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Protecting Our Achilles Heal

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis is a key business planning tool. In addition to knowing one's strengths, it is equally important to know our vulnerabilities so that we can be aware and on guard.

On his way back to Eretz Yisroel, an unidentified assailant attacks Yaakov in the middle of the night. The two men lock arms, wrestling until dawn. Unable to prevail, the assailant strikes Yaakov on the hip socket, leaving him with a limp. As a result of this strange incident the descendants of Yaakov are prohibited to eat the *Gid Hanashe* (sciatic nerve) on an animal's thigh socket.

Yaakov's mysterious attacker is identified as the Malach of Esav. The Medrash goes even further to explain that the angel of Esav is the prosecuting angel, Satan himself. The Satan also functions on the personal level as the Yetzer Hora. In contrast, Yaakov represents the Jewish soul, which craves spiritual existence and connection to G-d.

Yaakov's nightlong battle with the angel is the cosmic archetype of the daily struggle that we all face; to overcome the desires and temptations of our Yetzer Hora that distract us from our true purpose of serving Hashem.

From the Torah's account of this battle, we can glean a valuable insight as to how we can prevail in our own spiritual struggles, to identify our Strengths and Weaknesses.

Kabbalah explains that the Sefiros (attributes) of the Neshama mirror the human body. The head represents our intellectual capacity. The torso and two arms correspond to the primary emotions; Chesed is the right hand, Gevurah is the left hand and Tiferes is the Torso.

The Malach did not attack Yaakov's head. Instead they locked-arms and wrestled. Wrestling involves the arms and body. Even then he was unable to cause Yaakov to fall.

The light of the Neshama shines powerfully in our intellectual realisation of Hashem's greatness through meditation (hisbonenus) and Torah study. When we are operating with our G-dly intellect we

are deeply connected and immune to the attacks of the Yetzer Hora.

This intellectual appreciation spawns emotions of love and fear. Even when we are not actively meditating, these emotions remain, but a purely emotional service is weaker form of connection. And so the Yetzer Hora tries to wrap us in its arms (emotions), to subdue our G-dly emotions and usurp them with material and worldly desires.

But even then, the angel was unable to prevail. Our G-dly emotions, feelings of love for Hashem and an emotional appreciation for Mitzvos, offer us a degree of immunity in the face of challenge.

But our Achilles heal, our point of vulnerability, is our thigh socket, the *Gid Hanashe*.

The legs represent the Sefiros of Netzach and Hod, our resolve for action. When the intellectual and emotional appreciation is gone and all we are left with is going through the motions, we are at risk.

The *Gid Hanashe* is not kosher. However the prohibition of *Gid Hanashe* differs from that of other forbidden foods. When *Treif* food falls into kosher food it imparts its taste, rendering the entire mixture not-kosher. However, the food will remain kosher if the kosher food has 60 times the volume of the non-kosher food. This is referred to as *Bittul Beshishim*. The logic behind this magical number 60, is that the taste of the *Treif* food becomes completely nullified.

The *Gid Hanashe* is different. As long as the actual nerve has been removed, one does not need a nullification ratio. The reason for this is the Talmud's conclusion that sinews (nerves) do not possess taste. Therefore there is no flavour to cancel out. The *Gid Hanashe* represents a dry, flavourless service of Hashem.

Nashe also means to forget. When we "forget", when our G-dly intellect is not activated, our actions become like tasteless sinews, our weakness. When we are inspired and emotionally engaged, we face our spiritual struggles from a position of strength.

Think of davening and learning a spiritual work-out. The more we engage in it, the stronger we will be and the poor Yetzer Hora won't stand a chance.

Chanukah candles on camping trips - Part 2

Rabbi Yonason Johnson

Continued from last week's edition

Qu. Over the December break we are going camping for a few days and will be sleeping in tents. As it will be Chanukah, please advise if and how we should light Chanukah candles.

A. In last week's edition we established that the central issue is whether Chanukah candles is a Mitzvah on the individual or on a house. Below we present more of the views of the contemporary Poskim.

Az Nidberu¹⁷, like the Tzitz Eliezer, argues that there is no basis to those who claim that the Mitzvah of Chanukah candles depends on a house¹⁸. Therefore one may light with the Brachos wherever they are.

Mishna Halachos¹⁹ writes about lighting Chanukah candles when travelling overnight by car. If one will reach their destination during the night, they should certainly delay lighting candles until they arrive. He quotes the Maharsham but notes that a car may differ from a train carriage where one sleeps and eats. However he ultimately concludes that the obligation is in fact on the individual who should light wherever they are.

In contrast, Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch²⁰ rules like the Maharsham that we require a house. He rules that soldiers who are sleeping in tents in the fields should not light Chanukah candles, rather if they are married, they should rely on their wife lighting at home. A single soldier relies on their parents lighting.

