**Brooklyn torah gazette**

**Parshas Mikeitz 5777**

Volume 1, Issue 4 (Whole Number 4) 2 Teveth 5777/ December 31, 2016

**Printed L’illuy nishmas Nechama bas R’ Noach, a”h**

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**Intensive-Care Kugel**

**By Larry Gordon**

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It was 8 a.m. last Shabbos when we stepped off the Shabbos elevator on the seventh floor of the Gellman Pavilion at Maimonides Hospital in Boro Park. There was a tall man with a gray beard standing there with a *tallis* on. “Are you a *kohen*?” he asked. I responded in the negative but one quick look around made it clear that someone on the floor had passed away, and the man—either hospital chaplain or a do-gooder—was making sure that *kohanim* would not in any way be compromised.

Welcome to Shabbos at the MICU—the Medical Intensive-Care Unit—where patients in precarious medical circumstances reside with the hope of a turnaround in their health and an opportunity to go home someday soon. My father-in-law is a patient here and we spent Shabbos in the hospital ward.

But this essay is not so much about the challenging family situation that precipitated the decision to spend Shabbos there as it is about acquainting the reader with what it is like to spend 25 hours in and around the MICU.

First, while it was vitally important for us to be there, there were also periods of time over this long day that were painfully dull. We were fortunate that the other bed in my father-in-law’s room was empty so we were afforded the opportunity to spread ourselves out a bit more than one would usually be allowed.

As you will recall, it was bitter cold outside on Friday night, and then it snowed overnight, which made walking outside additionally taxing. As a result of the weather—unlike the last time I was here just a few weeks ago—I *davened* both Friday night and Shabbos morning in the hospital shul located directly off the lobby of the main hospital entrance.

**Walking into the Hospital Shul**

When walking into a new place, especially a shul, or in this case a hospital shul where most of the people end up unexpectedly, one tends to take a quick look around to get a handle on the scene and situation. So Friday night, I walk into the shul, which is relatively new, with the décor exuding welcoming warmth—or as welcoming as a hospital can be—and I take one of those quick glances around. The young men there, for the most part, just became fathers and you can see in their gait and the glowing looks on their faces that they have entered the hallowed halls of parenthood (though not necessarily for the first time).

Then there is the assortment of others. Medical personnel wearing yarmulkes, one or two patients in hospital gowns mobile enough to make it to shul, a gentleman who sat next to me whose mother had broken her hip in a fall that morning, the family members of assorted other patients, and the men who just live nearby and *daven* in the nice, neat, and comfortable shul without any specific affiliation.

**What sets this day of Shabbos Apart?**

But what sets this day of Shabbos apart from any other day of visiting a hospital? In this case and in this hospital in Boro Park, it is the families that make the rounds seeing to it that those of us in this circumstance are well fed and as comfortable as possible. And in most cases I observed, it is not individual volunteers making the rounds, but rather fathers and mothers with as many as five children trailing behind them and in some instances helping out. Now this is *chinuch* in its truest and purest manifestation.

Perhaps it is indigenous to the community where this particular hospital is found, but the aid and comfort came in our direction, for the most part, in the form of food, or just plain good Shabbos eating. Let me break that down just a little more—in the form of three different offers of *cholent* along with *kugels*, *kishke*, *farfel*, meat, chicken, fruits, homemade cakes, and other desserts all presented at some point during the day.

If you are not acquainted with the customs and schedule here and you do not place yourself in food-tasting instead of dining mode, then you are not going to be able to properly appreciate being at the receiving end of this type of *chesed*.

On Friday night, we caught a break and had dinner at the home of our friends Gabrielle and Ezra Friedlander and his parents a few blocks from the hospital. It was bitterly cold outside, but worth the walk. It was a lavish Shabbos *seudah* with great company, including *divrei* *Torah* from Ezra’s father, the Liska Rebbe. It was a good break in what was otherwise a hospital-based vigil.

