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# שמע קולנו

**SHEMA KOLEINU: CHANUKAH 5781**

DIVREI TORAH FROM OUR REBBEIM, FACULTY, TALMIDIM, AND ALUMNI



**DEDICATED TO MTA'S INCREDIBLE TALMIDIM, WHO HAVE MADE LEARNING AND TORAH GROWTH A PRIORITY THROUGHOUT THE PANDEMIC.**

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# GIVE ME A BREAK!

The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (21b) famously recounts the terse but inspiring history behind *Chanukah*. While the *Gemara* describes the events that took place, the *Rishonim* and *Acharonim* are busy discussing the actual meaning of the name “*Chanukah*”, and what aspect of the holiday it refers to. The Ran, for example, explains that the name quite overtly refers to the rededication, or *chanukas habayis*, of the altar in the second *Beis Hamikdash* following its ritual contamination at the hands of the oppressive Seleucid Greeks. Citing a secondary opinion, the Ran explains that the “*Chanukah*” is actually a compound word composed of two phrases - “*Chanu*,” meaning “they rested,” and “*kah*,” constituting the number twenty-five by adding the letters *chaf* and *hei* according to their *gematria* values. Thus, *Chanukah* denotes the well-deserved rest finally attained by the Jewish warriors on the 25th day of the month of *Kislev*.

However, the Maharsha, an early *acharon*, points out a glaring inconsistency within this second approach. Since the days of *Chanukah* do not include an abstention from *melachah* (within the context of *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*) to any extent, what “rest” did the *Chashmonayim* supposedly come to enjoy upon their victory against the occupying Greeks? If anything, the *Chashmonayim* found themselves performing one *melachah* particularly diligently during the eight-day affair - that of *sechitah*, the extraction of liquids (oil from olives in this case)! The Maharsha consequently favors the first approach, relating *Chanukah* to the *chanukas habayis* performed by the Jews after reentering the *Beis Hamikdash*.

Yet, upon further reflection, the Maharsha’s objection appears strange. The Maharsha asks how the *Chashmonayim* “rested” on the 25th of *Kislev* if *melachah* was not forbidden to them. Presumably, we could ask the exact opposite: how did they not rest!? The *Chashmonayim*, at this point, found themselves victorious after fighting a lengthy, tiresome, and undesired war with what was among the most powerful empires in human history. At long last, the fighting was over, and they would be able to resume their service in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Could there be a greater form of rest than this? Why does the Maharsha seem to only categorize “rest” in the context of whether or not a prohibition of *melachah* exists, while negating the more metaphorical but still quite legitimate rest of post-war peacetime?

Perhaps an answer to this question can be found upon a broader analysis of the oppression endured by the Jews at the hands of the Greeks. The Rambam writes in his *Mishneh Torah* (*Hilchos Megillah U’Chanukah* 3:1) that the Greeks forbade Torah observance - but, never did they actually threaten the Jewish people as a whole with genocide, as the evil *Haman* did around two centuries previous. The plight of the Jews at that time was of purely spiritual nature, not marred by any widespread physical affliction,

unlike the Jews of Persia under *Haman* and *Achashveirosh*, or of those to come over two millennia later during World War II. Thus, when the *Chashmonayim* brought an end to Greek rule in *Eretz Yisroel*, an epoch of spiritual freedom began, which would last for another two-hundred or so years.

With this in mind, it may then be logical to view the ultimate and primary goal of the *Chashmonayim* as not only *Eretz Yisroel's* physical independence from any foreign ruler, but the spiritual liberation of her people. While the Jews collectively resumed their uninhibited observance of Torah and *mitzvos* in realizing this goal, the brave warriors themselves found little spiritual respite despite this concept shining at the top of their agenda. Yes, their strenuous conflict had come to an end, but before them laid a long and tumultuous road to *Klal Yisroel's* spiritual reconstruction, which began with a clear violation of spiritual rest - the pressing of olives. Thus, the very climax of Jewish sovereignty in *Eretz Yisroel* marked by the events surrounding *Chanukah* is forged in an act forbidden on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, along with many others involved in rededicating the *Beis HaMikdash*. Perhaps it is in light of this that the Maharsha takes issue with the notion that the *Chashmonayim* rested on the 25th of *Kislev* - when it comes to the supreme spiritual rest that they struggled valiantly and victoriously to obtain for the nation, they indeed found little, if any, amongst themselves.

On *Chanukah*, it could be worthwhile to remember that we too enjoy “spiritual rest” in the form of our Torah observance as citizens of a nation whose philosophical foundation guarantees our freedom in such a regard. While *melachah* may not be forbidden on *Chanukah* as it is on *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov*, perhaps it should be a time of reflection upon the fact that, today, our abstention from such activities on those occasions is a right we enjoy in stark contrast to our ancestors living under Greek rule. May we resultantly renew the value we place on Torah and *mitzvos* as a whole, calling to mind the sacrifices of those who came before us to grant their descendants such sublime liberty of the soul.



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YUHSB '22

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# IS IT RIGHT TO LIGHT RIGHT TO LEFT OR LEFT TO RIGHT?

When I was asked to write a *dvar Torah* for *Chanukah*, the first thing I thought was “how can it be *Chanukah* already? It was just *Sukkos!*” Yet here we are- *Chanukah* 5781. With *Chanukah* comes the *mitzvah* of lighting the *menorah*, and there are many questions and differencing opinions about how to go about doing that. One of the more famous *machloksim* relating to the *mitzvah* is between *Beis Shammai* and *Beis Hillel*, about how many candles we should light each night. *Beis Shammai* holds that we should start with 8 candles on the first night, and do one less candle each night. This is in order to correspond with what happened with the miracle in the *Beis Hamikdash* - as each day went by, the oil continued to run lower and lower, and the candle got dimmer and dimmer. So too, we should light fewer candles each night. *Beis Hillel* has a different approach, that we should start with one candle, and each day add an additional candle, corresponding to the fact that the miracle got greater and greater each night the oil continued to burn. We follow *Beis Hillel*, starting with one candle and adding another each night.

Now that we know how many candles we light each night, what order do we light them in? The Maharik (quoted by the *Beis Yosef*) writes that we start with lighting one candle on the first night all the way on the right, and then adding each new candle to the left of the others, lighting each night's candles from left to right (ie. newest to oldest). This argument is based on a *Gemara* in *Sotah* (15b) which says “...*kol pinos she'atah ponah lo yihu elah derech yamin*”- any time a person turns, he should turn to the right. Because of this, the Maharik says, we start lighting all the way on the left, and continue turning towards the rightmost candle. The *Terumas Hadeshen* agrees, but only in a case where one is lighting in a doorway with a *mezuzah*, as the *mitzvah* was performed in the time of the *Gemara*. Since the doorway has a *mezuzah* on the right side, we start at the furthest candle and make our way towards the *mezuzah*. However, if one is lighting without a *mezuzah*, the *Terumas Hadeshen* holds that the first candle to be lit should be the one closest to the door. This means that if one is lighting on the right side of the door (ie. the *menorah* is on the right side as you enter the door), then they should light the rightmost candle first, as that is the one closest to the frame of the door. However, if one is lighting on the left side of the door, then they should light the leftmost candle first, as that would be the candle closest to the frame of the door.

The *Levush* and Taz argue with the Maharik's source from the *Gemara* in *Sotah*, and hold that that *Gemara* only says that one should usually turn to the right, not that it is required to change directions if one started turning to the left. Therefore, they argue that one should start lighting the *menorah* with the rightmost candle, and then continue lighting the rest of the candles

right to left. Lastly, the Gra holds that one should light whichever candle is closest to the door first, even if it isn't the newest candle, and even if then you have to light right to left. The *Chofetz Chaim* writes (*Mishna Berurah Siman 676*) that another reason why one lights from left to right is because one places the candles right to left, so one's hand is on the left side. We have a concept of *ein ma'arvin al hamitzvos*, that we try not to pass over *mitzvos* for even a moment. Since your hand begins on the left side, it would be impossible to light from right to left without passing over all the candles first. Therefore, we light from left to right. The general practice today is to follow the *Mishna Berurah*, starting by placing the candles from right to left, and then lighting them from left to right, starting with the newest leftmost candle.



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# CHANUKAH: THE MISSING MESECHTA

*Chanukah* lasts eight days. The *Shulchan Aruch* discusses numerous laws pertaining to *Chanukah*. Yet, the *mishnah* pays almost no attention to *Chanukah*, save for one time in *Maseches Bikkurim*, where *Chanukah* is brought as the last time to bring *bikkurim*, and in *Maseches Bava Kamma*, where the *mishnah* discusses a case of flax being carried by a camel that catches fire from *Chanukah* candles left in front of a store. Besides these passing mentions, *Chanukah* is not referred to in the *mishnah*. Furthermore, in the whole *Talmud Bavli*, only two and a half *dapim* discuss *Chanukah* and its laws. The problem is compounded when *Chanukah* is compared to its fellow Rabbinic holiday, *Purim*. An entire *masechta* is devoted to *Purim* and its laws; in fact, according to Rav Hershel Schachter, Rabeinu Yehuda Hanassi padded *Maseches Megillah* with laws that are not relevant to *Purim* (such as the "Ein Bein" *mishnayos*) in order to give *Purim* the distinction of having its own *masechta*. By virtue of the fact that the *mishnayos* seldom mention *Chanukah*, and that not even a *perek*, nevermind a *masechta*, is devoted to it and its laws, it seems that Rabeinu Yehuda Hanasi was attempting to downplay its significance. Thus, the question must be asked: what was Rebbe's motivation in minimizing the mentions of *Chanukah* in *Shas*?

The *Chasam Sofer* suggests that the reason that Rabeinu Yehudah Hanasi, the compiler and editor of the *Mishnah*, deemphasized *Chanukah*, was because he was a descendant of the family of Dovid, the family whom the *malchus* (kingship) was intended for. The *Chashmonayim* of the *Chanukah* story wrongfully took the *malchus* for their own family, rather than resuming it to the Davidic line. This was a violation of Yaakov's blessing that "the scepter [of rulership] shall not depart from Yehudah". The *Chashmonayim*, as *kohanim*, had no right to take the *meluchah* from its rightful owners. Accordingly, Rabeinu Yehudah Hanasi downplayed *Chanukah* as a critique of this error of the *Chashmonayim*.

Rav Yissocher Frand, in the name of Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik, explains the *Mishnah* and *Gemara's* lack of focus on *Chanukah* by explaining an apparent contradiction between a *Gemara* in *Maseches Moed Katan* and *Maseches Avodah Zarah*. The *Gemara* in *Moed Katan* states that if one observes a *sefer Torah* being burnt, he must tear *keriyah* (ripping clothing in mourning) twice, once for the parchment, and another time for the letters. However, the *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* recounts that Rav Chanina ben Traydon was murdered by the Romans, who wrapped him in a *sefer Torah* and then lit the scroll on fire. As he and the *sefer Torah* were burning, his *talmidim* asked him what he saw. He replied that he saw the parchment burning, but the letters were flying away. Rav Soloveitchik pointed out an apparent contradiction. The *Gemara* in *Moed Katan* states that one must

tear *keriyah* for the burning of the letters of the *sefer Torah*, but the *Gemara* in *Avodah Zarah* states that when a *sefer Torah* is burnt, the letters fly away unscathed. Rav Soloveitchik resolves the contradiction by pointing out that there is a fundamental difference between the two cases. In the case of the *Gemara* in *Moed Katan*, the one burning the *sefer Torah* was Yehoyakim ben Yoshiyahu. Rav Soloveitchik explains that since the Torah was given to the Jewish people, they possess a special relationship with it. Along with that positive relationship, however, comes the negative fact that they can also desecrate a *sefer Torah*. Due to the Jew's special relationship to the Torah, he has a special capability to destroy and desecrate its *kedushah*. However, in the case in *Avodah Zarah*, it was the Romans who were burning the *sefer Torah*. Since the Torah was never given to the Romans, they do not have the ability to truly defile it. Consequently, the letters of the *sefer Torah* escaped unscathed. Rav Soloveitchik extended this idea to the difference between Rome and Greece. The predominant theme of Rome is *churban*, destruction, such as that of the *Beis Hamikdash*, which we mourn on fast days such as *Tisha B'av*. However, the main theme of the Greeks was *tuma'ah* (defilement). Non-Jews are able to destroy a Torah, but they cannot debase it or affect its *kedushah*. In contrast, by the Greeks, the threat was not only from the *Yevanim*, but from the *Misyavnim*, those Jews who assimilated into the Greek culture and mindset. They became Greek-Jews / Jewish-Greeks. Due to them being Jewish, they had the ability to defile the Torah itself. By the *churban*, it was just the Romans, and since they bear no connection to the Torah, they are not able to truly defile it. Therefore, Rav Chanina ben Traydon witnessed the letters flying away. On the other hand, regarding the Greeks, there were also Jews involved, who possess a connection to the Torah, and can even debase its letters. Consequently, Rav Soloveitchik concludes, *Chanukah* is not accorded the same prominence that other holidays were given, as *Chanukah* is humiliating for us. It was a clash between the Jews themselves. It wasn't a typical "them vs. us"; it was an "us vs. us". Therefore, giving it the same prominence as *Purim*, where it was an outsider attempting to wipe out the Jews, would be improper. It was more fitting to keep this disgraceful incident of infighting out of the *Mishnah* and *Gemara*.

