

בסייעתא דשמיא

# על דברי אלהי דשנה

AL E I D E S H E

Weekly Torah Insights and inspiration on the Parsha from the Rosh Yeshiva Shlit" a of Gur

# CHANUKAH

# 5784

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# Chanukah And Chinuch

When we light the Chanukah *menorah*, we recite the *brachah* of *she'asa nissim*. *Sefarim* ask: why do we say “*nissim*” (miracles), in the plural, and not “*nes*” (miracle), in the singular? Even if we count the victory of the *Chashmona'im* as a separate miracle, it is only in commemoration of the miracle of the oil that we recite the *brachah*. This is clear from the Gemara ( Shabbos 23a), which states that we recite *she'asa nissim* every day of Chanukah because the miracle continued each day.<sup>1</sup>

*Sefarim* state<sup>2</sup> that the oil that burned for eight days during the Chanukah story had already been used for miracles during the time of the *nevi'im*: Eliyahu assured the woman of Tzarfaz, in the name of Hashem, כִּד הַקֶּמַח לֹא תִכְלֶה וְצִפְתָּת, תַּחֲסֹר לֹא תִשְׁמָן – *The jug of flour shall not run out and the flask of oil shall not lack* (I Melachim 17:14). Later, Elisha told the wife of Ovadiah that her last bit of oil would continue to

pour into as many vessels as she could prepare, and, after paying her creditors, וְאַתָּה וּבְנֵיךָ תִחְיֶי בְּנוֹתָר, – *you and your sons will live on the remainder* (II Melachim 4:7).

When Eliyahu said *the flask of oil shall not lack*, it was an assurance that her oil would last until the end of time. To Elisha's promise, *and you and your sons will live on the remainder*, the Midrash<sup>3</sup> adds: until *techiyas hameisim*. The *Beis Yisrael*<sup>4</sup> explains that this is a reference to the miracle of Chanukah.<sup>5</sup> We can understand this based on the Gemara (Yoma 29a) that teaches that the Chanukah miracle took place after the closing of the Written Torah; prophecy no longer existed and it was thus not recorded as a *megillah*. In the absence of clear Heavenly direction, the Jews would hold onto this miracle, strengthening themselves until the coming of *Mashiach* and *techiyas hameisim*.

1 See *Sfas Emes*, תרמ"ה ד"ה בעל, תרל"ד ליל ד ד"ה בעל, תרמ"ה ד"ה בברכת; *Likutei Yehudah*, Bereishis 26:22

2 See *Shach al HaTorah*, Bereishis 35:25; *Birkas Shmuel* (R. Shmuel Kaidenover), end of Mikeitz; *Kav Hayashar*, chap. 96

3 *Bereishis Rabbah* 35:3

4 תרי"ז נר

5 See *Tiferes Shlomo* ד"ה ואשה אחת וד"ה א"י להשכיחם

The connection between the miracles of the *nevi'im* and the miracle of Chanukah can also be seen in the wording of the pesukim. Ovadiah's wife told Elisha that she had only *אָסוּף שְׁמֶן* – a jar of oil (4:2). Those words have the *gematria* (with the *kollel*) of *חֲנֻכָּה*. The word *בְּנוֹתָר*, in Elisha's response, shares the same letters as *בְּנוֹרוֹת*. This, then, is why we say *she'asa nissim*, in the plural. We are referring to all the miracles that occurred with the oil.

The Gemara (Shabbos 23a) says that women are obligated in *ner Chanukah* because *אִי הָיוּ בְּאוֹתוֹ הַנֵּס* – *They, too, were part of that miracle*. The meaning of this is debated by Rashi and *Tosafos*. Perhaps the intent is that women were involved in the previous miracles that took place with the oil, in the days of Eliyahu and Elisha.

The wife of Ovadiah was a poor widow. It is remarkable that she didn't ask Elisha for help until her creditor threatened to take her sons as slaves. Her creditor was Yehoram ben Achav, an apostate Jew, and it was her fear that her sons would be led to apostasy that brought her to ask for help. Thus, the miracle oil of Chanukah was rooted in a mother's *mesirus nefesh* for *chinuch*.

The Gemara (Shabbos 23b), according to some texts,<sup>6</sup> states: *הָרִגִּיל בְּנֵר חֲנוּכָה הוּיִן לִיה בְּנִים תַּלְמִידֵי חַכְמִים* – *One who is diligent with ner Chanukah will have sons who will be talmidei chachamim*. Just as the previous miracle performed with the oil was for *chinuch*, so did the miracle of Chanukah occur to

The light of mitzvas ner Chanukah, when fulfilled in holiness and purity, contains a special segulah to be mechanech one's children on the proper path.

enable Yidden to raise *gitteh kinder*. The pasuk (Yeshayah 38:19) says, *חַי הוּא יוֹדֵךְ כְּמוֹנֵי הַיּוֹם, אָב לְבָנִים יוֹדֵיעַ אֶל אִמְתְּךָ* – *A living person, a living person, he shall thank you, as I do today. A father can make Your truth known to children*. The *gematria* of *חַי חַי* is thirty-six, the number of *lecht* we light throughout Chanukah – through which a father can make

6 See *Behag, Hilchos Chanukah* 9; *Rabbeinu Chananel; Meiri; Ran; Rosh* 13

*Your truth known to children.* The light of *mitzvas ner Chanukah*, when fulfilled in holiness and purity, contains a special *segulah* to be *mechanech* one's children on the proper path. This can be read into the *brachah* of *she'asa nissim*, שעשה – the *nissim* of yesteryear continue into our times, since Chanukah is a time of relaying our *chinuch* to the next generation.

The pasuk (Tehillim 119:105) states, נֵר לְרַגְלֵי דְבַרְךָ – *Your word is a lamp for my feet.* The Sfas Emes<sup>7</sup> explains that רַגְלֵי refers to a low *madreigah*, just as the feet are the lowest part of one's body, touching the earth, and are most prone to habit (הרגל) and base nature. Through the נֵר

of Chanukah, one's 'feet' can be elevated, lifting him out of his lowliness. Indeed, the *Menorah* is supposed to be placed three *tefachim* above the ground — which represents a halachic separation from the ground.<sup>8</sup>

There is another lesson in נֵר לְרַגְלֵי. The Gemara (Eiruvin 70b) says that a son is like his father's leg. When we heed Chazal's directive and are רגיל בנר, carrying the lesson of Chanukah into the whole year by lifting our feet above the mundaneness of the ground, our 'legs' – our children – will be uplifted as well, and we will merit to be *mechanech* them on the proper *Yiddishe* path.

(נר א' דחנוכה תשפ"ב – מאמר ב)

## Chanukah Collection

*Sefarim* point out that חנוכה shares the same letters as 'ח' הוכן— *eight [days] were prepared.* Let us share a beautiful allusion in this.

The Imrei Emes explains<sup>9</sup> the background of the flask of oil discovered by the *Chashmona'im*. Many years earlier, the *kohanim*

prepared to fill a flask with oil for the menorah—a routine task. They poured in the prescribed amount, yet the flask did not fill. Intrigued, they poured in the same amount again. Still, the flask was not full. This was repeated again and again. Finally, after eight times, the flask

7 See מ"ד ה' המצוה, תרנ"ט ד"ה מזוזה, תרל"א ליל ה' בשם החי' הרי"מ

8 See *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 671:6

9 See *Likutei Yehudah, Chanukah; Michtavei Torah*, 12

was full. Realizing the significance of this, the *kohen gadol* affixed his seal to the flask, and it was hidden away until a time when it would be needed. At the time of the *Chashmona'im*, the Yidden felt an intense longing to kindle the menorah with pure oil, and so it was revealed that such oil had been prepared and stowed away for them.

