

LampLighter

24 Kislev
Vayeishev-Chanukah

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LIVING WITH THE TIMES

As related in this week's Torah portion, Vayeishev, when Joseph went at his father's behest to check on his brothers in Shechem he met a man "wandering in the field," who was actually the angel Gabriel. In response to Joseph's question if he knew where they might be, the man replied, "They have departed, for I heard them say, 'Let us go to Dotan.'"

Rashi, the foremost Torah commentator, explains that with these words the angel was trying to warn Joseph to keep away from his brothers, who were intending to harm him. "They have departed" suggested "they have removed themselves from brotherhood," and "let us go to Dotan" meant they were looking for a legal way ("datot") to kill him. Nonetheless, Joseph ignoring these veiled warnings, continued on his way.

Thus we see that in his desire to fulfil his father's request Joseph demonstrated true self-sacrifice, to the point that he was willing to endanger his life. Yet this in itself raises several questions: Jacob had asked Joseph to "go see the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock, and bring me back word." If Joseph were to be killed by his brothers, he would obviously not be able to report back to Jacob.

Furthermore, what justification did Joseph have for endangering his life in order to fulfil the commandment of honouring one's parents, when it is not one of the three mitzvot a Jew is permitted to give up his life rather than transgress: idolatry, illicit relations and murder?

The great codifier of Jewish law, Moses Maimonides, explains that in certain circumstances it is indeed permissible to demonstrate this extreme level of self-sacrifice, even when it isn't "necessary": "If the person is tremendously great, pious and G-d-fearing, and sees that the generation is reckless [in observing that particular mitzva], he is permitted to sanctify G-d's Name and sacrifice his life for even a minor commandment, in order that people see and take note."

Joseph was well aware that his brothers were lacking in the mitzva of honouring parents, which had been amply demonstrated by their behaviour in the incident of Shechem as well as in their antipathy towards him. He thus resolved to fulfil his father's wishes at all costs.

The same dynamics are also evident in the story of Chanuka, which we are now celebrating. Strictly speaking, there was no need for Matityahu and his sons to risk their lives and engage in war against the Syrian-Greeks. Nonetheless, it was their willingness for self-sacrifice above and beyond the "letter of the law" that ultimately led to miracles and wonders.

In fact, in the merit of their deeds they found the "cruse of pure oil with the High Priest's seal," symbolic of the inner essence of every Jew, and merited "to institute these eight days of Chanuka to give thanks and praise to Your great Name."

(Based on the teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe)

The Living Menorah

By Naftali Silberberg

Rabbi Shmuel of Lubavitch famously said, "One must listen to the Chanukah candles." Gazing at the beautiful candles isn't sufficient; one must also pay attention to the lessons they are imparting.

The soft glow of the candles lends added radiance and lustre to the kaleidoscope of colours which it touches. The walls, the furniture, and even the dispositions of the people who are within its reach, are all enhanced by the Chanukah candles. Similarly, the lessons of the menorah affect all aspects of life — the more we listen to the flickering flames, the more areas of our life are positively affected.

The following are some of the lessons the candles have taught me:

1. The word "Chanukah" shares the same root as the Hebrew word "*chinuch*," education. The Greeks worked tirelessly to cause the Jews to forsake and forget the Torah. When they were defeated, it was necessary to start re-educating the population at large, and specifically the children. One need not search far to uncover the link between Chanukah and education — a more fitting metaphor for education than kindling the menorah cannot be found. There's a popular axiom: "Children should be seen, not heard." It's evident that this phrase wasn't coined by an educator. Our children are our candles to whom we must listen. It is impossible to inspire a child without listening very closely to what he or she is saying — explicitly as well as implicitly.
2. Every educator — this includes parents as well as those who choose the sacred task of education to be their lifelong calling — is entrusted with beautiful candles made of the purest oils. The educator has two options: he or she can endeavour to safeguard the candles, protecting them against harmful influences by keeping them safely ensconced in their carton; or he can kindle the precious candles, enflaming them with warmth and passion for their heritage. This clearly is the choice of the consummate educator.
3. A flame must be lit by using another flame. In order to educate a generation which is excited and passionate about Judaism, the educators must exude those same qualities. Children intuitively pay more attention to our actions than our words. We must rejuvenate our excitement about Judaism. We must pray with fervour and do mitzvot with zeal. Do it for the children. Hackneyed and stale Judaism just won't ignite a fire in our children's hearts.
4. The menorah is proudly displayed on our windowsill; we do not attempt to conceal the pride we feel with regards to our glorious heritage. Similarly, it is our duty to raise a generation of "living menorahs," Jews who are proud of their Judaism and are not ashamed to behave as Jews — even when walking on the street, even in the workplace. Children who are raised with these values will certainly live up to their G-d-given designation, and be an unabashed "light unto the nations." This army of light will undoubtedly chase away the darkness of exile and will proudly witness the kindling of the menorah in the newly dedicated Holy Temple in Jerusalem.



