

קולנו



שמע

SHEMA KOLEINU: DIVREI TORAH FROM THE REBBEIM, TALMIDIM, AND FACULTY OF MTA

CHANUKAH 5785



**YESHIVA UNIVERSITY**  
HIGH SCHOOL FOR BOYS  
MARSHA STERN TALMUDICAL ACADEMY





# From Our Desk to Yours:

## Chanukah Wisdom from the Shema Koleinu Team



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### The Chain Reaction

Who hasn't had a *Chanukah* with presents? For most of us growing up, presents on *Chanukah* were a staple of our households. At the end of the day, it's probably one of the highlights for any kid on *Chanukah*. We all got presents, and we saw how amazing they were from year to year. We would count down the days to *Chanukah* in anticipation of finally getting that one present we always wanted.

The first night of *Chanukah* would come, and as soon as we finished lighting the *menorah* we would all

rush to see what presents we received this year. Yet, did any of us ponder why we were getting presents on *Chanukah*? Despite this being a nice *minhag*, there is no source in *halacha* for this yearly tradition. Still, the *minhag* is able to foster a greater sense of *simcha* and increase our *achdus* during these times. Nevertheless, what is the purpose of giving presents in the first place?

There is an amazing idea of what giving presents could do to a child specifically. To build on before, whenever you benefit another Jew and create *simcha* and *achdus*, it is as if you are benefiting Hashem. We see this idea from a *Gemara* in *Sanhedrin* 58b that says when you hurt another Jew it is as if you are "hurting" Hashem. The exact opposite is found when you benefit another Jew. That is treated as if you are benefiting Hashem. A case of this is when a *Ben/Bas Torah* is given a present for learning *Torah* and acting like a *mentch*. When a child receives this type of reward his/her natural instinct is to keep on doing more. Motivation of this type can only lead to greater things. As a result, a child will have the desire to

keep following in the ways of his/her previous actions. This child will also realize that learning *Torah* is the greatest gift of all. We also learn from the *Gemara* in *Pesachim* 50b that it is even encouraged to have incentives to learn more *Torah*. Incentives allow people to engage more in *Torah* study, and make it all the more sweeter. In the end, a person will then come to learn *Torah* completely for Hashem. One could see that maybe presents on *Chanukah* could benefit someone, especially someone of a young age. Presents on *Chanukah* could be viewed as more than just gifts, we could see them as gateways for new opportunities. The whole concept of presents is used as a great tool in being *mechanech* a child. The lessons a child could learn from receiving a present could be endless. We see that giving a present could generate tremendous amounts of *achdus*. Not only could it do this, but it could also inspire the child to keep doing *maasim tovim* and become a bigger *ben/bas Torah*. Hopefully, we as people could find ways to generate more *achdus* and continue our self-growth in many ways. Have a happy *Chanukah*.

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# May We Request Another Miracle Like Chanukah?

Rabbi Michael Taubes ('76)  
Rosh Yeshiva, YUHSB and RIETS

The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (21b) states that following the miraculous *Chanukah* story, the eight days starting on the 25th of *Kislev* were established by Chazal to be days of "hallel and hoda'ah." Literally, these words are translated as "praise and thanksgiving," but Rashi there (d"h va-'asa'um) explains that the specific reference is to the recitation of what we all commonly call "Hallel," which is recited in its entirety on each day of the holiday (see the *Gemara* in *Erchin* 10a, Rambam, *Hilchos Chanukah* 3:5, and *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 683:1), and also to the recitation of "Al Ha'nissim" in the *brachos* of *Hoda'ah* which appear in the *Shemoneh Esreh* ("Modim") and in *Birchas Ha'mazon* ("Nodeh Lecha") recited during the holiday (see the *Gemara* in *Shabbos* 24a with Rashi d"h Be'virchas Ha'mazon, Rambam, *Hilchos Tefillah* 2:13 and *Hilchos Brachos* 2:6, and *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 682:1).

The text of 'Al Ha'nissim, as is well known, presents a summary of many of the key events relating to the *Chanukah* story, ending with the statement, echoing the above

*Gemara*, that the holiday was designed as a time to give thanks and praise to Hashem. According to an early version of this prayer, however, the text actually concludes with a request of Hashem, asking that just as He performed this miracle back then, so too should He perform miracles for us in our days (see *Seder Rav Amram Gaon, Seder Chanukah*, and *Machzor Vitry* No. 93). This lesser-known addition, which the *Shulchan Aruch* there (No. 3; see *Mishnah Berurah* No. 8) asserts is indeed said by some, would seem to indicate that we may ask Hashem to perform miracles on our behalf.

This notion, though, appears to contradict the statement of the *Mishna* in *Brachos* (54a) which teaches that one should not recite a prayer that his pregnant wife should give birth to a male child, as that is categorized as a *tefillas shav*, a prayer in vain. Among others, the *Vilna Gaon* (Shenos Eliyahu Ha-Katzar to this *Mishna* in *Brachos*, 9:3 d"h harei) explains that since the gender of the fetus has already been determined at that point, it cannot be naturally changed; such a prayer is thus a request for some

sort of miraculous intervention and one cannot pray for a miracle, as the *Gemara* later there (60a) intimates. Citing a different example, the Rambam (*Hilchos Bechos* 10:22) rules accordingly, and the *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 30:1, citing this very example, concurs.

It is true that according to *Tosfos* in *Megillah* (4a, d"h pesak), it is in fact improper to include this additional request at the end of 'Al Ha'nissim, but that is for other, technical reasons discussed there. Moreover, some actually present a recommendation to recite a similar request under certain circumstances. It is clear from the *Tosefta* in *Brachos* (3:14), cited by *Tosfos* in *Shabbos* (24a d"h de-sani), that one who forgets to recite 'Al Ha'nissim' in any *Shemoneh Esreh* on *Chanukah* does not repeat the *Shemoneh Esreh*, a ruling codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 682:1). Likewise, one who omits it in *Birchas Ha'mazon* does not repeat *Birchas Ha'mazon*, as the *Gemara* in *Shabbos* there (see Rashi d"h Be'virchas Ha-Mazon and d"h eino along with *Tosafos* d"h mahu) makes clear that its

# Introduction

Rabbi Michael Taubes, Rosh Yeshiva

inclusion in *Birchas Ha'mazon* is less significant than its inclusion in the *Shemoneh Esreh*, a ruling also codified in the *Shulchan Aruch* there.

Some authorities, however, including the Rashba (Shu"t Ha-Rashba 7:532) and the Kol Bo (No. 25), cite a suggestion that one who omitted 'Al Ha'nissim' in *Birchas Ha'mazon* can make it up later, in the "Ha'rachaman" section, by first saying that Hashem (the "Rachaman" – the Merciful) should perform miracles and wonders for us just as He did at that time, and then proceeding with the regular 'Al Ha'nissim' text describing what happened back then. The Rama there accepts this suggestion, and some add that one may similarly add this request as a postscript to the *Shemoneh Esreh* if he forgot to include it there in its proper place (see *Mishnah Brurah* there No. 4). But this ruling too, also presented by the Rama earlier regarding *Birchas Ha'mazon* (Orach Chaim 187:4), implies that it is permissible to request a miracle from Hashem, and would thus seem to pose the problem mentioned above.

In addressing this matter, the Sha'arei Teshuvah, in his commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* (187:3), cites some answers from the Bechor Shor in *Shabbos* (21b d"h va'asa'um). One is that an individual may indeed not ask for a miracle on his own behalf, but one may, using a plural formulation of his prayer, request a miracle on behalf of the Jewish people as a whole. The second is that one may not request that Hashem perform

an openly supernatural miracle, but one may ask for a concealed miracle, one which could be attributed to natural causes. A third is that certain especially pious and righteous people may indeed request even open, personal miracles; this does not have direct bearing on our present issue involving more "ordinary" people, but the first two approaches can be applied to everyone. One may therefore recite the additional line at the end of 'Al Ha'nissim' cited above or the "make-up" text in the "Ha'rachaman" section of *Birchas Ha'mazon* (or following the *Shemoneh Esreh*) if he is praying on behalf of *Klal Yisrael* and is not asking for a suspension of the laws of nature.

“

*"It is permissible to request miracles from Hashem when done on behalf of Klal Yisrael, seeking hidden miracles that align with natural causes or aiming to create a Kiddush Hashem and sanctify His Name in the world."*

”

Perhaps another answer can be offered. Towards the end of 'Al Ha'nissim, we say that by standing with and supporting *Klal Yisrael* against their enemies as He did at that time, Hashem made "a great and holy Name" for Himself in the world. In other words, one of the results of the triumph of the Jews against those who sought their destruction was a *Kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification of His Name. It is therefore possible that it is indeed permissible to request a miracle of Him if we keep in mind as well that our ultimate goal is to help bring about a *Kiddush Hashem* and achieve broader recognition of His greatness in the world at large.

Given that this past year, *Klal Yisrael* has endured suffering and tribulations of a magnitude not

previously experienced in the lifetime of so many of us, it may perhaps be especially important this *Chanukah*, even if we do not actually verbalize these requests, as it may not be our custom to do so, to at least have in our thoughts that we want Hashem to protect, defend, and bless us today with miracles similar to those that He performed for our ancestors in the past, both for our sake and, as it were, for His. Alternatively, we might follow the example set some two hundred or so years ago by R. Eliezer Papo, author of the *Sefer Pele Yo'etz*, who writes there (under the "Neir" entry) that his practice was to recite a special *tefilla* not in the 'Al Ha'nissim' text, and not as an extension of *Birchas Ha'mazon* or the *Shemoneh Esreh*, but when he lit the *Chanukah* candles each night. In this prayer, he asked Hashem that just as He performed miracles for our ancestors in the past, He should save us from our enemies in the present so that we may praise and thank Him for this as well. May we merit seeing the fulfillment of that prayer *by'meheireh ve'yameinu*.





# Lessons From Our Leadership:

## Chanukah Perspectives from the Hanhalah of MTA



Rabbi Shimon  
Schenker  
Menahel, YUHSB

### The Source of True Jewish Might

On *Chanukah* we say the beautiful expression of gratitude, *Al Ha'nissim* in our *tefillos* and *Birchas Ha'mazon* to thank Hashem for saving us. When we describe the incredible odds that we overcame in our victories, we list a few different ways of contrasting the Jewish people and the Greeks of the time.

גְּבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מְעֻטִּים וְטַמְאִים  
בְּיַד טְהוֹרִים וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צַדִּיקִים וְיָדֵים בְּיַד  
עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתְךָ.