This contains an important lesson. We do not always feel that we have the ability to serve Hashem properly. But we must know that the *kochos* are already there, stowed away for us. All that is necessary is a strong desire on our part to serve Hashem with purity.

Chanukah has the same letters as הוֹכֵחַ, because that is its essence and message: the Jewish people strove to serve Hashem with purity, so they found eight days' worth of oil prepared and waiting for them, allowing them to serve Hashem in the best way possible.



The Gemara (Shabbos 23a) states: נשים חייבות בנר חנוכה, שאף הן היו באותו הנס—*Women are obligated to kindle Chanukah lights, because they too were part of the miracle.* The

*Rishonim* disagree on the meaning of “they too were part of the miracle.” The Rashbam<sup>10</sup> explains that the miracle of Chanukah occurred through a woman, i.e., Yehudis, who killed a Greek general. *Tosafos*<sup>11</sup> argues that this does not fit with the Gemara’s language, since “הן—*they too*” implies that women were not central to the miracle, but accessory to it.

The more acutely we feel our inadequacy in *ruchniyus*, the greater a connection we can achieve to the *yom tov* and salvation of Chanukah.

Why are women only secondary in the Chanukah miracle? The Sfas Emes teaches<sup>12</sup> that the salvation of Chanukah applied to each person varyingly. When the *Yevanim* outlawed observance of mitzvos,

10 Pesachim 108b

11 Ibid

12 See Chanukah 5641 s.v. Chazal

there were disparate reactions. Some people inwardly rejoiced: now that they were unable to keep the mitzvos, they would finally be free of them. Others felt pained by the situation. Yet others felt as if a part of themselves were torn off; they simply could not live like this. Because of those who could not tolerate living without mitzvos, Hashem performed the Chanukah miracle. Each person was positively impacted by the salvation in accordance with his former level of pain.

The three *mitzvos* the *Yevanim* outlawed were *Shabbos*, *Rosh Chodesh*, and *milah*. *Shabbos* applies to men and women equally, both in its requirements and its prohibitions. The same is true of *Rosh Chodesh*.<sup>13</sup> *Milah*, however, does not apply to women at all. Since they were not affected personally by the prohibition against *milah*, they were pained by the *tzarah* to a lesser degree than men. Because of this, they experienced a smaller degree of the miracle. Thus, *they too were part of the miracle*—to a lesser extent.

This concept applies to us, as well: the more acutely we feel our inadequacy in *ruchniyus*, the greater a connection we can achieve to the *yom tov* and salvation of Chanukah.

(בנאות דשא – וישב-ימי החנוכה תשכ"ג)



*Al Hanissim* begins by describing the miraculous victory of the *Chashmona'im*. It continues, ואחר כך באו בניך לדביר ביתך, ופינו את היכלך, וטהרו את מקדשך, והדליקו נרות בחצרות—*And afterwards, Your children came to Your holy abode, and cleaned out Your Sanctuary, purified Your Beis Hamikdash, and kindled lights in Your holy courtyards.*

Why are the events broken up at this point, so that what occurred beforehand is “before,” and henceforth is “afterwards”?<sup>14</sup> If anything, the institution of Chanukah (described later in *Al Hanissim*) should be termed “afterwards,” since it occurred only the following year.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, the expression “ואחר כך” is very unusual in *tefillah*.

*Bnei Yissaschar*<sup>16</sup> points out another anomaly. Earlier in *Al Hanissim*, the Jewish nation is described as עמך—*Your*

13 Actually, *Rosh Chodesh* applies to women to a greater degree than to men, as it is considered a *yom tov* for them (see Rashi, *Megillah* 22b).

14 See *Sfas Emes*, 5640 s.v. *B'nusach*

15 *Shabbos* 21b

16 *Ma'amar* 4 no. 87

nation, Yisrael. Why does it change here, referring to them as “Your children”?

Let us recount a well-known parable of the Midrash.<sup>17</sup> A father once took a stroll with his young child on his shoulders. As they walked, they passed an acquaintance of the father. The child called out to him, “Have you seen my father anywhere?” Incensed, the father shouted, “You ride on my shoulders and ask where I am? I will toss you down and make you vulnerable to the enemy!” The Midrash explains that in the same way, Amalek attacked Bnei Yisrael just as they questioned Hashem’s Presence in their midst.<sup>18</sup> Through their miraculous victory over Amalek, Bnei Yisrael became aware once more that Hashem was protecting them as His child.

At the time of Chanukah, too, the Jews reached this realization; both through the miraculous victory

itself, and through Hashem’s love which they felt through the miracle.

We may now understand the wording of *Al Hanissim*. The Jewish people waged war and were miraculously victorious. *Afterwards*, upon contemplating this, they gained clarity that they were Hashem’s children, Who held them aloft as a child riding his father’s shoulders. As *Hashem’s children*,<sup>19</sup> they came to the *Beis Hamikdash*, and felt emboldened to *clean out the Heichal and purify the Beis Hamikdash and kindle lights in the holy courtyards*.

What is the lesson for us? When we truly feel that *בְּנֵי־מִתְנָם לֵה’*—*You are children to Hashem, your G-d (Devarim 14:1)*, we become empowered to beautify Hashem’s *Mikdash* that is ourselves, and to kindle the lamp of Hashem, the *Yiddishe neshamah*.

(בנאות דשא – ימי החנוכה תשכ"א)

## Oil Heist

It is told that in his younger years, the Divrei Shmuel of Slonim once went to watch his grandfather, the

Yesod Ha’avodah, light the menorah on Erev Shabbos Chanukah. The Divrei Shmuel had prepared his own

17 *Shemos Rabbah* 26:2, cited by *Bnei Yissaschar*, *ibid*

18 הֲיִשׁ ה' בְּקִרְבָּנוּ אִם אֵין?—*Is Hashem among us or not? (Shemos 17:7)*.

19 See *Sfas Emes*, 5642 s.v. *B'nusach*

menorah at home, and planned to return and light it before Shabbos. Arriving home, he found that a guest had lit his menorah—and he did not have time before Shabbos to prepare more *neiros*. Keeping his calm, he said, “The same Hashem Who commanded us to light Chanukah candles also commanded us not to become angry.” He thus greeted Shabbos joyously.

This story is told for the greatness in *avodas Hashem* it demonstrates. Nonetheless, we must analyze it as Torah.<sup>20</sup> Was this the proper course of action? After all, it would seem the guest did not fulfill his mitzvah, as *ner Chanukah* cannot be fulfilled with stolen oil.<sup>21</sup>

Why may *ner Chanukah* not be performed with stolen oil? First, based on the principle of *mitzvah haba'ah b'aveirah* (a mitzvah performed through an *aveirah*).<sup>22</sup> Second, *ner Chanukah* has a requirement of *דבר שאינו שלו*—of yours, just like *daled minim*,

so that one must own the materials to fulfill the mitzvah.<sup>23</sup>

If, indeed, the guest did not fulfill the mitzvah, and thus the flames were not *neiros Chanukah*, it would seem the Divrei Shmuel should have extinguished them and relit the *neiros* himself. Presumably, there was plenty of oil left, since on Erev Shabbos Chanukah one must prepare more oil than other nights.

Perhaps, with the guest's act of lighting the menorah, he caused the *neiros* to become *assur b'hana'ah* (prohibited for benefit) as kindled *neiros Chanukah*—and through this *shinui* (change) to the oil, he acquired it. If so, it was considered the guest's oil, and he fulfilled the mitzvah with it. Thus, the Divrei Shmuel didn't extinguish the *neiros*.

