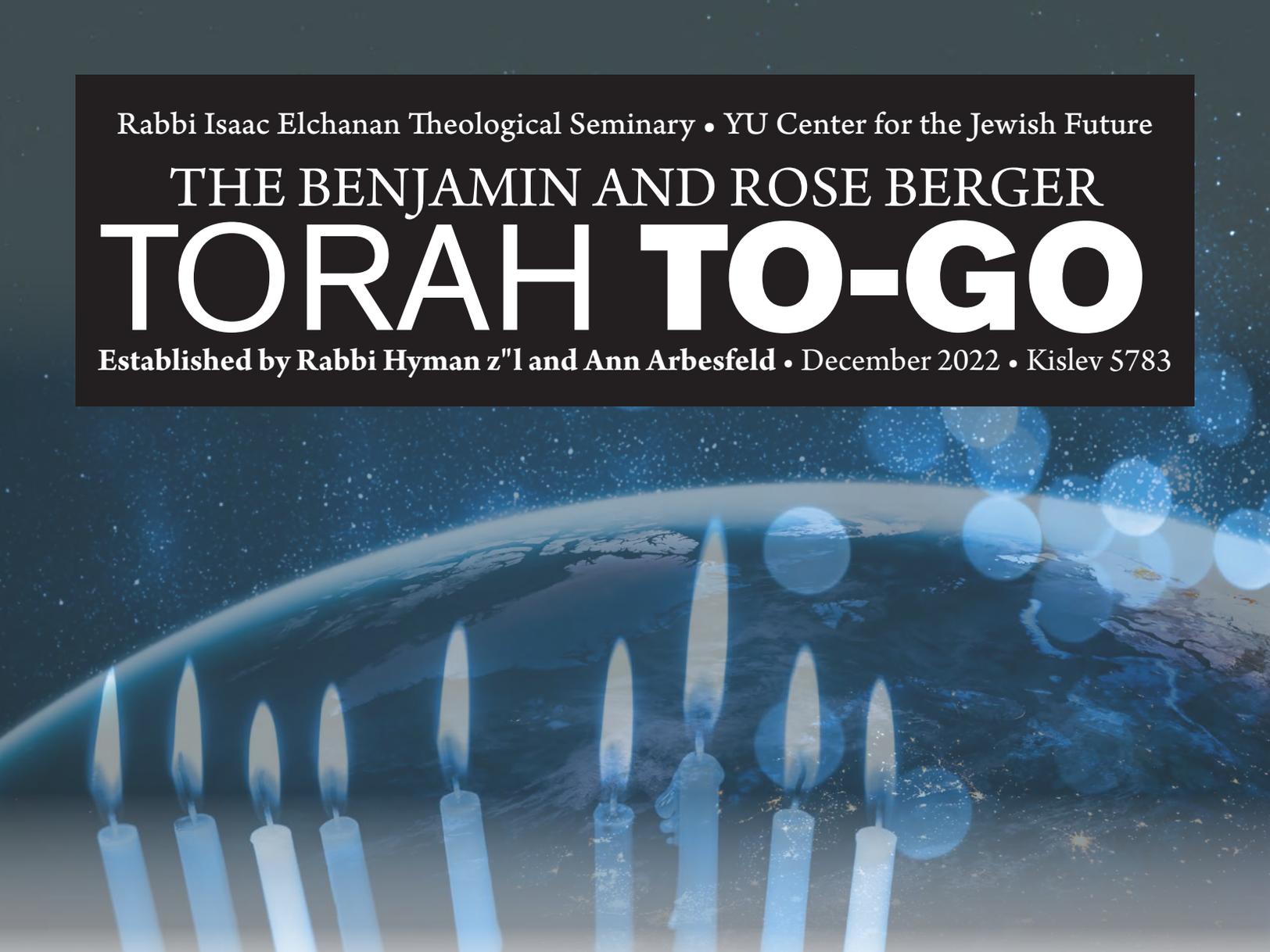


Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary • YU Center for the Jewish Future

THE BENJAMIN AND ROSE BERGER
TORAH TO-GO

Established by Rabbi Hyman z"l and Ann Arbesfeld • December 2022 • Kislev 5783



CHANUKA

Spreading Light to the World

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



ישיבת רבנו יצחק אלחנן

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

An Affiliate of Yeshiva University

CENTER FOR THE JEWISH FUTURE

We thank the following synagogues which have pledged
to be 5783 Pillars of the Torah To-Go® project

Beth Jacob Congregation Beverly Hills, CA	Cong. Kehilath Jeshurun New York, NY	Mount Kisco Hebrew Congregation Mount Kisco, NY	Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst Cedarhurst, NY
Boca Raton Synagogue Boca Raton, FL	Cong. Ohab Zedek New York, NY	New Toco Shul Atlanta, GA	Young Israel of New Hyde Park New Hyde Park, NY
Cong. Adat Yeshurun La Jolla, CA	Cong. Ohr HaTorah Atlanta, GA	Riverdale Jewish Center Riverdale, NY	Young Israel of New Rochelle New Rochelle, NY
Cong. Ahavas Achim Highland Park, NJ	Cong. Shaarei Tefillah Newton Centre, MA	The Jewish Center New York, NY	Young Israel of Scarsdale Scarsdale, NY
Cong. Ahavath Torah Englewood, NJ	Darchei Noam Glenbrook Northbrook, IL	Young Israel of Century City Los Angeles, CA	Young Israel of West Hartford West Hartford, CT
Cong. Arzei Darom Teaneck, NJ	East Hill Synagogue Englewood, NJ	Young Israel of Forest Hills Forest Hills, NY	Young Israel of West Hempstead West Hempstead, NY
Cong. Beth Aaron Teaneck, NJ	Green Road Synagogue Beachwood, OH	Young Israel of Great Neck Great Neck, NY	Young Israel of Woodmere Woodmere, NY
Cong. Beth Sholom Lawrence, NY	Jewish Center of Atlantic Beach Atlantic Beach, NY	Young Israel of Hollywood-Ft Lauderdale Hollywood, FL	Young Israel Talmud Torah of Flatbush Brooklyn, NY
Cong. Beth Sholom Providence, RI	Kemp Mill Synagogue Silver Spring, MD		
Cong. B'nai Israel – Ohev Zedek Philadelphia, PA			

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, President, Yeshiva University
Rabbi Menachem Penner, Max and Marion Grill Dean, Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

Rabbi Robert Shur, Series Editor Rabbi Joshua Flug, General Editor
Rabbi Michael Dubitsky, Content Editor Andrea Kahn, Copy Editor

Copyright © 2022 All rights reserved by Yeshiva University
Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future
500 West 185th Street, Suite 419, New York, NY 10033 • office@yutorah.org • 212.960.0074

This publication contains words of Torah. Please treat it with appropriate respect.
For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Rabbi Russ Shulkes at russ.shulkes@yu.edu

Table of Contents **Chanuka 5783**

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

Introduction

4 **Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman:** Two Holidays of Light

Spreading Light to the World



6 **Table Talk: Quotes and Questions for Family Discussions:** From Yeshiva University's Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein Center for Values & Leadership

9 **Dr. Erica Brown:** When Sparks Fly

11 **Dean Shoshana Schechter:** Passing the Torch and Spreading the Light

14 **Rabbi Dr. Ari Sytner:** Kidney Donation: Spreading Light Through Acts of Kindness

Chanuka Insights



20 **Rabbi Josh Flug:** Doughnuts on Chanukah: An Ancient Tradition?

22 **Rabbi Dovid Hirsch:** The Nature of Mehadrin on Chanukah

25 **Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter:** Sephardim, Ashkenazim, and the Hannukah Menorah: Halakhah and History

26 **Mrs. Michal Schonbrun:** Chanukah and the Missing Text

29 **Rabbi Etan Schnall:** How Should an International Traveller Fulfill the Mitzvah of Chanuka Lights?



Yeshiva University mourns the loss of

Tobias (Teddy) Berman, z"l

Beloved Husband of Rosalie (Bayer) Berman

Father of

Rabbi Dr. Ari Berman, President and Rosh Yeshiva, Yeshiva University and RIETS

Rabbi Alex Berman and Cheryl Levi

Brother of Rabbi Julius Berman, RIETS Chairman Emeritus and Member, YU Board of Trustees
and Esther Berman Rubin



TWO HOLIDAYS OF LIGHT

As winter proceeds, the day begins to get shorter. It is often still dark when we wake up in the morning and it is usually dark by the time we arrive home. Some find the darkness of winter serene. It feels quieter outside before the sun rises. Many find it somewhat somber; winter brings a melancholy, a longing for the light. And at the heart of Chanukah is a lesson on how we react to the darkness.

The first time the day grew shorter and darkness grew longer is also the first story of anxiety. As Adam HaRishon saw the days growing shorter and shorter, the Talmud explains (*Avodah Zarah* 8a), he became nervous. “Woe is me,” he said, “perhaps because I sinned the world is becoming dark around me and will return to the primordial state of *to’hu v’vohu*, chaos and disorder.” The first darkness of winter, Adam HaRishon thought the world was ending. Finally, as the days began to grow longer, he was put at ease. The Talmud explains:

כיון שראה תקופת טבת וראה יום שמאריך והולך אמר מנהגו של עולם הוא הלך ועשה שמונה ימים טובים לשנה האחרת עשאן לאלו ולאלו ימים טובים הוא קבעם לשם שמים והם קבעום לשם עבודת כוכבים.

Once he saw that the season of Tevet, i.e., the winter solstice, had arrived, and saw that the day was progressively lengthening after the solstice, he said: Clearly, the days become shorter and then longer, and this is the order of the world. He went and observed a festival for eight days. Upon the next year, he observed both these eight days on which he had fasted on the previous year, and these eight days of his celebration, as days of festivities. He, Adam, established these festivals for the sake of Heaven, but they, the gentiles of later generations, established them for the sake of idol worship.

Adam HaRishon created the first eight-day holiday in the winter in gratitude for the lengthening presence of the sun. Only later was this holiday, so to speak, co-opted by idolators as a festival celebrating the sun itself.

It is not hard to see the parallels to Chanukah in this story. Like Chanukah, this initial holiday was eight days long. And, like Chanukah, the holiday established by Adam HaRishon was in celebration of light. Yet, Adam HaRishon’s holiday was co-opted by pagans while Chanukah remains a quintessential Jewish holiday. What

is the difference between these two celebrations?

The essential question raised by these two holidays is how one responds to darkness. Adam HaRishon waited for the days to grow longer, while Chanukah celebrates our human capacity to spread light. Moreover, the holiday of Adam HaRishon revolved around the solstice, the sun, while Chanukah is a lunar holiday. The sun shines, the moon reflects. One might say that the message of Chanukah is that even in the absence of a light source, we can generate light by reflecting the illumination of divinity onto the world. We do not wait for the sun; rather, like the moon, we reflect the light of Hashem. Chanukah is the rabbinic holiday that celebrates our ability to make light by bringing divinity into this darkened world.

There are two ways to react to the darkness of night: One can wait for the darkness to leave, or one can work to transform the darkness into light. Chanukah teaches us to not passively wait for the sun to rise, but to spread the light of God. Each candle, each person, illuminating a dark world with God’s holy light.

LEARN MORE ABOUT CHANUKAH AT

yutorah.org/moadim-u-zmanim/holidays/chanukah



CORE TORAH VALUES

Yeshiva University is a unique ecosystem of educational institutions and resources that prepares the next generation of leaders with Jewish values and market-ready skills to achieve great success in their personal and professional lives, endowing them with both the will and wherewithal to transform the Jewish world and broader society for the better.

YU.EDU/VALUES

TORAT EMET

אמת
TRUTH

We believe in truth, and humanity's ability to discover it.

The pursuit of truth has always been the driving force behind advances in human understanding, from Socrates' wanderings through the streets of Athens to the innovations of the Industrial Revolution. People of faith, who believe in a divine author of Creation, believe that the act of discovery is sacred, whether in the realm of philosophy, physics, economics or the study of the human mind.

The Jewish people in particular affirm that beginning with the Revelation of the Torah at Mount Sinai, God entrusted eternal teachings and values to us that we must cherish and study diligently above all else, for they represent the terms of the special covenant that God made with us. All people, regardless of their faith background, should value the accumulation of knowledge because it is the way to truth and a prerequisite to human growth.

TORAT CHAIM

חיים
LIFE

We believe in bringing values to life.

