



AT THE ARTSCROLL SHABBOS TABLE

A PROJECT OF THE Mesorah Heritage Foundation

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כ"ז כסלו תשפ"ה
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WEEKLY INSPIRATION AND INSIGHT ADAPTED FROM CLASSIC ARTSCROLL TITLES

PROJECT DEDICATED BY MENACHEM AND BINAH BRAUNSTEIN AND FAMILY
L'ILLUI NISHMAS RAV MOSHE BEN RAV YISSOCHOR BERISH AND MARAS YENTA BAS YISROEL CHAIM

CHANUKAH

TO MAKE A MATZAV

Around the Year with Reb Meilech by Yisroel Besser



Chazal say that the Yevanim wanted to eradicate two mitzvos — that of *bikkurim*, and that of preparing the *atzei hamaarachah*, the wood used for the fire on the *Mizbei'ach*. These are important mitzvos, for sure, but what about them is unique enough to have provoked the Yevanim? Why these two mitzvos?

Bikkurim was a mitzvah performed with great joy. It was a *matzav*! The new crop was starting to grow after months of prayer and toil, and the farmers would travel to Yerushalayim amid singing and dancing, joining with other laborers as they ascended as one, a joyous group, to the Holy City. The Gemara describes the great joy of those involved in cutting and preparing the wood that would be used on the fires of the *Mizbei'ach*.

Yavan saw that. It wasn't the performance of the mitzvah that infuriated them, but the inherent joy, and they went to war against that feeling.

The Rambam calls these days *yemei simchah v'hallel*, days of joy and praise. The Chavos Yair writes that the *ikkar*, the main thing, is to be joyous during these days.

That's how we triumph over Yavan. They knew that this would lead us to victory, and they tried to resist it. But we win, we win by being joyous when we perform the mitzvos.

Someone once quipped that there are so many beautiful *niggunim* for the words of *Yevanim nikbetzu alai* that we sing after *hadlakas neiros*; you can choose, Boyan or Vizhnitz or Ger or Chevron, but you know what Yavan wants you to sing?

Yavan wants you to sing with no real heart or energy, just being *yotzei*.

Reb Meilech leans forward, as if nodding off, and

mumbles the words, "Yevanim, yevanim."

No, that's not the way! Sing *Yevanim*! Sing it with *simchah* and enthusiasm, with the realization that these *lechtelach*, the flames you light tonight, have never before been in the world and will never be here again. They're new, your mitzvah, and this is your moment — so sing!



Reb Meilech Biderman

THIS IS YOUR MOMENT - SO SING!

Chazal teach that "*al korchacha*, against your will, you will have to give a *din v'cheshbon*, a final reckoning" (*Avos* 4:29). *Tzaddikim* explain that this means we will have to give an accounting of why we performed mitzvos with the attitude of "*al korchacha*," as if we were forced: I have to go daven, I have to go learn... There is no greater delight, and this mitzvah, *hadlakas ner Chanukah*, calls for special joyfulness.

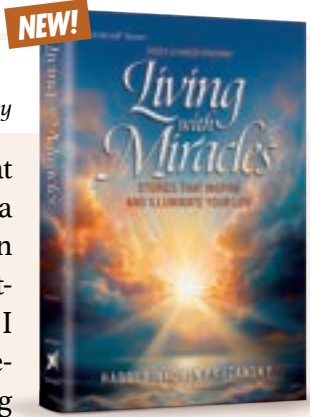
When Chazal make a promise, that's a guarantee. They tell us (*Shabbos* 23b) that someone who is careful with the *ner* — which Rashi says means not just *ner Shabbos*, but also *neiros Chanukah* — will merit learned children. Now, everyone lights Chanukah *lecht*, so where are all the *geonim*? Where are all those accomplished children? What happened?

The Meiri on that Gemara adds a few words. "One who lights the candles, *derech chibuv mitzvah v'he'arah mefursemes*, with love and obvious passion." He needs to make a *matzav*. He needs to celebrate and show that he's celebrating — then we have a guarantee!

Rav Chaim Ozer Grodzenski was *continued on page 3*

THIS WEEK'S ISSUE IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF MRS. RACHEL ZLOTOWITZ
פיגא רחל בת חיים חייקל ע"ה נפטרה כ"ג כסלו תשפ"ה

MESORAH HERITAGE FOUNDATION



The miracles of Chanukah and other Yomim Tovim are not confined to the past; they are reminders of the miracles we can discover every day. When a person looks for Hashem in his own life, he can see Hashem's miracles everywhere. However, if the person isn't paying attention, he won't see Hashem even if He performs a miracle right in front of the person's eyes.

