



# EIGHT PERSPECTIVES ON CHANUKA

## The Nitzchiyus of Ner Chanukah

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Rashi records a *Medrash Tanchuma* that espouses an idea we might not have believed had we not seen it in print, and that we certainly would never have had the temerity to espouse ourselves. The Medrash, noticing the order of the parshiyos, asks why the commandment for Aharon to light the Menorah appears at the beginning of Parshas Beha'aloscha, immediately after the section detailing the gifts that the heads of the tribes brought to inaugurate the Mishkan.

Famously, Rashi answers that:

למה נסמכה פְּרִשְׁתַּת הַמְּנוֹרָה לְפָרֶשֶׁת הַנְּשִׂיאִים? לְפִי שֶׁשָּׂרָאָה אֶהְרֹן חֲנֻכַּת הַנְּשִׂיאִים חֲלָשָׁה אִזְ דַּעְתּוֹ, שֶׁלֹּא הָיָה עִמָּהֶם בְּחֻנְיָה לֹא הוּא וְלֹא שְׁבָטוֹ, אָמַר לוֹ הַקֹּב"ה חַיִּיד שְׁלֶךְ גְּדוּלָה מִשְׁלָהֶם, שֶׁאַתָּה מְדַלֵּיק וּמְטִיב אֶת הַנְּרוֹת.

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

**Rashi, Bamidbar 7:2**

The question that always bothered me was: how do we understand this concept that Aharon had a *chalishus*

*hada'as* — a weakening of spirit? Was Aharon some small-minded person who would become jealous of others who were given a unique contribution to Hashem's Sanctuary? This is the magnanimous and refined Aharon that we so revere.

Furthermore, the Ramban poses two other questions. First, why did this *avodah* of *hadlakas haneiros* animate *yishuv hada'as* more so than the twice daily obligation of the ketores that was also in Aharon and his family's domain? How about the Yom Kippur service or the many other responsibilities that were entrusted only to the kohanim?

Second, Aharon himself offered daily sacrifices during the days of the inauguration of the Mishkan. So why should he have felt jealous of the



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offerings brought by the nesi'im?

Famously, the Ramban quotes a medrash that says that the sacrifices and the like would no longer apply if and when the Beis Hamikdash ceases to exist — אבל הנרות לעולם אל — מול פני המנורה יאירו will burn eternally “across from the Menorah.” The Ramban explains this tantalizing Medrash as follows: While the Beis HaMikdash may no longer be standing, the lights of the Menorah continue to burn in the form of the *neiros Chanukah*. It was the eternal nature of *ner*, in the form of the *neros Chashmonaim*, that brought comfort to Aharon in a way that his normal korbanos and other obligations of service did not.

Maybe this is why Aharon felt dejected in the first place. Aharon saw the nesi'im contributing to something eternal. Even if ultimately the Mishkan ends in a state of destruction, the creation of sanctity in this world is permanent. Even if the actual structure is destroyed, every future *makom kadosh* is infused with and is modeled after the original Mishkan. That eternal quality was lacking in the acts of *avodah* that Aharon heretofore had been assigned. But once Aharon was instructed in the lighting of the Menorah, which is also fundamentally eternal, he also felt as though he was making an everlasting contribution.

This is the furthest thing from a petty jealousy. Rather, it is a desire to contribute to the eternal sanctity that is the hallmark of the *Am Hanetzach*, the Eternal People.

May we be zoche to experience the historical, eternal, and transformative beauty of the *ner Chanukah* during the days ahead.

## The Mystery of the Missing Menora: A Halachic Whodunit

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If someone asked you to imagine, draw or paint a Chanuka scene, *neiros Chanuka* would most likely figure prominently in the image you create. Yet when the Gemara provides an ancient sketch of Jews keeping Chanuka, the *neiros* seem to be strangely absent.

In the midst of introducing the halachos of Chanuka, the Gemara shares the narrative background of this rabbinic yom tov:

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

*What is Chanuka? Our rabbis have taught, "The 25th of Kislev [begins] the eight days of Chanuka in which one may not eulogize and one may not fast. For when the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they contaminated all of the oil in the Sanctuary, and when the monarchy of the house of the Chashmonaim mustered their strength and defeated them, [the Chashmonaim] searched and found only one jug of oil marked with the seal of the Kohen Gadol. There was only enough to kindle for one day, but a miracle occurred, and they kindled from it for eight days. The next year, they*

*established them and made them yamim tovim, with Hallel and thanks.*

### Shabbas 21b

The baraisa opens with the prohibitions — fasting and eulogies are antithetical to the joy of Chanuka — and closes with the positives: the Chachamim instituted Chanuka as a yom tov celebrated with Hallel and thanksgiving. Mysteriously, this foundational description never mentions our requirement to light *neiros*, despite focusing on the narrative of the *neis ha-shemen*, the miracle of the Menora oil.<sup>1</sup> Why is the rabbinic mitzva of *hadlakas neiros* strikingly absent?

In a public shiur delivered in Yerushalayim during the 1970s, Rav Betzael Zolty<sup>2</sup> offered an intriguing historical-halachic solution to this mystery. Rav Zolty's approach is anchored in the discussion of the following double *sugya*. *Masseches Shabbas* offers two separate — and somewhat contradictory — discussions of the question of practical benefit from *neiros Chanuka*: may I use the light of the *neiros* to perform other tasks? At first, the Gemara presents practical benefit as a dispute among the *amoraim*:

רב הונא קסבר ... מותר להשתמש לאורה ... ורב חסדא ... קסבר ... מותר להשתמש לאורה ... רב קסבר ... אסור להשתמש לאורה

*Rav Huna is of the opinion ... that it is permissible to benefit from its light ... And Rav Chisda ... is of the opinion ... that it is permissible to benefit from its light ... Rav is of the opinion ... that it is prohibited to benefit from the light. Shabbat 21a-21b*

In this first passage, Rav Huna and Rav Chisda permit using the light of the *neiros*, while Rav forbids it. However, one page later, the Gemara raises this

question afresh and gives a definitive conclusion:

אמר רב יהודה אמר רב אסי (אמר רב) דאסור להרצות מעות כנגד נר חנוכה. כי אמריתה קמיה דשמואל, אמר לי וכי נר קדושה יש בה? מתקיף לה רב יוסף וכי דם קדושה יש בו? דתניא (ויקרא יז, יג) ושפך וכסה במה ששפך יכסה שלא יכסנו ברגל שלא יהו מצות בזויות עליו. ה"נ שלא יהו מצות בזויות עליו:

