

לעילו נשמת: פייגה בת הרב אהרן ת.נ.צ.ב.ה.

לזכות רפואה שלמה: מלכה בת רחל, מיכאל בן שולמית, יעקב משה בן דבורה שירה, ואברהם יהודה בן שרה רבקה.

Torah Wellsprings

Collected thoughts
from
Rabbi Elimelech
Biderman
Shlita

Mikeitz - Chanuka



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Torah Wellsprings

Mikeitz - Chanuka

Everything is from Hashem

Everything comes from Hashem. Nothing happens on its own. We must keep this idea in mind because the world runs in a way that makes it seem as if there is power besides Hashem, chas veshalom.

Whenever the Torah says "remember," it is because we are likely to forget. The Torah would not need to tell us to remember if we would not forget. For example, regarding Shabbos, the Torah says (*Shemos* 20:8), זכור, "Remember Shabbos to make it holy." Chazal (*Beitzah* 15:) say, זכרוהו, מאחר שבא להשכיחו, "Remember Shabbos because you tend to forget it." Reb Yisrael Iserlin *zt'l* (quoted in Ben Ish Chai, *Ekev*, שנה ראשונה) explains, "Throughout the week, we do all the 39 *melachos*. Due

to habit, one is likely to forget that it is Shabbos and transgress these 39 *melachos*. Therefore, the Torah tells us to remember Shabbos because we are liable to forget it."

The Torah also tells us to remember that *parnassah* comes from Hashem. As it states (*Devarim* 8:18), וזכרת את ה', אלקיך כי הוא נתן לך כח לעשות חיל, "Remember Hashem your G-d because He gives you the abilities to earn wealth." The Ben Ish Chai explains that the Torah urges us to remember that *parnassah* comes from Hashem because, through our physical eyes, it seems that *parnassah* lies in our own hands and that Hashem isn't part of the equation. The Torah tells us, וזכרת את ה', אלקיך כי הוא הנותן לך כח לעשות חיל because success in *parnassah* comes from Hashem.

Chazal (*Brachos* 54:) say, ארבעה צריכין להודות, four people must praise Hashem and say the *brachah* הגומל לחיבים טובות שגמלני כל טוב. They are: (1) an ill person who was cured. (2) Someone who was released from jail. (3) Someone who sailed across a sea. (4) Someone who traversed a desert.

The Ben Ish Chai explains that these four categories of people might think that they were saved by the rules of nature. When someone overcomes an illness, he tends to attribute his recovery to the doctors. Someone released from jail might attribute his salvation to lawyers, bribes, *askanim*, etc. Someone who sailed over a sea (which was dangerous in the past) can attribute his successful voyage to a sturdy ship or a talented captain. Someone who traversed a desert can attribute his salvation to the caravan with which he traveled. Therefore, these four categories of people

must praise Hashem and say the *brachah* הגומל, because they are likely to forget that their salvation came from Hashem.

The Ben Ish Chai adds a *kal v'chomer* that we should undoubtedly recognize Hashem when open miracles happen to us. Open miracles do happen to us, at times, and we must recognize them. We shouldn't attribute them to chance and nature. Because even when things appear to be nature, we must remember that they are from Hashem. Certainly, when it's an open miracle, we have to acknowledge it as such and not rationalize that it was just a natural phenomenon.

In this week's *parashah*, Yosef said to Pharaoh (41:25), את אשר האלקים עושה הגיד, לפרעה. Reb Moshe Minder *zt'l* noted that we could translate it as follows: הגיד את אשר, לפרעה he told Pharaoh, האלקים עושה, that everything happens according to Hashem's decree. Nothing

is natural. Everything, אשר האלקים עושה, Hashem does.

Pharaoh replied (41:39), אחרי הודיע אלקים אותך את כל זאת אין יוסף, נבון וחכם כמוך, "Yosef, if you know that everything happens according to Hashem's decree, then no one is wiser than you." Because this is the ultimate wisdom; to know that everything is from Hashem.

The Sfas Emes teaches, "A Yid must know that everything happens through Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*. Nothing happens by chance. When Yosef went down to Mitzrayim...he knew that Hashem was sending him there... When he went to jail, he knew that Hashem sent him there..."

Once, two men came to Rebbe Uri of Strelisk *zt'l* and told him they wanted to become his students. Rebbe Uri said to them that he only accepts students who possess clarity in *emunah*. He asked them, "When some straw falls off

a wagon to the ground, do you believe that the place they fall when they fall, the amount of straw that falls, and even which straw falls, are all because of Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* and not by chance?"

The men admitted that they weren't on that level. They couldn't imagine that it made a difference to Hashem which straw falls where and when. Why should the Creator of the world be interested in such matters?

The Rebbe told them, "If you don't believe, then you aren't ready to join our group."

A few days later, the men returned. "We thought it over, and now we believe that Hashem's *hashgachah pratis* is even on a straw that falls to the ground."

"What made you change your mind?"

They replied, "*Chas v'shalom*, if a tragedy were to occur, we would believe

without a doubt that it's from Hashem. Something so significant can't happen by chance. We had trouble recognizing that even seemingly minor, insignificant matters, such as straw falling, should be governed by Hashem's *hashgachah*. Then we thought: Compared to Hashem's greatness, everything is ultimately small and insignificant. If Hashem has *hashgachah pratis* over matters we consider significant, then why shouldn't Hashem also have *hashgachah pratis* over matters that seem trivial to us?"

The Noam Elimelech *zt'l* was once speaking to his chassidim about how everything is governed by Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*. The Rebbe said, "Even where a horse drops its dung is by Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*!"