The last one, *עוֹסְקֵי תוֹרָתְךָ*, seems to be the most perplexing, what does the fact that we learned *Torah* have to do with the fact that we won the war? The first two comparisons clearly highlight our military victory and the third one highlights our cultural differences, clearly hinting to the purity and miracle of the jug of oil. However, the last one seems to be the outlier, why focus on learning *Torah*?

Rav Matisyahu Solomon Zt"l, the former *Mashgiach* of Beis Medrash Govoha explained in his *sefer Matnas Chaim* that while of course we need the Jewish people to be powerful, mighty and pure, however our true strength emanates from our collective *limmud Ha'torah* and our collective connection to Hashem through learning *Torah*. We see this idea in a number of fascinating sources. The *posuk* in Parshas Toldos says, "הִקְלָקוּל יַעֲקֹב", Yitzchak tells Yaakov that his voice is the voice of Yaakov but his hands are the hands of Eisav.

The *Medrash Eicha* (Siman 2) expounds, as long as the voice of "Yaakov" (meaning *Bnei Yisrael*) is heard learning *Torah* in *Batei Midrashim* in the world, the hands of Esav will not conquer us. The *Sefer Ma'alos Ha'torah* asks, this *Midrash* completely takes the words of the *posuk* out of context, that is not at all what the *posuk* meant to say. *Sefer Ma'alos Ha'torah* explains that according to the *Midrash*, the *Bracha* of Yitzchak to Yaakov was that if Yaakov continues to learn and be connected to Hashem, no enemy (even the hands of Eisav) will be able to touch him.

We have seen this in every generation that when *Klal Yisroel* goes to war, the successes that the Jewish people have had defy logic, most of their successes are miraculous. Those successes are dependent on our dedication to *Torah* even when life is difficult and we are oppressed.

We have seen this in particular in the current war with the incredible dedication of the *chayalim* and *Klal Yisroel* as a whole to connect to Hashem through learning *Torah*, wearing *Tzitzis*, laying *Tefillin* and through intense *tefilla*.

In *Sefer Yehoshua* (5:13) and as expounded by the *Gemara Megilla* (3a) tells us that Yehoshua was visited by an angel who appeared to him as a warrior with a drawn sword as if to threaten him and *Klal Yisroel*. When Yehoshua asks why the angel was there? The Angel responded that he is there to punish *Klal Yisroel* because they did not learn *Torah* even during their war to conquer *Eretz Yisrael*. The Alter of Kelm asks the obvious question, how could the angel punish the Jews for not learning *Torah*, they were at war, weren't they exempt from learning? He says that Rashi was sensitive to this question there in *Megilla*, and he says that since they were not fighting at night, they should have learned at night. We see from this how high the bar is raised, that even when life is incredibly busy and difficult we still need to find time to learn and grow, especially during times of war.

Our personal growth is what fuels our collective salvation and success. This is what Rav Elya Lopian Zt"l points out from that *Gemara* in *Megilla*; the fact that the *malach* appeared to Yehoshua as a soldier and not as a *Rosh Yeshiva*, even though "he" was there to give *mussar* about not learning *Torah*. Rav Lopian explains that the *Malach* was teaching Yehoshua that "I am appointed to fight your wars for you, but I can only do so if you do your part and continue to learn *Torah*."

May we all learn from the *tzadikim* of the Chanukah story, and learn even in the most challenging times and always spread the light of *Torah*.



## We Have, Now, and Will Always Be the Light

The culmination of the *Krias Ha'Torah* on *Chanukah*, recalls the image of the lighting of the *Menorah* in the *Mishkan*, as described in *Parshas Ba'haloscha*. This moment, marked by *Aharon Ha'Kohen's* dedication to the *Menorah*, is something that carries profound meaning for us, especially during *Chanukah* and the current state we find ourselves in. The Ramban points out that the *Menorah* has an eternal dimension. Unlike other components of the *Mishkan*, which were meant for a particular time and place, the *Menorah's* spiritual significance endures across time. Even during *galus*, the lighting of the *Menorah* will always accompany us as a nation. Serving as a reminder of the light that once illuminated the *Mishkan* and then the *Beis Ha'Mikdash*.

The Sforno expands upon this idea, explaining that the seven lamps of the *Menorah* are not simply a source of physical light, but a conduit through which spiritual light descends upon *Klal Yisroel*. The lamps of the *Menorah*, as he writes, are meant to "illuminate" the souls of *Klal Yisroel*, guiding them towards spiritual elevation.

the individual lamps, which would of course provide physical light, represent more than just a physical illumination. They symbolize the spiritual presence that can constantly elevate us even when we are distanced from the physical structure of the *Mishkan* or the *Beis Ha'Mikdash*.

But there's a deeper lesson found in understanding how these seven lamps are positioned and how they interact with one another according to the Sforno explains. The right side of the *Menorah*, represents the realm of eternal values, our spirituality, and our connection to *olam habba*. It also reflects *Klal Yisroel's* unchanged values. On the other hand, the left side represents the responsibilities and actions that we do as a nation in *olam hazeh*.

The Sforno's lesson of the *Menorah* is clear: we as *Klal Yisroel* must find ways to intertwine our physicality and spirituality when it comes to spreading the light of the *Menorah*. This is very relevant to the times we are living in. When there is a war in *Eretz Yisroel* we can't sit on the sidelines, we must do our best physically and spiritually to help our brothers and sisters who are living in harm's way. The Sforno's words teach us that the *Menorah's* light represents a light that radiates through the actions of the *Klal Yisroel*, lighting up the world around us. We have that ability as *Klal Yisroel* to bring light through our physical and spiritual actions to the world in times when it is needed. As we light the *Menorah*, let's remind ourselves of not only the miracle of the oil, but the spiritual light that we, as individuals and as a community, are tasked with carrying. The light of the *Menorah* in the *Mishkan* continues to illuminate our path, guiding us through the challenges of life in *galus*. And we as a nation must preserve that light spiritually and physically.





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# From the Beis Medrash: Insights From Our Rebbeim



**Rabbi Shimon  
Kerner ('76)  
Magid Shiur, 10th grade**

## Overcoming A Triple Challenge

Celebrating *Chanuka* while war is still raging in Israel, relating to miracles of *ההם*, and hoping for *בזמן הזה* is a challenging task. Let's try to see if we can find a connection between *Chanuka* and current events.

When Rivka tells Yaakov that he must dress as Eisav to receive the blessings, Yaakov asks: But what if Father feels me and realizes the ruse? She answers *עלי קללתך בני*. I know through prophecy that it must be this way.

The Vilna Gaon says the 3 letters of *עלי* stand for the 3 major *nisyonos* that Yaakov would have to face in his life – Eisav, Lavan, and Yosef. Rav Asher Weiss Shlita explains that she was telling him about 3 types of challenges he would face. Eisav- the test of anti-Semitism; Lavan- the test of assimilation and living amongst gentiles in a hostile work environment; and Yosef- the test of in-fighting and internal strife. As a matter of fact, later, when the brothers try to persuade Yaakov to send Binyomin down to Egypt with them, he says: *יוסף איננו ושמעון איננו*. I was only supposed to suffer 3 times – and I've endured them all. Now I will lose Binyomin also- that's not supposed to happen.

*Chanuka* was a time when we can also say we experienced all three of these tests. It is true that in the main, the Festival of *Chanuka* celebrates our ideological victory over Antiochus and the Syrian Greeks, with all of the religious decrees they enacted against us.

However, we know that none of this happened in a vacuum. The *גזירות* weren't simply to promote the wisdom of Greece, and to target Judaism- but at least in part, reflected animosity and hatred towards Jews. It was an attack on both Judaism and Jews. The philosophy they preached, the culture and lifestyle that they promoted outlived them and continues to influence the world to this very day. In terms of our national Jewish experience, the *galus* of *Yavan* was followed up a couple of hundred years later by the fourth and final exile of Rome, which continues until Moshiach comes please G-d, very soon. Conceptually, Greece was never really conquered; rather, it merely bequeathed and transferred its power base to Rome, which Chazal refer to as *איטליא של יון* (Shabbos 55b). And it is well known that Rome is the descendant of Eisav about whom Chazal say *הלכה בידוע שנשו*. שונא את יעקב. Rome was responsible for the Crusades, the bitter hatred of the Church toward Jews, the blood libels, and much more.



In terms of the Lavan challenge- that is obviously what *Chanuka* is all about. They wanted להשכיחם תורתך. When Yaakov meets Eisav, he says עם לבן גרתי - ותרי"ג מצוות שמרתי. And I didn't learn from his evil ways. *Chanuka* was an attempt to infiltrate the purity of the Jew, and to influence him to adopt a culture antithetical to *Torah* values. And finally we had the Yosef phenomenon. Not enough that we were persecuted from without, but we had the Rabbis trying to defend Judaism from within. The *Misyavanim* were Jews who were won over and were ready to renounce their Judaism, and be lured by external beauty and the philosophy of Greece.

We today are facing all three at once. A Jew is no longer safe in this country or many others because of the spiked anti-Semitism. בידוע עשו. A Jew isn't safe walking the streets of this country or many other countries; A Jew is not safe on a college campus; A Jew is not safe anywhere outside of our beloved Eretz Yisroel. Intermarriage has been growing at an alarming rate. There are places in the U.S. that it is at 90%. And before Oct. 7th, Jews were at each other's throats. Datiim, Chilonim, Chareidim couldn't get along for a minute. Judicial reform was the hot item of discussion. People were ready to engage in physical and verbal abuse over a *mechitza* for an outdoor minyan.

On the Lavan front- Jews are waking up to their Jewish identity- keeping *Shabbos*, putting on *Tzitzis* and *Tefillin* like never before. We are heeding the call of מ' לה' אלי. Jews all over the world are in touch with their *neshama* and with G-d. And as for the Yosef front, we have witnessed a breaking down of barriers and an *achdus* that we haven't seen in a long time.

Indeed, the *Parsha* of *Vayeishev*, sometimes read on *Shabbos Chanuka*, is all about that very story. The problem of לא יכלו דברו לשלום, which leads to the selling of Yosef.

R. Bachya says that although at the end of the story, Yosef calmed the brothers down, he never explicitly forgave them. This rift between brothers reverberates throughout the generations. As we read on Yom Kippur, it is this sin that leads to the death of the 10 Martyrs.

