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**SHEMA KOLEINU: CHANUKAH 5783**

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## Introduction

### Chanukah Candles and Kiddush Hashem

Rabbi Michael Taubes ('76) - *Rosh Yeshivah*

In introducing the *mitzvah* incumbent upon everyone to light candles each night of Chanukah, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 671:1) states that even a very poor person who lives on *tzedakah* donations must borrow money or, if necessary, sell his clothing in order to be able obtain the funds needed to acquire oil (or candles) to light; the Rambam (*Hilchos Chanukah* 4:12) presents this ruling as well. This decision, however, appears to contradict a general principle, which has its roots in a statement in the Gemara in *Kesubos* (50a), that one should not spend more than one fifth of his income on *mitzvah* expenses, as the Rama (*Orach Chaim* 656:1) rules explicitly regarding all *mitzvos asei*, even those mandated by the Torah (though he notes that to avoid violating a *mitzvas lo sa'aseh*, one must indeed be willing to give up everything he has). The question, then, is why the *mitzvah* to light Chanukah candles, which, after all, is a Rabbinic requirement, is different, seemingly demanding that one give up far more than one fifth of his funds.

The *Maggid Mishneh*, in his commentary to the Rambam there, suggests that it is because by lighting Chanukah candles, one engages in *pirumei nissa*, publicizing the miracles performed by Hashem, and this is something in which everyone must participate and which cannot be limited due to a lack of money. As a Talmudic source for this idea, he refers to the Mishnah in *Pesachim* (99b) which teaches that even an impoverished person must drink no less than four cups of wine on the night of Pesach, even if he must obtain them through communal contributions. The *mitzvah* to drink four cups of wine on Pesach serves, among other things, to publicize the miracles of *Yetzias Mitzrayim*; since the Mishnah teaches that this act of *pirumei nissa* requires one to spend whatever is needed, and a lack of funds is no excuse for not engaging in it, so too the act of *pirumei nissa* associated with lighting Chanukah candles requires one to spend a greater amount of his money than one normally must for the sake of a *mitzvah*.

Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, *zt'l*, elaborated on this idea by

noting that when one publicizes Hashem's miracles, one actually also fulfills the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*, sanctifying the Name of Hashem, because one is thereby calling public attention to Hashem's greatness by highlighting His having saved His people from their enemies in a miraculous fashion. When presenting the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem*, the Torah states both that one may not profane His Name (committing what we call a "*Chillul Hashem*") and that we are to sanctify Him (*Vayikra* 22:32), equating the two ideas as heads and tails of the same coin. Rav Soloveitchik thus pointed out that just as one must avoid committing a *Chillul Hashem* at absolutely all costs, even to the point of being ready to give up one's very life if the situation calls for it, then so too one must be ready to perform a *Kiddush Hashem* at all costs, even if doing so involves a significant expenditure. Since by lighting Chanukah candles one indeed performs a kind of *Kiddush Hashem*, we may deduce that one must be willing to spend whatever is necessary in order to observe this *mitzvah*.

Taking this idea that lighting Chanukah candles is an act of *Kiddush Hashem* a step further, Rav Soloveitchik pointed to an interesting possible implication of a passage in the Gemara in Shabbos (21b). The Gemara discusses the latest time in the evening that one can properly light the Chanukah candles, stating that the time extends until all the passersby (meaning the people who would see the lit candles from the street) have left the marketplace. Specifically, the Gemara then says that this is the time when the Tarmodians ("*rigla deTarmodaei*") are no longer out in the marketplace. According to Rashi there (*d"h rigla*), these people were non-Jews who used to sell firewood and would thus stay in the marketplace until most other people had returned home for the night in case some of them might discover that they needed to purchase more wood; the Tarmodians were therefore the last people to leave the marketplace each evening.

The fact that this Gemara makes reference to the people of this non-Jewish nation gives rise to an important question. Is publicizing the miracle to non-Jews also part of the requirement of *pirsumei nissa* on Chanukah? Some suggest that it is not, and the Gemara's introduction of the behavior of the Tarmodians is solely for

the purpose of identifying a particular time beyond which the correct time to light Chanukah candles has elapsed. Others, however, posit that we may infer from this Gemara that it is indeed appropriate to publicize the Chanukah miracle to non-Jews like the Tarmodians as well.

Building on the aforementioned connection between lighting Chanukah candles and *Kiddush Hashem*, Rav Soloveitchik suggested that it makes sense, specifically in observing Chanukah, the holiday which marks our triumph over those who tried to cause us to abandon the Torah (as we say in *Al HaNissim*, “*lehashkicham Torasecha*”), that we perform a *Kiddush Hashem* even (and perhaps especially) in the eyes of non-Jews to demonstrate that we did not give in to the pressures and ultimately were deserving of a miracle from Hashem. Indeed, as Rav Soloveitchik noted, the Rambam, in his *Sefer HaMitzvos* (*Mitzvas Asei* No. 9), includes as part of the *mitzvah* of *Kiddush Hashem* the idea that we must not allow our enemies to think that we have given up our commitment to Hashem in any way.

By engaging in *pirsumei nissa* when we light the Chanukah candles in order to publicize Hashem’s great miracle, we are therefore simultaneously involved in an act of *Kiddush Hashem*, announcing our continued dedication to Him and proclaiming His greatness to all, affirming that through this miracle His greatness was in fact manifested to everyone, as we again say in *Al HaNissim*, “*u’Iecha asisa sheim gadol vekadosh be’olamecha*,” “and for Yourself You made a great and holy Name in Your [entire] world.”



## **Spreading the Light By Sharing Torah**

Rabbi Joshua Kahn - *Head of School*

The core principle of our celebration of *Chanukah* is *pirsumei nisa*, our obligation to publicize the miracle of *Chanukah*. This is reflected in our obligation to light the *menorah* in a place and at a time that it will be visible to people passing by. The obligation of *pirsumei nisa* is so important that in contrast to other *mitzvos*, we are obligated to spend whatever money necessary in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of *neir Chanukah* and *pirsumei nisa*. Why is *pirsumei nisa* so integral to our *Chanukah* celebration?

At the time of the *Chanukah* miracle, the Greeks attempted to annihilate our religious belief and commitment. The threat to the Jewish people focused on our spiritual survival. The *Bach*, written by Rav Yoel Sirkis, explains that our *Chanukah* celebration is primarily a spiritual celebration since the threat we experienced and the celebration that ensued was spiritual in nature. As a specific example, our custom to play dreidel is because it was used as a cover up to enable us to learn *Torah*. *Talmud Torah* was banned by the Greeks. Knowing that *Torah* learning was our lifeblood, many Jews would hide in caves to secretly learn *Torah*. When the Greeks would approach, the children would cover up the learning by playing *dreidel* instead.

Our victory over the Greeks is reflected in our proud and public celebration of *Chanukah*, namely *pirsumei nisa*. As the *Bach* notes, just as the threat revolved around our spiritual survival, our celebration reflects a spiritual celebration. There is no greater celebration of our spiritual survival and the sacrifice we made to learn *Torah*, then by continuing to demonstrate and celebrate *Torah* learning publicly. It is with this backdrop that we are especially proud and pleased to share the *Chanukah* edition of *Shema Koleinu*, providing our form of *pirsumei nisa* by sharing *Divrei Torah* from our *Roshei Yeshiva*, *Rebbeim* and *talmidim*, which will enhance your *Chanukah*!

Thank you to our editors-in-chief, Yisrael-Dovid Rosenberg ('23) and Yosef Weiner ('23), our editing team, Aaron Sisser ('23), Dovi Goldberg ('23), Elisha Price ('23), Eytan Sheinfeld ('23), Gavriel Barber ('23), and Natan Horowitz ('23), our formatter,

Eitan Rochwarger ('23), our distribution manager, Natan Gemal ('23), and to our Associate Principal, Rabbi Shimon Schenker, for overseeing this project.



## **Torah From Our Yeshivah** **Chanukah and the Pit**

Mr. Murray Sragow

On the very top of *Maseches Shabbos* 22a there appear two consecutive statements which apparently have nothing to do with each other. The first is a halacha of Chanukah, that a candle lit more than 20 *amos* above street level is invalid, just like a *sukkah* or *mavoi* that is that tall. The second is a *drash* regarding a *pasuk* about Yosef in the pit. The *pasuk* says that the pit was empty, and also that it had no water. Why did the *pasuk* need to say both? Obviously if the pit was empty it had no water. So the Gemara explains that yes, there was no water, but there were snakes and scorpions in the pit.

Why does the Gemara write these two statements back to back? Presumably there is some connection between them. But what is it?

One possibility, obvious to the careful reader, is that the two statements are cited in the name of the same *amoraim*. Both are a statement by Rav Kahana, quoting a drasha of Rav Natan Bar Minyomi in the name of Rav Tanchum. So it may be no more than a mnemonic device, which the gemara often uses. Often the Gemara will cite multiple statements by the same person one after the other, to help the reader remember the author.

A more tempting answer would be to connect the story to the halacha as a proof text. Perhaps the story of the pit EXPLAINS the *halachah* of the Chanukah candle! How? Well, the reason that a candle positioned so high (and a similarly tall *sukkah* or *mavoi*) is invalid is because the person walking on the street won't see it, because it is outside his natural field of view. And since the whole

purpose of the candle is “*pirsumei nisa*,” advertising the miracle, certainly an ad that is not likely to be seen is worthless. And how do we know that people do not notice things that are outside their normal field of view? From Yosef’s pit!!! Clearly Yosef’s brothers did not know that there were snakes and scorpions in the pit when they threw him in, because they had just decided NOT to kill him. The pit was to be a holding pen, not a danger to him. So if they knew that the pit was filled with dangerous creatures they never would have put Yosef there. That demonstrates the reason for the *halachah*! Just as Yosef’s brothers did not look outside their normal field of view to check the safety of the pit, so too, a typical Jew heading home on Chanukah night will not look outside his normal field of view to notice a Chanukah candle.

An even more tempting answer combines the first two. We know that Rabbis like to speak about *parshas hashavua* and also *inyana d’yoma*. Perhaps it was Parshas Vayeshev, which always falls out either the *Shabbos* before Chanukah or the *Shabbos* of Chanukah, and Rav Natan Bar Minyomi included both of these ideas in his *drasha*, using a pasuk from *parshas hashavua* to demonstrate the idea behind a detail of *hilchos* Chanukah. If so, it’s worth imagining what *mussar* he might have been getting at. Perhaps his point was that even though, when placing our Chanukah candle, we are conscious of what people normally see, it is also important to appreciate that it should not be so. People who are careful, especially those charged with protecting the safety of another person, should not suffice with a passing glance. If Yosef’s brothers cared as much about him as brothers (and really all people) should, they would have looked more carefully at the pit and seen the snakes and scorpions. Similarly, when we take upon ourselves any responsibility, we should be careful to not suffice with minimal effort but devote the time and attention to do the job properly.

## Holy Houses of Light

Dovid Wartelsky ('20)

One of the special *Tefillos* we add to *Davening* on *Chanukah* is *Al Hanissim*. In it, we thank Hashem for saving us from the Syrian-Greeks by miraculously helping us defeat them in battle. At the end of the *Tefillah*, the miracle of the oil is mentioned in a one-liner:

הַדְּלִיקוּ נֵרוֹת בְּמִצְרוֹת קִדְשְׁךָ

Much ink has been spilled trying to discover why the miracle of the oil is belittled in this paragraph which seems to be the mission statement of *Chanukah*. However, there is another question that can be raised on this line: the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* was located on the southern side of an area called the *Heichal*, to the east of the *Kodesh Hakodashim*. In contrast, the paragraph of *Al Hanissim* says that candles were lit *bichatzros* (in the courtyard)! How could the *Al Hanissim Tefillah* not be factually accurate?

To begin answering this question, one must look in the first place the *Menorah* is spoken about in *Tanach: Parshas Terumah*. In *Parshas Terumah*, the *Torah* discusses all of the *Keilim* and their respective functions in great detail. The *Menorah* symbolizes a Jew's unwavering commitment to *Mesorah*. The *Menorah* was one of the only *Keilim* that had to be maintained every single day, which symbolizes our need to constantly reinforce our belief in the tradition of *al pi Hashem biyad Moshe* (from the mouth of Hashem in the hand of Moshe). The *Menorah* teaches us about the day-to-day maintenance of tradition.

The answer to our original question about the placement of the lighting lies in our interpretation of the word "*bichatzros*". In this case, it is referring to our own homes, and how we each have an obligation to fill our own homes with the light of the *Mesorah*. The Greeks attempted to cut off our *Mesorah*, by forbidding the study of *Torah*, especially among children. In addition, they also forbade the *Bris Milah*, an integral Jewish practice performed upon children specifically. The Greeks understood, like Hitler *Yemach Shemo Vezi-*

*chro* did as well, that if an individual or movement wants to win people over, they need to start with the most impressionable of people: children. The Greeks attempted to do this by making *Bris Milah* and *Talmud Torah* illegal. Additionally, there is also the story of Chana and her seven sons, who, in progression, were asked by King Antiochus to bow to an idol placed before them. Each of the first six said no, and were immediately killed in front of their mother Chana. The youngest son was asked to bow and he also refused. However, Antiochus suggested that instead, he 'pick up the king's ring' which he had thrown before the idol. He again refused, and Chana's seventh son was killed before her eyes. This is what the requirement of *Ner Ish Ubeiso* is; one candle must be lit for every member of the household including *Ketanim* in order to fulfill the second tier of *Mitzvah*.

However, there is yet a third, ultimate tier of *Hadlakas Ner Chanukah*: each member of the household lights the amount of candles corresponding to that night of *Chanukah*. Rashi in *Maseches Shabbos* (23b) comments on a statement of the *Gemara* that reads "If a person has candles lit in his house, his children will be *Talmidei Chachamim*". Rashi comments that these candles are the candles of *Shabbos* and *Chanukah*. But the question is: why these categories of candle lighting specifically? The *mitzvah* of *Neir Shabbos* is based on a *Mesorah* that the Jews of the year 5783 have of Sarah Imeinu lighting candles in her tent for *Shabbos* (ed. *In the first edition of the New York Times in 2000, they printed the front page of the year 1900 and a mock-up of what they thought the front page of the year 2100 would be. At the time, the Times had been putting a small box [that is now occupied by "All the News That's Fit For Print"] with the Shabbos candle lighting time for New York, and they decided to run that on the 2100 cover as well. When the executive editor was asked why he did it, he said that he knew that even in 100 years from now, there would still be Jewish women lighting their candles every Friday night*) and *Neir Chanukah* because that is the symbol of the dedication to *Mesorah* that the *Chashmonaim* were fighting for against the Syrian-Greeks. This is also why we are not allowed to derive any benefit from the candles: the *Mesorah's* purpose and in-

tention cannot be changed at one's own discretion and/or will to benefit themselves.

Additionally, the *Gimara* in *Menachos* (86b) says that *Beis Hamikdash* had uniquely-shaped windows: instead of being thin slits on the outside and large alcoves on the inside, as was the case in many homes to allow light in but to maintain a sense of privacy, the windows were thin slits on the inside and large alcoves on the exterior. This was so that the light of the *Menorah* and the *Mesorah* it represented could be spread to the rest of the world. This is also why *Halachah* dictates that the *Menorah* must be lit in a window visible to the normal eye at street level: to spread the miracle. On a related note, Rav Avigdor Miller *Zatzal*, the venerated *Mashgiach* of *Yeshivas Rabeinu Chayim Berlin* in Brooklyn, had a famous idea that he referred to time and time again in his *Musar Shmuzen* and *Parsha Shiurim* that the home is like a man's personal *Beis Hamikdash*. That fits very neatly with this idea; it is our obligation to light our personal *Menoros* in our personal *Mikdashos* to to spread the light of the *Mesorah* to the public. However, this isn't just the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days or the war, but the miracle of the continuity of the *Mesorah* through the thick and thin of thousands of years of history. As Mark Twain said, "The Jew saw them all, survived them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert but aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?" It is the *Mesorah*, the secret to the continuity of the Jewish people.

We are our *chatzeir*. The Greeks tried to assimilate us by wooing us with their culture and lifestyle, thereby extinguishing our internal light, making our *chatzeir* one of *tumah*. The idol erected by the Syrian-Greeks would be front and center. They targeted our children first and outlawed the basic tenets of our faith. The *Chashmonaim* struck back and reclaimed our *Mesorah* by rekindling the lights not just in the *Beis Hamikdash*, but in the *chatzeiros* within ourselves.

## עיל ונפק בהלכות חנוכה

הרב מרדכי בראנשטיין

סימן תרע

מ"ב ס"ק א: לשון הכהנים הגדולים, צ"ע כמה כהנים גדולים לחמו. לא היה אלא כהן גדול אחד

עוד שם: וחזרה מלכות לישראל, לא ביאר איזה מלכות חזרה לישראל, רק שנמשכה מאתיים שנה וזה חסרון ניכר, והמעין ברמב"ם הלכות חנוכה משתומם על שהשמיט המ"ב ארבע תיבות מדבריו הקדושים של הרמב"ם - "והעמידו מלך מן הכהנים", כהנים משבט לוי כמובן ולא מבני דוד, ושם חשש המ"ב לשיטת הרמב"ן פרשת ויחי, בטעם שלא נשאר שריד ופליט מבית חשמונאי היינו משום שעברו "על צוואת הזקן" שצוה "לא יסור שבט מיהודה", ולכן מלכות חשמונאי היתה שלא כהלכה. מ"מ רבינו הרמב"ם לא סבר כן, עין הלכות מלכים פרק א הלכה ח,ט ובראב"ד. שהיה אפשר למלך משאר שבטים, ואם זה תלוי במחלקת גדולי עולם קשה למה תפס המ"ב שיטת הרמב"ן ודלג על לשון הזהב של רבינו הרמב"ם.

עוד שם: ומדליקים, עין שעורי הגרי"ד ז"ל מה שיש להבין מלשון זה של הרמב"ם שהדלקת המנורה הנהיגו חז"ל כמאה שנה אחר הנס כשנחרב בית שני, אשר לכך כתב הרמב"ם "ומדליקים" לשון מנהג ולא כתב "שידליקו" לשון תקנת חז"ל

ס"ק ז: כדאיתא במדרש, תמוה לי, מה בכך, האם עושין סעודה לחנוכה המזבח בליל ניסן שנאמר אשר בשביל זה ראוי לעשות סעודה ושמחה בכסלו. אם אין עושין סעודה בניסן אין לזה טעם לעשות סעודה בכסלו. ועוד, ולמה נבקש ממרחק טעמים שאין להם שייכות לחנוכה, נעין בלשונו של הרמב"ם הלכות חנוכה "ומפני זה תקנו חכמים וכו' ימי שמחה והלל" הרי יש חיוב שמחה בחנוכה אליבא דרמב"ם, ובזה נתיישב המנהג לקבוע סעודה,

סימן תרעא

ביאור הלכה ד"ה ואפילו עני: לפי המגיד משנה למד הרמב"ם כן מדין ד' כוסות, וקשה תרתי, (א) דין ד' כוסות נמצא ברמב"ם הלכות חמץ ומצה פרק ז הלכה ז, "ואפילו עני המתפרנס מן הצדקה לא יפחתו לו" וכו' מזה מוכח שהעני בקש יין מגבאי צדקה בשביל ד' כוסות והגבאי צריך לתת לו, מ"מ למכור כסותו לא הזכיר הרמב"ם כאן במקור ההלכה לפי המגיד משנה שד' כוסות שורש הדין הוא היה לרמב"ם להזכיר מכירת הכסות כאן בעיקר הדין. (ב) הגר"ח מבריסק קבע יסוד ויתד נאמן אשר הרמב"ם מביא תמיד לשון הגמרא ללא הוספה, ושם רצונו להוסיף על לשון הש"ס כותב "יראה לי". תיבות אלו "מוכר כסותו" לא נמצא בש"ס אלא ברשב"ם פרק ערבי פסחים, וכי תעלה על הדעת אשר הרמב"ם שלא ראה ולא ידע רבותינו בעלי התוספות מעתיק דברי הרשב"ם? עין ציוני מהר"ן על הרמב"ם מה שמצא מקור לדברי הרמב"ם.

ס"ק מ: והטעם בכל זה זכר למנורה, טעם ההדלקה בדרום משום זכר למנורה אבל הטעם של עצם הדלקה בבית הכנסת אינו משום 'זכר למנורה', עין שערי תשובה אות

ו ושו"ת הריב"ש סימן קיא שהוא מטעם פרסומי ניסא. והוא מסביר המנהג בשביל שבזמן הזה רוב מדליקים בפנים וחסר הפרסומי ניסא של עיקר תקנת חז"ל אשר על כן מדליקים בבית הכנסת במקום שרבים מצויים שם. אם כן בארץ ישראל, לכאורה, היה צריך לחזור הדבר כבראשונה כיון שמדליקים בחוץ ברחוב שוב אין להדליק בבית הכנסת ואם מדליק בבית הכנסת על כל פנים תהיה בלא ברכה. ואין הדבר כן. הריב"ש עצמו הקשה שאם לא תקנו חז"ל לברך מפני מה מברכים? תירץ שזה כמו ברכת הלל בראש חודש שאינו אלא מנהג ומברכים, הכי נמי המנהג להדליק בבית הכנסת ונוכל לברך. אבל החכם צבי סימן פח מצא סתירה והקשה הילכתא אהילכתא, שמרן הש"ע כתב לברך על ההדלקה בבית הכנסת אולם עין ש"ע הלכות ראש חודש סימן תכב סעיף ב' וקוראין הלל בדלוג וכו' ויש אומרים שאף בצבור אין מברכין עליו לא בתחילה ולא בסוף וזה דעת הרמב"ם וכן נוהגין בארץ ישראל וכל סביבותיה", הרי שסובר מרן הש"ע שעל מנהג לא מברכים ויש סתירה בין הלכות חנוכה שמברכים על הדלקה בבית הכנסת אף על פי שאינה אלא מנהג להלכות ראש חודש שלא מברכים לשיטתו על הלל של ראש חודש משום שהוא רק מנהג. והכריע החכם צבי לבני אשכנז בלבד מותר להם לברך משום שבני אשכנז מברכים על הלל בראש חודש הרי שסוברים כראשונים שמברכים על המנהג. אכן הגר"א ציין להלכות פסח שמבואר שם שקוראים הלל בליל פסח בבית הכנסת משום פרסומי ניסא וזה גם אליבא דמרן הש"ע ואתי שפיר לכולי עלמא שעל פרסומי ניסא מברכים מ"מ הרמב"ם והסמ"ג לא הביאו דין הדלקת המנורה בבית נכנסת כלל וזה מורה שבמקומם לא היו מדליקים בבית הכנסת אבל הריטב"א בסוגיא דמאי חנוכה מביא המנהג ומזה ראייה שהיה מנהג ישן מזמן הראשונים.

### סימן תרעה

ס"ק ג: ואם רוצות להדליק מברכות כשאר מצוות עשה שהזמן גרמא דיכולות לברך וכו'. תמוה לי לשון זה, עין רבותינו בעלי התוספות מגילה דף ד' עמוד א ד"ה שאף, גבי מצה יש מקשה למה לי היקישא דכל שישנו בבל תאכל חמץ ישנו בקום אכול מצה תיפוק ליה מטעם שהן היו באותו הנס ויש לומר דמשום האי טעמא לא מחייבא אלא מדרבנן אי לאו מהיקישא" וכו' ולכן אם עצם המצוה מדרבנן כגון נר חנוכה ומקרא מגילה לפי סברת התוספות הן מחויבות מעיקר הדין כמו אנשים בלא הבדל, ועין בתוספות לפני זה שכתבו לפי סברתם שנשים היו מוציאות אנשים נמי, אם כן קשה למה כתבו הפוסקים שגר חנוכה מצוות עשה שזמן גרמא אלא שיכולות להדליק רק מפני שמחמירות על עצמן כשופר ולולב, הרי מוכח מרבותינו בעלי התוספות להדיא שכיון שאף הן היו באותו הנס אין להן פטור של זמן גרמא במצוה דרבנן ומוציאות אף אנשים. ועוד עין ביאור הלכא ד"ה אשה מדלקת, שהביא ממה שמברכת שאין דעת חז"ל נוחה שמוציאה האיש מפני שההוא איש לא למד וזה שיטת רש"י וכוונת הביאור הלכה בקפידה זו רק על הברכה משום שלא למד ולא על המצוה עצמה שהיא מצווה כמו האיש וזה פשוט מסוגיא בברכות שם ומרש"י ותוספות סוכה דף לח עמוד א.



## Underrated Facts about Chanukah

Isaac Cohen ('23)

*Chanukah* rekindles for us the story of how the *Yevanim* attempted to extinguish Judaism at its core. Unlike on *Purim*, where *Haman* wanted to kill *B'nei Yisrael*, the *Yevanim* wanted *B'nei Yisrael* to get rid of their religion and convert to the *Yevanim*'s version of polytheism. After the *Chashmonaim* reclaimed the *Beis Hamikdash*, they soon discovered that all the oil had been made *tamei*. However, a question is raised from this: Why didn't the *Yevanim* just use up or destroy all the oil in order to prevent it from being rekindled again?

The main objective of the *Yevanim* wasn't to prevent the rekindling of the *menorah*, but to light it with defiled oil. Hence, they purposely left an ample supply of defiled oil in the *Beis Hamikdash*. The *Yevanim* wanted to accept the *Torah*, but not in the way it is meant to be received. They wanted to view it as a human creation. As such, the *Torah* could be changed and modified from time to time to become applicable to the morals and ethics of the time period. Therefore, it wasn't exactly the suppression of the *Torah* that the *Yevanim* were aiming for, but "*lehashkicham Toratecha*" - "to make them forget your *Torah*" - and treat it as written by man and not given by Hashem.

After searching, the *Hashmonaim* were able to find just one jug of oil that was pure. However, how did the Jews know that this jug of oil was also not defiled?

Tosfos raises this question and answers that the jug was buried in the ground. Hence, the *Yevanim* did not know of its existence. However, a difficulty with this approach is that the *gemara* does not give any indication to this fact. In addition, if so, why was it necessary that the jug was sealed?

Careful analysis of the *gemara* brings about two questions/conclusions:

1. The *Kohen Gadol* had no interference with the production of the oil. So why would his seal be on the jug?
2. Embroidered on the seal is the message, "*shehayah munach bechosamo shel kohen Gadol*" - "that was lying with the *kohen Gadol*'s seal." However, grammatically, shouldn't it have said, "*shehayah*

***chasum***” - “that was sealed”?

From this we can deduce an incredible miracle took place. When the *Chashmonaim* entered the *Beis Hamikdash* they saw one jug of oil - “*shehayah munach bechosamo shel kohen Gadol*” - that was lying together with the holy ring of the *Kohen Gadol*. They deduced that undoubtedly no *Yevanim* had come into this area because he would have for sure stolen the ring. Hence, they were able to confidently infer that this jug of oil was *tahor* and proper for the use of lighting the *menorah*.

Many people say that the *Chanukah* story is pretty straightforward and that everything about it was already written about. However, this statement is certainly not true. The story of *Chanukah* is deep in its own right and I encourage everyone to delve deeper into the story - trust me you won't be disappointed. *Chag sameach!*

## The Light of Chanukah

Natan Horowitz ('23)

You look outside the window, and it's nothing but pitch black. Suddenly, in an instant, the room is filled with the soft, warm glow of candlelight. As you hold the *shamash* candle, you recite the *brachah* we all know too well: "*lehadlik **ner** shel Chanukah*". If one takes a moment to really look at the words of the *brachah*, they'll notice that the words say "to kindle the *Chanukah* **candle**". However, we know that we light multiple candles on *Chanukah*, so why does the *brachah* only mention one?

Rav Kook begins to explain the answer by first examining the word *chanukah*. "*Chanukah*" means "dedication", as in the rededication of the *Beis Hamikdash* after the *Yevanim* defiled it. However, the word "*chanukah*" also shares the same *shoresh* as the word "*chinuch*", or "education". The difference between the two is that the word "*chinuch*" is *zachar*, while the word "*chanukah*" is *nekeivah*. Why is this so?

Rav Kook explains that the point of education is to develop one's natural abilities and talents in order to reach their full potential. It is for this reason that "*chinuch*" is *zachar* as it represents the strive for greater potential and level of *kedushah*. The *Beis Hamikdash*, however, already came with its full potential and *kedushah*, it needed no uplifting. It merely needed a revealing of its true innate completeness in *kedushah*. It is for this reason that the word for its dedication was "*chanukah*", the *shoresh* in its *nekeivah* form.

Rav Kook went on to explain that the *neiros* of *Chanukah* are a symbol of the innate values and traits of *am Yisrael* which they display to the world. These traits include the Torah, morality, and justice. However, sometimes, one of these traits will try to maximize its influence on the world even at the expense of some other values. This competition to contribute to the world can cause *machlokes* and division throughout *am Yisrael*. Certain sects of Jews may look at other groups with a critical lens because they feel as though these other groups are focusing on less fundamental values. In truth, promoting any of these ideals helps only to further enrich the Jewish people.