**The Food Comes Piping Hot**

It’s important to note that back at the hospital all the food comes to us piping hot, as one volunteer explained to us, from a special dedicated kitchen located two blocks away from the hospital. The group—Yad Ephraim—was there Friday afternoon, just prior to Shabbos, with a full Shabbos dinner and then again at about 11 a.m. Shabbos morning with grape juice, fish, a hot tin of *cholent*, *kugel*, *kishke,* chicken, and a compote desert.

After *davening* *Shacharis* on Shabbos morning, we were invited to a pre-lunch *kugel* and *cholent*-fest on the second floor of the hospital in the *bikur cholim*room. Those unfamiliar with the extravagance of the Yad Ephraim meal that would come later possibly indulged a little too much at the *bikur cholim Kiddush*, where, by the way, there was plenty of whiskey and wine to drink as well.

**Just When Your Eyelids Begin to Close…**

Anyway, after the little *Kiddush* and the full Yad Ephraim lunch—and just when your eyelids begin to close after the intake of excessive carbohydrates—a woman with three of her daughters carrying a warming bag over her shoulder comes to the doorway of the hospital room and says, “Would you like some homemade *cholent*?”

With two *cholents* under my belt—figuratively and literally—I had to respectfully decline, as neither of us could eat anything additional even if it was a great-tasting home-cooked *cholent*. After we declined the *cholent* and *kugel,* she reached a little deeper into her bag and asked if we wanted some fresh fruit, which we gladly accepted.

Sitting there all those hours and then just walking around the floor to see what else is going on, one can easily make simple observations. It is Shabbos and you cannot go out and buy food to eat. But beyond that, the generosity, the spirit of concern and giving, is so overflowing to the point that it is also overwhelming. You come away from a Shabbos like this with a real feeling of “*Mi k’amcha Yisrael*—who is like this people Israel?”

I paced the floors and took note of rooms with Chinese, Italian, Russian, and Muslim patients, but nowhere in sight was there anything resembling the equivalence of Yad Ephraim or the other individual or organized efforts to reach out to us. Sure, the other groups could walk out to the local diner and buy whatever they desired at any time, but there is still a marked contrast.

**A Man Who Cannot Partake of the Yad Ephraim Food**

What else can I say in praise of these extraordinary efforts? On a side note or two, I met a man in the shul from another area of New York who told me that even though the Yad Ephraim food looks great, he cannot partake of their generous culinary offering because the food is carried on Shabbos from their commissary a few blocks from the hospital, and he does not accept the *kashrus* of the *eiruv*.

After Shabbos, I consulted a *halachic* authority closer to home who told me that it was irrelevant that this person who was denying himself Shabbos food did not subscribe to the validity of the *eiruv*. This *rav* said that so long as those bringing the food considered the *eiruv* kosher, this individual could have eaten if he so desired. (**Editor’s Note: Please see a contrasting opinion in the next article by Rabbi Yair Hoffman**.)

Also, after *davening* on Shabbos morning, a young man introduced himself. He said he knew one of my sons and had liked reading the last article that appeared here about spending Shabbos in Boro Park. Then he inquired as to whether after this last Shabbos I was going to write about being in Boro Park for Shabbos again. The answer is yes.

*Comments for Larry Gordon are welcome at*[*editor@5tjt.com*](mailto:editor@5tjt.com)*.*

*Reprinted from the December 23, 2016 edition of the 5 Towns Jewish Times.*

**Boro Park Hospitals**

**And Food for Guests**

**By Rabbi Yair Hoffman**

There is no question that Klal Yisroel does remarkable chessed. The bikkur cholim in hospitals throughout the tri-state area is truly remarkable – especially in Boro Park. There are rooms to stay in, and as much food as one would want.

There is one issue, however, that could perhaps be improved.

**OPERATION CHOCOLATE AND SODA**

Imagine a wonderful Jewish Chesed organization that gives away OU-d Hershey chocolate bars to any and all visitors of Boro Park hospitals. Or imagine a Sefardic Chesed organization that gives out soda with corn syrup, albeit with a good Sefardic Hechsher, throughout Pesach in Boro Park hospitals.