Jewish thought asserts that truth is made available to human beings not simply so that they can marvel at it but also so that they can use it. Students studying literature, computer science, law, psychology or anything else are expected to take what they learn and implement it within their own lives as well as apply it to the real world around them.

When people see a problem that needs addressing, their responsibility is to draw upon the truths they uncovered during their studies in finding a solution. They must live truth in the real world, not simply study it in the classroom.

TORAT ADAM

אדם
INFINITE HUMAN WORTH

We believe in the infinite worth of each and every human being.

Judaic tradition first introduced to the world the radical proposition that each individual is created in the divine image and accordingly possesses incalculable worth and value.

The unique talents and skills each individual possesses are a reflection of this divine image, and it is therefore a sacred task to hone and develop them. The vast expansive human diversity that results from this process is not a challenge but a blessing. Each of us has our own path to greatness.

TORAT CHESED

חסד
COMPASSION

We believe in the responsibility to reach out to others in compassion.

Even as we recognize the opportunities of human diversity, Jewish tradition emphasizes the importance of common obligations. In particular, every human being is given the same responsibility to use his or her unique gifts in the service of others; to care for their fellow human beings; to reach out to them in thoughtfulness, kindness and sensitivity; and to form a connected community.

TORAT ZION

ציון
REDEMPTION

We believe that humanity's purpose is to transform our world for the better and move history forward.

In Jewish thought, the concept of redemption represents the conviction that while we live in an imperfect world, we have a responsibility to strive toward its perfection. Regardless of a person's personal convictions about whether social perfection is attainable or even definable, it is the act of working toward it that gives our lives meaning and purpose. This common striving is an endeavor that brings all of humanity together.

The Jewish people's task to build up the land of Israel into an inspiring model society represents this effort in microcosm. But it is part of a larger project that includes all of humankind. If the arc of the moral universe bends toward justice, then redemption represents our responsibility to work together in the service of God to move history forward.



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Dr. Berman at <https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-dr-ari-berman/>



Table Talk: Quotes and Questions for Family Discussions

Prepared by Rabbi Marc Eichenbaum

Yeshiva University's Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks-Herenstein
Center for Values and Leadership

Please enjoy this collection of sources, quotes, and discussion questions to enhance your Chanukah experience. In line with the theme of this issue, this guide will help you explore how the laws and themes of Chanukah relate to the idea of “spreading light to the world.” They are ideally meant to inspire family and other group discussion.

The Location of the Chanukah Candles

The Sages taught in a baraita: It is a mitzvah to place the Chanukah candles outside of the entrance to one's house so that all can see it. If one lives upstairs, one places it at the window adjacent to the public domain. And in a time of danger when the gentiles issued decrees to prohibit kindling lights, one places it on the table and that is sufficient to fulfill one's obligation ... And on which side [of the entrance], does one place it? Rav Acha, son of Rava, said: On the right side of the

entrance. Rav Shmuel from Difti said: On the left. And the halakha is to place it on the left so that the Chanukah candles will be on the left and the mezuzah on the right. Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b–22a

- **According to the Talmud, where is the ideal place to light the Chanukah candles?**
- **What do you think constitutes a “time of danger”?**
- **What do you think these laws teach us about the message of Chanukah?**

The Definition of “Outside”

Outside — Due to publicizing the miracle. Not in the public domain, rather in the courtyard, for their houses were open to the courtyard. Rashi (1040–1105), Shabbat 21b s.v. outside

It is a mitzvah to place it [the Chanukah lights] in the outside of the entrance of his house — we are dealing with a case in which there is no courtyard but rather a house [entrance] right next to a public domain. However, if there is a courtyard outside the house, it is a

mitzvah to place it by the entrance of the courtyard. Tosafot (12th and 13th centuries), Shabbat 21b, s.v. mitzvah

- **What is the disagreement between Rashi and Tosafot regarding the ideal location of the Chanukah candles?**
- **What do Tosafot's opinion highlight regarding the purpose of the Chanukah candles?**
- **Is this debate relevant today considering the construction of our modern living structures?**

Justifications for Lighting Inside

Although now we don't light outside despite there being no more danger, that is because we are prevented from doing so. In all of our countries the days of Chanukah are days of heavy rainfall, snow, and strong winds, and therefore it is impossible to place it [i.e. the Chanukah candles] outside if we don't enclose it in a glass case, and the rabbis did not burden us with this [requirement]. Furthermore, in doing so it is not recognizable it is for

the mitzvah. Furthermore, not every country will allow us to place them outside. Therefore, we all light inside the house.

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Epstein (1829–1908), *Aruch Hashulchan*, Orach Chaim 671:24

- **What are the three reasons the Aruch HaShulchan gives as to why it is common to light indoors nowadays?**

- Can you think of any other mitzvot that are commonly not performed in their ideal form due to the weather?
- There are several halachic connections between

the mitzvah of Chanukah candles and a person's home. What do you think this connection teaches us?

Lighting in between Two Mitzvot

Nowadays that we don't light outside and it's only publicized in one's household, there is no more decree that one should light at the entrance in-between two mitzvot [i.e. the Chanukah candles and the mezuzah]. Accordingly, it is no longer an obligation but something that those who are especially careful with mitzvot do ... Therefore, the Magen Avraham is correct when he writes that if one has a window facing a public domain one should place the Chanukah candles near the window ... because publicizing the miracle is more important than the idea of entering the house between two mitzvot.

Rabbi Moshe Feinstein (1895–1986), *Igrot Moshe*, Orach Chaim, 4:125

- According to Rabbi Feinstein, what is the main reason for the placement of the Chanukah candles?
- If one lives in an apartment that contains no windows facing a public domain, where should they light the Chanukah candles?
- Do you think there is a mitzvah to publicize the miracle of Chanukah in ways other than lighting the Chanukah candles?

We have seen a tension when it comes to lighting Chanukah candles. On the one hand, Halacha dictates that ideally, we should light outside our homes and spread the light to others. On the other hand, the light must emanate from the home. Rashi and Tosafot may disagree as to whether the courtyard is considered an extension of the home, but they both agree that there must be some connection to the home. Furthermore, in various circumstances, we light indoors with a focus on publicizing the miracle and spreading the light to members of the home. When learning the following non-Halachic sources regarding Judaism's relationship with universalism, please think about how they may shed light on this tension. How do we share the light with others while also ensuring that our own home is filled with light?

The Paradox of Judaism

Judaism embodies a unique paradox that has distinguished it from polytheism on the one hand and the great universal monotheisms, Christianity and Islam, on the other. Its God is universal: the creator of the universe, author and sovereign of all human life. But its covenant is particular: one people set among the nations, whose vocation is not to convert the world to its cause, but to be true to itself and to God. That juxtaposition of universality and particularity was to cause a tension

between Israel and others, and within Israel itself, that has lasted to this day.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks (1948–2020), *Crisis and Covenant*, pg. 250

- According to Rabbi Sacks, what paradox does Judaism possess?
- Where in Tanach do we see evidence supporting Rabbi Sacks' claim?
- In what ways can this paradox enhance your religious belief and practice?

The Rise of Universalism

The rise of universalist attitudes among Jewish authors in the Second Temple period can in part be attributed to the globalization of the ancient world. As Hellenism spread, Jews had to reckon with the world beyond their communities, a world that was enjoying increasing technological and cultural advances. Some Jews began to perceive themselves as part of a broader human network whose destiny lay not in the far-off end-time, but in the present era. Toward the end of the Second Temple period, Jews were writing universalist texts that, like

the universalist literature which preceded it, invited all humankind to worship the One True God in a sustained manner. Yet these Jews began to omit distinguishing aspects of the Jewish community that was at the forefront of earlier universalist texts.

Dr. Malka Simkovich, *The Making of Jewish Universalism: From Exile to Alexandria* (Lexington Books, 2017), pg. xxiv

- According to Dr. Simkovich, why did universalist attitudes rise during the Second Temple period?
- How may this observation relate to Chanukah and

the fight against Hellenism?

- What are potential downsides to emphasizing the

universalistic aspects of Judaism?

Exile vs. Redemption

In the Diaspora, which is likened to the evening, the focus of our actions is ourselves. ... But in the time of redemption, when the light of Israel is raised, the time will come for enacting [the words in the blessing before] the morning Shema, ahava rabba (a great love), when all the nations will say that the light of Israel will become “the light of the world.”

Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook (1865–1935), *Ein Ayah*, Berakhot 2a

- Compare the accompanying blessings of the Kriat Shema recited in the evening and Kriat Shema recited in the morning. What difference does Rav Kook pick up on that leads him to this statement?
- The prevalent custom in Israel is to light the Chanukah candles outside, whereas the common custom outside of Israel is to light inside. How do Rav Kook’s comments explain this phenomenon?
- What is one way in which Israel may already be considered “the light of the world”?

The Sanctity of Separateness

They wanted the Jews to assimilate into their culture, and unfortunately many Jews did. The Greeks brought their idols into the Temple and sacrificed pigs. And they sought out every jar and cruse of oil they could find to defile it, to compromise the purity of the oil, for the major characteristic of oil is that it separates and rises to the top of anything it is mixed with. Oil always remains separate; it always retains its essence. The crux of the war with the Greeks was much more than political. The Greeks wanted us to lose our essence and become intermingled with them. But we already had the example of Yosef, who always remained the Ivri, the different

one. The Hasmonians understood that they, too, and the entire nation, could retain their specific separate Jewish identity even amid this strong alien culture.

Mrs. Shira Smiles, YU Chanukah To-Go, 5776

- According to Mrs. Smiles, what may be the message of Chanukah in regards to our discussion of particularism and universalism?
- Is the theme of particularism that is evident in the holiday of Chanukah necessarily in contradiction to the idea of “spreading light to the world”?
- What is one way in which you can strengthen your Jewish identity in the midst of a strong alien culture?

Have you listened to the

YU Connects

CandiDate Podcast?

Candid conversations about dating and relationships

We cover topics from A to Z...

Anxiety, Bashert, Breakups, Checklists, Conversations, Dater's Perspective, Decisions, Disabilities, Emotional Intimacy, Emotional Investment, Engagement, Finances, Friends, Genetic Testing, Halachic Prenups, In-laws, Labels, Matchmakers, Mentors, Mindfulness, Past Challenges, Readiness, Parents, Premarital Education, References, Rejection, Resumes, Rules, Texting, Trust, Urban Dating, Values, Zoom Dating...

yuconnects.com/candidate-podcast



WHEN SPARKS FLY

Every spark is bright and dynamic. It's full of light and possibility. It's magical and transcendent. It can exist for one moment and disappear, or it can be nurtured and grow into full light if harnessed and managed properly.

This brings us to a famous Talmudic debate about sparks and professional liability. In BT *Shabbat* 21b, a blacksmith is responsible for damages if his anvil causes unintended sparks to hit something or someone. He should be aware, at all times, that his job comes with hazards that require extra precautions. The same is true for a flax merchant traveling in a public domain who ignores the lamps of storekeepers when he enters a store with a camel laden with wares. Flax catches fire quickly. If the storekeeper, however, put an oil lamp outside the store, then he, rather than the flax

merchant, is liable. In general, it may be a good idea to keep all camels outside of retail locations.

The whole legal dynamic of professional responsibility changes if the oil lamp in question is a menorah. According to R. Yehuda, "If the flax was set on fire by the storekeeper's Hanukkah lamp that he placed outside the entrance to his store, he is not liable." Ravina, citing Rava, adds an addendum to this. The menorah should be placed within 10 *tefahim*, handbreadths, from the ground. But maybe, the Talmud ponders, the storekeeper should place the menorah higher than a passing camel to avoid any problems whatsoever? The Talmud's conclusion takes into account human nature:

"If you burden one excessively, one will come to refrain from performing

the mitzvah of kindling Hanukkah lights." The onerousness of a mitzvah may compromise its observance.

The shopkeeper, wanting to attract customers and not have them avoid his shop, may not light the menorah at all.

This discussion takes place far from the few pages we have about Hanukkah in the second chapter of *Tractate Shabbat*, amid debates about the permissibility of certain oils for lighting Shabbat candles. Our focus is not on oils and wicks. It is on damages. After thinking about indemnities and recompense on an ordinary day in a blacksmith's forge, the Sages turned their attention to a possible exception on an exceptional set of days. What happens when the blaze of Hanukkah candles in a public space can, if unchecked, become

menacing? This discussion centers not only on occupational hazards. It also touches on the nexus of I-awareness and time-awareness.

