

לזכות  
הילדה השלוחה  
מושקא שתחי'  
לרגל יום הולדתה השלישית  
ט"ו חשון ה'תשע"ט  
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הרה"ת ר' יוסף יצחק  
וזוגתו מרת חי' שצערא  
ומשפחתם שיחיו  
שפאלטר

# Holy Coins

On the minhag Yisroel  
of Chanukah Gelt



*"In another ten days, I will ask again for the list of bochurim [who came to seder Chassidus], in relation to a certain matter. I'm saying this now so that there won't be any complaints later that if you would have known you would have acted differently..."*



27 KISLEV 5777, V SCHILDKRAUT VIA JEW 108598



# Why do we give Chanukah Gelt?

The definitive origin for the minhag of Chanukah gelt has always been a mystery, as the Rebbe pointed out a number of times. So why do we do it?



**Minhag Yisroel practiced by the Rebbeim:** The Rebbe would often emphasize the fact that it is an authentic *minhag* practiced by the Rebbeim, which means that it has the power of a *minhag Yisroel* and is therefore part of Torah. Furthermore: being that this practice was shared with the public, it has the authority of *divrei chachomim*, and by fulfilling it we connect with the Rebbeim.<sup>1</sup>

In addition, various hints and antecedents for the practice given by the Rebbe and his father Horav Levi Yitzchak:

- **From Shulchan Aruch:** One early hint is from the Magen Avraham in the beginning of *Hilchos Chanukah*. He cites a *minhag* that the poor youth would go door to door collecting money on Chanukah, which is similar to *Chanukah gelt* (though this isn't a considered a *real* source for *Chanukah gelt*, which is not specifically for the poor).<sup>2</sup>
- **A hint in the Gemara:** In the laws of Chanukah, the Gemara says that it is forbidden to make use of the candles of Chanukah, and it uses the example of coins—that it is forbidden to count coins to the light of the candle. This implies that already then people were giving *Chanukah gelt*.<sup>3</sup>
- **Like the beginning of education:** The word Chanukah comes from the word *chinuch*, education. Following the efforts of the *Yevonim* to cause Torah to be forgotten, Chanukah celebrates the renewal of Torah and the beginning of education. Just as we give money to a child at the beginning of his education (to encourage him to learn better), so too on Chanukah we give *Chanukah gelt*.<sup>4</sup>
- **The left:** We light candles on the left side of the door, and the *possuk* says, “בשמאלה עושר וכבוד”—on its left side are riches and honor,” and this is expressed in the “riches” and “honor” (which can also refer to money) of the *Chanukah gelt*.<sup>5</sup>
- **In defiance of the Yevonim:** In describing the persecution of the *Yevonim* leading up to Chanukah, the Rambam says, “ופשטו ידם בממונם,” they reached their hands into the Yidden's money. On



THE REBBE'S HANDWRITTEN RESPONSE TO THE MANICHIM, CLARIFYING THE SOURCES BEHIND GIVING CHANUKAH GELT.



Chanukah we demonstrate that the *Yevonim* did not succeed in contaminating our money; to the contrary, we are utilizing our money to fulfill a *minhag Yisroel*.<sup>6</sup>

- **The significance of luxury:** Just as we give *Chanukah gelt* on Chanukah, we likewise give *matanos la'evyonim* and *mishloach manos* on Purim. But there is a key difference between the gifts of Purim and Chanukah: the *matanos la'evyonim* is for the *needs* of the poor, and even *mishloach manos* is something that can be *consumed and used*. *Chanukah gelt*, on the other hand, is focused on children, who do not need money for their *needs*; instead, it is used on toys and the like—luxuries.

Now, luxuries and riches are something that are essentially higher than the world (as the Gemara says, gold was created merely to be used in the *Beis Hamikdash*).

This is the reason we give *Chanukah gelt*—a luxury—on Chanukah, which signifies a light that is beyond the world, higher than *seder hishtalshelus*; and this is expressed even in the physical world, through the *Chanukah gelt*.<sup>7</sup>

In addition, there are hints for *Chanukah gelt* in Parshas Miktze, which is read during Chanukah:

There are several mentions of money in the *parsha*: the money paid for the food, the double money that was returned to Yosef's brothers, and so on.