It has always been the practice of Jews to be as accommodating as possible to others. In the Five Towns, for example, the pizza shops are Cholov Yisroel. The majority of Five Towns residents do not strictly observe Cholov Yisroel. Yet there is benevolent accommodation in our communities.

The Hershey chocolate give-away is a chessed, true. However, there are many people in the Boro Park hospitals that do not eat Hershey’s OU dairy chocolate. Wouldn’t it be nice to perform the chesed in the best way possible, where people aren’t left out? The soda give-away is also nice, but most of the people in a Boro Park hospital are Ashkenazic Jews. Wouldn’t the chessed be so much better if they gave away soda that all Jews could drink?

**THE CHANUKAH LESSON**

During the season of Chanukah, many people ask why did the Chashmona’im find it necessary to wait for pure oil? There is a halachic concept called “tumah hutrah b’tzibbur” — if needed for the tzibbur, impure oil may also be used! They could have used the impure oil as well if they were unable to find pure oil. Why didn’t they do so?

One answer that is often given is that the Chashmona’im were setting things up for the first time after a long period of disuse. In such circumstances, everyone is looking and observing. When setting up a system – one should always try to do it in the best possible manner. The Chashmona’im taught us not to settle for things that are impure, but to do mitzvos in the best possible manner. This is one of the lessons of Chanukah.

**THE ISSUE**

Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l, the Posek haDor of the generation, had ruled that Brooklyn on account of the extensive amount of people in it is considered a reshus haRabbim from the Torah – a full public domain. His students claimed that the alleged Mechitzos that have always surrounded Brooklyn which proponents of the Eiruv claim exist – are not valid Mechitzos at all. It is not halachically possible to build an Eruv in a public domain. Any attempt to do such would be invalid.

There are others who disagree with his views and there are some that claim that even Rabbi Feinstein zt”l would have agreed that the Brooklyn Eruv is valid. None of his children, grandchildren, or students agree with this view, however. Indeed, for many decades, the standard practice in Boro Park was that no Eruv was possible, and there was no Eruv. Eventually, some Rabbis who disagreed with Rav Feinstein succeeded in erecting a Boro park Eruv.

The people that run the Chesed organization, however, do not bring the food to the Boro Park hospital before Shabbos, but they actually carry it on Shabbos itself – relying on the Boro Park Eruv. The question is whether one who respects the ruling of Rav Feinstein zt”l on the invalidity of Eruvin in Brooklyn, may eat the food that is brought on Shabbos. Also, is this case comparable to the illustrations of the chocolate and the sodas mentioned above. Let us once again emphasize that the organization’s remarkable chesed is not in question here, and it is truly a model Chesed organization that should be emulated.

**MAASEH SHABBOS**

Let us, however, provide some background explanations.

The term “Maaseh Shabbos” is, unfortunately, not one that is so well known, yet it is a concept with enormous Halachic ramifications. Literally, it means the by-products of Shabbos violation. If someone had Chas V’Shalom violated Shabbos, even by accident, by cooking, sewing, carrying, or planting what is the halachic status of the product of the Shabbos violation? May it be used by him?

**SCOPE**

It should be known that the concept of Maaseh Shabbos is not just limited to foods that were cooked. Rather, it is applicable in many other situations too as well as to all 39 of the Shabbos Malachos. It applies to clothing that was sewn, fires that were lit, and items that are planted. It applies to Biblical prohibitions as well as to Rabbinic prohibitions. And according to many Poskim, it applies to items that were carried on Shabbos as well. The issue is that, while the food was in fact, carried, no specific change was affected within the food itself.

The three opinions are as follows:

1] The Rashba (Shabbos 130a), the Ritvah (Eiruvin 41b), and Rabbeinu Yonah (ibid) hold that it is permitted if no physical change took place within the food itself.

