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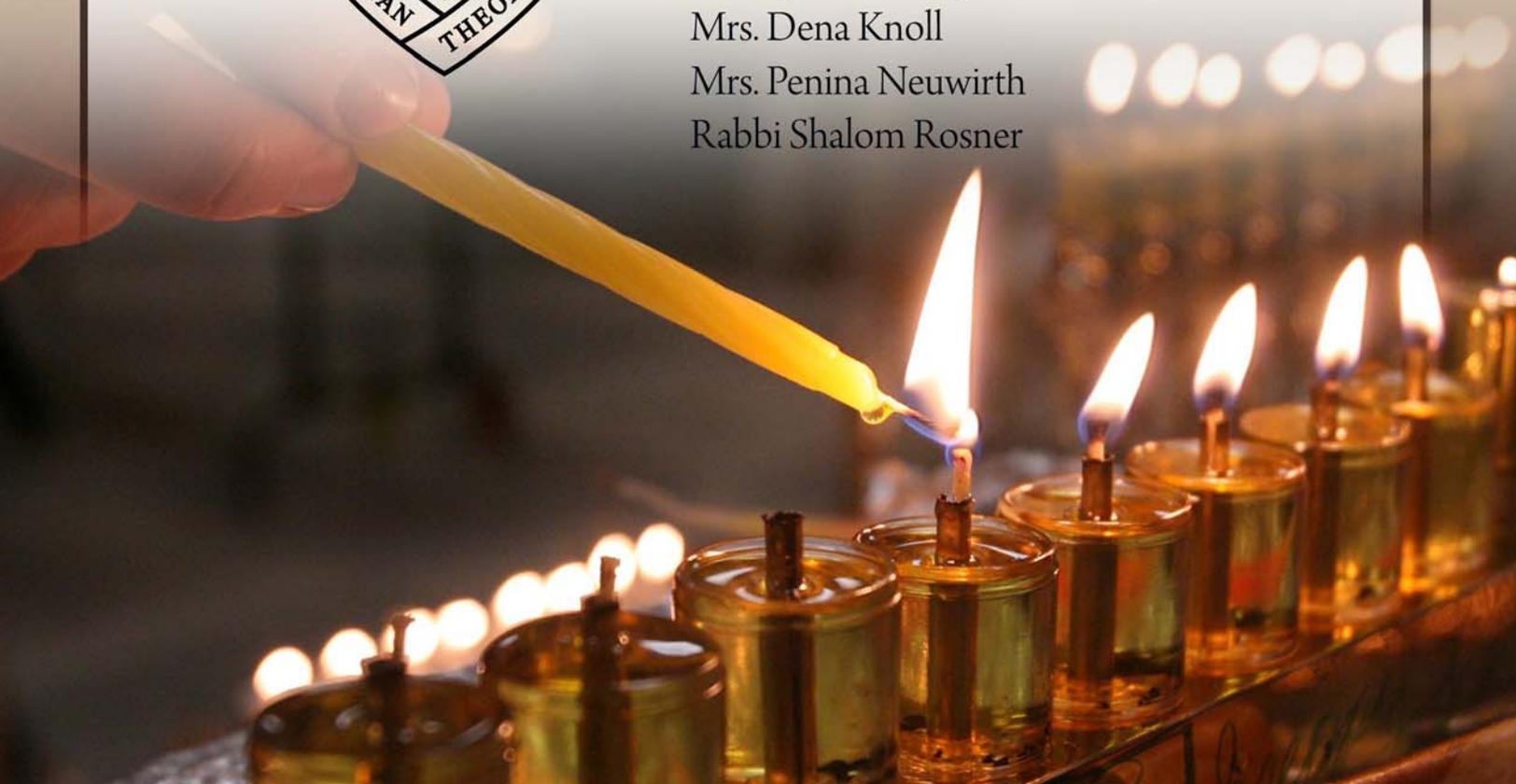
# Chanukah To-Go

# 5770



## Featuring Divrei Torah from

Rabbi Norman Lamm  
Rabbi Reuven Brand  
Rabbi Kenneth Brander  
Professor Steven Fine  
Rabbi Joshua Flug  
Mrs. Dena Knoll  
Mrs. Penina Neuwirth  
Rabbi Shalom Rosner





## YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

Kislev 5770

Dear Friends,

It is my sincere hope that the Torah found in this virtual ספר may serve to enhance your חנוכה (Chanukah) and your לימוד (study).

We have designed this project not only for the individual, studying alone, but perhaps even more for a חברותא (a pair studying together) that wish to work through the study matter together, or a group engaged in facilitated study.

With this material, we invite you to join our *Beit Midrash*, wherever you may be, להגדיל תורה (to enjoy the splendor of Torah) and to engage in discussing issues that touch on a most contemporary matter, and are rooted in the timeless arguments of our great sages from throughout the generations.

*Bivracha,*

**Rabbi Kenneth Brander**

The David Mitzner Dean, Yeshiva University  
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# Half the Hanukkah Story

Rabbi Norman Lamm

*Chancellor and Rosh HaYeshiva, Yeshiva University*

*This drasha was given by Rabbi Lamm in the Jewish Center in NYC on Shabbat Chanuka, December 23, 1967. Courtesy of Rabbi Lamm and the Yad Lamm online drasha archive of the Yeshiva University Museum.*

## Two Themes of Hanukkah

Two themes are central to the festival of Hanukkah which we welcome this week. They are, first, the *nes milhamah*, the miraculous victory of the few over the many and the weak over the strong as the Jews repulsed the Syrian-Greeks and reestablished their independence. The second theme is the *nes shemmen*, the miracle of the oil, which burned in the Temple for eight days although the supply was sufficient for only one day. The *nes milhamah* represents the success of the military and political enterprise of the Macabees, whilst the *nes shemmen* symbolizes the victory of the eternal Jewish spirit. Which of these is emphasized is usually an index to one's Weltanschauung. Thus, for instance, secular Zionism spoke only of the *nes milhamah*, the military victory, because it was interested in establishing the nationalistic base of modern Jewry. The Talmud, however, asking, "What is Hanukkah?," answered with the *nes shemmen*, with the story of the miracle of the oil. In this way, the Rabbis demonstrated their unhappiness with the whole Hasmonean dynasty, descendants of the original Macabees who became Sadducees, denied the Oral Law, and persecuted the Pharisees.

Yet, it cannot be denied that both of these themes are integral parts of Judaism. Unlike Christianity, we never relegated religion to a realm apart from life; we never assented to the bifurcation between that which belongs to God and that which belongs to Caesar. Religion was a crucial part, indeed, the very motive, of the war against the Syrian-Greeks. And unlike the purely nationalistic interpretation of Hanukkah, we proclaim with the prophet (whose words we read on the second Sabbath of Hanukkah), "For not by power nor by might, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts." In fact, the Macabean war was, to a large extent, not a revolution against alien invaders as much as a civil war against Hellenistic Jews who wanted to strip Israel of its Jewish heritage. Hence, Hanukkah symbolizes a victory through military means for spiritual ends. That is why rabbinic sources tell of both themes, the Pesikta speaking of the *nes melhamah*, and the Gemara speaking of the *nes shemmen*.

It is interesting that the dual themes adumbrated in the Hanukkah narrative are anticipated in the Sidra we read on the first Sabbath of Hanukkah. Young Joseph has two dreams, the first of which is equivalent to the *nes milhamah* and the second reminiscent of the *nes shemmen*. In the

first dream he sees himself and his brothers *me'alchim alumim*, binding their sheaves in the field, and the sheaves of the brothers bow down to his sheaf. This is clearly a materialistic dream - he wants to take over the food industry and corner the grain market. The second dream is a more spiritual and cosmic one: it is a dream of *shemmesh ve'kokhavim*, the sun and the stars and the attainment of spiritual preeminence.

Even more interesting is the reactions that these dreams evoke. When Joseph tells his brothers of his dream of the *alumim*, we read: *va-yosifu ode seno oto*, they hated him even more. When he tells them of his dream of the sun and the stars, we read: *va-yekanu vo ehav*, his brothers were jealous of him. The material dream evokes *sin'ah*, hatred; the spiritual dream arouses *kin'ah*, jealousy. We Jews are hated for our *nes milhamah*, and we are envied for our *nes shemmen*.

The State of Israel, in our day, has fulfilled the first dream. The *alumim* of the State of Israel, its farms and its fields, its towns and villages and cities, are comparatively safe and secure. We have achieved a miraculous victory in *milhamah*, the recent war. The result has been predictable – *sin'ah*, hatred. Let us not be blind to the nucleus of animosity that is latent even in the admiration which has been expressed for the State of Israel as a result of its military successes. Perhaps I am naive, but I have abiding "faith" in the silent anti-Semitic potential within a good deal of this expression of worldwide applause for Israel. The best proof - General DeGaulle, whose press has protested his remarks, but whose countrymen seem more and more to have responded by reverting to their old anti-Semitism. The General declared that Israel is "a war-like State bent upon expansion," and that Jews are "an elite people, sure of itself and dominating." Why? Because Israel dared to succeed without first begging his leave. How revealing is his further comment: "Jews provoke ill will in certain countries and at certain times." There it is: *sin'ah*, hatred provoked by the success of our *alumim*, by the accomplishment of our *nes milhamah*. Throughout the ages non-Jews have circumscribed our areas of endeavor. They gave us no farms for our *alumim*, and then hated us when we overcame these limitations nevertheless. They pushed us into money lending, and detested us when we became bankers. They allowed only the very uppermost echelons of our young people to get themselves a university education, and then they declared their hatred for us when this group succeeded in producing the world's leading financiers and scientists, doctors and men of culture. They confined us to squalid ghettos and expected to crush our dignity — but they were furious when we emerged with our dignity intact, when, in the words of Joseph's dream, *ve'hineh kama alumati ve'gam nitzavah* - our sheaf stood upright, unbent, un-submissive. Their hostility was boundless when all their oppression resulted in our possessing a fabulously noble religion, a cultural level second to none, and a superb moral life. Definitely, in general, we are "elite, sure of ourselves, and dominating." No people that has had to endure what has been wished upon us, and has survived with our quality, is anything less than "elite" and "sure of itself." Hence our heritage of *sin'ah*, the ill-will we have "provoked" in so much of the world.

But now that Israel, for itself and all the Jewish people, has fulfilled the first dream, the time has come to realize the second, the vision of *shemmesh ve'kokhavim*. Now, just as we have earned the world's *sin'ah*, we must deserve their *kin'ah*.

What is *kin'ah*? It is not envy, pure and simple. Some modern scholars (Brown, Driver, and Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament) relate the Hebrew word *kin'ah* to the Arabic root *kanaa* which means to turn red as with a dye. In other words, it means to blush, to be embarrassed. The Hebrew *kin'ah* is thus a rather complex phenomenon, one of its components is the feeling of embarrassment, of self-criticism which results in an awareness of one's shortcomings as he measures himself against the object of his *kin'ah* and which therefore, may hopefully lead him to transcend himself and inspire him to greater achievement. To inspire such creative *kin'ah* is, in essence, a moral task and an educational function. Our duty at the present stage of our history is to arouse the world's *kin'ah*, and thus make the rest of the world yearn for our spiritual achievements, for our miracle of oil, and thereby prove the correctness of that verse by King Solomon, *kin'at sofrim tarbeh hokhmah*, that envy (in this sense of creative *kin'ah*) amongst scholars can only increase wisdom in the world.

Indeed, just as Joseph beheld first his *sin'ah*-inspiring material dream, and afterwards rose to his *kin'ah*-provoking spiritual vision, so too, the miracles of Hanukkah are sequential: first there was the *nes milhamah*, and then later came the *nes shemmen*. This is reflected in our *al ha-nissim* prayer which we recite all through Hanukkah. We thank God for the miracle of our victory, for having given over *giborim be'yad halashim, rabbim be'yad me'atim* - the strong in the hands of the weak and the many in the hands of the few ... *ve'ahar ken*, and afterwards, *ba'u vanekha l'devir betekha*, Thy children came into Thy holy habitation, cleansed Thy Temple, purified Thy sanctuary, and kindled lights in Thy holy courts.

I submit that those two little words, *ve'ahar ken*, "and afterwards," define the position of world Jewry today. We have finished one half the Hanukkah story. We have accomplished the *nes milhama*, the miracle of military victory, and now we must proceed to the *nes shemmen*, to the miracle of the conquest of the Jewish spirit. We have realized the dream of the *alumim*; next we must proceed to the inspiring vision of the *shemmesh ve'kokhavim*.

Can it be done? Most certainly! I am more optimistic now than I have ever been before in my life that this, indeed, can be achieved. As an example, permit me to bring to your attention a revealing report in this past week's "Maariv," one of the leading newspapers in Israel. One of its most distinguished reporters, Geulah Cohen, interviewed General Ariel Sharon, who is one of the most popular heroes of the young generation of Israelis, and is widely known by his affectionate nickname Arik. Arik, the commander of the Negev and the conqueror of the Sinai, might well be considered the quintessential Sabra. In the course of the interview, he was asked, "I understand that when you came to the Western Wall, a Hasid gave you a pair of tefillin and asked you to wear them and that you did so. How come, why so suddenly?" The self-confident Arik for the first time turned somewhat shy. "Yes", he answered, "I did do just that". And here follows a remarkable insight: "I do not identify myself", said Arik, "with those who hate religion. On the contrary, I respect those who believe. Indeed, I believe in those who believe. I am genuinely sorry that I was never taught enough about Judaism. Thus, when I came to the Wall, I had very deep feelings that I wanted to express, but to my dismay I discovered that '*li ein millim; la-yehudi ha-dati yesh'*, I had no words, whereas the religious Jew does!"

This recognition is a historic achievement. Now it becomes our sacred duty, the sacred duty of all religious Jews, to give the Ariks the "words," the spiritual wherewithal to continue to the next glorious chapter in Jewish history of our times. Let us give them, and our American Jewish youth, the stuff with which to finish the second half of the Hanukkah story, with which to perform the second miracle, that of the *nes shemmen*; with which to realize Joseph's second dream; with which to excite mankind's envy, its creative *kin'ah* of our spiritual and moral success, and not only be afraid and hostile because of our material and martial conquests.

Then, having made this second dream a miraculous reality and having provoked the world to emulate our moral attainment, will we be able, with complete justification, to conclude the *al hanissim* prayer with the words *le'hodot u-le'hallel le'shimkha ha-gadol*, now we may thank and praise the great name of Almighty God for ever and ever.

# Inside Outside

Rabbi Reuven Brand

Rosh Kollel, Yeshiva University Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago

## Celebrating the Oil

In the second Perek of Massechet Shabbat, the Talmud discusses the details of the mitzvah of hadlakat hamenorah on Chanuka. There is an extensive discussion regarding the permissibility and requirements of specific wicks and oils for use in our Chanuka menorah. The Gemara concludes:

*R. Zera said in R. Mattenah's name, and others state, R. Zera said in Rab's name: Regarding the wicks and oils which the Sages said one must not light therewith on the Sabbath, one may light therewith on Hanukkah, either on weekdays or on the Sabbath.*

**Shabbat 21b**

אמר רבי זירא אמר רב מתנה, ואמרי  
לה אמר רבי זירא אמר רב: פתילות  
ושמנים שאמרו חכמים אין מדליקין  
בהן בשבת - מדליקין בהן בחנוכה, בין  
בחול בין בשבת.

