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Introduction: The Essence of Miracles

Mrs. Suzy Schwartz

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Ask any child to tell you about the miracle of Chanukah and guaranteed, there's mention of a little jug of oil and a menorah that stayed lit for an eight night run. Conduct a search across Talmudic texts and rabbinic literature about the Holiday of Chanukah, and the matter of oil and candles dominate. And yet, look at the one special prayer of *Al Hanissim* that we recite three times daily in prayer on Chanukah (as well as during our Grace after Meals), and the Menorah theme might be described by some as an after-thought. Why is this the case, and more importantly, what can we learn from it?

Let's look at the two different types of miracles connected with the Holiday of Chanukah. The devastation wrought by the Syrian-Greeks in the Beit Hamikdash and the subsequent discovery of a small jug of oil to keep the Menorah in the Temple lit for the next eight days was nothing short of a miracle. And it's inspiring to think of this miracle of "renewal" that the small jug represented- light in the face of darkness and renewal in the face of destruction.

On the other hand, the military victory that the Jews enjoyed at the hands of their much larger and mightier Greek adversary might be seen as simply a military victory. That, however, would entirely miss the point. While the victory the Jews enjoyed against the Hellenists was about their physical survival, it really represented at its core, nothing less than their spiritual survival.

Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin in *Hamo'adim B'Halacha*, pg. 159, cites the Levush as explaining that the Syrian-Greeks were not interested in persecuting and destroying the Jewish people. They were simply interested in obliterating our religion:

The enemy ... did not decree death and annihilation upon them, but only oppression and measures to convert them from their religion... And if Israel had submitted to the Greeks, behaving as a conquered people and paying tribute, and had converted to the conqueror's faith, the Greeks would have made no further demands.

Levush, Orach Chaim 670:2

מפני שלא נמסרו ישראל באותו זמן ביד מושל אחד שהיה מושל עליהם להריגה כמו שהיה בימי המן, אלא שבאו האויבים עליהם למלחמה ולא בקשו מהם אלא ההכנעה, ולהיות ידם תקיפה על ישראל ולהעבירם על דתם ... ואם היו ישראל מכניעים להם להיות כבושים תחת ידם ולהעלות להם מס וחוזרים לאמונתם חלילה, לא היו מבקשים יותר.

לבוש, אורח חיים תרע"ב

As we say in *Al Hanissim*: "להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחוקי רצונך" - to make them forget Your Torah and forsake the statutes of Your will." They wanted nothing but our assimilation; our

loss of identity. Since our hearts and souls were what the Syrian-Greeks were after, while the victory that we experienced on the battlefield was technically a military one, it represented so much more than just our physical survival.

According to Rav Zevin, the ability to give praise and thanks to Hashem is exactly that which the Syrian-Greeks wanted to take from us:

It was precisely praise and thanksgiving that the Syrian-Greeks wanted us to refrain from, and they wanted us to deny the Blessed One, and since we overcame the enemy with His help and their schemes failed, therefore the Sages established these days for us to reaffirm our praise and thanksgiving to Him.

Hamo'adim Bahalacha, pg. 159

כיון שהם רצו למנוע אותנו מזה
ולכפור בו יתברך ח"ו ובעזרתו
יתברך לא הפיקו זממם וגברה
ידינו, לכך קבעו אותם לחזור
ולשבח ולהודות לו.
המועדים בהלכה עמ' קנט

Maybe that is why it is the military victory which we primarily reference in our daily davening (during *Modim*), since we are essentially thanking Hashem for our spiritual survival.

Coming through this period in Jewish History with our identity sustained and strong was the first part of the Chanukah miracle. We mark it by offering praise and thanksgiving to Hashem through our daily prayers. Lighting the Chanukah menorah was our Sages way of incorporating a symbolic practice into our observance for remembering, acknowledging and thanking Hashem for the second part of the Chanukah miracle -- our spiritual renewal. And referring to these two miracles as Part I and Part II is simply a way of noting that before we as a nation could renew and recharge our sacred spirit, we had to be whole and physically intact- strong and firm in our beliefs and committed to our Jewish destiny.

We can also look at these two miracles of Chanukah, the one of military victory and the one of spiritual survival, as reflecting two classes of miracles, daily miracles and once in a lifetime miracles. We grow up learning that miracles are supernatural, out of the ordinary occurrences, and yet in the prayer of *Modim* recited three times daily, we say “על נסיד שבכל ...” מוידים אנחנו לך ... על נסיד שבכל “ מוידים אנחנו לך ...” we give thanks to You ... for Your miracles which are with us every day.”

How then should we define daily miracles? Perhaps they're the common ones that we're used to seeing all the time but require a constant reminder that while normal occurrences, they are still seen as extraordinary. We might recall this type of miracle when discussing the birth of a baby or a recovery from illness, but even more mundane activities such as breathing and digesting food are also miraculous.

Out-of-the-ordinary miracles might be seen as more dramatic, simply because they occur less often and thereby have a greater impact. The Chashmonaim were at a great disadvantage militarily, and there's no question that their victory was profound, but at the end of the day, it was still a military victory. Discovering a jug of pure olive oil in the ruins of the Temple and that oil's ability to keep a menorah lit for a period seven times longer than it should have was undoubtedly seen as a “special” miracle, defined so, by its uniqueness.

The Ramban discusses the concept of miracles in his *Commentary* on the last *pasuk* of Parshat Bo that states:

And it shall be a sign upon your arm and totafot (tefillin) between your eyes, for with a strong arm Hashem removed us from Egypt.

Shemot 13:16

וְהָיָה לְאוֹת עַל יָדְכָה וּלְטוֹטְפֹת בֵּין
עֵינֶיךָ כִּי בְחֹזֶק יָד הוֹצִיאָנוּ ה'
מִמִּצְרַיִם.

שמות יג:טז

The Ramban explains that because G-d does not perform miracles in every generation, He commanded us that we should constantly have a reminder and a sign for what our eyes saw in Egypt and transmit that to our children and all the future generations. He then explains that through remembering and acknowledging miracles such as *yetziat Mitzraim*, a person comes to acknowledge the hidden miracles of everyday life for he realizes that all our experiences in this world are miracles and there's no element of nature in them, nor can they be defined as part of the ordinary course of the world.

At the Center for the Jewish Future (CJF) at Yeshiva University, we are engaged in a myriad of activities and initiatives throughout the year that stand out for their immediate impact. Some of these initiatives include the service learning and humanitarian missions that we take our students on to communities all around the world, the inspiring Yarchei Kallah and continuing education programs that we run for rabbis, and the well-regarded educational and inspirational programs that we run for the greater Jewish community. But we believe that the true success of our programming is in the day-to-day impact that we hope these efforts are having. If community leaders, rabbinic leaders and student leaders can harness the power of these select programs and events and use it to impact and improve our world, we know that we will follow the lead of the Chashmonaim. We will look to the future with our souls and identity intact, embark on a journey of spiritual discovery, and identity and appreciate the miracles that are all around us.

There's No Place Like Home

Defining the Obligation of Lighting Chanukah Candles

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The mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles entails an individual obligation incumbent on every Jewish man and woman. However, a number of prominent Poskim¹ assert that the mitzvah is also dependent upon the existence of a *bayis*, a home in which the Chanukah candles must be lit.² In the following article, we will present aspects of this thesis and some of the practical halachic applications.

¹ Many of the points in this article can be found in essays written by Rabbi Herschel Schachter (*Bi'ikvei Ha'tzon*, "Makom hadlakas neros Chanukah," pp. 117-125) and Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (*Minchas Shlomo* 2:51(1); *Kovetz Mevakshei Torah*, 4:18, Kislev 5756; *Halichos Shlomo*, vol. 2, Ch. 13, #1-3; *Shalmei Mo'ed*, pp. 196-201).

Others that accept the thesis that a *bayis* is required for *neros Chanukah* include: Rabbi Tzvi Pesach Frank (*Mikra'ei Kodesh: Chanukah*, #18); Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe* Y.D. 3:14:14:5); Rabbi Simchah Zissel Broide (*Moriah* 7:1 [Marcheshvan 5737], "Geder chiyuv ner Chanukah", pp. 23-29); Rabbi Yaakov Kaminetsky, *Emes LeYaakov al Shulchan Aruch*, Siman 677, fn. 590. See also Rabbi Moshe Mordechai Karp (*Hilchos Chag BeChag: Chanukah*, pp. 27-29); Rabbi Shmuel Rozovsky, *Zichron Shmuel* (1985), Siman 19, sec. 4.

The basic thesis that the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah* is dependent upon the home is found clearly in an earlier source, the commentary of the *Pnei Yehoshua* on Shabbos (21b, s.v. *tanu rabbanan*).

There are those who argue with this premise, asserting that the obligation of *neros Chanukah* is not dependent on a *bayis*, and therefore one may light *neros Chanukah* in an open area when necessary. See *Aruch HaShulchan* (677:5), *Tzitz Eliezer* (15:29); see also the brief exchange with Rabbi Auerbach in *Tzitz Eliezer* vol. 9, p. 79, s.v.

u'bi'nogai'ah; *Az Nidberu* (7:67, 11:34:2). For further discussion of views in the poskim, see e.g. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, *Chazon Ovadiah: Chanukah*, pp. 156-158; Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Shemaya, *Birkas Mo'adecha: Chanukah U'Purim*, pp. 61-72. See also Rabbi Michel Zalman Shurkin, *Harerei Kedem* (vol. 2, #161); Rabbi Zvi Ryzman, *Ratz Ka'Tzvi: Chanukah U'Purim*, #9.

² Rabbi Auerbach noted that even if the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah* requires a *bayis*, it is nonetheless clearly different than the mitzvah of mezuzah. If an individual moves into a home that already has *mezuzos*, there is no need to place one's own mezuzah. Regarding *neros Chanukah*, however, each person is obligated to ensure the fulfillment of the mitzvah. See *Mevakshei Torah* (ibid.), p. 13, s.v. *u'bekesav yad*.

A Home is Essential for the Mitzvah

The primary sources in the Talmud imply that the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah lights can only be fulfilled in one's home. The Gemara (*Shabbat* 21b) defines the essential mitzvah of *hadlakas nerot Chanukah* (lighting the Chanukah lights) as “*ner ish u'baiso*” - “a candle of the individual and his home.” The significance of the home is also highlighted by the Gemara's statement that the *nerot Chanukah* should ideally be lit *al pesach baiso me'be'chutz* - outside of one's doorway, indicating that the candles' location must be associated with the person's home. Similarly, the Rambam underscores the need to light in a home in two places in *Hilchos Chanukah*:

Its [essential] Mitzvah requires that every house should light one candle. (4:1)

And we light the candles in the evening at the entrances of the houses. (3:3)

כמה נרות הוא מדליק בחנוכה, מצותה
שיהיה כל בית ובית מדליק נר אחד (ד:א)
ומדליקין בהן הנרות בערב על פתחי
הבתים (ג:ג)

Lighting in One's Place of Residence

One aspect of this requirement relates to the need to light in one's place of residence, where one lives. This condition finds expression in a number of *halachos*:³

Fulfillment of the Mitzvah through Lighting in the *Bais Haknesses*

The Rama (671:7) rules that the individual cannot fulfill his obligation through the lighting of the *nerot Chanukah* in the *bais haknesses* (synagogue). Apparently, this is reflective of the premise that a person can only fulfill the personal obligation of *hadlakas nerot Chanukah* when lighting in one's residence.

A Traveler Fulfilling the Mitzvah through Lighting in the Home

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 23a) cites Rabbi Zeira as saying that after he married, he fulfilled the mitzvah of *nerot Chanukah* even when he was away from home, בגו ביתאי, “for they are lighting for me in my home”.⁴ This halachah, enabling a travelling husband to fulfill the basic mitzvah of *hadlakas nerot Chanukah* through his wife's lighting in their home (and vice-versa), appears to be an anomaly: how can a person fulfill a personal obligation if he/she is not even present at the time of the fulfillment of the mitzvah? This seems to prove that the essential mitzvah is *ner ish u'baiso*, ensuring that the *nerot Chanukah* will be burning in the home.

Birchas Ha'roeh-The Observer's Blessing

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 23a) rules that a person who does not fulfill the mitzvah of *hadlakas nerot Chanukah* should say the *brachah* of *She'asa Nissim* (referred to as *birchas ha'roeh*) upon seeing another person's Chanukah candles. Tosafos (*Sukkah* 46a, s.v. *ha'roeh*) is puzzled by this *brachah* - where else do we find that Chazal legislated a “back-up *brachah*” for a person who cannot fulfill a mitzvah? Does someone who cannot fulfill the mitzvah of *sukkah* or *lulav* have

³ Additionally, the *Bais Yosef* (Siman 671, s.v. *u'ma she'kasav she'mainichin*) explains the custom to light *nerot Chanukah* in the *bais haknesses*: בר - נראה שתיקנו כן מפני האורחים שאין להם בית להדליק בו - “it appears that it was instituted because of guests that do not have a house to light in.”

⁴ See *Shulhan Aruch* 676:3, 677:1 with *Mishnah Berurah* 2.

the option of making an alternative *brachah* upon observing someone else fulfilling the mitzvah? What is unique about the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah*?

Tosafos explains that this special *brachah* was introduced specifically for *neros Chanukah*: מִשּׁוּם - “because there are some people that do not have houses and [therefore] are not able to fulfill the mitzvah.”⁵ The straightforward reading of this answer indicates that an individual can only light in a residence, which precludes a significant number of people from fulfillment of the mitzvah. Both homeless individuals and those who would be travelling during Chanukah would often be lacking the necessary *bayis* required for the fulfillment of *neros Chanukah*, and therefore *birchas ha’roeh* was instituted to enable them to participate in the *pirsumei nisa*, the publicizing of the miracle of the Chanukah candles.⁶

Achsinai: How a Guest Fulfills the Mitzvah

The halachah (*Shabbos* 23a, *Shulchan Aruch* 677:1) states that an *achsinai*, a guest, fulfills the mitzvah of *hadlakas nerot Chanukah* by taking ownership in a portion of the Chanukah candles. This halachah is puzzling: Why institute a different method of fulfilling the mitzvah for a guest? And why is this method effective?

The particular method whereby an *achsinai* fulfills the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah* can be understood in light of the principle that a person must light in his place of residence. This stipulation presents a problem for a guest who lives primarily in another home and is only staying by the host for a short time. In order for a guest to attain the status of a resident vis-a-vis *neros Chanukah*, he must become a partner in the lighting, thereby demonstrating that he is a member of the household and a resident of this home.⁷

Eating a meal at the home of a relative or friend, and then returning home

The *Turei Zahav* (672:2) critiques the practice of dinner guests who light candles in their host’s home rather than lighting in their own residence.⁸ The *Mishnah Berurah* (677:12; *Bei’ur Halachah* s.v. *Ba’makom*) also rules that if a person eats a meal at a friend’s or relative’s house and then returns home, he must light the Chanukah candles in his residence rather than at the

⁵ See similarly *Sefer Kolbo* (Siman 44), *Sefer Avudraham* (Hilchos Chanukah, s.v. *hamadlik ner*).

⁶ Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (*Igros Moshe*, *ibid.*) cites Rashi’s interpretation of *birchas ha’roeh* as a proof that a *bayis* is required for the lighting of *neros Chanukah*. In explaining the halachah that someone who cannot light Chanukah candles must say *birchas ha’roeh*, Rashi presents the example of someone on a boat. Why can’t the individual light on the boat? Apparently, says Rabbi Feinstein, a boat does not qualify as a *bayis*, and therefore the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah* cannot be fulfilled on it. [The interpretation of this Rashi is discussed in many other sources as well.]

⁷ With this conceptual understanding of the halachah of *achsinai*, Rabbi Soloveitchik called into question the prevalent custom that a guest lights his own candles. One could argue that the halachah specifically required that the guest contribute towards the candles of the *ba’al ha’bayis*, the host, thereby identifying himself as a member of the household; lighting one’s own candles arguably does not accomplish this purpose (*Bi’ikvei Ha’tzon*, p. 120); see also *Halichos Shlomo* vol. 2, Ch. 13, *Devar Halachah* par. 12).

⁸ “...בזה שיאכל כאן שעה או שתיים וישוב למקומו אין שום סברא לו’ שידליק שם ולא בביתו דזה הוה כאלו עומד בשעת הדלק’ על “...בזה שיאכל כאן שעה או שתיים וישוב למקומו אין שום סברא לו’ שידליק שם ולא בביתו דזה הוה כאלו עומד בשעת הדלק’ על “In such a case that one will eat here for an hour or two and then return [home], there is no logic to claim that one should light [in the host’s home] rather than his house, for it is as if he is standing in the street of the city at the time of lighting, for lighting is not relevant for him there...”

place where he is eating. This halachah reflects the rule that *neros Chanukah* must be lit in one's place of primary residence, and simply eating a meal at someone else's home does not qualify as setting up residence there.⁹

What Structure is Defined as a “*Bayis*”? The view of Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach

Even assuming that an individual may only light in his *bayis* or “residence”, another question remains: what are the criteria that qualify a structure as a *bayis* for the purpose of lighting *neros Chanukah*? Can an airplane or train passenger light by his seat, and consider it to be his *bayis*? What of an Israeli soldier who effectively lives in a tank or a foxhole?

