

## CHANUKAH GELT

By Ozer Bergman

*Once a person allows himself to steal from a friend, he's liable to commit any crime (The Aleph-Bet Book, Theft & Robbery A:1).*

Contrary to the popular misconception, Jews do not give things as Chanukah presents. We give Chanukah gelt. (Despite its absence from Microsoft Word's lexicon, "gelt" is an English word, found in ye olde hardcopy dictionary, and defined as "money.") Often, that gelt is used when we play dreidel on Chanukah. Now, spinning a four-sided top may seem simple to you. It is. Like most of Judaism (if not all of it) it is simple—and enjoyable—but also more profound and meaningful than you might have guessed.\*

What's the difference between giving a thing and giving money? A thing is what it is, no matter what it is, no matter how beautiful, expensive or valuable. Money, however, is nothing. As it is, it is undefined, but gelt can become anything its holder decides. This is very much like life. As Rebbe Nachman teaches:

*Know! The world is a rotating wheel, a dreidel, where everything constantly changes. Man becomes angel and angel becomes man. Head becomes foot, and foot becomes head. Everything in the world cycles and revolves. All things interchange, transforming into one another. ... This is because all things have one root ... All creation is like a rotating wheel, in which everything is oscillating. Now something is higher, the "head," while something else is lower, the "foot." Then the situation is reversed: "foot" becomes "head" and "head" becomes foot.*

Money, too, is always moving, from one person to another. This is why one of the Hebrew words for money is *zuzim*, move! We all know, from experience and from the Talmud (*Shabbat* 151b), that financial fortunes are always changing, the wheel is always spinning. Which is why, the Talmud says, we should [a] devote some of our prayers to asking for mercy that neither we nor our any of descendants fall into poverty, and [b] hurry to give and to help, so that others will hurry to help our descendants, should the need arise.

While these are important lessons, why are they *Chanukah* lessons? One of the subtle themes of Chanukah, what Chanukah is "really" about, is universal peace.\*\* The first step in making universal peace "out there" is making peace between body and soul. There are major obstacles to inner peace, among them anger, frustration and jealousy. Anger, in particular, is a very difficult habit to overcome. We've been doing it since we were children, never having learned how to deal with all of life's frustrations. (Even though we do OK with the small stuff, and we may not act out all the big stuff, there is often anger, or rage or grievances, under the surface.)

The Greeks set out to make us forget God's Torah so that we wouldn't do mitzvahs (see *Al HaNissim*). If, God forbid, we forget the one-footed foundation of the Torah—the faith that everything, all change, revolves around God's will—then not doing mitzvahs follows. A great deal of inner peace depends on believing in the notion of *hashgachah pratit*, that your life is tailored by Divine Providence. An important goal of *hitbodedut*\*\*\* is the realization that the choices you have made, plus your experiences, Divinely dovetail to bring you exactly where you need to be when you are there; and from where you need to progress from now.

## SIDEPATH

Rebbe Nachman teaches:

Be joyous, always. And serve God with joy. Even if there are times when things look dark and difficult, strengthen yourselves with the "good times" gone by. This can be compared to a blind man who once had the power of sight. Although now he can't see at all, he knows there's light—he's witnessed it. Therefore, strengthen yourself with joy—the joy you once knew. If you do, then eventually the "good days" will return (*Likutey Moharan* I, 222).

So when it's your turn to spin the dreidel, don't worry or get angry, jealous or frustrated. However the dreidel falls—whether you have to add to the pot and someone else takes all, whether you take half or do nothing—it's perfect ... for now. But the present now will later be past, and the first one now will later be last. For the dreidel is still in spin, and the loser now will later win.

\* Playing dreidel is not only a children's game, but a great way to bond with your children, even if they already have their own children. It's also a great way to teach some of the gelt lessons of life.

\*\* *Likutey Moharan*-niks will notice variations on the theme in the following Shabbat/Chanukah lessons that Rebbe Nachman gave over the years: *Likutey Moharan* I, 8; I, 14; II, 2; II, 7.

\*\*\* The daily practice of talking to God, in your own words, about what you choose to talk about.