The *Eidus Biyehosef* offers a historical approach to this question. He writes that the reason why *Chanukah* was so deemphasized in the *Mishnah* was because the *Tana'im* felt it was dangerous to compose a *masechta* celebrating the successful Jewish revolt against an oppressing nation, since if a ruling nation were to find out about this *masechta*, they might assume that the Jews wanted to revolt, which could lead to horrific consequences. Furthermore, it could be that the *tana'im* were concerned that this *masechta* would inspire a Jewish uprising, which could lead to catastrophic events in the vein of the massacre in Beitar following the Bar Kochba revolt. The *Eidus Biyehosef* also suggests that the *halachos* of *Chanukah* were already written in *Megillas Taanis*, and as a result, Rabi Yehudah Hanasi was not concerned with writing them down as he was with other, oral laws.

The *Sefer Ha'eshel* suggests that the reason why *Chanukah* is seldom mentioned in the *Mishnah* and *Gemara* is because the laws of *Chanukah* were so well known that it would have been superfluous to discuss them. He brings a proof from the Rambam (*Peirush Hamishnayos Menachos* 4:1) which explains that the *mishnah* spends relatively little time discussing the laws of *tzitzis*, *tefillin*, and *mezuzah* because their laws are very well known, and "knowledge of their laws is hidden from no one". Therefore, Rabeinu Yehudah Hanasi did not discuss them extensively. The *Sefer Ha'eshel* thus suggests that the same reasoning could have been behind the lack of discussion regarding *Chanukah*.

Lastly, some suggest that *Chanukah*, in fact, is not focused on in the written text as a celebration of the Oral Law, the *Torah She'baal Peh*. The holiday memorializes the triumph over the Greeks and *Misyavnim* who specifically aimed to destroy the Oral Law. In order to demonstrate their hatred

for the notion of the Living Torah, the Greeks forced the Jews to write on oxen's horns "we have no portion in the Torah of Israel." Rebbe's exclusion of *Chanukah* from the *Mishnah* is not due to a deficiency; rather, *Chanukah* is seldom mentioned in the *Mishnah* because it is a celebration of the triumph of the Oral Law. Therefore, its story and *halachos* are kept out of the written *Torah Sheba'al Peh*, and are instead kept in the truest form of oral Torah.

# WHAT ARE WE REALLY CELEBRATING ON CHANUKAH?



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YUHSB '22

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The story of *Chanukah* has two main miracles that occurred: the last jar of oil lasting eight days, and the victory of the few *Chashmonaim* against the mighty Greek army. Although many are familiar with both miracles, many are unaware of what we truly celebrate on *Chanukah*.

To answer this question, we must analyze the sources for *Chanukah* and why we celebrate it. Our first source is the famous *Gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* (21b), which states:

“When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they contaminated all of its oil. When the royal Hasmonean family overpowered and was victorious over them, they searched and found only a single cruse of pure oil that was sealed with the seal of the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest), enough to light the *Menorah* for a single day. A miracle occurred, and they lit the *Menorah* with this oil for eight days. The following year, they established these [eight days] as days of festivity and praise and thanksgiving to God.”

Looking at the source above, it is odd to see that the victory against the mighty Greek army is not mentioned. Contrasting this source with the prayer of *Al Hanissim*, we see the opposite:

“In the days of Matisyahu... the Hasmonean and his sons, when the wicked Hellenic government rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget your Torah and to make them violate the decrees of Your will, You, in Your abounding mercies, stood by them in the time of their distress... You delivered the mighty into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few... the wicked into the hands of the righteous... and you effected a great deliverance and redemption for Your people Israel... Then Your children entered the house of Your dwelling, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your sanctuary, kindled lights in Your holy courtyards, and instituted these eight days of *Chanukah* to give thanks and praise to Your great name.”

As shown above, *Al Hanissim* focuses on the victory of the *Chashmonayim*, and not on the oil. Although *Al Hanissim* does speak of “lights kindled in Your holy courtyards,” this is most likely a reference to the many lights being lit for the festivities in the temple (which explains why courtyards are in plural).

These two sources seem to contradict each other, but in reality, they are showing each miracle in a separate lens to emphasize it. This explains why in *Al Hanissim*, we focus only on the military miracles, for us to fully appreciate it. Otherwise, it would be seen as insignificant compared to the miracle of oil. The reason the Talmud chose to only focus on the miracle of oil, however, is because it wanted to highlight that the main essence of *Chanukah* is spiritual. That is why the military aspect of *Chanukah* isn't mentioned; it does not exemplify the true essence of *Chanukah*, which represents a spiritual battle, not a physical one.



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# MAOZ TZUR: WHAT IS THAT?

If you walk into any Jewish house after *hadlakas neiros Chanukah*, there is a familiar song that you will likely hear. This song has been part of Jewish culture for about 800 years, and it even has become known to the non-Jewish world. It is sung with a joyous tune, varying slightly depending on the household, but all with the same basic structure.

This song I'm referencing is the famed *Maoz Tzur*. For some reason, I have never fully understood it, and although I understand it references different Jewish struggles and perseverance, I have never fully grasped each of the stories, or why we sing it after lighting our *Chanukah* candles. And, if I am going to praise God for his saving of our people, I should probably understand what I'm saying! I decided to research the meaning and background of this song, to help us better understand what we are saying and why. In this article, we will go through the *zemer* stanza by stanza, giving background and explaining each one.

### Section I - The Name And Its History

Firstly, it would probably be helpful understanding the name of the song and it's historical background.

The name "*Maoz Tzur*", or "my Refuge, my Rock (of salvation)" is a reference to the Chashmonai stronghold of *Beis Tzur*, where the Chashmonaim (or Maccabees) had been victorious.

*Maoz Tzur* is thought to have been written in the 13th century, during the Crusades. The first letters of the first five stanzas form an acrostic of the composer's name, Mordechai (the five Hebrew letters מרדכי). He may have been the Mordechai ben Yitzchak Halevi, who wrote the *zemer* "*Mah Yafis*", or even the scholar referred to in the *Tosafos to Niddah 36a*. Or, to judge from the appeal in the closing verse, he may have been the Mordechai whose father-in-law was martyred at Mayence (now Mainz, Germany) in 1096.

A second acrostic is found in the first letters of the opening words of the final stanza, containing the word "*chazak*", meaning "be strong".

### Section II - The First Stanza

My Refuge, my Rock of Salvation! It is pleasant to sing your praises.

מעוז צור ישועתי, לך נאה לשבח

Let our house of prayer be restored, and there we will offer You our thanks.

תכון בית תפלתי, ושם תודה נזבח.

When You will have slaughtered the barking foe,

לעת תכין מטבח מצר המנבח.

Then we will celebrate with song and psalm at the altar's dedication.

אז אגמור בשיר מזמור חנכת המזבח.

The first stanza expresses hope for the rebuilding of the Temple, and for the defeat of enemies, who are metaphorically referred to as barking.

### Section III - The Second Stanza

My soul was being satisfied with misery, my strength was spent with grief.

רעות שבעה נפשי, ביגון כחי כלה

They embittered my life with hardship, when enslaved under the rule of the calf-like kingdom (Egypt).

חיי מררו בקשי, בשעבוד מלכות עגלה

But God with his mighty power brought out His treasured people;

ובידו הגדולה הוציא את הסגלה

While Pharaoh's army and followers sank like a stone into the deep.

חיל פרעה וכל זרעו ירדו כאבן במצולה.

The second stanza brings us on our first stop in the story of Jewish exile, Egypt. We highlight our struggle of slavery, and then our freedom brought about by God.

### Section IV - The Third Stanza

He brought me to His holy abode; even there, I found no rest.

דביר קדשו הביאני, וגם שם לא שקטתי

The oppressor came and exiled me, because I served strange gods,

ובא נוגש והגלני, כי זרים עבדתי

and drank poisonous wine. Yet scarcely had I gone into exile,

ויין רעל מסכתי, כמעט שעברתי

When Babylon fell and Zerubbavel took charge; Within seventy years I was saved.

קץ בבל זרבבל, לקץ שבעים נושעת.

The third stanza takes us on our second stop in the story of Jewish exile, Bavel. We highlight that we were comfortable in Eretz Yisroel after being redeemed in Egypt, but our sins caused Hashem to kick us out. Even so, after seventy years, we were brought back to our land.

### Section V- The Fourth Stanza

The Agagite (Haman), son of Hammedasa, plotted to cut down the lofty fir [Mordechai];

כרות קומת ברוש, בקש אגגי בן המדתא

But it proved a snare to him, and his insolence was silenced.

ונהיתה לו לפח ולמוקש, וגאותו נשבתה

You raised the head of the Benjamite [Mordechai], but the enemy's name You blotted out.

ראש ימיני נשאת, ואויב שמו מחית

His numerous sons and his household you hanged upon the gallows.

רב בניו וקניניו על העץ תלית

The fourth stanza takes us on our third stop in the story of Jewish exile, Persia. We highlight the persecution of Haman, and the salvation from God brought about through the Purim story.

### Section VI - The Fifth Stanza

The Hellenistic Greeks gathered against me, in the days of the *Chashmonayim*.

יונים נקבצו עלי, אזי בימי חשמנים

They broke down the walls of my towers, and defiled all the oils.

ופרצו חומות מגדלי, וטמאו כל השמנים

But from the last remaining flask a miracle was wrought for the Jews.

ומנותר קנקנים נעשה נס לשושנים

Therefore the Sages (literally “men of insight”) of the day ordained these eight for songs of praise.

בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו שיר ורננים

The fifth stanza takes us on our third stop in the story of Jewish exile, the Land of Israel under Seleucid control. We highlight the persecution of the Hellenistic Greeks when they defiled the temple and the Jewish people. It then discusses the “Chanukah Miracle” of finding the oil, and the establishment of the holiday.

### Section VII - The Final Stanza

O bare Your holy arm and bring the end of salvation.

חשוף זרוע קדשך וקרב קץ הישועה

Wreak vengeance upon the wicked nation, on behalf of your faithful servants.

נקם נקמת עבדיך מאמה הרשעה

For deliverance has too long been delayed; and the evil days are endless.

כי ארכה השעה ואין קץ לימי הרעה

O Reject the enemy into the shadows of idolatry (idolatry refers to christianity, which had been the oppressive force at the time), and set up for us the seven shepherds (who will bring us from exile).

דחה אדמון בצל צלמון הקם  
לנו רועים שבעה

The final stanza once again calls for divine retribution against the enemies of the Jewish people. It voices our plea to God to bring us to a final permanent redemption. We should be *zoche* to a *geulah sheleimah bimheirah!*

# THE MESSAGE OF THE OIL



**AKIVA KRA**

YUHSB '21

Akiva Kra is a Senior at MTA. He lives in Teaneck, New Jersey, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Cohen's *Beis Medrash Katan Shiur*. Akiva also writes a weekly column for *Shema Koleinu*, titled "A Short Vort", with a brief thought on the *Parsha*.

The Maharal writes that oil represents sanctity, for when a Jewish king or *Kohen Gadol* was appointed, his head was anointed with oil. This gesture symbolically imbued them with holiness which would guide them in their new position. It was this oil - the symbol of perpetual and continuous sanctity - that the Greeks wanted to discontinue. The Bach (*Orach Chayim* 670) explains that the *Yevanim* wanted to stop the *neiros tamid*, the consistent lights of the *Menorah* and the *Korban Tamid*.

The Maharal continues to analyze the events of *Chanukah* further, and notes the significance of the three particular precepts that the Greeks sought to obliterate from the Jews: *Kiddush Hachodesh*, *Bris Millah*, and the observance of *Shabbos*. These *mitzvos*, he explains, are representative of the three types of holiness which can exist in the world: time (consecrating the new month), the body (circumcision), and property (resting from labor on *Shabbos*).

The Greeks knew that in order "to cause the Jews to forget and forsake the Torah" (to quote *Al Hanissim*), they would not be successful if they took a head-on approach and explicitly told the Jews not to keep the Torah. Therefore, they allowed the Jews to continue with their attachment to the Torah, but they attempted to persuade them to supplement the Torah with other forms of wisdom that would defile the purity of the Jewish soul. They introduced gymnasiums, where the cult of physical perfection and materialistic indulgence was the sole practice to indirectly repress the sanctity of time, body, and home of the Jew. They did not spill out the oil found in the Temple; they only made sure it became defiled. They sought to dim the flames of the *Menorah* by contaminating it, for it would then certainly become extinguished eventually.

Rabbi Shmuel Pinchasi writes, in his *sefer Imrei Shefer*, an answer to the following question that fits in well with the above idea: Why did Hashem make a miracle and provide pure oil that burned for eight days, if the *halachah* is that the lighting of impure oil is allowed in the *Menorah* when no other oil is available? He answers that the miracle symbolized the principle that the purity of the Torah must remain uncontaminated at all costs.

Uncontaminated Torah isn't a phenomenon that was mentioned out of nowhere during the *Chanukah* story; rather, it is something that was stated as an essential ideal many years earlier. The *navi* Yirmiyahu (13:15) compares *Bnei Yisroel* to an olive tree: "A verdant olive tree, with beautiful fruit - so has Hashem called your name." What is the significance of this metaphor? One answer is that other juices blend in with each other or with water, but oil cannot be mixed with other liquids; it always floats to the top.

So too, *Bnei Yisroel* does not blend in with the other nations that surround

it; they always retain their uniqueness and remain as a distinct entity. Before we do any *mitzvah*, we thank Hashem for having "sanctified us with His commandments." It is not enough to fulfill the *mitzvos*, but rather, we must realize that the *mitzvos* are the medium through which we become purified and sanctified.

The importance of not integrating Torah with secular culture was also explicitly written in the Rambam's *Mishneh Torah (Hilchos Deiyos 6:1)*. Rambam writes "It is natural for a man's character and actions to be influenced by his friends and associates and for him to follow the local norms of behavior. Therefore, he should associate with the righteous and be constantly in the company of the wise, so as to learn from their deeds. Conversely, he should keep away from the wicked who walk in darkness, so as not to learn from their deeds."