2] The Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 6:24) and the Rosh hold it is permitted if there is no benefit to the user – for example if the carried item was put back.

The Mogain Avrohom (on SA OC 405:9), the third opinion, only permits it if the violation was a derabanan – but if it was a deoraisah and it was put back – it is still forbidden even if he had no benefit.

The Chayei Odom Klal 9 (See Nishmas Adam) states that in carrying, where there is nothing changed within the item itself – one would be permitted to utilize the byproduct of Shabbos violation. However, the Biur Halacha (Siman 318) states that when it comes to a Torah prohibition – one must be stringent just like in regard to cooking.

Rav Feinstein’s view, as understood currently by his family and students, is that it is indeed a Torah prohibition to carry in a Brooklyn Eruv.

**BACKGROUND AND REASONS**

The Talmud (Ksuvos 34a, Chulin 15a, and Bava Kamma 71a) records a debate between the Tannaim as to the parameters of the prohibition. The two categories under discussion are:

1] when Shabbos was violated by accident – B’Shogeg and

2] when it was violated intentionally – B’Maizid.

Two of the three views are found below:

• Rabbi Meir is of the opinion that when Shabbos is violated unintentionally – B’Shogeg there is no prohibition placed on what was cooked or made. However, when Shabbos is violated on purpose – B’Maizid one may not benefit from that which was done until Motzei Shabbos – Saturday night.

• Rabbi Yehudah is of the opinion that one may never benefit from a Shabbos violation on Shabbos itself and one must wait until Moztei Shabbos even if it was done unintentionally – B’Shogaig. If it was done on purpose, however, the person who did it can never use it. It is forbidden FOREVER.

**FINAL HALACHA**

According to which opinion do the Rishonim rule?

The Rambam, Rif and the Shulchan Aruch rule like Rabbi Yehudah. For the Shabbos violator the Maaseh Shabbos is forbidden forever and for everyone else it only becomes permitted on Saturday night.

Tosfos and the Vilna Gaon, however, rule more leniently. They rule like Rabbi Meir who permits everything on Saturday night and does not forbid it at all if it was done B’Shogaig. None of the Rishonim rule in accordance with Rabbi Yochanan HaSandlar, however.

How does the Mishna Brurah, who is the final arbiter of halacha, rule? He rules (318:7) that when it is l’tzorech – when necessary, one may rely upon the Vilna Gaon when the Shabbos was violated B’Shogaig. What about when it was violated on purpose? The Mishna Brurah does not state that one can rely on the Vilna Gaon’s opinion in such a case. The clear indication is that in cases of intentional Shabbos violation, the Mishna Brurah rules stringently.

Of course in this case, those that are carrying are of the opinion that the carrying is permitted. Under such circumstances, many Poskim view that if your own Poskim think that the other view is in error, their labor is considered beshogaig to you.

**DEFINITION OF L’TZORECH**

It is also interesting to note that the Mishna Brurah does not define for us what the exact parameters of l’tzorech are. Elsewhere, the Mishna Brurah (325:60) tells us that regarding Amirah L’Akum the parameters of “l’tzorech” are if one will not have hot food on Shabbos. One would have thought that the same definition would apply here. However, both Rav Elyashiv zt”l and Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach ruled more stringently (See Meor HaShabbos Vol. I 18:17). They rule that L’Tzorech means not having food at all.

This author brought the issue before Rav Dovid Feinstein Shlita and Rav Shmuel Fuerst Shlita this week. Both said that Rav Moshe Feinstein’s view was that “l’tzorech” would mean even if one will not have hot food on Shabbos – even though he may have other food. This is contrary to the view cited in the aforementioned Meor HaShabbos. This does not necessarily mean that one may eat of the food that is carried. This is because one can always make arrangements prior to Shabbos to have hot food in a home of a neighbor where one would not have to resort to carrying.

**DEFINITION OF B’SHOGEG**

There are three types of Shabbos errors that would be considered B’Shogeg.

