

Chanukah 2016

Rabbi Shimshon Pincus (Sichos Rabbi Shimshon Pincus pages 64-67) explains that each holiday builds off of the previous holiday. The holidays are comparable to a ladder. All of the rungs are necessary. The first holiday, Pesach, corresponds to the birth of the Jewish nation. Shavuot symbolizes our acceptance of the mitzvos, which is similar to our bar mitzvah. Sukkos is similar to a chupa (wedding); it is the devakus (connection) between Hashem and Klal Yisroel (the Jewish people). Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur are days of introspection. We must calculate our actions in order to prepare for the chupa. The peak is Shemini Ateres, a time where we have unity with Hashem. We hug, kiss, and dance with the Sefer Torah. This is the peak of spirituality. However, on this metaphoric ladder, there are seemingly unnecessary rungs that were integrated and are unessential. For example, Chanukah and Purim. What is the purpose of these holidays?

**One of the purposes of Chanukah is to demonstrate how beautiful the Torah is.** Sometimes a gift is wrapped with beautiful wrapping and appears to be a good gift. However, once the wrapping paper is opened, it becomes known that the gift isn't such a good gift. There is a difference between external beauty and internal beauty. For example, sometimes an apple will appear shiny, attractive and delicious; however, once someone takes a bite, he will discover that it taste terrible and that the apple is rotten. Good apples taste juicy, fresh and sweet just as how they externally appear. The purpose of the exterior apple shell is designed to draw the attention of those who will potentially eat this apple and appreciate its internal beauty. The Beis Hamikdash is similar in this regard. The purpose of its spectacular external beauty was in order to draw people to go inside.

Rav Pincus zasa"l (Tiferes Shimshon page 50) quotes the Gemara in Pesachim (7b) that quotes Shmuel who says with all mitzvos we first recite the beracha and then we immediately perform the mitzvah. (אמר רב יהודה אמר שמואל כל המצות מברך עליהן עובר לעשייתן.) For example, first we say the beracha on tefillin, and only subsequently we tighten the knot. However, there is one exception; birchas Hatorah. Every morning we thank Hashem for our ability to be עוסק בתורה (involved with learning) (אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו לעסוק בדברי תורה). However, afterwards we don't start learning immediately, rather we interrupt by saying והערב נא ה' אלהינו את דברי תורתך בפנינו ובפי עמך בית ישראל. ונהיה אנחנו וצאצאינו וצאצאי עמך בית ישראל, כלנו יודעי שמך ולומדי תורתך לשמה, ברוך אתה ה' המלמד תורה לעמו ישראל. Before we actually begin learning we ask Hashem to make the Torah sweet for us. Why is berchas HaTorah an exception in that we do not begin the mitzvah immediately after reciting the beracha? The words והערב נא possess the secret ingredient to success in learning Torah; making the Torah sweet. (עיקר ההצלחה בלימוד התורה הוא על ידי עריבות.) We interrupt with והערב נא because one who wants to succeed in Torah has to enjoy it and taste the sweetness of what he is learning. This is one of the main purposes of a Rebbe; to impart and inject the sweetness, desire, and awesome feeling one attains from learning Torah into his talmidim (students). This is the reason behind the practiced minhag (custom) of smearing honey onto the letters of the Hebrew alphabet when children begin learning Torah. They smear honey on the Hebrew letters in order that the children will recall the pasuk "Honey drops from your lips, o bride, honey and milk are under your tongue." (Shir Hashirim (4, 11)). Meaning, the sweet honey symbolizes and will easily and naturally remind them of the sweetness of Torah. In order for a Rebbe to transmit the love of Torah to his talmidim, he needs to love the Torah himself. If he doesn't, there is no way he will be able to impart this sweet feeling to the next

generation. If a talmid doesn't view his Rebbe as an intermediary between him and Hashem, it will be very hard for the child to learn from his Rebbe. This is why we say **והערב נא** in the middle of birchas Hatorah; it is not an interruption, rather, it is a prerequisite, condition and necessity for one to be successful with his learning. (See writings on Va'eschanan 2016 for an elaboration.)