There are also several gifts, similar to *Chanukah gelt*: Yosef returned the money to his brothers and he also gave gifts of clothing, especially to his brother Binyomin.<sup>8</sup>





# Practical

## WHO?

It should be given to sons and daughters, before and after marriage. (The Rebbe would always cite the example of the Friediker Rebbe, who gave *Chanukah gelt* to his adult daughters and sons-in-laws, and once commented, “He knew that I would make a *tumel* and *parad* about it...”)<sup>9</sup> It is also given to grandchildren, even though they already receive *Chanukah gelt* from their parents.<sup>10</sup>

In addition to the parents, other members of the family should also give *Chanukah gelt*.<sup>11</sup> At least one year, the Rebbe said that children should give amongst themselves as well.<sup>12</sup> The Rebbe himself would give *Chanukah gelt* to children during rallies, and encouraged others to gather children and do the same; and, at least one year, to soldiers being visited on *mivtzoim* as well.<sup>13</sup>



## WHEN?

In Hayom Yom, the Rebbe writes that the Tzemach Tzedek (and the earlier Rebbeim) would give *Chanukah gelt* on the fourth or fifth night of Chanukah.<sup>14</sup>

In 5748 the Rebbe encouraged that *Chanukah gelt* should be given every night of Chanukah. The Rebbe explained that the reason the Rebbeim only gave once over Chanukah was so that it would retain its novelty and it wouldn't become routine.

However, the Rebbe said, because the darkness of *golus* has intensified, specifically in the area of *chinuch*, we should now give *Chanukah gelt* every night. In order to fulfill the directive of the Rebbeim to give on the fourth or fifth night and to preserve the novelty, one should give extra on the fourth or fifth night—double or triple as much as the other nights.<sup>15</sup> The Rebbe continued encouraging nightly *Chanukah gelt* in the following years, and, at the very least, on two nights of Chanukah.<sup>16</sup>

The Rebbe said that one can (and should) complete the giving of *Chanukah gelt* on the last day of Chanukah, even after *Maariv* is over.<sup>17</sup>



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES CHANUKAH GELT TO CHILDREN IN THE BIG SHUL AT 770.



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES COINS TO BE GIVEN TO THE CHILDREN AT THE CHANUKAH RALLY, 5743.

## TZEDAKAH:

The Rebbe spoke many times throughout the years that *Chanukah gelt* should be used as an opportunity to educate children on the importance of giving tzedakah from their own money (especially since Chanukah has a special connection to tzedakah, as the Tzemach Tzedek explains).<sup>18</sup>

All of a child's needs are taken care of by his parents, so the primary use of his money is for mitzvos, first and foremost tzedakah. When a child receives more money, especially money that he hadn't expected to receive, it is in order to give more tzedakah.

## COINS:

In the later years, the Rebbe would hold rallies for children every Chanukah, during which he would give the chaperones *Chanukah gelt* to distribute to the children. The *Chanukah gelt* that the Rebbe gave was almost always in the form of coins (though this wasn't unique to *Chanukah gelt*, as the Rebbe would distribute coins for the children at other rallies as well). During one Chanukah rally, the Rebbe gave fascinating insight into this practice:

The Rebbe pointed out that, by nature, children value coins more than paper money, and he explained that this is a reflection of Torah: in Torah, too, coins have more value than paper money. In order to effect a halachic transaction (like marriage), one can only use coins which have inherent value, not paper-money which is really only a note from the treasury promising that it is backed by something.

The Rebbe learns a lesson from this: The *avoda* of a Yid is to make the world into a dwelling place for Hashem, to acquire it for Hashem, and he "pays" for it with gold and silver, by dedicating his *ratzon* (will) and *ta'anug* (enjoyment) to Torah and *mitzvos*. But it isn't enough to use paper money; it isn't enough to make a *hachlata* and write down a *promise* that something will be done; one must use coins with inherent value—one must actually do it!<sup>19</sup>





## TO THE BOCHURIM:

In the farbrengen of Yud-Tes Kislev 5712,<sup>20</sup> the Rebbe spoke about the fact that *bochurim* weren't coming to *seder Chassidus* as they should. Then he said, "In another ten days, I will ask again for the list of *bochurim* [who came to Chassidus], in relation to a certain matter. I'm saying this now so that there won't be any complaints later that if you would have known you would have acted differently."

These cryptic words kindled great curiosity among the *bochurim*. What could the Rebbe possibly be referring to? Ten days later, on the fifth night of Chanukah, the Rebbe told the *mashpia* Rabbi Yisroel Jacobson to put together a list of the *bochurim* who had come to Chassidus on time, and said that he would be giving *Chanukah gelt* to those who had attended at least three times since Yud-Tes Kislev.

