

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

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December 2016 • Chanuka 5777



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

Dedicated by

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

**Featuring Divrei Torah from Faculty, Students,
Parents and Alumni of YU High School for Boys**

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*Marking the Centennial Celebration of
Yeshiva University High School for Boys/
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Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future

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BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

September 3, 2016, marked the centennial of the founding of The Marsha Stern Talmudical Society/Yeshiva University High School for Boys (YUHSB). YUHSB opened its doors on that Sunday thanks to the efforts of two men: Dr. Solomon Hurwitz, the editor of *The Jewish Forum*, and Dr. Bernard Revel, who at that time was the president of the faculty at the Rabbinical College of America (a combination of Yeshivat Etz Chaim, a preparatory school, and the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary). YUHSB began with an enrollment of 20 boys. School ran six days a week (Sunday through Friday), with yeshiva classes from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m., and secular subjects between 3:30 and 7 p.m. New students joined the school each successive year, and the first class graduated in 1919. That year, the New York State Board of Regents chartered YUHSB as a fully accredited four-year high school.



Advertisement announcing the opening of MTA in Haibri Journal, circa 1916



The first graduating class of YUHSB, the Class of 1919

Over the decades, YUHSB has managed to endure as a beacon of what Seth Taylor, principal for general studies at YUHSB and a historian of the school, calls “the original synthesis, the compromise between the modern Jew’s longing to remain loyal to tradition, even as he aspires to take part in modern culture.” Executive Director Joshua Jacoby is leading the planning for a year-long celebration, which will feature a host of events, video testimonials, reminiscences from some of the more than 9,000 YUHSB alumni and collaborations with YU-affiliated Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, the Center for the Jewish Future, YU Library and the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education and Administration. Anyone interested in participating in the centennial programming should contact Mr. Jacoby at joshua.jacoby@yu.edu.



Yeshiva University High School for Boys/
The Marsha Stern Talmudical Academy

is proud to be

CELEBRATING



Founded in September 1916
as the first yeshiva high
school in North America to
offer both a premier Judaic

Years!

Studies and General Studies education, YUHSB is honored to be
celebrating 100 years of building foundations at both MTA and BTA.
Through its portals have passed over 9,000 students who have
gone on to shape the face of American and
world Jewry for the last century.



BUILDING FOUNDATIONS

For more information,
to share alumni stories, and for
upcoming events, please visit
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Introduction

Chanukah enjoys a special place in the larger beating heart of the Jewish people. Jewish population surveys have confirmed for decades that the lighting of Chanukah candles remains the most observed religious ritual throughout the Jewish world.

The Gemarah, *Shabbos* 21a, explains that the Chanukah candles must be lit “*ad shetichleh regel min hashuk*,” until the population has left the marketplace. As the *Tur, Orach Chaim* 672 explains:

מצותה מסוף שקיעת החמה עד חצי שעה מן הלילה שאז העם עוברין ושבין ורואין בביתם ואיכא פירסומי ניסא.

The mitzvah is from the end of sundown through a half hour of the night, which is when the people are passing by and will see [the candles lit] in the homes and the miracle is publicized.



Rabbi Yaakov Glasser

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

The goal of kindling the Chanukah candles is to publicize the remarkable miracle that took place in the unexpected military victory of the Chashmonaim, and the supernatural endurance of the small flask of oil that served to fuel the flames of the Menorah for a total of eight days.

While the contemporary application of this halacha is complex, as in many locations one may find people awake and benefiting from the candles well beyond the Gemarah's prescribed time, the Rishonim debate the parameters of this requirement. According to the Rambam, *Hilchos Chanukah UMegillah* 4:5, if the

required time has passed, one may no longer light the candles:

אין מדליקין נרות חנוכה קודם שתשקע החמה אלא עם שקיעתה לא מאחרין ולא מקדימין, שכח או הזיד ולא הדליק עם שקיעת החמה מדליק והולך עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק, וכמה הוא זמן זה כמו חצי שעה או יתר, עבר זמן זה אינו מדליק.

One may not light Chanukah candles before sundown, but rather one should light with sundown, not before and not after. If one forgot or intentionally skipped lighting at sundown, one may light until the population has left the marketplace. How much time is this? About a half hour or a little longer. If this time passed, one may not light.

Before walking to the window to proclaim the eternality of the Jewish people, and G-d's miraculous hand in our history, we must first soul-search within our own home and our own lives to discover the internal spark that can fuel our own fire of inspiration.



According to the Rashba, *Shabbos* 21b, one is permitted to light the candles for the remainder of the night:

והא נמי דקתני עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק
ופרישנא דאי לא אדליק מדליק. לאו למימרא
דאי לא אדליק בתוך שיעור זה אינו מדליק,
דהא תנן (מגילה כ' ב') כל שמצותו בלילה
כשר כל הלילה, אלא שלא עשה מצוה כתקנה
דליכא פרסומי ניסא כולי האי ומיהו אי לא
אדליק מדליק ולא הפסיד אלא כעושה מצוה
שלא כתקנה לגמרי.

That which it states "until the population has left the marketplace," which I explained that if one has not yet lit, one can light during this time, this is not to say that if one didn't light within this (later) time, one doesn't light at all ... rather one does not fulfill the mitzvah properly because the miracle is not publicized that well. However, if one did not light [while the population is still in the marketplace], one lights and does not lose out. It is like performing a mitzvah in an incomplete manner.

The *Minchas Meir* no. 32, suggests that according to the Rambam, the mitzvah of lighting the menorah is fundamentally one of "*pirsumei nisah*," an act of publicizing the miracle.

Therefore, if the kindling takes place devoid of that impact, it is essentially worthless. In contrast, the Rashba is of the opinion that the mitzvah is to light the candles as a personal testament to the miracle of Chanukah, and this obligation was extended by the Chachamim to include a public dimension — *pirsumei nisah*.

Initially, the opinion of the Rambam seems more intuitive. The mitzvah of lighting the menorah is inherently

a public expression of our *hallel* and *hodaah* to G-d for his miracles and wonders of sustaining Am Yisrael throughout our tumultuous journey over the course of Jewish history. Why would Rashba interject this two-tiered system, of first imposing the obligation on a personal and formal level, and only subsequently adding the layer of *pirsumei nisah*?

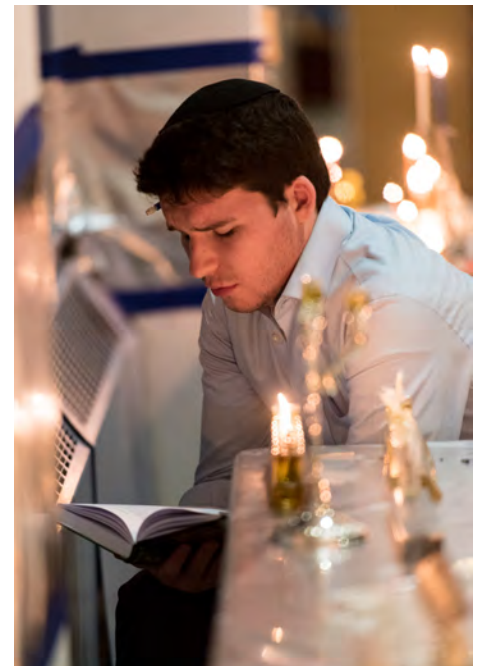
We live our lives in
the *reshus harabim*,
the public domain,
but before aspiring to
illuminate its streets,
we turn inward to light
our own candle, and
bask in the light and
the warmth of what it
means to be a Jew.

Perhaps the answer is that before we can successfully represent Judaism to the rest of the world, we need to cultivate a love and devotion to it within ourselves. Before walking to the window to proclaim the eternity of the Jewish people, and G-d's miraculous hand in our history, we must first soul-search within our own home and our own lives to discover the internal spark that can fuel our own fire of inspiration. There is value

in lighting the candle for ourselves and our own families. Chanukah is a mitzvah of "*ner ish ubeiso*" — it's a mitzvah that is rooted in the home. The Gemarah, *Shabbos* 22a, tells us that the menorah is situated on the left side of the doorpost so that we are surrounded by the mezuzah and the menorah on each side. To build a healthy and inspired Jewish home, there needs to be a parchment representing Torah on one side, and fire of passion and inspiration on the other. We live our lives in the *reshus harabim*, the public domain, but before aspiring to illuminate its streets, we turn inward to light our own candle, and bask in the light and the warmth of what it means to be a Jew.



Rabbi Yaakov Glasser



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Yaakov Glasser at
<http://www.yutorah.org/Rabbi-Yaakov-Glasser>

FOREWORD

The Eternal Celebration

B*ayamim ha'heim ba'zman ha'zeh* — in those days and today. The holiday of Chanukah manages to straddle different historical eras. On the one hand, it is a celebration of the past, of our victory over the Greeks and the miracle of the oil in the Beis Hamikdash. Yet simultaneously, it is a celebration of the present, and is relevant to the challenges we face today. This historical dichotomy is evident from the Gemara (*Rosh Hashanah* 18b), which teaches that although *Megillas Ta'anis* has been annulled and other Beis Hamikdash-era celebrations are no longer commemorated, we still celebrate Chanukah.

While Chanukah has a component that is a Beis Hamikdash celebration, it also has an additional component that remains relevant. The Ramban, Bamidbar 8:2, also highlights this duality of Chanukah in the context of a conversation between Hashem and Aharon HaKohen. Following the korbanos of the *nesiim* during the dedication of the Mishkan (*Chanukas Hamishkan*), Aharon was despondent. After all, as the leader of Shevet Levi, he was disheartened that all the other *shevatim* had the opportunity to bring a korban during the *Chanukas Hamishkan*, while Shevet Levi seemed to be neglected. Hashem comforted Aharon by assuring him that Shevet Levi would have a greater contribution than the other *shevatim*. The Chanukah lights, which would be kindled by the kohanim, will be everlasting, as opposed to the korbanos at the *Chanukas Hamishkan*.



Rabbi Joshua Kahn

Head of School, YU High School for Boys

What is it about Chanukah that enables it to exist in the past and present simultaneously?

The Chanukah celebration focuses on the spiritual struggle against the Greeks. The danger to the Jewish people during the time of the Chashmonaim was a spiritual annihilation. The Greeks were not interested in harming us physically, if only we were willing to assimilate and sacrifice our core religious values. With this background, Rav Soloveitchik zt"l develops an approach to the everlasting nature of Chanukah. The celebration of our spiritual triumph and commitment to clinging to the Torah and its values is eternal. While there was a Beis Hamikdash celebration, recognizing the victory against the Greeks, our commitment to Torah is one we celebrate each year. The victory of today is just as relevant and timely as the victory over 2,000 years ago, since the challenges continually reinvent themselves in each generation.

As Yeshiva University High School for Boys celebrates our centennial and dreams about the next hundred years, we do so with this theme. When YUHSB was founded, it was a time of great challenge religiously for American Jewry. The high school was created with a vision of nurturing the next generation of bnei Torah whose

education would have talmud Torah at its foundation. Yet these bnei Torah would be able to synthesize talmud Torah with a commitment to strong general studies and a well-rounded experience that would prepare them to grow up to be successful in everything they did. *L'havdil*, this year is our celebration of the Chanukah miracle. We are reflecting on the way in which our educational vision changed the landscape of American Jewry, serving as the model for yeshiva high schools across the country and the world. We are marveling at how the flame of YUHSB has lit up Jewish communities throughout the world, as our alumni serve in leadership capacities, as school leaders, shul rabbis, and lay leaders. We are dreaming about how to continue to lead in the field of Jewish education to ensure that our students are well-rounded Bnei Torah — appreciating the primacy of talmud Torah and a Torah-observant lifestyle, while continuing to synthesize this with a commitment to being a lifelong learner in all disciplines. We focus on developing the whole student so that each of our graduates is prepared to be a contributing member of Klal Yisrael. We welcome you to get in touch with us and help us shape this dream, and in doing so continue to celebrate the Chanukah miracle!

The Jar of Oil in the Sukkah: Understanding the Connection between Chanukah and Sukkos

The holiday of Sukkos would seem to have no place in an essay about Chanukah. What could these two different holidays have to do with each other? They each have separate mitzvos, and while Sukkos has its source in the Torah, Chanukah is only rabbinic.

Then again, there are several similarities. Both have eight days, and on both we recite the full Hallel. There are two customs from the Jewish community in Turkey that also connect Chanukah and Sukkos (see *Ziv Haminhagim* pg. 258). First, the material used to wrap the esrog was used to make the wicks for the Chanukah menorah. Second, a container of olive oil was hung as a decoration in the Sukkah, and that oil would be used to light the menorah. These two customs take each of the unique Sukkos commandments and connect them to the commandment of Chanukah. In truth, these practices are just two examples of the strong bond the two holidays share with one another. [See *Sefer Chashmonaim* II ch. 10, that records the celebration that took place immediately after the war by the Chashmonaim. The celebration was modeled after the celebration of Sukkos.]

Rabbi Elazar of Worms writes in *Sefer Harokeach* (*Hilchos Chanukah* 225) that the eight days of Chanukah were



Rabbi Chaim Axelrod

Maggid Shiur at YUHSB

Assistant Rabbi, Young Israel of New Rochelle

established to correspond with the eight days of Sukkos. He notes that the end of Vayikra chapter 23, which describes the details of Sukkos, is juxtaposed with the beginning of chapter 24, which mandates the use of “*shemen zayis zach*,” pure olive oil, for the Menorah in the Mishkan. This serves as a *remez*, hint, to the best way to perform the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles — using pure olive oil. He sees further connection to Chanukah in these *psukim*, as first the Torah uses the phrase “*l’ha’alos ner*,” to raise a flame, followed by the phrase “*ya’aroach es haneiros*,” he shall order the flames. The Torah starts with *ner* (singular) and shifts to *neiros* (plural). This is an allusion to our practice on Chanukah, which is to begin on the first night with just one candle, and then add another on each subsequent night.

There is another connection between Chanukah and Sukkos which, on the surface, seems to be tangential. The Talmud in *Shabbos* 21b, discusses the debate between Beis Shamai and Beis Hillel about the best manner to light the Chanukah menorah. Beis Shamai

concluded that on the first night one should light eight candles and decrease that number each night so that on the last night, only one candle is lit. Beis Hillel agreed in principle to highlighting the miraculous nature of the number eight, but differed in practice. They say that on the first night one should light only one candle, and then add one more each night, so that on the last night eight candles will be lit. Beis Shamai explain that their position is partially based on the Chanukah lights being “*k’neged parei hachag*,” corresponding to the cows offered on the Holiday (Sukkos). As Rashi explains, the *korbanos* of Sukkos decreased in their number each day (thirteen *korbanos* on the first day, down to seven on the last day). Yet there is perhaps even greater significance to Beis Shamai’s connection between the *korbanos* of Sukkos and the lights of Chanukah. Rabbi Chanoch Henoch Karelenshtein, in *Kuntrus B’Inyanei Yemei Chanukah* pg. 49, explains that on the day that follows Sukkos, Shimini Atzeres, there is only one *korban*, which represents the unique relationship between

Hashem and the Jewish people. According to Bais Shamai, on the last day of Chanukah, which is known as the choicest of the days, one would light only one candle. This serves as a further connection to “the last day” of Sukkos, and highlights the special bond between us and Hashem.

One can even see a connection between Chanukah and Sukkos by noticing when the prophecy about the events of Chanukah took place. In Sefer Chagai, the Navi states that in the seventh month, on the twenty-first day, the following prophecy came to Chagai the prophet:

עוֹד אֶחָת מֵעַתָּה הִיא; וְאֲנִי, מִרְעִישׁ אֶת-הַשָּׁמַיִם
וְאֶת-הָאָרֶץ...

*There will be one more, it is a small one;
and I will shake the heavens, and the
earth...*

Chagai 2:6

Rashi explains that Chagai is foretelling the term of exile under

the Greeks, that it will be relatively short compared to other exiles. The “shaking of heaven and earth,” Rashi explains, is in reference to “*nissim hana’su livnei Chashmonai*,” the miracles that were performed for the sons of the *Chashmonaim*. The connection to Sukkos is seen when one focuses on the date this prophecy was given, the twenty-first day of the seventh month, which is the day of Hoshana Rabba, the seventh day of Sukkos. When Chanukah was only a future projection, it was already linked to the holiday of Sukkos.

In his commentary on the Siddur, Rabbi Elazar of Worms (*Perushei-Siddur* 141) explains that there were two groups of five decrees that were placed upon the Jews by the Greeks. The first group of five came with a penalty of death for violation, while the second group of five did not. Included in this second group of decrees is the outlawing of the

celebration of Sukkos. Again, we see a connection to Sukkos in the events of the Chanukah story.

The midrash (*Midrash Chanukah*), commenting on the verse in Koheles (11:2), “*ten chelek l’shiva v’gam l’shemonah*,” divide a portion into seven, and even into eight, states that the number seven relates to the seven lights of the Menorah in the Beis Hamikdash, while the number eight relates to the eight days of Sukkos:

אמר הקב"ה חשבתם לעקור שבעת הנרות
ושמונה ימי החג הנני מביא עליכם שמונה
ימים ושבעה בני חשמונאי שמאבדים אתכם...
*Hashem said, you [Greece] sought to
uproot the seven lights of the Menorah
and the eight days of Sukkos, behold I
will bring upon you an eight-day holiday
(Chanukah), and the seven members of
the Chashmonai family that will destroy
you...*

This midrash is perhaps hinted to in *Al Hanisim*, which states “*nakamta*



YUHSB Simchat Beit Hashoeva, October 2016

es nikmasam,” You (Hashem) have avenged their vengeance. Rabbi Dov Tzvi Karelenstein (cited in *Kuntrus* loc. cit.) explains that the ultimate revenge is to do to the perpetrator the exact opposite of what they tried to accomplish. This was clearly fulfilled. Not only were the Greeks unsuccessful in erasing the eight days of Sukkos, but Hashem brought about the eight days of Chanukah for the Jewish people.

Why are these two holidays so linked, and why did the Greeks feel so strongly about outlawing Sukkos?

The midrash (*Bereishis Rabba* 2:3) describes the essence of the Greek exile and the impact it sought to make:

וחושך זה גלות יון שהחשיכה עיניהם של ישראל בגזירותיהן שהיתה אומרת להם, כתבו על קרן השור שאין לכם חלק באלקי ישראל.
And darkness, this is the Exile of Greece, that darkened the eyes of the Jewish people with their decrees. For the [Greeks] would tell the [Jews] to write on the horn of their oxen, that they have

no portion in the G-d of Israel.

It is noteworthy that the defining decree of the Greeks against the Jews chosen by the midrash is writing on the horns of the oxen. It was this decree that gets to the core of how the Greeks desired to profane Judaism. Our commentators explain that the Greeks wanted the Jews to publicize that they had no faith in G-d. Writing a message on the horn of an ox would be the equivalent of mandating a bumper sticker that proclaims you do not believe in G-d.

There is perhaps further significance to the idea that a Jew had to write that he has no portion, *chelek*, in the G-d of Israel. The term *chelek* is also used to describe the spiritual side of man. Our tradition understands that there is a “*chelek Eloka mima’al*,” a portion of G-d from above (Iyov 31:2) inside each of us. This concept encourages man to strive to emulate G-d. Judaism believes that man is not the center of the world. Mankind is subjugated to a Supreme Being, and man can only hope to try and imitate the ways

of Hashem. Such a belief system is completely antithetical to the ancient Greek philosophy that humans are at the center of the world. Mandating that Jews write that they have no *chelek* was asking them to proclaim that they have no right to achieve godliness.

Sukkos is the holiday where we publicize our faith in Hashem. All of our neighbors are heading inside after summer has concluded, but the Jewish people head outdoors. We build and move into temporary dwellings, and proclaim to ourselves and to the world that our security is always provided by Hashem. Just as Hashem provided security for the Jews on their journey from Egypt to Israel, so too He continues to provide our security. The Greeks sought to destroy the eight-day holiday that celebrates this faith. Hashem came to the rescue, and not only performed the miracles needed to keep Sukkos alive, but He also gave us the gift of another holiday, the yom tov of Chanukah, eight more days on our calendar to proclaim our faith for all to see.



The ultimate revenge is to do to the perpetrator the exact opposite of what they tried to accomplish. Not only were the Greeks unsuccessful in erasing the eight days of Sukkos, but Hashem brought about the eight days of Chanukah for the Jewish people.

Whose House? Our House!¹

Try this halachic riddle: A Judaica store in Yerushalayim has a display of three posters, each touting the religious devotion of certain soldiers in the IDF. The first depicts a unit gathered around their tank as they pray with talis and tefilin. The second projects the image of a lone *chayal* (soldier) somewhere in the Israeli wilderness, brandishing his lulav and esrog alongside his more common weaponry. And the third, thematically consistent, is a picture of a group of warriors in the evening desert, huddled around a tiny menorah serving as a beacon. Two are as halachically sound as they are inspirational. One lacks the legal consensus and bona fides to be unequivocally valid, let alone model behavior. Which one is questionable? Hint: This is the Chanukah issue of *Torah To Go*.

The most basic and essential fulfillment of the Chanukah imperative is described in the Gemara (*Shabbos 21a*) as “*ner ish uveiso* — a candle, a man, a household.” The Talmud curiously links the performance of the mitzva to the home. In the Gemara, and even more explicitly in the discussions of the Rishonim and Acharonim, this peculiar formulation impacts at least three different applications of Chanukah law. First and most generally, there is the possibility that the entire enterprise of Chanukah lighting is in the distinct category of *chovas habayis* as opposed to the more common *chovas hagavra*. That is, the decree obligates the house, and not the individual. Like the



Rabbi Moshe Benovitz

YUHSB Class of 1990

Managing Director of International NCSY

Rebbi, Yeshivat Reishit, Israel

commandment to affix a mezuzah, the candle lighting might not be incumbent on a particular person, but rather is something that the home must accommodate. Further, this would impact the “who” of the obligation’s reach. Once a house has been sufficiently covered by another’s lighting, there would be no further obligation on any individual. Similarly, one without a home or far from his abode would be exempt. Finally, the apparently binding emphasis on the *bayis* would impact the “where” of the menorah as well.

And here we encounter an enigma of the candle lighting. Centuries of halachic discourse have seen the consideration of many permutations for the placement of the lights. Inside or outside, high or low, yards and gardens, right and left. Yet remarkably, each and every one of these variables and options operate within a very limited framework. They all focus on the house.

In fact, most contemporary decisors conclude that without a house, there is no mitzvah. Thus one camping under the stars would be exempt. While Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg (*Tzitz Eliezer* 15:29) argues that the house is not an essential requirement, he is in the minority, and in our case

of the soldiers in the desert, the IDF Rabbinate does not advocate lighting with a blessing.

It is striking that the Gemara omits mention of the abundance of seemingly ideal spots for the candles. After all, the dominant force behind this act is the need for *pirsumei nisa*, publicizing of the miracle. This explains the second blessing recited,² the placement within the boundaries of the property, and even the timing of the lighting.³ Thus we would expect a location that maximizes the exposure. Yet there is clearly a competing pressure at work here. If not, we would be untethered from the confines of the home and free to maximize our broadcasting of the Chanukah narrative. Why must our quest for the ideal spot of prominence and visibility be restricted to our homes? My window might be good, my front porch better, but the park on Main Street vastly superior to both. So why not allow that to rise to the level of halachic ideal, as opposed to being rendered invalid? In Israel, the general population observes Yom Haatzmaut with barbecues across the country. The race to lay claim to prime spots for family recreation and celebration can begin days before the actual commemoration. It is an elaborate process of scouting and

selection, and a national pastime in its own right. Would it be so unusual if similar behaviors marked Chanukah too? If an intrepid (and trespassing) Los Angeleno scaled the Hollywood sign and planted his flag there in the form of a proud and public menorah showcase, would that not be grand? If we are serious about our *pirsumei nisa* objectives, why not go for broke?

To be sure, the need to light at home may emerge from the principles of the halachic system, and not from the specific contours of the mitzvah to light. Perhaps the house provides the structure, consistency, and objective standards that our legal system prioritizes. When the menorah is anchored to a local area, it may well provide less exposure of the miracle, but it will also be more compact and transmittable.

But the emphasis on the home does suggest an element further integral and specific to Chanukah. While initially somewhat unexpected, this focus on lighting the candles in the *bayis* can be revelatory for the goals and objectives of the mitzvah. At least two perspectives can explain the phenomenon. The first views the home as the recipient of the *pirsum/* publicizing. The second suggests the home as the source and subject of that which we proclaim.

Pirsumei nisa appears in a variety of contexts, most often associated with our holiday commemorations and affirmations of the Jewish historical record. But at its heart, it references an even more familiar motif in our tradition. *Pirsumei nisa* is education. The full range of mitzvos associated with *pirsumei nisa* represent visual and experiential forms of teaching and learning. This is particularly relevant on Chanukah, which derives its very

name from an allusion to *chinuch*, or preparation. While the *chinuch* of Chanukah is more closely related to the dedication and reinitiation of the Temple services, there is a decided undertone promoting the value of standard education too. And this is most pronounced when we commit ourselves to publicizing and relating our history and legacy of miracles.

In this context, the laws of charitable giving establish an important model. There we find the notion of *aniyei ircha kodem* — the local poor take precedent over more distant charities.⁴ This localization originates with the home, not only with the larger community, and the law is indicating a specific approach to generous giving and sharing. Charity begins at home. There are already many parallels between monetary donations and other forms of contribution. As such, education begins at home as well. The appropriate inclination to share Chanukah's message to a global audience cannot come at the expense of our most close disciples. The priority is to the home first, and the methodology of how we disseminate the message involves ever widening circles of influence.

