

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Vayeishev

Chanuka



Torah WELLSPRINGS

CONTACT INFORMATION

Mail@TorahWellsprings.com
718.484.8136

Weekly bulk orders in USA:
718.484.8136 ext 3

Weekly in your email free!

SUBSCRIBE TODAY!

Lashon Kodesh

באר הפרשה

subscribe+subscribe@beerhaparsha.com

English

Torah Wellsprings

Torah+subscribe@torahwellsprings.com

Yiddish

דער פרשה קוואל

yiddish+subscribe@derparshakval.com

Spanish

Manantiales de la Torá

info+subscribe@manantialesdelatora.com

French

Au Puits de La Paracha

info+subscribe@aupuitsdelaparacha.com

Italian

Le Sorgenti della Torah

info+subscribe@lesorgentidellatorah.com

Russian

Колодез Торы

info+subscribe@kolodetztory.com



USA OFFICE Mechon Beer Emunah
1660 45th St, Brooklyn NY 11204
718.484.8136

ERETZ YISROEL OFFICE

מכון באר האמונה
רח' דובב מישרים 4/2
עיה"ק ירושלים תונב"א
025 688 040

יו"ל ע"י מכון באר אמונה

COPYRIGHT 2021 הזכויות שמורות

Duplication of this gilyon in any format, for any sales or marketing purpose, without written permission by Machon Be'er Emunah, is against the law and Halacha.

Table of Contents

Torah Wellsprings - Vayeishev - Chanuka

It is Hashem's Will.....	4
Happy with your Spiritual Portion	7
The Great Test	9
"There is No One Greater than Me..." (<i>Gaavah d'Kedushah</i>).....	12
Serve Hashem with Joy.....	14
<i>Bitachon</i>	16
Children <i>Talmidei Chachamim</i>	19
Gazing at the Chanukah <i>Lecht</i>	20
<i>Simchah</i>	23
Preparation for the Mitzvah.....	25
Do the Mitzvah the Best You Can – Even if it isn't Perfect.....	27
Seeing the Miracles.....	30
<i>Eemunah</i>	33
The Mode of Miracles	35
Praying for Miracles	37
Chanukah: A Time for <i>Teshuvah</i>	42
תנייה - Undeserved Kindness	46
Taking Advantage of these Days	47
<i>Hallel</i> and <i>Al HaNissim</i>	49
Below Ten <i>Tefachim</i>	53
The Candles' Message.....	56

Torah Wellsprings

Vayeishev - Chanuka

It is Hashem's Will

When one truly believes that all life's circumstances are the direct result of Hashem's will and plan, he can accept and even be happy with all that happens to him.

It states (39:20), ויקח אדני יוסף אותו ויתנהו אל בית הסהר מקום יוסף אשר אסירי המלך אסורים, "Yosef's master took Yosef and put him into prison where the king's prisoners were detained. ויהי שם בבית הסהר, and he was there, in prison."

The final words stating that he was there in prison seem redundant because it is letting us know the obvious. Where else would he be?

The commentaries explain that the *pasuk* tells us that Yosef believed his imprisonment was Hashem's will, so he

accepted Hashem's decree with joy. Yosef was "there, in prison," willingly, with all his heart and soul.

The Sfas Emes writes, "Yosef was extremely wise and wealthy (because Potiphar gave him everything he owned [see 39:8]). If he had wanted to, he could have found a way out of jail. But he believed that his imprisonment was Hashem's will, and therefore he stayed put in the place he found himself to be."

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

Generally, we are encouraged to do our *hishtadlus* to improve the predicaments of our lives.

The Kedushas Levi and the Sfas Emes discuss a rare situation where Yosef didn't even try to get out of jail because he believed Hashem wanted him to be there. However, when we are faced with situations in which our *hishtadlus* to improve them is required (which is the standard approach), we must be sure to be happy with our lot no matter what it is because we believe that it's Hashem's plan.

The Midrash says, "Eliezer served Avraham loyally, and for this, he merited to be blessed (ברוך) instead of being cursed (ארור)...."

Another Midrash (*Shir HaShirim* 1:1) states, "Yosef served Potiphar loyally and in this merit he was freed from jail."

The Sifsei Tzaddik asked his brother-in-law, the Sfas Emes, "We understand that when Eliezer served Avraham Avinu loyally, he became blessed because it is a great

mitzvah to serve Avraham Avinu. But why should Yosef be freed from prison for serving Potiphar loyally?! What is so special about serving Potiphar?"

The Sfas Emes told the Sifsei Tzaddik that he wasn't translating the Midrash correctly. The Midrash says, יוסף על ידי ששימש את רבו באמונה יצא לחירות, meaning that because Yosef served his master with אמונה in Hashem, he was freed. In this context, אמונה doesn't mean "loyally," but rather with faith in Hashem.

Yosef was a slave, far away from his family, distant from his father Yaakov Avinu, with whom he had studied every day. He was living among idol worshipers in Mitzrayim, yet he remained happy. We know that Yosef was happy because it states (39:2), ויהי ה' את יוסף, "And Hashem was with Yosef," and Chazal (*Shabbos* 30) say, "The *Shechinah* rests only with someone who is happy." The *Shechinah*

wouldn't be with Yosef if he were sad.

Also, it states (ibid.), ויהי איש מצליח, and the Midrash translates גבר קפוז as איש מצליח, "a dancing person." Yosef was always dancing and filled with joy.

But how was he able to maintain his *simcha* under the circumstances?

The answer lies in Yosef's *emunah*. He believed that this is Hashem's will; Hashem wants him to be a slave in Mitzrayim, so he was happy with his fate.

Yosef suffered great shame when his brothers removed his cloak and sold him as a slave. However, also then, Yosef believed that it was all for the best.

Later, he was tested with אשת פוטיפר, and Yosef left his clothing in Potiphar's wife's hands and ran outdoors. How did Yosef have the courage to

embarrass himself and run outdoors without clothes to save himself from sin?

It was because of what happened earlier.

As the Sfas Emes (תרל"ד) writes, "Yosef was embarrassed by his brothers when 'they took off his coat' (37:23), yet, he didn't ask questions on Hashem. He believed that it was all for the good. Therefore (39:12), וינס ויצא החוצה, '[Yosef] ran outdoors.' He had *siyata dishmaya* and was able to embarrass himself to do Hashem's will."

Yosef's humiliation when they took off his coat conditioned him and helped him pass a most difficult test that he was faced with.

The Sfas Emes concludes, "We should learn from these *parshiyos* to accept Hashem's decrees with love and joy because everything is in His hands."¹

1. Yaakov Avinu thought Yosef died, and he donned sackcloth

Happy with your Spiritual Portion

since they wouldn't be able to study Torah or to daven.

Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk *zt'l* and Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli *zt'l* were imprisoned. There was a bucket in the cell, to be used as a toilet. Rebbe Elimelech was very upset

His brother Rebbe Zusha explained to him that this was actually a reason to rejoice because by refraining from studying Torah and tefillah, they will be keeping the *halachah*

(see 37:34).

The Midrash (84:20) states, "From the time Yaakov took the sackcloth, the sackcloth never left him, nor his children, nor his grandchildren, and so it will continue until the end of generations..."

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

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

Last week's *parashah* discusses אלוֹפֵי עֵשָׂו, Eisav's large and powerful family. This week's *parashah* begins with וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב, "Yaakov sat."

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

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* explains that "sitting among the troubles" means to accept them with belief that everything is for the good.

of the Torah that prohibits studying where there is a foul odor.

Rebbe Elimelech realized that Rebbe Zuscha was right, and they began singing and dancing around the bucket.

The prison warden rushed to see why there was singing, and when he saw the two brothers dancing around the bucket, he said, "Oh, this is what you are happy about?" and he grabbed the pail, and removed it from the room.

Every person has his own vision of what *avodas Hashem* should resemble, but we have to be happy with the portion Hashem gives us.

As the Sfas Emes says, שמח בחלקו means to be happy with your *ruchniyus* portion, too.

Although we strive for more, we rejoice and feel successful with whatever portion of *avodas Hashem* Hashem grants us.

Yosef is the only person in Tanach who is called איש מצליח, successful because in every situation he was happy with his spiritual portion, and he felt he was being successful in *avodas Hashem*. He never thought his life was a failure or a waste.

Although his *avodas Hashem* in Mitzrayim couldn't be the same as it was when he lived in Eretz Yisrael together with his father and the שבטי י"ה, he felt successful, because he was carrying out the mission Hashem had planned for him.

The Ksav Sofer zt'l (Teshuvah Orach Chaim 27) teaches:

ויהי ה' את יוסף ויהי איש מצליח, "Hashem was with Yosef, and he was a successful person."

The first half of the *pasuk* teaches us that Yosef was happy in Mitzrayim because if he weren't, Hashem wouldn't be with

him. As Chazal (*Shabbos* 30) say, "The *Shechinah* rests only with someone who is happy."

The second half of the *pasuk* reveals why Yosef was happy. He was happy because וְיֵהִי אִישׁ מְצַלִּיחַ, he considered his life to be successful. He knew he was accomplishing great things.

A person is sad when he thinks his life has no purpose and he isn't accomplishing anything worthwhile. Yosef didn't think that way when he lived in Mitzrayim. Instead, he considered himself successful because he was carrying out the mission Hashem planned for him.

The Great Test

This week's parashah tells us about the great test Yosef had with *eshes* Potiphar. When we study some of the details of the test, we are astounded by Yosef's *tzidkus*, that he

passed such a tremendous test.

The Gemara (*Yoma* 35:) says: "Every day *eshes* Potiphar spoke with Yosef and tried to convince him to sin. The clothes she wore in the morning, she didn't wear at night..."

The Midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 87; *Tanchuma*) states that *eshes* Potiphar said, "I will give you less *parnassah* [if you refuse to sin]." Yosef replied, נוֹתֵן לֶחֶם לְרָעִיִּים, Hashem feeds the hungry. She threatened to imprison him, to blind him, to send him to a distant land, but Yosef's resolve wasn't weakened.

