



## A Fantastic Insight from the Chasam Sofer

# Yaakov Avinu Gave Yosef HaTzaddik a Kesones Passim Weighing Two Selaim Alluding to Chanukah and Purim

On the auspiciously approaching Shabbas Kodesh, we will read parshas Vayeishev from the Torah. It is fitting, therefore, that we establish a connection between this parsha and the eight days of Chanukah that follow it. As the Zohar hakadosh teaches us (Yisro 88a): **”כל ברכאן דלעילא ותתא”** **”ביומא שביעאה תליין”**—**all heavenly and earthly Berachos depend on the seventh day.**

This concurs magnificently with an explanation of our holy master Sar Shalom of Belz, zy”a, regarding the formula we recite on Shabbas in Birkas HaMazon (“Retzei”): **”שלא תהא”** **”צרה ויגון ואנחה ביום מנוחתנו”**—**that there should not be any distress, grief or lament on our day of rest.** This seems odd! Why are we only beseeching the Almighty to be free of trouble and distress on Shabbas? Without a doubt, we do not want troubles on the weekdays either.

Yet, he explains the rationale for this formula based on the teaching of the Zohar: **”All heavenly and earthly Berachos depend on the seventh day.”** If we are free of distress, grief, and lament on Shabbas, it stands to reason that we will also be free of these troubles during the six days of the week, since they are influenced by Shabbas Kodesh, and everything that happens on the weekdays is determined by the preceding Shabbas. So, now, let us proceed to explore the wonderful connection between parshas Vayeishev and the festival of Chanukah.

## Lighting the Candles of the Menorah Invokes the Fire of Yaakov and the Flame of Yosef

We will begin to shed some light on the subject by referring to the following passuk in this week’s parsha (Bereishis 31, 7): **”ווישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען, אלה”** **”תולדות יעקב יוסף בן שבע עשרה שנה היה רועה את אחיו בצאן”**—**and Yaakov settled in the land of his father’s sojourning, in the land of Canaan. These are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock.** In an earlier version of Rashi, he presents a pertinent passage from the Midrash Tanchuma (Vayeishev 1):

**”And Yaakov settled.” There was a certain linen merchant whose camels entered a town laden with linen. The blacksmith wondered, “Where can all of this linen be stored?” One clever person answered him, “One spark emitted from your bellows, will burn it all.” In similar fashion, Yaakov saw all of the chieftains listed above. He wondered and said, “Who can conquer them all?” What is written further one? “These are the offspring of Yaakov, Yosef,” and it is written: “The house of Yaakov shall be a fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Eisav for straw.” A spark emanating from Yosef will consume and burn all of them.**

According to the Imrei Noam (Vayeishev 5), this Midrash is alluding to the Chanukah candles. He refers to the following Gemara (Shabbas 21b): **”גמל שטעון פשתן והוא עובר ברשות הרבים, ונכנסה פשתנו לתוך החנות ודלקה בגרו של חנוני והדליק את הבירה בעל הגמל חייב. הניח חנוני את גרו מבחוץ, חנוני חייב, רבי יהודה אומר בנר חנוכה פטור.”** **If a camel laden with flax was passing through the public domain, and its flax protruded into a shop and was ignited by the shopkeeper’s light, and it (the burning flax) set fire to a mansion, the camel’s owner is liable (for the damages to the structure). If, however, the shopkeeper placed his light outside the shop, the shopkeeper is liable. Rabbi Yehudah says: In the case of a Chanukah light, he (the shopkeeper) is not liable.**

The Imrei Noam asserts that the **merchant with his flax-laden camels** allude to the chieftains of Eisav and the other nations that hate Yisrael, led by the Greeks, who oppressed Yisrael and encouraged them to abandon Hashem’s Torah. The blacksmith who inquires: **”Where can all of this linen be stored?”**—alludes to the people of Yisrael, who pray to HKB”H and ask how can they possibly overcome the Greeks.

