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INTERNET PARSHA SHEET ON VAYEISHEV - 5773

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Britain's Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks The Refusal to be Comforted

The deception has taken place. Joseph has been sold into slavery. His brothers have dipped his coat in blood. They bring it back to their father, saying: "Look what we have found. Do you recognise it? Is this your son's robe or not?" Jacob recognised it and replied, "It is my son's robe. A wild beast has devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces." We then read:

Jacob rent his clothes, put on sackcloth, and mourned his son for a long time. His sons and daughters tried to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. He said, "I will go down to the grave mourning for my son." (37: 34-35)

Why did Jacob refuse to be comforted? There are laws in Judaism about the limits of grief – shiva, sheloshim, a year. There is no such thing as a bereavement for which grief is endless. The Gemara (Moed Katan 27b) says that G-d says to one who weeps beyond the appointed time, "You are not more compassionate than I."

A midrash gives a remarkable answer. "One can be comforted for one who is dead, but not for one who is still living." Jacob refused to be comforted because he had not yet given up hope that Joseph was still alive. That, tragically, is the fate of those who have lost members of their

family (the parents of soldiers missing in action, for example), but have as yet no proof that they are dead. They cannot go through the normal stages of mourning because they cannot abandon the possibility that the missing person is still capable of being rescued. Their continuing anguish is a form of loyalty; to give up, to mourn, to be reconciled to loss is a kind of betrayal. In such cases, grief lacks closure. To refuse to be comforted is to refuse to give up hope.

On what basis did Jacob continue to hope? Surely he had recognized Joseph's blood-stained coat and said, explicitly, "A wild beast had devoured him. Joseph has been torn to pieces"? Do these words not mean that he had accepted that Joseph was dead?

The late David Daube made a suggestion that I find convincing. The words the sons say to Jacob – haker na, "do you recognise this?" – have a quasi-legal connotation. Daube relates this passage to another, with which it has close linguistic parallels:

If a man gives a donkey, an ox, a sheep or any other animal to his neighbour for safekeeping and it dies or is injured or is taken away while no one is looking, the issue between them will be settled by the taking of an oath before the Lord that the neighbour did not lay hands on the other person's property . . . If it [the animal] was torn to pieces by a wild animal, he shall bring the remains as evidence and he will not be required to pay for the torn animal. (Shemot 22: 10-13)

The issue at stake is the extent of responsibility borne by a guardian (shomer). If the animal is lost through negligence, the guardian is at fault and must make good the loss. If there is no negligence, merely force majeure, an unavoidable, unforeseeable accident, the guardian is exempt from blame. One such case is where the loss has been caused by a wild animal. The wording in the law – tarof yitoref, "torn to pieces" – exactly parallels Jacob's judgment in the case of Joseph: tarof toraf Yosef, "Joseph has been torn to pieces."

We know that some such law existed prior to the giving of the Torah. Jacob himself says to Laban, whose flocks and herds have been placed in his charge, "I did not bring you animals torn by wild beasts; I bore the loss myself" (Bereishit 31: 39). This implies that guardians even then were exempt from responsibility for the damage caused by wild animals. We also know that an elder brother carried a similar responsibility for the fate of a younger brother placed in his charge (i.e. when the two were alone together). That is the significance of Cain's denial when confronted by G-d as to the fate of Abel: "Am I my brother's guardian [shomer]?"

We now understand a series of nuances in the encounter between Jacob and his sons, when they return without Joseph. Normally they would be held responsible for their younger brother's disappearance. To avoid this, as in the case of later biblical law, they "bring the remains as evidence." If those remains show signs of an attack by a wild animal, they must – by virtue of the law then operative – be held innocent. Their request to Jacob, haker na, must be construed as a legal request, meaning, "Examine the evidence." Jacob has no alternative but to do so, and in virtue of what he has seen, acquit them. A judge, however, may be forced to acquit someone accused of the crime because the evidence is insufficient to justify a conviction, yet he may hold lingering private doubts. So Jacob was forced to find his sons innocent, without necessarily believing what they said. Jacob did not believe it, and his refusal to be comforted shows that he was unconvinced. He continued to hope that Joseph was still alive. That hope was eventually justified. Joseph was still alive, and eventually father and son were re-united. The refusal to be comforted sounded more than once in Jewish history. The prophet Jeremiah heard it in a later age:

This is what the Lord says:
"A voice is heard in Ramah,
Mourning and great weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children

And refusing to be comforted,
Because her children are no more.”
This is what the Lord says:
“Restrain your voice from weeping,
And your eyes from tears,
For your work will be rewarded,” says the Lord.
“They will return from the land of the enemy.
So there is hope for your future,” declares the Lord,
“Your children will return to their own land.” (Jeremiah 31:
15-17)

Why was Jeremiah sure that Jews would return? Because they refused to be comforted – meaning, they refused to give up hope. So it was during the Babylonian exile, in one of the great expressions of all time of the refusal to be comforted:

By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept,
As we remembered Zion . . .
How can we sing the songs of the Lord in a strange land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
May my right hand forget [its skill],
May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
If I do not remember you,
If I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy. (Psalm 137: 1-6)

It is said that Napoleon, passing a synagogue on Tisha B'Av, heard the sounds of lamentation. “What are the Jews crying for?” he asked one of his officers. “For Jerusalem,” he replied. “How long ago did they lose it?” “More than 1,700 hundred years ago.” “A people who can mourn for Jerusalem so long, will one day have it restored to them,” he is reputed to have replied.

Jews are the people who refused to be comforted because they never gave up hope. Jacob did eventually see Joseph again. Rachel's children did return to the land. Jerusalem is once again the Jewish home. All the evidence may suggest otherwise: it may seem to signify irretrievable loss, a decree of history that cannot be overturned, a fate that must be accepted. Jews never believed the evidence because they had something else to set against it – a faith, a trust, an unbreakable hope that proved stronger than historical inevitability. It is not too much to say that Jewish survival was sustained in that hope. Where did it come from? From a simple – or perhaps not so simply – phrase in the life of Jacob. He refused to be comforted. And so – while we live in a world still scarred by violence, poverty and injustice—must we.

To read more writings and teachings from the Chief Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, please visit www.chief Rabbi.org.

From: ravfrand-owner@torah.org on behalf of **Rabbi Yissocher Frand** [ryfrand@torah.org] Sent: December 15, 2006 12:38 AM To: ravfrand@torah.org Subject: **Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYeishev** "RavFrاند" List - Rabbi Frand on Parshas VaYeishev
These divrei Torah were adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Tapes on the weekly portion: Tape # 528, Sending Someone on a Fatal Mission <http://www.yadychiel.org>

The Yetzer HaTov Is Not A Noodnik

This week's parsha contains the incident of Yosef's interaction with Potiphar's wife. She had her eye on Yosef and wanted to commit adultery with him. She pestered him day after day trying to get him to agree. According to Chazal, her motive was more than just passion or lust. Her astrologers informed her that she and Yosef were destined to have common descendants. She felt that Yosef was destined to father a child from her and that it would be most appropriate for them to have this illicit liaison. (She did not realize that it would be with her daughter – Osnas – that Yosef would have his two sons).

Her "pestering" Yosef every day involved her repeating to Yosef her erroneous belief that they were destined to have children together: "It is a mitzvah"; "The future is dependent on this"; "This is G-d's Will". Nevertheless, Yosef's response was constant: "How can I do this evil act and I will sin to G-d." [Bereshis 39:9] In other words, he told her: "You tell me it is a 'mitzvah', I'm telling you it is an aveirah [sin]."

The Sefas Emes asks – how was Yosef so sure that it was a sin and that Potiphar's wife was in error? The Sefas Emes answers with a sharp Yiddish comment: The Yetzer Tov is not a noodnik. In other words, a person's "good inclination" does not pester him.

This is not just a humorous comment. This thought contains a basic truth. There is a pattern to the activities of the Yetzer HaTov and the Yetzer HaRah. Things that come easily, things that a person wants to do, things that a person is excited about doing and has the energy to do – those are the things that we need to be careful about.

Things that are a "pain", things that do not come easily and that are troublesome, and that we do not seem to always have the energy for – these are things the Yetzer HaTov would want us to do.

