

## Fill Your Own Cup 5786

### Fall Series – Session Eight – Climbing Out of the Darkness

#### 1) "When You Need Light the Most" by Rabbi Noa Kushner

<https://web.archive.org/web/20141227064556/http://www.8for8.net/day-3/>

You light Hanukkah candles when it's dark. When it's the time of year that's so dark out that even though you're a totally modern, totally with-it, science believing kind of person, there's still a tiny part of you that wonders every night if it is ever really going to get light ever again. It's the same part of you that wonders if the problems of the world can ever really be solved.

When do we light? Right when that doubt and cynicism are kicking in, fueled by the longer nights and seemingly endless darkness. That's the time to light. Right exactly then.

**It's as if the tradition knows us intimately, knows our weaknesses and fears and says, "Here. You have worries? Hold this candle. Strike this match. Now watch what you are capable of doing. See what you can do. See, that although the darkness has taken hold outside, there is still light. It has always been there. It's just the kind of light that requires you to help light it.**

When a great teacher would die, I was taught that his students would gather at his house to study and pray. Why? Because when a great light goes out, our response is to replenish some of that light. To make new light. To be the alchemists who won't accept darkness as a normative, ongoing condition. When do we make light? When we are at a risk of succumbing to darkness.

David Hartman z"l teaches that the real miracle of Hanukkah was not that the oil lasted. Rather, the miracle was that, given that we had no oil, we tried to light anything at all. The last night of Hanukkah, the one with the eight candles, sure is pretty, but I am partial to the first night, when we go from no light at all to just one.

#### 2) The Princess Bride - The Pit of Despair

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mBaDcOBoHFk>

#### 3) Babylonian Talmud Tractate Shabbat 21b-22a

##### **Rav Kahana said that Rav Natan bar Manyumi taught in the name of Rabbi Tanhum:**

A Hanukkah lamp that one placed above twenty cubits is invalid, just as a *sukka*, and just as an alleyway (whose beam, its symbolic fourth partition in order to place an *eiruv*, is more than twenty cubits high, are invalid).

**Rav Kahana said that Rav Natan bar Manyumi taught in the name of Rav Tanhum:** What is the meaning of the verse that is written with regard to Joseph: "And they took him, and cast him into the pit; and the pit was empty, there was no water in it" (Genesis 37:24)? By inference from that which is stated: And the pit was empty, don't I know that there was no water in it? Rather, why does the verse say: There was no water in it? There was no water in it, but there were snakes and scorpions in it.

אמר רב כהנא, דרש רב נתן בר מניומי משמיה דרבי תנחום:  
נר של חנוכה שהניחה למעלה מעשרים אמה — פסולה, פסולה וכמבוי.

ואמר רב כהנא, דרש רב נתן בר מניומי משמיה דרב תנחום: מאי דכתיב "והבור רק אין בו מים?"

ממשמע שנאמר "והבור רק" איני יודע שאין בו מים?  
אלא מה תלמוד לומר "אין בו מים" — מים אין בו, אבל נחשים ועקרבים יש בו.

#### 4) Joseph in the Pit

##### A) The Brother's Put Joseph in the Pit – Genesis 37:24

And they took him and cast him into the pit. The pit was empty; there was no water in it	וַיִּקְחוּהוּ וַיִּשְׁלְכוּ אֹתוֹ הַבְּרֶה וְהַבּוֹר רֶק אֵין בּוֹ מַיִם:
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##### B) Potiphar puts him in the pit - Genesis 39:20 – 21

20) So Joseph's master had him put in prison, where the king's prisoners were confined. But even while he was there in prison. 21) God was with Joseph—extending kindness to him and disposing the chief jailer favorably toward him.	וַיִּקַּח אֲדֹנָי יוֹסֵף אֹתוֹ וַיִּתְּנֵהוּ אֶל־בֵּית הַסֵּהר מְקוֹם אֲשֶׁר־נֹאֲסְרִין (אסורים) הַמֶּלֶךְ אֲסוּרִים וַיְהִי־שָׁם בְּבֵית הַסֵּהר: וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֲתִיּוֹסֵף וַיִּט אֵלָיו חֶסֶד וַיִּתֵּן חֵן בְּעֵינֵי שַׂר־בֵּית־הַסֵּהר:
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##### C) Joseph says he shouldn't be in the pit – Genesis 40: 15