The I-awareness of obligation and concern is twinned here with a time-awareness of the observance of a holiday. In his article “Sacred and Profane,” Rav Soloveitchik describes two types of people. Those who measure time by the clock and by the calendar, whose idea of time is merely quantitative: “These people are,” he writes, “deprived of an historical consciousness, for history is the living experience of time.” To such a person all units of time are equal. The one who measures time qualitatively, however, has a very different experience of time. Time is an opportunity to bring newness, creativity, and accomplishment to every moment. He does not wonder how to get through the next hour but how to make the next hour unforgettable, as the Rav wrote, “The time norm is the highest criterion by which man, life and actions should be judged.”

The shopkeeper and the merchant conduct their work in the here and now of commerce and an exchange of goods and services for pay. But on Hanukkah, they also attach themselves to an evanescent, historic light and what it demands in terms of heightening consciousness. In so doing, these ordinary workers are joined to the collective force

and expression of holiness on the job. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, in his introduction to his *Covenant & Conversation* volume on Genesis, writes that time is both cyclical and linear. “Time” is, he writes, “a non-repeating sequence of events, a journey in which no stage is exactly like any that has been or will be. Jewish time is like a fugue between these two themes, the eternal and the ephemeral, the timeless and the timely.”

In our Talmudic debate, the additional complicating factor of Hanukkah is meant to widen the concerns of the blacksmith, shopkeeper, and merchant from the timely to the timeless, from thinking about space alone to deepening their experience of time. They must care not only about the fulfillment of a mitzvah, but, in so doing, also care about the world that passes them by on these days.

They — and we — cannot afford to lose ourselves in the joy of the day and forget the responsibility that comes with light. From a leadership perspective, this case has much to say about due diligence and preventative measures. It also raises profound questions: What is realistic to expect of people when it comes to professional accountability? What happens to the observance of a mitzvah when we place too many expectations on people that may compromise their livelihoods, even if temporarily? But something else

underlies this debate. To what extent do those involved have an awareness of even the minute consequence of their actions and their surroundings? Attention must be paid, as Arthur Miller famously wrote in *Death of a Salesman*.

The blacksmith, the shopkeeper, and the merchant help us appreciate that this mandate to shed light and to do so responsibly is not separate from our work but intertwined with it, on Hanukkah and on every day that follows.

Yeshayahu, long before this, offered us a way to pay close attention to the light: “I, the Lord, in My grace, have summoned you, and I have grasped you by the hand. I created you, and appointed you a light of nations, opening eyes deprived of light, rescuing prisoners from confinement, from the dungeon those who sit in darkness” (Isa. 42:6-7). The Malbim explains that the responsibility demanded here is to “light *faith* for others so that they do not move in darkness.” There is intimacy here in the moment of instruction and a confidence required in its application. We shine by holding onto God tightly and learning what to do with our light. We must use that light to seek out those dwelling in dim obscurity and opacity, and with that light repair a broken world in need of our illumination.



Find more shiurim and articles from Dr. Brown at
<https://www.yutorah.org/dr-erica-brown>



KIDNEY DONATION: SPREADING LIGHT THROUGH ACTS OF KINDNESS

Ever since childhood, Chanukah was always among my favorite holidays. The tastes, smells, and sights created a fusion of experiences and memories that I long to recreate every year. The exception was 2011. It was the first time in my life that I opted to skip lighting the menorah, exchanging gifts, or playing dreidel with my children, in lieu of something far greater.

Instead, I spent the first night of Chanukah in a hospital bed, an IV in my arm, and an iPad in my hands as I watched my children miles away lighting the menorah without me. It was a bittersweet, but very proud moment that had been years in the making. I was recovering comfortably that evening from donating my left kidney to a stranger, a single mother of three from Israel, whose life was slipping away with each passing day that she did not receive this life-sustaining transplant. My incredible recipient, Ronit, later joked

that this was the best Chanukah present given in all of Jewish history.

In the months following, people would stop and ask what compelled me to give my kidney away, knowing there was no benefit to me, only risk. I honestly wished that I had a better answer, but the simple truth was that I felt blessed with this (extra) organ that I did not need to live, and Ronit could not live without. Let us not pretend that the decision to undergo unnecessary surgery is an easy one; I spent the better part of a year agonizing over this difficult decision. In fact, as a professor of values and ethics at Wurzweiler's School of Social Work, I often challenge my students to weigh ethical decisions, not only through the lens of morality, but by scrutinizing them through an ethical justification process, weighing the benefits against greater costs of our actions. In this case, nobody will argue the benefits of saving the life of

another. In fact, the Sages compared saving a single life to saving an entire world (*Sanhedrin* 37a)! The challenge, however, was justifying the cost.

As a father and husband, was this a risk I wanted to take? Does saving a life justify putting myself in harm's way? Yet, what kept inspiring me to move forward was thinking of the vast tapestry of kindness that weaves all of us together. Much like the *shamash* that we use to light the other candles in the menorah — it only spreads light, without diminishing its own — so too, an act of selfless kindness — even one that comes with risk — will certainly bring more light to the world. I, therefore, opted to risk my life to create a world where we extend ourselves to help others, rather than live in a world where we each protect our own resources, while others around us suffer.

Was I scared? Of course, who wouldn't

be? Where, then, did I draw the strength to proceed? I looked deep into my childhood and realized that I already had the answer. No, I am not brave, nor a hero; rather, I was raised seeing the Torah values of how it is better to give of our own light, rather than to keep it for ourselves as others sit in darkness. Just as I knew that if I saw someone drowning, I would be simply unable to look away, so too, I could not ignore the fact that within my abdomen, I held a five-ounce life-saving key to another person's salvation.

Throughout my early Jewish education, robotically placing a penny in the *pushka*, I was endowed with the basic Jewish values of *tzedakah* and *chesed*. As the years went on those seeds blossomed and I was able to appreciate that the Torah's mandate of helping others starts, not with action, but with emotion, as instructed in the foundational verse *V'ahavta lera'acha kamocho*, to love others as ourselves (Vayikra 19:18). Only upon feeling genuine empathy within, stirred by seeing the plight of another, can we feel and identify with their pain. It is that feeling of empathy that propels us toward action. In fact, countless research studies have found that those in pain report lesser degrees of suffering when they simply perceive the presence and caring of another person who is with them in their ordeal. Such is the power of empathy. It does not start with giving a vital organ, but to help alleviate the pain of another by just seeing their angst and lovingly staying with them. Chazal describe this trait as something woven into the very DNA of Bnei Avraham Avinu (*Yevamos* 79a).

I am often asked regarding my kidney donation, if I could, would I do it again? My answer is a definite yes. In fact, in the months and years following my kidney donation, I found myself saddened by the fact that I could not

donate another kidney. Having seen the impact of saving a life, I wanted to do more. Without another kidney to give, I published a book, sharing my story and my struggles: *The Kidney Donor's Journey: 100 Questions I Asked Before Donating My Kidney*. It was my hope that, although I could not give another kidney, my story would inspire others to look within and explore their capacity to give. I have been deeply humbled by the letters I receive from people around the world who have read the book and since donated their kidneys. I feel honored to be a part of a very special growing community of amazing donors and their families, who continue to share their experiences in the hopes of helping others, including the work of organizations like Renewal, who are facilitating transplants and saving lives on a daily basis. The point is that *chesed* does not happen in a vacuum, it is nurtured by the inspirational people who live and breathe it.

Please allow me to paint a picture of several seemingly unrelated vignettes from throughout my life, which I believe ultimately inspired me to donate my kidney. Beginning as a young child, I remember countless times where my grandfather, OB" M, would stand up in the middle of a Shabbos meal and leave. No, he was not going to nap, read, or focus on himself, but to walk several miles to the local nursing home to visit with the elderly residents and sing for them with his beautiful voice. I foolishly assumed all grandfathers did this, only to later learn that I was being taught a unique lesson about *chesed* from a very generous man who looked for ways to bring joy to others. Later, in my junior high and high school years, I followed his example by visiting nursing homes and bringing my friends along to spread joy. Although it was never asked or expected of me, my grandfather left a beautiful trail of breadcrumbs that inspired me to follow.

I smile when I think back to these early life experiences, which likely primed my heart to see myself as a vehicle for kindness.

Another powerful example took place at Yeshiva University. One of the rights of passage of working at YU is interacting with the high school and undergraduate students while braving the lines at the many kosher dining options on campus. One afternoon, while standing in Golan restaurant, the young man ahead of me had finished ordering his lunch, when the cashier said, "that will be twelve dollars." The teenager counted a crumpled pile of single dollar bills, and then proceeded to slowly count the change piled high in his hand. He quickly looked up with an embarrassed look on his face, as he noticed the long line of people behind him, and admitted that he was a few dollars short. Without a moment's hesitation, I leaned over and told the cashier to put the difference on my bill. The young man turned around and smiled at me as if he just won the lottery, and was so taken by my gesture. As he thanked me and asked how he could repay me, I was instantly transported back to a forgotten memory from decades earlier in my own young life; a memory that may have explained my actions.

As a boy of eight years old, I remember the hot August day in sleepaway camp. I had been saving the nickels and dimes I found throughout the summer so I could buy myself a soda from the camp's new soda machine. When the day arrived that I finally had enough money, I ran as fast as I could to the machine and excitedly inserted coin after coin. As I reached up to enthusiastically insert the final dime, it slipped from my hand and rolled beneath the soda machine. I, too, quickly dropped to the ground to retrieve it, but as hard as I tried, my small fingers were unable to reach it. Disappointed, I knew I

would have to wait for another day and another dime to come my way. I then stood up and pressed the coin return button with all my might, but, sadly, to no avail.

It was at that moment of defeat that I turned around and saw a man standing over me — someone I had never seen before or since. He was a large man who quickly noticed the tears in my eyes and asked what was wrong. I explained that I dropped my dime under the soda machine and then it ate the rest of my money. Without a moment's hesitation he reached into his pocket and pulled out a handful of coins. He placed two nickels into my small hand with a gentle smile on his face. I must have looked as if I just won the lottery, and I asked him how I could pay him back. I will never forget how he leaned forward and said, "One day in the future, when you see another boy who doesn't have enough money in his pocket, you can pay me back by giving that boy the money he needs."

Although at the time I did not fully understand what he meant, and the memory quickly faded, evading my consciousness for decades, standing in line that afternoon, it struck me like lightning. I did not hesitate to help another, because I knew what it felt like to be on the receiving end, helped by the kindness of a stranger, whose only wish was to make the world better by paying it forward to another. It is amusing when I think about what a minor interaction it was, but I am filled with great awe when I consider the impact it had upon me so

How many such memories and interactions do we each hold, consciously or unconsciously, from those in our lives who have modeled chessed and empathy, planting seeds for us to act upon in the future?

many years later while standing in the restaurant and witnessing that familiar look of disappointment on a young man's face. How many such memories and interactions do we each hold, consciously or unconsciously, from those in our lives who have modeled chessed and empathy, planting seeds for us to act upon in the future?

The final story, unlike the previous ones, is not about the elders who motivated me toward chessed, rather, and quite surprisingly, how my own children inspired me to donate my kidney. During the year leading up to my donation, my wife and I agreed to keep the process quiet while undergoing the testing and evaluations. Only once I was cleared would we have more practical conversations with our family. One such discussion was with our children, whom we agreed needed to be on board with this major life decision. Therefore, one night over dinner, I explained to our children that Hashem blessed us with two kidneys, even though we only needed one to live, and I was thinking about giving my extra kidney away to someone else who needed it, but I wanted their thoughts and input before making the decision. My two older sons both nervously looked across the table with many questions about the dangers of surgery and the risks to their father. With tears in their eyes, they asked me not to donate my kidney. My wife and I locked eyes, as if we both knew that this would be the end of the journey. The silence was then broken when my oldest son, Reuven, who was about 10 years old asked, "Totty, who would you be

giving your kidney to?"

I explained that I was matched with a woman named Ronit, who lives in Israel and is a single mother of three children. After a brief pause, my two older children wiped the tears from their eyes and both nodded their heads and said, "Yes, we think you should do it."