Every Word Counts

Our Marriage Contract and Chanukah

By Elana Mizrahi

My husband and son danced as I cried and stared into the glowing flames of the Chanukah menorah. I was told that Chanukah is the end of a long journey that begins with Rosh Hashanah. On Chanukah the gates of Heaven are wide open to receive prayer and one's judgment for the year is finally sealed. Salty tears wet my cheeks as I prayed my heart out. Why so much? Why such emotion? After all, I had a son, a healthy child. My prayers had been answered with a gracious "yes!" before; why then the longing and the feeling of rejection? Because my husband and I had just celebrated six years of marriage, and in four more months my son would be two-years-old, and my womb was once again empty. Maybe the yes had been a merciful, one time occurrence and I would never know again what it would be like to bring another child into the world? I finished my weeping and brought myself back to my husband and son and joined them in their dancing.

A week or so later I was looking through some papers when I came across my *ketubah*, my Jewish wedding contract. I looked at it and my eyes fell upon my name, Elana. Elana? Where was my other name? I generally only go by my first name, but my parents gave me two names: Elana Mira. I quickly showed it to my husband. Why hadn't we noticed this before? Did it really matter? I insisted that he take it to a rabbi the next day to ask. I wanted to make sure that we were doing things right. We were told that we should have a new marriage contract drafted. The following week on the eighteenth day (which is the numerical value of *chai*, life) of the Jewish month of Tevet, we had a little ceremony with a new *ketubah*.

About a month and a half later, I went back to my infertility specialist doctor. I sat in his office with my son. He wrote out a set of prescriptions for hormone injections and a plan for me to follow. I don't know why, but I suddenly told him that I wanted to wait until after Passover when my son would already have turned two. He didn't pressure me, but told me, "No problem, everything is

all written out and ready to go. When you want to start, come back, and we'll start."

I left knowing that I wouldn't be back. I came home and explained to my husband that I just couldn't do this again. I would take herbs, I would follow a strictly healthy diet, but I couldn't start with the treatments again, with the running around like a madwoman, the ups and downs, and the anxiety. I just wanted to be happy with what I had and be thankful that I had a son. My husband fully supported me. Two weeks later, I conceived; but it wasn't until two months later that I found out that I was pregnant. I went to have an ultrasound to determine the due date of my baby because I had no idea when I conceived. They told me that the due date was the first day of Chanukah. My daughter was born eight days early on the eighteenth day of the Jewish month of *Kislev*, eleven months to the day after we changed our *ketubah*.

What was the deal with the *ketubah*? Did it make a difference? Did it change something in the Heavens? I don't know. What I do know is that the prayer I had offered as I stared into the flickering flames of the Chanukah lights changed something above, and changed something within. And when I saw my *ketubah* with part of my name missing, I knew that something wasn't right.

A long time ago, a really big miracle happened. A tiny Jewish army fought against the biggest army of the time, the Greeks, and they won! But that wasn't the only miracle. On Chanukah, we celebrate the tiny bit of oil that lasted eight days. Hmmm. Which sounds like a bigger miracle? And really, what's the big deal with the oil?

The Jewish fighters came back from the war and started cleaning up the Holy Temple. They wanted to rededicate it by kindling the Menorah, but all the pure oil, the oil sealed by the High Priest, had been spoiled by the Greeks; the seals had been broken. And then they found one tiny flask of this special oil. It would take eight days to make new oil, and they didn't have enough to last that long. They had a choice: to use oil that wasn't so fine and pure, but know that the Menorah would be lit during the time that it took to make new oil, or to go ahead and use the purest oil that they had, even if it would only last a short while. In thankfulness and praise to G-d for winning the war, they took a chance; they decided to only light with the pure oil. They gave the best that they could give, and G-d performed a miracle. It was as if

G-d told them, "You give Me the best that you can, and I will take care of the rest."

My daughter turned one-year-old, thank G-d, and once again, we are getting ready to light the Chanukah menorah. My husband carefully pours the oil, and I kiss my daughter's cheeks as I offer thanks. I pour my heart out once again as I watch the majestic flames and I say my name aloud: Elana Mira.

