

December Shabbat Service Schedule

December 12th Parashat Vayeshev
Chanukah Day 1 -- Hallel
Birchat Chodesh Tevet

December 19th Parashat Miketz

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**PLEASE COME TO CANORAH EVENT**  
supported by the synagogues of the East End  
to help benefit the local food pantries

**THIS Saturday Evening**  
**December 12<sup>th</sup> 6:00 – 7:30 pm**  
at the  
**VERED GALLERY**  
**EAST HAMPTON**

**Latkes . Sufganiyot . Songs . Friends. Prizes.**

Come see the amazing CSH Canorah  
before it's dismantled and donated to the Sag Harbor Food Pantry

To all who donated to this food drive, thank you.  
Special thanks to Arlene Davis, Kim Birnbaum and Sarah Engel for their building creativity.

There is No charge. But PLEASE bring canned or packaged food as a donation.

**Friday December 11th Candle Lighting 4:04pm** (the earliest candle lighting of the year)

**This week's Torah reading: Vayeshev**

Annual (Gen. 37:1-40:23): (Etz Hayim, p. 226)

Triennial (Gen. 39:1-40:23): (Etz Hayim, p. 238)

Maftir (Num. 7:1-17): Etz Hayim, p. 805)

Haftarah: Etz Hayim, p. 1270

**Musings on Vayeshev**

THE BLESSING

"HERE COMES THE DREAMER," say Joseph's brothers as they plot his murder. "We shall see what will become of his dreams!" In this week of *Vayeshev*, we will look to our dreams to see what has become of them. For in following those dreams, and risking everything, the blessing of our lives may be received.

Joseph, the dreamer, knows that the troubles he encounters are sent to him by God. He knows that blessing comes disguised and it is his mission to see through that disguise, to unmask the blessing even if it takes a lifetime. Somehow Joseph is blessed with the knowledge of his own radiance. He has always known that he is loved, that he is special and that he has a rich destiny to fulfill.

What prevents us from receiving this blessing of our *own* shining essence? What has dimmed

our radiance, belittled the greatness of our souls and obscured for us the truth of just how we fit in to the great puzzle of life?

THE TORAH TEACHES US THAT GREATNESS is born through unlikely circumstances; destiny unfolds in unexpected ways. Interrupting the story of Joseph is the drama of Tamar from whose blood will come King David and the messianic consciousness to heal the world.

Tamar, caught in the injustice of a cruel system, breaks all the rules, and acts from the knowledge of her own beauty, truth and radiance. Tamar refuses to give up her dream. She risks her life to allow our dream to be birthed through her. The two children born to Tamar as a result of her dream-following and risk-taking are named "Breakthrough" (*Peretz*) and "Radiance" (*Zerach*).

Joseph too is blessed with the powers of Breakthrough and Radiance that come from following dreams. *Vayeshev* returns us to his story and it is our story as well. Fate seems to play a strange game, lifting us out of slavery, letting our beauty shine, and then sending us back to the dungeon. Yet even in prison, the dreams keep us alive and will eventually open the doors to freedom and power.

<http://www.rabbishefagold.com/Vayeshev.html>

### **What's up with all of the clothing symbolism in Parashat Vayeshev?**

First we learn that haute couture can inspire powerful responses: Joseph's [Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat](#) makes his brothers so jealous they sell him into slavery. Then there's the outer garment which Potiphar's wife grabs as she orders him to lie with her -- which, when he flees, tears away and is left in her hands, the "proof" she uses to condemn him. As [this commentary](#) notes, Joseph gets a costume change to match every change of his fortunes. Like Clark Kent tearing off his mundane garb in a phone booth, Joseph changes his look every time he enters a new role.

The Hebrew for the multicolored coat is *מִסַּף תְּנִיחַ* (*k'tonet pasim*); the word in the Potiphar story is *דָּגָב* (*begeg*), "garment." A quick dip into my [Brown-Driver-Briggs](#) tells me that the three-letter root *דגב* means "garment, clothing, raiment, robe" when it's a noun...and "act or deal treacherously" when it's a verb. Okay, there's definitely something interesting happening here. Potiphar's wife's attempted treachery (*דגב*) leaves her with a robe (*דגב*) in her hands. And though Joseph's tunic isn't a *דגב* it leads to his brothers' betrayal, hinting at the synonym for clothing that the text doesn't use.

Given the resonance between the two kinds of *begeg*, why doesn't the text use that word at the start of the story? Why is Joseph's multicolored garment a *k'tonet*? [This commentary](#) notes that *k'tonet* is the name of the garment worn by the High Priest, and it's also the name of the garment God stitches for Eve and Adam out of skins. Are we meant to infer that Joseph prefigures the High Priest in some way, or to compare him with Adam? (Some commentators note that when Joseph was presented with temptation, he remembered Adam's error, and his fear of punishment kept him on the straight and narrow.)