I remember feeling confused, wondering if it was a mistake to ask for children to help make this important decision. I then asked why they changed their minds. It was in the words that my son spoke next that gave me the clarity and inspiration that I needed to proceed. He said, "If you donate your kidney and something bad happens to you, we will be very sad, but at least we will still have Mommy to take care of us. However, if Ronit doesn't get a kidney and she dies, her children will be orphaned. Therefore, you should give her your kidney."

I was so moved by the selflessness of my children, willing to risk losing a beloved parent, just so that another child is not left an orphan. It was in that precious moment that I realized that the proverbial torch had been passed. The world of kindness introduced by Abraham and modeled to me by my grandfather and so many others had been passed along to my children's generation.

Although the definition of being human is to be flawed and imperfect, it is this quality of empathically caring for others that brings us closer to the Divine. Anytime we can spread that flame of kindness, even at personal cost, it never diminishes, but only adds light to the world. Every year now when I light the Chanukah candles, I think of Ronit. I recall that one year I skipped candle lighting, and how that turned out to be the brightest Chanukah I ever experienced.



PASSING THE TORCH AND SPREADING THE LIGHT

Avraham's debut in the Torah's narrative begins with G-d commanding, "*Lech Lecha...*"—leave everything you are familiar with and go to the land I will show you. The mandate ends with the directive, "*venivrechu becha kol mishpechot ha'adamah*" — you will be a source of blessing to the world. There is a dichotomy presented here. On the one hand, Avraham must separate from his surroundings, while at the same time he is instructed to be a source of blessing for the world. The challenge of the Jewish people lies in the two-part nature of this mandate. On the one hand, we as Jews must separate ourselves from society around us to prevent assimilation and maintain our Jewish identity, while at the same time, we must be engaged in the world around us and contribute to it.

We know Avraham is called an *Ivri*, and we are named *Ivrim* or Hebrews/

Jews after him. The first time Avraham is called Avraham HaIvri is in the fourteenth perek of Sefer Bereishit. Four powerful kings go to battle against five kings and they overcome the five kings and take their citizens captive. A refugee from the war escapes and runs to Avraham HaIvri to inform him about the capture. Avraham gathers his men (or man, according to Rashi), enters the war and frees all those prisoners taken captive, including his nephew Lot:

וַיָּבֹא הַפְּלִיט וַיִּגַּד לְאַבְרָם הָעֵבֶרִי וְהוּא שָׁכֵן בְּאֵלְנֵי
מַמְרֵה הָאֱמֹרִי אָחִי אֲשֶׁכַל וְאָחִי עֶגְרָ וְהֵם בְּעַלֵּי
בְרִית אֲבָרָם.

Then there came the fugitive and told Avram the Ivri who dwelt in the plains of Mamre the Amorite, the brother of Eshkol and the brother of Avner, these being Avram's allies.

Bereishit 14:13

Rashi explains that Avram is called Ivri here because he came *me'ever*

lanahar, from the other side of the river. Commentaries on Rashi explain that this can mean that Avram came from a different place, not just literally from the other side of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, but that Avram is coming from a different place figuratively, with a different set of values. Why then is this phrase introduced specifically here? Shouldn't it be introduced at the beginning of the parsha when Avram is chosen by G-d to leave his surroundings and go to the land of Canaan?

Perhaps this story is where Avram's values are highlighted most strongly. The fugitive came specifically to Avram because he was looking for someone to get involved to help, and he knew that Avram is the only person who cares enough to get involved. He is, after all, Avram HaIvri, a man coming from a different place with different values, and the fugitive knows he is a man who cares enough to help. Avram is living at

peace with his neighbors as we see from the end of the passuk. He does not need to get involved in a war that does not affect him. Yet he gets involved because he cares and is compelled to right the injustice that has occurred. With Avram as our patriarch and role model, we are mandated to follow his lead and care about our fellow man and take action when needed.

In the next parsha (Vayera), three angels come to tell Avram and Sara that they will have a baby. The perek concludes with Avram arguing with G-d about the destruction of Sodom. There are three pesukim in the middle of that chapter (Bereishit 18) in which G-d explains why he is going to reveal to Avram that he is going to destroy Sodom. *Hamechaseh Ani MeAvraham asher Ani oseh* — should I hide from Avraham what I'm about to do? Hashem asks rhetorically. Hashem answers:

וְאַבְרָהָם הָיָה יְהוָה לְגוֹי גָדוֹל וְעָצוּם וְנִבְרָכוּ בוֹ כָּל
גּוֹי הָאָרֶץ. כִּי יִדְעַתִּי לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר יַצִּיחַ אֶת בְּנֵי
וְאֶת בֵּיתוֹ אַחֲרָיו וְשָׁמְרוּ דְרָוֹ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה
וּמִשְׁפָּט לְמַעַן הֵבִיא ה' עַל אַבְרָהָם אֶת אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר
עָלָיו.

And Avraham will surely become a great and mighty nation and all the nations of the world will be blessed through him. Because I know him, because he commands his children and his households after him that they keep the way of Hashem doing charity and justice in order that Hashem might bring upon Avraham that which He had spoken of him.

Bereishit 18:18-19

Hashem is explaining to us, the descendants of Avraham, why He chose Avraham to be the father of the Jewish people. "I know him," God says, according to Rashi, in an endearing way. I know that he will teach his children and children's children to follow in my ways and follow justice. God tells Avraham about Sodom's destruction because He knows Avraham will argue with Him on behalf of the people of

Sodom, and He wants us, Avraham's children, to see Avraham's values of concern for others, and for justice, in action so that we can learn from him and model those values. Rashi explains, why does Hashem know (love) Avraham? Because he commands his children about Me to follow My ways.

These pesukim act as the transition between the first and last parts of the perek. They explain the correlation between the two seemingly disconnected stories. The child promised in the beginning of the perek will be taught to follow in God's footsteps and show care for people and fight injustice, a model set by Avram as demonstrated in the second part of the perek in his argument to G-d on behalf of the people of Sodom.

As the children of Avraham chosen by God, we are mandated to embrace the values that Avraham has taught us by example and follow the ways of Hashem by caring about people and practicing *tzedek* and *mishpat*. We need to emulate Avraham Halvri by fighting injustice, caring about our fellow man, and living and disseminating those values.

These core Torah values are the foundation of Yeshiva University. It is these values that compelled my peers and I back in the 1990s, after the fall of communism, to start a program called YUSSR, Yeshiva University Students for the Spiritual Revival of Soviet Jews. We sent groups of YU students to various places throughout the former Soviet Union to spread Torah values and bring our fellow Jews who were removed from Torah as a result of living under communist rule, back to their Jewish roots. We ran summer camps in several cities in Ukraine including Kherson, Odessa, Kiev and Kharkov to teach Jewish children about their Jewish heritage and bring them closer to God and to Torah. I personally ran programs both in the summer and then

during the chagim in Kherson, where my cohort and I paired up with the local Chabad shaliach there, Rabbi Avraham Wolff, to run Torah programs for both children and adults, and help strengthen their Jewish identity which had long ago been forgotten. One summer we ran a leadership training program in Israel for young Jewish adults from throughout the former Soviet Union so they could then run their own programs in their respective cities. We rented a boat in Odessa to get the 30 students who participated in our program to Israel, and called our program Teyvat Tikva. When the program ended, the participants returned and became Jewish leaders in their respective cities. Our initiatives throughout the former Soviet Union, and particularly Ukraine, were driven by the core Torah values that Yeshiva University imbued in us and the leadership skills that YU had empowered us to be a source of blessing to the world.

Thirty years later, my son, Yedidya, a junior at Yeshiva College, had the incredible opportunity to express his values and help Ukrainian Jews after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Under the leadership of Dr. Erica Brown and the Sacks Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership, Yedidya travelled to Vienna along with 25 other Yeshiva University students, to help care for Ukrainian Jewish refugees who had fled from their homes with nothing but the clothing they wore, and to celebrate the holiday of Purim with them. The students brought tremendous joy to the refugees as well as games and toys for the kids. The trip enabled our students to express the core Torah values of Yeshiva University and live those values by caring for others in need. For me, it was particularly meaningful that my son had this experience after my experiences with Ukrainian Jews so many years ago. This trip was an embodiment of למען אשר יצוה את בניו ואת ביתו אחרינו ושמרו

דָּרַךְ ה' לַעֲשׂוֹת צְדָקָה וּמִשְׁפָּט (because he commands his children and his households after him that they keep the way of Hashem doing charity and justice), the passing on of the *mesorah*, tradition, the values to our children. The values that YU imbued in us years ago are still being passed on to students years later. The values that our parents imbued in us, we are passing down to our children as well.

Rabbi Avraham Wolff, the Chabad

shaliach we had partnered with years ago in Kherson, is now the chief rabbi of Odessa, where he returned to lead his community after returning after taking hundreds of orphans and students across Europe to safety. My son and his group had the opportunity to Zoom with Rabbi Wolff while Odessa was under fierce attack by the Russians. Rabbi Wolff expressed his admiration for Yeshiva University, whose students continue to live their values and reach out to others in need.

Just as my involvement with the Ukrainian Jews post-communism was transformative for me in my life, so too was my son's involvement with the Ukrainian refugees transformative for him. I am so grateful and indebted to the leadership of Yeshiva University for encouraging their students, including my son and me so many years apart, to take initiatives and to offer opportunities to experience and to demonstrate our values in action.

REFLECTIONS ON YU'S MISSION TO VIENNA

Yedidya Schechter YC '24

Growing up with the bedtime stories of my mother's real life pivotal chessed missions ringing in my ears, I was in a constant humble astonishment as to how much of an impact an individual can have on countless numbers of people. Whether it was her trips sneaking chumashim and siddurim into communist Russia in high school, going with friends to make a beautiful shabbos with Refuseniks in Russia as part of the YUSSR program she helped run, or organizing and traveling on an Israel bound ship filled with Jews living in Odessa, Vilna, and Kherson. As meaningful and massively helpful these expeditions were, they seemed as if fictional or distant. Until earlier this year.

After watching and reading the terrible news of the desperate story unfolding in Ukraine in early March, Yeshiva University, consistent with its Torah values, took initiative to do its part and aid to the best of their ability. Dr. Erica Brown of the Sacks Herenstein Center for Values and Leadership, organized a mission to Vienna to help the Ukrainian refugees there, both physically and emotionally. When I heard about this relief mission, the echoes of my mother's stories rushed to the front of my thoughts, and I immediately signed up.

I proceeded to spend a week, including Purim, this



past year in the city of Vienna, Austria. The Jewish community had taken in hundreds of Jewish refugees from families fleeing Ukraine. Our group included 26 Yeshiva University students, Rabbi Josh Blass, Dr. Erica Brown, the Herensteins, and President Ari Berman and family. While we were there, we assisted many Jewish families through babysitting, folding towels and sheets in the multiple hotels they were put up in, playing with their kids, bringing joy and support, and sitting with these amazing families at dinner and shmoozing with them and communicating in either broken English, Hebrew, Russian, or German. At times, we just sat with them in silence just being present and showing that they are cared about and loved and part of our family and community despite living 4,000 miles apart. The days leading up to Purim we gathered together the

Vienna Jewish community and distributed hundreds of costumes, shtick, Judaica, toys, games, books, stuffed animals, arts and crafts and so many fun items to the refugee families in a show of love and support. These gifts may seem trivial or insignificant to most people, but when families are forced to flee their homes and to take everything they own in one or two bags, these seemingly insignificant items deeply impact the recipients who have barely any possessions with them. The toys and gifts were a way to help the despondent kids and their parents get through these trying times.

On the night of Purim, there was a gala party with hundreds of refugees, hundreds of Viennese Jews, and all the YU students and staff, all united under one roof. When we danced with the Ukrainian kids it was incredibly emotional watching them get so excited and get lost in the moment, just being happy and momentarily forgetting their pain and fear. The ability we had to spread wide smiles over the faces of the refugees, despite just being kicked out of their homes, and despite many kids I met, still having fathers and older brothers fighting in the horrific warzone for the Ukrainian army, was an experience I will never forget. Putting a smile on these kids' faces and showing that we care, was the underlying goal of the mission, and in that I believe we succeeded. Watching on the sidelines as the kids jumping up and down with joy, picking out from hundreds of our Purim costumes, dancing on our shoulders, or doing an arts and crafts project together was a formative, inspiring experience. I was particularly emotional when one individual woman who I saw was literally in tears of joy videoing her kid finding the perfect astronaut costume, trying it on, and dancing in it, all while her husband was not present since he was back on the front lines fighting in Ukraine.

