**Shabbos Stories for**

**Parshas Miketz 5771**

**Volume 2, Issue #13**

**Chassidic Story of the Week #679**

**Until Saturday**

**Night, Chanukah**

**By Rabbi Moishe Gurkow**

**From the desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

In 1959, I was sent by the Lubavitcher Rebbe to act as his agent to strengthen and encourage Jewish observance in Boston, MA. Due to some health challenges, I was forced in 2006 to take residence in a kosher rehabilitation center near my home in Brighton.

We have a wonderful chaplain here who tries her best to accommodate our religious needs. Earlier today, while it was still afternoon of the Sabbath of Chanukah, she came to conduct the Chanukah menorah lighting service for us. We were all assembled in our sanctuary and the chaplain was ready to light the candles when I noticed that it was only 4 P.M. and well before twilight.

On other days of Chanukah, the menorah may be lit before twilight. But doing so on the Sabbath would constitute a desecration of our holy Day of Rest. So I shouted in protest, for by no means could I sit by idly and allow such a terrible thing to take place. My objections snowballed into a major dispute with threats of calling the police. To calms things down, I told the following story.

When I was still a boy of 6 years old in my home in Communist Russia, I went with my Uncle, Rabbi Michoel Teitelbaum, who later founded the Lubavitch Educational Institute Oholei Torah in Brooklyn, to light the first candle of the Chanukah menorah in an outdoor setting in an effort to publicize the miracle.

All of a sudden from out of nowhere a policeman appeared, wielding a huge knife, with which he attempted to kill us! My uncle and I ran for our lives. We came to a gigantic snow pile and plunged into its snow, but the policeman with his deadly knife was still at our backs. He thrust it deep into the snow; the knifes sharp blade literally reached the throat of Uncle Michoel when he suddenly bit the policemans thumb, causing him to drop the knife to the ground. In the midst of the commotion my uncle and I fled the scene. We returned back to the place where we started out only to find that lone, first Chanukah candle still burning joyously.

In this way, I continued to tell my tale in as much detail as I could, until finally the Day of Rest parted and the proper time to light the Chanukah menorah arrived. After the chaplain lit the candles, I began singing a rousing rendition of the Chanukah hymn, HaNaros Halalu, which describes how the Chanukah lights are sanctified.

Indeed, all those assembled in the sanctuary joined in together, and thank G-d, now it was at the right time. I was gratified that even out of my own element I was still able to perform my commission.

Edited by Yerachmiel Tilles, editor of KabbalahOnline.org

Source: Translated by Refoel Leitner from the hand-written Hebrew original who also added details from oral sources.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org, a project of Ascent of Safed*

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**RABBIS' MESSAGES**

**The Importance of One’s Internal and Spiritual Beauty**

**By Rabbi Reuven Semah**

“It happened at the end of two years to the day, Pharaoh was dreaming. (Beresheet 41:1)

Parashat Mikess is traditionally read on Hanukah, when we celebrate the victory of the Maccabees over our Greek oppressors. This is not a mere coincidence; there is a deep connection between them and a lesson that we can apply in our own lives.

As we know, Pharaoh dreamed of beautiful and ugly cows. In his dream he saw seven cows that were of ugly “mar’eh” – appearance. However, when he told the dream to Yosef he changed it to ugly “to’ar” – form. What’s the difference between them and why did he switch it?

Rabbi Ozer Alport explains that to’ar and mar’eh are very different. To’ar refers to the external quality of a person’s physical face. Mar’eh describes the internal spiritual shine which radiates from within. The Torah praises Rachel (29:17) saying that she was both comely in her to’ar and her mar’eh.

Now that we know the linguistic difference between these two words we can appreciate why Pharaoh changed from one to the other. Egyptian society was so absorbed in the hedonistic pleasures of this world that they buried people with their possessions. They couldn’t imagine an afterlife of anything but more physical pleasure.

Pharaoh saw cows that were ugly in mar’eh, meaning he was shown a destruction that would go deep down to the inner core of his corrupt society. But, since he was so physically oriented he wasn’t able to grasp the hint. In his eyes beauty was skin deep and he was unable to describe the animals in anything but their external appearance.

The Ramban writes that the Egyptian exile contained the roots of all other exiles. Therefore it isn’t surprising to us to find that in the time of the Hanukah miracle, the Greeks were so completely absorbed in the worship of external beauty that they reached the point of outlawing the study of the internal and spiritual Torah.

We see that our society reflects the superficial values of the Egyptian and Greek cultures. The triumph of our righteous ancestors was not only winning a physical war, but it was a victory of our world view over theirs. The Maccabees represented inner depth and spiritual beauty, something we should strive to emulate and incorporate into our daily lives.

**Being Careful of the Power**

**Of The Words One Utters**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

"If I don't bring Binyamin back, I will be a sinner forever."(Beresheet 43:9)

Yehudah wanted to convince Ya'akob to allow Binyamin to go down to Egypt with them. Otherwise, the viceroy would not allow their other brother out of prison. Yehudah therefore told Ya'akob, "If I don't bring back Binyamin I will be considered a sinner my whole life, including Olam Haba, the Next World."

The Gemara says that because of these words, Yehudah was not allowed into Olam Haba for many hundreds of years, until Moshe Rabenu prayed fervently, and got Yehudah into Olam Haba.

We see from here how careful we have to be when using words, even about ourselves. Although Yehudah said these words for a noble purpose of reuniting the family, nevertheless, his words affected his future in a very drastic way.

We should never utter words which can have a dangerous effect on ourselves or on anybody, even when just joking or playing. Saying things like, "I could die from embarrassment," or, "I'm going to kill you for that," or, "You're dead," and the like, should be avoided at all costs.

Although we don't mean these things literally, words uttered have a powerful force. We should train ourselves to say words of berachah (blessing) even when upset or angry. Many people from the old generation used to say, "You should be blessed," or the like, when they got upset with that person.

This way, not only did they not say anything negative during an argument, but by saying nice things they made the arguments shorter. This is something to think about and train ourselves to do.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of the Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin.*

**The Dog Tag Dilemma**

**By** [**Doron Kornbluth**](http://www.chabad.org/search/keyword.asp?kid=14617)

 *Do you know what a Protestant B is? I know what a Protestant is, and I know what a Catholic is, and I know what a Jew is . . . but until recently, I had never heard of a Protestant B.*

*I learned what a Protestant B is from an essay by Debra Darvick that appeared in an issue of Hadassah Magazine. It is a chapter from a book she is working on about the American Jewish experience. And this essay is about the experience of retired Army Major Mike Neulander, who now lives in Newport News, Virginia, and who is now a Judaic silversmith. This is his story.*

Then, as now, Jews were forbidden

By Saudi law to enter the country

Dog tags. When you get right down to it, the military’s dog tag classification forced me to reclaim my Judaism.

In the fall of 1990, things were heating up in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. I had been an Army captain and a helicopter maintenance test pilot for a decade, and received notice that I would be transferred to the First Cavalry Division, which was on alert for the Persian Gulf War.

**The Jewish Dog Tag Dilemma**

Consequently, I also got wind of the Department of Defense “dog tag dilemma” vis-à-vis Jewish personnel. Then as now, Jews were forbidden by Saudi law to enter the country. But our Secretary of Defense flat-out told the king of Saudi Arabia, “We have Jews in our military. They’ve trained with their units and they’re going. Blink and look the other way.”

With Kuwait occupied and the Iraqis at his border, King Fahd did the practical thing. We shipped out, but there was still the issue of classification. Normally the dog tags of Jewish servicemen are imprinted with the word “Jewish.” But Defense, fearing that this would put Jewish soldiers at further risk should they be captured on Iraqi soil, substituted the classification “Protestant B” on the tags.

**“It Was in G-d’s Hands”**

I didn’t like the whole idea of classifying Jews as Protestant-anything, and so I decided to leave my dog tag alone. I figured if I were captured, it was in G‑d’s hands. Changing my tags was tantamount to denying my religion, and I couldn’t swallow that.

In September 1990 I went off to defend a country that I was prohibited from entering. The “Jewish” on my dog tag remained as clear and unmistakable as the American star on the hood of every Army truck.

A few days after my arrival, the Baptist chaplain approached me. “I just got a secret message through channels,” he said. “There’s going to be a Jewish gathering. A holiday? Simkatoro or something like that. You want to go? It’s at 1800 hours at Dhahran Airbase.”

Simkatoro turned out to be Simchat Torah, a holiday that hadn’t registered on my religious radar in eons. Services were held in absolute secrecy in a windowless room in a cinder block building. The chaplain led a swift and simple service. We couldn’t risk singing or dancing, but Rabbi Ben Romer had managed to smuggle in a bottle of Manischewitz.

**For that Brief Hour We Were Home**

Normally I can’t stand the stuff, but that night, the wine tasted of Shabbat and family and Seders of long ago. My soul was warmed by the forbidden alcohol and by the memories swirling around me and my fellow soldiers. We were strangers to one another in a land stranger than any of us had ever experienced, but for that brief hour, we were home.

The wind was blowing dry across the tent, but inside there was an incredible feeling of celebration

Only Americans would have had the chutzpah to celebrate Simchat Torah under the noses of the Saudis. Irony and pride twisted together inside me like barbed wire. Celebrating my Judaism that evening made me even prouder to be an American, thankful once more for the freedoms we have. I had only been in Saudi Arabia a week, but I already had a keen understanding of how restrictive its society was.

**The Jewish Colonel in Charge of Our Unit**

Soon after, things began coming to a head. The next time I was able to do anything remotely Jewish was Chanukah. Maybe it was coincidence, or maybe it was G‑d’s hand that placed a Jewish colonel in charge of our unit. Colonel Lawrence Schneider relayed messages of Jewish gatherings to us immediately. Had a non-Jew been in that position, the information would likely have taken a back seat to a more pressing issue. Like war. But it didn’t.