• If one thought that it was permissible to do this action.

• If one followed the ruling of a Rabbi, even though it turned out to be incorrect (See Mogen Avrohom 318:3).

• If one forgot that it was Shabbos (See Mishna Brurah 318:6).

WHAT IF A KEY WAS CARRIED ON SHABBOS AND A DOOR WAS OPENED?

As an interesting aside, what is the halacha if a Jew had carried a key on Shabbos where there was no Eiruv? Rav Moshe Feinstein (IM OC II #71) forbids entering the door under such circumstances. Rav Elyashiv zt”l permits it (cited in his son-in-laws work, Mlachim Umnayich p.525). Rav Elyashiv’s rational is that in this case it is viewed not a positive action of benefit but rather as the removal of an impediment. The lock is blocking entry into the walled off area.

Yet the Mishna Brurah himself (518:45) forbids use of items found in a bit that was opened up in violation of the laws of Shabbos – indicating that he is in agreement with Rav Moshe.

**CONCLUSIONS**

If there is a need and one could not have made arrangements beforehand, then the carrying would be considered beshogaig and it would be permitted to rely on the view of Rav Meir. Otherwise, we would follow the view of Rabbi Yehudah and not eat of the carried food.

This author had approached both the hospital as well as the organization to try to arrange that all the food be brought before Shabbos so that everyone can be accommodated – even those that follow the view of traditional view of Rav Feinstein zt”l. Many Poskim, Rabbonim ,and lay leaders are indeed surprised that no such accommodation has been made. If anyone is in a position to influence matters, it would be appreciated by many thousands of religious Jews.

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*Reprinted from the December 23, 2016 edition of the 5 Towns Jewish Times.*

**Setting an Example**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

The Torah in Parashat Miketz tells the story of Yosef’s brothers who come to Egypt to purchase grain. Unbeknownst to them, Yosef, whom they had sold as a slave many years earlier, had risen to the position of Egyptian vizier, and when they come before him to purchase grain, they did not recognize him. Yosef accused them of coming to Egypt as spies, and imprisoned them. Three days later, he released them, and informed them that he had changed his mind. He would keep one brother in prison in Egypt while the others return to Canaan to bring the youngest brother, Binyamin, and this would prove that they are not spies.

When Yosef approached them after the three-day imprisonment to inform them of the change in plans, he first said, “This is what you shall do and thereby live; I am G-d-fearing” (42:18). Why did Yosef tell the brothers that he is “G-d fearing”?

Rav Shimon Schwab (Germany-New York, 1908-1995) offers a brilliant explanation of Yosef’s intent in these words. The defining characteristic of a G-d-fearing person is his ongoing self-evaluation. Somebody who truly fears G-d is constantly reexamining his conduct and lifestyle to determine what needs to be corrected or improved. He never feels completely comfortable and at ease with himself; he is always questioning and reexamining so he can continue to grow. This is what Yosef was telling the brothers: “Because I am G-d-fearing, I reconsidered my decision, and concluded that I should let you free.”

Rav Schwab noted that this insight also explains the brothers’ reaction to Yosef’s new decision. The Torah says, “They did so” (42:20), which, at first glance, means that Yosef’s new decision was implemented, and one brother was imprisoned while the others returned to Canaan. However, the Torah explicitly records this happening several verses later, indicating that “They did so” refers to something else.

**The Meaning of the World “They Did So”**

Rav Schwab explained that the phrase “They did so” introduces what the Torah writes immediately thereafter – that the brothers expressed remorse over the sale of Yosef, and realized that the tribulations they were experiencing in Egypt were a punishment for what they did to their brother.

In other words, the brothers learned from Yosef’s example. Seeing how Yosef reconsidered his decision out of his fear of God, they, too, “did so”– they followed his example, and they looked back at their past deeds and reexamined their conduct. They were inspired by the Egyptian vizier, who treated them harshly but then reconsidered and changed his mind, and they, too, revisited their decisions of the past. And they realized that they acted wrongly in the way they treated Yosef, and that they were now being punished for their wrongdoing.

