



“The house of Yaakov shall be fire, and the house of Yosef a flame”

The First Seven Days of Chanukah Correspond to Yaakov Avinu the Eighth Day of Chanukah Corresponds to Yosef HaTzaddik

In honor of Shabbas Chanukah that approaches auspiciously, it befits us to establish a connection between the weekly parsha, parshas Mikeitz, and the eight days of Chanukah, which we are privileged to celebrate due to the chesed of Hashem with the mitzvah of lighting the sacred candles. In the words of our blessed sages (Shabbas 21b): **“קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל והודאה”**—**they established and rendered them as days of Yom Tov with Hallel and the expression of gratitude.** In other words, we recite **Hallel** on each of the festival days in the Shacharis service; and we recite **Ahl HaNissim** in Shemoneh Esrei (in the berachah of **“Modim”**) and in Birkas HaMazon (in the berachah of **“Nodeh Licha”**). The latter expresses our gratitude to HKB”H for the miracles He performs on our behalf.

Our sacred sefarim explain the connection between parshas Mikeitz and Chanukah based on the “seudah”—the feast—Yosef HaTzaddik prepared for his brothers in Mitzrayim. Here is the pertinent passuk (Bereishis 43, 16): **“וירא יוסף אתם את בנימין ויאמר: לאשר על ביתו, הבא את האנשים הביתה וטבוח טבח והכן כי אתי יאכלו האנשים”**—**Yosef saw Binyamin with them, and he said to the one in charge of his house, “Bring the men into the house. Slaughter an animal and prepare it. For with me will these men dine at noon.”** Now, if we take from the two words **“טבוח”** and **“והכן”** the letter **‘ח’** from the word **“טבח”** together with the four letters of **“והכן”**, they spell **“חנוכה”**. In other words, we can infer that Yosef ordered that meat be slaughtered to prepare a feast in honor of Chanukah.

Thus, we learn an incredible chiddush. Yosef HaTzaddik, when he was Viceroy of Mitzrayim, prepared a Chanukah feast

for his brothers. This transpired when his brothers returned to Mitzrayim for the second time, but this time with Binyamin. We can suggest that he did not make this feast until all of the twelve holy shevatim, the sons of Yaakov, were present. Thus, he prepared for the future miracle of Chanukah to be celebrated by all of Yisrael.

The Gematria of יוס”ף Is the Same as יו”ן מל”ך

I would like to propose a wonderful explanation for this surprising event. Why did Yosef HaTzaddik see fit to make a festive Chanukah meal in Mitzrayim after his brothers returned with Binyamin? In the Megaleh Amukos on Vaeschanan (252), he points out that the gematria of **יוס”ף (156)** is the same as the gematria of **אנטיוכ”ם** (the Greek ruler at the time of the Chanukah events) and the gematria of the two words **מל”ך יו”ן** (King of Greece). This teaches us that the kedushah of Yosef HaTzaddik neutralizes and overcomes the klipah of Greece.

Based on this premise, he interprets the following Midrash (B.R. 2, 4): **“וחושך זה גלות יון, שהחשיכה עיניהם של ישראל בגזירותיהן, שהיתה אומרת להם, כתבו על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלקי ישראל.”** **“Darkness” represents the exile of Greece, whose decrees thrust Yisrael into a spiritual darkness; they ordered Yisrael to write on the horn of an ox that they have no association with the G-d of Yisrael.** Let us elaborate. Yosef HaTzaddik is referred to as an ox in the following passuk (Devarim 33, 17): **“בכור שורו הדר לו וקרני ראם קרניו”**—**a firstborn, his ox, glory unto him, and horns of a “re’eim” are his horns.** Now, the Greeks intended to undermine and take away the kedushah of Yosef

HaTzaddik from Yisrael. To accomplish this end, they decreed that Yisrael write on the horn of an ox that they denounce the G-d of Yisrael.

In his sefer Zera Kodesh (Fifth Night of Chanukah), the great Rabbi of Ropshitz, zy" a, explains the significance of the words of the Megaleh Amukos. Now, the klipah of Greece opposes matters of kedushah. As we learn in the Gemara (Shabbas 23a): "נשים חייבות בנר הנוכה שאף הן היו באותו הנס"—**women are obligated in the mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah light, since they were also involved in that miracle.** Rashi explains that some of the Greek decrees were aimed directly at defiling the kedushah of the Jewish women. Furthermore, a woman, Yehudit the daughter of Yochanan, played a key role in the miraculous salvation. For this same reason, the Greeks forbade performing the mitzvah of milah. Hence, Yosef the representative of "yesod tzaddik" nullified the klipah of Greece with his kedushah.