One *talmid* thought the Rebbe was going too far. How could such a mundane thing be by *hashgachah*

pratis? Soon afterward, this student was walking near a cliff, and he slipped on the ice. If nothing stopped his fall, he would fall off the ridge to the abyss below. There was something under the snow, which made a small mound, which broke his fall and saved his life. The student looked to see what saved him. It was frozen horse dung, under the snow. The next time he was together with Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk, the Rebbe asked him, "Nu? Now, do you believe that everything happens by *hashgachah pratis*? And even where a horse drops its dung is' by Hashem's *hashgachah pratis*."

Chazal say that we light the Chanukah *lecht* עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק. The Kedushas Levi explains, עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק, can mean that we light the Chanukah lamps until תכלה רגל, people will stop thinking that everything happens by rote (רגל means

regular/routine) and by chance.

The miracles we celebrate on Chanukah will help us recognize that everything happens by Hashem's decree. As the Ramban (*Shemos* 13:16) writes, מן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים, אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים שהם יסוד התורה כלה, "From the great, open miracles a person believes in the concealed miracles..." Similarly, from the miracles of Chanukah, we acquire awareness that everything that happens to us is a miracle. Everything is from Hashem.

The Yevanim decreed that the Yidden must write on the oxen's horns, שאין להם חלק באלקי ישראל, that they don't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael. Why

specifically on the oxen horns?

Oxen represented *parnassah* because their main occupation was agriculture, and the ox was their primary tool. They said to the Jewish nation, If you want to believe in Hashem, that is ok. But why do you say that your *parnassah* is from Hashem? Don't you see that this comes from the work of your hands?"

But the Yidden replied that we believe that even *parnassah*, which appears to be the work of our hands, comes from Hashem.¹

Bitachon

ויהי מקץ שנתיים ימים, ופרעה חולם, "It was at the end of two years, and Pharaoh dreamed..." The Or

1. When people play *dreidel*, they spin the *dreidel*, that's their *hishtadlus*. But the outcome, on which letter the *dreidel* will fall, is entirely not in their hands. *Parnassah* is the same. We do our *hishtadlus*, but the results are in Hashem's hands. *Parnassah* is from Hashem.

HaChaim states that Pharaoh dreamed of the seven cows and seven ears of grain every day for two years, but each morning when Pharaoh woke up, he forgot his dream. This is hinted at with the words, שנתיים ימים ופרעה חולם, "for two years Pharaoh was dreaming." At the end of two years, Pharaoh had the dream, and didn't forget it, and that's when Yosef was released from prison.

Why did Pharaoh dream the same dream for two years?

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz (*Miketz* 71) answered that the nocturnal dreams were to provide Yosef with the opportunity to be released from jail immediately. On the day Yosef would have enough *bitachon*, Pharaoh would remember his dream, the *sar hamashkim* would tell Pharaoh that Yosef knows how to decipher dreams, and Yosef would be freed that very same day.

To explain this better, Rebbe Pinchas Koritzer told a story that happened with the Baal Shem Tov *zt'l*. The Baal Shem Tov was traveling through a forest with his student, Rebbe Mendel, the Magid of Bar *zt'l*. Rebbe Mendel was thirsty. It was already three days since he had had anything to drink, and there was no water in sight. The Baal Shem Tov told his student to trust in Hashem that He will help him.

They came across a non-jew searching for his horses. "Did you see my horses? I am looking for them for three days."

Reb Mendel told him that they didn't see the horses, and Reb Mendel asked the goy for some water, which he gave to him.

Reb Mendel said to the Baal Shem Tov, "I am certain that Hashem sent this gentile to bring me water. But why was he

looking for his horses for three days?"

The Baal Shem Tov replied, "Hashem sent him out beforehand so he would be ready to give you water the moment you acquired the right level of *bitachon*."

Similarly, Pharaoh had this dream for two years so that the moment Yosef would perfect his *bitachon*, Pharaoh would remember the dream, and Yosef would immediately be released from prison.

The Alshich HaKadosh *zy'a* was once teaching his students about *bitachon*. He said, "When one has *bitachon*, he won't need to do any *hishtadlus* at all. His *parnassah* will descend from heaven, just as the Jewish nation had manna in the desert."

A simple, G-d fearing person attended this shiur and decided to practice this concept. He thought, "I work so hard for my *parnassah*, and I hardly

have time for Torah and *tefillah*. What's the purpose? I can trust in Hashem and earn the same *parnassah* without all that hard work."

He sold his horse and wagon, which he used to use for his *parnassah*, and started spending his days in the *beis medresh*, studying the Torah.

His wife didn't share his enthusiasm. "How will we manage?" she kept asking him.

He told her that Hashem will undoubtedly help them.

During the initial period of this new lifestyle, they lived off what they earned from selling the horse and wagon. When this money ran out, his wife once again urged her husband to do something for their *parnassah*.

"Don't worry, Hashem will help us," he assured her, and he continued spending his days and nights in the *beis medresh*,

basking in the words of Abaya and Rava.

The goy who bought his horse and wagon also took over this simple yid's business. He used to go down to a mountain, hew out large stones, and bring them to people constructing their homes. Now, the goy was doing this work.

One day, the goy removed a huge stone from the mountain and discovered a cave inside the mountain. He went inside and saw an immense, hidden treasure. He was exhilarated with his good fortune. He loaded the treasure onto his wagon, and he went back into the cave once more to make sure that he didn't forget anything. Just then, the cave collapsed, and the gentile died underneath the rubble.

After a while, the horse decided it was time to go home and have supper. He waited long enough for his master to come out of the

cave. The horse trekked back up the mountain, unaware that it was carrying a fortune in its carriage.

The horse followed the route it knew best and came to the home of his previous owner. The yid eyes opened in amazement when he saw the wealth he had just received.

This created a *kiddush Hashem*, as people saw that Hashem helps those who trust in Him.

The Alshich's students asked the Alshich, "We also strive to have *bitachon*. Why don't miracles like this happen to us?"