She had him wear an iron blade under his neck, so Yosef would be forced to look up and gaze at her. Even so, Yosef didn't look at her. These were extremely difficult tests on an ongoing basis, and Yosef passed them all.

Perhaps the hardest part of the test, for Yosef, was

that *eshes Potiphar* tried to convince Yosef that sinning with her is a mitzvah.

As Rashi (39:1) writes, "Just as Tamar intended *leshem shamayim*, *eshes Potiphar* also intended *leshem shamayim*. She saw in the stars that she will bear children with Yosef, only she didn't know whether it will be with her or with her daughter."

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* writes that just as *eshes Potiphar* saw in the stars that they would bear children together, Yosef saw that in the stars, as well. Yosef thought that this meant he would eventually sin with *eshes Potiphar*. (He didn't know that it meant he would marry *eshes Potiphar's* daughter. This brought Yosef to think, "What purpose is there in fighting, if I will anyway end up committing this grave *aveirah* eventually."

But then Yosef told himself, "What the future

will be, will be. Right now, I can fight and overcome the *yetzer hara*." This attitude saved Yosef. He ended up marrying Osnas bas Potiphar, and bore children in a permitted way.

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that Potiphar's wife shared what she saw in the stars with Yosef. She explained to him that it is a mitzvah, destined from heaven, and this factor made the test so much greater.

Because the *yetzer hara* can't convince *tzaddikim* to perform *aveiros*, so he tries to convince them that the *aveirah* is a mitzvah. Nevertheless (39:8) וַיִּמָּאן, Yosef refused to sin.

It also states וַיִּמָּאן by the mitzvah of *yibum*, because a person may refuse to perform the mitzvah of *yibum*, as it states (*Devarim* 25:7), מֵאֵן יָבִי, The Midrash (87:5) says that Yosef told *eshes Potiphar*, "If a person can refuse to do the mitzvah *yibum* (as it states מֵאֵן יָבִי),

certainly one can refrain from an *aveirah*!"

The Sfas Emes explains that Yosef was telling her, "Even if you are correct, and it is a mitzvah, I may refrain, just as one is permitted to refrain from the mitzvah of *yibum*. When one refuses to do *yibum*, another path is opened up – the path of *chalitzah*. Similarly, Yosef told her, even if it is a mitzvah, and he turns it down, Hashem will arrange some other way. (And indeed, Yosef married *eshes* Potiphar's daughter, who bore Efraim and Menasheh.)

It states (39:12), ותתפשטו בגדו, that the wife of Potiphar grabbed Yosef by his clothes. בגדו also means rebellion. The Beis Avraham explains that *eshes Potiphar* tried to convince Yosef that he is rebellious to Hashem and sinful, and therefore, it's natural for him to sin.

Because the way a person perceives himself

influences his actions. If one thinks he is righteous, he will act that way. As the Rambam (*Avos* 2:13) writes, ואל תהי רשע בפני עצמך "Don't consider yourself a *rasha*, because if you think you are lowly, you won't consider your *aveiros* severe."

Rashi (39:6) writes "When Yosef saw that he was ruling [in Potiphar's home], he began eating and drinking and fixing his hair. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, 'Your father is mourning, and you are curling your hair?! I will incite the bear [Potiphar's wife] against you.'"

Perhaps Potiphar's wife was referring to these matters when she said to Yosef that he is rebellious. She wanted Yosef to focus on his faults and weaknesses because that would lure him to do *aveiros*, *chalilah*.

Nevertheless, despite all these challenges, Yosef passed this difficult test, and his example encourages

everyone to pass the tests that come their way.

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

What tactic did Yosef use to pass this difficult test?

Yosef said to *eshes* Potiphar (39:9), אינו גדול בבית, "No one in this house is greater than me." Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* explains that Yosef said, "I'm the greatest person in the world. There is no one greater than me." He considered himself a *tzaddik*. With this encouraging thought in mind, with this improved

self-image, he was able to pass the test.²

These are the words everyone should tell themselves when the *yetzer hara* tries to convince them to sin. One should say, "I'm among Hashem's *tzaddikim*. I'm extremely distant from sin." And with such thoughts in mind, he won't commit *aveiros*.

This attitude is called *gaavah d'kedushah*, righteous pride, which one must use to overcome the *yetzer hara*.

Chazal say (*Sotah* 49:), בעקבתא דמשיחא חוצפה יסוגי, "Before Moshiach comes, there will be a lot of *chutzpah*." The *Sfas Emes zt'l* says that this *Gemara* can be translated as follows: Before Moshiach

2. After the Yidden committed the sin of the *egel*, Moshe Rabbeinu prayed for forty days that Hashem forgive them. Moshe Rabbeinu said that he was praying because (*Devarim* 9:19), כי יגרתני מפני האף, "I am afraid that their noses may turn down due to their shame and disgrace, as a result of their sin. And that is the greatest problem, because if they feel down, this can lead to many more sins. On the other hand, when they feel righteous and holy, they act that way."

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zy'a* explains that Moshe was saying, כי יגרתני I am afraid מפני האף, that their noses may turn down due to their shame and disgrace, as a result of their sin. And that is the greatest problem, because if they feel down, this can lead to many more sins. On the other hand, when they feel righteous and holy, they act that way.

comes, people will have the chutzpah to say, "I'm a tzaddik! I'm special!" And that's good, and that's necessary because with that pride, they will conquer the yetzer hara.

It states (37:3), וישראל אהב, את יוסף מכל בניו...ועשה לו כתונת פסים, "Yaakov loved Yosef more than all his other sons... and he made him a silk coat." This coat, that only Yosef wore, instigated jealousy as the Gemara (Shabbos 10) states, "A person should never show favoritism to one son over the others, because due to the... clothing Yaakov gave Yosef, the brother's jealousy was sparked, and it led to our forefathers going down to Mitzrayim."

Why did Yaakov give this coat to Yosef? Why wasn't he cautious not to arouse jealousy? Baalei mussar explain that Yaakov knew that Yosef needed this coat to build up his self-esteem. Probably, Yosef

faced more tests than his brothers did. As Rashi (37:31) writes, יוסף מלך היה, ועוד, שנשבה לבין הגוים, והרי הוא עומד בצדקו, "Yosef was king, and he was captured among goyim, and nevertheless, he remained righteous." Yosef passed these difficult tests because of the honor he received with his special clothing.

The Baal HaTurim writes that פסי"ם is *roshei teivos* for פוטיפר, סוחרים, ישמעאלים, מדיניים, the four times Yosef was sold. The Baalei Mussar explain that each time Yosef was sold, he was confronted with difficult tests. The coat's purpose was to boost Yosef's self-esteem so that he could pass those tests.

If we will build up our self-esteem and the esteem of our children and students, and if we consider ourselves proper Yidden, that will help us pass the tests that come our way, as well.³

3. The Chasam Sofer (ד"ה והיה) writes, "A person doesn't know the

Serve Hashem with Joy

One of the benefits of recognizing our importance before Hashem is that this will enable us to perform mitzvos joyously.

The *sar ha'ofim*, Pharaoh's chief baker, told Yosef (40:15-16) that he was carrying baskets on his head, and birds were eating from the basket.

Yosef told him that this meant he will be hung, and birds will eat his flesh. This is actually what occurred (see 40:22).

How did Yosef know that this was the interpretation of the dream?

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

An artist painted a true-to-life picture of a man carrying a basket filled with fruit. People were saying, "The painting is so true-to-life, it even fools the birds," since birds were pecking at the painting, trying to eat the fruit.

A wise person disagreed. He said, "If the painting was true-to-life, the birds would be afraid of the man holding the basket. I'd call it 'a dead painting.'" ⁴

The Chida explains that the *sar ha'ofim* dreamt that he was carrying a basket on

value of his deeds, just how precious they are. As the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* 141) says, if Reuven would know that Hashem will write in the Torah that he saved Yosef, he would have done far more. He would have carried Yosef home on his shoulders to bring him home to his father."

Similarly, every Yid does wonderful deeds, only we are often unaware of how special they are. Nevertheless, be aware that you do great deeds. This will help you build up your self-esteem, and win over the *yetzer hara*.

4. The Chida's *mashal* reminds us of another *mashal*:

his head, yet the birds weren't afraid to eat from the loaves of bread. Yosef understood it to mean that if the birds aren't afraid of the man holding the basket it surely proves that he's dead."⁵

Judges at an art competition were ready to proclaim the winner of a true-to-life painting of fruit and grains. His painting was so true-to-life, it even tricked the birds, as they repeatedly pecked at the fruits and grains displayed on the canvas.

One artist came to the judges and said, "You can't proclaim him the winner before you look at my painting." He pointed to a curtain on the side of the room, where his artwork lay.

The judges replied, "Open the curtains so we can see your painting."

"I prefer if someone else opens the curtain."

One judge tried to open the curtain, but then he realized that there was no curtain at all. It was a painting of a curtain.

The judges said, "The other artist fooled birds. Your work fooled humans! You win the competition!"

The *nimshal* is, there are artists who can fool birds, and there are artists who can even fool humans, but Hashem's artwork, *keviyachol*, fools almost everyone. The world seems to be running by nature, and people don't realize that it is just a painting, entirely directed by Hashem. Therefore, it states *אין צור כאלקינו*, and Chazal explain, *אין צייר כאלקינו*, there is no artist like Hashem.

