

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Vayeishev

Chanuka



# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Vayeishev - Chanuka

## Happy with Hashem's Will

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. "ויהי שם בבית" ויהי הסוהר, and he was there, in prison."

These final words seem superfluous; it is obvious that if Yosef was in jail, he was "there, in prison." Where else would he be?

The answer is that Yosef was "there, in prison," willingly, with all his heart and soul, because he believed this was Hashem's will. If Hashem wanted him to be in prison, he would fulfill Hashem's will with joy.

The Sfas Emes writes, "Yosef was extremely wise. He was also wealthy (because Potiphar gave him everything he owned [see 39:8]). If Yosef wanted, he could have found a way to get out of prison. But he believed that his imprisonment was Hashem's will, so he remained there and didn't try to leave."

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

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

Another Midrash (*Shir HaShirim* 1:1) states ויקח אדני יוסף 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 because of his loyal service because it is a great mitzvah to serve

Avraham Avinu. But why would Yosef be freed from prison because he served 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 loyally. Instead, we should translate it like the standard translation of emunah, which is belief in Hashem. Yosef had emunah. He believed that it was Hashem's will that he be a slave to Potiphar. In the merit of his emunah, he was freed from jail.

Yosef was a slave, far from his family, distant from his father Yaakov Avinu, with whom he would study each day. He was living among idol worshipers, nevertheless, Yosef didn't allow himself to lose hope or despair. It states (39:2), ויהי ה' את יוסף, "Hashem was with Yosef," and Chazal (*Shabbos* 30) say, "The *Shechinah* rests with someone who is happy." If the *Shechinah* was with Yosef, he must have been happy.

Also, it states (39:2), ויהי איש מצליח, "He was a successful man," and the Midrash translates גבר קפוז as איש מצליח, "a dancing person."<sup>1</sup> Yosef was always dancing and filled with joy.

But how was he so happy under 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 is for the good, so he was happy.

The Sfas Emes (4365) writes, "It seems that Yosef was embarrassed by his brothers when 'they took off his coat' (37:23), yet he didn't

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1. מצליח means success, and it also means jumping/dancing. This tells us that simchah is mesugah for parnassah.

ask questions on Hashem. He believed that it was for the good. Therefore (39:12), וינס ויצא, ההוצה, '[Yosef] ran outdoors.' He had *siyata dishmaya* and was able to embarrass himself to do Hashem's will."

The Sfas Emes writes the following:

Yosef's brothers took off Yosef's coat (the *ksonas passim*) and threw him into a pit. Yosef was humiliated, but he didn't ask questions on Hashem. He believed that this was Hashem's will. Later, to save himself from *eishes* Potiphar, he had to leave his clothing in her hands and run away. In the merit that he passed the first test and believed that what happened to him was for the best, he merited passing the second test and allowed himself to be humiliated to protect himself from sinning with *eishes* Potiphar.

We must know that all the moments that seem negative to us are all for our good.

The Or HaChaim (Bereishis 45:4) writes that Yosef told his brothers, "Even when you sold me, my feelings of brotherhood toward you never ceased." How did Yosef reach that level? How did he love his brothers even as they sold him? It is because he believed it was from Hashem. He told his brothers (Bereishis 45:8) ועתה לא אתם שלחתם אתי

הנה כי האלקים, "And now, it wasn't you who sent me here, rather it was Hashem."

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."<sup>2</sup>

### Happy with your Spiritual Portion

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* and Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli *zt'l* were once imprisoned, and there was a bucket in the cell, to be used as a toilet. Rebbe Elimelech was very upset because they wouldn't be able to daven and study Torah close to the bucket.

His brother, Rebbe Zusha, explained that this was actually a reason to rejoice because by refraining from studying Torah and from tefillah, they will be keeping a *halachah* that prohibits studying Torah near a foul odor. They will be doing Hashem's will, which is reason to rejoice.

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

The prison warden rushed in to inquire about the singing. When he saw them dancing around the bucket, he said, "Oh,

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2. Yaakov Avinu thought Yosef died, and he put on sackcloth (see 37:34).

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."

It isn't clear from this Midrash whether taking the sackcloth was a negative or positive action.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* clarifies that sackcloth is considered a negative one, because it means that we aren't accepting the hardships with the belief that everything is for the good. The ideal outlook is to believe that even the most challenging situations are from Hashem, for our good.

Last week's *parashah* discusses אלופי עשו, Eisav's large and powerful family. This week's *parashah* begins with the words וישב יעקב, "Yaakov sat."

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

this is what you are happy about?" and took the pail out of the room.

Everyone has a vision of what *avodas Hashem* should be like for them (learning many hours, for example), but we have to be happy with the portion Hashem gives us, even when it isn't what we had in mind. The Sfas Emes says, שמח בחלקו means to be satisfied with your portion in *ruchniyus*.

Yosef is the only person in Tanach who is called איש מצליח. He is called that way because he always felt that he was successful. He never thought his life or *avodas Hashem* was a failure or a waste. This is not easy for a person who was a slave and a prisoner.

His *avodas Hashem* in Mitzrayim wasn't the same as it was when he lived in Eretz Yisrael together with his father and the שבטי י"ה. But he was successful because he carried out the mission that Hashem had planned for him.

The Ksav Sofer *zt'l* (*Teshuvah Orach Chaim* 27) proves from the words ויהי ה' את יוסף "Hashem was with Yosef" that Yosef was happy. If he weren't happy, Hashem wouldn't be with him. How was he happy? The answer is יהי איש מצליח; he considered himself successful because he was carrying out the mission Hashem planned for him.

### The Great Test

This week's parashah tells us about the great test Yosef faced with *eishes Potiphar*.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 35:) says, "Every day *eishes Potiphar* spoke to Yosef and tried to convince him to sin. The clothes that she

wore in the morning, she didn't wear at night."

Yosef always kept his eyes down, so she forced him to wear an iron blade under his neck to try to get him to gaze at her. 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 wouldn't bend.