The Alshich explained, "This simple man was certain Hashem would help him, and therefore Hashem did so. When I speak to you about *bitochon*, you have many questions. You wonder if your level of *bitochon* is sufficient and whether you are deserving of Hashem's kindness... and you have other doubts.

You aren't certain that Hashem will help. Therefore, miracles happen to him and not to you."

The Alshich taught that a person who has perfect *bitachon* doesn't have to do *hishtadlus*. Hashem will support him. We aren't on this level, and therefore we must do *hishtadlus*. But it is important to know and appreciate the power of *bitachon* – how much it can accomplish. Therefore, together with your *hishtadlus*, have *bitachon*, and Hashem will help you.

People say, "Money doesn't fall from the heaven." Is this an accurate statement? Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa said that it isn't true. If Hashem desires it, money can fall from heaven, too, directly into your pocket or straight into your bank account. Hashem can do anything.

Rebbe Bunim proved this using this week's *parashah*. It states

(43:23), אלקיכם ואלקי אביכם נתן לכם מטמון במאמתחתיכם, "Your G-d, the G-d of your father, placed the treasure into your bags." The person in charge of Yosef's home (some say it was Yosef's son, Menasheh) said this to Yosef's brothers because they were afraid that they would become slaves since money was found in their food packages. He told them that they don't have to worry about that, "Hashem placed the money there."

So, it is a mistake to say, "Money doesn't fall from heaven." This week's *parashah* states that Hashem can mysteriously place money into someone's bag without him knowing about it. If Hashem desires it, money can fall from Heaven.²

2. Rebbe Elimelech of Lizensk zy'a taught: A Yid can even sell tiny slivers of wood and become extremely wealthy, because it isn't

Tefillah

The Midrash states that we are obligated to do *hishtadlus*, as it states (*Devarim* 15:18), וברוך ה' אלקך בכל, "Hashem will bless everything you do." One must act and then Hashem will send His blessing. Rebbe Mordechai of Nezchiz *zt'l* (quoted in *Maor v'Shamesh*) taught that *tefillah* is also a form of *hishtadlus*. As Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 65) state, עקימת שפתיו הוי מעשה, "moving the lips is called doing." The primary *hishtadlus* is *tefillah*.

We turn a *grager* (on Purim) from below, and we spin the *dreidel* from above. This isn't by chance; it represents the difference in the miracles of Purim and Chanukah. The Purim miracle began with *tefillah* (see *Esther* 4:1, 4:16, and 9:31). But by the Chanukah miracle, we don't have sources from Chazal that

Klal Yisrael davened. Thus, the Purim miracle began with the people below. Their *tefillah* brought on the miracle (התעוררותא דלחתא). This is represented by the *grager*, which we spin from below. The Chanukah miracle happened from above (התעוררותא דלעילא), and therefore, we spin the *dreidel* from above.

Tzaddikim teach the above explanation, but we wonder, was the Chanukah miracle only from Above? Didn't the Chashmonaim wage war? Isn't that called beginning the miracle from below?

We see that it isn't so. As Chazal say (*Avodah Zarah* 2:), מלחמות אני עשיתי, Hashem makes the war. The main *hishtadlus* that people can do is *tefillah*.

The Beis Yosef (670) asks: The Yidden found enough oil in the Beis HaMikdash

the profession that gives wealth, but Hashem's blessings. The only condition is that he mustn't be disgusted with this kind of work.

for one day, and it burned for eight days. It seems that the first night wasn't a miracle. So why is Chanukah eight days? The Beis Yosef gives three answers.

His first answer is that they divided the oil into eighths, and every night, they poured an eighth into the menorah. That small amount of oil burned all night long, so, a miracle happened on the first night, too, and we commemorate that miracle.¹³

Reb Shlomo Kluger *zt'l* asks, why did they divide the oil into eighths? They should have used the entire jug of oil for the first night! Were they relying on the fact that a miracle would

occur? We have a rule: אין הנם; סומכין על הנם; we don't rely on miracles.

Reb Shlomo Kluger answers that they put an eighth of the oil in the menorah, and they davened that it should burn all night long. After *tefillah*, they can rely on miracles. As the Maharsha (Kidushin 29:) writes, "ואין זה מיקרי נם," [when a miracle happens because of *tefillah*], it isn't called a נם."

Don't Worry and Don't Overdo your *Hishtadlus*

The Mishah (*Avos* 5:5) states, עומדים צפופים ומשתחוים רווחים. Rebbe Yissachar Dov of Belz *zt'l* explained, if a person feels עומדים, that he is standing on his own, and that his *parnassah* is the

3. The Beis Yosef has another two answers, which we quote here:

"Or we can answer that after they poured the oil into the menorah, the jug remained full, like before. Thus, the miracle was also seen on the first night. Or we can answer that on the first night they filled the menorah with oil, the menorah burned all night long, and in the morning they saw that the menorah was still filled with oil. This happened every night!"

result of his deeds, then it will be צפופים, his *parnassah* will be tight. However, משתחוים, if a person bows to Hashem, which means he recognizes that everything comes from Hashem, רווחים, he will have *parnassah* in abundance.

Because the correct path for earning *parnassah* is with peace of mind, with trust in Hashem, without anxiety, and without overworking. You will get an even greater dose of *parnassah* if you approach your pursuit for *parnassah* with this calm attitude.

In a public letter to his chassidim, Rebbe Mendel of Vitebsk zt'l wrote that if they wouldn't be worried and anxious about their *parnassah*, they will have *parnassah*. Worries and being overly particular with the details of one's *parnassah* are מדת הדין, restrictions, which restrict and limit the extent of his *parnassah*.

Someone once did a favor for Rebbe Punim of Peshischa zt'l, and the Rebbe asked him which *brachah* he wants as a reward for the favor. The man asked for the standard: to marry off his children easily, without debts.

The Rebbe replied, "My *brachah* to you is that you should never worry, because Hashem doesn't give *brachah* to those who worry. He gives to those who ask."

