

ב"ה
**Torah
Tidbits**

ISSUE 1640

ו
ישראל

DEC. 20TH 2025
ל' כסלו תשפ"ו

פרשת מקץ
PARSHAT MIKETZ

CHANUKAH | ROSH CHODESH



Dear OU Torah Tidbits Family
Rabbi Berman
Page 4



**8 Lessons from the
Chanukah Lights**
Shoshana Judelman Page 88



נס גדול היה פה

YERUSHALAYIM SHABBAT MIKETZ ZMANIM

CANDLES 4:02 PM • HAVDALA 5:19 PM • RABBEINU TAM 5:56 PM



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We continue to pray for the return Ran Gvili, last of the kedoshim



IMPORTANT REMINDERS

-  Earliest Kiddush Levana, 3 Days After Molad: 4 Tevet/ Tues. night Dec. 23
7 Days After Molad: 8 Tevet/ Sat. night Dec. 27
- Last Opportunity to Say Kiddush Levana until: 15 Tevet/ Sat. night Jan. 3

CANDLE LIGHTING AND HAVDALA TIMES



OTHER Z'MANIM



JERUSALEM

**Ranges 11 days Wednesday - Shabbat
December 17-27 / 27 Kislev - 7 Tevet**

Earliest Tallit and Tefillin	5:37-5:42
Sunrise	6:33-6:37
Sof Zman Kriat Shema	9:04-9:09
Magen Avraham	8:25-8:30
Sof Zman Tefila	9:54-9:59
(According to the Gra and Baal HaTanaya)	
Chatzot (Halachic Noon)	11:35-11:40
Mincha Gedola (Earliest Mincha)	12:05-12:10
Plag Mincha	3:34-3:39
Sunset (Including Elevation)	4:41-4:47



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	Mikeitz		Vayigash	
	Candles	Havdala	Candles	Havdala
Yerushalayim/Maale Adumim	4:02	5:19	4:06	5:23
Aza Area (Netivot, Sderot et al)	4:21	5:22	4:25	5:26
Beit Shemesh/RBS	4:01	5:20	4:25	5:24
Gush Etzion	4:19	5:20	4:22	5:24
Raanana/Tel Mond/Herzliya/K.Saba	4:18	5:20	4:22	5:24
Modiin/Chashmonaim	4:19	5:20	4:22	5:24
Netanya	4:18	5:20	4:22	5:24
Be'er Sheva	4:21	5:22	4:25	5:26
Rehovot	4:19	5:21	4:23	5:25
Petach Tikva	4:02	5:20	4:06	5:24
Ginot Shomron	4:18	5:20	4:21	5:23
Haifa / Zichron	4:06	5:18	4:10	5:22
Gush Shiloh	4:17	5:18	4:21	5:22
Tel Aviv / Givat Shmuel	4:19	5:20	4:23	5:24
Givat Ze'ev	4:22	5:19	4:26	5:23
Chevron / Kiryat Arba	4:19	5:20	4:23	5:24
Ashkelon	4:21	5:22	4:25	5:26
Yad Binyamin	4:20	5:21	4:23	5:25
Tzfat / Bikat HaYarden	4:08	5:16	4:12	5:20
Golan	4:14	5:16	4:18	5:20
Nahariya/Maalot	4:15	5:17	4:18	5:21
Afula	4:16	5:17	4:19	5:21

Rabbeinu Tam (Jerusalem): Miketz - 5:56 PM • Vayigash - 6:00 PM

All Times According to MyZmanim (20 mins before Sunset in most Cities;
40 mins in Yerushalayim and Petach Tikva; 30 mins in Tzfat and Haifa)

Daf Yomi: Zevachim 90



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DEAR TORAH TIDBITS FAMILY

RABBI AVI BERMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OU ISRAEL
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It seems like almost every year, around Chanukah time, my wife and I find ourselves sitting with at least one of our children to talk about their decision of what comes next for them. Where will they go next year? Which path should they take? These are not small questions. My wife and I know that as parents, our goal is not to choose *for* our children, but to help them think about what they want and how best to succeed in their lives. Chazal teach us, *"Ein adam lomed ela b'makom she-libo chafetz."* A person can only truly flourish spiritually in a place where their heart is invested. If we want our children to succeed, to excel, and to thrive, then we need to help them find the place that is truly right *for them*.

This year, we have been talking to our bar mitzvah boy, Mordechai Tzemach, who is deciding where he wants to go for high school. We *daven* to HaKadosh Baruch Hu that He grant us the wisdom to guide Mordechai properly, and that Mordechai will, *b'ezrat Hashem*, find himself in the most appropriate and meaningful place possible.

I know our family is far from alone in this

- the same process is happening in countless homes across the Jewish world. Just this past week, while visiting Miami Beach, Hollywood, and Boca Raton, I spoke to many twelfth grade seniors trying to decide where they will spend next year in Israel. They asked me about this yeshiva and that yeshiva, this seminary and that seminary, looking for my experience and familiarity with the different institutions, and trying to understand which place might be best for them.

At OU Israel Teen Centers and NCSY Israel, we see it as our responsibility to support teens through this process. Many children of *olim* in Israel naturally lack parents or older siblings with a deep familiarity with the system and the educational opportunities in Israel. That's why giving these young men and women a connection to others in the same situation and with amazing advisors is so essential.

Each year, NCSY hosts a major event focused on "what comes next." Advisors share their own journeys, whether in going straight to the army, or in choosing *sherut leumi*, but especially those who learned in yeshiva, midrasha, yeshivot gevohot, yeshivot hesder, or attended a mechina. Panels and one-on-one conversations take place to allow each teen to explore the full range of possibilities and to come to understand the right path *for them*.

We run similar programming through our OU Israel Teen Centers across the country. Each year we host dedicated Shabbatonim focused on life after twelfth grade - one for

**Condolences to my mother
Mrs. Rachel Leah Berman
on the passing of her sister,
my dear aunt**

Donna Sandberg a"h
in New York

המקום ינחם אותך בתוך שאר אבלי ציון וירושלים

Avi Berman

boys and one for girls - where teens sit down with staff members who have known them for many years. Together, they talk seriously about readiness, maturity, responsibility, and growth: whether to go straight to the IDF, to *sherut leumi*, to yeshiva, or to another framework. We always emphasize the value of spending some time learning Torah. It's worth noting that many times even the IDF itself encourages those finishing twelfth grade to take at least a year of post-high school experience - of learning, maturing, and deepening their understanding of their beliefs, their heritage, their people, and their Land - before enlisting. Teens who arrive after such a year often do so with greater clarity, confidence, and strength.

This year's Shabbaton is taking place at Moreshet Yaakov, the Yeshivat Hesder in Rehovot, who are graciously hosting us. Our staff will be sitting with teenagers they've accompanied for years, ensuring that each decision is thoughtful and grounded. We believe that this decision of where to go in the year following high school is really a determining factor of what their life is going to look like.

I want to take a moment to thank those who make this work possible. Thank you to NCSY Executive Director Rabbi Michael Kahn and Regional Director Rabbi Yosef Ginsberg, for organizing and leading this incredible initiative. Thank you as well to the OU Israel Teen Center teams, to Chaim Pelzner, to Kobi Ziat, and to all the dedicated staff members who work tirelessly to ensure that these Shabbatonim and guidance evenings take place and are run so well. A special thank you as well



to Nefesh B'Nefesh for hosting and helping sponsor the NCSY event.

It was deeply moving to hear that nearly 50% of our NCSY Israel seniors participated in the evening. That level of engagement reflects something so important: trust. These teens want to hear from the advisors who have invested countless hours, days, and months into their lives. Guidance coming from people who truly know them is what they care about.

The combination of divine help and our own personal efforts are all over this week's parsha. In the span of just a few chapters, Yosef HaTzaddik moves from sitting alone in a pit, to being in prison, to becoming second-in-command over all of Egypt. Such a journey defies human logic. It happens only through *siyata d'Shmaya*. Yosef does his *hishtadlut*. He works hard and puts in his effort, but ultimately, there is no doubt through the story that it is HaKadosh Baruch Hu who guides the process.

That balance is what we strive to teach our children and our students. We put in effort. We ask questions. We seek wise counsel. And

at the same time, we *daven*, recognizing that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is the One who truly leads each person to the place they need to be.

We are in the midst of Chanukah, a *chag* so deeply connected to education (since Chanukah shares the same root as the word *chinuch*), this message is especially timely. When we see that over 96% of Jews in Israel light Chanukah candles, we understand that something powerful is being transmitted. It's that even when the future is uncertain, we can look at the light of the Chanukah candles and remember that HaKadosh Baruch Hu is holding our hand. We might not know yet where we'll be next year, or how our decisions will unfold, but our task is to reach upward, to do our part, and to trust that with sincere *hishtadlut* and heartfelt *tefillah*, *b'ezrat Hashem*, HaKadosh Baruch Hu will guide our children, and all of us, to reach the most incredible heights.

Wishing you all an uplifting and inspiring Shabbat and a Chanukah Sameach,



Rabbi Avi Berman
Executive Director, OU Israel



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RABBI MOSHE HAUER ZT"L

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The Root of Positivity

An environment in which people speak negatively of one another becomes rife with tension, distrust, and toxicity. Indeed, the original exile of the Jewish people came about due to the tension between Yosef and his brothers and Yosef's badmouthing them to their father. Moshe would later attribute the Jewish people's bondage to their failings in this same area of toxic speech (see Rashi to Shemot 2:14).

Yet, when we reencounter Yosef later in his life, he has completely changed this behavior. A Midrash (Pesikta Rabbati 3) goes so far as

to say that Yosef avoided being alone with his father for the 17 years that they lived together in Egypt to avoid having to answer his questions about what had transpired between him and his brothers. In fact, he hardly spoke ill of anything, with the notable exception of his complaint to the butler and baker about his imprisonment.

How did Yosef turn around so dramatically?

In Egypt, as the Torah clearly attests, Yosef developed the ability to see the divine hand in everything. This enabled him to see and articulate the good in his situation, how even the difficulties he experienced were all positioning him to provide salvation for his family. In his eyes all was good, and so there was little motivation or urge to speak negatively about his situation or about others.

This idea is expressed in the critical verses (Tehillim 34) that discourage us from badmouthing others: "Who desires life, **loving each day to see good?** Guard your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit, turn from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it." It is indeed difficult to refrain from letting out the negativity and bitterness that may reside inside us. If, however, we can follow the path of Yosef and allow our faith in G-d to inform our outlook, we can succeed in transforming our perspective and therefore our words to reflect positivity and sweetness, creating a beautiful environment around us. ■



ישראל

No matter where we live in the world, we are one nation. When Jews are hurt in one place, hearts ache everywhere. Today, we hold close the families and victims in Australia. Their pain is felt far beyond where the attack took place, because they are not strangers to us, they are our brothers and sisters. In moments like these, we turn to HaKadosh Baruch Hu for comfort and strength, and we are reminded that the Jewish people are bound not by geography, but by responsibility, care, and an unbreakable sense of belonging. *Am Yisrael Chai*

Highlights

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Chaverim Makshevim Crisis Hotline



Emotional crises do not always arrive with warning, and they do not always end when the moment passes. Chaverim Makshivim is OU Israel's confidential, anonymous crisis hotline, offering immediate emotional support alongside steady, ongoing care for Israeli teens, young adults, and families. Each month, the hotline receives an average of 440 calls, a reflection of both urgent moments of distress and the continued need for a safe place to talk, process, and regain emotional balance.

OU Israel launched a Hebrew emotional support crisis hotline called Chaverim Makshivim (Friends that Listen) which is providing support for thousands of Israeli teens who are suffering emotionally and mentally from the trauma, loss, anxiety and more since the start of the war. Call center staff provide teens and young adults with practical advice on how to cope with the stress of the current war such as how to overcome an anxiety attack, how to maintain a positive attitude, and the importance of keeping a routine. The hotline is run by trained social workers, rabbis, educators and volunteers who provide a listening ear, support and care to help people cope and become more resilient.

Chaverim Makshevim crisis hotline number: *8298

Each week we share one of OU Israel's impactful programs helping English-speaking Olim with their Klita and impacting Israeli society.

STATS

10th of 54 sedras; 10th of 12 in Bereshit;

Written on 254.6 lines, ranks 6th.

Mikeitz is a one Parsha Petucha (open)(the longest parsha in the whole Torah).

Contrast this parsha's 2022 words with the shortest parshiyot with 2 words.

146 pesukim - rank: 8th (5th in Bereshit) tied with Bereishit (the sedra).

2022 words - ranks 3rd (2nd).

7914 letters - ranks 2nd (first).

Mikeitz's pesukim are unusually long for a big sedra. That's why it is so high in the rankings for words and letters. On the other hand, with no parsha breaks, the "number of lines rank" drops a bit.

MITZVOT

No mitzvot are counted from Mikeitz.

One of 17 sedras without mitzvot.

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"And he took Shimon from among them" (42:24) – יקח מֵאִתָּם אֶת שִׁמְעוֹן (מב:כד)

Why the need to state that Yosef took Shimon from amongst the brothers? Where else would Shimon be taken from?