And perhaps the hardest part of the test was that *eishes Potiphar* kept telling Yosef that to sin with her was a mitzvah, and she really believed that. Rashi (39:1) writes, "Just as Tamar intended *leshem shamayim*, *eishes Potiphar* intended *leshem shamayim*. She saw in the stars that she will bear children with Yosef, only she didn't know whether it would be with her or with her daughter."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* explains that the *yetzer hara* isn't able to 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. Nevertheless, (39:8) וימאן, Yosef refused to sin.<sup>3</sup>

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* writes that Yosef also saw in the stars that he would have a child with *eishes Potiphar*. Yosef thought that this meant he would eventually sin with *eishes Potiphar*. (He didn't know that it meant he would marry *eishes Potiphar's* daughter.) This made Yosef think, "What purpose is there in passing the test if I will anyway end up committing this grave *aveirah*?"

3. It also says וימאן by the mitzvah of *yibum* (*Devarim* 25:7, במאן יבמי). The Midrash (87:5) says that Yosef told *eishes Potiphar*, "If a person can refuse to do *yibum* (as it states במאן יבמי), 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.)

This is another method the yetzer hara uses to cause people to sin, to lose hope to succeed in passing the test.

But then Yosef told himself, "Although I see in the stars that I will have a child with *eishes* Potiphar, right now, I can fight and overcome the *yetzer hara*. What will be in the future will be, but now I will pass the test." This attitude saved Yosef from the aveirah, and he ended up marrying Osnas bas Potiphar and bore children in a permitted way.

It states (39:12), ותתפשהו בבגדו, "She grabbed [Yosef] by his clothes." בבגדו also means rebellion. The Beis Avraham explains that *eishes* Potiphar tried to convince Yosef that he was a rebellious and sinful person. If Yosef agreed with her, it would bring him closer to sinning.

The Rambam (*Avos* 2:13) writes, ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך "Don't consider yourself a *rasha*, because if you think lowly about yourself, you won't consider your *aveiros* severe." *Eishes* Potiphar was trying to make Yosef look down on himself so that he wouldn't feel distant from sin.

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.

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

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 was saying, "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>4</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 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 means that before Moshiach comes, people will have the *chutzpah* to say, "I'm a *tzaddik*! I'm special!" And that thought is good and necessary because with pride, they will conquer the *yetzer hara*.

It states (37:3), וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו...ועשה, "Yaakov loved Yosef more than all his other sons...and he made him a silk coat." This coat, which only Yosef wore,

4. After the Yidden sinned with the *egel*, Moshe Rabbeinu prayed for forty days for Hashem to forgive them. Moshe Rabbeinu said that he was praying because (*Devarim* 9:19), כי יגרתני מפני האף, בי.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zy'a* said that Moshe was saying, כי יגרתני מפני האף, that their noses may turn down due to their shame and disgrace, as a result of their sin. And that is the greatest problem because if they feel down, this can lead to many more sins. When they believe they are righteous, they conduct themselves according to that perception.

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."

Why did Yaakov give this coat to Yosef? Why wasn't he cautious not to arouse jealousy? *Baalei mussar* explain that Yaakov knew that Yosef would have more difficult tests than all the other brothers because he would live alone in Mitzrayim. Yaakov gave him honorable clothing to help him pass the tests.

The Baal HaTurim writes that פס"ם is *roshei teivos* for מדינים, מדינים, פוטופר, סוחרים, ישמעאלים, מדינים, the four times Yosef was sold. The Baalei Mussar explain that each time Yosef was sold, he was confronted with difficult tests. The coat's purpose was to increase Yosef's self-esteem so he could pass those tests.<sup>5</sup>

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85.) relates that Rebbe (Reb Yehudah HaNasi) used the technique of bestowing honor to bring back a grandson of Reb Shimon bar Yochai to Yiddishkeit. This grandson, whose name was Yossi, was initially a grave sinner. Rebbe gave him a Torah teacher, ordained him with *semichah*, dressed him in the golden cloak of rabbanim, and had everyone call him "rebbe." Whenever he wanted to return to his old ways, his teacher would tell him, "You were made a *chacham*, you wear the golden cloak of 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 and tzaddik – a Tana, and he is called "Reb Yossi ben Reb Elazar ben Reb Shimon." The change was caused by the honor he was given.

When Reb Yossi was *niftar*, they wanted to bury him near Reb Elazar, his father, but a snake blocked the cave entrance so 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 (only he lacked the merit of suffering for the Torah). That is how high Reb Yossi rose with his teshuvah. And Reb Yossi's pivotal change began when he received *semichah*, was called "rebbe," and wore the golden cloak of rabbanim. Honor does that to people. It can turn them 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 as though he has already reached the level you hope he will attain. That will inspire your child to fill the aspirations you've set for him.<sup>6</sup>

The Or Zarua discusses lessons we can learn from the order of the alef beis. For the letters ק ר צ, he explains that the first letter, צ, written like this: צ" means empty,<sup>7</sup> representing the empty people, the sinners. How can we bring them to teshuvah? The

5. The Chasam Sofer (ד"ה ודיה) writes, "A person doesn't know the value of his deeds, just how precious they are. The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* 141) says if Reuven knew that Hashem would write in the Torah that he saved Yosef, he would have done far more than save him. He would have carried Yosef on his shoulders to bring him to his father."

6. 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. That *bachur* remembers studying diligently for the next half year because of this episode.

7. צ" means empty. As Onkelus on תהו ובהו writes, צדיא ורקניא, "empty and void."

solution is ק' ר', *roshei teivos* for קריא רבי, "call him rebbe." This is what Rebbe did to bring back Reb Yossi. Build up his self-esteem, and he will reach his full potential.<sup>8</sup>

After suffering the *tzaros* of World War Two, a chassidische bachur strayed off the path and was planning on marrying a non-Jewish woman. People tried to convince him not to do this grave sin, but he ignored their mussar.