The man, later on, said, "This *brachah* helped me throughout my entire life. I married off all my children easily and without worry... I attribute it to the *brachah* that I received." (Heard from Reb Yisrael Hartman z"l of Bnei Brak, who heard it from this elderly man.)

Rebbe Moshe Kobriner zt'l tells (*Toras Avos, Emunah u'Bitachon* 46): "My rebbe, the Lechovitzer zt'l told me to build a house, so I traveled to Lechovitz to hear from his holy mouth the details

of how I should build it. I was in Lechovitz for Shabbos, but when I was there, I forgot to speak to him about it. So, I sent someone to Lechovitz to ask on my behalf. The Lechovitzer sent back the following message, 'If you build a house on the ground, you will succeed. But if you build it on your head, you won't succeed.' [This meant that he should build his house with peace of mind. The construction shouldn't occupy his thoughts.] I followed this counsel. Whatever could be done after Shacharis, I didn't do it before Shacharis. Whatever could be done a few hours later, I pushed off until then. It is a mitzvah to tell the *baalebatim* how much *siyata dishmaya* I saw in the building." His relaxed approach to building his home actually increased his success. The same is true with *hishtadlus* for *parnassah*; when it is done in a calm manner, leaving time for Torah and *tefillah*,

it leads to even greater success.

This week's *parashah* shows us Yosef's calm approach to life, which resulted from his *bitachon*. It states (41:14), ויריצוהו מן הבור that Pharaoh's men rushed Yosef out of prison. The Rebbe of Ostrova zt'l (*Toldos Adam, Chanukah, 7th night*) teaches:

"Let's think about this: Yosef was in prison for so long; he didn't see the sunshine for years. He had no respite... And now, finally, after twelve years, there's hope that he might be freed. He was granted the opportunity to speak to the king, himself! ... We would assume that Yosef would rush to speak to Pharaoh and to beg for his life... But it states, ויריצוהו מן הבור, Pharaoh's messengers rushed Yosef out of prison. Yosef didn't rush on his own..."

Why indeed didn't Yosef hurry out of the jail? It's because Yosef trusted

in Hashem and not in man. Hashem will be the One to release him from jail, not Pharaoh. Therefore there was no reason to rush out.

When Yosef interpreted Pharaoh's dream, he didn't add a plea to be freed from jail. Surprisingly, he didn't mention his plight and his plea to Pharaoh at all! Yosef understood that speaking to Pharaoh and deciphering his dreams was enough *hishtadlus*. He didn't feel it was necessary to do more *hishtadlus*.

Chanukah All Year Round

A Stoliner chassid was once with the Beis Aharon for Shavuos. When he returned home, his neighbors asked him, "How was *yom tov*? Tell us how it passed."

He replied, "The *yom tov* didn't pass. It went inside me. It became a part of me."

As Chanukah passes, we should ask ourselves,

"What lessons and inspirations of Chanukah can we take along with us for the rest of the year.

The Beis Aharon (p.45:) said, "Once, on Zos Chanukah, my father [Rebbe Asher of Karlin *zt'l*] asked his chassidim to sing, הדרן עלך מסכת חנוכה והדרן עלן מסכת חנוכה. [Similar words are said at a *siyum*, and he asked them to sing it at the completion of Chanukah.]

The Beis Aharon adds, "Who am I to explain my father's intentions?" Indeed, we don't know why Rebbe Asher of Stolin asked his chassidim to sing these words at the end of Chanukah. We can only try to understand it to the best of our limited capabilities. One of the translations of הדרן is to return. We merited to complete the holiday and the mitzvos of Chanukah. We pray עלן הדרן, that the light of Chanukah should return to us. The impressions of the lights of Chanukah should remain with us all year long.

Reb Shmuel Minkus *zt'l* (renowned chassid of the Baal HaTanya *zt'l*) felt he needed *chizuk* in *avodas Hashem*, so he went to the marketplace to look for someone who could take him to Liadi, where the Baal HaTanya lived. A spirits merchant told him that he was traveling in that direction, but he only has room for him to sit in the uncovered wagon, next to the barrels of spirits.

Reb Shmuel went with him. It was freezing in the uncovered wagon, and Reb Shmuel asked the spirit merchant for permission to drink some vodka from the barrels so that he could warm up. Permission was granted.

When Reb Shmuel came to the Baal HaTanya, he said *shalom aleichem* and *tzeschem l'shalom* at the same time. He explained that he was ready to return home.

"You just came! Why are you leaving so quickly?"

"I came here because I felt I needed *chizuk* in *avodas Hashem*. But I received my inspiration on the way here; therefore, I can go home now. When I need more inspiration, I'll come back."

The Baal HaTanya asked him, "What inspiration did you get?"

Reb Shmuel said, "I sat among barrels of alcohol as I traveled here, but the barrels didn't warm me up. I became warm when I drank some of that alcohol. I learned from this that it isn't sufficient to be around chassidic ideas. To become warm, I must allow these ideas to penetrate and become a part of me, and then I will improve my ways. I have to think about the chassidic concepts profoundly until I become a better person."

Now is the time to think about what we acquired over Chanukah and consider how we can take

those lessons and attitudes with us for the entire year.

Chanukah teaches us many lessons. It teaches us that Hashem loves us and that He performs miracles for us. Chanukah teaches us *emunah*. Chanukah teaches us to be like the Chashmonaim, and not allow foreign influences to draw us away from studying and keeping the Torah. Chanukah, from the word חניכה, teaches us to begin anew and to accustom ourselves to do Hashem's service. We should contemplate ideas such as these so that the lessons should remain with us.