Alternatively, it is the home itself that we choose to broadcast. The references to *bayis* are not the only time that our personal lives are injected into the Chanukah ritual. In the second *beracha* of candle lighting we thank God for the miracles of yore, but also of today. This mention of contemporary Divine intervention can, and likely should, be understood in at least two distinct ways. First, we assert that God's direct involvement in our lives is ongoing, and not merely part of our historical record. But second, those open miracles in

Lighting Chanuka Lights on a Train

R. Shalom Schwadron, *Teshuvot Maharsham* 4:146 (written in 5666/1907) discusses lighting Chanukah lights on a train:

אם מותר להדליק נ"ח על הבאהן לא מצאתי הדבר מבואר אבל הלא מי ששילם בעד כל הלילה הוי כשכר לו בית דירה לאכול ולישן שם וחייב בנ"ח ומ"ש רש"י ביושב בספינה י"ל שהיו אז ספינות פתוחות בלא קירו והרוח מנשב ולא הי' בגדר בית כלל. ואף דהבאהן אינו עומד במקום א' ורכוב כמהלך לא נמצא בשום מקום שיהי' צריך בית קבוע למה שמצותו בשביל פרסומי ניסא כנלענ"ד מסברא.

If it is permissible to light Chanukah lights on the train, I didn't find any explicit discussion about this, but if one paid for the entire night, it is as if he rented a home to eat and sleep there and is obligated to light Chanukah lights. Although Rashi mentions someone on a boat as being exempt, one can argue that in those days, the boats had no roofs and were exposed to wind and this is not considered a home at all. Even though the train is not stationary, and ordinarily, riding is considered like walking, there is no evidence that one needs a permanent home for Chanukah lights since the purpose of the mitzvah is to publicize the miracle. This is my opinion based on logical analysis.

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the past still resonate and impact our lifestyle today. The events of Chanukah then did not merely provide salvation and victory for that generation of warriors and Maccabees. They shaped our modern lives and defined our homes. In this sense, the "miracle" that we publicize is the more perpetual miracle of Jewish

survival. This does not dilute the specific celebration of Chanukah, but amplifies how history and Jewish practice have made us what we are. We publicize and promote the house.

Rabbi J. David Bleich⁵ makes this point even more strongly and directly. He quotes the Rambam (from his letters) as identifying some of the Greek decrees against Jewish life. One of them was the prohibition against closing the doors to the home. The Greeks were weary of clandestine activity that might further separate Jewish identity from the broader culture. Rabbi Bleich contends that our placement of the menorah at the doorway or in a place of public prominence *connected to the house* is the ultimate act of defiance, and a refutation of their scheme. We are in fact distinct, and our homes are defined as such. And we don't whisper this from behind closed doors, but we shout it from the rooftops. The rooftops of our homes.

Endnotes

1 The title of this piece is taken from a popular sports pregame responsive chant, particular to the host team. It refers to their commitment to winning on the home field or court. Our beloved MTA is one of many schools to have adopted it as a rallying cry. The phrase was not in vogue during my years at MTA, and even if it had been, I would have only heard it from the stands. Regrettably, my organized high school sports experiences were as spectator, not player.

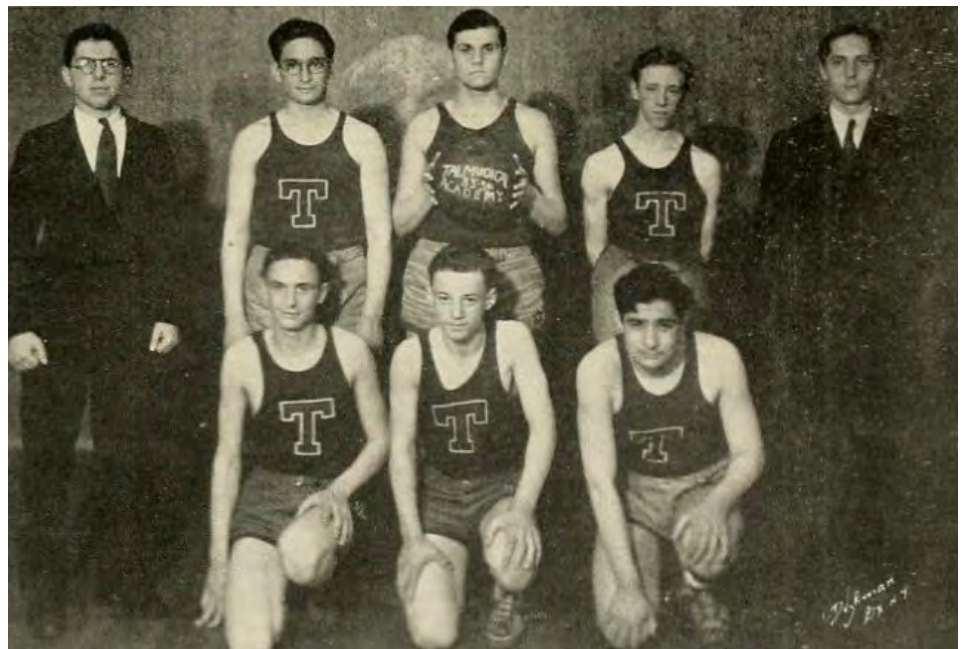
2 See Tosfos, *Sukkah* 56a.

3 Described by the Gemara, *Shabbos* 22a, as *ad shetichleh regel min hashuk*, until there are still people in the market.

4 See Gemara, *Bava Metzia* 71a:

אם כסף תלווה את עמי את העני עמך ונכרי עמי
קודם עני ועשיר עני קודם ענייך וענייך עירך קודמין
עניי עירך ועניי עיר אחרת עניי עירך קודמין

The verse states, "If you shall lend money



Top: YUHSB Basketball Team, 1934
Bottom: YUHSB Basketball Team, 2015

to My nation, to the poor among you."
My nation and a gentile, My nation takes precedence; a poor person and a wealthy person, the poor person takes precedence; your poor (i.e. family) and the poor of your city, your poor take precedence; the poor of your city and the poor of another city, the poor of your city take precedence.

See further, Rambam, *Hilchos Matnos Aniym*, 7:13:

עני שהוא קרובו קודם לכל אדם. עניי ביתו קודמין לעניי עירו. עניי עירו קודמין לעניי עיר אחרת שנאמר לאחיק לענייך ולאבינוך בארצך

A poor person who is a relative takes precedence over others. The poor of one's home take precedence over the poor of one's city. The poor of one's city take precedence over the poor of another city as it states, "to your brother, to your poor, and to your indigent in your land."

5 *Beis Yitzchak* 5764.

The Nature of Miracles

Imagine the following scene: It is a cold and windy winter evening. There is snow on the ground, and the world outside is quiet and dreary. But inside, there is warmth and light. The smell of crispy latkes sizzling in the frying pan wafts gently through the air. The atmosphere is filled with anticipation as an entire family gathers together, perhaps by a doorway, or perhaps by a window, to kindle the lights of the menorah. As the brachos are recited, followed by the first wick bursting into flame, everyone stares with awe and wonder, recalling the miracles of long ago. After reciting the passage of “*HaNeiros Halalu*,” the voices of the entire family come together to sing the moving and poignant words of “*Maoz Tzur...*”

We don’t know much about the background of *Maoz Tzur*. What we do know is that it was written in the 13th century, and that the author’s name was Mordechai (as seen from taking the first letter of each paragraph and putting them together to spell the name “Mordechai”). Rav Eliyahu Munk, zt”l, in his sefer, *Olam HaTefillos* pg. 332, says that the author’s name was Mordechai ben Yitzchak. He lived during the time of the Ramban, and he also wrote the *zemer* “*Mah Yafis*,” which is one of the *zemiros* for the Friday night meal. *Moaz Tzur* is broken into six paragraphs, each one discussing a time of persecution and exile during our history, and thanking Hashem for our salvation. The *Kitzur Shlah*, *Hilchos Chanuka*, says that the last paragraph, about *galus Edom*, the Roman exile, was added later, by a different author.



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The fifth paragraph of *Maoz Tzur* is the stanza that briefly discusses the story of Chanuka. When reading through this paragraph, there are many cryptic messages, and many questions that arise. One such question can be asked about the words at the end of the passage, “*bnei binah ymei shmonah kavu shir urinanim*,” meaning that the eight days of celebration of Chanuka were established for all future generations by “*bnei binah*” — men of understanding. The question is: why is it specifically emphasized that they were *bnei binah*? Why not people with a different type of wisdom, such as *bnei chochma* or *bnei daas*? Or, why not simply *bnei Torah*, or rabbanim? And what exactly is *binah*, as compared to other types of wisdom?

There are three classic terms used to describe different types of wisdom: *chochma*, *binah*, and *daas*. The Malbim, Mishlei 1:2-4, explains that these three types of wisdom are connected to one another, and build off each other. He explains that *chochma* is pure informational knowledge that is taught to you by others. *Binah* involves taking that knowledge and learning important lessons by contrast and comparison. Rashi describes someone with *binah* as someone who is “*mevin davar*

mitoch davar” — someone who has the ability to look at one thing and use that as a springboard to understand something else. *Daas* is the highest and deepest level of understanding.

In order to answer our question about why Chanuka was established by *bnei binah*, it helps to take a look at the story of Chanuka. In short, the Greeks persecuted us for years and defiled the Beis HaMikdash. Finally, the Chashmonaim, led by Matisyahu, led a revolt against the Greeks and were victorious. After the battle, when we entered the Beis HaMikdash, we were shocked and heartbroken at the disarray. When we wanted to light the Menorah, we couldn’t find any oil that had not been contaminated by the Greeks. Finally, we found one jug that had enough oil to last for only one day. To get new oil would have taken eight days. [The Ran in *Shabbos* 21b, explains that this is because it was a four day journey to get the oil and four days to return.] Bnei Yisroel had no choice, and so they lit the oil that they had, and sent messengers off to obtain more pure oil. In the meantime, a miracle occurred, and the small amount of oil lasted and continued burning for eight days, enough time to obtain new, *tahor* oil. And the rest is history — each year, we celebrate eight days of Chanuka in

commemoration of this miracle.

There is a famous question raised by the *Beis Yosef, Orach Chaim* no. 670. Indeed, it is probably the most famous question asked about anything pertaining to Chanuka. The *Beis Yosef* asks: If this is what happened, why is Chanuka celebrated for eight days? It seems as though the holiday should really be only seven days long. After all, there was enough oil for the first day. Only the following seven days were miraculous and our celebration and thanks to Hashem should only be for seven days. The miracle only began on day number two!

There are many, many answers given to this question. [In fact, there is even a sefer, called *Ner LeMeah*, that gives 100 answers just to this question of the *Beis Yosef*!] One answer can be found based in a famous comment of the Ramban at the end of Parshas Bo. The Ramban, while discussing the significance of remembering all the miracles that occurred when leaving Egypt, says that Hashem performs two different types of miracles: *nissim nistarim* (hidden miracles), and *nissim gluyim* (open miracles). It is not very often that Hashem performs open, obvious miracles. When He does perform an open miracle, what is the purpose of it? The Ramban explains that the purpose of open miracles is to inspire and teach us that the same way that Hashem is able to control and even change nature in such an obvious way, so too He is the One Who makes nature function in the first place. For example, what was the purpose of Hashem performing all of the great miracles during the ten plagues? He could have freed us in an instant without all the drama! However, through the unique miracles of the ten plagues, in which Hashem

constantly changed nature in order to punish the Egyptians, Hashem showed us that not only can He change nature, but that He is the One Who controls nature on a daily basis. The Ramban goes on to say that since Hashem doesn't perform these types of open miracles in every generation, it is incumbent upon us to constantly remember the Exodus, as a proof that Hashem also controls the hidden miracles of everyday life. This belief is one of the foundations of the entire Torah.

Throughout our extraordinary history, there have been many more times that Hashem has performed open miracles, and although they weren't all on the same level as the Exodus from Egypt, they were still open miracles that helped us recognize Hashem's dominion over nature. Truly, whenever there is an open miracle, it is incumbent upon us to look for the message Hashem is trying to send us, and to recognize that He is in control of every aspect of our lives. The miracle of the Chanuka oil is one of those open miracles that we merited to experience. Any conscious person should obviously recognize the clear miracle that Hashem performed in that situation. However, based on the Ramban, we can't just stop there. We have to take this supernatural event and use it to learn a broader lesson. We should see that the same way Hashem performed this unbelievable miracle by making the oil last an extra seven days, it is also a miracle that oil burns at all. Does vinegar burn, or wine, or water? No, under normal circumstances, they don't. So why does oil burn? Because this is what Hashem has decreed. This is one of His many hidden miracles that we experience daily. The reason we have eight days of Chanuka is because there

was a miracle that one day's worth of oil lasted for an extra seven days. Once we witnessed this open miracle, it made us realize that even the first day, when there was enough oil to burn, was also a miracle from Hashem, because He controls everything.

Now that we know why we have eight days of Chanuka and not seven, we can answer our original question of why it was specifically *bnei binah* who established the holiday of Chanuka for eight days. The awareness that the Ramban speaks about, of recognizing hidden miracles only through contemplating the open miracles, is *binah*; it is the attribute of "*mevin davar mitoch davar*" — understanding one thing from something else. It took *binah* to look at the seven "extra" days that were clearly miraculous and to discern from them that the first day was also a miracle. If we would have used other forms of knowledge, we would have only had seven days of Chanuka. But the *bnei binah* were able to discern the deeper lesson of the miracle of the oil. It's not just about the seven days of open miracles, it's also about the extra day in which we thank Hashem for making oil burn in the first place, rather than taking this for granted. Having eight days of Chanuka expresses the essence of the miracle of the oil. Had we only celebrated Chanuka for seven days, we would have missed the point. Hashem doesn't want us to only see His open miracles; He wants us to search and find Him everywhere in nature. As the Ramban says, this idea is a foundation of the entire Torah.

In order to understand this concept even further, there is another aspect of the story that we should look into. Rav Shlomo Kluger, *Sefer Hachaim* 670:1, asks: How was it permissible

to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah in the Beis HaMikdash with the miraculous oil that lasted an extra seven days? After all, the Gemara in *Taanis* 24b, says that it is forbidden to get benefit from something created by a miracle.

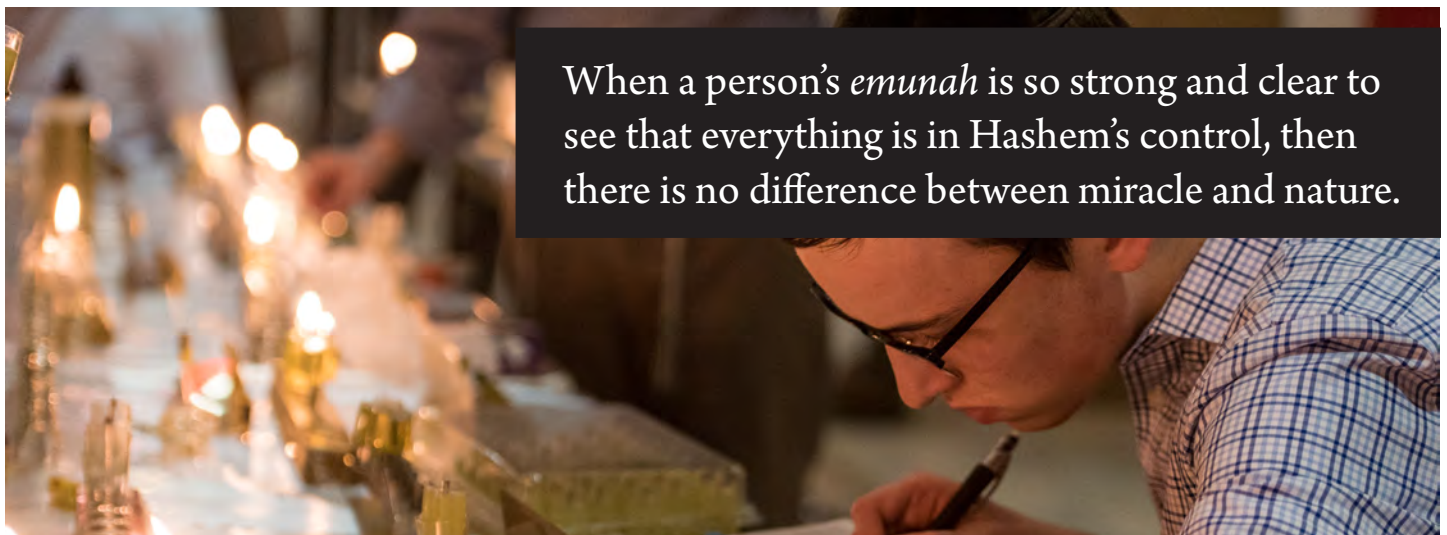
Rav Avraham Schorr, in *HaLekach v'HaLibuv*, Chanuka pg. 29, provides us with an answer to this question that teaches us a very important lesson about the essence of Chanuka and life in general. He notes the story found in the Gemara in *Taanis* 25a, in which Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa sees his daughter looking very sad. When he inquires, she responds that she is distraught because she accidentally lit the Shabbos candles with vinegar instead of oil. He consoles her, saying not to worry, because it makes no difference — Hashem can command the vinegar to burn the same way He commands the oil to burn. The *Ben Yehoyada*, ad loc., asks a crucial question: What was she worried about? After all, she had already lit the candles, and she saw that they were burning from the vinegar! The *Ben Yehoyada* explains that her concern was not about whether or not they will have Shabbos candles burning in their house — she already saw that the candles were burning. Her concern

was about whether or not those candles actually fulfilled the mitzvah to light Shabbos candles. After all, the Gemara in *Shabbos* 25b, says that the purpose of Shabbos candles is to get benefit from the lights, which enhance the *shalom bayis* in the house. She was concerned that since the burning vinegar was miraculous in nature, perhaps they were forbidden to get benefit from these candles. She was worried that maybe she did not fulfill the mitzvah with these miraculous Shabbos candles! However, Rabbi Chanina ben Dosa answered her that there's no difference. The fact that oil burns is also a miracle. What we perceive as nature is, indeed, a miracle as well. The law forbidding us to benefit from a miracle only applies where the miracle is perceived as something out of the ordinary and supernatural. However, when a person's *emunah* is so strong and clear to see that everything is in Hashem's control, then there is no difference between miracle and nature.

Rav Schorr writes that this provides insight into the *Beis Yosef's* question. We celebrate one day simply for the fact that oil burns, which is miraculous in its own right. Why do we celebrate this specifically on Chanuka? After all, we can celebrate the fact that oil

burns on any day of the year. However, says Rav Schorr, this recognition and appreciation was actually the very idea that made the whole remainder of the miracle of the Menorah permissible and possible! Really they should not have fulfilled the mitzvah of lighting the Menorah with the miraculous oil, because it would have constituted deriving benefit from a miracle, which is forbidden. It was only because they believed so strongly that this seemingly natural phenomenon of oil burning is, in fact, a miracle that needs to be appreciated and celebrated, and that there was no difference between miracle and nature, that they were then able to derive benefit from the “miraculous” oil and experience the more obvious miracle of the oil burning for all eight days.

Chanuka is a holiday that is all about thanksgiving, praise, and appreciation. May we merit to learn from and give praise for the obvious miracles in the story of Chanuka, as well as the more “natural” parts of the miracle. Let us appreciate the myriad of miracles and gifts that Hashem bestows upon us on a daily basis, and thus, merit even more miracles.



When a person's *emunah* is so strong and clear to see that everything is in Hashem's control, then there is no difference between miracle and nature.

Going Above and Beyond in Our Service of Hashem: Lessons from *Hadlakas Ner Chanukah* and the Number Eight

Unlike almost every other major Jewish holiday, Chanukah has no tractate of Gemara dedicated solely to its laws. Instead, the Gemara *Shabbos* daf 21 transitions from a discussion about Shabbos candles to one about the Chanukah menorah, and eventually deals with the details of the holiday itself. The Gemara there (21b) delineates three ways to fulfill the obligation of lighting the *chanukiah*. The first level is the bare minimum: one candle for each household every night of Chanukah. The second level, called *mehadrin*, requires that one candle be lit for each person every night. The highest level, the *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, is a topic of debate between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. Beis Shammai argues that on the first night, eight candles are lit, and one candle is subtracted each night until, on the last night, only one candle is lit. Beis Hillel maintains, based on the famous concept of “*ma’alin b’kodesh v’ein moridin*,” “we only go up in holiness, and not down,” that one candle is lit on the first night, and each night another is added, for a total of eight candles on the last night of Chanukah.

What is clear is that we follow the view of Beis Hillel, but what isn’t so obvious is what exactly they hold. There is ambiguity in Beis Hillel’s statement, and the *rishonim* pick up on it: does Beis Hillel mean that this one through eight “*chanukiah*” system



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should be performed by each member of the household? Or does one *chanukiah* per family suffice? Rambam in *Hilchos Chanukah* 4:1-2, makes it clear that he follows the first approach, while Tosafos on the daf support the second view.

Yet there is something strange in the way most Jews nowadays actually perform the mitzvah of *hadlakas ner Chanukah*: nearly everyone performs the highest level, the *mehadrin min hamehadrin*! Whether they practice in accordance with Rambam or Tosafos, everyone seems to be achieving the greatest mitzvah possible. The question is, why? Why is it that specifically the mitzvah of lighting the *chanukiah* gets this special treatment? How has *mehadrin min hamehadrin* become common practice? This is somewhat of an anomaly in halacha. Nowhere else do we find that the entire population takes the most scrupulous approach to a mitzvah.

There is another vexing idea that stems from the aforementioned Gemara. Immediately after the above discussion, the Gemara asks the famous question “*Mai Chanukah*,” what exactly is this Chanukah about which we’ve been speaking? The

question itself makes sense, because thus far, the Gemara has yet to explain the background of the holiday. But the answer given is quite perplexing. The Gemara states the date and length of Chanukah, the laws forbidding fasting and eulogizing, and then goes on to relate the historical basis for the holiday. Yet the Gemara seems to completely skip over the entire miracle of the spectacular Hasmonean victory, mentioning it only as a minor detail in the plotline of the miracle of the oil. This seems like an important omission! How could the Gemara not discuss in depth the enormous miracle of a few inexperienced Jewish soldiers defeating the robust Greek army?

To answer these questions, we must explore one of the most fundamental characteristics of the holiday of Chanukah: the number eight. This is the number of days the holiday spans, and the number of candles we light on the last night, all representing the number of days during which the Menorah burned from the fuel of a mere jug of oil. But what is the significance of the number eight?

The answer may lie in the common themes that emerge from the many things in Judaism that are

also characterized by the number eight: baby boys are circumcised on their eighth day of life; Shavuot is celebrated on the 50th day of the omer, the beginning of the eighth week; and *korbanos* become eligible to be brought on the eighth day from birth. What is the meaning of the number eight, the common denominator between these ostensibly unrelated concepts?

Kabbalistically, the number seven represents *shleimus* in *tevah*, or natural completion and perfection, because the world was created in seven days.¹ Consequently, the number eight signifies things that are *lema'alah min hatevah*, or supernatural, rising above and beyond the natural framework. This idea can be observed in all of the aforementioned mitzvos and halachos: A *korban's* eligibility means it is ready to go beyond its natural status as a farm animal, and be used for a higher purpose as a holy sacrifice. Sefiras HaOmer is a time for working on ourselves and our character traits for seven weeks,² culminating in our spiritual capability to receive the Torah on Shavuot, as a means of transcending normal human nature and become closer to G-d. And finally, the *bris* that a child receives serves as an *os*, a sign or symbol, ushering him into the community of the Jewish nation, a spiritually lofty people.

Equipped with this notion, we can answer our two original questions from the Gemara in Shabbos. On Chanukah, we light candles for eight days, and add a candle each night to form an eight-lamp candelabra, to evoke the number eight in its deeper meaning. We stress that Hashem caused the oil to last for eight days, altering natural law and going *lema'alah min hatevah* for our benefit.

Therefore, the Gemara focused solely on the miracle of the oil. It is true that the war was tremendously miraculous, and G-d's hand and *hashgacha* cannot be ignored,³ but ultimately no strict laws of nature were broken in the battle. However, the Gemara wanted to stress the fact that the miracle of the oil went **against** the natural order, and represents Hashem going above and beyond to do good for the Jewish people.

Our response to this exceeding kindness should be to act *lema'alah min hatevah* and go the extra mile in our service of Hashem. To that end, everyone fulfills the *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, because we want to show our willingness to transcend the basic "natural" requirements, and enter the "supernatural realm" in our service by performing the extra lighting.

As we light our Chanukah candles this year, let us try to keep this idea in mind, namely that we are performing the mitzvah in its finest state, to push ourselves to be extraordinary in our service of Hashem, in the hopes that Hashem responds *middah k'negged middah*, measure for measure, by continuing to relate to us in a spiritually transcendental manner.

Endnotes

1 Assuming Shabbos was also part of the creation, because the concept of *menucha*, or rest, was created on that day (see Rashi on Bereishis 2:2, and Rashi on *Megilla* 9a).

2 This idea is clear from the seven attributes (1. *Chesed* 2. *Gevurah* 3. *Tiferes* 4. *Netzach* 5. *Hod* 6. *Yesod* 7. *Malchus*) that we focus on during each of the seven weeks of sefirah.

3 In fact we *do* mention the greatness of the miracle of the war extensively, in the *Al HaNissim* prayer.

The Dispute between Beit Shamai and Beit Hillel

A number of Chasidic masters explain that the dispute between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel is not limited to *mehadrin*, but reflects two broader perspectives on Chanukah.

R. Tzvi Hirsch Morgenstern, *Ateret Tzvi* (Chanukah 5669), notes that Beit Shammai prefer to highlight the strength of the miracle of Chanukah, the defeat of the enemy. This occurred on the first day of Chanukah and its impact diminished over time. Therefore, *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is performed to highlight the diminishing strength of the miracle. Beit Hillel prefer to highlight the holiness that resulted from the miracle. Just as the holiness increased each day because of the rededication of the Temple, so too the lights should reflect an increase in holiness.

R. Chaim Halberstam (1793-1876), *Divrei Chaim Al HaTorah, Chanukah* (page 18a), presents a mystical explanation of the dispute. Beit Shammai are focused on strict judgment and their approach tries to remove or diminish any bad judgments or decrees. Lighting in descending order represents removal or diminishment of these judgments. Beit Hillel are focused on mercy and their approach tries to "sweeten" any bad judgments or decrees. This is accomplished by elevating oneself each day. Lighting in ascending order symbolizes that daily elevation.

