

Chanukah Facts

Did You Know?

Why is Chanukah eight nights long?

The Talmud asks and answers: The sages taught: On the 25th of Kislev, the days of Chanukah are eight. One may not eulogize on them, and one may not fast on them. This is because when the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they defiled all the oils that were in the Sanctuary. And when the Hashmonean (Maccabean) monarchy overcame them and emerged victorious over them, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that remained with the seal of the High Priest. And there was sufficient oil there to light the candelabrum for only one day. A miracle occurred, and they lit the candelabrum from it for eight days. The next year, the sages instituted those days and made them holidays with the recitation of Hallel and prayers of thanksgiving.

But there's more. Seven represents all that is found within this world. There are seven days of the week, seven classical planets and seven musical notes. In fact, the world itself was created in seven days.

Then there is the number eight, which represents that which is above, that which does not fit into the neat slots that hold the bits and pieces of our lives. The number eight evokes the transcendent and the G-dly. Eight is the number of miracles.

Light After Dark

The Chanukah candles must burn after night falls, since their purpose is to bring light into darkness. But they need to be lit early enough that someone will be around to see them. The lights need to be seen so they can serve their function of reminding others of the great miracle G-d wrought.

The Silent Holiday

Chanukah is the only Jewish holiday not mentioned in the 24 books of the Bible. That's because our Holy Scriptures (TaNaCh) was sealed by the Men of the Great Assembly, who flourished two centuries before the Chanukah miracle. Nor does it have a tractate in the Talmud that discusses its observances. Instead, it gets a by-the-way mention in Tractate Shabbat. In the context of discussing Shabbat candles, the Chanukah candles (and by extension, the Chanukah

holiday) get their time in the Talmudic sun.

Live & Laugh

Sadie tells Maurice, "You're a *sblamazel*. You always were a *sblamazel* and you always will be a *sblamazel*. You look, act and dress like a *sblamazel*. You'll be a *sblamazel* until the day you die! And if they ran a world-wide competition for *sblamazels*, you would be the world's second biggest *sblamazel*!"

"Why only second place?" Maurice asks.

"Because you're a *sblamazel*!" Sadie screams.

Calendar

- ◆ Shacharis 8:30 am; Shtibl 8:45 am
- ◆ Brocha in the Seeff Hall in appreciation of all those who do so much for the Shul.
- ◆ **Smorgasbord of Shiurim**
- ◆ Mincha: 6:15 pm
- ◆ Shabbos ends: 7:27 pm
- ◆ **Remember Tal U'matar**

Chanukah

12 December - 20 December

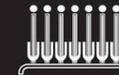
- ◆ First light is on **Tuesday 12 December**. Make sure to **light the Menorah at home** every evening after nightfall for 8 days.
- ◆ **Full Hallel** is recited daily. Recite **Al Hanissim** in the Amidah and Bentching.
- ◆ Have a **Chanukah Party**. Tell the story, enjoy latkes or doughnuts and give your children **Chanukah Gelt**.

- ◆ The **Scottish Leader Signature** whiskey at Shul is sponsored by **Distell** & available for purchase at **Norman Goodfellows**.
- ◆ **Nathan Fine** of I.deal Furnishers at Midway Mall, Bramley Gardens wishes all congregants a Good Shabbos. Call 011-887-5456/082-854-5706. **Furniture, Bedding & Appliances**.
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- ◆ Acknowledgements: Chabad.org
- ◆ Please take Good Shabbos Sydenham home if you will only carry it within the Eiruv.



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Parshas Vayeishev

21 Kislev 5778

Hello Howzit?

by: Rabbi Yossy Goldman

Would you believe that Hello Howzit can be a religious question? And that it even bears Biblical significance?

This week we read the dramatic story of Joseph - the technicolour dream coat, his sibling rivalries and ultimately his descent to Egypt, sold into slavery. After being framed by his master's wife for scorning her attempts at seduction, young Joseph finds himself incarcerated in an Egyptian jail. There he meets the Pharaoh's butler and baker and correctly interprets their respective dreams. Later, when Pharaoh himself will be perturbed by his own dreams, the butler will remember Joseph and he will be brought from the dungeon to the royal court. His dream analysis will satisfy the monarch and the young Hebrew slave boy will be catapulted to prominence and named Viceroy of Egypt.

