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Parshas Vayeishev - Chanukah

Simcha shel Mitzvah

Ideally, *avodas Hashem* should be performed with vigor and joy. It shouldn't be performed by rote, like a daily routine. Every *tefillah* should be, in one's eyes, like the first one ever. Each mitzvah should be performed with joy. Chanukah is an ideal time to cultivate this attitude.

The Chanukah *lecht* have a specific time frame when they should burn. The Gemara says, מצוותה משתשקע החמה עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק, "The mitzvah is to light the candles from sunset until there are no more people in the marketplace." We can explain that indicated in these words is that one should light Chanukah *lecht*, עד שתכלה רגל, until one gets rid of the רגילות, habitual behavior. The Chanukah candles should teach us to make our *avodas Hashem* fresh and filled with light and joy.

The Gemara says, הרגיל בנר, "One who is careful to light the Chanukah candles," הויין ליה בניי תלמידי חכמים, "he will merit children *talmidei chachamim*" (*Shabbos* 23).

We can also translate הרגיל, if you are accustomed to doing things habitually and because of your familiarity you don't do them with freshness, then בנר, shine the light of Chanukah, which is the light of newness onto your deeds.

In *Birchas haShachar* we say יהי רצון מלפניך... שתרגילנו בתורתך, we request that we should have רגילות, familiarity in Torah. Someone asked the Imrei Emes zt'l, isn't familiarity a negative matter? Don't we want the Torah to always be new to us?

The Imrei Emes answered that when it comes to Torah, we want to be familiar and רגיל to learn Torah. One should learn Torah at every opportunity.

But we also want the Torah to be new. By Torah study, it isn't a contradiction. The Imrei Emes compared it to eating. Every day we eat, yet each time, we eat with a new *chiyus*, excitement and appetite, as though we never ate before. We are never bored of food. Torah study should be the same. We want to become accustomed to studying Torah – we want to study Torah constantly – however, it should always be exciting and like new to us.

If Torah isn't exciting and new to us, we should pretend as though it were. We can pretend that we truly desire to understand the Gemara, by learning it in a joyous tune and with external expressions of excitement and interest. And when we pretend, eventually it will become real.

Sheker, falsehood, is a negative trait but tzaddikim said that one is permitted to pretend that he's happy because false happiness will

lead to true happiness. Similarly, one can pretend that he is excited and happy over the Torah and mitzvos, because by pretending, his happiness will become genuine.

In this week's *parashah* the *שר המשקים* and the *שר האופים* had a dream. Yosef told the *sar hamashkim* (chief butler) that in three days he will leave the prison and serve in Paroh's palace once again, and Yosef said to the *sar ha'ofim* (chief baker) that in three days, the *sar ha'ofim* will die. How did Yosef know that the *sar hamashkim* would live and the *sar ha'ofim* would die?

The Chida answers with a *mashal*:

An artist painted a picture of a man carrying a basket on his head. The basket was filled with cakes and other baked goods. The picture was true-to-life. Even the birds were fooled. They came and pecked at the picture, that's how real the breads looked.

"See how wonderful this painting is!" someone exclaimed. "Even the birds are fooled by it."

Another person disagreed. He said, "If the painting would look real, the birds would be afraid of the person holding the basket. Apparently, it doesn't look so real."

The Chida explains, the שר האופים dreamed that he was carrying breads and cakes in a basket on his head, and birds were eating from the basket. When Yosef heard this, he realized that this is a sign of a dead person. If he were alive, the birds would be afraid to eat from the basket above his head.

For our purposes now, it is a reminder that we must be *alive*. We need to serve Hashem with joy. We mustn't serve Hashem with laziness, with boredom, without interest. And as we wrote earlier, if we don't have this vim and vigor then we can always pretend as though we do until it becomes real.

Parashas Naso lists the *korbanos* that the *Nesi'im* brought after the *Mishkan* was completed. ויאמר ה' אל משה נשיא אחד ליום נשיא אחד ליום יקריבו את קרבנם לחנוכת המזבח, "Hashem said to Moshe, 'One *nasi* each day, should bring his *korban*, for the dedication of the *mizbeiach*'" (*Bamidbar 7:11*).

There were twelve nesi'im, and each *nasi* brought the very same *korban* on subsequent days, yet the Torah lists each *nasi* and his *korban*. It seems repetitious. The Torah could have stated the *korbanos* of נחשון בן עמינדב of *shevet Yehudah*, who brought them on the first day (Rosh Chodesh Nissan) and then the Torah can write that the other *nesi'im* brought the very same *korban* on the subsequent days. Why does the Torah repeat each *nasi's korban* individually?

The Ramban answers that this is to indicate that the twelve *nesi'im* didn't copy each another. Each of them had different intentions with the *korbanos* they brought. The

Torah lists them separately because even though their deeds were the same, each *korban* was totally different because of their intentions.

