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## The Darkness of Yavan is Alive and Kicking

### Tiferes Shlomo on Festivals

The Neshama is called “the candle of Hashem”. This is alluded in the word נר (candle) which is an acronym for נפש רוח, two names which mean soul. Kabbalistically they represent different levels of the soul.

On Shabbos, there are restriction on what types of oils and wicks may be used for the Mitzvah of Shabbos candles. This is because of a concern that inferior oils or wicks will not burn brightly and one may tilt the lamp to make them burn brighter, which is forbidden on Shabbos.

The Gemara teaches that according to some of the sages, these restriction do not apply to the oils and wicks used for Chanukah candles. The Gemara teaches that those wicks and oils that may not be kindled on Shabbos, may be kindled on Chanukah.

Using the metaphor of a candle for the Neshama, the Tiferes Shlomo interprets the Gemara as follows.

Some souls do not become kindled and illuminated by Shabbos. Yet even these souls can become ignited by the power and G-dly light of Chanukah. This is why the Chanukah candles should preferably be placed lower than 10 Tefachim (approx. 80cm), alluding to their power to reach and illuminate even the lowest of souls.

This message is also alluded to in the ruling הדלקה עושה מצוה מצוה. Literally this means that the Mitzvah is fulfilled with the lighting. But it can also be read as saying the Mitzvah does the lighting, referring to the power of the Chanukah candles kindle souls.

One of the sages in the Gemara teaches כבתה זקוק לה - if it (the candle) became extinguished, we are obliged towards it (to relight it). In a deeper sense, this directive refers teaches us that when we see a soul that appears to have lost its light, we have an obligation to rekindle them with the power of the light of Chanukah.

The Four Exiles is a common idea in Jewish thought. It refers to the four exiles that the Jewish people would go through subsequent to the exile in Egypt.

The Mahara”l of Prague explains why there are specifically four exiles. The Four Exiles correspond to the four directions. The directions emerge and move away from a single, centre point. The centre point is the oneness of Hashem, the Torah and the Jewish people. Like the four directions, the four Exiles represent a departure, deviation and opposition to this oneness.

The Midrash teaches that the Four Exiles are alluded to in the opening verses of the Torah;

והארץ הייתה תהו ובהו וחשך על-פני תהום ורוח אלהים  
מרקפת על-פני המים

*And the earth was without form and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the spirit of G-d hovered over the surface of the waters.*

תהו (without form) - refers to the Babylonian exile. בהו (void) - represents the Persian/Median exile. חושך (darkness) - alludes to the Greek exile, and תהום (the depths) - is the exile of Edom (Rome).

The Mahra”l teaches that the Four Exiles correspond to different parts of the human psyche. The Greek exile reflects the *Koach Hasichli*, our intellectual capacity. The Greek empire was renowned for their intellectual greatness. They gave the world the great philosophers, mathematicians, authors and scientists.

So why do the sages liken the Greek Exile to darkness? Darkness would be a more appropriate description of the backward and brutish Babylonians or the cruel and barbaric Romans, but not the Greeks, who were a people of sophistication, wisdom and illumination.

The Chachamim were not fooled by the illumination and intellectual greatness of the Greeks. They did not see their wisdom as a source and force of light in the world. Behind the façade of sophistication lay something dark and morally corrupt.

Their wisdom lacked the central point of G-d, the source of absolute truth and unchanging morality that distinguishes between right and wrong. Without this foundation of immutable truth, sooner or later, the wisdom and illumination of Yavan would become a source of darkness, confusion and lost morally consciousness.

This is the uniqueness of Torah that the Chochma of Yavan lacked. Torah is Divine wisdom, G-d-given law and truth. In contrast to the darkness of Yavan, Torah is called Or – light.

The darkness of Yavan is alive and well today. Yavan lives-

on in the hallways of academia in our “top” universities. Institutions that were once held on a pedestal as beacons of light and ethics, have been revealed as cesspools of darkness, lies, warped values and antisemitic vitriol. Their deans cannot condemn calls for Jihad as genocidal and their students, supposedly the brightest minds, glorify terrorists.

