



## Some Words from the Rosh Yeshiva

The Rabbinic enactment of Chanukah – according to the Talmudic account (Shabbos 21b) – did not take place immediately after the victory over the Hellenist Greeks and the miracle of the Menorah’s flames burning for eight days. Instead, the Talmud relates, it was only after one year had passed that Chanukah’s observance was decreed. By contrast, it is clear that the celebration of Purim involved no such delay; the verses in the Megillah (Esther 9:16-18) explicitly declare that the day following the Jews’ decisive triumph over their tormentors was celebrated with “feasting and joy”.

The difference is not hard to understand. In ancient Shushan, the Jews were threatened with annihilation; the downfall of Haman and the defeat of his empowered militias on the following thirteenth of Adar were critical to the very survival of the Jewish people. That these events would be worthy of celebration was – as we would say today – a “no-brainer”. In fact, several Rishonim (Ran, Megillah 1a, citing Ramban) infer from the wording of the Megillah verses that those initial celebrations were spontaneous; Rabbinic legislation was only needed to establish future years’ celebrations.

On the other hand, what problem did the Chanukah miracle solve? Because the oil of the Bais HaMikdash was defiled, there was a possibility that the Mitzvah of lighting the Menorah would be suspended. Miraculously, the one small flask, which only contained enough oil for one night, lasted for eight nights. In other words, this miracle facilitated the performance of a Mitzvah. Now, to a religious Jew, every Mitzvah is precious. Yet, we could certainly appreciate some taking the position that ordaining an everlasting holiday for its celebration would be an over-reaction. (See Maharal, Ner Mitzvah, London edition, P. 22, where this issue is discussed.) It was only one year later, after much analysis and consideration, that Chanukah was deemed worthy of becoming a fixture of the Jewish calendar.

Why? What insight was achieved over the twelve months to justify and rationalize this decision?

The Sfas Emes (Chanukah 5644) offers an intriguing insight:

The assumption that the miracle of the Menorah is the rationale for the Chanukah celebration may be an example of “putting the cart before the horse”. Chanukah, suggests the Sfas Emes, was not ordained to celebrate the Menorah miracle. Chanukah was ordained because the Sages determined that we needed to have the holiday of Chanukah. The Menorah miracle merely provided the opportunity and pretext for the ordinance. As we needed to have the holiday, even a seemingly inadequate justification would suffice.

But why did we need another holiday on the calendar? Weren’t the Biblically mandated holidays (Pesach, Shavuot, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, and Sukkos/Shemini Atzeres) sufficient?



To address this question, we must first ask another question:

**Why do we have holidays at all?** Undoubtedly we are meant to serve the Ribbono Shel Olam every day of the year. So why do we have exceptional days from time to time? The Sfas Emes explains that just like a person's body is supported by his legs, so the entire year is supported by the "pillars" of the Yomim Tovim. (The Sfas Emes utilizes a play on words here: Regalim (holidays)=Raglayim (legs)!) That is, the inspiration and enlightenment that we receive on each of the Yomim Tovim gives us the ability to sustain ourselves as Jews until the next Yom Tov; then we receive another "booster shot".



In earlier times, the Biblically mandated holidays were sufficient. But, as the times changed, our spiritual nutritional needs also changed. As greater darkness descended on the world, additional light was needed to dispel that darkness. That additional light could be provided by the holiday of Chanukah and its special Mitzvah of kindling the Menorah.

(Perhaps the following illustration will be helpful: If a person eats a balanced diet, he should be able to extract all the vitamins and minerals he needs from the food he eats. But, if he has an unusual need for extra nutrients or if his body is unusual in that its ability to absorb nutrients from food is compromised, he may need to take a vitamin/mineral supplement.)

But how could Hashem hint to the Jews of that time that such a Mitzvah would be advantageous? Very simply! Hashem orchestrated a Hellenist threat, a Maccabee victory, and a Temple miracle that would be best commemorated by instituting an eight-day Mitzvah of Ner Chanukah.

Did the Jews get the hint? No. You see, Hashem always "creates the cure before the illness" (Megillah 13b), and here as well Hashem brought about the pretext for Chanukah before the Jews could understand how desperately they would need that holiday. But it did not take long. By the time one year had passed, the Sages understood in hindsight what Hashem had done earlier. In that span of time the darkness of the world had become so opaque and dismal, it had become obvious that we needed that extra festival and accordingly it was ordained.

**Happy Chanukah!**



## Blast from the Past: Rabbi Dovid Kestenbaum

### What inspired you to become a Rebbe?

My father was a dedicated askan, deeply involved in supporting our local mosdos during the post-World War II rebuilding period. Yet, every year on his father's yahrzeit, he would teach Gemara to the 7th and 8th grade classes at our local yeshiva in Long Beach. He could have chosen any mitzvah to honor his father, but he chose to be a mechanech. This left a lasting impression on me and instilled the value of chinuch from a very young age.

