

Torah Wellsprings

*Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita*

Vayeishev - Chanuka





copyright 2018

For subscription & comments
Email: **Mail@torahwellsprings.com**

Table of contents

Parshas Vayeishev - Chanukah

Perform the Mitzvos Lively and Energetically	1
Chanukah – We are Precious to Hashem	10
The Message of the Chanukah Lecht	12
Chanukah: A Time for Teshuvah	17
Preparation for the Mitzvah	25
Eyes for Emunah	30
Going Beyond Your Nature to Serve Hashem	38

Parshas Vayeishev - Chanukah

Perform the Mitzvos Lively and Energetically

Yosef Hatzaddik said the *sar ha'ofim* will die and the *sar hamashkim* will live, and that is what happened. How did Yosef know that the *sar ha'ofim* will die?

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

An artist painted a picture of a man carrying a basket filled with fruit. The fruit appeared so real, even birds tried to peck at the fruit.

People stood in front of the painting in awe. They were saying, "It is so true-to-life, it even fools the birds."

A wise person disagreed. He said, "If the painting was true-to-life, the birds would be afraid of the man holding the basket. They aren't afraid; this means that it isn't true-to-life. I'd call it a dead painting."

The Chida explains that the *sar ha'ofim* dreamed he was carrying a basket on his head and birds were eating from the breads. Yosef said, "If the birds aren't afraid of the man, he's dead." That's how Yosef knew that the *sar ha'ofim* will die.

Let us learn from this to keep the mitzvos energetically, with happiness. When we light the Chanukah *lecht*, say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*, and do all other aspects of Chanukah, it should be obvious that we are alive.¹

The Great Test

Chazal say, "Photiphar's wife saw in the stars that she would have a child from Yosef." The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* says that Yosef also saw that. Yosef might have thought, "I see in the stars that anyway I will end up sinning with the wife of Photiphar, so what difference does it

1. At an artist competition, one artist made a painting of fruit and grains. It was so true-to-life, even birds would come to peck the canvas, trying to eat the fruits and grains. The judges agreed that this painting was the winning one. But one artist came forward and said, "But you didn't look at my painting yet" and he pointed towards the curtains. The judges said, "So open up the curtains, so we can see your painting."

"I prefer if someone else opens the curtain."

One judge said, "I will open the curtain myself." But when he tried, he discovered that it was a painting of curtains.

The judges granted him the award. The judges said, "The other artist fooled birds. Your work fooled humans!"

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

make when it will happen, now or later? I may as well sin now.” Yosef overcame this difficult test by telling himself, “What will be in the future, will be. Right now I can fight and overcome the *yetzer hara*,” which he did. And from this test, Yosef reached very high levels.

In the end, Yosef married Osnas bas Photiphar, which was permitted, and bore children in a permitted way.

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that Photiphar’s wife showed Yosef what she saw in the stars. Yosef told her, when it comes to the mitzvah of *yibum*, the Torah (*Devarim* 25:7) says, **מֵאֵן יִבְמִי**, which means one can refuse to perform the mitzvah, and he gets another way to take care of the matter. Instead of *yibum* he can do *chalitzah*. Yosef said, if one may refrain from the mitzvah of *yibum*, one can certainly refrain (**וַיִּמָּאֵן**) from an *aveirah*. Whatever has to happen will happen in a different way.

As the Midrash (87:5) on the word **וַיִּמָּאֵן** states: “If a person can refuse to do a mitzvah, as it states, **מֵאֵן יִבְמִי**, shouldn’t it be so that one can also refrain from an *aveirah*?” The Sfas Emes explains that the Midrash is repeating what Yosef said to Photiphar’s wife. He explained to her that if they refrain from sinning, Hashem’s plan will take place in another way – in a permitted way. And that is what happened, for he married Osnas.

Everything is for the Good

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 30) states, “The *Shechinah* resides solely with someone who is happy.”

A human king wants to be among happy people, because they make him happy, but why should it be important for Hashem to reside solely with those who are happy? In fact, it states, **אֲשַׁכֵּן אֶת דַּכָּא**, “I will dwell among the downtrodden.” Hashem desires to be among the poor, humble people, so why doesn’t Hashem want to reside with the sad people, too? The Ksav Sofer *zt'l* (*Teshuvah Orach Chaim* 27) answers that since he is sad, this is a sign that he doesn’t believe everything is for the good. If he doesn’t have this *emunah*, he doesn’t deserve Hashem should reside with him.

It states in this week’s *parashah* (39:2), **וַיְהִי ה' אִתּוֹ יוֹסֵף**, “Hashem was with Yosef.” If the *Shechinah* was with him, that means Yosef was happy, because the *Shechinah* doesn’t reside where there is sadness. The question is, how could Yosef be happy when he was a slave in Mitzrayim? What greater degradation could there be?

The Ksav Sofer says the answer lies in the final words of that *pasuk*: **וַיְהִי ה' אִתּוֹ יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מְצַלִּיחַ וַיְהִי בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרַיִם**, “...Yosef was a successful person. He was in his Egyptian’s master’s house.” This means Yosef considered himself “successful” even as a slave in his master’s house.

This isn’t simple. Many people are upset with their jobs, wishing they had a more prestigious and better paying position. But here we have Yosef, a slave among gentiles and idol worshippers, who felt successful and accomplished because he knew he is living the mission Hashem

cut out for him. And he was confident that one day he will find out that it was for the best. ²

Yosef is the only person in Tanach who is called successful, מצליח (39:2).

The Midrash translates איש מצליח as גבר קפוח, "a dancing person." Yosef was always dancing and filled with joy, because he knew Hashem's plan is always good. ³

2. Reb Zalman Brizel zt'l of Yerushalayim was a very happy person. Once, someone told him, "By the way you are walking down the street, it looks like you think the entire street is yours."

Reb Zalman Brizel replied, "It's true! The entire street is mine. Come with me and I'll show you!"

They went to the grocery and bought bread. Then they went to the bank, and Reb Zalman took out some money. He put out his finger and a taxi stopped for them.

Almost singing, he said to his companion, "Don't you see that the entire street is mine? The grocer, the bank, the taxies; they are all working for me. Hashem had compassion on me, so Hashem appointed others to bake bread, run a bank, and drive a taxi for me, but everything is for me."

Another time, someone asked Reb Zalman Brizel z'l how he manages to always be happy. He replied, "I think about what's happening in the world, and I see that I have a lot to be happy about. Some go to sleep at night and wake up blind, *rachmana litzlan*. There are those who go to sleep at night and have a heart attack in the middle of their sleep and don't wake up in the morning. I didn't sleep at all last night because my young child was crying. Shouldn't I be happy? I still have my eyesight, and I didn't have a heart attack in the middle of the night! Perhaps you will tell me that I should be sad because I didn't sleep at all last night, because I spent the entire night rocking the child? Is that a reason to be sad, or is it a reason to be happy? I didn't sleep was because Hashem granted me children! It's a reason to be happy..."

With the right perspective, one will always find reasons to be happy.

3. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizhensk zt'l and Rebbe Zusha of Honipoli zt'l were once imprisoned. There was a bucket in the middle of the cell, to be used as a toilet. Rebbe Elimelech was very upset about that, because he wouldn't even be able to daven or learn Torah. Rebbe Zusha explained to him that this was a reason to be happy. Because when they refrain from Torah and *tefillah*, they will be keeping the halachah, stated in Shulchan Aruch, and that is reason to rejoice.

Rebbe Elimelech realized that this was true, and they began to dance around the bucket. Their singing and dancing brought the prison guard running to see what was going on. He said, "Oh, this is what you are so happy about," and he took out the bucket.

Because when one has *emunah*, every situation is a reason to rejoice. In every situation one can serve Hashem.

In Photiphar's house, Yosef had many tests with the mitzvah לא תתורו אחרי לבבכם ואחרי עיניכם, "Don't stray after your heart and after eyes." He could have thought, "I used to be in Yaakov

The Midrash says, "Eliezer served his master, Avraham, loyally, and therefore he was transformed from being cursed (ארור), to being blessed (ברוך)...."

Another Midrash (*Shir HaShirim* 1:1) states, יוסף על ידי ששימש את רבו באמונה יצא, "Yosef served Photifar loyally, and in this merit he was redeemed from jail."

The Sifsei Tzaddik asked the Sfas Emes, "I understand that Eliezer became blessed because he served Avraham Avinu loyally, but why should Yosef be freed from prison because he served Photiphar loyally?! What is so special about serving Photiphar, that Yosef was rewarded for it?"

The Sfas Emes replied that he translated the Midrash incorrectly. He should have translated אמונה by its usual translation, "belief" (and not "loyal"). Yosef was released from jail because even when he was a slave, serving Photiphar, he believed it was for the good.

The Torah writes (39:20), ויתנהו את בית הסוהר, "Photiphar put Yosef in jail." Then it states, ויהי שם בבית הסוהר, "he was there in the jail." These latter words seem

extra. If Yosef was placed in jail, isn't it obvious that he was there?

The Kedushas Levi and the Sfas Emes both explain that these words (ויהי שם בבית הסוהר) imply that Yosef was at peace with his imprisonment. Yosef said, "If this is what Hashem's wants, I will be there, with my heart and soul."

The Sfas Emes writes, "Yosef was extremely wise, and he was also wealthy (because Photiphar gave him everything he owned).⁴ If he wanted to, he could find a way to get himself out of prison. But he believed that his imprisonment was Hashem's will, ויהי שם בבית הסוהר, so he remained there and he didn't try to leave."

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

The Sfas Emes writes that because he had this *emunah* and outlook he was released from jail before the time.

On the words, וישב יעקב, the Midrash (84:5) writes, "This can be compared to

Avinu's home, how did I end up here, with such tests?" But Yosef realized that every situation is Hashem's plan.

There was a renowned Slonimer chassid called Reb Mordechai (Motke) Leider *zt'l*. Once, as a *yungerman*, he collapsed in the beis medresh, and people succeeded to revive him. The next day he came to the beis medresh and said, "Yesterday I almost made the *kuntz*" (trick, implying that he almost died and went up to heaven).

Another renowned Slonimer Chosid, Reb Elazar Katz *zt'l* replied, "What did you say? That you almost made 'the *kuntz*'? How would you survive up there in heaven? You don't have there לא תתורו (the mitzvah to be cautious with one's eyes)." Because the true *kuntz* is to be in this world, and to pass all the tests Hashem sends us in life.

4. As Yosef said (39:8), וכל אשר יש לו נתן בידי, "Everything he has he gave to me."

a person who was walking along and was suddenly surrounded by a pack of dogs. He was afraid of them, so he sat down among them. Similarly, Yaakov saw Eisav's family (the אלופי עשו, stated at the end of last week's *parashah*) and he was afraid of them, so he sat down between them."

The Chidushei HaRim explains that Yaakov realized that one can't go against Hashem's will. All he can do is accept Hashem's will, and then everything turns around and becomes good. When Yaakov saw Eisav's family, he was afraid, at first. But then he sat among his troubles, he accepted them, for he believed they were for his benefit. And with this attitude, everything indeed became good.⁵

The Chasam Sofer says that Yaakov Avinu suffered many hardships in his lifetime (Lavan, Eisav, Dinah, etc.) but he was able to bear them all with his *emunah* that everything is ultimately for

the best. But when he lost Yosef, he feared that this meant he would go to Gehinom, and he was totally devastated.

