



I am happy to present to you the Chanukah edition of GUSHPanka for MTA בוגרים of GUSH, packed with Yeshiva updates, Divrei Torah and photos. I would be happy to receive your input into the format of this newsletter as well as the content, including your inspirational stories from chutz la'aretz, divrei torah etc.

Wishing you a Chanukah Sameach, Daniel Mainzer

NEWS N SHMOOZE

2nd Annual YHE's Movember

In Australia, during the month of November, there is a fundraiser known as Movember (Moustache + November = Movember) which involves numerous people growing moustaches for charity and finding donors to sponsor their cause. For the second year running, two Australian Shana Bet students ran the same initiative in Har Etzion. With eleven growers we managed to raise over 2600 NIS.



MTA is leaving the nest...

The year of MTA has been a year full of Torah, gaining much from the rabbanim, madrichim and the other students. Not only has Har Etzion instilled in them the value of Torah study, but how to behave as *benei yeshiva* both when they are in a yeshiva environment and when they return to their respective cities. Unfortunately all good things come to an end, yet what has been learnt and impressed this past year will always stay with them.



A Roshei Yeshiva Update

At the beginning of Zman Choref, HaRav Mosheh Lichtenstein was appointed as Rosh

Yeshiva. Due to this appointment, HaRav Aharon Lichtenstein will give Shiur Klali only once every three weeks. Rav Mosheh is a young, dynamic and enthusiastic Rosh Yeshiva. We feel very privileged to have Rav Mosheh as our Rosh Yeshiva.



Yeshiva Update

We would like to welcome back shiur daled, who have just spent a year and a half in various units in the Army. We wish them an easy landing back into yeshiva.

MTB in the Army



Just last week, David Gordon and Netanel Azizolohoff, participated in their Tekes Kumtah on the successful completion

of basic training. We would like to wish Rob Meyerson all the best for completing his army service in Kfir. Also, we would like to wish best wishes to Idan Chazan and Daniel Winer for their current army service.



Engagements:



Daniel Singer ('04) to Deena

Marriages:

Lance Blumenthal ('03) to Nikia
Darren Segal ('04) to Yael
Ilan Perez ('04) to Tzivia



Upcoming Weddings:

Robbi Tockar ('04) to Devorah
Zack Gomo ('04) to Eliyah

QUOTE

Chanukah is a festival of rejuvenation and renewal. The Syrian Greeks tried to destroy not only the Beit Hamikdash, but also the spirit of Bnei Yisrael. Greek culture advocated the worship of the body, embracing physicality, inventing and participating in the first Olympic games! Judaism advocates holiness while on the other hand has an aversion to the human body and the material world. The Ramban writes of an idea, in parashat Kedoshim, which speaks of how we must raise the mundane and the physical into something spiritual, exactly the opposite of what the Syrian Greeks stood for.

Chanukah is a time of self-reflection, to grasp the importance of Judaism in our daily lives. I would like to wish you all a successful year in trying to raise the mundane onto a level of holiness.

The Nature of the Blessing of "*She-assa nissim*"

The mitzva of lighting Chanuka candles is unique in possessing two layers of performance. Generally, a mitzva is simply an obligation to fulfill a specific action commanded in the Torah. Obviously, each mitzva possesses symbolism and accentuates specific components of the religious experience. However, these characteristics are not halakhically incorporated as part of the mitzva proper. For example, the symbolism latent within the mitzva of *shilua'ch ha-ken* (sending away a mother bird before recovering her eggs), as profound as it seems, in no way affects the actual execution of the mitzva. Surely, awareness of this symbolism enhances performance of the mitzva on a personal level. But even devoid of these symbols, the mitzva can be performed.

By contrast, lighting candles on Chanuka incorporates a second dimension as part of the fulfillment of the mitzva itself. That second dimension, *pirumei nissa* (publicizing the terms of the miracle), directly affects the manner and style in which the mitzva is performed. Essentially, by lighting candles an individual fulfills both a mechanical mitzva as well as a second facet of publicizing the miracle of Chanuka.

Assuredly, the two most conspicuous reflections of this duality are the timing and location of the mitzva. As the gemara in *Shabbat* (21b) asserts, the candles should be lit while people are returning from work, in order to ensure maximum publicity. In addition, the menorah should be lit at the entrance of one's residence to guarantee maximal visibility. These two familiar *halachot* reaffirm the presence of *pirumei nissa* as an additional halakhic component of the mitzva.

There are, however, several additional manifestations of the *pirumei nissa* element of *hadlakat neiros*. Generally, a mitzva which contains an additional halakhic feature warrants an additional blessing. *Tefillin* and *berit mila* are two examples of *mitzvot* which are multi-layered and accompanied by two blessings. The presence of an additional blessing when lighting candles – the blessing of *she-assa nissim* – might confirm the existence of an additional layer to this mitzva, depending on how we understand this additional blessing.