5. We'll take this lesson a step further:

In the dream, the *sar ha'ofim*, carrying the loaves on his head, was obviously alive. Yet, we see that one can be alive and it is as if he is dead. Sadly, the same can be said about someone who keeps the mitzvos without joy. For example, he lights the Chanukah *lecht*, says *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*, but without *hislahavus* and joy. He is alive but his mitzvos are dead. We must perform the mitzvos

Bitachon

Yosef is praised for his *bitachon*. In fact, the *pasuk* that discusses *bitachon*, אשרי הגבר אשר יבטח בה' "Fortunate is the person who trusts in Hashem..." is written about Yosef HaTzaddik (see *Rashi* 40:23). An aspect of his *bitachon* is seen in this week's *parashah*:

It states (40:23), ולא זכר שר, המושקים את יוסף וישכחוהו "The *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef and he forgot him." This *pasuk* needs commentary, because ולא זכר, "he didn't remember Yosef" and וישכחוהו "he forgot him" mean the same thing. Why does the *pasuk* write twice that the *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef?⁶

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* translates the *pasuk* like

this: ולא זכר שר המושקים את יוסף, the *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef, וישכחוהו and Yosef forgot the *sar hamashkim*. This demonstrates Yosef Hatzaddik's incredibly high level of *bitachon*. Most people in Yosef's place would repeatedly think about the *sar hamashkim*. They would wonder, "Did he tell Pharaoh that I was imprisoned for no reason, as I asked him to? Will he succeed in freeing me from jail?" Yosef was already in prison for ten years, and this might have been his only hope to be released. But the Torah tells us וישכחוהו, Yosef forgot about the *sar hamashkim*. After he made *hishtadlus*, he didn't think about the *sar hamashkim* anymore. He trusted in

energetically, joyously. When we light the Chanukah *lecht*, say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*, and do all other mitzvos of Chanukah, let it be obvious that we are alive.

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

Hashem and not in human beings.

The brothers showed Yaakov Avinu Yosef's blood-stained coat, so Yaakov will assume that Yosef was killed by a wild animal (see 38:31-34). The Rebbe of Radzimin zt'l, (*Bikurei Aviv*) asks, "Why did they have to do that? When Yaakov would see that Yosef wasn't coming home, he would assume, on his own, that Yosef was killed! The answer is that [if Yaakov wouldn't see the blood-stained coat] Yaakov would have *bitachon* that Yosef will yet return home and when one trusts in Hashem with all his heart, this draws Hashem's help. Yaakov Avinu's *bitachon* was on a very high level. It would have brought about Hashem's aid, and the Egyptians [who were holding Yosef as a slave] would have sent him home. At that point, Yosef would reveal to their father that his brothers sold him, and their father would be very

angry. Therefore, they slaughtered a goat, dipped Yosef's coat in its blood, and sent it to their father." Now Yaakov believed that Yosef was no longer alive, and this prevented him from having *bitachon*.

The Chashmonaim won the war against the Yevanim because they had *bitachon*. כהן is *gematriya* בטחון. The Chashmonaim were *kohanim*, and *bitachon* was the catalyst for their *yeshuah*.

Many people recite יושב בסתר עליון (Tehillim 91) after lighting Chanukah *lecht*. This chapter talks about *bitachon*. As we say, כי אתה ה', מוחסי, "You Hashem are my shield. לא תירא מפחד לילה, therefore I am not afraid..."

The letter ז does not appear in this chapter. The Avuderham writes that when one trusts in Hashem he doesn't need כלי זין, weapons. Hashem, Himself, will destroy and subjugate all enemies of Bnei Yisrael.

The *Midrash Chanukah* (quoted by the *Rokeiach*) tells that there was a Greek general called Gaskalgus (others say it was Bagris). He had an enormous army. They arrived in Eretz Yisrael and found twelve Chashmonaim prepared to battle with them. The general scoffed at them, "Fools! You want to battle with my enormous army!?"

The Chashmonaim raised their eyes to heaven and prayed to Hakadosh Baruch Hu. Hakadosh Baruch Hu seized the seventy angels of heaven, hit them with a fiery whip, and warned them to protect the Jewish nation. When a Greek soldier shot an arrow at the Jewish people, a *malach* intercepted the arrow and aimed it back at the soldier who shot it. It shot straight into his heart. The Chashmonaim saw these miracles and said, ה' ילחם לנו, "Hashem is fighting this battle for us!"

When one of the Greek kings was killed the

malachei hashares confiscated his money and threw it into Jewish homes. (The Yidden weren't able to access the money themselves because of all the corpses.)

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

With their *tefillos* and *bitachon*, they won their enemies again and again.

Children *Talmidei Chachamim*

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 23:) states, הרגיל בנר הויין ליה בנים תלמידי חכמים, "A person who is cautious with lighting the candles [of *Shabbos* and *Chanukah* - *Rashi*] will merit children who are *talmidei chachamim*, as it states, כי נר מצוה ותורה אור."

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

He answers, "Few people keep this mitzvah with all its details and *halachos*."

Furthermore, the Meiri writes, הרגיל בנר דרך חיבוב מצוה והערה מפורסמת הויין לו בנים תלמידי חכמים, "Whoever is cautious with the candles of *Chanukah* to light them *with love for the mitzvah*... will be granted children

talmidei chachamim." Thus, lighting the candles alone, may not be sufficient. One must perform the mitzvah with love for the mitzvah.

Reb Chaim Ozer Grodinzki *zt'l* was in Krakow one *Chanukah*. He came to a tailor's home and asked the tailor to fix his jacket. "I didn't light *Chanukah lecht* yet" the tailor replied.

"I'll wait," Reb Chaim Ozer replied. Reb Chaim Ozer figured, "How long can it take him to light *Chanukah lecht*? A few moments. I can wait."

It took much longer. Reb Chaim Ozer sat mesmerized, as the tailor, dressed in *Shabbos* clothing, sang songs for a half-hour near the *lecht*, totally enjoying the mitzvah.

Reb Chaim Ozer said, "By witnessing the way the tailor lit the candles, I now understand why so many great *talmidei chachamim*

came from Krakow over the generations." This is because Chanukah *lecht* is *mesugal* for children who are *talmidei chachamim* especially when one performs the mitzvah with love and inspiration.

Chassidim were once discussing the wealth of the legendary Count Pototsky. They were saying that during the summer he pours sugar over mountains so that he could go skiing.

The Berdichover Rav overheard their discussion and asked, "Does he light Chanukah *lecht*?"

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

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

The Rambam (4:12) writes, מצות נר חנוכה מצוה חביבה, "The mitzvah of Chanukah *lecht* is an extremely beloved mitzvah." And when we perform the mitzvah in this spirit, we will merit children *talmidei chachamim*.⁷

Gazing at the Chanukah *Lecht*

The Chavas Ya'ir (הגהות) (מקור חיים תרע"ב ב') writes, "In my opinion, the primary mitzvah is that the one who lit the *lecht* should stay near the *lecht* for a half-hour, and he should

7. The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* adds that also the one who lights the candles will become a *talmid chacham*. Because if it is *mesugal* that his children will become *talmidei chachamim*, it is certainly *mesugal* that the lighter will also become a *talmid chacham*.

Tzaddikim add that just as Chanukah *lecht* is *mesugal* to raise children *talmidei chachamim*, if *chas veshalom* one has a child who fell of the *derech*, the parent's mitzvah of Chanukah *lecht* can bring him back.

look at the *lecht* and be happy with them."

The Yeitav Panim writes, "The *minhag* in Klal Yisrael (which is Torah) is to sit and gaze at the candles. The reason for that is to bring down the miracles of Chanukah by gazing at the Chanukah *lecht*."

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

It states (*Bamidbar* 21:8), עשה לך שרף ושים אותו על גס והיה כל הנשוח וראה אותו וחי.⁸

This *pasuk* refers to the *brachos* of Chanukah, and to the importance of gazing at the *lecht*.

שרף hints to the *brachah*, להדליק נר חנוכה, because שרף means burns, and the candles burn.

שים ושים אותו על גס implies to the *brachah* ניסים לאבותינו.

And וחי hints to שהחיינו.

These words also allude to the custom to look at the Chanukah *lecht*:

Chanukah is implied in this *pasuk* because if someone was נשוח, bitten by the *yetzer hara*, וראה אותו, he should gaze at the Chanukah *lecht*, וחי, and he will become like a new person.

We say, אין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם, "We don't have permission to use them, only to see them..." The Divrei Chaim *zt'l* said that it seems from these words that seeing the Chanukah *lecht* is like using them.

He compares this to a doctor who looks into his patients' eyes and knows the illness and the cure. Similarly, by looking at the

8. Literally, the *pasuk* means, "Make a snake, place it on a pole, and whoever was bitten will see it and live."

Chanukah *lecht*, one can attain a *refuah* for all ailments of his *neshamah*.

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

What should a person do when he stays near the *lecht*?

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

Some say chapter קי"ט in *Tehillim*, because it has many requests for success in Torah and mitzvos.

The Leket Yoshar (p.43) writes that his Rebbe, the Terumas HaDeshen would say chapter קי"ט in *Tehillim* every day. Certainly, it is an excellent time to say it while looking at the Chanukah *lecht*, which is *mesugal* for attaining success in Torah.

This is also a good time for tefillah. The Tosefta (*Maasar Sheni* 5:15) writes, "When one performs a mitzvah, it is an ideal time to daven to Hashem."

The Rabbeinu b'Chaya (19:3) writes, "When a woman lights the Shabbos candles, she should pray that she merit children *talmidei chachamim*, who shine in Torah because *tefillos* are more accepted after performing a mitzvah."⁹

9. Reb Shimon Daskal, a Satmar chassid from Bnei Brak, was once deliberating whether he should buy a store on Reb Akiva corner Yerushalayim St., a prime location, or if he should buy a store three times the size, on a side street.

The Satmar Rebbe told him, "The *Tana'im* and *Amora'im* created

Primarily, as you look at the *lecht*, it is important to be happy with the *lecht*. As the Chavas Yair (that we quoted above in this section) writes, "In my opinion, the primary mitzvah is that the one who lit the *lecht* should be near the *lecht* for a half-hour, and he should look at the *lecht* and be happy with them."

Simchah

The Gemara (*Taanis* 28) states, "The Yevanim forbade donating wood for the *mizbeiach*, and they banned bringing *bikurim* to Yerushalayim."

Why did the Yevanim target specifically these two *mitzvos*? The Maharsha explains that these mitzvos

were performed amidst joy and celebration (as the *Mishnah Bikurim* states, "the flute played before them..."), and the Yevanim didn't want the Jewish people to be happy.

Yavan appreciated culture. They had no issue with Yidden keeping Torah and mitzvos as a culture. But Jewish people keep the mitzvos with joy, and that is something the Yevanim couldn't comprehend or tolerate. They, therefore, attempted to take away any mitzvah associated with joy.