As Rashi (*Bereishis* 37:35) writes, "[Yaakov said] 'I received this sign from Hashem: If none of my children die in my lifetime, I am guaranteed that I won't go to Gehinom.'" When he thought Yosef was killed he feared he would go to Gehinom. He put on sackcloth and mourned.

The Midrash (84:20) states, "From the time Yaakov took the sackcloth, the sackcloth doesn't leave him, his children, or his grandchildren, until the end of generations..." The Midrash writes that Dovid, Achav, Yoram, and Mordechai all wore sackcloth, and it was because Yaakov Avinu set the precedent of putting on sackcloth.

It isn't clear from this Midrash whether taking the sackcloth is a negative thing or a positive thing. The Chasam Sofer *zt'l*

5. The Sfas Emes gives an example from this week's *parashah* that shows how everything — even difficulties — are for the best.

To protect himself from sinning, Yosef left his clothes in Photiphar's wife's hands, and he ran outdoors without his clothes. How did Yosef have the strength and courage to embarrass himself to save himself from sins? It was because of what happened years before. His brothers humiliated him when they took off his כתונת פסים to sell him. Despite his shame, Yosef trusted that even that was for the good. That merit gave him the stamina to endure embarrassments to save himself from sin.

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

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

clarifies that sackcloth is negative, because it means we aren't accepting the hardships with belief that everything is for the good.

A better approach is to accept that everything is for the good. As the Chasam Sofer writes, *מבלון אחד עולה על כמה תפילות*, "accepting Hashem's decree is more effective than many *tefillos*."

The Chasam Sofer explains that Esther made several parties because she was wanted to abolish Haman's decree with her joy. Mordechai, on the other hand, took sackcloth and cried and prayed. The salvation came primary from Esther's approach, because being happy and accepting Hashem's decree with joy is the more effective approach towards abolishing it.

Holy Pride (*Gaavah d'Kedushah*)

The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85.) says, "Rebbe (Reb Yehudah HaNasi) came to the city where Reb Elazar b'Reb Shimon had once lived, and asked whether Reb Elazar had any children.

"He has a son here..." and they told him the severe sins he commits.

Rebbe wanted to bring him to do *teshuvah*. He didn't do it with rebuke, scaring him with the scorching fires of Gehinom. Rather, the Gemara says, "Rebbe gave him *semichah*, and gave him Reb Shimon ben Issi ben Lekunyah (the boy's uncle) to teach him Torah.

"Every day Yossi told his tutor that he

wants to return to his city [apparently, to return to his old lifestyle]. Reb Shimon ben Issi would tell him, "You were made a *chacham*, you wear the golden cloak of the scholars, we call you 'rebbe' and you want to leave?"

He would answer, "I swear, I won't ask to leave again." This planned worked, and eventually he became a great scholar and tzaddik. He is called Reb Yossi ben Reb Elazar ben Reb Shimon.

When Reb Yossi was niftar, they wanted to bury him near his father, Reb Elazar, but there was a snake at the entrance of the cave, preventing them. People thought that Reb Yossi wasn't fitting to be near his great father. A *bas kol* emanated and said, "It isn't because Reb Elazar is greater than Reb Yossi. Rather it's because Reb Elazar suffered the pain of being hidden in a cave for thirteen years" (see *Shabbos* 33).

The Gemara is saying that Reb Yossi reached the level of his father. This change happened when he received *semichah*, and was called "rebbe."

Because the way one perceives himself has enormous influence. When one believes he is righteous he will comport himself rightously.

The Or Zarua taught many lessons from the order and names of the alef beis. On the letters ק' ר' ז', he writes that צד"י means empty,⁶ representing the people who feel that they are empty sinners and failures.

This feeling could lead them to sin.

6. צד"י means empty. As Onkelus on תהו ובהו writes צדיא ורקניא, "empty and void."

The solution is ק' ר'. These letters are the *roshei teivos* for קריא רבי, "we should call him rebbi" as Rebbe did for Reb Yossi. Because when one believes in himself, he reaches his full potential.

In contrast, when one looks down at himself he is liable to sin. As the Rambam (*Avos* 2:13) writes, ואל תהי רשע, "Don't consider yourself a *rasha*, because if you will think you are lowly, you won't consider the sins you do severe."⁷

These ideas are implied in this week's *parashah*. It states (39:12), ותתפשטהו בבגדו, "[The wife of Photiphar] grabbed [Yosef] by his clothes..." בבגדו also means rebellion. She tried to convince Yosef that he was a rebel to Hashem, and therefore, it's o.k. for him to sin (*Beis Avraham*).

Which rebellion was Photiphar's wife referring to?

Rashi (39:6) writes:

"When Yosef saw that he was ruling [in Photiphar's home], he began eating and drinking and fixing his hair (מסלם בשעריו). HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, 'Your father is mourning [over you] and you are

curling your hair?! I will incite the bear [Photiphar's wife] against you."

We can say that Photiphar's wife, or more accurately, the *yetzer hara*, wanted that Yosef should focus on his faults (eating, drinking, and curling his hair while his father was mourning) and thereby convince Yosef that he wasn't so special. If Yosef agreed, he was in danger of sinning, *chalilah*.

What did Yosef do? He said (39:9), איני גדול בבית ממוני, "No one in this household is greater than me." Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zt'l* explains that Yosef was saying, "I'm the greatest person in the world. There is no one greater than me. How can I sin?"

These are the words everyone should tell themselves when the *yetzer hara* tries to convince them to sin. One should say, "I'm extremely distant from sin. I'm among Hashem's *tzaddikim*. With every good deed I do, I make a great *nachas ruach* for Hashem... If I sin, it will be disastrous to me, and to the world. How can I sin?"

Because a person must use righteous pride (*gaavah d'kedushah*) to overcome the *yetzer hara*.

7. See also *Rabbeinu Yonah, Shaarei HaAvodah* 1, who elaborates on this point.

After the Yidden committed the sin of the *egel*, Moshe Rabbeinu prayed for forty days that Hashem should forgive them. Moshe Rabbeinu said that he was praying because (*Devarim* 9:19), כי יגרתני מפני האף.

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zy'a* said that Moshe was saying, מפני האף כי יגרתני, I am afraid, that their noses may turn down, due to their shame and disgrace, as a result of their sin. They may feel lowly and distant from Hashem. This is the worst scenario, because this attitude can lead to many sins.

Chazal say (*Sotah* 49:), בעקבתא דמשיחא חוצפה יסגי. The Sfas Emes *zt'l* says that this Gemara can be translated as follows: Before Moshiach comes people will have the chutzpah to say, "I'm a tzaddik! I'm special!" And that's good, and that's necessary, because with that pride they will conquer the *yetzer hara*.

Indeed, it could very well be true. Maybe we are great tzaddikim? We don't know how to rate ourselves. We like to think that we are mediocre people, or worse, while Hashem sees us in an entirely different light.

In this week's *parashah* it states (37:20-21), ועתה לכו ונהרגו, "[Yosef's brothers said] 'Let us now go and kill him...' וישמע ראובן ויצילחו מדים, Reuven heard and he saved him from their hands." He advised his brothers to throw Yosef into a pit, rather than to kill him. The Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* 141) states, "If Reuven knew that Hashem will write these words in His Torah, Reuven would have carried Yosef on his shoulders and brought him home to his father."

The Chasam Sofer (ד"ה והיה) explains, "This is because a person doesn't know the value of his deeds – just how precious they are. If Reuven known that Hashem was happy with what he was doing, and that Hashem will right about it in the Torah, he would have performed those deeds with greater desire. The same is for all people: If they knew that their deeds bring goodness to all worlds and to all creations, they would surely do those deeds with greater desire."

But these matters are concealed from us, so we think we are mediocre, and therefore we think that if we commit an *aveirah* once in a while it isn't earth-shattering. Therefore, it is essential to tell yourself, "There is no one greater than me..." And with your holy pride, you will conquer the *yetzer hara*.

It states (37:3), וישראל אהב את יוסף מכל בניו...ועשה לו כתונת פסים, "Yaakov loved Yosef more than all his other sons...and he made him a silk coat." The Baal HaTurim writes that פסים is *roshei teivos* for מדינים, פוטיפר, סוחרים, ישמעאלים, the four times Yosef was sold. *Baalei mussar* explain that Yaakov made him this coat, so Yosef will remember his lineage and his specialness when he will be exiled among the goyim, so his pride will protect him from foreign influences.

Reb Yankele Galinsky *zt'l* was imprisoned in Siberia. Once, he woke up in the middle of the night and saw one of the prisoners dress in military clothing, salute, march, and carry out similar military maneuvers. Then this prisoner quickly took off his military uniform and went back to sleep. When this happened a second night, Reb Yankele asked him what it was all about. The man turned white. He thought no one had seen him.

Reb Yankele promised he would keep his story a secret, and then the man was ready to speak. He said, "Before I was captured by the Russians and brought here, I was a German general. I want to remind myself of my glorious past. So I put on my military uniform, which has

emblems of my prestigious rank, and I pretend that I'm once again commander over hundreds of soldiers. That gives me strength to endure the humiliation and affliction we suffer here in the Russian prison."

Reb Yankel would tell this story because we should also remember that we are the King's son. We shouldn't forget our glory and pride. Even when we think we are ordinary people, enslaved by the *yetzer hara*, don't forget who we really are.

Yaakov gave Yosef a כְּתוּנָה פְּסִים, so even when he will be sold as a slave, his clothing will remind him who he truly is.⁸

There was a *bachur* who suffered the horrors of the Holocaust, which left his *emunah* weak, and he was about to marry a non-Jewish girl. People tried speaking to the boy, explaining to him the severity of the matter, but he didn't listen.

People brought him to Reb Gad'l Eisner *zt'l*. Reb Gad'l told him just a few words, and those words turned him around. Reb Gad'l said, אַה... ס'איז פאסט נישט, "It isn't proper for a *chassidische bachur* to do such a thing." He was reminded of who he is, his pride, and with those words in mind, he didn't commit this severe sin.

Because the way to bring people to *teshuvah* is not through rebuke and the likes, but by revealing to them how great

they truly are. As it states (*Mishlei* 3:11), מוֹסֵר ה' בְּנֵי אֵל תְּמַאֵם. The Yesod HaAvodah explains: מוֹסֵר ה', Hashem gives *mussar* by saying בְּנֵי אֵל תְּמַאֵם, "You are my son. אל תמאם, don't disgrace yourself with foul deeds.

Actually, the *yetzer hara* lies to us when he tells us that we are lowly and unworthy. Consider the following story: There was a boss who used to humiliate one of his employees all the time. Once they were riding in a taxi together, and the boss asked the taxi driver, "How much will this ride cost?"

"Twenty dollars."

"And if the person sitting in the back seat gets off, how much will it cost?"

"It's the same price: Twenty dollars."

The boss turned to his employee and said, "You see, also the taxi driver says you're not worth anything.

Obviously, this logic is false, because if the employee rode in the taxi himself, he would pay twenty dollars.

Similarly, the *yetzer hara* tells us that we don't have any value, but it isn't true.

Therefore, when the *yetzer hara* incites you to an *aveirah*, believe in who you truly are. If need be, tell yourself, "There is no one greater than me" as Yosef said when he was tested. And remember: The fact that one is tested proves that his *avodas Hashem* is precious in Heaven. Otherwise, why was it necessary to test him? Think about this, and you will overcome the *yetzer hara*.

8. Rebbe Shlomo Karliner *zt'l* said, "The greatest *yetzer hara* is that one forgets that he is a בן מלך, the son of the King, Hakadosh Baruch Hu."