When notice of the Chanukah party was decoded, we knew about it at once. The first thing we saw when we entered the tent was food, tons of it. Care packages from the States—cookies, latkes, sour cream and applesauce, and cans and cans of gefilte fish. The wind was blowing dry across the tent, but inside there was an incredible feeling of celebration.

As Rabbi Romer talked about the theme of Chanukah and the ragtag bunch of Maccabee soldiers fighting Jewry’s oppressors thousands of years ago, it wasn’t hard to make the connection to what lay ahead of us. There, in the middle of the desert, inside an olive green tent, we felt like we were the Maccabees. If we had to go down, we were going to go down fighting, as they did.

We blessed the candles, acknowledging the King of the Universe who commanded us to kindle the Chanukah lights. We said the second prayer, praising G‑d for the miracles He performed, in those days and now. And we sang the third blessing, the *Shehecheyanu*, thanking G‑d for keeping us in life and for enabling us to reach this season.

**We Knew War Was Imminent**

We knew war was imminent. All week we had received reports of mass destruction, projections of the chemical weapons that were likely to be unleashed. Intelligence estimates put the first rounds of casualties at 12,500 soldiers. I heard those numbers and thought, “That’s my whole division!” I sat back in my chair, my gefilte fish cans at my feet. They were in the desert, about to go to war, singing songs of praise to G‑d who had saved our ancestors in battle once before.

The feeling of unity was as pervasive as our apprehension, as real as the sand that found its way into everything from our socks to our toothbrushes. I felt more Jewish there on that lonely Saudi plain, our tanks and guns at the ready, than I had ever felt back home in synagogue.

**Chanukah in the Desert – The Urge to Reconnect**

That Chanukah in the desert solidified for me the urge to reconnect with my Judaism. I felt religion welling up inside me. Any soldier will tell you that there are no atheists in foxholes, and I know that part of my feelings were tied to the looming war and my desire to get with G‑d before the unknown descended in the clouds of battle.

It sounds corny, but as we downed the latkes and cookies and wiped the last of the applesauce from our plates, everyone grew quiet, keenly aware of the link with history, thinking of what we were about to do and what had been done by soldiers like us so long ago.

Silently, he withdrew the metal rectangle and its beaded chain from beneath his shirt

The trooper beside me stared ahead at nothing in particular, absentmindedly fingering his dog tag. “How’d you classify?” I asked, nodding to my tag. Silently, he withdrew the metal rectangle and its beaded chain from beneath his shirt and held it out for me to read. Like mine, his read, “Jewish.”

Somewhere in a military depot someplace, I am sure that there must be boxes and boxes of dog tags, still in their wrappers, all marked “Protestant B.”

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Chabad.org Magazine*

**The Human Side of the Story**

**The Pintele Yid**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

What gives everyone in the field of outreach the confidence that alienated and assimilated Jews can be reached is their faith in the Pintele Yid literally the Jewish remnant residing in the heart of every Jew.

A best-selling book, “Sandy Koufax: A Lefty’s Legacy,” written by Jane Leavy, calls attention to the Pintele Yid in a Brooklyn boy who became a hero to Dodger fans, but an even greater hero to Jews everywhere.

On October 18, 1965, this legendary Los Angeles Dodger lefty was scheduled to pitch the opening game of the World Series against the Minnesota Twins. Koufax was not observant and did not even have a Bar Mitzvah ceremony. But he refused to pitch that day because it was Yom Kippur.

Koufax became a hero for all Jews, even those with the remotest connection to their heritage. One example of his influence is cited by the author in the preface to her book. She was covering the U.S. Tennis Open for the Washington Post in 1983 on Yom Kippur. Then she remembered that 18 years earlier Koufax had declined the opportunity every American kid dreamed of. “I have not worked on the High Holidays since”, she writes.

“Sandy Koufax had made himself at home in my soul.”

The Pintele Yid.

*Reprinted from Ohr.edu the website of Ohr Somayach International in Yerushalayim.*

**May a Grown Child Move Away From His Parents' City?**

**By Rabbi Eli J. Mansour**

Does the Misva of Kibud Ab Va'em - honoring parents - require a grown child to live near his parents so he can care for them, or simply because they want to be near him? Or is one allowed to live wherever he pleases, regardless of his parents' preference?

Numerous sources indicate that one must, indeed, live near his parents. The Gemara comments that Yaakob Abinu was punished for the years he spent away from his parents, Yishak and Ribka, clearly implying that one must live near his parents so he can fulfill the Misva of Kibud Ab Va'em.

The Maharil (Rav Yaakob Halevi Mollin, Germany, 1365-1427), as recorded in his "Likkutim," ruled explicitly that a person should live near his parents. Some inferred this ruling from the comments of the Rambam (Rabbi Moshe Maimonides, Spain-Egypt, 1135-1204), who writes that if a person's parent became senile, then the son should move somewhere else - implying that under normal circumstances one should live near his parents.

**No Obligation to Listen to Parents**

**If They Tell Him Not to Marry**

Furthermore, the Sefer Ha'hasidim (by Rabbenu Yehuda Ha'hasid, Germany, 1150-1217) writes that if one's parents instruct him not to get married, because they are afraid that he would then move away, he should not listen to them; rather, he should get married and live with or near his parents. Once again, we see that if the parents want their child to live near them, then he should accede to their wishes.

The Midrashic volume Yalkut Reubeni similarly comments, "It is an honor for a parent to live near his children." This is also the position of the Aruch Ha'shulhan (Rav Yehiel Michel Epstein of Nevarduk, 1829-1908), who writes that a person does not have to accede to his parents' demand that

he not go away from town to learn Torah. The Gemara writes that Yaakob was not punished for the years he spent away from home learning in the yeshiva of Shem and Eber, thus demonstrating that one may leave his parents' town - even against their wishes - for the purpose of learning Torah. Otherwise, however, one must remain near his parents.

This is, indeed, the Halacha. Just as one must acquire Tefillin so he can fulfill the Misva of Tefillin each day, similarly, one must ensure to live near his parents so he can fulfill the important Torah obligation of Kibud Ab Va'em. Even if the parents do not need their child to care for them, nevertheless, if they want him to live near them, he should accede to their wishes.

There are, however, several important exceptions to this rule. The Aruch Ha'shulhan rules that if one needs to move away for purposes of earning a living - meaning, his job requires him to relocate - then he may move away even against his parents' wishes.

**One May Move if Parents**

**Threaten One’s Shalom Bayit**

Furthermore, if living near one's parents may threaten his Shalom Bayit (peace in the home), such as if they will meddle in his personal affairs and interfere with his marriage, then he may move away. Certainly, if there are no suitable options for one's children's Jewish education in the area where his parents live, then he may move elsewhere for the sake of his children's education. And, it goes without saying that if the parents approve of their child's decision to move away, then he is permitted to do so.

Summary: The misva of honoring parents requires a person to live near his parents, unless they do not mind if he lives elsewhere, or if he must live somewhere else for reasons such as work or his children's education, or if he fears his parents may interfere with his marriage.

*Reprinted from the November 28, 2010 email of DailyHalacha.com*

**Everyone Has an Obligation**

**To Put Out the Fire**

**By David Bibi**

Baruch Hashem, most weeks we are blessed to have wonderful guests in our home. Often they are friends of our children. They add so much to Shabbat bringing perspectives from their various backgrounds, communities and customs.

This past week in addition to all the friends we had Rabbi Mottle Wolfe from Jerusalem who added so much to Shabbat. One of the young men with us this Shabbat, although only in his early twenties is already making his mark on the Jewish people through his dedicated work and chesed. A brilliant boy who can become a great scholar, he expressed a reluctance to take the next step.

**A Reluctance from True Humility**

This reluctance came from true humility. Who was he, when there were so many greater around him. I reminded him that sometimes we have to live up to the advice and accept that in a place where there is no man, we must step up and do what we can. We spoke for a while and I hope I was able to motivate him to move forward and take his place.

I heard a wonderful story this week from Rabbi Joey Haber in the name of the Chafetz Chaim which illustrates the point. A man had a new servant. He sent him to the well to bring drinking water for the house and the servant returned to the home with his bucket. The man took some of the water and showed the servant the impurities and dirt in the water and explained to him that when he brought water he needed to filter it through different cloths to remove the impurities.

**The Man Learned the Lesson of**

**How to Bring Home Pure Water**

The man understood and each day he would go to the well, draw water and then filter it again and again until it sparkled and was pure. The family was very pleased at the servants vigilance.

Then one day there was a fire in the house. The man called to his servant, “Quickly, please get water to put out the fire”. And so the servant quickly went to the well, drew the water and as usually sifted it to remove the impurities finally returning to the home thirty minutes later, by which time the fire had done its damage and the home was now a pile of ashes.

The Chafetz Chaim explained that we are living in a generation where the fire is raging. Just think about the rampant intermarriage and lack of affiliation. The pure water is the Sadik. Given the luxury of time, we would want no other teacher.

**Even Impure Water Can Put Out a Fire**

But when the fire is raging even impure water does the job. Many of us look at ourselves as the impure water. We push aside our responsibility and say, “let the sadik, let the rabbi, let the righteous handle it”.We believe we don’t know enough and we are unworthy. But when the fire is raging, we have no choice but to step forward.

Rav Ovadiah Yosef once asked us to imagine if each of us simply took one unaffiliated Jew under our wing, what a difference it would make in the world. Its easy to say, let the other guy handle it. But if we stand by and watch the fire without doing a thing to put it out, aren’t we as guilty as the one who started then fire in the first place?

**The Effect of a Small Light**

**In a World of Darkness**

This week we begin Chanukah where we celebrate the effect of a small light in a world of darkness. Each of us is that light. Each of us can make a difference. Every child of Israel, whether connected or not, has what they call a Pintele Yid within them.

