

STORY

The Minimalist Approach



The Tolner Rebbe told over a story: His first two children were daughters and his third child was a son. He wanted to name his son after his father-in-law, but the problem was

that his father-in-law's name was Yaakov Yitzchak. Given that his own name was Yitzchak Menachem, he obviously could not name his son Yaakov Yitzchak. The natural thing to do in such a situation is only to name the son Yaakov. However, his father-in-law had held that if you do not name a child entirely after a deceased person, you are not naming after the person at all!

The Tolner Rebbe was facing a dilemma. He sent a shaliach [messenger] to the Lev Simcha (the Gerer Rebbe) to ask him this shaylah. The messenger came back with the following exact (Yiddish) quote from the Gerer Rebbe: "Gornisht iz a Greserer Gornisht!" In other words, your father-in-law might be correct that to name a child after him using half his name is "Gornisht" [like nothing]. However, not naming at all after your father-in-law is an even bigger "Gornisht!" [Certainly like nothing]. Therefore – do what you can do and at least use the name Yaakov!

The Tolner Rebbe references the Kabbalistic sefer Tzror HaMor (Rav Avraham ben Yaakov Saba [1440-1508]). The Talmud [Yoma

35b] relates that that a poor person, a rich person, and a wicked person come before the Heavenly court for judgement. They are all asked, "Why did you not study more Torah?" If the poor person excuses himself by saying, "I was so poor I had to occupy myself with earning a living to feed myself and my family..." he will be asked, "Were you poorer than Hillel the Elder...?" If the rich person excuses himself by saying "I was too busy with my property and my investments..." he will be asked "Did you have more property and investments than Rabbi Elazar ben Charsom....?" If the wicked person excuses himself by saying, "I was very handsome and was tempted by my evil inclination..." he will be asked "Were you more handsome and more tempted than the righteous Yosef...?" The Gemara then describes the great temptation Yosef faced in the incident in next week's parsha where his master's wife attempts to seduce him.

But hold on for a second! The Rasha could have argued back here. He should have said: "Do you know why he was called Yosef the Tzadik? It is because he was from the spiritual elite of the world. He was one of Yaakov's Twelve Sons. I am a nothing but nothing. What can you expect from me?"

The Tzror HaMor cites a Midrash that says when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Yosef, he told her he refused to succumb to her

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SMILE!

IT'S CONTAGIOUS



Diet Day 1: I have removed all the bad food from the house. It was delicious.



I saw a book called "How to solve half your problems". So I bought two.



Today I lost 500 calories in 2 seconds!! My doughnut fell on the floor.



I didn't buy anything on Black Friday. I'm waiting for Black Lives Matter, it will be much cheaper!



I wonder what people who type "u" instead of "you:" do with all their free time.



enticements. She responded, "You may be unwilling to do it today, but tomorrow you are going to do it." He told her "You know what, you might be right." But nevertheless "He ran outside" because he was determined that "At least I will save myself from sinning today!"

"For one more day, I will remain a Tzadik. Even if tomorrow, I know I will succumb to her enticements, let me accomplish what I can today." Sometimes, a person needs to take what he can – even if that falls short of what is ultimately the preferred accomplishment. Half a loaf is better than no loaf at all. As it turns out, Yosef fled, she slandered him, he was thrown into prison – and he never sinned.

What do we tell the wicked person? We know you are not Yosef the Tzadik – you are not telling us anything new. However, hold on for a day, hold on for an hour, behave yourself at least for the next half hour – that much you should have been able to accomplish. We expect this comparison to Yosef haTzadik from the wicked person. Take what you can get, but at least make the effort.

[When attacked with lust that feels so much stronger than us, we can tell ourselves that maybe tomorrow we'll give in, just NOT TODAY. Often we'll find that tomorrow we'll feel stronger. And tomorrow we can again tell ourselves, JUST NOT TODAY].

With the approach outlined above, we can gain new insight into the Chanukah story.

