

# *Torah Wellsprings*

*Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita*

*Vayeishev*

*Chanuka*





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Vayeishev - Chanuka

## Accept Hashem's Will with Joy

We must accept the portion Hashem gives us and even be happy with it. Hashem destined it to be so; therefore, it is undoubtedly for best.

It states (39:20), ויקח אדני יוסף אותו ויתנהו אל בית, "Yosef's master took Yosef and put him into prison where the king's prisoners are detained." This was a great degradation. The holy Yosef HaTzaddik was imprisoned together with criminals. But there are hints that Yosef was always happy, even in prison. The end of the pasuk states, ויהי שם בבית הסוהר, "and he was there, in prison." These words seem superfluous because where else would he be? Obviously, if Yosef was placed in jail, he was "there, in prison."

The Torah tells us that Yosef was happy to be in jail. It wasn't a *b'dieved*, a negative experience he had to endure. Hashem placed him in prison, and he believed that he had a mission to accomplish there. ויהי שם בבית הסוהר, he was in jail with all his heart and soul. He believed that it was the best place for him to be, so he was happy with his lot.<sup>1</sup>

The Sfas Emes writes, "Yosef was extremely wise, and he was also wealthy. (Potiphar gave Yosef everything he owned [see 39:8]).

If Yosef wanted, he could have figured out a way to be let out of prison. But he believed his imprisonment was Hashem's will, so he remained there and didn't try to leave."

The Kedushas Levi writes, "Yosef could have tried to free himself from jail, but he didn't because he trusted in Hashem that everything was for the good."

The Midrash says, "Eliezer served Avraham loyally, and in this merit, instead of being cursed (ארור), he was blessed (ברוך)."

Another Midrash (*Shir HaShirim* 1:1) states יוסף על ידי ששימש את רבו באמונה יצא לחירות, "Yosef served Potiphar loyally, and in that merit, he was freed from jail."

The Sifsei Tzaddik asked his brother-in-law, the Sfas Emes, "We understand that Eliezer was blessed for his loyal service because it was a great mitzvah to serve Avraham Avinu. But why would Yosef be freed from prison for serving Potiphar loyally?

What was special about serving Potiphar?"

The Sfas Emes answered the Sifsei Tzaddik that when the Midrash writes באמונה, it doesn't mean loyalty, as is its simple translation. It implies that Yosef served Potiphar with belief in Hashem. He believed that Hashem wanted

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1. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk and Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli zt'l were placed in prison, and with super strength, they were happy there. This is what occurred:

In their cell, there was a bucket used as a toilet. Rebbe Elimelech was very upset because they couldn't daven or learn Torah in their cell. It wasn't bad enough that they were in jail, but they couldn't even serve Hashem there!

His brother, Rebbe Zusha, explained that the bucket was a reason to rejoice because by refraining from studying Torah and saying tefillos, they kept the halachah that prohibits doing so in unclean places. They were doing Hashem's will, which is a reason to rejoice.

Rebbe Elimelech agreed, and they sang and danced around the bucket.

The angry prison warden rushed in to see why they were so happy. He saw them dancing around the bucket and said, "Oh, so this is what you are so happy about!" and removed the pail from the room.

him to be a slave in Mitzrayim to Potiphar, and therefore, he accepted this role willingly, and with joy. In the merit of his emunah, he was freed from jail.

Regarding Yosef's stay in Mitzrayim, it states (39:2), ויהי ה' את יוסף, "Hashem was with Yosef." We understand that Yosef was happy in Mitzrayim because otherwise, Hashem wouldn't be with Yosef, as Chazal (*Shabbos* 30) say, "The *Shechinah* rests with someone who is happy."

Also, about Yosef's time in Potiphar's home it states (39:2), ויהי איש מצליח, "He was a successful man," and the Midrash translates as גבר קפוז, "a dancing person." Yosef was dancing and filled with joy.

But how was he so happy during these trying circumstances?

The answer lies in Yosef's *emunah*. He believed that this was Hashem's will; Hashem wanted him to be a slave in Mitzrayim, and he believed that everything was for the good, so why shouldn't he be happy?<sup>2</sup>

This is an attitude that we can emulate and seek to attain. The Chazon Ish zt'l said, "Everyone passes through the world; some pass through whilst crying, and some pass through with laughter. It is better to pass through the world with laughter." It is an *avodah*, one which doesn't happen naturally, if he doesn't strive for it. When a person remembers that the situation that he is in is the best situation for him, he can then be happy with his portion.

The Sfas Emes concludes, "We must learn from these *parshiyos* to accept Hashem's decrees with love and joy because everything is in His hands."

Last week's *parashah* discusses אלופי עשו, Eisav's large and powerful family. This

week's *parashah* begins with the words וישב יעקב, "And Yaakov sat."

The Midrash (84:5) writes, "This can be compared to a person suddenly surrounded by a pack of dogs. Since he is afraid of them, he sits down among them. Similarly, Yaakov saw Eisav's family (the אלופי עשו stated in the *pasukim* before). He was afraid of them, so he sat down among them."

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains that "sitting among the troubles" means accepting them with the belief that everything is for the good.

It states (37:34) ויקרע יעקב שמלתיו וישם שק במתניו, "Yaakov rent his garments, and he put sackcloth on his loins, and he mourned for his son many days." The Midrash (84:20) states, "From the time Yaakov took the sackcloth, the sackcloth never left him, nor his children, nor his grandchildren, and it will continue until the end of generations."

The Chasam Sofer zt'l explains that the Midrash is saying that it wasn't good to put on sackcloth. It demonstrates that we aren't at peace with what is happening. The ideal outlook is to believe that even the most challenging situations are from Hashem, for our good.

### Serve Hashem with Joy

The *sar ha'ofim*, Pharaoh's chief baker, told Yosef (40:15-16) that in his dream, he was carrying baskets of bread on his head, and birds were eating from the basket.

Yosef told him that he would be hung and birds would eat his flesh. And that is what occurred (see 40:22).

How did Yosef know that this was the interpretation of the dream?

2. It states (39:2) ויהי ה' את יוסף ויהי איש מצליח, "Hashem was with Yosef, and He was a successful man." The Ksav Sofer zt'l (*Teshuvah Orach Chaim* 27) explains that "Hashem was with Yosef," which means the *Shechinah* resided on him, and this is because Yosef was happy. How was he happy? ויהי איש מצליח, he considered himself successful because he was carrying out the mission Hashem prepared for him.

The Chida (*Pnei David*, Vayeishev) answers with a *mashal*:

An artist painted a true-to-life picture of a man carrying a basket filled with fruits. Birds were pecking at the canvas because they thought the fruit was real. People said, "The painting is so true-to-life, it even fools the birds."

A wise person disagreed. He said, "If the painting were true-to-life, the birds wouldn't come. They would be afraid of the man holding the basket. But birds come, so I'd call it 'a dead painting.'"

The Chida explains that the *sar ha'ofim* dreamt that he was carrying a basket on his head, and yet birds came and ate the bread. Yosef said, "If the birds aren't afraid of the man holding the basket, this proves he's dead." That's how Yosef knew the fate of the *sar Ha'ofim*.

We'll take this lesson a step further:

In the dream, the *sar ha'ofim*, carrying the loaves of bread on his head, was alive, yet we see that one can be alive and be considered dead. The same can be said about someone who keeps the mitzvos without joy. He is alive, and his heart is pumping, but a major part of his being is dead. That isn't the way to perform the mitzvos. We should keep the mitzvos with *hislahavus* and with joy. On Chanukah, we should perform the mitzvos joyously, and it should be noticeable to all that we are alive.

The Gemara (*Taanis* 28) states, "The Yevanim forbade Yidden from donating wood for the *mizbeiach* and bringing *Bikurim* to Yerushalayim."

Why did they specifically target these two *mitzvos*? The Maharsha explains that these mitzvos were performed with joy and

celebration (as the *Mishnah Bikurim* states, "the flute played before them..."). The Yevanim didn't want the Jewish people to be happy.

The Bach (670) quotes a Chazal, which states that the Jewish nation was lax with the Avodah in the Beis HaMikdash. Therefore, the Yevanim forbade them from bringing the *korban tamid*. The Shem m'Shmuel (680) explains that the problem wasn't that they didn't bring the *korbanos*. Before the Yevanim's decree, they brought every *korban*, but they did so without joy, and therefore it was taken away from them.<sup>3</sup>

The Skulener Rebbe (Rebbe Eliezer Zusia) *zt'l* would say that at the beginning of the year, on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos, we build a beautiful (spiritual) edifice, which is the source for bounty and blessings for the new year. Yet, everyone understands that the building isn't finished without electricity. Something essential is missing from that structure. Similarly, the new year without light isn't complete. Chanukah adds the light. Now, the new year is complete. The light is the joy of *Yiddishkeit*, the happiness we experience when we perform the mitzvos.

## The Great Test

This week's parashah tells us about Yosef's great test with *ishes* Potiphar. A seventeen-year-old bachur, alone in Mitzrayim, distant from all Yidden, when he faced his difficult test. However, when we study the details of the test, we discover the magnitude of the challenge, but with all his might, he passed the test.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 35:) says, "Every day *ishes* Potiphar spoke to Yosef and tried to convince him to sin. The clothes she wore in the morning were not the same ones she

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3. Everything in the world is composed of four elements: (1) fire, (2) water, (3) wind, and (4) earth. Dovid HaMelech said (*Tehillim* 40:3), ויעלני... מטיט היין, "Hashem saved me from the mud of Yavan..." The Sfas Emes explains that mud is made from earth and water, but there's no fire there. This signifies the approach of Yavan. They strived to extinguish the fire of a Yid.



wore at night." Yosef kept his eyes down, so she placed an iron blade under his neck to force his head to remain erect. Still, Yosef didn't look at her.

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 87; *Tanchuma*) states that *eishes* Potiphar said, "I will give you less *parnassah* [if you refuse to sin]." Yosef replied, "Hashem feeds the hungry." She threatened to imprison him, to blind him, to send him to a distant land, but Yosef remained steadfast. He wouldn't sin before Hashem.

Another difficulty in this test was that the *yetzer hara* told him that it was a mitzvah. The Sfas Emes *zt'l* explains that the *yetzer hara* can't convince *tzaddikim* to perform *aveiros*, so he tries to convince them that the *aveirah* is a mitzvah, and that is what made Yosef's test so difficult.

Rashi (39:1) writes, "Just as Tamar intended *leshem shamayim*, also *eishes* Potiphar intended *leshem shamayim*. She saw in the stars that she would bear children with Yosef, but she didn't know whether it would be with her or her daughter." *Eishes* Potiphar saw the message in the stars, and she tried to convince Yosef that this meant that it was a mitzvah. Nevertheless, (39:8) וַיִּמָּאן, Yosef refused to sin.<sup>4</sup> Ultimately, he married Osnas bas Potiphar and bore children in a permitted manner.

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* writes that Yosef also saw in the stars that he would have a child with *eishes* Potiphar. He understood that this meant that he would eventually fail the test. He thought, "I will anyway end up committing this grave *aveirah*, so what purpose is there in passing the test now?"

But then Yosef told himself, "Right now, I can overcome the *yetzer hara*. What will be in the future will be, but now I can pass the test." This thought saved Yosef from the *aveirah*.

The Rambam (*Avos* 2:13) writes, וְאַל תְּהִי רָשָׁע בְּפִנֵּי עַצְמְךָ "Don't consider yourself a *rasha*, because if you think lowly about yourself, you won't consider your *aveiros* severe." The Beis Avraham says that *eishes* Potiphar tried to make Yosef look down at himself so he wouldn't feel distant from sin. This was one of the techniques she used to get Yosef to sin.