After listing these *korbanos*, *Parashas B'haloscha* begins with the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah in the Mishkan. Rashi writes, להגיד שבחו של אהרן שלא שינה, "The Torah is telling us Aharon's praise that he didn't change [and do differently than Hashem's decree]." The Sfas Emes translates it differently: שלא שינה, he didn't repeat. The *nesi'im* didn't "repeat" one another, rather each *nasi* brought his *korban* with his personal intentions. Aharon was on an even higher level, and he never "repeated" himself. Each day he lit the Menorah with renewed vigor and joy, with new intentions.

The Ba'ch teaches that in the era of Chanukah (prior to the miracles of Chanuka) the Jewish people were התרשלו בעבודה, lenient with the *avodah*

in the Beis HaMikdash. The Shem MiShmuel explains that they brought the *korbanos* every day; the problem was that they didn't bring them with joy as a Yid should.

Their *teshuvah* was when they were *moser nefesh* for the *avodah* in the Beis HaMikdash and thereby, they merited a miracle with the Menorah.

Emunah

The main area where one should eliminate familiarity is with *emunah*. *Emunah* has many levels and we are accustomed to our level in *emunah*. It's hard for us to stretch beyond this limitation.

When something happens, many people – even G-d fearing people – can think that *it happened by chance*. It's hard for them to accept that what happened came directly from Hashem. On Chanukah, let's train ourselves to think in the mode of *emunah*. When it comes to *parnassah*, and regarding everything else too,

learn to recognize that
everything is from Hashem.

This is indicated in the words
עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק. The שוק is
the marketplace, where people
generally think that everything
that takes place there is a
natural occurrence and not
Hashem's Hand. If they make
money they think it's because
of their good choices, and if
they lose money it's because of
their faults. We light
Chanukah *lecht* עד שתכלה רגל מן
השוק, until we stop this רגילות
this typical form of thinking
and we acquire the awareness
that everything – even what
occurs in the market – is from
Hashem.

The Chasam Sofer *zt'l* taught
that when the Yidden [from

the desert] came to Eretz
Yisrael and they saw that
food grows from the ground,
they were astounded. They
were familiar with food
falling down from heaven;
now they saw that food grows
from the ground.

We tend to think of familiar
phenomena as simply the
forces of nature. But once in a
while Hashem performs a
great miracle, and then we
remind ourselves that
everything that occurs –
including those matters that
we are familiar with – are also
miracles (as the Ramban
writes at the end of *parashas*
Bo).¹

The Yevanim excelled in חכמות
היצוניות (sciences). Literally

1. In *Pirkei Avos* it states: מה נאה ניר, מה נאה אילן זה, "If a person stops learning and says, "How beautiful is this tree! 'How beautiful is this piece of land!' the *passuk* renders him *chayav misah*" (*Avos* 3:7).

Chassidim explained this Mishnah in the following manner: If when one sees a beautiful tree or a beautiful field, and he doesn't recognize that it's a miracle from Hashem, he is מתחייב בנפשו, because one should always remember that what he sees and everything that occurs to him is straight from Hashem.

חכמות היצונית means outer wisdoms. We must look for the inner wisdom. On the outside, matters seem to be happening by chance. One can study science and remain stranded on the outer level. One has to look within and recognize that everything is from Hashem.²

Hallel

The Chochmas Shlomo (*siman* תרפג) teaches that if someone in jail is given the choice of either lighting the Chanukah candles in prison or to leave the jail for a day to say *Hallel*, he should choose to leave and say *Hallel*. *Hallel* is more important than lighting the Chanukah candles because

these days were established for *Hallel* and *Hoidayah* (praise).

The Misechta Sofrim says that on Chanukah we should say *Hallel* בנעימה, to chant it pleasantly and joyfully.

There was a woman who suffered from a *dibbuk*. The Divrei Chaim of Tzanz ז"ל suggested that she stand by the doorway of the beis kneses when they say *Hallel* on Chanukah. She did so, and the *dibbuk* left her.³

Like all mitzvos, *Hallel* should be said with a *hislahavus*, with passion. Although we will be saying *Hallel* for eight days straight, we should strive to make the *Hallel* new, exciting and joyous, each day.

2. The Shlah Hakadosh taught that one should accustom himself to say בעזרת ה' and אם ירצה ה'. Hashem's name should always be on his lips. Yosef was this way. The *passuk* says, וירא אדוניו כי ה' אתו וכל אשר הוא עשה, "His master saw that Hashem was with Yosef, and whatever he did, Hashem gave him success" (39:3). Rashi writes, כי ה' אתו – שם שמים, "Hashem's name was always on his lips."

