

The Weekly *Farbrengens*


MERKAZ ANASH
 מרכז אנאש
 לחמן ישמעו • חקץ תשפ"ג • 702
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CHANUKAH

A LUMINOUS TIME

In the household of Reb Dovid of Tolna, *hadlokas haneiros* was a special event. His chassidim would gather excitedly in his house to take part in the lighting of his golden *menora*, which was an elaborate piece of artistic craftsmanship. One year, on the first night of Chanukah, when the *tzaddik* was ready to light it, he turned to one of his chassidim and said, "Your wife is short, isn't she? When you want to speak to her, what do you do? Do you bend over towards her, or does she raise herself up to your height?" Without waiting for an answer, he recited the *berachos* and lit the *menora*. Needless to say, the chossid and all those present were very puzzled.

During this time, Reb Dovid's great nephew, Reb Mordechai Dov of Hornisteipol, was staying at his home, and seeing the confusion of the chassidim, he explained: The *Gemara* says that "The Shechina does not descend lower than ten *tefachim* from the ground." However, there is an exception to this rule, for the Chanuka *menora* is ideally required to be lower than ten *tefachim*, and it brings the Shechina itself here below. Reb Mordechai concluded by quoting from the *AriZal* that this is the deeper meaning of the words of the *Gemara*, 'If your wife is short, you should bend over and whisper to her.'

The following evening, at the time of *hadlokas haneiros*, Reb Dovid again made some puzzling comment to one of his chassidim. Immediately, though he had not been told of the previous night's explanation, he turned to Reb Mordechai and said, "This time, you will not understand as you did yesterday!"

(סיפורי חסידים זיון מועדים ע' 281)

In *Haneiros Halalu* we say that we have no permission to use the lights, only to look at them ("*elo lir'oisn bilvad*"). This can mean that gazing at the lights is actually a benefit, healing any damage the eyes have incurred from seeing improper images, and protects one for the future. In fact many *tzaddikim* would sit and gaze at the *licht* as they burned.

(ש"ת שב יעקב סי' כב, זרע קודש - ראפשיץ)

After kindling the Chanukah *licht*, the Rebbe Rashab would sit near them for half an hour and learn, though at a slight distance, in order not to benefit from its light. He would learn *Gemara*, wherever he was holding in his learning of Shas.

The Rebbe explained that this practice highlights the special connection of Torah to light, and is a lesson for everyone - Chanukah is a time to increase one's learning. Furthermore, since the *Yevanim* wished to prevent us from studying Torah, we respond by increasing our study.

(רשימות היומן ע' שכג, תר"מ תשמ"ב ח"ב ע' 618)

CONSIDER

Why is it specifically the light of Chanukah that draws the Shechinah below ten *tefachim*?

How do we distinguish between "pure *Yiddishe* light" and "contaminated *goyishkeit*" when they both incorporate the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos?

The Rebbe explained that Chanukah is an opportune time to increase one's Torah study and *shemiras hamitzvos*, since the *nes* was related to those *ruchniyusdike* matters. One should especially upgrade one's *yiras Shomayim*, for that is the purpose of Torah and *mitzvos*, and that was what the *Yevanim* were particularly opposed to.

This we can learn from the way in which we light an additional candle every night. During Chanukah, one should increase one's contributions to *tzedaka* and study more Torah than usual.

Through the *mitzva* of *neiros* Chanukah, one is granted the light of Torah.

(התועודיות תשמ"ח ח"ב ע' 67, התועודיות תשמ"ד ח"ב ע' 596)

THE WAR OF THE YEVANIM

The goal of the *Yevanim* was "*lehashkicham torasecha*

uleha'aviram meichukei retzonecha" ("to make them forget Your Torah and transgress the decrees of Your will"). As the *Midrash* says, the *Yevanim* demanded the *Yidden* write that they have no part in *HaShem*. This was a war against *HaShem*. "Let them study Torah," said the Greeks. "Let them practice the *mitzvos*, *mishpatim*, and *eiduyos*, but they must not mention that the Torah is *HaShem's* and that the *mitzvos* are the decrees of His will. Torah and *mitzvos* must be severed from *HaShem*."