When the time came, 42 *bochurim* entered the Rebbe's room together with Rabbi Jacobson. The Rebbe scanned through the crowd and commented to Rabbi Jacobson that there were *bochurim* present who didn't belong... Rabbi Jacobson said that they may have come without permission. The Rebbe smiled and said, "If we wish to go with kindness and mercy, that



THE HANOCHO OF THE SICHA THE REBBE SAID TO THE BOCHURIM WHO CAME ON TIME TO SEDORIM, CHANUKAH 5712.



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would be different. But now is not the time for that. However, we won't throw out those who are already here."

The Rebbe then passed his hand over his forehead and began saying a *sicha*. After the *sicha* concluded, the Rebbe took *Chanukah gelt* out of his drawer and distributed it to the *bochurim*.

The next day, several *bochurim* approached Rabbi Jacobson and said that they had missed the distribution of *Chanukah gelt* because they had attended a wedding (which the Rebbe himself had attended after distributing the *Chanukah gelt*), but since they had come to *seder Chassidus*, they were requesting to receive *Chanukah gelt*.

When the request came to the Rebbe, he asked, "Did they ask permission to go to the wedding?" The *hanhala* of the yeshiva said that they would have given permission if asked. The Rebbe said that there was no such thing as getting permission after the fact, and so they did not receive *Chanukah gelt*.

In subsequent years, the Rebbe would continue giving *Chanukah gelt* to the *bochurim*. In the days before Chanukah, the Rebbe would come to *zal* to see which *bochurim* were present during *seder*, and the distribution itself would usually take place on the fifth night of Chanukah. The Rebbe would deliver a *sicha* to the *bochurim*, after which he would give each of them a silver dollar.

During these years, the Rebbe would also send *Chanukah gelt* to *yeshivos* overseas—to Eretz Yisroel, Morocco, France, and so on—to those *bochurim* who studied Chassidus.

This continued for almost a decade, the final year being 5721. (The Rebbe didn't explain why it stopped, but years later<sup>21</sup> he mentioned it as one of the initiatives that he had innovated in *dor hashvi'i* but had decided to discontinue because it was underappreciated. Other notable items on this list include: the *maamirim* in the tune of a *maamar*—as opposed to "*kein sicha*" which became more common in the later years; the *niggunim* on Simchas Torah; and more.)

## Where is Leima Minkowitz?

In 5716, Rabbi Leima Minkowitz was in a car accident and as a result was homebound during the distribution of *Chanukah gelt*.

During the distribution, the Rebbe asked Rabbi Dovid Raskin, "Where is Leima Minkowitz?" He answered that he was at home in Brownsville.

The Rebbe gave Rabbi Raskin a silver dollar for Leima. The dedicated Chossid that he was, Rabbi Raskin took the bus that very night to Brownsville to deliver the *Chanukah gelt*.



# Throughout the years

Although the annual distribution of Chanukah gelt to bochurim stopped in 5721, the Rebbe gave out Chanukah gelt on various occasions throughout the years:

## FOR THE NEIGHBORHOOD - 5731:

This was during the period that the Rebbe held a fierce campaign for the Crown Heights neighborhood, urging people not to flee to other neighborhoods and instead to invest in Crown Heights. With the Rebbe's encouragement, a company called Shebra was founded to invest in houses in Crown Heights. At the farbengen of Shabbos Parshas Miktetz 5731, the Rebbe spoke sharply about the fact that nothing had been done with it, and said: "I had the idea to connect it with a *segula*. In general, the way of Chabad is more difficult than the way of *Chaga*"; but since we see that people prefer *Polisher* things, we'll connect it with a *segula*: I am going to buy a share in the company, and split the cost of the share into single dollar bills. It should be publicized that every person who buys a share will receive one of my dollars... and being that it is Chanukah, it is connected with *Chanukah gelt* as well."<sup>22</sup>



THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES CHANUKAH GELT IN THE BIG SHUL AT 770.

## IF YOU HAVE A NOTE FOR MIVTZOIM - 5734:

In 5734, following the Yom Kippur War, the Rebbe launched the international *mivtza Chanukah*. Over that Chanukah, 60,000 menorahs were distributed! On the sixth night of Chanukah, a message came from the Rebbe that he would be distributing *Chanukah gelt* to those who went on *mivtziom*. Those who wanted *Chanukah gelt* were required to submit a note signed by those in charge of the *mivtzoim* stating that they had indeed participated in the *mivtzoim* (for at least two of the days of Chanukah).

