



YACHAD



This Dvar Torah was written by **Shira Kimche**, Beit Shemesh Yachad Coordinator & YTI (Yachad Teens in Israel), together with **Malka Furman**, Beit Shemesh Chapter participant.

Growing up, the most competitive game in my house wasn't Monopoly or Settlers—it was dreidel. To this day, I don't fully understand how it became such an intense competition, but we would sit for hours spinning and betting on these little plastic tops like everything depended on it. I always thought the letters were just the classic gan explanation: Nun, Gimel, Hey, Shin—Nes Gadol Haya Sham. And in Israel, Shin becomes a Peh for po, since the miracle happened here. But something about that answer never felt complete.

According to the story, Jews used the dreidel before the miracle of Chanukah, during the Greek decrees, to disguise their Torah learning. So how could the dreidel be about a miracle that hadn't happened yet?

My father, Rav Shmuel Kimche, recently shared an idea from the Bnei Yissaschar that completely reframed the whole story for me. Malka and I learned it together and were struck by the depth and meaning behind what

had seemed like just a “toy” to fool the Greeks. The Bnei Yissaschar explains that the dreidel actually reflects the four exiles described in Sefer Daniel—Nevuchadnetzar's dream.

Each letter points to one exile and to the unique way each empire tried to attack the core of the Jewish people.

Nun – Nefesh — Galus Bavel. The Babylon went after our Nefesh, the lifeblood of Klal Yisrael: our Avodas Hashem, our Beis HaMikdash, the spiritual center of who we were. **Gimel – Guf — Persia,** Haman's decree wasn't ideological. It was physical.

“לְהַשְׁמִיד לְהָרֹג וּלְאַבֵּד”

— to wipe out every Jewish body, man, woman, and child. **Shin – Sechel — Greece.** The Yavanim didn't want to kill us; they wanted to change us. Their battle was for the Jewish mind replacing Torah with Greek philosophy, holiness with culture, and banning the mitzvos that define us: Shabbos, Chodesh, Bris Milah, Torah. It was an exile of the mind, and many were pulled in. **Hey – Hakol,** writes the Bnei Yissaschar means “everything,” represents the long and bitter exile of Rome, or Edom—the exile we're still in today, ever since the destruction of the Second Beis HaMikdash.

This galus carries within it all the challenges of the previous ones. It began with Rome destroying the Second Beis HaMikdash, just as Babylonia had destroyed the first—a direct strike to our Nefesh, the spiritual heart of the nation. Over the centuries, Rome's heirs unleashed brutal attacks on our Guf: the

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Holocaust, countless pogroms, and even today, ongoing terror and wars. And the battle for our Sechel is just as real. Assimilation, confusion, and ideas wrapped in the language of “progress” slowly pull Jews away from who we are and from the deep power of being a Jew.

When you look at the dreidel this way, it becomes something entirely different. It's no longer just a game we play to pass time or a nostalgic symbol of childhood. The dreidel becomes a story of Jewish strength. When you spin a dreidel, the letters blur and you can no longer distinguish between them. The same is true in our history; the challenges swirl around us so quickly and intensely that it becomes hard to see what exactly is being tested—our spirit, our body, our mind, or everything at once. Yet through all that spinning, one truth never changes: Netzach Yisrael Lo Yishaker. The Jewish people cannot be defeated. No matter which letter lands facing up, no matter which part of us the world is trying to crush, we remain standing, spinning, and shining. That is the real story inside the dreidel—a reminder that behind the little wooden toy, behind the game and the Gelt, lies a profound message about who we are, what we've survived, and the unbreakable force that keeps us going. ■

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