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RABBI YEHUDA KELEMER

HARAV YEHUDA BEN R' DOV BER Z"l

Mara D'atra Young Israel of West Hempstead



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NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL



CHANUKAH TORAH JOURNAL

dedicated in memory of

HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

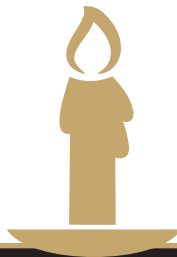
הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

Mara D'atra, Young Israel of West Hempstead

***“Rabbi Kelemer elevated every
situation, he knew how to
give comfort, listen, encourage,
inspire and uplift every person with
whom he came in contact.”***

RABBI JOSH GOLLER

Mara D'atra, YI West Hempstead



PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 70 FOR OUR SPECIAL DEDICATION SECTION.



Dear Friends,

It is my genuine pleasure to introduce the second edition of the National Council of Young Israel Torah Journal, the Chanukah Torah Journal.

It is deeply moving and meaningful that this edition is dedicated in memory of Rabbi Yehudah Kelemer, ז"ל, a shining light of Torah learning and teaching whose modesty, warmth and wisdom had such a profound influence on so many. יהא זכרו ברוך.

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik, זצ"ל, raises two perplexing questions regarding the תפלה על הנסים. First, why is it that there is no mention of the miracle of the שמן, פך שני, and second, why is it that on Chanukah, the actions of the חשמונאים and their role in the events of the day are recorded in the prayer, whereas on Purim, the roles played by Esther and Mordechai in the salvation are not recorded! (Their names are mentioned only to provide historical context). The parts played by the חשמונאים are emphasized, but the roles of Esther and Mordechai are not. Why might this be?

The Rav explained that על הנסים is recited as part of הודאה, the thanksgiving sections of both ברכת המזון and עמידה in which we thank HaShem for material blessings and for protection against our enemies, and not for purely spiritual miracles. It is for this reason that the spiritual miracle of the oil is not included in על הנסים.

Regarding the reason for emphasizing human involvement on Chanukah, but not on Purim, Rav Soloveitchik suggests that we learn from this is that when the battle is spiritual in nature, HaShem invites the Jew to directly participate. Although man may be guided by HaShem, when spiritual survival is at stake, man must take the initiative! Hence, the human role must be emphasized. When it is a question of physical survival, HaShem uses man as His tool to carry out the plan which He has devised. As such, in this case where man is

merely the messenger of HaShem, he is not credited with the victory over his enemies. Spiritual achievements are attributed to man, whereas physical achievements are attributed to HaShem. Man cannot claim credit for political or military achievements for fear that he will sin by saying, כחי ועצמי, ידי עשו לי את החיל הזה, it is my strength and power which brought about this result.

Therefore, on Purim, when we celebrate a physical victory, we do not mention Esther's and Mordechai's actions because that victory should be attributed to HaShem, with the human protagonists serving merely as His instruments. On Chanukah, however, when Antiochus' goal was to destroy the Jews spiritually, the initiative belonged to man. It is for this very reason that we remember the actions taken by the חשמונאים when we commemorate their victory through the recitation of על הנסים.

As an organization, National Council of Young Israel regularly faces both physical and spiritual challenges. It is our responsibility to recognize, however, that no matter the nature of the situation, we must respond both as the instruments of HaShem and also as human beings, utilizing our own resources and capabilities to meet those challenges head on.

It is our goal to continue to develop the number and level of services offered to our branches as a means of fostering cooperation and unity when confronting and dealing with issues of importance to the members of our national community. Whether in the realm of the lofty and the spiritual, or matters of everyday, mundane concerns, we are here to work with you in a spirit of אחדות and comradery towards the success and continued growth of our revitalized movement.

חג אורים שמח

Rabbi David Warshaw

President, National Council of Young Israel

president@youngisrael.org



ZECHARYA'S VISION AND ITS MESSAGE FOR TODAY

RABBI NEIL WINKLER

FOUNDING RABBI, YOUNG ISRAEL OF FT. LEE

THE ANCIENT PRACTICE of reading prakim 2-4 from Sefer Zecharyah on Shabbat Chanukah requires little explanation. The connection between this week's haftarah and Chanukah is quite obvious. Certainly, the vision of the seven branched Menorah that closes the selection connects powerfully to the very symbol of the holiday, the nine-branched Chanukiya. And perhaps more significant is the message of the menorah that was meant for that generation, i.e., that overcoming the obstacles and the enemies depends upon the strength of spirit and not the size of the nation or economic success or even military might. This clearly is a basic theme of Chanukah, a lesson to be learned from the victory of the heavily outnumbered Maccabees.

And yet, if we study the events of the time, that is, the challenges that faced the generation of Zecharya and his older peer, Chaggai, we will uncover that they parallel the challenges that

faced the Chashmona'im 350 years later. The brave minority who left the galut of Bavel and heeded the cry of their leadership to return to their land were, by and large, an impoverished group. They arrived in Yerushalayim to find the ruins of Bayit Rishon, the first Temple, and a new local population who were anything but happy with their return. These enemies petitioned the Persian king to halt the attempt to rebuild the Beit HaMikdash, claiming that the Jews were rebelling against his authority. Meanwhile, as the Book of Nechemiah teaches us, the destroyed walls that once surrounded the Holy City were breached and offered no protection to the Jews. In an attempt to create peaceful relations with the enemies who surrounded them, many Jews intermarried with the non-Jewish nations. Both the temporal and spiritual stature of the nation were seriously compromised. In fact, it was the leadership - including the Kohanim - who were fully involved with this assimilation and who intermarried with



the nations that surrounded them. It was a problem so severe that it was solved only a generation later, with the arrival of both Ezra and Nechemiah. It is significant to note that Zecharya's prophetic message - the message of this haftarah - was addressed to Yehoshua, the righteous Kohen Gadol, who remained faithful to our Torah at a time when so many Kohanim had lost their identity and their faith.

Given the sorry spiritual state of the nation, it is fitting that we read of how these few leaders of the nation stepped into this whirlwind. The temporal leaders - Zerubavel and, later, Nechemiah - as well as the spiritual leaders, Yehoshua, Chaggai and Zecharya, spoke with confidence to the people, urging them to cast away their doubts and fears and to put their hope in Hashem. Chaggai put it so beautifully when he called out to the nation "Alu hahar vahaveitem etz uv'nu habayit"--"Go to the mountain, bring down wood and start building the Beit Mikdash." And, he promises, G-d will be honored and glorified through it.

This too, in many ways, is the story of the Maccabim: a brave minority who faced a defiled Temple and were surrounded by powerful enemies. Many Jews were spiritually bankrupt as they actively attempted to Hellenize the people and stood against the

attempts of the faithful to restore Jewish domination over Israel's holy sites. There was little reason for the Maccabim to expect success in their endeavors. Nonetheless, these faithful Kohanim heeded the words of the prophets that preceded them by three centuries. They began the process. They "went up the mountain" by starting the rebellion and eventually, placing their hopes in Hashem's support. Like the leaders of Zecharya's generation, they succeeded in rebuilding the Beit Mikdash, cleansing it and lighting the Menorah therein.

The battles of Chanukah that marked the first time in history that war was fought over beliefs-and not conquest, over faith-and not power, are the story of Israel returning to her land and her beliefs, by following their priestly guides and by defending their State as well as their Torah.

The greatest challenges that face us can be met only with the courage to begin the seemingly impossible task and with the wisdom to rely on G-d to help us meet the challenges successfully.

The words of Zecharya teach us that.

The story of Chanukah teaches us that.

And the events of today do as well.

THE SHAPE OF THE MENORAH

RABBI MOSHE TAUB

YOUNG ISRAEL OF HOLLIWOOD

ONE NIGHT SEVERAL years ago, after a Chumash shiur, one of the participants – a woman who is slowly returning to yiddeshkeit – asked to speak with me.

She had been substituting in one of the Jewish day schools and had given the 4th grade class an art assignment in honor of the upcoming holiday: they were to draw a Chanukah menorah.

To give an example to the children of what she was looking for, she drew a menorah on the board. She was surprised when a number of the young children in the class told her that she had drawn it wrong, for she made the branches curved. Some other children then argued in her defense, that, in fact, the menorah does have curved branches.

While impressed that such youngsters could have such an emotional reaction to the shape of one of the klei hamikdash, she wanted to know who

was right, and what she should tell the class.

I asked, “Did you draw a Chanukah menorah with eight branches?”

“Yes, this was a project in honor of Chanukah”.

“Well then, you can explain to them that they missed the forest for the trees. For the menorah in the beis hamikdash – whether rounded or straight – had only seven branches, so either way this would not be kosher!” Indeed, one need not light the Chanukah lights with a “menorah” at all – let alone a fair representation of that of the beis hamikdash.

Furthermore, Chanukah halacha aside, it is forbidden to build an exact replica of the Temple menorah today (Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah, 141:8). Therefore, the last thing we would desire is a perfect reproduction.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to



wonder who was right. Was the menorah described in the Torah curved or straight? Shlomo Hamelech (Melachim 1 ch. 7) went to the trouble of creating ten menorahs so that we should know how to build them and what they looked like. When moshiach comes we will be required to create an exact replica –would we know how?

Based on Likutei Sichos (vol. 21, Terumah; vol. 26 Tetzaveh) Chabad Chasidim make their menorah representations – even for Chanukah –with straight branches, while most others have theirs curved.

From the citation from the Shulchan Aruch above, we see that there are real halachic consequences to the debate regarding the shape of the menorah! Since we are forbidden to create a replica of the menorah that would be technically kosher for Temple use (Meiri on Rosh Hashana 24, Igros Moshe YD 3:31. Cf. Bechor Shor), perhaps then if we were to make a seven branched Menorah but simply round the branches (if the real ones should have been straight), or vice versa, we would avoid the halachic concern entirely! Indeed, the Mishnas Chachamim teaches that if one makes a seven branched menorah, he need only curve them so as not to make a duplicate of the Temple's menorah!

(Shu't Ra'ch Hakohen YD 23 says the same, see Torah Shleima 22, miluim #14).

This is not simply an academic question, for what if a family has a seven-branched candelabra that it uses for Shabbos licht: is that allowed? Would it being fashioned curved or straight solve the problem? (See Darkei Teshuva and Birkei Yoseph YD 141 where many of these cases are discussed).

An interesting historical note is that when the modern state of Israel was founded, a national symbol/emblem was sought. Over 300 people submitted suggestions and drawings. Many of the suggested emblems had some version of the menorah included; many were curved, but some were drawn straight. As anyone who has seen the popular Israeli emblem knows, while a menorah was ultimately chosen, it was the curved shape that was used!

They based this on the image on the Arch of Titus. After the Romans conquered the land of Israel and destroyed the Second beis hamikdash, this arch was built in celebration of the grand parade through the streets of Rome with our holy vessels. The menorah – to this day – is depicted there as having curved branches. Until

Does the Arch of Titus play any role in discovering the true shape of the menorah?

THE SHAPE OF THE MENORAH

very recently this was the oldest rendition of the menorah. It is also noteworthy that the last king of the Chashmonaim produced a coin, still extant today that also depicts the menorah with curved branches. What makes this last coin so fascinating is that the very menorah of the messianic Chanukah was likely used as its muse!

However, can Halacha use archeological evidence as proof? Does the Arch of Titus play any role in discovering the true shape of the menorah?

Certainly, there have been times when archeology has shed light on an unknown or murky subject (see Ramban to Shmos 30 and Bereishis 9 where he changes his mind based on new discoveries regarding the weight of the shekel and if the rainbow was first created after the mabul, respectively). However, as Rav Chaim Kanievsky (Taama D'Kra) and others cite from various Gemaras, archaeology generally offers little help in deciding the final law.

What about archeology from Jewish sources? All the coinage from antiquity (including those created by Yidden) presents the menorah curved-shaped.

We would have to imagine that engraving a curved image is more difficult than a straight etching and that therefore this was purposeful. Consider as well that recently a Shul was discovered in Eretz Yisroel near Peki'in, from the time of the Second Beis Ha-

mikdosh that has an image of the menorah on its wall, again, with curved branches, as do the burial catacombs at Beit She'arim (see Artscroll's 'History of the Jewish People', p. 84).

Rav Avraham... states that although many scholars say the branches were curved, they were in fact straight '...as my father drew them'.

Many people turn to Rashi for more solid proof as to the Menorah's shape. Rashi to Shmos 25:32 seems to say that the branches were straight ('b'alchson'= diagonal). This is not conclusive proof to his meaning (see e.g. Rashi to Bereishis 18:2), and the Ibn Ezra clearly teaches that the Menorah's branches were curved.

Rav Avraham the son of the Rambam states that although many scholars say the branches were curved, they were in fact straight '...as my father drew them'. Today, in the newer editions of the Rambam we see the diagrams – drawn by the Rambam – that Rav Avraham was referring to, and indeed they appear clearly to be drawn with straight branches



(see Rabbi S. Mandel's article where he seeks to prove that this was not Rambam's intent; see Torah Shleima ibid. where he expresses surprise that the Rambam here seems to go against 'all the Rishonim').

Teyku.

Interestingly, a few pages after we are instructed not to make a replica of the menorah, the Gemara (26a) brings a debate as to the shape of the shofar. Should it be straight (zakuf) or curved (kafuf)? Each view, explains the Gemara, comes to symbolize different modes of approaching Hakadosh Baruch Hu.

