

פרשת וישב - חנוכה

This adaptation is dedicated
in honor of my daughter, Chaviva's, birthday.

חנוכה חג של אור Chanukah – Festival of Lights

The days of Chanukah are days of thanksgiving, as we say in *al hanisim*, "and they established these eight days of Chanukah to express thanks and praise to Your great Name." Days of thanks are of the pleasures of the next world. The primary delight of the next world is thanking and praising Hashem's great Name, for through this we draw close to Hashem."¹

The Light of the Jewish Home

Upon the lighting of a small candle, darkness is immediately dispersed. A bit of light casts aside much darkness.

Rather than battle darkness – let us illuminate with light. Rather than emphasize evil, the negative aspects – let us accentuate the good, the positive elements. Rather than focus on deficiencies – let us perceive a person as an entire entity and thereby successfully discern the good components within him, at least one.

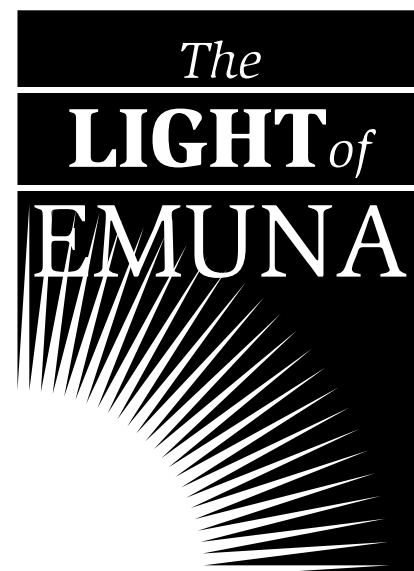
Instead of rebukes, protests and begrudging eyes – it is possible to touch the heart of a Jew from the opposite approach – to show him the light of *yiddishkeit*, the beauty that is within it. The diminutive candle that pops up in the doors and windows of Jewish homes invites those outside to enter – those who are distant to draw near. Those who are on a Chanukah outings in the alleys of Yerushalayim are invited inside, to observe the beauty of a Jewish home, the beauty of unpretentious *yiddishkeit*.

¹

ליקו"ת ב

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באור פני מלך חיים



Based on Harav Menachem Azolai's "Ohr Ha'Emuna"

A Jewish home = a home that is a *Mishkan*, where the *Shechina* rests, a house that is a blend of spirit and matter, of body and soul, a house of Torah based on laws and principles that are beyond human ken, on teachings that are incontestable. A home in which humility and a deferential heart are taught, guidance is provided in the ways of modesty and a pliable heart, of subjugating one's will to a higher will. A home whose occupants are satisfied with minimums, as a matter of principal and by choice, a home in which physical needs are sidelined and marginalized and never occupy a prominent place in the mind. How beautiful is a life of modesty and simplicity - how enchanting and charming it is. A home in which darkness is displaced by light – the light of Torah, of *tefilla* and good deeds, the light of yielding, of giving without a trace of desire or expecting to receive something in return. Simply doing good, simply enhancing the happiness of the other inhabitants.²

A house of Torah is one in which personal examples are set. Its occupants work and toil on correcting their attributes. It is impossible to properly educate children without educating ourselves first. Our children must behold parents who perform much introspection, who, at a minimum, want to improve.

Rabbi Berland teaches, "Invest in yourself and you will not be required to invest as much in your children." Children are endowed with a naturally keen eye – all of the lectures on Torah and *mussar* make little impression on the soul of a child as compared to the living example of his parents and teachers (either good or bad).

The Light of Never Despairing

A Jew lights the Chanukah candles and a great light fills the home – a light that penetrates every heart, a flame that is an illuminated countenance declaring, Hashem is with you!" When do we light the Chanukah candles? - When the sun sets. When darkness descends upon the world and the warmth of the heart is chilled and a person becomes stressed and depressed, as if there is no hope, G-d forbid – then, Chanukah candles arrive and drive away the despair of the heart, inspiring hope and infuse the heart with happiness.

Chanukah is a celebration of victory, triumph of the spirit over matter, conquest of *yiddishkeit* over the "enlightenment" of *Yavan* (Greece). The three Hebrew letters that comprise the word *Yavan* (יָוָן) are three lines of increasing length (the ך is a short line, the ן is longer and the ן is longer still). Each succeeding line descends lower and lower. This is what happens to one who is focused on materialism, on Greek culture, on the urges of this world – he becomes submerged in the depths of *Yavan*. For things to be good, we need nothing – only Hashem. Attachment to Hashem and love of Hashem depend on nothing that we possess or are missing. "One thing I asked of Hashem, that shall I seek; that I dwell in the House of Hashem all the days of my life."³ If a Jew does not attain this aspect – he is missing the fundamentals. What difference does it make if he has a beautiful house, and such fine and successful children who are accepted into the best *yeshivas*, etc. – if he does not achieve the spiritual delight of "one thing I asked...?"