But there is a rule that אין אדם שולו אוסר דבר שאינו שלו—a person cannot forbid something that doesn't belong to him. So how could the guest make

20 It has been pointed out that a different version of the story is recorded in *Ya'ir Ohr* of Rav Y. Schwatzman (p. 313), whereby the menorah was simply overturned. If so, our discussion is only theoretical.

21 See *She'elos U'Teshuvos Shoel U'Meishiv, Telisa'i*, 349, cited in *Mishnah Berurah*, 673:2

22 In our case, this may be explored from two angles: A. Does *mitzvah haba'ah b'aveirah* apply to *mitzvos d'Rabbanan*? (see *Sdei Chemed*, vol. 4, *Ma'areches Mem*, 77:7; *She'elos U'Teshuvos Eretz Tzvi, O.C.* 52.) B. If a mitzvah is performed through an *aveirah* accidentally (as may have been the case here), does that invalidate the mitzvah? (see *Chasam Sofer, Sukkah* 30a; Maharam Schick, *O.C.* 295.) If we combine these two questions, it might constitute a *sefeik sefeika*, which means the guest fulfilled his mitzvah (at least in terms of *mitzvah haba'ah b'aveirah*).

23 See Ran, *Pesachim* 4a (*dapei haRif*); *Pri Megadim, Eishel Avraham*, 679:1; *Sdei Chemed, Chanukah* 15; *Beis Yitzchak, Y.D.* end of 142

the oil *assur b'hana'ah*, when it didn't belong to him beforehand?

We may suggest that this is, indeed, possible. The Rashba<sup>24</sup> writes that if a person steals an object and then declares it *hekdes*, it is prohibited as *hekdes*. It hadn't been his until then, but he acquired it by *shinui* through making it *hekdes*—which, at the same time, enabled him to declare it *hekdes* to start with (a concept known as *ba'in k'echad*<sup>25</sup>). The same can be said here: by lighting the *neiros* for the mitzvah, the guest effectuated a *shinui* of *issur hana'ah*—which, at the same time, enabled his acquirement of the oil. He thus fulfilled the mitzvah.

Yet, although the guest created a *shinui* in the oil, he (presumably) didn't perform an act of *kinyan* on it, e.g., by lifting it up or placing it in his own property. So how could he acquire it?

Granted, R. Akiva Eiger writes<sup>26</sup> that a thief can acquire an item through *shinui* alone, even without an act of *kinyan*, but that may not apply here. R. Akiva Eiger says this where a physical change—e.g., *shechitah*—is made to the stolen object. In our case, the change is

halachic—that the oil becomes prohibited through the mitzvah. And, as above, this halachic status is subject to the principle of *ba'in k'echad*. As we shall see, *ba'in k'echad* may not extend to enabling a new *kinyan gezeilah*.

The *Acharonim* explain<sup>27</sup> that in the above case of the Rashba, the thief had already performed an act of *kinyan* (such as lifting up) on the stolen item; only, his obligation to return it prevented his *kinyan* from taking effect. Thus, when he declares it *hekdes*, the principle of *ba'in k'echad* allows this “prevention” to be bypassed, so that the acquisition is completed.

The *Acharonim* write that this is the only way *ba'in k'echad* works: it can bypass a “prevention” to a *kinyan*. It cannot, however, facilitate the creation of a new *kinyan*.

If so, even in accordance with R. Akiva Eiger, the guest's use of stolen oil could not constitute a *kinyan gezeilah* in the absence of an actual act of *kinyan*, because *ba'in k'echad* cannot create a new *kinyan*. Accordingly, the guest did not acquire the oil, and did not fulfill his mitzvah. So why didn't the Divrei

24 *Gittin* 55b

25 See *Gittin* 77b

26 *Kesubos* 34b

27 See *Yalkut Shiurim, Kiddushin, Mahadura Basra*, 20:2 s.v. *Omnam*

Shmuel extinguish and relight the menorah?

Perhaps the Divrei Shmuel was *mochel* the guest for his theft of the oil, and thus, the guest fulfilled his obligation. This seems counterintuitive, since the halachah is that עושה מצוה—*the mitzvah is performed by the kindling*, at which time the oil didn't belong to the guest. However, one could argue that if a person possesses kindled *neiros* that he lit—even if at the time he lit them they were not his—he has fulfilled the mitzvah. If so, the Divrei Shmuel's *mechilah* of the

guest's theft would enable the guest to fulfill his mitzvah.

But could the Divrei Shmuel grant his guest *mechilah*, at the expense of which he would be unable to fulfill his own mitzvah? Wouldn't his own responsibilities take precedence, in keeping with חייו קודמין—*your life takes precedence*?<sup>28</sup> We may suggest that since if he wouldn't grant *mechilah*, the guest's *berachah* on lighting the *neiros* would be considered *l'vatalah* (in vain), the Divrei Shmuel was permitted to be *mochel* him, so that his mitzvah would be deemed valid.

(בגאות דשא – ימי החנוכה תשפ"א)

## The Miracles Live On

The Gemara (Taanis 21a) tells that Nachum Ish Gam Zu was blind in both eyes, had no hands or feet, and was sitting in an unstable house. His *talmidim*, fearing the house would collapse, wanted to evacuate him and then remove the household items. Nachum instructed them to first remove the items and afterwards take him out, explaining that as long as he was in the house, it would not collapse. And so it was: they removed the household items,

then evacuated Nachum, and then the house gave way.

The Shaagas Aryeh, in *Gevuras Ari*, asks: the Gemara (Shabbos 32a) warns that one should not place himself in danger and rely on a miracle. A miracle might not occur; and if it does occur, it will be at the expense of some of his *zechuyos*. So why did Nachum Ish Gam Zu rely on a miracle, asking to be left in the house until the household items had been removed?

28 See *Yalkut Shiurim, Sugyos 16:7*.

*Gevuras Ari* answers that one may not *place himself* in danger and rely on a miracle, but if a *tzaddik finds himself* in a dangerous setting, his rescue will not be at the expense of his *zechuyos*, and he may even extend his need for rescue. Since Nachum had already been placed in the unstable house and was being miraculously protected, he didn't need to hurry out.

Chanukah of today's day is a continuation of the miracles of yesteryear – בימים ההם בזמן הזה. We need to further extend the *ha'aros* (spiritual illumination) of Chanukah, bringing them with us into the rest of the year. In fact, this is the purpose of Chanukah. The pasuk (Tehillim 60:6) states, נִתְּתָה לִירְאִיָּה נֵס לְהַתְנוּסָה מִפְּנֵי קִשְׁטֵי סֶלָה – *To those who fear You, You gave a banner (נס) to be raised high, for truth's sake, forever.* The Sfas Emes<sup>29</sup> explains: a person who improves his ways as a result of the miracles we experienced on Chanukah might consider it a 'favor' for Hashem. This is a mistake. נִתְּתָה – the reason that Hashem gave us a נס was so that we would raise ourselves higher, לְהַתְנוּסָה. Just as Hashem raised us

above nature, so it is expected that we raise ourselves above *our* nature. The pasuk concludes, מִפְּנֵי קִשְׁטֵי סֶלָה – *for truth's sake, forever.* The Sfas Emes explains that truth is eternal; falsehood is short-lived. The impact of a *nes* – the improvements one makes in oneself – must be everlasting.

The Sfas Emes writes,<sup>30</sup> “Just as nature was changed for Bnei Yisrael's sake, their own souls were certainly changed as well.” This means that although from Hashem's standpoint there is no difference between a change in nature and a change in the souls of Bnei Yisrael, we must internalize that if nature was altered for us, we can – and must – overcome our own nature, abandoning our habits which bind us to *gashmiyus*.

