

Nothing Is By Chance

written by Yehudis Golshevsky

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It is customary on Chanukah to play *dreidel*. A *dreidel* is a kind of top with four sides that has different Hebrew letters inscribed on each side. The four letters are *nun*, *gimel*, *hei* and *shin*. This is an acronym for “*nes gadol hayah sham*”—“A great miracle occurred there.” This alludes to the miracle of the menorah in the second Temple. Although the Maccabees clearing through the devastation of the sacked Temple only found one day’s worth of undefiled oil, it lasted for eight days until pure new oil could be prepared.

Rebbe Nachman teaches a very deep lesson from this simple game. The *dreidel* teaches that everything has one source. The letter *hei* stands for what was known in ancient times as the “hyle”—the primordial “ether” or initial matter from which everything was formed. *Nun* symbolizes *nivdal*, the spiritual elements of creation that are “separated” from the material world. *Gimel* indicates the *galgal*, the “wheel” of transitions and transformations upon which all of reality spins. *Shin* symbolizes *shafal*, meaning the “lowly” terrestrial world. From our perspective in the material world, these elements appear

somewhat disconnected and distinct, like the four planes that face away from each other, yet they are actually all subject to G-d's master plan and spin in balance as parts of a single structure. The *dreidel* teaches that all of reality is actually just the garment that enclothes G-dliness, and its apparent chaos is actually a carefully orchestrated motion that follows a deep Divine plan. Although at this point we cannot possibly grasp how all of its disparate elements, and the myriad factors in our own existence, work together in a single integrated motion, a time will come when we will be able to see how everything fits together seamlessly.

Dear G-d. Grant me deep faith that everything that happens is part of Your master plan. Help me believe that even the apparently random motion of the dreidel has a reason. Although life is largely unfathomable, as it spins along it follows a pattern. I may not yet discern its meaning, but I know that it's real. Light up my life with Your presence as I spin along so that I can accept whatever comes with composure, serenity and joy.

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