

# The Weekly *Farbrengens*

MERKAZ ANASH  
מרכז אנאש

לחמן ישמעו • וישב תשפ"א • 596  
EDITOR - RABBI SHIMON HELLINGER

## CHANUKAH

### A LUMINOUS TIME

In the household of Reb Dovid of Tolna, *hadlokas haneiros* was a special event. His chassidim would gather excitedly in his house to take part in the lighting of his golden *menora*, which was an elaborate piece of artistic craftsmanship. One year, on the first night of Chanukah, when the *tzaddik* was ready to light it, he turned to one of his chassidim and said, "Your wife is short, isn't she? When you want to speak to her, what do you do? Do you bend over towards her, or does she raise herself up to your height?" Without waiting for an answer, he recited the *berachos* and lit the *menora*. Needless to say, the chossid and all those present were very puzzled.

During this time, Reb Dovid's great nephew, Reb Mordechai Dov of Hornsteipol, was staying at his home, and seeing the confusion of the chassidim, he explained: The *Gemara* says that "The Shechina does not descend lower than ten *tefachim* from the ground." However, there is an exception to this rule, for the Chanuka *menora* is ideally required to be lower than ten *tefachim*, and it brings the Shechina itself here below. Reb Mordechai concluded by quoting from the *AriZal* that this is the deeper meaning of the words of the *Gemara*, 'If your wife is short, you should bend over and whisper to her.'

The following evening, at the time of *hadlokas haneiros*, Reb Dovid again made some puzzling comment to one of his chassidim. Immediately, though he had not been told of the previous night's explanation, he turned to Reb Mordechai and said, "This time, you will not understand as you did yesterday!"

(סיפורי חסידים זיון מועדים ע' 281)

In *Haneiros Halalu* we say that we have no permission to use the lights, only to look at them ("*elo lir'oisn bilvad*"). This can mean that gazing at the lights is actually a benefit, healing any damage the eyes have incurred from seeing improper images, and protects one for the future. In fact many *tzaddikim* would sit and gaze at the *licht* as they burned.

(שו"ת שב יעקב סי' כב, זרע קודש - ראפשיץ)

After kindling the Chanukah *licht*, the Rebbe Rashab would sit near them for half an hour and learn, though at a slight distance, in order not to benefit from its light. He would learn *Gemara*, wherever he was holding in his learning of Shas.

The Rebbe explained that this practice highlights the special connection of Torah to light, and is a lesson for everyone - Chanukah is a time to increase one's learning. Furthermore, since the Yevanim wished to prevent us from studying Torah, we respond by increasing our study.

(רשימות היומן ע' שכג, תר"מ תשמ"ב ח"ב ע' 618)

### CONSIDER

Why is it specifically the light of Chanukah that draws the Shechinah below ten *tefachim*?

How do we distinguish between "pure Yiddishe light" and "contaminated *goyishkeit*" when they both incorporate the study of Torah and the observance of mitzvos?

The Rebbe explained that Chanukah is an opportune time to increase one's Torah study and *shemiras hamitzvos*, since the *nes* was related to those *ruchniyusdike* matters. One should especially upgrade one's *yiras Shomayim*, for that is the purpose of Torah and *mitzvos*, and that was what the Yevanim were particularly opposed to.

This we can learn from the way in which we light an additional candle every night. During Chanukah, one should increase one's contributions to *tzedaka* and study more Torah than usual.

Through the *mitzva* of *neiros* Chanukah, one is granted the light of Torah.

(התועודיות תשמ"ח ח"ב ע' 67, התועודיות תשמ"ד ח"ב ע' 596)

### THE WAR OF THE YEVANIM

The goal of the Yevanim was "*lehashkicham torasecha*

*uleha'aviram meichukei retzonecha*" ("to make them forget Your Torah and transgress the decrees of Your will"). As the *Midrash* says, the Yevanim demanded the Yidden write that they have no part in *HaShem*. This was a war against *HaShem*. "Let them study Torah," said the Greeks. "Let them practice the *mitzvos*, *mishpatim*, and *eiduyos*, but they must not mention that the Torah is *HaShem's* and that the *mitzvos* are the decrees of His will. Torah and *mitzvos* must be severed from *HaShem*."