**Chanukah is a time to strengthen our inner sweetness and love that we have for the Torah. This is the underlying difference between our Torah wisdom and I'havdil the Greek knowledge. Torah wisdom is internal unlike Greek knowledge and culture which is external.** When we merit tasting the sweetness of the Torah our learning will change for the better. Many times it is difficult to learn because we don't feel its sweetness. However, once we realize how sweet it is we will want to constantly learn. The pasuk in Tehilim (45, 1) says "For the conductor, on the shoshanim, by the sons of Korach, a maskil, a song of endearment." **"למנצה"** The Medrish Shocher Tov (Tehilim 45) says this is analogous to a king who goes to a foreign country. They bring him a crown filled with fancy jewels and gems. The king responds I don't want the jewels; all I want are the roses that grow in the palace. Similarly, Hashem says I don't want gold or silver, all I want are the roses. (משל למלך שנכנס למדינה, ובאו בני המדינה לעטרו עטרה של זהב, מקובעת באבנים טובות ומרגליות, יצאו ואמרו להם אין המלך מבקש מכם אלא עטרה של שושנים, מיד שמחו בני המדינה, כך היו בני קרח ועדתו, אמרו הקדוש ברוך הוא מבקש מכם מחתות של זהב, אמר להן הקדוש ברוך הוא מה לי של זהב, "לי הכסף ולי הזהב" (חגי ב ח), ואפילו הקטורת, "קטורת תועבה היא לי" (ישעיה א יג), אלא מה אני מבקש? שושנים, אמרו בני קרח אנו שושנים, אמר להם הקדוש ברוך הוא (נצחתם, שנאמר "למנצה על שושנים לבני קרח."

What is the explanation of this Medrish? One who has jewels can obtain all the roses he wants? The king isn't interested in money from others, rather, he is interested in the love and the faith that others have for him. Roses demonstrate the love others have towards him. (Why do women love roses and flowers? because it's impractical! They don't last longer than a few weeks. That's why wives love them! Roses demonstrate the love the husband has for his wife. The husband is only getting flowers in order to make his wife happy.) Hashem doesn't only want us to serve him because it's the truth; rather, He wants us to do it out of love, enthusiastically and wholeheartedly. These are the roses that we can give to Hashem. What prevents us from lovingly serving Hashem? One will lose his appetite if before the meal he had something very bitter that will overpower all other tastes that will follow. So too, with Torah learning. If before we learn we are involved with all types of matters that take us away from learning, the Torah won't be sweet. Had we not been involved with matters that cover up the beautiful taste that is naturally acquired through learning, we would have a much higher chance to tap into the sweetness of Torah learning. These foreign tastes penetrate into our souls and prevent us from attaining the sweetness of Torah and devakus to Hashem.

How can we prevent these foreign bad tastes from penetrating the sweet taste of the Torah? How can we cure this? How can we separate ourselves from anything that isn't ratzon (the will of) Hashem? The Greeks wanted to inject within us the bad flavors of their culture in order to impair and spoil our love for the Torah. On Chanukah it's incumbent upon us to serve Hashem by distancing ourselves from these external, foreign pleasures. We will then attain the sweetness of Torah. Chanukah and Purim aren't extra rungs on the ladder; rather, they are actually integral rungs on the ladder. Many times throughout the year it is easier to attain high spiritual levels, for instance; during Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. Additionally, when we ask a good question or offer answers, then we'll feel the simcha (joy) of Torah. By feeling the sweetness of

Torah, it is revealed the sweetness of keeping a Torah lifestyle. Chanukah is when we tap into the sweetness of the Torah. Purim as well we come to the realization that this is the focal point of our life. The Gemara in Kiddushin (66b) says anyone who separates from the Torah is like he separates himself from life.