The Meshech Chochmah (Rabbi Meir Simcha Hachohen M'Divinsk 1843-1926) explains that Yosef originally gave the brothers the prospect of choosing by themselves which brother would remain behind. "If you are upright men, let one of your brothers be bound in your prison house" (42:19). Since the brothers refrained from choosing themselves who would remain hostage, Yosef was compelled to choose one of the brothers himself. Yosef enacted "a measure for a measure". During the sale of Yosef, they ignored the cries and persecuted the individual. So now, Yosef presented them with the situation where the individual must be abandoned to save the rest of the family. This is why the verse points out that they "wept", upon realizing the comparison of their fate to the original sale of Yosef.

- Shabbat Shalom



ALIYA-BY-ALIYA SEDRA SUMMARY

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PARSHAT MIKETZ

This most beloved and well known of the stories of the Torah is rich in its interpersonal dynamics and messages. But the Torah is not the story only of people, it is the story of G-d and man. The story of Yosef and his brothers, with all its twists and turns is the story of men, with an obscure Divine backdrop. G-d does not speak in the entire story, though man grasps at His Presence.

In a beautiful and subtle manner, the tradition that divided the aliyot sends this message. The name of G-d is in the last verse of aliyot 2,3,4 and 6. They end with a Divine engagement; though all are man's surmising as to G-d's ways. The Divine does not share His Doings. Yosef ascribes his success to G-d but he has to be wondering why he has been spurned from the covenant. And while he tells Paro that G-d is communicating the impending famine, what about his own dreams of his position in his family?

The human story is a pageant of foggy human vision struggling to detect the Divine Hand, seeing snippets of the picture,

then more of the picture, surmising. And will end without seeing the whole picture. While seeking to ascribe Divine involvement in human affairs is a noble pursuit, we never really know His ways. We will only much later understand that this is all a pretext to get all of the Jewish people, the entire people, to Egypt, in order to be redeemed in signs and wonders after hundreds of years.



1ST ALIYA (41:1-14)

2 years later (after the Butler's return to serve Paro), Paro dreams. 7 healthy cows emerge from the water, devoured by 7 skinny ones who emerge after. 7 healthy stalks are devoured by 7 parched ones. Paro is not satisfied by the dream interpretations of his wise men. The Butler remembers Yosef, telling Paro of him. Yosef is shaved, dressed and rushed to Paro.

Dreams aplenty. Yaakov dreamt of the ladder and the angels. Yosef had 2 dreams. The Butler and Baker had dreams. Now Paro has 2 dreams.

But the dreams have anomalies or oddities for the dreamer. Yosef and family were shepherds. He dreamt of sheaves bowing to him. Not what you would expect. What could that possibly mean? Now, we know what it means by the end of the story. The shepherd boy Yosef went to Egypt and became the custodian of the grain.

Paro is King of Egypt, the bread basket. Agriculture, not shepherding. The Nile flooded each year, soaking the earth. There are no famines in Egypt because of the



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reliability of the floods.

Paro has a dream of cows. That's odd, he thinks, because we are known for our grain not for cattle. And the cattle emerge from the marsh, the flooded fields from the natural flood irrigation of the Nile. Cows in the marsh is like a mixed metaphor; cows don't belong in the flooded fields.

Then he has a dream of grain. That makes more sense. But stalks of grain don't have teeth and a mouth to eat up other stalks.

Paro is restless, perplexed by the oddities of his dreams.



2ND ALIYA (41:15-38)

Paro relates the dreams to Yosef.

Yosef tells Paro that the 7 years of plenty will be followed by 7 years of famine. Now, Paro you shall appoint a wise person to hoard food during the plenty, to avoid the lands collapse during the famine. Paro responds: could one like this be found who has G-d's spirit in him?

Yosef seizes upon these anomalies. Eating is what cows do. Grain is agriculture. Remaining skinny, remaining parched?

It would never occur to Paro that his dream is of a famine because Egypt doesn't have famines. When there was a famine in Israel, Avraham went to Egypt. Because there was no famine in Egypt. Yitzchak, the same; a famine in the Land and so he was on his way to Egypt, though told not to go there.

Yosef assumes the reason that no one can interpret these dreams is because they are so outside of the realm of possibility. No Egyptian thinks of famines. I, Yosef surmises, I the outsider know plenty of famines.

So, I got it, he thinks. The marsh is the flooded fields, symbolic of agriculture. The skinny is famine. Years of plenty. Years of famine.

The name Elokim appears 7 times in this exchange between Yosef and Paro. When a word is repeated 7 times, it is a signal – take note, this is central. The story of Yosef's sale, his descent to Potiphar's home, his being framed by Mrs. Potiphar, thrown in jail, is a downward spiral designed by the hands of man. But all that is about to change, for G-d's Hand is entering the story.



3RD ALIYA (41:39-52)

Paro appoints Yosef over all of Egypt; he receives the signet ring, the royal clothes, rides the royal chariot, receives the Egyptian name Tzafnat Paneach and marries. He gathers the grain in the years of plenty. His 2 sons are born; Menashe, G-d has allowed me to forget my father's home and Ephraim, G-d has made me prosper in Egypt.

The juxtaposition in this aliya is beautiful in its meaning.

Yosef becomes Egyptian, the quintessential Egyptian. Royal robes. This is Yosef's 3rd robe story. First, his coat of many colors. Second, the robe Mrs. Potiphar held in her hand and framed him. Now, Egyptian royal robes. As if to say, I am assuming a new persona.

A new name, Tzafnat Paneach. A new identity.

Marries and has children. Marrying and children has been the core story of the legacy of Avraham until now. Who is part of the covenant and who not? Here, Yosef is building a family



with no legacy, no connection to that covenant.

He is a new man, in a new place, with a new name, a new wife and a new family. He names his children with this message; G-d has made me forget my family and to prosper in Egypt.

Of course, that is all bluff. He is feigning that he is forgetting his family and his G-d. You only say that you are forgetting your family if in fact you remember your family and your G-d. He *wants* to forget. But he can't.



4TH ALIYA (41:53-42:18)

The famine begins. Paro instructs his people to go to Yosef, for Yosef has opened the storehouses. Yaakov sends his sons, save Binyamin, to Egypt to get food. When the brothers bow to Yosef, he recognizes them. He remembers his dreams. Yosef challenges the brothers, claiming they are spying Egypt. To prove they are not, he demands they bring Binyamin. And puts them in jail for 3 days.

What did Yosef think when he saw the brothers? Why not say hello to them? Why hide? What an image: the Jew, successful, wildly successful, in the highest offices of his new land, with his new language, his new name, his new clothes, wanting to forget his family. He wants to forget the family and recognizes them.

They, the next aliya, blurt out that they are suffering because of Yosef. He who wants to forget his family recognizes them. They, who remember their brother, don't recognize him.



5TH ALIYA (42:19-43:15)

Yosef tells the brothers that one should stay behind while the rest return home and bring Binyamin to him. They respond to themselves; this has occurred because of how we treated Yosef.

Yosef cries upon hearing this. Shimon is jailed. Yosef places their money with their grain. When they discover this, they wonder why G-d is doing this. Yaakov is distressed at the thought of Binyamin leaving him. But when the food runs out, there is no choice. Yehuda guarantees Binyamin's safe return. They return and stand before Yosef.

The brother's feelings of guilt for the sale of Yosef persist even 20 years later. Over 20 years later, in Egypt, buying food – when things turn into a crisis, with Yosef demanding they bring Binyamin, the brothers immediately blurt out: we are getting our due for selling Yosef.

They have been waiting for calamity to befall them, knowing it will surely come. G-d is finally punishing us.

And what is with Yosef's capricious behavior? Yosef is repeatedly described as a definitive and successful man; in Potiphar's home, in the jail, and now as number 2 in the land. He is efficient and definitive.

Yet, here, he is capricious. First, he says to put them *all* in jail while one goes back to their father. Then he changes his mind; *one* stay in jail, *all* return.

Either Yosef is beside himself and winging it, not really knowing what to do. Or maybe the brothers are not the only ones subject to the Divine. They are being punished. Yosef, manipulated. Maybe Yosef too is a puppet in the Divine Hands – he makes a move, and He puts into his head something different. In order to bring the Jews to Egypt.



6TH ALIYA (43:16-29)

The brothers receive a royal welcome from Yosef upon their return with Binyamin. They apologize for the money they found in their grain sacks. Yosef tells them not to worry for their G-d has

given them a gift. The brothers are treated to a fine dinner. Yosef inquires of their father and sees Binyamin.

Binyamin is Yosef's brother, the only other born from Rachel. Binyamin was very young when Yosef was sold. This is 22 years later. Yosef would not recognize Binyamin. The aliya ends on a pregnant note – he sees Binyamin – and then what? The aliya ends, leaving us hanging.



7TH ALIYA (43:30-44:17)

Yosef sits the brothers in the order of their birth. They are surprised. Their sacks are packed with grain, their money returned. And Yosef's goblet planted in the sack of Binyamin. No sooner had they left, Yosef orders the guards to pursue. The goblet is found in the sack of Binyamin. They return to Yosef. Yehuda offers that they all stay as slaves. Yosef demurs; the thief alone shall be a slave. The rest of you return home in peace to your father.

Yosef has planted the cup in the sack of Binyamin. We have had another story of travelers, returning home to the Land of Israel, who are accused of having stolen from their host. Rachel. Binyamin's mother, who died in childbirth with him. She stole the idols from her father, hid them under her. Here, he son is accused of stealing from his host, hiding it in his bag of food.

What is striking in the story is the absence of the Divine. There is no Guiding Voice. No revelation. In a sense, Breishit is the story of man's struggle to figure out where and when the Divine Hand is present. Sefer Shemot will change that completely; the Divine is overt, present, instructing, controlling. Here, man is fumbling along, making mistakes, guilty, trying to figure out where the Divine is Present. Sometimes they get it right. And sometimes not.

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Hashem, in Zecharia's prophecy, proceeds to articulate the great reward awaiting Yehoshua, the first Kohen Gadol to serve in the second Beit Hamikdash, if he and his descendants follow the ways of the Torah. The reward will be: "Behold! I will bring My Servant, the Shoot." This is an allusion to the Mashiach, the 'shoot', the descendant of David.

Zecharia then powerfully witnesses in his mind's eye a golden seven-branched Menorah. An angel offers an explanation of the vision: "This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbavel - 'Not by force and not by physical might, by my spirit,' says the Lord of Hosts."

With these words the Navi conveys a message of hope and the promise that the redemption will surely arrive. The light off the Menorah is a symbol of God's *shechina*, His holy presence, that will soon be manifest in the land of Israel and will ultimately be visible for all humanity to behold. May that day come soon! ■



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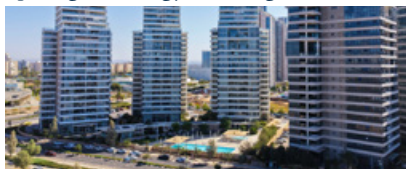
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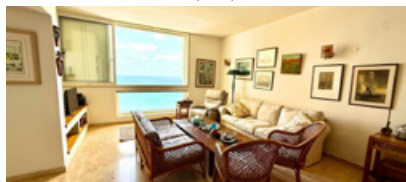
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BY RABBI DR. TZVI HERSH WEINREB
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“Two Kinds of People”

“There are two kinds of people.” I am sure that you all have heard one variation or another of that theme.

We seem to have a well-ingrained habit of dividing people into two categories. For example, we say that there are those for whom the cup is half-full, while others for whom the cup is half-empty. There are two types of people: some are optimists, and others are pessimists.

There are other dichotomies that we utilize. We distinguish between those individuals who are rational, guided by their heads, and those who are emotional, who follow their hearts. There are men and women of reason, and there are men and women of feeling.

The British political philosopher, Sir Isaiah Berlin, wrote an entire book about such a dichotomy. He entitled it, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*. He bases this title on a remark made by one of the ancient Greek philosophers: “The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing.” The fox has many little tricks up his sleeve, by which he can evade his pursuers. But the hedgehog has but one defense and, by the use of his prickly quills, can successfully defend himself against his enemies.

Sir Isaiah applies this distinction to the field of literature; specifically to the great Russian novelists such as Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Turgenev. Some excel at portraying details, while others are masters of depicting grand

themes. If we transfer Sir Isaiah's approach from literature to, say, medicine, we can certainly easily distinguish between the specialists and the generalists.

Personally, I believe that such dichotomies are simplistic, failing to take the complexity of human beings into account. Few of us are so rigidly one-dimensional. Most of us fluctuate between optimism and pessimism. We occasionally rely upon our reason, but in other circumstances become quite emotional. We shift our focus from fine details to the overall picture and back again.

It is fascinating to find such dichotomies in our traditional Jewish sources. Perhaps the most famous of them relates to two schools of thought that pervade Talmudic literature: Hillel and Shammai and their respective schools. These two great sages debate each other on hundreds of subjects, ranging from the question of whether it would have been better that man had never been created to laws regarding the fine points of ritual purity. They each prescribed different sequences for the blessings which constitute the *Havdalah* service, and they even differed as to the precise wording of some of those blessings.

