

THE CLANTON PARK HERALD

A quarterly newsletter, intended to provide timely and pertinent information to *shul* members

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From the Rav...

OUR TRIUMPH OR THEIR DOWNFALL?

For a while now, we've been anticipating tonight's Chanukah *lecht*. We've been waiting to see that solitary first night flame wax into a second night duet. Waiting to see how flame joins with flame, night after night, and apex in an eighth-night, eight-flame symphony of light. This rising crescendo of Chanukah *lecht* goes back to Hillel who was *mosef ve'holech*, who added a flame each night until it reaches that eighth-night apex. The *Gemara* in *Shabbos 21b* views this as an exemplar of *Maalin b'kodosh*, going up in matters of holiness, an exemplar of the growth that we're meant to seek in things of the spirit in general, and, in the sanctity that the Chanukah *lecht* is meant to recall, in particular. Yes, Hillel's practice of adding light after light, night after night, makes perfect sense.

And yet, Hillel's augmentation, sensible as it may have been, did not receive universal approbation. Shamai took quite the opposite approach. Shamai would kindle eight lights on the first night, seven lights on the second night and thereafter decreased the tally by one light each night until he climaxed with one light for that last night of Chanukah. That same *Gemara* in *Shabbos* puts Shamai's practice in perspective. The perspective is drawn by likening the *neiros* Chanukah to the *parai ha'chag*, to the Sukkos bull offerings. These offerings and their curious pattern of attrition are detailed at the end of Parshas Pinchas. We're told that thirteen bulls were offered as *korbanos* on the first day of Sukkos, twelve were offered on the second day, and that there was an incremental decrease of one bull each day thereafter until we finished the Yom Tov *korban* cycle with a seven bull offering. The final tally for the bulls brought over the course of seven days is seventy. Seventy is also the number that is traditionally used as a metaphor for the "seventy (non-Jewish) nations." The Pesikta de'Rav Kahana, following this metaphoric trail, assumes that these seventy bulls are alluding to the non-Jewish world, an allusion, that Rashi, in light of the incremental decrease, views as a metaphor of our enemies gradual weakening. Given that Chanukah is, to a large degree, about overcoming the antagonisms of that powerful non-Jewish world, the parallel to the *parai ha'Chag* is perfectly logical.

Yes, Shamai's practice of decreasing light after light, night after night, makes perfect sense.

Shamai and Hillel, they're both right, aren't they? Chanukah speaks to us about our victory over our Greek nemesis. It is, therefore, a celebration of our victory. Chanukah also speaks to us about the defeat of that same nemesis. It is, therefore, also a celebration of their defeat. Our victory and their defeat: they both occurred, they are both true, the disagreement between Hillel and Shamai is only over where to place the emphasis. Shamai sees a Chanukah that reminds us of evil's depths, of how evil has a way of self-destructing, of what it is that *Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu* wants us to avoid. Hillel, while, recognizing the undeniable truth of Shamai's outlook, urges us to channel our energies in a different direction. Hillel sees a Chanukah that reminds us of spiritual heights, of how good will prevail, of where it is that *Ha'Kadosh Baruch Hu* wants us to go; a focus on what can go right, rather than on what can go wrong. Within this argument, do you perhaps hear echoes of the classic Hillel-Shamai arguments that are quoted in *Shabbos 31a*? The *Gemara* there discusses a non-Jew who was willing to convert but only if he was taught the entire Torah while standing on one foot, or only if he was allowed to wear the *kohen gadol's* garments, or only if his conversion involved the written Torah exclusively. Shamai, focusing, perhaps, on what could go wrong, refused to convert him. Hillel, focusing, perhaps, on what could go right, was ready to take the chance.

Hillel and Shamai still resonate in so many arenas, most especially, in our attempt to raise moral, committed children in a world that is in direct dissonance to many of our basic moral values. We can, of course, focus our energies on fighting these demons. We can talk about how misguided much of contemporary culture is, about the emptiness of all the media noise. And to a degree, we should. But, as in other areas of *halachic* dissonance, perhaps it is Hillel's opinion that should prevail. Perhaps, as per Hillel, the focus should be on what is right and on what is good, on showing our children that our spiritual path is beautiful, stable and meaningful, not just in *olam ha'bah*, but also in *olam ha'zeh*, that our *yiddishkeit* allows for a symphony of familial and communal life that others can only begin to dream of. After sensing the beauty, all that

distracting noise will, in all probability, dissipate into the background. All that will remain will be the beautiful symphony of a committed Torah life.