Why specifically is Chanukah a time for attaining the sweetness for Torah? Kuntros benyonai Chanukah (siman alef) quotes the Shalah Hakadosh (end of Inyanei Tefila and kriyas sefer Torah) who says that it is very fitting to diligently learn during Chanukah. The Tiferes Shlomo (inyani Chanukah) also says a similar idea. The Gemara in Shabbos (21b) asks; **what is Chanukah? The Gemara answers ‘the Brisa says (or the Rabbis taught) etc.’** ( 'מאי הנוכה ? ) (דתנו רבנן וכו'. The Tiferes Shlomo explains based on this Gemara that **ikur (main) avoda (service) of Chanukah is to learn Torah.**

**Why is Chanukah specifically a time for additional Torah learning? By learning, we will remember the Chanukah miracle. The main goal of the Greeks was to spiritually annihilate us, להשכיחם תורתך. They wanted us to forget our Torah learning.** This is why there is no obligation to have a meal on Chanukah unlike Purim when there is an obligation to have a meal. (Shulchan Aruch siman 670 and 695.) The Levush (siman 690) explains that since on Chanukah they only tried to spiritually destroy us, therefore there is no obligation to have a meal. Conversely, on Purim, since they tried to physically destroy us, therefore, we are physically obligated to commemorate our victory via a meal. **On Chanukah we remember the miracle of being saved from the Greeks by countering what they intended to do to us, learning more Torah.** Similarly, the Kedushas Levi (derushim Chanukah) says that since Hashem saved us from the Greeks attempt to stop us from learning; it's fitting that we should focus on diligently learning during these days.

There is another reason why Chanukah specifically is a time for additional Torah learning. The sefer Minhagei Chasam Sofer (perek 9 os aleph) writes that on Chanukah we need to learn more because the yeitzer hara doesn't want us to learn and be involved with any spiritual matters on Chanukah. Chazal say Chanukah is a time להודות ולהלל, to thank and praise. This is because the secrets of the Torah were given to Moshe Rabbeinu at this time. Why does this obligate us to learn more? What do the secrets of the Torah being revealed to Moshe Rabbeinu at this time have to do with our obligation to learn Torah? The explanation of why the secrets were given to Moshe Rabbeinu at this time is because **during these days we are able to attain higher levels which are typically unattainable. We are able to understand deep and difficult areas of Torah which we usually wouldn't be able to understand.** Therefore, secrets were revealed to him during this time. The same applies to us. **We must strive to learn more in order that we can attain these higher levels.** What is the reason the secrets were revealed to Moshe during this time? What is so special about these days?

The Magen Avraham (al HaTorah parshas Mikeitz) writes, just as Shavuot is a time of kabalas hatorah shebechtav (when we received the written Torah), so too, **Chanukah is a time of receiving the Torah shebeal peh (oral Torah). That's why on Chanukah we need to accept upon ourselves to learn more Torah,** especially Torah shebeal peh. The Gemara in Yuma (29a) says Chanukah is written nowhere in Tanach, while Purim was the last miracle that was written. Rav Tzaddok (Retzieza Layla page 77, Pri Tzaddik inyani Chanukah) and the Sfas emes (Chanukah 5644) explain that since Chanukah is a time of Torah shebeal peh and understanding

its depths, therefore, it could not have been written in Tanach! That's why specifically at this time the Torah's secrets were taught to Moshe, because this is a time of Torah shebeal peh where all the secrets are revealed. We can still ask; why is Chanukah specifically an auspicious time for the Torah's secrets being revealed?

The reason is because this is part of the victory of us defeating the Greeks. **The Greeks wanted to metamei (make impure) all of the oil in order to prevent us from learning Torah.** The Gemara in Bava Basra (25b) says someone who desires to become wise should face the south. This is why the Menorah was located by the southern side of the Beis Hamikdash. Olive oil alludes to Torah wisdom as the Gemara in Brachos (57a) says, someone who sees olive oil in a dream should anticipate Torah wisdom. The Zohar (chalek gimal page 34) also says that olive oil alludes to Torah wisdom. The Gemara in Menachos (85b) says Torah wisdom will be found within those who regularly use olive oil. The Greeks didn't want any Torah wisdom. When we were victorious, we lit the menorah in order to increase the Torah wisdom. The Ramchal (Derech Hashem chalek deled perek ches) and Meor Einayim (parshas Mikeitz), explain that Chanukah is a time we come close to Hashem through learning Torah.