Chanukah – We are Precious to Hashem

The Yevanim wanted to secularize the Jewish nation and they knew that the first step is to have the Jewish people believe they aren't special. Therefore, they decreed that Yidden must write on their ox's horns *שאינן לכם חלק באלקי ישראל*, that they don't have portion with the G-d of the Yidden. The Sfas Emes (תרל"ז ליל ז' ד"ה) explains that these words are contradictory, because *אלקי ישראל*, means every Yid is united with Hashem. How do they say in the same sentence that they don't have a portion with *אלקי ישראל*? The Sfas Emes answers the emphasis was on the word *לכם*, "you." They didn't mind if they believed in Hashem, and they didn't even mind it if they believed that Hashem is *אלקי ישראל*, the G-d over tzaddikim. But they wanted them to think that they aren't tzaddikim, and Hashem doesn't have any connection with them. This is the reason they forbade the Jewish nation from making Rosh Chodesh. They didn't want them to believe that they can make Rosh Chodesh, and thereby determine when the *yom tovim* will be, because how can such heavenly matters be given over to simple human beings?

Chazal (*Bereishis Rabba* 2:4) state, *והשוך על פני תהום*, "Darkness over the depths..." refers to Yavan "who darkened the eyes of the Jewish nation with their decrees." They darkened their eyes by making

them feel that they are unimportant people. When the Chashmanoim won the war, Bnei Yisrael acquired *emunah* that every Yid, no matter who he is, is very important. With each mitzvah he performs, he sends spirituality and blessings to all worlds.

The Beloved Mitzvah

The Rambam (*Hilchos Chanukah* 4:12) writes, *מצות נר חנוכה מצוה חביבה היא עד מאד*, "The mitzvah of Chanukah *lecht* is an extremely beloved mitzvah..."⁹ The Rambam doesn't write such words regarding any other mitzvah. What is special about Chanukah *lecht*?

It's because this mitzvah shows us that Hashem loves us.

Chazal (*Succah* 5.) say the *Shechinah* never descends below ten *tefachim*. Yet, we light the Chanukah menorah below ten *tefachim*, because on Chanukah Hashem goes down to those people who are on very low levels – below ten *tefachim* – and He illuminates them with the light of holiness.

As the Meor Einayim writes, "The *Shechinah* never goes down below ten *tefachim* (see *Succah* 5). However, Hashem seeks ways so no Jew will be detached from Him (*לבל ירה ממנו נרה*). Because of the miracle, Hashem *kiveyachol* comes down below ten

9. The Kav HaYashar (94) says that the *malachim* come to every Yid's house to watch him light Chanukah *lecht* and to answer *amen* for his brachos.

tefachim. He comes close to man, to bring him back up to Him." ¹⁰

Chanukah is called, מצוה חביבה היא עד מאד, an extremely beloved mitzvah, because more than all the other mitzvos, Hashem's love to us is revealed by this mitzvah.

We can explain with an analogy:

A wealthy man married a poor girl and brought her into his luxurious home. She still doesn't know for certain that he loves her. Although he brought her into

his luxurious home, that is because he lives there. Where else should he bring her? But if she told her husband that she wants to live in the small house where she was raised, and he agrees to live there for her sake, then she will know that he loves her. He is willing to forfeit a life of luxury for her sake. Chanukah *lecht* is called מצוה חביבה עד מאד, "An extremely beloved mitzvah," because Hashem's willingness to come to such low places for our sake shows that He loves us — and even those on the lowest levels. ¹¹

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

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

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* said that on Shabbos, Hashem brings us up to Him. On Yom Tov, which Klal Yisrael makes (because they make Rosh Chodesh) Hashem comes down to us. On Chanukah, Hashem visits his children in prison.

The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz *zt'l* writes, "When a king is sitting on his throne in his palace, average people can't visit the king. Surely, those who are being punished by the king because of their iniquities won't be able to visit the king... However, when the king travels around his kingdom, it's his way to visit the prisoners in jail... At this time, the prisoners shout, 'King! Please save us!' This is what happens on Chanukah. Hashem comes to us to save us from our imprisonment."

11. *Shulchan Aruch* (670:2) states, "Some say that there is a little bit of a mitzvah to make meals..." but it isn't an obligation to make meals on Chanukah. Why is Chanukah different than all the other holidays?

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* answers with a *mashal*: A simple farmer married the king's daughter. Does anyone need to tell him to make a *seudah*? He will do so on his own. On Chanukah the *Shechinah* comes down to us, lower than ten *tefachim*. We don't need to be told to make a *seudah*. We are so happy, we will do so on our own.

Reb Yosef Dov Soloveitchik *zt'l* (son of the Gri'z *zt'l*) complained to the Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l* about the *chassidische bachurim* who have parties on Chanukah until late at night. He claimed this is *bitul* Torah.

The Sfas Emes writes, "Chanukah is mostly for the *chalashim* and for the *beinonim* —for the mediocre Yidden, and for those who are at low levels."¹² Chanukah elevates them, and one of the ways this happens is by revealing to the Yid that he is beloved to Hashem.¹³

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

The Message of the Chanukah *Lecht*

The *Kav HaYashar* (96) writes, "Every candle that is lit for a mitzvah [such as the Shabbos candles, Chanukah *lecht*, the lamps in the beis medresh,

etc.] is extremely holy. If we had *ruach hakadosh*, we would perceive the future when we light those candles. Because the candles used for a mitzvah

The Beis Yisrael replied, "The Rema in *Shulchan Aruch* states that there is קצת מצוה, somewhat of a mitzvah to make these parties."

Reb Soloveitchik replied, "Yes, there is קצת מצוה, but only קצת (a small mitzvah). Does that justify having big *seudos* until late in the night, every night of Chanukah?"

The Beis Yisrael replied, "My chassidim consider a קצת עבירה, a small *aveirah* to be prohibited like a grave *aveirah*. Therefore, they also have the right to consider a קצת מצוה, small mitzvah like a large mitzvah."

We say in *Maariv*: משפיל גאים עדי ארץ ומגביה שפלים עדי מרום. Rebbe Asher of Stolin zt'l explained: משפיל גאים, Hashem lowers the exalted lights of Chanukah, עדי ארץ, down to the earth, to the lowest levels. The reason is ומגביה שפלים, to raise those who are low, עדי מרום, to the highest levels.

At the end of the month, the moon becomes smaller and smaller until it disappears and then it begins to grow again, by the beginning of the next month. Chanukah is at the end of Kislev and at the beginning of Teves. This hints to the Yidden who fell to very low levels that on Chanukah, they can begin to grow again.

12. The Sma"g (*mitzvas asef 3, Avodas HaBorei*) writes, "Hakadosh Baruch Hu desires the tefillin of a *rasha* more than of a tzaddik." He explains that the purpose of *tefillin* is לזכרון, to help us remember Hashem and to help us remember our obligations to Him. Thus, it's even more important for the *resha'im* to wear tefillin, for they need to be reminded of their obligations, more than the tzaddikim need a reminder. In a similar way, Chanukah is more for the *chalashim* and for the *beinanim*, the mediocre and lowly Yidden, to draw them back up to Hashem.

13. People use cotton – or as it's called in Yiddish: *vatte* – for the Chanukah wicks. *Vatte* (ווייט), in Yiddish, also means "distant." We use *vatte* wicks to hint that even those who feel distant are close to Hashem.

tell prophecies. They are like when the *navi* speaks what he heard from Hashem's mouth."¹⁴

One of the prophecies of the candles is how much Hashem loves us, and how happy He is with our mitzvos.

The Kav HaYashar writes, "The Maharshal writes in the introduction to his *sefer, Yam Shel Shlomo*, 'Once, via a candle lit for a mitzvah, Heaven encouraged me, and told me that [He is happy with my studies and with the *sefarim* I write].'"

The Kav Hayashar explains, "I heard from my teacher (who heard this story from reliable sources) that this is what happened to the Maharshal:

[One night] Reb Shlomo Luria (the Maharshal) was learning and writing his *sefer, Yam Shel Shlomo*. He only had a tiny candle burning in front of him, it was about to burn out, but it continued burning for several hours more... He perceived through this candle that Hashem was with him," and Hashem was happy with his studies and *seferim*.

The *Kav HaYashar* writes, "The miracle that occurred to the Maharshal was similar to the miracle of Chanukah, which happened in the Beis HaMikdash. His merit should protect us. He is fortunate, as are his parents who gave birth to him."

A similar story happened with Rebbe

Shmelke of Nikelsburg *zy'a*. One night, he was learning Torah by candlelight and a gust of wind blew out the candle. He went out on his porch to see if some passerby could light his candle. Someone came and lit his candle, and Rebbe Shmelke returned to his table to study Torah. Sometime later he thought about what happened, and he realized that it was miraculous. His porch was on the second floor! How did someone come by and light his candle? He concluded that it must have been Eliyahu HaNavi.

The Alter of Navardok *zt'l* had a small hut in the forest where he used to study Torah and *mussar*. One night, his lamp blew out, and he needed more oil. He told himself, "If Hashem desires it, He can send me someone with oil. Everything is possible..." Since one is obligated to make *hithadlus*, he opened the door.

Just as he opened the door he saw a man walking in the forest. "Do you have oil?" He gave him oil and the Alter was able to study Torah and *mussar* for the rest of the night.

In the morning, the Alter took the leftover oil and stored it, so he could always remember the miracle that Hashem performed for him.

Once, there was a fire in his home and this jar of oil was consumed in the fire. The Alter said he was happy that this happened, because "Why

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

should I remember this episode more than all the other miracles Hashem performs for me. Every moment of life is filled with miracles."

So, we've seen that Hashem performs miracles with the lamps to show us that He loves us. This happened by the miracle of Chanukah, and it happens each year when Hashem comes below ten *tefachim* to be with a Yid who lights Chanukah *lecht*.

חנינה— Undeserved Kindness

The *Machzor Vitri* says that חנינה comes from the word חנינה (or חנם) free gifts.¹⁵

Rosh Hashanah and the days of judgment have passed. There were people who weren't found worthy in their judgment to receive bounty. On Chanukah, they can receive חנינה, a free gift.

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

Noach sent a dove out of his ark, and it returned with an olive branch in its beak. *Rashi* (*Bereishis* 8:11) writes that the dove was saying to Hashem, רבש"ע יהיו מזונותי מרורין בזית בידו של הקב"ה ולא מתוקין כדבש

בידי בשר ודם, "May my *parnassah* be bitter like an olive, but given from Your hands, and not sweet like honey, given by a human being."

Rebbe Moshe of Razvadov *zt'l* explains that the dove, to which the Jewish nation is compared (see *Brachos* 53:), says, "יהיו מזונותי מרורין בזית בידו של הקב"ה, because then the *parnassah* comes from Hakadosh Baruch Hu's compassionate hand, even if we don't deserve it. We prefer that over the *parnassah* that comes from Rosh Hashanah, מתוקין כדבש, the time of year we eat apple with honey, because then it is בידי בשר ודם, dependent on man's deeds. If he deserves, he receives, and if he doesn't deserve, he won't receive."

Though one can earn *parnassah* on Chanukah even if he doesn't deserve it. Nevertheless, this shouldn't be one's intention when he lights the Chanukah menorah and performs all the other mitzvos of Chanukah.