While this conflict does appear to be an inherent and perma-

nent one, Rav Kook clarifies that there is light at the end of the tunnel (pun not intended). True *kedushah* cannot take hold as long as such conflicts continue to exist. However, one day, we will once again have a *chanukas habayis* where it will be revealed that all of these values, all of these *neiros*, have the same *shoresh*. It will be revealed that, in fact, while we see many different lights, they are all emanating from one single candle. It is for this reason that when we say the *brachah* every *Chanukah*, we say “*lehadlik ner shel Chanukah*” - “To kindle the candle of *Chanukah*”.

*Chanukah Sameach!*

## The Peculiarity of Chanukah

Gavriel Barber ('23)

*Chanukah*, like *Purim*, is one of the unique holidays instituted by the *chachamim* during and between the time of the two *batei mikdash*. They both gain their significance from miracles that influenced the nation as a whole, and they share the almost exclusive requirement of *pirsumei nisa*, publicizing the miracles. *Chanukah*, however, contains many (seemingly) unnecessary idiosyncrasies that set it apart even from its “partner” holiday *Purim*.

The first and most general difficulty is related to the miracle of *Chanukah* itself. One of the miracles that we commemorate on *Chanukah* is that a jug filled with enough oil to last for one day miraculously lasted for eight days. And although this is clearly an exceptional and supernatural event, it's almost *too* exceptional and supernatural. Why did Hashem choose to enact the miracle in such an obvious fashion? Wouldn't it have been just as much of a miracle to instead leave one jug filled with enough oil to last for eight days? My *rebbe* from last year, Rabbi Mendelson, liked to ask questions like these by invoking the “Law of Conservation of *nisim*”; if this miracle was able to be accomplished in a simpler way, why did Hashem disrupt the natural order to execute it? The *Pnei Yehoshua* (*Shabbos* 21a: “*mai chanukah*”), answering a similar question, clarifies that although the *neis* of *Chanukah* was “over-the-top” in many regards, Hashem purposefully displayed the most dramatic miracle possible in order to publicly exhibit his love for *Bnai Yisrael*. Again, as Rabbi Mendelson frequently asked, how does this answer the question? Why on *Chanukah* was there such a need to demonstrate this love? On *Purim*, when the Jewish people accepted the *Torah* to a higher degree of willingness than they had at *Har Sinai* (*Shabbos* 88a), the *neis* was still not as supernatural as on *Chanukah*!

Aside from the primary question on the *neis* of *Chanukah*, the various *dinim* of lighting the *menorah* include numerous quirks that distinguish this *mitzvah* from all others. For example, the *chiyuv* of lighting the *menorah* is not on each *person*, but on each *house*. This concept of “*neir ish u'beiso*”, that every person in a house can be *yotzei* with the same candle, is a perplexing character-

istic of the *menorah* that seems almost out of place. Why does this *mitzvah* in particular fall on every house, when all other *mitzvos* depend on your personal actions? Even other *mitzvos* of *pirsumei nisa* such as *megillah* can be accomplished at best through *shomei'ah k'oneh* (hearing is comparable to saying) because the *chiyuv* falls on every person to read the *megillah* themselves! Additionally, further exemplifying the contrast with other *mitzvos* of *pirsumei nisa*, the *mitzvah* of *neir Chanukah* requires you to place your *menorah* in the doorway, an attribute special to this *mitzvah*. Why does a *menorah* need to be placed in the doorway, but when you read the *megillah* or drink your *arba kosos* there is no such requirement? All are sourced from the idea of *pirsumei nisa*, publicizing the miracle, so shouldn't they all require the same degree of publicity? Finally, the third peculiarity of the *mitzvah* of *neir Chanukah* relates to one of the ways you can fulfill your obligation. If no one at your home will be lighting (so you won't be *yotzei* through *neir ish u'beiso*) and you don't think that you will have the chance to light a *menorah* yourself later, you can make the *bracha* of “*she'asa nisim la'avoseinu bayamim haheim bazman hazeh*” when you see someone else's lit *menorah* (*Orach Chaim* 676:3). By no other *mitzvah* is watching someone else perform it enough to consider yourself *yotzei*, but by *menorah* even if you get a chance to complete the *mitzvah* yourself later you do not repeat the *bracha* you made when simply watching!

To answer these four questions, we need to zoom out and analyze the message of *Chanukah* as a whole. Using this new perspective, we will be able to justify all of the peculiarities of this *chag*. Although it's most conspicuous that we are celebrating the miracle of the *menorah* on *Chanukah*, the more fundamental *neis* we are celebrating is our victory in the war against the *yevanim*. Yes, the Greeks certainly presented a serious physical threat, but the real danger to the nation at the time was the ideological discord between Greek and Jewish values. The Greeks were so enamored with their own brilliance that it wasn't plausible for them to accept a higher power, a Being who was smarter and more perfect than they were. The *yevanim* disparaged spirituality wherever they went, which we remember in our *tefillos* when we state their goal as “*I'hashkicheim torasecha*” (making the Jews forget Your Torah),

leading to “*l’ha’avireim meichukei retzonecha*” (making the Jews violate Your laws). Just as Torah is described as light, the Greeks were comparable to a wave of darkness. In fact, the Greeks were so oppressive that they ultimately Hellenized a significant portion of the Jewish population, stripping them of their religious and moral beliefs. It was therefore imperative that the *neis* of *Chanukah* rekindled this extinguished light, renewing the notion of “*ki neir mitzvah vetorah or*”.

Using this explanation of *Chanukah* and the *menorah*, the *Sukkas Dovid* answers all 4 of our earlier questions. Why did Hashem choose to enact the miracle in *such* a supernatural way, breaking nature more than He had to? The *Pnei Yehoshua* answered that it was to demonstrate Hashem’s love for us, and we can now understand why this goal was particularly poignant on *Chanukah* more than on other *chagim*. The *yevanim* stood for logic and science, so Hashem had to prove to both the Greeks (and the Jews) that He was willing to completely suspend nature for our sake. Through the miraculous lights of the *menorah*, all of the darkness infused by the Greeks was purged and we were able to return to Hashem and His Torah. Why, by *menorah*, is it sufficient for one candle to be lit for every house? Now that we understand the function of the *menorah*, it’s clear that any more would be redundant. As long as everyone in the household can see and appreciate the light of the *menorah* and all that it represents, the *chiyuv* of everyone in the house can be fulfilled. Why is there a specific requirement for the *menorah* to be placed in the doorway, a feature that no other *mitzvos* of *pirsumei nisa* share? If the *menorah* is placed outside, it not only lights up our home but also suppresses the darkness of the outside world. Finally, why is someone able to be *yotzei* their *mitzvah* of *neir Chanukah* by simply looking at someone else’s lit candles? Well, if the function of the *neiros* is to spread the light of Torah, then recognizing the values expressed in this light is part of the *mitzvah* of *neir Chanukah*. To a degree, you are fulfilling your requirement of *neir Chanukah* just by watching and appreciating the candles. And although most of us have the *zechus* to light personal *neiros*, it is an imperative part of fulfilling our *mitzvah* to step back and simply watch, internalizing the lessons revealed by their light.

## The Modern Dreidel

Noam Sheffey ('25)

We all know the story of *Chanukah*; it is nothing new. Over the years we came to learn the reasons for some of the customs we do during those eight days. There is one thing that I would not call really a custom, but in some sense it is. This is something that a lot of people do for pleasure over *Chanukah*, and that is play some good old *Dreidel*. This *Chanukah* classic that we learned to play over the years was the way the Jews would deceive the *Yevanim* when they would check to see if they were learning Torah. Of course today we know the *dreidel* as a four sided top that has four letters that add up to *Neis Gadol Haya Shum*, or *Po* depending on where you live. The rules are pretty well known as well on how to play this game of *dreidel*. But going back to the words *Neis Gadol Haya Sham/Po*, maybe something in a modern sense could show something that can be thought about the next time you spin one of these *dreidals*. So now we get to *Chanukah*, and you pick up a *dreidel* and spin it. As it spins the letters become blurry, and once it stops the letters reappear once again. Seems like a pretty black and white process, yet this event could be so much more relevant to your daily lives if we understand an idea from Rabbi Ephraim Nisenbaum. During our daily lives it seems like everything is just a blur, and we really don't have any time to think about other stuff that happen around us. We in reality cannot see all the miracles that happen around us all the time, until the *dreidel* stops spinning and the letters are clear, so too if we stop for a moment and reflect, our eyes can be opened to the miracles that surround us every single day. May we be *zocheh* to always see the *nissim* and *neflaos Hashem* performs for us all year round.



## **The Mysterious Dreidel**

Natan Gemal ('23)

One of the most iconic parts of the *Chanukah* celebration is, of course, the *dreidel*. The *dreidel* originated in ancient Greece where people would commonly use spinning tops with multiple unique sides for gambling. When the Jews were not allowed to learn Torah under greek rulership, they would do so secretly in a cave and when the Greeks would come by the Jews would cleverly spin the tops they had brought with them to the cave, giving the illusion that they were merely gambling, causing the Greek officers to leave them unharmed. Hence the famous and ancient tradition of spinning *dreidels* to commemorate this aspect of the miraculous *Chanukah* story, with the hebrew letters *nun*, *gimmel*, *hei*, and *shin* written on the sides, which stand for *neis gadol haya sham* - a great miracle was there, referring to the whole *Chanukah* story in Israel. This may sound familiar and quite simple, but thinking about this will lead to the almost obvious question: if our *dreidels* have writings to commemorate the *Chanukah* miracle, which obviously happened after the greeks' persecution causing the Jews to hide their Torah learning with the *dreidels*, what did the Jews' *dreidels* say when they were playing with them in the caves, before the miracle happened? Surely they could not have said anything about a miracle that did not yet happen!?

The *Bnei Yissaschar* gives a beautiful answer to this question. When *Yaakov Avinu* moved down to Egypt, he wanted to ensure that the future Jewish nation would never assimilate with the egyptians, so he made sure to create a Jewish community. *Yaakov* set up a *yeshivah* and his family lived "Goshnah" (to/in Goshen), separate from the Egyptians. Fast forward to the Jews living under Greek rulership, there was fear that the kids, in the process of following and learning Torah as best as they could, would actually gain an addiction for gambling. If they truly did like gambling, chances are they would assimilate with the Greeks, exactly what they were trying to avoid. To counteract this, they put the letters *gimmel*, *shin*, *nun*, and *hei*, the same letters as today, on the four sides of their *dreidels*, spelling out "Goshna" to remind them of *Yaakov's* efforts when it was up to him to prevent assimilation.

This could be an important lesson for this time of year, when *Chanukah* can be seen as just another holiday but for the Jews. We must take a lesson from the Jews who, in turn, took a lesson from *Yaakov Avinu* that we must always keep ourselves separate from the *goyim*, even when it seems like we are all celebrating together, we are in fact our own, true nation.

## The Holiday Celebrating the Uniqueness of Am Yisroel

Rabbi Shimon Kerner

We usually think of exile as being detached from the land of Israel. Nevuchadnezar destroying the *Beis Hamikdash* and leading us away in chains – that's *golus*; Haman trying to annihilate us – that's *golus*; The Romans selling us on slave docks – that's obvious *golus* and darkness. In the time of the Greeks, however, we were still in *Eretz Yisrael*, during the second *Beis Hamikdash*. *Golus Yavan* was clearly a different type of exile. One where we were detached – not from the land but a **spiritual** detachment from the Divine presence. Their goal was to get us to renounce our connection and relationship with G-d. Unlike the others, the Greeks were not bothered by our status as a nation. They were fighting the fact that we were the *am hanivchar* — *atah vechartanu mikol ha'amim*

So, the conflict with Greeks is a breaking down of the barriers that set us apart from them. *Ufaretzu chomos migdalai* — which walls? The Mishnah in *Middos* (2:3) teaches that it refers to 13 breaches in the *Soreg*. This was the wall that was the point beyond which gentiles could not go. The Greeks wanted to blur such separations. Rav Asher Weiss *Shlita* suggests that the number 13 is specific – it corresponds to the 13 *Ikarei Ha'emunah* which set us apart as a nation.

The Greeks wanted us to write on the horn of the ox that we no longer have a portion in the G-d of Israel. Why an ox? Rav Asher Weiss explains: they wanted to remind us of the golden calf. You are no different than us. You want to bring sacrifices? Go right ahead. But acknowledge that you are no different than us. *Ein lachem cheilek be'Elokei Yisrael* is the equivalent of “You made the golden calf. Your service of G-d does not emanate from being chosen but by your own needs.”

We now can understand the decrees against *Shabbos*, *Chodesh* and *Milah*. Each of these shows the uniqueness of our relationship with G-d. *Shabbos* – *ki vanu vacharta...* — we are the chosen people. *Chodesh* — *atem afilu shogegim...* — *Rosh Chodesh* and the holidays are set by us – *mekadeish Yisrael vehazmanim*. *Milah* – an

obvious physical sign to identify as Jews.

Rav Asher Weiss explains that when the *Yevanim* entered the *Beis Hamikdash*, time'u kol hashemanim but not shafchu. Feel free to serve in the Temple, feel free to light the *menorah*. But don't do it with the holiness and the purity of a Jew. Go ahead and light the *menorah*, but with *tamei* oil.

A famous question is based on the principle that *tumah hutrah betzibbur*. If so, why was the miracle of finding pure oil needed? According to our approach, the goal of the Greeks was not to stop our service, just to be *metamei* it. So true, we could have lit with the impure oil from the perspective of the strict laws of the *avodas hamikdash* but from the angle of the *sha'as hashmad*, that would have given the Greeks exactly what they wanted!

The *Gemara* (*Rosh Hashanah* 18b) relates that another of the decrees of the *Yevanim* was to prohibit writing G-d's name in documents. When the *Chashmonaim* were victorious, they reinstituted it and they would write: "in such and such a year of Yochanan Kohen Gadol *lekeil eilyon*". They wanted to detach us from our relationship with Hashem, and we responded by reinforcing that very connection.

Rav Boruch Simon (in the introduction to his *sefer* on *minhagim*) quotes the Ozhorover *Rebbe*, Rav Moshe Yechiel Halevi Epstein in his *sefer Be'er Moshe*, who suggests another reason that the emphasis is specifically on the number of 13 breaches in the wall. *Beshalosh esrei middos hatorah nidreshes*: They were attacking the root of our relationship with Hashem - *Torah shebe'al peh*. Therefore, upon the victory of the *Chashmonaim*, they were *mesakein* 13 bowings. *Chanukah* is the holiday of *Torah shebe'al peh*, which is the root of our relationship with Hashem.

Rav Simon quotes from Rav Shmuel Yisochor Dov Taubenzfeld who relates that the Skverer *Rebbe* was once asked to give a reason for the *minhag* of eating latkes on *Chanukah*. He responded that latkes are the language of "*lata*" (לאטע) which means a "*tela*" — (טלאי) or a patch. We symbolically are patching up the 13 breaches in the wall, and beaming with pride about our special bond with G-d.

*Chanukah* is a celebration of the *Menorah*. Rambam writes

that it is a *mitzvah chavivah me'od*. Why? because it is representative of the oral Torah, of *mesorah*, of bowing in deference to G-d's wisdom, and not falling through the breached gates. May the darkness the Greeks tried to bring on us be overpowered by the light of the *Menorah* , the light of Torah, the light of connection to Hashem. This *Chanukah* let us proudly proclaim *yeish lanu cheilek be'Elokei Yisrael!* And may we use this great *Yom Tov* to appreciate how much Hashem loves us: *Habocher be'amo Yisrael be'ahavah*.

## Happy to Light

Netanel Shechter ('25)

*Parshas Beha'aloscha* begins with Hashem telling Moshe *Rabbeinu* to instruct Aharon *Hakohen* to light the *menorah* in the *Mishkan*. The *passuk* tells us “*vaya'as kein Aharon*”, “And Aharon did so.”

There is a well-known Rashi that tells us that Aharon following this commandment of Hashem was so exceptional that the Torah highlighted it. The obvious question is what was so special about Aharon doing what he was supposed to do?

There are two explanations given. The *Sfas Emes* explains that the *passuk* is saying that no matter how many times Aharon lit the *menorah*, even in the same way, he still had the same enthusiasm as if he was lighting the flame for the first time. His passion never went away from doing this great *mitzvah*.

Aharon's beloved sons Nadav and Avihu were burned and killed in a heavenly fire. It was a day of pain and loss for Aharon and a day of deep mourning. It is not regular that a mourner does such *avodah* as lighting the *menorah*. Aharon could have appointed someone else to light the *menorah* instead of him, but he did no such thing. He did not even think about whether he should appoint someone else. He did the *mitzvah* as if his sons had never died.

The Chasam Sofer writes, the Torah is telling us that Aharon did not deviate despite what had happened, even though he was permitted to do so. Not only was Aharon determined to do the *mitzvah*, but he didn't just light it to be *yotzei*, just to fulfill the commandment. He did it with such intensity that it set the tone for the rest of his time as *Kohen Gadol*.

This is an incredible lesson to be learned. No matter the situation or how sad a person may feel, we have the capability to overcome anything. We can push forward, to fight through and go about our lives as if nothing is amiss. Like Aharon, we should never disregard our obligations to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu*.

## Where's the Party At?

Aaron Sisser ('23)

As the famous joke goes, every Jewish holiday progresses like this: Our enemies tried to kill us, we won, let's eat! While this is funny from the outside, a deeper analysis shows that, in fact, this is not so far off from the truth. By *Sukkos*, we have the *passuk* of "*visamachta bichagecha*" (*Devarim* 16:14), meaning that we should remember to be especially happy on this holiday. By *Pesach*, Hashem commands us to celebrate *Yetziyas Metzrayim* for 7 days. By *Purim*, it is a famous *pshat* that we are supposed to celebrate (possibly with wine - *ad d'lo yada*) the victory of Esther and the Jews over the evil Haman. It is thus clear that on Jewish holidays we are supposed to be happy. However, while we have spoken of 3 of the major Jewish holidays that do have this command to be physically happy, there are two holidays that we have glaringly left out: *Shavuos* and *Chanukah*.

If one analyzes the *pesukim* in the *Torah* that talk about *Shavuos*, they will see that the actual event that many people associate with *Shavuos* is barely mentioned. When most people think of *Shavuos*, they think of the giving of the *Torah*. However, in the *Torah*, *Shavuos* is mainly associated with the *Yom Habikkurim*, celebrating the harvest. Thus, R' Shlomo Kluger explains, our command to be happy on *Shavuos* is intuitive. It would not be right to celebrate the receiving of the *Torah* - a purely spiritual event - with physical partying and feasts. However, once we add on the celebration of the harvest to the holiday, we are able to celebrate with physical happiness.

Now, let's look at *Chanukah*, which is noticeably different from each of the other holidays. By *Chanukah*, there is no mention of being physically happy at all, but rather a requirement to appreciate how Hashem saved us from our enemies' spiritual attack. However, this raises a question: if the main miracle of *Chanukah* is the war that Hashem helped the *Maccabim* to win, then it seems similar to when Hashem helped us leave Egypt or when he helped us to destroy Haman. If the reason for the celebration is clearly similar, then why is there no command to be physically happy on *Chanukah* like there is by all of the other holidays?

To answer this question, let's jump back to before Hashem miraculously saved us. Before we were saved, we were in trouble, but why were we in trouble? What caused Hashem to send Antiochus to try to destroy Judaism? The Bach writes that the reason Hashem sent Antiochus is because the Jews were being lazy in their keeping of the *Torah*. So, Hashem punished us by instituting governmental rules to limit our serving of the *Torah*. Then, with the help of the *Chashmonaim*, the Jews were able to revitalize the *Torah* in their hearts and minds. Writes R' Shlomo Kulger that this reinvigorating of the desire to do *Torah* in the souls of the Jewish people is a direct connection to the holiday of *Shavuot*. It is as if here, בנינו received the *Torah* again! So, just as by *Shavuot*, *if the only event commemorated was the receiving of the Torah, by Chanukah we are commemorating a purely spiritual event and should celebrate accordingly.*

Now, we have a question about how we act today. Most of us do have *Chanukah* feasts and get-togethers. How is this allowed if it is supposed to be a chiefly spiritual holiday? The point of this *Dvar Torah* is not to say that there should be no physical celebration of *Chanukah* at all. It is always good to be happy and celebrate the greatness of Hashem. Rather, we learn from here that one must always be cognizant of the spirituality of the day. Thus, when eating your *latkes* and your *sufganiyos*, remember how important a spiritual day this is in the history of the Jewish people. There are multiple aspects to many different parts of our lives, from our thoughts and feelings to our relationships with other people. We find balance among the different facets of our lives. So too by *Chanukah*, we must be able to balance the physical aspects of the day with the spiritual and go to that *Chanukah mesibah* with the right frame of mind.



## The Obligation for children to Light - How to Maximize Every *Talmid's* Potential

Rabbi Shimon Schenker - Associate Principal

### **The Chinuch Dilemma**

Every Jewish parent wants their children to grow and reach his or her potential. However, many parents do not have an exact formula as to how to accomplish this herculean task. If one looks deep enough into any *halacha*, there is a deeper moral teaching lying at the surface. The *halachos* of *Chanukah* are no exception and contain a *halacha* that give us an insight into this fundamental parenting dilemma. As we better understand the nature of a child's obligation to light *Chanukah* candles, it will give us tremendous insight into our ability to foster and develop real growth in every child.

One of the challenges that parents face in child rearing is how hard to push our children to accomplish versus taking a more laid back approach. This is reflected in the laws of *Chanukah* itself. There is a large discussion in the *halachik* literature about the nature of the mitzvah for children to light *Chanukah* candles. Is there an obligation to teach our children to perform not only the basic mitzvah, or are we also obligated to train them to perform mitzvos on a higher level and to do the mitzvos in a more *mehudar* (beautiful) and enhanced manner? R' Yosef Karo in the *Shulchan Aruch* [1] writes, "a child that has reached the age of *chinuch* is obligated to light candles". However, the *Magen Avraham* amazingly comments that the *Shulchan Aruch* is referring to a child that has his own house, because it is possible that a child otherwise would be exempt from lighting, as can be found in the writings of the *Shiltei Hagiborim* [2] ". According to both the *Magen Avraham* and *Shiltei Hagiborim*, there isn't an obligation for a child to light *Chanukah* candles at all. Practically, Rav Moshe Isserles writes in his gloss to the *Shulchan Aruch* [3] according to our practice that everyone in the home lights, a child that has reached the age of *chinuch* [4] would also light.

### **The Chofetz Chaim - Parenting With Simplicity**

Both the decision of the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rama* seem clear that a child which reaches the age of *chinuch* is obligated to light candles, so why does the *Shiltei Giborim* and the Meiri [5] *pasken* that unless a child has his own house is he exempt from lighting, according to them isn't there a general *mitzvah* to train our children to perform *mitzvos* and in addition he seems to be explicitly opposing both the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Rama*? Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan (the *Chofetz Chaim*) writes [6] that the *Shiltei Giborim* holds that of course we are obligated to train our children in *mitzvos*, however that only applies to *mitzvos* which adults themselves are commanded in, not extra stringencies that adults perform to beautify a *mitzvah*. Therefore, children would in theory only be obligated the same way an adult is, if they have their own home. He holds that we are not obligated to train our children to perform *hiddur mitzvah*. The *Chofetz Chaim* adds in the *Mishna Berurah* [7] that even if one would want their child to light, he should only have him light one candle, because we are not obligated to train them to be so strict (to light one extra candle per night). According to this line of reasoning of the *Shiltei Giborim* and seemingly the *Chofetz Chaim* in a little more expansive opinion, our children are only obligated to light a minimum of one candle, irrespective of the night of *Chanukah*, which is the bare minimum requirement in the *Gemara Shabbos* [8], called "*ner ish u'beiso*".

### **Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank - Inspiring Our children for Greatness**

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank [9] gives a completely new spin to this discussion. Rav Frank differentiates between the levels the *Gemara Shabbos* gives of beautification of the *mitzvah* of lighting. He explains, of course the *Shiltei Giborim* and Meiri do not argue on the *Shulchan Aruch* and *Rama*, rather the *Shiltei Giborim* and Meiri refer to the basic *mitzvah*. It is true that only a child that has his own home would need to light himself, this is according to the *Gemara's* base *mitzvah* of "*Ner Ish U'beiso*". However, practically, one would of course need to have our children perform the *mitzvos* to the best of their ability which would include performing it in a "*mehudar*"

way [10] and light an extra candle each night.

According to Rav Frank ZT”L, our children need to light *Chanukah* candles in the most pristine way possible. His proof is from the *Gemara Sukkah* [11] that tells the story of Helene the Queen that sat her young boys in a *halachikly* acceptable *sukkah*. The Ritva there learns from this story that *chinuch* is enabling our children to perform *mitzvos* fully and purely like an adult, without compromise. This concept is inherent in the fabric of the *mitzvah* of lighting *Chanukah* candles itself. The *Pnei Yehoshua* [12] famously asks, why did we need the entire miracle of the oil burning for eight days, why couldn’t use impure oil based on the principle of *Tumah Hutra B’tzibur* [13] that impurity is permitted in case public need in the *Beis Hamikdash*? The *Pnei Yehoshua* answers that while it is true that they could have brought impure oil, Hashem wanted to show how precious their re-dedication of the *Beis Hamikdash* was to Him and that he was with them. [14] Rav Yosef Engel [15] offers a different explanation and a fundamental principle in *chinuch* as well. He says that anytime something is done for the first time it must be done in the most pristine and purest way possible. Therefore, of course the *Chachamim* of the time could have relied on using impure oil but as they were dedicating the *Beis Hamikdash*, they were setting the tone and level of performance in the *Beis Hamikdash* for all those who came after them, which needed to be only the highest possible level.

### The Foundations of Inspirational Chinuch

The *mitzvah* of *chinuch* is the same word and idea as *Chanukah*, it means to dedicate and start from the beginning to set a pattern of behavior. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman (the Piaseczno Rebbe), teaches [16] that the word for education, *chinuch* (and *Chanukah*), doesn’t just mean beginning, there are other Hebrew words for that. It refers specifically to the ability to take something and prepare it in a way that is able to help it fulfill its potential, to take it from potential to actual. When the *Chashmonaim* were rededicating the *Beis Hamikdash* they weren’t just starting the *avodah* again, they were preparing it to be used for it’s true purpose and to be

used for what it will always be used for. So too, the often quoted *passuk* as the *mitzvah* of training our children in mitzvos teaches us just that. The *passuk* in *Mishlei* [17] says, “*chanoch lana’ar al pi dar-ko gam ki yazkin lo yassur mimenah*”, “Train a child on his way, so that he will not veer from it”. The *Ritva* in *Sukkah* quoted earlier says that from this *passuk*, it is clear that purpose of *chinuch* is to prepare our children for mitzvos throughout their lives, therefore the *mitzvah* experience of a child needs to mirror an adult’s experience exactly.

It seems clear from the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* candles, we have the answer to our question that we began with. In order to help our children reach their potential, we need to ensure that their educational experiences is as pure and idealistic as possible. In order to enable this type of *chinuch* in our children we obviously need to choose the institution that will enable our children to grow spiritually but there is more than that. We need to have and maintain lofty goals and aspirations for our children’s spiritual growth. In *Tehillim* 127:4, it is written, “*kechitzim beyad gibor kein bnei hane’uri*”, “like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so too are our youth”. Rav Hirsch [18] explains that when an archer aims his arrow, he sets it on a trajectory higher than his intended goal. In the same way, when educating our children we must aim higher than we perhaps realistically expect them to attain, in order for them to reach the actual target that we are hoping they will achieve.

We are only going to have lofty aspirations for our children if we believe in their potential. Rashi [19] explains that Moshe Rabbeinu would not nurse from an Egyptian wet nurse because he would eventually speak with the *Shechinah*. The *Rama* [20] *paskens* that Jewish children should not nurse from a non-Jew. The *Vilna Gaon* [21] in the name of the *Rashba* explains that the source for the *Rama* is Moshe Rabbeinu as was stated in Rashi that eventually he would speak with the *Shechina*. Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky asks, how can Moshe be the source for this *halacha*, he was certainly unique in his ability to speak with G-d, how can this be the standard for all Jewish children? Rav Kaminetsky answers that we learn from this *halacha* that we need to view every Jewish child as having the potential to speak with the *Shechinah*.

In order to maximize our children's potential we need to make their educational experience as pure and pristine as possible and always believe in their ability to achieve greatness.

[1] Siman 677:2

[2] Shabbos 9b in the pages of the RIF

[3] Siman 674:3

[4] See Maseches Sukkah 42a and Chagiga 4a. See also *Mishna Berurah Siman 343:3* who explains that the age of *chinuch* is dependent on the understanding of each individual child and therefore in subjective not objective.