Many scholars have assumed that fundamentally, different philosophies of life were at the root of their disagreements. One attempt to identify such an underlying rationale was

made by a sage of the last generation, Rabbi Solomon Joseph Zevin, who fortunately escaped the prisons of the Soviet Union and lived to teach and write in Jerusalem.

Rabbi Zevin believed that all of Hillel and Shammai's differences of opinion could be reduced to one basic difference between them. Shammai, he argued, held the future potential of a situation to be more critical than the actual current situation. Shammai was concerned with probable future consequences; Hillel, with present realities.

Hillel, felt that the actual situation with which a person is confronted takes precedence over considerations of what might happen in the future. Rav Zevin's dichotomy puts Shammai's priority on potential eventualities against Hillel's belief that actual present circumstances took priority.

Their contrasting approaches to religious life is exemplified in the well-known story of the aspiring convert to Judaism who approached first Shammai and then Hillel with the request that they teach him the entire Torah while standing on one foot. Shammai angrily rejected him, while Hillel welcomed him, famously declaring that the essence of the Torah could indeed be taught while standing on one foot: "Do not do unto others what is hateful to you." Hillel then went on to advise him that the rest of the Torah was just commentary that he could study independently.

Following Rav Zevin's approach, when Shammai was confronted with the bizarre request of the convert, he suspected, with good cause, that this man would not be a good candidate or a lasting conversion—sooner or later, he would revert to his pagan ways. Characteristically, Shammai considered potential.

But Hillel was not troubled by what the

potential future might hold in store. Here was a man who wished to convert. That was all that mattered. The actuality of the present moment prevailed.

With another of their many debates, we finally come to this week's special Shabbat, the Shabbat of Hanukkah.

Hillel ruled that one begins the holiday by lighting just one candle and then increases the number of candles day by day. Shammai ruled in the opposite manner, beginning with eight candles and then gradually decreasing the number of candles night after night.

We are all so accustomed to lighting one candle of the *menorah* on the first night and then adding an additional candle for each successive night that many of us are unaware that this procedure follows Hillel's opinion. Shammai insisted that things should be done differently. He and his entire school lit eight candles on the first night and proceeded to light in descending order, from eight down to one.

Applying Rav Zevin's analysis can gain a fresh understanding of the candle lighting ceremony of Hanukkah. For Shammai, the miracle was

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powerful at that specific time in history when it occurred. But, concerned as he was about the potential future, he was convinced that, with time, the memory of that miracle would fade and its lessons would be forgotten.

Hillel had a different view. We can return, he asserted, to the moment in history when the miracle occurred. At first, on day one, the phenomenon was almost insignificant. But as each day passed and the oil of the Temple's *menorah* continued to burn, the wonder grew and grew. That was the nature of the situation at that moment in time, the awe increasing gradually day after day.

Hillel had an additional insight. Always holding the present moment in focus, he realized that that bygone moment did not have to disappear over time. It could be preserved. It could forever be experienced in all of its wonder.

The victory of more than 2,000 years ago remains ever present, right up to this very year. Memories need not fade. Such is the nature of the Jewish historical memory: events can be relived.

Hillel's teaching about the primacy of the present moment and our ability to perennially relive that moment lies at the core of the Hanukkah holiday. This teaching is encapsulated in the words of the blessing we recite just as we light the *menorah*:

"Blessed are You, Lord our God... who performed miracles for our ancestors in those days, and at this time." ■

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לעילוי נשמת
HaRav Ya'akov Zvi ben David Ariele zt"l

לעילוי נשמות

פנחס בן יעקב אשר וגולדה בת ישראל דוד איז ע"ה ועזריאל בן אריה לייב ומעניה בת יצחק שרטור ע"ה

Disguise

Joseph is now the ruler of Egypt. The famine he predicted has come to pass. It extends beyond Egypt to the land of Canaan. Seeking to buy food, Joseph's brothers make the journey to Egypt. They arrive at the palace of the man in charge of grain distribution:

Now Joseph was governor of the land [Egypt]; it was he who dispensed food to all its people. When Joseph's brothers arrived, they bowed down to him, their faces to the ground. Joseph recognised his brothers as soon as he saw them, but he acted like a stranger and spoke harshly to them . . . Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him. (Gen. 42:6-8)

We owe to Robert Alter the idea of a 'type-scene', a drama enacted several times with variations; and these are particularly in evidence in the book of Bereishit. There is no universal rule as to how to decode the

significance of a type-scene. One example is boy-meets-girl-at-well, an encounter that takes place three times, between Abraham's servant and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, and Moses and the daughters of Jethro. Here, the setting is probably not significant (wells are where strangers met in those days, like the water-dispenser in an office). What we must attend to in these three episodes is their variations: Rebecca's activism, Jacob's show of strength, Moses' passion for justice. How people act toward strangers at a well is, in other words, a test of their character. In some cases, however, a type-scene seems to indicate a recurring theme. That is the case here. If we are to understand what is at stake in the meeting between Joseph and his brothers, we have to set it alongside three other episodes, all of which occur in Bereishit.

The first takes place in Isaac's tent. The patriarch is old and blind. He tells his elder son to go out into the field, trap an animal, and prepare a meal so that he can bless him. Surprisingly soon, Isaac hears someone enter. "Who are you?" he asks. "I am Esau, your elder son," the voice replies. Isaac is not convinced. "Come close and let me feel you, my son. Are you really Esau or not?" He reaches out and feels the rough texture of the skins covering his arms. Still unsure, he asks again, "But are

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you really my son Esau?" The other replies, "I am." So Isaac blesses him: "Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field blessed by God." But it is not Esau. It is Jacob in disguise.

Scene two: Jacob has fled to his uncle Laban's house. Arriving, he meets and falls in love with Rachel, and offers to work for her father for seven years in order to marry her. The time passes quickly: the years "seemed like a few days because he loved her." The wedding day approaches. Laban makes a feast. The bride enters her tent. Late at night, Jacob follows her. Now at last he has married his beloved Rachel. When morning comes, he discovers that he has been the victim of a deception. It is not Rachel. It is Leah in disguise.

Scene three: Judah has married a Canaanite girl and is now the father of three sons. The first married a local girl, Tamar, but died mysteriously young, leaving his wife a childless widow. Following a pre-Mosaic version of the law of levirate marriage, Judah married his second son to Tamar so that she could have a child "to keep his brother's name alive." Tamar's second husband was loathe to have a son that would, in effect, belong to his late brother so he "spilled his seed," and for this he too died young. Judah is then reluctant to give Tamar his third son, so she is left an *agunah*, "chained," bound to someone she is prevented from marrying, and unable to marry anyone else.

The years pass. Judah's own wife dies. Returning home from sheep-shearing, he sees a veiled prostitute by the side of the road. He asks her to sleep with him, promising, by way of payment, a kid from the flock. She asks him for his "seal and its cord, and his staff" as security. The next day he sends a



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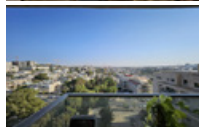
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friend to deliver the kid, but the woman has disappeared. The locals deny all knowledge of her. Three months later, Judah hears that his daughter-in-law Tamar has become pregnant. He is incensed. Bound to his youngest son, she was not allowed to have a relationship with anyone else. She must have been guilty of adultery. “Bring her out so that she may be burnt,” he says. She is brought to be killed, but she asks one favour. She tells one of the people to take to Judah the seal, and cord, and staff. “The father of my child,” she says, “is the man to whom these things belong.” Immediately, Judah understands. Tamar, unable to marry yet honour-bound to have a child to perpetuate the memory of her first husband, has tricked her father-in-law into performing the duty he should have allowed his youngest son to do. “She is more righteous than I,” Judah admits. He thought he had slept with a prostitute. But it was Tamar in disguise.

That is the context against which the meeting between Joseph and his brothers must be understood. The man the brothers bow down to bears no resemblance to a Hebrew

shepherd. He speaks Egyptian. He is dressed in an Egyptian ruler’s robes. He wears Pharaoh’s signet ring and the gold chain of authority. They think they are in the presence of an Egyptian prince, but it is Joseph – their brother – in disguise.

Four scenes, four disguises, four failures to see behind the mask. What do they have in common? Something very striking indeed. It is only by not being recognised that Jacob, Leah, Tamar and Joseph can be recognised, in the sense of attended, taken seriously, heeded. Isaac loves Esau, not Jacob. He loves Rachel, not Leah. Judah thinks of his youngest son, not the plight of Tamar. Joseph is hated by his brothers. Only when they appear as something or someone else can they achieve what they seek – for Jacob, his father’s blessing; for Leah, a husband; for Tamar, a son; for Joseph, the non-hostile attention of his brothers. The plight of these four individuals is summed up in a single poignant phrase: “Joseph recognised his brothers, but they did not recognise him.”

Do the disguises work? In the short term, yes; but in the long term, not necessarily. Jacob suffers greatly for having taken Esau’s blessing. Leah, though she marries Jacob, never wins his love. Tamar had a child (in fact, twins) but Judah “was not intimate with her anymore.” Joseph – well, his brothers no longer hated him but they feared him. Even after his assurances that he bore them no grudge, they still thought he would take revenge on them after their father died. What we achieve in disguise is never the love we sought.

But something else happens. Jacob, Leah, Tamar and Joseph discover that, though they may never win the affection of those from whom they seek it, God is with them; and that, ultimately, is enough. A disguise is

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an act of hiding – from others, and perhaps from oneself. From God, however, we cannot, nor do we need to, hide. He hears our cry. He answers our unspoken prayer. He heeds the unheeded and brings them comfort.

In the aftermath of the four episodes, there is no healing of relationship but there is a mending of identity. That is what makes them, not secular narratives but deeply religious chronicles of psychological growth and maturation. What they tell us is simple and profound: those who stand before God need no disguises to achieve self-worth when standing before humankind. ■

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“B’chayil or B’ruach... or Both?”

This Shabbat we are granted the privilege to read from three separate sifrei Torah, including Shabbat reading (from Parashat Miketz), Rosh Chodesh aliya (from Parashat Pinchas) and Chanukah maftir (from Parashat Naso). Ordinarily, when Shabbat coincides with Rosh Chodesh, we read the haftarah that focuses on Rosh Chodesh and not that of the weekly parasha, as Chazal established that the haftarah must connect to the maftir that is read. For this reason, on this Shabbat we read the haftarah that concentrates on Chanukat HaMishkan, reflecting the theme of the maftir and the chag.

In his work, “Prophecy in an Age of Uncertainty”, Rabbi Hayyim Angel explains that Chazal’s choice for Chanukah haftarah (found in chapters 3 and 4 in Sefer Zecharya) reflects

the view of the ancient scholars that focuses upon the miracle of the oil and downplays the Maccabean military victory. They base their opinion on the second to last verse in the haftarah, that states: “Lo v’chayil, v’lo v’kho’ach”-“your success will not come through army nor through strength”, “ki im b’ruchi” - “but, rather, through My spirit!” This approach toward the Chanukah miracle is the one most widely accepted within the traditional world.

Nonetheless, Rabbi Angel points to the *Pesikta Rabbati*, a midrashic collection, which contains two other suggestions, alternative choices, for the haftarah of Chanukah, that offer different understandings of the essence of the holiday.

- The first submission [*Pesikta Rabbati 4*] prefers to read the dramatic narrative of Eliyahu Hanavi at Har Carmel [M’lachim A 18] where the prophet challenged the followers of the pagan idol, Ba’al. It was then that the navi triumphed over the pagan worshippers, when Hashem sent a fire from heaven to consume Eliyahu’s sacrifice – that which did not happen to the idolatrous offering. The saga ended with the people’s recognition of the power of the true G-d with the destruction of the idolaters. Rabbi Angel submits that this haftarah choice supports those who saw the Maccabean victory as **THE** “nes Chanukah”, since it tells of a Kohen (Eliyahu - who was regarded as a descendant of Pinchas, grandson of Aharon) who removed those who worshipped a foreign deity [see

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B'Midbar 25: 7-9]. The similarity to the victorious struggle of the priestly clan of Chashmona'im to remove the Hellenistic, idolatrous culture, was a powerfully fitting reading for Chanukah. It underscores the holiday's miracle of "**Ko'ach**".

- The second submission [*Pesikta Rabbati* 8] suggests that the reading of the first perek of Sefer Tzephanya is more fitting for the holiday. It is there that the navi shares Hashem's promise to "search Yerushayim" to find those non-believers - those who claim that G-d does not reward or punish. Tzephanya quotes Hashem's statement: "Achappes et Yerushalayim **baneiroi**" – "I will search Jerusalem **with candles**", and Rabbi Angel submits that the prophecy's connection to Chanukah through the mention of searching with candles, intimates that Chanukah is a time of introspection and repentance – to **rededicate** and purify our souls. In effect, the Chanukah miracle of the Menorah lighting in the Beit HaMikdash, should be seen as a subtle message to future generations that the "Holiday of Lights" is our deadline for Teshuva before G-d seals everyone's judgment. This reading underscores the holiday's miracle of "**Ru'ach**".

I would humbly suggest that both approaches are correct...but only when they merge into one; when there is the Ru'ach working with the Ko'ach.

