

# The Torah Any Times

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## Rabbi Elimelech Biderman

### Miracles in Our Day

The Midrash (Parshas Tetzaveh) states that the verse “And you shall take pure olive oil” (Vayikra 27:20) references the Jewish people. In this context, the oil is symbolic of the Jewish nation and the “fire” is Hashem. What, though, connects the olive oil and the fire? The wick, or pesilah in Hebrew. Not coincidentally, the letters comprising the word pesilah (pei, tav, yud, lamed, hei) make up the word tefillah (prayer). Through prayer, a person connects to Hashem during these holy days.

The Chidushei HaRim cites the Maharal who notes that the Gemara (Shabbos 23b) refers to the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles as that which is incumbent on a man and his household. The Gemara continues and states that “one who lights in a manner of me’hadrin min ha’mehadrin (the optimum way)—according to Beis Shammai—lights eight candles the first night, seven candles the second night and so on. A close look at the way the Gemara is phrased is perplexing, questions the Chidushei HaRim. The mitzvah is incumbent on a person and his entire family, thus indicating that it contains a collective element to its mitzvah. Given this, if a person wishes to perform the mitzvah in the best fashion, they should carry it out in a manner of Mehadrin. Mehadrin is a word that is plural in tense, and rightfully so, because

the mitzvah done in lighting encompasses the entire family. But then the Gemara switches and speaks about an individual lighting, as the Gemara says that an individual is to be “madlik,” a word which is singular and not plural in tense. But isn’t the mitzvah of Chanukah incumbent on the entire household—a collective, plural group of people?

Moreover, the Gemara never uses the term “mehadrin” to refer to extra care and diligence with respect to a mitzvah, but rather “machmir.” Why then is the term “mehadrin” used when referring to the mitzvah of Chanukah?

The Maharal cites the verse, “With all forms of wisdom did she build her house; she carved out its seven pillars” (Mishlei 9:1). Hashem created the world in a set of seven days: six weekdays and Shabbos. The number “seven” resembles the fact that Hashem created the world with laws of nature in which to operate. In the natural ways of the world, there are poor and rich people, healthy and sick people. Moreover, within this natural scope of the world, you will never hear of a poor man suddenly becoming wealthy nor will you hear of a deathly ill patient suddenly becoming healthy. This is because Hashem made the world work within the natural framework, which contains expected laws and rules. But what happens when we do hear of a poor person becoming suddenly wealthy or a sick man who

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#### IN THIS ISSUE

Rabbi Eimelech Biderman  
Miracles in Our Day  
Rabbi YY Jacobson  
Just See Them  
Rabbi Doniel Staum  
Thanks a Thousand

#### DEDICATIONS

##### L'iluy Nishmat

R' Elchonon Yaakov z"l ben R' Shmuel  
Pinchos

Manish ben Esther

Meir Eliyahu ben Yaakov Dov

Bechor ben Rivkah

Shlomo Zalman ben  
R' Mordechai Yisroel Tzvi

Esther bat  
haRav Avraham Halevi z"l

Moshe Simcha ben Doniel Dov Ber

Miriam bat Yeshayahu

Malka Bracha bat Shimon Chaim

R' Zechariah Shimon ben Yitzchok

##### L'refuah Sheleima

Deena bat Shoshana

Chaya Raizel bat Dena

Yerachmiel Eliyahu Ben Esther Riva

Reuven ben Rochel

abruptly experiences a medical transformation? This is because the person reached the point of “eight,” in which there is no nature. When this happens, everything can immediately switch, and someone poor can become wealthy and someone sick can become healthy.

How did such a person reach this caliber of the ‘number eight’? Either in the merit of guarding his eyes, keeping quiet during an argument, a special davening, tzedakah, or something else that is singular in merit. It is because of something done meritoriously that such incredible results can occur. We’d think that the person became wealthy because he won the lottery or inherited a family estate or because an expert doctor provided special medical treatment, but that’s not why. The reason is because he lifted himself to the point above the natural world—to the degree of “eight,” one above the natural ‘seven’—and now Hashem is relating to him on that plane. The proper perspective therefore is that because he reached that caliber of “eight,” where there are no rules and things spin (a lesson reinforced by the dreidel), various effects come into play.

