

## Weekly Internet Parsha Sheet Vayeishev 5770

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**A LITTLE LIGHT :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

One of the bywords of Jewish tradition is that a little light can overcome a great deal of darkness. The rabbis taught us that the power of good is many times greater than the power of evil - even if we are unable to witness that phenomenon as being abundantly present in our daily and national lives. It is therefore no wonder that the rabbis in their wisdom chose to commemorate the great victory and redemption of Chanuka by having us light little lights rather than by other perhaps more dramatic and grandiose rituals.

The symbol of the little light is a powerful message that communicates the optimism and resolve of the Jewish people to overcome the forces of evil in our lives no matter the difficulties and challenges of that task. And this little light is not meant for us alone. It is to be made public, lit for all to see and observe.

As long as people are still in the street, as long as there still is a public presence and discourse we are bidden to light that small light to dispel that great darkness that otherwise may engulf us. Our little lights have been lit in almost every corner of the world over the past millennia. They have survived over all of the dark forces that threatened to annihilate us. They have proved true the adage that a little light truly can overcome a great deal of darkness.

One of the great and holy Russian Jewish refuseniks records in his memoirs his determination to light Chanuka lights while imprisoned in the Russian prison. Since he did not have a calendar - Jewish calendars were very rare in Communist Russia even for those not officially incarcerated in prison - he was unaware as to the exact dates of Chanuka. Nevertheless he was determined to light his little candle.

He saved scrapings of the meager soap allowance granted him to use as fuel and tore threads from his prison uniform to serve as his wicks. And in a cold Russian prison he clandestinely lit his little light, hidden by his body from the KGB prison warders on a night that he hoped was Chanuka. A few years later when he reached Israel and related his story of the Chanuka light in prison a great rabbi informed him that he had performed the mitzvah limhadrin min hamehadrin - in the highest and most holy fashion possible.

The darkness of the evil empire that was the Soviet Union was eventually overcome by the little lights kindled in the recesses of its prisons by Jews who believed in the power of good to overcome the forces of evil. In the eyes of Heaven, so to speak, a little light means a great deal. It displays our commitment to goodness and righteousness, tradition and holiness and is thus treasured dearly both in heaven and on earth. It is what gives Chanuka its special place in Jewish hearts and souls.

This week the Jewish world will light its little lights of Chanuka. Many have ornate silver menorahs to hold those little lights. Others will make do with more simple and modest candle holders. No matter, for it is not the candle holder that is the main object in the lighting of the Chanuka fires - it is the little light itself that carries all of the weight and importance of the holiday and its holy meaning.

Once when my children were very young I explained to them that they should not feel badly that I was using an elaborate rabbinic silver menorah for my Chanuka lights while they had clay menorahs that they had made in school. One of my children assuaged my anxiety by saying: "Don't worry, Daddy, my candle will burn as brightly as yours does!"

How correct was that statement. It is after all the little lights that count. It is they that drive away the hopelessness and pessimism that the darkness of the surrounding world thrusts upon us. Chanuka comes to reinforce the good angels that lie within all of us. It teaches us that nothing is impossible in God's world and that evil eventually will not prevail. Chanuka is the right holiday at the right time for us here in present day Israel. Let us

always remember that a little light can truly overcome a great deal of darkness.

Shabat shalom. Happy Chanuka

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**Weekly Parsha :: VAYESHEV :: Rabbi Berel Wein**

So our father Yaakov wishes to spend the rest of his days in peace and serenity, enjoying his grandchildren and pursuing his spiritual growth. Is that not what all of us wish for ourselves as we grow older and we feel that the major battles of life are already behind us? Yet, as Rashi points out, based on difficult tests of Yaakov in his life - Lavan, Eisav, Shechem, etc, Midrash, the Lord, so to speak, is dissatisfied with this plan of Yaakov's.

The great drama of Yosef and his brothers yet lies before him. This situation can be seen as one of external enemies and Yaakov is steered to the task of opposing them for such is the way of the world - certainly of the Jewish world. But Yosef and his brothers is a test of internal rivalries and enmities, a situation at the end of Yaakov's life that threatens to destroy all that he achieved in his lifetime.

Yaakov feels that he is entitled to rest on his laurels and savor his accomplishments. He has somehow overcome all of the wiles and aggressions of his external enemies and sees only peace and serenity ahead. He is therefore unprepared for the internal struggle within his own beloved family that, in the words of Rashi and Midrash, "now leaps upon him."

His very longing for the peace and serenity that has eluded him his entire lifetime is his very undoing because he does not choose to see the festering enmities and jealousies that are brewing within his own house and family. Wishes and desires, illusions as to how things should be, often blind us to the realities of how things really are and we are therefore blindsided by events that could have been foreseen had we not indulged so mightily in our fantasies.

I think that is what Rashi and the Midrash had in mind when they quoted God, so to speak, that the righteous should not expect serenity in this world. The Talmud even goes so far to say that even in the World to Come the righteous are not at tranquil rest but rather are bidden "to go from strength to strength."

We all need times of leisure and rest in order to build up a reservoir of physical and mental strength to deal with the problems and vicissitudes of life. Judaism does not know of the concept or value of "retirement" as it is formulated in modern parlance. It certainly allows for changes in circumstances, occupations and interests. But "man was created for toil." One must always be busy with productive matters - Torah study, good deeds, self-education, etc. - even till the end of life.

And one must always be vigilant and realistic about the problems of life - externally caused or internally present in one's own household - in order to make certain that gains made in one's earlier years will not be squandered by illusions and wishful thinking later in life. This is true nationally as well as personally. We all desire peace and serenity but only realism and vigilance can protect us from our own errors and self-made problems.

Shabat shalom. Happy Chanuka

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**Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayeshev**  
**For the week ending 12 December 2009 / 24 Kislev 5770**  
**by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com**  
**Overview**

Yaakov settles in the land of Canaan. His favorite son, Yosef, brings him critical reports about his brothers. Yaakov makes Yosef a fine tunic of multi-colored woolen strips. Yosef exacerbates his brothers' hatred by

recounting prophetic dreams of sheaves of wheat bowing to his sheaf, and of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him, signifying that all his family will appoint him king. The brothers indict Yosef and resolve to execute him. When Yosef comes to Shechem, the brothers relent and decide, at Reuven's instigation, to throw him into a pit instead. Reuven's intent was to save Yosef. Yehuda persuades the brothers to take Yosef out of the pit and sell him to a caravan of passing Ishmaelites. Reuven returns to find the pit empty and rends his clothes. The brothers soak Yosef's tunic in goat's blood and show it to Yaakov, who assumes that Yosef has been devoured by a wild beast. Yaakov is inconsolable. Meanwhile, in Egypt, Yosef has been sold to Potiphar, Pharaoh's Chamberlain of the Butchers. In the Parsha's sub-plot, Yehuda's son Er dies as punishment for preventing his wife Tamar from becoming pregnant. Onan, Yehuda's second son, then weds Tamar by levirate marriage. He too is punished in similar circumstances. When Yehuda's wife dies, Tamar resolves to have children through Yehuda, as this union will found the Davidic line culminating in the Mashiach. Meanwhile, Yosef rises to power in the house of his Egyptian master. His extreme beauty attracts the unwanted advances of his master's wife. Enraged by his rejection, she accuses Yosef of attempting to seduce her, and he is imprisoned. In prison, Yosef successfully predicts the outcome of the dream of Pharaoh's wine steward, who is reinstated, and the dream of Pharaoh's baker, who is hanged. In spite of his promise, the wine steward forgets to help Yosef, and Yosef languishes in prison.

### Insights

#### Joining The Ivy League

#### **"And Yosef had been brought down to Egypt..." (39:1)**

In North-West London where I grew up it was not uncommon to find a Jewish home at this time of year that had a menorah at one end of the living room and an Xmas tree at the other.

Chanukah comes at a time of the year where the bombardment of the season to be jolly is unremitting; where renegade reindeers threaten to leap from behind the holly and the ivy and the fake snow of every shop window.

And I have my suspicions that the Jewish custom to give money to children on Chanukah (Chanukah gelt) may well be a method of distracting the eyes of the young and the restless from gorgeously over-stuffed Xmas stockings.

Even though the Maccabees managed to overcome the Greeks and rededicate the Beit Hamikdash ("Chanukah" comes from the root meaning "to dedicate a building"), the war is far from over.

Chanukah always falls during the Torah portions of Yosef. What is the connection between Yosef and Chanukah? Another question: Why was it that Yosef was sent into the exile of Egypt and not one of the other brothers? And why specifically was it the Maccabees, who were kohanim, who overpowered the Greeks?

The prayer "Al Hanissim" emphasizes the role of the kohanim in the defeat of the Greeks. Even more than their role in the Beit Hamikdash, the kohanim were responsible for disseminating Torah to the Jewish People. We see this in Parshat V'Zot Habracha, where Moshe first blesses the tribe of Levi that they will "teach laws to Yaakov and Torah to Yisrael." And only afterwards he says, "They will place before You the ketoret and the offerings of the Altar" (Devarim 33:10). The role of the kohanim as the teachers of Torah precedes the service in the Beit Hamikdash.

Yosef too represents the power of Torah. Yosef was the brightest and most diligent Torah student of all the sons of Yaakov (Targum – Bereshit 37:7). It was for this reason that he was sent to Egypt, for he alone had the spiritual survival kit to withstand the withering decadence of Egypt.

When Pharaoh elevated Yosef to the greatest position in the land, he applied great pressure on Yosef to make him abandon his faith and become an Egyptian. And so it has been down the ages that apostasy has been the entry fee into gentile society. In every generation there is another Egypt that tempts Jews with the glittering prizes of secular success, only demanding of them that they should break with the outdated and quaint customs of their forbears.

Every Chanukah we commemorate the rededication of the Holy Beit Hamikdash. However in our own lives the real rededication is to Torah learning and careful observance of the mitzvot — for that is the only thing that will keep the Xmas tree out of the living room.