To which the Midrash answers: **What is written further one? “These are the offspring of Yaakov, Yosef,” and it is written (Ovadhiah 1, 18): “The house of Yaakov shall be a fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Eisav for straw.”** A spark emanating from Yosef will consume and burn all of them. The Midrash is alluding to the miracle of the lights performed by HKB”H for Yisrael on Chanukah. The fire of the lamps symbolizes the kedushah of Yaakov of which the passuk says: **”The house of Yaakov shall be a fire.”** Whereas the flame that spreads from the fire symbolizes the kedushah of Yosef HaTzaddik of which the passuk says: **”The house of Yaakov shall be a fire.”** Their combined kedushah will incinerate **”the house of Eisav for straw.”** As the Midrash depicts: **A spark emanating from Yosef will consume and burn all of them.**

Furthermore, the Imrei Noam asserts that the fact that Yaakov Avinu transmitted the secrets of the Chanukah candles to Yosef is alluded to in our parsha (Bereishis 37, 3): **”וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו כי בן זקונים הוא לו ועשה לו כתונת פסים—”and Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons, because he was a son of his old age (wise); and he made him a “Kesonos passim” (a striped tunic). Rashi comments:**

**”ואונקלוס תרגם בר חכים הוא ליה, כל מה שלמד משם ועבר מסר לו”**—Onkelos translates the phrase **כי בן זקונים הוא לו** as indicating that Yosef was his wise son; therefore, everything Yaakov learned from Shem and Eiver, he conveyed to Yosef. We can suggest that the secrets of the Chanukah candles are alluded to by the words: **”כי בן זקונים הוא לו”**. For, the gematria of the word **ל”** equals **36**, alluding to the **36** total candles lit on Chanukah by those who follow the minhag of the **”mehadrin min hamehadrin,”** the choicest method of lighting—whereby an additional candle is added every night.

### The Kesonos Passim Is Chanukah and Purim

I would now like to share with my esteemed readers something that has perplexed me for many years. In light of the Imrei Noam’s interpretation that the phrase **”because he was a son of his old age”** implies that Yaakov transmitted the secrets of the **36** Chanukah candles to Yosef, how are we to interpret the continuation of the passuk: **”And he made him a “Kesonos passim”?** What is the connection between the **”Kesonos passim”** Yaakov made for Yosef and the Chanukah candles?

To clarify the interpretation of the Imrei Noam, let us refer to the following Gemara that discusses the **”Kesonos passim”** (Megillah 16b): **”בשביל משקל שני סלעים מילת שהוסיף—”for, on account of two selaim’s weight of fine wool that Yaakov gave Yosef in excess of his other sons, his brothers became envious of him, and as a consequence, our forefathers descended to Mitzrayim.** According to the Chasam Sofer, the additional **”two selaim of wool”** refer to the festivals of Chanukah and Purim that were not perceived by the other shevatim but only by Yosef. **”והנה כל השבטים השיגו בשכלם הזך והקדוש כל התורה עד שלא ניתנה, חוץ ממצוות פורים וחנוכה הנ”ל שהם חוץ לתורה לא השיגו, מה שאין כן יוסף שהיה למעלה מהשגת כל השבטים... וזהו שהוסיף יעקב ליוסף יותר מאחיו שני סלעים מילת, היינו ב’ השבטים.”** The other shevatim perceived the entire Torah, even before it was given, with the exception of the mitzvos of Purim and Chanukah—which are not included in the Torah. Yosef’s perception, however, exceeded that of his brothers, the shevatim. This is the significance of the extra two selaim of wool that Yaakov gave to Yosef—namely two mitzvos from Torah she’b’al peh alluded to by the terms **”selaim”** and **”milat.”**

Now, if we combine the sacred insights of these two great luminaries—the Imrei Noam and the Chasam Sofer—we can interpret the passuk very nicely. **“And Yisrael loved Yosef more than all his sons, because he was his wise son (as per Rashi and Onkelos)”**—according to the Imrei Noam, this infers that Yaakov transmitted the secrets of the 36 Chanukah candles to Yosef. Then, the passuk concludes: **“So, he made him a ‘Kesones passim’”** weighing two selaim—inferring, according to the Chasam Sofer, that in addition to the secrets of Chanukah, Yaakov also transmitted to Yosef the secrets of Purim, the two festivals instituted by the Rabbis.

