

# Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts  
from  
Rabbi Elimelech  
Biderman  
Shlita

Vayeishev

Chanuka





# Torah WELLSPRINGS

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# Torah Wellsprings - Vayeishev - Chanuka

## Hashem's Plan Will Always Occur

A person can plan and do his best hishtadlus, but Hashem's will ultimately prevail. It is impossible to outsmart Hashem, and to accomplish something that isn't part of His plan.<sup>1</sup>

Rabbeinu Avraham ben HaRambam writes (in his commentary on the Torah) that Yaakov Avinu knew that his sons harbored animosity towards Yosef. Therefore, he was careful not to leave Yosef alone with his brothers. However, when the time came for Yosef to

be sold to Mitzrayim, Yaakov sent Yosef directly to his brothers, as it states (Bereishis 37:13) ויאמר ישראל אל יוסף הלוא אחיך רעים בשכם לכה ויאשרחך אליהם, "Yisrael said to Yosef, 'Are your brothers not pasturing in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them.'" It was time for Yosef to be sold to Mitzrayim, and Hashem's plan to transpire.

Rashi writes, "[Yosef] went with alacrity to fulfill his father's command, although he knew that his brothers hated him." He didn't find his brothers in Shechem, but he met a person in Shechem who directed Yosef to

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1. Let us begin with an amazing story of *hashgachah pratis*, *kiruv*, and *hatzalas nefashos*: A Yid from Nir Oz (a settlement near Gaza) was standing on the side of the road next to his stalled car. A religious Yid noticed him and stopped to ask him if he needed help. The man from Nir Oz replied that he had run out of gas and had been waiting an hour and a half for someone to stop and help him.

"I have a container with me," the religious Jew told him. "I will fill it with gas at the gas station, which isn't far from here, and bring you the gas."

Soon afterward, he returned with the gas, and the man from Nir Oz wanted to pay him. The religious Yid refused. "This was my mitzvah; I am not selling it."

The grateful man from Nir Oz exclaimed, "I am irreligious, and I heard many negative things about the religious community. But now, I am getting an entirely different perspective!"

Before Shabbos, the religious Jew called the man from Nir Oz to wish him "Gut Shabbos." This went on for some time; the religious Yid would call him on erev Shabbos, and sometimes, he would invite him to come to his home for Shabbos. (He lived in Givatayim, near Bnei Brak.) Finally, the non-religious man accepted the offer and agreed to come with his family for Simchas Torah. He said that he heard from his friends in Nir Oz that Simchas Torah is a good time to spend among the religious; there is dancing, candies are thrown, and canopies of *taleisim* are spread, etc.

Generally, this religious Yid went to his father's home for Simchas Torah, but he made an exception this time. He was presented with the opportunity to do *kiruv*, and he didn't want to miss it. His father, who lives in Sderot (a city near Gaza), agreed that his son should stay home and host this man from Nir Oz and even decided to join them for Simchas Torah to participate in the mitzvah.

Simchas Torah, a warning siren was heard in the morning, and everyone was afraid. The family from Nir Oz almost laughed at them, because where they lived, sirens are a common occurrence throughout the year. The Jews in Givatayim didn't hear the news of what actually happened that Simchas Torah until motzei Simchas Torah. When the non-religious man turned on his phone after Simchas Torah, he discovered the tragedy that occurred. With tears, he came to his host and said, "My life and the lives of my family, and also your parents' lives, and your family's lives, were saved in the *zechus* of the Simchas Torah we celebrated together in Givatayim. You and your parents weren't in Sderot for Simchas Torah, and we weren't in Nir Oz. Our lives were saved through *hashgachah pratis*, which all began with a gasoline can!" The lesson is that Hashem leads the world with *hashgachah pratis*, and weaves detailed and precise plans of how, where, and when events will occur.

his brothers (see 37:15-17). The Ramban writes, "This tells us that Hashem's decree is truth, and all *hishtadlus* is false. Hashem prepared someone to direct Yosef to go to his brothers. As Chazal (Bereishis Rabba 84:14) say, this man was a malach. This story isn't written for no purpose, but to let us know that Hashem's plan will occur." Yosef had to meet his brothers. If the brothers weren't in Shechem, Hashem prepared a way to let Yosef know where to find them because Hashem's plan that Yosef be sold to Mitzrayim had to occur.

### Accept Hashem's Will with Joy

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." How hard it must have been for Yosef HaTzaddik to be imprisoned there, underground, together with criminals. The supply of food, drink, and other necessities was probably minimal. He was alone, distant from his family, a family of tzaddikim and kedoshim. But there are indications that Yosef was always happy, even in prison. The end of the pasuk states, ויהי שם בבית הסוהר, "and he was there, in prison." These words seem superfluous because where else would he be? Obviously, if Yosef was placed in jail, he would be "there, in prison." The Torah tells us that Yosef was happy to be in jail. It wasn't a *b'dieved*, a negative experience he had to endure. ויהי שם בבית הסוהר, he was in prison with all his heart and soul. He believed that Hashem placed him in prison, so this was the best place for him to be, and that he had a mission to accomplish there.<sup>2</sup>

The Sfas Emes writes, "Yosef was extremely wise, and he was also wealthy. (Potiphar gave Yosef control over everything he owned [see 39:8]). If Yosef wanted, he could have figured out a way to get out of prison. But he believed his imprisonment was Hashem's will, so he remained 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 was for the good."

Two Midrashim discuss the quality of being loyal to one's boss. One Midrash says that Eliezer (the slave of Avraham) was cursed (ארור), and he became blessed (ברוך) because he served his master Avraham loyally. Another Midrash (*Shir HaShirim* 1:1) states that Yosef served Potiphar loyally, and in this merit, he was saved from jail.

The Sifsei Tzaddik asked his brother-in-law, the Sfas Emes, "We understand that Eliezer was blessed for his loyal service to Avraham Avinu, but why would Yosef be freed from prison because he served Potiphar loyally? What was special about serving Potiphar?"

The Sfas Emes explained that the Sifsei Tzaddik hadn't translated the second Midrash correctly. The Midrash states, יוסף על, ידי ששימש את רבו באמונה יצא לחירות. Although the simple translation באמונה is "loyally," in the context of this Midrash, it means "belief." The Midrash is saying, "Yosef served his master [Potiphar] with the belief that it was bashert, and he was fulfilling Hashem's will by serving Potiphar. In that merit, he was freed." Yosef believed that Hashem planned

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2. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhenzk and Rebbe Zusha of Anipoli zt'l were once placed in prison, and there was a bucket in their cell for the inmates to use as a toilet. Rebbe Elimelech was very upset because, due to this bucket, they couldn't daven or learn Torah. His brother, Rebbe Zusha, explained that the bucket was, in fact, a reason to rejoice because by refraining from studying Torah and saying tefillos, they were doing Hashem's will, and that is a reason to rejoice. Rebbe Elimelech agreed, and they sang and danced around the bucket.

The angry prison warden rushed in to see what the commotion was about. When he saw them dancing around the bucket, he thought they were celebrating the convenience of having a beis hakisei in their cell. He shouted, "Oh, so this is what you are so happy about!" and removed the pail from the room.

that he be a slave to Potiphar, and therefore, he accepted Hashem's will with love. In the merit of his emunah, he was freed from jail.

Yosef believed that he was enslaved in Potiphar's home because this was Hashem's will. An indication of this is the description that the pasuk gives about this period of Yosef's life. It states (39:2), ויהי ה' את יוסף, "Hashem was with Yosef." This means Yosef was happy at this time of his life because Chazal (*Shabbos* 30) say, "The *Shechinah* only rests on someone who is happy." Also, about this time, in Potiphar's house, it states (39:2), ויהי איש מצליח, "He was a successful man," and the Midrash translates איש מצליח as גבר קפוז, "a dancing person." Yosef was dancing and filled with joy. It is obvious that the joy Yosef had was the outcome of his emunah. He believed that Hashem wanted him to be a slave in Mitzrayim, so why shouldn't he be happy?<sup>3</sup>

### Bitachon

In this week's parashah, Yosef asks the *sar hamashkim* to remember him and to tell Pharaoh that he is enslaved for no reason. However (40:23), ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף וישכחהו, "The *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef and he forgot him." What are the two expressions, ולא זכר, "he didn't remember Yosef," and וישכחהו "he forgot him"? They both share the same meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף means the *sar hamashkim* forgot Yosef, וישכחהו means Yosef forgot the *sar hamashkim*. After Yosef asked the *sar hamashkim* to help him, he totally forgot about him.