**שבת כא:**

It is striking to note that although the Talmud is very specific in its description and discussion of particular wicks and oils for use on Chanuka, there is no mention at all of any requirements for the Chanuka menorah itself. In fact, many authorities are of the opinion that one is not obligated to utilize a menorah at all. Simply arranging the lights in the proper order, in the correct location would be sufficient<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps this observation can be appreciated in light of a fascinating description in the Midrash:

*And why does one kindle lights on Chanuka? For at the time that the children of the Hasmonean High Priest vanquished the Greek kingdom, as it says "and raised up your sons, O Zion, over your sons, O Yavan" they entered the holy Temple and found there eight iron poles and they established them and they lit lights in them.*

**Pesikta Rabti 2**

ולמה מדליק נרות בחנוכה אלא בשעה שנצחו  
בניו של חשמונאי הכהן הגדול למלכות יון  
שנאמר ועוררת בניך ציון על בניך יון (זכריה  
ט' י"ג) נכנסו לבית המקדש מצאו שם שמונה  
שפודין של ברזל וקבעו אותם והדליקו בתוכם  
נרות

**פסיקתא רבתי (איש שלום) פסקא ב**

The Talmud Bavli corroborates this account with greater detail:

<sup>1</sup> The Avnei Nezer (Rabbi Avraham Borenstein, Sochatchov, 1838- 1910, Shu"t Avnei Nezer, Orach Chaim 150) cites an opinion of the Chessed l'Avraham who requires a proper Menorah and offers fifteen levels of preference among specific types of Menorahs. However, the Avnei Nezer suggests that this is a dispute among the Rishonim. Rav Hershel Schachter, shlit"z, in his sefer, Nefesh Harav p.226, records that Rav Soloveitchik, zt"l, felt strongly that one does *not* require a Menorah. I heard from Rav Schachter, shlit"z, that Rav Soloveitchik followed his opinion in practice as well.

R. Jose b. Judah said: He should not make one even of wood, this being the way in which the kings of the house of the Hasmoneans made it. They said to him: Can you adduce this as a proof? The spits were of iron and they overlaid them with tin. When they grew richer they made them of silver. When they grew richer still, they made them of gold.

### Rosh Hashana 24b

רבי יוסי בר יהודה אומר: אף של עץ לא יעשה, כדרך שעשו מלכי בית חשמונאי. אמרו לו: משם ראייה? שפודין של ברזל היו, וחיפום בבעץ. העשירו - עשאו של כסף, חזרו העשירו - עשאו של זהב  
ראש השנה כד:

According to these descriptions, the Menorah itself was not involved in any miracle at the time of the victory of the Chashmonaim. On the contrary, the Menorah was a pale shadow of its original form, being constructed of simple wood-covered iron rods, instead of ornate, sculpted gold branches. This mundane portrayal of the Menorah is in contradistinction to the description of the oil that was astonishingly preserved and then miraculously lit to last eight days instead of one. Hence, we understand why the halacha concerns itself only with the details of the oil, the contents of the menorah, and no commemoration is made of the menorah itself. Yet, we are left to wonder. It is surely not by coincidence that the miracle occurred in the oil and not the Menorah. What lesson are we to learn from this?

## Shem and Yefet

In Parshat Noach, the Torah details the tragic tale of Noah and his sons upon their leaving the ark:

20. And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard;  
21. And he drank of the wine, and became drunk; and he lay uncovered inside his tent. 22. And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside.  
23. And **he** took, Shem and Yefet, the garment, and laid it upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. 24. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done to him. 25. And he said, cursed be Canaan; a slave of slaves shall he be to his brothers. 26. And he said, blessed be the Lord God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his slave. 27. God shall enlarge Yefet, and he shall live in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his slave.

### Bereishit 9:20-27

(כ) ויחל נח איש האדמה ויטע כרם:  
(כא) וישת מן היין וישכר ויתגל בתוך אהלה: (כב) וירא חם אבי כנען את ערות אביו ויגד לשני אחיו בחוץ:  
(כג) ויקח שם ויפת את השמלה וישימו על שכם שניהם וילכו אחרנית ויכסו את ערות אביהם ופניהם אחרנית וערות אביהם לא ראו: (כד) וייקץ נח מיינו וידע את אשר עשה לו בנו הקטן: (כה) ויאמר ארור כנען עבד עבדים יהיה לאחיו: (כו) ויאמר ברוך ה' אלהי שם ויהי כנען עבד למו: (כז) יפת אלהים ליפת וישכן באהלי שם ויהי כנען עבד למו:  
בראשית ט:כ-כז

Rashi notes an unusual formulation in Pasuk 23. When the Torah describes Shem and Yefet taking the garment it states, “and **he** took.”

**And he took, Shem and Yefet.** It does not state and they took, rather and he took, to teach that Shem exerted himself

ויקח שם ויפת: אין כתיב ויקחו אלא ויקח, לימד (ב"ר לו, ו.) על שם שנתאמץ

in the mitzvah more than Yefet. Therefore [Shem's] sons merited the garment of tzitzit and Yefet merited burial, as it says, and I will give a place for Gog there as a burial.

**Rashi 9:23**

במצוה יותר מיפת, לכך זכו בניו לטלית של ציצית, ויפת זכה לקבורה לבניו, שנאמר אתן לגוג מקום שם קָבַר (יחזקאל לט, יא).  
**רש"י ט:כג**

Rashi explains that the precise formulation of the Torah, wording “and **he** took” in the singular, is to emphasize that Shem played the dominant role in this mitzvah. Yet, the continuation of Rashi is difficult to understand. Why were Shem and Yefet each privileged to their specific respective spiritual gifts, tzitzit and burial? What do these rewards have to do with Shem and Yefet’s relationship to the mitzvah?

## Religious persecution, Spiritual salvation

Perhaps we can better understand these issues in light of a fundamental theme of Chanuka, which is illustrated by a ruling in Shulchan Aruch:

*The elaborate meals that we have many of [on Chanuka] are voluntary meals, because [the Rabbis] did not establish [the days of Chanuka] as ones of festive meals and joy.*

**Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim 670:2**

ריבוי הסעודות שמרבים בהם הם סעודות הרשות, שלא קבעום למשתה ושמחה  
**שולחן ערוך או"ח תרעב:ב**

This statement, that the meals that we eat on Chanuka are technically not considered Seudat Mitzvah, is interesting if we compare it to the experience of Purim, our other Rabbinic holiday, on which we have a required Seudat Mitzvah. The distinction is explained by a passage in the Levush (Rabbi Mordechai Yaffee, 1530- 1612):

*And because the Jews of that time were not subject to one ruler who decreed against them annihilation as it was in the days of Haman. Rather, the enemies came upon them for battle and didn't request of them except subjugation and for their hand to be upon Israel and to change their religion as is known from the story of Antiochus who did not decree against them death and destruction, only persecution to cause them to change their religion... and had the Jews been subject to them to be quashed under their hand, forced to pay tax to them, and change to their religion, G-d forbid, they would have not sought more. But, Hashem strengthened the hand of the Jews and they were victorious. Therefore, [the Rabbis] did not establish it except for praise and thanks, but not for festive meals and joy, as if to say, since they wanted to remove us from this, to deny our religion, G-d forbid, and with His help, they were unsuccessful and our hands were stronger, therefore, they established them in return to praise and thank Him for that*

ומפני שלא נמסרו ישראל באותו זמן ביד מושל אחד שהיה מושל עליהם להריגה כמו שהיה בימי המן אלא שבאו האויבים עליהם למלחמה ולא בקשו מהם אלא בהכנעה ולהיות ידם תקיפה על ישראל ולהעבירם על דתם כידוע ממעשה אנטייכס שלא גזר עליהם להרוג ולהשמיד רק צרות ושמירות כדי להמיר דתם ... ואם היו ישראל מכנעים להם להיות כבושים תחת ידם ולהעלות להם מס וחוזרים לאמונתם חלילה לא היו מבקשים יותר אלא שנתן הש"י וגברה יד ישראל ונצחם לכך לא קבעום אלא להלל ולהודות ולא למשתה ושמחה כלו' כיון שהם רצו למנוע אותנו מזה לכפור בדת ח"ו ובעזרתו י"ת לא הפיקו זממם וגברה ידינו לכך קבעו אותם לחזור ולשבח ולהודות לו על שהיה לנו לאלוהים ולא עזבנו

*He was our G-d and did not allow us to abandon His service  
... Therefore, the increase of meals on Chanuka is only  
voluntary.*

**Levush Hachor 670:2**

מעבודתנו ... הילכך ריבויי הסעודות  
שעושין בחנוכה אינן אלא סעודות  
הרשות.  
**לבוש החור הלכות חנוכה תרע"ב**

The history of Chanuka and the revolt of the Chashmonaim was not a reaction to external Greek political dominion or threat of annihilation as in the story of Purim. The Jews in Israel had been subject for decades to Greek hegemony in the land of Israel (with varying degrees of proper and improper government involvement in the functioning of the Beit Hamikdash). Only after the degradation of the Beit Hamikdash and the initiation of anti-religious decrees by Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) did the Maccabees challenge Greek authority. They fought in search of reclaiming and maintaining religious freedom, not on political grounds. They battled Jewish Hellenists as well as Greek armies to re-establish traditional Jewish mores and modes of worship, especially in the Beit Hamikdash. This notion, that the Chashmonaim were resisting religious persecution and not foreign rule is accented in the tefillah of Al Hanisim. The Al Hanisim prayer describes that the aim of the Greeks and Antiochus's religious persecution, was not to destroy us, rather: "*L'hashkicham toratecha ul'ha'aviram me'chukei retzonecha*" - To cause them to forget Your Torah and to remove from them the laws of Your will.

Hence, the salvation of the Chashmonaim and the holiday of Chanuka is a celebration of religious observance, not of physical survival. On Purim we feast because we were at risk of losing our physical existence. In contrast, the celebration of Chanuka for generations is not one that engages our physical bodies with lavish meals; it engages our spirits, our religious sensibilities with prayers and thanks to Hashem.

## Inside Outside

This understanding that the conflict between the Syrian Greeks and the Chashmonaim was, at its core, not a political and military one but rather a religious one, reflects a broader difference in the worldview of these two societies. Perhaps we could encapsulate the difference between these cultures as "inside" versus "outside". Greek culture, as it was practiced at the time, placed great emphasis on the external aspects of the world. The human body and its form were highly regarded, almost worshipped, in a culture that celebrated the body in art and sports. Clothes were regarded as impediments to the appreciation of the external form of the human body. The physical world at large became an object of study in art and science, but it was understood to be the beginning and end of life. Nothing existed before the world that we see and nothing exists afterwards. This external view of life is contrasted with a Jewish perspective that focuses on the internal.

According to Jewish tradition, the body is significant because it houses the soul within; it is not essentially valuable in its own right. The world in which we live is significant as it houses and

manifests G-d residing within it. Judaism looks beyond the body to appreciate the soul within it, and it charges us to seek out Hashem who hides beyond the physical limits of our natural world.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps this explains the text of Maoz Tzur which emphasizes, “*Vetimu Kol Hashmanim*” - they **defiled** all of the oil. They did not destroy or remove the oil; they made it *tamei*. Rabbi Shaul Yisraeli, zt”l, former Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Merkaz Harav, noted in a speech to his students that the notion of *tumah* highlights this distinction between inside and outside. From an external perspective, ritual impurity is imperceptible, and there is no distinction between pure oil and impure oil. Only from an inside, spiritual perspective is there a fundamental difference. The Greeks sought to impose their view that only the outside matters, while Jewish resistance declared that the inside, the spiritual qualities of the body, the world and life are what truly matter.

## Ethics and Etiquette

Now the story of Shem and Yefet can be fully appreciated with an insight that Rabbi Hershel Schachter, shlit”a, shares in the name of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik zt”l.<sup>3</sup> Rav Soloveitchik posited that there are two distinct principles which guide a person’s behavior: ethics and etiquette. Ethics mandates that a person act in accord with proper behavior under all circumstances. An ethical individual is bound to do the right thing regardless of context. In contrast, etiquette mandates behavior that conforms to social norms. These principles of etiquette are only in effect when one is in a social setting. In the privacy of one’s home and beyond the view of others, one is not bound by these guidelines. While ethics concerns itself also with the “inside”, etiquette only regards the “outside.” Shem was concerned with ethics, with what transpires on the inside. Hence, when he learned that his father was disgraced in his tent he immediately went to cover him. Yefet was a man of etiquette. Noach’s situation inside the tent was unknown to the outside world. There was no breach of etiquette and no need to respond. Yefet joined in only after Shem moved to act, as it would be a violation of basic etiquette for Yefet to stand by idly as Shem helped their father. This is the meaning of Rashi’s comment on the word *vayikach*, and **he** took; Shem took the initiative and Yefet joined later.

This distinction can explain the reward which each of them received. Shem was granted the mitzvah of tzitzit, which is a private mitzvah, signifying a personal, intimate relationship with Hashem. The Magen Avraham (Rabbi Avraham Abele Gombiner, 1633- 1683, Poland, Orach Chaim, 8:13) notes that although one may wear the strings of the tzitzit on the outside, the actual garment should be worn on the inside, under one’s clothing. In contrast, Yefet was granted burial, which is a social convention. We bury the dead out of *kavod haberiyot*, human dignity, but not from any ethical or moral obligation.

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<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Hellenism, Judaism guides us to cover our bodies and conceal ourselves in modesty, precisely because there is a precious quality within. For a fuller exploration of this thesis, see “Tzeniut, A Universal Concept” by Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm in his book, *Seventy Faces vol. 1*, pp. 190- 202.

<sup>3</sup> Nefesh Harav, pp. 272- 273

Shem, the progenitor of the Jewish people and the monotheistic code of morality is the model of ethics and concern for the inside. Yefet is the father of Yavan, the Biblical progenitor of the polytheistic Greek society that is obsessed with the outside, the external.

Let us be clear: Judaism does not eschew the external, the role of etiquette. We appreciate it for its value. Yet the external is only meaningful when it is complemented by internal values and ethics. Arts and sciences are meaningful when informed and illuminated by the guiding values of Torah, as Noach himself noted, “*Yaft Elokim l’Yefet v’yishkon b’ohalei Shem*” - God shall enlarge Yefet, and he shall live in the tents of Shem.<sup>4</sup> As the Gemara in Megillah 9b paraphrases: the beauty of Yefet is in the tents of Shem.

## Chanuka: A Celebration of the Inside

Now we can fully appreciate the message of Chanuka, the victory of Jewish ethics and Torah values over a purely superficial worldview. This concept of an inner view of existence, the notion of Torah wisdom, is symbolized by oil and its light. Oil emerges from within, from inside an olive from which it is squeezed, and it is this substance that fuels the warmth and light of illumination. The greatest lesson of the Chashmonaim is the insistence upon purity of oil, the Torah light, that emanates from the inside. The spiritual vision of these warriors enabled them to perceive and appreciate the inside aspects of the world and not be carried away by the Hellenistic culture which held sway on the outside. Hashem choreographed the miracle of Chanuka to revolve around a cruse of oil, the symbol of ethics, and decidedly not on the Menorah itself, which is a visible, external symbol. Hence, our halachic insistence upon kosher oil de-emphasizes, and perhaps ignores, the Menorah itself. Instead, it accents this lesson that the victory of Chanuka is the continuation of our timeless values, our inside - the inner light of Torah. Perhaps this is why the mitzvah of hadlakat hamenorah is at the entrance of the home on the outside, or in a window overlooking the street. The light of our Menorah, the glow of the inside, is meant to radiate outside. The illumination of Torah, which is situated at and emanates from the inside, serves as a guiding beacon of light for the outside world in which we live.