It states (39:12), וַתִּתְפַּשְׁהוּ בְּבִגְדוֹ, "She grabbed [Yosef] by his clothes." בְּבִגְדוֹ also means rebellion. The Beis Avraham explains that *eishes* Potiphar tried to convince Yosef that he was a rebellious and sinful person, so why shouldn't he perform this *aveirah*?

What was *eishes* Potiphar referring to when she said Yosef is sinful and rebellious? Rashi (39:6) writes, "When Yosef saw that he was ruling [in Potiphar's home], he began eating and drinking and fixing his hair. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, 'Your father is mourning, and you are curling your hair?! I will incite the bear [Potiphar's wife] against you.'"

Perhaps Potiphar's wife was referring to this when she told Yosef that he is rebellious. She wanted Yosef to focus on his faults and weaknesses.

Nevertheless, despite all these challenges, Yosef passed this difficult test. His example strengthens everyone to pass the tests that come their way.

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4. It also says וַיִּמָּאן by the mitzvah of *yibum* (*Devarim* 25:7, מִצְוַת יִבְמוֹ). The Midrash (87:5) says that Yosef told *eishes* Potiphar, "If a person can refuse to do *yibum* (as it states מִצְוַת יִבְמוֹ), which means one can refuse to perform a mitzvah, certainly one can refrain from an *aveirah*!"

The Sfas Emes explains that Yosef was telling her, "Even if you are correct that it is a mitzvah, I may refrain, just as one is permitted to refrain from the mitzvah of *yibum*. When one refuses to do *yibum*, another path opens – the path of *chalitzah*. Similarly, Yosef told her that even if it were a mitzvah, Hashem would arrange another way if he turned it down. (And indeed, Yosef married *eishes* Potiphar's daughter, who bore Efraim and Menasheh.)

### "There is No One Greater than Me" (*Gaavah d'Kedushah*)

We wrote above from the Rambam that when one considers himself a rasha, this negative self-image can bring him to commit aveiros. In contrast, when one believes in his greatness, it is easier for him to pass tests. Yosef said to *eishes* Potiphar (39:9), איננו גדול בבית, ממני, "No one in this house is greater than me." Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* explains that Yosef said, "I'm the greatest person in the world. I'm from the tzaddikim. There is no one greater than me." With this encouraging thought in mind, he was able to pass the test.<sup>5</sup>

And these are the words everyone should tell themselves when the *yetzer hara* tries to convince them to sin. One should say, "I'm among Hashem's beloved Yidden. I'm from the tzaddikim! I'm extremely distant from sin." And with such thoughts in mind, he won't commit *aveiros*.

This attitude is called *gaavah d'kedushah*, righteous pride, which one must use to overcome the *yetzer hara*.

Chazal say (*Sotah* 49:), בעקבתא דמשיחא חוצפה, יסגי, "Before Moshiach comes, there will be a lot of chutzpah." The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that this Gemara alludes to the era before Moshiach, when people will have the chutzpah and audacity to say, "I'm a tzaddik! I'm special!" And yet, that thought is necessary because, with pride, they will conquer the *yetzer hara*.

It states (37:3), וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו...ועשה, לו כתונת פסים, "And Yisrael loved Yosef more

than all his other sons...and he made him a silk coat." This coat, which only Yosef wore, created jealousy. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 10) states, "A person should never show favoritism to one son over the other because due to the extra clothing Yaakov gave Yosef, the brothers were jealous, and it led to our forefathers going down to Mitzrayim."

So, why did Yaakov give this coat to Yosef? *Baalei Mussar* explain that Yaakov knew that Yosef would have more difficult tests than all the other brothers when he was alone in Mitzrayim. Yaakov gave him honorable clothing to help him pass the tests.

The Baal HaTurim writes that פסי"ם is *roshei teivos* פוטיפר, סוחרים, ישמעאלים, מדינים, hinting at the four times Yosef was sold. The Baalei Mussar explain that each time Yosef was sold, he was confronted with a difficult test. The coat's purpose was to increase Yosef's self-esteem so he could pass those tests.<sup>6</sup>

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85.) relates that Reb Shimon bar Yochai had a grandson called Yossi who "went off the derech" and was initially a grave sinner. Rebbe (Reb Yehudah HaNasi) heard about this and wanted to be mekarev Reb Shimon's grandson back to the Torah. He hired a Torah teacher for Yossi, gave Yossi *semichah*, dressed him in a golden cloak, the type worn by rabbanim, and had everyone call him "rebbe." These measures raised Yossi's view of himself, and he gradually returned to Yiddishkeit. Whenever he was tempted to return to his old ways, his teacher reminded him, "You were made a *chacham*, you wear the cloak of

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5. After the Yidden sinned with the *egel*, Moshe Rabbeinu prayed for forty days that Hashem forgive them. Moshe Rabbeinu said that he was praying because (*Devarim* 9:19), כי יגרתני מפני האף, Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zy'a* said that Moshe was saying, כי יגרתני I was afraid מפני האף, that their noses may turn down due to their shame and disgrace, in result of their sin. That is the most significant problem because feeling down can lead to more sin.

6. The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* 141) says, "If Reuven knew that Hashem would write in the Torah that he saved Yosef, he would have carried Yosef on his shoulders to bring him to his father." This Midrash teaches us that our deeds are far greater than we imagine. If we knew how great our good deeds are viewed before Hashem, we would perform them in even better ways.



scholars, we call you 'rebbe,' and you want to leave?"

He would answer, "I swear, I won't ask to leave again."

Eventually, he became a great scholar, a tzaddik, even a Tana, and is called "Reb Yossi ben Reb Elazar ben Reb Shimon." The honor he received turned him around.

When Reb Yossi was *niftar*, they wanted to bury him near Reb Elazar, his father, but a snake blocked the entrance to the cave, and they couldn't bury him there. Some thought that Reb Yossi wasn't fitting to be near his father. A *bas kol* emanated and said, "It isn't that Reb Elazar is greater than Reb Yossi. Rather, it's because Reb Elazar suffered the pain of being hidden in a cave for thirteen years" (see *Shabbos* 33).

This Gemara is saying that Reb Yossi reached his father's level! This is how high Reb Yossi rose with his teshuvah. The pivotal change began when he received *semichah*, was called "rebbe," and wore the golden cloak of rabbanim. Honor does that to people. It turns people around. This is how Rebbe turned Reb Yossi into a *baal teshuvah* and a great *Tana*.

Here we have a lesson in chinuch. If you want your child to reach high levels, honor him. Believe in him. Consider him to be great. This will inspire your child to grow and reach his potential.<sup>7</sup>

The Or Zarua discusses lessons that can be learned from the order of the alef beis. For the letters ק ר, he explains that the first letter, ר, is written like this: "ר", which means empty,<sup>8</sup> representing the empty people, the sinners. How can we bring them to teshuvah? The solution is ק ר, *roshei teivos* for ק ר, *roshei teivos* for ק ר,

"call him rebbe." This is what Rebbe did to bring Reb Yossi back. Build his self-esteem, and he will reach his full potential.

After suffering the *tzaros* of World War Two, a chassidishe bachur strayed off the path and was planning to marry a non-Jewish woman ר"ל. People tried to convince him not to commit this grave sin, but he ignored their mussar.

Reb Gad'l Eizner ז"ל told him, ספאסט נישט, פאר א חסידישע בחור, "It isn't right for a *chassidishe bachur*." That straightforward rebuke turned him around. It was rebuke laced in honor. He was honored with the title "chassidishe bachur" and wanted to continue being worthy of this title.

It states (*Mishlei* 3:11), מוסר ה' בני אל תמאס. The Yesod HoAvodah explains the words מוסר ה', Hashem gives *mussar* by saying בני, "You are my son! אל תמאס, Don't disgrace yourself with bad deeds."

Reb Yankele Galinsky ז"ל tells that when he was in a Siberian prison, one of his cellmates would awaken in the middle of the night, dress in an army uniform, and march about the room, as he pretended to be giving demands to people.

One night, Reb Yankele asked him why he did this.

The prisoner was embarrassed. He didn't realize that he was being watched. Reb Yankele promised he wouldn't tell anyone and was just curious why he did this. The prisoner replied, "I was a powerful general in the German army. Hundreds of soldiers were under my command. I don't want to forget my glorious past. I put on my military uniform with all my medals and pretend I'm once again a commander over hundreds of

7. A *bachur* from Reb Isser Zalman Meltzer's yeshiva once said an innovative Torah thought. Reb Isser Zalman requested *mashkeh*, and the entire yeshiva drank *lechayim* because of their joy from this *bachur*'s discovery in Torah. The *bachur* said that for the next half-year, he studied diligently due to the honor he received that day.

8. ר means empty. As Onkelus on וברו וברו writes, ר, "empty and void."

soldiers. This gives me strength to endure the humiliation and affliction we suffer here in this Russian prison."

Reb Yankele would tell this story to remind us that we are the King's sons and shouldn't forget our glory and pride.

Rebbe Shlomo Karliner zt'l would say, "The greatest yetzer hara is that we forget that we are a ben Melech, children of Hashem, the King."

### Chanukah Reveals the Greatness of Every Yid

We discussed that every Yid should consider himself special. It was this pride that angered the Yevanim. It bothered the Yevanim that Yidden believe they have a close connection with Hashem and that their deeds have universal, and even celestial, significance.

This is the reason they forced Yidden to write on their oxen's horns, שאין לכם חלק באלקי ישראל, that they don't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael. They didn't want them to feel important.

This jealousy continues until today. Deep down, goyim know that the Jewish people are Hashem's chosen nation, and this gives them no rest. They know that our deeds are significant to Hashem, and they have trouble swallowing that reality.

The Sfas Emes (5636 ליל י"ד איתא) writes, "The Yevanim stopped the Yidden from performing three mitzvos: Chodesh, Shabbos, and bris milah. Why did they specifically want to annul chodesh, more than all other mitzvos? And what aspect of Rosh Chodesh did they want to annul? It doesn't seem this refers to the korban Mussaf of Rosh Chodesh, so what did they want to annul? It seems they wanted

to annul kiddush hachodesh, when witnesses tell beis din that they saw a new moon, and beis din establishes the day as Rosh Chodesh. It angered the Yevanim that the calendar and the yomim tovim should depend on Bnei Yisrael.

"Therefore, they said, 'Write on the oxen's horn that you don't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael.' [These words contradict themselves.] If Hashem is the 'G-d of Yisrael,' as they were told to write on the oxen's horn, this automatically means they have a portion with Hashem!

"[But the answer is, the Yevanim knew and agreed that Hashem is the G-d of Yisrael, but they didn't want Yidden to feel that they have a חלק, portion, with Hashem, and that their deeds can bring holiness to the world.]" They weren't against us performing mitzvos, but they were against our belief that the mitzvos we perform have supernatural qualities, and through the mitzvos, we become attached to Hashem, and we draw down Hashem's holiness.

Another reason for this decree was that the Yevanim accepted that there were tzaddikim among Klal Yisrael who had a close connection with Hashem. This is why Hashem is called "the G-d of Yisrael," the G-d of tzaddikim. But they denied that there's a connection between Hashem and the average Yid, or between Hashem and a Yid who is at a very low level.

The Sfas Emes teaches that the Yevanim failed to educate the Jewish nation to believe like them. In fact, due to the gezeiros of that era, Hashem gave the Jewish nation Chanukah, which reveals the close connection between Hashem and the Jewish nation.<sup>9</sup>

The Rambam (*Hilchos Chanukah* 4:12) writes, מצות נר חנוכה מצוה חביבה היא עד מאוד וצריך אדם להזהר

9. *Shulchan Aruch* (673:1) states, "If a Chanukah candle gets mixed and lost among other candles, even at a ratio of 1/1000, it doesn't become *batel*." This is because Chanukah represents the essence of a Yid and his specialty. Even when combined with another thousand, he doesn't lose his unique, individual status and value.

בה, "The mitzvah of lighting Chanukah *lecht* is an extremely beloved mitzvah, and a person must be cautious with it."