The Chidushei Ha'Rim (al hatorah inyani Chanukah) says through lighting Chanukah candles one will merit Torah as it says in Mishlei (6, 23) "For a commandment is a lamp and the Torah is light." Through the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles we will merit the light of the Torah. The Gemara in Shabbos (23b) says one who is regular with candles, will have children who are Talmedai Chachamim. The explanation of that Gemara is that the one who is lighting will also become wise.

**The are many sources that indicate that light alludes to the Torah.** The pasuk (Mishlay (6, 23)) states "the Torah is light" "ותורה אור." We say in davening before reciting shema 'enlighten our eyes in Your Torah.' "והאר עינינו בתורתך". The pasuk says "ליהודים היתה אורה." "The Jews had light." (Esther 8, 16) The Gemara in Megilah (16b) explains that this light refers to the Torah. (אמר רב יהודה "אורה" זו תורה.) The pasuk in Bereishis (1, 2-3) says "darkness was upon the surface of the deep etc. God said let there be light." "והיושך על פני תהום וגו' ויאמר אלוקים יהי אור וגו'." The Bereishis Raba (beginning of parshas Berashis) says the word "darkness" in the pasuk refers to the Greeks who tried to darken the eyes of the Jews by preventing them from learning Torah. Meaning, the main target of the Greeks was to darken and nullify the light which was produced from the Torah. When the decree of the Greeks was abolished, a new light was created. Hashem then said "let there be light." This alludes to the light of the Torah that we can tap into on Chanukah. The Maharal points out that the gematria of the word יהי is 25. This is another allusion to Chanukah from that pasuk. Chanukah is during the twenty fifth day of the month of Kislav. Furthermore, אור is the twenty fifth word in the Torah.

The Rokeach says that the 36 candles we light throughout Chanukah correspond to the seven days of creation. Rashi (Bereishis 1, 4) quotes the Gemara in Chagiga (12a) which says that Hashem saw that the world wasn't worthy of the light. He therefore hid it for the tzaddikim in the future. The Pesikta Rabasi (parshas Bereishis) and Yerushalmi Berachos (8, 5) say that this light remained lit for 36 hours. We therefore light 36 candles on Chanukah which correspond to the 36 hours this light of creation stayed lit. Additionally, the words 'נרות', 'אור', and 'מנורות' are mentioned 36 times in the Torah! This alludes to the light from creation being hidden in the Torah. In fact, the Medrash Tanchuma (Noach) explicitly states that the light from creation is hidden in the Torah. Meaning, in the future when mashiach comes everyone will merit this light. However, before he arrives, this light can only be attained through learning Torah. There is also

another way this light could be attained. On Chanukah we could tap into this light via the 36 candles.

There are 36 Mesachtas in Shas as well! Chanukah is a time to specifically learn Torah shebeal peh as we mentioned above! Hashem hid this light in the Torah. It is impossible to attain this light via learning superficially. Only by toil and deeply delving into the Torah, can this light be attained. This is similar to digging for a buried treasure that is deep underground. Much effort must be exerted to dig so deep. This is how we will tap into the inner essence of the Torah. Someone smart will understand the light is hidden deep in the Torah shebeal peh and one needs to work hard to uncover her secrets. This is an auspicious time to tap into the inner secrets of the Torah.

**Another reason we are able to merit high levels of learning during this time is because Chanukah corresponds to Yaakov Aveinu. Yaakov specialized in learning Torah.** The pasuk (Mica 7, 2) states “grant truth to Yaakov.” "תתן אמת ליעקב." The Gemara in brachos (5) says the word “truth” in the pasuk refers to Torah. "אמת" זו תורה. Hashem gave us the Torah which is true. **Yaakov merited attaining a lofty level of Torah knowledge because he was very humble.** The Gemara in Avoda Zara (5b) says that the Torah, like water, descends from a high place to a low place. Since Chanukah is a time that Hashem rests his presence amongst us, we can merit understanding difficult areas of the Torah. By coming close to Hashem during this time, we will be able to understand Torah better as well. The Maharal (introduction to Tiferes Yisroel) writes that when one focuses his learning towards Hashem, Hashem saves him from making mistakes and enlightens his eyes. Similarly, the Shelte Geborim (on the Mordechai (Shabbos perek beis on 65)) says that those who learn Torah lishma (for its own sake), won't come to sin and won't pasken incorrectly.

