nothing; G = Ganz = all; H = Halb = half; and S = Stell ein = put in. In German, the spinning top was called a "torrel" or "trundl," and in Yiddish it was called a "dreidel," a "fargl," a "varfl" [= something thrown], "shtel ein" [= put in], and "gor, gorin" [= all].

When Hebrew was revived as a spoken language, the dreidel was called a *sevivon*, which is the one that caught on.



Light Up The World! – R' Aviv Bar Ilan

Rashi describes a coal merchant who sees another tradesman called a 'Pishtani'- someone who sells flax on the market. He sees that this flax merchant is taking over the place, bringing more and more straw and literally flooding the marketplace with his bulky produce.

So the coal merchant begins to panic. 'What will be with my merchandise!? Soon this guy will leave no room for my coals and I won't be able to sell anything!'

A wise friend reassured the coal merchant, 'You have nothing to worry about! As soon as his straw touches your coal, your coal will burn down his entire stock!'

Sometimes as Jewish parents, we worry - how can we possibly compete with the glitz and glamour of the world of Eisav around us!? The lure of the myriads of enticing opportunities on offer seem to far overshadow our seemingly far less dazzling alternative!

The answer lies in this Rashi. All we have to worry about is that in our own hearts we have a real flame! As long as we have a flame of Emes burning in our hearts, its flames will incinerate and consume any of Eisav's empty alternatives! It's not about numbers - it's about having fire in our soul!

One Purim, Nosson and his wife entered a taxi with an Israeli driver, shaven head, no kapel and didn't seem to be celebrating Purim. Nosson, slightly intoxicated from his Purim seuda, struck up a conversation with the driver who proceeded to reveal that he was in fact a 7th generation Yerushalmi!

When Nosson heard this, and with the Purim wine opening up his heart, Nosson began to cry noticeably! Here, he thought, is a descendent of the holiest ancestors and yet he has fallen so far away! How could this be?!

A year later Nosson's wife burst through the door excited to share something with her husband. 'You won't believe it… I just got out of a taxi with that driver from last year on Purim if you remember… well… he was wearing a kapel, tzitzis and he even had some payas!!! I asked him what happened and he told me that your tears last Purim penetrated his heart and made him rethink his priorities!'

As we gaze into the menorah candles, Chanukah is a time when we can reignite that genuine spark of Emes in our hearts and souls and light up the world around us! - A lichtige Chanukah.

"One would not be jealous of one's friend if one could be like him. " ~~ Mishle Yehoshua

A Practical Idea to Upgrade Your Family's Chanukah – Rabbi Shlomo Landau



It's Chanukah. Hopefully, you and your family are so excited about the Mitzvas and celebration, the messages, inspiration and the impact.

The Beis Aaron writes something that is so simple, so practical and extremely impactful.

He writes that before you light *neiros* on the first night, turn to your family, and ask them to think of a few things that they are grateful to Hashem for. This is basic daily functions.

The ability to walk, talk, to have family, freedom, plenty, health etc etc etc - All the different brachos that we might take for granted all the time.

Try to highlight them. Ask each person/child, from the youngest to the oldest – "What are you thankful to Hashem for?" We are talking about regular stuff, not major miracles, but **וְעַל נִסֶּיךָ שֶׁבְּכָל יוֹם עִמָּנוּ** – everyday gifts that are miracles in themselves.

The Beis Aaron says that when a person says the Shehecheyanu on the first night of Chanukah, he should be full of gratitude and thanks to The Riboino Shel Olam for everything – for every step that we take, for every breath that we take, for every moment of nachas, for every moment of health.

Why is the first night the most important?

Everybody knows the famous Beis Yosef's question that there was enough oil to burn for one night, so why do we light for 8 nights and not 7 nights?

The Baalei Mussar explain that we light the extra night, just to thank Hashem for the miracle that oil burns! To thank Hashem for all the incredible miracles that He does for us, which could be portrayed as natural or part of nature, - They are all miracles! We must thank Hashem continually. It is not necessarily specific to Chanukah. It is also for the Nissim that Hashem does for us every single day.

Rabbi Pesach Krohn - Project Mesorah



Many of you know the famous Gemarah in Shabbos 22 has a machlokos how one lights the neiros Chanukah. Beis Shammai says you start from 8 and light counting down. Beis Hillel says you start at 1 and count upwards. The Gemarah uses the words **מוסף והולך** – You always have to add more and go higher.

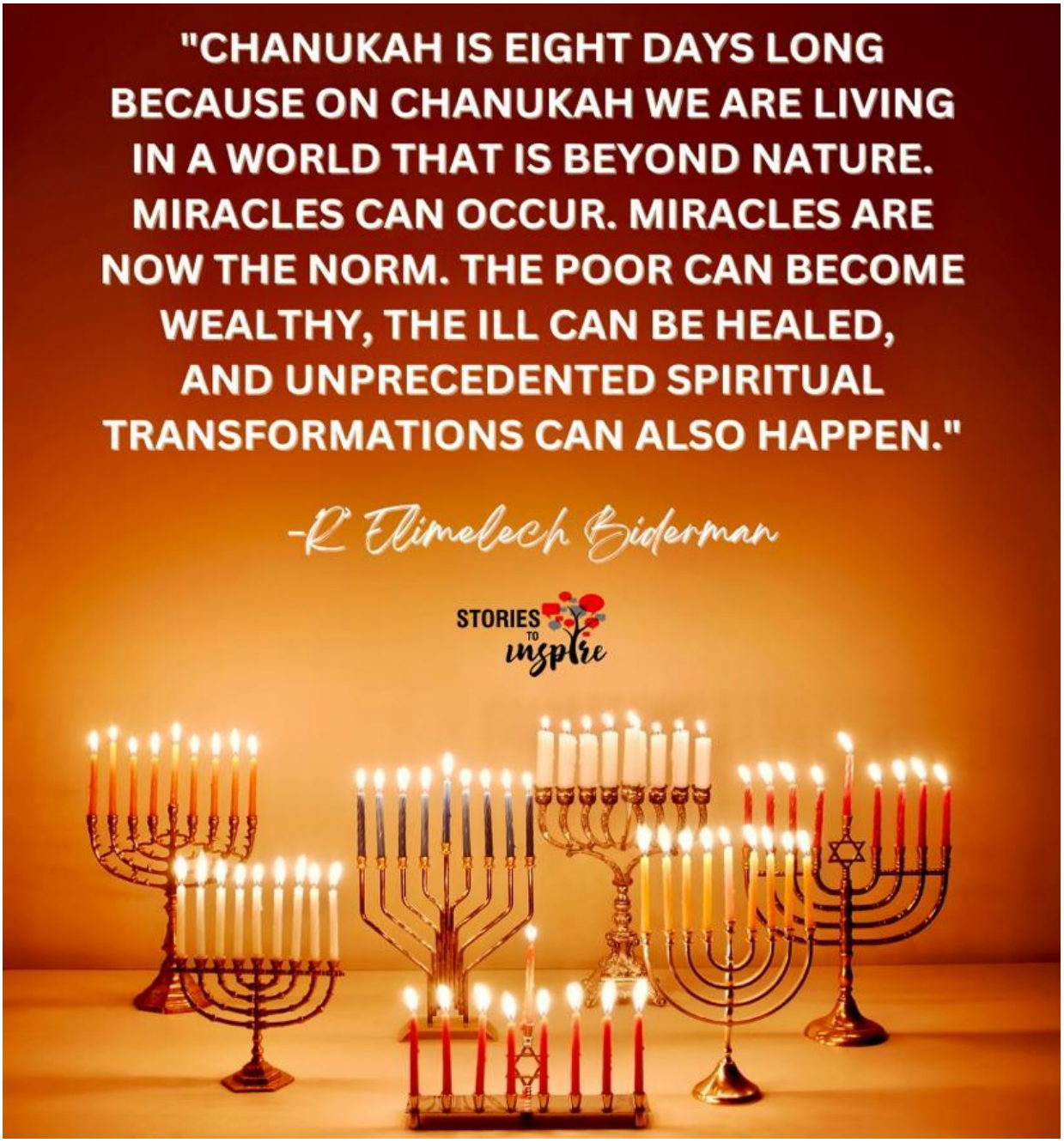
I think that this is an important lesson of Chanukah. We should all add more to our Torah, Tefillah and Ahavas Yisrael.

There is a boys camp that takes them on outings to Utah National Park and The Grand Canyon etc. The kids sleep in lodges or tents every night.

There was one boy this year who was crying. Rabbi Mendlowitz asked him, "What's the matter, is everything ok?"

The kid said, "I'm upset, because I haven't kissed a Mezuzah in 6 days!"

Maybe our **מוסף והולך** should be to always ensure that we kiss the Mezuzah.



Short And Sweet Story Of The Week With R'mordechai Levin

The Chidah, ZT"L, writes a fascinating story about the **Maharam Mirottenberg, ZT"L**. The government accused him of being a spy and threw him in jail. The Jewish people did all they could to get him released. After much negotiation, they settled on a huge sum in order to release him. However, the Maharam Mirottenberg forbade them from spending such a large amount on his release.

In the end, the Maharam Mirottenberg remained imprisoned in a tall tower all alone until he died in solitary confinement. Even then, the terrible government did not allow his body to be removed for Jewish burial.

After quite a while, a wealthy Jew decided to personally ensure the release of the Maharam Mirottenberg's body. After expending much time, effort, and money he successfully won the release of the body. He earned the great honour of personally burying the great Maharam Mirottenberg. Then, the next day he died! The Jewish world couldn't understand how one who had worked so hard to earn the release of the Tzaddik's body could deserve such a fate.

A few days later, the wealthy man came to his friend in a dream. He told him that the very night after the Tzaddik was buried, the Maharam Mirottenberg came to him in a dream.

As a way of thanking him for his great deed, he offered him a choice of two fates; He could choose great wealth for himself and his defendants forever or die immediately and be guaranteed a place in Olam Haba.

The rich man told his friend that he chose the second choice, and that's why he died the day after the burial. His friend asked him what does he have in Olam Haba, and he answered that he is next to the Maharam Mirottenberg in Gan Eden!

Comment: *Aharon Hakohen was given a great gift from Hashem, the privilege of lighting the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash was forever to be done by him and his descendants. As we light the Menorah with our family this Chanukah, let us refocus our lives on choosing to do that which will grant us Eternal life. Let us choose eternity and Gan Eden, as did the rich man, focusing less on this world and dedicating ourselves to lives of Torah and Chesed (acts of kindness).*

THE MENORAH OF HAKODOSH BORUCH HU IS THE JEWISH PEOPLE. WE ARE HIS LAMP. WE ARE THE LIGHT FOR THE NATIONS. WE ARE THE MIRACLE; WE ARE THE FLAME THAT WILL NEVER GO OUT. WHEN HAKODOSH BORUCH HU RESCUED OUR PEOPLE AFTER ALL THOSE WARS AGAINST THE MIGHTY ARMIES, IT WAS THIS MENORAH THAT DIDN'T GO OUT. WE, THE MENORAH OF HASHEM, SURVIVED.

-R' Avigdor Miller zt"l



Rabbi Elimelech Biderman - Chanukah - Chanina

One of Hashem's attributes is **חנון**, which means that Hashem grants kindness, beyond what one actually deserves. **חנון** is from the word **חנם**, which means free. Because of Hashem's love to us, he gives us **מתנות חנם**- free gifts, that we don't necessarily deserve.

The Machzor Vitri teaches that Chanukah - **חנוכה** comes from the word **חנינה**. On Chanukah Hashem grants us good, beyond what we deserve.

R' Yisrael of Ruzhin zt'l taught that the shefa (spiritual bounty) that comes down on Chanukah is similar to the shefa that comes down on Rosh Hashanah, except that on Rosh Hashanah, one is judged whether he is worthy to receive or not. If he isn't worthy, he won't get Hashem's blessings.

On Chanukah we receive **חנינה**. Even if he doesn't deserve the bounty, Hashem will grant it to him!



On Chanukah, the custom is to play with a dreidel. When one spins the dreidel, he can do nothing to make the dreidel fall on the winning letter. Even if he is the best spinner in the world and spins the dreidel with all his might, he still cannot predict or arrange the outcome.

Similarly, one works for a living, one makes hishtadlus, but the results are in Hashem's hands. Hashem does, and not mankind.

Chanukah Gems



One Chanukah, a delegation of Jews arrived in Lublin to speak with the Chozeh. The leader of the delegation said, "Rebbe, a Jew named Yaakov is causing our community great trouble by informing on other Jews to the government authorities. Many Jews have been forced to pay large fines, and some have even been imprisoned due to the terrible stories he makes up and tells about people. Please, Rebbe, help us bring an end to this difficult situation." He then took out a piece of paper with this man's name written on it and handed it to the Chozeh.

The Chozeh glanced at the note and said, "Why, this man's merit is illuminating the entire world!" The group was shocked, and they left the Chozeh, speechless.

After Chanukah, the Chozeh called for the delegation to come before him once again. This time, he said a Tefilah and gave a Brachah that this evil informer should be stopped, and that his terrible plans should no longer be successful!

The delegation thanked the Chozeh and left. After the delegation had gone, the Chozeh's son, Rav Yosef, asked his father why he hadn't given his Brachah to stop this man during Chanukah?

The Chozeh answered, "When I saw the note with the man's name on it, at that moment, he was lighting the Chanukah Menorah. Despicable as such a Jew is in the eyes of Hashem, the beauty of the Mitzvah he was performing illuminated both this world and the next, and I was powerless to do anything. Therefore, I had to wait until after Chanukah to try and remove his evil influence!"

Zos Chanukah Is Akin to Shemini Atzeres

On this topic, it is related in **Sefer Bais Aharon that Rav Aharon of Karlin zy"a** once asked his chasidim to sing the following words on Zos Chanukah: "***Hadran alan Maseches Chanukah. Hadran alan Maseches Chanukah. We will return to you Maseches Chanukah.***"

He would say: Many things are on "the eighth". Milah is on the eighth day. Shemini Atzeres is the eighth day of Sukkos. On this day, there is a perfect connection of all "yichudim" that were made during the entire month and completed on Shemini Atzeres. And on Chanukah, we kindle eight lights.

It seems to me that the eighth day of Chanukah has the same bechina as Shemini Atzreres. Therefore, tzadikim call this day "the final seal". When we complete all of this yichudim of Chanukah, we say "hadran alan" because Hashem returns all of the good influences to the world on this day.

Rabbi Daniel Glatstein - A Secret Formula





The Yom Tov of Chanukah is different from Purim. On Purim we celebrate physically with elaborate food and drink, whereas Chanukah is experienced by thanking and praising Hashem. But this act of thanking Hashem is so fundamental that the Rambam writes that the mitzvah of lighting the menorah is so dear. This is because the main function and purpose of our existence is to recognize and thank Hashem, and the medium of the Menorah allows for this very purpose to be expressed and actualized.

Asher had a number of daughters whom he was struggling to marry off. It occupied a good portion of Asher's time and it was beginning to wear him down. Asher also had a chavrusa, Benny, whose daughter got married relatively quickly. As things turned out, Benny planned on helping his daughter rent an apartment in Israel, but was in need of a co-signer. He turned to Asher for that. Asher graciously agreed, and the paperwork was signed.

However, when things came to a head, Benny was unable to take care of his financial responsibilities for the apartment's rent, and it fell on the shoulders of Asher. Asher, though, was neither in a position to pay, which prompted the bank to come after Asher.

Now Asher was not in a place to handle additional financial pressure. He himself was doing his utmost to see to it that his daughters met their husband and settle down themselves, and having this extra concern and burden of worrying about his friend's personal matters was too much. The bank, in fact, threatened and actually went through taking over Asher's home.

At the suggestion of someone, Asher went to the **Gerrer Rebbe**. The first question the Rebbe asked was, "Do you daven?" "Of course I do," Asher said, "I ask Hashem to help me marry off my daughters and get out of this financial debt I'm in." "But do you daven?" Asher didn't understand. The Rebbe then asked the question yet again, a third time. Asher stood there in silence. He didn't know what more he could say. Yes, he did daven. Three times a day. "Rebbe, am I missing something?"

"Davening is not just asking Hashem for what you need; it's thanking Hashem for what you have. Do you thank Hashem for all the blessings you have?" With that, the conversation ended. Asher was unsettled. "What does he have to thank Hashem for?" But he couldn't deny the truth of what the Gerrer Rebbe had said. Yes, he did have clothes and he was healthy. Hashem was making all of this work for him. Taking this to heart, Asher made a list of everything

Hashem was providing him with, and came to the stark realization that what Hashem was giving him far outweighed what he didn't have.

At that private meeting between the Gerrer Rebbe and Asher, the Rebbe also disclosed a valuable piece of advice. "Your prayers should be 60% thanking Hashem and 40% asking."

This formula, as Asher soon learned, had a strong Torah source. And of all places, in Hallel. We say, "Ana Hashem hoshiana na … hatzlicha na – Please, Hashem, save us ...make us successful." Here, we ask something of Hashem. However, we also state, "Hodu La'Hashem ki tov – Praise Hashem for He is good." We also thank Hashem in Hallel. There are ten verses in total, between the four stanzas of request of "Ana Hashem" and the six of thanks of "Hodu." This is the basis of the Rebbe's breakup – 60% thanking Hashem and 40% asking Hashem.

The Yom Tov of Chanukah is centred around thanking Hashem. Yes, we have a long list of requests of Hashem, but the main function of prayer and of life is to thank Hashem. Our main focus should be on thanking Hashem for what we have, as we also ask Him for what we don't. This lesson gleaned on Chanukah is one to carry us through the entire year.

Rabbi Yisroel Majeski - Beyond Your Limit

The oft-cited question of the Beis Yosef as to why we celebrate the miracle of Chanukah to be eight days, when in reality the first day was not a miracle, is in fact answered by the Beis Yosef himself in three ways. Firstly, on the first day, after pouring oil out of the jar, it miraculously became refilled. Secondly, on each morning, the menorah candelabra itself became miraculously refilled with oil. Lastly, they divided the oil into eight parts and used only one-eighth each night, which burned the entire night.

The question on the third and final answer of the Beis Yosef is how the Jews could have relied on a miracle altogether? On the first night, the Jews should have lit the menorah with the entire amount of oil they had. How could they have only filled it up an eighth and rely on a miracle? Our Sages are clear in many places throughout the Talmud that we "do not rely on a miracle."

The Gemara (Berachos 20a) states that Rav Papa approached Abaye and asked why was it that the earlier generations experienced miracles, whereas they (the generation of Rav Papa and Abaye) did not experience miracles? It can't be, continued Rav Papa, that they were greater in their Torah scholarship than we, for we have greater Torah scholarship now than they had then. Abaye explained: "In the previous generations, the Jews were moser nefesh and would give up their lives for the purpose of Kiddush Hashem through their observance of Torah and mitzvos. However, in our generation, we are not moser nefesh for reasons of Kiddush Hashem."

When we do experience miracles? When we give up of ourselves. When we push to the limit, then Hashem performs miracles for us. When Klal Yisroel returned from the war where they were moser nefesh with but a few people, they poured in a small amount of oil and thereby relied on a miracle because they were certain there would be a miracle. Given their self-sacrifice, they knew what Hashem would do for them.

We all want miracles in our life, but how do we elicit them? Find an area in your life where you can push yourself, where you can go beyond your limits. Once you do so, Hashem says, "I'll take over from here and do the same for you."

Rav Nosson Tzvi Finkel zt"l was such an example. Whatever minimal physical energy he had left, given his Parkinson's, he poured into Torah learning and support of the Mir yeshiva. He gave as much as he could and merited to raise millions of dollars for the yeshiva and build a towering epicentre of Torah scholarship.



Someone once approached **Rav Chaim Kamil**, rebbe of Rav Nosson Tzvi, and said that he must encourage Rav Nosson Tzvi to slow down for his health's sake and well-being. Rav Chaim Kamil replied, "If a multi-billionaire would give you a blank check, how much would you fill in? It's limitless. Rav Nosson Tzvi is a blank check. He lives without limits, with unrelenting mesirus nefesh, and there's no stopping his willpower and dedication."

When we push ourselves – whether it be in tefillah¸ chesed, kibbud av v'em or anything else – even just over the days of Chanukah, Hashem takes note of it and performs miracles in our lives.

"Nefesh Shimshon" – From the Teachings of Rabbeinu Shimshon Dovid Pincus Zt"L - Chanukah: Finale of the Yamim Nora'im

Early Torah sources say that Chanukah is the finale and climax of the *Yamim Nora'im* we experienced a couple months ago. It says in *Likutei Maharil* that Chanukah is the finalization of the seal on the judgment of Yom Kippur. And R. Tzvi Elimelech said that in heaven, from Rosh Chodesh Elul until Chanukah, there is a shining image similar to a hand outstretched to receive those returnees who, for some reason, were pushed away from returning to *Hashem* during *Aseres Yemei Teshuvah.*

Their *teshuvah* is accepted until Chanukah, and this continues until the very last day of Chanukah, called *Zos Chanukah.* There is an allusion to this in the following verse: *Yeshayahu* 27:9. **בְּזֹאת יְכֻפַּר עֲוֹן־יַעֲקֹב** – In this (*Zos*) the sin of Yaakov will be atoned.



This alludes to the final day of Chanukah, on which we read the Torah portion of **המזבח וזאת חנוכת**. Until then is the final atonement of the sin of "Yaakov," of the Jewish people.

And it is written in *Sefer Bnei Yisas'char* that the rabbis of former generations were wont to say that on Chanukah we can arouse Heaven to grant children to the childless, like on Rosh Hashanah, when *Sarah Imeinu* and Channah were granted children.

This *segulah* applies mainly on the last day of Chanukah, called *Zos Chanukah*. Nevertheless, there is an allusion that it applies all of Chanukah, because the *gematriya* of **מתתיהו** is the same as that of **ראש השנה**.

From all the foregoing we see that Chanukah is the final conclusion of *Yamim Nora'im*. This could be explained as follows.

Yamim Nora'im were days of great light and *kedushah* for every Jew. Already in Elul we started gathering in *shul* while it was still night-time to pour out our prayers and pleas to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*. This naturally brings a deep feeling of *kedushah* to everyone's heart.

Then came Rosh Hashanah when we blew the *shofar*, which rips open the closure of the heart.

It intensified on Yom Kippur, when even those who are very distant draw close and attach themselves to *kedushah*. And it was immediately followed by the days of joy on Sukkos.

These were the *Yamim Nora'im*. Although we all awakened to *teshuvah* and *kedushah* on these special days, there is still room for

the *Satan* to voice an objection. Indeed, when days of light and great awe arrive, a Jew's heart is electrified and wakes up due to the powerful *kedushah* imbued in the time. But when these special days are gone, and simple days come, what are we like then? What is a Jew like when he goes back to his work and his routine, and he mixes with all sorts of people? Does the flame of *kedushah* still burn within him?

This is the role of the days of Chanukah. They are ordinary weekdays on which we may perform all kinds of *melachah*. People go to work as usual. And the darkness of Greece, the prostration to nature and its material forces, still darkens our lives. Wherever we go in the world we encounter abuse and ridicule for everything spiritual and holy. Honour and fame is accorded to science, technology and those who possess great wealth.

Even then, a Jew kindles his light, and places it prominently at the entrance to his home, publicly demonstrating his contempt for false secular splendour. He is declaring: There is no light other than Torah! There is no beauty other than *kedushah!* There is no value other than *mitzvos!*

A Jew takes this truth with him into his daily life, in the office, wherever he may be with ordinary, this-worldly people. He stops in the middle of an important meeting to *daven minchah*. Between clients he takes advantage of the time to learn his daily *shiur*.

This is the completion and climax of *Yamim Nora'im*. This shows that the *kedushah* of those days penetrated deep into our hearts, that it became part of our very essence. Then nothing in the world can extinguish the flame of *kedushah* that burns within us.

"If it could be better then it would be better everything is precisely the way it is supposed to be." ~ Chofetz Chaim.

The Fifth Night of Chanukah



Story for the Fifth Night of Chanukah: In 1979, tragedy struck. A Yiddishe girl became friendly with a non-Jewish boy and ran away from home! Do you think she returned home safely? Well, years before, the Rebbe foresaw what would happen…

In 1979, tragedy struck. A Yiddishe girl became friendly with a non-Jewish boy and ran away from home! Do you think she returned home safely? Well, years before, the Rebbe foresaw what would happen…

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Greenwald tells this incredible story:

My father, Rabbi Avraham Tzvi, was born in Lodz, Poland in 1912. When he was just seven years old, his father passed away. Hoping to give him a proper chinuch, his mother sent him to his uncle Rabbi Menachem Zemba, a great talmid chacham and huge Torah leader in Europe. Together, they learned a lot of Torah.

In 1929, when my father was seventeen, Rabbi Zemba brought him to Warsaw to attend the "Great Wedding" of the young Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson and Rebbetzin Chaya Mushka, the daughter of the Frierdiker Rebbe. The next day, they went to visit the chosson.

At the end of the visit, Rabbi Menachem Mendel turned to my father: "Chanukah is in a few days. Do you know why chassidim celebrate the fifth night as a special occasion?"

Both my father and Rabbi Zemba didn't know, so the future Rebbe explained: "The fifth night of Chanukah never falls on Shabbos. This symbolizes great spiritual darkness! However, the light of the fifth Chanukah candle can remove all darkness. **The duty of every Jew—whether in Warsaw or London—is to light up even the deepest darkness."**

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Ten years passed, and the Holocaust began.

