

## Chanukah: Sfat Emet Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

Our sages tell us that the physical war against the Greeks gave expression to our spiritual struggle against them. Hashem could have destroyed the Greeks, but He wanted us to fight against them for our own development. This was the same reason that Avraham fought with Terach and Rabbi Akiva battled the Romans. When we won against the Greeks, it wasn't a physical victory, but a victory of *kavod shamayim* (honoring Hashem's name).

Although the vial of oil burned for eight calendar days, the miracle translated into something beyond time. This is intimated by the number eight. The root of the word *shemona* (eight) is *shemen*, oil. Just as oil floats above other liquids, the Chanukah miracle was something above our sense of reality. It transformed our way of thinking and experiencing this world to one of *sheleimut*, rising above ourselves. Similarly, a *brit milah* takes place on the eighth day and is performed on a baby who is not given a choice. Eight represents submitting to a higher will above our own.

The potential to see the light was there before the war but it was concealed by darkness. The Greeks had squashed all our potential and latent power. When the Macabbees succeeded in defeating them, they were finally able to achieve *deveikut* (connection to G-d). This is an inspiration for all of us. When we fall spiritually, we may easily come to despair. The miracle of Chanukah strengthens our belief in the power of our higher self, in the love Hashem has for us, and in the eventual redemption.

The Gemara writes that the Chanukah lights are holy and may not be used for our own benefit. Sanctity means dedicating something to Hashem. All *mitzvot* have holiness, but their holiness is hidden. *Yavan* with its philosophy of self-contained humanism creates concealment. Faith and following the Torah help us break through these barriers to access this sanctity. This is the miracle of Chanukah which can still be found in the Chanukah lights.

After the candles are lit, we sing, "*U'menotar kankanim naaseh nes la'shoshanim*, with what was left in the little vessel, Hashem made a miracle for the Jews who are called

*shoshanim* (roses). In Shir Hashirim the verse states, "*Ani chavatzelet hasharon shoshanat ha'amakim*." The roses that grow in the hot and dry Sharon region are yellow and hardy while those that grow in the shade are red and delicate. There are *tzaddikim* who are tough, who discover who they are not and affirm who they are. There are those who are more refined, who never faced the impurity of the outside world. People sometimes mistakenly think that the second type of *tzaddik* is inherently superior to the first. However, the Chashmonaim who battled impurity are called *shoshanim*.

Both categories of *tzaddikim* can reach the same level of greatness because the oil, their core *emunah*, remains. Our sages tell us, "*Al tistakel b'kanakn eleh b'mah she'yesh bo*." The outside is really a garment for the inner self. Many times we may look at people and wonder where Hashem is with them. This is true of secular Jews, and about those among us who have failed. We must learn to focus on every Jew's inner essence. The word for world in Hebrew is *olam*, which is related to the word *he'elem*, meaning hidden. Hashem is there within every form of concealment. Someone who may appear so far from Judaism really has faith buried deep within him whether he is aware of it or not. Hashem's *malchut* (kingdom) is hidden in this world. Every so often He lifts the curtain and we see miracles. We realize that He was there all along.

The *kankanim* (containers) that conceal light are the different forms of exile. Some of us are victims of the Greek exile, which perceived everything in terms of human perceptions. Others are victims of the Persian exile, which espouses that only material exists. And still some of us are victims of the Babylonian exile where control and force dominate. We are all victims, but inside of us is a pure light which we will rediscover at the time of redemption. All of us go through stages of terrible concealment, failure, and despair. We have all sorts of things that enslave our hearts and emotions. It's up to us to liberate ourselves. On Chanukah we renew our sense of Hashem's kingship. We can take on many enemies and defeat them. We can discover our own capacity for light and attain purity. Then we can come to a higher point of perceiving *malchut shamayim*, not only in this world and in other people, but in ourselves.