Indeed, only through the heavenly hand can miracles occur....but only when the faithful lend their hand, as well. ■

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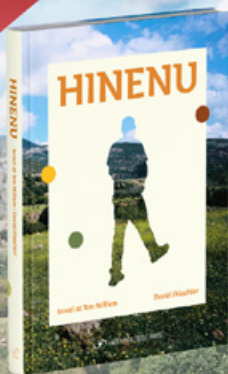
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Seeing the Light Beyond the Darkness

וְעַתָּה יֵרָא פַרְעֹה אִישׁ נָבוֹן וְחָכָם וְיִשְׁתַּהוּ עַל-אַרְץ מִצְרַיִם:

“So now, let Pharaoh seek out a man of discernment and wisdom and put him in charge of the land of Egypt.” (Bereishit 41:33)

After Yosef interprets Pharaoh’s dreams to his satisfaction, he goes a step further—offering unsolicited advice. He recommends that Pharaoh appoint “a man of discernment and wisdom” to oversee the land, ensuring that during the seven years of plenty Egypt would prepare for the seven years of famine.

This move is startling. Yosef has just been taken from prison to interpret Pharaoh’s dream. Who gave him the right—or the nerve—to lecture Pharaoh on how to

manage the country? Such audacity could easily have offended Pharaoh, sending Yosef straight back to the dungeon. Why take such a risk?

The *Shemen HaTov* offers a striking explanation. Both of Pharaoh’s dreams convey the same fundamental message: when God grants success, one must preserve it for the future. Blessing is not meant to be totally consumed in the present but to be safeguarded for the challenges ahead. The imagery of the thin cows devouring the fat cows, yet showing no sign of fullness, warns against squandering present abundance until nothing remains for tomorrow. God, in His kindness, sends the *refuah*—the cure—before the *makkah*, the illness, and it is our task to respond wisely to that providence.

Yosef recognizes that this insight is not external to the dream’s interpretation but integral to it. Pharaoh’s dream does not only foretell events; it teaches a divine principle about life and leadership. And in that moment, Yosef perceives something even deeper: perhaps his own personal descent into Egypt—his betrayal, slavery, and imprisonment—has likewise been part of a providential design. God had positioned him precisely where he needed to be to ensure the survival of his family and the birth of the Jewish nation in Egypt.

With this awareness, Yosef finds his voice and confidence. He is not overstepping his place; he is stepping into it. He is fulfilling

May the learning
in this week’s Torah Tidbits
be dedicated לעילוי נשמת

Ronald Markowitz ז"ל
ראובן בן ברוך ז"ל

Sorely missed by
his family and friends

the very destiny that God had woven through his suffering. Yosef was, in a sense, *living the dream*—literally and figuratively. Pharaoh's dreams revealed to Yosef the meaning of his own.

CHANUKAH – LIGHT WITHIN DARKNESS

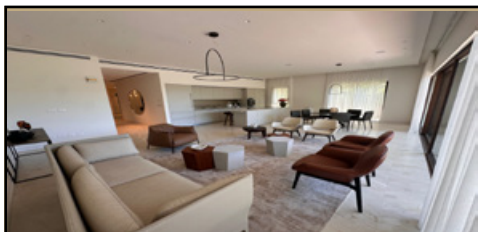
A similar idea shines through the story of Chanukah. Unlike Purim or Pesach, Chanukah has no dedicated book in Tanakh. The Rambam, in *Hilchot Chanukah*, recounts its story because it exists only within the realm of Torah Shebe'al Peh—our oral tradition. Perhaps this itself conveys a message: Chanukah belongs to the hidden, whispered voice of exile.

The light of the Chanukah menorah is not the blazing sun of redemption but the small, persistent flame that defies darkness. It teaches us how to live in *galut*—to kindle faith in the night, to illuminate despair with hope. Even the very name *Chanukah* (חנוכה) shares a root with *chinuch* (חינוך), “education” or “preparation.” Chanukah educates the Jewish soul to see meaning within suffering and to prepare for spiritual endurance in foreign lands.

SEEING THE LIGHT

Yosef and Chanukah share a single message. Yosef's imprisonment became the path to his greatness. The darkness of Greek oppression gave birth to the eternal light of Chanukah. In both, God's salvation arrived disguised as struggle.

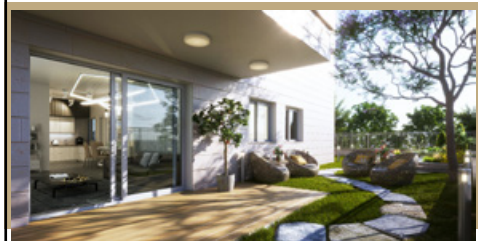
May we learn, like Yosef, to see the larger picture—to recognize that even in the most confusing chapters of our lives, Hashem is guiding the story. And like the menorah's flame, may we never cease to shine—transforming every moment of darkness into preparation for a brighter future. ■



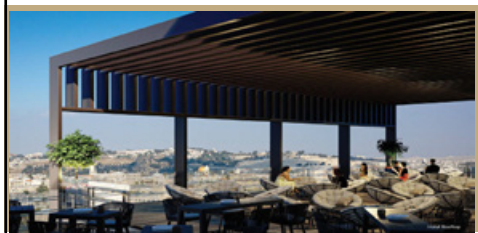
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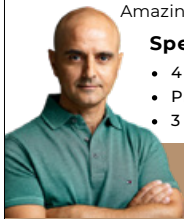


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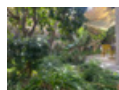
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Zot Chanukah

The final day of Chanukah is commonly referred to as “Zot Chanukah.” The name is derived from the Torah reading of that day, “Zot chanukat hamizbeach beyom himashach oto mei-eit nesi’ei Yisrael — This was the dedication offering of the altar presented by the chieftains on the day it was anointed.” (*Bamidbar* 7:84) We read about the offerings of the last five princes, as well as the summation of the *korbanot*, beginning and ending with the words, “Zot chanukat hamizbeach — this was the dedication offering of the altar.” As

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the holiday itself was given the name “Chanukah,” this last day, with its special name, must hold deeper significance.

The Chatam Sofer *zt”l* offers a novel explanation for the events that transpired during the original eight days of Chanukah. He posits that when the Jews lit the Menorah after the war with the Greeks, a fire descended from heaven to kindle its lights. Since it was heavenly fire, it did not burn out, miraculously staying ablaze for seven days. On the eighth day, Hashem made an even greater miracle, and the heavenly fire ignited the oil, allowing it to burn in a natural fashion. In so doing, Hashem expressed how dearly He valued the Jews’ efforts to produce the purest oil for the Menorah, as such, Hashem caused the supernatural fire to function in a “natural” way. Notes Rav Gedalya Schorr *zt”l*, how precious our efforts to do mitzvot are! How beloved are we to Hashem!

In *Halekach Vehalebuv* on Chanukah, Rav Avraham Schorr explains that the original Mishkan in the desert was completed on the 25th day of Kislev but was only inaugurated on Rosh Chodesh Nissan. Chazal describe the day of inauguration in the most awesome terms, likening it to the day the heaven and earth were created; it was a day on which the world reached its *tikun*, its perfected state. Yet, prior to the day of inauguration, Moshe held a seven-day initiation period. Thus, in theory, if the Mishkan had been inaugurated immediately upon its completion, the eighth day of Chanukah would have fallen out on

Rosh Chodesh, the day of the Mishkan's actual inauguration. Therefore, *Zot Chanukah* potentially holds tremendous energy for each person to access the necessary levels to facilitate his own personal *tikun* in his life.

The Ba'al Shem Tov Hakadosh *zt"l*, based on the teachings of the *Arizal*, reveals that if one is on a low spiritual level, his final judgement for the year is extended beyond Yom Kippur, beyond Shemini Atzeret, until *Zot Chanukah*. Rav Eliezer Meizlish in *Sichot B'avodat Hashem* teaches that some people are born after seven months, others are born after nine months. Tzadikim are "born" seven months from Nissan, the start of the year, and can therefore be judged in Tishrei. In contrast, the general masses need nine full months to develop and do teshuvah properly, hence, their judgement is extended until Chanukah. Further, he expounds that one can either be woken in the morning with an alarm clock, or by turning on the light. Those who were not awakened by the call of the shofar, can still wake up from the light that shines into the room; this is the light of the Chanukah menorah.

Rav Wolfson *zt"l* in *Festivals of Faith* explains that the intense power of lighting the menorah for eight days ignites the spiritual fire within one's neshamah and has the power to expedite one's teshuvah. Rav Yisrael of Ruzhin *zt"l* teaches that even a simple person can achieve great effects through his tefillot on *Zot Chanukah*, similar to what a tzaddik can achieve on Rosh Hashanah. It is through the power of having lit the 36 candles that we access the "*lamed vav*" aspect of *tzidkut* inside ourselves, bringing us to greater heights and greater closeness to the holiness of our true selves. ■

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SIMCHAT SHMUEL

BY RABBI SAM SHOR
DIRECTOR, TORAH INITIATIVES,
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The *Talmud* in *Masechet Shabbat*, in describing the Miracle of *Chanukah*, speaks primarily of the *Nes pach hashemen*, the miraculous oil that burned for eight days, and makes no mention of the perhaps more significant miracle, the military and spiritual victory of the *Chashmonaim*, who not only defeated the mighty Greek Empire, but restored a Torah way of life for the many thousands of Jews who had assimilated into Greek culture and society

This might easily be explained by the positioning of this Talmudic entry, indeed the entire Talmudic account and description of *Chanukah* and its practice appears as a footnote to a discussion regarding materials that may be used to kindle the Sabbath lights. Perhaps the message being conveyed is that the account of the victory of the *Chashmonaim* is placed specifically within the discussion of lighting *Shabbat* candles, to emphasize that the *Chashmonaim* courageously fought to restore the sanctity and centrality of *Shabbat* in Jewish Life.

However, our Master, **Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, zy" a**, had a fascinating and original approach to the entire passage.

The *Gemara* introduces us to the story of the *Chashmonaim*:

"Mai Chanukah? D'Tanu Rabanan, B'Kuf Hey B'Kislev, yumei d'chanuka, tamneya inun delo lemasped behon, udelo lehitanot b'hon. Shekenichnisu yevanim leheichal timu kol hashmanim shebeheichal. Uchshegavra

malchut beit Chashmonai, unitzchom, badku velo matzu eleh pach echad shel shemen munach b'chotmo shel cohein gadol, velo haya bo l'hadlik yom echad, naaseh bo nes, v'hidliku mimenu shmona yomim..."

*"What is Chanukah? As our Rabbis taught: On the 25th of Kislev begins the days of Chanukah - days when we do not eulogize, and do not fast. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, and rendered impure **all** of the oil that was in the Temple. And when the Kingdom was again established by the Chashmonaim, they went to search for oil, and found only one jar of oil with the seal of the High Priest. It was barely enough oil to burn for one day, and a miracle occurred and the oil burnt for eight days..."*

The obvious question to be asked is if the Greeks had indeed defiled all the oil, as the first part of the text suggests, how is it possible that there was a vessel that remained with the proper seal? Might this in itself be the reason why our Sages chose to highlight the miracle of the oil, over the miraculous military victory?

Rav Kook as cited in the anthology, *Moadei HaRayah*, explains this *Gemara*:

"B'Chol Adam MiYisrael, yesh tzad kehuna, mipnei shebichlalam heima mamlechet cohanim v'Goy kadosh, uteshuka hapnimit likedushat hachaim ulelaat HaTorah; ganuza hi b'omek halev hayisraeli. V'oto-Hapach hakatan- haolam hapnimi haganuz-Shemunach b'chotmo shel cohein gadol, lo yochlu hayevanim letamei..."

"Within every single Jew exists an aspect

of priesthood, because collectively the Jewish People are a priestly nation and a holy people; and are joined by the inner desire for a life of holiness and to know the secrets of the Torah. This quality remains safely hidden deep within the heart of each and every Jew. This small container, the hidden inner eternal holiness, which is sealed with the seal of the high priest, this inner holiness could not be contaminated by the Greeks!"

The miracle of the *pach hashemen*, as understood by Rav Kook, is not in the extended flammability of a small cruise of actual olive oil, but rather the sudden awareness of the flame which burns inside of each of us as Jews, hidden safely away inside each of our hearts, which can never be extinguished.

Indeed the masters of Jewish thought point out that the word *hashemen*, is composed of the same letters as the word *neshama*! Each of us is endowed with a *neshama*, a proverbial *pach hashemen*, that no enemy of *Am Yisrael* could ever render impure!

Similarly, the **Netivot Shalom, The Slonimer Rebbe zy'a**, taught that the discovery of the *pach Hashemen* is meant to reveal to each of us, that through the *neirot Chanukah* we light, a great light continues to shine for the Jewish People. Throughout all the many years of darkness we have experienced as a people, our *neirot Chanukah* have reminded us to never despair, because in every circumstance we too can be blessed to experience salvation, to find our own *pach hashemen*....