Chazal suggest this when they say (*Shabbos* 22.), אסור להרצות מעות כנגד נר חנינה.¹⁶ We can translate it, "It is forbidden to want money when lighting the Chanukah candles." This shouldn't be our focus. Instead one should think about Hashem's miracles the Chanukah *lecht* are revealing, and one can think about

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

16. Literally, these words means, "One is forbidden to count money near the Chanukah lamps."

Chazal's promise that this mitzvah can bring children who will be *talmidei chachamim*, and similar spiritual gains. But it isn't proper to think about money at this time. This is implied in the words, ...אסור להרצות מעות..., "it is forbidden to want money while lighting the Chanukah *lecht*." And when he lights the Chanukah *lecht* with proper intentions the bounty for *parnassah* will come, too.

Taking Advantage of these Days

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21) says, "On Chanukah...one mustn't give *hespedim* (eulogies)..."

Hinted is that we should be cautious to use these days of Chanukah well, to fill them with joy, gratitude, Torah and *tefillah*, so when Chanukah passes one shouldn't have to eulogize a lost opportunity. We should look back and feel gratified that we used these holy days well.

בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו. This can be explained, the בני בינה, the wise, ימי שמונה קבעו, acquire these eight holy days, so it will remain with them, throughout the year.

The Kedushas Levi (*Kedushah* 2) gives a *mashal* of a king who opened his treasury for a day, and whoever wants can come and take whatever he desires. "Woe to the fool who doesn't take advantage of this, and sleeps all day long." This *mashal* describes the pitiful state of those who don't take advantage of Chanukah. There is so much good we can receive on Chanukah, when lighting the Chanukah *lecht*, by saying *Al*

HaNissim and *Hallel*, by rejoicing the miracles, and so on. All of these bring us immense bounty and goodness — both spiritual and material. Isn't it a shame and foolish to squander these special opportunities?

A parable is told about a very poor person who couldn't eke out a living. Whatever he tried, failed. He decided to visit the *sar hamazalos* (the angel appointed over *mazal*) to ask him where and what he should do to find his *mazal*.

As he was walking to the *sar hamazalos*, he saw a beautiful, big tree that had no fruits on it.

The tree said, "When you meet with the *sar hamazalos*, tell him about me as well. Ask him why my *mazal* is so bad and I can't grow fruit."

"No problem," the man replied. "When I meet with the *sar hamazalos*, I'll ask him."

The man walked further and met a princess who was banished from her palace. She said to him, "When you meet with the *sar hamazalos*, ask him what I should do to get back my honor."

"I will" the man replied, and he walked further.

Then he met a lion. It was lying on the ground, ill and in pain. The lion said, "When you meet the *sar hamazalos*, ask him what I should do to heal myself."

"Will do," the man promised, and he went to the *sar hamazalos*.

On his way back he saw the tree and said, "The *sar hamazalos* told me that near your roots is a box filled with gold

and diamonds. This blocks the nutrients in the ground from reaching your trunk and branches. When someone will dig up the treasure, you will bear fruit.”

The tree pleaded, “Please dig up the treasure. You will become wealthy and I will have fruit.”

“No! No!” the man said. “I don’t have time for that. I’m too busy looking for my mazal.”

He walked further and found the princess. “I spoke with the *sar hamazalos*. He said you will return to your honor and greatness when you get married. Your husband will become the king and you will become the queen.”

The princess pleaded, “Please marry me. I will return to the palace, and you will become the king and be very wealthy...”

“I’m so sorry,” the man replied, “But I’m too busy for that. I need to find my mazal.”

Then he met the lion. “Did the *sar hamazalos* tell you what I should do?” the lion asked.

“Yes he did,” the man replied. “Your remedy is to eat the brain of someone who throws away every opportunity that comes his way.”

The lion gobbled him up.

Let’s not be like the fool in this parable. The opportunities are before us. We can gain so much on Chanukah. Let’s take advantage of these days, and attain all the greatness that Chanukah offers.

Once, the renowned Lubavitzer chassid,

Reb Shmuel Minkus *zt'l*, felt he needed *chizuk* in *avodas Hashem*. He wanted to travel to his Rebbe, the Baal HaTanya *zt'l*. He couldn’t afford to hire a wagon and driver, so he went to the marketplace and sought a businessman who was anyway traveling to Liadi, where the Baal HaTanya lived. A businessman who deals with alcoholic beverages offered to take him. He said he doesn’t have room in the passenger section of his wagon, but if Reb Shmuel wanted, he could sit among the barrels.

Reb Shmuel rode with him, but it was very cold in that uncovered part of the wagon. Reb Shmuel asked the businessman permission if he could warm up by drinking some vodka from the barrels. Permission was granted.

When Reb Shmuel came to the Baal HaTanya, he said *shalom aleichem*, and got ready to go back home immediately.

“You just came! Why are you leaving so quickly?”

“I wanted *chizuk* in *avodas Hashem*, and I received my *chizuk* on the way here. When I need more inspiration, I’ll come back to the Rebbe.”

The Baal HaTanya asked him, “Which inspiration did you acquire?”

Reb Shmuel said, “On the way here I sat among barrels of alcohol, but they weren’t giving me any warmth. When I drank some of that alcohol, I warmed up. I learned that it isn’t sufficient to be around chassidic ideas. To become warm, I must allow these ideas to penetrate me, and then it will change me.”

In reference to Chanukah, the holiday is saturated with an extremely great light, but the light won't affect us if it remains

external. We must internalize this great light, and only then will the warmth and the enthusiasm last throughout the year.

Chanukah: A Time for *Teshuvah*

The name חנוכה implies that it's a time for a fresh start. It is a time for *teshuvah*.

A woman approached the Yesod HaAvodah *zt'l* and his *gabai* as they were walking down a street.

"Which one of you is the Rebbe? I need a *brachah*."

The *gabai* pointed to the Rebbe, and the Rebbe pointed to his *gabai*. Confused, she said, "Please, don't make me into a fool. Tell me who the Rebbe is."

The Yesod HaAvodah asked her to state her request. She said, "My daughter went off the *derech* and she recently ran away from home."

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

"Yes, we do."

"Turn the garment into wicks and use them to light the Shabbos *lecht*."

She did that, and in the middle of the Shabbos *seudah*, the girl returned. She said that she had acted foolishly, but now she wants to do *teshuvah*. Mother and daughter fell into each other's embrace with immense love. The Shabbos *lecht* brought her around.

The Beis Avraham *zt'l* added that this is implied in the *brachos*, להדליק נר של שבת, and להדליק נר חנוכה. The word להדליק, doesn't mean "to light," it means "to

ignite." The *segulah* of these mitzvos ignites the fire of *Yiddishkeit* in people's hearts.

In *Al HaNissim* we say, מסרת...ממאים ביד, מטהורים רשעים ביד צדיקים וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך, "You gave over the impure into the hands of the pure, the *resha'im* into the hands of *tzaddikim*, and sinners into the hands of those who study Torah."

The Bardichover Rav *zy'a* said that these words need explanation, for why is it considered miraculous that the impure ones fell into the hands of the pure ones, or that the sinful ones fell into the hands of those who study Torah? Is it unnatural and miraculous when the righteous win a war?

The Bardichover Rav answers that due to this war, a great wave of *teshuvah* began. Everyone saw how a handful of *tzaddikim* miraculously won a war against the mighty Greek army, and many non-religious Yidden did *teshuvah*. The *Al HaNissim* is discussing that wave of *teshuvah*: ממאים ביד מטהורים means the impure people did *teshuvah* and became pure. רשעים ביד צדיקים, means that the *resha'im* became righteous. And זדים ביד עוסקי תורתך implies that the sinners began studying Torah.

Fifty years ago a Yid from Eretz Yisrael went to Australia. He didn't know where he would be for Shabbos. He decided to

go to a fish store Friday morning, and see if someone is buying a large fish, he assumes that it will probably be a Yid, and he would ask him if he could go to his home for Shabbos.

The plan worked. He approached a customer who was buying a large fish, and discovered that he was indeed a Yid. He asked whether he can stay with him for Shabbos. "Definitely," the man said, and he brought him to his home.

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

On Motzei Shabbos, he thanked his host and said, "You have a beautiful house, but there was one thing I was wondering about. May I ask?"

"Go ahead."

"I noticed you have a broken oil bottle in your showcase. Why is it there?"

The man replied, "That oil bottle is very precious to me. Because of that bottle I am where I am today. I'll tell you my story:

"I was orphaned as a child, and it became my responsibility to support my widowed mother. I tried my hand in business and *baruch Hashem*, succeeded. However, together with my financial growth came my spiritual decline. The first thing that went was my yarmulke.

Gradually, I dropped all the mitzvos.

"One day, I saw a young child crying on the curb. As I was an orphan, I have a soft spot for children who cry, so I asked the child what was bothering him. The

child said, 'Do you see the oil on the floor? Do you see the broken bottle? My father sent me to buy a bottle of olive oil for Chanukah, and as I was walking home, a cat ran in front of me, and I ran and fell... Before I left my house, my father warned me to be careful not to drop the olive oil. We are very tight in money, and we can't afford to buy another bottle of olive oil. So now I'm sitting here, crying, and wondering how can I go home and face my father without the olive oil?'

"When the child told me this, I began to cry, too, because I immediately realized that I should be asking myself the very same question. There will come the day when I will join my father, in heaven, and I should ask myself, 'How can I meet my father without olive oil, without the mitzvah of Chanukah *lecht*?' I saw my father light Chanukah *lecht* every year. How could I stop?'

"I gave the child some money and said, 'Buy two bottles; one for your father and one for me.' I took the shards of the broken bottle home so I should remember...

That year, I lit Chanukah *lecht*. After Chanukah, I began keeping Shabbos, too. Then I started wearing tefillin. And now I have a beautiful family, all of us following in the ways of my father. This all began because of that broken olive oil bottle. Now I believe you understand why I saved it, and why it is so precious for me. This broken bottle saved my life."

This story is an example of the power of *teshuvah* that is available for us on Chanukah.¹⁷

Rebbe Yechezkel of Kozmir *zt'l* wouldn't permit his chassidim to watch him light Chanukah *lecht*. He said that Chazal (*Bava Basra* 57 : writes, "it is forbidden to look at women when they are washing..." and he explained that women represents the Jewish souls, and it is forbidden to look at them when they are being washed from all blemishes, which took place when he lit the Chanukah *lecht*. We quote this to remind people to cleanse themselves with thoughts of *teshuvah* when they light the Chanukah *lecht*, because it is a time for cleansing.

When one lights the Chanukah *lecht* he can elevate many others with his mitzvah. The *Meir Einei Chachamim* (12:2) writes, "Believe with *emunah sheleimah* that when one stands to light Chanukah *lecht*, all the sparks of his soul and of his fathers and grandfathers up to Adam HaRishon are standing there with him, surrounding around every Yid who lights Chanukah *lecht*, hoping that perhaps with his inspiration by Chanukah *lecht*, they will merit a rectification and elevation to reach their source..."

Hallel and Al HaNissim

The Sfas Emes (תרמ"ד ד"ה לשנה) writes that Chanukah and Purim are special

holidays, because they are the only holidays that we can keep exactly as we should. By all other *yomim tovim*, we can't keep with all their details, since we don't have *korbanos* and the Beis HaMikdash.

One of the ways we keep Chanukah is by saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*.

To get an indication to the importance of these praises, we repeat a lesson from Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* (חכמת שלמה תרפ"ג):

There was a Jewish person in jail, who was granted a short furlough on Chanukah. The question is, should he go out at nighttime, so he can light Chanukah *lecht*, or should he leave in the morning, so he can say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* in the beis medresh?

Reb Shlomo Kluger answers that it is preferable to leave prison in the morning, so he can say *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim*.