Why is Chanukah *lecht* called מצוה חביבה, a beloved mitzvah?

We will explain with a *mashal*:

A poor girl married a very wealthy man. She felt honored to live in the large mansion that he provided. She had never lived amidst so much wealth before. But one day, she told her husband that she preferred to live in her previous home, where she lived before she got married.

Her husband agreed, and they moved into the tiny home. This made his wife very happy because now she knew for sure that her husband loved her. When she lived in her husband's wealthy estate, she thought: "He brought me to his fancy home because he lives there. Where else should he bring me? This doesn't prove that he loves me." But when she saw that her husband was prepared to forgo pleasure and comfort to please her, that assured her that he loved her.

The Rambam calls Chanuka *lecht* מצוה חביבה a very beloved mitzvah because, on Chanukah, Hashem comes down to our low levels. This proves that He loves us. He comes down to us to elevate us so we can be close to Him.

The Meor Einayim writes, "The *Shechinah* never descends below ten *tefachim* (see *Succah* 5). However, Hashem makes sure that no Jew will be detached from Him. So, during the miracle of Chanukah, Hashem *kiveyachol* comes down below ten *tefachim*. He comes close to man to bring him back up to Him."

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt'l* said, "On Shabbos, Hashem brings us up to Him. On *yom tov*, Hashem comes down to us. On Chanukah, Hashem visits His children in prison." It is the holiday for the people imprisoned by the *yetzer hara*. On this holiday, Hashem comes to them.

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt'l* explains, "When a king is on his throne, in his palace, the average person can't visit him. Surely, those punished by the king won't be able to visit the king. However, when the king travels around his kingdom, it's his custom to visit the prisoners in jail. At this time, the prisoners shout, 'King! Save us!' This is what happens on Chanukah. Hashem comes to us to save us from our imprisonment."

In Avodah Zarah (20:), Reb Pinchas ben Yair teaches ten steps for success in avodas Hashem. They are, תורה מביאה לידי זהירות, זיהירות, נקיות מביאה לידי פרישות, פרישות מביאה לידי טהרה, טהרה מביאה לידי חסידות, חסידות מביאה לידי ענוה, ענוה מביאה לידי יראת חטא, יראת חטא מביאה לידי קדושה, קדושה מביאה לידי רוח הקודש. Ten levels are mentioned here. Chazal (*Succah* 5.) state, "The *Shechinah* never goes down below ten." This hints that one needs to have success in at least one of the ten levels mentioned here to have a connection with the *Shechinah*. But on Chanukah, we light the menorah below ten *tefachim*. This hints that on Chanukah, even if one is at a very low level and hasn't even begun avodas Hashem, the *Shechinah* will come to him and help him rise from there.

One night, before lighting Chanukah *lecht*, the Tolna Rebbe *zt'l* asked a chassid who had a short wife, "When you speak to your wife, does she climb up on a chair to speak to you or do you bend down to speak with her?" After asking this question, the Rebbe lit the Chanukah *lecht*.

Rebbe Mordechai Dov of Hornesteipel *zt'l* explained the Tolna Rebbe's intention. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59.) says, "If you have a short wife, bend down to seek her counsel." The Tolna Rebbe hinted that on Chanukah, Hashem *keviyachol* bends down to whichever level we are on to elevate us.

The Sfas Emes writes, "Chanukah is mostly for the *chalashim* and the *beinonim*." Chanukah is mainly for the Yidden who are at a low or mediocre level. Chanukah is their opportunity to come close to Hashem.<sup>10</sup>



### Bitachon

It states in this week's parashah (40:23), ולא, "The *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef and he forgot him." The pasuk seems to be saying the same thing twice because ולא זכר, "he didn't remember Yosef," and וישכחו "he forgot him," share the same meaning!<sup>11</sup>

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l explains the repetition to mean that they forgot one another. ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף, the *sar hamashkim* forgot Yosef, וישכחו and Yosef forgot the *sar hamashkim*.

We aren't surprised that the *sar hamashkim* forgot Yosef. But we should be impressed that Yosef forgot the *sar hamashkim*. Yosef's forgetting the *sar hamashkim* demonstrates a very high *madreigah* of bitachon. Yosef was in prison for ten years, and this was perhaps his first ray of hope to be released. Most people in Yosef's place would be thinking about the *sar hamashkim* all the time, wondering whether he spoke to Pharaoh on their behalf. But after Yosef did his *hishtadlus*, he didn't think about the *sar hamashkim* anymore. Yosef knew that ultimately it was solely Hashem who could save him, so he forgot about the *sar hamashkim*.

The Rebbe of Radzimin zt'l, (*Bikurei Aviv*) asks, "Why did the brothers need to show Yaakov the blood-stained coat? (see 38:31-34).

When Yaakov would see that Yosef wasn't coming home, he would assume, on his own, that Yosef was killed! The answer is that had Yaakov not been shown the blood-stained coat, Yaakov would have had *bitachon* that Yosef was still alive, and Yaakov would have had *bitachon* that Yosef would return home. Yaakov's perfect bitachon would have drawn Hashem's assistance. The Mitzrim would

have surely sent Yosef home. And then, Yosef would reveal to their father that his brothers sold him, and Yaakov would be angry with them. Therefore, they slaughtered a goat, dipped Yosef's coat in its blood, and sent it to their father." They were protecting themselves from what would occur if Yaakov had bitachon.

We see from this vort the power of bitachon. The story of Chanukah also teaches us the power of bitachon because the *Chashmonaim* won the war against the Yevanim since they trusted in Hashem. The *Chashmonaim* were kohanim, and כהן is *gematriya* בטחון.

Many people say יושב בסתר עליון (Tehillim 91) after lighting Chanukah *lecht*, which talks about *bitachon*. כי אתה ה' מחסי, "You Hashem are my shield. לא תירא מפחד לילה, therefore I am not afraid." The *Abuderham* writes that we don't find the letter ך in this *kappitel* because when one trusts in Hashem, he doesn't need כלי זין, weapons.

The *Midrash Chanukah* (quoted by the *Rokeiach*) relates that Gaskalgus (others say it was Bagris) was the general of Yavan, and he led an enormous army. They arrived in Eretz Yisrael and found twelve *Chashmonaim* preparing to fight the battle with them. The general scoffed at them, "Fools! You want to battle with my enormous army!?"

The *Chashmonaim* prayed to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and Hashem seized seventy malachim in heaven, hit the malachim with a fiery whip, and warned them to protect the Jewish nation. When a Greek soldier shot an arrow at the Jewish people, a *malach* would intercept the arrow and shoot it back at the soldier who shot it, straight in his heart. The *Chashmonaim* saw these miracles and said, ה'

10. Many people use cotton wicks on Chanukah, and in Yiddish, cotton is *vatte*. *Vatte* also means distant (ימיט). We use *vatte* wicks to hint that even those distant from Hashem can come close to Him on Chanukah.

11. Rashi answers, וישכחו לאחר מכן, ולא זכר בו ביום, the *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef on that day, and he forgot him later.

לחם לנו, "Hashem is fighting this battle for us!"

When one of the kings of Yavan was killed, the *malachim* took all his money and threw it into Jewish homes. (The Yidden couldn't take the money themselves because of all the corpses...)

Eliforni gathered an army of 120,000 mighty warriors, 22,000 archers, and camels carrying endless food supplies. In the past, Eliforni had conquered many large, powerful countries. The Yidden heard that he was approaching, and they became terrified. They shouted and prayed to Hashem, together with their wives and children, and they did *teshuvah* while fasting. The *kohanim* wore sackcloth, and even the *mizbeiach* was dressed in sackcloth.... They shouted to Hashem, and they fell on their faces.

Then the Yidden ran after their enemies and killed many of them."

With their *tefillos* and with their *bitachon*, they won wars against their enemies again and again.

### Children Talmidei Chachamim

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 23:) states, הרגיל בנר הויין, "A person who is cautious with lighting the candles [of Shabbos and Chanukah – *Rashi*] will merit children who are *talmidei chachamim*, as it states, כי נר מצוה, ותורה אור."

This is a wonderful promise, but the question that is asked by the Rishonim is, do we see it happening? Do we see people who are cautious with Shabbos lecht and Chanukah lecht having children *talmidei chachamim*?

Rabbeinu Yitzchak, the son of the Raavad, asks, "Why isn't everyone a talmid chacham?"

Most people are cautious with Chanukah lecht, so why don't we see that everyone merits to be *talmidei chachamim*?!"

He answers, "Few people keep this mitzvah with all its details and *halachos*."

There might be another answer. When the Meiri discusses the segulah of lighting Chanukah lecht to merit children *talmidei chachamim*, he writes, הרגיל בנר דרך חיבוב מצוה, והערה מפורסמת הוין לו בנים תלמידי חכמים, "Whoever is cautious with the candles to light them with love for the mitzvah and with visible excitement, will be granted children *talmidei chachamim*." It isn't sufficient to just light the Shabbos and Chanukah lecht. It must come with a love and excitement for the mitzvah, and then he will merit children *talmidei chachamim*.

One year, on Chanukah, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski zt'l was in Crakow. He came to a tailor's home and asked the tailor to fix his jacket. "I haven't lit Chanukah lecht yet," the tailor replied.

"I'll wait," Reb Chaim Ozer replied. He thought it would be just a few moments. How long does it take to light Chanukah lecht?

It took much longer than a few moments. Reb Chaim Ozer watched in astonishment and admiration as the tailor, dressed in his Shabbos clothing, sang songs for a half hour near the lecht, with obvious happiness for the mitzvah.

Reb Chaim Ozer said, "Now I understand why Crakow produced so many great *talmidei chachamim* over the generations." It is because the mitzvah of Chanukah lecht is *mesugal* for children *talmidei chachamim*, especially when performed with love and passion.<sup>12</sup>

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12. Chassidim were once discussing the wealth of the legendary Count Pototsky. They were saying that in the summer, he pours sugar over mountains so he could go "skiing."

The Berdichover Rav overheard their discussion and asked, "Does he light Chanukah lecht?"

The Rambam (4:12) writes, מצות נר חנוכה מצוה, חביבה היא עד מאוד, "The mitzvah of Chanukah lecht is an extremely beloved mitzvah." And when we perform the mitzvah in this spirit, we will merit children *talmidei chachamim*.

Chazal say that for being cautious with Chanukah lecht, one merits children *talmidei chachamim*.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* adds that the one who lights the candles will also become a *talmid chacham*. If it is *mesugal* for his children to become *talmidei chachamim*, it is certainly *mesugal* that the person who lights the lecht will become a *talmid chacham*.

Furthermore, *tzaddikim* say that if *chas veshalom* one has a child who strayed from the *derech*, the parent's mitzvah of Chanukah lecht can bring him back.

A woman approached the Yesod HaAvodah (Slonim) *zt'l* while he was walking down the street with his gabbai and told the Rebbe that her daughter had strayed off the path and had run away from home.

The Yesod HaAvodah asked, "Do you have clothing that belongs to your daughter?"

She said that she does.

"Turn the garment into wicks and use them to light the Shabbos lecht."

She did so.

The segulah worked. That Friday night, the girl returned home. The family was then in the middle of their Shabbos *seudah*, and they were overjoyed to see her. She said, "I regret running away. I acted foolishly. I want to return home and to Yiddishkeit."

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* repeated this story and added that this is implied in the *brachos*, להדליק נר של שבת. The correct translation of להדליק isn't "to light." It means "to ignite."

The Shabbos lecht ignites the *neshamah* of a Yid.

The Beis Avraham adds that on Chanukah, we say להדליק נר חנוכה because Chanukah lecht ignites the *neshamah*, the hearts of the Jewish nation, to draw them to *teshuvah*.

