

Introduction

The Gemara, *Shabbos* 23a, states that upon seeing the Chanukah lights of someone else, one recites the blessing of *She'asa Nissim*. Tosafos, *Sukkah* 46a, are bothered by the fact that other mitzvos do not have such a blessing. We don't recite a beracha upon seeing a lulav, sukkah, mezuzah or any other mitzvah. What is at the root of this blessing? Why does Chanukah — a late rabbinic holiday — merit this unique blessing?

In truth, there are two components of the mitzvah of ner Chanukah. One relates to the formal obligation to light the candles. We recite the beracha of *lehadlik ner shel Chanukah* as we light the candles commemorating the parallel experience in the Beis Mikdash. We light in the context of a miraculous salvation of the Jewish People. Reenacting those magical moments of bringing light into a very dark world full of assimilation, we embrace the symbolic fire of Torah that illuminates our homes. In this regard, we seek to create inspiration within the internal world of our family and ourselves.

One of the central messages of Chanukah is that illumination and inspiration must not only be created, but also discovered and pursued. There is a miracle not only in the creation of light, but in its appreciation and enjoyment as well.



Rabbi Yaakov Glasser

David Mitzner Dean, YU Center for the Jewish Future
Rabbi, Young Israel of Passaic-Clifton

However, there is an additional dimension to the Chanukah experience. Upon entering the Beis Hamikdash, the Chashmonaim could have easily relinquished their goal of kindling the Menorah based upon the principal of *onnes rachmanah patrei* — we are exempt from mitzvos when circumstances beyond our control don't allow us to perform them. The absence of any oil, in addition to the ubiquitous presence of impurity, would have provided enough halachic basis to postpone the rekindling of the Menorah until materials could be properly procured. Yet they chose differently. The Chashmonaim searched the Mikdash for any vestige of pure oil, and upon finding only enough for one day — knowing full well that this lighting would be inadequate — they moved forward

with *hadalakas HaMenorah*. One of the central messages of Chanukah is that illumination and inspiration must not only be created, but also discovered and pursued. The berachos that are recited on the Chanukah lights are not only for the production of the light, but for its discovery and appreciation as well. The beracha that is recited upon seeing the lights of others is symbolic of this discovery and appreciation.

We live in a world with much darkness. From our own internal communal struggles to the larger global threats of extremism and terror, the message of Chanukah is not only found in our mandate to illuminate that darkness ourselves, but in our efforts to discover it in the homes of others as well. As we walk the streets of our communities on Chanukah and we peer into the windows of our fellow Jews, we pause and recognize that there is a miracle not only in the creation of light, but in its appreciation and enjoyment as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yaakov Glasser'.