[5] Shabbos 21b S.V. Mitzvas Chanukah

[6] *Biur Halacha* S.V. U'ldidan

[7] Ibid S.K. 14

[8] Shabbos 21b as well as the Bach and Pri Chadash (Siman 670) and Chacham Tzvi (Siman 67) see also Emek Hasheila (Sheilta 26:17)

[9] Mikraei Kodesh Chanukah Siman 15

[10] This of course disagrees with the Mishna Berura who said that even practically we don't need to have our children light candles with hidur.

[11] 2b

[12] Shabbos 21b s.v Mai Chanukah

[13] Pesachim 77a, Toras Kohanim (Vayikra 24:2), Rambam (Hilchos Tamidin U'mosifin 3:10)

[14] Rav Yonasan Sacks Shli"ta in Y'mei Chanukah Siman 7 page 114, adds that according to the Pnei Yehoshua it makes sense why there is a concept of Mehadrin min Mehadrin by Chanukah only as opposed to other mitzvos, because the Rabbis did not rely on the base requirement on the performance of the original mitzvah, they went above and beyond to have the mitzvah be done on a more pristine and purer level.

[15] Gilyonei Hashas Shabbos 21a

[16] Chovas Hachildim p. 8

[17] 22:6

[18] On Tehillim there

[19] Shemos 2:7

[20] Yoreh Deah Siman 81:7

[21] Ibid

## The Importance of Hallel

Shua Pariser ('20)

The *Shulchan Aruch* in *Siman* 670:2 says that there is no *chiyuv* of *seudah* on *Chanukah*, because it's not a time of *mishteh v'simcha*. The *Mishnah Berura* there explains that there is no *din* of *mishteh v'simcha* but there is *hallel v'hoda'ah*. He goes on to explain that on *Purim* we were saved physically, whereas by *Chanukah* we were saved spiritually.

There's a *gemara* in *Maseches Megillah* (14a) that asks, why don't we say *Hallel* on *Purim*? The *gemara* gives three answers: The *nes* didn't happen in *Eretz Yisrael*, reading the *megillah* is *Hallel*, or it wasn't a full *geulah* because we were still servants of *Achash-verosh*. How does the *Mishnah Berurah* explain the second answer?

Of course, we can simply answer that the *Mishnah Berurah* held like the third answer and we would have no issue. However, it is possible to suggest that he can hold like the second answer.

When we look at the *megillah*, it's a story that to the naked eye just seems like happenstance, one thing happened after the other with a bunch of coincidences. Of course, we know that there was much *hashgachah*, but if one looks at it from an outsider's perspective, we can say that it seems coincidental. Also, the *megillah* itself is a piece of cow that has ink on it. If *megillah* is the *Hallel* on *Purim*, it is a spiritual thing that is very much hidden in the physical.

Additionally, Rav Meilech Biederman says that when someone makes a *Birchas Hanehenin* properly, it's a form of *Hallel*. On *Purim* there's a *chiyuv* of *seudah*. This *seudah* enables us to have the *Hallel* from the *Birchas Hanehenin*. Again, we are taking the physical and infusing it with spirituality.

So we answered our question for *Purim*, but what about *Chanukah*? Why do we say *Hallel* on *Chanukah*? What is the role of *shirah* in our lives?

We say every day "*am zu kanisa*" - You acquired this nation. When do we see that Hashem performed a *ma'aseh kinyan kivyachol*? Did Hashem make a *meshichah* or *hagbah*? There's a *gemara* in *Maseches Kiddushin* (22) that says, how is a master *koneh* his slave? Not by picking his slave up, but rather by the slave picking up his master. In *Shiras Hayam* we say "*Elokei avi va'aromemen-*

*hu*,” meaning that I will pick up Hashem *kivyachol*. Literally, *va’aromemenhu* means to exalt someone. We exalt others by praising them and making them seem higher in our own eyes and in the eyes of those around us. In fact, the word *va’aromemenhu* comes from the same *shoresh* as the word *liharim*, meaning to lift. So, it is like we are picking up Hashem. Through *shirah*, we are *makneh* ourselves to Hashem.

On *Chanukah*, the time when we are *mechazek* in our *emunah* and all other areas of *avodas Hashem*, we remind ourselves of this by singing *Hallel* for 8 days and repeating “*Ani avdecha ben amasecha*.” A *Freilichen Chanukah*!



## A Great Miracle

Ezra Halpert ('23)

Yay! The oil lasted for 8 days! Chanukah! Every year we celebrate the holiday of Chanukah and its miracle but was it really so miraculous? What was so special about the miracle of Chanukah that it gets its own holiday each year? The Gemara in *Shabbos* (22b) tells us that the *ner ma'aravi* in the *Beis Hamikdash* was filled with enough oil to last only for the night, yet every day it lasted for 24 hours, until the next night. This fire was “*aidus*” to the *shechinah*, Hashem’s presence, that rests with the Jews. Why was the miracle of Chanukah so special compared to this “common-place” miracle? This miracle of oil happened every day in the *Beis Hamikdash* for tens of years, and the Chanukah miracle was only for 8 days? Additionally, the Gemara in *Ta'anis* (25a) tells a story about Rebbi Chaninah ben Dosa and his daughter. On *Erev Shabbos*, R' Chaninah ben Dosa saw that his daughter was sad and he asked her what was wrong. She said that she accidentally lit vinegar instead of oil for *Shabbos* candles, which obviously wouldn't really work, so she was sad she didn't light *Shabbos* candles. R' Chaninah responded if Hashem made it so that oil can light, so too vinegar can light. The candles were lit and lasted for all of *Shabbos* and were even used for *havdalah*. Once again, what is so special about Chanukah compared to this story? It was not even oil that was lit but vinegar! If we don't celebrate this miracle why would we celebrate the miracle of Chanukah?

The *Succas David* (*Succas David Mikrai Kodesh* 6:1,2) makes a distinction between these miracles to help solve our problem. While at first glance Chanukah may seem like a “small” and “regular” miracle, really it was so much more. The Gemara in *Yoma* (39a) quotes a *braisia* that states different miracles that happened during the generation that Shimon Hatzadik was *Kohen Gadol*. One example is that the *ner ma'aravi* was able to last for extra time and was used to light the *menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. When Shimon Hatzadik was *Kohen Gadol* the *ner ma'aravi* would always last extra and be used to light the *menorah*, but afterward, it would only last extra sometimes. This miracle happened for a great *tzadik*, as the name indicates, and not for anyone. Chanuka on the other

hand happened for all of the Jews, not a single great *tzadik*. The Chanukah miracle was specifically to show the truth of Judaism as opposed to Hellenism which had spread within the Jewish community. This led to the desecration of the *Beis Hamikdash*, but the miracle of Chanukah inspired the Jews to do *teshuvah*. Another distinction that can be made was who each miracle was performed in front of. In the *Beis Hamikdash*, only the *kohanim* were able to see the miracle whereas by Chanukah it was known by all. On Chanukah the *kohanim* had to send for more oil, so everyone knew when the oil lasted for 8 days it was a miracle. Finally, by Chanukah, the actual oil lasted longer whereas by the *ner ma'aravi* it was only used to light the *menorah*. The oil itself did not miraculously last longer, which is what happened by the miracle of Chanukah. All of these points can also be used to explain the story of R' Chaninah ben Dosa. One, it was for a *tzadik*. Two, it was not an open miracle for all to see that led to *teshuvah*, but rather a private miracle. Three, the miracle was that vinegar was able to light on fire, but relative to oil there was enough vinegar to last the amount of time that it lasted. This distinction can lead us to better understand what we are celebrating on Chanukah. It is not just that the oil lasted for 8 days but how it happened and what it showed. The *Maccabim* were able to with the war and remove the Hellenist culture from their midst. The Succas David brings one more answer (ibid: 6:4) that can show another aspect of Chanukah. This answer lies within the answer to the famous question of why 8 days, not 7. The question puts forward that really Chanukah should only be 7 days long since there was enough oil to last one day, so the miracle was only 7 days. The Succas David answers that part of the miracle of Chanukah that we celebrate was even finding the one jug of *tahor* (pure) oil. This answers both questions. We celebrate 8 days since finding the oil itself was a miracle so it deserves a day, and the miracle was not only the oil lasting like the other oil miracles but finding the oil itself. Ultimately, the miracle of Chanukah signifies the removal of Hellenist culture from the Jews, and the miracle of finding and using the oil for 8 days.

## How Spiritual is Chanukah Anyway?

Elisha Price ('23)

We all know the famous *vort* which is oftentimes said in the name of the *Bach* - the difference between *Chanukah* and *Purim* is that on *Purim* the danger was physical, whereas on *Chanukah* the danger was spiritual, and the *mitzvos* follow thereupon (on *Purim* we have very physically oriented *mitzvos* - the *seudah*, *mishlo'ach manos*, etc.; on *Chanukah* we have spiritually oriented *mitzvos* - the *menorah*). While this is true, it doesn't fully encapsulate the nature of the *Chanukah* story. Harav Aharon Lichtenstein ZT"l, in a *sicha* later posted to Yeshivat Har Etzion's Virtual *Beis Medrash* titled "To Distinguish Between the Impure and the Pure," notes partially based on the Rambam's opening *Halacha* of *Hlichos Chanukah* (which mentions that the Jews were both spiritually restrained and physically abused under Greek rule) that the violation of the *Beis Hamikdash* (arguably the worst part of the Greek persecution of the Jews) had two elements to it, as he puts it: "physical destruction and the defilement of the sacred." This, says Rav Lichtenstein, is the duality of the *Chanukah* persecution. On the one hand, we have the physical destruction, on the other the spiritual contamination. It follows, therefore, that the response of the Jews of that era (and the *nissim* that allowed those responses to be effective) would parallel the method of persecution, and so it was: the *Chashmonayim* defeated the Greeks rebuilt the *Beis Hamikdash* and lit the *menorah*. However, it should also follow (although Harav Lichtenstein does not mention this) that *our* practices now should reflect those responses/miracles. And indeed, we not only light our own *menoras*, but many physically oriented *minhagim* have emerged over the centuries (ex. *latkes*, doughnuts). So there is clearly some dual nature to the Greek's persecution as well as to the miracles of *Chanukah*. In fact, there is a *Gemara* in *Meseches Shabbos* (21b) that seems to indicate this as well. The *Gemara*, when discussing the miracle of *Chanukah* seems to imply (although it does not say this explicitly) that there are two separate miracles that occurred on *Chanukah*, the one jug of oil lasting eight days (spiritual) and the *chashmonayim* won the war (physical).

There are many ways to answer for the *Bach*. I will present two of them here.

Harav Lichtenstein, in a different *sicha* later titled “The Duality of *Chanukah*”, commented that these two miracles are complementary - the miracle of the war was public, meant to be seen by all, the lenses through which the nation could see the miracles being performed on their behalf. The oil, on the other hand, was very private. Only the *Kohanim* saw that all the oil had been contaminated save one. Only those present witnessed that one jar burn for eight days. Harav Lichtenstein explains further that this duality is itself as fundamental as each of its pieces. On the one hand, we are meant to focus on the spirituality of the *Beis Hamikdash*, the “olive oil Torah.” On the other hand, we are also supposed to care about the masses and make sure there is ample inspiration available for them as well. In that sense, both of these miracles are *bi’etzem* (in essence) spiritual, and are meant to respond to what the Greeks were attempting to destroy: spiritual Judaism, not physical Jews.

However, one can answer for the *Bach* in another way altogether. Harav Moshe Taragin, in a VBM article titled “The Global Impact of *Chanukah* Upon Humanity,” writes that in order to fully understand the magnitude of *Chanukah* (and, although he doesn’t discuss it explicitly, to answer our question on the *Bach*) we need to understand the history of religion at the time. Greece marked the end of the “gods of stone and wood” era which we know from various *midrashim* across *Chumash Bereishis* had existed at least since the times of the *Avos* and *Imahos*. Now, with the emergence of Greece as the religious and cultural headquarters of the non-Jewish world, religion turned more metaphysical. The gods aren’t wood and stone, argued the Greeks, but they also aren’t fully spiritual. They exist in the physical world, but are separated from us, above us. This, says Harav Taragin, is the significance of the war of *Chanukah*. It wasn’t just a physical fight, it represented the struggles of two cultures: the Jews, who believed in metaphysical monotheism, and the Greeks, who believed in semi-physical polytheism. Thus, the victory of the *Chashmonayim* is very much so a spiritually oriented miracle responding to a spiritual attack from the Greeks.

Thus, even though there are events that took place during the larger context of *Chanukah*, all of the challenges and all of the miracles were *bi'etzem* spiritual.

## The Fire of Torah

Dov Hochman ('23)

What do you do with a *menorah*? What does a *menorah* do? What do you do with a *menorah*? We all wish that we knew. These are the questions that the aliens of Planet Matzah Ball ask in song form after a *menorah* crash into their home. We know that we light the *menorah* to commemorate the miracles of *Chanukah* while performing the *mitzvah* of *pirsumei nisah* but the question is how does the *menorah* achieve that?

After the Maccabees had beaten the Greeks in a war, they found just one jug of pure olive oil to light the *menorah* with. They truly thought that after the Greeks destroyed everything in the *Beis Hamikdash* there was nothing pure left in it. That was a miracle in and of itself but on top of that the one jug which they had found managed to last for eight days when it was not even supposed to last for one. This is the reason for our *menorahs* to have eight branches on it without including the *shamash*. The fires we light on our windowsills for everyone to see represent the fires that they lit over two thousand years ago in the *Beis Hamikdash* to give everyone just a little bit of light and hope in those dark times during the war with Antiochus.

Yirmiyahu 23:29 describing *Torah* states “for my words are like fire - the word of Hashem”. Fire and *Torah* are comparable because they both bring hope in dark times, and you can get light from it consistently if you know how to use it. The Jewish people during the time that the Greeks were waging war on them were having their religious identity stripped away from them and they went behind the backs of the evil Greeks and still learned *Torah* when they had the chance. A fire can be a very dangerous thing if one does not know how to properly use it but if prepared properly it can light up the night. The *Torah* might also be harder for some people to understand than for others but if you carefully work on it then it will be the greatest thing that you can come across in life. The Chafetz Chaim in his youth travelled to Horodna to see Rav Nachum of Horodna and he saw that there was a fire in the *Beis Hamedrash* that he wanted to put out and he then realized it was the fire of the *Torah* that Rav Nachum was learning.

The goal of a *Ben Torah* is to maintain a strong mesorah from the previous generation and pass it down to the next generation. This is an impossible task if one does not work on his own learning before trying to teach others. Every day in our *tefillos* in the *bracha* of *Ahava Raba* we say the words *lilmod u'lilamed* which means to learn and to teach and the reason learning comes before teaching is because you need something to base your teaching off. This is just like a fire which cannot be spread to others for a source of light if it is not lit first. The candles on the *menorah* are lit from 1 to 8 because Beis Hillel said they should be lit like that because things should grow in holiness to give them steady bases which is just like the Torah which we work on before having learned enough to spread out to others.

So to answer the questions of the aliens of Planet Matzah Ball no, the *menorah* is not a holder for hot dogs rather it is a holder for candles which are lit and displayed by our windows to remind the world about the miracle of *Chanukah* which showed the Jewish people in that time that something so small can mean so much if it is treated properly. We light the *menorah* starting with a small number of candles and gradually increase the fire from them each night of the holiday to bring out something large from something that started small. This *Chanukah* we should all use the light of the *menorah* to surround the world with the fire of *Torah*.

## Shrinkage *Chanukah* and Jewish Education

Rabbi Yehuda Halpert ('93)

In light of a surge in shoplifting across the country [1] as well as a spate of several highly publicized, highend, shoplifting incidents in San Francisco and New York City [2], there has been much discussion and debate about shoplifting. While shoplifting is an important moral and ethical societal issue, the reality is that the economic loss from shoplifting pales in comparison to the annual economic loss associated with cash and inventory shrinkage ("Shrinkage"). Shrinkage is the technical term for inventory and cash which is stolen from the cash register, pilfered from the warehouse or falls off the back of the truck. Shrinkage, when taken as a percentage of total retail sales in 2021, accounted for \$94.5 billion in losses up from \$90.8 billion in 2020. [3]

These statistics are surprising in the modern era. In an age where the Mars rover sends live video feed to our phones, you would think we could engineer a way to prevent cashiers from stealing out of the cash register? However, even today, the solution which is suggested by experts in the industry to be most effective, is the solution that Yosef used in Egypt. The manager must be present in the store, know the employees and remain alert. Technology, artificial intelligence, cameras, each of these tools can supplement the human aspect, but ultimately management needs to be present and aware.

This need to be present and aware explains an otherwise surprising formulation in our *parsha*. A famine rages in the land and the people living in the region realize that "*yesh shever b'mitzrayim*" (there is sustenance in Egypt).[4] Accordingly, Yosef's brothers join the hordes of people headed to Egypt, desperate for food, and seeking relief from the food shortage. As the brothers arrive in Egypt we are told, "*ve'yosef hu hashalit al Haaretz, hu **hamshbir** lechol am ha'aretz*" (Yosef is the ruler over the land, he is the **mashbir** to all the people of the land). [5]

What is a *mashbir*? In Israel, "The Mashbir" is a department store chain as *mashbir*, in modern Hebrew, means a merchant, a



salesman or a retailer. This explanation stems from *Targum Onkelos* on our *pasuk* who translates *mashbir* as *mizaben* (seller). [6]

At first glance this explanation seems quite surprising, Yosef the *shalit*, the ruler of Egypt, also functions as the *mashbir*, the counter clerk?

The *Seforno* explains that notwithstanding Yosef's position, no grain was sold in Egypt without Yosef's signature or seal, "although [Yosef] was the highest ranking official, he personally supervised the selling, not trusting any of his underlings to do this honestly as there was a great deal of money involved and Yosef was responsible to Pharaoh." [7] Translated into modern business terminology, if you want to prevent Shrinkage the manager must be present in the store.

However, many *rishonim*, most explicitly the Ramban, argue that it is not possible that Yosef a high-ranking official took an active role in the sales process. In fact, it is exactly for this reason that *chazal* explain that Yosef ordered that all the storehouses, except one, remain closed. Only in this way could Yosef be sure that he would see his brothers upon their arrival at the one open storehouse. [8]

The Radak is also incredulous that *mashbir* could mean direct sales, and explains that the *mashbir* is the title for the individual who is responsible to appoint others who implement the actual sales. According to the Radak, even this level of middle management would normally be too menial for a high ranking official, but Yosef set up the sales system in this fashion to ensure that he would have the opportunity to see the brothers if they were amongst those who descended to Egypt to purchase produce. [9]

While the Radak and the Ramban raise legitimate and compelling challenges to the *Seforno's* explanation, there is a certain elegance and simplicity to the *Sforno's pshat*; if you want something done correctly, efficiently and most important accurately you need to be actively involved. You must be present in the room or on the factory floor.

The *Seforno's* formulation of the significance of being present, which explains *pshat* in the word *mashbir*, perhaps, is also the underlying rationale of a *halachik* requirement in *hilchos hadlakas neros Chanukah*. The *Aruch Hashulchan* states, if a man previously lit *Chanukah* candles for himself he is still permitted to make the *beracha* for the benefit of someone else (e.g., his wife) who was unable to make the *beracha* so long as **she stands next to him** and has in mind to fulfill her obligation via her husband's recitation of the *beracha*. [10]

What is the rationale for requiring that the wife stand alongside the husband as he lights and recites the *beracha* on her behalf? Some suggest that *ner Chanukah* is more accurately defined as a *mitzvah shebegufo* (a commandment linked to the individual), akin to donning *tefillin*. As such, in order for a *shaliach* (an emissary) to fulfil a *mitzvah* of this nature on your behalf, you must make your physical presence felt at the time of its performance. [11]

Others argue that *ner Chanukah* is clearly not a *mitzvah shebegufo* but nevertheless, in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* you need to be present at the moment of its *kiyum* (its fulfillment). You need to fully experience the lighting and you also need others to see you experience the lighting. Seemingly, your absence is a *chisaron* (a defect) in the lighting and in order to fulfil this *mitzvah* via a *shaliach* you must be present and actively involved. [12]

The need for an active presence to prevent Shrinkage in the context of retail sales is understandable. But, in the context of *ner Chanukah*, why is it necessary to be physically present? What is unique about the *mitzvah* of *ner Chanukah* which requires an extra *kiyum* of *vayamdu etzlo* (you must stand next to the one lighting)?

*Chanukah* is a holiday which celebrates the ability of *bnai yisrael* to pass on the *mesorah* (tradition) despite the influence of alien philosophies and the physical threats of foreign enemies.

Within this context, in *Megillas HaMakabim*, the tragic story of Channah and her seven sons is related. [13] Channah's seven children were seized and they were commanded to prove their obedi-

ence to the king by eating *treif*. Each of the children refused to partake and were executed after being subjected to horrific tortures. In the midst of this horrific saga, detailed conversations between Channah and her children are retold. Words of Torah, faith and belief. At this crucial moment Channah is educating, communicating and actively transmitting her religious beliefs and her dedication to tradition. [14] This symbol of tradition and transmission is a fundamental part of the story of *Chanukah* and arguably a key component of the mitzvah of *ner Chanukah* as well.

Yosef's need to be present in Egypt to ensure that the transfer of grain was undertaken efficiently, Channah's conversations with her children and finally the need for every individual to be present while the *Chanukah* candles are lit on their behalf all can be attributed to this same source. Important tasks, such as the transmission of *mesorah* and its values, can only be accomplished with the active and hands on participation of all the individual's involved and requiring one's presence at the time of lighting *Chanukah* candles stands for this ideal. The need for teachers, parents and grandparents to be present in the provision of Jewish education is crucial. We cannot afford any Shrinkage when it comes to the transmission of the *Mesorah*.

[1] Kavilanz, Parija. "Shoplifting is surging across America with dangerous and costly consequences."

CNN Business, 7 January 7, 2022, [www.cnn.com/2022/01/07/business/retail-theft-shoplifting-robbery/index.html](http://www.cnn.com/2022/01/07/business/retail-theft-shoplifting-robbery/index.html)

[2] Marcius, Chelsia Rose. "Shoplifting Ring Swept Stores for Luxury Goods." The New York Times, 26 May 2022, [www.nytimes.com/2022/05/26/nyregion/nyc-shoplifting-ring.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2022/05/26/nyregion/nyc-shoplifting-ring.html)

[3] 2022 National Retail Security Survey, [www.nrf.com/research/national-retail-security-survey-2022](http://www.nrf.com/research/national-retail-security-survey-2022)

[4]

בראשית מב: א " וַיֵּרָא יַעֲקֹב כִּי יֵשׁ-שָׁבַר בְּמַצָּרַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר יַעֲקֹב לְבָנָיו לָמָּה תִּתְּרֹאוּ "

[5]

בראשית מב: ו " וַיֹּסֶף הוּא שְׁלֵיט עַל-הָאָרֶץ הוּא הַמְּשָׁבִיר לְכָל-עַם הָאָרֶץ וַיָּבֵאוּ אֹחֵי יוֹסֵף וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ לוֹ אַפָּיִם אֲרָצָה "

[6]

תרגום אונקלוס, בראשית מב: ו " וַיֹּסֶף הוּא שְׁלֵיט עַל אֲרָצָא הוּא מְזַבֵּין עֲבוּרָא לְכָל עַמָּא דְּאֲרָצָא וְאֵתוּ אֹחֵי יוֹסֵף וְסָגִידוּ לֵיהּ עַל אִפְּיָהוֹן עַל אֲרָצָא "

[7]

ספורנו, בראשית מב: ו

[8]

רמב"ן, בראשית מב: ו

[9]

רד"ק, בראשית מב: ו

[10]

ערוך השולחן אורח חיים סימן תרעה: ה "ומי שכבר הדליק מ"מ יכול לברך בשביל אחר או בשביל אשה כשהם אינם יכולין להדליק ולברך, ויעמדו אצלו ויכוין להוציאם כדין כל ברכת המצות שאף מי שיצא מוציא לאחרים".

[11]

הגהות מנהגים לר"א טירנא, מנהגי חנוכה, אות י"ח).

[12]

דרשות מהר"ח או"ז סי' פ' ויצא. ועיין באריכות בצפה הצפית, ערוך השולחן אורח חיים סימן תרעה: ה ציון 48.

[13] II Maccabees , Chapter 7.

[14] For an analysis of the historic time period and context of the martyrdom story which is popularly known as "Channah and her

Seven Sons” see also Simkovich, M. Z. *Discovering Second Temple Literature: The Scriptures and Stories That Shaped Early Judaism*. United States: Jewish Publication Society (2018).

## **Bringing Light Into the Darkness**

Yoel Goldstein ('23)

There is a famous *machlokes* in *Maseches Shabbos* regarding the light of *Chanukah*: The gemara asks if we start with eight candles and go backwards or if we increase every night. The gemara answers that because "*ma'alim bakodesh vein moredin*" - we go up in holiness and not down, we go up in *kedusha* every night, so we start with one and every night we add a candle to the *kedusha* of the *yom tov*.

The *yom tov* of *Chanukah* is a holiday that brings the light into darkness. We have seen this from the times of the *Chashmonaim* when the oil returned the light to the *Beis Hamikdash* to now where the light is used to illuminate the cold, dark winter.

The story of Rabbi Shmelke. During *Kislev* of 1944, the situation seemed hopeless. The Rabbi's job, as he saw it, "was to keep up the spirits of the Jews who were imprisoned in the Bergen Belsen concentration camp." Since the beginning of the month the Rabbi had been busy preparing for the holiday. He asked the same question to everyone he met: "Can you get us a little oil? Do you know someone who works in the kitchen?" The answer was always the same: "No."

He had to find some oil. Even if he found only enough oil to kindle the first *Chanukah* light for a few seconds that would be enough. The day before *Chanukah*, Rabbi Shmelke was at work – his 'other' job in the camp was to remove dead bodies from the barracks – when he received an order to go to the last barrack, where some people had died during the previous night. While he walked across a field, his foot got caught in a small hole in the frozen earth and he almost fell. He removed his foot from the hole and noticed that there was something buried inside. After making sure that no guards were watching him, he knelt down to see what it was. He pulled out a small jar and a carefully wrapped package from the ground. Inside the jar was some congealed liquid. Oil for *Chanukah*! He undid the paper wrapping. Inside were eight little cups and eight thin strands of cotton. It was obvious that some Jewish prisoner had buried this little *menorah* and the oil. But who was he? And where was he? Had he been transported to another camp? Had

he died?

Rabbi Shmelke hoped that the Jew who had buried these things was still alive. When the prisoners returned to their barracks after the evening roll call they saw, to their amazement, a little *menorah* standing on one of the bunks. Rabbi Shmelke recited the blessings and then kindled the light. The group watched in silence while the tiny flame fought its eternal battle against the surrounding darkness. Some smiled, while others cried. Rabbi Shmelke was one of the fortunate few who survived the war. Several years later he made a trip to the United States, and while he was there he paid a visit to an acquaintance from the 'old country' – Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum, the *Satmar Rebbe*. While they reminisced, the *Satmar Rebbe* mentioned that he had also been a prisoner in Bergen Belsen.

"I was rescued on the 21st of *Kislev*, four days before *Chanukah*," said the *Satmar Rebbe*. Before I found out about the rescue plan, I made provisions for the holiday. I bribed several camp officials and put together a package of oil, cups, and wicks, which I then buried in a field. I always felt badly that my little *menorah* was never put to use.

Rabbi Shmelke smiled. "Your *menorah* was used. It dispelled the darkness for hundreds of Jews and helped at least one of them survive the war."

This story is a great example of finding and bringing light into the darkness. Rabbi Shmelke could have given up and just not have lit the *menorah*. But he didn't give up hope and Hashem was on his side in helping him fulfill the *mitzvah*.

This is a lesson that I feel can benefit all of us. One day we might encounter an issue where we might refrain from doing a *mitzvah* or maybe *chas vesholom* be influenced to do an *aveirah*. But I believe we can all push through and try our hardest to find that light in the darkness and do what is best for ourselves in the way of Hashem.

## A Deeper Look Into *Beis Shammai's Reasoning*

Ben Goldfeder ('26)

The *gemara* (*Shabbos* 21b) explains how to fulfill the *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah* on *Chanukah*. First, it describes how the minimum requirement per household is one candle every night. Then, it tells us of the second level: lighting one candle for each person in your household every night. Finally, we are told of the best level. *Beis Shammai* says that this means to light 8 on the first night and go down one candle each night. *Beis Hillel* says you should light one candle the first night and add a candle each night. The *gemara* then goes on to list the reasoning behind *Beis Shammai* and *Beis Hillel's* opinions. There are two *amora'im* who argue on what each reason was:

אמר עולא: פליגי בה תרי אמוּרָאי בְּמַעְרְבָא, רבי יוסי בר אבין ורבי יוסי בר זבידא. חד אמר טעמא דבית שמאי כְּנֶגֶד יָמִים הַנִּכְנָסִין, וְטַעְמָא דְּבֵית הַלֵּל כְּנֶגֶד יָמִים הַיוֹצֵאִין. וְחַד אָמַר טַעְמָא דְּבֵית שְׁמַאי כְּנֶגֶד פְּרִי הַחֵט, וְטַעְמָא דְּבֵית הַלֵּל דְּמַעְלִין בְּקֹדֶשׁ וְאֵין מוֹרִידִין.