The Shlah teaches that this is alluded to in the *passuk*, היא עצת ה' היא תקום, היא תקום, אם ירצה ה'. If one says this, he will succeed.

3. We can derive from this that all forms of negativity will go away by saying *Hallel* on Chanukah.

The Baal HaTanya *zt'l* had a great chassid called Reb Shmuel Minkas *zt'l*. Once, he asked a *melamed*, "What are you teaching now?"

The *melamed* replied that he was teaching *Bava Metziah*.

Reb Shmuel Minkas asked, "The first Mishnah of *Bava Metziah* repeats some of its phrases twice. *וזה אומר אני מצאתיה*, and then again the Mishnah writes, *וזה אומר אני מצאתיה* (This person says that he found the garment and this person says that he found the garment.)

The Mishnah says, *וזה אומר כולו שלי*, and then again, *וזה אומר כולו שלי*, (This one says that it is all mine, and this one says that it is all mine.) "My question is," Reb Shmuel Minkas said in good humor, "in the siddur, by *Hallel*, there are also some words that are repeated. (אורך) *כי עניתני... אנה ה' השיעה נא*) The Siddur writes the first words in large print, and the second words are written in smaller print. Why doesn't the Mishnah do the same? When

the phrase is repeated, it should be written in smaller print."

The *melamed* laughed, but he didn't have an answer.

Reb Shmuel Minkas said, "I will tell you the reason. When a person claims that the garment is his, he says it with all his heart. He really means it; he really wants it. Therefore, the words (both times) are written in large print. But in *Hallel*, when the words are repetitious people become tired and are uninspired. The second time, the words aren't said with the same enthusiasm as the first time around. Therefore the first set of words is written in large letters but the second set is written in smaller print."

This problem certainly can occur when we say *Hallel* for eight consecutive days. We can lose the excitement and the joy, and it can *chalilah* turn into a routine. Therefore, we must strive to say the

Hallel each day, with joy and with passion.⁴

Halachah states that one shouldn't eat before davening *Shacharis*. There was an elderly *gadol* who was careful with this halachah. This was a bit of a problem because he davened *Shacharis* very late each day. He was old and ill and it wasn't good for his health.

His family tried to convince him to maybe daven earlier or to eat before davening because he needed it for his health, but he refused.

One of his children went to his doctor. "Maybe you can convince our father to eat earlier?"

The doctor spoke with the elderly man, "I have two questions: My first question is, I don't understand why

Yidden daven the very same prayer each day. It is disrespectful. Even before a human king, one doesn't repeat his words daily. He changes his requests and his praises each time he speaks to the king. Certainly, one shouldn't repeat his words before the King of the world.

"My second question," the doctor continued, "is why do you daven so late? Can't you pray earlier?"

The elderly rav replied, "Your questions are very good, but one question is the answer to the other one. You say that it's improper to repeat the same exact words each day, and I agree with you entirely. Therefore, I try to have new intentions every day. Although the words are the same, I make certain that my meanings are deeper and different each day. Thus

4. Tosfos (*Tanis* 28) says that we say *Hallel* each day of Chanukah because each day the miracle increased. Therefore, we should understand that we must say *Hallel* with feeling and concentration each day even better than the day before.

Hashem, who knows people's thoughts, receives a brand new *tefillah* each day. But to do so, I need time to prepare. It isn't easy to pray a new prayer each day. Preparation takes time. That is the reason why I daven late."

Reb Yankel Kojhelik *zt'l* came from Europe to live in Eretz Yisrael. He assumed that when he comes to Eretz Yisrael he would feel its immense *kedushah*, but he was surprised to discover that he actually felt more spirituality in *chutz le'aretz*. He spoke with Rebbe Shlomke of Zvhil *zt'l* about this. The Rebbe of Zvhil explained, "*When one carries water on his shoulders, it's heavy. But when he goes to the mikvah, and is entirely immersed under the water, there's a lot of water on his shoulders and but he doesn't feel the weight. Because when one is entirely immersed in something, he doesn't realize what he's carrying. Now that you are in Eretz Yisrael, totally immersed in the*

holiness, you don't realize what you have.

This is one of the reasons that people become less inspired with *Hallel*, *Al HaNissim* and with the *hadlakas haneir* of Chanukah, as Chanukah goes by. At first, they are excited and inspired but as they become more and more immersed in its holiness, they lose sight of all the goodness that they have. We should recognize that the holiness of Chanukah increases each day and we should continue to endeavor to experience its wonderful light and joy.

Retroactive

The local governor summoned the *rosh hakahol* (the head of the Jewish community) and informed him that the military was planning to build a military base in their town. By the king's orders, the soldiers will be billeted in the townspeople's homes. Every Jewish homeowner is required to host a soldier for as long as the army is stationed there.