It has always seemed to me that this helps explain the debate regarding the menorah: The Baal Shem Tov desired that every Jew, even the

simple, be aware that he too can have a direct relationship with Hashem, no matter his level of scholarship. Think, for example, of how the holy Rav Levi Yitzchak of Berdichev approached Hashem in tefila, directly, explaining the needs of Am Yisroel – this is zakuf. Others believed that one should be more kafuf, bent and humble, only earning a relationship in small steps. Eilu V'eilu Divrei Elokim Chaim- these and these are all the words of the living G-D! Perhaps this is why some Chasidim have a straight Menorah and others, a bent one. It would seem that the Chanukah menorah we use today, with its eight branches and its shamash, may be either straight, or curved, and any generally halachically correct rendition will serve us to fulfill the mitzvah.

HIJACKING THE HOLIDAY OF CHANUKAH

RABBI JONATHAN MUSKAT

YOUNG ISRAEL OF OCEANSIDE

CHANUKAH MEANS different things to different people. For some, it's all about the presents. For others, it's about the menorah. For others, it's about Jewish strength. I believe that about 100 or 150 years ago, a group of people tried to hijack the holiday of Chanukah. Eliezer Don-Yehiya, a political science professor at Bar Ilan University, wrote an article in the Jewish Journal of Sociology entitled, "Hanukkah and the Myth of the Maccabees in Zionist Ideology and in Israeli Society." In this article, he argued that Chanukah was one of the Jewish traditional festivals which the Zionist movement employed to assert the continuity of Jewish identity and the national right of the Jews to the Land of Israel. The renewed importance given to Chanukah was apparent from the early beginnings of the organized Zionist movement in 1882. In fact, Theodor Herzl concluded his book, The Jewish State, with the words: 'The Maccabees shall rise again.' The early Zionists understood

Chanukah primarily as a nationalist holiday, as a struggle for national liberation. But they had a problem. What do you do with all of the religion that we find in the story? The Hasmoneans were willing to fight to the death for the right to observe Shabbat, brit milah and taharat hamishpacha. How did the secular Zionists fit this reality into their new secular Zionist ideology?

Professor Yehiya wrote that different Zionist groups struggled with this issue and came up with different solutions. The Revisionists, forerunners of the Likud party, saw themselves as muscular Zionists. They glorified the Zealots who revolted against the Romans, but they actually also sided with the Hellenists. They admired the young Hellenized Jews who took part in wrestling competitions and who were among the bitter enemies of the Hasmoneans. In fact, in 1905, Zev Jabotinsky from the Revisionist party declared that mankind should be eternally grateful to Hellenism, which



was the first movement to point to sports as the best educational tool for creating, by prolonged training and willpower, a prototype imbued with spiritual beauty and courage.

The Labor movement took pride in the Hasmoneans, but not in religious terms. They characterized them as individuals who waged war only after grave acts of provocation and of suppression by Greek rulers. The Labor movement was more moderate politically than the Revisionists. However, both the Revisionists and the Labor movement ignored the religious component of the story of Chanukah.

Israel Eldad, a religious Zionist philosopher, summed up the strategy of secular Zionists when he noted that Zionism appropriated the form, but not the content, of the war of the Hasmoneans. There's a popular Chanukah song: "Mi yemalel gevurot Yisrael, otan mi yimneh, hen b'chol dor yakum hagibor go'el ha'am." This is a song that was composed by a Zionist, Menashe Ravina, in the early 20th century and it is characteristic of this ideology. The phrase, "mi yemalel gevurot Yisrael" is taken from a verse in Tehillim (106:2), "Mi yemalel gevurot Hashem" or "who can recount the

strength of G-D." However, in this song, G-D is not mentioned! Ravina replaces "G-D" with "Yisrael." The song continues, "hen b'chol dor yakum hagibor go'el ha'am" meaning, "in every generation a strong man arises, a redeemer" – and in the next stanza, who is the redeemer? Hashem is not mentioned; rather "Maccabee moshia u'fodeh" – a Maccabee is the redeemer! There is no G-D in Chanukah according

to this song and this ideology. Of course, in reality, G-D and his intervention play a decisive and prominent role.

There was a strong reaction to this approach. Yitzchak Breuer, a major Haredi

leader, argued that "the Hellenizers loved the land but loathed the Land of Torah... It is not for the Jewish State that the Hasmoneans fought, but for the People of the Torah." This approach avoids the nationalistic elements of the holiday and focuses only on the religious aspect. Both this perspective and that of the secular Zionists each bypasses a different important aspect of the holiday of Chanukah. By ignoring either the religious or the nationalistic content of the holiday, both have hijacked Chanukah to fit their own ideological aims.

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HIJACKING THE HOLIDAY OF CHANUKAH

Religious Zionists can incorporate both the religious and the national content of the holiday without compromising our ideology at all. However, maybe there is even more to the holiday than the national and religious content. The Torah states that when the mishkan was built, the glory of G-D filled the mishkan. Additionally, when the first Beit Hamikdash was built, the pasuk in Divrei Hayamim states that the glory of G-D filled the mishkan. Both the building of the mishkan and the Beit Hamikdash created a tangible sense of G-D awareness.

However, when the second Beit Hamikdash was built, the book of Ezra states that the elders who had witnessed the first Beit Hamikdash cried. Some commentaries assert that they cried because it wasn't as grand as the first Beit Hamikdash. Perhaps, though, what was missing was the glory of G-D, the G-D awareness. Perhaps for another 300 years, the people were wondering if they could recreate this G-D awareness in their holy Mikdash. Finally, after we fought for our religion

and after we were willing to give up our lives for the sake of G-D and His Torah, the Mikdash was rededicated during the story of Chanukah. So too, perhaps the miracle of lights was a long-awaited sign that the glory of G-D was once again present in the Mikdash.

Both the improbable military miracle and the miracle of the lights of Chanukah created G-D awareness, just as the improbable blossoming of the land of Israel beginning at the end of the 19th century created G-D awareness for many of us, who see this state as a modern-day miracle.

As we celebrate Chanukah, let us remember how G-D lit the way for us over 2100 years ago, and how G-D lit the way for us starting from the end of the 19th century in Eretz Yisrael. May we all be blessed with the ability to sense the light of G-D, the light of our holy Torah during this holiday, and may we be blessed to share this light with others.



WOMEN AND THE POSITIVE MITZVOT OF CHANUKAH

BY RABBANIT ROOKIE BILLET

YOUNG ISRAEL OF WOODMERE

THE OBSERVANCE OF Chanukah is about positive mitzvot like acknowledging the miracles by candle lighting and reciting the full Hallel daily. Where do Jewish women stand in terms of their obligation to observe Ner Chanukah since it is a time-bound positive commandment?

Many Halachic authorities and Jewish thinkers debate the participation of women in time-bound positive commandments, מצוות עשה שהזמן גרמן. While women are exempt from Biblical mitzvot like Tzitzit (worn only during the day) and Tefillin (not worn on Shabbat), there are other time-bound positive commandments for whose performance women are completely obligated. Since Shabbat is commanded through both a positive commandment, זכור את יום השבת לקדשו, as well as the negative commandment not to do creative work, איסור מלאכה, and women are certainly obligated in the negative commandment, women are also bound to keep the positive

commandments like Kiddush and Havdalah which are alluded to in the זכור statement regarding Shabbat. The rabbinic commandment to light the Sabbath candle is also assigned to women! Needless to say, in traditional homes, much of the כיבוד ועונג, the honor and pleasure accorded to Shabbat by tasty and beautifully presented food, finer table settings and utensils as well as festive personal attire, are also in the purview of women.

The Mitzvah of listening to the Shofar is also a time-bound commandment, but the Talmud tells us that over the generations, women took upon themselves the obligation to listen to the shofar blasts on Rosh Hashanah which are the centerpiece of the prayer service on the יום הדין (the Day of Judgment), and also an important element of arousing humankind to repent and seek forgiveness for both errors between man and man and transgressions between man and G-d. Two weeks later, most women in

WOMEN AND THE POSITIVE MITZVOT OF CHANUKAH

certain communities sit in the Sukkah religiously each autumn even though Sukkah is a time-bound positive commandment, and Ashkenazi Poskim (Decisors of Jewish Law) have rendered the halachic decision that they may in fact recite the blessing praising “He who has sanctified us with His commandments and charged us with sitting in the Sukkah!”

Regarding the observance of Pesach and the consumption of Matzah, while a positive commandment surely requires the consumption of Matzah, a negative commandment demands refraining from eating Chametz, leavened foods, and that no leavened products be found in our possession. The Talmud teaches that the juxtaposition of these two commandments informs us that anyone who is forbidden to consume chametz is obligated to eat matzah! Hence women are full participants in the rituals of Pesach and the seder night, and certainly historically, have played a major role in preparing our homes for the holidays and in the educational preparation of the children for the seder celebration.

Regarding the rabbinic holidays of Purim and Chanukah, as well as the rabbinic mitzvot of Pesach (like the

four cups of wine), our Sages offer a grand explanatory statement for the obligation of women to participate in the time bound positive rabbinic mitzvot of these holidays: **אף הן היו באותו הנס!** This means that “They too were involved in the miracle.” The statement has been interpreted in

each of two ways: The women were also involved in the heroic means to achieve salvation, and in addition, the women were involved in the horrific persecutions from which the Jewish people in those generations required salvation

and redemption!

In the Pesach story, it is clear that the Israelite women were also enslaved in Egypt and were part of the suffering. It was the baby boys that they carried in their pregnancies upon whom the Egyptians and Pharaoh leveled the decree to be killed on the birthing stones. And among the heroes of the story were Yocheved and Miriam, for the many roles they played. The medrash tells us that it was Miriam who advised her father and mother to reunite after their separation, urging them that their own decree of marital separation was worse than Pharaoh's, since he only sentenced the baby boys who would be born to death by drowning, but the husbands'

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and wives' separation doomed even potential baby girls, who would therefore never be conceived and born! The Hebrew midwives, Shifra and Puah, also identified by the medrash as either Yocheved and Miriam, or Yocheved and Elisheva, played a vital role in defying Pharaoh's decree, saving the baby boys from death and giving them life! The medrash actually gives credit to all the Jewish women for beautifying themselves with their mirrors, going out to the fields where their men were doing backbreaking labor, and arousing them under the apple trees to help make Jewish babies, despite their exhaustion and despair. The women were rewarded by having their mirrors included in the holy washing station (kiyor) in the Tabernacle, where the Kohanim washed their hands and feet to purify themselves for the daily service in the mishkan. The women also anticipated the celebration of the future salvation by taking musical instruments out of Egypt during the Exodus, so they could be sure to accompany the songs of praise that would be sung with live music to enhance the joy and thanksgiving! Indeed, the women in the Passover story were an integral part of the miracle.

In the Purim story, women were also included in the decrees of Haman and Ahashverosh to annihilate the entire Jewish people, from youths to the elderly, children and women, in a single day! No Jew in the 127

provinces of the Persian king was to be exempt from the death sentence. In the gathering of beautiful women from the kingdom to compete for the role of the next queen, undoubtedly Jewish women other than Esther were also taken captive and held in the king's palace and harem. And it goes without saying that a woman, Queen Esther, is the central heroine involved in the saving of the Jewish nation, with the assistance, support and encouragement of Mordechai haYehudi. Hence, all four positive mitzvot of the day of Purim, the reading of Megillat Esther, the gifts to our friends (Mishloach Manot), the gifts to the poor (Matanot La'Evyonim), and the festive holiday meal (Seudat Purim), all time bound positive rabbinic commandments, are equally obligated upon women.

In the Chanukah story, women were also deeply affected by the decrees. As the *עקרת הבית*, the centerpiece of the Jewish home, each and every wife and mother was deeply impacted by the decrees that intended to deny the Jewish home its special character by forbidding Torah study and circumcision, and also introducing Greek culture and values into the Jewish social, communal and familial life. We are taught about individual women in the Book of Maccabees like the daughters of the high priests who were abused by Greek generals and soldiers. We learn that a Jewish young woman who was to be married was

first to be defiled by a Greek official. We cry together with Hannah who sacrifices each of her seven sons as she encourages them to refuse to bow down to an idol. In the Apocrypha, (external Jewish writings that were not included in the canon of the Tanach), we find the story of Judith, a heroine who saves her city from the siege laid by a foreign general, Holofernes, by befriending him with her beauty, and tricking him in a fashion similar to Yael and Sisera in the Book of Judges, and eventually beheading him clandestinely and sending his army packing in the bedlam that followed the death of their leader. Though there is controversy about identifying Judith with the precise time period of the Chanukah story, if she is another heroine associated with the Chanukah story, she is an additional reason to contend that women were involved in both the persecution as well as the redemption during Chanukah, and hence obligated in the positive

mitzvot of the chag! Hence, we see the visible manifestation of the Mehadrin min haMehadrin form of the mitzvah of Ner Chanukah fulfilled everywhere, as Jewish homes are 'ablaze' with the nightly increasing lights of all the Chanukiyot of each of the family members, daughters and sons, wives and husbands!

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A final word: Unfortunately, much of the history of our people has been fraught with pain and persecution, with death על קידוש השם. The full and complete celebration of all the aspects of the

mitzvot of the Jewish holidays in our times of freedom and independence in our own land, as well as freedom in decent, tolerant societies the world over, gives us the opportunity to be the generation who doesn't always need to be prepared to die for Kiddush Hashem! We have the privilege and opportunity to surround ourselves with the joy and splendor of living al Kiddush Hashem!