Sometimes they don’t know its there. Its dormant. It needs to be

ignited. It needs a spark. This year don’t just light the menorah. Spread the miracle and publicize it. Make a commitment to bring light to someone else. All they need is a spark and you’ve got it to give!

*Reprinted from last week’s email of Shabbat Shalom from Cyberspace.*

**As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

**Hashem’s Many Surprises**

**In Running the World**

**By Sam Gindi**

“*The cornerstone which was despised by the builders, became the top (exalted) of the edifice*” (Tehillim 118:22).

This week we say the complete ‘Hallel’ for the full eight days of Chanukah.  David Hamelech included this principle in the wealth of thoughts of praise, gratitude and excitement found in Hallel.

Yosef Hatzadeek was at the most desperate point in his career.  He was sold into slavery, taken to a foreign land, unjustly accused and thrown into jail for 12 years.  “The cornerstone which was despised by the builders.” referring to Yosef who was also rejected by his brothers.

Now Pharoh does something unprecedented, irresponsible and unexpected.  He could have just given Yosef a great reward for interpreting the dreams.  Pharoh takes the King’s ring off of his finger and puts it on Yosef!! This evokes feelings of wild excitement in us. Yosef is King of Egypt!!

Just like the elation experienced by our nation at Chanukah when the single flask of oil miraculously stayed lit for 8 days. And also when we saw that suddenly Haman was hanging on the tree and the King’s ring was placed on Mordecai’s finger.  All of these revelations by Hashem are indications that:

*“Hashem is with His Jewish People.”*

The next verse of the Hallel reveals the true purpose, that of gaining Emunah.

“This (unexpected surprise) is from Hashem, it is (meant to be) a wonder in our eyes.”  (ibid.188:23)

Hashem operates the world utilizing 'surprises' throughout history in order to reveal that it is He who manages the affairs of the world with His Providence.

Some examples are, Yishmael was older but Yitzchak was chosen.  Esav was the first born but Yaacob was the chosen one.  Yosef was younger and despised by the Brothers yet through it all Yosef was chosen.  David was the youngest and his lineage was suspected. However he became King David.

The Jewish nation is the most despised and very small in numbers yet we are the Chosen of Hashem and will become "the top of the edifice" at the end.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “As Heard from Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l.”*

**Light Dispels Darkness**

From a Letter of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Zt”l

15 Kislev, 5738 (1977)

In connection with the forthcoming days of Chanuka, I extend to each and every one of you my heartfelt wishes for a bright and inspiring Chanuka, coupled with the fulfillment of your hearts' desires for good in every respect.

Chanuka brings a message of encouragement, in keeping with all the festivals and commemorative days in our Jewish calendar, which are meant to be observed not just for the sake of remembrance, but also for the practical lessons they provide in our daily life. One of the practical teachings of Chanuka follows:

**The Special Mitzvah Pertaining to Chanuka**

The special mitzva pertaining to Chanuka is, of course, the kindling of the Chanuka lights, which must be lit after sunset--unlike the Sabbath candles, which must be lit before sunset, and unlike the lights of the menora in the Holy Temple, which were kindled even earlier in the day.

This emphasis on kindling the Chanuka lights after sunset teaches that, if a person finds himself in a situation akin to "after sunset," when the light of day has given way to gloom and darkness--as was the case in those ancient days under the oppressive Greek rule--one must not, G-d forbid, despair.

On the contrary, it is necessary to fortify oneself with complete trust in G-d, the Essence of Goodness, and take heart in the firm belief that the darkness is only temporary, soon to be superseded by a bright light which will be seen and felt all the more strongly by the intensity of the contrast.

This, then, is the meaning of the kindling of the Chanuka lights, done in a manner which calls for lighting an additional candle each successive day of Chanuka--demonstrating plainly to oneself and to others passing by in the street that light dispels darkness, and that even a little light dispels a great deal of darkness--how much more so a light that grows steadily in intensity! And if physical light has such power, how much more so eternal spiritual light.

**Pertains to the Jewish People, As**

**Well as to Each Individual Jew**

All of this pertains to the Jewish people as a whole, as well as to each individual Jew, man or woman, in particular. Although the Jewish people is still in a state of Exile, and "darkness covers the earth," a time when "nations rage and people speak vain things," etc., there is no reason to be overwhelmed; we have only to strengthen our trust in G-d, the "Guardian of His people Israel, Who slumbers not, nor sleeps," and be confident that He will protect His people wherever they are, and will bless them with success in all things, and in a growing measure; and that He will hasten the coming of our Righteous Moshiach to bring us the true and complete Redemption which is fast approaching.

Similarly, in regard to individuals who find themselves in a state of personal Exile--there is no cause for discouragement and despondency. On the contrary, one must have complete trust in the Creator and Master of the Universe, that personal deliverance from distress and confinement is speedily on the way.

**One Will Draw Increasing Strength**

Furthermore, one will draw increasing strength when this trust is expressed in a growing commitment to the fulfillment of G-d's will in daily life and conduct in accordance with His Torah and mitzvot--of which the mitzva of kindling the Chanuka lights is particularly significant in that it symbolizes the illumination of the soul, the "lamp of G-d," with the light of the Torah and mitzvot, "for a mitzva is a lamp and the Torah is light"--illuminating it in increasing measure from day to day, to bring about the fulfillment of the prophecy: "The people walking in the darkness of Exile will see a great light"--the light of the Redemption.

*Reprinted from Issue #296 of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization that was printed for Parshas Mikeitz edition in 1993/5754.*

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**

**From Poland to Jerusalem**

Part of the miracle of the Chanukah account is that the Maccabees found one container of oil in the Beis Hamikdash (Holy Temple in Jerusalem) which the Greeks had not contaminated.  This hints perhaps to the concept of the "Pintele Yid" - every Jew has within him a Jewish soul, the essence of a Jew.  This essence remains intact in the Jewish heart no matter how far it strays from the Jewish nation.

During the Holocaust, a large group of Polish women were rounded up to be sent to the gas chambers. As the group gathered their possessions to take with them into the camp the evil Nazi officers called out to all the villagers who were standing by watching, “Anything that these Jews leave behind you may take for yourselves, because for sure they will not be coming back to collect them!”

**Two Polish Women Eyed a**

**Jewish Woman’s Expensive Coat**

Two Polish women who were standing nearby saw a woman towards the back of the group, wearing a large, heavy, expensive coat. Not wanting to wait to see if others got the coat before them, they ran to the woman and knocked her to the ground, grabbing her coat and walked away.

As the Jewish women were being led away, these two Polish women lay down the coat to divide the spoils of what was hiding inside. As they rummaged through the pockets, they discovered gold jewelry, silver candlesticks and other heirlooms, but still, as they lifted the coat it seemed heavier than it should be.

**Discovering a Little Baby Girl**

After further inspection they found a secret pocket, and hidden inside the coat was a little baby girl. Shocked at their discovery, one of the women insisted to the other, saying “I don’t have any children, and I’m too old to have now. You take all the gold and silver and let me take the baby”.

The deal was agreed and the Polish woman took her new ‘daughter’ home to her delighted husband . They raised the Jewish girl as their own, treating her very well, but never told her anything of her history. The girl excelled in her studies and became a successful pediatrician, working in the top hospital in Poland.

**A Revelation After Her**

**“Mother” Passes Away**

After some years the girl’s ‘mother’ passed away. A week after, she received a knock at the door. An old woman invited herself in and said “I want you to know that the woman that passed away last week was not your real mother...” and she proceeded to tell her the whole story.

The girl did not believe her at first but the old woman said to her “When we found you, you were wearing a beautiful gold pendant with strange writing on it which must be Hebrew, I am sure that your mother kept the necklace, go and look” and with that parting advice she left. The girl went into her ‘mother’s’ jewelry box and found the necklace just as the woman described. She had it extended and wore it every day, but thought nothing more of her Jewish roots.

Sometime later, she went on holiday abroad and saw two Lubavitch boys. Seizing the opportunity she told them entire story and showed them the necklace. The boys confirmed that a Jewish name was inscribed on the necklace but did not know what to say about her status.

**Mailing a Letter to**

**The Lubavitcher Rebbe**

They recommended that she send a letter to the Lubavitcher Rebbe explaining everything. She sent off the letter and received a speedy reply saying that it is clear from the facts that she is a Jewish girl and since she had a special talent, she should use her invaluable skills in Israel, a place in desperate need of talented pediatricians.

She took the Rebbe’s advice and moved to Israel where she approached a Beis Din who declared her Jewish. She was accepted into a hospital to work, and she met her husband and raised a family. Some years later...

**A Terrorist Attack at the Sbarro Cafe**

When there was a terrorist attack at the Sbarro cafe in the centre of Jerusalem in August 2001, this woman was walking nearby with her husband.  When she heard of the blast, she told her husband to return home to the kids and she proceeded to rush to the scene where she treated the wounded and helped the injured to hospital.

When she arrived at the hospital she met an elderly man who was in a state of shock. He was searching everywhere for his granddaughter who had become separated from him. She calmed him down and went with him to search amongst all the patients in order to find his granddaughter. Asking how she could recognize her, the frantic grandfather gave a rough description of a gold pendant necklace that she was wearing.

**Stunned by the Granddaughter’s Necklace**

After searching amongst the injured, they finally found the granddaughter who was wearing the necklace. At the sight of this necklace, the pediatrician froze. She turned to the old man and said “where did you buy this necklace from?”