Unfortunately, the Yevanim were somewhat successful. The Bach (670) teaches that the Yevanim were able to take over the

tefillos (see *Brachos* 17.) but few people say them. But there's a tefillah written by an *acharon*, the Chayei Adam, it is called תפילת זכה, and many people say it. This is because תפילת זכה is said when Yom Kippur is approaching. So, you see that it's all about location... Buy the store in the better location."

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

Beis HaMikdash because the Jewish people were lax with the *korbanos*. The Shem MiShmuel (680) explains that the Yidden brought all *korbanos*; they were scrupulous with their obligations. The problem was that they brought the *korbanos* without joy. Therefore, the *korbanos* were taken away from them.

The world consists of four elements: (1) fire, (2)

water, (3) wind, and (4) earth. Dovid HaMelech said (*Tehillim* 40:3), וַיַּעֲלֵי... מַיִם, הֵייוֹן, "Hashem saved me from the mud of Yavan..." The Sfas Emes explains that mud contains earth and water but no fire. That exemplifies Yavan. They strived to extinguish the fire of a Yid.¹⁰

The Sukelener Rebbe (Rebbe Eliezer Zusia) zt'l would say that at the beginning of the year, on

10. Rebbe Meir Yechiel of Ostrovtze zt'l was once at a rabbinic gathering, and everyone present was asked to tell something that they learned from their father. Most people present had rabbinic parents, and they repeated something inspirational they heard from their fathers. Rebbe Meir Yechiel's parents were simple people. When it was his turn to repeat what he learned from his father, he said, "My father was a baker. He taught me that fresh bread is better than stale bread." He was hinting to them that "Although my father wasn't a Torah scholar, I am a scholar, and that is more important than someone who is a rabbi solely because his father was a rabbi."

Then Rebbe Meir Yechiel added, "My father also told me that when you bake bread, you must fill the oven with wood and seal it hermetically, for even the slightest draft can ruin the bread..." With this, he was hinting that we must be cautious that foreign, non-Jewish influences shouldn't cool off our *yiras Shamayim*. Even the smallest draft from the outside world can ruin what we are cooking inside.

Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos, we build a beautiful (spiritual) edifice, which is the source of bounty and blessings for the new year. Yet, something is missing. There is no light. Everyone understands that without electricity, a building isn't complete. Something essential is missing. Similarly, the new year without light isn't complete. Chanukah adds the light. Now the year is complete.

The light is the joy of *Yiddishkeit*, the happiness we have with the mitzvos. That is the light of Chanukah that we add into the new year.

Preparation for the Mitzvah

A chassid found a place to hide and watched the Yismach Yisrael *zt'l* as he

prepared to light the Chanukah *lecht*. The chassid observed the Rebbe's intense devotion and fiery *hislahavus* as he poured the oil and prepared the wicks. The chassid thought, "If this is the way the Rebbe prepares for the mitzvah, I can only imagine the great excitement that I will witness when the Rebbe lights the candles." But when the Rebbe lit the *lecht*, the Rebbe suddenly became very regular. He said the *brachah* and lit the candles just like thousands of other Yidden do. At least externally, one couldn't discern anything unique. The chassid wondered, "It doesn't make sense; shouldn't the mitzvah be performed with even greater *hislahavus* than the preparations?" He couldn't come out of hiding to ask the Rebbe this question

It is important for the family to see your joy and passion for the mitzvos. That keeps them warm inside, and they will "bake well." But if the mitzvos are performed coldly and without joy, it may fail to pass on to the next generation.

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

The next day, the Yismach Yisrael approached that chassid and told him, "A person's part in a mitzvah is his preparations for the mitzvah. When he performs the mitzvah, Hashem gives inspiration from above. At that point, it isn't in his hands anymore."

Therefore, if we want to light the Chanukah *lecht* properly, we should make a good *hachanah* (preparation) beforehand. We don't have much control over what happens when we perform the mitzvah – that is in Hashem's hands. Perhaps Hashem will give us *hislahavus* and joy, and perhaps not. But the preparation is in our hands, and we should prepare for the mitzvah as best we can.

Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala *zt'l* sent his grandson to watch the Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l* get ready

to light Chanukah *lecht*. The grandson arrived at the Rebbe's residence and told the *gabai*, Reb Chanina Shiff, that his grandfather, the Biala Rebbe, sent him to observe the Beis Yisrael prepare for Chanukah *lecht*.

The *gabai* opened the door to the Rebbe's room and saw the Rebbe pacing with immense concentration, his face aflame. The *gabai* quickly shut the door and said, "I don't dare disturb the Rebbe at this time. I'm sorry, I can't bring you in. If you want to, go in on your own."

The grandson decided to do just that. He opened the door, but as soon as he saw the Beis Yisrael's holy face aflame, he quickly shut the door in fright.

He returned to his grandfather and told him what he saw. His grandfather replied, "That's exactly what I wanted you to see."

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

An oil merchant came to a town, and people brought out their pots and containers, and they asked him to fill their utensils with oil. Eventually, people ran out of containers. They told him, "We want to buy more oil, but we don't have where to put it."

The merchant replied, "I also want to sell you more oil. Bring more pots and pans, and I will fill them with oil."

The *nimshal* is, Hashem wants to give us immense light on Chanukah, and we also want to get it, but we can't receive it without vessels. When we prepare ourselves, we create vessels that will retain the light of Chanukah.

Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Chortkov *zt'l* taught: A gem shines in the correct setting. Put it on a velvet cloth, and it appears beautiful. Put it in a gold

ring, and it appears exquisite. Take the same gem and place it in a paper bag or a dirty bowl, and it won't have the same appeal.

The same is with the light of Chanukah. We have to create a setting that is conducive for it to shine beautifully.

He said that this is hinted at in the words, ולכל בני ישראל היה אור במושבם (*Shemos* 10:23). The אור, the brilliant light of Chanukah changes, במושבם, with its setting. If we prepare ourselves well, we become a proper receptacle to retain the great light of Chanukah.

Do the Mitzvah the Best You Can – Even if it isn't Perfect

We want to light the Chanukah *lecht* in the best way possible, however, we mustn't forget that we are human beings and have a *yetzer hara*. The goal, therefore, is to do the best you can and to be happy

with whatever you accomplish

After the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim *zy'a* was *niftar*, the chassidim debated whom to appoint as their next Rebbe. One elderly person recommended the Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* (the Yesod HaAvodah's grandson) to be the successor, and he supported his recommendation with the following incident:

The Divrei Shmuel loved the mitzvah of Chanukah. He was an expert in the halachos, and he spent a lot of time preparing his olive oil for the mitzvah. One year, he filled his Menorah with olive oil, and before lighting it, he went to his grandfather's house to watch the Yesod HaAvodah light Chanukah lecht. When he returned home, he saw that someone had lit the *lecht* that he had prepared. There was no time to set up another Chanukah menorah, as

Shabbos was fast approaching. All he could do was light one candle made from animal fats. The *chiddush* is that he lit that candle with joy. He didn't perform the mitzvah with olive oil. He didn't even light the number of candles one is supposed to light (because he only had one candle). But he did the best he could under the circumstances, and he was very happy with the mitzvah.

The elderly chassid concluded, "If Reb Shmuel could be happy even then, he deserves to be the Rebbe." His nomination was accepted.

The Divrei Shmuel passed this attitude down to his son, the Beis Avraham of Slonim *zt'l*.

One year, on Friday afternoon, the Beis Avraham was just about ready to light the Chanukah menorah when a child ran by and accidentally knocked over the Menorah. The oil spilled, and there

wasn't enough time before Shabbos to prepare the Menorah again. The Beis Avraham commented with a smile, "The same Creator who commanded us to light Chanukah *lecht* commanded us not to become angry."

When Rebbe Yochanan of Tolna *zy'a* (Yerushalayim, Bayit v'Gan) would light Chanukah *lecht*, people from the neighborhood would come to watch the *pirsumei nisah*. Once, due to pushing, a child fell on the Rebbe's Chanukah menorah, and knocked it over. The child felt terrible, but the Rebbe said, "My dear child, I'm so grateful to you. Now I can keep Chazal's ruling of, כבתה אין זקוק לה, if the candles blow out before one half-hour passes, one isn't obligated to light the candles again. How often do I have the opportunity to keep this Chazal?"

Instead of being angry with the child, he rejoiced that he could finally practice a statement from Chazal. (Afterwards, the Rebbe lit the candles again because the Mishnah Berurah rules that if a half-hour hadn't yet passed, one should rekindle the candles.)

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* said that he was once in the home of his Rebbe, Reb Nachumke Kaplan, on Chanukah. It was time to light Chanukah *lecht*, but Reb Nachumke was waiting until his Rebbetzin got home.

The Chofetz Chaim told his Rebbe that halachah states one should light at the right time even if everyone isn't home.

Reb Nochumke replied, "I know that my wife will be upset if I light the candles without her. The Gemara says שלום ביתו עדיף, *shalom bayis* is more important than lighting Chanukah *lecht*.¹¹ So I'm

11. Shulchan Aruch (תרע"ה) writes, "If a person doesn't have enough

waiting for her. *Shalom bayis* takes precedence."

Sometimes, our hislahavus to perform the mitzvah in the best way (at the very best time, and so on) could cause friction in the home. It isn't worth it. Don't cause your *shalom bayis* to suffer because of Chanukah *lecht*, because שלום ביתו עדיף, *shalom bayis* is a greater ideal.

Seeing the Miracles

There's a popular question people ask on Chanukah called "The Beis Yosef's question." There are more than a hundred answers.

The Beis Yosef asks:

The Gemara teaches us that the Chashmonaim found only one jug of oil, marked with the Kohen Gadol seal. In the jug was only enough oil to light

[the Menorah] for one day. A miracle occurred, and they used it to light for eight days. Based on this Gemara, the Beis Yosef asks: "Why did they establish Chanukah as eight days? After all, the oil in the container was enough to burn for one night [without a miracle]. This means that the miracle was only for seven nights!"