THE DARKNESS OF CHANUKAH

RABBI HERSHEL BILLET

YOUNG ISRAEL OF WOODMERE

RAMBAM'S CLASSICAL fourteen volume presentation of Jewish law has two names, Mishneh Torah and Yad Chazakah. The laws are generally organized in a systemized and very direct way without any digressions. It is therefore unusual to find the following lengthy, detailed and historic introduction to the Laws of Chanukah (paraphrased below):

הלכות חנוכה - פרק שלישי

א בבית שני כשמלכי יון גזרו גזרות על ישראל ובטלו דתם ולא הניחו אותם לעסוק בתורה ובמצוות. ופשטו ידם בממונם ובבנותיהם ונכנסו להיכל ופרצו בו פרצות וטמאו הטהרות. וצר להם לישראל מאד מפניהם ולחצום לחץ גדול עד שריחם עליהם אלהי אבותינו והושיעם מידם והצילם וגברו בני חשמונאי הכהנים הגדולים והרגום והושיעו ישראל

ב וכשגברו ישראל על אויביהם ואבדום בכ"ה בחדש כסליו היה ונכנסו להיכל ולא מצאו שמן טהור במקדש אלא פך אחד ולא היה בו להדליק אלא יום אחד בלבד והדליקו ממנו נרות המערכה שמונה ימים

ג ומפני זה התקינו חכמים שבאותו הדור שיהיו שמונת ימים האלו שתחלתן כ"ה בכסליו ימי שמחה והלל

ומדליקין בהן הנרותוימים אלו הן הנקראין חנוכה

He tells of the dark days of great Jewish suffering under the Greek Syrians. Torah study was banned, Jewish wealth was plundered, young women were violated, and the Jews were mightily persecuted. The Hasmonian Kohanim rebelled and with G-d's help, they led the Jews to victory over the enemy. They entered the Temple, found enough pure oil for one day, and lit the menorah which miraculously burned for eight days until new pure oil was manufactured. These eight days were called Chanukah.

Why tell us this lengthy story? Why not simply state that during the second Temple because of foreign disrespect for our religious needs, there was little pure oil for the Temple menorah. Miraculously, a single cruse of pure oil which was normally enough to provide light for just one day, burned for eight days until new pure oils could be made.

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Why tell us about plunder, rape, denial of Torah study? Chanukah is only about oil and candles. Nothing more!

Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik z"l (The Rov) once presented a public lecture in English at YU called "Holiness and Kingship". He suggested that Moshe Rabbeinu had to shatter the tablets of the Ten Commandments before he achieved his full greatness. He had to descend into "the lonely dark night of the soul" before he was told by G-d, שמות לד

{א} וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל-מֹשֶׁה פֶּסֶל-לָךְ שָׁנִי-לַחַת אֲבָנִים
כְּרָאשֵׁינִים וְנִתְּבַתִּי עַל-הַלָּחַת אֶת-הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר הָיוּ
עַל-הַלָּחַת הַרְאשֵׁינִים אֲשֶׁר שָׂבַרְתָּ:

{ב} וַהֲיָה זָכוֹן לְבַקֵּר וְעֹלִית בְּבִקֵּר אֶל-הַר סִינִי וְנִצְבָּתָ לִי
שֵׁם עַל-רֹאשׁ הָהָר:

Only after plunging into the depths was Moshe able to reach the pinnacle of his career.

By loose analogy, the same is true in reference to Chanukah. The miracle of the oil taken in a vacuum is not reason enough to explain why we celebrate Chanukah. The miracle of the oil is special specifically because of the dark nights of suffering that preceded that miracle.

During the Shoah the miracle of Chanukah was re-enacted in the darkness of the Lodz Ghetto

We have the following account of Oskar Singer, a German Jew who was deported to Lodz. He describes

Chanukah 5703 (December 1943)

The fifth winter of the war, and the fourth inside the ghetto...People exchange memories, which usually conclude with the cry: 'Of course, in those days!' In those days it was different. It was better. Memories enhance the past. In this fourth winter in the ghetto we are plagued by the same problems as in those days. The main concern: heating materials. Most ghetto inhabitants explain that it is preferable to be hungry than to suffer from the cold... They prefer to exchange the most vital item for heating materials.

On Hanukkah 1943, Singer wrote:

"In the ghetto, Hanukkah is a family holiday, as it was before the war... It doesn't require any formal setting. The Jew who wants to respect the memory of the Maccabees in the traditional way observes the festival in his own home.

In the street, by a broken door, on filthy stairs, a figure sits wrapped in rags. This figure offers candles... usually these are Sabbath candles, sold each week on Sabbath eve. This time... they are candles for the Hanukkah menorah.

Not everyone can afford to give the menorah its full radiance. The menorah's eight branches mean - when one lights an extra candle each day - 36 candles, and with the



“Shamash” – 37 candles. So, if we express this monetarily, at least 18 marks, if we calculate each candle as costing 50 pfennigs. But some families can afford to buy candles for one mark, so the “lighting” alone costs them 36 marks.

Nevertheless, despite the hardships of this place and the lack of funds, this year too we will celebrate Hanukkah with dignity.

Many, many families light candles. As with holy books, prayer books, prayer shawls and phylacteries, the head of the family... smuggles the Hanukkah

menorah from the city [to the ghetto]. You can see simple menorahs made of brass or iron, but also those made of copper and nickel, menorahs old and new, made industrially and by hand, free-standing menorahs, and wall menorahs. Friends and acquaintances are invited. In dark stairwells, through courtyards and damp hallways, they climb up to the apartment, usually comprising just one room, used both as the living and celebratory space.

Many wear festive clothes... One of the people gets a special honor.

Usually it's the daughter of the house, and she sings the candle-lighting blessing. Often it happens that Jews brought here from the surrounding areas and German Jews from the west meet in this room and celebrate the holiday together. The candles shine brightly, and memories of past Hanukkah evenings float to the surface. Memories from youth, from student years, memories of years

lived in joy and freedom, scenes and pictures connected in some way to the festival of the Maccabees.

People meet “privately”, with no formal ritual, just the menorah candles burning.

Children also celebrate Hanukkah. In the larger apartments, many people gather. Everyone brings a small, fitting gift: a toy of some kind, a slice of cake, a hair ribbon, some empty cigarette packets in many colors, a plate decorated with flowers, a pair of socks, a warm hat. There is a lottery, and it's all a matter of luck.

After candle-lighting, gifts are exchanged. Ghetto gifts are not monetarily valuable, but they are received with profound gratitude. Eventually, songs are sung in Yiddish, Hebrew and Polish. In each case, songs that

The miracle of the oil is special specifically because of the dark nights of suffering that preceded that miracle.

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are supposed to lift the spirits. A few hours of festivity, a few hours to forget, a few hours to let the mind wander... Would that Hanukkah 1943 would be the last in wartime, the last Hanukkah in the ghetto. That is everyone's hope. People share this wish with friends when parting – wordlessly, mutely, with a squeeze of the hand.

The menorah candles go out, darkness prevails once more. We go out into the street. Ghetto life starts again.”

The Lodz ghetto was liquidated eight months later. Most of the Jews were sent to Auschwitz and Chelmno where they were murdered.

Chanukah was not only celebrated in the darkness of the ghettos. Even in the endless nights in the Camps the Jews celebrated Chanukah. Yaffa Eliach in her “Chassidic Tales of the Holocaust” describes Chanukah in Bergen Belsen:

“A seemingly impossible celebration came about on the first night of Hanukkah 1943 in Bergen-Belsen. One of 11 fortunate survivors, Rabbi Israel Spira, better known as the

Bluzhever Rebbe, was the central figure of that macabre Hanukkah celebration. Living in the shadow of death, and not knowing when their own turn would come, the Jewish inmates were determined to celebrate Hanukkah in the traditional manner and draw whatever spiritual strength they could from the story of the Maccabees.

On the third blessing, in which G-D is thanked for having ‘kept us in life and preserved us and enabled us to reach this time,’ the Rebbe’s voice broke into sobs...

“From their meager food portions, the men saved up some bits of fat. The women, for their part, pulled threads from their tattered garments and twisted them into a makeshift wick. For want of a real menorah, a candle-hold-

er was fashioned out of raw potato. Even dreidels for the children in the camp were carved out of the wooden shoes that inmates wore.

“At great risk to their lives, many of the inmates made their way unnoticed to Barrack 10, where the Bluzhever Rebbe was to conduct the Hanukkah ceremony. He inserted the improvised candle into the improvised menorah and in a soft voice began to chant the three blessings. On the third blessing, in which G-D is thanked for having ‘kept us in life



and preserved us and enabled us to reach this time,' the Rebbe's voice broke into sobs, for he had already lost his wife, his only daughter, his son-in-law, and his only grandchild.

"The assembled inmates joined him in a chorus of weeping, for all of them had also lost their own families. In low voices, choked by irrepressible sobs – they struggled to chant the traditional hymn, Ma'oz Tzur, which proclaims steadfast faith in G-D, the Rock of their strength.

"On regaining some composure, the Rebbe tried to comfort them and instill new courage and hope. Referring to the words of the second blessing ('that G-D wrought miracles for our fathers in days of old'), the Rebbe asked, 'Is it not anomalous to thank G-D for miracles that he had wrought for our ancestors long ago, while He seemingly performs none for us in our tragic plight?'

"In answer to his own question, the Rebbe said, 'By kindling this Hanukkah candle we are symbolically identifying ourselves with the Jewish people everywhere. Our long history records many bloody horrors

our people have endured and survived. We may be certain that no matter what may befall us as individuals, the Jews as a people will outlive their cruel foes and emerge triumphant in the end.' "

Never was Chanukah celebrated more traditionally. That is the point of RAMBAM's historical "lecture" about Chanukah in his Mishneh Torah. The history is not simply an introduction to the Laws of Chanukah. Rather it is an irrepressible and inexorable part of the laws of Chanukah. Without the darkness of suffering and persecution, the joyous celebration of Chanukah is missing an essential ingredient. Without darkness we cannot fully appreciate the light of Chanukah.

As we celebrate Chanukah this year, let us appreciate our freedom. We celebrate without persecution. But at the same time, we are not heroes. The Maccabees, the Jews of Lodz and Bergen Belsen not only celebrated Chanukah, but they displayed timeless and incredible heroism in the way they did it.

THREE SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT CHANUKAH

RABBI SHUBERT SPERO

RABBI EMERITUS OF YOUNG ISRAEL OF CLEVELAND

THREE SERIOUS QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INNATE NATURE OF CHANUKAH:

A DISCUSSION

Permit me to pose three penetrating questions about Chanukah:

- 1. Why does this post biblical Yom Tov merit an eight-day celebration in which the complete Hallel is recited daily, more than any other Chag?**
- 2. Are all biblical “miracles” events which were needed for their salvific consequences? In that sense, was there any “need” for the “miracle” of the cruse of oil?**
- 3. By what authority did Matisyahu and his sons launch an all-out war-against a militarily superior ruling power?**

The answer to these questions lies in the opening words of the Al Hanissim prayer: “In the days of Matisyahu, son

of Yochanan...” that is to say, if you wish to understand the significance of the actions of Matisyahu and the events that followed, you must first understand the “days,” the times, the historical reality in which he lived. It was still largely the aftermath of the transforming disaster in which the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BCE and the upper classes were exiled to Babylonia.

Actually, it was even more complicated than that. The basic material foundations and conceptual frameworks that had defined Jewish peoplehood for the past centuries had been demolished. The dynastic monarchy of the House of David which had provided political leadership was now gone. The Temple with its Priesthood which had been the center of Israel’s religious life, the locus of the agricultural pilgrimage festivals connecting the nation to G-D, was no longer. The storied land of the Patriarchs and Prophets no longer provided a haven



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for the people of Israel. The Jews had become an ethnic minority, one among many, in a vast empire.

However, the real problem facing Jews was not just “how can we sing the Lord’s song in a foreign land” (Psalms 137:4) but going forward, what does it now mean to be a Jew? What is Judaism? Toward what kind of a future can we look forward? In 539 BCE, Cyrus the Persian conquered Babylonia and proclaimed that all captive peoples may return to their land and rebuild their Temples.

The small number of Judeans that returned to the land of Israel during the next few decades met harsh economic conditions and dangerous harassment from the peoples who had occupied the land. They were unable to complete the building of their modest Temple or to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. But the arrival of two additional groups from the exile changed the landscape. With one group led by Ezra, a Kohen called “the Sofer” (scribe) (458 BCE), and the other, by Nehemiah, a high official in the Persian court, armed with the authority of the King, the situation

began to improve. Ezra, who was knowledgeable in the Torah, came with a complete social and religious program designed to revitalize the people and give them a sense of unity by reconnecting them to their past. He convened public assemblies in which the Torah texts were read, translated and explained to the people, to which they personally rededicated themselves.

A mechanism was being put into place that would transform the oral law into an all-encompassing practical way of life and would rearrange the conceptual principles of Judaism.

Subsequently, Ezra established an organization (probably the first Jewish N.G.O) known as the men of the Great Assembly, consisting of 120 members, in-

cluding the last of the prophets which persisted for about 200 years. We know very little about the identity of these men. However, later generations tell us that they inherited the mantle of authority from the prophets. (Avot1:1).

They developed the oral tradition into what we know as Rabbinic Judaism. Because of their activities, Torah study became democratized, new local institutions arose such as the bet midrash and the bet kneset. In addition, texts for regular prayers and



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blessings were formulated. By about 350 BCE, there were signs of a major renewal. After all, they had the basic ingredients for nationhood. Although still a province of the Persian Empire, the Jews in the land had autonomy over their internal affairs. The community was headed by a high priest and a communal council. They inhabited a contiguous territory centered around Jerusalem and possessed a common language with historical traditions based on sacred texts.