May the lights of our *chanukiyot* inspire us to tap into the inner light, the tucked away jar of pure oil which burns within each of our hearts. Chanukah Sameach! ■




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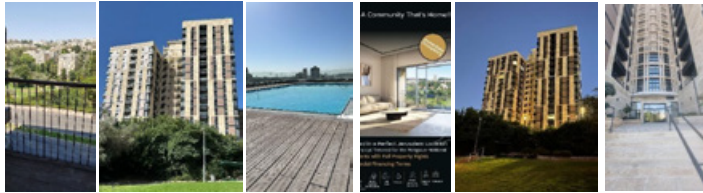


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**SUNDAY
DEC 21**



7:30 PM

Men's Safrut (The Bais)
Rabbi Tzvi Mauner
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**MONDAY
DEC 22**



8:30 PM

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Ohel Yitzchak
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2 Radak St., Rechavia

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**TUESDAY
DEC 23**

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Classes @ Bet Knesset Nitzanim, 3 Asher Street, Bakaa

9:20 AM

Understanding Tefila
Rabbi Yossi Goldin

11:25 AM

Pshat in the Parsha
Rabbi Shmuel Goldin

10:15 AM

Rambam: Letters & Introductions
Rabbi Yitzchak Breitowitz

12:20 PM

Unlocking the Messages of Chazal
Rabbi Shai Finkelstein

TORAH TUESDAYS WITH THE WOMEN'S DIVISION

Classes @ Beit Knesset HaNassi, 24 Ussishkin St. Rechavia

9:15AM

Torah Tapestries Parsha Shiur
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7:30 PM Men's Safrut in **BEIT SHEMESH** Rabbi Elie Levi

This Week's Inspirational Torah Learning with OU Israel

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COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN RECHAVIA

@ Bet Knesset HaNassi,
24 Ussishkin St., Rechavia

9:15AM

Holy Poetry

Rabbi Dr. Aaron Adler

10:20 AM

Contemporary Issues in
Halacha and Hashkafa

Rabbi Anthony Manning

11:25 AM

Mussar and Self Improvement:
A study of Rav Kook's sefer
Midot HaRayah **Rabbi Aaron
Goldscheider**

12:30 PM

Jews in the Middle Ages: External
Threats and Internal Developments
Dr. Deborah Polster

THURSDAY DEC 25

COMMUNITY BEIT MIDRASH IN ARNONA

Classes @ Bet Knesset Shai
Agnon, 11 Rechov Leib Yaffe,
Arnona

9:15 AM

Parshat HaShavua
Rabbi Ari Kahn

10:30AM

Parashat Hashavua
Rabbi Baruch Taub

11:25 AM

Trailblazing the Text of
Tanach **Rabbi Neil Winkler**

12:20 PM

Modern Masters
Rabbi Sam Shor

8:00 PM

Halachic Controversies- (the
Bais) **Rabbi Aschi Dick**
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MRS. BASYA TEITELBAUM

Words of Introduction by
OU Beit Shemesh Coordinator



MRS. KAREN HOCHHAUSER

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A Study in Chanukah, Asara
B'Tevet, and Tefillah



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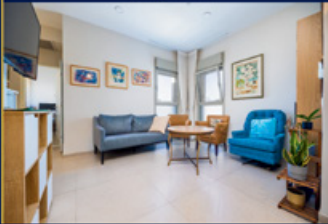
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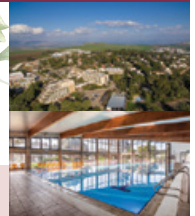
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Chanukah: With Eyes to See

The *heilige* Ribnitzer Rebbe, Reb Chaim Zanzvil Abramowitz, zy'a, was an extraordinary *tzadik* and a legendary *baal avodah*, renown for his sacrifice for Yidishkeit, personal holiness and powerful blessings. Describing the Ribnitzer's righteousness, Reb Shlomo Freifeld, zt'l, Rosh Yeshivah of Shor Yeshuv, said meeting him was like meeting a *tzadik* from the days of the Baal Shem Tov.

A young couple once gave birth to a child with severe medical complications, including a progressive and irreversible loss of eyesight. With every passing month the darkness closed in further, and the doctors warned that complete blindness was inevitable. Shattered and desperate, the father, Reb Nachum, decided before Chanukah to travel to Monsey and bring the little boy to the Ribnitzer. He hoped that somehow the days of miracles might shine for them as well.

When he arrived for the Rebbe's *hadlakas neiros*, the room was jammed wall-to-wall with chassidim straining to see the *tzadik* kindle the holy flames. Unable to get anywhere near the front, Reb Nachum stood

at the back, clutching his child. As the Ribnitzer cried out the *brachos* in a voice that shook the walls, something within the father moved him. He suddenly lifted his son high into the air, facing the Rebbe's direction, in the line of vision of the Chanukah candles, as if to place the child into the embrace of those sacred lights.

The Ribnitzer was known to sit motionless after lighting, lost in deep *dveykus* for long stretches. But this time, something utterly uncharacteristic happened. The Rebbe paused. He turned. Rising from his place, from across the crowded room, his eyes locked onto the child being held aloft. Seeing this, Reb Nachum kept holding his son high, trembling, as the Ribnitzer shifted his intense gaze back and forth, from the flames...to the child...to the flames...to the child, again and again, as if drawing light from the menorah and sending it toward the little boy.

Only after several long moments did the Ribnitzer return fully to the glowing candles, sinking back into his holy silence. And then the miracle revealed itself.

Within minutes, Reb Nachum saw what no doctor had ever allowed him to hope for. His son began responding to light — first subtly, then unmistakably. Over the coming days, the darkness lifted entirely. Against every medical prediction, the child regained full

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eyesight.

A Chanukah *neis*, hidden in the crowd, was carried by the gaze of a tzadik and the light of the menorah.

Hilchos Chanukah of the Rambam opens in a strikingly unusual way. Before presenting a single halachic detail, there are three full *halachos* dedicated to recounting the historical background. These cover the harsh decrees of the Greeks, the desecration of the Mikdash, and ultimately the miraculous victory of the Chashmonaim and the restoration of Jewish autonomy in Eretz Yisrael for more than two hundred years, until the destruction of Bayis Sheini. (*Hilchos Megillah v'Chanukah*, 3:1-3).

The Hasmonean dynasty, glorious in its origins, ultimately descended into corruption, internal strife, and even open violations of Torah and *halachah*. Hardly the ideal *malchus* rooted in holiness, it is striking that the Rambam chose to emphasize the political background as part of our celebration of this beloved *moed*.

Rav Yehuda Amital, zt"l, Rosh Yeshiva of Har Etzion, uncovers a profound insight within the Rambam's framing. He explains that the obligation of *hallel v'hodaah*, expressing praise and gratitude for Hashem on Chanukah, is not dependent on achieving the final, perfect Geulah with the arrival of Mashiach; it is not all-or-nothing. Rather, whenever the Jewish People merit even a partial return, even imperfect sovereignty — even a life in Eretz Yisrael where Jews can live as Jews — that itself demands gratitude and song.

To illustrate this, Rav Amital points to the prophetic description of Geulah in

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Zecharyah (8:4-5):

כה אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת, עוֹד יֵשְׁבוּ זָקְנִים וְזָקֵנֹת בְּרִחוּבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם... וּרְחוּבוֹת הָעִיר יִמְלְאוּ יְלָדִים וְיִלְדוֹת, מִשְׁחָקִים בְּרִחוּבֶיהָ.

“Thus says Hashem Tzevakos: Elderly men and elderly women shall yet again dwell in the streets of Yerushalayim... And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in Her streets.”

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Children playing outside and elderly men and women relaxing on benches hardly seems like a grand vision of redemption and the fulfilment of two thousand years of Messianic dreams. This, however, explains Rav Amital, is exactly the point: *geulah* is not only in open miracles or political perfection. It is also to be seen in normal Jewish life returning to Yerushalayim, a reality in which children and their grandparents can stroll and enjoy without fear, where the streets are filled with laughter.

A *geulah* of this description is one that we have, in fact, begun to experience. It is real and within reach. This simple presence, Jewish life lived naturally in the Land, is itself an aspect of redemption. Although it is not the *Complete* *Geulah* which we continue to daven for each day, it is nonetheless a meaningful level, for which we are obligated in *hallel v'hodaah*.

This perhaps is why the Rambam, with such care and precision, opens Hilchos Chanukah with a historical excursus that reads more like *Sefer Maccabim* than *Mishneh Torah*. He is showing us that the miracle of Chanukah is not only the spiritual light of the menorah, it is the gift of even partial sovereignty, the ability to live as Jews in our Land. We must acknowledge this, and we

must give thanks.

.....

We have actually become accustomed to considering God's Hand to be revealed through a miraculous process unfolding within the confines of nature and the 'rules' of this world, including political processes, and military and economic successes.

Chanukah reminds us that while there is reason to celebrate such natural events that move us toward salvation, we can also hope and pray for miracles that are beyond nature. A flask of oil can last eight days, a band of brothers untrained in warfare can defeat an entire empire, blindness can be cured, we can become unstuck, saved, and completely redeemed.

As we bask in the illuminating days of Chanukah, may we have eyes to see and give thanks for the small miracles and signs of redemption multiplying around us. May it be that the greatest and most awesome miracles, healings and lights are yet to come. May all those who are injured in body or soul, or lack for any material or spiritual good become whole, and may we see, with our own eyes, complete victory, revealed good, open miracles and the גאולה השלימה והאמיתית! ■



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Jews Revolting Against Themselves

Throughout history, our people have confronted many enemies who despised us. Some persecuted us, others legislated against our faith, and still others tried to force conversion. *B'chol dor va'dor omdim aleinu l'chaloteinu* — in every age someone has risen to threaten our existence.

Chanukah was no different. The Greek empire had reached unprecedented power, projecting military might and cultural influence throughout the Mediterranean world. No nation dared challenge them. Yet even after they desecrated the Mikdash and subdued Israel, we rose in revolt and, for a time, reclaimed Jewish sovereignty.

The many fell before the few. Wave after wave of Greek armies were turned back by a Maccabean force numbering no more than ten thousand. Though the Maccabees could

not, in the long run, permanently withstand the Greek legions, the miracle of Chanukah restored Jewish self-rule and rekindled our national spirit. In that regard, Chanukah resembled other moments of national resurgence.

THE HELLENIST BREACH

Yet something far deeper had unfolded beneath the surface. What made Chanukah distinct was that it confronted us not only with an external empire but with an internal rupture. Even before the Greeks desecrated the Mikdash or imposed their decrees, a powerful Hellenist faction within our own people sought to remake Judea as a fully Greek polity — and secured the support of the Seleucid monarch to advance their vision.

How did this internal fracture take shape? In the years leading up to the revolt, notorious Hellenist activists agitated against our people. Some bribed Antiochus for political office, while others secured Greek support by pledging to refashion Jerusalem as a Greek city, complete with a gymnasium and the institutions that accompanied it. Attendance at Greek athletic events — themselves intertwined with pagan worship — became a marker of loyalty to the new agenda. Other figures promoted reforms designed to erode traditional observance. Many Jews, whether under pressure or by choice,



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submitted to the painful act of reversing their circumcision long before circumcision was officially banned by the Greeks.

Matters reached a breaking point when these corrupt Hellenists — the *bnei bliya'al* described in Sefer HaMaccabim — forced their way into the Mikdash and installed a pagan idol. They defiled the *klei sharet* and pressed them into the service of foreign rites, turning the holiest place on earth into a stage for pagan worship. This horrific crime occurred about three years before the rededication of the Mikdash on Chanukah.

THE ME'ILAH OF THE HELLENISTS

A painful Gemara in Avodah Zarah (52b) highlights their crime. The Gemara wonders how the stones of the mizbei'ach could have lost their sanctity. Normally, *me'ilah* — the misuse of consecrated property — removes *kedushah*. Once someone unlawfully derives benefit from *hekdes*, the object's sanctity departs. But halachah states that Gentiles cannot commit *me'ilah*. Their misuse of sacred items does not dissolve the holiness embedded within them.

If so, how did the stones of the mizbei'ach lose their *kedushah*? The Ba'al HaMa'or (Rav Zerachya HaLevi, a twelfth-century commentator on the Ri"ף) explains that it was not the Gentiles who stripped the mizbei'ach of its sanctity, but the Jewish Hellenists themselves. They erected the idol and employed the mizbei'ach-stones for pagan rites. As Jews, their profanation constituted an act of *me'ilah*, and through their hands the stones were rendered desecrated.

The broader tragedy of Chanukah was not only that foreigners violated the Mikdash, but that Jews enabled and enacted its defilement. It was the Hellenized Jews who first set the

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This is what made Chanukah so different from other struggles. We were threatened not only by a foreign empire but by members of our own nation who turned against their people and against the sanctity of the Mikdash. For the most part, Greek rulers respected the Jews and safeguarded our religious practice. It was the agenda of the Hellenist faction that manipulated the Greek authorities and steered them toward confrontation. Only after the Maccabees rose in revolt did the Seleucid regime respond with overwhelming force. Though Antiochus eventually dispatched wave after wave of soldiers, it was Jews who first invited the Greeks into this conflict and granted them their opening.

THE CULTURAL SPELL

Why, then, did Hellenism wield such power

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over their imagination?