“You can’t buy such a necklace” he responded, “I am a goldsmith and I made this necklace. Actually I made two identical ones for each of my daughters. This is my granddaughter from one of them, and my other daughter did not survive the war”   ...And this is how the Jewish Polish girl was reunited with her father!  (Told by Harav Moshe Kupetz shlit"a,  Written by Moshe Kormornick [www.ShortVort.com](http://webmailbb.juno.com/webmail/new/www.ShortVort.com) )

*Reprinted from this week’s Good Shabbos Everyone Shabbos Everyone.*

**A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l**

**Understanding the**

**Miracles of Chanukah**

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION:** |

 What's the relative importance of the miracles of *Chanukah* in the matters of the victories of the enemies, and the miracle of the cruse of oil?

|  |
| --- |
| **ANSWER:** |

|  |
| --- |
| Chanukah Candles |

Now, the miracles of the conquest were absolutely no less a miracle than the *Pach Shemen*. Only, we must admit that the *Yetzer Horah* will find an opportunity to deceive mankind in miracles of that kind.

**Arguments of the Yetzer Horah**

Well, you say, it happened they were good fighters, and perhaps the Assyrians were disorganized. It’s not true, they were a very well organized army, but if people are looking for flaws in their *Emunah*, they'll say it's an accident.

They’ll try to find parallels, a certain small band of people who fought for independence; didn't the Americans fight the British army? No comparison of course, the Americans were here and the British army was only a small number of regiments from across the sea, nevertheless the *Yetzer Hora* will find ways and means.

**A Miracle You Couldn’t Find an Answer For**

The *Pach Ha'shemen* is something you couldn't answer, and therefore when the *Gemora* asks, *Mai Chanukah*? What's the miracle for which we celebrate *Chanukah*? It says, the *Ness* of *Shemen*. But it doesn't mean that the other *Nissim* were smaller *Nissim*. No, they were also great *Nissim*, whatever happened, not only one battle, many battles were miracles upon miracles. Only to give us the maximum benefit it was necessary to emphasize the *Ness* of the *Pach Shemen*. That must be utilized most fully because that gives us the greatest benefit. *Good Shabbos To All*

*Reprinted from this week’s email of “A Moment with Rabbi Avigdor Miller, Zt”l,” based on a transcription of a question to Rabbi Miller and his answer from a Thursday night hashkafa lecture at his Flatbush shul.*

**Protecting the Jewish Home**

**By Rabbi Elazar Meisels**

*Dear Rabbi,*

*My husband and I recently really learned about the broader conflict with the Syrian-Greeks during the Hanukah period, and about the oppressive decrees that were imposed on the Jews at the time. Reading the Book of Maccabees, I was shocked to find out that every bride had to spend a night with the Greek governor prior to her marriage! Is there a reason why there no specific celebration dedicated to the abolishment of this decree?*

*Sincerely,*

*Melanie (and David)*

*Marin County, CA*

Dear Melanie and David,

Indeed, the Greeks enacted many vile decrees against the Jews. The one you highlighted may be the most loathsome of all, for it struck directly at the time-honored modesty found in the Jewish home and family. Curiously, this characteristic was praised by none other than our arch-enemy Balaam, the evil non-Jewish prophet sent to curse the Jewish people. (Numbers 24:5)

While overlooking the Jewish encampment, Balaam recognized that the Jewish people were different than all other nations simply by the unique manner in which our tents were arranged in the desert.  They were staggered, so that no entryway faced that of the next tent. Balaam understood that as long as we retained such modesty, we were virtually indestructible.

**Enticing Jews to Sin**

He therefore abandoned his original plan and instead urged the daughters of Midian to entice the Jewish men to sin. His plan almost succeeded.  Some 24,000 Jewish men died in a plague following this catastrophe. Since that time, numerous enemies of the Jewish people have sought to defeat us by attacking our national modesty.

Chief among them were the Greeks, who incessantly enacted decrees aimed at destabilizing Jewish family life. The Medrash [*Batei Medrashot, Perek 5*] explains that their first decree was a prohibition against locking the front door, so that no Jewish home would enjoy privacy. Anyone could enter a Jewish home at any time. The Jews responded by removing their front doors.  In this way, they would not be misled into believing they had privacy when they really did not, and would protect themselves from being found in compromising situations.

**Forbidding Jewish Women**

**To Go to the Mikvah**

Later, the Greeks decreed that no Jewish woman was allowed to go to the mikvah, on pain of execution.  Anyone who caught a woman on the way to a mikvah was allowed to kidnap her and her children and hold them as slaves forever. The Jewish people we forced to devise all sorts of solutions, some went as far as digging a mikvah in their own homes. Eventually, the Greek’s insisted that all Jewish brides spend an evening with the Greek governor. This, they felt, would forever taint the Jewish nation and cause us to lose all the purity and modesty inherent in Jewish living.

**The Rebellion of the Maccabees**

A small group of Maccabees in the little town of Modi’in finally decided that they could take it no longer and rose up in arms to rebel against the Greeks. Certainly the lighting of the Menorah primarily celebrates the miracle of the oil and the victory over the Greeks. Yet, it has been suggested that it also commemorates our self-sacrifice in overcoming the other areas of persecution as well. As is well-known, the ideal location for the Menorah is not by the front window, but by the front door. According to some opinions, this is to commemorate the decree against locking our doors and our willingness to remove them altogether to preserve our modest lifestyles.

Customarily, a married woman relies on her husband’s act of lighting the menorah.  One of the ideas inherent in this practice is in response to the Greeks who sought to drive a wedge between husbands and wives and thereby destroy the Jewish family. Our response to them is to draw even closer together. By relying upon her husband’s lighting, the Jewish woman demonstrates that she is inseparable from him. In this manner she symbolizes the Jewish ideal that the union between a man and his wife is sacred and inviolable, and that by clinging to this ideal we merited to be victorious over those who wished to destroy our way of life.

Wishing you and David a joyous and de-lightful Chanukah!

Rabbi Elazar Meisels

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Parsha Partner, a publication of Partners in Torah.*

**A Slice of Life**

**Heavenly Compensation**

**By Shoshana Monk**

*The names in this true story have been changed for reasons of privacy*

Mrs. Spitzer answered the door and smiled when she saw her visitor. She had been married for nine years with no children. However, in a miraculous turn of events, the Spitzers had been blessed with quintuplets!

Before their quintuplets, the Spitzers had led a modest lifestyle, but now their expenses had quintupled. The visitor, Mrs. Schiff, had heard about their situation and had raised money and organized other endeavors to help the couple.

Mrs. Spitzer led her visitor into her children's bedroom. Mrs. Schiff looked at the five precious souls with a smile. Her gaze wandered around the room and was drawn to a small photo on the wall.

Suddenly, Mrs. Schiff gasped. She pointed to the photo, asking, "Who is that young woman?"

"She was my mother."

Mrs. Schiff looked at Mrs. Spitzer. "Your mother? Tell me, is she still alive?"

"I'm sorry to say that she passed away last year, just before I fell pregnant. She would have been so happy to see our long-awaited babies."

**A Story from Bergen-Belsen**

Mrs. Schiff was silent for a moment. Then she said, "I have a story to share with you. When I was 15 I was taken to Bergen-Belsen. I was placed in a barrack together with other girls my age. My four friends and I remained steadfast in our Jewish observance; we said we'd rather die Al Kiddush Hashem (to sanctify G-d's name) than in any other manner. One day, one of my friends, Rivka, called us together excitedly.

"'Tomorrow is Chanuka!' she exclaimed. 'We must light a menora!' We devised a plan. We would trade our daily ration of bread for machine oil from a girl who worked in the factory. Thread from our uniforms would be wicks, and two stones would create fire. Round potato peels could serve as a menora, but it would be risky to get them.

"At midnight, when the guards' shift changed, one of us would sneak into the kitchen through the window, while the others would stand guard.

"That night, all five of us crept stealthily towards the kitchen. Being small, I was chosen to crawl in. I approached the large garbage bin and began to sift through its contents. I could hear the loud grumbling of my hungry stomach. I had given up my ration that day, and I was famished!

"I saw small pieces of food, and stuffed them into my mouth. At last, I found one potato peel with a perfect shape. Then I continued searching. A second perfect potato peel! Suddenly, glancing up at the window, I saw Sarale waving frantically.

**Recklessly Looking for One More Peel**

"Though my head told me not to, I intently continued looking for at least one more peel. Suddenly, I heard a voice thunder, 'Halt!' I looked up to see a tall Nazi official pointing his gun at my chest. On both sides of him were my four friends, pure terror written across their stricken faces.

"You'll be punished,' he declared with great relish. 'Tomorrow, at noon, all five of you will be hung - in front of the camp, so everyone will learn the punishment for stealing. You know others will be punished if you don't report on time.'

"The darkness seemed even thicker as we trudged back to our barrack. We secretly lit our menora, reminiscing about previous Chanukas in better times. The flame burned very quickly, but it long enough to infuse hope into our deflated souls.

**A Plan for Salvation**

"Then Sarale came up with a plan. She suggested that we ask Shaina for help. Shaina was a 15-year-old Jewish girl who knew six languages. The Nazis, may their names be blotted out, used Shaina as their interpreter. They gave her a radio and put her in charge of reporting to the Nazi officials any news of the enemy's strategies. She lived in her own little shack in the woods and received a full piece of bread every day.

"'She'll never risk herself to help us!' I said.

"'Let's try anyway,' Sarale reasoned.

"We crept out of the barracks again, this time in the direction of the woods. Rachele spotted light in the distance. We followed the light and soon saw a girl in front of a menora quietly singing Ma'oz Tzur!

**Chases the Five Girls Away**

"We stood there, entranced; we no longer thought of death, but rather of Mattithias and his sons, marching to victory. Suddenly, Shaina turned around. 'Have you come to spy on me? To tell the Nazis what you see me doing?' she spluttered. 'Do you think that I don't know that you five will be hung tomorrow? You'd better get out of my sight or you'll be in more trouble!'