Rav Sholom Schwadron cites a teaching from Avos d'Rav Nassan: When a person is aroused by a passion and is contemplating doing an immoral act, all his limbs listen to him – he has energy and he moves forward with a bounce and with enthusiasm. This is because the Evil Inclination rules over the 248 limbs of a person. Therefore when the Yetzer Harah orders a person to "do it", there is always energy for the task. On the other hand, when someone is on the way to do a mitzvah, all of his limbs become lazy.

It is hard to get out of bed to go to minyan. But if someone has a business appointment where he knows that he stands to make a lot of money, there will be no problem jumping out of bed. This is not to say, chas v'Sholom, making a business deal is a sin – but it certainly can't be equated with doing a mitzvah. And how much more so does this apply when a person is on his way to doing something that he should not be doing.

This was the insight of the Sefas Emes. Yosef knew that if this woman was pestering him, over and over and over: "Do it, do it, do it" – then it was obviously not a message from his "Good Inclination". Yosef knew that the Yetzer HaTov is not a noodnik.

It is with this perspective that we need to judge so many things in life. When we are weighing an act – "Is this a mitzvah or an aveirah?" – let us always apply the principle that the Good Inclination does not pester us.

A Sermon Before Napoleon

At the end of the parsha, Yosef finds himself in prison with two ministers of Pharaoh. They each had a terrible nightmare and were unable to come up with satisfactory interpretations. When the Sar HaMashkim [chamberlain of the cupbearers] recited his strange dream to Yosef, Yosef gave him the following interpretation:

The three tendrils are a three-day period. In another three days Pharaoh will count you and will restore you to your post, and you will place Pharaoh's cup in his hand as was the former practice when you were his cupbearer, at which time if you would think of me with yourself [ki im zechartani...] when you will have benefited, and you will please do me a kindness and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building. For indeed I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews and even here I have not done anything for them to have put me in the pit." [Bereshis 4:12-15]

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik comments on the flow of these pasukim. We would expect Yosef to first interpret the Sar HaMashkim's dream and then ask for a favor that if Yosef's interpretation indeed comes true, the Sar HaMashkim should help get him out of jail. Rav Chaim explains that the words "ki im zechartani..." -- introducing Yosef's request for assistance -- are actually part and parcel of Yosef's dream

interpretation. The linkage of this pasuk with the previous pasuk indicates that it is all part of the message of the dream. "ki im..." may be translated "so that..."

Rav Chaim then related a story that goes back to the time of Napoleon.

Napoleon had won a major battle and made a big party. He invited everybody to speak in honor of the great victory. Speaker after speaker got up and no one said anything worthwhile. Napoleon then inquired if there was a Rabbi in the town and summoned him to expound on the occasion.

His lieutenants went out and found some Rabbi from a small nearby village and brought him to the banquet, ordering him to say something in front of Napoleon, the most powerful person in the world.

It happened to be Parshas Vayeshev. The Rabbi related the story of Yosef in prison with the royal ministers. He commented as follows:

Under normal circumstances, when someone in a high position of government is accused of a terrible crime, the most that he can expect to accomplish is to receive an acquittal and then go off into obscurity. In the natural course of events, it is never expected that such a disgraced official will get his old job back.

The Sar HaMashkim, one of the most prestigious posts in ancient times, was rotting away in jail for a crime that he committed. All of a sudden he has a strange dream and Yosef tells him 'not only will you be freed -- you will get your old prestigious job back as if nothing happened.' This is very strange -- it just does not make any sense. Why should the Sar HaMashkim have believed Yosef?

Yosef told the Sar HaMashkim: "Do you know why you and I are in this jail cell together? Do you know why you were stuck in this pit in the first place and why you will be restored to your old position of glory? It is all KI IM ZECHARYANI -- in order that you remember me to Pharaoh and help me get out of here.

The only reason it will happen is because it is part of G-d's master plan -- so that I should be able to get into the good graces of the King of Egypt. Therefore, it is important that you listen to me and play your destined role -- to mention me to Pharaoh.

The Rav then told Napoleon Bonaparte: How is it that you are so successful in conquering the world? It is because you have been good to the Jews. You emancipated the Jews and brought them freedom. This is the reason you have gotten as far as you have. Your key to success, Napoleon, is to continue being the friend of the Jews and continue with your noble work.

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, WA DavidATwersky@aol.com Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman; Baltimore, MD dhoffman@torah.org This write-up was adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tape series on the weekly Torah portion. The complete list of halachic topics covered in this series for Parshas Vayeishev are provided below: Tapes or a complete catalogue can be ordered from the Yad Yechiel Institute, PO Box 511, Owings Mills MD 21117-0511. Call (410) 358-0416 or e-mail tapes@yadyechiel.org or visit <http://www.yadyechiel.org/> for further information. RavFrand, Copyright © 2006 by Rabbi Yissocher Frand and Torah.org
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re Shabbat Shalom from Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh!

The Dreams and their Meaning

Rav Zechariah Tubi, Rosh Kollel Rabbanut

(Translated by Rav Meir Orlian)

Yosef dreamt two dreams. The first: "We were binding sheaves in the middle of the field, when, behold! -- my sheaf arose and also remained standing; then behold! -- your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf." (Bereishit 37:7) The second: "The sun, the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." (37:9)

The meaning of the first dream is of economic strength and wealth, expressed by the sheaves, which symbolize something material and economic. Yosef stands in the center and the others bow down to him, but he is still not above them. He, too, is envisioned as "my sheaf." Nonetheless, the brothers respond with hatred, "They hated him even more -- because of his dreams and because of his talk." (37:8)

The meaning of the second dream is of kingship. Here Yosef does not suffice with his being ruler and their all coming to him to buy food, but rather he pushes towards the rank of king. "The sun, the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." In other words, I am G-d's anointed. If his father and mother bow down to him, this is only when he will be king and they are obligated to honor the king. Here he rises above his brothers, and therefore, "His brothers were jealous of him." (37:11)

Were his dreams fulfilled? The first dream certainly was fulfilled, since the brothers came down to buy food and surrounded Yosef and bowed down to him. This is the meaning of, "your sheaves gathered around and bowed down to my sheaf."

Was the second dream fulfilled? Yosef did everything he could so that his father would also come down to Egypt and bow to him, and then he would hand him the crown. But Yosef did not merit this; Yehuda takes the kingship. Already at the time of Yosef's sale, the Torah interrupts with the story of Yehuda and Tamar: "Yehuda went down from his brothers ... and he called him Peretz." (ch. 38) The Torah is saying that with the birth of Peretz the kingship passes on to Yehuda. The debate between Yosef and Yehuda at the beginning of Parshat Vayigsh was around kingship, as Chazal comment (Bereishit Rabbah 22):

"Yehuda approached him," etc. "Behold! the kings" -- these are Yehuda and Yosef; "crossed together" -- this one was angry with that one, and that one was angry with this one; "they saw and were astonished" -- these are the [other] tribes. They said: The kings are debating one another; what do we care?

Yosef and Yehuda struggled over kingship. Yosef pushes to be king, and waits for his father to come down and bow to him, but this does not happen. Yosef is forced to reveal himself to his brothers even before Yosef comes down to Egypt. "Yosef could not control himself ... He said, 'I am Yosef your brother that you sold me to Egypt ... Go up quickly to my father and say to him: Thus says your son Yosef.'" (45:1) It is already clear to Yosef that his father will not bow down to him, and will not hand the crown over to him; the second dream will not be fulfilled.

Yaakov is also careful not to kiss Yosef when they meet, and he reads the Shema instead, so that it should not be understood that he is transferring the kingship to him, as we find a kiss of kingship with Shaul: "Shmuel took the pitcher of oil and poured on his head and kissed him." (Shmuel I 10:1) Therefore, Yaakov was concerned that if he would kiss Yosef it would be understood as transferring the kingship to him, whereas it had already been given to Yehuda. Yosef does not succeed in fulfilling the second dream, "The sun, the moon and eleven stars were bowing down to me." Yosef paves the road for the kingship of Yehuda, while he himself remained only a ruler.