The Alter of Kelm *zt'l* answers that on the first night of Chanukah we celebrate the miracle of creation, that oil can give light. Why should oil create light? It's one of the miracles Hashem performed at Creation, and we have to train ourselves to recognize these miracles.

The Alter of Kelm explains that the miracles that Hashem placed in nature are the greatest because they are miracles

money to buy candles for both Shabbos and Chanukah, he should buy for Shabbos so there will be *shalom bayis*."

of *יש מאין*, something from nothing.

We generally celebrate the miracles of *יש מיש*, which means that there was no new creation, rather, there was a change in the rules of the world.

For example, on Chanukah we celebrate the miraculous war when the few and the weak Jews defeated a vast and mighty army. Nothing new was created, just a new reality. Generally, the few and the weak lose the war; this time, the few and the weak won.

Also, naturally, a half-*lug* of oil can last for one night. This time, the same measure of oil remained lit for eight days. This isn't a new creation, rather a new reality within the rules of creation.

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

of oil to burn and give off light, and that creation is a miracle of *יש מאין*, so it is an even greater miracle.

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* teaches that on Chanukah we must train ourselves to see the world correctly. When we see nature, we should recognize that it is all miracles. Therefore, on Chanukah, we make a *brachah* just by seeing the *lecht*. As *Shulchan Aruch* (676:3) teaches, "Someone...who isn't going to light Chanukah *lecht* on that night...he makes the *brachah* *שעשה ניסים* when he sees Chanukah *lecht*..." We don't say a *brachah* for seeing any other mitzvah. What is unique about the Chanukah *lecht* that one makes a *brachah* simply for seeing them? On Chanukah, we correct our eyesight and perspective to recognize the miracles Hashem performs all the time.

Therefore, Chazal (*Shabbos* 22.) say, "Chanukah *lecht* that is placed above

twenty *amos* is *pasul*." People won't see the Chanukah *lecht*, it won't publicize the miracle, and Chanukah is about *seeing*.

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

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

What is the connection between these two ideas? There must be a reason why these two very different lessons were placed together in the Gemara.¹²

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* answers that both Gemaras are discussing our obligation to recognize the miracles that Hashem performs:

The Menorah can't be too high because we must see the Chanukah *lecht* and internalize its messages. We must remember the miracles Hashem performed on Chanukah, and that Hashem performs for us each and every day. Then the Gemara continues with how Yosef was thrown into a pit where there were snakes and scorpions, and miraculously he survived. His brothers saw this but didn't recognize the miracle. (Had they been cognizant of the miracle, they wouldn't have sold him.) This Gemara is expressing the challenge we must overcome: It is possible to see a miracle and not

12. Why does the Gemara juxtapose (1) a Chanukah menorah can't be higher than twenty *amos*, because people won't see it; (2) the pit that Yosef was thrown into contained snakes and scorpions?

recognize it, and the purpose of the Chanukah *lecht* is to train us to see things correctly.

Lighting Chanukah *lecht*, is like turning on the lights in a dark room. Before we couldn't see the miracles in life, and now we can. But even after turning on the lights, it remains dark for those who keep their eyes closed. On Chanukah, we have the potential to see the world with all its miracles, but that's only for those who are willing to open their eyes and consciously seek Hashem's presence in the world.

In the morning, we say the *brachos* פוקח עורים and המעביר שנה מעיני. Both *brachos* seem to be thanking Hashem for our ability to see. What is the difference between them?

Reb Shimon Schwab *zt'l* answers that one *brachah* thanks Hashem for our vision, and the other *brachah* thanks Hashem for

our perception. Because there's seeing and there's seeing. We praise Hashem that we can see. And we praise Hashem that we can perceive all the miracles that our eyes see.

Emunah

People tell a *meshal* of a *talmid chacham* who proudly told his friends that he saw Hashem in his dreams. His friends told him, "*Chazal* (*Brachos* 55:) say that dreams are often just reflections of the thoughts one had during the day. You're a great *talmid chacham*; you always think about Hashem, so you dreamed that you saw Hashem. It isn't necessarily a true revelation."

He replied, "Why do you say that? I'm so busy davening and learning that I hardly have time to think about Hashem!"

Unfortunately, that is how people are: they do mitzvos, learn Torah, and even daven, but they don't

think about before whom they are doing these deeds. And even when they remember Hashem, they think of Hashem as being far away, somewhere high up in heaven. They don't realize that Hashem is truly with them and close to them.¹³

Chanukah is a time to remember that.

The *Tzror HaMor* says חנוכה doesn't solely mean חנו כ"ה, that the nation rested from the war on כ"ה, because our *yomim tovim* aren't named for the date the miracles occurred. For example, Purim isn't named for the fourteenth of Adar, and Pesach isn't named for the fifteenth of Nisan.

There are כ"ה, twenty-five letters in שמע ישראל ה' אלקינו ה' אחד. So חנו כ"ה means they were won the war in the merit of their belief in Hashem. And each year, on Chanukah, we should work on improving and enhancing our *emunah*.

Reb Shlomo Eiger of Lublin *hy'd zt'l* (son of Shevet Yehudah *zt'l*) taught: There are two ways to wake someone up: with a loud sound or by turning on the lights. On Rosh Hashanah, we are awakened by the loud call of the shofar. On Chanukah, we are awakened by the bright light of *emunah* that shines forth from the Chanukah *lecht*.¹⁴

13. The Sma'g lists the 613 mitzvos, and he writes in his introduction, "In a dream, I had a vision, which told me, 'Behold, you forget to list the primary mitzvah, השמר לך פן תשכח ה' אלקיך, Be cautious, lest you forget Hashem your G-d (*Devarim* 8:11).'¹ I wasn't planning on listing that *pasuk* among the Torah prohibitions (לאוין), and the Rambam didn't list it either. But after this dream, I thought about it in the morning and I realized that it is a primary mitzvah for attaining *yiras Hashem*."

14. Once, at *shalash seudos*, the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told his students,

The Mode of Miracles

The *Navi* (II *Melachim* 4, see commentaries) tells us that Ovadyah's wife told Elisha that she owes money, and the creditor warned that if she doesn't pay soon, he will take her two sons as slaves. Elisha asked her, מה יש לך בבית, "What do you have in your home?"

She answered that she had some oil. Elisha replied, "Borrow empty utensils from the neighbors and pour the oil into the

utensils." Miraculously, the oil kept flowing until all the utensils were filled with oil, and she was able to pay off her debt.

The Taz (670:1, quoting the Zohar) writes:

Elisha asked (ibid, *Melachim* 4:2) מה יש לך בבית, "What do you have in your home?" because Hashem sends his blessings onto something that is already there. As we see in this instance, the small amount of oil became a lot of oil.

"The entire world is filled with heresy and denial of Hashem. I'm not referring only to the goyim or non-religious Yidden. I'm referring to the *ehrllicher Yidden*. Listen to the way they speak, and you will hear *kefirah*. When they discuss business and politics, they speak as though everything is in our hands, forgetting that everything is in Hashem's hands.

"Therefore," the Chofetz Chaim concluded, "in my opinion, everyone must strengthen himself with *emunah* for an hour each day."

The students were startled. An hour is a long time.

The Chofetz Chaim asked his students whether they are ready to dedicate an hour a day to think about *emunah*, and they were all silent. The Chofetz Chaim said, "I see that this is hard for you. So, I have another idea for you. When you daven, think about what you're saying, and that will be your daily lesson in *emunah*."

But Hashem doesn't make a miracle by creating something brand new.

With this concept, the Taz answers the Beis Yosef's question. The Beis Yosef asks that since they found a jug of oil that had enough oil for one day, it seems that there was no miracle on the first night of Chanukah. The Taz answers, "Looking back, they realized that a miracle occurred on the first night... If the oil were completely consumed on the first night, there would be nothing left for the miracle to latch onto the next night. Therefore, it is certain that some oil miraculously remained from the first night, and the miracle came from the remaining oil to increase it."

So, the miracle of the first night was that the oil wasn't completely consumed, leaving room for a miracle to transpire on the following nights.

Reb Aryeh Leib Tzinz (קומץ למנחה, דרוש לחנוכה ז') explains this with a *mashal*:

Someone owned ten crates filled with gold coins. Nine were stolen. Using the gold coins from the tenth crate, he hired police to search for the nine stolen crates. He vowed that if the gold was found, he would give three gold coins from each crate to *tzedakah*.

The nine crates were found, and true to his promise, he gave a *gabai tzedakah* 27 gold coins, three from each crate.

The *gabai* wasn't satisfied with that and asked for another three gold coins from the tenth crate. The man replied, "That crate wasn't stolen. My gratitude to Hashem is that He brought back the nine crates. Why must I thank Hashem for that tenth crate, which was never stolen?"

The *gabai tzedakah* explained, "If the tenth crate were stolen, you wouldn't have money for the search. The fact that it wasn't stolen is part of the miracle, and you should thank Hashem for that, too."

On the first night of Chanukah, we thank Hashem for the oil that was left over because without that oil, the miracle couldn't have occurred.

Praying for Miracles

The Gemara (24.) tells:

Someone was hit with *mal'kus* in Rava's *beis din* for a sin he committed, and the man died.

The Babylonian king found out and wanted to punish Rava. However, the king's mother warned the king not to Rava, and that he shouldn't start up with the Yidden because Hashem performs miracles for them.

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

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

"How do you know?"

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

"That doesn't prove that G-d listens to them," the king said. "Perhaps they prayed a moment before it was going to rain. Let them request rain now, in the middle of the summer, and then we will know whether Hashem listens to their prayers or not."

It was Tamuz, a month that it never rains in Bavel. So the king's mother sent a message to Rava, explaining the gravity of the situation, and asked him to pray for rain.

Rava prayed, but it didn't rain.

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

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

His father told him that he shouldn't sleep in his bed.

Rava immediately awoke, got out of bed, and slept elsewhere. In the morning, Rava looked at

his bed and saw that it was stabbed with a knife many times. (The *sheidim* were given permission to harm Rava, and they were told where Rava generally sleeps.)

