



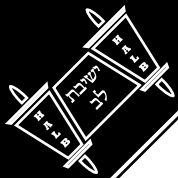
Volume XXI - Issue 8



Special Chanukah Issue!!!



The DRS Weekly Torah Publication



## Fire: Light up or Burn Down

By Dylan Broder, 12th Grade, Editor of Student Articles

**Y**avan, being a nation that existed after the completion of the Torah, is never explicitly mentioned in the Torah. However, the Torah does reference Yavan implicitly. When Noach left the Teivah, he got drunk and rested unclothed in his tent. Upon hearing this, Sheim and Yafes covered up their father. Subsequently, Sheim became the ancestor of the Jews, and Yafes ultimately became the progenitor of Yavan.

The pasuk describing Sheim and Yafes's great act seems problematic. The pasuk says ויקחו, using the singular verb of take instead of using ויקחו, which is the normal language when referring to two people. Rashi picks up on this and says that Sheim realized his father was unclothed and therefore he went to do what was right and cover him up. However, Yafes did not care about his father until he saw Sheim going, so he tagged along. Based on this, Rav Soleveitchik says that the battle between Sheim and Yafes, and ultimately, between the Jews and the Greeks, is the battle of ethics versus etiquette. Sheim, and in turn the Jews, do the right thing no matter if it will go unnoticed and unappreciated or even if the rest of society is against him, he will always do what is right. Yafes and the Yevanim on the other hand, only do what is right when others are watching - their culture is based solely on etiquette.

We even see this in their names. Yafes means beauty, something very ex-

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## The Light of Chanukah

By Yosef Fertig, 11th Grade, Layout Editor

**T**here's a famous midrash on Parshas Behaaloscha regarding Chanukah. The Torah never explicitly mentions Chanukah, due to the fact that it predates Chanukah, but when the Torah talks about oil in Parshas Behaaloscha, it places it right next to a perek talking entirely about Yomim Tovim. The midrash explains that this was an allusion to the fact that the Jews were destined to establish the Yom Tov of Chanukah, which is about the miracle of the oil.

The Machzor Vitri adds that this juxtaposition also teaches us that Chanukah is a "Yom Tov like all other Yomim Tovim". However, there's a big problem with this explanation. The Gemara in Shabbos 21b says about Chanukah that its days should be "festive days for praise and thanksgiving." Rashi explains that this teaches us of the permissibility of doing melacha on Chanukah and that the primary purpose of the Yom Tov is just to say Hallel and Al Hanissim to thank Hashem for the miracles.

Additionally, the Ramban says about Yomim Tovim in general, that they are supposed to be treated differently than all other days and that's why we have to dress and eat differently than on a regular day. This is not the case by Chanukah where there is no concept of honoring the holiday by doing things differently than usual. The

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**Torah Teasers***By Rabbi Moshe Erlbaum, 9th Grade Rebbe***Chanukah Questions**

1. What are words associated with Chanukah that contain within the letters shin and mem (6 answers)?
2. Where is there a hint to Chanukah from the first chapter in the Torah?
3. Which encampment found in Parshas Masei perhaps alludes to the holiday of Chanukah?
4. Where is the first time that a Milchamah - war, occurs in the Torah?
5. Where does Yavan appear in the Torah?
6. Which kings are named or alluded to in the Maoz Tzur? (3 answers)

**Answers**

1. The following words contain the letters shin and mem: shemen - oil, shemonah - eight, chashmonaim - the family of priests who led the rebellion, sham - there (the last word of the phrase found in the driedel), shamash - the light on the chanukia from which we light from, Shimon - one of the sons of Matisyahu
2. The 25th word of the Torah is "Or - "light" when Hashem states "Vayehi Or" - "let there be light" (Bereishis 1:3).
3. The twenty fifth encampment of Benei Yisroel in the Midbar was a place called Chashmonah (Bamidbar 33:29). The holiday of Chanukah is celebrated beginning on the twenty fifth day of the month of Kislev. This was the day that the Jews rested after battling the Syrian-Greeks. The heroes of the holiday were the priests known as the Chashmonaim, a name linguistically similar to the name of the 25th encampment.
4. In Parshas Lech Lecha the Torah describes the war of the four kings against the five kings that led to the capture of Lot and him being rescued by Avraham (Bereishis 14:2).
5. Yavan is a son of Yefes, the son of Noach (Bereishis 10:2).
6. Pharaoh, king of Mitzraim, is mentioned in the second stanza. Zerubavel, who is mentioned in the third stanza, is chosen by Hashem to be the first king of the second Temple era (Chagai 2:23). Aggag, king of Amalek (Shmuel I 15:8), is alluded to in the fourth stanza to describe Haman Ha-Rasha, who descends from Aggag.