This entire experience made me realize three fundamental ideas. The first is the idea of *ve'ahavta liraicha kamocho* (love your neighbor like yourself) tied



together with *mikabal es kol ha'adam bsever panim yafos* (greet each person with a cheerful expression). It is so simple yet so impactful for one to bring joy or to uplift someone, even those whom one is around all the time. By showing love and care, we can make ourselves and others around us happier

The second epiphany I had was realizing how much my mother's experiences and lessons have affected me and the impact that value driven parenting has on a child.

The third point which made this trip so formative, and ties into the two above, is how proud I am to be part of the Yeshiva University community and to be part of an institution that stands for values which I try to learn from, and which impacts the world around us. Creating a program within 24 hours for YU students to run to the aid of fellow Jews thousands of miles away, accompanied by the president of the university himself, demonstrates how value driven this flagship Jewish institution is. By imbuing my mother with core Torah values of showing sensitivity and care to our fellow Jews and embracing our brethren no matter where they are or what their background is, and giving her the unforgettable opportunities to express these values, directly affected not just her but me as well. And now years later, as a proud YU student, I see those values reinforced on a daily basis through the values-driven experiences and growth-oriented learning that take place on our campus and make up the mission of Yeshiva University.



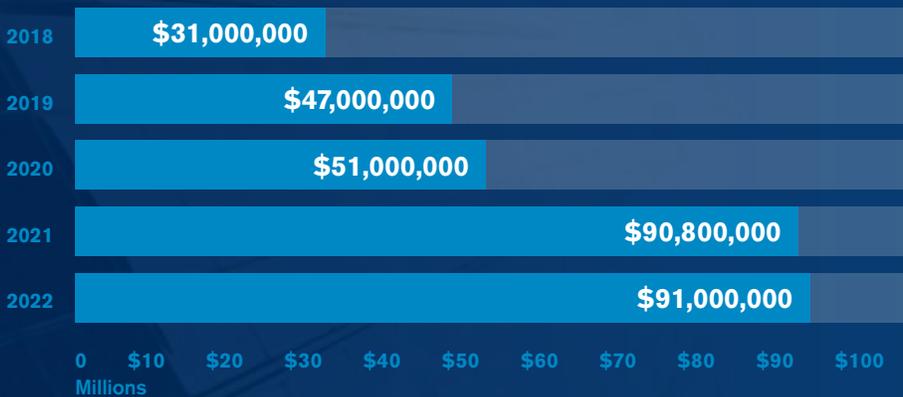
The author, second from left, bottom row



Yeshiva University

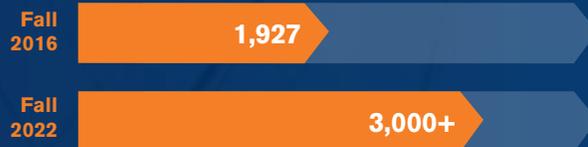
YU BY THE NUMBERS

PHILANTHROPY RISES: New cash and commitments, which includes cash donations, multiyear pledges and estate gifts.



GRADUATE ENROLLMENT INCREASED BY OVER

60%



UNDERGRADUATE ENROLLMENT rose significantly in fall 2022 with an over

20%

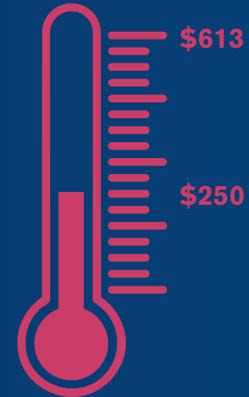
increase in new students from fall 2021.



YU STUDENTS FIND SUCCESS:

Over 95%

of YU undergraduate students are employed, in grad school or both within six months of graduation.



WE ARE MAKING GREAT PROGRESS

toward our goal of raising

\$613 million

through our **Rise Up Campaign**, which has already raised more than \$250 million.

YU'S TOTAL DONORS ARE UP

18%

IN 2022.



YU LIBRARIES CONTAIN A WEALTH OF KNOWLEDGE, WITH

700,000 physical volumes,

313,000 electronic books and 75,000 electronic and physical journals and 202,212 linear feet of shelving—almost 38 miles.

THE CARDOZO LAW SCHOOL INNOCENCE PROJECT directly exonerated

193
innocent
people



using DNA testing for crimes they did not commit.

YU CELEBRATES GRADUATES AT EXPANDED 2022 COMMENCEMENT:

YU Ishay Ribo Concert capped the day of festivities that attracted

over 16,000

people to Arthur Ashe Stadium in Queens, New York.

THE PARNES CLINIC AT THE FERKAUF GRADUATE SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY

is among the four largest psychology training clinics in the United States: Serves over

600

patients at any given time and provides over 1,500 appointments per month.



RIETS EDUCATES THE NEXT GENERATION OF RABBIS:

80%



of all major Modern Orthodox congregations are led by RIETS graduates.

YU FACULTY LAUNCH CUTTING-EDGE RESEARCH:

Received

\$3,940,758

in grants for 2022.



FY21

FY22

THE UNIVERSITY ROSE 29 SPOTS #67

in its *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Colleges 2022 ranking, from 97 to 68.



YU IS THE 3rd RANKED UNIVERSITY in all of New York City.



YU IS RANKED

#33

for best value in the *U.S. News & World Report's* Best Colleges rankings.

In 2022, *Fortune* magazine ranked **THE KATZ SCHOOL'S ONLINE MASTER'S DEGREE** in cybersecurity

2nd

in the nation.



NEARLY PERFECT RATE OF YU UNDERGRADUATE ACCEPTANCE TO MEDICAL SCHOOL:



92%

of YU undergraduates who applied to medical school earned admission between 2013 and 2022 with 492 applying and 451 accepted. This acceptance rate is more than double the national average.



DOUGHNUTS ON CHANUKAH: AN ANCIENT TRADITION?

Most Jewish holidays have specific foods associated with the holiday. On Pesach, we eat matzah and maror to fulfill mitzvos that require eating those specific foods. On other holidays, there are *minhagim* (customs) to eat specific foods. For example, apples dipped in honey on Rosh HaShanah, dairy food on Shavuot and hamantaschen on Purim. There are many other examples.

On Chanukah, perhaps the two most popular foods associated with Chanukah are *latkes* and *sufganiyot*, doughnuts (or donuts for those who are less formal). In this article, we are going to present some of the sources and reasons for eating doughnuts.

Does this Custom Date Back to the 11th Century?

R. Maimon ben Yosef (12th century),

Rambam's father, wrote an Arabic commentary on the Siddur. R. Ya'akov Moshe Toledano (*Sarid UFalit* Vol. I, pg. 8) printed one of the only paragraphs we have from that manuscript. It states the following:

אין להקל בשום מנהג ואפילו מנהג קל ויתחייב כל נכון לו עשית משתה ושמחה ומאכל לפרסם הנס (של חנוכה) שעשה השם יתברך עמנו באותם הימים ופשט המנהג לעשות סופגנין בערבי אלספלנג והם הצפחיות לדבש ובתרגום האיסקריטין והיא מנהג הקדמונים משום שהם קלויים בשמן וזכר לברכתו.

One may not be lenient regarding any custom, even a light custom and every proper person should prepare [a feast of] drink, joy and food to publicize the miracle (of Chanukah) that God performed for us in those days. The custom is to make fried dough, in Arabic Al Spalang and they are like honey cookies, and in Aramaic translation they are called Iskritin. It is an

ancient tradition because they are fried in oil to remember the blessing.

R. Maimon seems to be describing what we know as doughnuts. The reason to eat them on Chanukah is to remember the blessing.

Ostensibly, what he means is that since the miracle was with oil, we commemorate the miracle by eating food fried in oil. However, he does not address an obvious question. Usually these types of customs try to commemorate an aspect of the holiday story that is not commemorated through the mitzvos of that holiday (see the next section as an example). On Chanukah, the mitzvah of lighting already commemorates the miracle of the oil. What is added by having a custom to eat fried food? Perhaps the answer is that we are prohibited from benefitting from the oil of the

Chanukah lights and as such, a custom developed that allows us to benefit from an oil-based practice.

There is a *zemer* for Shabbos Chanukah that appears in some *bentchers* and is attributed to R. Avraham Ibn Ezra (11th century). The *zemer* opens with the phrase “*ichlu mashmanim v’soles revuchah*” — eat fattened [delicacies] and “*revuchah flour*.” The delicacies refers to the food we eat on Shabbos. [We find this in the *zemer* “*Yom Zeh Mechubad*” which states “*echol mashmanim.*”] “*Revuchah flour*” seems to refer to something specifically eaten on Chanukah. What is “*revuchah flour*”? The word *revuchah* comes from the verse (Vayikra 7:12) describing the *todah* (thanksgiving) offering which includes loaves of “*soles murbeches*” mixed with oil. What is *soles murbeches*? Rashi writes that it is bread that is boiled. He could be referring to bread that is boiled in water (like a bagel) or he could be referring to bread that is deep fried in oil (oil is clearly a main ingredient in the *todah* offerings), like a doughnut. This *zemer* would then be a source that the custom dates back to the time of Ibn Ezra, a century earlier than R. Maimon. However, there is a problem. Ibn Ezra himself in his commentary on Vayikra translates *soles murbeches* as quality flour. As such, it is difficult to suggest that the *zemer* was written by Ibn Ezra and that he was referring to something resembling a doughnut.

Cheese Filled "Doughnuts"

Kol Bo, a 14th century collection of laws and customs, states the following (*Hilchos Chanukah* no. 44):

שעל ידי אשה אירע להם הנס הגדול ההוא
ושמה יהודית כמו שמפורש באגדה בת היתה
ליוחנן כהן גדול והיתה יפת תואר מאד ואמר
המלך יון שתשכב עמו והאכילתו תבשיל של
גבינה כדי שיצמא וישתה לרוב וישתכר וישכב
וירדם ויהי לה כן וישכב וירדם ותקח חרבו
וחתכה ראשו ותביאהו לירושלים וכראות החיל
כי מת גבורם וינוסו, ועל כן נהגו לעשות תבשיל
של גבינה בחנוכה

The great miracle was facilitated by a woman whose name was Judith as the legend states, she was the daughter of Yochanan the high priest and she was extremely beautiful and the king of Greece demanded that she sleep with him. She fed him a dish containing cheese so that he will become thirsty, drink too much and become drunk and fall into a deep slumber. And so it was. When he fell into a deep slumber, she took his sword and decapitated him and brought his head to Jerusalem and when the soldiers saw that their hero was killed, they fled. For this reason, it has become customary to prepare a dish of cheese on Chanukah.

While there are questions as to whether the story of Judith (or another woman) took place during the Maccabean Revolt or whether it took place while the Jews were living under the rule of the Persian Empire (see *Mor UKetziah* OC 670 and *Aruch HaShulchan* OC 670:8), the custom to cheese or other dairy products is mention by Rama, OC 670:2.

The custom to eat cheese or other

dairy products is not as prevalent nowadays as eating doughnuts or *latkes*. It is possible that in earlier times, it was customary to fulfill this custom by eating a doughnut type food filled with cheese (and the same could be said for *latkes*). Over time, doughnuts became a Chanukah staple even without the cheese filling.

A Prayer for the Rededication of the Mizbeach

R. Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (cited in *Halichos Shlomo*, Chanukah page 319) offers an interesting suggestion for the minhag to eat doughnuts. The Gemara, *Avoda Zarah* 52b, states that the Chashmonaim were able to restore and rededicate every part of the Beis HaMikdash with the exception of the Mizbeach. They were forced to bury the stones of the Mizbeach. By eating a doughnut, we are provided with a special opportunity to pray for the rededication of the Mizbeach. How? When we eat doughnuts (or other foods from the five grains that do not constitute bread), we recite *Al HaMichya* after eating them. In the beracha of *Al HaMichya*, we specifically pray for the rededication of the Mizbeach when we say *ve'al mizbechecha*. Although *Al HaMichya* is a shortened version of *Birkas HaMazon*, this particular phrase appears in *Al HaMichya* and not in *Birkas HaMazon*. Therefore, a custom developed to eat doughnuts and have additional opportunities to pray for the rededication of the Mizbeach.



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Flug at
<https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-josh-flug/>



THE NATURE OF MEHADRIN ON CHANUKAH

The Gemara, *Shabbos* 21b, quotes a *beraisa* that tells us that there are three levels of fulfillment when it comes to lighting the Chanukah lights:

ת"ר 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.