We learn from this Gemara that it is dangerous and improper to daven for miracles.¹⁵

Yet, surprisingly, on Chanukah we daven for miracles. As it states (*Shulchan Aruch* 187:4), "If one forgot to recite *Al HaNisim* [in *Birchas HaMazon*]... he can say in the הרהרמן... הרהרמן הוא יעשה לנו נסים כמו שעשה בימים ההם בזמן הזה בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן.. 'May the compassionate One perform miracles for us as He performed miracles in those days...' "¹⁶

15. Praying for a *refuah sheleimah* isn't called praying for a miracle, even when doctors have given up. Doctors were given permission to heal, but they weren't given permission to cause people despair.

Similarly, one can pray for *parnassah*, *shidduchim*, *nachas*, and all other kinds of *yeshuos*. Never lose hope. The Gemara teaches, "If one davened and his *tefillos* weren't answered, he should pray again. As it states (*Tehillim* 27:14), 'קוה אל ה' חזק ויאמץ לבך וקוה אל ה', 'Trust in Hashem, strengthen your heart, and trust on Hashem.'"

16. When one says *Al HaNisim* in the right place, one doesn't daven

Similarly, if one forgot to say *Al HaNisim* in *Shemonah Esrei*, he can say *הרחמן* at the end of *Shemonah Esrei*, before *ויהי לרצון* (*Mishnah Berurah* 682:4).

We daven for miracles!

The Shaul u'Meishiv (*Diorei Shaul*) *zt'l* asks why we do so, as it is improper and dangerous to daven for a miracle.

The Shaul u'Meishiv answers that on Chanukah we are permitted to daven

for miracles. Chanukah, Hashem runs the world in a mode of miracles; therefore, we may pray for miracles.

The Maharal says that Chanukah is eight days long to express that these are days that transcend the laws of nature. The world is based on the number seven, as it states (*Mishlei* 9:1), *הצבה עמודיה שבעה*, "Hashem established the world on seven pillars." This is the reason many aspects of the

for miracles. But when one forgets *Al HaNisim*, he does. It seems that by forgetting to say *Al HaNisim* he earns a bonus, because now he can pray for miracles.

Perhaps the explanation is that when one forgets to say *Al HaNisim* he is heartbroken that he lost out on a special opportunity. His broken and humble heart makes him a fitting recipient of miracles. He should pray for miracles because it is likely that miracles will occur due to his broken heart.

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

During the eight days of Chanukah, the Chanukah miracles should always be on our mind. But this person forgot Chanukah (evident by the fact that he forgot to say *Al HaNisim*). He needs a salvation and a miracle to become a better Yid, for he is apparently on a very low level. Therefore, he needs to pray that Hashem should miraculously elevate him. Whereas someone who didn't forget *Al HaNisim* doesn't have to pray for a miracle.

world are related to the number seven. Such as seven days of the week, music is comprised of seven notes, there are seven wisdoms, and so on. During Moshiach's era, the world will be run with the number eight. As it states (*Tehillim* 6:1), למנצח על השמינית, "a song played on a harp of eight strings." Chanukah is eight days because on Chanukah the world is run beyond the rules of nature.

The Maharal (*Ner Mitzvah*) writes, "The natural world is comprised of seven... Eight is beyond nature... *Milah* is on the eighth day, because *milah* is beyond nature... Torah is beyond nature. The Torah was given after seven, as it states (*Devarim* 16:9) 'Count seven weeks...' and after the seven weeks, on the fiftieth day, the Torah was given... Chapter 119 in *Tehillim*, which discusses Torah, has eight *pesukim*

for each letter of the alef beis (תמינא אפי'), representing that Torah is beyond nature." The Maharal explains that the Chanukah miracle came in the merit of the Torah, which is beyond nature. This is why the Menorah miraculously burned for eight days.

The Gemara (*Gittin* 30:) states, "If someone tells you that your friend died, you can believe him, but if someone tells you that your friend became wealthy, don't believe him." This is because the world follows the laws of nature, and generally, the poor remain poor. But Chanukah is a time of miracles, and everything can turn around. It is the world of eight where the laws of nature don't apply. We are permitted to daven for miracles on Chanuka because it is a time when miracles are the norm.¹⁷

17. The laws of Chanukah begin in *Shulchan Aruch* with the

Tzaddikim tell us: When you serve Hashem with *mesirus nefesh*, beyond your natural limits, Hashem will perform miracles for you beyond the rules of nature.

This concept applies every day of the year, and especially on Chanukah, a time for miracles. If you serve Hashem beyond your limits, Hashem will perform great miracles for you.¹⁸

simanim (תרע - תרעא). תרע or תרעא in Aramaic means gate. The Beis Yisrael zy'a said that this is because on Chanukah, the gates of heaven are opened and everyone can go inside.

18. The Mishnah teaches: "Be brazen like a leopard, light like an eagle, swift like a deer, and strong like a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven." Why does the Mishnah express itself with animals? It could have written in brief, "Be brazen, light, swift, and powerful."

We can answer that animals act according to instinct. The deer doesn't *decide* to run fast, and the lion doesn't make a decision to be brave and powerful. They do so instinctively. This is how one should serve Hashem. He should be swift like a deer, powerful like a lion, and almost instinctively be quick to do Hashem's will.

In *parashas Vayeira*, when the angels came to visit Avraham, they asked him, "Where is Sarah, your wife." (18:9). The Ksav Sofer explained *bederech tzachus* that the angels said, "It is known that women are stingier with their guests than men are. Since you prepared such a lavish meal for us, we assume that she isn't home. Is that correct?"

Avraham responded that she was home, in the tent.

The angels replied, חדל להיות לשרה אורח נשים, Sarah is different than all other women. The angels promised that she will bear a son. This is because she went beyond her nature, and that brings miracles beyond nature.

Chanukah: A Time for Teshuvah

A woman approached the Yesod HaAvodah (Slonim) *zt'l* asking for help with her daughter who had strayed off the path and ran away from home.

The Yesod HaAvodah asked, "Do you have at home a garment that belongs to your daughter?"

She replied that she did.

"Cut off some pieces of fabric from the garment and roll them into wicks and use them to light the Shabbos *lecht*.", the Rebbe instructed.

She did so.

That Friday night, the girl returned home while the family was in the middle of their Shabbos *seudah*. She said, "I regret running away. I acted foolishly. I want to return home and to Yiddishkeit."

The joy was immense. Mother and daughter embraced.

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* repeated this story and added that this is implied in the *brachos*, להדליק נר של שבת.

להדליק doesn't mean "to light," it means "to ignite."

The Ksav Sofer tells us that he is writing this *bederech tzachus*, however, he adds, the lesson is true nonetheless. When one serves Hashem beyond his limitations, he will merit miracles beyond the rules of nature.

People were discussing the miracles some chassidic Rebbes performed. One person said, "Whatever my Rebbe asks for, Hashem fulfills."

The son of the Chofetz Chaim was present, and he said, "I don't know whether Hashem does everything my father requests, but I do know that my father does everything Hashem requests."

When one has this approach, he will merit miracles beyond nature.

The Shabbos *lecht* ignites the *neshamah* of a Yid.

The Beis Avraham adds that on Chanukah we say להדליק נר חנוכה, because the Chanukah *lecht* ignite the *neshamah*, the hearts of the Jewish nation, and draws them to *teshuvah*.

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

חנוכה comes from the word חינוך, which means training, to train oneself, or to train children, to act properly. Therefore, the

holiday is called חנוכה because during these eight days, we teach ourselves to serve Hashem properly.

The Beis Aharon *zt'l* adds that since Chanukah is a time for *teshuvah*, it is recommended to say *Tehillim* on Chanukah, because *Tehillim* helps a person on his path to *teshuvah*. The Beis Aharon writes, "A person must believe that by saying *Tehillim*, he can leave behind all his foolish ways and problems and overcome thoughts of *yeush* that the *yetzer hara* brings onto a person."

Al HaNissim discusses the miracles of the war. מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים רבים ביד מעטים, "You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of few."

The following words are, וטמאים ביד טהורים רשעים ביד צדיקים, וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך, "[You delivered] the *tame'im* into the hands of the *tahorim*, *resha'im* into the hands of

tzaddikim, sinners into the hands of those who study Torah." The Bardichover Rav zy'a asks: Why is it considered miraculous when the *tahorim*, tzaddikim, and those who study Torah win a war? We understand that it is a miracle when the weak and few win a battle but is it miraculous for Torah scholars to win a war?

The Bardichover Rav answers that a great wave of *teshuvah* began after this

war because everyone saw how a handful of tzaddikim miraculously defeated the mighty Greek army. This caused many non-religious Yidden to do *teshuvah*. *Al HaNissim* is discussing that wave of *teshuvah*: טמאים ביד רשעים, צדיקים טהורים means the impure people did *teshuvah* and became pure. רשעים ביד צדיקים, implies that the *resha'im* became righteous. And זדים ביד עוסקי תורתך indicates that the sinners began studying Torah.¹⁹

19. A story is told about a yid from Eretz Yisrael who traveled to Australia. This occurred around sixty years ago. He didn't know the language, and he didn't know where to find the Yidden. He would have gone to the beis medresh, but how do you find one when there was no one to ask?

He came up with a plan. Erev Shabbos he went to a fish store and waited. He figured that he would find Yidden there, who come to buy fish for Shabbos. The plan was on target. A yid came to the store to buy a large fish for Shabbos, and the yid (from Eretz Yisrael) asked him whether he can be his guest for Shabbos.

The man cordially invited him. "It isn't every day that I have the opportunity to perform *hachnasas orchim*," he said.

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

On Motzei Shabbos, he said to his host, "Thank you for your

hospitality. It was truly a wonderful Shabbos. From your beautiful house, I understand that Hashem blessed you with wealth. But there is something I was wondering about. May I ask you about it?"

"Go ahead."

"I noticed that in your dining room showcase you keep a broken olive oil bottle. Why are you saving it, and why in the showcase?"