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By the Light of Half-Stories

The closing chapter of *Masseches Sanhedrin* records the image sketched by Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi of two disabled individuals who could only act in tandem, for one was lame and the other blind. They could only pick fruit if the lame person rode upon the shoulders of the blind one, thereby harnessing the sight of the former and the mobility of the latter:

אמר [רבי], אמשול לך משל ... מלך בשר ודם שהיה לו פרדס נאה והיה בו בכורות נאות, והושיב בו שני שומרים אחד חигר ואחד סומא. אמר לו חигר לסומא, בכורות נאות אני רואה בפרדס, בא והרכיבני ונביאם לאכלם. רכב חигר על גבי סומא והביאום ואכלום.

[Rebbe] said, I will offer a parable ... A king had a nice orchard and there were nice fruit in it. Two watchmen were placed in it, one was lame and one was blind. The lame one said to the blind one, "I see nice fruit in the orchard, come and place me on your shoulders and we can gather them and eat them." The lame one climbed on the blind one, they gathered them and ate them.

Sanhedrin 91a-b

At first glance, this image captures something of the story of Chanuka, for as we learn and study the most ancient texts in our tradition that address the narrative of Chanuka, we discover that — mysteriously — in any one given text, Chazal choose to tell us only one or the other of the two aspects of the story.

The Two Texts

Popularly, the most prominent retelling appears in *Al ha-Nissim* (referenced in *Masseches Shabbas* 24a and *Tosefta*



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Berachos 3:14), which we add to tefilla and *birkas ha-mazon* throughout the eight days of Chanuka:

בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול חשמונאי ובניו פשעמדה מלכות יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשפיקם תורתך ולהעבירם מחקי רצונך ואתה, ברחמיך הרבים, עמדת להם בעת צרתם: רבת את ריבם דנת את דינם נקמת את נקמתם מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים ורבים ביד מעטים ויטמאים ביד טהורים ורשעים ביד צדיקים ויודים ביד עוסקי תורתך ולך עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולמך ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה ופרקן כהיום הזה. ואחר כן, באו בניך לדביר ביתך ופנו את היכלך וטהרו את מקדשך והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך וקבעו שמונת ימי חנכה אלו להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול.

In the days of Mattityahu, son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Chashmonai, and his sons, the wicked Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and violate the decrees of Your will. But You in Your great compassion stood by them in time of their distress. You fought their battles, judged their claim, and avenged their wrong. You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the arrogant into the hands of those who were engaged in the study of Your Torah. You made for Yourself a great and holy name in Your world, and for Your people Israel You performed a great salvation and redemption to this very day. Then Your children entered the holiest

part of Your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, kindled lights in Your holy courts, and instituted these eight days of Chanuka for giving thanks and praise to your great name.

Al ha-Nissim details the overwhelming military odds stacked against the Chashmonaim and the miraculous victories that Hashem granted them despite those odds. It then briefly mentions in closing that the Chashmonaim subsequently returned to the Beis ha-Mikdash and renewed *hadlakas ha-Menora*, but the text of *Al ha-Nissim* gives no indication that lighting the Menora anew involved any miracle.

The miracle of the oil finds its home elsewhere, in *Masseches Shabbas* 21b:

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

What is [the reason for] Chanuka?

For our Rabbis taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev [commence] the days of Chanuka, which are eight on which a lamentation for the dead and fasting are forbidden. For when the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oils, and when the Hasmonean dynasty prevailed

against and defeated them, they made search and found only one cruse of oil which lay with the seal of the High Priest, but which contained sufficient oil for one day's lighting only; yet a miracle happened and they lit [the lamp] for eight days. The following year these [days] were appointed a Festival with [the recital of] Hallel and thanksgiving.

Shabbas 21b (adapted from Soncino Translation)

This *baraisa* exactly inverts the pattern of *Al ha-Nissim*, focusing entirely on the miracle of the oil while omitting any reference to the miraculous nature of the preceding military victory of the Chashmonaim. That victory appears here only in passing, as backdrop to the miracle of the oil.

Why did Chazal bifurcate the narrative of the miracles of Chanuka into two half-stories? Why does *Al ha-Nissim* focus only on one miracle while the *baraisa* in *Shabbas* 21b only on the other?

His Kindness and His Wonders

Tehillim 107 showcases those who

express gratitude in response to Divine help in surviving various hazardous situations.¹ The central description of this human response is one verse that appears four times in this chapter. A careful look at this leitmotif verse may assist us in understanding the puzzle of the two partial narratives of Chanuka:

יְדוּ לוֹה' חֲסִדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם:

Let them give thanks to Hashem for His kindness, and His wonders to people.

Radak 107:8 notes that this brief verse describes presentations to two different audiences: Divine and human. Moreover, Radak and Malbim both highlight that the content of each presentation is differentiated: one thanks Hashem for His *chesed*, His kindness, while to people one speaks of His *nifla'os*, His wonders.

In other words, this verse profiles two distinct verbal responses to Divine intervention in one's life:

Hoda'a — thanking Hashem for His *chesed*, for the help He has provided, whether evidently miraculous or not. The objective of *hoda'a* is gratitude.

Pirsumei nissa — publicizing and disseminating *nifla'os* — impressive, manifestly miraculous events — regardless of whether they were practically helpful or not. The objective of *pirsumei nissa* is demonstrating Hashem and His involvement to ourselves and to others.

Understanding the Two Miracles of Chanuka

From our belief in Hashem as Creator and Sustainer of the universe, it follows logically that any miracle is possible if He wills it.² Nevertheless, Ramban³ posits that Hashem chose to create a rhythmic universe usually governed by the scientific laws and patterns that He created, and therefore He typically chooses to minimize overt *nissim* and to perform them only as necessary to accomplish specific objectives that cannot be attained naturally. Ramban's axiom sets the stage for the question raised by *Penei Yehoshua*⁴ and others⁵: what was the purpose of the *neis ha-shemen*, of the single day's worth of pure oil burning for eight days, if (under emergency

Why Don't We Recite Al HaNissim in Al HaMichya?

When one eats foods (other than bread) that are derived from the seven species that the Land of Israel is praised for (see Devarim 8:8), one recites an abridged version of Birkat HaMazon titled *Beracha Mei'ain Shalosh* (known colloquially as "*Al HaMichya*"). On Shabbat, yom tov and Rosh Chodesh, there is one sentence that mentions the specific day that is being observed. Chanukah and Purim are noticeably absent from this list. Why don't we mention Chanukah or Purim in the *Beracha Mei'ain Shalosh*?

R. Yosef D. Soloveitchik (cited in *Harerei Kedem* Vol. I, page 302), suggests that the additions of Shabbat, yom tov and Rosh Chodesh have a different status than the additions of Chanukah and Purim. On Shabbat, yom tov and Rosh Chodesh, the function of the additions is to mention the day. On Chanukah and Purim, the function of *Al HaNissim* is to provide a more detailed account of

G-d's providence in the *Hoda'ah* (thanksgiving) section of the Amidah and Birkat HaMazon. Therefore, the additions of Shabbat, yom tov and Rosh Chodesh are independent portions of Birkat HaMazon. *Al HaNissim* is not an independent portion of Birkat HaMazon, rather an extension of the *Hoda'ah* section. *Beracha Mei'ain Shalosh*, whose purpose is to provide an abridged version of Birkat HaMazon, abridges all portions of Birkat HaMazon by providing the main idea of each portion. The additions for Shabbat, yom tov, and Rosh Chodesh are independent portions of Birkat HaMazon and are therefore abridged and included in *Beracha Mei'ain Shalosh*. However, *Al HaNissim* is not an independent portion and it is not the main idea of the *Hoda'ah* section. Therefore, it is not mentioned in the *Beracha Mei'ain Shalosh*.

Torah To Go Editors

circumstances) halacha permits using the impure oil that was readily available? Unlike the military *neis ha-milchama*, not only did the *neis ha-shemen* not help us materially, militarily, or politically, strictly speaking it was not even a spiritual or halachic necessity!

Penei Yehoshua suggests that the objective of *neis ha-shemen* was to communicate⁶ His love for His people, amplifying the experience of the preceding *neis ha-milchama*:

נראה דעיקר הנס לא נעשה אלא להודיע להם חיבת המקום עליהם ... והואיל ואיתרחיש להו ניסא בעיקר הענין שנגאלו גאולה שלימה מיד מלכות יון הרשעה ... ועכשיו שנגאלו ונעשה להם נס גדול ששלטו בשונאיהם, לכך נעשה להם ג' כ נס זה בענין הנרות שהוא עדות לישראל שהשכינה שורה בהם.

It seems that the primary miracle was performed to communicate to them His love for them ... since they experienced the primary miracle in that they were fully redeemed from the wicked Greek Empire ... Now that they were redeemed and experienced a great miracle in the defeat of their enemies, for this reason, a miracle was also performed for them regarding the lights, which is a testimony to the Jewish people that the Divine presence rest among them.

Maharal⁷ further adds that the *neis ha-shemen* actually clarified and demonstrated Who was behind the preceding *neis ha-milchama*:

ועוד יש לומר, שעיקר מה שקבעו ימי חנוכה, בשביל שהיו מנצחים את היונים. רק שלא היה נראה שהיה כאן נצחון הזה על ידי נס שעשה זה השם יתברך ולא היה זה מכחם וגבורתם, ולפיכך נעשה הנס על ידי נרות המנורה, שידעו שהכל היה בנס מן השם יתברך, וכך המלחמה שהיו מנצחים ישראל היה מן השם יתברך.

One might also suggest that the primary reason for the celebration of Chanuka is the defeat of the Greeks. However, the victory didn't appear to be a miracle

performed by Hashem rather than their own might and power. Therefore, the miracle of the lights of the Menora happened so that they would know that everything was a miracle from Hashem, including the Jewish military victory.

As in 1967, some might have chosen to insist that the Chashmonai victory was merely coincidental, not Divinely enabled. The purpose of the *neis ha-shemen* was to irrefutably show that He Who miraculously kept the oil burning is also He Who miraculously delivered the Chashmonai victory.

We can now use the language of Tehillim 107 above to reformulate and further refine this new understanding of the two miracles of Chanuka. Only the *neis ha-milchama* can be described as a *chesed*, whereas the *neis ha-shemen* did not actually save us or provide us with any practical assistance or rescue. The *neis ha-shemen* was, however, a *nifla* of the first order, an unmistakable manifestation of the power of Hashem in our world.⁸ It even shed light on our military victories, demonstrating and communicating the Divine Hand behind those victories as well.

Chazal's Two Narratives

With this perspective on the *nissei Chanuka* in mind, consider now the genre and context of Chazal's two narratives of those miracles. *Al ha-Nissim* is an adjunct to *Modim* and to *Node Lecha*, the thanksgiving segments of tefilla and of *birkas hamazon*, respectively. Its purpose is to augment these year-round, universally appropriate expressions of gratitude for ubiquitous Divine assistance with a seasonally-specific *hoda'a*. Accordingly, the focus in giving thanks is for Divine help and assistance, for His *chesed* that saved us on the battlefield.

By contrast, the *baraisa* recorded

in *Masseches Shabbas* 21b is an excerpt of *Megillas Taanis*, an ancient record of improvements to and restoration of the Beis ha-Mikdash or the *avoda* therein (and the *yamim tovim* observed during the period of the *Beis ha-Mikdash* to celebrate those occasions).⁹ *Al ha-Nissim* is our fulfillment of the *yodu la-Shem chasdo* imperative, expressing to Him our gratitude for His *chesed* in the military theater, the *neis ha-milchama*. The Mikdash-centric *Megillas Taanis* treatment of Chanuka, on the other hand, is understandably focused on the *neis ha-shemen*, whose venue was the Menora in the Beis ha-Mikdash.¹⁰

Combining the Two Stories

The personal impact and spiritual import of the Chanuka miracles are fully derived only from the combination of both. The two half-stories work in tandem, much as the two individuals in Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi's sketch accomplish far more collaboratively than either possibly could alone. This two-stage intellectual-spiritual dynamic is elegantly captured by Ramban's coda to his commentary on *parshas Bo* and *yetzias Mitzrayim*:

ומן הנסים הגדולים המפורסמים אדם מודה בנסים הנסתרים, שהם [= הנסים הנסתרים] יסוד התורה כלה. שאין לאדם חלק בתורה משה רבינו, עד שנאמין בכל דברינו ומקרינו שכלם נסים, אין בהם טבע ומנהגו של עולם, בין ברבים בין ביחיד.

Through the great open miracles, one comes to admit the hidden miracles that constitute the foundation of the whole Torah, for no one can have a part in the Torah of Moses our teacher unless he believes that all our words and our events are miraculous in scope, there being no natural or customary way of the world in them, whether affecting the public or the individual.

Adopting and adapting Rabbi Yehuda ha-Nasi's poetry in a positive sense, the "fruits" of Chanuka are effectively plucked only by contemplating both facets of its story, the *pirsumei nissa* of the miraculous Menora shedding her light and clarity upon the subtler yet profound Divine interventions behind the Chashmonai military successes.

May the lights of Chanuka and the recitation of Al ha-Nissim serve to endow us with the gift of the two half-stories of Chanuka, training us to notice and absorb the wonder of the subtle yet ubiquitous involvement of Hashem in our own everyday victories.

יִדְּוּ לָהּ חֶסֶדּוֹ וְנִפְלְאוֹתָיו לְבָנֵי אָדָם:

Let them give thanks to Hashem for His kindness, and His wonders to people.

Endnotes

1 In fact, see *Berachos* 54b that the four situations described therein — sea travel, wilderness travel, illness and imprisonment — constitute the *arba'ah she-tzrichim le-hodos*, the four individuals who offer a *korban*

toda and/or recite *birkas ha-gomel*. The four iterations of *yodu la-Shem chasdo* correspond to the four scenarios, respectively.

2 See Rambam's development of this notion near the end of his *Iggeres Techiyas ha-Meisim* (p. 367, ed. R. Sheilat), where he cites as well his discussion in *More ha-Nevuchim* 2:25.

3 *Devarim* 20:9, and see also 6:16 and *Bereishis* 6:19.

4 *Shabbas* 21b.

5 See *Chacham Tzvi* 87 quoted by R. Yosef Engel in his *Gilyonei ha-Shas* to *Shabbas* 21b.

6 In fact, Ramban himself already indicates that the objective of a miracle might be either practical or communicative (*Devarim* 20:9).

7 *Ner Mitzva* (in his comments to *Shabbas* 21b), quoted in *Sifsei Chayim* (p. 13).

8 In other terms, the *neis ha-shemen* was a *neis nigle* — an "open" miracle, an outright suspension of the principles and patterns of chemistry. The *neis ha-milchama*, though, was a *neis nistar*, a "concealed" miracle not in overt violation of scientific laws or principles.

9 See *Be-ikvei ha-Tzon* 19:2ff.

10 The duality is also expressed halachically in Rambam's formulation of the two primary mitzvos of Chanuka: reciting *Hallel*, lyrical praise upon our salvation (*vide Pesachim* 117a and *Griz Hilchos Chanuka* 3:6), and

lighting Chanuka lights. [See *Hilchos Chanuka* 3:3, in explication of the closing line of the *baraisa*, and consider as well the overall structure of the two *perakim* that comprise *Hilchos Chanuka*.] Chanuka lights are the paradigmatic *pirsumei nissa*.

This duality of *nissim* in the Chanuka narrative, the inception of our Second Commonwealth, might also inversely parallel the pair of sins which drive the tragic story of Gedalya, the very end of the final embers of the First Commonwealth. [The obvious sin, Yishmael's mass murder of Gedalya and many other victims — according to *Malbim* 41:1, driven by jealousy, narcissism, and a jilted sense of entitlement — is emphasized in *Rosh ha-Shana* 18b. *Nidda* 61a focusses on the second, subtler sin: Gedalya's fatally irresponsible refusal to attend to Yochanan's advance warning of Yishmael's murderous intent, in contravention of the rules of *leshon ha-ra le-toeles*.] Certainly, the clarity of *bitachon* taught by the *neis ha-shemen* is a powerful cure for the envy and sense of entitlement that underlay *cheit Yishmael* (per *Emuna u-Vitachon la-Chazon Ish* 2 based upon *Yoma* 38b). Perhaps the Divine restoration of the Jewish sovereignty via *neis ha-milchama* served to undo and invert the lack of communal responsibility and consequent *churban ha-tzibbur* for which Chazal fault Gedalya.

**SACRIFICE
NOTHING**

 Yeshiva University

Appreciation

Two easily missed words in the Talmud's brief discussion of Chanuka may transmit a message of critical importance. As with so many messages of this sort, however, we have to be sensitive enough to notice it.

After briefly describing the Hasmonean victory over the Syrian Greeks and the miraculous longevity of the single cruse of oil, the Talmud states: "*L'shana acheret*, to another year, [the rabbis] established and rendered [these eight days] permanent Festival Days with praise and thanksgiving."¹

The Talmudic record is clear; Chanuka is not established immediately as a festival, but only in conjunction with "another year."



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Faced with this statement, many commentaries adopt a straightforward approach, rendering the phrase "*l'shana acheret*" as "to the next year."

This possibility allows us to easily understand the establishment of Chanuka as a holiday that comes into existence the very next year, once the rabbinic authorities recognize the full significance of the events that have transpired.

If this is the case, however, why doesn't the Talmud use the specific language "*l'shana ha'ba'a*," literally, "to the coming year?" Even if Chanuka is

established only a year later, might the rabbis be teaching us a lesson through their use of the broader phrase "*l'shana acheret*"?

An answer might be gleaned from the powerful observations of Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik concerning a totally different holiday event, the Pesach seder. In discussing the structure of the seder, the Rav identifies three dimensions of "time-awareness" that are essential to the life of each Jew: *retrospection*, *anticipation* and *appreciation*:

A collage of three black and white photographs: a young man playing an acoustic guitar, a young woman wearing safety goggles in a lab setting, and a young man smiling. Overlaid on the right side of the collage is the text "ACHIEVE ANYTHING" in large, bold, white capital letters. Below the collage, on the right, is the Yeshiva University logo and the text "Yeshiva University".

Retrospection refers to man's ability to re-experience the past, to feel deeply that which is only a memory, to transport an event of the distant past into a "creative living experience" of the present...

Memory is more than a storehouse; it can become a present-day experience, a part of the "I" awareness.

Anticipation is man's projection of visions and aspirations into the future... In **anticipation**, man moves from reminiscing to expectation, from memories to visions. To live fulfilling in time requires both a worthy past and a promising future. Time awareness is not only for dreaming... We derive from retrospection the moral imperative to act now in order to realize our visions for the future. The Haggada opens with "Avadim hayinu, we were once slaves (retrospection)" and it concludes with "Nishmat kol Chai, the soul of every living thing," which is an anticipatory vision of the future, moving from hindsight to foresight.

The third time-awareness dimension is **appreciation**, which means valuing the present and prizing each moment as a precious gift. **Retrospection and anticipation are significant only insofar as they transform the present. In every fraction of a second, visions can be realized or destroyed.**² (emphasis added)

Of the three dimensions of time awareness identified by the Rav, he singles out *appreciation* as central, the one dimension that the others are meant to shape. To go one step

further, I would argue that *appreciation* is not only the most central, it is also the most difficult to attain. Within this dimension, we are challenged to view our lives through the lens of history. One hundred, two hundred, five hundred years from now, how will our story, our challenges and our contributions to Jewish life be judged?

To truly appreciate the times in which we live, we must regularly stop to consider, not only the gifts that are uniquely ours, but also the challenges that these gifts carry.

To name a few:

- *Living in a land of unparalleled religious freedom and tolerance, can the committed American Jewish community do more to stem the rising tide of assimilation beyond its walls?*
- *How will the Diaspora community be ultimately judged for continuing to live in a "Diaspora of choice," at a time when our nation has miraculously returned to its homeland after centuries of forced exile?*
- *Exceptional as day school education is, is it enough? Are we inspiring the next generation toward meaningful observance? Can families and communities do more to prepare their children for the challenges of a "free society" on the college campuses and beyond?*
- *Armed with access to political power rarely experienced by our people before, are we using that access wisely? Are we responding aggressively enough to the*

rising anti-Semitism sweeping across Europe and across the globe? Are we adequately attuned to the shifting political winds in America and beyond?

- *In the face of the Jewish community's unparalleled affluence, how can it be that Jewish education has not been made more affordable for all? What more can we do?*

These questions and others reflect the unique nature of our times. Rarely, if ever, has enormous opportunity and overwhelming challenge faced our people, hand in hand, as it does today.

Centuries ago, the Hasmonean revolt saved Judaism, only to ultimately fall victim to its own excesses and lost perspective. Could the Talmud be hinting at one of the reasons? Perhaps if we would have recognized the importance of the Chanuka victories immediately and not "l'shana acheret," we would have retained our footing in a turbulent world. Perhaps if we truly learn in our day to appreciate the gifts Divinely granted to us, this time, we will also successfully rise to appreciate and meet the challenges they bear.

Endnotes

1 Talmud Bavli, *Shabbat* 21b.

2 Besdin, Abraham, *Reflections of the Rav*, vol. 1, *Lessons in Jewish Thought – Adapted from the Lectures of Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (Jerusalem: Jewish Agency, Alpha Press, 1979), pp. 200-201.

The Torah's "Chanukah" Story:

Jews as Minority and the Jewish People as a Nation of Shepherds

For the seventh time in the last 100 years, Chanukah and Christmas fall on the same day. Beyond being a calendar quirk, the coincidence of Chanukah and Christmas — maybe the most publicly-celebrated holidays of Jews and Christians respectively — accentuates our community's cultural standing here in the United States. Indeed, while the cultural embrace of Chanukah surely captures the ascension of Judaism in the American imagination, this calendric coincidence also highlights our continued status as a religious minority in the U.S. — as, to adapt a phrase from the Chanukah liturgy, *me'atim b'toch rabim*, the few among the many. Push comes to shove, we do not celebrate what is, for all intents and purposes, the singular national religious holiday.¹ As a community, we are on the sidelines with our own set of religious symbols, practices and prayers.

While the coinciding of Chanukah and Christmas is somewhat unusual, Chanukah this year falls in its familiar place on the Jewish calendar. As always, of course, it begins on the 25th of Kislev; but Chanukah this year is also, once again, nestled in among the familiar weekly Torah portions that describe Yosef's journey from lowly slave boy to viceroy of Egypt. The story itself is extraordinary, rife with a wide range of theologically significant messages such as the importance



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of religious commitment, personal repentance, and familial reconciliation.

But, in many ways, the overarching story of the second half of Sefer Bereishit is one that highlights our ancient status as a minority nation. Yosef's ascent from slave to royal eventually brings his extended family down to Egypt where they live as a nation within a nation:

וַיָּבֹאוּ מִצְרַיִם יַעֲקֹב וְכָל זֶרְעוֹ אֹתוֹ: בָּנָיו וּבָנֵי בָנָיו אֹתוֹ בְּנֹתָיו וּבְנוֹת בָּנָיו וְכָל זֶרְעוֹ הָבִיא אֹתוֹ מִצְרָיִם.

... [A]nd they came to Egypt, Jacob and all his descendants with him: His sons and his sons' sons with him, his daughters and his sons' daughters and all his descendants he brought with him to Egypt.

Genesis 46:6-7

As a result, Chanukah falls squarely within the *parshiyot* describing what might have been our first — and surely our most nationally significant — experience as a minority nation within a larger host culture. Egypt, at that time, stood as the preeminent civilization in the ancient world. It was the economic center of the world, keeping civilization alive during a time

of famine, as well as the technological and cultural center of the world. Thus, the travel of B'nei Yisrael down to Egypt represented maybe the first time that we, as a burgeoning nation, were truly a nation-within-a-nation that had to think deeply not only about who we were, but about how to maintain our values in the midst of society suffused with a different ideology and a different worldview. And a careful examination of the story makes clear that the Torah is keenly aware of the historical and national significance of this moment — a true *ma'aseh avot siman labanim*, the events of the forefathers are symbolic for their descendants² — which would hold significance not just for biblical times, but for all future times as well.

Accordingly, it is not simply that Chanukah falls out during the weeks we read these *parshiyot*, but these *parshiyot* track the central themes of Chanukah, serving as the Torah's, so to speak, "Chanukah Story"; like the story of the Jews traveling down to Egypt, the Chanukah story depicts a time when B'nei Yisrael were forced

to grapple with its minority status and decide how it would, as a nation, respond to oppression, violence and discrimination leveled against not only its religious practices,³ but also its very identity as a people. In turn, the Egypt story provides us with a glimpse of how our forefathers grappled with these challenges — challenges not only relevant for the ancient Chanukah story, but challenges that remain at the forefront of our collective communal consciousness in the 21st century.

The Torah's Chanukah Story: A Nation of Shepherds

To appreciate the timeless lessons of these *parshiyot*, I would like to focus specifically on how Yosef — the protagonist for much of Sefer Bereishit's Egypt story — approached the challenges presented by B'nei Yisrael moving down to Egypt, and how it provides a biblical blueprint for our own contemporary engagement with the world around us. Consider the context.

Yosef's family arrives in Egypt. And Yosef knows that he will eventually have to introduce them to Pharaoh. Given the importance of this encounter, it isn't surprising that Yosef — by now a sophisticated politician — wanted to prepare his family for their first meeting with Pharaoh. So he tells them, soon you will meet Pharaoh. And he also tells them exactly what it is Pharaoh is going to want to know:

וְהָיָה כִּי־יִקְרָא לָכֶם פַּרְעֹה וְאָמַר מַה־מְעֹשֶׂיכֶם
And when it comes to pass that Pharaoh calls you, he will ask, 'What is your occupation?'

Genesis 46:33

Put in more contemporary language, Pharaoh will want to know “What do you do?” Yosef then tells his family what to say:

וַאֲמַרְתֶּם אִנְשֵׁי מִקְנֶה הָיוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ מִנְעוּרֵינוּ וְעַד־
 עַתָּה גַם־אֲנַחְנוּ גַם־אֲבוֹתֵינוּ

You shall say, 'Your servants have been shepherds from our youth until now. Not only have we been shepherds, but also our ancestors.'

Genesis 46:34

In Egypt, being a shepherd isn't something you would want to readily admit. As Yosef quickly notes, shepherds are despised:

כִּי־תֹעֲבֶת מִצְרַיִם כָּל־רֹעֶה צֹאן
[A]ll shepherds are an abomination to the Egyptians.