For in truth, I was kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews; nor have I done anything here that they should have put me in the dungeon."	כִּי־גָנַב גָּנַבְתִּי מֵאֶרֶץ הָעִבְרִים וְגַם־פֹּה לֹא־עָשִׂיתִי מְאוּמָה כִּי־שָׂמָו אֹתִי בְּבוֹר:
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##### D) Joseph Comes Out of the Pit – Genesis 41:14

Thereupon Pharaoh sent for Joseph, and he was rushed from the dungeon. He had his hair cut and changed his clothes, and he appeared before Pharaoh.	וַיִּשְׁלַח פַּרְעֹה וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיְרִיצֵהוּ מִרְהַבּוֹר וַיַּגְלֵחַ וַיַּחֲלֵף שְׂמֹלֹתָיו וַיָּבֹא אֶל־פַּרְעֹה:
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#### 5) Torah Temima Genesis 37:24, Section 20

You must say that Reuben and his brothers did not know that there were snakes and scorpions, because [Reuben] planned to return Joseph to their father... And, do not wonder at the fact that they could not see what was in the put, for according to what is written in Tractate Tamid, and the end of the first chapter, the verb "to cast" means a distance of 20 amot [25-30 feet], and that is the verb used here. This means that the pit was at least 20 amot deep, and we hold that the eyes cannot see something at a height or depth of 20 amot, as we hold regarding Channuka candles and the Schach of a sukka. [And this is precisely why these two comments are juxtaposed in the Talmud, regarding candles that were placed above 20 amot is unacceptable, because the eyes don't normally see that. And, let alone that they are adjacent comments in the Torah, but that they are authored by the same person, indicated that the reasoning for the two comments is the same, that the eye doesn't normally see that distance.]	
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#### 6) His Brothers Don't Recognize Joseph – But He Knows Them - Genesis 42:7-8

When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them; but he acted like a stranger toward them and spoke harshly to them. He asked them, "Where do you come from?" And they said, "From the land of Canaan, to procure food." For though Joseph recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him.	וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף אֶת־אֶחָיו וַיִּכְרָם וַיִּתְּנָם אֵלֵיהֶם וַיַּדְבֵּר אִתָּם קָשׁוֹת וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מֵאֵין בָּאתֶם וַיֹּאמְרוּ מִמֶּצְרַיִם כָּנְעַן לְשֹׁבַע־אֶכְל: וַיִּכְר יוֹסֵף אֶת־אֶחָיו וְהֵם לֹא הִכְרִחוּ:
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**7) Apter Rav (Avraham Yehoshua Heschel 19<sup>th</sup> C Poland) as taught by Rabbi Norman****Lamm**

<https://archives.yu.edu/gsd/collect/lammserm/index/assoc/HASH0133/161923c7.dir/doc.pdf>

Perhaps what the Torah is referring to is not recognition of facial features, of mere physiognomy, but an existential recognition of a far deeper kind. When Joseph was not second only to Pharaoh, the ruler of all Egypt. But he had just come up from the most agonizing period of his life. He was in the pit, enslaved, abandoned, all alone, a stranger forgotten by his family and world. From the depths of misery, he now sat on the throne of Egypt, at the pinnacle of his career.

The brothers were in the reverse situation. While Joseph was suffering, they went about their business and their daily pursuits with a total neglect of and unconcern with him. But now they were suffering, now they were caught in a terrible vise: torn by their fidelity to their father, their search for food and survival, their guilt over what they had done to Joseph, their worry over Benjamin. Things looked black indeed for them.

So, "Joseph recognized his brothers" – having come through the same experience, he understood what they were going through, and he understood too that their difficulties were the prelude to their salvation... But while Joseph recognized their predicament, and understood that the miracle of their survival was at its height when they were most pessimistic, "they did not recognize him" – not having undergone this tremendous experience, as Joseph already did, they could not appreciate the situation, they could not know what he knew – and that is, the teaching we have been presenting in the name of the Apter Rav.