**YESHIVAT HAR ETZION**

**ISRAEL KOSCHITZKY VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH (VBM)**

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**A River Flows from Eden:**

**The Garden of Eden**

**as the Inner Source of the Jewish Holidays**

**Rav Uriel Eitam**

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Dedicated by Mr. and Mrs. Leon Brum for the Refua Sheleima of

Dana Petrover (Batsheva bat Gittel Aidel Leba)

and Marvin Rosenberg (Meir Chaim ben Tzipporah Miriam)

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In memory of six friends and family,   
strong pillars of the Montreal Jewish community,   
who have left us in the past 7 years.   
All were אוהבי עם ישראל, אוהבי ארץ ישראל, אוהבי תורת ישראל.

Joseph (Yosie) Deitcher

Avrum (Avy) Drazin

Rabbi Joseph Drazin

Leibel Frisch

Israel (Mutch) Yampolsky

Dr. Mark Wainberg

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**Shiur #15:**

**The Holiday of Chanuka**

**Part I**

**The Holiday of *Bein Ha-shemashot***

THe mystery of the unique time

fOR the mitzva of kindling chanuka lights

The coming *shiurim* will address the spiritual struggles that lie at the root of the holiday of Chanuka.

In the first and second chapters, we will consider the question of what lies behind the unique time set for the mitzva of kindling the Chanuka lights, *bein ha-shemashot* (twilight), and its special connection to Chanuka, the culture of Greece (Yavan) and the struggle between Yisrael and Yavan.

In the third chapter, we will move on to the roots of this spiritual struggle in the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and in the temptation that leads to eating from it.

In the fourth and final chapter, we will see how the holiday of Chanuka and its laws express the reparation and repentance which Yisrael effects in response to the spiritual movement of Yavan, which is rooted in Adam's sin.

I

"THE TIME OF GREECE"

### iTS OBSERVANCE IS FROM SUNSET

After addressing the mitzva of kindling Chanuka lights, the Gemara mandates the appropriate time for kindling them:

Its observance is from sunset until there is no wayfarer in the street. (*Shabbat* 21b)

The directive that establishes the time of kindling from sunset is an exceptional determination in the world of Halakha, deviating from what we encounter with regard to *mitzvot* that are dependent on time.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Generally speaking, we distance ourselves from the problematic period of time known as *bein ha-shemashot* (lit. "between the suns," i.e. between sunset and nightfall, when the stars come out). We either try to fulfill a mitzva before sunset, when it is clearly still day, or else we delay fulfilling the mitzvauntil after nightfall, when it is clearly already night.

Seemingly, according to the ordinary concepts of time found in Halakha, which define *beit ha-shemashot* as a period of uncertainty, perhaps day or perhaps night, one who kindles a light on the first night of Chanuka immediately after sunset should be in doubt: Is it still daytime, on the 24th of Kislev, in which case no Chanuka light has been kindled? Or is it already nighttime, on the 25th of Kislev, and the obligation to kindle a light on Chanuka has been discharged? Why do *Chazal* establish the time for fulfilling the mitzvaat this special hour?[[2]](#footnote-2)

### The wisdom of time

In order to clarify this matter, let us get a taste of the issue of the wisdom of time in the Torah. Our lives revolve around different systems and cycles of time, some based on nature and perceptible reality, others defined by the Torah. We engage in various timeframes, such as the day, week, month and year, as well as comprehensive time systems, such as human life from birth to death, or the historical timeline.

Between the various systems there exist connections and correspondences, and sometimes drawing comparisons between them raises new insights and meanings.

To illustrate this point, we can easily see how a full day contains the essence of the human life cycle. As soon as we wake up in the morning, we thank God for the soul that is, as it were, cast anew into our bodies; we open the day with the morning hand-washing, one of the reasons for which is our revitalization as a new creature, as it were being born into a new day. The end of the day is similar to the end of the life cycle, for sleep is "one sixtieth of death" (*Berakhot* 57b); and as we draw near to it we ask in the *Ha-mappil* blessing: "And may You illuminate my eyes lest I die in sleep."