(היום יום ב' טבת)

The Rebbe explained how the goal of the Yevanim and the *misayavnim* was to remove the separation that exists between Yidden and *goyim*, and to educate children to be similar to the other nations. This is more severe than placing decrees against the observance of Torah and *mitzvos*, because its effect remains even after the decree is over. It begins with something 'small', through 'lighting up' the way for a child with 'oil' that is contaminated with *goyishkeit*, claiming that it produces the same light. When one educates children improperly, drawing 'light' from a source which is not pure, this leads a child to become a *Misyaven R"L*.

The lesson from Chanukah is: when lighting up Yiddishe homes, one must use only pure Yiddishe light, uncontaminated by any *goyishkeit*. By doing so, with *mesirus nefesh* (not giving in to the majority, who also appear to be stronger), we will be victorious, for *HaShem* is on our side.

(לקו"ש ח"כ ע' 438)

At a children's rally the Rebbe pointed out the war against the Yevanim in our times. During the time of Chanukah, the Chashmona'im withstood a tremendous challenge, battling a mighty army with *mesirus nefesh*. Today's *nisyonos* are not as formidable, but are of a different nature. The *Yetzer hara* comes to a child and tells him to spend his time playing games like others around him, thus causing him to forget to learn Torah. Or he will try to convince him to eat a candy which others are eating, even though its *kashrus* is uncertain. In such a situation, the child must act strongly, with *mesirus nefesh*, no matter how exciting or enticing the challenge is, and then he will certainly be victorious.

(ז' חנוכה תשל"ה, לקו"ש ח"כ ע' 483)

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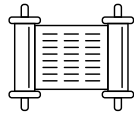
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CHANUKA CELEBRATIONS

What are the halachos of a Chanuka seuda?

While on Purim there is a mitzva to have a festive meal commemorating the miracle, on Chanuka the obligation is to express our thanks to Hashem by reciting hallel and v'al hanisim, not with a meal. The reason for the difference is that by Purim the decree was on our physical existence, thus we celebrate with a physical feast, but by Chanuka the decree was aimed against our spiritual wellbeing, thus we celebrate in a more spiritual way.

Although Shulchan deems festive Chanuka feasts "optional," the Rama records the custom to hold seudos since they commemorate the rededication of the mizbeiach and are therefore somewhat of a mitzva. By singing songs of praise to Hashem—or discussing Torah thoughts—at the meal, it is certainly a seudas mitzva. Poskim emphasize that the festivity should be centered around Torah and not a vain party or card game.

The Rambam's view, however, is that the days of Chanuka are "yemei simcha," and the festive meals held during Chanuka are full-fledged seudos mitzva. The Rebbe said that just as by neiros Chanuka we perform the mitzva in the best way—"mehadrin min hamhadrin"—we should also be mehader to fulfill the Rambam's opinion regarding feasts. Furthermore, being voluntary they express a greater level of joy, (like the joy of hakafos which is a custom). They also demonstrate how we can infuse holiness into a mundane thing like a meal.

Which night should one choose to hold a Chanuka celebration?

Some poskim write that it is praiseworthy to hold these seudos every day of Chanuka. Some write that it is especially auspicious to make one on Rosh Chodesh Teves, and others prefer the last day, Zos Chanuka.

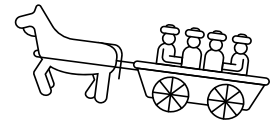
It is customary to eat milchig foods at a Chanuka feast in commemoration of the miracle of Yehudis who fed dairy to the Greek general and slew him. Additionally, the overturning of the Greeks' scheme to make the Jews forget the Torah is comparable to Matan Torah which we also commemorate with dairy foods.

Since the meal is not obligatory, one doesn't repeat bentching if they forget v'al hanisim. Yet, it should be added as a "harachaman" at the end as indicated in the siddur.