My father's wife and five little children were killed by the Nazis. After the war, he immigrated to America broken and alone. Rabbi Moshe Chaim, his uncle who had moved to Philadelphia before my father was born, welcomed him with open arms.

Time passed and my father found a new wife. Before marrying my mother, he went to New York to get a brocha from the Frierdiker Rebbe.

When the Frierdiker Rebbe heard that my father's entire family had been killed, he wept bitterly and bentched my father for a long, happy life. Before he left, my father mentioned that he had been at the "Great Wedding" of the Frierdiker Rebbe's daughter twenty years earlier.

The Frierdiker Rebbe's eyes brightened. "In that case," he said, "you should visit my son-in-law! His study is one floor down!"

When my father went downstairs, Rabbi Menachem Mendel recognized him right away and asked about the fate of Rabbi Zemba. Afterwards, he said, "Since my father-in-law sent you to me, I'll share words of Torah with you."

"Chanukah is almost here," he continued, "and chassidim celebrate the fifth night as a special occasion. That night never falls on

Shabbos, which symbolizes great spiritual darkness. However, the light of the fifth Chanukah candle can remove any darkness! **The mission of every Jew—whether in New York or London—is to light up even the deepest darkness in the world!**"

My father was shocked. The Rebbe had just repeated what he had told him twenty years earlier!

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After my sister and I were born, my family moved to Toronto. We lived there for many years, and in 1969, I got engaged. Just as he had done before his own wedding, my father took me to get a brocha from the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson.

When I entered the Rebbe's room, I saw the Rebbe for the first time in my life. His piercing blue eyes affected me deeply.

My father held out a note with my name, the kallah's name, and a request for a brocha. Before unfolding the note, the Rebbe smiled at him. "You were here less than twenty years ago before your own wedding! I'm sure you remember that my father-in-law sent you to me."

My father was amazed by the Rebbe's memory. After reading the note, the Rebbe bentched me and my father, wishing us long and happy lives. "Just as you rejoiced at my wedding," the Rebbe told my father, "You should rejoice at the weddings of your grandchildren."

What a powerful brocha! Overcome with emotion, my father started crying. Before we left, my father asked the Rebbe a question.

"Some people in Toronto say that Lubavitchers shouldn't help non-religious Jews do mitzvos. Doesn't Dovid Hamelech say that those who hate Hashem are hated? So why do Lubavitchers go out of their way to help those who go against Torah and mitzvos?"

The Rebbe became serious. "How would your 'super-religious' neighbor react if his own daughter, chas v'shalom, made bad friends and moved away from Yiddishkeit?" he replied. "Would he try to

convince her to return to Torah and mitzvos, or would he say that 'those who hate Hashem are hated'? Do you really think that he would break off all contact with her?"

Without waiting for an answer, the Rebbe continued. "Of course, he could answer that his situation is different, since she is his daughter. However," the Rebbe continued, becoming very serious and pounding on the table, "To Hashem, every Yid is as important as the daughter is to her father! Every Yid is a part of Hashem Himself!"

Then the Rebbe said, "I should conclude with a brocha. Chassidim celebrate the fifth night of Chanukah as a special holiday. You see, the fact that the fifth night of Chanukah never falls on Shabbos means it's a great spiritual darkness. **But the light of the fifth Chanukah candle can remove any darkness. This is the job of every Jew—whether in Toronto or London!** Every Yid is a piece of Hashem above. With the light of his neshama, he can light up the darkest places and reawaken the neshama of another Yid—even someone who is far removed from Torah and mitzvos."

My father was stunned. The entire way home, all he could do was repeat three words: "This is incredible! This is incredible!"

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Ten years passed.

In 1979, a few days before Chanukah, we flew to England for my younger brother's wedding in London. On the way, my father looked troubled. After asking him a few times, my father told me what was wrong.

Shortly before our flight, my father was visited by his friend, a respected member of the local non-Chassidic community. "I didn't want to tell anyone, but maybe you can help me," his friend cried. "My daughter ran away to London together with her non-Jewish boyfriend."

"Since that day," the worried father continued, "it feels like Tish'a B'Av in our house! Could you look for her while you're in London? Maybe Hashem will help you find my daughter and save her from disaster!"

After my brother's wedding, my father asked the kallah's father if he knew of anyone who could help find the missing girl from his hometown. "Go to Rabbi Abraham Yitzchak Glick, a shliach of the Rebbe," the kallah's father advised him. "Maybe he can help you."

Right away, my father called Rabbi Glick, explaining that there was no time to lose. "As soon as I find her, I'll call you!" Rabbi Glick promised.

Ten days later, Rabbi Glick called. "Come to my house! I have a surprise!"

When my father arrived, he saw a girl crying in the living room. Somehow, Rabbi Glick had found her and convinced her to go back to her parents! At the entrance to the living room, my father noticed a Chanukah menorah. He took a closer look, and almost fainted! *Five Chanukah candles were burning with a steady flame.*

Father stared at the candles, remembering the words spoken by the Rebbe fifty, thirty and ten years earlier: "**The light of the fifth Chanukah candle can remove any darkness … The duty of every Jew, wherever in Warsaw or London … New York or London … Toronto or London … is to light up even the deepest darkness** … How would your 'super-religious' neighbour react if his own daughter, chas v'shalom, made bad friends and moved away from Yiddishkeit? To Hashem, every Yid is as important as the only daughter is to her father!"

Shaken, my father felt that he had to meet with the Rebbe. When he arrived, he burst into tears. The Rebbe looked at him and said, "My father-in-law, the Frierdiker Rebbe, is able to see far into the future…"

The story does not end here. In 1989, my eldest son got married. My father passed away just after the wedding sheva brachos ended. He passed away on the 14th of Kislev, the date of the Rebbe's anniversary.The Rebbe's brocha that my father would rejoice at his grandchildren's wedding came true exactly sixty years after the "Great Wedding" in Warsaw, exactly sixty years after their first meeting!

[*Many people have asked questions on this story and I thank Rabbi Yerachmil Tilles for doing the research and confirming the facts of the story from people first hand.]

Chizuk In The Siddur - על הניסים

The **גמרא** in **שבת כא:** defines the days of **חנוכה** as **ימי הלל והודאה** - days of praising and thanking **הקב"ה**.

רש"י there says that we fulfil this by saying **הלל** all eight days of **חנוכה** and by adding **על הניסים** in the **ברכה** of **הודאה** i.e. **מודים**.



It is interesting to note that **על הניסים** focuses solely on the military victory over the **יונים** and just gives a passing reference to the fact that candles were lit **קדשך בחצרות**.

Rav Chaim Friedlander זצ"ל explains that when we say **הלל** we are thanking **הקב"ה** for the **נס** of the oil burning for eight days and when we say **על הניסים** we are thanking Him for the victory on the battlefield.

These two aspects of **חנוכה** are really two sides of the same coin. The **נס** of the oil which was a **נס גלוי** , an open miracle, showed us that the military victory, which was a **נס נסתר** , a concealed miracle, was no less miraculous.

These days of **חנוכה** are therefore an appropriate time to thank **הקב״ה** for all the concealed miracles that we experience each and every day **ועל נסיך שבכל יום עמנו.**

I Saw the Angel Trapped in the Marble – No Two Flames Flicker Alike – Rabbi YY Jacobson

When Clint Pulver was 10 years old, he struggled terribly in school. He just couldn't stay still in class. All day he would bang on the table. He tried so hard to focus, but he couldn't stop tapping on the desk.

Clint's teacher gave him several warnings, but he would just instinctively and unconsciously start tapping again. He couldn't help himself.



Clint was sent to the principal's office. The principal instructed him that whenever he felt the urge to tap on his desk, he should sit on both of his hands, and that would solve the problem.

Well, he tried it, and it worked for approximately two minutes.

Then one day, while Clint was tapping away on his desk in a new teacher's classroom, the teacher instructed him to stay after class. Clint just knew that he was in trouble yet again, and this time, he would probably be expelled from school for good.

But after class, his teacher – Mr Jensen, let him know that he was not in trouble. Instead of giving Clint tips on how to refrain from tapping, he shared something else with him.



Mr Jensen opened the drawer to his desk, and he handed Clint his very first pair of drumsticks and a drum!

Mr Jensen told him, "In my opinion, you have no problem at all. You were just created to be a drummer. So, that's what your brain has been telling your hands to do all day!"

Clint never put those drumsticks down. He practiced and practiced and developed a skill that has taken him to become a major success story – a world-renowned drummer!



Imagine if Clint Pulver would have never encountered Mr Jensen. He might have been deemed a loser, a problem child – A disturbance to the school in the classroom.

A poor performer. Not only would his talent remain in captivity, but his entire self-dignity would also have been trapped in walls of resentment, shame and anger.

But a teacher with wisdom and empathy allowed him to shine.

He made him understand that he need not be the best in the world, but only to believe in his G-d-given light and potential.

Michelangelo – perhaps history's greatest sculptor, once said, "I saw the angel trapped in the marble, and I carved and carved until I set the angel free."

Clint had a teacher who saw the angel trapped in his behaviour, and he set the angel free.



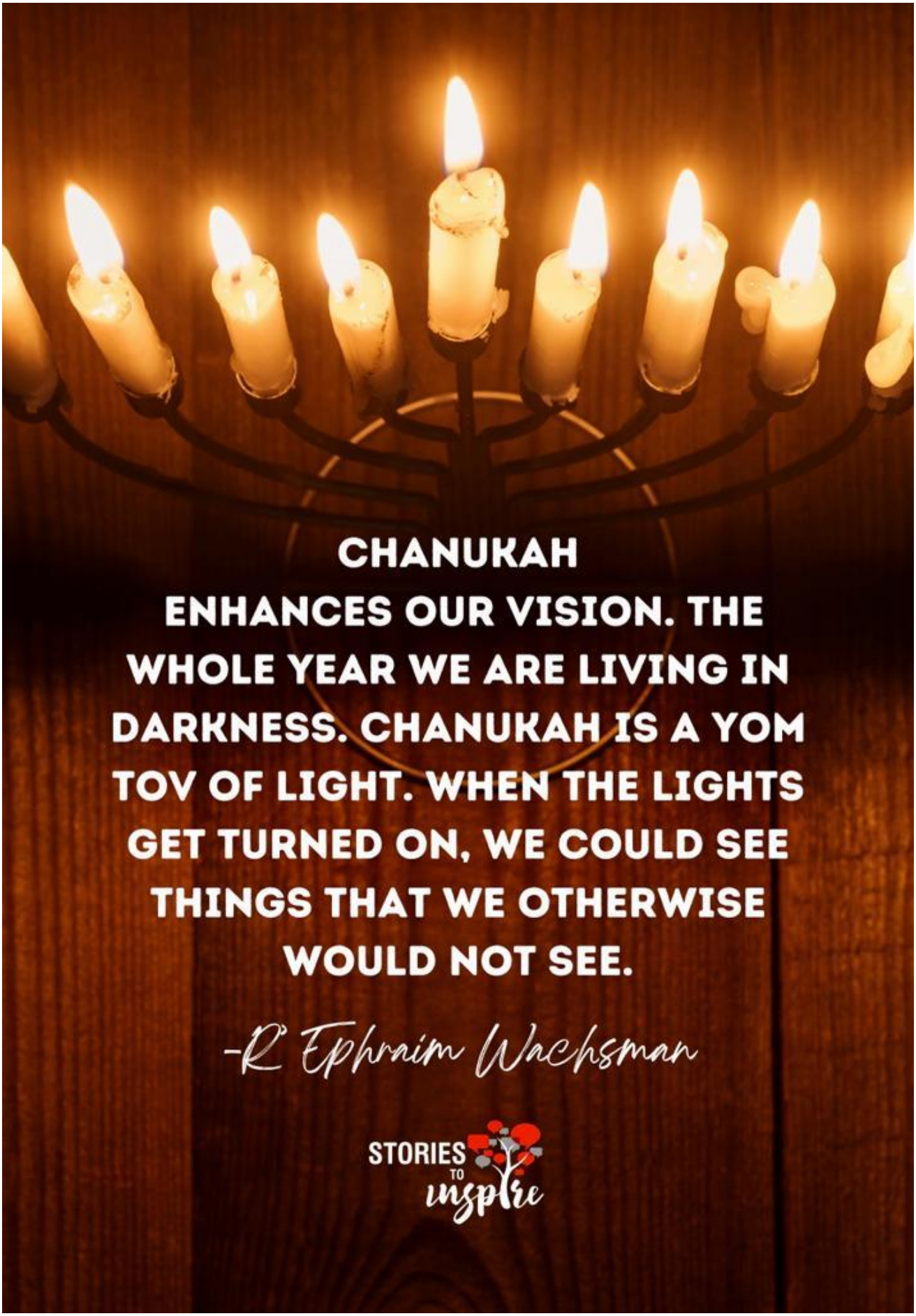
As you gaze at the Chanukah flames, can you notice how no two flames are identical? They were ignited by the same source of light, but each of them flickers differently.

If each of us can have the awareness, the courage, the compassion to truly appreciate and celebrate the unique radiance in each of our children and disciples- in each and every soul, we can believe in them earnestly – so they can believe in themselves!

Happy Chankah.

Rav Moshe Feinstein famously said that the phrase "Shver tzu zein a Yid—It's hard to be a Jew"—helped destroy American Jewry.

When Judaism is experienced only as hardship, restriction, pressure, and prohibition, children eventually suffocate. - But when Judaism is presented as beautiful, joyous, rich, uplifting—as Givaldik, as something to cherish—then it becomes a source of identity, connection, and pride.


CHANUKAH
ENHANCES OUR VISION. THE WHOLE YEAR WE ARE LIVING IN DARKNESS. CHANUKAH IS A YOM TOV OF LIGHT. WHEN THE LIGHTS GET TURNED ON, WE COULD SEE THINGS THAT WE OTHERWISE WOULD NOT SEE.
-R' Ephraim Wachsman
STORIES TO inspire


"WHAT A PERSON EARNS DURING CHANUKAH, CAN STILL BE LOST, BUT WHAT ONE GAINS ON ZOS CHANUKAH, WILL NEVER BE LOST. IT REMAINS FOREVER."
-The Rebbe of Ruzhin ztl
STORIES TO inspire

Rabbi Elimelech Biderman -Torah Wellsprings

Praying for Miracles

Under normal circumstances, one is not allowed to pray for a miraculous intervention by Hashem (Brachos 54a). On Chanukah however, the whole universe is running according to the order of miracles.

Therefore says the **Shoel U'meishiv**, during these days one may even pray for a miraculous intervention because on these days, miracles are "nature"!



Chanukah – A Time To Request Miracles

When we recite Birchas Hamazon on Chanukah, we include the tefilloh of Al Hanissim. We thank Hashem for all the miracles and all the wonders that Hashem performed for our ancestors during the times of the Chachmanayim.

What if someone forgot to say Al Hanissim?

The halacha is that they do not have to repeat bentching. However, if they remember that they forgot to recite Al Hanissim before they reached the end of bentching, they can still make it up by saying a special הָרַחֲמָן. The Nusach of this beracha is a very powerful tefillah – '***Harachaman Hu Yaaseh Lanu Nisim V'Niflaos Ka'asher Asa La'avoseinu BaYamim HaHeim BaZman Hazeh.***'

The question is, how can you formulate a tefillah where we ask for miracles? We have a principle - **שאין סומכין על הנס?** We are not supposed to ask Hashem to perform miracles for us?

The Shoel Umeishiv says something incredible: He says that Chanukah has different rules. During the rest of the year, when Hashem runs the world *Al Pi Derech Hateva*, (naturally), we are not supposed to ask Hashem to reverse the laws of nature. We can ask

Hashem to help us in the standard natural way that the world operates.

However, on Chanukah the world operates on a system that is above nature.

Usually when a person is impoverished, they don't become wealthy overnight. When a person is deathly ill R'l, it takes a long time before they become healthy again. If a child is struggling with their Yidishkeit, it can take months, if not years to get them back to Torah and Mitzvos.

But not so on Chanukah. Chanukah is a time that is governed by miracles.

Says the Shoel U'Meishiv, that since this is the norm during these days, we are allowed to ask of Hashem for even open miracles! This is truly amazing!

The question is, why is it only when we forget to say Al Hanissim do/can we ask for miracles in the special **הָרַחֲמָן** – but when we recite the standard text of Al Hanissim in bentching, there is no mention of asking for miracles ? Why should the person who remembered to say Al Hanissim lose out on requesting miracles?

It is only when one forgets to say Al Hanissim that they must take additional steps and request miracles. However, when somebody recites Birchas Hamazon correctly, it is unnecessary for them to specifically request miracles – as they will receive them automatically! – Because Chanukah is a time for miracles!

When lighting the menorah, we make the beracha - **שֶׁעָשָׂה נִסִּים לַאֲבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם בַּזְּמַן הַזֶּה** – In the same way that Hashem performed miracles for our ancestors, He will perform miracles for us, in our days.

During the year, we don't get to experience any open miracles, however, Chanukah is an "**עת רצון**" – an auspicious time when miracles can happen for us collectively and individually – even open miracles!

What seems impossible and unattainable the rest of the year – is within the realms of possible on Chanukah!

So, when you are sitting next to the menorah on Chanukah, and you are asking for the possible – Don't forget to also ask for the impossible! Miracles happen on Chanukah!



Rav SF Zimmerman

In מָעוֹז צוּר, we say בְּנֵי בִינָה -men of insight, יְמֵי שְׁמוֹנָה – for 8 days קָבְעוּ שִׁיר וּרְנָנִים - they established these days for song and jubilation.

What insight was necessary to establish 8 days of celebration?

The answer might be as follows: There is a well known question from the Beis Yoseph, that if the jug of oil was sufficient to burn for one day, and it lasted for 8 days, than the miracle was surely for only 7 days? So, why do we celebrate an 8 day festival?

The answer might be like the **Ramban** who writes at the end of Parshas Bo- that from miracles, we learn that Hakadosh Baruch Hu controls this world. And everything that happens in this world, is a function of His will. We come to the realisation, that even the laws of nature, are because of the will of Hashem.

Therefore, after the miracle of Chanukah, when the menorah burnt for 8 days, we recognise that even the 1st day when oil burnt at all – this was a miracle too! - And therefore, בְּנֵי בִינָה -men of insight- those that don't just recognise the miracle, but the reason behind the miracle, יְמֵי שְׁמוֹנָה – for 8 days קָבְעוּ שִׁיר וּרְנָנִים - they established these days for song and jubilation.

Fighting Fire with Fire By Rabbi Tzvi Sytner



There is a powerful true story that every firefighter knows about. It happened in a valley in Montana, just along the Missouri River. The valley is called Mann Gulch, and is surrounded by forests on one side, and tall brush on the other side.

August the 5th 1949 was an extremely hot, dry and windy day. Lightning struck a dead tree, and a forest fire started. Fifteen firefighters were air-dropped into the valley, led by their chief, who was called Wagner Dodge.

By the time that they were in position, the winds had picked up so much that the fire was 30 foot high and totally out of control, as was rapidly spreading towards them. They were totally trapped, with nowhere to escape to safety.

Dodge recognized the precarious danger that they were in, and told his men to back off, and head back to the other side where the brush was. They retreated, but the winds were so powerful, that the fire had jumped the gap between the forest and the brush – cutting off any escape. They tried to out-run the fire, but it was already too late -The fire was already upon them! The fire covered 3,000 acres in ten minutes (over 30 MPH!)!

Dodge then did something totally unexpected - He pulled out a lighter, and he set fire to the brush in front of him! The other men thought he had lost his mind, and couldn't understand why he was creating another fire, didn't they have enough fires to contend with?! - So, they left him and continued to try to attempt to outrun the fire.

Dodge's fire had quickly burned out a small area that acted as a firebreak over which the main fire could not reach. He had created for himself a small safe haven area. He covered his mouth with a wet cloth, and lay face down in this clearing, and when the fire caught up to him, it had no fuel to consume. So, it burned all around him and right past him!



By creating his own fire, he survived the ordeal. Unfortunately, 13 fire fighters lost their lives that day, and only 3 survived! The fire would continue to burn for five more days before being controlled by 450 firefighters.

This story of Mann Gulch is a heartbreaking one. But Dodge left us a legacy of a life changing lesson. The United States Forest Service drew lessons from the tragedy of the Mann Gulch fire by designing new training techniques and safety measures that

developed how the agency approached wildfire suppression. The agency also increased emphasis on fire research and the science of fire behaviour.

Right now we are in the middle of an incredibly inspiring and uplifting Chanukah. And soon we will be entering into a long, cold and dark winter.

How do we keep this inspiration going throughout the winter?

I think, just like Dodge – We need to ignite our own fire within us, while the fires of Chanukah are still burning around us.

With the inspiration of Chanukah that we have right now, let's dig down deep, and make a small *kaballah* – to work on ourselves, our marriages, our parenting or learning from a sefer - to better ourselves.

"Go light a fire – and let it burn bright through the dark winter!"

Rabbi YY Jacobson- A Failed Chanukah Party

One day back in 1995, a father and his 8-year-old daughter moved right next door to my friend, Rabbi Moshe Bryski, the Chabad emissary to Agoura Hills, California.

On the very same day that they moved into their new home, Rabbi Bryski welcomed them to the neighbourhood, and he invited the father and daughter – Jack and Sarah, to join them for a Shabbos meal.

Jack was a former conductor of a reform choir, so the songs sung around the Shabbos table were very familiar to him. And Jack and Rabbi Bryski befriended each other.

Jack began attending some of the community programmes and classes, and lectures.

One evening, the Rabbi gave a class entitled, "Faith and Suffering," and when he concluded the lecture, Jack broke down, sobbing.

It was then that Rabbi Bryski invited him into his office. They sat down and Jack shared with him his personal story.

"A year before I moved to Agoura Hills, my wife and I were married with three little beautiful children. We made a good living. We were happy. Life was blissful. But two of my little children were in a car accident, and they were both killed.

Following the tragedy, I just fell apart. I descended into the abyss. I became depressed. Therapist after therapist – nobody could help me. I could not go back to work. I lost my job. I simply could not function. My marriage could not stand up to the profound grief, and a divorce soon followed.

My wife took my third and only surviving daughter, Sarah, and she left the house. I was now a complete and utter wreck – alone in the world. No hope, no family, no anchor. Life became darker each day. The sun never came out for me. The pain was incessant and overwhelming. That was then I decided to put an end to my misery – to end my life.

I wanted to bid farewell to my daughter on a positive note. So, I called my ex-wife, and I asked her, "Can I take out Sarah to the movies?"

She said, "Yeah, go ahead."

I did not tell her about my plans.

We made our way to the Mountain Gate Plaza Cinema in the Simi Valley Mall. My plan was that we would watch a child-friendly movie together. I would bring her back home to her mother, and then I would say goodbye to this dark and scary world.

As we entered the mall, we heard some music playing. It was strange. As I listened, all I can hear is Jewish music. And then I was shocked to see some Jewish men singing and dancing right in front of the movie theatre entrance! It was a bizarre scene! There was a menorah

burning brightly in the background, and suddenly I remembered – It's Chanukah!



Before I knew what was happening, one of the Jewish fellows, drew us into the circle. And there I was dancing to the music with these Jewish guys. The night I had planned to end my life, I found myself dancing and celebrating! It was surreal!

But something happened during that dance. As I watched the Chanukah flames burning, and these Yeshiva boys dancing with so much love, passion, and enthusiasm, a mysterious sense of hope was ignited in my heart. A feeling of joy was kindled in the depth of my soul. A flicker of positivity showed up inside of me. I closed my eyes, and for the first time since the horrific accident, I could feel a glimmer of serenity.

I decided to give life a second chance. I would move. Find a new home and begin a new life. So, I found this house in Agoura Hills. And I prayed to G-d that it would be the right place, and everything would work out. And then, on the very day I moved in with my daughter, you were standing outside inviting me in for a Shabbos meal!"

Rabbbi Moshe Bryski listened to the story. He wiped away a tear, and then he turned to the shelf in his office and brought down a

photo album. This album contained photos of previous Chanukah celebrations organized by Chabad of Agoura Hills over the years. He opened it and flipped through the pages. And then, he retrieved one photo entitled – 'Chanukah at the Simi Valley Mall.'

He pointed to the photo, and he said to Jack, "Here you are in the photo! Here I am! I was actually the person who pulled you in for the dance that night!"

As they both wept emotionally, Rabbi Bryski said to Jack, "I remember that night very well, and I'll tell you why:

You see, each year at Chabad, we choose a different mall where to erect our large menorah and make a Chanukah celebration, inviting Jews of all backgrounds and affiliations to be part of the Festival of Lights.

And, that year we chose Simi Valley Mall. So, I phoned the mall. They put us through to the Mountain Gate Cinema. I told the receptionist, that we would love to light our menorah and bring our celebrations to the mall.

She said, "Are you sure?", and I said, "Yes." "Sure you're sure? – "Yes, absolutely!"

She said, "No problem, if that's what you want, you got it." And she granted us permission.

So, we prepared. We booked the music band. We bought donuts. We prepared a large menorah. We even had a clown, hot latkes and dreidlach -The works.

As we arrived, on the first night of Chanukah, me and the yeshiva boys helping me, I realized my mistake. – The mall was going out of business! All the stores had already been shut down! The whole place was due to be demolished. The place was deserted. The only place left open, was the movie theatre.