"'Shaina, we need your help!' I stammered.

"'I said get out of my sight!' Shaina screamed. We ran back to our barrack in fear.

**A Deep Resentment Against Shaina**

"That night, the fear of dying hovered over us. We resented Shaina deeply. Even if she couldn't help, how could she threaten us in our despair? Where was her Jewish heart?

"The next day, the entire camp was assembled. The Nazi was about to raise our nooses when somebody screamed, 'Stop!'

"He turned around, startled. There stood Shaina, motioning to him frantically and waving her radio wildly in the air. He approached her, grimacing, A few minutes later, he untied us, and with a last kick, sent us back to work, muttering all the while. Miraculously, we had been spared.

"A few days later we were liberated, but we never got a chance to thank Shaina for saving our lives. She had taken such a risk to save us. After the war, no one could trace her. And now I see her face on your wall! Look how G-d runs the world! I thought I was helping a total stranger, but in fact, you are the daughter of the woman who saved my life! You have given me a chance, in a small way, to return the great kindness I owe your mother."

**“Finif Neshamos far Finif Neshamos”**

"Now I understand!" cried Mrs Spitzer. "During my pregnancy, I dreamt of my mother. With a smile, she kept repeating: 'Finif neshamos far finif neshamos - five souls for five souls.'

"'Mamme, I don't understand!' But she just repeated, 'Finif neshamos far finif neshamos.'

"Now I understand! In the Heavenly court it must have been decided that in the merit of the five neshamos that my mother saved during the war, I would finally be blessed to have her grandchildren - my five beautiful neshamos."

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of “L’Chaim,” a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization in Brooklyn, NY. Originally published in Women for Life, Sydney, Australia.*

**It Once Happened**

**Reb Meir of**

**Cherbin’s Menora**

For the Chasidim of Rabbi Mordechai of Chernobyl, Chanuka was a special time. Regardless of the distance, thousands would come from all over the country for the privilege of watching the Rebbe kindle the menora.

One year, on the eve of the first night of Chanuka, the Rebbe's shamash (attendant) announced that there would be a small deviation from tradition. Instead of kindling the Chanuka lights in the menora he had inherited from his saintly father, Rabbi Nachum, the Rebbe would be using a different one. He offered no reason. "All I know is that the Rebbe told me to take it out of storage and get it ready," the shamash said. "I don't know where it is from, only that it is exceptionally beautiful."

That evening, when the sun went down, Rabbi Mordechai strode into the huge synagogue to fulfill the mitzva (commandment). Everyone was already waiting eagerly. Thousands of eyes followed the tzadik's every movement.

**An Incredibly Beautiful Menora**

Indeed, the menora that had been set up was not the Rebbe's usual one. And although the shamash had described it as "exceptionally beautiful," this was truly an understatement. The Rebbe recited the blessing and lit the wick, then stared into the tiny flame for a long time. It was obvious that the Rebbe's thoughts were far away, even though he was physically present.

A few minutes later the Rebbe shook his head slightly, as if returning to the world around him. Then, without even looking up, he started speaking:

**Visited the Village of Cherbin**

"Many years ago I visited the village of Cherbin," the Rebbe began. "The Chasidim there greeted me very warmly, and I was invited to stay in the home of a certain Reb Meir. This Reb Meir, who had once been a follower of my late father, was the wealthiest man in town. He was a true Chasid in all of his 248 limbs and 365 sinews. His love for the Torah and his desire to perform mitzvot in the most beautiful manner possible knew no bounds.

"Towards the end of my stay in Cherbin Reb Meir led me into his treasury to show me his riches. There, in one corner of the room, was the most extraordinary silver menora I had ever seen. Reb Meir told me that he had paid a fortune for it, and planned on using it the very next Chanuka. I picked it up to admire its workmanship and artistry.

**Requests the Special Menora as a Gift**

"'Reb Meir,' I said to him suddenly, looking him in the eye. 'Would you give me this menora as a gift?' My question momentarily startled him, and he was silent for a minute. But after considering my request he immediately agreed. 'Yes,' he said. 'I would give all my wealth to the Rebbe.'

"When I got back to Chernobyl I instructed my family to put the menora in storage. When Chanuka arrived I did not ask for it, but continued to use the menora I had inherited from my father. My family was somewhat surprised by this, for why had I brought the other one if I wasn't planning on using it? But as time passed, everyone forgot that the other one even existed.

"This year, however, I decided to change my custom, and now I will tell you why:

**Reb Meir Recently Passed Away**

"A few days ago, Reb Meir of Cherbin passed away. When he ascended to the heavenly court, it seemed obvious that his rightful place was in Gan Eden [the Garden of Eden]. Thousands of angels testified to all the good deeds Reb Meir had performed throughout his life. One after the other they described his love of Torah and his exceptional performance of mitzvot.

"Reb Meir was about to pass through the gates of Gan Eden when all of a sudden, an angel without any eyes stood up and cried out, 'I object!' Pandemonium broke out. The blind angel was given permission to speak, and proceeded to tell the story of the silver menora Reb Meir had once purchased at great expense.

**The Angel’s Explanation**

**Of the Menora Purchase**

"'What you don't know,' the angel explained, 'is that this menora was bought from a poor Jew in Cherbin who was forced to sell it because his wife and children were starving. This menora had been in his family for 13 generations, and was almost as dear to him as his life. For years he refused to sell it. Reb Meir was well aware of the poor man's circumstances. The otherwise generous and charitable Reb Meir had such an intense desire to own the beautiful menora that he deliberately exploited the poor man and offered financial assistance only through the purchase of the menora.'

**Case Reviewed by**

**The Heavenly Court**

"The heavenly court decided to review the case. In the end it was ruled that Reb Meir should go to Gan Eden, but not directly. To atone for the anguish he had caused, he would first have to wander around through the celestial spheres accompanied by the blind angel.

"Many years ago, when I visited Reb Meir's house and he showed me the menora, I knew what was going to happen. I took it from him so that when the proper time came, I would be able to help him make amends. Tonight, when I lit the first candle of Chanuka in that menora, it corrected Reb Meir's spiritual defect and allowed him to enter Gan Eden. It also restored the gift of sight to the blind angel..."

*Reprinted from the archives of “L’Chaim Weekly.”*

**Shabbos Stories for Parshas Miketz (Chanukah) 5770**

**The French Connection**

**Good Shabbos Everyone.**  On Chanukah we light candles to celebrate the victory of the Chashmonayim over the Greeks over 2000 years ago.  In reality, the kingship which the Chashmonayim established did not last very long, it was quickly eclipsed by the growing Roman Empire.  Nevertheless, we celebrate the victory.  In a greater sense we celebrate on Chanukah the everlasting victory of the Jewish People over those nations who have sought to destroy us in every generation.

Even the non-Jewish scholars have recognized the everlasting nature of the Jewish people. As the American author and commentator Mark Twain writes in his short essay entitled: Concerning the Jews.

**But One Percent of the Human Race**

*"If the statistics are right, the Jews constitute but one per cent of the human race. It suggests a nebulous dim puff of stardust lost in the blaze of the Milky Way. Properly the Jew ought hardly to be heard of, but he is heard of, has always been heard of. He is as prominent on the planet as any other people, and his commercial importance is extravagantly out of proportion to the smallness of his bulk.*

*His contributions to the world's list of great names in literature, science, art, music, finance, medicine, and abstruse learning are also away out of proportion to the weakness of his numbers. He has made a marvelous fight in the world, in all the ages; and has done it with his hands tied behind him. He could be vain of himself, and be excused for it.*

*The Egyptian, the Babylonian, and the Persian rose, filled the planet with sound and splendor, then faded to dream-stuff and passed away; the Greek and the Roman followed, and made a vast noise, and they are gone; other peoples have sprung up and held their torch high for a time, but it burned out, and they sit in twilight now, or have vanished. The Jew saw them all, beat them all, and is now what he always was, exhibiting no decadence, no infirmities of age, no weakening of his parts, no slowing of his energies, no dulling of his alert and aggressive mind. All things are mortal but the Jew; all other forces pass, but he remains. What is the secret of his immortality?"*

**First Person Story by a Doctor**

The following amazing true story, told in the first person by a doctor, illustrates that although we have been persecuted, the Jewish nation has survived all those who sought to destroy us...

"Several years ago, a physician from southern France contacted me. His granddaughter had taken ill with a disease that baffled the physicians there. He called after reading several of my articles on disorders of the autonomic nervous system. His granddaughter's symptoms seemed to match those I had described, and he asked me if I could help. I readily agreed, and for many months, I collaborated with the child's French physicians by telephone and by fax, directing their diagnostic testing. At last we came to a diagnosis, and I prescribed a course of therapy.

During the next several weeks, the child made a seemingly miraculous recovery. Her grandparents expressed their heartfelt thanks and told me to let them know should I ever come to France. In the summer of 1996, I was invited to speak at a large international scientific meeting that was held in Nice, France. I sent word to the physician I had helped years before.

**A Message Upon Arriving at the Hotel**

Upon my arrival at the hotel, I received a message to contact him. I called him, and we arranged a night to meet for dinner. On the appointed day we met and then drove north to his home in the beautiful southern French countryside. It was humbling to learn his home was older than the United States.

During the drive he told me that his wife had a terminal illness and was not well, but she insisted upon meeting me. When introduced to her, I saw that despite her severe illness, she was still a woman with a noble bearing.

We sat in a 17th-century salon, sipping cognac and chatting. Our conversation must have seemed odd to the young man and woman who served us because it came out in a free-flowing mixture of English, French, and Spanish. After a time the woman asked,

"My husband tells me you are Jewish, no?" "Yes," I said, "I am a Jew." They asked me to tell them about Judaism, especially the holidays. I did my best to explain and was astounded by how little they knew of Judaism. She seemed to be particularly interested in Chanukah.