Mazel Tovs

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Chayim and Tovit Rubin, on the bar-mitzvah of their son, Yissachar Aron (Sachi). Mazel to the grandparents, Rabbi and Mrs. Moshe Stern, and Mrs. Marlene Rubin.

Dr. Leibe and Leah Warner, on the bar-mitzvah of their son, Yair. Mazel tov to the grandparents, Sam and Freda Warner, Mark and Julie Sapir.

David and Cheryl Jenah, on the bar-mitzvah of their son, Ryan. Mazel tov to the grandparents, Mrs. Denise Jenah and David and Jenny Rybowski.

Howard and Chavi Lyons on the bat-mitzvah of their daughter, Tali. Mazel tov, as well to the grandparents, Dr. and Mrs. Yehudi Shields.

Arthur Herzig, on the engagement of his daughter, Shira, to Noah Turk, of Thornhill. Mazel tov to the choson's parents, Jonah and Elizabeth Turk. Mazel tov to the grandparents, David and Lea Herzig, Sara Frankel of Tel Aviv, Irving and Rose Bravman, Harry and Pnina Turk, and to the greatgrandmother, Fayga Rusinek.

Drs. Heshy and Esther Sturm, on the engagement of their daughter, Shira to Steven Botnick of Woodmere, New York. Mazel tov to the chasan's parents, Gerry and Ginny Pinsky, and to the grandparents, Agnes Sturm and Mr. and Mrs. David Weil.

Dave and Esther Taub, on the engagement of their daughter, Sara, to Shloimy Walden. Mazel tov to the kallah's parents, Nosson and Zeldy Walden. Mazel tov to the grandparents, Mrs. Piri Newman, Mrs. Eva Orbach, Mrs. Celia Walden.

Marvin and Judy Sigler, on the engagement of their son, Binyomin, to Nikki Reichmann. Mazel tov, as well, to the kallah's parents, Ephraim and Channie Reichmann, and to the grandparents, Abe and Lily Gartner.

Tommy and Judy Hofstedter, on the engagement of their daughter, Chana, to Moti Loeb of New York. Mazel tov, as well to the grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Sandy Hofstedter.

Hersch and Penny Kanner, on the marriage of their son, Baruch, to Aliza Weisberg, of Detroit. Mazel tov to the kallah's parents, Itzy and Ruchie Weisberg. Mazel tov to the grandparents, Mrs. Mozelle Kanner, Willie and Sara Wolfe and Mr. and Mrs. Leibush Steinmetz.

Arnold and Sally Rais, on the marriage of their son, Yehuda, to Etah Mael, of Chicago. Mazel tov, as well, to the kallah's parents, Dr. Dovid and Audrey Mael, and to the grandparents, Mrs. Mira Kipper, Mr. and Mrs. Nysen and Esty Mael of Boston, Mr. and Mrs. Alter Chaim Myer and Mirel Jakobovitz of Montreal, and to the kallah's uncle and aunt, Jerry and Ruth Warner.

Rabbi and Mrs. Eizental, on the marriage of their son, Yisroel Meir.

Rabbi Shlomo and Dr. Wilma Jakobovits, on the birth of a grandson, Adir, to their children, Joel and Lisa Jakobovits. Mazel tov, as well, to the other grandparents, Sam and Marcy Newmark of Cleveland.

Dr. George and Esther Rothenstein, on the birth of a grandson, Daniel Meir Hertz, to their children Yonah and Yonit Rothenstein. Mazel tov, as well, to big sister, Tehilla.

Tommy and Annie Kohn, on the birth of a grandson, Avraham, to their children, Yaakov and Aviva Eisenberger. Mazel tov to the grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Eisenberger, and the great-grandparents, Mr. Danny Rubinstein and Mr. and Mrs. Eugene Kohn.

Norm and Arlene Weisbart, on the birth of a granddaughter, Leah Ora, to their children, Bryna and Daniel Keller of Cleveland. Mazel tov to the other grandparents, Hymie and Marcia Keller of Cleveland, and to the greatgrandmothers, Ida Keller of Cleveland and Ruth Gilbert of Toronto.

