



Exploring the Fascinating Insight of the Ma'or Einayim Avraham Avinu Paved the Way for the Miracle of Chanukah on the 25th of Kislev

The auspicious approaching Shabbas Kodesh of parshas Vayeishev is the Shabbas prior to the festival of Chanukah. We will begin this essay by introducing an intriguing teaching in the Tikunei Zohar (Tikun 13) related to Chanukah. The eight days of Chanukah begin on the 25th of Kislev. According to the Tikunei Zohar, the first twenty-four days of the month correspond to the twenty-four letters of: **"ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד"**. These words are referred to as the "lower declaration of G-d's unity." They are immediately followed on the 25th of Kislev by the twenty-five letters of the "higher declaration of G-d's unity": **"שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד"**. This is alluded to by the very name **חנוכה**, which can be read as **חנני**—they rested in the merit of the twenty-five letters of the declaration of Hashem's unity of **Shema Yisrael**.

The Pri Tzaddik (Chanukah 15) explains the matter in his own inimitable way. During the first twenty-four days of the month, the Chashmonaim were engaged in an intense battle with the Greeks; this relates to the "lower declaration of unity": **"ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד"**. After their miraculous triumph, they were privileged to exult in the "higher declaration of unity" on the 25th of Kislev: **"שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד"**. So, it now behooves us to explain the connection between the first twenty-four days of Kislev and the twenty-four letters of the declaration **"ברוך שם"** and also the connection between the first day of Chanukah, the 25th of Kislev, and the twenty-five letters of the declaration of **"שמע ישראל"**.

The Fascinating Connection between Akeidas Yitzchak and the Miracle of Chanukah

Next, we will introduce an illuminating insight from the incredible teachings of the brilliant Rabbi Menachem Nachum of Chernobyl, zy"u, in Ma'or Einayim (Mikeitz, Drush for Chanukah). He asserts that Avraham Avinu prayed for the miracle of Chanukah back at the time of Akeidas Yitzchak based on the following passuk (Bereishis 22, 5): **"וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָהָם אֶל נְעָרָיו שְׁבוּ לִכְם פֹּה עִם הַחֲמוֹר וְאֲנִי וְהַנֶּעֱר נִלְכָּה עַד"**—**Avraham said to his young men, "Stay here by yourselves with the donkey, while I and the lad will go up to that place; we will worship and we will return to you."** He explains that with the term **כ"ה**—whose numerical value is **25**—Avraham Avinu, a"h, alluded to Chanukah, which is celebrated on the 25th of Kislev. In other words, he prayed that the Jews would triumph over the Greeks in the times of Matityahu.

He is teaching us an incredible chiddush. When Avraham Avinu took his son Yitzchak to offer him up as a korban "olah," he was setting the stage for the miracle of Chanukah with the statement: **"וְאֲנִי וְהַנֶּעֱר נִלְכָּה עַד כֹּה"**. In other words, Avraham insinuated that our going now to fulfill the mitzvah of the Akeidah will continue to exert its influence **עַד כ"ה**—**"until the 25th"** of Kislev, the first day of Chanukah.

Let us analyze this claim further. Avraham placed his son Yitzchak atop the mizbeiach on Har HaMoriah. That was the site of the future Mikdash, where the kohanim

would perform the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah. Therefore, when he arrived at that destination, he already began to pray for the miracle of Chanukah—for the priestly Chashmonaim to defeat the Greeks, who had the extreme chutzpah and temerity to enter the Heichal and desecrate and defile all of the pure oil. He prayed that they would be privileged to light the Menorah with pure oil at the same holy site where he was about to place Yitzchak atop the mizbeiach. Notwithstanding, it is still incumbent upon us to explain the connection between Akeidas Yitzchak and the miracle of Chanukah.

It appears that we can explain the matter based on what the Chasam Sofer, zy"l, writes in Toras Moshe. He writes that the ordeal of the Akeidah was the basis for all the ordeals of self-sacrifice for the sake of "Kedushas Hashem" that Jews would endure throughout all the galuyos. Here is a translation of part of the excerpt:

In my humble opinion, HKB"H did not only test Avraham and Yitzchak to see if they would maintain their righteousness; he also intended to test the holy nation that was destined to descend from them. Initially, HKB"H tested their forefathers . . . since they are the source of their progeny imparting to them the ability to tolerate galus and persecution. Then, again, more recently, He tested to see if they would withstand murders and extermination for the sake of "Kedushas Hashem." And after Hashem granted him a lone son in his old age, and he raised him for 37 years in greatness and honor and Torah, he then took him to be slaughtered . . .