Rabbi Auerbach¹⁰ notes that the Gemara (*Sukkah* 3a) stipulates that the obligations of *mezuzah* and *ma'akeh* (as well as many other mitzvos that relate to a house) only apply to a home that has the dimensions of four by four *amos*.¹¹ Since it seems logical that the *bayis* referenced in regard to *neros Chanukah* would have this same criterion, Rabbi Auerbach was troubled that the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah* is noticeably absent from the Gemara's list of halachos that necessitate a *bayis* that is four by four *amos*.

Therefore, Rabbi Auerbach concluded that the definition of a *bayis* vis-a-vis *neros Chanukah* does not necessitate the dimensions of four by four *amos*. This criterion, he suggested, only applies when the mitzvah in question applies throughout the year, and therefore, the corresponding *bayis* must have a permanent quality. Regarding the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah*, however, which only lasts for eight days of the year, the requisite *bayis* may be of an impermanent character. This is analagous to the halachah that a sukkah, defined as a *diras arai*, a temporary residence, need only have dimensions of seven by seven *tefachim*,¹² far less than the four by four *amos* required in other areas of halachah.

⁹ There is much discussion as to when a guest can be considered a resident in someone else's home, thereby allowing the guest to light *neros Chanukah* there. The *Bei'ur Halachah* writes that this status takes hold when the person lives there for all eight days of Chanukah (see the discussion in *Bi'ikvei Ha'tzon*, fn. 2; p. 123 s.v. *ve'ayain Mishnah Berurah*). While some poskim adopt this view, many assume that a person becomes a resident by eating and sleeping in another's home for one night (see e.g. *Igros Moshe* Y.D. vol. 3, Siman 14, par. 5, s.v. *Im Yesh Lo Bayis*; *Shalmei Mo'ed* p. 239, quoting Rabbi Auerbach). To illustrate, it is common practice that a family that stays with relatives on Shabbos Chanukah will light the *neros Chanukah* on Friday afternoon in the host's home (rather than in their permanent residence). It is presumed that staying for Shabbos is considered taking up residence in the host's home. There is much discussion regarding the appropriate place for lighting on Motzei Shabbos in the common circumstance that the visiting family will return to their residence that evening. Some poskim say that their “residency status” has essentially expired, as they anticipate leaving imminently and returning to their permanent residence. Others, however, assert that the status of temporary residency, once established, continues until they actually leave. There are other possible permutations and details; each person should consult with a rabbi to determine the correct course of action.

¹⁰ *Minchas Shlomo* vol. 2, Siman 51 (1).

¹¹ There are various views regarding the length of an *amah*; it can range from approximately 18.9 inches (Rabbi Chaim Na'eh) to 23 inches (Chazon Ish). Thus, 4 *amos* is approximately between 6 feet, 3.6 inches, and 7 feet, 8 inches.

¹² Seven *tefachim* is between approximately 22 inches (R. Chaim Na'eh) and 26.5 inches (Chazon Ish).

Based on this reasoning, Rabbi Auerbach considered the possibility that the minimum dimensions of a *bayis* in regard to *neros Chanukah* corresponds to the requirements for a sukkah: an area of 7 by 7 *tefachim* (22 inches), and a height of 10 *tefachim* (31.5 inches), with a roof above. However, he later considered the possibility that the Halacha's requirement of a *bayis* regarding *neros Chanukah* only requires a *distinctive and identifiable personal domain that is designated as the person's place of residence*.¹³ He found support for this in the view of Rabbi Shalom Mordechai Shvadron (*Teshuvot Maharsham* 4:146), a leading halachist of the 19th century, who was asked whether it was permissible for someone to light *neros Chanukah* while travelling on a train. He ruled that despite the impermanent nature of a moving train, the area designated for this passenger could be considered like a "house of residence" rented for eating and sleeping, and therefore the person could light at this "*bayis*".¹⁴

Rabbi Auerbach did not resolve this question conclusively, remaining uncertain whether the *bayis* needed for *neros Chanukah* needs to have the dimensions and structure associated with a *diras arai*, a temporary structure such as a sukkah, or whether it is sufficient to have a defined area which is designated as one's residence. Therefore, he ruled that someone travelling on a train or plane should light *neros Chanukah* on the tray at his designated seat, but without a *brachah*.¹⁵ On the one hand, the individual has paid for use of this location for eating and sleeping purposes; on the other hand, it does not have the dimensions and structure associated with a *diras arai*.

This issue took on greater practical ramifications following the Yom Kippur War, when many Israeli soldiers remained on the battlefield during Chanukah. Rabbi Auerbach was asked about the propriety of lighting *neros Chanukah* in various situations in which the soldiers were not living in conventional living quarters. Using the guidelines mentioned above, he ruled that soldiers who essentially lived in their tanks could treat it as their *bayis* and light Chanukah candles with a *brachah* either inside or by its entrance. Similarly, he ruled that a soldier who ate and slept in a foxhole could light *neros Chanukah* with a *brachah*, on condition that it was ten *tefachim* deep and had a roof overhead. In both these cases, the area occupied by the soldiers satisfied the criteria of a *diras arai* (an area of seven by seven *tefachim*, a height of ten *tefachim*, and a roof), which in Rabbi Auerbach's view fulfilled the requirement of the *bayis* needed for

¹³ See *Minchas Shlomo* (ibid); *Halichos Shlomo* (vol. 2), Ch. 13, par. 2, and especially n. 12, quoting from a manuscript responsum of Rabbi Auerbach.

¹⁴ He indicates, however, that one may not fulfill the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah* in an open area which is exposed to the wind and the elements. See also *Mikra'ei Kodesh* (ibid.).

¹⁵ *Halichos Shlomo* (ibid., par. 3). While lighting a real candle would clearly be proscribed due to safety considerations, Rabbi Auerbach allowed a person to use a conventional flashlight with incandescent bulbs for the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah* - see *Halichos Shlomo*, Ch. 15, par. 3. Other Poskim do not accept the presumption that a flashlight with an incandescent bulb can qualify as a *ner Chanukah*; see e.g. Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, *Teshuvot Yabia Omer* O.C. vol. 3, Siman 35, *Chazon Ovadiah: Chanukah*, pp. 93-97. Rabbi Auerbach himself was reluctant to rely on use of a flashlight unless there was no other option; see the sources cited *ibid*.

It seems clear that this ruling (and that of the Maharsham regarding a train) is only applicable if a person is travelling through the night and the personal space is therefore designated for eating and sleeping. If, however, the trip is (e.g.) for a few hours at the beginning of the evening when most people are not sleeping, this would not be defined as a *bayis* even according to these Poskim. (See *Halichos Shlomo* vol. 2, Ch. 13 n. 17.)

neros Chanukah.¹⁶ If, however, the soldiers were sleeping in an open area, they could not light *neros Chanukah* with a *brachah* there.¹⁷

A Hashkafah Perspective

Why did Chazal link the *neros Chanukah* to the home? Why must they be identified with a *bayis*?

In answer, we may first pose a different question: Given that the miracle of Chanukah transpired in the environs of the Bais HaMikdash, would it not have been more appropriate to commemorate the miracle in the public arena? Why didn't Chazal see fit to reenact the miracle in a communal setting? Would not the *bais haknesses*, the *mikdash me'at* (the minor sanctuary) which is identified as perpetuating the *kedushah* of the Bais HaMikdash, serve as the most natural and ideal location for the lighting of the *neros Chanukah*?¹⁸

¹⁶ These rulings were recorded in *Kuntres Hilchos Ner Chanukah La'Chayalim*, written by Rabbi Avraham Sherman and Rabbi Yaakov Katz, and quoted in *Halichos Shlomo* (vol. 2, pp. 259-260).

¹⁷ Similar conclusions, based on the ruling of the Maharsham, are presented by Rabbi Yosef Cohen (in his footnotes to *Mikra'ei Kodesh*, *ibid.*), and by Rabbi Moshe Shternbuch, *Mo'adim U'zmanim*, vol. 8, p. 34.

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein concurs that a *bayis* is required for *neros Chanukah*, but maintains different criteria for its definition. He asserts that when dealing with a temporary and unconventional place of residence, the *duration of the residency* rather than the structure determines whether it is categorized as a *bayis* vis-a-vis *neros Chanukah*. If the person has resided there for at least thirty days, it is considered a *bayis* and *neros Chanukah* should be lit there; if the person maintains residence for less than seven days, it is definitely not a *bayis* and Chanukah candles should not be lit there; if it is between seven and thirty days, it is considered a *safek* (doubt) whether it is considered a *bayis*. If the person maintains residence for the requisite period of time, it is considered a *bayis* even if the person is sleeping under the open sky; the structure per se is immaterial.

Based on these criteria, Rabbi Lichtenstein rejects the view that one can light *neros Chanukah* on a train or airplane, as these situations are transient and temporary. (See <http://www.vbm-torah.org/chanuka/05chanal.htm>)

Rabbi Asher Weiss (*Kovetz Darchei Hora'ah*, vol. 4, Kislev 5766, pp. 91-94) similarly emphasizes the transient nature of airplane travel in asserting that a plane does not qualify as a *bayis* for the purpose of *neros Chanukah*. He also records his sharp opposition to the consideration of lighting a candle on a plane given that it violates the rules of the airline and also constitutes a danger.

For further discussion regarding lighting by Israeli soldiers and the broader issue of the definition of the obligation of *neros Chanukah*, see e.g. Rabbi Moshe Harari, *Mikra'ei Kodesh: Hilchos Chanukah*, 9:21-23, 31; Rabbi Eliyahu Schlesinger, *Eileh Heim Mo'adai* (2002), pp. 23-27.

¹⁸ In fact, some Rishonim explain that the custom cited in the *Shulchan Aruch* (671:7) to light in the Bais HaKnesses is intended as a *zecher li'Mikdash*, a commemoration of the lighting in the Bais HaMikdash. See *Bais Yosef* (Siman 671, quoting from the Kolbo); *Sefer HaManhig*, Hilchos Chanukah, s.v. *u'mitzvah li'hanicha*.

The relationship between the lighting in the *bais haknesses* and the lighting in the Bais HaMikdash is most evident from the ruling that the Chanukah candles should be placed by the southern wall of the *bais haknesses*, corresponding to their placement in the Bais HaMikdash. Similarly, in discussing whether the alignment of the menorah should be from east to west or north to south, many poskim assumed that the placement of the menorah in the Bais HaMikdash (which is disputed by Rashi and the Rambam) should determine its position in the *bais haknesses*. See *Terumas Hadeshen*, Siman 104; *Shulchan Aruch* 671:7 with commentaries. Other applications of the view that the lighting in the *bais haknesses* is a commemoration of the lighting in the Bais HaMikdash can be found in *Teshuvos Binyan Shlomo* (#53), *Teshuvos Shevet Halevi* (8:156).

There is also much discussion regarding the correlation between the *original* mitzvah of *hadlakas nerot Chanukah* and the lighting of the Menorah in the Bais HaMikdash. For example, the Ran (*Shabbos*, 9a in Rif, s.v. *shemah minah*) asserts that the prohibition to use light from the *neros Chanukah* is based upon the proscription against using the light of the Menorah in the Bais HaMikdash. Other associations with the lighting in the Bais HaMikdash

In light of this question, we may suggest that the decision to formulate this mitzvah as *ner ish u'baiso*, each person and his home, was a bold one, signifying an incisive and far-reaching perspective on the confrontation with Greek culture and its implications for the Jewish future. As it was, the era of the second Bais HaMikdash was fraught with religious inconsistency and mediocrity, sometimes especially evident in the conduct of the very individuals who were charged with upholding the sanctity of the Bais HaMikdash. Especially in that context, the cultural and spiritual confrontation with the Greek Empire could not be viewed as a passing aberration, but rather as foretelling an inevitable feature of Jewish existence, a religious conflict that would have broad and enduring ramifications even after the victory of the Chashmonaim and the miracle of lighting the Menorah in the Bais HaMikdash. The broader spiritual battle would continue to rage unabated throughout the centuries, with varying societies religiously hostile to our beliefs and way of life, and disparate Jewish communities would struggle to protect, preserve, and nurture the flame of Jewish faith and observance in the face of the threatening winds of foreign values and cultures. The lighting of the Menorah would represent uncompromising commitment to Hashem and His Torah, even when faced with enmity and ridicule.

Where would this battle be waged? Where would the Jews set up their line of defense to protect against influences that would undermine our loyalty to the Torah? Chazal, observing the ongoing and subtle infiltration of Greek ideas and values into Jewish society despite the presence of the Second Bais HaMikdash, understood that the spiritual survival of Klal Yisrael during the remainder of the Second Bais HaMikdash and the subsequent centuries of exile would depend upon the defense of a different sanctuary: the Jewish home. It is there that the Menorah would be lit; it is there that each family would publicly demonstrate its loyalty to Hashem and its dedication to preserving the sanctity of the home.¹⁹

include: (1) whether a *ner Chanukah* must have the same characteristics as the Menorah in the Bais HaMikdash, which could also preclude use of electric lights which do not have conventional oil and wicks (see the broad discussions of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef in *Yabiah Omer* [O.C. 3:35], *Yechaveh Da'as* [4:38], *Chazon Ovadiah: Chanukah* [pp. 93-97]); (2) whether new wicks should be used each night, as was done in the Bais HaMikdash (*Darkei Moshe* 673:6, quoting *Kolbo* and *Avudraham*; *Meiri*, Shabbos 21b, s.v. *ve'lamaditah*; and cf. *Shulchan Aruch* 673:4). See also Ra'avad, gloss on *Mishneh Torah*, Hilchos Berachos 11:15..

¹⁹ This gives added meaning to the famous Midrash : הקרבנות כל זמן שבהמ"ק קיים הם נוהגים אבל הנרות לעולם אל מול - פני המנורה יאירו - "The sacrifices only are observed as long as the Bais HaMikdash stands, but the lights are forever: 'The seven lamps shall give light in front of the menorah'" (Bamidbar Rabbah 15:6). The Ramban (Bamidbar 8:2) writes that this refers to the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah*. As we have explained, the mitzvah of *neros Chanukah* represent the transfer of responsibility for *mesorah* to the Jewish home, and the identification of the Jewish home as a mikdash, a sanctuary.

This idea is reflected in the beautiful interpretation of Rabbi Kook regarding the revelation of the *Shechinah* on each Jewish home during the night of Pesach in Egypt, thereby transforming each home into a *mikdash*; see Rabbi Mordechai Greenberg, *Kerem Li'Shlomo*, pp. 140-141.

The idea of a home acting as a sanctuary may also be discerned in the custom of conducting a *chanukas ha'bayis*, a consecration of the home, after entering a new home. See Rabbi Yitzchak Yosef, *Yalkut Yosef: Sova Semachos* (I), p. 269, par. 2; Rabbi Yosef Yitzchak Lerner, *Sefer Ha'bayis*, p. 26.

See also the beautiful idea presented by Rabbi Soloveitchik regarding the halachah that the Chanukah candles should be placed on the left side of the doorway so that one will be surrounded by the mezuzah and the *neros*

In this light, we may suggest an understanding of the significance of *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, the ideal way of lighting Chanukah candles, by which each individual lights his or her own set of candles. While the essential mitzvah can be fulfilled with *ner ish u'baiso*, a candle for the entire home, Chazal offered the opportunity for each individual to demonstrate initiative to fulfill the mitzvah in a more personal way. Building upon the designation of the home as a spiritual haven, this more ideal fulfillment represents every individual embracing and accepting personal responsibility to safeguard our Torah and protect ourselves from pernicious influences that would dilute and compromise our loyalty to Hashem. By lighting the *neros Chanukah* at home in commemoration of the miracle which occurred in the Bais HaMikdash, each Jew gives expression to the idea that not only is the home a sacred place, but each individual is identified as a sanctuary as well.²⁰

Chanukah when passing through the doorway: "...when the Sages introduced Hanukkah, they extended the *mitzvah* of *mezuzah*, that a *bayit Yisrael*, a house where Jews live, must fulfill two *mitzvot*, the biblical commandment of *mezuzah*, and the rabbinic enactment of *ner Hanukkah*" (*Days of Deliverance: Essays on Purim and Hanukkah*, p. 200).

²⁰ See Rabbi Chaim of Volozhin, *Nefesh HaChaim*, Shaar 1, Ch. 4, who emphasizes this idea. See especially his footnote (s.v. *ki ha'Mishkan*): *הרי כי ודאי עיקר ענין הקדש ומקדש ושריית שכינתו יתברך הוא האדם* - "certainly, the most fundamental aspect of the *kodesh* and *Mikdash* and the resting of the Divine Presence is [identified with] the individual..."