Our Rabbis taught: The mitzvah of Chanukah is one light for the entire household; the scrupulous (mehadrin) [kindle] a light for each member [of the household]; and the extremely scrupulous (mehadrin min hamehadrin) — Beis Shammai maintain: On the first day, eight lights are lit and thereafter they are gradually reduced; but Beis Hillel say: On the first day, one is lit and thereafter they are progressively increased.

The Nature of Mehadrin and Mehadrin Min Hamehadrin

The simple understanding of *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is that it is an added feature of *mehadrin*. Instead of lighting one light for each member of the household (*mehadrin*), the number of lights per member of the household is increased each day. This is the opinion of the Rambam, *Hilchos Chanukah* 4:1-2. The Rambam writes that if there are ten members of the household, on the first night, the head of the household lights ten lights, twenty on the second night, increasing each night until eighty on the eighth night. [The Rambam differs from Ashkenazi practice where the members of the household each light their own *chanukiyah*. This issue is beyond the scope of this article.]

Tosafos, *Shabbos* 21b, d.h. *Vehamehadrin*, have a different approach. According to Tosafos, *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is not built upon *mehadrin*. If someone were to light twenty lights in the house on the second night, how is anyone supposed to know if there are ten people and it is the second night or if there are five people and it is the fourth night? The only way to increase each night while ensuring that it is recognizable which night is being represented is if only one person per household lights each night and the number of lights that are lit in that single *chanukiyah* increase each night.

How does the Rambam answer Tosafos' question? If there are twenty lights lit on the second night, how is it recognizable what those twenty lights

represent? Perhaps the Rambam will say simply that it doesn't matter. There is no need for the *hiddur* to be recognizable. What, then, is the *nekudas hamachlokes* (point of contention) between the Rambam and Tosafos? It all depends on how we view the nature of *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. [The following is based on the approach of Rav Betzalel Zolty, *Mishnas Yaavetz, Orach Chaim* no. 74.]

The Gemara, *Shabbos* 133a, teaches that there is a general requirement to perform mitzvos in a beautified manner (*hiddur mitzvah*). The Gemara, *Bava Kama* 9a, also teaches that there are certain objective standards to fulfill *hiddur mitzvah*. Are the standards of *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* part of the general requirement to perform mitzvos in a beautified manner? Or perhaps *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* are a specific way to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah lights?

Rashi, *Shabbos* 21b, d.h. *Vehamehadrin*, writes that *mehadrin* (in the context of Chanukah) refers to people who normally perform mitzvos with *hiddur*. This implies that *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* are the ways in which we can fulfill the general requirement of *hiddur mitzvah*.

There is an objective standard of *hiddur mitzvah* that would help explain Tosafos' opinion. Rashi, *Yoma* 70a, d.h. *L'haros*, writes that one of the ways to fulfill *hiddur mitzvah* of a sefer Torah is to bring it to Beis Hamikdash on Yom Kippur so that everyone can see its beauty. We see that part of *hiddur mitzvah* is how it is displayed or presented. Tosafos, *Menachos* 32b, d.h. *Ha*, have a similar idea. They quote Rabbeinu Tam that the requirement to have *sirtut* (scored lines) applies to sefer Torah because of *hiddur mitzvah*, but not to the parchment of tefillin because the parchment of tefillin remains inside

the *batim* and nobody sees it.

By combining these two ideas — that *mehadrin* on Chanukah is part of the general requirement of *hiddur mitzvah* and that *hiddur mitzvah* is fulfilled when others see it — we can understand Tosafos' need for the *mehadrin min hamehadrin* on Chanukah to be recognizable. If people can't tell which night of Chanukah it is, the *hiddur* is lost.

Why does the Rambam ignore the concern that the *hiddur* won't be recognizable? Because the Rambam is of the opinion that *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* are not part of the general requirement of *hiddur mitzvah* but rather a specific fulfillment related to Chanukah lights. Perhaps the Rambam understood this from the fact that there are two levels: *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. Regarding all other mitzvos, there is only one level of *hiddur*. As such, it must be a specific aspect of Chanukah lights. Therefore, the general requirement that *hiddur mitzvah* must be recognizable does not apply to *mehadrin min hamehadrin* and lighting twenty lights on the second night in a ten-member household is a fulfillment of it.

Mehadrin: An Intrinsic or Extrinsic Fulfillment?

This idea can be taken one step further. According to the Rambam, it seems that *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* are intrinsic to the fulfillment of the mitzvah. According to Tosafos, *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* are extrinsic, part of the general requirement of *hiddur mitzvah*. There are four practical applications to this.

First, the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 671:1, writes that a poor person must spend money to fulfill the mitzvah, even if he has to beg for money or sell his clothing. How much money does



the tzedakah fund have to provide? The *Mishna Berura* in *Beur Halacha* there writes that it only needs to give enough to fulfill the basic mitzvah — one light per night. It doesn't need to provide tzedakah funds to fulfill *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. However, the *Ohr Sameiach, Hilchos Chanukah* 4:12, infers from the Rambam's formulation of this halacha that there is a requirement to provide this person with enough to fulfill *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. What is the point of contention? If *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* are extrinsic, then the tzedakah fund doesn't need to provide added funds to fulfill something considered "extra." However, if *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin* are an intrinsic way of fulfilling the mitzvah of Chanukah lights, then the tzedakah fund should provide enough not only to fulfill the mitzvah, but to fulfill it properly.

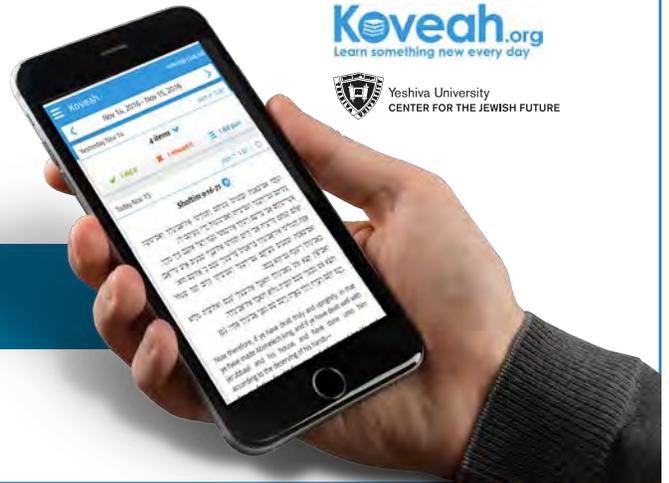
Second, the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 676:5, writes that on the first night, we place the light on the right side of the *chanukiyah*, and then each night we add a light to the left of that one. However, when we light, we light from left to right (starting with the newest light). The Vilna Gaon there disagrees. He asks: why should we light the lights used to fulfill *mehadrin min hamehadrin* before we light the

Were you **Koveah** time to learn today?

Koveah.org
Learn something new every day



Yeshiva University
CENTER FOR THE JEWISH FUTURE



Daily Learning

What you want, when you want, at the pace you want

Visit www.koveah.org to start adding more learning to your day!

light used to fulfill the basic mitzvah? The answer is that the *Shulchan Aruch* holds that the added lights used to fulfill *mehadrin min hamehadrin* are an intrinsic part of the fulfillment of the mitzvah. As such, it doesn't matter which lights are lit first. The Vilna Gaon is working with the assumption that *mehadrin min hamehadrin* is an external fulfillment and therefore, we must first light the primary light before lighting the others.

Third, R. Akiva Eger in his teshuvos (Tinyana no. 13) discusses the question of someone who started to light the lights and realized in the middle that he forgot to recite the berachos. Normally, we are supposed to recite the beracha before performing the mitzvah. In this case, is it permissible to recite the berachos after lighting some of the lights for that night but not all of them? There are several factors that would allow one to recite a beracha: 1) Perhaps one can still recite the beracha while people are still out in the marketplace because the candles are still burning and there is a continuous

fulfillment of the mitzvah. 2) According to the *Hagahos Ashri*, cited by the Rama, YD 19:2, it is permissible to recite a beracha soon after performance of the mitzvah. 3) There is another mitigating factor that is relevant to our discussion. R. Akiva Eger notes that there is a machlokes between the *Eliyah Rabbah* and the *P'ri Chadash* as to whether one can recite a beracha on the fulfillment of *hiddur mitzvah*. In this situation, after lighting the first light, one already fulfilled the mitzvah, and the rest are only to fulfill *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. Is a beracha warranted in such a situation?

There is a general debate about whether one can fulfill *hiddur mitzvah* when it is not connected to the basic mitzvah. The Rambam (*Hilchos Milah* 2:4, see *Beis Halevi* 2:47) seems to hold that once the basic mitzvah is completed and the person is no longer involved, there is no fulfillment of *hiddur mitzvah*. As such, one certainly cannot recite a beracha in such a situation. However, that is true regarding other mitzvos because there is no intrinsic connection between

the *hiddur* and the mitzvah itself. On Chanukah, there is an intrinsic connection and therefore the Rambam might hold that a beracha is warranted.

Fourth, the Gemara, *Shabbos* 22b, seems to conclude that it is permissible to light one Chanukah light from another. Nevertheless, the Rama, *Orach Chaim* 674:1, writes that it is not proper to light one from another because the first light is used for the primary mitzvah and the rest are just used for *mehadrin min hamehadrin*. The *Shaarei Teshuva* there quotes the *Beis Yehuda* who doesn't understand why we can't light from one to another; what's the issue? This dispute seems to revolve around our issue. The Rama seems to view *mehadrin min hamehadrin* as extrinsic to the mitzvah. As such, it is inappropriate to use the primary light to light the extra lights. On the other hand, the *Beis Yehuda* seems to view *mehadrin min hamehadrin* as intrinsic to the mitzvah. The additional lights are the same fulfillment as the first light, and therefore, there is no issue to light one from the other.



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Hirsch at
<https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-dovid-hirsch>



SEPHARDIM, ASHKENAZIM, & THE HANNUKAH MENORAH: HALAKHAH & HISTORY

It has already long been demonstrated that in describing Ashkenazim and Sephardim in the Middle Ages one cannot speak of two totally distinct and unrelated ethnic and cultural identities. Although geographically separate and culturally different, Ashkenazi and Sephardi Jews did not flourish in isolation from one another. Individuals and ideas moved from one society to the other and some measure of interaction between them existed throughout the medieval period.

There is much evidence for this phenomenon. Rabbenu Tam writes in his *Sefer ha-Yashar* that scholars from Spain “served in the presence of Rabbenu Gershon Me’or ha-Golah (“*shimshu lefanav*”),¹ the Spanish chronicler, Abraham ibn Daud, records in his *Sefer ha-Qabbalah* that in the middle of the eleventh century “there came to the city of Cordova [Spain] a great scholar from France by the name of R. Paregoros”² and his book ends with a reference to Rabbenu Tam living in Ramerupt,³ Rashbam writes on more than one occasion that he

consulted “*sifrei Sepharad*” in preparing his commentary on the Torah,⁴ the author of the *Shibbolei ha-Leket* presents a halakhic exchange between “*anshei Sepharad*” and “*hakhmei Zarfat ve-Erez Ashkenaz*,”⁵ the Rashba refers to Ashkenazi students who studied in his yeshiva (in Barcelona),⁶ R. Asher b. Yehiel spent roughly half his life in Germany and half in Spain,⁷ and there are more examples, many more.⁸

One particularly remarkable and unusual example of such influence in a halakhic context is provided by the *mizvah* of *ner Hannukah*. The Talmud (*Shabbat* 21b) states that the basic requirement is to light only one candle per night for the entire household. Those more scrupulous in their observance (*mehadrin*) should light a separate candle for each member of the household, regardless of which night of Hannukah it may be. Finally, those who are unusually scrupulous (*mehadrin min ha-mehadrin*) add one additional candle each successive night of Hannukah (according to the opinion of bet Hillel).