[Reb Tirzah Firestone](#) notes [here](#) that another figure in Torah wears a *k'tonet passim*: Tamar, also violated by a sibling. "These Technicolor coats carried some heavy karma," Reb Tirzah writes. "In both stories, the jackets are the props spelling specialness that ends in sibling violence." She sees special resonance in Joseph's shift from *k'tonet* to *begeg*: the *k'tonet* is "the garment of our identification, our story line. Our story might be about our greatness; it might be about how much we have suffered or the way in which we have uniquely suffered, it doesn't matter. These identities, like the *k'tonet passim*, keep us special and hence, keep us separate." Joseph relinquishing that garment -- and, later, relinquishing his *begeg* in order to keep his honor -- is a sign of his transformation.

[http://velveteenrabbi.blogspot.com/blog/2005/12/vayeshev\\_torah\\_.html](http://velveteenrabbi.blogspot.com/blog/2005/12/vayeshev_torah_.html)

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Musings on Chanukah

The rabbis of the Talmud ask a strange question: Mai Chanukah? (Shabbat 21b). Loosely translated, this means, "What the heck is Hanukkah about anyway?" At this point you may

be asking: "you mean the ancient sages of our tradition didn't know the story about the wicked Antiochus and the flask of oil that lasted eight days and about latkes and dreidels and little chocolate coins?"

Well, except for the latkes and dreidels and little chocolate coins part, the ancient sages did know that story. In fact, they gave it to us. What they were not sure was how to properly celebrate the holiday, or how all the different traditions that had developed fit together.

To explain how the ancient rabbis saw Chanukah, first let's take a step back and look at the historical record, as best we understand it. In 167 B.C.E., a king named Antiochus Epiphanes ruled over a chunk of the Middle East that included the land of Israel. He wanted to unify all the peoples under his rule with one culture, the Greek-Roman culture called Hellenism, which had been handed down from the time of Alexander the Great (ca 323 B.C.E.). So Antiochus outlawed the study of Torah and the practice of Judaism, and put Greek gods in Jewish holy places.

To read this article in its entirety, go to http://www.kolel.org/pages/holidays/Chanukah_intro.html

Thoughts on Kindling the Chanukah Lights By Rabbi Dan Ehrenkrantz

Traditional Chanukah lights have three elements: oil, wick and fire. The fire ignites the wick, and the oil (or, today, the wax candle) provides fuel for a continuous flame.

To succeed in any endeavor, we need the same three elements: The creative spark (the flame) must be given form (the wick), and the form must be given sustenance (the oil or wax).

The Hebrew words for flame, wick and oil are נר (*ner*), ליתפ (*petil*) and שמן (*shemen*).

Taken together, the first letters of each word—נ (*nun*), פ (*phey*) and ש (*shin*)—form the Hebrew word נפש (*nefesh*), or soul.

A candle is a symbol of the soul. As we kindle the Chanukah lights, let us pay attention to each element—the creative spark of the flame, the wick that gives form to the flame and the oil that keeps the flame alive.

May the light of our souls increase and may we bring that light to our learning, our relationships and our communities.

<http://www.ritualwell.org/holidays/primaryobject.2008-11-25.7127368510>

And Thoughts on Spinning the Dreidle

Students of Kabbalah, who thrive on finding and interpreting symbols, read the dreidel as a comment on the struggle between the rational, physical, and spiritual forces within everyone. Which one will win out?

Nun (נ) - nefesh, soul

Gimmel (ג) - guf, body

Hey (ה) - sechel, mind

Shin (ש) - hakol, all

There are soaring moments when the soul dominates, when corporeal material desires carry more weight, when cool calculating logic rules, but nothing compares to the harmony of all aspects working together.

Rabbi Goldie Milgram (Reb Goldie), a modern mystic, member of the Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, twists out another reading of the nun, gimmel, hey, shin inscription and the rules of the dreidel game.

Shin (ש) - Shafal - humility. When the dreidel lands with "shin" facing up, a player must put a coin/raisin/candy (or whatever is being played for in the dreidel game) back into the pot. Once an ego is shrunk to proper size the call to contribute to the pot of life is answered with enthusiasm.

Gimmel (ג) - Galgal - wheel. Happy is the dreidel player who lands on Gimmel because the whole prize pot becomes his. Those who open themselves to the twists of life evolving, revolving, unending shifts of fortune and fate get everything the pot of life has to offer.