At 4 a.m., Rabbi Bernstein's slumber was interrupted by the sound of loud knocking on his apartment door. First, he tried to ignore the racket and fall back asleep. But as the knocking persisted and grew louder, he realized that perhaps someone was desperately in need of help. Perhaps this was a life-or-death situation.

He got out of bed and headed toward the door. But as he passed the kitchen, he caught sight of a horrifying scene. His two-year-old son Shimmy was perched on top of the kitchen counter holding a kettle of hot water in one hand and his bottle in the other. The flimsy plastic bottle wobbled, and so did Shimmy, as he attempted to fill his bottle. In another second, Shimmy could drop the kettle and tumble off the counter with the boiling water cascading down on top of him.

Rabbi Bernstein had to act fast, but also, he had to move calmly and gently to avoid startling Shimmy. The rabbi carefully removed the kettle from his son's hand and lifted him off the counter. Through

Hashem's perfect timing, the little boy was saved from grave injury.

Rabbi Bernstein then set out to discover who was knocking on the door. When he opened it, he found an entire family standing there, exhausted and disheveled, dressed in Shabbos clothing.

"I'm so sorry to knock at this hour," the father explained. "We came here from America and rented the apartment upstairs for

AS HE PASSED THE KITCHEN, HE CAUGHT SIGHT OF A HORRIFYING SCENE



two weeks.

The door has a combination lock. I wrote the code down on a piece of paper and put it into the pocket of my weekday suit. The problem is that we are just getting back from a wedding and I'm wearing my Shabbos suit. The code is inside the apartment, and I have no idea how to get in. I was told by the apartment owner that you have the code.

"I feel terrible for waking you up in the middle of the night, but the wedding was in Bnei Brak and there was an accident on the road that caused a big delay. I have a bunch of kids with me who are all in desperate need of a bed, and when we got here and I realized I didn't know how to get in, I didn't know what to do.

But I saw that there was a light on in your apartment and I heard someone dragging a chair across the floor, so I realized that someone was awake. I thought it would be alright if I knocked. We're really so grateful for your help!"

Rabbi Bernstein gave his visitor the code and made sure the family got into the apartment, assuring them that it was no trouble at all. As he returned home, he was bursting with joy. He had witnessed a true miracle that saved his little boy from terrible injury. Had the American family not been stuck in traffic and come home exactly when they did, he would not have gotten up at the exact moment that his son was wobbling perilously on the counter with a kettle of boiling water in his hand. When he heard the insistent knocking on the door, he had wondered, "Who could that be?" Now he knew. Hashem was knocking, knocking, and knocking some more, and wisely, Rabbi Bernstein answered.

There are many times in life that we encounter a situation and wonder why it had to be this way. What was the purpose of the challenge? But then we realize that every test has but one purpose — to guide us down the path on which Hashem wants us to go. Recognizing the hashgachah in the events of our lives inevitably makes us greater people. 📖

	SHABBOS DEC 28 ז' כסלו	SUNDAY DEC 29 ח' כסלו	MONDAY DEC 30 ט' כסלו	TUESDAY DEC 31 י' כסלו	WEDNESDAY JAN 1 א' טבת	THURSDAY JAN 2 ב' טבת	FRIDAY JAN 3 ג' טבת
BAVLI	Sanhedrin 11	Sanhedrin 12	Sanhedrin 13	Sanhedrin 14	Sanhedrin 15	Sanhedrin 16	Sanhedrin 17
YERUSHALMI	Shabbos 32	Shabbos 33	Shabbos 34	Shabbos 35	Shabbos 36	Shabbos 37	Shabbos 38
MISHNAH	Sanhedrin 3:8-4:1	Sanhedrin 4:2-3	Sanhedrin 4:4-5	Sanhedrin 5:1-2	Sanhedrin 5:3-4	Sanhedrin 5:5-6:1	Sanhedrin 6:2-3
KITZUR	139:12-19	139:20-End	32:23-End	33:1-6	33:7-End	34:1-4	34:5-13

RESTORING THE SANCTITY OF THE JEWISH HOME

The Light and the Splendor by Rabbi Daniel Glatstein



The Gemara tells us that the mitzvah of *ner Chanukah* is *ner ish u'beiso*, a candle for each man and his house. The primary obligation is that in each house a *ner*, candle, should be lit. Regardless of how many people reside in a specific home, one candle suffices for all of them. The obligation, in essence, is on the house; it is a *chiyuv habayis*.