### The “Kesones Passim” Provided Protective Names during Chanukah and Purim

It appears that we can embellish the remarks of the Chasam Sofer associating the striped tunic with the festivals of Chanukah and Purim. At first glance, they seem to be totally unrelated. What does this unique article of clothing have to do with the miracles that transpired on Chanukah and Purim? To illuminate the matter, we will refer to a precious teaching from the Chasam Sofer himself on this week’s parsha addressing the passuk (ibid. 37, 23): **“ויהי כאשר בא יוסף אל אחיו ויפשטו את יוסף את כתונתו את כתונת הפסים אשר עליו”**—**and it was, when Yosef came to his brothers, they stripped Yosef of his tunic, the “Kesones passim” that he wore.** Rashi comments: **“את כתונתו, זה חלוק, את כתונת הפסים, הוא שהוסיף לו אביו יותר על אחיו.”** In other words, the shevatim stripped Yosef of two separate garments that he was wearing—his undergarment and the special tunic given only to Yosef.

Apropos this matter, the Maharal writes in Gur Aryeh (ibid.): **“את כתונת הפסים הוא שהוסיף לו אביו. פירוש מה שכתוב את כתונתו את כתונת הפסים, דמשמע שני כתונות היו לו, ואין דרך לאדם להיות לו שני כתונות, לכך אמר הוא שהוסיף לו אביו, כי הוסיף לו אחת לחשיבותו, ועשה אותה של פסים, ולא היתה זאת על בשרו כדי שלא תתמלא זיעה... כך היה ליוסף כתונת פסים על החלוק, ולפיכך כתיב ‘אשר עליו’ מפני שהיתה למעלה.”** It was not the typical practice for a person to wear two tunics. Therefore, Rashi specifies that this was an additional garment that his father Yaakov gave him. This garment was intended to reflect his importance and prestige. This garment was not in direct contact with his skin, so as not to become full of sweat. Thus, Yosef’s “Kesones passim” sat on top of his ordinary tunic. Therefore, the passuk indicates

“אשר עליו”—which literally means: **“which was on top of it,”** referring to the ordinary tunic or undergarment.

In Toras Moshe, however, the Chasam Sofer provides us with a novel explanation. In truth, the shevatim were unable to damage the “Kesones passim” directly, because Yaakov employed sacred, protective names in making it. Therefore, the shevatim cleverly removed Yosef’s garments by grabbing hold of the bottom garment adjacent to his body. In this manner, they also succeeded in stripping him of the “Kesones passim,” without actually touching it. He derives this fact from the redundant language in the passuk; it refers to **“his tunic”** nonspecifically and then it refers specifically to the **“Kesones passim”—“the striped tunic”** he received as a special gift from Yaakov. Now, **פסי”ם** is a sacred name derived from Birkas Kohanim; it is a name that affords protection from all living creatures. Perhaps this sacred name prevented anyone else from touching this special tunic.

This enlightens us with regards to the Chasam Sofer’s contention that the striped tunic weighed two selaim, alluding to the secrets of Chanukah and Purim, which Yaakov transmitted to Yosef. We posed the question above: What is the connection between this special garment and the festivals of Chanukah and Purim? We can now answer the question based on the explanation of the Chasam Sofer himself. The “Kesones passim” had sacred names of protection inscribed on it. In the merit of these names that Yaakov gave Yosef for protection from all outside influences, the people of Yisrael were ultimately saved from the wicked Haman in the galus of Madaai and the Greeks in the galus of Yavan.

### Yaakov Taught Yosef Everything He Had Learned from Shem and Eiver

We will now endeavor to explain the practical significance of the association of Yaakov Avinu and Yosef HaTzaddik with the miracles of Chanukah and Purim. To begin with, we will present a delightful chiddush from the great Rabbi Meir Yechiel of Ostrovtsa, zy”a, regarding the passuk in this week’s parsha (ibid. 37, 2): **“אלה תולדות יעקב יוסף בן שבע”**—**אלה תולדות יעקב יוסף בן שבע—עשרה שנה היה רועה את אחיו בצאן—these are the offspring of Yaakov: Yosef, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock.** Why does

the Torah bother to inform us that Yosef HaTzaddik was seventeen years old at that time?

