



CHANUKAH

The Kedusha of Chanukah

In the household of the *tzaddik*, Reb Dovid of Tolna, *hadlokas haneirois* was a special event. His chassidim would gather excitedly in his house to take part in the lighting of his golden *menora*, which was an elaborate piece of artistic craftsmanship. One year, on the first night of Chanuka, when the *tzaddik* was ready to light it, he turned to one of his chassidim and said, "Your wife is short, isn't she? When you want to speak to her, what do you do? Do you bend over towards her, or does she raise herself up to your height?" Without waiting for an answer, he recited the *berachos* and lit the *menora*. Needless to say, the chossid and all those present were very puzzled.

During this time, Reb Dovid's great nephew, the *tzaddik*, Reb Mordechai Dov of Hornisteipol, was staying at his home, and seeing the confusion of the chassidim, he explained: The *Gemara* says that "The Shechina does not descend lower than ten *tefachim* from the ground." However, there is an exception to this rule, for the Chanuka *menora* is ideally required to be lower than ten *tefachim*, and it brings the Shechina itself here below. Reb Mordechai concluded by quoting from the *AriZal* that this is the deeper meaning of the words of the *Gemara*, 'If your wife is short, you should bend over and whisper to her.'

The following evening, at the time of *hadlokas haneiros*, Reb Dovid again made some puzzling comment to one of his chassidim. Immediately, though he had not been told of the previous night's explanation, he turned to Reb Mordechai and said, "This time, you will not understand as you did yesterday!"

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 281)

There was once a man whose mind was severely troubled by constant thoughts of *kefira* and *avoda zara*. Desperate for a remedy, he went to a certain *tzaddik* but was told, "I cannot help you, young man. I would advise you, however, to pay a visit to the *tzaddik*, Reb Shlomo of Karlin. He will help you." The man promptly traveled there, and found the *tzaddik* reciting *pesukim* from *Tehillim*, as was his *minhag* while lighting the *menora*.

When the *tzaddik* came to the *possuk*, "*vayifrekeinu mitzareinu ki le'oilom chasdo*" ("And He delivered us from our oppressors, for His kindness is

everlasting"), he slapped his visitor on the shoulder and said, "Do you believe that *HaShem* can deliver a man from every *tum'a* and from every *Mitzrayim*?" (For *מִצְרַיִם* also implies *מִצְרַיִם*, the restraints and limitations suffered by the *neschama* in a body.)

At that moment, the man was free of all his disturbing thoughts, and he left – a new man.

(סיפורי חסידים זוין מועדים ע' 281)

The Rebbe explained that Chanuka is an opportune time to increase one's Torah study and *shemiras hamitzvos*, since the *nes* was related to those *ruchniyusdike* matters. One should especially upgrade one's *yiras Shomayim*, for that is the purpose of Torah and *mitzvos*, and that was what the *Yevanim* were particularly opposed to.

This we can learn from the way in which we light an additional candle every night. During Chanuka, one should increase one's contributions to *tzedaka* and study more Torah than usual.

Through the *mitzva* of *neirois* Chanuka, one is granted the light of Torah.

(התועודיות תשמ"ח ח"ב ע' 67, התועודיות תשמ"ד ח"ב ע' 596)

The War of the Yevanim

The goal of the *Yevanim* was "*lehashkicham torasecha uleha'aviram meichukei retzonecha*" ("to make them forget Your Torah and transgress the decrees of Your will"). As the *Medrash* says, the *Yevanim* demanded the Yidden write that they have no part in *HaShem*. This was a war against *HaShem*. "Let them study Torah," said the Greeks. "Let them practice the *mitzvos*, *mishpatim*, and *eiduyos*, but they must not mention that the Torah is *HaShem's* and that the *mitzvos* are the decrees of His will. Torah and *mitzvos* must be severed from *HaShem*."

