

KOL SIMCHA TORAH GAZETTE FOR CHANUKAH/MIKEITZ 5786

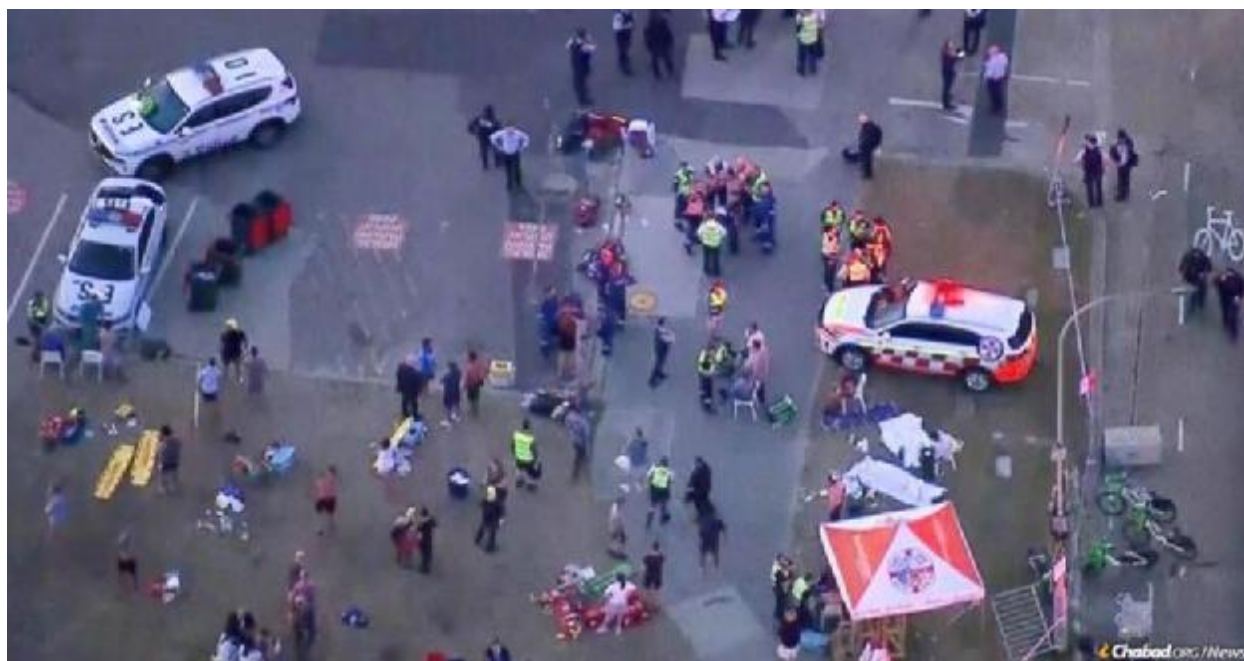
Vol 10 Issue 11 (Whole #477) 30 Kislev 5786/ December 20, 2025

Printed L'illuy nishmas Nechama bas R' Noach, a"h

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Terror Attack at Chanukah Event at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia: 11 Killed, Including a Chabad Rabbi, By Chabad.Org



Emergency services respond to the terrorist attack on Chanukah on the Beach in Sydney, Australia. (Photo by Via X)

Two gunmen attacked Chabad-Lubavitch of Bondi's Chanukah event on Bondi Beach killing 11, including Chabad Rabbi Eli Schlanger, hy"d, and injuring many others.

The "Chanukah by the Sea" event, which began at 5:30 PM local time, was interrupted by the sound of gunfire at approximately 6:45 PM. Thousands of attendees fled in all directions as the terrorists fired into the crowd. One gunman was interrupted when a middle-aged man heroically

charged him and wrestled the long gun from him. He rejoined his accomplice on an elevated bridge before both were neutralized.

December 14 marked the first night of Chanukah, and the Australian Jewish community was ready to be one of the first places on earth to welcome the light of the menorah. The Chanukah event on Bondi Beach has become a crown jewel of the Sydney Jewish community over the decades with thousands attending the family summer event.