*Chanukah* is a time when we celebrate that we didn't mix with "other liquids", and that we were able to preserve our faith. This is one of the reasons we gather to commemorate this miracle as opposed to others from our history: we were never threatened with assimilation in such a way as we were by the story of *Chanukah*. As we use oil to light the candles of *Chanukah* each night, may we all be able to remember what we were threatened with, the lessons we learned, and that our values can't be compromised.

# אין בין חנוכה לפורים אלא...



**ELISHA PRICE**

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Elisha Price is a Sophomore at MTA. He lives in Bergenfield, New Jersey, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Kerner's *Shiur*.

We know that there are fundamental similarities between the holidays of *Purim* and *Chanukah*, most significantly that they are the only two holidays which were established after *Matan Torah*. The two holidays are compared by the Rambam (*Hilchos Megillah ViChanukah* 3:3), who writes “*And these days are called Chanukah, and eulogies and fasting are forbidden on them as on the days of Purim. And it is a mitzvah to light candles on these days based on divrei sofrim, as is the reading of the Megillah.*” Thus, the Rambam presents an equation between *Purim* and *Chanukah*. Furthermore, these two holidays are not just similar in origin, but in theme as well, since they are the only two holidays whose central theme and main *mitzvah* is a fulfilment of *persumei nissah*, spreading awareness of a miracle. On *Chanukah*, we light candles, and on *Purim*, we read the *Megillah*, both of which are meant to publicize the *neis* of that particular *yom tov*.

But if *Chanukah* and *Purim* are so similar, why are there so many differences between them?

Our first major difference is that we say *Hallel* on *Chanukah*, but not on *Purim* (the Chasam Sofer *paskens* that *Hallel* on *Purim* is not a requirement). This seems illogical, as both holidays have similar themes of praise and thanksgiving towards God.

Rabbi Nathaniel Helfgot, writing on the VMB, furthers the question by asking why it is that by *Purim*, the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 14a) teaches that “*the forty-eight male prophets and seven female prophets who prophesied for Israel did not diminish from nor add to what is written in the Torah except for [their institution of] the reading of the Megillah.*” Rabbi Helfgot wonders why the *Gemara* doesn't even seem to consider the possibility that *Chanukah* was also added as a new holiday. Why is only *Purim* considered here?

Another difference between the two holidays is with regard to a woman's obligation. Women are obligated to listen to the reading of the *Megillah* (*Megillah* 4a). However, Tosfos and the Bahag both reject the idea that a woman can be *yotzei* a man in his requirement to read the *Megillah*. But by *Menorah*, the Be'er Heitev (665:3) rules that a woman can be *yotzei* a man.

Yet another difference can be found by an *onein* (a pre-burial mourner who is forbidden to eat meat or drink wine). Rabbi Helfgot brings down the *Orchos Chayim* in the *Tur*, which *paskens* that the *halachos* of *aninus* overrides *Chanukah*, but not *Purim*.

In sum, we are left with several stringencies that only apply to *Purim*, but not *Chanukah*, and it is puzzling that these two *yamim tovim* which are so similar

in origin would have such distinct halachic differences.

Our question, however, is too large to answer in one stroke. So, we need to break it down into two: *Hallel*, and the various chumros which we listed. The *Gemara* in *Megillah* explains that *Purim* has no *Hallel* because of any of three reasons:

1. The miracle occurred outside of *Eretz Yisroel*.
2. The *Megillah* takes the place of *Hallel*.
3. We don't say *Hallel* because on *Purim* we weren't fully liberated; we were still under the rule of Persia.

In other words, the *Gemara* was sensitive to our question (why there is no *Hallel* on *Purim*) and presents three possible approaches. But what about the other issues? Interestingly, this *Gemara* would seem to suggest that *Purim* is more lenient (not more stringent!), in spite of the stringencies that we know only apply on *Purim*! Therefore, while this *Gemara* addresses *Hallel*, it adds to the strength of our question about the other issues!

Rabbi Helfgot explains that *Purim* and *Chanukah* are not on the same level. He brings down the source for the *mitzvah* of *Megillah*, the *Gemara* (*Megillah* 14a) which learns from a *kal vichomer* that since we praise God for taking us out of slavery (*Hallel* on *Pesach*), so too we praise Him for saving our actual lives (*Megillah*, the substitute for *Hallel*, on *Purim*).

Therefore, Rabbi Helfgot explains that the *mitzvos* of *Purim* (but not the holiday itself) may actually be Biblical (or derived from such), putting them at a *de'oraysa* level! Therefore, we understand why *Purim* is more stringent than *Chanukah*.

While that is a beautiful *vort* for *Purim*, where does this leave *Chanukah*? What emerges from this analysis is that since *Purim* is no longer a *derabanan*, *Chanukah* becomes the ultimate expression of Rabbinical thanks to Hashem. *Chanukah* is the only *yom tov* where we receive no instruction from God regarding its fulfillment; it is just us pouring our thanks to Hashem, without any guiding commandments.

And that is the unique significance of *Chanukah*. It is our dedication to our Rabbis and our wanting to thank Hashem even if the Torah doesn't give us exact instructions as to how. Let's use this year's *Chanukah* to express and internalize these important messages and values!

# CHANUKAH: FROM AHARON TO THE CHASHMONAYIM



**SAMUEL  
GORMAN**

YUHSB '21

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At the end of *Parshas Naso* (*Bamidbar* 7: 1-89), the Torah records the events of the *chanukas hamizbeach*, the dedication of the *Beis Hamikdash*, and lists the *korbanos* of the *nesii'im*. From this, the Torah immediately shifts its focus to the lighting of the *Menorah* at the beginning of *Parshas Beha'alosecha* (*Bamidbar* 8: 1-4). This juxtaposition causes one to question what exactly is tying these two topics together.

The Chizkuni (*Bamidbar* 8: 2, d"h: *daber el Aharon*), as well as Rashi (*Bamidbar* 8:2, d"h: *behaalosecha*), answer this question, and explain the reason for the juxtaposition of these two topics in the Torah. According to Rashi and the Chizkuni, after the *chanukas hamizbeach*, Aharon was upset. All of the *nesi'im* had brought offerings in honor of the event, but he had not been given the opportunity. For this reason, explain the Chizkuni and Rashi, the topic of *Menorah* is juxtaposed with the *chanukas hamizbeach*. God, in response to Aharon's disappointment at not having played a role in the *chanukas hamizbeach*, now reassures Aharon that he and his descendants would have the important job of lighting the *Menorah*.

The Ramban (*Bamidbar* 8:2, d"h: *behaalosecha*) elaborates on this connection. Questioning the explanation given by Rashi and the Chizkuni above, Ramban wonders why it is that God chose to use the lighting of the *Menorah* to console Aharon. Why not mention some other special service of the *kohen gadol*, such as the bringing of the *ketores* or the *Yom Kippur avodah*? Why does God specifically choose to mention *Menorah* in order to console Aharon? Additionally, questions the Ramban, what reason did Aharon have to feel left-out? After all, Aharon brought plenty of mandatory *korbanos*, so he shouldn't have felt left-out in that regard, and he couldn't have been upset that he didn't have the opportunity to bring optional *korbanos*, as in that case, the *mitzvah* of *Menorah* would not have consoled him, as it is not an optional *avodah*!

In response to these questions, the Ramban gives a most fascinating explanation of the connection between *Menorah* and the *chanukas hamizbeach*. The Ramban explains that God is not trying to console Aharon through the *mitzvah* of *Menorah*; rather, He is hinting at future events that would make Aharon feel better. The Ramban writes that "the point of this is to hint at the rededication of the candles that happened in the second temple, by means of Aharon's descendants" (*ibid.*). In other words, the Ramban says that the reason for the juxtaposition of *Menorah* to *chanukas hamizbeach* is that God made Aharon feel better about him not having played a major role in the first *chanukas hamizbeach* by reassuring him that his descendants, the *Chashmonayim*, would play a major role in the rededication years later by the miracle of the *Menorah* on *Chanukah*.

# אמר לחכמה אחתי את



## RABBI BARUCH PESACH MENDELSON

MAGGID SHIUR

Rabbi Mendelson joined the YUHSB faculty in 1996, and has since served as a *rebbe* for both the 10th and 11th Grade Honors Shiurim and the AP Psychology instructor. He also serves as the Faculty Advisor for *Shema Koleinu*.

Rabbi Mendelson received *semicha* from RIETS and holds a Master's degree in Psychology from CUNY. Rabbi Mendelson was awarded the Caroline and Joseph S. Gruss Life Monument Funds, Inc. and the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Awards for Excellence in Jewish Education from the Board of Jewish Education of Greater New York. Rabbi Mendelson serves as the *Morah Diasra* of Kehilla Marine Park.

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik is widely considered the father of modern *lomdishe* learning, and much of our *iyun* in *Gemara* and *Rishonim* comes from his unique style of analysis. Rav Chaim used to say that, when learning a *sugya*, we must realize that the *Rishonim* already said all the *chiddushim* (novel ideas) - our job is simply to work hard to understand what it was that they were trying to communicate. Learning *Gemara* in depth is not about testing the limits of our own logical capabilities, and then discovering which *Rishonim* agree with us. Rather, we work to explain the *Rishonim* and ensure that their words “fit in” to the *shalka vitarya*, the give-and-take, of the *sugya* as a whole. This is why, despite the tremendous creativity of Rav Chaim and his son, the Brisker Rov, every piece in their *seforim* begins with a question on the *pshat* (basic understanding) of the *sugya*. *Lomdus* is only a tool which is used to help us answer these questions, and thereby understand the wisdom of *Chazal*. Rav Yoshe Ber Soloveitchik *zt”l*, the Rav, was very opposed to those who attempted to superimpose non-Torah systems of logical analysis in learning *Gemara*. Learning is not about showing our own creativity, but about working to resolve the words of the *chachomim* of previous generations.

The same rule applies when we learn other matters, such as Tanach. When we approach a story or *nevuah*, we do not come with our own ideas about what is socially, politically, or morally correct, and use the *pesukim* to support those ideas. Rather, we listen to how *Chazal* and *meforshim* like Rashi, the Radak, and the Malbim understood the *pesukim*, and approach the topic from that perspective. Rav Yaakov Moshe Lessin *zt”l*, a former *mashgiach* in our *Yeshiva* for over 30 years, described *drush* as “twisting the words of *Chazal* to match my *hashkofos*, instead of plumbing the depths of *Chazal*.” This is not the proper way to approach any sort of *limmud Torah*.

*Chanukah* is a holiday which celebrates the triumph of the Torah over the corrupt ideologies of Hellenism. Western culture proved unable to dominate *Bnei Yisroel*, and true *hashkofas haTorah* emerged unscathed. This presents a real problem to our community: how does one who holds himself to be a practitioner of *Torah Umadda* understand this *yom tov*? How do those of us who believe that *chochmas Hashem* is revealed in the study of Physics, Biology, Literature, and Psychology, purport to celebrate this triumph?

My *Rebbi*, Rav Aharon Soloveitchik *zt”l*, explained this with the *possuk* in *Mishlei* (7:4) which says “*emor lichochmah ‘achosi at’*” - say to wisdom ‘you are my sister’. My *Rebbi* explained: I can be very close with my sister, we can know each other well, and we can share alot. But, the *possuk* does not say “*amar lichochmah ishti at’*” - say to wisdom ‘you are my **wife**’! The relationship of husband and wife is defined by *ishto kigifo*, where the two

become like one person. This kind of relationship cannot exist with *chochmah*; we may treat wisdom like a sister, but never as a wife. The *possuk* in *Bereishis* states that man should “cleave to his wife, and they shall be as one flesh.” Rashi explains that this is fulfilled when a man and wife have a baby, who is a combination of the two parents. Such a thing cannot exist with *chochmah*. There cannot be a hybrid which mixes everything into one being. When Rivkah *Imeinu* saw that there was kicking inside of her stomach when she passed a *beis medrash* **and** when she passed a house of idol worship, she became concerned. Hashem calmed her by telling her that she had **two** sons inside of her, who would become two great nations. This calmed Rivkah, because she realized that the kicking was coming from two separate children. To have one child who wanted to leave to the *beis medrash* and the *beis avodah zarah* would be oxymoronic and untenable. Only once she learned that these were two separate children did she calm down.

If this is the case, then what exactly should our relationship with *chochmah* be? My *Rebbi* explained based on another *possuk* (*Bereishis* 9:27): “God shall be with Yafes, and Yafes shall reside in the tents of Shem”. Yafes was the ancestor of all Western civilizations, including the Greeks, and Shem was the ancestor of *Bnei Yisroel*. Yafes can be very valuable, and he can reside within Shem’s tent, but the tent must remain primarily Shem’s! The *madda* must be filtered through the lens of Torah before it can be utilized. If it is to dwell in Shem’s tent comfortably, it must first conform to Shem’s “house rules” so to speak, of proper *hashkofas haTorah*.

*Torah Umadda* is when we use *chochmah* in such a way that it can complement the Torah, but not to supplement or replace the Torah with secular wisdom, *chas vishalom*. Rabbi Dr. Norman Lamm *zt”l* always said “our interaction with the modern world does not permit us to be any less scrupulous in upholding and maintaining the minutiae of *halachah*.” *Torah Umadda* does not preclude being careful about our approach to things such as *Shabbos*, *kashrus*, *tzniyus*, *tefillah bitzibbur*, *tzitzis*, *lashon hara*, *keviyas itim laTorah*, and proper *hashkofas* (outlook)!