Yaakov says about Yehuda in his blessings, "Yehuda, your brothers will acknowledge you, your hand [will be] in your enemies nape, your father's sons will bow down to you." (49:9) In the end, the bowing down will be to Yehuda: "The scepter shall not depart from Yehuda, nor a leader from among his descendants, until Shiloh arrives and his will be an assemblage of nations." (49:10)

Yosef receives the blessing of "blessing of heaven from above, blessings of the deep crouching below" (49:25); he receives all the blessings except for kingship. Yehuda, son of Leah, who represents the trait of gevurah (control) receives the kingship, since kingship draws its strength from the trait of gevurah. From Yehuda descends David king of

Israel, who is G-d's Messiah – may he appear speedily in our days!
(Based on Divrei Zikaron by Rabbi J.B. Soloveitchik zt"l.)

<http://www.jewishpress.com/judaism/halacha-hashkafa/>

When One Forgets To Say Vesein Tal U'matar

By: Rabbi Raphael Fuchs

Published: December 5th, 2012

The Jews living outside Eretz Yisrael began reciting vesein tal u'matar in the Shemoneh Esrei this week. If one does not say vesein tal u'matar (instead continuing to say "vesein berachah") and finishes the Shemoneh Esrei, he must repeat the Shemoneh Esrei. If one accidentally does not daven at all, he must daven two Shemoneh Esreis during the following tefillah. If one did not say vesein tal u'matar and finished davening and only remembers this fact at the time of the next tefillah, he must daven two Shemoneh Esreis at the next tefillah.

If one does not recite ya'aleh veyavo during Shacharis and only remembers to do so during Minchah, he must daven two Shemoneh Esreis during Minchah. Tosafos, in Berachos 26b, says that if one forgets to say ya'aleh veyavo at Minchah on Rosh Chodesh or on any other day that we recite ya'aleh veyavo, he does not repeat Shemoneh Esrei during Ma'ariv. This is because at Ma'ariv he can no longer say ya'aleh veyavo since Rosh Chodesh is over, and he already davened the 19 berachos of Shemoneh Esrei. As the only reason why he would repeat the Shemoneh Esrei would be to say ya'aleh veyavo, he should not repeat the Shemoneh Esrei at all since he cannot recite ya'aleh veyavo during Ma'ariv (which is the next day).

Reb Chaim Soloveitchik (stensils 1) says that the halacha of Tosafos does not apply to one who forgets to recite vesein tal u'matar on Friday by Minchah. For even though he will not be able to say vesein tal u'matar by Ma'ariv (since it is Shabbos), he must nevertheless repeat the Shemoneh Esrei. He explains that this is because when one fails to say vesein tal u'matar it is different than when one does not recite ya'aleh veyavo. Even if one forgets to say ya'aleh veyavo, he has fulfilled his obligation in davening – except that he lacks having recited an external prayer, namely ya'aleh veyavo.

On the other hand, when one fails to mention vesein tal u'matar he lacks having said the actual berachah of "bareich aleinu" and has therefore not fulfilled his obligation in davening. Vesein tal u'matar is not an external prayer that we insert into the Shemoneh Esrei; rather, it is part of the actual berachah. So when one does not say it he has not fulfilled his obligation in davening and it is as if he had not davened at all. As a result he must daven two Shemoneh Esreis at Ma'ariv on Shabbos, even though he will not be reciting vesein tal u'matar in those Shemoneh Esreis.

Many have asked the following question on Reb Chaim's halacha: The Gemara in Berachos 29a says that if one does not mention vesein tal u'matar in its proper place (in "bareich aleinu...") he can say it in "...shomeia tefillah." The halacha follows this Gemara, as it is found in Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 117:5. If vesein tal u'matar is indeed part of the actual berachah of "bareich aleinu," how can one say it in a different berachah?

If one only remembers that he forgot to mention vesein tal u'matar after he has already passed the berachah of "shomeia tefillah" but before he has finished Shemoneh Esrei, there is a machlokes Rishonim as to where he must return to in the Shemoneh Esrei – "bareich aleinu" or "shomeia tefillah." Tosafos, in Ta'anis 3b, says that one should return to the berachah of "shomeia tefillah." The Rambam (Hilchos Tefillah 10:9) and the Shulchan Aruch say that one must return to the berachah of "bareich aleinu."

It seems that the Rishonim who opine that one should return to the berachah of "shomeia tefillah" do not believe that vesein tal u'matar is part of the actual berachah of "bareich aleinu." They believe that it is an

added request (bakashah) that can either be inserted in the berachah of "bareich aleinu" or "shomeia tefillah." Therefore, when one realizes that he did not say vesein tal u'matar and has already passed "shomeia tefillah," he should go back to the nearest berachah where he may recite this request.

The Rambam and Shulchan Aruch, who both say that one should return all the way back to the berachah of "bareich aleinu," seemingly hold that vesein tal u'matar is part of the berachah of "bareich aleinu." Hence they say that one should return to "bareich aleinu" even though the berachah of "shomeia tefillah" is closer. The reason why we allow one who forgot to say vesein tal u'matar in "bareich aleinu" to recite it in the berachah of "shomeia tefillah" (if he remembers before he gets there) is because the berachah of "shomeia tefillah" serves as a tashlumin for all the middle berachos of Shemoneh Esrei. Similarly, if one forgot to say any of the integral parts of any other middle berachah, he would be able to make it up in the berachah of "shomeia tefillah" (see Be'er Halacha 117:5 d"him). But when one forgets to mention it even in the berachah of "shomeia tefillah," the halacha of tashlumin no longer applies and he must return to the berachah of which it is a part – namely "bareich aleinu."

Reb Chaim's halacha fits well with the Rambam and Shulchan Aruch, who opine that vesein tal u'matar is part of the actual berachah. Therefore, one who forgets to recite it on Friday by Minchah would have to daven two Shemoneh Esreis at Ma'ariv on Shabbos. The Rishonim who say that one must return to "shomeia tefillah" seemingly opine that vesein tal u'matar is not part of the berachah of "bareich aleinu." Thus, they hold that one who forgot to say vesein tal u'matar on Friday by Minchah would not daven two Ma'ariv Shemoneh Esreis on Shabbos.

from: Shabbat Shalom <shabbatshalom@ounetwork.org> date: Thu, Dec 6, 2012 at 11:47 PM

Shabbat Shalom from the OU

Chanukah: A Generation in Need of Rededication

By Rabbi Eliyahu Safran

The strength and numbers of Orthodox Jews in America has never been greater, and yet any of us concerned with Judaism's future must admit that we confront a future no less frightening than the future that was evident to Hannah's noble sons in Modi'in all those centuries ago.

Then, Jewish ritual and belief was crushed by a dominant Greek culture that had been imposed upon but—let's be honest—a culture gladly borne by the Jewish populace. As much as we might want to argue otherwise, we must wrestle with the understanding that the majority of the Jews of the Hasmonean Era embraced Greek culture.

While in America there is no military or cultural imposition that demands a compromise of Jewish values or practice, there is no less of an embrace of the larger, secular, non-Jewish culture.

The sad fact is, we are losing many of our children.

To believe otherwise is to willfully place blinders upon our eyes and shackles upon our hearts. Anyone who is honest and who works with Orthodox teens, even those who have received a yeshiva (Jewish day school) education, knows that too many do not find meaning, fulfillment or purpose in Judaism. They do not feel the beauty of Judaism, or the power of the halachot (laws). Instead, they chafe against a "lifestyle" they feel is restrictive and complain that being religious simply is not "fun."

Dr. Simcha Katz, Orthodox Union President, outlines some examples of the malaise affecting our young people in his Jewish Action (Winter 5773/2012) article, noting how they text on Shabbat, and argue that the use of the ubiquitous technology is morally indistinguishable from adults speaking in shul (synagogue). He identifies an "underground" teen Shabbat culture that even allows for Friday night parties in empty houses or basements; parties organized by text or Tweet and always unsupervised; parties that often involve music and, too often, drugs and alcohol.

Was the threat to Judaism any greater during the Hasmonean Era? Was the pain that Judah Maccabee felt when he looked upon his Jewish brethren any more acute than the ache a caring Rosh Yeshiva feels today? Yet, what army do we fight to save Judaism? Where is our enemy?

Our Jewish children seem lost – determinedly so! Rather than the warmth of a small minyan (prayer group), they feel embraced by their hundreds of Facebook “friends”, seemingly unable to appreciate the power of what having a true friend actually means.