*Rav Yehuda said in the name of Rav Assi: It is prohibited to count money opposite Chanuka lights. When I said this to Shmuel, he said to me, "Is there some sort of sanctity to the candles?" Rav Yosef asked, "Does blood have any sanctity? Yet we were taught in a baraisa [The Torah states], "if one spills blood [of a non-domestic animal or of a bird] ... one must cover it." One should use what was used to slaughter the animal in order to cover and not use one's feet so that we don't desecrate the commandments. Here too, [we don't count money opposite the candles] so that we don't desecrate the commandments.*

### Shabbas 22a

In this second passage, Rav Assi forbids counting money by the Chanuka candlelight. This assertion is maintained by Rav Yosef, who explains it as an application of the universal requirement to respect mitzvos; counting money by mitzva candlelight would constitute a form of disrespect. The two passages seem inconsistent: is practical use of the Chanuka candlelight an open question and an ongoing matter of dispute, or is it certainly and conclusively prohibited?

Rabbeinu Zerachya *Ba'al ha-Ma'or*, a giant of 12<sup>th</sup>-century Provence and Spain,<sup>3</sup> suggests that these two passages refer to two distinct situations that warrant different halachic responses. The second passage refers to **personal** use of the light, such as counting money; this is unanimously forbidden, since personal use constitutes *bizuy mitzva*, disrespect of the mitzva at hand. The first passage refers to use of the light **to fulfill another mitzva**, such as enjoying reading a *sefer* or eating a Shabbas meal by Chanukka candlelight; this sacred use is not disrespectful and therefore some *amoraim* (Rav Huna and Rav Chisda) permitted it.

Yet Rav forbade any use of the light, and that is the accepted halacha. Why? Rabbeinu Zerachya explains that our wholesale prohibition against **any** benefit from the Chanuka lights parallels the wholesale prohibition against **any** benefit from the light of the Menora in the Beis ha-Mikdash. Rav's accepted opinion reflects the principle of *zecher la-Mikdash* as described in *Masseches Rosh Hashana*:

מתני' בראשונה היה הלולב ניטל במקדש שבעה ובמדינה יום אחד. משחרב בית המקדש, התקין רבן יוחנן בן זכאי לולב ניטל במדינה שבעה זכר למקדש ... גמ' ומנלן דעבדינן זכר למקדש? דאמר קרא (ירמיהו ל, יז) "כי אעלה ארוכה לך וממכותיך ארפאך נאם ה' כי נדחה קראו לך ציון היא דורש אין לה" – מכלל דבעיא דרישה:  
*Mishna: In the beginning, the lulav was taken in the Mikdash all seven [days of Sukkos] and throughout the land on the first day. When the Mikdash*

*was destroyed, Rabban Yochanan ben Zakai instituted that the lulav is taken throughout the land all seven in remembrance of the Mikdash. Gemara: How do we know that we observe [certain practices] in remembrance of the Mikdash? The verse states, "But I will bring healing to you and cure you of your wounds declares the Lord, though they called you 'Outcast, That Zion whom no one seeks out.'" This implies that Zion requires seeking out. Rosh Hashana 30a*

The destruction of Beis ha-Mikdash mandated our Chachamim to institute practices that serve as *zecher la-Mikdash*, practices that parallel those in the Mikdash and which will thereby keep the Mikdash memories in the forefront of our thinking. Specifically, Rabbeinu Zerachya writes that the rabbinic mitzva of *neiros Chanuka* was instituted as a *zecher la-Mikdash*, as a mnemonic parallel to the mitzva of lighting the Menora in the Mikdash. As a result, we make no use whatsoever of the Chanuka light much as we would be absolutely forbidden to make any use of the Menora light in the Mikdash.<sup>4</sup>

\*

Rav Zolty highlights the remarkable implication: the rabbinic mitzva of *hadlakas neiros* was instituted after the destruction of the second Beis ha-Mikdash, well over a century after the miracle of Chanuka took place. While we are familiar with *pirsumei nissa*, publicizing the miraculous story of Chanuka, as the *telos* of the requirement to kindle



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*ner Chanuka*,<sup>5</sup> Rabbeinu Zerachya seems to understand that this rabbinic mitzva is actually a composite of two purposes — publicizing the miracle and remembering the Mikdash — and the Chachamim instituted the requirement to kindle *neiros* only after *churban ha-Bayis* when both purposes were relevant.<sup>6</sup>

This concept solves the mystery of the missing menorah. The passage we began with is a particularly ancient *baraisa*, which records the original institution of Chanuka shortly after the miracles occurred. At the time, the only positive fulfillments were reciting Hallel and *Al ha-Nissim*, and those indeed appear in this ancient text. The requirement to light *neiros Chanuka* was added later, following the Roman destruction of the Mikdash, and it is therefore recorded only in later texts such as the Mishna<sup>7</sup> and Gemara,<sup>8</sup> which were composed after *churban ha-Bayis*.

\*

May our engagement with *ner Chanuka* both renew our awareness of the Divine miracles that fill our lives and rekindle our yearning for the unimaginably greater relationship with Hashem, which a rebuilt Mikdash will enable, and may our contemplation of these paired *ner Chanuka* themes — *pirsumei nissa* and *zecher la-mikdash* — spur our *avodas Hashem* ambitions in the coming months and beyond.

## Endnotes

1. This brief article will explore Rashi's understanding that "thanksgiving" mentioned in the *baraisa* is a reference to reciting *Al ha-Nissim*, which enhances *Modim*, the gratitude section of *tefilla*. Rambam, however, appears to have interpreted "thanksgiving" as a reference to *neiros Chanukka* (see footnote 4 below).

2. *Mishnas Ya'avetz, Orach Chaim* 73:1.

3. *Ma'or ha-Katan* to Rif, *Shabbas* 9a.