Rabbi Eli Schlanger, hy”d

Among those murdered was Rabbi Eli Schlanger, who organized the event for Chabad of Bondi, where he served as assistant rabbi. Schlanger's in-laws, Rabbi Yehoram and Shternie Ulman, founded Chabad of Bondi decades ago. Schlanger was a devoted rabbi and chaplain, working tirelessly as an emissary of the Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson, of righteous memory, to support Jewish life in the Bondi community. He was 41.

A State Emergency Services chaplain named Vlad spoke with Australian TV, and shared that he was attending the event with his eight-year-old son. He pushed his son to the ground and covered him. A security guard was shot nearby and he tried to assist him. Vlad vowed to light Hanukkah candles he purchased at the event at home following the massacre to “keep the show going” and to show that “we are not afraid.”

Since the Oct. 7, terror attacks in Israel in 2023, Australian Jewry has been under attack. Multiple synagogues have been burned or vandalized, Jewish homes and cars have been sprayed with antisemitic graffiti, and massive protests in major cities, including calls for the genocide of Jews and Israel’s destruction, have made it dangerous for Jewish people.

Other victims that have been identified are Reuven Morrison, a member of the Chabad community who divided his time between Melbourne and Sydney, Alex Kleytman, a Holocaust survivor who attended the event with his children and grandchildren.

Speaking to Chabad.org earlier this year about the uptick in antisemitism in Australia, Schlanger noted with pride how attendance at the annual Chanukah at the Beach

doubled in response to the anti-Jewish attacks, with the Jewish community refusing to be cowed by the hatred. He also noted that security was heightened in recent years.

Last Chanukah, Schlanger responded to those asking how should Jews respond to antisemitism with a video posted on social media showing the Chabad way in his classically humorous manner. With the caption saying “Here's The Best Response to Combat Antisemitism”, Schlanger danced out of his home towards his car, on top of which he placed a light up portable menorah, encouraging others to join him in sharing the message of light in the face of hate.

In the face of darkness, Schlanger told Chabad.org at the time, the way forward is always the same: “Be more Jewish, act more Jewish and appear more Jewish.”

Understanding the Purpose of Our Tefillos (Prayers) and How to Connect Better with Hashem

By Daniel Keren



Rabbi Yehoshua Heber

One of the featured speakers at the recent Flatbush Veterans Day Hakhel Event was Rabbi Yehoshua Heber, Rav of Khal Tomchi Torah (the Torah Voda'as Minyan) and Dayan of the Bais Din Mishpatei Yisroel (Bais Din of Rav Yisroel Belsky, zt"l.). The topic of his lecture was “Our Daily Tefillos!”

How to Deserve an Overflowing of Blessings

Rabbi Heber began his lecture by declaring that Hakodesh Baruch Hu wants to give us an overflowing of blessings. But, first we must turn to Hashem and tell Him of our needs and requests.”

The toldos Noach are not just the children and offspring of Noach but his maisim tovim (good deeds). Rav Moshe Feinstein, zt”l, explains that just as one appreciates his children, a Jew must appreciate the opportunity that he has to perform maisim tovim.

When it comes to davening (praying to Hashem), one should understand that it is not one big shacharis of prayers, but that every word of davening is important and we should focus on reciting each word with loving care and kavanah (deep concentration) just as one might count his money.

The Rambam says that it is a mitzvah deraisa (Torah commandment) to daven to Hashem every day. There are three aspects to davening and they are – (1) asking Hashem for our needs, (2) offering our praises to Hashem and (3) thanking Hashem for granting us what we need and for the good that He does for us.

Every time that a person turns to Hakodesh Baruch with a request or a praise or thanks even outside of a formal davening (i.e. shacharis, mincha or maariv) he is makayim (fulfilling) a mitzvah deraisah.

The Rambam says that if person doesn’t daven with kavanah, that it is not a davening. In another place, the Rambam says that if you have kavanah in the first beracha (blessing) the Shemonah Esrai (Amidah), then you are yotzei (have fulfilled your obligation in davening the Amidah prayer).