(היום יום ב' טבת)

The Rebbe explained how the goal of the *Yevanim* and the *misyavnim* was to remove the separation that exists between *Yidden* and *goyim*, and to educate children to be similar to the other nations. This is more severe than placing decrees against the observance of Torah and *mitzvos*, because its effect remains even after the decree is over. It begins with something 'small', through 'lighting up' the way for a child with 'oil' that is contaminated with *goyishkeit*, claiming that it produces the same light. When one educates children improperly, drawing 'light' from a source which is not pure, this leads a child to become a *Misyaven R*"L.

The lesson from Chanukah is: when lighting up *Yiddishe* homes, one must use only pure *Yiddishe* light, uncontaminated by any *goyishkeit*. By doing so, with *mesirus nefesh* (not giving in to the majority, who also appear to be stronger), we will be victorious, for *HaShem* is on our side.

(לקו"ש ח"כ ע' 438)

At a children's rally the Rebbe pointed out the war against the *Yevanim* in our times. During the time of Chanukah, the *Chashmona'im* withstood a tremendous challenge, battling a mighty army with *mesirus nefesh*. Today's *nisyonos* are not as formidable, but are of a different nature. The *Yetzer hara* comes to a child and tells him to spend his time playing games like others around him, thus causing him to forget to learn Torah. Or he will try to convince him to eat a candy which others are eating, even though its *kashrus* is uncertain. In such a situation, the child must act strongly, with *mesirus nefesh*, no matter how exciting or enticing the challenge is, and then he will certainly be victorious.

(ז' חנוכה תשל"ה, לקו"ש ח"כ ע' 483)

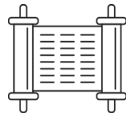

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PUBLIC MENORAH LIGHTINGS

Can I light a public menorah with a bracha?

There is an age-old custom for the menorah to be lit in shul after mincha, though it doesn't fit the original mitzva of "ner ish ubiso," which is fulfilled by lighting by one's personal residence. This practice is not mentioned in the Gemara, but it is discussed by the Rishonim and codified in Shulchan Aruch.¹

Rishonim note that the Chanuka miracle occurred in the Beis Hamikdash, thus it is appropriate to commemorate it in the shul, which is a miniature Mikdash, and in the presence of the many who gather there.² Some add that it is motzi those who cannot light themselves,³ or for travelers who are staying in the shul building.⁴ Furthermore, this serves to publicize the miracle, especially today that people don't light outdoors anymore, and some view this as the primary reason for lighting in shul.⁵

When lighting in shul, a bracha is recited. But reciting a bracha on a minhag is the subject of debate, so why do we make a bracha at the shul lighting? R. Shlomo Zalman Aurbach explains that this isn't an independent minhag but rather an extension of the original mitzva, in which case all agree that a bracha may be recited.⁶

If a primary aspect of lighting in shul is because it's like the Beis Hamikdash, then a public lighting not in a shul wouldn't qualify for a bracha. Yet, if the primary aspect of the minhag is to further the publicity of the miracle, a public lighting outside of shul accomplishes this as well, and reaches many Jews who otherwise wouldn't be exposed to Chanuka candles.

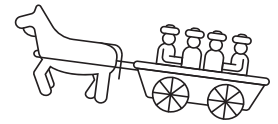
While some later poskim hold that such public lightings should be done without a bracha due to the doubt (whether it is similar to shul lighting), some arrange to have a minyan for maariv at the lighting so it will have the status of a congregational prayer.⁷

Others accept pirsumei nisa to be the primary aspect, for which public lightings qualify on their own.⁸ While pirsumei nisa still requires a tzibur (i.e. ten people) to be present, yet some contemporary poskim hold that women and children over the age of chinuch are included in the count since they are also obligated in ner Chanukah.⁹

In any event, the participants do not fulfill their obligation by a public lighting and should be informed that they must still light in their homes.¹⁰

1. שו"ע אורח סי' תרע"א ס"ז.
2. ספר המנהיג הל' תנוכה קמה.
3. ראה שו"ת אז נדברו ח"ה סי' ל"ז ח"ו.
4. כלבו סימן מ"ד.
5. ע"ה וחי"א סי' ל"ב. וכן פסק הרב הע"י לער שליט"א.
6. ב"י אורח סי' תרע"א.
7. בית הבחירה למאירי שבת כ"ג ע"ב.
8. שו"ת מנחת שנינא סי' נ"ח אות ג'.
9. חזון עובדיה תנוכה עמ' יב - יג.
10. תו"מ תשמ"ז ח"ב ע' 98.
7. מנהג הרב מרדכי אליהו ע"ה כשהד ליק