Similarly, consider a traveler who can be in a hotel at night where he can light Chanukah *lecht*, but then he won't have minyan for *shacharis*, or he can travel all night, forfeit lighting Chanukah *lecht*, but arrive in the morning where he can say *Hallel* and *All HaNissim*. Which should he choose?

Once again, Reb Shlomo Kluger advises him to prefer *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* over Chanukah *lecht*, because the

17. The Beis Aharon *zt'l* recommends saying *Tehillim* on Chanukah. "A person must believe that by saying *Tehillim* he can leave his foolishness, his problems, and his struggles. He can overcome thoughts of *yeush*, of despair, which the *yetzer hara* brings onto a person."

holiday was established for הלל והודאה, to praise Hashem.

The Chebiner Rav *zt'l* said, “*Hallel* on Chanukah shouldn’t be said like *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh. *Hallel* on Rosh Chodesh is a *minhag*, while the *Hallel* on Chanukah is a *mitzvah* קבלה, from the *Nevi'im*.”

Some *Rishonim* say that *Hallel* is a *mitzvah* from the Torah (see Reb Yeruchem Fishel Perlow’s commentary on *Sma’g, mitzvas asei* ג-ם, p.258).

One should say *Hallel* sweetly and happily. One shouldn’t rush through it. As the *Masechta Sofrim* (20:9) states, “We say the entire *Hallel* during the eight days of Chanukah...and we make a *brachah* before and after *Hallel*, and one must say it בנעימה, sweetly, pleasantly.”¹⁸

Saying praises to Hashem purifies us. It states (*Mishlei* 27:21), מצרף לכסף ובור לזהב, ואיש לפי מהללו. The *Chida* explained, ovens

purify silver and gold, איש לפי מהללו and a person becomes cleansed and pure by praising Hashem.

Similarly it states (*Tehillim* 106:47), להשתבח בתהלתך. It seems it should state, לשבח בתהלתך “To glorify You with Your praises.” It states להשתבח, which means the person himself becomes purified and better by praising Hashem.

There was a person suffering from a *dibbuk*, and was brought to the *Divrei Chaim* of *Tzanz zt'l* on Chanukah. The *Divrei Chaim* said, “Bring him to *beis medresh* when we say *Hallel*, and he will be cured from the *dibbuk*.”

They brought him to the *beis medresh* when the congregation was saying *Hallel*. The *dibbuk* left his body, and flew out a window.

This is because every impurity within a person can be extricated by saying *Hallel*.

18. The renowned *Lubavitzer chassid*, Reb Shmuel Munkess *zt'l*, once overheard a *melamed* teaching his students the first *Mishnah* of *Bava Metzia*. שנים אוחזין בטלת... זה, “Two people are holding onto a garment. One says ‘It is mine.’ And the other one says ‘It is mine.’”

Reb Shmuel asked them, “These words, זה אומר כולה שלי, are written twice in the *Mishnah*, and the printer prints them both in the same size font. But in the *siddur*, we repeat *pesukim* such as אודך כי עניתני, and the printer often prints the repeated phrases in a smaller font. Why?”

They didn’t know the answer, so Reb Shmuel Munkess told them: When people are fighting over a garment, and are both claiming כולה שלי, that the garment is entirely theirs, they will both be speaking loudly, with all their heart and soul. They will both shout כולה שלי, “it is entirely mine.” Therefore, it states כולה שלי in large letters, both times. But when we daven, people’s nature is that they become lazy. Even if they said אודך loudly the first time, by the second time (and certainly by the later days of Chanukah) they say it silently, without inspiration. It is our obligation to say it each time with the same *hislahavos*.

Saying *Hallel* also saves us from all problems. The Gemara (*Pesachim* 117) says, “We say *Hallel* על כל צרה וצרה שלא תבא עליהן וכשנגאלו אומרים אותו על גאולתן, “for every *tzarah* that shouldn’t come...” The Ben Ish Chai says that these words imply that *Hallel*, צרה שלא תבא עליהן, is *mesugal* that troubles won’t befall us.

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* writes that the words of the Gemara, לשנה אחרת קבעום בהלל והודאה, implies that saying *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* makes the holiday. The praises draw down the miracles and creates Chanukah, each year. Because the Gemara writes בהלל with the letter ב' (and it doesn't state קבעום להלל והודאה with the letter ל'). It seems to be saying קבעום the *chachamim* made these days holidays, בהלל והודאה, with the *Hallel* and *Al HaNissim* that Yidden say.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev*, 4:134) teaches that one can pray via praising Hashem. For example, when there's someone in the family who needs a *refuah*, one can praise Hashem and say that Hashem is רופא חולים. Heaven understands that he is requesting, “You heal the ill, and please heal my family member...” The benefit of such a *tefillah* is that the *malachim* will always allow it to go up to heaven. When one says a standard *tefillah*, the *malachim* may prevent it from going up, claiming the person doesn't deserve to request from Hashem. But who can stop a Yid from praising Hashem? The praises go up; Hashem reads between the lines, and fills his request.

This is the meaning of the *pasuk* (*Tehillim*

18:4), מהולל אקרא ה' ומן אויבי אשוע, “I call out to Hashem from the midst of praises, and I am saved from my enemies.” Similarly, it states, אודך כי עניתני ותהי לי לישועה, “I praise You when I'm suffering, thereby I will have my salvation.”

The Sfas Emes *zt'l* said that when one says אנה ה' in *Hallel*, all his requests can be fulfilled. Chasidim thought the Sfas Emes was referring to the *pasuk* אנה ה' הושיע נא, “Please Hashem save us, now,” which hints to material salvations, such as *parnassah* and health. The Imrei Emes *zt'l* said that he thinks the Sfas Emes was referring to the *pasuk*, אנה ה' כי אני עבדיך, “Please Hashem, because I am Your servant...” hinting to spiritual salvations.

And the truth is, we should have *kavanah* both times, because by saying *Hallel* we can get both spiritual and material salvations.

When we say על המחיה, we don't add a line for Chanukah (as we do on Shabbos, *yom tov*, etc.) This is because when one praises Hashem, one shouldn't make shortcuts. Praises need elaboration.

Reb Aharon of Belz *zt'l* insisted on thanking people himself, and not through his *gaba'im*. The *gabai'im* asked him, “For more important matters you send us. Why is it so important that you should make the effort to thank someone yourself?”

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

Children who are *Talmidei Chachamim*

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

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* adds that the person who lights the candles will also become a *talmid chacham*. If it is *mesugal* for the children, it is certainly *mesugal* for the person lighting the candles, too.

Rabbeinu Yitzchak son of the Raavad asks, "Most people are cautious to light Chanukah *lecht* each year, yet we don't see them becoming *talmidei chachamim*?"

He answers, "Only a minority keeps this mitzvah with all its details and laws."

Furthermore, it is important to light the Chanukah *lecht* with joy and inspiration. Without this factor, he may not merit children *talmidei chachamim*.

The Meiri writes, הרגיל בנר דרך חיבוב מצוה, והערה מפורסמת הויין לו בנים תלמיד חכמים, "Whoever is cautious with the candles of Chanukah to light them *with love and inspiration* will be granted children

who are *talmidei chachamim*." Thus, the blessing for good children is conditional on performing the mitzvah *דרך חיבוב מצוה והערה מפורסמת*, with love, enthusiasm, and joy.

Reb Chaim Ozer Grodinzki *zt'l* was once in Krakow on Chanukah. His jacket needed mending, so he went to a tailor. The tailor said that he hadn't yet lit Chanukah *lecht*, and would fix the coat immediately after he's finished. Reb Chaim Ozer assumed that lighting the candles would take no longer than a few minutes, so he said he'll wait.

He was pleasantly surprised. The tailor put on his Shabbos clothing, lit the candles with *hislahavus*, and for a half hour sang beautiful, soulful tunes to Hashem in front of the menorah. After he finished, he put on his weekday clothing and mended Reb Chaim Ozer's jacket.

Reb Chaim Ozer said, "By how the tailor lit the candles, I understand why Krakow merited so many great *talmidei chachamim* over the generations." This is because Chanukah *lecht* is *mesugal* for children who are *talmidei chachamim* particularly when one performs the mitzvah *דרך חיבוב מצוה והערה מפורסמת* with love and inspiration.¹⁹

19. In this generation, with the amazing advancement of science, it won't be surprising if science will one day create artificial fruit that tastes and has the texture of fruit. However, they won't succeed to make an artificial fruit that has seeds inside it, and that has the ability to reproduce other fruits.

The *nimshal* is, when one lights Chanukah *lecht*, it should be with a sincere and genuine *hislahavus* and joy. He shouldn't be copying others. If he just imitates others, it won't have the strength to bear fruit and influence the next generation.

A group of chassidim were once discussing the great wealth of the legendary Count Pototsky. They were saying that in the summer he pours sugar over mountains so he could go skiing.

The Bardichover Rav heard their discussion, and asked, "Does he light Chanukah *leicht*?"

"No." Count Pototsky wasn't Jewish.

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

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

After the Yesod HaAvodah of Slonim *zy'a* was *niftar*, the chassidim were discussing who should be their next Rebbe. In the end, they chose the Divrei Shmuel *zy'a* (grandson of the Yesod HaAvodah) because of the following incident:

Once, the Divrei Shmuel prepared his menorah, on *erev Shabbos* Chanukah, and before lighting it, he went to his grandfather's home (the Yesod HaAvodah) to watch him light Chanukah *leicht*. When the Divrei Shmuel returned home he saw that someone had lit the menorah that he prepared.

The Divrei Shmuel calmly sought another menorah and some more olive oil. He found one single candle made from animal fat (*chelev*). Shabbos was fast approaching, so the Divrei Shmuel lit that one candle.

The Divrei Shmuel loved the mitzvah of Chanukah *leicht*. He was an expert in the halachos, and throughout the year, he spent many hours preparing and organizing the olive oil. But this time, he

lit only one candle (and it wasn't the first night of Chanukah) and he didn't have olive oil. Nevertheless, he was extremely happy when he performed the mitzvah.

The elderly chassidim remembered this incident and said, "For that alone he deserves to be Rebbe. If he can be happy, even after such disappointment, he deserves to be Rebbe."

The Divrei Shmuel's joy and tranquility were passed over to his holy son, the Beis Avraham of Slonim *zt'l*.

One year, on Friday afternoon, the Beis Avraham was just about ready to light the Chanukah menorah, when his son ran by and accidentally knocked over the menorah. The oil spilled and there wasn't enough time before Shabbos to prepare the menorah again. The Beis Avraham didn't become angry. He said with a smile, "The same Creator who commanded us to light Chanukah *leicht* commanded us not to become angry."

The Tolner Rebbe *zy'a* of Yerushalayim would rejoice immensely in front of his Chanukah *leicht*. One year, when he was rejoicing in front of his candles, his grandson ran by and knocked over his menorah. The Rebbe said, "My dear child, I'm so grateful to you. Now I can keep the words of Chazal, בבתה אין זקוק לה, that if the candles blow out before one half-hour passes, one isn't obligated to light them again. How often do I have the opportunity to keep this Chazal?"

Instead of being angry with his grandson for spilling the menorah, and instead of being upset that the Chanukah menorah

overturned, he rejoiced that he could finally carry out a statement from Chazal. (Afterwards, the Rebbe lit the candles again, as the Mishnah Berurah recommends.) The Rebbe found the good in the situation and rejoiced with the mitzvah he performed, instead of being distressed that the menorah blew out.

