

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary  
Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future

THE BENJAMIN AND ROSE BERGER  
**TORAH TO-GO®**

Established by Rabbi Hyman and Ann Arbesfeld

*December 2017 • Chanukah 5778*



A Project of Yeshiva University's  
Center for the Jewish Future

*Dedicated by*

**Dr. David and Barbara Hurwitz**  
in honor of their children and grandchildren

**Featuring Divrei Torah from**

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman	Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm
Rabbi Dan Cohen	Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger
Rabbi Joshua Flug	Mrs. Chaya Batya Neugroschl
Rabbi Ozer Glickman	Mrs. Stephanie Strauss
Rabbi Aaron Goldscheider	Rabbi Benjamin Yudin
Rabbi Akiva Koenigsberg	



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# Introduction

The Gemara discusses whether we are permitted to light a Chanukah candle by using the flame of an existing Chanukah candle:

איתמר רב אמר אין מדליקין מנר לנר ושמואל אמר מדליקין.

*It was stated, Rav said one may not light from one candle to another and Shmuel said that one may light.*

## Shabbos 22a

The Gemara, after a lengthy discussion, concludes that if we hold *hadlakah oseh mitzvah*, that the mitzvah is dependent on the actual lighting of the candles rather than the placement of the candles, then it is certainly permissible to light from one candle to another. This is because we actually fulfill a mitzvah at the time of lighting the second candle, and therefore, it is not a denigration to the first candle to use it for a mitzvah.

Since we follow the opinion that *hadlakah oseh mitzvah*, we would expect to also be permitted to use one of the candles to light the others, and that we should not require a *shamash* (extra candle) for this purpose. However, the Rama adds an additional factor:

ונהגו להחמיר בנרות חנוכה שלא להדליק אפילו מנר לנר דעיקר מצותו אינו אלא נר אחד והשאר אינו למצוה כל כך לכן אין להדליקן זה מזה.

*Our practice is to be stringent regarding the Chanukah lights not to light from one candle to another, because the primary mitzvah is only one light and the rest are not really such a mitzvah. Therefore one should not light from one to another.*

## Rama, Orach Chaim 674:1

There are two difficulties with the Rama's ruling. First, the *Sha'arei Teshuva* notes that the Gemara



## Rabbi Yaakov Glasser

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

implies that when Shmuel permits lighting from one candle to another, he permits it even from the primary candle to the extra *mehadrin* candles. Second, the Rama implies that we may not even light the third candle from the second candle. If the concern is lighting from a mitzvah candle to a *mehadrin* candle, why can't we light from one *mehadrin* candle to another?

Perhaps, homiletically, we can explain as follows: Since *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* and the goal is to produce light, the manner in which each candle is lit is of less significance. Our focus is on producing the collective light of each night's menorah. However, the Rama is introducing another dimension. We light a different number of candles each night to fulfill *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. By doing so, each day's lighting has its own unique character and represents something unique. Therefore, we don't only focus on producing the light, we make sure that each candle is infused with its own creative energy. It is not acceptable to draw from the existing light, *mi-ner li-ner*, but we instead must create the light anew.

We often encounter people who live their spiritual and religious lives *mi-ner li-ner*. They simply draw from the collective light that already exists in our world. There is a passivity to their religious identity — although they may be fulfilling halachic expectations, they are relying significantly on the insights and inspiration of others.

The alternative is a world where we approach each one of the candles of our religious personality and ignite its flame individually. We recognize that using someone else's flame might be sufficient, but we wish to contribute a new flame that might look the same as the old one, but has our own personal touch. We seek to contribute a new and vibrant flame to each one of the candles that comprise our religious experience, and infuse it with warmth, energy, and vitality.

This edition of *Torah To Go* features an exploration of what our new president, Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, termed the "Five Torot." These are five dimensions that define our communal and individual religious identities. We share with you Rabbi Berman's investiture address and a series of articles from authors who reflect upon and interpret each of these dimensions. The "Five Torot" concept is not meant to create a new approach to religious identity. Rather, it is to identify the distinct candles that we seek to light, in all aspects of our lives, and to ensure that each one is embraced with dedication and passion as a core aspect of our religious lives. We strive to live not *mi-ner li-ner*, not by simply drawing on the collective positivity of our religious world. We strive to contribute to each dimension, with intentionality and purpose, as we grow in our *avodas Hashem*.

# The Five Torot and the World of Tomorrow

Transcript of Rabbi Dr. Berman's investiture speech as delivered Sunday, September 10, 2017

It is deeply humbling to stand here today in this hallowed hall, this hall through which the voices of our past continue to echo across the generations, the voices of our early presidents, Dr. Bernard Revel and Dr. Samuel Belkin, and those of the great scholars and sages who have lectured from this pulpit, most notably our revered teacher of blessed memory Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik. As we embark on this next phase of Yeshiva University's illustrious history, I am fully conscious of the fact that we are only here today because of the incredible work and sacrifice of so many leaders who have come before us. Whatever success we hope to achieve in shaping our future will be due to the fact that we are standing on



Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman

President, Yeshiva University

the shoulders of giants, and I begin my talk today by asking you to join me in showing recognition and appreciation to the third and fourth presidents of Yeshiva University, Dr. Norman Lamm and President Richard Joel.

I first stepped into this room when I was 13 years old as a student of the Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy. Since that moment, I have been inspired and nourished by Yeshiva University. My studies — high school, college, graduate school, ordination,

post-ordination, and my early teaching career — all occurred at YU. Even my wife — I met Anita when I was a senior in high school on the MTA-Central blind date event.

Intellectually, spiritually and socially I am a product of this special institution.

Most new presidents of universities need to learn the story of their institutions to understand their narrative and their purpose, but I do

## The Five Torot of Yeshiva University

TORAT EMET

TORAT CHAIM

TORAT ADAM

TORAT CHESSED

TORAT TZION

not need to read a history book to understand Yeshiva University. It is in my heart and it is in my soul, as it is in the heart and soul of so many of you who are sitting here today and so many people who are our friends and partners throughout the world.

We know instinctively what Yeshiva University is and what it is meant to be.

Yet, interestingly, it is not always so easy to articulate.

Before I officially started as president in June, I spent three months living on campus commuting back and forth from Israel. When I moved out after graduating college in 1991, I have to admit that I never thought that, 26 years later, I would move back into the Morg dorm, but life is full of surprises.

During this time, I had the opportunity to speak with board members, alumni and supporters as well as meet with the faculty, administrators and professional staff of each of our schools, and spend much quality time with our students. And in most of my meetings, I asked the same question. What does Yeshiva University stand for?

Perhaps, unsurprisingly, there were many different answers and often there was no answer at all.

This is a crucial question for us. Yeshiva University is, of course, an institution; it has campuses, buildings and students. But, at its core, Yeshiva University is an idea. And it is this idea that gives us our strength and positions us to be the educational and intellectual epicenter of a large global movement. Therefore, before I outline our direction for the future of the institution, in the first part of this talk I need to address the question of Yeshiva University as an idea. What

is Yeshiva University? What does it stand for?

In my mind, there are five values that personify Yeshiva University, which I would call the Five Torot or the five central teachings of our institution.

The first is Torat Emet — we believe in truth.

We believe that God gave the Torah to Moses at Mount Sinai. We believe that in that Torah there are eternal values, not subject to the vagaries and vicissitudes of history. It is this pursuit of truth that animates our intense study of Torah during the day and deep into the night which, in turn, deepens our relationship with God.

But we also believe that our goal is not simply to sit, study and live in some ivory tower but that we must be fully engaged in the world and responsible to the world.

We do not just believe in Torat Emet but also Torat Chaim — that our truths and values must live in the world.

Who are our graduates?

They are rabbis and Jewish educators and they are lawyers and doctors, accountants and financial analysts, social workers and psychologists, mothers and fathers, community leaders and leaders of industry — all of whom are out in the world, acting daily as productive citizens of society.

And we are uniquely qualified to raise engaged Jewish citizens for whom Judaism is vibrant and essential to their lives. Many of our students come to campus with a full day school education; some of our students come from public school, with little to no previous Jewish education. Here in Yeshiva University our students find friends for life, and often even soul

mates and partners for life. Here in Yeshiva University our students have the opportunity to not just learn about Judaism but to experience Judaism, to appreciate that Shabbat is not just something we keep, it is something we treasure, and that living a life of faith adds great meaning and joy to one's life.

Moreover, at this moment in time, as cultures shift and as moral intuitions inevitably adjust, all parents know how difficult it is to help their children navigate the tension between tradition and an increasingly complex world. Yeshiva University, located at the nexus between heritage and pioneering, provides the students of the next generation with the tools for critical critique and self-reflection so that they can not only weather the storms and tempests of contemporary moral discourse but also leave here both rooted and nimble, anchored in our values and equipped with the language and sophistication necessary to succeed as leaders in the world of tomorrow.

By offering in one institution a comprehensive, integrated educational program that produces the Jewish leaders of the next generations who are firmly committed, forward focused, engaged in the world and pillars of society, Yeshiva University is the world's premier Jewish educational institution.

But Yeshiva University is not just for our Jewish students. We are also proud to include a large non-Jewish population in our graduate programs, and this message applies to you as well.

The educational philosophy of Torah u-Madda is based on Maimonides' directive to accept the truth from whatever source it comes. We know

that there are great truths to be discovered in the study of the human mind, the physical world, literature, legal interpretation and more. Our belief in the higher purpose of education is true for all of humanity. In addition, Torat Chaim requires everyone to be engaged in the project of applying these values and truths to the world, and we look to all of our faculty and intellectual leaders to guide us in this effort. As such, by utilizing our vast, interdisciplinary resources, Yeshiva University is uniquely positioned to address the most pressing moral issues of the day. In an era in which there is a breakdown of civil and civic discourse, we stand proud as educators, thought leaders and moral voices for our generation.

These are our first two values: Torat Emet and Torat Chaim.

But Yeshiva University does not only believe in truth, it also believes in humanity.

Our tradition teaches us that each individual is created in God's divine image and that it is a sacred task for each individual to hone and develop their unique talents and skills. In addition, we are charged with the obligation to use these unique gifts in the service of others; to care for our fellow human beings; to reach out to them in thoughtfulness, kindness and sensitivity, and form a connected community. These two values, humanity and compassion, are our next two Torot: Torat Adam and Torat Chesed.

One of the aspects of YU that simply amazed me when I was walking around the university in the spring is the way in which these themes of Torat Adam and Torat Chesed manifest themselves in each of our

schools.

For example, in Cardozo, Professor Jocelyn Getgen Kestenbaum leads the Ferencz Human Rights and Atrocity Prevention Clinic, which fights against human rights violations and genocides around the world. Dr. Bill Salton heads the Parnes Clinic of the Ferkauf School of Psychology which provides low-cost, high-quality psychological treatment for a Bronx population that would not otherwise be able to afford it. The Wurzweiler School of Social Work is launching a new innovative mental health clinic, which will help people from all walks of life cope with life stress issues. When I was visiting the Albert Einstein College of Medicine I encountered a group of people sitting around a table who were introduced to me as super-scientists. I asked them about their research and each shared with me their work on some matter crucial to the betterment of humanity. One was a leader in the fight against AIDS, another the Zika virus, a third, breast cancer.

And this spirit exists not only in our graduate schools, but in our undergraduate schools as well. I was walking in the library one night and saw two students with YU t-shirts. I asked them where they were coming from and they replied: the START Science Program. This is a program in which every week over 100 Yeshiva University undergraduate students go to the local Manhattan public schools to teach children about science and technology. When I heard this I was very impressed, but it was only later that I discovered that this program was actually launched by undergraduate students at Yeshiva University seven years ago and has subsequently spread to chapters in countries across the world. And this

is emblematic of our student body, as hundreds of our students participate in these kinds of programs throughout the academic year, channeling their unique talents into extraordinary acts of kindness. Just last week our Student Life department initiated student-led missions to Houston to help our fellow citizens recover from Harvey. Within minutes our sign-up sheet had over a hundred students volunteering to go.

And this is what we do. At Yeshiva University, we teach our students to fight for justice; to fight for the underprivileged; to fight against violence; to fight against disease.

But most of all, at Yeshiva University we teach our students to fight against indifference.

The values of Torat Adam and Torat Chesed pervade our entire university, fusing a lofty sense of human dignity with an inspiring commitment to compassion.

These are our first four principles: Torah that is True and Torah that is alive; a belief in human capacity and the need to reach out to others.

And there is a fifth: Torat Tzion, the Torah of Redemption.

Torat Tzion of course directly relates to the project of building the modern State of Israel. And this is very important to us as proud Zionists. We certainly encourage students to move to Israel and we encourage those who live outside of Israel to devote their time and resources to help Israel further its role as a shining light to humanity. But it is also much more than that, because the return to Israel in Jewish theology is, in and of itself, part of a much greater narrative. Torat Tzion tells us that we are not accidents of history, nor even simply

participants in history, but we are drivers of history.

Torat Tzion requires us to understand that as human beings we all have one common, overarching goal, and that is to redeem the world, and transform it for the better; to birth a world suffused by justice, goodness, prosperity and transcendence. If, as Martin Luther King Jr. proclaimed “The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice,” then Torat Tzion charges us with the task of moving history forward. This directive applies to all of humanity. And at this moment in time — more than at any point in the entire span of Jewish history — the Jewish people are capable of partnering with the full breadth of humanity to move history forward.

Let me share with you a personal story that illustrates this point.

My wife’s grandmother, Bubbe, is an extraordinary woman who survived the Holocaust by evading the Nazis hiding in caves, forests and cemeteries. She was born in Poland, and had a large family including her brother Pinchas to whom she was very close. Her childhood sweetheart, Shlomo, eventually became her husband and together they lived a relatively quiet and peaceful life. But then the Nazis invaded Poland, entered their town, and gathered and killed all of its Jews. Bubbe managed to escape into the woods with Shlomo and a few of their nephews and nieces, but no one else in their large family was as fortunate. She never left her husband’s side and together they managed to evade the Germans, and found their way to Romania. Following the war, they left Europe and went to Cuba, and then when Castro rose to power, they fled once again, this time to New York.

Fast forward the story by a couple of decades, and one day Bubbe received a call from a friend of hers who just returned from a trip to the former Soviet Union. “Cyla” she said, “You need to sit down, I have something astounding to tell you. Your brother, Pinchas — he is alive. While you ran west, he escaped east. You each thought the other was dead, but Pinchas is alive and living in Russia.” Bubbe immediately contacted him, but they were never able to meet, as soon afterwards Pinchas died. Pinchas, though, had a daughter named Gala, who married Vladimer. When they had a son, they named him Pinchas, after her father. Some years later, the Iron Curtain fell, and Gala and her family moved to Israel. Shortly thereafter, Anita and I were studying in Yeshiva University’s center in Israel. At the end of the year, Anita gave birth to our first son, whom we named Shlomo after her grandfather who had recently passed away. I still remember the scene when Bubbe came to Israel for the bris. She was sitting with her new great grandson, Shlomo, on her lap, when in came a woman who carried a clear family resemblance. It was her niece Gala whom she had never previously met. And with Gala came a little boy named Pinchas. And when Pinchas ran over to see the baby, once again Bubbe was surrounded by Pinchas and Shlomo.

You see, they thought they could kill us, they thought they could remove us from the earth, but Pinchas and Shlomo were alive again, and this time they connected with each other in Jerusalem, the capital of the modern Jewish State of Israel. Bubbe’s life represents the dramatic story of the Jewish people in the modern era, a story of an indomitable spirit able to

transcend destruction and to rebuild a lost world.

It is my great joy at this point to pause for a moment and acknowledge the presence of a woman who is over 100 years old, beli ayin ha-ra, who is here with us today celebrating the investiture of her grandson — ladies and gentlemen, my Bubbe.

To me, this story highlights the reality of the Jewish world today, as it provides a stark contrast with the Jewish world of yesterday. The prophet Ezekiel foretells a wondrous future in which the dry bones of Israel are brought back to life, but for us living today we know that this is no dream; it describes our reality. Pinchas and Shlomo once left for dead have now returned in a new generation. And look at the world that they face today. It is an era that is simply unprecedented in Jewish history.