For further elaboration on this theme, see e.g. *Malbim*, Shemos 22:1, 25:8; Rabbi Moshe Yechiel Halevi Epstein, *Be'er Moshe*, Shemos, pp. 781ff.; Rabbi Yehoshua Heschel Ryzman, *Iyunim Ba'Parasha*, pp. 228-236.

Chanukah as a Celebration of the Rededication of the Temple

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There is one aspect of the story of Chanukah that doesn't get as much attention as it deserves. When the story of Chanukah is told, the focus is often on the miraculous military defeat of the Syrian Greeks or the miracle that ensued in lighting the Menorah. The rededication of the Temple and specifically, the *Mizbe'ach* (altar), if it does get mentioned, often gets less prominence.

The prominence of this aspect of the story is apparent when one considers the following: First, the very name Chanukah is taken from the term (Bamidbar 7:10) *chanukat HaMizbe'ach*, the dedication of the Altar.¹ Second, the Torah reading for Chanukah is the story of the original dedication of the Mizbe'ach and the offerings that were brought by the *nesi'im* (princes) to commemorate that event (*Megillah* 30b). Third, the prayer *Al HaNissim* references the purification of the Temple (וטהרו את מקדשך). Fourth, there is a tradition in many communities to recite after the morning prayers the 30th chapter of Psalms (מזמור שיר חנוכת הבית לדוד) which is about the dedication of the Temple. While people may be aware that the rededication of the Temple and the Altar plays a role in the celebration of Chanukah, they may not be aware of its exact role. This is perhaps why this aspect of the story is not as popular. In this article, we will present a number of sources that elucidate the role of the rededication of the Temple and the Altar in the celebration of Chanukah.

The Rededication of the Temple

A number of sources indicate that the rededication of the Temple is not merely an aspect of the Chanukah story, but a foundation of the holiday itself. *Megillat Ta'anit*, a compendium of holidays that were celebrated during Talmudic times, presents the centrality of the rededication of the Temple:

Why did they decide to celebrate Chanukah for eight days? Wasn't the Chanukah that Moshe established in the desert (i.e. the dedication of the Mishkan) only seven days? As it states (Vayikra 8:33) "You shall not leave the opening of the Tent of Meeting for seven days." It also states (Bamidbar 7:12) "The one who brought the offering on the first day," and on the seventh day [the tribe of]

ומה ראו לעשות חנוכה שמונה ימים, והלא חנוכה שעשה משה במדבר לא עשה אלא שבעת ימים שנאמר ומפתח אהל מועד לא תצאו שבעת ימים ואומר ויהי המקריב ביום הראשון את קרבנו וגו' ובשביעי הקריב אפרים וכן מצינו

¹ Another popular reason for the name Chanukah is presented by Rabbeinu Nissim, in his *Commentary on Rif*, *Shabbat* 9b, who quotes an opinion that it is called Chanukah which is a representation of חנו בכ"ה, they rested (from war) on the 25th (of Kislev).

Ephraim brought its offering. Similarly, we find that King Shlomo's dedication was only seven days ... Rather [the reason is that] during the days of the Syrian-Greek Kingdom, the Chashmonaim entered the Heichal, built the Mizbe'ach, installed it with limestone and restored the holy vessels and this took eight days.

Megillat Ta'anit, Ch. 9

The premise of *Megillat Ta'anit* is that the celebration of Chanukah is based on the rededication of the Temple, leading to the question of why Chanukah is celebrated for eight days, one day longer than the previous "chanukah" celebrations. The answer affirms this premise.

A similar view of the centrality of the rededication of the Temple is found in the *Book of Maccabees*:

Now Maccabeus and his followers, the Lord leading them on, recovered the temple and the city; and they tore down the altars which had been built in the public square by the foreigners, and also destroyed the sacred precincts. They purified the sanctuary, and made another altar of sacrifice; then, striking fire out of flint, they offered sacrifices, after a lapse of two years, and they burned incense and lighted lamps and set out the bread of the Presence. And when they had done this, they fell prostrate and besought the Lord that they might never again fall into such misfortunes, but that, if they should ever sin, they might be disciplined by Him with forbearance and not be handed over to blasphemous and barbarous nations. It happened that on the same day on which the sanctuary had been profaned by the foreigners, the purification of the sanctuary took place, that is, on the twenty-fifth day of the same month, which was Kislev. And they celebrated it for eight days with rejoicing, in the manner of the feast of booths, remembering how not long before, during the feast of booths, they had been wandering in the mountains and caves like wild animals. Therefore bearing ivy-wreathed wands and beautiful branches and also fronds of palm, they offered hymns of thanksgiving to him who had given success to the purifying of his own holy place. They decreed by public ordinance and vote that the whole nation of the Jews should observe these days every year.

Book of Maccabees 2:10

בחנוכה שעשה שלמה המלך שלא עשה אלא שבעת ימים ... אלא בימי מלכות יון נכנסו בית חשמונאי להיכל, ובנו את המזבח ושדוהו בשיד ותקנו בו כלי שרת, והיו מתעסקים בו שמנה ימים.

מגילת תענית פרק ט

(א) ורוח ה' צלחה על יהודה המכבי ועל אנשיו, וילכדו את העיר ואת המקדש. (ב) ויהרסו את המזבחות ואת בתי הגילולים אשר הקימו הגויים בחוצות העיר. (ג) ויהי אחרי טהרם את הבית, ויעשו מזבח חדש, ויוציאו אש מן האבנים אשר ליקטו, ויקריבו את קורבנם לה' מקץ שנתיים ימים. (ד) ויקטירו ויערכו את הנרות, ויתנו את לחם הפנים על שולחן ה'. (ה) וככלות כל אלה נפלו על פניהם ויתחננו אל ה' אלוהים לאמור: (ו) אנא ה' שומרנו לנצח מצרה כזאת אשר באתנו. (ז) ואם חטאנו לך, יסרנו כחסדך, ואל תתננו עוד בידי זרים המחרפים את שם קודשך. (ח) ומאת ה' הייתה זאת לחטא את הבית בעצם היום ההוא אשר טימאו אתו הגויים, והוא יום העשרים וחמשה לירח כסלו. (ט) ויחוגו חג לה' שמונת ימים כימי חג הסוכות, ויזכרו את הימים מקדם בחגם את חג הסוכות בהרים ובמערות, ויתעו בשימון כבהמות שדה. (י) ויקחו ערבי נחל וכפות תמרים וישירו שיר שבח והודיה לה', אשר נתן להם עוז ותשועה לטהר את בית מקדשו. (יא) ויעבירו קול בכל ערי יהודה לחוג את החג הזה מדי שנה בשנה.

ספר חשמונאים ב:י

While the *Book of Maccabees* gives prominence to the rededication of the Temple, it differs from *Megillat Ta'anit* in that the celebration is not modeled after the original dedication of the Mishkan but rather, it is modeled after the holiday of Sukkot.²

Why should the rededication of the Temple or the Mizbe'ach be a cause for celebration? R. Meir Simcha of Dvinsk suggests that when the Torah (Bamidbar 10:10) commands us to celebrate on *yom simchatchem*, the day of happiness, it is referring specifically to the dedication of the Temple:

[The verse states] "On your day of joy and on your holidays ... you shall blow the trumpets" ... The simple meaning of the verse is that whenever there is a dedication of the Altar or the Azarah, one must blow the trumpets and that is the joy ... Therefore, on Chanukah, which was the rededication during the days of the Chashmonaim, when they built a new Altar after the Syrian Greek kingdom destroyed [the old one] as stated in Tractate Avodah Zarah 52b, Rambam states that they were days of joy and they established them as days of joy.

Meshech Chochmah, Bamdbar 10:10

ביום שמחתכם ובמועדיכם (ובראשי חדשיכם) ותקעתם בחצוצרות ... ובפשטא דקרא, הוא כל זמן שיהיה חינוך המזבח או העזרה צריך לתקוע בחצוצרות, וזהו שמחה ... ולכן בחנוכה, דהיו מילואים בימי חשמונאים, שבנו מזבח חדש, ששקצום מלכי יון את אבני המזבח, כמפורש עבודה זרה נב, ב, כתב רמב"ם דהיו ימי שמחה וקבעום לשמחה.

משך חכמה, במדבר י"י

According to R. Meir Simcha, Chanukah's status as days of joy is based on Chanukah as a celebration of the rededication of the Altar.

The Anniversary of the Completion of the Mishkan

According to the Midrash, the 25th day of Kislev, which is now the first day of Chanukah, is also the anniversary of the completion of the Mishkan:

The construction of the Mishkan was completed on the 25th day of Kislev and the Mishkan remained folded until Rosh Chodesh Nissan.

Bamidbar Rabbah, 13:2

שמלאכת המשכן נגמרה בכ"ה בכסלו ועמד המשכן מקופל עד ר"ח ניסן.

במדבר רבה יג:ב

Rashi, quoted by R. Tzidkiyahu HaRofei, in his *Shibolei HaLeket* connects this idea with the Torah reading for Chanukah:

I found in the name of Rabbeinu Shlomo³ [stating]: Why did they decide to read the story of the dedication of the Temple on Chanukah? Because Moshe Rabbeinu stood on the mountain 120

מצאתי בשם רבינו שלמה זצ"ל מה ראו לקרות בחנוכה בנשיאים בחנוכת המזבח לפי שעמד משה רבינו בהר ק"כ [יום] וירד בי'

² The Gemara, *Shabbat* 21b, records that Beit Shammai argued for lighting the Chanukah lights in descending order (i.e. on the first day, eight lights, on the second day, seven, etc.) based on the Mussaf offerings on Sukkot which also were offered in descending order (thirteen on the first day, twelve on the second day, etc.). Why should the offering of Sukkot serve as a model? If one assumes that the original Chanukah celebration was based on Sukkot, then the Sukkot model is an appropriate model to use. Although Beit Hillel disagree, they may have felt that despite the connection of Chanukah to Sukkot, there are more appropriate models to use.

³ He is referring to Rashi. We find similar comments in the name of Rashi by Rashi's students in *Sefer HaPardes* no. 198 and *Siddur Rashi* no. 320.

days and descended on the 10th of Tishrei and was told that God had forgiven the people on Yom Kippur, and on that day, he was told "Make me a Temple" ... and on the 25th day of Kislev they finished it.

Shibolei HaLeket no. 189

בתשרי ונתבשר סלחתי ביום
הכיפורים ובו ביום נאמר לו ועשו
לי מקדש ... ובכ"ה בכסליו גמרוה.
שבלי הלקט, חנוכה ס' קפט

Rashi, in his *Commentary on the Talmud, Megillah 30b*, offers a four word explanation why the Torah reading for Chanukah is the section dealing with the offerings of the *nesi'im*: "דהוי נמי "הנוכת המזבח, it is also a dedication of the Altar." How do we understand this brief comment in light of the explanation attributed to Rashi by R. Tzidkiya HaRofei and Rashi's other students? Is Rashi, in his *Commentary on the Talmud* referring to the original dedication of the Mishkan or the rededication by the Chashmonaim? If he is referring to the latter, are his comments at odds with the explanation presented in his name by his students?

Furthermore, if reading the portion in the Torah dealing with the offerings of the *nesi'im* is supposed to relate to the rededication of the Temple during the times of the Chashmonaim, there are a number of obvious questions one can ask. First, according to Rashi (Bamidbar 7:1) and many other commentators, the first offering of the *nesi'im* took place on Rosh Chodesh Nisan, which was the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan. The offerings, which represented the dedication of the Altar, took place for twelve days. Thus, the dedication of the Temple was completed on the day that the dedication of the Altar began. If Chanukah parallels the dedication of the Mishkan, why do we read about the dedication of the Altar? If Chanukah parallels the dedication of the Altar, why don't we observe Chanukah for twelve days? Second, on the eighth day of Chanukah, we read the section dealing with the offerings on day eight through twelve and then continue to *Parashat Beha'alot'cha* to read the section about lighting the Menorah. Reading about the Menorah seems logical given that the lighting of the Menorah by the Chashmonaim is a major part of the Chanukah story. However, reading it on the eighth day seems a little late. After all, all of the Chanukah lights were already lit. Granted that this is the way it appears in the Torah, isn't there a way to read it on the first day? Is there a reason why it is specifically read on the eighth day?

The Connection between the Original Dedication and Chanukah

Perhaps Rashi, in presenting two different explanations for the Torah reading on Chanukah, is of the opinion that both the original dedication of the Mishkan and the rededication during the time of Chashmonaim play a role in Chanukah.

Rashi, in his commentary on the Torah, discusses the Torah's juxtaposition of the dedication of the Altar with the commandment given to Aharon to light the Menorah. He states:

Why is the section about the Menorah juxtaposed with the section about the princes (i.e. the dedication of the Altar)? Because when Aharon saw the dedication being performed by the princes, he was despondent that neither he nor his tribe was able to participate in

למה נסמכה פרשת המנורה לפרשת
הנשיאים, לפי שכשראה אהרן
חנכת הנשיאים חלשה דעתו, שלא
היה עמהם בחנכה, לא הוא ולא
שבטו, אמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא

the dedication. God told him: Yours is greater than theirs because you light and prepare the candles.

Rashi, Bamidbar 8:2

חייך, שלך גדולה משלהם, שאתה מדליק ומטיב את הנרות רש"י, במדבר ח:ב

Rashi's comments are based on the comments of the *Midrash Rabbah*, Bamidbar 15:3. Ramban questions why the Menorah specifically was singled out to assuage Aharon's concerns. Why not the myriad of other services that the kohanim perform daily? Ramban suggests:

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

Ramban, Bamidbar 8:2

ענין ההגדה הזו לדרוש רמז מן הפרשה על חנוכה של נרות שהיתה בבית שני על ידי אהרן ובניו, רצוני לומר חשמונאי כהן גדול ובניו: רמב"ן, במדבר ח:ב

According to Ramban, the Midrash specifically connects the original dedication of the Temple to the Chanukah story. The participation of the kohanim in the dedication of the Mizbe'ach took place during the Second Temple. As such, perhaps the celebration of the rededication during the days of the Chashmonaim is not a new celebration, but a continuation of the original dedication.

R. Yitzchak of Vienna also connects the original dedication of the Mishkan to the rededication during the times of the Chashmonaim, though in a slightly different manner:

It states in Megillat Ta'anit that the dedication of the Chashmonaim is observed in all future generation. Why is it observed in all future generations? Because it occurred during a crisis and they recited Hallel and thanksgiving and lit the candles in purity ... Therefore it is called Chanukah based on the dedication of the Altar that was destroyed and rebuilt. This is what is stated in the Midrash: Why is the section about the Menorah juxtaposed with the section about the princes because [the tribe of] Levi complained that they didn't merit offering a sacrifice. God told them "Theirs was only one day per prince and was only observed once. Your dedication will be eight days and in all future generations." The implication is that [it is called Chanukah] based on name of the dedication of the Altar of the princes.

Or Zarua, Hilchot Chanukah no. 321

אמר'י במגילת תענית ולדורות חנוכה בית חשמונאי ולמה היא נוהגת לדורות אלא שעשאוהו בצער ואמרו בו הלל והודאה והדליקו בו נרות בטהרה ... ולפיכך נקרא חנוכה על שם חנוכה המזבח שנסתר ובנאוהו. והיינו נמי דאמר'י במדרש למה נסמכה פרשת בהעלותך לחנוכה נשיאים לפי שהיה לוי מתרעם על שלא [זכה] להקריב ואמר לו הקב"ה שלהם לא היה אלא יום אחד לנשיא ולפי שעה וחנוכה שלך תהיה ח' ימים ולדורות משמע שגם הוא היה נקרא ע"ש חנוכה המזבח כמו אותן של נשיאים. אור זרוע הל' חנוכה ס' שכא

R. Yitzchak of Vienna adds another dimension to the discussion by noting that the original dedication of the Mishkan is no longer celebrated, yet the rededication of the Chashmonaim is celebrated on an annual basis. He explains, based on his version of *Megillat Ta'anit*, that the other aspects of the Chanukah story (the war, the miracle of the oil) contributed to the institution of this dedication as an annual holiday. Because they rededicated the Temple immediately after the war, recited Hallel for their victory and lit the Menorah, the rabbis decided to make this particular rededication an annual holiday. The rededication of the Chashmonaim is

modeled after the original dedication, but unlike the original dedication, the circumstances allowed it to merit becoming an annual holiday.

Whether the rededication on Chanukah was a continuation of the original dedication or whether, as R. Yitzchak of Vienna suggests, it was modeled after the original dedication, we can now explain the apparent discrepancy in the comments of Rashi. The Torah reading on Chanukah highlights the connection between the original dedication of the Altar and the Chanukah story. While Chanukah commemorates the rededication of the Temple, the fact that construction of the Mishkan was completed on the 25th of Kislev is significant because the original dedication of the Mishkan was the beginning of the process (according to Ramban) or the model for the rededication (according to R. Yitzchak of Vienna). Rashi's students focus on the relevance of the Torah reading to the date and Rashi's comments on the Talmud focus on the impetus to read about the dedication.