“R’ Yosef bar Avin and R’ Yossi bar Tzvida argued about this. One said that the reasoning for *Beis Shammai* is that the *menorah* should represent the coming days (how many days are left) and that the reasoning of *Beis Hillel* is that the *menorah* should represent how many days have passed (going out). The other *amora* says that *Beis Shammai's* reasoning is corresponding to the cows used for *Korbanos* on *Sukkos* (which go down from 13 to 7) and the reasoning for *Beis Hillel* is because we go up in *kedushah* and not down.”

### **The Ben Yehoyada**

יש להקשות: בשלמא בית הלל מסתבר טעמיהו אבל בית שמאי מאי טעמא בזה? ונראה לי בס"ד דכתבו הפוסקים דבשמן היה שיעור לילה אחת והניחוהו כולו ושרתה בו ברכה, שהיה דולק בכל לילה חלק אחד משמונה שהיה בתחילה בלבד, נמצא לילה ראשונה שרתה הברכה על ח' חלקים, ובשניה שכבר נדלק חלק אחד מהם שרתה על ז' חלקים, וכן בשלישית על ששה וכעל זה הדרך, ולכן סבירא ליה לבית שמאי פוחת והולך שידליק לפי חלקים שנשארו בנר בשעת הנס.



The *Ben Yehoyada* asks on the first *amora's* explanation of *Beis Shammai*: why would *Beis Shammai* think to hold this way? He quotes the *poskim* who answer this question by further understanding the *neis* of *Chanukah*. When the *Chashmonaim* went to light the *menorah*, there was only enough oil to last for one night. However, a miracle happened and only  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the oil was used up each night. After the first night,  $\frac{7}{8}$  of the oil *remained*, which is why, according to *Beis Shammai*, we start at 8 and count down to 1. Since on the first night of the *neis* there were 8 parts of oil left, we light 8 candles on the first night. On the second night, when only 7 parts of oil remained, we light 7 candles. On the third night, 6 parts were left, so we light 6 candles, and so on.

This answer of the *Ben Yehoyada* can also be used to answer the famous *kasha* asked by the *Beis Yosef*. The *Beis Yosef* asks: the oil in the jug was enough to naturally last for one day, so the *neis* was only the extra seven days that it burned. Why do we celebrate eight days of *Chanukah* if the *neis* was only for seven? According to the *Ben Yehoyada's* explanation of *Beis Shammai*, if  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the oil was burned each night then even on the first night it should only have lasted  $\frac{1}{8}$  of the night! Since it lasted the *entire night* for eight nights, we observe eight days of *Chanukah*. (This answer is also quoted in *Ner L'Meah* which lists 100 answers to the *kasha* of the *Beis Yosef*).

## **When Purim Falls on Chanukah**

Rabbi Moshe Rosenberg ('78)

The well-known *piyyut* of *Ma'oz Tzur* travels through Jewish history to recount waystations of salvation for the Jewish people. After its general opening stanza, the poem visits the redemption from Egyptian bondage, Babylonian exile, Haman's decree, and Greek domination, ending with a plea for the ultimate reprieve from exile with the advent of the Messiah. This piece will examine only the paragraph dealing with the *Purim* story, in order to show the artistry of the Paytan, and uncover the scriptural and Midrashic allusions ingeniously embedded in it. Ultimately, we will see how the poet, whose identity is unknown, achieves both message and rhyme with barely a word that isn't adapted from an earlier source.

כרות קומת ברוש בקש אגגי בן המדתא

*The Aggagite, son of Hamedata sought to cut down the height of the cypress tree.*

"The Aggagite" is, of course, Haman, son of Hamedata, who is often referred to in Megillat Esther as *ha-Aggagi*. By intentionally omitting the name of Haman, the paytan emphasizes that this is more than a rivalry of two individuals; it is a recurring battle between the Jewish people and Amalek, whose king was Agag.

Haman sought - בקש - to cut down Mordechai. The same verb is used when Haman first hatches his plot in Esther 3:6 - ויבקש המן להשמיד את כל היהודים.

Mordechai is called "the cypress tree" in keeping with the *midrash* cited in *Megillah* 10b:

- "יעלה ברוש" — זה מרדכי שנקרא ראש לכל הבשמים, שנאמר: "ואתה קח לבבשמים ראש מרדרור", ומתרגמין: "מרדכי".

This midrash plays on the similarity in sound between "*brosh* -" cypress and "*rosh* -" head, labeling Mordechai as chief or first among the spices of the anointing oil, based on the *targum* on the words *mor deror* - *mor d'khei*, (pure myrh which sounds like Mordechai). (It also associates Mordechai with the sense of smell, even as Esther - Hadassah - is likewise related to aroma. The Bnei Yissaschar develops this theme, but it is beyond the scope of this arti-

cle.)

וְנִקְיָתָהּ לוֹ לַפֶּחַ וּלְמוֹקֶשׁ וְנֶאֱחָזְתָּהּ

*But it became a snare and an obstacle for him, and his arrogance was put to rest.*

This sentence captures the reversal that was at the heart of the miracle of *Purim*. Haman's own plans were turned against him and became the instrument of his own downfall. פֶּחַ and מוקש appear together in *Tanakh* on several occasions (e.g., Ps. 91:3 כִּי הוּא יִצִּילְךָ מִפֶּחַ וְיִשְׁבֹּת הָעֵץ מִמֶּחְרָת 5:12 Joshua). Haman's overweening arrogance - the inability to tolerate even one person who will not kneel to him - is his defining characteristic, but the reversal of his plans burst the bubble of his hubris. It should be noted that the unusual use of the verb ש-ב-ת is also a play on words based on Joshua 5:12 וְיִשְׁבֹּת הָעֵץ מִמֶּחְרָת. The original meaning refers to the cessation of the manna when the Israelites began eating of the crops of Canaan. The new meaning is the subduing not of Ha-man - the manna - but of Haman the man. Punning on Haman's name also takes place in the *Shabbos Zemer*, שִׁמְרוּ שְׁבִתוֹתֵי in the phrase אֶת הַמָּנָה לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת דְּבַר אֶסְתֵּר.

רָאשׁ וְיָמִינִי נִשְׂאֵת וְאוֹיֵב שְׁמוֹ מְחִיתָ

*You lifted up the head of the descendent of Benjamin and erased the name of the enemy.*

Mordechai is, of course, the Benjaminite who receives a promotion. The language נִשְׂאֵת is meant to echo the language of Haman's promotion in 3:1 גָּדַל הַמֶּלֶךְ אֶחָשׁוּרוּשׁ אֶת הָמָן בֶּן הַמְּדֵתָא הָאֲגָגִי וַיִּנְשְׂאֵהוּ. It is used together with רָאשׁ to describe the re-elevation of the *Sar HaMashkim* to his position as well. This is a second time that Mordechai is connected to the concept of *Rosh*.

Haman is the אוֹיֵב whose name is erased. When Esther reveals him for what he is, she calls him צָר וְאוֹיֵב (*Esther* 7:6). And G-d promises כִּי מַחָה אֶמְחֶה אֶת זֵכֶר עַמְלֵק that He will erase the name of Amalek.

רַב בָּנָיו וְקִנְיָנָיו עַל הָעֵץ תִּלְיָתָהּ

*His many sons and possessions you hanged on the gallows.*

Haman's fate is expressed in the language of *Esther* 5:11 -

וַיִּסְפָּר לָהֶם הַמֶּן אֶת־כְּבוֹד עֲשָׂיו וְרַב בָּנָיו. Though Megillas Esther records וַיִּאמֶר הַמֶּלֶךְ תְּלוּהוּ עָלָיו, that the hanging was as a result of the command of Ahaseurosh, and the *Al Hanisim* prayer attributes it an unknown “they-” וַתִּלּוּ אוֹתוֹ וְאֵת בָּנָיו עַל הָעֵץ, the piyyut makes it clear that it was G-d himself, Sovereign of the universe, who directed the punishment.

## The Everlasting Eight Days of Chanukah

David Tanner ('18)

In discussing the story of *Chanukah*, the *beraisa* in *Megillas Ta'anis* asks the following question:

ומה ראו לעשות חנוכה שמונה ימים, והלא חנוכה שעשה משה במדבר לא עשה אלא שבעה ימים, שנאמר (ויקרא ח, לג): "ומִקְרַח אֶהְיֶה מוֹעֵד לֹא תֵצֵאוּ שָׁבָעַת יָמִים וְגו'"; ואומר: (במדבר ז, יב): "וַיְהִי הַמִּקְרִיב בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן אֶת קָרְבָּנוֹ וְגו'", ובשביעי הקריב אפרים. וכן מצינו בחנוכה שעשה שלמה, שלא עשה אלא שבעת ימים, שנאמר: (דה"ב ז, ט): "כִּי תִגַּפְתָּ הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עֲשׂוֹ שְׁבָעַת יָמִים, וְהִתְחַג שְׁבָעַת יָמִים". מה ראו לעשות חנוכה זו שמונה ימים? אלא – בימי מלכות יוון נכנסו בני חשמונאי להיכל, ובנו את המזבח, ושדוהו בשיד ותקנו בו כלי שרת והיו מתעסקין בו שמונה ימים.

*The beraisa asks, why did the Chashmonayim make Chanukah eight days long? After all, the inauguration of the Mishkan ("chanukas Moshe") and that of the Beis Hamikdash ("chanukas Shlomo") were each only seven days long, as the pesukim indicate! The answer is, when the Chashmonayim took back the Beis Hamikdash from the Greeks and entered it, they rebuilt the mizbeiyach, plastered it, created klei shareis and were involved in preparing the Mikdash for eight days.*

This passage of *Megillas Ta'anis* is puzzling. (We will not address the question of how this passage fits with the famous question of the *Beis Yosef* [O.C. 670] as to why *Chanukah* is eight days; for discussion, see *Sefer Devarim Achadim* by the Chida, *Derush* 32 for *Shabbos Chanukah*.) The *beraisa* seems to compare *Chanukah* with the *chanukas hamishkan* and *chanukas hamikdash*, asking why the former is eight days while the latter were each seven days. This is already strange, because *Chanukah* is an established, yearly *Yom Tov*; the dedication of the *Mishkan* and *Beis Hamikdash* were one-time, historical events. Furthermore, the answer seems rather anticlimactic. After quoting *pesukim* to establish that the two historical dedications were each seven days long, the *beraisa's* answer as to why the *Chanukah* of the *Chashmonayim* was established for eight days is simply "because that's how long it took." It took eight days to clean up and fix the mess the *Yevanim* had made in the *Beis Hamikdash*, and for that reason we celebrate *Chanukah* for eight days. At first glimpse, this answer seems less meaningful than we may have been expecting.

Another interesting connection between *Chanukah* and previous dedications of the *Mishkan/Beis Hamikdash* is provided by the midrash (*Pesikta Rabbasi* 6:5). The *midrash* says that the *Mishkan* was completed on the 25th of *Kislev* (which we celebrate as the first day of *Chanukah*); however, it was not inaugurated until the first of *Nissan*. As a result of *Kislev* losing out on having the inauguration of the *Mishkan* occur within it, Hashem made it up to *Kislev* by having the inauguration of the *Chashmonayim* occur on the 25th of *Kislev*. This midrash seems to connect *Chanukah* with the inauguration of the *Mishkan*; the month of *Kislev* had to wait until the *Chanukah* of the *Chashmonayim* to get its turn in hosting an inauguration of the *Mikdash*. What is the significance of the connection between *Chanukah* and the inauguration of the *Mishkan*? Also, why does *Chanukah* begin on the 25th of *Kislev*, if that is when the inauguration of the *Mishkan* was completed? According to this *midrash*, wouldn't it be more appropriate to have the 25th of *Kislev* be the last day of *Chanukah*, directly paralleling the inauguration of the *Mishkan*?

The Ramban in *parshas Beha'aloscha* (*Bamidbar* 8:2) famously explains the midrash (cited by Rashi there) that Aharon *Hakohen* was disheartened at his lack of participation in the inauguration of the *Mishkan* relative to the *Nesi'im*. According to the midrash, Hashem comforted Aharon by saying "Your portion is greater than theirs, for you prepare and light the lights [of the *menorah*]." The Ramban explains that the *midrash* is referring not to the *mitzvah* of lighting the menorah in the *Mishkan*, but to the lighting of the *menorah* performed by the descendants of Aharon, the *Chashmonayim*, after they defeated the *Yevanim* during the time of the second *Beis Hamikdash*. Moreover, though the *avodah* of the *Beis Hamikdash* is not performed during *galus*, "...the lights of the *Chanukah* of the *Chashmonayim*...is in effect even after the *Churban*, during our *galus*." This Ramban highlights the observation we made earlier: unlike the inauguration of the *Mishkan* and *Beis Hamikdash*, the inauguration of the *Chashmonayim* is considered ongoing to this very day, performed each year when we celebrate *Chanukah* with the *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah*. This Ramban also shows another aspect of the connection between the inauguration of the

*Mishkan* and the inauguration of the *Chashmonayim*.

Perhaps a hint to the significance of the connection between the inauguration of the *Mishkan* and *Chanukah* can be found by examining the number of days each one took (seven and eight respectively). The *Peirush Ha'eshel* on *Megillas Ta'anis* points to the *midrash* in *Koheles Rabbah* (11:2), which comments on the *pasuk* there:

תן חלק לשבעה וגם לשמונה כי לא ידע מה יהיה רעה על הארץ:

The literal translation of the *pasuk* is, “Give a portion to seven and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be upon the earth.” The *midrash* presents several different opinions as to what the “seven” and “eight” of the *pasuk* are alluding to. The *Peirush Ha'eshel* notes that the last opinion, that of Rebbi Yehuda, sees the *pasuk* as an allusion to the seven days of the *milu'im* (during which the *Mishkan* was inaugurated), and the eighth day of the *milu'im* which was the first day of the *Mishkan's* regular use. The *Peirush Ha'eshel* suggests that according to this opinion, the eighth day is really an allusion to *Chanukah*.

Another one of the explanations offered by the *midrash*, in the name of Rebbi Eliezer, is that seven is an allusion to *Shabbos* (the seventh day), and eight an allusion to *bris milah* (performed on the eighth day). The *midrash* then ascribes to Eliyahu *Hanavi* the following statement: “*Ribono Shel Olam*, even if Your children have only the merit of these two *mitzvos*, *Shabbos* and *milah*, it is fitting for You to have mercy on them.” If we connect this explanation of the *pasuk* with the explanation given by Rebbi Yehuda, we arrive at the following conclusion: the seven days of the inauguration of the *Mishkan* (and *Beis Hamikdash*) correspond to *Shabbos*, while the eight days of *Chanukah* correspond to *bris milah*.

We know from *Megillas Antiochus* that the *Yevanim* stopped the Jews from observing the *mitzvos* of *Shabbos*, *rosh chodesh*, and *bris milah*. There is a fundamental difference between *Shabbos* on the one hand, and *rosh chodesh* and *bris milah* on the other. The *kedushah* of *Shabbos* does not depend on our actions. In the phrasing of the *Gemara* (*Chullin* 111b), *Shabbos* is “*kevi'a v'kayma*,” established and continuously existing. The seventh day of each week has the *kedushah* of *Shabbos*, regardless of what we do. This is in contrast with *roshei chodoshim* and by extension *yamim tovim*, which

are established by the Jewish people. As we say in the *rosh chodesh* and *yom tov* shemoneh esrei, Hashem is “*mekadeish Yisrael v’roshei chodoshim/hazmanim*” - He gives us the power to create *kedushah* in time. Along similar lines, *bris milah* is a *mitzvah* in which the father of the baby boy takes action to create *kedushah* by giving his son a *bris milah* (see *Midrash Tanchuma Parshas Tazria* 5).

The inauguration made by the *Chashmonayim* differs from earlier ones in Jewish history. It is celebrated every year, for eight days instead of seven, and starts on the day that the inauguration of the *Mishkan* was finished. The *Sfas Emes* (*Chanukah* 7:5) explains that as the last open miracle *Klal Yisrael* has experienced, *Chanukah* is meant to carry us through the long *galus* until we reach the final *ge’ulah*. Perhaps this explains the differences of *Chanukah* when compared to earlier inaugurations of the *Mishkan* and *Beis Hamikdash*. *Chanukah* begins, so to speak, where the inauguration of the *Mishkan* ends, because it takes us from the earlier part of our history, when we would be accompanied by the *Mishkan* and *Beis Hamikdash*, into *galus*, where we lack these modes of serving Hashem. Though the *Chashmonayim* inaugurated the second *Beis Hamikdash*, we treat that inauguration not as a one-time event like previous inaugurations, but as ongoing each year, even in the absence of the *Beis Hamikdash*, as a continued source of rededication to Hashem in the face of strong antipathy and adversity from the surrounding culture. The previous dedications took seven days, corresponding to the established *kedushah* of *Shabbos*; we were able to serve Hashem in the designated location of the *Mishkan* and *Beis Hamikdash*. The *Chanukah* of the *Chashmonayim* takes eight days, corresponding to *bris milah*, in which we must take action to create *kedushah*, which often means rejecting the values and beliefs which surround us.



## Which Candle to Light First: The Vilna Gaon's Opinion

Pinchus Cohen ('24)

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 676:5) says that when lighting the *Chanukah* candles, one should start with the newest candle and proceed to the right. His source is the Maharik, who says that the newest candle represents the added miracle, and the Mordechai, who says that in all *mitzvos* one must go from left to right.

The Gra disagrees with both of these reasons. He argues that the main candle should be the oldest one, not the newest one, because the basic obligation is really to light only one candle; anything more than that is just a *hiddur mitzvah*. As far as going from left to right, the Gra agrees that normally we would do so, but it does not outweigh the importance of starting with the candle closest to the doorway. When lighting on the left side of the doorway, the rightmost candle is the closest, so it should be lit first.

The *Mishnah Berurah* (676:11) says that even those who light indoors next to a window must still start with the oldest candle according to the Gra. Therefore, in order to light from left to right he must place the candles in, starting at the left side of the menorah.

However, the *Likutei Hagra* (commentary on *Maaseh Rav*, 240) quotes the *Divrei Shlomo*, who quotes Rabbi Yosef, who quotes Rabbi Yissachar Ber, who testified that the Gra only started with the oldest candle when lighting next to the doorway, not when lighting in the shul or at a window. The reason is that the Gra's first argument - that the oldest candle is the main one - was only intended to counter the Maharik, who says that one must give preference to a candle far from the doorpost in order to show the additional miracle of each day. Regarding this, the Gra says that on the contrary, the first candle is the main *mitzvah* and so no matter what candle one lights first, he is starting with the main one. Therefore there is no problem with starting with the candle nearest the doorway. However, when lighting indoors, the Gra would agree that one should start on the leftmost, newest candle in order to do the *mitzvah* from left to right.

The lesson for us is that the first one to do a *mitzvah* today is always the main one - it does not matter if he was the one who started that *mitzvah* yesterday. Everybody has a chance to take the lead in doing *mitzvos*, and in life in general. For example, if someone was always the best *talmid* in *shiur* or the first one in *shul*. Others shouldn't feel like there is no hope for them to be the best. Every day is a new day and a new opportunity and you can work hard and become the best that day.

## **Remembering Hashem Through the Menorah**

Moshe Lieberman ('24)

Everyone knows the famous story of the *Maccabim*'s miraculous defeat over the mighty Greeks, which we are constantly reminded of throughout the prayer of *Al Hanisim* over the course of *Chanukah*. However, the main theme of *Chanukah* seems to be commemorating the miracle of the oil as we have a *mitzvah* to light the *Chanukah* candles on the *Menorah*. If we essentially only mention the victory over the Greeks in *Al Hanisim*, and not the miracle of the oil, shouldn't we be commemorating the victory over the Greeks? Which miracle are we really celebrating?

In truth, the main celebration of *Chanukah* *should be our salvation from the Greeks. After all, it is truly incredible, and almost inconceivable how Hashem was able to display his great love for his precious children by guiding the few untrained, barely armed, tzadikim* in battle to fight for the Torah and win. However, the Maharal explains that appointing this miracle to be our prime celebration on *Chanukah* would diminish the role of Hashem in the story. Instead, we would be praising the men who fought in battle for their excellent fighting and strategies to overcome the Greeks. We would completely forget that Hashem was the One (and only One) to orchestrate this miraculous event. With this knowledge, we can now understand why our primary celebration of *Chanukah* is the commemoration of the miracle of the oil. We need to thank Hashem by remembering a miracle which defies the laws of nature; the oil should not have lasted through all 8 days (yet it did). It is impossible to think of anyone else but Hashem concerning the miracle of the oil. Therefore, the Rabanim instituted this miracle of the oil as our primary focus and not the miracle over the Greeks, even though that miracle was seemingly greater. Once we establish that Hashem is behind everything, we can then follow through with celebrating the main miracle of the Maccabim. We can learn a valuable lesson from this. That is, that we should never become too haughty or give too much praise to others, because we all know deep inside that it all comes from up above. Sometimes, we just

must be reminded that Hashem is the one behind the scenes and controls every aspect of our lives. Additionally, we must set up boundaries for us to be constantly reminded of Hashem. With this in mind, we can now properly celebrate *Chanukah* with the ultimate Ahavas Hashem.

## ***Al Hanisim* and *Al Hamichya*: Oil Isn't All That Lacking**

Raffi Weil ('22)

In the Rambam's *Hilchos Brachos* (3:13), he discusses the *brachah* of *Al Hamichya*. The *Rambam* concludes the chapter stating that on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* you include a line about the sanctity of the day. For *Shabbos*, this is “*uretzei*”. For *Rosh Chodesh*, this is “*vizachreinu*”. For each *Yom Tov*, there is a specific line that is correlated to the theme of the day. Commenting on this *halachah*, the *Haghos Maimoniyos*, a commentator on the *Rambam*, says that on *Chanukah* and *Purim*, when you would normally insert “*al hanisim*” and “*ubiyimei*” in the *amidah* and *Birkas hamazon*, you don't add an insertion into *Al Hamichya*. The question is, why not? Seemingly, *al hanisim* is also an insertion that relates to the theme of the day. During a holiday that celebrates a lack of oil that lasted, let us consider what else is lacking.

In order to answer this question, one must understand the purpose of *al hanisim*, *uretzei*, and *Al Hamichya*. The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (21b) tells us that on the first anniversary of *Chanukah*, the *Chachamim* established the days of *Chanukah* to be a time of celebration of the miracles that *Hashem* had performed for us. *Rashi* comments that these days are a time for *Hallel* and *al hanisim*. Both of these *Tefillos* clearly indicate praise and thanks to *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* for being our Savior. In *Tefillah*, it is located as an extension to *Modim*, and in *Bentching* it is an extension to *Nodeh Lecha*. Once we are within the realm of thanking *Hashem*, we add on more thanks.

On *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, during *Bentching*, there is a *chiyuv* to say the paragraph of *Uretzei/Yaaleh Viyavo* after *Rachem*. These insertions are necessary components of *Birkas Hamazon*. If one had already moved on to the *Bracha* of *Hatov V'hameitiv* and realized they forgot to say it, they must repeat *Bentching*. There is a lesser known *Halacha* that if you remember you missed *Uretzei/Yaaleh Viyavo* after *Uvnei*, and you didn't yet start *Hakel Avinu*, you insert a *Bracha* relating to the קדושת היום (sanctity of the day).

The *Bracha* of *Al Hamichya* is also called *Birchas Me'ein Shalosh*. It was given this name because it is a condensed version of the first three *Brachos* of *Bentching*. Only later in history was there a line added into *Al Hamichya* reflecting the *Hatov V'hameitiv Bracha* in *Bentching*.

Now that we have established a basic outline of what each *Tefillah* tries to accomplish, we can answer our original question. Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik said that it wouldn't be befitting to mention *Al Hanisim* in *Al Hamichya*. The whole goal of *Al Hamichya* is to condense the *Birkas Hamazon* into a shorter paragraph. It is not meant for extending praise to *Hashem*. Accordingly, we don't add *Al Hanisim*. However, the additions for *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* are included because there is an obligation to mention the sanctity of the day. In *Tefillah/Bentching*, it makes perfect sense to add *Al Hanisim* because we already have a portion devoted to thanking *Hashem*. Therefore, extending the thanks is a befitting practice.

This answer can help us explain the following *Mishnah Berurah*. The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 682:1) says we should recite *Al Hanisim* on *Chanukah* during *davening* and *Bentching*. The *Mishnah Berurah* quotes an opinion that the *Nussach* should be *Ve'Al Hanisim* with the extra *Vav*. This fits the theme of *Tefillah* as a whole. Since we are thanking *Hashem*, we add more thanks befitting the theme of the day.

In an age where it is so easy to take many of our activities, possessions, health, friends, family and more for granted, it is a potent reminder to think of the source of all the good we have. The events we celebrate on *Chanukah* are those of a miraculous nature. We celebrate the victory of the *Macabim*, the underdog in the war against the Greeks, and the small jug of oil lasting well beyond its limits. However, *Chanukah* is also an opportunity to appreciate and give thanks for the "small miracles" that occur everyday - miracles so small and common that we forget how supernatural they really are. As we say *Al Hanisim* this year, it is important to keep in mind the great miracles that *Hashem* performs for us along with the natural kindness He bestows upon us each and every day.

## **Hallel Vehoda'ah**

Ezra Shechter ('22)

Throughout the existence of the Jewish people, there have been many nations that have persecuted and oppressed the chosen nation. The *Rabbanim* decided to decree holidays to commemorate the victories for two of these times of persecution, *Chanukah* and *Purim*. Although these holidays were instituted for similar events and reasons, we still celebrate the holidays differently.

In *Meseches Shabbos* (21b), where the *Gemara* explains the *Chanukah* story, we learn that we have 8 days of 'Hallel v'Hoda'ah" to commemorate the miracle of *Chanukah*. *Rashi* on this writes that "Hallel v'Hoda'ah" means that we sing *Hallel* and recite *Al Hanisim*. According to *Rashi*, it seems that the celebration of *Chanukah* is about praising and thanking Hashem for the miracles he performed for us. The *Rambam* writes differently in *Hilchos Chanukah* (*Mishnah Torah Hilchos Chanukah Ch. 3 Halacha 3*) that these days of *Chanukah* are "days of *Simcha* and *Hallel*". This opinion would lean more to the side that *Chanukah* is about being *b'Simcha* and celebrating the victory Hashem led us to. This seems to be a *Machlokes* between *Rashi* and the *Rambam* about what the essence of *Chanukah* is. The *Shulchan Orech* paskens that you could have a *suedah* on *Chanukah* but, it is not required. The *Magen Avraham* comments on this that you must have a set *suedah* and eat and drink *b'Simcha*. There is a *Tosfos* in *Taanis* that says that both *Purim* and *Chanukah* are considered days of "Mishta v'Simcha" because you can't fast. This *Tosfos* and the *Magen Avraham* seem to side like the *Rambam* in this *Machlokes* about if *Chanukah* has a requirement of *simcha*. On the other hand, the *Tor* quotes *Haram Muritenberg* that you just need *Hallel v'Hodaah* and not *Simcha v'Mishta*- siding with *Rashi* and the *Gemara*.

Why do we have a *suedah* on *Purim* but not on *Chanukah*? The *Bach* explains *Haram Muritnberg's* opinion by saying that *Purim* and *Chanukah* are different. By *Purim* everything was about the physicality- the whole story started because *Achashverosh* threw parties, and we were going to physically be killed- so we celebrate in correspondence to that physicality with drinking *b'Simcha* and a big *suedah*. On the other hand, on *Chanukah* the only thing that

was being taken away from us was our *avodah*, our spirituality, so we celebrate by embracing our spirituality and praising and thanking Hashem. The *Bach* continues to *Pasken* that we do need a *suedah* and to be *Mishta b'Simcha*, so the question is Why? If we just explained that *Chanukah* is about the spirituality and not the physicality, then why do we have a *suedah* or care about the physicality? I would like to suggest the following answer. We always think of spirituality and physicality as two different things and sometimes we even think of physicality as the enemy of spirituality, but now maybe we can say that on *Chanukah* we should use the physicality to increase the spirituality. By having a good meal and being *b'Simcha*, we can reach new levels of thanking and praising Hashem. This fits perfectly with the event that we are celebrating. The Ancient Greeks were known to be a very intellectual nation and come up with revolutionary ideas, but at the same time they only believed in that which was physical. If the Greeks couldn't see, feel, or hear something then as far as they were concerned it did not exist. They didn't destroy Sifrei Torah, they just translated them, so they were just story books. They did not destroy the Beis Hamikdash, rather they made it *Tamei* so it was spiritually unfit to be used. The Greeks tried to take our spirituality away to leave us with just our physicality, so we celebrate our victory by using the physicality that they left us with, to enhance our spirituality which they tried to take away.