We aren't surprised that the *sar hamashkim* forgot Yosef, but we should be impressed that Yosef forgot the *sar hamashkim*. Yosef was in prison for ten years, and this was perhaps his first ray of hope for him to be released. Most people in Yosef's place would

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3. The Ksav Sofer (*Orach Chaim Teshuvah* 27) writes, "It states (39:2) ויהי ה' את יוסף ויהי איש מצליח ויהי בבית אדונו המצרי, "Hashem was with Yosef, and he became a successful man, and he remained in the house of his Egyptian master." The pasuk testifies that Hashem was always with Yosef, even as a slave, although the *Shechinah* resides solely where there is joy. This is because Yosef considered himself an איש מצליח, a successful man. He believed that all his trials were from Hashem, for his benefit, and therefore accepted his challenges with a happy heart."

The Sfas Emes concludes, "From these *parshiyos*. We must learn to accept Hashem's decrees with love and joy."

Last week's *parashah* discusses the אלופי עשו, Eisav's large and influential family. This week's *parashah* begins with the words וישב יעקב, "And Yaakov sat." The Midrash (84:5) says that this can be compared to a person surrounded by a pack of dogs. "Since he is afraid of them, he sits down among them. Similarly, Yaakov saw Eisav's family (the אלופי עשו stated in the previous *pasukim*). He feared 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 they are concealed goodness.

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

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* explains that the Midrash is saying that it isn't good to put on sackcloth. It demonstrates a lack of peace with the situation. The ideal approach is to believe that even the most challenging situations are from Hashem, for our good.

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



be thinking about the *sar hamashkim* all the time, wondering whether he spoke to Pharaoh on their behalf, but after Yosef did his *hishtadlus*, he didn't think about the *sar hamashkim* anymore. Yosef knew that only Hashem could save him, so after he made hishtadlus, he didn't think about the *sar hamashkim* anymore.

The Torah tells us that the brothers showed their father Yaakov the blood-stained clothing of Yosef, and he understood that Yosef was killed by wild animals (see 38:31-34). The Rebbe of Radzimin zt"l (*Bikurei Aviv*) asks, "Why did the brothers need to show Yaakov the blood-stained coat? Wouldn't Yaakov see that Yosef wasn't coming home and assume, on his own, that Yosef was killed? The answer is that without seeing the blood-stained coat, Yaakov would have *bitachon* that Yosef was still alive, and that Yosef would return home. Yaakov's perfect bitachon would have drawn Hashem's aid, and the Mitzrim would have surely sent Yosef home. And then, Yosef would reveal to their father that his brothers sold him, and Yaakov would be angry with them. Therefore, they slaughtered a goat, dipped Yosef's coat in its blood, and sent it to their father." They were protecting themselves from what would occur if Yaakov had bitachon.

From this *vort* we learn the unbelievable power of bitachon! The Shevatim needed to make certain that Yaakov thought Yosef was killed. Otherwise, he would have bitachon that Yosef was still alive, and his bitachon would have brought Yosef home.

The story of Chanukah also teaches us the power of bitachon since the *Chashmonaim* won the war against the Yevanim because they trusted in Hashem. There is a *remez* to the bitachon that the *Chashmonaim* possessed. The *Chashmonaim* were kohanim, and כהן is *gematriya* בטחון.

This can explain the custom of saying יושב יושב *בסתר עליון* (*Tehillim* 91) after lighting Chanukah *lecht*. This chapter discusses *bitachon*. כי אתה ה' לא תירא, "You Hashem are my shield.

מפחד לילה, therefore I am not afraid." It was with bitachon that they won the war against the mighty Greek army.

The *Avudraham* writes that we don't find the letter ׀ in this *kapitel* because when one trusts in Hashem, he doesn't need כלי זין, weapons.

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

The *Chashmonaim* prayed to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and Hashem seized seventy malachim in heaven, hit the malachim with a fiery whip, and warned them to protect the Jewish nation. When a Greek soldier shot an arrow at the Jewish people, a *malach* intercepted the arrow and shot it back at the soldier who shot it, straight 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 his money and threw it into Jewish homes. (The Yidden couldn't take the money themselves because of all the corpses...)

*Eliforni* gathered an army of 120,000 mighty warriors, 22,000 archers, and camels carrying endless food supplies. In the past, *Eliforni* conquered many large, powerful countries. When the Yidden heard he was approaching, they were terrified. They shouted and prayed to Hashem, together with their wives and children, and they fasted and did *teshuvah*. The *Kohanim* wore sackcloth, and even the *mizbeiach* was dressed in sackcloth. They shouted to Hashem, and they fell on their faces. Then the Yidden ran after their enemies and killed many of them."

With their *tefillos* and with their *bitachon*, they won wars against their enemies again and again. This is a lesson for us, as well. When a person experiences fear and

insecurity, he can pass his tests with bitachon in Hashem. This applies to worldly pursuits (such as the pursuit of *parnassah*), and spiritual pursuits (to overcome the *yetzer hara* and to serve Hashem). There are fears and insecurities, but with bitachon, we are encouraged and boldened, and with bitachon, Hashem will help us, and we will overcome all challenges.<sup>5</sup>

Chazal tell us that Chanukah lecht must burn מִשְׁתַּשְׁקַע הַחֲמָה עַד שֶׁתְּכַלֶּה רֶגֶל מִן הַשּׁוּק, "from shekiyah until there aren't people walking in the marketplace." Why did Chazal use this unusual expression? Our Chachamim could have said that the time for Chanukah lecht is from shekiyah until a half-hour passes. This is a more common expression representing the same period (because there is a half-hour from shekiyah until there aren't people in the marketplace).

Reb Moshe Leib Sassover *zt'l* explains that we learn from the miracles of Chanukah that Hashem does everything. Therefore, businessmen understand that Hashem can support them even if they spend less time in the marketplace. *Parnassah* is from Hashem, and although we make *hishtadlus*, תְּכַלֶּה רֶגֶל מִן הַשּׁוּק, we can spend less time in the workplace, and Hashem will grant us *parnassah*.

The Yevanim decreed that the Jewish people must write on the oxen's horn that they don't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael (Bereishis Rabba 2:4). We can explain that oxen were once the prime tool to work the field, to plow, and to bring home *parnassah*.

The Jewish nation attributed everything to Hashem's help, as well as *parnassah*. The Yevanim said, "Don't mention Hashem's name when it comes to earning a living. Write on the oxen's horn that Hashem isn't part of this pursuit." They didn't want the Jewish people to connect religion to their *parnassah*. But the Jewish nation knows and believes that success at work is only from Hashem's *hashgachah*. They can rely on Hashem, and Hashem will help them.

### Chanukah is for People at Low Levels

The Sfas Emes writes, "Chanukah is mostly for the *chalashim* and the *beinonim*." This means Chanukah is mainly for the Yidden who are at a low or mediocre level. Chanukah is their opportunity to come close to Hashem.<sup>6</sup>

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt'l* says, "When a king is on his throne, in his palace, the average person can't visit him. Surely, those punished by the king won't be able to visit the king. However, when the king travels around his kingdom, it's his custom to visit the prisoners in jail. When the king is there, the prisoners shout out to him, 'King! Save us!'" This is what happens on Chanukah. Hashem comes to us to save us from our imprisonment. Even those who are at very low levels, Hashem comes to them and elevates them.