We had everything. But there were no people! I felt like such an idiot!



But we were there already, so what were we supposed to do? There was nowhere else to go – it was Chanukah. So, we took our menorah, and we set it up right in front of the movie theatre! And any poor person trying to go into the movies was shlepped into our Chanukah dance!

I came home that night ashamed, disappointed and frustrated. I told my wife "What a failure! What a disaster of a night! It bombed – Or so I thought!"

As it turns out, that small soulful dance in front of the movie theatre, in Mountain Gate Plaza in Simi Valley, saved Jack's life! Sarah did not lose her father that night!

Jack rebuilt his life. Today, Sarah is married and recently had twins. Jack called Rabbi Bryski from the delivery room, and he said, "***G-d gave me back my two lost angels***!"

Rabbi Bryski forwarded me the text message that Jack sent him for Chanukah:-

From the moment Sara and I walked into the foyer of that shopping centre, you were an agent of G-d to raise us up and enrich our lives – And you continue to do it now.

It occurred to me that if it had not been for you that Chanukah night, 27 years ago, our worlds would have been entirely different – Terrifyingly different!

I owe you a debt that I can never repay other than telling you that you are surely one of my life's greatest friends.

I love you like a brother, and you are one of G-d's most holy blessings to me, my family and the world.

Thank you, thank you, thank you,

Love Jack

There are no ordinary days or monotonous nights in Hashem's master plan. There are no real failures in the ultimate story of life.

Wherever you are, muster the courage to kindle a flame of love and joy – And the miracles will follow!

Rabbi YY Jacobson- Mikhail Gorbachev



Last Shabbos, I had a fascinating guest. A Jewish woman who grew up in poverty and the persecution and challenges of the communist regime of The Soviet Union.

In 1989 she emigrated from Russia, and came to the United States. She told me that in September of 2008, she was at the National constitution Centre in Philadelphia, where Mikhail Gorbachev, the former leader of the Soviet Union was being rewarded by the President of The USA – George Bush, with the highest honour – The Liberty Medal.

Gorbachev, who won the 'Nobel peace award', was given credit for ending 'The Cold War', for enabling the 'Berlin Wall' to come down (Sep '89) and for ending the communist era in the Soviet Union.

She told me, "I was pinching myself – asking myself- 'Is this for real?' As a child, in my wildest dreams, I could never have imagined

that this day would arrive. The Iron Curtain would finally be dismantled, and we would be allowed to leave Russia.

Jewish people in Russia would have a renaissance, and here I am together with hundreds of people, watching Gorbachev receiving this great medal of honour."

She told me that she had to go to the washroom, and as she came out, who does she bump into? – Mikhail Gorbachev himself! The words came right out of her mouth…



'Mr Gorbachev, the gratitude that I have to you, for the gift that you have given me, my children and my family, is indescribable. G-d bless you for what you have done for the Russian people, the Jewish people of Russia – for humanity. May I ask you to give me your signed autograph, so that I can carry this special day with me for the rest of my life.'



Without blinking or skipping a hearts beat, Mr Gorbachev looked at her straight in the eye, and said," ***Your life, is my autograph***."

Sometimes, people ask, "Where is G-d? Where is the creator of the world?"

The life of our people – the Jewish people – is Hashem's autograph!



If you go back today to the former Soviet Union, where Judaism was almost complexly eradicated and obliterated, where Stalin and his Gulag murdered between 30–50 million people, there are more than 200 public Menorah lightings.

But tonight, I say something else to you – 'Try to make sure that there is one life out there – that becomes **your** autograph. Make sure to light up a heart, to kindle a flame in the human spirit – to give somebody for whom the sun has set – hope, inspiration, love and clarity, so that their life can become your autograph.'

Revealing What Was Inside

The purpose of the candles is to illuminate the darkness. When we light the menorah, we reveal what was there all along and simply needed a light to shine on it.

In chinuch, says the **Piascezno Rebbe**, we are just revealing what is latent inside the child all along. We illuminate the way for him or her and allow them to break through and become the people they are meant to be.

Make Hashem's Name Great

Rav Wolbe explains that when the Chashmonaim risked their lives to fight a war for the sake of Hashem, they were, in effect, endeavoring to "make His Name great and holy in the world" (Al Hanissim).

We hope to never be challenged to have to fight an actual war to make His Name great, but we will face opportunities each day from the way we welcome the "outsider" to shul, to the way we interact at work, the supermarket or the gym. - May the lights of Chanukah inspire us to make His Name great and to light up the world with our actions, each and every day.

Rabbi's Message -Rav Eli Mansour

Every year, without exception, the story of Yosef and his brothers is read during or just before the celebration of Hanukah. It is always at this time of year that we read about the very first instance of Sinat Hinam (baseless hatred) among the Jewish People – the hatred shown to Yosef by his brothers, who ended up selling him into slavery, banishing him from their family. Is this just a coincidence, or might there be some connection between the story of Yosef's being sold as a slave, and the festive celebration of Hanukah?

In truth, we have proof that a connection exists between the story of Yosef and the story of Hanukah. The Kabbalistic work **Megaleh Amukot** (by Rav Natan Shapiro, Poland, 1584-1633) noted that the Gematria (numerical value) of the name "Yosef" equals that of the name "Antiochus" – the Greek king who enacted the edicts against the Jews. Moreover, the Midrash writes that the Greeks forced the Jews to write upon the horns of their oxen a formal declaration that they renounced their allegiance to their G-d. Some Rabbis noted that this edict was intentionally associated with Yosef, who is compared to an ox ("Bechor Shoro Hadar Lo" – Debarim 33:17).

The question, then, becomes, what is the point of connection between Yosef and Antiochus; between the story of the cruelty suffered by Yosef at the hands of his brothers, and the story of the cruelty suffered by the Jews at the hands of the Greeks?

The answer is that the Greek persecution came because the Jews of the time repeated the mistake of Sinat Hinam which was first made by Yosef's brothers. The entire story of Hanukah was all about strife among the Jews and the decision to cure this ill through unity and peace. Indeed, the war against the Greeks was led by the Hashmonaim, a family of Kohanim. The Kohanim, the descendants of Aharon, carried his unique legacy of "Oheb Shalom Ve'rodef Shalom" – living as a "lover" and "pursuer" of peace. They embodied the ideal of peaceful relations among people, and thus it was specifically they who led the campaign to restore peace and harmony in Am Yisrael and thereby put an end to the Greek persecution.

Additionally, the Mishna (Middot 2:3) teaches that when the Greeks stormed the Bet Ha'mikdash, they made thirteen breaches in one of the walls surrounding the structure. Thirteen is the numerical value of the word "Ehad" ("one"), and thus represents Jewish unity, the ideal of Jews working and living harmoniously together as one. The thirteen breaches symbolize the breach in unity that wrought the campaign of oppression launched by the Greeks against the Jews.

For good reason, then, "Antiochus" has the same Gematria as "Yosef." If we repeat the mistake made by the brothers in their mistreatment of Yosef, then we suffer the oppression of Antiochus.

This is why we always read the story of the sale of Yosef around the time of Hanukah – because Hanukah is the time for us to focus our attention on eliminating Sinat Hinam from our midst, to correct the mistake made by Yosef's brothers, the mistake which, unfortunately, we continue to make even today. We read this story as a somber reminder of the devastating consequences of strife among Jews, and the need to work towards peace and harmony –

especially during the time of Hanukah. It is perhaps for this reason, we might add, that people customarily make special parties with relatives, friends and neighbors during the Hanukah holiday. Celebrating together with our fellow Jews in joy and camaraderie is an effective way of strengthening the bonds between us and thereby combating strife and fighting.

Please G-d, we will succeed during the upcoming Hanukah celebration to strengthen our love for all our fellow Jews, eliminate hatred and contention from our homes, from our communities, and from our hearts, and increase the level of peace and unity in our nation, so we will earn the merit of witnessing and experiencing miracles like those which were performed for the Hashmonaim, Amen.

Stories from the Life of Rav Shimshon Pincus *zt"l*

The Eternal Menorah



A bachur from *chutz la'Aretz* who was learning in *Yeshivas Tiferes Avos* in Bnei Brak once approached Rav Shimshon to ask where he should light his *Menorah* on Chanukah.

Rav Shimshon indicated an exact spot and suggested that the *bachur* purchase a glass box for his *Menorah* so the flames, lit outside, wouldn't be snuffed out by the wind.

The *bachur* replied that he wasn't sure it was worthwhile since he would only be spending one year in *Eretz Yisrael* and would be returning home that summer. "There, everyone lights inside, so I won't have use for an outdoor *Menorah*."

Rav Shimshon was shocked, unable to fathom the *bachur's* doubts. "We're not talking about a *Menorah* for this year alone! This is an eternal *Menorah!* Your *mitzvah* of *hadlakas ner Chanukah* this year will escort you for eternity! Don't you think it's worth investing in eternal gain!?"

Fascinating INSIGHTS

Where do we encounter the light of Moshiach during the year?

The gemara (Chagiga 12a) teaches that when Hashem looked at the *Dor Hamabul* and the *Dor Haflaga* and saw their actions were perverse, He hid the light He created on the first day for the tzadikim in the future. This light is known as the *ohr haganuz* (Peninim Mishulchan Hagra, Breishis, 1:4).

With this light, reality becomes transparent, allowing one to perceive the true essence of things. Before Adam sinned, this light pervaded existence as the clarity of Hashem was so clear in the world.

An example to help us understand this is that today we say a bracha on food in order to acknowledge Hashem's involvement. However, back then, it was unnecessary to say a bracha, as the Divine origin of, for example, an apple, was unmistakably evident.

The first 36 hours of the world's existence were bathed in this Divine light (Yerushalmi Brachos 8:5, Breishis Rabba 11:2, 12:6, Midrash Shocher Tov 92). This was from the time Adam was created on Friday until Motzei Shabbos. Although he sinned on Friday, the light was not removed until after Shabbos.

This clarifies the absence of the phrase *vayehi erev*, and there was evening, in relation to Shabbos since there was no evening when only this light prevailed (Although it is a spiritual light, it has an impact

on physical existence. Consequently, during the period the world had this light, there was no darkness.).

The Rokeach (Taamei Haminhagim, Chanuka, p. 366) links the 36 candles of Chanuka to the 36 hours that we had the *ohr haganuz*. In fact, he calculates that it says *ner, meor* and *ohr* (expressions for "light") 36 times in the Torah as a hint to the 36 candles of Chanuka.

The 36 candles also correspond to the 36 Mesachtos of *shas*, *Torah She'baal Peh* — that which is hidden. Additionally, this ties in with the 36 hidden tzadikim. Incidentally, Kislev is derived from the term *kisui* (covered, hidden) since the *ohr haganuz* is the light that is hidden.

This light of Chanuka which is the light of the *ohr haganuz* is the future light of Moshiach (Bnei Yissaschar, Kislev Teves, 2:16). It comes as no wonder that **משיח** stands for **מצות שמונת ימי חנוכה** (Emunas Itecha p. 144).

Another hint is found in the gematria of the word Moshiach when it is spelled out. **משיח** spelled out is **ממ, שין, יוד, חית**. This has a gematria of 878, which is precisely the same sum as **הדלקת נר חנוכה**.

One last allusion to this can be found on the letters of the *dreidel* (*gimmel, nun, hey, shin*), which yields a sum of 358, the same as the word Moshiach.

Amazingly, **R' Pinchas Koritzer** informs us that at the time of Chanuka lighting, the *ohr haganuz* is revealed (Taamei Haminhagim, p. 365).

In the home of **R' Shlomo Kluger**, the Chaunka lights once accidentally ignited a fire. Although it was quickly extinguished, a small burn mark nevertheless, remained. Contrary to the reaction of dismay that many would have, R' Shlomo Kluger was elated since now Chanuka, the days of the *ohr haganuz*, could linger on in his home even after Chanuka was over.

Flames Of Peace

The time for lighting the Chanukah menorah had long passed, and the young **Chofetz Chaim**, spending Chanukah in the home of his revered Rebbi, **R' Nachum'ke of Horodna**, could not understand why the *tzaddik* still hadn't lit. - Hours went by until, very late at night, R' Nachum'ke's wife finally came home — only then did he light the menorah.

When the Chofetz Chaim respectfully asked why he had waited so long, R' Nachum'ke explained: "The Gemara says that if someone has money for only one candle on the Friday night of Chanukah, he must buy a Shabbos candle, because *Shalom Bayis* takes precedence over the Chanukah light. My wife would have been distressed had I not shown her the courtesy of waiting for her. - If the Gemara uses Chanukah candles to teach the importance of *Shalom Bayis*, how could I damage *Shalom Bayis* through the Chanukah candles? I lit when she returned, at a time still acceptable according to *halacha*."

When **R' Sholom Schwadron** repeated the story, he added a striking insight: *Shalom Bayis* also meant that when R' Nachum'ke's wife arrived, he did *not* complain that her lateness caused him to wait to perform a *mitzvah* — he knew even that would diminish peace in the home. (Around the Maggid's Table)

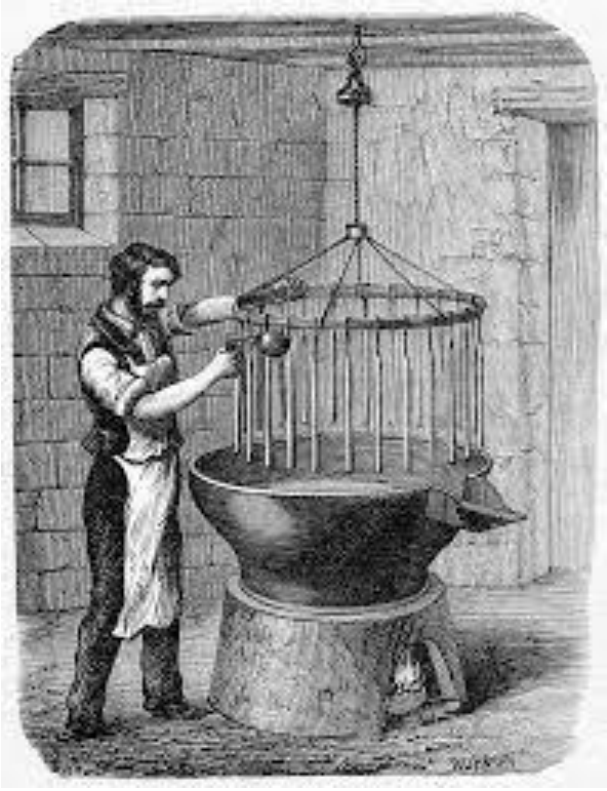
Each Child Is a Flame

Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch points out that the basic mitzvah of Chanukah is as the Gemara dictates, ner ish u'beiso, the head of the household lights one candle and fulfills the mitzvah for his wife and children. However, says the Gemara, one does the mitzvah in a mehadrin, enhanced fashion, if ner lechol echad v'echad, each person of the house lights their own.

Rav Hirsch suggests that yes, we can live life "ner ish ubeiso," we light the fire in our own hearts, inspire ourselves and make sure we

are warm. But the proper thing to do, the way to accomplish things in a mehadrin fashion, is to make sure each person in the home is a burning flame, to inspire children to burn brightly and illuminate the darkness as well.

The Candle Maker



A candle maker hired a young boy to help pour wax and trim wicks. The boy was enthusiastic but clumsy, constantly spilling wax and scraping molds. After a particularly messy day, he apologized, saying, "Maybe I'm not cut out for this." The candle maker shook his head. "You're judging the candle before the flame ever touches it."

The next morning, the candle maker gathered all the boy's crooked, uneven candles and lit them one by one. To the boy's surprise, every single one burned steadily and brightly. Some even created softer or wider glows because of their unique shapes. "See?" the candle maker said. "A candle's purpose is not to be perfect – it's to give light."

The boy watched the candles flickering, each one slightly different but all shining the same warm glow. Their uneven forms didn't make them weaker; they gave each candle a light that shimmered in its own distinct way. "I thought the flaws would make them burn wrong," he said. The candle maker smiled. "Flaws don't stop a candle from shining. And they don't stop people either."

From that day on, the boy worked with new confidence, knowing that what mattered wasn't flawless wax, but the light it would eventually give.

This story teaches that our imperfections don't disqualify us, and they don't cancel our ability to shine. In fact, our differences often allow our light to shine in ways no one else's can. We spend so much time worrying about being polished – socially, emotionally, spiritually – that we forget the purpose of the soul is not to appear perfect but to illuminate, to make the world a bit brighter.

Just like the candles, people are shaped unevenly by life. Some experiences bend us, soften us, or leave marks. Yet none of that diminishes the flame we hold inside. Sometimes the very dents and curves of our lives become the channels through which our unique warmth comes through strongest.

The boy only saw his mistakes, never the purpose behind them. We often do the same – focusing on the spilled wax instead of the light we're capable of offering. When we look at ourselves through a narrow lens, we underestimate our own potential. But the candle maker gives the truest reassurance – our worth is defined not by how perfectly we're shaped, but by the light we can offer. And often, it's the uniquely shaped candles that create the most unforgettable glow.

Inspired by the teachings of the Baal Shem Tov (1698-1760)

Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

The Chashmonaim won the war against the Yevanim because they trusted in Hashem. - The Chashmonaim were kohanim, and כהן is gematria בטחון.

The Maharil teaches that the shamesh should be placed above the other chanukah lecht. This hints that when one shines and gives light and hope to others, he is above all.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l said: From the Shabbos candles, one can know what will happen during the following week, and from the Chanukah candles, one can know what will happen throughout the following year.

Many have the custom of using cotton wicks on Chanukah, and in Yiddish, cotton is vatte. Vatte also means distant - ווייט. We use vatte wicks to hint that even those distant from Hashem can return to Him on Chanukah.



One night, before lighting Chanukah *lecht*, the **Tolna Rebbe *zt'l*** asked a chassid who had a short wife, "When you speak to your wife, does she climb up on a chair to speak to you, or do you bend down to speak with her?" - After asking this question, the Rebbe lit the Chanukah *lecht*.

Rebbe Mordechai Dov of Hornosteipel *zt'l* explained the Tolna Rebbe's intention. - The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59.) says, "If you have a short wife, bend down to seek her counsel."

The Tolna Rebbe hinted that on Chanukah, Hashem keviyachol bends down to whichever level we are on to elevate us.

The Rambam (Hilchos Chanukah 4:12) writes, מצות נר חנוכה - "The mitzvah of lighting Chanukah lecht is an extremely beloved mitzvah, and a person must be cautious with it."



A man was trekking through a forest and found a great treasure of gold, diamonds, and precious stones. The hiker emptied his backpack of his personal items and began filling his bag with gems.

Just then, his phone rings. It is his rebbe. "Rebbe, thank you for returning my call. Please give me chizuk. I feel very depressed."

"What are you doing now?" asked his rebbe.

"I found a mountain of precious gems in the forest and am stuffing my pockets and bag."

"You are gathering gems, and you need chizuk?!" the rebbe exclaimed in disbelief.

During Chanukah, people come over to me and ask for chizuk. I wonder, "How can you need chizuk now? Every moment of Chanukah, you gather treasures, b'gashmiyus and b'ruchniyus. No one should be happier than you, and you need chizuk?!"

With Hallel, the neiros Chanukah, Al HaNissim, Tehillim, Torah study, Chanukah seudos, and simply by being happy on Chanukah, we are picking up priceless treasures. So, how can we feel a need for chizuk now?"

Rebbe Moshe Mordechai of Lelov zt'l would tell that when Reb Avraham Elimelech of Karlin zt'l prepared the wicks for Chanukah lecht, his face shone brightly, like a person standing by an open hot oven when matzos are being baked.

One year, **Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna *zy'a*** (Bayit v'Gan, Yerushalayim) lit Chanukah *lecht*, and was saying zemiros and Tehillim. Many people were present. Due to pushing, a child fell on the Rebbe's Chanukah menorah, and knocked it over. The Rebbe said, "My dear child, I'm so grateful to you. Now I can keep Chazal's ruling, **כבתה אין זקוק לה**, if the candles blow out before a half-hour passes, one isn't obligated to light the candles again. - How often can I fulfill this Chazal? Thank you for giving me this opportunity!"

Instead of being angry with the child, he rejoiced that he could practice a statement from Chazal. (Afterwards, the Rebbe lit the candles again because the Mishnah Berurah rules that if a half-hour hasn't passed, one should be *machmir* and rekindle the candles.)

Gazing at the Chanukah Lecht

The brachos and the lighting of the Chanukah lecht can be done relatively quickly, but many spend half an hour looking at the Chanukah lecht, praying and praising Hashem.

Chavas Ya'ir (**הגהות מקור חיים תרע"ב ב'**) writes, "In my opinion, the essential part of the mitzvah is that the one who lit the *lecht* should stay near the *lecht* for a half hour and look at them and be happy with them."

Yeitav Panim writes, "The *minhag* in Klal Yisrael is to sit and gaze at the lecht. This draws down the miracles of Chanukah."

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* said that those who have pure eyes can see Hashem's name shining on the Chanukah *lecht*.

The Beis Avraham (**נר ד' ד"ה רק**) says that **אלא לראותם בלבד** implies that looking at Chanukah *lecht* is a *refuah* and rectification for sins related to guarding the eyes.

Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchortkov zt'l related that there was a person who was prone to sadness and depression. **The Apter Rav**

zt'l advised him to look at the Chanukah lecht. He followed that advice and was healed.

The Divrei Chaim *zt'l* teaches: An expert doctor can diagnose an illness by looking into his patient's eyes, and he would know how to treat that illness. Similarly, by looking into the Chanukah *lecht*, one can attain a spiritual *refuah* for all ailments of his *neshamah*.

The Nesivos Shalom says, "When a Yid says the brachos on the Chanukah lecht and looks at them and accepts on himself that from now on he won't return to his foolish ways, with the strength of Chanukah, this is sufficient to rectify everything in just one moment.

The Bnei Yissaschar (Kislev-Teves 4:65) writes that the gates of Gan Eden are closed at night, but it seems from the teachings of Reb Pinchas Koritzer that when Yidden light Chanukah lecht, the gates of Gan Eden open.

Hallel and Al HaNissim

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* -חכמת שלמה תרפ"ג discusses the following scenario: A prisoner was granted the right to leave prison on Chanukah for a few hours. The prisoner's question was whether he should go out at nighttime, so he can light Chanukah lecht, or should he leave in the morning so he can say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* in beis medresh. - Reb Shlomo Kluger answered that he should leave prison in the morning to say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* with a minyan.

From this discussion, we understand the importance of *Hallel* and *Al HaNisim*. They are among the highest points of Chanukah. Therefore, we should certainly invest in saying Hallel and Al HaNissim with kavanah.

In parashas Toldos, the Torah tells how Yaakov Avinu received the brachos from Yitzchak Avinu. The word לו is repeated several times in the pasukim. (27:25-27) ויגש לו ויאכל ויבא לו יין וישת... ויישק לו.

The Tzvi l'Tzaddik (Bluzhev) zt'l explains that ל״ו hints at the thirty-six Chanukah lecht. - This means we receive Yitzchak's brachos yearly when we light the Chanukah lecht.

The Chiddushei HaRim zt'l said that lighting the Chanukah lecht is in some ways even greater than the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash. If the lamps of the Menorah of the Beis HaMikdash were blown out, the kohen is obligated to light them again. But when the Chanukah lecht are extinguished, they don't need to be relit.

This is because the light of the Chanukah menorah shines in the neshamah of the Jewish nation, even after the light was extinguished.



In the home of **Reb Shlomo Alter zt'l** (a grandson of the **Chidushei HaRim zt'l**), they would light a candle whenever there was a need for a *yeshuah*. If someone was ill, or there was a **יולדת**, or even when the weather was harsh, they would light a candle. - It seems that he received this custom from his holy ancestors.

Reb Chaim Palagi says this also occurs when we light the Chanukah lecht. Immense *rachamim* flows, like what is achieved with the shofar, and *midas hadin* becomes *rachamim*.

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l said that Chanukah lecht brings *refuos* to the world. - Lighting candles banishes the kelipos, the Satan, and it brings yeshuos.

Rebbe Leibele Eigar zt'l taught that the letters that make up the word רפואה can be divided into two words: אור פה. There is another word for healing. It is ארוכה. This word can also be divided into two words, אור כ"ה.

This hints that on the 25th of Kislev, when we light Chanukah lecht, refuos begin to come to Klal Yisrael.

Furthermore, להדליק נר חנוכה is gematria מלך רופא נאמן.

One of the primary segulos of lighting Chanukah lecht is to have children who are *talmidei chachamim*. As Chazal say, **הרגיל בנר הויין לו בנים תלמידי חכמים**, "When one is accustomed to lighting Chanukah lecht, he will merit children talmidei chachamim.

L'Maaseh

A delegation of collectors arrived in the city of Volozhin to collect money for a Yeshivah in a distant city. They knocked on door after door, but to their dismay, most people contributed very small amounts of money. Someone explained to them that people were probably annoyed that they had come to Volozhin to collect funds for a distant Yeshivah, when Volozhin had its own Yeshivah to support.

The collectors met with **Rav Chaim Brisker, zt"l**, the Rosh Yeshivah in Yeshivas Volozhin. They told him what was happening, and they expressed their great disappointment that they would have to return home without the funds they had hoped to collect.