When they passed these tests and proved themselves to be superior to all the nations on earth, once again, on account of our countless sins, for nearly two-thousand years, they were subjected to captivity, plunder, murder, and annihilation—G-d have mercy on us! Everything was tolerated . . . HKB"H saw that from this holy beginning, holy, courageous people and the like would descend. Hence, He declared, "I will make your offspring like the stars in the heavens . . . ultimately, your offspring will inherit the gates of its enemies"—swiftly, in our times—Amen.

The Satan Fought with All Its Might at the Akeidah to Prevent the Willingness of Jews to Sacrifice Themselves in Future Generations

Based on this understanding, we can comprehend why the Satan made extraordinary efforts, employing various tactics, to prevent Avraham from fulfilling the will of HKB"H in the ordeal of Akeidas Yitzchak. This is described in the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayeira 22):

The Satan appeared before him on the path in the likeness of an old man. He said to him . . . Is an old man like you going to part with the son that was given to him at one hundred years old? . . . He said to him . . . I will not listen to you. He left him and reappeared as a young man standing to the right of Yitzchak. He said to him . . . Poor thing son of a poor thing, how many fasts did your mother fast until you were born? Yet, this old man has lost his mind and is going to slaughter you. He replied, "Even so, I will not violate the wisdom of my Maker and the command of my father" . . . Upon seeing that they were not swayed by him, he went and transformed himself into a large river.

Avraham immediately went into the water until it reached his knees. He said to his young men, "Follow me." When he reached the middle of the river, the water reached up to his neck. At that moment, Avraham gazed toward the heavens. He said to Him, "Master of the Universe, You chose me, took me down, and appeared to me. You said to me, 'I am One and you are one. Due to you, My name is known in My world. Sacrifice your son Yitzchak to Me as an olah.' I did not delay, and I am executing Your command. Now, the water is threatening my life. If I or Yitzchak, my son, drown, who will fulfill Your request? With whom will Your name be affiliated?" HKB"H answered him, "On your life, My name in the world will be affiliated with you!" Immediately, HKB"H reproached the source of the water, the river dried up and they stood on dry land.

Now, we don't find that the Satan made any unusual effort to prevent Avraham from fulfilling any of the other nine trials that HKB"H commanded him to do. To explain the matter, we will refer to two teachings in the Gemara (Berachos 63b):

“מנין שאין דברי תורה מתקיימין אלא במי שממית עצמו עליה, שנאמר **From where do we learn that words of Torah can only be retained by someone who is willing to sacrifice himself on its behalf?** For, it says (Bamidbar 19, 14): **“This is the Torah of a man who dies in a tent.”** Elsewhere, we are taught that HKB”H said to Yisrael (Kiddushin 30b): **“בני בראתי יצר הרע ובראתי לו תורה תבלין, ואם אתם—”My son, I have created the yetzer hara, and I have created Torah as its antidote (spice). If you engage in Torah-study, you will not be delivered into its hand.”**

Now, since the Satan and the yetzer hara are one and the same, it fought with all its power and means to prevent Avraham Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu from sacrificing their lives to fulfill the mitzvah of the Akeidah. For, it was well aware that they were paving the way for all of Yisrael to sacrifice themselves for the sake of Torah-study, which only endures in association with self-sacrifice. Furthermore, Torah-study is the antidote to the yetzer hara.

The Woman Who Sacrificed Seven Sons

We will now introduce a moving passage in the Gemara (Gittin 57b) concerning a woman (Chana) and her seven sons. After her seven sons sacrificed their lives for the sake of “Kedushas Hashem,” she proclaimed: **“בניי לכו ואמרו לאברהם—my sons, go and tell Avraham your father, “You bound a sacrifice on one mizbeiach, but I bound sacrifices on seven mizbichot.”** Is it plausible that this righteous woman, who sacrificed seven sons for the sanctity of Hashem, intended to gloat over Avraham Avinu?

We find a plausible explanation from the distinguished Rabbi of Porisov in Nahar Shalom. She meant to say that the capacity to educate her children to sacrifice themselves stemmed from Avraham. This then is what she wanted her sons to convey to Avraham: You, Avraham, were the first to sacrifice your only son for the sanctity of Hashem to prepare all of your future generations of offspring to sacrifice themselves for the sake of “Kedushas Hashem.” So, as an upstanding, proper Jewish woman, I fulfilled my role and obligation that I inherited from you by binding my seven sons on the mizbeiach.