Imagine! Hundreds of friends! More than a thousand even! I am nearing retirement age, having lived a good life and yet I only require the fingers of one hand to count the number of my friends—friends I know, cherish, love and respect. Hundreds of friends? Ridiculous! These are not friends. They are faceless faces. Ciphers on an iPad, or a smartphone. The relationship is no deeper than the pixels found on the computer monitor. These “friends” offer but a shallow glimmer of what life and relationships should be.

Those pixels shine only outward, never inward.

Yet, this is what draws our children.

And therein lies the challenge for those of us who, like Judah of old, face if we want to redeem this generation and to bring about a genuine rededication; how do we help our children learn to shine their light inward as well as outward?

Tractate Shabbat teaches that, “It is a mitzvah to place the Chanukah candles outside the door to one’s home, but in times of danger, it is sufficient to place the candles on one’s table (inside).” On its face, this text is a simple directive for a practical matter – where is the proper place for the menorah to be placed.

Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh – every Jew is responsible for the other. Judaism is, first and foremost, a communal expression. No Jew should live isolated from the rest of his community, nor should he be concerned only with his own existence and survival. Each Jew is obligated to reach out to his fellow Jews. In this regard, placing our menorah on the outside of our houses symbolizes this essential lesson. We bring our light to those who are still in the dark; we seek to enlighten those who have not as yet had the opportunity and privilege to be on the inside. Our light shines outward.

As Jewish parents and teachers of Judaism we set our light to shine as an example of all that is beautiful about Judaism. Still, in order to be a light to others, we must also be a light to ourselves. Being responsible for others is not to be irresponsible to the self. In times of danger, when there is a threat from the outside, we should keep the lights on our own table, surrounded securely by children and family who are willing to share in the light of Judaism.

For so many years, the threat we faced as Jews was clear. Our enemies were on the outside. By kindling the Chanukah lights and placing our menorah on the outside of our homes, we declared a victory over these enemies.

Judah Macabee’s enemy was clear. Can the same be said for our own?

Our modern world threatens us less with annihilation by violence and force than by the simple seductiveness of assimilation. Technology creates the illusion of intimacy while denying the truth of it; creates the illusion of communication while removing the need for personal trust and faith, thereby making a mockery of real communication.

Against such a wily threat, the lights of our menorah must not only shine outward but inward, into our homes and souls. The menorah must stand as a source of light to maintain and reinforce the stability of our greatest source of strength – the Jewish home and its Jewish family.

The mitzvah of lighting Chanukah lights is so important that, like the mitzvah of the four cups of wine at Pesach, halacha teaches that a Jew lacking funds to buy candles for Chanukah or wine, must go out and beg, to literally “stretch out his hand” in order to fulfill these special mitzvot. Why? What is so important that it would make a needy Jew a beggar?

Unlike other mitzvot, if a Jew has positive and proper intentions but lacks the mean, the intention is enough. Not so for these two mitzvot. These two call for *pirsume nisa* – public display and declaration. No matter what, action is commanded.

Unlike so many other festivals, when we celebrate the miracles brought about by the grace and mercy of God alone, Chanukah is a celebration of God’s grace and mercy coupled with the courage and bravery of the Hasmoneans.

The Temple was not redeemed by God’s grace. Rather, God graced the determination of those brave men and woman who actively fought the Hellenist desecration of the Temple and Jewish identity. The fight against assimilation, secularization, and ignorance can never be God’s alone. It is a fight that calls for “the work of our hands.”

So too, the work of our own generation. We cannot be satisfied because the enrollment in yeshivot causes classrooms to burst at the seams; we cannot be satisfied when the power of the “Jewish vote” is sought by the powerful; we cannot be satisfied when town councils accede to construction of communal Eruvin.

We cannot be so smug as to think these things alone constitute victory, not when our children are dropping out and falling by the wayside, not when a party on Shabbat is our children’s idea of the appropriate celebration of this glorious day.

There is so much work to be done.

When we succeed, as we did on Chanukah, we not only praise God with *brachot*, but we also extol “the work of our hands.” All the more difficult, I would add, when the enemy does not amass an army against us.

The Talmud teaches that the proper time for kindling the Chanukah lights is “when the sun begins to set.” The simple reading of this is that we light our Chanukah lights at the end of the Jewish day, at sundown. However, the *remez* understanding recognizes that it is precisely when the sun sets, and darkness gathers, that fear and trembling set in, that candles need to be lit.

Intermarriage. Teens “falling away.” Internet culture. Diminished Jewish communal involvement and concern.. This is the impending darkness we fear. It is precisely in response to such awesome and dark realities that more and more candles need to be lit. Beit Shamai advised that we begin with a big flame of eight candles so that we may burn through the contemporary scene of decay and Hellenism. But, as usual, Beit Hillel offered the more accepted perspective. We begin with just one, small candle. With a single spark. From the one little spark, we work our way up, slowly and surely, to bigger and stronger lights – *mosif veholech*.

How important are the Chanukah lights to the challenge of our times? Among the laws of Chanukah, we find that, “wicks and oils which may not be used on the Shabbat may be used for Chanukah.” Reb Mendel of Kotz claimed that *neshamat* – souls (*ner Hashem nishmat adam*) which may resist the beauty and sacredness of Shabbat might be moved by the observance of Chanukah.

Even during the time of the Hasmoneans, when Jews were alienated and removed from Jewish observance, they were moved by Judah Maccabee’s call to join the struggle for Jewish independence, sovereignty and pride.

Another law regarding the lighting of the Chanukah menorah gets closer to the sod of Chanukah observance. If a Jew is unable to light or participate in the lighting of the menorah but merely sees a menorah belonging to someone else, he is permitted to recite two of the blessings recited when kindling the lights – *she’asa nisim l’avoteinu* (Who performed miracles for our forefathers) and *shehecheyanu* (the blessing of gratitude for reaching a significant time or season.)

Our gratitude, more than our fear, must define this holiday. Despite the challenges we face, let us take faith from the mighty struggles of our forebears. Let us dedicate the time, resources and energy to bringing our young people back. Let us help them identify with Jewish destiny and history. How? Not by spending all our time in front of computers on the Internet, or texting ourselves! But by teaching and learning from them! By listening to them! By showing by our compassion, sensitivity and care what it means to truly care for another, rather than an avatar.

Our task is overwhelming but, as Rabbi Tarfon taught, ours is not to complete the task... nor is it to turn away from it. With each simple step, with each modest candle, we will go forward.

We celebrate Chanukah because of the purification of a small can of oil; the triumph of light over darkness. Even after full independence was attained, our festival remained a commemoration of the miracle of lights, not of political supremacy. The purpose of the Hasmonean uprising was not military power; it was light of Torah, mitzvot, commitments, authentic Jewish education, vibrant and dynamic Jewish homes, synagogues and schools.

Only children who learn primary Jewish sources, who study Jewish history, tradition and heritage and who appreciate their ancestors and identify with their language and customs, can be expected to be dedicated – even if they merely see the lighted menorah! The *Kedushat Levi* concludes that the Talmud’s statement regarding the law of Chanukah, *hadlakah osah mitzvah* – the actual lighting of the fire is the essence of the mitzvah – has as its ultimate goal to create fire, excitement, enthusiasm and yearning to create light. Jewish education, exciting and creative Jewish education, is the spark to sparking that contagious fire. But study must lead to more than intellectual understanding, or even spiritual insight. Our study must lead to a desire to cleave to our people.

Only light conquers darkness!

It is time that we rededicate ourselves to the real purpose of Chanukah. The lights of Chanukah were meant to banish our inner darkness. It is time that we emerge from the shadows of the virtual world and illuminate our real world. This year, do your share to let the light in.

Rabbi Dr. Eliyahu Safran serves as OU Kosher’s vice president of communications and marketing.

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The TorahWeb Foundation
Emunah and Bitachon

The parsha ends with Yosef Hatzadik asking the sar hamashkim to repay the kindness he showed him by remembering to try to get him out of prison. The sar hamashkim forgets all about Yosef for two years. According to the medrash, this forgetting was not a mere coincidence, rather Yosef was punished with remaining in prison an additional two years for lacking proper bitachon. Yosef should not have requested anything of the sar hamashkim.