The people of the town were devastated when they heard the decree. Hosting soldiers is costly – it's another mouth to feed – but that wasn't the main problem. The primary issue was the influence that a non-Jew could have on them and their children while living in their home. There were children of all ages, boys and girls, and it was frightening and risky to host a non-Jewish soldier that has no fear of Heaven.

The chassidim of that town went and told their Rebbe about the *gezeirah*. The Rebbe asked them, "How much money are you willing to pay to resolve the problem?"

The chassidim replied that they were ready to pay any price. They considered hosting gentile soldiers a terrible tragedy, which needs to be avoided by all costs.

The Rebbe told them, "I am presently involved in a mitzvah of *pidyon shvuyim* (to

save a Yid from prison) and I need ten thousand rubles to free him. If you give me this amount, you will not need to host the soldiers in your homes."

The chassidim were overjoyed. Ten thousand rubles wasn't all that much money when divided among all the people of their town, and they were certain that the Rebbe's promise would materialize.

The chassidim went knocking from door to door, collecting the money for *pidyon shvuyim* and for their salvation. Many people gave their share readily, however the *misnagdim* of the city (who didn't believe in the Rebbe) were hesitant. "What will be if we give the money, but it doesn't help, and we will nevertheless be forced to host the soldiers in our home?"

The chassidim promised, "If the *tzedakah* doesn't help, we will return the money."

With this stipulation, they agreed to pay their share.

Finally, the chassidim brought the ten thousand rubles to their Rebbe for *pidyon shvuyim*. The Rebbe gave them his brachos that they shouldn't need to host soldiers.

It didn't take long before the local governor sent a message to the *rosh hakahol* that there was a change of plans, and the soldiers wouldn't be coming to their town after all.

The governor said, "I received another letter from the king's palace. It states that the army will not come to our town. They will be going to another town..."

The chassidim rejoiced. They didn't know whether the salvation came about because of the Rebbe's *brachah* or if it was in the merit of their *tzedakah* for *pidyon shvuyim* – and they didn't care to know. The main thing was that they were freed from the terrible decree.

The *misnagdim* however asked the governor to show them the letter. They saw that the letter

was dated even before the chassidim spoke with their Rebbe. The money they donated was for naught, because they didn't need the *yeshua* at all.

The *misnagdim* came to the chassidim and said, "We want our share of the money back. The money that we gave for *tzedakah* didn't save us, since we would have been saved regardless. The decree was annulled two weeks before we paid our share."

The chassidim disagreed. They believed that somehow the Rebbe's *brachah* or the merit of *tzedakah* set the salvation into motion, retroactively. Only a *din Torah* would determine who was correct, and they brought their debate to Rebbe Shlomo Kluger *zt'l*. Generally, a *din Torah* is ruled with *פשרה*, compromises, so everyone leaves the court case at least somewhat satisfied. But the *misnagdim* were certain that they deserve their entire share of the money back, so they said to Reb

Shlomo Kluger that they wanted the *din Torah* to be held without any compromise.

Reb Shlomo Kluger told them to return the next morning and they would discuss it.

The next morning, Reb Shlomo Kluger ruled in favor of the chassidim. Although the army's change of plans occurred two weeks earlier, it is still possible that it was due to the *tzedakah* and the *brachah* that they had a *yeshua* afterwards. Hashem, who knows the future, in mysterious ways, sets the process of the salvation in motion, retroactively. If the community will give the money to *tzedakah* and receive the Rebbe's *brachah*, they would merit receiving this salvation, which was prepared already from before.

Reb Shlomo proved this from the following sources:

The Gemara (*Brachos* 63) teaches that the *aron* was kept in the home of *עובד אדום הגיתי*. *עובד* honored the *aron* by

storing it in his home, and he would sweep the floor in front of it. In this merit, his wife and their eight daughters-in-law all gave birth to sextuplets (*ששה ששה בכרם* *אחד*, altogether 54 children, $9 \times 6 = 54$) soon afterwards.

Obviously, the pregnancy of these women began months before. The *aron* was only in *עובד*'s home for three months. We see from this that Hashem prepares the reward even before the good deed is performed. It is set into motion, so if one will merit it, he will receive what's coming to him.

The Gemara (*Kesubos* 67) says that a poor person came to Rava requesting a meal. Rava asked him, "What do you generally eat?"

"Fat chicken (*תרנגלת מפותמים*) and old wine."

"Don't you think that it improper to ask from people to give you so much?" Rava rebuked him.

The pauper replied, "I don't eat from yours. I eat from what Hashem gives. As it is written, עיני כל אליך ישברו ואתה נותן להם את אכלם בעתו...

Rashi explains that בעתו, in singular – and not בעתם – implies that Hashem supplies each individual with his needs, in accordance to what he is accustomed to.