And Yavan lives on in the International Criminal Court that was formed to uphold peace and justice, to prosecute crimes of genocide and war crimes. Yet this highest secular court in the world draws equivalence between the Prime Minister and Defense Minister of Israel to the terrorist leaders of Hamas. They do not see a difference between a terrorist entity that deliberately targeted civilians and the IDF who are fighting an existential war and have gone beyond what any army in history has done to minimise civilian casualties.

Yavan lives on in the halls of the United Nations, an institution revered as the champion of morality. This illustrious institution is not bothered by real atrocities being committed around the world and instead focuses on Israel as the source of all evil in the world.

In 1984, when Bibi Netanyahu served as the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, the Lubavitcher Rebbe told him “you are going to a house of lies and darkness. Remember, in a hall of darkness, if you light one small candle, its light will be seen from afar. Your mission is to light a candle for truth and for the Jewish people”. He quoted this story in the General Assembly in his speech as Prime Minister in 2011.

Like the Chashmonaim, we have to stand steadfast against the ideology of Lavan. With courage, conviction and Jewish pride, we must expose the darkness for what it is. We must take the pure oil, sealed with the seal of the Kohen Gadol that represents the incorruptible truth, holiness and Divine morality of the Torah that is sealed with Emes, the seal of Hashem. And with this oil, we light a small candle of true light.

We light our light outdoors to illuminate the dark streets of the world that perpetuate the darkness of Yavan. This small light in a place of darkness will eventually be seen by good and honest people who choose to see the truth. Like the Chanukah lights, a single small flame of truth will grow and spread, until all of the lies are exposed and the darkness is vanquished.

When this light fills the world, the spirit of G-d will hover over the water, alluding to the spirit of Moshiach and our triumph over exile. The entire world will return to the epicentre, where the oneness of Hashem will be revealed and recognised by all of the nations of the world.

## Public Menora Lightings with a Bracha

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

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In last week's edition, we discussed the Minhag of lighting the Menora in Shule and the basis for making a Bracha. In this edition we will discuss the topic of lighting Menoras in other public places such as shopping centres, public squares, parks and iconic sights. Such gatherings are arranged by Chabad centres around the world.

Many of the great Poskim of the last generation had a problem with public Menora lightings. They argued that one could not make a Bracha on public lightings and to do so would be considered a Bracha Levatala (a blessing in vain).

When addressing the issue of public Menora lightings, the Poskim all draw on the Minhag of lighting in Shule, that was discussed in last week's edition. The question is whether we can extrapolate from the Minhag of lighting in Shule to permit lighting with a Bracha at public gatherings elsewhere.

First, we need to explore whether the reasons for the Minhag of lighting in Shule apply to public lightings.

If lighting in Shule is a remembrance for the Beis Hamikdash where the miracle took place, this would be limited to a Shule which is referred to as a Mikdash Me'at, a miniature sanctuary.

The reason of being Moitzi guests does not apply to public Menora lightings, just as it no longer applies to lighting in Shule since there are no guests.

The reason of being Moitzi those who do not know how to light or are unable to light would apply to public Menora lightings. However, the Shulchan Aruch rules like the Rivash that no one is Yoitzai with the lighting in Shule.

The reasons of Pirsumei Nissa and publicly sanctifying Hashem's name with a large crowd would apply to public Menora lightings just as they do in Shule.

Despite this similarity, many Poskim rules against making Brachos at public gatherings outside of Shule.

### Rulings Against Making a Bracha

The Minchas Yitzchak<sup>1</sup> writes that the great Rabbis including the Rivash and Chacham Tzvi were pressed to justify making a Bracha even on the established custom of lighting in a Shule. Therefore, we cannot go beyond this to permit it at other gatherings.

A similar approach is taken by Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg<sup>2</sup> who writes "Look how much ink was spilled on the matter of lighting in Shule and how it is possible to make a Bracha over it. Indeed, many of the great sages of former generations were careful not to make a Bracha on lighting in Shule... Therefore, it is clear and obvious that we do not have the authority to add to this and make the blessings when lighting at parties." He concludes that it would be considered a Bracha Levatala.

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach<sup>3</sup> and the Shevet Halevi<sup>4</sup> also ruled in the negative.