The Tur (siman 417) quotes his brother Rebbi Yichel who says that the 12 months correspond to the 12 tribes. The Kedushas Levi (inyani Chanukah) says the third month, Kislev, corresponds to the third tribe, Levi. What is for this reason that the miracle happened through the Kohanim, i.e. the tribe of Levi. What is the explanation of this Kedushas Levi? The tribe of Levi learnt Torah, as the Rambam writes (end of hilchos shemita v'yovel). Since the light on Chanukah is really the Torah light as well, therefore, it makes sense that the miracle happened through shevet Levi.

The Magan Avraham (beginning of hilchos Chanukah) explains that it is customary to give more charity during Chanukah than the rest of the year. Why is this so? The Yesod VshoresH Havoda (shar hamifkad perek rishon) explains that Chanukah is an auspicious time to fix blemishes of the soul. This is accomplished through giving charity. This is especially an important time to give money to those who learn Torah. Those who realize the high lofty levels that are attainable during these days will understand the importance of giving charity as well. The Gemara in Baba Basra (9a) says greater is one who convinces someone else to give charity than one who actually gives (א"ר אלעזר גדול המעשה יותר מן העושה). Therefore, in order to fix our souls it is fitting to give charity to those who learn Torah.

The candles that were lit in the Beis Hamikdash and the candles we light during Chanukah are the root of the light of the Torah. What can we learn from the laws of lighting the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash?



**When one forgoes extra physical indulgences, his potential for Torah success automatically drastically increases.**

The Gemara in Shabbos (21a) comments on the aforementioned pasuk; “to kindle the lamp continually.” The Gemara says that the candle must be lit to the extent that the flame ascends by itself (מדליק עד שתהא שלהבת עולה מאליה). (This Gemara is quoted by Rashi.) This alludes to the way Rebbeim must teach their students. **The proper way to teach is that ‘the flame ascends by itself’ i.e. the talmid wants to learn on his own and understands the depths of Torah by himself. The talmid should be at the level that even when he isn’t in front of his Rebbe, he is able to learn.** This is the explanation of the following pasuk. “They shall make a Sanctuary for Me – so that I may dwell among them (בתוכם).” (Shemos (25, 8)) "ועשו לי מקדש ושכנתי בתוכם." Many meforshim (commentators) are bothered by the plurality of the word within it (בתוכם)? Seemingly the pasuk should be in the singular tense, since there is only one Mikdash? The Elshach Hakadosh explains that **the pasuk isn’t merely referring to a physical Mikdash; rather, every person must create a Mikdash within himself. Meaning, even if we are not in a holy environment such as a Beis Medrash or Shul, we must still nevertheless strive to make that environment holy.** The Mishna in Avos (first perek) says ‘develop many disciples.’ (והעמידו תלמידים הרבה) The literally translation of the Mishna is to cause many students to stand. The Mishna does not say to teach many talmidim, rather, to cause many talmidim to stand. Meaning, **the Rebbe needs to shape his students in a manner that will enable them to stand on their own, with their own strength.** This can be comparable to one who broke his leg and therefore needed crutches. It will be foolish for him to use these crutches after his leg is healed. Similarly, training wheels are only for kids while they are taught how to ride a bike. However, once they learn how to ride the bike the training wheels will slow them down. This shtims with what we discussed in parshas Bechukosai (2014) “If you will follow my decrees etc.” (26, 3) "אם בהקויתי תלכו." There was a story of a group of people who were eating. The entire time that they were sitting it was impossible to differentiate between them. However, once they finished their meal and everyone walked away from the table, one person remained in his place. Originally they were unaware why he remained at the table away from everyone else. Subsequently, they realized that he was paralyzed and unable to walk. The entire time they were sitting around the table this difference was undiscernible. Afterwards however this difference was glaringly apparent. Rabbi Nachum Zev (son of the Alter Mi’Kelm) explains the same applies to those who learn in the Yeshiva. **The entire time that people are learning in the Yeshiva it is essentially impossible to distinguish one person from another. Differences are unrecognizable because everyone is going through the same motions. Everyone is dressing the same way, eating the same food and learning etc. They are at the same table. But where will these people be in ten, twenty years from now? The true test will be after leaving the Yeshiva. Who will be able to walk away from the table? Who will chas v’shalom be paralyzed? Who will continue in the correct path of Torah and mitzvos and who will not?** Based on this we can explain the pasuk “if you will follow my decrees Etc.” Meaning, who will have legs to properly walk in this world in the way of the Torah. **How can we reach this level of staying strong, learning and remaining observant even after leaving Yeshiva?** Rashi quotes the Toras Kohanim who explains that we should be toiling and rigorously learning. The Gemara in Yevamos (121a) relates that one time Rabbi Gamliel was on a ship. He saw that another ship had sunk. He was pained that Rabbi Akiva was on that ship. Against all odds, Rabbi Gamliel found Rabbi Akiva surprisingly still alive. He asked Rabbi Akiva how he survived. Rabbi Akiva