As they were speaking Rava's sister arrived. She had a gift for Rava in her hands: fat chicken and old wine. Rava hadn't seen her for thirteen years. Rava realized that this was a signal from heaven that he should give the fat chicken and old wine to the pauper. "I spoke to sharply to you," Rava told him, and gave him the food.

When did Rava's sister leave her house to go to Rava? It wasn't at the same time when Rava and the pauper were speaking. But Hashem starts the process of the salvation in advance. Before the pauper arrived at Rava's doorstep and

even before he asked for the food, the process of his receiving the food was set into motion. Therefore, it is very possible that the change of plans that the army had was in merit of the *tzedakah* and the *brachah* that ensued.

Reb Shlomo Kluger adds that this idea is also stated in this week's *parashah*. Yosef was sold to merchants who imported spices. The *passuk* says וישאו עיניהם ויראו והנה ארחת וישמעאלים באה מגלעד וגמליהם נשאים נכאת וצרי ולט הולכים להוריד מצרימה (37:24).

Rashi writes, "Why does the *passuk* tell us what they were importing? To teach us the reward that's given to *tzaddikim*. Arabs generally deal with *נפט ועטרון*, which have a bad odor. But especially for Yosef, a transport of *besamim* passed, so he wouldn't be harmed by the fumes."

When did those Arabs load their wagons with *besamim*? It was well before Yosef's brothers even considered

selling him. But Hashem sets into motion the process of the salvation that may be needed in the future⁵.

Hishtadlus

Everyone must do *hishtadlus* but everyone must believe that it isn't his *hishtadlus* that brings the results; it's Hashem's word and blessings.

Yosef excelled in *bitachon* because he knew that everything comes from Hashem. As the *passuk* says, וַיֵּרָא אֲדֹנָיו כִּי ה' אִתּוֹ וּבֹל אֲשֶׁר הוּא עֹשֶׂה ה', "Yosef's master [Photifar] saw that Hashem was with Yosef, and

everything that Yosef did, Hashem gave him success."

Rashi explains, Photifar saw that Yosef was continuously praying. שֵׁם שָׁמַיִם שְׁנוּר בִּפְּיוֹ, "Hashem's name was always on his lips," and this is what gave him constant success. Yosef certainly trusted in Hashem without doubt, yet even for the greatest tzaddikim there are always higher and higher levels to reach. Therefore, Chazal tell us that Yosef erred with his *bitachon* when he asked the *sar hamashkim* to speak on his behalf to Paroh, to be freed from jail. His punishment was

5. The Baal Shem Tov zy'a was once a guest in someone's home. After Shabbos, the Baal Shem Tov thanked his host and took out an envelope. "Can you deliver this letter to Mr. So-and-so, who lives in another town..."

His host agreed but he soon forgot about the letter, and it remained in a drawer in his home for many years. Over this time, this man lost his money and was struggling with his *parnassah*.

One day, he found the letter and he remembered the Baal Shem Tov's request. He finally delivered the letter, and the receiver read it out loud before him. The letter said, "The person handing you this letter was once wealthy but he lost his money and is now going through a hard time. Please help him generously." The receiver of the letter helped him out generously. This was the Baal Shem Tov's way of repaying his host.

that he remained in jail for another two years.

As the final Rashi of the *parashah* states, "The *שר המשקים* forgot Yosef because Yosef put his trust in him, thinking that he would remember him. Therefore, he needed to be imprisoned for an additional two years. As it says, *אשרי הגבר אשר שם ה' מבטחו*, ולא פנה אל רהבים, 'Fortunate is the man who trusts in Hashem, and he doesn't turn to the Egyptians, who are called *רהב*, for help.'"

What was Yosef's error? He did some *hishtadlus* and he asked the *שר המשקים* to mention his plight to Paroh. That shouldn't be a problem since one is obligated to do *hishtadlus*.

The common answer is because Yosef requested from the *sar hamashkim* twice that he remember him. Chazal explain that Yosef said *זכרתני...והזכרתני* "Remember me... mention me..." (40:45) and for saying this word twice, he was

punished that he would remain another two years in prison.

Reb Chaim of Brisk *zt'l* asked his student, Reb Shimon Shkop *zt'l*, "What would happen if Yosef would have said *זכרתני* only once?"

Reb Shimonn Shkop replied that Yosef would then be in prison for only one more year.

Reb Chaim said, "No, he wouldn't be punished at all, because a person may do *hishtadlus*. If Yosef HaTzaddik would request once, he would be redeemed from jail immediately. The problem was that Yosef requested it twice. This means that he trusted in the *sar hamashkim*, and he was punished for the first time he said *זכרתני* as well, and that's why he remained in prison another two years.