## The Nature of A Woman's Obligation In Neir Chanukah

Yosef Weiner ('23)

The *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 23a) asserts that women light *neiros chanukah* despite it being a *mitzas aseh shehzman grama*. It cites R' Yehoshua Ben Levi who explains that this is so because *af hein hayu b'oso haneis*.

There is dispute amongst the *meforshim* as to the exact circumstances which led to the phrase *af hein hayu b'oso haneis* being applied to women.

*Tosfos* (*Meggilah* 4a s.v. *she'af*, *Pesachim* 108b *she'af*) cites two opinions. First, the Rashbam maintains that a woman, Yehudis, played a central role in the *neis* of *chanukah*. However, *Tosfos* believes this interpretation is challenged by the language of "*af hein*" as opposed to *hein* alone. *Tosfos* interprets this to connote that women were involved, but not the focal point. In specific, *Tosfos* asserts, based on the *Yerushalmi*, that *af hein hayu b'oso haneis* means that they were subject to the same danger as the men.

Within the Rashbam's opinion, two main camps emerge disagreeing as to whether a woman served as inspiration or was an active conduit of the *neis*. The *Kol Bo* (44) explains that Yehudis was the daughter of Yochanan, the *kohein gadol*, and was particularly beautiful. While the Greek king attempted to engage in relations with her she executed a plan which culminated in the beheading of the king. She brought the head to *Yerushalayim* and the enemies fled, frightened by the death of their leader. However, *Megilas Taanis* explains that a woman played a central role in the *neis* of *chanukah* as when the Greek king came to defile Matisyahu's daughter her father and brothers did not stand idly by and instead began the revolution. In a similar vein, the *Piskei Riaz* (*Shabbos*, *Bameh Madlikin* 14) explains that Yehudis wore rags to her wedding as a statement regarding the fact that she would have to undergo defilement. This outraged her brothers and inspired them to ultimately prevail.

Rashi (*Shabbos* 23a s.v. *hayu*) provides two reason for *af hein hayu b'oso haneis*. First, women were subjected to a decree which

mandated their defilement prior to marriage. Second, through a woman the *neis* was carried out. The Ran (*Shabbos* 10a *B'dapei Harif*) *dshares* Rashi's first rationale and elaborates on the second aspect, recounting the same account as the *Kol Bo*.

R' Yaakov Emden (*Mor U'Ktsia* 670 s.v. *u'biyichud*) rejects the approach that woman had a special role in the *neis* of *Chanukah*, in part arguing against the adoption of a narrative implying as such found in Josephus.

Another fascinating approach is entertained by Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank. He suggests that the *Gemara's* rationale of *af hein hayu b'oso haneis* only exists within the opinion of R' Yehoshua Ben Levi who maintains that when one violates a *d'rabanan* they do not simultaneously violate the *d'orysa* of *lo sasur*. However, the *halacha* is against R' Yehoshua Ben Levi, and one is indeed in violation of *lo sasur* when disobeying a *d'rabanan*. A woman is, therefore, obligated in *ner chanukah* because there was no room for exemption in the first place. Women are only exempt from *mitzvos aseh shehzman grama* but are not permitted to violate a negative prohibition even if it is time bound.

Based on the above, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 675:3) states that a woman lights *neiros chanukah* as she too is included in the obligation. Indeed, the *Mishnah Berurah* (675:9) writes that a woman's obligation extends so far as to allow her husband to fulfill his obligation through her lighting were he not to be home. However, the *Chofetz Chaim* in the *Biur Halacha* (675 s.v. *Isha*) warns that while technically a woman may fulfill her husband's obligation she should not do so unless there are extenuating circumstances as the underlying principle behind the *Gemara's* statement criticizing one who fulfills his obligation of *Birkas Hama-zon* through his wife applies here as well. Similarly, the *Raavan* (*Shabbos* 340) shares that when the husband is present he takes precedence in terms of who lights.

The above addresses a case where there is only one lighting per family. However, the *achronim* have noted a perplexing practice that even when each member of the family is lighting their own *chanuykiya*, in order to achieve the *mehadrin* standard, the women do not light their own. Indeed, the *Shaar Ephraim* (42) is exceeding-

ly bothered by this practice, noting that even a child as long as they are of the *chinuch* must light to fulfill the *mehadrin*, (*Orach Chaim* 675:3) so surely a woman who has a higher level of obligation should do so! The authorities provide a number of rationals for this practice and dispute if it is valid in the first place.

The *Elyah Rabbah* (671:3) defends the practice, explaining that a woman need not light because of the principle of *ishto k'gufo*. The *Maharshal* (Shu"t 85) likewise states that a husband and wife may suffice with one candle even according to the *mehadrin* standard. The *Machatzis Hashekel* (675:4) notes that this *Maharshal* seems to adopt the *Elyah Rabbah*. The *Pri Megadim* (*Mishbitzos Zahav* 671:1) comments that the *Elyah Rabbah's* view seems to be reflected by Rashi but not by the Rosh.

However, the *Achronim* point out that this only explains why married women would not light but fails to explain the practice of all women refraining from lighting.

The *Mishmeres Shlomo* (vol. 1 48:2) explains that since the mother is not lighting it is improper for the daughters to do so.

The *Olas Shmuel* (105) explain women not needing to light because for the *mehadrin* standard because they are *tefailos l'anashim*. The *Olas Shmuel* provides two rationals for women being *tafel l'anashim*. First, as Tosfos explained earlier, *af hein hayu b'oso haneis* means that the women were were beneficiaries of, but not the focal point of, the *neis*. However, the *Olas Shmuel* prefers a different answer. Namely, the men were faced with the *nisayon* of being compelled to deny *Hakadosh Baruch Hu* which is *yeharag v'al yavor*. Whereas, the women were forced to engage in relations but this is not *yeharag v'al yavor* because of the *ptur* of *karka olam*.

The *Mishna Berurah* quotes the *Olas Shmuel* in one place (675:9) but elsewhere (671:9) quotes the *Elyah Rabbah*.

The Chasam Sofer (Shabbos 22b) provides a different rationale for women not lighting. Namely, that it used to be that lighting would be done outside. As such women refrained from fulfilling the *mehadrin* so as not to go outside at night and light amongst the men thus risking raising suspicion. Nowadays, even though lighting is done inside, women maintain the practice.

R' Sternbuch (*Teshuvos V'Hanagos* vol. 2 342:7) provides an

alternative rationale by drawing a fundamental distinction in *mitzvas ner Chanukah*. He asserts that there are two aspects of *mitzvas ner chanukah*: a) A commemoration of the military victory and b) a commemoration of finding *tahor* oil. The former includes women because they were fundamental in bringing about the *neis*. However, women are not included in the latter because it relates to the *tzibbur*. R' Velvel Soloveitchik explained that *mehadrin* is not a mere *hiddur* mitzvah but is a specific *halachah* by *Ner Chanukah*. This is because the very essence of finding *tahor* oil was itself only *linfnim m'shuras hadin* as in theory they could have applied the rule of *tumah d'chuya b'tzibbur* and use *tamei* oil. So as to commemorate this there is a specific concept of *mehadrin* by *Chanukah*. It therefore emerges, argues Rav Sternbuch, that *mehadrin* commemorates the latter category which women are not included in. They therefore do not light to fulfill the *mehadrin* standard. Indeed, Rav Sternbuch argues that it is preferable for a woman not to light and fulfill her obligation with her husband that way she will be included in a *maaseh mitzvah* which fulfills two aspects instead of just one.

The *Eishel Avrohom M'buchach* (675:3) suggests that women do not attempt to fulfill the *mehadrin* standard as kabalistically the *mehadrin* standard is only relevant for men.

R' Yochanon Sofer (*Yomin D'Chanukah* 10) is bothered by all the aforementioned justifications for women abstaining from lighting. He explains that the *Piskei Riaz* and Rambam both imply that the head of the household is to light for each member of the household, including women, in order to fulfill the *mehadrin*. He suggests a distinction between the practice that the Rambam and *Piskei Riaz* were referring to where the husband lights a candle for each individual in order to fulfill the *mehadrin*, making the *hiddur* be most related to him, whereas the practice nowadays is that each individual lights for themselves and thus *hiddur* most directly relates to each individual, thus allowing for the aforementioned reasons to take effect.

While all of the above are rationales for why women typically does not light, if she would like to then she may (*Mishnah Berurah* 675:9).

The *Birkei Yosef* (671:2 as explained by the *V'yosef Dovid*)

criticises the practice of women not lighting explaining that there is no solid rationale for the practice and that it is improper to make the wife appear to be on a lower level then the children who are lighting. Rav Joseph B. Soloveitchik (*Nefesh Harav Chanukah* 4) did not view the above rationals as satisfactory and stated that it is proper for women to light.

Rav Moshe Feinstein (quoted by Rav Ahron Felder *Moadei Yeshurun, Chanukah* fn. 4) holds that if a women elects to light she should do so before her husband lest her obligation is fulfilled when her husband lights because of *ishto k'gufo* thus leading to a *bracha l'vatala*.

Lastly, based on the above rationals, there is a dispute when a woman may have her obligation fulfilled through her husband's lighting.

Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach (*Halichos Shlomo, Chanukah* 13:13), Rav Yosef Elyashiv (*Pninei Chanukah* p. 118), and Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Moadei Yeshurin Chanukah* fn. 18) maintain that a man can't fulfill his wife's obligation if he is not lighting at their home. Indeed, the *Leket Yosher* (p. 152) explains that in a case where a man and his wife do not share a house then they must each light independently.

However, Rav Shmuel Vosner (*Piskei Shmuos Chanukah* p. 57) and Rav Shmuel Kaminetsky (*Kovetz Halachos Chanukah* 12:12) maintains that a woman's obligation can be fulfilled with her husband regardless of where he is lighting; the principle of *ishto k'gufo* is not limited to when one is lighting in their own home. However, even Rav Vosner agrees that if the husband is not lighting for himself but is rather joining together with his host family then the woman must light on her own (*Piskei Shmuos Chanukah* p. 57).

Rav Shlomo Zalman Aurbach despite maintaining that a husband must be at home in order to fulfill his wife's obligation, concedes that were the entire family to be gathered together in a place other than home then all of their obligations can be fulfilled through their father's lighting (*Halichos Shlomo, Chanukah* 13:13).

## **Miracles In Halachah**

Rabbi Yisrael Apfel ('o8)

R' Chaim Soloveitchik asked the following question regarding the miracle of the *pach shemen* on *Chanukah*: The Torah says that the *Menorah* must be lit with olive oil. If so, how could the השמן הזה use the oil they found to light the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* if seemingly this is not actually “olive oil” but rather it’s miracle oil?

We will use this question as a springboard to go look at different parts of *Nach* and *Shas* to see how *Halachah* defines an item or food that was made through a miracle. Do we view that as no different than the natural item itself or do we view it as something different?

First, we will look at the episode of Elisha in *Melachim Beis* (Perek 4) involving miracle olive oil. The widow of Ovadiah came to Elisha and described that her husband had died in heavy debt and that the creditors now threatened to take away her two sons as slaves, unless she paid the debts immediately. Elisha performed a miracle turning the single jar of oil that she had into multiple jars of oil. She sold the jars of oil to pay her husband's debts, and used the money that was left to support herself and her children.

Regarding the olive oil that Elisha miraculously created we need to ask if it was defined as oil in Halacha? Would such oil be obligated in *Terumos* and *Maasros*?

The *Radak* (Melachim II 4:7) quotes the *Medrash* as saying that she was exempt from separating *Terumos* and *Maasros* on this oil since it is miracle oil.

However, we need to understand the nature of this exemption. Why was she exempted from separating *Terumos* and *Maasros* from this oil? There are seemingly two logical possibilities.

One can say that ‘miracle oil’ is not oil at all, it may look like oil but it’s actually a supernatural substance. The same way if a person created synthetic oil which is not natural & did not grow from

the ground, no one would say that you would have to separate *Terumos Umaasersos* from it, so too this “miracle oil”.

Or one can say the following: In general, only a fruit that grew in Eretz Yisrael is obligated in *Terumos* and *Maasros*. Furthermore, even if it grew in *ארץ ישראל*, if it grew in something called a *atzitz she'eino nakuv*, a pot that does not have a hole, then on a *Torah* level you are not obligated to separate *Terumos Umaasersos* from it and it rather it is only *Chayav Mederabanan*. If so, one could argue that indeed Miracle oil is *halachikally* real oil, but the reason why you are exempt from separating *Terumos* and *Maasros* is because it did not grow from the ground just like olives that grew in a *atzitz she'eino nakuv*.

A possible answer to this question can be suggested based on the words of the *Targum Yonason* in *Parshas VaYakhel*. The *Pesukim* are describing the various items that the *Nesi'im*, leaders of each *Shevet*, brought as a donation to the *Mishkan*. The *Targum Yonason* interprets the *Pasuk* not to be referring to the *בנשיאים* but rather to the *ananei hakavod* & the *ananei hakavod* brought the *shemen* from *gan eden* & it was the *shemen* from *gan eden* that they used to light the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Seemingly, we see from here that ‘miracle oil’ is considered *halachikally* to be *shemen zayis* that can be used to fulfill *Mitzvos* and it is no different than natural oil. Otherwise, how could they have used it to light the *Menorah*. If so, we see the reason why Elisha told Ovadiah’s widow the ‘miracle oil’ is exempt from *terumos umaasersos* is not because it is not considered ‘natural oil’ but rather because it did not come from the ground of *Eretz Yisrael*.

However, we can reject this proof based on the *Medrash* that says that when Noach sent a dove to see if the waters of the *Mabul* had receded, the dove brought back an olive branch from *Gan Eden*. This *Medrash* indicates that the olives in *Gan Eden* grow naturally from the ground. If so, it makes sense that they can use these olives to produce the oil to use in the *Menorah* for the *Mishkan* as it is real *shemen zayis*. But this would not be a proof for the miracle oil in the story of Elisha which was not squeezed from olives that grew from the ground and rather had just appeared out of thin air.

Another possible answer to our question can be given based on the words of *Tosafos* in *Menachos*. The *Gemara* is dealing with the issue of where must the flour that is used for the *Korban Shtei Halechem*, the bread *korban* brought in the *Beis Hamikdash* on *Shavuot*, come from. In that context the *Gemara* raises the following question: What if wheat kernels came down from the clouds in the rain? The *Gemara* responds that for *Menachos* offerings you for sure can use them, and the only question is for *shtei halechem*, can you make the *shtei halechem* from wheat kernels that came from clouds? The *Gemara* spells out two sides to this question.

When Hashem says in the *Torah* that the *shtei halechem* should come from *mimoshvoseichem* - *from your dwelling place*- i.e. *Eretz Yisrael*, what is it coming to exclude? One possibility, that you cannot bring wheat kernels from *Chutz La'aretz* but you can bring *shtei halechem* made from wheat kernels that came from the clouds. Or perhaps, "*mimoshvoseichem*" means that you can only bring *shtei halechem* from wheat kernels that comes from an actual dwelling place but wheat that dropped from the clouds could not be used since people don't live in the clouds. The *Gemara* asks did this ever happen that we should ask about this halacha? The *Gemara* says that it once happened to Bar Adi, an Arab, that there came down from the clouds a layer of wheat of *kizba* high over an area *3 parsos* (12 mil).

The obvious question we must ask on this *Gemara* is what exactly is the case of wheat coming down from clouds? Regarding this question we find a *Machlokes* between Rashi and *Tosafos*. Rashi explains that as the clouds took up water over the ocean, they swept up a ship full of wheat. When they passed over land, the airborne wheat fell to the ground together with the rain.

Comes Rabbeinu Tam and asks on Rashi: According to this explanation of Rashi the *Gemara's* question does not make any sense. If the wheat from the clouds grew outside of *Eretz Yisrael*, it wouldn't suddenly become rendered fit by having been swept into a cloud before falling in *Eretz Yisrael* since it did not come from *mimoshvoseichem*- "*your dwelling place*"! And if it grew in *Eretz Yisrael*, why should it be disqualified simply because it spent time in a



cloud?

Therefore Rabbeinu Tam gives a different explanation of the Gemara. The “*wheat coming down from the clouds*” refers to wheat that came down from heaven miraculously. This wheat fell in Eretz Yisrael and the question is whether it may be used for *shteí halechem*.

It comes out from *Tosafos*’ understanding of the *Gemara* that You can use “miracle wheat” for *Menachos* but it is still in doubt if you can use it for *shteí halechem*. If so, we can suggest that just as “miracle wheat” can be used for *Menachos* and we consider it “natural wheat”, so too in the story of Elisha “miracle oil” is considered “natural oil” and the reason why Elisha said the oil is *מפטר* from *Trumos* and *Maasros* is because it did not grow from the ground in Eretz Yisrael.

Let’s apply this to the original question we brought from R’ Chaim Soloveitchik. How could the *Menorah* have been lit with “miracle oil”? Based on what we see from *Tosafos* the question does not get off the ground. We can say just as the “miracle wheat kernels” are considered natural and fit to be used for the *Menachos*, so too the “miracle oil” is considered natural and kosher to be used for the *Menorah*.

## A Physical Nullification

Daniel Toth ('24)

The *gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* asks, “What is *Chanukah*?” Rashi comments that the *gemara* is not literally seeking the definition of this holiday. Rather, the *gemara* is searching for the miracle which triggered the establishment of this holiday. Meaning, we are not asking “What is *Chanukah*?” Instead, we are asking, “Why was *Chanukah* so memorable?”

The *gemara* answers its own question by saying, “when the Hellenists entered the *Beis Hamikdash*, they defiled all of its oil. Then, as the royal Hasmonean family was searching (for any remaining oil), they found one jug of pure oil which could realistically light the menorah for one day. However, the miracle was that the oil lasted eight days.”

On the other hand, there is another major event which can qualify as the miracle of *Chanukah*: the Jewish forces were victorious in battle over the mighty Hellenic forces. On this note, we learn in the *Al Hanisim* prayer that Hashem brought “the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few.”

By analyzing these two statements, the statement of the *gemara* and the statement, which is derived from the *Al Hanisim* prayer, we can point out a seemingly technical contradiction. If we can bring this argument of delivering “the mighty into the hands of the weak...”, then how can we also present the statement of the *gemara* about the miracle of the oil? Why is it that the *gemara* uses one reason over the other?

The answer can be derived from a *sichah* delivered by the Lubavitcher Rebbe. The Rebbe explains that the primary threat the Jews faced was not that of a physical matter. Rather, the true threat, the true worry, was that of a spiritual matter. The primary issue is not that the Jews were in physical danger. The worry remained in their spiritual integrity and safety. We can see this from a Hellenistic declaration: “Inscribe upon the horn of an ox that you have no part in the G-d of Israel.” Evidently, the true hazard was found in the spiritual lives of *Bnei Yisroel*. Therefore, the significance in saving the spiritual body was highlighted initially, while the rescue of the physical body was secondary.

This was the miracle of the oil. In fact, this miracle was connected to the *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah* in the Holy Temple. Moreover, lights are symbolic of Torah and *mitzvos*, for a *passuk* states, “For a mitzvah is a lamp and Torah is light.”

After such a resolution, we now question the statement of the *gemara* yet again: Why does the *gemara* so passively mention the miracle of defeating the Hellenists? Why doesn’t the *gemara* describe the miracle in detail? Although the true miracle of *Chanukah* was a spiritual miracle, as mentioned above, nonetheless, there was still an obvious miracle in regard to their physicality. The fact that the Jews were also physically rescued is not a detail that should be overlooked. Additionally, spiritual salvation only came through physical salvation. So, why did the *gemara* leave out the miraculous victory in battle?

The Rebbe explains that the Hellenist attack was not directed to the entirety of Judaism. Rather, the attack was only focused on certain aspects of it. We see this from the prayer of *Al Hanisim*, where it mentions that the Hellenists desired “to make them forget Your Torah and make them violate the decrees of Your will.” Clearly, the Hellenists did not want to target the existence of the Torah. Rather, the Hellenist wanted to challenge “Your Torah,” the Torah, which is of Divine origin, and therein, beyond the limited human comprehension. Also, the Hellenists did not target the practice of the Torah and its *mitzvos*. Rather, the Hellenists specified their decree in regard to the “decrees of Your will,” the commands which surpass any logic and reason, those which are observed due to the Fear of Heaven.

This goes to say that the war brought by the Hellenists was against the notion of G-dliness which surpasses nature and all elements of creation. We can now understand the statement of the *gemara*. “What is *Chanukah*?” *Chanukah* represents spiritual victory in which the *Chanukah* lights, the Torah and *mitzvos*, were rescued from eradication. Even though the physical miracle, the physical safety, made the spiritual safety possible, nevertheless, the spiritual component of *Chanukah* takes precedence over the physical preservation solely due to the fact that it completely encompasses the physical miracle. This is shown when the *gemara* completely ig-

nores the physical miracle that took place during *Chanukah*. Meaning, the *gemara* disregards the physical miracle because it does not define the glory of the holiday. It simply falls under the category of “other (less significant) miracles.”

One may ask, how does this lesson apply to us? Just as the spiritual aspect of *Chanukah* completely nullifies the relevance of the physical aspect of *Chanukah*, so too, we must achieve the strength where our souls have precedence over our bodies so much that the body is comparably non-existent. Meaning, the concern of the soul’s needs and desires should outweigh the needs and desires of the body. Although the soul is rooted inside the body, and can only exist, or act, in this world through the well-being of the body, nevertheless the body should be insignificant besides the importance of the soul and its greatness.

This should apply to each and every one of us so much that when one peers onto the “*Chanukah*” of an individual, “one sees not a material creature, but a spiritual one.” This is so, for the body is merely a vehicle of the soul. Its job is to transfer the essence and applications of the soul into the world in an earthly manner to elevate the world on greater and greater levels with each stroke of kindness and love.

## **Chanukah and Torah U'madda: A Contradiction?**

Meir Morell ('22) and Noam Shechter ('22)

Just as hearing “it’s finger lickin’ good!” instills thoughts of southern military men selling fried chicken, or “gotta catch ‘em all!” brings up thoughts of little creatures stuffed into spheres, or “15 minutes can save you 15% on car insurance” creates images of a small reptilian Cockney salesman, “*Torah U'madda*” instills thoughts of Greek works and culture.

Over the course of a day in MTA, one will certainly encounter the Yeshiva University logo with the words “*Torah U'madda*” prominently positioned in the middle. What this slogan, plastered on almost every page of *The Jewish Link*, exactly means is a topic of much debate, though (grossly simplifying the idea) it seems that the simple explanation is that there is value for a Torah Jew to interact with secular knowledge; the boundaries of this fusion, however, are up for debate.

One of the challenges against “*Torah U'madda*” emerges from the *Chanukah* story. Many point to the idea that the entire message of *Chanukah* is the miraculous salvation of the Jews, and the fact that the Jews were saved in particular from the clutches of the anti-semitic *Yevanim* who wanted to engage the Jews in secular knowledge and culture, thereby forcing assimilation. Therefore, they claim that the lesson that emerges from *Chanukah* is that secular knowledge is a complete contradiction to Torah values and a threat to Judaism; the war waged between the *Maccabim* and the Greeks was in reality a war fought between assimilation and ghettoization, and, from the fact that Hashem performed many miracles to ensure the victory of the Jews, foreign wisdom should clearly be alienated and viewed as harmful. However, there is a key factor in the Greek approach to wisdom, one which differs from the Jewish approach.

A fascinating *aggadah* is presented in *Bechoros* 8a and 9b. On the surface, the *Gemara* presents a challenge from the Caesar for Rebbe Yehoshua ben Chaninah to engage in debate with the *Chachmei Atuna*, the sages of Athens. Maharsha explains that this

incredulous story cannot be understood simply, and offers the explanation that the nonsense with which Rebbe Yehoshua debated the sages of Athens and risked his life for was not purely silly banter. Rather, this discourse was hiding in parables what the sages of Athens found difficult in the fundamental tenets of Judaism. Additionally, an important nuance of the Greek approach to knowledge can be seen from Rebbe Yehoshua's debate with the sages of Athens, an approach which the *Gemara* is clearly pointing out is contrary to Jewish ideology.

After claiming that one of Rebbe Yehoshua's statements was false, the Caesar challenges Rebbe Yehoshua to prove his wisdom against that of the *Chachmei Atuna*. As soon as Rebbe Yehoshua cunningly infiltrates the academy of the sages of Athens, he is struck with the following observation:

אזל אשכח ינוקי מלעיל סבי מלתחת אמר אי יהיבנא שלמא להני קטלי לי הני סברי אנן  
עדיפין דאנן קשינן טפי ואינהו דרדקי

*Rebbe Yehoshua found the younger sages sitting in the upper, more prominent section, and the elder ones in the lower section. He said to himself: I must first greet the younger sages, as they are sitting in the upper section, prior to the elder sages; but if I greet these younger sages first, those elder sages will kill me, as they maintain: We are better, because we are older and they are children.*

When Rebbe Yehoshua finally introduces himself, he's immediately challenged:

א"ל ההוא גברא דאזיל ובעי אתתא ולא יהבו ליה מאי חזי ליה דאזיל היכא דמדלו מיניה שקל  
סיכתא דצה לתתאי לא עאל לעילאי עאל אמר האי נמי מיתרמי בת מזליה

*The sages of Athens said to him: In the case of a certain man who goes and asks to marry a woman and her family does not give her to him, why would he see fit to go to a family that is greater than the first? Rebbe Yehoshua took a peg and stuck it into the lower part of the wall, but it did not go in. He then stuck it into the upper portion of the wall where there was a hole, and it went in. He said to them: In this case too, where he goes to a more distinguished family than the first, perhaps he will find the girl destined for him.*

After Rebbe Yehoshua successfully defeated the sages of Ath-

ens in an epic debate, he boards all sixty sages on a specially crafted ship containing sixty rooms, each with sixty beds. In his sagacity, he places each sage in their own room, breaking their mental composition as they continually await the remaining 59 beds to be filled. When the ship arrives, the Caesar, seeing these broken down, anxious men, exclaims that it is not possible that these men are the same conceited and haughty sages of Athens. Rebbe Yehoshua responds by

שקל מעפרייהו ושדא עילויהו אקשו לאפי מלכא אמר ליה כל דבעית עביד בהו  
*[taking] of the dirt that he had taken from Athens and [throwing] it upon them. When they smelled the scent of their own soil they began to act like themselves again, and they spoke with arrogance before the king. Upon hearing them, the Caesar said to Rabbi Yehoshua: You may do with them whatever you wish.*

The sages of Athens, upon feeling at home, back in their comfortable social hierarchy, restore their arrogance and hubris. Upon seeing this, the caesar becomes cognizant of the futility and foolishness of his supposed “wise men” of Athens.

### Thought Questions:

- What value, in the first excerpt, is evident in the sages of Athens that Rebbe Yehoshua is concerned about, which seems to be the same reason why they were not able to think of Rebbe Yehoshua's answer?
- What can that teach us about the driving force of the sages' interest in knowledge?

Additionally, what seems to be the fuel of their knowledge and wisdom?

It is clear from the *Gemara* that the desire for knowledge of the sages of Athens does not stem from an honorable place. They do not seek knowledge in order to find the truth and enhance their understanding of the world, but rather they express a thirst for knowledge which is fueled by a thirst for power. In a perversion of integrity and a lust for honor and power, these men use wisdom as a way to climb the social pyramid.

As is seemingly appropriate in an article such as this, we can

turn to the Greek sources to see this very prevalent idea in their own words. A very common theme, and in many cases the defining inner battle, in Greek tragedies is hubris. Throughout Greek literature, the hero is constantly engaged in an inner battle with their pride, which quite often causes poor decisions to be made. For example, in Homer's *The Odyssey*, even after he successfully defeats Polyphemus the cyclops, Odysseus provokes Polyphemus out of pure hubris, an act which ultimately causes the death of his entire crew and twenty years lost at sea.

Additionally, in *Plato's Republic*, Socrates constructs a theoretical utopian society, and ensures that the philosopher, a person who "is willing to taste every kind of learning with gusto, and who approaches learning with delight, and is insatiable" (*Plato's Republic* Book V) is placed in the highest echelons of society. Plato constructs classes, groups of people who must adhere to their class and give the utmost respect to those higher than them, and makes a point to place philosophers in the "guardian" class, a people who possess ultimate honor and power and can do whatever they see fit; thus, since being a philosopher is such a coveted position of power, Socrates explains that it is necessary to "define for them whom we mean by the philosophers, who we dare to say ought to be our rulers. When these are clearly discriminated it will be possible to defend ourselves by showing that to them by their very nature belong the study of philosophy and political leadership, while it befits the other sort to let philosophy alone and to follow their leader" (ibid).

As is prevalent from both the *Gemara* in *Bechoros* and from Greek works themselves, there is a strong correlation between wisdom and power throughout Greek thought. Many ancient Greeks would study and attempt to obtain knowledge as a means to possess the power and honor which Plato believed should be given to every philosopher. However, because of this synonymization of knowledge to wisdom, an inherent haughtiness and conceit became embedded in the search for knowledge; many Greeks wished to strive for knowledge and pursue intellect in order to rise in rank and be venerated. This is the exact observation which Rebbe Yehoshua brings to light regarding the sages of Athens, and which, *lehavdil*, was the downfall of so many Greek tragic heroes.