We say in *Al Hanissim* of Chanukah, ופינו את היכלך וטהרו את – *They cleared out Your Heichal and purified Your Mikdash and lit lamps in Your holy courtyards.* The Chasam Sofer<sup>31</sup> explains that when the *Chashmona'im* were ready to light the Menorah, the *Heichal* had not

29 5636 ד"ה בברכת 5645 ד"ה במאמר, 5641 ד"ה כתיב, ליל אד"ה חתיב, and other locations

30 Pesach 5646 במדרש 5646 ד"ה

31 *Derashos* for Chanukah 5592, p. 67 column 1

yet been cleared of impurity and of the idols that had been placed there. Until it was cleaned up, they lit the Menorah *בְּחִצְרוֹת קֹדֶשׁ*, in the courtyard of the Beis Hamikdash. Based on this, he explains what the *nes* of the first day was: when a fire is lit outdoors, the windy conditions cause the flame to consume more fuel than an indoor fire. The *Chashmona'im* only had enough oil for one night when lit indoors, and yet, the Menorah – outdoors – remained lit the entire night.

We are surrounded today by many different winds, each one seeking to disrupt the continuity of our *avodas Hashem*. We must take to heart the miracle of Chanukah, where the winds could not disrupt the flames of the Menorah; we must keep this miracle alive. If we will elevate ourselves and not be distracted by the winds around us – whether technology-related or one's personal struggles – it will truly be a fulfillment of *יָגֵס לְהִתְנוּסָה*.

(בבאור דשא – ויגש תשפ"ב)

## Finding the Pach Shemen Within

Our parshah begins (Bereishis 41:1): *וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים וּפְרָעָה חֲלֹם – It happened at the end of two years to the day: Pharaoh was dreaming.* The Ohr Hachaim notes that *וּפְרָעָה חֲלֹם* is in the present tense, literally, *Pharaoh is dreaming*. He explains that Pharaoh had the same dream every night for two years but forgot it every morning. On this day Pharaoh at last remembered his dream, and therefore sought its interpretation. This is also why the pasuk says *מִקֵּץ שְׁנָתַיִם יָמִים*, literally, *at the end of two years of days*; the dream was repeated every day for two years.

But what was the purpose in the two years' recurrence of Pharaoh's dream?

The Baal Shem Tov was once traveling in a desolate region with R. Mendel, the *maggid* of Bar. At one point, the *maggid* told the Baal Shem Tov that he felt dangerously thirsty and desperately needed water. The Baal Shem Tov replied, "Do you believe with absolute faith that Hashem can provide us water in this deserted locale?" After a few minutes of deep thought, the *maggid* replied that he did. Suddenly, a gentile passerby came into view,

carrying two pails of water on his shoulders. He gladly gave the two *tzaddikim* to drink.

The Baal Shem Tov asked him, “Why are carrying water through this deserted area?” The man replied, “I’m not sure myself. My master, the *poritz*, has gone mad. He ordered me to bring him water from a certain far-off well, three days’ journey from home. I’m now on my way back to him, and my route passes through this area.”

Elucidating what had just occurred, the Baal Shem Tov explained that Hashem prepares salvation in advance, so that it is ready as soon as the person is worthy of it – when he exercises *emunah* and *bitachon*.

R. Pinchas of Koretz<sup>32</sup> explains the *Ohr Hachaim* based on this story. Chazal<sup>33</sup> say that Yosef was punished for asking the *sar hamashkim* to mention him to Pharaoh, which displayed an imperfection in *bitachon*. We have no concept of Yosef’s lofty *madreigah*, but we are taught that he needed to improve his trust in Hashem.<sup>34</sup> He would be imprisoned until his *bitachon* reached the

proper level. From that time, Pharaoh began having his peculiar dream every night, so that when Yosef reached the proper level of *bitachon*, his salvation could occur immediately.

The miracle of Chanukah, as well, was prepared well in advance. The Imrei Emes teaches that one day, many years before the miracle

Just as Klal Yisrael’s desire for closeness to Hashem led to a nes with the oil flask, so can the ‘flask’ – the body – of a Yid experience nissim if he longs to come close to Hashem.

of Chanukah, those tasked with preparing oil for the Menorah were doing their assigned task. They prepared the amount of oil needed for one night and poured it into a

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32 *Imrei Pinchas*

33 *Bereishis Rabbah* 89:3

34 See *Likutei Harim*

flask of that capacity. Inexplicably, the flask didn't fill up. They again poured in the same amount of oil, with the same result. After pouring in the appropriate amount of oil eight times, the flask was finally full. Realizing that something extraordinary had happened, the *kohen gadol* affixed his seal to the flask,<sup>35</sup> and it was hidden away. Many years later, the *Chashmona'im* searched the Beis Hamikdash for pure oil with which to light the Menorah. They could have used oil that was *tamei*, since most of Klal Yisrael was *tamei* at the time — but they yearned fiercely to light the Menorah *b'taharah*. It was then revealed to them that a special flask of oil had been prepared for this occasion, and it burned for eight days. Chanukah contains the letters ה' הוּכַן - *prepared for eight [days]*. Because the Yidden strove to serve Hashem in purity, their salvation stood prepared for them.

The same holds true on the individual level, as well. The Midrash<sup>36</sup> states that Jews are compared to olive oil, which doesn't mix with other liquids and always rises to the top. The Sfas

Emes<sup>37</sup> explains that the *neshamah* of a Jew is compared to oil. The Gemara (Berachos 10a) states that a person's *neshamah* fills his whole body and gives it life. Yet although it invigorates the whole body, it remains apart. We say (in *Asher Yatzar*) ומפליא לעשות, specifically about the wondrous synthesis of physical body and spiritual soul — together, yet separate.

The soul and the body can be compared to the oil and the flask that contains it. Although they stand apart from each other, the Chanukah miracle took place not only with oil, but with a כַּךְ שֶׁמֶן - *a flask of oil*. Just as Klal Yisrael's desire for closeness to Hashem led to a *nes* with the oil flask, so can the 'flask' - the body - of a Yid experience *nissim* if he longs to come close to Hashem.

The pasuk (Tehillim 107:9) states: כִּי הִשְׁבִּיעַ נַפְשִׁי שִׁקְקָה - *For He satisfied the yearning soul*. My father noted<sup>38</sup> that the first letters of נַפְשִׁי הִשְׁבִּיעַ נַפְשִׁי spell כהה. The miracles of Chanukah, both the battle victories and the *nes* of the Menorah, occurred על ידי כהה - *through Your holy kohanim*. It was their נַפְשִׁי שִׁקְקָה, their pining to serve Hashem in

35 See *Likutei Yehudah* to Chanukah; *Michtvei Torah* 12

36 *Shemos Rabbah* 36:1

37 Tetzaveh 5661 ד"ה עוד במדרש

38 *Pnei Menachem*, Naso p. 61

purity, which brought about the *yeshuos* and the miracles.

My father added that the last letters of *שְׁקֵקָה נִכְּשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעַ כִּי* spell *עשיה* – action. Every Yid's *neshamah* experiences spiritual yearning, but it is sometimes mistaken for this-worldly passions, resulting in pursuits that counter *kedushah*. It takes discernment to discover the *neshamah's* true call. One who heeds its call and seeks closeness with Hashem will find that a *koach* of *taharah* has already been set aside for him. His *שְׁקֵקָה נִכְּשׁ* will lead him to *עשיה*, proper conduct.