Zos Chanukah is an especially appropriate time to think about the lessons that we can take with us for the rest of the year. Once, Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zt'l* came into the beis medresh on Zos Chanukah, and he saw chassidim playing *dreidel* with money. The Rebbe said, "What a person earns during Chanukah, he still

might lose [when he plays dreidel the next day, he might lose what he earned on the first day]. But what one gains on Zos Chanukah, he won't lose." It will remain with him forever.

Shabbos

One of the presents we received on Chanukah is the ability to keep and enjoy Shabbos properly. The Meor Einayim (*Miketz*) explains that Shabbos is immensely holy, and people on low levels don't feel connected to Shabbos. But on Chanukah, Hashem raises our level. Now we can experience Shabbos. This is something we should try to take with us for the rest of the year.

The Meor Einayim writes, "Hashem gave Shabbos - the present that was in Hashem's treasury - to the Jewish nation, to draw a person close to his Creator. When one keeps Shabbos, all his sins are forgiven... But it is hard

for a person to tap into Shabbos' holiness, because the holiness of Shabbos is extremely exalted — it's Hashem's name. How can a person ascend to this high, holy place? On Chanukah, Hakadosh Baruch Hu, *keviyachol*, goes down lower than ten *tefachim* [to the person's level] to draw him up. This is the explanation of, ... פתילות, שאין מדליקין בשבת מדליקין בהן בחנוכה, 'wicks that don't light on Shabbos, one may light them on Chanukah.'... The wicks, which are people, שאין מדליקין בשבת, who don't become illuminated on Shabbos, מדליקין בהן בחנוכה, can become inspired on Chanukah. Hashem, Himself, *keviyachol*, lowers Himself down to the person and has the light catch onto him..."

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zy'a* would say in the name of his father, Rebbe Shalom Shachnah of Pravitch *zy'a* that the Shabbosim until Chanukah are alluded to in the words, "The earth was

תהו ובהו, empty and void." Even the Shabbosim lacked their brilliance. But when Chanukah comes, it states, ויאמר אלקים יהי אור, "Hashem said, there should be light," and from then on, one can attach himself to the holiness of Shabbos.

Enjoying Shabbos is certainly a good thing to take along with us for the rest of the year.

Zos Chanukah - Gmar Chasimah Tovah

Rebbe Yisrael of Ruzhin *zt'l* taught, "What tzaddikim accomplish on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, simple Yidden can accomplish on Zos Chanukah." (Some explain that this is because on Zos Chanukah the miracles are all prepared and ready in heaven. All we need to do is to bring them down. Therefore, even simple Yidden can bring down salvations on this day.)

The Beis Aharon adds, "I think the eighth candle of Chanukah is the same

concept as שמיני עצרת. And therefore, tzaddikim say Zos Chanukah is the גמר החתימה, when we are inscribed for a good year [just as שמיני עצרת is a גמר החתימה טובה, a day when we are inscribed for a good year]..."

The Beis Yosef (670) writes, "Why did the Chachamim establish Chanukah for eight days? There was enough oil in the jar to light for one night, so the miracle was only for seven nights!"

The Rokeiach answers as follows:

Parashas Emor (Vayikra 23) lists the *yomim tovim*. The last of the *yom tovim* mentioned are Succos and Shemini Atzeres. Then the Torah discusses the laws of lighting the menorah (see *Vayikra 24:2*). The Rokeiach says that the menorah hints at the holiday of Chanukah. And since Chanukah is written next to Succos and Shemini Atzeres, and Succos, including Shmini Atzeres, is eight days, this

implies that Chanukah too should be eight days.

This source shows a connection between Chanukah and Shemini Atzeres, and it is reasonable to assume that the eighth day of Chanukah represents Shemini Atzeres.

Rashi (*Vayikra 23:36*) explains the reason for Shemini Atzeres: "It can be compared to a king who invited his children for a meal for several days. When it was time for his children to return home, the king said, 'My children, please, remain with me one more day. קשה עלי פרידתכם, it's hard for me when you leave.' Similarly, we can explain that after seven days of Chanukah, Hashem says to the Jewish nation, "I enjoyed your mitzvos so much. Your Chanukah *lecht*, your Hallel, etc. Stay with me one more day. It's hard for me when you leave." This can be another answer to the Beis Yosef's question. Chanukah should really be seven days

because the miracle was only for seven days. But Hashem requests that we have one more day of Chanukah, the eighth day because it is hard for Hashem when we leave.

About Shemini Atzeres, the *Zohar* (vol.3, 32.) states, ובהוא חרותא לא משתכחי במלכא אלא ישראל בלחודייהו, ומאן דתיב עם מלכא ונטל ליה בלחודיה כל מה דבעי שאיל ויהיב ליה, "At this joyous time [of Shmini Atzeres] the Jewish people are alone with the King. And when one sits with the king, alone, whatever he asks for will be granted to him." This is stated regarding Shemini Atzeres, and it also applies to Zos Chanukah. Whatever we ask for from Hashem on this day will be given to us.

The Vilna Gaon teaches us that the *Hallels* we say on the eight days of Chanukah are to complete the eight *Hallels* that we were missing during the year. In the final six days of Pesach, we only say half-*Hallel*, and on Rosh

Hashanah (from the Torah, Rosh Hashanah is only one day), and on Yom Kippur, we don't say *Hallel* at all. These are eight days a year when we don't say *Hallel*.

On the last day of Pesach, we don't say the entire *Hallel*, as Chazal say, "My creations are drowning in the sea, and you are saying *Hallel*?" And since we don't say *Hallel* on the seventh day (the day of *kriyas Yam Suf*), we also don't say *Hallel* on Chol Hamoed Pesach. On Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, we again don't say *Hallel*, as Chazal say, "How could it be that the King is sitting on the throne of judgment, the books of life and the books of death are opened before Him, and Yisrael are saying *shirah*?" This means that these days are technically days when we should say the entire *Hallel*, but something prevents us from doing so.