In light of this, why did the candle burn for eight days? Why not seven or eighteen? The reason, explains the Maharal, is because Hashem wanted to demonstrate to the whole world that these days are ‘number eight’. How is it possible that there can be thirteen boys on one side, and a hundred and eighty thousand on the other side along with millions of soldiers and yet the few overcome the many? It’s because the thirteen boys prayed and cried out: “And we, in the Name of Hashem, call out.” When doing so, they transcended the natural means and realms of warfare and connected which that which is above nature.

This is why the Gemara employs the word “Mehadrin” in the plural

followed by the word “madlik” in the singular. “Madlik” does not refer to the person; it refers to Hashem! Before the first night of Chanukah, Hashem takes a candle and ignites ‘number eight’ upon the world. The world for the duration of these eight days of Chanukah doesn’t operate according to the expected ways of nature. Hashem turns to ‘number eight’ and the whole world runs accordingly.

But there is more. Someone who acts in a ways that is Mehadrin—cognate to the Talmudic expression ‘hadri bi,’ to take back—infuses bracha (blessing) into his own life. During Chanukah, you want to “take back” the number eight to yourself. You want to infuse into your life an attitude and lifestyle that lifts yourself above the natural parameters of the world, and in doing so, Hashem will respond to you in kind. The miraculous ‘number eight’ now spreads to all areas of your life!

When you close a door, there’s a latch that you close. At times in life, the “door” is closed on a person. He’s been waiting for a shidduch for so many years, or for children, parnassah or health. But all this is to a Jew is a closed latch. But before the first candle of Chanukah is lit, Hashem opens that lock! Open the door and enter, Hashem says!

The Lev Simcha once came into Shul on Chanukah and exclaimed, “There are treasures floating around down here; go and grab them!” This applies to all areas of our life. R’ Leibel’e Eiger also writes that when we pray to be healed in Shemonah Esrei (according to some versions) we say, “V’ha’alei arucha u’refuah.” Both arucha and refuah refer to aspects of healing, but what is the exact difference? Arucha is comprised of the letters “Ohr chaf-hei,” light of the 25th (of Kislev), referring to Chanukah. Refuah is composed of the let-

ters “Ohr peh,” light of the mouth. What does this mean? We pray with our mouths to be healed, and the auspicious time for the healing to take place is on the 25th of Kislev—during Chanukah.

R’ Levi Yitzchak of Berditchev (Kedushas Levi; in Kedusha Sheniyah) offers a parable. Chanukah is akin to a king who opened his treasures one day of the year, and on that day, whoever wants can come and take from those treasures. Just imagine... he can take whatever he wants! Anyone and anything! Woe to the fool, says the Kedushas Levi, who on this day when the treasures are open, doesn’t turn to them and just sleeps all day.

We must utilize this time. Now, you will ask, what should I do? Think... if there would be a mountain of diamonds outside, would you be asking, “What should I do?” You’d simply start working and grabbing. But what if you don’t feel ‘number eight’? What if you don’t feel the special quality that Chanukah is? I told one such person the following.

Someone once went into an elevator on his way to the hundredth floor. When he finally arrived, they told him that he could exit. But he didn’t want to. “I don’t feel like I’m at the hundredth floor!” he said. We’d all say that such a person is not thinking correctly. Whether he feels it or not, he’s there on the hundredth floor! Similarly, if it’s Chanukah and Hashem is running the world in a manner which is above the confines of nature, whether you feel it or not, use the time! Anyone can do this.

The Sfas Emes writes, “It’s known that this Yom Tov of Chanukah consists of us placing the Menorah below ten tefachim (handbreadths) and on the left side of the doorway. The significance of

this is that even if one's spiritual state is "below ten tefachim—i.e. very lowly and poor—and even if one feels like he's on the "left side" and on the outside, he is still part of this Yom Tov of Chanukah!" The Sfas Emes adds, "The main point of this Yom Tov is for the ordinary people and weak people."