Rav Boruch Simon suggests that perhaps *Chanuka* is a time when we finally have a *tikun* (repairing) of that sin. The issue was one of lack of communication, lack of *shalom*. Yaakov sends him on a mission to see שלום אחיך - seek to make peace. When Yosef meets the man on the road who asks him מה תבקש, he responds את אחי אנכי מבקש. The story ends with the emotional revealing of Yosef to his brothers, after which the *Torah* says that after kissing his brothers and crying on them, ואחרי כן, דברו אחיו אתו. What did they say? It's not important! Just the fact that now they could speak to each other says it all.

*Chanuka* is the holiday of the victory of *Torah* over those who wanted להשכיחם תורתך. *Chanuka* serves as the beginning of the period of the *Tannaim* and the oral law- is the *tikun*. What is the oral law about if not communication? It's one big dialogue- question, answer, proof. It's a dialogue that spans generations. The 10 Martyrs may have been physically killed, but their *Torah* lives on. Our *Batei Midrashim* are full of people trying to understand the words of R. Akiva, R. Chanina ben Tardyon, R. Yehuda ben Bava, and others. While we learn, we are engaged in מלחמתה של תורה - a war! But when we emerge נעשים אוהבים זה לזה. תלמידי חכמים מרבים שלום בעולם.

We need continued work in all three areas- we need to stand up to Eisav by reminding ourselves that we are Hashem's beloved people; to not succumb to the Lavan influence, but rather to strengthen our Jewish identity and *mitzvah* observance; and to continue breaking down the barriers. Labels don't matter - we are all brothers and sisters. In the zechus of withstanding the challenges of Eisav, Lavan, and Yosef, then we will bring Moshiach soon. As Rav Ovadya Yosef זט"ל once said, the letters of משיח stand for מדליקין שמונת ימי חנוכה. May our lighting of the menorah indeed bring אורו של משיח Amen!



Rabbi Yoni  
Sonnenschein

Magid Shiur, 11th grade,  
Director of Athletics

## The מכבים: The Ideal Jewish Soldier

What defines the ideal Jewish soldier? Is it physical strength and the courage to face danger, or is it a deep spiritual connection to Hashem and unwavering faith? Can one person truly embody both the warrior's bravery and the *tzaddik's* sanctity? Must there always be a tension between the *tzaddik* (the righteous) and the *gibor* (the hero)? Or is it possible that these qualities are not contradictory but complementary, forming a singular ideal?

As we reflect on the legacy of the *Maccabees*, who fought with both swords and faith, and as we look at the challenges facing *Klal Yisrael* today, these questions take on new urgency. In a world fraught with danger and darkness, what does it mean to be both a protector of the Jewish people and a servant of Hashem?

The *Sfas Emes* focuses on the dual aspects of a candle: it is *me'ir*, it gives light, and it is also *mechamem*, it provides warmth. There is the *koach ha'or* (the power of light), and the *koach ha'esh* (the power of fire). A candle removes both the coldness and darkness from our lives.

On *Chanukah*, two prayers highlight the miracles of the holiday: *Al Ha'nissim* and *Ha'neiros Halalu*. In *Al Ha'nissim*, the focus is on the military victory. Meanwhile, *Ha'neiros Halalu* highlights the miracle of the pure oil that burned beyond natural expectations. The theme of war aligns with the warmth of the fire. The Hebrew word *milchamah* (war) contains the root *cham* (warm). What provides warmth in the heart of a Jewish soldier? It is *ahavas Yisrael* – the profound love and passion that drive them to defend and protect *Klal Yisrael*. Regardless of their level of religious observance, this love and devotion for *Eretz Yisrael* and *Am Yisrael* burn intensely in their hearts.

*Chazal* teach that lighting our *menorah* is akin to lighting the *menorah* in the *Beis HaMikdash* (*Midrash Rabbah Bamidbar* 15:6). Through *hadlakas neiros*, we draw from the light of the *Beis HaMikdash* and the light of our own *neshamos*. This light reflects the *or pnimi* (inner light), which connects us to the sanctity of the pure oil sealed by the *Kohen Gadol* (*Gemara Shabbos* 22b and *Zohar Shemos* 88b).

The oppression of Greece, *galus Yavan*, symbolized darkness and coldness. *Yavan* "darkened our eyes" with their ideology. Ironically, their movement—focused on enlightenment through sports, music, poetry, and philosophy—was a kingdom of external light that left the soul cold. Their light had no place for *tefillah* (prayer) or *teshuvah* (repentance). It was superficial, disconnected from the inner warmth of the soul. The Psalmist captures this when he writes that *Yavan's* actions were aimed at "embarrassing Hashem." (*Tehillim* 89:52).

Rav Kook contrasts *Klal Yisrael* with other nations by emphasizing our unique synthesis of *or* (light) and *chom* (warmth). Judaism combines *seichel* (intellect) and Torah with *regesh* (emotion). This blend of intellectual and emotional depth is a hallmark of our people.

Throughout history, there has been a tension between the *tzaddik* (the righteous) and the *gibor* (the warrior). Secular Jews often idolized the military heroism of *Chanukah* while neglecting its spiritual core. They saw the *Maccabees* as heroes disconnected from Torah and *emunah*. Conversely, some religious Jews focused so heavily on the light of Torah that they neglected the warmth of Jewish unity and physical courage. In truth, the *chashmonaim* were both *tzaddikim* and *gibborim*, serving in the *Beis HaMikdash* and defending the Jewish people with unparalleled bravery. David HaMelech exemplified this balance, embodying both spiritual devotion and military might. The ultimate redemption, brought by Moshiach, will reconcile these worlds into one harmonious truth.

This duality became tragically relevant on October 7th, 2023, when

Hamas launched a brutal attack on Israel, murdering over 1,400 Jews and taking hundreds hostage. Amidst the darkness of that day, stories emerged of incredible heroism, embodying the synthesis of the *tzaddik* and the *gibor*. The story of *Chanukah* teaches us that the answer is not one or the other, but a harmonious blend of both. The *tzaddik* and the *gibor* are not opposing forces; rather, they are two facets of a greater whole. The *Maccabees* were warriors of unparalleled bravery, yet their battles were fueled by a deep spiritual commitment to Hashem. The Jewish soldier must be both a defender of the people and a vessel of divine light, combining the heroism of the battlefield with the sanctity of the *Beis HaMikdash*. This synthesis—of the *tzaddik* and the *gibor*—defines not just the soldier, but the ideal that Judaism aspires to: a unity of physical courage and spiritual devotion. This duality—the light of Torah and the warmth of physical courage—is what defines the true Jewish hero.



**Rabbi Josh Kaufman**  
**Bekius Shoel U'maishiv**

## The Distinctive Lights of Neros Shabbos and Neros Channukah

Why do the laws of *Chanukah* appear in the beginning of the second chapter of *Maseches Shabbos*? What is *Chanukah's* connection to *Shabbos*? The *Gemara* itself clues us in.



*Bameh Madlikin*, this second chapter, identifies the kinds of wicks and oils unfit for *Shabbos* candles (e.g. wool (*tzemer*) or hair (*seiar*) for wicks, and for oils, pitch (*zefer*)). The guiding principle: we require wicks that produce a clear rather than choppy flame (*she'ein ha-or mesachseches bahen*), and oils easily drawn by the wicks (*she'nimshach achar ha-pesilah*). The candles do light, of course they are flammable, but *Neros Shabbos* require a pristine and unobstructed flame.

Why? From a plain reading of the *Gemara*, it isn't clear how fundamental a requirement this is. Most *Rishonim* articulate the view that these kinds of quality standards arise merely from technical considerations. Should the candle's flame malfunction on *Shabbos*, one may come to tilt the candle (*shema yateh*). In seeking its improvement, we're concerned one may come to kindle it instead (a *Shabbos* violation). In other words, the *halacha's* standards are not a function of the kind of quality required for the *mitzvah* of *Neros Shabbos* – in principle any flame suffices – but a secondary concern requires instituting precautionary measures to prevent *issur melacha*.

That is the predominant view. But, some understood this requirement in a fundamental way. The *mitzvah* of *Neros Shabbos* itself requires a certain quality of candle. A choppy or dim flame fails to project the goal underpinning the *mitzvah* of *Neros Shabbos*. *Shabbos* provides an illuminous escape from what is, in a sense, the darkness of the week. It revitalizes us, gives us clarity and focus. The *Shabbos* candle cannot flicker or waver, but it must be pristine and effervescent. The flame must embody *Shabbos's* focus, a day described as *ohr layehudim*, and that is why we disqualify the

wicks and oils (*pesilos u'shmanim*) listed in the *Mishna*.

"For their flame flickers, cuts in and out, isn't pure and steady. And these oils cannot be used since wicks cannot effectively draw from them, there is a disconnect."

On this issue of acceptable *pesilos u'shmanim*, the *Gemara* immediately turns to the other candle obligations in *Halacha*. Which quality of candle is required when it comes to candles in *Beis Hamikdash*, and candles in the *mitzvah* of *Neros Chanukah*? What are they about?

The *Gemara* unequivocally establishes that the *pesilos u'shmanim* disqualified for *Shabbos*, are likewise invalid for the *menorah* of the *Beis Hamikdash*. The *menorah* requires a self-sufficient flame (i.e. one that wouldn't rely on tilting or any additional support) as the *Gemara* derives from the verse, "*lehaalos ner tamid (Shemos 27:20) – kidei she'tihei shalheves olah me'eileha velo she'tihei olah al yidei davar acher*". The *Mikdash* doesn't need the world's light; the world needs its light. Like *Shabbos* is *ohr la-yehudim*, the *Mikdash* is *oro shel olam*. However, while straightforward when it comes to *Shabbos* and *Mikdash*, all agree a pure, self-sufficient flame is required, we encounter a debate about *Neros Chanukah*.

אמר רב הונא: פתילות ושמנים שאמרו חכמים אין מדליקין בהן בשבת – אין מדליקין בהן בחנוכה, בין בשבת בין בחול...אמר רבי זירא אמר רב מתנה, ואמרי לה אמר רבי זירא אמר רב: פתילות ושמנים שאמרו חכמים אין מדליקין בהן בשבת – מדליקין בהן בחנוכה, בין בחול בין בשבת. (שבת כא. – כא:)

*Rav Huna* said: Those wicks and oils with which the Sages said that one may not light the lamp on *Shabbos*, one may not light the lamp with them on *Chanukah* either.

*Rabbi Zeira* said that *Rav Mattana* said, and others say that *Rabbi Zeira* said that *Rav* said: The wicks and oils with which the Sages said one may not light on *Shabbat*, one may, nevertheless, light with them on *Chanukah*.