The commentaries find this mesdrash very hard to understand - isn't it always expected of us to do our hishtadlus and act as if there were no hashgacha pratis? At the beginning of parshas Vayishlach we read that Yaakov Avinu prepared himself for his meeting with Esav not only with tefillah, but also with doron and milchama. What was wrong with Yosef asking the sar hamashkim to try to get him released from prison?

To understand this medrash we must understand what exactly does bitachon really is. The Chazon Ish points out that while many think that bitachon means that one in a dangerous predicament should always have the attitude that everything will work out well in the end, this understanding can not be correct. Why should one assume that the danger will pass without affecting him - was he notified of this by a navi?

Included in emunah is belief in hashgacha pratis. Chazal (Chullin 7b) tell us that "No one hurts his finger in this world if such was not ordained from above" and "No one can touch anything that was intended for someone else" (Yoma 38b.) Records are kept in heaven on all people, and everyone will get what he deserves. We have emunah (we believe) that whatever will happen to me is the will of Hashem. Whether I survive or not is up to Hakadosh Baruch Hu, and I can not possibly suffer if this is not the wish of Hashem.

Bitachon requires that we act in accordance with our emunah, i.e. in accordance with this principle of faith that there is hashgacha pratis. While one must engage in hishtadlus, he should not fall to pieces considering the possibility that he may accidentally (i.e. not in accordance with the divine will) die, etc. The outcome of all situations is dictated by the will of Hashem, and everything Hashem does is ultimately l'tov.

The Egyptians of old were known as an ungrateful bunch. As such, for Yosef to ask the sar hamashkim to remember him was grasping at straws; it was a totally ineffective act which would only be engaged in out of desperation. One who has emunah in hashgacha pratis would always maintain his calm and never fall to pieces. Bitachon means that one acts in accordance with his emunah in hashgacha pratis. Losing one's clam and falling into a state of desperation indicates that one's belief in hashgacha pratis is not really that strong.

Baruch merachim al ha'aretz - we believe not only in hashgacha klalis, that Hashem looks after the entire world with an overall perspective, but also in baruch meracheim al habriyos, that He looks after each person individually, i.e. with hashgacha pratis.

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From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein
Weekly Parsha :: Rabbi Berel Wein
Vayeshev

Life generally and Jewish life particularly, is unpredictable, surprising, mysterious and enigmatic. Yaacov expects that after his encounter with

Lavan and Eisav the worst is behind him. But the fun is just about to begin. Who could predict that after the sibling controversies between Yishmael and Yitzchak, Yaacov and Eisav that the greatest sibling controversy in Jewish history would now begin?

All sorts of mysterious and inexplicable events conspire to bring this story along. Why does Yaacov give Yosef a special tunic and show such favoritism in front of his other children? Why does he send Yosef on such an apparently dangerous mission to find his brothers? Who is the mysterious man that leads into the lair of Shimon and Levi? And why is the final result of all of this the sale of Yosef as a slave destined for Egyptian bondage?

Later in the parsha, how does Yehuda commit such an apparently immoral act and why is he nevertheless rewarded as being the ancestor of Jewish royalty and messianic destiny? And why does Peretz push his way out of his mother's womb ahead of Zerach?

The Torah grants us no answers to any of these fantastic events. Midrash offers various comments and interpretations to help us somewhat understand this chain of events. But at the end of the story, it all remains one great enigma wrapped in heavenly mystery. I am very poor at solving mysteries or explaining very difficult, complex torah issues and biblical narrative. Therefore I content myself with observing in wonder the story that the Torah relates to us.

The prophet Yeshayahu taught us that God's ways are not our ways and that his guiding hand in all human affairs remains invisible, mysterious and most wondrous. This is the basic thrust of how Jewish tradition viewed not only Biblical narrative but all of Jewish and human history. In our time the Holocaust was unforeseen unbelievable and even after its occurrence it is still subject to denial by millions of people. Who could have imagined a Jewish state emerging in the Land of Israel against internal and external odds, expectations and predictions? And how, after millennium of Torah tradition and ritual observance would that State bring forth as an apparent bastion of secularism and even atheism? Yet all of this has happened, and the wonders of Jewish life continue to expand before our very eyes. Israel has become much more of a Jewish state than a socialist one. Anti-Semitism has never been stronger and yet the Jewish people have never felt as emboldened and strong as it is today.

The enormous rebirth of Torah scholarship and study within the Jewish people the world over and especially here in Israel is perhaps the greatest surprise of our time. All of this should make us wary of expert predictions, all-knowing politicians and other savants who claim to know our future and what is really in our best interests. Mysteries of the parsha are themselves the message of the parsha.

Shabat shalom

From Ohr Somayach <ohr@ohr.edu>
To weekly@ohr.edu
Subject Torah Weekly

Ohr Somayach :: Torah Weekly :: Parshat Vayeshev
For the week ending 8 December 2012 / 23 Kislev 5773
by Rabbi Yaakov Asher Sinclair - www.seasonsofthemoon.com
Insights

Iron Yarmulke

(Yosef said to the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers): "If only you would think of me... and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building." (40:14)

Something very strange happens on the twenty-fifth of the Hebrew month of Kislev. Two completely different festivals are observed. One festival celebrates a military triumph by a small group of partisans who manage by their own bravery to overcome vastly superior forces and restore Jewish statehood to the Land of Israel. The other commemorates a

supernatural victory against powers of darkness that wished to adulterate the Jewish People and their Holy Torah.

The bizarre thing is that both these festivals have the same name.

They are both called "Chanuka".

The secular version of the Chanuka story makes Mattityahu and Yehuda Maccabee sound like characters out of a Cyborg movie. True, there's an eight-branched candelabra somewhere there at the back of the set, but Chanuka is really a nationalistic shoot-em-up where the good guys win and the bad guys lose and G-d got written out of the plot at the first script meeting.

The other version of Chanuka focuses on the supernatural events that surround Chanuka. The miracle of the oil lasting eight days; of a small minority who manage to hold onto their Judaism against the blandishments of materialism and hedonism. True, there's a military victory somewhere in there, but it's a miraculous victory against impossible odds, a victory which is no more than the revelation of G-d's providential Hand.

There's a fine line between faith and folly. There's an equally fine line between thinking that the Jewish People win wars because we have the best tanks and planes and the best training.

In 1967, the Six Day War opened with a blistering attack on the Egyptian airfields by the Israeli air force. The Israeli air force managed to knock out 90% of the Egyptian planes while they were still on the ground. Now, 90% is an interesting statistic — because it can't happen. Warplanes bombing a tiny ground target under fire can achieve 40%, maybe 50%. But 90% doesn't happen.

After the Six Day War finished, you couldn't buy a set of tefillin in the whole of Israel. There were appeals in the United States for anyone who had a spare pair to send them to Israel. The Jewish People realized that G-d had given them a miraculous victory against five Arab armies on four fronts, and the upswell in the observance of Judaism was remarkable.

Equally remarkable - and predictable - was the short-lived nature of this awakening. Nothing much had changed in three thousand years, and just as the Jewish People were capable of cavorting around a golden calf a few weeks after they had witnessed the splitting of the sea and all the miracles in Egypt, so too the Jewish People very soon forgot Who it was Who fights our wars and were busy bragging about the invincible Israeli army.

So, as it were, to give us a little reminder of Who's really running things, some six years later, the Arabs attacked again. This time they managed to make deep inroads into the heartland of the country. But the Arabs made a fatal mistake. They think that they will attack on Yom Kippur when everyone is fasting and weak.

They forget two things: One strategic and the other supernatural. Strategically, the most difficult thing about starting a war without a large standing army is to mobilize. The major problem is to find everyone. However, on Yom Kippur you can find everyone. Because almost everyone is in shul. So all you have to do is to take a truck drive from shul to shul and call out the names at the back. Also the roads are empty so you can mobilize your army in about half the time it would normally take.

Secondly, the Arabs forgot to read their history books. If they'd paid closer attention, they'd have realized that traditionally the Jewish People always used to fast before going into battle to purify themselves before G-d. And even in the secular State of Israel, anyone with the remotest connection to his Judaism is praying his heart out in shul and the angels are taking his prayers upstairs to the King of Kings. Not a good day to attack really...

Again the same thing happens. A realization of a miraculous miracle followed by a return to "with my own power and the strength of my own hand" kind-of-thinking.