answered לי נדמן דף (a daf (board) occurred to me). I grabbed this board and whenever there was a wave I was able to overcome it. I ended up successfully floating to shore alive. Rabbi Meir Shapiro homiletically, metaphorically and beautifully explains this Gemara as referring to our lives. **We are all surrounded by waves, turbulence and stuff around us. There are many distractions and inappropriate sights that attempt to divert our minds from our goal in this world. These stormy waves try to drown us. What keeps us going? The plank of the ship, aka the daf (page) of the Gemara. Rabbi Akiva was telling Rabbi Gamliel that his learning saved him.** It is most fitting for Rabbi Meir Shapiro to offer this explanation, since he founded the daf yomi. **The daf Gemara prevents us from drowning in the non Torah matters. Learning Torah keeps us afloat. With the merit of learning we will be able to improve our actions and successfully pass the daily tests that we undergo.** Learning is comparable to a shield. It will protect us from negative outside influences that threaten and attempt to drown us. **The daf that a person learns, each at his own level, can save him from the difficulties of life; it gives him what he needs to “ride the waves.” The daily learning of a daf Gemara strengthens and fills our heart with ahavas (love of) Hashem and emunah (belief). In this merit, all of our actions get better and we will succeed in overcoming life’s challenges without harm. This learning will virtually help us deal with everything that comes up in life, all the ups and downs, that otherwise threaten to drown us.** (See the illustrated mashal page 51 and Otzer Hamashalim page 189) **The Or Hachaim Hakadosh has no less than forty explanations of the pasuk “If you will follow my decrees Etc.” One of his explanations is; even when we are on the way and not in Yeshiva, we must continue to learn. This is why the pasuk uses a language of halicha/going. This is the secret to remaining spiritually successful; learning.** Tosefes in Zevachim (19b) says whenever standing is Halachically required; it is prohibited to lean on anything to the extent that if that which you are leaning upon is removed then you will fall. For example, it is prohibited to lean on a table when saying Shemoni Esrei because leaning is like sitting. Conversely, at a time when sitting is Halachically required, for example saying tachnun or reciting an al hamichya; one can lean on something if there is nowhere to sit and it is considered as if he is sitting. What is the deeper idea behind this Halacha? This is the explanation of talmidim; they must be able to stand with their own strength, without leaning on something. Talmidim, need to be able to stand on their own; even without the Rebbe.