Mattisyahu and his sons – five men proceeded with such indescribable self-sacrifice to confront thousands of soldiers in battle - their apparent chances of success were nonexistent – it was utter doom and gloom. But, when we proceed with Hashem, everything is feasible. Every moment has the potential for overcoming and beginning anew. It is told of one of the great *poskim* of our generation that he was naturally endowed with a weak mind. When he was young, he became aware of a famous elite *yeshiva* that opened enrollment only to those young men who were tested on several hundred pages of *Gemara* by heart. This boy sat and toiled, day and night, for years, until he felt ready for the examination. He travelled to the *yeshiva*, presented himself and failed the test. Rather than being broken over all of the hard work he had done to no avail – he thought nothing of it, he merely sat down in the *yeshiva* to learn until it was time to catch his train home. The *Rosh Hayeshiva* walked in and saw the boy's amazing diligence and was startled by it. He asked the boy, "Why have you not returned home?" The boy responded that since he had a few hours before his train, he did not want to waste time, so he sat down to learn. The *Rosh Hayeshiva* responded, "You will not be returning – you will stay here, I gladly reconsider my earlier determination and accept you unequivocally." Many years passed and this boy surpassed all of his colleagues who scorned their holy tasks because they relied on their innate talents. He ultimately became a leading *posek* and started his own *yeshiva* with thousands of students – all due to the fact that he would not be broken, he refused to despair – he battled daily for spiritual elevation.

The Light of Kindness

On Chanukah, the light descends on us, to the precise place that we are. Rebbe Nosson compared Chanukah to visiting the sick. When a nobleman is healthy and he wishes to visit the king, he must prepare himself, adorn himself appropriately, and request favors to gain access to the palace. The king will certainly not come to him. But, when one of the king's ministers falls

³ אחת שאלתי מאת ד' אותה אבקש, שבתי בבית ד' כל ימי חיי (תהלים כז)

ill and is on his deathbed – the king’s compassion is stirred and he travels to the man’s home to cheer him up and revive him. The same applies to us. We are ill in that we require so much salvation from the King. On Chanukah, He comes to us, to visit us in our infirmity. It is said that the *Shechina* never descends below ten *tefachim* – but on Chanukah, it does and it illuminates, with the light of truth, the darkness and confusion that surrounds us. Just as the King treats us, He demands that we treat each other.

For a person to experience the utter and infinite bliss of an everlasting connection and attachment to the King of the World – he must escape the confines of his love of himself into the open space of love of others. Only on this condition will Hashem associate with us and brighten our souls. The *Halacha* is that if a person has just enough oil to light for the eight nights of Chanukah and his friend has none – it is preferable to give some of the oil to the other and light just one candle each night. We are forbidden from sequestering ourselves in our private space while leaving others to their own obscurity. We must share with others – for if we leave others in darkness, it will soon engulf us as well. We received a small flask of pure oil – we must use it – to oil what is creaking – to enable life to flow in a more equitable manner, more pleasantly. Kindnesses that we perform for others – a smile, a thank you, yielding, or a short note left on the table before leaving the house – these all brighten the day. A shining countenance, a good word provides vitality to another, as it says, “The light of the eyes make the heart happy; good news fattens the bone.”⁴ A person builds his home by continuously thinking of ways to gladden his family - of ways to add joy to the home.

Harav Eliezer Berland Shlita: Brighten your expression towards everyone – be happy and bring happiness into your home. If a person comes home happy, with smiles and singing, it inspires his wife to be holy and modest. When children see that Daddy is happy, they will be

⁴ מאור עיניים ישמח לב, שמועה טובה תדשן עצם (משלי טו, ל)

content. But, if they see a sad father – they want to escape – they notice their friends having a good time and they seek joy outside. Therefore, before arriving home, sit for five minutes and relax – do not enter rushed, amidst commotion, with sadness – enter jubilantly. Maybe your wife is upset and she needs you to encourage her, maybe your child fell and you need to cheer him up. If a child only experiences melancholy parents – he rejects them and their way of life. He seeks elation elsewhere. If the home is miserable – he will not wish to build a similar home. If the home is a delightful place – he will aspire to build the same.