So next time, G-d, as it were, says "So you think it's your army that's winning these wars? I'll tell you what. Next time, your army will sit on its benches, and I will send the largest and most powerful navy in the world steaming half way around the world and your army and your navy and your air force will do absolutely zero."

And that's exactly what happened in the Gulf War. I remember sitting in a taxi at the time, and this secular taxi driver was quoting me a verse, I think it was from the prophet Yishayahu, all about how G-d will tell us to go into a sealed room for a little while until the danger passes. "Who is like your people Israel?! One nation in the land!" Even the taxi drivers quote you the prophets!

I also remember when the day the Gulf War ended. It just "happened" to be Shushan Purim. I went into my own sealed room and ripped the plastic off the window and threw the window open wide to let in the sweet air of freedom wafting in the holy city of Jerusalem.

If I live to a hundred and twenty, I don't think I'll ever have a Purim like that one.

And now, G-d has saved us again from rockets aimed at the very heart of this Holy Land. And what is the word on the street, in the media?

"Kipat Barzel is a game-changer."

What a shame that we think that the "Iron Hat" saved us!

The "Iron Hat" didn't save us. The "Iron Yarmulke" saved us.

The massive amount of Torah learning that the State of Israel supports is the real "Iron Hat."

"If only you would think of me... and mention me to Pharaoh, then you would get me out of this building."

In this week's Torah portion, Yosef asks the Chamberlain of the Cupbearers twice to intercede on his behalf to Pharaoh. By his lack of trust in G-d - by asking the Chamberlain twice - Yosef languished two further years in jail.

Rabbi Chaim of Brisk once asked Rabbi Shimon Shkop how long Yosef would have been kept in prison if he had only asked the Chamberlain once to help secure his release.

Rabbi Shimon replied that if Yosef had asked only once, he would have spent only one year in prison.

Rabbi Chaim disagreed. "He wouldn't have had to spend any more time in prison at all. To try to secure his release by asking once is considered to be *hishtadlut* - the human effort that G-d expects of each of us. To ask twice showed a lack of trust in G-d. So it would have been two years or nothing."

The Jewish People are faced yet again with the threat of War. Again there are those who rise, as they do in every generation, wishing to annihilate us. We must fight. And we must fight with everything we have. With our bodies. With our minds. But mostly we must fight that little voice inside us that tells us that we ourselves are doing all this.

Time to put on the Iron Yarmulke!

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From Shema Yisrael Torah Network <shemalist@shemayisrael.com>

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Subject Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Peninim on the Torah by Rabbi A. Leib Scheinbaum

Parshas VAYEISHEV

Then Yaakov rent his garments and placed sackcloth on his loins; he mourned for his son many days. (37:34)

Rashi teaches that yamim rabim, many days, amounts to a period of twenty-two years. This time frame coincides with the twenty-two years that Yaakov Avinu was away from home, thereby preventing him from properly carrying out the mitzvah of *kibud av v'eim*, honoring one's father and mother. While we certainly are not in a position to understand the underlying reason for Yaakov's behavior, there is clearly a powerful lesson to be derived from here. This is despite the fact that Yaakov's decision to leave home was originally suggested, encouraged and approved by his mother, Rivkah Imeinu. Yet, Yaakov is held accountable for his lack of *kibud av v'eim*. This demonstrates the value and significance of this mitzvah.

An indication of this significance may be derived from none other than Terach, the father of Avraham Avinu. When we peruse the list of generations from Noah until Avraham, we note that in giving names to their offspring, the only one who cared to name his son after his father was Terach, Avraham's father, who was the son of Nachor and who named his son Nachor. No other person saw fit to eternalize his father's name by naming his son after him, except for Terach. I wonder if this is not why Terach, who, despite being an idol worshipper, merited to father Avraham, the individual who was blessed by Hashem to become av hamon goyim, the father of many nations. Naming a child after a parent demonstrates one's respect for the parent and his affinity with the past. The past plays a pivotal role in shaping the present and determining the future.

A reverence for the past allows one to study and learn from the highs and lows of a previous generation. This guides him to avoid the same errors in his own life. It also helps to set a standard upon whose foundation he is inclined to build the future. To disregard, with complete disdain, the events preceding the present and the lives of one's forebears is not only foolish, it is downright disrespectful.

As we see from the above, Yaakov Avinu, whose lack of Kibud av v'eim was inadvertent, was still punished, even though he was following his father's and mother's wishes. Kibud av v'eim is a complex mitzvah, one which seems to be the result of common sense, yet is Divinely decreed. A human being is the product of earthly parents and a Heavenly Father, with each one contributing a component to his creation. The mere fact that Hashem selected to partner with one's parents is sufficient reason for the mitzvah of Kibud av v'eim.

Horav Gamliel Rabinowitz, Shlita, quotes the famous anecdote that is often included upon blessing one with longevity. "You should live many years and see your children doing to you what you did to your parents." He quotes his father, shlita, who would apply this interpreting the pasuk in Tehillim 128:6, U'rei banim l'vanecha, shalom al Yisrael. "And may you see children born to your children, peace upon Yisrael." He explains that when one is privileged to see his grandchildren, peace abides between father and son. Why? When the son/second generation, sees how his son/third generation, acts towards him, he begins to realize how his own father must have felt years earlier, when the son was still a youth. This sense of *deja vu* will create a sense of remorse over one's own actions and a renewed respect for his father, the grandfather. This catalyzes a heightened sense of peaceful coexistence between the generations.

Once we begin to appreciate the incredible reward due to one who properly fulfills the mitzvah of Kibud av v'eim, we can develop an understanding of the punishment due to he who does not carry out this mitzvah, or worse - deprecates his parent, denigrates the mitzvah of Kibud av v'eim. Who knows, asks Rav Gamliel, if much of the adversity one sustains throughout life is not the result of his lack of Kibud av v'eim? Look at Yaakov Avinu. He experienced twenty-two years of mourning for a lost son, just because he was not there for his parents - and his separation from them was at their behest! Clearly, Yitzchak Avinu forgave him. Nonetheless, he was punished. How careful must we be in observing this precious mitzvah.

The reward for Kibud av v'eim is unparalleled, as would be suggested from the above observation that Terach fathered Avraham because he named his son after his father. I just returned from being menachem aveil a dear friend who had just lost his father. A Holocaust survivor, who suffered untold tribulations in Europe, he came to these shores and built a Torah community in the Pacific Northwest. The shul, mikvah and day school may all be attributed to his efforts, as he and his wife were moser nefesh, dedicated their lives, to perpetuating the Torah life they knew in Pre-World War II Europe. They raised a beautiful family of banim u'bnei banim oskim ba'Torah, four generations of commitment to Torah, its scholarship and dissemination. I commented that I marveled at the incredible z'chusim, merits, the niftar, deceased, had amassed during his life. These merits will surely sustain him in the Olam Ha'Emes, World of Truth.

His son responded with a frightening exposition he had heard quoted in the name of Horav Don Segal, Shlita. We both felt it was worth publicizing, with the hope that it would serve as an eternal z'chus for the neshamah of his father, Reb Dov ben Meir, zl. Rav Segal gives an unexpected depiction of Olam Habba, the World to Come. Once a person leaves this world he is an omeid, standing still, since he is unable to move forward. Movement is for the living. Whatever positive deeds we have performed in our lives will be reckoned for us, but, once we "arrive" in the World of Truth, there is no longer any movement. This may be compared to a long line of people, almost frozen from the bitter cold, who are standing in single file, in the frigid tundra of Siberia. The bitter cold and howling wind envelops them as the line moves slowly. They are all waiting to enter the one community post office. Each one waits to see if he has received any mail. Does anyone care, or am I forgotten?

As they inch closer to the postal window, their hopes are high with anticipation. Perhaps I received a letter, a package, a warm coat. As each one steps up to the

window, he might be lucky to have received a letter, another, a small box, yet another, a fur coat. Likewise, it is with life - or its aftermath. We move as the result of our children. A son who recites Kaddish will earn his father a letter. He stood in the frigid cold for hours, but at least he obtained a letter. The next one was even more fortunate: His son studied Mishnayot, Gemorah, thus enabling the father to receive a large box filled with goodies. The father whose son not only recited Kaddish, studied Mishnah and Talmud, but even undertook upon himself to perform a special mitzvah, to endeavor to carry out a special act of chesed, kindness, has hit the Heavenly jackpot; he receives a fur coat.