When contrasting this mindset with the mindset of *Chazal*, we see that there is little further from the truth. Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai teaches (*Avos* 2:8) that “if you have learned much Torah, do not claim credit for yourself, because for such a purpose you were created.” The Jewish pursuit of knowledge, in particular learning Torah, is not a selfish power grab - it is a means to fulfill God’s will, the reason people were created, and something everyone must do. In the case where one is gaining wisdom for the sake of honor or respect, our sole hope is for them to realize that wisdom should be attained out of a desire for truth and love of God (see *Sanhedrin* 105b and Rambam’s introduction to *Perek Cheilek* in *Sanhedrin* where he expounds upon that point). The Jewish view on the pursuit of knowledge is not rooted in a desire to climb the social hierarchy but is rather rooted in a desire for wisdom.

With all of this in mind, it is possible to explain why the claim that *Chanukah* contradicts “*Torah U’madda*” is a fallacy. The driving factor that made the Greek interest in secular knowledge dangerous and contradictory to Torah values was not an inherent problem with secular knowledge, but rather was due to their sinister underlying goal. A lust for honor and power, which, as is seen with the *Chachmei Atunah*, were the ulterior motives and fuel of the Greek search for wisdom, was what made the ideology so horrible. If one can instead approach and study secular knowledge with the intent of learning more about God, appreciating more about His world, and understanding His creations, all while remembering to humble themselves before the Creator of the Universe, they not only avoid falling prey to the mistakes of the Greeks, but they can also even gain immensely and come closer to fear and love of God (See *Mishneh Torah*, *Yesodei HaTorah*, 2:2).

## Viewing Torah U'madda Through the Lens of Chanukah

Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik is widely considered the father of modern *lomdishe* learning, and much of our *iyun* in *Gemara* and *Rishonim* comes from his unique style of analysis. Rav Chaim used to say that, when learning a *sugya*, we must realize that the *Rishonim* already said all the *chiddushim* (novel ideas) - our job is simply to work hard to understand what it was they were trying to communicate. Learning *Gemara* in depth is not about testing the limits of our own logical capabilities, and then discovering which *Rishonim* agree with us. Rather, we work to explain the *Rishonim* and ensure that their words "fit in" to the *shakla vitarya*, the give-and-take, of the *sugya* as a whole. This is why, despite the tremendous creativity of Rav Chaim and his son, the *Brisker Rov*, every piece of their *seforim* begins with a question on the *pshat* (basic understanding) of the *sugya*. *Lomdus* is only a tool which is used to help us answer these questions, and thereby understand the wisdom of *Chazal*. Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik *zt"l*, the *Rav*, was very opposed to those who attempted to superimpose non-Torah systems of logical analysis in learning *Gemara*. Learning is not about showing our own creativity, but about working to resolve the words of the *chachomim* of previous generations.

The same rule applies when we learn other matters, such as *Tanach*. When we approach a story or *nevuah*, we do not come with our own ideas about what is socially, politically, or morally correct, and use the *pesukim* to support those ideas. Rather, we listen to how *Chazal* and *meforshim* like Rashi, the *Radak*, and the *Malbim* understood the *pesukim*, and approach the topic from that perspective. Rav Yaakov Moshe Lessin *zt"l*, a former *mashgiach* in our *Yeshiva* for over 30 years, described *drush* as "twisting the words of *Chazal* to match my *hashkafos*, instead of plumbing the depths of *Chazal*." This is not the proper way to approach any sort of *limmud Torah*.

*Chanukah* is a holiday which celebrates the triumph of the

*Torah* over the corrupt ideologies of Hellenism. Western culture proved unable to dominate *Bnei Yisroel*, and true *hashkofas hatorah* emerged unscathed. This presents a real problem to our community: how does one who holds himself to be a practitioner of *Torah Umadda* understand this *yom tov*? How do those of us who believe that chochmas Hashem is revealed in the study of Physics, Biology, Literature, and Psychology, purport to celebrate this triumph?

My *Rebbi*, Rav Aharon Soloveitchik *zt"l*, explained this with the *possuk* in *Mishlei* (7:4) which says "*emor lichochmah 'achosi at*" - say to wisdom 'you are my sister.' My *Rebbi* explained: I can be very close with my sister, we can know each other well, and we can share a lot. But, the *possuk* does not say - say to wisdom 'you are my wife"! The "*amar lichochmah ishti at*" relationship of husband and wife is defined by *ishto kiguf*, where the two become like one person. This kind of relationship cannot exist with *chochmah*; we may treat wisdom like a sister, but never as a wife. The *possuk* in *Bereishis* states that man should "cleave to his wife, and they shall be as one flesh." Rashi explains that this is fulfilled when a man and wife have a baby, who is a combination of the two parents. Such a thing cannot exist with *chochmah*. There cannot be a hybrid which mixes everything into one being. When Rivkah *Imeinu* saw that there was kicking inside of her stomach when she passed a *beis medrash* and when she passed a house of idol worship, she became concerned. Hashem calmed her by telling her that she had two sons inside of her, who would become two great nations. This calmed Rivka because she realized that the kicking was coming from two separate children. To have one child who wanted to leave to the *beis medrash* and the *beis avoda zara* would be oxymoronic and untenable. Only once she learned that these were two separate children did she calm down.

If this is the case, then what exactly should our relationship with chochmah be? My *Rebbi* explained based on another *possuk* (*Bereishis* 9:27): "*God Shall be with Yafes, and Yafes shall reside in the tents of Shem.*" Yafes was the ancestor of all Western Civilization, including the Greeks, and Shem was the ancestor of *Bnei Yisroel*. Yafes can be very valuable, and he can reside within Shem's tent, but the tent must remain primarily Shem's! The *madda* must be fil-

tered through the lens of *Torah* before it can be utilized. If it is to dwell in Shem's tent comfortably, it must first conform to Shem's "house rules" so to speak, of proper *hashkofas hatorah*.

*Torah Umadda* is when we use *chochmah* in such a way that it can complement the *Torah*, but not to supplement or replace the *Torah* with secular wisdom, *chas vishalom*. Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm *zt"l* always said "our interaction with the modern world does not permit us to be any less scrupulous in upholding and maintaining the minutiae of *halachah*." *Torah Umadda* does not preclude being careful about our approach to things such as *Shabbos*, *kashrus*, *tzniyus*, *tefillah* *bitzibbur*, *tzitzis*, *lashon hara*, *keviyas itim laTorah*, and proper *hashkafos* (outlook)!

But, we still must ask ourselves: why do we see such compromise so often? Why is it that we commonly see people sacrificing on basic matters of *halachah* and *hashkafa* in favor of a more "enlightened" approach to *Yiddishkeit*?

*Lefi aniyas da'ati*, it all begins with the style of learning. When we learn, do we make sure to nullify our preconceptions in favor of what the *Rishonim* tell us, or do we attempt to fit our own *svaros* and ideas into the text? If we do not approach Judaism from a place of humility, with a willingness to remove ourselves from the equation and focus on understanding the words of *Chazal*, then will inevitably come to create the sort of hybrid of *Torah* and *chochmah* which cannot exist for long.

This is the major difference between a *yeshivah* and a secular college. In a *yeshivah*, the *roshei yeshivah* decide the curriculum and schedule for the entire institution. Everyone in the *yeshivah* comes to the *beis medrash* at the same time, to learn the same things, under the guidance of *gedolei yisroel*. In a college, however, everyone decides when and what they want to learn: I can take chemistry, english, public speaking, and music, at any time and in any order that I choose! If a person is in *yeshivah*, they can go to secular college, with their fundamental outlook and perspective being shaped by the *yeshivah*. But if they are primarily in college, then their outlook, and their lifestyle, is left up to their own discretion. Inevitably, they will end up as a Jewish American, an American through and through, who happens to also be Jewish. His Judaism will not stand up to any innovations which occur to him. But a *ben*

*yeshivah*, even one who appreciates secular knowledge, is fundamentally an American Jew, the Jew of *Torah Umadda*, who appreciates wisdom and knowledge through the lens and guidance of *hashkofas hatorah*.

If one approaches Judaism with *gaivah*, determined to stick to his own inclinations, then he will inevitably be led astray in both learning and *hashkafas hachayim*. Only someone who is prepared to submit himself to the timeless and immutable wisdom of *Torah* will be able to truly have the *Torah* shape him, rather than the other way around.

On *Chanukah*, we celebrate the triumph of the *Chashmonayim* over the corruptions of Greek culture. The Greeks attempted to replace *Torah* with secular learning, or at the very least, to equate the two. Our triumph over the *Yevanim* was not necessarily in completely rejecting their innovations; rather, *Bnei Yisroel* showed that the only interactions we can have with the rest of the world are ones which occur from the perspective of *Toras Emes*. May we all merit to act with *yiraso kodem lichachmaso*, where our *yiras shamayim* precedes our own intellect, in every part of our lives.

## **Beauty is in the Eyes of the Beholder**

Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz ('95)

### **Questions**

Somebody suggested that the reason for the *minhag* to eat deep fried foods on *Chanukah*, is that we want to show that we are different than the Greeks. While the Greeks placed great emphasis on the physical body, we eat fried foods that add to our waistline (a moment on the lips and an eternity on the hips) and essentially lay waste to our physical appearance. While this is not the *peshat*, the idea of beauty and the multiple levels of beauty are certainly something that relates to *Chanukah*.

*Chanukah* is associated with beauty. The notion of *hiddur mitzvah* is operative year-round and for all *mitzvos*, but only on *Chanukah* do we have a level of beauty that goes beyond all normal limits – *mehadrin min mehadrin*. The beauty that we emphasize counters the beauty that the Greeks represented – *yafes Elokim li-yafes*. The Hebrew language is so nuanced. There are many words that might be translated into a single English word, such as “beauty” – *hod* and *yofi* both mean beauty, yet the Greeks had *yofi* and we have *hiddur*. How are we to understand the difference in the language.

*Chanukah* is also unique in that it is celebrated, not only with *Hallel* like all *yamim tovim*, but *lehodos ulehallel* – first *hodos* and only then *lehallel*.

In these *parshiyos* we read of the story of Yosef *Hatzadik*, and particularly of his rivalry with the children of Leah (Reuvein from whom he wanted the *bechorah* and Yehudah who stood up to him). Yosef is one of the few people in our history who we refer to as “*Hatzadik*”, and yet the Torah emphasizes his physical beauty – *vayehi Yosef yafeh to’ar viyafeh me’od*.

It even seems that at key moments in his life, his physical beauty has to be incorporated into the story. *Vehu na’ar* at the beginning of *Vayeshev*, Rashi tells us means that he was *mesalsel bese’aro*. Before overcoming the challenge of *eishes Potifar* we are told of his beauty, and before meeting Paraoh we are told of his taking a haircut and a shave. What is the connection between Yosef’s success and beauty?

### Yesod

Rav Lopiansky explains that in this world there are three types of beauty.

First, we have a kind of *yofi* that is purely external – something that appears attractive from the outside but has no inner value. *Sheker hachayn vehevel hayofi* – it's a false advertisement. The fruit looks delicious but is really poisonous.

Second, there is genuine *yofi* – the kind of beauty that draws our attention to valuable content. A beautiful cover on a *sefer* that draws us to look at the *Torah* inside.

Third, and finally, sometimes the value of the inside of a vessel exceeds the outside packaging. It is as though the bag is straining to hold its contents – the beauty bulging out tearing apart the seams of that which tries to contain it. *Eretz Yisrael* has this kind of beauty – *Eretz Hatzvi*, *Chazal* tell us, means that just as a *tzvi* looks like it's skin is too small for its body, *Eretz Yisrael's* physical exterior will stretch to hold *Klal Yisrael*. This is the beauty of a great *tzadik* – Rav Moshe Feinstein was not an imposing or impressive looking person, but those who met him knew that there was a greatness that leapt out at you.

The first two categories are different types of *yofi*, while the third is *hod*. The reason Moshe *Rabbeinu* has *karnei hahod* is that his spiritual level was such that it could not be contained by the physical body, and human eyes could not even withstand its dazzling rays.

*Yavan* was endowed with great *yofi*, but it was the first kind of *yofi*. When *Daniel* (10:8) describes *Yavan*, he says *vehodi nahafoch alai lemashchis* – the *hod* of *Klal Yisrael* was destroyed by the Greeks and all of their *yofi*.

### Leah and Rachel

Leah and Rachel represent *hod* and *yofi* respectively. Leah is not a *yefas to'ar* but her eyes are beautiful because they are the window to the internal soul. Leah is overcome with *hoda'ah*, the *middah* that is expressed when our inner feelings cannot be adequately described by our outer expressions. Leah's descendant is Dovid, the small son of Yishai who gets overlooked – when Shmuel tells Yishai that one of his sons will be a *melech*, they don't even

think that Dovid is a possible candidate!

Rachel on the other hand represents genuine *yofi*, the second type that we described before. She is a *yefas to'ar*. She is the mother of Yosef. She is the matriarch of the family that produced Shaul who was impressive in stature *mishichmo ulema'alah mikol ha'am*.

### Answering our Questions

A *tzadik gammur* is the epitome of *yofi* – he never sinned and his external actions are a reflection of a pristine *neshama*. A *ba'al teshuvah*, on the other hand, is a reflection of *hod*. He is flawed on the outside, but something inside of him is pushing him to rise up, to do *teshuvah* and to enhance his spiritual personality.

Yosef is a *tzadik* because he never succumbed to the pressures of *eisesh* Potifar. Yehudah, is a *ba'al teshuvah* because his *did* succumb to sinning with Tamar. *Yosef* is *yofi* and Yehudah is *hod*. Even the letters of their names bear this out.

On *Chanukah* we celebrate the defeat of the wrong kind of *yofi* by emphasizing *hod* and *hiddur*.

We not only have *hiddur*, but *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. That which we see in the physical world is the tip of the iceberg as far as the beauty that lies beneath.

On *Chanukah*, it is first *lehodos* and only then *lehaleil*.

Physical limitations do not constrict us on *Chanukah* – *giborim beyad chalashim*, a single jug of oil lasts for 8 days. There is more potential latent than that which we can perceive. It is struggling to come out.

*Purim* is recorded in *Tanach*, it is given a physical place in a scroll. *Chanukah* is not in *Tanach* or even *Mishnah* – there is no shell that holds its ideas.

Each of the *yamim tovim de'oraisa umiderabanan* are represented by one of the 7 *mashkim*. Pesach is represented by *dam pesach*, while *Sukkos* is represented by *nisuch hamayim*, Shavuot by *chalav*, Rosh Hashanah by honey, and Yom Kippur by dew. *Purim* is represented by *yayin*, and *Chanukah* by *shemen*. The very character of *shemen* is such that the bitter fruit carries within it the most valuable of all *mashkim* (the *Gemara* consistently assumes that oil is more expensive than wine).



## Lighting the Menorah In Shul

Yaakov Feldman ('24)

One of the most memorable aspects of *Chanukah* is lighting the *menorah* in *shul*. This practice, however, has a much more interesting basis than meets the eye. For one, there is no source in the *Gemara* for lighting the *menorah* in *Shul*, but it does appear in the *Shulchan Aruch*, meaning that the *minhag* must have developed at some point during the time of the *Rishonim*. Furthermore, there are multiple unique factors to this custom, leaving it in its own category of sorts. For example, the *Shulchan Aruch* says that we do make a *bracha* on the lighting in *shul*, despite the fact that it is a *minhag*. This is strange considering the opinion of the *Shulchan Aruch* on another notable *minhag* in *shuls* - *hallel* on *Rosh Chodesh*. Concerning this *hallel*, the *Shulchan Aruch* says that there is no *bracha*, due to the fact that it is a *minhag*. The *Minchas Elimelech* offers an important distinction between the two that resolves this seemingly glaring discrepancy. In the case of *hallel* on *Rosh Chodesh*, the *hallel* itself is specifically changed (we only say half *hallel*) so it becomes a separate *minhag* and not the same as the classic *mitzvah* of *hallel*. However, by *Chanukah*, the *minhag* is performing the *mitzvah*, so a *bracha* can be made on that *mitzvah* action.

Another interesting detail of this *minhag* is the question of whether or not the lighting of the *menorah* in *shul* requires a *minyan*. Rav Yaakov Emden, for one, is of the opinion that there needs to be a *minyan* in order to make the *bracha* on the *menorah* in *shul*. This seems a little odd, considering the fact that a *minyan* is not needed in order to make the *bracha* on lighting at home. An interesting comment of Rav Asher Weiss can help address this question, as Rav Asher Weiss quotes R' Chaim Soloveitchik as always being careful to light the *menorah* before *kaddish* towards the end of *davening*, when the *tefillah* is still considered *tefillah betzibbur*. From this it is clear that there is some type of *tzibbur* aspect to the *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah*; it's not that lighting in *shul* is a *kiyum* of a personal *mitzvah*, but that there is a separate *mitzvah* for the community to light the *menorah*, and there are separate considerations of *pirsumei nissah* for both the individual and the *tzibbur*.

A third caveat to the *shul menorah* lighting is the fact that

one is not *yotzei* his personal obligation by just being in *shul* for *menorah* lighting. The Vilna Gaon gives two interesting reasons for this, one based on a novel concern and one rooted in *halacha*. First, he cites the concern that if lighting in *shul* was enough, almost nobody would have a lit *menorah* on display in their own home, potentially leading to the misconception that they are not doing the *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah* at all. Second, he writes that there is the directive of *ner ish ubaiso*, meaning that each household should have a lit *menorah*. However, if we factor in these reasons, a glaring problem arises: if there are so many details that point to the importance of lighting at home, why light in *shul* at all?

There are two possible answers to this question, both of which can justify lighting the *menorah* in *shul* in addition to lighting at home. First, there is the concept of doing certain things in *shul* for guests or poor people who don't have the opportunity to do the *mitzvah* themselves. At first glance, it seems that this is similar to making *kiddush* in *shul*. However, the reasoning that the *Gemara* gives for this practice (that it's for poor people eating in the *shul*) no longer applies *bezman hazeh*, so there must be a further reason. What emerges from this is that it seems there is always value in doing *mitzvos* in public places for the *pirsumei nisah* element, which is likely the reason that *kiddush* is still made in many *shuls*. This is especially true with the *menorah*, because nowadays many people are unable to get the full *pirsumei nisah* of their personal *menorahs* since it is not widespread to put *menorahs* outside in *chutz la'aretz*.

All in all, it is clear that the seemingly simple and logical practice of lighting the *menorah* in *shul* is much more intricate than one may think. Hopefully with the contents of this piece in mind, we can all gain a better appreciation for what is really going on in our *shuls* and schools during *chanukah*.

## **Chanukah: The Quintessential Mitzvah**

### **Derabanan...Right?**

Yitzchak Hagler ('22)

Let me pose an absurd question. Is the holiday of *Chanukah* *de'oraysa* or *derabanan*? At first glance, there's not much to talk about. *Chanukah* is not mentioned in the *Torah*, nor even in any of the books of *Tanach*, as it took place after the events described in *Tanach*. Thus, it doesn't surprise us that the Rambam (*Hilchos Megillah Vechanukkah* 3:3), when describing the *Mitzvos* of *simcha*, *hallel*, and *hadlakas neiros* on *Chanukah*, uses phrases such as "*takannas Chachamim*" and "*Mitzvah midivrei Sofrim*." However, when we dig a little deeper, we discover a much more nuanced picture of *Chanukah*, one which sees it seem to transcend some of the confines of the typical *din derabanan*.

#### *I. Ba'al Tosef*

The *Gemara* (*Megillah* 14a) states that the only thing the *neviim* ever added on to the corpus of *Torah* was *mikrah Megillah*. The *Gemara* inquires after the legitimacy of making such an addition. How can the *neviim* create a new *Mitzvah* not found in the *Torah*? The answer is that they used a *kal vachomer*, which goes as follows: if *Bnei Yisrael* sang *shira* upon going from servitude in *Mitzrayim* to freedom, how much more so is it appropriate to sing *shira* upon being saved from certain death (in the *neis* of *Purim*). Rashi wonders why the *Gemara* doesn't discuss *neiros Chanukah*, as it is seemingly another *Mitzvah derabanan* appended to the original *Mitzvos mede'oraysa*. He answers that the *Gemara* was talking only about additions made by the *neviim*, and so *neiros Chanukah*, which was instituted after the cessation of *nevuah*, was not mentioned. Rav Nathaniel Helfgot (writing on the VBM) explains that according to Rashi, *mikrah megillah* poses a problem of *ba'al tosef* because it was inspired by *ru'ach hakodesh*, and so it is a *Mitzvah* on the level of *divrei kaballah*. *Chanukah*, on the other hand, is a normal *derabanan*, and so no concern of *ba'al tosef* exists.

The Maharsha has trouble understanding this Rashi. Why

should the *issur* of *ba'al tosef* apply only to new *Mitzvos* created by the *neviim*, but not those created by *Chachamim* of later generations? The Maharsha answers that our *Gemara* really should have raised the question of *ba'al tosef* even by *neiros Chanukah*, but it neglected to do so because its discussion was only about additions enacted by the *neviim*. However, continues the Maharsha, being that *neiros Chanukah* is not a violation of *ba'al tosef*, we are forced to assume that it too was hinted to in some *derashah* in the *Torah*. In these words of the Maharsha, we find the first indications that maybe *neiros Chanukah* are more than a *din derabanan*; maybe they, like *mikrah megillah*, are rooted in some way in *Torah shebik-sav*.

## II. Chiyuvei Cheftzah

(The following comes from a shiur given by my Rebbe, Rabbi Mendelson)

In general, *Mitzvos* (both positive and negative *Mitzvos*) take effect on the world in one of two ways: either the *Mitzvah* creates an intrinsic reality of obligation or violation in an action or object (known as a *chovah* or *chiyuv* on the *cheftza*), or it creates an obligation or violation on the person performing the action, while the action/object itself has no inherent good or evil to it (a *chovah* or *chiyuv* on the *gavra*). The *Nesivos Hamishpat* (234:3) famously asserts that while *Mitzvos de'oraysa* have the power to create *chiyuvei cheftza*, *Mitzvos derabanan* can only create *chiyuvei gavra*. This makes sense, because although each person has a *chiyuv* not to rebel against the Rabanan, the Rabanan don't have the power to create the reality of *chovah* on an action or object. Thus, if one violates an *issur de'oraysa*, regardless of their intention, they have done something inherently wrong, but if one violates an *issur derabanan*, it would not be considered an *aveirah*, as one cannot rebel against the Rabanan unintentionally. Rav Yoesf Engel (*Asun De'oraysa klal yud*) explains that the reason for this distinction is that only Hashem, who owns the entire world, has the power to shape reality such that a certain action or object is intrinsically *assur*; the Rabanan can never reach that Divine level (see also *Koveitz Ha'aros* 8:15). However, this theory is thrown into question from a number

of different *dinim* in *hilchos Chanukah*.

### 1. *Shemen Hanossar Le'achar Chanukah*

Rav Yosef Engel (ibid) quotes the *Medresh Tanchuma* (Naso, 29) which rules that oil which is leftover after *Chanukah* needs to be burned by itself, because “*keivan shehuktzah lemitzvasah, assur lehishtameish meemenu*,” meaning that since it was set aside for its *Mitzvah*, one can not use it. Given what we have just seen in the *Nesivos*, this *din* is puzzling. Why should the *Mitzvah* of *neiros Chanukah*, a *Mitzvah derabanan*, turn this oil into a *cheftza shel Mitzvah*, an item which is intrinsically a *Mitzvah* item, unable to be used even after *Chanukah*? Rav Yosef Engel concludes that it must be that really, the *Rabanan* do have the power to mold reality, as when they declare something to be *assur* or *muttar*, Hashem makes it so that the reality of the world fits their guidelines. However, Rabbi Mendelson (*Ha'aros Kohein Ba'avodaso*, p. 125) suggested a possible answer to support the *Nesivos's* position. It's possible that although in general *chiyuvei derabanan* are *issurei gavra*, *neiros Chanukah* is an exception because, as the *Medresh* (ibid) describes, Hashem Himself says about *neiros Chanukah* to those who belittle it: “my sons, you are not permitted to say this, but rather whatever [the *Rabanan*] are *gozeir* on you, you should fulfill... for I agree to their words.” While normal *Derabanan* decrees can only take effect on the *gavra*, when it comes to *neiros Chanukah*, Hashem shapes reality in accordance with the *Mitzvah* of the *Rabanan*. This is why *Maseches Sofrim* (20:6) famously says that “*haneiros halalu kodesh heim*,” these candles are holy, and this is why oil leftover from *neiros Chanukah* is a *cheftzah shel Mitzvah*.

### 2. *Chovas Habayis* vs. *Chovas Hagavra*

(The following idea comes mostly from an article written by Rav Doniel Schreiber)

Rav Sheishes (*Shabbos* 23a) states that a guest is *chayav* in *neir Chanukah*. The *Ran* explains that without this statement, we might've thought to compare *neir Chanukah* to *mezuzah*, and so just like one who doesn't own a home (like a guest) has no *chiyuv* of *mezuzah*, so too *neir Chanukah*. According to this understanding, Rav Sheishes

would be coming to teach us that even one who doesn't own a home is *chayav* in *neir Chanukah*, presumably because *neir Chanukah* is a *Mitzvah* on every person (*chovas hagavra*), unlike *mezuzah*, which is a *Mitzvah* on the house (*chovas habayis*). However, this stance of the Ran isn't universally accepted. The Shibbolei Haleket quotes a machlokes ge'onim about the *chiyuv* of *neiros Chanukah* for one who owns two homes. The Geonim who hold that a dual homeowner only has to light once are easily explained- they seem to agree with the Ran that *neir Chanukah* is a *Mitzvah* on the *gavra*, and so as long as the *gavra* lights once, he has fulfilled his obligation. What about the Geonim who require two lightings for the two houses? It seems that they hold that really the *chiyuv* of *neiros Chanukah* is a *Mitzvah* on the house (like *mezuzah*) and so every house that one owns creates a new *chiyuv* of *hadlakas neiros*. This position seems to be reflected in the Rambam (*Hilchos Megillah Vechanukah* 4:1), who writes that the *Mitzvah* is for every house to light *neiros* (see also *Tosfos Sukkah* 46a, *d"h haro'eh*). (It must be noted that even if *neiros Chanukah* is a *chiyuv* on the *bayis*, that does not necessarily make it a *chiyuv* on the *cheftzah* of the *bayis*, as it can very well be that the parameters of the *chiyuv gavra* of *neiros Chanukah* are defined by one's connection to a particular house, not that the existence of the house automatically triggers the *chiyuv*.)

We now have two instances of *chiyuvei cheftza* by *neiros Chanukah*, supporting Rabbi Mendelson's theory about this *Mitzvah's* special prominence among *Mitzvos derabanan* (as a result of Hashem *kavayachol* getting personally involved in ensuring its fulfillment), and by extension supporting our broader thesis about the unique status of *Chanukah* and its *Mitzvos*.

### III. Zecher Lemikdash

(The following comes from a shiur given by my Rebbe, Rabbi Tanchum Cohen)

The *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 21) describes a machlokes *amora'im* about using the light of *neiros Chanukah* for one's personal needs. Rav Huna and Rav Chisda (as explained by Rava) hold that it's *muttar* to do so, while Rav (as explained by Rav Yirmiya) holds that it's *assur*. However, when we look at the very next *amud*, we find a very

different treatment of the issue of using the light from *neiros Chanukah* for personal needs. The *Gemara* (ibid 22a) quotes Rav Yehuda in the name of Rav Assi, who states that it's *assur* to count money using the light of *Chanukah neiros*. Shmuel wonders why this is so- "*vechee neir kedushah yeish bo*," do *Chanukah* candles have *kedushah*? Rav Yosef responds that counting money is a disgrace to the *Mitzvah* of *neiros Chanukah*, [and so it's *assur* to do so despite the fact that the candle lacks *kedushah*].

What is going on here? If using *neiros Chanukah* constitutes a disgrace of the *Mitzvah* (as the *sugya* on *daf chuf beis* implies), how do some of the *amoraim* permit it (on *daf chuf aleph*)? The Ba'al Hamor (9a in *dapei harif*, *dh lema'an de'amar assur lehishtameish*) explains that everyone agrees that a mundane usage of *neiros Chanukah*, like using its light to count money, is a disgrace to the *Mitzvah* and therefore prohibited. The *machlokes amora'im* was about using the *neiros Chanukah* for a holier purpose, such as reading a *Sefer* or a *seudas Mitzvah*. According to Rav Huna and Rav Chisda, since it is not disgraceful to use *neiros Chanukah* in such a way, it is permitted to do so. According to Rav, however, since *neiros Chanukah* is a *zeicher* to the *menorah* in the *Mikdash*, it is completely *assur* to get any sort of benefit from their light. In this Ba'al Hamor, we find a new perspective on *neiros Chanukah*. *Neiros Chanukah* don't just function as a vehicle of *parsumei nisah*, they are also a *zeicher* to the *menorah* in the *Mikdash*.