### Gazing at the Chanukah Lecht

The *brachos* and the lighting of the Chanukah lecht can be done relatively quickly, but some spend a half-hour looking at the Chanukah lecht. We elaborate on that custom here to express its importance and benefits.

The Chavas Ya'ir (הגהות מקור חיים תרע"ב) writes, "In my opinion, the essential part of the mitzvah is that the one who lit the lecht should stay near the lecht for a half hour and look at them and be happy with them."

The Yeitav Panim writes, "The *minhag* in Klal Yisrael is to sit and gaze at the candles. This draws down the miracles of Chanukah."

The Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* said that those who have pure eyes could see Hashem's name הוי"ה shining on the Chanukah lecht.

It states (*Bamidbar* 21:8), עשה לך שרף ושים אותו על, נס והיה כל הנשוך וראה אותו וחי. This *pasuk* hints at the *brachos* of Chanukah. שרף is a hint at the *brachah*, להדליק נר חנוכה, because שרף means to burn. ושים אותו על נס is the *brachah* שיעשה ניסים ומוֹת. And וחי hints to להחיותנו.

Literally, the *pasuk* means, "Make a snake, place it on a staff, and whoever was bitten will see it and live." For Chanukah, we can explain that if someone was bitten by the snake, the yetzer hara, the solution is to gaze at the Chanukah lecht, וראה אותו וחי, and he will become like a new person.

The Divrei Chaim *zt'l* compares this to a doctor who can diagnose and treat illnesses by looking into his patients' eyes. Similarly,

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"No." (Count Pototsky wasn't Jewish.)

"Then he doesn't know what true pleasure is."



by looking at the Chanukah *lecht*, one can attain a *refuah* for all ailments of his *neshamah*.

We say, ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם. The Divrei Chaim translates these words as, "We don't have permission to use the *lecht*, only by looking at them." This means that to look at the Chanukah *lecht* is to use them. They are a vehicle to help us reach spiritual purity and growth.

The Beis Avraham (נר ד"ה רק) says that אלא לראותם בלבד implies that looking at Chanukah *lecht* is a *refuah* and rectification for sins related to guarding the eyes.

Some people recite Tehillim chapter 91 during this half-hour. The Sefer Zechirah (69:1) writes, "A *segulah* that helps to be protected the entire year is to say seven times (Tehillim 91) יושב בסתר עליון, each night of Chanukah after lighting the candles."

Some say chapter קי"ט in Tehillim because it is full of requests for success in Torah and mitzvos.<sup>13</sup>

In general, it is a good time for tefillah because whenever one performs a mitzvah, it is a good time for tefillah. As is brought in Tosefta (Maasar Sheni 5:15), "When one performs a mitzvah, it is an ideal time to daven to Hashem."

Rabbeinu b'Chaya (19:3) writes, "When a woman lights the Shabbos candles, she should daven that she merit children *talmidei chachamim*, who shine in Torah because *tefillos* are more accepted after performing a

mitzvah."<sup>14</sup> The Shabbos and Chanukah *lecht* are *mesugal* for children *talmidei chachamim*, so it is good to daven for this blessing at this auspicious time.

### Seeing Miracles

The oil found was sufficient for one day, and it miraculously burnt for eight days. Therefore, we celebrate Chanukah for eight days. The Beis Yosef asks that Chanukah should be seven days because there was no miracle on the first day. There was enough oil for that day!

The Alter of Kelm *zt'l* replies that there was a miracle the first day, too. It was the miracle of nature. Oil produces light naturally, but isn't that also a miracle? How does oil become light?

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* says that on Chanukah, we train ourselves to recognize that every aspect of nature is a miracle. *Shulchan Aruch* (676:3) states, "If a person is unable to light Chanukah *lecht* on one of the nights of Chanukah, he should say the *brachah* of שַׁעֲשֵׂה נִסִּים when he sees Chanukah *lecht*." This is an unusual halachah. We don't say a *brachah* for seeing any other mitzvah besides Chanukah *lecht*. This is because Chanukah is all about seeing. It is about training oneself to see the world as it truly is: a miraculous world.

This is also why Chazal (*Shabbos* 22.) say, "Chanukah *lecht* that was placed above twenty *amos* is *pasul*." People won't see it,

<sup>13</sup>. The Leket Yoshar (p.43) writes that his rebbe, the Terumas HaDeshen, would say chapter קי"ט in Tehillim every day. Indeed, it is an excellent time to say it while looking at the Chanukah *lecht*, which is *mesugal* for success in Torah.

<sup>14</sup>. Reb Shimon Daskal, a Satmar chassid from Bnei Brak, was once deliberating whether to buy a small store on Reb Akiva corner Yerushalayim St., a prime location, or a store triple the size, on a side street.

The Satmar Rebbe told him, "The *Tana'im* and *Amora'im* created *tefillos* (see *Brachos* 17.), but few people say them. But there's a tefillah written by an *acharon*, the Chayei Adam; it is called תפילת זכה, and lots of people say it. This is because תפילת זכה is said when Yom Kippur is approaching. So, you see that it's all about location... Therefore, I advise you to buy the store in the premium location."

When one lights Chanukah *lecht*, he is in a *good location* and should take advantage of this location and special time for tefillah.

and the point of Chanukah is to *see*, to see the world in its true colors.

After the Gemara tells us that a menorah can't be placed higher than twenty amos, the Gemara digresses to discuss a *pasuk* in this week's *parashah*, where Yosef was thrown into a pit. It states (37:24), והבור ריק אין בו מים, "The pit was empty; it didn't have water." The Gemara adds, "It didn't contain water, but it had snakes and scorpions."

The *meforshim* wonder why the Gemara teaches these lessons together. What is the connection between a menorah above twenty amos and that Yosef was thrown into a pit filled with snakes and scorpions?

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* answers that a great miracle happened to Yosef. He was thrown into a pit with snakes and scorpions, but they didn't bite or harm him. But Yosef's brothers didn't recognize this miracle. If they had, they wouldn't have sold him as a slave. The Gemara teaches us that it is possible to stare at a miracle and not notice it. Indeed, we always see the miracles of creation, but who thinks about them? This is the reason a Chanukah menorah can't be too high. The Chanukah menorah trains us to see the world correctly and recognize the miracles we are exposed to all the time.

We now understand why the Gemara places together the halachah of a Chanukah menorah perched above twenty amos and the lesson that Yosef's pit had snakes and scorpions. Yosef's brothers didn't recognize the miracle. And this is precisely why Chanukah lecht can't be too high. The Chanukah lecht must be seen because it reveals Hashem's miracles.

However, looking at Chanukah lecht alone doesn't suffice if we don't contemplate the message that the Chanukah lecht are teaching. When a person is in a dark room, he can't see anything. Even if someone turns on the light, he still won't see anything if his eyes are closed. The light of Chanukah reveals that Hashem performs miracles and that even nature, itself is a miracle. But if a person keeps his eyes closed, he won't capture the message.

In the morning, we say the *brachos* פוקח עורים and המעביר שנה מעיני. Both *brachos* seem to be thanking Hashem for our ability to see. What is the difference between them?

Reb Shimon Schwab *zt'l* answers that one *brachah* thanks Hashem for our vision, and the other *brachah* thanks Hashem for our perception. We praise Hashem that we can see, and we praise Hashem that we can perceive the miracles our eyes witness.

Reb Shlomo Eiger of Lublin *hy'd zt'l* (son of Shevet Yehudah *zt'l*) taught that there are two ways to awaken someone: either with a loud sound or by turning on a light. On Rosh Hashanah, we are awakened by the loud call of the shofar. On Chanukah, we are awakened by the bright lights of *emunah* that emanate from the Chanukah lecht.

The *Tzror HaMor* says חנו כ"ה spells חנוכה, and there are כ"ה, twenty-five, letters in שמוע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד. So חנו כ"ה means the Chashmanaim won the war because they believed in Hashem. And each year, on Chanukah, we open our eyes and discover the miracles Hashem constantly performs for us.<sup>15</sup>

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15. Once, at *shalosh seudos*, the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told his students, "The entire world is filled with heresy and denial of Hashem. I'm not only referring to the goyim or non-religious Yidden. I'm referring to the *ehrllicher Yidden*. Listen to the way they speak, and you will hear *kefirah*. When discussing business or politics, they talk as though everything is in their hands. They forget that everything is in Hashem's hands.

"Therefore," the Chofetz Chaim concluded, "in my opinion, everyone must strengthen himself with *emunah* for an hour each day."

The students were startled. Who has an extra hour in the day? An hour is a long time.

### The Taz's Answer to the Beis Yosef's Question

Above, we asked the Beis Yosef's question: There was enough oil for the first night, so why do we celebrate the first night of Chanukah? Why is Chanukah eight days if the miracle was only for seven?

The Taz (670:1) answers that because the oil of the first night wasn't entirely consumed, we celebrate on the first day of Chanukah. Navi (*II Melachim* 4) states that a woman (the wife of the navi Ovadyah) said to the navi Elisha that she has debts and the creditors threatened to take her two sons away as slaves. Elisha asked her, *מה יש לך בבית*, "What do you have in your home?"

She replied that she had some oil. Elisha said, "Borrow empty vessels from your neighbors and pour the oil into those vessels." Miraculously, the oil kept flowing until all the utensils were filled with oil, and she was able to pay her debtors.

The Zohar explains that the miracle occurred solely because this woman had a drop of oil in her home. If she had nothing in her home, the brachah wouldn't come because "when nothing is there, the brachah will not come to create something new." If there is even a tiny drop, the brachah can increase it.

This is how we know that in the days of the *Chashmonaim*, in the Beis HaMikdash, when they lit the menorah on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev from the oil they found, some of it must have remained until the morning. The miracle wouldn't have created new oil if no oil remained from the first night.

The Taz writes, "In retrospect, they realized that a miracle happened on the first night. Had the oil been completely consumed the first night, there couldn't have been a miracle the next night. Certainly, some oil

[miraculously] remained from the first night. The brachah came upon that remaining oil. So, we see that there was a miracle on the first night, too."

Reb Aryeh Leib zt'l, the Maharal Tzinz (*קומץ למנוחה*, *דרוש לחנוכה ז'*) explains the Taz with a *mashal*:

Someone had ten crates filled with gold coins. Nine were stolen. Using the gold coins from the tenth crate, he hired police to search for the nine stolen crates. He vowed that if the gold was found, he would give three gold coins from each box to *tzedakah*.

The crates were eventually found, and true to his promise, he gave a *gabbai tzedakah* 27 gold coins, three from each box.

However, the *gabbai* asked for another three gold coins from the tenth crate. The man replied, "That crate wasn't stolen. My gratitude to Hashem is that He brought back the nine crates. Why must I thank Hashem for that tenth crate, which was never stolen?"

The *gabbai tzedakah* replied, "Had the tenth crate also been stolen, you wouldn't have had any money to pay for the search. The fact that it wasn't stolen is part of the miracle, and you should thank Hashem for that, too."

On Chanukah, we praise Hashem for the menorah that lit seven days more than expected, and we also praise Hashem for the oil that was left over on the first night because, without that oil, the miracle couldn't have occurred.

We learn from this to praise Hashem for all the miracles we receive, including those that prepare the path for other miracles. We have a lot to be grateful for, and Chanukah is when we attain this awareness.

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The Chofetz Chaim said, "I see this is hard for you. So, I have another plan for you. When you daven, think about what you're saying, and you will get your daily dose of *emunah*."



### Preparation for the Mitzvah

A chassid hid in the Yismach Yisrael's zt'l room to watch his Rebbe prepare and light the Chanukah *lecht*. The chassid watched the Rebbe's joy and *hislahavus* as he poured the oil and prepared the wicks, but when the Rebbe lit the *lecht*, it seemed very regular. He didn't see anything unique. The chassid wondered, "Shouldn't the mitzvah be performed with even greater *hislahavus* than the preparations?"