Additionally, we can suggest that this concurs with the teaching in the Zohar hakadosh (Lech Lecha 93b) that Yosef merited becoming a ruler of Mitzrayim—the land where immorality was most rampant—because he withstood the difficult ordeal involving the wife of his master—a test of kedushah. Therefore, he was able to subjugate the King of Greece with his kedushah.

Furthermore, our blessed sages teach us in the Midrash (V.R. 32, 5): "יוסף ירד למצרים וגדר עצמו מן הערוה ונגדרו ישראל בזכותו. אמר רבי חייא בר אבא, כדאי היה גדור ערוה בעצמו שננאלו ישראל על ידו." **Yosef descended to Egypt and safeguarded himself from immorality; in his merit, Yisrael also safeguarded themselves from immorality. Rabbi Chiya bar Abba said: The guarding against immorality alone was sufficient cause for Yisrael to be redeemed.** It is evident from this passage that Yosef HaTzaddik paved the way with his kedushah for all of Yisrael to sanctify themselves in Mitzrayim—i.e., to refrain from immorality. As explained, in the merit of that kedushah, the Chashmonaim (a) defeated the Greeks who were licentious and unrestrained in matters of kedushah and (b) imbued all of Yisrael with kedushah.

Viewed in this light, we can begin to comprehend the incredible significance of the "seudah" that Yosef made for his brothers in honor of Chanukah. First, Yosef paved the way with his kedushah for all of Yisrael to maintain their kedushah in

Mitzrayim. In this merit, he was appointed Viceroy of Egypt. Subsequently, he invited all of his brothers to Mitzrayim for a Chanukah feast. In this manner, he performed a symbolic gesture for all the people of Yisrael, the descendants of the twelve shevatim, to merit the miracle of Chanukah. In the merit of Yosef's kedushah in Mitzrayim, the Chashmonaim subdued the klipah of Greece.

"Do this and live" Alludes to "This is Chanukah"

Amazingly, we find another association of Yosef HaTzaddik with Chanukah. On the brothers' first venture down to Mitzrayim, without Binyamin, to purchase grain, Yosef said to them (Bereishis 42, 9): "מרגלים אתם לראות את ערות הארץ באתם"—**you are spies; you have come to survey the nakedness of the land** (where it is most vulnerable)! He then incarcerated them for three days, as it says (ibid. 17): "ויאסוף אותם אל משמר שלשת ימים, ויאמר אליהם יוסף ביום השלישי, זאת עשו וחיו את האלקים אני ירא"—**he then placed them together in confinement for three days. On the third day, Yosef said to them, "Do this and live; I fear G-d (Elokim)."**

The commentaries try to explain Yosef's reason for incarcerating them for three days. The Ba'al HaTurim conjectures that it was on account of the three things they did to him: (1) They stripped him of his fancy tunic and dipped it in blood, (2) they threw him into the pit, and (3) they sold him into slavery.

Apropos this matter, we find the following explanation in the commentary of Rabeinu Bachayei (Bereishis 2, 18). To explain Yosef's rationale for releasing his brothers from confinement on the third day, he cites three pesukim in Tanach. It is written (Hoshea 6, 2): "**He will heal us after two days; on the third day, He will raise us up, and we will live before Him.**" Additionally, the merit of the Avos assisted them, as it is written (Bereishis 22, 4): "**On the third day, Avraham raised his eyes.**" Lastly, the merit of the Torah assisted them, as it is written (Shemos 19, 16): "**It came to pass on the third day when it was morning.**"

I would also like to humbly put in my own two cents on the subject. We will refer to the sacred words of the Tiferes Shlomo (Chanukah). He asserts that Yosef HaTzaddik said to his brothers: "זאת עשו וחיו את האלקים אני ירא"—as an allusion to the eighth day of Chanukah which is called "זאת הנוכה". On

the day of “Zos Chanukah,” it is possible to make amends and complete all the “tikunim” that a person was unable to complete during the Yamim Nora’im. He explains that the Shechinah is called “Zos”; the essence of our service of Hashem is to rectify this attribute. This is the implication of Yosef’s directive to his brothers: **“Do this and live!”** This will help a person acquire “yiras Shamayim,” as Yosef insinuates: **“I fear G-d.”** This is why the last day of Chanukah is called **“Zos Chanukah,”** because the process of tikun that was begun on Rosh HaShanah with the blowing of the shofar is completed during the days of Chanukah. Hence, the name Chanukah is related to the word “chinuch,” because it allows us to renew ourselves.