On Chanukah, we read the parsha of the *nesi'im* and their contribution to the sanctuary, which was completed on the 25th of Kislev. The twelve tribes parallel the twelve different angles of a cube that meet at the same center. They each reflect a different soul power, treading a different path to reach the same goal. The Zohar says that Yaakov blessed each of his twelve sons individually because he recognized that they were unique. They were each born in a different month under a different astral sign which reflects the different channels through which Hashem's energy flows down. Likewise, Hashem's name, yud *keh vav keh*, has twelve different ways of arranging the letters. Each tribe sees Hashem echad through its own prism. His binding force is aroused even when there is a partial redemption. This awakening of the Chanukah miracle rekindled our own light.

The Torah says there was a river that flowed out of Eden. When this river left Eden it divided into four different tributaries. Eden represents unity and the four streams correspond to the forces of estrangement represented by the exile. In Kohelet it is written, "All of the rivers go into the sea." We can take any exile back to its source. We can face the evil and uplift it. Our defeat of *Yavan* brought us to a new level of redemption that we had never experienced before. The river *Chidekel* represents *Yavan* – *chad v'kal* – sharp and brilliant. The Greeks used their incisiveness to describe reality in their own terms. We can take that power and use it for holiness.

In the blessing on the Chanukah lights, we say, "*Bayamim haheym ba'zman hazeh*." At all moments of liberation, we have an opportunity for redemption as individuals too. Chanukah is liberation from the Greek mind-set, whose root is the sin of the golden calf, whose underlying was the desire to see everything on our own terms. On a personal and collective level, this is a time of elevation.

We are like someone standing on a giant's shoulder reaching upward. All of the merits of the previous generations give us the strength to chart our own course. As we tread the path mapped out by our forefathers, we create our own unique way. As we merit to experience the miracles, to see our unity as purposeful, and to find the light within ourselves.

# Jewish Calendar II #16-Mehadrin Min Hamehadrin

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Herschel Reichman

Chanukah is a unique holiday in that the Gemara delineates two extra levels of *hiddur mitzva* (enhancing the mitzva) when lighting the candles. The basic *mitzva* is for the head of the household to light one candle each night for the whole family. However, there is a level of *mehadrin* where each family member lights a light every night. In *mehadrin min hamehadrin* each family member lights the corresponding number of candles for that night.

The Beit Yosef discusses a question whether a person who made a blessing on the wrong number of candles must make another blessing when he remembers to light the additional candle(s). He answers that if there was a significant break (approx. 1-2 hours) after the first lighting, one would make another blessing. This is surprising, because in normative Jewish law one doesn't repeat a blessing on a *hiddur mitzva*. From this we

learn that the *mehadrin* factor inherent in *neirot nisa*. Chanukah is unique in that it is related to *maaseh hamitzva* (performance of the *mitzva*). While there is great importance attached to beautifying a *mitzva*, such as making a blessing on a fine etrog or tallit, it is only related to *mitzva* objects with which the person fulfills the fundamental *mitzva* regardless if the item is beautiful. Therefore, no further blessing is recited. However, when one adds more Chanukah candles, the performance of the *mitzva* is radically enhanced, it's intrinsic to the *mitzva*. It's not just lighting the candles, but also *pirsumei nisa* – publicizing the miracle. Therefore, another blessing is recited.

Similarly, the poskim explain that although the *basic mitzva* of *ner ish u'baito*, (the father lighting for the household) has already been fulfilled, other family members can still make their own blessing because they are adding to the fundamental *mitzva*, which is *pirsumei*

Can a child who has reached the age of *chinuch* and is obligated in Rabbinic *mitzvot*, be *motzi* (intend to include) an adult with a *mitzva d'rabanan* such as *megilah* or *neirot Chanukah*? The Shulchan Aruch rules that a child cannot be *motzi megilah* but he could be *motzi neirot Chanukah*. Rav Soloveitchik explains that *megilah* is a *chiyuv gavra* – an adult obligation. *Neirot Chanukah* is a *chiyuv bayit* – an obligation on the household. It's not a transfer from one person to the next. Since a child has an obligation he can automatically be *motzi* the household.