But, we still must ask ourselves: why do we see such compromise so often? Why is it that we commonly see people sacrificing on basic matters of *halachah* and *hashkafa* in favor of a more “enlightened” approach to *Yiddishkeit*?

*Lefi aniyas da’ati*, it all begins with the style of learning. When we learn, do we make sure to nullify our preconceptions in favor of what the *Rishonim* tell us, or do we attempt to fit our own *svaros* and ideas into the text? If we do not approach Judaism from a place of humility, with a willingness to remove ourselves from the equation and focus on understanding the words of *Chazal*, then we will inevitably come to create the sort of hybrid of Torah and *chochmah* which cannot exist for long.

This is the major difference between a *yeshivah* and a secular college. In a *yeshivah*, the *roshei yeshivah* decide the curriculum and schedule for the entire institution. Everyone in the *yeshivah* comes to the *beis medrash* at the same time, to learn the same things, under the guidance of *gedolei yisroel*. In a college, however, everyone decides when and what they want to learn: I can take chemistry, english, public speaking, and music, at any time and in any order that I choose! If a person is in *yeshivah*, they can go to secular college, with their fundamental outlook and perspective being shaped by the *yeshivah*. But if they are primarily in college, then their outlook, and their lifestyle, is left up to their own discretion. Inevitably, they will end up as a Jewish American, an American through and through, who happens to also be Jewish. His Judaism will not stand up to any innovations which occur to him. But a *ben yeshivah*, even one who appreciates secular knowledge, is fundamentally an American Jew, the Jew of *Torah Umadda*, who appreciates wisdom and knowledge through the lens and guidance of *hashkofas haTorah*.

If one approaches Judaism with *gaivah*, determined to stick to his own inclinations, then he will inevitably be led astray in both learning and *hashkofas hachayim*. Only someone who is prepared to submit himself to the timeless and immutable wisdom of Torah will be able to truly have the

Torah shape him, rather than the other way around.

On *Chanukah*, we celebrate the triumph of the *Chashmonayim* over the corruptions of Greek culture. The Greeks attempted to replace Torah with secular learning, or at the very least, to equate the two. Our triumph over the *Yevanim* was not necessarily in completely rejecting their innovations; rather, *Bnei Yisroel* showed that the only interactions we can have with the rest of the world are ones which occur from the perspective of *Toras emes*. May we all merit to act with *yiraso kodem lichachmaso*, where our *yiras shamayim* precedes our own intellect, in every part of our lives.

# KEEP GOING UP



**YAAKOV  
WEINSTOCK**

YUHSB '22

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The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (21b), when discussing the *halachos* of *Chanukah*, brings a *machlokes* between *Beis Hillel* and *Beis Shammai* regarding whether the number of candles lit on *Chanukah* progressively increases or decreases over the eight days. *Beis Hillel* holds that they increase from one candle to eight candles, while *Beis Shammai* argues and holds that on the first night, eight candles are lit, and it decreases every night by one candle. The *Gemara* gives us insight into their reasoning behind their opinions. *Beis Hillel's* reasoning for increasing is because of the concept of *ma'alin bikodesh vi'ain moridin* - we go up in holiness, and we don't go down. In order to understand *Beis Hillel's* reasoning, we need to ask a few questions.

This concept that *Beis Hillel* utilizes is used in another place. The Rambam in *Hilchos Klei Kodesh* rules that a *kohen* who is given a higher position, such as *Kohen Gadol*, cannot subsequently become an ordinary *kohen* later, because of the irule of *ma'alin bikodesh vi'ain moridin*. In fact, this is the primary utilization of this concept. This *halacha* is found in a *Gemara* in *Megillah* (21b), as well as in a *Gemara* in *Yoma* (72b). Therefore, it is clear that this is the common application of this concept. *Beis Hillel* wants to apply this to *Chanukah*. However, what is motivating *Beis Hillel* to explain this *halacha* by *Chanukah* with a concept that, at face value, seems to have no connection to *Chanukah*?

In order to answer this, we need to ask another question. Why do we say *ma'alin bikodesh vi'ain moridin*? I believe the answer is that observing this doctrine of only going up in *kedushah* is supposed to set a mentality within all of us. We must always be striving higher and higher in areas of *kedushah*. Therefore, allowing someone to move from a higher position to a lower position in matters of *kedushah* would be antithetical to a Jewish mindset, which is supposed to only progress in matters of holiness. That's the ideal method of growth, and therefore, we practice it in any way possible.

Understanding this idea behind *ma'alin bikodesh vi'ain moridin*, we can now understand why *Beis Hillel* was compelled to apply this concept by *Chanukah*. *Chanukah*, beneath the surface, is about striving for the high level of *kedushah* possible. Under the *Yevanim*, the Jews were in a spiritually low state. The *Mishnah Berurah* explains that the difference between *Purim* and *Chanukah* is that *Chanukah* was solely a spiritual persecution, in contrast to the physical threats on *Purim*. The Greek's goal wasn't to destroy the Jews physically, but to destroy Judaism. This persecution made people leave Judaism and join the Greeks and their ideology. However, when Matisyahu and his sons rose up and won, they inaugurated the *Beis Hamikdash* again, and lit the *Menorah*. The Ramban in *Parshas Behaaloscha* explains that Hashem comforted Aharon, who was upset at not being involved in the *korbanos* at the *Mishkan's* dedication, by

telling him that his descendants would light the *Menorah* at the time of *Chanukah*. Aharon's upsetness with not offering the *korbanos* at the *chanukas hamishkan* was due to his constant drive to achieve greater heights in *kedushah*; since he was unable to offer a *korban* himself, he felt as if he was being brought down. Therefore, Hashem promised him that his children would epitomize this trait of always aspiring for *kedushah* at the time of *Chanukah*, when they would light the *Menorah* as a rejection of Greek principles and as an attempt to create a culture of continued progress towards the goal of more holiness. Thus, it is clear that *Beis Hillel* wanted to commemorate, through the main *mitzvah* of the holiday, not only the neis of the oil, but also what that lighting represented. As we increase the number of candles we light over this *Chanukah*, we should make sure to keep this message alive, and remind ourselves that we must continue to aspire and progress in our relationship with Hashem.

# START THE FIRE



## SHIMI KAUFMAN

YUHSB '21.  
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF,  
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One of the fundamental *halachos* in *Hilchos Chanukah* is the principle of *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* (lit. “lighting makes the *mitzvah*”). This means that the main requirement of lighting *Chanukah* candles is fulfilled from the moment the candles are lit in a *kosher* manner, even if they are subsequently moved to a place which would not be fit for the *mitzvah*. For example, a candle placed above twenty *amos* is invalid for the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* candles; however, if one lit a candle below twenty *amos*, and then moved it above twenty *amos*, the *mitzvah* would still be fulfilled, based on this principle of *hadlakah oseh mitzvah*. Since the initial lighting of the candles was done properly, any subsequent movement does not invalidate the *mitzvah*. We follow this opinion in the *Gemara* in contrast to that of *hanachah oseh mitzvah* (lit. “placing makes the *mitzvah*”), which maintains that even if the candles were lit in an improper place, as long as they burn for the minimum time of 30 minutes in a valid location, the *mitzvah* is fulfilled.

The *Minchas Chinuch* (*Mitzvah* 97) asks a question on this notion of *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* based on a puzzling statement of the Rambam in *Hilchos Biyas Hamikdash* (9:7). The original *Menorah*, lit daily in the *Beis Hamikdash*, was placed inside of the *Heichal*, against the southern wall. The Rambam writes that technically, a non-*kohen* is permitted to light the *Menorah*; however, since a non-*kohen* is forbidden to enter the *Heichal*, the *Menorah* must first be prepared and cleaned inside the *Heichal*, and then brought out to the *Chatzer* (courtyard). The non-*kohen* can then light the *Menorah* in the *Chatzer*, at which point it is brought back inside to its proper location in the *Heichal*. In this *halachah*, the *Minchas Chinuch* sees a contradiction: if one lit the candles on *Chanukah* in this manner, lighting them in an invalid place and then bringing them to a *kosher* place afterwards, the candles would not fulfil the *mitzvah*, based on the principle of *hadlakah oseh mitzvah*! If the *Chanukah* candles were established to commemorate the original *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash*, why would *Chazal* not formulate the *mitzvah* with the same principles as those used by the *Menorah*?

Rav Chaim Soloveitchik, in his commentary on the Rambam (*ibid.*), clarifies that the *mitzvah* of lighting the *Menorah* was not the actual lighting of the flame; rather, the requirement was that the *Menorah* should burn in its proper place. Thus, it was irrelevant where the actual candles were lit, since as long as they would be moved to burn in the correct place, the *mitzvah* was fulfilled. This would seem to further our question - the *mitzvah* of the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* was fundamentally that the candles should be allowed to burn in their proper place, while the *mitzvah* on *Chanukah* is that the candles should be lit in their proper place. In other words, the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* seems to operate on the aforementioned

principle of *hanachah oseh mitzvah*, which we reject when it comes to *Chanukah*! What is the reason for this discrepancy?

Rav Chaim Pinchas Scheinberg (*Mishmeres Chayim Chelek I, "Chanukah" 2*) explains that on *Chanukah*, we are not merely commemorating the existence of the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash*. Rather, we light the candles to recall the specific miracle of *Chanukah*, that the *Menorah* burned for eight days with only enough oil to last for one (or perhaps even less than that). Thus, what we are remembering with the lighting of the candles on *Chanukah* is not how the *Menorah* was lit, but rather, the specific action of lighting which brought about this miracle. It therefore makes sense why the *mitzvah* was established differently from the *mitzvah* of the *Menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash*, since what we recall on *Chanukah* is not the general *mitzvah* of the *Menorah*, but the lighting which resulted in the miracle of the oil.

However, this explanation would seem to still be problematic. While it is true that what we remember on *Chanukah* is the specific miracle of the *Menorah*, the miracle itself was also not about the action of lighting. Rather, the *neis* was that the *Menorah* continued to burn for eight days straight after it was lit. It would therefore seem to be logical for the *mitzvah* to be established in a way which reflects this; namely, that the candles must burn properly for a set amount of time, to remember the candles in the *Beis Hamikdash* which continued to burn. If the miracle was unrelated to the action of lighting, why was the principle of *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* established at all; the candles on *Chanukah* should reflect the *neis* which they commemorate, by remaining lit properly for a set amount of time, just as the candles burned longer than expected. Seemingly, the best way to recall the miracle would be through the rule of *hanachah oseh mitzvah*, by requiring that the candles remain burning properly for a set period of time.

This question is made even more puzzling when one considers that the *Chashmonayim* themselves were not *kohanim*, and that the *Heichal* was still *tamei* from the Greek defilement of the *Beis Hamikdash*. Based on these two factors, the *Chasam Sofer* (*Drashos on Chanukah* Vol. I page 67) suggests that the *Chashmonayim* lit the *Menorah* outside of its proper location, in accordance with this *halachah* in the Rambam. We therefore see that even the lighting which brought about the miracle utilized the principle of *hanachah oseh mitzvah*. What motivation was there to establish the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* to reflect the action of lighting the *Menorah* instead?

Perhaps we can suggest an answer which is commonly used to answer the famous *kashya* of the *Beis Yosef* on *Chanukah*. Why, asks the *Beis Yosef*, do we celebrate *Chanukah* for eight nights; if there was enough oil to last for one night, then the *neis* only occurred on the seven extra nights when the oil burned through miraculous means? There are many, many answers to this question (enough to fill entire *seforim*!), but one answer which is given is that the *neis* was that the *Chashmonayim* even bothered to light the *Menorah* with the amount of oil that they had. Given that there was not enough oil to last eight days, the *Chashmonayim* could have easily not bothered to light at all. Thus, we light an extra candle to commemorate the *bitachon* which *Bnei Yisroel* demonstrated in Hashem, to try and fulfil the *mitzvah* despite the seemingly hopeless nature of the situation. Maybe we can use this answer to address our question. By formulating the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* candles such that the main function is the actual lighting of the candle, we commemorate the *bitachon* of the *Maccabim* in taking action to light the *Menorah* despite not having enough oil. We are not only commemorating the miraculous burning of the candles, but the courage and faith which it took to light a *Menorah* which had no natural way of lasting longer than one night. While it is true that the main *mitzvah* of the *Menorah* is that it should be allowed to remain burning properly, at the same time, *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* - what makes the *mitzvah*, what allows it to come about, is that first action of lighting. Without the action of *hadlakah*, there would have been no opportunity for a miracle.

One of the main themes of *Chanukah* is “rekindling our flame.” Months after the *Yomim Neorayim*, the buzz and closeness to Hashem which we feel during the months of *Elul* and *Tishrei* has begun to fade. *Chanukah* is meant to inspire us to relight our excitement and reclaim our closeness to Hashem. In this vein, the *Chiddushei HaRim* writes that the halachic requirement for how long the candles must burn, *ad shetichleh ragil min hashuk* (until people stop walking in the marketplace), can also be interpreted homiletically - *ad shetichleh ragil min hashuk* - until we cease with our ordinary, uninspired service of Hashem. With the idea we have developed, we can take this one step further. While it is true that the *Chanukah* candles must burn “*ad shetichleh ragil min hashuk*”, at the end of the day, this is not what qualifies the *mitzvah*. The guiding principle for *Chanukah* is that *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* - we must take it upon ourselves to light our own candle, even in the face of a world of impending darkness. The power of *Chanukah* is that when we light our flame, even if it seems that we do not have enough fuel to keep it lit, to remain inspired, the candle can keep burning *ad ad shetichleh ragil min hashuk*. But in order for us to seize onto this unique opportunity, we must ourselves take the first step and resolve to grow closer to Hashem, even if it seems like it may be out of our reach. Thus, in lighting the *Chanukah* candles, we remind ourselves that *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* - if we act like the *Chashmonayim* and light our flame no matter what, Hashem will see to it that it does not burn out.