With this understanding of the relationship of the original dedication of the Temple and the rededication during the times of the Chashmonaim, we can answer the questions relating to the Torah reading. While *Megillat Ta'anit* only mentions a seven day dedication of the Mishkan,⁴ other Midrashim highlight a number of other important events that took place on the eighth day, including the appearance of the *Shechinah* (Divine presence) and the offering of Nachshon ben Aminadav, the first of the *nesi'im* to offer voluntary sacrifices in honor of the dedication of the Mizbe'ach.⁵ Assuming that the first of the sacrifices took place on the eighth day, the eighth day was a continuation of the dedication of the Mishkan, culminating in the dedication of the Mizbe'ach. In fact, the Torah, in Bamidbar 7, refers to the dedication of the Mizbe'ach four

⁴ It seems that *Megillat Ta'anit* does not follow the tradition that the *nesi'im* began to offer their sacrifices on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. Rather, there were seven days of dedication and the *nesi'im* began to offer their sacrifices on the first day. However, this understanding of *Megillat Ta'anit* is difficult to understand. Why does *Megillat Ta'anit* consider the celebration to be only seven days and not twelve? If *Megillat Ta'anit* does not consider the sacrifices of the *nesi'im* to be included in the dedication of the Mishkan, why does *Megillat Ta'anit* record the first and the seventh sacrifice? Perhaps these questions motivated R. Yitzchak of Vienna to prefer the alternate version of *Megillat Ta'anit* which does not mention the number of days of the original dedication of the Mishkan. R. Avraham Eliyahu Borenstein, in his *Ner LaMaor* commentary on the ninth chapter of *Megillat Ta'anit*, notes the comments of R. Ya'akov Emden, *Mor Uketziah* no. 429, that not all Tannaim are of the opinion that the *nesi'im* began to offer their sacrifices on Rosh Chodesh Nisan. Rather, he suggests that it is possible that the dedication of the Mishkan actually began on Rosh Chodesh and the *nesi'im* began to offer their sacrifices on the second day of Nisan. Based on R. Emden's comments, R. Borenstein suggests that *Megillat Ta'anit* specifically highlights the seventh offering because that offering took place on the eighth of Nisan, the day that the *Shechinah* appeared in the Mishkan. R. Borenstein further suggests that on that day, when Ephraim was given a distinct sacrifice, Aharon realized that Ephraim and Menashe would each be bringing a sacrifice and the Tribe of Levi was to be excluded. It was on that day that G-d comforted Aharon with the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah. R. Yehoshua Hurwitz, in his responsa printed in the back of *Imrei Noam* Vol. III, responsa no. 9, offers a different approach to understanding the comment of *Megillat Ta'anit*. He suggests that *Megillat Ta'anit*, in highlighting the offering of the seventh day, is noting that the offering took place on Shabbat. This is significant because offerings of the individual cannot be offered on Shabbat. R. Hurwitz proves that the offering on Shabbat was not indicative of the public nature of these offerings but rather a special dispensation to Yosef's descendants as a reward for Yosef keeping Shabbat. As such, R. Hurwitz posits that *Megillat Ta'anit* is highlighting the private nature of these offerings and how they were not part and parcel of the dedication.

⁵ *Sifra*, *Shemini* no. 1.

times in recording the offerings of the *nesi'im*. One of those verses mentions a specific day that the Mizbe'ach was dedicated:

The princes offered their dedication of the Altar on the day it was anointed; the princes offered their sacrifices before the Altar.

Bamidbar 7:10

וַיִּקְרִיבוּ הַנְּשִׂאִים אֶת חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ בְּיוֹם
הַמִּשָּׁח אֹתוֹ וַיִּקְרִיבוּ הַנְּשִׂאִים אֶת קִרְבָּנָם
לִפְנֵי הַמִּזְבֵּחַ.
במדבר ז:י

The Midrash comments on the obvious problem with this verse: How can the Torah state that all of the *nesi'im* offered their sacrifices on the day it was anointed? Didn't they offer their sacrifices over the course of twelve days?:

Did the entire dedication of the Altar take place on the day it was anointed? Didn't it take twelve days to complete the dedication of the Altar? Rather, the verse comes to teach you that all of the tribes are equally precious to God such that the verse credited all of them as if they all offered their sacrifices on the first day.

Bamidbar Rabbah 14:12

וכי ביום שנמשח נעשה כל חנוכת המזבח
והלא עד מלאת שנים עשר יום לא נגמרה
חנוכת המזבח אלא בא הכתוב ללמדך שכל
השבטים הם שווים וחביבים כולם כאחד
לפני הקב"ה שהעלה עליהם הכתוב כאלו
ביום ראשון הקריבו כולם
במדבר רבה יד:יב

Based on the comments of this Midrash, we can deduce that the primary day for the dedication of the Mizbe'ach was the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan. Although, the dedication of the Mizbe'ach extended for eleven more days, it is possible that we consider that to be due to unique circumstances⁶ and that is why we don't have a twelve day dedication of the Altar in future dedications. The primary celebration of the dedication of the Mishkan was an eight day celebration with the eighth day serving as the day that the Mizbe'ach was dedicated.⁷ As such, on Chanukah, when we commemorate the rededication of the Temple as well as the rededication of the Altar, we read the entire Torah portion dealing with the dedication of the Altar. Yet, it is the eighth day of Chanukah that has the most extensive reading. Perhaps this is because the eighth day of the dedication of the Mishkan was marked with the actual dedication of the Mizbe'ach and in the Chanukah story, it also marked the completion of the rededication of the Temple. This also explains why we read about the lighting of the Menorah on the eighth day. Based on Ramban's comments, it is possible that we read this section in the Torah to connect the original dedication of the Mishkan to the rededication by the Chashmonaim. The focus is not on the lighting of the Menorah per se, but on the involvement of the kohanim in the dedication.

Observances Relating to the Rededication

Now that we have seen the role of the rededication of the Temple in the Chanukah story, what role does it play in observing Chanukah? The observances of Chanukah seemingly correspond to the various aspects of the Chanukah story. The lighting of the candles commemorates the

⁶ See Bamidbar Rabbah, 12:21, that God decided that it is preferable for each prince to have a unique day to dedicate his particular offering.

⁷ R. Yechiel M. Epstein, *Aruch HaShulchan, Orach Chaim* 670:5, notes that both the dedication of the Mishkan and the dedication of the Beit HaMikdash by Shlomo HaMelech had a seven day celebration and the eighth day marked the completion.

miracle of the oil, the recitation of Hallel commemorates the military victory (see Rashi, *Pesachim* 117a, s.v. *Ve'Al Kol*) and the Torah reading corresponds to rededication of the Temple. Nevertheless, these observances are not exclusively focused on the aspect of the story that they represent. We have already seen R. Yitzchak of Vienna's comment that the miracle of the war and the miracle of the oil play a role in celebrating the rededication of the Temple. Furthermore, the *Pesikta D'Rav Kahanah* suggests that our candle lighting is also a celebration of the rededication of the Temple:

You find the Chanukah that we observe is to commemorate the dedication of the Temple of the Chashmonaim after they waged war with the Syrian Greeks and defeated them and now we light. Similarly, when they completed the construction of the Mishkan they observed a Chanukah as it states "this is the dedication of (Chanukat) the Altar."

Pesikta D'Rav Kahanah no. 6

את מוצא זאת החנוכה שאנו עושים
זכר לחנוכת בית השמונאי על
שעשו מלחמה ונצחו לבני יוון ואנו
עכשיו מדליקין, וכן בשעה
שנגמרה מלאכת המשכן עשו
חנוכה כמו שכתב זאת חנוכת
המזבח.
פסיקתא דרב כהנא פסקא ו

The *Pesikta* seems to highlight a difference between the way the dedications were originally observed and how we observe the rededication of the Temple. While they were originally observed by offering sacrifices, we observe the rededication by lighting Chanukah lights. The *Pesikta* doesn't mention anything about the miracle of the oil, but if not for the miracle of the oil, why would lighting candles have been chosen as an arbitrary event to commemorate the rededication of the Temple? Rather, our observance of lighting candles is based on the miracle of the oil, but ultimately serves to commemorate the rededication of the Temple.

R. Moshe Isserles (Rama, 1520-1572) discusses another area of observance that is relevant to the rededication of the Temple. In his *Darkei Moshe, Orach Chaim* no. 670, he quotes R. Avraham of Prague that if the impetus for celebrating Chanukah is the miracle (or miracles), then Chanukah is a holiday of praise and thanksgiving (*hallel* and *hoda'ah*). However, if it is a celebration of the rededication of the Temple, then Chanukah should be classified as days of feasts and joy (*mishteh v'simcha*) and one should have a festive meal each day. Rama, in his glosses on *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 670:1, ultimately concludes that festive meals are encouraged, but not mandatory. Nevertheless, Rama's designation of festive meals as optional does not necessarily mean that he rejects the component of Chanukah relating to the celebration of Chanukah. He may agree that we celebrate the rededication but do so in other ways, such as the Torah reading or lighting the Chanukah lights (as per the *Pesikta*). Regardless of which observances commemorate the rededication of the Temple, the rededication plays an important role in the story of Chanukah.

Insights into Chanukah

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Chanukah: The Holiday of *Torah Sheba'al Peh*

Chanukah is not mentioned in all of Tanach. Moreover, it is mentioned just nine times in the Mishnayos and on three pages in Shas. Nevertheless, there are perhaps two hints to Chanukah in the Torah. First, the 25th word in the Torah is *ohr* (light), hinting to the 25th of Kislev, the first day of Chanukah. Secondly, the 25th destination of the Jewish people in the desert was Chashmona, perhaps another hint to the Chashmonaim of Chanukah. However, clearly there is no specific mention of Chanukah in Tanach.

The Gemara, *Pesachim* 30b, writes that כל דתקון רבנן כעין דאורייתא תקון: when the rabbis made an enactment, it was patterned and modeled after a Biblical law. The mitzvah on Chanukah is to light the Chanukah candles. Perhaps we can suggest six sources that show that the Rabbinic mitzvah of Chanukah candles was patterned after a mitzvah in the Torah.

1. There is a mitzvah in the Torah to light the Menorah in the Mishkan and the Beis Hamikdash. The Ramban, Bamidbar 8:2, explains that Aharon Hakohen was despondent that he was not included in the dedication of the Mishkan. Hashem told Aharon not to be despondent because He would give him the job of lighting and cleaning the Menorah to appease him. The Ramban notes that this was satisfactory during the times of the Beis Hamikdash, however after the *churban* (destruction of the Temple), how would Aharon be appeased? The Ramban answers that Chanukah will be the replacement for the lack of lighting the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash. The fact that Chanukah was given to the Jewish people could be an extension of that appeasement that Hashem gave Aharon regarding cleaning and lighting the Menorah. One should not think that the appeasement would only be that the kohanim have an obligation to light the Chanukah candles. Rather, as long as there is a Rabbinic mitzvah given to all of the Jewish people, that would be an appeasement to Aharon. We see from the Ramban that the actual institution of Chanukah at its core was to serve as the substitution for the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash.
2. There is a dispute in the Gemara, *Shabbos* 22b, as to whether the ignition of the flame is the mitzvah (*hadlakah oseh mitzvah*) or whether the placement of the *chanukiyah*, is the mitzvah (*hanachah oseh mitzvah*). Rashi, writes:

If the mitzvah of Chanukah is contingent on lighting, we must [actually] light it, like we find with the Menorah.

Rashi, Shabbos 22b, s.v. Ee Hadlakah

אי המצוה של חנוכה תלויה בהדלקה
מדליקין כדאשכחן במנורה.
רש"י, שבת כב: ד"ה אי הדקלה

Regarding the Menorah the ignition of the light is the mitzvah, so too on Chanukah it is the ignition that is the mitzvah. The *Minchas Chinuch* no. 98, asks, according to the Gemara, one of the main practical applications of the opinion that the ignition is the mitzvah is that the *chanukiyah* must be lit in the proper place to be valid. It can't be lit and then moved to the proper place. Yet, we find that the Rambam, *Hilchos Bias Mikdash* 9:7 and the Ra'avad, there, both write that the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash was lit outside of the Heichal and then brought into the Heichal. It was not lit in the place that the Menorah was placed. If we assume that the Chanukah candles are patterned after the Menorah, then one should be permitted to light the Chanukah candles and then place them in its proper place. Shouldn't one then conclude from the Menorah that it is the placement that is the mitzvah? The *Minchas Chinuch* writes that he had this question for many years and then later found it in the *Ma'aseh Rokeach* as well. The *Minchas Chinuch* suggests in defense of Rashi that there is an explicit statement of the *Toras Kohanim*, *Emor* no. 13 that one should light the Menorah in the Heichal and it should not be lit outside of the Heichal and then brought in. Perhaps Rashi was relying on the *Toras Kohanim* when he patterned the *hadlakah oseh mitzvah* rule of Chanukah after the lighting of the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash.

3. Both the Ran, *Shabbos* 9a (*dapei HaRif*) s.v. *Halachos* and the *Ba'al Hamaor*, there, s.v. *L'man D'amar*, write that there is a prohibition to derive benefit from the *chanukiyah* light. One should not read by it or derive warmth from it. Where did this prohibition come from? The *Ba'al Hamaor* and the Ran write that it comes from the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash. Just like there is a prohibition of deriving benefit from the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash, that prohibition serves as a model for the prohibition of deriving benefit from the *chanukiyah*.
4. The *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 671:7 and Rama, there, write based on the comments of the *Terumas Hadeshen* that when we light the *chanukiyah* in the shul, we should light it at the southernmost wall. The reason for this is that the Menorah was lit in the Beis Hamikdash at the southernmost wall.
5. Rama, *Orach Chaim* 673:1, writes that ideally, one should use oil and wicks to light the *chanukiyah* as opposed to wax candles. The miracle of the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash was with oil not with wax candles, so to highlight the linkage, one should ideally light Chanukah candles with oil and not candles.
6. There is a discussion amongst the *poskim* (see *Darkei Teshuva* 141:56-57) as to why making a *chanukiyah* does not violate the prohibition of replicating the vessels of the Beis Hamikdash. The ultimate conclusion is that the *chanukiyah* has nine stems not seven like the Menorah. It is not made of the same dimensions and material and therefore it is permissible. The discussion again highlights a link between the *chanukiyah* and the Beis HaMikdash.

The Nature of the Mitzvah to Light

The Gemara, *Shabbos* 21b, quotes a *beraisa* that there are three levels to the mitzvah of lighting the candles. The base level is *ner ish uveiso*, which means that one candle has to be lit for each house no matter what night of Chanukah it is. HaRav Zalman Nechemia Goldberg, Shlit" a explains that the

mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles is an obligation on the household and not a personal obligation. This can explain the ruling of *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 675:3, in the name of the *Ba'al Haittur*, that a minor who is old enough to understand the concepts of Chanukah (*higia l'chinuch*) may light on behalf of the entire household. Normally, a minor cannot perform mitzvos on behalf of an adult. How then can he light on behalf of the household? The answer is that the limitation of minors performing mitzvos on behalf of adults only applies to personal obligations. However, since this mitzvah is an obligation on the household, the minor, as a member of the household, may light on behalf of the entire household.

The Gemara, *Shabbos* 23a, writes that if someone is a guest at someone's house on Chanukah, the guest should be *mishtatef b'perutah*, meaning he should give a coin to the host to become a partner in the mitzvah since the guest is not at his own house. What is the guest becoming a partner in? The *Mishna Berurah* 677:3, writes that the guest becomes a partner in the oil or candles. The Rav zt"l asked on the *Mishna Berurah*: the Gemara, *Baba Metzia* 47a, states that money cannot acquire movable objects. According to R. Yochanan, this is because we are concerned that a buyer might give money for an item and then says he'll pick it up later. If there is, God forbid, a fire that breaks out in the store, the seller will not try to save the object because it is not his. Therefore, Chazal instituted that movable items remain in the possession of the seller until the buyer physically takes hold of the object and pulls it in. Consequently, the Rav zt"l asked, how does a guest acquire a share in the candles or oil if money cannot be used to purchase movable items? For this reason, the Rav zt"l disagreed with the *Mishna Berurah* and suggested that the guest becomes a partner in the home. The home is not a movable object and therefore, a monetary transaction is valid. HaRav Wohrman, Shlit"a, *She'eris Yosef* Vol.5, pp. 210-211, defends the *Mishna Berurah* by quoting the *Kesef Hakodashim* who writes that when purchasing an item for a mitzvah, Chazal suspended their concern about the seller taking responsibility for the item and allowed a monetary transaction to take place on movable items without actually taking possession of the object. Therefore, the guest's contribution of the coin is valid to make him a partner in the candles. It emerges from the Rav zt"l that the obligation to light the Chanukah lights is primarily an obligation on the household, taking the words *ner ish uveiso* very seriously.

