



# Parsha Encounters

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Parshas Vayeshev – Rabbi Chaim Ehrman

## Forgive and Forget

**P**arshas Vayeshev deals with the selling of Yosef. Ultimately, Yosef became the viceroy of Egypt, subsequently convincing Yaakov to join him with his family there as well. The selling of Yosef was a means to an end, to get Yaakov and his sons to Mitzrayim.

The actual sale of Yosef has different interpretations. Rashi says that the brothers took him out of the pit and sold him to Yishmailim, who in turn sold him to the Midyanim. The Midyanim then sold him to Egypt.

The Rashbam says, that since the brothers sat down to eat bread, they were out of earshot of Yosef. Therefore, the Midyanim dragged Yosef from the pit, and they sold him for twenty pieces of silver to the Yishmailim. The Meforshim explain that Yosef turned green from being in the pit, and so they paid only 20 pieces of silver for him. The Targum Yonasan adds that when the brothers demanded payment from the Yishmailim, they gave each one of the brothers a new pair of shoes (Amos 2:6). The Yishmailim then sold Yosef to Mitzrayim. According to this pshat, the brothers didn't actively sell Yosef at all.

The Seforno says that the Midyanim were local merchants and the Brothers were embarrassed to sell their brother to merchants who lived next door. The Yishmailim owned camels and went wherever they had a job. Therefore, the brothers asked the Yishmailim to negotiate a deal with the Midyanim who will sell him in Mitzrayim.

The Kli Yakar explains that the Yishmailim were the brothers' first cousins once removed. They were hoping that they would treat Yosef well. However, the actual sale and removal from the pit was through the Midyanim.

The Ohr Hachaim explains that Potefar refused to purchase Yosef from the Midyanim because she suspected that he may have been stolen. The Midyanim then brought the Yishmailim to prove to her that they had actually bought Yosef.

In Parshas Vayechi (50:17), the brothers asked Yosef to forgive them for selling him, and Yosef did forgive them. It would seem at this point that the entire

event was over and done with.

On Yom Kippur we say in Eileh Ezkerah, and on Tisha Bav we recite in Arzay Halevonon the tragic, painful and unspeakable deaths of the Ten Martyrs. The reason for the torture of these ten tzaddikim, was to atone for the selling of Yosef. The prophet Yirmiyahu was dragged out of a pit to atone for the selling of Yosef, who was also dragged out of a pit (Baal Haturim). The two kings of Chashmonaim, Hurkanus and Aristobulus, were fighting about who should be the ruler over Israel. They asked Pompay to come with his army and settle the dispute. However, the rulership kept vacillating from one king to the other until the final churban. The switching of the rulership was to atone for the fact that Yosef was sold 4 or 5 times until he actually arrived in Egypt and was bought by Potifar (Siforno).

Hagaon R' Elchonon Wasserman HY"D (Kovetz Mamorim) suggests that all the blood libels that Klal Yisrael had to endure throughout history were related to the sin of the dipping of Yosef's coat into the blood.

However, if Yosef had forgiven his brothers, why did the Jewish people have to suffer so much for their sin? Wasn't the sin already atoned for? This question can be answered with a story. There were two people who came before Hagaon R' Moshe Feinstein ZT"L for a din Torah. After R' Moshe gave his ruling, he told one party to verbally forgive the other party. The man responded that all was okay and he bares no grudges. R' Moshe responded that nevertheless he must verbally say "I forgive you". R' Moshe's reasoning was based on the fact, that although Yosef Hatzaddik told his brothers that he bares no grudge against them, he never actually uttered the words, "I forgive you". Because of this, there was never a complete atonement for their sin, and much suffering has been endured throughout the generations as a result of that.

The lesson we can learn, is the importance of verbally expressing forgiveness to someone who has hurt us in some way. Mere feelings are not sufficient. In order to properly atone for the sin, the words, "I forgive you" must be uttered.

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# Halacha Encounters

## Using Electric Lights for the Chanukah Menorah

Rabbi Avi Weinrib

One of the most amazing aspects of Halacha is that although our world is changing and advancing at a dizzying pace, Halacha needs no advancement. The job of our *Poskim* (Halachic deciders) is merely to apply age-old principles to the inventions of the day. In this week's *Halacha Encounters*, we will discuss the fusion of Chanukah and electricity, by examining if and when the use of electric lights for the lighting of the menorah would be permitted.