•Source: Based on an essay by Rabbi Shlomo Tanenbaum

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### Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

#### Parshas Vayeishev

#### **Reuven heard, and he rescued him from their hand, He said, "We will not strike him mortally!"... Shed no blood! Throw him into this pit." (37:21,22)**

Reuven's plea to his brothers to spare Yosef's life did not go unnoticed. His goal was to circumvent a tragedy, so that he could return later and rescue Yosef from the pit. The Torah makes a point of emphasizing Reuven's intentions, which is in itself highly unusual. In connection with Reuven's praiseworthy act, the Midrash comments concerning a pasuk in Shir HaShirim (7:14), Hadudaim nasnu reiach, v'al pesachim kol megadim, "The mandrakes have given out their scent, and by our doors are all choice fruits." "The mandrakes have given out their scent" is a reference to Reuven. (Mandrakes have fertility-inducing powers. Reuven sought them to give to his mother Leah, so that she could bear more children. Rachel asked Leah for some of her mandrakes- a request to which she acquiesced. Leah then gave birth to Yissachar, Zevulun and Dinah; Rachel conceived and gave birth to Yosef. Hence, Reuven is identified with the dudaim.) "And by our doors are all choice fruits" refers to the neiros Chanukah, the lamps commemorating the Chanukah miracle, which are lit and placed at the front door of Jewish homes. The fact that Chazal find reference to Reuven in the first part of the pasuk and to the Chanukah lamps in the second half indicates that there is a connection between the two. What is the connection?

Horav Meir Bergman, Shlita, cites the Teshuvos HaRashba who questions why the Torah relates what went through Reuven's mind when he exhorted his brothers not to kill Yosef. Rarely does the Torah delve into an individual's inner thoughts. He deduces that the Torah records and publicly lauds those who perform mitzvos. Therefore, if the Torah does so, it is appropriate for us to follow this practice. Rav Bergman asserts that this is the factor underlying the concept of pirsumei nissa, publicizing a miracle. It is not sufficient merely to declare that a miracle has occurred. It is crucial that every aspect and detail of the miracle be underscored, such as for whom it was done and through whose merit the laws of "nature" were abrogated - just as the Torah did in Reuven's situation. The Torah glorifies Reuven's action because it is worthy of such special treatment.

Likewise, on Chanukah, we make a point to proclaim the miracles, specifying that they had been performed for our fathers, through the Kohanim, so that emphasis is placed on the "for whom" and the "through whom." All of this lends greater weight to the miracle which took place.

A similar rationale may be applied to Purim and the need for reading the Megillah. It is not enough merely to announce that a miracle occurred in Shushan. We must spell out to whom it happened, and how, and by whose merit it was catalyzed. In an effort to place greater focus on the miracle, we follow the reading of the Megillah with the Shoshanas Yaakov prose, in which the highlights of the Purim story are featured explicitly throughout.

Returning to the original Midrash that alludes to a correlation between Reuven and the miracle of Chanukah, "the mandrakes," which are symbolic of Reuven, "have given out their scent"; the Torah has declared and publicized Reuven's laudatory intentions concerning Yosef. Such a proclamation should be carried out to the fullest extent possible. It should be made known in fullest detail and spread as far as possible. Publicizing the miracle is a form of hodaah, paying gratitude. Thus, "by our doors are all choice fruits" - in compliance with the principle the Torah teaches us--we, too, light the Chanukah candles near the front door in order to publicize the miracle to the fullest extent.

This idea is in direct contrast to those who choose to play down miracles, who refuse to call attention to themselves. Humility is valuable and has its

place, but not at the expense of veiling Hashem's beneficence. When one has been blessed with a miracle, when he has been party to something out of the natural order of things, he should make an effort to declare his gratitude to Hashem. It is all part of recognizing the Source of all of our blessings.

**He (Yaakov) recognized it and he said, "My son's tunic! A savage beast devoured him." (37:33)**

The Midrash ponders why Yaakov Avinu was punished to the extent that he had to utter the words, kesones beni, "My son's tunic!" Chazal explain that Hashem rewards and punishes middah k'neged middah, measure for measure. One is "reimbursed" in a manner quite similar to his actions. Yaakov misled his father, Yitzchak Avinu, when he donned Eisav's garment. For this, he paid dearly. This is not the venue to discuss whether Yaakov acted inappropriately by taking the berachos, blessings, for himself. Rivkah Imeinu, his mother, told him to take them. The wicked Eisav could not have received those blessings. Apparently, Yaakov was only punished for wearing a garment that deceived Yitzchak, causing him to ask, "Are you my son, Eisav?" Perhaps there was another way for someone of the calibre of Yaakov Avinu, the chosen one of the Patriarchs, to have received the blessing that was rightfully his.

Measure for measure seems to be a theme, weaving its course through the parsha. Yosef HaTzadik said three things concerning his brothers: they ate eivar min hachai, flesh from a living animal; they abused the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah; they were gazing inappropriately at the pagan women who inhabited the land. Chazal note that Yosef was punished measure for measure, in consonance with what he related about his brothers. Furthermore, Chazal explain why the Torah interrupts the narrative dealing with the sale of Yosef into slavery and his travails in Egypt, by introducing the story of Yehudah and Tamar in a similar manner. It is to juxtapose the word haker, recognize, used by Yehudah to his father when he presented Yosef's bloodied tunic, onto the word, haker, used by Tamar in her message to Yehudah, indicating the father of her unborn children. Why does a simple word make a difference?

Horav Chaim Shmuelevitz, zl, explains that when Yehudah heard the familiar ring of "haker," he was reminded that the humiliation he was experiencing at the hands of Tamar was retribution for his callousness in dealing with Yosef. Likewise, when Yosef saw his brothers slaughtering the goat and not eating it while it was still living, it indicated to him that he had erred terribly concerning them.

We must understand that Divine Justice is not punitive to "avenge" a sin, but rather to instruct and educate, to demonstrate to a person where he went wrong, so that he will know how to correct his misdeed. Middah k'neged middah pinpoints the reason for the punishment, and tracks the actions leading up to it. As a result, one knows in which areas he is deficient and how to rectify the problems. One who takes his humiliation seriously, realizing that Hashem is conveying a message to him, has the ability to circumvent additional, more painful punishment. Thus, he has acknowledged his failing, such that no further punishment is necessary.

When the Chafetz Chaim, zl, was a youth, he was privy to an odious incident in his community. A poor widow could not pay her rent. It was in the cold of winter, and she begged her Jewish landlord to have pity on her and not evict her from the house. She pleaded, she cried. The response was negative. The heartless man refused to listen, and he threw her out in the cold. The Chafetz Chaim took notice of the incident. A few years later, he was surprised that the landlord had not received any Heavenly "intervention" for his ghastly deed. He remarked, "Impossible. It is impossible that something so evil will be ignored. Hashem follows through on the cases of widows." Ten years elapsed, and word was received that one day the landlord was walking through the street when he "chanced" upon a mad dog who bit him. The landlord died shortly thereafter. Hashem was biding His time.

The Chafetz Chaim's son, Rav Leib, zl, recounted that a butcher in Radin once grabbed a yeshivah student and placed him - in place of his own son - to be conscripted into the Russian Army. The city raised an uproar which, after some time, quieted down, as all such outrages tend to do. The Chafetz

Chaim once again remarked that he did not believe that such a travesty would go unpunished. Surely, the butcher would receive his rightful due from the Heavenly Tribunal.

Thirty years went by, and, suddenly, "out of the blue," the butcher's son-- who was now a grown man-- became ill with a serious disease. In a very short time, the illness ran its course, and he died. Thirty years. No evil deed goes unpunished. What we do to others - the manner in which we act towards others- will return to haunt us. We cannot escape Hashem's retribution.

There is a flipside to middah k'neged middah. In his commentary to the Torah, Rashi questions the necessity of saving Noach from the Deluge by means of an Ark that took one hundred twenty years to construct. Certainly, Hashem had other less "elaborate" avenues of escape available to spare Noach and his family. He explains that the Ark was designed to inspire the wicked people of Noach's generation, who, upon noticing him working so hard, would ask what he was doing and to question why. Noach's response might have motivated the people to repent. Sadly, they chose to continue their evil behavior until their society came to an abrupt end.

The Be'er Mayim Chaim explains that Hashem's plan was to reward Noach, middah k'neged middah. One who serves Hashem from his "easy chair"- without going out of his way, in no way straining himself to do more, better and with greater effort- will experience a similar response for his reward. Hashem will reward him, but it will be simple and straightforward - no heroics - and Hashem will not go "out of His way" to change the natural order. In Noach's case, it was necessary to save Noach, not only from the waters, but also from the people and the animals who sought to kill him. Noach needed a miracle, and in order to receive one, he needed to deserve it. A miracle occurs in order to acknowledge someone who has gone out of his way to serve Hashem. Noach did. He was, therefore, spared.

Commensurate with our investment, we will reap reward. This applies in the physical/material world, and, surely so, in the spiritual dimension. Horav Yitzchak Zilberstein, Shlita, relates that a man once asked why he was having such a difficult time selling his apartment. It was a beautiful apartment in one of Yerushalayim's most impressive neighborhoods, and he just could not get a customer. This was despite the fact that anyone else in his complex who put up his apartment for sale - sold it immediately. What was wrong?

Rav Zilberstein shared the following vignette with him. One day, he davened Shacharis in a shul in Yerushalayim. The gabai, sexton, was attempting to sell the aliyos to a non-responsive congregation. He was offering shlishi, for five shekalim, and no takers had emerged. It was embarrassing for the shul and the Torah! Rav Zilberstein could no longer contain himself, so he rose to the lectern and addressed the assemblage. "Does anyone realize that the Torah is being publicly humiliated? No one is willing to spend five shekalim (\$1.25) for a chance to recite a brachah, blessing, over the Torah? We have such a wonderful opportunity to give honor to the Torah, and we fail to do so. Is this not outrageous?" It did not take but a moment, and the aliyah was sold.

Rav Zilberstein looked at the petitioner and said, "Tell me, perhaps you, too, had an opportunity to perform a mitzvah which might have cost a few shekalim, and you ignored it. Do you realize that this causes humiliation in the spiritual realm? Think about it. That might be the reason for your lack of success in selling your apartment." Perhaps we should also introspect, to explore whether we are being a bit too casual and complacent in our own mitzvah observance.

**And all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to comfort himself. (37:35)**

A Jew has a unique neshamah, soul, whose flame continues to burn, regardless of the "beating" it has taken as a result of a person's wandering away from the Torah way of life. Years of assimilation and alienation can suddenly be erased, as the neshamah is inspired to return to its source. It might seem to the spectator that the words of inspiration, the many talks, pleas and encouragements had all been for naught, and then, suddenly, as if

from nowhere, the individual for whom we had all given up hope returns. He comes home, his neshamah ablaze with a passion to serve Hashem and regain the days, months and years during which he had been astray. He is embraced and welcomed home, because his Father in Heaven never despaired of his return.