He refers to Rashi's comment (at the end of parshas Toldos) that when Yaakov Avinu departed Be'er Sheva, he did not flee directly to Charan. Instead, he was sequestered in the house of Eiver for fourteen years studying Torah with him. This is also evident from Rashi's comment in parshas Vayeitzei (Bereishis 28, 11): **In that place he lay down; however, during the fourteen years that he served in the house of Eiver, he did not lay down at night, because he engaged in Torah-study.**

The great Rabbi of Ostrovtza finds this perplexing. After all, throughout the 63 years that Yaakov dwelled in his parents' home, he studied Torah in the Beis Midrash of Shem and Eiver. This is implied by the passuk (ibid. 25, 27): **“ויעקב יושב תם יושב אהלים—Yaakov was a wholesome man, abiding in tents.** Rashi explains that this refers to the tents of Shem and Eiver. That being the case, when Yaakov fled from Eisav HaRasha and was instructed by his parents to go to Charan, why did he see fit to spend fourteen years sequestered in the Beis Midrash of Eiver studying Torah?

So, let us explain. When Yaakov was living with his parents, he learned how to be an observant Jew and serve Hashem while living among other Jews. When he fled to Charan, however, to live among consummate reshaim such as Lavan HaArami and his evil cohorts, he needed to study a different type of Torah in the Beis Midrash of Eiver. He needed to learn how to remain a Torah-observant Jew even among the goyim and how not to be influenced by their evil ways.

### Yaakov Avinu Also Learned 14 Years with Yosef

He goes on to explain that Yaakov Avinu sensed with his “ruach hakodesh” that Yosef HaTzaddik would also need to spend time among the goyim in a place of extreme tumah. Hence, he studied with him the portions of Torah that he had studied during those 14 years in the Beis Midrash of Eiver. He taught him how to live as a proper, G-d-fearing Jew among the goyim. Now, there is a time-honored Jewish minhag to start learning Torah with a child when he is three years old. Therefore, Yaakov Avinu waited until Yosef was three years old; then, he learned with him for 14 years the parts of the Torah that he had learned during those 14 years in the Beis

Midrash of Eiver—how to remain a proper Jew while living among the goyim.

Thus, at the conclusion of these studies, Yosef was 17 years old and was well prepared to live as a proper Jew among the goyim. Therefore, the Torah informs us: **“Yosef, at the age of seventeen years, was a shepherd with his brothers by the flock.”** It is teaching us that only after he was adequately prepared did HKB”H orchestrate these events. Yaakov sent Yosef to check on his brothers, he was sold to Mitzrayim, and he was able to live there as an observant Jew abiding by the Torah and its mitzvos.

This then is the message of the passuk: **“וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו כי בן זקונים הוא לו”**. As Rashi explains, this means that Yosef was Yaakov's wise son and, therefore, everything he learned from Shem and Eiver, he transmitted to Yosef. In other words, Yaakov taught Yosef how to live as a Torah-observant Jew among the goyim, since he sensed via his “ruach hakodesh” that Yosef would require this knowledge.

In the sefer Emes L'Yaakov (Vayeitzei), the great Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetzky, ztz”l, discusses this matter at length with an additional insight. These two tzaddikim, Shem and Eiver, experienced life among the goyim firsthand. Shem was the son of Noach; he survived the generation of the mabul, remaining kadosh without being corrupted by their extreme wickedness. Similarly, Eiver was born and lived during the generation of the dispersion, who rebelled against Hashem; he, too, remained righteous and was not swayed by their malevolent ideas. Thus, both of them were living examples of how to live among reshaim without being influenced and corrupted by them.

So, who better to prepare Yaakov prior to his sojourn with Lavan HaArami for life among corrupt reshaim, who constantly pursue their hearts' desires?! This is the Torah that Yaakov Avinu learned during the 14 years that he was sequestered in the Beis Midrash of Shem and Eiver.

This explains very nicely the passuk (ibid. 39, 11): **“ויהי כהיום הזה ויבא הביתה לעשות מלאכתו ואין איש מאנשי הבית שם בבית—and it was on that day that he entered the house to do his work—and not one of the men of the household was there in the house.** Rashi comments, based on the Gemara (Sotah

36b): **At that precise moment, the visage of his father came and appeared to him in the window.** In keeping with our current discussion, Yaakov’s image appeared to Yosef in his time of need—when he faced a difficult ordeal—to remind him of what his father had studied with him for 14 years—how to remain steadfast in his Torah observance and resist the negative, harmful influences of the goyim. With this helpful reminder, he withstood the ordeal.