The *Braysa* (*Shabbos* 23a) writes that the year after the miracle of *chanukah* took place, the eight days during which it took place were established as "*yamim tovim bihallel vehoda'a*," festivals with *hallel* and thanksgiving. Rashi explains that *hallel* refers to the reading of *hallel* on these days, and *hoda'a* refers to the recitation of *al hanissim* in the *brachah* of *modim* in *shemonah esrei*. Interestingly enough, this *Braysa* fails to mention anything about the *Mitzvah* of *neiros Chanukah* (see however Rambam (*Hilchos Megillah Vechanukah* 3:3), where he might be understanding the word *hoda'a* in the *Braysa* to be referring to *neiros Chanukah*). Rabbi Cohen, in the name of Rav Herschel Shachter and Rav Betzael Zolty, suggested that maybe *Channukah* was originally created as a holiday of thanksgiving to Hashem, with its only *Mitzvos* being the recitation of *hallel* and *al hanissim*. However, after *churban bayis sheini*

(around 200 years after the miracle of *Chanukah*), the *Mitzvah* of *neiros Chanukah* was added to *Chanukah* in order to publicize and celebrate the miracle in a way which would also remind *Bnei Yisrael* throughout the generations of the *Mikdash* they had lost.

The *Gemara* (*Sukkah* 41a, *Rosh Hashanah* 30a) derives the obligation to enact *Mitzvos* as a remembrance of the *Mikdash* from a *passuk* in *Yirmiyahu*. Thus, if the *Mitzvah* of *neiros Chanukah* is really motivated (at least partially) by the need to remember the *Mikdash*, it seems that we've found another avenue through which the *Mitzvah* of *neiros Chanukah* is actually rooted in a *passuk* in *Tanach*.

#### IV. Spending Money on *neiros Chanukah*

The *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 671:1) writes that even one so poor that they rely on *tzedakah* for their food supply should borrow money or sell their clothing in order to buy oil for *neiros Chanukah*. This is somewhat surprising, as generally (see Rama OC 656:1 and Mishnah Berurah OC 25:1:2) we assume that a person shouldn't spend more than a fifth of his money even on *Mitzvos de'oraysa*, yet here the *Shulchan Aruch* is requiring one to spend all of their money on the *Mitzvah derabanan* of *neir Chanukah*!! Furthermore, the *Shulchan Aruch* (OC 678:1) writes that if one only has enough money for either *kiddush hayom* or *neir Chanukah*, he should use the money for *neiros Chanukah*. This too is puzzling, as *kiddush hayom* is seemingly a *Mitzvah mede'oraysa* (see *Pesachim* 106a), and so why does it take second place to *neiros Chanukah*?

To answer our first question, almost all of the *poskim* explain that *neiros Chanukah* demands such a high financial investment—higher than even *Mitzvos asey de'oraysa*—because it is an expression of *pirsumei nisah*. As for our question about *kiddush hayom*, the Mishnah Berurah explains that even though *kiddush hayom* is *de'oraysa*, it can be done without wine, and so the *chiyuv* of buying wine for *kiddush* is a *mederabanan*, putting it on an equal playing field with *neiros Chanukah*. However, these answers lead to more difficulties. What's so great about *pirsumei nisah* that it works here to make the standards of observance of a *Mitzvah derabanan* higher



than *Mitzvos de'oraysa*? Also, even if we accept the Mishnah Berurah's assumption that *kiddush hayom* on wine is *derabanan*, *kiddush hayom* itself is still a *Mitzvah* which has an aspect of *de'oraysa* to it, and so it should take precedence over the *Mitzvah midirabanan* of *neir Chanukah*? Let's put these questions on hold for now and turn our attention to an eye-opening Chasam Sofer.

Until now, we've worked hard to find guesses and hints to *Chanukah* being anything more than a typical *din derabanan*. The evidence is certainly convincing, but we haven't come across an iron clad *mekor* to lend weight to our theory. All of that changes with the Chasam Sofer. The Chasam Sofer (*ShuT OC 208*) writes that the *chiyuv* of remembering the *neis* of *Chanukah* is a *chiyuv de'oraysa*, derived from the *kal vachomer* the *Gemara* in *Megillah* invokes to support the institution of *Purim*. That *kal vachomer* teaches that whenever Hashem performs a *neis* for us, there's a *chiyuv de'oraysa* to create a *zeicher* to that *neis* for future generations. The exact nature of this *zeicher* (*mikrah megillah* on *purim* and *hadlakas neiros* on *Chanukah*) is *derabanan*, but the existence of the *zeicher* itself is *de'oraysa* (see however *Ha'emek She'eilah, She'eltos, Vayishlach 26*).

Based on this Chasam Sofer, we can attempt to answer our questions. Maybe, because of the Chasam Sofer's application of the *kal vachomer*, *pirsumei nisah* is like a *chiyuv de'oraysa*, and this is why it demands such financial sacrifice. Furthermore, the reason why *kiddush hayom* and *neiros Chanukah* are comparable is because both of them have are a broad *chiyuv de'oraysa* manifest in a specific *chiyuv derabanan*- the *chiyuv de'oraysa* of *kiddush* is manifest in the *chiyuv derabanan* of *kiddush* on wine, and the *de'oraysa* of *pirsumei nisah* is manifest in the *chiyuv derabanan* of *neiros Chanukah*.

## V. Conclusion

So all in all, what are we coming out with? Besides for an excuse to gain some insight into the beautiful sugyos of *Chanukah*, what have we discovered? Let's start with the most explicit *mekor* we saw- the Chasam Sofer. The Chasam Sofer posited that the *chi-*

yuv of publicizing the *neis* of *Chanukah* is a *chiyuv mede'oraysa*, learned out from the *kal vachomer* in *Megillah*, and the Rabanan decided that the *kiyum* of this *chiyuv* should take place through the means of lighting *neiros Chanukah*. So it seems that at least the *pirsumei nissah* aspect of *Chanukah*, the *chiyuv* to make a *yom tov* to praise and thank Hashem for the miracles He did to us “*bayamim haheim bazman hazeh*,” is a *chiyuv* stemming straight from the *Torah* itself.

However, this isn't all. Not only is the *chiyuv* of *pirsumei nissah* on *Chanukah* on a higher level than regular *dinim derabanan*, but even the *neiros Chanukah* themselves have something special to them. We first saw this reflected in the Maharsha, who argued that there must be some *derashah* in the *Torah* justifying the *Mitzvah* of *neiros Chanukah*. We next saw it in the fact that *neiros Chanukah*, unlike other *dinim derabanan*, seems to include various *chiyuvim* on *cheftza'os* (leftover oil and the *chiyuv* on the *bayis*), because, as Rabbi Mendelson explained, Hashem gave His personal stamp of approval to this *Mitzvah*. Lastly, we encountered the Ba'al Hamor, who proved that (according to one opinion in the *Gemara* in *shabbos*) the *Mitzvah* of *neiros Chanukah* arises from the *chiyuv midivrei neviim* to enact remembrances of the *Mikdash*.

I hope that with these insights we can gain a deeper appreciation of the significance of the magnificent holiday of *Chanukah*, allowing us to truly relate to the Rambam's loving declaration that “*Mitzvas Chanukah Mitzvah chavivah hee ad me'od*,” the *Mitzvah* of *Chanukah* is exceedingly beloved.

(For more on this topic, see *Maharitz Sha'arei Simcha*; the Rambam's list of *mitzvos* at the beginning of *Mishnah Torah*, Rambam (3:3, 4:13) where he calls *neiros Chanukah* a *Mitzvah midivrei sofrim* like *mikrah megillah* and *kiddush hayom* and *Kesef Mishnah Hilchos Issurei Bee'ah* 1:2 where he says that *divrei sofrim* in the Rambam is referring to *de'oraysa*; *Shabbos* 24a about *al hanissim* and *Beis Yosef* OC 187:13; and the first of the Rambam's *sharashim* and Ramban there)

## Seeking Out Pirsumei Nisa

Rabbi Chaim Axelrod

The *Yom Tov* of *Chanukah* is permeated with the theme of *Pirsumei Nisa*, publicizing both the miracle of the *Menorah* and the victory against the Greeks. We normally focus on the major expressions of *Pirsumei Nisa*, such as the lighting of the *Menorah* and the recitation of *Al Hanisim*. However, there is also a minute detail hidden within the *Halacha* that serves to be an expression of *Pirsumei Nisa* in its own unique way.

The *Shulchan Aruch* records an argument between the *Mechaber* and the *Rama* about the Torah reading for the second day of *Chanukah*. The *Mechaber* explains that the *Kohen Aliya* and the *Levi Aliya* divide the section of the *Parshas Hanisi'im* that is entitled “*Bayom Hasheini*”. The *Mechaber* then explains that the *Shlishi Aliya* goes back and reads the entire section of “*Bayom Hasheini*” again. The *Rama* argues, citing a tradition which he advocates that we follow. The *Rama* explains that the *Shlishi Aliya* should be the section entitled “*Bayom Hashlishi*”, without any repetition of “*Bayom Hasheini*”.

The great 19th century sage Rabbi Moshe Greenwald offers a fascinating explanation of this debate in his *Sefer, Arugas Habosem*. He explains that there is a different debate that should be considered in order to appreciate the varying opinions of the *Kriah* for the second day of *Chanukah*. The *Ran* and the *Rambam* argue about which day the battles of the *Chanukah War* came to an end. The *Ran* is of the opinion that the *Chanukah War* ended on the 24th day of *Kislev*, while the *Rambam* contends that it actually ended on the 25th day of *Kislev*.

The *Arugas Habosem* aligns the opinions from the two debates with perfect precision. According to the *Ran*, the second day of *Chanukah* is also the third day since the victory in battle was three days prior. To highlight and accentuate this detail, we should extend the *Kriah* of that day and have the *Shlishi Aliya* read from “*Bayom Hashlishi*” to remember and recall that this is the third day since the military victory. This fits in well the opinion of the *Rama* that we cited above.

The opinion of the *Mechaber* about the second day’s *Kriah*

follows the approach of the Rambam. Since the war ended on the 25th, the second day of *Chanukah* is also the second day since the victory. One would therefore elect to read from “*Bayom Hasheini*” again, in order to focus on the celebration of the victory of the War. Small actions that continue the theme of *Pirsumei Nisa*.

What this explanation of the *Arugas Habosem* highlights for me is the desire to express our overwhelming thanks to Hashem for the miracles of the days of *Chanukah*. I believe that there is a hidden charge to each of us to continue to focus on all the details within our own lives, and that we should choose to constantly offer our thanks for all the goodness that Hashem has bestowed upon us.

## **Pirsumei Nisa? Why?**

Eitan Rochwarger ('23)

The *gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* (21b) explains that it is a *mitzvah* for one to put their *menorah* in front of their house outside. Rashi explains that when it is placed outside, it is put in a courtyard where all the neighbors can see it for “*pirsumei nisah*,” meaning to publicize the miracle. But what is this miracle?

Earlier on the same *daf*, the *gemara* explains the *Chanukah* story. The *gemara* explains how the Greeks made the *Beis Hamikdash* into a place of *tumah* and there was only one sealed cruse of oil. The *gemara* continues that the *Chnaukah* miracle was that this oil kept the wicks of the *menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* lit for eight nights (the amount of time it took to resupply the oil).

Nowadays, we light our miniature *menorahs* outside, or facing outside by a window, for all to see the light. However, what do the Rabbis believe one receives for following this *mitzvah*, and how does it help our understanding of why we do the *mitzvah*?

The *gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* (23b) explains that one who lights candles (for *Chanukah* and *Shabbos*) will merit to have children who are *Talmidei Chachamim*. Rashi here explains that since a *mitzvah* is like a candle and the Torah is like a light, when lighting the *Chanukah* and *Shabbos* candles you are allowing the light of Torah to shine. Everyone who sees the candles outside is seeing the light of Torah. The *Bnei Yissaschar* takes this idea further by bringing it back to the *Chanukah* story. They write that the Greeks wanted to nullify this light of Torah, so the miracle was done through oil and a *menorah* (references to wisdom which keep the light of Torah alight).

Furthermore, the *gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* (21b) furthers the discussion regarding the importance of *pirsumei nisah* with the lighting of our *menorah*. The *gemara* says that even if the time for lighting has passed one is still able to light as long as the traffic in the marketplace has not yet rested. The Rambam adds in his *Hilchos Chanukah v'Megilah* (4:5) that the time after sunset and the traffic resting in the marketplace is approximately thirty minutes after sunset, and one needs to make sure he puts enough oil to last through that period of time. He concludes by saying that: one can

blow out or take away the flames once the traffic has rested in the marketplace (there is no longer anyone passing the house to see the flames). Nevertheless, both the *gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* and the Rambam put the notion of *pirsumei nisah* as the “*ikkur*” for the *mitzvah* of *hadlakas neiros*.

Finally, throughout the holiday of *Chanukah* during davening and *bentching*, the *tefillah* of “*al hanissim*” and “*bimei Matisyahu ben Yochanan...*” is added. In this *tefillah* we are praising Hashem and all that He has done for us. Specifically, the *tefillah* refers to the story of *Chanukah*. In the end of the *tefillah*, it is written that the eight days of *Chanukah* were made to give: “*lihodos ulihallel lisimcha hagadol*” - *thanks and praises to Your name*. These words explain what the whole holiday is really about. All Jews set aside eight days from their busy lives to go home a little earlier (for most) and light candles for the whole world to see. This action spreads the light of Torah around the world and shows Hashem our love for Him and all He does for us. May we light our *Chanukah* candles this year knowing the impact it gives off to the world and how privileged we Jews are to be part of the extremely special nation of *Am Yisroel*.

## The Case of the Lonely Chanukiah - A Halachic Dive

Rabbi Yaakov Werblowsky ('92)

Imagine the following situation: one night of Chanukah someone comes back late from a Chanukah party or from work and he is the only one home. He lives on a quiet street which is deserted at the time. Can he make a *berachah* on his Chanukah candles? What if other people are home but they are sleeping – must he wake them? What if it is earlier in the evening, but he finds himself in a location where there are no Jews who will see his candles?

This issue is debated by the *poskim*, without a clear consensus. The Magen Avraham (672:6) believes that one cannot light with a *berachah* unless there is someone else awake to see the candles, and this position is adopted by many other Poskim, such as the Chaye Adam (154:17) and the Aruch Hashulchan (*Orach Chayim* 672:6). The Mishnah Berurah (672:11) cites this opinion as well, and says that, ideally, if one arrives home and everyone in the house is sleeping, one should wake up members of his household (if he can) so that they can see the candles he is lighting. However, in his note in the Shaar Hatziyun (672:17), the Mishnah Berurah quotes a sefer called Chemed Moshe who posits that even if one finds himself on Chanukah in a location with no Jews, or he arrives home late and cannot wake his family (or is by himself), he should still make a *berachah* on his candles. The Mishnah Berurah's conclusion is that *safek berachos l'hakel* – when in doubt, skip the *berachah* – but if one wants to make a *berachah ein mochin b'yado* (we shouldn't object). Rav Moshe Feinstein (*Orach Chayim* 4:105:7) goes further, saying definitively that one can and must always make a *berachah*, even if there are no observers.

What are the central issues in this debate? It seems that there are two: 1) What is the relationship between the mitzvah of *hadlakas neiros chanukah* and *pirsumei nisa* according to the Gemara? 2) What are the parameters of the mitzvah nowadays?

At first glance, our questions are explicitly debated in the Rishonim. The Gemara in *Shabbos* (23b) describes *ner chanukah* as a mitzvah of *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle). Earlier (21b),

the Gemara states that the mitzvah is to light the candles outside the front door; however, *b'shas hasakanah* (at a time of danger) one may light even on his table inside *בשעת הסכנה מניחו על שולחנו ודי*. It also states there that the time to light (at least according to one opinion) is specifically at the beginning of the night when people are out in the market. All this points to the fact that the mitzvah is to light the candles such that others will view them. However, there is a debate in the Rishonim as to what the *halachah* is *b'dieved*. The Rashba's opinion is that if one hasn't fulfilled the mitzvah during the ideal time, he can light the whole night. The Ritva also believes that this is true, but he says that after there are no longer people outside one should light inside, because it is no worse than *shas hasakanah*. But other Rishonim, such as Tosfos and the Rambam, hold that once the time has expired it is too late to light. They seem to be arguing about exactly our issue: the Rashba and Ritva hold one can light the whole night even though there is no longer any *pirsumei nisa*, and Tosfos and the Rambam believe that without *pirsumei nisa* there is no mitzvah.

However, this is not so simple. Indeed, Rav Moshe Feinstein maintains that there is a mitzvah of *hadlakas neiros* which exists independently of *pirsumei nisa* according to all Rishonim, not only the Rashba and his camp. According to Rav Moshe, Tosfos and the Rambam merely argue that Chazal gave a fixed time for the mitzvah based on *pirsumei nisa*, but not that absent *pirsumei nisa* there is no mitzvah. His proof is that when it comes to *krias hamegillah* on *Purim*, which is also a mitzvah of *pirsumei nisa*, if one is by himself he must still read the Megillah. Therefore, Rav Moshe explains, since nowadays (at least in *chutz la'aretz*) we light inside and later than the time mentioned in the Gemara, we can also light when no one is around or awake. (It would seem that his reading of Tosfos, at least, is debatable, because Tosfos are the ones who say that since nowadays we light inside for the household members one can light later; this implies that there is no fixed time for lighting, and that the only limitation during the time of Chazal was, in fact, the absence of *pirsumei nisa*.) On the other hand, if one pays close attention to the words of the Rashba he never says that one can light even if no one sees the candles. The Rashba concludes one can light



all night even though ליכא פרסומי ניסא כולי האי (there is not that much *pirsumei nisa*). One could infer that if there was absolutely no *pirsumei nisa*, the Rashba would actually hold that one couldn't light.

This debate amongst the Rishonim relates to the explanation of the Gemara; however, for many centuries the practice in most places in *chutz la'aretz* has been to light inside the house, and, in terms of timing, to light deep into the night. What is the justification for this? After all, it is clear that it wasn't always dangerous, and the Tur (672) even comments that the practice was specifically to light inside the front door while it was open so people outside could see! Many of the Rishonim use the expression that in our times we are primarily concerned to have the candles seen by the בני הבית (the household members). There is a novel suggestion by Rav Yehoshua Ehrenberg (Av Beis Din in Yaffo in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century) in his *Sefer Devar Yehoshua* (40) that after the time of the Gemara, due to various decrees, the Rabbis actually redirected the mitzvah of *ner chanukah* from being focused on *pirsumei nisa* toward those outside to ensuring *pirsumei nisa* toward those who are present in the house. He even goes as far as to suggest that one must light inside. According to him, there is no reason to believe the parameters of *pirsumei nisa* have changed, just the intended viewers. However, some *poskim* (chief amongst them Rav Elyashiv) disagree with him and argue that the practice in *chutz la'aretz* was based on a broad understanding of *shas hasakana* due to living amongst the non-Jews or technical difficulties, an idea which is already found in the Ritva. Based on this, they insist that in *Eretz Yisrael* nowadays one must light outside if possible. If this is the case, it stands to reason that even though we in *chutz la'aretz* must try to maximize *pirsumei nisa*, if one has no alternative and no one else is around to see the candles he still has a *mitzvah* to light, just as בשעת הסכנה מניחו על שולחנו ודין .

## **Hiddur Mitzvah**

Yaakov Weinstock ('22)

The Rambam writes that one person lights all the candles of the nights, and even if one wishes to fulfill the mitzvah of *mehadrin min hamehadrin* (and therefore each member of the family has their own menorah,) only one person makes a *brachah* and lights all the candles. However, the Rama (O"C 671:2) writes that each person lights their own *menorah* and make their own *brachos*. What is this *machlokes* all about?

The *Brisker Rav* (*Hilchos Chanukah* 4:1) writes that this is a fundamental *machlokes* in how we view the idea of *hiddur mitzvah*. The main *chiyuv* is the simple level of one candle per household and everything afterwards is considered just a *hiddur mitzvah* and therefore the *machlokes* is whether the *hiddur mitzvah* is considered completely separate from the actual *mitzvah* or is it connected and part of the actual *ma'aseh mitzvah* itself. According to the Rambam that one person lights all the candles for everyone, he believes that the *ma'aseh mitzvah* and the *hiddur mitzvah* are two separate entities and therefore, you can't make a separate *brachah* on just the *hiddur* because a *brachah* can only be made on a *ma'aseh mitzvah* and this isn't considered a *ma'aseh mitzvah*. However, according to the Rama who says that each person can light their own *Chanukah* candles and make a *brachah* on it is because the *hiddur mitzvah* and the actual *ma'aseh mitzvah* are all connected and all one thing, perhaps one can say that according to the Rama the *hiddur mitzvah* is part of the *ma'aseh mitzvah* and therefore, every member can light their own *menorah* and make a *brachah* because they are part of the *ma'aseh mitzvah* itself. This *Brisker Rav* begins to push us to try to understand better what *hiddur mitzvah* is all about and through that we will have the ability to understand more fundamentally what *ner chanukah* is all about.

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* gives us a source for this idea of beautifying *mitzvos*. The *Gemara* learns it out from the *pasuk* of "zeh keili vi'anvehu" that we need to beautify Hashem with *olot mitzvos* and therefore we are required to have a nice *sefer Torah* or a nice *lulav* and a nice *shofar*. Our *mitzvos* should be done in the best way possible. The *Gemara* in *Bava Kamma* (9b) explains

that a person needs to be willing to spend a third of the price more for *hiddur mitzvah*. As Rashi writes in *Bava Kamma*, that if I find two *sifrei Torah* that are able to be used and one is more *mehudar* than the other, one needs to be willing to spend a third of a higher price for the second one. From these *Gemaras* we see that *hiddur mitzvah* isn't only a nice thing to do, but there is an actual obligation to this *chiyuv*. Once we establish that it sounds like from the *Gemara* itself that there is an obligation, isn't it possible to say that a *hiddur mitzvah* is a *na'aseh mitzvah* in it's own right? Why does the *Brisker Rav* assume that the *machlokes* is about the the connection of the actual *ma'aseh mitzvah* to the *hiddur mitzvah*? Why isn't the *hiddur mitzvah* a *ma'aseh mitzvah* on it's own?

I heard from my 11th Grade Rebbe, Rabbi Mendelson, who said in the name of Rabbi Yudin, a way to perhaps answer this question. The Rashbam writes in the beginning of *Arvei Pesachim* that the reason there is an *issur* to eat *samuch li'mincha* is because as a *hiddur mitzvah*. However, the Ran writes that the reason of the *gezeira derabannan* is in order one doesn't eat an *achila gasa*. What is the *machlokes rishonim* all about?

Rabbi Mendelson quoted in the name of Rabbi Yudin that when one looks at the *Gemara* in *Shabbos* of what the *geder hamitzvah* is the way *hiddur* is described is all in the context of *cheftzei mitzvah*, mitzvah objects. A nice *lulav* or a nice pair of *tzitzis*. The *machlokes* between the Ran and the Rashbam is whether a *ma'aseh mitzvah* can have a *hiddur mitzvah* or you can only be *mehader a cheftza shel mitzvah*.

What is *hiddur*? Is it just buying a nice pair of *tzitzis* or *tefillin*? That sounds impossible. But rather the *geder* is to be *yotzei* with *cheftzei mitzvah* that are *mehudar*. If that's true, then we can answer our original question as to why *hiddur mitzvah* can't be a *ma'aseh mitzvah bifnei atzma*. The reason is that the *geder* of the *mitzvah* is fundamentally connected to being *yotzei* the *mitzvah* and therefore the assumption in the entire *machlokes* explained by the *Brisker Rav* is that *hiddur* can't be a *ma'aseh mitzvah bifnei atzmo* because the *hiddur* is being *yotzei* with a beautified *cheftza shel mitzvah*.

As one thinks about how one conducts his *avodas Hashem*, it

is easy to do *mitzvos* throughout the day and view it as a checklist. The entire idea of *hiddur mitzvah* teaches us that in *avodas Hashem* one can't be complacent. One needs to try to fulfill *mitzvos* and to improve constantly in our *avodas Hashem* and that is what the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* is all about. From a halachic level, *tamei* oil was able to be used for the *menorah*, but they didn't want to. Rav Yosef Engel explains that when it came to the rededication of the *Beis Hamikdash* they didn't want to start off the *Beis Hamikdash* in a *bedi'eved* way. That isn't the way to start because the ideal is to fulfill the *mitzvah* in the best way possible. This *Chanukah* as we light our *Chanukah* candles we should realize how lucky we are to be able to serve Hashem, may it catapult us further to serve Hashem in the best way possible.

## The Light At the End of the Tunnel

Yoni Tandhasetti ('26)

The beginning of creation, like many other of Hashem's wonders, was filled with creativity and miraculous wonders. It began with a flood of divine light that we don't fully understand properly, but we know that it was a wavelength that was different from any we experience daily. After the beginning, this light was covered and veiled by layers until Hashem said "*Di*" - *enough*. The world at this time was so thick and vicious that someone can go their entire lives without stopping to seriously think: "Where does this all come from?" However, it was filled with enough wonder that people like Avraham Avinu and his sons - us - can ask and deduce to find out that Hashem is the true creator of this world.

Jewish history also begins with an explosion of light. The *Sfas Emes* explains that the 10 plagues of the Egyptians was an undressing and reversal of the world's creation. It is no mystery that the ninth plague of darkness is also explained as an increase of light. Many were blinded by this light. Those whose eyes were adjusting to the reality and truth of Hashem were benefited by it, and those who were in denial, were overwhelmed by the sudden truth of that light. Some *Rabbeim* interpret these incidents as though we are going through history like a tunnel. We benefit and are inspired from the light at the beginning, and just as well when we are approaching the end, we begin to experience the light at the end of the tunnel, which is really the same light if you think about it.

At some point during our lives, we may find ourselves in a place where we are making an important decision that may affect ourselves as well as other people. This time may be very dark and it underlines a very complex question of the interaction between destiny and our individual initiative. It is impossible to take in every variable and predict how our decision will impact the future. Nevertheless, we must take the initiative to make the best decision we can and involve ourselves in the outcome. Hashem is the only one who truly knows the exact outcome of any circumstance. This is why we refer to him as "*Dayan Haemes*" - *the truthful judge*, he knows all the variables and takes it into account when he makes his decision. A human judge is limited to here and now, it is the

hope of every judge that his limited grasp on truth and consequence will suffice for true justice.

This week's *parshah* is an excellent example of the interaction between destiny and individual initiative. From the moment that Yaakov purchased the birth right from Eisav, he assumed the role of Yaakov and Eisav. As the *medrash* relates, Yaakov was supposed to marry Rachel and Eisav was supposed to marry Leah. Each would have given birth to six of the *shevatim* and Yaakov and Eisav would have forged an unbreakable bond. Instead, Yaakov rightfully took away Eisav's ability to be one of the *avos* - and Yaakov married Rachel and Leah. Rashi explains how Lavan confused Yaakov into marrying Leah. Yaakov suspected his uncle of deception and gave Rachel signs to insure that he was indeed marrying Rachel. When Rachel saw that Lavan was going to marry off Leah to Yaakov, she gave over the signs to Leah so that she wouldn't be humiliated when Yaakov discovered the trick.

Rachel acted with love and compassion towards Leah in protecting her from humiliation. However, she could not have known the price she would have to pay for her decision. Rachel is the mother who is directly connected to sacrifice and compassion. She is the one who wasn't buried in the Cave of Machpelah so that she would be there when the Jews were taken to exile after the destruction of the *Beis Hamikdash*. We see from the Talmud that it was Rachel's tears and prayers at the time that the Jews passed by her that guaranteed Hashem's protection over the Jewish people and swift return to *Eretz Yisrael*.

There is a point in time, where there is neither light from the beginning nor from the end that we can benefit and be inspired from. That place can be very dark and discouraging, and we have to attempt to do what is right with our own intuition and hope that Hashem will give true justice. Like Rachel, we must not be afraid of sacrifice. We must live our lives with compassion and trust Hashem to do the rest. When we struggle for Hashem's sake, it will only result in growth within ourselves. *Chanukah* plays an important role. *Chanukah* is a bridge of light during the darkest of times. *Chanukah* provides the light necessary to make it through, benefitting and

gaining inspiration from it until we reach the light at the end of the tunnel.

## Celebrating the Full *Mitzvah* of the *Menorah*

Rabbi Eli Cohn ('oo)

The Rambam's description of the miracle of the oil (*Hilchos Chanukah* 3:2) calls into question the very date on which we should be celebrating *Chanukah*. The Rambam notes that the Jews vanquished their enemies on the 25<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev* and only then entered the *Heichal* searching for pure oil to light the *menorah*. The actual lighting of the *menorah*, and the ensuing miracle, only occurred that evening – which was already the 26<sup>th</sup> of *Kislev*. Why then did *chazal* establish the 25<sup>th</sup> as the day we start celebrating *Chanukah*?