There's an old custom to sing *Haneirot Halalu* as the Chanukah lights are lit. This seems like a *hefsek* (interruption in the performance of the *mitzva*). The reason it is not is because it is part of publicizing the miracle.

## Chumash In Depth- The Sale of Yosef: Life of Growth

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

What is the connection between the end of Parshat Vayishlach, which speaks about the lineage of Esav, and Parshat Vayeishev, which describes the difficult incident of Yosef and his brothers? Rashi explains that although Esav's background is mentioned briefly, the Torah focuses on the story of Yaakov and the twelve tribes. It is compared to a precious stone that fell beneath the sand. After finding the stone, the debris is discarded and attention is focused solely on the stone. Similarly, Hashem sifted through all the generations until He found Yaakov, the *bechir h'avot* (the chosen one), and then focused on him.

Rashi tells another parable about a coal dealer who came to the market to sell his coal. After his arrival, another merchant arrived laden with straw. The coal dealer worried that there would not be any room now for his coal. A wise person said one spark released from your coal will decimate the entire wagonload of straw. When Yaakov saw all the generals of Esav, he worried how he would overcome them. Therefore, the Torah says, "*Eleh toldot Yaakov, Yosef.*" These are the children of Yaakov, Yosef. Sefer Ovadaya states, "*Vayaha beit Yaakov aish u'beit Yosef l'hava u'beit Esav l'kash.*" (Yaakov is the fire, Yosef is the flame, and Esav is the straw.) One spark of Yosef can destroy the entire camp of Esav. The Netivot Shalom notes that Esav represents our

negative inclinations. Hashem said, "*V'haya beit Yaakov l'aish*, your passion, desire, and yearning to do the will of Hashem will outweigh all the evil of Edom.

Rabbi Tatz explains that straw symbolizes the nations of the world who believe that the more material a person has the better off he is. Esav said, "I have a lot," while Yaakov said, "I have everything." What really counts is spirituality. Life is not about having, but about appreciating what one does have and elevating it for Hashem. Although Esav's lineage seems impressive compared to Yaakov, Yaakov is central in the narrative of the Chumash.

## Rebbetzin's Perspective I: Class # 2

Excerpted from Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller's Question and Answer series on Naaleh.com

### Question:

I've seen girls that were lumped together and told to be friendly and it backfired badly. It bothers me because it was all in the name of *achdut* (unity). What is the Torah perspective and where does *achdut* fit in here?

### Answer:

Our world is enormously complex. Every creation has its own purpose, structure, and reason for being, with the common goal of revealing Hashem's glory. If you compare a lion to a frog they are different, but they share one characteristic – they affirm Hashem's greatness. The mission of a Jew is to interpret the world

and find Hashem's glory in every person, creation, or situation he encounters. Every Jew is part of the collective of Klal Yisrael and together we can give interpretation and meaning to existence.

The verse says concerning the Jews, "*Becha etpaer,*" I take pride in you. When you meet another Jew, ask yourself, How does Hashem take pride in him in a way that is different than how He takes pride in me? How can I really know this person? What is his unique contribution to the world? How can I learn from him?

*Achdut* can occur when you ask, "Where do I see

Hashem's honor in this person?" His glory may be hidden under layers of pride and sinfulness. Your job is to see through that facade so that you and the person can resonate by tapping into the *tzelem Elokim* (Divine Image). This is really what *achdut* means, seeing the spirituality within another person and feeling one with him.

Viewing different sectors within Klal Yisrael and seeing what is unique, admirable, and beautiful, without necessarily feeling you have to be a part of that particular group, is *achdut* manifested in reality. This is the way true *tzaddikim* looked at other Jews and this is what we should aspire to.

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