He goes on to say that this is the allusion in the Mishnah (Menachos 85b): **“תקוע אלבא לשמן”** (the oil of **Tekoa is the best of oils**). He interprets this as an inference that all of the tikunim that began with the **“tekiot”** (a play on the name Tekoa) of Rosh HaShanah are completed with the oil of the Chanukah lamps. This is a chesed from the Almighty; we are granted a new beginning like a young child. Whatever we did in the past is forgotten, and from here on, He gladly accepts our deeds that we now perform with “yiras Shamayim.”

צו"ם קו"ל ממו"ן זא"ת Equals ת

As we learned above, Yosef incarcerated his brothers for a period of three days. On the third days, he said to them: **“זאת עשו”** **“ואחיו את האלקים אני ירא”**. We can propose that he wanted to inform them that it is possible to correct everything on the last day of Chanukah, which is called **“Zos Chanukah.”** Let us refer to a passuk related to the avodah performed on Yom Kippur (Vayikra 16, 3): **“בזאת יבוא אהרן אל הקודש”**—**with this (“zos”) shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary.**

The holy Rabbi Shimshon of Ostropoli, ztz”l, hy”d, presents a fantastic allusion from the moving proclamation we utter on the Yamim Nora’im in the poetic prayer U’Netaneh Tokef: **“ותשובה ותפלה וצדקה מעבירין את רוע הגזירה”**—**and teshuvah, and tefilah, and tzedakah avert the evil (brunt) of the decree.** In our machzorim, the words **צו"ם, קו"ל, ממו"ן** appear above each of these three items. In other words, teshuvah refers to fasting; tefilah refers to voicing our praise and supplications; tzedakah refers to giving monetary donations and support. Now, the gematria of **צו"ם קו"ל ממו"ן** equals **זא"ת (408)**. (Each one equals 136, and $3 \times 136 = 408$.) This then is the interpretation of the

passuk: **“With ‘zos’ shall Aharon come into the Sanctuary** to provide atonement for Yisrael, with these three things whose sum is “zos.”

Now, on Chanukah, we can only perform two of these three things+, since it is prohibited to fast on Chanukah. This is taught in the Gemara (Shabbas 21b): **“בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא דלא למסבד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון.”** **On the 25th of Kislev, the days of Chanukah commence. They are comprised of eight days, on which it is prohibited to eulogize or fast.** Nevertheless, due to the kedushah of the festival, it is possible to rectify everything by means of the other two—making use of our **“voice”** and our **“money”**—as if we performed all three things that total **זא"ת**. For, on Chanukah, we have a special mitzvah to recite Hallel and express our gratitude. Additionally, it is customary to give tzedakah, as the Magen Avraham writes (O.C. 670): **It is customary for the poor youth to go door to door on Chanukah.**

This illuminates for us the message Yosef HaTzaddik was conveying to his brothers. He was instructing them to make amends for having sold him into slavery, so that they would not have to reincarnate into the “ten martyrs”—the “asarah harugei malchus.” Therefore, he placed them in confinement for three days, so that they would search their souls and evaluate themselves and their deeds. After this self-reckoning, he wanted them to make amends via the three things that avert the evil decree—**“teshuvah, tefilah, and tzedakah.”**

Yet, he deliberately did not wait three full days, as indicated by the Torah’s narrative: **“Yosef said to them on the third day.”** He intimated to them that there was an alternate way to finish making amends for what they had failed to accomplish during the Yamim Nora’im: **“Do “zos” and live; I fear G-d.”** In other words, on the eighth day of Chanukah called **“Zos Chanukah,”** it is possible to rectify everything, avert the evil decree, and remain alive, even with only two out of the three components of **“zos.”** It is precisely for this reason that this day is called **“Zos Chanukah.”** This name alludes to the fact that if someone performs the mitzvah of lighting the candles, says Hallel, and expresses gratitude to Hashem during the eight days of Chanukah, he is able to rectify everything—as if he performed all of the three—**צו"ם קו"ל ממו"ן** whose gematria equals **זא"ת**.