Genesis 46:34

The Torah itself doesn't tell us exactly why it is that shepherds are despised in Egypt. But it presumably isn't because shepherds owned sheep. In the very next chapter, the Torah reports that all of Egypt came to Yosef to exchange, among other commodities, their sheep for food.⁴ So the Egyptian revulsion to shepherds can't be that owning sheep is, in and of itself, an abomination.

Instead, as Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch notes earlier in Sefer Bereishit,⁵ it is presumably because Egyptians despised the lifestyle of being a shepherd. Shepherds were nomads, wandering the Earth without the trappings of success. They had no permanent property, which is what Egyptian culture prized. In Egypt, you moved up the caste system to the extent that you were a wealthy landed property owner. And therefore nothing could be more despised than a shepherd.

Indeed, the importance of wealth and property in Egypt is clear from Pharaoh's first question to Yosef's family: “*mah ma'aseichem*” — what do you do? This is what Pharaoh needed to know in order to evaluate Yosef's family — to know where they would

fall in the Egyptian cultural hierarchy. And when they answer shepherds, Pharaoh knows that their place is at the very bottom of Egyptian culture.

Given all of this, one can only imagine that Yosef would feel quite uncomfortable about this anticipated exchange. Yosef had risen to the very top of the Egyptian political machine. His family, as lowly shepherds, would be an embarrassment — and maybe even a reminder to all of Yosef's own origins as a lowly slave brought in chains down to Egypt. As a result, we might have excused Yosef had he told his brothers not to mention that they were shepherds.

But Yosef did nothing of the sort. He instructed his brothers to go before the most powerful man in the ancient world and tell him who they were: shepherds. This insistence should, therefore, come at a bit of a surprise. And it begs the question: why was this so important to Yosef?

The answer begins with what should be obvious by taking a look at Tanach. Clearly, there is something important — something of deep value — about being a shepherd. It isn't just a profession. Avraham, Yitzchok, Yaakov and all of Yaakov's sons are shepherds; Moshe was a shepherd; Dovid Hamelech was a shepherd. Surely this isn't all just happenstance.

Even Hevel was a shepherd, which — as the *Ktav V'Hakablah* notes — is peculiar.⁶ Presumably, there weren't too many people around during the early years of Hevel's life, thereby necessitating him to amass large amounts of sheep.

The *Midrash Rabbah*, in Sefer Shmot,⁷ provides one reason why being a shepherd was a consistent and noteworthy character trait of so many biblical leaders. According

to the midrash, being a shepherd helps develop the compassion necessary for being a leader. Thus, in Sefer Shmot, the midrash recounts that Hashem evaluated Moshe's compassion by looking at how he treated his flock of sheep.

But other commentaries see another component to being a shepherd.⁸ To be a shepherd is not only to demonstrate a deep sense of compassion; it is also to live a life of constant contemplation and reflection. It is to wander with your flock and explore the wonders of God's Earth. Shepherds can take advantage of quiet moments of thought to pursue the internal life of the mind. In so doing, they are nomadic not only in how they roam the Earth; they are intellectual nomads, constantly investigating the great wisdom and splendor of God's universe.

It is thus not surprising that Avraham — who discovered God by exploring the heavens⁹ — was a shepherd. And it is not surprising that the key figures in our tradition across the generations were shepherds, providing the intellectual backbone for our national identity. Shepherds are the searchers and the seekers. They are the ones who want to explore the expanse of the heavens and plumb the depths of the universe to understand God's wisdom. And for this reason, shepherds repeatedly stand at the very center of our nation's long intellectual tradition. They live the life of an intellectual nomad, wandering the universe to unravel its mysteries.

Such a worldview emerged at odds with Egyptian culture. Egypt prized accomplishment, seeing it as a function of permanent wealth. A nation of shepherds prizes exploration, seeing it as a mechanism for understanding and wisdom.

Egypt admired the ephemeral; a nation of shepherds admires the ethereal. And Egypt valued people based upon what they owned. A nation of shepherds values people based upon what they've learned. These two worldviews stood — and for that matter, continue to stand — in diametric opposition. So Egypt viewed shepherds as an abomination, the low man on the social totem pole.

A Search for God's Wisdom: the Shepherd's Many Tents

This is not to say that the shepherd lifestyle does not have its own pitfalls. It may be true that Egyptians were too absorbed with the material world, while shepherds spent their time in the noble pursuit of extracting God's wisdom from the world. But Chazal were keenly aware that the picture was more complicated. Being a shepherd may require valuing the intellectual over the material and dedicating one's life to theological exploration over and above financial achievement.

But to unequivocally pursue the life of a shepherd presents its own dangers. To focus solely on the internal life of the mind has the potential to cut you off from the world. Taken to an extreme, discovery can take the form of becoming self-absorbed and only concerned with one's own thoughts. And in that way, the process of discovery can become so solitary that you fail to learn from others. Thus, a fanatical obsession with the shepherd's lifestyle can undermine one of the key components of true exploration: to engage the world's great intellectual diversity.

Indeed, for Chazal, the process of learning from others is key if we are all to join in becoming a true

nation of shepherds. Chazal were therefore careful to emphasize the importance of intellectual diversity in discovering knowledge in God's world. They made clear that becoming a nation of shepherds meant not only exploring on our own, but doing so in conversation with others.

As an example, consider the following: Yaakov, as we know, was famously referred to as an *ish tam yoshev ohalim*, an innocent man who sat in shepherds' tents.¹⁰ Or, to recharacterize the literal meaning of the verse, Yaakov was an indoors guy, in contrast to Esav, the consummate outdoorsman.

The commentators famously interpret these words in a wide range of ways. But it is first worth considering this description of Yaakov in light of an earlier verse in Bereishit where a marginal character, Yaval, is described as the *avi yoshev ohel umikneh* — the father of those who dwell in tents and have sheep.¹¹ The descriptions of Yaakov and Yaval have some clear similarities. And yet the midrash provides diametrically opposed interpretations. Yaakov is described as someone who spends his days studying Torah — spending some time in the *ohel* of Shem and some in the *ohel* of Ever.¹² By contrast, the midrash accuses Yaval of spending time in his *ohel* engaged in *avodah zarah*.¹³ Why such different interpretations of such similar descriptions?

One difference between the two verses stands out: Yaakov is a *yoshev ohalim*; Yaval is merely a *yoshev ohel*. Yaakov studies with all who can provide wisdom — whether it is Shem or whether it is Ever. He is constantly on the move in his pursuit of knowledge, never satisfied with a solitary search for wisdom. Yaval, by contrast, spends his days in his own tent. Sure, he rejects a

life of purely material pursuit. He does not align himself with an Egyptian worldview typified by Pharaoh's question of "mah ma'aseichem" — what do you do? But at the same time, he is absorbed within his own mind. He does not visit with others or explore the diversity of thought that typifies God's great universe. And this intellectual isolation is why Chazal see him as an idol worshipper. He does, in the end, worship his own mind.

The Minority of All the Nations as a Nation of Shepherds

It is in this way that Chazal's vision of the shepherd emerges as a central metaphor for our national identity. The shepherd leverages the quiet of his profession to contemplate the world. He seeks out God's wisdom, pursuing knowledge and understanding. And yet at the same time, his search is typified by engagement with others. The search would not only be incomplete, but dangerously misguided, if it weren't pursued in conversation with others. To be a true seeker is to chase knowledge wherever it can be found. Becoming a nation of shepherds means being intellectual nomads, wandering wherever knowledge takes you — and visiting many tents in order to pursue wisdom. In sum, to be a shepherd is to embrace a focus on the life of the mind without getting lost in your own mind: to find God's wisdom in the world without forgetting about that world and all that its many inhabitants have to offer.

Success in this mission is difficult. It requires that we neither become obsessed with the material world nor become obsessed with our own thoughts. The problem is that maintaining this balance can often be quite difficult. In fact, this two-fold

objective can pull a minority nation in opposite directions.

One of the reasons for this is because pursuing knowledge as a minority while surrounded by majoritarian culture of materialism requires a singularity of focus. It requires a skepticism of the surrounding majority culture for fear of allowing the world's values to contaminate your own.

But skepticism of the world around you can all too easily lead to an intellectual narrowness; it can lead to the loss of the intellectual nomad that lives at the heart of a nation of shepherds. Or, put differently, it can lead you to stop being a *yoshev ohalim* and to become instead a mere *yoshev ohel* — and thereby become satisfied with your own thoughts, sacrificing intellectual exploration at the altar of theological zealotry. And in so doing, it can lead you to undermine the diversity of thought that is central to a nation of shepherds.

Balancing the pursuit of knowledge with an embrace of intellectual diversity has been a long-standing challenge for the Jewish people. Maybe the best diagnosis of the problem comes from Rabbi Sampson Raphael Hirsch. Addressing a 19th-century audience about the lessons of Chanukah, Rabbi Hirsch proposed as follows:

Let us evaluate, calmly and objectively, our position and our task from the vantage point of a minority . . . We try to make clear to ourselves what dangers must be avoided and what duties we must fulfill if truly we find ourselves relegated to the position of a minority.

And so Rabbi Hirsch began his Chanukah exploration of the Jews as minority, which culminates with the following concern about the future of the Jewish community:

The minority may come to regard . . . "outside" pursuits in themselves as the roots of the spiritual error it deplors in the majority. Eventually it may reach a point where it will fearfully shun all intellectual endeavors other than those directly related to its own philosophy as an enemy of its cause and as a threat to the purity and loyalty of its adherents.¹⁴

Thus, Rabbi Hirsch worried that remaining strong as a minority — as a nation within a nation — might often lead to a deep skepticism of intellectual diversity. It might lead to the rejection of intellectual exploration for the sake of protecting ourselves from outside influences.

But such an outcome is not acceptable. A nation of shepherds not only rejects materialism. And a nation of shepherds not only embraces a life of spirit and intellect. But a true nation of shepherds combs God's great universe for inspiration and knowledge without fear of influence from the outside because to do otherwise — to become narrow as opposed to diverse, closed as opposed to open — would be to reject our extraordinary intellectual heritage. In a word, it would be to reject our identity as a nation of shepherds.

So what should we make of all this? First, our forefathers were not shepherds by happenstance. Being shepherds was more than a profession; it was a lifestyle. It meant a dedication to a life of constant learning and exploration, discovering wisdom wherever it could be found. But here and now in the 21st century, we aren't — to state the obvious — shepherds. So what's the lesson of all this?

It is true that we aren't shepherds. But let us not forget, neither was Yosef. Indeed, Yosef truly experienced some of the very same dilemmas as the

prototypical 21st-century modern Orthodox Jew. He climbed to the very highest echelons of the culture around him; he was held in the greatest of esteem by the Egyptian culture; he was considered wise and was granted extraordinary power. He achieved in all the ways that were valued by the Egyptian majoritarian culture around him.

But none of this changed who he was on the inside.¹⁵ When the moment of truth came, and his family was about to enter Pharaoh's chamber, he had one message for them:

וְאַמְרָתָם אֲנֹשִׁי מִקְנֶה הִיוּ עַבְדֶּיךָ מִנְעוּרֵינוּ
 וְעַד-עַתָּה גַם-אֲנַחְנוּ גַם-אַבְתֵּינוּ — “You tell Pharaoh who we really are and who we always have been.”

“גַם-אֲנַחְנוּ גַם-אַבְתֵּינוּ” — “And you tell him who your father is and who your grandfather was.”

Yosef stares into the eyes of his brothers and he tells them, “We have nothing to be ashamed of.” I don’t care what the world around us thinks. To the contrary, our national heritage is nothing short of extraordinary and should be worn as a badge of honor. Because even as we choose professions that bring us great achievement and acclaim, inside we can remain a nation of shepherds. Our lives in this world are for unlocking the knowledge and wisdom God embedded in his universe. That is our heritage as a nation of shepherds.

This is why the ideological challenge of Egypt so closely tracks the ideological challenge of Chanukah — and remains at the center of our contemporary ideological challenge as we confront the world around us. We are and always have been a minority nation — we are always the *me’atim* confronting the ideologies of the *rabim*. And this status is not a bug; it’s a feature. It is

precisely why Hashem declares his love for us in Sefer Devarim:

לֹא מִרְבָּכֶם מִכָּל הָעַמִּים הָשֵׁק ה' בָּכֶם וַיִּבְחַר
 בָּכֶם כִּי אִתְּם הִמָּעֵט מִכָּל הָעַמִּים:

Not because you are more numerous than any people did the Lord delight in you and choose you, [but] because you are the minority of all the peoples.

Deuteronomy 7:7

As a minority nation with a clear ideological vision, we have the unique ability to navigate a world still typified by two, somewhat contradictory, extremes. On the one hand, we live in a world that is deeply materialistic, apathetic to exploring God’s world of ideas. On the other hand, we live in a world that is ideologically narrow, only willing to engage those ideas it already agrees with. But in between base materialism and intellectual narrowness lies another path — one embodied by a nation of shepherds.

Of course, like Yosef of old, we aren’t actually shepherds. But that does not mean we cannot still remain a nation of shepherds in our hearts and in our souls. Whether as a burgeoning nation in the land of Egypt, a minority nation persecuted by the ancient Greeks, or American Jews living in the 21st century, our collective aspirations have not changed. We look to the heavens to unlock all the various forms of wisdom that God has embedded in this universe. And in so doing, we both eschew the materialism of the world around us, without falling prey to the intellectual narrowness of spiritual zealotry. We build our institutions and our communities to reflect these values — the values of spiritual vitality, philosophical exploration and intellectual diversity. And even as the culture around us all too often vacillates between material achievement and intellectual

narrowness, we remain dedicated to a different set of values. We are, after all, intellectual nomads dedicated to search for God’s wisdom wherever it can be found. And it is in continuing this pursuit that we reclaim our ancient heritage: as *anshei mikneh* — God’s great nation of shepherds. This is the lesson of the Torah’s “Chanukah story.”

Endnotes

- 1 For the percentage of Americans celebrating Christmas, and their motivations for doing so, see Pew Research Center, “Celebrating Christmas and the Holidays, Then and Now” (Dec. 18, 2013), available at <http://www.pewforum.org/2013/12/18/celebrating-christmas-and-the-holidays-then-and-now/#religious-observance-of-christmas>.
- 2 On this concept, see Ramban, *Commentary to Bereishit* 12:6.
- 3 On the persecution of the Jews at the hands of the Greeks, and specifically the Jewish practices targeted by Greek authorities, see *Bereishit Rabbah*, 2:4; Rambam, *Hilchot Chanukah* 3:1.
- 4 Bereishit 46:17.
- 5 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Commentary on Genesis* 4:2.
- 6 Bereishit 4:2.
- 7 Shemot 2:2.
- 8 For an example, see *haKtav v’Hakabalah*, Bereishit 4:2.
- 9 See Rambam, *Mishneh Torah*, *Hilchot Avodah Zara* 1:3.
- 10 Bereishit 25:27.
- 11 Bereishit 4:20.
- 12 Rashi, *Commentary on Bereishit* 25:27 (quoting *Bereishit Rabbah*).
- 13 Rashi, *Commentary on Bereishit* 4:20 (quoting *Bereishit Rabbah*).
- 14 Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Atem haMe’at ‘You Are the Smallest of All’: The Minority, Challenges and Problems*, The Collected Writing of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, Volume 2, page 247.
- 15 On this point, see also Rashi, *Commentary on Shmot* 1:5.

8 Conversations for 8 Nights

A Chanuka Activity for Families

It has often been observed that Chanuka shares a root with *chinuch* (education). In fact, the stories and halachot of Chanuka are rich with opportunities for robust educational conversation both in school and at home.

Each night, families have a tremendous “teachable moment” while sitting by the chanukia. Conversations about themes in Chanuka can help families address topics and share values that sometimes get neglected in the rush of day-to-day life.

1. Making the Effort

After the Maccabees defeated the Syrian-Greeks, and wanted to rededicate the Beit Hamikdash, they famously discovered that they only had enough oil to last for one day, when producing more oil would take eight days. Though the oil was not enough to last, they lit the menorah anyway. They did the best they could.

- Have you ever started something that you didn’t think would succeed?
- Why should we try our best if we are sure that we will not succeed?

[Rabbi Tarfon] used to say: “It is not your responsibility to finish the work, but you are not free to abstain from it either.”

Mishna Avot, 2:16

- How does Rabbi Tarfon’s wisdom apply to the Maccabim?
- If we don’t finish the work, who will? Who “finished the work” of keeping the menorah lit?



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2. Miracles in our Day

On Chanuka, we remember and express our gratitude for two miracles. The miracle of the oil—one day’s worth lasting for eight days—was an act of Hashem suspending the laws of nature. The miracle of the military victory—the few defeating the many—was within the laws of nature.

- Do we still experience miracles today? If so, are they supernatural, or within the laws of nature?
- Do you think the establishment of the State of Israel was miraculous? Why or why not?
- Did you ever have a personal experience that felt miraculous? If so, what was it? Did you express gratitude?

3. The Few Against the Many: Overcoming the Odds

The story of the war between the Maccabim and the Syrian-Greeks is an illustration of how a few brave and strong people, with the help of Hashem, can defeat an overwhelming force.

- Do you ever feel like the odds are stacked against you? To whom do you turn for help?

- What characteristics do you think the Maccabim had that helped them defeat the Syrian-Greeks?
- Did you ever overcome a challenge? How did you do it? How did it feel?

4. Counting Up: Chanuka as a Model for Growth

The Gemara relates that Hillel and Shammai argued over the correct method for lighting the chanukia. According to Shammai, one begins with eight candles, lighting one fewer each night. According to Hillel, one begins with one candle, lighting one more each night. One reason given for Hillel’s position is that we should increase in holiness.

- Why would we not light all eight candles the first night, but gradually add one candle each night?
- What message do you think it would send if we decreased the number of candles each night? How would that change our Chanuka celebration?
- What does it mean to “increase in holiness” and how can we do it?
- How could our method for lighting the chanukia be a model for personal growth?

5. Resisting Peer Pressure: How the Maccabim Embraced Being Different

The Syrian-Greeks sought to destroy the Jews by outlawing Jewish practices. Many Jews assimilated, becoming indistinguishable from the Greeks around them. The Maccabim resisted tremendous pressure to conform, and retained both their Jewish practice and their Jewish pride.

- When it seems like everyone is doing the wrong thing, how do you do what's right?
- What are some things bullies might try to do to make us do things we know are wrong?
- How can we be prepared to respond to peer pressure?

6. Pirsum HaNes: Being a Show Off

The Rambam teaches in *Hilchot Chanuka* that we should light our chanukia in a window or doorway since its purpose is to publicize the miracle.

- When do we want to attract attention and show off? When not?
- What are the right things to show off? What should be kept more private?
- Have you ever felt reluctant to advertise your Judaism?

7. All those Presents!

Recently, exchanging gifts has become an important part of many families' Chanuka celebration. Sometimes, this results in excitement and joy. Sometimes it causes jealousy and greed.

- Why do we give gifts on Chanuka?
- How can we make gift-giving part of the spiritual message of Chanuka?
- What is the best gift you ever received?

- If you could give a gift to your whole family/school/community, what would it be?

8. Enjoying the Moment

We are halachically forbidden to use the lights of the chanukia for anything. We may not use them to do homework, read a book, or wash dishes. We are supposed to enjoy their light. There is a widespread custom (especially among women) to refrain from work for at least the first half hour that the chanukia lights burn.

- As a family, do we find enough time to stop and enjoy? Are we too busy?
- Does everything have to have a "use" or is it good to have things just to appreciate?

Adapted from the Benjamin and Rose Berger Torah To-Go®, Chanukah 5772.



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The Shirt Off Your Back: A Chanukah Message

Chanukah is a holiday highlighted by fun, especially with its amusing customs such as dreidels, latkes, *kvitlach* (a card game) and gift-giving. This seems to have long been the case, as Rambam explains:

מצות נר חנוכה מצוה חביבה היא עד מאד.

The mitzvah of kindling Chanukah lamps is very beloved.

Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megillah and Chanukah 4:12

And yet there exist more profound lessons embedded in the festival's traditions that pique one's curiosity. Rambam records a striking rule that provides meaningful insight into some of Chanukah's interesting themes and traditions:

אפילו אין לו מה יאכל אלא מן הצדקה שואל

או מוכר כסותו ולוקח שמן ונרות ומדליק.

Even if a person has no resources for food except [what he receives] from charity, he should pawn or sell his garments and purchase oil and lamps to kindle them [in fulfillment of the mitzvah].

Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megillah and Chanukah 4:12

There are many Torah-mandated laws and rules for which one would *not* be required to sell his or her clothing to achieve fulfillment; why does this rabbinically-enacted commandment — lighting the menorah — require such a radical action? In most cases, even if he or she wanted to, a person of limited means is prohibited from going to this extreme:



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כל המפזר ממונו במצוות, אל יפזר יותר מחומש.

A person who distributes his money for mitzvot should not distribute more than a fifth.

Mishneh Torah, Laws of Arachim Vacharamim 8:13

In fact, for only one other mitzvah does Rambam require a poor person to take such drastic measures: the four cups of wine drunk at the Passover seder. Rambam states:

ואפילו עני המתפרנס מן הצדקה לא יפחתו לו מארבעה כוסות.

Even a poor person who is sustained by charity should not have fewer than four cups.

Mishneh Torah, Laws of Chametz U'Matzah 7:7

Clearly then, this requirement represents something fundamentally unique about both mitzvos, and unites them in their distinctiveness.¹

In approaching a holiday established through the *Torah she-baal peh* (the Oral Law) such as Chanukah, we might look to our earliest compendium of Oral Law, the Mishna, for guidance. However, there exists neither a tractate nor even a full chapter about Chanukah, whereas other holidays such as Purim are

well represented. In fact, Chanukah's details appear tangentially in just a few pages of the volume relating to the laws of Shabbos (*Shabbos*, 21a-23b).

Thus, our analysis begins with a general rule regarding the relationship between Torah and rabbinic laws:

כל דתקון רבנן כעין דאורייתא תיקון.

Whatever the Rabbis enacted, they enacted it similar to the Scriptural Law.

Pesachim 116b

Based on this principle, it is striking that the rabbinically-mandated holiday of Chanukah shares an astounding number of similarities with the Torah-based holiday of Sukkos.

1. On a superficial level, both holidays are eight days. *Maccabees* 2, in the tenth chapter, notes that the original Chanukah celebration took place because the Jews missed Sukkos that year due to the siege of Jerusalem and the temporary loss of the Beis Hamikdash.

2. On Sukkos, there is a mitzvah to dwell in a sukkah, which is a mitzvah that relates to the house. On Chanukah, the mitzvah to light candles is a mitzvah on the house as well — מצותה שיהיה כל בית ובית מדליק

I would like to thank my chaver Nachman Calko for asking the question that prompted these thoughts and R' Eliezer Barany for his research that supported the various directions I sought in this analysis.

נר אחד — the mitzvah is that a single candle should be lit in each and every house, as we shall soon see from Rambam.

3. On Sukkos the *korbanos*, sacrifices, are *chalukin bekorbanoseihem*, differentiated in number by their days — we decrease their number every day; so too, the candles lit on each day of Chanukah are differentiated in number, and we increase their number every day.

4. On Sukkos, we take four species that are *mehudar*, or extra beautiful. In fact, the Torah description of the *esrog* is *pri etz hadar*, a beautiful fruit (Vayikra 23:40). On Chanukah, we have a very special occasion where the *mehudar* way to do the mitzvah is built into the mitzvah itself. Rambam states:

כמה נרות הוא מדליק בחנוכה. מצותה שיהיה כל בית ובית מדליק נר אחד בין שהיו אנשי הבית מרובין בין שלא היה בו אלא אדם אחד. והמהדר את המצוה מדליק נרות כמנין אנשי הבית נר לכל אחד ואחד בין אנשים בין נשים. והמהדר יותר על זה ועושה מצוה מן המובהר מדליק נר לכל אחד בלילה הראשון ומוסיף והולך בכל לילה ולילה נר אחד.

How many candles should one light on Chanukah? The mitzvah is that a single candle should be lit in each and every house, regardless of whether there are many members of the household, or merely one person [lives] there. A person who performs the mitzvah in a beautiful and conscientious manner should light candles for every member of the household, whether male or female. A person who is even more conscientious in his performance of the mitzvah than this and observes the mitzvah in the most desirable manner should light candles for every member of his household, a candle for each individual, whether male or female, on the first night. On each subsequent night, he should add a

candle [for each of the members of the household].

Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megillah and Chanukah 4:1

5. Another point of comparison between Sukkos and Chanukah relates to the prohibition to benefit from the Chanukah lights. By contrast, the purpose of lighting candles on Shabbos is directly related to our need to use them. The Sukkos festival again sheds “light” on this strange phenomenon, as formulated by the *Tur*:

לא צונו לעשות סוכה באותו הזמן לפי שהוא ימות הקיץ ודרך כל אדם לעשות סוכה לצל ולא היתה ניכרת עשייתנו בהם שהם במצות הבורא יתברך ולכן צוה אותנו שנעשה בחדש השביעי שהוא זמן הגשמים ודרך כל אדם לצאת מסוכתו ולישב בביתו ואנחנו יוצאין מן הבית לישב בסוכה בזה יראה לכל שמצות המלך היא עלינו לעשותה.

We were not commanded to make a sukkah during that time (Nissan) because that is summertime, and it is the way of man to make a sukkah for shade, and it would not be apparent that our making them (building a sukkah) is due to the commandment of the Creator, He should be blessed. And therefore, He commanded us to make [sukkahs] in the seventh month (Tishrei), which is the rainy season, and the way of man is to leave the sukkah and return to his house, and we go out of the house to return to the sukkah, and in this, everyone sees that it is a commandment of the King that it is on us to do.

Tur, Orach Chaim no. 625

It would seemingly have been more appropriate to establish Sukkos during Nissan, since we dwell in a sukkah in order to remember the Exodus (Vayikrah 23:43):

למען ידעו דורותיכם כי בסוכות הושבתי את בני ישראל בהוציא אותם.

In order that your [ensuing] generations

should know that I had the children of Israel live in booths when I took them out of the land of Egypt.