However, it would be a mistake to see what was happening as a restoration, that is, as progress towards returning to what had been before. Actually, something new and very innovative was in the making. A mechanism was being put into place that would transform the oral law into an all-encompassing practical way of life and would rearrange the conceptual principles of Judaism. According to Simon the Just, (one of the last members of the Men of the Great Assembly), the Jewish world rests upon three things: 1) Torah, by which he means the study of the Torah, 2) avodah, which is prayer and service, meaning, observance of the commandments which include service to G-d in the Temple and elsewhere, and 3) gemilat hasadim, acts of loving kindness. That was meant to say that the serious, balanced and stable attention on the part of individuals to Torah study, prayer, service to G-d and morality in the form of good deeds, are absolutely essential.

However, in 332 BCE, there occurred an event that was to have worldwide political and cultural ramifications. For the Persian province of Yahud centered around Jerusalem, it was to become at one and the same time, an existential threat to the delicate process of Torah renewal and a unique challenge that would catapult Israel into the maelstrom of international politics and world market place of ideas. Alexander the Great invaded the Middle East on his way to world conquest and brought with him Greek culture (Hellenism) which was the first trans-national civilization that is, a culture containing elements of intrinsic value that could be adopted by any people while it retained its national identity. There was science and philosophy, art and theater, and military arts. In addition, there were practical institutions such as the polis, a model of city government, the agora (meeting space), the gymnasium, sports and the Academy.

The key to all of this was, of course, the Greek language which had become the lingua franca. Jewish merchants who engaged in international trade had already become familiar with Greek, and scholars were influenced by the translation of the Torah into Greek, known as the Septuagint. Dazzled by the beauty and comforts of Hellenism, many of the affluent Temple priests (some of whom had corruptly “bought” their positions) attempted to make Jerusalem a Greek city, yet somehow to retain Temple service



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and the concept of Jewish nationalism, while at the same time giving lip service to the pagan Greek G-Ds.

With the sudden death of Alexander in 323BCE, the region came under the control of rival generals, one in Syria (Seleucid) in the north and another in Egypt (Ptolemy) in the south. For decades, Judea became an unwilling pawn and sometimes an active participant in the wars between the generals. Rival political parties in Jerusalem sided with their favorite general. In 198 BCE the Seleucids gained control over Judea and in 175 BCE, there came to the Syrian throne Antiochus IV, an aggressive Hellenizer. Several years later, he embarked upon a military campaign against Egypt but was unable to overcome them. Enraged by his failure and by the aid given to Egypt by that country's supporters in Jerusalem, Antiochus declared total war against the Jewish religion. He defiled the Temple, banned circumcision and the observance of the Shabbat and ordered periodic offerings of unclean animals in honor of the emperor. The stage was now set for Matisyahu and his sons.

The point of all of this is the realization that had the Levitical priests, Matisyahu and his five stalwart sons not taken violent action against the apostate Jew in Modi'in and not launched an armed insurrection against the ruling power, the Torah way of life and thought as we know it may never

have come into being. Therefore, the ultimate victory of their struggle does merit the maximum days of celebration we have on the calendar: eight days with complete Hallel recited daily (a la Sukkot). The twenty fifth of Kislev, the day chosen to commemorate these events, was the day in 165 BCE in which a newly built altar in a newly purified Temple was consecrated and the daily sacrificial service restored. This occurred after Judah Maccabee and his band of loyalists, fresh from their initial victories, gained control of Jerusalem.

The unexpected discovery of a cruse of oil with the seal of the last legitimate high priest, was taken as a sign of Divine favor, establishing continuity with the past and constituting approval of the Hasmonean campaign. Although the golden Menorah had been looted by the Syrians, Judah's men fashioned a lampstand from their spears and used the precious oil to kindle lights in grateful praise and celebration. Judah ordered lights to be kindled throughout Jerusalem.

(Actually, the military struggle against the Syrians continued for many years with battles being won and lost. The war came to a formal end first in 142 BCE when Simon Maccabee signed a treaty with the Syrian king. Judah, Elazar and Yochanan were all killed in battle. Jonathan and Simon (135 BCE) were murdered, victims of political intrigue. All the five sons were buried



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in Modi'in, next to their father Matisyahu.

The “days of Matisyahu” were after ‘prophecy’ ceased in Israel”. No longer were there men like Samuel and Nathan or Isaiah and Jeremiah or Zechariah and Malachi who could define the times and give guidance to the political leaders. Although now living in their land, Israel, in a sense, was still in “exile,” living under foreign domination, from Babylonia to Persia to Greece. Perhaps, Israel was still under the strictures of Jeremiah: “seek the peace of the city’ to which you have been exiled” (Jer. 29:7) By that time, the renewed Torah infrastructure had extended from the Men of the Great Assembly to the Zugot (Pairs). They consisted of the head of the High Court in Jerusalem and the head of the Council of Jews. At that time, it was Yehoshuah ben Perachya and Nitai of the Arbel. It can be assumed that the latter approved of these policies of the Hasmoneans: the idea of martyrdom, “it is far better to die than to violate G-D’s commandments”

and the right to fight defensively even on the Shabbat.

Chanukah is the only Yom Tov in which the ritual observances are predicated on the assumption of a divided community. Not all Jews were followers of the loyalists and the Maccabees. Therefore, there is an unusual emphasis on *pirsumai-nisa*, publicizing of the miracle. The lights should be prominently displayed in a window or doorway. They must be kindled at a time when passersby are about in the street. At all public assemblies during Chanukah, Chanukah lights should be displayed even if those present have already fulfilled the mitzvah.

Today, whether in Israel or the Diaspora, the home with the visible Chanukah lights broadcasts a message of pride in Torah and resoluteness in its defense. To those on the outside, it is an invitation to our brothers and sisters to come in from the darkness and join the march towards the New Light about to shine on Zion.



CHANUKAH HOLIDAY- WHY?

RABBI GAVRIEL RUDIN

YOUNG ISRAEL OF OTTAWA

If you were to walk into your local elementary yeshivah and ask several children why we celebrate Chanukah, they would most likely respond that we are celebrating the nes of the Chashmona'im and the menorah; there was only one jar of oil, enough to remain lit for one night, yet the oil burned for eight full days and nights.

While this is certainly miraculous, it hardly seems a sufficient impetus for the establishment of an eight-day holiday for all times. The Mishnah¹ states that there were ten miracles that happened each day in the Beis HaMikdash, yet there was no holiday established to celebrate them. Furthermore, the Gemarah² tells us that the middle candle of the Menorah always burned longer than the other candles however miraculously. No holiday there. What was it about the miracle of the Chashmona'im that was so earth-shattering and out of

the ordinary, that led to the creation of Chanukah?

Rabbi Yaakov Weinberg, the late Rosh Yeshivah of Yeshivas Ner Yisroel-Baltimore, offered a beautiful insight into the celebration of Yomim Tovim. The Holidays, he said, are not merely about celebrating miracles of the past. Throughout our history, Hashem has performed countless miracles for the Jewish people, yet the vast majority of them are not celebrated each year. Rather, Rav Weinberg explains, holidays were only established at times when we had to learn lessons from those times, to inspire ourselves for the future. The mitzvot and minhagim of each holiday are intended to reinforce these lessons and make them a part of our daily lives.

With this in mind, what then is the lesson of Chanukah? What was it about this miracle that caused the

1 Avos 5:5

2 Shabbos 22b

CHANUAKH HOLIDAY-WHY?

chachamim to set aside eight days of celebration? What were they hoping for us to learn?

The story of Chanukah took place during Bayis Shaini, the time of the second Beis HaMikdash. In many ways, this time-period was similar to the time of Bayis Rishon, the first Mikdash.

But there was one major difference. During the time of the first Beis

HaMikdash, the Jews enjoyed giluy Shechinah, a time when Hashem's presence was openly revealed. It was a time when Hashem communicated to us through the preaching of the nevi'im and

a person could walk into the Beis HaMikdash and sense Hashem's presence in a tangible way, just as we did at Har Sinai.³ However, when the second Beis HaMikdash was built, Hashem's presence was not felt with the same clarity. The Jewish people now lived in a state of hester panim, a state where Hashem's presence could no longer be easily felt, and Hashem no longer communicated through nevi'im. Despite the presence of a Beis HaMikdash, the connection to Hashem was a lot less clear.

This is the state in which we find ourselves until today.

In addition, during the time of the Chashmona'im, the Jews were under the rulership of the Greeks, a foreign, oppressive nation. They were not permitted to study Torah or perform mitzvos. The Greeks took control of their money and their women.⁴ Even the Holy Beis Hamikdash, which had always been their safe haven, was now

defiled. Many of the Jews began to have doubts. Was Hashem still with them? Did he really care about them? Was he going to protect them? Unfortunately, these doubts caused many Jews

to give up hope and side with the Greeks. They embraced Greek culture and did everything they could to fit in with their oppressors.

There was, however, a small and brave group of people who stood strong in their faith. Yochanan Kohen Gadol and his sons refused to bend the knee. They openly opposed the Greeks and willingly met them on the battlefield. But what about the rest of the Jews? How would their faith be restored?

When the Chasmona'im returned to the Beis Hamikdash after defeating

Despite the presence of a Beis HaMikdash, the connection to Hashem was a lot less clear.

³ Ramban, Shemos 25:1

⁴ Rambam Laws of Chanukah 3:1



the Greeks, they found that all the oil for the menorah had been defiled by the Greeks. They could only find one jar of tahor oil that was enough for one day. Miraculously, it burned for eight days. The interesting thing is, this miracle was not entirely necessary. The Gemarah teaches us tum'ah hutra b'tzibbur. When all of the nation or supplies are impure, it is permitted to use them for service in the Beis Hamikdash. In other words, the Jews could have lit the menorah with any oil. If that's the case, why did Hashem perform this miracle altogether? Why not just let them run out of the pure oil, and then switch to regular oil, until the supply could be replenished?

Hashem typically performs miracles for one of two reasons. One purpose is to accomplish a specific goal, such as splitting the Red Sea, to allow the Jews to pass through, or making mann rain from heaven, so the Jews would have food to eat. The second reason why Hashem performs miracles is to demonstrate His presence. Fittingly, the Hebrew word for miracle, nes, is the same as the Hebrew word for flag. When Hashem performs a miracle, He is waving a flag and reminding us that He is still with us, still watching us and still protecting us.

This was certainly the message that the Jews under Greek rulership needed to hear. They needed a clear sign that despite Hashem's hidden presence,

despite the desperate situation they found themselves in, that He was right there next to them. Hence, this seeming unnecessary, underwhelming miracle of oil burning, was in fact a life-saving moment. It restored the faith of the doubting Jews and enabled them to rededicate themselves to Hashem during those difficult times.

Our Chachomim understood that this was not only a necessary lesson for the Jews of those times. As long as Jews live in a state of hester panim, they need a reminder that Hashem is always there, guiding them and caring for their every need. It was for this reminder that the holiday of Chanukah was established.

Galus is a time of hester panim. While we are still recovering from the effects of a worldwide pandemic, dealing with communal and personal tragedies, and struggling with the daily challenges of life, we need to hear this message more than ever. This year, when we light the Chanukah candles, let us remember the nes, the miracle, the flag that Hashem waved, reminding us of His constant presence.

May Hashem shine His light on you and your family, and may you always feel the joy of His presence, right beside you.

SHABBAT CHANUKAH

RABBI BARRY KORNBLAU AND ZACHARY BEER

SHABBAT CHANUKAH: ZECHARIAH 2:14-4:7

After defeating the Seleucid Greeks and returning to the Temple, the Maccabees faced a dire situation: a completely defiled Temple, devoid of G-D's presence. Hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Zechariah faced a similarly hopeless situation. After Persia's conquest of Babylon, Cyrus the Great decreed¹ that Jewish exiles there could return to Judah to rebuild the Temple. Only a small portion of the exiles did so; many intermarried. They built an altar, but local tribes prevented the reconstruction of the rest of the ruined Temple. Zechariah and his prophetic contemporaries sought to reignite the returnees' passion for G-D's presence, the Temple, and a prosperous commonwealth led by men sanctioned and inspired by G-D.

The Haftarah opens with Zechariah telling the people to rejoice, as G-D's presence is returning to Judah. Zechariah then has a vision about the High Priest Joshua, who is described as a "firebrand plucked from the fire" - a remnant of the First Temple's destruction. Joshua is cleansed of sin in a heavenly tribunal, then dressed as a purified High Priest; by following G-D's righteous ways, he will worship, judge, and lead as a holy priest. At the same time, G-D will bring forth a "shoot" (3:8)² to govern Judah- Zerubbabel, a descendant of the penultimate Davidic king, Jechoniah. A mysterious seven-eyed stone cleanses the Land of sin.

Zechariah next envisions an expanded version of the Temple's Menorah. It is surrounded by two olive branches and has seven branches, each with seven

¹ Ezra 1:1-4 and 2 Chronicles 36:22-23 state that Cyrus attributed his conquests to G-D, who also directed him to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem. He therefore permitted the Jews to return there to do so, aiding them financially, too.