Hellenism offered a rare fusion: a rigorous intellectual framework paired with a vibrant and expressive cultural life. Greek thought provided tools for mapping the cosmos through logic, mathematics, and disciplined inquiry; its thinkers pursued order in everything from ethics to astronomy. Yet this seriousness of mind was matched by an emotional and aesthetic world that was equally compelling. Its sculpture idealized the human form, and its theater explored the tensions of fate and moral choice.

For many across the Mediterranean, this combination — intellectual structure alongside artistic vitality — created a way of life that felt expansive, ordered, and deeply civilized. In modern language, we might say that Hellenism became the cultural narrative of its age, shaping how people imagined their place in the world.

Many Jews were drawn to this worldview. Much of Hellenistic culture did not initially seem to directly conflict with Jewish religious life. The progress of Greece could even be viewed through the lens of Noach's blessing — that Yefet would develop aesthetic gifts that could find a natural place “in the tents of Shem.” Under that reading, the intellectual

and artistic strengths of the Greek world could enrich Jewish life rather than undermine it.

ENCOUNTER OR INSULARITY

Throughout history, we have wrestled with the question of cultural and ideological openness. Should we remain insulated, drawing all meaningful wisdom solely from Torah? Or can we enrich our religious lives by engaging with broader cultural achievements that do not compromise our identity?

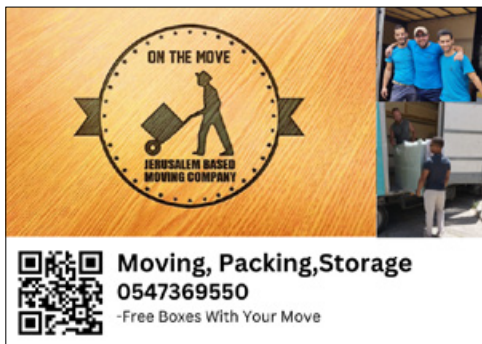
The encounter with Greece brought this debate into sharp focus. For the first time, the Jewish world confronted a sophisticated civilization whose accomplishments shaped law, ethics, and civic life. Some Jews resisted any Greek influence, fearing that even measured exposure would erode our distinctiveness. Others believed that selected elements of Greek achievement could be channeled through the tents of Shem.

UNIVERSALISM DEVOURS PARTICULARISM

However, the hope of enriching Judaism through non-Jewish influence carries real danger. Sometimes the outside culture begins to feel more compelling than our own covenantal experience. A desire for universal belonging can overshadow the pride we are meant to feel toward our particular destiny as *am ha-nivchar*.

History shows that when people bring external ideas into their Jewish lives without grounding, they can abandon Jewish commitments altogether. And when Jewish particularism seems to clash with universalist ideals, they may turn against their own heritage in an effort to fashion a more “universal” identity.

This is precisely what unfolded in the years leading up to Chanukah. What began



as curiosity became admiration; admiration became attachment; attachment became preference. Over time, Hellenism felt more compelling than Judaism itself.

As that attraction deepened, the boundaries that marked Jewish identity began to feel restrictive. In their eagerness to align with Greek ideals, some Jews attempted to dissolve those boundaries altogether. And once cultural loyalties eclipsed covenantal commitments, they turned against the Mikdash and actively participated in its desecration.

A band of Hellenist opportunists — driven by financial ambition, political aspiration, or ideological passion — fomented against their own people. They became the true villains of Chanukah, a portrait of what occurs when universalist desires overshadow the Brit Avot.

HELLENISM IN NEW CLOTHING

Strikingly, the same dynamic has resurfaced. Over the past two centuries Jews were welcomed into broader society and invited to help shape the emerging modern world. Some resisted these overtures, while others opened themselves to selected influences. Neither path is inherently more or less religious, so long as Jewish identity and halachic integrity remain rooted.

However, over time, a tilt toward a more open stance can slide into a universalist ideology that comes at the expense of internal national commitments. To those who adopt this worldview, the particularism of Jewish life — its covenantal identity, its history, its collective mission — can begin to feel overly tribal or uncomfortably ethnic.

Sadly, this drift has led some Jews to turn against their own people. Many who now openly express anti-Zionist positions are, in

spirit, walking the same path as the criminal Hellenists of old. Just as the cultural narratives of Hellenism bred hostility toward Judaism, so the dominant cultural narratives of our own age have corroded the commitments of many of our brothers and sisters.

They have absorbed the claim that we are building an ethnic state rooted in racism and discrimination, and this conviction has led them to oppose the State of Israel during one of the most critical periods in its history. It feels like the same tragedy once again: Jews embracing a broader cultural narrative, viewing their own heritage as tribal and outdated, and turning against their people.

Thousands of years ago they turned against our Mikdash; today, many turn against our prophecies and the unfolding story of our return.

Yet just as then, this moment will pass. Our Brit Avot and our Masorah have outlasted every attempt to erode them, and they will outlast this one as well. ■



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Not by Might, Not by Power

At the first *yahrzeit* shiur in memory of Marcy Stern a"h, Mrs. Shira Schiowitz shared a thought that added a dimension to the Chanukah Haftorah by placing two familiar *pesukim* in conversation with one another.

Zechariah is shown a vision of a menorah that burns without human tending. No oil is poured, no hand steadies the flame. When the Navi struggles to understand what he is seeing, the message is clarified, *לא בְּחֵיל, כי אם בְּרוּחִי*, *not through might and not through power, but through My spirit*. The menorah's endurance is not fueled by strength, strategy, or force, but by *ruach Hashem*. Redemption, Zechariah teaches, is not driven by dominance but rather by Hashem's will.

Moshe uses the same language, but as a warning. As the people stand on the brink of

prosperity, he cautions them against the quiet danger that accompanies success, *כְּחֵי וְעֹצֶם, דְּיָ עָשָׂה לִי אֶת הַחֵיל הַזֶּה*, *my strength and the might of my hand made this success*. Moshe is not denying human effort; he is warning against misreading and misapplying it. *כח* becomes corrosive when it forgets its source and turns inward.

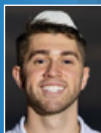
Chanukah lives precisely between these two *pesukim*. The Chashmonaim fought bravely, yet the miracle we preserve is not a battlefield victory but a menorah that burned beyond expectation. Zechariah teaches how light is sustained through spirit. Moshe warns how it is extinguished through arrogance.

We light the Chanukah candles to hold both truths at once. We act, we strive, we commit — and we remember that the flame endures only when our strength makes space for Hashem. ■

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The Scent of Mesorah: From Our Frying Pan to Theirs

Walking through the streets of Israel from Rosh Chodesh Kislev onward, it's impossible to miss the sufganiyot — they appear everywhere: in makolets, bakeries, and even gas stations. As Chanukah approaches, the air itself seems to change; the scent of sizzling latkes drifts from home to home, filling the streets with the unmistakable aroma of the chag.

We often think of these minhagim as fun, nostalgic, and delicious, but perhaps not particularly significant. Yet already in the 1100s, **Rabbeinu Maimon ben Yosef** — the Rambam's father — cautioned us not to take these customs lightly. He explains that all such practices, from eating a sheep's head on Rosh Hashanah to preparing symbolic holiday foods, are filled with deep meaning.

Those who keep them, he writes, are *zerizim u'mishtadlim* — people brimming with energy and enthusiasm for mitzvot. These seemingly small acts form part of the very foundation of Jewish life. It is about them that the pasuk in Mishlei teaches: “אַל-תַּטֵּשׁ” “תּוֹרַת אִמְךָ” — “Do not abandon the Torah of your mother.”

This idea — that our customs and foods carry spiritual depth — is beautifully expanded upon by **Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik**. In his *Tribute to the Rebbetzin of Talne*, he explains that there are two kinds of *mesorah*. The first is *Mussar Avicha* — the transmission of halacha and Torah knowledge from one generation to the next. The second, equally vital, is *Torat Imecha* — the passing down of the warmth, flavor, and emotional experience of Judaism. He writes of his own mother: “Most of all, I learned from her that Judaism expresses itself not only in formal compliance with the law but also in a living experience. She taught me that there is a flavor, a scent, and warmth to mitzvot.”

Modern research, interestingly, supports this spiritual truth. Studies have shown that smells — especially those connected to food — are powerful triggers of memory and emotion. Our sense of smell is closely

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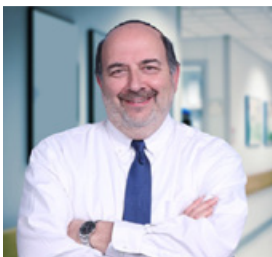
linked to the amygdala, the part of the brain responsible for emotion, and the hippocampus, which governs memory formation.

Perhaps this explains why every *chag* has its own tastes and scents that define its spirit: the aroma of frying latkes and sufganiyot on Chanukah, the scent of challah and kugel for Shabbat, the *simanim* of Rosh Hashanah, the familiar dishes of Pesach. Each connects us to the essence of the day and awakens memories and emotions that bind us to Torah and mitzvot.

Recognizing this, we can understand that our role as parents goes far beyond teaching the story of Chanukah or the halachot of lighting candles. We are also charged with igniting joy, excitement, and emotional connection in our children. Whether it's decorating the house with colorful streamers and Chanukah artwork, playing lively games of dreidel or Chanukah Jeopardy, or cooking feasts of latkes, sufganiyot, and of course, giving Chanukah gelt — through these experiences, we help our children build a living connection to Torah, mitzvot, and Hashem.

And so, as we mix, fry, or bake, we can do so with *kavana* — that the spiritual messages and meaning of each *chag* should be felt in the food itself and passed on to those who will taste and remember. ■

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EDITOR, TORAH TIDBITS
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Rav Kook's Chanukah Vision - Eight Teachings For Eight Nights



1. RAV KOOK'S CHANUKAH MAXIM

In 1916, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook composed a motto for each month of the Hebrew calendar. For the month of Kislev and the festival of Chanukah, he wrote:

“The Divine bolt upon the heart of the Chashmonaim splintered into sparks. When they are gathered into a single torch, they will once again be revealed.”

Like all poetry, these words lend themselves to multiple interpretations. Yet it is clear that Rav Kook is pointing toward a future vision in which the “sparks” ignited by the Chashmonaim will be regathered and will once again radiate great light.

The Chashmonaim were unique among Jewish leaders. They were Kohanim—spiritual servants of God in the Beit HaMikdash—who simultaneously took up arms and led the nation

in battle. They embodied a rare synthesis of spiritual devotion and national responsibility.

Rav Kook envisioned the reemergence of these same qualities in the rebuilding of the Jewish people: Jews sanctified both through devotion to mitzvot and through active participation in defending and rebuilding the Land of Israel. A striking contemporary expression of this ideal can be found in the Hesder Yeshiva movement, which integrates Torah study with military service and views this synthesis as an ideal fulfillment of God's will (Mo'adei HaRa'ayah, ed. Neria, p. 159).



2. A TORAH WRITTEN FOR RAV KOOK

On the evening of Rosh Chodesh Tevet—the seventh night of Chanukah in 1932—a unique gathering took place in Rav Kook's beit midrash.

A small congregation in Poland had chosen to name itself *Beit Knesset Beit Avraham* in Rav Kook's honor (his given name being Avraham). They saw themselves as disciples of Rav Kook, modeling their worldview on his teachings. In effect, they regarded themselves as chassidim of their revered Rebbe.

As a tribute, they sent the first parchment of a new Sefer Torah to Jerusalem, asking Rav Kook to write the opening letters of *Bereishit*. The parchment would then be returned to Poland to be completed by a scribe.

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After the gathering ended and everyone had departed, Rav Kook turned to his close friend and disciple, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, and confided that although he was deeply moved by the gesture, he did not wish to be the rebbe of any particular group:

“I want to be connected to all of *Klal Yisrael*. I never want to be severed from the nation as a whole.” (ibid., pp. 169–170)



3. A MESSAGE TO THE WORLD

The Chanukah menorah is lit in a way that fulfills the principle of *pirsumei nisa*—publicizing the miracle. The lights are meant to be seen by others, whether placed in a window or at the doorway.

What is unique about Chanukah that led the Sages to emphasize public display so strongly?

Rav Kook explains that the Jewish people bear a message for all of humanity: a vision of peace, righteousness, kindness, and truth. During the long years of exile, circumstances forced the menorah indoors, limiting its radiance to the family and immediate community. With the return of the Jewish people to their Land, however, the light of Torah can once again shine outward.

Thus, on Chanukah—the festival that celebrates Israel’s revitalization and the rededication of the Beit HaMikdash—the Sages embedded within the mitzvah of lighting the menorah the Jewish mission to illuminate the world with the redemptive values of Torah (Mo’adei HaRa’ayah, pp. 161–162).



4. PURE OIL WITHIN EVERY JEW

Rav Kook taught that every Jew carries within their soul an aspect of priesthood. This is reflected in the Torah’s description of the Jewish people as “*a kingdom of priests and a holy nation*.”



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The flask of oil that contained enough to burn for only one night, yet miraculously lasted eight, symbolizes the innate purity embedded within every Jewish soul. Each Jew possesses a wellspring of sanctity and spiritual potential far greater than we often imagine (ibid., p. 166).