However, the *Tur* states that we inhabit the sukkah in the beginning of the fall in order to demonstrate that we are not doing so simply for enjoyment, but for a mitzvah purpose. We celebrate Chanukah as well by lighting candles not simply for enjoyment, but for a mitzvah purpose!

What, then, is the purpose of this mitzvah?

In order to answer, we must note a sixth similarity between Chanukah and Sukkos:

6. As the *Tur* noted, we leave our houses for the sukkah for a more profound reason than enjoyment, i.e. to inspire within us the proper realization that even our houses are not secure. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks termed the holiday as “The festival of insecurity” (Sukkot 5774) for that very reason. Robbers, natural disasters, and accidents illustrate this very notion that in actuality, it is Hashem who rules the world. As Aldous Huxley wrote, “Experience



is not what happens to you. It is what you do with what happens to you.” Experiencing a week of living in a temporary dwelling without security helps inculcate that very message. So too, on Chanukah, we publicize to the entire world that Hashem runs the show; He is the one who turns on and off the lights, as it were.

What, then, provides the impetus for us to sell the very shirts off our backs in order to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting candles on Chanukah? *Pirsumei nissah* — spreading the knowledge of Hashem’s awesome and miraculous realities — as we pray in the blessing of Modim in the Amida, *she-bechol eys erev va-voker va-tzahorayim*, every moment, evening, morning and afternoon, we recognize His intervention within the world.

This explanation also helps to clarify the link between lighting Chanukah candles and drinking four cups of wine at the Pesach seder. *Maggid Mishneh* explains why the same rule regarding the four cups applies to Chanukah lights:

נראה שלמדו ממה שנתבאר פ' ז' מהלכות
חמץ ומצה שאפילו עני שבִּישְׂרָאֵל לא יפחות

Those who might be lacking monetarily actually have a lot to give, and have something important to offer, in that they can spread the knowledge of Hashem’s miraculous nature to the world.

מד' כוסות והטעם משום פרסומי ניסא.

It appears that it is derived from what is explained in the seventh chapter of the Laws of Chametz and Matzah that even a poor person in Israel should not have less than four cups, and the reason is to publicize the miracle.

Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megillah and Chanukah 4:12

As *Maggid Mishneh* explains, the institution of lighting candles on Chanukah is in fact derived from the four cups, as a display of the miracles Hashem performed for us. Based on this, one might inquire why we would not be required to sell our clothes in order to live in a sukkah? There are two possible responses, one technical and the other fundamental:

1. Halachically speaking, the concept of *teishvu k'ein taduru*, to dwell in a sukkah like you live in your house (*Sukkah* 28b), requires us to live in our sukkah the same way we would in our houses, which might preclude the option of selling our clothing.

2. The purpose of living in a sukkah is to bring about change *within* the person; however, Chanukah lights and drinking four cups of wine at the seder are other-focused, meant for us to influence others and not just ourselves.

Based on the latter explanation we can now understand the unique nature of both of these mitzvos: they provide the archetype for our responsibility to the world and not just to ourselves through the performance of Hashem’s will.

The phrase *giving the shirt off your back* implies a generous act; on the other hand, one who *doesn't even have a shirt on his back* suggests impoverishment. While the former often denotes someone who is monetarily able to

provide for others, and the latter refers to someone who is downtrodden and generally lacks the means to help others, with respect to the halachos herein discussed, an unusual permutation of the two arises. Indeed, regarding the requirement of the poor with respect to both Chanukah lighting as well as the seder’s four cups, halachah demands the personal generosity of the poor person! The lesson: those who might be lacking monetarily actually have a lot to give, and have something important to offer, in that they can spread the knowledge of Hashem’s miraculous nature to the world.

Thus, Chanukah is not just about taking the shirt off your back to put food on your own table — but rather to share Hashem’s message with the world. In order to encourage the world, one must be other-person focused, not just centered on oneself. As John Quincy Adams noted: “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.” This Chanukah, as we light, we may be focused on our own lacks and limitations, but let us remind ourselves to take the opportunity to inspire the world as leaders, spreading Hashem’s message of miraculous opportunities.

Endnotes

1. The *Mishna Berurah*, *Bei'ur Halacha* 263:2, writes that one must also sell the shirt off of one’s back in order to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Shabbos candles. However, that seems to be a function of *shalom bayis*, the domestic tranquility that is provided by having a home with lights, rather than a function of the mitzvah itself. See *Mishneh Torah, Laws of Megillah and Chanukah* 4:14, and *Minchas Asher*, Chanukah no. 13.

Repetition of the Final Verses of Hallel:

If Dovid Hamelech Didn't, Why Should We?

Chanukah and Hallel are linked. Not only do we say the full Hallel all eight days, but when Rambam decided where within his meticulously-ordered *Mishneh Torah* he would place the laws of Hallel, he chose the section on Chanukah.¹

One curious feature of Hallel is that the series of verses at the end are repeated. The practice is so ubiquitous that, according to Rav Ovadia Yosef, it extends today even to members of the Edot HaMizrach community, despite its historical identification as the custom of Ashkenazim, not Sefaradim.²

The basis for repeating the verses is a Gemara in *Sukka*, which we will explain shortly. That Gemara and the custom to repeat certain verses in Hallel are not without problems, according to Rav Soloveitchik (as recorded in the notes from his shiurim).³ In this essay, we will present the Rav's question, his resolution, and a suggestion as to how to possibly resolve an issue not addressed there.

Before we get to the Rav's question, let us look at the Rambam. Like the Mishna in *Sukka*, Rambam says that the repeating is a custom only of some communities and that those that have the practice may continue.⁴ Unlike the Mishna, Rambam then says explicitly that communities whose custom is to *not* repeat should continue to *not* do so.⁵



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Why the reservation? The Rav suggests that it's tied to Gemarot in *Megilla* 18a⁶ and *Berachot* 33b.⁷ There, the Gemara says it is forbidden, within tefilla, to add to the praise of HaKadosh Baruch Hu. We are permitted to say what was formally included in tefilla by the great figures of the past, but not to go beyond that. And that is the basis for understanding, according to the Rav, a dispute in *Sukka* 39a as to which verses in Hallel may be repeated and which ones not:

תנא רבי כופל בה דברים רבי אלעזר בן פרטא מוסיף בה דברים מאי מוסיף אמר אביי מוסיף לכפול מאדוך ולמטה

A Tanna taught: Rabbi "doubles" certain phrases in Hallel. R' Elazar ben Perata adds words. What does he add? Abaye said: He additionally "doubles" from odecha and onward.

Sukka 39a

Rashi explains that Rebbe repeated the following verses in Hallel:

אָנָּה ה' הוֹשִׁיעָה נָּא אָנָּה ה' הַצְלִיחָה נָּא. בְּרוּךְ הַבָּא בְּשֵׁם ה' בְּרִכְנוּכֶם מִבֵּית ה'. א-ל ה' וְיִאָּר

לָנוּ אֱסָרוּ חַג בְּעִבְתִּים עַד קִרְנוֹת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ. א-לִי אֲתָה וְאוֹדֶךָ אֱלֹהֵי אֲרוֹמָמְךָ. הוֹדוּ לָהּ כִּי טוֹב כִּי לְעוֹלָם חֲסִדוֹ.

Please Hashem save now! Please Hashem make us prosper now! Blessed be he that comes in the name of Hashem; we bless you out of the house of Hashem. Hashem is God, He illuminated for us; bind the sacrifice with chords, to the horns of the altar. You are my God, and I will give thanks to You; You are my God, I will exalt You. Give thanks to Hashem, for He is good, for His kindness endures forever.

R' Elazar went further, repeating (as we do) also the verses that precede the ones above:

אוֹדֶךָ כִּי עָנִיתָנִי וְתָהִי לִי לִישׁוּעָה. אָבִן מִאֲסוּר הַבּוֹנִים הָיְתָה לְרֹאשׁ פֶּנֶה. מֵאֵת ה' הָיְתָה זֹאת הִיא נִפְלְאָת בְּעֵינֵינוּ. זֶה הַיּוֹם עָשָׂה ה' נִגְלָה וְנִשְׁמָחָה בּוֹ.

I will give thanks to You, for You have answered me, and You have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This is Hashem's doing; it is wondrous in our eyes. This is the day that Hashem has made; we will rejoice and

be glad in it.

Where would the idea come from to repeat verses in Hallel? Rashi explains: the idea is from Dovid HaMelech himself, for Tehillim 118, the source of these verses, is itself a series of couplets. R' Elazar and Rebbe's dispute is only in regards to *how much* should be repeated. Or, more specifically, *which* verses may be repeated and which ones may not.

With this, we come back to the Rav.

The Rav asked: Given Rashi's reason, that Tehillim 118 is itself a series of couplets, why wouldn't Rebbe — and not just R' Elazar ben Perata — start the repeats from *odecha* (I will give thanks to You)?

The Rav answered: The section beginning with *odecha* expresses praise; the next section, beginning with *ana Hashem* is not praise, but supplication and prayer. Expressions of praise may not be added to, as per the Gemarot in *Megilla* and *Berachot*. Those of supplication and prayer, however, *may* be added to.

What is the Rav's proof that prayer and supplication are an exception: Moshe Rabbeinu's pleas to forgive the Jewish people for the sin of the golden calf:

וַתִּתְנַפֵּל לִפְנֵי ה' כְּרַאשֹׁנָה אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם
וְאַרְבָּעִים לַיְלָה לֶחֶם לֹא אָכַלְתִּי וּמַיִם לֹא
שָׁתִיתִי עַל כָּל חַטֹּאתֶיךָ אֲשֶׁר חָטָאתָם לַעֲשׂוֹת
הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי ה' לְהַכְעִיסוֹ.

Then I threw myself down before Hashem as I did at first, for forty days and forty nights...

Devarim 9:18

For forty days straight, Moshe Rabbeinu threw himself to the ground and prayed. It was not one continuous prayer, but the same prayer, repeated 40 times, according to the Rav. [This is consistent with *Sefer Panim Yafos*,

written by Rav Pinchas Horowitz, author of *Sefer Hafla'ah*.⁸]

Rebbi, then, felt that Hallel's words of supplication and prayer may be repeated, but those of praise should not, due to the limitations set by the Gemarot in *Megilla* and *Berachot*: that it is *forbidden* to repeat praises of God.

The notes from the Rav's shiur conclude with the explanation presented above.

We are left with the question of why R' Elazar ben Perata disagreed, maintaining that it is indeed proper to add from *odecha*, despite the Gemarot in *Megilla* and *Berachot* seemingly telling us otherwise.

I would like to offer a suggestion, based on the *Levush* and Meiri.

Referring to the repetition of phrases in Hallel, *Levush* writes:

וכל זה אינו אלא מנהג בעלמא, ועיקר טעמא
הוא ליפות הקריאה ולהגדיל שבח הש"י
ולהודו בשירו על רוב חסדיו אשר עשה ועושה
עמנו...

All of this is nothing more than minhag. Its main rationale is to enhance the reading, heighten praise to Hashem, and thank Him through Dovid HaMelech's poetry for His abundance of kindness He does with us.

The *Levush* understands Rebbe to say that the practice to repeat from *odecha* until the end of Hallel is to amplify and beautify the *shevach*, praise composed by Dovid.

This suggestion of the *Levush* is perplexing, since he defines the last nine verses of Hallel as classical *shevach*. We are then forced to wrestle with Rav Soloveitchik's question: How can one attempt to offer more *shevach* than was offered by Dovid HaMelech himself?

I believe we might have an answer in the Meiri, whose commentary to Tehillim 118 divides what we know as chapter 118 into three chapters (117, 118, and 119). The first (his 117) comprises *Hodu* through *yomru na yirei Hashem*. The second (his 118) begins at *min hametzar* through *zeh hayom*. His next chapter (his 119) starts with *ana Hashem* through *hodu LaShem*.

With our 118 now divided into three distinct sections, Meiri shows how each section (for him, separate chapters) encapsulates a unique theme.

The theme of his 117 is Klal Yisrael's rejoicing that Dovid has ascended to the throne. The theme of his 118 is the improbability — and even implausibility — that this ascent occurred at all. It could only have been the hand of Hashem, declared Dovid.

We now arrive at Meiri's comments to his 119:

אנא ה' זה המזמור נאמר לימות המשיח
מתפלל שיושיעם מצרת הגלות ובצאתם
יצליחם הצלחה אמיתית לדעת את ה' מקטנם
ועד גדולם ולהיות כלם מתהפכים שפה אחת
דברים אחדים לקרוא כולם בשם ה'.

This Psalm references Messianic days and we pray that Hashem save us from the persecutions of exile and that we will be truly successful during the Messianic Era for both old and young to know Hashem. Everyone will change and use a common language to call out in unison in the name of Hashem.

Rav Soloveitchik has identified the final verses of Hallel, the ones used by Rebbe, as expressions of supplication and prayer. Meiri teaches us what those prayers were *for*: That Hashem save us from the persecutions of exile and bring us to a Messianic Era where everyone will know Hashem.

Perhaps we now have an explanation of R' Elazar's perspective: Dovid HaMelech's unlikely rise, for which Klal Yisrael is so grateful, could not have been anything other than the hand of Hashem. Dovid, once a shepherd, was prophetically promised a seemingly unlikely rise to greatness and he is now a king. Having witnessed Dovid's astonishing change of fortune, Klal Yisrael was now reassured that the promise of Messianic redemption would certainly be actualized.

R' Elazar saw fit to double the verses not because he saw fit to repeat them, but because he didn't see them as saying the same thing twice. The first recitation was as thanks for the rise of Dovid HaMelech. The second, rather than a repetition, was as thanks for the confidence Klal Yisrael could now have for the days of Mashiach.

Rambam expresses a similar thought, in his introduction to *Mishneh Torah*. After identifying and listing the 613 mitzvot given at Sinai, he discusses the role of the Rabbis. Their fleshing out the details of the 613 also has the status of Torah Law, he says, as it was rooted in traditions passed down from Sinai. The Rabbis had another role, he says, which was to innovate and legislate post-Sinai "Rabbinnic" mitzvot. Examples, he says, are Megilla and Chanukah.

To what purpose were these innovations?

שהנביאים עם בית דין תקנו וצו לקרות המגלה בעונתה כדי להזכיר שבחיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא ותשועות שעשה לנו והיה קרוב לשועינו, כדי לברכו ולהללו וכדי להודיע לדורות הבאים שאמת מה שהבטיחנו בתורה כי מי גוי גדול אשר לו אלהים קרובים אליו כה' אלקינו בכל קראנו אליו.

The prophets and the courts ordained and commanded that the Megilla be

*read at its [appointed] time in order to recall the praise of the Holy One, blessed be He, the salvation He wrought for us, and his response to our cries, so that we will bless Him, extol Him, and inform the future generations of the truth of the Torah's promise (Devarim 4:7): "What nation is so great that it has God close to it..."*⁹

The Rabbis initiated certain mitzvot so that we recall the praise of Hashem, the salvation He wrought for us and His response to our cries, so that we will bless Him, extol Him, and inform the future generations of the truth of the Torah's promise.

The Rambam says this last detail about Megilla, but I believe he would apply it to Chanukah and its Hallel as well, given that in his *Mishneh Torah*, Rambam groups the laws of Chanukah and Megilla together.

So, as we recite Hallel eight days of Chanukah, and particularly as we double the final verses in Hallel, let us have in mind to emphasize the confidence we have in Hashem to fulfill His promises to His people, "to recall the praise of the Holy One, blessed be He, the salvation He wrought for us, and his response to our cries, so that we will bless Him, extol Him, and inform the future generations of the truth of the Torah's promise (Devarim 4:7): "What nation is so great that it has God close to it..."

Endnotes

- 1 Rambam, *Hilchot Megillah UChanukah* ch. 3
- 2 Yabia Omer, *Orach Chaim* 6:5:
וכיום אנו נוהגים לכפול מאורך ולמטה עד סוף ההלל, וזה כמנהג אשכנז, שהובא בטור (סי' תכב), ושלא כמנהג ספרד המובא בטור שם, אף על פי שמרן הב' להסביר טעם מנהג ספרד בזה. ע"ש.

Today, our practice is to repeat from odecha until the end of Hallel. This is the Ashkenazic tradition recorded in Tur (no. 422) and not like

the Sefaradic tradition recorded in Tur, even though [R. Yosef Karo] in Beit Yosef explained the Sefaradic tradition.

3 Reshimot Shiurim, Sukka 39a.

4 Mishna, Sukka ch. 3:

מקום שנהגו לכפול לפשוט יפשוט לברך אחריו
יברך אחריו הכל כמנהג המדינה:

In a place where the tradition is to repeat, one should repeat; to recite once, one should recite once; to recite a blessing afterward, one should recite a blessing. Everything follows local tradition.

5 Rambam, *Hilchot Megillah UChanukah* 3:11:
ומקום שנהגו לכפול יכפול ומקום שנהגו שלא לכפול אין כופלין.

In a place where the tradition is to repeat, one should repeat and in a place where the tradition is not to repeat, one should not repeat.

6 Megillah 18a:

מכאן ואילך אסור לספר בשבחיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא ... אמר רבה בר בר חנה אמר רבי יוחנן: המספר בשבחיו של הקדוש ברוך הוא יותר מדאי נעקר מן העולם.

More than that, one may not speak of the praises of the Holy One Blessed be He ... Rabbah bar bar Chana said in the name of R. Yochanan: One who speaks of too much praise of the Holy One Blessed be He is uprooted from the world.

7 Berachot 32b:

אנן הני תלת דאמרין אי לאו דאמרניהו משה רבינו באורייתא ואתא אנשי כנסת הגדולה ותקנינהו בתפלה לא הוינן יכולין למימר להו ואת אמרת כולי האי ואולת. *The three praises that we mentioned (gadol—great, gibor—mighty, nora—awesome), if not for the fact that Moshe Rabbeinu said them in the Torah and the Men of the Great Assembly instituted them into the prayers, we would not be permitted to say them, and you want to say more?*

8 Panim Yafot, Devarim 9:18.

9 Minyan HaMitzvot of Rambam, translation by Rabbi Eliyahu Touger, as posted to Chabad.org



How Many are there, Really?

Counting the Mitzvos of Chanukah and Purim

In the *koseres*, or header, to *Hilchos Megillah VaChanukah* in the *Yad HaChazakah*, the Rambam posits:

יש בכללן שתי מצות עשה מדברי סופרים ואינן מן המניין.

The laws of Megillah and Chanukah include two positive mitzvos established by the Rabbis, which are not included among the 613 mitzvos of the Torah.

This seemingly innocuous line becomes troubling when the rest of *Hilchos Megillah VaChanukah* is taken into account.¹ A simple tally shows that six mitzvos are mentioned by the Rambam in *Hilchos Megillah VaChanukah*: *krias hamegillah*, *mishteh*, *mishloach manos*, *matanos l'evyonim*, *hadlakas neiros Chanukah*, and Hallel. The *koseres* states that only two mitzvos will be discussed, while the Rambam in fact presents six — including the mitzvah of Hallel, a mitzvah that applies to holidays throughout the year — in the halachos that follow.

The answer lies within the foundational basis of the six aforementioned obligations. By identifying the two underlying objectives — and the rationale behind them — it is possible to group the array of commandments into two baskets, with each of the components driving at the same goal. In order to do this, we must take an individual look at each of the mitzvos.

In answering why those who do not understand *Lashon HaKodesh* (Hebrew) can still fulfill *krias hamegillah* in Hebrew, the Gemara in *Megillah* presents an incomplete resolution:



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מצות קריאה ופרסומי ניסא הכא נמי מצות קריאה ופרסומי ניסא.

[With regards to] krias hamegillah and pirsumei nisa (publicizing the miracle), in [the case where a listener did not understand what was being read,] he still fulfills the mitzvah of krias hamegillah and pirsumei nisa.

Megillah 18a

Rashi is bothered by the fact that the Gemara rules that they have fulfilled the obligation of *pirsumei nisa*, since publicizing at the very least connotes an understanding of the miracle on the part of the listener, which is absent if the listener does not understand Hebrew. Rashi explains that listeners who don't understand the words of the megillah as it is being read will at least ask others for an explanation of what they are hearing, and in this way will become familiarized with the story of the miracle of Purim. Through this knowledge, they are naturally involved with, and therefore fulfill *pirsumei nisa* and consequently, *krias hamegillah*.

In regard to *neiros Chanukah*, the Rambam describes a situation in which the person who lit the candles would not fulfill the mitzvah:

גַּרְתָּ חֲנֻכָּה שֶׁהֵנִיחוּ לְמַעַלָּה מֵעֶשְׂרִים אַמָּה לֹא עָשָׂה כְּלוּם לְפִי שֶׁאֵינּוּ נִכָּר.

A person who lit Chanukah candles at a height of least twenty amos (30-40

feet) above the ground has not fulfilled his obligation because the candles are not easily observable.

Hilchos Chanukah 4:7

Rashi states explicitly in *Shabbos* 22b, that if the candles are lit at such a height that passersby fail to notice or identify the candles, the candles fail to serve their purpose, namely publicizing the miracle of Chanukah. Once they lose this capacity, they can no longer be used to fulfill *pirsumei nisa* and, accordingly, the mitzvah of lighting *neiros Chanukah*.

In both cases, it is evident that one who fails to properly achieve the necessary level of *pirsumei nisa* also fails to fulfill *krias hamegillah* and *neiros Chanukah*. In other words, *pirsumei nisa* — which at the very least entails the performer's recognition of the miracle — is essential to the fulfillment of the mitzvah. The obligations of *krias hamegillah* and *neiros Chanukah* are merely vehicles used to properly express and execute the mitzvah of *pirsumei nisa*. They serve as halachic formulations and formalizations of the underlying obligation, namely *pirsumei nisa*. *Pirsumei nisa* is basket number one, *krias hamegillah* and *neiros Chanukah* its two constituents.²

In order to form basket number two, the root cause of the remaining four

mitzvos — *mishteh*, *mishloach manos*, *matanos l'evyonim* and *Hallel* — must be identified.

After explaining the halachos of megillah, the Rambam goes on to describe the obligation of feasting:

פיצד חובת סעודה זו. שיאכל בשר ויתקן סעודה נאה כפי אשר תמצא ידו. ושותה יין עד שישתכר ויגדלם בשכרותו. וכן חייב אדם לשלח שתי מנות בשר או שני מיני תבשיל או שני מיני אכלין לחברו שנאמר (אסתר ט-יט) "ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו", שתי מנות לאיש אחד. וכל המרבה לשלח לרעים משבח. ואם אין לו מחליף עם חברו זה שולח לזה סעדתו וזה שולח לזה סעדתו כדי לקיים ומשלוח מנות איש לרעהו:

What is the obligation of feasting? One must eat wine and prepare a nice meal in accordance to what he can afford, and should drink wine until he falls asleep from his drunkenness. And similarly, there is an obligation to send two portions of meat or cooked food or any ready to eat food, as it says in Megillas Esther, "and the sending of portions between friends" portions implies two per person. Whoever sends a lot of portions to friends is praiseworthy. If he does not have enough [money to do so] he can swap meals (needed for the obligation of mishteh) with a friend in order to fulfill his obligation of mishloach manos.

Hilchos Megillah 2:15

The halachos of *mishloach manos* are put in the same paragraph as the halachos of *mishteh*. To connect the two, the Rambam uses the word "v'chen" — and similarly — which connotes a continuation of the halachos of *mishteh*. Furthermore, *mishloach manos* must be food that is ready to eat, because if it is not, the person who received it cannot use it for his *seudah*. Two people can exchange their *seudos* and thereby fulfill their obligation of *mishloach manos*.

All of this points to the conclusion that *mishloach manos* is an outgrowth of *mishteh*. Each is a mitzvah in its own right, yet the two share the same fundamental purpose. In other words, *mishloach manos* is an extension of *mishteh*, and therefore should share its thematic underpinnings, whatever they may be.

The famous Rambam in *Hilchos Shvisas Yom Tov* explains the requirement for enjoying a feast through meat and wine:

אין שמחה אלא בבשר ואין שמחה אלא בייין. *There is no simcha (happiness) where there is no meat and wine.*

Hilchos Shvisas Yom Tov 6:18

The halachic requirement of enjoying meat and wine is the very definition of *mishteh*, and clearly stems from the halachic requirement of *simcha*. *Simcha* is not merely one of the pleasant effects of *mishteh*, but rather its purpose and motive. It follows, then, that *mishloach manos*, a corollary of *mishteh*, is grounded in *simcha* as well.

The connection between *simcha* and *matanos l'evyonim* is highlighted beautifully by the Rambam, as he explains that *matanos l'evyonim* takes monetary priority over the *mishteh* and *mishloach manos*:

אין שם שמחה גדולה ומפארה אלא לשמח לב עניים ויתומים ואלמנות וגרים.

There is no greater, more splendid joy than gladdening the hearts of the poor, the orphans, the widows, and the converts.

Hilchos Megillah 2:17

Matanos l'evyonim is not merely a new name for the mitzvah of *tzedakah*. The goal of giving on Purim is to enhance the *simcha* of both the supporter and the supported; the benefactor is also the beneficiary. He attains an even greater level of *simchas yom tov* by helping a fellow Jew.

Hallel is recited as an expression of *simcha* as well. When listing the days in which *Hallel* is recited, the Rambam explains why *Hallel* is omitted on Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur:

אבל ראש השנה ויום הכפורים אין בקו הלל לפי שהן ימי תשובה ויראה ופחד לא ימי שמחה יתרה.

On Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur, Hallel is not recited because they are days of repentance, awe and fear, not days of excessive happiness.

Hilchos Chanukah 3:6

Hallel is a means to verbalize and possibly expand the scope of our *simcha*. By acknowledging our indebtedness and dependency while also celebrating our relationship with God, we become filled with joy, pride, and a sense of fulfillment.

Basket number two has now been woven. *Mishteh*, *mishloach manos*, *matanos l'evyonim* and *Hallel* are all motivated by the core obligation of *simcha* on Chanukah and Purim, some as expressions of and others as catalysts for joy. *Simcha* is the intention and objective of these mitzvos, while the obligations themselves are formal means used for reaching the goal of *simcha*.