The Gemara in Shabbos (22b) quotes Rava who says one who lights a Menorah while holding it, is considered to have done nothing. The pashut pashat (simple explanation) of this is Halacha is הדלקה עושה מצוה, and it needs to be stationary. The Sfas Emes (Chanukah 5656) and Avir Yaakov (inyani Chanukah) explain that it is problematic for someone to stand. We need to constantly grow. If we were standing in a stationary position, we will not fulfill the mitzvah of lighting the menorah. The Gra (even Shalomo) and Rabbi Uri Pilichowski (Maximizing your time chapter five) explain that **one who doesn’t increase spiritually, will almost always decrease spiritually.** This can be likened to an escalator going the wrong way; one who isn’t going up will automatically descend. This is also the explanation of the Gemara in Shabbos (21b); we only go up in holiness, not down. (מעלין בקדש ואין מורידין.)

Through lighting the Chanukah candle we will merit the light of the Torah. The Gemara in Moed katan (29b) says talmedai chachamim have no rest in this world and in the next world. ( אמר רבי חייא בר אשי אמר רב תלמידי חכמים אין להם מנוחה לא בעולם הזה ולא בעולם הבא, שנאמר "יילכו מחיל אל חיל



"(יראה אל אלהים בציון). What is the explanation of this Gemara? Through their learning they are constantly ascending every moment. Rashi explains the pasuk "If you will follow my decrees etc." that was previously quoted. Rashi quotes the Toras Kohanim that explains this pasuk refers to toiling in Torah learning. The Ohr Hachaim HaKadosh (beginning of parshas Bechukosai) explains that the word follow/תלכו means to constantly grow. By lighting the Menorah, we need to remember to constantly grow. With this we can understand Beis Hillel's (Shabbos (21b)) opinion. He says we add a candle every night because we are constantly growing.

The Shulchan Aruch (673, 2) says lighting the Chanukah candles is the mitzvah (הדלקה עושה) (מצוה). If the candles were lit in a location that was fitting for the candles to remain lit for the minimal amount of time, thirty minutes after three stars emerge, then, even if they went out within that time, you don't need to relight them. (כבתה אין זקוק לה) **When it comes to learning Torah the main focus is the effort put in and not the result.** The Mishna in Avos (end of second perek) says 'the day is short, the task is abundant.' (היום קצר והמלאכה מרובה) 'you are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it.' (לא עליך המלאכה לגמור ולא) (אתה בן חורין ליבטל ממנה) We are not obligated to finish the entire Torah. At the same time we can't completely forsake the Torah. **The Gemara in Berachos (28b) states we toil (with our learning) and they toil (with their work); we toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward. What is the simple explanation of this Gemara? These people who work do in fact receive reward. They get a nice pay check.** These are several mehalchim (approaches) and answers to this fundamental question. The Chafetz Chaim (al hatorah pages 178-179, also Otzer Hamashalim pages 185-186) answers by means of an analogy. This is analogous to someone who is hired to sew clothing. He works very hard and spends a lot of time sewing, but was unsuccessful. If he asked to be paid, he is considered foolish. Tailors only get paid when they complete their work. Their payment isn't based on the amount of effort, toil and energy they put into their work; rather the result. Toil without a result is unbeneficial, pointless and purposeless. Conversely, **when it comes to learning we are rewarded according to our effort. Even if we do not understand something clearly** as stated in Gittin (43a) one will not have success with his learning unless he stumbles first (אין אדם עומד על דברי תורה אלא אם כן נכשל) (תחילה); **nevertheless reward will be granted. Even if the work/learning is incomplete, reward will still nevertheless be granted.** This is the explanation of 'we toil and receive reward and they toil and do not receive reward.' **We get rewarded according to our toil, exertion and effort; even if our learning is incomplete and we didn't fully grasp and comprehend the learning properly. The reward is dependent on the effort, not the result.** Rav Zilberstein (Aleinu L'shabayach parshas Lech Lecha) says **Hashem doesn't ask us to do more than we are capable of doing. Hashem wants us to invest all of our effort in order to reach the highest level we possibly can. However, Hashem doesn't ask us to do more than we can do.** In fact Shlomo Hamelech says this as well. The pasuk in Koheles (9, 10) states "כל אשר תמצא ידך לעשות בכחך עשה." "Whatever you are able to do with your might, do it." Rav Zusha once said if they ask me in the next world 'Why didn't you reach the level of the Baal Shem Tov?' I won't be worried. How can you compare me to such a chashuv (important) Gadol (great person)? Did I have the capabilities, talents and siyata dishmaya (heavenly assistance) he had? However, **if they say 'Why weren't you the Zusha you could have become?' That is something that I'd be afraid of.** Based on the aforementioned we can easily and beautifully understand a fundamental story regarding the history of the childhood of the Nisev (Rabbi Naftali Tzvi Yehuda of Berlin). Little Naftali overheard his parents discussing the possibility of