Are *Neros Chanukah* like *Shabbos* and *Mikdash*, or do they have a different focus?

While *Rav Huna* equates them, the view of *Rav* and the position we adopt *le'halacha* distinguishes *Neros Chanukah* from *Shabbos* and *Mikdash*. Perhaps the *Chanukah* candles embody a different, distinctive message.

Whereas *Shabbos* and *Mikdash* represent the clarity and firmness of spirituality and *kedushah*, *Chanukah* represents the challenge of upholding sanctity throughout the generations and celebrates our capacity to overcome those obstacles. *Kedushah* is elusive, and as a concept is often threatened by the ideologies (or, at times, the lack thereof) of surrounding cultures. On an even more fundamental level, the quest for *kedushah* makes great personal demands of us; to overcome our most basic instincts and imperfections, adopting a posture of holiness and transcendence. On *Chanukah* we look at this challenge squarely in the eye, the dim flame that it is, and we embrace it.

The Jew's trial and triumph is embodied by the *Chanukah* candle. They are not the *Neros Shabbos*—which we greatly need—not brilliant and bold, but choppy and obscure. It highlights the struggle we proudly engage in to cultivate *kedushah*, primitive man in his natural habitat, rising and falling, but reaching, flickering, achieving. How perfectly placed are the laws of *Chanukah* in *Maseches Shabbos*—two candles, distinctive yet complementary.



**Rabbi Yehuda  
Balsam ('94)  
Rosh Beis Medrash**

## Who Saw The נס of the מנורה?

The two main מצוות that we observe over the 8 days of חנוכה are the recitation of הלל and the lighting of the מנורה. We understand that the הלל commemorates the victory of the בני ישראל over their enemies and the נס of the השמן, but הדלקת speaks only to the latter miracle. Furthermore, when the גמרא in (כא:) asks מאי חנוכה it answers by describing only the נס of the פח השמן. It seems that this miracle is the central reason that חז"ל instituted this holiday. All of this begs the question as to how many people actually witnessed this נס? The military victory was witnessed and celebrated by the entire nation, but the מנורה that was lit in the בית המקדש could only be witnessed by those in the היכל, perhaps a mere handful of כהנים. This understanding of who actually witnessed what occurred rings a bit hollow, and perhaps is not what actually took place at the time.

The גמרא in (כד:) teaches that the actual lighting of the candles is not considered an עבודה and a זר who lights the מנורה is not מיתה. The רמב"ם (ביאת מקדש טז:) understands this גמרא as saying that the מצוה that requires a כהן is to set up the candles with the appropriate amount of oil, after which if the מנורה is brought out into the עזרה where a זר is permitted to go, he may light the מנורה. Although the ראב"ד comments that he doesn't think a זר lighting the מנורה is לכתחילה, he

agrees that if he did so it is כשר. Rav Chaim Soloveitchik explains that the מקדש regarding the מנורה is that the candles should be lit and not the act of lighting them. Therefore, the כהן is responsible for cleaning out the previous night's ashes, providing the oil and the wicks, and ensuring that they are properly lit, but is not obligated to actually light them himself.

Based on this, one can suggest that in the days of חנוכה, the מנורה was set up in its proper place in the היכל, but was brought outside into the חצר where it was lit in front of all of the בני ישראל who had gathered in the מקדש. The חתם סופר (דרשה לחנוכה) suggests that this is the meaning of what we recite in על הניסים, when we describe what took place following the military victory. We say "והדליקו" נרות בחצרות קדש which can be directly contrasted with the words "ופינו את היכליך" – they emptied your מנורה, which is where the מנורה would normally be lit. He suggests that since they were in the process of purifying the interior of the מקדש, they set up the מנורה inside the היכל and moved it outside where it could be lit with עדה ועדה. Thus the miracle of the פח השמן was seen by the masses, and not a few כהנים who entered the היכל.

The ספר נר למאה (ס' יג) suggests that this explanation can serve as another answer to the בית יוסף's famous קשיא as to why we celebrate 8 days of חנוכה, when the פח השמן was able to last for 1 day. Since the מנורה was lit outside, the amount of fuel necessary to keep it burning for the entire night is more than would be contained in a single פח, due to exposure to the elements. Thus, there wasn't even enough oil for the first night, and even the initial lighting was a נס. Hence we celebrate חנוכה for 8 nights.



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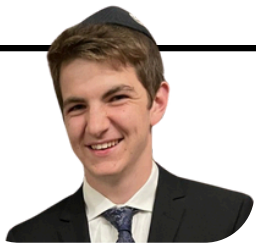
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# From The Halls of MTA: Insights From Talmidim and Alumni



Shua Ratzker, '25

## Illuminating Priorities: Shabbos and Chanukah Candles in Perspective

There is a well-known halacha that the *Shulchan Aruch* quotes based on the *Gemara* in *Shabbos* 23b:

מי שאין ידו משגת לקנות נר חנוכה ונר שבת  
"יקנה נר שבת" *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 678:1)*.

If a person has only enough money to purchase either *Shabbos* candles or *Chanukah* candles, he should sooner purchase *Shabbos* candles. To understand this *halacha* in its entirety, one needs to fully understand the nature of both of these complex institutions.

In the year 164 BCE, the relationship between the Jews and the ancient Greeks was completely spoiled, leading to the infamous decrees against *mitzvos* such as *Bris*, *Shabbas*, and *Rosh Chodesh*. The *Midrash Ma'aseh Chanukah (Otzar Midrashim, Eisenstein)* relates a less but still crucially important decree. It writes that "any Jewish person who places a lock or frame on his opening shall be stabbed with a sword."

As the story goes, the situation got so dangerous that the Jews were forced to turn to physical retaliation. The retaliatory group was called the *Chashmonaim* and they were surprisingly victorious against the much larger Greeks. This is one of the miracles of *Chanukah*. Another one of the numerous miracles that took place was the miracle of the *Pach Shemen*; the oil in the *Beis Ha'Mikdash* that lasted for all eight days.

Every year we remember these great miracles and publicize them. This is the reason for the institution of *Chanukah* candles in the household.

"מצות חנוכה - נר איש וביתו" (*Gemara Shabbos 21b*). Nowadays we know this idea as *pirsumei nisa*. We try to remember and be inspired by the miracles that took place despite the decrees against us.

The mitzvah of lighting *Shabbos* candles, however, comes from very different roots and the reason for its institution is somewhat confusing. In one place, The Rambam (*Shabbos* 5:1) writes that lighting *Shabbos* candles is "*b'chlal oneg shabbos*", whereas in another place (*Rambam Shabbos* 30:5) he states that it is included in *kavod Shabbos*. At its core, it is clear that the basis behind the entire concept of lighting candles on Friday night, whether it is considered for *oneg* or *kavod* *Shabbos*, is to bring peace into the home through *shalom bayis* (*Shabbos* 23b). Now that we have looked at the reasons for both Friday night candles and *Chanukah* candles, the *din* that Friday night candles take precedence can be understood on a much deeper level.

The practical reason that *Shabbos* candles take precedence over *Chanukah* candles is that *shalom bayis* generally takes precedence over *pirsumei nisa* (Shabbas 23b). However, I believe there is another important point to consider. When each family lights Friday night candles, they are in essence fighting back against the evil decrees of the Greeks. The Greeks attempted to strip away our Jewish identity and the sanctity of the home. The lighting of *Shabbos* candles symbolizes our commitment to continue building our Jewish identity and fostering relationships within the household in an *avodas-Hashem*-focused way.

That is our form of resistance! By working on our *shalom bayis* and sanctifying our home, we are not merely remembering the decrees of the Greeks but actively countering them. In this sense, *Shabbos* candles themselves fulfill the spirit of *pirsumei nisa*—spreading awareness of the endurance of Jewish values and the sanctity of the home.

We should continue to fight the decrees of the Greeks through the beautiful lights that surround us, strengthening our homes and proclaiming our unwavering Jewish identity. Wishing you a joyful and meaningful *Chanukah*!



Yehuda Tannenbaum, '26

## Can Women Carry the Flame

One of the many questions regarding the *mitzvah* of *neir Chanukah* is whether women have a *Chiyuv* to perform it. The *Gemara* in *Maseches Shabbos* addresses this discussion, and the first issue to clarify is the nature of the *mitzvah* itself. Is the *kiyum* (fulfillment) of the *mitzvah* in the lighting of the *menorah* or the placing of it? The *maskanah* of the *Gemara* is that the *kiyum* of the *mitzvah* is the lighting. As a result, if a *chairesh* (deaf-mute), *shoteh* (someone mentally incapable), or *katan* (minor) lights the *menorah*, the *mitzvah* is not fulfilled.

*Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi* says that women are *chayiv* in *neir Chanukah* because of, "*af hein hayu b'oso ha'nes*," they too were involved in the miracle of *Chanukah*.

This *shittah* appears in other contexts as well, such as by the *mitzvos* of *krias megillas Esther* and the *daled kosos* by the *Pesach seder*.

*Tosfos* in *Gemara Megillah* raises an important question: The *Gemara* in *Pesachim* states that women are *chayav* to eat *matzah* on *Pesach* because they are *assur* from eating *chametz*, and that *issur* automatically creates a *chiyuv* to eat *matzah*. *Tosfos* asks why the *Gemara* doesn't simply say that women should be *chayav* to eat *matzah* because of, "*af hein hayu b'oso ha'nes*"? *Tosfos* answers that *af hein hayu* only makes women *chayiv* in *mitzvos d'rabbanan*, not *mitzvos d'oraysa*, like *matzah*. Therefore, to show that women are *chayav* to eat *matzah*, the *Gemara* must derive the women's *chiyuv* elsewhere.

*Rav Moshe Soloveitchik* offers an alternative answer: *af hein hayu b'oso ha'nes* applies only to *mitzvos* that involve *pirsumei nisa*, publicizing the miracle. While *mitzvos* such as *matzah* and *sukkah* have an element of the miracles, they lack the active component of publicizing the miracle. In contrast, the *mitzvos* of *krias megillah*, *neir Chanukah*, and *daled kosos* are defined by *pirsumei nisa*.