4. In addition to this prohibition against practical benefit from the candlelight (*asur le-hishtameish le-orah*), Rav Zolty suggests two other halachic expressions of *ner Chanuka* as *zecher le-Mikdash*: the phrasing of the *birkas ha-mitzva* (Ra'avad, *Hilchos Berachos* 11:15) and the centrality of the act of lighting (*hadlaka osa mitzva*, per Rashi, *Shabbas* 22b). In pre-Chanuka shiurim, Rav Hershel Schachter has added several additional *nafkan minah*: the position of *She'iltos* (qtd. by Rosh, *Shabbas* 2:9) that leftover oil may not be used after Chanuka, the position of *Avnei Nezer* that all the lights of *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* must be contained by a single container, and the position of *Beis Yitzchak* that *ner Chanuka* requires distinct wick and fuel (which disqualifies a Bunsen burner which lacks the former and an electric bulb which lacks the latter). *Beis ha-Levi* (Chanuka 28b) similarly explains that the practice quoted by *Darkei Moshe* 673:6 to avoid reusing wicks is based upon *Mikdash* procedure.

Furthermore, *zecher le-Mikdash* appears to explain the position of Rav Chisda and Rav (*Shabbas* 21b) that *kavesa ein zakuk lah*, that this rabbinic mitzva was structured as a required act of lighting a *ner* (while *pirsumei nissa* alone would instead have suggested a requirement that the *ner* be and remain lit, *kavesa zakuk lah*). Additionally, Ramban (*Be-ha'aloosecha* 8:2) interprets several *midrashim* as presenting *ner Chanuka* as a perennial continuation of *hadlakas ha-Menora* in the *Mikdash* (as opposed to the *korbanos*, which have no such perennial continuation); this appears to be a robust formulation of *ner Chanuka* as *zecher la-Mikdash*.

Moreover, Rambam disagrees with Rabbeinu Zerachya's approach to practical benefit from Chanuka candlelight (*Hilchos Megilla ve-Chanuka* 4:6), and he may follow the Rif in rejecting the abovementioned position of *She'iltos* regarding post-Chanuka leftover oil (Rif, *Shabbas* 9a and Rambam 4:5; see also *Hagahos Maimoniyos* 4:4\*). This is consistent with his interpretation of *hoda'a* (*Shabbas* 21a) as *ner Chanuka* rather than as *Al ha-Nissim*, and with his corresponding, explicit dating of *ner Chanuka* to the original institution of Chanuka (Rambam 3:3 and 4:12).

5. *Shabbas* 23b.

6. Perhaps *pirsumei nissa* alone was insufficient due to the concern of *bal tosfif*. See *Megilla* 14a, with Ritva and *Piskei Rid*, as well as Ramban (*supra* 2a) and Netziv in *Ha'amek She'eila* 26:1, and especially Rav Schachter in *Be-Ikvei ha-Tzon* 19:3.

7. *Bava Kamma* 6:6.

8. *Shabbas* 21a ff.

## Chanuka and the Light of Rav Kook

### Rabbi Reuven Brand

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Chanuka, our time of light, is a time to learn the Torah of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook.

Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hakohen Kook (1865–1935) was a Torah personality who defies a single definition. It is impossible to fully encompass the dynamic life, transformational personality, manifold published contributions, and revolutionary spiritual ethos of Rav Kook. His story has many chapters, from halachic responsa and communal activity to institution-building and diaries filled with poetry searching for Hashem. Rav Kook's Torah personality is best associated with light. And light is a phenomenon that defies a single definition.

Light is the origin of all that exists in our world. It is Hashem's window into our existence. It is a medium of energy and of many dimensions. Chanuka is one of the chapters of the story of light. Chanuka is all about light; its central mitzvah is our creation of light, reflecting the illumination of the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash.

*Orot*, meaning lights, is one of several of Rav Kook's works that includes light in their title. Light is the theme

to which he refers and the theme he invokes extensively in his writings.

His perspectives on Chanuka, our holiday of light, take many forms: a poem written in Europe that weaves together the halachic details of Chanuka; community sermons; written responsa in his *Orach Mishpat*; and a philosophical commentary to the Talmudic section dealing with all aspects of Chanuka in the second perek of *Massechet Shabbat* called *Ein Aya*.

Thus, Chanuka is an opportune time to appreciate Rav Kook's unique beacon of light. The light of his teachings continues to illuminate our world. Let us consider a few themes of Rav Kook, in light of an aphorism he coined in 1916 (*Megeid Yerachim, Ma'amarei HaRa'aya* pg. 500) to capture the essence of the time of Chanuka:

הברק האלוקי שבנשמת החשמונאים נתפוצץ  
לניצוצות. כשיתקבצו לאבוקה אחת ישוב  
להגלות.

***The Divine bolt in the heart of the Chashmonaim splintered into sparks. When they will gather into one torch they will return to being revealed.***

This one simple phrase includes many aspects of Rav Kook's thinking.

***HaBarak HaEloki*** — The Divine bolt: In Rav Kook's writings the notion of a Divine phenomenon is common. He refers to Divine ideals (האידיאה האלוקית) and Divine wholeness (השלמות האלוקית). These ideas, despite their ethereal language, remind us that we are all living in the

presence of Hashem. Hashem's energy envelops our world and suffuses it with spirituality at every level. Hashem's light is present in our lives. He is constantly pouring light into our world for us to receive, reflect, and refract.

***SheBiNishmat HaChashmonaim***

— In the soul of the Chashmonaim: The Chashmonaim were ordinary people. They were individual Jews with aspirations and struggles. Yet, they carried within them a spark of Hashem. Each of us has a neshama with a connection to Hashem, if only we can perceive it. The neshama of the Chashmonaim is referred to in the singular. As people who fought for and represented the entirety of the Jewish people they carry one soul, just like the Jewish nation. As Knesset Yisrael, we are all one giant soul, one entity. As individuals, we are part of a greater whole, not separate, distinct parts. Rav Kook emphasized and appreciated the collective dimension of the Jewish people.

***Nitpotzetz lanitzotzot*** — Splintered into sparks: The splintering Rav Kook refers to may reflect the dual role the Chashmonaim played, which proved to be short lived. As Kohanim, they reinstated the service of the Mikdash, returning the holiness and purity of the Beit Hamikdash. They waged an ideological and spiritual battle against those who had abandoned the light of Torah and tradition. They illuminated the world with the light of their spiritual quest, highlighted by the Divine miracle of the oil.

They also served as military men who fought bravely against the Selucid Greeks, who persecuted the Jewish people in the Land of Israel. They struggled for autonomy from foreign rule. They were heroic in their quest, which was championed by Hashem, who delivered them a miraculous victory: many at the hands of few. The small band of Chashmonaim waged a guerilla war to ultimately repel the Greeks and create an independent state. They continued to serve as political leaders in the ensuing period.