The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* was in Reb Nachman Kaplan's *zt'l* home on Chanukah, and although it was already time to light Chanukah lecht, Reb Nachman Kaplan was waiting for his Rebbetzin to come home. Reb Kaplan didn't want to light the Chanukah *lecht* until she arrived.

The Chofetz Chaim asked his rebbe, Reb Nachman Kaplan, that it seems from halachah that one should light at the right time even if everyone isn't home.

Reb Nachman replied, "The Gemara tells us שלום ביתו עדיף, peace in the home is of paramount importance – even more important than lighting Chanukah *lecht*. (Therefore, if one has only one candle, he should use it for Shabbos, to create light and shalom bayis in the home. That is preferred over lighting Chanukah lecht outdoors.) My wife will be upset if I light the candles when she isn't home. It will cause friction in the home. So I will wait for her. *Shalom bayis* is more important than Chanukah *lecht*."

Because we should be happy with the mitzvah of Chanukah and perform it with joy. Even when something prevents

us from performing the mitzvah in the very best way, we should be happy with whatever part of the mitzvah that we can do.

The stories we brought in this section are examples of tzaddikim who wanted to perform the mitzvos of Chanukah in the best way, but couldn't, due to the circumstances. Nevertheless, they didn't let these situations disturb their joy and enthusiasm for the mitzvah. They lit the Chanukah lamps to the best of their abilities, because Hashem doesn't ask from us more than we can do.

Simchah

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

The Maharsha writes, "Why did the Yevanim forbid these two mitzvos? It is because these mitzvos were performed with immense joy. Those who donated wood for the *mizbeiach* would celebrate, and *bikurim* was also brought with great joy. As the Mishnah states, 'the flute played before them...' The Yevanim didn't want the Jewish people to be happy..." It bothered them to see Yidden rejoicing with the mitzvos.

Yavan loved culture. They wouldn't mind if Yidden kept Torah and mitzvos as if it were nothing more than cultural. But the Jewish people keep the mitzvos with passion and joy, and the Greeks couldn't tolerate that. They

therefore strived to take away our joy in the mitzvos.²⁰

The Yevanim were somewhat successful. The Bach (670) teaches that the Jewish people were lax with the *korbanos*, and therefore, the Yevanim were able to conquer the Beis HaMikdash. The Sheim MiShmuel (680) explains that "lax with the *korbanos*" doesn't mean they didn't bring the *korbanos*. They brought every *korban*, but without happiness. That is why the *korbanos* were taken away from them.

Consider a beautiful building. It's simply a pleasure to look at. Every inch of the building depicts wealth and

beauty. But there is no electricity, as it hasn't been connected yet. Everyone agrees that without electricity, the building isn't finished.

The Sukelener Rebbe (Rebbe Eliezer Zusia) *zt'l* would say that on Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and Succos, we build a beautiful, spiritual edifice, which is a source for bounty and blessings for the new year. Yet, something is missing. There is no light. Chanukah adds the light. Now the edifice is complete.

The light is the joy of *Yiddishkeit*; happiness with the mitzvos. Add that element, and the edifice for the new year is completed.²¹

Preparation for the Mitzvah

A chassid found a place to hide, and watched the Yismach Yisrael as he prepared to light the Chanukah *lecht*. The chassid saw the Rebbe's intense devotion,

his fiery *hislahavus* as he poured the oil and prepared the wicks. The chassid thought, "If this is the way the Rebbe prepares for the mitzvah, I can only

20. David HaMelech said, ויעלני... מטיט הין, "Hashem saves me from the mud of Yavan..." (*Tehillim* 40:3). The Sfas Emes explains that there are four elements: fire, water, wind and earth. The *galus* of Yavan is called *tit hayavan* (the mud from Yavan) because mud is made from earth and water, but there's no fire there. This exemplifies the approach of Yavan, who desired to extinguish the inner fire of the Jew.

21. At a rabbinic gathering, each rav present said something he learned from his father. When it was Rebbe Meir Yechiel Ostrovitze's *zt'l* turn, he said, "My father was a baker. I learned from him that fresh bread is better than old bread."

He was implying that although his father wasn't learned, it is more important who *you* are than who your *parents* were. People feel proud they are descendants of great tzaddikim. But most important is who you are.

The Ostrovitze Rebbe said, "My father also taught me that when you bakes bread, you should fill the oven with wood and seal it hermetically, for even the slightest draft can affect the temperature inside the oven. When the oven is very hot, you can put bread inside."

The point is that one should be cautious from the foreign influences and ideas that cool us off. And when one is very warm, and he keeps the mitzvos with fervor and joy, it will influence his children and others to be joyous with the mitzvos, too.

imagine the great fire of excitement when the Rebbe lights the candles." But when the Rebbe lit the candles, the Rebbe suddenly became very regular. He said the *brachah* and lit the candles just like thousands of other Yidden do. At least externally, one couldn't see anything unique. The chassid wondered, "It doesn't make sense; shouldn't the mitzvah itself be performed with even greater *hislahavus* than the preparations?" He couldn't come out of his hiding place to ask the Rebbe since he was there without permission, so he kept his questions to himself.

The next day, the Rebbe explained to the chassid that a person's part in a mitzvah is his dedication, love and awe, when he prepares for the mitzvah. But when he actually performs the mitzvah, Hashem gives the inspiration from above. At that point it isn't in his hands anymore.

Therefore, if we want to light the Chanukah *lecht* properly, we should make a good *hachanah* (preparation). That is in our hands to do.

Rebbe Yechiel Yehoshua of Biala *zt'l* told his grandson to watch the Beis Yisrael of Gur *zt'l* as he prepared himself to light Chanukah *lecht*.

The grandson arrived at the Rebbe's residence, and told the *gabai*, Reb Chanina Shiff, that the Biala Rebbe sent him to watch the Beis Yisrael prepare for Chanukah *lecht*. The *gabai* opened the door to the Rebbe's room. They saw the Rebbe pacing with immense concentration and excitement. The *gabai* quickly shut the door and said, "I don't

dare disturb the Rebbe at this time, so I can't bring you in. If you want to follow through on your grandfather's request, go in on your own."

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

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

The more one prepares, the more he will receive. The Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* explained this with a *mashal*:

A merchant came to town with a lot of oil to sell. All the residents came to him with their pots and pans, and he poured his oil into their containers. The townspeople wanted to buy more oil, and the merchant obviously wanted to sell them more, but they didn't have any more containers. He told them, "Bring more containers, and I'll sell you more."

The *nimshal* is, Hashem wants to give us immense light on Chanukah, but we can't receive more than the containers we prepared. The more we prepare, the more we can receive.

Rebbe Dovid Moshe of Chortkov *zt'l* taught: A precious gem shines when it is in the correct setting. Put it on a velvet cloth, and it appears beautiful. Put it on a gold ring, and it appears exquisite. Take the same gem and place it in a paper bag, or in a dirty bowl, and it won't have the same appeal.

He said that this is hinted in the words, *(Shemos 10:23)* ולכל בני ישראל היה אור במושבתם. The אור, brilliant light of Chanukah variates, במושבתם, depending on its setting. We must prepare ourselves, so we will be a proper receptacle to carry the great light of Chanukah.

Emunah

One of the translations of חנוכה is חנוכה ב"ה, "The Yidden rested from the war on ב"ה כסלו. No other holiday is named for the date it occurred. Purim isn't named for the 14th of Adar, and Pesach isn't named for the 15th of Nissan. They are named for the miracle that occurred. Why is Chanukah different?

The *Tzror HaMor* says that ב"ה is *gematriya* 25, the amount of letters in the first *pasuk* of *kriyas Shema*, שמע ישראל ה' אחד. Chanukah means, חנו, the Yidden rested and were victorious in the war in the merit of ב"ה, their *emunah* in Hashem, which we proclaim with Shema.

People tell a story about a *talmid chacham* who proudly told his friends that he saw Hashem in his dreams. They said, "*Chazal* (*Brachos* 55:) say dreams are often just reflecting the thoughts one had during the day. You are a great *talmid chacham*, and you are always thinking about Hashem, so you dreamed

that you saw Hashem. That doesn't mean it was a true dream...."

He replied, "Why do you say I am always thinking about Hashem? I hardly ever think of Hashem. I'm so busy davening and learning, I don't have time to think about Hashem! That's how I know the dream is true..."

That is how people are: they do mitzvos, learn Torah, and even daven, and don't think before Whom they are doing these deeds.

Chanukah *lecht* is destined to solve this problem. The Chanukah candles shine *emunah* into our hearts, so we can live with *emunah* all our days, with everything we do.²²

Reb Shlomo Eiger of Lublin *hy'd zt'l* [son of Shevet Yehudah *zt'l*] taught: There are two ways to awaken someone who's sleeping: either by making a loud sound or by turning on the lights. Figuratively speaking, people are sleeping because they've forgotten Hashem. On Rosh Hashanah we awaken them with the loud call of the shofar. On Chanukah we awaken them by the bright lights of the Chanukah menorah. We awaken them to *emunah*.

Once, at *shalash seudos*, the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l* told his students, "The entire

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

world is filled with heresy and denial of Hashem. And I'm not only referring to the non-religious Yidden or gentiles who don't believe in Hashem. I'm referring to the true, *ehrlicher Yidden* — those who fear Hashem. If you pay attention to what they say, you will hear *kefirah*. If a businessman discusses money issues, and throughout the conversation he forgets that Hakadosh Baruch Hu is in charge, that is *kefirah*.

"Therefore," the Chofetz Chaim concluded, "In my opinion, everyone should spend an hour each day thinking about *emunah* and *bitachon*. He should think about the *Chazal*, 'No one hurts his finger below unless it was decreed above' and other fundamentals of *emunah*. He should clear his thoughts from all other matters, and engrave *emunah* onto his heart."

Then the Chofetz Chaim asked his students whether they were ready to dedicate an hour a day to think about *emunah*.

Everyone was silent. An hour is a long time. No one was committed to do that. The Chofetz Chaim said, "I see that this is hard for you. So I have another plan. When you daven, focus on what you're saying. For example, when you say the *pesukim*, אשרי שא"ל יעקב בעזרו, 'Fortunate is the one who Hashem...is his helper,' and when you say, פותח את ידך ומשביע לכל חי רצון, 'You open Your hand and satisfy the needs of every living thing.' רבות מהשבות 'ה' היא תקום, 'There are many thoughts in man, and Hashem's counsel prevails...' think what you are saying.

Thereby you will have approximately an hour each day when you're thinking about *emunah*."

Bitachon

It states in this week's *parashah* (38:31-34) that the brothers took Yosef's coat and dipped it in blood.

The Rebbe of Radzimin *zt'l*, (*Bikurei Aviv*) asks, "Why did they [have to do that, to convince their father that Yosef was killed]? When Yaakov will see that Yosef wasn't coming home, he will assume he was killed! ... The answer is, Yaakov would have had *bitachon* that Yosef is still alive and that he would yet return home. As *Chazal* (*Brachos* 10.) say, 'Even when a sharp sword is on one's neck, one shouldn't stop praying...' One should always pray and have *bitachon* that Hashem will help. Certainly then, Yaakov Avinu, whose *bitachon* in Hashem was on an extremely high level, would trust in Hashem that Yosef will yet return. And then the people in Mitzrayim would permit Yosef to return home. Because when one trusts on Hashem with all one's heart, it draws Hashem's aid. Yaakov, who had a very high level of *bitachon*, would draw Hashem's aid, and Yosef would surely be sent home...The brothers feared that if Yaakov would daven and also have *bitachon*, the Egyptians would send Yosef home, and Yosef would reveal to their father that they sold him, and their father would be angry with them. They therefore slaughtered a goat, dipped Yosef's coat in its blood, and sent it to their father so their father will think

Yosef was killed, and he would stop praying for Yosef...."