Rav Chaim asked the group to wait another day before returning home. He then quickly called a meeting of the city's important dignitaries and wealthy men. At the meeting, he told them the following story:

"There was once a wealthy man who had business affairs in many

countries. Since he couldn't be everywhere at once, he appointed a different manager to each branch of his business. Each manager tried to make sure that his branch of the business performed well so that the boss would be pleased, but none of them really cared about the company as a whole.

The wealthy man had a son that he brought into the business, and the son would travel from one country to another to oversee his father's company. The son cared about his father's business in its entirety, rather than just one particular branch, and because of that, the company did very well overall."

Rav Chaim then looked at the wealthy men of Volozhin and said, "The Menorah in the Mishkan serves as a symbol of unity in Klal Yisroel. It was not made of a combination of parts that were screwed or welded together. Rather, it was a single piece of gold that was hammered into shape. - We are all Hashem's children, and we have to worry about His business as a whole, not just our own branch!"

The next day, the collectors received very nice donations for their Yeshivah!

Thoughts For Chanukah – Rabbi Chanoch Bleier

When we say every Yid has a fire in them [as stated in Ovadya 1:18 בֵּית־יַעֲקֹב אֵשׁ] why do we take the example of 'Fire'? There is so much we can learn from Fire.

● A fire always flickers up and down, but always points upwards, and keeps trying to go up, so too, us Yiden we go up, fall down, but always aim upwards, and keep trying.

● A flame can bring light even in the darkest places, so too, with our fire of Emuna and Bitochon, we can light up even the darkest places, Hashem is ALWAYS with us, holding our hands, even in the hardest times.

● Walking in the dark, will make you stumble, and make it very unenjoyable, we Yidden that have an inbuilt fire – Torah, we can navigate the world much easier with our light, knowing where and how to go, without stumbling.

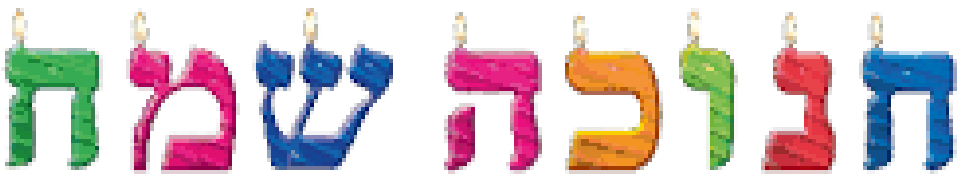
● A fire by itself is very strong, but when mixed with water, the water puts out the fire, so too, when Yidden stand alone, the fire burns stronger and stronger, but when we begin mixing with the other nations of the world [who are compared to water], our fire gets weaker quite quickly.

● A fire needs to be kept alive with fuel constantly, otherwise it will go smaller and smaller, likewise, our fire needs constant fuel with our Mitzvas and Masim Toivim, otherwise will get smaller.

Each one of these examples, can be expounded about at great lengths, so now you have work cut out for you by the Neiros Chanukah, when you see those Heiligeh Flames flickering. And on a last point, although we mentioned our fire getting smaller sometimes, however, our fire, can never be put out - **מים רבים לא יכלו לכבות**, and wherever we are in the world, both physically and spiritually, our fire is ALWAYS alight, and waiting to grow bigger.

What year did the story of Chanukah take place

The story of Chanukah took place during the times of the Second Beis Hamikdosh, in the year 3622, meaning 2164 years ago. From the time the Chashmoinoim won over the Greeks, they were in charge and no one started up with them for the next 26 years, until the Romans started coming in the year 3648 and eventually destroying the Second Beis Hamikdosh 180 years later in the year of 3828.



Staying with the candles Half hour

One of the big conflicts people tend to have is, does one HAVE to stay/take in the vibes/aura and enjoy their candles once lit, or is it just the lighting one has to do, and that's it? In Yidishkeit [Judaism] we have no such things as remembrance days, every Yom Tov we have, means that the same Hashpo'as that came down to our ancestors, comes down to us in the exact same way [Kedushas Leivi].

The **עת רצון** at the time of lighting the Menorah, is literally unimaginable, its mesugal for reaching new heights of Emuna & Bitochon [like they saw and felt even in the darkest of moments], to daven for kids, for children to grow up **יראים ושלמים** [like one davens by the Shabbos Candles], to daven for Refuas, and Parnosa b'Shefa and loads more.

So, to miss this once-a-year opportunity for the sake of…. "its your turn to take me swimming"!!! Is like someone giving you a key to a safe, that inside it, is the secrets that can give you anything you need forever, and you very kindly accept the key with great excitement.

Sometime later you meet this person, and they ask you, "nu, has your life changed?", and you say "no, why should it have?", "but I gave you the key to access the safe, which was full of everything you could wish for, forever?", - "Yes, I put the key in, opened the safe, but didn't take anything out of it, as I had to run on an errand, and got side tracked"!!

Although this minhag of staying by the Neiros is brought down in many Seforim, all the way back in time, and the Chavas Yo'ir [Mekoir Chaim on Sh"O 672/2 Nireh li] says that "the 'iker mitzva' [main mitzva] is, that one should stay by the flames to see and enjoy them… and one should not light and leave them…" - still, Halachically, one cannot say there is a chiyuv to be by the Menorah for half hour.

Dreidel, Donuts and Lights: Chanukah's Deeper Meaning by Rabbi Mordechai Becher



Dreidels, latkes, and donuts aren't just fun—they're coded history. Discover how spinning, frying, and lighting reveal Hanukkah's deeper message.



Have you ever made a dreidel out of clay? - Didn't think so, although I did once buy a beautiful, handmade ceramic dreidel in St. Petersburg.



The Yiddish word "*dreidel*" comes from the German word "*drehen*", which means to turn, as in the expression "*dreyen a kopf*" ("turning a head" which loosely translates as "driving me crazy"). The modern Hebrew term "*sevivon*" comes from the root "*sovev*" (to turn) and was invented by Itamar Ben-Avi (the son of Eliezer Ben-Yehuda, father of Modern Hebrew) when he was five years old.

Although Jewish sources don't mention the dreidel earlier than the 18th century, numerous reasons have been suggested for the custom of playing with dreidels on Hanukkah. The most famous explanation is based on the historical Hellenist opposition to study of Torah, and this was a way for Jews under Hellenistic persecution to disguise their study of Torah by pretending to engage in gambling with tops, or by children pretending to be playing when they were actually assembling to study.

Others contrast the dreidel with the Purim *grogger* (noisemaker), pointing out that while the *grogger* is spun from below, the dreidel is spun from above. On Hanukkah, the miracles were due to Divine kindness rather than repentance of the Jews – i.e. spinning from above. On Purim, the Jews fasted and repented, and the miracles resulted from their merit – i.e. spinning from below.

The great Chassidic thinker, **Rav Zvi Elimelech of Dinov** sees the four sides of the dreidel as alluding to four kingdoms that oppressed and exiled the Jewish people: Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome. The dreidel symbolizes the ultimate fall of each empire, whereas the two constants of the dreidel, the point around which history revolves, the destiny of the Jewish people, and the Hand of G-d that spins from above, symbolize the future redemption. The opposition forces will be nullified, and the world will unite with the Jewish people in the service of G-d.

Many great Rabbis took the custom of spinning the dreidel quite seriously. **Rabbi Moshe Sofer** of Pressburg (known as the **Chasam Sofer**) used to specifically spin his own silver dreidel, especially when guests visited, in order to fulfill this beautiful custom and publicize the miracle in a distinguished manner. Nowadays Chassidic Rebbes spin dreidels in the presence of their Chassidim after the lighting of the menorah.

Consider the physics behind a dreidel. Gravity tries to topple it by creating an angular force, but when the dreidel spins rapidly around its vertical axis, this spin stabilizes it. As long as it's spinning quickly, gravity's effect is too weak to tip it over—so the dreidel stays upright. Based on this idea, Rabbi Shlomo Fischer added another dimension to the dreidel. He explained that like the dreidel, the Jewish people, if left to natural, sociological and historical forces will fall. It is only because we "spin" continuously with the energy and enthusiasm of Torah and mitzvah observance that we are able to stay upright and survive.



Chanukah Foods

Aside from spinning dreidels, we celebrate Hanukkah in a primarily spiritual fashion – lighting candles and saying special prayers; there is no obligation to have a special meal. One reason for this is that the threat of the Hellenists to the Jewish people was primarily spiritual, not physical – assimilation as opposed to annihilation. This is in contrast to Purim where the threat was physical annihilation, and hence the celebration is primarily physical – food, gifts, and wine. Having said that, the Jewish people are definitely gastro-centric and there are specific customs related to food on Hanukkah.

The earliest mention of a special Hanukkah food is found in a medieval commentary on the Talmud (Rabeinu Nissim, Shabbat, Dafei HaRif 10a). And the Midrash relates that the daughter of Yochanan the High Priest, Yehudit, gave the Greek governor, Holofernes, cheese and wine, and when he was drunk, she took his sword and killed him. Because of this it has become customary to eat dairy foods on Hanukkah."



This is one source for a ruling in the Code of Jewish Law, which states that "Some say it is customary to have special meals during Hanukkah to celebrate the dedication of the Temple.... And some say it is customary to eat cheese on Hanukkah to commemorate Yehudit feeding Holofernes cheese before killing him." The act of bravery of Yehudit helped spark the Maccabean revolt and put fear into the hearts of the Greeks.

One of the oldest Hanukkah foods, dating back to the 13th century, was the ricotta cheese pancake, fried in olive oil. This food combined two references to Hanukkah, the cheese commemorating Yehudit

and her courage, and the olive oil, commemorating the miracle of the Menorah. Jews of Spain, Sephardim, referred to these pancakes as *cassola* and Italian Jews called them *casciola,* from the Italian *cascio,* cheese.

Latkes

The Yiddish term *latke* is derived from the Ukrainian word for pancake or fritter, *oladka*. This word originated from the Greek *eladia*, meaning "oily things," related to the Greek *elaion*, meaning olive oil (which, of course, brings us back to Hanukkah) and from which the English word "oil" derives.

The original European latkes did not use potato but were made of soft cheese fried in olive oil. In Eastern Europe, where olive oil was either not available or extremely expensive, other oils were substituted. The most common oil to fry was *schmaltz*, animal fat, and therefore the latkes could not be made of cheese. Instead, people used rye batter, buckwheat flour, turnips and other vegetables. Potatoes were first brought to Europe from South America by the Spanish and were originally considered poisonous. They were not widely eaten in Europe until the 18th century, and it was not until the late 19th century that potatoes became acceptable to plant and eat in Eastern Europe.

Once potatoes were introduced, they became a staple of the Eastern European diet and were used by Jews to make latkes, fried in *schmaltz*. Unfortunately, this evolution of the latke was now missing both references to Hanukkah, not having either cheese or olive oil in the recipe.

Doughnuts

Anyone who has been to Israel knows that already a month before Hanukkah, bakeries all over the country begin selling *sufganiyot,* fried doughnuts, which come in a staggering variety of flavors and styles. Fillings include the classic jelly, but also halva, chocolate truffles, dulce de leche, crème espresso and

mango cream. The Hebrew term *sufganiyot* is actually a term that is found in the Talmud as *sufganin*, where their status as matzah is discussed. Commentaries explain that the word means "like a sponge, *sfog*" and that it is a type of bread-like food.



The *sufganiyah* only really became a Hanukkah food in the 1920s where it was pushed by the Histadrut trade union in Israel in order to provide much needed employment to workers. Unlike latkes, which could easily be made at home, *sufganiyot* were produced in bakeries and hence created an opportunity for employment. However, the fact that it is fried in oil, albeit not olive oil, does make it somewhat of a Hanukkah dish. In fact, Spanish Jews used to make fritters known as *bimuelos*, which were fried in oil and dipped in honey or sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar for Hanukkah.

Lighting the Menorah at Home

The single most important observance of Hanukkah, one that is actually required by Jewish law, is the lighting of the Hanukkah menorah, the eight-branched candelabra. Every household is obligated to light at least one menorah. This is in order to commemorate and publicize the miracle in which the oil burned for eight days even though there was only enough oil for one day, as is well known.

There is, however, a little bit of a problem with this obligation. The original miracle of the menorah at the time of the Maccabees took place in the holy temple in Jerusalem and therefore one would expect that the primary location for lighting the Hanukkah menorah should be in the synagogue, our quasi-temple. Why is it that the

obligation is primarily in the home, whereas in the synagogue it is not obligatory but customary?



One perspective comes from a previously mentioned story: Yehudit was taken captive by the Greeks. The Talmud explains that this decree was universal, a Hellenist effort to undermine and corrupt the sanctity of the Jewish home and family. As a response, we light candles specifically in our homes to symbolize that the holiness of the Jewish home endures.

Another explanation, offered by **Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Kook**, highlights how the Torah refers to the Jewish people as "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." According to Rabbi Kook, every Jewish home is considered a temple, and every Jew a priest. Thus, we light the menorah within our own temple—the Jewish home.

Homes versus Shuls

I believe that there is another important lesson in the idea of lighting the menorah in our home. **Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch** who lived in Germany in the 19th century was frustrated by the emphasis in the early reform movement where Judaism was almost completely focused in the synagogues and the temples.

He believed that the epicenter of Judaism was in fact the home. He even went as far as saying that he would like to close all the synagogues for a month or two just to demonstrate that the primary locus of Jewish holiness, of Torah study, performance of the commandments, and Jewish education was in each person's home not in the communal institutions of the synagogues and schools. By lighting the menorah in our homes, we express this same idea.

Jewish celebrations and festivals are multi-faceted. Food, prayers, rituals and even recreation are ways in which Judaism shares its messages. We celebrate Hanukkah with reminders of our persecution and salvation – the dreidel; our heroism and self-sacrifice – dairy foods; and miracles and holiness – the menorah. Whether you light the menorah, eat donuts or spin the dreidel, you are testifying to the eternity, uniqueness and miraculous nature of Jewish survival.

Wicks Used For The Menorah



Regarding wicks used for the *Menorah*, any type may be used, even if it does not create a beautiful flame. Comparatively, for *Shabbos*, the wicks of the *Shabbos* candles must produce a nice flame.

It is known that the light of the *Menorah* signifies the *Torah*. The **Bnei Yissaschar** learns that the wick represents man. As such, he derives from this, that any person, regardless of intellect, diligence, or stature, can connect to the *Torah* and light up the world with his learning. - By believing in our children and ourselves, we all can be *Marbeh K'vod Shamayim*.

Emuna Daily - Only Then

Hashem helps at the moment when a person doesn't see any natural means for his salvation - Because that's when he places his trust in Hashem. - The Chazon Ish

בס"ד

למודי משה

Congealed Oil



In recent years, many people have started using ready-made candles, which contain olive oil that has been hardened using bee's wax and the like, and when they are lit, the oil melts and becomes liquid. The big question is, is there any problem to use such candles, and does doing so have the *hiddur* of lighting olive oil?

In *Da'as Torah*, the *Maharsham* (*Orach Chaim* 670) brings in the name of the *Teshuvah Me'ahavah* (*Orach Chaim* 285) that congealed olive oil is kosher for the *menorah*, and the jug of oil that the Chashmonaim found through which the miracle of Chanukah happened was in fact congealed oil, which has the status of food and not a liquid.

Based on the above, R' Yehudah Aryeh Dunner *shlita* (*Beis Aharon V'Yisrael*, *Kovetz* 70, pg. 147) suggests that there may even be more of a *hiddur* to use congealed oil for Chanukah candles, as that is the most similar to the type of oil used at the time of the miracle.

R' Moshe Sternbuch *shlita* (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 3:218) suggests that *lechatchilah* one shouldn't use congealed candles, as when they are congealed and solid they don't have the status of a liquid and are not considered oil. Although the flame burns from the oil that has melted, at the time of lighting it wasn't melted, and we rule that **הדלקה עושה מצוה** – the lighting is the mitzvah, therefore, at the time of lighting it should already be a liquid.

R' Wosner (*Shu"t Shevet HaLevi* 9:143) disagrees with this and he writes that although congealed oil is no good for the *menorah* in the

Beis HaMikdosh, it is nevertheless kosher for Chanukah candles even *lechatchilah*, because there is no complete analogy between Chanukah candles and the candles in the *Beis HaMikdosh*, and the two don't have to be exactly the same.

It also brought in the name of R Elyashiv *zt"l* (*Ashrei HaAish*, Vol. 3, *Perek* 34, *ois* 16) that congealed oil is kosher *lechatchilah* for Chanukah candles.

Knock, Knock, Who's There? (Incredible Story)

(I saw the following in the book "Living with Miracles" written by Rabbi Binyomin Pruzansky)

The miracles of Chanukah and other Yomim Tovim are not confined to the past; they are reminders of the miracles we can discover every day. When a person looks for Hashem in his own life, he can see Hashem's miracles everywhere. However, if the person isn't paying attention, he won't see Hashem even if He performs a miracle right in front of the person's eyes.

At 4 a.m., Rabbi Bernstein's slumber was interrupted by the sound of loud knocking on his apartment door. First, he tried to ignore the racket and fall back asleep. But as the knocking persisted and grew louder, he realized that perhaps someone was desperately in need of help. Perhaps this was a life-or death situation.

He got out of bed and headed toward the door. But as he passed the kitchen, he caught sight of a horrifying scene. His two-year-old son Shimmy was perched on top of the kitchen counter holding a kettle of hot water in one hand and his bottle in the other. The flimsy plastic bottle wobbled, and so did Shimmy, as he attempted to fill his bottle. In another second, Shimmy could drop the kettle and tumble off the counter with the boiling water cascading down on top of him.

Rabbi Bernstein had to act fast, but also, he had to move calmly and gently to avoid startling Shimmy. The rabbi carefully removed the kettle from his son's hand and lifted him off the counter. Through Hashem's perfect timing, the little boy was saved from grave injury.

Rabbi Bernstein then set out to discover who was knocking on the door. When he opened it, he found an entire family standing there, exhausted and disheveled, dressed in Shabbos clothing.

"I'm so sorry to knock at this hour," the father explained. "We came here from America and rented the apartment upstairs for two weeks. The door has a combination lock. I wrote the code down on a piece of paper and put it into the pocket of my weekday suit. The problem is that we are just getting back from a wedding and I'm wearing my Shabbos suit. The code is inside the apartment, and I have no idea how to get in. I was told by the apartment owner that you have the code.

"I feel terrible for waking you up in the middle of the night, but the wedding was in Bnei Brak and there was an accident on the road that caused a big delay. I have a bunch of kids with me who are all in desperate need of a bed, and when we got here and I realized I didn't know how to get in, I didn't know what to do.

But I saw that there was a light on in your apartment and I heard someone dragging a chair across the floor, so I realized that someone was awake. I thought it would be alright if I knocked. We're really so grateful for your help!"

Rabbi Bernstein gave his visitor the code and made sure the family got into the apartment, assuring them that it was no trouble at all. As he returned home, he was bursting with joy. He had witnessed a true miracle that saved his little boy from terrible injury. Had the American family not been stuck in traffic and come home exactly when they did, he would not have gotten up at the exact moment that his son was wobbling perilously on the counter with a kettle of boiling water in his hand. When he heard the insistent knocking on

the door, he had wondered, "Who could that be?" Now he knew. Hashem was knocking, knocking, and knocking some more, and wisely, Rabbi Bernstein answered.

There are many times in life that we encounter a situation and wonder why it had to be this way. What was the purpose of the challenge? But then we realize that every test has but one purpose — to guide us down the path on which Hashem wants us to go. Recognizing the *hashgachah* in the events of our lives inevitably makes us greater people.



Mitzvah De'O'raisa to Eat a Donut

Riddle: When would there be a case, that there is a mitzvah *de'O'raisa* to eat a donut on Chanukah?

Answer: The *Chasam Sofer* (*Yoreh De'ah* 333) writes that there is a mitzvah *de'O'raisa* to commemorate miracles on Chanukah and Purim. However, one who commemorates the miracle through a different means than those specifically enacted by *Chazal* — such as lighting the *menorah* or reading the *Megillah* — still fulfills the Torah obligation. Nevertheless, the rabbinic enactments dictate how these commemorations must be observed in practice.

On a *de'O'rasia* level one may do whatever he wants, whereas on a *derabonon* level he should do what *Chazal* enacted.

According to the *Chasam Sofer*, if one would be in a situation where he is unable to light *menorah*, i.e. he has no candles, and he is unable to sing *Hallel*, and the only thing he is able to do to remember Chanukah is to eat donuts, then although he won't be able to fulfill the mitzvah the way *Chazal* enacted, he should still eat donuts and fulfill the *de'O'raisa* of remembering Chanukah.

What Connection Do the Numbers 1 – 10 Have with Chanukah?

Riddle: List at least one connection the numbers 1 – 10 have with Chanukah? Who knows 1? 2? 3? 4? 5? 6? 7? 8? 9? 10?

Answer: 1 – The minimum number of candles required for the mitzvah of lighting *menorah*. It is also the number of candles lit as a *shamash*.

2 – The amount of *berachos* we make every night before lighting *menorah*, besides for the first night.

3 – The amount of *berachos* we make when lighting *menorah* on the first night; the minimum height of the *menorah*.

4 – The sides of the *dreidel*.

5 – The sons of Mattisyohu (according to *Megillas* Antiyochus); the five *gezeiros* of the Yevonim – Shabbos, *milah, kiddush hachodesh, kashrus* and Torah.

6 – Mattisyohu and his sons.

7 – Number of days that the oil burnt for miraculously; the number of candles in the *menorah* of the *Beis HaMikdosh*.

8 – Days of Chanukah; number of candles in a full *menorah*.

9 – Full *menorah* with a *shamash*.

10 – The maximum *lechatchilah* height of the *menorah*. (*Parsha* Challenge)

The Chazon Ish (*Orchos Rabbeinu*, old version, Vol. 1, pg. 108) had the *minhag* to use regular candles that burnt well for his Shabbos candles, and he didn't specifically use olive oil. However, for his Chanukah candles, even though other candles potentially would burn better, he made sure to use olive oil because: **בו נעשה הנס** – it is the oil that the Chanukah miracle happened with.

The Minhag to Recite מזמור שיר חנוכת הבית on Chanukah

Riddle: On Chanukah there is a *minhag* to recite **מזמור שיר חנוכת הבית**, what is the reason for this *minhag*?

Answer: The Medrash tells us that the Yevonim tried to uproot three *mitzvos*, "Shabbos", "Chodesh" and "Milah". The *Chida* says that the *roshei teives* of the words **מזמור שיר חנוכת הבית** hint to these three *gezeiros*. The **מ** of **מזמור** hints to **מילה**, the **ש** of **שיר** hints to **שבת**, the **ח** of **חנוכת** hints to **חודש**, and the **ה** of **הבית** hints to the **five** Chashonaim who defeated the Yevonim.

The *Chida* concludes that this is why we recite **מזמור שיר חנוכת הבית** on Chanukah.

If One Has a Limited Number of Candles for Chanukah, Can He Rely on His *Bitachon* and Light the *Mehadrin* Number of Candles?

The *Mishnah Berurah* (671:5) writes in the name of the *Chayei Adam* (*Klal* 154) that if one has a limited number of candles, he should light one candle each night, and he shouldn't fulfill the mitzvah of *mehadrin* (and light according to the amount of nights of Chanukah it is), in order to ensure that he is able to light every single night of Chanukah at least one candle, which is the minimal obligation.

R' Aharon Leib Steinman *zt"l* asked, why don't we tell the person to fulfil *mehadrin* and light according to which night of Chanukah it is, and if we are worried that he won't have enough candles for future nights, he should stop worrying and have *bitachon* that Hashem will provide him with what he needs for the next night.

Story with the Brisker Rav

Earlier in his life, the Brisker Rav *zt"l* was in Warsaw during World War II. Two days before Yom Kippur, he had just two pieces of bread. He was hungry, and so he ate them. People asked him why he did not save the bread for the next day, Erev Yom Kippur when it is a mitzvah to eat in preparation for the Yom Kippur fast.

"I'm not going to hoard food," the Brisker Rav replied, "I am hungry now, and now I have bread, so I am going to eat it".

Sure enough, the next day a baker arrived with loaves of bread, and the Brisker Rav had bread for the Erev Yom Kippur meal. The same man who brought the bread also had some fish – but as he made his way to the neighborhood, bombs fell, and he dropped the fish.

"If I had more *bitachon*" the Brisker Rav said, "I would have fish, too". Hashem has everything for us, and He will give us precisely what He determines we need.

We see from the above story that even when it comes to *mitzvos* it is ok to rely on *bitachon*.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (157:4) brings from the *Zohar* that it is forbidden to prepare food on one day for the next, as it shows a lack of *bitachon*. If so, why in our case can one not rely on *bitachon*?

Perhaps the answer is that if one really has *bitachon* then he may light the *mehadrin* amount of candles and not be worried about the next day, and the *poskim* which say otherwise, are referring to regular people who are not on such lofty levels.

Davening for your Children At the Time of Lighting the Chanukah Candles

There is a widespread *minhag* Yisrael when lighting Shabbos candles, that *yiddishe mama's* [Jewish mother's] worldwide *daven* for their children to grow up to be *talmiday chachomim*. The source for this is *Rabbeinu Bechayeh* (*Parshas Yisro* 19:3) who writes: – "It is fitting for a woman to *daven* when lighting candles that Hakadosh Baruch Hu should give her male children, who light up the world with Torah."