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# A GOOD OL' SLAP IN THE FACE

One of the miracles that is celebrated on *Chanukah* is the victory of the *Chashmonaim* against the Greeks. There is a fascinating, not so well-known *Midrash* that describes the event which caused the war. The *Midrash (Otzar HaMidrashim Chanukah, page 189)* describes a *gezeirah* enacted by the Greeks that required all Jewish women to have relations with a Greek officer on their wedding night, before they could be with their husbands. Over time, many Jewish women stopped getting married in order to avoid this despicable and humiliating act. Chanah, daughter of Matisyahu the *Kohen Gadol*, was getting married to Elazar, the son of a *Chashmonai*. Many Jews gathered to celebrate the wedding of the children of two *Gedolei Yisroel*. After the ceremony, while all eyes were on the *kallah* being carried in on a bridal throne, Chanah did something shocking. She disrobed, exposing her body to all of the guests. Immediately, her brothers, the Maccabees, were horrified. They couldn't fathom why she would act so immodestly in public at her wedding, and they were ready to "kill" her for the embarrassment she caused to the family. In response to her brother's rage and indignation, Chanah responded to them with a stinging rebuke. Where was their anger when every pure and modest Jewish woman had to submit herself to a Greek officer? Where was their indignation when women had to denigrate themselves in a way that was far more embarrassing and offensive than her uncovered body at her wedding? Rather than turning their anger on her, she admonished them to direct that anger where it truly belonged, at the Greeks. The brothers were taken aback by this response at first, but soon they realized how correct she was. They acknowledged that they had to take action. They devised a plan to demand that Chanah only be given to the highest ranking Greek general, since she was the daughter of someone important. Once he was brought to her, the brothers assassinated him. The *Midrash* pinpoints this murder as the beginning of the war that led to the victory of *Chanukah*.

There are many lessons to be learned from this story. One message that resonates with me is the idea that the brothers knew there was a problem, yet they did nothing to address it. They sat passively and helplessly as many women were subjected to this horrific decree. Only when Chanah did something shocking and daring, did they heed the call to action. How much suffering could have been avoided if they had only acted sooner? In life, there will always be challenges. It shouldn't take a blatant or shocking action to come to the realization that a problem that causes distress and suffering needs to be addressed.

I think a very relevant example of this lesson can be seen in how the global community has handled the current pandemic. Every country on the planet knew that Covid was out there, and that it had the potential to be dangerous

and deadly. Many countries sat passively and watched, but did nothing to prepare to face the disease when it came to their borders. Only when people got sick, were hospitalized, and many tragically died, were our leaders shocked into facing the reality of this unknown virus. They scrambled to set up enough hospital beds, amass PPE, ventilators, testing capabilities, and enact real restrictions to minimize the spread of infection. In the story of the *Midrash*, the Jews only took action when damage had already been done, and only when Chanah shocked them into facing the reality of the tragedy. Sadly, the same thing happened in many places the world over; action to fight Covid only happened when countries were shocked into facing the reality of the tragedy. No matter the problem, this *Midrash* teaches how important it is not to feel powerless, and not to wait until we receive a “slap in the face” to act. We must acknowledge the core issues that our community is facing and find the strength, courage and wisdom to improve the situation.



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# ORDINARY MIRACLES

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Sanhedrin* brings a statement from Rav Yochanan. Rav Yochanan says that everyone who makes a blessing on the new moon for the month during the proper time, it is as if they have greeted the Divine Presence. Rabbeinu Yonah on the Rif at the end of the fourth *perek* of *Maseches Brachos* explains Rav Yochanan's statement. Rabbeinu Yonah states that we know we cannot actually see any life-like, physical embodiment of Hashem. However, we are still able to "see" Him in a sense, by witnessing His miracles, being in awe of the great things he creates, and by trying to comprehend the might of Hashem.

There is a *possuk* in *Sefer Yeshayahu* that relates a similar concept. The text there says that while Hashem is hidden from us, He is also still the savior of Israel. This *possuk* comes to teach us an important lesson. Even though we are unable to see Hashem, he is still protecting us throughout our daily lives. This, like the aforementioned berachah that we make on the new moon, teaches us that we should be in awe of the great wonders that Hashem does for us. We should always be thankful for everything that Hashem does for us, and not disregard Hashem because we cannot see Him.

The Alter of Kelm elaborates on this message of Rabbeinu Yonah. He says that things that we see and do everyday, regardless of their importance, will often fade into the background and not feel so meaningful to us. When we see or do the same things again and again, we start to care about them less and less. This relates to what we mentioned earlier. We experience the great benefits of the sun every single day of our lives. The sun does not change, from our point of view. It is constant, and it rises and sets the same way each and every day. The moon, on the other hand, is a different story. The moon is constantly changing. On no day does the moon appear to us with the same shape that it had on the previous day. The lunar cycle reminds us of Hashem and his great power. By constantly changing, it is teaching us that despite the regularity of the sun and many other celestial bodies, Hashem is still in control of the events that transpire surrounding every single one. There is no thing in the world, both out of this world and here on Earth, that is not under Hashem's control. He is the one who gives everything the ability to happen. This berachah that we make on the moon is to remind ourselves that Hashem is in complete control, even over the seemingly regular and mundane factors of life.

The miracle of *Chanukah* perfectly encapsulates this concept of us being grateful to Hashem for both the supernatural and natural miracles of life. We know that the reason that we light the *menorah* on *Chanukah* each year is because the *Chashmonayim* had enough oil to light the *menorah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* for one night, but Hashem made it last for eight nights, to allow *Bnei Yisroel* enough time to get more oil to continue lighting afterwards. We

know that Hashem controls every aspect of our lives, and so we can look closer at the basics of what transpired. While it is shocking to us to see oil burn for eight days, in light of what we have said, we can see that the same Hashem who makes oil burn for one day, just made it burn for eight days! The miracle, at its core, is the same in both situations. However, the Alter of Kelm explains, familiarity and repetitiveness blind us to truly being in complete and utter awe of every one of Hashem's seemingly "regular" miracles. These phenomena, despite how miraculous they are, occur on a regular basis, and so we feel less emotional impact when they happen. Over time, we forget to recognize that nature is only nature because Hashem made it to be so. The supernatural events just cause us to understand the greatness of Hashem, and from there we also see the greatness of Hashem in our daily lives. Seeing a miracle that is not a regular thing to us, like the new moon or one day's oil lasting for eight days, reminds us of the countless wonderful things Hashem does in our daily lives that we do not normally perceive as extraordinary or great. By seeing the supernatural miracles we come to appreciate the natural miracles as well.

This notion can also help us to answer the famous question of the *Beis Yosef*. The *Beis Yosef* asks why, if the oil found by *Bnei Yisroel* was already able to burn for one day under normal circumstances, why do we celebrate *Chanukah* for eight days? Only the last seven days were really supernatural! The first day would have had enough oil for the *menorah* by natural means! The Alter of Kelm explains that the answer to this question is the same concept that he has been telling us all along. Even though the supernatural miracle of *Chanukah* was only for the last seven days, where the oil was able to burn when it would not have done so under typical conditions, everyone was reminded by this of the greatness of the natural world. All of *Bnei Yisroel* recognized that it was Hashem who made a miracle so that the oil would be able to burn, even on the first night. Therefore, just as we make a *berachah* on the cycle of the new moon when we become aware of the greatness of natural miracles, so too we do the same on the first night of *Chanukah*. On the first night of *Chanukah*, we are acknowledging and appreciating the miracles of Hashem that occur in our ordinary lives. On the rest of the nights of *Chanukah*, we are being grateful for the supernatural miracles that Hashem does for us. *Chanukah* teaches us both of these lessons. We should learn from here that along with being thankful for the great, extraordinary miracles of life, we should also appreciate the more common miracles that Hashem does for us. It is our hope that this *Chanukah*, we should all be *zocheh* to fully appreciate everything that Hashem does for us, and that we should be better people because of it, ultimately to bring the coming of *Moshiach*, *Bimheirah* *Biyameinu*, Amen!



## RABBI MAYER SCHILLER

### MAGGID SHIUR

Rabbi Schiller joined the MTA faculty as a *Maggid Shiur* in 1987, and in the 33 years since, he has influenced countless *Talmidim* with his unique blend of warmth and intellectualism. Rabbi Schiller is the author of several books, including *The Road Back, an investigation of the different doctrines within Orthodox Judaism*; *The Guilty Conscience of a Conservative*, a critique of the American Right; and *And He Shall Judge His People With True Judgement*, a monograph in defense of the philosophy of Rabbi Shimshon Raphael Hirsch.

# SHOULD THE *MENORAH* GO BACK OUTSIDE?

Rabbi Moshe Walter, in a lengthy article in *Hakirah* 16 (pp. 233 – 246), notes that “21<sup>st</sup> century Jews” have, in general, adhered to a very detailed observance of *halacha*. If we think about it, there is little question that our *tefillin*, *arba minim*, and other *mitzvah*-oriented objects are vastly superior to those which were the norm in earlier centuries. This accentuates the question of why lighting the *menorah* next to the door outside our dwellings, in the ideal fashion, has not been accepted by most of contemporary observant Jewry.

This question is one which has occupied the *poskim*, not only of late but even reaching back to the days of the *Rishonim*, many of whom were also part of communities who no longer lit the *menorah* outside.

In order to explore this question adequately, we need first to provide a brief overview of the *halachic* issues. (For those desiring a more prolonged exploration of the varied *pesakim* on this, the just mentioned Walter article should provide initial reflections and detailed source material.) Having done this, we hope to discuss a further question of to what degree should tradition (*mesorah*) replace what is the apparent *halacha* in situations where the traditions seem to be time and place generated.

First, then, we turn to the basic *halachic* contours. The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (21b) quotes a *braisa* which states, “The *Chanukah* light is a *mitzvah* to place on the doorway of one’s house on the outside; if one lives on an upper floor, he should place it in a window next to the public domain. In a time of danger, one should place the *menorah* on his table, and that is enough.”

Tosfos (d’h “*mitzvah*”) there adds that the *ner* (light) must actually be outside of the property, such that in a situation where a large courtyard lies between the house and street, the lighting must take place outside the courtyard. Another Tosfos (d’h “*ub’shaas*”) clarifies that the “danger” referred to was from idolaters, who on their holidays forbid lights to be lit anywhere outside their own houses of worship.

It seems that, already in the days of the later *Rishonim*, the accepted practice was that “even though there was no longer any danger, if there once had been, then the *menorah* should continue to be lit inside.” (See *Sefer Ha’ittur, Hilchos Chanukah* following the explanation of the *Pesach Hadvir*.)

The *Sefer Ha’ittur* was written by R. Yitzchak ben Abba Marri, who lived in France in the twelfth century. Despite this ruling, the *Shulchan Aruch*, following the Tur and his own conclusions in the *Beis Yosef* (671:5), simply codifies the law as stated in the *Talmud* to light outside. However, the Rama notes that the custom is that “all light indoors.” (671:7)

The Rama goes on to say that even when lighting inside the house, “the

custom is to still light in the *tefach* which is close to a door, as was done in their days.” (ibid. op cit.) This is explained in the *Mishnah Berurah* (671:37) as fulfilling the “appropriate custom (*minhag nachon*)”, as the *Biyur Halacha* describes it, to enter surrounded by the two *mitzvos* of *Ner Chanukah* and *mezuzah*. In truth, this concept of having *mitzvos* on both sides is found in the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 22a), but is unclear whether it only applies when lighting outside. And, it is also unclear whether the “door” referred to by the Rama might be one completely inside the house, where the notion of “entry” between the *mitzvos* might not apply.

The Rama also does not explain why it is “our practice” to light inside. Is it only due to danger, or might it be a continuation of the *Sefer Ha’ittur* notion of a custom continuing even if its reason has ended?

In fact, there have been several other explanations offered throughout the years for not lighting outside. The Rivash (1326 - 1408) seems to feel that “the hand of the nations is always upon us” and that this simple “hatred” is sufficient to not light outside (*Siman* 111). Alternatively, Ritva (1260 - 1320) sees the move indoors as binding only when “the wind makes it impossible to light outdoors” (*Shabbos* 21a). The Munkatcher Rov, R. Chaim Eluzar Shapiro (1868 - 1937) also sees the move indoors as only understandable if due to climate-related change (*Nimukei Orach Chayim* 671). Moreover, he asserts that if there is a chance of wind “and especially in the winter,” if the lights will be extinguished before the time of lighting has ended, then the entire lighting becomes retroactively invalidated, since it is similar to not putting sufficient oil in the *menorah*.

Others, however, maintain, along with R. Yaakov Emden (1697 - 1776), that bad weather is no excuse. Rather, a glass structure should be constructed to protect the *menorah*, and we should continue to light outside. The requirement to light in a glass enclosure is firmly rejected by the *Aruch Hashulchan* (1829 – 1908) for three reasons: 1) in his areas (Lithuania), *Chanukah* falls in the winter months, with frequent snow and strong winds, 2) using a glass might limit the *mitzvah* being seen and, therefore, not be within the *halacha* of publicizing the miracle, 3) not all Gentile communities will allow Jews to do this outside. He also adds that it is that *Chazal* would not require us to fulfill the basic *mitzvah* in such a demanding fashion.