Reb Gad'l Eizner zt'l told him, ס'איז פאסט, נישט פאר א חסידישע בחור, "It isn't proper for a chassidische bachur to do such a thing." That simple rebuke turned him around because the way to bring people to *teshuvah* is by revealing how great they truly are.

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

### Chanukah Reveals the Greatness of Every Yid

We discussed how everyone should recognize his greatness and consider himself special. We add that this awareness is the root of the Yevanim's hatred of the Jewish nation. It bothered the Yevanim that Yidden believed they have a close connection with Hashem and that their deeds have universal, and even celestial, significance. This is the reason why they forced Yidden to write on

their oxen's horn, שאין לכם חלק באלקי ישראל, that they don't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael.

The Sfas Emes (5636 ליל ז' ד"ה איתא) writes that the Yevanim didn't have a problem believing that there were some tzaddikim among Klal Yisrael and that they have a close connection with Hashem. But the Yevanim didn't want the simple, mediocre Yid to think they were close to Hashem.

Just think of the words written on the oxen's horn: "We don't have a portion in the G-d of Yisrael." The phrase "G-d of Yisrael" means Hashem is associated with Yisrael. It contradicts the notion that Yidden don't have a portion and connection with Hashem. The beginning and final words, written on the horn, are contradictory.

The answer is that the Yevanim accepted that Hashem is the G-d of Yisrael, the G-d of tzaddikim. They knew that tzaddikim are close to Hashem. But they denied that there's a connection between Hashem and the average Jew. Certainly, they didn't believe that a Jew who is on a very low level could be connected with Hashem and that his deeds have significance.

The Chanukah miracle revealed Hashem's love for the Jewish nation and the greatness of every Yid. *Shulchan Aruch* (673:1) states, "If a Chanukah candle gets mixed with other candles, even a ratio of 1/1000, it doesn't become *batel*" This is because Chanukah

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8. When Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l was a prisoner in Siberia, one of his roommates was a gentile, a former general in the German army. Every night, when the gentile thought everyone was asleep, he put on his uniform, which he kept hidden under his bed, and marched around the room as though he was leading hundreds of soldiers. One night, Reb Yankele asked him why he did this.

The German 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 German replied, "I used to be a powerful general in the German army. Hundreds of soldiers had to obey each of my commands. 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 soldiers. That gives me strength to endure the humiliation and affliction we suffer here in this Russian prison."

Reb Yankele would tell this story, so we should also remember that we are the King's son. We shouldn't forget our glory and pride.

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.

### Below Ten Tefachim

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

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

The husband agreed to move to his wife's old home to please her.

The wife was overjoyed since now she knew that her husband loved her. She enjoyed a better lifestyle when they lived in the mansion, but 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 his love to her.

That is why the Rambam calls Chanuka *lecht* מצוה חביבה עד מאוד a very beloved mitzvah. It is very special because on Chanukah, Hashem comes down to our low levels to raise us, proving that He loves us. He comes down to us to elevate us so that 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* and distant from Hashem's presence. 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 being 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."

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>9</sup>

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

### Serve Hashem with Joy

One of the benefits of recognizing our importance before Hashem, and our closeness to Him, is that this enables us to perform mitzvos 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?

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

An artist painted a true-to-life picture of a man carrying a fruit-filled basket. 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 because 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 weren't afraid to eat from the bread. Yosef said, "If the birds aren't afraid of the man holding the basket, it proves that 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. Sadly, the same can be said about someone who keeps the mitzvos without

joy. For example, he lights the Chanukah *lecht*, says *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*, but without *hislahavus* and happiness. He is alive, but his mitzvos are dead. We must keep the mitzvos enthusiastically and joyously. When we perform the mitzvos of Chanukah, let it be evident that we are alive.

### Bitachon

It states in this week's parashah (40:23), ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף וישכחו "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" have the same meaning!<sup>10</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*.

Yosef's forgetting the *sar hamashkim* demonstrates a very high *madreigah*. It attests to Yosef's high level of *bitachon*. Yosef was in prison for ten years, and this was perhaps his first ray of hope on the horizon of being 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* and asked the *sar hamashkim* to speak to Pharaoh, he didn't think about him anymore. Yosef knew that, ultimately, only Hashem could save him, not a human being. Therefore, Yosef forgot 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, if Yaakov wouldn't have seen the blood-

10. Rashi answers, ולא זכר בו ביום, the *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef on that day, וישכחו לאחר מכן, and he forgot Yosef in the future, too.

stained coat, Yaakov would have had *bitachon* that Yosef was still alive and that he would return home. Yaakov's *bitachon*, which was at such an elevated level, with a full heart, 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 he would be angry at them. Therefore, they slaughtered a goat, dipped Yosef's coat in its blood, and sent it to their father."

This concept shows us the power of Yaakov Avinu's *bitachon*. If he thought Yosef was alive, he would have *bitachon*, and Yosef would come home.

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 ׀ in this kappitel because when one trusts in Hashem he doesn't need ׀ כל, weapons.

The *Midrash Chanukah* (quoted by the *Rokeiach*) relates that there was a general of Yavan named Gaskalgus (others say it was Bagris). He had an enormous army. They arrived in Eretz Yisrael and found twelve Chashmonaim prepared to 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 them 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 and hit him right in his heart.

The Chashmonaim saw these miracles and said, ה' ילחם לנו, "Hashem is fighting this battle for us!"

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

Aliforni gathered an army of 120,000 mighty warriors, 22,000 archers, and camels carrying an endless food supply. In the past, Aliforni had already 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* with fasting. The *kohanim* wore sackcloth, and even the *mizbeich* 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, ליה בנים תלמידי חכמים, "If a person is cautious with lighting the candles [of Shabbos and Chanukah - *Rashi*] he will merit children *talmidei chachamim*, as it states, כי נר מצוה ותורה אור."

This is a wonderful promise, but the question is: Do we see it working? Do we see people who are cautious with Shabbos *lecht* and Chanukah *lecht* having children *talmidei chachamim*? This isn't a new question; it was asked by the *rishonim*.