Rav Kook’s beloved student and colleague, Rav Yaakov Moshe Charlop, added that when we approach the menorah to light its flames, we are reminded that every Jew possesses kohen-like qualities—royalty, dignity, and spiritual elevation. No enemy or foreign influence can ever blemish the pure and exalted *neshama* of a Jew (ibid.).



5. A MITZVAH OF THE HOME

The mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah is defined as a household obligation: “*One candle for a man and his household*”



(Rambam, Hilchot Chanukah). Its prescribed placement—at the entrance of the home, facing outward—further underscores this focus.

Why does Chanukah place such emphasis on the home?

Rav Kook explains that the Greek decrees sought to uproot the Jewish way of life, whose foundation is Torah, modesty, and purity—particularly within the family unit (*Ein Ayah*, Shabbat 23a). The Greeks targeted the sanctity of the Jewish home in an effort to dismantle the moral core of the nation.

Midrashic sources describe harsh decrees aimed at humiliating Jewish families and eroding their purity, including prohibitions against *mikveh* observance and violations of marital sanctity (Ma’aseh Chanukah, Otzar Midrashim).

Against this backdrop, the Sages’ decision to anchor the mitzvah of the menorah in the home becomes deeply meaningful. The Chanukah lights proclaim that the sanctity of the Jewish home endures eternally. The unique *shalom bayit* that characterizes Jewish family life stands as one of the most beautiful expressions of our people’s spiritual distinctiveness.



6. THE HOLIDAY THAT LOOKS FORWARD

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik often observed

that Jewish festivals are typically celebrated by reenacting the past. On Pesach we eat matzah to taste the bread of slavery; on Shavuot we stand for the reading of the Ten Commandments to relive the revelation at Sinai; on Sukkot we dwell in huts reminiscent of those used in the wilderness.

Rav Kook suggested that Chanukah is different. While rooted in history, its primary emphasis is forward-looking. Lighting the menorah in our homes offers a living vision of the rebuilt Beit HaMikdash and the golden Menorah once again aflame.

Chanukah calls upon us to direct our gaze toward national renewal: a return to the Land of Israel, restored sovereignty, the rededication of the altar (*chanukat haMizbeach*), and ultimately the rebuilding of the Beit HaMikdash.



7. WHY MULTIPLE LEVELS?

The mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah is unique in that the Sages established multiple tiers of fulfillment. At its most basic level, one fulfills the obligation by lighting a single candle each night. Beyond this are the higher standards of *mehadrin* (beautifying the mitzvah) and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* (the most complete beautification). Why did the Sages choose to structure this mitzvah in such a layered fashion?

Rav Kook explains that these multiple levels mirror the historical reality of the Chanukah redemption itself. The Jewish people were not unified by a single motivation. Some joined the revolt against the Syrian Greeks out of a national aspiration—to reclaim political independence and restore Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel. Others, led by the Chashmonaim, were driven by a deeper spiritual calling: to restore the sanctity

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of Torah, the Temple, and the inner spiritual life of the nation.

Because the longing for redemption expressed itself on different planes, the Sages embedded this diversity into the mitzvah itself. Each level of lighting gives expression to a legitimate yearning within the people. In doing so, the Sages affirmed that even aspirations that fall short of the highest spiritual ideal still possess value and contribute to the unfolding redemption.

Rav Kook clearly saw this principle as essential for understanding the modern return of the Jewish people to their land. Not every movement or individual may be motivated by the most refined spiritual vision, yet all who act *מתוך אהבת האומה*—out of love for the Jewish people—participate in the redemptive process. While we strive toward *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, the most perfected expression of light, we must also recognize and honor the light generated by others who, each in their own way, seek the rebuilding of the Land and the renewal of Jewish life within it.

8. A FINAL WORD: RAV KOOK AND ELIEZER BEN-YEHUDA

On the second day of Chanukah in 1922, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda—father of modern Hebrew—visited Rav Kook. Ben-Yehuda often consulted Rav Kook on the roots and deeper meanings of Hebrew words, and on that day the two discussed a particular term at length, drawing on both the revealed and hidden dimensions of Torah.

As Ben-Yehuda rose to leave, Rav Kook gently said:

“Mr. Ben-Yehuda, perhaps you would consider drawing closer to a life of commitment and engaging in *teshuvah*?”

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Ben-Yehuda replied simply, “*Ulai*”—“perhaps.”

That evening, only hours after this encounter, Eliezer Ben-Yehuda passed away at the age of sixty-four.

Rav Yitzchak Arieli, who was present during the visit, later noted together with Rav Kook that the Talmud teaches that even saying “perhaps I will repent” is considered akin to actual repentance (Kiddushin 49b). Thus, Ben-Yehuda’s final word may itself have constituted *teshuvah* on the day of his death (Simcha Raz, *Angel Among Men*). ■



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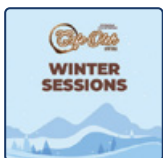
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Answer: Your friend can fulfill his basic *mitzva* in this way (Mishna Berura 676:9). If your neighbor comes home very late, it is a good question whether it is better for him to light himself then or have you do it for him at a “better” time (see Living the Halachic Process VI, D-7). We will leave that decision to him and his rabbis.

In general, “Reuven” recites a *beracha* before doing a *mitzva* on behalf of “Shimon” (Rambam, Berachot 11:13, mentioning the *mitzvot* of *mezusa*, *hafrashat ma’asrot*,

ma’akeh, and *mila*). This is because *birchot hamitzvot* relate to the *mitzva*’s action, not its fulfillment (Minchat Shlomo II:58). However, the way Reuven and Shimon team up in the fulfillment of the *mitzva* can differ significantly from *mitzva* to *mitzva*. We will give some examples.

All valid *mohalim* are halachically capable of doing *mila* to Shimon’s son, with Shimon just being the one with a specific obligation to do so. If Reuven does the *mila*, he fulfills the *mitzva* for himself, irrespective of whether Shimon asked him or fulfills his *mitzva* (see Shach, Choshen Mishpat 382:4). In contrast, Reuven needs Shimon’s authorization to take off *ma’asrot* and the *mitzva*’s impact applies to Shimon. In both cases, Reuven makes the *beracha* (Rambam *ibid.*; Derech Emuna, Terumot 4:1). Therefore, we would expect that if Reuven lights Chanukah candles in Shimon’s house, he would make the *beracha*.

The complication begins with the Bach, cited by the Magen Avraham (676:4) and Mishna Berura (675:9). He seems to say that one who already lit Chanukah lights can light for a woman (his case) but can make the *beracha* only if she is listening, because it is “the responsibility of a person’s body.” If Shimon listens, it is as if he makes the

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beracha himself. Rav SZ Auerbach, while puzzled why Chanukah lights are different from other *mitzvot*, explains that since the *mitzva* devolves on Shimon's house, which does not relate to Reuven, Reuven cannot make the *beracha* for himself.

There are other understandings of the Magen Avraham (Mikraei Kodesh (Frank) Chanuka 23; Igrot Moshe (OC I, 190) and Chovat Hadar 1:(42) generally concur). They say that the first *beracha*, i.e., a standard *birkat hamitzva*, can be made even if the home's resident is not there. The need for Shimon's presence concerns only the *berachot* of *She'asa Nissim* and *Shehecheyanu* (on the first night). This is because these *berachot* are connected to the experience of seeing the publicizing of the miracle, and they can only be made by or in the presence of the one to whom the *mitzva* applies. (If Reuven will not have an opportunity to make these *berachot* in his home, it is a different story.)

A precedent for these *berachot* being separate from the *mitzva* of lighting per se is found in the Shulchan Aruch (OC 676:2) – if someone has not lit or is connected to a lighting, he should make *She'asa Nissim* and *Shehecheyanu* when he sees someone else's candles. What is the subject of considerable debate is whether when members of one's household light on his behalf, he needs to make *She'asa Nissim* and *Shehecheyanu* himself (see Mishna Berura 676:6; ibid. 677:14).

Let us move on to practical suggestions. The indications are strong enough that you

should definitely not recite *She'asa Nissim* and *Shehecheyanu* at your neighbor's house, and therefore, he should try to find Chanukah lights upon which to recite them. Regarding *Lehadlik Ner*, it is very difficult to decide whether you can recite it. Therefore, it is usually best to light at your neighbor's home right after lighting at your own home, in which case the *beracha* goes on both venues (*Acharonim*, including Dirshu 675:15, in the name of Rav Elyashiv). An exception would be when your neighbor is abroad, in Central or Western Europe, in which case, you should light at a time when it is night where he is (see Living the Halachic Process VI, D-8). In that case, it is safer not to make any of the *berachot*. ■

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Chanukah: Creating More Light in the World

Chanukah is the Festival of Light, *Or*, but in Chazal, light is never merely physical. *Or* represents clarity, chesed, spiritual awakening, and the presence of Hashem in the world. When we light the menorah, we are not simply recalling a miracle of oil; we are reaffirming

our mission to illuminate the world through mitzvot, compassion, and acts of chesed. The Gemara in Shabbat 21b records the famous debate between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel regarding how the Chanukiah should be kindled. Beit Shammai taught that one should begin with eight lights on the first night and decrease by one each night. In contrast, Beit Hillel taught that one should

begin with a single light on the first night and increase by one each night. The Gemara explains Hillel's reasoning: "מעלין בקודש ואין מורידין" — we ascend in holiness and never descend.

This principle guides much of halachic and spiritual life: holiness is not static. It must grow, expand, and elevate. Lighting an additional candle each

evening embodies the Jewish commitment to continual spiritual ascent.

Why does holiness grow? Because holiness shared is holiness multiplied. Light, unlike physical resources, does not diminish when given away. When you use your flame to ignite another candle, your own flame remains just as bright. This is the essence of חנוכה; we increase our own light specifically by lighting the lights of others.

Chanukah is thus a call not only to elevate ourselves, but to help elevate those around us. Chazal teach (Yevamot 79a) that one of the defining traits of Am Yisrael is



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rachmanim, bayshanim, and gomlei chasaddim, compassion, modesty, and boundless generosity. Whenever we give tzedakah, emotional support, time, or kindness we mirror the original miracle of the oil; a small amount becomes much more than expected.

So too with every act of chesed, a small gesture can illuminate a life, a moment of attention can restore dignity, and a quiet act of giving can ripple outward, creating light in places we never imagined.

In our times, the need for light, kindness, charity, empathy is profound. Darkness takes many forms such as loneliness, hardship, confusion, spiritual disconnection. Yet that darkness can be lifted, even erased by infusing the light of our love and compassion that we have for others, by showing our true friendship and by being there in one's time of need.

Each night of Chanukah urges us to **add more light, add more goodness and add more giving.**

Just as the halachah follows Hillel, ascending candle by candle, so too we ascend by acts of generosity, each one building on the next. No act of giving is insignificant. Each is a small flame that Hashem helps expand.

Eli Moshe Zimbalist HY"D lived his life embodying this very principle of giving light to others. He added so much goodness to this world and lived a life of מעלין בקודש. He was constantly helping and uplifting those around him, offering a kind word, a smile, or a helping hand even before anyone asked.

In his memory, we created a sticker that reads: אל תכחו שיבקשו פשוט תעזרו *"Don't wait to be asked, simply help."* This captured his spirit perfectly. Eli Moshe's

generosity was quiet, humble, and consistent. He was always present for others, making a difference in ways both large and small. His life serves as a living example of how each of us can illuminate the world by selflessly lifting others.

May we all be inspired by the light Eli Moshe lived his life by and use it to help others in all aspects of life. We all have what to share and give of ourselves to others. So when you light your candles, think about how you can shine, illuminate and radiate **your** special light in the world and how much an impact it can have and the lasting imprint it leaves in making this world a better place for us all. Chanukah Sameach! ■

Sara Zimbalist made Aliyah with her family almost 20 years ago to Bet Shemesh. She volunteers as an EMT in Ichud Hatzala.

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PORTION FROM THE PORTION

RAKEL BERENBAUM
CONTRIBUTOR, TORAH TIDBITS



Maoz Zur Yeshuati - Mah Nishtana? Pesach and Chanukah - What's the Connection?

For some time now I have been working on producing a Haggada with pieces that move and pop-up. My "Pop-up Haggada" makes the familiar text more exciting for the kids (6 to 106) who will use it, and will help keep them engaged throughout the long Seder night. There are only a few more things left till it's finished and may even be ready for this Pesach. So it's understandable that I constantly have Pesach on my mind. So what does that have to do with our current holiday of Chanukah?

Well, while preparing this column for Chanukah it hit me that the song "*Maoz Zur Yeshuati*", that we sing after lighting the Chanukah candles isn't only about Chanukah. Actually, only one of the six verses of this *piut* speaks about Chanukah, and the song even includes one whole verse about Pesach. So what is so

special about this song that is sung by families in all communities (except for Teimanim) while standing together around the burning Chanukah candles? Why was this song chosen to be sung at such a special spiritual time?

The first verse of the song is a prayer for the reestablishment of the Beit Hamikdash, our House of Prayer where we can also bring the Toda -the sacrifice for thanksgiving and give thanks to God. Chanukah is a time for giving thanks, and we would like to be able to do that in the Beit Hamikdash.