### Ruling in Support of Making a Bracha

In his responsa, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef<sup>5</sup> notes that most of the contemporary Poskim forbid making Brachos. Nonetheless, based on the reason of Pirsumei Nissa, those who make a Bracha "have on whom to rely". As an extra precaution, they should daven Maariv at the hall after lighting the Menora so that the place resembles a Shule.

Rabbi Binyomin Zilber (Bnei Brak) addressed this topic in a number of responsa in Shaalos Uteshuvos Az Nidberu. His first Teshuvah<sup>6</sup> was a response to a question about lighting Chanukah candles for a youth gathering in the city square. He quotes the Rivash that the reason for lighting in Shule is because of Pirsumei Nissa.

He raises the following question: Even though we make a blessing on a Minhag such as 'Half Hallel', this is because it is a Minhag that established by Chaza"l. Therefore, we can say the Bracha אֲשֶׁר וְצוּנוּ, that Hashem has commanded us to do this. This is because we are obliged by the Torah to follow the rulings of the Chachamim. But how can we say this for a Minhag from the Rishonim?

Rabbi Zilber gives a novel explanation (Chiddush). Lighting outside is fundamental to the Mitzvah as established by Chaza"l. Even though we are Yoitzai by lighting indoors, the essential element of lighting outdoors for Pirsumei Nissa is missing. Since the Minhag Rishonim is to fulfil the element of the initial Rabbinic obligation of Chaza"l, we can say וְצוּנוּ.

He concludes that it is permissible to light in the public square with a Bracha, especially as most of the participants would not have been in Shule.

A number of Rabbis wrote to Rabbi Zilber, questioning his ruling. He addresses their challenges in subsequent Teshuvos<sup>7</sup>, bolstering his original Chiddush and Psak Halacha.

He writes that the primary reason for lighting in Shule is like the Rivash – because of Pirsumei Nissa. Lighting in public spaces is an even greater Pirsumei Nissa as more people will attend. (He also questions the assertion that Chanukah candles must be lit by a house. This suggests that one could be Yoitzai with the lighting as well).

He concludes that "I do not tell anyone that they must accept my opinion... however I stand by my original position".

In a subsequent Teshuvah<sup>8</sup>, he addressed the question of the Chacham Tzvi and how Sefardim could make a Bracha over a Minhag.

Elaborating on his original Chiddush, he writes that lighting the Menora outdoors in public has nothing to do with the custom of lighting in Shule. It is a continuation and fulfilment of the Mitzvah of Chaza"l to light the Menora outdoors. As such, it is not a Minhag but "Ikar Hadin" in fulfilling a Rabbinic Mitzvah. He qualifies that this applies only when the Menora is lit outdoors, but not to lighting in indoor places.

In discussing this Mitzva, the Rebbe explains that it is for Pirsumei Nissa and it is preferable to be done outside and in very public areas. The Rebbe also said that at the public lightings, one should announce that no one is Yoitzai and should light at home<sup>9</sup>.

The Rebbe never explicitly – in word or in writing – said anything about either making or not making a Bracha. However, presumably as the driver of this campaign, had there been a Halachic issue, the Rebbe would have raised it.

Indeed, in the years of 1990, 1991 and 1992, the Rebbe watched 'Chanukah Live'; An event which broadcast public Menora lightings from major cities across the world. This included lighting the Menora at public sites including the Eiffel Tower where the Brachos were said.

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| 1.6:65   | vaduyos 5747 volume 2 p98  |
| 2.Tzitz Eliezer 15:30  |  |
| 3.Quoted in Az Nidberu                                       | 10.The Menora was lit at the Kosel in Jerusalem and in a number of Shules, including the Melbourne Yeshivah.             |
| 4.4:65   | However, no proof can be brought from these locations as there is an established custom of lighting the Menora in Shule. |
| 5.Yabia Omer 7 OC 57:6                                       |  |
| 6.Volume 5 Siman 37,   |  |
| 7.Az Nidberu Volume 6 Siman 75 and Volume 11 Siman 32 and 34 |  |
| 8.Volume 11 Siman 32   |  |
| 9.Toras Menachem His-  |  |