There is one other neshamah, that of he whose son did nothing: no Kaddish, no learning, no mitzvos. He sustained the arctic chill, and, upon stretching out his hand to receive something - anything - a letter, a package, anything, he received "nothing," relegated to returning "home" with nothing. His son did not bother, so the father will not receive anything. We carry our parents on our shoulders. When they are gone, they are gone. We are their only link to reward. As I said, it is a disquieting analogy, but clearly inspirational.

One more story - this one daunting, but no less inspirational. Rav Chaim of Worms was himself a great tzaddik who lived during the fifteenth century. He was blessed with three brilliant sons: the eldest, Betzalel, followed by Yaakov and Helman. A father's dream, these young men exemplified the epitome of devotion to Torah scholarship. People would observe how fortunate Rav Chaim was to have his three sons follow in his footsteps.

The community of Worms regrettably did not offer the young men an opportunity to achieve the outstanding Torah scholarship which they sought. Thus, they appealed to the father that they be allowed to travel to Poland to study under one of its preeminent Torah leaders, Rav Shlomo Luria, zl, reverently known as the Maharshal. The father understood his sons' yearning and gave permission for the younger two - Yaakov and Helman - to leave immediately for Poland. He insisted, however, that Betzalel remain at home. "You are my eldest and, while I might be overstepping my rights as a parent to ask this of you, I still implore you to remain at my side here in Worms." What is a son to do when his father asks? He says yes, and he is happy about it. This was Rav Betzalel's nature.

A few years passed, and the brothers returned to Worms, accomplished scholars, having imbibed Torah at the feet of the Maharshal. While Rav Betzalel was overjoyed with the return of his brothers, he was even more enraptured with the knowledge they had accumulated. He was truly happy for their success in Torah. He regretted his lost opportunity and would, at times, ruminate out loud, conveying his sadness at not having been given the opportunity to study Torah on an elevated level.

His son's emotion did not escape Rav Chaim who felt bad for him: "How sad it is that my son is so despondent over his lost opportunity to have studied under the Maharshal. How can I appease him, make things better? He served me so well. He doesn't deserve to be unhappy."

Rav Chaim said to his son, Betzalel, "In reward for your noble act of remaining home and serving me, at great cost to yourself, I would like to grant you a blessing. I cannot pay you back for your exemplary Kibbud av, but I can entreat Hashem on your behalf that you be blessed with four sons that will illuminate the Torah world with their scholarship and righteousness."

And so it was that the father's blessing was realized. To Rav Betzalel were born four sons: Rav Chaim who became Chief Rabbi of Friedenburg and the distinguished author of Sefer HaChaim; Rav Sinai, Rosh Yeshiva in Mehrine; Rav Shimshon, Chief Rabbi of Kremenitz. The fourth and most distinguished son was Rav Yehudah, the legendary Maharal m'Prague, a name which, until this very day is synonymous with the highest levels of Torah scholarship. All of this was as a result of the mitzvah of Kibbud av v'eim.

Va'ani Tefillah

Es kol divrei salmud Torasecha b'ahavah.

All the words of Your Torah's teachings - with love.

The word "tradition" is loosely thrown around, especially by those who view their Jewish observance as part of tradition, rather than the result of diligent study and comprehension of the intricacies and profundities of the Torah. Horav Shimon Schwab, zl, interprets this idea into this prayer. We ask Hashem that He grant us the privilege to observe the mitzvos as a result of learning about them in the Torah. Perhaps this is why we accentuate salmud Torasecha, "Your Torah's teachings." We do not wish to observe Torah and mitzvos as part of a "tradition." Indeed, this suggests that Jewish observance is akin to superstition and folk culture. We study Torah; we delve into its veracities; we toil in its dialectic. It is not something we do merely because it is a tradition of observance. It is a very vibrant part of our lives, without which we cannot survive. A mitzvah performed out of a sense of tradition can never be properly performed.

I met someone earlier in the supermarket. A "traditional" Jew who prides himself that he keeps kosher, he complained that the symbol of hechsher, kosher certification, was hardly noticeable on the package. He added, "When the symbol is missing, I simply read the ingredients." Regrettably, he knows very little about the kashrus laws and the many misleading ingredients.

Last, we pray that Hashem grant us the "entire package" with love. Our frame of mind concerning mitzvah observance should be one of love for Him and His Torah - not the result of compulsion and restriction.

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Chanukah and Sensitivity

Rambam's discussion of mitzvas ner Chanukah provides perspective on how our brethren in Eretz Yisroel fared during the recent Operation of Defense. Rambam (Chanukah 4:12) writes, "a person must be scrupulous (to fulfill mitzvas ner Chanukah) to publicize the miracle (l'hodi'ah ha'neis) and to add to the praise of the Almighty and thanksgiving to Him for the miracles (v'hodaya Lo al hanissim) He has performed for us."

Rambam shifts from the singular to the plural. One is obligated to publicize the miracle of the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash and to give thanks to Hashem for the miracles He has performed. Apparently, mitzvas ner Chanukah, when properly fulfilled, sensitizes us to other miracles as well and thus it prompts us to give thanks to Hakadosh Baruch Hu for miracles. For the sensitive soul miracles inspire a range of religious emotions and experiences, including wonder, gratitude and love. For the insensitive, however, miracles merely pass unnoticed. Mitzvas ner Chanukah, by focusing our attention on one instance of Hashem's miraculous intervention, is designed to sensitize us to the multitude of miracles.

The segue to the recent Operation of Defense is clear. Within the span of a week, murderous terrorists directed thousands of lethal missiles towards population centers in Eretz Yisroel. The sheer volume of volleys would seem to have guaranteed heavy casualties even if all the terrorists firing had been blindfolded and shooting indiscriminately. How much more so when all the missiles were shot deliberately with murderous intent. And yet, in defiance of all natural explanations (the Iron Dome helped but was very fallible), b'chesed Hashem the heavy casualties simply did not materialize. I do not, G-d forbid, meant to downplay the tragic, horrific significance of even a single casualty. Nonetheless, the lack of heavy casualties was simply miraculous. Nothing less. And it behooves us to recognize this remarkable miraculous continuum. We are reminded of Hakadosh Baruch Hu's loving providence for His people. That reminder can and should inspire us to renewed commitment to Hakadosh Baruch Hu and His Torah.

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Subject Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt (dneustadt@cordetroit.com)

Yoshev Rosh - Vaad HaRabanim of Detroit

Weekly Halacha

by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt

Chanukah Issues

I am uncomfortable going to sleep before the Chanukah lights burn out. How long do they need to burn? May I extinguish them before going to bed?

Once the candles remained lit for at least one-half-hour after nightfall, one has fulfilled the mitzvah. It is then permitted to extinguish the candles. The leftover oil which was placed in the menorah should be used for next day's lighting. Leftover oil from the last day should be burned in a manner where one does not derive benefit from it.

Is it permissible to read by the light of the candles if we have lit the requisite shamash?

No, you may not read by the collective light of all of the candles even if the shamash is lit. It is, however, permitted to use the shamash itself for personal use, e.g., to light the pilot light on your stove.

May I, a single mother, make the bracha on the Chanukah candles and be motzi my fifteen-year-old son? Is it preferable that he, instead, make the bracha and be motzi me?

The preferred method is that both of you should light and recite the blessings. If, however, only one person can or will light, then it is preferable that your son light and be motzi you with your obligation.

My husband comes home very late from work and we usually light candles when he comes home. Are the children and I permitted to eat before candle lighting in this case? Alternatively, may I light candles with the children on my own or is it preferable to wait for my husband to light?

If your husband truly does not mind, then the preferable for way is for you and the children to light the candles on your own at the proper time, and your husband will light when he comes home after work. If your husband insists that no lighting take place before he arrives, children under the age of bar and bas mitzvah may eat supper at their regular time of eating. Adults should preferably eat foods whose berachah rishonah is shehakol, ha-eitz or ha-adamah, or less than 2 oz. of bread or mezonos foods. If that proves difficult, they should ask a friend to remind them that they did not yet fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles. Once they have appointed a shomer, they may eat as they usually do.