The Gemara (Taanis 25a) states: *מי שאמר לשמן וידלוק הוא יאמר לחומץ וידלוק – the One Who commanded oil to burn will command vinegar to burn.* On Chanukah, Hashem was revealed as *מי שאמר לשמן וידלוק*, commanding oil to burn supernaturally. So too, Hashem can be *יאמר לחומץ וידלוק*. Even one who has sinned and is like vinegar can ignite the flame of his soul, revealing the great potential of his pure *neshamah* and improving his ways.

May Hashem help that we merit to illuminate the darkness, fulfilling the will of Hashem in the proper way.

(מקץ – שבת חנוכה תשפ"ב, ליל ש"ק מאמר א)

## Of Days and Dreams

After Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's dream, he added (Bereishis 41:33): *וְעַתָּה יִרְא כְּרַעַה אִישׁ נְבוֹן וְחָכָם וְיִשִּׁיתָהוּ עַל אֲרָץ מִצְרַיִם – Now let Pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt.* Yosef had not been asked for advice, only to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Why was he offering suggestions? Also, what did Pharaoh find so impressive about Yosef's idea, to the point that he exclaimed (41:38): *הֲנִמְצָא כָּזֶה אִישׁ – Could we find*

*another like him – a man in whom is the spirit of G-d?*

The Dzikover Rebbe in *Imrei Noam* answers by pointing out another anomaly. When Pharaoh related his dream to Yosef, he said (41:21): *וְתִבְאֵנָה אֶל קִרְבָּנָה וְלֹא נִוְדַע כִּי בָאוּ, אֶל קִרְבָּנָה – They (the robust cows) came inside them (the scrawny cows), but it was not apparent that they had come inside them.* Yosef's interpretation explained this as (41:31) *וְלֹא יוֹדַע הַשְּׁבִיעַ – And the*

*abundance will be unknown in the land, in the face of the subsequent famine.*<sup>39</sup> But in the Torah's original narration of the dream (41:1-4), this detail is not mentioned.

The Dzikover Rebbe explains that when Pharaoh asked his sorcerers to explain his dream, their interpretations accounted for every detail of the dream. Pharaoh knew these interpretations were incorrect, because as the Gemara (Berachos 55a) teaches, every dream contains an element of untruth. When Yosef concluded his interpretation with **וְעַתָּה יֵרָא פְּרַעַה אִישׁ נְבוֹן וְהָכֵם וְלֹא יִלְא** that the detail of **וְלֹא יִלְא** was the untruth of his dream. Its interpretation, **וְלֹא יִלְא** would not occur, provided Pharaoh would appoint someone to oversee the necessary preparations during the years of plenty. If Pharaoh followed this advice, the good years would not be forgotten.

Yosef gave this advice because it was crucial to his interpretation – allowing this one part of the dream to be left untrue. But since this detail of the dream was untrue, the Torah's narration of the dream leaves it out.

Seeing that Yosef had the ability to discern between truth and falsehood, Pharaoh declared, **הֲנִמְצָא כָּזֶה אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ אֱלֹקִים בּוֹ**.

All Dzikover *vertlach* are beautiful, but this one in particular carries a deep lesson. The world we live in is (Iyov 20:8) **כְּחֵלוֹם יַעֲוֶיךָ** – *like a dream that soars away*. Sefarim interpret the pasuk (Tehillim 126:1) **בְּשׁוּב ה' אֶת שִׁיבַת צִיּוֹן הֵייוּנו כְּחֵלְמִים** to mean that in the future, when we will have the proper perspective and outlook, we will look back at our lives and say, **"הֵייוּנו כְּחֵלְמִים"** – it was all a dream." But it is up to us to make the most of our dream; will it remain meaningless, or will it be of consequence? Will we use our time in the Lobby to prepare for our entry into the Ballroom?

The story is told that after the Second World War, the Ponevezher Rav, Rav Yosef Shlomo Kahaneman, shared his dream of building magnificent Torah institutions. People expressed their skepticism; at the time, it seemed flatly impossible. The Ponevezher Rav said, "People call me a dreamer. Yes, I am dreaming. But I am not sleeping!" This remark is beautifully relevant to our own dream-life in this world. We must remain awake

39 As explained by Rashi.

and aware about what is meaningful and what is an 'untruth.' Then we will focus our time and energy toward the spiritual realities that will accompany us to *Olam Haba*, at the conclusion of our dream.

Chanukah in particular can provide inspiration toward using our lives properly. The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) records a debate whether we are to increase or decrease the number of candles we light each day of Chanukah. Beis Shammai says that we decrease each day, according to the number of days remaining to Chanukah, and Beis Hillel says that we increase, like the number of days of Chanukah that have passed (according to one explanation in the Gemara). Rashi states that according to Beis Hillel, the present day is considered a day that has passed. Why is this? Doesn't today still stretch out promisingly before us?<sup>40</sup>

When we get to the next world, we will realize that indeed, each day of our lives carried enormous potential, but any moment of it we did not use for Torah and mitzvos is lost forever. But in this world, we think that since we can still plan the remainder of our day, it is still

available to us. We must realize that our days race by like a speeding train, and whoever is not in a rush to grab the moment for action will find his days and his life passing him by. Although he might still be planning his day, in actuality, it has already passed.

In this world, where life is כְּחֵלֶם (chayim), the halachah follows Beis

Our days race by  
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Hillel's opinion that we increase candles each night, counting that day as past. We must internalize the message it carries of the urgency of time. Only this way can we navigate our 'dream' without getting lost in its falsehoods, ably discerning between matters of little consequence and those which can earn us eternity. If we don't, our days are all days past.

40 Indeed, when Beis Shammai counts the days remaining, the present day is considered remaining.

The Gemara teaches us another reason to increase the candles each night: מעלין בקודש ואין מורידין – *We ascend in kedushah, and we do not descend.* During this time in particular, we must increase our energies, ascending the heights of *kedushah*.

The Gemara relates: שני זקנים היו בצידן, אחד עשה כבית שמאי ואחד עשה כדברי בית הלל – *There were two elders in Tzidan; one did as Beis Shammai, and one did as the words of Beis Hillel.* The *mefarshim* wonder, why

does the Gemara refer to the second elder as doing “as the words of Beis Hillel,” while the first simply did “as Beis Shammai”?<sup>41</sup>

In light of the above, we may suggest that the second elder realized that Beis Hillel’s opinion is relevant not only to *ner Chanukah*, but to all of life. He conducted himself “like the words of Beis Hillel,” living his entire life with an eye focused on the days passing by, making the most of every moment.

(מקץ – שבת חנוכה תשפ"ב, ס"ג מאמר א)

## Spreading the Light

The Gemara (Shabbos 23a) states that one whose courtyard has entrances on two of its sides must light *ner Chanukah* at each one. This is to avoid suspicion (*chashad*); a passerby who sees an entrance without *neiros* may suspect that the homeowner didn’t light *neiros* at all.

*Beis Yosef*<sup>42</sup> contrasts this to the halachah that one passing a *beis haknesses* must enter, so that others should not suspect him of avoiding the *beis haknesses*. In that case, it is permitted if the *shul*

has another entrance,<sup>43</sup> because people will assume that he will use that entrance. Why don’t we use the same logic with regard to *ner Chanukah*? One should not need to light at both entrances; if a passerby will see an entrance without *neiros*, he will assume that the owner lit at the other entrance.

R. Shlomo Kluger, in *Chochmas Shlomo*, answers that since one earns reward for every step he takes walking to shul (*sechar pesios*), if someone walks past the entrance

41 See *B’neos Deshe*, Mikeitz 5782 p. 2

42 *Orach Chaim* 671:8

43 See *Berachos* 8b

to a shul, people will assume that he intends to earn more reward by walking to the further entrance. This is comparable to the halachah that if one has two shuls where he might daven, he should daven at the further one so that he may earn more reward.<sup>44</sup> However, this logic does not apply to *ner Chanukah*, and so one must light at both entrances.

