

ניצוצי אור Sparks of Light

בס"ד



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פרשת וישב תשע"ו

Chanukah

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The Kedusha of Chanukah

In the household of the *tzaddik*, **Reb Dovid of Tolna**, *hadlokas haneirois* 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 *Chanuka*, 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, the *tzaddik*, **Reb Mordechai Dov of Hornisteipol**, 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 זוין מועדים ע' 281)

Once, some *chassidim* of **Reb Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev** were chatting when suddenly the *tzaddik* approached them and asked what they were discussing. Having been involved in idle talk, they were embarrassed to divulge the subject. When the *Rebbe* asked again, they were compelled to reveal that they had been speaking of the wealth of a certain *poritz*, who would indulge in everything he wished. In fact, even when he decided to sled in the summer, he had his servants cover a field with mounds

of sugar.

Hearing this, the *tzaddik* asked, "Does he light *Chanukah licht*?" Surprised, the *chassidim* replied that he did not, and he probably did not even know what *Chanukah* is.

Replied Reb Levi Yitzchak, "If he doesn't light *Chanukah licht*, then he does not have true enjoyment in this world!"

(בני בינה)

Since the primary *nes* of *Chanukah* was a *ruchniyusdike* one, annulling the decrees of the *Yevanim* against the observance of *Yiddishkeit* and the offering of *korbanos*, we commemorate it in a *ruchniyusdike* way, by saying *Hallel* and praising *HaShem*. However, it is also customary to make more lavish *seudos* during *Chanukah* in order to recall the *nes* of winning the war and to commemorate the completion of the *Mishkan* on *chaf-hei Kislev*. During such a *seuda*, one should sing praises to *HaShem* for His *nissim*, thus making it a *seudas mitzva*.

(שו"ע או"ח סי' תע"ד ובהשלמה לשו"ע"ר שם)

Chanuka 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.

(התועודיות תשמ"ח ח"ב ע' 67)

The War of the Yevanim

In the time of the *Yevanim*, the *aveiros* of the *Yidden* were: socializing with the *Yevanim*, studying their culture, desecrating *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, eating *treif*, and not observing the *Yiddishe tahara*. The punishment was: the spiritual destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, death, and slavery in *gulus*. Through *teshuva* and *mesirus nefesh* came the wondrous salvation from *HaShem* – the miracle of *Chanuka*.

(היום יום כ"ט כסלו)

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 *Medrash* 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 goal of the *Yevanim* and the *misayavim* 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 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 *tahor*, this leads a child to become a *Misyaven R'L*.

The lesson from *Chanuka* 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"ב ע' 438)

Consider This

Why is it specifically the lights of *Chanukah* that draws the *Shechinah* below ten *tefachim*? Why did that *kedusha* remove the man's negative thoughts?

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

Sparks of Greatness

Reb Moshe Leib of Sasov

Reb Moshe Leib of Sasov was a *talmid* of **Reb Shmelke of Nikelsburg** and **Reb Elimelech of Lizensk**. He became a great *Rebbe* spreading *Chasidus* to thousands of *chasidim* throughout Galicia. He was known for his *ahavas Yisroel* and care for fellow *Yidden*. His teachings are collected in the *seforim* "*Chidushei Ramal*." Reb Moshe Leib was *niftar* on the 4th of *Shvat*, 1807 (תקס"ז).

Reb Moshe Leib was not only concerned about the well-being of human beings, but of animals as well. When going through the market, he would help wagon drivers ease the load

of the horses by loading the wagons properly. Once, he was seen at the fair, giving water to the sheep on sale whose owners had obviously not cared enough for.

Reb Moshe Leib would say: "I learned *ahavas Yisroel* from two peasants. I once saw to peasants drinking in a tavern, and one asked the other, "Do you love me?" "Sure," the other replied. The first peasant rejoined, "But how can you say you love me when you do not know what I need?!" From this I learned that true love is when you know what the other person needs.

Library Sparks

The *Torah* portion *Vayeishev* chronicles Yosef's trials and tribulations from the time he left his father's house and was sold into slavery until his eventual appointment to the position of second in command of the entire Egypt. But Yosef was more than just an individual, and his life showed the path that the Jewish nation would take. Indeed, Yosef's life closely parallels the life of every Jew, and by studying his story we can better understand our own mission in life.

Yosef began his life by enjoying the comfort of his father's household. The most beloved of Yakov's children, Yosef enjoyed a special relationship with his father. Not only did Yakov make him the famous coat of many colors, but he learned *Torah* with him day and night, while the other brothers were busy shepherding the flocks. For Yosef, this period was his happiest, both spiritually and physically.

This situation is analogous to the condition of the Jewish soul before coming into the body. A "veritable part of G-d," it exists on the highest plane, enjoying the proximity of only holiness and G-dly light. Even when the soul has descended into this world and is in the fetus, it still enjoys the luxury of learning the entire *Torah* before the baby is born.