**First Aliyah:** Pharaoh had a dream of seven fat cows and seven skinny cows that came out of the Nile. In the first dream the fat cows proceeded to consume the skinny ones. Pharaoh had another dream similar to the first. In this dream seven healthy ears of grain were eaten by seven thin ears. None of Pharaoh's wise men were capable of interpreting the dreams to Pharaoh's satisfaction. Pharaoh's wine butler then informed Pharaoh about Yosef who had correctly interpreted his dreams while in prison. Pharaoh ordered Yosef's release and he came before the king.

**Second Aliyah:** Pharaoh recounted his dreams to Yosef. Yosef told Pharaoh that the dreams had the same message: there would be seven years of plentiful crops and harvests, immediately followed by seven years of severe famine. Yosef proposed a plan to save the surplus from the 7 years of plenty for the 7 years of famine.

**Third Aliyah:** Pharaoh appointed Yosef as viceroy of Egypt, and placed him in charge of collecting food as Yosef had advised. The seven years of plenty arrived and Yosef implemented his strategy to save food for the years of famine. Yosef married Osnas, the daughter of Potiphera, and she bore him two sons: Manashe and Ephraim.

**Fourth Aliyah:** The years of famine then arrived. Yosef sold the stored food to all who needed. Because of the widespread famine, Yaakov sent all of his sons — with the exception of Binyamin — to buy food in Egypt. The brothers arrived and stood before Yosef, but did not recognize him. When the brothers asked for food, Yosef dealt with them harshly, accused them of espionage, and incarcerated them all for three days.

**Fifth Aliyah:** On the third day, Yosef released them all, aside for Shimon, whom he held hostage. He told the rest of the brothers to return to Canaan and return with their youngest brother, Binyamin. The brothers recognized that this was their punishment for the sale of Yosef, and expressed regret for their deed. Yosef instructed his servants to return the money that the brothers used, to pay for the food in the sacks of grain they were given. The brothers arrived back in Canaan and recounted the entire episode to Yaakov. He initially refused to send Binyamin, but eventually, after Yehudah personally guaranteed Binyamin's safe return home, Yaakov allowed him to go.

**Sixth Aliyah:** The brothers arrived in Egypt. Yosef instructed his palace supervisor to invite the brothers to join him for a meal. When the brothers came, they were reunited with Shimon. Yosef arrived, and the brothers presented him with the gift they had prepared.

**Seventh Aliyah:** Upon seeing his brother Binyamin, Yosef was overcome with emotion, which he concealed. The brothers sat down and enjoyed a feast, culminating in Yosef presenting them all with gifts. He gave Binyamin (his only full brother) more gifts than the others. Yosef had his royal goblet planted in Binyamin's sack of food unbeknownst to him. After the brothers left, Yosef then sent his officers to chase after the brothers and "discover" the goblet. The brothers were all brought back to Yosef, who demanded that Binyamin remain behind as his slave.