How did it all begin? It began with Joseph in prison noticing that the butler and baker were looking somewhat depressed. "And Joseph came to them in the morning and he saw them and behold they were troubled. He asked Pharaoh's officials... 'Why do you look so bad today?'" They tell him about their disturbing dreams, he interprets them correctly and the rest is history.

But why did Joseph have to ask them anything at all? Why is it so strange to see people in prison looking sad? Surely in the dungeons depression is the norm? Wouldn't we expect most people in jail to look miserable?

According to the Lubavitcher Rebbe, the answer is that Joseph was exhibiting a higher

sense of care and concern for his fellow human beings. Torn away from his father and home life, imprisoned in a foreign land, he could have been forgiven for wallowing in his own miseries. Yet, upon seeing his fellow prisoners looking particularly unsettled, he was sensitive enough to take the time to enquire about their well being. In the end, not only did he help them, but his own salvation came about through that fateful encounter. Had he thought to himself, 'Hey, I've got my own problems, why worry about them?' he might have languished in prison indefinitely.

Sometimes, according to the Rebbe, a simple Hello Howzit can prove historic!

It's a lesson to all of us to be a little friendlier, to greet people, perhaps even to smile more often.

Some years ago, after studying in the Talmud how one of the great sages never allowed anyone else to greet him first but always made a point of initiating the greeting; I made a personal resolution to try and put it into practice. Every Shabbos, I walk quite a few kilometers to and from Shul. I pass by many fellow pedestrians, mostly black people. Rarely had any of them greeted me, but now I am the one to say Good Morning to them. They always respond, though I must confess that some do look rather surprised at the acknowledgment. In a country where for many years they were not recognised as full-fledged citizens, a simple Hello can become a very humanising experience. I heartily recommend the practice.

Certainly, we should not let a fellow Jew walk by without saying Good Shabbos.

When we meet someone we know and ask, "Hey,

how are you doing?” do we wait for the answer? Try this experiment. Next time you are asked how you are doing, answer “Lousy!” See if the other person is listening and responds or just carries on his merry way oblivious to your response.

Besides Joseph’s many outstanding qualities which we ought to try and emulate, in this rather simple passage Joseph reminds us to be genuinely interested in other people’s well being. And that it should not be beneath our dignity - nor should we be inhibited - to make an honest and sincere enquiry as to their condition. Who knows? It may not only change their lives, but ours.

Parsha Pointers

*Vayeishev: Artscroll Chumash pg 198;
Living Torah pg 183*

Jacob settles in Hebron with his twelve sons. His favorite is 17-year-old Joseph, whose brothers are jealous of the preferential treatment he receives from his father, such as a precious many-colored coat that Jacob makes for Joseph. Joseph relates to his brothers two dreams he has which foretell that he is destined to rule over them, increasing their envy and hatred towards him.

Shimon and Levi plot to kill him, but Reuben suggests that they throw him into a pit instead, intending to come back later and save him. While Joseph is in the pit, Judah has him sold to a band of passing Ishmaelites. The brothers dip Joseph’s special coat in the blood of a goat and show it to their father, leading him to believe that his most beloved son was devoured by a wild beast.

Judah marries and has three children. The eldest, Er, dies young and childless, and his wife Tamar is given in levirate marriage to the second son, Onan. Onan sins by spilling his seed and he, too, meets an early death. Judah is reluctant to have his third son marry her. Determined to have a child from Judah’s family, Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute and seduces Judah himself. Judah hears that his daughter-in-law has become pregnant and orders her executed for harlotry, but when Tamar produces some personal effects he left

with her as a pledge for payment, he publicly admits that he is the father. Tamar gives birth to twin sons, Peretz (an ancestor of King David) and Zerach.

Joseph is taken to Egypt and sold to Potiphar, the minister in charge of Pharaoh’s slaughterhouses. Potiphar’s wife desires the handsome and charismatic lad; when Joseph rejects her advances, she tells her husband that the Hebrew slave tried to force himself on her and has him thrown in prison.

In prison, Joseph meets Pharaoh’s chief butler and chief baker, both incarcerated for offending their royal master. Both have disturbing dreams, which Joseph interprets; in three days, he tells them, the butler will be released and the baker hanged. Joseph asks the butler to intercede on his behalf with Pharaoh. Joseph’s predictions are fulfilled, but the butler forgets all about Joseph and does nothing for him.

The Joseph Approach

By Rabbi Yitzi Hurwitz

In this week’s Parshah, Vayeishev, we read about Joseph. Despised by his brothers, sold into slavery and thrown into jail on false charges. An orphan, alone, in a foreign land. Yet you don’t get the feeling that Joseph was depressed or down at all. He seems positive, able to rise above and succeed in every situation.