Nun (נ) - Nivdal - separate. Dreidel players who turn up a Nun generally cluck in despair because one gets nothing from the pot when a Nun turns up. Getting nothing, standing apart from the grabbing masses, or Nivdal in mystical parlance, is not such a bad thing. Separateness helps distinguish between that which is holy and that which is not.

Hey (ה) - Hiuli - formlessness. When a Hey faces up, the spinner receives half the pot. Regarding one's fortune as half the pot is to be a co-creator in the future.
<http://mazornet.com/holidays/chanukah/dreidel-mystic.htm>

And One More Spin to the Dreidle (pun Intentional)

The dreidel or *sevivon* is perhaps the most famous custom associated with Hanukkah. Indeed, various rabbis have tried to find an integral connection between the dreidel and the Hanukkah story; the standard explanation is that the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin*, which appear on the dreidel in the Diaspora, stand for *nes gadol haya sham*--"a great miracle happened there," while in Israel the dreidel says *nun, gimmel, hey, pey*, which means "a great miracle happened here." One 19th century rabbi maintained that Jews played with the dreidel in order to fool the Greeks if they were caught studying Torah, which had been outlawed. Others figured out elaborate *gematriot* [numerological explanations based on the fact that every Hebrew letter has a numerical equivalent] and word plays for the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin*. For example, *nun, gimmel, hey, shin* in gematria equals 358, which is also the numerical equivalent of *mashiach* or Messiah! Finally, the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin* are supposed to represent the four kingdoms which tried to destroy us [in ancient times]: N = Nebuchadnetzar = Babylon; H = Haman = Persia = Madai; G = Gog = Greece; and S = Seir = Rome.

As a matter of fact, all of these elaborate explanations were invented after the fact.

The dreidel game originally had nothing to do with Hanukkah; it has been played by various people in various languages for many centuries.

In England and Ireland there is a game called *totum* or *teetotum* that is especially popular at Christmastime. In English, this game is first mentioned as "*totum*" ca. 1500-1520. The name comes from the Latin "*totum*," which means "all." By 1720, the game was called *T-totum* or *teetotum*, and by 1801 the four letters already represented four words in English: T = Take all; H = Half; P = Put down; and N = Nothing.

Our Eastern European game of dreidel (including the letters *nun, gimmel, hey, shin*) is directly based on the German equivalent of the *totum* game: N = Nichts = nothing; G = Ganz = all; H = Halb = half; and S = Stell ein = put in. In German, the spinning top was called a "torrel" or "trundl," and in Yiddish it was called a "dreidel," a "fargl," a "varfl" [= something thrown], "shtel ein" [= put in], and "gor, gorin" [= all].

When Hebrew was revived as a spoken language, the dreidel was called, among other names, a *sevivon*, which is the one that caught on.

Thus the dreidel game represents an irony of Jewish history. In order to celebrate the holiday of Hanukkah, which celebrates our victory over cultural assimilation, we play the dreidel game, which is an excellent example of cultural assimilation! Of course, there is a world of difference between imitating non-Jewish games and worshipping idols, but the irony remains nonetheless.

http://www.myjewishlearning.com/holidays/Jewish_Holidays/Hanukkah/At_Home/Dreidel.shtml

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There is a story at the bottom of this update that is long and probably not true, but it's a nice early American Chanukah story. So sometime over the week, when you have a few minutes, take the time to read it.

### Quote of the Week

"It doesn't matter how long we may have been stuck in a sense of our limitations. If we go into a darkened room and turn on the light, it doesn't matter if the room has been dark for a day, a week, or ten thousand years - we turn on the light and it is illuminated. Once we control our capacity for love and happiness, the light has been turned on."

-- Sharon Salzberg (American Spiritual Teacher and Author)

"If a light is slowly dimmed to fifty percent strength and then is instantly turned up to full strength, the person is startled as to the intensity. He had no idea he was missing so much light. Even so with spiritual light. We are often not aware when we are losing it." **JJ Dewey**

Shabbat shalom v'chag urim sameach.

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This is long and probably not true, but it's a nice American Chanukah story

## **The Chanukah Candle that Inspired George Washington**

### **Chanukah (1775) 5537.**

A difficult winter. Terrible cold. We are sitting in Valley Forge and waiting. Why? I don't know. Perhaps for better days than these. I am the only Jew here. Perhaps there are other Jews among us, but I haven't seen any. We hunger for bread. We have no warm clothing or shoes to protect our feet. Most of the soldiers curse George Washington for going to war against Britain.