Once I had finished answering her questions, she suddenly looked me in the eye and said, "I have something I want to give to you." She disappeared and returned several moments later with a package wrapped in cloth. She sat, her tired eyes looking into mine, and she began to speak slowly.

**A Little Girl of 8 Years**

"When I was a little girl of 8 years, during the Second World War, the authorities came to our village to round up all the Jews. My best friend at that time was a girl of my age named Jeanette. One morning when I came to play, I saw her family being forced at gunpoint into a truck. I ran home and told my mother what had happened and asked where Jeanette was going. 'Don't worry,' she said, 'Jeanette will be back soon.'

"I ran back to Jeanette's house only to find that she was gone and that the other villagers were looting her home of valuables, except for the Judaic items, which were thrown into the street. As I approached, I saw an item from her house lying in the dirt. I picked it up and recognized it as an object that Jeanette and her family would light around December time. In my little girl's mind I said 'I will take this home and keep it for Jeanette, till she comes back,' but she and her family never returned."

**To You I Entrust This**

She paused and took a slow sip of brandy. "Since that time I have kept it. I hid it from my parents and didn't tell a soul of its existence. Indeed, over the last 50 years the only person who knew of it was my husband. When I found out what really happened to the Jews, and how many of the people I knew had collaborated with the Nazis, I could not bear to look at it. Yet I kept it, hidden, waiting for something, although I wasn't sure what. Now I know what I was waiting for. It was for you, a Jew, who helped cure our granddaughter, and it is to you I entrust this."

Her trembling hands set the package on my lap. I slowly unwrapped the cloth from around it. Inside was a menorah, but one unlike any I had seen before. Made of solid brass, it had eight cups for holding oil and wicks and a ninth cup centered above the others. It had a ring attached to the top, and the woman mentioned that she remembered that Jeanette's family would hang it in the hallway of their home. It looked quite old to me; later, several people told me that it is probably at least 100 years old. As I held it and thought about what it represented, I began to cry.

**“It Should Once Again See Light”**

All I could manage to say was a garbled "merci." As I left, her last words to me were "Il faudra voir la lumiere encore une fois -- it should once again see light."

I later learned that she died less than a month after our meeting. That Chanukah, the menorah once again saw light. And as I and my family lit it, we said a special prayer in honor of those whose memories it represents. We will not let its lights go out again!

The original owners of that menorah were unfortunately taken as sacrifices during the war.  However, the Jewish nation has survived and we continue to light the Chanukah lights to symbolize the everlasting nature of this great nation.  Good Shabbos and Happy Chanukah Everyone.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of Good Shabbos*

**Story #629**

**The Ninth Flame**

**By Simon Jacobson**

***As heard from a Holocaust survivor, who was a child in the camps***

**From the Desk of Yerachmiel Tilles**

***Chanuka 1944, Auschwitz***

I will never forget the last *Chanuka* in the barracks. Most of us were so consumed with scraping together any morsel while avoiding the attention of the guards that we had no inkling which day in the year it was. Especially in those last weeks before the liberation, the Nazis were particularly unpredictable and cruel, and the chaos only made matters worse.

Yet there were a few who always knew the exact dates. They would tell the rest of us that today is Shabbat, Pesach and other significant days. On this particular day a man would tell me that it was Chanuka.

That morning I went to the infirmary to try smuggling out some balm - anything to help relieve my father's open sores. His disease -- whatever it was -- was eating his body away, and whenever I could sneak over to see him I would see him silently struggling for some relief. As an 11-year-old child*,* I was completely overcome by the sight of my suffering father.

**My Father Was No Longer There**

That particular day, when I finally snuck over to my father's bunk, he was no longer there. I became frantic.

An older gentleman, whom I did not know but I had often seen talking to my father, came over to console me. He too did not know when my father was taken, to this day I don't know if it was the disease or a Nazi bullet that took my father to heaven, but his was a calming presence.

He told me that today was Chanuka and we celebrate the victory of the few weak over the many powerful oppressors. We light the candles to demonstrate that our light is stronger than any darkness. "Your father would be very proud to know that you carry on his light despite the blackness around us," he said.

I was so moved by his words -- and all the memories it brought back from my earlier years in Lodz -- that I suggested to him enthusiastically that we should light the menora tonight. He sort of smiled at me, the child -- a smile hardly concealing his deep anguish -- and said that it would be too dangerous to try. I insisted and made off to get some machine oil from the factory.

**Putting Together Some Wicks**

I was so excited. And for this brief moment I was able to put aside my grief. I slowly made my way back, so as not to be noticed, to the barrack with my treasured bit of oil. Meanwhile the strange gentleman had put together some wicks, apparently from clothing or some other material.

Now we needed fire to light our makeshift *menora*. I noticed at the end of one building smoldering cinders. We agreed that we would wait till dusk and at an opportune moment we would light our Chanuka lights

Wait we did. As we were walking over to the cinders a guard noticed us and grabbed away the oil and wicks we were concealing. He began cursing and frothing at us. A miracle seemed to happen when his superior barked a command that apparently needed his participation, and he ran off with our precious fuel. The miracle however was short-lived. The animal yelled back at us that he would soon return to "take care of us."

**A Light More Powerful than the Chanuka Lights**

I was terrified. The gentleman was absolutely serene. And then he said to me words that are etched into my every fiber until this very day:

"Tonight we have lit a flame more powerful than the Chanuka lights. The miracle of Chanuka consisted of finding one crucible of oil, which miraculously burned for eight days. Tonight we performed an even greater miracle: We lit the ninth invisible candle even when we had no oil...

"Make no mistake. We did light the Menora tonight. We did everything in our power to kindle the flames, and every effort is recognized by G-d. He knows that we were deprived by forces that were not in our control, so in some deeper way we lit the Menora. We have lit the ninth flame - the most powerful one of all, so powerful that you can't even see it."

**A Promise: “You Will Get Out of Here Alive”**

The man then promised me: "You will get out of here alive. And when you do, take this ninth invisible flame with you. Tell G-d that we lit a candle even when we had no oil.

"Tell the world of the light that has emerged even from the darkest of darkness. We had no physical oil and no spiritual oil. We were wretched creatures, treated worse than animals. Yet, in some miraculous way, we forged a 'crucible' where none existed -- in the hell fires of Auschwitz.

"So there was no oil. Not even defiled oil. No oil, period. Yet we still lit a flame -- a flame fueled by the pits of darkness. We never gave up. Let the world know that our ninth flame is alive and shining. Tell every person in despair that the flame never goes out."

As he finished these last words, the Nazi beast returned and viciously led him away behind one of the barracks.

I made my escape. A few weeks later the Russians arrived and we were liberated. Here I am today to tell you the story of the ninth flame.

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Rabbi Simon Jacobson is the author of the best-selling Toward a Meaningful Life (meaningfullife.com), as well as two important guidebooks for the Jewish year.

*Reprinted from this week’s email of KabbalaOnline.org,*

*a project of Ascent of Safed*

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**“What Has Hashem**

**Done to Us?”**

**By Rabbi Shmuel Choueka**

When Yosef’s brothers went to Egypt to buy grain, they were brought before the viceroy (Yosef) and he suspected them of spying. Although they vehemently denied the charges, they were accused of a serious offense and the only way to clear their name was to go back home and bring their younger brother, Binyamin. On the way home, when one of the brothers checked his sack of grain, he found the original money in the sack and he cried out, “What has Hashem done to us?” (Beresheet 42:28)

We see from here how a G-d-fearing person should speak. When things go wrong (as they invariably do) we try to find someone to blame. If we lose something in the house, we question who moved our things. If business is off, we look for causes and reasons to be able to pin it on.

The sons of Ya’akob were holy men who realized that when something goes awry, it is from Hashem, and they asked, “What does Hashem want from us?” We must reinforce such behavior in our lives and in our homes. When things go right we say “Baruch Hashem,” and if there is a problem we look to Hashem for the reason. When we train ourselves and our children in this manner, we will constantly be living with Hashem and He will dwell amongst us, which will only bring us blessings.

*Reprinted from this week’s Jersey Shore Torah Bulletin email*

**Chanukah in Iowa**

**By Miriam Meir**

I was the only Jewish child in the auditorium, and sometimes felt I was the only Jewish girl in the entire world.

My younger sister and I were the only Jewish children attending Monroe Elementary school in Davenport, Iowa in the sixties. In most ways I was just like any other little girl in the Midwest. I went sledding in the winter and caught fireflies in the summer. Only a few symbols formed my Jewish identity. For instance, the mezuzah on our front door was my daily reminder that I was part of a Jewish family.

**Enjoying the Freedom of**

**Living in the Melting Pot**

Like most red-blooded Americans enjoying the freedom of living in the melting pot, the extended family gathered to celebrate Thanksgiving with all the trimmings (our stuffing actually had farfel, which was purchased across the river in Rock Island, Illinois from the kosher deli). However, this attitude of "when in Rome" did not extend to the next holiday. As the orange, yellow and brown displays in the supermarkets were replaced by green and red, a voice from within said, "This is not mine."

Each year, I would have to break in a new teacher. This happened in the fall. I was just an ordinary student, maybe a bit more gabby than the rest, until Rosh Hashana approached and I would quietly inform the teacher that I'd be missing school.

"Oh, you're Jewish?" was the usual response.

**Lighting My Chanukah at the**

**School X-mas Recital**

Once through the Jewish holiday season, my Jewishness was forgotten until the X-mas recital. Suddenly, my Jewish roots were recalled and considered of great educational importance. For this glorious gathering the entire school body was squeezed into the auditorium to hear speeches, a few carols, and view the lighting of my Chanukah candles.

It was a silence that impressed upon me that I was doing something important...that being a Jew was important.