We live in an era that is miraculous and wondrous. The Jewish people are no longer lost in exile but have once again returned to their homeland. Torah study is open and accessible throughout the world. Where once we might have looked at our neighbors and saw only persecutors, today we may look at them and see potential partners. And this presents us not only with great opportunities but also great responsibilities.

As Rabbi Soloveitchik taught us in 1956, in this very room, from this very podium — some of you may even have been in this room — kol dodi dofek, the voice of God is metaphorically calling to us, knocking at our door. He has placed us in this incredible time, and he beckons us to respond.

Yeshiva University represents the

kinds of thinkers and dreamers who have always believed in embracing history and its opportunities. Now more than ever before it is time to think bigger, to think beyond our individual selves, to move history forward, to spread positive values to the world and to fight for peace and prosperity for all of humanity and with all of humanity.

Torat Emet, Torat Chaim, Torat Adam, Torat Chesed and Torat Tzion — Truth, Life, Humanity, Compassion and Redemption.

These are the Five Torot that differentiate us and are our identity. They root us deeply within a structured value system while providing moral guidance and direction in living our lives. They propel us to develop our talents and skills while directing us to reach outwards and connect to others in kindness. And they inspire us with a grand, historic purpose to make a difference, and impact the world.

This is what we believe Judaism represents and what God wants from all of us. This is not just about Modern Orthodoxy, or even Orthodoxy. These are our messages to the Jewish people and to the world at large.

This is who we are — this is our philosophy of life.

And now that we have discussed the idea of Yeshiva University, we can focus on outlining the future of Yeshiva University as an institution. Once we have established who we are, we can now lay out where we are going. And I have to tell you that the future of Yeshiva University as an institution is bright and it is exciting.

When Yeshiva was founded in the early 20th century, it met the needs of an Orthodox Jewish immigrant

population with limited higher education possibilities. Over the generations, our specific form and structure has shifted depending on times, needs and circumstances, but the core mission has always remained the same. At this point, the world has changed greatly but our task of educating the next generation of students and future leaders has not changed, it has just shifted to be in synch with our new realities. Today, perhaps more than ever before, there is a need to raise generations of students who are both deeply rooted and forward focused. And Yeshiva University will continue to look ahead into the future to open up new worlds for them.

And I say this specifically in respect to three areas in which we will be looking to expand.

First, new industries:

We will continue to excel at educating our students in the areas of law and medicine, accounting and finance, social work and psychology, education and scholarship. But as the global economy evolves we will also create new opportunities for our students in the areas of STEM — science, technology, engineering and mathematics — as well as in the health fields. The marketplace of tomorrow will feature high demand for graduates trained in coding, data analytics, quantitative analytical skills, as well as those with entrepreneurial experience, and we will be preparing our students with the skill sets necessary to succeed in this new reality.

Second, new markets of students:

In our graduate and undergraduate programs we will be diversifying our offerings and utilizing the latest

technological innovations allowing for greater accessibility to attract new student populations both in the United States and internationally. Moreover, we will actively seek to attract students who represent the values of our institution, who are role models of our Five Torot, including students who show a propensity and passion for their Torah studies, or who display extraordinary capabilities in areas that create new knowledge like in science and technology, or young social entrepreneurs who stand out for their communal contributions, or those who have shown the courage of their convictions to respond to the historical opportunities of our era. For example, by creating scholarships for students, who after studying for a year in Israel, continue their stay there by volunteering for *sherut leumi*, national service, or volunteering to become members of *Tzahal*, soldiers in the Israeli army, or students who volunteer to join the United States Armed Forces. We already have a significant number of these students in our ranks and we will work to attract even more of such people in the years ahead, as these are the young men and women we wish to showcase to our community as role models and future leaders,

And finally, new educational pathways:

We conceptualize Yeshiva University as a single, interconnected network, instead of a collection of separate schools. As such, new connections between our graduate schools and new pipelines between our undergraduate and graduate programs, like the Einstein College of Medicine, the Cardozo School of Law and the newly developed Katz School, will enable our students to complete their

studies here market-ready and poised for immediate success. In addition, our tens of thousands of alumni and friends are a crucial part of our network and will play an important role in our new educational models as connectors who will help place our students at summer positions or advanced internships between their college and graduate school years. Moreover, we are looking to partner with the graduate schools of other stellar institutions in their areas of expertise.

One manifestation of all of these points will be our new connections with Israel. As we know, Israel is no longer simply a charity case for Diaspora Jews, but is now an economic powerhouse and major resource specifically in areas of innovation. Over the past few months, we have been working to formulate partnerships with universities in Israel, and I am excited to report that just last week we reached agreements with Bar Ilan University and the Hebrew University to create bridge programs between

our institutions so that a YU student who earns a BA in computer science can complete her or his studies with a Master's degree at Bar Ilan or the Hebrew University in such areas as data science, cybersecurity and information technology. Through the assistance of our alumni, this program will include high-level internships in the start-up and hi-tech industries in Israel. We have been closely working with Israel's education ministry and government on this project, and they are providing us with substantial support because they see Yeshiva University as their natural partners. There will be more announcements like this in the future but my point now is that we will continue to leverage our close ties with Israel to create these kinds of pipelines so that our students will receive the best training in the skill sets necessary to succeed in the marketplace of the future, and the world of tomorrow.

But Israel is just the beginning. The global economy is evolving and emerging markets in places like East Asia and India are growing

in importance. We already have a relationship with a number of universities in China, and have over 30 Chinese students enrolled in our Katz School, and we will be looking to expand further. In addition to growing our tuition base, these efforts will allow us to spread Jewish values and ideas across the world, help shape future global partners and ambassadors for Israel and the Jewish community, and enable our students to develop a worldwide network that will be crucial for their success in the future.

But most importantly, all of these innovative and exciting initiatives will be advanced within the context of the Five Torot. Since its founding, Yeshiva University has looked to open new worlds for its constituencies, placing them within the framework of our moral and religious ideals. Tomorrow's Yeshiva University will continue in that effort. Our differential will always be our Torot, our values and teachings, our sense of rootedness, together with our drive to engage the world, directing



We live in a rapidly changing world. Technology, medicine, education, and communications are progressing and shifting in fundamental ways. This presents daunting challenges but also extraordinary opportunities for humanity. Armed with a 3,000-year-old tradition of wisdom, Yeshiva University's mission is to guide our students and broader society in seizing these opportunities and transforming our world of tomorrow for the better.

the development of our own special skills in the service of others, with the overarching, grand purpose to move history forward and impact the world. And as we move into the next era of our history, we will apply our core principles to our current circumstances, and all of this in service to God.

We live in a rapidly changing world. Technology, medicine, education, and communications are progressing and shifting in fundamental ways. This presents daunting challenges but also extraordinary opportunities for humanity. Armed with a 3,000-year-old tradition of wisdom, Yeshiva University's mission is to guide our students and broader society in seizing these opportunities and transforming our world of tomorrow for the better. We will dedicate ourselves to empowering morally-mature, market-ready graduates with the skill sets for lifelong success, endowing them with both the will and the wherewithal to make a historic, significant impact on an ever-changing world.

This is the future of Yeshiva University.

I will close with one final story:

Last week I spent Shabbat at our Beren campus with our undergraduate women. And in a talk at the end of Shabbat I mentioned to our students

how important it is for us to come together as one united whole; that in a time in which competition and self-focus are the underpinnings of the society in which we live, our student body must exemplify the value of supporting one another and rooting for each other's success. And I mentioned to our students that I am rooting for them, that I am rooting for each of them to succeed in life. And then one woman in the crowd shouted out: "Rabbi, we are rooting for you!"

I was very moved by what she said. And I want to tell you that this is the feeling that I have been experiencing both from inside and outside our university. Over the last number of months, I have been visiting many communities in this country and beyond, and the overwhelming feeling that I have walked away with is how many people are rooting for us to succeed. I have repeatedly encountered a clear appreciation of the crucial importance of Yeshiva University, of the necessity for Yeshiva University to live up to its own ideals, to raise the next generations of leaders, and to serve as not only the premier Jewish higher educational institute but also the spiritual and intellectual epicenter of a robust global movement that unites the international Jewish community together with all of our partners and

friends in its dedication to promoting the moral and material betterment of human society.

On and off campus, there is a great feeling about this moment and a great excitement for our future.

To all of you who have long been part of the Yeshiva University community, who have been nurtured by this institution, who deeply understand the enormous potential that lies within our mission, who wish Yeshiva University not only to grow and expand but to rise and become the place it was always meant to be, and for all those who are new to us, who are meeting Yeshiva University for the first time, who identify with our values, who see the importance of such an institution for the Jewish community and the broader society — now is the time to get involved. The participation of each and every one of you will make a real difference, strengthening and energizing our renewed sense of purpose.

For all of you sitting here today and for all of our friends who are listening throughout the world — now is the time to come together.

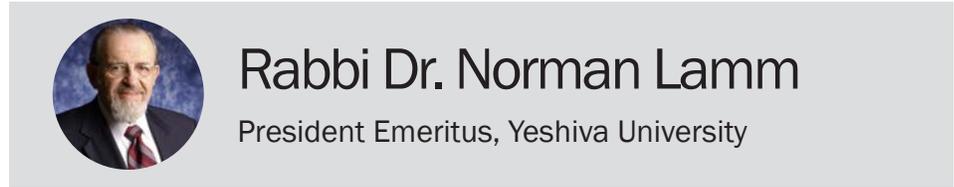
Join us in our journey. Be a part of history, as we maximize our potential, write a new chapter in the Jewish story and work to make a lasting impact on the history of all of humanity.

# Where Angels Fear to Tread

On December 11, 1971, Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm, who was then rabbi of the Jewish Center in Manhattan, delivered a sermon for Parashat Vayeshev and Chanukah titled “Where Angels Fear to Tread.” This sermon touches on the themes of Torat Emet and Torat Chaim and we are including an excerpt to enhance this section of the publication. We thank Rabbi Mark Dratch for his assistance.

One of the greatest difficulties for and challenges to Orthodox Judaism, is modern man’s lack of appreciation of the value of tradition for its own sake. Indeed, modern man often seems to be antagonistic to the past, and anxious to disassociate from it. He worships change, which he often regards as synonymous with progress. Why not, he asks, discard the old and substitute the new for it?

Moreover, contemporary man is anxious to take new notions and put them into practice immediately. Theory should not remain theoretical, it should at once be converted into action. After all, that is the secret of the success of technology which has done so much to transform our lives and make life more liveable:



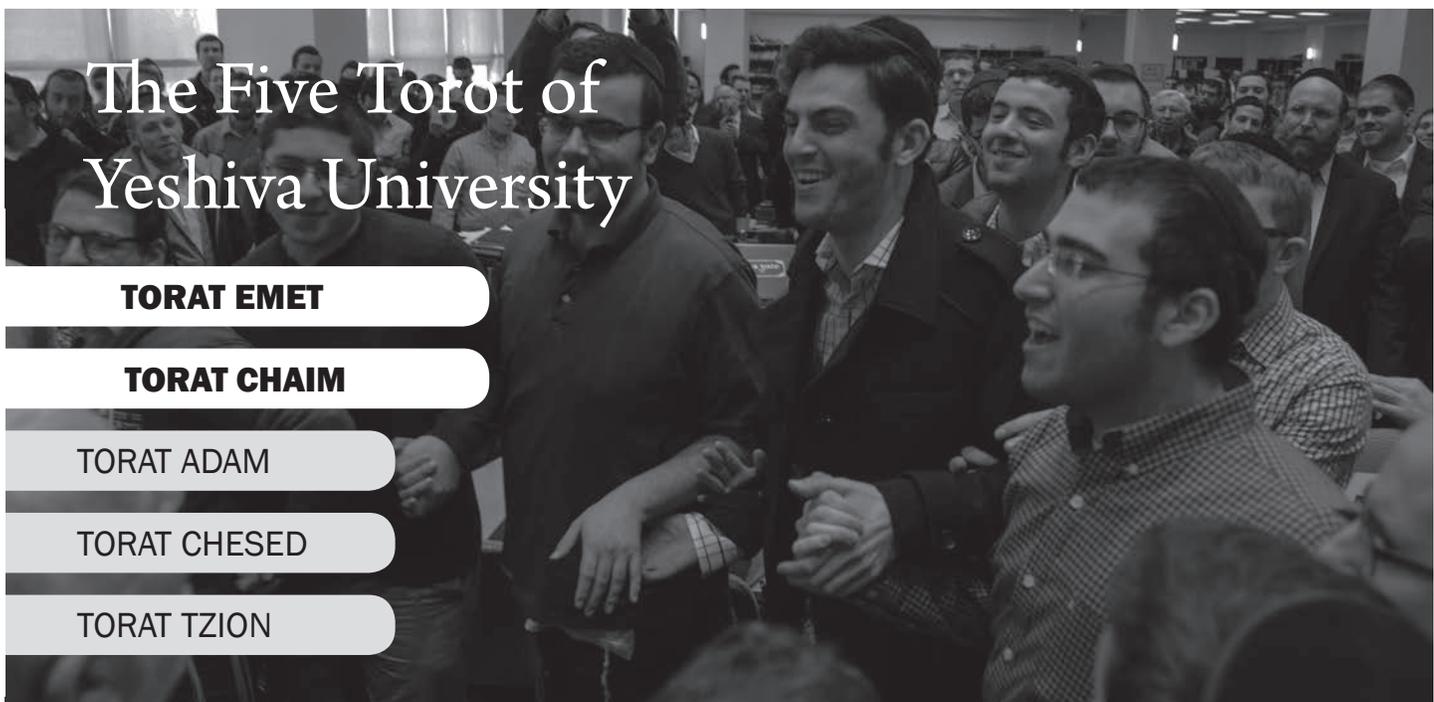
a pure scientist formulates an idea, and immediately the engineers and the inventors begin to develop it into practical gadgets or medicines or equipment. A secularized world, for whom the category of the holy is alien, would like to do the same with religion. It sees nothing wrong with experimentation, innovation, and constant change in the realm of religion and the spirit.

This, indeed, is the spirit of the age, the *zeitgeist*. Hence, it is common for people to consider tradition dated and ready to be jettisoned in favor

of anything that is new either in content or in form.

Morality? — out with the old “code-morality” and in with the New Morality. Services? — we are bored with the traditional services and the cadences and rhythms of the ages. Let us, rather, write our own poetry, and worship to the tune of “rock-n-roll.”

And yet, this is so dangerous — and, even worse, so foolish! A great Anglican thinker, Dean Inge, once said: “A man who marries the age will soon find himself a widower.”



The kernel of this idea may be found in symbolic form in the Haftorah we read this morning, from the Book of Amos. The Prophet tells us that one of the sins for which God will not forgive Israel is:

על מִכְרָם בְּכֶסֶף צְדִיק וְאֶבְיוֹן בְּעִבּוֹר נְעֻלִים.  
*On selling the righteous man for silver and the poor man for shoes.*

#### Amos 2:6

In general, the Prophet is referring to a kind of treachery which allows us to subordinate human values to commercial values. More specifically, the Rabbis saw in this prophetic metaphor a reference in the selling of Joseph by his brothers — a theme which, together with the eating of the fruit of Tree of Knowledge and the dancing about the Golden Calf, is one of the archetypical sins in the Jewish historical consciousness. The brothers sold Joseph, who was a *tzaddik*, righteous, for silver. What of the reference to shoes? Here they tell us that the brothers took the 20 silver pieces which they received for Joseph and with them bought shoes for themselves. Hence, the prophet's warning against repeating the sin of "selling the righteous for silver and the oppressed for shoes."

But what is the significance of shoes, such that the prophet thought it necessary to recall this ancient crime? My grandfather tz"l explains the symbol as follows: in the days of old, when poverty was almost universal, people would use shoes only rarely, only for special occasions, such as walking long distances or, more important, for going places quickly. Otherwise, they would go barefoot. Hence, shoes are the symbol of quickness and impulsiveness. To go barefoot, to expose your feet to the pebbles and rocks and splinters,

is a symbol of the sensitive, the slow, and the deliberate. Shoes signify impetuosity, heavy-handedness as well as heavy-footedness, the mind following the body, thought trailing action. Thus, the brothers of Joseph may have been right in condemning Joseph, but they acted too speedily, too impatiently, they were peremptory and not deliberate when dealing with the survival and destiny of a human being, of their brother. The shoe is thus the emblem of those who rush in where angels fear to tread.