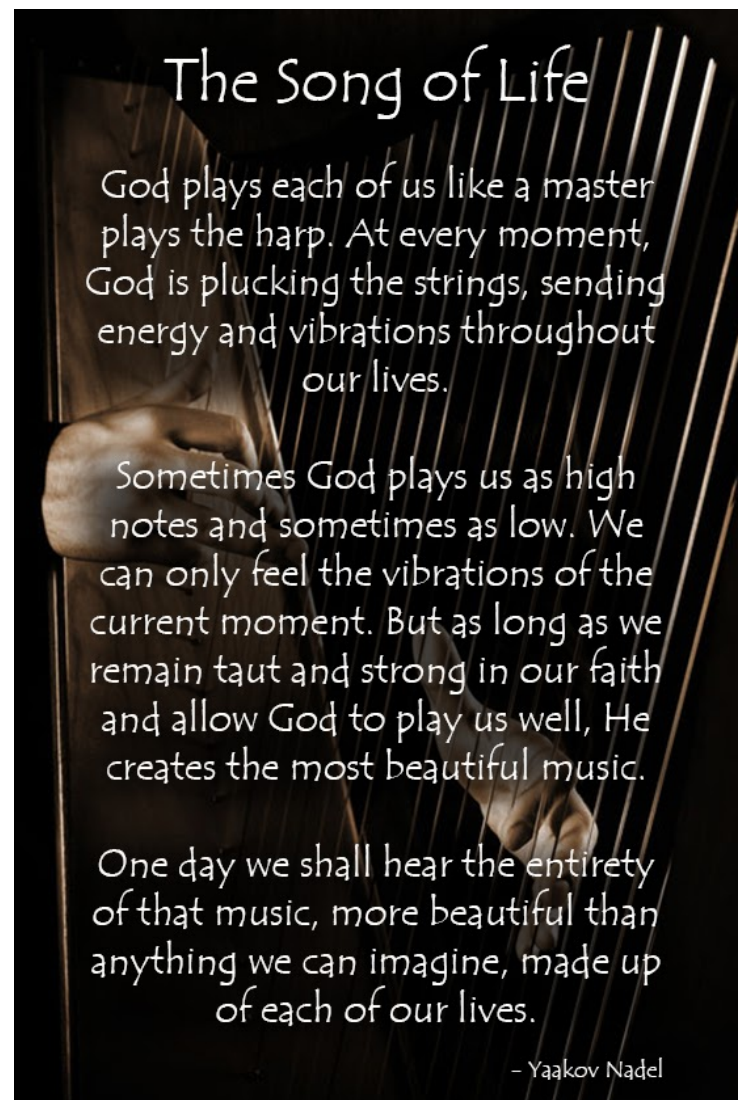
The Maccabees came into the Courtyard of the Bais Hamikdash and found total chaos. It was defiled and desecrated. The situation was terrible. What did they find? They found a small jug of undefiled olive oil with the seal of the Kohen Gadol. There was only enough oil to burn a single night (and according to one textual reading of the Midrash, there was not even enough oil to burn for one night).

What does a person do in such a situation? The default reaction is to do nothing! What is the point of resuming the Bais Hamikdash ritual under such circumstances? Does it make sense to light the Menorah for one night and then leave it unlit for another week or so until they put things back into order and the Bais Hamikdash service properly resumed on a permanent basis? Conventional wisdom would be to "do it right" – get new olives, press the olives,

manufacture more olive oil, etc., etc. What were they thinking?

The answer is that they knew the approach of Yosef HaTzadik. They were minimalists. One night of lighting the Menorah is also something. One night is not "nothing." "Nothing at all" is a bigger "nothing" than the "nothing of one night."

Rav Yisroel Salanter used to advise that the seamstresses who were Mechallel [violated] Shabbos should at least sew with sewing machines rather than by hand on Shabbos because that involved less Sabbath desecration. What does that mean – "less Chillul Shabbos"? So what? Still, he felt that "less Chilul Shabbos" is better than "more Chillul Shabbos." Even though it does not solve the problem and it does not make them into Sabbath observers, nonetheless, this is the lesson of Judaism – take whatever we can, do whatever we can, and hope that the Ribono shel Olam will make up the difference.



The ultimate light

By a GYE Member



The Me'or Einayim and many other tzadikim explain. The Gemarah says, that we must light Ner Chanuka:

(1) At night, (2) Lower than 10 tefachim,

(3) Outside, (4) On the left side, (5) Starting at the end of the month (when the moon, which represents Am Yisroel, is waning), (6) on the longest night of the year (I actually verified this by checking sunrise and sunset on an Israeli calendar).

All these things represent darkness, distance and weakness. The night, of course, represents darkness and galus. Lower than 10 tefachim is the place where the gemara says, the Shechina doesn't go. "Outside" represents distance and impurity, and "Reshus Harabim" is, according to kabbalah, the place of the "Other Side". "Left" also represents weakness and harshness.

We are told to go specifically to that place and at that time, and to light a candle. Not to banish the darkness, but just to light a little candle. The darkness is still there and the candle even burns out. But tomorrow we'll be back, ignoring yesterday's seeming lack of success, and we will light two candles...

It is these little lights in the darkness that will bring to the world the ultimate light like it says - באורך נראה אור - "In Your light we shall see light".

And it is these little lights that Hashem was referring to when He told Aharon Hakohen, "שלך לעולם קיים" - yours will last forever" - even in the darkest of the dark there will always be the little lights. And this pacified Aharon, because he knew the super power of these little lights.

The GYE network is one of the greatest Chanuka lights of the world, and the stronger the wind blows, the more we will be strengthen ourselves together!! All of you reading this are candles lighting up the darkest night!

Wishing you all a happy (in the true sense of the word), powerful, meaningful, fruitful, successful and lichtiger Chanuka!