However, this experiment did not last. The fusion of religious, spiritual leadership and military, political leadership led to the decline of the service in the Beit Hamikdash and of the Mikdash itself. Ultimately, each of these two important elements — the sanctuary and the battlefield — splintered into separate realms. They each retain a spark of holiness, yet they do not live together in unity. Malchut — physical leadership — and Kehuna — spiritual leadership — are meant to be distinct yet also cojoined partners. The confluence of the two dissolved into the complete separateness of the two. In exile, these forces no longer even appreciate each other's contribution.

***KeSheYitkabtzu la'avuka achat*** — When they gather into one torch: Rav Kook understands history as one unfolding drama, orchestrated by Hashem. We are living in one long arc of redemption — a movement toward total unity. There is no doubt of the reunification, the redemption. Hashem is already unfolding the



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process of reunification at every moment, leading to the gathering of the scattered forces, holy elements in life. Even on a physical level, the past century — the final turn toward full redemption — has seen the gathering of Jews from every corner of the earth.

This ultimate vision is reflected by a specific type of light: a torch, not one single beam of light that would be monolithic. Our view of unity is one that respects and appreciates the different flames within the torch, each with its own color and shade. Each has its own height and hue. Every type of Jew and each individual has a unique quality to contribute to the totality of the Jewish people. Even those who are currently devoid of religious content but contribute to the national rebuilding of the Jewish people are lights in the torch.

**Yashuv lehigalot** — They will return to being revealed: Hashem will ultimately reveal the unity between what currently may seem to be conflicting or competing values. The spiritual and physical dimensions of life, which are constantly in tension with each other, will find a harmony, a synthesis. The word return used here has the specific connotation of teshuva.

In Rav Kook's panoramic view of teshuva, it's not simply a series of steps to mending a wrongdoing. Teshuva is the process of enlightenment, of revealing the inner light of existence. Teshuva is a movement toward higher levels. This light of unity, peace, and wholeness exists on a personal level, a national level, and a cosmic level.

The word *lehigalot* is related to the word *galut*, meaning exile. In exile — national or personal — we experience the separateness of the sparks. When we are in a place of redemption — in

the Land of Israel — we can reveal the true inner light of the world — the light of Hashem that has accompanied us all along in our journey together.

For Rav Kook, the Chanuka themes of unity, the holiness of heroism and redemption, and the unfolding of history and kedusha are all lights that shine together.

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## Of Miketz, Menorahs, and Majesty

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### The Controversy over Yosef's Shave

The release of Yosef from prison, a moment of great drama and emotion, has also been the subject of halakhic inquiry. Some rishonim note, in light of the fact that his release took place on Rosh HaShanah,<sup>1</sup> it is surprising that Yosef shaved at that time.<sup>2</sup>

Rashi comments that the shaving was done because of *kevod ha-malkhut*; nonetheless, working under the assumption that the Avot (and, apparently Yosef included) observed the entire Torah before it was given, it would be expected that he would refrain from shaving on Rosh Hashanah. This question prompted an extensive literature in later generations, analyzing the halakhic considerations from every angle — is shaving a violation *mi-d'orayta* of *Hilkhos Yom Tov*; perhaps

the action is to be considered a *melakhah she'einah tzrichah ligufah*; can it be excused under his unique circumstances; what role does *kevod ha-malkhut* play in the question; perhaps the situation is considered *pikuach nefesh*; perhaps it is relevant that Yosef was presumably shaved by someone else, etc.<sup>3</sup>

### Kevod Ha-Malchut

The *Chatam Sofer*, for one, seemed bothered by the very question itself.<sup>4</sup> The notion of the Avot keeping the Torah, he argued, was a fine and important idea, but not an actual obligation. *Kevod Ha-Malkhut*, by contrast, is a genuine *din*, one that had to be observed even before the giving of the Torah, by force of law. Thus, *kevod ha-malkhut*, which was commanded, certainly overrides Yom Tov, which was “*eino metzuveh vi-oseh*.”

The *Chatam Sofer's* comment is itself difficult to understand. *Kevod ha-malchut* is also a law of the Torah, derived from pesukim.<sup>5</sup> By what logic is this law separated from the other mitzvot of the Torah, which he deems voluntary in the Pre-Sinaitic era, while this one is not?

In considering the obligation of *kevod ha-malkhut*, R. Simcha Zissel Broide, the late Rosh Yeshivah of the Chevron Yeshivah, posits<sup>6</sup> a number of theories explaining its importance. Among the five points that he makes is what he considers a fundamental principle of the human personality: It is crucial for one's spiritual development that he possess the ability to appreciate great things. One who is jaded and cynical, who views all things with disinterest, is unable to attain any kind of meaningful spiritual maturity. Thus,

it is critical to hone one's awareness of the extraordinary, and the attitude one brings toward royalty is certainly reflective of this vital attribute.

It is interesting to note that there is another (seasonally appropriate) comment of the *Chatam Sofer* that is also somewhat surprising. We generally assume that Chanukah and Purim, clearly post-Biblical in origin, are observed as *chiyuvim mi-de-rabanan*.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, maintains the *Chatam Sofer*,<sup>8</sup> if one would let the occasions of Chanukah or Purim pass by without any acknowledgement, this would be the wrong thing on a level *mi-d'orayta*.

## Appreciating Greatness and Majesty

Perhaps the common element between the two statements of the *Chatam Sofer* — his comment regarding Yosef, and his assertion regarding Chanukah — is the fundamental necessity of cultivating an appreciation for greatness and majesty. One who is unreceptive to the miraculous and the majestic is incapable of approaching the Torah with any potential for success. If one is unmoved by the extraordinary, then the greatest gift of all eternity can fail to move and inspire; not for any internal deficiency in the item, but because of the closed “eye of the beholder”.

This issue is indicated as well by the comments of the Ramban on the pasuk<sup>9</sup> following the giving of the *Aseret Ha-Dibrot*, when Moshe

tells the Jewish people not to be afraid, because G-d has come “*ba-avur nasot etchem*.” The Ramban understands this in the sense of *nisayon*, to test the Jewish people, to see if they are capable of feeling an appreciation for the awe-inspiring display that accompanied *Matan Torah*.