(היום יום ב' טבת)

In the time of the *Yevanim*, the *aveiros* of the Yidden were: socializing with the *Yevanim*, studying their culture, desecrating *Shabbos* and *YomTov*, eating *treif*, and not observing the *Yiddische tahara*. The punishment was: the spiritual destruction of the *Beis HaMikdash*, death, and slavery in *golus*. Through *teshuva* and *mesirus nefesh* came the wondrous salvation from *HaShem* – the miracle of Chanuka.

(היום יום כ"ט כסלו)

In a *sicha* (כ"א כסלו תש"מ), the Rebbe explained how the goal of the *Yevanim* and the *misyvanim* was to remove the separation that exists between Yidden and *goyim*, and to educate children to be similar to the other nations. This is more severe than placing decrees against the observance of Torah and *mitzvos*, because its effect remains even after the decree is over. It begins with something 'small', through 'lighting up' the way for a child with 'oil' that is contaminated with *goyishkeit*, claiming that it produces the same light. When one educates children improperly, drawing 'light' from a source which is not *tahor*, this leads a child to become a *Misyaven* (ר"ל).

The lesson from Chanuka is: when lighting up *Yiddische* homes, one must use only pure *Yiddische* light, uncontaminated by any *goyishkeit*. By doing so, with *mesirus nefesh* (not giving in to the majority, who also appear to be stronger), we will be victorious, for *HaShem* is on our side.

(לקו"ש ח"כ ע' 438)

In a *sicha* to children (ז' תוכה תשל"ח), the Rebbe spoke of the war against the *Yevanim* in our times. During the time of Chanuka, the Chashmona'im withstood a tremendous challenge, battling a mighty army with *mesirus nefesh*. Today's *nisyonos* are not as formidable, but are of a different nature. The *Yetzer hara* comes to a child and tells him to spend his time playing games like others around him, thus causing him to forget to learn Torah. Or he will try to convince him to eat a candy which others are eating, even though its *kashrus* is uncertain. In such a situation, the child must act strongly, with *mesirus nefesh*, no matter how exciting or enticing the challenge is, and then he will certainly be victorious.

(לקו"ש ח"כ ע' 483)

CONSIDER THIS!

- Why is it specifically the lights of Chanukah that draws the Shechinah below ten *tefachim*? Why did that *kedusha* remove the man's negative thoughts?
- How do we distinguish between "pure *Yiddische* light" and "contaminated *goyishkeit*" when they both incorporate the study of Torah and the observance of *mitzvos*?

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A WAY OF LIFE

RABBI CHAIM CHAZAN

Maariv and Lighting Menorah

One who is only ready to light the menorah after the time for maariv has begun (i.e. tzeis hakochovim - nightfall) and has no minyan readily available: should he wait to daven maariv with a minyan and light later, daven maariv without a minyan and light, or should he light before maariv and daven with a minyan later?

- It is *minhag Chabad* to light the menorah immediately after *shkiah* between *Mincha* and *maariv*¹. However, if for whatever reason, one did not light before *maariv* time, he should first *daven maariv* and then light the menorah².
- This is based on the principle "*tadir vesheino tadir todir kodem*" – when faced with two *mitzvos*, one should fulfill the one practiced more frequently first. In addition, when *davening maariv*, one fulfills the mitzvah *mide'oraisa* of reciting *krias shema*, which takes precedence (according to some³) over lighting the menorah which is *miderabonon*.
- However, one only should *daven maariv* before lighting if he can do so with a *minyan*. If there will only be a *minyan* later, or he is currently unable to leave his home to go to a *minyan*, he may first light the menorah and *daven maariv* later.
- The reason for this: The principle of "*tadir vesheino tadir todir kodem*" only applies when one is ready and able to fulfill both *mitzvos* immediately, in which case, he is required to do the more frequent *mitzvah* first. However, in a situation where (for whatever reason) he is not about to fulfill the more common *mitzvah*, he need not wait and should fulfill the *mitzvah* for which he is ready⁴.