How is Joseph able to stay positive? How can we be like Joseph and stay positive?

There are several approaches to take when knocked down with challenges. You can become a lifelong victim, adopting the “woe-is-me” mentality. This type of existence is a miserable one. Then there is the guy who can get up after being knocked down. Although this sounds admirable, it is very difficult and can be exhausting.

Then there is the “Joseph approach.” Joseph’s paradigm was the key to his positive outlook. Joseph saw himself as part of G-d’s plan, and he saw every situation as part of the plan. When you perceive the world from this perspective, every so-called challenge, knockdown, etc., is nothing more than part of the plan. Seen that way, you are never knocked down to begin with.

Our perspective is the key to our happiness. When we see only ourselves, we are stuck with the diffi-

culty of being knocked down, the pain, the hurt, the anguish and the suffering.

However, when we see everything as part of G-d’s plan, every situation is seen as an opportunity. The crazier the situation, the more meaning can be found in it. Instead of being knocked down, you are uplifted.

It is not easy to get past ourselves, but by doing so, we can see things from Joseph’s perspective. By seeing it all as part of G-d’s plan, we can overcome life’s challenges.

I have so much faith in our ability to be like Joseph, to always see our challenges to be purposeful, and to be able to lead with wisdom and grace. Yet we have too many challenges, and we have seen too much pain. It is time for G-d to let us all know how well we have done, and to send Moshiach. May he come soon.

The Black Carriage

By Rabbi Yerachmiel Tilles

Editor’s note: The 19th of Kislev is celebrated throughout the world as the day of the liberation of the founder of Chabad, Rabbi Schneur Zalman of Liadi (1745–1812). Rabbi Schneur Zalman was arrested by the Czarist regime under the accusation that his teachings undermined the imperial authority, and his release allowed the vigorous growth of Chassidism and the uninhibited dissemination of its teachings.

During the “intermediate days” of the festival of Sukkot of 1798, an armed officer arrived in Liozna to arrest Rabbi Schneur Zalman. Deciding that it would be advisable at this point to take the biblical advice, “Hide yourself for a brief moment” (Isaiah 26:20), the Rebbe slipped out a side door. The officer returned to his headquarters empty-handed.

Back in the house, the Rebbe decided that if the agent were to return, he would allow himself to be arrested. Some say that he decided this only after consultation with Rabbi Shmuel Munkes, one of his close chassidim, who happened to be in the Rebbe’s home at the time. Reb Shmuel reputedly said to the Rebbe: “If you are a true Rebbe, you have nothing to fear by being arrested. If you are not, you deserve whatever they will do to you (!), for what right did you have to deprive thousands of chassidim from enjoying the pleasures of this world?”

When the officer reappeared on the day after Simchat Torah, which fell on Thursday that year, the Rebbe did not hide. Within a few hours he was already seated in the infamous “Black Mary,” the carriage which was reserved by the Czarist regime for rebels who were under capital sentence. Covered on all sides with heavy black metal panels, and with no windows whatsoever, it was designed to cast dread on all those who saw it. Guarded by heavily armed soldiers, the ironclad black carriage pulled out of Liozna on Thursday night and clanked its fearsome way down the highway to Petersburg, via Vitebsk and Nevel.

At half past ten the next morning, some six hours before candle-lighting time, the Rebbe asked that they stop where they were until after Shabbat. The officer in charge ignored his request. A moment later the axles of the carriage broke. No sooner had they repaired them, than one of the horses collapsed and died. Fresh horses were brought, but they could not move the carriage from its place. By this time the gendarmes gathered that it would be impossible to press on with their journey against the Rebbe’s will, so they asked their prisoner if they could detour to a nearby village and spend the next day there. The Rebbe refused, but did agree that the carriage be moved off the highway to an adjacent field.

The spot at which the Rebbe spent that Shabbat is about three miles from the village of Seliba-Rudnia, which is near the town of Nevel. An old Chassid who survived into the twentieth century—Reb Michael of Nevel—used to relate that he knew chassidim who were able to point out the exact spot at which the Rebbe had spent that lonely Shabbat. He himself had gone there to see it with his own eyes. All the way there he had seen old and drooping trees on both sides of the road, but that memorable spot was marked by a tall tree with luxuriant foliage.

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