Reb Shloime Kluger explains that Yosef told the *שר המשקים* that he would be freed from jail in three days. As the *passuk* says, *ויאמר לו יוסף זה פתרונו* שלשת השריגים שלשת ימים הם בעוד

שלושת ימים ישא פרעה את ראשך והשיבך על כנך (12 – 13). Yosef had another three days to speak with the שר המשקים. Within these three days, Hashem could save Yosef from jail some other way. There was no rush to speak with the *sar hamashkim* immediately. His speaking immediately with the *sar hamashkim* indicated that he felt that there was no other way that he could be freed, other than via the *sar hamashkim* in three days time.

That is a lack of *bitachon*.

If Yosef would have spoken with the שר המשקים only on the third day, it would be *hishtadlus*, and that is proper. But Yosef asked two days too early, and therefore he was punished with an additional two years in prison.

Yaakov said, זאת עשו קחו מזמרת הארץ בכליכם והורידו לאיש מנחה מעט צרי ומעט דבש נכאת ולט במנים ושקדים (11). Yaakov wanted to appease the ruler of Mitzrayim because the ruler kept Shimon hostage, accused them of being spies, and now he

demanded to see Binyamin. To appease him, Yaakov Avinu sent along with his children the good fruits of Eretz Yisrael. But we wonder why Yaakov sent only מעט צרי מעט דבש, small portions? Why didn't he send more?

The answer is, Yaakov Avinu knew that attaining favor in the ruler's eyes is in Hashem's hands. As Yaakov told them (a few *pesukim* later) ואל שר-י יתן לכם רחמים לפני האיש "Hashem shall give you compassion in the man's eyes..." The gift was merely a *hishtadlus*. And since the gifts were nothing more than *hishtadlus*, a small *hishtadlus* was also sufficient.

Chanukah Lecht

The Midrash teaches that the nation didn't have sufficient merits for the sea to split by *kriyas Yam Suf*, so Hashem took into account the pleasure that he will receive from the Jewish nation when they will say *Az Yashir* in *Shacharis* every morning. In that merit the sea split.

The Yeitav Leiv *zt'l* writes that he is certain that the same thing occurred by Chanukah. The Yidden weren't worthy of the miracles, so Hashem took into account the immense pleasure He will get from the Jewish nation when they will light Chanukah *lecht*. And in that merit Hashem performed all the miracles.

This is the meaning of the *brachah*, שְׁעֵשָׂה נִסִּים לְאַבוֹתֵינוּ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם, בּוֹמֵן הוּוֹה, the miracles happened in those days, because of the good deeds that we do today.

The holy *sefarim* teach that when one lights Chanukah *lecht*, his home becomes like a Beis HaMikdash, and he is like the *Cohen Gadol*, lighting the Menorah.

The Kav HaYashar says that *malachim* come to the home when we light Chanukah *lecht*.

חנוכה, with the ה' at the end is in feminine form. The Ben Ish Chai *zt'l* teaches that this is because on Chanukah we

don't only commemorate miracles that occurred years before. The miracles of Chanukah continue each year. Something that increases and reproduces is represented in the feminine. The ה' at the end of חנוכה alludes to the *passuk*,
הָא לָכֵם זֵרַע.

Don't Rehash the Past

According to the Ramban, Yaakov Avinu never found out that the brothers sold Yosef into slavery to Mitzrayim. He heard that Yosef was alive, he met him in Mitzrayim and he never asked how he ended up being there. (Rashi disagrees, because Rashi on מִטְרָף בְּנֵי עֲלִית teaches that Yaakov Avinu knew that Yosef was sold. However, according to the Ramban, Yaakov Avinu was never told.)

Yaakov never asked, because what difference would it make? The past is gone; why should we focus on what happened years before? What good can come out of it?

The Chazon Ish ז"ל once said to his sister, "Don't open the door for anyone."

Soon, a girl knocked on the Chazon Ish's door. "Don't open the door for her," the Chazon Ish repeated.

But the girl kept on knocking, and soon she was pounding on the door. The Chazon Ish's sister (who was the Steipler's Rebbetzin) said, "If we don't let her in, she'll be inside anyway because she'll break down the door."

The Chazon Ish said, "Tell her to speak with Reb Wolf," who was in charge of the Beis Yaakov schools in Bnei Brak.

A half-hour later, Reb Wolf came to the Chazon Ish and told him the girl's story. "She comes from a religious home, but she served in the army and she transgressed grave sins. She's so depressed, she's ready to commit suicide..."

The Chazon Ish said, "Tell her that thinking about past sins is more severe than the sin itself, as Chazal say, הרהורי עבירה קשה

מעבירה. Tell her not to rehash the past. She should go on with her life and ignore what happened."

This counsel saved her life. She eventually married and built a Jewish home in the way of the Torah.