The following episode took place in a shul, one week-night after the rav had concluded his nightly dvar Torah between Minchah and Maariv. It was the week of Parashas Vayeishev, and the rav had quoted a Torah thought from the Ohr HaChaim Hakadosh, then he added his own vignette. What happened afterwards is "textbook kiruv" outreach which should inspire us all. The Ohr HaChaim wonders how Yaakov Avinu's sons and daughters comforted him. What could they have done that might have consoled him? He responds that when the family saw how distraught Yaakov was over the loss of Yosef, they reasoned that if they all were to come forward - sons, daughters, and their individual families - Yaakov would take note of his remaining family. Thus, some of the pain concerning the loss of Yosef would dissipate. In other words, they did nothing other than all assemble together as a unit, to demonstrate to their father that a substantial family was still left.

It was a good idea, but they had yet to realize the intense love that Yaakov had for Yosef - both physically and spiritually. Yosef's spiritual potential vis-?-vis the future Jewish nation was awesome. The loss he had experienced was devastating. No, Yaakov could not be comforted over such a loss. All of the children could not replace one Yosef.

Thus ended the Ohr HaChaim's dvar Torah. The rav now added his own novel suggestion. He explained that Hashem is also a loving father, to whom each and every Jew/child is of incalculable significance. He mourns the spiritual alienation of each child. The loss of a Jew causes Hashem great pain. Imagine, Hashem peers into the bais hamedrash and, when He sees the empty seat of an individual, He mourns his spiritual demise. Thus, when all of His remaining children, those Jews who have maintained their observance and retained their relationship with their Heavenly Father, assemble and show their increased numbers, it gives Hashem pride and joy. Perhaps this will cause His mourning to subside.

Our task is to - in some way - decrease Hashem's "pain" over the loss of His children. Hashem, however, refuses to be comforted! Each and every Jew comprises a world on his own. He matters - regardless of how far, how long and how deeply he has strayed. Hashem misses him, grieves over his forfeiture from the religion of his ancestors, and awaits his return. Every Jewish soul that is missing is a discreet reason to lament.

The rav's words struck a chord in the hearts of his listeners. Unbeknownst to him, an individual was seated in the shul who was not a regular participant in the services. In fact, he never came, having halted his practice of Judaism quite some time previously. It just happened that he had yahrzeit for his father, who had been a member in the shul, so he came to recite kaddish. Over the years, the rav had spoken to him numerous times, in an attempt to jumpstart his Jewish observance - all to no avail. Something happened, however, that night which was unlike any other time. He had just heard that every Jew is important to Hashem, and that the Almighty waits for the return of each individual. Yes, Hashem still loved him. He had hope. He could return home and be accepted. He came over to the rav and asked for "directions." He was coming home.

As she was taken out, she sent word to her father-in-law, saying, "By the man to whom this belongs I am with child." (38:25) We live during a time in which our people sorely need some form of hope, something to hold, something to stabilize our lives in a world society constantly being plummeted by winds of confusion. What has kept us resolute and unwavering in our commitment has been the belief in the advent of Moshiach Tzidkeinu. It would, thus, make sense that we do everything within our power to "expedite" this process. What can we do to bring Moshiach? It might be more judicious to focus on what it is we are doing - however inadvertently - to delay his arrival. While this author has never claimed to have the answers, one subtle lesson can be derived from an incident in this parshah, which should prove to be a powerful lesson for us all.

The Torah records the passing of Yehuda's two sons, Er and Onan. Er's widow, Tamar, who is identified by Chazal as the daughter of Shem ben Noach, was to marry Onan, her brother-in-law, in order to "raise up" offspring for his deceased brother. Onan was really not interested in having a child that would be regarded as belonging to his brother; therefore, he was careful not to impregnate her. He, too, died young and it was not yet time for the next brother, Sheilah, to marry Tamar. Yehudah was hesitant to have Sheilah marry Tamar, lest he, too, die prematurely. He told Tamar to wait for Sheilah to grow up, and then they would marry. The years passed, and Tamar sensed that her marriage to Sheilah would probably never occur.

Tamar decided on a course of action which, to the uneducated, may appear to be unbecoming, but was totally l'shem Shomayim, for the sake of Heaven. She presented herself as a woman of ill-repute and arranged a liaison with Yehudah, during which she became pregnant. The incident was part of a Divine plan to cloak the seeds of malchus Bais David, the Davidic dynasty, and eventually Moshiach Tzidkeinu, in a veil of ambiguity and moral murkiness. Not only is Yehudah not to be blamed for his tryst, he remains as chaste and righteous as he was before. The entire episode was forced upon him by the Divine Hand. This is not the forum to explain the "why," but rather to discuss how Tamar, who became the matriarch of the Davidic dynasty, handled herself and to learn from her actions.

When word reached Yehudah that his daughter-in-law was pregnant, thus guilty of an adulterous act, he said, "Bring her out, so that she may be burnt." Tamar's response displays her unusual character: subtly, she sent a message to Yehudah that the man who had deposited with her a seal, its cord and a staff, was the father of the children growing in her womb. This was a coded message to which only Yehudah would respond - if he so chose. He was the father; he knew it, and she knew it; yet, she was prepared to die, rather than divulge his secret, to humiliate him publicly. Tamar's sensitivity to another person's feelings - even at the risk of her own life - and Yehudah's strength of character in accepting and confessing his participation in this liaison, are the traits upon which the seeds of the Davidic dynasty were established.

Chazal derived a powerful moral rule from Tamar's actions: "It is better that a person throw himself into a fiery furnace, rather than shame his neighbor in public." Chazal continue with other similar statements, exhorting us to be sensitive to another person's feelings. This incident laid the framework for Moshiach Tzidkeinu. Obviously, it reveals something about the nature of the Jewish moral code and its demands upon each and every one of us. Sensitivity to the dignity of our fellow man is not too much to expect, but, without it, we are of limited value. It is our source of hope and, indeed, our only reason for hope.

**She caught hold of him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." (39:12)**

It is not uncommon for one to justify his actions by comparing himself to others. His situation is always worse, and, therefore, he should be allowed certain leniencies. He has always been deprived, so now he should be permitted to get away with some modified expectations. The Torah does not agree with such a rationale. When Yosef was confronted by the wife of Potifar, much went through his mind. Her blandishments were becoming too much for him to handle. Yosef was at the breaking-point. It was crunch time, and he was about to give in. At this point, an image of his father, Yaakov Avinu, appeared to him and said, "Yosef! In the future, the Kohen Gadol will wear the Choshen Breastplate, inscribed with the names of the twelve shevatim, tribes. Your name is supposed to be included among them. Do you wish to have your name removed?"

A powerful Chazal. Horav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld, zl, derived an important lesson from Chazal. If Yosef had compared himself to his brothers, he could have easily found a rationale to support his behavior. Indeed, he was actually more righteous than they. He was kidnapped as a young boy and sent to live in the moral filth of Egyptian society, spending time incarcerated in prison together with the dregs of society. No one encouraged him. He was alone, with no mentor, no inspiration, no one to reinforce the moral imperatives that his father had taught him. Certainly, if

he were to yield to temptation, he could find a way to justify himself. He did not have it as easy as his brothers, since they grew up under the watchful eye of Yaakov. Yet, they sold him into slavery. Maybe he would be doing something wrong, but compared to his brothers, he was a tzaddik, righteous person. Look at how they had treated him. Yet, their names were not threatened with removal from the Choshen.

This is what Yosef could have argued, and we probably would have understood his position. Regrettably, this was not Yaakov's message. His father intimated that people are judged by what they themselves do - not in comparison to others. What others do is not a mitigating factor in one's personal demeanor. Yosef realized that to yield to Potifar's wife would be a sin, for which he would jeopardize his nitzchios, eternity. He would lose his place among the Twelve Tribes. Nothing could justify that!

**u'mishpatime baal yedaum - such judgments - they know them not.**

The non-Jews also have laws. What is the meaning of "such judgments - they know not"? This is an aspect of the seven mitzvot of Bnei Noach, to establish dinim, laws. Horav Yaakov Kamenetsky, zl, explains that the fulfillment of the Noachic demand to have dinim, is achieved by the legislative process of writing laws and establishing a court system to adjudicate these laws. Jewish laws are given to us in the Torah, dictated by the Divine Author, which grants these laws an entirely different perspective.

Why were the mishpatim of the Torah not given also to the non-Jewish world? It certainly would not have caused any harm. Rav Yaakov explains that even the mishpatim, rational laws, that are found in the Torah are bound up together with the chukim, laws that defy human rationale. They might make sense to us, but each law has a deeper reason that does not enter into the scope of our limited purview. For example, the laws pertaining to an eved Ivri, Hebrew bondsman, dictate that he work for only six years. The reason is that Hashem created the world in six days. Thus, the law commemorates the creation of the world in six days and alludes to the mitzvah of Shabbos; all of this suggests the deeper rationale behind the laws concerning eved Ivri. It is a simple law, but its profundity is mindboggling. Every nation accepts the commandment, "Do not kill," but the rationale for the other nations is different than for us. We are taught that murder is prohibited because man is created b'tzelem Elokim, in G-d's image, an idea totally foreign to secular law. Even our mishpatim are intricately connected in some way with our chukim, which is unlike anything in the secular code of law. "Such judgments - they know them not."

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**Rabbi Yissocher Frand on Parshas VaYeishev  
Yosef and Yehudah: Down But Not Out**

In the middle of the narration of the story of Yosef and his brothers [starting at the beginning of Bereshis Chapters 36], the Torah interjects the story of Yehuda and Tamar [Chapter 38]. Yehuda had 3 sons, the first son - Er—was married to a woman named Tamar. Er died and then the second brother—Onan—married Tamar. When Onan also died, Yehudah did not want to allow his third son (Shelah) to marry Tamar. Tamar disguised herself and tricked Yehudah into performing a form of levirate marriage with her. When she became noticeably pregnant, Yehudah accused her of being unfaithful to his family. Rather than embarrassing him and announcing that he made her pregnant, she merely ambiguously said that she was pregnant from the person who gave her certain items as a security pledge.

Yehudah recognized the items as his own. Rather than deny the fact that he was indeed the one who lived with her, he admitted that he was the father of her children. In fact, one of the two sons born to Yehudah and Tamar (Peretz) eventually became the ancestor of King David and the Davidic dynasty.

