

a Call to Action

Foreword

This edition of *a CALL to ACTION* is brought to publication in anticipation of the coming days of Chanukah. Translated from *HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar*, it is a collection of instruction from the Rebbe's *sichos*.

HaMaaseh Hu HaIkar is a compilation of *hora'os* culled from the Rebbe's talks in the years 5748 to 5752 (1988-1992), from both edited and unedited sources (*muga* and *bilti muga*). This English translation is rendered by **Rabbi Shais Taub**, who has made it available in pamphlet format for the first time.

At this time, when Moshiach's arrival is imminent, the Rebbe, *Melech HaMoshiach*, has emphasized the primacy of action. We are now beginning to experience the era when we will fully appreciate "the superiority of deed" above scholarship. May it happen now, completely and speedily.

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Chanukah

CHANUKAH CUSTOMS

- We wish each other "Good Yom Tov," when meeting during the days of Chanukah.¹
- It is customary to eat foods prepared with oil during Chanukah in remembrance of the miracle that happened with the oil [in the *Beis HaMikdash*].²

TZEDAKAH

- We should give extra *tzedakah* during the days of Chanukah and thereby merit this year to light the menorah in the *Beis HaMikdash*.³

JOY DURING CHANUKAH

- According to the ruling of the Rambam, the days of Chanukah are to be days of joy. The Remah, [in his commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*], also states that

1. *Sichas First Day of Rosh Chodesh Teives* 5750 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 65).
2. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz* 5752 (*Hisva'aduyos*, footnote 26).
3. *Sichas First Day of Chanukah* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 102).

it is "somewhat of a mitzvah" to make festive meals during Chanukah. Practically speaking, our custom is that we make special meals during these days.⁴

- Although there are different opinions [as to whether there is a special obligation to be joyful during Chanukah], just as all Jews perform the mitzvah of lighting the menorah in the most scrupulous manner – "*mehadrin min hamehadrin*" – we should be equally scrupulous about the mitzvah to be joyful during Chanukah.⁵

THE MENORAH

- The obligation to "beautify mitzvos" includes obtaining a beautiful menorah for Chanukah.⁶

- It is our custom to relight the menorah in *shul* each morning.⁷

- The Chanukah spirit is intensified when the synagogue menorah remains lit twenty-four hours a day – provided, that is, that the children will not play with it.⁸

- It is the custom in the home of the Rebbe that women and girls do not light their own menorah but rather are exempted by their fathers – and then, when they are older, by their husbands.⁹

- In a place where there are no men to light the menorah, we should make sure then that a woman or a girl lights.¹⁰

SPECIAL TIME FOR EDUCATION

- Chanukah also comes from the word "*chinuch* – education." Accordingly, it is a propitious time for all endeavors in the education of Jewish children.¹¹

LISTENING TO WHAT THE CANDLES SAY

- It is well known what the Rebbe, my father-in-law, Leader of our Generation, has said about the Chanukah lights: "We should look at them and hear what they are saying."¹²

- When the children arrive home, they should ask their parents or older siblings to tell them what the Chanukah lights are saying – and to tell them more and more every night, even during the days.¹³

- The children should be told all about Chanukah and different stories that portray the theme that although we are the smallest of nations, G-d has chosen us over all others to give us the Torah and its mitzvos.¹⁴

LIGHTING THE MENORAH BY CHILDREN'S ROOMS

- It is proper that children should light their own menorahs by the entrance to their rooms, for it makes a strong impression on the children's souls.¹⁵

- Many questions have been asked regarding this practice.¹⁶ Must every child light a menorah? Should we light in every room or just one room? Should girls light as well? The answer is that we have to look into each case, determine what the practical outcome will be and do that which will have the most positive effect on the education of the child.¹⁷

- This practice must be in conjunction with our explaining to the children – in words they understand

12. *Sichas 26th of Kislev 5749 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 47).*

13. *Sichas 28th of Kislev 5749 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 62):* "This is in addition to whatever the children have learned about Chanukah from the *sidur* or what they have heard from their teacher, Rosh Yeshivah or friends."