When it comes to most other mitzvos, however, it is not so.

Pirsumei – For example, hearing the Megillah on Purim is similar to *ner Chanukah* in that it, too, has the objective of *parsumei nisa*, publicizing the miracles that occurred, yet each individual must hear the *Megillah* in its entirety. The obligation can never be discharged by one person in the house hearing the *Megillah*. *Why is the mitzvah of ner Chanukah different?*



The Chacham Tzvi

I heard from Rav Isaac Bernstein in the name of one of the Roshei Yeshivah of Yeshivas Kol Torah a breathtaking insight that sheds light on this unique aspect of *ner Chanukah*.

Iggeres HaShmad, a letter authored by the *Rambam*, discusses the *gezeiros* that the Yevanim had enacted toward Klal Yisrael in order to sever their connection to Hashem. The Yevanim declared it illegal to learn Torah, keep Shabbos, observe Rosh Chodesh, or perform *bris milah*. The *Rambam* then introduces an additional, lesser-known *gezeirah* that had also been enacted.

The *Rambam* tells us that the Yevanim decreed that no Jew was permitted to close the door to his home. They knew that as much as they could prevent us from performing mitzvos publicly, we would still continue to perform mitzvos in the privacy of our own home. To prevent this, they outlawed closing the door. Open

front doors, they felt, could prevent us from doing any mitzvah.

The *Midrash L'Chanukah* states that the Yevanim decreed that any Jew who locked his door would receive the death penalty. A closed door provides security, dignity, privacy, modesty, and a sense of freedom. The Yevanim wanted to deprive us of all of these. Without a door, any passerby is welcome to enter uninvited at any time. The *Midrash* states that any house that has no door has no dignity or modesty.

WHY IS NER CHANUKAH DIFFERENT THAN KRIAS MEGILLAH?

When this decree went into effect, the Jews removed all their doors. They were unable to eat or drink, out of fear of Yevanim who could enter at any time. They did not sleep at all, concerned that Yevanim thieves would rob them while they slept.

We can now fully appreciate why *Chazal* decreed that the mitzvah of *ner Chanukah* should be on the home rather than on the individual. In addition to trying to abolish Torah and mitzvos, the Yevanim waged an all-out assault on *kedushas habayis*, the dignity of the Jewish home. Therefore, through the mitzvah of *ner Chanukah*, it is incumbent on each person to restore the sanctity of the Jewish home.

Furthermore, the mitzvah was originally designed to place the menorah at the doorpost, in the home's entryway. The Yevanim sought to destroy the sanctity of our homes, which is preserved by the door and our ability to lock it to block entry of that which is antithetical to our faith. On Chanukah, we therefore demonstrate restoration of the *kedushah* by placing the menorah right next to our front doors, the very doors that they had prevented us from locking. 🏠

TO MAKE A MATZAV continued from page 1

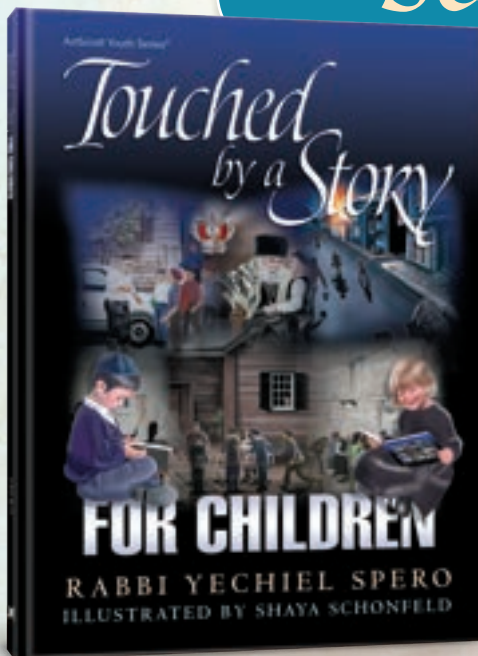
visiting Krakow and went to a tailor to repair his jacket. It was after *shekiah*, and Rav Chaim Ozer had already lit the Chanukah candles, but the tailor, a chassid, excused himself to light. After that, he said, he would fix the garment.