Despite this influence, I initially planned to either become a doctor or join my father's business. However, during my first year in Beis Medrash in Eretz Yisrael, Rav Henschel Lebowitz visited and spoke to me about the critical importance of chinuch. His words, coupled with my father's example, ultimately convinced me to pursue this path.

### What was your favourite aspect of being a Rebbe?

As a learning Rebbe in Camp Yeshiva Staten Island, I had the privilege of attending a Q&A session with Rav Moshe Feinstein. I asked him whether I should focus more on the top students or the bottom half of the group. He impressed upon me the importance of ensuring that every boy succeeded, regardless of his current level or innate intelligence. This advice stayed with me throughout my career. Dr. Geft often remarked that he could take the boys in my class off Ritalin for a year because I made a genuine effort to ensure that no one was left behind.

### So how did you get to Darchei?

I taught 10th grade at Darchei for five years, starting when the school first relocated to Toronto in 2000. It was a unique and eclectic group, mostly comprised of boys who didn't get into Ner but weren't interested in attending Ohr Chaim. What stood out the most, however, was the remarkable level of achdus among the boys. The Rosh Yeshiva was very deliberate in admitting only boys who were friendly, kind, and genuinely good-hearted. Those were interesting times-Darchei was a new institution with no funds, no established rules, and no defined processes. Yet, those were the Yeshiva's formative years, laying the foundation for what it would become.

### Tell us a story or two from your time at Darchei

When Rabbi Joshua was trying to get the Yeshiva to approve a ski trip for the boys, he struggled to get the Rosh Yeshiva to agree. Fortunately, I knew Rabbi Breitowitz from our days at Mogen Avraham, so I had an idea of how to persuade him. Rabbi Breitowitz used to do the bookkeeping after night seder while listening to shiurim from Rav Yochanan Zweig, which I knew always put him in a good mood. One evening, while he was working on the bookkeeping, I approached him and made the case for the ski trip. I explained that Rabbi Joshua had already made all the arrangements and emphasized that the boys needed a break. I even referenced a well-known story about Rav Ruderman, who once said that holding a Yeshiva Mesiba for Pesach Sheini is a mitzvah because it breaks up the monotony of Yeshiva life. The Rosh Yeshiva turned to me and thought it was a great idea, and that Ski trip is still taking place today.

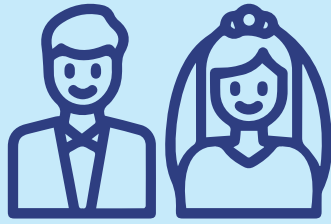
Another story from my time was of course, the fire. Rabbi Breitowitz and I, in our Tallis and Tefillin, tried putting it out with Fire Extinguishers but it was to no avail. It was coming up from behind a cabinet and it was just too big for us to control with just fire extinguishers.



You have taught boys from 1st grade all the way up to Beis Medrash. What do you think is the most important skill that needs more emphasis?

Every year, when the Yeshivas from Eretz Yisroel come to Faher—what I like to call the "Rosh Yeshiva parade"—Rabbi Mordechai Friedman, one of the Rebbeim from Yeshivat Gush and a friend of mine, would stay at my house. On one of those occasions, I asked him, "What is the one skill that all the boys could improve on?" His answer surprised me: reading! I was astounded. This Yeshiva is like the Harvard of Hesder Yeshivas, filled with bright boys who have no trouble understanding Gemara. Yet, even they were still struggling with reading fluently. From that moment, it became clear to me that basic reading skills are the most important area that needs improvement.

# Mazel Tov!



To the Newlyweds

Raphael (2021) & Sarah Moyal

Yedidya Netanel Epstein (2019) & Shaindel Bracha Greene



To the  
Baby Girls

Shimmy (2010) & Leora Igelman

Dovi (2013) & Zahava Rosen



To the  
Baby Boys

Noam (2018) & Mimi Sonenberg

Coby (2017) & Esti Stopnicki

Rabbi Ezra (2004) & Tziporah Saleman

Zach (2011) & Eliana Husynni

Ariel (2010) & Estee Nacson

Jamie (2007) & Noga Azoulay

Shoutout to the graduating class of 2013 who raised over **\$60,000** during last years day of giving and won the dinner to Meron!



This year's campaign will be on **March 5th**, however, all donations made beginning today will be allocated to your class page.

Once again, the winning class will be rewarded with a dinner at Meron!

Donations can be made at [www.darchei.ca](http://www.darchei.ca) or by calling Jeff at **416 520-6279**

# #tbt