This fits beautifully with the words of the Rambam when he first introduces the mitzvos of Purim:

מצות יום י"ד לבני כפרים ועירות ויום ט"ו לבני כפרים להיות יום שמחה ומשתה ומשלוח מנות לרעים ומתנות לאביונים.

It is a mitzvah, on the fourteenth (of Adar) for those living in villages and unwallled cities, and on the fifteenth (of Adar) for those living in walled cities, to make the set day a time of happiness and feasting in which food portions are sent among friends and gifts are given to the poor.

Hilchos Megillah 2:14

The Rambam mentions the mitzvos of Purim that are a part of the “simcha basket,” namely *mishteh*, *mishloach manos* and *matanos l’evyonim*, immediately after the obligation to be happy on Purim.³ Furthermore, in addressing these three obligations, the Rambam uses the word “mitzvas,” which means “the one mitzvah,” effectively regarding all three obligations as one. This unquestionably drives at a synthesis and unification of the mitzvos on a fundamental level.

The Rambam, therefore, is quite consistent throughout *Hilchos Megillah VaChanukah*. The *koseres* outlines the two underlying mitzvos from which the specific mitzvos *hayom* stem, while the halachos explain how they express themselves through the six obligations. The six mitzvos are rabbinic mediums that we use to bring

pirsumei nisa and *simcha* into our Purim and Chanukah celebrations.

Endnotes

1 Citings of the six mitzvos mentioned by the Rambam:

קריאת המגילה בזמנה מצות עשה מדברי סופרים.
Reading the megillah in its proper time is a positive mitzvah established by the Rabbis.
Hilchos Megillah 1:1

מצות יום י"ד לבני כפרים ועירות יום ט"ו לבני פרקים להיות יום שמחה ומשתה ומשלות קנות לרעים ומתנות לאביונים.

It is a mitzvah, on the fourteenth (of Adar) for those living in villages and unwalled cities, and on the fifteenth (of Adar) for those living in walled cities, to make the set day a time of happiness and feasting in which food portions are sent among friends and gifts are given to the poor.

Hilchos Megillah 2:14

והדלקת הנרות בהן מצוה מדברי סופרים בקריאת המגילה.

Lighting candles on the days of Chanukah is a rabbinic mitzvah, like megillah reading.

Hilchos Chanukah 3:3

אף על פי שקריאת ההלל מצוה מדברי סופרים מברך עליו אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו כדרך שמברך על המגילה.

Even though the reading of Hallel is a rabbinic mitzvah, the blessing of “who sanctifies us with His commandments and commanded us” is recited, similarly to the way the blessing for megillah reading is formulated.

Hilchos Chanukah 3:5

2 This idea can also help explain the bracha of *SheAsah Nissim*, and why the only time it is said is before the mitzvos of *krias hamegillah* and *neiros Chanukah*. Since the underlying mitzvah is *pirsumei nisa*, it is imperative to acknowledge the miracle that will be publicized through the fulfillment of the mitzvah. This blessing, therefore, which is a form of praise, is ensuring that the performer of the mitzvah has *pirsumei nisa* in mind.

3 There is no Hallel on Purim because the reading of the megillah is Hallel in the sense that it praises and causes the listeners to praise and thank Hashem for the miracles which He performed.



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Where to Place the Menorah

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 21b) tells us that the proper place to put the Chanukah lights is in front of one's home, so that all the passers-by will notice the lights, and thereby the greatest possible *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle) will be achieved. However, if it is a *sha'as hasakanah* (a time of persecution), it is sufficient to leave the menorah inside one's home. At one point in the discourse, the Gemara (*ibid* 22b, see also *Chidushei Sefas Emes*) clearly assumes that if the menorah is placed inside the home, the mitzvah is not fulfilled at all because an essential factor in the mitzvah of *ner Chanukah* is *pirsumei nisa*, and a private *pirsum*, serving only the *bnai habayis* (the members of the household), is not sufficient. At that point in the discourse, the Gemara clearly feels that the idea of placing the menorah on one's table *b'sha'as hasakanah* is merely to have a *zecher l'mitzvas ner Chanukah*, a remembrance of the mitzvah, without even partially fulfilling the mitzvah.

The *Sefas Emes* points out that once the Gemara reaches its conclusion, this assumption is no longer necessary, and may be rejected. One may assume that lighting in one's home *b'sha'as hasakanah* is not merely for the purpose of having a *zecher l'mitzvas ner Chanukah*, but actually represents an incomplete *kiyum hamitzvah* (fulfillment) of *ner Chanukah*; the *pirsumei nisa* for the *bnai habayis* constitutes a partial *kiyum hamitzvah*. This is obviously the position of *bnai chutz la'aretz*, those living in the Diaspora, for



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the past several centuries, who recite all the *berachos* upon our lighting inside the home. If it were only a fulfillment of *zecher l'ner Chanukah*, it would probably not warrant all the *berachos*.

In his collection of *drashos* on the Torah, the *Sefas Emes* has an interesting comment regarding this change in practice with respect to the *makom hadlokas haneiros* (proper place to light the lights). The Chanukah lights, explains the *Sefas Emes*, represent the *ohr haTorah* (light of Torah). Years ago, the inside of the Jewish homes were saturated with Jewish values, and the placing of the menorah outside the home, just near the doorpost, represented an attempt to keep the foreign influence of the street from penetrating within. Nowadays, however, as the Gemara (*Avoda Zara* 8a) comments, the Jews who live in *chutz la'aretz* “worship *avoda zara b'tahara*,” and even the insides of their homes fall prey to many foreign influences and elements. Today, it is necessary to light the *ohr haTorah* inside to chase out the foreign notions.

One verse in Mishlei (6:23) contrasts the effectiveness of learning Torah with that of fulfilling mitzvos, declaring, “*ki ner mitzvah v'Torah ohr*” — the illumination gained

from doing a mitzvah is compared to the light of a small candle, while that gained from learning Torah is likened to the brilliance of a torch” (see *Sotah* 21a). A verse in Tehillim (119:45), however, compares even the illumination gained from Torah learning to the light of a candle — “*ner leragli devarecha, ve'or le'nesivasi*,” Your words are a candle for my feet and a light for my path. The medrash (*Yalkut Shimoni* to Tehillim 119, *siman* 478), commenting on that verse, explains that when one has just started to learn Torah, he should not feel that he is already competent enough to develop an entire life philosophy — his own *hashkofas olam*. Only after much learning does the power of illumination of Torah change from a *ner* to an *ohr*, from a candle to a light.

The Gemara (*Shabbos* 88b, see also Rashi ad loc.) draws a distinction between two groups of people who learn Torah, which it refers to as the *meiyaminim* (those on the right) and the *masmeilim* (those on the left). For those who learn Torah with *amal* and *yegiah* (toil and effort), learning becomes a life-preserving elixir. For those who learn, but without such a great commitment, and without *yegiah* and *amal*, learning will become a source of confusion, and a toxic drug.

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Every person is enveloped in the *choshech* (darkness) of our *alma d'shikra* (world of falsities). The verse in *Borchi Nafshi* (Tehillim 104:20) states, “*toshes choshech veyehi layla*,” You make darkness and it becomes night. The Gemara (*Bava Metzia* 83b) comments on this verse, “*zeh ha'olam hazeh shedomen lelaylah*,” this refers to this world which is comparable to night. Our *chachomim* have taught us that “a small amount of light cancels **much** darkness,” but not **all** of the darkness. If one learns **much** Torah with great *yegiah*, he can dispel **all** of the *choshech*. If one has only **begun** to learn Torah, and only reached the level of *ner leragli devarecha*, then he will be in a state of *ohr vechoshech mishtamshim b'irbuvyah* — light and darkness mixed together [See *Sichos Mussar*, by

Rav Chaim Shmuelewitz zt”l, *Parshas Vayetzei* 5733]. We sometimes hear of Orthodox rabbis espousing anti-Torah views even though these rabbis learned in yeshivas. The mere earning of *semicha* from a recognized yeshiva does not mean that a person is qualified to *pasken a shayla* (respond to a halachic question). If one has *ohr vechoshech mishtamshim b'irbuvyah* in his own mind, he can never tell whether his opinion on any halachic matter is rooted in the *ohr* of Torah or in the *choshech* of foreign influences. The *Shulchan Aruch* (Rema, *Yoreh Deah* 242:3) quotes the statement of the Rambam, that those students of the Torah who *pasken shaylas* even though they are “*lo higyau l'hora'ah*” (not qualified to issue rulings) are “extinguishing the illumination of the Torah.”

This statement of the Rambam and the *Shulchan Aruch* was made when the *shaylas* were usually standard, straight-forward ones rooted in Gemara and *poskim*. It is even truer today, when Klal Yisroel is faced with new types of *shaylas*, many of which have no clear precedent in halachic literature. These new *shaylas* require *poskim* of great stature, who have such a broad understanding of halacha that they have even refined their intuitions and instincts to think in terms of Torah. Let us continue to light the Chanukah menorah inside our homes to chase out the foreign influences that have already crept in. May we all merit an abundance of *ohr* to succeed in dispelling **all** of the *choshech*.

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Mikdash, Mitzvot and Menorah: Chanukah Themes from Chamisha Chumshei Torah

While Chanukah is unique in our calendar of celebration in that it commemorates a story that takes place long after the closing of Tanach, its themes resonate throughout *Chamisha Chumshei Torah*. We know that in halacha, whenever Chazal create a new rule (i.e. a *din drabanan*) they pattern it after the Torah law — *kol d'tikkun rabanan kein d'oraysa tikkun*. Examples of this abound throughout Shas.¹ Rav Hershel Schachter,² quoting Rav Solovetchik in the name of his grandfather Reb Chaim, describes this as an essential feature of the way Chazal establish rules throughout Shas while balancing the risk of inappropriately adding onto the Torah (*bal tosf*). In this way, every established rabbinic law is both something new, and at the same time a reflection of ancient archetypal themes of Torah.

The way Chazal establish rules applies not just to halacha, but is reflected in the fabric of our narratives, stories and celebrations as well. The celebration of Chanukah echoes the themes and messages of the Torah. Both as *Maaseh avos siman l'banim* (events of the forefathers are a sign for their descendants),³ or even more fundamentally, as the expression that all celebrations in the Jewish calendar are rooted in the ethos and history of Torah, we find Chanukah presciently



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foreshadowed in the stories of the Mikdash, Menorah and battles of Bnei Yisrael. As such, we can find the themes of Chanukah and answers to some of the more puzzling aspects of this Bayis Sheni (Second Temple) holiday in the text of *Chamisha Chumshei Torah*.

Mai Chanuka?

The most well-known question of Chanukah is: What is the nature of its celebration? *Mai Chanukah?* Chazal answer in *Shabbos* 21b:

מאי חנוכה דתנו רבנן בכ"ה בכסליו יומי
דחנוכה תמניא אינון דלא למספד בהון ודלא
להתענות בהון שכשנכנסו יוונים להיכל טמאו
כל השמנים שבהיכל וכשגברה מלכות בית
חשמונאי ונצחום בדקו ולא מצאו אלא פך
אחד של שמן שהיה מונח בחותמו של כהן
גדול ולא היה בו אלא להדליק יום אחד נעשה

בו נס והדליקו ממנו שמונה ימים לשנה אחרת
קבעום ועשאוּם ימים טובים בהלל והודאה.

What is Chanukah? Our rabbis taught that [starting] on the 25th of Kislev [begin] the eight days of Chanukah. They are days of celebration of not eulogizing and fasting, since when the Yevanim went into the sanctuary they defiled all the oils in the Temple and when the rule of the house of Chashmonaim was mighty and victorious over them they searched and didn't find one flask of oil that was left intact with the seal of the Kohain Gadol, and they only had enough to light [the Menorah] for one day. A miracle occurred and they lit from it for eight days. In the following year they established and made it days of holiday with hallel and thanksgiving.

The focus of the Gemara's explanation for the celebration of Chanukah is

not that of the military victory and of the few vanquishing the many, but on the miracle that happens subsequent to the victory, the miracle of the small flask of oil lasting longer than it naturally should have lasted. The question that many discuss is: Why is the miracle of the oil so central that it is the primary focus of our actions? Isn't the salvation of the Jewish people through an impossible military victory against a world power not the greater of the miracles, especially since they didn't even need the oil; they could have used the oil they found given the general principle of *tumah* (ritual impurity) being permissible for public use if needed (*tumah hutrah btzibur*)?

The Mahral in *Ner Mitzvah* answers

ועוד יש לומר שעיקר מה שקבעו ימי חנוכה בשביל שהיו מנצחים את היונים, רק שלא היה נראה שהיה כאן ניצחון הזה על ידי נס שעשה זה השם יתברך ולא היה זה מכוחם וגבורתם. ולפיכך נעשה הנס על ידי נרות המנורה, שידעו שהכל היה בנס מן השם יתברך. וכך המלחמה שהיו מנצחין ישראל היה מן השם יתברך.

The military victory certainly was a great miracle, but it was not obvious or immediately recognizable as such, since after all, perhaps good military strategy can lead to unexpected results. Therefore, the flask of oil, which is unequivocally a miracle from God, is the stamp of Hashem on the victory of the Chashmonaim as well. Do not assume that it is your power and strength that led you to victory, but that both the military victory and long-lasting oil are miracles from God.

R. Meir Simcha HaKohen of Dvinsk in *Meshech Chochma* further elaborates on this point in reference to the celebration of *yetzias Mitzrayim*⁴ in Shmot 12:16. Jews do not celebrate such an event the same way other nations do. We do not celebrate the downfall of our enemy — *binfol oyvech*

al tismach — rather we celebrate our redemption and salvation by the act and victory of God. Pesach is not referenced as the day of the destruction of Egyptian civilization. It is the day of the deliverance of Bnei Yisroel. He then explains the miracle of Chanukah:

ולכך על נס חנוכה, אין היום מורה רק על הדלקת שמן זית, וחינוך בית ה' וטהרתו, והשגחת אלקים על עמו בית ישראל בזמן שלא היה נביא וחזוה בישאל. ולכן נעשה ההדלקה על ענין בלתי מפורסם, ההדלקה שמונה ימים בהיכל, משום שהמנהיגים והשרי צבאות היו הכהנים הגדולים החשמונאים, והיתה חוששת ההשגחה שמא יאמרו 'כוחם ועוצם ידם', ובתחבולות מלחמה נצחו, הראתה להם ההשגחה אות ומופת בהיכל, אשר אינו ידוע רק לכוהנים, למען ידעו כי יד אלקים עשה זאת והם מושגחים דרך נס למעלה מן הטבע.

And therefore regarding the miracle of Chanukah, the day indicates only the lighting of the pure oil and the consecration of the House of God and its purity and the providence of God over His nation, the house of Israel, at a time when there was no prophet or seer in Israel.⁵ And therefore the lighting was done about something that was not so well known as the lighting of the candles for eight days was in the heichal because the leaders of the military revolt were the kohanim and the Kohain Gadol, and the Divine Providence was concerned that they should not become arrogant or conceited that it was their strategy and brilliance, but rather it was important for them to see the miracle and know that it was from Hashem.

The celebration of the military victory is inextricably connected to the miracle of the oil, to ensure that we do not forget that victory was not simply a result of a skilled and strategic army, but that it was a miracle, directly emanating from Hashem.

The conclusion of the battle, therefore, is secondary to the resurgence of *avoda* and observance of mitzvot that was able to take place after the war. That continuation of Torah life and worship in the Mikdash began when the Jews reentered the Beis Hamikdash and rededicated it.

The other key question of Chanukah is, Why eight days?

The earliest source for Chanukah in Chazal is in *Megillas Taanis*, an ancient text of the celebratory days for which eulogy and fasting is prohibited; an ancient shul *luach* as it were, to which the Gemara refers to in quasi-biblical terms — *dichtiv* — as it is written. There we find a surprising answer, different from all the more familiar answers to this question.⁶

ומה ראו לעשות חנוכה שמונה ימים, והלא חנוכה שעשה משה במדבר לא עשה אלא שבעה ימים, נאמר (ויקרא ח, לג): "וּמִפֶּתַח אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד לֹא תִצְאוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים וגו'", ואומר: (במדבר ז, יב): "וַיְהִי הַמִּקְרִיב בַּיּוֹם הָרִאשׁוֹן אֶת קָרְבָּנוֹ וגו'", ובשביעי הקריב פרים. וכן מצינו בחנוכה שעשה שלמה, שלא עשה אלא שבעת ימים, שנאמר: (דה"ב ז, ט): "כִּי חֲנֻכַּת הַמִּזְבֵּחַ עָשׂוּ שִׁבְעַת יָמִים, וַהֲחֵג שִׁבְעַת יָמִים". מה ראו לעשות חנוכה זו שמונה ימים? אלא – בימי מלכות יון נכנסו בני חשמונאי להיכל, ובנו את המזבח, ושדוהו בשדית ותקנו בו כלי שרת והיו מתעסקין בו שמונה ימים.

And why did they (Chazal) see fit to make Chanukah eight days? And is not the chanukah that Moshe made in the desert only seven days, "and it was the sacrifice on the first day," and it says, "and from the door of the ohel moed do not leave for seven days," and it says on the seventh [day] he sacrificed cows. And so too we find in the chanukah that Shlomo made, that he did it for only seven days as it says, "and his sacrifices, etc., because the chanukah [dedication] of the Mizbayach [altar] they made for seven days and the holiday was

seven days.” So why did they see that this Chanukah should be eight days? Rather, in the days of the kingdom of the Yevanim the sons of Chashmonaim entered the sanctuary and built the Mizbayach [altar] and plastered it and fixed the tools of service and were involved with it for eight days.

The answer of why the celebration was eight days is not a function of the long-lasting oil, but rather the time it took to rebuild the stones and service of the Mizbayach. Most important, the ancient text of *Megillas Taanis* clearly sees this Chanukah and dedication as linked to its predecessors, the *chanukas Hamishkan* and Mikdash — the dedications of both the Mishkan and of the Temple.

In both accounts, the one of the candles and the *chanukas hamizbayach*, the point is very clearly, as the *Meshech Chochma* explains, that the celebration is the result of Hashem’s intervention and our return to His service. These themes are critical in our celebration and the values it imparts, and resonate powerfully with the larger themes we find through Chumash around the Mikdash, Mizbayach and Menorah.

The Chanukah Message “by the Book”

The Ramban, in his introduction to Sefer Shemos, explains that the sefer is called *sefer hageula*, the book of redemption, because of the redemption of the Jews that takes place in the book. He points out that the redemption that is celebrated is not simply a physical one marked by the physical victory over the Egyptians. If that was the case, then the book would conclude after the victory over the Egyptian enemy is complete, in Parshas Beshalach, after

the Egyptians are drowned. Instead, the book continues and does not conclude until the Mishkan is built and the Shechina is dwelling within it, at the conclusion of Parshas Pekudei. That is why the book is called *sefer hageula* according to the Ramban. The book is in fact a book of redemption, but that redemption is not complete until the relationship between Bnei Yisrael and Hashem is complete and marked by G-d’s Shechina dwelling in the Mishkan. Once again, the military victory over our enemies, in this case the annihilation of the great Egyptian empire, is not the main focus, but rather it is G-d’s presence among his people.

Bnei Yisrael experience this idea during their first encounter with an enemy after their miraculous salvation from the Egyptians, in their war with Amalek at the end of Parshas Beshalach. This was the first time they had to actually fight a battle. The Egyptian salvation was supernatural and they were passive players, as Moshe says before the splitting of the Sea, “*Hisyatzvu ure’u es yeshuas Hashem*,” — stand by and watch the salvation of Hashem (Shemos 14:13). During this very first military operation, the model is clear:

וְהָיָה כַּאֲשֶׁר יָרִים מֹשֶׁה יָדוֹ וְגִבֹּר יִשְׂרָאֵל
וְכַאֲשֶׁר יִנִּיחַ יָדוֹ וְגִבֹּר עֲמָלֵק.

When Moshe raised his hand, Israel was stronger and when he lowered his hand, Amalek was stronger.

Shemos 17:11

Rashi, quoting the Mishna in *Rosh Hashana* 3:8, asks: Was it Moshe’s arms that won the battle or lost the battle? Rather, the Torah is teaching that as long as Israel looked heavenward and subjected their hearts to Hashem and recognized that He is in their midst, they would prevail. But

when they did not, they would fail. This notion is further demonstrated through the fact that the Aron went out to battle with them throughout the conquest of the land, again reminding Bnei Yisrael that they will only achieve military victory because Hashem is in their midst. Just as it was the center of the camp, the Aron was also the center of their military operations.

Similarly, at the beginning of Sefer Bamidbar, Bnei Yisrael are at the threshold of entering the Land of Israel and are preparing to leave Har Sinai to begin the conquest of the land. The book begins with Bnei Yisrael being counted and then organized into a cohesive group, with three tribes grouped together on all four sides of the camp. Among the discussion of the commentaries explaining the purpose of the census at the beginning of this sefer, the general consensus is that one main reason for the counting was for military purposes (Ramban in Bamidbar 1:2). However, the focus of the text is not the military strategy but the placement of the Mishkan in the center of the camp. In his introduction to Sefer Bamidbar, the Ramban explains that the reason the sefer begins with detailed instructions regarding the setting up of the camp and placement of the Mishkan is to enhance the glory of the Mishkan, and highlight the fact that Hashem is in the midst of his people, reminding them that He is ever-present and with them even as they leave the spiritual haven of Har Sinai:

וְהַסֵּפֶר הַזֶּה כֻּלּוֹ בְּמִצְוֹת שְׁעָה שְׁנֵצִטּוֹ בָּהֶם
בְּעִמְדָם בַּמִּדְבָּר וּבְנִסֵּים הַנַּעֲשִׂים לָהֶם לְסַפֵּר
כָּל מַעֲשֵׂה ה' אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה עִמָּהֶם לְהַפְלִיא וּסְפֹר
כִּי הָחֵל לָתֵת אוֹיְבֵיהֶם לִפְנֵיהֶם לְחָרֵב וְצוּהוּ אֵיךְ
תַּחֲלֹק הָאָרֶץ לָהֶם.

This whole book is concerned with temporary precepts commanded them for their stay in the wilderness and the miracles performed for them, to relate all the wondrous deeds of God. It relates that he began to deliver their enemies to them by sword and contains instructions how to divide the land.

Ramban, Introduction to Sefer Bamidbar

According to Ramban, the Mishkan that moved in the midst of the camp was a mini movable Har Sinai, accompanying the Jews on all of their journeys, reminding them that they will succeed in their military conquest of the land because G-d is in their midst.

Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi explains in the *Kuzari* (2:26) that the camp and its divisions are to be compared to the body and its limbs, the Mishkan being to the camp what the heart is to the body.⁷ Ramban explains further in his introduction that there were boundaries separating the parts of the camp to the Mishkan just as there were boundaries separating the people camping around the mountain to Har Sinai. Furthermore, when Bnei Yisrael are about to leave Har Sinai in Parshas Behaaloscha, after G-d says, *Rav lachem sheves behar hazeh*, “You’ve been at this mountain long enough, it’s time to go — among the last instructions they are given is Hashem telling Aharon to light the Menorah, a constant, daily reminder of God’s presence. This is yet another circumstance in which the focus could have been the physical preparation for military victory, and yet it was instead on the reminder of G-d’s presence.

Sefer Devarim is the culmination of Bnei Yisrael’s travels in the desert and entering into the land. It takes place in the last 40 days of Moshe’s life and is his “last lecture” to his beloved people.

This final speech may be expected to be a pep rally for their imminent entrance into the land, or a rally for the upcoming battles that lay ahead. Instead, it was Moshe’s *mussar* and guidance to the people, exhorting them to follow the ways of Torah and mitzvos, since that is most important factor to their ownership of and right to the land. **It is mitzvos and middos, not military might** that gives them ownership of the land. Moshe reminds them of this connection to Hashem that will be had, lost and regained because that is the key.

Moshe presses Bnei Yisrael in Sefer Devarim that the destiny of the Jewish people is inextricably tied to their lived relationship with Hashem. If they lose that relationship, they lose the land. He warns them:

וְאָמַרְתָּ בְּלִבְךָ בְּחַי וְעֶצֶם יְדֵי עֲשָׂה לִי אֵת
הַחֵיל הַזֶּה. יח וְזָכַרְתָּ אֵת ה' אֱלֹהֶיךָ כִּי הוּא
הִנִּיתָ לְךָ כַּח לַעֲשׂוֹת חֵיל לְמַעַן הָקִים אֵת
בְּרִיתוֹ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּע לְאַבְרָהָם כְּיוֹם הַזֶּה.

You will say in your heart it is my strength and the strength of my arm that brought me this strength. And you will remember Hashem your G-d that He is the one who gives you strength to succeed...

Devarim 8:17-18

This is exactly the meaning and vision of the Menorah in the prophecy of Yehoshua Kohain Gadol in the haftarah of Chanukah. When seeing and not understanding the vision of the Menorah, the Angel tells Yehoshua that you do indeed know what it means (Zecharya 4:4-6) — these are the words of Hashem to Zerubavel, echoing the words of Moshe in Devarim, saying “*lo bchayil vlo bekoach ke im bruchi*” — Not by might and not by strength, but rather through My spirit.

It is not your strength and military

might, the same message of Moshe’s, which is the message of the Menorah and the message of Chanukah. That is why the military victory is transformed to a symbol of the Menorah.

Duality of the Menorah

But why is it that the Menorah specifically represents this message of *lo bkoach*?

The answer may be intimately connected to the duality of the Menorah in its construction and daily *avodah*. The Menorah is both of our human *avodah* and personal efforts, but at the same time, it represents the basking in the passive role we take in God’s handiwork.

Moshe is commanded to create a Menorah — *v’asisa menoras zahav tahor, mikshe teaseh hamenorah* — And you should make a golden Menorah pure, pulled, the Menorah should be made (Shemos 25:31). The first commandment is active — *veasisa* — but the latter verb is *teaseh* — it should be made — is passive. Rashi quoting the Midrash Tanchuma says:

מאליה לפי שהיה משה מתקשה בה אמר לו
הקב“ה השלך את הככר לאור והיא נעשית
מאליה לכך לא נכתב תעשה.