Immediately after this interjection, the Torah resumes the story of Yosef, telling us that he was brought down to Egypt and placed in the house of Potiphar, Pharaoh's officer, chamberlain of the butchers.

Rashi explains the juxtaposition of the two stories by the words "And Yehudah went down..." [Bereshis 38:1]. Yehudah had been admired by all his brothers; however after the sale of Yosef (which Yehudah suggested as an alternative to killing him) and the deep depression that overtook their father Yaakov, the brothers dethroned Yehudah from his role of leadership. They told him "had you insisted that we return him to our father instead of killing him, we would have also listened to you!"

When the narration of Yosef resumes, there is a similar expression of descent: "And Yosef was brought down to Egypt" [Bereshis 39:1] Here, too, Rashi comments on the linkage of the two stories and the fact that Yehudah was dethroned from leadership because of the fact that Yosef was brought down to Egypt.

The Shemen haTov comments that the incidents that occurred with Yehudah and Yosef may both be described as "yerida", but there are tremendous lessons to be learned from these so-called "down-falls". As things turned out, both descents were opportunities for these two brothers to achieve their maximum potential and to reach the high-points of their respective lives. This sordid incident of Yehudah's involvement with Tamar and his public embarrassment over it may seem like a low-point. However, it was this very admission which gave Yehudah his claim to fame. Yaakov later said "Yehudah, you your brothers will acknowledge" [Bereshis 49:8] as part of the blessing that he gave to Yehudah. Jews are called by his name (Yehudim), not by the name of any other Tribe. Why are we "Yehudim"? It is because Yehudah did something that took a tremendous amount of self-discipline and honesty. He admitted: "You are right. I was wrong."

This story, which began as a tremendous down-fall for Yehudah - he was dethroned, he was abused - this could have been his Waterloo, was in fact the nadir of his life. Things looked bleak, but he rose to the occasion. He became Yehudah and he demonstrated the power of confession (Hodaah - same root as Yehudah) to all of us.

Yosef also suffered tragedy after tragedy. He was sold as a slave to Egypt and then he was thrown from there into prison. But this descent too, this terrible period in his life, gave him the title by which he is known for all time: Yosef haTzadik [Joseph the Righteous]. Yosef was tempted by the wife of Potiphar and withstood the temptation. There are very few people in Jewish history that are given the title "Tzadik".

The lesson of both these narratives is that sometimes we are thrown into circumstances that present us with tremendous challenges. We look like we are at the bottom of the pit looking up, like we have suffered an irreversible setback. Sometimes these very situations present opportunities to meet those challenges and thereby greatly improve our life situation.

The dual descents of Yehudah and Yosef turn out to be opportunities that gave these two sons of Yaakov the ability to achieve great accomplishments and to acquire immortal greatness.

**Where's the "Emes L'Yaakov"?**

The beginning of the story of Yosef in Parshas Vayeshev essentially concludes the story of the life of Yaakov Avinu. In Sefer Bereshis, Lech Lecha, Vayera, and Chayei Sarah are the parshiyos devoted to the story of Avraham. Toldos is the story of Yitzchak. Vayetze, Vayishlach and part of VaYeshev are the story of Yaakov Avinu. The balance of Vayeshev and the rest of the book of Bereshis - Miketz, VaYigash, and Vayechi - are the story of Yosef. Now that we are leaving Yaakov Avinu for another year, so to speak, it is perhaps a good opportunity to ask a basic question about his trademark characteristic.

The trademark characteristic by which Avraham is known is Chesed [kindness]. This attribute is clearly described by many of the stories from Avraham's life. Yitzchak's defining trait is Pachad [Fear of G-d, Service of His Maker]. Yitzchak's willingness to give up his life at the Akeidah, no questions asked, certainly earned him this trademark. One can have no argument with the identification of Yitzchak with Service to the Almighty.

However, Yaakov's trademark attribute is Truth [Titen Emes L'Yaakov]. Where is this attribute demonstrated anywhere in the various narratives we have regarding the life of the Patriarch Jacob? On the contrary: He "stole" the blessings from Eisav; he shrewdly outmaneuvered Lavan in salary negotiations with the sheep. He stood by silently when his sons were involved in the deceitful massacre of the people of Shechem. Where is the "Emes L'Yaakov"?

Rav Shimshon Pinkus makes the following observation: None of the Patriarchs had as turbulent and tragic a life as did Yaakov. From Eisav to Lavan to Dinah to Yosef, he had nothing but anguish and aggravation from even his own close family members. In such a situation, it is not difficult for one to throw up his hands and ask "What do I need this for?"

Furthermore, Chazal say that Yaakov Avinu possessed a tradition that if any of his 12 sons would die in his lifetime, he himself would wind up in Gehennom [Hell]. If a person was convinced that he was headed to Gehennom regardless of what he does, how would we expect him to live his life in this world? Most people would have the attitude "eat, drink, and be merry". The Talmud says [Chagiga 15a] that a Bas Kol [Heavenly Voice] came forth and proclaimed "Return you wayward children except for Acher". Acher's reaction was "Since I am excluded from the next world anyway, I might as well enjoy myself in this world." The Talmud says he then went out with a prostitute.

That was Yaakov's situation. He had a very trying life. He assumed that Yosef had died and that meant he was destined to lose his portion even in the world to come. He could have easily thrown it all away. "Who needs this?"

The fact that he did not have this attitude earned him the attribute of Emes. Truth means that a person does what he has to do, not because of reward and punishment, but because it is correct. Yaakov knew that the lifestyle he was leading was the honest one and the right one and he continued to live by it, never veering off the straight and narrow path, regardless of the fact that he was not expecting any reward for it. Such an attitude earned him the accolade and the identifying crown of "Emes L'Yaakov" [Truth to Jacob].

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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### **Parshas Vayeishev/Chanukah: Rest Stop By Rabbi Mordechai Kamenetzky (Matzav.com)**

Yaakov's struggles were over — or at least he thought so. He had met the challenge of living 22 years with a conniving uncle; he had held back the malicious advances made by Esav and had appeased him properly. His daughter was rescued from the clutches of an evil prince, and though his children had attacked and decimated the city of Shechem, the neighboring countries did not seek revenge. This week the portion begins "Vayeshev Yaakov," and Yaakov settled. The Midrash tells us that Yaakov wanted to rest. The Midrash continues that the Almighty did not approve of Yaakov's retirement plans. Hashem asked, "are the righteous not satisfied with the World to Come? They would want to rest in this world too?" Immediately, says the Midrash, the incident with Yosef occurred. Yosef is kidnapped by his brothers and sold as a slave, thus throwing Yaakov's tumultuous existence into another 22 years of agony.

What exactly is the objection toward Yaakov's desire to rest? Why couldn't the father of the 12 tribes spend the final third of his life in tranquility?

On the fast day of the Tenth of Teves, during the height of World War II, Rabbi Ahron Kotler took the well known activist Irving Bunim on a train trip to Washington. The war in Europe was raging, Jews were being exterminated, and the two had to see a high-ranking Washington official to plead with him in every possible way — "save our brothers." On the way down to Washington Rabbi Kotler tried to persuade Bunim to break his

fast. "Bunim," he explained. "You cannot fast now. You need your strength for the meeting."

But Irving Bunim refused to eat. He was sure that he could hold out until the evening when the fast ended.

The meeting was intense. Rabbi Kotler cried, cajoled, and begged the official to respond. Finally, the great rabbi felt that he impressed upon the man the severity of the situation. The man gave his commitment that he would talk to the President. When they left the meeting Bunim was exhausted. He mentioned to Rabbi Kotler that he thought the meeting went well and now he'd like to eat.

Rav Ahron was quick to reply. "With Hashem's help it will be good. And Bunim," he added, "now you can fast!"

Yaakov wanted to rest. However, Hashem had a different view. There is no real rest in this world. As much as one has accomplished, there is always another battle — another test. The moment one declares victory, another battle looms.

This week we celebrate Chanukah. The words Chanukah mean "they rested on the 25th (of Kislev)." It was not a total rest. Just one rest from one battle. The Hasmoneans had to rededicate the desecrated Temple, re-light the Menorah, and re-establish the supremacy of Torah over a Hellenist culture that had corrupted Jewish life. They rested from physical battle, but they knew that there would be a constant battle over spirituality for ages to come. They established the Menorah-lighting ceremony with flames that have glowed until today proclaiming with each flicker that the battle may be over but the war is endless — until the final rest.

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### **Parshas Vayeishev: Yosef and His Brothers - The Anatomy of a Sales By Rabbi Zev Leff (Matzav.com)**

...and Yosef would bring evil reports about them to their father (Bereishis 37:2).

Just as the halachic sections of the written Torah were meant to remain a closed book without the elucidation of the Oral Torah, so, too, are the narratives incomprehensible without the explanations of the Oral Torah. One of the most difficult portions in the Torah to understand is the episode of Yosef and his brothers that culminated in his being sold by them as a slave to Egypt. What follows is a compendium based on Chazal and later commentaries.

Each of the twelve sons of Yaakov possessed specific traits and talents that would be required by their descendants, the twelve tribes, in order for each tribe to fulfill its unique role in the building of the Jewish people. Each son expressed a different facet of their father Yaakov's personality. Yaakov himself embodied the entire Jewish people, Yisrael, in microcosm.

Yosef, unlike his brothers, was a complete replica of his father Yaakov, fashioned in his physical and spiritual likeness. Yosef was Yaakov's firstborn in thought, for Yaakov had intended to marry Rachel first and Yosef was Rachel's firstborn. As Yaakov's likeness, Yosef also possessed all the various traits that would define the entire Jewish people.

Yosef's role was to provide the other tribes with the means to develop their individual roles. Thus Yosef preceded his brothers to Egypt and lay the foundation for his brothers' eventual sojourn there. Yosef's descendant Yehoshua conquered the land that the tribes then developed into the Jewish commonwealth. And at the end of time, Mashiach ben Yosef will prepare the way for Mashiach ben David.

With the birth of Yaakov's twelve sons, the transition between the period of the Avos (Forefathers) and that of the Shevatim (Tribes) was completed. The question arose, however, did the twelve brothers constitute the beginning of Klal Yisrael, or were they only the forerunners of a nation yet to be? Did they have the halachic status of Jews or were they still considered bnei Noach (Noachides). The answer to that question obviously had profound halachic significance. The brothers maintained that they already represented a nation in embryo and therefore possessed the status of Jews. Yosef, however, maintained that they were not yet a nation, but only the forerunners of a nation. To the brothers the time had already come

to start fulfilling their individual roles in the totality of Klal Yisrael, whereas Yosef saw himself as a shepherd to his brothers, to nurture and prepare them for their eventual roles.