The second level that the *beraisa* lists is *mehadrin* which means each member of the household should light one candle no matter what night of Chanukah it is. The third level is called *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. There is a dispute between the Rambam and Tosafos as to how to define this concept. Tosafos, *Shabbos* 21b, s.v. *Umehadrin*, write that if *mehadrin min hamehadrin* would modify *mehadrin* then on the eighth night of Chanukah if there were ten members of the household, one would light eighty candles because each member lights according to the count of the night. The problem is that since from the outside it is not discernible that the candles correspond to the number of nights (because the outsider doesn't know how many members of the household there are) it is not a proper way to publicize the miracle (*pirsumei nisa*). Therefore, Tosafos rule that *mehadrin min hamehadrin* only modifies the basic level of *ner ish uveiso*. The one candle lit for the household is incremented according to the night of Chanukah. You cannot simultaneously fulfill *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* and therefore, *mehadrin min hamehadrin* trumps *mehadrin*. It is more important to delineate what night of Chanukah it is than to light based on the number of members of the household.

The Rambam, *Hilchos Chanukah* 4:1, however argues and says that *mehadrin min hamehadrin* modifies *mehadrin* and if there are ten members in the house on the eighth night, then there will be eighty candles in the home. How does Rambam address the argument of Tosafos that if one does so, it is not discernible which night it is? Rav Betzalel Zolty zt”l, *Mishnas Ya’avetz, Orach Chaim* no. 74, writes that the Rambam holds that the *hiddur mitzvah* (enhancement of the mitzvah) of the *chanukiyah* is different from *hiddur mitzvah* as it applies to other mitzvos. Regarding other mitzvos, *hiddur mitzvah* must be recognizable. Rashi, Yoma, 70a, s.v. *L’haros*, writes that on Yom Kippur, everyone would bring their *sefer Torah* and lift it up to show its beauty to the congregation because one only fulfills *hiddur mitzvah* when it is recognizable to the naked eye. Rabbeinu Tam, cited in Tosafos, *Menachos* 32b, s.v. *Ha*, rules that there is no requirement to make lines (*sirtut*) on the parchment of tefillin because it is normally covered. No one can see the parchment and since the *sirtut* requirement is based on *hiddur mitzvah*, if one cannot see the item *hiddur mitzvah* does not apply. However, on Chanukah, the requirement is different and perhaps it applies even if the enhancement is not recognizable. This explains the opinion of the Rambam. However, Tosafos hold that the *hiddur mitzvah* of Chanukah is patterned after the regular parameters of *hiddur mitzvah* that we find regarding other mitzvos and therefore, the *hiddur* must be recognizable.

Rashi and Rabbeinu Chananel seem to follow Tosafos’ approach to *hiddur mitzvah* of the Chanukah lights. Rashi, *Shabbos* 21b, s.v. *Vehamehadrin*, describes *mehadrin* as those who are מהדרין אחר המצות, people who seek out enhanced performance of mitzvos. Why does he mention other mitzvos? Aren’t we only dealing with Chanukah? Rav Zolty zt”l writes that Rashi patterned Chanukah after all the other mitzvos and therefore, regarding *hiddur mitzvah* of Chanukah, the *hiddur* must be recognizable. Rabbeinu Chananel, *Shabbos* 21b, quotes the Gemara, *Baba Kama* 9b, which presents two opinions as to whether the requirement to increase a third in order to fulfill *hiddur mitzvah* is internal (e.g. if the base price of an item is \$30, one should pay \$40, one-third more than the base price) or external (e.g. if the base price is \$30, one should pay \$45 so that the base price is one third less than the price of the enhanced item). Why does Rabbeinu Chananel even mention the discussion about how to calculate one third for *hiddur mitzvah*? What relevance does it have to the *mehadrin* discussion about Chanukah? Rav Zolty zt”l, suggests that Rabbeinu Chananel wanted to highlight that the *hiddur mitzvah* of Chanukah is patterned after the *hiddur mitzvah* of other mitzvos and therefore, he includes a general rule regarding *hiddur mitzvah* in the context of Chanukah.

Hiddur Mitzvah

Regardless of whether the *hiddur mitzvah* of Chanukah is patterned after the regular rules of *hiddur mitzvah* or whether it is a separate category, one can question whether the *hiddur mitzvah* of Chanukah is a portion of the mitzvah to light or whether it is a separate concept. What if a poor person asks for oil or candles on the fifth night of Chanukah? Do we give him enough for five candles or enough for one? The *Bei’ur Halacha*, 671:1, *Va’afilu Ani*, writes in the name of the *Chemed Moshe* that we give him enough for one candle. We are not obligated to subsidize him for the *hiddur mitzvah* as well. However, the *Ohr Sameach*, *Hilchos Chanukah* 4:12, holds that we give him enough for five candles. The *Ohr Sameach* deduces this from the language of the Rambam:

Even if he has nothing to eat except what he receives from charity, he should borrow or sell his garment to purchase oil and candles to light.

Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah 4:12

אפילו אין לו מה יאכל אלא מן
הצדקה שואל או מוכר כסותו ולוקח
שמן ונרות ומדליק.
רמב"ם, הל' חנוכה ד:יב

Why does Rambam mention multiple candles when the poor person can fulfill the mitzvah with one candle (flask) that is refilled with oil each night? The *Ohr Sameach* deduces that we should provide multiple candles for the poor person and allow him to fulfill *hiddur mitzvah*. What is the basis of the dispute between the *Chemed Moshe* and the *Ohr Sameach*? If *hiddur mitzvah* is a portion of the mitzvah itself and it qualitatively enhances the mitzvah, one should give the poor person five candles. However, if *hiddur mitzvah* is a separate idea, one is only obligated to subsidize him to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Chanuka candles, not the concept of *hiddur mitzvah*.

A second difference between these two approaches is the direction in which we light the candles. The *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 676:5 writes that we light from left to right but we add the candles each night from right to left. The candle used to fulfill the primary mitzvah is the one furthest to the right and the *hiddur mitzvah* candles are to the left. Why do we light the *hiddur mitzvah* candles before the primary candle? The answer is that the *hiddur mitzvah* candles are on the same level as the primary candle. *Hiddur mitzvah* becomes subsumed in the primary mitzvah and it enhances the mitzvah. Since we always want to turn to the right, we light the left most candle and continue rightward and it is not a denigration of the primary candle. The *Bei'ur HaGra, Orach Chaim* 676:6 argues against the ruling of the *Shulchan Aruch* claiming that it doesn't make sense. The Gra writes that one lights the primary candle first and then the *hiddur mitzvah* candles. The *hiddur mitzvah* candles are not on the same level as the primary candle, and therefore, it is not proper to light the *hiddur mitzvah* candles before the primary candle. Accordingly, *hiddur mitzvah* is a separate concept and it does not become integrated into the primary mitzvah and this is why one must light the primary candle first.

A third difference between these two approaches is regarding what happens if there is no *shamash* to light the candles. Although, the Gemara, *Shabbos* 22a, rules that it is permissible to light from one candle to another, Rama, *Orach Chaim* 674:1, writes that this only applies from one primary candle to another. One may not light a *hiddur mitzvah* candle from a primary candle. The *Sha'arei Teshuva, Orach Chaim* 674:1, writes in the name of the *Beis Yehuda* that he doesn't see a problem with lighting the *hiddur mitzvah* candles from the primary candle. The basis of this dispute seems to be how we view *hiddur mitzvah*. If *hiddur mitzvah* is an extension of the primary mitzvah, one may, perhaps, light the *hiddur mitzvah* candles from the primary candles. However, if *hiddur mitzvah* is a separate concept, the *hiddur mitzvah* candle is not on the same level and therefore it is disrespectful to light the *hiddur mitzvah* candle from the primary candle.

A fourth difference is apparent in a question discussed by R. Akiva Eger in his responsa, no. 13. What if, for example, on the fifth night of Chanukah, someone started lighting and after lighting three candles, realizes that he never recited the *berachos*? May he still recite the *berachos*? R. Akiva Eger provides three reasons why he may still recite a *beracha*. First, it is still within the timeframe to light and until the time of השוק רגל מן, traffic has ceased from the

marketplace, one may still recite a *beracha*. Second, he notes the opinion of the *Hagahos Ashri* that if one forgot, one may recite a *beracha* after performance of a mitzvah, an opinion that is at odds with the Rambam's opinion. Third, and most relevant for our discussion, there is a dispute between the *Eliyah Rabbah* and the *P'ri Chadash* about whether one can say a *beracha* on fulfillment of *hiddur mitzvah*. Rav Zolty zt"l, adds that if *hiddur mitzvah* is an integral part of the lighting, then the action involved in lighting (*ma'aseh mitzvah*) has not been completed and consequently, one can still recite the *berachos*. If *hiddur mitzvah* is an independent concept then it would depend on the dispute between the *Eliyah Rabbah* and the *P'ri Chadash* whether *hiddur mitzvah* warrants a *beracha*.

History of Chanukah

The Rambam begins *Hilchos Chanukah* with the history of Chanukah. There is no other holiday where Rambam discusses the history of the *chag*. Why, specifically, does the Rambam discuss the history of Chanukah? The Rav zt"l said that the Rambam writes in the introduction to *Yad Chazakah* that after he finishes his work the *Yad Chazakah*, all one will need is a Tanach and a *Yad Chazakah* because the Rambam codifies all of the laws that appear in the Talmud. Therefore, the Rav zt"l says that since Chanukah is nowhere in Tanach, the Rambam must include the history of Chanukah in the *Yad Chazakah* or otherwise, one who only studies Tanach and *Yad Chazakah* would not know about the history of Chanukah.

The Lubavitcher Rebbe (cited in *Be'eros Nasan* pg. 40) provided a different explanation for the Rambam. The *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle) that is needed when it comes to the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles is inextricably linked to the performance of the mitzvah. If one does not understand the history of Chanukah, how can one properly publicize the miracle of Chanukah. The Rambam, in providing the history of Chanukah is making a halachic statement. In order to fulfill the mitzvah of *pirsumei nisa*, one must understand the history and background of Chanukah. The *Magen Avraham* 672:6, writes that the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles and *pirsumei nisa* are inextricably linked. According to the *Magen Avraham*, if one is on a desert island and there is nobody else there, there is no obligation to light the Chanukah candles. This goes well with the Lubavitcher Rebbe's explanation of the Rambam that the history of Chanukah is quintessential to know in order to fulfill the mitzvah of *pirsumei nisa* which is linked to the lighting of the candles. Rav Moshe Feinstein, *Igros Moshe*, *Orach Chaim* 4:105 (7), disagrees with the *Magen Avraham* and says that *pirsumei nisa* and the lighting of the candles are not linked and Rav Moshe zt"l says that on a desert island one is obligated to light the Chanukah candles even though there would be no *pirsumei nisa*.

Chanukah is known as the *chag* of *Torah sheba'al peh* (the oral tradition). The Gemara, *Gittin* 60b, says that the *Torah sheba'al peh* is the covenant between Hashem and the Jewish people. Chanukah is the time to rededicate ourselves to Hashem and strengthen our relationship to Hashem. May our own fulfillment of the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles bring us closer to Hashem and may we merit to light the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash, speedily in our times.

The Chanukah Controversy and its Relevance Today

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The One Who Experiences a Miracle Does Not Recognize It

Hindsight is 20/20. We are all familiar with this pithy aphorism which expresses a salient truism of life – when we look back at events with the benefit of the passage of time and the gift of perspective, we tend to see things with a clarity that cannot be seen during the course of the experience itself. We may experience in our personal or collective lives potentially life-changing events, but we are often unable to appreciate the enormity and significance of their future consequences. It is often only time, perspective and historical context that redeem us from our myopic vision. Our Sages capture this succinctly when they say, "אפילו בעל הנס אינו מכיר בנסו" – even one who experiences a miracle does not acknowledge it (Talmud, *Niddah* 31a). It seems to me that this phenomenon is evident today regarding our perspective of the modern State of Israel.

We are living in an era where we have had the privilege of experiencing monumental miracles of literally Biblical proportions. The enormity of the remarkable achievements of modern day Israel seems blatantly obvious. The establishment of an independent State only three years after the ovens of Auschwitz; the creation of a place of refuge to gather millions of Jewish exiles from

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over one hundred countries speaking more than eighty languages after two thousand years of wandering; transforming the Land of Israel from an arid and barren backwater into a flourishing oasis of agriculture and ecological marvel; reviving Hebrew from an ancient and static language of textual study into the living lingua franca of Jewish society; building a thriving and sustainable economy from the bankrupt and starving old Yishuv; a handful of young pioneers and Holocaust survivors overcoming political and military odds to defeat much larger and better trained national armies, thus “*delivering the many into the hands of the few*,” the rebuilding of the Torah world with arguably more Torah learners than any time in history – all come together to create modern day sovereign Israel which stands at the center of Jewish religious, cultural and political life. This is undoubtedly one of the great crowning successes of the 20th century. More than anything, Israel has revived the spirit of a broken people so soon after the devastation of the Holocaust, reinvented hope in place of despair, faith in place of tragedy, life in the face of death and the belief in a bright future over the reality of a devastating past.

Despite this seemingly undeniable reality, there are many who are unable to see Israel in such a light. The reason, of course, is that Zionism and Israel were born in a very complex spiritual, cultural and political context. Many elements of the Zionist endeavor seem to be less than ideal. Significant numbers of both the original and current protagonists in the story of Israel were and are distant from traditional Torah values and some at times even antagonistic. In many ways, Zionism was one of the ideological “isms” of the late 19th century, growing out of Western romantic nationalism and the era of the emancipation and *haskala*. Much of the cultural milieu both then and now is at times challenging to reconcile with Torah and Halachah. One example is the judicial system in Israel which was established on many tenets of Ottoman civil law and British common law and is governed by the Supreme Court as opposed to the rule of Torah law of the Sanhedrin.

This dichotomy and complexity causes confusion for many and creates significant doubt as to the appropriate spiritual context within which to place these events. Our ability to appreciate the enormity of our times is clouded by the context in which they transpired. There is no doubt in my mind that, in the not too distant future, we will all be able to appreciate fully the miracle of Israel. As previously mentioned, such is the nature of epoch changing events that the one who lives through such events, is often unable to recognize and fully acknowledge their significance during the experience itself.

Back to the Future

The essential thesis of this article is to argue that both stories of Chanukah and Purim, the only two festivals which have survived from Second Temple times, can shed tremendous light on our modern era. This fundamental thesis consists of three tiers. First, to prove that both the Purim and Chanukah miracles transpired in circumstances which were fraught with great spiritual and halachic controversy and complexity - no less controversial than the circumstances around the birth of modern day Israel. They therefore provide an ideal historical case study to assist us in forging an appropriate spiritual perspective of Yom Ha'atzmaut and the establishment of the State of Israel. Second, I wish to highlight that these original complexities of Purim and Chanukah have in no way prevented Klal Yisrael from adopting and accepting, without

reservation, these events as joyous occasions and opportunities to thank Hashem for posterity. Third, to contend that it is the passage of time and benefit of historical context that have allowed us to embrace wholeheartedly these events without being clouded by the complexity in which they were wrought. The distance of time has allowed us to see Chanukah and Purim for what they truly are in the Divine order – their indispensable role in ensuring the survival of the Jewish people and the fulfillment of her spiritual destiny. The perspective of hindsight allows us to discern between the crucial and the circumstantial, thereby stripping the husk from the kernel, the essential from the external - providing an opportunity to appreciate and celebrate Chanukah and Purim's eternal lessons.

Purim at a Glance

Is it so simple to us that a young Jewish girl should be halachically permitted to enter a beauty pageant in order to marry a gentile king? From a halachic perspective, can one assume that once she wins the contest, she is permitted to live with this king and not give up her life? The Sages of the Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 74b) were troubled by the fact that Ester seems to have transgressed one of the three cardinal sins. These sins which the Jewish People are called upon to give up their lives rather than transgress – יהרג ועל יעבור – are the sins of idolatry, sexual immorality and murder. Furthermore, points out the Talmud, the fact that Ester's marriage to the king was known to all, added an additional halachic problem of committing a sin in public. While the Talmud finds halachic justifications for her actions, there is no doubt that this remains an area of great controversy.² To give this a contemporary spin – how would it be received today if a pure and pious *bat Yisrael* was taken to be the wife of the President of the United States of America in order to attempt to bring about some type of salvation for the Jewish People? There is no doubt that no matter how noble the cause, this would become an issue of great halachic contentiousness within the Jewish community. What is even more remarkable is that once the Megillah is concluded and there is no longer any imminent danger to the Jewish People, Ester continues to live with Achashverosh and chooses not to give up her life.

