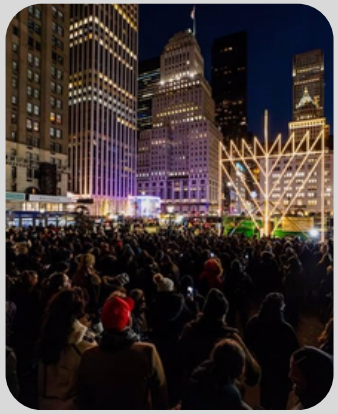
This Week in Jewish History

Lighting the menorah in Public: A New Confidence in Jewish Life

Even though we see public Menorah lighting as from Chabad, much earlier in the late 19th century, Jewish communities in cities such as Vienna, Berlin, Paris and London began lighting Chanukah menorahs more openly in open venues, public squares, large halls, community buildings and windows facing the street. For many families, this was a meaningful change. Only a generation earlier, Jewish practice had often been kept discreet. Now, growing confidence and legal emancipation allowed Jews to celebrate visibly and joyfully. These early public lightings weren't just about making statements, but about showing that you belong, sharing light, tradition and identity with the wider world. Today's public menorahs, school celebrations and shared songs all trace their roots back to this moment.



Notices

School Reopens on **Monday 5th January**

Question for the Table - Why do you think celebrating Jewish traditions openly can feel powerful? When might showing who you are take courage?

Edited By **Eli Bondt & Avi Abeles** For sponsorships please contact **avi@abeles.co.uk**

השבוע ביבנה

#022 מקץ/חנכה Start: 3:35 End: 4:50

Rabbi Nyman's Year 9 Gemorah class had a siyum for all their amazing learning & efforts in learning this term with Donuts & lots nash!

WHAT MODERN DAY COUNTRY WERE THE 'GREEKS' BASED IN?

TO ANSWER THIS QUESTION SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW
AND WIN AN AMAZON GIFT VOUCHER!

Everyday this week we enjoyed a musical hallel in Shacharis followed later on by donughts after lighting the menorah

Mazal Tov To Rabbi Joseph on his son's Bar Mitzvah This Shabbos! And for leining for us in school!

Finding Light in Dark Times

Rabbi Cohen

This Chanuka has felt unusually heavy. Jews around the world were shaken by the horrific terror attack at a Chanuka gathering in Sydney, reminding us that even moments of light and celebration can be overshadowed by darkness. Unsurprisingly, many have turned to a central Chanuka teaching of the Lubavitcher Rebbe זצ"ל: our response to darkness is not retreat, but the deliberate creation of light.

A parallel message emerges from Parshas Miketz. Pharaoh's advisers offered interpretations of his dreams, yet none satisfied him. Rashi explains that while their readings were technically plausible, they offered no comfort or direction. Yosef's interpretation was different. Not only did he explain the dream, he showed Pharaoh how to respond to it.

Ramban explains that Yosef's instruction to store grain was not merely advice - it was part of the dream's meaning itself. The frightening vision contained within it the tools for survival. Even if difficult years lay ahead, the outcome was not fixed. Human responsibility, foresight, and action could change the future.

This was what resonated with Pharaoh. Yosef transformed a nightmare into a challenge that could be met.

Chanuka carries the same message. We light the Menora specifically after nightfall. One small flame pushes back the darkness, and each night we add more. The nes of Chanuka teaches us that darkness is real - but it is not absolute, and it is not permanent.

Antisemitism, sadly, is not new. We do not ignore it, nor are we naïve about its dangers. But Chanuka reminds us that alongside vigilance, we must also strengthen our identity, Mitzvos, Torah learning, and Chessed.

Like Yosef, we refuse to be paralysed by fear. We choose to bring light.

May our candles this Chanuka give us strength, clarity, and hope - until brighter days return, בב"א.

The Making of a Leader

Avi Abeles - Head Boy

Parshas Mikeitz describes one of the most dramatic turnarounds in Tanach: Yosef goes from a forgotten prisoner to the viceroy of Egypt in a single day. But Chazal point out something striking - Yosef did not become a leader in Pharaoh's palace. He had already been one long before.

Years earlier, Yosef sat in an Egyptian prison with no status, no power, and no audience. Yet the Torah tells us that he noticed the distress of his fellow prisoners and asked a simple question: "Why do you look upset today?" (Bereishis 40:7). Rashi, citing Chazal, highlights this moment - even in his own suffering, Yosef took responsibility for others.

This leads to an important question: Why does the Torah emphasize Yosef's behavior in prison? Isn't his rise to power the main story?

Perhaps the answer is that Pharaoh's "interview" with Yosef - the dream interpretation - was important, but it wasn't everything. Anyone who has ever gone for a job interview knows this truth: the interview matters, but very often what truly determines the outcome is what the references say about you. How did you act before you needed the job? How did you treat people when there was nothing to gain?

The Ramban explains that Pharaoh trusted Yosef not only because he interpreted the dream correctly, but because Yosef demonstrated wisdom, responsibility, and care for others. Those qualities were not developed overnight. They were built quietly, in prison, when no one was watching.Parshas Mikeitz teaches us a foundational Torah principle: character comes before position. Leadership is not defined by titles or authority, but by consistency - by who a person is in everyday moments, long before opportunity arrives.

Yosef's message is clear and powerful: the habits we build, the way we treat others, and the responsibilities we choose to take on - especially when no one is watching - become the "references" that define our character and speak for us later in life.