He couldn't come out of his hiding place to ask the Rebbe this question since he was there without permission, so he kept his questions to himself.

The next day, the Yismach Yisrael approached the chassid and said, "A person's part in a mitzvah is his preparations. The actual performance of the mitzvah isn't in his hands anymore. Either Hashem gives him inspiration, or He doesn't."

This is a reminder that we should prepare properly for the Chanukah *lecht*.

The Chofetz Chaim zt'l told the following *mashal*:

An oil merchant once came to town. The townspeople brought pots and containers and asked the merchant to fill them with oil. When all their vessels were filled with oil, the merchant said, "You want to buy more oil, and I want to sell you more oil. But I can't sell you oil if you don't have containers."

This *mashal* helps us understand why it is important to prepare for Chanukah *lecht*. Hashem wants to give us light, kedushah, brachos, and salvations on Chanukah, but we can't receive it without enough vessels. Every preparation creates another vessel into which Hashem will pour His blessings.

Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Chortkov zt'l said: Place a gem on a velvet cloth, and it appears beautiful. Put the gem in a gold ring, and it seems exquisite. Place the same stone in a paper bag or in a dirty bowl, and it won't have the same appeal.

The same is true with the light of Chanukah. We must create a setting that is conducive for it to shine beautifully.

This is hinted at in the words, *ולכל בני ישראל היה אור במושבם* (Shemos 10:23). The *אור*, brilliant light of Chanukah variates, *במושבם*, with its setting. If we prepare ourselves well, we become a proper receptacle to retain the great light of Chanukah.

A young man arrived at the Beis Yisrael's residence and said to the *gabbai*, Reb Chanina Shiff, "My grandfather, the Biala Rebbe (Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala zt'l) told me to come here to watch the Beis Yisrael as he prepares for Chanukah *lecht*."

The *gabai* opened the door and saw the Rebbe pacing in his room, his face aflame. The *gabai* quickly shut the door and said to the young man, "I don't dare disturb the Rebbe now. If you want to, go in on your own."

The grandson opened the door, but when he saw the Beis Yisrael's holy face aflame, he quickly shut the door. He was afraid to disturb him.

He returned to his grandfather and told him what he saw. His grandfather replied, "That's exactly what I wanted you to see."

### Do the Mitzvah as Best as You Can

After the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim zy'a was *niftar*, the chassidim debated whom to appoint as their next Rebbe. One elderly person recommended that they appoint the Divrei Shmuel zt'l (the Yesod HaAvodah's grandson) to be the successor, and he supported his opinion from the following incident:

The Divrei Shmuel was very attached to the mitzvah of Chanukah *lecht*. He studied the halachos very well, and every year, he spent a lot of time importing olive oil for the mitzvah. One year, he filled his menorah with olive oil, and then he went to his grandfather's house to watch the Yesod HaAvodah light Chanukah *lecht*. When he returned home to light his menorah, he saw

that someone had already used his menorah and had lit the *lecht*. Since Shabbos was approaching, there wasn't enough time to prepare another olive oil menorah, so he lit one candle made from animal fats, and that was his mitzvah that night.

The elderly chasid told this story and explained to his friends, "The *chiddush* was that he lit that candle with joy. I say that if he can be happy with his mitzvah, even when it wasn't as planned, he deserves to be Rebbe."

The elderly chassid's suggestion was accepted, and the Divrei Shmuel became the next rebbe of Slonim.

The Divrei Shmuel's attitude was passed down to his son, the Beis Avraham of Slonim *zt'l*.

One year, Friday afternoon, the Beis Avraham was about to light the Chanukah menorah when his child ran by and knocked over the menorah. The oil spilled, and there wasn't enough time before Shabbos to prepare the menorah again. The Beis Avraham said with a smile, "The same Creator Who commanded us to light Chanukah *lecht* commanded us not to become angry."

We must perform the mitzvos as best as possible and be happy with what we achieve, even when it isn't perfect. The results aren't in our hands; all we can do is try our best.

One year, Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna *zy'a* (Bayit v'Gan, Yerushalayim) lit Chanukah *lecht*, and was saying *zemiros* and *Tehillim*. Many people were present, and due to pushing, a child fell on the Rebbe's Chanukah menorah, and it turned over. The child felt terrible. The Rebbe said, "My dear child, I'm so grateful to

you. Now I can keep Chazal's counsel, כבה אֵין זְקוּק לָהּ, if the candles blow out before one half-hour passes, one isn't obligated to light the candles again. How often can I fulfill this Chazal? Thank you for giving me this opportunity!"

Instead of being angry with the child, he rejoiced that he could finally practice a statement from Chazal. (Afterwards, the Rebbe lit the candles again because the Mishnah Berurah rules that if a half-hour hasn't passed, one should be *machmir* and rekindle the candles.)

Once, the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* was in the home of Reb Nachumke Kaplan *zt'l* on Chanukah. The time to light Chanukah *lecht* arrived, but Reb Nachumke waited to light until his Rebbetzin got home. The Chofetz Chaim asked his rebbe why he waited since halachah clearly states one should light at the proper time, even if some people aren't home.

Reb Nochumke replied, "My wife will be upset if I light the candles without her. Chazal say שלום בית עדיף, *shalom bayis* is more important than Chanukah *lecht*. So, it is better that I wait until my wife comes home and then light."<sup>16</sup>

### Praying for Miracles

*Shulchan Aruch* (187:4) states, "If one forgot to say *Al HaNisim* [in *Birkas Hamazon*], he can say it in the הַרְחֵם לָנוּ נְסִים...הַרְחֵם כִּמוֹ שַׁעֲשֵׂה בַיָּמִים הָהֵם בְּזֶמַן הַזֶּה בִּימֵי מַתְתִּיהוּ בֶן יוֹחָנָן... 'May Hashem perform miracles for us just as He performed miracles in those days...'"

Similarly, if one forgets *Al HaNisim* in *Shemonah Esrei*, he should say this הַרְחֵם at the end of *Shemonah Esrei* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 682:4).<sup>17</sup>

16. The Gemara refers to a Friday night on Chanukah, and he has only one candle. The Gemara says that he should use it for the Shabbos candle and not for Chanukah because the Shabbos *lecht* increases *shalom bayis*, and *shalom bayis* is paramount.

17. When one says *Al HaNisim* in the right place, one doesn't *daven* for miracles. However, when one forgets *Al HaNisim*, he earns a bonus and can pray for miracles.

The Shaul u'Meishiv (*Divrei Shaul*) *zt'l* asks that it is known that we don't pray for miracles, so how can we say הרחמן הוא יעשה לנו נסים, "May Hashem perform miracles for us"?

The Shaul u'Meishiv proves that we don't daven for miracles from the following Gemara (Taanis 24:):

Rava's beis din gave malkus to a sinner, and the person died. The king heard about this and wanted to punish Rava. The king's mother warned her son, "Don't start up with the Yidden, because whatever they ask from their G-d, He gives them. When they pray for rain, it rains!"

The king replied, "That's because they pray for rain in the winter season. It was going to rain, regardless. Let them pray now, in the summer, and let's see if they could bring rain!"

The king's mother had rachmanus on Rava, so she sent him a message, warning him to daven for rain. Rava davened, but it didn't rain.

Rava said, "Ribono Shel Olam, (*Tehillim* 47) אלקים באזנינו שמענו אבותינו ספרו לנו פועל פעלת בימיהם, בימי קדם, 'with our ears we heard, our forefathers told us; You performed miracles in their days, in days of old,' but we didn't see these miracles with our own eyes."

Suddenly, it started pouring – in the middle of the summer! The streets of Mechuzah were flooded, and the water flowed into the Chidekel River. His tefillos were answered, and he was saved from the king's punishment.

That night, Rava saw his father in a dream. His father said, "How could one make Heaven work so hard [to bring rain in the wrong season]?"

His father instructed him not to sleep in his bed. Rava got up and slept somewhere else that night. In the morning, Rava saw his bed stabbed and cut with knives. Rashi explains that *sheidim* came to harm Rava.

We learn from this Gemara that it is dangerous and improper to daven for miracles. Hashem chose to lead the world according to the rules of nature, and it is wrong to try to alter those rules.<sup>18</sup>

Yet, on Chanukah, we daven for miracles. What is the explanation?

The Shaul u'Meishiv (*Divrei Shaul*) *zt'l* answers that throughout the year, Hashem leads the world according to the rules of nature, but on Chanukah, Hashem leads the world in miracle mode. Therefore, we may daven for *nisim*.

It states (*Mishlei* 9:1), הצבה עמודיה שבעה, "Hashem set up the world on seven pillars." Many factors of the world are related to the number seven, such as the seven days of the week, seven notes of music, seven kinds of wisdom, and more. In the future, the world will be run according to the number eight, as it states (*Tehillim* 6:1), למנצח על השמינית, "A song played on a harp of eight strings." This represents a world beyond nature. Chanukah is eight days because on Chanukah, the world is run beyond the rules of nature.

The Maharal (*Ner Mitzvah*) writes, "The natural world is made up of seven. Eight is beyond nature. Milah is beyond nature

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Perhaps the explanation is that when one forgets to say *Al HaNisim*, he is heartbroken that he lost out on a special opportunity. His broken and humble heart makes him a fitting candidate for miracles.

**18.** Praying for a *refuah sheleimah* isn't considered praying for a miracle, even when doctors have given up. Doctors are permitted to heal but not to cause people to despair.

Similarly, one should pray for *parnassah*, *shidduchim*, *nachas*, and all other kinds of *yeshuos*. The Gemara teaches, "If one davened and his *tefillos* weren't answered, he should pray again. As it states (*Tehillim* 27:14), קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה', 'Trust in Hashem, strengthen your heart, and trust on Hashem.'"



[because a child's creation is beyond nature]; therefore, milah is on the eighth day. The Torah was given after seven, as it states (*Devarim* 16:9), 'Count seven weeks...' and on the fiftieth day, the Torah was given. Chapter 119 in *Tehillim*, which discusses Torah, contains eight *pesukim* for each letter of the alef beis (תמניא אפי) representing Torah, which is beyond nature." The Maharal explains that the Chanukah miracle came in the merit of the Torah, which is beyond nature. This is why the menorah miraculously remained lit for eight days.

Chazal (Shabbos 21:) say, according to Beis Shamai, יום ראשון מדליק שמונה, "The first day, he lights eight [lamps]." The Chidushei HaRim zt'l says that this refers to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. [His proof is that it is written in singular, "he lights," and it doesn't state מדליקין, "we light."] On the first night of Chanukah, Hashem lights eight, which means he brings into existence a world beyond nature.

Tzaddikim tell us: When you serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, beyond the limits of your nature, Hashem will perform miracles for you beyond the rules of nature.

This applies to every day of the year, especially on Chanukah, a time for miracles. If you serve Hashem beyond your limits, Hashem will perform great miracles for you.<sup>19</sup>

The Gemara (*Avodah Zarah* 18.) relates that Reb Meir's sister-in-law was imprisoned, and Reb Meir bribed a prison guard to free her. The guard asked, "What should I do if I am caught?"

Reb Meir told him, "Say אלקא דמאיר ענני, 'The G-d of Meir, save me!'"

The guard said this and was saved. The government caught him, and they hung him at the stake to crucify him, but when he said אלקא דמאיר ענני, miraculously, they took him down. They didn't understand why they let him off. He told them that Reb Meir told him that when he said this, he would be saved.

Chazal (*Bereishis Rabba* 94:5) say that one mustn't associate Hashem's name with someone alive. We say אלקי אברהם, אלקי יצחק, and אלקי יעקב, after their petirah, but when they lived, it wouldn't be proper to attach Hashem's name to a person who has free will, and his future צדקות isn't yet determined. So how did Reb Meir tell the guard to say אלקא דמאיר, "The G-d of Reb Meir"?