As R. Yitzchak Hutner explains,<sup>10</sup> this “test” was a crucial part of the process of the bestowing of the Torah upon the Jewish people. If the Jews failed to be moved by such a display, then they cannot fulfill their roles as the guardians of the Torah; they will be unreceptive to the infinite treasures of its content, and thus immune to its influence.

In this sense, R. Hutner notes the Maharal of Prague's interpretation of the Talmud's statement that the *churban Ha-Bayit* took place because the Jews failed to recite *Birkhot Ha-Torah*.<sup>11</sup> This passage has long challenged commentators, both because of the apparently disproportional nature of the punishment, and the well-known fact that the Jews of that era were guilty of several other egregious offenses. The Maharal explained<sup>12</sup> that the Talmud is not claiming that the lack of *Birkhot Ha-Torah* is the punishable offense; indeed, the *churban* was provoked by the other offenses committed at that time. Rather, the Talmud's question was this: since we know that the Jews of that time were involved in the study of Torah, how is it also possible that they were guilty of such transgressions? Should not their *talmud Torah* have influenced

them toward a more righteous path?

To this, explains the Talmud, it is commented that the Jews of that time did not recite a berakhah on the Torah. They were not awestruck by the experience; they were not moved by the privilege to express gratitude to He who bestowed this great gift. If that was their attitude, they were not in a position to be influenced by the Torah's content.

The *Chatam Sofer* is reminding us, in his two comments, that no relationship with Torah can be complete without a sense of the majestic and the miraculous. Before the giving of the Torah, the Avot were not technically obligated in mitzvot; but if they were lacking an awe of majesty, they would not have been the Avot. Before the events of Chanukah, there was no obligation to light candles or recite Hallel; but in the generations after, one who can casually fails to do so is shown to be flawed in his relationship with Torah at a fundamental level. The convergence of Miketz and Chanukah provides us with a reminder that allowing the magnificent to become mundane is a danger to the very definition of the Jewish personality.

## Endnotes

1. *Rosh HaShanah* 10b.
2. *Bereishit* 41:14.
3. See, for example, R. Asher Weiss, *Minchat Asher al ha-Torah*, *Bereishit* #56.
4. See his *chiddushim* to *Bereishit*. It should



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be noted that there are several editions of the *chiddushim* of the *Chatam Sofer* to the Torah, under the titles *Torat Moshe*, *Torat Moshe HaShalem*, *Chiddushei Chatam Sofer*, *Mei-Otzrot HaChatam Sofer*, etc. In many of those editions, the *Chatam Sofer* does deal with the question more directly. The comment mentioned here can be found in the edition printed in R. Yehudah Horowitz's *Gilyonei Mahari al Sefer Chatam Sofer al ha-Torah*.

5. Possible sources include *Bereishit* 48:2 (see Rashi) or *Shemot* 6:13 (see *Mechilta*, *Bo*, ch. 13).

6. *Sam Derekh*, *Bereishit*, II, pp. 117.

7. Setting aside, for a moment, the possibility that the *mitzvot* of Purim, as *divrei Kabbalah*, might have *di-orayta* status.

8. *Responsa Chatam Sofer*, *Orach Chayim*, 208.

9. *Shemot* 20:16.

10. *Pachad Yitzchak*, *Shavuot* #8.

11. *Bava Metziah* 85b.

12. *Hakdamah* to *Tiferet Yisrael*.

## The Symbolism of the Menorah

### Deena Rabinovich EdD

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In a long excursus in his *Commentary on Chumash*, Rabbi S.R. Hirsch gives a detailed view of what the Menorah represents. Rav Hirsch<sup>1</sup> quotes the Talmudic conclusion<sup>2</sup> that there are two elements necessary, at least *lechatchila*, in sculpting the Menorah — it must be fashioned of gold, and it must be formed out of a single piece, *mikshah*.<sup>3</sup> What, though, if there is not enough gold on hand? Then, says the Gemara after an extended back and forth, you are allowed to use other metals, and in that case it

is not necessary for the Menorah to be a single piece; the parts may be soldered together. Rav Hirsch reads the verb *תיעשה* almost as a passive command — one way or another, the Menorah must be made. There is the ideal way to make it — of one piece of hammered gold. And then there is the alternative way using any metal, and any number of pieces.

Why is it so important to have a Menorah even if not in its ideal form? The *Midrash Tanchuma* imagines Aharon's reaction as he watches the gifts being brought by the tribal leaders in the lead up to the dedication of the Mishkan, and wonders if he has missed out. "Don't worry," God reassures him. "Your gift is greater than theirs, for you will be able to light the Menorah forever."<sup>4</sup> Aharon's is a gift that keeps on giving and involves him and his descendants in daily *avodah* in the Mishkan and the Bet ha-Mikdash. Ramban, to be sure, wonders how this can be referred to as "forever"; were not the First and Second Temples destroyed? Where is the continuity? He suggests that the midrash is alluding to the Chanukah miracle, which has a continuing resonance even post-churban.<sup>5</sup>

Rav Hirsch notes that on a basic level the significance of the Menorah is plain. The Menorah provides light, which symbolizes knowledge.<sup>6</sup> Standing opposite the Shulchan (representing material prosperity) in the Mishkan and near the Aron with the Tablets, the light of the Menorah symbolizes a nation whose life is grounded in the Torah. But, he continues at great length, while light can allude to knowledge and spiritual enlightenment, it more often represents a "source of growth and life, of unfolding and flowering, of

undisturbed progress and happiness, of joy and bliss."<sup>7</sup> Light not only illuminates life; it awakens life.<sup>8</sup> Light can imply perception and understanding but also the joy of living, the consciousness of growing life. The source of light, says Rav Hirsch, is *ruach*, the spirit that "grants knowledge, insight, and wisdom, and at the same time motivates moral will and moral action."<sup>9</sup>

This idea is underscored by the words of Zechariah that we read for the Haftarah of Shabbat Chanukah. Zechariah, asked to describe what he sees, observes an elaborate gold candelabrum (albeit not precisely in the form of the Menorah of the Mishkan (Zech. 2:2)). But Zechariah is unsure of the meaning of his vision and asks the angel to explain. The heavenly response is stirring and memorable:

לֹא בְחֵיל, וְלֹא בְכֹחַ--כִּי אִם-בְּרוּחִי, אָמַר ה' צְבָאוֹת.

*Not by might, not by force but by My spirit, says the Lord.*

### Zechariah 4:6

The political leader Zerubavel will achieve greatness for himself and the nation and overcome the enormous challenges he faces if he concentrates on the spirit. To be sure, Zerubavel is the leader, not the teacher of the people. His role (sadly unrealized at the end) is to recognize God's will and carry it out.