### The day and History

Returning to the matter at hand, let us compare the time systems of a 24-hour day and history. At first glance, these are two very different time systems: The first is short and cyclical, whereas the second is one long system, encompassing all of time familiar to us and even that which has not yet happened. Upon closer examination, however, we notice a simple and well-known conceptual correspondence between a day and the history of the Jewish people: the period of exile corresponds to the night, while the time of redemption corresponds to the day.

A basis for this distinction can be found already in the Book of *Bereishit,* in the Covenant Between the Pieces, at which Avraham is informed about the first exile, the exile in Egypt. This information is conveyed to him in a setting of "night":

And it came to pass, that, when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Avram; and, lo, a dread, even a great darkness, fell upon him. (*Bereishit* 15:12)

This is an exile to which the nation of Israel goes out even before the nation comes into being, or as part of the process of its coming into being. In this sense, this exile is one of a night that precedes the day: "And it was evening and it was morning" (*Bereishit* 1:5).

When Yeshayahu describes the redemption, he uses the image of sunrise: "Arise, shine, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you" (*Yeshayahu* 60:1). *Chazal* expand upon this image, teaching us about a more precise correspondence between the process of the appearance of light in the morning and the nature of the process of redemption. This is what Rabbi Chiya the Great says to Rabbi Shimon ben Chalafta, as they are walking in the valley of Arbel and they see the morning-star breaking forth:

So is the redemption of Israel: It begins little by little, but as it proceeds, it grows greater and greater.(*Yerushalmi,* *Berakhot* 1:2)

The *Zohar (*III, 238b) identifies the night with exile in an even more explicit manner: "Night is nothing but exile."

In the wake of all of these sources, this comparison continued to be widely used by Torah scholars of every generation.[[3]](#footnote-3)

### *Bein ha-SHemashot* within A 24-hour day

However, day and night together do not encompass an entire 24-hour day. Between the day and the night there is the period of *bein ha-shemashot.* To what does it belong more — to the day or to the night? It no longer has the strong light of day, but it does not yet have the darkness of night; it has a little of this and a little of that. Its light is, of course, beneficial, but it also poses dangers. The decrease in the intensity of the light is gradual, and therefore a person may not even notice that one’s vision is becoming more limited. Morning (*boker*) evokes examination (*bikoret*); the more it advances, the greater one's ability to perceive objects and distinguish between them. This may be contrasted with the onset of evening (*erev*), which evokes confusion (*irbuv*); light and darkness intermingle, and with them the details of the picture become blurred in the eyes of the viewer.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Let us examine more closely the process of transition from day to night that takes place during *bein ha-shemashot.* At the first stage, there is sunset, which involves a sharp transition from light to darkness, stemming from the concealment of the sun, which is a huge source of light. In the second stage, it becomes clear that even in this new situation there is some light, in which one can manage at least partially.

Furthermore, after becoming accustomed to this new light, one may forget the immense light that had been removed. One not outside at the time of the removal of the great light, who is familiar only with the new dim light, is liable to relate to this semi-dark reality as if it were a truly bright reality.

Alongside the difference in the intensity of the light, there is also a difference in the nature of the light. During the day, it is strikingly obvious that the source of the light is the sun; it is clear that that the light is coming from a source beyond our planet. During *bein ha-shemashot*, on the other hand, the source of the dim light is not evident, and in the absence of a manifest source, the light appears to shine from within our planet.

### *Bein ha-Shemashot* in History – the second temple

The comparison between the 24-hour day and history reveals that so too in "the day of history" there is a period that is a sort of *bein ha-shemashot*. The days of the First Temple, the days of the prophets, are centered on illumination that comes from above. This illumination parallels the illumination of the sun during the day, both with regard to the intensity of the illumination, and with regard to its coming from outside our planet. The long exile, the exile of Edom (identified with Rome) which follows the destruction of the Second Temple, parallels, as stated above, the night. Between the destruction of the First Temple and the long exile there is a whole period, which has the distinctive characteristics of *bein ha-shemashot* : the Second Temple Era.