This practice, year after year, tended to be the show stopper. The night before, I would carefully choose the nine candles according to some color pattern that I felt would make the best impression. These candles were promoting the entire Jewish religion and culture, competing with large evergreen trees covered with tinsel, lights and ornaments. As I took center stage and set my menorah onto a tabletop, I was amazed by the total silence around me. It was a silence that impressed upon me -- more than the gratuitous applause that would follow -- that I was doing something important...that being a Jew was important.

Lighting the *shamash* with a match was not a particularly religious aspect of the menorah lighting, but being nine years old and allowed to use fire added an air of authority to the ceremony. In a loud, clear voice I would recite the blessings according to the tune my father taught me. Then, one by one I would light all eight candles. It was usually not the last day of Chanukah when I made this presentation, but I felt it was important for everyone there to know that Chanukah was celebrated for eight days.

**The Question of the Doubting Thomases**

After the menorah was lit, my teacher would ask if there were any questions about Chanukah. Inevitably, some doubting Thomas would ask, "Is it true that you get a present each night?" Believing this to be one of the foundations of my holiday, I would announce, "That is correct!" which always got a few oohs and ahhs.

Once in a while a question would be considered out of line, asking if I "believed in" Christmas. My teacher would intervene, explaining that all questions should be about Chanukah. I had no problem announcing that I did not "believe in" Christmas. It was foreign to me. It was them, not me. I knew I was the only Jewish child in the auditorium, and sometimes felt I was the only Jewish girl in the entire world. And yet, like Judah Maccabee, I had no sense of weakness or lack of importance. As I stared at the small dancing flames, I thought of the children's poem, "Twinkle, twinkle little star" and I felt like a small, but precious diamond connected to an eternal People throughout time and space.

**The Core of My Present Torah Observance**

Today I no longer live in Iowa. And I am definitely not the only Jew around. I live in Jerusalem, with children ranging from still in diapers to recently married. The small twinkling light of Chanukah that built the strong Jewish identity within me in my childhood is the core of my present Torah observance that permeates my consciousness and every action.

I would never recommend anyone to raise their Jewish children in an environment void of the basic Jewish vibrancy that guides a child from his *"Modeh Ani*" in the morning until his *"Shema Yisrael"* at bedtime. But any parent who has felt the power of the small flame of Judaism from within the darkness of Jewish ignorance has a grand opportunity approaching. As the Chanukah lights are burning, take the time to tell your story. From a place of safety and light, we can help our children appreciate *"BaYamim Hahem, Bazman Hazeh*" -- Just as it was in those days, at this time.

*Reprinted from Aish.com website*

**A Message from the Kalever Rebbe Chanukah 5770**

**Seeing Our Greatness “Through The Eyes of Our Enemies”**

[](http://go.madmimi.com/redirects/db586f61e2d010507db7926f0b1d09f2?pa=433940161)

People often take for granted those things most familiar to them. Even the most precious heirlooms can become commonplace - until one is reawakened to their true value. As Jews, our most priceless legacy is our holy Torah and its beautiful Mitzvos. And yet, at various times throughout our history, even until the present day, many of us have taken for granted this dearest of gifts from Hashem. However, when we are forcefully deprived of our birthright we once again recognize what we are missing and fight back to reclaim what is rightfully ours.

In the period of the Chanukah story, some 2.300 years ago, our Syrian-Greek oppressors decreed that Jews abandon the practice and observance of three particular Mitzvos: Shabbos, Declaration of the New Month (Kiddush HaChodesh) and Ritual Circumcision (Bris Milah). What was it about these Mitzvos that the Syrian-Greeks found so objectionable and, conversely, what valuable lessons can we draw from what they saw?

**The Special Relationship Between**

**Hashem and His Chosen Nation**

The common characteristic of these Mitzvos is that each highlights the special relationship between Hashem and His chosen nation and the supernatural divine plane upon which the Jewish people exist as a result of it. This idea was anathema to the ancient Greeks who introduced rational philosophical thought to the world and bristled at the notion of divine intervention into the affairs of man.

Shabbos is testimony to Hashem's creation of heaven and earth and His continued active participation in all of nature. On Shabbos we Jews are enjoined from the performance of any creative work to demonstrate our belief that ultimately everything we receive comes directly from Hashem and is dependant upon our commitment to observing His holy Mitzvos.

Indeed, the Zohar expounds that Shabbos is the source of all blessing for all of man’s creative endeavors. Paradoxically, the greater one’s observance and glorification of Shabbos by refraining from work, the greater the material benefits he will reap in the course of the workweek. On the other hand, one who violates Shabbos in pursuit of financial gains will see no benefit from the toil of his labor. In the divine framework of Jewish life, faithful adherence to Hashem’s instructions is the most important key to success.

**Symbolizing the Eternal Nature**

**Of the Children of Israel**

The Mitzvah of Kiddush HaChodesh symbolizes the eternal, enduring nature of the Children of Israel. Just as the moon waxes brightly and then wanes but its illumination is always restored, so it is with the Children of Israel, while her enemies ever try to extinguish her supernal luminescence, Hashem always rekindles her holy light.

Ritual circumcision is the sign of our eternal covenant with Hashem. We demonstrate that we will endeavor to sublimate and perfect even our basest impulses in the service of the Almighty. Throughout the ages Jews have performed this Mitzvah even at great sacrifice but always with joy.

Decreeing against these three cardinal observances, the Greeks sought to sever the holy bond between Hashem and the Jewish people and debase them to live strictly in accordance with the laws of nature and the will of the gentiles. The Jews heeded the call of the hour and rose up in rebellion against their oppressors. Though greatly outnumbered, they waged war with selfless sacrifice, the small against the manyplacing their trust in Hashem to deliver them from the hands of their enemies. Thus, they sanctified His holy name and miraculously prevailed.

**Commemorating the Supernatural Victory**

We commemorate this supernatural victory with the Chanukah candles, themselves, the miraculous product of Hashem’s direct providence over His beloved children. The Chanukah candles allude to the very three Mitzvos which the Greeks failed to abolish. The Chanukah candles obviously remind us of the Shabbos candles. They also reflect the inner soul-light of every Jew who enters into Hashem’s covenant through circumcision. And finally, they recall the ever-renewing light of the moon which represents the inextinguishable light of the Jewish nation.

May the holy Chanukah lamps cast the light of Torah wisdom on Jews everywhere so that we never again take for granted our precious heritage. May they engender profound spiritual growth and abundant material blessing for all of us. And may we merit, once again, to see Hashem’s great miracles with the arrival of Mashiach speedily in our days, Amen.

Special Thanks to: Rabbi Avraham Shalom Farber & Yehuda Leib Meth, for the Translation

**Zalmen Rosenberg** Gabai of the Kalever Rebbe

**The following was President Obama’s message at the Chanukah event:**

**[President Obama Quotes the Novi Zechariah at White](http://matzav.com/president-obama-quotes-the-novi-zechariah-at-white-house-chanukah-reception" \o "Permanent Link to President Obama Quotes the Novi Zechariah at White House Chanukah Reception)**

**[House Chanukah Reception](http://matzav.com/president-obama-quotes-the-novi-zechariah-at-white-house-chanukah-reception" \o "Permanent Link to President Obama Quotes the Novi Zechariah at White House Chanukah Reception)**

It was more than 2,000 years ago, in the ancient city of Jerusalem, that a small band of believers led by Judah Maccabee rose up and defeated their foreign oppressors - liberating the city and restoring the faith of its people.

And when it came time to rededicate the Temple, the people of Jerusalem witnessed a second miracle: a small amount of oil - enough to light the Temple for a single night - ended up burning for eight. It was a triumph of the few over the many; of right over might; of the light of freedom over the darkness of despair. And ever since that night, in every corner of the world, Jews have lit the Hanukkah candles as symbols of resilience in times of peace, and in times of persecution - in concentration camps and ghettos; war zones and unfamiliar lands. Their light inspires us to hope beyond hope; to believe that miracles are possible even in the darkest of hours.

It is this message of Hanukkah that speaks to us no matter what faith we practice or what beliefs we cherish. Today, the same yearning for justice that drove the Maccabees so long ago inspires the protestors who march for peace and equality even when they know they will be beaten and arrested for it.

It gives hope to the mother fighting to give her child a bright future even in the face of crushing poverty. And it invites all of us to rededicate ourselves to improving the lives of those around us, spreading the light of freedom and tolerance wherever oppression and prejudice exist.

This is the lesson we remember tonight - that true acts of strength are possible, in the words of the prophet Zechariah, not by might and not by power, but by spirit alone.

*Reprinted from the website of Matzav.com*

**A Head for the Birds**

**By Rabbi Mendel Weinbach**

In the midst of a shiur in Talmud given to a group of Jerusalem laymen, Rabbi Ezra Attiah, the Rosh Hayeshiva of Yeshivat Porat Yossef, faced a challenge from one of his students. The subject being studied was the Torah command for someone who finds a bird's nest on a tree or on the ground to send away the mother bird before taking its eggs or fledglings. A question is raised in the *gemara* whether this obligation also applies to a nest on a person's head.

"How is such a thing possible?" asked the challenger. "Why should the Sages deliberate about such an impossible scenario?"

Before the rabbi had a chance to respond, there entered the room a Jew who had been absent for a considerable amount of time from the shiur in which he was a regular participant.

"Welcome back," the rabbi greeted him and asked him where he had been.

"I was away in the Far East on business," was the reply. "I saw many strange things, but what struck me most was seeing a man who had been motionlessly meditating for days until a bird built its nest on his head!"

The rabbi smiled as the challenger learned his lesson.