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<sup>4</sup> Halacha recognizes the contribution of the Greek aesthetic as well. We see this in the Gemara in Masechet Megillah 9b, which uses this verse regarding Yefet and Shem to teach that according to the opinion of Rabbi Shimon ben Gamliel, although one may only write a Sefer Torah in specific Hebrew script, one may also write a Sefer Torah in Greek. Even the Greek alphabet has holiness when it contains the words of Torah.

# Chanukah Through the Prism of the Rav's Teachings

Rabbi Kenneth Brander

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## The Rambam & Chanukah

When the Rambam wrote his magnum opus, the Mishneh Torah, he stated his intended purpose at the outset.

*I, Moses the son of Maimon the Sephardi...relying on the help of the Rock [G-d], blessed be He, intently studied all these works with the view of putting together the results obtained from them regarding what is forbidden or permitted, clean or unclean, and the other rules of the Torah - all in plain and terse language, so that the entire Oral Law might become known to all without difficulty...consisting of statements that are clear, understandable and correct, predicated upon the laws which are elaborated upon from all of the works and commentaries from the time of Judah the Prince until now... Therefore, I have called this work Mishneh Torah, for a person will be able to first read the Written Torah and afterward read this [Mishneh Torah] ..and this work may serve as a compendium of the entire Oral Law...*

**Rambam, Introduction to the Mishneh Torah**

נערתי חצני אני משה בן מיימון הספרדי  
ונשענתי על הצור ברוך הוא ובינותי בכל  
אלו הספרים וראיתי לחבר דברים  
המתבררים מכל אלו החיבורים בענין  
האסור והמותר הטמא והטהור עם שאר  
דיני התורה. כולם בלשון ברורה ודרך  
קצרה עד שתהא תורה שבעל פה כולה  
סדורה בפי הכל בלא קושיא ולא פירוק.  
... דברים ברורים קרובים נכונים על פי  
המשפט אשר יתבאר מכל אלו החיבורים  
והפירושים הנמצאים מימות רבינו  
הקדוש ועד עכשיו... לפיכך קראתי שם  
חיבור זה משנה תורה. לפי שאדם קורא  
בתורה שבכתב תחלה ואחר כך קורא בזה  
ויוודע ממנו תורה שבעל פה כולה  
הקדמה ליד החזקה לרמב"ם

Given his stated objective, there is much to be learned from the content and context of the Rambam's Hilchot Chanukah. When codifying the chagim, the Rambam lists the holidays in calendar order, beginning with the general laws of Yom Tov, followed by Pesach, Rosh HaShanah, and the holiday of Sukkot.<sup>5</sup> Rav Yosef Karo, author of the Shulchan Aruch, follows

<sup>5</sup> Since Yom Kippur is considered an extension of Shabbat, it is codified immediately after the treatise dealing with Shabbat. Shavuot has no particular mitzvot; therefore, the practical behavior for the holiday is included in the

the Rambam's order. However, the Rambam and Rav Karo differ when codifying the rabbinic holidays of Chanukah and Purim.

Rav Karo, consistent with calendar order, codifies Chanukah (Orach Chaim 570-584) and then Purim (Orach Chayim 586-597). The Rambam deviates from the order of the calendar, codifying the holidays in historical order, placing Purim before Chanukah. The Rambam does not codify the rabbinic holidays in distinct treatises, like Rav Karo and every other codifier, but in one treatise - Hilchot Megillah v'Chanukah - as if they are one holiday.

Additionally, while the Mishneh Torah typically limits its focus to the halakhic dimensions of a holiday, Hilchot Chanukah begins with a full paragraph summarizing the holiday's story:

*In [the era of] the Second Temple, the Greek kingdom issued decrees against the Jewish people, [attempting] to nullify their faith and refusing to allow them to observe the Torah and its commandments. They [the Chashmonaim] overcame their forces and killed them, and saved the Jewish people from their hands. They then appointed a king from the priests, and sovereignty returned to Israel for more than 200 years, until the destruction of the Second Temple.*

**Hilchos Megillah v'Chanukah 3:1**

בבית שני כשמלכו יון גזרו גזרות על ישראל ובטלו דתם ולא הניחו אותם לעסוק בתורה ובמצות ... וגברו בני חשמונאי הכהנים הגדולים והרגום והושיעו ישראל מידם והעמידו מלך מן הכהנים וחזרה מלכות לישראל יתר על מאתים שנה עד החורבן השני.  
רמב"ם הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ג:א

Why insert the story of Chanukah in the Mishneh Torah, which is an otherwise legal work, devoid of any other holiday story?

As stated, the purpose of the Mishneh Torah is to summarize the Oral Law systematically. Therefore, when organizing the rabbinic holidays, the order chosen was consistent with the halachic development of rabbinic holidays. Purim is the first rabbinic holiday, and was the battleground regarding the permissibility to add holidays not prescribed in the Torah.

*Rabbi Samuel ben Judah said: Esther sent to the wise men saying: "Commemorate me for future generations" They replied: "You will incite the ill will of the nations against us." She sent back a reply: 'I am already recorded in the chronicles of the kings of Media and Persia.'*

**Megillah 7a**

*Our rabbis taught: Forty-eight prophets and seven prophetesses prophesized to Israel, and they neither took away from nor added anything to what is written in the Torah, save only the reading of the Megillah [the holiday of Purim].*

**Megillah 14a**

אמר רב שמואל בר יהודה: שלחה להם אסתר להכמים: קבעוני לדורות! שלחו לה: קנאה את מעוררת עלינו לבין האומות. שלחה להם: כבר כתובה אני על דברי הימים למלכי מדי ופרס.  
מסכת מגילה דף ז.

תנו רבנן: ארבעים ושמונה נביאים ושבע נביאות נתנבאו להם לישראל, ולא פחתו ולא הויתרו על מה שכתוב בתורה, חוץ ממקרא מגילה.  
מסכת מגילה דף יד.

general laws of Yom Tov, while the laws dealing with the special sacrifice are found in Hilchot Tmidin uMussafin (Chapters 7-8).

Chanukah's validity as a holiday, as a halakhic institution, is predicated on Purim. The establishment of Purim gives legitimacy and precedent to establish additional rabbinic holidays such as Chanukah. This idea is daramitzed in the language the Rambam uses throughout the narrative regarding the mitzvot of Chanukah. Notice, in the text below, the legal pointers back to Purim.

*These days are known as Chanukah. Eulogies and fasting are forbidden just as they are on Purim, and the kindling of lights is a mitzvah...just like the reading of the Megillah. All who are obligated to read the Megillah are also obligated in the kindling of the Chanukah lights.*

**Hilchos Megillah v'Chanukah 3:3-4**

וימים אלו הן הנקראין חנוכה והן  
אסורין בהספד ותענית כימי  
הפורים, והדלקת הנרות בהן מצוה  
... כקריאת המגילה ... כל שחייב  
בקריאת המגילה חייב בהדלקת נר  
חנוכה  
הלכות מגילה וחנוכה ג:ג-ד

These halakhic nuances and the retelling of the Chanukah story are missing from Shulchan Aruch. Rav Karo's agenda was not to replicate the earlier work of the Mishneh Torah, nor to summarize the Oral tradition. His goal was to create an ordered table, complete with the practical laws relevant to Diaspora Jewry. Therefore, in Rav Karo's Shulchan Arukh all laws dealing with the Temple service, Jewish self-government, and commandments limited to the Land of Israel are missing from his code. Only halakhot relevant to a Jew and his/her community ensconced within a Diaspora existence are inserted. The Rambam, in keeping with his *raison d'etre*, includes in the Mishneh Torah all aspects of the Oral tradition. Therefore the laws of Jewish kings, Messiah, commandments limited to the Land of Israel, as well as laws concerning the Temple are found in the Mishneh Torah. Chanukah took place after the canonization of the Written Law. Unlike any other holiday codified in the Mishneh Torah, its story is part of the Oral Tradition. Therefore, consistent with the stated goals of the Mishneh Torah the treatise must not only include its laws but also its story.

## The Notion of Hallel

The organizational structure of the Mishneh Torah raises one additional question regarding a textual component of Hilkhos Chanukah. The laws of the Hallel liturgy are codified in the Shulchan Arukh as part of the laws of prayer. However, the Rambam does not place the laws of Hallel within the treatise on prayer, nor as a component of any of the holidays in which Hallel is recited. Rather, the laws of Hallel are codified as part of the final chapter of Chanukah. Given the Rambam's organizational meticulousness, one wonders why he relegated the laws of Hallel to the final chapter of the Book of Seasons, as part of the rabbinic holiday of Chanukah.

Rav Soloveitchik explained that, in prayer, Hallel is seen in a limited perspective. It expresses praise only through words, through prayer. On Chanukah, Hallel is seen in its most pristine form. It is seen through action as well as through prayer, through the lighting of the menorah. For the theme of this holiday, the essence and mitzvah of these eight days is Hallel. The theme of Pesach is the birth of the nation; Shavuot commemorates the receiving of the Torah; Sukkot celebrates the intimate relationship between G-d and the Jewish people. Chanukah's theme is praise to G-d. While we recite Hallel on many holidays, it is on Chanukah that praise is at the

core of the festival's religious experience.

*The following year, these [days of Chanukah] were appointed a festival of Hallel and thanksgiving*

**Shabbos 21b**

לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים  
בהלל והודאה.  
מסכת שבת דף כא.

On Chanukah, Hallel is not only seen in its liturgical form but is also displayed through the act of kindling the menorah. Hallel's dual nature, as a prayer and as action, makes Chanukah the holiday in which Hallel is observed in its complete form. Therefore, the Rambam specifically waited for the chapters focusing on the holiday of Chanukah to codify the laws of Hallel.

## Shabbat & Chanukah

Rav Soloveitchik notes that the Talmudic location in which the story of Chanukah is found is the tractate of Shabbat.

*What is [the reason for] Chanukah? For our rabbis taught: On the 25th day of Kislev [commence] the days of Chanukah, which are eight.*

**Shabbat 21b**

מאי חנוכה? דתנו רבנן: בכ"ה בכסליו  
יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון  
מסכת שבת דף כא.

Why did the rabbis choose the tractate of Shabbat to introduce the holiday of Chanukah? While the theaters of experience for Chanukah and Shabbat are distinct, existentially they complement each other. Chanuka's holiday experience symbolizes taking the light found in the Jewish home and allowing it to radiate in the public thoroughfare. All of the laws regarding the menorah's location and time of lighting are predicated on the pedestrian's ability to see its illumination in the public thoroughfare. Chanukah celebrates the Jews' responsibility to be involved in *tikkun olam*.

This goal is only achievable when there is also the Shabbat experience. Shabbat is celebrated through the retreat from the public arena of life. Carrying an object from the private to the public domain is forbidden (and vice versa); so is carrying any object four amot in the public domain. The experience of Shabbat is primarily found within the privacy of the home. It is the Shabbat experience which strengthens our home, our personal spiritual epicenter. Introducing the festival of Chanukah in the middle of Tractate Shabbat plays to the recognition that our national aspiration, of perfecting the public thoroughfare, is only achievable when the private arena is reinforced. Conversely, when the Shabbat experience creates a Robinson Crusoe mindset - permanent withdrawal from the world community - it becomes an obstacle to achieving the Divine agenda of *tikkun olam*, the purpose of the Chosen People.

As we usher in this Chanukah season, let us recommit ourselves to the balance between Shabbat and Chanukah. May we celebrate a commitment to the calibration of our personal spiritual compass; yet concurrently focus on the mission of Knesset Yisrael, "a light unto the nations," in every aspect of our public persona.

# The Temple Menorah: Where Is It?

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What is history and what is myth? What is true and what is legendary? These are questions that arise from time to time and specifically apply to the whereabouts of the Menorah. Reporting on his 1996 meeting with Pope John Paul II, Israel's Minister of Religious Affairs Shimon Shetreet said, according to the Jerusalem Post, that "he had asked for Vatican cooperation in locating the gold menorah from the Second Temple that was brought to Rome by Titus in 70 C.E." Shetreet claimed that recent research at the University of Florence indicated the Menorah might be among the hidden treasures in the Vatican's storerooms. "I don't say it's there for sure," he said, "but I asked the Pope to help in the search as a goodwill gesture in recognition of the improved relations between Catholics and Jews."

Witnesses to this conversation "tell that a tense silence hovered over the room after Shetreet's request was heard." I tried to research Shetreet's reference at the University of Florence, but no one I contacted there had ever heard of it. This story has repeated itself a number of times since. One of the two chief rabbis of Israel, on their historic visit to the Vatican in 2004, asked about the Menorah, as did the President of Israel, Moshe Katzav, on another occasion. Asked for an official response, this is what I received from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs via email:

*The requests by Shetreet, the president, and the chief rabbis reflect the long-held belief that the Catholic Church, as the inheritor of Rome, took possession of the empire's booty—as documented by the Arch of Titus. It is thus assumed that, among other treasures looted from the Jewish people, the Temple menorah is stashed away someplace in the storerooms of the Vatican.*

This is not to say those 2,000 years or so have been enough time for the Foreign Ministry to formulate a policy on the matter. Unofficially at least, we look forward to the restoration of the treasures of the Jewish people to their rightful homeland, but do not anticipate this will occur before the coming of the Messiah.

These requests of the Church are a fascinating extension of the Jewish hope that the Temple Menorah taken by Titus would be returned “home.” The legends of the Menorah at the Vatican have considerable currency. I have heard them from many Jews who take it as historical fact. In one version, a certain American rabbi entered the Vatican and saw the Menorah. In another version, it was an Israeli Moroccan rabbi known as “Rabbi Pinto” who saw it. In a third version, when the former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Isaac Herzog, went to rescue Jewish children in Europe, he visited Pope Pius XII (1939–1958) at the Vatican. According to this story, the Pope showed Rabbi Herzog the Menorah, but refused to return it.

Father Leonard Boyle, former director of the Vatican Libraries, tells of Jewish tourists from the United States entering the library and, with all naiveté, telling Father Boyle that their rabbis had instructed them to find the Menorah during their visit. Folklorist Dov Noy tells me that the myth of the Menorah, at the Vatican, is not a part of traditional Jewish folklore. It is not recorded by the researchers of the Israel Folklore Archive. Apparently, it is a distinctly American Jewish urban myth.

How this myth arose we have no idea. But it is interesting to compare it to the ancient sources regarding the Menorah following the Roman destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. The best known evidence for the Temple Menorah in Rome is, of course, the monumental victory arch of Titus. This arch, completed in 81 C.E. after Titus’s death, was just one of the many triumphal arches and monuments that once graced the center of Rome. While large, more than 50 feet tall, it was a rather average sized memorial two thousand years ago. The interior of the arch is carved with bas reliefs of Titus’s triumphal entry into Jerusalem on one side, and the parading of the sacred vessels of the Jerusalem Temple, into Rome, on the other. These include the Table for Showbread, trumpets and, most prominently, the seven-branched Menorah of the Temple.

But the Arch of Titus isn’t the earliest reference to the Temple Menorah in Rome. The Jewish historian Josephus was in Rome and saw the triumphal celebration of Jerusalem’s defeat in Rome in 70 C.E. At the beginning of the revolt, Josephus had been the Jewish general in charge of the Galilee. In a famous turn about, he surrendered and joined the Roman side, writing books under imperial patronage about the Jewish war and, at the same time, defending Jewish tradition. In general, Josephus’s descriptions of the architecture of ancient Judea have been found to be extremely accurate; his discussions of Jerusalem and of Masada are two examples. His work—written in the mode of Roman historiography—is always colored by his apologetic approach to both the Flavian emperors (Vespasian, Titus and Domitian) and on behalf of the Jews.