David and Ruth Segal, on the birth of a granddaughter, Ariella Meira Mona, to their children, Amir and Ilana Poliszuk. Mazel tov, as well to the other grandparents, Andre and Myriam Poliszuk, and to the great-grandmother, Judith Segal.

Dr. Allan and Susie Seidenfeld, on the birth of a granddaughter, Elka Adina. Mazel tov, as well, to the parents, Josh and Ahuva Kleiner, and to the other grandparents, Dr. Morton and Karen Kleiner, and to the great-grandparents, Mr. Sol Seidenfeld, Mr. Danny Rubenstein, Mr. Hy Golombek and Mrs. Dora Kleiner.

Paul and Roberta Tobias, on the engagement of their granddaughter, Shoshana Henig, to Baruch Taub of Cleveland. Mazel tov, as well, to

Shoshana's aunt and uncle, Dr. Ernie and Susan Greenwald.

Harry and Sarah Szpigiel, on the bar-mitzvah of their grandson, Eli.

Gavriel Frohwein, on his imminent aliya to Israel.

If we have missed your recent *simcha*, it's because you neglected to report the details to the editor! Full details, and correct spellings can be reported via email to (bulletin@clantonpark.com) or phone (416-493-9560 x 2102); if they are not received via email or phone, they most likely will not be printed.

Condolences

Carl Brown and Susie Greenwald, on the passing of their father, Berel Berger.

Ken Goldstein, on the passing of his mother, Gertrude Goldstein, in Montreal.

Avraham Katzman, on the passing of his father, Shlomo Zev Katzman, in Israel.

Yitz Kurtz, on the passing of his mother, Dr. Shoshanna Kurtz, in Israel.

Shloime Mernick, on the passing of his brother, Earl Mernick.

Shloime and Israel Ochs, on the passing of their grandmother, Rebbtzin Mina Ochs.

Shul News and Rules

Annual Chanukah Party for Adults -- CANCELLED .. Originally scheduled for Motzei Shabbos, December 16th, the party has been cancelled due to insufficient reservations.

Renovations to the Shul: A Status Report...
The ongoing renovations to the *shul* are progressing nicely. The parking lot has been repaved, and the drainage problem has been fixed. The eaves troughs are slated next for repair, as well as the heating and ventilation system. In the spring, the windows will be replaced in the main sanctuary with more thermally efficient and glare-resistant windows.

Youth News

Chanukah Party for all youth, age 5 and up...
Motzei Shabbos, December 16th, at 7:30 PM.
The Youth Party is still **ON**, despite the

cancellation of the Adult Party. There will be BINGO, prizes, music, and falafel for dinner.

Special Message from our Youth Director, Manuel Kanner.... Attention all youth!!! Chag Chanukah Sameach! Hope you love parties! Stay tuned for our Bingo high scorers and youth party highlights. We all know Bingo is in the skill!?!)

Many thanks to our leaders: Rebecca Kurtz (still) and Alyashiv Gemara (forever).

As always your participation, ideas and involvement are appreciated.

Thanks and keep up the good work to all our leaders and participants. Youth is where it's at!!



Divrei Torah...

The Significance of the Dreidel

Ken Stollon

The source of the *dreidel*, the traditional spinner that is played with on Chanukah, is that at the time of the Syrian-Greek decrees against the Jews, one of the harshest decrees was prohibiting Jews to study the Holy Torah. Any Jew that was caught studying or teaching Torah was put to death. This of course did not deter the Jews from continuing to study Torah, even when they were caught and imprisoned. The Jews came up with a creative way of avoiding being caught. They prepared spinners so that when the enemy soldiers inspected the homes of the Jews or the cells of the prisoners; they found them spinning their *dreidels*. While "playing" with their spinners they would discuss Torah topics. The soldiers didn't catch on that they were actually engaged in Torah study.