14. *Ibid.*

15. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5748 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 64):* "Not only does it make a strong impression on the children, but also on their parents and on anybody who happens to enter the house."

16. See also *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5748 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 133):* "In answer to the question that has been asked, 'How can we light in a second room?' the answer is that... [the child's room] is not a 'second room.' Besides sleeping there, the child uses the room for many purposes including learning Torah, praying, and giving *tzedakah* as we have already stated many times, that a child's room should be a 'small sanctuary.'"

17. *Sichas 24th Kislev 5748 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 91).*

4. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5749 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 30).*

5. *Ibid.* (p. 34, footnote 79)

6. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5750 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 86, footnote 69).*

7. *Sichas "Zach" Kislev 5750 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 48).*

8. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Lech L'cha 5750 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 336).*

9. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5750 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 51, footnote 69).*

10. *Ibid.* (footnote 70).

11. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5748 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 336).*

– the meaning and significance of lighting the menorah.¹⁸

CHANUKAH GELT

- It is our custom to give children Chanukah gelt.¹⁹ It was the practice of all of the Rebbes of Chabad to hand out money on the fourth or fifth night of Chanukah. The Rebbe, my father-in-law, would give gelt to his children even after their marriage and would also give to his sons-in-law.²⁰
- Really, we should give the children Chanukah gelt on every day – or at least two of the days – of Chanukah²¹ and tell them that they are being given this money so that they will learn more Torah.²²
- This of course excludes Shabbos, which we can make up for on Erev Shabbos or on Sunday.²³
- In order to uphold the Rebbes' custom²⁴ of giving gelt specifically on the fourth or fifth night, we may give double or triple the amount of money on those nights.²⁵
- By giving Chanukah gelt, besides for making the children happy, we also strengthen our connection with the Rebbes of Chabad.²⁶

- It is customary that children receive gelt not only from their father but from other family members as well.²⁷

- The idea behind giving gelt is to provide the children with the opportunity to give tzedakah.²⁸ We should explain to them that we are giving them this money to do with as they see fit and we trust that they will use it in the proper way.²⁹ Certainly, they will give a portion of the money to tzedakah on their own.³⁰

PUBLICIZING THE MIRACLE

- After lighting the menorah and singing *HaNeiros Halalu*, we should continue to publicize the Chanukah miracle by speaking about Chanukah amongst each other.³¹
- Each day, we should speak not only about the general greatness of Chanukah but of the special importance of the present day as compared to all others – an idea reflected in the new number of candles lit each night and the different Torah reading for each day.³²

FARBRENGENS

- On every day of Chanukah, there should be a Chasidic *farbrengen* – or call it some other name if you wish – where we speak words of Torah and make

¹⁸. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 64).

¹⁹. See *Sichas "Zach" Kislev* 5751 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 48): "The custom is to give the children money – only money – on Chanukah [as opposed to any other type of gift]. With this, they may procure whatever they so desire, as well as, most importantly, giving money to tzedakah thereby hastening the coming of the Redemption."

²⁰. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 64).

²¹. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5750 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 51). See also *Sichas 24th of Kislev* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 91): "Although the custom is to give Chanukah gelt on one or two nights of Chanukah, since this year is a year of rejoicing (*Tismach*) and also a year of **Hakbel**, let us give gelt on all eight nights of Chanukah and it will certainly have a most beneficial and influential effect on the Torah education of the children."

²². *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 65).

²³. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 65).

²⁴. See *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 65-66): "If the custom of the Rebbes was to give Chanukah gelt only on the fourth or fifth night, seemingly, why should add on to this and give on every night? However, the reason for not giving gelt on every night would seem to be that since this is a practice meant to educate the children, then by repeating it every night, it loses its novelty and no longer elicits such a great reaction... Therefore, in order to preserve the Rebbe's custom... the solution is..."

²⁵. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 64).

²⁶. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeitzei* 5752 (*Sefer HaSichos*, p. 153).

²⁷. *Sichas "Zach" Kislev* 5751 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 48).