Rabbeinu Yitzchak, the son of the Raavad asks, "Why don't we see everyone becoming *talmidei chachamim*? Most people are cautious with Chanukah *lecht*, so why don't we see them merit children who are *talmidei chachamim*!?"

He answers, "Few people keep this mitzvah with all its details and *halachos*." In other words, the segulah only works if the mitzvah is performed perfectly.

There can be another answer. The Meiri writes, הרגיל בנר דרך חיבוב מצוה והערה מפורסמת הוין לו, בנים תלמיד 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 could be that the love and the excitement for the mitzvah were lacking. It isn't sufficient to light the Shabbos and Chanukah lecht, even with all its stringencies. There also needs to be a love for the mitzvah, and then he will merit children *talmidei chachamim*.

One year, on Chanukah, Reb Chaim Ozer Grodzinski *zt'l* was in Krakow. He came to a tailor's home and asked the tailor to fix his jacket. "I didn't light 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. Reb Chaim Ozer watched in astonishment as the tailor, dressed in his Shabbos clothing, sang songs for a half hour near the lecht, completely happy with the mitzvah.

Reb Chaim Ozer said, "Now I understand why Krakow 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 one performs the mitzvah with love and inspiration.<sup>11</sup>

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 lighter will also become a *talmid chacham*.

Furthermore, *tzaddikim* say, 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 together with his *gabbai*. She asked them, "Which one of you is the Rebbe?"

The *gabbai* pointed at the Rebbe and the Rebbe pointed to the *gabbai*. Confused, she said, "Don't make me into a fool. I must speak to the Rebbe. Tell me, who is the Rebbe?"

The Yesod HaAvodah asked her what she needed. She told him that her daughter 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."

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**11.** 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?"

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

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

She did so.

The segulah worked, and 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 Chavas Ya'ir (הגהות מקור חיים תרע"ב ב') writes, "In my opinion, the primary mitzvah is that the one who lit the *lecht* should stay near the *lecht* for a half hour and look at the *lecht* 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 shining on the Chanukah *lecht*.

It states (*Bamidbar* 21:8), עשה לך שרף ושים אותו על נס. This *pasuk* refers to the *brachos* of Chanukah. שרף hints to the *brachah*, להדליק נר חנוכה, because שרף means to burn. ושים אותו על נס hints to the *brachah* שעשה ניסים לאבותינו. And וחי hints to שהחינו.

Literally, the *pasuk* means, "Make a snake, place it on a pole, and whoever was bitten

will see it and live." About Chanukah, we can explain that if someone was bitten by the snake, the yetzer hara, the solution is that he should 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, by looking at the Chanukah *lecht*, one can attain a *refuah* for all ailments of his *neshamah*.

We say, אין 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, looking at the Chanukah *lecht* is like using them. They are a vehicle to help us reach spiritual purity and inspiration.

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

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

Some say chapter קי"ט in *Tehillim* because it contains many requests for success in Torah and mitzvos.<sup>12</sup>

During the lighting of the Chanukah *lecht* is an auspicious time for tefillah. The Tosefta (*Maasar Sheni* 5:15) writes, "When one performs a mitzvah, it is an ideal time to daven to Hashem."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (19:3) writes, "When a woman lights the Shabbos candles, she should daven that she merits children *talmidei chachamim*, who shine in Torah

12. 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 attaining success in Torah.

because *tefillos* are more accepted after performing a mitzvah.<sup>13</sup>

### Simchah

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

Unfortunately, the Yevanim were somewhat successful since the Yidden weren't performing the mitzvos with joy.

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* anymore. 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>14</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 if you have a building without electricity, the building isn't finished yet. Something essential is missing from that big 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.

### Preparation for the Mitzvah

A chassid hid in the Yismach Yisrael's *zt'l* room and watched as the Rebbe prepared to light the Chanukah *lecht*. The chassid saw the Rebbe's devotion and *hislahavus* as he poured the oil and prepared the wicks. The chassid thought, "If this is the way the Rebbe prepares for the mitzvah, I can only imagine the great enthusiasm I'll see when the Rebbe lights the candles." But when the Rebbe lit the *lecht*, he didn't notice any great excitement. He said the *brachah* and lit the candles, just like thousands of other Yidden do. At least externally, one couldn'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

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13. Reb Shimon Daskal, a Satmar chassid from Bnei Brak, was once deliberating whether he should buy a store on Reb Akiva corner Yerushalayim St., a prime location, or if he should buy a store three times 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 many people say it. This is because תפילת זכה is said when Yom Kippur is approaching. So you see that it's all about location... Buy the store that's in a better location."

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

14. Everything in the world is made up 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 Sfias 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.

there without permission, so he kept his questions to himself.

The next day, the Yismach Yisrael came over to the chassid and said, "A person's part in a mitzvah is his preparations. When he performs the mitzvah, it isn't in his hands anymore. Either Hashem gives the inspiration, or He doesn't."

Therefore, if we want to light the Chanukah *lecht* properly, we should prepare for it before we do the mitzvah. We don't have much control over what happens when we perform the mitzvah – that is in Hashem's hands. Perhaps Hashem will give us *hislahavus* and joy, and perhaps not. But the preparations are in our hands, and we should prepare for the mitzvah as best we can.

Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala *zt'l* sent his grandson to watch the Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l* as the Beis Yisrael got ready to light Chanukah *lecht*. The grandson arrived at the Rebbe's residence and told the *gabai* Reb Chanina Shiff that his grandfather, the Biala Rebbe sent him to watch the Beis Yisrael prepare for Chanukah *lecht*.

The *gabai* opened the door and saw the Rebbe pacing intently, his face aflame. The *gabai* quickly shut the door and said to the young man, "I don't dare disturb the Rebbe at this time. If you want, 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."

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

An oil merchant once came to a town. The townspeople brought pots and containers and asked him to fill their utensils with oil. Eventually, the residents ran out of

containers. They wanted to buy more oil, but they didn't have where to put it.