This *raya* is evident in the *brachos* recited before these *mitzvos*, as it is the *guf* of the *mitzvah*. For *krias megillah* and *neir Chanukah*, we say the blessing "*she'asah nissim*," in addition to the standard blessings which reflect the *pirsumei nisa* in the *mitzvah*. The *Raavad* raises a question about *daled kosos*; why don't we recite "*she'asah*"

## CHANUKAH TRIVIA!

1. HOW DID THEY KNOW THAT THE OIL FOUND WAS UNCONTAMINATED?
2. IS IT OBLIGATORY TO EAT A MEAL LIKE ON *PURIM*?
3. WHAT DAMAGE DID THE *YEVANIM* DO TO THE *BEIS HA'MIKDASH*?
4. WHY IS THERE NO *MUSSAF* PRAYER ON *CHANUKAH* EXCEPT FOR *SHABBOS* AND *ROSH CHODESH*?
5. WHAT DID THE JEWS DO AFTER THE VICTORY THAT EXPLAINS THE NAME *CHANUKAH*?

SEE ANSWERS ON PAGE 24



*nissim*" before drinking the four cups, if it too is centered around *pirsumei nisa*? He explains that the blessing "*asher ge'alanu*" already includes an aspect of *pirsumei nisa*.

This leads to a practical question: Can a woman light *Chanukah* candles on behalf of a man? The Rishonim primarily discuss this issue in the context of *krias megillah*, but the principles are applicable here as well.

The Rambam in *Hilchos Megillah* writes that both men and women are obligated equally in *krias megillah*: "*V'hakol chayavim b'kriasah—anashim, nashim, geirim, v'avadim meshuchrarim... echad ha'korei v'echad ha'shomea min ha'korei yatza yedei chovaso.*" According to the Rambam, women and men have identical *chiyuvim*, therefore a woman would be able to fulfill the *mitzvah* on behalf of a man. By extension, this reasoning could apply to *neir Chanukah* as well.

However, *Tosfos* in *Megillah*, quoting the Behag, disagrees with the Rambam. *Tosfos* quotes the *Tosefta* which states that an *androgynous* (a person with ambiguous gender) cannot read the *Megillah* for a man, implying that a woman also cannot. The Behag explains that a woman's *chiyuv* is to hear the *Megillah*, while a man's *chiyuv* is to read it. This creates a fundamental difference in the nature of their obligations.

Based on this, there are three possible understandings of a woman's *chiyuv* in *neir Chanukah*. Firstly, the *chiyuv* is identical to that of *krias megillah*. If a woman can fulfill a man's *chiyuv* for *megillah*, she can also light *Chanukah* candles for him. Secondly, usually a woman can fulfill men's *chiyuvim* through *af hein hayu b'oso ha'nes*. However, *megillah* is unique

because of the requirement to read, not just to hear. Lastly, women have a lower level *chiyuv*. The *chiyuv* created by *af hein hayu* is not on the same level as a man's *chiyuv*. However, *neir Chanukah* is unique in that men and women have an identical obligation and a woman may light candles for a man.

The *Pri Chadash*, quoting the *Mordechai* in the name of *Tosfos*, discusses a guest who can rely on the candles lit in his home. This reflects a unique aspect of *neir Chanukah*: the *mitzvah* is "*neir ish u'beiso*," a household obligation rather than an individual one. Unlike other *mitzvos* involving *pirsumei nisa*, where the individual must perform a specific act, the *mitzvah* of *Chanukah* candles is fulfilled by having a lit *menorah* in the home.

This insight changes the nature of the *machlokes*. Instead of asking whether a woman can fulfill a man's *chiyuv*, we ask whether a woman's lighting creates a valid *din* of a "lit *menorah*" in the home. In addition, the *Gemara's* exclusion of a *cheresh*, *shoteh*, and *katan* from lighting implies that not every candle is considered a halachic "*Chanukah* light." If a woman's lighting creates the status of a Kosher *menorah*, then the man would automatically fulfill his *chiyuv*.



Yoni Tandhasetti, '26

## A Hopeful Chanukah

The well known story of *Chanukah* is of the oil lasting for eight nights

more than was initially thought to. However, there is more to the story's lesson, being that it teaches us about the true meaning of hope as a fundamental principle in our Jewish heritage. It also reminds us that there is someone watching over us. The *Gemara* (*Shabbas* 21b) brings up the original source for the *Chanukah* story that the *Chashmonaim* found an oil flask with the seal of the *Kohen Gadol*, signifying that it was still pure. They realized it only had enough oil to last for one night, however, a miracle happened and the oil lasted for eight days. These lights which lasted for so long remind us of Hashem's prescience in this world, and that he is not far away from us, and hopefully the lights will one day be lit in the *Beis Ha'Mikdash* once again, as they had those eight days. All of these revelations stem from the most important aspect of our souls, having hope in Hashem.

Imagine a *Chanukah* where there was no hardships or adversity that hinders enjoyment, and we all got to fully revel in our freedom which *Chanukah* is supposedly representing. Most people think that the meaning of *Chanukah* is to revel in our freedom and be released from the oppression of our enemies. With this, most people find it hard to do so in their own lives and the situation around them. Well, I heard from Rabbi Fried Shlita that if it were the case, we wouldn't be experiencing or appreciating the full power that it is supposed to have on us. According to Rabbi Fried, the message of *Chanukah* is to recognize and have hope in Hashem through the darkness surrounding us, and the lighting of the *Menorah* is to signify that we can always find light despite the darkness outside. The hope is that we are able to seek Hashem even when he is "hiding" from us.

While *Chanukah* is never mentioned in the Torah, there are many hints. One of them happens through the first few *pesukim* in the Torah talks about that when the Earth was being formed, there was darkness over the surface, and then follows it up by Hashem's pronouncement, "וַיְהִי אֹרֶךְ," and there was light (Bereishis, 2-3). The darkness that the *posuk* refers to symbolizes Greece, and the darkened eyes of the Jewish people. The Maharal points out that in this *posuk*, the word "light" is the 25th word of the *Torah*, and the letters of וַיְהִי add up to 25. This alludes to the darkness that the Greeks caused, which will be disrupted by the kindling of the *Menorah* on the 25th of *Kislev*.

The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* also points out that the reason we ideally use olive oil for lighting the *Menorah* is for publicizing the miracle. However, the hidden message in it is that the oil is hidden in the olive. Only when you toil and extract the oil from the fruit, does it shed light and illuminate the wick. During *Chanukah*, we look deeply into ourselves and work on ourselves despite the oppression that we face constantly. Only once we toil enough with the "fruit" will we be able shed light on ourselves.

The ability to maintain faith in Hashem even when we are faced with obstacles that hide him from us is the biggest thing *Chanukah* comes to teach us. The faith that triumphed during the *Chanukah* story with the *Maccabees* is our reminder that it could be done and therefore our responsibility to do so and constantly preserve that faith for many more generations. This also leads us to have to do our *hishtadlus*, our own personal effort, to become a catalyst for that to happen. The *Maccabees* did not just wait for Hashem to intervene to help them, they fought for it, showing

that their success also had to be accomplished by their actions.

While *Chanukah* reminds us of Hashem's engagement in our lives, it is also meant to awaken a sense of responsibility. On top of fully having hope that He will help and guide us, there has to be an action that boosts us to that level in our lives. What *Chanukah* is bringing is the light which we need to achieve that boost. However, it is only with work on ourselves and true toil that extracts those skills we need to shed light on us. Even through the darkness, there will always be light for those who search for it and who hope to utilize it.



## When Challenges Become Miracles

Every year we light the *Menorah* for eight days and celebrate the miracles of *Chanukah*, such as the oil lasting for eight days or the Jews winning despite being outnumbered. While these events are remarkable, it can be hard to connect to something that happened thousands of years ago. One might wonder how we can relate to *Chanukah* today. Although we no longer witness open miracles like those of past times, how can we recognize Hashem's awesomeness and make the lessons of *Chanukah* relevant to our lives today?

Rabbi Yehuda Prero writes the following on the miracles of *Chanukah*. The Bnei Yisaschar defines the word "*neis*" as an action

from Hashem that is supernatural. The word *neis* can also be the sail of a boat. A sail towers above the boat and it is what enables the boat to travel along its path. A miracle is the display of *hashgacha pratis* that guides us throughout our lives and keeps us on the path that we have chosen for ourselves. When you look up at the sail of the boat, you can see that there is a force controlling it, and it is made clear to us that there is an external force directing you in your life.

The choice of the word *neis* to represent a miracle should not fall to the side and instead teach us a lesson. We learn the following from *Brachos* 4b,

"אמר רבי יוחנן: מפני מה לא נאמר נון באשרי מפני שיש בה מפלתן של שונאי ישראל, דכתיב: נפלה לא תוסיף קום בתולת ישראל... אפילו הכי, חזר דוד וסמך ברוח הקדש, שנאמר 'סומך ה' לכל הנפלים'."

The letter *nun* symbolizes pain, suffering, and misfortune, while the letter *samech* which follows *nun* in the *alef beis* represents success, uplifting and redemption. It is no wonder that these two letters were placed together to form the word "*neis*", which is a combination of these two elements. Throughout time, we have been faced with many hardships and challenges, and yet each time, events take place and we are saved. The word *neis* reminds us of the ups and downs and the role that Hashem plays in our life.

We see by *tefillas* Chanah the following,

"הנה ממית ומחיה מוריד שאול ויעל: יהנה מוריש ומעשיר משפיל אר-מרום: מקים מעפר דל מאשפת ירים אביון להושיב עם-נדיבים וכסא כבוד ינחלם כי ליהנה מאקי: ארץ וישת עליהם תבל:"

Chanah describes how Hashem can



completely flip someone's fortune, for good or for bad. Save the good from the evil, and make the poor into the rich. The exact same thing can be seen in the *tefillah* of *Al Ha'nissim* that we add during *Chanukah*.

“אֶת־נִקְמַתָּם מִסֶּרֶת גְּבוּרִים בְּיַד חֲלָשִׁים וְרַבִּים בְּיַד מַעֲטִים ... וְרָשָׁעִים בְּיַד צְדִיקִים.”

There is a complete reversal of logic, the weak defeated the strong, the few defeated the many, the wicked into the hands of the righteous. This victory sends a message that will resonate throughout all time. Although it may seem like our successes and victories in life come into being solely through our own toil, they are truly a result of Hashem's will. No matter what the odds are, no matter how low we may be, we should never be in despair. If you put in the work and try your very best to climb out of whatever depths you may find yourself in, Hashem will be there to pull you the rest of the way. A little oil can last for eight days, a few can defeat many, even miracles can happen. It is up to us to recognize them and look at the word *neis* to understand and appreciate them.