This, according to R. Hirsch, is the dual lesson of the Menorah. We must combine accurate perception and appropriate action. As another great prophet observes:

...רוּחַ ה'--רוּחַ חֲכָמָה וּבִינָה, רוּחַ עֲצָה וְגִבּוֹרָה, רוּחַ דַּעַת, וְרוּחַ יוֹרָאת ה'.

*And the spirit of God ... the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit*

of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of God.

**Yeshayahu 11:2**

Yeshayahu enumerates three pairs of words (3 X 2 = 6), each representing a branch of the Menorah. Each branch points toward the central branch, the *ruach*, the spirit of God.

Concludes Rav Hirsch, the spirit of God “is not just the source of theoretical knowledge and perception, but the source of both perception *and* action.”<sup>10</sup>

That is why Aharon was comforted with the knowledge that his children would always light the Menorah. They would be the ones to spread the knowledge of God and the ability to bring that knowledge to life. The lesson is sometimes perfectly reproduced — the Menorah is carved from a block of pure gold. But even if the ideal cannot be experienced, in times when the Menorah needs to be cobbled together from baser metals, it is crucial that Aharon’s children be there to bring the light — the spirit of God — to the children of Israel and to mankind.

## Endnotes

1. *The Hirsch Chumash* (Feldheim, 2002) “Shemos” 25:31 p. 567.
2. BT *Menachot* 28a.
3. Think of Michelangelo paring down a block of marble.
4. *Midrash Tanchuma, Behalotcha*, 8, 5.
5. Ramban, *Bamidbar* 82.
6. *Shemos* 25:39 p. 570.

7. E.g., “There will I cause the horn of David to flourish; there I prepared a lamp for my anointed.” (*Tehillim* 132:17). (The translation, by the way, of “*keren*” as horn which the English translator (and others to be sure) adopted is quite lame and misses the metaphorical allusion to victory and success. See *Tehillim* 89:18).

8. *Ibid*, p. 572.

9. *Ibid*, p. 572.

10. *Ibid*, p.572.

## It’s All About the Hallel

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In a poll of “The top 8 practices most commonly associated with Chanukah,” Hallel would likely rank behind the chanukiah, latkes, dreidel, sufganiyot, gelt, Maoz Tzur and Al HaNisim, and perhaps even sfenj (Moroccan doughnuts). However, Rambam linked Hallel and Chanukah closely; in his *Mishneh Torah* code of law, Rambam began the laws of Chanukah by describing Hallel first, even before addressing lighting the chanukiah. Why did Rambam prioritize the connection between Chanukah and Hallel?<sup>1</sup>

### The Original Celebration

First, it is worth noting that the chanukiah may appear after Hallel simply because it was not part of the original Chanukah celebration. As noted by Rabbi Yitzchak Yehudah Trunk (*Chasdei Avot* 17:17) and

Rabbi Betzalel Zolty (*Mishnat Yaavetz* 73:1), among others, the Talmud’s description of the history of Chanukah omits the chanukiah entirely:

שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו כל השמיים שבהיכל, וכשגברה מלכות בית חשמונאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן גדול, ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד. נעשה בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים. לשנה אחרת, קבעום ועשאו ימים טובים בהלל והודאה:

*For when the Greeks entered the Sanctuary, they contaminated all of the oil in the Sanctuary, and when the monarchy of the house of the Chashmonaim mustered their strength and defeated them, [the Chashmonaim] searched and found only one jug of oil marked with the seal of the Kohen Gadol. There was only enough to kindle for one day, but a miracle occurred, and they kindled from it for eight days. The next year, they established them and made them Yamim Tovim, with Hallel and thanks.*

### Shabbat 21b

Similarly, the Rambam’s code of law seems to mention the chanukiah only as a secondary commemoration of the miracle:

ומפני זה התקינו חכמים שבאותו הדור שיהיו שמונת הימים האלו שתחלתן מליל חמשה ועשרים בכסלו ימי שמחה והלל, ומדליקין בהן הנרות בערב על פתחי הבתים בכל לילה ולילה משמונת הלילות להראות ולגלות הנס, וימים אלו הן הנקראין חנוכה והן אסורין בהספד ותענית כימי הפורים, והדלקת הנרות בהן מצוה מדברי סופרים כקריאת המגילה.

*Because of this, the sages of that generation enacted that these eight*



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days, from the night of the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev, should be days of joy and Hallel, and they light lamps in the evening at the entrances of houses on each night of the eight nights, to demonstrate and reveal the miracle. And these days are called “Chanukah,” and one may neither eulogize nor fast on them, like the days of Purim. And lighting lamps on them is a rabbinic mitzvah, like reading the Megillah.

Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Megillah v'Chanukah 3:3

Further, our tefillah of Al haNisim does say that after the military victory, “they lit lamps in the courtyards of Your sanctum,” but commentators have long explained that this is likely not a reference to an institution of the chanukiah. Rather, it may refer to lighting the Menorah of the Beit haMikdash,<sup>2</sup> or lighting lamps in joy and celebration.<sup>3</sup>

These three sources, among others, have led some authorities to suggest that our lighting of the chanukiah was instituted only later, to continue the light of the Menorah in the Beit haMikdash and thereby commemorate the victory of the Chashmonaim. But even without this revision of the chanukiah’s history, the point behind it is indisputable: the explicit emphasis of our sages’ description of Chanukah, in the Talmud, Al haNisim and beyond, has been upon Hallel. This emphasis is one reason to include Hallel in the Laws of Chanukah. Looking deeper into the nature of Hallel, though, we may find a stronger connection.

## Processing the Miracle

In discussing the Hallel of Pesach, Rabbi Aharon Kotler<sup>4</sup> explained that there are two types of Hallel: The ritual of a formal festival, and the reaction to a miracle.

In context, Rabbi Kotler used this analysis to explain why the Talmud and Rabbi Yosef Karo give separate reasons for the lack of a full Hallel in the latter part of Pesach. The Talmud<sup>5</sup> says it’s because the latter days of Pesach do not have a unique korban, and so their festival aspect is reduced. Rabbi Karo<sup>6</sup> says it’s because the Egyptians drowned on the seventh day of Pesach, diminishing the joy of the miracle. Each explanation addresses a different element of Hallel.