In fact, however, some *poskim* maintain that although one should choose to go to the further shul in order to increase *sechar pesios*, if he passes the closer shul, he should daven there, in keeping with the principle that אין מעבירין על המצוות – one may not pass over a *mitzvah*. Accordingly, one should also not pass by one entrance of a shul in order to enter a further one and earn more reward. If so, *Beis Yosef's* question remains; just as one must light *neiros Chanukah* near both entrances of his courtyard to avoid *chashad*, one should also not be allowed to pass by an entrance of a shul without entering.

Additionally, Rav Shlomo Kluger's answer would seem to be at odds with an opinion of *Maharshag*.<sup>45</sup> *Maharshag* was asked why one who

is called to the Torah is required to take the shortest route;<sup>46</sup> why not take a longer route to increase *sechar pesios*? He answers (in one approach) that one only increases *sechar pesios* by walking to a further destination. If one could reach his destination via a short route but chooses to take a longer route, he does not earn more reward. The same would seem to hold true regarding two entrances

Pirumei nissa  
is achieved by  
spreading spiritual  
light to passersby  
who witness the  
mitzvah.

of a shul; one would not earn extra reward by intentionally using a further entrance.

However, there may be a difference between walking circuitously to the *bimah* and using a further entrance to a shul – in the latter case, the actual *land route* is longer;<sup>47</sup> thus, perhaps one would

44 As ruled by *Magen Avraham* (90:22)

45 *Orach Chaim* 27

46 See *Shulchan Aruch* 141:7

47 See *She'elos u'Teshuvos Chasam Sofer, Orach Chaim* 29

increase *sechar pesios* by using the further entrance.

*Gur Aryeh Yehudah*<sup>48</sup> offers another approach to *Beis Yosef's* question. One can only enter a shul at one entrance, so if a person doesn't use one, it will be assumed that he had reason to use the other. But one *can* light *ner Chanukah* at both entrances of his courtyard. Thus, if he doesn't light at one, people may suspect that he didn't light at the other, either. He is therefore required to light at both entrances.

This is difficult to understand. It is true, he has a way of avoiding suspicion by lighting at both entrances. But why would people be suspicious if he doesn't light at one entrance? They should assume that he lit at the other! Apparently, it is human nature to confirm one's suspicion of another by the fact that he did not take measures to avoid suspicion.

*Imrei Emes*<sup>49</sup> cites *Sfas Emes*, who answered in another way. If one doesn't light at one of his entrances, people might suspect that he didn't

light at the other either, since the main idea of *ner Chanukah* is to publicize the miracle (*pirsumei nissa*). This does not apply, however, to *tefillah*, so one is allowed to pass by one entrance of a shul.

Why is the obligation of *pirsumei nissa* reason for special concern of *chashad*? It seems that if *anybody* suspects that one did not light *ner Chanukah*, one's *pirsumei nissa* is lacking.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, *She'elos u'Teshuvos Pri Hasadeh*<sup>51</sup> uses this logic to answer *Beis Yosef's* question.

However, this explanation is counterintuitive. The purpose of *pirsumei nissa* is to spread awareness of the miracle, allowing whoever passes to internalize it and the mitzvos attached to it. So if a passerby is already knowledgeable about the mitzvah – to the point where he suspects the homeowner of not fulfilling it – it cannot be considered a lacking in *pirsumei nissa*.

*Sefarim* say that one who witnesses a spiritual failing in another will himself be 'cooled down' in *ruchniyus*. This is how

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48 From R. Aryeh Leib Teumim (Shu"t), p. 114

49 *Likutim*, Shabbos 23a

50 Although this explanation does not fit perfectly into the words attributed to the *Sfas Emes* by *Imrei Emes*, the *Imrei Emes* himself did not write his *sefer*, and it is known that its language is not precise.

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*Maharil Diskin*<sup>52</sup> explains the obligation to judge another favorably.<sup>53</sup> If one assumes fault in another, he is effectively exposing himself to a sin, and this will cause him a spiritual downturn. It is said that the Avnei Nezer once witnessed someone being *mechallel Shabbos*. He remarked that had he witnessed one more instance of *chillul Shabbos*, he would not have been able to compose his *Eglei Tal* on *hilchos Shabbos*, because he would have lost sensitivity to Shabbos.

Because of this concept, Yidden are responsible for one another not only regarding reward and punishment in the next world, but in this world, too, our actions – both positive and negative – affect other Yidden.

Based upon this we may understand the Sfas Emes's approach to *Beis Yosef's* question. *Pirsumei nissa* is achieved by spreading spiritual light to passersby who witness the mitzvah. When a Yid passes a courtyard and does not see a *ner Chanukah* in its entranceway, the spiritual light that he should receive from the homeowner's mitzvah is diminished. This is the *chashad* that *Chazal* were concerned about.

For this reason, as well, the menorah is lit in shul, even though everyone will light it in their own homes. Fulfilling it together as a *tzibbur* provides great *pirsumei nissa*, in that it brings spiritual inspiration to each person, igniting in him the light of the mitzvah.

(בגאות דשא – וישב-ימי החנוכה תשפ"ג)

## A Climbing Peg to Rise Above the Mundane

Our Rebbes would say that Chanukah is “a yom tov in the weekdays.” On a basic level, Chanukah is a yom tov in which

(in contrast to other *yamim tovim*) labor is not prohibited. But, of course, there is much more depth to their words.

52 End of vol. 1

53 Besides the simple understanding that one must exercise *ayin tovah* (a positive eye) toward others and not view them with suspicion.

Tzefania Hanavi (2:4) prophesied about the days of Mashiach: ועקרין ותעקר, and *Ekrone* will be uprooted. The Gemara (Megillah 6a) elaborates: [*Ekrone*] is *Caesarea*, daughter<sup>54</sup> of *Edom*, which lies among the sand dunes (בין החולות). And it was 'a peg embedded'<sup>55</sup> (יתר תקועה) to *Yisrael* in the time of the Greek rule. And when the House of Chashmonai prevailed and defeated them, they called it the 'Captured Tower of Shir.'

However, as the Gemara continues, the victory of the Chashmonaim is not yet complete, for when Yerushalayim is destroyed, *Caesarea* is settled. Not until the times of Mashiach will we merit the fulfillment of the prophesy of Tzefania.

Why does the Gemara describe *Caesarea's* geography, 'among the sand dunes'? Do we care what the surrounding landscape looks like? The description serves no apparent practical purpose; it does not help identify the city, because sand dunes are quite common.

We introduce our explanation with the remarks of the Maharsha. The Gemara relates (Shabbos 31a) that someone came to Hillel one Friday

afternoon to test his patience by asking inane questions. One of his questions was, "Why are the eyes of Tarmudians rounded?" Hillel praised the question, and patiently explained to the man that since Tarmudians live among sand dunes (בין החולות), Hashem gave them rounded eyes so that sand won't get stuck in the corners of the eyelids.

The Maharsha expounds: the word חול also means the opposite of holiness, and so 'they live בין החולות' can read 'they live among the profane.' The Gemara in Yevamos (16b) tells us that the Tarmudians were the least fitting, of all nations of the world, to be accepted into the Jewish nation, because of their low level of morality and lack of holiness. We know holiness is found where boundaries of morality are found<sup>56</sup>; they had absolutely no boundaries of morality, and were, accordingly, described as 'living among the profane.' Likewise, the denizens of *Caesarea* lived 'among the profane'; they were immersed in the opposite of holiness, and thus were a thorn in the sides of the Jews.