The final *pasuk* of the *parashah* states, "ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף וישכחהו", "the *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef, and he forgot him." The *pasuk* seems to be saying the same thing twice, for not remembering and forgetting is the same thing.

Rashi answers, "The *sar hamashkim* didn't remember Yosef on that day, and he forgot him in the future..." Yosef asked the *sar hamashkim* to tell Pharaoh that he was enslaved unlawfully, but the *sar hamashkim* forgot him on the day he came to Pharaoh, and he also forgot to tell Pharaoh later on.

The Chidushei HaRim zt'l reads the *pasuk* like this: "ולא זכר שר המשקים את יוסף וישכחהו", the *sar hamashkim* forgot Yosef, and Yosef forgot the *sar hamashkim*.

Yosef was in prison for ten years; finally, there's hope. He interpreted the *sar hamashkim's* dream correctly, and the *sar hamashkim* is now serving wine to Pharaoh. The *sar hamashkim* is in a perfect position to help Yosef, and he owes Yosef *hakaras hatov*. Anybody in Yosef's place would constantly be thinking about the *sar hamashkim*, wondering whether he did the *shelichus* and whether he forwarded his plea to Pharaoh. But Yosef trusted solely in Hashem. After doing his *hithadlus*, he forgot about the *sar hamashkim* and placed his trust solely with Hashem.

Yosef is praised for his *bitachon*. The

pasuk 'אשרי הגבר אשר יבטח בה' "Fortunate is the person who trusts in Hashem..." is written about Yosef HaTzaddik (see *Rashi* 40:23). An aspect of his *bitachon* is seen from this episode. He made *hishtadlus*, but his heart relied solely on Hashem.

בטחון is *gematriya* *גמטריה*. The Chashmanoim were *cohanim*, and they won their wars because of their *bitachon*.

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

There is no ז' in this chapter. The Abuderham writes that when one trusts in Hashem he doesn't need ז'ין weapons. Hashem, Himself, will subdue all enemies of Bnei Yisrael.

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

The Jewish people raised their eyes to heaven and prayed to Hakadosh Baruch Hu... Hakadosh Baruch Hu seized the seventy angels of heaven (who are appointed over the seventy nations of

the world) and hit them with a fiery whip and warned them to protect the Jewish nation. When a Greek soldier shot an arrow at Bnei Yisrael, a *malach* came, turned the arrow around and aimed it at the soldier who shot it, shooting it straight into his heart. The Chashmonaim saw these miracles and said, ה' ילחם לנו, "Hashem is fighting this battle for us!" When one of the Greek kings was killed, the *malachei hashares* angels confiscated his money, and threw it into Jewish homes. (The Yidden weren't able to take the money themselves because of all the corpses...)

Aliforni gathered an army of 120,000 strong warriors, 22,000 archers, and

camels carrying an endless supply of food. Aliforni had already conquered many big and powerful countries in the past. When the Yidden heard that he was approaching, they became very afraid... They — with their wives and children — shouted to Hashem, and did *teshuvah* with fasting and prayers. The *cohanim* wore sackcloth, and even the *mizbeiach* was dressed in sackcloth.... They shouted to Hashem... and they fell on their faces... Then the Yidden ran after their enemies and killed piles of them."

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

Eyes for *Emunah*

We never make a *brachah* for looking at a mitzvah. The exception is on Chanukah. As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (676:3), "Someone... who isn't going to light Chanukah *lecht* that night... should make the *brachah she'asah nisim* when he sees Chanukah *lecht*. He should also say *shehechyanu...*"

What is unique about the Chanukah *lecht* that one makes a *brachah* simply for seeing them?

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* explains that the *avodah* on Chanukah is to train ourselves to see things correctly. When we look at the world, we should perceive the wonders of creation, recognize Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*, turn our eyes to Hashem to trust in Him, and similarly, regarding all other aspects of

emunah and *bitachon*. We make a *brachah* on just seeing the Chanukah *lecht*, because the lesson of Chanukah is about seeing – seeing correctly.

With this principle, Reb Moshe answers the following renowned questions:

The Beis Yosef asks: Why do we celebrate Chanukah the first day? The jug of oil that they found had enough for one day, so the first day wasn't a miracle?

Reb Simchah Zisel, the Alter of Kelm *zt'l*, answers that the first night of Chanukah we commemorate the miracle that oil burns, for that too is a miracle. On Chanukah we improve our vision, and we discover that even natural things, such as oil producing light, are also a miracle.

The Alter of Kelm says that Creation is the greatest miracle, because all miracles are *יש מיש*, changing the matters of the world, but Creation is *יש מאין*, creating something from nothing, which is an even greater wonder. One should be even more overwhelmed by looking at nature, than by looking at a miracle. People are accustomed to the miracles of nature, therefore it doesn't have a mesmerizing effect on them. But when miracles occur we become aware that nature is also a miracle. Therefore, we light the Chanukah menorah on the first night of Chanukah to celebrate the awareness that even the fact that oil burns is also a miracle.

The commentaries also seek to understand an unusual juxtaposition of the Gemara. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 22.) says, "A Chanukah candle placed over twenty *amos* is *pasul*" because people won't see it, and it won't publicize the miracle.

The next line of the Gemara speaks about a *pasuk* in this week's *parasha* (*Bereishis* 37:24), *והבור ריק אין בו מים*, "The pit was empty; it didn't have water." The Gemara asks, "Isn't it obvious that if the pit was empty, it didn't have water? The *pasuk* is hinting that the pit didn't have water, but it did have snakes and scorpions."

The commentaries ask, why is this lesson

stated in the Gemara after the halachah that a Chanukah menorah can't be higher than twenty *amos*? What is the connection between the two?

Reb Moshe Feinstein *zt'l* explains that a great miracle happened to Yosef HaTzaddik. He was thrown into a pit with snakes and scorpions, and they didn't harm him. His brothers didn't recognize the miracle, because if they had, they would have pulled him out and saved him. So we see that one can see miracles and not be aware of them.

We now understand the juxtaposition of the Gemara. Chanukah *lecht* above twenty *amos* is *pasul* because people can't see them. Seeing the *lecht* is important so we can train ourselves to recognize miracles. Because one can experience a miracle and not know about it, as this happened to Yosef's holy brothers...

When we light Chanukah *lecht*, it is like turning on the lights so we can see well. Before we couldn't see the miracles in our life, and now we can. However, even after lighting the *lecht*, it is up to each person to see the miracles, because otherwise, it is like turning on the lights and still not see, because his eyes are closed.²³

23. Reb Shimon Shwab *zt'l* ponders, we say two *brachos* in the morning *פוקח עורים* and *המעביר שנה מעיני*, and they both seem to be thanking Hashem for the same thing: For enabling him to awaken in the morning and see.

He explains that *פוקח עורים* is thanking Hashem for being able to see. But sometimes, people don't see the many miracles that are happening for them. It is like they are asleep and

Some people were watching a video in a dark room. Someone wanted to see something, so he turned on the light. People shouted at him, "What did you do? Now we can't see the show."

He replied, "Yes, but now we can see everything else." Similarly, when we light Chanukah *lecht*, we don't see this illusion that the world runs by nature. Now we can see Hashem who is behind everything that happens in the world.

To answer the Beis Yosef's question: "What was the miracle on the first day?" the Taz (670:1) answers that the miracle was that the oil didn't burn out completely. Some oil was left over. That was necessary, as the *Zohar* says Hashem doesn't give a *brachah* and a miracle onto something that isn't there.

As Elisha said to the *ishah Shunamis* (II Malachim 4:2), מה יש לבי בבית ותאמר אין, "What do you have in your house?" She replied, "I don't have anything in my house, other than some oil." And Elisha performed a miracle with the oil. He told her to borrow empty pots and they all became filled with oil. But if there was no oil to begin with, the miracle couldn't occur. Similarly, it was necessary that there be some oil for the Chanukah miracle to take place. The miracle of the first night was that the oil wasn't totally consumed,

leaving room for a miracle to take place on the following nights.

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

Someone had ten crates filled with gold coins. Nine were stolen. Using the gold coins in the tenth crate, he hired police to search for the nine stolen trunks. He also vowed that if they are found he will give three gold coins from each crate to *tzedakah*.

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

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

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

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

unaware of all the good Hashem does for them. For this awareness we say the *brachah* המעביר שנה מעיני.

Everything is Good

It states (*Tehillim* 69:3), מבעתי ביון, "I sunk into the Yavan clay..." The Sfas Emes says that מבעתי is from the word טבע, natural. Yavan claims everything is natural and people sink into that false philosophy. Yavan is therefore called חשך, darkness (see *Bereishis Rabba* 2:4) because when one thinks life is run by nature he lives a dark, disappointing life, because he isn't able to encourage himself with the awareness that everything is for the good. The truth is, even when Hashem's *hashgachah* isn't vividly seen, Hashem's *hashgachah* is always there, guiding us every step of the way.

We light the Chanukah candles after the sun sets to remember that even when Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* seems concealed, even then, miracles are happening to us.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21:) writes that the lights should burn, משתשקע החמה עד, שתכלה רגל מן השוק, "From sunset until there aren't people walking in the marketplace."

The Kedushas Levi explains, עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק can mean that we light the Chanukah lamps and ponder the wonders until תכלה, people will stop thinking that everything that happens in the world is routine, regular, natural (הרגל). Rather, we will know that everything happens by Hashem's *hashgachah*.

Reb Binyamin Zev Deitsch *zt'l*, *mashgiach* of Yeshivas Ponovizh, related that when he was a *bachur* in

Hungary, before the Holocaust, he was among a group of fifty *bachurim* drafted by the Hungarian army. Their parents called an emergency meeting. Their plan was to ask a doctor they knew to write up false medical reports for the fifty *bachurim*, stating they were ill and unfit for army service.

The doctor agreed to write up the documents for a price. All parents contributed whatever they could. Reb Binyamin Zev's parents, and the parents of one other *bachur*, who were wealthy, paid a greater sum than the others.

The medical letters arrived on the morning the *bachurim* were supposed to sign up for the army. They showed their reports to the draft board, and were exempt from military service.

However, the doctor only wrote up forty-eight letters. Reb Binyamin Zev, and the son of the other wealthy parents, didn't receive their letters. (Ironically, it was the children of the wealthy parents who paid the most money, who didn't get an exemption.)

Reb Binyamin Zev and the other *bachur* had to flee to Eretz Yisrael that day. They didn't even have time to say good-bye to their families properly. They had to escape as quickly as possible, before being arrested for deserting the army.

Reb Binyamin Zev recalls, "I remember how we felt that day. We didn't even have time to say good-bye to all members of our families. Compared to our 48 friends, we felt unfortunate. We arrived in Eretz Yisrael,

two young *bachurim* alone, having to fend for ourselves.

“A few years later, we realized that we were the fortunate ones. Because none of our friends survived, except for us, since we were in Eretz Yisrael...”

Reb Binyamin Zev learned from this episode that even when things seem bad, they are always for the good. Even when everything appears like sunset, the brilliant light of miracles shines.

Miracles Beyond Nature

It states (*Mishlei* 9:1), הצבה עמודיה שבעה "Hashem established the world on seven pillars." Nature is associated with the number seven. A week has seven days, music is made of seven notes, there are seven traits that make up a person's personality (חסד, גבורה, etc.), there are seven wisdoms, etc.