In the Jewish War book 6 Josephus describes how a certain Jewish priest named Phineas handed over to the Romans “some of the sacred treasures”:

*Two menorot similar to those deposited in the sanctuary, along with tables, bowls, and platters, all of solid gold and very massive. He further delivered up veils, the high priests’ vestments, including the precious stones, and many other articles for public worship and a mass of cinnamon and cassia and a multitude of other spices, which they mixed and burned daily as incense to God.*

Josephus concludes his description by noting that “Those services procure[ed] for him [Phineas], although a prisoner of war, the pardon accorded to the refugees.”

Josephus also describes the Temple trophies in his account of the triumphal procession on Titus’s return to Rome from his successful campaign in Judea:

*The spoils, in general, were borne in promiscuous heaps; but conspicuous above all stood those captured in the Temple at Jerusalem. These consisted of a golden table, many talents in weight, and a Menorah, likewise made of gold ... After these, and last of all the spoils, was carried a copy of the Jewish Law. They followed a large party carrying images of victory, all made of ivory and gold. Behind them drove Vespasian [who initially led the Roman forces before he was proclaimed emperor in 69 C.E.], followed by Titus [who finally suppressed the rebellion]; while Domitian [his brother and future emperor] rode beside them, in magnificent apparel and mounted on a steed that was in itself a sight.*

There is no reason to doubt the historicity of these descriptions and images, which are so close in content to the official visual portrayal of these events on the Arch of Titus. Note Josephus’s mention of the Showbread table (the Biblical “bread of the presence” [Exodus 25], which he refers to as the “golden table.” While in the service of the Temple, this table contained 12 loaves of unleavened bread, as an offering to God) immediately followed by mention of the Menorah. This pairing of the Menorah and the Showbread table, which follows the order in which these artifacts are described in Exodus 25 and elsewhere, is no doubt based on their adjacent locations within the Temple, as well as their physical impressiveness (each was manufactured using large quantities of gold).

The Menorah and table were paired as early as 39 B.C.E. on a lepton coin of Mattathias Antigonus as an apparent propaganda tool to ward off the Roman-backed usurper Herod. The juxtaposition of the table and the Menorah is also found in a graffito on a plaster fragment discovered in excavations in the Jewish Quarter in Jerusalem dating to just before the Roman destruction of the city in 70 C.E.

Josephus writes that the Temple trophies were displayed in Rome after the procession. According to him, they were exhibited in the magnificent Temple of Peace. Begun in 71 and completed in 75 C.E., this temple was built by Vespasian to commemorate the Roman defeat of Judea and was later rebuilt by Domitian. Pliny the Elder includes the Temple of Peace among Rome’s “noble buildings,” describing it as one of “the most beautiful [buildings] the world has ever seen.” It was built on the southern side of the Argiletum—a major road connecting the Subura (Suburb) to the Forum. The complex included a pleasure garden and a library. A model in the Museum of the City of Rome suggests what the Temple of Peace might have looked like.

Here is how Josephus describes it:

*The triumphal ceremonies being concluded and the empire of the Romans established on the firmest foundation, Vespasian decided to erect a Temple of Peace. This was very speedily completed and in a style surpassing all human conception. For, besides having prodigious resources of wealth on which to draw, he also embellished it with ancient masterworks of*

*painting and sculpture; indeed, into that shrine were accumulated and stored all objects for the sight of which men had once wandered over the whole world, eager to see them severally while they lay in various countries. Here, too, he laid up the vessels of gold from the temple of the Jews, on which he prided himself.*

Jews, both natives of Rome and visitors, no doubt came to the Temple of Peace to view the Temple items—as Jews to this day still flock to the Arch of Titus. The temple was a partially public space, as the White House is in the United States. As the great Roman architect Vitruvius notes, in homes of the powerful “the common rooms are those into which, though uninvited, persons of the people can come by right, such as vestibules, courtyards, peristyles and other apartments of similar uses.” Thus it seems that the sacred vessels were deposited and on view within Vespasian’s palace during the latter first century.

The traditions of the earliest Rabbis (the Tannaim [second century C.E.]), preserves several accounts of sightings of the holy vessels in Rome. For example, mid-second-century student of Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Eleazar, who claims to have seen the parokhet, or veil covering the Ark of the Covenant:

*Rabbi Lazer son of Rabbi Jose said, “I saw it [the parokhet] in Rome and there were drops of blood on it. And they told me: ‘These are from the drops of blood of the Day of Atonement.’”*  
**Tosefta Kippurim, ed. S. Lieberman, 2:16**

אמ' ר' לעזר בי ר' יוסה אני ראיתיה  
ברומי היו עליה טיפי דמים ואמ' לי  
אילו מדמים של יום הכפורים  
**תוספתא כפורים ב:טז**

The enigmatic concluding sentence of this quotation seems to suggest that many had seen the veil and that there was some sort of local tradition about it. One can almost imagine Rabbi Eleazar going to see the parokhet and discussing the bloody spots with local Jews. In another tradition, this same rabbi is said to have seen the priestly breastplate worn in the Temple:

*I saw it [the priestly breastplate of gold] in Rome, and the name was written on it in a single line, ‘Holy to the Lord.’*  
**Talmud Yerushalmi, Yoma 4:1, 41c**

אמר רבי אלעזר בי רבי יוסי אני ראיתיו ברומי ולא  
היה כתוב עליו אלא שיטה אחת קודש ליי'  
**תלמוד ירושלמי יומא פרק ד דף מא טור ג**

Still another student of Rabbi Akiva, Rabbi Shimon, saw the Menorah itself:

*Rabbi Simeon said, “When I went to Rome, there I saw the Menorah.”*  
**Sifre Zutta, Be-ha'alotkha to Numbers 8:2**

אמר ר' שמעון כשהלכתי לרומי וראיתי שם את  
המנורה היו כל הנרות מוסטרין כנגד גר האמצעי:  
**ספרי זוטא פרק ח**

These sightings have a reasonable chance of recording reliable history. The items mentioned could well have been viewed in Rome by these second-century rabbis. Even if we are inclined to dismiss these rabbinic sources as mere literary devices or as folklore, the external evidence from Josephus and from the Arch of Titus lends strong support for their historicity.

A Byzantine period rabbinic collection, *Avot de-Rabbi Natan* (ed. Schechter, version A, ch. 41) notes that Temple artifacts had been taken to Rome and were “hidden away.” The objects include “the [Showbread] table, the Menorah, the veil of the Ark and the vestments of the anointed priest.” In the second half of the 12th century a Spanish Jew known as Benjamin of Tudela made a tour of the then known world (he went as far east as Mesopotamia) and kept a travel diary in which he claims to have seen a church with two columns from Solomon’s Temple in Rome. More pertinent to the present discussion, he was apparently told by Rome’s Jews that the Temple vessels that had been brought to Rome were hidden in a cave in the church:

*In the church of St. John, in the Lateran, there are two copper columns that were in the Temple, the handiwork of King Solomon, peace be upon him. Upon each column is inscribed “Solomon son of David.” The Jews of Rome said that each year on the Ninth of Av [the traditional date on which both the First and Second Temples were destroyed, first by the Babylonians and then by the Romans] they found moisture running down them like water. There also is the cave where Titus the son of Vespasian hid away the Temple vessels which he brought from Jerusalem.*

If nothing else, this suggests that medieval Roman Jews had a tradition that the Temple vessels were in Rome. A century later, Christians made the same claim. A mosaic in an apse in the church of Saint John in the Lateran, from 1291, contained an inscription proclaiming the presence not only of the Ark of the Covenant but of the Menorah and columns: “Titus and Vespasian had this ark and the candelabrum and ... the four columns here present taken from the Jews in Jerusalem and brought to Rome.” By the end of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, then, the Lateran was claiming to have the Temple booty of the Solomonic Temple, taken anachronistically by “Titus and Vespasian” and on display (or in a reliquary). Though neither Christians nor Jews could actually see the Menorah, its presence was intense.

When contemporary Jews go to Rome, the Menorah is no less present — yet non-present. They know that their holy vessels were brought to Rome, as commemorated in that open sore known as the Arch of Titus. They can also see the Menorah in the remains of the fourth-century Jewish catacombs of Rome, most of which are safely stored and displayed in the Vatican. If the Vatican did have the actual Menorah and other vessels, there is no reason to think that in our more ecumenical age they would not display them, just as they do so many fine Jewish manuscripts and artifacts. I could imagine the Menorah under a huge cupola resting on a base, surrounded by a velvet cord with an Italian guard on either side. Alas, this is not the case. As long as Jews believe that the Menorah will someday be returned to Jerusalem, however, the eternal Jewish hope of messianic restoration is not yet lost.

# Chanukah & Mehadrin

## Min HaMehadrin

Rabbi Joshua Flug

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The term "*mehadrin*" is used for those who are scrupulous in the performance of *mitzvot*. In kashrut, "*mehadrin*" is the term one would use to connote that the standards applied to the product or establishment exceed normal kashrut standards. The Talmud provides various methods of fulfilling the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah lights, including a *mehadrin* method and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* method for those who are very scrupulous. In this article, we will deal with the following questions:

- 1) What are the various positions relating to *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin*?
- 2) Is it possible for all members of a household to fulfill *mehadrin* or *mehadrin min hamehadrin*?
- 3) Why has it become universally accepted practice to fulfill *mehadrin min hamehadrin*? Shouldn't this practice be reserved for the very scrupulous?

*Our Rabbis taught: The precept of Hanukkah [demands] one light for a man and his household; the zealous [kindle] a light for each member [of the household]; and the extremely zealous, — Beth Shammai maintain: On the first day eight lights are lit and thereafter they are gradually reduced; but Beth Hillel say: On the first day one is lit and thereafter they are progressively increased.*  
**Shabbat 21b (Soncino Translation)**

מצות חנוכה נר איש וביתו והמהדרין נר לכל אחד ואחד והמהדרין מן המהדרין בית שמאי אומרים יום ראשון מדליק שמנה מכאן ואילך פוחת והולך ובית הלל אומרים יום ראשון מדליק אחת מכאן ואילך מוסיף והולך.  
**שבת כא:**

The Halacha follows *Beit Hillel*, who are of the opinion that on the first night, one light is lit and one continues in ascending order culminating in the lighting of eight lights on the eighth night. The ambiguity of the practice of *mehadrin min hamehadrin* lies in the relationship between regular *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. Do those who fulfill the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* also fulfill the practice of the *mehadrin*, or is the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* practice a distinct one that is not based on the *mehadrin* practice? This question is a matter of dispute between Rambam (1135-1204) and Tosafot:

*How many lights should one light? On Chanukah, the mitzvah is that there should be one light lit in each house whether there are many people living in the house or whether there is just one person*

כמה נרות הוא מדליק בחנוכה מצותה שיהיה כל בית ובית מדליק נר אחד בין שהיו אנשי הבית מרובין בין שלא היה בו אלא אדם אחד

living there. Those who are scrupulous regarding mitzvot light the number of lights corresponding to the number of people living in the house, one light for each person, whether they are men or women. One who is even more scrupulous and wants to perform the mitzvah in the most preferable way should light one light for each person on the first night and increase for each night one light. For example, if there are ten people living in the house, on the first night one light ten lights, on the second, twenty, on the third, thirty, until he lights eighty lights on the eighth night.

**Rambam, Hilchot Chanukah 4:1-2**

והמהדר את המצוה מדליק נרות כמנין אנשי הבית נר לכל אחד ואחד בין אנשים בין נשים והמהדר יותר על זה ועושה מצוה מן המובחר מדליק נר לכל אחד ואחד בלילה הראשון ומוסיף והולך בכל לילה ולילה נר אחד. כיצד הרי שהיו אנשי הבית עשרה בלילה הראשון מדליק עשרה נרות ובליל שני עשרים ובליל שלישי שלשים עד שנמצא מדליק בליל שמיני שמונים נרות.  
**רמב"ם הל' חנוכה ד:א-ב**

Clearly, Rambam is of the opinion that *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is built on the practice of *mehadrin*. Therefore, the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* practice also factors in the number of people in the house. However, Tosafot claim that *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* cannot coexist:

*It seems to Rabbeinu Yitzchak that Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel only refer to [adding] to the one light per household because there is a greater fulfillment when it is recognizable when one increases or decreases corresponding to the days that are coming or the days that are going. However, if one lights one light for each member of the house, even if one adds lights each night, it is not recognizable, for the onlooker will think that it corresponds to the number of people in the house.*

**Tosafot, Shabbat 21b, s.v. VeHaMehadrin**

נראה לר"י דב"ש וב"ה לא קיימי אלא אנר איש וביתו שכן יש יותר הידור דאיכא היכרא כשמוסיף והולך או מחסר שהוא כנגד ימים הנכנסים או היוצאים אבל אם עושה נר לכל אחד אפי' יוסיף מכאן ואילך ליכא היכרא שיסברו שכך יש בני אדם בבית  
**תוס' שבת כא: ד"ה והמהדרין**

According to Tosafot, if the number of lights is reflective of both the number of people in the household and the corresponding day, it is not recognizable which practice is in effect. For example, if one lights eight lights on the fourth night, it is possible that there are eight members of the household and one is fulfilling the practice of *mehadrin*. Alternatively, there may be two members of the household, and one is fulfilling *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. For this reason Tosafot state that one can either light based on the number of members in the household (*mehadrin*), or light one light for the entire household (according to *Beit Hillel*) and increase one light every night (*mehadrin min hamehadrin*). According to Tosafot, the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* practice is considered preferable because there is more *hidur* (enhancement) when the lights correspond to the specific day of Chanukah.

R. Yosef Karo (1488-1575) *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 671:2, rules that even if there are many members of the household, one should light one light on the first night of Chanukah and increase one light every night of Chanukah. Rama (1520-1572), *ad loc*, notes that common practice is that every member of the household lights one light on the first night and increases one light per night.

## The Opinion of Rama

At first glance, the dispute between *Shulchan Aruch* and Rama seems to correspond to the dispute between Tosafot and Rambam. *Shulchan Aruch* rules in accordance with the opinion of Tosafot that one can either fulfill *mehadrin* or *mehadrin min hamehadrin* but not both. Rama rules in accordance with the opinion of Rambam that the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* practice encompasses the *mehadrin* practice.

However, there are numerous difficulties in assuming that Rama rules in accordance with the opinion of Rambam. First, according to Rambam, *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is accomplished by the head of the household lighting one light for each member of the household. Rama's practice is that every member of the household lights his own lights. Second, according to Rambam, the number of lights corresponds to the number of members of the household – even those who are not obligated to light. Rama's practice will only provide lights corresponding to household members who actually light their own lights. Third, according to Rambam, the primary mitzvah is fulfilled by lighting one light. All additional lights are above and beyond the actual requirement. Ostensibly, it is unjustifiable to recite a *beracha* upon lighting additional lights as those additional lights are not part of the actual fulfillment of the mitzvah. Yet, Rama, in ruling that each member of the household lights his own set of lights, implies that each member of the household recites his own *beracha*.