As each person stood in line for *Chanukah gelt*, they would first submit the note to the *mazkir* who was standing next to the Rebbe, and they then received *Chanukah gelt* from the Rebbe. Even the *mazkirim* had to submit their own notes in order to get *Chanukah gelt*. When Rabbi Yaakov Yehuda Hecht (who was very involved in arranging the *mivtzoim*) came by to receive his dollar the Rebbe said, "Really you deserve more than one dollar, but when a mother gives to her children she gives them all the same amount." The Rebbe also gave *Chanukah gelt* for the women who went on *mivtzoim*, and sent *Chanukah gelt* to Eretz Yisroel for those who had participated in *mivtzoim* there. (For more on Mivtza Chanukah 5734, see "*Illumination*," A Chassidisher Derher, Kislev 5776.)

## CHANUKAH GELT AT THE DOOR - 5738:

On Rosh Chodesh Kislev 5738, the Rebbe returned home for the first time since suffering a heart attack on Shemini Atzeres. Nineteen days later, on Yud-Tes Kislev, the Rebbe held the first farbrengen in the downstairs shul—as opposed to speaking from his room—since the occurrence, with thousands of Chassidim in attendance. Then, a few days later, on the third night of Chanukah, the Rebbe surprised all of the assembled by saying a *sicha*, concluding with the announcement that he will now give *Chanukah gelt* to everyone present: “Being that Chanukah is connected with *al pesach beiso mibachutz*, [lighting candles] on the outside of the door, we will give out *Chanukah gelt* at the door of the *beis haknesses* and *beis hamedrash*, the *daled amos* where the Rebbe the *nossi* lead *am Yisroel*.”

The Rebbe then walked to the back of the shul, where, standing near the door, he handed everyone a dollar bill from the packet he had brought down with him before *Mincha*. When the line was done, all the men exited the shul and the women entered in order to receive dollars as well. [Out of concern for the Rebbe’s health, the *mazkirim* tried stopping people from going by. The Rebbe gave each of the *mazkirim* a dollar, and said, “Tonight the *chaluka* [distribution] will be without limitations.” Later on, when people again tried stopping the line, the Rebbe’s face became very serious, and he said, “Those who are stopping the crowd should know that they are starting up with me!”]

After the entire crowd had received, the Rebbe motioned that the men should move aside so that more women could receive, after which he gave out again to the men who arrived late. All told, the distribution took two hours—hardly two months after Shemini Atzeres!

## FOR EVERYONE - 5751/5752:

On the first day of Chanukah, there was a gathering of the Tiferes Zekeinim Levi Yitzchak and Chochmas Nashim. A big crowd was present, and, at the end of the *kinus*, the Rebbe gave the organizers packages of *Chanukah gelt* to distribute to the crowd. They were coins packaged in a plastic case with the words “Chanukah 5751.” The following day the Rebbe personally gave these out to everybody, saying to each person, “*A freilechen Chanukah*.” The following year as well the Rebbe gave out *Chanukah gelt* to the entire crowd.



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11TEVES 5752, YOSSIE MELAMED VIA JEM 23644



## FOR THE REST OF THE CHILDREN TOO:

It was the first night of Chanukah 5728, a cold and snowy night. As usual, the Rebbe davened *Maariv* with the *minyán*, and when it came to the singing of *haneiros halalu*, the Rebbe opened the door of the shul so that the shlucha to Milan, Mrs. Garelik could hear the singing together with her daughter. When the Rebbe came out, he gave a dollar to the girl and said, in Yiddish, “This is *Chanukah gelt* for you.” When their older son, Levi Yitzchak, came out of the *zal*, the Rebbe gave him *Chanukah gelt* as well. Then the Rebbe put his hand in his pocket, took out another four coins, and said, “This is for the rest of the children who are in Pittsburgh [with their grandfather, Rabbi Sholom Posner].”



1 TEVES 5742, YOSHI MELAMED VIA JEM 286584



## DREIDEL BY THE REBBE'S DOOR:

In the early 5710s, a few children (including Sholom Yisroel Hodakov and Abba Piekarski) were playing *dreidel* near the Rebbe's room. Suddenly, the Rebbe arrived to 770 from his house. The Rebbe took out a dime, threw it to the children on the floor, and told one of the children to spin the *dreidel*. It fell on the letter *hei*, and the Rebbe asked them what to do in such a case. They replied that you split the pot. After the Rebbe went into his room, the children made a lottery for the dime, and Abba Piekarski won.