Tani Schnall, '28

## The Pure and the Beautiful

The *Chanukah* story is a classic, passed down through generations of latkes and lights. Yet, there appears to be an inconsistency in the narrative that must be addressed. The *Gemara* in *maseches Shabbos* states that when the Greeks entered the *Beis*

*Ha'Mikdash*, they defiled the oil used to kindle the *Menorah* with the intent to prevent its rekindling. Would it not have been simpler for the Hellenists to destroy the oil or use it up? It appears to be that the Greeks wished for the oil to remain, albeit with its holiness removed.

The *Lekutei Sichos*, a compilation of the words of the Lubavitcher Rebbe, explains that the Greeks did intend for the *Menorah* to continue illuminating, as they admired its splendor. While the true splendor of the *Menorah*, its beauty, was a concept that Greek culture was so diametrically opposed to, they were content with allowing its continuation. For example, the Hellenist view on the *Torah* was not one of disdain. They were willing to accept the *Torah* as a literary achievement of mankind, a human creation. The need for such a malleable text, one written by humans, was imperative to the ever-changing societies that could only accept a work that aligned with their viewpoints. Thus, we use the term "*le'hashkicheh Torasecha*," – "to forget the *Torah*" – and treat it not as given by Hashem. That is also why the Greeks were opposed to the *Chukim* – "*leha'aviram meichukei retzonecha*" – which are the pinnacle of faith. *Chukim* take a moral or a precept, something that the Hellenistic culture could indeed get behind, and transform it into something far more profound than just manners; they are what Hashem tells us to do.

Likewise, the Greeks defiled the oil instead of simply destroying it because they admired the *Menorah* as an aesthetic, hoping to continue it. But the Greeks wished for it to be a beautiful *Menorah* created by beautiful man.

They removed the spiritual beauty and kept the physical, while we should aspire to achieve the opposite.



Noam Sheffey, '25

## Go the Extra Mile

What makes the *mitzvah* of *Ner Chanukah* unique? We light eight days to commemorate the miracle with the one *pach shemen*, which burnt for eight days. However, the *Kedushas Levi* has a very interesting point about this *mitzvah*. This *mitzvah* is unique because it's one of a kind. You see that this *mitzvah* is the only one year round that we do to commemorate a miracle. The *Kedushas Levi* continues by asking why we don't do a *mitzvah* on the seventh day of *Pesach* to commemorate *Krias Yam Suf*, or why don't we don't do something relating to trees to celebrate the fact the *Haman* was hanged instead of *Mordechai*, even better yet, why didn't Hashem give us a *mitzvah* to remember the miracles of the *makos*? He provides a very sweet answer on why this could be. We see a direct correlation between *Klal Yisroel* and Hashem on *Chanukah*. Unlike all those other miracles, when it came to the *pach shemen* Hashem showed us His kindness and His desire for us as a nation and all we do to serve as people. Therefore, we have a special connection with *Neiros Chanukah*, because we can see Hashem's presence within them, and Hashem sees our dedication to Him through the performing of this *mitzvah*.

Since we see this mutual relationship in *Neiros Chanukah*, it should be of utmost importance that we elevate this *mitzvah* as best as possible. After all the Rambam describes the *mitzvah* of *Ner Chanukah* as one that has *chavivus*. Therefore we always must cherish the *mitzvah* of lighting the *Menorah*. One way we can do this is *hiddur mitzvah*. We as people can find many ways to be *mehuder* the *mitzvah* of *Ner Chanukah*. One way the *Kaf Ha'Chaim* says we can beautify this *mitzvah* is by getting a nice *menorah*. One person who had this tremendous love and desire to get a nice silver *menorah* was Rav Shimshon Pincus. His love for *Chanukah* was tremendous. Later on in his life, when he realized that he wanted to elevate the *mitzvah* of *Ner Chanukah* to an even higher level than he was currently doing he decided to look for the perfect silver *menorah*.

After searching many antique stores, he finally found the perfect silver *Menorah* in a shop in *Me'a She'arim*. The *Menorah* cost a small fortune, but how could he resist buying it with all its *hiddurim*. It fit his ideal *menorah*, most importantly it had large, wide silver cups that allowed him to fulfill the *hiddur* of lighting the *menorah* in silver instead of glass inserts. It also was able to hold enough oil to burn into the late hours of the night. One can learn from Rav Pincus that even though he was at an old age, he always wanted to enhance *mitzvos*, such as *Ner Chanukah*, and make these *mitzvos* special and not routine.

As *Chanukah* approaches we should maybe think about how we can go the extra mile, and enhance our connection with Hashem. We can see Hashem's kindness every day, but we see it even more during the day of *Chanukah*. As Hashem's

nation, we should only continue to dedicate ourselves to serving Hashem this *Chanukah*, and we can be *zocheh* to feel Hashem's warmth, as we did when the miracle of the *pach shemen* happened. So when it comes to doing all of Hashem's *mitzvos* we must think about how we can only increase and elevate them through different ways furthering our connection with Hashem.



Shua Pariser, '20

## Ma'alín Ba'kodesh V'eín Moridin

The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* states the levels of which one can be *mekayem* the *mitzvah* of *Neiros Chanukah*. The basic level is one candle per household every night. Therefore, on the fifth night, one would light the same number of candles in his house as on the seventh night, namely just one. The second level is where everyone in the house lights one candle per night. So if a family has eight people, they light eight candles on night one and eight candles on night six. The third level is lighting the number of candles that corresponds to the night.

According to *Beis Shammai* one would light eight on the first night, seven on the second night, and so forth and so on, but according to *Beis Hillel*, one lights one candle on the first night, two on the second night, etc. counting up instead of down.

Why is this so? According to *Beis Shammai* it corresponds to the cows of *Sukkos* which also went in descending order (13-7). According to *Beis Hillel* it's because of the famous halachic principle called *maalin bekodesh vein moridin*. Three glaring questions become apparent: First, what is the *kedusha* regarding *Neiros Chanukah* in which we can apply the rule of *maalin bakodesh*? Second, what do the cows of *Sukkos* have to do with *Chanukah*? Third what does *Beis Shammai* do about *malain bakodesh* if it is really a halachic principle?

Our first step would be to define, and explore the concept of *ma'alín bakodesh*. Is it just a nice idea, or is it halachically binding? The first *Mishnah* in the *fourth perek* of *Megillah* states that if one wishes to sell an object that is *kadosh*, holy, he can only sell it for something more *kadosh* because of the rule of *maalin bakodesh*. The *Gemara* in *Menachos* 99A also says this rule of *maalin bakodesh*. We see very clearly that the rule of *ma'alín bakodesh* is a halachic principle. But the question remains, does it really apply to *Chanukah*? To rephrase the question, are *Neiros Chanukah* an object which has inherent *kedusha*, and therefore *ma'alín ba'kodesh* would apply or not?

There's a Ramban in *Shabbos* (22a) which explains the *kedusha* that the candles have. The Ramban says that objects that are used for a *mitzvah*, like a *Lulav* or *Tzitzis*, that aren't usually *kadosh*, gain *kedusha* when they are being used for the *mitzvah*. This would also apply to the *neiros*. The wicks and oil: aren't necessarily *kadosh* by themselves, but when they are burning, they have a *kedusha* status. This could be why we say *Ha'neiros Ha'lalu* while we light, because we infuse



the wicks with *kedusha*. According to *Beis Shammai* you can maybe say that there is no *ma'alin bakodesh* because the *kedusha* is the status of having them lit, which applies even if you do the most basic "*ner ish u'beiso*." In other words the *machlokes* between *Beis Shammai* and *Beis Hillel* boils down to whether or not the quantity of candles increases the *hiddur mitzvah* or not.

Going to our second question, what do the cows of *Sukkos* have to do with *Chanukah*? In reality, nothing, but *Beis Shammai* wanted to give us a mechanism with which we can understand what *mosif veholech* is. Just like on *Sukkos* we brought one fewer cow every day, so too on *Chanukah* we are lighting one fewer candle per day. If one wanted to say *drush* in this *sugya*, one can say that on *Sukkos*, the cows represent the 70 nations of the world, and we shecht 70 cows. On *Shmini Atzeres*, we bring one cow representing *Bnei Yisrael*. *Chanukah* is the perfect time to apply this. *Chanukah* is the last *Yom Tov* chronologically in history, and therefore when we celebrate the fact that we are still around and survived all our enemies, we realize that we are the only one left. What would *Beis Shammai* do with *ma'alin bakodesh*? *Beis Shammai* says that this is also *maalin bakodesh* but in a different way. We go from including all of the other 70 nations, to just being *Klal Yisrael*. We go from everyone being represented to just us. That's what *neiros* are, they resemble how *Klal Yisrael* is still here.

This whole *machlokes* is in the level of *menadrin min hamehadrin*. Is *hidur mitzvah* an extra *mitzvah*, or is it the *schar* from the *mitzvah* that's

being expanded? Rav Soloveichik zt"l said that by *Lulav* and other *mitzvos*, it's a separate *mitzvah* of *hidur*. Rav Reichman said that by *Chanukah*, since it's part of the *Gemara*, *hidur mitzvah* adds to the *mitzvah*.

How does *mehadrin min hamehadrin* work? Is it *mosif veholech* plus *ner lechol echad vechad* and *nerish ubeiso*, or is it just *mosif veholech* plus *ner ish ubeiso*?

*Tosfos* says that it is just *ner ish ubeiso* and *mosif veholech* because, for *ner lechol echad*, you are not able to tell the difference between all the candles. The Rambam (*Chanukah* 4:1) says that it is *mosif veholech* plus *ner le'chol echad vechad* and *ner ish u'beiso*. You can be *medaiyik* from him that maybe the *baal ha'bayis* should light the amount, of candles per person in his family per night and not that everyone lights his own. Three *shitos* come out l'ma'aseh: one *menorah* per house (most *Sfardim*), everyone lights *mosif v'holech* (most *Ashkenazim*), and the third *shittah*, the father lights for everyone in the house, so if there are 10 people in the family, on night 7, he will light 70 candles.



Isaac Kantowitz, '25

## Above and Beyond: Not Doing the Bare Minimum

When the Jews wanted to light the *menorah*, they only had one jug of *tahor* oil. They lit the *menorah* with

that jug, and it lasted for 8 days until they were able to produce more *tahor* oil. However, why was this miracle necessary? When the majority of the *tzibbur* is *tamei*, then *Tumah Hutra Be'tzibur* is in effect. *Tumah Hutra Be'tzibur* allows items that are *tamei* to be used for the *tzibbur* when it is a situation of ones. Therefore by *Chanukah*, the *tamei* oil could have been used in the *Beis Ha'mikdash*. They didn't need the pure oil jug to last, they could have just used the *tamei* ones.