We must all make use of our time to the maximum, especially when it comes to the actual mitzvos of Chanukah, especially the Chanukah candles, about which the Gemara (Shabbos 23) guarantees, "One who is accustomed to lighting the Chanukah candles will have sons who are Torah scholars." This is a promise from the Gemara. But if most of the world lights Chanukah candles, where are all the Torah scholars? The Meiri adds a line there: "One who is accustomed to lighting candles—in a manner of endearing the mitzvah and enlightened expressiveness and enthusiasm." A person shouldn't just light the menorah, but should do so with sweetness, love, and through making a whole event out of it. When this is done, you're guaranteed to have children who are Torah scholars.

When R' Chaim Ozer Grodzinski was in Krakow, a city home to many Torah sages, his suit ripped and he decided to go to the tailor. It was Chanukah and the tailor said, "I need to light the Chanukah candles now..." R' Chaim Ozer replied, "Of course, I'll wait." R' Chaim Ozer went on to wait and watch him light the candles. First, the tailor took off his weekday clothing and put on Shabbos clothing, then he gathered his children, and they began singing and dancing. When R' Chaim Ozer saw this, he said, "This is when I understood why so many gedolim came out of Krakow!" Why? Because the Gemara guarantees that

someone who is accustomed to lighting the Chanukah candles will have sons who are Torah scholars. This is true so long as it is done with exuberance and a lively scene is made from it.

When we light the menorah, we recite the blessing, "Who performed miracles to our ancestors." But, asks the Chiddushei HaRim, what does this blessing of "Hashem performing miracles" have to do with the candles? We should recite this blessing in the morning. Moreover, the Gemara says that one who didn't light but merely sees a candle should recite this same blessing of "Who makes miracles." Why then do we make this bracha specifically when we light the candles?

The Chiddushei HaRim explains that the light of the miracles is aroused through the candles. When you light the candles, those same miracles that happened to our ancestors are awakened onto you. Grab the opportunity! The Yeitiv Lev adds that "the root of the lighting of the Chanukah candles is to arouse miracles and wonders also nowadays... The main use and purpose of the candles is so that we should be saved and helped today." What a yeshua (salvation) we can achieve!

Therefore, the Rishonim (Sefer Ha'Zechirah, authored by a student of the Ramban) write, "It is a special segulah to be protected for the entire year to say the verse of Vihi No'am (Tehillim 90:17) and Chapter 91 of Tehillim—Yoshev b'seser—seven times [after lighting the Chanukah candles]." How much we need this these days...It's also an auspicious segulah to recite chapter 67 of Tehillim (Lam'natzeiach B'neginos).

There's also a well-known seg-

ulah of saying "Eloka D'Meir Aneini—The G-d of [Reb] Meir, answer me." R' Meir Baal Hanes composed this segulah himself. Someone once needed a salvation and R' Meir said to recite "Eloka D'Meir Aneini" and they merited miracles. The Maharsha (Avodah Zarah 19) asks how R' Meir was able to tell the person to say this. Chazal tell us that Hashem does not associate His name with those who are alive; Hashem only does so once a person has passed away. But R' Meir was alive, so how could he instruct the person to say Eloka D'Meir Aneini?

The Maharsha explains that R' Meir wasn't referring to himself. He rather meant, "The G-d who enlightened for us [from the word 'Meir,' to enlighten] from the dominion of the Greeks during the miracles of Chanukah." What this therefore means is that by just mentioning the Chanukah candles alone, a person will be assisted and helped by Hashem! When you're standing by the Chanukah candles, take the time to think about what kind of salvations we can achieve.

The same is true of Hallel. Hallel is the main mitzvah during the days of Chanukah, as Chazal state that our Sages "enacted days to sing words of song and praise." The Tchebiner Rav would announce before Hallel on Chanukah that Hallel should not be recited on Chanukah just like on any Rosh Chodesh. Reciting Hallel on Rosh Chodesh is only a custom, whereas Hallel on Chanukah is either a Rabbinic or Torah commandment.