The explanation for Rama's opinion is hinted to in Rama's own *Darkei Moshe*:

*R. Avraham of Prague writes that according to our practice of lighting indoors and those in the house know how many members of the house there are, there is no concern of people thinking that the number of lights corresponds (only) to the members of the house, (and therefore) our practice is correct, even according to Tosafot. Furthermore, since we light indoors, every individual can light in a distinct location and they do not have to all light within a handbreadth of the door and each set of lights is recognizable and it is clear discernible when one increases each night. Therefore, our practice is valid according to all opinions.*

**Darkei Moshe, O.C. 671:1**

וכתב מהר"א מפראג דלדידן שמדליקין בפנים ויודעין בבית כמה ב"א בבית וליכא למיחש שמא יאמרו כך בני אדם הם בבית אף לדעת הת' מנהגינו נכון ועוד דמאחר שמדליקין בפנים כל אחד יכול להדליק במקום מיוחד ולא בעי להדליק כולן בטפח הסמוך לפתח וניכר הנרות שמדליק כ"א ואחד ואיכא היכירא כשמוסיף והולך בשאר הלילות ולכן מנהגינו אתי שפיר לכו"ע.  
**דרכי משה או"ח תרע"א:**

The Gemara, *Shabbat* 21b, states that the *Chanukah* lights should be lit outdoors at the entrance to the home. If it is too dangerous to do so, it is permissible to light the lights indoors. R. Avraham of Prague suggests that since nowadays everyone lights indoors, it is possible to light multiple sets of lights and still fulfill the opinion of Tosafot. This can be accomplished by lighting each set of lights in a distinct location. By doing so, it is clearly recognizable that each set of lights represents one member of the household. This method is the preferred method as it fulfills the opinion of Tosafot and Rambam.

One can now suggest that in principle, Rama follows the opinion of Tosafot. According to Tosafot, *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is fulfilled by one member of the household lighting the number of *Chanukah* lights that correspond to the day of *Chanukah*. Ideally, this should be

done by each member of the household who is obligated in the mitzvah of Chanukah. However, since doing so would inhibit the onlooker's ability to determine which night of Chanukah it is, only one set of lights is lit on behalf of the entire household. Nevertheless, nowadays, when it is possible to light multiple sets of lights and still determine which night of Chanukah is being observed, every member of the household who is obligated in the mitzvah should light a set of lights in a distinct location. According to this explanation, it is justifiable for each member of the household to recite his own *beracha*. [This explanation is based on the comments of R. Yechezkel M. Epstein (1829-1908) *Aruch HaShulchan* 671:15-18.]

The only difficulty with this explanation is that it does not fulfill the opinion of Rambam in all situations. If there are members of the household who do not light, the number of sets of lights will not correspond to the number of members of the household. One can either suggest that Rama primarily follows the opinion of Tosafot, and is not concerned with the opinion of Rambam in these situations. [This is implied by *Aruch HaShulchan* 671:9.] Alternatively, one can suggest that even Rambam agrees that the number of lights only corresponds to the number of household members who are obligated in the mitzvah. [Meiri, *Shabbat* 21a, cited in *Mishna Berurah*, *Bei'ur Halacha* 675:3, states that only adult members of the household are counted.]

## The Explanation of R. Yitzchak Z. Soloveitchik

R. Yitzchak Z. Soloveitchik (1886-1959), *Chidushei Maran Riz HaLevi*, *Hilchot Chanukah* 4:1, provides an alternative explanation for the opinion of Rama. He suggests that in principle, Rama follows Rambam's opinion. However, there is a dispute in *Hilchot Milah* as to whether *hidur mitzvah* (enhancement of the mitzvah) can exist outside of the context of the actual mitzvah. Rambam, *Hilchot Milah* 2:4, is of the opinion that once the actual fulfillment of the mitzvah is completed, there is no purpose to performing *hidur mitzvah*. R. Ya'akov ben Asher (1269-1343), *Tur*, *Yoreh De'ah* no. 264, disagrees and maintains that one can fulfill *hidur mitzvah* even after the mitzvah is completed. Rama, *Yoreh De'ah* 264:5, follows the opinion of *Tur*.

R. Soloveitchik suggests that Rambam's insistence that the head of the household light all of the sets of lights is due to his own opinion that *hidur mitzvah* cannot be accomplished outside of the context of the actual mitzvah. Therefore, a different member of the household cannot light the additional lights. However, Rama is of the opinion that *hidur mitzvah* can be fulfilled outside of the context of the actual mitzvah. Therefore, if another member of the household lights, it will constitute a fulfillment of *mehadrin min hamehadrin*.<sup>6</sup>

## *Mehadrin* as a Theme of Chanukah

In the introduction, we questioned why the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* practice is universally accepted and not limited to the very scrupulous. This question is addressed by R. Yitzchak Meir Alter (1799-1866, also known as the Chidushei HaRim) who asks two more questions relating

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<sup>6</sup> One must still address whether it is appropriate to recite a beracha upon fulfilling *hidur mitzvah* and whether the head of the household should light additional sets of lights corresponding to the members of the household who do not light.

to the story of the miracle of the oil, the miracle that the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah lights serves to commemorate. The *Beraita* describes the miracles as follows:

*For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed against and defeated them, they conducted a search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle was wrought therein and they lit [the lamp] therewith for eight days.*

**Shabbat 21b (Soncino Translation)**

שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית השמונאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים.

**שבת כא:**

R. Alter asks the following questions:

- 1) When they found the flask of oil, they knew that they were not going to be able to produce oil with ritual purity for another seven days (See *Beit Yosef, Orach Chaim* no. 670). If so, why didn't they use thinner wicks to allow the oil to burn longer? Why did they rely on a miracle?
- 2) The Gemara, *Yoma* 6b, states that on matters relating to communal *mitzvot*, the laws of ritual impurity are either overridden (*dechuyah*) or suspended (*hutrah*). If so, why was there a need for a miracle? Why couldn't they just use ritually impure oil?

R. Alter is quoted as answering the following:

*My holy grandfather (the Chidushei HaRim) asked: Why do we find regarding this mitzvah that people insist on mehadrin and mehadrin min mehadrin which we don't find regarding other mitzvot? He answered that there were two enhancements. First, they were not required to light with impure oil. Second, when they found the pure oil, they divided it into eight portions and they used a wick one-eighth of the normal size. This would have resulted in a very small light. When they poured in the small portion, G-d performed a miracle that the entire fuel chamber filled with oil. They then replaced the wick with a proper wick. Therefore, the enhancement was the main feature of the miracle.*

**Siftei Tzadik, Chanukah no. 12**

זקני הקדוש מו"ר ז"ל תמה מפני מה מצינו במצוה זו דוקא מהדרין ומהדרין מן המהדרין שלא מצינו בשאר מצות כן ותירץ שהי' כאן ב' הידורים. א' שלא הוצרכו להדליק עם שמן טמא. ב' כשמצאו פך טהור הי' מחלקים השמן ליתן חלק שמינית. והכינו מהפתילה שהיו רגילים ליתן שמינית מעובי הפתילה. הי' נר קטן מאוד וכשנתנו חלק שמינית דשמן. עשה הקב"ה נס שנתמלא הנר בשמן. אזי נתנו פתילה יפה וא"כ הי' עיקר הנס ההידור.

**שפתי צדיק הנוכה אות יב**

According to R. Alter, there was no need for a miracle in order to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting the lamps in the *Beit HaMikdash*. The miracle provided the Jewish people with the opportunity to fulfill the mitzvah in a nicer, more enhanced fashion. Therefore, to commemorate the miracle, we all fulfill the mitzvah in the most scrupulous fashion.

R. Ya'akov Yehoshua Falk (1680-1756) suggests a reason why G-d performed this miracle:

*We must return to our original question: If they were able to light with ritually impure oil [why did they need a miracle]? For this reason, it seems that the miracle primarily served to show them*

ואם כן הדרא קושיא קמייתא לדוכתא שהיו יכולין להדליק בשמן טמא כיון דטומאה הותרה בצבור כדפרישית. לכך נראה דעיקר

*G-d's affection for them ... Since they experienced a miracle of complete redemption from the evil Greek Empire who said to the Jewish people 'Write on the horn of a bull that you have no portion in the G-d of the Jewish people' and they instituted many forms of persecution, now that they were redeemed and experienced the great miracle of defeating their enemies, they were also provided with the miracle of the lights which is a testimony to the Jewish people that the Shechinah rests among them.*

**P'nei Yehoshua, Shabbat 21b**

הנס לא נעשה אלא להודיע להם חיבת המקום עליהם ... והואיל ואיתרחיש להו ניסא בעיקר הענין שנגאלו גאולה שלימה מיד מלכות יון הרשעה שהיו אומרים לישראל כתבו על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלקי ישראל וגזרו כמה שמדיות ועכשיו שנגאלו ונעשה להם נס גדול ששלטו בשונאיהם לכך נעשה להם ג"כ נס זה בענין הנרות הוא עדות לישראל שהשכינה שורה בהם.  
**פני יהושע שבת כא:**

The miracle of the oil came at a time when the Jewish people were subject to religious persecution. The Greeks wanted the Jewish people to abandon their relationship with G-d. In response, G-d provided a miracle that showed his ongoing relationship with the Jewish people.

As we celebrate Chanukah, we should reflect on the miracles that Chanukah represents. Our observance of *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is but a small way of showing gratitude for the miracles of Chanukah and the miracles He provides on a daily basis.

# Chanukat HaBayit

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## The Question

One of the most famous questions about Chanukah is: What motivated Chazal to create this holiday? The Gemara on Shabbat 21b asks precisely this question and responds by relating the story of the nes pach shemen, the miracle of the cruse that contained enough oil to burn for just one night yet miraculously remained lit for eight. That this miracle lies at the heart of Chanukah is corroborated by the fact that the one mitzvah unique to this holiday is to reenact the nes pach shemen by lighting a menorah every night of Chanukah.

However, it has been pointed out numerous times throughout the ages that the nes pach shemen does not seem to have been sufficient to justify the creation of a holiday. First, many other miracles occurred for the Jewish people throughout history that did not lead to the establishment of an annual holiday. For example, during the battle to defend Givon, Yehoshua beseeched God to make the sun stand still so as to give Bnei Yisrael more time to defeat their enemies,<sup>8</sup> and God acceded to this extraordinary request. It would seem that the sun standing still must have been a more spectacular miracle than a little oil remaining lit for longer than it should have. Yet, the former has become barely a blip in Jewish history while the latter is the centerpiece of an eight day gala festival each year.

Furthermore, the fact that the nes pach shemen took place in the Beit HaMikdash renders it even less remarkable, since miracles related to the functioning of the Temple were commonplace. According to Pirkei Avot 5:5, there were ten miracles that regularly occurred in the Beit HaMikdash, such as the space in the Temple expanding so that there was sufficient room for everyone to prostrate themselves even though the area was crowded while they were standing. Why would the miracle of the oil have been at all noteworthy?

Finally, Jewish holidays generally commemorate seminal moments in Jewish history. It is understandable why we annually mark the anniversary of the Exodus from Egypt on Pesach and the giving of the Torah on Shavuot; Judaism is inconceivable without either of these two events.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, if the miracle of the oil had not transpired, the path of Jewish history would not have been altered in any way. The Jews would simply have had to wait an additional week before continuing to light the Menorah. In fact, it seems they would not have even had to wait the

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<sup>8</sup> His words were "שמש בגבעון דום וירח בעמק עילון" – let the sun stand still in Givon and the moon in the Valley of Ayalon (Yehoshua 10:12).

<sup>9</sup> For an explanation of why we annually remember the booths in the desert on Sukkot, which do not seem particularly noteworthy at first glance, see my article in Sukkot To-Go 5770.

week, since based on the principle of *טומאה הותרה בצבור* (impurity is permissible for the sake of the community<sup>10</sup>), they could have resumed lighting the Menorah immediately, using oil that was *tamei*.<sup>11</sup>

Not only does the *nes pach shemen* seem to have been relatively insignificant, but even if it had been momentous, Chazal would not have created a yearly holiday simply to remember that a certain miracle once transpired. There must be some eternal message embedded in the *nes pach shemen* that Chazal wished to inculcate in us by mandating its annual reenactment. What could that message be?

## The Central Theme of Chanukah

The key to appreciating the significance of the *nes pach shemen* lies in grasping the greater significance of Chanukah in general. The end of Kislev has been an auspicious time in Jewish history since long before the Chanukah miracle ever occurred.<sup>12</sup> According to the *Yalkut Shimoni*,<sup>13</sup> the very first “House of God,” the *Mishkan*, was completed on exactly the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev. In addition, *Chagai 2:18* reveals that the foundation of the second *Beit HaMikdash* was laid at this time of year as well – on the 24<sup>th</sup> of Kislev.<sup>14</sup> Thus, the *Chashmonaim*’s famous rededication of *Bayit Sheni* on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev can no longer be viewed as an isolated historical event; it was the third dedication of a “House of God” to take place at precisely this time of year.

In fact, Chanukah seems to commemorate much more than just the one rededication of *Bayit Sheni* that took place during the time of the *Chashmonaim*. Throughout all eight days of Chanukah, we recite *Tehillim Mizmor 30*, *מזמור שיר הנוכת הבית לדוד*, at the end of *Shacharit*,<sup>15</sup> which recalls the inauguration of the first *Beit HaMikdash*.<sup>16</sup> In addition, the completion of the *Mishkan* is prominently memorialized on Chanukah in a number of ways. The Torah portion that we read all eight days describes the *korbanot* that each of the *nesi'im* offered upon the *Mishkan*’s completion.<sup>17</sup> In addition, the eight days of Chanukah are reminiscent of the eight-day consecration ceremony to inaugurate the *Miskhan* that is described in *VaYikra 8-9*. Furthermore, though Chazal did not require extra *seudot* on Chanukah to commemorate the

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<sup>10</sup> *Pesachim 77a*.

<sup>11</sup> This is a famous point raised by many different *meforshim*, including Rabbi Eliyahu Mizrahi and the *Pnei Yehoshua* (*Shabbat 21b*). See also the first two pages of Rabbi Ezra Bick’s article, “Why Celebrate a Miracle?” at [www/vbm-torah.org/chanuka/chan60eb.htm](http://www/vbm-torah.org/chanuka/chan60eb.htm).

<sup>12</sup> See Rabbi Menachem Leibtag’s article, “Chanukah’s Biblical Roots” ([www.tanach.org/special/chanuka.doc](http://www.tanach.org/special/chanuka.doc))

<sup>13</sup> *ילקוט שמעוני מלכים א פרק ו סימן קפד*. This Midrash is cited by the *Mishnah Berurah 670:7*. A similar midrash is also found in *Midrash Rabbah BaMidbar 13*.

<sup>14</sup> *Chagai 2:18* says, *שימו נא לבבכם מן היום הזה ומעלה מיום עשרים וארבעה לתשיעי למן היום אשר יסד היכל ה' שימו* “*שימו נא לבבכם – Now consider from this day onwards, from the 24<sup>th</sup> day of the 9<sup>th</sup> month (Kislev), from the day that the foundation of HaShem’s Temple was laid, consider it.*”

<sup>15</sup> *Masechet Sofrim 18:3* is the source for this practice.

<sup>16</sup> It is actually a *machloket* whether this *mizmor* refers to *Bayit Rishon* (*Radak*) or a future *Beit HaMikdash - Bayit Sheni* or *Shlishi* (*Ibn Ezra*). The *Malbim* interprets the *mizmor* as an allegory to *David’s health* (the *bayit* is really his body).

<sup>17</sup> *BaMidbar perek 7*.

Chashmonaim's rededication, the Rama notes in Orach Chayim 670:2 that some opinions<sup>18</sup> hold there is a mitzvah to increase meals during Chanukah in honor of the Chanukat HaMizbeach that took place when the Mishkan was completed.