## Don't trample the sacred. When approaching the holy, take your shoes off, exercise sensitivity and reverence, care and caution.

This symbol seems to be consistent throughout the Torah. Thus, when giving the Jews the commandment to observe the Passover while they were yet in Egypt, God tells them to wear their shoes — to spur them on, to get them out quickly, *b'chipazon*. Even more important, when Moses receives his revelation at the burning bush, the message of God to him is:

וַיֹּאמֶר אֵל תִּקְרַב הֵלֶם שֶׁל נְעֻלֶיךָ מֵעַל רַגְלֶיךָ  
כִּי הַמָּקוֹם אֲשֶׁר אַתָּה עוֹמֵד עָלָיו אֲדָמַת קֹדֶשׁ  
הוּא.

... *Remove your shoes from your feet, because the place on which you are standing is hallowed ground.*

#### Shemot 3:5

Don't trample the sacred. When approaching the holy, take your shoes off, exercise sensitivity and reverence,

care and caution.

This was the fatal error of the Greeks which caused the rebellion which we celebrate on Chanukah. The revolution was not primarily a nationalistic assertion of Jewish independence as much as it was a reaction against the gross and stupid insensitivity of the Greeks in violating the religious feelings of the Judeans. We have learned to live without independence for a long time, but when the Greek-Syrians and the Hellenists insisted upon sacrificing to a pagan idol on the spot of the sacred Temple, at that time they were trampling with vulgar boots where angels fear to tread. The result was revolution and the rest of the Chanukah story.

I wish to make it clear that in advocating caution and deliberateness when dealing with matters of the greatest moment, I do not recommend paralysis or institutional inertia. I am pleading to remove shoes, not to plant one's feet in concrete. I am saying that with regard to the sacred, and *only* with regard to the sacred, we should adopt a responsible conservatism and not a stultifying and strangling reaction. Where Halakhah cannot be changed, it should not and must not. But even where it can, and when changed, even then — only when we are barefoot, with the greatest sensitivity towards the sancta and concerns of the past and keeping in mind the possible consequences for the future. Even sacred customs, important traditions, albeit that they do not have the sanction of Halakhah, must be approached with reverence and sensitivity. However, where we are not dealing with the sacred, with Halakhah, with important tradition

and custom, but where we are dealing with habits and institutional customs and techniques, or what the tradition itself has called *minhag sh'tut*, ordinary or sometimes meaningless custom — no such conservatism can lay claim to religious sanction. Human institutions can always improve — even synagogues. It is simply wrong to worship blindly on the altar of the past. A mistake is no less a mistake because it is repeated unquestioningly for 20 or 30 or 50 or 100 years. Error does not become truth because it has the sanction of long usage. Techniques, habits, matters of style all must be subject to intelligent criticism, rational analysis, and constant revision.

The same responsible, moderate conservatism holds true not only with matters directly dealing with religion and religious law, but also with what Judaism considers supremely sacred in another realm: Human destiny and the human mind.

For some time now, biologists have been undertaking great and promising research in genetics and have developed what they refer to as “genetic engineering,” by which they mean the ability to effect changes in a

man’s or the race’s genetic structure. By means of such genetic surgery they hope to weed out defects and thus improve the race. Similarly, psychologists, through the use of behavioral conditioning and psychopharmaceuticals, hope to control man’s mind and passions and direct them towards more creative ends. All of them intend the best for humanity. All those who make such proposals are unquestionably benevolent.

Now, I agree that it is sometimes necessary to poke around in man’s chromosomes or his mind, and thus cure heretofore incurable hereditary illnesses or psychoses. But there must be moral limits, codified in law, on scientific attempts to manipulate human destiny and the human mind. I admire the good intentions of a leading psychologist who, in the daily press, has recently been arguing for pills to be given to heads of state in order to calm them and prevent them from making rash decisions. But I do not trust that psychologist, and not only because of his obvious naiveté. I do not trust anyone who has such enormous power in his hands, because such power corrupts and destroys. The human mind, human

chromosomes — these are sacred, they are repositories of the *tzelem Elokim*, the divine image of man. I do not even place my trust in Nobel Laureates. The techniques of the laboratory which they have mastered with such great eminence, does not qualify them to make momentous moral decisions for all the ages. Let them and let us remove our shoes: humankind is hallowed ground.

To summarize, then, the Prophet Amos — according to our interpretation — teaches us what Jewish history in the Chanukah incident confirms: that the sacred must not be dealt with cavalierly and light-heartedly and impulsively. Rather, we ought to approach it with reverence, with sensitivity, with deliberateness.

Perhaps for that reason, the wearing of leather shoes is forbidden on Yom Kippur: as if we, by our practice, ask forgiveness for having been insensitive throughout the year.

So, let us now be sensitive before it is necessary to ask forgiveness.

For to be sensitive is to be human.

And to be human is to enhance and exemplify the holy.



# The Mastery of Submission

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, in his inaugural address as the new president of Yeshiva University, placed “Toras Emes” — the Torah of Truth — as the unparalleled pillar of the Yeshiva University enterprise. I am honored to be asked to describe this principle as part of our celebration of the appointment of President Berman, and the chapter of Jewish leadership and scholarship that will be his. I humbly do so with my deepest prayers that Hashem continues to bless our new president with strength, wisdom, good counsel and good health as he steers us forward l’hagdil Torah ul’ha’adirah, to grow Torah and glorify it.

I can best describe the educational philosophy inherent in the phrase “Toras Emes” by sharing two vignettes of the Rav zt”l. Both are vivid in my mind and continually orient me.

The first one repeated itself many a time. The Rav would fall silent during



## Rabbi Yaakov Neuburger

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

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a shiur, in the middle of developing an idea. My fellow talmidim and I remember it well. Sometimes the silence lasted but a few moments as he simply searched for the most accurate phrase, the most rigorous presentation. Sometimes it seemed well over 10 minutes, hard as it is to imagine so many years later. Often the silence was interrupted with what would become the first *nusach*, the initial iteration of his idea, only to be refined with greater precision following further moments of reflection. Sometimes it was a question that gave him pause. Most often, he soundlessly deliberated in order to weave together, with absolute consistency, the many texts on his

mind, for which he had inestimable reverence. There was to be no daylight between the responsibilities of the posek, who had to arrive at an actionable halachic conclusion and the teacher who had to present Torah with accuracy and excitement.

The clock was never of consequence. That was the same clock that may well explain the readiness of the young students to gloss over the Rav’s concern, but that readiness carried no weight.

It was during those silences, offered with no apology, that I learned to appreciate the *yiras Shamayim* (fear of Heaven) that demands rigor and

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integrity in understanding Torah, its texts, laws and precepts. Those moments of undisturbed reflection became the “Rashi,” the commentary, to the way we begin our days, “*reishis chochma yiras Hashem*” — the beginning of wisdom is the fear of Heaven (Tehillim 111:10).

At first glance, we may find this experience inconsistent with another vignette frozen in my mind, as it was the first time I merited to hear the Rav. It was 1975, and the RCA membership convened on our campus to hear the Rav reflect:

“... the study of Torah is an act of surrender. That is why Chazal stress so many times the importance of humility, and that the proud person can never be a great scholar, only the humble person. Why is humility necessary? Because the study of Torah means meeting the Almighty, and if a finite being meets the infinite, the Almighty, the Maker of the world, of course this meeting must precipitate a mood of humility, and humility results in surrender. What do we surrender to the Almighty? We surrender two things: first, we surrender to the Almighty the everyday logic, or what I call mercantile logic the logic of the businessman or the utilitarian person, and we embrace another logic — the logic *m'Sinai*. Second, we surrender the everyday will, which is very utilitarian and superficial, and we embrace another will — the will *m'Sinai*.”<sup>1</sup>

The obvious deliberateness with which the Rav chose the word “surrender” portrayed submission, with the attendant rejection of attractive and meaningful intellectual alternatives. To be charged by the author of *The Lonely Man of Faith*, who conceived of “majestic man,” to surrender all of that divinely gifted majesty, became an enduring lesson in *yiras Shamayim* and the immutable truths of Torah.

Throughout the years, we would watch the Rav bring his powerful intellect to the fore to elaborate with unmatched clarity and from that elevated peak, humbly surrender to the requirements of halacha and mesorah. On the one hand, we are enjoined to use the keenest powers of human intellect to uncover G-d's truths. On the other hand, we are expected to submit that same intellect to truths revealed. Indeed, it is that ultimate acquiescence that validates and animates our tireless pursuit to comprehend the will of Hashem, in all its depth and complexity.

Thus, the Rav explained, the importance of the Rambam's statement:

מקדימין לקרות פרשת שמע מפני שיש בה יחוד השם ואהבתו ותלמודו שהוא העיקר הגדול שהכל תלוי בו.

*The section containing Sh'ma Yisrael is read first because it contains the uniqueness of G-d, love for Him and study of His Torah, which is the main principle that everything is dependent on.*  
**Rambam, Hilchos Kerias Sh'ma 1:2**

Why does the Rambam include the study of Torah as part of the mitzvah of *kerias Sh'ma*? The Rav explained that sparing no effort in the pursuit of an accurate interpretation is an act of *kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim* — acceptance of the yoke of Heaven. To do so knowing that we will embrace the truths of Torah, irrespective of the discomfort or sacrifice or counter-cultural position that they may impose, is an expression of the “*ol*,” the yoke of *kabbalas ol malchus Shamayim*.

The concept of *Toras Emes* appears in the berachos that are recited during *Kerias HaTorah*, but after, not before reading that parsha of the Torah. Why is that? The public reading of the Torah was never the opportunity

to engage in the rigor of Torah study. Therefore, it is not introduced with *la'asok b'divrei Torah*, to toil in the words of Torah, but rather with our grateful recognition of the singular chosenness expressed through *matan Torah*. Nevertheless, as we step away from the public presentation of a parsha, we recognize that we embrace that parsha without compromise or apology, and hence recite *v'nasan lanu Toras emes*, He gave us a Torah of Truth.

The mindful pursuit of *Toras Emes* that lies ahead is as vital as it is daunting. All indications are that the minds of the future will be shaped or conditioned by a culture that has little patience for true curiosity or for the rigors of painstaking deliberation. All indications are that the hearts of the future will judge only by the unanchored standards of their prevailing culture. The *bais hamedrash* of *Toras Emes* will challenge all of that and continue to nurture the robust *tzelem Elokim*, image of G-d, with all of its magnificent discussion, noisy debate and silent reflection. The *bais hamedrash* of *Toras Emes* will test many millennials as it demands to be the center around which all else will be valued without apology or concession.

It may well be that the excitement of inquiry and the utter joy of discovery will only be found in that *bais hamedrash*. It is certainly the only address for experiences, which genuinely resonate with the Jewish soul.

## Endnotes

1 Editor's note: Transcript of the speech is available at: <http://arikahn.blogspot.com/2013/03/rabbi-soloveitchik-talmud-torah-and.html>.

# The Aspiring Lights of Chanukah & the Optimism of a Torat Chaim

Fire has always been a source of fascination for me. It thrills me to consider the dual qualities of fire as both a creative and a destructive force. With just small adjustments in temperature or duration, its warmth and heat can be equally deployed toward opposite purposes. Fire represents the power to give life and to cause death, and those who wield its force can only sometimes choose to what end. Just as the lighting of Shabbos candles helps us recognize the powerful creative force that man has been given and the peace that we are choosing to embrace each Shabbos, I wonder what lessons the lights of Chanukah are meant to impart.

The mitzvah of the lighting of the menorah on Chanukah is the only



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mitzvah that is unique to the chag, and its fulfillment represents much more than just the lights of the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash and the miracle that occurred when the oil lasted longer than expected. According to Rav Kook, in *Olat Re'iyah* (pg. 435), the unique nature of the Chanukah lights is reflected in the language of the beracha, which refers to many lights and is strangely written in the singular.

אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

*Who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us to light the candle of Chanukah.*

The suggestion here is that when making this blessing we are not only focused on the lights right before us. Instead, the lights of Chanukah are representative of another light, the inner sanctity of the lights of the Mikdash. In this way, the events of Chanukah, including the political developments, the military victories and the ensuing challenges of the Hasmonean Age, are simply the

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setting for us to appreciate the lessons of the “light” of the Menorah, the Mikdash and more.

What layered lessons can we learn from the Chanukah lights? How do we see their meaning in our sources?

Certainly, lighting our menorah on Chanukah commemorates the inauguration of a newly sanctified Temple, and is explicitly celebrating the end of the defilement of the Holy Temple by Greek conquerors. Still, the simple imagery and symbolism of the lights that banish the darkness of Greek subjugation just barely scratches the surface. Instead, the lights of Chanukah represent a more complete victory.

We can see the diverse aspects of Chanukah in the tefillah of *Al Hanissim*, where we read of the miraculous Jewish victory in a series of poetic dichotomies. In this list, we praise Hashem for the unlikely physical and military victories, which are noted in two of the five pairs of opposites.

Still, these obvious military miracles are overshadowed by a longer list of spiritual victories. A quick comparative count of the references made here between the military and political victories and the spiritual victory makes it obvious. What’s surprising is that the prominence of the spiritual threat and the resulting victory is somehow linked intrinsically to, and represented by, the purity of the lights of the Menorah. As we dig deeper into the meaning of the lights of Chanukah, we begin to see these lights as representing a more significant light in Torah, rather than just the actual light that was emitted from the oil that miraculously burned longer than it should have on Chanukah.

### Political/ Military Terms

רבים ביד מעטים  
(The many in the hands of the few)

גבורים ביד חלשים  
(The mighty in the hands of the weak)

כשעמדה מלכות  
יון הרשעה על עמך  
(When the evil Greek empire stood over Your nation)

### Spiritual Terms

טמאים ביד טהורים (The defiled in the hands of the pure)

ישראל (Israel)

רשעים ביד צדיקים (The evil in the hands of the righteous)

ודים ביד עוסקי תורתך (The wanton in the hands of those who toil in Your Torah)

להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך (To cause them to forget Your Torah and to move them away from Your commandments)

ולך עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולמך (And for You, You made a great and holy name in Your world)

While both the military and spiritual victories are mentioned, as we can see from numerous examples, the spiritual victory is clearly more prominent. It is commonly asserted that the political and military conflict was not just a question of our physical survival; it represented a cultural clash between Judaism and Greek Hellenism. While there are very real merits to this claim, we also must remember that Greek culture wasn’t uniformly vilified, and was indeed esteemed at times by the Jews (*Megillah* 9b). Therefore, it is especially important to see the lights of Chanukah as an intentional and specific feature that epitomizes the nature of the threat of the Greeks and the victory of the Chashmonaim.

Furthermore, the way Chanukah is recorded and celebrated in the rabbinic texts places a greater focus on the miracle of the oil that lasted eight days, rather than on the extraordinary military/political victory. This understanding is seen when the Gemara explains why we are forbidden to fast or offer eulogies on the 25th of Kislev. The text summarily explains that the holiness of these days

derives from the discovery of a pure flask of Temple oil and the miracle of that oil lasting eight days. As if that was the only moment of significance! In fact, according to the Gemara’s account, the holiday commemorating this miracle was only established a full year later — seemingly completely disregarding the actual military victory, which was clearly completed as the Greek forces were routed from Jerusalem.

מאי חנוכה דתנו רבנן בכ"ה בכסליו יומי  
דחנוכה תמניא אינון דלא למספד בהון ודלא  
להתענות בהון שכשנכנסו יוונים 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 ועשאו ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.

*What is Chanukah? Our rabbis taught that [starting] on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev [begin] the eight days of Chanukah. They are days of celebration of not eulogizing and fasting, since when the Yevanim went into the sanctuary they defiled all the oils in the Temple, and when the rule of the house of Chashmonaim was mighty and*

victorious over them they searched and didn't find one flask of oil that was left intact with the seal of the Kohain Gadol, and they only had enough to light [the Menorah] for one day. A miracle occurred and they lit from it for eight days. In the following year they established and made it days of holiday with Hallel and thanksgiving.