This *psak* is followed by the *Chayei Adam* (154:12) of R. Avroham Danzig (1748 - 1820) and the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (139:7) of R. Shelomoh Ganzfried (1804 - 1886), who both rule that whenever we live among non-Jews, we should light inside.

Contemporary *poskim* are engaged with whether those who live above twenty *amos* from street level are better served by lighting in the window or in a doorway inside the house (or apartment) See, for example, in *Shaar Hatzion* of the *Mishnah Berurah* (671:42), where we find that under all circumstances, we must light below twenty *amos*. Others differ for a variety of reasons which will not detain us here. R. Moshe Feinstein’s position seems a bit unclear. (*Igros Moshe Orach Chayim* 4:125)

R. Moshe Sternbuch of the Jerusalem *Beis Din* rules that so long as any Jew anywhere faces danger when lighting outside, then no one should do so, because those Jews may be tempted to run the risk of lighting, and thus bring about a potential danger. (*Teshuvos Vihanhagos* 2:140)

What emerges from the foregoing are, in broad strokes, three schools of thought: 1) To seek to continue the basic *halacha* of lighting outside, inside a glass if need be, if there be no danger involved; 2) To light inside if there be danger or weather related problem; 3) To always light inside, since once the practice of lighting outside was abandoned, it should not be brought back.

Before offering some final observations, we note in passing that there is a tradition cited in the *Nikkei Orach Chayim* that R. Zvi Elimelech of Dinov, the noted author of the *Bnei Yissaschar*, had a silver *menorah* which he kept in a glass enclosure. However, he never used it, saying that it was

to be used only in the Holy Land at the coming of *Moshiach*.

Similarly, there are sources in *kabbalah* which maintain that today, lighting at a door and under ten *tefachim* (as is the simple ruling in *Shulchan Aruch*) is superior to lighting outside or even at a window. See, for example, *Mekor Chaim* (671: 70) of R. Chaim Hakohen (? - 1655), a disciple of R. Chaim Vital. There we find the statement "...we must under all circumstances light within a *tefach* of a door and below ten *tefachim*."

So the question we posed initially, as to what degree practices born of history should end when the historical circumstances which engendered them have ended, seems to be an open one, demanding the usual combinations of investigation, reflection and tradition, a process which does not always offer a clear consensus.

# MITZVOS AND MIRACLES



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In the story of *Chanukah*, we see the small army of Maccabees take on the mighty Greek empire. The Maccabees put their lives on the line to fight for the Jewish people, despite the fact that there was no natural way for the tiny Jewish fighting force to emerge victorious. Seemingly, the Maccabees were relying on Hashem to provide miraculous aid, which would help them to emerge victorious. This begs the question: to what extent is one allowed to rely on miracles? Throughout *Shas*, we see multiple instances of people relying on the merit of *tzaddikim* to perform miracles. The *Gemara* in *Taanis* (20b) relates a story in which Rav Huna had stored some wine in a house which was about to collapse. He wanted to remove the wine, so he brought Rav Adda bar Avaha into the house, since as long as Rav Adda was in the house, it would not collapse. Sure enough, when they finished removing the wine, Rav Adda left and the house immediately collapsed. Upon hearing what Rav Huna's true intentions were, Rav Adda grew furious, stating, "*al ya'amod adam bimakom sakanah vi'omer 'osin li neis*" - a person should never stand in a place of danger and say, "a miracle will happen for me!"

The *Gemara* goes on to bring other examples of miracles being performed in the merit of *tzaddikim*. One of these stories tells that there was once a plague in Sura, the city where Rav lived, and when it arrived at the neighborhood of Rav, the plague suddenly stopped. The people began to rejoice, and believed that their city had been saved in the merit of Rav. However, it was soon revealed to them in a dream that this was too small a matter to require a *gadol* of Rav's status. The neighborhood was actually saved in the merit of a man who would lend out his shovel to people for burials. Rav Yitzchak Meltzen *zt"l* the author of the *Siddur HaGra*, asks why it is relevant to the story that Rav's merits were too great to warrant such an insignificant miracle? Rav Meltzen cites an answer from the *Ohelei Yaakov*, who writes that the *Gemara* in *Bava Kamma* (60a) says "once the force of destruction has been permitted to do damage, it will not distinguish between a *tzaddik* and a *rasha*." This applies to one who is righteous, but not perfect. In the case of Rav however, his deeds were as good as perfect, and the destruction therefore had no power over him. Even if the plague had come to Sura, Rav would not have been affected, and therefore only in the *zechus* of the man who lent his shovel was the city saved.

This answer can show the incredible power of *mitzvos*. Even one seemingly small *mitzvah* can have a tremendous impact in a time of *tzarah*. This *Chanukah*, as we hope and daven for an end to the current *tzarah* in which we find ourselves, we should try to do every *mitzvah* the way it is supposed to be done. If we go out of our way to help others and perform the many *mitzvos* of *Chanukah* in the best way possible, perhaps we may be *zocheh* to see a return to normality as a result.



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# WOMEN AND *PIRSUMEI NISAH*

*Based on Shiur given by Rav Mordechai Willig, shlit"a*

*Chanukah* has many unique attributes unseen in most other holidays. One notable difference about *Chanukah* is the fact that its main *mitzvah*, lighting the *Chanukah* candles, is a *mitzvas aseï shehazman grama*, an active *mitzvah* with a set time. Normally, women are not obligated in this category of *mitzvos*, but this case is different, since “they were also included in the miracle.” This refers to the story of a woman named Yehudis, who tricked a major Greek general into falling asleep so that she could kill him. This fact that women were involved in the miracle makes all women *chayiv* in the *mitzvah* of *Ner Chanukah*.

The extent of this *chiyuv* (obligation), however, may be more limited than the *chiyuv* that men have. The *Shulchan Aruch* says, in regards to women by *Megillah* reading, that they only have a *chiyuv* to hear the reading, unlike men who have a *chiyuv* to both hear and read the *Megillah*. (The reason men don't read is because of a concept known as *shomeiah ki'oneh*, which means that when a person hears something, in some cases, it can be considered as if he said it out loud.) The reason women have this lower-level *chiyuv* is also because they were involved in the miracle by *Purim*, as Esther was a central figure in the *Purim* story. This *chiyuv*, however, is limited just to hearing, since despite their being involved in the *mitzvah*, since it is still a *mitzvas aseï shehazman grama*, there is still no full obligation. The part of the *mitzvah* that they are *chayiv* in is that which falls under the category of *pirsumei nisah* (publicizing the miracle). The aspect of women being involved in the miracle only makes them obligated to do the “publicizing the miracle” part of the *mitzvah*.

This same idea can be taken also to the *mitzvah* of lighting *Chanukah* candles. Women should only be *chayiv* in the *pirsumei nisah* aspect of the *mitzvah*, which in this case is limited to *neir ish ubeiso*, one candle per household. This is the reason why women can light and be *yotzei* other people in the house, despite not having the same level of *chiyuv* as the men in the house. Since they are *chayiv* in the aspect that requires the candle to be lit for the household, they can be *yotzei* the household.

There is one other *mitzvah* in which women are obligated for this same reason of “being included in the miracle”: the four cups of wine at the *Pesach Seder*. If what was said earlier is true, that this reason for obligating women only obligates them in *pirsumei nisah*, then we need to figure out where the *pirsumei nisah* is by this *mitzvah* on *Pesach*. In *Maseches Pesachim* (108b), the *Gemara* discusses two less-than-ideal ways to fulfil this *mitzvah*, each of which are lacking in some aspect of the *mitzvah*. If one drinks all four cups at once, he fulfils the *mitzvah* of celebrating the miracle, but not the

requirement of drinking four cups. Likewise, if one had very low-quality wine, he fulfils the strict *mitzvah* of having four cups, but he does not fulfil the *mitzvah* of celebrating the miracle. We see from here that there are two aspects to this *mitzvah*, both of drinking four cups of wine, and of celebrating the freedom of *Pesach*. If women are only obligated in the *pirsumei nisah*, since their requirement is based on them being involved in the miracle, it would stand to reason that their *mitzvah* would be fulfilled by drinking the four cups all at once!

This could also explain how there could be a *machlokes* if women are obligated in telling over the story of *yetzias mitzrayim*, despite their being obligated in the *mitzvah* of the four cups. After all, the *mitzvah* of the four cups is fulfilled at the *Pesach Seder*, of which the main purpose is to say the story of *Pesach*! According to the opinion that women are not obligated in the recitation of the story, the *chiyuv* of the four cups would only be based on celebrating the miracle, and therefore, they could technically drink all four cups at once, without actually attending the *Seder*.

# BIRCHAS HARO'EH - SEEING IS BELIEVING



## RABBI YONI STONE

### DIRECTOR OF ADMISSIONS

Rabbi Yoni Stone serves as the Director of Admissions, and partners with Rabbi Kahn in teaching the 9B *Shiur*(?). He is also pursuing his Master's degree in Jewish Education from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. Rabbi Stone has been part of the MTA family for the past several years, coaching the Varsity hockey team and JV softball team.

Picture the following scene: you have just left *shul* on Friday night of *Chanukah*, and you are walking in the holy city of *Yerushalayim*. You are walking through the Old City, and are surrounded by the hundreds of beautifully lit *menorahs* which line the streets outside. As you are admiring the scene, you suddenly realize that you did not light your own *menorah* that night! What should you do? On one hand, the *Gemara* states if you did not light your *menorah*, and you see other candles burning, you are able to replace your lack of lighting with this action of seeing. On the other hand, it is Friday night, and you would not be allowed to light even if you somehow were able to get yourself candles.

The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (23a) quotes Rav Yirmiyah, who states that one who sees a burning *Chanukah menorah* must recite a *birchas haro'eh*, a *berachah* upon seeing. He explains that just as there is a *mitzvah* to light the candles during *Chanukah*, there is also a *mitzvah* to see the light.

At first glance, this seems like a strange *mitzvah*. We do not find other *Mitzvos* where if you are not able to accomplish the *mitzvah* yourself, you can fulfill your obligation by seeing someone else do the *mitzvah*. As a result, there is a debate as to what the nature of this *mitzvah* of seeing is by *Chanukah*. The scenario raised above will help shed light on how we are to view this *mitzvah*, since the dilemma which we raised is exactly the question of what the nature of the *mitzvah* is. Do we say that seeing candles lit is an extension of your own lighting? In that case, you would only be able to say the *birchas haro'eh* when you yourself could light, which would mean that making this *berachah* on Friday night would not be an option. Or, do we say the purpose of the *birchas haro'eh* is to accomplish *pirsumei nisah*, publicizing the miracle which *Neiros Chanukah* represent, which would apply even when one could not light their own candles?

We *pasken* that one should recite the *birchas haro'eh* even if they would not be allowed to light themselves, since the purpose of the *birchas haro'eh* is to publicize the miracle of *Chanukah*, not to literally substitute for lighting candles. Based on this, we also *pasken* that if, on the sixth night of *Chanukah*, you pass by a *menorah* and can only see one of the lit candles, you should still recite the *birchas haro'eh*, since *pirsumei nisah* applies to whatever candle is visible.

This notion of *pirsumei nisah* is not unique to only the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah*. *Pirsumei nisah* also applies to the *mitzvah* of reading *Megillas Esther*, and by the four cups of wine we drink at the *Pesach Seder*. There is, however, one difference that separates the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* from these other *mitzvos*. The *pirsumei nisah* by *Chanukah* represents what Hashem saved us from. The *Yevanim* were not trying to physically attack us, the way *Achashverosh* or

Pharoah were. Rather, they were trying to attach us spiritually. They wanted us to refrain from Torah and *mitzvos*. The candles represent our *hakaras hatov* to Hashem, that He saved us and enabled us to continue to serve him with Torah and *mitzvos*. On *Chanukah*, the notion of *pirsumei nisah* is intended to highlight that we are able to learn and do *mitzvos* in ways that prior generations were not able to. It is for that reason when one sees a *menorah*, there is an imperative to recite a *berachah*, to highlight to all what we are really accomplishing and what it represents. The idea that one can walk in the streets and recite a *berachah* on the *menorah* captures the essence of what we are trying to accomplish with this special *mitzvah* on *Chanukah*.

# A VORT PER NIGHT



## SHUA PARISER

YUHSB '20

Shua Pariser graduated MTA in 2020, and has since gone on to learn in Yeshivas Yishrei Lev in Israel. Shua also served as Editor-In-Chief of *Shema Koleinu* during his Senior year at MTA.

### Night 1: *Maoz Tzur*

If one were to read the words of *Maoz Tzur*, one would see that this song is a crash course in Jewish history. It starts off with a general introduction how Hashem always saves us, and how we want the *Beis Hamikdash*. It then goes on to talk about Egypt and how we were enslaved there, and how Hashem took us out. The next stanza talks about *Galus Bavel*, and how we were saved after seventy years. Next, we mention how Haman and his ten sons were hanged by the story of *Purim*. We go on to talk about the two miracles of *Chanukah*, and we then ask Hashem to save us from bad, revenge the blood spilled over the many centuries of persecution, and send us *Moshiach*. Why is it necessary to go over all the exiles that we experienced as a nation specifically on *Chanukah*? Additionally, why is it that *Parshas Vayeishev* always falls around the time of *Chanukah*?

At the beginning of *Parshas Masei*, the Torah tells us all the stops that the *Bnei Yisroel* made in the desert. Rashi asks, what is the reason for this recap? We spent three sefarim of the Torah talking about *Bnei Yisroel* in the desert, so what need is there to repeat? Rashi brings a *mashal* of a father and son. The son became ill, and his father had to take him to a distant city to be cured. As the pair return, the father makes sure to visit each spot which they saw on the journey there, saying “here you felt cold, here you felt hungry”, and so on. This recollection helped the son to recognize the good which Hashem did in saving him.