As Rav Chaim Ozer waited, this tailor went to change his work clothing for Shabbos clothes, and then gathered his family around him with great excitement. The *berachos* were said with obvious feeling, the

actual lighting treated like a major event. Rav Chaim Ozer looked on, then remarked that he now understood how it was that the Yidden of Krakow had produced so many great *talmidei chachamim*.

Torah came forth from this Polish city because simple Jews remembered precisely that which Yavan wanted them to forget, that the *simchah* is part of the goal — and the best way to merit the fulfillment of Chazal's promise.

Lichtige, heilige doros, blessed children. 🏠



Magical Lights

For over seventy years, many Jewish people kept the Torah secretly in Russia. Under the Communist government it was against the law to practice Judaism. So these people, who are truly heroes, had to constantly watch to make sure that the Russian secret police, the KGB, did not catch them.

One of the most famous heroes was a man by the name of Yosef Mendelevitch. Mendelevitch had been watched by the KGB for many years. One day the KGB arrested him and put him in jail. In jail they tried to make him tell them secret information about who else was practicing Judaism. But the harder they tried, the more stubborn he became — he would not say a word. They were so angry that they put him in a jail cell by himself.

In this cell he would get very little food and would never be allowed to see the outside. He could not even speak to anyone. The KGB hoped that he would be so hungry and scared that he would tell them what they wanted to know. But they did not know

Yosef. Instead of getting weaker, he got stronger. He would still not say a word.

Another amazing thing was that, even in his jail cell, with no one to talk to, Yosef was able to keep track of when the Jewish holidays were, and he knew that Chanukah was coming up in just a few days. He felt that his fight against the KGB was like the fight of the *Chashmonaim* against the Greeks. And he very much wanted to light the candles of the menorah. But how would he be able to do it?

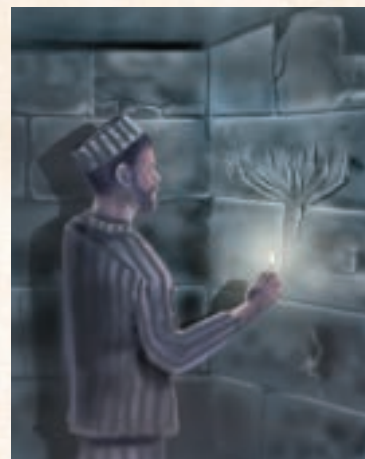
He thought long and hard, and finally came up with a plan. He somehow managed to get a match from one of the guards. Now all he needed was a wick and a small container of oil.

Making a wick was simple. Yosef pulled at the threads of his prison clothing and wove a few of them together. But finding oil was a problem. As nighttime came Yosef was about to give up hope when he thought of an idea. Maybe he would not be able to fulfill the mitzvah to its fullest, but he would try his best and do what he could.

Yosef picked up a rock and walked over to the wall and began to carve out the image of a menorah: a base and eight stems. He took the one precious wick he had and pushed it firmly into the crack in the wall where he had carved out the form of the first light. Then he took out the match he had held onto for the past few weeks and struck it against the stone wall. Yosef put the fire next to the wick. The wick caught fire, and Yosef stood there staring at the small flickering flame that lit up the cell.

It did not burn long, perhaps only a few seconds, but the sparkling fire had lit up that dark, cold cell for a moment, and it gave hope and promise to a very brave Jew in a very lonely place.

Yosef remembered the warmth and light of that flame for a long time afterwards, and it made him feel even stronger and prouder, and determined to live as a Jew, which he finally got to do when he was allowed to leave Russia a few years later.



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THE WEEKLY QUESTION

Question for Mikeitz:

Why didn't the brothers recognize Yosef, their brother who they grew up with?

*Kids, please ask your parents to email the answer to shabbosquestion@artscroll.com by this Wednesday to be entered into a weekly raffle to win a \$36 ARTSCROLL GIFT CARD! Be sure to include your full name, city, and contact info. Names of winners will appear in a future edition. HINT: The answer can be found in *The Jaffa Family Edition Weekly Parashah*.*

The winner of the question for Parashas Vayeitzei is: ARI GOODMAN, East Windsor, NJ

Question for Vayeishev was: What language did Lavan speak? The answer is: Aramaic



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