The merchant commented, "You want to buy more oil, and also, I want to sell you more oil. But I can't sell you oil if you don't have containers to hold it."

This *mashal* helps us understand why it is of utmost importance to prepare for all mitzvos and Chanukah *lecht*. Hashem wants to give us an enormous amount of light on Chanukah, but we can't receive it without enough vessels. With every preparation we make for Chanukah, we create more vessels to absorb the light that Hashem wants to give us.

Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Chortkov *zt'l* said that a gem shines only in the correct setting. Put it on a velvet cloth, and it appears beautiful. Put it in a gold ring, and it appears exquisite. Take the same gem and place it in a paper bag or a dirty bowl; it won't have the same appeal.

The same is 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 במושבתם (*Shemos* 10:23). The אור, brilliant light of Chanukah variates, במושבתם, with its setting. If we prepare ourselves well, we become a proper receptacle to retain the great light of Chanukah.

### 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, then 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 *chiddush* was that he lit that candle with joy," the old chassid said. "That night, he didn't perform the mitzvah with olive oil. He didn't even light the correct number of candles that one is supposed to light (because he only had one candle). But he did the best he could under the circumstances and was very happy with the mitzvah. For this, I say, he is worthy of becoming the Rebbe."

The elderly chassid's nomination was accepted.

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."

When Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna *zy'a* (Bayit v'Gan, Yerushalayim) would light Chanukah lecht, people from the neighborhood would come to watch. Once, due to pushing, a child fell on the Rebbe's Chanukah menorah, and it turned over. The child felt terrible, but the Rebbe said, "My dear child, I'm so grateful to you. Now I can keep Chazal's counsel, כבתה אין זקוק לה, 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 didn't pass yet, one should be *machmir* and rekindle the candles.)

We want to perform the mitzvah as best as possible, but we should be satisfied with whatever we accomplish. The Sfas Emes *zt'l* calls this being שמח בחלקו, happy with one's spiritual lot.

An example of this concept is when one wants to light at the correct time but can't because his family isn't ready. Some people become anxious and nervous, but that isn't the proper reaction. Be happy with what you can do.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* was once in the home of Reb Nachumke Kaplan during Chanukah. The time to light Chanukah lecht arrived, but Reb Nachumke waited until his Rebbetzin came home. The Chofetz Chaim asked his rebbe why he waited since halachah clearly states one should light at the proper time, even if not everyone isn't home.

Reb Nochumke replied, "My wife will be upset if I light the candles before she comes home, so it is a matter of shalom bayis. The Gemara says that if one only has one candle on Friday during Chanukah, he should light it for Shabbos because שלום ביתו עדיף, *shalom bayis* is more important than lighting Chanukah lecht. So, I decided it is preferable to push off lighting at the ideal time for the sake of shalom bayis."

### Seeing the Miracles

There's a popular question people ask on Chanukah. It is known as "The Beis Yosef's question." More than a hundred answers have been written over the years.

The Beis Yosef asks:

The Yidden found a jug that contained enough oil for one night, which miraculously burned for eight days. Thus, the candles burned naturally for one day and

miraculously for another seven days. So, why do we celebrate Chanukkah for *eight* days?

The Alter of Kelm *zt'l* answers that on the first night of Chanukah, we celebrate the miracle of creation, the miracle that oil can give light because that is also a miracle. Why should oil give light? It's a miracle, and we must train ourselves to recognize these wonders.

The Alter of Kelm adds that the miracles of creation are more significant than all other miracles because it is *יש מאין*, something emanating from nothingness.

Generally, the miracles we celebrate are *יש מיש*, which means that it wasn't a new creation, rather there was a change in the rules of the world. For example, on Chanukah, we celebrate the miraculous war when the few and the weak won the war against the many and the mighty. Nothing new was created, just a miraculous result.

Also, usually, a half-*lug* of oil can burn for one night. This time, the same measure of oil lasted eight days. This isn't a new creation but a new reality within the rules of creation.

However, Creation is *יש מאין*, something emanating from nothing – and that is the greatest wonder.

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* says that on Chanukah, we must train ourselves to see the world correctly. We should look at nature and recognize that it is miraculous. *Shulchan Aruch* (676:3) teaches, "Someone who isn't going to light Chanukah *lecht* on one of the nights of Chanukah, should make the *brachah* *שעשה ניסים* when he sees Chanukah *lecht*" We don't say a *brachah* for seeing any other mitzvah. What is unique about the Chanukah *lecht* that one makes a *brachah* simply for seeing them? It is because on Chanukah we correct our vision and perception of the world. Thus, *seeing* is a major component of the mitzvah.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 22.) say, "Chanukah *lecht* that was placed above twenty *amos* is *pasul*." This is because it is so high that people won't see them, and it won't publicize the miracle. The problem is that people won't see it, and on Chanukah we need to *see*.

After the Gemara tells us that a menorah can't be higher than twenty *amos*, the Gemara digresses to an apparently entirely different subject. It discusses a *pasuk* in this week's *parashah*:

It states (37:24), *והבור ריק אין בו מים*, "The pit [that Yosef was thrown into] was empty; it didn't have water." The Gemara expounds, "It didn't have water, but it had snakes and scorpions."

Many *meforshim* address the connection between these two Gemaras. Why is the Gemara about a menorah placed away from people's sight, above twenty *amos*, put next to the drashah that there were snakes and scorpions in Yosef's pit?

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* answers that both Gemaras discuss our obligation to recognize Hashem's miracles:

The menorah can't be too high because we must see the Chanukah *lecht* and internalize its messages. We must remember the miracles Hashem performed on Chanukah and every day. Then the Gemara tells that Yosef was thrown into a pit with snakes and scorpions and miraculously survived. His brothers saw this miracle, but they failed to recognize its significance. Had they realized that a miracle had occurred to save Yosef, they surely wouldn't have sold him to slavery. This Gemara presents the problem we must overcome: It is possible to see a miracle and not recognize it. That is why we need Chanukah *lecht*; it trains us to see things correctly.