The home must be a place where we live for others. We must restrain ourselves from criticizing, place our spouses first. Peace in the home is the source of all blessing.

Our aim is honoring others, taking caution not to hurt others, not to embarrass others. If we notice someone during an embarrassing episode – we should act as if we had not noticed, as if we had not heard, we must change direction to avoid him. Whatever we do, we must do wholeheartedly – give charity unstintingly, perform kindness unreservedly, host others enthusiastically, share a kind word warmly. When we give wholeheartedly – it is not readily forgotten. Sometimes, the recipient remembers it for the rest of his life. Loving others is obligatory – it is not optional – we must devote all of our efforts to it.

"והוא נער את בני בלהה ואת בני זלפה" (לו, ב)
"But he was a youth with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah"

What was Yoseph’s secret that warranted the Torah occupying itself with him for five full *parshiyos*? The sons of Bilhah and Zilpah represent the less esteemed families of the Jewish people – Yoseph lowered himself to them to bring them close. Yoseph was seventeen years old – the *gematria* of the Hebrew word for good (טוב) is seventeen. Yoseph was good to all – he

always unearthed the positive facets of even the lowliest people and drew them in. Only one who understands that the primary battle in life is minimizing our egos and attaining humility though self-nullification can entice others towards Hashem. This is the *tzaddik*. What was Moshe Rabbeinu's greatest attribute? – Humility. That was his paramount legacy to us. Only such a person can do *kiruv* – only from such a person can we receive.

A *tzaddik* opens our eyes to see the beauty of the world, the beauty of Torah and *mitzvos*, the greatness of Hashem.

Harav Eliezer Berland Shlita: There is no such thing as an irreligious person. The soul of a Jew awaits and longs for a spark to be ignited within him. At times, we encounter Jews who appear to be very distant from *yiddishkeit*, but *emuna* burns in their hearts. We must turn to them with humility, radiate in our approach to them, set aside time for them, and not lose hope if we do not see immediate success. We must *daven* that all Jews return to Hashem in *teshuva*, even the most remote.

Attracting hearts to Hashem is above all else - each of us in our own unique way, according to our own exclusive abilities. No one is exempt.

תפילה

Master of the World! May I merit, with the tiny Chanukah candle, to illuminate the depths of my heart and reveal all of the small kindnesses that you perform for me on a daily and hourly basis and for which I fail to express my gratitude or feel that I am deserving of because of my diligence and my exertion or that I deem too insignificant to require appreciation.

Thank You for those special moments that were prone to catastrophe via my anger – yet, during which, I somehow remained calm and relaxed - I did not allow even an iota of ire to stir inside of me. How strong and how great I feel in those instants. Thank You for all the times that I manage to yield even when I am certain that I am in the right. How close I feel to You.

Thank You for those five minutes that I sometimes merit pausing for to overcome my *yetzer hora* – for example, when I resist taking the extra piece of chocolate cake or another bowl of ice cream. How happy I am when I witness the virtue and efficacy of “waiting five minutes.” It is just so difficult to utilize this method regularly.

Thank You for the occasions that I hold myself back from my haste and pay attention to someone who stopped me to seek my advice. Even more so, when I can provide sound counsel for I have experience in the matter.

Thank You for the still too rare instances in which my plans are disrupted (like forgetting something at home until we are well on our journey) and I am able to not just say, but actually feel, that everything is from Hashem and for the best. Master of the World – help me with this.

Thank You for the precious moments when I observe or hear of one of my children saying something, reacting to something or doing something in a refined manner, proper, mature, honest – how much *nachas* I have in those moments.

Master of the World, I can fill pages with these “minor” occasions (which are really not minor at all) – what about the major items? What of all of the kindnesses that you’ve done for me since the day I was born?

Master of the World, I have no other words, just – THANK YOU.

Have an awesome, uplifting and wonderful Shabbos,

Dov

Notice: The foregoing is based on my limited understanding of the Parsha Sheet, *Ohr Ha'Emuna*, disseminated by Harav Menachem Azolai *Shlita* and is not a complete or exact adaptation of *Ohr Ha'Emuna* and is not necessarily even a reliable interpretation of the ideas presented therein. *Ohr Ha'Emuna* is published in Hebrew; in translation, accuracy is always compromised. Rav Azolai has not reviewed this material - any inaccuracies, omissions or confusion should be attributed exclusively to me. I still hope you enjoy and it provides some *chizuk*.

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