There are a number of issues raised by the *Poskim* regarding the use of electric lights for the menorah. HaGaon Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach *zt"l*, in his classic work on electricity, *Me'orei Aish* [chap. 5, section 2] raises the following points. Our lighting of the menorah, he writes, is to commemorate the great miracle of the oil in the *Beis HaMikdash* (Temple) which miraculously burned for eight days when there was only enough oil to burn for one day. It would follow that our menorah should therefore be similar to the menorah lit in the *Beis Hamikdash*. In an oil menorah, the fire consumes the fuel, whereas using electricity consumes no "fuel." Additionally, electric menorahs lack a flame, the most basic trait of an oil menorah. Thirdly, a basic trait of an oil-burning light is the function of a wick – used to draw up the fuel for the flame. We do permit using candles, as there the wick is seen as being fueled by the wax or paraffin. In electric light the electricity flowing through them is merely lighting up the wires. This would be similar to a person heating up rods of iron, which give off a light that according to all opinions would not be valid. See also HaGaon Rav Y. Henkin *zt"l* in *Edus Liyisroel* Page 122 Kaf Hachaim 673-19 and *Sha'alos Vitshuvos Maharshag* Volume 2 Siman 107, who give similar reasons. There are *Poskim* who take issue with the above reasons. They contend that since the Shulchan Aruch [O.H. 673-1] rules that all oils and wicks are acceptable for one's menorah (albeit olive oil being the most preferable fuel), we see there is no requirement to imitate exactly the Menorah in the Temple. [See *Beir Yitzchok* Y.D. Volume 2 Siman 31 *Tzitz Eliezer* Volume 1 Siman 20 Chapter 12].

Another issue raised by Rav Shlomo Zalman and Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank *zt"l* [*HaMa'ayan Journal* Tevet 5732] is as follows. The Shulchan Aruch [675-2] rules that since the mitzvah is the actual kindling of the flame, then one is obligated to have the required amount of oil [enough to burn for half an hour] in the menorah at the time. If one would light and then add the required amount he did not fulfill his obligation. Regarding electricity, there is no fuel present during the lighting. It is being constantly generated. This would be similar to lighting and then adding afterwards. If one would use a battery-

powered menorah, he would avoid this problem.

Another issue raised by the *Tzitz Eliezer* [ibid.] is that the Shulchan Aruch rules that one can only fulfill his obligation with a single flame, and not a "*medurah*" [blaze of fire]. He contends that since incandescent bulbs contain an arc shaped filament this would have the status of a "*medurah*" rather than a single flame.

Additionally in *Sha'alos Vitshuvos Bais Yitzchok*, Rav Yitzchok Shmelkish rules that one cannot use electricity for an additional reason. The Rema [671-7] rules that one should not light his menorah in a place where he lights throughout the year, as it will not be recognizable that he is lighting now especially for Chanukah. Regarding this, if one would have an electric menorah where it is clear that the sole function is for Chanukah, then this problem would not exist.

In summation, based on the above reasons one should not use electric lights in any situation where one has the option of using oil or candles. What should one do if he is in a situation where lighting a flame is not allowed [i.e. a hospital or one on a long flight through the night where there is no option of lighting when one arrives]? There are *Poskim* who suggest lighting a flame for an instant and then blowing it out. Their reasoning is that since the flame in and of itself has the ability to burn for a half an hour, even though one decided on his own to extinguish it, one would have fulfilled the obligation. HaRav Dovid Zucker, *shlit"a*, rules that this should be strongly discouraged. Besides the obvious danger, there is the tremendous potential for a *Chillul Hashem* [desecration of G-d's name] and an additional issue of *Mitzva Haba Biaveira* [a commandment fulfilled through illegal means]. The best practical solution would be for one to bring, corresponding to the day of Chanukah, that amount of flashlights and have them burn for one half-hour. One should not make a bracha, being that many render even this method invalid. One should make sure not to hold the flashlights in his hand, but to set them up on a table or similar place [see Shulchan Aruch 675:1]. As an aside, there is an extensive discussion among the *Poskim* when one is not in his "home" if and when one is required to light, which is beyond the scope of this article. As a final point, HaGaon Rav Elyashav, *shlit"a*, (*Shvus Yitzchak Ner Shabbos* Chapter 3 Footnote 11) says this entire discussion would only apply to incandescent bulbs. Regarding fluorescent, all would agree one might not use such a bulb for Chanukah, as it does not have the halachic status of "*aish*" (fire).

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