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# 10-Minute Halacha Shiur

Given by Rabbi Aryeh Lebowitz on yutorah.org

Transcribed by Yosef Axelrod

## Why Do We Spin The Dreidel On Chanukah?



□ What are the sources for playing Dreidel

□ 1. The most perpetuated reason for why we play dreidel is recorded in the Otzer Minhagei Yeshurun. It is the classic story of how the Jews would hide and learn the outlawed Torah, and when the Greeks would come, they would whip out their dreidels and pretend to be playing a game. However, this explanation was only first put in print in 1890 by a Rav in Pittsburgh who says it in the name of one of his friends. This isn't the strongest source, and that sefer even quotes a minhag to play cards for the same reason. The Bnei Yissaschar says that we do it because we are saying that this neis is such a part of our lives during Chanukah, that we are even being mefarsem it during our non-Torah time. The Siach Sarfei Kodesh says that it is very similar to the idea of giving candies to the children at the seder. We want to be mefarsem the neis for the children here so they will stay up. The issue with this is that the hadlakas neiros isn't late enough to necessitate something to help the kids stay up. Dan Rab-inowitz, who runs the Seforim Blog, did research and wrote an article several years ago that asserted that playing dreidel originates from an old German game from the 16th century, and the letters on the dreidel are just the transliteration of the letters from German, which meant the same thing as the general instructions we use today ("G" would get all, "H" would get half, etc.). The first Jewish records are from the 18th century. However, one should not think that every vort about the dreidel is now bogus because even though they are not factually accurate, they still portray the attitude of great Gedolei Yisrael about this minhag and about Chanukah in general. So even though these ideas are not "technically" factually accurate, they point us to the meaning we should be getting out of this minhag.

□ 2. The Tzura of the Dreidel (the letters): The most

□ classic explanation is that the four letters are an acronym for Neis Gadol Hayah Sham. This is the accepted explanation and the reason why many in Israel write a Pei instead of a Shin - to indicate that the miracle happened "here" (in Israel). The Imrei Pinchas says that the gematria of these letters is the same as Mashiach because there is a sense of Mashiach during Chanukah. The Sefer Ben Beisi says that the letters are rashei taivos for the two mitzvos of Chanukah - Hallel and menorah - and they stand for Neir Shemen Hallel Gadol (others say Neiros Shmoneh Gmar Hallel - full Hallel). Others say they're the same letters as Goshen, where Yosef sends his brothers in next week's parsha. We specifically mention it on Chanukah because that is where Yosef sends his brothers to avoid the negative influence of the goyim. That is what we are celebrating on Chanukah: our resistance against assimilation. The Bnei Yissaschar says that the letters relate to different Galiyos (exiles). The Nun is the neshama, when we are spiritually oppressed; the Gimel is the guf, when we are physically oppressed; the Shin, which is actually a Sin, stands for sachel, when our minds are oppressed with bad ideologies and thoughts; the Hei is hakol, when we face all of these challenges. These actually relate to four Galiyos: Persia and Haman are Gimel because they tried to physically annihilate us, Nun is Bavel because they stopped the Karbonos, Shin is the Greeks because they threatened us on an intellectual level, and Hei is Edom. The Bnei Yissaschar and Imrei Noam have a Hakpadah that the dreidel should be made out of wood. The Bnei Yissoscher also gives a famous explanation of why the dreidel is spun from the top, compared to the gragger on Purim which is spun from the bottom. He says it's because the shemen was a "top-to-bottom" neis - it was totally from Hashem. This is unlike Purim, which was a "bottom-to-top" neis, because it be-

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# SPARKS OF CHASSIDUS



*With Akiva  
Magder*

As we are enjoying the kedusha of Chanukah, you may be wondering why we play dreidel. Taken at face value, dreidel is a game that kids play commemorating what the times were like under the rule of Greece. Back then, kids would be learning and as soon as the Greeks would come in, they would put away the sefer and start playing dreidel. This is a nice way to remember our history, but why has this tradition continued to this very day? There must be something much deeper behind the dreidel, being that it is a staple in the Chanukah festivities.

The Bnei Yissaschar expounds on the dreidel, uncovering many deep secrets. He starts off by saying that when the pauc says: "He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph, to point the way before him to Goshen. So when they came to the region of Goshen" (Beresheis 46:28), the pasuk is in the context of Yaakov's household desecrating to Mitzrayim. Why does the Torah specifically use the word "Goshnah" (to Goshen)? It could have said l'Goshen. The Bnei Yissaschar's answer is truly incredible! It is known that there are 4 exiles of the Jewish people. Baval, Madai, Yavan, and Edom. What about galus Mitzrayim, why isn't it counted in the list? In reality, galus Mitzrayim is the root of all the galusim. This is represented by the fact that each galus covers up one letter of Hashem's name, Yud-K-Vav-K. Galus Mitzrayim corresponds to the 'kutzo shel yud', which is a little hook at the top of the yud. Being that the above quoted pasuk is the beginning of the descent to galus for the house of Yaakov as a whole, the word "Goshnah" had to be used. These 4 letters each correspond to a different galus. Gimmel- gufani, physical-