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה



R. BERE LEIB GINZBURG

R. Dov Ber Yehudah Leib Ginzburg (c. 5590-5654) was born in Dubravna, to his father, the famous gaon and chossid R. Nechemia, the author of Divrei Nechemia. R. Bere Leib was a chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek, and later of the Rebbe of Kopust.

A resident of Mogilev, R. Bere Leib was a wealthy businessman and a talmid chacham with broad knowledge in all areas of Torah, including nigleh, Chassidus, and chakirah, and he used his knowledge to counter the maskilim in the contemporary press. He was a prominent community leader, and often served as a representative for his Rebbe, Harav Shlomo Zalman of Kopust, regarding communal affairs.

R. Bere Leib published his father's seforim Divrei Nechemia, which include some of his own notes and chidushim, as well as Emunas Chachamim, a refutation of maskil attacks on the miracle of Chanukah.

In 5652, a controversy erupted in the Jewish world when a maskil published an article in a Hebrew newspaper denying the Chanukah miracle with the menorah oil RL, and even ascribing this position to the Rambam.

One of this maskil's supporters then published a pamphlet advocating this position by taking derush and kabbalah explanations of the neis out of context and claiming that these gedolei Yisroel didn't believe in the miracle in the literal sense. Quoting the Mittlerer Rebbe's explanation in Shaarei Orah that the oil represents the divine chochmah of the Torah, he twisted this to mean that the Mittlerer Rebbe denies the actual neis!

The Kopuster Rebbe, Harav Shlomo Zalman, turned to R. Bere Leib and asked him to publish

a rebuttal to these absurd claims. R. Bere Leib wrote a kuntres titled "Emunas Chachamim" which was funded and published by Chabad Chassidim, led by R. Elyakim Getzel Arlozorov, a Rosh Yeshivah in Rogatchov. Two thousand copies of the kuntres - a significant number for that time - were distributed for free across Eastern Europe.

In Emunas Chachamim, R. Bere Leib used his broad knowledge in all areas of Torah to dismiss the maskilim's arguments and prove that the Chanukah miracle was of course universally accepted by all gedolei Yisrael in its literal sense.

The maskilim were enraged by R. Bere Leib's refutation of their position, and took revenge by continually mocking him in the press. But R. Bere Leib stood firm, and continued to fight for the authentic Torah position.

(אמונת חכמים; סיני, גליון ק, עמ' רד-רה; ועיתונות התקופה)

As a child, Bere Leib learned in cheder with the Rebbe Maharash and Harav Shneur Zalman, the Magen Avos of Kopust. While R. Bere Leib and the Magen Avos were also gifted students, they weren't as quick learners as the Rebbe Maharash.

Once, the Tzemach Tzedek asked Bere Leib a question in what they had learned, and the boy began to cry. When the Tzemach Tzedek asked why he was crying, the boy answered that he wishes to be granted wisdom in learning.

The Tzemach Tzedek then told the boy what he had heard from the Alter Rebbe repeat from the Maggid: "What my Zusha [of Anipoli] can accomplish with his holy, pure tears, a tzaddik and gaon can't accomplish with his knowledge and genius."

(רשימת היומן ע' רפה ואילך)

A Moment with The Rebbe



EXPERIENCE IS NOT ENOUGH

Rabbi Yosef Minkowitz, the principal of Beis Rivkah Academy for girls in Montreal, Canada, relates:

I once personally heard a sharp comment on chinuch from the Rebbe that has shaped my worldview ever since.

There was a certain mechanech who had invested many years in education. This

veteran educator, justly proud of his vast experience in the field, would say of himself that he has thirty years of chinuch behind him, and he therefore "knows everything there is to know about chinuch."

When the Rebbe heard of this, the Rebbe said that the problem of this educator is that indeed his experience is behind him -

Chinuch must be ahead of us, constantly growing.