The Divrei Chaim of Sanz *zt'l* said, "On Shabbos, Hashem brings us up to Him. On

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5. Generally, we are familiar with the spelling of the word Maccabi with a כ"ף, like this: מַכְבִּי, and it stands for מי כמוכה באלים הוי"ה "Who is like You among the powerful, O Hashem." However, Tzror Hamor (Va'eschanan) writes Maccabi with a קו"ף, like this: מַקְבִּי. (Reb Yosef Halprin *zt'l* of Manchester also found it written with a ק in an old handwritten document.) מַקְבִּי stands for מועילם קיונו בך הוי"ה, "We always rely on You, Hashem". These letters were written on their flags, giving them the bitachon and courage to fight and defeat the mighty Greek army.

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* taught that the final letters of the words (Tehillim 112:7-8) נֶחֱדָה לִבּוֹ בַטּוֹחַ בְּה' סִמוּךְ "His heart is steadfast, trusting in Hashem..." spell הנוכח. This means that thanks to the miracles of Chanukah, the Yidden in galus have the strength to trust in Hashem that everything they endure is for their benefit (Sfas Emes 5631, fifth night).

6. Many have the custom of using cotton wicks on Chanukah, and in Yiddish, cotton is *vatte*. *Vatte* also means distant (יָיִט). We use *vatte* wicks to hint that even those distant from Hashem can return to Him on Chanukah.



*yom tov*, Hashem comes down to us. On Chanukah, Hashem visits His children in prison." It is the holiday for the people imprisoned by the *yetzer hara*. On this holiday, Hashem comes to them.

We light Chanukah lecht outside, below ten tefachim, on the left side of the door. These details indicate that we light the Chanukah lecht to inspire and give life to those on low levels, outdoors, below ten tefachim, on the left side.

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."

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 Hornosteipel *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.

In *Avodah Zarah* (20:), Reb Pinchas ben Yair teaches ten steps for success in *avodas Hashem*. They are, תורה מביאה לידי זהירות, זהירות נקיות מביאה לידי מביאה לידי זריזות, זריזות מביאה לידי נקיות, נקיות מביאה לידי פרישות, פרישות מביאה לידי טהרה, טהרה מביאה לידי חסידות, חסידות מביאה לידי ענוה, ענוה מביאה לידי יראת חטא, יראת חטא מביאה לידי קדושה, קדושה מביאה לידי רוח הקודש. Ten levels are mentioned here. Chazal (*Succah* 5.) state, "The *Shechinah* never goes down below ten." This hints that one must achieve at least one of the ten levels mentioned here to connect with the *Shechinah*. But on Chanukah, we light the menorah below ten tefachim. This hints that on Chanukah, even if one is at a very low

level and hasn't even begun *avodas Hashem*, the *Shechinah* will come to him and help him rise from there.

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."

The expression מצוה חביבה, "a beloved mitzvah," is only used when describing Chanukah lecht. The Rambam even adds the words מצוה חביבה היא עד מאוד, "it is an extremely beloved mitzvah." What is so special and unique about the Chanukah *lecht*?

It reveals that Hashem loves us, no matter our level.

We will explain with a *mashal*:

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

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

The Rambam refers to Chanuka *lecht* as מצוה חביבה היא עד מאוד an extremely beloved mitzvah, because on Chanukah, Hashem comes down to our low levels. This proves that He loves us. He comes down to us to elevate us so we can be close to Him.

When a person knows that Hashem loves him, even as he is, at his low level, this will give him strength to overcome the *yetzer*

hara. The yetzer hara tells a person that he doesn't have significance and that it makes no difference whether he performs aveiros or mitzvos. But the light of Chanukah, lit below ten tefachim, tells us and reminds us of our importance.

In this week's parashah, Yosef HaTzaddik said to *eishes* Potiphar (when she enticed him to perform an aveirah, chalilah) (39:9), *איננו גדול בבית מומי*, "No one in this house is greater than me." Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* explains that Yosef said, "No one is greater than me. I'm the greatest person in the world. I'm from the tzaddikim." With this encouraging thought in mind, he was able to pass the test.

Chazal say (*Sotah* 49:), *בעקבתא דמשיחא הוצפה*, יסגי, "Before Moshiach comes, there will be a lot of chutzpah." The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that this Gemara alludes to the era before Moshiach, when people will have the chutzpah to say, "I'm a tzaddik! I'm special!" With this pride, they will do what's right and conquer the *yetzer hara*.

If a person doesn't have so much "holy chutzpah", he should at least remember the lesson of the Chanukah lecht. Even if you are on a low level, below ten tefachim, Hashem loves you and wants you. This thought will give you "light", hope, and strength to battle the yetzer hara.<sup>7</sup>

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7. It states (37:3), *וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו...ועשה לו כתונת פסים*, "And Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his other sons...and he made him a fine woolen tunic." This garment, which only Yosef received, created jealousy. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 10) states, "A person should never show favoritism to one son over the others because due to the extra clothing Yaakov gave Yosef, the brothers were jealous, and it led to our forefathers going down to Mitzrayim."

So, we wonder, why *did* Yaakov show favoritism to Yosef? *Baalei Mussar* explain that Yaakov knew that Yosef would have more difficult tests than the other brothers when he was alone in Mitzrayim. Yaakov presented him with honorable clothing to help him pass the tests.

The Baal HaTurim writes that פס"ם is *roshei teivos* of מדינים, שופרים, סוחרים, ישמעאלים, hinting at the four times Yosef was sold. The Baalei Mussar explain that each time Yosef was sold was a difficult test. The garment's purpose was to increase Yosef's self-esteem so he would feel that he was a tzaddik, which would help him pass those tests.

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

Finally, he declared, "I swear, I won't ask to leave again."

Eventually, he became a great scholar, a tzaddik, a Tana, "Reb Yossi ben Reb Elazar ben Reb Shimon." The dignity he received turned him around.

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

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

The Yevanim ordered the Yidden to write on oxen's horns, שאין לכם חלק באלקי ישראל, that they don't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael. They didn't want them to feel connected to Hashem. They didn't want them to feel important. That thought alone could lead to sin, chalilah, and cause people to ignore their obligations to Hashem.<sup>8</sup>

The Sfas Emes (ליל ז' ד"ה איתא 5636) writes, "The Yevanim prevented the Yidden from performing three mitzvos: Chodesh, Shabbos, and bris milah. Why did they specifically want to annul chodesh more than any other mitzvos? And what aspect of Rosh Chodesh did they want to annul? The Yevanim wanted to end kiddush hachodesh, when

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Here we have a lesson in chinuch too. If you want your child to excel, shower him with honor. Believe in him. Consider him to be great. This will inspire your child to grow and achieve his potential.

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

The Or Zarua discusses lessons that can be learned from the order of the alef beis. For the letters צ ק ר, he explains that the first letter, צ, is written like this: "צד", which means empty (Onkelos on תהו ובהו writes, צדיא ורקניא, "empty and void") representing the empty people, the sinners. How can we bring them to teshuvah? The answer is ק ר, *roshei teivos* for קריא רבי, "call him rebbe." This is what Rebbe did to bring back Reb Yossi. Build his self-esteem, and he will reach his full potential.

After suffering the *tzaros* of World War Two, a chassidische *bachur* strayed off the path to the extent that he planned to marry a non-Jewish woman r"l. People tried to convince him not to commit this grave sin, to no avail. His mind was set, and he ignored all word of mussar.

Reb Gad'l Eizner zt'l approached and engaged him in friendly talk. When the *bochur* told him of his plans, Reb Gad'l replied in passing, ספאסט נישט פאר א חסידישע בחור, "It isn't right for a *chassidische bachur*." That straightforward rebuke turned him around. It was rebuke coated in pride. He was honored with the title "chassidische *bachur*" and wanted to continue being worthy of that status.

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

Reb Yankele Galinsky zt'l related that when he was interned in Siberian, one of his cellmates would regularly get up in the middle of the night, get dressed in full army uniform, and march about the room, pretending to give orders to his underlings.

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

The prisoner was embarrassed. He hadn't realized he was being observed. Reb Yankele promised not to tell anyone; he was just curious about this strange custom. The prisoner replied, "I was a powerful general in the German army. Hundreds of soldiers were under my command. I don't want to forget my glorious past. I put on my military uniform with all my medals and pretend I'm once again in command of hundreds of soldiers. This gives me strength to endure the humiliation and affliction we suffer here in this Russian prison."