The *Machatzis HaShekel* (on *Magen Avraham, Orach Chaim* 263:11) writes that the source for this is the Gemara in Shabbos (23b) which says: – "One who is accustomed to lighting a candle will have children

who are *talmiday chachomim*". The *pasuk* says, **כי נר מצוה ותורה אור**, we see that through *mitzvos*, one merits the light of Torah. Consequently, it is fitting for a woman to *daven* when lighting Shabbos candles that her sons should be *talmiday chachomim*, **כי בשעת קיום המצוה, התפלה על השכר המיוחד לאותה מצוה רצויה יותר לפניו יתברך** – *at the time of fulfilling a mitzvah, a tefillah asking for the reward of that mitzvah, is more easily accepted in front of the Ribbono Shel Olam.*

(Rabbeinu Yonah in his *Igeres Teshuvah*, *ois* 59, writes a similar thing – "When a woman gives *tzedokah*, she should *daven* at that time that her children should have *yiras Shomayim* and be successful in Torah and *mitzvos*, because the *tefillah* of a person at a time he fulfils a mitzvah is very powerful.)

Rashi on the Gemara in Shabbos explains that when the Gemara says, **הרגיל בנר**, it refers to both Shabbos and Chanukah candles. Rashi learns that it refers to both, however, many *Rishonim* learn it refers to just Chanukah (see *Rabbeinu Chananel; Rosh* (*siman* 13); and the *Behag*, *Hilchos* Chanukah 9)

Therefore, just like there is no *yiddishe mama* who doesn't *daven* by the Shabbos candles on *erev* Shabbos for her children, the same thing should be with the Chanukah candles, there shouldn't be single *yiddishe tata* [Jewish father], who doesn't *daven* by the Chanukah candles that his children (and himself) should be *talmiday chachomim* who light up the world with Torah.

Chanukah: Once the *Shirah* Starts – It Must Keep Going

The Rambam writes (*Hilchos* Chanukah 4:12): "The mitzvah of Chanukah is very precious. A person must be particularly careful to publicize the miracle and to add to the praise of the Almighty, and thank Him for the miracles He did for us; even if he has nothing to eat other than from charity funds – he must borrow or sell his clothing to be able to buy oil and wicks and light."

If we pay close attention to these words, we notice a discrepancy. The Rambam begins by saying the goal of the mitzvah is to publicize the miracle (***nes***), singular. Then he says that we are to add to the praise of the Almighty and thank Him for the miracles (***nisim***), plural, that He did for us. So, which is it? Is it ***nes*** or is it ***nisim***?

After lighting Chanukah candles, we say "*HaNeiros Halalu*" and then we recite "*Maoz Tzur*." *Maoz Tzur* recounts the miracle of *Yetziyas* Mitzrayim, the redemption from the Babylonian exile, the story of Purim, and the Chanukah story of the struggle with the Greek empire. Basically, it is a brief synopsis of Jewish history: Mitzrayim, Bavel, Purim, and Chanukah.

On Purim we say "*Shoshanas Yaakov*". We only mention the story of Purim. What about the rest of the miracles of Jewish history? Why in the Chanukah *Pizmon* do we mention all the major miracles of Jewish history and by Purim, we only mention about Purim?

Rabbi Lander offers the following answer: The Gemara says (*Megillah* 14a) that there is a fundamental difference between Chanukah and Purim – namely on Chanukah we recite *Hallel* and on Purim we do not.

There are several explanations why this is the case. Rava, in the Gemara there, explains why unlike the commemoration of *Yetziyas* Mitzrayim, where we recite *Hallel*, in commemorating the Purim deliverance we do not: When we left Mitzrayim, we could indeed say *Hallel* because we were no longer servants to Pharoah, but even after the "deliverance" of the Purim story, we were still servants of Achashverosh.

The "deliverance" of the Chanukah story was more similar to *Yetziyas* Mitzrayim: After the successful Maccabean revolt, we were free men, we were in our own country, and we had our own government. We had the *Beis HaMikdosh*. We were not enslaved to anybody! Therefore, on such a *nes*, we say *shirah*. On Purim, we were very happy that the decree of annihilation was cancelled. That was

a terrific miracle. But after all is said and done, we still remained in exile, subject to foreign domination by a Gentile king!

Shirah is an expression of the heart. When you say *shirah*, you sing! You express your deepest emotions, your feelings of gratitude to the Almighty for all He has done for you. When people engage in *shirah* they do not stop with a single expression of thanks. They give thanks for everything!

Therefore, on Chanukah, which justifies *Hallel*, which is *shirah*, once we begin singing His praises, we must express thanks for all the *tova* He has done for us throughout the ages! Purim has various *mitzvos* commemorating the event, but they are localized to the exact event that happened "in those days at this time of year." An obligation to say *shirah* does not exist "for we are still slaves of Achashverosh."

So, this is what the Rambam means: A person needs to be particularly careful to publicize the miracle (i.e. – of Chanukah) and to add to the praise of the Almighty and thank Him for the miracles that He did for us (i.e. – during the rest of Jewish history as well)."

As we continue through the winter let's not forget the above, and lets continue to appreciate and thank Hashem for all the constant miracles he does for us. (Rav Daniel Lander, quoted by R' Yissochar Frand) - Wishing you and your families a *freilichen* Chanukah!!!

When someone did a favor to **Reb Aharon of Belz *zt'l***, he would make it a point to thank him personally.

His *gabbaim* asked, "Why do you take the effort to thank people yourself? For more important matters, you send your *gabbaim*. Why can't you send us to thank those who helped you?"

He replied, "When the *chazan* says **מודים**, the congregation says *modim* along with him. This is because when it comes to thanking, one must do so himself and not rely on a *shaliach*."

The Weekly Vort

► Only Happiness And Praise

The *Chashmonaim* found only one container of pure oil with which to light the *Menorah* in the rededicated *Beis Hamikdosh*, which miraculously burned for eight days. The Rambam teaches that Chazal therefore set eight days of Chanukah for us to commemorate as days of **שמחה והלל** - *happiness and praise*. The Sefer Seder HaYom explains that it is therefore prohibited to be sad and depressed during Chanukah.

Inspired by Time – Rabbi Yehoshua Frankenhauis



As Yidden around the world prepare to light the menorah, we are pained to hear the terrible news from Australia. Our brothers and sisters were attacked at the very moment they were preparing to celebrate Chanukah and kindle the lights — targeted for one reason alone: because they are Yidden.

We continue to daven for the refuah sheleimah of the injured, and we mourn together with the families who have lost their loved ones. Our hearts ache, yet our emunah stands firm.

At moments like these, we are reminded that this is not new. In the days of Chanukah, forces arose who sought to destroy and eradicate *Klal Yisrael*, to extinguish the light of Torah and Yiddishkeit. Their goal was darkness, fear, and spiritual annihilation.

But what did *Klal Yisrael* do?

Against all odds, they stood up. They fought back — not only with strength, but with light. They continued. They persevered. And they overcame those who tried to extinguish them by increasing holiness, courage, and commitment.

And so it is today.

As others around the world seek to harm us, to silence us, to put out the light of Yiddishkeit, our response is the same as it has always been. Tonight, we go home and light our menorahs. We bring more light into our homes. More kedushah into our lives. More clarity into a dark world.

Light is our answer. Light is our strength.

A freilichen Chanukah. May we merit to hear only besoros tovos.

The Inspired by Time Team

FACEBUKER SHABBOS TABLE TALK

Continuing the Legacy of Rabbi Dovid Winiarz of blessed memory

Chanukah – War and Peace

The Ran in Masechta Shabbos says that the word Chanukah is a combination of two words, Chanu, they rested from the war, and Chof Hey, on the 25th day of Kislev. - Why, asks **Rav Elyashiv z"l**, do we celebrate the day we rested? Shouldn't we celebrate the day we miraculously won the war?

We learn from this, he says, a great lesson regarding war. The great warriors of history saw war as a means of showing off their awesome power and ruling their conquests. They celebrate the crushing of their enemies which is their goal in war. However, for some, war is just a means to remove a threat interfering with their real goals in life. For them victory in war is not an accomplishment, it is what they

will achieve afterwards with their new-found peace that is the fruit of their victory.

This is the Jewish view of war. We do not want to fight. We are forced to, and we celebrate when we can finally lay down our arms and live in peace.

"A Touch of Chizuk" by Rav Yechiel Spero



On July 24, 1982, phantom pilot Gil Fogel was flying over Lebanon when his plane was shot down by a Syrian missile. Gil ejected himself from the plane but was taken into captivity by Syrian forces.

Nearly a year and a half later, Gil lay in his cell, wondering if he would ever see his loved ones again. For all he knew, they assumed he was dead and would never look for him. Perhaps he would be like those Israeli soldiers who were shot down and never heard from again. In truth, the Israelis were working on a plan to swap him for other prisoners, but he knew nothing of this.

While still in training, Gil was taught that it is imperative for POW's to keep track of the days of the week and the months to keep a sense of order and maintain some semblance of normalcy. Thus, one of the first things he did in prison was get hold of a calendar. Hence, he was able to follow the seasons and the holidays. Still, Gil could not help but grow despondent. But then, a few weeks before Chanukah, he thought of an idea. If the guards discovered what he was doing, he knew he would be punished severely, but he needed it to somehow bring some light into his darkness. He needed to feel the Presence of the Almighty in the hopelessness of his prison cell.

Although most of the guards were far from friendly, a few had a modicum of decency. It was from those few that he would obtain some of his most basic needs. First, he managed to get a tube of toothpaste. Instead of using it to brush his teeth, he cut it into eight separate parts, which he formed into receptacles. After that, he tore some threads from his blanket and rolled them into wicks.

Every morning, he would receive a meal. It wasn't anything to speak of, just something to help him live from day to day. He would extract some of the oil from the food and save it in the round receptacles he fashioned out of the toothpaste tube.

After a few weeks of planning, he had almost everything he needed. He had a menorah, wicks, and oil, but he still didn't know how he would get a light.

From time to time, his captors would take Gil from his dark and decrepit prison cell, clean him up, and place him in front of the international authorities. They wanted to show the world that they took care of their prisoners.

On the day before Chanukah, the guards barged into his cell to prepare him for another "performance." Gil had lost a lot of weight since he was captured, and he looked frail and gaunt. They handed him new clothing and tried to put some color in his cheeks. - All this time, his mind was focused on trying to find a light.

As he sat in the Syrian official's office, waiting to meet with the International Red Cross, he looked down at his feet. Gil could hardly control his excitement: there were eight matches right there on the floor! Clearly, this was a gift from the Almighty to ignite a spark of hope in his captivity. He hid them in his sock while no one was looking.

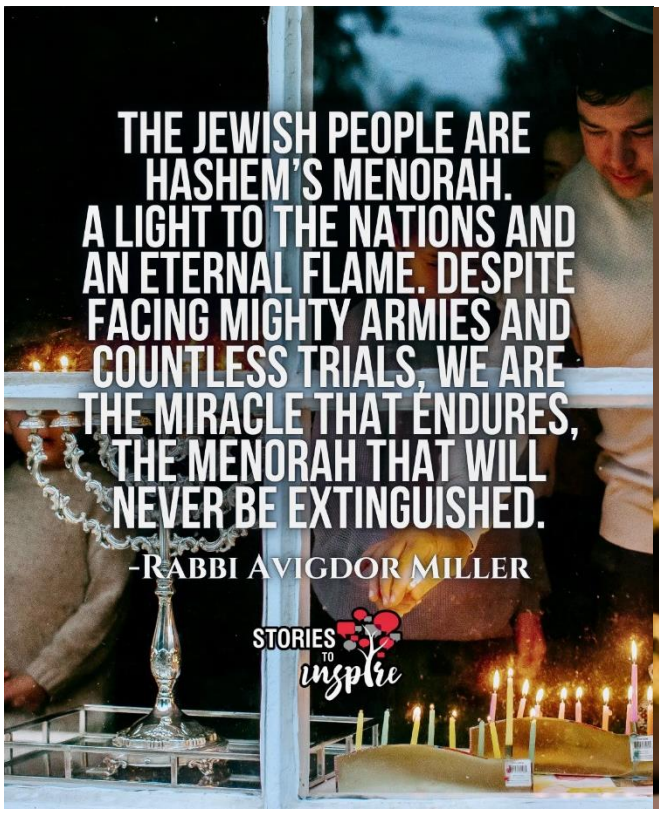
The next evening, darkness settled in on Damascus. Gil took out his makeshift menorah, struck the first match, made a blessing, and lit the wick. Tears streamed down his cheeks as he sang Maoz Tzur and all the other Chanukah songs he knew while he thought of his family.

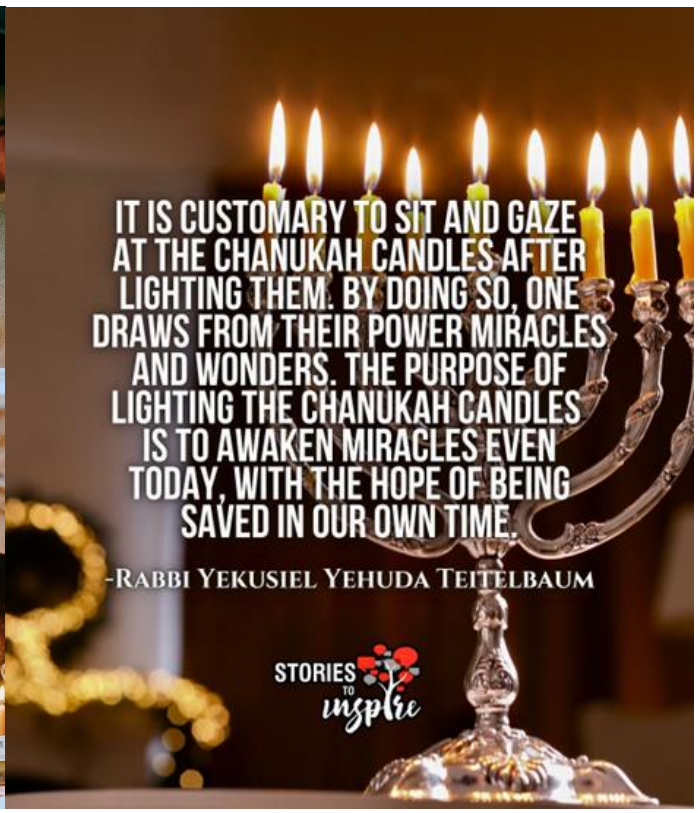
The irony of the whole situation was not lost on him. On Chanukah, the Jews celebrate their triumph over the Syrian-Greek forces. Tonight, in his own little way, in a dark and dank cell in Damascus, Syria, he, too, was victorious. On June 28th, 1984, Gil Fogel was granted freedom in exchange for Syrian prisoners.

Only Once A Year

R' Yitzchok Isaac of Ziditchov lived simply. All his utensils and furnishings were made of cheap materials, except for items used for *mitzvos* — a small silver Chanukah menorah, Shabbos candlesticks, and a Kiddush goblet.

Once, a wealthy *chossid* won a small silver table in a lottery and brought it to the Ziditchover Rebbe as a gift, but the Rebbe refused. His son, R' Eliyahu, suggested it be used for a mitzvah — as a pedestal for the Chanukah menorah. The Rebbe agreed, but only to use it once a year, on Chanukah. The rest of the year, the silver table remained in his son's house. (Sippurei Chassidim)





Torah Wellsprings ~ R' Elimelech Biderman

In Lecha Dodi we say **התעוררי התעוררי כי בא אורך קומי אורי**. **The Beis Avraham zt'l** teaches that **אורך** and **אורי** allude to the light of Chanukah. This is because **אורך** can be read as for **אור ך** - the light of Chanukah, which is placed lower than twenty amos (**ך** is twenty). And **אורי** stands for **אור י**, that the Chanukah lecht must be higher than ten tefachim (**י** is gematria ten). It hints at the great light of Chanukah, and therefore it states, **התעוררי התעוררי** - awaken!

These are great holy lights that illuminate the world. Let's awaken and lean into this unique opportunity!



The Perfect Replacement

After the passing of the great *tzaddik*, **Rabbi Avraham Weinberg of Slonim** (1804–1883), known as the **Yesod Ha'Avodah**, a question arose among the Chassidim: Who would succeed him?

He had several grandchildren of towering stature, each one worthy of bearing the mantle. But who, they wondered, embodied their revered Rebbe's path most faithfully?

In the end, their choice rested upon his grandson, **Rabbi Shmuel Weinberg (1850–1916)**, later to be known as the **Dvar Shmuel**. And the decision was sparked by a single illuminating episode.

From his youth, R' Shmuel had a fiery passion for the mitzvah of *hadlakas neiros Chanukah*. He did not merely prepare for the mitzvah; he immersed himself in it. Each year, he would personally gather olives from the field, press them, sift them, and refine the

oil until it was perfectly pure, worthy of doing *hiddur mitzvah* to its fullest. The approaching days of Chanukah filled him with deep, growing excitement.



That year, he chose to spend Shabbos Chanukah with his illustrious grandfather, the *Yesod Ha'Avodah*. Chassidim from across the region would travel to witness the Rebbe's Chanukah lighting, and R' Shmuel was no different.

Early Friday morning, he placed his carefully prepared menorah in the small room off the shul where he was staying so that everything would be ready for *erev Shabbos*. Before lighting himself, he went to behold his grandfather's *hadlakah*.

When he returned, however, he was met with an unexpected scene.

A simple man, seeing a beautifully prepared menorah with pure oil set in place mistakenly assumed that it was there for public use. Oblivious to the effort invested, he had taken R' Shmuel's menorah and had lit it for himself!

When R' Shmuel entered and saw what had happened, he neither uttered a cry of frustration nor did his face fall. Instead, he softly said:

"Ah…the menorah has already been lit. Then I must do the same."

With no oil left and Shabbos rapidly approaching, he searched for an alternative, but all he found were a few simple wax candles. And so, with perfect calmness, he lit the wax candles in place of the pure olive oil he had worked so hard to prepare.

One might think such a disappointment would cast a shadow over his Chanukah. After all, he had pored hours of devotion into producing

the oil with which he had longed to perform the mitzvah. Yet, R' Shmuel allowed none of it to dampen his joy. He celebrated the Yom Tov with a full and grateful heart, untroubled by what had gone differently than planned.

Those who witnessed the moment saw not only his humility but his mastery over himself, his ability to embrace Hashem's will with serenity. It was this quiet greatness that convinced the Chassidim: **He is the one who should carry his grandfather's mantle**.

From this, we learn the proper response when life veers from our expectations. R' Shmuel invested tremendous effort to beautify a mitzvah, yet when everything shifted beyond his control, he accepted it without bitterness — rejoicing simply in the opportunity to serve Hashem however circumstances allowed.

Sometimes, the greatest light of Chanukah comes not from the oil we prepare but from the light of *emunah* we ignite in our heart.



'Sometimes, the Shechinah is concealed, and the person doesn't see the hashgachah pratis in his life. It can be compared to a dreidel that is turning swiftly, and at that time, no letters can be seen.

Similarly, in his life, he doesn't see any letters of Hashem, any sign of hashgachah pratis or of Hashem's kindness. But he shouldn't despair. Continue dancing, and the time will come when you will see the letters, and you will understand how it was all for the good.' ~ Rabbi Elimelech Biderman.



Bring the Light

Our job is to bring light; Hashem takes care of the miracles. ~ R' Yitzchak Hutner zt"l.



משל למה הדבר דומה

עַל נִסֶּיךָ וְעַל נִפְלְאוֹתֶיךָ וְעַל יְשׁוּעָתֶךָ

A distraught individual once came to the renowned **Chazon Ish *zt"l***, complaining bitterly about his troubles. He had fallen into astronomical debt and felt his life was unbearable. "Only a real miracle could save me from my desperate situation," the man claimed. "However, **לאו כל יומא איתרחיש ניסא**," he concluded.

The man was quoting the well-known Talmudic phrase, conventionally understood as: "Not every day does a miracle occur." One should not rely solely on divine intervention. [Megillah 7b]

The Chazon Ish, however, offered a profound reinterpretation.

He read the phrase not as a statement of negation, but as a powerful display of *Hashem's* constant Divine intervention: *"Lav! Kol yoma itrchish nisa,"* meaning, No! Every single day miracles happen!

The Chazon Ish explained it in a way only he could about *Hashem's* intimacy with us and assured the fellow that with the right frame of mind, *Hashem* will surely come to his rescue in unimaginable ways.

The man was deeply moved. He realized that his problems were not proof of *Hashem's* absence, but that he had been blind to the Divine Presence, sustaining his life every moment. Miracles do indeed happen, and *Hashem* can easily perform them at a moment's notice.

The *Chanukah* story centers around the miracle of the oil burning for eight days, stemming from the small, undefiled *Pach Shemen* (flask of oil) found by the *chashmonaim* after they defeated the Greeks and rededicated the Holy Temple. - This seemingly insignificant quantity of oil, sufficient for only one day, miraculously sustained the *Menorah's* light for eight full days.

A key takeaway from *Chanukah* is that miracles can happen, even when least expected!

Why Is Chanukah 8 (Not 7) Days Long? 13 answers to an age-old puzzle by Yehuda Shurpin



The basic story goes like this: The Syrian-Greeks entered the Temple and defiled all the oil there. When the Hasmoneans reclaimed the Temple, they searched for pure olive oil but found only one cruse of oil that still bore the seal of the High Priest. There was only enough oil to light the Menorah for one day, yet a miracle occurred and the flames remained burning for eight days.

The question is, why did it take eight days to get new oil? There are two basic explanations.

• There was pure olive oil in a town called Tekoa (a region that continues to produce olive oil today), which would require a four days' journey. Therefore, they needed eight days to go there and come back.

• After the war, all the Jews were presumed to be in a state of ritual impurity resulting from contact with a dead body, and it takes seven days to be purified from such impurity. Only after they were ritually pure would they be able to obtain ritually pure olive oil on the eighth day.

Shouldn't Chanukah Be Seven Days?

While the above explanations sound simple enough, Rabbi Yosef Caro in his commentary Beit Yosef poses a glaring question. If there was enough oil in the flask to last one day, then the miraculous part was the oil lasting for the next seven days. Shouldn't Chanukah, which celebrates the miracle of the oil, be celebrated for just seven days?

Many commentators, including Rabbi Yosef Caro himself, have proposed various answers to this question. (One even wrote a book in which he collected 1004 possible answers.) Here are but a few of them:

1.Divided the oil: Knowing that it would take another eight days to procure pure oil, the Jews divided the jug of oil—which contained enough oil for only one night—into eight equal amounts. They figured that they would light one-eighth of the oil each of the next eight nights. Miraculously, each night, the oil that should have lasted only one-eighth of the night lasted for the entire night.

2.Jug remained full: After they filled the Menorah with oil on the first night, the jug remained full, and they were able to fill the Menorah the following night. The same thing happened the next seven days.

3.Menorah remained full: When the Jews entered the Sanctuary that first morning after lighting the Menorah, they found that the cups of the Menorah were still full of oil, despite having burned the entire night.

4.The miracle of finding oil: The first day commemorates the miracle of actually finding a jug of pure oil, especially after the Greeks went out of their way to defile all of the oil in the Temple.

5.Military victory: We celebrate the first day to commemorate the miraculous victory over the Greeks.

6.Dedication of Temple: The first day commemorates the rededication of the Temple. In fact, the very word Chanukah means "dedication."

7.Like Sukkot: The commandment to light the Menorah with pure oil is written in the Torah immediately after the commandment to observe the Sukkot festival for eight days (including Shemini Atzeret). The sages saw this as a divine hint that Chanukah should be celebrated for eight days.

Some go further and explain that since the eight-day holiday of Sukkot (and Shemini Atzeret) were not celebrated in the Temple that year, they instituted Chanukah for eight days.

8.Thinner wicks: Knowing that they had a minimum amount of oil, and it would take eight days to get more, they thinned the wicks so as to use only one-eighth of the oil in the Menorah. Miraculously, the flame was as strong as if they had used full-sized wicks.

9.More oil for Shabbat: The year that the Chanukah story occurred, the 25th of Kislev was Shabbat, so they actually lit the Menorah in the Temple before dark on the evening of the 24th of Kislev. They therefore needed more than a day's worth of oil, and the fact that the flames lasted through that first day was already miraculous.

10.Not even enough for one day: One variant of the Talmud (found in the Geonic-era work the Sheiltot) reads that they did not even have enough oil for one day.

11.Just one light: The jug only had enough oil for one of the seven lights of the Menorah for one day, but it lasted for all seven lights of the Menorah for eight days.

12.Circumcision: One of the main mitzvahs the Greeks outlawed was brit milah (circumcision), which is done on the eighth day after the child is born. Part of the celebration of Chanukah was that the Jews were finally allowed to openly perform this mitzvah, which represents the bond between the Jewish people and G-d. The sages therefore instituted that Chanukah be commemorated for eight days (instead of seven), corresponding to the brit milah.

13.The number eight: Technically, due to the circumstances, the Jews would have been permitted to use impure oil for the Menorah. G-d performed a miracle to show His love and appreciation for the Jewish people, giving them the opportunity to do the mitzvah in the optimal way. Thus, on a mystical level, the miracle of the oil was a suprarational miracle that there wasn't even a need for.

While seven represents the natural order of the world (seven days of the week, cycle of seven years for Shemitah, etc.), the number eight represents the connection between G-d and the Jewish people that is higher than the natural order.