The transition from day to night takes place by way of a process that begins with sunset and ends with the total removal of its light, which allows the stars to "come out" and appear before us. In similar fashion, we may talk about two historical sunsets, the two destructions, the Destruction of the First Temple and the Destruction of the Second Temple. Between these two sunsets, there is the Second Temple Era — the time of historical *bein ha-shemashot.*

As mentioned above, the period of *bein ha-shemashot* is marked by the fact that the sun does not illuminate the earth with direct light, but nevertheless the earth is still illuminated by it, even when the sun itself is no longer visible. The spiritual situation of the Second Temple period is similar to the period of *bein ha-shemashot*: It opens with the removal of the *Shekhina*, when there is no longer a direct revelation of God, but there is still a certain spiritual enlightenment.

As an expression of this, let us consider the words of the Gemara in *Yoma*, which distinguish between the First and Second Temples — between the historical daytime and twilight:

In these five things the First Temple differed from the Second Temple:

1. The Ark with its Cover and its Cherubim;
2. The fire;
3. The *Shekhina;*
4. The Holy Spirit;
5. The *Urim Ve-tumim*. (*Yoma* 21b)

The Second Temple lacks all aspects of the direct revelation of God, which appear in a straightforward manner from above to below. It lacks the splendor of the Ark, with its Cover, upon which stand the two Cherubim, through which the word of God is revealed in the Holy of Holies (*Shemot* 25:22). It lacks the *Shekhina* and the Holy Spirit, our communication with God by way of the *Urim Ve-tumim* in the breastplate worn by the high priest, and the fire which comes down from heaven. However, the darkness of exile has not yet fully emerged, and part of the light of the day continues to illuminate in various manifestations, as the Jewish people dwell in their own land, as the Temple and most of its accoutrements are restored, and as Israel once more becomes a sovereign kingdom — once the Chashmonaim reinstate Jewish kingship.

### "The time of Greece"

This period of the Second Temple, of historical *bein ha-shemashot*, is the period of the Greek Empire. The Second Temple is built under the patronage of the Persian Empire and destroyed by the Roman Empire; in between, the days of the Second Temple themselves pass primarily in the shadow of the Greek Empire, which rules during the period between Persia’s fall and Rome’s rise.

The essential connection between Greek culture and the time when the *Shekhina* departs is further clarified through the words of Rabbi Yochanan:

When he [Reish Lakish] came before Rabbi Yochanan, he said to him: This is not the reason. Even if they had all come up in the time of Ezra, the *Shekhina* would not have rested over the Second Temple.

For it is written: "God shall enlarge Yefet, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (*Bereishit* 9:27). Even though God has enlarged Yefet, the *Shekhina* rests only in the tents of Shem.

And how do we know that the Persians come from Yefet? As it says: “The sons of Yefet: Gomer and Magog and Madai and Yavan…”

Madai is Macedonia, Yavan is as the name implies. (*Yoma* 9b-10a)

Rabbi Yochanan explains that the *Shekhina* cannot rest in the Second Temple because it does not rest in the tents of Yefet, but only in the tents of Shem. Rabbi Yochanan's novel point is that even though the Temple belongs to the Israelites and is built in their land, nevertheless it is considered to be among "the tents of Yefet," because it is constructed in an era when Israel is under the rule of the descendants of Yefet, first as represented by Persia and then by Greece. The Second Temple period, which is the time of Israel's historical *bein ha-shemashot*, is perceived in its very essence to be "the time of Greece."

The days of Chanuka are born in the encounter between Yisrael and Yavan in the historical *bein ha-shemashot,* and therefore in parallel fashion the mitzvaof kindling Chanuka lights is enacted precisely at this special time of the day, the time of *bein ha-shemashot.[[5]](#footnote-5)*

### The attitude toward the light of *Bein ha-SHemashot*

Facing the world illuminated with the light of *bein ha-shemashot,* stand Yisrael on one side and Yavan on the other, and here is born the great historical clash between them. What gives rise to this clash? Yisrael and Yavan encounter the light of *bein ha-shemashot* from opposite points of view. The people of Israel have just seen "sunset," the removal of prophecy, and they recognize that the partial light that illuminates the world is only a remnant of the great Divine light that until recently has illuminated the world directly. They lift up their eyes to the return of this original light.