Rav Soloveitchik is quoted (*Harire Kedem* 1:159) as explaining that although the actual lighting of the *menorah* occurred on the 26<sup>th</sup>, the preparation necessary for the lighting took place on the 25<sup>th</sup>. He notes that according to the Rambam this is of critical importance, as the *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah* also includes *hatavas haneiros*, the need to clean out the cups from the previous day's lighting and prepare them anew for the next day's *mitzvah*. The Rambam makes this clear in *Hilchos Tamidim u'Mumsafin* (3:10) where he notes that cleaning out and preparation of the *menorah* constitutes a *mitzvas aseï*, and furthermore in his *Sefer Hamitzvos* (25) where he describes the positive *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah* as not just kindling the flame but also arranging and preparing the lamps. As such, argued the Rav, it is proper to commence the celebration of *Chanukah* on the 25<sup>th</sup> because that is when the *mitzvah* started.

Based on the Rav's analysis of the Rambam, Rav Aharon Lichtenstein had the following insight into our celebration of *Chanukah*. The act of kindling a flame does not take all that much effort. When we light the *menorah* each night, we merely bring the *shamesh* close to the wick and a majestic flame emerges. In contrast, the preparation of the *menorah* takes work and effort – one needs to toil to clean out the blackened lamps and remove the soot from the night before. And when the work is done, while one has a clean vessel, it is not nearly as satisfying as the flickering flame that kindling accomplishes. *Hadlakah* requires minimal effort and gen-



erates considerable pleasure; *hatavah* requires significantly more work and yet the results are scarcely noticeable.

On *Chanukah* we celebrate both the *hadlakah* and the *hatavah*. While it is natural for the actual lighting of the flames to capture our imagination and become the focal point of the celebration, we all recognize the reality that there can be no *hadlakah* without a *hatavah* that precedes it. This is certainly true when we spend time considering the events of *Chanukah* itself – the miracle of the *pach hashemen* was only made possible by the long and hard struggle of the *Chashmonim* that preceded it. As our recitation of *al hanissim* stresses, we don't limit our *hakaros hatov* to Hashem to the miraculous events that occurred within the confines of the *Heichal*, but we recognize the *yad* Hashem that facilitated the military victories and the courageous revolt leading up to the fantastic *neis* of the *menorah*.

What is true of *Chanukah* in particular is certainly true of our *Avodas Hashem* in general. We often spend time celebrating the accomplishments and achievements in our learning or *gemilas chasadim*, and too often fail to recognize the toil and effort that leads to those impressive feats. It is exciting to dance and sing at our annual *Seudas Preidah* and *Siyum* in June, but it is sometimes harder to celebrate the efforts invested on Wednesday morning in *shiur* on a frigid February morning. It is easy to sense our growth and satisfaction in our learning in the former, and sometimes incredibly difficult to do the same in the latter. The complete *mitzvah* of kindling the *menorah* reminds us that it is all part of a single package – there can be no *hadlakah* without *hatavah* – and it is up to us to seriously engage and invest in the nitty gritty daily work that ultimately leads to meaningful growth in *Avodas Hashem*.

## **Hashem Hu HaElokim Ein Od Milvado**

Yossi Dietz ('18)

There is a story told of an Israeli soldier named Menachem who was standing guard near the Lebanon security zone. In his pocket he had a notecard on which his father had written part of the *passuk* in *Devarim*, "*Hashem hu haElokim, ain od milvado*" - *Hashem alone is G-d, there is no other*. Menachem and his fellow soldiers were under fire from Hezbollah terrorists when suddenly he spotted an anti-tank missile, strong enough to pierce the thick armor of a vehicle of war, flying toward his position. He realized there would be no escape and quickly recited the words written down in his pocket. Without warning or reason, the missile switched trajectory and arched over the hideout, landing with a tremendous explosion behind him. No one had any explanation, and the conclusion was made that the event was unnatural. It was a miracle. But what is a miracle and how can they help us live better lives?

The Rambam, in his discussion on *Pirkei Avos*, writes that Hashem embedded all miracles into the fabric of creation. The Rambam believes that it would be incorrect to say Hashem made a miracle in the moment, as that would imply some form of an imperfection with the world. Rather, he writes, all miracles were fashioned into the creation. For example, water was created to flow downstream, but also with the ability to flow in the opposite direction on a few occasions.

The Ramban disagrees. He writes that miracles are a fundamental shift away from the normal way for the world to work and are *ma'aleh min hateva*. The Meshech Chochma appears to agree with the Ramban and adds that the purpose of miracles is to allow us to remember that Hashem is in charge. We can be working, studying, learning when suddenly a Hashem makes a *neis* to remind us that He is there. Furthermore, the Meshech Chochma writes, *nisim* are reminders that really everything is miraculous. Every breath, every step, every waking moment, is a miracle.

There are several numbers in Judaism that have symbolic significance. The number three comes up on a few occasions, as does the number forty. However, the number seven has special sig-

nificance as does its relationship to eight. The Maharal writes that eight signifies a spiritual level above seven. There are seven days in the week, and then the *bris milah*. There are seven *Shmitah* cycles and then *Yovel*. We see that while seven is *tevah*, eight represents *ma'aleh min hateva*.

The Greeks were diametrically opposed to miracles and things being *ma'aleh min hateva*. Everything they did was about the physical. They promoted physical beauty, strength, and the pursuit of knowledge, but with the final purpose of serving themselves. For them, whatever you saw is what was real, without any deeper purpose. The Greeks told the Jews they could have a *Beis Hamikdash* but it would be *tameh*. The Jews recognized that they needed the spiritual aspect of the *Beis Hamikdash*, not just the physical structure.

One of my *Rebbiem* once asked the *shiur* to consider the following situation. Imagine one was standing by the window when he saw a finger slowly extend from the ground. Then a hand, then an arm. In that moment, he witnesses *techiyas hameisim*. That would be the most miraculous thing he had ever seen, and the news would surely spread far and wide about this event. However, if the same person was gazing from the window when he noticed a small sapling, which started to grow branches, and then leaves, he wouldn't bat an eyelash. It's just a tree growing.

On *Chanukah* we celebrate the realization that Hashem is behind everything, not just the supernatural but also the everyday events. Hashem was the one who caused the oil to last for eight days and was also the cause of the Jewish victory over the Greeks. As we go through our everyday lives, we have to realize that we have to be thankful for everything we have in our lives. While we may get used to some of the *nisim* that Hashem performs for us daily, *Chanukah* gives us a chance to stop and realize how miraculous our lives are. If we can take the time to consider this idea on *Chanukah*, we can live more fulfilling and meaningful lives all year round.

## The Halachic Status of Leftover *Chanukah* Oil

Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson

The *Shulchan Aruch* (*Yoreh Deah* 99:6) tells us that a piece of food that is Rabbinically prohibited may not be placed into a pot of kosher food in order to effect a "*bittul*," an annulment of the forbidden food since it is now in the minority. However, if a piece of Rabbinically forbidden food accidentally falls into a pot of kosher food, where the kosher food is in the minority, one may put more kosher food into the pot, thereby annulling the non-kosher food once the kosher food is in the majority. However, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 677:4) states that the leftover oil from the *Chanukah Menorah* one should destroy because it is oil that has been designated for a *Mitzvah* (*Huktza Lemitzvaso*) and should not be used for any other purpose. If some oil accidentally falls into other oil, that is not enough to annul the status of the *Chanukah* oil, and one may not add more regular oil to the mixture in order to effect a *bittul*.

The *Achronim* are troubled by the seeming contradiction between these two statements. Since the *Mitzvah* of *Chanukah* is one of Rabbinic origin, it should be allowed to pour more regular oil into the mixture in order to cause a *bittul* to take place.

I would like to elaborate upon one answer that is given by the *Shach*, one of the classic 17th-century commentators on the *Shulchan Aruch*. He says that perhaps since the *Chanukah* oil is specifically designated for the use of a *Mitzvah* (*Huktza Lemitzvaso*), we are stringent in its case. What needs to be determined is why this distinction should cause us to be stricter with regard to *Chanukah* oil than any other *Mitzvah* or prohibition of Rabbinic origin.

In order to solve this question, we must first ask another question. The *Shulchan Aruch* quoted above relates the permissibility of adding to a mixture in order to produce the requisite majority for annulment of a Rabbinically prohibited food. Immediately prior to stating that law, he tells us that if a food prohibited by *Torah* law fell accidentally into a mixture, one may not add to the mixture in order to effect a *bittul*. Why should there be a difference between dealing with a Rabbinic, as opposed to a Biblical, law relative to this

*Halachah?*

One could explain this distinction with the following analysis. The *Mishna* (*Sotah* 20a) tells us that when a *sotah* (a woman accused of committing adultery) drinks the special waters prepared to test her and seems to be about to explode while standing in the *Beis Hamikdash*, the people on hand say, "take her out, take her out of the *Beis Hamikdash*." The *Gemara* (20b) questions the need to remove her since in *Torah* law the area where she is tested does not prohibit the *tumah* of corpses. *Tosfos* (*Yevamos* 7b) claims not to understand the *Gemara's* inquiry, for even though the *Torah* doesn't forbid the *tumah* of corpses from that part of the sanctuary, it is still Rabbinically prohibited. Perhaps that is why the *Mishna* says that they wanted to remove her. *Tosfos* answers that the urgency implied by the repetitive statement "take her out, take her out" could only exist if the prohibition was Biblical and not Rabbinic; if it was Rabbinic, then saying "take her out" one time would have sufficed.

Rabbi Elchonon Wasserman Hy"d, a 20th-century scholar killed in the Holocaust, suggested an explanation of this *Tosfos'* answer based on an explanation he gave to a comment of the *Nesivos Hamishpat* (18th century) that one who violates a Rabbinic prohibition by accident does not need to atone for his sin, as opposed to one who accidentally transgresses a *Torah* law, who in the time of the *Beis Hamikdash* would have to bring a sacrifice and repent. This is because the nature of a *Torah* law is that the action that one did is a violation. Therefore, even if it was done accidentally, it was still done and requires some atonement. On the other hand, there is nothing inherently wrong with a Rabbinic prohibition, rather, it is simply a "rebellion" against the Rabbis who have created this law. As such, when the violation is done accidentally, it cannot be called a violation because it is illogical to call any rebellion accidental. If so, explains Rabbi Wasserman, if the prohibition to keep the corpse on the premises of the *Beis Hamikdash* is only a Rabbinic one, then simply removing her, even without great haste, is adequate — once the law is being followed and she's being removed, it cannot be called a rebellion by moving slowly. Only if there is an inherent *Torah* prohibition of keeping the corpse in the area must one remove her as quickly as possible. This conceptual distinction is further spelled out by Rabbi Yosef Engel (20th century), saying that only

Hashem has the ability to inherently infuse articles with prohibitive qualities as the *Torah* says, "*LaHashem Haaretz: Umeloah*," to Hashem is the world, and it is filled. The Rabbis only have the power of Rabbinical injunction on a person's actions. This is because the *Torah* tells us, "*lo sasur*," you shall not deviate from what the Rabbis tell you. The Rabbis may only restrain people from utilizing an object, but they cannot infuse a true prohibition within the object itself.

Therefore, one may suggest that rebellious behavior like throwing something Rabbinically prohibited into a pot of *kosher* food where it will be immediately *battel* is not allowed, but adding more *kosher* food to a mixture in which a Rabbinically prohibited item fell accidentally in order to annul the prohibited food thus saving the *kosher* food would not be rebellious and would be permitted. However, since *Torah* prohibitions are inherent, it would be impossible for one to enable a *bittul*, changing the prohibited status of the object, much like the Rabbis can't affect an inherent status as well. This would be the case even if the Biblically prohibited food fell into the pot accidentally.

Once these principles have been established, perhaps we can explain the *Shach's* answer to the original contradiction. The *Mishna* in *Maseches Sofrim* (20:6) tells us that "*haneiros hallalu kodesh hem*," the *Chanukah* candles have an inherent holiness about them. It seems that unlike most laws of Rabbinic origin, the *Mitzvah* of *Chanukah* has the ability to affect the inherent nature of the objects involved in its performance. Perhaps this is because of a *Medrash Tanchumah* that implies that Hashem gave His personal approbation to this *Mitzvah*. Due to this, one is not allowed to derive any personal benefit from the candle's light while it's lit or from the oil left over. Therefore, it remains distinct amongst the Rabbinic prohibitions that it would be forbidden to add to a mixture containing it in order to effect a *bittul*, for it is not within the power of man to change the inherent status of an object. Since it is oil designated for its *Mitzvah*, we are stringent here, much like we are stringent relevant to *bittul* of a *Torah* prohibition.

The verse states, "*ki ner Mitzvah vectorah ohr*:" for a candle is a *Mitzvah* and the *Torah* is light. Let us use the candles of the *Mitz-*

*vah* of the *Chanukah Menorah* to create the light of *Torah* in our homes. Let us utilize the extra oil left over from the *Menorah*, oil that can never be annulled, to inspire us to learn *Torah* amidst all of our daily responsibilities.

## Hashem's Way of Saying Hello

Rabbi Baruch Schonbrun

*The following is based upon ideas developed by Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz.*

The *Gemara* asks, “What is *Chanukah*” meaning, what was the miracle because of which *Chanukah* was established? Obviously, we would expect the answer to be: the miraculous victory of the small Maccabees against the strong Greeks! But the *Gemara* answers that we found a small, sealed jug of pure olive oil. Which is strange – why wouldn’t the *Gemara* mention the fact that the Jews were almost eradicated by the Greeks, but with the help of Hashem we were victorious? That seems like a much bigger miracle than the little bit of oil that we found! Furthermore, we know that *beshas hadchak*, in pressing times they could have used any oil for the *Menorah*, and did not need to use the special pure oil that they found. So what is the significance of this miracle?

We see this same type of occurrence throughout *Tanach*. When Yosef was brought down to Egypt, the wagons were filled with nice-smelling spices instead of the usual chemicals that they use to create leather. What was the point of this miracle? This doesn’t change the fact that Yosef, Yaakov’s favorite child, was just removed from his amazing life and forced into becoming a slave.

When *Bnei Yisrael* was fighting the *Plishtim* (*Shmuel* 1 17:49), David steps up to bat against Goliath. David slingshots a rock and hits Goliath square in the forehead. Miraculously, this kills Goliath and *Bnei Yisrael* are saved from the *Plishtim*! What an amazing miracle. But then the *pesukim* tell us of another miracle: After David kills Goliath, Goliath falls forward, so that David does not have to walk as far to collect his prize. What is the point of this seemingly pointless miracle? In fact, the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 53b) tells us that it is no small feat to change nature. So why did Hashem change nature to have Goliath fall forward? The real miracle is that Goliath died from the slingshot, so why take away from that by having another miracle of falling closer to David?

When Hashem was telling Avraham that *Bnei Yisrael* were destined to inherit *Eretz Yisrael*, the *pasuk* tells us that he looked in



all directions from the place he was sitting. Rashi tells us that there was a *nes* that he did not have to turn his head and he can see all of *Eretz Yisrael*. But what is the purpose of this little miracle?

There is a parable to help us understand this. There is a family that has a huge diamond heirloom, that has been in the family for generations. One day, the family lost the heirloom. Everyone panics, and they search high and low, trying to locate the diamond. Finally, the little boy of the family finds the heirloom. Everyone is so excited, and the father gives the little boy a huge kiss on the head. While the family felt joy from finding the heirloom, the little boy had double joy: finding the heirloom, as well as the kiss from his father.

This relates to what we have been mentioning. There is a greater, general miracle, which is joyous and amazing. There is also an additional, seemingly smaller miracle, which is like a kiss from Hashem. It is Hashem's way of showing that He loves us and is watching us. By the examples mentioned above, Hashem shows each of those individuals – Yes, this is being done for the greater good, but I am also doing this for you because I love you. Yosef was consoled when he smelled the spices on his way to Egypt. The spices indicated that he was not going there by himself; Hashem was holding his hand. Goliath was defeated, and that was amazing for the Jews. When he fell forward, David knew that not only did Hashem do this to help the Jews; David felt Hashem's love. Same by Avraham: Israel was to be given to the Jews, but Hashem was showing "I love you Avraham."

This brings us back to the Gemara of *mai Chanukah*– What is *Chanukah*? The *Gemara* answers that the miracle is the little bit of oil. We won a massive war, against all odds, yet the main miracle is the kiss from Hashem. The seemingly insignificant miracle of finding the oil is Hashem's way of showing his love for us. This stems from the love that the *Chashmonaim* showed toward Hashem. Even though they were severely outnumbered, they had faith and love in Hashem and prepared for battle.

We may not be *zocheh* to see these types of miracles on an everyday basis, but there are little things that take place throughout our week that show us Hashem is watching. My 8<sup>th</sup> grade Rebbe called these occurrences, "Hashem Said Hello' Stories," where we

would try to take note of Hashem in our daily lives. Like missing a train, and finding out later that the train broke down. We should make sure to take note of when Hashem says hello to us throughout our day, and realize that He loves us and cares for us.

*A freilichin* Chanukah!

## Youthful Thinking

Yisrael-Dovid Rosenberg ('23)

As a child, William Shakespeare, the famed 15th century English playwright, sat in his church schoolhouse with the sounds of the Bible being read echoing around him. These lines and memories stuck with him and snuck their way into his writing. That is how we wound up with “O heaven, O Earth, bear witness to this sound” (*The Tempest*, Act 3, Scene 1, 81) as an opening to a vow of eternal love and marriage between Ferdinand and Miranda in Shakespeare’s play, *The Tempest*. The line clearly alludes to *Parshas Ha’azinu* and its opening *passuk* of the *shirah*:

"הָאָזִינוּ הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֲדַבְרָה וְהָאָרֶץ תִּשְׁמָע אֲמַרְי פִּי"

“Give ear, O heavens, let me speak; Let the earth hear the words I utter!” [1] (*Devarim* 32:1)

There, Moshe Rabbeinu is calling for the eternal forces of Heaven and Earth to serve as witnesses to the covenant that he - a mere mortal - will not always be around to enforce himself (see Rashi). Shakespeare, *lehavdil*, has Ferdinand invoke the land and sky once again as witnesses to his undying devotion to Miranda and their covenant of marriage. This is an example of what Dr. Shaina Trapedo, a professor at Yeshiva University’s Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought, calls “Shakespeare’s Biblical Soundscapes”. These little biblical lines and themes wormed their way into Shakespeare’s work from his childhood experience in church.

For Shakespeare and everyone else, there is a lot to say about the learning of children and its long lasting effect. Elisha ben Avuyah is cited in *Pirkei Avos* (4:20) as a source for a lesson of the power of learning when young. In the words of the *mishnah*:

אֶלִישֶׁע בֶּן אֲבוּיָה אֹמֵר, הַלּוֹמֵד יְלֵד לְמָה הוּא דּוֹמֶה, לְדִיו כְּתוּבָה עַל גִּיר חֲדָשׁ.  
וְהַלּוֹמֵד זָקֵן לְמָה הוּא דּוֹמֶה, לְדִיו כְּתוּבָה עַל גִּיר מְחוּק.

Elisha ben Avuyah said: He who learns when a child, to what is he compared? To ink written upon a new writing sheet. And he who learns when an old man, to what is he compared? To ink written on a rubbed writing sheet. [2]

On a basic level, the *Bartenura* (on *Avos* 4:20) explains that the *mishnah* is noting that what a child learns is retained well in their memory just as a clean sheet of paper retains ink well. But there are several levels of meaning in the comparisons made in the *mishnah* which are expounded upon by other *meforshim*.

Let us consider some points about the particular language of the *mishnah* which may prove enlightening:

1. The *mishnah* uses the term “*halomeid yeled*”, one who learns as a child. Some have a different *girsah* (alternate text) that reads “*halomeid leyeled*”, one who teaches to a child? What might be the difference?
2. Why does the *mishnah* say “*lediyo chesuvah*”, ink written on paper, rather than “*one who writes*” on new paper? Why does the *mishnah* lack the actual action of writing and prefer to indicate its apparent automatic occurrence?
3. The *mishnah* compares the learning of youth to the writing on *neyar chadash*, new paper, while it compares the learning of the aged to the writing on a *neyar machuk*, used and erased paper. Are those opposites? What qualities do these descriptions reveal to us about studying at different points in life?

Now we can go through these each in turn.

### **Halomeid Yeled vs. Halomeid Leyeled**

This is really a bit of a trick question. Though, the Rambam (ibid.) does use the language “*halamud bimei hayaldus*” - which means “that which is learned in childhood” - to explain this phrase in the *mishnah*, as the *Tosfos Yom Tov* (ibid.) notes, both “*halomeid yeled*” and “*halomeid leyeled*” can really be explained as “one who teaches a child”. The Rambam’s interpretation indicates a more passive process, while the *Tosfos Yom Tov* seems to imply more involvement on the part of the teacher. However, even according to the latter understanding, the teacher’s active roll is aside from the

point of the *mishnah* as we will see momentarily in our analysis of question #2.

### **Diyo Chesuvah vs. Koseiv Bediyo**

The *mishnah* refers to “*diyo chesuvah*” - ink that has been written on paper. It does not speak of the person who put that ink there. If the *mishnah* had wanted to stress the role of the metaphorical scribe, it would have used the language of “*koseiv bediyo*” - one who writes with ink. It does not. It thus follows in the comparison to childhood study that the role of the teacher is not the *mishnah*’s emphasis. Though teachers play crucial roles in the education and proper raising of children, the *mishnah* hints that they do not have power over memory itself in the minds of their pupils. Children, by nature of having less information clouding their minds, naturally retain their memories better. The *Tosfos Yom Tov* cites an analogy from the *Derech Chaim* (ibid.) to illustrate the idea:

"[המלמד] כמי שמראה לאחד צורה שבכותל. הנה יחקיק זה הציור בדעתו. ולא מפני כן נוכל לומר שזה שהראהו חקיקה בזכרונו"  
 “[The teacher] is like somebody showing his friend a picture on the wall. This causes the picture to be engraved in the friend’s memory, but we cannot on account of this say that he himself engraved that picture in his friend’s memory.” [3]

Memory is created as one goes through life with their senses picking up the world around them. The aspect of memory that the *mishnah* is addressing has nothing to do with strategies like mnemonic devices or constant review that a teacher might employ or encourage. Rather, it focuses on the automatic absorption of the memory creation process. This brings us to the final words of the statement in the *mishnah* and the end of our analysis of it.

### **Neyar Chadash vs. Neyar Machuk**

Now we have arrived at the *mishnah*’s insightful contrast of

the study of the young and the old. The young are compared to new paper - "*neyar chadash*" - and the old to "*neyar machuk*" - paper that has had the ink scraped away. Rashi (ibid.) explains that the memories of the young stick in their minds while that of those who are older is less adhesive in their minds and is easily forgotten. The *Tosfos Yom Tov* specifies that the presence of far more worldly matters in the minds of the elderly takes great space and some of this must first be erased before new memories can be stored. That is the meaning behind the specificity of *neyar machuk* as opposed to simply *neyar yashan* - old paper. An older person is not like a blank, but wilted page. Thoughts and experiences fill the human brain and the more that is there the harder it becomes to add distinct new memories.

The *Yachin* commentary (ibid.) draws a helpful distinction. He says that new paper has two qualities: (1) It is white and bright. (2) It is clear from any writing. These determine the paper's ability to retain ink and correspond directly to the human mind and its ability to retain memory. At this early stage, markings will be long and well retained in the white sheet. Due to its unfurnished state, any small or even light mark can be made out on the paper. However, as the paper gets older and is used it turns a darker color and becomes filled from edge to edge with all the writing placed upon it. The more ink that is written on the paper, the more difficult it becomes to fit more on it in a discernible way. To do so will necessitate *erasing* - *mechikah* - of some of the paper's content or else overwriting to fit more onto the page. But erasing leaves smudges making it harder to make out new content and writing with new ink on top of the old, dry ink without erasing will only provide distinguishable text while the new ink is still wet, but after some time, the ink will dry and blend in with all the ink around it.

Human memory is the same. When a child is young, their mind is blank and ready to be filled. The memories created at that age - even small ones - can easily last a long time and be recalled with clarity. As a person ages and grows in experience, wisdom, and maturity, their mind does fill with incredible amounts of information. That, by nature, makes creating and keeping new memories more difficult. That is why the *mishnah* compares the mind of the young to *new* paper and that of the old to *erased* paper and not to

old paper. Old paper simply gets darker, but lacks any content. The human mind, however, is also *used* just like paper written upon and rewritten upon. People think and grow in life and that fills their minds as they get older.

### **A Poignant Story**

At the end of a long discussion about the halachos relating to the types of wicks and oils that may be used to light *Chanukah* candles, the *gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* (21b) relates a story of the *amora'im* as a brief, but impactful anecdote. Abayei heard the report of this *halachah* relating to *Chanukah* from Rabbi Yirmiya, but he did not accept it. Only later when he heard the same matter reported by Ravin in the name of the esteemed Rabbi Yochanan did he accept the validity of this new *halachah*. He said in woe:

"אִי זָכָאִי, גְּמִירְתִּיהָ לְשִׁמְעִתִּיהָ מְעִיקָרָא."

"Had I been worthy, I would have learned the teaching the first time."

The *gemara* wonders why Abayei was so upset if he ultimately did accept the *halachah* and answers that the difference would have been the "*girsā deyankusa*", the learning of his youth. He, as Rashi on the *gemara* notes and we have seen through the lens of *Pirkei Avos*, would have been able to remember the *halachah* better had he given it credence and learned it earlier.

The lesson we draw is that it is important to take advantage of time in youth and not wait until we are older to study Hashem's *Torah*. It must be noted that this process is a natural one that *progresses* with time. Youth and old age in the context of the *mishnah* do not mean a specific age; they mean only now as opposed to later. Because now my mind is young and vacant and in need of important things to fill it. It is tomorrow - literally and figuratively - when it will be crowded and muddled. Today I am young and I have an opportunity to learn.

## A Postscript Note

Rabbeinu Yonah, in the process of explaining our *mishnah* in *Pirkei Avos*, addresses part of the disheartening side of memory's relationship with age. What if we do forget a piece of *Torah* that we learned? Whether we are old or young this might be possible. What if we simply are not able to remember something clearly? Rabbeinu Yonah offers some words of encouragement:

"ואל יאמר הזקן הן אני עץ יבש [4] אחרי שאין התורה מתקיימת בידו ולמה יקרא והבל ייגע כי מכל מקום שכרו אתו אשר למד וטרח ועשה מצוה ומה לו אם לא יזכרנה שבין כך ובין כך השכר נותנין לו. משל לשוכר שנתן לשני פועלים טרסקל נקובה לדלות בו מים ופסק עמהם לעשות עמו מלאכה זו יום אחד. טפש אומר מה תועלת במלאכתי. הפקח אומר ומה לי השכר יתן לי. כך הזקן מה לו אם הוא שוכח שכר נותנין לו. אחד המרבה ואחד הממעיט בזכרונו ובלבד שיתכוין לבו בשמים"

"But the elder should not say, "Behold I am a dry tree" [4] - that since the *Torah* does not stay preserved in his hand, why should he read, and he would toil in vain - since nonetheless, his reward is with him for having learned and exerting himself and doing a commandment. And what difference is it to him if he does not remember it - whether it is this way or that way, he is given the reward. There is a parable [relevant to this] about an employer who gave containers with holes to two workers with which to draw water, and he agreed with them that they do this work for him for a day. The silly one said, "What is the point of my work?" The clever one said, "What is it to me? He will give me the wage [regardless]." So is [it with] the elder - what is to him if he forgets, the reward will be given to him. It is the same for the one who remembers a lot and the one who remembers a little - as long as his heart is directed to the Heavens." [5]

There is a *mitzvah* to learn even if one does not remember. The effort is of value and we can be comforted by that. Learn and try to remember it, but know that the ultimate result is in Hashem's hands.

[1] The translations are taken from and some are adapted from Se-faria.



[2] See note 1

[3] See note 1

[4] This is paraphrasing the language of the *passuk* in *Yeshayahu* (56:3).

[5] See note 1



Thank you to all of the writers for all the hard work put into creating this publication.

***Rosh Yeshivah:*** Rabbi Michael Taubes

**Head of School:** Rabbi Joshua Kahn

**Associate Principal:** Rabbi Shimon Schenker

**Rabbinic Advisor:** Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendel-  
son

**Editors in Chief:** Yosef Weiner,

Yisrael-Dovid Rosenberg

**Editors:** Aaron Sisser, Dovi Goldberg, Elisha Price,  
Eytan Sheinfeld, Gavriel Barber, and Natan Horowitz

**Format:** Eitan Rochwarger

**Distribution Manager:** Natan Gemal

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From The Entire Shema Koleinu Team, Have A Freilichen *Chanukah!*