הוי עז כנמר

Yavan is represented by the leopard, נמר (see *Daniel* 7:6) which is known for its עזות, brazenness and chutzpah. Indeed, when we study the methods that Yavan used to belittle and destroy the Jewish nation, we see that they adapted this attitude of *azus*. They were conquered and overcome by the Chashmonaim because they used holy chutzpah, as it says, הוי עז כנמר, be brazen like a leopard to serve Hashem. In this manner they overcame the mighty Greek army.

A leopard isn't particularly strong but it has chutzpah and is prepared to act, even against those who are stronger than him. With Yavan's chutzpah

they wanted to cause the Jewish nation to feel lowly and that they don't have a portion in Judaism. They decreed, "Write on the ox's horn that you don't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael." The Maharal explains that they had them write those horrific words on the ox's horn, because they wanted to remind the Jewish nation of the golden calf they created. With their chutzpah, they were saying, "Didn't you make a golden calf? And don't you have many other sins? So why do you consider yourselves so special? Why do you think you still have a connection with Hashem?"

The Chashmona'im fought back with their עזות – a holy chutzpah – הוי עו כומר. With their *azus*, they were prepared to take their army of twelve people and wage war against the Greek empire and they won, and restored the glory to the Jewish nation.

Hashem desires those types of brazen fights. Eisav is

gematriya shalom because it represents making peace with the *yetzer hara*. Man sees that the *yetzer hara* is stronger than him, so he makes peace and gives in. Hashem desires those people who put up a fight and are willing to go against all odds to vanquish the *yetzer hara*.

When אשה פוטיפר grabbed onto Yosef's clothing, Yosef could have grabbed it out of her hands. Had he done that, she wouldn't have any evidence to claim that Yosef came to sin. Why didn't he do that? The Ramban writes, לכבוד גברתה לא רצה להוציאה מידה בכחו הגדול, "In honor of his mistress, he didn't want to pull it out of her hands with his great strength." How much *middos tovos* can we learn from this! Yosef continued to respect his mistress even at this time.

But there is another explanation: Yosef didn't want to remain at the scene of the test for another second. He realized that grabbing his shirt would take another moment.

Yosef chose to let her keep the garment and ran out. This is an example of *עזות וקדושה*, when one doesn't take anything into consideration other than Hashem's will.

Rashi writes, "[אשת פוטיפר] intended *leshem shamayim*. She saw in the stars, that she is destined to have children with Yosef, only she didn't know whether it would be through her or through her daughter" (39:1).

The Divrei Shmuel *zt'l* teaches that if she knew it then Yosef certainly knew it too. This means, that Yosef foresaw that he would have children with *אשת פוטיפר* (or with her daughter). In other words, Yosef could have understood from this that he would sin. He perceived it but he didn't allow it to cause him to give up. He strove to win all battles with the *yetzer hara*. Furthermore, on the *passuk* *ויפזו זרעי ידיו*, Chazal tell us that that an impurity went through Yosef's fingertips at the time

of this test. That also didn't stop him from salvaging whatever he could, and he ran away from sin. This is *azus*, to be brazen and prepared to do whatever needs to be done, for Hashem's service and this is the attitude that wins over the Yevanim.

There is no one Greater than Me

In this week's *parashah*, the Torah tells us that on a day when no one was home *ותתפשהו* *בבגדו* "[The wife of Photiphar] grabbed onto Yosef's clothes" (39:12) and tried to seduce. *בבגדו* also means rebellion. We can explain that she tried to convince Yosef that he was rebellious to Hashem. If Yosef would have believed her consider himself a sinner, he wouldn't be very distant from sin. Because when a person considers himself virtuous and holy he will be cautious from sin but when one sees himself a sinner, he is liable of committing more sins.

Rashi writes, "When Yosef saw that he was ruling [in

Photiphar's home] he began to eat and drink and to curl his hair. HaKadosh Baruch Hu said, 'Your father is mourning for you and you are curling your hair?! I will incite the bear against you [referring to the test of Photiphar's wife]" (39:6). Photiphar's wife grabbed onto such faults in Yosef's behavior, and tried to convince him that he was not very special anyway so he may as well sin.

What did Yosef do? He proclaimed אינני גדול בבית הזה במני, "There is no one greater than me in this household" (39:9). The holy *sefarim* explain that Yosef was really saying, " I am the greatest person in the world. There is no one greater than me. I am extremely distant from sin." And with these encouraging words he was safeguarded from sin.

This is a tactic that we should also use when the *yetzer hara* approaches us. We can convince ourselves of how

great we are and then we will be more distant from sin.

The Yevanim required every Yid to write on his ox's horns that he doesn't have a portion with the G-d of Yisrael, *chas veshalom*. Their goal was to cause the Yidden to feel lowly, which is a step before sinning and falling into the *yetzer hara's* trap. We can combat the inferiority complex with the awareness of how special we truly really are.