### Shabbat 21b

According to the *Bnei Yissaschar*, Kislev no. 3, this reflects the fact that while the miracle of the oil lasting eight days was evident in the first year, it was assumed to be just a one-time event. Instead, a year later, the miracle was recognized as connected to revealing the kedusha of light from time immemorial. Perhaps this emphasis on the miracle of the oil directs us to explore the layers of meaning associated with the Chanukah menorah, since therein lies the core insights into the timeless nature of the celebration. Furthermore, we may uncover contemporary lessons from this enigmatic battle of a Diaspora Jewry confronting the temptations of a mass culture fighting valiantly to retain the purity of its holy light.

First, we must start at the beginning. The Menorah is first mentioned in the Torah in relation to the desert sanctuary, the Mishkan. There, the mitzvah of kindling the Menorah was entrusted to Aaron the High Priest.

דָּבַר אֶל אֶהֱרֹן וְאָמַרְתָּ אֵלָיו בְּהֶעֱלִיתָ אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת אֶל מוֹל פְּנֵי הַמְּנוֹרָה יָאִירוּ שִׁבְעַת הַנֵּרוֹת.  
Speak to Aaron and say to him, "When you mount the lamps, let the seven lamps give light at the front of the lampstand".

### Bamidbar 8:2

At the time of the dedication of the Mishkan, Moshe's brother Aharon was upset that at this original inauguration in the desert he wasn't included in the

tribes' sacrificial offerings. Instead, Rashi explains, quoting Midrash Tanchuma, Aharon was given the mitzvah of lighting the menorah — which was deemed "greater."

לָמָּה נִסְמְכָה פְּרִשְׁתָּ הַמְּנוֹרָה לְפָרֶשֶׁת הַנְּשִׂיאִים? לְפִי שִׁכְשָׁרְתָּהּ אֶהֱרֹן הַנֶּבֶת הַנְּשִׂיאִים חֲלָשָׁה אִזּוּ דַעְתּוֹ, שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה עִמָּהּ בַּחֲנֻכָּה לֹא הוּא וְלֹא שִׁבְטוֹ, אָמַר לוֹ הַקֹּבֵץ הַחַיִּיד שֶׁלָּךְ גְּדוּלָּה מִשְׁלֵהֶם, שֶׁאֵתָּה מְדַלֵּק וּמְטִיב אֶת הַנֵּרוֹת.

*Why is the section about the candelabrum juxtaposed with the section dealing with the offerings of the princes? Because when Aaron saw the dedication offerings of the princes, he felt distressed because neither he nor his tribe was with them in the dedication, whereupon the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him, "By your life! Your part is of greater importance than theirs, for you will kindle and set in order the lamps."*

### Rashi, Bamidbar 8:2

Ramban further notes that Aharon was comforted specifically with the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah as compensation, since this would be a mitzvah that outlasted the institution of korbanot, which were dependent on the Temple. The lights of the Menorah, on the other hand, would last forever.

עֲנִין הַהֲגָדָה הַזֹּאת, לְדַרוֹשׁ רִמּוֹז מִן הַפְּרָשָׁה עַל חֲנוּכַּת שַׁל נְרוֹת שֶׁהִיָּתָה בְּבֵית שְׁנֵי עַל יְדֵי אֶהֱרֹן וּבְנָיו, רְצוּנִי לומר חֲשׂוֹמֵנָאֵי כְּהֵן גְּדוֹל וּבְנָיו.

*The purpose of this midrash is to offer a hint from the section [about the Menorah] relating to the "Chanukah of lights" that took place during the time of the Second Temple by Aharon and his children, meaning the Chashmonean high priest and his children.*

### Ramban, Bamidbar 8:2

The lights of the desert menorah are a foreshadowing of the Menorah of the future temples and of Chanukah

as well. Chanukah is one of the only *moadim* (festivals) that will be celebrated even after the coming of Moshiach (see *Gevurot Yitzchak*, Chanukah no. 36). Another proof of the quality of spiritual permanence in the Chanukah lights is the fact that Chanukah's permanence is referenced in the special affinity Hashem uses to declare his affection for Chanukah with the possessive "*mo'adai*," My holidays:

דָּבַר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֲשֶׁר תִּקְרְאוּ אֹתָם מִקְרָאֵי קֹדֶשׁ אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדָי.

*Speak to the Jewish people and say to them: These are the holidays of God, which you shall proclaim as sacred occasions, these are My holidays.*

### Vayikra 23:2

מוֹעֲדֵי ה' אֵלֶּיךָ אֵינּוֹן חֹג הַמִּצּוֹת חֹג הַשְּׁבוּעוֹת וְחֹג הַסּוּכוֹת הָרִי תֵּלֶת תֵּלֶת אוֹחַרְנִין רִאשׁוֹן הַשָּׁנָה חֲנוּכַּת פּוּרִים ... תֵּלֶת אַחֲרֵינֵיךְ אֵיךְרוֹן אֵלֶּה הֵם מוֹעֲדֵי.

*"These are the holidays of God," these are Pesach, Shavuot and Sukkot. Behold there are three. There are three others, Rosh Hashanah, Chanukah and Purim ... The last three are called "these are My holidays."*

### Tikkunei Zohar Chadash

The Rambam also shows a special affection for the mitzvah of ner Chanukah by declaring its treasured status as an exceedingly cherished mitzvah.

מִצְוֹת גֵּר הַחֲנֻכָּה מִצְוָה חֲבִיבָה הִיא עַד מְאֹד וְצָרִיךְ אָדָם לְהִזָּהֵר בָּהּ כְּדִי לְהוֹדִיעַ הַנֶּס וְלְהוֹסִיף בְּשִׁבְחָהּ הָאֵל וְהוֹדִיעָה לוֹ עַל הַנֶּסִים שֶׁעָשָׂה לָנוּ.

*The precept of lighting the Chanukah lamp is exceedingly precious, and one should carefully observe it in order to acclaim the miracle, ever praising and thanking God for the miracles which he has performed for us.*

### Hilchot Chanukah 4:12

In fact, *Megillat Taanit* records many mini-holidays instituted during the Second Temple period, each marking various Hasmonean victories. These smaller victories and minor holidays were also accorded temporary halakhic status, which prevented people from eulogizing and fasting on those days. According to the Gemara, *Rosh Hashanah* 18b, after the destruction of the Second Temple “*batla Megillat Taanit*,” the holidays listed are no longer observed, and Chanukah only retains its status due to the mitzvah of ner Chanukah.

The focus on the miracle of the *pach hashemen*, the oil that lasted eight days, instead of the political autonomy, feels more worthy of celebration since we are all aware that the two hundred years of Hasmonean rule were marked by successive corruption and tragedy. The Chanukah lights offer us the opportunity to celebrate a different focus, one of significance to our national character. The miracle of the oil lasting was in fact quite an astounding miracle. Noting that there was enough oil for one day, the *Beit Yosef* (*Orach Chaim* 670) asks why we celebrate eight days and not seven? The *Pri Chadash* suggests that this reflects a minor focus on the first day celebrating the military victory, and a major focus on the remaining seven days for the miracle of the oil. Rav Michael Rosensweig notes<sup>1</sup> further that many Achronim wonder why the halakhic principle of “*tuma hutra b’tzibbur*,” the principle that laws of purity are suspended in order to fulfill public offerings (*Yoma* 6b),

wasn’t applied by the Kohanim when purifying the Temple. In this case, the Menorah could have been lit even using defiled oil, making the miracle of pure oil lasting eight days seemingly a superfluous miracle. Rav Rosensweig suggests that unlike other mitzvot, with regard to ner Chanukah, the Gemara, *Shabbat* 21b, discusses various levels of observance, and seems to encourage the highest level, *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, as the universal standard. Surprisingly, this has become the widely accepted norm in our current practice as well.

The *pach hashemen* is the focus of Chanukah because it was this miracle that returned this aspirational mode of mitzvah observance to the national scene. Lighting the Menorah with pure untainted oil was not necessary halakhically, but striving for holiness in our mitzvot restored our national character. It was precisely this aspirational approach to mitzvah observance that Antiochus’ Hellenization was designed to prevent. The persecutions that led up to the Hasmonian revolt emphasized public displays of fealty to the Greek Pantheon and to the prohibition of all public displays of distinct Jewish practice. Being a Jew in this age meant blending into the social norms as the Mityavanim did. The choice to make their Jewish practices mere private preferences while adopting the majority culture allowed a spirit of mediocrity to prevail. It was this that threatened Jewish continuity. Lighting the Menorah with oil that was pure represents a different type of kindling. Here we have the performance of

a mitzvah done in a manner that is reigniting the spark of *avodat Hashem*. Mitzvot that are done by rote, fulfilling only the minimal requirements, will ultimately be empty, and lacking in depth and meaning.

The lights of the Chanukah menorah remind us to aspire to perform mitzvot in their fullest sense. In lighting the ner Chanukah, we tackle the societal assumptions that challenge our distinctive *avodat Hashem* as “too different.” By embracing the practice of *mehadrin min hamehadrin* we reject mediocrity. In this way, the lights of Chanukah express the notion of “*ki ner mitzvah V’Torah or*” — because mitzvah observance is a candle and Torah is light (*Mishlei* 6:23) — by connecting the holiness from the lights in the Mishkan, through the service of the Kohanim, to all mitzvot with the capacity to shine through any darkness and pierce the prominent societal impurities. In this way, Chanukah inspires us to strive to ignite each mitzvah every day. Thus when we light the Chanukah menorah, we are evoking the spiritual durability of all mitzvot; the resilience of a faith that endures not because of our brute force — but rather, because we wield a *Torat Chaim*, a life-giving force that warms and continues to create, as we aspire toward an *avodat Hashem* that is always striving and never settling for less.

## Endnotes

1 “Chanukah as a Holiday of Idealism and Maximalism,” available at [www.torahweb.org/torah/2006/moadim/rros\\_chanukah.html](http://www.torahweb.org/torah/2006/moadim/rros_chanukah.html).



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# Kiddush haShem in the Public Square

Chanukah is a very particularistic holiday. The *Book of Maccabees* chronicles the struggle of a single faction within a small nation to preserve its national identity in the wake of colonization and cultural imperialism. Without resorting to homilies about light, can Chanukah teach us anything about what Rabbi Berman has aptly termed “Torat Adam: the lofty sense of human dignity”? Is there any universalist message for Jew and Gentile in our holiday?

There is a lot at stake these days. Has there been a time when there were so many forbidden topics in polite conversation among neighbors, colleagues, friends and even relatives? The cacophony of shrill voices in the media, in the streets, and wherever



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people gather has reached a deafening crescendo with no relief in sight. More than ever before, it appears that the fabric of civilized society is ripping apart. Can those who would mend the tear draw inspiration from this very parochial holiday?

The answer may perhaps be found in the one Torah mitzvah associated with the holiday: *Mitzvat kiddush ha-Shem* (the commandment to sanctify the name of God). It figures prominently in *II Book of Maccabees*, the earliest literary record of Jews opting for

martyrdom rather than violating a precept of the Torah. The source of the mitzvah is found in Parashat Emor:

וְלֹא תִחַלְלוּ אֶת שֵׁם קִדְשִׁי וְנִקְדַּשְׁתִּי בְּתוֹךְ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל אֲנִי ה' מְקַדְשְׁכֶם.

*And you shall not profane My Holy Name; but I will be sanctified among the children of Israel: I am the Lord Who sanctifies you.*

**Vayikra 22:32**

Its very position in Emor is noteworthy, coming as it does at the end of a parashah devoted to laws

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of holiness directed principally to Kohanim. The focus on the purity of rituals in the Temple is turned to the entire people. Just as the priests are holy, so are all Jews. The Kohanim are not the only vehicle for sanctifying the world; the entire people of Israel must play a role as well.

A close reading of the above verse reveals an apparent redundancy. We are enjoined not to profane God's Name so that He will be sanctified among the people of Israel. Are not profanation and sanctification two sides of the same coin? Why repeat the commandment in both positive and negative language?

Chazal (*Sanhedrin* 74b) observe that there is another notable difference between the two clauses of the verse. The first, the command not to profane God's Holy Name, is addressed to a general audience without qualification. The second clause specifically mentions the Children of Israel. Private acts that desecrate God's Name are forbidden, but the obligation to perform a public act of *kiddush ha-Shem* must be witnessed by at least ten Jews. Otherwise, such acts are forbidden.

What act of sanctification would be supremely praiseworthy if done in the presence of ten Jews but prohibited otherwise? Chazal explain: if a Jew or Jewess is threatened with death unless he or she violates a Torah commandment, he or she should comply. Private martyrdom does not override the mitzvah to preserve one's life. If, however, the violation is one of three (murder, idolatry, or forbidden relations), the victim must suffer martyrdom rather than submit, even in private. The second clause, then, refers only to public acts of martyrdom and is not restricted

to violations of the three cardinal sins. In order to qualify, it must be performed in the presence of ten Jews. Public acts, then, are defined by the halakhah, at least regarding *kiddush ha-Shem*, in terms of the number of Jewish witnesses. It is only regarding the three cardinal sins listed above that a Jew must give his life rather than commit even in the presence of a multitude of non-Jews.

Simply stated, the ultimate act of sacrifice, martyrdom, is constrained by an overriding positive commandment, to preserve life. We cannot voluntarily go beyond the law and accept martyrdom when we are not so obligated, because this would violate another commandment. How about when the stakes are not as high, when the loss is personal or financial? Is there any obligation to seek out opportunities to sanctify God's Name in our everyday dealings with gentiles?

The Talmud is replete with examples of sages who exerted great effort or suffered significant financial loss not just to avoid reflecting badly on God and His Torah, but to elicit a gentile's praise. One such story is found in the Talmud Yerushalmi (*Bava Metzia* Chapter II, Halakhah 5). I first heard it 45 years ago in a lecture at Yeshivat Merkaz haRav by the late Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel Rav Shlomo Goren z"tl, at that time the Chief Rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces:

שמעון בן שטח הוה עסיק בהדא כיתנא אמרין ליה תלמידיו ר' ארפי מינג ואנן זבנין לך חדא חמר ולית את לעי סוגין. ואזולן זבנון ליה חדא חמר מחד סירקאי ותלי ביה חדא מרגלי. אתון לגביה אמרין ליה מן כדון לית את צריך לעי תובן. אמר לון למה אמרין ליה זבנינן לך חד חמר מחד סירקיי ותלי ביה חדא מרגלי. אמר לון וידע בה מרה אמרין ליה לא א"ל לון איזל חזר.

*Shimon ben Shetach was a dealer in flax.*

*His students said to him: Rabbi, give up this trade and we will acquire for you a donkey so you will not need to trouble yourself so. They went and bought him a donkey from an Arab merchant. The donkey had a pearl tied around its neck. They came to their Rav and told him, Now you will not need to toil so. He said to them, Why? They said to him, we acquired a donkey for you from an Arab merchant with a pearl around its neck. He said to them, does the owner know about this? They said, no. He said to them, go and return it.*

The Yerushalmi analyzes the story, placing it within its halakhic context:

... אפילו כמאן דמר גזילו של עכו"ם אסור כל עמא מודיי שאבידתו מותרת. מה אתון סברין שמעון בן שטח ברברין הוה. בעי הוה שמעון בן שטח משמע בריך אלהון דיהודאי מאגר כל הדין עלמא.

*...Even if we maintain one may not steal from pagans, everyone admits a lost object is permitted. The master responded: do you think Shimon ben Shetach would appropriate property in this way? Shimon ben Shetach simply wanted to hear the gentile say, Blessed is the God of Israel, more than any reward in the universe.*

I can remember to this day how quiet the Beit Midrash was when Rav Goren quoted that *sugya*. It was only years later, when I began to study the Yerushalmi seriously, that I read the continuation of the *sugya*. Characteristically, the Talmud wonders about the source for Shimon ben Shetach's approach. Was there a verse? A mishnah, perhaps? An oral tradition from Sinai?

ויידא אמרה דא רבי חנינה משתעי הדין עובדא רבנין סבייא זבנין חד כרי דחישין מאילין דאיסרטוס ואשכחון ביה חדא צררא דדינרי וחזרוניה להון אמרין בריך אלהון יהודאי.