*(Continued on page 8)*

*(Dylan Broder- Continued from page 1)*

ternal. In fact, the Maharal writes that the word Yavan consist of three of only a handful of hebrew letters that do not have an inside, representing that Yavanm is all about external looks and not about the penimiyus, the internal. Sheim seems like a very arbitrary name, the name of Sheim actually means name! It seems like his parents got lazy thinking of baby names. But that is not the case. In Jewish thought the name of something represents its true essence. Additionally, the Neshama represents the internal, more spiritual aspect of a person. Furthermore, the middle part of the word Neshama spells Sheim. Sheim represents that deep down, in his or her Neshama, a Jew knows what's right.

Real growth that lasts comes from the inside. Chanukah is a lashon Chincuh, rededication to our internal and spiritual Neshama. This is all represented by the Menorah. Rav Aryeh Cohen explains that the Gematria of Mehadrin min Hamehadrin, a special concept of beautifying the mitzvos, specifically is by the Menorah. The phrase equals the gematria of Teshuva, to return; returning to a state where your Neshamos were totally pure and building and growing on that. The Menorah emphasizes this point as well. Fire serves two

*(Continued on page 5)*



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## SHARE YOUR LIGHT

### JOBE SILVER 10TH GRADE

In Masseches Shabbos there is an intriguing machlokes about Chanukah candles. On Chanukah, if a person has a limited amount of candles, and a shamash is unavailable, could one use one of the candles to light the others?

Rav holds that one cannot use one of the candles to light the others, because the Gemara says “ka mach-chish mitzvah,” which translates to “do not diminish the Mitzvah,” and inevitably some of the wax or oil would fall, diminishing the first candle. Therefore, Rav says do not do anything that could lessen the fire of the first candle. Shmuel disagrees with Rav and says we pasken that using the first candle to light the rest would be permissible, but why?

Rabbi Sacks explains with the following scenario. Imagine two Jews, both religious and committed to Judaism. One of them says he must not get involved with Jews who are less religious than he is because if he does, his own standards will fall. He believes his light will be diminished, which is Rav’s view.

Shmuel disagrees, and he provides the following reason. When the other Jew uses the flame of his faith to light a candle in someone else’s life, that Jew’s faith is not diminished, it grows. This is because there is now more Jewish light in the world. When it comes to ruchnius, the more we share, the more we have. If we share our knowledge, faith, or love with others, we the Jewish people will gain even more, and that’s the view of Shmuel.

*(Dylan Broder- Continued from page 4)*

purposes: to give light and to burn. The light comes from the depths of the flame, but the power to burn is external. Fire has the power to destroy all that is considered external and not spiritual. The Neis of the Menorah was that there was light (internal) without the oil burning up (external)!

This idea is especially emphasized on Chanukah Rosh Chodesh. The sun is the same as a flame, it gives light but can also burn and scorch the Earth. Rosh Chodesh celebrates the new moon. The moon is like Sheim, it is like the Neis of the Menorah. The moon is a reflection of the sun; it only takes and reflects the light, the internal, but the moon does not have the power to burn. Rosh Chodesh, especially when it coincides with Chanukah, celebrates the true essence of the Jew. Just like the moon begins its waxing on Rosh Chodesh, when a Jew recognizes and celebrates his true essence it allows him to grow to new spiritual heights.

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# A DEEPER MEANING OF 2025

By Ephraim Boczko, 10th Grade

Across most of the Chumashim, a siman for the number of pesukim in each Parsha is listed at the end of each Parsha. At the end of Mikeitz, for example, the fact that there are 146 Pesukim is alluded to by the Siman of Yechizkayihu, as the Gematriyah of Yechizkayihu is 146. However, at the end of Mikeitz, unlike any other Parsha, the Chumashim write the number of words in Mikeitz — 2025 — in addition to a Siman about the number of Pesukim.