- 1. משנב אורח סי תרע"ט סק"ו.
2. ראה שו"ע שם סי"ב.
3. מקור חיים סי תרע"ט סי"ב, וראה שו"ת מרש"ל סי פ"ה.
4. רמ"א שם סי"ב, וראה השלמה לשו"ע אדה"ז סי תרע"ט ס"ג שכן נוהגין. י"א דוקא כשיש קצת מצוה בלא"ה. י"א מצ"ע מספיק - ראה משנ"ב שם סק"ח, אבל ראה משמעות מהרש"ל יש"ש בב"ק פ"ז סי" ל"ז.
5. ביה"ל שם ד"ה ונוהגין.
6. רמב"ם חנוכה פ"ג ה"ג, ובביאור דבריו.

לע"נ מרת ציפא אסתר בת ר' שלום דובער ע"ה

Our Heroes



REB ELIMELECH OF LIZENSK

Reb Elimelech was one of the greatest talmidim of the Mezritcher Maggid, and after the Maggid's histalkus, he became responsible for the dissemination of Chassidus in Poland. He was a brother of the famous Reb Zusha of Anipoli, and together they were known as "the holy brothers". He was one of the greatest Rebbes of his time, and many of his disciples became Rebbes in their own right, his primary successor being the Chozeh of Lublin. His teachings were printed in the sefer Noam Elimelech. He passed away in Lizhensk on the 21st of Adar תקמ"ז (1787).

took upon themselves to go into golus (self-inflicted exile), and so they wandered from village to village, dressed in simple rags, with no one knowing who they were. During the course of their travels, whenever they would come to the town of Ludmir, they would stay by a certain Reb Aharon, who was a great man but lived quite poorly.

Years later, when Reb Elimelech and Reb Zushe had become well known, they once again traveled to Ludmir. This time, however, they did not travel by foot, but with a horse and buggy and an entourage of chassidim.

When they reached a village near Ludmir, one of the wealthy men in town came out to greet them and invite them to stay with him for the course of their visit. The bothers suggested that he return to Ludmir and they would arrive on their own.

When they arrived, they headed to the home of the poor Reb Aharon. When the wealthy man heard about it, he came running and complained, "Why did you not accept my offer?" To which one of the brothers replied, "We are the same people as before, and we don't want to change our lodgings. The only difference between then and now is the horse and buggy. If that's what inspired you to invite us, take the horse and buggy and let them stay with you..."

The Alter Rebbe once met with a rov who was an opponent of Chassidus. The rov asked the Alter Rebbe, "I have a sefer called Noam Elimelech which as I have discovered, has been written by a chossid, a disciple of the Maggid of Mezritch, and I put the sefer under the bench. Can you tell me something worthy about its author?"

The Alter Rebbe replied, "Even if you would put the tzaddik of Lizhensk himself under your bench, he would remain silent and not say a word. Such was his humility!"

(בית רבי ע' סג)

The brothers Reb Elimelech and Reb Zusha

A Moment with The Rebbe



A PRAYER AT THE SENATE

A rov who was to deliver the opening prayer at the United States Senate prepared a text, in which he included a prayer of thanks for the advancement of democracy. He also wrote, "Bless this august assembly, them, their wives, their sons and daughters... pour down Thy beloved blessing on our distinguished president Lyndon B. Jonson... citizens of all faiths will know the joys of prosperity, tranquility and peace..."

"Obviously it should be something they'll accept, and also concepts which are permitted to deliver to goyim. Therefore, I suggest that you include ideas of hashgacha pratis, personal inner-harmony, and the triumph of spirit over matter."

When he gave the prayer in to the Rebbe for editing, he received the following response:

The Rebbe continued with some specific edits on the text, suggesting (1) to replace 'wives, sons and daughters' with 'family' so it is more refined. (2) 'All faiths' should be erased or replaced with 'all race and color' since Yiddishkeit cannot be associated with other religions. (3) Don't make 'democracy' such a great value; write instead 'peace and justice.'

"Everything is good and nice, but it could have been written by any of the hundreds of religious sects in America. And there is certainly no way to know that this is not a Reform or Conservative prayer.

(Full handwritten response printed in Simpson Teshurah, Cheshvan 5771)