Teaseh [it should be made] on its own; Moshe was having difficulty with it, so God said to him: Throw the block [of gold] into the fire and it will be made on its own. Therefore, it says teaseh (passive).

The Menorah is formed by us and on its own, a combination of Hashem’s action and our enlightened passivity. An expression of this whole notion of the Mikdash is *v’asu li mikdash veShachanti besocham* — make me a Mikdash (active) — and I will dwell (passive) in it (Shemos 25:8).

The same duality of active and passive



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is found in Aaron's lighting of the Menorah, "*Behaalosecha es haneros*" — when you raise up the candles, an active act, and "*el mul pnei hamenorah yairo shivas haneros*" — parallel to the Menorah, the seven candles will shine (Bamidbar 8:2), demonstrating a passive action on our part.

Similarly, in the halachos of the service of the Menorah, every morning the one who would get the lottery to clean and set up the Menorah would come in and do the *dishun* (clearing and preparing). They would clean and set up each of the candles except for the two Western ones, which were always lit (*Tamid* 33a). When there were open miracles in the Mikdash, these two candles were always lit even though they got the same measure of oil as all the rest (Rosh, *ibid*). They were not cleaned and set, but it was from those two candles that the Kohain lit all the rest, as the Rosh says, they served as, "a witness that G-d rests His presence in the Jewish people."

This *hashraas haShechina* is the *ner*

tamid, consistent and always, and reflects both the service of man and the sign from God that everything is only from Him.

Chanukah was a military victory that we recall and give thanks for. But as an *avoda*, it is transformed to the lighting of the candles, a reminder of the *ner tamid* and Moshe's recurring theme throughout the Torah that it is not our strength that allows us to succeed — a rejection of the *kochi veotzem yadi* model; instead, we succeed by embracing the Mikdash and the spiritual as the source of our strength, "*Vezacharta es hashem Elokecha ki Hu hanosen lecha koach Laasos chayil*" (Devarim 8:18). The constant and consistent relationship through Torah and mitzvot is clearly the lasting legacy and destiny of the Jewish people.

Chanukah is not a commemoration of a victory in battle, but the celebration of what the Jews were fighting for and their rallying cry "*mi laHashem eli*" — Whoever is for Hashem, come with me.

Endnotes

- 1 Yoma 31a, Yevamos 11, Pesachim 30b, 39a; 116b, Gittin 64b, Bechoros 54a.
- 2 Introduction to *MiPninei HaRav*.
- 3 Usually quoted from the Ramban (Bereishis 12:6); The earlier source of this is *Bereishis Rabbah*, *Lech Lecha* no. 9, "Rabbi Yehoshua of Sichnin said God gave Avraham a *siman*/sign that all that happened to him happens to his sons."
- 4 *Meshech Chochma* Parshas Bo 12:16.
- 5 Similarly on Purim we don't celebrate the hanging of Haman but the reprieve the Jews received when they were saved from the decree.
- 6 Most famously, the *Bais Yosef* (*Orach Chaim*, 670). The many answers to this question before and after the *Bais Yosef* of why Chanukah is eight days if the miracle was that it lasted the extra day, is summarized in the book *Ner Le'meah* with over 100 answers to that question.
- 7 Rav Shamshon Refael Hirsch echoes this idea and points out the parallel between the Mishkan and Har Sinai, explaining that the same way the Shechina rested upon Har Sinai, now it is resting upon the Mishkan (Shemot 40:33)

The Secret of the Candles:

How to Maximize Our Children's Potential

One of the goals of Jewish parenting is to help our children to grow and reach their potential. However, many parents do not have an exact formula to accomplish this herculean task. If one looks deep enough into any halacha, there is a deeper moral teaching lying below the surface. The halachos of Chanukah are no exception. Within them is a halacha that gives us an insight into this fundamental parenting challenge. As we better understand the nature of a child's obligation to light Chanukah candles, we will discover a profound insight into our ability to foster and develop real growth in our children.

One of the dilemmas that parents face in child-rearing is how hard to push their children. Should they take a strict approach or a more laid-back approach? This dilemma is reflected in the laws of Chanukah. There are many sources in halachic literature that discuss the mitzvah for children to light Chanukah candles. Is there an obligation to teach our children to perform not only the basic mitzvah, or are we also obligated to train them to perform mitzvos on a higher level and to do the mitzvos in a more *mehudar* (beautiful) and enhanced manner? R' Yosef Karo in the *Shulchan Aruch*, *Orach Chaim* 677:2, writes, "a child that has reached the age of *chinuch* is obligated to light candles." The *Magen Avraham*, 677:8, has an amazing qualification of the *Shulchan Aruch's* ruling: the obligation is referring to a child who has his own house. He notes



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that according to the *Shulchan Aruch*, in general, the head of the household lights on behalf of the whole family. This is normative Sephardic practice. However, the *Magen Avraham* adds that it is possible that a child would not light even according to Ashkenazic practice, where each member of the household lights in order to fulfill *mehadrin* (the enhanced form of the mitzvah). The *Magen Avraham* bases his ruling on a comment of the *Shiltei Hagiborim*, *Shabbos* 9b (Rif pages). A similar view is found in the Meiri, *Shabbos* 21b, s.v. *Mitzvas Chanukah*. The ruling of the *Magen Avraham* challenges an explicit ruling of the Rama, *Orach Chaim* 675:3, that children who have reached the age of *chinuch*¹ (training) should also light, since Ashkenazic practice is that each member of the household lights.

The Chofetz Chaim: Parenting With Simplicity

Why do the *Shiltei Giborim* and the Meiri rule that unless a child has his own house, he is exempt from lighting? Isn't there a general mitzvah to train our children to perform mitzvos? Furthermore, why does the *Magen Avraham* follow an opinion that rejects the ruling of both the

Shulchan Aruch and the Rama? Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan (the Chofetz Chaim) writes, *Beur Halacha* 675:3, s.v. *ULedidan*, that the *Shiltei Giborim* certainly agrees that we are obligated to train our children in mitzvos. However, his position is that *chinuch* only applies to mitzvos that adults themselves are obligated to perform, not to the extra stringencies that adults perform to beautify a mitzvah. Therefore, children are only obligated to perform the basic mitzvah that only applies if one has his own home. The additional sets of light in the home are considered *mehadrin*, and children have no *chinuch* obligation to perform an aspect of the mitzvah that is only considered *mehadrin*. The Chofetz Chaim adds in the *Mishna Berurah* 675:14, that even according to the Rama, who holds that children should light, there is no need to require the child to light more than one candle. This is because lighting more than one candle represents *mehadrin min hamehadrin*, and children are not obligated to go to such lengths to fulfill the mitzvah of *chinuch*. Accordingly, the Chofetz Chaim agrees with the line of reasoning of the *Shiltei Giborim*, but with a more limited application.

The Piaseczno Rebbe

R. Kalonymous Kalman Shapira (1889-1943) was appointed the Grand Rabbi of Piaseczno, Poland at the age of 20. He distinguished himself as someone uniquely sensitive to the psychological needs of others, especially of children. His work *Chovas HaTalmidim*, The Students' Obligation, continues to be a widely studied work on educating children. When the Nazis invaded Poland in 1939, R. Shapira's son, daughter-in-law and sister-in-law were killed and R. Shapira was forced into the Warsaw ghetto. There, he was forced to work as a shoemaker at the Schultz factory to pay for his food. Though no longer an official leader, R. Shapira continued to take seriously his commitment to the community. He took on an informal pastoral role at the factory, inspiring others through his words, and delivering a weekly sermon to his followers every Shabbat. Aware of the importance of his work, he transcribed his sermons, placed them in a milk canister and buried the canister before the liquidation of the Warsaw Ghetto in May 1943. Included in the canister were instructions to the finder to send the sermons to R. Shapira's brother who lived in Israel, and to then have them published. The canister was discovered by a Polish construction worker after the war. The contents were, as requested, delivered to Israel and published under the title *Esh Kodesh* (Sacred Fire).

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank: Inspiring Our Children for Greatness

Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank, *Mikraei Kodesh*, Chanukah no. 15, provides a different perspective to this

discussion. Rav Frank differentiates between the two levels of *mehadrin*. He explains that a child who is living in his parents' home has no obligation to light, just as children over bar/bas mitzvah have no obligation to light to fulfill the basic (non-*mehadrin*) mitzvah. Therefore, the mitzvah of *chinuch* is never triggered. This is why the *Shiltei Hagiborim* and Meiri do not insist on the child lighting. However, if a child has his own home, he would be *obligated* to light because of the mitzvah of *chinuch*. Once he is lighting, he should fulfill the mitzvah properly and fulfill the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* aspect by lighting the number of candles corresponding to the night of Chanukah.

According to Rav Frank *zt"l*, the mitzvah of *chinuch* requires children to fulfill mitzvos in the most scrupulous way possible. He cites the Ritva, *Sukkah* 2b, who proves from the Gemara there that the mitzvah of *chinuch* requires us to enable our children to perform mitzvos fully and scrupulously like an adult, without compromise.

This concept is inherent in the fabric of the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles itself. The *Pnei Yehoshua*, *Shabbos* 21b, s.v. *Mai Chanukah*, asks: Why did we need the entire miracle of the oil burning for eight days? Why couldn't we just use impure oil based on the principle of *tumah hutra b'tzibur*,² that impurity is permitted in case of public need in the Beis Hamikdash? The *Pnei Yehoshua* answers that while it is true that they could have used impure oil, Hashem wanted to show how precious their rededication of the *Beis Hamikdash* was to Him, and that He was with them.³ Rav Yosef Engel, *Gilyonei Hashas*, *Shabbos* 21a, offers a different

explanation. He suggests that anytime something is done for the first time, it must be done in the most pristine and purest way possible. The *chachamim* of the time could have relied on using impure oil, but since they were rededicating the Beis Hamikdash, they wanted to set the tone and level of performance in the Beis Hamikdash for all those who came after them. They wanted to perform the mitzvah in its purest form. R. Engel's message is equally applicable to how we train our children to perform mitzvos.

The Foundations of Inspirational Chinuch

Chinuch and Chanukah come from the same Hebrew root and convey the same idea: to dedicate and start from the beginning to set a pattern of behavior. Rabbi Kalonymus Kalman (the Piaseczno Rebbe), *Chovas Hatalmidim* pg. 8, teaches that the word for education, *chinuch* (and Chanukah), doesn't just mean beginning — there are other Hebrew words for that. It refers specifically to the ability to take something and prepare it in a way that enables it to fulfill its potential; to take it from potential to actual. When the Chashmonaim were rededicating the Beis Hamikdash they weren't just starting the *avodah* (service) again. They were preparing it to be used for its true purpose. The same applies to *chinuch*. The verse in Mishlei states:

חֲנֹךְ לְנֶעַר עַל פִּי דְרָכָיו גַּם כִּי יִזְקֶינָה לֹא יִסּוּר
כִּמְנָה.

Train a child according to his way, even when he gets older, he won't stray from it.
Mishlei 22:6

The aforementioned Ritva in *Sukkah* states that from this verse, we see that the purpose of *chinuch* is to prepare



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our children to perform mitzvos throughout their lives. This is why the mitzvah experience of a child needs to mirror the experience of an adult.

The mitzvah of *chinuch* — as explained by Rav Tzvi Pesach Frank — and the connection between *chinuch* and Chanukah, provide a model for us to help our children reach their potential. We need to ensure that their educational experiences are as pure and idealistic as possible. We need to pursue and maintain lofty goals and aspirations for our children's spiritual growth. In Tehillim 127:4, it is written:

כְּחִיצִים בְּיַד גִּבּוֹר כֵּן בְּנֵי הַנְּעוּרִים.

Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the youth.

Rav Shamshon Refael Hirsch, in his commentary on Tehillim, explains that when an archer aims his arrow, he sets it on a trajectory higher than his intended goal. So too, when educating our children, we must aim higher than our realistic target in order for them to

reach the actual target.

In order to have lofty aspirations for our children, we have to really believe in their potential. This idea can be found, of all places, in a ruling of the Rama in an obscure chapter about the laws of milk coming from non-kosher species. The Gemara, *Sotah* 12b, states that when Moshe Rabbeinu was an infant, he would not nurse from an Egyptian wet nurse because it was inappropriate for the mouth that would eventually speak with the *Shechina* to nurse from someone who ate non-kosher food. The Rama, *Yoreh Deah* 81:7, rules that Jewish children should not nurse from a non-Jew. The Vilna Gaon, *Beiur Hagra* ad loc. notes that the source for the Rama's ruling is the Gemara's comment regarding Moshe Rabbeinu. Rav Yaakov Kamenetsky, *Emes L'Yaakov* Shemos 2:7, asks: we understand why Moshe Rabbeinu, who was destined to be the greatest prophet ever, couldn't nurse from a non-Jew. Why does the Rama apply this to all Jewish

children? Rav Kamenetsky answers that we learn from this ruling that we should raise every Jewish child with the perspective that he/she has the potential to speak with the *Shechina*. In order to maximize our children's potential we need to make sure their educational experiences are pure and uncompromised, and always believe in their ability to achieve greatness.

Endnotes

- 1 See *Sukkah* 42a and *Chagiga* 4a. See also *Mishna Berurah* 343:3, which explains that the age of *chinuch* is dependent on the understanding of each individual child and therefore is subjective, not objective.
- 2 *Pesachim* 77a, *Toras Kohanim* (Vayikra 24:2), Rambam (*Hilchos Temidim U'musafim* 3:10).
- 3 Rav Yonasan Sacks shli"ta in *Y'mei Chanukah*, Siman 7 page 114, adds that according to the *Pnei Yehoshua* it makes sense why there is a concept of *mehadrin min mehadrin* specific to Chanukah. Because the rabbis did not rely on the basic requirement at the time of the miracle and went above and beyond to find pure oil, we too perform the mitzvah in an extremely scrupulous manner.

The Message of “Mehadrin Min Ha-Mehadrin” on Chanukah

One of the most famous passages in the entire Gemara, which outlines the details of the mitzvah to light Chanukah candles, states as follows:

תנו רבנן: מצות חנוכה נר איש וביתו.
והמהדרין - נר לכל אחד ואחד. והמהדרין
מן המהדרין, בית שמאי אומרים: יום ראשון
מדליק שמנה, מכאן ואילך פוחת והולך; ובית
הלל אומרים: יום ראשון מדליק אחת, מכאן
ואילך מוסיף והולך. אמר עולא: פליגי בה תרי
אמוראי במערבא, רבי יוסי בר אבין ורבי יוסי
בר זבדא, חד אמר: טעמא דבית שמאי -
כנגד ימים הנכנסין, וטעמא דבית הלל - כנגד
ימים היוצאין. וחד אמר: טעמא דבית שמאי
- כנגד פרי החג, וטעמא דבית הלל - דמעלין
בקדש ואין מורידין. אמר רבה בר בר חנה
אמר רבי יוחנן: שני זקנים היו בצידן, אחד
עשה כבית שמאי ואחד עשה כדברי בית הלל,
זה נותן טעם לדבריו - כנגד פרי החג, וזה נותן
טעם לדבריו - דמעלין בקדש ואין מורידין.
מסכת שבת דף כא עמוד ב



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The Rabbis taught: The mitzvah of [lighting candles on] Chanukah is [to light] one candle [per] man and his household [each night]. And those who pursue mitzvos [with greater enthusiasm light] one candle for each and every one [in the household each night]. And [as for] those who pursue mitzvos with even greater enthusiasm, Beis Shammai say that [on] the first day [of Chanukah] one lights eight [candles, and] from then on continuously decreases [the number of candles lit each night], and Beis Hillel say that [on] the first day [of Chanukah] one lights one [candle, and]

from then on continuously increases [the number of candles lit each night]. Ulla said: Two Amoraim in the west (i.e., in Eretz Yisrael) disagree about this (i.e., about the basis for these opposing positions, namely): Rabbi Yose bar Avin and Rabbi Yose bar Zevida. One [of them] said [that] the reasoning of Beis Shammai [is that the nightly decreasing of the number of candles lit is done so that the number of candles lit each night] corresponds to the [number of] days [of the holiday] yet to come, and the reasoning of Beis Hillel [is that the nightly increasing of the number of



Rav Noach Borenstein zt'l

Note: Much of this presentation is based on a shiur delivered by HaRav Noach Borenstein, zt'l. HaRav Noach was recognized at a young age as one of the most outstanding talmidim of the “Brisker Rav,” the famed gaon HaRav Yitzchak Zev (“Reb Velvele”) Soloveitchik, zt'l, in Europe, and eventually, HaRav Noach served as a Rosh Yeshiva at RIETS for several decades. His son, HaRav Shmuel Borenstein, zt'l, who was niftar just this past Rosh HaShanah, was an extraordinarily dedicated and beloved rebbe for over forty years in MTA/YUHSB, where he also learned as a student himself. His profound devotion to and deep concern for his talmidim, his willingness to cheerfully do anything that was asked of him, his love for and trust in our yeshiva and its mission, his respect for all other human beings, about whom he never spoke a word of lashon hara, and his ever-present smile will always be remembered by those who were privileged

to know him. Several years ago, I came across a written summary of the shiur from HaRav Noach that this essay is based on, in a sefer that I chanced upon which contained several Divrei Torah published by a member of his family, and I (orally) shared it then with HaRav Shmuel and a number of others. I present some of the ideas here to the best of my understanding in the hope that I will be able to accurately relate them and that the learning that they may inspire will serve as an aliyah for the neshamos of both HaRav Noach and HaRav Shmuel, zichronam leverachah.

candles lit is done so that the number of candles lit each night] corresponds to the [number of] days [of the holiday] that have [already] passed. And one [of them] said [that] the reasoning of Beis Shammai [that the number of candles lit decreases each night is that this mitzvah] corresponds to [the mitzvah of offering] the [sacrificial] bulls [in the Beis HaMikdash] on the holiday [of Sukkos], and the reasoning of Beis Hillel [that the number of candles lit increases each night is based upon the principle] that we ascend in sacred matters and we do not descend. Rabbah bar bar Channah said in the name of Rabbi Yochanan: There were two elders in [the city of] Sidon, one performed [the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles] in accordance with the words of Beis Shammai, and one performed [it] in accordance with the view of Beis Hillel. This [one, who followed the ruling of Beis Shammai,] gives [as] the reason for his opinion [that the number of candles lit should decrease each night that this mitzvah] corresponds to [the mitzvah of offering] the [sacrificial] bulls [in the Beis HaMikdash] on the holiday [of Sukkos], and this [one, who followed the ruling of Beis Hillel,] gives [as] the reason for his opinion [that the number of candles lit should increase each night] that we ascend in sacred matters and we do not descend.

Shabbos 21b

As elucidated by Rashi, the Gemara is telling us that the basic requirement is to light one candle per household each night, regardless of how many household members there are. [Note that we will refer in this essay to lighting candles, but all the same issues are relevant if one uses oil to kindle the Chanukah lights.]

The “*mehadrin*,” those who pursue mitzvos in general with a greater level of enthusiasm, go beyond the basic

requirement, and light one candle per member of the household each night. And the “*mehadrin min ha-mehadrin*,” those whose excitement for mitzvah observance is even greater, go even further and change the number of candles lit each night, depending upon which night of Chanukah it is. Exactly how they do this, however, is subject to a dispute between Beis Shammai, who are of the opinion that on the first night these people light eight candles and subsequently subtract one candle each night, thus concluding with one candle on the last night, and Beis Hillel, who hold the reverse: these individuals begin by lighting one candle the first night and subsequently add one candle each night, thus concluding with eight candles on the last night.

The Gemara then presents a further dispute, this time among Amoraim in Eretz Yisrael, as to the logic behind the respective positions of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel concerning the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option. According to one Amora, Beis Shammai hold that the number of candles lit per night should correspond to the number of days of the holiday yet to come — hence eight candles are lit on the first night, when eight days of the holiday are still in front of us, seven candles are lit on the second night when seven days of the holiday still remain, and so on, proceeding down to one candle on the eighth night, when just one day is left. Beis Hillel, on the other hand, maintain that the number of candles lit per night should correspond to the number of days of the holiday that have arrived — including the one on which the candles are now being lit. On the first night, when only one day has arrived (including that day itself), one candle is lit, on the second night,

when two days (including that day) have arrived, two candles are lit, and on the eighth night, when eight days (including that day) have arrived, eight candles are lit.

The second Amora suggests a very different rationale behind the opinions of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. He contends that the position of Beis Shammai, that the number of candles decreases each night, is modeled after the special sacrificial offerings on the holiday of Sukkos, when the number of bulls offered as *korbanos* each day decreases, beginning with thirteen on the first day of the holiday and ending with seven on the seventh day (see Bamidbar 29:12-34). The view of Beis Hillel, on the other hand, that the number of candles increases each night, is based on a general halachic principle that when it comes to sacred matters, we ascend (i.e., we elevate or increase) and we do not descend (*ma’alin ba-kodesh ve’ein moridin* — see *Menachos* 99a for a source in the Torah for this idea). As the Gemara concludes, it is the explanation of this second Amora regarding the argument between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel that was apparently more widely accepted.

As a side point, it is interesting to ponder why Beis Shammai would choose to relate the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles to the “*parei ha-chag*,” the bull offerings sacrificed in the Beis HaMikdash on Sukkos. It is true that the fact that the number of bulls offered each day indeed decreased as the holiday progressed would seem to indicate that the aforementioned rule of *ma’alin ba-kodesh ve’ein moridin*, suggested as the reason for Beis Hillel’s view, is actually not always employed, especially if there is a

compelling indication otherwise; but the question is still why we should model our practice on Chanukah after those sacrifices.

Perhaps the answer lies in a ruling found earlier in that same Gemara (*Shabbos* 21b), where we are taught that it is prohibited to make personal use of the light provided by the Chanukah candles, a ruling codified by the Rambam (*Hilchos Chanukah* 4:6) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 673:1). Here it is noted that for this reason we customarily kindle one extra light — commonly known as the *shamash* — so that we can make use of that light and not the light of the candles kindled for the mitzvah itself. In order to explain why it is in fact forbidden to make use of the light from the actual Chanukah candles, the Ran writes:

הלכות חנוכה. שמע מינה אסור להשתמש לאורה. פירוש כל תשמישין ואפילו תשמיש מצוה דכיון שעל ידי נס שנעשה במנורה תקנוה עשאוה כמנורה שאין משתמשין בה כלל.
ר"ן על הרי"ף, שבת ט.

The laws of Chanukah. [We] learn from this [that] it is forbidden to make use of [a Chanukah candle's] light. The meaning [of this] is that all uses, even mitzvah [oriented] uses [are forbidden by the light of the candle], because since it was as a result of a miracle which was done with the Menorah [in the Beis HaMikdash that] they (i.e., the rabbis) established it (i.e., the mitzvah to light a candle on Chanukah), they made it (i.e., the Chanukah candle) like the Menorah [itself], which cannot be used [for any other use] at all.

Ran to Shabbos, 9a in Rif

In other words, because the very mitzvah to light candles on Chanukah was introduced as a means of commemorating the miracle of the

burning of the oil in the Menorah of the Beis HaMikdash, the rabbis patterned the laws of the light from the Chanukah candles after the laws of the light of the Menorah — and after other sacred items of the Beis HaMikdash that may not be used for any other purposes. Just as, therefore, one could not make use of the light of Menorah of the Beis HaMikdash for any other needs, one likewise may not make use of the light of the Chanukah candles for any other needs. Once we have connected the Chanukah candles to the Beis HaMikdash and even declared that they are to be treated on par with other sacred items of the Beis HaMikdash, the sanctity of which precludes their being used for any external purposes, we can understand connecting the Chanukah candles to a sacrificial rite in the Beis HaMikdash, namely, the Sukkos offerings. The same laws forbidding making personal use of a sacred Beis HaMikdash item also apply to the animals dedicated for those offerings.

To return to the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel as to whether those who follow the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* practice should add or subtract a candle each night, one may legitimately ask if it makes any practical difference what their respective opinions are based on. That is, does it matter practically whether Beis Shammai's opinion (that the number of candles lit should decrease nightly) is based upon the idea that the number of candles lit each night should correspond to the number of days remaining in the holiday, or upon the connection between Chanukah candles and the bull offerings of Sukkos? And does it matter whether Beis Hillel's opinion (that the number of candles lit should increase nightly) is based upon the

notion that the number of candles lit each night should correspond to the number of days of the holiday that have already arrived or on the general rule that, regarding sacred matters, we ascend rather than descend?

The *Beis Ha-Leivi*, in one of his essays about Chanukah (printed at the end of his commentary to *Sefer Bereishis*), presents an interesting scenario. What if, on the third night of Chanukah, one has only two candles? Should he light both in order to fulfill the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* practice in accordance with the ruling of Beis Hillel? If Beis Hillel's reason for increasing the number of candles lit each night is based on the idea that the number of candles should correspond to the number of days of the holiday that have arrived (the first interpretation above), then the answer is no, since he will not be lighting the correct number of candles on the third night. If, however, Beis Hillel's reason is based on the principle that we ascend in sacred matters and do not descend (the second interpretation above), then the answer is yes, because although he will not be ascending from what he did the night before, as he is unable to do so, he is still not permitted to descend, and light fewer than he did previously.

The *Beis Ha-Leivi* then turns his attention to a fundamental disagreement between Tosafos and the Rambam regarding the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option. As noted above, whereas the basic requirement of the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles is to light a single candle per household per night, those who wish to fulfill the *mehadrin* option light an additional candle for each household member (though the number does not change from one night to the

next). But what about those who wish to fulfill the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option? As explained, Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel argue about whether they should start with eight candles on the first night and light one less each subsequent night, ending up with one candle on the eighth night, or start with one candle on the first night and light one more each night, ending up with eight on the eighth night. But should they be lighting on each night just one candle or set of candles, the exact number depending upon the particular night, regardless of how many household members there are? Or should they be lighting a separate candle or set of candles for each individual household member on each night, either subtracting or adding one each night as the holiday progresses, following the ruling of either Beis Shammai or Beis Hillel? The Gemara itself does not make this clear, and it is consequently the subject of a dispute among the Rishonim.