The man replied, "That oil bottle is very precious to me; it carries the story of my life. I'll tell you about it:

"My father was *niftar* when I was young. As the oldest child, it was my responsibility to support my widowed mother and my younger siblings. Kind people had *rachmanus* on me, and they helped me get into the field of business. Baruch Hashem, I had immediate success. There was plenty of money in the house. However, together with my financial success came my spiritual decline. The first thing to go was my *yarmulke*. Soon, the other mitzvos left, too.

"One afternoon, I saw a Jewish child sitting on the curb near my house, crying. Being an orphan myself, it is always painful for me to see a child crying, so I asked him what happened. The child said, 'Chanukah is approaching. My father sent me to buy olive oil. He warned me to be careful with the oil because we are poor, and he will be very upset if the bottle breaks. I tried to be careful, but then a cat ran right up to me. Startled, I fell, and the bottle broke.' He showed me the broken bottle, lying in the gutter. He said, 'How can I go to my father, without the Chanukah oil?'

"I gave the child some money and said, Go back to the store and buy two bottles of olive oil. Bring one bottle to your father and one bottle to me."

The host explained, "I didn't light Chanukah *lecht* for several years, but that year, I did. When the child said, 'How can I go to my father without the Chanukah oil?' I remembered how my father lit Chanukah *lecht* each year. I thought to myself, 'The day will come when I return to my father in heaven. How can I meet my father without Chanukah *lecht*? How can I go to him, without

הנינה - Undeserved Kindness

The *Machzor Vitri* says that חנוכה comes from the word חנינה (or חנם), largess, or free gifts.²⁰

As the Ruzhiner *zt'l* says, "On Chanukah Hashem sends down bounty similar to the bounty that descends on Rosh Hashanah. The difference is that on Rosh Hashanah we receive the bounty only if we are worthy, and on Chanukah we receive the bounty even if we don't deserve it."

Rebbe Moshe of Razvadov *zt'l* also discusses

the great bounty that the Jewish nation receives on Chanukah. He says that it's hinted in *Rashi* (*Bereishis* 8:11) which tells that the dove Noach sent from the *teivah* said, רבש"ע יהיו מזונותי מרורין בזית בידו של הקב"ה ולא מתוקין כדבש בידו בשר ודם, "Ribono Shel Olam! May my *parnassah* be bitter like an olive, but given from Your hands, and not sweet like honey, given by a human being."

The Jewish nation is compared to a dove (see *Brachos* 53:). So, we can say that the dove's prayer represents the prayer of the Jewish nation. They say to Hashem, יהיו מזונותי מרורין בזית,

this mitzvah?' I took the shards of the broken bottle from the gutter because something told me that this was a turning point in my life.

"That year, I lit the Chanukah *lecht*. Soon, I was keeping Shabbos. Then came *tefilin*. And now, *baruch Hashem*, I have a beautiful family, all of us following in the ways of the Torah. All this began with a broken olive oil bottle. Now you understand why I saved it all these years."

20. As it states, יה' ה' קל רחום וחנון, etc. and חנון means Hashem grants kindness, even to those who don't deserve it.

let my *parnassah* come from Chanukah, when we use זית שמן, olive oil, בידו של הקב"ה, because then the *parnassah* comes from Hakadosh Baruch Hu's compassionate hand. We prefer that over the *parnassah* that comes from Rosh Hashanah, מתוקין כדבש, the time of year we eat an apple with honey because then it is בדי בשר ודם, dependent on man's deeds. If one deserves it, he receives, and if he doesn't deserve it, he doesn't receive. Because Chanukah, everyone receives *parnassah*. It is a time of חנינה, free, even underserved gifts."

Chanukah draws down *parnassah* even if we don't deserve it. But this shouldn't be our *kavanah* when we perform the mitzvos. We should intend to reveal the miracles, to praise Hashem, etc. We can say that this is implied in Chazal (*Shabbos*

22.), אסור להרצות מעות כנגד נר חנוכה.²¹ We can translate it, "It is forbidden to *want* money when lighting the Chanukah candles." *Parnassah* shouldn't be our focus when we light Chanukah *lecht*, but it will undoubtedly come in its merit.

Taking Advantage of these Days

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21) says, "On Chanukah...one mustn't deliver *hespedim* (eulogies)." We add that we also shouldn't need to deliver *hespedim* *after* Chanukah passes over lost opportunities. We are presented with an excellent opportunity to fill our coffers with spiritual and *gashmiyos* treasures, and it would be a shame to let these days pass without taking advantage of them. Fortunate are those who

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

latch on to the potential that's lies within these holy days.

In *Moaz Tzur* we say, בני, בינה ימי שמונה קבעו. This can be explained, the בני בינה, the wise people, ימי שמונה קבעו, acquire these eight, holy days of Chanukah. They don't let these days pass unproductively.

The Kedushas Levi (*Kedushah* 2) offers a *mashal* of a king who opened his treasury for a day, allowing all to take whatever their heart desires. "Woe to the fool who doesn't take advantage, and he sleeps all day long." This *mashal* describes the pitiful state of those who don't take advantage of Shabbos, Yom Tov, and our subject, Chanukah. We can gain so much when lighting the Chanukah *lecht*, when we say *Al HaNissim* and *Hallel*, when we rejoice with the miracles, and so on. Every moment of Chanukah is special when used for *avodas Hashem*. Only a fool

would squander such an opportunity.

The Kedushas Levi writes, "Due to the *tzidkus* (righteousness) of Matisyahu ben Yochanan Kohen Gadol and his children, the gates of *chesed*, and the gates of miracles are open during the eight days of Chanukah. Perhaps the gates open when we light the Chanukah *lecht*.... And with *Hallel* and with *Al HaNissim* we draw down the *chesed* and miracles to this world."

The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ד ד"ה) writes, "The holidays are the pillars upon which the world stands. They are called שלש רגלים (literally, 'three feet') for they are the pillars that hold up the world. In earlier generations, three holidays were sufficient. In later generations, it was known clearly before our Father in heaven that three holidays weren't sufficient, so He added Chanukah and Purim. About us, it states, אין שוטה נפגע, a fool doesn't feel.' [We are like

fools because we don't realize just how important Chanukah and Purim are to us.] But the early scholars and the true *ovdei Hashem* certainly felt and recognized that it is impossible to exist without Chanukah and without Chanukah *lecht*, which illuminates the darkness... I think we can attain more on these holidays [Chanukah and Purim than by the three *regalim*] because we can observe Chanukah and Purim in their entirety. By the other holidays [Pesach, Shavuot, Succot], we lack the mitzvah of עליה לרגל, to go up to the Beis HaMikdash, which was the primary joy of the holiday. But we can keep the mitzvos of Chanukah and Purim fully. We can keep Chanukah and Purim exactly as they were originally established, and that is a quality that Chanukah and Purim have. At the same time, we lack several parts of the *yomim tovim*, due to the Churban Beis HaMikdash."

Hallel and Al HaNissim

Saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* are a vital part of Chanukah. In fact, we will see that they might be the peak of Chanukah.

To explain, we repeat a lesson from Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* (חכמת שלמה תרפ"ג):

On Chanukah, a Jewish prisoner was granted a brief leave of just a few hours. The question he posed to Reb Shlomo Kluger was whether he should go out at nighttime to light Chanukah *lecht*, or should he leave in the morning so that he could say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* in *beis medresh*?

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

Most people consider Chanukah *lecht* the highlight of Chanukah. But from this discussion, we understand that perhaps saying *Hallel* and *Al*

HaNisim are the highest points of Chanukah.

Chazal (*Shabbos* 21:) say, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו גם והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל, "The oil was sufficient for one day. A miracle occurred, and the oil burned for eight days. The following year, they established these days a *yom tov* with Hallel and *Al HaNissim*."

The Sfas Emes says that the Gemara's words, לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל, and, והודאה, imply that saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* make the holiday. קבעום, it was established, and it becomes a holiday בהלל והודאה, when people praise Hashem.²²

Let's discuss *Hallel*:

Reb Shmuel Munkes zt'l (renowned student of the Baal HaTanya zt'l) overheard a *melamed* teaching his young students the first Mishnah in *Bava Metzia*, which discusses two people arguing over the ownership of a garment. זה אומר כולה שלי, "This one says 'it's entirely mine,' and the other one says, 'it's entirely mine.' "

Reb Shmuel said to the *melamed* and the children, "Perhaps you can explain this to me: In *Hallel* we repeat some *pesukim* twice. For example, we say, אודך כי עניתני ותהי לי לישועה, twice. The first line is printed in many siddurim in large print, and the repeated line is written in smaller print. But in the Mishnah that you're learning, the words זה אומר כולה שלי are repeated twice, and both times are

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

printed in large letters. Why?"

No one knew the answer. Reb Shmuel told them: When two people fight over a garment, they both shout, כולה שלי, "it is entirely mine!" They shout with all their heart and soul. Therefore, the printer writes זה אומר כולה שלי, both times in large letters, to represent the loud voices of the people who claim the tallis to be theirs. But when we say *Hallel*, people become lazy. Even if they say אודך loud the first time, the second time they say it silently, without inspiration. That is why the second time is written in smaller print."

This was how Reb Shmuel Munkes impressed on the children the importance of saying *Hallel* with vigor.

We repeat the exact words of *Hallel* for eight days but don't allow routine to make you tired or lazy. Remember, saying

Hallel is one of the highlights of Chanukah.

The Chebiner Rav zt'l said, "*Hallel* on Chanukah shouldn't be like *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh, because *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh is a *minhag*, while *Hallel* on Chanukah is a *mitzvah*."

Some Rishonim say that *Hallel* is a *mitzvah* from the Torah (see Reb Yeruchem Fishel Perlow's commentary on *Sma'g*, *mitzvos asei* ט-נ, p.258).

Masechta Sofrim (20:9) states, "We say the entire *Hallel* during the eight days of Chanukah, and we make a *brachah* before and after *Hallel*, and one must say it בנעימה, sweetly and pleasantly."

It states (*Mishlei* 27:21), מוצרף לכסף וכור לזהב ואיש לפי מהללו. The Chida explains that just like a furnace purifies silver and gold, איש לפי מהללו, so does man become cleansed and pure when he praises Hashem.