Before the miracle of the oil could even occur, the *Maccabim* received a miraculous victory in battle. When the *Yevanim* decided that the Jews could not keep *Shabbos*, declare *Rosh Chodesh*, and give *Bris Milah*, the *Chashmonaim* decided to fight. This seems like a very logical idea, but according to *halacha*, why did they need to fight? None of these things that were banned are *aveiros* that are *yehareg ve'al ya'avor*.

The reason why they chose to fight, and also why they wanted *tahor* oil, is that the *Chashmonaim* were not content doing the bare minimum. They felt the need to go above and beyond in their *avodas Hashem*.

*Shir Hashirim* uses the relationship of a man and a woman to describe the ideal relationship between us and Hakadosh Baruch Hu. The same way a man and a woman love each other so much that they are willing to do anything for each other, so too we should have that same relationship with Hashem.

Everyday we say "*ahava rabba ahavtanu*". Hashem loves us so much, and He does so much for us. We need to reciprocate this love and grow in our *ahavas hashem*. We need to be invested in this

relationship. By coming to love Hashem we will be able to go above and beyond in our service of him.

Going above and beyond is demonstrated in the main *mitzvah* of *Chanukah*: lighting the *Chanukah* candles. The *Gemara* in *Shabbos* (21b) explains that there are 3 levels of performing this *mitzvah*. The basic requirement is to light one candle per house per night. The second level is to light one candle for every person per night. The third and highest level is to light one candle on the first night and to add an additional candle every night. Even though this highest level is considered "*mehadrin min hamehadrin*", it is universally accepted among *klal yisroel*. By doing this we show our willingness to go above and beyond in our *avodas Hashem* following in the footsteps of the *Chashmonaim*.



Azriel Avraham, '26

## A Kinderlach's Game

There are many aspects of *Chanukah* that make it the beautiful holiday that it is. A part of *Chanukah* that kids are always excited about is playing *Dreidel*. At first glance the *Dreidel* just seems like a fun kids game that we enjoyed as young children. However Rav Asher Sinclair points out something truly fascinating. When we take a deeper look, we realize that this children's game actually unveils the entire story of the Jewish People. Our story does not begin with the miracle of *Chanukah* ....

.... It begins 1,325 years earlier with Yaakov's dream on *Har Hamoriah*. *Chazal*, (*Pirkie d'Rebbi Eliezer*, *Perek*

35) say that the angels Yaakov *Avinu* saw on the ladder were the angels of four kingdoms. Four kingdoms that in the future will crush, dominate, and exile the Jewish people. The first angel that Yaakov saw was the *Malach* of *Bavel*. The angel climbed the ladder until the 70th step and then descended. The 70 steps corresponded to the seventy years of *Galus Bavel*. The second *Malach* was the angel of Persia, who reached 52 steps before coming back down. This signified the 52 years that *Bnei Yisrael* was ruled by Persia. The third *Malach* was the angel of Greece, the angel climbed 180 steps. 180 corresponding to the number of years that Greece controlled *Bnei Yisrael*. Finally the *Malach* of Rome began climbing the ladder, it rose up, and up, but never came down. Yaakov feared that this final *galus* would never end. Hashem assured Yaakov that even if that angel soared up like an eagle and made its nest amongst the stars, He would eventually bring its downfall. We unfortunately are still in this *galus*.

All of these four kingdoms had one crucial thing in common, they all tried to take away an important part of our daily lives. *Bayis Rishon* was destroyed by *Bavel* taking away our opportunity to bring *Korbanos*. These *Korbanos* represented a connection between Hashem and *Bnei Yisrael* which *Bavel* took away from us. This connection is symbolized by the word נפש (soul) which begins with the letter נ. The נ on the *Dreidel* represents the Kingdom of *Bavel* who tried to destroy our נפש. Next is Persia, who in *Megillas Esther* tried to physically kill us through Haman's plan. Persia wanted our body, our גוף, which begins with the letter ג. The ג on the *Dreidel* represents Persia who wanted to destroy us, they wanted our גוף.

Greece represents the attack on *Torah*, they wanted to take away our intelligence, our שכל. The ש on the *Dreidel* represents Greece who wanted to destroy our brains, our שכל. The final kingdom Rome, is all of the previous three exiles rolled into one. In the beginning of their reign the Romans, like *Bavel*, destroyed the *Mikdash*, taking away the *Korbanos* along with our נפש. They tried to harm us, to kill us, taking our גוף like Persia. The Romans also tried to take our שכל, to take our *Torah* just like Greece. Rome is all the exiles combined symbolized by the Hebrew word הכל (all). The ה on the *Dreidel* represents Rome, concluding the fourth side of the *Dreidel*.

There is still one piece of the *Dreidel* that we have yet to touch on. That piece being the small little stick on top that is used to make the *Dreidel* spin. This top part of the *Dreidel* is a lot smaller than the rest of the toy, yet still very much there. Just like the letter י, compared to the rest of the *Aleph-Bies*, it is small but it stands out. The י symbolizes ישראל. Now when the *dreidel* is spun, it is much more than a little game, when it is spinning it symbolizes *Bnei Yisrael* with the four Kingdoms revolving around, and the hand spinning that *Dreidel*, which comes from above.

An important thing we can learn from this is that Hashem never gives up on us. Through all the troubles, hard times, and tears, He will never let any other nation get the best of us, He will never let us be destroyed. The same way that Hashem never gives up on us, we should never give up on ourselves. When times are tough, when things get hard, or you just don't feel like doing something, you shouldn't quit because Hashem will never quit on you. You need to hit every challenge with your best shot and Hakadosh Baruch Hu will do the rest.





Gavi Pinsky, '25

## An Everlasting Love

The dedication of the *mizbeach* in *Parshas Naso* was an extremely exciting and joyous time for *Klal Yisrael*. The leaders of each of the *shevatim* brought a wide variety of gifts and offerings for twelve consecutive days. However, not everybody was so happy. The next *parshah*, *Parshas B'ha'aloscha*, leads off with Aharon receiving the special *mitzvah* to light the *menorah*. In the second pasuk of the *parshah* (*Bamidbar* 8:2) Rashi explains why the section of the *menorah* is next to the section of the *nesiim*. Rashi expounds that Aharon felt left out that he wasn't able to take part in the dedication of the *mizbeach*. Hashem consoled Aharon by giving him the *mitzvah* of the *menorah*, which is a greater portion than any of the *nesiim*.

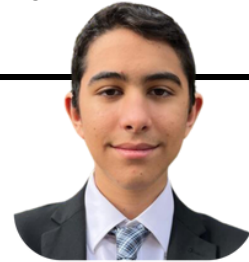
This is a beautiful Rashi from which we can learn countless lessons, but the Ramban is bothered. The Ramban (*Ramban Al Bamidbar* 8:2) asks why the consolation that Hashem gave Aharon was through the *menorah*. The *kohanim* had so many jobs that seem so much more important! They had to offer the *ketores* every day, which could cause them to die if offered improperly. They had to offer the *korbanos* of the day. The *kohen gadol* even had the most important job of the year – walking into the *Kodesh Hakodashim* on *Yom Kippur*. Why would Hashem pick the *menorah* as the best way to pick up Aharon's spirits?

The Ramban answers this question through a *Midrash Rabbah* (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 15:5). The *Midrash Rabbah* says that Hashem is promising Aharon that the lights of the *menorah* will go on forever. The obvious question presents itself: What do you mean they will go on forever? The *Beis Hamikdash* is destroyed and we don't have the *menorah* that Aharon lit? But the Ramban addresses this as well. He tells us that the *midrash* was alluding to the story of *Chanukah*, which applies even during the Diaspora. This was the real comfort to Aharon. The other *nesiim* only had a *mitzvah* of the moment, but Aharon's *mitzvah* continues to be observed until this day. Whenever we light the *menorah* we can stare at the rising flames and transport ourselves back thousands of years to the time of the *Beis Hamikdash*. The *menorah* is an everlasting connection to our history.

However, Aharon wasn't the only Jew to receive an everlasting present from Hashem. Every day, we have our own gift that Hashem gave us – the *Torah*. In our physical world, it can be so easy to see all of the fun things that the *goyim* have. Sometimes we will feel sad that we can't experience them. The nations of the world seem to get all of the benefits. They can do whatever they want and eat whatever they want without thinking about the consequences. However, all of their pleasures are short-term and fleeting. On the other hand, we have the greatest gift of all. The *Torah* and the *mitzvos* are everlasting and will provide us with *שכר* that lasts for eternity.

We know that "*ki lo sishachach mipi zaro*" – the *Torah* will never be forgotten from our people (*Devarim* 31:21). Every time someone finishes a

*masechta* or *sefer*, they say the famous words "*anu ratzim v'hem ratzim, anu ratzim l'chayei olam haba v'hem ratzim l'be'er shachas*" – both we and the nations of the world run, we run to the next world and they run to *Gehinnom*. In the moment it can sometimes be extremely hard to remember that we have the better lot in life, but at the end of the day we have to know where we are going, *Olam Haba*, and to realize that our portion is everlasting.



Matan Marmer, '25

## The Pride of Chanukah

This year, something very unusual is happening. *Chanukah* is starting on a Wednesday night, and this hasn't happened since 1993. *Chanukah* is the only holiday that is able to be on six different days of the week. Every other holiday is only able to be on four days of the week. The reason *Chanukah* has this specialty is because it comes after *Marcheshvan*, which is one of the two months that aren't consistent with the amount of days that they have. The other month is *Kislev*. Why is it, though, that it is these two months specifically, that are inconsistent with their amount of days?

The first thing that we need to answer the question is to know that besides the fact that the Jewish calendar has leap years, which add an extra month, the Jewish calendar also sometimes has a leap day, or a lack thereof. Sometimes, because

we need to fix the day of the week that *Rosh Hashanah* will be on, a day needs to be added or taken out of the year. When we take out a day, we take it out of *Kisleiv*, and when we add a day, we add it to *Marcheshvan*.

There are multiple opinions as to why we do this “fixing” of the year in *Marcheshvan* and *Kisleiv*. One opinion is that we do it now because if we did it later in the year then there would be situations where *Asarah B'Teives* would end up on *Shabbos*. There is a *machlokes* whether you would have to fast if *Asarah B'Teives* is on *Shabbos*, and in order to avoid this *machlokes*, we make it impossible that it would ever happen. Another explanation of why we do it specifically in *Marcheshvan* and *Kisleiv* is that if we are going to “fix” the year, we should do so in the beginning of the year.