Now we can understand why Yaakov conveyed to Yosef alone the Torah he had learned in the yeshivah of Shem and Eiver. Since this was a Torah of bnei Noach, only Yosef considered it relevant. The other brothers already considered themselves to be Jews.

Consonant with his view of his role, Yosef kept careful watch on his brothers. For instance, he nurtured and guided the sons of the maidservants, who were destined to become followers and supporters among the Jewish people. The Torah's description of Yosef "vehu naar (he was a youth)" - suggests his self-appointed task - "lenaer" - developing and arousing their talents. With the more influential brothers, who would be the leaders of the future nation, Yosef served as a watchdog monitoring their activities and reporting to his father.

Chazal tell us that Yosef reported three things concerning his brothers to his father: That they were eating eiver min hachai, flesh torn from a living animal; that they were calling the sons of the maidservants, slaves; and that they were conducting themselves in an immoral fashion with the Canaanite women. In each of these cases, the disagreement between Yosef and his brothers hinged on their halachic status.

A Jew is permitted to eat meat from an animal that has been ritually slaughtered even if it is still twitching (mefarcheses). Bnei Noach, however, were prohibited, prior to the giving of the Torah, from eating meat from an animal until all motion ceased. Because the brothers considered themselves Jews, they did not wait to begin dismembering an animal until all movement ceased. Yosef, however deemed this eiver min hachai since he considered them bnei Noach.

Similarly, if Yaakov had the halachic status of a ben Noach, then even though Bilhah and Zilpah were servants, their children were free men (see Kiddushin 67b). But if he was considered a Jew, then his children by the maidservants were slaves unless their mothers were previously freed or converted. Yosef assumed that Yaakov was of the same opinion as he, and therefore had not freed his maidservants. But according to the brothers, if the maidservants had not been freed, their sons were slaves. Thus, the brothers' halachic opinion, in Yosef's eyes, was tantamount to calling the children of Bilhah and Zilpah slaves.

The brothers considered themselves naturally separated from the other nations by virtue of their status as Jews. Thus they was no danger in engaging in business transactions with Canaanite merchant women. Yosef, on the other hand, saw no natural barrier between his brothers and their neighbors, and therefore regarded this association as fraught with danger.

Had Yosef reported to his father the facts and let him decide how to interpret them, there would have been no fault in his report. Instead, he reported his conclusions alone to his father, creating a negative impression of his brothers' conduct. He was still not mature enough, says Sforno to consider the far-reaching implications of his actions.

The Torah then informs us that Yaakov, in his role as Yisrael, the progenitor of the future nation and not as Yaakov, the personal father to twelve individual sons - loved Yosef mikol banav - literally, from all his sons. His love for Yosef emanated from the love of all his sons, for he viewed Yosef as the one who represented them all and who would prepare them for their future tasks.

He made Yosef a kesones pasim, either a coat of many colors, representing his multi-faceted role, or a wristband (see Baalei HaTosafos). Just as the wrist represents the link between the arm muscles and the hands, so too, Yosef was the link to actualize the potential of the brothers. (The name Yosef is 'pas' - wrist - plus two letters of God's Name.)

The brothers viewed Yosef as a threat to the nation, which in their view had already come into being. They perceived him as attempting to curry favor in Yaakov's eyes at their expense. They viewed their father's love for Yosef as coming at their expense, and thus estranged themselves from him and could not find the ability to speak to him in harmonious perfection that had to be reached through the unity of each tribe contributing its unique portion and not usurping the role of another tribe.

Chazal tell us that there are two distinct types of dreams: those generated by one's own thoughts and ideas; the other linked to prophecy. When Yosef related his dreams concerning his brothers' sheaves of grain bowing to him - and later the dream of the sun, moon and stars bowing to him - he did so because he viewed them as prophetic mandates. The brothers, however, saw them as further proof that thoughts of domination preoccupied his mind.

When Yosef was sent by Yaakov to report on the welfare of the brothers, they saw this as an opportunity to defend themselves against this usurper of their roles in Klal Yisrael. They feared he would defame them to Yaakov, and that they would be banished, as Yishmael was by Avraham and Esav by Yitzchak.

Thus, Yosef was in their view a rodef, a pursuer who threatened both their physical existence and eternal roles as the founders of Klal Yisrael. For this reason they decided that they were justified, perhaps even reequired, to kill him first. Rather than kill Ysef, however, they listened to the pleas of Reuven who argued that their involvement in his death should be passive, and ultimately to Yehudah, who urged them to sell Yosef as a slave.

The brothers were so convinced that they were justified that after selling Yosef they sat down to eat bread without any pangs of guilt. Their common meal was in effect a celebration of the fact that now unity and harmony between them would be unhindered by Yosef's evil designs. Even years later, when they searched their pasts for any sins that could explain a series of apparently tragic events, they could not come up with anything other than their failure to be more merciful. But they still deemed the sale itself to have been justified.

In the final analysis, both Yosef and his brothers seemingly acted with proper intentions. But if so, why did Yosef's sale leave such a stain on the history of the Jewish people? The midrashim and piyutim attribute, for instance, the death of the ten martyrs mentioned in the Yom Kippur davening to the sale of Yosef.

Though the brothers felt fully justified, the Torah reveals to us that their misperception concerning Yosef was not simply an innocent mistake. Coloring their judgment was a slight trace of jealousy. Chazal tell us that jealousy removes a person from the world. This means, in part, that it removes one from the world of reality and causes him to view people and incidents in a distorted fashion.

Since the brothers' deed was tainted by jealousy, both they and future generations had to suffer the consequences. Rabbeinu Yonah finds in the sinas chinam (causeless hatred) for which the Second Bies Hamikdash was destroyed an echo of the hatred of Yosef's brothers.

With this understanding of how one imperfection in middos (character traits) can have such long-range effects, we can understand a difficult Chazal. When R' Yochanan ben Zakkai's students went to visit him on his death bed, he began to cry. His students asked him why he was weeping. He answered that if he were brought before a mortal king who could be appeased or bribed, and whose decrees extended only as far as the grave, he would wail, how much more so now that he was soon to face the judgment of Hashem, Who cannot be appeased or bribed and Whose punishment is eternal. Did R' Yochanan ben Zakkai really entertain the possibility that he was deserving of eternal death, the punishment reserved for heretics of the worst type?

When R' Yochanan ben Zakkai went out to meet the Roman general Vespasian during the siege of Jerusalem, he was allowed to make certain requests. He asked that the Sanhedrin be permitted to continue in Yavneh, that Rabban Gamliel be spared and the line of the Nesi'im thereby preserved, and that a doctor be provided to heal R' Tzaddok, who had fasted forty years to avert the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

Many years later, the Amoraim discussed whether R' Yochanan ben Zakkai acted correctly. Some thought he should have instead asked that the Temple and Jerusalem be spared. Others argued that had he asked for too much, he might have ended up with nothing. The Talmud concludes that he erred. He should have asked that the Beis Hamikdash be spared, but it was in fact the Divine Will that he err, since God had decreed that the Temple be destroyed.

Before his death, R' Yochanan ben Zakkai was also beset with doubts as to whether he had acted properly. In his rigorous self-scrutiny, another explanation of why he erred came to him. He had opposed the zealots, who led the rebellion against Rome. But the zealots had ignored his opinion and forced the issue by burning all Jerusalem's food supplies. The destruction of the Temple and exile of the Jewish people was an apparent vindication of R' Yochanan ben Zakkai's stance since the zealots could hardly claim a Divine sanction for a policy that failed so miserably.

On his deathbed, R' Yochanan ben Zakkai worried that perhaps subconsciously he had not asked that the Beis Hamikdash be spared out of a fear that there would then be no clear proof that he had been right. And he suspected that his own honor - offended by the zealots' refusal to heed his psak - might have influenced his request. If that were true, and as a consequence the Beis Hamikdash were destroyed, would he not have merited eternal death? The Talmud tells us that R' Yochanan ben Zakkai's suspicions were unfounded; he was innocent; the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed by a Heavenly decree. Yet we can learn from R' Yochanan's concern as to the power of subtle traces of honor, desire and jealousy in distorting one's decisions.

It is incumbent upon us to learn from the sale of Yosef the devastating effect of jealousy and hatred, even in its subtlest forms and even in the greatest of people, so that we can strive to conduct ourselves in a manner that will cause us to merit seeing the ultimate reunion of Yosef and his brothers, when Mashiach ben Yosef will be sent as a harbinger of Mashiach ben David.

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### **Al Hanissim: Defining a Nation Through War** **Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger (The TorahWeb Foundation)**

Is it not inconsistent that we, who see ourselves as a peace loving people, should thank Hashem throughout the days of Chanuka, not only for our victories over the Greeks but for the very battles that we waged against them? As difficult as it is to say, we in fact repeat at the end of every Chanuka shemone esrei, "[We thank you] for the miracles, for the relief, for the mighty acts for the victories and for the battles which you performed for our fathers in those days at this season". It is so uncharacteristic of our prayers, that one of the commentaries - the Anaf Yosef - removes the "vov" so that it reads "for the victories of the battles". Alternatively, Rav Chaim Friedlander (Sifsei Chaim) quotes Harav Yaakov Emden as elucidating the phrase to mean for "conducting our battles for us". Yet it would seem that the text as we have it simply does thank Hashem for the actual battles and this should be very difficult for us to do. No doubt our absolutely frightening sense of the brutality of war and its unspeakable pain has been fashioned by the compassion that defines the people who are "rachmonim ... gomlei chasadim - compassionate and kind". Have we not, ever since our earliest years, associated battle with the hands of Eisav, even as we distance ourselves and take pride in the voice of Yaakov? Moreover, Rashi in parshas Toldos attests to Yaakov's fear of bearing arms and having to kill, even when it will be his only chance at saving his family. Our fear of the impact of battle finds further expression in Hashem's promise to us that He will restore to us the sensitivities of mercy that we will surely lose while fulfilling the obligation of rooting out an idolatrous city (ir hanidachas). Now, how do we thank Hashem for bringing war upon us even when He brings it to victory?