In *Parshas Vayeishev*, one common theme between the three stories in the *parsha* is clothing. Yosef is sent into exile because of clothing, his coveted *Kesones Pasim*; Tamar disguises herself to Yehudah with clothing; and Yosef escapes *Eishes Potiphar* by abandoning his coat. Yosef’s brothers did not like that their brother got a fancy cloak and they did not, and that began Yosef’s *galus*. Tamar was able to pretend she was someone else, just by changing up her clothing. People are often judged by their clothing, whether it’s a big furry hat, or a *kippah serugah* and a blue shirt on *Shabbos*. We know that the reason the *Beis Hamikdash* was destroyed is because of *sinas chinam*, baseless hatred. Judging someone based on something as superficial as clothing is pure *sinas chinam*. This is why Tamar changed her clothing, because she was going to be judged. She heard what the brothers did to Yosef, so she changed so Yehudah would not judge her. This is perhaps the reason why we sing about all of our redemptions on *Chanukah*, and also why we read *Parshas Vayeishev* around *Chanukah* time. It is to remind us that we are in *galus* because of *sinas chinam*, such judging people by their clothing. And, it’s to remind us to thank Hashem for all the good that He did and does for us.

## **Night 2: Shabbos Chanukah: Elah Lirosam Bilvad**

*Inspired by Rabbi Moshe Auslander*

Many times, people find themselves asking how they are meant to derive benefit from certain people or events. The *possuk* says that *ner Elokim nishmas adam*, the candle of Hashem is the soul of man. After lighting the *Chanukah* candles, we sing the song of *Haneiros Halalu*, in which we say “*haneiros halalu kodesh hiem, vi’ein lanu reshus lihishtameish bahem, elah lirosam bilvad*” - these lights are holy, and we have no permission to use them, but only to see them. This *possuk*, along with this line, can help us appreciate how to get the most out of each person. There are some people that one can derive benefit from, like a good chavrusa, or a powerful, life-changing speaker. At the same time, however, there are some people which have a *neshamah* like the candles of *Chanukah*; the benefit, the inspiration, comes just from observing them and watching how they conduct themselves.

## **Night 3: The Festival of Lights**

*Inspired by Rabbi Doniel Staum*

Every *yom tov* is either in the beginning of the month, or the middle. Only *Chanukah* is at the end of a month. Why is that? If we think about this, we can come to a fairly simple but powerful answer. The beginning of the month is when the moon is renewed. It is at its new state, where the light is getting stronger and stronger. The middle of the month is when the moon is at its strongest. But, the end of the month is when the moon is the weakest. It’s the darkest part of the month. We therefore have *Chanukah* at the end of the month, to light up the end of the month.

## **Night 4: The Importance of Yeshiva**

*Inspired by Rabbi Tanchum Cohen*

The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (21b), in the first *sugya* of *Chanukah*, tells over a story about an *Amora* who didn’t learn the *halachah* that if a candle goes out, you need not relight it, because the main *mitzvah* is the action of lighting, until he was older. He said “I should have learnt it when I was younger.” The *Gemara* says that something learnt when you are younger stays with you much more than something which is learned when one is older.

One of my *rabbeim* from MTA, Rabbi Mendelson, taught me the following line: “*mah tov biyeshivah, umah na’im li lihiyos talmid shel Hakadosh Boruch Hu*” - how great is it in *yeshiva*, and how pleasant for me to be a student of *Hakadosh Boruch Hu*. We are so lucky to be able to learn *sugyos* when we are younger, when they will stay with us. We have the ability at every moment to acquire so much Torah. Take advantage.

## **Night 5: True Potential**

*Inspired by Rabbi Baruch Pesach Mendelson*

There is a *halachah* that the oil and candles that were used for *Chanukah*, cannot be thrown out after. There is also a *halachah* that the oil in the cups that did not burn, cannot be thrown out. You need to use them for a different *mitzvah*. The reason is because they had a potential of being used for the *mitzvah*, so you need to keep that potential alive.

As we said by night number two, people are compared to candles, and *haneiros halalu kodesh heim* - these candles have tremendous *kedushah*. The potential that each person has is incredible. We need to keep that potential alive. We can’t simply throw it out.

## **Night 6: Hallel on Rosh Chodesh**

Today, we have an obligation to recite *Hallel*, both because it is *Chanukah*, and also because it is *Rosh Chodesh*. The thing is, on *Rosh Chodesh*, there’s no *chiyuv* of *Hallel*. *Hallel* is only a *minhag*

(custom) on *Rosh Chodesh*, not a full-fledged obligation - as such, *Sefardim* don't make a *berachah* on *Hallel* of *Rosh Chodesh*. The problem is, there is a *possuk* which says "*ubiyom simchaschem, ubimoadeichem, ubiroshei chadsheichem*" - and on your days of happiness, and on your holidays, and on your *Roshei Chadashim*. This *possuk* would seem to equate *Rosh Chodesh* to a real holiday. Why is it that *Hallel* on *Rosh Chodesh* is just a *minhag*?

We know that on *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, the Rambam says that there's no *chiyuv* of *Hallel*, since the Books of Life and Death are open before Hashem, giving an increased sense of dread. Therefore, there is no *din* of *simchah yeseirah*, of increased joy and happiness. In *mussaf* of *Rosh Chodesh*, we call it a *zman kapparah*, a time of atonement. It could be that the reason why there's no *chiyuv Hallel* on *Rosh Chodesh* is because there is judgement and forgiveness which occurs, which precludes the *simchah yeseirah* of a normal *yom tov*.

### **Night 7: The Importance of *Shevach* to *Hakadosh Boruch Hu***

We know that *Chanukah* is a *Yom Tov* which is *midirabanan*, Rabbinically ordained. On *Chanukah*, there is no *chiyuv* to have a *seudah*, a festive *yom tov* meal, but if someone washes on *Chanukah*, they can make their meal into a *seudas mitzvah*. However, *Purim*, which is also *midirabanan*, is a day where there is a *chiyuv* to have a *seudah*. Why did the *rabanan* set up these two holidays in this manner? What can be learned from this?

We all know that when it comes to *Purim*, Haman wanted to physically kill us, but by *Chanukah*, the Greeks wanted to kill our *neshamos*. *Purim* celebrates a physical salvation, so most of our *mitzvos* of *Purim* are physical, such as the *seudah*. On *Chanukah*, there is no *chiyuv* of *seudah*, but there is a *chiyuv* to say *shevach, hallel, vihoda'ah* (praise and thanks) to Hashem, as we do in the *tefillah* of *Al Hanissim*. This could be the food for the *neshama*, corresponding to the physical food which we eat on *Purim*.

### **Night 8: *Lema'aloh Min Hateva***

Today is the last day of *Chanukah*, which is called "*Zos Chanukah*". Why is this name given to this day? There are two ways of translating *Zos Chanukah*. The first way is the *pashut* (simple) way: "this *Chanukah*". The second way is more 'advanced.' *Zos Chanukah* means that this, the eighth day of *Chanukah*, is *Chanukah*. What on earth does this mean?

We know that a *bris milah* happens on the eighth day of the baby's life. The reason for this is because we want to go above *teva*, nature, and take away a part of the body. The *Mishkan* was anointed on the eighth day. This is because, as much wood and gold was involved in the *Mishkan*, it was a place to go beyond *teva*, to connect to spiritual worlds beyond our own. The Greeks were all about *teva*, and they could not tolerate any spiritual practice which attempted to breach the walls of the natural order. The point of *Zos Chanukah* is to show that the Jews believe that it is possible to go beyond *teva*, to connect to Hashem even while in this world, despite what the *Yevanim* tell us. This could also possibly answer the famous question of the *Beis Yosef* as to why we celebrate eight days of *Chanukah*, despite the oil only burning miraculously for seven days. We take this extra day of *Zos Chanukah* to drive home the essence of *Chanukah*, the idea that we have the ability to go *lima'aloh min hatevah*, above the boundaries of nature, and experience *ruchniyus* in our everyday lives.

# WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH *GELT*?



**ISAAC COHEN**

YUHSB '23

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*Chanukah* is known as a holiday of *simchah*, happiness, with many parties and celebrations revolving around these eight days. As many are accustomed to, it is known that many families give gifts to the children of the family. These gifts are known as *gelt*, a Yiddish word for money, in order to teach children the value of *tzedakah*. However, when one examines this *minhag*, an obvious question starts to emerge. (And don't worry, this question doesn't have one hundred answers.) Shouldn't we teach children about *tzedakah* all year round, not just on *Chanukah*?

We can further this question from another source. The *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* (*Siman 571*) rules: "It is forbidden to derive any benefit from the lights of the *Chanukah menorah*... even to use the light to count your money." When teaching us the laws of deriving benefit from the light of the *menorah*, the *Kitzur* chooses to use the example of giving money. Clearly, giving *gelt* and money in general is a big part of *Chanukah*. But what is the deeper meaning behind this custom? Why does money have anything to do with *Chanukah*?

While money is really just fancy pieces of paper and metal, it is a fact that we do not just see money as these materials. For example, we see money as a way to pay each other, buy food, give *tzedakah*, or perhaps surprise our loved ones with lavish gifts. We don't just see money as pieces of paper, but as potential for what the money can be used for. Now, this explanation may be seen as wonderful for an economics class, but how does this answer the question posed earlier?

Let's take a step back. It is understood that the Jews, as a nation, are known as an eternal nation. In other words, we are a nation that doesn't fade; that the traditions, laws, and nation as a whole never disappears. The Jewish people have witnessed the fall of the greatest empires; whether it be the Persians, Babylonians, or even the Romans, our ancestors have endured all of them and survived. The Jewish people were able to survive the toughest superpowers to continue in their role as "a light unto the nations". The *Chanukah* candles represent the concept of potential - in other words, even though other nations may see darkness, we see light.

The *Chanukah gelt* is not simply money. It is representative of the same idea as the candles themselves. As stated before, the candles are also a representation of potential. Therefore, *Chanukah gelt* isn't just a way of teaching our children the importance of *tzedakah*, but also the concept of looking for potential; potential seen in the story of *Chanukah*, when we were up against a superior opponent, but were able to see light instead of darkness. *Chanukah gelt* teaches about potential in the same way, where ordinary materials are able to become something far more valuable. When we see pain, struggles, or people we may dislike, it is best to always see their potential, their light, in order so that we can grow to our greatest potential.



## MEIR NESS

YUHSB '22

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# WHY FLICKERING LIGHTS ON CHANUKAH ISN'T THAT BAD

In *Masachot Shabbos*, the *Gemara* discusses which types of wicks and oils are allowed to be used for *Chanukah* candles, and which can be used for *Shabbos*. When it comes to *Shabbos*, one can only use certain materials, which ensure that the flame will not sputter and that the flame will burn evenly. As a result, only oils and wicks which allow the oil to flow and spread easily are permitted. In contrast, by *Chanukah*, one can use any material of wick and any type of oil to light his candles. The obvious question is, why is there a difference between *Shabbos* and *Chanukah*? We learn later on in the *Gemara* that the reason for this difference is because by *Shabbos*, we are worried that one would relight his candles because they went out. On *Chanukah*, on the other hand, one may not benefit from the candles, and relighting them if they went out is unnecessary. Since the candles going out is not as much of a concern, the material used to light the candles is not subject to the same scrutiny as those used on *Shabbos*.

Rav Abraham Isaac Kook explains that the types of candles used for *Chanukah* represent the struggle that the Maccabees had with the Greeks. He goes on to say that the Torah is the essential part of Judaism, and if it were to falter, the Jewish people could not survive. This is represented by the *Shabbos* candles, which requires pure oil to burn without flickering. However, many times throughout Jewish history Jewish people have been drawn towards the ideas and beliefs of other nations. They have veered from the Jewish path because of philosophical speculation and theories. For a while, there were chachamim who would explain these non-Jewish teachings through the Torah. The thing is, that these ideals and foreign philosophies are always changed and refuted. They are like the flickering flame that can never remain steady, unlike the Torah which is eternal. So, when one tries to take these foreign philosophies and learn them with the Torah, they always will fail to produce a bright and even light. Eventually, all of these interpretations will “flicker out”. Although Torah is the eternal truth, most people will say that if a philosophy doesn't fully work with the Torah, then it must be because the Torah is incorrect. *Chanukah* teaches us that these secular philosophies are forever changing, and it is not our duty to make them fit with the Torah - “When their light goes out, they need not be relit.” Certainly, we should not make practical changes to Torah observance based on these ideas - “it is forbidden to make use of its light.” Making modern philosophy and the Torah work together may be useful to quell the thoughts of one who has trouble believing, but we should never take modern philosophy and change the Torah because of it. This is the main part of the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah*, and the main thing we should take from lighting the candles. Even though it seemed that the way the Greeks thought about the world was correct, we as Jews still held onto our belief in the everlasting truth of the Torah and fought our way to victory. The way we celebrate *Chanukah*, with the halachos surrounding the

candles, teaches us this lesson. In the end, we can see that in our everyday life, the Torah is around us and surrounds us with its brilliance and glory. In every action we do, we should always think about why we do them, and how this relates back to us being a better Jew.



## YONATAN BURNS

YUHSB '22

Yonatan Burns is a Junior at MTA. He lives in Bergenfield, New Jersey, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Mendelson's *Shiur*.

