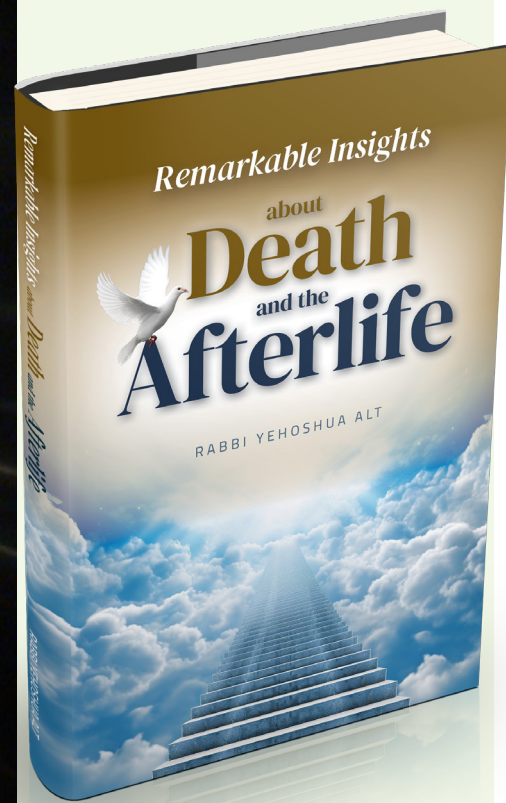




A Light That Lifts

RABBI YEHOSHUA ALT



The Midrash (Breishis Rabba 2:4) says that Galus Yavan is *Choshech*. This is symbolised by the fact that Chanuka coincides with the longest nights of the year, the rainy season and the fact that it comes out at the end of the month. (The first half of a month is *חסד* as the moon keeps expanding. This is until the 15th. Indeed, most Yomim Tovim come out on the 15th of the month or earlier.) It is also a Mitzva done at night time, in contrast to most Mitzvos which are performed by day such as Tefillin and Tzitzis.

This idea is also illustrated in the parshiyot that fall out near Chanuka as it speaks about the hardships of Yaakov, dealing with Lavan and Esav, Dina being violated, Shimon and Levi killing Shechem, and Yosef being sold.

The Tur (Hilchos Rosh Chodesh 417) teaches that the twelve shevatim correspond to the twelve months of the year. The tribe of Don corresponds to the month of Teves, a month filled with impurity, as it contains the secular holidays – December 25th and January 1st. In addition to being the lowest of the shevatim, they were also the last encampment (Bamidbar 2:31), symbolising their inferiority (Shemos 35:34, Rashi). Among the many ways we see their weakness is that the only incident where a Jew had relations with an Egyptian was Shlomis bas Divri (Vayikra 24:11) who was from the tribe of Don (see Melachim 1, 12:29, Breishis 14:14, Rashi and Tanchuma, Ki Seitzei, 10 for other examples).

Throughout Hilchos Chanuka we see the emphasis of putting light in places that don't contain spiritual light.

1) The Menora is placed less than ten tefachim high which is where the Shechina doesn't rest (Orach Chaim 671:6).

2) The Menora is placed on the left side (Shabbos 22a, Orach Chaim 671:7). This represents the side of impurity as the satan is called *שמאל*, the same word as *שמאל*, left (The *samech* and *sin* are interchangeable as in Shemos 33:22 and 25:5, Rashi. The Torah shows importance to the right side as the

right takes precedence – the right shoe and the right side of your body first [see also Mishna Brura 671:34]. However, Tefillin is put on the left hand [if one is right-handed] in order to bind the Yetzer Hara and as Rashi says on *bchol levavcha*, with both inclinations.). Lighting on the left side is putting the light in a place of impurity. With this we can fulfill *ימין ושמאל תפרוצי* (in Lecha Dodi), to spread Kedusha to the right and left side as the Mezuzah is on the right side and *Ner Chanuka* on the left. Then, *ואת ה' תעריצי*, we will exalt Hashem. In fact, the term *שמאל* is a contraction of *ל-ל-ל*, there is Hashem, as we need to spread Kedusha even there.

3) The Gemara instructs us that the *Ner Chanuka* should be placed by the doorway of one's house from the outside. If he lives on an upper floor it should be placed in a window that is adjacent to *Reshus Harabim*, public domain (Shabbos 21b, Orach Chaim 671:5). *Reshus Harabim* is a place of impurity as it contains the impure outside influences as well as being out in the open, the opposite of *tznius*, modesty. This is in contrast to *Reshus Hayachid* which is the domain of Hashem, *Yechido shel Olam*. In a similar vein, this is what is meant by *עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק*, to jettison the negative outside influences. (Shabbos 21b. This is the time for lighting Chanuka candles. Literally it translates as until the passerby vanishes from the market.)

4) The Gemara teaches that the wicks and oils that we may not kindle on Shabbos, we may kindle on Chanuka.

In light of the above we can now grasp a deeper meaning in what we say in Al Hanissim *קדשיך בחצרות נרות* – through the lighting of the candles, we put kedusha in all places. Chanuka is the light amongst the darkness.

Just as the candles of Chanuka puts light in the impure places, it also puts light into the lowest of Jews. This is how the Tiferes Shlomo (*Hashmatah L'chanuka*. Shabbos 21b) explains “the wicks and oils that we may not kindle on Shabbos, we may kindle on

Chanuka”. Those that are not lit up on Shabbos can get lit up on Chanuka. This is because when we light the candles of Chanuka, we are lighting up our Neshama as it says *נשמת אדם נר ה'*, the spirit of man is the candle of Hashem (Mishlei 20:27. In a slightly different way we can understand it as follows: the Pasuk states *ה' צלך*, Hashem is our shadow. Hence, when we light the Chanuka light Hashem lights *נשמת נר ה'* (אדם.). Therefore, *נש* forms an acronym of *נר ה' נשמת נשמן*. The *נר חנוכה* should be placed by the doorway of one's house from the outside. This also means that on Chanuka those Neshamos that are on the outside are lit up. In this way we can grasp why even an *עני* *המתפרנס מן הצדקה*, a poor person should be very careful with lighting Chanuka lights (Orach Chaim 671:1), as *עני* refers to *עני* *אלה בדת* (Nedarim 41a) the real poor person is one impoverished of understanding, referring to the Jews that are low. The Chidushai Harim explains *לשמן וידלוק...*, the one who said oil should light can let vinegar light (Taanis 25a), in the following way. *חומץ*, vinegar, refers to lowly people as in *מעור וחומץ*, unrighteous and cruel man (Tehillim 71:4. *Sichos B'avodas Hashem*, *Sicha* 6). Just as Hashem commanded us to light oil, similarly with *חומץ* Neshamos, as Hashem lights up those Neshamos.

This is really what Chanuka is as it has been said *זאת חנוכה* means this is what Chanuka truly is! The Krias Hatorah of *זאת חנוכה* is about the *בני מנשה* who are called so because *כי נשני*, to forget (Bamidbar 7:54. The *בנים קטנים* that Yaakov went back for refers to the *פך שמן* of Chanuka. On a deeper level this means the low Neshamos.). This refers to the forgotten Neshamos. His *Nasi* is *גמליאל* *בן פדהצור*, meaning those low Neshamos. That is to say, *גמליאל* is a contraction of *ל-ל-ל*, these Jews are also for Hashem whereas *פדהצור* is a contraction of *צור*, Hashem redeems them. Consequently, *מנשה* is composed of the same letters as *נשמה*.

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