For some reason, the standard of *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* has been determined to be the normative requirement, but its exact meaning is the subject of a dispute between the Ashkenazi authorities, the Ba’alei he-Tosafot, and Maimonides, the Sephardi. According to Tosafot (s.v. *ve-ha-mehadrin*), the most candles that can ever be lit in any household on Hannukah is eight, on the last night of Hannukah. In his view, the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* position circumvents the *mehadrin* view and considers only the number of nights of the holiday as an operative consideration. One candle is lit the first night, two the second night, and so on, regardless of the number of people present. For Maimonides (*Hil. Hannukah* 4:1-2), however, the *mehadrin min ha-mehadrin* view considers both the number of people present as well as the number of nights as equally relevant variables, with the result that if there are ten people present on the last night of Hannukah, eighty candles are lit – the number of

Continued on Page 28



CHANUKAH AND THE MISSING TEXT

The Gemara in *Yoma 29a* records that the story of Esther was the end of all miracles. Incredulously, the Gemara asks: But what about Chanukah! Chanukah is a celebration of miracles that chronologically comes after Purim. As such, how could the Gemara indicate that the miracles ended with the story of Esther? The Gemara ultimately distinguishes between Purim, whose miracles are permitted to be recorded in writing, and Chanukah, whose story is *not* permitted to be written down formally. Accordingly, we do not find the story of Chanukah in the cannon of Tanach.¹

From the Gemara's response, it is clear that Chanukah is indeed a holiday of miracles, one that presumably warrants celebration like the days of miracles that came before it. And yet, for some outstanding reason, we are not permitted to write down the miracles of Chanukah — they may be transmitted only orally.

In that vein, there is not merely a distinction between Purim and Chanukah, but between Chanukah and all other holidays! Other than Chanukah, each holiday has entire sections of Torah (or in the case of Purim, a megillah) outlining its respective details and characteristics. More than that, the lack of formal writing of the miracle of Chanukah seems to place it in the domain of *Torah She'baal Peh*. Yet whereas every other holiday has its own *Masechta* [tractate] in *Shas* dedicated to expounding its respective laws and themes,² Chanukah is referenced in merely a few *dapim* in *Maseches Shabbos* in what seems to be a tangential discussion. Moreover, Chanukah is mentioned only a handful of times in all of *Mishnayos*, and there too, its reference is as a side point. How can it be that Chanukah — the holiday of *hallel* and *hodaah*, which the Gemara itself seems to acknowledge is a holiday of miracles — has almost no references in *Torah She'baal Peh*? What underlies

the lack of written text celebrating the Festival of Light?

Rav Yitzchak Hutner zt"l, in his *Pachad Yitzchak* on Chanukah, sheds light on these questions through a passage in the Gemara, *Gittin 60b*. The Gemara discusses how much of Torah was written down, and cites a pasuk from Hoshea 8:12:

אכתוב לו רובי תורתי כמו זר נחשבו.

Though I write for him never so many things of My Law, they are accounted as a stranger's.

Tosfos in *Gittin 60b* (s.v. *Atmuhei*) explains that were all of Torah to be written down for Klal Yisrael, the *umos haolam*, the other nations of the world, would undoubtedly go on to write it down themselves, to copy it. This is why Hashem instructs that a portion of Torah — *Torah She'baal Peh* in particular — *not* be written down. Rav Hutner explains that had it been written down, such a phenomenon would introduce an element of “*zarus*,” of the

“strangerhood” to which Hoshea was referring; In such a scenario, a barrier between *Knesses Yisrael* and Hashem would be created, one that would make Klal Yisrael like “outsiders.” If every nation has equal access to all of Torah, what would make our bond with Hashem unique?

A beautiful medrash (*Medrash Tanchuma Ki Sisa* 17) echoes a similar sentiment. Working off the same pasuk in Hoshea, the medrash explains that Hashem gave over the entirety of the Torah to Moshe at Har Sinai, including *Mikrah* (Torah), *Mishnah*, *Aggadah*, and Talmud. After He finishes, Hashem commands Moshe to go and teach all of it to His children. Moshe, presumably with excitement, tells Hashem “[We should] Write down the Torah for Your children!” Hashem responds: “I also want to give Bnei Yisrael the Torah in writing. However, I know that were it to be written down, in the future, the *umos haolam* would seize control of the Torah, and take it from the Jewish people.” Once every nation has access to the Torah, there is no distinguishing Klal Yisrael from any other nation. As Hashem exclaims, were the Oral Torah to be written down, “My sons would be like the *umos haolam*!” Hashem ultimately concludes that *Mikrah* can be written down, but the other parts of Torah would remain oral, so that

Klal Yisrael’s singular access to *Torah She’Baal Peh* will serve as a distinction (*mavdilin*) between Klal Yisrael and the other nations going forward.

However, it is not just that *Torah She’Baal Peh*’s remaining unwritten maintains Klal Yisrael’s “insider access,” but it informs it. Our “insider access” that comes by virtue of the unshared *Torah She’Baal Peh* is the basis of our unique relationship and covenant with Hashem. Rav Hutner gleans this idea from the continuation of the Gemara in *Gittin* 60b.

א"ר יוחנן: לא כרת הקב"ה ברית עם ישראל אלא בשביל דברים שבעל פה, שנאמר: הכי על פי הדברים האלה כרתי אתך ברית ואת ישראל..
Rabbi Yochanan says: The Holy One, Blessed be He, made a covenant with the Jewish people only for the sake of the matters that were transmitted orally [baal peh], as it is stated: "For on the basis of [al pi] these matters I have made a covenant with you and with Israel" (Exodus 34:27).

Rav Hutner explains that it is not just that the Torah being written down and available to other nations would mitigate Klal Yisrael’s special connection with HaKadosh Baruch Hu by making them like everyone else, but that *Torah She’Baal Peh* and its reliance on oral transmission captures the essence of the covenant. In fact, the exclusivity of *Torah She’Baal Peh* is both the necessary precondition and

the purpose of Klal Yisrael’s *bris* with Hashem. Hashem’s prohibition to write it down is built-in as the foundation of the covenant itself!

Along these lines, Rav Hutner also highlights the Gra’s distinction between the phrases “*asher bachar banu*,” that Hashem chose us, and “*asher nasan lanu*,” that Hashem gave to us, in *Birchos HaTorah*. The Gra explains that Hashem’s “*bechira*” of Klal Yisrael happened on the second day of Sivan, when the covenant between Hashem and Bnei Yisrael began. The premise of this covenant was *devarim shebaal peh ee atah rashai l’kosvan*, the principle that generally forbids the recording of *Torah She’Baal Peh* in writing. Only after the formation of that exclusive bond — Hashem and Bnei Yisrael, to the exclusion of all other nations — could the Torah be given four days later, as demonstrated by the word “*nasan*.” The prohibition against writing down *Torah She’Baal Peh* is not a specific prohibition among all other prohibitions in the Torah, but, as Rav Hutner notes, is the crucial covenantal framework of exclusivity in which all the specifics of the Torah need to be contextualized.

Appropriately, the exclusive and uniquely bonding medium of *Torah She’Baal Peh* perfectly captures the struggle and victory of the



Find more shiurim and articles from Stern College for Women at <https://www.yutorah.org/stern-college/>

Chashmonaim. As Rav Hutner notes, their fight was not about specific laws of the Torah, per se, but about the singularity of the Jewish people. The acculturation of Jews around them and rise of Hellenism threatened to dilute their distinctive identification as the children of Hashem. If Klal Yisrael is too impacted by outside influences — if we are just like everyone else — we lose our “*yichud Yisrael*,” our singularity among the nations. If we are like all the other nations, our relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu will not be unique.

Integral to the essence of Chanukah is the relationship of exclusivity that Klal Yisrael has with Hashem, of which *Torah She’Baal Peh* plays a critical role.³ As such, it is not that the miracles of Chanukah ideally should have been written down, but as a technicality, we are prohibited from doing so. Rather, the omission of Chanukah in rabbinic literature perfectly encapsulates the

essence of the very miracle we are celebrating.⁴ Along these lines, it is fitting that Chanukah is not only sparse throughout *Torah She’Baal Peh*, but that its story was not canonized in Tanach, in the written Torah. The triumph of Chanukah is not solely about the specifics, about particular laws written in the Torah, but about the preservation and ultimate thriving of the “*yichud Yisrael*,” the singularity of the Jewish people.

Endnotes

1. The Gemara explains that when it states that the story of Esther is the end of all miracles, it means within holidays that are allowed to be written down.
2. With the exception of Shavuot, which will be addressed in footnote 4.
3. Rav Hutner notes that nowadays, when *Torah She’baal Peh* has been written down in order to ensure its continuity (see *Temurah* 14b), there are still ambiguous references throughout the written-down *Torah She’baal Peh* that require a

mesorah, an oral recounting of our traditions, in order to fully understand the meaning, depth, and magnitude. For example, principles like *ein seder l’Mishnah*, *chisurei mechsera*, and *aniyim b’makom zeh v’ashirim b’makom acher* require oral transmission from a rebbe or teacher, perpetuating the “insider access” that informs and maintains our unique exclusive bond that Klal Yisrael has with HaKadosh Baruch Hu through His *Torah She’baal Peh*.

4. If the paucity of Chanukah’s presence in rabbinic literature is a fundamentally intentional omission that captures the essence and themes of the day, it is appropriate that Shavuot, another holiday celebrating *Torah She’baal Peh* and the crucial role it plays in our relationship with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, is not explicated in its own *Masechta*. Though the korbanos and agricultural aspects of Shavuot are discussed at length in *Maseches Menachos*, there is significant ambiguity in *Torah She’bichsav* as to the date/timing of Shavuot. This ambiguity relies and depends on the input and explanation of Chazal, highlighting what Rav Rosensweig shlit”a calls our “junior partnership” with Hashem. While their focus is slightly different, both Shavuot and Chanukah collectively demonstrate the exceptional and pivotal role that *Torah She’baal Peh* plays in the formation and cultivation of our exclusive bond with Hashem.

SEPHARDIM, ASHKENAZIM, & THE HANNUKAH MENORAH: HALAKHAH & HISTORY

Continued from Page 25

people (ten) times the number of nights (eight).⁹

It is interesting to note that within a few centuries something very interesting occurred in the worlds of Ashkenaz and Sepharad. Not only was one culture influenced by the other but, remarkably, *each culture adopted the ruling of the other* as the normative halakhah. By the time we come to the sixteenth century, Tosafot’s position was adopted by the Sephardi R. Joseph Karo and Maimonides’ opinion was followed by the Ashkenazi R. Moshe Isserles.¹⁰ In his commentary on the *Tur*, the seventeenth century R. Yoel Sirkis correctly notes that “our [Ashkenazic] custom is like the opinion of the Rambam and the Sephardic custom is like the opinion of Tosafot.”¹¹ His son-in-law, R. David Halevi, actually went so far as to add “and this we do

not find in other places.”¹² While it has been shown that this assertion is a bit of an exaggeration,¹³ this remarkable phenomenon of this cross cultural, crisscrossed influence is certainly unusual and deserves attention.

This article originally appeared in The YU Lamdan, Winter 2014.

Endnotes

1. *Sefer ha-Yashar* (New York, 1959), 74a.
2. Gerson D. Cohen, *The Book of Tradition by Abraham ibn Daud* (Philadelphia, 1967), Hebrew, p. 59; English, p. 79.
3. *Ibid.*, Hebrew, p. 66; English, p. 89.
4. *Devarim* 7:14, 18:11. See too *Shemot* 23:24.
5. *R. Zidkiyahu b. Avraham ha-Rofe*, *Shibbolei ha-Leket*, vol. 2 (Jerusalem, 1969), 147-48.
6. *Teshuvot ha-Rashba*, vol. 1, #395.
7. Avraham Hayyim Freiman, *Ha-Rosh, Rabbenu*

Asher b. Yehiel ve-Ze’eva’av: Hayeiheim u-Fa’alam (Jerusalem, 1986).

8 See Simhah Assaf, “*Halifat She’elot u-Teshuvot bein Sepharad u-vein Zarfat ve-Ashkenaz*,” *Tarbiz* 8 (1937):162-170; H. J. Zimmels, *Ashkenazim and Sephardim* (London, 1976); Avraham Grossman, “Relations between Spanish and Ashkenazi Jewry in the Middle Ages,” in Haim Beinart, ed., *Moreshet Sepharad: The Sephardi Legacy*, vol. 1 (Jerusalem, 1992), 220-39.

9. I am not here dealing with the issue of who lights the eighty, one person lights all or each person lights eight.

10. See *Shulhan Arukh, Orah Hayyim* 671:2. Once again, the issue of who does the lighting is not now my concern.

11. *Bayit Hadash (Bah), Tur, Orah Hayyim* #671, s.v. *ve-kamah*. For an interesting historical explanation for this shift, see R. Yehezkel Kazenellenbogen, *She’elot u-Teshuvot Knesset Yehezkel* #17.