The Gra offers some insight as to why the Chumashim offer this strange and unique addition. The Gra understands that the purpose of this addition of a word count is to solve the dispute regarding the number of words in Mikeitz. While some view the word “Avreich” as one word, others view it as two words. Thus, the purpose of the number 2025 is to settle this conflict concerning whether the word “Avreich” is one word or in fact two.

However, another understanding of the number 2025 is that it alludes to the Yom Tov of Chanukah. The Baruch Sheamar, which is the Pirush of the Torah Temimah on the Siddur, explains the connection between 2025 and Chanukah. 8 Neiros multiplied by 250 — the gematriyah of Neir — equals 2000. 2000 plus 25 — the day of Kisleiv upon which Chanukah falls out — equals 2025. From this explanation, we see that, in addition to the numerous connections between the story of Mikeitz and Chanukah, there is a further connection between Chanukah and Mikeitz that is embedded within the Parsha.

(Adapted from Rabbi Rosner’s Parshah Shiur 5770)

*(Yosef Fertig- Continued from page 1)*

Shulchan Aruch even says in Orach Chaim 670:2, that there is no obligation to have a seudah on Chanukah. Even more so, there’s an idea that Chanukah is specifically supposed to be the holy within the mundane. We still do regular things! This begs the following question: How can we compare Chanukah with the other Yomim Tovim and group it together with them?

In order to answer this question, we must first analyze the Mitzvah of lighting the menorah on a deeper level in order to really understand its significance. The Torah says in Behaloscha that the seven lamps of the menorah in the Beis Hamikdash “will cast light”. The Sforno explains this to mean that all of the lamps will “provide illumination and cast a Heavenly light upon Bnei Yisroel”. According to the midrash, this spiritual light still exists in our time when we light the menorah on Chanukah. In Derech Hashem, the Ramchal writes that by every Yom Tov in the Torah, Hashem brought a great light into the world through a miracle. A similar light will shine again on every anniversary of that day that it occurred.

We now can see that all Yomim Tovim, including Chanukah, have a unique aspect to them. A certain spiritual light is brought into this world on every Yom Tov when we commemorate the miracles that Hashem has done for us. The Torah isn’t comparing Chanukah to all other Yomim Tovim in the traditional sense, rather in the spiritual status that every Yom Tov holds. On every Yom Tov, we are bringing some of the spiritual light from the original miracle. May we all merit to be inspired by and connect to the holy light of Chanukah and to keep the inspiration within us!

Adapted from Dorash Dovid

# What Really Matters

Ariel Kunin, 9th Grade

There are 2 miracles associated with Chanukah. One miracle, explained by the Gemara on Shabbos 21B, is that the oil which should have lasted 1 night, lasted 8 nights. Therefore, we celebrate Chanukah for 8 nights and add a candle each night. The prayer of Al Hanisim, which we insert into our She-moneh Esreh and Birchas Hamazon, explains the other miracle, that the Jews were miraculously successful in their military fight against the Greeks. In Al Hanisim, it explains that the miracle of Chanukah was that the many were delivered into the hand of the few, and the strong into the hand of the weak. So, what is the connection between Chanukah, the parsha of Vayeshev (which this year takes place the week before Chanukah), and the parsha of Mikeitz? The answer is that in both Vayeshev and Mikeitz there were dreams. In Vayeshev, we read about Yosef's dreams. His first dream was that all the brothers' bundle of grains bowed to his bundle of grain. His second dream was that the sun, moon, and 11 stars (corresponding to his family), were bowing down to him. In Parshas Mikeitz, we are told of Pharaoh's dreams. In his first dream, 7 ugly, thin cows ate 7 fat, healthy cows. In his second dream, 7 thin, dried-up heads of grain swallowed up 7 heads of full, ripe grain. Yosef dreamt that the majority can be subordinate to the minority. In Pharaoh's dreams, the weak conquered the strong. The common factor of these dreams is that the quality of strength is greater than the quantity of strength. Al Hanisim explains that although the Greeks were stronger and larger in number, they lost to the Jews who were righteous torah believers. The Jews were of a greater quality than the Greeks. The victory of the Jews represents a victory of quality over quantity.