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THE REBBE DISTRIBUTES CHANUKAH GELT TO THE MEMBERS OF COLEL TIFERES ZKEINIM LEVI YITZCHOK FOLLOWING A SPECIAL GATHERING FOR THEM, 30 KISLEV 5748.



# The lesson from Money

Excerpted from a letter dated the eighth day of Chanukah, 5733;  
translated from the original Hebrew:

...In reply to your question: what is the significance of the *minhag*... of giving *Chanukah gelt* to children...

Chanukah [in general] has two basic themes: 1) the dedication of the *Beis Hamikdash* and *mizbe'ach*. 2) Education, namely, educating children. This includes every single Yid, who are all Hashem's children. Just as the *Beis Hamikdash* was cleaned, purified and dedicated, so must every single Yid be a *mishkan* and *mikdash* for Hashem.

Obviously, in addition to the fact that one must educate oneself... for a person must add in Torah and *mitzvos* every day—the education of children is even more emphasized. The parents are especially obligated in this arena, and this education must be *al pi darko*, in a fashion that the child will understand and accept.

Now we come to *Chanukah gelt*: We give it to the children in order to connect the lessons of Chanukah to the lessons that we can learn from money, [which can be learned] with even cursory contemplation. On the one hand, money has great power. Someone who has a lot of money is rich, and even very rich, while someone who does not have money is poor and destitute. On the other hand, money on its own does not bring

benefit—it isn't one of [a person's] three basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter; it's just that a person can use it to acquire all his needs. Furthermore, with money a person can fulfill the *mitzvah* of *tzedakah*, *gemilus chassadim*, and other *mitzvos* but if the money sits in a box, it brings no benefit.

One of the main messages we must impart when educating a child is that he must always remember that Hashem gave him tremendous riches, tremendous energies: his mind, his emotions, and his power of action. But they must be utilized in full; he must use his mind to study Torah until he *toils*, and then he will truly achieve; he must use his emotions to love Hashem, Torah, every Yid, and the other things that should be loved; [he must also use his emotions] to fear and flee from negative things. He must therefore study with devotion, commitment, and obedience, so that he will recognize good from bad.

Unlike physical money, where someone might be poor, in spirituality everyone can be rich, if he uses the energies that were given to him. We were promised *yagaata umatzasa*—if you toil you will succeed but a person is given a choice whether to do so. It

is dependent entirely upon the person and his willpower, and when someone truly wants something, nothing can stand in his way.

When one explains this to a child using the appropriate language and heartfelt words—most importantly, when one shows a good example—then *meir einei shneihem Havaya*, Hashem helps both the giver of the *Chanukah gelt* and the receiver to reach higher and higher in Torah and *mitzvos*, from strength to strength until they become examples for all.

With esteem and blessing... ❶



27 KISLEV 5737, V. SCHILDKRAUT VIA JEM 108593

1. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5752 vol. 1 p. 356.
2. Likkutei Levi Yitzchak Igros Kodesh p. 358.
3. Likkutei Levi Yitzchak Ibid.
4. Likkutei Levi Yitzchak Ibid.
5. Likkutei Levi Yitzchak Ibid.
6. Motzo'ei Shabbos Parshas Vayeshev 5738, Sichos Kodesh 5738 vol. 1, p. 302.
7. Sichos Kodesh 5716 p. 124.

8. Likkutei Levi Yitzchak Ibid.
9. Sichos Kodesh 5737 vol. 1 p. 356; Ibid 5735 vol. 1 p. 174.
10. 5735
11. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5751 vol. 1 p. 48.
12. Likkutei Sichos vol. 20 p. 450 451.
13. Sichos Kodesh 5734 vol. 1 p. 196.
14. Hayom Yom 28 Kislev.
15. Sefer Hasichos 5748 vol. 2 p. 65-66.
16. 5750.

17. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5749 vol. 2 p. 96.
18. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5749 vol. 2 p. 23; see also Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5751 vol. 2 p. 48.
19. Toras Menachem Hisvaaduyos 5748 vol. 2 p. 159.
20. Toras Menachem vol. 4, p. 185.
21. Simchas Torah 5732, Sichos Kodesh 5732 vol. 1, p. 74.
22. Sichos Kodesh 5731 vol. 1 p. 361.