

Drisha's Winter Week to Explore Light, Dreams, and a Proper Container: Chanukah and *Chassidut*

By Wendy Amsellem

New York-Chanukah, a relatively minor holiday in rabbinic literature, is a central holiday in *Chassidut*. From Tuesday, December 23 to Thursday, December 25, Drisha will host its annual Winter Week of Learning on the theme of "Light, Dreams, and a Proper Container: Chanukah and *Chassidut*." In the mornings, participants will study key Chassidic texts about Chanukah and delve into themes of boundaries and balance, reality and fantasy, what is hidden and what is revealed. The classes will be given at the Drisha Institute's facilities in midtown Manhattan.

In the afternoons, they will examine *Chassidut* more broadly. The philosophical questions underlying central Chassidic works will be analyzed as well as why *Chassidut* was at first perceived as radically trans-

gressive. Sessions will be taught by Rute Yair Nussbaum (a teacher of *Chassidut* in Matan, Midreshet Nishmat, Maale, the Jewish film school), Samuel Lebens (a post-doctoral fellow at Rutgers University in the philosophy of religion), and Eliyahu Stern (Associate Professor of Modern Jewish Intellectual and Cultural History at Yale University). As part of the program there will be a special collegiate track. We are looking forward to discussing the themes and questions below:

1. Chanukah is the only holiday that must be observed at home. What makes a space into a home? We will explore how the halachic definitions of home (is it where you sleep? where you pay rent?) open into a discussion in *Chassidut* of what it means to be at home. We will learn, based on kabbalistic and Chassidic sources, how these definitions shed a light into the essence of Chanukah.



2. As Chanukah is a rabbinic holiday, it becomes in *Chassidut* a metaphor for the power and potential of oral law. By lighting Chanukah candles, we become exposed not only to the unrevealed part of Torah but to unrevealed realms in our own lives and surroundings. The Chanukah lights are intended to be viewed, not used,

which raises questions of intentionality and sight. What and how do we choose to see? We will explore Chanukah as a celebration of potential not yet actualized and dreams not yet made real and we will challenge some of the normative notions of "home."

3. In order for our contact with light to be sustainable, the light must be held in a proper container, or home. We will explore the relationship between light and vessels for light, and by extension the issue of checks and balances. We will study biblical and midrashic sources that describe the catastrophic consequences of exposure to light that one is ill-equipped to hold and the redemptive possibilities when one finds a fitting container.

For more information or to register please email inquiry@drisha.org or call 212-595-0307.

Holy Name Hospice Receives Jewish Re-Accreditation

Teaneck-Villa Marie Claire, Holy Name Medical Center's residential hospice in Saddle River, recently received re-accreditation by the National Institute for Jewish Hospice (NIJH), the national accrediting organization for hospice programs that care for the Jewish terminally ill.

Villa Marie Claire staff members who joined representatives from hospice programs across the country at the NIJH An-

nual Accreditation and Training participated in sessions focusing on "Jewish Medical Ethics: End-of-Life Care"; "Understanding the Jewish Home"; "Getting the Most Out of Jewish Hospice-Caregivers, Families, Patients"; and "Giving Dignity Until the Soul Reaches Heaven," as well as workshops related to observances of Jewish life, customs, and laws.

Accreditation provides Villa Marie Claire with materials, support, and assis-

tance from the NIJH, which was founded by Rabbi Maurice Lamm, noted authority on Jewish observances related to dying and bereavement, in 1985 to help alleviate suffering in serious and terminal illness. A 24-hour NIJH toll-free number (1-800-446-4448) offers counseling to families, patients, and caregivers, and provides locations of hospices, hospitals, health professionals, and clergy of all faiths.

Holy Name Hospice serves terminally ill patients of all faiths as well as their families through home hospice care, in-hospital consultative support, and in-nursing-home consultative support as well as at Villa Marie Claire, Holy Name's family-centered residential hospice facility located on 26 acres in Saddle River. For information about Villa Marie Claire, call 201-783-8870 or fax 201-327-1325.