Teheran, 1980

"I first met the Rebbe during the lifetime of his father-in-law and predecessor, Rabbi Yosef Yitzchack of Lubavitch," related Rabbi Avrohom Mordechai Hershberg, the past Chief Rabbi of Mexico. "I asked the previous Rebbe about a Rabbinic position I was offered in Chicago. He told me to consult his son-in-law.

"I spent nearly an entire night with the Rebbe. Our discussion covered tractate after tractate of the Talmud, and the scope of the Rebbe's knowledge and his genius totally amazed me. From that night onward, I maintained a relationship with the Rebbe, and I consulted with him regarding numerous personal and public matters."

In 1980, during the Iranian occupation of the American embassy, Rabbi Hershberg was scheduled to travel to Iran for a public service project. Because of the tense atmosphere at the time, many tried to persuade him to postpone his trip. The Rebbe, by contrast, encouraged him: "Go with blessing," he answered. "You are certain to light the Chanukah menorah in Iran."

Rabbi Hershberg was puzzled by the Rebbe's closing words. He was not necessarily planning to stay in Iran for Chanukah. But if he would, there was no question that he would light a menorah. He did not understand the Rebbe's reference, nor the emphatic tone in his words.

Afterwards, it became clear. Rabbi Hershberg's mission in Iran took longer than expected, during which time he developed a relationship with some Iranian officials. He knew that there were six Jews among the hostages in the American embassy and he asked permission to light the menorah with them. "Just as we have granted permission for a priest to meet with the Christian hostages on their holiday," the Iranians replied, "we will allow you entry as well."

And so it was in the barricaded American embassy in Iran that Rabbi Hershberg lit the Chanukah menorah that year.

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P.O. Box 67, Balaclava Vic. 3183 AUSTRALIA
Phone (03) 9525 8190

Email: lamplighter_weekly@hotmail.com

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ISSUE 908

MOSHIACH MATTERS

Everything is connected to Moshiach, even playing dreidel! The B'nei Yissachar explains: There are four Hebrew letters written on the dreidel – *Nun*, *Gimmel*, *Heh*, and *Shin*. This is an abbreviation for the words "nes gadol haya sham-a great miracle happened there." When adding up the numerical value of the four letters on the dreidel one comes up with the total of 358. This is also the numerical value of the word "Moshiach"!

INSIGHTS

LETTERS BY THE LUBAVITCHER REBBE



THE MIRACLES OF CHANUKA

As has been often said before, all matters of Torah are an inexhaustible source of lessons and inspiration for our daily life. This is especially so when they take the form of practical mitzvot, since the Torah and mitzvot are infinite, being derived from the Infinite. I mention this here apropos the mitzva of the Chanuka lights, especially in relation to one particular aspect which, at first, appears puzzling.

I am referring to the fact that although Chanuka recalls many miracles and wonders, the main event for which Chanuka was instituted was the miracle of the cruse of oil. The fact that only one small jug of oil was found in the Beit Hamikdash (the Holy Temple), intact and undefiled by the enemy; which was kindled and lasted for eight days, until new, pure holy oil could be prepared.

What is puzzling about this whole story is that the oil was not required for human consumption, nor for use on the Altar, but for fuel in the Menora to be burnt in the process of giving light. It would seem, at first glance, of no consequence, insofar as the light is concerned whether or not the oil had been touched and defiled, for surely the quality and intensity of the light could hardly be affected by the touch.

Yet, when the Talmud defined the essence of the Chanuka festival, the Sages declared that the crucial aspect was the miracle of the oil. Not that they belittled or ignored the great miracles on the battlefields, when G-d delivered the "mighty" and "many" into the hands of the "weak" and "few," for these miracles are also emphasized in the prayer of "V'al Hanissim." Nevertheless, it was the miracle of being able to light the Menora with pure, holy oil, which gave rise to the Festival of Lights.

The obvious lesson is that in the realm of the spirit of Torah and mitzvot, as symbolized by the Chanuka lights, there must be absolute purity and holiness. It is not for the mind to reason why, or what difference it makes, or any other calculation.

To carry the analogy further, it is the purpose of the Holy Temple to illuminate and bring holiness and purity into the individual "Holy Temple"—i.e., every Jewish home and every Jewish person. This is also the obligation of every Jew towards his fellow Jew, in accordance with the mitzva of "love your fellow as yourself." But special precautions are necessary that the Holy Temple itself be illuminated with the purest, sanctified oil, so that even the High Priest, if he was impure, could not enter the Holy Temple, much less kindle the Menora.