My husband learns in Kollel and is able to come home to light the candles at the proper time. Since I work full time for a difficult boss, I am not always able to be home for the proper time of lighting the candles. Although my husband always offers to wait for me so that I could be present for the lighting, I nevertheless feel guilty that I am causing him to delay the mitzvah past its preferred time. How should I respond to his offer?

It depends on your true feelings. If your sincere wish is for your husband to light on time and you would bear absolutely no resentment that you are not present for the lighting, then it is preferable that he lights on time; you are yotzei your obligation even though you are not home at the time of lighting. But if this arrangement would lead to some resentment on your part, then you should take up your husband's offer to wait for your arrival.

Is there a basis in halacha or mesorah for giving gifts on Chanukah or is this practice discouraged?

Chanukah gelt, distributing money to the children or to the needy, is an age-old tradition which has a mesorah and valid sources. We do not, however, find any source for giving out Chanukah gifts, and most probably it is a custom copied from other religions.

Because I am totally overwhelmed with taking care of my children, I find it difficult to daven Shacharis but I do try to daven Mincha. On Chanukah, may I daven Hallel right before Mincha even though it is already late afternoon?

Yes, you may. Hallel may be recited anytime during the day – from sunrise until sunset. While Hallel is considered a mitzvah which is time bound from which women are generally exempt, some opinions maintain that they are obligated to recite Hallel on Chanukah, since they too were included in the miracles of Chanukah.

I have heard that there is a minhag to serve dairy foods on Chanukah, in addition to fried foods. Can you explain the source for this custom?

While there is no specific custom to eat just any type of dairy, there is a custom to eat cheese on Chanukah. The reason for this custom is to recall the miracle which occurred with cheese – which Yehudis, the daughter of Yochanan the Kohein Gadol, fed to the Greek governor until he was very thirsty. She then fed him wine until he was drunk and fell into a deep sleep. She then proceeded to cut off his head and brought it to Yerushalayim. When the Greeks saw that their leader was dead, they fled.

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reply-To subscribe@yeshiva.org.il
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff
Some Light Chanukah Questions
By Rabbi Yirmiyohu Kaganoff

Several people have asked me to send this article out again before Chanukah, even though they may have seen most of its contents a few years ago. Enjoy!

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

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

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

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

SOME BASICS

Each individual has a requirement to light Chanukah lights, or to have an agent kindle the lights for him (see *Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah* 3:4). In places where the custom is that the entire household lights only one menorah, which is the predominant practice among Sefardim, the person who kindles functions as an agent for the rest of the family and the guests. (However, cf. *Minchas Shelomoh* 2:58:41, 42; who understands this *halacha* differently.) Even in places where the custom is that each individual kindles his own menorah, as is common Ashkenazic practice, married women do not usually light, and most people have the custom that single girls do not, either (see *Chasam Sofer, Shabbos* 21b s.v. *vehamihadrin, Elyah Rabbah* 671:3, and *Mikra'ei Kodesh* #14 who explain reasons for this practice). In these instances, the male head of household kindles on behalf of his wife and daughters.

A guest visiting a family for Chanukah can fulfill his or her obligation by contributing a token amount to purchase part of the candles or oil. By doing this, the guest becomes a partner in the Chanukah lights and now fulfills his mitzvah when the host kindles them. An alternative way for the guest to become a partial owner of the Chanukah lights is for the host to direct the guest to pick up some of the oil or candles.

EATING IN ONE HOUSE AND SLEEPING IN ANOTHER

If someone is a guest for Chanukah and he will be eating in one house while sleeping in another, where should he light the menorah?

In general, one should kindle where he is eating (*Rama* 677:1). Therefore, in this situation, the place where one eats his meals is his primary "home." (However, someone who lives in the same town who is visiting only for dinner cannot fulfill his mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lights at his host. Since he has his own residence, he must kindle where his own house is.)

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

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

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

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

If one spends Shabbos at someone else's house, many *poskim* contend that one may kindle the menorah there on *Motza'ei Shabbos* before leaving (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 1:391). Some *poskim* suggest that if one does this, he should not leave

immediately after lighting, but should spend some time, preferably a half-hour, appreciating the lights before leaving (see *Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 1:394).

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

To answer this question, we need to discuss two issues. The first is:

WHEN IS THE OPTIMAL TIME TO KINDLE THE MENORAH?

Early *poskim* dispute concerning the optimal time to kindle the Chanukah lights. According to the *Gra*, the best time is immediately after sunset, whereas most *Rishonim* rule that it is preferable to kindle at nightfall or shortly before. The usually accepted approaches are to kindle sometime after sunset, but before it is fully dark. Thus, Rav Moshe Feinstein kindled the menorah ten minutes after sunset, the *Chazon Ish* lit his menorah twenty minutes after sunset, while others contend that the optimal time to light the menorah is twenty-five minutes after sunset.

UNTIL WHAT TIME CAN ONE KINDLE THE MENORAH?

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

Today, the *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle) is primarily for the members of the household, and therefore many *poskim* hold that it is not essential to kindle the menorah immediately when it begins to get dark, and one may kindle later (see *Tosafos, Shabbos* 21b s.v. *de'ei*). Nevertheless, because this *halacha* is disputed, one should strive to kindle at the optimal time, which is close to twilight, as we mentioned above.

In addition, there is also a *halachic* problem with working before one performs the mitzvah. Similar to other mitzvos, such as *bedikas chometz* or hearing *megillah*, where work is prohibited before the mitzvah has been fulfilled, it is similarly forbidden to work before lighting Chanukah lights (*Shu't Maharashal* #85; *Mishnah Berurah* 672:10; *Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 1:395:4). Someone who missed lighting menorah at the proper time because of extenuating circumstances should kindle his menorah as soon as his family is assembled at home (*Rama* 672:2 and *Mishnah Berurah* ad loc.).

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

Whether or not to follow this approach depends on the sensitivities of the people involved. My *Rosh Yeshiva*, Rav Y. Ruderman *zt"l*, often lectured us on the importance of being concerned about others' feelings. He often repeated the story of the *Chofetz Chayim's* rebbe, Rav Nachumke, who waited several hours until his *rebbeitzin* returned home before lighting the Chanukah lights. Therefore, if kindling the menorah early via an agent will create friction between family members, one should wait and kindle at a time that creates more *shalom bayis* (see *Shabbos* 23b). It is important to discuss the matter in advance and decide on an approach that keeps everyone happy.

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

Answer: Let us ask this question about the *baalei simcha* themselves! If a wedding takes place during Chanukah, where should the *baalei simcha* light the menorah? I have attended weddings during Chanukah where the *baalei simcha* brought their menorahs to the hall and kindled them there. However, this seems incorrect, because the *baalei simcha* are required to kindle Chanukah lights at their own homes (*Teshuvos V'Hanhagos* 1:398). Therefore, they should light the menorah at their homes sometime during the evening. If this is not possible or convenient, they should arrange for someone to kindle their menorah for them at their house as their agent (see *Mishnah Berurah* 677:12). Guests attending the wedding who cannot kindle their menorah at home should also arrange for someone to light their menorah at their house. If they are concerned about leaving unattended lights

burning, they should have someone remain with the lights for half an hour, and then the “menorah sitter” may extinguish the lights, if he chooses. If someone wishes to light an additional menorah at the hall without a *bracha* to make *pirsumei nisa*, he may do so. However, this lighting does not fulfill the *mitzvah* (*Teshuvos V’Hanhagos* 1:398).

WHY IS THIS DIFFERENT FROM LIGHTING IN SHUL?

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

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

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

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

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

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

WHY IS THE CONCERT DIFFERENT FROM LIGHTING IN SHUL?

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

LIGHTING IN A HOTEL

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

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

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

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

If the hotel forbids lighting candles or fire in its rooms and one is eating regularly in the hotel’s dining room, one may light in the hotel dining room. Although we decided earlier that it is better to light where one is eating than where one is sleeping, in this instance, the hotel room is preferable, since it is more one’s living area than the dining room.

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

VISITING DURING CHANUKAH

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

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

WHERE DOES A YESHIVAH BACHUR LIGHT HIS MENORAH?

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

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

REWARD FOR LIGHTING NER CHANUKAH

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