This was exactly the goal of the Greeks: to surround and smother the

54 An idiom meaning an offshoot of Edom, the Roman empire. *Caesarea* was primarily a Greek and Roman city.

55 An idiom closely related in form and interpretation to, "A thorn in their side."

56 Rashi *Vayikra* 19:2, quoting Midrash *Vayikra Rabbah* 24:6

Yidden with the profane, to breach the barriers of holiness. This is why they decreed against the observance of Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh,<sup>57</sup> so the Jews would not have days of holiness to elevate them. And the House of Chashmonai, when at last they prevailed and defeated the Greeks, counterbalanced those inroads of the Greeks — not only by restoring Shabbos and Rosh Chodesh, but by adding a “Yom Tov in the weekdays,” to sanctify even days of יום טוב.

At the beginning of Parshas Vayeishev (37:1), Rashi remarks on the sequence of parshios: the history of the princes of Esav and their dwelling places is recorded at the very end of Parshas Vayishlach, immediately before the generations of Yaakov. Rashi quotes a parable from Midrash Tanchuma about a pearl that was lost in the sand (בין חול). Its owner sifts through the sand with a sieve until he finds the pearl; when he finds the pearl, he discards all of the pebbles from his hands, and keeps the pearl. This parable explains why the section of the Torah which deals with the princes of Esav appears just before the history of Yaakov’s children.

The pasuk does not elaborate on the settlements of Esav and on his generations, because as soon as the pearls are found — Avraham, Yitzchok, and Yaakov — the narrative becomes focused exclusively on them.

The Maharal<sup>58</sup> objects: The Torah begins Yaakov’s story in the earlier parshios. The pearl was still in Hashem’s hand; it never fell to the

This was exactly the goal of the Greeks: to surround and smother the Yidden with the profane, to breach the barriers of holiness.

sand — to borrow the terminology of the parable. According to the parable, then, the story of Esav should appear immediately after Parshas Toldos!

The Maharal explains that Yaakov himself is not mixed in the sand with Esav, and therefore the Torah tells us the story of Yaakov,

57 The basis of all Jewish holidays, which are marked on the calendar subject to the sanctification of the new moon.

58 Gur Aryeh, Bereishis 37:1.

himself, before the dwellings of Esav. However, the children of Yaakov would live among the sand. The pearl would get mixed with the stones in the sand. One might mistakenly believe that the story of the settlements of Yaakov's progeny and Esav's represents a shared destiny. Therefore, the Torah specifies that Esav had his own settlement. Once Hashem defined that distinction, and picked up the pearl, then He attended to the pearl exclusively and dropped the worthless stones. The pasuk deals with the settlements of Esav and then Yaakov, sifting through the sand until the pearl is found.

We live in this world surrounded by חול, the profane, the opposite of holiness. We cannot say that we have only the pearl, the pure *neshamah*, to attend to. We need to sift through the sand, and it is an arduous job, to dismiss the stones and the sand and keep the pearl. It is the labor of our lives, seeking the holiness among the mundane.

R. Tzadok said that the parable of the pearl is not only applicable to Yaakov and Esav, but to each one of us within our own selves. Sometimes we fall, we slip where we

should not have slipped... a spiritual challenge that we failed to meet. Sometimes we find ourselves on a lower level than we know we can and should be. We need to know that the *Yiddishe neshamah* is a pearl! When a pearl is lost, we don't throw up our hands in despair; its value is too great to ever be forsaken. We take a sieve and carefully, laboriously, discard the sand and stones, until we reveal the original pearl – the holy *Yiddishe neshamah*.

True, Caesarea was 'among the profane,' but on Chanukah there is a special power: the Chanukah lights are to burn עד דכליא ריגלא דתרמודאי, outlasting the influence<sup>59</sup> of the Tarmudians<sup>60</sup> ...who live among the profane. And the House of Chashmonai was able to defeat the Caesarean influence, to reintroduce holiness where it was previously evicted.

The Gemara's phrasing is noteworthy. Caesarea was 'a peg embedded,' and Rashi adds: *for the bad*. The יתך was embedded for the bad: a peg that is stuck in the ground, the earthiness and lowliness of this world. But there is a counterforce, a יתך which can be employed for the good. This idea is

59 Adaptation of the word ריגלא in the sense of "habit." One becomes desensitized to a force which is habitual, and therefore subject to its influence.

60 Shabbos 21b. This is the time frame given for the Chanukah lights to last. See there.

found in the following Yerushalmi  
(Berachos 4:1) —

*When Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya was appointed the nasi (exilarch), Rabbi Akiva was pained, and explained: "He [was appointed the leader] not because he is greater in Torah than I, but because he has greater lineage than I. Fortunate is a man whose forefathers have given him merit! Fortunate is a man who has a peg to rely<sup>61</sup> upon." What was the peg upon which Rabbi Elazar ben Azarya was able to hang upon? He was a tenth generation [descendant] of Ezra the Scribe.*

‘A peg to rely upon’ is a peg by which one can lift oneself, to be elevated “a tefach above the ground.”<sup>62</sup> A person wishes he could elevate himself, but it is hard, and he might lose hope. But if he has a peg above him, which he can grasp onto to lift himself up, he will be successful in elevating himself above the material and physical world.

This is the power of the days of Chanukah. The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) introduces Chanukah to us with the words יומי דחנוכה תמניא, *the eight days of Chanukah*. Notice the initial letters of those words: יתד.

We recite the brachah שְׁעֵשָׂה נִסִּים לָאֲבוֹתֵינוּ, *who performed miracles for our fathers*, because in the merit of our forefathers, we have a ‘climbing peg,’ a יתד to rely upon. Even בזמן הזה, in this day and age, we can elevate ourselves from the mundane, in the merit of our forefathers.

There is a halachah of שדה ארוחה, an inherited field. The Mishnah rules that any inherited field gets the halachic status accorded to such a field, regardless of the value of the field. *Whether one sanctifies [an inherited field] in ‘חולת המחוז’ or in the orchards of Sevseti,<sup>63</sup> he can redeem it at [the Torah’s set price for an inherited field].* Rabbeinu Gershom explains that חולת המחוז was an area which did not produce any fruit. Still, because it was an inheritance, it gets the value the Torah confers upon an inherited field.

The lesson for us: even if we live “between the חולות,” in a barren and fruitless land, in the gutter — we can elevate ourselves if we grasp onto the ways of our forefathers. It is noteworthy that the word ארוחה can mean, aside for inheritance, grasping hold. If we hold onto that

61 Literally, hang. In this context it means to be able to hold onto for total support.

62 A borrowed term, which in Chassidus connotes a state of being above the mundane, higher than the lowly realities of the physical world.

63 A place with lush orchards.

'climbing peg' which is the merits of our forefathers, we can arise from the sands and be elevated from the mundane.

If we count all the Chanukah lights (36) and the *shamash* of each night (8), we light 44 lights — the gematria of the word חול. The Chanukah lights counter the anti-holiness! However, as long as we

remain in *galus*, we are not entirely out of the חול. Only when עקרון תעקר, when Caesarea will be destroyed, when Mashiach comes, will we be entirely free of the power of the Greeks, the power of the profane. May Hashem let us merit to see the true illumination, when all evil will dissipate, and we will be able to serve Hashem in holiness.

זאת חנוכה תשכ"א

## The Special Segulah of Shabbos-Rosh Chodesh-Chanukah

When Yosef's officer caught up with the Shevatim and accused them of stealing Yosef's silver goblet, they denied it absolutely, and offered, "Whoever is caught with the goblet in his possession we will submit to be killed, and the rest of us will be your slaves." Yosef's officer responded, "As you speak, it is so, whoever is caught with the goblet will be my slave, and the rest of you will be exonerated." Rashi explains, quoting Chazal, that the officer responded, "According to the letter of the law regarding a group of ten, when one of the group is found to be in possession of stolen goods, the entire group is culpable.