Reb Yankele told this story to remind us that we are the King's sons and must never forget our glorious past.

8. 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."

It states (39:12), ותתפשטהו 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, so why not transgress this *aveirah* too?



witnesses would tell beis din that they saw a new moon, and then *beis din* would establish the day as Rosh Chodesh. It angered the Yevanim that the calendar and the yomim tovim depended on Bnei Yisrael."

It was the greatness of the Jewish nation that frightened them. The Sfas Emes writes, "Therefore, they said, 'Write on the oxen's horn that you don't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael.' [These words contradict themselves.] If Hashem is the 'G-d of Yisrael,' as they were told to write on the oxen's horn, it automatically means they have a portion with Hashem!" The Sfas Emes answers that they knew and admitted that Hashem is the "G-d of Yisrael." But they didn't want us to think that we have a חלק באלקי ישראל, a portion with Hashem, to the extent that our opinion of when it should be rosh chodesh is accepted in heaven. They admitted that Hashem gave us the Torah, but they denied the greatness of the Jewish nation and their closeness with Hashem.

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

### The Candles' Message

Hashem often uses candles and lamps to reveal to the Jewish nation that He loves them and that He loves their service to him.

The *Kav HaYashar* (96) writes, "We must praise Hashem's holy name for the great miracles Hakadosh Baruch Hu performed for our fathers during these days - back in the times of Antiochus, the Greek king. Antiochus decreed several bad things against the Jewish nation, and Hashem, with His compassion and immense kindness, which prevails forever, dressed Himself in clothes of revenge and, via the Chashmonaim, killed the two leading generals of the Greek army, Bagris, and Nikanor. All the soldiers of the Yevanim were delivered into the hands of the Jewish nation. May all of Hashem's enemies be destroyed in this manner. "Then, the Chashmonaim came into the Beis HaMikdash. They only found one jug of oil sealed with the *kohen gadol's* seal... It only had enough oil to burn for one day, and the G-d in heaven, Who resides in the Beis HaMikdash, performed a miracle, and the oil lit for eight days. To remember this miracle, in every generation, the Jewish nation lights the Chanukah *lecht* for eight days. These are lamps of a mitzvah. We have several sources that Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves lamps of a mitzvah, for it states (*Yeshayah* 24:15), באורים נבדו את ה', 'Honor Hashem with lamps.' Every candle lit for a mitzvah has immeasurable holiness. If we had *ruach hakodesh*, we would know the future when we light these *lecht* because the candles of a mitzvah tell prophecies, just like a *navi* giving over what he heard from Hashem's mouth.<sup>10</sup> "The *gaon*, the Maharshal z'l writes in the introduction to his *sefer Yam shel*

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9. As we wrote, the Yevanim's decree contradicted itself. They forced Bnei Yisrael to write on oxen's horns שאין לנו חלק באלקי ישראל, that they don't have a portion in the G-d of Yisrael. However, if they admit that Hashem is the G-d of Yisrael, doesn't that mean we have a portion in Hashem? Some answer that the Yevanim agreed that Hashem is the "G-d of tzaddikim", but they didn't want them to believe that Hashem is the G-d of all Yidden. They denied that a close connection exists between Hashem and the simplest Yid, who is on a very low spiritual level.

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

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

Shlomo, 'Once, with a candle of a mitzvah, heaven gave me encouragement and opened the gates of light. Heaven told me, "Study Torah... Be like a lion in his den. Write sefarim... And after I received this message, I couldn't abstain from writing sefarim!'"

The Maharshal revealed that he received from the candles of a mitzvah encouragement to write sefarim, but he didn't tell the details of the episode. The Kav HaYashar explains that he heard from the Yesod Yosef, who heard from scholars that this is what occurred:

"One night, Reb Shlomo Luria (the Maharshal) was studying and writing his sefer *Yam Shel Shlomo* with only a small candle before him, and it was about to go out. The candle remained lit for several hours – as if he had three or four complete candles... He understood from his candle that Hashem was with him." The miraculous candle told him that Hashem loves his Torah learning and *chiddushei Torah*, that Hashem wants him to continue learning and writing his *chiddushim*, and that encouraged him. The miracle that happened to the Maharshal is similar to the miracle of the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash on Chanukah" (*Kav HaYashar*).

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 light his candle, so he went onto the porch to see if a passerby could light it. Someone came, lit his candle, and Rebbe Shmelke returned to study Torah. Rebbe Shmelke later thought, "How did he light my candle? I was on the porch of the second floor, and the man was on the street!" He realized that Eliyahu HaNavi had come to light his candle so he could continue learning.

The Alter of Novardok *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 Novardok 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?" the Alter asked. He did. The Alter was able to study Torah and *mussar* for the rest of the night. In the morning, the Alter took the remaining oil and stored it so he would never forget the miracle that Hashem performed for him.

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

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

### A Time for Teshuvah

*חנוכה* comes from the word *חינוך*, which indicates that *חנוכה* is a time for teshuvah, a time when we are *מחנך* ourselves to improve our ways.<sup>11</sup> *Al HaNissim* discusses the miracles Hashem performed for us in this war. We say, *מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים ורבים ביד מעטים, וטמאים ביד טהורים, ורשעים ביד צדיקים, וזדים ביד עוסקי*

11. 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 along his path of *teshuvah*. The Beis Aharon writes, "A person must believe that by saying *Tehillim*, he can leave all his foolish ways... and overcome thoughts of *yeush* (despair) that the *yetzer hara* brings onto a person."

תורתך, "You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of few, *tame'im* into the hands of the *tehorim*, *resha'im* into the hands of tzaddikim, sinners into the hands of those who study Torah." We understand the first half of the phrase: the mighty and the many were miraculously delivered into the hands of the weak and few. But why is it miraculous that sinners and *resha'im* were given over into the hands of the righteous and those who studied Torah?

The Bardichover Rav *zy'a* answers that the final words of this line refer to the wave of teshuvah that happened in response to

the miracles that occurred at that time; טמאים ביד טהורים, the impure people did *teshuvah* and became pure. רשעים ביד צדיקים, the *resha'im* changed their ways and became tzaddikim. וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך, sinners began to study Torah.

When the Jewish nation witnessed the miraculous war, that the weak and the few won against the mighty Greek army, the *resha'im* among them did teshuvah. The *resha'im* at that time were called the *מתיונים*. They were Jewish people who wanted to be like the Greeks. When they saw the miracles, they did teshuvah and returned to their heritage.<sup>12</sup>

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**12.** Some sixty years ago, a Yid from Eretz Yisrael traveled to Australia. He didn't know how to find a beis medresh and couldn't ask anyone either, because he didn't speak the language. Shabbos was approaching, and he needed a place to be.

He came up with an idea. On Friday morning, he went to a fish store. He figured that if he saw someone buying a large fish, he would ask him whether he was a Yid.

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

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

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

"Go ahead and ask," the host said.

The guest said, "Why do you keep a broken olive oil bottle in your dining room China closet? It is so out of place, among all your valuable items."

The man replied, "That oil bottle is very precious to me. It carries my life's story. Listen well, and I will tell you:

"My father was *niftar* when I was young, and being the oldest child, the responsibility to support my widowed mother and my younger siblings fell on me. Some kind people had *rachmanus* on me and helped me get into business. Baruch Hashem, I was met with immediate success. There was plenty of money in the house. However, together with my financial success came my spiritual decline. The first thing to go was my *yarmulke*. Within a short time, I was completely non-religious.

"One afternoon, I saw a young Jewish child sitting on the curb, crying. It always pained to see a child crying, probably because I was orphaned as a child, and I knew what it felt like to cry. So I asked the child why he was crying. The child said, 'Chanukah is approaching, and my father sent me to buy olive oil. He warned me to be careful with the bottle because we are poor and cannot afford more oil if the bottle breaks. I tried to be careful, but a cat ran right up to me. Startled, I fell, and the bottle broke.' The young boy showed me the broken bottle lying in the gutter. He said, 'How can I go to my father without the Chanukah oil?'