*And from where did he learn this? From*

a story told by R. Chanina. Older sages had bought a pile of wheat from gentile soldiers in which they found a pile of gold dinars which they returned. The soldiers responded: Blessed be the God of the Jews.

The Yerushalmi continues recounting similar stories of Jews who elicited praise from gentiles for the God of Israel. So is the Name of God sanctified in our world.

Let's look more closely at the story of Shimon ben Shetach. There is one important detail that the Talmud makes certain to supply. The tanna specifically asks if the Arab merchant is aware that he has lost the pearl tied around the neck of the donkey he sold. The students answer that he isn't. Why does the Talmud include this detail? Simply because if the Arab merchant had been aware that the students had found his pearl and had not voluntarily returned it, then there could potentially have been a case of *chilul ha-Shem*, the flip side of the obligation to sanctify God's Name. The Talmud makes it clear that they would have had no obligation to return the lost property of a non-Jew. The Yerushalmi wants to be clear that there was no legal obligation for Shimon ben Shetach to do as he did. His full motivation was the Arab merchant's admiration for the God of Israel in whose name he acted.

Again, the tanna's action was not covered legally by either clause of the verse in Emor that occasioned our discussion. He was neither obligated to return the pearl as a positive act of *kiddush ha-Shem* nor prohibited from keeping it in order to prevent *chilul ha-Shem*. He acted for one reason only, so that a non-Jew would be moved to bless the God of Israel.

The chain of stories here and elsewhere in rabbinic literature (Rav

Goren presents more examples in his subsequent writings) demonstrate the concern of the rabbinic tradition for the universal attitude of the world toward the Jewish people. *Kiddush ha-Shem*, so intimately associated with the very nationalistic holiday of Chanukah, is an object lesson in Torat Adam, the universal dignity of humanity.

How wonderful that our newly invested President included Torat Adam in his global agenda for our Yeshiva University. It is a value about which the Torah studies faculty is passionate. Torat Adam informs the Torah studies requirements, especially in the Sy Syms School of Business, where students learn to participate in the global marketplace just as the rabbis of the Talmud did.

For a yeshiva in particular, there is an important lesson in pedagogy in the Yerushalmi we have discussed. The most effective means for teaching the practice of Torat Adam is through its exercise by the leaders and teachers we most respect. The Talmud very abruptly and tersely asked, from where did Shimon ben Shetach learn the moral imperative to evoke admiration and love of God? The answer was from the behavior of R. Chanina and then others who acted with the same passion for the love of the God of Israel.

The brilliance of Torah scholars illuminates the mind. The noble behavior of those we respect, not only scholars but community leaders, parents, and fellow Jews, inspires the heart. We have been fortunate to sit in the shadow of world-class *talmidei chachamim* in our yeshiva. Equally important is the inspiration we have drawn from the way they conduct themselves in and out of the *beit ha-midrash*.

Sometimes stories teach us far more than even the most novel and penetrating Torah insights. In the short time since the loss of Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l, we, his bereaved students, have told and retold anecdotes about him. Rav Aharon not only wrote eloquently on the ethical imperatives in our texts that promote devotion to Torat Adam, he lived them. The stories are what animate us, even as we reread the essays and texts.

Rabbi Berman's address was a challenge to us all to promote our core values among our students, both while they are on campus and when they leave us to live their own Torah u'Madda lives. In the world outside the *beit ha-midrash*, there are more Jews learning Talmud than at any time in our history. Kosher dining choices are more numerous than ever more. Sabbath observance is no longer the novelty it once was. From these perspectives, the religious Jewish world might be adjudged a success.

But then there is Torat Adam and the call to elicit blessings of and admiration for the God of Israel and His Torah. There are too many Jews incarcerated for white collar crimes. That they do *Daf Yomi* does not mitigate the sting. When a Jewish central banker in a foreign country asks me not to wear a kippah when I speak on financial matters because "Orthodox Jews have a reputation for cutting ethical corners in business," I can only think of Shimon ben Shetach and his colleagues. We must embrace Torat Adam as a core principle of our program so that in the years ahead, Jew and non-Jew, religious and secular, will be moved to say with love and admiration, Blessed be the God of Israel.

# Chanukah: The Celebration of Chesed

א"ר אלעזר מאי דכתיב (משלי לא, כו) פיה פתחה בחכמה ותורת חסד על לשונה וכי יש תורה של חסד ויש תורה שאינה של חסד ... איכא דאמרי תורה ללמדה זו היא תורה של חסד שלא ללמדה זו היא תורה שאינה של חסד.



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*R. Elazar said, What is the meaning of the verse, "Her mouth opens with wisdom and a Torah of compassion (torat chesed) is on her tongue"? Is there is a Torah that is compassionate and a Torah that is not compassionate? ... There are those that say, [learning] Torah to teach others is Torah of compassion and [learning] without intent to teach others is Torah without compassion.*

**Sukkah 49b**

**T**here is a very significant difference between secular law and Torah law. Regarding secular law, the Mishna in *Avos* (3:2) tells us that "one is to pray on behalf of the government (in the land in which they live), as without their laws, one would swallow another alive." Secular law maintains law and order while providing individuals their inalienable rights and protections. Torah law, by sharp contrast, is not only inclusive of the former — *sur me'rah*, preventing

one from damaging and inflicting harm on another — but also includes *asei tov*; Torah law not only legislates, it refines. A few examples: The mitzvos of *leket*, *shikcha* and *pe'ah*, agricultural mitzvos that apply in the Land of Israel, in which gleanings and forgotten bundles and a corner of the field are to be left for the poor. The *Chinuch* (216) explains that Hashem wants His nation to be crowned with good character and a generous spirit. He therefore legislated these mitzvos.

## The Five Torot of Yeshiva University

TORAT EMET

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The Jewish farmer was not born good, he was transformed by the mitzvos to be a good person.

The Torah itself begins and ends with *chesed*, acts of kindness. In chapter 3 of Bereishis, Hashem Himself clothes Adam and Eve, and the Torah closes with Hashem personally burying Moshe. The Vilna Gaon teaches that one can get a good understanding of the nature of a book by noting its beginning and end.

Moreover, while the Torah has many mitzvos that take into account *tza'ar ba'alei chaim*, sensitivities and feelings of animals, it legislates one Jew to assist another, and gives it higher priority than *tza'ar ba'alei chaim*. There is no law in our beloved United States that a citizen must stop to assist a stranger to fix a flat tire. The Torah legislates that one is to assist a Jew in loading an animal — *teinah* — and in helping to unload a load that has been dislodged and causes pain to the animal — *perika*. However, the Talmud, *Bava Metziah* (32b), teaches that one must help an enemy load his animal prior to helping a friend unload his animal, even if the latter has an additional aspect of *tza'ar ba'alei chaim*. This is in order to refine one's character by legislating that he help his enemy, and thereby subdue his negative inclination.

It is interesting to note that the term used extensively in the Talmud referring to the Torah is *Rachmana*, meaning the Merciful One. Constantly the Torah is referred to as a work of mercy and compassion.

*Olam chesed yibaneh*, the world is built upon *chesed* (Tehillim 29:3), and extending *chesed*. Reading Parshas Noach a few months ago, we could ask the following question: The entire floating zoo was a combination of

many miracles. To begin, the Torah gives us the dimensions of the ark — its length, approximately the size of one-and-a-half football fields — which at first glance seems quite large. However, the Ramban in his commentary (6:19) teaches that, in reality, 10 arks of this size could not contain all the animals, birds and their food supply for the year. So why does the Gemara in *Sanhedrin* (108b) teach that Noach and his children were busy around the clock feeding the animals? Why didn't Hashem perform another

## Just as the *Shulchan Aruch* is a manual for how to observe Shabbos and kashrus, our rich mesorah provides direction in how to perform *chesed*.

miracle that once a week, Noach would deposit food into an automatic feeder? Then he would have the rest of the time for himself — if not R&R, then for introspection and reflection upon the colossal task that awaited him, to rebuild the world.

The answer given is that since the world was destroyed because it was full of “*chomas*” — violence — Noach had to lay the foundation of the new world by extending *chesed* 24/7 to the animals. In so doing, he created positive energy upon which the new world order would be established.

There is an internal struggle and dialectic that ideally we should all consider, namely our allocation of time and energy. On the one hand Hillel, in *Avos* (1:14) teaches, “If

I am not for myself, who will be for me?” But on the other hand, continues Hillel, “If I am for myself, who am I?” The first time around, I am learning the Daf Yomi with just the text, the second time with Tosfos, the third with Maharsha. Who has time for others? In addition, I have an obligation to support and nurture my family, who has time for others? Thus the question of how we are to allocate our time and resources, suggest both Rav Shimon Shkop zt”l in his introduction to the *Shaarei Yoshier* and Rav Moshe Feinstein zt”l, *Igros Moshe*, E.H. 4:26 (4), is that ideally we should give a tenth of our time and resources to others, to the community. This resolution ideally creates the environment for my personal growth and for that of my family, while at the same time requiring me to contribute to society. Thus a Jew does *chesed* not only to fulfill the 611<sup>th</sup> mitzvah, that of *v'halachta b'drachav* — to emulate His ways (Devarim 28:9) and to fulfill *bikur cholim* — visiting the sick, and *nichum aveilim* — comforting the mourners, as He did and does. The Jew does *chesed* as a fulfillment of the mitzvah of *v'ahavta l're'acha kamocho* — loving our fellow as ourselves (Vayikra 19:18), which Rabbi Akiva taught was a mainstay of Torah.

Interestingly, there is a *Toras Chesed*, literally a Torah of “how to.” Just as the *Shulchan Aruch* is a manual for how to observe Shabbos and kashrus, our rich mesorah provides direction in how to perform *chesed*. The Chofetz Chaim in his *Ahavas Chesed* (Book 3 Chapter 7) teaches that *chesed* itself needs to be done in a manner reflecting *chesed*, and often ingenuity. You can assist in a manner that helps the recipient, but at the same time compromises his dignity; or you can assist in a way in which the recipient literally believes

he is helping you by accepting. A classic example: You go to the supermarket and buy a case of canned goods. You come home and take a hammer and slightly damage each can enough to tell the needy neighbor that they sold this case at an extremely low price because of the “damaged goods”; the neighbor gets a bargain, and you performed a mitzvah in the highest way possible.

There are numerous connections between Chanukah and *chesed*. To begin with, we find regarding Chanukah the unusual halacha that even if one is destitute, he is to fulfill the mitzvah of ner Chanukah, even if it means selling his garment or begging for assistance (*Orach Chaim* 671:1). This breaks most of the rules. If we are obligated to fulfill a positive mitzvah, we must spend up to one fifth of our possessions, but we are not required to beg for funds (*Orach Chaim* 656). Why is ner Chanukah different? An answer suggested by the Rav zt”l, is that the entire environment of Chanukah is rooted in Hashem acting with us *lifnim meshuras hadin* — above and beyond the letter of the law. In reality, there was no need for the miracle of the *pach shemen*. We won the war, defeated the Greeks, freed the Temple from those who had violated it; those miracles could have been sufficient. Moreover, we could have used impure oil to light the Menorah as *tumah hutra b'tzibur* — the rules of ritual impurity are waived for communal offerings. The miracle of the Menorah was in actuality a Divine wink showing the Jewish people that He is not only there to preserve the Jewish nation as He swore to do, but that He has a warm, special relationship with us.

מחוץ לפרוכת העדות יערוך וכי לאורה הוא צריך והלא כל ארבעים שנה שהלכו בני ישראל במדבר לא הלכו אלא לאורו אלא 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.

*With regard to the Temple candelabrum, it is stated: “Outside the veil of the testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, shall Aaron order it from evening to morning before the Lord continually; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations” (Leviticus 24:3). It must be understood: And does God require its light for illumination at night? Didn’t the children of Israel, all forty years that they walked in the wilderness, walk exclusively by His light, the pillar of fire? Rather, the lighting of the candelabrum is testimony to mankind that the Divine Presence rests among Israel. The Gemara asks: What is this testimony? Rav said: That is the westernmost lamp in the candelabrum in which the measure of oil placed was the same measure of oil as was placed in the other lamps, and nevertheless he would light the others from it each day and with it he would conclude, i.e., the westernmost lamp would continue burning throughout the day after all the others were extinguished.*

**Shabbat 22b (Translation: The William Davidson digital edition of the Koren Noé Talmud)**

When the Beit Hamikdash was in full function, there was a daily miracle visible at the Menorah, whereby the *ner maaravi*, the westernmost candle, burned continually, outlasting the other six branches though the same amount of oil was placed therein. This provided testimony to all that the Divine presence dwelled in the Jewish nation. The miracle of the Menorah conveyed this message again.

The 611th mitzvah of *v’halachta b’drachav* prescribes that we follow and emulate Hashem’s behavior. He went above and beyond the call of duty, and we must do so as well. Therefore, we require the poor person to beg for funds in order to fulfill this mitzvah which, in turn, enables the community to fulfill its duty of *chesed* in an “above and beyond” manner. Moreover, it is fascinating to note that the *Magen Avraham* begins his commentary on Chanukah not by addressing a specific law of Chanukah but by publicizing an established custom that the poor young men of the community would go from door to door, home to home to receive charity on Chanukah — Chanukah gelt. He does not explain why or how this practice originated. Perhaps, in keeping with the rationale of the Rav, as Hashem went beyond the letter of the law with us, we respond in kind by extending kindness to others. [Others including *Responsa Imrei Kohain* (38) suggest that as the Rambam teaches, *Hilchos Chanukah* (3:2), that part of the Greek oppression was that they confiscated our wealth, now that we have some resources the practice was to do *tzedakah* and *chesed* with it.]

In addition, the Arizal writes that at the time of the lighting of the Menorah, ideally, we should keep in mind the 13 Middos — the Attributes of Mercy. This further suggests, as found in the Talmud, *Rosh Hashana* (17b), that we should not only recite these Middos, but *ya’asu l’fanai* — we should perform and actualize these principles. Thus, the minhag of the needy coming to the “doors of the community” might well signify the following: The door is now surrounded by the mezuzah on one side and the Chanukah lights on the other. The mezuzah testifies to

Hashem's existence and the Chanukah lights testify to His care and embrace for us. We emulate His care for us by showing and extending *ahavas Yisrael* — love for a fellow Jew.

Interestingly, the Koshnitzer Maggid in his *Avodas Yisrael* understands the *Magen Avraham's* choice in the word “*na'ar*” — young men — approaching the homes for charity as referring to individuals in the category of “*na'ar*,” i.e. those who are not yet educated and observant. The minhag of giving Chanukah gelt is to extend the teachings of Chanukah to others. Understandably, the mitzvah of returning a lost object is Biblical, but the most precious lost object one can return is “*v'hashevos lo*” (Devarim 22:2)— returning the person to himself, that is, connecting his soul with its Donor.

There are, I believe, three ways that the holiday of Chanukah and the virtue of *chesed* coalesce. First, the Talmud, *Shabbos* (122a), teaches that *ner le'chad ner l'meah* — a single candle initially lit for one person — can in fact benefit countless others. Moreover, the fact that others benefit from his candle in no way detracts from his enjoyment. Similarly, when one does *chesed*, be it to one or to 100 beneficiaries, it does not detract from the donor and indeed, most often comes back to enhance and enrich the donor. There is a boomerang effect of *chesed*. The Shalah Hakadosh writes in his commentary at the end of *Pesachim*, that when we go out of our way to perform a *chesed*, Hashem goes out of His way and goes *lifnim meshuras hadin* for us. He therefore urges that we should consciously perform at least one *chesed* per day be it *b'gufo*, *b'mamono*, or *b'nafsho*, with our body, our money or our soul. He bases this on Tehillim (52:3) *chesed*

*Kel kol hayom* — the kindness of Hashem is the entire day. The *baalei mussar* suggest that we should keep a *chesed* diary not for anyone else to see, not to raise our ego, but to properly challenge ourselves to perform *chesed* daily and not to rest on yesterday's laurels and accomplishments. The *ner Chanukah* is lit at the entrance of our home in full view for all to see. We are lighting it to fulfill our personal mitzvah, but in so doing we are also affecting — effecting — the many others who see our light.