² Generations earlier, Isaiah (11:1) described a messianic Davidic king as a shoot; see Haftarah Helper for Last Day of Passover.



lights. The two olive branches represent olive oil (4:12) to anoint and legitimate Judah's religious (Joshua) and governing (Zerubbabel) leaders who will bring a prosperous, righteous peace to the Land. The Haftarah

concludes with a reassuring flourish: despite lacking military might, Zerubbabel will rebuild the Temple (where Joshua and priests will serve) by the divine Spirit and mountain-moving might G-D granted him. ³

HAFTARAH BREAKDOWN

Verses 2:14-17: G-D exhorts Zion to rejoice as He “awakens” to return to dwell once again in her midst, the “holy land” of Judah. This will inspire other nations with faith in G-D, and silent awe among all humanity.	
Zechariah 2:15	זכריה ב:ט"ו
Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, they shall become My people. I will dwell in your [Judah's] midst, and you will know that the Lord of hosts sent me [Zechariah] to you.	וְנִלְווּ גוֹיִם רַבִּים אֶל-ה' בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא וְהָיוּ לִי לְעָם וְשִׁכְנָתִי בְּתוֹכָךְ וַיְדַעַת כִּי-ה' צִבְקוֹת שְׁלַחְתִּי אֵלָיִךְ:
Verses 3:1-5: In Zechariah's prophetic dream, a fiery remnant of the First Temple, Joshua the High Priest, is tried in a heavenly court. An angel cleanses his sins and dresses him as a High Priest to serve and lead in a rebuilt Temple.	
Zechariah 3:4	זכריה ג:ד
He [G-D] answered, saying to the [angels] standing before Him, “Remove the filthy garments from [Joshua].” [G-D] said to [Joshua], “Look, I removed your iniquity from you, dressing you in [priestly] garments.”	וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל-הַעֲמָדִים לִפְנֵי לֵאמֹר הִסִּירוּ הַבְּגָדִים הָאֵלֶּים מֵעָלָיו וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו רֹאה הָעֶבְרִיתִי מֵעָלָיִךְ עוֹנֶךָ וְהִלְבַּשׁ אֹתָךְ מִחֻלָּצוֹת:
Verses 3:6-7: In the dream, the angel reminds Joshua to walk in G-D's ways, serve Him, and judge Judah.	
Zechariah 3:7	זכריה ג:ז

³ Radak and Ibn Ezra (4:7) state that this power was granted to overcome the tribes who opposed the Temple's reconstruction.

HAFTARAH HELPER SHABBAT CHANUKAH

Thus said the Lord of Hosts: “If you [Joshua] walk in My ways, and if you keep My charge, [then] you, too, shall judge My house [of Israel] and guard My courtyards, too. I will give you paths among these [angels] standing [here in Heaven].”	כֹּה-אָמַר ה' צְבָקוֹת אִם-בְּדַרְכֵי תֵלֵךְ וְאִם אֶת-מִשְׁמְרֹתַי תִּשְׁמֹר וְגַם-אֶתֶּה תִּדְּוִן אֶת-בֵּיתִי וְגַם תִּשְׁמֹר אֶת-חֲצָרֵי וְנִתְּתִי לְךָ מִהֲלָכִים בֵּין הָעַמִּדִּים הָאֵלֶּה:
Verses 3:8-10: The angel also tells Joshua and his fellow priests that a Davidic heir, Zerubbabel, will rule and bring prosperous peace to Judah, which a mysterious seven-eyed stone will cleanse of sin.	
Zechariah 4:10	זְכַרְיָה ד':י
“On that day,” declares the Lord of Hosts, “each of you shall invite his neighbor [to come] under [your] grapevine and under [your] fig tree.”	בְּיוֹם הַהוּא נֹאֵם ה' צְבָקוֹת תִּקְרְאוּ אִישׁ לרֵעֵהוּ אֶל-תַּחַת גִּפְנוֹ וְאֶל-תַּחַת תְּאֵנָה:
Verses 4:1-3: The angel shows Zechariah a vision of a golden Menorah with seven, seven-wicked lamps. It is draped with two olive branches.	
Zechariah 4:3	זְכַרְיָה ד':ג
There are two olive branches on it, one on the bowl's right, and one on its left.	וּשְׁנַיִם זַיִתִּים עָלֶיהָ אֶחָד מִיְמִין הַגִּלָּה וְאֶחָד עַל-שְׂמָאלָהּ:
Verses 4:4-7: The angel is astonished that Zechariah does not understand the vision's meaning but then explains its meaning: Zerubbabel will act through G-D's spirit and might, not with an army.	
Zechariah 4:6	זְכַרְיָה ד':ו
And he [the angel] replied and spoke to me [Zechariah], saying, "This is the Lord's word to Zerubbabel, saying, ' "Not by [military] force and not by [physical] strength, but by My spirit," says the Lord of Hosts.' ”	וַיַּעַן וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלַי לֵאמֹר זֶה דְּבַר-ה' אֶל-זֵרְבָבֶל לֵאמֹר לֹא בְחָל וְלֹא בִכְחַ כִּי-אִם-בְּרוּחִי אָמַר ה' צְבָקוֹת:

HOLIDAY CONNECTION

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains light of the divine law is self-sufficient.
the Haftarah as follows: “The spiritual It is victorious by means of its innate



strength. It achieves victory without outside support, without state support, without military might. It carries sufficient energy to supply the lamp as well as the tree on which the fruits of its supply ripen. Although the difficulties facing Zerubbabel mounted steadily, they were all destined to be solved. The spirit was the cornerstone to which the abundance of mercy would flow... This was the Third Chanukah, the third

dedication of a Temple. It took place at winter's end, on the third of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of the Persian king Darius. It was attended by those who had returned from exile under Zerubbabel and Joshua, inspired by the spirit of the prophets Haggai, and Zechariah, by the decree of the G-D of Israel... It was the dedication of the Galuth-Temple.”⁴⁴

CONNECTIONS

Maimonides considers Zechariah's prophetic dreams to be representative of many prophetic experiences:

כמו שיראה האדם חלום וידמה בחלום ההוא שהוא נעור וסיפר החלום לזולתו ופרש לו ענינו - והכל חלום... ומן החלומות גם כן מה שיודע עינים אחר ההערה. כן משלי הנבואה - יש מהם יפורשו עניניהם 'במראה הנבואה'. כמו שהתבאר בזכריה באמרו אחר אשר הקדים המשלים ההם "וישב המלאך הדובר בי ויעירני כאיש אשר יעור משנתו ויאמר אלי מה אתה רואה? וגו'" - ואחר כן פרש לו המשל.

מורה נבוכים, חלק ב:מ"ג

...similar to a man having a dream, imagining in that dream that he is awake, relating his dream to another person who explains its meaning to him - and it's all a dream. Some [other] dreams, one understands their matter [only] after awakening. Prophetic allegories are similar. Some are interpreted within the prophetic vision itself, as occurred with Zechariah. After [his] allegorical visions, Scripture states,

"The angel speaking with me [Zechariah] returned and awakened me as a man awakened from his sleep. He said to me, 'What do you see?'..." (Zech. 4:1-2). [The angel] then explained the allegory to him (4:6-7).

Guide for the Perplexed, Part 2:43

The emblem of the State of Israel is based upon the Haftarah. The Jewish Virtual Library describes its history, concluding that:

"...the emblem of the State that has become familiar to us borrowed Zechariah's vision [4:1-3, 11-14] to represent the Zionist idea of the newly established State of Israel. From this perspective, the establishment of the State corresponds to the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem after the Return to Zion. The two olive [branches] evidently played an extremely important part in the perception of the new State, in which "religion" and "state"

4 From "The Collected Writings of Rabbi S.R. Hirsch Vol. II", pg. 225.

HAFTARAH HELPER SHABBAT CHANUKAH

(the “two anointed dignitaries” - the high priest and the governor) stand together to realize the Zionist dream.”⁵

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REFLECTIONS ON THE MENORAH

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We are all familiar with the Menorah as part of the iconic image of the State of Israel. The founders of the State chose to use the 7-branched Menorah reminiscent of the Bet Ha-Mikdash, rather than the 8-branched candelabra that we associate with our upcoming holiday of Chanukah. In the exile, both of these light-emitting structures are commonly named “Menorah;” only here in Eretz Yisrael is the distinction made clear: on the holiday of Chanukah, we light the Chanukiah.

Despite the differences between the Menorah of the Bet HaMikdash and the Chanukiah which we light in current times, there are interesting similarities between the two types of lamps: they both emit light, and they both express a sense of purpose and dedication to the larger identity of the Jewish people. These are important points, and deserve some thought.

When Moshe Rabbenu is commanded in the Torah to create a Menorah, he

is not quite sure what to do. This is not to be wondered at: the Menorah was certainly one of the most decorated and complex vessels in the Bet Ha-Mikdash: it was full of natural imagery (flowers, knobs round as apples, cups in the shape of almond blossoms) all in patterned orders. And all this was made out of a beaten piece of pure gold. An obvious difficulty confronts us here. In a place of worship that emphasized an incorporeal Divinity who is above all of Nature and the world that He had created, this plethora of imagery seems, at the very least, confusing. What are we to make of this seeming conflict?

R. Shlomo Ephraim Luntschitz (1550-1619) in his *Kli Yakar* comes to our rescue here. In his commentary on the Menorah (Shemot 25:31), he says that the very sumptuous description of the Menorah in the Mishkan/Bet HaMikdash reflects not the earthly objects that it seems to describe, but aspects of entirely different accomplishments.



REFLECTIONS ON THE MENORAH

As Kli Yakar sees it, the almond-blossom cups allude to King David's overflowing cup of spiritual joy (Tehillim 23:5) that he identifies, (in the spirit of the origin of the phrase in Tehillim), with spiritual fulfillment.¹ Similarly, the apple-like knobs allude to the perfect (round, signifying the uninterrupted quality of the) spiritual fulfillment enjoyed by the righteous from the rays of the Shekhinah in the World-to-Come; while the flowers of the Menorah allude to the verse that describes the flowering of the righteous.²

But what are we to make of the source of these highly spiritual, even mystical, allusions that are grounded on sculpted images drawn from Nature? Why the dissonance between form and content; between message and messenger?

Let us look at the question from a different angle. The Menorah disseminates light. What does this light represent? At its highest spiritual level, as the Midrash (Shemot Rabbah 36:3) points out, the light symbolizes Torah as it says, "v'Torah ohr."³ Midrash Rabbah points out that this is no ordinary light. The light kindled

by human beings may illuminate a discrete area; the light of Torah is of Divine quality and lights up the world. This is symbolized by the architecture of the Bet HaMikdash: the windows were narrow inside but wide outside, to symbolize that the Bet HaMikdash (and by extension, Bnai Yisrael) is the source of light to the world.⁴

But we may still ask: what difference does that make to our question? How does the spirituality of the light elucidate the materiality of its expression on the Menorah?

The Midrash in Shemot Rabbah asks an additional question: if G-d's light is spiritual and fills the earth⁵ (even if it is not the "ohr haganuz latzaddikim" which is G-d's first creation⁶), how is it that G-d needs us to make light by lighting a Menorah in the Bet HaMikdash? What need has G-d for our -- by definition, limited -- light?⁷

The Midrash responds by citing a story -- a parable -- of a blind man and a smart man who are walking together. Naturally, the seeing man leads the blind man. But once they reach their destination, a house of some sort, the seeing man reveals why the Midrash

1 Emphasizing this message, this chapter in Tehillim ends: "and I will dwell in the House of Hashem forever" (ibid., 23:6)

2 "Tzddik kaTamar Yifrah" (TEHILLIM 92:13)

3 "v'Torah ohr" [Proverbs 6:23].

4 Shemot Rabbah 36:2; Bamidbar Rabbah 15:7.

5 "Melo kol ha'aretz k'vodo" (Shabbat Kedusha)

6 See Rashi on Bereshit 1:4 ("VaYar' Elokim et ha'ohr ki tov, vayavdel...")

7 Shemot Rabbah 36:2; cf. Bamidbar Rabbah 15:5.



classifies him as a smart man: he asks the blind man to light a taper (narrow[ing] candle) for him so that he (the seeing man) would be able to see inside the house. Why does that remark classify him as a smart man (pike'ah, in the language of the Midrash)? On the contrary, one could argue that both the seeing man and the blind man are equally disadvantaged in the dark interior of the house!

But the viewpoint of the Midrash is broader than this one incident. "Light the taper/candle for me so that you dare not be the only one in possession of [lit: holding] a favor." What can this mean? Keeping the world moving does not only, or always, involve doing things in the most efficient way, but rather in a way that promotes growth and development for everyone. Everyone – even the blind person – has something to give. The Midrash explicitly connects the smart man with HaKadosh Baruch Hu, who allows human beings -- Bnei Yisrael – to participate in the work of the Creation, which includes the spread of holiness throughout the world.

To be sure, this point expands on the process of Creation, emphasizing that by definition, Hashem does not need creation – "ein od milvado" (Devarim 4:35). Since Hashem does not "need" Creation -- Hashem is the Sum and Unity of All, and needs nothing to "complete" Him -- it naturally follows that Hashem created the world with chesed, because there can be no other logic motivating this creation.⁸ Consequently, Hashem had to, as it were, "limit" Himself -- tzimtzum -- in order to create, so that there

would be room for the creatures and structures springing from Hashem's Creation. At its most basic level, this chesed allows other creatures to give. Hashem made room for our own light.

This is a sterling lesson of Chanukah. The light of the Menorah is found in the human contribution to spreading the light of Hashem throughout the world. At the same time, this human contribution must be seen as more than just a "step" to fulfilling Hashem's kedushah. The human aspect of spreading kedushah has its own holiness. Hashem created the

Keeping the world moving does not only, or always, involve doing things in the most efficient way, but rather in a way that promotes growth and development for everyone.

⁸ "Olam hesed yibaneh" (Tehillim 89:3).

REFLECTIONS ON THE MENORAH

world such that human performance of Mitzvot is an inextricable part of the kedushah that is created. The form is not antithetical to the content. The decorations of the Menorah are a fundamental part of the message of the Menorah's Eternal light.