Unlike Pesach, Chanukah does not warrant Hallel as the ritual of a festival; as a post-biblical celebration, it has no korban. Instead, as noted in the Talmud itself,<sup>7</sup> the Hallel of Chanukah is purely of the second variety — a response to a miracle. But this Hallel does more than just express gratitude; it is how we process and decipher the miracle, causing us to appreciate its wonder and to fully experience the joy. As Rabbi Kotler wrote:

אף מה שהאדם רואה בעיניו, מהצורך לבאר לעצמו מה שהוא רואה ולקבוע בהכרתו.  
*Even regarding that which a person sees with his own eyes — he needs to interpret for himself that which he sees, and to establish it in his mind.*

The Jews of the second century BCE knew no prophet; no message from G-d interpreted the military victory and the miracle of the oil. Perhaps

there were those in that generation who, given time, could have explained away their military success and the longevity of the oil. But we preempted that mistake by creating “Yamim Tovim, with Hallel and thanks.”

We arrived at the conclusion that this was a miracle on our own, via Hallel. That Chanukah celebration acknowledging G-d was a true fulfillment of the mission of Hallel, the Jewish nation spontaneously recognizing what Hashem had done for us. And so Rambam placed its laws properly, at the front and center of the Chanukah celebration that Hallel itself catalyzed — and this act of Hallel should remain the essence of our Chanukah celebration today.

May we soon witness the completion of our redemption, and may we comprehend the Divine Hand in the miracle and so sing Hallel as a nation once again.

## Endnotes

1. It is also worth noting that Rambam places the laws of Hallel not in *Hilchot Tefillah*, but in *Hilchot Chanukah*, strengthening the connection to Chanukah.
2. See *Reshimot Shiurim* of Rabbi Yosef Dov Soloveitchik to *Succah* 51a.
3. See Avudraham *Chanukah*, and Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson cited at <https://chabadlibrary.org/books/admur/tm/5726-1/310/index.htm>.
4. *Mishnat Rebbe Aharon*, Pesach pg. 3.
5. *Arachin* 10a-b.
6. *Beit Yosef Orach Chaim* 490, based on *Megillah* 10b.
7. *Arachin* 10b.



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# The Luminous and Numinous Light of Chanukah

**Rabbi Yehuda Willig**

*Maggid Shiur, RIETS*

It's fascinating to note that we find several connections between the light of the menorah and the creation of the world. Let's cite a few examples.

On Chanukah we light a total of 36 candles if following *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. The Rokeach explains the significance of the 36 total candles as corresponding to the 36 hours that Adam benefited from the special light of creation. Chazal teach that this primordial light was subsequently hidden for the tzadikim in the future.

In addition, the 25th word in the Torah is אור. The context of this word is in the description of Hashem's creation of light. The *Sefer Hatoda'ah* expounds on this and suggests that this is a hint to the light of the Chanukah menorah, which commences on the 25th day of Kislev. Furthermore, the light of the menorah illuminates a darkness hinted at in the pasuk of *v'choshech al p'nei tehom*, darkness over the surface of the deep (the second pasuk in the Torah discussing creation), which the Midrash says is a reference to the dark period of the Greek oppression that took place in the leadup to the Chanukah story.

Moreover, the Shlah Hakadosh points out that the *gematria* of "יהי" in the creation of light (יהי אור) on the first



day of the universe is 25, underscoring yet another connection between Chanukah and creation. He adds that just as the light of creation was restricted from our use, so too the light of the menorah of Chanukah was restricted from personal use.

How do we explain all these connections? Is there some deeper connection that binds Chanukah to creation?

The *Sefas Emes* suggests that the light of the menorah is in fact a continuation of the light of creation! When Hashem hid the original light of creation, it can be found, in part, inside the light of Chanukah. For this reason, says the *Sefas Emes*, one should rejoice extra on the days of Chanukah, days that we can access this primordial light.

Considering this, we can explain why so many traces of the light of Chanukah are contained in the world's creation, specifically in the creation of the first light.

Perhaps we can add an idea to this and offer the following explanation. We are taught that the very first day of creation, the day that Hashem also created light, was the 25th day of Elul, six days before Rosh Hashanah. We also find in the writings of Chazal that creation is referred to as birth; Hashem, so to speak, gave birth to the world.

Based on the comparison of creation to birth, homiletically we can suppose that there was also a period of pregnancy leading up to the world's birth. In this understanding, conception of the world would be nine months prior to the 25th of Elul. This would be precisely the 25th of Kislev. In other words, the very beginning of creation, the moment of conception of this world, is the first day of Chanukah!

This would be another explanation of why the day of Chanukah is so spiritually charged, as Hashem, *k'viyachol*, began the first steps of creation and the illumination of this



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heavenly light on this day. Based on this, we can say that Chanukah is not rooted in creation as the *Sefas Emes* suggests, but rather creation is rooted in Chanukah! This would explain all the connections we mentioned above.

The significance of this last idea is quite great. Chanukah is a time when we can tap into this enormous power and spirit. It is a time to consider our future, a time to sow the seeds for bringing ourselves and the entire world to a more sublime space.

## Chanukah: The Holiday of Mindfulness

### Rabbi Dov Winston

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We cannot help but be enamored by the beautifully lit menorahs as they illuminate our windowsills throughout the holiday of Chanukah. The dancing flames atop the candles are mesmerizing and can immediately catch the eye of any passerby. Yet, what is so interesting about the lights of the menorah is that we are not allowed to have any benefit from them. Famously, we recite the passage of “*Haneirot Hallalu*” following the lighting of that first candle, and in this passage we add the words: “*ve’ain lanu reshut l’hishtamesh bahem ela lirotam bilvad*” — And we do not have the permission to use them [the lights], just to look at them.”

If we are not meant to use the candles for illumination, then what purpose do they serve? You might answer that they are there to look at, after all that is exactly what we say in the passage

of “*Haneirot Hallalu*” quoted above. But in all honesty, how many people actually sit and observe their menorah after it is lit, how many people would turn on a lamp in their home and just stare at it? Not only is this not done, but it is actually a danger to our eyesight to look directly at a light source for too long. We must therefore endeavor to understand why we light candles if not to benefit from their radiance.