Second, *ner Chanukah* is different in that most mitzvos can be performed privately. There is no greater mitzvah in lighting Shabbos candles if your drapes are opened and the passersby can see the lights of Shabbos. The Chanukah lights, by definition, are lit to share with others. To publicize, to reinforce the celebration, to add more light in the dark night of winter. Your lighting your lights in full view of others is an act of *chesed* that is an integral part of the mitzvah.

Finally, there is the exciting question of the *Beis Yosef*: why, indeed, is Chanukah celebrated for eight days when there was sufficient oil for one day and thus the holiday should be but seven days? Among the many answers is that the first day's lighting is *tevah* — a natural phenomenon — while the subsequent seven days are supernatural in nature. The Rabbis however ordained that we celebrate eight days as a unit to elevate the natural and connect it to the supernatural. To recognize that the natural phenomenon of oil burning is not to be taken for granted but is only because Hashem has enabled oil to burn. Hence, to recognize that even the natural is indeed supernatural in nature.

Similarly, when you do a positive



action on your own behalf, that is natural. However, if your intention and desire are motivated to benefit others, then even your own actions are also elevated and become part and parcel with those of the supernatural, helping others. Your focus on *v'ahavta l're'acha kamocho* elevates your personal activities done on your own behalf to become merged with the lofty activities of *chesed* as the end goal. Hence your seemingly mundane activities are now raised to fulfill *b'chol d'rachecha da'ehu* — to know and incorporate Hashem in all of your actions (Mishlei 3:6).

On a personal note, it is my honor to offer President Berman shlit”a, a beracha on this Chanukah, which as we mentioned has roots in *chesed*. May you be blessed to emulate the manner of our great teacher Moshe. The Talmud, *Menachos* (53b) teaches:

יבא טוב ויקבל טוב מטוב לטובים.

*Let good come to receive good from good for those who are good.*

Understood by the Talmud to mean that Moshe — regarding whom we are taught that his mother saw he was *good* — received *good* referring to the Torah, from *good* — referring to Hashem, for those who are *good* — referring to the children of Israel. May your tenure reflect all of the above “goods.”

# The Maccabees Then and Now: Drivers of Our Destiny

**T**he festival of lights is celebrated by all denominations of world Jewry with grandeur and symbolism. Every aspect of the Chanukah story is compelling, giving us heroes we can identify with and emulate, and incorporating practical customs that enhance our festivities. The military and spiritual victory experienced by the original Chashmonaim serves not only as the primary basis for our observance of the holiday, but has been the paradigm for Jewish heroism for generations.

In the Rambam's *Hilchot Chanukah* 3:1, the Rambam presents the historical backdrop for the Chanukah story. This is an unusual departure for a sefer dedicated to halakhic application. The Rambam begins by detailing the affront to Jewish



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spiritual life and the violation of our holy temple. He then continues with an equally detailed description of Hashem's Divine assistance to our ancestors, which resulted in "*v'chazra malchut L'Yisrael*," the reinstatement of Jewish sovereignty in Israel that would endure for over 200 years until the tragic churban of the Second Temple. This is a bit perplexing as this *malchut* was not one of the tribe of Yehuda and the kingdom of David but rather one led by the Chashmonaim who were Kohanim. Nevertheless, the Rambam seemingly expresses a positive view of

Jewish sovereignty over the Land of Israel, notwithstanding that it is not in the ideal form.

Rav Yehuda Amital, zt"l, in *Be'er Miriam*, asserts that the narrative of the military victory and subsequent restoration of sovereignty illustrated by the Rambam is mirrored in the religious Zionism expressed in Eretz Yisrael today. Whether we subscribe to the "*derech hateva*" approach — the natural order of events unfolding — or the Divine intervention that augments those events in a more direct manner, the Jewish people

## The Five Torot of Yeshiva University

TORAT EMET

TORAT CHAIM

TORAT ADAM

TORAT CHESED

**TORAT TZION**



are unified and celebrate Torah and Jewish life in Eretz Yisrael.

The above premise lends credence to the possibility that Zecharya's prophesy has been fulfilled in our time:

כֹּה אָמַר ה' צָבָא-וֹת, עַד יָשְׁבוּ זָקְנִים וְזָקֵנוֹת,  
בְּרַחֲבוֹת יְרוּשָׁלַם; וְאִישׁ מִשְׁעָנָתוֹ בְּיָדוֹ, מֵרֵב  
יָמִים. וְרַחֲבוֹת הָעִיר יִמְלְאוּ, יְלָדִים וְיִלְדוֹת,  
מִשְׂחָקִים, בְּרַחֲבֹתֶיהָ.

*This is what the Lord Almighty says:  
Once again men and women of ripe old  
age will sit in the streets of Jerusalem,  
each of them with cane in hand because  
of their age. And the streets of the city  
shall be full of boys and girls playing in  
its streets.*

**Zecharya 8:4-5**

The Maccabees of the Second Temple Period, which was the epicenter of the Jewish world until its destruction, fought an existential war to preserve Torat Tzion — the unique opportunity to observe the Torah in the Land of Israel. The very notion of the Maccabees as the champions of God's Torah and laws and defenders of Jewish sovereignty in our ancestral

homeland has been replicated in our time. Nowhere is this felt more profoundly than in today's modern State of Israel where the similarities are undeniable.

The kol Torah (sounds of Torah learning) emanating from batei midrash across the land is at historic proportions. The accepted norm whereby many Israeli youth immerse themselves in Torah study as a pre- or co-requisite to national service underscores the successful integration of Torat Tzion in daily life. This is also true for the thousands of overseas students — many under the auspices of Yeshiva University — who arrive each year to explore their heritage, strengthen their commitment to religious Zionism and dedicate significant time to Torah study. These unique experiences empower them to better serve the Jewish people and strengthen Jewish life in Israel and abroad.

The young men and women who serve our country in the IDF or *Sherut Leumi* are the epitome of modern Maccabees. Their uniform is their

badge of honor and their pride and sense of duty to the Jewish people is infectious. So much so that this calling has also become a viable option for students choosing to extend their gap year experience before beginning university.

As parents who greet our soldiers returning home just for Shabbat from training and exercises, we are privileged to witness daily miracles with their safe arrival time after time. When marching to battle is accompanied by the singing of "*anachnu ma'aminim bnei ma'aminim*" — we are believers (of God), children of believers — and led by a commander holding a sefer Torah, we set the narrative and are drivers of our destiny. They are the defenders of Torat Tzion.

The integration of religious Zionist professionals in every sphere of Israeli society ensures that Torah is prominent in shaping modern Jewish history. Our own YU alumni are among the CEO's, investors, and lawyers in many start-up enterprises and in all fields. We are healthcare

professionals, rabbis, educators, scientists and civil servants. In this way we are all modern Maccabees contributing to the ongoing success of the Jewish people through the prism of Torat Tzion.

The intrinsic connection between Torah and Eretz Yisrael as part of the redemptive process today is beautifully articulated by HaRav Tzvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook, zt”l:

*Torah is a national constitution, a Divine cosmic and national law, embodied in a Divinely-chosen community, and fulfilled in a Divinely-chosen land. A Divine community with a real government, a real army, a real economy, and all of the other down-to-earth aspects of normal, national life.*

**Torat Eretz Yisrael: The Teachings of HaRav Tzvi Yehuda HaCohen Kook, Ch. 5, pg. 104**

While the celebration of Torah and Jewish life in Israel is the most obvious parallel to the Chanukah story and to the Maccabees of old, it is by no means the only example of Jewish heroism and leadership. In Parshat Bamidbar, Rav Yaakov Kaminetsky zt”l, *Emet L’Yaakov, Parshat Bamidbar*, pg. 413, discusses the purpose of the “*degalim*,” the tribal flags used to

differentiate each *shevet*. The design and color of each flag represented the unique culture and purpose of each tribe. However, the focal point and the epicenter of the *machane*, the entire camp, was the Mishkan. Like Eretz Yisrael then and now, the Mishkan was the unifier and source of spiritual life, the common denominator of the nation.

A similar concept is mentioned in the introduction to the *Siddur Hameforash*. It is explained there that the Arizal believed that there is a unique *nusach* (textual style) for each of the 12 *shevatim*, with a corresponding specific gate in the heavens into which each *nusach* enters. Still, he composed a new *nusach* for a thirteenth gate, through which the common tefilla of all the *shevatim* could enter.

Though Jerusalem is the epicenter and unifier of the Jewish world, the broader Jewish community is taking control of its destiny across the globe. Each sector and community has a unique capacity to effect change and advance the mission of Am Yisrael.

Perhaps this is the point of the *piyut* that we recite after lighting the Chanukah candles — *Hanerot*

*halalu anachanu madlikin* — we light these candles — which can also be translated homiletically as “we are the candles that are flickering.” Our mandate is to take action by kindling a flame within ourselves. As Rabbi Dr. Berman said so eloquently at his investiture, we must be drivers of history. We can each on an individual level, and all on a national level, be modern Maccabees by strengthening our commitment to Torah observance as well as our connection to the Zionist enterprise that is the modern State of Israel. Then we can also fulfill the second part of the *piyut*:

ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם אלא לראותם  
בלבד כדי להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול על  
... נסוך

*We have no permission to benefit from the lights, except to look at them in order to offer praise and thanksgiving to Your great name for Your miracles ...*

We can pause to reflect and offer *hallel* and *hoda’ah*, praise and thanksgiving to Hashem for His Divine intervention in enabling the Maccabees of old and Maccabees of today to achieve all that we have. With the help of Hakadosh Baruch Hu, may we continue to strengthen Torat Tzion and serve as an example to enlighten the entire world.

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# Chanukah: A Holiday of Renewal

Let's begin with a few questions. First, the main mitzvah of Chanukah is lighting the menorah (*Shabbat* 21b). We all know that the reason for this mitzvah is to remind us of the miracle that Hashem performed for the Jews of that time. Hashem made a single jug of oil supernaturally last eight nights instead of one. As we know, mitzvot are not solely to remind us of a historic event; what, then, is the depth of the mitzvah of lighting the menorah?

Second, on Chanukah we remember two miraculous acts of kindness that Hashem bestowed upon us: the miraculous victory of war by the Maccabees over a stronger and larger enemy, and the miracle of the oil supernaturally lasting eight days. What is the common theme that these miracles share?

Third, the Greeks decreed against the Jews fulfilling three mitzvot: Rosh Chodesh, Shabbat and Milah (*Megillat Antiochus* 7:11). Why did they choose these in particular?

To answer these questions, let us explore the unique role of the three mitzvot banned by the Greeks.

## Rosh Chodesh

The midrash (*Shemot Rabbah*, Bo 15:26) compares the Jewish nation to the moon. As we know, the moon begins as a small sliver that barely provides light. As the days pass, however, the moon appears larger and larger until it reaches its peak on day 15. From this point on, the moon appears to gradually decrease



## Rabbi Dan Cohen

Edmond J. Safra S'gan Mashgiach for the Sephardic Community, Yeshiva University

in size until it reaches a small sliver once again. The midrash suggests that Am Yisrael follows the same pattern. The nation started out with a single individual providing spiritual light to the world (Avraham Avinu) and gradually grew in spiritual light for the next 15 generations, ultimately reaching its peak with King Shlomo at the time of the First Beit Hamikdash. From this point on, the nation's spiritual level began to deteriorate, eventually ending up with the destruction of the Beit Hamikdash 15 generations later. Just as the moon renews itself at its lowest point of light, so too the Jewish nation renews itself every time it reaches rock bottom.

We can learn from this midrash that “ups and downs,” — good years and bad years, poverty and prosperity — are part of our identity. We must understand that the same way the moon renews itself and eventually becomes great, so too our nation will always rebuild and reach spiritual heights just like the days of old. Hardships and suffering are only a sign of good times to come.

Throughout the centuries, our nation has endured countless tragedies and persecutions. Every period of persecution brings with it the energy to anticipate renewal and redemption. Am Yisrael has *hitchadshut* (renewal) engraved on our *neshamot*. Perhaps

that is why the first mitzvah we were given as a nation was *kiddush hachodesh* (consecrating the new moon). Hashem wanted to inform us from the start that we will have ups and downs but we must never give up hope.

Rabbi Hershel Schachter once told me in the name of Rav Soloveitchik that if you were to chart the history of the other nations it would look like a triangle. Once they reach their peak, they start descending until they reach their ultimate downfall. Jewish history looks like a zig-zag. When we reach our peak, we start descending until we reach a very low place, only to rise to glory once again.

## Shabbat

In addition to the monthly *hitchadshut*, Hashem also handed us the gift of a weekly *hitchadshut*: Shabbat. Shabbat acts as a small island of respite in the middle of a stressful ocean called the workweek. Shabbat is a day that we can recharge our spiritual batteries for the coming week. R. Tzadok Hakohen of Lublin states:

השבת הניתן לישראל א' לו' ימים מעורר בלב האדם בכל שבת חשק חדש לקדושתו ית'. מצד שעברו עליו ו' הימים בטרדת מלאכה והתרשלות מד"ת לכן ביום המנוחה מתעורר החשק להתקרב לקדושה.

*The day of Shabbat, which was given to the Jews, comes every seven days and arouses a renewed passion in a person's heart to learn Torah and do mitzvot. For after a person endures six days of hard labor that causes him to slack and neglect Torah, then the day of rest arrives and awakens a new inspiration to come close to Hashem.*

### **Pri Tzaddik, Yitro**

During the workweek, it is challenging to grow spiritually. Shabbat has the ability to give a Jew that needed sense of renewal. Rav Tzadok is telling us that Hashem understands this very well. That is why he gave us the gift of Shabbat. Perhaps this is why we refer to Shabbat in *Lecha Dodi* as the *mekor haberacha*, the source of blessing in the week.

A lawyer in a prestigious firm, let's call him Moshe, once told me that when a senior member of the firm was retiring, Moshe asked him for a small piece of advice. The man told Moshe as follows: "If you want to stay sane during your workweek, take one day out of your week, disconnect yourself from work, technology, sports, and only spend time with family." If he only knew that this was already part of Moshe's way of life.

### **Milah**

The Gemara, *Menachot* 43b, says that one time David Hamelech was in the bath house and began to feel despondent that he was not able to perform any mitzvot at that time. He then noticed his milah and felt at ease. This is a feeling that many of us share. There are times that we feel empty

of mitzvot, we feel like we forfeited our connection with Hashem. The mitzvah of milah acts as a reminder that our connection to Hashem is everlasting. The milah acts as a feeling of renewal, which allows us to continue striving to spiritual heights despite our prior sins.

Milah is an acronym for מי יעלה לנו השמימה — who will take us up to the heavens (Devarim 30:12)? This phrase is a rhetorical response to those who say that the Torah is in the heavens. The Torah states *lo bashamayim hi* — it is not in the heavens. It was given to human beings on the earth. Human beings make mistakes and are accustomed to sin. Milah reminds us that the Torah was given to human beings in a world filled with trials and temptations.

Although the Greeks were one of many nations who sought to destroy us, they pursued the precious gift that Hashem gave us, the secret to our survival, *hitchadshut*. They knew that if they destroyed our sense of renewal, they would destroy our hope and without hope there is no life. Rosh Chodesh, Shabbat and Milah are the three mitzvot that symbolize renewal and hope. The Greeks wanted to nullify them, thereby nullifying Am Yisrael.

The first miracle that took place was that the outnumbered Maccabees defeated the mighty Greek army. As an army of few, the Maccabees could have easily given up hope and surrendered. Instead, they collectively said Perek 91 in Tehillim — *Yoshev B'seter Elyon* — which is infused with hope and confidence that Hashem will

always be there for every Jew in every circumstance. For this reason there is a custom to recite this chapter after candle lighting (*Ben Ish Hai*, Parashat Vayeshev). The Maccabees, they kept on pressing that refresh button and pushed harder and harder. Their hope and renewal was a core part of the miracle. They knew that they couldn't expect Hashem to save them without putting up a fight. They engaged the enemy and Hashem assisted them in miraculous ways.