*Agutn Shabbos!*

*Shabbat Shalom!*

*Afreilekhen und likhtegh Chanukah!*

*Chanukah samei'ach!*

*Chappy Chanukah!*

Based on *Sichot HaRan*  
(*Rabbi Nachman's Wisdom*) #40

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## SEEING THE LIGHT

By Yossi Katz

Perhaps the most dramatic story in the Torah concerns the fraternal jealousy and eventual betrayal of Joseph. It starts by Jacob showing favoritism towards Joseph. The brothers get a sense of this and begin to hate him. Then Joseph relates his dreams to his brothers, telling them how they all bowed down to him in the dreams. The brothers interpret this as a threat that he will rule over them and conspire to throw Joseph into a pit filled with scorpions and snakes. Then they sell Joseph as a slave and he ends up in Egypt, where he later becomes viceroy and eventually does rule over them.

So many questions surround this story. Why did Jacob, the father of twelve sons, show favoritism? And why was it Joseph, of all the worthy and holy tribes, who eventually did become the ruler?

The answer to these questions and the root causes of the entire episode are hidden in the first two verses of this week's *parashah*. Verse 1 states: "Jacob dwelled in the land where his fathers had sojourned." The Midrash explains that the word *meGuRei* (מגורי, stayed) is related to the word *GeR* (גר, convert). Like his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham, Jacob was dedicated to making converts and elevating downtrodden souls (*Bereishit Rabbah* 84:4).

Verse 2 begins: "These are the offspring of Jacob: Joseph." Was Joseph the only offspring? How about the rest of the tribes? But the Torah is teaching us that it was primarily Joseph who emulated his father and continued on the same path of elevating and drawing souls closer to God.

"He was seventeen years old and would shepherd his brothers' flock." Seventeen is the *gematria* (numerical value) of the word *tov* (טוב, good). Joseph was completely wholesome and good, and he also saw the good in others. He was able to uplift everyone around him, even the lowest of the low, because he

saw that they, too, possessed goodness and value.

"And he played with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah." Bilhah and Zilpah were Jacob's secondary wives; their children represent the lowly Jew. Joseph brought himself down to their level in order to uplift these souls as well. Joseph represents the true tzaddik, the one who is on such a high level that he can elevate every single soul. Indeed, we often refer Joseph as *Yosef HaTzaddik* (Joseph the tzaddik).

## Every Chanukah, an enormously powerful light of holiness shines down on us

Every year on Chanukah, an enormously powerful light of holiness shines down on us. Regarding this light, the Talmud records a dispute between the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel. The School of Shammai contended that this light is so powerful and pure that it can be properly utilized and appreciated only by elite Jews. Those less capable of appreciating the light must be kept away. This is the reason why the School of Shammai ruled that we should light eight candles on the first night of Chanukah and subtract one candle on each succeeding night, until there is just one candle left on the eighth night. While the School of Shammai agrees that the miracle and greatness of the lights increases every night, this is the way they hide the light from those who are unworthy.

The School of Hillel taught just the opposite. Although certain Jews may be unworthy, we must go down to their level and help them build a vessel so that they, too, will be uplifted through the great light. Therefore the School of Hillel ruled that we should light one candle on the first night and increase the number of candles by one each night, until all eight lights are shining powerfully. In actual practice, we follow the School of Hillel.

The dispute over the lighting of the Chanukah menorah is the same dispute that Joseph had with his brothers, and the same dispute among the tzaddikim in every generation. Even though they are all great tzaddikim, they have been influenced by the attribute of strict judgment and believe that not every Jew is worthy. But Joseph, the true tzaddik, acts differently. Even his name, *Yosef*, means "add on"—to add on a candle every night and continually add light and holiness to every single Jew.

This Chanukah, may we all merit to attach ourselves to the "rulership" of Joseph and the "rulership" of the true tzaddikim. Amen.

Based on *Likutey Halakhot*,  
*Hilkhot Rosh Chodesh* 7

## KITZUR L" M WEEKLY

17 — "Rabbi Yonatan related—a  
basket" (*Bava Batra* 74a)

1. Everything has a purpose or goal which it was meant to achieve. One thing's purpose has another, higher purpose, [and that higher purpose has another, even higher purpose,] and so on. The main thing, however, is the final goal, which is the delight of the World to Come. This is the ultimate purpose and goal of the entire creation, and [the reason for] everything that exists in the world. But there is no one who is able to comprehend or grasp this goal in his thoughts except for the tzaddikim. And each Jew, in accordance with the root that he has in the soul of the tzaddik, receives this [conception of the] goal from the tzaddik to the degree that he breaks his anger with compassion. In this way, he will merit to reach and to comprehend the purpose in everything in the world—and this is the most important thing.