The Talmud (*Sukkah* 46a) notes that there are two elements of this mitzvah, lighting *and* observing the candles. If one is lighting, then on the first night, three blessings are recited, and on the subsequent nights, two. However, if one is simply watching, then on the first night, two blessings are recited and then one blessing on the nights to follow. The observer does not recite the blessing of “*l’hadlik ner shel Chanukah*” but still says “*she’asa nisim l’avoteinu*,” because he is involved in the acknowledgement and publicization of the miracle. Although we infrequently arrive at the halachic reality in which someone would only observe and not light (or have someone light on their behalf), this is a potential practice that one can theoretically utilize.

Tosafot (*ibid*) question this odd practice, contrasting lighting Chanukah candles to other mitzvot. The Baalei Tosafot wonder: why is it that regarding other commandments such as lulav and sukkah that we are not obligated or even inclined to gaze upon them, whereas with Chanukah that seems to be one of the central facets of the commandment? They note that it is because of our appreciation for the unusual miracle of Chanukah that we are compelled to thank Hashem, even when we are

not fulfilling the commandment of lighting on our own.

Moreover, there is indeed a lesser known but compelling custom that developed over the years, which encourages those who light to sit by the menorah for a period of time. Rabbi Eliyahu David Rabinowitz-Teomim (ADeReT), father-in-law of Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, was a proponent of such a custom and he writes about his great love for the commandment of lighting the Chanukah candles, and how he would be sure to have them lit for as long as possible. He describes his practice as follows:<sup>1</sup>

התענגתי לשבת בחדר שבו הנרות, לראותם ולהסתכל בהם בכל רגע, ולא הלכתי מאותו החדר רק כשהייתי אנוס על פי עבודת הציבור. *I would take pleasure in sitting in the room with the candles, to look and gaze upon them for every moment, and I would not leave the room unless there was a great need for me to be involved with communal work.*

Indeed, others shared in such a custom as well, and it is appropriate for one, at the very least, to spend a few moments gazing at the candles and internalizing what they represent – the great miracles and support that our Creator has and continues to provide for His beloved people.

Somewhat reminiscent of us turning toward the flames of the menorah is the Biblical scene in which Moshe Rabbeinu turns toward the flame of the burning bush.

וַיֵּרָא מִלְאָכֵי ה' אֵלָיו בְּלֶבֶת אֵשׁ מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֵּרָא וְהָיָה הַסֵּנֶה בְּעַר בְּאֵשׁ וְהַסֵּנֶה אֵינֶנּוּ אֶכְלֵ. וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה אֶסְרָה נָא וְאֶרְאֶה אֶת הַמְּרָאָה הַגְּדֹל הַזֶּה מִדּוּעַ לֹא יִבְעַר הַסֵּנֶה. וַיֵּרָא ה' כִּי סָר לְרֵאוֹת וַיִּקְרָא אֵלָיו אֱלֹהִים מִתּוֹךְ הַסֵּנֶה וַיֹּאמֶר מֹשֶׁה וַיֹּאמֶר הַגִּבִּי.

*An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed,*

and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, "I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?" When the Lord saw that he had turned aside to look, God called to him out of the bush: "Moses! Moses!" He answered, "Here I am."

#### Exodus 3:2-4

Rabbi Avraham Schorr<sup>2</sup> suggests that there is a deep connection between this verse and the month of Kislev in which we celebrate the holiday of Chanukah. Notice in the bolded words above that the first letter of each of these words, when combined and rearranged, spells out "כסלו" — "Kislev." The reason being, says Rabbi Schorr, that it is specifically during this time of year that we must "... awaken within ourselves the yearning to see this 'great light,' to see the burning bush, the fire of holiness and Godliness that burns within us."

With this, we can understand that the transcendent custom of gazing into the flames of the menorah is much deeper than the recognition of the great miracles that Hashem did for us so many years ago. Rather, when we look into the flames, we are to reflect on the fire that exists within each and every one of us; that we possess the greatness, strength, and courage to become the best versions of ourselves. As the flames dance in front of our eyes, we are meant to yearn for the sanctity and potential that we have to grow to unprecedented heights in our relationship with our Creator.

How does looking at a fire enable us to do this? What is it about the contemplative state of staring at the flames of the menorah that might help us achieve a heightened level of inner confidence? Life naturally moves at a rapid pace. In fact, our rabbis were sensitive to this reality when they taught us, אָנוּ רָצִים וְהֵם רָצִים. אָנוּ רָצִים וְהֵם רָצִים — "We run and they run. We run to the World to come, and they run to a life of futility."<sup>3</sup> While we typically use this statement as a proof-text to living a life of Torah and mitzvot, perhaps even more interesting is that everyone is running somewhere. This is the natural way of the world, that life is often very busy.

Perhaps Chanukah offers us the opportunity to stop running, for just a few days. The eight days of Chanukah are meant for self-reflection, meditation, and rejuvenation. This time of year, when the nights are their darkest and it is easiest to lose track of who we are and what we are here to accomplish, Chanukah offers us the chance to take a break from doing in order to ponder who we are and who we can be. In short, Chanukah is a holiday of mindfulness.

In the late 1970's a professor by the name of Jon Kabat-Zinn started a movement that would fundamentally change the way the world viewed treatment of physical and mental illness. Instead of seeking external remedies, mindfulness seeks to find a solution from within. Kabat-Zinn

explains, "Mindfulness is awareness that arises through paying attention, on purpose, in the present moment, non-judgmentally... in the service of self-understanding and wisdom." It may sound simple, or even too good to be true, but mindfulness, when practiced correctly, has been found to be an effective tool in the treatment of chronic diseases and disorders.<sup>4</sup> There is an incredible capacity for self-healing that we can achieve by simply *being* in the moment.

This is the hidden meaning behind the Chanukah candles. We may not have permission to use them, because that is all we ever do; we are always doing and in pursuit of something. On Chanukah, we may only look at them, reflect on their meaning and on our greater purpose. If we can take these eight days and utilize them to stop running and start introspecting, then although we may not use the Chanukah candles for illumination, *we* will instead be a source of illumination to the world.

#### Endnotes

1. *Chanukah*, compiled and written by Rabbi Tzvi Cohen, page 110, footnote 8.
2. *Halekach V'Halibuv*, 5763, Parshat Vayeitzei, Page 42.
3. Part of the prayer we recite upon completion of a tractate of Talmud based on the *Berachot* 28b.
4. <https://www.mindful.org/jon-kabat-zinn-defining-Mindfulness/>



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