What emerges is that Chanukah memorializes much more than the nes pach shemen and the rededication of Bayit Sheni by the Chashmonaim. Rather, what Chanukah celebrates is the entire concept of chanukat habayit laHaShem altogether – the idea of dedicating a “house” for God, a physical structure to be filled with His presence. The name Chanukah itself encapsulates this theme. The Hebrew word “chanukah” means dedication or inauguration. Thus the very name of the holiday highlights the concept of dedicating a physical place for the service of God.<sup>19</sup>

However, if the central theme of Chanukah is the dedication of “Houses of God,” why does the Gemara say that Chazal established this holiday to commemorate the nes pach shemen, and why is the primary mitzvah of the holiday lighting the menorah?

To answer these questions, we must further explore the significance of the nes pach shemen.

## The Significance of the Nes Pach Shemen<sup>20</sup>

The essence of a Mikdash is the presence of God. At the conclusion of every construction of a house for God in Tanach, the final climactic moment is when the Shechinah descends, transforming what would otherwise have remained simply stones and bricks into a Mikdash. For example, upon the completion of the Mishkan, the Torah relates:

*The glory of God appeared to the whole nation. A fire came out from before God and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat. The whole nation saw, and they raised their voices in praise and fell on their faces.*

**VaYikra 9:23-24**

וירא כבוד ה' אל כל העם. ותצא אש  
מלפני ה' ותאכל על המזבח את העולה  
ואת החלבים וירא כל העם וירננו ויפלו  
על פניהם  
**ויקרא ט:כג-כד**

Similarly, at the culmination of the construction of the first Temple, it is written:

<sup>18</sup> Such as the Maharal MiPrague, cited in parentheses there.

<sup>19</sup> The Tur in Orach Chayim 670 and the Ran on Shabbat 9b bedapei haRif mention the famous explanation of the name Chanukah as a reference to “חנו בכ”ה” – that the Jews rested from battle on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev. However, many if not most, other mefarshim focus on the literal meaning of the word, which translates as “dedication.”

Interestingly, the commentators choose different dedications to highlight as the source of the name. The Maharsha on Shabbat 21b and the Ohr Zarua 2:321 explain the name as referring to the Chashmonaim's chanukat hamizbe'ach (dedication of the Altar) following their purification of Bayit Sheni. Rav Yaakov Emden posits that it refers to the original dedication of Bayit Sheni discussed by the prophet Chaggai. The Shibbolei HaLeket thinks it is a reference to the dedication of the Mishkan, whose work was completed at this time. Since so many commentators agree that the name refers to a dedication of a house for God, yet disagree as to which specific dedication, I would suggest that the name is meant to transcend any one specific dedication, and instead to capture the broad concept of dedicating a house for God in general. (I would like to acknowledge Rabbi Nosson Scherman's article, “Origin of the Name Chanukah,” which presents a clear summary of the different opinions as to the source of the name Chanukah. It can be found at [www.torah.org/features/holydays/originchanukah.html](http://www.torah.org/features/holydays/originchanukah.html).)

<sup>20</sup> I want to thank and give credit to my husband, Rabbi Nir Knoll; many of the ideas in this section are his.

*And when Shlomo finished praying, the fire descended from the Heavens and consumed the burnt offerings and the sacrifices, and the glory of God filled the house. The Kohanim could not enter the House of God because the glory of God filled the House of God. All of Israel saw the fire's descent and the glory of God upon the House, and they prostrated themselves upon the floor, and bowed, and thanked God for He is good, for His mercy is forever.*

**Divrei HaYamim II 7:1-3**

(א) וככלות שלמה להתפלל והאש ירדה מהשמים ותאכל העלה והזבחים וכבוד ה' מלא את הבית: (ב) ולא יכלו הכהנים לבוא אל בית ה' כי מלא כבוד ה' את בית ה': (ג) וכל בני ישראל ראים ברדת האש וכבוד ה' על הבית ויכרעו אפים ארצה על הרצפה וישתחוו והודות לה' כי טוב כי לעולם חסדו:  
**דברי הימים ב ז:א-ג**

However, a description of the glory of God visibly descending is glaringly missing from the account of the construction of the second Beit HaMikdash.<sup>21</sup> In fact, Yoma 21b claims that the second Temple never lived up to the majesty or holiness of the first.<sup>22</sup> It lists five specific items that were present in the first but absent in the second and the Shechinah is one of them.<sup>23</sup>

Although the Shechinah was clearly not a strong presence in the second Temple, it does seem to have been there to some degree, at least initially.<sup>24</sup> The Gemara explains that there was a daily sign of the Shechinah's presence in the Batei Mikdash – the western lamp of the Menorah:

*It [the Temple Menorah] is a testimony for all Mankind that the Divine Presence dwells with Israel. Rav said: This (the testimony) is the western lamp, to which the Kohen gave the same amount of oil as the other lamps, and yet from the western lamp he would kindle the other lamps, and with it he would conclude.*

**Shabbat 22b**

עדות היא לבאי עולם שהשכינה שורה בישראל. מאי עדות? אמר רב: זו נר מערבי, שנותן בה שמן כמדת חברותיה, וממנה היה מדליק ובה היה מסיים.  
**מסכת שבת דף כב:**

This miracle involving the ner ma'aravi miraculously remaining lit for longer than the other lamps occurred in the second Beit HaMikdash as well as in the first. Thus, though there was no initial descent of the Shechinah into Bayit Sheni, the Shechinah does seem to have been present there, at least to a minimal degree.

<sup>21</sup> See Ezra 6:15-18, which describes the completion of the construction, the dedication (which is referred to as בית אלהא חנוכת), and the sacrifices that were offered. It concludes without any reference to a sign of the Divine presence descending.

<sup>22</sup> Most Rishonim and Achronim who address what led to the inferiority of the second Beit HaMikdash relate it to the fact that the vast majority of Jews chose to remain in galut rather than return to Eretz Yisrael. See for example the Kuzari 2:24. Rabbeinu Bachya, in his commentary to Bereishit 46:27 suggests a similar reason but adds a technical point – that only 42,360 Jews returned in the time of Ezra to build the second Beit HaMikdash (Ezra 2:64), but the Shechinah cannot reside permanently among less than 600,000 Jews.

<sup>23</sup> The other four are the aron, kaporet, and keruvim, which together count as one, the Heavenly fire, ruach hakodesh, and the urim v'tumim.

<sup>24</sup> Rabbeinu Bachya to Bereishit 46:27 (cited also in footnote #16) says this explicitly. In addition, the Gemara in Zevachim 118b quotes a Beraita which expounds the pasuk, "He (God) hovers over him (Binyamin) all the day" (Devarim 33:12) as referring to God's Shechinah hovering specifically over the second Beit HaMikdash.

The situation, however, worsened still further in the years leading up to the Chanukah story. The Gemara in Yoma 39a relates that from the time when Shimon HaTzaddik served as Kohen Gadol, Bnei Yisrael were no longer worthy of the miracle of the ner ma'aravi on a consistent basis; some mornings it remained lit but other mornings it went out at the same time as the other flames. This indicates that from Shimon HaTzaddik's time on, the Shechinah was not simply less present than it had been during Bayit Rishon; it was often absent altogether. Shimon HaTzaddik was the Kohen Gadol during the reign of Alexander the Great,<sup>25</sup> the famous conqueror who first brought Greek culture and Hellenist influence to Israel. In other words, about 150 years before the Chanukah miracle occurred, exactly when Greek assimilation first began to make inroads within the Jewish people, God indicated that He was so displeased with His nation that He was removing Himself still further from them and would sometimes be entirely absent from the Beit HaMikdash.

With this backdrop, we can now appreciate the dramatic import of the nes pach shemen. The Chashmonaim fought valiantly to militarily defeat the Greeks and chase them out of the Beit HaMikdash. They then devoted themselves to thoroughly purifying the desecrated Temple. However, their painstaking efforts would have all been for naught if upon completing the purification and inauguration, the Shechinah had still refused to come to Bayit Sheni. If God had still been displeased with His people and still refused to live amongst them in a consistent, permanent way, then their enormous efforts to expunge Greek paganism and idolatry from the Beit HaMikdash would ultimately have been worthless. Thus, the value of everything they worked so hard for – their military victory and purification of the Beit HaMikdash, all hinged on waiting for some sign from God that He had accepted their efforts. And that sign came in the form of the nes pach shemen.

The essence of the miracle was that a little bit of oil lasted for a supernaturally long time. The parallel to the miracle of the ner ma'aravi is striking.<sup>26</sup> There too, a limited amount of oil miraculously lasted for longer than it naturally should have, and that, says the Gemara, was the sign *שהשכינה שורה בישראל* – that the Shechinah resided in Israel. Thus, the awesome significance behind the seemingly minor miracle of the nes pach shemen is that it was HaShem's sign that He was returning His Shechinah to the Beit HaMikdash. Given the history of Bayit Sheni, the significance of this cannot be overstated.

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<sup>25</sup> Yoma 69a tells an intriguing story about a dramatic meeting between the two. When Alexander the Great was on his way to wreak havoc upon Jerusalem, Shimon HaTzaddik went out to greet him dressed in the Bigdei Lavan normally reserved only for Yom Kippur. Upon seeing Shimon HaTzaddik, Alexander dismounted and bowed down to him, explaining that every night before a victory, a figure that looked exactly like Shimon HaTzaddik would appear to him in a dream and instruct him on which strategies to use in the battle. At the end of the encounter, as an alternative to putting a statue of Alexander in the Beit HaMikdash as the Emperor wanted, Shimon HaTzaddik offered to have all Jewish males born that year named Alexander.

<sup>26</sup> See the Pnei Yehoshua's commentary to Shabbat 21b, where he explicitly spells out this parallel. I want to give credit to Rabbi Yair Kahn, whose article, "The Miracle of the Lights," ([www.vbm-torah.org/chanuka/a-chan-2.htm](http://www.vbm-torah.org/chanuka/a-chan-2.htm)) brought this parallel to my attention.

Especially striking is the fact that God did not indicate His return by simply causing the miracle of the ner ma'aravi to once again occur consistently; rather He chose the more dramatic eight-day-long, all-seven-branch *nes pach shemen*<sup>27</sup> to express the message of His return. Perhaps this indicated that the Chashmonaim's passion, devotion, and commitment were so successful in bringing the Shechinah back, that it was not returning on the diminished intensity level that had previously characterized Bayit Sheni, but on an intensity level previously unknown in the second Beit HaMikdash.<sup>28 29</sup>

With this understanding of the *nes pach shemen*, it makes perfect sense that Chazal established a new holiday with this miracle as its centerpiece. Not only was it the climax and culmination of everything the Chashmonaim had fought and cleansed for, but it initiated a new era in Bayit Sheni and a newly close relationship between HaShem and His people that had not existed for a few hundred years.

The significance of the *nes pach shemen* goes still deeper. As we developed at the outset, the holiday of Chanukah transcends the events that took place during the time of the Chashmonaim; it encapsulates the broad concept of *chanukat habayit laHaShem* – dedicating a house for God. The essence of a Mikdash, of a “House for God,” is the presence of the Shechinah; that is what transforms the stones and bricks into a place imbued with kedushah. There could be no more perfect mitzvah for the holiday which embodies the concept of dedicating mikdashot than recreating the *nes pach shemen*, the miracle that conveyed the purpose of a mikdash - the coming of the Shechinah.<sup>30</sup>

## The Relevance for Us

Now that we no longer have a Beit HaMikdash or the palpable presence of the Shechinah in our midst, what significance does Chanukah possess? What message does this holiday convey to us, as we light small chanukiyot in the windows of our homes instead of the glorious Menorah in the Beit HaMikdash?

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<sup>27</sup> The ner ma'aravi was just one candle and it only remained lit for one extra day

<sup>28</sup> Rashi seems to indicate this in his commentary to Chagai 2:6.

<sup>29</sup> The Haftarah that we read on Shabbat Chanukah, Zecharia perek 2, expresses the overwhelming joy and relief that must have accompanied the *nes pach shemen* precisely because of the message that it expressed. Pasuk 14 states, "רני ושמחי בת ציון כי הגני בא ושכנתי בתוכך נאם ה'" – Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion, for I am coming and will dwell in your midst, says HaShem.

<sup>30</sup> Rav Michael Rosensweig, in his article, “Chanukah as a Holiday of Idealism and Maximalism,” ([www.torahweb.org/torah/2006/moadim/rros\\_chanukah.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2006/moadim/rros_chanukah.html)) addresses one of the questions that was raised at the outset of this article: why didn't the Chashmonaim light the Menorah with impure oil, based on the principle of *tumah hutra be'tzibbur*? He answers that perhaps the significance of the *nes pach shemen* lay specifically in the fact that it wasn't technically necessary; it became necessary only because of the people's desire to perform the mitzvah in its most *lechatchila* way, with pure oil. Perhaps this can also explain why the *nes pach shemen* was the chosen vehicle through which the message of the Shechinah's return was expressed: The Beit HaMikdash has always been viewed as the centerpiece of an ideal Jewish national and religious existence. Thus, a perfect medium for expressing its revival was a miracle that occurred only because of the nation's insistence upon performing a mitzvah in the most ideal way.

The answer, I believe, lies in a very unique aspect of the mitzvah of ner Chanukah, namely that it is inextricably linked to our homes. Most mitzvot can be performed wherever an individual happens to find himself. For example, one can eat matzah or shake a lulav anywhere he happens to be and still fulfill the mitzvah. However, lighting ner Chanukah must specifically be done in one's home; one may not even be able to fulfill the mitzvah with a lighting done elsewhere.<sup>31</sup>

The very formulation of the mitzvah indicates the unusual connection between ner Chanukah and the home. The phrase used by the Gemara to convey the basic obligation is מצות הנוכח נר איש וביתו. Though the meaning of the phrase is that the mitzvah is one candle for a man and his entire household, the phrase literally translates as: a candle for each man and his house.<sup>32</sup>

In fact, the basic obligation expressed by this phrase confirms the fundamental link between ner Chanukah and the home. The phrase נר איש וביתו teaches that the minimum obligation of lighting Chanukah candles is fulfilled by one member per household lighting for his entire family. This is startling because based on the regular rules that govern when one can fulfill a mitzvah on behalf of someone else, this should not work. For a mitzvah of speech, such as kiddush, one person can fulfill the obligation of another through the principle of *shome'a ke'oneh* – if one hears it, it is as if he said it himself. However, for mitzvot that involve performing an action, each person must fulfill the mitzvah himself. For example, one cannot ask someone else to eat matzah, sit in a sukkah, or shake the lulav for him. So how can the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles be fulfilled through only one member of the household lighting on behalf of the rest of his family members?

The fact that the mitzvah can be fulfilled in this way indicates that the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles may be fundamentally different than most other mitzvot. Perhaps there is no obligation upon any specific individual to light Chanukah candles.<sup>33</sup> Rather, the mitzvah might be for every Jewish home to have a menorah lit in it.<sup>34</sup> In other words, perhaps the mitzvah of

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<sup>31</sup> The Rivash quoted by the Beit Yosef in Orach Chayim siman 671 says that one cannot rely on the menorah lighting performed in shul; rather he must relight at home in order to fulfill the mitzvah. Tosafot on Sukkah 46a s.v. "ha'roeh ner," seems to indicate the same thing. Tosafot there raises the question of why ner Chanukah is the only mitzvah for which Chazal established a birchat ha'roeh – a blessing that one should make upon seeing someone else's mitzvah (their lit candles). Tosafot suggests at one point that it might be because someone who doesn't have a house is otherwise unable to fulfill his mitzvah of ner Chanukah (משום שיש כמה בני אדם שאין להם בתים ואין בידם לקיים המצוה). According to this explanation, it is only possible to fulfill one's obligation by lighting in one's home. (See footnote #29, where this Tosafot is discussed again.)