How does that work? How does the Menorah symbolize the meshing of human externality, often expressed in gashmiyut -- physicality -- and the internality and pure essence of Divine ruchniyut – spirituality?

Here the story of Chanukah -- the holiday itself -- helps us arrive at an answer. Chanukah is about the story of a war, memorialized in “Al HaNissim,” that leads to the repurification of the defiled Bet HaMikdash. It is the story of physicality that is harnessed for -- and developed for -- the achievement of the holiness that sustains the world.

This occurs throughout the story of Chanukah: the encounter between Judith and the military general Ho-

lofernes, her would-be assaulter (Shabbat 32a), is another example of this phenomenon. It is noteworthy that women are deemed equally responsible for fulfilling the Mitzvot of Chanukah (as they are for those of Purim and Pesach) because they are considered key actors in bringing about the miracle that resulted in the liberation of the entire nation (Tosafot Megilla 4a:5:2).

Finally, Rav Kook clearly stated that in this era we live in the miraculous existence of a Medinat Yisrael. Perhaps this is the deeper reason why we commemorate the miracle lasting 8 days on Chanukah with an 8-branch Menorah (and not a 7-branch candelabrum, as in the Bet HaMikdash), with the number 8 symbolizing the concept of a level above the “completeness” of Nature [7].

May the luminosity of the Chanukah lights show us the way.



CHASSIDIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE LAWS OF CHANUKAH

BY RABBI DAVID DEROVAN

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CHASSIDIC INTERPRETATIONS OF THE LAWS OF CHANUKAH AS THEY APPEAR IN THE GEMARA

*Selected, translated and annotated
by David Dero van from Is. I. Chasidah,
Bi'urei HaChassidut L'Shas (Chassidic
Interpretations of the Talmud),
Mossad HaRav Kook: Jerusalem 1975*

A FIRST WORD

The breadth of Torah study and ideas is a wondrous thing. You can spend a whole lifetime studying Torah and never finish it all. At the same time, the depth of meaning in Torah that awaits discovery is also endless. As a way of handling the complexity of the depth of meaning, we recognize four levels of meaning in the Torah:

1. פשט - The explicit meaning of the text as it appears with all of its complexity and sophistication.
2. דרש - The implicit meaning of the text.

3. רמז - The meaning that is only hinted at by the text.

4. סוד - The esoteric meaning of the text.

All four levels of meaning utilize the same literary cues on which the complexity and the sophistication of the text are based. And all four levels of meaning co-exist simultaneously in the Torah. Most amazing of all is the fact that these levels of meaning are there in the Torah SheBa'al Peh, the Oral Law, as well as the Torah SheBichtav, the Written Law.

Gemara is always studied so the student will understand the Peshat. However, it is most intriguing and instructive to see the other, deeper, levels of meaning that are there in the same halachic material. Very often, on the Derash level we discover the philosophical and theological significance of the Halacha, while on the Remez and Sod levels we get a peek at the spiritual processes unleashed by our



halachic behavior.

The purpose of this essay is twofold: 1) to demonstrate how the three deeper levels are present in halachic Talmudic texts, and 2) to reveal some of the deeper issues, both philosophical and spiritual, which are the life's breath of the laws of Chanukah.

The primary focus is a selection of Chassidic comments¹ (which appear in indented paragraphs) on the laws of Chanukah as they are presented in the Gemara² (which appears in bold italics). On the whole, these comments speak for themselves; however, each comment is followed by explanatory notes meant to elucidate both the background and the issues involved.

AS THE SUN SETS THE CANDLES ARE LIT

"The Mitzvah [of the Chanukah lights begins] when the sun sets [and continues] until the feet are finished [walking through] the marketplace." (Shabbat 21b)

Sunset is a time of darkness, referring to the miracle of Chanukah that was a hidden miracle, enveloped in natural events. Even though the

multitude was handed over to the "few,"³ it was the result of a natural war, unlike the miracle of the exodus from Egypt that was a revealed miracle. We understand from this that the natural course of events in this world is supervised by G-D (i.e., providence, Hashgachah, השגחה) and nothing occurs outside of His purview. Through His will, nature exists, or by His will, it is voided. This is the meaning of "until the feet are finished in the marketplace." The understanding of those in the marketplace, that everything is just natural, will be "finished," for nature is controlled by G-D, "who renews in His goodness the acts of creation every day."⁴ If He were to remove His providence from the world for only a split second, it would return to empty confusion (תהו ובהו).⁵ The Chanukah candles help us in this belief, for even though the war followed a natural course, it was only through G-D's providence that the "multitude fell into the hands of the few," for all of nature is permeated with G-Dliness which guides it. (Kedushat Levi)⁶

Chanukah is unique in that we celebrate two miracles that occurred at that time. The Chanukah candles

1 The Chassidic comments have been taken from Is. I. Chasidah, Bi'uray HaChasidut al HaShas, Mossad HaRav Kook: Jerusalem 1975.

2 Shabbat 21b ff.

3 From the Al HaNisim prayer added to the Shemonah Esray and to Birkat HaMazon during Chanukah.

4 From the Siddur, end of the first Beracha before the Shema in the Shacharit prayers.

5 See Berayshit 1:2.

6 The Kedushat Levi was written by Rabbi Levi Yitzchak of Berditchiv.



commemorate the "revealed" miracle of the oil in the Temple, but Al HaNisim, the prayer added during Chanukah, emphasizes the "hidden" miracle of the few Maccabbees winning the war against the multitudinous Greeks. The Kedushat Levi sees this second miracle as a prime example of G-D's providence, His Hashgachah (השגחה). Thus, the celebration of Chanukah is to be viewed as a time to renew our belief and trust in the personal care G-D provides for us individually and as a nation.

The concept of G-D's providence, His Hashgachah (השגחה), presented by the Kedushat Levi is a complex one. In essence, there are two aspects to G-D's providence that are interrelated. The first is the commonly held idea of the personal attention that G-D pays to us as Jews. Thus, when G-D deems it necessary, He intervenes in our lives. However, this intervention usually takes the form of His manipulating both nature and natural law to affect the course and outcome of events. This form of providence functions first and foremost on a collective level. G-D has a special interest in the Jewish people, whom He protects.⁷ On an individual basis, G-D's willingness to bend the laws of nature depends upon the person's level of piety and

righteousness.⁸

The second aspect of providence alluded to by the Kedushat Levi is the idea that it is through G-D's constant attention that the world exists. Put simply, G-D uses a continual, unending flow of divine spirit to sustain each and every particle of physical matter in the universe.⁹ This is the meaning of the quotation from the Siddur, from the Beracha which precedes the Shema, G-D is the One "who renews in His goodness the acts of creation every day."¹⁰ To remove His "attention" would result in the immediate destruction of the world.

These two aspects come together when we realize that one is the foundation of the other. By constantly and consistently providing the universe with its very existence, G-D remains in complete control, always. Therefore, He is capable at any moment of bending the very rules He established. On Chanukah, we celebrate the miracle of the war. "Even though the war followed a natural course, it was only through G-D's providence that the "multitude fell into the hands of the few," for all of nature is permeated with G-Dliness which guides it," as the Kedushat Levi was quoted above.

"From sunset," meaning at a time

7 See Devarim 33:29; Midrash Tehilim 36:1; and Yalkut Shimoni 1:963 and 2:724.

8 See Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban) on VaYikra 27:29; Sefer HaChinukh, Mitzvah no. 546; and Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzatto, Derech HaShem 2:5:6.

9 See Rabbi Chaim of Voloshin, Nefesh HaChaim, Sha'ar I, ch.s 2-3.

10 From the Siddur, end of the first Beracha before the Shema in the Shacharit prayers.

when G-D hides His face (Hester Panim, הסתר פנים). Then we must try hard to light the "candle of G-D" and to be enthused in our worship. "Until...is finished," from the phrase, "my soul is finished."¹¹ "Feet in the marketplace" meaning that we must kindle the light of G-D within those in the marketplace, as it is written, "I thought of my ways and I returned my feet to Your testimonies."¹² It is a Mitzvah to place [the candles] outside the door of the house. By doing so we will awaken the spirit of repentance in those who are "outside." (Toldot Adam)¹³

In considering the comment by the Toldot Adam, there is one question that requires an answer: What is the connection between becoming more "enthused in our worship" of G-D and the idea of awakening the spirit of repentance in others? The reply can be given on a number of levels.

Only if we become more enthusiastic about Mitzvot, more careful in our halachic observance, more inclined to be moved spiritually can we begin to influence others to repent. Our sincerity and our behavior serve as a living model that says it all, speaking loudly and clearly to those we want to impress.

On a deeper level, by becoming more

enthusiastic in our observance, we, too, are repenting. Thus, the repentance which is cued by the sight of the Chanukah candles becomes a shared experience, making it all the easier to communicate both the beauty and supreme meaning of Mitzvot as well as the significance of the process of repentance itself.

OUR CHANUKAH CANDLES ARE MEHADRIN MIN HAMEHADRIN

"The Mitzvah of Chanukah is a candle for a man and his household. The 'Mehadrin' (מהדרין - those who do it beautifully) have a candle for each person. The 'Mehadrin Min HaMehadrin' (מהדרין מן המהדרין - those who do it most beautifully), Bayt Shamai says to light eight candles on the first day... Bayt Hillel says to light one the first day and then to increase..." (Shabbat 21b)

All this hints at the different levels of Torah study. "A candle for a man and his household" refers to the Rav and his students, for he illuminates their lives with Torah as they listen to him and receive his Torah learning. However, the Mehadrin (מהדרין) do not rely solely on the words of the Rav. Rather, they are Mehadrin (in Aramaic, "to return") reviewing their studies again and again. Thus, they

¹¹ Psalms 84:3.

¹² Psalms 119:59.

¹³ The Toldot Adam was written by Reb Yehoshu'a of Ostrova.



each light a candle, for by reviewing they discover new ideas; through continued discussion their Torah expands. As for the Mehadrin min HaMehadrin (מהדרין מן המהדרין), Bayt Shamai says that one decreases, for the Torah light, i.e., the new idea of the student, is never on the level of the Torah light of the teacher; where there is a "primary cause" (Ilah, עילה 14) and a "secondary effect" (Alul, עלול), the second is always less than the first. Bayt Hillel maintains that even though the new idea of the student is less than that of the Rav, the student has increased the light of Torah in the world; thus, on Chanukah we "increase..." (Benay Yisakhar)¹⁵

At first glance, this comment seems to take the idea of the Chanukah candles rather far afield. What does the interrelationship between the Torah teacher and his students have to do with lighting Chanukah candles?

The unspoken assumption of the Benay Yisakhar is the symbolic meaning of the candle's flame. Fire is unique. Contrary to the rest of nature, it defies gravity and continually rises. Thus, it becomes the perfect symbol for spirituality, for an attempt reach to the heavens, to make contact with

G-D. The light that emanates from the fire's flame, spreads in every direction, illuminating everything around it, just as involvement with G-D permeates every aspect of life. This set of symbols is also the model for teaching Torah. Every teacher of Torah lights the flame of G-D within his/her students. Every teacher of Torah, whether they do so consciously or not, spreads the light of Torah in a way that ultimately lights up the life of the student. The ultimate success occurs when the student is inspired to be Mechadesh (מחדש), to come up with a new idea.

The argument between Bayt Hillel and Bayt Shamai is the old one of quantity versus quality. Usually, quality wins, but not here. The Halacha is according to Bayt Hillel. First let us spread the light of Torah into one more dark corner. Let the world of Torah ideas expand to include another, new idea. In the end, the quality will improve. Someday, the student will become the Rav, and the cycle will begin all over again.

"A candle for a man and his household" is understood by what our Rabbis have taught,¹⁶ "If a man and a women have merit, then the Shekhinah dwells with them," symbolized by the letter Yod (י) in the word Ish (איש - man) and the letter

continued on page 48

14 The terms Ilah and Alul used here are favorite phrases of the Maharal of Prague. He uses them to describe the relationship between G-D, the Ilah, and His created world or mankind, the Alul.

15 Benay Yisakhar was written by Reb Tzvi Elimelekh of Dinov.

16 Sota 17a.





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Hay (ה) in the word Ishah (אשה - woman).¹⁷ Here too, by performing the Mitzvah with a physical act, he merits the illumination of the letters Yod-Hay that reside in his soul. (Sefat Emet)¹⁸

In today's affluent society where everyone lights his or her own Menorah, we forget that the lighting of the Chanukah candles is meant to be a family affair. Thus, when the entire family gathers around to witness the lighting of the Chanukah candles, those spiritual elements, represented here by the Hebrew letters Yod and Hay, are activated. The Itaruta DeLetata (אתערותא דלתתא), the awakening below, results in an Itaruta DeLe'ayla (אתערותא דלעילא), an awakening on G-D's part, the result of which is a showering of divine effluence on all those present, i.e., "then the Shekhinah (Divine Presence, שכינה) dwells with them."

In Kabbalah, the letter Yod of G-D's ineffable name¹⁹ stands for Chokhmah (חכמה), wisdom, which the saintly Ari, Rabbi Isaac Luria, called Abba (אבא), father. The letter Hay symbolizes Binah (בינה), understanding. The Ari terms Binah as Ima (אמא), mother. The sharp point rising off the top of the letter Yod is representative of Keter (כתר), G-D's crown. These two

letters hint at the three highest-level spiritual forces, Sefirot (ספירות), which are employed by G-D in the created world. Thus, the simple act of lighting Chanukah candles as a family unleashes a ripple of intense spirituality which reaches the very highest levels, bringing together the Yod and Hay, the elements of Keter, Chokhmah and Binah.