Insights from Rav Chaim, the Chazon Ish and the Steipler

Rav Chaim Kanievski (1928-2022) explains that in the first place where the Rambam says that a person must have kavanah, that refers to understanding that when one is praying, he is davening in the presence of Hakodesh Baruch Hu. The Chazon Ish, Rav Avrohom Yeshaya Karelitz, 1878-1953 (the uncle of Rav Chaim) says that one must have in the beginning of his davening the intent that he is indeed davening to and in the presence of Hakodesh Baruch Hu, even if later on during this davening, his mind floats away from having perfect kavanah, he is still yotzei the mitzvah of tefillah.

The Chazon Ish writes that even if one is distracted with thoughts of his business or what he is going to do after praying, there is still a concept that he has a lower level of kavanah since he knows not to move away from the place that he is davening.



Rav Chaim Kanievski, the Chazon Ish and the Steipler Gaon

Rabbi Heber asks that if a person realizes that he didn't daven the first beracha of the Shemona Esrai with the proper kavanah, should he still continue to pray the other berachos? The Steipler Gaon, Rav Yaakov Kanievski, 1899-1985 (the father of Rav Chaim) says that the answer is that while one hasn't fulfilled the particular mitzvah of davening with kavanah, he can still fulfill the lower-level mitzvah of davening even without proper concentration. A person is supposed to daven with a certain type of fear. If a person isn't capable of such elevated prayers, he should at least daven with the concept that he is before the presence of Hakodesh Baruch Hu.

The Significance of the Three Steps Forward

The Remah says that when we take three steps forward before beginning the davening of the Shemonah Esrai it is like Moshe Rabbeinu who ascended Har Sinai to receive the Torah that he pierced the three mechitzahs that for us symbolize piercing all the distractions that separate us from recognizing that Hakodesh Baruch Hu has given a special privilege and kindness to approach Him with our davening.

Rabbi Heber explained that we have to recognize that Hashem is not obligated to answer our prayers and requests. Rather it is His kindness to pay attention to our davening and prayers. Davening is something that constantly requires one's efforts to do properly.

If one has a friend who is not Jewish and who is in need of a refuah (healing), can one daven for that non-Jew to have a refuah shelaima? If that non-Jew is a decent person, one would be permitted to pray for his non-Jewish friend to be healed.

Why Hakodesh Baruch Hu Didn't Create a Perfect World

Hakodesh Baruch Hu created this world, but He did not do so in a completely perfect manner, in order to allow us an opportunity to join Him in the mission of perfecting it with our mitzvahs, particularly through the medium of davening before Hashem with the best kavana possible that we can achieve.

Reprinted from the November 27, 2025 edition of the Flatbush Jewish Journal.

Jacob's Odd Answer to Pharaoh's Question

From the Teachings of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, Zt"l



This week's Torah portion, Miketz, contains an interesting exchange between Pharaoh, King of Egypt, and our Patriarch Jacob. When Joseph brought his elderly father to Pharaoh to introduce him, Pharaoh asked, "How old are you?" Jacob responded: "The years of my travails are 130. The days of the years of my life have been few and hard, and they have not reached those of my ancestors in their journeys."

What an odd answer to Pharaoh's question! Why did Jacob find it necessary to offer all this information, when Pharaoh had only asked him his age? Furthermore, how could he have described his years as being "few"? His lifetime was already longer than the 120 years allotted to mankind after the great Flood of Noah's generation. In fact, Pharaoh had only posed the question because of Jacob's ancient appearance.

In the literal sense, it could certainly be said that Jacob had not reached the years of his ancestors, for Abraham lived till the age of 175, and Isaac until 180. Relatively speaking, Jacob was still young. Yet according to the commentator Rashi, Jacob was speaking qualitatively about his life; in contrast to his forefathers, his years were short and his lifetime was difficult.

From this perspective, since Jacob's years were "hard," fraught as they were with difficulty, they were also "few," for they were not filled with the inner spiritual

service he desired. Because his life was hard, Jacob did not reach the inner spiritual fulfillment with which Abraham and Isaac had endowed their years.

Of course, this lack of fulfillment is relative to the unique level which Jacob saw as his potential. Our Sages relate that Jacob's true desire was to live to his fullest capacity, in the perfect goodness and prosperity of the Era of the Redemption. Since this potential was not realized during his lifetime, Jacob considered his life as lacking.

Jacob felt it necessary to communicate this message, both to Pharaoh, and to his descendents. He wanted his children to know that even while they dwelt in "the finest place in the land of Egypt," and were being given "the fat of the land," they should be ever aware that their lives were not complete.