It is for this reason that Chanukah, which represents this suprarational connection, was established for eight days. Likewise, we find in Midrashic sources that the era of the final redemption is represented by the number eight, which reflects a relationship with G-d that is higher than nature.

May we merit the final redemption speedily in our days!



● The Message of the Dreidel

On Chanukah, the custom is to play with a dreidel. When one spins the dreidel, he can do nothing to make the dreidel fall on the winning letter. Even if he is the best spinner in the world and spins the dreidel with all his might, he still cannot predict or arrange the outcome.

Similarly, one works for a living, one makes hishtadlus, but the results are in Hashem's hands. Hashem does, and not mankind.

● The Spin Doesn't Last Forever

When a dreidel spins, we know it will not spin forever. At a certain point, it stops. - Similarly, the troubles we go through in our lives won't last forever. At a certain point, they will end, and the salvation will come. ~ R' Uri Lati.

● Someone asked a dreidel, "How do you have the strength to stand on one foot? And why are you so happy that you dance a kedatchke?"

He replied, "I don't have the strength to stand alone. A person turns me from above, and I dance from his strength."

Sometimes, people feel that they are on one foot; they feel that life isn't stable. But if they believe that everything that happens to them is turned from Above, they will be happy and even dance a kedatchka.

● The letters on the dreidel have the words Nun, Gimmel, Hei and Shin. When we spin the dreidel we do not see the exact letters, given the speed at which it is moving. Only when it lands, can we make out the letters and put together the acronym – Neis Gadol Hayah Sham, a great miracle happened there.

The takeaway is that Hashem gives us so much. Yet, we are always busy with our normal routine, as if we are a moving dreidel, and we do not see how much Hashem is coordinating the unseen miracles of our lives. Yet, when Shabbos arrives, and we settle down, then we can recognise Hashem's hand. We can see how He was with us the entire week.

Similar to the dreidel, we must realise that Hashem is indeed orchestrating the big and small miracles in our lives, every moment and even as we move quickly from day to day. They are always there.

● The letters of a dreidel spell **נס גדול היה שם**, "A great miracle happened there," but while the dreidel spins, the letters cannot be seen. This represents how we lose sight of all the miracles that happen to us. So many things happen in our lives like we are spinning round and round, unable to focus on the many miracles and kindness Hashem a performs for us.

But Hashem constantly performs miracles and grant us His kindness, and we strive to recognise them, remember them, and praise Hashem for them.

● The dreidel turns on a tiny point. This hints that with a small kabbalah, everything can turn around.

Seize the Opportunity - Rav Dovid Ashear Shlita

In general, a parent's tefilot on behalf of their children's success in Torah and mitzvot goes a very long way, but now, specifically on Chanukah, parents have a golden opportunity to utilize these days for extra heartfelt tefilot which count even more.

The Yosef Ometz writes, as well as the **Peleh Yo'etz**, that right after lighting the Chanukah candles, the women should pray for their sons to be illuminated in Torah because during that time it is an et ratzon and the tefilot go straight to Shamayim.

The sefer **Chanukah B'Tzion** writes when the parents light the Chanukah candles, they should make sure that their children are present, because each child is like a candle and when the parent lights, they are also illuminating the Neshama of each child as well.

There is so much kedusha at the time of hadlakat nerot and we should utilize this great opportunity on all eight nights of Chanukah.

R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld *zt"l* would say:

"Chanukah means that the Chashmonahn rested from their war on the 25th day of the month of Kislev. This is alluded to in the Torah: The 25th rest place where the Jews camped in the desert after the Exodus was called 'Chashmonah."



Of Donuts And A Berachah -The Maggid on Tefillah by Rabbi Paysach Krohn

עַל הַמִּחְיָה

The blessing of Al HaMichyah is basically an abridgement of Bircas HaMazon. It is interesting and puzzling to note that the words **וְעַל מִזְבְּחֶךָ** – 'upon Your Altar', are included in this blessing, as there is no mention of the Mizbei'ach in Bircas HaMazon.

It occurred to me that perhaps this is because in the very first siman in Shulchan Aruch (1:3), the Beis Yosef writes, 'It is proper for every G-d-fearing person to feel anguish and pain over the destruction of the Beis HaMikdash.

The Mishnah Berurah (ibid., note 11) writes that the Shelah HaKadosh instructs us that after every weekday meal, one should preface the Bircas HaMazon with **עַל־נַהֲרוֹת בָּבֶל** (Tehillim ch. 127) and on Shabbos preface it with **שִׁיר הַמַּעֲלוֹת בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת־שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן** (ibid. ch. 126), as both refer to the loss of the Beis HaMikdash.

Perhaps this is why **וְעַל מִזְבְּחֶךָ**, 'upon Your Altar', has been added to Al HaMichyah, as it is also a reference to the loss of the Beis HaMikdash.

There are those who say that **R' Shlomo Zalman Auerbach** commented that this is one reason we eat doughnuts on Chanukah, after which one would recite Al HaMichyah, so that we can say the words **וְעַל מִזְבְּחֶךָ**, to commemorate that during the Chanukah era the Mizbei'ach was rededicated. As cited in Maoz Tzur, **אָז אֶגְמוֹר בְּשִׁיר מִזְמוֹר חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ** - Then I shall complete with a song of hymn the dedication of the Altar.

R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld personally embodied what the Beis Yosef writes in the first siman of the Shulchan Aruch regarding the Beis

HaMikdash. - In 1920, shortly after the League of Nations gave Great Britain control of Palestine, the British appointed Sir Herbert Samuel — an assimilated Jew — as high commissioner. One of his first official functions was to pay his respects to the country's prominent rabbis, including a visit to R' Yosef Chaim in the Old City.

R' Yosef Chaim lived in a simple basement apartment with no luxuries and not even electricity. R' Moshe Blau, of Agudas Yisrael who was arranging the meeting, felt that such humble surroundings were not suitable for receiving the high commissioner with proper honor. He suggested that the meeting be held in a more fitting location.

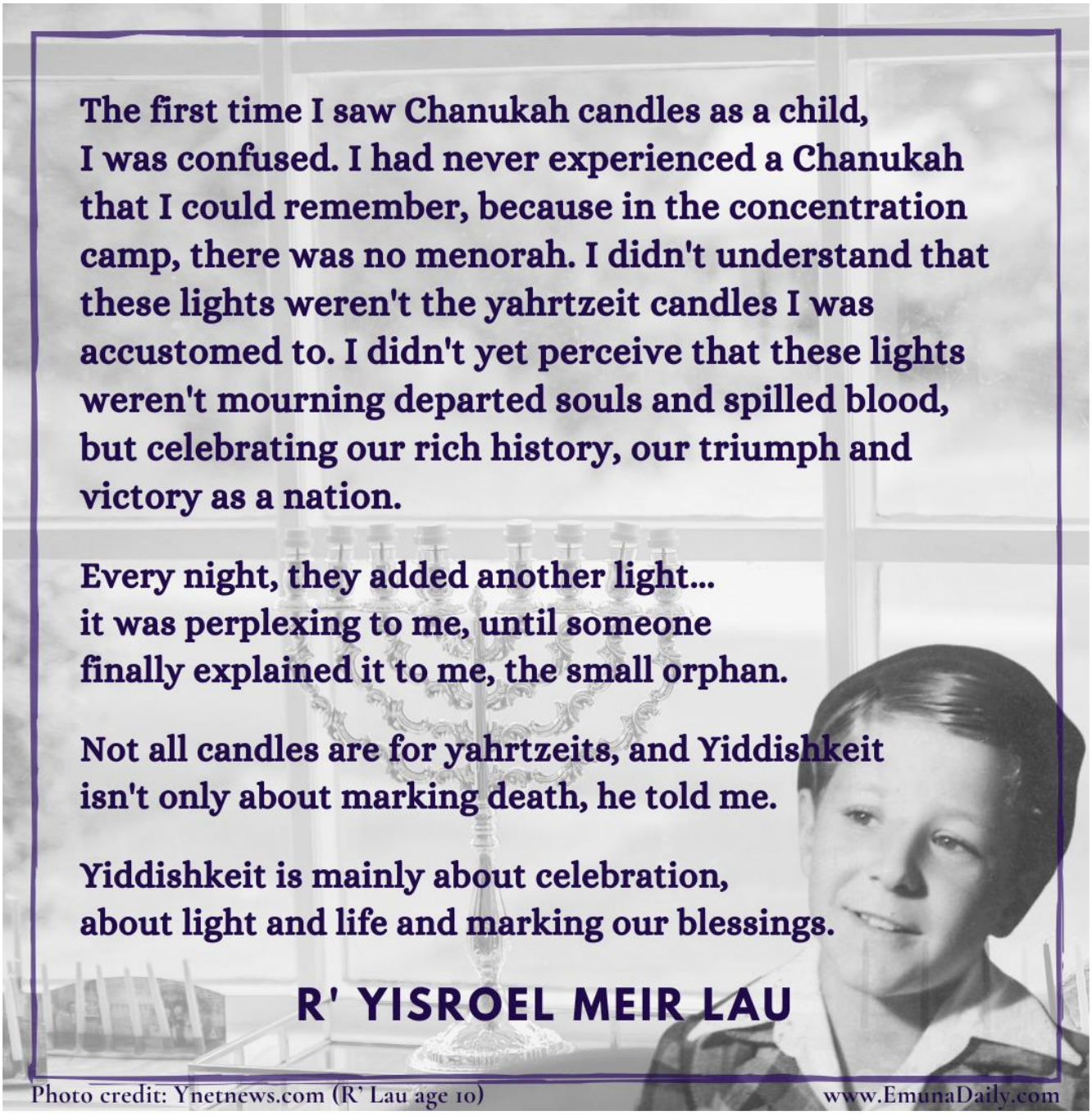
R' Yosef Chaim refused, explaining that it would be deceptive to create the impression that he lived on a higher standard. R' Blau then proposed bringing in a new table and chairs to replace the Rav's rickety furniture. Again, R' Yosef Chaim refused, saying that this too would be deceptive.

Seeing he could not persuade him, R' Blau arranged for Sir Herbert to visit the basement apartment as is. A squad of police led the high commissioner's entourage, and Sir Herbert R' Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld was personally escorted by the tzaddik Dr. Moshe Wallach, founder and head of Shaare Zedek Hospital.

Dozens of people followed as the group wound through the narrow streets of the Old City to the Battei Machseh neighborhood. R' Yosef Chaim, wearing his Shabbos clothes as a sign of respect, came forward to greet the representative of the King of England.

Sir Herbert descended, and entering the little abode, looked around and asked half-jokingly, "You couldn't find a lower apartment?"

R' Yosef Chaim replied, "Please come to the window." - From the window, the Kosel HaMaaravi was clearly visible, its small, unpaved area intentionally neglected by the Arabs. - Pointing upward, R' Yosef Chaim said, "If He [Hashem] can live like that, I can live like this."



A single spark can push back a great darkness; a single moment of clarity can awaken enduring faith. In the bitter night of exile, we do not wait for sunrise to begin to believe. We begin with one small flame, and from that fragile light comes our faith that "kareiv keitz hayeshuah" - that dawn is on its way. ~ Rabbi Yehuda Munk.



A Call To Action Against Terrorism - December 18, 2025

We are all shaken to the core by the attack in Sydney, Australia, at the start of Chanukah, and we grieve for the victims and their families. What message can we take from this, and what can we do in response?

The Rebbe taught us - 'A little candle in the room lights up the whole room. - Such brutal darkness can only be fought by torches, by torches of goodness and kindness and light."

"One of the organizers of the Chanukah celebration event in Sydney was Rabbi Eli Schlanger Hy"D, a local Chabad Shaliach who was among those murdered. His last post was his response to rising antisemitism, encouraging people to celebrate Chanukah.

In the face of hate, Rabbi Schlanger said, "we should be more Jewish, act more Jewish and appear more Jewish." - His holy words are the legacy he has left for us all."

RIDDLE CORNER

WHY DID THE DONUT GO TO THE DENTIST

IT NEEDED A FILLING!

WHAT'S THE BEST THING TO PUT IN A DONUT?

YOUR TEETH

WHERE WAS THE FIRST DONUT MADE?

IN GREECE (GREASE.)

WHAT KIND OF DONUTS CAN FLY?

THE PLANE ONES

WHY WAS THE OIL CAN ALWAYS SO CALM?

BECAUSE IT KNEW HOW TO GO WITH THE FLOW.

JewishGen
מרכז עולמי לגנאלוגיה יהודית
The Global Home for Jewish Genealogy



***Chanukah Celebration*, 1946-1948, Bergen-Belsen, Germany.**

As the only Displaced Persons (DP) camp in the British Zone of Occupation specifically for Jews, Jewish life and tradition thrived in the Bergen-Belsen DP camp. Taken at a Chanukah party between 1946-1948, this photograph features Saul Edelstein as he celebrates with his family in the camp. No more than five years old, Saul stands on a chair in front of a menorah as he sings the songs of Chanukah. Behind him, adults look on, proud of both Saul himself and the new generation of children post-Holocaust that he represented.

Children's Games And Pleasures - Sokolievka/Justingrad: a Ukrainian Shtetl

The booklet reconstructs daily life in Sokolievka: the bustling streets and markets, the workshops of craftsmen, the rhythms of study and prayer in the cheder, the festivals and celebrations, and the games and work of children. Through the voices of the survivors and the meticulous research of these young historians, the text preserves the customs, traditions, and the spirit of community that characterized Sokolievka before its destruction.

Holidays provided children with a multitude of games and pastimes. From Rosh Hashanah to Succos, the chaleh or other bread (over which the Motzi blessing was said at the beginning of a meal) was spread with honey: children saved the honeycomb wax and played with it at cheder. From the palm leaves of the Succos lulav, they braided finger rings, baskets and mats.

As Chanukah approached, they gathered lead for the teacher to cast into dreidels. It was traditional for the assistant to pass out gifts to each child at some holidays: a dreidel at Chanukah, a bow and arrow at Lag B'Omer, a wooden sword for Tisha B'Av.

Card playing, like dreidel was customary at Chanukah. Older children, in Chumash and Gemara class, who could imitate printed Hebrew letters beautifully, used to design their own playing cards, kvitlach. These were numbered from aleph (one) to lamed-beis (thirty-two).

They inscribed the letter numerals on ordinary paper, pasted them on heavy packing paper, drying them in the ovens, because winter air is damp. They cut the cards apart, and colored them, using crayon pencils blue at one end and red on the other. For yellow they borrowed cinnamon from mother's kitchen.

They also made paper purses for collecting Chanukah gelt. Each holiday had its fun, bows and arrows on Lag B'Omer, grogger noisemakers at Purim. Many and varied were the children's games, activities, and pleasures.

A child beginning to learn to read in the cheder would be "tested" by his parents. They would set him before them and tell him: if you read well, an angel will toss you a penny from heaven. As the boy read, his mother stood behind him, holding the penny over his head. When the reading went well, she let the penny fall onto the siddur and the child was so happy!

On winter nights, when the winter stove was lit with straw, children would spread the straw looking for husks with kernels still in them, which they toasted over the fire and ate. When mother bought a pumpkin, she let the children split it and take the seeds for drying.

Mother usually shared lighter labor with her boys and girls, in baking, in plucking goose feathers to stuff pillows and bed covers (feather beds), in caring for the goats that were in most houses.

Girls had games of their own. They played a lot with jacks, tsheichen, using small bone joints of sheep or goats, smooth and shiny from play. The game was like "five stones" that girls play nowadays. Girls were permitted to buy rubber balls at the vendor stands, and they bounced them, interchanging hands and feet, as they do now. - Girls were always closer to home and had the burden of house chores.

Both small boys and older sought adventures. They went out to open spaces, hunted for junk and all kinds of finds (metzios). They risked their lives rowing on pond waters in broken wooden troughs. Summertime they would go in groups to bathe in the river, and to spend hours in the craftsmen's workshops, where they would pick up materials for work and for play.

On market days they would roam the market in packs. When the boys came to the cattle market, they would repeat the Talmud passage about the "ox which gores a cow," and in their naivete would wait to see it happen.

Saying Kaddish In Zawiercie - Yizkor Book of the Holy Community of Zawiercie and Environs



Zawiercie was called "za – Vartshe," meaning on the far side of the Warta River. In its early days, this small town in southern Poland featured a few dozen houses and barns, largely unnoticed on regional maps. By the end of the 19th century, Zawiercie began to develop, especially with the construction of a railway line connecting Warsaw to Vienna.

This new infrastructure attracted industry and commerce, transforming the town into a bustling center of trade. Education and religious study were central to Jewish life in Zawiercie, and many students who studied in the Zawiercie yeshiva became great scholars with reputations across Poland.

During World War I, Zawiercie was under Austro-German occupation, making the transport of food and supplies extremely dangerous and difficult.

On his wedding day in 1915, Yekhiel Dancyger undertook an unusual mission to deliver food for the local Jewish population. He navigated checkpoints and Hungarian occupied zones, meeting the Jewish watch commander of the Austro-Hungarian military post, who had recently received news of his mother's death. - With the help of Yekhiel and his companions, the officer recited Kaddish for his mother under the open sky.

The memory of Yekhiel's Chanukah adventure unfolds a vivid tapestry, illustrating the courage, resilience, solidarity, and humanity of the Jewish community even amidst the hardships of war:

Saturday evening after Sabbath ended during Chanukah of 1915 – the period of the First World War – I had the good luck to become a groom. Of course, it was a great joy for me, for my bride, and for my relatives. Fine if modest weddings could still be celebrated in Zawiercie because the front was a way off. The area around Zawiercie and Zawiercie itself were divided by the railroad line into German and Austrian occupation zones. The right side of Zawiercie and the territory that lay to the right of the railroad tracks (Kromolow, Pilice, etc.) were Austrian territory. The left side (Poreba, Siewierz, etc.) was the German zone of occupation.

The border was heavily guarded by the occupying armies of both Austria and Germany because there was a very active smuggling trade. The Austrians occupied the most economically productive lands in Poland. The German zone had less productive land but was more industrialized. The economy of Austro-Hungary was in fact mostly based on agriculture, and Germany's much less so. Therefore, Germany imported more from its part of Poland than Austro-Hungary did.

In the Austrian zone of occupation there was no lack of food, but in the German zone there was. Smuggling paid. Everyone smuggled – some took a kilo of butter and some eggs in their pockets, just to cover household expenses, and others sold large transports in order to make a living. There was also legal commerce with the approval of both occupying forces in order to guarantee the distribution of food to the population of Zawiercie and the surrounding area, on the German side in particular.

Because the house where the military authorities were stationed was not far from my parent's house (by the crossing), Jewish officers in the Austrian army used to come to visit. I got to know them well. Once an officer asked me if I could contact someone who could get flour in order to make bread for the people in Zawiercie. I said that I would be able to do so. I did this in partnership with Leyb Rushinek. Since the railroad bridges were all destroyed,

everything had to be transported by horse and wagon. So we rode out into the countryside – to Poreba, Zarki, etc. – and we worked at full speed.

So it was, in the heaviest period of our commercial activity, I became, as I said, a groom. On the night that my tenai'im (lit. "conditions," a prenuptial agreement between the families of the bride and groom) were signed, at 10:30 at night, after I had been entertaining my bride and the "conditions" ceremony guests, Leybush Rusinek arrived and whispered in my ear that we had to go to Zarki, and I had to go because the authorization to do business was made out in my name. Did I have a choice? We went.

We went through the crossing between Zawiercie and Zarki, where an Austrian soldier was always posted to inspect travelers to make sure they had passes. "Pre – pu – sku," (A halting version of "przepustke" – Polish for "pass.") – said an Austrian soldier, a Hungarian. I quickly put my hand in my chest pocket in order to take out my pass, my "przepustke." I took out a large stack of papers – the "conditions" for my wedding that had been written a few hours earlier – and gave them to the Austro-Hungarian soldier.

I saw immediately that when changing, I must have taken the "conditions" instead of my pass. The soldiers turned the papers one way and another and could not figure them out. Leybush was also stunned: "What did you give him?" he asked me.

In the moment that I understood what had happened, I couldn't help bursting out into laughter. The soldier became angry and took the rifle off his shoulder. He yelled at me, "Na kom – an – dan – ture" (into the command post!) and pointed the way with his hand to a small, nearby house.

The guardhouse was squat and small (no more than two or three rooms). It had previously functioned as the guards' quarters by the railroad crossing. A wave of warmth hit me, penetrating my frozen limbs as I entered the first room. There were more soldiers in the

other rooms of the guardhouse, and they had taken care that the rooms were well-heated. The soldier who had led me in from outside left me with the soldiers in the guardhouse. With the "conditions" in his hand, he went in to the watch commander, who was an Austrian Jew.

After a couple minutes, the commander came over to me in the first room. He approached me, holding the "conditions" in his hand, and in a loud voice said, "Congratulations, groom!" and gave me his hand. "I am delighted, completely delighted, that you came here today," he said.

I wondered why the Jew was so delighted, but I didn't wonder for long. The Jewish officer invited me into his room. As he did so, he told me he was doing so in order that the non-Jewish soldiers wouldn't see how happy he was.

"I am delighted because you and the other Jews that are still outside are like a gift from Heaven," said the watch commander. The soldier who had brought me in from outside stood by perplexed, and, clicking his heels like a good soldier, ordered the other soldiers, "Attention!" He raised his hand to his hat in a salute, and the other soldiers did the same back to him. I remained with the Jewish watch commander in his office. - I saw that he was crying and couldn't speak. Frightened, I asked him what had happened, and why he was crying.

He asked me to sit down and asked me how many Jews were still outside. I told him, eleven. When he heard that, his face lit up with joy. "Good," he said. "Come outside with me to see the other Jews, and I'll tell you all my story."

We went outside, and he told us the following: "My name is Shloyme Blat, and I'm an imperial soldier. I've lived through a lot. I've been on many battlefields. Now my regiment has come to your district for some rest, and I am very happy to be able to rest and recover my strength. Things don't always work out the way you want, though.

After a short time here, the military post brought me a letter from home, and at first, I was happy to see it, but when I opened it and read it, I received the terribly sad news that my mother had died."

He stopped for a moment because he could barely speak, and then he went on: "It happened, according to the letter, exactly a year ago. Today, precisely, is my mother's death anniversary, yortsayt (death anniversary). As prescribed by religious law, after Sabbath ended I sat down for an hour of mourning. I thought and thought, how would I be able to say Kaddish? I beg you, dear Jews, make it possible for me to say Kaddish for my mother for the first time."

The Jewish watch commander took out a small volume of psalms, recited a chapter, and then he said the first Kaddish for his mother. He said it while he was standing outside, under the open sky, in a foreign country, where he knew no one.

"And now, my dear Jews," he said to us, "move fast and see to it that you get back to Zawiercie as soon as possible. The inspecting officer will be here early in the morning, and he could cause trouble." He asked us to come back and bring Chanukah candles (it was Chanukah at the time). We did what he asked. We went back to Zawiercie as quickly as possible.

Early in the morning, on time, we were back at the post and brought the Jewish watch-commander Chanukah candles, brandy for a toast, and something to eat along with it. The Jew recited a couple psalms and said Kaddish again. After praying, the Jewish soldier from Reyshe said farewell to us and thanked us from his heart. He said that he hoped we would think of him and of his mother's death anniversary, yortsayt, every Chanukah.

Every year at the end of Sabbath during Chanuka, I think of this event, and I become very sad, after the Nazi bloodbath, when I recall that there were once better times, even under German occupation.



This menorah was presented to Yitzchak Yaakov Moshe (Moses) and Adele Eiger as a wedding gift for their 1911 wedding in Lublin, Poland. After Yitzchak passed away in 1931, Adele moved to Vienna with the menorah where they remained until the onset of World War II.

Intending to move to England to escape the looming Nazi threat, Adele sent many of her belongings, including the menorah, ahead of her journey. She was unable to follow and tragically was murdered during Holocaust.

Her daughter Batya managed to recover this menorah from a shipping agent in England who had held on to Adele's belongings, giving Batya back cherished memories of her parents after they had perished.

The Power of Zos Chanukah - Rabbi Avi Wiesenfeld

Rav Moshe Wolfson shlit"a says over the following story. There were Yidden who lived in a European town, and they were suffering terribly from a moser — someone who informed on Jews to the government. He caused tremendous suffering. According to halacha, in certain circumstances, it can even be permitted to kill a moser.

They went to the **Chozeh of Lublin** and said, "Rebbe, this moser is making our lives miserable. Curse him." The Chozeh asked for his name and his mother's name. Then he said, "I cannot curse him."

They were shocked. The Chozeh explained, "His neshama is shining. All the upper worlds are being illuminated by his neshama. I cannot

curse him." They left confused. The next day they returned and begged again. This time the Chozeh said, "Now I can curse him." He cursed him, and the next day the man died.

They asked, "Yesterday you said his neshama was illuminating all the worlds. Today you cursed him. What changed?"

The Chozeh answered: "Yesterday, when you came, it was night, and this man was lighting Chanukah candles. While he was lighting, his neshama was shining and illuminating all the worlds above. Today, Chanukah ended."