The distressing perspective of recent years has suggested to me that perhaps Chazal are directing us to indeed be grateful for the manner in which the Maccabean battles were waged and certainly the Shushanite struggles. Sadly, we have come to see terrorism introduce battles without borders, and bring warriors without any price for life to the city street, far off destinations, and all that lies between them. Possibly, we as people can be grateful that if Hashem has seen fit to bring a battle upon us, that it is similar to the one fought by the Chashmonaim where war and warriors were clearly depicted.

Perhaps we can suggest a deeper understanding of this phrase through an insight of the saintly Harav Kook tzvk"l. Trapped in Switzerland during the horror of WWI and pining for his home in Israel, Rav Kook published a collection of essays, Orot. In what was going to become a highly controversial collection and would forever mark his entry into the Torah world, Rav Kook addresses the concept of war as it impresses itself on the history of nations. He argues that war despite its unforgivable cruelty and unredeemable suffering, must nevertheless assume an important position in the development of peoples. There would be no other way to understand how G-d can be referred to as "ba'al milchamos - the master of wars", or as "ish milchama - the man of war". We can add that the Torah views the Jewish military camp as one that feels the presence of Hashem in its midst, and therefore models for us many of the laws that design a place in which to daven.

Accordingly Rav Kook observes that wars were more than a disastrous manner to settle disputes. Rather they were often defining moments for nations. Avrohom's battle to save Lot probably depicts Avrohom as a man of kindness more than any other event; Shimon and Levi's battle for Dina defines their brazenness and their concern for the safety of their families. Far from being a maven on American history it would seem to me that the Civil War with all of its torment, defined this nation as a people committed to ideals and morals in a manner that surpasses almost all other nations. The indescribable cruelty of the Germans and Japanese during WWII exposed their civility and politeness as being merely a facade. Using children as a human shield shows, to the honest observer, a barbaric group, just as the caution with which Israeli soldiers move through the populated streets of Jenin and Azza, defines a people who have forever treasured life like no others.

The Maccabean battle against the Greeks, where Jews put their lives on the line to hold on to Torah, its mitzvos and its culture, its opportunities of growth and Divine service, was one of those defining moments. When for some reason G-d's infinite wisdom determined that we had to take up arms, we can express our acceptance that our defining moment marked us a people who treasure beyond all else Hashem's gift of being selected to be His children in this world.

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### **Haaretz.com** **Portion of the Week / Great expectations** **By Benjamin Lau**

This week's Torah portion introduces us to a central drama in Genesis: the story of Joseph and his brothers. This narrative is accompanied from beginning to end by three pairs of dreams, which serve as the primary axis for the plot structure.

The narrative starts off with two of Joseph's dreams, both of which intensify his brothers' hatred of him. The next pair of dreams, those of Pharaoh's chief butler and chief baker, respectively, earn Joseph the status of "a man discreet and wise" (Genesis 41:33), while Pharaoh's two dreams raise him to the lofty status of viceroy in Egypt.

In contrast to the psychoanalytical approach, which perceives dreams as a bursting-forth of the dreamer's repressed subconscious, Maimonides, in his "Guide for the Perplexed" (2:36), argues that dreams express our ambitions, which are sometimes pushed to the margins by the severe demands of our daily lives.

Jacob has two dreams that are depicted in Genesis. When he leaves home, he dreams of a ladder: "And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And, behold, the Lord stood above it, and said, I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed" (Gen. 28:12-13). Banished from his family in Be'er Sheva, he has no idea what he will find when he reaches his destination: Laban's home in Haran. The ladder represents Jacob's journey, whose starting point is known but whose

destination is not. The angels ascending and descending the ladder symbolize Jacob's longing for companionship on this lonely journey. In this dream, God stands at the top of the ladder, an expression of a basic human need: Jacob wants to feel that God is with him every step of the way and is protecting him from all possible harm.

Twenty years later in Laban's home, Jacob has a very different kind of experience, as he relates to Leah and Rachel: "And it came to pass at the time that the cattle conceived, that I lifted up mine eyes, and saw in a dream, and, behold, the rams which leaped upon the cattle were ringstraked, speckled and grised" (Gen. 31:10).

There are no angels in this dream. Jacob's pursuit of material success has plunged him into an environment filled with flocks of sheep; the world of work has penetrated even his dreams. A tragic figure in this passage, Jacob is perceived at this point in the narrative as an individual who cannot escape material reality even in the world of dreams.

It is Jacob's good fortune that he is rescued in this dream by an angel, who extracts him from the flood of materialism that threatens to drown him: "...now arise, get thee out from this land, and return unto the land of thy kindred" (Gen. 31:13).

Joseph's dreams are different: They are an integral part of the real world, not severed from it. Before we hear of them, we are told of the "coat of many colors" (Gen. 37:3) that Jacob makes for him. This unique garment not only sets Joseph apart from his brothers, but also establishes his status as a favored son and provides him with an "infrastructure" for his dreams. He enlarges this coat, turning it into a royal robe.

In the first dream, the other sheaves in the field bow before his sheaf, while in the second one, the sun, moon and stars all bow before him. In other words, in both dreams the message, as Joseph sees it, is that everything on earth and in heaven accepts his dominion. In his dreams, he sees things before they happen - and, perhaps, he even makes them happen.

As is the case with Jacob, the Torah depicts two of Joseph's dreams which constitute a single entity. In the first dream, Joseph tells his brothers, "For, behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and, lo, my sheaf arose, and also stood upright; and, behold, your sheaves stood round about, and made obeisance to my sheaf" (Gen. 37:7). The dream focuses on work in the field and on the dynamics of Jacob's family; moreover, in it, Joseph grasps his potential to become a king. It is his self-awareness that is the determining factor. Everyone in the field is binding a similar sheaf of wheat; however, when one of the sheaves arises and stands tall, all the other sheaves surround and bow before it.

Joseph's second dream expresses heavenly aspirations. In this dream, unlike the first, he does not do anything; nonetheless, the sun, moon and stars bow before him. This is another kind of self-awareness altogether. Whereas in his first dream Joseph understands that his sheaf must arise and stand tall in order to rule the others, in this dream he already sees himself as the very essence of a king, and thus he does not need to do anything to rule the heavenly bodies.

Rabbi Joseph Ber (Yosef Dov) Soloveitchik considers this dream to be the articulation of an immense self-awareness: Joseph is very much aware that he deserves to be a king. According to Soloveitchik, the second dream has nothing to do with material or economic realities; it is an expression of Joseph's ability to achieve spiritual supremacy over his brothers. The entire concept of kingship in Judaism, observes Soloveitchik, is totally unconnected with authority or power in terms of instrumentality: It is an expression of a self-awareness, of a sense of greatness and spiritual purity. Such immense self-awareness will place Jacob's son on the Egyptian throne, and this is the kind of spirit that drives the members of the Hasmonean family to lead the revolt against the might of Greece. They fill no official capacity, no one has chosen them and no one has asked them to spearhead an insurrection. It is only the self-awareness of the head of the family at the center of the Hanukkah story, Mattathias, that places the family at the forefront of leadership: His sheaf arises and stands still, and the other sheaves of contemporary Jewish society surround him in a powerful expression of national solidarity that writes a magnificent chapter in Jewish history.

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## Weekly Halachah - Parshat Vayeishev & Chanuka 5750

**Rabbi Doniel Neustadt** ([dneustadt@cordetroit.com](mailto:dneustadt@cordetroit.com))

**Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit**

**Question:** Is it permitted to recite the blessings over Chanukah candles that are kindled outside one's home, e.g., at a Chanukah party in school, in a public hall or at a public display?

**Discussion:** Several contemporary poskim address this issue and the consensus is that it is not permitted. They explain that the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles was instituted specifically to be performed in one's home or in a place where one is residing temporarily. Reciting the blessings over candles lit outside of one's home may be a berachah levatalah.<sup>1</sup>

The only exception to this rule is when candles are lit in shul between Minchah and Ma'ariv on Chanukah. Thus it may be argued that any public lighting is similar to the lighting in shul. But for several reasons the poskim strongly reject this argument and recommend that one avoid reciting the blessings in any setting other than in one's home (or temporary dwelling) or in shul.<sup>2</sup>

**Question:** When is the appropriate time to light Chanukah candles and how long should they burn?

**Discussion:** Concerning the proper times for lighting, there are several views in the poskim which are reflected in various customs. Those who have a family tradition should uphold it, but those who do not have a specific custom should light at the time that recognized Gedolei Yisrael lit, which is about twenty minutes after sunset.<sup>3</sup> Although in Eretz Yisrael many people light immediately after sunset, outside Eretz Yisrael it is yet daylight for a while and too early to kindle the lights.

There should be enough oil, however, for the candles to burn until one half hour after tzeis ha-kochavim.<sup>4</sup> There are various ways and a number of opinions of calculating tzeis ha-kochavim, ranging from twenty minutes (in Eretz Yisrael) to seventy-two minutes past sunset. In order to fulfill the mitzvah according to all views, there should be enough oil to burn for about eighty to eighty-five minutes.

On erev Shabbos, Chanukah candles are lit right before lighting Shabbos candles, which is about twenty minutes before sunset. In order to fulfill the mitzvah according to all views, there should be enough oil to burn for at least two hours.<sup>5</sup>

**Question:** How important is it to daven Minchah before lighting Chanukah candles on erev Shabbos Chanukah?

**Discussion:** If possible, one should daven Minchah on Friday before lighting Chanukah candles.<sup>6</sup> There are two reasons for this: 1) The afternoon Tamid sacrifice, which corresponds to our Minchah service, was always brought before the lighting of the Menorah in the Beis ha-Mikdash;<sup>7</sup> 2) Davening Minchah after lighting Chanukah candles appears contradictory, since Minchah "belongs" to Friday, while the Chanukah candles "belong" to Shabbos.<sup>8</sup>

However, if no early minyan is available, then it is better to light first and daven with a minyan afterwards.<sup>9</sup> Working people who are unable to daven Minchah before lighting the menorah because that would cut their short Friday even shorter, should light candles first and then daven Minchah in shul with a minyan.

**Question:** Does the prohibition against giving a gift to a non-Jew apply to gifts given to an employee, a mailman, a cleaning lady, etc.?

**Discussion:** One of the applications of the Biblical command, You shall not seal a covenant with them nor shall you show them favor,<sup>10</sup> forbids "favoring" a non-Jew<sup>11</sup> by giving him a gift for no compelling reason. But giving a gift to a non-Jew with whom one has a business relationship is permitted. The gift that you are presenting to your employee, mailman, etc., is being given in appreciation for a job well done in the past or as an incentive for keeping up the good work. In reality, this is not a gift but a "payment" of sorts, which, just like any other business transaction, is permitted to be made by a Jew to a non-Jew.<sup>12</sup>

Question: Is it permitted to give a gift to a non-Jewish employee, colleague, etc., during the non-Jewish holiday season?