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



Reb Yechezkel of Kuzmir *zt'l* wouldn't permit his chassidim to watch him light Chanukah *lecht*. He said this is alluded to in the Chazal (*Bava Basra* 57:) which says, "It is forbidden to look at women when they are washing." He said that "women" represent Jewish souls, and "washing" means when a tzaddik washes Jewish souls from their blemishes. When Rebbe Yechezkel of Kuzmir would light the Chanukah *lecht*, he purified and washed the souls of the Jewish nation, and Chazal said, "It is forbidden to look" when this washing takes place.

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

### How to Light the Chanukah Lecht

The Pele Yoetz (ויהי נעם) writes, "Before every good deed... you must say *she pasuk* (Tehillim 90:17) ויהי נועם ה' אלקינו עלינו ומעשה ידינו כוננה עלינו ומעשה ידינו כוננהו, "May the pleasantness of Hashem our G-d be upon us, and the work of our hands establish for us, and the work of our hands establish it."

He explains: Each mitzvah has profound ideas, purpose, and kavanos, only we don't know them. Even when we perform the mitzvos in their simplest form, they will

accomplish all these secrets, but it would be far better to know the *kavanos* when we perform the mitzvos. Therefore, we request with the ויהי נעם that Hashem should consider in heaven as if we intended all the thoughts that we should think when we perform the mitzvah.

The Pele Yoetz adds, "This pasuk, itself, has many divine secrets, with every letter and with every word, and it would be proper to say ויהי נעם on the saying of the ויהי נעם."

The Kav HaYashar (ch.96) writes, "Have a lot of kavanah when you say the brachos for lighting the Chanukah *lecht*. Say the brachos with joy because this is a very beloved mitzvah that comes once a year. Also, you should say the brachos with kavanah in honor of the holy malachim who came to your house for this mitzvah... The first brachah has 13 words, and one must intend that [with this brachah and mitzvah], you are arousing the 13 attributes of mercy. There are 13 words in the second brachah [which also] arouses the 13 attributes of mercy. Together, they are 26 words, corresponding to Hashem's name (הוי"ה, which is gematria 26)... *Malachim* and *Serafim* come to the house of every Yid, and they watch his holy avodah when he lights the Chanukah lamps, and they answer amen on his brachah. A hint to this is that מלאך is gematria אמן."

The Yaavatz (Mor Ketzia siman 672) says that the brachos on the Chanukah *lecht* aren't the same as most brachos that we say before performing a mitzvah. The brachos on the Chanukah *lecht* are *part of the mitzvah*. The brachos make the *lecht* into a mitzvah. Therefore, one must be extra cautious about

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father. I hadn't lit Chanukah *lecht* in years, but 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 come when I will go up to heaven, and meet with my father again. I asked myself, 'How can I meet with my father without Chanukah *lecht*?' I took the broken bottle shards from the gutter because something told me this was a turning point in my life.

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

saying the brachos with hislahavus, the same hislahavus he would have when he lights the lecht.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The same is true with the light of Chanukah. We must create a setting that is conducive for it to shine beautifully. This is hinted at in the words ולכל בני ישראל היה אור (Shemos 10:23). The אור, brilliant light of Chanukah variates, במושבתם, with its setting. The setting is created with our preparations. If we prepare ourselves well, we become a proper receptacle to retain the great light of Chanukah.

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

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

The grandson opened the door, but when he saw the Beis Yisrael's holy face aflame, he too, 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."

### Taking Advantage of These Days

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

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21) says, "On Chanukah, one mustn't give *hespedim* (eulogies)." We can explain that the Gemara hints that after Chanukah passes, we shouldn't give *hespedim* and eulogies over lost opportunities. We should be wise and use

our time well when the opportunity is before us.

In *Moaz Tzur* we say, בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו. This can be explained as the בני בינה, the wise people, ימי שמונה קבעו, draw as much as they can from these holy, eight days.<sup>13</sup>

The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ד ד"ה לשנה) writes, "The yomim tovim are called שלש רגלים (literally, 'three feet') because they are the pillars that hold up the world. In earlier generations, three holidays were sufficient. Hashem knew that three holidays wouldn't be enough for us in later generations, so Hashem added Chanukah and Purim. About us, it states, אין שוטה נמוע, 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 gain 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

can keep Chanukah and Purim exactly as they were originally established, which is a quality that Chanukah and Purim have over the other *yomim tovim* due to the Churban Beis HaMikdash."

### Do the Mitzvah as Best as You Can

After the Yesod HoAvodah of Slonim *zy'a* was *niftar*, the chassidim debated who should be their next Rebbe. One elderly person recommended that they choose the Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* (the Yesod HoAvodah's grandson). He told them the following story:

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, on erev Shabbos, he filled his menorah with olive oil and went to his grandfather's house to watch the Yesod HoAvodah light Chanukah *lecht*. When he returned home to light his menorah, he saw that someone had already lit his menorah. Since Shabbos was approaching, there wasn't enough time to prepare another olive oil menorah, so he lit one candle made from animal fats, and that was his mitzvah that night.

The elderly chasid told his friends this story, saying, "The *chiddush* was that when he lit that one candle, he performed the

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### 13. Consider the following story:

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

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

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

"I found a mountain of precious gems in the forest and am stuffing my pockets and bag."

"You are gathering gems, and you need chizuk?!" the rebbe exclaimed in disbelief.

During Chanukah, people come over to me and ask for chizuk. I wonder, "How can you need chizuk now? Every moment of Chanukah, you gather treasures, b'gashmiyus and b'ruchniyus. No one should be happier than you, and you need chizuk?!" With Hallel, the neiros Chanukah, Al HaNissim, Tehillim, Torah study, Chanukah seudos, and simply by being happy on Chanukah, we pick up priceless treasures. So, how can we feel a need for chizuk now?"



mitzvah with joy. If he can be happy with his mitzvah, even when it wasn't performed *b'hidur*, as planned, he deserves to be Rebbe."

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

The Divrei Shmuel's attitude was passed down to his son, the Beis Avraham of Slonim *zt'l*. One year, on a Friday, the Beis Avraham was about to light the Chanukah menorah, and 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."

One year, Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna *zy'a* (Bayit v'Gan, Yerushalayim) lit Chanukah *lecht*, and was saying *zemiros* and *Tehillim*. Many people were present. Due to pushing, a child fell on the Rebbe's Chanukah menorah, and it turned over. 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 a 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 practice a statement from Chazal. (Afterwards, the Rebbe lit the candles again because the Mishnah Berurah rules that if a half-hour hasn't passed, one should be *machmir* and rekindle the candles.)

Once, the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* was in the home of Reb Nachumke Kaplan *zt'l* on Chanukah. The time to light Chanukah *lecht*

arrived, but Reb Nachumke waited to light until his Rebbetzin got home. The Chofetz Chaim asked his Rebbe why he waited since halachah clearly states one should light at the proper time, even if some people aren't home.

Reb Nochumke replied, "My wife will be upset if I light the Chanukah *lecht* without her, so it is a matter of *shalom bayis*. Chazal say *שלום בית עדיף*, *shalom bayis* is more important than Chanukah *lecht*. So, according to halachah, I should wait until my wife comes home."<sup>14</sup>

### Gazing at the Chanukah *Lecht*

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

The Yeitav Panim writes, "The *minhag* in Klal Yisrael is to sit and gaze at the *lecht*. This draws down the miracles of Chanukah."<sup>15</sup>

The brachos and the lighting of the Chanukah *lecht* can be done relatively quickly, but many spend half an hour looking at the Chanukah *lecht*, praying and praising Hashem.

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

It states (*Bamidbar* 21:8), *עשה לך שרף ושים אותו על נס והיה כל הנשוף וראה אותו והי שרף* is a hint at the *brachos* of Chanukah. *שרף* is a hint at the *brachah*, *להדליק נר חנוכה*, because *שרף* means to burn. *עשה ניסים ושים אותו על נס* is the *brachah* *שעשה ניסים*. *להדליק נר חנוכה* hints at *שהחיינו*. Literally, the *pasuk* means, "Make a snake, place it on a

14. The Gemara refers to the Friday night of Chanukah when a person has only one candle. The Gemara rules he should use it for the Shabbos candle and not for Chanukah (which is lit outside) because the Shabbos *lecht* increases *shalom bayis*, and *shalom bayis* is paramount.

15. Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Tchartkov *zt'l* related that there was a person who was prone to sadness and depression. The Apter Rav *zt'l* advised him to look at the Chanukah *lecht*. He followed that advice, and he was healed. (Binas Yisrael, Chanukah *שמעתי* ד"ה).

staff, and whoever was bitten will see it and live." For Chanukah, we can explain that if someone was bitten by the snake, the yetzer hara, the solution is to gaze at the Chanukah lecht, וראה אותו וחי, and he will become like a new person.<sup>16</sup>

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

Some say chapter קי"ט in Tehillim because it has many requests for success in Torah and mitzvos.<sup>17</sup>

Whenever one performs a mitzvah, it is a good time for tefillah. As is brought in Tosefta (Maasar Sheni 5:15), "When one performs

a mitzvah, it is an ideal time to daven to Hashem." This is particularly true after lighting the lecht of a mitzvah (Such as Shabbos or Chanukah lecht). Rabbeinu b'Chaya (19:3) writes, "When a woman lights the Shabbos candles, she should daven that she merit children *talmidei chachamim*, who will shine with Torah because *tefillos* are more accepted after performing a mitzvah."<sup>18</sup> The Shabbos and Chanukah lecht are mesugal for children *talmidei chachamim*, so it is good to daven for that at this auspicious time.

### The Great Test

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

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**16.** The Divrei Chaim zt'l teaches: A doctor can diagnose an illness by looking into his patient's eyes, and then he knows how to treat the disease. Similarly, by looking at the Chanukah lecht, one can attain a spiritual *refuah* for all ailments of his *neshamah*.

We say, ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם. The Divrei Chaim translates these words as, "We don't have permission to use the lecht, only via looking at them." This indicates that looking at the Chanukah lecht is how we use them. This is because by looking at the lecht, we achieve spiritual purity and growth.

The Nesivos Shalom zt'l (Chanukah p.85) explained the pasuk (Tehillim 30:6) כי רגע באפו, "For His wrath lasts but a moment," that באפו is gematria חנוכה (as is written in the holy sefarim). The pasuk is saying כי רגע באפו, that on Chanukah, one can attain purity in a moment. It is very hard to correct one's bad deeds and destructive habits, but by looking intently at the Chanukah lecht, everything can be rectified in a moment.

This is also alluded to in the pasuk (Tehillim 91:8) רק בעיניך תביט ושלמת רשעים תראה, "You will but gaze with your eyes, and you will see the annihilation of the wicked." By merely gazing at the Chanukah lecht, שלמת, one attains *sheleimus*, perfection, רשעים, in all areas where he is lacking and still considered a rasha.

The Nesivos Shalom says, "When a Yid says the brachos on the Chanukah lecht and looks at them and accepts on himself that from now on he won't return to his foolish ways, with the strength of Chanukah, this is sufficient to rectify everything in just one moment.

**17.** The Leket Yosher (p.43) writes that his rebbe, the Terumas HaDeshen, would say chapter קי"ט of Tehillim every day of the year.

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

The Satmar Rebbe told him, "The *Tana'im* and *Amora'im* wrote many 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 recite it. This is because תפילת זכה is said when Yom Kippur is approaching. So, you see that it's all about location... Therefore, I advise you to buy the smaller store in the premium location."

When one lights Chanukah lecht, he is at a *good location* and should utilize this location and auspicious time for tefillah.

This week's parashah tells us about Yosef's great test with *eishes* Potiphar. Yosef was a seventeen-year-old bachur, alone in Mitzrayim, distant from all Yidden when he faced his difficult test, but with all his might, he passed the test.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 35:) says, "Every day *eishes* Potiphar spoke to Yosef and tried to convince him to sin. The clothes she wore in the morning were not the same ones she wore at night." Yosef kept his eyes down, so she placed an iron blade under his neck to force his head to remain erect. Still, Yosef didn't look at her.

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 87; *Tanchuma*) states that *eishes* Potiphar said, "I will give you less food [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 trusted in Hashem and remained steadfast.

Another difficulty in this test was that the *yetzer hara* told him it was a mitzvah. Rashi (39:1) writes, "Just as Tamar intended *l'shem shomayim*, also *eishes* Potiphar intended *l'shem shomayim*. She saw in the stars that she would bear children with Yosef but didn't know whether it would be with her or her daughter." The Sfas Emes *zt'l* explains that the *yetzer hara* can't convince tzaddikim to perform *aveiros*, so he tries to convince them that the *aveirah* is a mitzvah, and that is what made Yosef's test so difficult.

Nevertheless, (39:8) וימאן, Yosef refused to sin.<sup>19</sup>

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

But then Yosef told himself, "Right now, I can overcome the *yetzer hara*. Whatever will be in the future will be, but now I can pass the test." This thought saved Yosef from the *aveirah*. (In the end, he married *eishes* Potiphar's daughter Osnas. They bore children, and that was the meaning of what they saw in the stars.)

### Praying for Miracles

*Shulchan Aruch* (187:4) states, "If one forgot to say *Al HaNisim* [in *Birkas Hamazon*], he can say it in the הרחמן...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...'"

Similarly, if one forgets *Al HaNisim* in *Shemonah Esrei*, he should say this הרחמן at the end of *Shemonah Esrei* (see *Mishnah Berurah* 682:4).<sup>20</sup>

The Shoel u'Meishiv (*Divrei Shaul*) *zt'l* asks that it is known that we don't pray for miracles, so how can we say הרחמן הוא יעשה לנו

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

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

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

Perhaps the explanation is that when one forgets *Al HaNisim*, he becomes heartbroken that he has lost out on a unique opportunity. His broken and humble heart makes him a worthy candidate for miracles.



נסים, "May Hashem perform miracles for us"?<sup>21</sup>

The Shoel u'Meishiv (*Divrei Shaul*) zt'l answers that throughout the year, Hashem leads the world according to the rules of nature, and therefore, it is wrong to ask for miracles. On Chanukah, Hashem leads the world in miracle mode. Therefore, during Chanukah, we may daven for *nisim*.

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

Chanukah, the world runs beyond the rules of nature.

The Maharal (*Ner Mitzvah*) writes, "The natural world is made up of seven. Eight 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 (תמניא אפי) representing Torah, which is beyond nature." The Maharal explains that the Chanukah miracle came in the merit of the Torah, which is beyond nature. This is why the menorah miraculously remained lit for eight days.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 21:) say, according to Beis Shamai, יום ראשון מדליק שמונה, "The first day, he lights eight [lamps]." The Chidushei HaRim zt'l says that this refers to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. [His proof is that it is written in singular,

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

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

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

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

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

Suddenly, it started to pour – although it was in the middle of summer (and it never rains in the summer in Bavel)! The streets of Mechuzah became flooded, and the water flowed into the Chidekel River. Rava's tefillos were answered, and he was saved from the king's punishment.

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

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

We learn from this Gemara that it is dangerous and improper to daven for miracles. This is because Hashem wants to lead the world according to the rules of nature, and it is wrong to try to alter those rules and ask for miracles.

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

"he lights," and it doesn't state מודליקין, "we light."] On the first night of Chanukah, Hashem lights eight, which means he brings into existence the world of eight, a world beyond nature. On Chanukah, the world is led beyond the rules of nature,<sup>22</sup> and therefore, on Chanukah, we pray for miracles.<sup>23</sup>

### The Miracles Return Each Year

Chazal (Shabbos 21:) say, לשנה האחרת קבעום בהלל, ויהודאה, that the *chachamim* established Chanukah as a holiday "on the following

year." Why did they wait a year to establish Chanukah? They should have established Chanukah immediately when the miracle occurred. The Kedushas Levi (Kedushah Rishonah, see also the Ben Ish Chai, Ben Yehoyada) explain that initially, they thought that the miracles of Chanukah were a one-time matter, a miracle to save the Yidden during that specific time. The following year, the *chachamim* perceived that the miracles were reoccurring. They understood that the miracles of Chanukah would recur each year, so they established Chanukah as a holiday to be celebrated each year.<sup>24</sup>

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

Another story we know (from a member of our chaburah in Elad) is of a boy who was involved in a serious car accident on rosh chodesh Kislev and remained unconscious for weeks. Miraculously, he began talking regularly on the first night of Chanukah. They had their personal Chanukah miracle in the merit of Chanukah, a time beyond nature.