Lavan was for Rachel, Yosef's mother; additionally, Yosef's splendid appearance resembled him; and everything that happened to Yaakov happened to Yosef. This one was hated and that one was hated; this one's brother sought to kill him, and that one's brothers sought to kill him. And similarly, there are many other parallels (between them).

In light of Rashi's comment, it is not far-fetched to suggest that the miracle of Chanukah was attributable to the merits of both Yaakov and Yosef, who were identical in so many ways.

We find a fantastic source supporting this notion in the Imrei No'am (Vayeishev 5), where he interprets the passuk (Ovadiah 1, 18): "והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף להבה ובית עשו לקש"—**the house of Yaakov shall be fire, and the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Eisav for straw.** He asserts that this alludes to the miracle performed by HKB"H for Yisrael on Chanukah, enabling them to kindle the lamps with pure oil for eight days. 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 Yosef a flame.**" By lighting the Chanukah candles, we elicit the power of their combined kedushah; as a result, the conclusion of the passuk will become a reality: "**The house of Eisav for straw**"—our age-old adversary and nemesis will be incinerated.

Yaakov Revealed to Yosef the Secret of the Chanukah Candles

Now, we have just learned that the miracle of the Chanukah lamps is attributable to the amazing combination of Yaakov's kedushah and Yosef's kedushah, in keeping with the passuk: "והיה בית יעקב אש ובית יוסף להבה". With this powerful combination, the Chashmonaim overcame and defeated the Greeks, who blinded the eyes of Yisrael to the truth. They imbued Yisrael with a phenomenal light that dispelled the darkness introduced by the Greeks.

Continuing with this line of thought, the Imrei No'am adds another connection between the miracle of Chanukah with Yaakov and Yosef. As we know, Yaakov learned the entire Torah with his favorite son Yosef. Hence, he also revealed to him the secrets of the Chanukah candles. This is alluded to magnificently in last week's parsha (ibid. 37, 3): "וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו כי בן יוסף"—**and Yisrael loved Yosef more**

than all his sons, because he was a son of his old age (wise); **and he made him a "Kestones passim"** (literally: a striped tunic). Rashi comments: "ואונקלוס תרגם בר חכים הוא ליה, כל מה שלמד ממשם 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.

Now, the word "זקנים" is actually written in the Torah without a "vav"; thus, it has the same gematria as "אור" (207), meaning light. The gematria of the phrase "כי בן זקנים הוא" equals 301, the gematria of "מנורה". Thus, the phrase "כי בן זקנים הוא לו" alludes to the miracle involving the menorah and the secret significance of the "לו" (36) candles that are lit during the eight days of Chanukah.

In his own inimitable, sacred way, the Imrei No'am adds a "remez" based on the methodology of "sod"—secret, mystical exegesis. He refers to the teachings of the Arizal in Pri Eitz Chayim (Sha'ar Chanukah 4). On the first seven nights of Chanukah, he instructs us to focus on the corresponding midah from the "thirteen midos harachamim." On the eighth night, we should focus on the last six midos. Thus, during the eight days of the festival, we focus on all thirteen midos.

Now, HKB"H revealed the "thirteen midos harachamim" to Moshe Rabeinu in parshas Ki Sisa (Shemos 33, 6). The Arizal configures them as follows: א"ל, רחום, וחנון, ארך, אפים, ורב חסד, ונקמה. Accordingly, one should have in mind the respective midah on each of the first seven nights of Chanukah from the first seven midos: א"ל, רחום, וחנון, ארך, אפים, ורב חסד, ואמת. Then, on the eighth night, one should have in mind all of the last six midos: ונוצר חסד, לאלפים, נושא עון, ופשע, וחטאה, ונקמה.