LIGHTING THE CANDLES FOR ALL TO SEE

"The Chanukah candle: It is a Mitzvah to place it outside the door of his house. If he lives upstairs, he should place it in the window... And in times of danger, he should place it on his table (inside) and that is sufficient." (Shabbat 21b)

"The Chanukah candle:" "G-D's candle is man's soul."²⁰ Whoever wants to teach his "candle" to renew itself and to repent for the past, then the Mitzvah is "to place it outside the door of his house." The basis of Teshuvah (repentance, תשובה) is to repair those external things, the everyday things like business, etc. This is Teshuvah using a scale, to tip the balance against the evil inclination, thereby overcoming it. Through Teshuvah one has the light of G-D shine upon him. Yet in times

¹⁷ Together Yod and Hay form G-D's name, י-ה.

¹⁸ Sefat Emet was written by Reb Yehuda Aryeh Leib Alter of Gur.

¹⁹ The reference here is to the Tetragrammaton, the י-ה-ו-ה.

²⁰ Mishlay 20:27.



of danger, when the evil inclination is winning outside, and one is afraid of being caught in its net, then "he should place it on his table (inside)." Sanctify yourself with that which is permitted "and that is sufficient." This is the characteristic of Histapkut (self-sufficient contentment). (Bat Ayin)²¹

Once again, two previously noted themes reappear in this comment by the Bat Ayin. Yet this comment is not a mere repetition of the one above. The Bat Ayin strikes at the very heart of being an observant Jew. Aside from the spiritual goal of connecting with G-D through Torah and Mitzvot, the goal of religious observance is to mold the individual into a walking, breathing, living image of the Creator. The Mitzvot are meant to reach into the very core of the person and affect every aspect of his behavior. Classically, this is expressed by the idea that we must defeat the Yetzer HaRa (יצר הרע), the evil inclination. Thus, the lighting up of one's soul should be visible from the "outside." As the Bat Ayin says, "The basis of Teshuvah (repentance) is to repair those external things, the everyday things like business, etc."

Afraid that the "Other Side"²² is winning? Then retrench, work with those elements that are "permitted,"

meaning with those aspects of your inner self that you are sure can be strengthened and sanctified. Sometimes we must do with less temporarily until we are ready to engage in full battle once again. This is Histapkut (making do with less, הסתפקות). However, the goal must not be forgotten: Let the light of Torah be kindled and illuminate every aspect of life.

The days of Chanukah are a doorway to the ultimate redemption (which should come soon in our time) which is why it is a Mitzvah to place the candles by the door, as the Zohar says, "Open an opening for Me as large as the point of a pin, and I will open for you uppermost gates."²³ (Sefat Emet)

Why is it so important to place the Chanukah candles near the door? The Sefat Emet teaches us that every minute detail of halachic observance is meaningful and significant. We light the Chanukah candles to remind ourselves that the darkness of exile, of G-D's hiding of His face, will soon be lit up with the light of redemption. Our task is to open the doorway to our hearts, to our minds and to our souls. As the Zohar says, "Open an opening for Me as large as the point of a pin,

²¹ Bat Ayin was written by Reb Avraham Dov Urbach of Ovritch.

²² In Kabbalah, the powers of evil are called the Sitra Achra, the "Other Side."

²³ Zohar VaYikra p. 95a.



and I will open for you uppermost gates."²⁴

WHAT IS CHANUKAH?

"What is Chanukah? As our Rabbis taught: On the 25th of Kislev begin the eight days of Chanukah... When the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all the oil... and they found only one jug of oil with the seal of the High Priest, which only contained enough to light [the Menorah] for one day. A miracle occurred and it remained lit for 8 days. The following year, they established and made them holy days with 'Hallel' and thanksgiving." (Shabbat 21b)

That first year, when the miracle occurred, they experienced Devaykut (cleaving, דביקות) to G-D because of the great light [of the miracle]. Any further spiritual strengthening was unnecessary. But a year later when they also wanted to feel the previous year's illumination, "they established" those days, as it says, "they strengthened them with nails,"²⁵ "with Hallel and thanksgiving." Through the Hallel and thanksgiving they achieved the very same level of Devaykut as during the time of the miracle. (Avodat Yisra'el)²⁶

Rav Yesha'yahu Hadari of Yeshivat

HaKotel once explained the cycle of the Jewish year in a very interesting manner. He said that as a child his family did not have a great deal of money for toys, so he used to go downtown in Jerusalem and spend time looking into the display windows of toy stores. One toy that particularly impressed him was an electric train that traveled on a circular track. Every time it passed a certain point, a little streetlight would go on. This, explained Rav Hadari, was a perfect model for the Jewish year. The circular track represents the cycle of the year. We, the Jewish people, travel through time, as if on the train. And every time we arrive at a certain point in the year, a specific important date, a divine light is lit, bursting forth with unique powers to affect human events. As we travel around the circuit each year, the same lights go on. At the appointed time, as we live through the events, the Exodus from Egypt or the miracles of Chanukah for instance, we are spiritually moved by the experience. However, in following years, when we want to relive the experience spiritually, we must engage in a ritual act that will open our eyes to the special light of that day. This is the function of the Hallel and thanksgiving on Chanukah. This is the message of the Avodat Yisra'el.

Everyone asks, since the miracle of

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Isaiah 41:7.

²⁶ Avodat Yisra'el was written by Reb Yisra'el, the Maggid of Koznitz.



"a multitude falling into the hands of a few" is a greater miracle than the miracle of the jug of oil, why was the holiday based specifically on the miracle of the oil? It is possible to answer that the miracle of "a multitude falling into the hands of a few" was caused by the oil.

When Moshe Rabbeinu, of blessed memory, at G-D's command, commenced the construction of the Mishkan (the portable tabernacle) and it was completed, the vessels and utensils were not sanctified for use until they were anointed with the holy oil. By anointing them, they were imbued with a vitality of holiness that rendered them fit for use in the Mishkan. The priests as well were not allowed to serve until they, too, were anointed with the holy oil, which imbued them with the vitality of holiness.

Thus, when they found the jug of oil in the Temple, after winning the war, and it had the seal of the High Priest, they understood that the essence of their military victory was indeed derived from the sacred vitality in the oil and imparted to the priests. Therefore, they established the holiday to commemorate the miracle of the oil. (Ohayv Yisra'el)²⁷

Which is more significant, the cause or the effect? In medicine, the effort is always made to treat the cause,

not just the effect, the symptoms. In theology as well, the root cause is always more significant than the resulting effect. The building of the portable tabernacle in the desert, the Mishkan, was the necessary physical preparation for establishing a Temple where G-D would be worshipped on a daily basis. However, the spiritual preparation, the one act that makes this building different from all other structures, was missing. The anointing of every vessel and the priests themselves with oil is the ritual that causes the Mishkan to be a proper Temple, for through this ceremony the Mishkan and those who worked in it were sanctified and dedicated to G-D and G-D alone.

In this way, the miracle of the oil confirms the miraculous essence of the victory of the few over the many. Ostensibly, the Hasmonean soldiers tossed aside their armor and weapons and donned their priestly robes only to experience what seemed to be another miracle. However, they understood that it was not "another" miracle. The war and the oil were really one and the same, the oil being an extension of the miracle of the war. The lighting of the Menorah with the purest oil was the root cause of their military victory! Hence, we commemorate the cause and not the effect.

For the first generations, the three festivals (Pesach, Shavu'ot & Sukkot),

²⁷ The Ohayv Yisra'el was Reb Avraham Yehoshua Heschel of Apta.

which parallel the three pillars on which the world[’s existence] rests (Torah, service and loving kindness), were enough. However, the period of the Hasmoneans was darkened by the Greeks. After they overcame them and saw the miracle, the sages of that generation understood that G-D prepared this miracle to light their way through the dark times. Therefore, a year later they established the holiday. And there is one distinct advantage to this holiday, namely the possibility to observe it completely in all ways, as opposed to the three festivals where we are prevented from going up to Jerusalem and offering our sacrifices. (Sefat Emet)

The true experience of the three festivals of Pesach, Shavu’ot and Sukkot, has been marred by the destruction of the Temple and the ensuing exile. Even if we can travel to Jerusalem today to celebrate these holidays, the inability to celebrate in the Temple makes the observance less than whole.

Chanukah is unique. Chanukah was established while the Temple was in use. However, the celebration of Chanukah does not require the Temple! The religious experience of the holiday is total, even today. Indeed, the light of the Chanukah candles will prepare us spiritually and show us the way back to the Temple, where Torah, service

and loving kindness found their fullest expression.

This miracle was different from all the others. All the other miracles that G-D performed for Israel were to save the Jews from the clutches of other nations or to save them from some impending natural disaster. Here, the miracle only enabled Israel to observe the Mitzvah of lighting the Menorah [in the Temple]. According to the Halacha, [they were exempt because] "G-D forgives those who are totally unable"²⁸ (because of circumstances beyond their control), especially in times of war and political oppression. If G-D performed this miracle despite this fact, it is indicative of G-D’s great love for Israel. Thus, they commemorate it with Hallel and thanksgiving, not with food and wine. (Sefat Emet)

To go beyond the letter of the law, Lifnim MiShurat HaDin (לפנים משורת הדין), is to grasp the spiritual essence of the law and to take it to new heights. The strength of the Maccabbees’ desire and attempt to perform a Mitzvah from which they were technically exempt resulted in G-D rewarding them with the sublime spiritual experience of extended light. Therefore, it is only appropriate that we respond in kind, through the purely spiritual acts of Hallel and thanksgiving.

Concerning the question of the com-

²⁸ Nedarim 27a.



mentaries, why are there eight days instead of seven?²⁹ It is possible to answer that the miracle (of the first day) was the fact that the jug had the seal of the High Priest. Since his seal was imprinted on it, the "outside forces" (Chitzonim, חיצונים) had no effect on it and could not defile it, this being the miracle of the first day. This is why the Rabbis prohibited the use of the light [of the Chanukah candles], so the "outside forces" cannot take over the this-worldly pleasure that could be derived from the candles, thus keeping them holy and solely dedicated to commemorating the miracle. (Tiferet Shlomo)³⁰

To utilize the light of the Chanukah candles for any mundane purpose would taint them with "outside forces." The light of the candles is meant to illuminate our souls, not our hands and the this-worldly work they perform.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBER TEN

"It is a Mitzvah to place the Chanukah candles within ten [handbreadths from the floor]." (Shabbat 21b)

The essence of the Kavanah (spiritual intention, כוונה) of the Chanukah light is to bring down and to draw forth the sanctity from above to below

and to illuminate the lowest levels. The Shabbat lights, on the other hand, are meant to raise everything from below to above, therefore, the Shabbat lights are lit above ten [handbreadths from the floor]. (Bayt Aharon)³¹

Our Rabbis taught: "The Shekhinah never descended lower than ten handbreadths."³² That is why they decreed that the Chanukah lights should be placed within ten [handbreadths from the floor], to draw down to there the uppermost light, causing the light which is above ten to gather strength in pleasing G-D. (Zichron Zot)³³

In Kabbalah, a great deal of time and effort is expended to detail the process whereby the divine effluence flows from G-D, Himself, from above, to us below and back again. Each Mitzvah is connected into this constant circuit of divinity in a different way. The authors of the above two comments understand that Chanukah plays a special role in our spiritual lives. The purpose of the Chanukah candles is meant to extend G-D's sanctity into the lowest and darkest corners of our lives and experience.

The number ten represents spiritual perfection. Anything less than ten

²⁹ Why does the first day count as a miracle?

³⁰ Tiferet Shlomo was written by Reb Shlomo Rabinowitz of Radomsk.

³¹ The Bayt Aharon was written by Reb Aharon Perlov of Karlin.

³² Sukkah 5a.

³³ Zichron Zot was written by the Chozeh of Lublin, Reb Ya'akov Yitzchak Hurvitz.

is spiritually defective. To kindle the Chanukah candles lower than ten is meant to draw the perfect sanctity that exists above into the area below, thus filling in the missing gaps and uniting that which is below with that which is above.

TO THE LEFT AND TO THE RIGHT

"The Chanukah light to the left and the Mezuzah to the right." (Shabbat 22a)

It says about the Mezuzah, "so your days will multiply"³⁴ and "longevity to the right"³⁵ yet the Chanukah candles are on the left, for the essence of the Mitzvah of the Chanukah candles is to light up the dark places and to drive away the hiding [of G-D's face]. This way the [forces of the] left are subdued and become those of the right. (Sefat Emet)

In Kabbalah, the right and left sides are of great importance. The right represents love and kindness, while the left side symbolizes discipline, judgment and even punishment. Thus, the placement of the Chanukah Menorah on the left side of the doorway is most puzzling until we realize that the light chases away the darker aspects of the left to the point that it too becomes the source of G-D's love and beneficence, i.e., the right.

³⁴ Devarim 11:21.

³⁵ Mishlay 3:16.

WHAT IS THE ESSENCE OF THE MITZVAH?