<sup>32</sup> Another indication of the connection between the menorah and the home is that the Gemara on Shabbat 21b informs us that the Chanukah candles should be lit by the entrance to one's house, outside, and the Gemara further clarifies on 22a that they should ideally be placed specifically within a tefach of the entrance. Tosafot there comments that if one has a private chatzer (courtyard) in front of his house, he should light his menorah at the end of his chatzer where it opens to the public thoroughfare, so as to maximize pirsumei nisa. Rashi however, indicates that one should always light within a tefach of his home, even if he has a chatzer that distances it from public view. This implies that according to Rashi, proximity to the home is even more important than maximizing pirsumei nisa.

<sup>33</sup> In other words, it may not be a *chovat gavra*, an obligation upon the person.

<sup>34</sup> The Pnei Yehoshua on Shabbat 21b presents the mitzvah in exactly this way. He calls it a *chovat habayit* – an obligation upon the home, not upon any specific individual. This could also more generally be termed a *chovat cheftza* – an obligation upon an object.

ner Chanukah is more similar to the mitzvah of mezuzah, which every Jewish home must have, rather than to a mitzvah such as lulav, which every individual has an obligation to perform. This would explain both the formulation of נְרֵי בַּיִת as well as its halachic ramification that only one candle has to be lit per household. The implication of this is remarkable: Not only is there a connection between the mitzvah of ner Chanukah and the home; the home itself may be what generates the obligation to light a Chanukah candle!<sup>35</sup>

The fact that ner Chanukah is inextricably linked to our homes indicates that there is something about its message that can only be expressed in our homes. The theme of Chanukah in general and of the nes pach shemen in particular is the importance of performing chanukat habayit laHaShem, of transforming physical structures into places worthy of housing the Shechinah. One might have thought that the synagogue would be the most appropriate venue for expressing this message. Yet halachah insists that it be expressed specifically in our homes. The overwhelmingly powerful message that we are supposed to imbibe from our experience of Chanukah is to perform a chanukat habayit laHaShem in our own homes. We are supposed to transform our homes into places that are worthy of carrying the message of the nes pach shemen. Just as the nes pach shemen proclaimed the presence of the Shechinah in Bayit Sheni, the flames that burn in our windows each night should be broadcasting the message that this is a makom Shechinah; this is a place dedicated to avodat HaShem, a place imbued with a sense of God's presence.

It is encouraging that of the three Mikdashot throughout history that were dedicated at exactly this time of year, Chanukah focuses primarily on the Chashmonaim's rededication of Bayit Sheni. The Chashmonaim were faced with what must have seemed like a hopeless situation: the Shechinah had never returned with the intensity of the Bayit Rishon era and was growing increasingly distant as Hellenism continued to spread throughout the Jewish community. There were idols in the Temple, and the enemy vastly outnumbered them. Yet, they rose to the challenge with courage, passion, and commitment, and were ultimately successful in reversing the reality; they defeated the Greeks, purified the Beit HaMikdash, and most importantly, brought the Shechinah back to Am Yisrael. The message that emerges from this inspiring story and our reenactment of it each year is that no matter how far removed the Shechinah may seem, if we demonstrate genuine courage, passion, and commitment, we can bring the nes pach shemen into our homes and make the Shechinah a palpable presence in our lives.

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<sup>35</sup> Tosafot in Sukkah 46a s.v. "ha'roeh ner" seems to indicate exactly this. As mentioned in footnote #25, Tosafot wonders why ner Chanukah is the only mitzvah for which Chazal established a birchat ha'roeh – a blessing that one should make upon seeing someone else's mitzvah (their lit candles). Tosafot first suggests that it is because of "chavivut hanes" – the degree to which the mitzvah is beloved. He then proposes that it might be because someone who doesn't have a house is otherwise unable to fulfill his mitzvah of ner Chanukah. He concludes that the first reason is preferable "דלא תיקשי ליה מזוזה" – so that one shouldn't raise an attack from the mitzvah of mezuzah. Presumably, Tosafot means that one might say that there can never be a problem of someone being unable to fulfill his ner Chanukah obligation due to his homelessness since someone who doesn't have a house has no obligation of ner Chanukah at all, just as he has no obligation of mezuzah.

## Conclusion

Throughout Jewish history, a number of mikdashot were constructed or dedicated at exactly this time of year. Thus, Chanukah celebrates much more than the one victory and dedication that occurred during the period of the Chashmonaim, but rather the far-reaching concept of chanukat habayit laHaShem – the idea of consecrating a physical structure to God. The perfect symbol for this concept is the nes pach shemen, which signified the momentous return of the Shechinah to Bayit Sheni. During Chanukah, we recreate this miracle specifically in our homes, hopefully inspiring us to transform our own homes into places filled with a sense of God's presence.

# Who Wants to be a Greek?

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A few days before the school's Hanukkah play, my son announced: "I am going to be a Greek soldier in the play! You may be disappointed – you probably wanted me to be a Maccabee – but please understand; if everyone were to be the 'good guys', the production wouldn't be possible, so I volunteered to be a Greek; someone has to do the dirty work..."

As I watched the heroic battle of Hanukkah re-enacted by my son and his peers, I received a better understanding of my son's apparent altruistic motives: onto the stage marched the brave Jewish warriors, dressed in "traditional" Hashmonai garments: a shtreimel, a kapota, and shining tzitzit. Then came the Greeks – along with my son – dressed in shimmering armour, glamorous helmets, waving magnificent swords and riding fearless horses (not real ones, the budget of the school was limited to fake ones). The mother seated next to me leaned towards me and whispered: "my son was chosen to be a Hashmonai. He cried non-stop for three days. Finally, I called the teacher and begged her to let him be a Greek; he wanted the horse ..."

Watching the play started me thinking: are we really proud of the victory of the Hashmonaim? Don't we identify with Greece, the cradle of Western civilization? Don't we indulge ourselves with the pleasures of Western culture? What is the essence of Hanukkah? What miracle are we celebrating?

These questions are addressed by our sages in the Gemara.

*"What is Hanukkah about which our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] eight days of Hanukkah, on which eulogies and fasting are forbidden? For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils therein, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed, and defeated them, they searched and found only one flask of oil, which was left with the seal of the High Priest, which only contained enough for one day's lighting. A miracle occurred upon it and they lit [the menorah] with it for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.*

**Talmud Shabbat 21b**

מאי חנוכה? דתנו רבנן: בכ"ה בכסליו יומי דחנוכה תמניא אינון, דלא למספד בהון ודלא להתענות בהון. שכשנכנסו יונים להיכל טמאו כל השמנים שבהיכל, וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום, בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד, נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים. לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאוּם ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.

**מסכת שבת דף כא:**

According to this, the miracle of the jug of oil is the essence of Hanukkah. Yet, surprisingly enough, the miracle of the jug of oil is not mentioned at all in the “Al Hanissim” prayer composed by our sages to commemorate the Hanukkah victory. The prayer tells the praises of Hashem, as revealed through the miraculous Hasmonean military victory; but no mention of the miracle of the jug of oil.

*“... You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the wanton into the hands of the diligent students of your Torah... your children came to the Holy of Holies of Your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified the site of your Holiness and kindled lights in the courtyards of Your Sanctuary...”*

What was, in fact, the miracle of Hanukkah? How can the apparent contradiction between the Gemara and “Al Hanissim” be reconciled?

According to the Maharal<sup>36</sup> the victory of the Maccabim over the Greeks is highlighted in “Al Hanissim”, as an expression of gratitude on our behalf, for this tremendous miracle which saved Am Yisrael from a life-threatening situation. The miracle of the jug of oil is not mentioned in “Al Hanissim” as it was not crucial for the physical redemption of Am Yisrael<sup>37</sup>.

Why, then, does the midrash focus on the insignificant miracle of the jug of oil?

The Maharal explains that the essence of the Hanukkah miracle was the victory over the Greeks. Yet in order for us to appreciate the miracle of our victory, and not to misinterpret it as a natural event (such as attributing it to smart guerrilla warfare), Hashem performed an unmistakable miracle – the miracle of the oil – which could not be understood as anything but a miracle beyond the laws of nature. Through the miracle of the lights, Hashem illustrated that all of the events that had transpired were miraculous, and that it was He that had brought about the victory of the Jews.

The Maharal further suggests that the story of the jug of oil is a symbol of the true meaning of the struggle between the Greeks and the Jews. Greek wisdom was of tremendous strength, and represented a great threat to the Torah. This is why the Greeks were not easily defeated by the Maccabim, as we can see from the passage in the Gemara quoted above, which testifies that the Greeks managed to defile all the oils in the Heichal (the קודש)<sup>38</sup>.

Yet one single pure jug of oil remained untouched. How did it survive the Greek attack?

The Maharal claims that this jug was unique because it was stamped by the seal of the Kohen Gadol, the sole person that enters the Holy of Holies. Although the Greeks had the power to dominate the Heichal (קודש), they were unable to defile the Holy of Holies (קודש קודשים).

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<sup>36</sup> חידושי אגדות למסכת שבת, חלק ראשון, ד'.

<sup>37</sup> In fact, due to the principle “טומאה הותרה בציבור”, it wasn't even necessary for Am Yisrael's spiritual needs!

<sup>38</sup> The Maharal deduces this by gematria (assignation of numeric values to Hebrew letters). The value of “היכל” is 65, while the gematria of “יון” is 66 – and therefore of greater strength.

What distinguishes the Holy of Holies (קודש קודשים) from the Heichal (קודש)? How can anything be holier than holy?

The difference between the Holy and the Holy of Holies is profoundly explained by Rav Kook<sup>39</sup>:

*There is a world of the secular, and a world of the holy, worlds of secularity and worlds of holiness. These worlds contradict each other. Obviously, the contradiction between them is subjective: Man, in his limited comprehension, is unable to harmonize secularity and holiness, and is unable to neutralize their contradictions. They are, however, reconciled in the higher world, in the place of the holy of holies.*

Rav Kook defines holiness as separation from secularity, whereas the Holy of Holies is defined as the combination of holiness and secularity.

This suggested definition of the Holy of Holies sheds light upon the Jewish triumph on Hanukkah, as explained by Rav Kook<sup>40</sup>:

*According to Greek philosophy there are two possible separate ways: either following the forces of nature, developing and strengthening them (and [the Greeks] were the first to conduct sport rituals and rituals celebrating the body) or going against nature, devoting oneself to complete secession from all natural forces and leading a spiritual life. Am Yisrael is not like that. They are called "ממלכת כהנים": a physical kingdom involved in political leadership, and a Priesthood involved in spiritual leadership; combined and united. ויגוי"ש קדוש: not only individuals reach the level of holiness, but rather the entire nation, involved with any physical work ... this is why the triumph was that of the Hashmonaim, descendants of Aharon, from the family of priests. It is they who fought this holy war, and returned the glorious kingdom to Yisrael. It is they who symbolized the struggle; the fierce warriors utilizing the power of the body were also the protectors of the nation's spirit and soul, its purity and its temple.*

The Greeks appreciated Holiness, yet according to their belief, in order to experience Holiness one must be detached from secularity, from routine matters of the mundane. Judaism, on the other hand, stems from the Holy of Holies, from the ability to combine secularity with spirituality.

The Maccabim, sons of Aharon, living in Eretz Yisrael and struggling for its independence, were authentic representatives of the Holy of Holies: spiritual priests and religious leaders, yet powerful men and fearless warriors.

In contrast to the manner by which the Maccabim were portrayed by my son's schoolteacher, I am confident that the Maccabim too had fearless horses and shimmering armour. Yet for the Maccabim, these physical accessories served as an integral part of their spiritual identity.

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<sup>39</sup> אורות הקודש, הקודש הכללי, י"ז

<sup>40</sup> מועדי רא"ה קס"ה

Hanukka is a celebration of the ability to combine worlds of physicality and spirituality in Eretz Yisrael, the land of milk and honey, where the concept of the Holy of Holies comes to life, as highlighted by Rav Kook<sup>41</sup>:

*"We are all drawing closer to nature, and it is drawing nearer to us. The young spirit that demands its land [Eretz Yisrael], its language, its freedom, its honor, its literature, its strength, possessions and feelings, all propelled by the flow of nature, which in its very heart, is imbued with holy fire...*

*Our physical demand is great. We need a healthy body. We have been preoccupied with spirituality; we forgot the holiness of the body, we neglected health and our physical strength. We forgot that we have holy flesh, no less than the Holy Spirit. We forgot about the practical aspects of life...*

*All of our repentance will succeed only if it will be, along with its spiritual splendor, also a physical repentance producing healthy blood, healthy flesh, firm, mighty bodies, and a flaming spirit, shining over powerful muscles."*

We are blessed to be living in an era in which the idea of the Holy of Holies is no longer theoretical. Now we truly appreciate the Maccabim, we understand what they were fighting for: the ability to be an independent nation living upon its land, leading a spiritual-physical life of קודש קודשים B"H, after two thousand years of Diaspora, the true miracle of Hanukkah is becoming a reality.

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<sup>41</sup> אורות התחייה ל', ל"ג

# Being a Jew Inside and Out

Rabbi Shalom Rosner

*Ra"m, Yeshivat Reishit Yerushalayim*

## Two Complementary Mitzvos

Our doorway is our bridge to the outside world. It is the place of transition between our public, society-centered life and our private family-focused life. Throughout the year, we place one religious marker at this crucial exit and entrance point—our mezuzah. On Chanuka, though, at least according to the *תלמוד בבלי*, we are privileged to position another mitzvah object in our doorway, opposite the mezuzah. This is, of course, the menorah. Why exactly do we need two mitzvot to be performed at this place? To publicize the miracle of Chanuka, we could just as easily have positioned the menorah in our windows. Why does the Gemara demand specifically to place it in the doorway, opposite the mezuzah? What is the deeper message behind these two mitzvot?

Living in our open society, we encounter many situations, which challenge our religious observance. There are, at times, two opposite pressures, to which a Jew might succumb. On the one hand, there are those who find it easier to be a Jew on the “inside”. When they are at home, they are totally kosher, they daven, they make brachot, and they are meticulous about each detail of halacha. Yet when they go outside, they feel the need to blend in with society. Off comes any religious identification. The need to socialize and intermingle with professional acquaintances justifies the falling away of any religious norms. They are a Jew at home, but not amongst the nations.

On the other hand, there are those who find it easier to be a Jew on the “outside”. Peer pressure, being surrounded by others who would not approve of certain inappropriate behaviors, force them to behave religiously. They would not dare eat in a certain public eatery, or take certain liberties or shortcuts, related to their public religious observance. Yet, in the privacy of their own home, when nobody is watching, then the standards are forgotten.

These two behaviors, says Rabbi Benjamin Blech, are what *הקדוש ברוך הוא* had in mind when they enacted mezuzah on the right of the door and menorah on the left. The mezuzah is on our right upon entering our home. As we transition from our social public thoroughfare into our private domain, we take note of the mezuzah. [The right side is always the main side in halacha.] The mezuzah tells us that HaShem is always watching, and we always have a standard of behavior to live up to, even if no human being is present.