May G-d grant you success in the spirit outlined above, truly reflecting the spirit of the Chanuka lights, lighting ever more candles and increasing their glow from day to day.

P.S. One of the essential messages of Chanuka is the need to preserve the purity of the Torah and mitzvot, especially in the education of our children.

A WORD from the Director

The Festival of Chanuka teaches us many lessons about how to live our day-to-day lives. In particular, the way in which we perform the mitzva of lighting the Chanuka menorah contains lessons for our Divine service.

Even after the Holy Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed the mitzva remains in force and continues. In fact, the Chanuka candles are eternal, and will never be abrogated. There are three important aspects to this mitzva, which actually has a long-reaching effect on the entire year:

Firstly, the mitzva to kindle the Chanuka lamps is connected to the concept of light and illumination. The nature of light is limitless and without boundaries. It reaches out from its source and can travel great distances. Nothing can prevent it from illuminating or change its essence.

A Jew's service of G-d should also be performed in this manner, without limits and without alterations. There is nothing in the world that has the power to prevent a Jew from serving G-d or deter him from his holy path.

Secondly, the number of lights increases from day to day. In the same way that every night of Chanuka we add another candle, a Jew must never content himself with whatever spiritual achievements he has already attained. Like the lights of the menorah, we must always strive to increase in Torah and mitzvot.

Lastly, the menorah is placed at the entrance to the house, so as to allow its light to illuminate the darkness outside. We learn from the placement of the Chanuka menorah, that no Jew is ever an "island." His connection to other Jews and his obligation to bring them the light of Torah and mitzvot extends not only to his family and acquaintances, but to every single member of the Jewish people. No Jew is ever "outside" the fold, in the same way that the very purpose of the menorah is to illuminate even the outer recesses of the world.

Have a Happy Chanuka, and best wishes on this Festival of Light.

J. I. Gutnick

It is an ancient Jewish custom to eat fried/oily foods on Chanukah, since it is a Holiday that commemorates a miracle that occurred with oil; the jug of oil which naturally should have lasted only one night, lasted eight.

Jews of Ashkenazi origin traditionally eat potato latkes to fulfil this custom, but Sephardic Jews eat "sufganiyot," deep-fried donuts. This custom has really caught on in Israel, where everyone, Ashkenazim and Sephardim alike consume copious amounts of sufganiyot on Chanukah.

A panel of scholars was convened to decide which of these customs is preferable. The unanimous vote declared that it is proper for everyone to enjoy both sufganiyot and latkes throughout the course of the holiday.

The word "Chanukah" comes from the same word as "chinuch (education)." The Greeks wanted to make us forget the holy Torah, thus when they were

defeated it was necessary to start re-educating the (Jewish people, and especially the) children.

Maimonides writes that it is important to use incentives in order to educate a child (until he/she is old enough to fully understand the importance and beauty of the Torah and mitzvos). On Chanukah, the holiday which is dedicated to education, we tell the children: "Here is some Chanukah gelt (money), an incentive for you to study Torah properly."

When giving Chanukah gelt to children, we also endeavour to educate the children about the importance of giving charity with their own money.

It Happened Once...



Israel Solomon was cold, but his mind was neither on the freezing winter of Valley Forge nor on tomorrow's battle. He was trying to light his Chanukah Lights without waking anyone or attracting attention.

'This could be my last Chanukah,' he thought to himself as he blew into his hands to warm them up so he could hold the match. But as the fire caught the wick he suddenly felt different; he felt strangely warm and happy.

"Thanks for everything, G-d!" He thought to himself "Thanks for everything!" And a few seconds later he was lying under the silent, clear, winter Pennsylvania sky making a blessing on the four small candles flickering in his miniature Menorah.

Suddenly he was brought out of his reverie; someone was standing at his feet!

"What is this!?! What are you doing, are you mad!!! Are you a spy!?!?" He looked up and lost his breath; it was the Commander of the Revolutionary forces, General Washington himself, whispering angrily at him!

He sat bolt upright, not wanting to stand quickly for fear that the noise would wake someone. "No, No, General! G-d forbid!!" he whispered. He slowly rose until he stood facing the General. "I am a religious Jew. I believe in G-d and this is one of G-d's commandments. Believe me I'm not a spy. G-d forbid, General Washington, G-d forbid."

The General couldn't sleep; he had been concerned with the impending battle and was walking between the rows of his sleeping soldiers when he noticed the lights.

"What sort of commandment is this?" he had calmed down a bit and seemed to be almost interested.