The opinion of Rabbeinu Yitzchak is cited in Tosafos:

נראה לר"י דב"ש וב"ה לא קיימי אלא אנר איש וביתו שכן יש יותר הידור דאיכא היכרא כשמוסיף והולך או מחסר שהוא כנגד ימים הנכנסים או היוצאים אבל אם עושה נר לכל אחד אפי' יוסיף מכאן ואילך ליכא היכרא שיסברו שכן יש בני אדם בבית. תוספות, שבת כא: ד"ה והמהדרין

It appears to the Ri (Rabbeinu Yitzchak) that [in describing the mehadrin min ha-mehadrin option,] Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel are referring to [enhancing the basic requirement to light] one candle [per] man and his household [each night], because that way there is a greater embellishment [of the mitzvah] since there will be a [clear] distinction [as to which night of Chanukah it is] when he [either] continuously increases or

decreases [the number of candles each night], as that corresponds [either] to the [number of] days [of the holiday] yet to come or to the [number of] days [of the holiday] which have [already] passed [depending upon whether one is following the position of Beis Shammai or that of Beis Hillel]. But if [the person] lights one candle [on the first night] for each one [in his household], even if he will from then on add [another candle each night, in accordance with the view of Beis Hillel], there will be no [clear] distinction [as to which night of Chanukah it is], as those [who see the additional candles] will think that such is [the number of] people there are in the house [and the person is following the mehadrin option, and not the mehadrin min ha-mehadrin option].

Tosafos to Shabbos 21b, s.v. ve-ha-mehadrin

In other words, according to Tosafos, one goal of the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option is to light the number of candles that will make it clear which night of Chanukah it is (with either one more or one less candle being lit each night in accordance with the view of either Beis Hillel or Beis Shammai). This can be best accomplished only if one lights, according to Beis Hillel, one candle for the entire household on the first night, two candles for the entire household on the second night, and so on, or, according to Beis Shammai, eight candles for the entire household on the first night, seven candles for the entire household on the second night, and so on. If, however, one were to light an individual candle or set of candles for each member of the household, it would be unclear to the on-looker which night of the holiday it is, as one who sees multiple candles will not know if those candles represent which night of Chanukah

it is or if they represent the number of people in the household. In short, according to Tosafos, the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option is an enhancement of the basic requirement to light one candle per household each night, and is not related to the *mehadrin* option to light one candle per member of the household each night.

The Rambam, however, disagrees:

כמה נרות הוא מדליק בחנוכה, מצותה שיהיה כל בית ובית מדליק נר אחד בין שהיו אנשי הבית מרובין בין שלא היה בו אלא אדם אחד, והמהדר את המצוה מדליק נרות כמנין אנשי הבית נר לכל אחד ואחד בין אנשים בין נשים, והמהדר יתר על זה ועושה מצוה מן המובחר מדליק נר לכל אחד ואחד בלילה הראשון ומוסיף והולך בכל לילה ולילה נר אחד. כיצד הרי שהיו אנשי הבית עשרה, בלילה הראשון מדליק עשרה נרות ובליל שני עשרים ובליל שלישי שלשים עד שנמצא מדליק בליל שמיני שמונים נרות.

רמב"ם הלכות חנוכה פרק ד הלכה א-ב

How many candles does one light on Chanukah? The [basic] mitzvah is that in each and every household one lights one candle [each night], whether there are many members of the household or whether there is only one person [living] in it. One who embellishes the mitzvah lights [as many] candles [each night] as the number of members of the household [that there are], one candle for each and every one [of them], whether men or women. And one who embellishes [the mitzvah even] more than that, and does the mitzvah in the choicest fashion, lights one candle for each and every one in the household on the first night and continuously increases [the number of candles lit by adding] one candle [per household member] on each and every night.

For example, if there were ten members of the household, on the first night one lights ten candles, and on the second

night twenty, and on the third night thirty, [and so on] until he ends up lighting eighty candles on the eighth night.

Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah 4:1-2

Clearly, the Rambam is of the opinion that the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option is an enhancement not only of the basic requirement but also of the *mehadrin* option. Just as, therefore, the number of candles lit by one who fulfills the *mehadrin* option varies based upon the number of people in the household, as this person lights one candle for each member of the household each night, the same is true of one who fulfills the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option, as this person lights an additional candle each succeeding night (according to the accepted view of Beis Hillel) for each member of the household, to the point that on the eighth night he will be lighting eight candles per household member. Evidently, the Rambam is not troubled with the concern raised by Tosafos that if one lights multiple candles for each household member, the distinction in terms of which night of Chanukah it is will be somewhat blurred.

In terms of the final halachah, the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 671:2) codifies the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* practice in accordance with the opinion of Beis Hillel, that a new candle is added each night of the holiday, but asserts that only one candle or set of candles is lit in every household, such that on the last night, a total of eight candles are lit regardless of how many members there are of that household. This is in line with the position of Tosafos that the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option does not build on the *mehadrin* option, and most Sephardic Jews to this day

conduct themselves accordingly. The Rama there, however, writes that the widespread custom is that a separate candle or set of candles is lit for each and every member of the household, as posited by the Rambam, and this is indeed the practice followed by most Ashkenazic Jews today. As an aside, it should be noted that the *Taz* (*ibid.* no. 1) points out that there is somewhat of an anomaly here in that the Sephardim have accepted the ruling of Tosafos, more generally followed by the Ashkenazim, while the Ashkenazim have accepted the ruling of the Rambam, more usually followed by the Sephardim. [See, however, *Sdei Chemed* (*Asifas Dinim, Ma'areches Chanukah* 9:4), among others, for further discussion of this point based on what the Rambam himself writes about the common Sephardic practice in *Hilchos Chanukah* 4:3; see also *Chidushei Maran Ri"z Ha-Leivi 'al Ha-Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah* 4:1, for an analysis of an important distinction between the actual Ashkenazic practice and the Rambam's ruling.]

In considering this dispute between Tosafos and the Rambam regarding the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option, the *Beis Ha-Leivi* suggests that it may

point to another important difference between the two aforementioned interpretations in the Gemara as to the reasoning behind the respective positions of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. Basing himself on a comment of the Vilna Gaon in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Bi'ur Ha-Gra ibid.*, s.v. *ve-yeish omrim*), the *Beis Ha-Leivi* posits that according to the second of those interpretations, according to which Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel are unconcerned about a need to demonstrate what night of Chanukah it is (and thus do not argue about what is more important — the number of days yet to come or the number of days that have already arrived, but rather about whether this mitzvah is modeled after the descending number of bull offerings on *Sukkos* or after the standard policy that we ascend in sacred matters and do not descend), there is no requirement that there be any visible indication to an on-looker as to what night of the holiday it is. The objection raised by Tosafos, as presented above — that if a candle or set of candles is lit for each member of the household in order to satisfy the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option, there will be no clear distinction on a given night as to



Rabbi Shmuel Borenstein zt"l (Class of 1960) with YUHSB student Gabi Steinberg (Class of 2013)

which night of Chanukah it is because those who see multiple candles will not know if they represent which night of the holiday it is or if they represent the number of people in the household — is thus of no concern and is hence irrelevant. That concern is relevant only according to the first interpretation, which focuses upon the idea that the number of candles corresponds to the day of the holiday (whether yet remaining or already passed). Since, as described above, the Gemara subsequently records that the elders of Sidon accepted this second interpretation of the views of Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, the Rambam too accepts that interpretation and thus rules as he does in terms of the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option, disregarding any concern about making it clear which night of Chanukah it may happen to be. Had the Rambam accepted the first interpretation, he would have shared the concern of Tosafos and ultimately ruled like Tosafos that to satisfy the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option only one candle or set of candles is lit each night regardless of the number of household members.

The opinion of Tosafos, however, is that everybody agrees — according to both interpretations of the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel — that the primary goal of the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option is to demonstrate clearly to any on-looker which night of Chanukah it is. According to the first interpretation, the dispute is about what the Sages wished to call attention to when establishing the mitzvah to light Chanukah candles — the days still to come or the days already gone by. According to the second interpretation, the dispute — given that everybody agrees that the number of candles must indicate clearly which

night of the holiday it is — is about whether the emphasis should be on the number of remaining days and we should proceed in descending order as we do with the bull offerings of Sukkos or whether the emphasis should be on the number of days that have already arrived and we should proceed in ascending order because of the general rule that in sacred matters we ascend and do not descend. Since in any case, though, the number of candles should demonstrate something about which night of Chanukah it is, the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option requires only one candle or set of candles per the entire household so as to minimize any potential lack of clarity in this demonstration. According to the *Beis Ha-Leivi*, then, there is a significant practical difference between the two interpretations of the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel, relating to the disagreement between Tosafos and the Rambam regarding the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option. It may be noted that the Chida, in his *Birkei Yosef to Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* (*ibid.* no. 1), writes explicitly, citing the *Pri Chadash* (*ibid.* no. 1) and others, that the two interpretations in the Gemara regarding the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel indeed centers around this point of disagreement between Tosafos and the Rambam.

It may be possible to suggest yet another practical difference between these two interpretations of the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel. Regarding the physical placement of the Chanukah candles, the Gemara states:

תנו רבנן: נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ . . . ובשעת הסכנה - מניחה על שלחנו, ודיו.
שבת כא:

The Rabbis taught: The mitzvah [is] to place the Chanukah candle(s) at the doorway of one's house on the outside... and in times of danger, he should place it [inside] on his table, and that is sufficient.

Shabbos 21b

As explained there by Rashi, one of the important purposes of lighting Chanukah candles is to generate *pirsumei nissa* — publicity for the great miracle that the holiday commemorates. It is therefore proper to light the candles outdoors, where they will likely be seen by many individuals who are passing by in the street, thereby making more and more people aware of this miracle. If, however, one is not able to light outdoors due to some dangerous circumstance at the time (see Rashi, s.v. *ha-sakanah* and Tosafos, s.v. *u'veshe'as ha-sakanah* for details), he may light indoors at his table and that will suffice for him to fulfill the mitzvah. The Rambam (*Hilchos Chanukah* 4:7-8) and the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* *ibid.* no. 5) rule accordingly; the *Aruch HaShulchan* (*ibid.* no. 24) notes that the same is true when there may be no actual danger, but the weather conditions outside are adverse. The question not discussed in these sources is whether one who is forced to light indoors should nonetheless pursue the enhancement options of *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin*, or whether he should, in such a case, simply fulfill the basic obligation of lighting one candle each night regardless of how many people are in his household.

The answer to this question may lie in our understanding of the nature of the enhanced options, such as the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option. As just pointed out, the notion of

pirsumei nissa is central to proper fulfillment of the mitzvah to light Chanukah candles. But is *pirsumei nissa* to be viewed as an actual component of that very mitzvah — in other words, is the requirement on Chanukah not only to light candles (that is, to perform a “*ma’aseh hadlakah*” — an act of lighting), but also to light the candles specifically in a manner that allows for the miracle to be publicized to as great an extent as possible? Or is *pirsumei nissa* a kind of separate obligation — in other words, in addition to lighting candles, one must also try to publicize the miracle, but the *pirsumei nissa* is not by itself part and parcel of the *ma’aseh hadlakah*? From the fact that when, for one reason or another, it is not possible to light the Chanukah candles outdoors, where *pirsumei nissa* can be properly attained, one is still obligated to light the candles indoors, where there will be no broad *pirsumei nissa*, it would seem that the “*maaseh hadlakah*” is an obligation even in the absence of the possibility for *pirsumei nissa*.

The same conclusion may be drawn from something else written by the Rambam:

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

And because of this [story, outlined previously], the Sages who were [alive] in that generation instituted that these eight days, which start from the evening [of] the twenty-fifth of Kislev, should be days of rejoicing and of [reciting] Hallel,

and on [these days] in the evening we light the candles at the doorways of the houses each and every night of the eight nights [in order] to demonstrate and reveal [the greatness of] the miracle. And these days are the [days which] are called Chanukah, and they are forbidden [to be days on which one delivers] a eulogy or [on which one observes] a fast day just like the days of Purim. And the [mitzvah of] the lighting of the candles on [these days] is a mitzvah from the Rabbinic authorities just like [the mitzvah of] the reading of the Megillah [on Purim].
Rambam, Hilchos Chanukah 3:3

Conceptually speaking, is the embellishment accomplished by the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option similar to the embellishment accomplished by a regular *hiddur mitzvah*?

From the fact that the Rambam here makes mention twice of the mitzvah to light Chanukah candles, once, toward the beginning of the passage, connecting it directly to concept of *pirsumei nissa* (“to demonstrate and reveal [the greatness of] the miracle”), but again at the end of the passage, presenting it as an independent rabbinic requirement with no reference to *pirsumei nissa*, it may be argued that he too is conveying the point that *pirsumei nissa*, while certainly very important, is not an

inseparable component of the mitzvah to light candles on Chanukah. Had the Rambam shared only the earlier part of the passage, one might have concluded that *pirsumei nissa* is absolutely necessary for this mitzvah and if for whatever reason there is no possibility to accomplish that, the mitzvah simply cannot be performed. With his remarks at the end of the passage, however, the Rambam clarifies that there indeed exists a Rabbinically mandated mitzvah to light Chanukah candles on its own, even without a possibility for *pirsumei nissa*.

If this analysis is correct, we can now ask what is accomplished by lighting in accordance with the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option. Is that enhancement intended to embellish the *ma’aseh hadlakah*, the act of lighting the candles, which would make it similar to performing any other mitzvah in an enhanced fashion, through what is generally known as “*hiddur mitzvah*” — the “beautification” of a mitzvah? For example, the Gemara in *Shabbos* (133b), based upon a verse in the Torah (*Shemos* 15:2), encourages one to acquire a beautiful sukkah, a beautiful lulav, a beautiful shofar, beautiful tzitzis, and so on, as a means of embellishing the particular act of the mitzvah performed with each of those items. Is that what *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* regarding Chanukah candles is all about as well? To be sure, some of the parameters are not identical, as the Gemara in *Bava Kamma* (9b) teaches that to accomplish the goal of *hiddur mitzvah*, one must be willing to spend up to one third extra for the more beautiful item (see there for details; see also *Shulchan Aruch Orach Chaim* 656:1), while one who lights even one additional Chanukah candle a

night is spending more than one third extra. But conceptually speaking, is the embellishment accomplished by the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option similar to the embellishment accomplished by a regular *hiddur mitzvah*?

Or — maybe because of the above discrepancy between the means of fulfilling the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option and the standard *hiddur mitzvah* rules — should we say that *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* on Chanukah does not relate to the actual mitzvah of lighting candles — the *ma'aseh hadlakah* — at all, but rather to the unique requirement of *pirsumei nissa*? In other words, perhaps the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* enhancement is intended to embellish the *pirsumei nissa* element, as it attracts more attention from the on-looker, through the ever-increasing number of candles visible, to the special greatness of the miracle being celebrated on Chanukah? Which of the above two understandings of *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* on Chanukah is correct?

Perhaps the answer to this question depends on which of the two aforementioned explanations of the original dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel regarding the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* practice one accepts. The author of the first explanation, emphasizing that the number of candles lit in accordance with the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* practice relates to what day of the holiday it is, apparently holds that the goal of following this practice is to allow the on-lookers passing by in the

streets to recognize the greatness of the Chanukah miracle by considering how many “miraculous days” yet remain (Beis Shammai) or how many have already arrived (Beis Hillel). It seems clear that according to this view, the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option is designed to enhance the level of *pirsumei nissa*; consequently, one may suggest that when the person has to light indoors, where no significant *pirsumei nissa* is achieved in any event, there is nothing to be gained by adhering to the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* practice. In such a case, lighting one candle for the entire household each night would suffice to enable the person to fulfill his mitzvah, as there is no *pirsumei nissa* to enhance.

The author of the second explanation, however, who does not attach any significance to calling attention to what day of the holiday it is, apparently posits that the performance of the mitzvah in accordance with the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* practice is to be modeled after a pattern existing elsewhere in halachah, either that found regarding the sacrificial bull offerings on Sukkos (Beis Shammai), or that found more commonly, that we ascend in sacred matters and do not descend (Beis Hillel). According to this view, the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* option has nothing to do with *pirsumei nissa*, but rather relates to the *ma'aseh hadlakah*, the way one performs the act of the mitzvah of lighting the candles; consequently, even one who lights indoors, without any major *pirsumei nissa*, may still choose to

follow this option if he so desires, as he will thereby embellish his personal performance of the mitzvah. In any case, it seems clear that there are indeed practical differences between these two interpretations of the nature of the dispute between Beis Shammai and Beis Hillel.

As a postscript, it may be added that in a way, at least homiletically, both of the above ideas are correct. There is value in embellishing one's personal performance of mitzvos, regardless of what is visible to others, and there is also value in enhancing the aspect of a mitzvah that one demonstrates to others, thereby showing his love for the mitzvah to the public. It is noteworthy that the Hebrew root of the word “Chanukah” is the same as that of the word “*chinuch*,” usually translated as education, training, or, most accurately, making someone (or something) suitable for the role he will ultimately fill. Anyone who wants to be involved in *chinuch*, to educate, train, or make someone suitable for his role, whether formally as a *rebbe* or a teacher, or just as someone who wishes to positively impact others, should himself be scrupulous and meticulous about his own mitzvah observance, and hence be an effective role model. He should also demonstratively communicate his love for, his joy in, and his happiness with his relationship with God through mitzvah observance. As we celebrate Chanukah, let us strive to influence and to be influenced in the best possible way.



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Recalculating Our Priorities in Education

When we think about Chanukah, many themes come to mind.

We remember the dedication and commitment of the Chashmonaim, the miracle of the Menorah, and the importance of *hallel v'hoda'ah*, praising and thanking Hashem for the great miracles He has performed for us in our lives. While these themes are primary and central to Chanukah, there is another idea, albeit less discussed and center stage, that is part of the fabric of Chanukah and what it represents: Chanukah sheds light on our focus and priorities in Jewish education.

One of the most famous questions raised about the miracle of the *pach shemen* is raised by the *Pnei Yehoshua* in *Maseches Shabbos* (21b). Why was the miracle necessary at all? We have a halachic principle called "*tum'ah hutrah b'tzibbur*," which means that when we are involved in a communal event, even impure oil would have been allowed. Why then, did we need the miracle of finding the one jug of oil?

One answer to this question is as follows: From the letter of the law we could have gotten by with oil that was impure. But there was a much deeper issue that was facing the Jewish people than merely the lighting of the Menorah. We are taught in the Gemara (ibid) that the Greeks came into the Beis Hamikdash and defiled all of the oils. On the surface, that means that they made it impossible



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for us to light the Menorah, as the oil was impure. On a deeper level, the Greeks were out to accomplish much more than inhibiting the kindling of the Menorah. The Maharal in his *Ner Mitzva* explains that *shemen*, oil, refers to wisdom. They went after our oil because they really wanted to defile our wisdom and our Torah. They could not stand the fact that our *chochmah*, our wisdom, was greater than theirs, or that it was Divine. They therefore defiled all our oils — symbolically saying that there is nothing holier about your educational system.

When the Chashmonaim entered the Mikdash, they realized with every fiber of their existence what the Yevanim had tried to accomplish, and thus went on a search to find pure oil to light the Menorah. What they were teaching generations to come was the value of purity and sanctity of our Torah and our *chochmah*. It is so clearly different from the other *chochmah* in the world, because it was given to us by Hashem Himself. As such, although impure oil would have worked to fulfill the technical mitzvah of lighting the Menorah, it would not have taught the lesson that was so important and essential for the day:

the purity and sanctity of Torah.

Perhaps it was this insistence of the Chashmonaim that inspired the miracle from on High. In *Maoz Tzur* we say:

ומנותר קנקנים נעשה נס לשושנים.

From the leftover jugs of oil, the miracle occurred for the beloved roses (Jewish people).

In light of the above idea, perhaps the message is that **because** there was such a desire for purity and sanctity, Hashem performed the miracle and allowed the oil to burn for eight days.

This message is extremely powerful and very relevant. While B"H we don't live in a time of religious persecution, we are constantly challenged, both externally and internally, with ideas and concepts that are not consistent with Torah values and certainly are not in sync with *kedushas haTorah*. Whether it is choosing schools for our children, summer venues or family vacations, we struggle (or perhaps don't struggle enough) with placing the proper value system and priorities to ensure that we maintain the *kedusha* and *tahara* that is essential to *Toras Hashem*. We always want more for our children: a more comfortable home, a better vacation or the latest technology. But sometimes more is



Chinuch begins from the earliest ages when a child soaks in everything he sees from his parents. Everything we do teaches our children.

less. Sometimes we try to show our love by showering gifts and material possessions without realizing that we are not transmitting the greatest gift possible to the next generation — the essence of Yiddishkeit — in the way that we should.

So where do we start? How can we take the *chinuch* message of Chanukah and properly transmit it to our children and our students?

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, zt”l was once asked by a young father at what age should he begin to be *mechanech* (educate) his son. His son was a few years old and this parent didn’t want to miss the boat and begin his *chinuch* too late. Rav Shlomo Zalman responded gently that the young man was already late in beginning to be *mechanech* his son.

“*Chinuch* begins from the earliest ages when a child soaks in everything he sees from his parents.” The venerable Rav then quoted the verse we recite thrice daily in Krias Shema, “*v’li’madi’tem osam es b’nei’chem...*” which charges parents to teach their children. Rav Shlomo Zalman noted that the word “*osam*” is spelled without a vav — as though it should be read “*a’tem*.” Everything we do teaches our children.

In light of this teaching, it would seem that the best place to start when we revisit the educational value system we would like to impart to our children, is to contemplate our own values and goals in life. What is really important to us? What do we get excited about? How much do we strive for purity and sanctity in our

daily life? How can we improve our mitzvah observance so that it will trickle down to the next generation?

Before Waze was invented, people used to use a separate GPS device. When a person lost track of his original route to his destination, the GPS would announce “Recalculating!” Chanukah comes each year and reminds us to recalculate our goals and dreams in life so that we can hopefully transmit the right messages and lessons to the next generation.

May we each merit to learn this lesson of Chanukah and fill our lives with more *kedusha* and *tahara* and thereby merit seeing our children walk in the ways of our illustrious ancestors: educated, wise and pure.



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Joint Distribution Committee <i>Jerusalem, Israel</i>	Sephardic Institute Synagogue <i>Brooklyn, NY</i>	SAR High School <i>Riverdale, NY</i>	Ulpanat Orot <i>Downsview, ON</i>	Young Israel of Jamaica Estates <i>Jamaica, NY</i>	Young Israel of Toco Hills <i>Atlanta, GA</i>
Kehilat Zichron Yosef <i>Jerusalem, Israel</i>	Sephardic Kehila Centre Synagogue <i>Thornhill, ON</i>	Shaare Zedek Cong. <i>Winnipeg, MB</i>	United Orthodox Synagogues <i>Houston, TX</i>	Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst <i>Cedarhurst, NY</i>	Young Israel of West Hartford <i>West Hartford, CT</i>
Kehillas Bais Yehudah Tzvi <i>Cedarhurst, NY</i>	Shaarei Shomayim Cong. <i>Toronto, ON</i>	Shaarei Shomayim Cong. <i>Toronto, ON</i>	University of Massachusetts JLIC Hillel <i>Amherst, MA</i>	Young Israel of Long Beach <i>Long Beach, NY</i>	Young Israel of West Hempstead <i>West Hempstead, NY</i>
Kehillat Ahavat Tzion <i>Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel</i>	Shaarei Tefilla <i>Las Vegas, NV</i>	Shaarei Tefillah Cong. <i>Toronto, ON</i>	University of Pennsylvania Hillel <i>Philadelphia, PA</i>	Young Israel of Memphis <i>Memphis, TN</i>	Young Israel of West Rogers Park <i>Chicago, IL</i>
Kehilat Chovevei Tzion <i>Skokie, IL</i>	Shaarei Tefillah Cong. <i>Toronto, ON</i>	Shaarei Torah Orthodox Cong. of Syracuse <i>Dewitt, NY</i>	Viewmount <i>Toronto, ON</i>	Young Israel Of Montreal <i>Montréal, QC</i>	Young Israel Ohab Zedek of North <i>Riverdale</i>
Kehillat New Hemsptead <i>Spring Valley, NY</i>	Shaarei Torah Orthodox Cong. of Syracuse <i>Dewitt, NY</i>	Shalhevet High School <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>	West Coast Torah Center <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>	Young Israel of Neve Aliza <i>Karnei Shomron, Israel</i>	Young Israel Shomrei Emunah <i>Silver Spring, MD</i>
Kehillat Ohel Ephraim <i>Ariel, Israel</i>	Shaarey Yerushalayim <i>Valley Village, CA</i>	Shivtei Yisrael <i>Ra'anana, Israel</i>	Westville Synagogue <i>New Haven, CT</i>	Young Israel of New Hyde Park <i>New Hyde Park, NY</i>	YU High School for Girls <i>Hollis, NY</i>
Kehillat Shaareei Torah Of Toronto <i>Toronto, ON</i>	Shaarey Zedek <i>Valley Village, CA</i>	Shomrai Shabbos <i>Toronto, ON</i>	Woodside Synagogue Ahavas Torah <i>Silver Spring, MD</i>	Young Israel of New Rochelle <i>New Rochelle, NY</i>	YULA Boys High School <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>
Kehillat Shaarei Yonah Menachem <i>Modiin , Israel</i>	Shalhevet High School <i>Los Angeles, CA</i>	SKA High School for Girls <i>Hewlett Bay Park, NY</i>	Yagdil Torah <i>Boca Raton, FL</i>		
Kemp Mill Synagogue <i>Silver Spring, MD</i>	Shivtei Yisrael <i>Ra'anana, Israel</i>	South Fallsburg Hebrew Association <i>South Fallsburg, NY</i>	Yavneh Academy <i>Paramus, NJ</i>		
Keneseth Israel Cong. <i>St Louis Park, MN</i>	Shomrai Shabbos <i>Toronto, ON</i>		JLIC at Yale University Hillel <i>New Haven, CT</i>		
Kesher Israel Cong. <i>Harrisburg, PA</i>	SKA High School for Girls <i>Hewlett Bay Park, NY</i>		Yeshiva of Flatbush <i>Brooklyn, NY</i>		
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