Vayeshev: Run First, Explain Later

By Rabbi Abraham J. Twersky



The Torah relates that when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce Joseph, he adamantly refused. Then he said to her, "My master has entrusted me with everything he owns, and has not kept anything back from me except you, for you are his wife. How could I commit such a great wrong?" (Genesis 39:8-9).

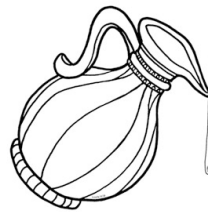
The Rabbi of Gur commented that the sequence of Joseph's words is important. His first response was to adamantly refuse, categorically and absolutely. Only after his refusal does he explain himself.

When faced with a serious threat to your life, your first action is to run away. After you're safe, you can analyze the situation.

When confronted with something of questionable morality, your first reaction should be to refuse. After that you can reason and explain why. If you try to explain before refusing, you may rationalize why it's OK.

PRACTICAL TIP OF THE WEEK

Do the best with what you've got.



When people consider making improvements in Shmiras Haloshon, they sometimes drop the idea as unrealistic. "Can I really say that I'll be able to avoid loshon hora forever? What's the point of trying, only to fail?"

But in the month of Kislev, we learn that this line of thinking is false. It is exactly the opposite of the approach the Maccabim took when they entered the Temple. They looked for pure oil and found only enough oil for one night. They did the best they could with what they had; and in that merit, Hashem provided the miracle.

Chanukah teaches us that when it comes to serving Hashem, if we give it what we've got – however limited that is – Hashem provides the rest.

Lessons From Chanukah Candles

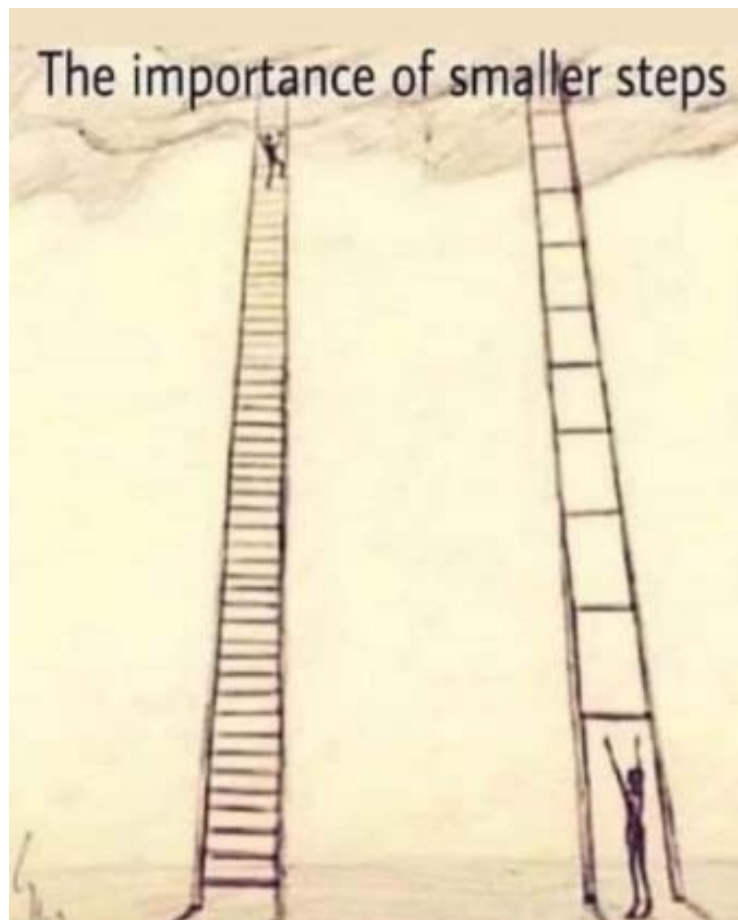
A great Rabbi, Hillel, taught that on the first night of Chanukah we light one candle and each successive night we add an additional candle until on the eighth night there are eight candles.

Why did Hillel prescribe this method for commemorating the eight days of Chanukah? Wouldn't it have been more impressive to light eight candles each night?

There are two important lessons for us to learn:

- (1) We must always strive to grow and increase our spirituality. One never stays in the same place -you either improve or you fall behind.
- (2) It is a mistake to grasp too much too fast. Growing spiritually is like climbing a ladder. If you try to climb too many rungs in one step, you're likely to fall.

That is why we increase the Chanukah lights one candle at a time! Shmiras Einayim also takes steps, one rung at a time, a person can rebuild their sensitivity to the difference between kosher and non-kosher sights. As time goes on, we will regain the purity that Hashem intended us to have. As long as we strive to grow, Hashem will help and we will all merit to reach our great potential.



DESIRES ARE AN ILLUSION

Spinning Dreidels

Gaze at one of the circles, do you notice how all the other ones seem to be turning?

Our eyes are a tremendous blessing that allow us to perceive the world around us. However our eyes can trick us as well, making us believe that we need things that in reality it may be very bad for us. Let's train ourselves to use our eyes for good and not let them trick us to turn after our hearts desires!