Discussion: Obviously, Jews are forbidden to celebrate non-Jewish holidays, as many of them are considered to be a function of avodah zarah, idolatry. But as explained in yesterday's Discussion, giving a gift to an employee or to a person who renders a service is merely an expression of gratitude, a form of payment for past or future service which it is not considered a celebration of avodah zarah and is permitted. It is proper, however, that no specific mention be made that the gift is in honor of the non-Jewish holiday,<sup>13</sup> and that the gift be given a day or two before or after the holiday rather than on the holiday itself.<sup>14</sup>

Question: May a Jewish employee participate in company parties that are held in celebration of non-Jewish holidays?

Discussion: It depends on the type of party the company is having. Many times, a company's holiday party has nothing to do with the celebration of the holiday; rather it is an employee appreciation party that happens to take place during the holiday season. There is no halachic objection to attending such a party. But if the intention of the party is to celebrate the actual non-Jewish holiday, it would be forbidden for a Jew to attend.

However, even if the party is not intended to celebrate a non-Jewish holiday, non-Jewish office parties are hardly the place for an observant Jew to be. The mode of dress, the type of language and the loose behavior at such affairs is completely alien and contrary to everything that Yiddishkeit stands for. It is clear, therefore, that if for business reasons one must attend such a party, he or she must do so only when there is no other choice, and even then, he or she must come and go as quickly as possible. Lingering in such an environment can lead to serious transgression of many Torah laws.

1 Minchas Yitzchak 6:65; Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Az Nidberu 6:75); Shevet ha-Levi 4:65; Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 1:398.

2 There are several distinctions between lighting in shul and any other public lighting. Two of the more significant are: 1) The purpose of lighting in shul was to remind us of the lighting of the Menorah in the Beis ha-Mikdash, and only lighting in shul, a mikdash me'at, is similar; 2) Lighting in shul was instituted for the sake of guests who had nowhere to sleep, whereas lighting Chanukah candles in any other public venue would not address this concern.

3 Rav Y. Kamenetsky (Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 672, note 586). See also Teshuvos v'Hanhagos 2:334 and Az Nidberu 7:70. See Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:101-6, who writes that the appropriate time is ten minutes after sunset, but Rav Feinstein himself used to light thirteen to eighteen minutes after sunset (Halachos of Chanukah, pg. 20). Rav A. Kotler lit twenty-five to thirty minutes after sunset (ibid.)

4 See Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:101-6.

5 See Beir Halachah 672:1. The breakdown is as follows: Twenty minutes before sunset, seventy-two minutes until the stars appear, and an additional half hour for the candles to burn after tzeis ha-kochavim.

6 Mishnah Berurah 679:2.

7 Sha'arei Teshuvah 679:1, quoting Birkei Yosef.

8 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 679:7, quoting Pri Megadim.

9 Birkei Yosef 679:2; Yechaveh Da'as 1:74.

10 Devarim 7:2.

11 In the opinion of several Rishonim (Rambam, Sefer ha-Mitzvos 50; Teshuvos Rashba 1:8; Sefer ha-Chinuch 426; Meiri, Avodah Zarah 20a), this prohibition applies only to non-Jews who are involved in the practice of avodah zarah, idolatry; see Tzitz Eliezer 15:47.

12 Y.D. 151:11 and Taz 8.

13 Y.D. 147:2.

14 Rama, Y.D. 148:12.

## Some Light Chanukah Questions

### By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Several people asked me to send this article out again before Chanukah, notwithstanding that they may have seen most of this article three years ago. Enjoy!

Question #1: My sister invited our family for Shabbos Chanukah, and we will be sleeping at her neighbor's house. Where do we set up the menorahs, particularly since I do not even know the neighbor?

Question #2: My husband has a late meeting at work tonight and will not be home on time. What should we do about kindling Chanukah lights?

Question #3: I will be attending a wedding during Chanukah that requires me to leave my house well before lighting time, and I will not return until very late. Can I kindle at the wedding, just like the lighting that takes place in *shul*?

Question #4: I will be spending part of Chanukah in a hotel. Where should I kindle my menorah?

## SOME BASICS

Each individual has a requirement to light Chanukah lights, or to have an agent kindle the lights for him (see *Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah* 3:4). In places where the custom is that the entire household lights only one menorah, which is the predominant practice among Sefardim, the person who kindles functions as an agent for the rest of the family and the guests. (However, cf. *Minchas Shelomoh* 2:58:41, 42; who understands this halacha differently.) Even in places where the custom is that each individual kindles his own menorah, as is common Ashkenazic practice, married women do not usually light, and most people have the custom that single girls do not either (see *Chasam Sofer, Shabbos 21b s.v. vehamihadrin, Eliyahu Rabbah* 671:3, and *Mikra'ei Kodesh* #14 who explain reasons for this practice). In these instances, the male head of household kindles on behalf of his wife and daughters. A guest visiting a family for Chanukah can fulfill his or her obligation by contributing a token amount to purchase part of the candles or oil. By doing this, the guest becomes a partner in the Chanukah lights and now fulfills his mitzvah when the host kindles them. An alternative way to become a partial owner of the Chanukah lights is for the host to direct the guest to pick up some of the oil or candles and thereby become a partial owner.

## EATING IN ONE HOUSE AND SLEEPING IN ANOTHER

If someone eats at one house during Chanukah and sleeps somewhere else, where should he light the menorah?

One should kindle where he is eating (*Rama* 677:1). Therefore, in this situation, the place where one eats his meals is his primary "home."

Many *poskim* contend that in *Eretz Yisroel* the answer to this question depends on other additional factors, including whether anyone else is staying in the house where you are sleeping. In their opinion, if no one else is kindling a menorah where the guest is sleeping, he should kindle the menorah there. Otherwise, he should kindle where he is eating.

The reason for this difference is that in *Eretz Yisroel*, where the custom is to light outdoors when practical, someone walking through the street expects to find a menorah lit at every house. Thus, there is a responsibility to be certain that a menorah is kindled in every house that is being used. In *Chutz La'Aretz*, since the menorah does not **need** to be visible outdoors to fulfill the *mitzvah*, someone walking outside the house and not seeing a lit menorah will simply assume that someone kindled it indoors. Therefore, one does not need to make sure that every house has a lit menorah.

Similarly, if one is using two houses, in *Eretz Yisroel* he should light menorah at both of them, although he should recite only one *bracha*; in *Chutz La'Aretz* he does not need to kindle menorahs at both houses.

I can now answer the first question I asked above: If someone will be eating at one house and sleeping in another, where should he kindle the menorah? The answer is that in *chutz la'aretz* he should kindle where he will be eating. In *Eretz Yisroel*, other factors may be involved, and one should ask a *shaylah*.

If one spends Shabbos at someone's house, many *poskim* contend that one may kindle the menorah there on *Motza'ei Shabbos* before leaving (*Tshuvos V'Hanhagos* 1:391). Some *poskim* suggest that if one does this,

he should not leave immediately after lighting, but should spend some time, preferably a half-hour, appreciating the lights before leaving (see *Tshuvos V'Hanhagos 1:394*).

Question #2: My husband has a late meeting at work tonight and will not be home until very late. What should we do for kindling Chanukah lights? To answer this question, we need to discuss two issues. The first is:

#### WHEN IS THE OPTIMAL TIME TO KINDLE THE MENORAH?

Early *poskim* dispute concerning when is the optimal time to kindle the Chanukah lights. According to the *Gr'a*, the best time is immediately after sunset, whereas most *Rishonim* rule that it is preferable to kindle at nightfall or shortly before.

The usually accepted approaches are to kindle sometime after sunset but before it is fully dark. Thus, Rav Moshe Feinstein kindled the menorah ten minutes after sunset, the *Chazon Ish* lit his menorah twenty minutes after sunset, while others contend that the optimal time to light the menorah is twenty-five minutes after sunset.

#### UNTIL WHAT TIME CAN ONE KINDLE THE MENORAH?

At the time of the *Gemara*, one fulfilled the mitzvah of lighting menorah only if one lit within a half-hour of the earliest time for lighting (*Shabbos 21b*; *Shulchan Aruch 672:2*). This was because the focus of lighting the menorah was to publicize the miracle to people in the street. Since in the days of *Chazal*, the streets were empty shortly after dark, there was no longer any mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lights after about half an hour.

Today, the *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle) is primarily for the members of the household, and therefore many *poskim* hold that it is not essential to kindle the menorah immediately when it begins to get dark, and one may kindle later (see *Tosafos, Shabbos 21b s.v. de'ei*). Nevertheless, because this *halacha* is disputed, one should strive to kindle at the optimal time, which is close to twilight as we mentioned above. In addition, there is also a *halachic* problem with working before one performs the mitzvah, similar to other mitzvos, such as *bedikas chometz* or hearing *megillah*, where it is prohibited to work or eat before fulfilling the mitzvah (*Shu't Maharashal #85*; *Mishnah Berurah 672:10*; *Tshuvos V'Hanhagos 1:395:4*). Someone who missed lighting menorah at the proper time because of extenuating circumstances should kindle his menorah as soon as his family is assembled at home (*Rama 672:2* and *Mishnah Berurah ad loc.*).

An alternative method can be followed when a husband is delayed. The husband can arrange to have a member of the household, such as his wife, light at the optimal time as his agent (*Mishnah Berurah 675:9*; *Tshuvos V'Hanhagos 4:170*). If he follows this approach, he does not need to light when he arrives home later, and if he does light, he should not recite the *bracha* of *lehadlik ner shel Chanuka*. Alternatively, the wife can light at the proper time without the husband being present, and the husband can light when he gets home. If one follows the latter approach, the husband and wife are no longer functioning as agents for one another, as they usually do germane to mitzvos such as *ner Chanukah* and *ner Shabbos*. Rather, each is fulfilling the mitzvah of *ner Chanukah* separately.

Whether to follow this approach depends on the sensitivities of the people involved. My Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Y. Ruderman zt"l, often lectured us on the importance of being concerned about others' feelings. He often repeated the story of the Chofetz Chayim's rebbe, Rav Nachumke, who waited several hours until his *rebbeztzin* returned home before lighting the Chanukah lights. Therefore, if kindling the menorah early via an agent will create friction between family members, one should wait and kindle at a time that creates more *shalom bayis* (see *Gemara Shabbos 23b*). It is important to discuss the matter in advance and decide on an approach that keeps everyone happy.