One lesson we can learn from this insight is the influential power of setting a personal example. Yosef taught by example the critical lesson of self-examination, and it had a profound impact upon the brothers. If we wish to influence the people around us, especially our children, the most effective way of doing this is by setting a personal example, by modeling the kind of behavior we want others to embrace. It worked for Yosef – and it can work for us, as well.

Reprinted from the Parashat Mikeitz 5777 email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.

**The Power of a Quarter**

**By Daniel Keren**



If you live in certain neighborhoods in Brooklyn and probably Monsey and perhaps Lakewood; the odds are very good that every day when in shul or when walking on the street to a store or your place of work, you will be approached by many people collecting tzedakah (charity) either for themselves or for a mosdos (yeshiva, kiruv group, etc.).

I have noticed that all too often, most people simply ignore these appeals. Perhaps one of the reasons why is that how can we know if the person asking is truly a legitimate oni (poor person) or someone collecting for a worthy cause. All you need is to hear one story of a bad apple and you can become a hardened cynic.

Many people think that if you don’t give a dollar bill, the oni or meshullach is going to be offended, say mean words to you and maybe even throw the quarter back in your face (G-d forbid) or the back of your head. Now if you daven (pray) in a shul where not too many people come to solicit tzedakah, it probably is appropriate to give a dollar.

The following essay is really meant for people who feel overwhelmed by the wave of people coming to ask for help during the course of davening, usually during Shachris, the morning service or a simcha like a wedding. Again, if G-d has blessed you with a bountiful parnassa (livelihood), my suggestion of giving everyone who asks you for a quarter is definitely not meant for you. Maybe if you are really successful, you should consider even more than a dollar depending on who is collecting and what they are collecting for. I would never ever give a Rosh Yeshiva a quarter.

I find in my case that in the course of a week, six days when davening in shul or walking on the commercial streets, I can easily be approached by perhaps up to 50 people asking for assistance. Now if you have a take-home pay of say $600 to maybe even $1,000 a week, obviously give a dollar to every one of those soliciting for tzedakah can wipe out your 10% maisah or come close to 50% of your maisah [not allowing you to give as much as you want to certain causes that you truly believe are important.] Obviously again if you are doing exceptionally well financially and have no problems paying your bills, you might want to discuss with your rav or posek whether or not you should be giving chomesh (20% of your net salary.)

**The Questions of a Fraudulent Collector**

But what about the possibility that the person asking for tzedakah is a fraud? I once heard Rabbi Yisroel Reisman at an asifah for a choleh in his shul say, “Just give the person a quarter.” So what did you lose? Just a quarter! If you are in a bagel shop and want a donut, does it bother you that in your corner grocery store you can buy that same daughter for a quarter less? And perhaps that person wasn’t a faker. But remember to give that quarter with a smile and a good spirit.

Each week I give the bank teller a $10 bill and ask for a roll of quarters (40). Sometimes I find that by Wednesday, I am running out of quarters, so when in shul where I normally put money into the pushka before davening, I redeem another eight or 12 quarters to last me until my regular appointment Thursday night at the bank for a new roll of quarters.

**How to Handles Requests at Chasanahs**

Now if I am going to a chasanah (wedding) in Boro Park or some other location where a lot of people will come to collect, I get a second roll of quarters. I have noticed when sitting at the table, that when the first meshullach comes and asks for tzedakah, many people (not the whole table) cheerfully give a dollar.

Five minutes later when the second and third meshullach approaches the table, these same tablemates are not giving so cheerfully. And by the fourth and thereon, they either shake their heads or pretend that they are in such an important conversation with their neighbor that they just can’t hear what this stranger who is so rude as to be interrupting their conversation is saying.

Me, I have most of the quarters on the table so I don’t have to waste the meshullach’s time by taking my wallet out of my back pocket. And even when the fourth or fifth or sixth or seven, etc. individual comes collecting, I am able to cheerfully hand over a quarter and wish him hatzlacha (success.)