The Divrei Chaim was once in-

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formed of a girl who had a dibbuk (spirit) in her. He tried at first to get rid of it but didn't succeed. As Chanukah approached, the Divrei Chaim said that they should have the girl stand right outside the door when Hallel was being recited. As soon as the Divrei Chaim said the blessing of Hallel, the dibbuk left! How does this apply to us? Everyone has their things which are "attached" to them and which they can get rid of during Hallel.

The Sfas Emes told everyone that when reciting all the different instances of the words "Ana Hashem" in Hallel, they can be helped by Hashem. This applies to the instances of "Ana Hashem hoshiah na," and "Ana Hashem malta nafshi" and the others.

The Sefer Meir Einei Chachamim on Chanukah, written a few hundred years ago, brings a fascinating thought. The Yerushalmi states that a certain Tanna (Talmudic sage) said, "I appreciate that my head bows during Modim in Shemonah Esrei." The Meir Einei Chachamin explains that "appreciating the head" refers to Hashem, Who is the "Head of the world." Hashem, so to speak, bends Himself to us when we thank him during Hallel on Chanukah. We are Hashem's delight! We are meant to

feel gratitude to Hashem for bending down to us when we say Hallel.

In Parshas Vayeishev, we learn of the test of Yosef HaTzaddik. When he overcame the test, the Torah places a 'shalsheles' (chain) trop overhead the word "And he refused." Why is there specifically a shalsheles? Moreover, asks the Rokeach, why did the Torah tell us about this test of Yosef altogether?

The Torah is teaching us a very important lesson, explains the Rokeach. Yosef eventually became very great because when a person shuts his eyes when tempted, he merits to become great. This is why the Torah wrote this. He refused and he merited to become very great. It didn't happen right away, but it did happen in due time. But why is there a shalsheles over the word, "And he refused?"

The Divrei Shmuel explains that in the business world, one who works from the early morning until night will not become wealthy. He'll make ten to fifteen thousand dollars, but he won't become rich. How does someone become rich? From a good business deal in the middle of the day. If it's very successful, then he can become a millionaire.

The same is with a person. Hashem says, "There's learning and davening from morning until evening. That

provides a person with a parnasah, but not wealth. What is wealth? Someone who "refuses" during the day. Such a person's achievement is a crowning success that glorifies him, akin to a shalsheles—a crowning chain—which sits on top of everything.

We say in Al HaNissim that the Sages "enacted the holiday of Chanukah the next year [after the miracle] to be with praise and thanks." Why was it established the next year and not the same year of the miracle? The answer is that the Sages saw that it was a different year when they utilized and harnessed the power of Chanukah. Only the following year did they fully appreciate the power of Chanukah, and henceforth established a holiday. When we utilize Chanukah properly, we become able to access and grow beyond the rules and roles of the natural world—the 'number eight'—throughout the entire year.

With Hashem's help, may we utilize this time and achieve the wondrous heightened levels of spirituality and closeness with Hashem we are capable of. And through this, just as our ancestors experienced wondrous miracles and salvations, may Hashem bless us too to experience the same in our day.

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## Rabbi YY Jacobson

### Just See Them

Chanukah comes from the word 'chinuch,' meaning education. This is why there is a special focus on education and children during the holiday of Chanukah. The eight days of 'Chanukah' don't simply therefore refer to the eight days of the holiday of Cha-

nukah, but to the education of our children. Viewing matters in this light, we can arrive at a profound insight into the world of raising our sons and daughters.

The Pasuk compares a candle to a soul—"Ner Hashem nishmas adam" (Mishlei 20:27).

During Chanukah, we come to realize—as we recite in the passage of HaNeiros Ha'Lalu said when we light the menorah—that the candles, or our soul, is "kodesh heim v'ein lanu reshus l'hishtamesh ba'hem." Our soul is holy, and we do not have permission to use

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them. What does that mean?

We have no right to use our children. The only permission G-d gave us is to see our children for who they really are. That is the role of a parent. Children were not granted to parents to be used for their psychological, emotional or spiritual benefit. For a parent to be able to say, 'I'm a successful father or mother... I have nachas (pleasure) from my children' is not why we have children. Such an attitude misses the point. Then why does Hashem give us children?