The next four stanzas recall four exiles that the Jewish people endured and praise God for redeeming us from each one of them. Included in this list are slavery in Egypt, the Babylonian exile, the Purim story and Chanukah itself. The holiday we celebrate today is part of our long history of Hashem being there for us.

The last verse of the song "*Chasof zeroa kodshecha* - Take retribution against the evil nation" is a request for God to take revenge against Israel's enemies (no shortage of those), for that reason it was censored and doesn't appear in some siddurim. Of course, these lines reminded me of the part in the Haggadah when we open the door for Eliyahu and say "*Shefoch Chamatcha al hagoim asher*

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lo Yaducha – Pour out Your wrath upon the nations who do not know You...". We pray to Hashem to punish the goyim for what they have done to the Jews. Revenge against enemies of Israel and of God is important.

So back to our question – why "Maoz Zur Yeshuati" on Chanukah? For one reason, while "al hanisim" that we recite in the *shemona esra* and *birkat hamazon* on Chanukah highlights the miracle of winning the battle, it doesn't mention the miracle of the small flask of oil that lasted 8 days. *Maoz Zur* does just that and talks about the miracle of the oil in line 19 "Uminotar kankanim – from the last remaining flask a miracle was wrought for your beloved ". So that gives some balance.

Another reason the song is so popular is that it connects the story of the miracles of Chanukah into the overall historical system of Hashem's hashgacha over Israel (providence) throughout the generations. Just like God saved us from the Egyptians, and the Babylonians, and Haman He saved us from the Greeks and will continue to save us till Moshiach comes.

Maybe this year a nice family activity while together lighting the Chanukia would be to write a personal family stanza for "Maoz Zur" that poetically and musically gives thanks for the miracles that we all experienced here in Israel this year. Many people feel the events were on a Biblical scale and it is appropriate to sing thanks for them. Channukah Sameach

.....

The Greeks tried to make us forget the Torah so we had to fight against them, and thanks to God's help, they are no longer a super power that we must contend with. I thought it appropriate to include a recipe for Greek fried patties – a little different kind of

latke. Chanukah Sameach.

GREEK CHICKPEA FRIED PATTIES (REVITHOKEFTEDES) WITH YOGURT DIP

- 450grams / 15 oz home cooked or canned chickpeas, drained
- 1 small onion, chopped finely
- 1 egg
- 1 clove garlic, pressed
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- 12 tablespoons flour
- 4 tablespoons olive oil
- Oil for frying

Blend the chickpeas, olive oil, garlic, and oregano until smooth. Add the remaining ingredients, except the flour. Season with salt and pepper. Mix well. Then gradually stir in the flour one tablespoon at a time. The dough will be sticky. Remove egg-sized portions and form into patties. Heat oil in a frying pan and gently fry the keftedes until well browned on all sides. Drain excess oil on a paper towel. Arrange on a serving dish with lemon wedges, scallions and Greek yogurt dip.

GREEK YOGURT DIP

- 3 tablespoons Greek yogurt
- ½ lime zest & juice
- 3 mint leaves

Mix the Greek yogurt, lime juice and zest in a small bowl. Finely chop the fresh mint leaves and add to the bowl. Season with salt and pepper and whisk until fully combined. ■

 **Mazal Tov to** 
Jake and Helen Weichholz and
family on the marriage of their
granddaughter



ARIELA DAVIS

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The Gevura of Resilience

Every Chanukah, we commemorate the ancient victory of the few against the many during the times of the Chashmonaim. However, over these two plus years of war, the concept of Gevura has become all too real, as seen in the faces of the soldiers and their families that are our neighbors and friends or even in our own families.

But there are many different kinds of Gevura including a level revealed in these parshiyot of “Sippurei Yosef”.

If Yosef were a teenager today, he could win the “prize” of the one who has it the worst. By little fault of his own, he is thrown into a pit by his brothers, sold by them to Egypt (or at least they plan to), and then when the handsome 17 year old heroically resists temptation, he is thrown into a prison for a crime he did not commit. He interprets dreams and

despite being forgotten in return, he doesn’t despair and Hashem’s name is constantly in his mouth. What’s more, despite probably wondering if his father knowingly sent him to his brothers to be sold, Yosef continuously keeps his father’s image as an inspiration to stay true to his values. Yosef refuses to be a victim. As a result, he rises to the highest level of success in a foreign culture in the Torah.

But Yosef is not the only main character of the “Sippurei Yosef”. Running parallel is the story of Yehuda, the fourth brother with leadership qualities who is the one who suggests selling Yosef to Egypt. Despite his father’s heartbreak, Yehuda does not admit guilt but ends up in a downward spiral. In a story that appears as a non-sequiter (and a story that we somehow “didn’t have time to cover at school”), Yehuda marries a Cnani woman, which has only been done before by Esav before him. He has two children that each marry Tamar and then subsequently leave her as a childless widow as they engage in behavior that is evil in the eyes of Hashem. Yehuda does not offer Tamar to his youngest son as he promises but rather leaves her in a state of limbo, an agunah of sorts. Yehuda then unknowingly impregnates his daughter-in-law thinking she is a prostitute and just when it seems he is beyond repair, he stunningly chooses to publicly admit guilt, saving Tamar. Yehuda emerges from this story as a different person- one who subsequently takes responsibility and stands up for Binyamin in a way that he chose not to stand up for Yosef.

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These two stories of Yosef and Yehuda are both stories of Gevura in the image of resilience. Yosef refuses to be defined by what happens to him and Yehuda refuses to be defined by his mistakes. They both overcome. From these two men, come Mashiach ben David and Mashiach ben Yosef.

Fittingly, we always read these stories around Chanukah.

On Chanukah we celebrate the dual miracles of the oil lasting for 8 days- and also the victory of the few fighting against the many. While both miracles show a tremendous level of Hashgachat Hashem, Rabbi Sacks adds that there is an additional miracle. What made the Chashmonaim continue to search for sealed oil when none could be found- and why did they light the Menorah when it wouldn't last for the eight days it would take to make more oil? And what made the Maccabim think that it was worth fighting against the superior Syrian-Greek army? What unites both miracles, says Rabbi Sacks, is the fact that despite all odds, that they even tried.

We are living in difficult times. In Israel, we are divided from within and have countless enemies facing us from the outside. In the Diaspora, Jewish communities are facing anti-Semitism the likes of which we have never seen. In our homes, parents are facing the threat that smartphones bring into them with over-exposure and addiction. The challenges our generation face sometimes seem insurmountable.



But if there is anything we learn from the parshiyot surrounding Chanukah and Chanukah itself is the message of resilience. That gevura means not giving up and always looking for the light, no matter how dark our surroundings may be. We are living in





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difficult times but also in uniquely miraculous times when we have been privileged to see yad Hashem in ways that have been unparalleled in our history. Here in Eretz Yisrael, we have been a part of kibbutz Galuyot and in the wake of this war, we can almost hear the footsteps of Mashiach.

In the spirit of the Maccabim of old and the modern day heroes around us, may we continue to display Gevura in our homes and around the world by standing for the values we believe in and never giving up. ■

Ariela Davis is a passionate Jewish educator and writer, who also served as a Rebbetzin before her aliyah in 2020. She is the Menahel of Ulpanat Orly in Bet Shemesh.

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Becoming Hashem's Partner: How to Begin Your Journey as a Matchmaker

לעילוי נשמת
מאיר יצחק בן יוסף אליהו הכהן ז"ל

Dov asks:

Aleeza, I'm a new ambassador just starting out in the world of matchmaking. I feel excited but also nervous because I really want to do this right. What are your best tips for being the most effective and supportive shadchan I can be for my candidates?

Aleeza answers:

First of all- welcome to the holy work of matchmaking! You've stepped into something sacred. This isn't just about introductions or logistics, it's about helping souls find their way back to each other. That's holy work, and Hashem Himself is your partner in it.

My first piece of advice is simple: *lead with heart, not pressure*. People don't need perfect matches; they need someone who truly listens to them. Learn their story, what lights them up, what scares them, what they hope for. When people feel seen, they open up, and that's when real matchmaking begins.

Second: *hold judgment lightly*. You'll meet all kinds of people, some open, some guarded, some who seem "difficult." Remember, we never know the journey someone has walked. Instead of labeling, try reminding yourself: "We each have a past, how can I understand them and help them move forward?" The best shadchanim see potential where others see problems.

Third: *remember, you're the shaliach,*


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not the author. Your job is to bring people together, not to control outcomes. You can suggest, guide, and pray, but the results are in each person's decision and Hashem's hands. Every effort plants a seed, even if you don't see it bloom right away.

Fourth: *take care of your own heart.* This work can be emotional. There will be disappointments and frustrations. Make time for tefillah, for gratitude, and for joy. You can't pour from an empty cup.

And finally: *believe in miracles.* Because in this field, you'll see them. You'll witness how timing, geography, and chance meetings turn into weddings. When it happens, pause and whisper, "Thank You, Hashem. I got to be part of Your plan."

So take a deep breath and begin with faith. You don't have to be perfect, you just have to be present, patient, and full of heart. The rest, as always, is up to Him. May you have the right words, at the right time, to make the right matches.

Aleeza ■

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SHOSHANA JUDELMAN

TORAH TIDBITS CONTRIBUTOR



8 Lessons From the Chanukah Lights

My birthday is on Chanukah, so in lieu of being able to send out personal blessings to all of you, I want to share an idea that is giving me extra strength this year. May it be a blessing and a tefillah for all of us.

In the discussion about Chanukah candles in the Gemara (Shabbos 21b), there are differing opinions about which way to light. There are three basic ideas:

1. Light one Chanukah menorah per household
2. Light one Chanukah menorah per person
3. Light either an ascending or a descending number of lights each night (either per household or per person)

According to the House of Shammai we should light 8 candles on the first night and decrease each night for 8 nights.

According to the House of Hillel we should light 1 candle on the first night and increase up to 8.

No matter how many menorahs are lit, we all follow the House of Hillel and increase

in light. This is considered “Mehadrin min HaMehadrin”- the “best of the best” way to light the candles on Chanukah.

What I find surprising and meaningful is that NO ONE suggests that we light all 8 candles each night.

Wouldn't that be the most exciting and most light-filled? Wouldn't that bring the most energy into the world?

And yet, we don't do it that way.

There are important lessons here...

These are the 8 that I am working on internalizing:

1. **Remember that the journey is just as important as (if not more important than) the destination.** We spend far more time in it and we often forget to value and enjoy it.
2. **Constant growth as a value** - We wake up every morning with the opportunity to do something a little bit differently, to respond a bit more positively, to learn a new skill or smile at someone new, to take chances and to bring more light into the world.
3. **Set achievable goals and**
4. **Acknowledge each achievement** Each night when we light one more candle, we have achieved another goal. Recognizing and celebrating all achievements

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strengthens us to keep dreaming and trying.

5. **No one is expected to be able to do something perfectly the first time** - We don't jump straight to 8. We must have patience with ourselves and not give up. Only through time, effort and repetition can we become proficient at whatever tasks we set for ourselves.
6. **Life happens one day at a time** - Try to remember to take each day as it comes and to not make yourself afraid by stressing out over what is coming. Be here now.
7. **Keep moving forward** - Life presents us with many challenges and we just have to breathe and take the next step. Don't get stuck in what was or what "could have been"- just keep going and trying
8. **Every. Little. Bit. Counts.** All of the effort that we ever put in has an effect on us and the world around us. May we all be strengthened, energized and healed by the light of the Chanukah candles. May we all internalize the light and utilize it to look at our children, our communities and ourselves with compassion and encouragement. And may we merit the ultimate light and the ultimate healing with the coming of Moshiach very very soon.

Happy Chanukah and Shabbat Shalom! ■

Shoshana Judelman is passionate about learning and growing through Chassidus. She gives shiurim to women in many communities around Israel, including Efrat, Elazar, Raanana and Jerusalem as well as at Midreshet Rachel V'Chaya. Shoshana also guides groups at Yad Vashem and leads journeys to Poland and other countries around Europe for JRoots.



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She was like Aron, who loved peace and pursued peace.



Yoni thanks Hashem for having the opportunity of having Tziporah in his life, to learn of her caring, patience and happiness, to overcome her challenges. May Tziporah's Neshama be a light onto the world, in a time of darkness, and may her Neshama shine to Gan Eden. Yoni misses Tziporah with tears in his eyes, as Hashem gave him a gift, a crown jewel, now he returns her to Hashem.

With thanks and Toda. Love, Yoni

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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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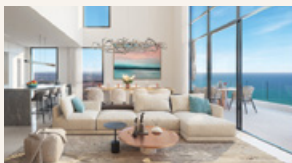
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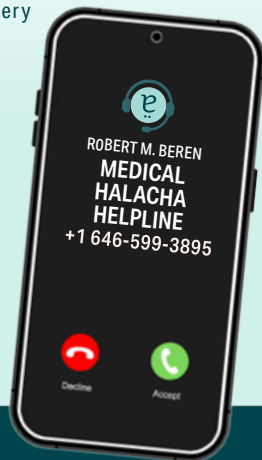
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