²⁸. *Sichas 28th of Kislev* 5749 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 63-64): "Although when we give the children this money it is theirs to do with as they please, it is also assumed that this extra money is being given to them so that they may give more tzedakah. Otherwise, what does a Jewish child really need with money? ...He is supported by his parents... has food to eat, clothes to wear, a house to live in, holy books to read. It is thus understood that the main use of the money is for performing those mitzvos that are done with money, specifically tzedakah. Especially as the Alter Rebbe writes in Tanya that although the required measure for tzedakah is one tenth of one's income, and even better a fifth of one's income, nevertheless, in these days, in order to completely eradicate the Evil Inclination, we should give even much more than a fifth."

²⁹. *Sichas Night of 23rd of Kislev* 5749 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 23).

³⁰. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev* 5749 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 35).

³¹. *Sichas First Day of Chanukah* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 98): "According to the *halacha*, the obligation to publicize the miracle of Chanukah is fulfilled by lighting the menorah... nevertheless we can also publicize the miracle by speaking about it... Especially after everyone has gathered together to light the menorah, we might as well use the opportunity to further publicize the miracle and speak about Chanukah, especially in this year of **Hakbel** and year of joy (*Tismach*)."

³². *Sichas Days of Chanukah* 5748 (*Hisva'aduyos*, p. 100).

resolutions. This should be in every location in a way befitting the place.³³

- It is most important that at these *farbrengens* we publicize the miracle of Chanukah and all of the miracles that G-d does for the Jewish people with the knowledge that publicizing these miracles in our time is something that brings the Redemption.³⁴

CHANUKAH PARTIES AND GELT

- It was the custom of the Rebbes of Chabad to make something like a *farbrengen* with the immediate household on one of the nights of Chanukah. Thus, we too should gather with the whole family during Chanukah, at which time we may also distribute *gelt*.³⁵

- It would be worthwhile to gather children in the schools and speak to them about Chanukah and to make good resolutions in Torah study, prayer and acts of kindness, and to give out *gelt* there.³⁶

- We should make Chanukah parties in offices – especially in places of work where the nature of the occupation requires that the employees be in a specific place – and similarly, in hospitals. At these parties, we may also give out Chanukah *gelt*.³⁷

MITZVOIM

- We should see to it that a menorah is lit in every Jewish home and that there are communal menorah lightings in public places to further publicize the miracle of Chanukah.³⁸

- We must explain to every Jew, no matter who he is or in what situation he may be, that he must stand tall and be proud of Judaism and not to be embarrassed, Heaven forbid, of his Jewishness. To

the contrary, he should take pride in it and show this in his daily life by living according to Torah.³⁹

- We should explain the idea of Chanukah to women in a way that will effect them in their role in the home so that the spirit of Chanukah will permeate all of their various efforts in the house.⁴⁰

- We will certainly use the remaining days of Chanukah to light up the world – both in Israel and in the Diaspora – from one end of the earth to the other, with the physical lights of Chanukah and the spiritual lights of Torah and mitzvos.⁴¹

SHEVA MITZVOS

- We should use the time of Chanukah to influence non-Jews to keep the Seven Mitzvos, even those non-Jews who as of now are still the "*Turmedai*," until they too are transformed to good.⁴²

• יחי אדוננו מורנו ורבינו מלך המשיח לעולם ועד

³³. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5752 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 408-9):* "For those who are alarmed by the word, '*farbrengen*,' it does not matter what name we call it, the main thing is the deed, that many Jews get together, speak words of Torah and are aroused to increase in Torah, mitzvos and the dissemination of Judaism – all this in addition to the many mitzvos we do just by being at a *farbrengen*."

³⁴. *Ibid.*

³⁵. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5749 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 35).*

³⁶. *Ibid.*

³⁷. *Ibid.*

³⁸. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5748 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 64).*

³⁹. *Sichas Night After 20th of Kislev 5749 (Hisva'aduyos).*

⁴⁰. *Sichas Night of 23rd of Kislev 5749 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 23).*

⁴¹. *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Mikeitz 5749 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 77).*

⁴². *Sichas Shabbos Parshas Vayeishev 5752 (Hisva'aduyos, p. 52).*