The second miracle that occurred was that the flame that was supposed to last just one day ended up lasting eight days. A flame embodies *hitchadshut*, because it constantly renews itself. We know that we are forbidden to transfer an item from one domain to another on Shabbat. The Gemara, *Beitzah* 39a, states that if we transfer a flame from one domain to another we have not violated a Biblical restriction. The flame that we lifted was not the same flame that we placed because a flame constantly renews itself. We see from here that the nature of a flame is that it is always in a state of renewal. The miracle was that the flame kept on burning for eight days while constantly in a state of renewal. The message behind the miracle was one of renewal. The two miracles of Chanukah are one and the same. They both symbolize the gift of *hitchadshut* that we were granted.

As we know, Hashem promised that the light of Mashiach will never be extinguished (*Birkot Haftarah*). May we merit to see the final renewal and the arrival of Mashiach let it be tomorrow!



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Dan Cohen at <http://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-dan-cohen>

# Chanukah Gifts: A Jewish Tradition?

**B**lack Friday, the day after Thanksgiving in the United States, despite its dark connotation, is quite a joyous day for retailers and their customers. On that day, or sometime over that weekend, more people in the U.S. will purchase holiday gifts than people who voted in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.<sup>1</sup> During this time of year, retailers make it a point to make sure that those who celebrate Chanukah are buying gifts for family members and friends. While some might argue that gift giving seems to be based on Christian or pagan customs, in this essay, we will present a number of sources supporting the idea of giving children money or gifts on Chanukah.

## Simchat Yom Tov

A compelling reason for the practice of gift giving emerges if we make the following assumption — that Chanukah, like yom tov, is a day of *simcha* (joy), and there is an obligation of *simchat yom tov*. The Gemara, *Pesachim* 109a, states that the obligation of *simchat yom tov* is partly fulfilled by providing gifts to members of the family.

Is *simchat yom tov* applicable on Chanukah? The Gemara, in describing the institution of Chanukah states:

לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים  
בהלל והודאה.

*In a later year, they established these days and made them a holiday through praise and thanksgiving.*

### Shabbat 21b

The Gemara does use the term “yom tov” to describe Chanukah.



## Rabbi Joshua Flug

Director of Torah Research,  
YU Center for the Jewish Future

Nevertheless, the phrase “praise and thanksgiving” may come to modify the term “yom tov.” In other words, it is a yom tov of praise and thanksgiving and not an ordinary yom tov. Rambam clearly identifies Chanukah as “*yemei simcha v’hallel*” — days of joy and praise:

ומפני זה התקינו חכמים שבאותו הדור שיהיו  
שמונת ימים האלו שתחלתן כ”ה בכסליו ימי  
שמחה והלל.

*For this reason, the rabbis of that generation instituted that these eight days, which begin on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, should be days of joy and praise.*

### Hilchot Chanukah 3:3

Does this mean that in practice, the concept of *simchat yom tov* applies to Chanukah? Although Rambam does use the term “simcha,” he presents Chanukah differently from his description of an ordinary yom tov. Rambam, *Hilchot Yom Tov*, 6:17, writes that on yom tov, a person must be *sam’eich v’tov lev*, happy and good-hearted. This may reflect that Chanukah represents a different type of *simcha*, and that the observance of Chanukah may be different than yom tov.

R. Yaakov ben Asher, *Tur, Orach Chaim* no. 670, quotes Maharam MiRutenburg’s opinion that there is no obligation to have festive meals on Chanukah:

והיה אומר הר”מ מרוטנבורק ז”ל שרבו

הסעודה שמרבים בהם הן סעודת הרשות שלא  
קבעו אלא להלל ולהודות ולא משתה ושמחה.  
*R. Meir of Rutenburg would say that the additional meals that people eat are considered optional meals (i.e. there is no mitzvah to participate) because they only established [Chanukah] for praise and thanksgiving, not for feasting and rejoicing.*

*Tur* contrasts Chanukah with Purim. Purim is a day of *mishteh v’simcha*, feasting and rejoicing, but Chanukah is a day of praise and thanksgiving. R. Mordechai Yoffe explains further:

לא קבעום אלא להלל ולהודות, ולא למשתה  
ושמחה, כלומר כיון שהם רצו למנוע אותנו  
מזה לכפור בדת ה’ו, ובעזרתו יתברך לא  
הפיקו זממם וגברה ידינו, לכך קבעו אותם  
לחזור ולשבח ולהודות לו על שהיה לנו  
לאלקים ולא עזבנו מעבודתו, אבל בימי המן  
שהיתה הגזירה להרוג ולהשמיד את הגופות  
שהוא ביטול משתה ושמחה ... לכך כשנצלו  
ממנו קבעו להללו ולשבחו יתברך גם כן על  
ידי משתה ושמחה.

*They were only established for praise and thanksgiving, not feasting and rejoicing. This is because they wanted to prevent us from [praise and thanksgiving] by having us give up religion, Heaven forbid. And through God’s help, they were not able to carry out their plan and we were successful. Therefore, they established a return to praise and thanksgiving to Him that He was our Lord and did not cause us to stray from His service. However, during the days of Haman, the decree was to kill and destroy the Jewish people, which negates*

the possibility of feasting and rejoicing ... Therefore, when they were saved, they instituted praising God through feasting and rejoicing.

**Levush, Orach Chaim no. 670**

On Purim, there was a physical threat against the Jewish people. Therefore, the celebration is of a physical nature. On Chanukah, the threat against the Jewish people was a spiritual threat and therefore, the celebration is spiritual in nature. *Tur's* comments are codified in *Shulchan Aruch* 670:2.

R. Shlomo Luria, *Yam Shel Shlomo, Bava Kama* 7:37, disagrees and notes that Rambam specifically refers to Chanukah as days of *simcha*. Furthermore, the Gemara specifically refers to Chanukah as a *yom tov*. Therefore, he concludes that there is a mitzvah to be festive on Chanukah. Rama, *Orach Chaim* 670:2, writes that while not required, we should have meals that are festive.<sup>2</sup>

R. Yisrael Pesach Feinhandler, *Avnei Yashpei, Orach Chaim* 1:129, follows the approach that giving gifts on Chanukah is at least a partial fulfillment of *simchat yom tov*. He also writes that it cannot be considered a violation of *chukat akum*, the prohibition against adopting practices of idolaters or other religions, because there is a logical reason why we would have adopted this practice on our own.

### **Distribution of “Chanukah Gelt”**

R. Avraham Gombiner, *Magen Avraham* 670, writes that it is customary for poor children to collect tzedakah on Chanukah. He quotes R. Shaul ben David's *Chanukat HaBayit* as the source for this custom. In *Chanukat HaBayit, s.v. L'Shimcha HaGadol*, he explains that children are compared to *pachim ketanim*, small vessels, and through their collection of tzedakah we

publicize the miracle, which occurred with a small vessel of oil. R. Yissachar Dov Rokeach, the third Belzer Rebbe, is quoted as saying (in *Chaim SheYesh BaHem, Moadei HaShanah* pg. 248) that the practice developed to give money to all children so as not to embarrass those who are poor.

R. Ya'akov Kamenetsky, *Emet L'Yaakov, Orach Chaim* 670, suggests that during Chanukah, parents sent money with their children to distribute to their teachers. The practice then developed that the children were given some money to keep for themselves.

R. Yisrael Spira, *Binat Yisrael* pg. 125, suggests that when we spend money to observe the Jewish holidays, it contributes to the love of the holiday. Since Chanukah doesn't have any major expenses, the custom developed to distribute tzedakah to teachers of Torah and to give money to children so that we have a greater appreciation of Chanukah.

### **Giving Gifts or Gelt for Educational Purpose**

R. Chaim Friedlander, *Siftei Chaim, Moadim* Vol. II, pg. 134, quotes from R. Yosef Kahaneman that the basis for the practice of Chanukah gelt is that at the time of the story of Chanukah, there was a decree against learning Torah. After the war, they needed to “bribe” the children to resume learning Torah. Therefore, we also give Chanukah gelt as a means of encouraging children to learn Torah.

R. Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the seventh Lubavitcher Rebbe, *Sha'arei HaMoadim*, Chanukah pg. 359, notes that the root of the word Chanukah is *chinuch*, (education and training). Therefore, we pay special attention to *chinuch* on this

holiday. Providing children with treats to encourage them to learn is an important aspect of *chinuch*, and as such, we put a special emphasis on this on Chanukah. For this reason, R. Schneerson suggests giving gelt every day of Chanukah.

R. Eliyahu Kitov, *Sefer HaToda'ah*, Chanukah pg. 172, also notes the connection between Chanukah and *chinuch*. He suggests that we distribute gifts to the children with an implicit message that they are receiving these gifts with the understanding that they will further commit themselves to the observance of Torah.

### **Conclusion**

Chanukah is a very exciting time for children and the practice of giving gelt or gifts is a good opportunity to help nurture their spiritual growth. The gifts can be used as tools to start discussions about Jewish values. What is the Jewish concept of *simcha* and how does it differ from material pursuits? Why is it important to express appreciation to our teachers specifically on Chanukah? How much of what we do is motivated by external rewards or consequences and how much do we do because we want to do what is right? By giving context to the tradition of gift giving, the gift can be better appreciated both by the giver and the receiver.

### **Endnotes**

1 “By the Numbers: The Biggest Shopping Weekend of the Year, available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2016/11/25/black-friday-sales-stats.html>.

2 Rama, both in *Darkei Moshe* 670 and in his glosses on *Shulchan Aruch*, is clear that the festive nature of the holiday is not a function of the miracles of Chanukah. Those miracles are celebrated through praise and thanksgiving. The reason why we should be festive is that during these days, the Mizbe'ach was dedicated.

# Reflecting on the Menorah's Reflection

The beloved song *Maoz Tzur*, which is traditionally chanted each night of Chanukah, is filled with allusions and figurative language.

One intriguing example is the unusual word used to describe the miracle of Chanukah:

ומנותר קנקנים נעשה נס לשושנים.  
From the remaining **jugs** — a miracle was made for Shoshanim [roses] (a reference to the Jewish people).

Why did the *paytan* (author) choose the word *kankanim* to describe the jug of pure oil? Why not use the more familiar term *pach* (or in the plural, *pachim*), which is the term used in the Talmud (*Shabbat* 21b)?

We will soon discover that the word *kankan* contains a unique meaning that reveals an essential theme of Chanukah.<sup>1</sup>

The word *kankan* may be most familiar to us from the mishna in *Pirkei Avot* (4:20) — “*Al tistakel bekankan*” — Don’t look at the jug...

This phrase in the mishna is generally understood to teach us that we should not judge others by simply looking at their exterior. However, the mystical tradition suggests a deeper layer of understanding embedded in this mishnaic phrase. Rabbi Isaac Luria, the Ari Hakadosh, interprets these words to mean that we must not look only at the outer shell of our physical world, we must look beyond the “*kankan*” and strive to uncover God’s presence. The Jew must see beyond the veil that often obscures



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the Divine.<sup>2</sup> The Ari Hakadosh then unexpectedly connects this phrase in our mishna with a particular phrase in the Torah (Exodus 34:7): ונקה לא ינקה, a term taken from the 13 attributes of mercy.<sup>3</sup>

What did the Ari Hakadosh have in mind? Rabbi Dovid Moskovitz of Transylvania in his *Gelilei Zahav, Miketz*, remarkably elucidates the Ari’s seeming non sequitur.<sup>4</sup> He suggests that the *Ari Hakadosh* had the following intent: When we realign the letters of words ונקה and ינה, they spell two words: י-ה-ו-ה and קנקן. In other words, God is to be found behind the *kankan*; behind the contour of the vessel lies its true content.

ונקה ינקה  
י-ה-ו-ה קנקן

The *Ari Hakadosh* is teaching us that *ve’nake lo yenake* alludes to God’s eternal promise of loyalty to His people — that He is present even when obscured. Similarly, the mishna in *Avot* is a call to each of us to be aware of God’s providential care even at times when His presence is concealed.<sup>5</sup>

Rabbi Moskovitz interprets the phrase *ve’nake lo yenake* based on a parallel phrase in Jeremiah (30:11): “I will bring destruction to all the nations but to you the Jewish People” — “*Venake lo anakekah*.” Rashi explains this to mean: “To wipe you out, I will surely never wipe you out.” As such, *ve’nake lo yenake* can be translated as, “*To wipe you out, you will not be wiped out!*” Even in the unfortunate circumstance when guilty of sin, the Jewish people will always endure.

When the master *paytan* penned his beloved *Maoz Tzur* poem for Chanukah, he deliberately chose the term *kankan*. This unique term contains a double meaning: In the simple sense, the word *kankan* refers to the miraculous jug of oil used to light the Menorah. But a second layer of meaning suggests the sublime spiritual notion that God is always present even in darkness and pain.<sup>6</sup>

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, zt”l, in *Days of Deliverance* pp. 176-179, shared a profound insight regarding the Menorah, which strikingly parallels this theme alluded to within the word *kankan*. The Rav takes note of the Torah verses that describe the Menorah lighting in the Mishkan. Surprisingly, the laws governing lighting the Menorah are stated hand in hand with the offering of the *ketoret*, incense:

והקטיר עליו אהרן קטרות סמים בבקר בבקר  
בהיטיבו את הנרות יקטירנה. ובהעלת אהרן  
את הנרות בין הערבים יקטירנה קטרות תמיד  
לפני ה' לדורותיכם.

*Aaron shall burn the incense thereon; every morning, when he dresses the lamps, shall he make it burn, And when Aaron lights the lamps at dusk shall he make it burn, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations.*  
**Exodus 30:7-8**

The incense was burned on the Altar, which created a clouded room. Were we to picture this scene in our mind's eye we can begin to imagine how the lights of the Menorah would be obscured by the smoke of the *ketoret*. Apparently, the lights of the Menorah were not bright lights — instead, they were hidden.<sup>7</sup> In the words of the Rav, “The sanctuary is not illuminated because of an impenetrable pillar of incense vapor. One perceives the light but does not enjoy it.”

With poetic beauty, the Rav compared the light of the Menorah to a star in the night sky: “The distant star does not shed light; it does not resolve enigmas or clear up mysteries. However, it does tell one story: namely, that there is a light behind the vast and awesome cosmic drama.”

The Rav is proposing a unique perspective regarding the inner meaning of the Menorah. The Menorah should not be viewed as a bright light or a symbol of clear providence or Divine intervention. On the contrary, the Menorah represents merely the “twinkle from a star above,” the light of God when it is dimmed and difficult to discern. In such times a Jew is responsible to search out God and strive to locate His presence; to be aware of His guiding hand even when it is not apparent.

Taking this interpretation to heart, the miracle of Chanukah, which centered around the Menorah, is most fitting. The Rav taught that “the festival of Chanukah commemorates an era of *hester panim*, God's hiddenness ... No prophet promised a reward, no vision inspired them, no message gave them solace. It was an act of faith par excellence. This is their message to the generations: ‘Do not believe that our people is abandoned of God’” (2 Macc. 7:6).

The Maccabean revolt was an act of bravery and determination. Amazingly, an elderly Jew together with his faithful sons found the courage to fight. They awakened a spirit within the nation that inspired the bold return to Jerusalem and to the Holy Temple. They lifted their hearts and ennobled their spirits knowing that they were not alone in their battle to survive; they turned to their Father in Heaven and they held fast to this deep faith every step of the way.

On the darkest nights of the year, the Jew places the menorah lights in the window. Little lights flicker from our homes spreading a message to the world. Namely, when we see beyond the *kankan*, when we lift the outer veil, suddenly the letters יה-וה appear. In truth, all along the way, even during the most painful and bleakest moments, God was there with us.

## Endnotes

1 For a running commentary on the *Maoz Tzur* see *The Light That Unites*, (OU Press 2017).

2 This idea is a major theme in kabbalistic and chassidic literature. A well-known example can be found throughout the writings of the *Sfat Emet* on the Torah where he uses the term *nekuda hapenimit* in his

commentary to convey this concept.

3 Rashi notes the comment of Chazal that He will clear those who repent (*ve'nake*) but not those who don't repent (*lo yenake*). The Rishonim offer a variety of opinions identifying the 13 attributes of mercy. See, for example, Rabbi Aharon Soloveitchik's treatment of this matter in *Yeled Sha'ashuim* pages 530-555.