**23.** 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 agreed and freed Reb Meir's sister-in-law. The government caught him and sentenced him to death by hanging. The verdict was about to be carried out when he said אלקא דמאיר ענני, and miraculously, he was saved.

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

The Maharsha answers that אלקא דמאיר ענני means, "The G-d who shines, should answer me." The intention is: "You are the G-d Who shone Your light for us in ancient Yavan with the miracles of the Chanukah lecht... He should answer my tefillos and save me in miraculous ways."

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

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

After asking מאי חנוכה, the Gemara relates the story of Chanukah and concludes that the following year they established it as a yom tov. As we explained, when the *chachamim* saw that the miracles returned each year, they established it as an annual holiday. We now have the answer to the question. מאי חנוכה, why is it

The Bnei Yissaschar (Kislev 4:9) teaches that the miracles of Chanukah happen again each year. We aren't only commemorating a miracle that occurred in ancient times, millenniums ago. This is hinted in the Chazal (Masechta Sofrim 2:1), which says אסור להדליק בנר ישן, "It is forbidden to light [Chanukah lecht] in an old lamp." We aren't solely remembering the miracles of olden times but rather the miracles that occur now.<sup>25</sup>

About Purim, Chazal (Megillah 17.) say, הקורא מגילה למפרע לא יצא.<sup>26</sup> The Bnei Yissaschar repeats from his Rebbes, הקורא מגילה למפרע, if one reads the megillah like it was an episode that happened in the past, לא יצא, he didn't perform the mitzvah correctly. This is because the miracles of Purim aren't solely

about something that happened in the past. Every generation has its Haman (or Hamans) who want to destroy us, r'l, and each year, Hashem saves us anew, in the merit of the mitzvah of reading Megillas Esther and all the other mitzvos we perform on Purim. We aren't only commemorating the past; we celebrate the salvations that Hashem grants us each year.

The Bnei Yissaschar says that something similar occurs with the Chanukah lecht. We aren't only commemorating a miracle of the past. When we light Chanukah lecht, the miracles recur. Thus, Chazal say, אסור להדליק בנר ישן, "It is forbidden to light in an old lamp." It isn't an "old lamp". It is salvation that is happening to us today.<sup>27</sup>

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called חנוכה, with a ה at the end? Why isn't it called חנוך? The *heh* makes the word feminine, indicating birth. They recognized that miracles would give birth to more miracles. It wasn't a miracle for a particular time, instead it would grow and bear fruit yearly. This is why it is called חנוכה.

We can also say that לשנה אחרת means "a different kind of year," referring to the same year that the miracles occurred. The chachamim understood that it was a "different year אחרת." People were more spiritual, and more miracles and chesed descended on the world. When the chachamim understood how Chanukah changed the Jewish nation for the better, they established it as an annual holiday.

**25.** The simple meaning of this Chazal is that it is forbidden to use a clay lamp (כלי חרס) that has already been used in the past. This is because after it was used once, it loses its beauty; it even turns black and ugly, and it is a בזוי מצוה, a disgrace to use for a mitzvah. However, the Bnei Yissaschar explains that this reason isn't sufficient because if it is a בזוי מצוה, it would be forbidden to use such a lamp on Shabbos and yom tov, as well. Rather, this Chazal is hinting another lesson, which is related specifically to Chanukah, and that is that we aren't remembering solely the miracles of the past, נר ישן. Instead we are celebrating the miracles that occur each year.

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

**27.** The Gemara (Shabbos 23.) states, "When one lights Chanukah lecht, he must make a brachah. מאי מברך, What brachah should he say? ברוך אתה ה'... אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר חנוכה, "Bless are You Hashem... Who sanctified us with His mitzvos and commanded us to light Chanukah lecht."

The Gemara asks, היכן צונו, "When did Hashem command us to light Chanukah lecht?" [Chanukah is a yom tov instituted by the chachamim!]

The Gemara replies (Devarim 32:7), שאל אביו ויגיד, "Ask your father and he will tell you..." Hashem commands us to obey our chachamim. (The chachamim commanded us to light Chanukah lecht, and Hashem obligated us to listen to them, so it is as if Hashem commanded us to light Chanukah lecht.)

Rebbe Yisrael of Tchartkov zt'l explains the Gemara *b'derech remez*:

The Gemara begins, "When one lights Chanukah lecht, he must make a ברכה." A בריכה or הרכבה can also be translated as grafting, when you merge two plants to grow as one. הרכבה can be described as transferring something from its source to others. The Gemara is saying that when one lights Chanukah lecht, he must say a ברכה. This means he must create a connection from the source of miracles to the Jewish nation.



The Kedushas Levi writes, "Due to the righteousness of Matisyahu ben Yochanan Kohen Gadol and his children, the gates of *chesed* and miracles open during the eight days of Chanukah. It is likely that 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."

Over one hundred years ago, in the year 5683, someone came to Reb Itzikel of Antwerp zt'l and told him that he must travel immediately. The problem was that he didn't have a passport. He could order one, but he needed to travel immediately and ordering one would take too long. Rebbe Itzikel gave him a bencher and said, "If you need a passport, take this."

The man traveled with the bencher. When he arrived at passport control, he showed him the bencher. The policeman skimmed through the pages and stamped permission for entry next to the words <sup>28</sup> על הניסים.

This miracle didn't happen on Chanukah, but it originated on Chanukah. It is an example of the miracles that reoccur each year.

### Or HaGanuz

The Gemara (Chagigah 12.) says, "With the light that Hakadosh Baruch Hu created on the first day of creation, a person could see from one side of the world to the other." This light wasn't the light of the sun because the sun was created on the fourth day of creation, and this was still the first day of

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This is because the miracles of Chanukah repeat themselves each year, and Klal Yisrael can receive many yeshuos and salvations, but we must make the connection. We have to create a הרכבה, connection, between the source of salvations so that it should come down to the entire Jewish nation.

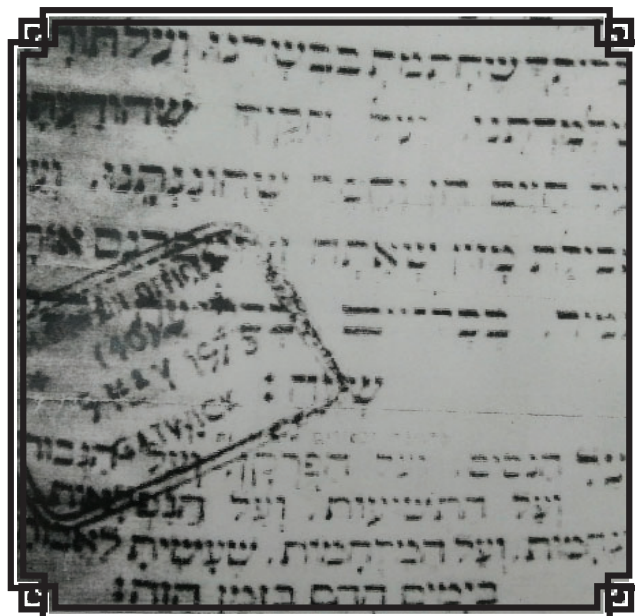
The Gemara asks, מאי מברך, "How does one make this connection?"

The Gemara replies, וצונו, that we should become connected with Hashem. (The word צונו can mean connect, as in צוהא).

The Gemara continues, היכן צונו, how does one connect with Hashem?

The answer is, שאל אביך ויגדך, ask the tzaddikim and follow in their way. Emulate their good deeds, do as they do, and you will be connected to Hashem and draw down the blessings and salvation of Chanukah.

28. Here is a copy of this incredible bencher, stamped by the UK Government.



creation. It was a unique light, about which it states (Bereishis 1:4), וירא אלקים את האור כי טוב ויבדל, אלקים, "Hashem saw the light that it was good, and Hashem separated it..."