Thus, we can now appreciate the wonderful connection between Akeidas Yitzchak and the miracle of Chanukah. After all, the basis of the miracle of Chanukah was the “mesirus nefesh” of the Chashmonaim. They did not hesitate to combat the Greeks, who wanted the people of Yisrael to abandon and forget the Torah Hashem had given them. They did so even though they were greatly outnumbered by the mightier Greeks. We laud their heroism and devotion in the inspirational prayer Ahl HaNissim:

“בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול חשמונאי ובניו, כשעמדה מלכות יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל, להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך, ואתה ברחמיך הרבים עמדת להם בעת צרתם, רבת את ריבם, דנת את דינם, נקמת את נקמתם, מסרת גיבורים ביד חלשים, ורבים ביד מעטים, וטמאים ביד טהורים, ורשעים ביד צדיקים, וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך, ולך עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולמך, ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה ופורקן כהיום הזה.”

In the days of Matityahu, the son of Yochanan Kohen Gadol, the Chashmonai, and his sons, when the Greek regime rose up against Your people Yisrael, to make them forget Your Torah, and to compel them to stray from the statutes of Your will, You, in Your abundant mercy, stood up for them in their time of distress. You championed their cause, judged their claim, and You avenged their wrong. You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the tzaddikim, and the willful sinners into the hands of the diligent students of Your Torah. For Yourself You made a name that is great and holy in Your world, and for Your people Yisrael You performed a victory of great magnitude and a salvation as this very day.

This formula attests to and commemorates the self-sacrifice of the Chashmonaim for the sanctity of Hashem. Evidently, they connected with the kedushah of Avraham and Yitzchak Avinu, who displayed their willingness to sanctify Hashem at the time of the Akeidah. Accordingly, we can interpret Avraham Avinu’s remark to his people as he left them to go bind Yitzchak: **“ואני והנער נלכה עד כה”**. He announced that this attribute of self-sacrifice would remain in effect **until כ”ה**—i.e., the 25th of Kislev—Chanukah. For, it was in the merit of Avraham and Yitzchak that the Chashmonaim were able to adorn themselves with their kedushah to

sacrifice themselves in their battle against the Greeks. Thus, they prevented Yisrael from forgetting the Torah.

"שמע ישראל": Actual Self-Sacrifice

"ברוך שם": Living and Studying with Self-Sacrifice

With this introduction, we can proceed to explain the connection between the first twenty-four days of the month of Kislev and the eight days of Chanukah beginning on the 25th day of Kislev—between the twenty-four letters of "ברוך שם" and the twenty-five letters of "שמע ישראל". We are taught an important, fundamental principle in our sacred sefarim; there are two types of "self-sacrifice" associated with the observance of the Torah. The first is when a Jew is prepared to actually sacrifice his life to sanctify the name of Heaven. We find that Avraham Avinu demonstrated this type of "self-sacrifice" when Nimrod threw him into the fiery furnace; similarly, Yitzchak Avinu demonstrated this admirable trait with his willingness to be offered as a korban to Hashem.

The second type is when a Jew lives a life of Torah and mitzvos characterized by "self-sacrifice." In other words, he occupies himself with the study of Torah and the performance of mitzvos with commitment, diligence, and perseverance. This is the message conveyed by the teaching quoted above: **From where do we learn that words of Torah can only be retained by someone who is willing to sacrifice himself on its behalf? For, it says: "This is the Torah of a man who dies in a tent."** It does not mean that a person should actually kill himself, chas v'shalom, but rather that he kills all of his earthly, physical, material desires in Olam HaZeh. This is the "self-sacrifice" characteristic of a life dedicated to the study of Torah.

It should be apparent that our forefathers—Avraham Avinu and Yitzchak Avinu—displayed both types of "mesirus nefesh" and, thereby, paved the way for all Jews. Let us refer to what the brilliant author of the MAchaszis HaShekel in his commentary on the Magen Avraham (O.C. 591, 7) wrote regarding the formula instituted in the Mussaf service of Rosh HaShanah: **"ותראה לפניך עקידה שעקד אברהם אבינו את יצחק"**—and see before You the image of the "akeidah," when Avraham Avinu bound his son Yitzchak on the mizbeiach. Surprisingly, no mention is made of

Yitzchak's merit. It would seem that his merit and self-sacrifice exceeded that of Avraham in the matter of the "akeidah." After all, he was already thirty-seven years old at that time, and he willingly agreed to be placed atop the mizbeiach as a korban to Hashem.