Rav Yechezkel Sarna, the famed Rosh Yeshiva of the Chevron Yeshiva, used to ask school children whether the Maccabees were strong or weak. The children always responded to the sage that the sons of Matisyahu were strong. Rav Sarna would challenge the children and respond, that in the Al Hanisim prayer for our miraculous salvation on Chanukah, we thank God that he delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, meaning the Maccabees. Rav Sarna explained that the Greeks were stronger in their military might; yet, because of the unique quality of the Jews, that they believed in Hashem, the Greeks were unable to defeat them.

We can't forget the miracle as explained by the gemara in shabbos. The additions of a candle to the Chanukah menorah each day teaches that in Torah and mitzvos, we should never be content with what was done yesterday. Each day we must strive to do more to improve our character, and to keep the mitzvos.

(10 MH- Continued from page 3)

gan through human intervention. Purim was more of a neis nistar, and it was not as openly clear that everything was from Hashem.

3. The Gameplay Itself: The Nitei Gavriel quotes that the general minhag of the rebbeim is to play one night for just half an hour, as not to be mevatel too much time. He even quotes that the Chasam Soffer did it. However, he writes that we should be mevatel this minhag due to the intense Yetzer Harah that we face nowadays to just totally waste large amounts of time, and that we should never give in to this Yetzer Harah.

## Halachic Issues

1. Gambling: Many gamble in their play of dreidel. It is well known and quoted in the Shulchan Aruch that it is assur to be mesachek b'kubiya. The Mishna Brurah in Hilchos Shabbos says that even raffling off the best piece of food at the Shabbos table is assur, and he asserts that the Shulchan Aruch himself

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said that it is even an issue during the week because it is equivalent to being mesachek b'kubiya. However, to defend our minhag, the Nitei Gavriel quotes the Shefa Chayim who says that since on Chanukah we are all "K'ish Echad B'leiv Echad," the unhappiness that we feel when we lose in gambling (which is what causes the issur) is gone, and we are happy for the winner instead, even to the point that we are happier for them than they are for themselves. He even continues to say that this achdus and love that we feel when losing dreidel is the whole point of the minhag of dreidel. The Nitei Gavriel suggests that we should use a very small amount so that this may actually be true. Rabbi Lebowitz suggests not to use actual currency, but rather to use the currency just to keep score, and then divide it at the end of the game evenly. Obviously, gambling is a very bad idea in general and especially under the cloak of religious pretexs.

### Conclusion

Even though the idea of playing dreidel may not have purely Jewish origins, many Jewish ideas can be gleaned from it.

(Sparks- Continued from page 4)

ity. Shin- sichli, intellectuality. Nun- nafshi, spirituality. Hei- hakol, everything (this is galus Edom which shares characteristics of all the galusim). Therefore, Yaakov specially sends down Yehuda who represent mashiach (which is gematria goshnah), to nullify the evilness of the nachash- snake (which is also gematria goshnah), and bring a feeling of "Hashem melech, Hashem malach, Hashem yimloch" (which is gematria mashiach/goshnah) to get us out of galus.

These four letters of 'Goshnah' happen to also be the same letters that are on the dreidel. Since each letter represents a different galus, each letter is on a seperate side of the dreidel. These are then spun around a middle place which bnei yisrael represent. The spinning of these letters accomplishes all that was mentioned above. This is why the minhag is specifically to use a wooden dreidel, which is based off of a pasuk in Yechezkel (37:19) "Thus said the Lord GOD: I am going to take the stick of Joseph—which is in the hand of Ephraim—and of the tribes of Israel associated with him, and I will place the stick of Judah upon it and make them into one stick; they shall be joined in My hand." This explains why "He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph...": because these two tzadikim represent the 2 mashiach's, Mashiach Ben Yosef and Mashiach Ben David. In this light, dreidel takes on a whole new spin. We are not just playing a fun game along with friends and family, we are actually displaying our anticipation for mashiach and our hopes to get out of galus.