"Ela lir'osam bil'vad—Only to look at them." Hashem gave them to you for you to see them for who they really are. That is the deepest

and greatest thing a parent can give a child. Help them see themselves for who they really are by modeling how you see them. If it's to "use" the light of your children, that's a diversion from a child's purpose for parents. But if it's to see them for their innate worth and understand them for who they are—that is holy.

When you truly see this within a child, the result is the next words: "K'dei l'hodos u'le'hallel—In order to praise and give thanks." Every child will cause you to say thank you to Hashem. Some parents will say, "For this child, I say thank you. For this child, I take medicine... I

can attribute my migraines to him or her... that's where my anxiety comes from..." But when you appreciate and internalize that a child is not for a parent to use, but they are solely for you to see them on the inside, then you are accessing the true gift that Jewish parenting is. When the outside looks splendid and nearly perfect, everyone can see it. But sometimes, when the world points and says, "I don't see anything," that is the precise moment for the parent to move in closely and whisper those words that touch the heart... forever... "I see you just the way you are."

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## Rabbi Doniel Staum

### Thanks a Thousand

Reb Yisroel Salanter zt"l once walked into a diner and asked for a cup of water. After drinking it, the concierge handed him the bill. To his surprise, it was an astronomical price. It made no sense, though. How could a simple cup of water cost so much?

"You're not simply paying for the water," replied the concierge. You are paying for the ambience, the service, use of the glass, and finally the water. Rav Yisroel, hearing this, took to heart more than the concierge was telling him.

"When we make the blessing, 'She'hakol nihiye bid'varo—Everything is according to the word of Hashem,' reflected Reb Yisroel, the blessing is intended to get us thinking along these lines. Nothing is plain and simple when it comes to the benefits and beneficence Hashem showers upon us in this world. There are countless upon countless aspects that go into the actions and productions

that we often take for granted. But when we consider that a glass of water is not just a glass of water, but encompasses much more, we can begin to appreciate how this too is true of all aspects of life. And then, with that new perspective, the gratitude and appreciation we feel to Hashem for all that He gives us—and even of those things which we don't even know about—swells to unbounded proportions."

A.J. Jacobs, a professed atheist, commented that it is a well-circulated notion in today's world that by focusing on the gratitude one feels for what they have in life, it will increase their happiness. Jacobs assumed this commonly held position, as did many others, to the point that when his family would sit down for a meal, they would thank everyone who was involved in preparing the food. Until one time when Jacobs' son noted that despite all these thankful statements being shared, none of the benefactors could actually hear it. This got Jacobs' on a mission to begin thanking everyone

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who was involved in the making of his morning coffee.

Jacobs spent the next several months traveling around the world, thanking all those involved. He included the trucker who transported the coffee, the workers who laid down the asphalt for the road, architects, biologists, designers, miners, and on and on. His project was called, "Thank 1,000." Jacobs admitted that he in fact could have gone on more than a thousand.

As we find ourselves amidst the holiday of Chanukah, the holiday of when we "give gratitude and praise to Hashem," we are challenged to turn inward and find what it is in our life that we can expressly thank Hashem for. And then we do so for eight days. The effects it will have on us will be profound.

Our challenge is to see the opportunities before us, along with the moments that are latent for growth, and utilize them for the good, appreciate them, and thank our family, friends, and ultimately Hashem for every minute and thing we have in our life.

And then repeat. In doing so, we became changed people for eight days, and with G-d's help, forever more.

# Bring Them Home!

## Names of Hostages in Gaza

(Updated: 25 Kislev)