Harav Gavriel Zinner²¹ writes that a camper-van or trailer caravan certainly constitutes a house as it functions as a dwelling. One would light with a Bracha. One who is sleeping out in the field may not light with a Bracha. They should nonetheless light (without a Bracha) to be Yotzai according to the Bach that one is still obligated even if they do not have a house. If one's car is at least 10 Tefachim tall (approximately 80cm) and 4 Amos wide (approximately 2m), it constitutes a house and one may light next to their car with a Bracha. In a Teshuva²² on the topic, he writes that a tent is not considered a house.

Mikraei Kodesh²³ writes that tent which has a roof and is protected from the elements does constitute a house according to the distinction of the Maharsham (between a train and boat) and one would light with the blessings.

Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach²⁴ accepts as

a matter of fact that for Chanukah candles one requires a house. He bases this on the Gemora and Rishonim quoted above. Therefore soldiers sleeping in the open would not be able to light with a Bracha.

In his Teshuvah, he discusses what type of structure would qualify as a house for this purpose. The structure must have a roof to protect from the elements. If the structure would not be able to withstand a common wind, it is also not considered as a house. The structure must also be a minimum of 10 Tefachim tall (approx. 80cm)²⁵.

Concerning the internal floor-space dimensions, he initially suggests that we require an area of 4 Amos by 4 Amos. This is the minimum size to be considered a house in Halocha with regards to Mezuzah, Eiruv and other Mitzvos²⁶. However he concludes that for Chanukah candles, it could be sufficient to qualify as a dwelling, even if it is not considered a house. For this, it is sufficient if the structure is large enough to use. The minimum useable space is 7 by 7 Tefachim (approx. 56cm by 56cm) which is the minimum dimensions of a Kosher Sukkah.

Larger tent which meet these requirements would constitute a dwelling and one may light with the Brachos. Pup tents would not qualify.

Harav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach once severely reprimanded a group of travellers when he was asked about lighting Chanukah candles when sleeping in the open field; "Chanukah candles is such an important Mitzvah that even a pauper is required to sell their clothing or go collecting to be able to light candles, how can you do something which will exempt yourselves from it?"

In Kuntres on Halachos for soldiers, Harav Shlomo Zalman writes that soldiers who sleep in their tanks may also light Menora in the tank.

If a group of travellers were sleeping out in the open or sleeping in small tents, they are unable to light according to the majority of Poskim (or would only be able to light without Brachos). Some suggest that if there is a minyan and they daven Mincha, one of the group may light the Menorah with the blessings for the purpose of *Pirsumei Nissa* as is done in Shule. Others disagree because public lighting is limited to a Shul as opposed to a pop-up minyan, so davening Mincha would not help.

However according to the Rebbe's view²⁷ (as understood by many Chabad Rabbanim²⁸), one may also light with the blessings at other com-

munal gatherings²⁹ for the purpose of *Pirsumei Nissa*. A group of campers sleeping in the open could do this.

For those in large tents who will be lighting, there is a further issue to consider;

Technically, when away from home, a married man is *Yotzai* with his wife lighting Chanukah candles in their home. A child is *Yotzai* when their parent lights at home.

Terumas Hadeshen³⁰ rules that one may nonetheless light for themselves in their temporary location with the blessings.

The Beis Yosef³¹ argues; If one is *Yotzai* with one's wife's lighting, then making a Bracha would be an unnecessary blessing.

The Ram"o³² rules like the Terumas Hadeshen. There is no concern of a *Bracha Levatala* as one has in mind not to be *Yotzai* with their wife's lighting. However, because many Poskim³³ are *machmir*, the Mishna Berura³⁴ advises that one should hear the Brachos from someone else or try to light before the time that their wife will light.

Conclusion

If you will be sleeping in large tents, each person can light Menorah with the blessings. They should have in mind not to be *Yotzai* with their wives' lighting at home.

The Menorah should be placed near the opening of the tent (lighting in the tent would not be safe).

Those sleeping out in the open or in small tents may not light individually with the blessings. They are *Yotzai* with their family at home. However, one member may light for the group in a manner of *Pirsumei Nissa*.

17. 6:75

18. See footnote there that afterwards he was shown the Teshuva of the Maharsham 4:164

19. 7:86

20. Moadim Uzmanim volume 8 2:143

21. Nitei Gavriel Chanuka 10:7

22. Ibid Teshuvah 8

23. Chanuka siman 18

24. Minchas Shlomo 2:51

25. In Halichas Shlomo he also requires that the walls reach within 3 Tefachim of the ground.

26. Sukkah 3a "Any house that is not 4 by 4 Amos, is exempt from Mezuzah, Maakeh (a protective fence on the roof) and

cannot contract Tzaraas of houses...

27. See Az Nidberu ibid who supports the Rebbe's position.

28. See Nesivos B'sdeh Hashlichus from Dayan L.Y. Raskin. See there for the opinion of Harav Masas.

29. Some require that there be 10 adults present

30. Siman 101

31. OC 677

32. Darkei Moshe 677:2. This is also the opinion of Maharil, Magen Avraham, Taz, Levush and Elya Rabbah

33. Maharshal Shu"t 85 and Pri Chadash

34. 677:16