The Maharsha answers that מאיר hints at Reb Meir's name, but it wasn't the primary intention. אלקא דמאיר ענני means, "Hashem Who shines His light of the sun to the entire world should answer my prayers."

The Maharsha's second answer is that אלקא דמאיר ענני means that "You are the G-d Who shone Your light for us in ancient Greece with the miracles of the Chanukah lecht... He should answer my tefillos and save me in miraculous ways to be saved from their hands."

Many people recite the words אלקא דמאיר ענני when they give tzedakah. According to the Maharsha's explanation, we are asking Hashem to perform His miracles for us, as he had by the miracles of Chanukah.

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**19.** A member of our chaburah related that his wife wasn't feeling well for a few weeks, and the doctor who examined her ordered an MRI. The diagnosis was that she had a cancerous growth r"l. The husband arranged an appointment with a medical specialist. He scheduled the meeting for the nighttime after he lit Chanukah lecht so that he could have the merit of this holy mitzvah. When the specialist looked at the MRI results, he said, "There is no growth here. You have nothing to worry about."

Another story we know (from a member of our chaburah in Elad) is of a boy who was unconscious since rosh chodesh Kislev due to a car accident. Miraculously, he began talking regularly at the start of the first night of Chanukah. They had their Chanukah personal miracle in the merit of Chanukah, a time beyond nature.

### Annual Miracles

The Kedushas Levi writes, "Due to the righteousness of Matisyahu ben Yochanan Kohen Gadol and his children, the gates of *chesed* and miracles open during the eight days of Chanukah. It is possible the gates open when we light the Chanukah *lecht* and when we say *Hallel* and *Al HaNisim*. These draw down the *chesed* and miracles below."<sup>20</sup>

The miracles recur each year. Chazal (Shabbos 21:) say, לשנה האחרת קבעום בהלל והודאה, that the chachamim established Chanukah as a holiday "on the following year." Why did they wait a year to establish Chanukah? They should have established Chanukah as an annual holiday immediately. The Kedushas Levi (Kedushah Rishonah) and the Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yohayada) explain that initially, they thought that the miracles of Chanukah were a one-time matter, a miracle to save the Yidden during that particular time from the Yevanim. But the following year, the chachamim perceived that the miracles were still in the air. They understood that the miracles of Chanukah would recur each year, so they established Chanukah as a holiday.<sup>21</sup>

We can also say that לשנה אחרת means "a different kind of year," and it is referring to the same year that the miracles occurred. The chachamim understood that it was a "different year" שנה אחרת. People were more spiritual, more miracles and *chesed* came to the world. Avodas Hashem was more filled

with light and passion. When the chachamim understood how Chanukah affected the Jewish nation for the better, they established it as an annual holiday.

In parashas Toldos, the Torah tells how Yaakov Avinu received the brachos from Yitzchak Avinu. The word לו is repeated several times in the pesukim. (27:25-27) ויגש לו ויאכל ויבא לו יין וישת... וישק לו. The Tzvi l'Tzaddik (Bluzhev) zt'l explains that ל"ו stands for the thirty-six Chanukah *lecht*. We receive Yitzchak's brachos each year when we light the Chanukah *lecht*.

Chazal (Misechta Sofrim 2:1) state, אסור להדליק, בנר ישן, "It is forbidden to light [Chanukah *lecht*] in an old lamp."

The Bnei Yissaschar (Kislev 4:9) explains that a כלי חרס, clay lamp, can never be cleaned. After you use it once, it appears disgusting (see Mishnayos Shabbos 2:4). Therefore, it is a ביזוי, a disgrace for the mitzvah, and it shouldn't be used for Chanukah *lecht*.

But this can't be the only reason for the prohibition. If it were the only reason, it would be forbidden to use clay menoros on Shabbos and yom tov, as well, and not only on Chanukah. There needs to be an additional reason why we don't light with a נר ישן, "old lamp" on Chanukah.

The Bnei Yissaschar says that we can't light in a נר ישן, an old lamp, because we must remember that Hashem performs Chanukah

20. The laws of Chanukah begin in *Shulchan Aruch* with the *simanim* (תרע"א). (תרע"א-תרע"ב or תרע"ב in Aramaic means gate. The Beis Yisrael zy'a said this is because on Chanukah, the gates of heaven are opened, and everyone can enter.

21. The Gemara (Shabbos 21:) asks, מאי חנוכה. The Ben ish Chai (Ben Yehoyadah) explains that the Gemara is asking: "Why is it called חנוכה, with a ה"א at the end of the word? Chanukah means chinuch, and it is named for the *chanukas hamizbeiach*, the rededication of the mizbeiach that took place at that time. So, it should be called חנוך, not חנוכה.

After asking the question מאי חנוכה, the Gemara relates the story of Chanukah and concludes that the following year they established it as a yom tov. As we explained, when the chachamim saw that the miracles returned each year, they established it as an annual holiday. We now have the answer to the question. מאי חנוכה, why is it called Chanukah? Why isn't it called חנוך? The *heh* makes the word feminine, indicating birth. They recognized that miracles would give birth to more miracles. It wasn't a miracle for a particular time, rather it will grow and bear fruit yearly. This is why it is called חנוכה.

miracles for us every year. We aren't only commemorating a miracle that happened in ancient times, millenniums ago. The miracles return each year.

About Purim, Chazal (Megillah 17.) say, <sup>22</sup>הקורא מגילה למפרע לא יצא. The Bnei Yissaschar repeats from his Rebbe, הקורא מגילה למפרע, if one reads the megillah like it was an episode that happened in the past, לא יצא, he didn't perform the mitzvah correctly. Every generation has its Haman (or Hamans) who want to wipe us off the map of the earth, and Hashem saves us each year anew, in the merit of the mitzvah of reading Megilas Esther. We aren't solely commemorating the past; we celebrate the salvations that Hashem grants us each year.

The Bnei Yissaschar says that something similar occurs with the Chanukah lecht. We aren't only commemorating a miracle of the past. When we light Chanukah lecht, the miracles recur again. Thus, Chazal say, אסור להדליק בנר ישן, "It is forbidden to light in an old lamp." When we light the Chanukah lamps, miracles occur in our time again. It isn't an "old lamp". It is a salvation that is happening to us today.

One hundred years ago, in the year 5683, someone came to Reb Itzikel of Antwerp zt'l and told him that he must travel immediately. However, he did not have a passport, and ordering one would take too long. In response, Rebbe Itzikel gave him a bencher and said, "If you need a passport, take this."

The man showed the border police his "passport." The policeman skimmed through the pages and stamped permission for entry next to the words על הניסים. (A picture of the passport can be found on the last page of the booklet)

This miracle didn't happen on Chanukah, but the origin of the miracle came from

Chanukah. It is an example of the miracles that recur each year.

### Undeserved Kindness

The *Machzor Vitri* says that חנוכה comes from the word חנינה (or חנם), to give gifts, even to those who don't deserve them. The Ruzhiner zt'l explains, "On Chanukah, Hashem gives us bounty, similar to the blessings that descend on Rosh Hashanah. The difference is that on Rosh Hashanah, we receive the bounty if we are worthy, and on Chanukah, we receive the bounty even if we aren't."

*Rashi* (Bereishis 8:11) says that the dove that Noach sent from the *teivah* said, רבש"ע יהיו מזונותי מרורין כזית בידו של הקב"ה ולא מתוקין כדבש בידי בשר ודם, "Ribono Shel Olam! May my *parnassah* be bitter like an olive, but given from Your hands, and not sweet like honey, given by a human being." Rebbe Moshe of Razvadov zt'l says that these words hint at Chanukah. The dove represents the Jewish nation (see *Brachos* 53:). They say to Hashem, יהיו מזונותי מרורין כזית בידו של הקב"ה, let my *parnassah* come from Chanukah when we use זית שמן, olive oil, בידו של הקב"ה because then the *parnassah* comes from Hakadosh Baruch Hu's compassionate hand. We prefer that over the *parnassah* that comes from Rosh Hashanah, מתוקין כדבש, the time of year when we eat apple with honey, because then it is בשר ודם, dependent on man's deeds. If one deserves, he receives, and if he doesn't deserve, he doesn't."

*Parnassah* and all *brachos* come when we light Chanukah *lecht*, but that shouldn't be our focus. We light the lecht because it is a mitzvah and because we want to publicize the *nisim*. The *parnassah* and bounty will certainly come in their merit, but we shouldn't be thinking about that when we perform the mitzvah. This is hinted in Chazal (*Shabbos* 22.) say, <sup>23</sup>אסור להרצות מעות כנגד נר חנוכה. We can

22. Literally, this means that we must read the megillah in order. We can't skip around and fill in the missing pasukim afterwards.

23. Literally, these words mean, "One is forbidden to count money near the Chanukah lamps" because it is



translate it to mean, "It is forbidden to *want* money when lighting the Chanukah candles." However, when we perform the mitzvah properly, we will receive many brachos and yeshuos, b'ruchniyos and b'gashmiyos.

### **The Home becomes a Beis HaMikdash, and you become the Kohen Gadol**

The Midrash (Tanchuma, Behaaloscha) tells us that lighting the menorah is a greater merit than bringing korbanos. Hakadosh Baruch Hu said to Moshe to tell Aharon, "... When the Beis HaMikdash is destroyed, the korbanos will end, but your portion is to light the menorah, and that will remain forever." The Ramban (beginning of Behaaloscha) asks about this. When the Beis HaMikdash isn't here, there is no mitzvah to light the menorah! "It must be referring to the mitzvah of Chanukah lecht, which continues after the Churban..."

The Yismach Yisrael (Bahalascha 4) says that we can derive from this Ramban that when one lights Chanukah lecht, he is like the kohen gadol lighting the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash. The simplest Yid becomes like a kohen gadol, and his home becomes a Beis HaMikdash.

We say in Al HaNissim הדליקו נרות בהצרות קדשך, that the kohanim lit the menorah in the courtyards. The miforshim ask that the menorah was lit in the Heichel and not in the courtyard of the Beis HaMikdash!

The Sar Shalom of Belz zt'l answers that we are referring to the courtyards of every Jewish home. On Chanukah, one's courtyard (where he lights Chanukah lecht) becomes הצרות קדשך, holy like the Beis HaMikdash.

### **Or HaGanuz**

On the first day of Creation, Hashem said (Bereishis 1:3), יהי אור ויהי אור, "Let there be light, and there was light." But the sun was created

on the fourth day of creation! What light shone on the first day of creation?

The Gemara (Chagigah 12.) says that a special light shone at the beginning of creation. "With the light that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created on the first day of creation, a person could see from one side of the world to the other. When Hakadosh Baruch Hu thought about the generation of the flood and the generation of dispersion (דור הפלגה), and he saw their corrupt ways, Hakadosh Baruch Hu immediately concealed the light from them. This is as it states (Iyov 38:15) וימנע מרשעים אורם, 'Their light shall be withheld from the wicked.' For whom did Hashem store the light? For the tzaddikim of the future, as it states (Bereshis 1:4) וירא אלקים, 'Hashem saw the light that it was good,' and אור טוב refers to a tzaddik, as it states (Yeshayah 3:10) אמרו צדיק כי טוב, 'Praise the tzaddik, for he is good.' When the light saw that it was being reserved for tzaddikim, it was happy, as it states (Mishlei 13:9) אור צדיקים ישמח, 'The light of the tzaddik will rejoice.'"

The Baal Shem Tov zt'l says that this holy, concealed light is concealed in the Torah. When one studies the Torah, he can tap into this sacred light.

Furthermore, tzaddikim say that this concealed light shines each year on Chanukah.