The Vilna Gaon taught that the complete *Hallel* that we say on the eight

days of Chanukah corresponds to those eight days and makes up for the *Hallels* that we missed.

The order of the holidays begins with Pesach. Therefore, tzaddikim taught that it is logical to assume that Chanukah's first six days complete the *Hallel* that we missed on Pesach. On the seventh day of Chanukah, we complete the *Hallel* of Rosh Hashanah. And on the eighth day, Zos Chanukah, we say the *Hallel* that should have been recited on Yom Kippur.

According to this calculation, Zos Chanukah corresponds to Yom Kippur. And, just as Yom Kippur is the day when the

Jewish people are signed in for a good year, so too, on Chanukah, the Jewish people are confirmed for a good year.⁴

The Yismach Yisrael (*Chanukah* 53) writes that when the Torah says, זאת, it refers to something one can see with his eyes.⁵ The Yismach Yisrael explains that on זאת הנוכה tzaddikim can see all of the holy lights that shone throughout the days of Chanukah. The *kedushah* is very great on this day, and tzaddikim can see it. Therefore, it is called זאת הנוכה, something that can be pointed to and seen with one's eyes. "But this revelation is only for the perfect tzaddikim. It states (*Tehillim* 118:23), מאת ה' היתה זאת, we believe that

4. The Beis Ahron *zt'l* teaches that we should say *Tehillim* on Chanukah. We add that certainly one should say *Tehillim* on זאת הנוכה, because Hashem bestows His kindness on us, on this day.

5. For example, it states (*Shemos* 12:2) החדש הזה לכם, and Chazal explain that הוה indicates that Hashem showed Moshe the new moon. Because when it states זה it's something that can be visibly seen. There are several examples of this principle.

Hashem gives this revelation on זאת הנוכה, however, היא נפלאה בעינינו, we aren't able to see it... Although we don't see or feel this special revelation, nevertheless, we are happy for the tzaddikim, for we believe that they see it. We are happy with their joy..."

בזאת ידעתי כי חפצת בי (Tehillim 41:12). The Yismach Yisrael explains בזאת, since you gave us זאת הנוכה, I know that You desire me and that You want to grant me good.

Salvation on Zos Chanukah

It states, איש בער לא ידע וכסיל, "The fool doesn't know, and the imbecile doesn't understand the concept of זאת." We can explain that he doesn't understand that זאת הנוכה is a special day. לו חכמה ישכילו זאת, "if you are wise, you will understand זאת" the importance of זאת הנוכה. And בזאת אני בוטח, in the merit of

Zos Chanukah, you trust in Hashem's salvation.

The Maharal teaches that the world was built with the number seven (seven days in the week, seven *chachmos*, etc.). Eight represents a world that is beyond nature, a world where miracles occur.

Zos Chanukah is doubly eight (שמיני שבשמינית) as it is the eighth day of Chanukah, which is an eight-day holiday. Therefore, Zos Chanukah is surely a day when miracles can occur.

The *brachah* יוצר אור (that we say each morning) lists eight praises: פועל גבורות, עושה חדשות, בעל מלחמות, זורע צדקות, מצמיח ישועות, בורא רפואות, נורא תהילות, ארון הנפלאות. The kabbalists say that these eight praises correspond, respectively, to the eight days of Chanukah. The eighth praise is ארון הנפלאות, which means Hashem performs miracles. It's appropriate that ארון הנפלאות corresponds to Zos Chanukah because

it is a day of miracles and wonders.

Rebbe Shlomo (the first Rebbe) of Bobov *zt'l* said that the miracles of זאת חנוכה are alluded to in the *pasuk* מאת ה' היתה זאת היא נפלאות בעינינו. The נפלאות, wonders, happen because of זאת, because of זאת חנוכה.

The Bnei Yissaschar (*Kislev Teives* 2:10) writes, "The earlier rabbanim often said that Chanukah is *mesugal* for עקרות, for barren women to bear children... In my opinion, the *segulah* only has power on Zos Chanukah..." (Rebbe Ahron of Belz *zt'l* and several other *tzaddikim* would repeat this idea from the Bnei Yissaschar each year at their Zos Chanukah *tisch*.)

Someone once came to the Chazon Ish *zt'l* complaining about his poverty. The man said, "I need a miracle, and לאו בכל יום, miracles don't happen every day."

The Chazon Ish corrected him and said that this phrase should be read as follows, לאו, it isn't so! בכל יום, miracles occur every day!" And this is definitely true on Zos Chanukah, a day of miracles beyond the laws of nature.

Rebbe Pinchas of Koritz *zt'l* said that Zos Chanukah is *mesugal* for *parnassah*. He learned this from the eight praises we say in ויברך לך (I *Divrei HaYamim* 29:11). ה' הגדולה (1). והגבורה (2). והתפארת (3). והנצח (4). והתוד (5). כי כל בשמים ובארץ לך ה' הממלכה (6). והמתנשא לכל ראהש (7). והעושר (8).

והעושר, wealth, is the eighth praise, corresponding to the eighth day of Chanukah.

The other days of Chanukah are also *mesugal* for *parnassah*, as the Arugas HaBosem *zt'l* (*Vayigash*) says on the *pasuk*, כי למחיה שלחני, אלקים לפניכם, "for the sake of *parnassah*, Hashem sent me before you..." (*Bereishis* 45:5). The word שלחני is *roshei*

להדליק נר חנוכה שמונת ימים, "To light the candles of Chanukah eight days."

Chanukah, particularly Zos Chanukah, is *mesugal* for *refuah*. In Paris, a story took place in the yeshiva of Reb Chaim Yitzchak Chaykin *zt'l* (who was a student of the Chofetz Chaim *zt'l*). A *bachur* of the yeshiva became ill; a tumor was found in his neck. The doctors said that he would need an operation urgently, but they admitted that the procedure itself was dangerous. If the scalpel is slightly off target, it could be deadly, *r"l*. At this time, Reb Itzikel of Pshvorsk *zt'l* lived in Paris. They asked him for advice. He replied, "It is only three weeks after Chanukah, and I still have wicks from Chanukah. Place the wicks on the tumor, and the *bachur* should stay home for three days. They did so, and the growth disappeared. The doctors were astounded.