The Gemara says, "When Hakadosh Baruch Hu thought about the generation of the flood and the generation of dispersion (דור הפלגה), and He saw their corrupt ways, Hakadosh Baruch Hu immediately concealed the light from them. This is as it states (Iyov 38:15) וימנע מרשעים אורם, 'Their light shall be withheld from the wicked.' For whom did Hashem store the light? For the tzaddikim of the future... When the light saw that it was being reserved for tzaddikim, it was happy, as it states (Mishlei 13:9) אור צדיקים ישמח, 'The light of the tzaddik will rejoice.'"

Where was this light concealed?

The Baal Shem Tov zt'l says that this holy, concealed light is concealed in the Torah. One can tap into this sacred, concealed light when studying Torah. Another time to connect with this holy light is when we light Chanukah lecht. The Bnei Yissaschar (Kislev 2:21) writes, "I have brought you the testimonies of three trustworthy witnesses that the light of Chanukah is the Or HaGanuz (concealed light of creation). They are (1) the holy

tzaddik, the Rokeach, who received his lessons from Eliyahu HaNavi z'l. (2) The Maharal of Prague. It is known that his teachings were said with ruach hakodesh, and he would use Sefer Yetzirah. (3) And the holy Rav, who lived close to our times and was renowned for his ruach hakodesh, Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz zt'l.<sup>29</sup> Chazal hardly mention Chanukah. The Zohar mentions Chanukah once (vol.1 238:); the same is true with Tikunei Zohar (29.). Even when they mention Chanukah, it is a side topic, not the primary issue being discussed.<sup>30</sup> This is because Chanukah is the concealed light, the Or HaGanuz, so it was also concealed in the Oral Torah. But as we approach the geulah [when the Or HaGanuz will shine], tzaddikim began to speak about the mitzvah of Chanukah *lecht*, ideas that gedolim of previous generations didn't imagine...." They began to reveal that the light of Chanukah is the concealed holy light, the Or HaGanuz.

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

The Beis Yosef asks: There was enough oil for the first night, so the miracle was for

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**29.** The Bnei Yissaschar (Kislev-Teves 4:65) writes that the gates of Gan Eden are closed at night, but it seems from the teachings of Reb Pinchas Koritzer that when Yidden light Chanukah lecht, the gates of Gan Eden open.

The number and the name of the simanim in Shulchan Aruch are associated with the mitzvah that siman discusses (as is brought down in Agra d'Pikrka, Naso, regarding the mitzvah of Viduy, and several other sources teach this idea). The Beis Yisrael zt'l said that Hilchos Chanukah begins with siman תרע, which is similar to תרע"א, which means "gate" in Aramaic. This hints that the gates of salvation open when we light the Chanukah lecht. The Gemara (Bava Kama 80:) states, "When a door is locked, it won't open so quickly" We understand that the opposite is undoubtedly true; when the gates of heaven and salvation open, they won't close so quickly, and we will merit all kinds of salvations, beyond the rules of nature.

The Beis Yisrael zy'a adds that the gates of heaven are opened on Chanukah, and everyone can enter.

**30.** Also, in Mishnayos, Chanukah is mentioned only once (see Mishnayos Bava Kama 6:6) and is mentioned as a side topic. It states there, הניח חנוני נרו מבהוץ החנוני חיב, "If a storeowner leaves a candle outside, he must pay for any damages it caused. ר' יהודה אומר בנר חנוכה פטור, Reb Yehudah says that if it was a Chanukah lecht that was left outside, he isn't obligated to pay," because he didn't do anything wrong by placing his lamp there.

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

seven days. Why do we celebrate Chanukah for eight days?

The Taz (670:1) answer begins with a story from Navi (II Melachim 4). It states that a woman told Navi Elisha that she had debts, and the creditors threatened to take her two sons away as slaves. Elisha asked her *מה יש לך בבית*, "What do you have in your home?"

She replied that she had some oil.

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

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

The Taz says that we now know that when the Kohanim lit the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, the oil wasn't entirely consumed. Some of the oil miraculously remained until the morning. We know this because the miracle wouldn't have occurred the next night if all the oil had been consumed on the first night.

The Taz writes, "In retrospect, they realized that a miracle happened on the first night. Had the oil been completely consumed on the first night, there couldn't have been a miracle the next night. Certainly, some oil [miraculously] remained from the first night. The brachah came upon that remaining oil. So, we see that there was a miracle on the first night, too."

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

Someone had ten crates filled with gold coins. Nine crates were stolen, and one wasn't. Using the gold coins in the tenth

crate, he hired police to search for the nine stolen crates. He vowed that if the gold were found, he would give three gold coins from each box to *tzedakah*.

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

However, the *gabbai tzedakah* requested 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 the tenth crate, which was never stolen?"

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

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

We learn from this to praise Hashem for all the miracles we receive, including those that prepare the path for other miracles.

We shouldn't solely praise Hashem for those times when we had serious problems, and Hashem miraculously and kindly saved us. We should also praise Hashem for all the good we have, the areas where there aren't any problems at all.

We have much to be grateful for, and Chanukah is a holiday to praise Hashem.

### ***Hallel and Al HaNissim***

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

A prisoner was granted a brief leave on Chanukah for a few hours. The question was whether he should go out at nighttime to light Chanukah lecht or leave in the



morning so that he could say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* in beis medresh.

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

Most people consider Chanukah *lecht* the highlight of Chanukah. But from this discussion, we understand that perhaps *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* are the highest points of Chanukah. Regardless of what is more important, we should certainly invest in saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* with *kavanah*.<sup>31</sup>

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. It is likely that the gates open when we light the Chanukah *lecht* and say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*. These draw down the *chesed* and miracles below."

Chazal (*Shabbos* 21:) say, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום והעשאו 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, קבעום ועשאו ימים טובים בהלל והודאה, imply

that saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* make and create the holiday. קבעום ועשאו, it became established, and it became a holiday בהלל והודאה, when we say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*.<sup>32</sup> The Tchebiner Rav *zt'l* said, "*Hallel* on Chanukah shouldn't be like *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh because *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh is a *minhag*, while *Hallel* on Chanukah is a *mitzvah*." Some Rishonim say that *Hallel* is a *mitzvah* from the Torah (see Reb Yeruchem Fishel Perlow's commentary on *Sma'g, mitzvos asei* ג-נ, p.258).

It states (*Mishlei* 27:21), מצרף לכסף וכור לזהב ואיש, לפי מהללו, "The refining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold, and a man according to his praise." The Chida explains that while the refining pot and the furnace purify silver and gold, איש לפי מהללו, man becomes cleansed and pure when he praises Hashem.<sup>33</sup> It states (*Tehillim* 106:47), להשתבח בתהלתך, This means the person becomes improved, בתהלתך, by praising Hashem.<sup>34</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

31. *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 בניעמה (sweetly, pleasantly)."

32. Sfas Emes explains that 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*."

33. 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 the body and flew out a window. This is because every *tumah* inside a person can be extricated by saying *Hallel*.

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

can intend a prayer, "Hashem, please heal so-and-so."

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

This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 18:4), מְהוֹלֵל אֶקְרָא ה' וּמִן אֹיְבֵי אוֹשֵׁעַ, "I call out to Hashem with praises, and I am saved from my enemies." Similarly, it states, אֹדֵךְ כִּי עֲנִיתָנִי, "I praise You when I'm suffering, and I will certainly have my salvation."

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* said that when one says אָנָּה ה' in *Hallel*, all his requests can be fulfilled. Chassidim thought that the Sfas Emes was referring to the *pasuk*, אָנָּה ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּ, "Please Hashem, save us, now." The Imrei Emes *zt'l* said that he thinks the Sfas Emes was referring to the *pasuk*, אָנָּה ה' כִּי אֲנִי עַבְדֶּיךָ, "Please Hashem because I am Your servant."<sup>35</sup>

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

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35. When we say על המחי על, we don't add a line for Chanukah (as we do on Shabbos, *yom tov*, etc.) This is because praise must not be a be a one-liner. Praise requires elaboration.

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

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