"Over two thousand years ago we Jewish people were fighting a war very similar to yours, Sir." Solomon felt himself filling with inspiration; the General was looking deeply into his eyes as though he was yearning for the answer. Solomon stood upright and looked powerfully back into Washington's eyes, "General, the Jews won that war because we fought for the truth. We fought for freedom. We were outnumbered too, even more than you are now, maybe a hundred to one, but we won because we believed in G-d, and G-d helped us."

Solomon felt as though he was connected to something infinitely certain. "And you will win tomorrow also, Sir! G-d will help you just as He helped us and we will win!"

The General was silent for a moment, staring, examining incredulously the face of the Jew.

Finally he broke the silence and said. "You are a Jew. You are from the nation of prophets! I treat what you have said as a prophesy from G-d Himself!" The General shook Solomon's hand saluted, turned on his heel and continued his rounds.

What happened the next day is now history: Washington's forces scored a telling victory over the British, which proved to be the beginning of total victory and eventually the independence of the United States of America from England.

But what is less known is that Mr. Solomon survived the war and returned to his home in Boston. One day, some two years after Valley Forge, he was

sitting with his family around the dinner table when he heard a knock at his door. He rose, opened the door and was astounded to see standing there a contingent of ten very official-looking men led by none other than ... the first President of the United States, President George Washington himself!

They entered, and the President was the first to speak. "We are here to present you with this. One of them stepped forward and took out a small expensive looking velvet box from his inside coat pocket. Mr. Solomon looked from one face to the other for some sign of what was going on. He slowly took the box and opened it. Inside was a golden medallion; he took it out and noticed that it was engraved with a picture of a menorah inscribed with the words:

'With admiration, General George Washington'

"Mr. Solomon, you don't know what you did that night at Valley Forge."

The President continued. "I couldn't sleep that night because I was sure that we had no chance of winning. We lacked ammunition, we were outnumbered ten to one, and we didn't even have sufficient food or bedding. When I saw the boys lying asleep in the freezing cold under those thin blankets I made up my mind to surrender.

But your lights and your prophecy changed all that. Mr. Solomon, if it wasn't for you and your Menora, I don't know if we would be standing here today as free men."

THOUGHTS THAT COUNT

Go now and see if it is well with your brothers (Gen. 37:14)

When Jacob sent Joseph to look for his brothers, he enjoined him to see only that which was "well"—the goodness and positive qualities they had. In this way the brothers would maintain their unity. (Rabbi Simcha Bunim of Pshischa)

Reuven returned to the pit, and behold, Joseph was not in the pit (37:29)

Reuven's absence allowed the other brothers to sell Joseph; had Reuven been present, he would not have permitted them to do it. And where was he? Rashi says Reuven was preoccupied with fasting and perfecting himself. Because he was concerned only with himself, Joseph was sold and the whole series of events was set in motion that would lead to our forefathers' exile in Egypt. An important lesson is learned: One must not be concerned solely with his own perfection to the exclusion of others. We must always have our fellow Jew in mind and truly love him, lest he be ignored in his time of need. (Likutei Sichot)

CHABAD HOUSE OF CAULFIELD LUBAVITCH

PARSHAS VAYEISHEV 25 KISLEV • 12 DECEMBER

FRIDAY NIGHT:	CANDLE LIGHTING:	8:17 PM
	MINCHA:	7:30 PM
	KABBOLAS SHABBOS :	9:00 PM
SHABBOS MORNING:	TEHILIM:	8:30 AM
	SHACHARIS:	10:00 AM
	THE MOLAD IS THURSDAY	12:59:33 (10 <i>chakalim</i>) AM
	MINCHA:	8:15 PM
	SHABBOS ENDS:	9:22 PM
WEEKDAYS:	SHACHARIS: SUN- FRI:	9:15 AM
	MINCHA:	8:25 PM
	MAARIV:	9:30 PM

CANDLE LIGHTING: 11 DECEMBER 2009



Begins	Ends
8:17 MELBOURNE	9:22
8:04 ADELAIDE	9:07
6:18 BRISBANE	7:16
6:47 DARWIN	7:40
6:17 GOLD COAST	7:16
6:57 PERTH	7:58
7:41 SYDNEY	8:43
7:53 CANBERRA	8:56
8:21 LAUNCESTON	9:32
8:15 AUCKLAND	9:19
8:28 WELLINGTON	9:38

Dedicated to the beloved, revered leader of World Jewry

The Lubavitcher Rebbe

זצוקללה"ה נבג"מ ז"ע

May he succeed in imploring the Almighty to redeem His people speedily in our days.