I remember one time at a wedding being approached by a man collecting to help pay the tuition for his son in a special needs yeshiva. By this time everyone at the table had maxed out of their dollar donations and were shaking their heads or pretending not to hear. I gave him a quarter, wished him hatzlacha and sheepishly apologized for not being able to give him a larger donation.

He surprised me by saying quite cheerfully “Quarters are wonderful!” Pointing to all the tables in the men’s section, he declared “If everyone here would just give a quarter, I wouldn’t have to spend so much time going from hall to hall and could spend more time with my family.” Remember every quarter has the word – “IN G-d WE TRUST.”

If a person knew just how much reward one gets both in this world and the next world for even a modest by joyful tzedakah contribution, he or she would be constantly on the lookout for such precious opportunities.

*Reprinted from the December 29, 2016 edition of the Jewish Connection.*

**Dershowitz: Obama Will Go**

**Down in History as One of Worst Foreign Policy Presidents Ever**

**By B.B. Portnoy**

Outgoing US President Barack Obama will be remembered in history as “one of the worst foreign policy presidents ever,” an internationally renowned American legal expert told Fox News on Monday.

“It’s the most undemocratic thing a president can do — to tie the hands of his successor during the lame-duck period,” Professor Alan Dershowitz — a Democrat — said on Obama’s decision to abstain from a vote last Friday on an anti-Israeli settlement UN Security Council resolution that passed by a 14-0 margin.

Before the 2012 presidential election, Dershowitz recalled, Obama “called me into the Oval Office before the election and said to me, ‘Alan, I want your support. And I have to tell you, I will always have Israel’s back.’ I didn’t realize that what he meant was that he’d…stab them in the back.”



Alan Dershowitz

“What he did was so nasty,” Dershowitz went on to say. “He pulled a bait-and-switch. He said to the American public, ‘Oh, this is all about the settlements deep in the West Bank,’ and yet he allowed his representative to the UN to abstain, which is really [a vote] for a resolution which says that Jews can’t pray at the Western Wall. Jews can’t live in the Jewish Quarter where they’ve lived for thousands of years and he’s going to say, ‘Whoops, I didn’t mean that.’ Well, read the resolution. You’re a lawyer, you went to Harvard Law School.”

*Reprinted from the December 27, 2016 website of Matzav.com Originally printed in The Algemeiner Journal.*

**Chanukah Musings**

**By Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss**

Let me share with you some short Chanukah thoughts to add extra sparkle to your Chanukah - to go with the delicious latkas, cheese platters, and sufganiot.

1. Speaking about sufganiot which are those delicious confections that we imported from Eretz Yisroel. (When I was growing up, all I’d ever knew of was latkes, sour cream and apple sauce.  I’d never even heard of sufganiot.)  I assumed that the reason why there is a *minhag* to eat these delicious donuts is because they are deep fried so it once again - like latkas - helps us recall the miracle of the oil.  However, Rav Shach, Zt”l, Zy”a, reveals another fascinating angle to this custom.  He explains that we eat them in order to be able to make the after-blessing of Al HaMichyah, which is the only blessing that mentions the Mizbei’ach, the Altar.  Since on Chanukah, the Chashmonaim joyously rededicated the Mizbei’ach, we make it our business to say this blessing.

2. One of the infamous decrees of the Y’vonim, the Syrian-Greeks, was “Kisvu lachem al karnei ha-shor, ‘Ein li cheilek b’Elokei Yisroel’ - Write on the horns of your ox, ‘I have no portion in the G-d of Israel.’” The Yavonim tried to influence us into believing that our livelihood (symbolized by the ox since we were an agricultural economy) had nothing to do with Hashem.  We, of course, as we celebrate Chanukah, note to the contrary that our *parnassah* has everything to do with G-d and since we believe that on *Zos Chanukah*, the eighth day of Chanukah, the final annual verdict is rendered, this makes Chanukah a good time to pray heartily for financial success.