This is particularly relevant to us, the last generation of the exile and the first generation of the Redemption. We must feel that until the Redemption becomes manifest, our lives are lacking. This perception will lead to an increased desire and yearning for the Redemption, and also an increase in our performance of those activities which will bring Moshiach and usher in the Messianic Era.

Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe

Reprinted from the Parashat Noach December 6, 2002 - 1 Tevet, 5763 edition of L'Chaim, a publication of the Lubavitch Youth Organization. Adapted from the works of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

Thoughts that Count for Our Parsha

"Suddenly, seven fat, handsome cows emerged from the Nile... Then, just as suddenly, seven other cows emerged after them, very badly formed and emaciated." (Gen. 41:18-19)

Pharaoh's dream, in which he dreamt of two opposites, is like the exile. In exile we are faced with opposites all the time. One minute we pursue eternal, spiritual goals and the next minute we want things that are mundane and transitory. When the Redemption comes we will no longer feel this dichotomy. We will see how the purpose of everything in the world is purely for holiness and G-dliness. (Likutei Sichot)

And he asked them after their welfare (Gen. 43:27)

Some people only show an interest in their fellow man until they assume a position of power, whereupon it becomes beneath them to inquire about another. Joseph, on the other hand, despite being second in command over all of Egypt, approached his fellow man with the same humility as before his ascent to power.

If I lose, I lose. (Gen. 43:14)

Jacob was afraid that he would lose yet another son when his sons brought Benjamin to Egypt. "I lose" the first time was for Joseph and Shimon who were still there, and the second "I lose" was for Benjamin. Jacob was also referring to the exiles of the Jewish people. "I lose" the first time is for the first Holy Temple that was destroyed, the second "I lose" is for the second Holy Temple that was destroyed. After the Redemption, G-d will give us a third Holy Temple that will never be destroyed. (Bereishit Rabba)

Chanuka - The superiority of the "shamash"

The "shamash" candle, the one which is used to light all the others, is not part of the mitzva itself. Yet it is precisely this candle which is placed, by Jewish custom, above all the others in a position of honor. We learn from this that a person who lights the "candle" of another Jew, who shares his enthusiasm and love of Judaism with another until he, too, is touched and "ignited," elevates his own spirituality as well. (The Lubavitcher Rebbe)

Reprinted from the December 6, 2002/1 Tevet, 5763 edition of L'Chaim.

House Speaker Mike Johnson and Congressman Mike Lawler Visit the Skverer Rebbe



House Speaker Mike Johnson paid a formal visit Sunday, December 7th to the Skverer Rebbe in New Square, where he revealed that preparations are underway for a forthcoming meeting between the Rebbe and President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington.

The Speaker's stop in New Square came after he and Congressman Mike Lawler attended a fundraising event in Stony Point, Rockland County earlier in the afternoon. From there, the two lawmakers traveled to the Rebbe's residence for what participants described as a warm and meaningful encounter.

Both Johnson and Lawler informed the Rebbe that they are actively arranging a private meeting in Washington between the Rebbe and President Trump, with the sit-down expected to take place in the near future.

Community askanim expressed deep appreciation for the Speaker's involvement and for Congressman Lawler's ongoing advocacy on behalf of local Jewish mosdos and schools.

This latest development follows a personal gesture from President Trump just two weeks ago, when he sent the Skverer Rebbe a heartfelt congratulatory letter in honor of the wedding of the Rebbe's granddaughter. The message, printed on official White House stationery, conveyed warm wishes from the President and First Lady Melania Trump, offering blessings for joy, peace, and a home "built on tradition and guided by purpose."

Reprinted from the December 7, 2025 website of Matzav.com

A Millionaire Because of You

By Rabbi Paysach J Krohn



Rabbi Paysach Krohn and Rav Shlomo Wolbe, zt"l

I want to share something remarkable that has never left me.

Many years ago, I went with my son and daughter-in-law to one of the wisest men of the generation, Rav Shlomo Wolbe *zt”l*. I asked him a question I am often asked myself: “Rebbe, when I speak to parents about *chinuch*, what is the single most important message I should give them?”