But suddenly, Yosef's idyllic existence was interrupted--"Yosef was brought down to Egypt." Sold as a slave, his

situation continued to deteriorate until he found himself a prisoner in Pharaoh's jail. Spiritually as well, Yosef could not have been in a worse situation. Plucked from the refuge of the tent of learning *Torah*, Yosef was dropped directly into the most corrupt and depraved civilization of his era.

This symbolizes the soul's dramatic descent into this world. No longer can it bask in G-d's glory--the soul finds itself trapped in a physical body, subject to its whims and fancies. It must endure the temptations to which the body is drawn, and overcome all sorts of trials. The soul longs to return to its source above.

Yet we learn that Yosef triumphed and attained an even higher position than he had enjoyed while in his father's house. Yosef was victorious spiritually as well, as the *Torah* calls him, "Yosef the Righteous," for despite his elevation to high office Yosef retained his purity and goodness. Yosef turned his descent to Egypt into triumph and ascent, emerging the master and ruler.

This then is the purpose of the soul's journey down into this world and its imprisonment within the body: Our task is to subjugate the Evil Inclination and conduct our lives according to the dictates of *Torah*. Overcoming the obstacles which try to prevent us from doing *mitzvos* enables us to attain greater spirituality than would have been possible had the soul remained above.

Halacha Sparks

Menorah in Seminary

Rabbi Chaim Hillel Raskin

I am away from home in seminary. Do I need to light my own menorah?

A guest in another home can fulfill the obligation to light *menorah* in several ways: (1) By lighting a separate *menorah*. (2) By contributing with a nominal sum towards the oil and wicks of the householder's *menorah*.¹ (3) The members of guest's household light for him at the guest home.²

The third option has several limitations: (1) Some contemporary *poskim* hold that this only works between a husband and wife, and not parents for their children, especially when they are living elsewhere.³ (2) If one is in a distant time zone one may not be able to fulfill the obligation with the lighting at home since the time of *menorah* lighting is so different.⁴

There is a *machlokes* as to whether a guest who eats and sleeps at the home of their host is considered a member of that household and thereby automatically *yotzei* with the *menorah* lighting of the householder.⁵

There is likewise discussion as to the duration of the stay required to make one considered as a member of that household. Some say only a long term boarder.⁶ Others extend it to one who stays for the entire *Chanukah*,⁷ and others say that sleeping and eating at someone's home for even one night makes one considered a resident, albeit temporarily.⁸

Some have the custom that girls and women only light when there is no male to light for them. Thus if a family lives in the dormitory building, it is preferable that the girls should be *yotzei* with the man's lighting. Although the girls board long-term they aren't considered 'family members' since they pay for their lodgings.⁹ Yet, they don't have to participate financially since they have already participated with their tuition.¹⁰ When going away for *Shabbos* girls should *lechatchila* give the householder a small sum to participate, but *b'dieved* they are nonetheless *yotzei*.¹¹

1. שבת כ"ג ע"א, שו"ע תרע"ז ס"א.

2. שו"ע תרע"ז ס"א וס"ג.

3. שו"ת אז נדברו ח"ג סי' נ"ג וח"א ס"ד. וראה ספר ימי הלל והודאה עמ' רע"ו-ז. וראה שו"ת מקדש ישראל חנוכה סי' רל"ז שנוטה להקל, אלא שדעת שו"ע א"ח סי' רס"ג ס"ט משמע שהשמן שמדליקים בשבילו בביתו צ"ל שלו, ויל"ע האם זה שייך בילד שנסע מביתו לתקופה. (ולהעיר ששם הוא מחלק בן נשוי לבחור בישיבה.) וצ"ע.

4. המנח"ם ח"ו סי' מ"ו וכן נט"ק פ"י ס"ד וראה שו"ת מקדש ישראל חנוכה סימן ל"ח מחלוקת בזה ויל"ע.

5. מג"א ריש סימן תרע"ז. תשו' רש"ל סי' פ"ה.

6. פרמ"ג סי' תרע"ז א"א סק"ג, משנ"ב שם סק"ד.

7. תשובות והנהגות ח"ב סי' קנ"ז. וראה בס' חובת הדר (ס"ק ל"ט).

8. גינת ורדים גן המלך סימן מ"א. בשו"ע הרב סי' רס"ג ס"ט בנוש"ק כתב שמספיק אורח שסמוך על שולחנו לשבת, ויל"ע האם להשוות לעניין נ"ח ובפרט שכמה אחרונים חילקו, וראה לב השבת סי' י"ב.

9. ימי הלל והודאה פל"ד הע' 50-51.

10. ע"פ קצוה"ש סימן ע"ו בבדה"ש ס"ק כ"ב.

11. גינת ורדים גן המלך סימן מ"א.

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