He explains the matter based on a Midrash (B.R. 55, 1). It states that the test of the "akeidah" surpassed all of the previous tests which Avraham was subjected to. The Nezer HaKodesh (ibid.) is perplexed by this Midrash. After all, Avraham was already subjected to a similarly difficult test. In his very first test, he was willing to sacrifice his life and be burned alive in Nimrod's furnace. He only survived, because HKB"H miraculously saved his life. So, why was the ordeal of Akeidas Yitzchak considered a greater test than that?

The Nezer Kodesh answers that the suffering associated with being burnt alive is short-lived; it ends when the person's life expires. Sacrificing one's only son—who was born to him when he was one hundred years old and whom he loved dearly—would result in a constant, lifelong suffering. Nevertheless, due to his extreme love for Hashem, he was prepared to sacrifice his son. Therefore, the ordeal of "Akeidas Yitzchak" was considered a greater test and ordeal than being thrown into the fiery furnace.

Accordingly, the MAchaszis HaShekel justifies the mentioning of Avraham Avinu's merit alone in our prayers: **"ותראה לפניך עקידה שעקד אברהם אבינו את יצחק בנו על גבי המזבח"**. For, the ordeal for Avraham Avinu—sacrificing his only son, born to him at the age of one hundred, and enduring a constant, lifelong misery—was far greater than the ordeal of Yitzchak Avinu—which was only momentary.

It turns out, therefore, that the ordeal for Yitzchak Avinu, who was willing to sacrifice his life as a korban "olah," falls into the first category of self-sacrifice for Hashem—actually giving up one's life. On the other hand, the ordeal of the "akeidah" for Avraham Avinu falls into the category of living a life of self-sacrifice devoted to learning Torah and serving Hashem. In truth, these two types of self-sacrifice complement each other. For, only someone who is prepared to actually die is also capable of serving Hashem with a life of self-sacrifice.

In light of what we have discussed, we can explain the practical significance of the two “declarations of unity.” The Zohar hakadosh (Bereishis 18b) teaches us that the passuk of “שמע ישראל” is referred to as “יחודא עילאה”—**the higher declaration of G-d’s unity**. Whereas the passuk of “ברוך שם” is referred to as “יחודא תתאה”—**the lower declaration of G-d’s unity**. The two go hand in hand. Let us elaborate. “שמע ישראל ה’ אלקינו ה’ אחד”—the higher declaration—states that every Jew must be ready and willing to sacrifice his life for “Kedushas Hashem” with the sincere belief in the unity of Hashem. The pronouncement “ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד”—the lower declaration—states that every Jew must obligate himself to live a life of Torah with self-sacrifice.

With this perspective, we can explain the teaching of the Ma’or Einayim magnificently. On the way to the Akeidah, Avraham remarked: “ואני והנער נלכה עד כה”. We learned that he was preparing the way for the “mesirus nefesh” that would occur in the future on the כ”ה of Kislev. For, the miracle of Chanukah involved both types of “mesirus nefesh”—that of Avraham Avinu and that of Yitzchak Avinu. The first twenty-four days of Kislev allude to the twenty-four letters of the “lower declaration of unity”—“ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד”. During those days, the holy Chashmonaim dedicated their lives to Torah and mitzvos despite the threats of the wicked Greek regime attempting to uproot their observance and belief in the Torah and its mitzvos.

In contrast, the 25th of Kislev, the first of the eight days of Chanukah, alludes to the fact that the holy Chashmonaim placed their lives in actual danger by engaging the Greeks in battle against all odds—the few against the many, the weak against the mighty. This actual “self-sacrifice” corresponds to the 25 letters of the “higher declaration of unity”—“שמע ישראל ה’ אלקינו ה’ אחד”.

“One concealed flask of pure oil” — the Inner Spot that Was “Stamped with the seal of the Kohen Gadol”—namely Avraham Avinu

It gives me immense pleasure to add a bit of spice explaining why Avraham was privileged to prepare the way for the miracle of Chanukah. We will refer to what the Sefas Emes (Chanukah 5633, Third Night) presents in the name of

his grandfather the Chiddushei HaRim. He comments on the following Gemara (Shabbas 21b): כל להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא When the Greeks entered the Heichal, they contaminated all of the oil in the Heichal; when the royal house of the Chashmonaim gained the upper hand and defeated them, they searched and found only one flask of oil that was lying with the Kohen Gadol’s seal. It is a fundamental principle of Chassidut that every Jew, even one who sins frequently, chas v’shalom, has a spot in the depths of his heart that is impervious to sin and character flaws. As such, it always remains clean and pure.