Rav Wolbe answered with characteristic simplicity and brilliance: “There are two things every child must receive: Time and love.”

My son, then just beginning his own parenting journey, pressed further. “Rebbe, how much time? How much do our children need?”

Rav Wolbe smiled and gave a timeless answer: “As much as they need.”

He was right. In today’s world you simply cannot attend every wedding, every bar mitzvah, every bas mitzvah, every *upsherin*, every event. Baruch Hashem, Klal Yisrael has grown so beautifully that you could be out every single night of the week. But if you still have children at home, you do not belong everywhere else.

Your first responsibility is home. Your first obligation is your children.

People ask me all the time, “Rabbi, how do you travel all over the world? Edmonton, Antwerp, Manchester, Chile, Australia?” And the answer is simple: my children are married. You’d have to be out of your mind to travel like that when there are little ones at home.

I will tell you something surprising: If you don’t show up at the wedding, the couple will still get married! But your child won’t wait for your time.

If we are not present, children will look for validation somewhere else. They will seek connection from friends, from the street, from their phones—because they feel no connection at home. The world is full of distractions, and if we are too busy for our children, someone else will be glad to claim their attention.

When my children were young, each one had a weekly half-hour of undivided time. No interruptions. No phones. Just the two of us. Today it’s harder; cell phones run our lives. As R’ Matisyahu Salomon once quipped, “I don’t know how anyone with a smartphone can say the morning blessing, ‘*She’lo Asani Aved*—Who has not made me a slave.’ Such a person is a slave!”

Walk down any street and watch couples taking a walk. He is on his phone. She is on hers. They might as well be miles apart.

But a child, for thirty minutes a week, gets a parent with full attention. If they want to go bowling, we went bowling. If they wanted pizza, we bought pizza. If they wanted to learn Tanach, we learned Tanach. It was their time.

Do you know what happens when you do this? You learn everything about your child.

Their friends. Their teachers. Their favorite colors. Their dreams. And your relationship becomes real.

As yourself. When was the last time you had a real conversation with your child or grandchild? Not a quick check-in, not a reminder, not a correction; an actual conversation longer than three minutes. This is where connection happens. This is how children feel loved.

I once heard a heartbreaking story from the marriage counselor and psychologist, Dr. Meir Wikler.

A couple divorced, and the custody arrangement was that the children stayed with their mother during the week and with their father for Shabbos. One Tuesday night, the mother was putting her young son to sleep when he suddenly burst into tears.

“I want to go to Daddy.” “What do you mean? You’ll see Daddy on Shabbos.” “No! I want Daddy now!” She couldn’t calm him, so she called her ex-husband. He came immediately, took the boy home, put him into bed, and the boy began crying again.

“I want Mommy!” “But you just asked for me! That’s why I came!” “No, I want Mommy!”

He couldn’t calm him either. So he brought the boy back to his mother. And as the father turned to leave, the boy stood at the door sobbing, “Daddy, don’t go. Please stay. Please stay tonight.” The father couldn’t stay. He left, and the boy cried himself to sleep.

The next morning the mother called Dr. Wikler. After describing the whole ordeal, she asked:

“Do you think my son needs therapy?” Dr. Wikler answered: “Your son doesn’t need therapy. Your son needs parents.”

Children don’t need perfection. They don’t need brilliance. They don’t need expensive toys or elaborate vacations. They need parents who present, attentive and loving.

When my daughter was engaged, we had many honest conversations. I once said to her, “Faige, I used to criticize you a lot. Didn’t it bother you?” She answered with such clarity that I will never forget it. “Tatty, do you know how many times a week you told me you were a millionaire because I was your daughter? I believed you. And I knew you meant it.” That is the power of love that is spoken and shown consistently.

Do you ever go over to your child and say: “I am the richest person in the world —not because of money, but because Hashem gave me you.”

Say it. And mean it. One sincere hug given with that message can bind a child to you for life.

Reprinted from the Parshat Vayeitzei 5786 edition of the TorahAnytime.com Newsletter, compiled and edited by Elan Perchik.

What Does Hanukkah Really Celebrate?

by Rabbi David Berlinger



Hanukkah's tiny candles tell a big story: a fight for Jewish identity, the power of small acts to defeat darkness, and the hidden spark within every soul.