12. *Turei Zahav (Taz)*, ad. loc., #671:1, end.

13. See R. Shlomo Yosef Zevin, *Ha-Mo’adim ba-Halakhah* (Tel Aviv, 1955), 166, n. 15.



HOW SHOULD AN INTERNATIONAL TRAVELLER FULFILL THE MITZVAH OF CHANUKA LIGHTS?

The question of air travel during Chanuka poses an interesting halachic dilemma. Normally, we light Chanuka candles in our home. If we are elsewhere temporarily during the holiday, halacha may dictate that we share in our host's lighting, and sometimes we will light our own candles.¹ However, when traveling by airplane we may spend an entire night in the air, never reaching our home or any residence whatsoever before the end of the night. Chazal (*Shabbos* 21b) classify the mitzva as "*ner ish u'veiso*" — a candle for each of us and our home. How is the mitzva performed when travel plans are such that there is no "home" to speak of?

Our analysis begins with Chazal's discussion of the *birchas ha'roeh*. The Gemara (*Shabbos* 23a) describes an

individual who recites the bracha of *She'asa Nisim L'Avoseinu* upon seeing Chanuka candles lit by others. Tosfos offer explanations as to why other mitzvos, such as Lulav and Sukka, do not call for a similar bracha. It may be due to the uniquely beloved nature of Chanuka candles that this bracha was established.² Alternatively, Tosfos suggest that Chazal never intended that this bracha be recited routinely by anyone who sees Chanuka candles. Rather, it is meant as a substitute opportunity for those who are homeless and cannot perform the mitzva, the occasion upon which the bracha *She'asa Nisim L'Avoseinu* would normally be said.

Rashi offers two rationales behind the recital of the *birchas ha'roeh*. Initially, he describes it as a universal obligation

for anyone who passes a location where the candles are visible. Subsequently, in the name of Rabbeinu Yitzchak ben Yehuda, he records the interpretation of Rabbeinu Yaakov who explains that the bracha was instituted only for someone who has not yet lit candles at home, or finds himself on a boat, where he will be unable to perform the mitzva independently. It would appear that the two opinions cited by Rashi and the two by Tosfos, though not identical, are indeed parallel. If *birchas ha'roeh* is a special recital meant to highlight the precious nature of Chanuka, there are no self-evident reasons to exempt any individual from the obligation, as Rashi explains in his first answer. However, if the bracha was formulated specifically for those who lack a home in which to light, it would follow (along the lines of Rabbeinu Yaakov's interpretation)

that the bracha be more limited to those who cannot or have not yet fulfilled the mitzva as prescribed, *ner ish u'veiso*.

These two differing approaches may shed light on the fundamental obligation of Chanuka candles. If Chazal saw fit to create a new mitzva — *birchas ha'roeh* — for one who has no home, we would infer that this individual is exempt from lighting Chanuka candles otherwise. Evidently, owning or having access to a place of residence is a prerequisite of *ner ish u'veiso*, where the home is emphasized as part of the obligation. As a result, someone who is away from home and in transit overnight would be unable to fulfill the mitzva altogether and is not obligated to do so.³ However, if the bracha is incumbent upon anyone seeing the candles, we have no indication that a home is essential to the obligation. Instead, every Jew is obligated to light candles even if he is homeless or traveling.

Indeed, in the opinion of *Orchos Chaim* (cited in *Beis Yosef*, O.C. 667), one who is on a boat during Chanuka must light candles. *Levush* (O.C. 667:2) reflects this view and adds that even one who sleeps in a forest or other unenclosed locations is required to light there, even when no house is available. *Aruch HaShulchan* (O.C. 667:5) records that the accepted custom is to satisfy this position by lighting at least one candle even while in transit, such as when traveling through the night by coach or by train. He acknowledges that it might be difficult to light more than one candle, but it would be unfortunate for him to miss out a night of the mitzva altogether.

This position would not interpret the Gemara's term, "*u'veiso*," as a basic prescription for the mitzva, but merely as an ideal location. Alternatively, it may be a reference to one's family and not to any structure whatsoever. In other words, Chazal's term may simply state that the baseline obligation of Chanuka requires no more than one representative for the entire familial unit.⁴ In any event, many contemporary Poskim adopt the view of *Orchos Chaim* and state that one must light even when sleeping outside, such as in an army camp, as long as the area is somewhat enclosed and certainly when it is covered, such as in a tent or the like.⁵

Nevertheless, it is conceivable that the *Aruch Hashulchan's* ruling to light in a coach or railroad car is not in accordance with these Poskim. Rather, it is based on the premise that fare paid for such travel is adequately deemed as a rental of private space that satisfies the requirement of "*beiso*," and calls for the lighting of Chanuka candles. A similar line of reasoning is found in the responsa of Maharsham.⁶

Some authorities entertain a third approach that emphasizes both the "*ish*" and "*u'veiso*" simultaneously. That is, even one who is homeless or traveling must light candles. However, because the prescribed location is specifically a residence, this is the only place where the mitzva can be performed. This perspective results in a very novel stringency: one who lacks a personal, private space to stay on Chanuka must procure one by renting or purchasing a form of residence. Some ascribe this position to the Rambam, based on his rulings in *Hilchos Brachos*.⁷

It should be noted that in any scenario where one is traveling but there are family members lighting candles at home, the basic fulfillment of the mitzva is achieved even if the traveler does not light at all. Nevertheless, *Terumas HaDeshen* (101) explains that a traveler lighting away from home remains a component of the optimal "*mehadrin min hamehadrin*" standard that we generally seek in the mitzva of Chanuka candles. Moreover, the aforementioned Poskim emphasize that one would be remiss to go a night of Chanuka without encountering candles that publicize the miracles commemorated on the holiday,⁸ and this may occur if he does not light and he finds himself in a non-Jewish environment. A married person who wishes to make a bracha when lighting in such situations should stipulate that his or her spouse's lighting will not discharge the traveler's obligation.⁹

To summarize, there are some Poskim who rule that one who is not in any residence of any sort is not obligated to light Chanuka candles altogether. However, others believe that the obligation persists even in the absence of a home, either because one must light wherever he finds himself (especially if it is an enclosed location), or because he must procure some private space in which to light.

Therefore, one who is traveling by airplane on a night of Chanuka may indeed be exempt from lighting while in transit. However, many Poskim maintain that even in transit one is obligated. As such, Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach instructed individuals on airline flights to light battery-operated



Find more shiurim and articles from Rabbi Schnall at
<https://www.yutorah.org/rabbi-etan-schnall/>

incandescent flashlights without making a bracha, relying on the opinions that accept electric bulbs for use as Chanuka candles.¹⁰ In addition, the traveler would be instructed to appoint an agent to light on his behalf at the traveler's home.¹¹ He offered similar instructions to soldiers in the IDF following the Yom Kippur War who traveled and slept in tanks or tents while on field duty. Using the overhead light in an aircraft cabin or any other light on the control panel in a tank would be insufficient. The mitzva demands that the light be recognizable and designated specifically to publicize the miracles of Chanuka.¹² Any other candles that are routinely used in a given context will not accomplish that goal.¹³

It goes without saying that it is not a viable option to light candles in an airplane lavatory. Rav Asher Weiss dismisses this suggestion of a petitioner as ridiculous on the grounds of several obvious points. First, it would be a terrible disgrace to the mitzva to attempt to fulfill it in a restroom.¹⁴ Moreover, it is inconceivable to attempt to publicize the miracle of Chanuka in a deliberately private and restricted area. Of course, it is also violation of federal law to light a fire on an airplane. Beyond possibly undermining the mitzva, lighting an illegal fire may also constitute a form of theft because permitted passenger usage of the aircraft is contingent on the customer abiding by the relevant legal terms.¹⁵

As mentioned above, the mitzva of Chanuka candles is uniquely beloved by the Jewish people. This is one of the reasons why we endeavor to fulfill the mitzva in its optimal form.¹⁶ The Rambam exhorts that this special appreciation of the mitzva behooves us to be punctilious in publicizing the miracles of Chanuka, going to great lengths and expense to light the candles, and by thanking and praising Hashem for all He has done for us. Therefore,

whenever possible, travel should be planned in a way that does not force us to miss the opportunity to perform the mitzva.¹⁷ Understandably, there are situations in which we must travel. In these cases, we will rely on the lighting of others at home or attempt one of the above suggestions that may allow us to participate in the mitzva to some extent.

Endnotes

1. See *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 677:1 and *B'Ikvei HaTzon*, pg. 120.
2. See Rambam, *Hilchos Chanuka* 4:12.
3. See *Shut Minchas Shlomo* (2;51:1) and *Halichos Shlomo* pg. 257; *Shut Igros Moshe* (Y.D. 3:14:5; see also O.C. 5:43) and *Shut V'Dibarta Bam* (Vol. 1, no. 180).
4. It may also be intended to apply the mitzva to any enclosed area, even if it is not a place of residence, according to those who reject the extension of the Levush mentioned above.
5. See *Shut Titz Eliezer* 15:29:7.
6. See *Shut Maharsham* Vol. 4, Chap. 146.
7. See *Hararei Kedem* Vol. 1, pp. 276; *Yeshurun* Vol. 17, pg. 219; *Kovetz P'ninei Chanuka*, pg. 12; *Shut Rivivos Ephraim* 2:180:13.
8. See *Shulchan Aruch*, O.C. 677:3
9. *Mishna Berura* 677:14.
10. The flashlight used must have at least one half-hour's worth of battery power. For further discussion of the use of electric Chanuka candles, see Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach's *M'orei Aish* (5:2), *Sukkas Chaim* (*Hilchos Chanuka*, pg. 75), *Mitzvas Ner Ish U'Veiso* (7:12).
11. Likewise, in the case of an evening flight, one might have sufficient opportunity to light candles at home before leaving for the flight. However, it is a matter of dispute if one can fulfill the mitzva with candles lit in a location where one is not sleeping on that particular evening. Therefore, this solution remains questionable. See footnotes to *Mishna Berura* (*Dirshu*) 677:15.
12. See *Shabbos* 22b.
13. *Halichos Shlomo* (pp. 259-260). It is important to note that Rav Shlomo Zalman himself adopted the first position, only requiring candles to be lit in a home. He was unsure if an airplane constitutes a home at all. The railroad

precedent mentioned by the Poskim may be incomparable, because the latter's fare was often for an extended journey that could last days or more and might include more individualized, private space in the railcar. A similar concern was raised by others, including Rav Yosef Shalom Elyashiv (*Shut Rivivos Ephraim* 8:519). *Shut V'Dibarta Bam* (Vol. 1, no. 180) relates in the name of Rav Dovid Feinstein that Rav Moshe Feinstein allowed an individual to light Chanuka candles in an airport terminal, when no other option existed, because only those with a ticket may enter. Furthermore, it is a location that affords space to eat and even spend the night when flights are delayed.

14. See *Shabbos* 22a.

15. *Kovetz Darkei Hora'ah* Vol. 4, pg. 91.

16. See *Ohr Sameach*, commenting on Rambam, *Hilchos Chanuka* 4:12.

17. Rav Shlomo Zalman noted that the aforementioned Rambam rules that one must sell the shirt off his back in order to afford the mitzvah, and so it is inconceivable that one would purposefully plan travel that would interfere with his ability to perform the mitzva (*Halichos Shlomo*, pg.257, footnote 3). Rav Moshe Feinstein also stated that it is inappropriate to travel without a legitimate residence wherein to light candles (*Shut V'Dibarta Bam*, Vol. 1, no. 180).



Understanding Miracles ▪ Why Do We eat Fried Foods
The Meaning of Mehadrin ▪ Lighting while Travelling
The significance of the Dreidel ▪ Forgetting Al Hanisim
The Proper Time for Lighting ▪ Remembering the Beit Hamikdash
Why Chanuka is Eight Days ▪ Oil vs. Wax Candles ▪ Lighting in Shul
Rabbinic Holidays ▪ Hallel ▪ The Haftorah of Shabbat Chanukah
Chanukah and Sukkot ▪ Appreciating Jewish History ▪ Zos Chanukah

Prepare for Chanukah with thousands of shiurim on

The Marcos and Adina Katz

YUTorah.org



ישיבת רבנו יצחק אלחנן

Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

An Affiliate of Yeshiva University

CENTER FOR THE JEWISH FUTURE