

# 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*.