The Bnei Yissaschar (Kislev 2:21) states, "I have brought you the testimonies of three trustworthy witnesses that the light of Chanukah is the Or HaGanuz. They are (1) the holy tzaddik, the Rokeiach, who received his lessons from Eliyahu HaNavi z'l. (2) The Maharal of Prague. It is known that his teachings were said with ruach hakodesh, and he would use Sefer Yetzirah. (3) And the holy Rav, who lived close to our times and was renowned for his ruach hakodesh, Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l.

"Chazal hardly mention Chanukah.

The Zohar mentions Chanukah once (vol.1 238:); the same is with Tikunei Zohar (29.). Even when they mention Chanukah, it is mentioned as a side topic, not the primary issue being discussed.<sup>24</sup> This is because Chanukah is the concealed light, the Or HaGanuz, so it was concealed in the Oral Torah as well. But as we approach the geulah [when the Or HaGanuz will shine], tzaddikim began to speak about the mitzvah of Chanukah lecht, ideas that gedolim of previous generations didn't imagine...."

### Chanukah: A Time for Teshuvah

חנוכה comes from the word חניך, which means training, to train oneself, or to train children to act appropriately. The holiday is called חנוכה because, during these eight days, we teach ourselves to serve Hashem properly.

The Beis Aharon zt'l adds that since Chanukah is a time for *teshuvah*, it is recommended to say *Tehillim* on Chanukah because *Tehillim* helps a person in his path of *teshuvah*. The Beis Aharon writes, "A person must believe that by saying *Tehillim*, he can leave all his foolish ways and all his problems and overcome thoughts of *yeush* that the *yetzer hara* brings onto a person."

*Al HaNissim* discusses the miracles of the war. מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים רבים ביד מעטים, "You

delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of few."

After that, we say, וטמאים ביד טהורים רשעים ביד צדיקים, "[You delivered] the *tame'im* into the hands of the *tehorim*, *resha'im* into the hands of *tzaddikim*, sinners into the hands of those who study Torah." Is this miraculous? We understand the first half of the phrase, the mighty and the many being delivered into the hands of the weak and few is certainly miraculous, but is it a miracle that those who are sinners will be given over into the hands of those who are righteous and who study the Torah?

The Berdichover Rav zy'a answers that the final words of this verse discuss the wave of *teshuvah* that happened in response to the miracles that occurred: טמאים ביד טהורים the impure people did *teshuvah* and became pure. רשעים ביד צדיקים, the *resha'im* changed their ways and became *tzaddikim*. זדים ביד זדים sinners began to study Torah.

There were many *resha'im* among the Jewish nation at this time called מתגיירים, people who joined ranks with the Yevanim. When they witnessed the miraculous war that the weak and the few won against the mighty Greek army, they did *teshuvah* and became pure and righteous. They did *teshuvah*.<sup>25</sup>

24. Also, in Mishnayos, Chanukah is mentioned only once (see Mishnayos Bava Kama 6:6) and is mentioned as a side topic. It states there, הניח חנוני נרו מבחוץ החנוני חייב, "If a storeowner leaves a candle outside, he must pay for any damages it caused. ר' יהודה אומר בנר חנוכה פטור, Reb Yehudah says that if it is a Chanukah lecht [that was left outside], he doesn't have to pay," because he didn't do anything wrong when he placed his lamp there.

This is the only place that Chanukah is mentioned in Mishnaayos, and it isn't even discussing Chanukah! It is discussing payment for damages. This is because Chanukah represents the Or HaGanuz, the concealed light, so also in the Oral Torah, it is concealed.

25. A Yid from Eretz Yisrael traveled to Australia some sixty years ago. He didn't know where there was a beis medresh, and he couldn't ask anyone because he didn't know the language. Shabbos was approaching, and he needed a place to be.

He came up with an idea. He went to a fish store on Friday. He figured that if he saw someone buying a large fish, he might be a Yid.

The plan worked. He noticed someone buying a large carp and asked him whether he was a Yid. The man replied that he was and invited him to be with him on Shabbos. "It isn't every day that I have the opportunity to perform *hachnasas orchim*."

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt'l* wouldn't permit his chassidim to watch him light Chanukah *lecht*. He explained that Chazal (*Bava Basra* 57:) say, "It is forbidden to look at women when they are washing." Women represent the Jewish souls. It is forbidden to look at them when they are being washed from their blemishes. When Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir would light the Chanukah *lecht*, he washed the souls of the Jewish nation.

*Meir Einei Chachamim* (12:2) writes, "Believe with *emunah sheleimah* that when you stand to light Chanukah *lecht*, all the sparks of your *neshamah* and the *neshamos* of your father and grandfathers, all the way up to Adam HaRishon are standing there with you. This applies to every Yid who lights Chanukah *lecht*. The *neshamos* hope that

perhaps with your hislahavus and inspiration by the Chanukah *lecht*, they will merit a rectification and reach their origin and source."

### Take Advantage of These Days

The Kedushas Levi (*Kedushah* 2) tells a *mashal* of a king who opened his treasury for a day, and everyone could come and take whatever they desired. "Woe to the fool who doesn't take advantage and sleeps all day." These are extraordinary days. We can gain so much from each moment of Chanukah—woe to those who don't take advantage of this fantastic opportunity.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21) says, "On Chanukah, one mustn't give *hespedim*

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They spent a pleasant Shabbos together, singing *zemiros* and speaking *divrei Torah*.

On Motzei Shabbos, after thanking his host, he said, "From the looks of your beautiful house, I understand that Hashem blessed you with wealth. But there is something I was wondering about."

"Go ahead and ask," the host said.

The guest said, "Why do you keep a broken olive oil bottle in your dining room China closet?"

The man replied, "That oil bottle is very precious to me. It carries the story of my life.

"My father was *niftar* when I was young. As the oldest child, I was responsible for supporting my widowed mother and my younger siblings. Kind people had *rachmanus* on me and helped me get into business. Baruch Hashem, I had immediate success. There was plenty of money in the house. However, together with my financial success came my spiritual decline. The first thing to go was my *yarmulke*. Within a short time, I was totally secular.

"One afternoon, I saw a young Jewish child sitting on the curb, crying. It is always painful for me to see a child crying, probably because I was orphaned as a child, so I asked the child whether he wanted to tell me what had happened. The child said, 'Chanukah is approaching, and my father sent me to buy olive oil. He warned me to be careful because we are poor, and he would be upset if the bottle broke. I tried to be careful, but a cat ran right up to me. Startled, I fell, and the bottle broke.' The young boy showed me the broken bottle lying in the gutter. He said, 'How can I go to my father without the Chanukah oil?'

"I gave the child some money and told him to buy two bottles of olive oil: one for me and one for his father.

"When the child said, 'How can I go to my father without the Chanukah oil?' I remembered how my father lit Chanukah *lecht* each year. I thought to myself, 'The day will eventually come when I will go up to heaven, and I will meet with my father again. I asked myself, 'How can I meet with my father without Chanukah *lecht*?' I took the broken bottle shards from the gutter because something told me this was a turning point in my life.

"That year, I lit the Chanukah *lecht*. Soon afterward, I was keeping Shabbos. Then came *tefillin*. Now, *baruch Hashem*, I have a beautiful family, all following the Torah's ways. It all began with the broken olive oil bottle. Now you understand why I saved it all these years!"



(eulogies)." We can explain that the Gemara hints that after Chanukah passes, we shouldn't be giving hespedim and eulogies over lost opportunities. We should be wise and use our time well.

In *Moaz Tzur* we say, בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו. This can be explained as the בני בינה, the wise people, ימי שמונה קבעו, acquire these eight holy days of Chanukah, and draw as much as they can from these holy days.<sup>26</sup>

The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ד"ה לשנה) writes, "The yomim tovim are called שלש רגלים (literally, 'three feet') because they are the pillars that hold up the world. In earlier generations, three holidays were sufficient. In later generations, Hashem knew that three holidays wouldn't be enough for us, so Hashem added Chanukah and Purim. About us, it states, אין שוטה נפגע, a fool doesn't feel.' [We are like fools because we don't realize just how important Chanukah and Purim are to us.] But the early scholars and the true *ovdei Hashem* certainly felt and realized that it is impossible to exist without [Chanukah] and without Chanukah *lecht*, which illuminates the darkness.

"I think we can attain more during these holidays [of Chanukah and Purim than by the three *regalim*] because we can keep Chanukah and Purim in their entirety. By the other holidays [Pesach, Shavuot, Succos],

we lack the mitzvah of עליה לרגל, to go up to the Beis HaMikdash, which was the primary joy of the holiday. But we can keep the mitzvos of Chanukah and Purim fully. We can keep Chanukah and Purim exactly as they were originally established, which is a quality that Chanukah and Purim have over the other *yomim tovim* due to the Churban Beis HaMikdash."

### **Hallel and Al HaNissim**

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* (חכמת שלמה תרפ"ג) discusses the following scenario:

A Jewish prisoner was granted a brief leave on Chanukah for a few hours. The question was whether he should choose to go out at night to light Chanukah *lecht* or leave in the morning so he could say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* in *beis medresh*.

Reb Shlomo Kluger answered that he should leave prison in the morning to say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* with a minyan.

Most people consider Chanukah *lecht* the highlight of Chanukah. But from this discussion, we understand that perhaps *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* are the highest points of Chanukah.

We should certainly invest in saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* correctly.

### **26. Consider the following story:**

A man was hiking through a forest and found a great treasure of gold, diamonds, and precious gems. The hiker emptied his backpack of his personal items and began filling his bag with precious gems.

Just then, his phone rings. It is his rebbe. "Rebbe, thank you for returning my call. Please give me *chizuk*. I feel so broken."

"What are you doing now?" asked his rebbe.

"I found precious gems in the forest, and I am filling my bag with the gems."

"You are gathering gems, and you need *chizuk*?" the rebbe asked.

During Chanukah, people come over to me and ask me for *chizuk*. I wonder, "How can you need *chizuk* now? Every moment of Chanukah, you pick up treasures, *b'gashmiyos* and *b'ruchniyos*. No one should be happier than you, and you need *chizuk*?!" With *Hallel*, the *neiros Chanukah*, *Al HaNissim*, *Tehillim*, Torah study, Chanukah *seudah*, and even simply by being happy on Chanukah, we pick up priceless treasures. So, should we feel we need *chizuk* at this time?"

We quoted above the following words from the Kedushas Levi:

"Due to the *tzidkus* of Matisyahu ben Yochanan Kohen Gadol and his children, the gates of *chesed* and the gates of miracles open during the eight days of Chanukah. Perhaps the gates open when we light the Chanukah *lecht* and say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*. These draw down the *chesed* and miracles below."

Chazal (*Shabbos* 21:) say, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק, יום אחד נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת "The oil was sufficient for one day. A miracle occurred, and they used this oil for eight days. The following year, they established these days as a *yom tov* with *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*."

The Sfas Emes says that the Gemara's words, ועשאו ימים טובים בהלל והודאה, imply that saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* make and create the holiday. קבעו ועשאו, it became established, and it became a holiday בהלל והודאה, when we say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*.<sup>27</sup>

The Tchebiner Rav zt'l said, "*Hallel* on Chanukah shouldn't be like *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh because *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh is a *minhag*, while *Hallel* on Chanukah is a *mitzvah*."

Some Rishonim say that *Hallel* is a *mitzvah* from the Torah (see Reb Yeruchem Fishel Perlow's commentary on *Sma'g*, *mitzvos asei* ג-ס, p.258).

*Masechta Sofrim* (20:9) states, "We say the entire *Hallel* during the eight days of

Chanukah...and we make a *brachah* before and after *Hallel*, and one must say it בנעימה (sweetly, pleasantly)."