The question that can be asked on both opinions is why we don't do it in *Tishrei* and *Marcheshvan*? This is an even bigger question on the “fixing” the year in beginning” answer because *Tishrei* and *Marcheshvan* are earlier in the year than *Marcheshvan* and *Kisleiv*.

The answer to this question is that if we “fixed” the year in *Marcheshvan* and *Kisleiv*, then there would be times when you would still be able to see the “old” moon on the night of *Rosh Chodesh Kisleiv*. This happens because, as a result of us sometimes taking out a day from the year, there are times when we have three months in a row that all have twenty-nine days. When this happens, the months with twenty-nine days are *Marcheshvan*, *Kisleiv*, and *Teives*. If the months that we would use to fix the calendar would be *Tishrei* and *Marcheshvan*, then the three months would be *Elul*, *Tishrei*, and *Marcheshvan*. Since

*Tishrei* is the only month in which the first day of the month is decided based on when the *molad* is, two months of only twenty-nine days later we could be in a situation where *Rosh Chodesh* is as much as a day before the *molad*. This would result in us being able to see the “old” moon on the night of *Rosh Chodesh*, which is something that we don't want. Therefore, by “fixing” the year in *Marcheshvan* and *Kisleiv*, we really are “fixing” the year as early as possible, and it is the only way to “fix” the year in a way that *Asarah B'Teives* won't be on *Shabbos*.

The third answer, which is offered by R' Haber, is that we *davka* do it in the months around *Chanukah*, as a celebration of *Chanukah*. One of the things that the *Yevanim* wanted to be *mevatel* was *Kiddush Ha'chodesh*, so we “tamper” with the year specifically now to show that we still have control over our calendar. We can apply this to our life. This *Chanukah*, let us celebrate not just *Chanukah* but our ability to be Jewish and free, and let us take pride in our *Yahadus*.



## Finding Holiness in Imperfection

*Chanukah* celebrates the miracle of the oil and the victory of the *Chashmonaim* over the Greeks. While the victory story is well-known, there's a deeper lesson about the holiness that emerges from imperfection. After the Greeks

defiled the *Beis Ha'Mikdash*, the *Chashmonaim* returned to find the holy site in a state of impurity. Faced with a far-from-ideal situation, they acted, and Hashem made a miracle happen.

The *Chashmonaim* didn't wait for everything to be perfect before they acted. They found a small jug of oil, enough for just one day, and used it to light the *Menorah*. Despite limited resources, they didn't let the situation discourage them. They did what they could, and Hashem made it last for eight days. This teaches us that it's not about having a perfect situation, it's about making the most of what we have, even when things aren't ideal.

Sometimes, we may feel like we need everything to be in place before we take action, but the *Chashmonaim* teach us that it's the willingness to act that leads to miracles. This lesson applies to many areas of life. It's easy to feel overwhelmed when we believe we don't have everything we need to succeed. Whether in *Torah* study, work, or personal life, we often become discouraged when things don't go according to plan. But the story of *Chanukah* reminds us that even when we feel we're starting small or imperfect, we can still make a big difference.

The *Chashmonaim* didn't wait for the perfect *Menorah* or oil, they did what they could, and that was enough. This small action in good faith, that didn't seem ideal then led to this miracle. This idea also teaches us that our imperfections don't define us. Take Moshe *Rabbeinu*, who, when chosen by Hashem to lead the Jewish people, described himself as “*ki kaved peh u'kaved lashon anochi*” (*Shemos 4:10*). Despite feeling



unqualified, Hashem saw his potential and chose him. Similarly, Dovid *Ha'Melech* was the youngest son, and was continuously overlooked when Shmuel came to choose a king, still became one. Hashem saw Dovid's inner strength and proceeded to make him king of Israel. These examples show us that it's not our flaws that matter, but how we choose to use them for good. Like Moshe and Dovid, we all have imperfections, but they don't define our ability to accomplish great things.

The story of *Chanukah* reminds us that we don't need to be perfect to make a difference. Even if our efforts are small or imperfect, they can bring light into the world. Like the *Menorah*, our actions, no matter how small they seem, can have a big impact. The *Chashmonaim* didn't wait for things to be ideal, they did what they could, and Hashem made it enough.

This lesson extends to all parts of our lives. In *Torah* study, we may not always have the time or energy to learn as much as we'd like, but we can still make progress. In work or personal life, we may not be able to control everything, but we can still give our best effort with the resources available. The *Chashmonaim* didn't have everything they needed, but they trusted in Hashem. That's the lesson for us, even when things don't seem perfect, we can make a difference by doing our best with what we have.

The ability to make the most of our circumstances is key to growth. Whether in our daily routines, community involvement, or pursuit of *Torah* and *mitzvos*, we can improve and do good, even when it feels like we're starting from a place of imperfection. If we believe our small efforts matter, we'll be motivated to take action. Like the oil

in the *Menorah*, our efforts can have an impact beyond our expectations when we trust in Hashem and do our part.

The ability to make the most of our circumstances is key to growth. Whether in our daily routines, community involvement, or pursuit of *Torah* and *mitzvos*, we can improve and do good, even when it feels like we're starting from a place of imperfection. If we believe our small efforts matter, we'll be motivated to take action. Like the oil in the *menorah*, our efforts can have an impact beyond our expectations when we trust in Hashem and do our part.

In conclusion, *Chanukah* teaches us to embrace imperfection and make the most of what we have. It's not about waiting for the perfect moment, but about taking action and trusting Hashem will help us along the way. When we do our best, even in difficult circumstances, we bring light into the world, just as the *Menorah* brought light to the *Beis Ha'mikdash*. The *Chashmonaim* didn't need perfection to succeed, and neither do we. By acting with faith, we can create miracles in our lives, no matter how imperfect our situation may seem.



## From Darkness to Light

During the time of the Greek occupation of the Land of Israel, the Greeks planned to put an end to religious practices, desecrating the

*Bais Hamikdash*, as well as outlawing *Torah* study, keeping *Shabbos*, and many other Jewish rituals. The *Maccabees*, an army of Jewish people, rose up against the mighty Greek army and achieved an unsuspected victory. Upon reclaiming the *Bais Hamikdash*, they hoped to rededicate it by lighting the *menorah*, but they found only one small jar of oil, enough to last a single day. Miraculously, this oil burned for eight days, just the perfect amount of time to produce new oil and rededicate the *Bais Hamikdash* fully.

The act of lighting the *menorah* is more than just to relive history, it carries Jewish significance. The *Gemara* (*Shabbas* 21b) teaches that the main purpose for lighting the *Chanukah* candles is *pirsumei nisa*, to publicize the miracle. The *menorah's* lights serve as a reminder of the wondrous miracles that have happened to the Jewish people, as well as symbolizes Hashem's light that continues to guide us.

The *Zohar* (III, 124b) describes the *menorah* as a representation of Hashem's wisdom and spiritual clarity. Just as its light illuminates the darkness of winter, it symbolizes the inner light of understanding that helps us navigate life's challenges. The eight lights of the *menorah* (plus the *shamash*) remind us of the totality of Hashem, encouraging us to reflect on His divine presence and share it with the world.

Jewish tradition deeply values the symbolism of light. Both the *Shabbos* candles and the *Chanukah menorah* serve as powerful reminders of Hashem, but they show different aspects of our lives.

The lighting of *Shabbos* candles mark the beginning of *Shabbos*, the day of rest. According to the

*Gemara (Shabbos 25b)*, *Shabbos* candles bring *shalom bayis*, peace to the home. Their warm glow creates an atmosphere of spiritual and holiness, transitioning from a week of work to a week of rest. This is designed to help with our prayer and connections with Hashem and family. The personal nature of *Shabbos* candles encourages us to turn inward. As we light them, we create a sacred space which symbolizes the holiness of *Shabbos*, inviting us to reflect on the blessings in our lives.

In contrast, the *Chanukah menorah* shines outward. Its purpose is to publicly proclaim the miracle of the oil and celebrate the resilience of the Jewish people. The *menorah* is meant to be placed in a visible location, often by a window, to share its light with the world. This outward-facing mitzvah reminds us that our

faith and traditions are not meant to remain private but are meant to inspire and illuminate others.

The shamash, the elevated candle used to light the others, holds special significance. It symbolizes leadership and service, teaching that true leaders are those who uplift others and spread light. Positioned above the other candles, the shamash embodies role of individuals in guiding and inspiring those around them.

Both the *Shabbos* candles and the *Chanukah menorah* remind us of the power of light. The *Shabbos* candles symbolize the inner peace that allows us to connect deeply with G-d and ourselves, while the *Chanukah* lights shine outward, calling us to share our faith and proclaim the miracles of our religion to the world. Together, these

*mitzvos* serve as bookends to our spiritual lives, balancing personal expressions with public joy, and showing us how to enhance our lives and the lives of others.

As we light the *menorah*, we not only commemorate the miracles of *Chanukah* but also invite the guidance of Hashem's light into our lives. The *shamash*, standing above the other candles, teaches us the importance of uplifting others and spreading light. Like the *shamash*, we are called to lead through service, helping to guide those around us. Each flickering flame reminds us that Hashem's presence is with us, illuminating the right path to follow even in moments of darkness. Through this act, we grow in wisdom, faith, and connection with Hashem, drawing closer to the clarity and purpose that only His light can provide.

## CHANUKAH TRIVIA ANSWERS!

1. ITS CONTAINER HAD THE SEAL OF THE *KOHEN GADOL*. (MESECHTA SHABBAT 21B)
2. NO. BUT IF THE MEAL IS ACCOMPANIED BY SONGS OF *SHEVACH* TO HASHEM IT IS CONSIDERED A *SEUDAS MITZVAH*. (IBID. 670:2)
3. THEY MADE BREAKS IN THE WALLS AND CONTAMINATED THE SACRED ITEMS. (RAMBAM, LAWS OF CHANUKAH 1:1)
4. BECAUSE THERE WERE NO ADDITIONAL SACRIFICES IN THE BEIT HAMIKDASH DURING CHANUKAH. (*SHULCHAN ARUCH ORACH CHAIM* 682:2)
5. THEY REDEDICATED THE ALTAR IN THE *BEIS HA'MIKDASH*, WHICH THE *YEVANIM* HAD DEFILED. ("CHANUKAH" MEANS INAUGURATION.)



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