So what is Zos Chanukah? We all know there are times in the Jewish calendar designated for teshuvah. Rosh Hashanah. Aseres Yemei Teshuvah. Yom Kippur. Hoshana Rabbah. But the **Baal Shem Tov**, in the name of the **Arizal**, teaches that there is a fourth time of judgment. That time is Zos Chanukah. The Baal Shem Tov writes that this day is specifically for the sheyaris — the leftovers, the struggling ones, those at the end, those who feel distant. The Torah hints to this when it says: "B'zos yechuper avon Yaakov."

Why is Zos Chanukah such a powerful time for teshuvah?

Because Chanukah reveals the Or HaGanuz, the hidden light of creation. That light was too holy for the world and was concealed — but it was also placed inside the core of every Jewish neshama. No matter what a person does, says, or experiences, that neshama can never be contaminated. During the year we don't have access to it. We're busy. We're distracted. But on Chanukah, that hidden light is revealed. And on Zos Chanukah, when all eight candles are lit, the

entire Or HaGanuz is revealed. That is why our generation — the last generation — is judged on Zos Chanukah.

Rav Chaim Vital teaches that each day of Chanukah corresponds to one of the 13 Middos of Rachamim. Zos Chanukah corresponds to the final six, making it the greatest day of rachamim.

The Rizhiner Rebbe taught that on Zos Chanukah, the koach of a simple Jew is equal to the koach of the greatest tzaddik on Yom Kippur.

About eight years ago in Bnei Brak, a chareidi couple had a four-year-old son who became critically ill. Doctors exhausted all medical options and told the parents to prepare for the worst.

It was Zos Chanukah. A nurse, who was not religious, asked if they could light the Chanukah candles in the hospital room. As the candles were lit, the mother whispered through tears: "Ribono Shel Olam, if there is still an opening in Heaven, please don't close it on our child." - Less than two hours later, the child stabilized. Doctors were shocked. One senior doctor said, "Medically, this makes no sense."

The child fully recovered. Today he is healthy and learning in yeshiva. Every year on Zos Chanukah, those parents light the candles with tears.

The Torah reading of Zos Chanukah contains 44 pesukim, corresponding to the 44 candles lit throughout Chanukah. It is as if Hashem is telling us: Take the light with you. Zos Chanukah is Yom HaChasimah. Even a whisper reaches Heaven.

True Security

'When you give tzedakah, you show that money is not your security - Hashem is. And that trust brings brachah and parnassah.' ~ Based on the Kedushas Levi.

The Bracha That Changed a Life As told by Rabbi Ephraim Shapiro Brought to you by Stories to Inspire



This story happened about three and a half years ago. - One of my daughters had just finished her high school midterms. My wife and I decided to take her out for a short break to a milchig restaurant in our area. The restaurant no longer exists, but the moment that took place there will stay with me forever.

The three of us were sitting at our table, about to order, when suddenly we heard a loud commotion near the front of the restaurant. We looked up and saw four young women aggressively yelling at a waiter. They were humiliating him. They were from a foreign country, and they were screaming at him about everything — the drinks, the timing, the food.

One of them ordered a dairy dish and shouted, "This is cheese?! Where we come from, this isn't called cheese!" They were tearing him apart.

I am embarrassed to admit that even today, when I think about it, I feel it in my chest. I should have stood up. I should have walked over and said, "As a rabbi in this community, you cannot speak to another human being this way." But I didn't.

The waiter was a young man in his early twenties. Tears welled up in his eyes, but he said nothing. He remained silent.

My wife leaned toward me and said, "Ephraim Eliyahu, he didn't respond. You know what Reb Chaim Kanievsky says — when someone is humiliated and remains silent, they have the power to give a bracha." It's based on a Gemara in Shabbos.

She said, "Call him over. Ask him for a bracha." I called him over. "What's your name?"

"Shoam."

"How old are you?"

"Twenty-two."

I told him I was a rabbi in the community and asked him for a bracha.

He laughed nervously. "Harav, are you serious? I'm just a waiter."

I said, "You were humiliated and stayed silent. You have power right now. I want your bracha."- He gave a bracha. We answered Amen.

Five minutes later he returned, crying. He told me his story — how he had grown up learning Mishnayos with his father in Israel, drifted away from Judaism over the years, moved to America, and lived without connection for sixteen years. He said, "If you cared enough about me to believe I could give you a bracha, I'm ready to come back. I'm ready to do teshuva."

I connected him with a chavrusa. This happened three and a half years ago. Today, Shoam learns consistently. His wife did teshuva as well. They rebuilt their marriage, moved to North Miami Beach, and about a year ago they had a baby boy. They invited me to the bris.

I often think what would have happened if I hadn't called him over. Where would he be today?

That is the power of reaching out. Go create the next Shoam. Show someone they matter. Create a neshama. And in that merit, darkness will turn to light — "LaYehudim hoysa ora.

Light Where Darkness Once Ruled - by Rabbi YY Jacobson

This story literally just unfolded, and the person it happened to shared it with me directly. This is not a story passed along secondhand or thirdhand. It was told to me firsthand.

There is a man named Rabbi Aharon Michal Canarito, an Italian Jew who lives in Rome. He grew up there and was deeply influenced by the Jewish community in Rome. Not long ago, he became a Chabad shliach in the historic Jewish ghetto of Rome. Rome has an ancient ghetto—one with centuries of Jewish history, suffering, and resilience.

About a year ago, Rabbi Canarito established a Chabad House there, inside a building that is over 500 years old. This is the old Roman ghetto, a place with an incredibly heavy past. From the moment he opened the Chabad House, Rabbi Canarito began running programs—davening, learning, educational programs, social events, youth activities. Many tourists and locals pass through the ghetto every day, and the Chabad House quickly became a center of Jewish life. Within just a year or so, it was thriving.

On Chanukah, a 90-year-old Jewish man walked into the Chabad House. Rabbi Canarito asked him a simple question: "Did you ever have a bar mitzvah?" The man answered, "No." He had never put on tefillin. He had never had a bar mitzvah.

Rabbi Canarito was stunned. He told the man that a group of yeshivah bachurim were coming for Chanukah to help with activities. Together, they would make a minyan and celebrate his bar mitzvah properly—with tallis, tefillin, Shema Yisrael, and an aliyah to the Torah.

With him came another elderly Jew. "What's your name?" Rabbi Canarito asked. "Gavriel," the man replied. "How old are you?" "Eighty-six." "Did you ever have a bar mitzvah?" "No." So they made two bar mitzvahs—one for a 90-year-old Jew and one for an 86-year-old Jew. Both were Holocaust survivors.

On the fifth day of Chanukah, they donned tallis and tefillin for the first time in their lives, said Shema Yisrael, received aliyos, and danced with the Sefer Torah.

Rabbi Canarito sent me a video. You should have seen it. These two elderly Jews were dancing with the Torah with a depth of emotion that is almost impossible to describe. It was as if their neshamas were finally allowed to sing.

A few days later came Zos Chanukah, the final night of Chanukah, which that year fell on Sunday night. The bachurim were preparing to return to yeshivah, and Rabbi Canarito offered to drive them to the airport. Before leaving, he decided to light a public menorah in front of the Chabad House.

At first, only a few people were there. But as the menorah lighting began, a crowd suddenly gathered from all directions. Jews appeared from seemingly nowhere. And then—suddenly—Gavriel, the 86-year-old man who had just celebrated his bar mitzvah days earlier, arrived. Rabbi Canarito turned to the crowd and said: "We have here a Jew who just had his bar mitzvah for the first time in his life. He is a survivor of the war. We are going to honor him with lighting the menorah—right here, in the Roman ghetto."

Gavriel stepped forward and lit all eight candles of the menorah. It was overwhelming. Rabbi Canarito addressed the crowd and said: "We are standing in the Roman ghetto. From here, Jews were sent to their deaths. And now, the light of Chanukah burns again. And who is lighting it? A survivor—who only days ago put on tefillin for the first time in his life."

They sang. They danced. The light burned brightly. Later that night, Rabbi Canarito received a voice message from Gavriel. Gavriel told him something astonishing.

When the Nazis entered the Roman ghetto, they confined the Jews there. Gavriel and his sister were just small children, only a few years old. They didn't understand what Nazis were. They didn't

understand danger. They were innocent children, playing in the street.



A Nazi soldier walked down the ghetto street and saw them. To the Nazis, a Jew had less value than an animal. The soldier seized both children—Gavriel and his little sister—and began dragging them away to be murdered. As he marched them through the ghetto, he passed a dairy shop owned by a non-Jewish Italian man.

The shop owner saw what was happening. Without hesitation, he ran out screaming at the children: "I've been looking for you for hours! Your mother is terrified! What are you doing here?!" He slapped the girl—not out of cruelty, but to make it real.

The Nazi stopped and asked, "Are these your children?" "Yes," the man answered. "I'm sorry," the Nazi said. "I didn't realize." He released them and walked away. - The man pulled the children into the dairy shop and saved their lives.

Gavriel then told Rabbi Canarito: "I want you to know something. The spot where I lit the menorah—the exact place where the menorah stands—is the very spot where my sister and I were seized by the Nazi." - "And your Chabad House," he said, "is the dairy shop. That's where the man came out from. That's where he saved us."

Eighty-two years earlier, Gavriel was saved at that exact location. Eighty-two years later, he stood there as a Jew—with tefillin, with

Torah, with Chanukah light—lighting the menorah in the Roman ghetto.

Rabbi Canarito shared this with me just days ago. Darkness once ruled that place. And now—light. A child who was almost murdered became a Jew who lit the menorah. A place of death became a place of Torah and chesed. A ghetto became a home for Hashem's presence. That is Jewish history. That is Jewish eternity. And that is the light of Chanukah.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Hoff Shlita – Expounding on עַל הַנִּסִּים

Essence of the Struggle of Chanukkah

The core conflict wasn't about the mere existence of Kal Yisroel, but about their Torah and Avodah. The decree by the Greeks targeted Jewish religious practice rather than their physical survival. Many Jews (מִתְיַוְונִים who adopted Greek culture, language, and religious practices) joined the Greek culture, but the real battle was about preserving Torah as the essence of Jewish life.

Personal Connection to Torah and Avodah

The prayer encourages a personal internalization: when one truly feels that Torah and Avodah are their own essence and need, the spiritual strength to overcome obstacles is granted by HaKadosh Baruch Hu.

The words "**רִיבָם** " (our fight), "**דִּינָם** " (our judgment), and "**תּוֹרָתֶךָ** " (our Torah) emphasize this personal and communal commitment.

Historical vs. Contemporary Relevance of the Chanukkah War

While the Chanukkah story involves a physical battle where a small group defeats a larger enemy, the prayer suggests a broader ideological and spiritual struggle that continues today.

The "many" (**רַבִּים**) represent overwhelming challenges, distractions, and spiritual enemies opposing Torah observance.

The "few" (מְעַטִּים) symbolize the often small but dedicated forces of holiness and commitment to Torah.

Spiritual Battle: Few vs. Many

The Chanukkah narrative is a metaphor for the ongoing fight between the strong forces of impurity and distraction and the small but potent sparks of holiness within each person.

Despite the strength of external challenges (The Yetzer HaRah), even a small amount of latent Kedusha (holiness) inside each individual can prevail. Chanukkah is a time to ignite and reveal this inner light, the "oil" or "light" that was hidden and now shines.

Practical Spiritual Application עַל הַנִּסִּים calls for:

- Recognizing the importance of Torah and Avodah as life's essence.
- Cultivating a strong personal desire for closeness to Hashem.
- Trusting that even limited spiritual strength, when sincerely sought, can overcome great challenges.
- Viewing Hanukkah as a moment when the internal light of holiness emerges to counteract external darkness.

The Chanukkah prayer עַל הַנִּסִּים is not only a commemoration of historical events but a living spiritual framework that encourages each individual to recognize their innate holiness and fight for Torah and Avodah as their personal essence.

The narrative of few overcoming many is a metaphor for the inner spiritual battle faced in every generation, reminding us that even a small spark of true commitment can conquer overwhelming external challenges. Chanukkah thus represents a time of renewed spiritual strength and dedication to Hashem, Torah, and kedusha.

"Torah is not education, it's transformation".



Rabbi Moshe Weinberger – Out of This World

Something happened on Chanukkah. It was a miracle of גִּבּוֹרִים בְּיַד חַלָּשִׁים וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים. Somehow, even though we were so weak, we were able to defeat those who were so powerful and strong. Even though we were so few, we were able to defeat the many. And each one of us feels like that in life.

When we're facing the challenges of this world, what we're up against seems to be overpowering and overwhelming. I feel like I'm a חַלָּשׁ, I'm weak, and that the world is a גִּבּוֹר, the world is strong. I don't know how I'm going to win. רַבִּים בְּיַד מְעַטִּים, the many in the hands of the few.

If I look at my life, how many minutes of the day am I really, really in a place of connection to Hashem? Am I really in a place of Kedusha? But then how many other things am I exposed to every day of my life?

That the Kedusha in me is so little and small compared to the Rabbim of the world. How is it possible for me to win? The odds are stacked very much against me.



So let's go back to Yosef HaTzadik, the Koach of וימאן. It says, וַיַּעֲזֹב בִּגְדוֹ בְּיָדָהּ וַיָּנָס וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה, that he left his clothing there and he ran outside. How did he succeed? How was Yosef HaTzadik victorious?

Chazal focused on the word הַחוּצָה, he went outside. And they say that it was in the zechus, that Avrohom Avinu was taken outside of the world by Hashem. And Hashem said to Avrohom Avinu, וַיּוֹצֵא אֹתוֹ הַחוּצָה וַיֹּאמֶר הַבֶּט־נָא הַשָּׁמַיְמָה וּסְפֹר הַכּוֹכָבִים אִם־תּוּכַל לִסְפֹּר אֹתָם וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ כֹּה יִהְיֶה זַרְעֶךָ

- Look up to the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them.' - 'So shall your offspring be.'".

Which the Tzaddikim tell us means the following. There are things in this world that, according to human nature, I can't possibly win. I can't win. But Hashem took out for me, you know, outside of this world.

That means that every Jew has woven into the fabric of who we are, the ability of to go outside, to go to something higher. And Hashem told me to look at the stars. You will have children who will have the ability to be higher than this world, to lift themselves above this world, and to shine in the night. Like the candles of Chanukkah.





An Orphan's Prayer

His father, Hanan Amar, was a beloved Israeli barber in Ashkelon, and he was murdered in cold blood at the Nova Music Festival on that morning of October 7th, 2023, Simchas Torah 5784, as he was physically hovering over and using his body to protect two young girls.

Hanan was 38. He was survived by his wife, Miri, and their three beautiful children, Avishag, 13, Noam, 11, and Eitan, five and a half. Friends described him as the most expensive, gigantic heart you would encounter. A person who loved people, loved his family to pieces, and was in love with love and kindness and life.

More than two years passed since that dark day. A few months ago, as Noam was approaching his 13th birthday, his mom began to talk to him about his bar mitzvah celebration. But Noam told his dismayed mother that he was not interested in having any bar mitzvah. The sadness and devastation of losing his beloved father was just too much to bear. Doing this, going into this milestone without his father just seemed so overwhelming.

His mom was dumbfounded. She says, 'every boy has a bar mitzvah at the age of 13. You go to the synagogue, you get called up to the Torah, you put on your tefillin. This is something Jewish boys have been doing for thousands of years', she says to Noam.

'Not me, mommy. No bar mitzvah for me.'

A confused and sad mother says, so what would you like to do instead?

'I want to go to America with you. I want to have a fun, exciting vacation in the United States of America. I want a vacation. I want a tour in America. I don't want a bar mitzvah.'

Mom says, 'I would love to, but you know there's no way we can afford such a trip to the United States. We are not a wealthy family. I am so, so sorry.'

'Well', Noam says, 'that is what I want. You ask me what I want. That is what I want. I do not want a bar mitzvah.'

His mother, a special heartfelt Yiddishe mama, says to him, 'you know, my dearest son, you have two fathers in heaven. Your biological father is in heaven and you have your creator, Hashem. Why don't you talk to them and tell them what you want? Because this is above my pay grade. This is not anything I can arrange in the furthest stretch of my imagination. Go talk to your two fathers in heaven.'

Noam shared the story with me. And he told me, 'I took my mother's words to heart. I went to the synagogue. I spoke to G-d and I spoke to my father. I asked my dad to intercede on my behalf. And I asked Hashem, please arrange for me a tour to America.'

Life moves on. A few weeks later, Miri Amar shares with me the story.

I receive a message on my phone. There's an organization called Menuchav Yeshua. It's headed by a Hasidic-Israeli couple, my dear

friends, Mendy and Brocha Kenick, founded to support bereaved families in Israel after the October 7th massacre and the Gaza war. They're arranging a 10-day vacation in America for bereaved families with all expenses covered. Miri, the widow, looks at the dates. It's exactly the same week as Noam's bar mitzvah.

'I thought I was hallucinating, she tells me. I thought I went crazy. I was dreaming. I phoned them, and they said, of course. Come, join us. Bring your children. Your family's going to have a blast.'

When I told Mendy Koenig about the whole story, my son does'nt want a bar mitzvah, he wants a tour, he says, amazing. We are going to arrange your son's bar mitzvah in the most beautiful hotel in the United States. Hundreds of Jews will celebrate with him during this incredible dream American vacation. We will cover all the expenses.

Mendy invited me to. And so, just a few weeks ago, Shabbat Parshas Chai Yisrael, November 15th, 2025, I joined so many Jews at the Oceanfront Berkeley Hotel in New Jersey as Noam was called up to the Torah.

He was then placed on someone's shoulders, dancing with hundreds of people, orphans, widows, bereaved parents, benefactors and donors, who have all come together for this special Shabbos. We danced and we sang, we threw bags of candies at him, celebrating this young boy's bar mitzvah.

I was invited to say a few words, and I said, 'Noam, my dearest, everyone in this room thought they were coming to America just for a fun gateway. Almost 200 tickets were sponsored for these families to come from Israel, Orlando, have a great time. The truth is unbeknownst to all of us, this entire trip was arranged by your prayers as you prayed to Hashem and you asked your Father's Holy Soul to pray for you. G-d brought all the pieces together for you to enjoy this most magnificent celebration with so many of us. Thank you, Noah. For bringing us all together to celebrate this amazing day.'

I saw another man sitting in the crowd. His name is Achia Eliyahu. He was chaperoning Noam and helping him and preparing him for the Bar Mitzvah. And he said to me, I had a son, Ariel. He was a tank gunner. The morning of October 7th, he took his tank to Be'eri. He killed dozens of terrorists, saved countless lives, until he was murdered at the age of 20. A few years ago, he also celebrated his Bar Mitzvah on this Shabbos, Shabbos Chayei Sara, the connection of souls.

After the celebration, Moitzeiy Shabbos, as he was eating pizza, Noam said to me, ' I took my mother's words seriously. She said to me, go pray. You have two fathers in heaven. Talk to them. That's what I did.'

This, my friends, is the power of a pure heart melting in prayer. - Happy Chanukkah.

TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

Sometimes, the Best Sentence is Compassion

This story occurred a number of years ago in North Carolina. It touched me profoundly.

When Joe Serna was arrested for drinking and driving, one of the terms of his probation was that he would not consume alcohol for a predetermined amount of time. Yet after caught lying, he was brought back to the courthouse, this time in front of Judge Lau Oliveira.

Judge Oliveira felt he had no choice but to sentence Joe to a night in jail for breaking probation, a sentence that was carried out. As Joe walked into the prison cell, the door was closed behind him. Anxiety filled his entire body. In his own words, it came back, it came back.

What came back? You see, we often know so little about someone else's story. Joe is a decorated American veteran who served three

terms in Afghanistan and has two Purple Hearts for his bravery. His Green Beret survived bombs and a suicide bomber. But the scariest moment was that dark night in Afghanistan when he was riding in a truck with three other U.S. soldiers.

While following a creek, the road gave way, causing the truck to be submerged underwater. Unable to move, Joe and his friends were trapped inside the truck, which was now sinking deeper and deeper. Joe can feel the water rise to his legs, then to his torso, and then up to his neck. Finally, it stopped at his chin as the long, dark night was over.

Joe was the only soldier to make it out of the truck alive. His three close friends died.

As Joe returned from war, he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. For him to be in a confined space like a jail cell brought up that experience when he was in the truck, trapped underwater. So as Judge Oliveira sentenced Joe to a night in jail, he was sending this war veteran to one of his very worst fears, trapped in a cell. The judge said...

'I knew Joe's history. I knew that he had to be held accountable. But I also knew that for him to be in a prison cell could be horrific.'

So what did the judge do? Moments after Joe was locked away for his night in prison, he was shocked as he saw someone else entering his prison cell. Who is it? It was Judge Oliveira himself, who came to stay the entire night with the man he has just sent to jail.

To quote the judge in his own words, 'I felt that if I'm going to send him to jail, it's fine, but I have to go with him.'

With homemade meatloaf and a change of clothes, the judge accompanied Joe throughout the night. They spoke about their families and their lives, their visions and their dreams, their fears and their disappointments. They spent an entire night chatting, musing, sharing. - Joe said that with Judge Oliveira there, the walls

were no longer here. My anxiety and fear melted away. I was able to have a genuine, beautiful conversation with a highly intelligent and empathetic human being. He took me from a truck underwater in Afghanistan back to a room in North Carolina.

After the night in jail, Joe promised the judge there would be no more mess-ups. And as morning came, the two people hugged each other like they were old friends back from high school.

'Sometimes' the judge said, 'jail is not what a man needs. Sometimes the best sentence is compassion.'

What a lesson for our relationships with our children and students.

Sometimes we administer penalties and punishment. We show disapproval and disappointment. We chastise and we rebuke. But if we fail to understand who we are dealing with, if we lack the humility and empathy to experience their inner distress, we may win the battle and lose the war. We sometimes don't help, but create even more anxiety and anguish.

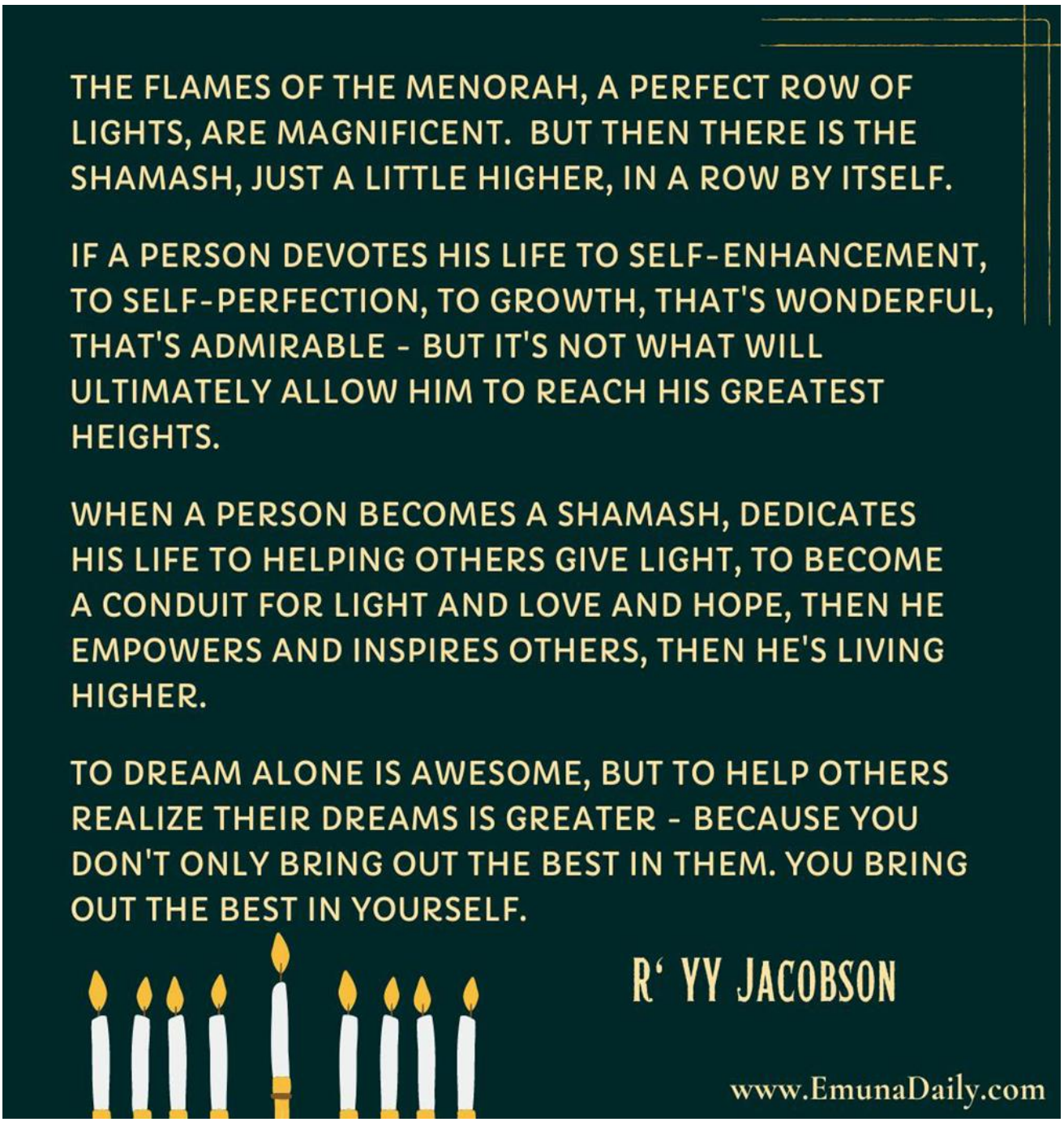
I need to be able to get off my high horse and go into the prison cell with my student, with my child, or the person I'm trying to help. I need to be there with them in their experience and distress, and with a warm and loving presence, I can lift them up.