It states (*Mishlei* 27:21), מצרף לכסף וכור לזהב ואיש, לפי מהללו, "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man according to his praise." The Chida explains that while the refining pot and the furnace purify silver and gold, איש לפי מהללו, man becomes cleansed and pure when he praises Hashem.<sup>28</sup>

It states (*Tehillim* 106:47), להשתבח בתהלתך. This means the person becomes improved, בתהלתך, by praising Hashem.<sup>29</sup>

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 117) says, "We say *Hallel* על כל צרה וצרה שלא תבא עליהן, "for every *tzarah* that shouldn't come..." The Ben Ish Chai says that these words imply that *Hallel* is *mesugal*, על כל צרה וצרה שלא תבא עליהן, that troubles won't befall us.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev*, 4:134) teaches that when one praises Hashem, he can use that praise as a prayer to Hashem. For example, in the second *brachah* of *Shemonah Esrei* we praise Hashem, רופא חולים, "Who heals the ill." As one says these words, he can intend a prayer, "Hashem, please heal so-and-so."

When one says a standard *tefillah*, the *malachim* may prevent it from going up, claiming that the person doesn't deserve his requests to be considered. But *malachim* never prevent praises from going up before Hashem. The praises go up, and Hashem hears the concealed plea and fills his request.

27. Sfas Emes explains that the ב' in בהלל והודאה implies that קבעו they made it a holiday, בהלל, because of the *Hallel*. The *Hallel* makes it a holiday. Otherwise, it would state, קבעו להלל והודאה, "They established these days to say *Hallel* and *Al Hanissim*."

28. Someone suffering from a *dibbuk* was brought to the Divrei Chaim of Sanz zt'l on Chanukah. The Divrei Chaim said, "Bring him to the beis medresh when we say *Hallel*."

They did that, and the *dibbuk* immediately left his body and flew out a window. This is because every *tumah* inside a person can be extricated by saying *Hallel*.

29. If להשתבח means to praise Hashem, it would state לשבח. It says להשתבח, because a person becomes praised and better בתהלתך by praising Hashem.

This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 18:4), מְהוֹלֵל אֶקְרָא ה' וּמִן אוֹיְבֵי אוֹשֵׁעַ, "I call out to Hashem with praises, and I am saved from my enemies."

Similarly, it states, אֲדוֹךְ כִּי עֲנִיתִי וְתָהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה, "I praise You when I'm suffering, and I will certainly have my salvation."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* said that when one says אָנָּה ה' in *Hallel*, all his requests can be fulfilled. Chassidim thought that the Sfas Emes was referring to the *pasuk*, ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא, "Please Hashem, save us, now." The Imrei Emes *zt'l* said that he thinks the Sfas Emes was referring to the *pasuk*, אָנָּה ה' כִּי אֲנִי עַבְדְּךָ, "Please Hashem, because I am Your servant."<sup>30</sup>

We will be saying the same words of *Hallel* for eight days, but don't allow the routine to make you tired or lazy. Remember, saying *Hallel* is one of the highlights of Chanukah. The same applies to *Al HaNissim*. Try to make every *tefillah* unique.

### The Candles' Message

The *Kav HaYashar* (96) writes, "We must praise Hashem's holy name for the great miracles Hakadosh Baruch Hu performed for our fathers during these days – back in the times of Antiochus, the Greek king. Antiochus decreed several bad things against the Jewish nation, and Hashem, with His compassion and immense kindness, which prevails forever, dressed Himself in clothes of revenge and, via the Chashmonaim, killed

the two leading generals of the Greek army, Bagris, and Nikanor. All the soldiers of the Yevanim were delivered into the hands of the Jewish nation. May all of Hashem's enemies be destroyed in this manner.

"Then, the Chashmonaim came into the Beis HaMikdash. They only found one jug of oil sealed with the *kohen gadol's* seal... It only had enough oil to burn for one day, and the G-d in heaven, Who resides in the Beis HaMikdash, performed a miracle, and the oil lit for eight days.

"To remember this miracle, in every generation, the Jewish nation lights the Chanukah *lecht* for eight days. These are lamps of a mitzvah.

"We have several sources that Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves lamps of a mitzvah, for it states (*Yeshayah* 24:15), בְּאוֹרִים כִּבְדוֹ אֵת ה', 'Honor Hashem with lamps.' Every candle lit for a mitzvah has immeasurable holiness. If we had *ruach hakadosh*, we could know the future when we light these *lecht* because the candles of a mitzvah tell prophecies, just like a *navi* giving over what he heard from Hashem's mouth.<sup>31</sup>

"The *gaon*, the Maharshal *z'l* writes in the introduction to his *sefer Yam shel Shlomo*, 'Once, with a candle of a mitzvah, heaven gave me encouragement and opened the gates of light. Heaven told me, "Study Torah... Be like a lion in his den. Write *sefarim*... And after I received this message, I couldn't abstain from writing *sefarim*!'"

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30. When we say על המזון, we don't add a line for Chanukah (as we do on Shabbos, *yom tov*, etc.) This is because when one praises Hashem, it shouldn't be a one-liner. Praise requires elaboration.

When someone did a favor for Reb Aharon of Belz *zt'l*, he would thank him personally. His *gabai'im* asked, "Why do you take the effort to thank them yourself? For more important matters, you send your *gaba'im*. Why can't you send us to thank those who helped you?"

He replied, "When the *chazan* says מוֹדִים, the congregation says *modim* together with him. This is because when it comes to thanking, one must do so himself. It isn't enough to send a *shliach*"

31. Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said: From the Shabbos candles, one can know what will happen during the following week, and from the Chanukah candles, one can know what will happen during the following year.



The Kav HaYashar explains that he heard from the Yesod Yosef, who heard from scholars that this is what happened:

"One night, Reb Shlomo Luria (the Maharshal) was studying and writing his sefer *Yam Shel Shlomo*, with only a small candle in front of him, and it was about to go out. The candle remained lit for several hours – like three or four complete candles... He understood from his candle that Hashem was with him." The miraculous candle told him that Hashem loves his Torah learning and *chiddushei Torah*, that Hashem wants him to continue learning and writing his *chiddushim*, and that encouraged him.

"The miracle that happened to the Maharshal is similar to the miracle of the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash on Chanukah" (*Kav HaYashar*).

Other miracles occurred with lamps.

One night, Rebbe Shmelke of Nikolsburg *zy'a* was learning Torah by candlelight, and a gust of wind blew out the candle. He didn't have a match (or flintstone) to relight his candle, so he went onto the porch to see if a passerby could light his candle. Someone came, lit his candle, and Rebbe Shmelke returned to study Torah. Rebbe Shmelke later thought, "How did he light my candle? I was on the porch of the second floor, and the man was on the street!" He realized that Eliyahu HaNavi had come to light his candle so he could continue learning.

The Alter of Navardok *zt'l* would study Torah and *mussar* in a small hut in the forest. One night, his lamp blew out, and he needed more oil. The Alter of Navardok told himself, "Hashem can do everything; Hashem can send me oil."

For *hishtadlus*, he opened the door of his hut.

Just then, a man came by. "Do you have oil?" He did. The Alter was able to study

Torah and *mussar* for the rest of the night. In the morning, the Alter took the remaining oil and stored it so he would never forget the miracle that Hashem performed for him.

Once, there was a fire in his home, which consumed the jar of oil. The Alter said he was happy this happened because "Why should I remember this episode more than all the other miracles Hashem performs for me? Every moment of life is filled with miracles."

As we wrote from the Kav HaYashar, the lamps tell prophecies, like a *Navi* relaying what he heard from Hashem. We don't have *ruach hakodesh* to understand the prophecies, but one message clearly comes through: The lecht tells us that Hashem loves us, and He wants our Torah and mitzvos. That is the message of the Chanukah *lecht*, too. Hashem loves us and wants our service. And that message is very dear to us.

### Shabbos Chanukah

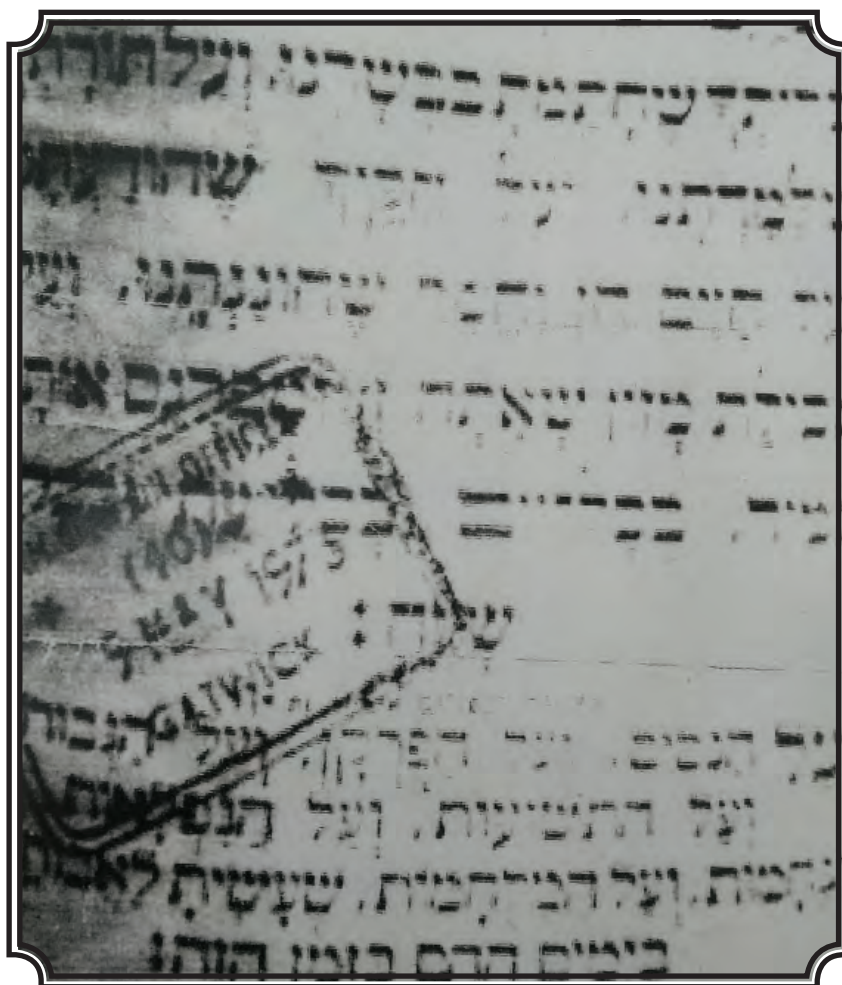
The Meor Einayim (*Mikeitz*) writes, "Hashem gave Shabbos to the Jewish nation so we can be close to Him. When one keeps Shabbos, all his sins are forgiven."

However, it is hard to tap into the holiness of Shabbos because the holiness of Shabbos is so extremely exalted. שבת is Hashem's name; how can a person ascend to this high, exalted place? On Chanukah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *keviyachol*, goes down lower than ten *tefachim* [to the people at very low levels] and draws them up so they too can experience Shabbos. This is the explanation of פתילות שאין מדליקין בשבת בהן בחנוכה, 'Wicks that one can't use on Shabbos, one may light with them on Chanukah.' The wicks represent people, שאין מדליקין בשבת, who don't become illuminated on Shabbos, מדליקין בהן בחנוכה, they can become illuminated on Chanukah. Hashem, Himself, *keviyachol*, lowers Himself down to the person and kindles his neshamah." So, Shabbos Chanukah is an exceptional opportunity. If we have trouble

connecting to Hashem on Shabbos, we have the potential to succeed in binding with Hashem on this Shabbos.

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zy'a* would repeat in the name of his father, Rebbe Shalom Shachnah of Pravitch *zy'a*, that the Shabbosim until Chanukah are alluded to in

the words, "The earth was תהו ובהו, empty and void." Even the Shabbosim lack their shine and brilliance. But when Chanukah comes, it states, ויאמר אלקים יהי אור, "Hashem said, there should be light," as from then on, one can more easily attach himself to the holiness of Shabbos.



Copy of the incredible benchner, stamped by the UK Government (see page 23)