Rabbi Moshe Meir Weiss

3.Rabbi Frand, Shlit”a, adds that in ancient times they fashioned baby bottles from horns.  It was the desire of the Y’vonim that we inculcate our young with the spirit of atheism.  Therefore, as we celebrate Chanukah, which has at its very root the word *chinuch*, education, we try to impress even upon our very youngest the spirit of Hashem and His miracles that permeate this very special time.

**A Superb Feeling**

When we kindle the menorah at the right time, whether it’s *shkiah* or forty-five minutes after shkiah, it’s a superb feeling for we know at that moment that we are doing exactly what we were created to be doing.  As the posuk says, “Davar b’ito, mah tov - A thing in its proper time, how good it is.”  Therefore, we should be vigilant that Chanukah parties should be worked around the menorah and not vice versa.

The Chanukah *dreidel*: its rules are simple.  *Gimel*, you win; *hei*, you get half; *nun* is nothing and *shin* you pay.  The rules are puzzling, however, since we would think that the *nun* should be the big winner since it means *neis*and represents the big miracle.  I’d like to suggest that gimel, which stands for *godol*, great, is the big winner because those of us who have an ambition to be great as we spin through life, whether to be great with G-d, great with our spouse, great with our children, great in learning, or great in prayer, are the true winners in life.

**Losers Coast Through Life**

Those who just coast through life on cruise control are in the loser’s corner.  The next best letter is *hei* which stands for*hoyah*, what happened in the past, for the true winners in Yiddishkeit are not those who are enamored by modern technology and enraptured by all that is new.  Rather, real success is for those who are connected to the sacred teachings of Sinai from thousands of years ago.

The dreidel toy was used by the children in case a Syrian-Greek inspector would come to catch them learning Torah.  As soon as they heard ominous footsteps, they would hide their Chumoshim (yet others suggest that they studied by heart) and pull out their Chanukah spinning tops.  The message is clear:  Torah is more important than playing and not vice versa.  We should bear this in mind on Chanukah before cancelling our scheduled Torah study sessions.  For example, make an effort to go to your Motzoei Shabbos Avos u’Bonim learning before going to a Chanukah gathering.

You can’t win with the dreidel while it’s spinning.  Only when it falls on its side do you know whether you’ve won or lost.  As long as we are alive we don’t know whether we are in the winner’s column.  As we are taught, Al tamin. b’atzmocha ad yom moscha - Don’t trust in yourself until the day you die.”  We must be ever vigilant from the many temptations that abound around us.  It is only when we are lying on our side after one hundred and twenty that we will truly know if we’ve won or lost in the game of life.

**The Lesson of the Dreidel**

On the other hand, the dreidel also teaches us the great Jewish lesson that if you fall pick yourself up and try again.  As the ethicists wittingly say, yiush  shelo m’das - Giving up means you’re not using your head.”  We Jews are compared to the moon which is always changing and always renewing itself.

The Menorah does not have halogen bulbs or mercury vapor lights.  It does not have fancy reflectors and neither does it boast powerful wattage.  To the contrary, it is a rather relatively pathetic, outdated pool of oil with an antiquated wick inside.  But, that is precisely its powerful message.  The glow in our homes is not from the new world whose morals and values are rapidly disintegrating around us.  Rather the illumination that brightens our homes is from the Divine ancient wisdom handed down to us from generation to generation.

What is menorah power?  When someone from a kiruv organization such as Oorah sees a menorah in a window and because of it rings the doorbell and offers a child a Chanukah toy and invites them to try out yeshiva, this two thousand year old ritual is sending out a beacon to alleviate the threat of *l’hashkichom Torosecha*, the forgetting of the Torah, as it was thousands of years ago during the time of Chanukah itself.

Dear Readers, May you and yours have a healthy, happy, sweet and wonderful Chanukah.

*Reprinted from the December 16, 2014 website of Matzav.com*