One needs to be a *tzaddik* like Rebbe Itzikel

to perform a miracle like this one. But on Zos Chanukah, everyone can perform miracles. As the Ruzhiner said, "What *tzaddikim* accomplish on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur, simple people can accomplish it on Zos Chanukah." We can daven for *yeshuos* and *refuos*, and they will come, *be'ezras Hashem*.

In *sefer Chesed L'Avraham* from Rebbe Avraham of Radomsk *zt'l* it states that Zos Chanukah is *mesugal* for hastening the redemption since on ואת חנוכה וזאת חנוכה המזוכה (Bamidbar 7:84) and *משיח* is from the word *משיח*.

Another hint to *משיח* is from *מדליקין שמונת ימי חנוכה*. The first letters spell *משיח*.

It states in this week's *parashah*, וישלח פרעה ויקרא את יוסף, "Pharaoh summoned, Yosef was called, and he was rushed out of the dungeon..." (41:14). The Seforno writes,

"[Yosef was saved quickly, as it states וירצוהו, they rushed him out], like all of Hashem's salvations that happen quickly and immediately. As it states (*Yeshayah* 56:1), כי קרובה ישועתי לבוא, 'My salvation is near.'... This is what happened in Mitzrayim, as it states (*Shemos* 12:39) כי גרשו ממצרים, 'they were banished from Mitzrayim.' Chazal tell us that their dough didn't have enough time to rise before the King of kings, Hakadosh Baruch, redeemed them. This will also occur in the future, as it states, ופתאום יבוא אל היכלו הארון, 'Suddenly He will come to his *heichal*, the master (Moshiach) whom you are awaiting' (*Malachi* 3:1). May it be speedily in our days.

Fight the War

In על הניסים, we thank Hashem for, על המלחמות, the wars. Shouldn't we thank Hashem for winning the battles, and not for the actual fight, itself?

The Ponovitzer Rav *zt'l* answers that we never finished the war against the Yevanim, and until Moshiach comes, we are still in the midst of the battle. Because it wasn't only a physical war; it was an ideological war, and that aspect of the war continues to this day. The battlefield is our mind and heart. Therefore, we can't praise Hashem for our victory because we are still in the midst of the battle. We thank Hashem that we are not giving up, and we are still fighting this war.

The holy Chashmonaim were a small group fighting a war against a mighty, large army. One wonders, "Is this a war? It looks more like suicide! According to all logic and common sense, there was no way, at all, for them to win this war. The answer is that the Chashmonaim understood that they would have to wage this war to save Klal Yisrael, so they put aside all logic and common sense

and threw themselves into the battle. This is how we battle against the *yetzer hara*. Sometimes it seems impossible to win. After all, the *yetzer hara* is a *malach*, and how can we fight him? But we courageously go out to battle, and Hashem saves us and gives us success.

It states in Daniel (7:6), וארו אחרי כנמר, that Balshetzer, the king of Bavel, saw a leopard in his dreams. Rashi writes "This represents the kingship of Antiochus." We know that a leopard has the attribute of עוֹתָהּ, as it states in *Pirkei Avos* (5:2), הוּי עוֹ כְנָמֵר, be stubborn like a leopard. The Shem MiShmuel (הרע"ט) (ליל ד') says that this teaches us that the Yevanim had the attribute of עוֹתָהּ, a stubborn and brazen nation.

The Chashmonaim adapted and acquired this attitude from the Yevanim; only they used it positively. The Yevanim had עוֹתָהּ in negative ways, and the

Chashmonaim used this same trait for good things. עוֹתָהּ means to be firm and tenacious in one's resolve, and not letting anything get in the way. The Chashmonaim didn't let anything deter them from their goal. A large army didn't frighten them. They went out to war brazenly, and they won. We should do the same when it comes to our battle against the *yetzer hara*. We should fight with all our strength, and we shouldn't be afraid of anything. Be brazen, be determined, and do what you know you should.

The Beis Aharon (*Chanukah* p.48.) explains the *pasuk* (*Tehillim* 119:59), חֲשַׁבְתִּי אֶל עֲדוּתֶיךָ דְרָכִי וְאִשְׁכַּח רְגָלִי אֶל עֲדוּתֶיךָ as follows: "חֲשַׁבְתִּי" is from the word חֲשׁוּב, important. Every person – even those on low spiritual levels – must consider every one of his good deeds to be חֲשׁוּב, special. He must believe that all of his good deeds make an imprint in heaven regardless of his level.

When one has this outlook, ואשיבה רגלי he can change his routines. He can improve his ways. But as long as one doesn't consider his deeds significant, he won't be able to change his ways."

Similarly, the Kedushas Levi (פורים, קדושה שלישית) writes, "The Magid of Mezritz *zt'l* said, Hakadosh Baruch Hu is happy with our deeds, mitzvos, and Torah. As it states בן הכם ישמה אב, 'The father is happy with his wise children,' and we are called Hashem's children... The primary *avodas Hashem* is to make a *nachas ruach* for the Creator. But if a person loses hope in himself, and he thinks that Hakadosh Baruch Hu doesn't have pleasure from his deeds, although he believes that this is עניה, it isn't humility at all. On the contrary, this is somewhat מינות, disbelief in Hashem..." With the belief in ourselves, and with faith that Hashem loves our good deeds, we will have עזות, holy determination to serve

Hashem, even against all odds, and Hashem will help us succeed.

Shalom

Rebbe Bunim of Pshischa *zt'l* taught a two-step cure for all disputes:

(1) Think about your fellow man's qualities, and (2) focus on your faults. The combination of both will dispel all disputes.