There are those who hope for his downfall, but I believe that his cause is just. We must expel Britain from America. She wants to put her hands in everything her eyes see. Although we are suffering here terribly, I am loyal with all my heart to George Washington. More than once I see him at night, passing through the camp, between the rows of sleeping soldiers. He gazes with compassion upon the soldiers who are suffering from the cold. And sometimes he approaches one of the sleeping soldiers and covers him, as a father would cover his son.

There are times when the hunger and the freezing cold torture me to death. But I don't curse General Washington who is fighting for the freedom of America. At moments like this I think of my father in Poland. I think about all that he suffers at the hand of the cruel "Poritz". I remember: I was a child then and I saw my father dancing before the Poritz. What an awful thing to see! My father was wearing the skin of a Polar bear - and danced like a bear before the Poritz and his guests.

What terrible pain! What great shame! My father dancing like a bear - and the "Poritzim" laughing and rejoicing at the sight. I decided then and there that I will never dance like my father before the Poritz. Afterwards, I escaped to America.

And now I am lying in Valley Forge and shivering from cold. They say that Washington is losing and that he can't win this war. But I don't believe all that. I lie at night and pray for him.

The first night of Chanukah arrives. On this night, years ago, I left my father's house. My father gave us this Chanukah menorah and said to me, "My son, when you light the Chanukah candles, they will illuminate the way for you".

Since then, the Menorah has been like a charm for me. Wherever I go, I take it with me. I didn't know what to do - to light the Chanukah candles here, among the goyim, or not. I decided to wait until they were all asleep, and then I took out my father's Menorah. I made the brocha and lit the first candle. I gazed at the light and remembered my parents' home. I saw my father dancing like a bear before the Poritz and I saw my mother's eyes filled with tears. My heart was filled with pain and I burst out crying like a small child. And I decided then in my heart, that for the sake of my father and mother, for my brothers and sisters in Poland. I must help George Washington make America a free country, a land of refuge for my parents and brothers who are subjected to the cruelty of the Poritz.

Suddenly I felt a gentle hand touching my head. I lifted my eyes and it was he - he himself was standing over me and he asked, "Why are you crying, soldier? Are you cold? ".

Pain and compassion were in his voice. I couldn't bear to see him suffer. I jumped up, forgot that I was a soldier standing before a General, and said what came from my heart, like a son speaking to his father:

"General Washington," I said, "I am crying and praying for your victory. And I know that with the help of G-d we will win. Today they are strong, but tomorrow they will fall because justice is with us. We want to be free in this land. We want to build a home here for all those who flee from the hands of "Poritzim", for all who suffer across the ocean. The "Poritzim" will not rule over us! They will fall and you will rise!" General Washington pressed my hand.

"Thank you, soldier," he said. He sat next to me on the ground, in front of the Menorah.

"What is this candlestick?", he asked.

I told him, "I brought it from my father's house. The Jews all over the world light candles tonight, on Chanukah, the holiday of the great miracle".

The Chanukah candles lit up Washington's eyes, and he asked joyfully, "You are a Jew from the nation of Prophets and you say we will be victorious?!"

"Yes sir," I answered with conviction. "We will win just like the Maccabees won, for ourselves and for all those who come here after us to build a new land and new lives."

The General got up and his face was shining. He shook my hand and disappeared in the darkness.

My faith prevailed. Washington's victory was complete. The land was quiet. My General became the first President of the United States and I was one of its citizens. I soon forgot the terrible days and nights in Valley Forge. But I kept the memory of that first night of Chanukah in my heart like a precious dream. I did not relate it to anyone because I said to myself: Who will believe me? I was certain that the General forgot it completely. But that was not the case. He didn't forget.

### **The first night of Chanukah (1776) 5538.**

I was sitting in my apartment in New York, on Broome Street, and the Chanukah candles were burning in my window. Suddenly, I heard a knock at my door. I opened the door and was shocked: my General, President George Washington, was standing in the doorway (there himself), in all his glory. "Behold the wonderful candle. The candle of hope of the Jewish People," he proclaimed joyously when he saw the Chanukah candles in my window.

He put his hand on my shoulder and said, "This candle and your beautiful words ignited a light in my heart that night. Soon you will receive a Medal of Honor from the United States of America, together with all of the brave men of Valley Forge. But tonight, please accept this token from me." He hung a golden medallion on my chest and shook my hand. Tears filled my eyes and I couldn't speak. The President shook my hand again and departed....

I came to, as if from a wonderful dream, then I looked at the medallion and saw an etching of a beautiful Chanukah Menorah. Under it was written: "A token of gratitude for the light of your candle - George Washington".

This is a true story.

<http://www.neveh.org/chanukah/chanwash.html>