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*(SOG- Continued from page 10)*

ryone immediately complied. "Esteemed gentlemen," he began. "Around 30 years ago, I was present among a committee of rabbis who excommunicated the Baal Shem Tov. My intentions were earnest. "On my 70th birthday, as I learned the tractate of Menachot, my eyes closed of their own accord. A man appeared in my dream. "I am the Baal Shem Tov," he declared. "You and your associates had me and my students ostracized, but you failed to first enquire and investigate as Jewish law requires. Recant your position!" "I awoke distraught, his words ringing in my ears. He was right. When we issued our indictment, we had not properly investigated. The dream compelled me to conduct my own research, and I followed the Chassidim and their ways closely. The error of my ways was immediately seen — the Chassidim are G-d fearing people, observing the Torah most scrupulously. Thus, I withdrew from the opposition. "Since then, over the course of 20 years, I still follow them, and the more I do, the further I realize how profoundly erroneous are the controversy and backlash surrounding them." The crowd stood in rapt silence as Reb Shlomo straightened up and faced Rabbi Shneur Zalman. "I'm 93 years old, and standing here today I wholeheartedly say, 'Blessed are You... who has granted us life, sustained us and enabled us to reach this occasion to meet face to face with a true leader of Israel, a true scholar, who merited to draw thousands of Jews closer to their Father in Heaven and elevate Torah to its fullest extent.'" Reb Shlomo's emotional proclamation set Sventiany and the surrounding towns abuzz. Once Shabbat ended, hundreds proceeded to visit Rabbi Shneur Zalman, who received them till the early hours of the morning. Reb Shlomo, once so opposed, can now be credited for spurring Chassidus into wider public acceptance. Adapted from Chabad.org

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## STORIES OF GREATNESS

### TOLD OVER BY: HILLEL GOLUBTCHIK

In the second part of the 18th century, the fledgling Chassidic movement faced stiff hostility, fueled by a bona fide suspicion that perhaps its followers weren't G-d fearing people, coupled with a bevy of false reports crafted by individuals seeking to hurt the movement. Rabbi Shneur Zalman of Liadi, founder of Chabad, made it his mission to sway public opinion by exposing the detractors to the truth about Chassidism and its adherents. In synagogues packed with spectators, in cities such as Minsk and Smilovitz, he held grand debates with his opponents, proving the claims of Chassidism's boorishness untrue. Time and again, his words found their mark. Great scholars, persuaded by the breadth of his genius, became ardent followers. Our story begins in the winter of 1786. Rabbi Shneur Zalman was on his way to Sventiany (Shventzian), Lithuania, whose Jewish population were predominantly opposed to Chassidism. Word of his arrival traveled quickly through the town, spreading to the hundreds of Chassidim who lived nearby. On Shabbat Noach, Sventiany swelled with Chassidic guests. For two weeks Rabbi Shneur Zalman hardly left the lectern. His discourses ranged in topic from Gemara and Halacha to the esoteric realms of Kabbalah and Chassidus. Many of the scholars in attendance had traveled to Sventiany specifically to attend these lectures. As hoped for, Rabbi Shneur Zalman's visit created an indelible impression, and before long, many of Sventiany's illustrious young men adopted Chas-

sidic customs. At the age of 93, Reb Shlomo Rafaels was one of Sventiany's oldest residents. He was well known and admired both as a scholar and a wealthy businessman, retired from his massive and very successful spirit manufacturing and distribution operation. All ten of his children had married into well-known, respected families. People spoke of him epitomizing the word "success." Thirty years prior, Reb Shlomo placed himself at the frontlines of the war against Chassidism, driven by sincere but misguided convictions that Chassidism was just another heretical incarnation of the Sabbatean movement. His deep pockets provided a majority of the funding necessary for the opposition's pushback, and in 1757 he traveled to Vilna to witness a group of prominent rabbis excommunicate the Baal Shem Tov. During this period of disquiet, not a single Chassid dared to step foot inside Sventiany. Reb Shlomo continued his battle for seven years, before suddenly retracting his funding and ceasing all further involvement. An envoy of rabbis visited him to learn the reason for his withdrawal, but he would say nothing. When asked whether he believed the Chassidim to be G-d fearing Jews, Reb Shlomo affirmed there was no doubt in his mind they were. In 1786, however, during Rabbi Shneur Zalman's visit, the reason finally surfaced. It was before Mincha on Shabbat, just as Rabbi Shneur Zalman finished speaking before a large crowd. Reb Shlomo stood up and called for silence. Even-

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