The small flames of the menorah have lit up Jewish life for centuries. Why has Hanukkah captured the Jewish heart, becoming one of the most beloved Jewish holidays?

To understand, let's explore three layers: the historical, the spiritual, and the personal.

1. The Historical: A Battle of Cultures

Maimonides writes that the Greeks attempted "to make Israel forget the Torah and violate its laws." This wasn't only a military assault. It was an attempt to redefine the Jewish soul.

Greek culture prized beauty, reason, philosophy, and physical perfection. Judaism doesn't reject those values but it insists they are not ultimate. For the Jewish People, wisdom is holy when it points upward, beauty is meaningful when it reveals G-d, and strength is noble when it serves goodness. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks once

wrote, “To the Greeks what is beautiful is holy; to the Jews, what is holy is beautiful.”

The Greeks weren’t trying to destroy Jews physically; they were trying to reshape Jews spiritually. The Maccabees initially fought for their national identity. Hanukkah is therefore not only a holiday of military victory—it is a holiday about the right to remain committed to Jewish values and practice.

This is why the miracle of the oil matters so much. When the Maccabees purified the Temple, they found only a single jar of oil “with the seal of the High Priest intact.” That jar represents the inner identity of Israel that cannot be contaminated. Much can be touched, damaged, or profaned, but the core of the Jewish soul—its oil—remains pure.

2. The Spiritual: A Small Light Pushes Back Darkness

The Talmud teaches: “A little light pushes away a lot of darkness.”

Darkness doesn’t need to be wrestled with; you don’t grab handfuls of it or shove it out the door. You simply bring light and it disappears. This is the spiritual meaning of Hanukkah: the power of small, steady holiness to transform a world that often feels overwhelmingly dark.

Unlike the bonfire of Lag B’Omer or the grand flames of the Temple Menorah, Hanukkah candles are tiny and fragile. They flicker in the winter cold, barely illuminating a few inches beyond the wick, and yet they change everything. Why? Because holiness isn’t measured by size; it’s measured by purpose. A mitzvah done quietly, a moment of kindness, a word of encouragement, a minute of Torah learning—these are small flames but they shift the atmosphere of the world. Jewish history has so often been preserved by “a small remnant,” a tiny jar of oil, a spark that refuses to go out.

That’s also why the menorah is lit at the entrance of the home, the place where holiness begins. The miracle of Hanukkah is not only that G-d helped the Maccabees win—it is that He showed us how even the smallest human act can become a vessel of divine light.

3. The Personal: Finding the Pure Jar of Oil Within

Every Jew has moments that feel like the Temple after the Greek occupation—tired, confused, cluttered, or spiritually dim. Sometimes you feel that your inner world has been trampled, that habits or distractions have dulled your sensitivity, or that you’ve drifted far from where you hoped to be.

Hanukkah’s message is: look again. There is always one jar of oil left. There is always a part of you that remains pure, untouched, holy, and full of potential. That small spark is indestructible. Even if the rest of the Temple feels broken, that single jar can begin the rebuilding.

And it's enough for eight days. The number eight represents what is beyond nature—beyond limitation. When a person finds even the smallest authentic spark within, G-d expands it far beyond what seems possible.

Hanukkah reminds you that you are never too broken to shine. You are never too small to change your world.

Carrying the Light Forward

Hanukkah arrives during the darkest time of the year, near the winter solstice when daylight is at its minimum. It also begins late in the lunar month, so that during the festival even the moon seems to fade into nothing. Everything suggests that darkness will prevail.

Yet night by night the flame grows, candle by candle. By the end of the holiday, the darkness is broken, the moon returns and begins to grow. Light will prevail.

May the lights you kindle inspire you to uncover the pure oil within yourself and to spread your light in a world that still desperately needs it.

Reprinted from the current website of aish.com



Hanukkah lamp, 1867–72. Lemberg (Lviv, Ukraine). Silver: cast, engraved, and traced, 34 1/4 × 23 7/8 × 15 in. (87 × 60.7 × 38.1 cm). The Jewish Museum, Gift of Dr. Harry G. Friedman in memory of Adele Friedman (F 5119)

Reprinted from the website of the Met Museum in New York City.