



The Greater Washington Community Kollel

SHABBOS DELIGHTS

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TORAH MINUTE

IN MEMORY OF RABBI KALMAN WINTER ZT"l

A Mitzvah Like No Other

Presented by Rabbi Yitzchak Kaminetsky, Kollel Scholar

When the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah lights is introduced, the Gemara immediately qualifies it by presenting three levels of performance. At the most basic level, one candle is lit per household. A higher level is one candle per member of the household, and the highest level – *mehadrin min hamehadrin* – is to add an additional candle each night.

The Brisker Rav highlights a fascinating dispute between the Rambam and the Tur regarding how to fulfill *Ner Chanukah* at the highest level – *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. According to the Rambam, the *baal habayis* (head of household) lights all the candles on behalf of the household. The Tur, however, rules that each member of the household lights independently.

The Brisker Rav explains that this dispute reflects a deeper question: can *hiddur mitzvah* – enhancing a mitzvah – exist independently of the core act of the mitzvah? The Rambam maintains that *hiddur*/beautification can only take place within the act of the mitzvah itself, and therefore, since the basic mitzvah is accomplished by the head of household, the enhanced version – lighting for every member of the household – is performed by that same person.

The Tur, by contrast, holds that *hiddur* can generate its own expression, allowing each individual to light. When it comes to Chanukah, however, this raises an additional difficulty. Rabbi Akiva Eiger asks: even if each member of the household can perform the *mehudar*/enhanced level after the mitzvah has already been fulfilled, how can each person recite their own *berachah*? Everyone agrees that one cannot make a *berachah* on *hiddur mitzvah* alone.

One possible answer, as I heard from my rebbe, Rav Chaim Eisenstein, is that Chanukah is unique. With *Ner Chanukah*, *hiddur mitzvah* is not an afterthought – it is central to the mitzvah itself. Rashi explains *mehadrin* as those who “chase after mitzvos,” and strikingly, the Gemara presents enhanced levels of performance immediately upon introducing the mitzvah.

Chazal thus created a unique form of *hiddur mitzvah* for Chanukah. In the Chanukah story, the Chashmonaim could technically have used impure oil given the circumstances, yet they insisted on performing the mitzvah in the most ideal way. According to the Bach, the Greeks were able to defile the Beis Hamikdash because Jewish service had become lax. Chanukah was about restoring an ideal *avodah* — serving Hashem not just adequately, but beautifully.

Chanukah is therefore a time to focus on performing *mitzvos* in the most ideal and beautiful way possible. If we show Hashem that we strive to enhance how we serve Him, we can hopefully merit that He continue to bless us with the wherewithal to continue on that path – as individuals, as a community, and as a nation.

Wishing you a Good Shabbos and a Happy Chanukah!

Point to Ponder

TABLE TALK

Parsha Riddle

We do not add a ninth day to Chanukah due to S'feika D'yoma (uncertainty which date it is). The reason is that in the time of the Bais Hamikdash, when the sanctification of the new moon was performed via witnesses, it was possible that people would be unsure which day was Yom Tov. With a set calendar now in use, indeed there is no uncertainty. Still, we continue the custom of our fathers to add a day of Yom Tov. However, this only applies to a Biblical Yom Tov and not to a Rabbinic Yom Tov. (Chavas Daas 110, Minchas Chinuch 301)

Rav Yochanan said in the name of Rabbi Shimon Ben Yehotzodok, "In the Diaspora we recite the complete Hallel on twenty one days... and on the eight days of Chanukah." (Taanis 28b)

Rebbi Shimon Ben Yehotzodok lived during the time when the new moon was sanctified by witnesses (Sanhedrin 26a) and the calendar wasn't set? Why then does he say that Hallel is recited for eight days in the diaspora and not nine?

Yosef was called Tzofnas Paneiach. Who wrote a sefer with that name?

Please see next week's issue for the answer.

Last week's riddle:

Why do we perform Pidyon HaBen (Redeeming the Firstborn) with five shekalim?

Answer: Five shekalim equals twenty dinarim. The brothers received this amount of dinarim in the sale of Yosef, the firstborn of Rachel.

HATORAH V'HAMITZVAH

HALACHA INSIGHTS FROM THE PARSHA

In *parashas Mikeitz* (43:8), Yehuda responds to his father Yaakov's worries about Binyamin's safety by saying: "Send the lad with me, and we will get up and go, and we will live and not die, both we and you and also our young children." A number of midrashim and later commentaries explain that Yehuda was conceding that Binyamin would be endangered by the trip, but he was arguing that taking him along was nevertheless the best course of action, since exposing Binyamin to the mere possibility of harm was clearly preferable to condemning the entire family to certain death by starvation (*Tanchuma Mikeitz* 8, *Bereishis Rabbah* 91:6, Rashi, Bechor Shor).

The commentary *R'vid ha-Zahav* asserts that this interpretation of Yehuda's calculus, that it was appropriate for Binyamin to risk his life in order to save the rest of the family from certain death, is the basis for the view, attributed by the *Hagahos Maimoniyos* (Constantinople, *Rotzeach* 1:15) to the *Yerushalmi* (it is not entirely clear what passage in the *Yerushalmi* is intended) that the obligation to rescue someone from mortal danger ("lo sa'amod al dam rei'echa") applies even where this involves the possibility of mortal danger to the rescuer. The *Torah Shleimah* (*Mikeitz* p. 1410 #102), however, refutes this by pointing out that here, Binyamin himself faced death by starvation along with the rest of his family, and so he would be risking his life on his own behalf as well and not merely on behalf of others.

In any event, other authorities disagree with the view of the *Yerushalmi* / *Hagahos Maimoniyos*. The *Sma* (*siman* 426 s.k. 2) maintains that the omission of this idea by the major codifiers indicates that it is not normative. The *Radvaz* in one responsum (3:1052) declares that one who risks his own life in order to save another is "a pious fool, for the possibility of (danger to) himself outweighs the certainty of (danger to) his fellow man." In another responsum (5:1582) however, he adopts a more nuanced view, that there is indeed an obligation to save another from mortal danger even if this entails "some (*ktzas*)" risk to one's own life, but only where the probability of the rescuer's safety and success is more likely than not, and not where the probability is "balanced (*muchra*)," and certainly not where the probability of the rescuer's death and failure is more likely than not.

PRESENTED BY

RABBI YITZHAK GROSSMAN, ROSH CHABURAH

KIDS KORNER

Who Am I?

#1 WHO AM I?

1. I was for the Menorah.
2. I was for the cows.
3. I am for Shemittah.
4. I was for the wheat.

#2 WHO AM I?

1. I had a cow.
2. I was wheat free.
3. I was one in two.
4. I caused saving.

Last Week's Answers

#1 Yaakov (I wanted calm, I am for the heel, I am for trickery, I sent my favorite.)

#2 Yosef (I gathered-in disgrace, I am a leaping flame, I dreamed, I was brother searching.)

KOLLEL BULLETIN BOARD

Series #1: The Halachos of Pikuach Nefesh (Saving a Life) on Shabbos and Yom Kippur

**Danger Defined:
What Is Considered Choli She'yeish Bo
Sakanah/an Endangered Person? Part I**

1st Shiur:

What is the status of?

- Sakanas Eiver (an endangered limb)
- Severe Pain
- Sakanas Ubar (an endangered fetus)
- Psychological Conditions, etc...



**Presented by
Rabbi Yitzhak Grossman
Tuesday, December 30 at
8:30pm on Zoom
Register at**

<https://thegreaterwashingtoncommunitykollel.com/medicalhalacha>