pulling Naftali out of Yeshiva in order that he could start working. He ran into the room crying and pleading saying that he will behave. To make a long story short he returned to Yeshiva and started to diligently learn. He ended up becoming a huge talmid chacham and Gadol. He authored many sefarim. Amongst them are Hamek Davar on Chumash, Shilos and Teshuvos Mashiv Davar, Hamek Sheala commentary on the Shiltos D'Rebbi Achaia and many others. In Rabbi Berlin's later years he commented saying 'imagine if I wouldn't have over heard my parents conversing. I would have gone up to heaven and they would have asked 'where are all of your sefarim?'' Rabbi Berlin would not have even known what they were referring to. The reason for this is that he would have never guessed that he had the potential to write so many sefarim. **The concept of this lesson is equally applicable to us as well. We must not underestimate the potential that we have. The reality is, we are capable of becoming great and performing many great acts. We must have confidence, hope and optimism towards our perspective on our potentially positive future.**

The Chofetz Chaim says that one who toils in Torah in this world will get rewarded, even if he didn't have the best mind to learn. Whatever Torah he didn't understand in this world he will understand in the next world. The Chasam Sofer wonders why on Sukkos we only shake the daled minim when we say אָנָּה ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא (please, Hashem, save us)? Why don't we also shake the daled minim when we say אָנָּה ה' הַצְלִיחָה נָּא (please, Hashem, bring success now)? He answers that when we request for salvation from Hashem we strive to do everything we can. However, when we ask for success, there is not much we can do, it is all from Hashem. That's why we shake during אָנָּה ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא. The same applies to learning, we toil in order to understand, but our ability to understand is from Hashem. The Gra explains the Gemara in Megilah (6b) that says if someone says I toiled in Torah and I found success, believe him. (יִגְעַתִּי וּמְצָאתִי תִאֲמִין.) Even after one toiled, the learning is only called a something found (מְצִיאה). People do not intend to find lost objects rather, they just suddenly appear. The same applies to Torah learning. We need to toil, but in the end it is a gift from Hashem. This is the deeper idea behind lighting the menorah. The lighting is the mitzvah because all we can do is the striving. The rest is up to Hashem.

This applies to the dreidel as well. Sefer Shefa Chaim (Rav Yekusiel Halberstam, the Klausenberger Rebbi) (perek yeheye ohr page 58) offers a novel reason why we spin the dreidel. We say בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו שיר ורננים, men of insight – eight days they established for song and jubilation in Maoz Tzur. Why here are we called men of insight (בני בינה)? Rashi (beginning of parshas Tetzaveh) explains that בני בינה refers to those who understand one thing from another (Chagiga 14a). Through the learning we do on Chanukah we will merit a special understanding that is usually unattainable throughout the rest of the year. **We spin the dreidel with our fingers. Suddenly it lands on a ג and we get everything! The deeper idea behind this applies to learning. We try very hard to spin; learn difficult sugyos (topics) that are very hard to fully understand. During Chanukah we have a special siyata dishmaya and merit understanding these sugyos. In the end it all comes from Hashem.**

In al hanisim we say וְהִדְלִיקוּ נְרוֹת בְּחִצְרוֹת קִדְשֶׁיךָ 'they kindled lights in the courtyards of Your sanctuary.' Why does it say courtyards in the plural tense? Since there is only one courtyard it would be more logical to say courtyard. The Chaza Lemoed (inyani Chanukah) answers that through lighting the menorah we and all Jews will merit the light of Torah. All of the Jewish courtyards will be illuminated from the light of the Torah.

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.