1. לוח כולל חב"ד (נערך ע"י הגרא"ח 3. צל"ח ופנ"י ברכות נא, ב. תורת חסד נאה).
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OUR HEROES

Reb Shmuel Ber Barisover

Reb Shmuel Dovber Lipkin of Borisov, known to Chabad chasidim as "Reb Shmuel Ber Barisover," was a great *maskil*, *oived* and *chosid* of the Tzemach Tzedek, the Rebbe Maharash and the Rebbe Rashab. The Frierdiker Rebbe spent much time with him, listening to the stories he related about the previous generations of chasidim.



When Reb Shmuel Ber was a *yungerman*, he and a group of friends wanted to travel to the Mittlerer Rebbe; however, their *mashpia* Reb Mordechai told them not to, for accusations were then being placed against the Rebbe (which eventually led to his imprisonment). Around this time, the young chasidim heard that the Rebbe would be traveling to Haditch, to the *tziyon* of the Alter Rebbe, so they secretly hitched a ride to Zhlobin, one of the stops the Rebbe was planning to make on his trip.

By forging a connection with the *gabbai* Reb Meir Tzvi, Reb Shmuel Ber was able to catch a glimpse of the Mittlerer Rebbe for the first time, even though people were not being accepted for *yechidus*. Later, the Rebbe asked for him to come in. Reb Shmuel Ber recounts: "When I heard that the Rebbe wanted to see me, I was so bewildered, and it was only thanks to Reb Meir Tzvi that I could actually make my way inside the room. Full of emotion, I was only able to utter the words, 'I want to be a chosid.' The Rebbe replied, 'Chabad is *haskalah*, *havana*, and *haamakah*,' (thinking, understanding, and delving in depth). Toil and you will become a chossid!."

Upon returning to my hometown, the *mashpia* Reb Mordechai told me that he senses a special "*ruach taharah*" in me and he asked what had happened. I had no choice but to tell him everything.

Reb Shmuel Ber once spent a long time in *yechidus* with the Rebbe Maharash, after which he asked the Rebbe, "After everything has been said, I still want to know what a chossid is."

"Go to my son, the Rashab," the Rebbe responded. Reb Shmuel was somewhat perplexed, for he was already an elderly chossid while the Rashab was still a young man.

The Rebbe explained, "I get up early every morning. One morning, at an early hour, I sent my *shamash* to see what my son the Rashab was busy with, and he reported that my son was sitting with a Siddur, though he could not tell exactly what he was doing. I sent someone else, who returned to tell me that the Rashab was sitting with a Siddur, an Abudraham, and a Nac"ח, learning the translation of the *davening*."

"This", the Rebbe concluded, "is what a chossid is. He is capable of harnessing himself. After all the levels he may have attained, he can still sit with a Siddur and learn the simple meaning of the words in *davening*."

לזכות ר' שלום מרדכי הלוי שי' בן רבקה

A MOMENT WITH THE REBBE

A Love for Torah

Reb Binyomin Klein relates:

"As a *mazkir*, I saw the Rebbe's love for *seforim*. Whenever we would bring in a new *sefer*, the Rebbe would stop all that he was doing, and read the *sefer* from cover to cover.

"In fact, this often left us in a predicament. We would have letters regarding health matters, *shidduchim* awaiting approval etc, and a new *sefer* that came in. If we would hand in the *sefer*, we knew that it would hold up the Rebbe, but our job was to hand in whatever came in. And so, we would watch the scene repeat itself; the Rebbe would take the *sefer*, and not let go until it he finished going through it."

"I distinctly remember once being called into the Rebbe's room at 3:05 pm, and on my way, a renowned *rov* presented me with a new *sefer*. As expected, the Rebbe immediately took it and began learning.

"Ten minutes later, the Rebbe came out for *minchah*. As the Rebbe walked past, the *rov* asked the Rebbe to comment on the *sefer*. The Rebbe turned around and replied, "Why do you not mention the Alter Rebbe's *Shulchan Aruch* once in the entire *sefer*?"

"He was shocked. This was a thick *sefer*. How had the Rebbe looked through the entire work in ten minutes?"