Lighting Chanukah *lecht* can be compared to switching on the light in a dark room. Before we lit the Chanukah *lecht*, we didn't recognize the miracles surrounding us, but now we do.

However, even if the lights are on, but someone closes his eyes, he still won't see. On Chanukah, we have the potential to see the world with all its miracles, but it is up to us to open our eyes and see Hashem's hand in the world.

In the morning, we say the *brachos* פוקח פוקח and המעביר שנה מעיני עורים. 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. There is seeing, and there is seeing. 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: There are two ways to wake someone up: 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 shine from the Chanukah *lecht*.

The *Tzror HaMor* says חנו כ"ה spells הנוכה, and there are כ"ה, twenty-five, letters in שמע ישראל. So חנו כ"ה means the Chashmanaim won the war in the merit of

their belief in Hashem. And each year, on Chanukah, we should improve and enhance our *emunah*. One way to accomplish this is to open our eyes and see the miracles Hashem performs for us all the time.<sup>15</sup>

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

We asked above the Beis Yosef's question:

There was enough oil one night, so why do we celebrate Chanukah for eight days?

The Taz (670:1) answers that the miracle of the first day was that the oil wasn't entirely consumed on that night; some oil remained.

The Taz's answer is based on the following lesson from the Zohar:

*Navi* (II *Melachim* 4) tells the story of Ovadyah's wife, who came to Elisha and said that she was in debt, and her creditors threatened to take her two sons as slaves. Elisha asked her, מה יש לך בבית, "What do you have in your home?"

She answered that she had some oil. Elisha instructed her, "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.

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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 the non-religious Yidden. I'm referring to the *ehrllicher Yidden*. Listen to the way they speak, and you will hear *kefirah*. When they discuss business or politics, they talk as though everything is in our hands, and 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 a free hour during the day? An hour is a long time.

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 have a daily lesson in *emunah*."

The Sma'g lists the 613 mitzvos, and he writes in his introduction, "In a dream, I had a vision, which told me, 'Behold, you forget to list the primary mitzvah, השמר לך פן תשכח ה' אלקיך, Be cautious, lest you forget Hashem your G-d (*Devarim* 8:11).' I wasn't planning on listing that *pasuk* among the Torah prohibitions and the Rambam didn't list it either. But after I had this dream, I thought about it in the morning, and realized that it is a primary mitzvah for attaining *yiras Hashem*."

But notice, the miracle began with something she had. She had some oil in the house. This is because Hashem sends blessings onto something that already exists.

The Taz explains that this is how we know that some oil from the first night remained. Otherwise, there couldn't be a miracle on the other seven nights.

The Taz writes, "Looking back, they realized that a miracle happened on the first night. Had the oil been completely consumed on the first night, there couldn't be a miracle the next night. Certainly, some oil remained from the first night, and the miracle was that the remaining oil increased."

Reb Aryeh Leib of Tzinz (קומץ למנוחה, דרוש לחנוכה) explains this 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 *gabai tzedakah* 27 gold coins, three from each crate.

However, the *gabai* wasn't satisfied and 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 *gabai 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 the first night of Chanukah, we thank Hashem for the oil that was left over because

without that oil, the miracle couldn't have occurred.

### Praying for Miracles

The Gemara (*Gittin* 30:) states, "If someone tells you that your friend died, you can believe him, but if someone tells you that your friend becomes wealthy, don't believe him." This is because the world follows the laws of nature, and generally, the poor remain poor. But Chanukah is a time of miracles, and everything can turn around. The poor can become wealthy, and the ill can be healed; everything can change. Throughout the year, we don't daven for miracles, but on Chanukah, we do (as we will explain), and this is because on Chanukah, miracles are the natural way Hashem leads the world.<sup>16</sup>

The Gemara (24.) says:

Someone committed a sin punishable by *malkus*. While Rava's *beis din* gave him the required lashes, the man died.

The Babylonian king heard about this and wanted to punish Rava. The king's mother warned the king not to punish Rava and not to start up with the Yidden because Hashem performs miracles for them.

The king asked, "Which miracles does G-d do for them?"

His mother replied, "Whatever they ask for from Hashem, He gives them."

"How do you know?"

"When they need rain, they pray, and it rains immediately."

"That doesn't prove that G-d listens to them," the king said. "Perhaps they prayed a moment before it was going to rain. Let them request rain now, in the middle of the

<sup>16</sup> The laws of Chanukah begin in *Shulchan Aruch* with the *simanim* (תּרע-תרעא). תרע or תרעא in Aramaic means gate. The Beis Yisrael *zy'a* said this is because on Chanukah, the gates of heaven are opened, and everyone can go inside.

summer, and then we will know whether Hashem listens to their prayers or not."

It was during the month of Tamuz, when it never rains in Bavel.

The king's mother sent a message to Rava, explaining the gravity of the matter, and asked him to pray for rain.

Rava prayed, but it didn't rain.

Rava said, "Ribono Shel Olam, we heard about the miracles You performed in the past, but we never experienced any of them!" After he proclaimed this statement, it began to rain. The streets of Mechuzah were flooded, and the waters flowed into the Chidekel River.

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

Then his father instructed him not to sleep in his bed.

Rava slept elsewhere that night. In the morning, Rava saw his bed stabbed with a knife repeatedly. (The *sheidim* were given permission to harm Rava, and they were told where he usually sleeps.)

We learn from this Gemara that it is dangerous and improper to daven for miracles.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, on Chanukah, we daven for miracles. *Shulchan Aruch* (187:4) states, "If one didn't say *Al HaNisim* [in the *Birkas Hamazon*] he can say it in the הרחמן... הוא יעשה לנו נסים... כמו שעשה בימים ההם בזמן הזה בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן.. 'May Hashem perform miracles for us just as He performed miracles in those days.'

We daven for miracles.