It states (*Tehillim* 106:47), להשתבח בתהלתך. This means

the person becomes improved, בַּתְּהִלָּתוֹ, by praising Hashem.²³

Someone suffering from a *dibbuk* was brought to the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz zt'l on Chanukah. The Divrei Chaim said, "Bring him to the beis medresh when we say *Hallel*."

They did that, and the *dibbuk* immediately left his body and flew out a window.

This is because every *tumah* inside a person can be extricated by saying *Hallel*.

The Gemara (*Pesachim* 117) says, "We say *Hallel*, על צרה וצרה שלא תבא עליהן, "for every *tzarah* that shouldn't come..." The Ben Ish Chai says that these words imply that *Hallel* is *mesugal*, על כל צרה וצרה שלא תבא עליהן, that troubles won't befall us.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev*, 4:134) teaches that when one praises Hashem, he can use that praise as a prayer to Hashem. For example, in the second *brachah* of *Shemonah Esrei* we praise Hashem, רופא חולים, "Who heals the ill." As one says these words (רופא חולים), he can intend a prayer, "Hashem please heal so-and-so."

When one says a standard *tefillah*, the *malachim* may prevent it from going up, claiming the person doesn't deserve his requests to be granted. But who can stop a Yid from praising Hashem? The praises go up, and Hashem reads between the lines, understands the intentions, and fulfills the Yid's request.

This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 18:4), מְהוֹלֵל

23. If להשתבח would be referring to Hashem, it would say לְשִׁבְחָהּ. It states להשתבח because a person becomes praised and better בַּתְּהִלָּתוֹ, by praising Hashem.

אקרא ה' ומן אויבי אושע, "I call out to Hashem from the praises, and I am saved from my enemies."

Similarly, it states, אודך כי, עניתני ותהי לי לישועה, I praise You when I'm suffering, and because of my praises, I will undoubtedly have my salvation.

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

When we say על המזחיה, we don't add a line for Chanukah (as we do on Shabbos, *yom tov*, etc.) This is because when one praises Hashem, it shouldn't be a

one-line shortcut. Praises require elaboration.

When people did favors for Reb Aharon of Belz *zt'l*, he insisted on personally thanking them. His *gabai'im* asked him, "For more important matters, you send your *gaba'im* to arrange. Why can't you send us to thank those who help you? Why do you make an effort to thank them, yourself?"

The Rebbe replied, "When the *chazan* says מוידים, the congregation says מוידים together with him. This is because when it comes to thanking, one can't send a *shaliach*. One must do so himself."

Below Ten *Tefachim*

The Sfas Emes writes, "Chanukah is mostly for the *chalashim* and the *beinonim*." This means Chanukah is primarily for the Yidden on low levels.²⁴

24. People use cotton wicks on Chanukah. In Yiddish, cotton is

As the holy *sefarim* teach: On Chanukah, Hashem comes down to Yidden who are on very low levels "lower than ten *tefachim*," and He raises them to Him.

As the Meor Einayim writes, "The *Shechinah* never goes below ten *tefachim* (see *Succah* 5). However, Hashem ensures that no Jew will be detached from Him. So, as part of the miracle of Chanukah, Hashem *kiveyachol* comes down below ten *tefachim*. He comes close to man, to bring him back up to Him."

As the Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* once said: "On Shabbos, Hashem brings us up to Him. On *yom tov*,

Hashem comes down to us. On Chanukah, Hashem visits His children in prison." It is the holiday for people imprisoned by the *yetzer hara* and distanced from Hashem's presence. On this holiday, Hashem comes to them.

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* writes, "When a king is on his throne, in his palace, regular people cannot visit him. Surely, those who are being punished by the king won't be able to visit the king. However, when the king travels around his kingdom, it is customary for him to visit the prisoners in jail... At this time, the prisoners shout, 'King! Save us!'

vatte. *Vatte* also means distant (רחוק). We use *vatte* wicks to hint that even those who are distant from Hashem can come close to Him on Chanukah.

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

"This is what happens on Chanukah. Hashem comes to us to save us from our imprisonment."

One night, before lighting the Chanukah *lecht*, the Tolna Rebbe *zt'l* asked a chassid who had a short wife, "When you speak to your wife, does she climb up on a chair to speak with you, or do you bend down to speak to her?" After asking this question, the Rebbe lit the Chanukah *lecht*.

Rebbe Mordechai Dov of Hornestieple *zt'l* explained the Tolna Rebbe's intention. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 59.) says, "If you have a short wife, bend over to seek her counsel..." The Tolna Rebbe was hinting that on Chanukah, Hashem *keviyachol* bends over to whichever level we are on to elevate us.

The Rambam (*Hilchos Chanukah* 4:12) writes, מצות נר חנוכה מצוה חביבה היא עד מאוד וצריך אדם להזהר בה, "The mitzvah of lighting Chanukah *lecht* is

extremely beloved, and a person must be cautious with it." Why is specifically Chanukah *lecht* called מצוה חביבה, a beloved mitzvah?

It is because by this mitzvah Hashem comes down to us. We will explain with a *mashal*:

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

Wanting to please her, the husband agreed to move to his wife's old home.

His wife was overjoyed because now she knew that her husband truly loved her. True, she enjoyed a better lifestyle when they lived in the mansion, but she didn't know if her husband loves her. She thought: "He brought me

to his fancy home because he lives there. Where else should he bring me?" But when she saw that her husband was prepared to forgo pleasure and comfort to please her, that convinced her that he loved her.

That is why Chanuka *lecht* is a מצוה חביבה עד מאוד a very beloved mitzvah for us. On Chanukah Hashem comes down to very low levels to raise us, proving that He loves us.

The Candles' Message

The *Kav HaYashar* (96) describes the miracle and *yom tov* of Chanukah:

"We must praise (להודות ולהלל) Hashem's holy name for the great miracle that Hakadosh Baruch Hu performed for our fathers in those days – in the times of Antiochus, the Greek king. Antiochus did several bad things for the Jewish nation, and Hashem, with His compassion and immense kindness, which prevails forever, put on the

clothes of revenge, and via the Chashmonaim, killed the two chief generals of the Greek army: Bagris and Nikanor. All the Greek soldiers were delivered into the hands of the Jewish nation. May all of Hashem's enemies be destroyed in this manner.

"Then, the Chashmonaim came to the Beis HaMikdash. They only found one jug of oil sealed with the *kohen gadol*'s seal. This jug was used to anoint the Jewish kings, and every *kohen gadol* that needed anointment was anointed from that jar of oil. It only had enough oil to burn for one day, and the G-d in heaven who resides in the Beis HaMikdash performed a miracle, and the oil burnt for eight days. (The miracle needed to be for eight days because the *kohanim* had to purify themselves [from טומאת מֵת] seven days, and on the eighth day, they produced oil in purity.)

"To remember this miracle, in every generation,

the Jewish nation lights Chanukah *lecht* for eight days. These are lamps of a mitzvah."

The Kav HaYashar explains that all lamps of a mitzvah are extremely holy:

"We have several sources that Hakadosh Baruch Hu loves lamps of a mitzvah. As it states (*Yeshayah* 24:15), באורים כבדו את ה', 'Honor Hashem with lamps.' Every candle that is lit for a mitzvah has immeasurable holiness. If we had *ruach hakadosh*, we could see and know the future when we light these *lecht*, because the mitzvah candles tell prophecies,²⁵ like a *navi* telling what he heard from Hashem's mouth.

"The *gaon*, the Maharashal *z'l* writes in

the introduction to his *sefer Yam shel Shlomo*, 'Once, with a candle of a mitzvah, heaven encouraged me and opened up שערי אורה, the gates of light. [Heaven told me: Study Torah... Be like a lion in his den. Write *sefarim*... And after I received this message, I couldn't abstain from writing *sefarim*]."

The Kav HaYashar explains that he heard from his Rebbe, the Yesod Yosef, who heard from scholars that this is what happened:

"One night, Reb Shlomo Luria (the Maharashal) was studying and writing his *sefer Yam Shel Shlomo*. He only had one small candle before him, and it was about to go out. Miraculously, the candle remained lit for several hours, the time that three

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

or four whole candles usually burn. He understood from his candle that Hashem was with him." The miraculous candle told him that Hashem loves his Torah learning and *chiddushei Torah*, and that Hashem wants him to continue learning and writing his *chiddushim*, and that gave him encouragement.

"The miracle that happened to the Maharashal is similar to the miracle of the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash on Chanukah" (*Kav HaYashar*).

Now we will share a couple of other miracles that happened with candles:

One night, Rebbe Shmelke of Nikelsburg *zy'a* was learning Torah by candlelight, and a gust of wind blew out the candle. He didn't have a match to light it, so he went onto the porch to see if a passerby could light his candle. Someone came, lit his

candle, and Rebbe Shmelke went back inside to study Torah. Sometime later, Rebbe Shmelke thought, "How did he light my candle? I was on the porch, on the second floor, and the man who lit it was on the street!" He realized that Eliyahu HaNavi came to light his candle, so he could continue learning.

The Alter of Navardok *zt'l* would study Torah and *mussar* in a small hut in the forest. One night, his lamp blew out, and he needed more oil. The Alter of Navardok braced himself with *bitachon*. He repeated to himself, "Hashem can do everything; Hashem can send me oil," and he trusted in Hashem.

For *hishtadlus*, he opened the door of his hut.

Just then, a man came by.

"Do you have oil?" He did. The Alter was able to study Torah and *mussar* for the rest of the night.

In the morning, the Alter took the remaining oil and stored it to remember the miracle Hashem performed for him.

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

As we wrote above from the Kav HaYashar, the

lamps tell prophecies, like a *navi* speaking what he heard from Hashem. We don't have *ruach hakodesh* to understand the prophecies, but one message comes through clearly: The *lecht* tell us that Hashem's loves us and He wants our Torah and mitzvos. That is the message of the Chanukah *lecht*, too. Hashem loves us and wants our service. And that message is very dear to us. So we understand why the Rambam calls this mitzvah מצוה חביבה עד מאוד, a very beloved mitzvah.