Based on this, the Imrei No'am says that this format is alluded to by Yaakov and Yosef—in whose merit the miracle of Chanukah occurred, as explained. The allusion is based on the numerical value of their two names. The gematria of "יעקב" equals 182+156=338 equals 13 times Havaya (13x26=338). So, we see that the sum of their two names corresponds to the "thirteen midos harachamim" that are revealed on Chanukah by the lighting of the candles. Due to the power of their kedushah, a fire and flame is ignited that bursts forth to consume the Greeks and their progeny who rise up against Yisrael in every generation in an attempt to make them forget Hashem's Torah.

**Yaakov Avinu Represents the First Seven Midos
Yosef HaTzaddik Represents the Last Six Midos**

We will now demonstrate something fascinating! If we calculate the numerical value of their two names, we find that the gematria of **יעקב** equals seven times the name **Havaya**; thus, Yaakov represents the first seven midos that are revealed during the first seven days of Chanukah. Whereas the gematria of **יוסף** equals six times the name **Havaya**; thus, Yosef represents the last six midos of the “thirteen midos harachamim”—the midos that are revealed on the last day of Chanukah, Zos Chanukah.

We can suggest that the first seven midos, which begin with **א**, allude to Yaakov Avinu. This is based on the elucidation in the Gemara (Megillah 18a): **“מניין שקראו הקב”ה ליעקב אל, שנאמר ויקרא לו אל אלקי ישראל.”** **Where do we see that HKB”H called Yaakov “El”?** For it says (Bereishis 33, 20): **“And He called him ‘El,’ the G-d of Yisrael.”** Also, the last of the first seven midos is **“ואמת”**. This also alludes to Yaakov Avinu whose attribute is **“emes,”** as it is written (Michah 7, 20): **“תתן אמת ליעקב”—grant “emes” to Yaakov.**

Similarly, we can suggest that the last six midos allude to Yosef HaTzaddik, who emulated the midos of HKB”H. He was **“נוצר חסד לאלפים”—preserver of kindness for thousands—** by providing food for the entire world and saving them from the famine. He also demonstrated the midos of **“נושא עון ופשע”—forgiver of iniquity, willful sin, and error—** by forgiving his brothers who asked him for forgiveness. Here is the pertinent passuk (Bereishis 50, 17): **“אנא שא נא פשע אחיך”—please forgive the spiteful deed of your brothers and their sin; for they have done you evil.** Yosef responded to them (ibid. 21): **“ועתה אל תיראו אנכי אכלכל אתכם ואת”—so now, fear not; I will sustain**

you and your young ones. Thus, he comforted them and spoke to their heart. He demonstrated the last midah of **“ונקה”** by cleansing Yisrael of the tumah of Mitzrayim by sanctifying himself in Mitzrayim.

We now have cause to rejoice. We have illuminated the amazing connection between Yaakov Avinu and Yosef HaTzaddik and the miracle of Chanukah. **Yaakov**, whose name equals seven times **Havaya**, corresponds to the first seven days of Chanukah. As explained, on each of the first seven nights, one of the first seven midos (of “rachamim”) is revealed. Whereas **Yosef**, whose name equals six times **Havaya**, corresponds to the day of Zos Chanukah. As explained, on the eighth night, the last six midos are revealed. Therefore, in this week’s parsha, parshas Mikeitz, which usually falls during Chanukah, Yosef revealed the secret of **Zos Chanukah** to his brothers by instructing them: **“Do ‘zos’ and live; I fear G-d.”**

It is worthwhile adding a pertinent idea from the Bnei Yissaschar (Kisleiv-Teves 2, 10). He writes there is a special **“segulah”** on Zos Chanukah to draw from the last six midos—from **“נוצר חסד לאלפים”** to **“ונקה”**—an abundance of good and berachah of **children, life, and sustenance**. In keeping with this discussion, we can suggest that this **“segulah”** is due to the merit of Yosef HaTzaddik, since we find these three things associated with him. Firstly, Yosef said (ibid. 47, 23): **“הא לכם זרע”—here is seed for you.** This alludes to **“zera shel kayama”**—an enduring lineage of Jewish **children**. Secondly, Yosef said: **“Do this and you shall live.”** This obviously alludes to long **life**. Thirdly, Yosef provided the entire world with **sustenance**. Therefore, **“Zos Chanukah,”** corresponding to Yosef HaTzaddik, portends abundant berachah and hatzlachah (success) with regards to children, life, and ample sustenance.

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