### Lighting the Menorah Invokes the Kedushah of Yaakov Avinu and Yosef HaTzaddik

We now have cause to rejoice! For we can now comprehend the amazing connection between Yaakov Avinu and Yosef HaTzaddik and the miracle of Chanukah (and the miracle of Purim, as well). In the formula of “Ahl HaNissim” established by the Chashmonaim, we say: **כשעמדה מלכות יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך—when the wicked Greek regime rose against Your people Yisrael attempting to make them forget Your Torah and to compel them to abandon the statutes of Your will.** This statement teaches us that the Greeks made every effort to make Yisrael forget and abandon Hashem’s Torah.

Our holy sources teach us that the Greeks had a vastly different agenda than the wicked Haman. Whereas Haman sought to annihilate all of Yisrael, the Greeks attempted to interact and intermingle with the Jews. They wanted the Jews to adopt their impure and unholy lifestyle, so that they would eventually forget and abandon Hashem’s Torah—in keeping with the passuk (Tehillim 106,35): **ויתערבו בגוים—וילמדו ממעשיהם—but they mingled with the nations and learned from their deeds.** In fact, the historian Josephus attests to the fact that many Jews became Hellenized. This led to the rebellion spearheaded by the priestly Chashmonaim to avenge the honor of Hashem and to sacrifice their lives in order to separate the people of Yisrael from the Greeks and their influence.

This explains magnificently why, as part of the miracle of Chanukah, HKB”H chose to enable Yisrael to kindle the menorah with pure olive oil. Let us refer to the Gemara (Shabbas 21b):

”שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל, וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד, נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים, לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאוים ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.”

**For when the Greeks entered the Heichal (Sanctuary), they contaminated all of the oils in the Heichal; and when the Chashmonean dynasty triumphed and defeated them, they searched and could only find a single flask of oil that was hidden with the Kohen Gadol’s seal on it; it only contained enough oil to kindle the menorah for one day. A miracle occurred with it, and they were able to kindle with it for eight days. In the following year, they established and rendered these days as days of Yom Tov, characterized by the recital of Hallel and expressions of gratitude.**

Let us provide an explanation based on our current discussion. The lighting of the menorah alludes to the magnificent partnership of Yaakov and Yosef as described by the passuk in Ovadiah: **“The house of Yaakov shall be a fire, and the house of Yosef a flame.”** The two of them learned together and paved the way for Yisrael to survive all of the galuyos while remaining devout Jews. This is why the mitzvah is to light the Chanukah candles at night. This symbolizes that we are illuminating the darkness of galus with the kedushah of Yaakov and Yosef, and that we have learned from them not to come along with the goyim and not to adopt their ways.

We will conclude with a delightful tidbit. The Gemara says: **“At that moment, the visage of his father came and appeared to him in the window.”** We explained that the visage of Yaakov appeared to Yosef to remind him of the lessons that they had learned together for 14 years—how to live as an observant Jew and remain separate from the goyim. In that merit, the Chashmonaim were able to withstand and defeat the Greeks in the miraculous events of Chanukah.

Now, if we add a candle on each subsequent night of Chanukah, we end up lighting a total of ל”ז—36—candles during the eight days of the festival. As explained, the lighting of the Chanukah candles alludes to the fire of Yaakov and the flame of Yosef, whose kedushah enables us to remain separate from the goyim. This then is the

allusion inherent in Chazal's statement: Yaakov's visage appeared to Yosef in the window, the חלו"ן. We can interpret the word חלו"ן as an abbreviation for ל"ו נרות—36 Chanukah candles.

Thus, parshas Vayeishev teaches us a vital lesson. Yosef HaTzaddik was stranded alone in Mitzrayim. Nevertheless, he maintained his kedushah, because he had been taught

how to do so by his father Yaakov, who had learned this lesson prior to being stranded alone with Lavan in Charan. We must adhere to their kedushah—remain separate from the goyim and not adopt their ways. Thus, we will be well prepared for the eight days of Chanukah, the festival established by Chazal to commemorate the triumph of the Chashmonaim over the Greeks due to the combined kedushah of Yaakov Avinu and Yosef HaTzaddik.



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In honor and Zechut of my Eshet Chayil, Sapir bat Vered and our children, Yosef Elkana, Ezra and Sophia Shireen. May they all have 120 years of perfect and endless health, happiness, success, growth, strength, proximity to Hashem, Beracha, Ahava and Shalom BH.

All the love in the world, Daniel Aryeh Ohebshalom

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