Question #3: I will be attending a wedding during Chanukah that requires me to leave my house well before lighting time, and I will not return until very late. Can I kindle at the wedding, just like the lighting that takes place in *shul*?

Answer: Let us ask this question about the *baalei simcha* themselves! If a wedding takes place during Chanukah, where should the *baalei simcha* light the menorah?

I have attended weddings during Chanukah where the *baalei simcha* brought their menorahs to the hall and kindled them there. However, this seems incorrect because the *baalei simcha* are required to kindle Chanukah lights at their own homes (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos 1:398*). Therefore, they should light the menorah at their homes sometime during the evening. If this is not convenient, they should arrange for someone to kindle their menorah for them at their house as their agent (see *Mishnah Berurah 677:12*). Guests attending the wedding who cannot kindle their menorah at their home should also arrange for someone to light their menorah at their house. If they are concerned about leaving unattended lights burning, they should have someone remain with the lights for half an hour, and then the "menorah sitter" may extinguish the lights if he chooses. If someone wishes to light an additional menorah at the hall without a *bracha* to make *pirsumei nisa*, he may do so. However, this lighting does not fulfill the mitzvah (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos 1:398*).

#### WHY IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM LIGHTING IN SHUL?

Since one fulfills the mitzvah only by kindling the menorah in or near one's residence, why do we kindle a menorah in *shul*?

Lighting the Chanukah menorah in *shul* does not fulfill the mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lights, but is a centuries old *minhag* that we perform to make *pirsumei nisa*.

This practice prompts an interesting question. If lighting a menorah in *shul* is only a *minhag*, why do we recite a *bracha* on it? Do we ever recite *brachos* on *minhagim*?

The *poskim* explain that we recite a *bracha* because it is an accepted *minhag*, just as we recite a *bracha* on *Hallel* on *Rosh Chodesh* even though *Chazal* did not obligate this recital of *Hallel* and it too is technically a *minhag* (*Shu't Rivash #111*; for other reasons see *Beis Yosef, Orach Chayim 671, s.v. uma shekasav shemeinichin*). Actually, even those opinions who contend that one does not recite a *bracha* on *Hallel* on *Rosh Chodesh*, agree that one does recite *brachos* when lighting a menorah in *shul* (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chayim 671:7*; *Shu't Yabia Omer 7:OC:57*; cf., *Shu't Chacham Tzvi #88*).

#### THERE IS A CONCERT IN SCHOOL ON CHANUKAH. SHOULD WE LIGHT THE MENORAH WITH A BRACHA TO PERFORM PIRSUMEI NISA?

Although lighting a menorah at the assembly will also be an act of *pirsumei nisa*, one fulfills no mitzvah or *minhag* by doing so. Therefore, one should not recite a *bracha* on this lighting (*Tshuvos V'Hanhagos 1:398*).

#### WHY IS THE CONCERT DIFFERENT FROM LIGHTING IN SHUL?

Lighting in *shul* is a specific, established *minhag*. We cannot randomly extend this *minhag* to other situations and permit making a *bracha* (*Tshuvos V'Hanhagos 1:398*).

#### LIGHTING IN A HOTEL

Question #4: I will be spending Chanukah in a hotel. Where should I kindle my menorah?

Answer: One should light the menorah in one's room (*Chovas Hadar, Ner Chanukah 2:9*; see *Shu't Maharasham 4:146*, who requires one to kindle Chanukah lights while riding the train). If there is concern about a fire hazard, remain with the menorah until a half-hour after nightfall or at least for a half-hour after kindling and then extinguish the lights. On Shabbos, place only enough oil to burn the required amount of time, which is until a half-hour after nightfall.

#### SHOULD ONE PLACE THE MENORAH IN THE WINDOW OF HIS HOTEL ROOM?

If someone will be able to see the lit menorah from outside, then it is preferable to light in a window. If no one will be able to see the menorah from outside, he should simply kindle the menorah on a table in his room.

If the hotel forbids lighting flames in its bedrooms, and one is eating regularly in the hotel's dining room, one may light in the hotel dining room. Although we decided earlier that it is preferable to light where one is eating then where one is sleeping, in this instance, the hotel room is preferable, since it is more one's living area than the dining room.

Although *frum* hotels often set up menorahs in the hotel lobby, many *poskim* contend that one does not fulfill the *mitzvah* by placing a menorah there, since one is required to kindle Chanukah lights at one's "home," which is either where one regularly eats or sleeps, and not in a lobby. Other *poskim* are lenient, and contend that the entire hotel lobby is considered one's living area just as one's entire house has this status, and that therefore one may fulfill the *mitzvah* by lighting there.

#### VISITING DURING CHANUKAH

Where do I light menorah if I visit a friend for Chanukah dinner but I am not staying overnight?

Many people err and think that one may fulfill the *mitzvah* by kindling the menorah at someone else's house while visiting. I know of people who invite guests to their house for menorah kindling and dinner. The problem with this is that one is required to kindle Chanukah lights at one's own house. Therefore, the guest must kindle the Chanukah lights at his own house and then go to his friend's house for the festive meal (*Taz* 677:2; *Mishnah Berurah* 677:12).

#### WHERE DOES A YESHIVAH BACHUR LIGHT HIS MENORAH?

This is a dispute among contemporary *poskim*. Some contend that he should light in the *yeshivah* dining room since it is preferable to kindle where one eats as we mentioned above. Others contend that his dormitory room is considered more as his "dwelling" than the dining room and that he should light there (*Shu't Igros Moshe Yoreh Deah III 14:5*; *Shu't Minchas Yitzchok* 7:48; *Chovas HaDar* pg. 106). To resolve this issue, some *bachurim* have the practice of eating one meal each day of Chanukah in their dormitory room and kindling the menorah there.

What about a *yeshivah bachur* who spends his entire day in *yeshivah* but sleeps at home?

It is unclear whether his main obligation to light is at home or in *yeshivah*. Some *poskim* suggest he can fulfill the *mitzvah* by relying on the people kindling at each place — his family lighting at his home and his fellow students lighting in the *yeshivah*. Alternatively, he can have in mind not to fulfill the *mitzvah* in either place and light wherever it is more convenient (*Shu't Minchas Yitzchok* 7:48; *Chovas HaDar* pg. 106).

#### REWARD FOR LIGHTING NER CHANUKAH

The Gemara teaches that someone who kindles *Ner Chanukah* will merit to have sons who are *talmidei chachomim* (*Shabbos* 23b, see *Rashi*). This is puzzling, because as all observant Jews kindle *Ner Chanukah*, why aren't all our sons *talmidei chachomim*? The *Rishonim* explain that this *bracha* applies only to someone who observes the *mitzvah* carefully in all its details (*Sod Hadlakas Ner Chanukah*, authored by Rabbi Yitzchok, the son of the Raavad). It therefore is in our best interest to be thoroughly familiar with all the *halachos* of kindling the Chanukah lights. May we all be blessed with a happy and healthy Chanukah!!

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Vayeishev - Lighting the Chanukiya in Shul

Rabbi Asher Meir

The gemara states that the mitzva of Chanuka lights is "a candle to each man and his house" (*ner ish uveito*). No mention is made of lighting in shul.

However, many *Rishonim* from various communities mention the custom to light in Beit Knesset as well, and it seems that this lighting was widespread by the time of the earliest *Rishonim* (*Tur* and *Beit Yosef* OC 671:7). A variety of reasons are given for this custom:

1. This lighting is for the benefit of wayfarers who are put up in the shul, just like *havdala* in shul (See OC 269).
2. Lighting in the home is meant to create *pirsumei nisa*, publicizing the Chanuka miracle; lighting in shul is merely an amplification of the same idea (both in *Kol Bo*).
3. Ideally, Chanuka lights should be lit in or at least towards the public thoroughfare. However, in most diaspora communities Jews were hesitant about lighting in public. The synagogue is a public place, and lighting there is a kind of substitute for lighting towards the street (*Rivash*).

According to these explanations, the lighting in shul is fundamentally similar to lighting at home. It just happens to be the home, or street, of community members. However, an additional law mentioned in many *Rishonim* suggests that this lighting has a different character. The *Semak* mentions that the Chanuka light should be in the southern part of the shul, as a commemoration of the Menora which was in the southern part of the Temple. *Trumat HaDeshen* extends the likeness even further and says that the arrangement of the individual lights should be in the orientation found in the Temple (north-south according to some authorities, east-west according to others). (All sources as cited in *Tur* and *Beit Yosef* OC 671.)

The lighting in shul is also distinguished by the custom to light in the morning - something which is never done at home! This too is explained by many commentators as a commemoration of the *Mikdash*, where the lights were lit in the morning when necessary (*Rambam Temidin uMusafin* 3:10).

It seems natural to us that the Chanuka lights should be viewed as a commemoration of the Temple Menora. After all, they are meant to publicize the miracle of the tiny quantity of oil that illuminated the newly rededicated Beit HaMikdash for eight days. But actually we seldom find this likeness as a factor in other laws of Chanuka. In fact, *Rav Kook* suggests that we light eight lights at Chanuka specifically to differentiate these lights from the seven-branched Menora in the Beit HaMikdash. (*Moadei HaRayah* citing *Mitzvot Rayah* OC 670.)

Evidently this parallel is special to the lighting in shul. Indeed, the *Mishna Berura* (*Shaar HaTziun* 671) writes explicitly that the lighting in shul is a commemoration of the Temple.

We can explain this discrepancy as follows. The Chanuka holiday and lighting were initially established in order to celebrate the rededication of the *Mikdash* in Yerushalayim. It would have been inappropriate to demonstrate our joy at the renewal of the central Sanctuary by making miniature copies in every community! On the contrary, there was then a necessity to distinguish the private lighting from the Temple lighting, as *Rav Kook* suggests.

However, after the destruction of the Temple, the mitzva assumed a new dimension. As the Jewish people were sent into exile, we all become like wayfarers; likewise, in foreign lands our ability to publicize the miracle to other became limited and there was an increased need to publicize it among ourselves, particularly where Jews gather together. Finally, with the lack of the Temple there arose the need to recall and commemorate it. All of these considerations find expression in the custom to light in shul to honor the wayfarers, to publicize the miracle specifically among Jews, and finally to partially recreate the radiance of the *Mikdash* in each community.