In the era of Moshiach, the world will be run with the number eight, as it states (*Tehillim* 6:1), למנצה על השמינית, “a song played on a harp of eight strings” because it will be a world above nature, run in a path of miracles.

As the Maharal (*Ner Mitzvah*) writes, “The natural world is comprised of seven, because this natural world was created in seven days... Eight is beyond nature... Therefore *milah* is on the eighth day, because *milah* is beyond nature [since by nature a child is born without a *milah*]... Torah is beyond nature. Therefore, it was given after

seven, as it states (*Devarim* 16:9) 'Count seven weeks...' and after the seven weeks, on the fiftieth day, the Torah was given... Chapter (119) in *Tehillim*, which discusses Torah has eight *pesukim* for each letter of the alef beis (תמוי'א אפי')... representing that Torah is beyond nature...”

The Maharal explains that the Chanukah miracle came in the merit of Torah, and therefore, the menorah miraculously remained lit for eight days. And that is why we celebrate Chanukah for eight days.

We learn from this that on Chanukah we enter a world that is beyond nature, a world where miracles can be the norm.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21:) states, והמהדרין מן המהדרין, those who seek to perform the mitzvos in the best way, בית שמאי אומרים יום ראשון מדליק שמונה, Beis Shamai says that on the first day he lights eight candles...”

The Chidushei HaRim *zt'l* asks, the Gemara begins in plural tense (המהדרין, "those who seek to do the mitzvos in the best way") and the Gemara switches to singular tense (יום ראשון מדליק שמונה, "on the first day *he* lights eight candles...").

The Chidushei HaRim explains that when the Gemara states, ביום ראשון מדליק שמונה, "on the first day he lights eight..." it means that on the first day of Chanukah Hashem shines the number eight onto the world and during

Chanukah the world functions in the mode of miracles.²⁴

Chanukah is eight days, because on Chanukah we enter a world beyond nature. In a world that is beyond nature there are no rules. The poor can become wealthy, the sick can become well. What the doctors say, and what statistics suggest, doesn't make a difference.

The Gemara (*Gittin* 30:) states, "If someone tells you that your friend died, you can believe him, but if someone tells you that your friend become wealthy, don't believe him." This is because the world follows the laws of nature, and generally, the poor remain poor. But on Chanukah, everything can turn around. It is the world of eight, where the rules of nature don't apply.

Praying for Miracles

On Chanukah, one may pray for miracles. As it states in *Shulchan Aruch* (187:4), "If one didn't say *Al HaNisim*, he doesn't repeat *Birchas HaMazon*, but he can say it in the הרחמן. One can say הרחמן הוא יעשה לנו נסים כמו שעשה בימים ההם בזמן הרחמן, הזה בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן.. "The Compassionate One should make miracles for us as He performed miracles in those days..."²⁵

Generally we don't daven for miracles. Hashem wants to lead the world according to the rules of nature.

The Gemara (24.) tells a story about a man who got *malkus* in Rava's *beis din* for a sin he committed, and he died. The Babylonian government heard about this and the king wanted to punish Rava. The king's mother advised the king that he

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

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

When one says *Al HaNisim* in the right place, one doesn't daven for miracles. But when one forgets *Al HaNisim*, he does. It seems that by forgetting to say *Al HaNisim* he earns a bonus, because now he can pray for miracles.

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

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

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

shouldn't start up with the Yidden, because Hashem does miracles for them.

The king asked, "Which miracles does He do?"

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

"How do you know?"

"When they need rain, they pray, and it immediately begins to rain."

"Perhaps they prayed a moment before it was about to rain. Let them request rain now, in the middle of the summer, and then we will know whether Hashem listens to their prayers or not."

It was Tamuz, a month it never rains in Bavel. The king's mother sent a message to Rava, explaining the gravity of the matter, and asking him to pray hard for rain.

Rava prayed, but it didn't rain.

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

flooded, and the rain water flowed into the Chidekel River.

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

His father told him that he shouldn't sleep in his bed. Rava immediately awoke, and slept elsewhere. In the morning, Rava looked at his bed and saw that it was stabbed with a knife many times. (The *sheidim* were given permission to harm Rava, and they were told where he sleeps. Since Rava wasn't there that night, his life was saved.)

We learn from this Gemara that it is dangerous, and improper, to pray for a miracle.²⁶ So how do we pray for miracles on Chanukah?

The Shaul u'Meishiv (*Divrei Shaul*) *zt'l* answers that during the eight days of Chanukah, the world is run in a mode of miracles, and therefore one can pray for miracles. The prohibition to daven for miracles is only when the world is run

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

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

The Maharasha (*Kiddushin* 29:) states, "A miracle that happens through *tefillah* isn't called a miracle." When a miracle occurs, one loses some of his good deeds. His good deeds are used as payment for the miracles. But when one attains a miracle through *tefillah*, it is considered natural, and not miraculous, and he doesn't lose his merits.

by the rules of nature. But on Chanukah miracles are the norm.

Sarah Imeinu gave birth to a child when she was ninety years old, and the Torah elaborates on this miracle. An even greater miracle happened with Yocheved, for she was 130 years old when she bore Moshe, but the Torah doesn't elaborate on that miracle. What's the difference?

The Dubno Magid *zt'l* explains that in Mitzrayim women were giving birth to six children at a time, and other miracles were happening. When miracles are the norm it wasn't outstanding that Yocheved gave birth at 130. Because when miracles abound they become the standard. Similarly, on Chanukah, miracles abound, and if one needs a salvation he will, *im yirtzeh Hashem*, receive it.

Gazing at the Chanukah *Lecht*

The Chavas Ya'ir (הגהות מקור חיים תרע"ב) (ב') writes, "In my opinion, the primary mitzvah is that the one who lit the *lecht* should be near the *lecht* for a half hour, looking at them and being happy with them."

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

The Yeitav Panim writes, "A *minhag* in Klal Yisrael is Torah; to sit and look at the candles. The reason is to draw down

the miracles of Chanukah by gazing at the Chanukah *lecht*."

It states (*Bamidbar* 21:8), עשה לך שרף ושים, "Make a snake, place it on a pole, and whoever was bit will see it and live." This *pasuk* hints to the *brachos* of Chanukah. עשה לך להדליק נר hints to the first *brachah*, הנוכה, because שרף means burns, like the candles burn. ושים אותו על גם hints to the *brachah* שעשה ניסים לאבותינו. And וחי hints to the *pasuk* because if someone was bit, by the *yetzer hara*, וראה אותו, he should gaze at the Chanukah *lecht*, וחי, and he will become like a new person.

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

Some say chapter קי"ט in *Tehillim*, because it has many requests for success in Torah and mitzvos.²⁷ And this is an ideal time for *tefillah*, because whenever one performs a mitzvah it is an *eis ratzon* for *tefillah*.

As the Tosefta (*Maasar Sheni* 5:15) writes, "Whoever is doing a mitzvah, it

27. The Leket Yoshav (p.43) writes that his rebbe, the Terumas HaDeshen would say chapter קי"ט in *Tehillim* every day. Certainly, it is a good time to say it while looking at the Chanukah *lecht*.

is a time to open your mouth in *tefillah* before Hashem.”

Similarly, the Rabbeinu b'Chaya (19:3) writes, “When a woman lights the Shabbos candles, she should pray that she merit children who are *talmidei chachamim*, who shine in Torah, because the *tefillah* is heard more after doing a mitzvah.”

We say אין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם בלבד, “We don’t have permission to use them, only to see them...” The Divrei Chaim *zt'l* said that this expression implies that when one sees the *lecht*, it is like he is using them. He compares this to going to a doctor who looks into the patient's eyes, and thereby knows the illness and the cure. Similarly, by looking at the Chanukah *lecht*, one can attain a *refuah* for all the ailments of our *neshamah*.

The Beis Avraham (נר ד' ד"ה רק) says that

Going Beyond Your Nature to Serve Hashem

When one goes beyond his nature to serve Hashem, Hashem does wonders and miracles for him – beyond nature.

Everyone has their comfort zone, the level that they are accustomed to serve

אין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם בלבד implies that looking at Chanukah *lecht* is a *refuah* and rectification for sins related to those who weren't cautious with their eyes.

A *bachur* strayed off the *derech*, and became involved in sorcery. Once, on Chanukah, he was speaking to his sorcery teacher on the phone. The sorcerer suddenly said, “What happened? You left me. Where are you?” At that moment the *bachur* was looking at the Chanukah *lecht* that were burning in his home. He told this to his teacher, who told him that he should go away, because he can't work sorcery when he looks at the Chanukah *lecht*.

We don't need support from these lowly sorcerers, however we tell it to show the effect Chanukah *lecht* can have on us, even on people who fall to very low levels...

Hashem. If a person can go beyond his natural comfort zone, and do more than he generally does, this will result with miracles happening to him. This rule applies to every day of the year, and especially on Chanukah.²⁸

28. The Mishnah teaches: “Be brazen like a leopard, light like an eagle, swift like a deer, and strong like a lion to do the will of your Father in heaven.” Why does the Mishnah express itself using animals? It could have written, “Be brazen, light, swift, and powerful.” We can answer that animals work with instinct. The deer doesn't *decide* to run fast, and the lion doesn't make a decision to be brave and powerful. They do these things instinctively. This describes how one should serve Hashem. He should be swift like a deer, powerful like a lion, almost instinctively with swiftness and with powerful strength to do Hashem's will. In *parashas Vayeira*, when the angels came to visit Avraham, they asked him, “Where is Sarah, your wife.” (18:9). The Ksav Sofer explained *bederech tzachus* (wittily) that the angels said, “It

Rebbe Yissacher Dov of Belz zy'a was collecting money for a poor family. One of his chassidim said, "I don't have money right now. When I have, I will give you."

Rebbe Yissacher Dov told him the following parable:

"There was a student in a university studying to be a doctor. After many years of study, he had to pass a final, oral exam, given by the top professors of the academy. If the student passed this test, he can be a doctor.

The doctor asked him, "What will you do when a patient comes to you bleeding profusely?"

"I will place *bonkers* (suction cups) to stop the bleeding."

"And if that doesn't work, what will you do?"

"I will give him a drop of iron."

"And if that doesn't help, what will you

do?"

"I will bandage him."

"And if you don't have any bandages, what will you do?"

The student thought about this question, but didn't know what to answer. The professor took the diploma and ripped it up. "You aren't ready to be a doctor. When someone is bleeding and you don't have bandages, you must be prepared to rip your own clothing to bandage the wound."

Rebbe Yissacher Dov explained to his chassid, "I'm collecting money for a poor family. Their hearts are bleeding. If you don't have money now, you should be prepared to sell your tallis and tefillin to help them."

This is an example of going beyond nature to serve Hashem. Everyone knows what holds them back from properly serving Hashem. We can all go beyond our nature, and in this merit, Hashem will bestow all the miracles of Chanukah onto us.

is known that women are more stingy to the guests than men are. Since you have prepared a very generous meal for us, we assume that she probably isn't home. Is that correct?"

Avraham told them that she was home, in the tent.

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

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

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

The son of the Chofetz Chaim was there, and he said, "I don't know whether Hashem does everything my father requests, but I do know that my father does everything Hashem requests." When one has this approach, even with self-sacrifice, going beyond the rules of nature to do Hashem's will, he will merit miracles, beyond nature, and Hashem will indeed do for him everything he requests.