² The Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 74b), offers two explanations as to Ester's behaviour. Abaye mentions the reason as Ester *karka olam* – i.e. that her role in the sexual act was a passive one therefore exempting her from these transgressions. Rava mentions the reason of *hana'at atzman* - meaning that the motivation of Achashverosh was to fulfil his own personal desires rather than deliberately cause her to transgress the Torah, once again exempting her from the above prohibitions. Tosafot (D.H. *Ve'ah Ester Farhesya Havai*) quoting the Talmud (*Megillah* 13a) deduces that Ester was not Mordechai's cousin as the verse implies (Ester 2:7) but indeed she was his wife whom he did not divorce. This means that at the time that she was taken to Achashverosh, he was still married to her thus further complicating the matter. The above answers are based on the assumption that Ester was an *anusa* – coerced against her will to be with Achashverosh. This is most certainly implied in Ester (2:16). Her status as 'coerced' changes though according to the Talmud (*Megillah* 15a) when Mordechai commands Ester to initiate contact with Achashverosh even though she has clearly had no contact with him for thirty days (Ester 4:11). The Gemarah points out that by heeding Mordechai's command to enter the king's inner chamber and re-establish the relationship with him, she was no longer an *anusa* – coerced – but was now acting out of her own free will. The *Noda B'Yehudah* (Responsa, second edition, Y.D. 161) notes that by doing so, she was no longer halachically protected by the justifications mentioned by Abaye and Rava in the Gemarah and ostensibly should have given up her life. He continues to state that the reason that she did not do so was because she had the potential to bring salvation to all of Klal Yisrael. In such a case, she was permitted to initiate the relationship in order to save the Jewish People and was not required to give up her life.

Mordechai's actions are not only complex in terms of how he influenced Ester's behavior, but also in terms of his own independent actions. For the purposes of this article we will cite only one example. What is most perplexing is the unbending stance that Mordechai took in not bowing down under any circumstances to Haman. Is it so simple that Mordechai should not have heeded the decree to bow down to Haman thereby endangering the lives of all of the Jewish People? Could Mordechai not have found a less confrontational way to deal with this quagmire? The constant refusal to kneel before Haman was the catalyst of Haman's plan to eradicate all of the Jews.³ This act, according to our Sages in the Midrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* 1054) was contrary to the view of the *dayanim*, the rabbinic judges of the time, who accused Mordechai of unnecessarily and irresponsibly endangering Klal Yisrael. While there are many Midrashim and Rishonim who clearly justify Mordechai's behavior⁴ as halachically sound and necessary under the circumstances, we once again highlight the complexity of the decisions taken at the time.

So complex were Mordechai's actions, that the final verse of the Megillah (10:3) concludes with the fact that despite Mordechai's fame and success, he was "רצוי לרוב אחיו" liked by most of his brethren, not all. This implies that a significant minority of Jews did not approve of Mordechai and his actions. The Talmud (*Megillah* 15a) notes that this verse refers to members of the Sanhedrin who distanced themselves from him as an act of protest and disapproval. The 'reward' that he received for saving the Jewish People was, incredibly, a demotion in his standing in the Sanhedrin.⁵

All of the above points to the fact that the times of Ester and Mordechai and the events surrounding the story of Purim were highly complex, at times divisive and contentious in an era which was anything from straightforward, from a Halachic and Torah point of view.

Ramban's Scathing Critique of the Hasmoneans

If this is true regarding Purim, it is most certainly true regarding Chanukah. Nowhere do we find a more harsh attack of the Hasmoneans and their *modus operandi* than in the Ramban's (Nachamanides) *Commentary on the Torah*. The verse states:

The sceptre (of leadership) shall not depart from Judah, nor a scholar from among his descendants, until Shiloh arrives and his will be an assemblage of nations.

Bereishit (49:10)

לֹא יִסּוּר שֵׁבֶט מִיְהוּדָה וּמַחֲקֶק מִבֵּין רִגְלָיו
עַד כִּי יָבֹא שִׁילָה וְלוֹ יִקְהֶת עַמִּים.
בְּרֵאשִׁית פָּרָק מִט פָּסוּק י

³ See Ester (3:6). Notice that the verse twice emphasizes the fact that Haman's decree is aimed at eradicating "Am Mordechai" – the People of Mordechai. Mordechai's actions elicit in Haman the desire to kill all of Mordechai's people. According to the verse, Haman bases his desire to eradicate the entire Jewish People on Mordechai's perceived impudence.

⁴ See the excellent article by Rav Yaakov Meiden, Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Har Etzion in his article in the book "היא אסתר" (published in 2007 in Alon Shevut).

⁵ In this source, the Talmud points out that in the Book of Ezra (2:2) he is mentioned in the fifth position of importance, whereas later in the Book of Nehemiah (7:7) he is mentioned in sixth position. The Talmud attributes his demotion to his lack of Torah study while he was fulfilling his communal role. It is quite astounding that while Mordechai is endangering his life to bring salvation to all of Klal Yisrael, he is prejudiced and demoted because of his lack of time to study Torah.

Ramban comments on this verse:

But this means that the sceptre of leadership should never depart from the Tribe of Judah to any of the other brothers, as Kingship in Israel which rules over them (the Jewish people) should be from Him alone and none of the other brothers ... In my opinion, the Kings who reigned over Israel who came from tribes other than Judah after David, were violating the expressed wishes of their forefather Jacob and were usurping Judah's rightful inheritance... And this was the punishment of the Hasmoneans who ruled as Kings during the Second Temple – for they were righteous lofty people and if not for them, Torah and mitzvot would have been forgotten from the Jewish People. Even so they were punished with great retribution and four of the sons of the elder Hasmonean [Mattityahu] who were the righteous rulers who ruled one after the other died by the sword of the enemy despite their courage and success [Yehuda, Elazar, Yonatan and Yochanan – Shimon the last remaining son did not die in battle]. Their punishment was so severe that our Sages said about them “whoever says that they are a descendant of the Hasmonean house, is surely a slave” [Masechet Baba Batra (3b) and Masechet Kiddushin (70a)]. All descendants were killed off because of this sin. Even though there was of the seed of Shimon those who were punished because of their affiliation to the Sadducees, all the descendants of Mattityahu, the righteous Hasmonean perished because of the sin that they ruled over Israel while not being descendants of the tribe of Judah and from the house of David. And they removed the sceptre of leadership totally from the Tribe of Judah and therefore their punishment was measure for measure– that Hashem caused their slaves to rule over them and those slaves to destroy them...

Ramban's Commentary, Bereishit 49:10

אבל ענינו שלא יסור שבט מיהודה אל אחד מאחיו, כי מלכות ישראל המושל עליהם ממנו יהיה, ולא ימשול אחד מאחיו עליו... ולפי דעתי היו המלכים המולכים על ישראל משאר השבטים אחרי דוד עוברים על דעת אביהם ומעבירים נחלה... וזה היה עונש החשמונאים שמלכו בבית שני, כי היו חסידי עליון, ואלמלא הם נשתכחו התורה והמצות מיישראל, ואף על פי כן נענשו עונש גדול, כי ארבעת בני חשמונאי הזקן החסידים המולכים זה אחר זה עם כל גבורתם והצלחתם נפלו ביד אויביהם בחרב. והגיע העונש בסוף למאן שאמרו רז"ל כל מאן דאמר מבית חשמונאי קאתינא עבדא הוא, שנכתרו כלם בעון הזה. ואף על פי שהיה בזרע שמעון עונש מן הצדוקים, אבל כל זרע מתתיה חשמונאי הצדיק לא עברו אלא בעבור זה שמלכו ולא היו מזרע יהודה ומבית דוד, והסירו השבט והמחוקק לגמרי, והיה עונשם מדה כנגד מדה, שהמשיל הקדוש ברוך הוא עליהם את עבדיהם והם הכריתום ...

רמב"ן בראשית מט:י

The verse that the Ramban discusses is part of our forefather Jacob's final will and prophetic testament that he bequeaths to his children. The Ramban learns out from this verse that kingship, i.e. political leadership, is the sole right of the Tribe of Judah. Deviating from this principle contravenes the natural order and is a direct transgression of Jacob's will. This right, to the exclusion of the other tribes, took effect from the time of King David's reign. The Hasmoneans, who lived long after David, during the time of the Second Temple, were not from the tribe of Judah but rather a family of kohanim – priests - from the Tribe of Levi. Their assuming political leadership was therefore directly compromising Jacob's final will. Over and above this verse, Ramban, in the paragraph following the cited text above, finds an additional source in the Talmud Yerushalmi in a *beraita* in *Masechet Horayot* (3:2) which directly forbids kohanim to be appointed as priests. While Rabbi Yehudah Antoria sees the source of this

prohibition in the above verse, Rabbi Chiya Bar Abba believes that this is an additional prohibition. In other words, not only are no other tribes allowed to assume the political leadership of the Jewish People from the time of David, but furthermore there is a specific prohibition aimed at the kohanim and the Tribe of Levi from assuming this mantle of leadership. Their domain is that of the Temple and not kingship. By the Hasmoneans assuming the role of political leadership during the course of the Chanukah events, they transgressed an explicit Torah law. Ramban acknowledges, as is the consensus, that the Hasmoneans were exceptionally pious and noble people who felt that they had no choice but to initiate this rebellion against the harsh decrees of the Seleucid Greeks purely for the sake of Hashem and His Torah. However, since these actions contravened Jacob's last will and an explicit law, they were severely punished. Four of the five sons of Mattityahu, the great protagonist and initiator of the Chanukah rebellion and miracle, were killed prematurely in the course of battle. Incredibly, so harsh was their punishment – as the Ramban explains – that it was barely 150 years after the rededication of the Temple that the entire Hasmonean dynasty was wiped out. Every last one was killed off.⁶ The Ramban sees a clear causal relationship between the inappropriate reality of kohanim – priests of Hashem – assuming political and military leadership and the horrific consequences which befell their descendants – the premature death of the Chanukah heroes and their short lived dynasty.

Yochanan and Yanai – From Bad to Worse

The last surviving son of Mattityahu was Shimon whose descendants became the heirs to the Hasmonean dynasty. Not only was this dynasty short lived, but it is astounding how quickly it descended into spiritual decay. Shimon's pious son who became known as Yochanan Kohain Gadol became, according to our Sages, a heretic towards the end of his days. This is evident in the following Talmudic source.

But we learned in a Mishnah – Do not believe in yourself, i.e. do not trust that you are safe from the evil inclination, until the day that you die – for Yochanan the Kohain Gadol served in this capacity for 80 years, and in the end became a Sadducee.

Masechet Berachot 29a

והא תנן: אל תאמין בעצמך עד יום מותך, שהרי יוחנן כהן גדול שמש בכהונה גדולה שמנים שנה ולבסוף נעשה צדוקי!
מסכת ברכות כט.

Remarkably, it was not two generations after Mattityahu that his descendants had given up on Rabbinic Judaism and had become heretics. Perhaps the worst of all Hasmoneans was Alexander Yannai, known as King Yannai. He was so evil that he decided to murder the entire rabbinic establishment of his generation. By the grace of G-d, the only one who survived was his brother-in-law, Shimon ben Shatach who was saved by Yannai's wife, his sister. As a result of this horrific act, ignorance of Torah life and law was rife. So much so that there was not even one person in the entire kingdom other than Shimon ben Shatach who knew how to recite Grace after Meals. This appears in the source below.

⁶ The only Hasmonean who survived was Herod, who was a great pretender to the Hasmonean throne. He was a gentile slave, a doubtful convert, who assumed the kingship and killed off every last Hasmonean descendant. Anyone who claimed thereafter to be a Hasmonean was in fact a descendant of slaves i.e. Herod's family (*Baba Batra* 3b)

King Yannai and the Queen were eating bread together, in the company of members of Yannai's court - and since, (Yannai) had massacred the rabbis, he did not have anyone to recite Grace after Meals for them. He said to his wife "If only there were someone who could give us a person who would be able to recite Grace after Meals for us?" She said to him – "Swear to me that if I bring you such a person you will not persecute him." He swore to her. She then brought Shimon ben Shatach, her brother.

Masechet Berachot 48a

ינאי מלכא ומלכתא כריכו ריפתא
בהדי הדדי, ומדקטל להו לרבנן -
לא הוה ליה איניש לברוכי להו.
אמר לה לדביתהו: מאן יהיב לן
גברא דמברך לן? אמרה ליה:
אשתבע לי דאי מייתינא לך גברא
- דלא מצערת ליה. אשתבע לה.
אייתיניה לשמעון בן שטח אחוה.
מסכת ברכות דף מה.

From the above analysis of the Hasmoneans and the Chanukah miracle, we once again observe how spiritually complex and halachically controversial these events were. On the one hand, the Hasmoneans uplifted the spirit of the Jewish people, revealed heroism and courage against impossible odds, reversed the harsh Hellenistic decrees of Antiochus which threatened to destroy the spiritual and cultural fibre of the Jewish people, removed pagan idolatry from the Land in general and the Temple specifically, rededicating it's service to Hashem and ensuring that the light of Torah continue to shine. Notwithstanding these enormous achievements and the fact that we will still celebrate Chanukah today over 2000 years later – the entire process was initiated on shaky halachic grounds. The spiritual order was upset, Jacob's prophetic will contravened, and Jewish law compromised from the very moment the kohanim assumed the political and military leadership of their people. The result, maintains the Ramban, was the tragic, at times wicked, and ultimately short-lived dynasty.

Mordechai, Ester & the Hasmoneans – Remembering Things the Way they Were Not

It seems perplexing to me how all the complicated controversies and complexities of both Purim and Chanukah have not in any way found their way into the consciousness of later generations. We celebrate Chanukah and Purim today without any trace of the contentious, divisive and controversial elements we described above. We dress our young daughters as the pious and pure Queen Ester oblivious to the compromised and immodest circumstances that she had to face in the inner chambers of a gentile king. We laud Mordechai as the fearless hero of the Purim saga, once again oblivious to his disputes and arguments with the *dayanim* and members of the Sanhedrin over his decision making. We dress up for the reading of the Megillah often wearing costumes in a sometimes frivolous mood as we sound our *grager* (noisemaker), not in tune with the raging controversy with which their actions were met.

What is true for Purim is equally true for Chanukah. We light candles for 8 days, indulge in Chanukah parties, say the *Al Hanissim* prayer 3 times a day during the silent prayer for 8 days (4 times on Shabbat) thanking Hashem for the miracles that He did "*during the time of Mattitياهو, the Hasmonean, and his sons*". We say Hallel every day for 8 days, thanking G-d for the political

and military victory over the Greeks.⁷ We sing *Maoz Tzur* and marvel at the heroic and courageous acts of our Hasmoneans, while totally unmindful and unaware of the stormy polemics and halachic morass in which these events transpired.

Hindsight is indeed 20/20. We who look back are blessed with the unique gift of historical perspective and context. This allows us to experience past events in a totally different fashion from those who lived through the experience itself. Their reality was fraught with complexity and controversy while ours is filled with clarity and precision. The passage of time allows us to distinguish between the eternal core of these events and their confusing external wrapping. We are able to embrace wholeheartedly and celebrate unequivocally the role that these events played and continue to play in our survival and destiny.

Life Is Understood Backwards But Must Be Lived Forwards

While it is true that hindsight affords us the ability to understand the past, our lives are not lived backwards, in retrospect, but rather lived in the present while moving forward. The benefit of hindsight of past events must enlighten us to a greater understanding of the events of our current era.

I believe, in light of all that we have clarified in this article, that the challenges surrounding the birth of Zionism and the State of Israel are inherently no more complex than those of Chanukah and Purim. It seems that a definitive trait of epoch changing times such as Chanukah, Purim and modern Israel is spiritual complexity and halachic controversy. The salient difference, therefore, between Purim/Chanukah as opposed to modern day Israel is not in the degree of complexity around the circumstances in which they transpired, but rather in the timing of the experience. We view Purim and Chanukah with clarity because we look back on them. We sometimes have a clouded view of Israel because it is our current reality. Indeed, as we clarified at the outset, our Sages have taught us that so often the one who experiences a miracle is not able to appreciate and acknowledge it. Understanding this truth is the key to a deeper grasp of the spiritual nature and value of our generation.