The *dreidel* has four Hebrew letters inscribed on its four sides: *Nun, Gimmel, Hay, Shin*. The letters, as everyone knows, stand for the words: "*Nais Gadol Haya Sham*". "A great miracle occurred there." The letters turn on a center point. These four letters are also representative of the four kingdoms that the Jews experienced their exile through. The four empires that tried to utterly destroy the Jewish nation were Babylonia, Greece, Persia and Edom (Rome). Each tried to obliterate us through one of the four elements of the spirit; Babylonia tried to destroy our *neshamos* (beginning with *nun*) by destroying the Holy Temple, the source of our holiness; Greece tried to annihilate us through our *seichel* (beginning with *shin*), by forcing us to accept the Hellenistic culture; Persia tried to wipe out our *guf* (beginning with *gimmel*), through the evil plans of Haman and King Ahaseurus; and finally Edom

the exile that we are still experiencing today, wants to destroy *hakol* (beginning with *hay*). The letters of these four elements are the letters inscribed on the *dreidel*, which rotate on an epicentre – symbolic of the Jewish nation. (Source: *Likutei Yesharim* quoting *Bnei Yissachar*)

The numerical value of the four letters that appear on the *dreidel* is as follows: Nun = 50. Gimmel = 3. Hay = 5. Shin = 300. Total = 358.

It is the same as the numerical value of the word *Moshiach*: Mem = 40. Shin = 300. Yud = 10. Chet = 8 Total = 358.

By observing the *mitzvos* and learning the lessons of the holidays we come closer to *Hashem* and hasten the redemption

Lies the World Tells Itself

Professor Paul Socken

Mark Twain would not have been surprised to see the world so easily accept the Arabs' lies and the anti-Semites' falsifications. He would have thought it was the way of the world. He wrote many years ago: "The history of our race, and each individual's experience, are sown thick with evidence that a truth is not hard to kill and that a lie well told is immortal". Jews are always stunned that people could believe such evil things about them and hypocritically hold them to a different standard. Yet, Twain's point is that it has always been this way and likely always will be. We have the right to be indignant and to articulate the truth but we do not have the right to be surprised that the world is willing to believe the worst of the Jew and to hold fast to bold-faced lies.

Lies well told - everything from the chilling story of Jews using the blood of Christian children to bake Passover *matzahs* to the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* - are brilliantly-devised fabrications that appeal to the morbid imagination and persuade the general public that people unlike themselves must be bad, and then the worst can be thought of them. Unfortunately, as Twain writes, those lies do become immortal because they enter the popular imagination and ordinary language. The lies may have a religious source – early Christianity's attempt to demonize the Jew. But once they enter general culture in literature (Fagin in Dickens, Shylock in Shakespeare) and vocabulary ("He *Jewed* me"), the game is over. The lie has become universal and unassailable. Everybody just "knows" it's true.

We have discovered that lies are immortal in another sense. Not only do they become embedded in the general culture, but they can easily be transported to another culture. Every single hate-filled tract espoused by early Christians, and then the Nazis, has been translated and devoured eagerly by the Arabs. Now that most of mainstream Christianity has publicly and repeatedly disavowed anti-Semitism, Islam has enthusiastically embraced the entire gamut of hate and lies and dedicated itself to promulgating them. And so on it goes. Twain sadly had it so right – the truth is easy to kill and well-told lies live on forever.

However, Twain does not answer the question, "Why?" Why does the world prefer lies to truth, hate to love? James Baldwin, an African-American who suffered discrimination, wrote: "I imagine one of the reasons people cling to their hates so stubbornly is because they sense, once hate is gone, they will be forced to deal with pain". Imagine a world in which people could no longer use hatred to mask the true source of difficulty in their lives. Instead of using Israel and the Jews or America and the West as the source of all their trouble, what if the Arab world had to face the truth that they had permitted themselves to live with medieval despotic regimes that stifled their freedoms and their chance at prosperity? Imagine the pain that would ensue if Arabs learned that their twenty-two countries had, in total, the economic output of one European country – Spain.

What if they couldn't blame others and had to confront the truth? The pain would be unbearable. Where to start righting things? How to begin the overwhelming task of bridging the gap of the centuries? Baldwin was right. It is far easier to nurse hatred than to confront pain, especially when the source of that pain is within. Whether it is an individual, a nation or a religion, digging deep to find the source of the problem and doing something about it is terrifying and so blaming others is the convenient recourse.

In the face of such a difficult situation, in which the other party needs to reform itself from within, and over which Jews have little control, our task is to hold fast to the truth. Jews need to understand that they have weathered all other storms and survived, and they will survive this one, too. The truth may be painful and unpleasant, but it must be asserted and promoted at all times. One day, the Jew will stop being the world's whipping boy. Then it will be lies that will be easy to kill and truth that will be immortal. We pray and yearn for that day. It will be a sign of a better world, a day when truth will finally prevail.