The Sfas Emes writes, "Chanukah is mostly for the *chalashim* and for the *beinanim* (for the people who are weak [spiritually] and for the mediocre people)." Chanukah elevates them, and reminds them of just how precious they are before Hashem.

People often use cotton wicks for the Chanukah *lecht*. Cotton, in Yiddish, is *vatte*. *Vatte* can also mean far away. The Chanukah *lecht* is for people who are *vayt* (distant). It encourages them, elevates

them, and brings them back to Hashem.⁶

The Or Zarua (one of the *rishonim*) studied the secrets of the *alef beis*, and learned wondrous *remazim* (hints) in them. (They are printed at the beginning of his *sefer, Or Zarua*.) He explains the three letters, 'ר - ק - צ' based on the Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 85.).

The Gemara says that Rebbe (Reb Yehudah HaNasi) came to the town where Reb Elazar the son of Reb Shimon bar Yochai used to live and inquired whether any of Reb Elazar's children were still living there. He learned of one son, Yossi, who was steeped in sins.

Rebbe wanted to save Yossi. What did he do? The Gemara tells us that Rebbe gave Yossi *smichah* (rabbinic ordination). He called him *Reb Yossi!* And appointed Reb Shimon ben Issi (who was Reb Yossi's uncle) to be his private tutor. Every day, Reb Yossi would say that he wants to leave and return to his old ways, but Reb Shimon ben Issi would tell him, "You were made into a *chacham*, we call you 'Reb Yossi,' you wear the golden cloak of scholars and you want to leave?"

Reb Yossi was persuaded. He would respond, "I swear, I won't ask to leave again."

6. The Chasam Sofer *zt'* teaches that the uniqueness of Chanukah is that it occurred after *כל השמנים*, *טמאו*, all the oils were contaminated. This indicates the Jewish people's low level. Even at that time, great miracles occurred for them.

After Yaakov was smitten in his thigh by the *malach*, the Torah says, *ויזרח*, *לו השמש כאשר עבר את פנואל והוא צלע על ירכו*, "the sun shone for him... and he was limping on his thigh" (*Bereishis* 32:32). In these words is the message: "Even those people who are limping – spiritually – the light of Chanukah will shine for them and will give them support. *ויזרח לו*, represents the *לו* candles that we light on Chanukah.

In the end, Reb Yossi became a great scholar. He reached his father's level in Torah and in righteousness.

What brought about the change? That Reb Yossi believed in himself and saw himself a rabbi. This turned his life around. He viewed himself as being special, and he grew into that role.

The Or Zarua writes that this is the meaning of the three letters *tzadi, kuf, reish*. *Tzadi* means empty (see *Unkulos* on *tahu vevahu*, "tzadya vereikanya ") [*Bereishis* 1:2]. When a person is empty, without good deeds, the counsel is *kuf reish*. *Kuf reish* are *roshei teivos* for

karyei rebbe (call him rebbe). Give him honor, call him rebbe, let him believe that he is special and then he will become special.⁷

Bitachon

Fish usually pursue their prey from the back. If we were to open a fish's belly and see the small fish inside, we would expect to find the small fish in the direction of which they were swallowed. (Tails towards the tail). But that is not what we find. We find that the fish are in the position of head first. How did that happen?

The Ostrofer Rebbe *zy'a* explained that the fish's eyes are always open, so the fish

7. After the Yidden committed the sin of the *Eigel*, Moshe Rabbeinu prayed for them for forty days, asking Hashem to save them and forgive them. Moshe Rabbeinu said, כי יגרתני מפניי האף, "I was afraid of [Hashem's] wrath" (*Devarim* 9:19).

Rebbe Moshe of Kobrin *zy'a* translated this *passuk* differently. He said, Moshe Rabbeinu was saying, "I was afraid of the nose (אף)." Moshe was afraid that the Jewish people's noses may turn downward because of their shame and disgrace, as a result of their sin. They may feel lowly and distant from Hashem. That is the worst scenario, because that attitude can lead to sin.

thinks that he can protect its head against predators and large fish. He is only worried for his tail, which is behind him. To protect its tail the fish relies on Hashem – and that's why its tail is actually the most protected.

The bigger fish chases after the smaller fish and seeks to swallow the tail but it can't; the tail is protected. In the last moment, the smaller fish turns around and the larger fish swallows it head first.

We see this happening with *parnassah*. We make attempts to earn *parnassah* but in the end the *parnassah* often comes from an entirely different venue than we originally planned. It's always for the good. Fish are swallowed head first, because if it were swallowed tail first, the scales of the smaller fish would become stuck in the larger fish's throat. Similarly, always, *parnassah* comes in the manner that is best for us.