Yosef taught his brothers this process so that there should be peace among them. He told them (48:18), ואת עשו וחיו את האלקים אני ירא, "Do the following and you will live. I fear Hashem..." The words "I fear Hashem" seem out of place in this text. Yosef told them to focus on the fact that Yosef fears Hashem. They also thought about their lowliness. As it states a few *pesukim* later (42:21), אבל אשמים, אנהנו על אחינו, "We are guilty of what we did to our brother..." They focused on Yosef's qualities and

their faults. This paved the way for *shalom*.

It also states (ibid., 42:19), ויעשו כן, "The [brothers] did so." It isn't clear from the *pasuk* what they did. Rebbe Bunim said that they focused on this concept. They thought about Yosef's greatness and their own lowliness, and thereby were able to be at peace with him.

Last year, Lag b'Omer, in the peak of the Corona epidemic, there was a *chasunah* in Yerushalayim that wasn't following the health department's guidelines. Police officers came into the hall, arrested the *chasan* and the *kallah*, and brought them to the police station. Whoever passed them in the police station couldn't resist staring at this unusual sight: A *chasan* and *kallah*, still dressed in the wedding suit and wedding gown, were being detained by the police. They were there until 3:30 in the morning. The happiest day of their

life became a traumatic nightmare.

The young, new couple took it very hard. This wasn't how they planned to start their new life together. In particular, the *kallah* was very upset. For weeks and months after the *chasunah*, she cried over what happened.

They wondered, "Who called the police? Who tattled on them?" They didn't know. But one thing they were sure of: Whoever it was, they would never forgive him.

Eventually, they found out who called the police. It was actually a very good *bachur* from a good home. He didn't have any bad intentions. It was just that he was worried that many people might die because of this *chasunah*.

The *bachur* called the father of the *kallah* on *erev* Rosh Chodesh Elul to ask *mechilah*. He said, "I was

the one who called the police."

The father didn't know how to respond. This phone call took him by surprise. The *bachur* continued, "I regret what I did. I didn't call the police to be cruel, *chas v'shalom*. It resulted from the fear and panic that reigned in those early days of the Covid 19 virus. I saw the dancing, people holding hands, and I imagined the repercussions this might cause. I wanted the police to tell people to stop dancing, so no one gets ill. I didn't imagine they would arrest the *chasan* and *kallah*."

The father of the *kallah* replied, "You turned the *chasunah* into a funeral. How can I forgive you?"

The *bachur* said, "I understand that you are angry at me. But please listen to my plea. Before your daughter's wedding, I used to get many *shidduch* offers. I am from the best *bachurim* in a very good

yeshiva, and I was considered a good catch. But ever since that episode, *shadchanim* stopped calling. It is like I was cursed. I'm certain that I'm being punished for this *aveirah*, and I beg forgiveness."

The *kallah's* father repeated that he didn't forgive him.

Still on the phone, the *bachur* cried uncontrollably. This roused the father's compassion. He said, "I want to forgive you, but I just can't. Call me tomorrow, this time I need time to think things over."

The next day when the *bachur* called, the *kallah's* father said, "I was awake all night, studying the words of Chazal, אין אדם נוקף, אצבעו לממה אלא אם כן מכריזין עליו מלמעלה, 'A person doesn't even stub his toe [in this world] unless it was decreed from Above.' I studied this lesson from the Mesilas Yesharim and the Shaarei Teshuvah. I attained awareness that

everything happens from Heaven, and what occurred was destined to happen. If you hadn't called the police, someone else would have. It was destined from heaven that we had to go through this. Therefore, I forgive you. However, you still have to ask *mechilah* from the *chasan* and *kallah*..."

The *bachur* called the *chasan* and he begged for his forgiveness. The *chasan* didn't want to forgive him. He said, "There are some things that are impossible to forgive." The *bachur* cried copiously and bitterly. The *chasan* realized that he genuinely regret what he did, and he said, "I forgive you. But now you have to ask forgiveness from the *kallah*, and I don't think she will forgive you."

The *bachur* spoke to the *kallah*. He explained that he was the one who called the police, why he did so, the punishment he received (that *shadchanim* stopped calling), and his deep

remorse. She replied, "How dare you ask me for forgiveness?" and hung up the phone.

Devastated, the *bachur* spoke to a *rav* he was close to, and he explained to the *rav* that without the *kallah's* forgiveness, he was afraid he might never get married. He is being punished for what he did. The *rav* knew the *kallah's* father, so together (the *rav* and the father) went to the *kallah*, to request forgiveness for the *bachur*.

She replied, "I can't forgive him. Never!"

The *rav* told her that the *Zohar* in *parashas Mikeitz* states that when one forgives his fellow man, even when it is hard for him, merits miracles. The *rav* told her that it is worthwhile for her to forgive. It will give her credit to earn miracles when she needs them. She was persuaded, and with tears in her eyes, she said that she forgives the *bachur*.

A month later, on *erev* Rosh Hashanah, the *chasan* and *kallah* got into a terrible accident. Their car flipped over seven times, and it was crushed like butter, but they emerged unscathed. Hatzalah and Zaka volunteers at the site searched the car to see who was still inside, but the young couple told them there is nothing to look for. They were the only passengers, and they are healthy and well. They asked, "How did you manage to get out of the car?" It seemed impossible. The car was crushed. They replied that the window on the roof was open, and

miraculously they both flew out from there. It was like a vacuum had pulled them out of the rooftop.

They were brought to the hospital just to be certain that everything was well. The hospital staff didn't even find a scratch or a drop of blood. The hospital staff told them, "You are very fortunate to have experienced this miracle."

The *kallah* told them, "We also don't know how and why this occurred. But we forgave our fellow man, and as our sages say, this attitude gives us the merit for miracles."



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