Similarly, if one forgot to say *Al HaNisim* in *Shemonah Esrei*, he can say this הרחמן at the end of *Shemonah Esrei* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 682:4).<sup>18</sup>

The Shaul u'Meishiv (*Divrei Shaul*) *zt'l* explains that on Chanukah, we are permitted to daven for miracles because this is the atmosphere of the days of Chanukah. Throughout the year, Hashem leads the world according to the rules of nature, and it isn't proper to daven for miracles. 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

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17. 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 can 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."

18. When one says *Al HaNisim* in the right place, one doesn't *daven* for miracles. When one forgets *Al HaNisim*, he earns a bonus, because now he can pray for miracles.

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 renders him a fitting candidate for miracles.

*Bederech tzachus*, Rebbe Zusha of Chernobyl (Bnei Brak) *zt'l* explained:

During the eight days of Chanukah, the Chanukah miracles should always be on our minds. But this person forgot Chanukah (evident by the fact that he forgot to say *Al HaNisim*). So, he needs a salvation and a miracle to become a better Yid, for he is apparently on a very low level. Therefore, someone who forgot *Al HaNisim* should daven for a miracle.

week, the seven notes of music, seven kinds of wisdom, and more examples. In the era of Moshiach, the world will be run using the number eight, as it states (*Tehillim* 6:1), למנצח על השמינית, "A song played on a harp of eight strings." 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 comprised of seven. Eight is beyond nature. Therefore, a *bris milah* is performed on the eighth day: *milah* is beyond nature. 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 (תמנייא 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. On the first night of Chanukah, He lights eight lights, a world beyond nature.

The *Kedushas Levi* writes, "Due to the *tzidkus* (righteousness) 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 when we say *Hallel* and *Al HaNisim*. These draw down the *chesed* and miracles below."

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>

### Annual Miracles

The miracles recur each year. Chazal (*Shabbos* 21:) say, לשנה האחרת קבעום בהלל והודאה, "The following year [after the Yidden experienced the miracles of the war and the menorah] the chachamim established Chanukah as a holiday to praise Hashem." Why did they wait a year to establish Chanukah? They should have established Chanukah as an annual holiday immediately, the year the miracles occurred! The *Kedushas Levi* (*Kedushah Rishonah*) and the Ben Ish Chai (Ben Yohayada) explain that initially they thought that the miracles were a one-time experience. The following year, the chachamim perceived that the atmosphere of miracles was still in the air, and they understood that the miracles of Chanukah would recur each year. Therefore, they established it as an eternal holiday.<sup>20</sup>

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19. A member of our chaburah relates that his wife wasn't feeling well for a few weeks, and the doctor who examined her ordered an MRI test. He told them that she had a cancerous growth. 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 saw the MRI test, he said, "There is no growth here at all. There is nothing to worry about."

Another story we know of (from a member of our chaburah from 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 miracle in the merit of Chanukah, a time beyond nature.

20. 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, named for the *chanukas hamizbeiach*, the rededication of the mizbeiach that happened at that time. So, it should be called חנוך, not חנוכה.

We can also explain that לשנה אחרת means "a different kind of year." The chachamim reflected on the year that the Chanukah miracles occurred, and they saw that it was a year like never before. The year was saturated with miracles, with Hashem's kindness and compassion, more than ever before. It was a year when Yidden experienced spiritual growth, too. It was a שנה אחרת, a different type of year. When the chachamim understood how Chanukah affected the Jewish nation, 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.

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, "אלקא דמאיר ענני, "The G-d of Meir, save me!"

The guard said this and was saved. The government caught him, they hung him at 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,

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 righteousness isn't yet determined. So how did Reb Meir tell the guard to say אלקא דמאיר, "The G-d of Reb Meir"?

The Maharsha (in his second answer) replies that אלקא דמאיר doesn't mean "the G-d of Reb Meir." It means "Hashem who shone upon us His miracles with the lamps of Chanukah."

We also recite the words אלקא דמאיר ענני. It is a segulah for yeshuos to give tzedakah and to say אלקא דמאיר ענני. According to the Maharasha's explanation, we ask Hashem to perform miracles for us in the merit of the Chanukah lecht, which is the source of miracles for the entire year.

### הנינה - 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 it. The Ruzhiner zt'l explains, "On Chanukah, Hashem gives us bounty, similar to the blessings that descend from Rosh Hashanah. The difference is that on Rosh Hashanah, we receive the bounty only if we are worthy and deserve it, and on Chanukah we receive the bounty even if we don'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 to Chanukah. The dove represents the Jewish nation (see

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He answers that the *heh* makes the word a female one, which implies that there will be a birth. They recognized that miracles happen each year anew.

So, the Gemara is read like this: מאי חנוכה, why is it called חנוכה with a ה"א at its end? The Gemara tells the story of Chanukah and concludes, לשנה אחרת, the next year they established it as a holiday. This answers the question. It is called Chanukah, in its female form, because the miracles will bear fruit and happen again.

Brachos 53:). They say to Hashem, "יהיו מזונותי", מרורין בזית, let my *parnassah* come from the bounty of 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 בידי בשר ודם, dependent on man's deeds. If one deserves, he receives, and if he doesn't deserve, he doesn't."

Chazal (*Shabbos* 22.) say, אסור להרצות מעות כנגד, <sup>21</sup>נר הנוכה, and we can translate it to mean, "It is forbidden to *want* money when lighting the Chanukah candles." *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 its merit.

### Chanukah: A Time for *Teshuvah*

The *Meir Einei Chachamim* (12:2) writes, "Believe with *emunah sheleimah* that when you stand to light Chanukah *lecht*, all the sparks of your soul and of your fathers' and grandfathers' *neshamos*, all the way up to Adam HaRishon are standing there with you. This applies for every Yid who lights Chanukah *lecht*, as these *neshamos* hope that perhaps with your inspiration by the Chanukah *lecht*, they will merit a rectification and reach their origin and source."

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 would light the Chanukah *lecht*, he washed the souls of the Jewish nation.

חנוכה comes from the word חינוך, which means training, to train oneself, or to train children, to act properly. 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." This is certainly miraculous. Naturally, the mighty and the many win, but during this war, the weak and the few won.