*Reprinted from the current Ohr Somayach website*

**A Slice of Life**

**The "Lion of Zion"**

**By Dovid Efune**

To witness the making of history is a rare occurrence. On the Saturday night of November 14, 2009 at the MGM grand arena in Las Vegas, I watched rabbinical student Yuri "Lion of Zion" Foreman become the first Israeli world boxing champion of all time and the first Jew since 1978.

Yuri executed a decisive and compelling victory against his Puerto Rican rival Daniel Santos, and in the words of HBO boxing commentator Larry Merchant, "He gave the best performance of his career when it mattered most."

It was about a year ago I met this fascinating, unique and inspiring young man.

**Grew Up in Abject Poverty**

Yuri is originally from Gomel, Belarus, where he grew up in abject poverty far removed from Judaism. He would sometimes sell goods on the black market to help his family earn a living. Following some unpleasant incidents, his mother took him to learn boxing so that he could protect himself from bullies at school.

After the fall of Communism, Yuri moved with his family to Israel, seeking a new and better life. As boxing is hardly a popular sport in Israel (it's not exactly encouraged by most Jewish mothers!) he found it difficult to pursue his passion and dream. Eventually, however, he found a way. "I went to the Arab gym. The first time I walked in, I saw the stares. In their eyes, there was a lot of hatred. But I needed to box. And boy, did they all want to box me."

After winning virtually every amateur championship in Israel, at the age of 19 Yuri moved to New York in an effort to take his boxing to the next level. He trained hard and progressed rapidly. Shortly after arriving in New York, Yuri began to feel the calling for deeper meaning in his life. He began to study and eventually practice Orthodox Judaism. He is now studying to become a rabbi under Rabbi DovBer Pinson at the Iyyun Institute of Downtown Brooklyn. Yuri describes Judaism as his "pillar of strength" that is his inspiration in whatever he does.

**Inspiring Jewish Pride to Many**

The Jewish pride that Foreman has brought to many of his fellow Jews is remarkable. As I exited the arena with Yuri that Saturday night, we were mobbed by fans who stopped to take photos and wish us "mazal tov!" It felt like a huge Bar Mitzva! The host of the event, world's biggest boxing promoter Bob Arum, was elated and he beamed with Jewish pride as he ran around the ring, speaking proudly of his Jewish heritage and saying how it has always been a dream of his to promote a Jewish champion.

Yuri addressed the press conference with his tzitzit swinging, thanking G-d first and foremost for the victory, mentioning Jewish law and Talmudic teachings. He quoted the dictum that says " a person can hope for a miracle but can't rely on one" and then quipped, "I didn't rely on any miracle for this fight."

**Reciting Psalms Before the Fight**

**For the New Chodesh**

Despite the fact that Yuri wasn't relying on miracles, he didn't train for the entire 25 hours before the fight, as it was Shabbat. He and his wife Leyla kept quite busy, however. They recited Psalms throughout the day, observing the Chabad custom of reciting the entire book of Psalms on the Shabbat that blesses the new chodesh (month.)

Witnessing Yuri's genuine humility in searching for G-dly purpose in his talents is a great inspiration to many, and with his new status as world champion his influence and reach grows rapidly. Following the fight, there were stories in many of the world's major news outlets.

For many Jews, Yuri's success at bridging the secular world with Torah observance renews their Jewish pride and encourages them to re-discover their roots.

The well wishes and congratulation left on his Facebook fan page provide a window to the immense feelings of pride Yuri brings to Jews of all backgrounds: "I am so proud after watching your fight; it brings tears to my eyes. Mazal Tov!" wrote a Jew from the UK. "I am so proud! Every Jew should be." wrote an admirer from Portugal. "Was watching the fight live from Israel at 5 a.m. You made me feel so proud man!!!! Keep it up!!!!" posted another fan.

It's interesting to note that many of Yuri's supporters compare him to the heroes of the Chanuka story - the Maccabees. "MAZAL TOV!!! YOU'RE THE CHAMP! FIGHT LIKE A MACCABEE!!!" posted a fan from Brooklyn. And this from Portland, Maine, "Good luck Yuri. You are the Maccabbi of our time."

Yuri's story is special because it smashes stereotypes and blasts away some common misconceptions. There are many Jews who are of the opinion that Orthodox Judaism conflicts with contemporary perceptions of success and that to live a committed Jewish life is to cut off ones wings in exchange for reserved seating in heaven.

**Connecting to Something Bigger than Ourselves**

But in truth, living a lifestyle that combines the past and the present, taking our rich history and vibrant soul and applying it to daily living, connects us with something bigger than ourselves and should only act as an ongoing source of inspiration in maximizing our unique individual gifts and talents.

Fusing the physical and the spiritual and striving to strengthen one with the other is a basic principle of Jewish philosophy. Our task is to uplift the physical world by engaging our surroundings and utilizing it all in the effort to make this world a better place.

As we tackle the challenges of day-to-day living and thriving, in one way or another, we are all fighters, whether conquering an industry or hustling to scrape together a living. Sometimes our challenges are physical and sometimes psychological:our inhibitions and fears. Often life's greatest battles are fought within.

Yuri Foreman has shown many the value of balance, and that leading a life of committed values can bring the inner strength fostered by a relationship with G-d that inspires unprecedented success.

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**It Once Happened**

**The Blacksmith’s Desire to Light the Community Menorah**

Most of the people of the shtetl of Roshvenitz were very poor, but, being Chasidim, poverty could not detract from their joy of life, as it was derived from their Rebbe, the great Rabbi Avraham Yaakov of Sadigora.

In those days, traveling to the Rebbe was not an easy undertaking. It cost far more than most of them could afford, and so they established a special fund to pay the traveling expenses of one person. Each Jewish family would contribute to the communal pot, and when a special occasion would arise, a raffle would be held. The winner would travel to the Rebbe as an emissary of the community.

At the Rebbe's court, the representative was given a private interview with the Rebbe who would question him about the state of his Chasidim in the little village. But that wasn't all. When the emissary set off, the Rebbe always presented him with a pure, silver coin. These coins became the property of the community and were its prized treasure.

**Utilizing the Holy Coins of Their Beloved Rebbe**

It was a month before Chanuka and a special meeting was called. The villagers twittered with anticipation of this unexpected event. Finally the caretaker of the shul began to speak: "My dear brethren, we have called you here tonight to discuss the matter of the holy coins of our beloved Rebbe. We have merited to amass many coins, and we have decided to give them all to a G-d-fearing silversmith who will make from them a most beautiful menora."

Excitement rose as the congregants murmured their approval to one another. "The beautiful menora, we will put in our study hall, and each Chanuka we will sell the honor of lighting it to the highest bidder. This money will help pay for the many needs of our community - food and medicine for the sick and poor, dowries for needy brides, salaries for the teachers." The congregants were all very excited, and each of them dreamed about the beautiful silver menora made from the Rebbe's holy coins.

**The First Night of Chanuka Arrived**

The first night of Chanuka arrived and every corner of the shul was packed tight. At the southern wall stood the Chanuka menora, a masterpiece of the silversmith's art - intricate in design, glowing, and sparkling in the lamplight.

The bidding began, and then rose quickly. It wasn't long before the poor and average homeowners were outbid, leaving only the wealthy to continue the contest. In the end, Reb Lipa, a wealthy wood merchant won the honor. With great emotion he approached the menora. He recited the three blessings, and ignited the wick.

This scene was repeated each night of Chanuka. The same bidding, the same enthusiasm, and in end, the same result: one of the wealthy congregants always emerged the winner.

The poor people of the shtetl realized that the coveted honor would never fall to one of them. They had to content themselves with watching the lighting and answering "amen" to the blessings.

**Reb Baruch, the Blacksmith Pursues His Mission**

One of them, however, couldn't accept the situation. Reb Baruch, the blacksmith, was a Chasid to the core of his soul. His love for his Rebbe filled his entire being, and he was heartbroken that he couldn't light the menora even once. Chanuka passed and once again life's dreary sameness returned to the inhabitants of the little shtetl.

But for Baruch the blacksmith life was different. He had a mission which filled his nights and days. He began to work a little extra every day, and he hoarded every penny he managed to scrape together - all this for his much longed-for Chanuka lighting. Months went by and he managed to amass a tidy sum.

A month before Chanuka his wife took ill. When all the old remedies failed to cure her, a doctor was summoned from the big city. The doctor's fee was tremendous and the medications very costly. When G-d blessed his wife with a complete recovery, Reb Baruch's entire hard-earned savings were gone.

**Watching Each Night of Chanuka with a Pained Heart**

Chanuka arrived and Reb Baruch was inconsolable. He had come so close to attaining his heart's desire, and now it was lost.

As the nights of Chanuka passed by, Reb Baruch watched the successive lightings with a pained heart. Finally, the eighth and final night came. The bidding was frenzied, and the poor looked on as their wealthy brethren bid astronomical sums for the honor. Reb Baruch felt that his heart would break.

Suddenly all was still. All eyes focused on the figure ascending the bima. Could it be Reb Baruch, the blacksmith!? With tears running down his face, he turned to the crowd: "My dear friends, this is the second year that I have yearned with my whole soul to kindle the holy menora. All year I saved, but then my wife became ill. G-d has granted her a complete recovery, but my savings are gone. Believe me, my brothers, I cannot continue; my soul is expiring from longing. So, I am making you a proposition. My house is very small - worth about 300 crowns. I am giving it to the community. I will continue to live in it, but as a tenant of the community. Accept my plea and restore the soul of a poor blacksmith."

Reb Baruch's heartfelt words touched everyone. Tears flowed freely, and a great roar came up from the crowd. "Reb Baruch has won the bidding!" was heard from every corner. When he rose to kindle the silver menora, there was not one heart which did not tremble at the sight of the flame that burst forth and rose up from the soul of Reb Baruch, the blacksmith.

*Reprinted from this week’s issue of L’Chaim.*