By contrast, Greek culture emerges from the dark world of idolatry, so it meets the light of *bein ha-shemashot* like a prisoner born in a dank pit who emerges for the first time into the light. For such a person, the dim light that illuminates the world is overwhelming and blinding, and what is more, the prisoner even mistakenly believes that the world is illuminated by itself, due to not recognizing any source of light.

Just as the Second Temple is characterized by the removal of prophecy, so too it is characterized by the total disappearance of idolatry, which floods the world from ancient times and throughout the days of the First Temple, then disappears almost overnight. With the removal of prophecy from Israel, the evil desire for idolatry is removed from Israel and the nations.[[6]](#footnote-6) Greek culture leads the process of human culture's exit from the dark pit of idolatry, into a human world illuminated by God in a hidden manner — both through the spiritual baggage that prophetic revelation has left behind and through the image of God implanted in mankind and its powers.

Though it is true that Greek culture still drags idolatrous baggage with it, its idolatrous world is tempered, even assuming a human face. Greek culture sees the human light that exists in the world, admires and empowers it. It develops with great intensity all human faculties, from physical strength and appearance to wisdom, through philosophy, which is considered the pinnacle of human culture.

The battle between Yisrael and Yavan is fought over the attitude toward the light of cultural *bein ha-shemashot*. Are we dealing with a tremendous self-enlightenment of the human world, or is it a new appearance of Divine enlightenment?

It is not by chance that the struggle leads to the Candelabrum. As we saw earlier, the overt appearance of the Holy of Holies is no more (due to the absence of the Ark), and what is left is the Holy, the Sanctuary, in which stands the Candelabrum, which illuminates by way of seemingly natural light, even constituting a symbol of wisdom: "He who desires to become wise should turn to the south…The symbol [by which to remember this] is that the Table is to the north of the Altar and the Candelabrum to the south" (*Bava Batra* 25b).

The Greeks see the light of the Candelabrum as a wholly natural light, and they want to impose their view on the people of Israel: "When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary*,* they defiled all the oil" (*Shabbat* 21b). The Greeks defile the oil, but do not burn or destroy it. It is as if they are saying to Israel: Light is noble and beautiful, but there is no difference between the light of pure oil and the light of impure oil. The Greeks think of this illumination as the natural illumination of the Candelabrum, but the people of Israel insist on the purity of the Candelabrum, on kindling with only pure oil, since the Candelabrum is part of the Holy.

For the people of Israel the Candelabrum is not an expression of natural or human illumination, but rather it constitutes testimony about the true light, the source of illumination:

Rav Sheshet objected: "Outside the veil of testimony shall [Aharon] arrange it."

Does He then require its light? Surely, during the entire forty years that the Israelites travelled in the wilderness they travelled only by His light![[7]](#footnote-7)

But it is a testimony to mankind that the *Shekhina* rests in Israel. (*Shabbat* 22b)

Therefore, *bein ha-shemashot* is not just the time of the mitzva, and it is also not just a concept that characterizes the historical period of the struggle. The concept of *bein ha-shemashot* also characterizes the content of the struggle. In contrast to earlier pagan cultures, Greek culture is marked by a mix of good and evil. During this period, the people of Israel descend from meriting the sunlight of the First Temple Era to the light of *bein ha-shemashot* of the Second Temple Era, which is also illuminated by the light of the Candelabrum. The nations of the world, on the other hand, merit rising from the impurity of idolatry to the *bein ha-shemashot* of locating man in the center. It is precisely for this reason that the problematic nature of Greek culture is more difficult to identify, more accommodating to deception and more dangerous.

(Translated by David Strauss)

1. The plain meaning of the Gemara is, as stated, that the Chanuka lights are to be lit at sunset. For the opinions of the Rishonimand the final halakhic ruling*,* see *Shulchan Arukh*, the Gra, *Mishna Berura* and *Beiur Halakha*, *OC* 672:1.