# WHY IS THERE NO MENTION OF THE OIL IN *AL HANISSIM*?

When analyzing the text of *Al Hanissim*, the special *tefillah* added to *Shemoneh Esrei* and *Birchas Hamazon* during the eight days of *Chanukah*, it seems as if we are only commemorating the miracle of the *Chashmonayim*'s military victory against the Greeks. The text includes the words “*vihidlik neiros bichatzros kadshecha*” - and they kindled lights in Your holy courtyards - but we completely leave out the famous story in which the *kohanim* entered the defiled *Beis Hamikdash* and were miraculously able to find the single sealed bottle of pure olive oil left among all the unholy and defiled *keilim*. This oil would last for eight days, until the Jews were able to produce more pure oil. Ask any child about the miracle of *Chanukah*, and they will surely mention the oil! So why do we not mention this in our *tefillos*?

The *Gemara* in *Maseches Pesachim* (16a) records a debate among *Tana'im* whether liquids used for the *avodah* in the *Beis Hamikdash* have the ability to become *tamei midi'oraisa* (Biblically impure). Elsewhere, the opinion of Yosi ben Yoezer of Tzereidah is cited in the *mishnayos* of *Maseches Ediyos* (8:4). He believes that the liquids used by the *Beis Hamikdash* (ie. water, oil, wine, blood) are not at all subject to *tumah min haTorah*, and the only way they can become *tamei* is *midirabanan* (Rabbinically)! Seemingly, according to Yosi ben Yoezer's opinion, on a *di'oraisa* level, the miracle of finding oil with an unbroken seal was not even necessary, since the oil was not impure on a *di'oraisa* level! It was not great that they found the oil with an unbroken seal, since they didn't even need it - the “great” miracle that occurred would only have been to avoid violating a *gezeirah midirabanan*.

While it is not known for certain who composed the *tefillah* of *Al Hanissim*, many believe it the author to have been Rabbi Saadya Gaon, a renowned Rabbinic figure from the 10<sup>th</sup> century. A similar version of *Al Hanissim* to what is commonly recited today was found in his personal *siddur*. With this question regarding the oil's ability to become *tamei*, is it possible that Rav Saadya was of the opinion of Yosi ben Yoezer, and felt that the finding of the oil was insignificant, as the *kohanim* could have used the “impure” oil. Is this why the finding the sealed jug of oil is nowhere to be found in *Al Hanissim*?

In reality, the miracle of the oil cannot be dismissed. In fact, the *Gemara* (*Shabbos* 21b) wholly attributes the reason for celebrating *Chanukah* as commemorating the miracle of the oil! (Commenting on the *Gemara*'s words “*Mai Chanukah*” - what is *Chanukah*, Rashi explains that the *Gemara* is asking for which miracle do we establish the celebrations of *Chanukah*. Since the *Gemara* follows with a description of the miracle of the oil, it follows that the *Gemara* believes this to be the primary motivation for the holiday). Rabbi Saadya could not have disregarded the oil, commemorating *Chanukah* only because of the military victory. But, how do we reconcile the clear significance of this miracle with the opinion of Yosi ben Yoezer, who would

seem to believe that this miracle was wholly unnecessary?

Rav Avraham Halevi Gombiner *zt"l*, author of the famous *Magen Avraham* commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*, writes in *Zayis Ra'anan*, his commentary on *midrashim*, that the oil found in the *Beis Hamikdash* was indeed not *tamei*. Rather, the *Chashmonayim* did not want to use it out of concern that it had been used as part of an idolatrous service. Therefore, to the *Chashmonayim*, concerned about lighting the *menorah*, finding sealed oil was still a miracle.

Rav Hershel Schechter *shlit"a* (recorded in the book *Rav Schechter on the Moadim*) explains that the ability of liquids in the *Beis Hamikdash* to become *tamei* was debated over several generations. He explains that in the time of the story of *Chanukah*, it was accepted that oil could in fact become *tamei*. But, if the story of the oil happened years later in the time of Rav Yossi ben Yoezer, the story of the oil would not have been seen as a miracle, as the accepted ruling of the time was that oil of the *Beis Hamikdash* cannot become *tamei*. According to Rav Schechter's answer, finding the *tahor* oil was indeed significant in the times of the *Chashmonayim*, and therefore, it was a miracle in their eyes.

So, if we have established that the miracle of finding the oil was indeed significant, does that not warrant inclusion in our *tefillos*? The Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rav Menachem Mendel Schneerson *zt"l*, answers this question in his *sefer Likutei Sichos*. The Rebbe explains that while we believe that both miracles are the reason for which we celebrate *Chanukah*, the miracle of oil seems so much greater than the military victory. While the small army of *Chashmonayim* were unlikely to defeat the *Yevanim*, the military miracle was only physical. That seemingly pales in comparison to the miracle of the oil, which signifies Hashem's Divine intervention in our natural daily lives! The Rebbe explains that if the two miracles were specified next to each other in *Al Hanissim*, one miracle (the oil) would look greater than the other. But this is not true! To avoid this, we commemorate the miracle of the oil with the lighting of the *menorah*, and commemorate the miracle of military victory in the *tefillah* of *Al Hanissim*, so as to signify the importance of both.



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Rabbi Shimon Schenker serves as Associate Principal, and he has been teaching in YUHSB since 2001. Rabbi Schenker has a B.S. in Management Information Systems from the Sy Syms School of Business of YU, an M.S. in Jewish Education from the Azrieli Graduate School of Education of YU, a Masters in Special Education from Herbert Lehman College CUNY and Rabbinic Ordination from RIETS of YU. He is also trained in the Orton-Gillingham Reading Remediation by the Institute for Multi-Sensory Education. Rabbi Schenker was the recipient of the Grinspoon-Steinhardt Award for Excellence in Jewish Education in 2013. He lives in Passaic, New Jersey with his wife and family.

# THE SOURCE OF TRUE JEWISH MIGHT

On *Chanukah*, we say the familiar tefillah of *Al Hanissim* in our *tefillos* and *bentching* to thank Hashem for saving us during the Greek oppression. When we describe the incredible odds that we overcame in our victory against the *Yevanim*, we list a few different ways of contrasting the Jewish people and the Greeks: “*giborim biyad chalashim, virabim biyad mi’atm, utimei’im biyad tehorim, uresha’im biyad tzaddikim, vizeidim biyad oskei torasecha*” - “[He delivered] the strong into the hand of the weak, the many into the hand of the few, the impure into the hand of the pure, the wicked into the hand of the righteous, and the sinners into the hand of those who are involved in Your Torah. The last contrast - “the sinners into the hand of those who are involved in Your Torah” - seems to be the most perplexing. What does the fact that we learned Torah have to do with the fact that we won the war? The first two comparisons clearly highlight the unlikeliness of our military victory, and the third one highlights our cultural differences, clearly hinting to the purity of the jug of oil. However, the last one seems to be the outlier; why focus on learning Torah specifically?

Rav Matisyahu Solomon *shlit”a*, the *Mashgiach* of Beis Medrash Govoha in Lakewood, explains in his *sefer Matnas Chayim* that while of course we need the Jewish people to be powerful, mighty, and pure, this is not where our true strength comes from. Rather, our true might emanates from our collective *limmud Hatorah*, and our collective connection to Hashem through learning Torah. We see this idea in a number of fascinating sources. In the *possuk* in *Parshas Toldos*, Yitzchak Avinu declares “*hakol kol Yaakov, vihayadayim yidei Eisav*” - the voice is the voice of Yaakov, but the hands are the hand of Eisav. The *Medrash Eicha (Siman 2)* says, as long as the voice of “Yaakov” (meaning *Bnei Yisroel*) is heard learning Torah in *Batei Medrash* in the world, the hands of Eisav will not conquer us. The *Sefer Ma’alos HaTorah* asks: this *Midrash* completely takes the words of the *possuk* out of context! Yitzchak was commenting on Yaakov’s disguise to try and take the *berachos*, not commenting on the power of Torah! *Sefer Ma’alos HaTorah* explains that according to the *Midrash*, the *berachah* of Yitzchak to Yaakov was that if Yaakov would continue to learn and be connected to Hashem, no enemy (even the hands of Eisav) would be able to touch him.

We have seen in every generation that when *Klal Yisroel* goes to war, the successes that they have defy logic. In fact, many are simply miraculous! These successes come entirely from the power which comes from the Torah learning of the Jewish people.

In *Sefer Yehoshua (5:13)*, as expounded by the *Gemara Megillah 3a*), we learn that Yehoshua was visited by an angel who appeared to him as a warrior with a drawn sword, as if to threaten him and *Klal Yisroel*. When Yehoshua asked why the angel was there, The angel responded that he was there to punish

*Klal Yisroel*, because they did not learn Torah during their war to conquer *Eretz Yisroel*. The Alter of Kelm asks the obvious question: how could the angel implicate the Jews for not learning Torah when they were in the middle of a war, which makes them *patur* from learning? He explains that Rashi was sensitive to this question there in *Maseches Megillah*, and he therefore says that since they were not fighting at night, they should have learned at night. We see from this how high the bar is raised for public *limmud Torah*, and what we should be working towards; even when life is incredibly busy and difficult, we still need to find time to learn and grow.

Our personal growth is what fuels our collective and national salvation and success. This is what Rav Eliyahu Lopian points out from the aforementioned *Gemara* in *Megillah*, that the *malach* appeared to Yehoshua as a soldier, not as a rosh yeshiva, even though “he” was there to give *mussar* about not learning Torah. Rav Lopian explains that the *malach* was teaching Yehoshua that “I am appointed to fight your wars for you, but I can only do so if you do your part and continue to learn Torah.”

We should all take the lessons of the great *tzaddikim* of the *Chanukah* story and continue to learn and grow even in the most challenging times in our lives, and light up the darkness with the light of Torah.



## ARYEH MARGOLIN

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Aryeh Margolin graduated MTA in 2018. He went on to learn in Yeshivat Shaalvim, and is currently a *talmid* in Rabbi Eli Baruch Shulman's *Shiur* in Yeshiva University.

# THE LIGHT IS WITHIN

*Chanukah* is a holiday full of excitement and energy. Everywhere you go, you encounter doughnuts, dreidels, chocolate, lights, and much more for eight full days. However, these days seem to be very strange. In the darkness of the night, during the longest nights of the year, when things get difficult, and the light doesn't seem to be rising on the horizon for a while, that is specifically when we should light candles? That's when we should show the light? It almost feels fake. We feel lost, alone, cold and worried. The darkness is no fun, and we don't feel we can make it through. Why during these times, the heart of the winter, do we light candles? I think we can answer this with what is probably the most famous question on *Chanukah*.

The *Beis Yosef* (*Orach Chayim* 670:1) famously asks: why is *Chanukah* 8 nights? Didn't the miracle only last seven nights? Since the *kohanim* had enough oil for one night, the miraculous burning of the oil was only for seven nights, not eight. There are more than five hundred printed answers to this question, but I would like to focus on the first one given by the *Beis Yosef* himself. The *Beis Yosef* explains that when they found the oil, they split it up into eight small cups, in order to have eight lights. Logically, if one cup was enough to burn for one whole night, then splitting that cup into eight sections would only allow each cup to burn for an eighth of the night. He explains that the miracle was that the oil in each cup lasted one whole night. The miracle was that when there was barely anything left, when we were down to the droplets, Hashem revealed himself and allowed us to continue that light. That light that signifies greatness and strength.

Many times, in life, we feel that all is lost, that we won't be able to make it through. We have felt this especially during this *tekufah*. Corona has been hard for every person on this planet. Zoom, after zoom, after zoom. It's exhausting. Friends and family members have been sick, and *nebach*, in some cases, much worse. We feel drained. Some are close to *yei'ush* (giving up hope.) It's exactly a time like this that we feel we don't have much left to give. Then, right there, is exactly when Hashem comes to us and says "put in a little bit, whatever you have left, and I'll take care of the rest." Those bleak nights have so much greatness waiting inside.

It's in those dark times, when we feel empty, that we can't keep pushing forward, when we must understand that with the little bit we have, we must take one more step, and Hashem will take us by the hand. He will carry us through. We think we have a only few minutes of fuel left in our cup, but little do we know that when we light our flame anyway, Hashem can make it last for a long time. Hopefully, we will rise very soon from these dark times, as Hashem lifts us on his shoulders to carry us through these difficult times and every challenge we face in life.

# THE SANCTITY OF SHABBOS



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We find in the *Book of Maccabees* that during the Greek oppression, Jews used to hide in caves to keep *Shabbos*. On multiple occasions, the Greeks discovered their location and surrounded the opening of the cave. They commanded them to leave the cave or they would be killed. The people inside would always choose death, so they wouldn't have to desecrate *Shabbos*. When Matisyahu heard about this, he said, "If we continue this way, they will kill us all, and there will be no Jews left." So, he permitted them to fight back on *Shabbos*.

The obvious question is: Isn't it a famous *halachah* that one may violate *Shabbos* to save a life? What had Matisyahu introduced that the Jews hadn't known before him?

One can answer that the Greeks attacked the Jews on *Shabbos* deliberately to get them to retaliate on *Shabbos* and thereby desecrate it. The *Bnei Yisroel* therefore considered this a "*sh'as hashmad*" - a time when there is a lot of pressure from the *goyim* to abandon the *mitzvos*, in which case one must give up one's life for any *mitzvah*. Matisyahu, however, convinced them that this situation was different, as the Jewish people's very existence was being threatened.

We see from here the importance of the Torah, and how vital it is to our existence. There were times in history when Jews had to give up their lives for the *mitzvos*, but it's not always that way. Nowadays, when it is relatively easy for us to learn Torah and perform the *mitzvos*, we certainly must utilize this opportunity.

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