... and each time that we enter, we are met with the name of God, written on the klaf of the mezuzah, and we remember God's love for us, and we will be awakened from our spiritual slumber

**Rambam Hilchos Mezuza 6:13**

וכל זמן שיכנס ויצא יפגע ביהוד השם  
שמו של הקדוש ב"ה ויזכור אהבתו  
ויעור משנתו ושגיותו בהבלי הזמן  
רמב"ם הלכות מזוזה ו:יג

The mezuzah tells us not to leave our Judaism out on the street, not to live a Judaism based on others' judgments. "שויתי ה' לנגדי תמיד" - ה' is always watching.

Yet upon exiting our house, the menorah is on our right. What is this meant to remind us? The Greek motto was the blending in of the nations, the Hellenization of the Jews. Be like us, why be different. The menorah symbolizes our victory over the Greeks and their creed. We must and will be Jews in the workplace, amongst our neighbors, just as we are in our own homes. So, as we leave our homes, and we look to the right, we see our menorah, to remind us not to leave our Judaism inside. The menorah says that we overcame the Greeks, and we must stay strong in our public Jewish way of life.

## Jewish Leaders Both On The Inside and Outside

Yosef HaTzadik himself, whom we always read about during the Chanuka weeks, epitomizes this message. On the one hand, in his epic struggle with the wife of Potiphar, he controls his urges, and privately was *mekadesh Shem Shamayim*. The Gemara<sup>42</sup> tells us that his father's image, symbolizing his religious upbringing, appeared to him in that private bedroom of the wife of Potiphar. Yosef knew the message of the mezuzah. He practiced his Judaism in private. Yet later on, we also observe Yosef the *public Jew*, Yosef the one who, though the only Jew in the entire country of Egypt, was not fearful to behave in a unique manner. The Torah tells us<sup>43</sup> that Yosef's master saw that God was with him. Rashi comments that *Shem Shamayim* was constantly on his lips. Yosef constantly invoked the name of God in his everyday conversations. He did not feel constrained by being out in the open, amongst strangers. Yosef understood the message of the menorah. He practiced his Judaism in public.

Rav Gedailah Schorr adds another idea, which helps deepen our understanding of what Yavan stood for. He quotes earlier sources which parallel the four Kingdoms with the four harsh sins, the three cardinal sins (idolatry, illicit relations, and murder) coupled with lashon harah. Yavan is paralleled with murder. On the surface, though, this is a perplexing equation. Yavan was all about culture and aesthetics. How does murder fit and parallel their world view? The Ohr Gedalyahu explains that murder, or literally spilling blood, means removing the blood which sustains the inner life of a person. What Yavan wanted to do was to remove the "blood" of every Jew, the soul of every Jew, חלק אלוהים ממעל. כי הדם הוא הנפש. They wanted to wipe out the soul of every Jew, forcing us to be exactly like them, and having us give up on our inner sentiments for Judaism, would, in effect, be killing us as Jews. That is why Yavan is best symbolized by the sin of murder, not

<sup>42</sup> Sotah 36b - נראתה לו דמות דיוקנו של אביו

<sup>43</sup> Bereishit 39:3

because of their interest in physical murder, but because of its insistence on the murder of the spiritual blood flow, inside each and every Jew.

The Chashmonaim, with HaShem's divine help, were able to thwart the plans of the Yevanim. Our job on Chanuka is to remember what this victory symbolizes. Our inner and deep feelings for our religion must motivate us to be תוכו כברו, to be Jews on the inside, in private, as well as Jews on the outside, amongst other people. Let us use this holiday as a springboard to strengthen our spiritual growth, both in our homes and in our public lives.

# The Message of Huram, Hiram, Hirom and Chanukah

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In presenting the seventh chapter of Melachim I as our haftorah for the second Shabbat Chanukah, the sages<sup>44</sup> introduce us to a story of three men with near-identical names, as well as a moral lesson of broad sweep and penetrating depth.

## Huram, Hiram and Hirom

*And Huram, King of Tyre, wrote to Solomon: "Because God loves His nation, He made you king upon them." And Huram said: "Blessed be HaShem, God of Israel, who created the heavens and the earth and gave King David a wise son who possessed intellect and understanding, who would build a house for God and a house for his reign. I have now sent you a knowledgeable, understanding man, my master craftsman<sup>45</sup> Hiram. He is the son of a woman from Dan and his father is a man of Tyre; he knows how to work in gold, silver, brass, iron, stone, wood, purple wool, blue wool, linen and crimson, and to engrave any engraving and to design any design which would be given to him, along with your wise men and the wise men of David your father."*

**Divrei haYamim II 2:10-13**

(י) ויאמר חורם מלך צר בכתב וישלח אל שלמה באהבת ה' את עמו נתנך עליהם מלך: (יא) ויאמר חורם ברוך ה' אלקי ישראל אשר עשה את השמים ואת הארץ אשר נתן לדויד המלך בן חכם יודע שכל ובינה אשר יבנה בית לה' ובית למלכותו: (יב) ועתה שלחתי איש חכם יודע בינה לחורם אבי: (יג) בן אשה מן בנות דן ואביו איש צרי יודע לעשות בזהב ובכסף בנחשת בברזל באבנים ובעצים בארגמן בתכלת ובבוץ ובכרמיל ולפתח כל פתוח ולחשב כל מחשבת אשר ינתן לו עם חכמיו וחכמי אדני דויד אביך:  
**דברי הימים ב ב:י-יג**

<sup>44</sup> Megilah 31a

<sup>45</sup> Rashi, among others, renders this as "my father's craftsman."

So far, then, King Hiram<sup>46</sup> of Tyre has sent King Shlomo a brilliant craftsman who shares the name Hiram. As the Malbim notes, this occurred at the start of the construction of the Beit haMikdash.

Melachim I mentions another, similarly-named craftsman:

*And King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a brassworker. He was filled with knowledge and understanding and intelligence, to perform all of the tasks involving brass. He came to King Solomon and performed all of his tasks.*

**Melachim I 7:13-14**

וישלח המלך שלמה ויקח את חירם מצר: בן אשה אלמנה הוא ממטה נפתלי ואביו איש צרי חרש נחשת וימלא את החכמה ואת התבונה ואת הדעת לעשות כל מלאכה בנחשת ויבוא אל המלך שלמה ויעש את כל מלאכתו:  
**מלכים א ז:יג-יד**

This Hiram is also from Tyre, but there are marked differences between this craftsman and the previous craftsman sent by King Hiram:

- The former craftsman worked in a range of materials; this one works only in brass;
- The former craftsman was sent at the start of the construction, while this one arrives at the end;
- The former craftsman is described as the son of a woman from Dan; the latter craftsman's mother is from Naftali.

This second craftsman is also mentioned in the opening sentence of the Ashkenazi haftarah for the second Shabbat Chanukah, albeit with the altered name of Hirom:<sup>47</sup>

*And Hirom formed the sinks, shovels and basins, and Hiram completed all the tasks he had performed for King Solomon in the house of God.*

**Melachim I 7:40**

ויעש חירום את הכירות ואת היעים ואת המזרקות ויכל חירם לעשות את כל המלאכה אשר עשה למלך שלמה בית ה':  
**מלכים א ז:מ**

Why were two craftsmen, Hiram and Hiram/Hirom, involved in building the Beit haMikdash? Malbim explains that they were actually father and son:

*It appears to me that when Divrei haYamim says that King Hiram sent a written message to King Solomon, "Now I have sent you," that referred to the father of this Hiram, and his name was also Hiram.<sup>48</sup> He was sent from the King of Tyre at the start of construction... And he died after seven years, and Solomon sent for his son. Regarding this it says, "And Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre," for the first came at the order*

ולי נראה שמה שכתוב בדברי הימים ששלח מלך חירם בכתב אל שלמה "ועתה שלחתי לך..." זה היה אביו של חירם זה, והיה שמו גם כן חירם, והוא נשלח מאת מלך צור בתחלת הבנין... ואחר שבע שנים מת, ושלח שלמה אחר בנו, ועל זה אמר, "וישלח שלמה ויקח את חירם מצור," כי הראשון בא אליו

<sup>46</sup> Note that the king of Tyre's name is sometimes presented as חירם, Hiram. See, for example, Melachim I 5:15.

<sup>47</sup> The Artscroll Stone Chumash (pg. 1212) errs in this regard, commenting on the haftarah, "Much of the *Haftarah* describes the Temple vessels that were made by King Hiram of Tyre, a friend and collaborator of King Solomon."

<sup>48</sup> Malbim ignores the Hiram/Hirom/Hiram variations throughout.

of the King of Tyre and the second came because Solomon had sent for him. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali, and she was a widow because her husband, Hiram, had died.

**Malbim to Melachim I 7:14**

בפקודת מלך צור והשני בא על שם  
ששלח שלמה אחריו, והוא היה בן אשה  
אלמנה ממטה נפתלי, והיתה אלמנה כי  
מת חירם בעלה.  
**מלבי"ם מלאכים א ז:יד**

In sum, then, King Hiram/Hiram sent a craftsman named Hiram, who was succeeded by his son Hiram/Hirom, to help build the Beit haMikdash.

## The lessons of Hiram's fascinating lineage

This story is about more than an odd interplay of names, though; both Melachim and Divrei haYamim take pains to present us with the lineage of both craftsmen - the son of a woman from Dan and a father from Tyre, and the son of a woman from Naftali and a father from Tyre. Why is this information germane?

Rabbi Yochanan offered one answer:

*How do we know that one should not diverge from his craft, and from the craft of his fathers? As it is written, "And King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre. He was the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a brassworker." We are taught, "His mother was from the family of Dan," and it is written, "Ahaliav, son of Achisamach from the tribe of Dan."*

**Erchin 16b**

מנין שלא ישנה אדם מאומנותו  
ומאומנות אבותיו? שנאמר: וישלח  
המלך שלמה ויקח את חירם מצר בן  
אשה אלמנה הוא ממטה נפתלי ואביו  
איש צרי חרש נחושת, ואמר מר:  
אימיה מבית דן, וכתוב: אהליאב בן  
אחיסמך למטה דן.  
**ערכין טז:**

In other words: This craftsman is a matrilineal descendant of Ahaliav, who was also a craftsman. The prophet stresses this lineage in order to teach us to continue the lines of our family businesses.

Another midrashic approach, though, offers deeper moral guidance:

*Great and small are equal before God. Betzalel was from Yehudah and Ahaliav was from Dan, and he was paired with him. R' Chanina said: Great and small are equal... The Mishkan was created by these two tribes. So was the Beit haMikdash - Solomon from Yehudah, with Chiram, "the son of a widow from the tribe of Naftali."*

**Sh'mot Rabbah 40:4**

הגדול והקטן שוין לפני המקום, בצלאל משל  
יהודה ואהליאב מן דן והוא מזדווג לו, אמר ר'  
חנינא הגדול והקטן שוים... המשכן בשני  
שבטים אלו נעשה, וכן המקדש, שלמה  
מיהודה וחירם (מלכים א ז) בן אשה אלמנה  
ממטה נפתלי  
**שמות רבה מ:ד**

Betzalel and Ahaliav, the team responsible for construction of the original Mishkan, were the products of opposite families. Betzalel descended from the royal clan of Yehudah, who was a son of Leah. Ahaliav emerged from the tribe that travelled last, Dan, who was a son of Bilhah, Rachel's maidservant. The two men could not have hailed from more varied backgrounds, but together

they built the first building on earth where God would be manifest and the Jewish people could gather in worship.

Shlomo and the two Hiram, as the midrash notes, carried the same theme into the first Beit haMikdash. Shlomo, the king from Yehudah, paired first with a descendant of Bilhah's son Naftali and then a descendant of Bilhah's other son Dan to assemble the first permanent home of HaShem. Indeed, Hiram of Dan and Betzalel of Yehudah are both described as being Divinely invested with חכמה and תבונה, knowledge and wisdom; these traits can exist in anyone, regardless of family history.

Abarbanel makes this point even stronger in his explanation of Hiram's lineage. Regarding both Hiram the elder and Hiram the younger, the prophet notes that their fathers were "men of Tyre." Noting that Tyre might simply refer to a geographic origin, Abarbanel then adds that Hiram might actually have been a product of intermarriage:

*It is possible to say that he was Tyrean from birth, as the text suggests, and his wife was Jewish, and she married him for some reason – because she had been taken captive, or for some other reason.*

**Abarbanel Melachim I 7:14**

ואפשר לומר שהוא היה צורי ממולדתו, כמו שהעיר  
הכתוב, ואשתו היתה יהודית ונשאה לו בסבה מן  
הסבות, אם מפני שביה שנשבית שמה או בסבה  
אחרת  
**אברבנל מלאכים א ז:יד**

This possibility underscores the message of the midrash above, that a Jew is Jew, regardless of his background, and that any of us can grow to greatness.

It is natural for human beings to assume that spiritual character is an inherited trait and that certain lines are more gifted than others, but the description of Hiram's lineage teaches us that our natural inclination is incorrect. No Jew should ever say, "I am predisposed to spiritual weakness," or, "My ancestors handicapped me." Certainly, all of us are gifted with certain basic talents – but anyone who is willing to invest the effort is given the opportunity to develop those talents to the fullest.

## Hiram's message for Chanukah

Rav Mordechai Elon adds that this message may have special relevance for Chanukah:<sup>49</sup>

Our Chanukah Torah reading recounts the gifts brought by each nasi (tribal prince) at the end of the Mishkan's dedication. Despite the fact that each gift's elements were identical, the Torah repeats every detail of each gift as if it were unique, emphasizing the importance of each individual. Then, at the end, the Torah sums up the gifts collectively and demonstrates that we are all as one before HaShem.

Rav Elon points out that the first nasi to bring a gift is Nachshon ben Aminadav, leader of Yehudah, and the last nasi to bring a gift is Achira ben Einan, leader of Naftali. With this we are

<sup>49</sup> [www.elon.org/shiur\\_hebrew\\_doc/vayigash64.doc](http://www.elon.org/shiur_hebrew_doc/vayigash64.doc)

taught, yet again, that the entire nation exists on the same plane. Each leader's gift for the mishkan is significant, but each also functions as an equal part of the greater unity.

## The union of Chanukah's haftarot

This message is also critical as we look toward the building of a third Beit haMikdash, for we are taught that our national unity is a prerequisite for the arrival of Mashiach.<sup>50</sup> Further, this theme unites the two haftarot of Chanukah.

On the face of it, the two haftarot of Chanukah seem to be read out of order; the haftarah for the first Shabbat of Chanukah is Zechariah's foretelling of the **second** Beit haMikdash, and the haftarah for the second Shabbat of Chanukah describes Shlomo's construction of the **first** Beit haMikdash. Why do we read these messages in reverse chronological order?

Tosafot Yom Tov<sup>51</sup> cites the Ran to suggest that Zechariah's vision actually relates to a future time of Mashiach, and so it is more beloved to us than a description of the first Beit haMikdash.<sup>52</sup>

Certainly, Zechariah's message is more explicitly linked to a future time of mashiach, but, as noted above, Hiram's message is also important for our eschatological future. On the day when we will truly stand together, when we look not at tribe and lineage but at the knowledge and understanding and talent of the individual, then we will merit a final חנוכת הבית for the בנין עדין, the eternal Beit haMikdash.

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<sup>50</sup> See, for example, Yechezkel 37, the haftarah for Parshat Vayyigash

<sup>51</sup> Tosafot Yom Tov to Megilah 3:4

<sup>52</sup> The Kolbo (#20) answers that precedence is determined by relevance for Chanukah; Zechariah's vision relates to the second Beit haMikdash, during which time the story and miracle of Chanukah took place.

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