However, I will be lenient, and hold only the possessor accountable."

(Since there is no halachic basis for this claim, clearly Yosef's officer meant that it is the way of the monarchy to incarcerate the entire group until an investigation is carried out, and perhaps even to punish the whole cabal.)

When a group comes together to do good, surely the same expansive rule applies! The worthy achievement of one casts its influence on the whole. When a *tzibbur* assembles for the purpose of elevating their *avodas Hashem*, when one member of the group is inspired, the entire group is credited for that improvement, and the

entire group is elevated with him. The inspiration and call to teshuvah is intensified and amplified when carried by a group.

This especially so on Rosh Chodesh Teves, as the letters of Hashem's ineffable Name which influence Teves<sup>64</sup> are the letters which emerge from the pasuk (Tehillim 34:4) גדלו לה' אתי ונרוממה שמו יחדיו, *magnify the name Hashem with me, let us exalt His Name together*. This pasuk teaches us the halacha of *zimun*, calling Jews together to give praise to Hashem. A public praise of Hashem is so much more powerful, for each individual is subsumed by the group. That is the secret of 'to exalt His name together.' And it is true of teshuvah and elevation as well, for these are also a form of praising Hashem.

This lesson is particularly apropos to this specific crossroads in time. Our Rebbe would often repeat the pasuk (Yechezkel 46:1) וביום השבת יפתח, *on Shabbos it would be opened, and on Rosh Chodesh it would be opened*. There are some portals which are opened only on Shabbos, and there are some portals which are opened only on Rosh Chodesh. When Shabbos

and Rosh Chodesh converge, the opportunity to enter those portals is magnified. And now, Chanukah is added! Chanukah lights grace the entrance to the home,<sup>65</sup> preventing the door from closing. The doors are open; anyone who wishes to enter is welcome to step inside.

There is an important caveat. A person must not become haughty or feel superior. On the contrary, at such times of opportunity, when the doors are open to come closer to Hashem, it is even more important to do teshuvah. In order to open the gates, one must approach with a negation of self, with a broken heart. This brings to mind the well-known story of the Baal Shem Tov and his disciple R. Wolf Kitzes.

R. Wolf Kitzes was to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah in the Baal Shem Tov's minyan. In preparation for the monumental moment, the Baal Shem taught R. Wolf many deep, kabbalistic meditations for each note of the shofar's sounds. R. Wolf took notes on a sheet of paper; when the time came, these exalted kavanos would accompany his sounding of the shofar.

Before the time came for blowing the shofar, the paper went missing.

64 Printed in many siddurim in Mussaf of Rosh Chodesh.

65 According to the optimal, original, halacha. Today, there are various practices.

R. Wolf was exceedingly distraught. He went forth to blow to blow the shofar with a broken heart, bereft, saying to Hashem, 'I have no holy intentions now, no kavanos, except simply 'I am blowing because Hashem said to blow the shofar on Rosh Hashanah.'"

Afterwards, the Baal Shem Tov disclosed to him that he had purposely arranged for the paper to disappear. "While the kabbalistic intentions are like keys, each of which opens a different Heavenly gate," he explained, "a broken heart opens all the gates!"<sup>66</sup>

Don't be the simpleton who says, "Why do I need any key? Everything is open anyway on Shabbos Rosh

Chodesh Chanukah!" It doesn't work that way. The pasuk says about the men of Sedom (Bereishis 19:11), וילא, למצוא הכתח, *they tried in vain to find the entrance*. If one is blinded by vanity and materialism, if one is not deserving — like the unworthy people of Sedom, one will be unable to find the door, even if all the doors are open.

The answer is a broken heart. To assess one's spiritual accounts, and to recognize the lowness of one's state. With a broken heart, one can pass through all of the gates, and find oneself inside.

סעודה שלישית שבת ראש חודש חנוכה  
תשי"פ עריכת נר לב"ן ישי"מ משיח"ך לכ"ק

## Seeing the Light

Over forty years ago, my father was sitting in the Lev Simcha's holy abode at *Seudah Shelishis* when the Lev Simcha posed the following question on a Tosafos in Maseches

Sukkah,<sup>67</sup> and did not offer an answer.

Tosafos asks why Chazal only instituted a brachah to made upon seeing the Chanukah lights, and

66 In the popular version of the story, the Baal Shem Tov said a broken heart is like an ax, smashing through all of the gates. (See *Keser Shem Tov* 243; *Yosher Divrei Emes* end of 42. See also, *Torei Zahav*, Drush for Rosh Hashanah, s.v. בשם הוורטיק.) My father had a different version: a broken heart is like a skeleton key, which opens all the doors. (See *Pnei Menachem*, Chukas p. 126; Va'eschanan p. 28.) The difference is that once an ax breaks open all the doors, they remain open. But when you open all the doors with a master key, the next day you may find them locked again, and need to reopen them.

67 46a s.v. הרואה.

not upon seeing other mitzvos, such as lulav and sukkah. Tosafos provides a number of reasons. The Lev Simcha protested, “How can Tosafos ask such a question? Seeing the Chanukah lights is intrinsic to the mitzvah, so it is reasonable to institute a brachah to be recited upon seeing them. For all other mitzvos, there is no aspect of sight to them, and therefore it is obvious that Chazal could not institute a brachah to be recited upon seeing them!” The Lev Simcha left the question unanswered.

I thought, perhaps in a rhetorical style,<sup>68</sup> why did Tosafos wait until Maseches Sukkah to consider this question? The *sugya* of Chanukah is in Maseches Shabbos<sup>69</sup>; why not ask it there?

But perhaps this helps answer the Lev Simcha's objection. On Chanukah there is indeed no room for a question of why Chanukah is singled out, with a brachah to be recited upon seeing the

Chanukah lights. Everyone sees and experiences the extraordinary power of seeing the Chanukah lights. How much holiness we bring to our eyes by gazing at the *neiros!*<sup>70</sup> Only at the distance of Sukkos can one think of such a question, wondering why Chanukah is singled out...

Aside from the holiness and the mystical power inherent in gazing at the Chanukah lights — for the sanctity of the lights purifies and sanctifies the eyes of the beholder<sup>71</sup> — it is also an actual mitzvah. Although the more recent Acharonim debated the matter, it is clear in the Ramban<sup>72</sup> that not only one who does not light one's own *neiros Chanukah* has a mitzvah to gaze at the lights, but even the one who lights them has a mitzvah to gaze at them.

נר א' דחנוכה תש"פ עריכת נר  
לב"ן ישי"מ משיח"ר לכ"ק

68 בדרך צחות

69 I must add that as proper preparation for Chanukah one should study these topics in Maseches Shabbos, the *sugya* of כרתה in the Gemara and in the *poskim*. This was the practice of Chasidim of earlier generations; they would study the topics relating to each yom tov in its time, because the light of each yom tov is concealed within those *sugyos* in Gemara. You will find that the *Sfas Emes* has an uncommon profusion of *chiddushim* on the *sugyos* of Chanukah; because each year, when Chanukah approached, he would immerse himself in those *sugyos*, and would expound with original approaches.

70 See *Sifsei Tzaddik* 1, and 42.

71 See *Avodas Yisrael* s.v. מניחו על פתח ביתו מבחוץ, and s.v. עד שתכלה. See also *Sifsei Tzaddik*, *ibid.*

72 *Pesachim* 7a, s.v. ואני אומר.



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