Before concluding, I would like to highlight what I believe is a major stumbling block which prevents us from expressing genuine appreciation for what we have. I am referring to a particular mind-set which I think can best be described as 'the ordeal of the ideal.' It seems that we have a visceral need to judge our current life situation in relation to a perceived ideal. One of the ways that we do this is by comparing our contemporary reality to the distant memory of previous times. This sets us up for failure, as we have shown that the way we remember and celebrate the past does not capture the complexity of the first-hand experience. Our challenge is that life in the present is hardly ever lived in the ideal state. This is the reality of the human condition. We often

⁷ The Maharal of Prague in *Ner Mitzvah* notes that the Hallel prayer could not have been instituted on the miracle of the oil. He clarifies that the purpose of Hallel on festivals is to give thanks to Hashem for the miracle of saving the Jewish People from imminent destruction and not for a miracle which affords us the opportunity to fulfil a mitzvah. The Hallel we say on Chanukah is therefore a praise to Hashem for the military and political victory of the Hasmoneans over the Seleucid Greek empire.

tend to compare our present reality not only to the distant memory of the past, but also to an idyllic expectation of the future. The truth, though, is that the ideal is something we constantly strive for but are unable to achieve in full in our current circumstances. Indeed, life began in the ideal of the Garden of Eden and does culminate, we believe, in the Messianic era and beyond where the ideal will once again be our natural experience. However, in between the idyllic past and future, there exists a gap known as the present. It is here, and only here, that we battle to bridge the schism between the real and the ideal, between the way things ought to be and how they are in reality, between the perfect vision for a world that was or is not yet and the imperfect reality in which we find ourselves. Life in the present is never straightforward and so often deeply complex and controversial. It is here that we must confront the complexity of life. Halacha, our great and sacred mechanism through which we encounter practical life reflects this reality succinctly. In halachic terminology - we are always striving to live life in the *l'chatchila* – the ideal, however, so much of real life turns out to be the *bediavad*, the less than ideal and sometimes even the *sha'at hadechak* – the extenuating circumstance. When we attempt to try and assess our current lives with the mind-set of the ideal, the way in which we tend to view the past and future, we are unfortunately bound never to appreciate in full what we have now in the present.

A concluding comment and a fervent prayer. When we light our Chanukah candles and chant the *berachot*, we thank Hashem for the miracles which He did for our forefathers “*bayamim haheim bazman hazeh*” - in those days and at this time. Perhaps the deeper meaning of this blessing is that it is a yearning and a prayer that when we reflect on the miracles of the distance past - in those days – we are indeed able to appreciate fully the miracles of our current era – at this time. May we be able to express wholeheartedly and unconditionally our gratitude to Hashem for the enormity of our generation, the continual miracle of the State of Israel and appreciate the ongoing and crucial role that it plays in the drama of Jewish survival and destiny.

1000 Marbles v. 8 Candles

Rabbi Yona Reiss

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There is a popular story called “1,000 Marbles – A Little Something about Precious Time,” that was written by Jeffrey Lewis in 1999. The story, written from the first person perspective of the narrator, was about a broadcaster on a ham radio who was telling a listener about how he calculated at the age of 55 that, according to his estimated life span, he had about 1,000 Saturdays remaining in his life. He then went to several toy stores in order to round up 1,000 marbles and every week took out one marble and threw it away. “I found,” he said, “that by watching the marbles diminish, I focused more on the really important things in life. There is nothing like watching your time here on this earth run out to help get your priorities straight.”

The broadcaster ended his story by noting that he had just taken out the last marble in the container. “I figure,” he concluded, “if I make it until next Saturday then I have a little more time. And the one thing we can all use is a little more time.” The narrator of the piece then notes that “[y]ou could have heard a pin drop on the band when this fellow signed off.” At the end of the article, he describes how he turned to his wife, told her he was taking her and the kids out for breakfast, and asked her if they could stop at a toy store because, well, he wanted to buy some marbles.

A rabbinic acquaintance of mine was moved by this beautiful story, and shared it with me. I pointed out that it was indeed a wonderful and inspirational tale, but that there was a very different approach to life indicated by the viewpoint of Beit Hillel in the talmudic passage relating to Chanukah candles (*Shabbat* 21a).

In their well known dispute, Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disagree about the proper method of lighting the Chanukah candles. According to Beit Shammai, one should light eight candles on the first night of Chanukah, and then one less candle each night, until the last night when one lights only one Chanukah light. According to Beit Hillel, one should light one candle on the first night of Chanukah, and then be “*mosif v’holekh*,” adding one candle each night until the last night when one lights eight Chanuka candles. The halakha, of course, follows the opinion of Beit Hillel.

Accordingly, I observed that according to Beit Hillel, in the same way that we add more Chanukah candles each day, it would stand to reason that a person counting the weeks of his life should start with one marble and add more marbles as he went along. But in order to

understand this notion, it is important to explore the respective rationales for the opinions of Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai.

The Gemora presents two alternative explanations for the two variant opinions: (a) according to Beit Hillel, the candles correspond to the days that have passed (*“yamim ha’yotzin”*), while according to Beit Shammai the candles correspond to the days that are yet to come (*“yamim ha’nikhnasin”*); (b) according to Beit Hillel, the candles represent the principle of *“ma’alin b’kodesh v’ain mo’ridin”* – that one should ascend higher and higher in holiness and not descend, while according to Beit Shammai the candles correspond to the *“parei hachag,”* to the bullock offerings on Sukkot that decreased in number each day of the holiday.

The second explanation of the dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai seems to have a clear basis based on Torah concepts, but the first explanation requires further elucidation. Of what significance is it whether one is focusing upon the days that have passed or the days that are yet to come?

Perhaps the answer is that the significance of the first explanation is illuminated by the second explanation. In the story of Chanukah, a small band of dedicated Jews defeated a large army of Syrian-Greeks who sought to undermine the spiritual and religious foundations of Judaism. The forces of the secular world had to be conquered in order to preserve the pristine tradition of the Jewish people. This conquest, it can be suggested, is symbolized in the diminution of the *“parei hachag,”* the seventy bulls offered during Sukkot that correspond to the seventy nations of the world (*Sukkah* 55b), and whose decreased number each day symbolizes the gradual conquest of the foreign influences of those nations (see *Maharsha* ad loc.). Beit Shammai, in celebrating the defeat of the enemy forces, prescribed a corresponding decrease of the number of candles each day. Beit Hillel, on the other hand, focused upon the ascendance of the spiritual character of the people, *“ma’alin b’kodesh,”* and therefore prescribed an increase in the number of candles each day.

This difference in attitude is also reflected in the first interpretation regarding whether the focus is on the “days that have passed” or the “days that are yet to come.” At first blush, the approach of Beit Shammai that focuses on the “days that are yet to come” seems more upbeat, and the approach of Beit Hillel that focuses on the “days that have departed” seems more depressing. However, this is where the story of the marbles becomes helpful. A focus upon remaining days causes one to notice what is gone and lost. For Beit Shammai, this diminishment is sensible, since their focus is upon the enemies who are gone and defeated. However, for Beit Hillel, their focus upon the “days that have passed” elicits an appreciation for the accomplishments of those who have weathered the battles and achieved higher levels of holiness, and actually creates a progression in the gradual number of candles.

If we carry over the attitude of Beit Hillel to life in general, then each day, we should be adding more marbles rather than gradually lessening our marbles. Each day is not a lost opportunity, but rather another day of accomplishment, another day of growing, of reaching higher plateaus of holiness in this world. When we look at our collection of days, at the mitzvot that we have been privileged to perform, of the Torah that we have been fortunate to learn, rather than despairing about time running out, we are fortified by how brightly our collection of lights illumines our path for the future.

I do not think that the author of the aforementioned article would disagree with this message, and believe that his important message of appreciating the boundaries of life is also consistent with the talmudic passage that one should always treat each day of life as his last in order to be inspired to do repentance every day (*Shabbat* 153a). However, as we see from the opinion of Beit Hillel, there is an equally critical side to the equation, one that requires a daily affirmation of life and appreciation of the days that have accumulated in order to enable the future to burn ever more brightly. Our practice of lighting Chanukah candles, based on the opinion of Beit Hillel, epitomizes this positive life message.

This message, interestingly, may have something to do with why the practice has developed in many quarters to celebrate birthdays. In Parshat Vayeshev, which consistently coincides with Chanukah, we are told about a great party that took place on the occasion of the birthday of Pharaoh (Bereishit 40:20). There is a question debated by many halakhic authorities as to whether birthday celebrations are a Jewish concept. Some are of the opinion that celebrating a birthday has no basis in Jewish law or lore (see, e.g., *Divrei Torah* of the Munkatcher Rebbe, 5:88), while others favorably record the practice (see, e.g., *Ben Yehoyada*, *Brachot* 28a, s.v. “*Hahu Yoma*”).

Apropos to this discussion, there is an important insight by Rav Chaim Shmuelevitz in his *Sichot Mussar* (Parshat Sh'mot, Ma'amar 29) that, I believe, provides support for those who endorse birthday celebrations, and also underscores the message of Beit Hillel. Rav Shmuelevitz quotes the talmudic passage in *Kiddushin* (80b) which cites the passage in Megillat Eichah (3:39), in which G-d declares, “*mah yitonen adam chai, gever al chata'av*” (literally, “why does a living man complain, a man regarding his sins”) and shares the commentary of Rashi in *Kiddushin* on that passage: “why should a person complain about all of the events that befall him after all of the kindness that I have done for him, that I have given him life and have not brought death upon him?” Rav Shmuelevitz explains that the gift of life is reason enough for man to celebrate and be happy with his lot – there is nothing more exhilarating than the opportunity provided by G-d to live life.

Along these lines, a birthday celebration can be understood as an appreciation for the accumulation of years in this world and the opportunity to continue to live life to the fullest. Celebrations of birthdays always focus on the number of years that have thus far passed, or the many “marbles” that have been accumulated. In accordance with the words of Rashi, this evokes an appreciation of all of the kindnesses that have been provided from above, and all of the hurdles that have been overcome, that have enabled the person to be alive for another birthday.

This, ultimately, is the message of the order of the Chanukah candles. Through all of the challenges and battles that we had to face as a people, we have grown stronger every day and celebrate the accumulation of the candles. This insight also underscores the meaning of the “*she'asah nissim*” blessing over the candles, in which we thank G-d for having performed miracles for our forefathers “both in the days of old and in current times.” By celebrating the days of old through accumulating the Chanukah candles as time marches along, we are able to appreciate the miracles in our time as well, and thereby adopt a more positive and upbeat attitude towards the future.

The Maccabean Revolt: What Really Happened

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Political Background

The political background of the struggle over Hellenization must be sought in the years following the final Seleucid conquest of the Land of Israel under Antiochus III in 198 B.C.E. Throughout the years of warfare between the Seleucids (Alexander the Great's successors ruling in Syria) and the Ptolemies (the successors ruling in Egypt), each empire had its partisans among the aristocracy of Jerusalem. When the Seleucids firmly established their dominion over Judea, the pro-Ptolemaic party was left disenfranchised. The high priest Onias III had supported the Ptolemies during the reign of King Seleucus IV Philopator (187–175 B.C.E.). The pro-Seleucid party, therefore, denounced him to the Seleucid rulers. In an effort to exonerate himself, Onias set out for Antioch to meet with the king.

Meanwhile Seleucus IV died, and the infamous Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175–164 B.C.E.) succeeded to the throne. Onias, unable to convince him of his loyalty, was forced to remain in Antioch. His brother Jason then bought the high priesthood from Antiochus. This disruption of the hereditary succession of the high priests set a precedent that would hasten the decline of this office in the years to come.

Hellenistic Reform

In addition to purchasing the office of high priest, Jason also bought the right to establish a gymnasium and ephebeion in Jerusalem, and, on the basis of these institutions, to turn the city into a Hellenistic polis to be named Antioch in honor of Antiochus IV. The right to live according to the Torah, granted to the Judeans by Antiochus III, was now rescinded. In its place, the Jews were to live under the laws of a Greek city. Among other things, this meant that the majority of those who previously had enjoyed full rights under the laws of the Torah now found themselves second-class citizens in an oligarchy. In addition, Greek-style athletic activities began and the Gerousia was probably purged of members who did not support the reform.

It is not surprising that the already Hellenized aristocracy of Judea so willingly undertook these changes. Throughout the Hellenistic world, rulers were encouraging ancient cities to become up-to-date Greek poleis (plural of polis, a Hellenistic city). The poleis were allied closely with the kings and could be depended upon to control the less Hellenized rural areas. Citizenship in Greek cities held out many pluses: the commercial benefits of trade with other such cities, the

minting of coins, and other advantages that would have been particularly attractive to the aristocracy. Further, the polis afforded its citizens the opportunity to see themselves as part of a wider and more open world.

Jason and his followers were not extremists. Although they introduced the political and commercial changes mentioned above, they did not seek to change the Jewish faith. They maintained the Temple and its rituals according to the tradition, even if they compromised with the Hellenistic way of life in other spheres. They were seeking a way to live as Jews within the wider Hellenistic world without abandoning the age-old traditions of Israel.

Jason's brand of Hellenization was apparently not enough for some. As a member of a family which had been pro-Ptolemaic, he soon found himself opposed by the pro-Seleucid Tobiad family, and by the three brothers Simeon, Menelaus and Lysimachus. The Tobiads plotted to have Menelaus replace Jason as high priest. Menelaus succeeded in buying the office from Antiochus in 171 B.C.E., as Jason himself had done only a few years earlier. After an armed battle, Jason was forced to flee Jerusalem. Now in control, Menelaus appropriated funds from the Temple treasury to present gifts to Antiochus.

Civil Strife

Menelaus's misappropriation of Temple funds and his lack of Oniad family ties turned the people bitterly against him. Violence broke out in Jerusalem, and Lysimachus, who had taken over in his brother's absence, himself fell in the fighting. Despite an appeal from representatives of the Gerousia that Menelaus be replaced, Antiochus allowed him to continue in office, and the representatives were executed. It was not long before, under new leaders, popular discontent became full-scale revolt.

Antiochus had for some time been trying to conquer Egypt. His first attempt against the Ptolemies failed, but his second, in 168 B.C.E., almost succeeded. The Romans, however, already looking toward the East, forced him to abandon Egypt. The false rumors of Antiochus's death which spread in the aftermath of this humiliation led Jason, the deposed former high priest, to leave his hiding place in Transjordan and mount an assault on Jerusalem. He managed to drive Menelaus and his supporters into the citadel, but was not able to reassert his rule. Apparently, popular forces arose against him, remembering that he had begun the Hellenistic reform, and forced him to again flee the holy city. Despite a slaughter led by Antiochus himself, the insurrection in Jerusalem continued. An attempt by the Seleucid general Apollonius to bring the situation under control by establishing a fortress, known as the Akra, at the center of the polis, and by stationing a Hellenistic garrison there, led only to further popular opposition and to a massive flight of Jews from the city, some of whom had been dispossessed to make room for the garrison.

It was probably at this time that foreign deities were introduced into the Temple, creating further friction. The Jewish Hellenizers, Menelaus and his party, saw these gods as equivalent to the God of Israel, and thus in their view this was not really foreign worship. They regarded the ancestral God of Israel as simply another manifestation of the supreme deity known in Syria as Baal Shamin (Master of Heaven) and in the Greek world as Zeus Olympius. In this way they rationalized their behavior.

Revolt and Persecution

The earliest attempts at an organized uprising were probably led by the Hasidim (“pious”), a group of priests who found the religious compromises in Hellenistic Jerusalem totally unacceptable. Rebellion was mounting; determined to stem it, Antiochus conceived of the infamous persecutions, which, far from being the beginning of our story, came after years of struggle and insurrection fueled by the attempt of Hellenistic Jews to foist their way of life on the entire nation of Israel. There is no evidence whatsoever that Antiochus pursued a similar policy anywhere else in his kingdom. He took up the Hellenizing banner in Judea in response to the nature of the rebellion confronting him there. As he saw the situation, the way to defeat the rebels was by an onslaught against the forces that propelled them, the Torah, the commandments, and the culture of the Jewish people.

The persecutions were enacted in the winter of 167/66 B.C.E. To begin with, the decree of Antiochus III which had granted the Jews extensive rights of religious freedom was formally rescinded. Moreover, in December of 167 foreign idolatrous worship and cultic prostitution were introduced into the Temple. In addition, throughout Palestine, the Sabbath and festivals were to be violated, high places (outdoor shrines) were built where unclean animals were to be offered, circumcision was outlawed, and the dietary laws could not be observed. The penalty for violating these ordinances was death. In every part of the land, Jews found themselves facing royal officials who sought to enforce the regulations with a vengeance, burning Torah scrolls and executing those who hid them. Antiochus had instituted this brutal program in order to deprive the Jewish uprising of a purpose by forcing the Jews to become normal citizens of the Seleucid Empire. Thanks to his short-sighted scheme, the stage was now set for the confrontation of two opposing forces, the Jewish people and the Seleucids. The appearance of the Hasmonean (Maccabean) family would ignite the flames of full-scale revolt.

We cannot be sure whether the accounts of the beginning of the revolt in I and II Maccabees are historical. Nonetheless, Mattathias, the priest of Modiin, and men and women like him bravely refused to submit to the persecution and repaired to the forests. Several thousand soon coalesced around the Hasmonean family, led by Judah the Maccabee (“hammer”), and his brothers John, Simon, Eleazar, and Jonathan. Together with elements of the Hasidim they began to take control of villages throughout the countryside. By Mattathias’ death in 166/65 B.C.E. they had taken control of Judea.