   See also the summary of the *Piskei Teshuvot,* arguing that Rav Yosef Karo,who writes, “We do not kindle Chanuka lights before the sun sets, but rather at the end of its setting,” follows the well-known opinion of Rabbeinu Tam, who speaks of two “sunsets” approximately an hour apart. However, as the contemporary widespread practice is to follow the Geonim, who acknowledge only one sunset, i.e. when the sun goes below the horizon, the proper practice in modern times should be to kindle at the “beginning” of sunset, and this is the view of the Gra. The custom to delay the time of kindling Chanuka lights thus reflects the reality experienced by communities in Europe and other areas far north off the equator (such as that of Rabbeinu Tam in northern France), in which there is a long period of time between sunset and the emergence of the stars, and after the sun sets there is still strong daylight for quite a while.

   Those who delay kindling even in Eretz Israel (such as the Chazon Ish, who would kindle twenty minutes after sunset even in Eretz Israel) do so in order to fulfill their obligation according to all opinions, for even according to those who maintain that one is to kindle at sunset, this means within half an hour after sunset. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The problematic and complex attitude toward the period of *bein ha-shemashot* finds expression in the words of the Gemara:

   Our Rabbis taught: As to *bein ha-shemashot*, it is doubtful whether it is partly day and partly night, or the whole of it [belongs to the] day, or the whole of it [belongs to the] night: [therefore] cast upon it the stringencies of both. (*Shabbat* 34b)

   A sharp example of the problematic nature of the period of *bein ha-shemashot* in the context of time-dependent *mitzvot* is in the case of the birth of a boy on Friday evening *bein ha-shemashot*. In such a case the circumcision is not carried out on the next Friday, and also not on Shabbat, not even during *bein ha-shemashot*, but rather it is delayed until Sunday. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See, for example, *Sefer Ha-Kuzari* (II, 24*)*: "Perhaps about this Shelomo said: 'I am asleep, but my heart is awake' (*Shir Ha-shirim* 5:2) — he refers to the exile as sleep."

   See also the Maharal, who expands the parallel to include the three watches of the night (*Netzach Yisrael* 18; see also the continuation of his words there):

   But you must know that the night is darkness, and it is similar to the exile… Just as the night is divided into three watches, so the exile is divided into three parts. They are entirely similar to the watches at night, as they are signs of three parts of the exile.

   Also see the words of Rav Kook (see *Ein Aya*, *Shabbat* 2, 294):

   The vision of day and night and the transition and relationship between them reminds us of the attitude of morality and general governance appropriate for these two periods, especially in the situation of the people of Israel — at the time that is similar to the day, at the time of their redemption and the raising of their horn; and at the time that is similar to the night, at the time of their descent and humiliation. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. So we find in the commentary of the Ramban (*Bereishit* 1:5), based on that of ibn Ezra: "The beginning of the night is called *erev*, when the forms become confused, and the beginning of the day is called *boker*,when a person can distinguish between them." [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. The dimension of place, like the dimension of time, also reflects the unique struggle of Chanuka. Just as in the dimension of time we kindle Chanuka lights at the seam between day and night during *bein ha-shemashot*, so too in the dimension of place we light the Chanuka lights at the seam between inside and outside, at the entrance to the house. This place expresses more than anything else the nature of the struggle against Greece, which is located on the boundary between inside and outside, as will be explained below. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See the Gemara in *Yoma* 69b concerning the nullification of the evil desire of idolatry, and also *Seder Olam Rabba*, Chap. 30 (Leiner): "He is Alexander the Great who ruled for twelve years. Until then the prophets prophesied with the holy spirit. From then on, incline your ears and listen to the words of the Sages." See there, *Hagahot Ha-Gra*, that "until now" means until the nullification of the evil desire of idolatry. See also *Poked Akarim* by Rav Tzadok Ha-kohen of Lublin (Letter *Vav*): "And from the time that the Men of the Great Assembly nullified the evil inclination of idolatry, the power of idolatry ended even among the nations." [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. That is to say, the light of God (*Tosafot*, ad loc.). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)