Perhaps the blessing should be classified as a *birkat ha-shevach* – a blessing recited in praise of extraordinary natural or historical events. A classic example of a *birkat ha-shevach* is the blessing recited when hearing thunder or witnessing lightning. As no mitzva is being performed, the blessing cannot be defined as a *birkat ha-mitzva*. Might the blessing of *she-assa nissim* – recited when lighting candles – be similarly defined as a *birkat ha-shevach* – a blessing recited in PRAISE of the miracle, praise which is elicited by seeing the candle? As such, *she-assa nissim* would not be classified as a *birkat ha-mitzva* and would not be indicative of a second level to the halakhic execution of the mitzva.

The question of how to define *she-assa nissim* – and, by extension, whether its recitation confirms a second tier to the performance of the mitzva – could potentially yield an important practical difference: when should the blessing of *she-assa nissim* be recited? Classically, a blessing on a mitzva is recited prior to the performance of the mitzva, while a *birkat ha-shevach* – which responds to a phenomenon – is recited after witnessing the given phenomenon. Should *she-assa nissim* be recited prior or subsequent to the actual lighting of the candles?

The Ritva in *Masekhet Shabbat* claims that the blessing of *le-hadlik* ALONG WITH *she-assa nissim* should precede the actual lighting, and the Rema in *Orach Chayim* 670:2 adopts this position. This ruling would imply that we view *she-assa nissim* as a *birkat ha-mitzva* recited upon the *pirumei nissa* component of the mitzva. By contrast, *Masekhet Sofrim* (20:6) asserts that the blessing should be recited AFTER lighting the candles. Rav

Chayim Brisker asserted the following compromise position: On each evening he would recite the blessing of *le-hadlik*, light one candle and then recite *she-assa nissim* prior to lighting the additional candles. In this manner, he was able to fulfill the Rema's position of reciting *she-assa nissim* prior to lighting the full quota of that night's candles, while also allowing *she-assa nissim* to function as a *birkat ha-shevach* recited after an event and in response to an event – thereby satisfying *Masekhet Sofrim's* position as well. Of course, the first night of Chanuka does not accommodate this compromise, and on that night Rav Chayim would adhere to the ruling of the Rema and recite both *berakhot* prior to lighting the first candle.

Logically, the very same question of how to understand the blessing of *she-assa nissim* would apply to this blessing's recitation before reading the Megilla. Should this blessing be viewed as a *birkat ha-shevach* recited in gratitude for the miracle of Purim, or as a *birkat ha-mitzva* recited on the added component of *pirsumei nissa*? Interestingly, no opinion claims that we should recite this blessing after reading the Megilla – in part because a post-reading blessing is already recited – "*ha-rav et riveinu*."

Understanding the nature of *she-assa nissim* might impact upon an interesting debate regarding the conditions under which this blessing is recited. The gemara in *Shabbat* (25a) claims that *she-assa nissim* is recited even upon witnessing someone else's candles. After all, praising the event of a miracle or experiencing the publicity of a miracle does not demand personal lighting - these experiences may be achieved even second-hand by witnessing the candles of others. There is, however, a dispute between several *Rishonim* concerning whether reciting *she-assa nissim* upon personal lighting is preferable to reciting it upon witnessing the candles of others. The Rashba, for example, in his comments to that gemara, claims that only someone who will not subsequently light his own candles should recite the blessing of *she-assa nissim* upon witnessing other people's candles. In essence, it is preferable to recite *she-assa nissim* upon candles a person himself lights. Rashi's comments to that same gemara, as well as those of the Ritva, suggest a parity between *she-assa nissim* on personal candles and *she-assa nissim* upon witnessing the candles of others. For example, Rashi claims that even someone who intends to ultimately light his own candles should, upon first witnessing someone else's candles, recite a blessing of *she-assa nissim*.

This debate as to whether *she-assa nissim* is superior when recited upon personal lighting would clearly stem from our understanding of the blessing. If it were purely a responsive *birkat ha-shevach*, praising the event of the miracle of Chanuka, it would be difficult (but not impossible) to differentiate between personal performance and second-hand experience; either situation facilitates offering praise in response to the memory of the event which is elicited through candles. However, if *she-assa nissim* constitutes a blessing recited upon performing the act of publicizing, one can easily envision a fundamental difference between passively noticing another's publicizing and actively contributing a personal message. Viewing *she-assa nissim* as a *birkat ha-mitzva* might account for the Rashba's prioritizing recitation upon personal performance over second-hand recitation.

If you have any technical problems, general inquiries relating to the Yeshiva: office@etzion.org.il

Question, comments, suggestions, personal stories, Mazal Tov's, related to the GUSHPanka:

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Please keep in mind that your halakhic questions can be presented to any of the Ramim in Yeshiva that your heart desires (or any number of Ramim) so please don't hesitate to put forward your questions!

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This edition was edited by Rav Pini Cohen and Daniel Mainzer.