After that, we say, וטמאים ביד טהורים רשעים ביד, צדיקים, וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך, "[You delivered] the *tame'im* into the hands of the *tahorim*, *resha'im* into the hands of *tzaddikim*, sinners into the hands of those who study Torah." Is this miraculous? Is it natural that sinful, *tamei reshaim* win when in battle against the righteous Yidden?

The Berdichover Rav *zy'a* answers that these words are discussing 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 עוסקי תורתך sinners began to study Torah.

There were many *resha'im* among the Jewish nation at this time called מתיונים, people who joined with the Yevanim. When they witnessed the miraculous war that the weak and the few won against the mighty

21. Literally, these words means, "One is forbidden to *count* money near the Chanukah lamps" because it is forbidden to benefit from the light of the Chanukah *lecht*.

Greek army, they did teshuvah and became pure, righteous Yidden.<sup>22</sup>

### Taking Advantage of these Days

We've seen that Chanukah is mesugal for teshuvah, for receiving Hashem's bounty

(even if we don't deserve it). It is mesugal for miracles and good children. Let us not allow these days to pass without investing heart and mind, joy and excitement. We can compare it to someone who won the lottery but doesn't go to the office to pick up the money. He lost so much. He will lose much

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**22.** A Yid from Eretz Yisrael traveled to Australia some sixty years ago but wasn't familiar where there was a beis medresh. 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 and figured that if he saw someone buying a large fish, he might be a Yid.

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

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. May I ask you?"

"Go ahead."

"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 because it carries the story of my life. I'll tell you about it:

"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 they helped me get into the business field. 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*. Soon, the mitzvos were left behind, too.

"One afternoon, I saw a young Jewish child sitting on the curb near my house, crying. It is always painful for me to see a child crying, probably because I'm an orphan, 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 cautious, but a cat ran right 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."

The host explained, "I didn't light Chanukah *lecht* for several years, but that year, I did. 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 meet with my Father in heaven. How can I meet my Father without Chanukah *lecht*? How can I go to Him without this mitzvah?'

"I took the broken bottle shards from the gutter, because something told me that 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. This all began because of that broken olive oil bottle. Now you understand why I saved it all these years!"

more if he doesn't take advantage of Chanukah.

The Kedushas Levi (*Kedushah* 2) gives a *mashal* to 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 long."

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21) says, "On Chanukah, one mustn't give *hespedim* (eulogies)." This is one of the halachos of Chanukah. They are days of joy and mourning and eulogies aren't permitted. However, we can add that we also shouldn't be giving *hespedim* after Chanukah passes. We shouldn't cry and mourn over lost opportunities.

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. They don't let these days pass unproductively.

The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ד ד"ה לשנה) writes, "The holidays are the pillars upon which the world stands. They are called שלש רגלים (literally, 'three feet'), for 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 sufficient, 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, Shavuos, 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 are able to 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**

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 when we say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*. These draw down the *chesed* and miracles below."

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

A Jewish prisoner was granted a brief furlough on Chanukah for just a few hours. The question was whether he should go out at night to light Chanukah *lecht* or leave in the morning so that he can 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 saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* are the highest points of Chanukah. We should certainly invest in these praises to say them properly.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 21:) say, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק, יום אחד נעשה בו גם והדליקו מומנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל ובהודאה, "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, ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה, imply that saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* make and create the holiday. קבעום ועשאום, it became

established, and it became a holiday בהלל והודאה, when we say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*.<sup>23</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, mitzvas aseil* ט-ג, 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, "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>24</sup>

It states (*Tehillim* 106:47), להשתבח בתהלתך. This means the person becomes improved, בתהלתך, by praising Hashem.<sup>25</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 the *malachim* never prevent praise from going up before Hashem. The praises go up, and Hashem hears the plea and fills his request.

This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 18:4), מהולל אקרא ה' ומן אויבי אושע, "I call out to Hashem with praises, and I am saved from my enemies."

Similarly, it states, אודך כי עניתני ותהי לי לישועה, "I praise You when I'm suffering, and I will certainly have my salvation."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* said that when one says אנה ה' in *Hallel*, all his requests can be fulfilled. Chassidim thought that the Sfas Emes was referring to the *pasuk*, אנה ה' הושיעה נא, "Please Hashem, save us, now." The Imrei Emes *zt'l* said that he thinks the Sfas Emes was referring to the *pasuk*, אנה ה' כי אני עבדיך, "Please Hashem, because I am Your servant."<sup>26</sup>

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

24. 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*.

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

26. When we say על המחי, 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 one-line shortcuts. Praise needs elaboration.

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* special.

### 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 – in the times of Antiyochus, the Greek king. Antiyochus 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. This jug was used to anoint the Jewish kings, and every *kohen gadol* that needed anointment was anointed from that jar of oil. 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. (The miracle needed to have been for eight days because the *kohanim* had to purify themselves [from טוֹמְאוֹת מֵת] seven days, and on the eighth day, they made oil in purity.)

"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), באורים כבדו את ה', 'Honor Hashem with lamps.' Every candle lit for a mitzvah has immeasurable holiness. If we would have *ruach hakadosh*, we could see and know the future when we light these *lecht*, because the candles for a mitzvah tell prophecies, just like a *navi* giving over what he heard from Hashem's mouth.<sup>27</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 up שערי אורה, 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*!'"

The *Kav HaYashar* explains that he heard from his Rebbe, 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 – as if it were 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 gave him encouragement.

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When someone did a favor for Reb Aharon of Belz zt'l, he would thank him personally. His *gabai'im* asked, "Why do you make 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 help you?"

He replied, "When the *chazan* says בודים, 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*"

27. 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 next year.

"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 went back inside to study Torah. Sometime later, Rebbe Shmelke thought, "How did he light my candle? I was on the porch, on 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 could always remember the miracle that Hashem performed for him.

Once, there was a fire in his home and the jar of oil was consumed in the fire. The Alter said he was happy that 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* tell 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.