4 Printed in the year 5695 (1935). Interestingly, the book opens with approbations from both Rav Abraham Isaac Kook, then the Chief Rabbi of Israel and Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld. Rabbi Moskovitz's idea is cited by Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg in *Shabbat be' Shabato* in *gilyon* 1654.

5 It is worth noting that the author of this mishnaic teaching, “*al tistakel be'kankan*,” is none other than Rabbi Meir who is the master of finding the inner goodness. See Rav Yehuda Amital's *Jewish Values In a Changing World* (page 112), where he writes, “Rabbi Meir was characterized by the ability to find the positive roots of all phenomena, ‘In Rabbi Meir's Torah they found it written: “And behold, it was very (*me'od*) good.” ( Bereishit 1:31) - and behold, death (*mavet*) is good.’ (Bereishit Raba 9:5).” Rav Zvi Yehuda Kook zt”l noted that this Mishna (*Avot* 4:20) opens with a saying from Rav Elisha ben Avuya and is then offset with Rabbi Meir. The Talmud says of Rabbi Meir that when eating a pomegranate, “he ate its core and discarded its shell.” (*Chagigah* 15b) [*Sefer Sichat Avot* on Pirkei Avot pg. 246.]

6 The actual author and dating of the *Maoz Tzur* is not clear. It is theorized that it was written in 12th or 13th-century Ashkenaz. The Ari Hakadosh lived in the 1500's. This being the case, we are suggesting here in this piece that the author of the *Maoz Tzur* was steeped in this tradition and offered this teaching even prior to the time of the Ari Hakadosh.

7 One may even argue that the actual positioning of the words in these verses place the Menorah “observed” on the inside and the incense on the outside.

# Eight Days of Praise

The *Shulchan Arukh*, O.C. 683, writes that throughout Chanukah we recite the full Hallel. The source for this halakhah is the Gemara in *Arakhin* 10a.<sup>1</sup> The Gemara quotes a *baraita* that lists all the days we recite the full Hallel; the eight days of Chanukah are part of that list. But the Gemara does not explain why we recite the full Hallel on Chanukah. The *Beit Yosef*, O.C. 683 s.v. *Kol*, quotes from the *Shibbolei Haleket* §174 (in the name of Rashi) that Chanukah is similar to Sukkot. Just as we recite the full Hallel each day of Sukkot because the number of sacrifices varied from day to day, so too on Chanukah, when we light a different number of candles each night, we recite full Hallel each day. This explanation seems somewhat problematic because, while it is true that we usually light a different number of candles each night, the Gemara in *Shabbat* 21a, teaches that a person could technically fulfill the mitzvah by lighting only one candle each night.<sup>2</sup>

Perhaps we can better appreciate the comparison between Chanukah and Sukkot based on another comment of the *Shibbolei Haleket* §185. We may be familiar with the dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel regarding the number of candles to light each night. *Shibbolei Haleket* discusses the position of Beit Shammai to light a different number of candles each Chanukah night in descending order. In this discussion, he quotes in the name of Rabbi Yehudah haChassid that Beit Shammai bases its position on the number of bulls brought for korbanot each day of Sukkot. Why? Because immediately after it discusses the holiday of Sukkot in Parshat Emor,



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the Torah discusses the olive oil for the Menorah, which hints to Chanukah.<sup>3</sup>

We find this same juxtaposition of Sukkot and Chanukah mentioned by R. Elazar of Worms, a student of R. Yehudah haChassid, in his *Sefer Roke'ach*.<sup>4</sup> The *Roke'ach* notes that this juxtaposition teaches us that, just as we recite the full Hallel on Sukkot, we also recite it on Chanukah.

What is the connection between Chanukah and Sukkot? The answer may lie in the subsequent comment of the *Roke'ach*. In this comment, he explains that the Torah follows the description of the dedication of the Mizbe'ach at the end of Parshat Naso with the command, in Parshat Beha'alotekha, to initiate the Levi'im for service. This alludes to the dedication of the Mizbe'ach, which was done by Yochanan, the Kohein Gadol in the time of the Maccabees.

The connection of Chanukah to the dedication of the Beit Hamikdash seems to reveal its connection to Sukkot. When the Jews were in the desert, the construction of the Mishkan (the predecessor of the Beit Hamikdash) began on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei (the date of Sukkot)<sup>5</sup> and concluded on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev (the date of Chanukah).<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Shlomo Hamelekh's dedication of the Beit Hamikdash coincided with Sukkot.<sup>7</sup> *Shem MiShmuel* points out that had the Jews not sinned with the golden calf, the command to build

the Mishkan would have occurred on the 17<sup>th</sup> of Tammuz, the day Moshe returned with the Luchot, and they would have completed it by the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishrei. After 12 days of dedication offerings by the nesi'im, the Jews would have traveled for three days into Israel and the Beit Hamikdash would have descended on the 15<sup>th</sup> of Tishrei.<sup>8</sup>

In terms of Chanukah, it is recorded in *Maccabees I* (ch. 4 45-47) that after the Maccabees won the battle, they demolished the Mizbe'ach (that was defiled) and built a new one. Thereafter, they dedicated the Mizbe'ach on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev and celebrated for 8 days (ch. 4 52-59). Furthermore, in *Maccabees II* it is recorded that the Maccabees purified the Beit Hamikdash on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev and celebrated for 8 days, remembering that they had been in the mountains and caves during the previous Sukkot holiday (so they missed the 8 days of celebration of Sukkot/Shemini Atzeret). They instituted a yearly commemoration<sup>9</sup> and called on Jews from across the world to celebrate on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev as they do on Sukkot.<sup>10</sup>

The connection between Chanukah and the Mizbe'ach is also reflected in the *Midrash Tanchuma, Beha'alotekha* 5, which questions why, immediately after the Torah records the dedications of the nesi'im as part of the dedication of the Mizbe'ach at the end of Parshat Naso, we read about the lighting of the Menorah at the beginning of

Parshat Beha'alotekha. As the midrash describes, when Aharon saw the dedication offerings of the nesi'im he felt dismayed, whereupon Hashem reassured him that his contribution to the lighting of the Menorah would be greater. Ramban, Bamidbar 8:2, discusses how this consolation refers to the mitzvah of Menorah that would be instituted by the Kohanim (descendants of Aharon Hakohein) many years later.<sup>11</sup>

This connection between the dedication offerings of the nesi'im and the important role of the Kohanim is not only indicated by the Torah's mention of the Menorah that follows the description of the dedication offerings of the nesi'im. As the *Ba'al Haturim*, Bamidbar 7:1 points out, it is also indicated by the preceding portion in the Torah with the command of *birkhat Kohanim*.<sup>12</sup>

With our deeper understanding of how both Sukkot and Chanukah relate to the dedication of the Mizbe'ach/Beit Hamikdash, we can address the significance of reciting Hallel on these days. As we find at the time of Shlomo Hamelekh's dedication of the Beit Hamikdash, Hashem's presence only filled the House after the Jews recited Hallel.<sup>13</sup> Therefore the eight-day celebration on Chanukah with the recitation of Hallel seems to find its origin in the dedication of the Mizbe'ach/Beit Hamikdash paralleling Sukkot.<sup>14</sup> Indeed the holiday name of Chanukah meaning "dedication" refers to the dedication of the Maccabees and seems to be the focal point of the commemoration.

Furthermore, when we focus on Chanukah as a commemoration of the dedication of the Mizbe'ach, we can better appreciate the very next halakhah that appears in *Shulchan Arukh* (immediately after ruling that a full Hallel is recited) regarding the Torah

reading on Chanukah. The mishnah in *Megillah* 3:6 teaches that on Chanukah we read about the dedication offerings of the nesi'im from Parshat Naso, which served as the dedication of the Mizbe'ach.<sup>15</sup> When the *Tur*<sup>16</sup> codifies this halakhah, he mentions a proper custom to conclude the reading on the eighth day of Chanukah with the portion about the Menorah found at the beginning of Parshat Beha'alotekha. He also mentions a proper custom to begin the reading on the first day with the portion about *birkat Kohanim*. *Shulchan Arukh* codifies both customs as the halakhah.<sup>17</sup>

## Endnotes

1 See also *Ta'anit* 18a.

2 See also *Magen Avraham* O.C. 671:1, and *Be'er Heitev* 671:2. It is also noteworthy that the reason quoted by the *Shibbolei Haleket* follows the Gemara's explanation for Beit Shammai's opinion that the number of candles lit each night changes in descending order. But we do not follow this practice.

3 See R. Nachman Cohen, *The Encyclopedia of Talmudic Disputes and Perspectives: Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel*, vol. 2, 743-749, where he elaborates on the reason for the descending order on Sukkot and Chanukah.

4 *Hilkhot Chanukah*, §225. In his *Commentary to the Siddur, the Roke'ach* (§117) emphasizes that whenever the Torah mentions the Shulchan (table) and Menorah, the Shulchan is mentioned first, but in *Parshat Emor*, the Torah discusses the Menorah before the Shulchan in order to juxtapose the Menorah to the previous discussion of Sukkot, which teaches that on Chanukah we recite full Hallel as we do on Sukkot. The *Roke'ach* continues with two other comparisons: just as we light candles on Chanukah, so did they have lights on Sukkot (as part of the Simchat Beit Hasho'evah celebration). And according to Beit Shammai we light the candles in descending order as they brought the bulls on Sukkot in descending order. See also, the *Ba'al Haturim*, Vayikra 24:2 (who often mentions ideas of the *Roke'ach* throughout his commentary), who points out that the juxtaposition of the Menorah to Sukkot teaches that we recite a

full Hallel on Chanukah as we do on Sukkot.

5 See *Gra to Shir HaShirim* 1:4.

6 See *Bamidbar Rabbah* 13:2 and *Tanchuma, Pekudei* 11. See also *Pesikta Rabati* 6:5, where the Midrash concludes that since the dedication of the Mishkan was deferred from Kislev to Nissan, Hashem promised to make it up to Kislev, which he did with the dedication of the Maccabees.

7 *Melakhim I* 8:2 and 8:65, *Divrei Hayammim II* 5:3 and 7:9.

8 *Shem MiShmuel*, Sukkot 1914 (pg. 150). This conclusion can also explain why Shlomo Hamelekh deferred the dedication of the Beit Hamikdash from Cheshvan until the following Tishrei.

9 *Maccabees II*:10 5-8. See *Arukh Hashulchan* 670:5, who explains (based on the *Book of Maccabees*) that the original celebration of the 8 days of Chanukah was for the dedication of the Mizbe'ach and Beit Hamikdash. But when they experienced the miracle of the Menorah burning all 8 days, they took it as a sign of approval of their eight-day dedication and decided to incorporate the mitzvah of lighting Menorah as part of their commemoration.

10 *Maccabees II*:1 18. See Rama to 670:2, that we should have a more festive meal on Chanukah because of the dedication of the Mizbe'ach that took place then.

11 See also *Ba'al Haturim* and *Peirush HaTur HaArukh* to Bamidbar 8:2.

12 Ramban also mentions this point. See also end of *Tanchuma*, *ibid*.

13 *Divrei Hayammim II* 5:13.

14 Note that the dedication of the Mizbe'ach/Beit Hamikdash by the Maccabees lasted 8 days, which they subsequently instituted as an annual holiday. This understanding may answer the famous question posed by the *Beit Yosef* (O.C. 670 s.v. *V'ika*) as to why we celebrate Chanukah for 8 days.

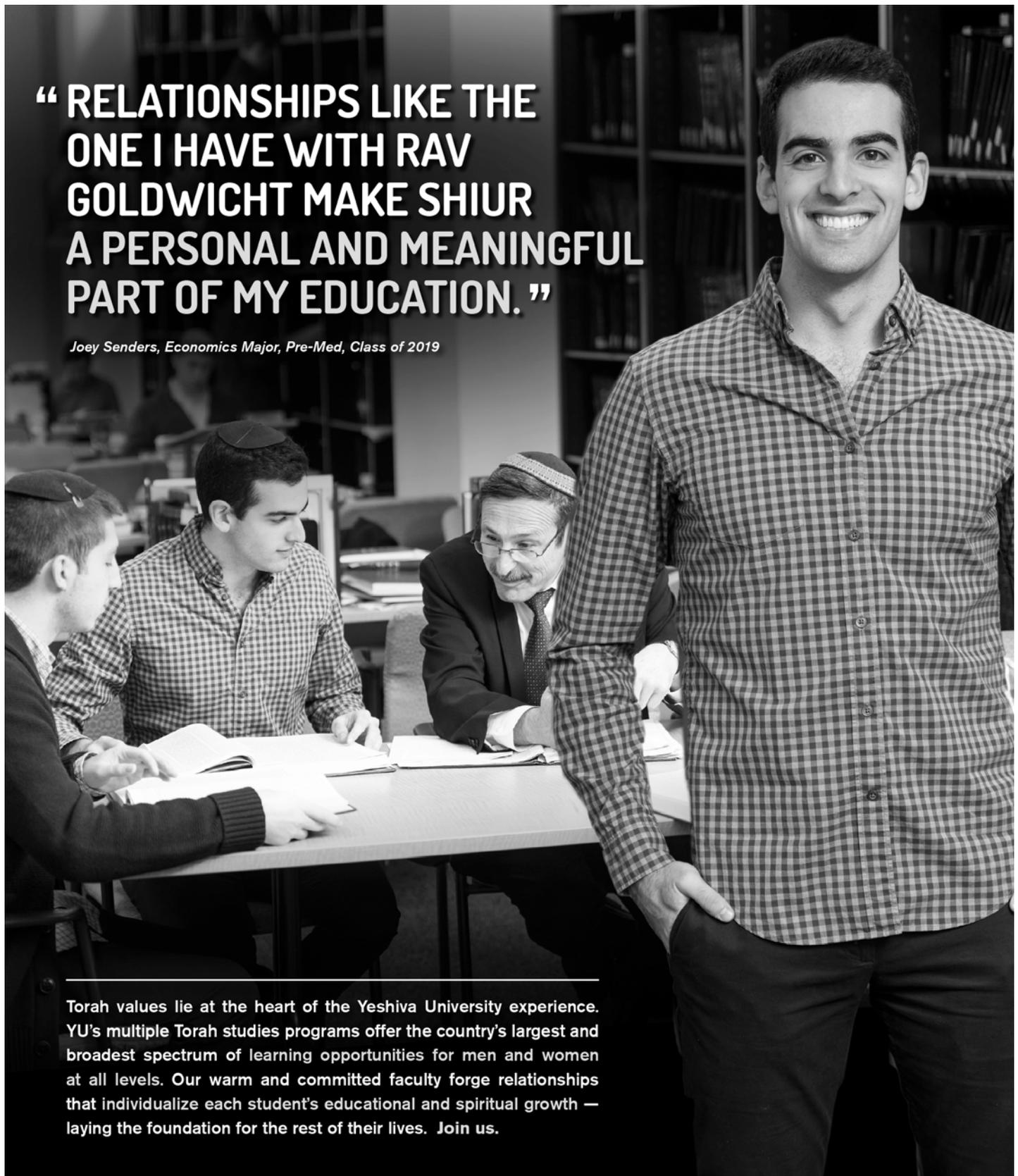
15 Rashi to *Megillah* 30b, s.v. *B'nesi'im* explains the reason relates to the dedication of the Mizbe'ach. However, *Tur*, O.C. 684:1, quotes the Midrash that the Mishkan was completed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev. See *Bach* s.v. *V'korin*. See also *Tosfos Yom Tov to Megillah* 3:6 s.v. *B'nesi'im*, who quotes from the *Book of Maccabees* that the Maccabees dedicated the Mizbe'ach on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev when they rebuilt it.

16 The code of law written by the *Ba'al HaTurim*.

17 O.C. 684:1. See also *Melekheth Shlomo to Megillah* 3:6 in the name of *Sefer Chen Tov*.

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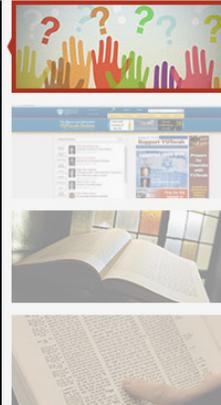
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