Of this innermost spot, which is a portion of G-d from above, it states (Vayikra 16, 16): “השוכן אתם בתוך טומאותם”—**that dwells with them amidst their tumah**. In other words, amidst the tumah of their iniquities and transgressions, there lies this inner focus, a portion of G-d from above, that remains totally unsullied. Because of this untainted site, Chazal taught (Sanhedrin 44a): “אף על פי שחטא ישראל—**although he has sinned, he is still called a Yisrael**.” This is because he still has within him an internal, Jewish focal point that remains untainted, on account of which he maintains his kedushah as a Jew. It is for this very reason that we occasionally witness even total “reshaim” aroused to perform righteous acts and teshuvah. This surprising phenomenon is attributable to the internal focus that has not been tarnished. In the words of Chazal: “רשעים מלאים—**the wicked are full of remorse**.”

Regarding this, the Chiddushei HaRim asserts that Avraham Avinu, with his extreme level of kedushah, laid the foundation for every Jew to have this untainted, inner, divine focus. In this light, we can interpret HKB”H’s remark (Bereishis 15, 1): “אל תירא אברם אנכי מגן לך”—**fear not, Avram, I am a shield for you!** HKB”H reassured him that He would safeguard this inner core present in every Jew from becoming blemished. We express this three times a day in Shemoneh Esrei with the berachah: “ברוך אתה ה’ מגן אברהם”. We are acknowledging and expressing our gratitude to Hashem for keeping His promise to safeguard this legacy of Avraham Avinu present within every Jew.

Additionally, we find the following in the Midrash (B.R. 46, 5): **Rabbi Yishmael says: Avraham was a Kohen Gadol.** The Chiddushei HaRim applies this fact to interpret the Gemara just cited: **When the Greeks entered the Heichal, they contaminated all of the oil in the Heichal—** in other words, the Greeks corrupted the souls and beings of the Jews from head to toe. **But when the royal house of the Chashmonaim gained the upper hand and defeated them, they searched and found only one flask of oil—** they found concealed deep within the core of the Jewish soul the inner point that remained pure and unblemished; **that was lying with the Kohen Gadol's seal.** In other words, this unblemished core was stamped with the seal of Avraham Avinu, who was a Kohen Gadol—i.e., we inherited it from him. It is impervious to the touch and contamination of external forces and influences. **It contained only**

enough oil to light the Menorah for one day—alluding to the solitary focus within a Jew's heart. Nevertheless, **a miracle was performed with it, and they lit with it for eight days**—its illumination spread from the inner focus to the seven gates of the soul.

In conclusion, we have learned that the miracle of Chanukah—finding a single flask of pure oil stamped with the seal of the Kohen Gadol—occurred in the merit of Avraham Avinu. Therefore, while preparing for the Akeidah, Avraham Avinu prayed and laid the groundwork for the miracle of Chanukah by saying: "ואני והנער נלכה עד כה". He alluded to the fact that his legacy would continue to shine within every Jew **until** the כ"ה of Kislev. Thus, on each of the eight days of Chanukah, every Jew is capable of lighting the inner point within him, so that it will illuminate all of his 248 limbs and 365 sinews with the kedushah of the Torah.



Our thanks and blessings are given to those who donated for the publication of our weekly dvar Torah for the merit of **אחינו בני ישראל**

Yoselovsky Family - לעילוי נשמת -
his father Reb Shabsy
Ben Yitzchok Isaac ע"ה

Family Madeb - לעילוי נשמת
their dear mother
Lea bat Virgini ע"ה

Arthur & Randi Luxenberg לזכות
of their wonderfull parents, children and grandchildren
His Father נשמת ע"ה ר' יצחק יהודה בן ר' אברהם ע"ה

לע"נ ר' מרדכי צבי ז"ל בן יבלחט"א ר' יצחק אלימלך קעסט Moti Kest
נפטר בדמי ימיו ביום כ"ג כסלו תשפ"ב
ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

To receive the mamarim by email: mamarim@shvileipinchas.com