עידן בן דלית (שתיין) - <b>נעדר</b> עמירם בן שרה (קופר) עמית דוד בן לימור - <b>נעדר</b> עמית אסתר חיה בת אילנה אלן (בוסקילה) עמרי בן אסתר ורה (מירן) ענבר בת יפעת (הימן) פרננדו סימון בן טניה (מרמן) צחי בן דבורה (עידן) קית' שמואל בן גלדיס (סיגל) קרין בת אירינה (ארייב) רום בן תמר (ברסלבסקי) רומי בת מירב (גונן) רון בן חנה (בנימין) רון בן מעין (שרמן) רן בן טלי (גואילי) - <b>נעדר</b> שגב בן גלית (כלפון) שגיא בן נעמית (דקל חן) שירי בת מרגיט (ביבס) שלומי בן רוזיטה (זיו) שלמה בן מרסיל (מנצור) תמיר בן חירות (נמרודי) תמיר בן יעל (אדר)	יורם בן בלה (מצגר) יותם בן איריס (חיים) יצחק בן אנטה (אלגרט) יצחק בן גילה (גלרנטר) ירדן בן פנינה (ביבס) כפיר בן שירי (ביבס) כרמל בת כנרת (גת) לואיס נורבטו בן נורה (הר) ליאור בן מיכל (רודאיף) לירי בת שירה (אלבג) מישל בן סולמירה (ניסנבאום) - <b>נעדר</b> מקסים בן טלה (הרקין) - <b>נעדר</b> מתן בן ענת (אנגרסט) מתן בן ירדנה (צנגאוקר) נדב בן חנה (פופלוול) נועה בת ליאורה (ארגמני) ניק בן קטיה (בייזר) נמרוד בן ויקי (כהן) נעמה בת איילת (לוי) עדן בת אורין (זכריה) עדן בת שרית (ירושלמי) עודד בן בלהה (ליפשיץ) עומר בן ניבה (ונקרט) עומר בן שלי (שם) (טוב) עומר מקסים בן אורנה אסתר (נאוטרה) עידו בן כוכבה (קלדרון) עידן בן יעל (אלכסנדר) - <b>נעדר</b>	אלעד בן חנה (קציר) אלקנה בן רוחמה (בוחבוט) אנדריי בן יבגניה (קוזלוב) ארבל בת יעל (יהוד) אריאל בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו) אריאל בן שירי (ביבס) בר אברהם בן ג'וליה (קופרשטיין) גד בן שרה (חגי) גד משה בן שרה (מוזס) גיא בן מירב (גלבוע) דלאל גלי בן תמר (ברמן) דוד בן סילביה מוניקה (קוניו) דולב בן יעל (יהוד) דורון בת סימונה (שטיינברכר) דניאלה בת אורלי (גלבוע) דרור בן דורית (אור) הירש בן רחל גולדברג פולין זיו בן תמר (ברמן) חיים בן נחמה (פרי) חן חנן בן ורד יבלונקה) - <b>נעדר</b> טל בן ניצה (שוהם) קורנגולד) טל בן אסתר (חיימי) יאיר בן רות אדית (הורן) יאיר בן פלור (יעקב) יגב בן אסתר (בוכשטב) יהודית בת ... (ויינשטיין) יוסף בן חנה (שרעבי) יוסף חיים בן מרים (אוחנה)	אבינתן בן דיצה תרצה (אור) אביתר בן גליה (דוד) אברהם גלעד בן ליאת (מונדר) אגם בת מירב (ברגר) אדר בת דניאלה (בוזגלו) - <b>נעדרת</b> אוהד בן אסתר (בן עמי) אוהד בן אסתר (יהלומי) אור בן טלי (לוי) אורי בן עינב (דנינו) אוריאל בן נעמי (ברוך) אילן שלמה בן מרים (וייס) איתי בן אורית (סבירסקי) איתי בן חגית (חן) איתן בן סול (לוי) - <b>נעדר</b> איתן בן רות אדית (הורן) איתן אברהם בן אפרת (מור) אלון בן דקלה (לולו) שמריז) אלון בן עידית (אהל) אליה בן אודל (טולדנו) - <b>נעדר</b> אליה בן סיגי (כהן) אליהו בן חנה (שרעבי) אליהו יעקב בן הדסה עדי - <b>נעדר</b> אליקים שלמה בן אבישג (ליבמן) אלכס בן אוקסנה (לובנוב) אלכסנדר סשה בן ילנה (טרופנוב) אלכסנדר בן נינה (דנציג) אלמוג בן אורית (מאיר ג'אן) אלמוג בן נירה (סרוסי)
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