I show them that I am here with them. I believe in them so that they can believe in themselves. I want to show them that I am not scared of them so they also don't have to be scared of themselves. And this is also true with ourselves.

Can you go into your own dark cell and sit with the child who is afraid and tantruming? Can you sit with your own darkness, with your own pain, embrace it with love, with empathy as a loving, non-judgmental adult? Because the peace you search for is often on the other side of the pain you don't want to feel. The connection you seek is on the other side of the solitude you desperately avoid. The friends you

want are on the other side of the person you keep trying to be in order to please others.

We light the Chanukkah flames as the sun sets and darkness descends on our horizon. Do not be afraid of your darkness. Enter into your night. Kindle a flame of love and compassion. Embrace all of your parts. And that is how things begin to shift for real. - Happy Chanukkah.



TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

The Soldier Thought He Was Coming to Console; He Left with a Bride

More than 20 Hamas terrorists infiltrated the city of Ofakim in southern Israel on the morning of October 7th. Avi Chatuel heard crazy, insane gunfire outside of his home.

Desperate to protect his wife and children, he opened the door of his home to go out and see what's happening. A few seconds later, he was shot by a squad of terrorists in front of his wife, Shoshana. Realizing they were surrounded by killers and monsters, immediately locked the door, ran into her home, took her three children, and hid in a closet for 20 hours. She turned the air conditioner and lights off so that the terrorists would not know that there was anybody in the house. She did not tell her three children what just happened to their father so as not to scare them. They didn't drink water for 20 hours.

Their mouths and hearts dry with fear as all the time they heard the terrorists' quick footsteps on the roof of their home as the killers were running and shouting and cursing in Arabic, sounds of gunfire and grenades exploding, screaming and hollering.

She can hear the screaming of the five terrorists in the home of her next door neighbor, the famous Rachel Edry from Ofakim who baked cookies for the five killers who came into her home and thus saved her and her husband. When the army finally came to the rescue, Avram's body was not present. He was missing for 10 days, after which his family was given the sad news that he had been murdered in front of his home.

Avram was 52, he left over his wife Shoshana and their three children, ages 22, 15, and 14.

The next chapter of the story I heard from the person himself.

Yaakov Amar at the time was a 21-year-old handsome, refined, sweet, charming and shy Israeli soldier serving in Ofakim. He told me, 'I passed the tent where the Chatuel family was sitting shiva, and my heart was nudging me to go in. More than 50 Jews were slain in Ofakim. Many, many families were sitting shiva. I'm not sure why my heart was telling me to visit this particular family, but as I walked by their home, it felt like this magnetic pull come into this home. The problem is I am shy and bashful by nature.'

'I didn't feel comfortable going to a home and sitting with people I don't know in such a vulnerable space. So I hung around outside. I hesitated and hesitated and I left. But the next day I returned, hoping maybe this time I'll find the courage to come in. The widow noticed me and she invited me into the home.'

Yaakov tells me, 'I entered, I sat down, I chatted with the family. I spoke about my faith in the eternity of the soul. I spoke about the fact that their father and husband was killed only because he was a Jew, which means the soul finds itself in the highest and deepest spiritual, divine, heavenly bliss. I offered my condolences, I bid farewell, and I left their home.'

The widow, who shared with me the story as well, tells me, 'I saw him leaving, and as he left the house, a thought dawned on me. I like this guy. Who knows? Maybe he can be the right one for my oldest daughter, my 22-year-old, Bat El, who's grieving for her father who was just murdered.' - So she sent a neighbor to follow him to get his contact and to invite him back to the home. The next day, he returned to their home.

As the widow saw him come in, she asked her daughter Bat - El to go prepare a chavita, an omelet, for this visiting soldier. So her daughter prepared an omelet, and they both sat and talked over the egg.

I met Yaakov a few weeks ago at a special Shabbaton for widows and orphans and bereaved families from Israel, organized by Menuche

and Yeshua. Yaakov was standing near Bat El, her siblings, and her mother Shoshana. He turns to me, and with a bashful yet glowing twinkle in his eye, he tells me, 'we will soon be getting married.'

Divine providence orchestrates every move, every moment, every experience in our lives. Even as life offers us serious challenges, profound loss and pain, Hashem is still holding our hands and sending us angels to embrace us and remind us that we are never, ever alone. Happy Chanukkah.

TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

The Woman Who Slapped the SS commander in the Face



The most colossal failure of the Shin Bet, Israel's domestic intelligence agency, was its failure to see October 7th coming, despite the many signs.

A result of hubris and arrogance and a lack of understanding caused disaster. And a few weeks ago, Israel confirmed the appointment of a new head for the Shin Bet, Major General David Zini. David is the oldest of 10 children. His parents are Rabbi Yosef and Penina Zini. Rabbi Yosef Zini is the rabbi of Ashdod. David himself is a yeshiva graduate, a Torah-observing Jew, and a father to his own 11 children.

At the IDF retirement ceremony of his son as he was entering the Shin Bet, Rabbi Yosef Zini shared the following remarkable story with a message to his son.

'My mother and grandmother, he said, were the only ones of their families to survive Auschwitz. One day, while in Auschwitz, an SS officer was outraged at one of the Jewish women who was so weak she had failed to fulfil her work duty. She sat down in utter exhaustion. The screams of the officer did not help this poor woman get up and continue working. She was just completely depleted.

So he sent his dog to attack her. And the vicious dog tore her flesh off her body. My late grandmother approached this SS monster and slapped him in the face twice. So, he pulled out his gun to shoot my grandmother. But the gun got stuck. He became even angrier and he ordered that my grandmother be punished with 90 lashes, and at the end her body was completely purple. She was returned to the barracks unconscious. She remained that way for nine days. When she opened her eyes and mouth after nine days the first sentence that came out of her mouth was, 'it was worth it.'

At the end of the war, the two of them, my mother and grandmother, were sent with 2,000 Jewish women on a 650-kilometer death march in the snow which ended in Innsbruck, Austria. Only 200 women survived the march.

When they arrived there, the American soldiers were frightened by these skeletons. They seemed like dead spirits or walking ghosts. In their fear, the soldiers called their priests. The priests approached the women and said, are you aliens? And they said, no, we're Jewish. That's when the priests went and called the rabbis of the Allied forces who liberated Europe.

One of these rabbis was my late father rabbi Zini said. He was a chaplain and when he saw the frightening spectacle he said to his Jewish friends this is what is left of the people of Israel.This is what we're going to do - each of us is going to take one of these girls as a wife and we will rebuild our people from the ashes. And so my father married my mother Rachel, a skeleton from Auschwitz, and I, Yosef Zini, was born. And thank G-d, smack in the middle of the Yom Kippur War in 1973, our oldest son, David, was born together

with his twin sister, when there was no electricity in Jerusalem and 16 inches of snow.

Rabbi Yosef Zini continued, 'to be a Jew is to take a long breath, knowing that from every crisis we rise higher and higher. My mother used to say that the two most beautiful days in her life were the day that she was liberated from Auschwitz and the day when she saw her grandson David become a general in the IDF.'

When his grandmother slapped that SS monster twice in the face, she did not think she would ever survive. She came as close as can be to the brush of death. But she could not stand by idly as a Jewish woman was being torn to pieces by an SS dog. And the result? Her grandson becomes the head of the Shin Bet to ensure that the Nazis of today will never be able to tear apart the flesh of our brothers and sisters in our eternal homeland.

This is the eternal flame we celebrate on Chanukkah. And you can't even describe it in words. It comes from your deepest, purest essence. That space inside of you in which your soul and G-d are fused, are one forever and ever. There is a safety and love that is infinite and limitless. - Happy Chanukkah.

TheYeshiva.net
BY RABBI YY JACOBSON

Amid Heartbreak, She Forged a New Dream

It was the seventh night of Chanukah two years ago 5784 December 13th 2023. Normally one of the most joyous days on the Jewish calendar, when a knock on the door brought the news that changed Hadas Lowenstern's life forever. Her husband of 13 years, Rabbi Sgt. Maj. Elisha Loewenstern - the love of her life, had fallen in battle in Gaza.

Alisha was there on a mission to rescue wounded soldiers when he was killed by a Hamas-fired anti-tank missile. He left behind his

widow Hadas and six children, the youngest just 11 months old, the oldest preparing for his bar mitzvah.



Hadas shared that Alisha told her before he went to war: "If something happens to me, please get married as fast as possible."

In frustration and jest she asked him: "Alisha, you mean I open the window and just choose the next man walking by?"

Alisha responded: "Hadas, please, as fast as possible."

Since his murder Hadas has become a symbol of strength and resilience for her entire nation: resolve, love, and faith. "We plan on living such a wonderful life," she once said, "that the bad guys will never merit to live."

A little less than a year after her husband Alisha was killed, a man living in the same apartment building in their town Harish suffered a tragic loss. Hagit Reichert, a mother of four, passed away 10 days after giving birth to her fourth daughter.

Hagit, 37, was in an advanced stage of pregnancy when her condition deteriorated. The doctors were forced to deliver her baby via C-section and 10 days after that she passed away leaving over her husband Hod and four girls.

Hadas Lowenstern went downstairs to pay a shiva call to her neighbor. She sat down in the women's section and began talking to the oldest daughter who just lost her mother.

"I fell in love with her right away," Hadas recalled, "and I thought to myself: This girl would be an amazing match for my oldest boy when they both get older." - Classic Jewish style, in the middle of shiva she's already made a shidduch in her mind between this girl Hallel and her son Eitan who are both bar mitzvah age.

Of course she didn't know that G-d had a different match in mind. As Hadas was walking out of the shiva home she turned to the grieving father and husband Hod and she just said to him: "I want you to know that this girl of yours, the oldest, is going to be just fine." And Hod looked at Hadas and he put both hands on his heart in an expression of such gratitude; it was obvious to her how worried he was about this particular girl and how comforting it was for him to hear that she's going to be okay.

A few months later a woman phones Hadas and says there is another woman who wants to date the widower in her building - Hod.

"Can Hadas ask him if he's interested?"

So she texted her neighbor Hod and he said no, he's not ready yet to date. Then he asked her if she was dating and Hadas said yes. So he wished her success in her efforts and he said: "May it go well, bli pakakim. (without traffic jams) " - She wished him well and moved on.

Some time passes, a woman calls Hadas and asks if she might be interested in dating her neighbor Hod.

She apologizes for calling and she says: "Listen, I tried to dissuade him but he's driving me meshuga all day and all night so I'm calling you." Hadas says: "I already asked him, he said he wasn't interested." The woman responds: "What he meant was that he's not interested in dating other women, he wants **you**!"

Hadas's heart melted. She texted him that night. A few months later in the summer they got engaged and just a few days before last Rosh Hashanah September 16th 2025 they stood under a chupa and they got married. The MC at the chupa was Hadas's oldest son.

"A son usually does not speak at the wedding of his mother," he began, "but G-d had a different dream for my family, and I will follow it with an open heart."

At this chupa the boy said: "We have two people present not physically but spiritually: Hagit, Hod's first wife and my father Alisha, my mother's first husband. They are here celebrating spiritually."

The boy went on to say under the chupa of his mom: "The Prophet Haggai predicts **גדול יהיה כבוד הבית הזה האחרון מן הראשון**. ***The glory of the last home shall be greater than the first one, G-d says***. In Hebrew, the verse can be explained in two ways.

One is the last home shall be greater than the first, but you can also read it differently. The last home shall be greater min harishon, from and because of the first home. It's the first home that will make the last home great. This new home of my mother and Hod is not going to replace their first home. - Its greatness and glory is going to blossom from our first home, min habayis harishon.

The boy nailed the secret of Chanukah and of Jewish history. Hadas cried at her chuppah. She felt the pain. She lost the father of her six children. She knew that blending two families, making up ten children together, is not easy. The pain is deep. We don't need to shut down our emotions.

On the contrary, we allow our pain, vulnerability, and authenticity to catapult our hearts into surrender, faith, trust, love, and ultimately bliss. Mazel tov Hadas and Hod. Mazel tov to the countless heroes of our generation, teaching us all how to find light in our challenges.

Hadas told the reporter who asked her about all of this: I do not want to die, I want to live, and to live means to love and to allow myself to feel love.

Happy Chanukah.

When your mind is with Hashem, your whole life is with Hashem.
~ Based on the teachings of Rav Menachem Mendel of Rimanov



עלייה לרגל - בעניני חנוכה

The Brisker Rov Z"L, once approached the **Gerrer Rebbe, R' Yisroel Alter Z"L**, and asked him, "Why do the Chassidim insist on making large **סעודות** on Chanukkah - singing for hours and eating their fill - when we find written in the Kitzur Shulchan Aruch "**מצוה להרבות קצת בסעודה בחנוכה**", the mitzvah is to be "**מרבה קצת**" - to increase minimally and to add just a little - to the **סעודות** of Chanukkah, and not to prolong and maximize them?"

The Gerrer Rebbe smiled and answered him, "I teach my Chassidim that a little **עבירה** is as terrible and unseemly as a big one. Therefore, they take this rule and apply it to the **סעודות** of Chanukkah too, and so, if it says to "to add a little" to the meals, they go and create from it a big beautiful **סעודת חנוכה**!"

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך

When he was still quite a young child, the famed **Kozhnitzer Maggid, R' Yisroel of Kozhnitz ZT"L**, would remain in the *Beis Medrash* late at night, after all had left, to continue learning alone.

When *Chanukah* came around, his father refused him permission to go to the *Beis Medrash* at night for fear lest he join the other boys in the pastime of card-playing, which is customary on *Chanukah* in various places. The child would have wanted to study instead at home, but his father was a poverty-stricken bookbinder and the house boasted neither candles nor books.

Young Yisroel, therefore, promised his father that he would buy a candle of the size that cost no more than three copper coins, and would study in the *Beis Medrash* by it's light until it went out. He would then come home at once, and his father could thus rest

assured that he had not stayed on to play cards. The father agreed, and the boy went off to the *Beis Medrash* to study.

But the angels in Heaven found such pleasure in the young boy's studies that a miracle was performed for him, just like the miracle of *Chanukah*: the little candle burned on and on throughout the night. When

his father saw that the promised hour had passed and his son had not yet returned, he became upset and convinced that the child had acted against his wishes and was no doubt playing cards with all the little emptyheads in town. When morning came, Yisroel returned home and lay down to sleep. His father, however, decided to administer discipline in the only way he knew - and he beat him soundly.

Recalling this incident, the Kozhnitzer Maggid commented that had he told his father at the time, that he had studied all throughout the night, he surely would have believed him, for his father knew that he never lied. But he thought it would be sinful to spare himself a beating by making use of the honor of Torah. Even at such a tender age, young Yisroel was careful to shy away from any honor shown to him and therefore, he had chosen to be beaten and bruised in silence, rather than to take credit in the name of the Torah.

מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

It was the custom of **R' Yitzchok Meir Alter ZT"L, the Chiddushei HaRim**, to distribute Chanuka gelt to all of his grandchildren every year. One year he summoned his grandchildren to his study where he gave each a sum of money.

When it was Yehuda Aryeh Leib's turn, (later to be renowned as the **Sefas Emes**), his grandfather asked him, "What would you like me to give you for Chanuka gelt?"

"What need do I have for money?" he replied.

"Ah, but what you and your wife do need is a child! Your 'Chanuka gelt' shall be that you and your wife will be the parents of a healthy son this year," said the rebbe.

They had been married for several years and as yet had no children. The Chiddushei HaRim perceived the cause of their childlessness in the spiritual realms, and he set about making the spiritual corrections which only a tzaddik can make.

The Rebbe's blessing soon materialized, and Yehuda Leib's wife became pregnant. Her pregnancy, however, progressed with great difficulty. In fact, she became so week that the doctors urged that surgery be performed to abort the fetus.

When word of the doctors' prognosis reached the Chiddushei HaRim, he was very upset. "I have promised them a son, and G-d willing, they will have a son. Has all my work been in vain!?" And he left orders that they go to no more doctors for the doctors could not help them.

Finally the time came and the young woman went into labour. But the hours of labour stretched into days. By the third day, the midwife had given up hope and was begging that doctors be brought in. But the Rebbe only nodded and replied that he would refuse to begin his morning prayers until the seeming danger had passed and a healthy child was born.

A short time later, he was brought the good news, "Mazel Tov, a healthy girl was born!"

He replied, "No, that is not true!" And it was not true. Soon, someone else entered the room with the information that a mistake had been made, and it was a healthy boy. With this news, the Rebbe pronounced a hearty, "Mazel Tov!" and began his morning prayers.

The child was named Avrohom Mordechai Alter. He grew up to be a foremost Talmudic scholar whose diligence, alacrity, and purity of speech were legendary. Upon the passing of his father, he became

the Gerer Rebbe, and his followers numbered in the hundreds of thousands. He moved to the Holy Land in 1940 and was active in establishing schools and youth organizations, as well as in rescue and rehabilition work, during and after the Holocaust. He passed away in 1948, in Yerushalayim.



מעשה אבות .... סימן לבנים

The story is told about the renowned Rebbe and Tzaddik, the author of the sefer **Bnei Yissoschar**, **R' Zvi Elimelech of Dinov ZT"L**, to whom thousands turned for guidance and whose monumental work has become a classic among Jewish Seforim.

One day during the Yom Tov of Chanukkah, while on his way to visit his Rebbe, the holy **Chozeh of Lublin ZT"L**, he began to ponder the question of which of the twelve tribes of Israel, he descended from. "Why," he thought to himself, "as soon as Chanukkah comes around, do I always experience a heightened measure of spiritual delight? It definitely cannot be because I am descended from the Chashmonaim, for I am not a Kohen. So where, then, does this blissful sweetness actually come from?"

R' Zvi Elimelech decided that when he reached Lublin and his Rebbe, he would ask him this question, for the Chozeh - the "seer" of Lublin - was said to possess the Ruach Hakodesh that enabled him to see from one end of the world to the other, and he would certainly be able to provide him with a qualified answer.

He arrived at the great man's house, but before he managed to say a word, the Chozeh said, "You should know that you are descended from **שבט ישששכר** - the tribe of Yissoschar. As to the question of why you experience what you do on Chanukkah, that is because in the time of the Bais Hamikdosh, you were a member of the **בית דין** - the high court of the Chashmonaim!" This particular tribe traditionally supplied the Talmidei Chachomim and scholars who manned the Rabbinical courts during the time of both temples.

R' Zvi Elimelech was amazed at the incredible intuition and Heavenly spirit that rested on his Rebbe, and was excited to learn the answers to his questions. He decided right then that he would name his monumental work - Bnei Yissoschar - which literally means "The sons of Yissoschar", due to this fact that he actually stemmed from the illustrious tribe of scholars, **שבט ישששכר**.







The *Gemara* in *Shabbat* says, if someone has a choice and they have limited funds or they have only one candle, and they have a choice between using that candle for the *Ner Chanukah*, for the *menorah*, or using that candle for *Ner Shabbat* for the Friday night candles, which one wins?

Says the *Gemara* that the *Ner beito*, the *Ner Shabbat* wins. Why? Because of *shalom bayit*. Because the candles of *Shabbat* are *shalom bayit*, and therefore they bring peace in the home, and therefore they win.

Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky says, I don't understand. The *Chanukah* candles represent that you can't even benefit from them because they're so holy. They represent the *Torah*, they represent *Hashem's* presence in our life, they represent the fact that *Hashem* runs the world, they represent these incredible things. The other candles, the *Shabbat* candles, are just so it's light so I can function. Those candles are better?

The candles of Friday night are more important than the candles of *Chanukah* that represent this incredible miracle and the fact that *Hashem* is taking care of us in the darkness? Why would *Ner Shabbat* be more important than *Ner Chanukah*?

And he has his own answer, but I'd like to provide a very simple straightforward, I think, obvious answer, and that is this: you're right.

You're right that the candles of *Chanukah* represent *Torah*, represent G-d's presence, represent his involvement in our life,

represent him taking care of us in the darkness, represent everything we believe. But the candles of *Shabbat* bring peace and happiness in the home. And if you don't have peace and happiness in your home, if you don't have a healthy home, you never get to the *Torah* and the belief in *Hashem*.

Children that grow up in a home that's happy and healthy and strong have a great chance of one day growing in *Torah* and *mitzvot*. Children that grow up in a home that's not healthy, that's not happy, that doesn't have the right dynamic, that doesn't have the right air about it, doesn't have the right confidence within it, children that grow up in that kind of home, they never even get to *Ner Chanukah*.

So *Ner Chanukah* may be very important in the moment, it represents *Torah* for today, but the candles of *Shabbat* represent *Torah* for these children forever. Because if I can make the home happy and I can make it healthy, these children will grow, they will be nurtured, they will blossom, they will become everything.

A Miracle Happened There - R' Tzvi Sytner

So **חנוכה**, we say **נס גדול היה שם**, a great miracle happened there.

I once heard, I think it's from the **מהרל**, who says what does it mean **שם**, there?

שם doesn't mean there, just like there in **ירושלים**. **שם** means there as in 'not here', not the way normal people think. A great miracle happened because we didn't think the way regular people think. We didn't settle for mediocrity, we didn't throw in the towel, we thought way above. Our minds were there, that's where the **מכבים**, that's where the **חשמונאים** were.

שם. And the word **שם** is throughout the entire **חנוכה**. We have the word **שמן**, right, oil. What does oil do? It rises to the top. You have the **שמש**, it's the candle that's above all the other ones. It's way

above it, **שם**, it's over there. **חשמונאים** are **שם**. How many days for **חנוכה**? There's **שמונה**. **שם**.

Not only that, but the number eight itself by the way, right, eight is infinity on its side, right? Eight is infinity.

It's the number above and beyond. It's not limited. And of course we know not only that, the **שבע**, right, seven in Judaism represents all physicality, right? Every object has six sides plus the object itself, that's **שבע**, that's seven. There are seven days a week. There are seven notes in an octave.

שמונה, eight, is above physicality. It's above nature. It's above the way normal people think. It's not subjecting ourselves to the way regular people think. It's thinking above and beyond. It's going way beyond. It's pushing the limits. It's stepping outside our comfort zone. That's **שם**.

שמים, נשמה, these are metaphysical things. It's above and beyond.

Yeah, the challenge seems so great. Yeah, the mountain is huge. How am I going to climb? Insurmountable. How am I going to get over it? I don't know.

Better I don't have to deal with it the way normal people do. I don't have to approach it the way normal people do. I don't have to throw in the towel. I don't have to give up.

I can be **שם**. I can go above and beyond.

I remember years ago I was living in Westchester and I remember there was a Hebrew school up north in Mount Kisco. And the rabbi asked me if I would come up there and do like a Hebrew school graduation for their Hebrew school, do like a **דבר תורה** and sing some songs with the kids, bring a guitar.

So I said I don't mind doing a **דבר תורה**, but I'm really not much of a guitarist. So I was a little hesitant about that, but I said you know what, fine, I'll bring my guitar, I'll try, see what I can do.

As I'm driving up I'm thinking to myself, you know, I'm really not much of a guitarist. I don't know how I'm going to pull this off. But it's just a bunch of kids, they're not really going to know, it's fine, no big deal.

But as soon as I get up there and I stand up in front of the audience of kids, and who's sitting there? Kids and their parents. And I'm looking at them and I'm like, oh my gosh, now I'm starting to sweat. And then I look in the front row and there's a guy who looked familiar. It was Paul Shaffer, the musical director and he's sitting in front.

And now I'm really sweating and kids are fine, I get through the whole thing.

I come up to him at the end say, 'Nu Paul, what'd you think? What'd you think? He looks at me and he goes, you know, you're really not much of a guitarist. And then he said something I'll never forget. He said, 'but you don't let that get in the way of what you're trying to do.'

'You don't let that get in the way of what you're trying to do'. We don't have to have it all figured out. We just have to try to not let anything get in the way of what we're trying to do. If you know it's the right thing.

What's the end result going to be? I don't know. How's it going to work out? I don't know. Do I have to have it all figured out? No. Because the Almighty can do anything.

הקדוש ברוך הוא כל יכול, The Creator of the universe, can do anything. There's nothing impossible for **הקדוש ברוך הוא**. And what we learn from **חנוכה** is that our job, if it's the right thing to do, is to attempt even the impossible.

חנוכה שמח



I would like to take this opportunity, to wish you and your families wherever you may be in the world, a freilichen Chanukah, and may you bring the light of Chanukah and everything it represents, into your homes and communities and to all Klal Yisroel.

A Freilichen Lichtigen Chanukah to all!

I want to wish you all a beautiful Shabbos and Yom Tov, bringing you and your family much ***light***, much ***illumination***, much ***enlightenment***, much ***radiance***, much ***luminosity,*** much ***lustre***, much ***brilliance*** - and of course, the common denominator - ***much Torah!***

May the light of our collective Menorahs burn long and last us through the year and herald the the "Ohr HaGanuz" - the ultimate light of salvation, the light of Moshiach, speedily and in our days.



Have a great Shabbos and a Freilihchen and Lichtigeh Chanukah!

Wishing all Am Yisroel a fulfilling Chanukah filled with miracles, simcha and closeness to Hashem!