Under Judah the Maccabee, the Jewish army defeated a series of Seleucid generals who attempted to put down the uprising. Having defeated the best of Antiochus’s generals, Judah soon was master of the entire country. Menelaus and the Hellenizers sought a peaceful settlement, asking that the Jews be allowed to return to their homes and that the persecution be officially suspended. The Seleucid government recognized the need for a political compromise. On October 15, 164 B.C.E. it restored the rights of the Jews as granted by Antiochus III, providing amnesty as well. While some may in fact have taken advantage of the amnesty, the soldiers of Judah did not. In December of that year Judah and his men captured Jerusalem, although a Seleucid garrison continued to hold the Akra, the Hellenistic fortress. On the 25th of the Hebrew month of Kislev Judah purified the Temple, relit the Menorah, and reorganized the

sacrificial worship to conform to the Jewish tradition. The main objective of the revolt, ending the persecutions and restoring Judaism, had been achieved.

Aftermath of the Revolt

Throughout the period of persecution and revolt, the Hellenistic pagans in the Land of Israel had sided with the Seleucids and had participated in the persecutions. It was therefore natural that Judah now turned on these enemies as well as on the Hellenizing Jews who had brought on the horrible persecutions. The Hellenizers, many of them of aristocratic origins, had fought on the side of the Seleucids against Judah. Their center was the Akra, and it was here that they finally took refuge when Judah conquered Jerusalem.

Judah undertook wars throughout the Land of Israel to defend the Jews from their pagan neighbors and at the same time to extirpate paganism from the country. After Antiochus IV died in 164 B.C.E., his son Antiochus V Eupator advanced on Judea, came to terms with Judah, and again restored the rights of the Jews. He executed Menelaus, the Hellenizing high priest, blaming him for embroiling the Seleucid Empire in the persecutions and the war with the Jews, and appointed Alcimus, a moderate Hellenizer, as high priest. By 162 B.C.E. Judah and his party had barred Alcimus from taking office. Alcimus sought the help of the Seleucids, and they confirmed him in office. The Hasidim hastened to compromise with Alcimus, but the Hasmoneans continued to resist his rule. After a brief honeymoon, the Hasidim were back in Judah's camp. The Syrians had again succeeded in putting the Hellenizers in power over Judea.

Alcimus sought Seleucid help to maintain his regime against Judah. The force dispatched to aid him was defeated, and Alcimus fled to Syria. He returned with the Seleucid general Bacchides, and Judah fell in battle against him in 160 B.C.E. The Hasmoneans now rallied around Jonathan, Judah's brother. Again the Hellenized Jews sought to rule and again the Hasmoneans plagued them on all sides. For several years, as the war raged, the post of high priest remained vacant. Finally, Bacchides entered negotiations with Jonathan. The two signed a treaty that gave Jonathan, based in his stronghold at Michmash, control over most of Judea.

In 152 B.C.E., when internal affairs in Syria led to a civil war over the succession to the throne, both sides began wooing Jonathan. He gave his backing to Alexander Balas and on Tabernacles of 152 B.C.E. appeared in the Temple in the robes of the high priest, having been appointed to the office by Balas as a *quid pro quo*. Judea was now united under the rule of a Hasmonean high priest. The Hasmonean (Maccabean) dynasty had dawned which would rule the Jewish people until the coming of the Romans in 63 B.C.E.

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Eight Tales For Eight Nights: Chanukah Is A Time For Telling Tales

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Whenever someone says “Chanukah,” a kaleidoscopic set of images and memories flash through my mind – flickering colors of candles, a family menorah, lights, miracles, my mother’s latkes, a dreidel, Chanukah gelt, the Maccabees, Hannah, Judith, an elder gentleman named Mr. Gordon handing out shiny pennies – and, of course, stories and songs in honor of this festival.

The festival of Chanukah, which begins on the 25th day of Kislev, records the first struggle for religious freedom in human history that was met with success in the year 165 B.C.E. The Maccabees fought bravely to keep the Jews from forsaking their religion for hellenism. It was not so much a fight against the physical destruction of Jews as was the case against Haman on Purim. However, Purim and Chanukah both represent struggles against enemies who wanted to perpetuate anti-Semitism by trying to crush the Jews physically and spiritually. The stories of heroism and bravery against all odds are told and retold from generation to generation as part of an oral tradition. When these stories become part of the culture, they are written down and read and celebrated each year. Coupled with the miracle of the one recovered flask of oil to rededicate the Temple, the story of Chanukah is celebrated through rituals of lighting the menorah, telling stories and singing songs, and reciting prayers of thanksgiving – in addition to playing games of chance, often where the answer must be 44 (the total number of candles lit during the eight days of Chanukah). The most popular game is playing dreidel where the four Hebrew letters, one on each of the four sides of the dreidel, stand for “*nes gadol hayah sham*” (“A great miracle happened there”). Of course, since 1948, the Israeli dreidel has the letter ‘*peh*’ instead of ‘*shin*’ to mean “A great miracle happened here.”

Each of the eight nights of Chanukah opens up opportunities to tell stories. Naturally, the main story should be the story of Chanukah and what happened there/here so as to listen to how the small band of Jews could overtake a well-equipped army to win the fight. As it says in the Haftarah for the first Shabbat of Chanukah: “... Not by might, not by power, but by My spirit – said the Lord of Hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

However, in addition to the story of the festival itself, these eight nights are a time for families and friends to tell folktales connected to the themes of the holiday - including those of the Master of Miracles, Elijah the Prophet. Since Elijah is the most popular hero in Jewish folklore, stories of his miracles and bringing hope can be found in many volumes, including *Tales of Elijah the Prophet*, Retold by Peninnah Schram. At the end of this article, I have added a bibliography of stories and anthologies containing primarily folktales for this holiday. Search and select stories that you enjoy that expand the themes and beauty of Chanukah – or perhaps tell stories you recall from earlier days.

In addition to folktales, this is a perfect time to tell personal and family stories related to the holiday. There are several ways to recall and/or create the narratives of your own personal/family stories. However, as an example, I would like to share one of my personal/family Chanukah stories that I have titled “The Substitute Shammas.” This story is true and it also really happened.

On the first night of Chanukah my father would proudly and carefully take his menorah from the breakfront, place it on the table and set the first candle in the right-hand holder. After my parents and I recited the blessings and lit the first candle, my father then would set the lit shammas in its special holder, higher than the other holders.

When I got old enough to observe the details, I realized that the shammas holder was of a different shape and design than the rest of the holders. Rather than a squat cup, it was oblong in shape and it swung from side to side held with a crooked S-shaped wire. One year I asked, “Pa, why is the shammas holder so different from the other candle holders?” My father laughed and responded, “Well, the original shammas cup had broken off years ago and I replaced it with an empty bullet shell. Then I used a curtain hook to attach it to the menorah.” I accepted that explanation and thought how ingenious my father was.

I loved that menorah and always watched the candles until they flickered out. My father had brought it with him when he came to America from Lithuania at the turn of the twentieth century (in 1906). At the time of these memories, the menorah was probably a half century old. It was a heavy metal menorah with eight metal cups to be filled with oil for lighting. I recall there had been tiny covers for each cup (but they had gotten lost along the years). The high metal back was impressive: two columns with vines wrapped around them on each side topped with metal flames. On the very top, in the center, was a 3-dimensional crown. In the middle of the back plate were two lions on either side of a seven-branched menorah, each lion holding onto it with one paw, and each looking up at it. To me it seemed like a theatrical backdrop for the drama of the little flames. Oh, yes. At the top of the right-hand column, but just below the metal flame, was placed the shammas cup, which was now replaced by that long, deeper oblong metal piece and attached to the menorah with a bent piece of wire.

While we would watch the candles ‘dance’, my father always told me the story of Chanukah. When all the candles had gone out, then we would go to the synagogue, where my father was the Hazzan, to celebrate the holiday with the congregation. The women of the Ladies Auxiliary of the shul were all busy frying hundreds of latkes in the big kitchen

and serving them to the families sitting at long tables. There was some kind of entertainment by the children of the Talmud Torah as well as my father singing Cantorial and Yiddish songs in honor of Chanukah.

But what I waited for each year was when a man by the name of Mr. Harry Gordon would take his seat behind a certain small table, with shiny pennies piled up in front of him. The children all lined up in front of the table. He would greet each child by name and ask, "How old are you this year?" And then he would give each of us Chanukah gelt according to our age – 5 years old, five pennies; 10 years old, ten pennies, and so on. I treasure that gift as I treasure this memory.

One Chanukah, when I was a college student, I wondered about the substitute shammas. After lighting candles with my parents, I suddenly said, "Pa, it's absolutely perfect that this bullet casing be on a menorah. After all, when the Maccabees found the Temple desecrated and the menorah destroyed, they used spears to hold the cruses of oil so that they could rededicate the Temple. Doesn't it say in Isaiah that peace will come when we beat our swords into ploughshares? Maybe we should add, 'And our bullets into menorahs!'"

I now have inherited this menorah, the menorah I love, so filled with memories and lights. And when I light the shammas each year for the eight nights of Chanukah, it is also the shammas holder that holds a special meaning for me.

This is the story my children grew up hearing from me and it is part of our family lore and their legacy.

Stored memories are the key to holiday stories. We all have plenty of story-producing memories, once we retrieve them, activate them, and then keep them active by telling our stories. This series of questions and exercises will help you find and retrieve the stories of your past Chanukahs (and other holidays). Use all five senses to recall places, people, objects, and experiences so that you will have personal and family stories to tell this Chanukah.

Places

Memories of a place brings with it memories of events. To retrieve the stories that happened in a particular location, we must mentally move back to that place and time. The setting acts as a hook that pulls the story from its hidden spaces. Stories are wound around the core of a place, and standing in the center allows you to look at the layer upon time-bound layer of events that occurred there. The following imaginative exercise will help put you back into the places of your past so that you can retrieve the stories living within them.

In your mind, recreate the first Chanukah you can recall – or a favorite Chanukah – and where it took place. Fill in every detail, including the menorah, where it stood while lit, who was present with you, what songs you sang, the gifts you received, what you wore, and so on.

People

Making characters come to life will bring success to your stories. Choose people in your life who were part of the Chanukah celebration and describe them, bringing them alive by including such

details as mannerisms, clothing, topics of conversation, posture, hobbies, place at the table, facial expressions, and favorite phrases, jokes, songs, and quotes, especially at Chanukah. When you describe people, use nouns as well as adjectives to convey the essence of the characters. What roles did they play? Who was the family storyteller? To flesh out your descriptions, interview other people about these individuals.

Objects

You can help uncover stories by remembering any object(s) that you especially treasure, such as a photograph, a religious item (e.g., a menorah) or clothing. Did you ever have your own menorah? How did you obtain it? Was it a gift? If so, from whom, or did you make it in school? Was it handed down from someone in the family? What was its significance for that person? What special gift was given to you at Chanukah that you treasure? What special or unusual gift did you give someone for Chanukah?

Smells

Marcel Proust, in his literary works, took advantage of the fact that the sense of smell often serves as a powerful springboard to memory. Some studies have concluded that smell is the most effective trigger of the most vivid memories. Think of smells that bring back memories of Chanukah: the aroma of baking challah, frying of latkes or fried dough (*soufganiyot*), the smell of the candles going out, and so on.

Experiences

What was the happiest time you can remember during a Chanukah? The funniest episode at a Chanukah family gathering? The most poignant moment? The best gift you ever gave or received for Chanukah? A special visit or visitor? These questions may trigger recall of some high points - but they might also remind you of those tinier moments that are just as important in shaping lives and relationships – and creating or retrieving holiday memories.

All of our stories – stories of the holiday, personal and family stories, traditional folktales - have enriched the lives of all people and created in us a need to continue the tradition of "planting" stories in the minds and hearts of our next generation. Taking a storytelling approach to celebrating a holiday makes our heritage and history more vital because it gives it context with a rich pudding of plot and character that illustrates the celebration. When a generation can 'experience' its ancestors' history and feelings, share their ideas and sorrows, the lessons of their lives will live on. The Torah associates wisdom with the heart, not with the mind. So we must direct our stories to the heart, where truth and wisdom can be found by those who care to listen. There is always a time for telling stories, and there is always a story to fit the time. Storytelling not only reflects but perpetuates life. L'chaim!

A Bibliography Of Stories And Books For Chanukah Telling

Compiled by Peninnah Schram

Adler, David. **The Kid's Catalog of Hanukkah.** Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2004.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. **While the Candles Burn: Eight Stories for Hanukkah.** Illustrated by Elaine Greenstein. NY: Viking, 1996

8 stories which include original and traditional tellings on Hanukkah themes. Tales range over many countries and centuries. An introduction to each story presents the source, themes, and customs of the holiday.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. **Journeys with Elijah: Eight Tales of the Prophet.** Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. NY: Gulliver/Harcourt, Brace, 1999

8 tales featuring Elijah in his many disguises, bringing hope and performing miracles as he travels to many countries. Bibliography.

Goldin, Barbara Diamond. **Ten Holiday Jewish Children's Stories.** Illustrated by Jeffrey Allon. NY: Pitspopany Press, 2000

Each of the ten stories highlights various meanings of the holidays. "Lost in the Woods" is the story for Chanukah.

Jaffe, Nina. **The Uninvited Guest and Other Jewish Holiday Tales.** Illustrated by Elivia Savadier. NY: Scholastic, Inc., 1993

Traditional folktales, a literary tale, and midrashim adapted for 7 major Jewish holidays, and Shabbat, some in new settings, for younger readers. In addition, there is an introduction about the Jewish calendar, a glossary, and a bibliography.

Jaffe, Nina. **In the Month of Kislev: A Story for Hanukkah.** Illustrated by Louise August. NY: Viking, 1992.

Kimmel, Eric A. **The Spotted Pony: A Collection of Hanukkah Stories.** Illustrated by Leonard Everett Fisher. NY: Holiday House, 1992

8 adapted tales for families featuring fools of Chelm, rabbis, King Solomon, and that clever trickster, Herschel of Ostropol. Sources are given.

Kimmel, Eric A., ed. **A Hanukkah Treasury.** Illustrated by Emily Lisker. NY: Henry Holt, 1998
13 original and traditional folktales plus poems/songs for Hanukkah, including "The Legend of Judith."

Kimmel, Eric A. **The Jar of Fools: Eight Hanukkah Stories from Chelm.** Illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein. NY: Holiday House, 2000.

Krensky, Stephen. **Hanukkah at Valley Forge.** Illust. Greg Harlin. NY: Dutton, 2006.

Rush, Barbara. **The Jewish Year: Celebrating the Holidays.** NY: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 2001.

This book offers more than 35 literary excerpts, ranging from folktales to modern writing, for 17 Jewish holidays, plus folk customs, religious laws, and color art reproductions. Many

storytellers are represented in this collection. The book includes two Chanukah tales: "A Chanukah Miracle" (folktale) and "The Fourth Candle" by Mara.

Schram, Peninnah and Steven M. Rosman. **Eight Tales for Eight Nights: Stories for Chanukah.** Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1990
8 stories, in addition to the ancient legend, which reflect the holiday themes and traditions of Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews. There are appendixes of Chanukah music, notes on the story, and a chapter on retrieving family stories. Two family stories told by the authors are also included.

Schram, Peninnah. **Tales of Elijah the Prophet.** Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, an Imprint of Rowman & Littlefield, 1991
36 stories of Elijah the Prophet, the master of miracles, gathered from various sources and centuries - with a major introduction and endnotes and written in an oral style. The foreword is by folklorist Dov Noy.

Schram, Peninnah. **The Chanukah Blessing.** Illustrated by Jeffrey Allon. NY: URJ Press, 2000.
This Elijah the Prophet story includes many folktale motifs with an original plot. Elijah visits a certain poor family because of their special menorah and brings the family blessings. A recipe for a "Latke-Kugel" is included.

Schwartz, Cherie Karo. **My Lucky Dreidel: Hanukkah Stories, Songs, Poems, Crafts, Recipes and Fun for Kids.** NY: Smithmark, 1994.

Schwartz, Howard, **The Day the Rabbi Disappeared: Jewish Holiday Tales of Magic.**
Illustrated by Monique Passicot. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2003
For each of the 12 holidays, there is a story featuring a magical feat by a wise rabbi for the benefit of the Jewish people. Sources given. The Chanukah story is "The Enchanted Menorah."

Singer, Isaac Bashevis. **Zlateh the Goat and Other Stories.** Pictures by Maurice Sendak. NY: Harper & Row, 1966.
This book of seven stories includes four with Chanukah themes: "The Snow in Chelm," "Grandmother's Tale," "The Devil's Trick," and the title story "Zlateh the Goat."

Special Resource Book To Find Jewish Stories By Theme, Etc.

Elswit, Sharon Barcan. **The Jewish Story Finder: A Guide to 668 Tales Listing Subjects and Sources, 2d ed.** Foreword by Peninnah Schram. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2012.
This valuable resource is a guide to finding Jewish folktales to fit a theme or subject under eleven major categories, including The Torah, the Talmud and Their Study, Biblical Characters and Events, Trickster and Fools, and Tales for Festivals and Holidays. There are numerous tales that are summarized with variants given, along with complete citations and a list of connecting themes. Extensive bibliography, Story Title Index, and Subject Index. Print Edition and also Ebook.

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