

The Weekly *Farbrengens*



MERKAZ ANASH
מרכז אנאש

לחצן ישמעו • וישב תשפ"ד • 752
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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.

(שו"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.

(לקור"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, לקור"ש ח"כ ע' 483)

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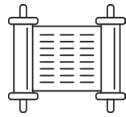
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MELACHA AFTER MENORAH

May a woman fry latkes after Menorah lighting?

Shulchan Aruch quotes the custom of women not to do *melacha* while the Chanuka candles are lit, and one should not be lenient in this.¹ Women are singled out because the miracle came about through a woman – Yehudis.² On a spiritual note, the Rebbe writes that this *minhag* symbolizes that when women internalize the message of the Chanuka candles, they can rise above mundane matters.³

The *poskim* offer two explanations for this custom:

The first reason is out of concern that she may come to use the candles to illuminate her work. Accordingly, this should only apply during the first half hour of the candles burning after nightfall (i.e., 50 minutes from being lit according to the Chabad custom), since after that time one may extinguish the candles altogether.⁴ While some argue that it should remain prohibited afterward since one still shouldn't use them if they burn longer, others counter that we would not make a decree to safeguard this *hidur*.⁵

A second reason given for this *minhag* is that the days of Chanuka were established as a *yom tov* with Hallel and thanksgiving to Hashem. To mark it as a *yom tov*, women abstain from *melacha* as long as Chanuka candles are burning anywhere in their vicinity, assumed to be until midnight.⁶ According to this approach, a woman should abstain from *melacha* even after her candles have burned out or she isn't at home where her candles are burning.

In practice, the custom follows the first approach that allows *melacha* following the first 30 (or 50) minutes. After that time, *melacha* is done, but not in front of the candles.⁷

As to the type of *melacha* prohibited, some *poskim* follow the guidelines of *yom tov*, when cooking is permitted.⁸ Others only prohibit *melacha* that is forbidden on *chol hamoed*, like sewing and washing clothing.⁹ Frying latkes would thus be permitted according to all opinions even while the candles burn strong.

1. טוש"ע סי' תר"ע.
 2. מג"א שם סק"א.
 3. מכתב כללי לחנוכה תשמ"ו -
 לקוטי שיחות חכ"ה ע' 512.
 4. משנ"ב שם סק"ד.
 5. ראה פסק"ת שם הע' 8.
 6. ראה מג"א שם סק"ב.
 7. כך רואים מהלך האחרונים - ראה
 פסק"ת שם הע' 12.
 8. שו"ת קנין תורה ח"ז סי' נ"ב.
 9. מועד לכל חי סי' כ"ז אות ס"ה. אבל
 ראה שו"ת רבבות אפרים ח"א סי'
 תל"ו בשם הגר"י פ"ש ע"ה שמנהג
 ירושלים לאסור אפילו בישול בחצי
 שעה הראשונה.

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

Our Heroes



R. AVREMKE ZHEBINER

R. Avrohom *HaLevi* Landau, known as R. Avremke Zhebiner, was a chossid of the Tzemach Tzedek and the Rebbe Maharash. He was a grandson of R. Zalman Kurenitzer, who was the leading chossid of the city of Kurenitz and was of the great chassidim of the Alter Rebbe. At first, R. Avremke was in business in Kurenitz and was quite a *gvir*. When things changed and he lost his fortune, the Rebbe Maharash appointed him to be the rov of the city Zhebin.

R. Avremke was once asked why he chose to be the rabbi of such a small town as Zhebin, when he could have been a rabbi of a much more respectable city.

R. Avremke replied, "If I was interested in taking a position of rabbi, a more respectable community would have been my choice. But to me, the honor and power of a rabbinic position is undesirable, and so the smaller the community, the better."

(זכרונות סבא ע' מז)

R. Groinem once came to know an esteemed individual who rose early each morning to lament the destruction of the *Beis*

HaMikdash. R. Groinem asked his *mashpia* R. Avremke if he knew any *chassidim* who did this. R. Avremke replied that there are *chassidim* who do it, but they are particular not to let others know about it.

R. Groinem took it as referring to R. Avremke himself.

(רשימו"ד ח"א ע' רס"ג)

Once, a kernel of wheat was found in a room that had been cleaned for Pesach, and R. Avrohom cried about it bitterly.

(זכרונות סבא ע' מז)

In earlier times, it was hard to get large amounts of wheat for *matza* that was guarded from the time of harvest (*shmura*). The common practice was to eat *shmura matza* only at the *sedarim*, and the rest of Pesach people would eat handmade *matza* that was made with non-*shmura* wheat.

When it was suggested to R. Avremke that he undertake the stringency of eating *shmura* for all of Pesach, he replied that he hadn't yet reached that level.

(הלקח והליבו ח"ב ע' ר"ה)

A Moment with The Rebbe



IT IS NOT A GAME

On Chanukah 5734 (1973), the Rebbe distributed Chanukah *gelt* exclusively to those who went on *mitzvoyim*.

A distinguished Skverer chossid also joined the line. When he approached, the Rebbe asked him whether he had participated in *mitzva* Chanukah. When he replied that he hadn't, the Rebbe said that he is sorry, but he cannot give him the Chanukah *gelt*.

This guest began crying. He said that he is in a desperate need of a salvation, therefore he beseeches the Rebbe that he receive the holy Chanukah *gelt*.

The Rebbe responded, "A *bracha* I could give you. *Vaharikosi lochem brocho ad bli dai* (I will

pour down for you blessing until there be no room to suffice for it - Malachi 3:10). However, the dollar I cannot give."

The chossid continued to insist, as his tears flowed.

The Rebbe said, "I don't understand you. If you believe in my *bracha*, then trust me, that when I say that I cannot give you it is not a children's game. You want the *bracha davka* in your way?!"

"I will do it in my way. You should have a *freilichen* Chanukah, and Hashem should fulfill all your wishes."

(*Sipuro Shel Chag, Chanukah, page 238*)