"I will ask you: Is the Mitzvah performed by lighting [the candles] or is the Mitzvah performed by placing [the candles]? ... We hear from this that the Mitzvah is performed by lighting." (Shabbat 22b)

The one who says that the Mitzvah is performed by "lighting" is of the opinion that a Mitzvah should always be performed with great enthusiasm (Hitlahavut, התלהבות, literally flaming) and desire, and with wondrous joy over the very opportunity to fulfill G-D's commandment. The one who says that the Mitzvah is performed by "placing" does not disagree with the first opinion. Rather, he is trying to teach us that if a person falls from a higher level and cannot employ the "great sensibilities" which proper observance requires, this should not prevent him from fulfilling the Mitzvah. He should still perform it by "placing" [it in its proper place], even without the proper enthusiasm. "If it goes out, one need not relight it." Instead, perform the Creator's Mitzvah innocently, for the simple reason that G-D commanded its performance. (Kedushat Levi)

In Chassidut, the concept of Hitlahavut, enthusiasm, is one of the



keys to proper Mitzvah observance. It is not enough to perform the act correctly according to the Halacha, nor is it sufficient to have the proper intentions during the performance. Rather, correct observance and intention must be accompanied by Hitlahavut, the flaming fire of the soul. Does that mean that we should desist from Mitzvah performance if our souls are not aflame? No, says the Kedushat Levi, there is still real value to a Mitzvah observed in a simple, "innocent" manner.

This lesson is certainly one that applies to all Mitzvot, in two ways. To perform any Mitzvah correctly with proper intention and dedication is significant, even if we are not moved spiritually. However, the Halacha as decided in this case applies conceptually to all Mitzvot. A Mitzvah should light up our souls.

The one who says that the Mitzvah is performed by "lighting" and not by "placing" thinks that "placing" represents man's action, while "lighting" represents "the flame rises by itself."³⁶ And that is how the miracle of Chanukah occurred without any awakening below (Itoreruta DeLetata, אִתְּרֻטָּא דִּלְתַּתָּא), the light being revealed by itself. (Benay Yisakhar)

The Benay Yisakhar presents a far different interpretation of the same

halachic decision. This law reflects the essence of what is commemorated on Chanukah--the miracle! The miracle of Chanukah was unique. The priests did nothing unusual. They lit the Menorah in the Temple knowing full well that the oil would only last a day. Thus, the miracle of the Menorah staying lit for eight days was an act of G-D, pure and simple!

A FINAL WORD

The miracles of Chanukah and their spiritual essences permeate every aspect of this special holiday, including the very laws that govern its celebration. The Chassidic Rebbes were supremely sensitive to this innate spirituality, and they saw the deeper levels of meaning of all of Torah and Mitzvot clearly. We must take our cue from them and search for the Derash (דְּרַשׁ), Remez (רִמּוֹז) and Sod (סוּד) in the Torah we learn and the Mitzvot we perform.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACEMENT OF THE CANDLES

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CHANUKAH, LIKE PURIM, is known as an outward-facing holiday. Both holidays have central practices designed for *pirsumei nisa* (publicizing the miracle), and in the case of Chanukah, we literally face our candles outward, as a means of proclaiming to passersby that G-D performed a great miracle for us in those days, at this time.

At least, in theory.

In theory, we place our candles just outside the door, within a certain time frame, when others are most likely to see them. But in practice, many of us today keep them inside (though usually in a window, still facing the street). Sometimes, in practice, we miss the time frame when we might catch the attention of passersby; yet, we still light.

The Gemara (Shabbos 21b) contains a famous discussion about degrees in observance of the mitzvah to light on Chanukah, from obligation to

more-than: the mitzvah is one candle per household per night, while those who wish (most of us today) increase by the night and/or by the person. It also teaches that there are degrees in placement of the candle, this time seemingly from obligation to less-than: “the mitzvah is to place it just outside the entrance to one’s house; if one lives in an upper story, he places it in the window closest to the public thoroughfare; and in a time of danger – he places it on his table, and it is sufficient for him.”

While we can appreciate the widespread desire to do the mitzvah at the highest degree possible and light more than one candle per household, as most of us do today, we might be surprised to find that the Rema condones widespread acceptance of a lower degree with regard to placement: “In these times, when we all light inside and there is no *heker* (recognizable distinction) for the people in the public thoroughfare at



all...” (Shulchan Aruch O”C 671:7). The Rema seems not to be bothered at all by the idea of lighting inside and losing the visible sign of Chanukah in the public eye, but he emphasizes that placement does matter even for those in the home: “It is preferable for each person to light in a separate place, rather than mixing them together such that there is no heker how many candles they light. And in any case, one should be careful not to light in the place where they light year-round, because then there will be no heker at all. And even though there is no heker except for the members of the household, nevertheless, a small heker is required.”

The word “heker” appears frequently, not just in those few lines from the Rema but throughout centuries of discussions of the halachot of Chanukah candles. In an earlier striking example: The Gemara follows its statement about lighting on the table with Rava’s requirement that one makes sure there is another candle lit, in order to use its light. We might assume Rava is referring to the general practice of lighting a shamash candle to make sure the ner Chanukah is not the only light in the room by which we may see, since we are not allowed to use

the light of that ner. However, the Ran reads his statement in the specific context of placement on the table: “Even though in a time of danger, since he places it on his table, he will certainly come to use its light – even so, he still needs another ner, to create a heker in the matter.” The simple existence of an apparently superfluous candle in the room may not truly prevent us from seeing by the light of the Chanukah candle, but it will create a heker. To whom is that heker directed? In this context, it can only be directed towards the person doing the mitzvah; no one on the outside can see!

The Ran, like the Rema after him, seems quite comfortable with the notion of lighting inside. In fact, the Gemara itself seems oddly comfortable with it: presumably, we could have inferred dispensations in situations of danger based on the general rule that pikuach nefesh takes precedence over virtually any mitzvah; the fact that the Gemara does not leave that to us, but mentions lighting on the table as a “sufficient” option to be used when necessary, seems to imply that this is not a regular case of overriding the mitzvah, but is a legitimate fulfillment of the purpose of ner

Perhaps there is actually a dual goal in the lighting of Chanukah candles, and in what we are “publicizing.”

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PLACEMENT OF THE CANDLES

Chanukah.

Additionally, the Ran also – like the Rema after him, and many others – quite clearly does not think the lack of publicity cancels out the true purpose of lighting candles. But what is so significant about creating an inward-facing heker to publicize something to oneself? How can lighting in private possibly fulfill the goal of publicizing the miracle?

Perhaps there is actually a dual goal in the lighting of Chanukah candles, and in what we are “publicizing.”

Obviously, we are looking to achieve *pirsumei nisa*, which is big, powerful and important. We remind others of what G-D did for us and how awed and thankful we are. Certainly, we remind ourselves also, but the notion of “publicizing” to oneself (in the absence of a public audience) feels redundant, a sort of empty ritual.

However, Chanukah isn’t only about

what G-D did. He worked His miracles when we demonstrated our commitment to remaining who we are, to retaining our uniqueness as *ovdei Hashem* in the face of Hellenistic influences. Our celebration isn’t only about the big, outward-facing proclamation of what He did, but an inward-facing affirmation of what each of us does every day. For that, we make sure there is a heker that our Chanukah candles are not just a lighting system like anyone might have, but they are a special mitzvah commanded to us! We want to proclaim that heker to the world as well, but more fundamentally, we reaffirm it to ourselves. No matter the circumstances, we maintain a heker, a subtle distinction – a reminder of the commitment we maintained then and still maintain to this very day. The public is important, but when the public is absent, the ultimate meaning and significance of the candles is not lost on us as individuals and as a people!



A CURIOUS AL HANISSIM ITEM

BY DR. NOAM WASSERMAN

DEAN OF SY SYMS SCHOOL OF BUSINESS, YESHIVA UNIVERSITY

AT THE BEGINNING of Al Hanissim, we thank Hashem for five things. The first four make perfect sense: miracles, redemption, mighty deeds, and acts of salvation. However, the fifth is puzzling: We thank Hashem for the wars that were fought. Shouldn't we thank Him for helping us avoid wars instead?

We can learn a key lesson by looking at the beginning of the current pandemic. I trace the beginning of it within our community to March 3, 2020, when the first Orthodox school, SAR of Riverdale, NY, had to shut down due to a Covid case. That day in Daf Yomi, (BT Berachot 60) Hashem sent us a message about the mindset we should adopt at that moment.

That page ends with Rabbi Akiva beset by challenge after challenge. First, the town he was trying to reach before dark ended up not being able to house him, stranding him outside of town. This was a major setback, es-

pecially during dangerous times. But at least he had his candle to light the area, a rooster, and his donkey.

When dark fell, the wind picked up and blew out the candle. Now he was all alone in the pitch black, another setback. Soon a cat ate the rooster and a lion consumed his trusted donkey. Setback after setback.

Every step of the way, Rabbi Akiva could have thrown in the towel and given up. Our natural reflex when we encounter a major setback is to recoil from it. "Woe is me!" Instead, though, Rabbi Akiva kept persisting, powered by the belief that every "setback" that Hashem brings is actually for the good.

When the sun came up in the morning, Rabbi Akiva saw that the town had been attacked overnight. Had he gotten his wish to find lodging in the town, he would have been part of that devastation. If his candle were still burning, his chicken had clucked, or his donkey had brayed, the marauders

A CURIOUS AL HANISIM ITEM

could have seen or heard him and attacked him as well. Each apparent setback had indeed been a Gam Zu L'Tovah.

Tractate Chagigah (12a) teaches us the secret of Rabbi Akiva's resilience: He had spent 22 years learning under Nachum Ish Gamzu, who had taught his students how to replace the natural recoil from setbacks with the drive to turn setbacks into strengthening opportunities. Gam Zu L'Tovah.

We see Rabbi Akiva doing this throughout Shas – when he sees a fox emerge from the ruins of the Beit HaMikdash (Makkos 24); when he has to pick straw out of his wife's hair because they were so poor that they could only afford straw on which to sleep (Nedarim 50a); when stranded in a dangerous environment in the dark – and elsewhere. Each step of the way, he was able to rejuvenate himself and those around him by gaining motivation and insights from setbacks, redefining failures into productive strengthening.

Looking to today, the health consequences and economic setbacks of Covid have been devastating. On March 3, 2020, Hashem was sending us a message that we're going to have to build our Gam Zu L'Tovah- muscles to help us get through this period. We were about to head into a metaphorical war, and we were going to have to fight hard to have good come from it. The extra chessed that people

extended to each other, the slower and more kavannah-driven davening that we did at home, the seudah shelisheet meals that included everyone in the family: all were ways in which we were forced to adjust to a setback while hopefully finding new meaning and deeper relationships than when things were easier and less challenging.

A challenge we face now is that we might lose the Gam Zu L'Tovah if we just go back to our old way of doing things without having gotten stronger. In fact, rather than passively hoping that we will be able to see challenging events in light of Gam Zu L'Tovah, we need to actively partner with Hashem to turn each setback into a long-term Gam Zu L'Tovah. Otherwise, we risk having what we've achieved be a fleeting improvement that isn't sustained.

This is a message that Al Hanissim is conveying to us with its fifth item for which we are grateful, the wars! When things are going well for us, it's often too easy to be on autopilot, to be "frum but robotic." We go through the motions without reflecting on whether there's a better way to daven or interact with others. When viewed with a Gam Zu L'Tovah mindset and lens, the "wars" of life are wakeup calls from Hashem as he tries to jar us into consciously taking actions, rather than defaulting into moving passively through life.



AN UNNECESSARY MIRACLE

RABBI SHIMSHON HAKOHEN NADEL

YOUNG ISRAEL OF HAR NOF, JERUSALEM

THE MIRACLE OF the oil - so central to the Chanukah story - was completely unnecessary.

The Talmud (Shabbat 21b) relates: "When the Greeks entered the sanctuary they defiled all the oils in the sanctuary. And when the Chashmona'im overcame them and were victorious, they searched and found only one cruse of oil that was placed with the seal of the Kohen Gadol."

But why did they search for pure oil, sealed with the seal of the Kohen Gadol?

Rav Yaakov Yehoshua Falk (1680-1756) in his Pnei Yehoshua (ad Loc., s.v. Mai Chanukah) famously asks this very question, in light of the halachic principle: Tum'ah hutrah b'tzibbur

- impurity is permitted when the majority of the community, Kohanim, or vessels are impure, service in the Holy Temple is performed in a state of impurity. The Chashmona'im could have lit the candles with impure oil! Any old oil would have sufficed!

***the entire
purpose of the
miracle was to
"inform them of
Hashem's love
for them."***

Pnei Yehoshua explains that the entire purpose of the miracle was to "inform them of Hashem's love for them." He continues and explains the miracle in light of the historical context: The Second Temple was

a mere shadow of the first, with many of the miracles that took place daily during the First Temple period absent during the Second Temple period (See Yoma 21b). Even the Shechinah, the Divine Presence was absent! According to Pnei Yehoshua, the miracle of the

AN UNNECESSARY MIRACLE

oil was a sign that Hashem's presence and His love had returned to the Holy Temple as they had been during the First Temple.

Many compare and contrast the military victory with the miracle of the oil. While the former was essential, the latter was inconsequential. After wresting control from the Syrian Greeks, the Chashmona'im could have restored Jewish sovereignty to Jerusalem even without kindling the Menorah.

True, the flask of oil may have been unnecessary. But as my rebbe and mentor HaRav Moshe Dovid Tendler zt"l (1926-2021) explained, a gift of love should have no utility, per se. Speaking

to a room of newly-married semicha students, Rav Tendler presented the following mashal: Imagine if you surprised your wife for her birthday or your wedding anniversary with a brand new vacuum cleaner or dishwasher. "But is that what she really wants?" he asked. Instead, he continued, "She wants a shiny piece of jewelry that has absolutely no utility; no function; no use; no real purpose. Its sole purpose is an expression of mutual love."

With this 'unnecessary gift' of a little flask of pure olive oil, sealed with the stamp of the Kohen Gadol, Hashem was expressing His love for the Jewish People. That is the greatest gift of all.



UNITING THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL ON CHANUKAH

Yael Unterman

JERUSALEM-BASED INTERNATIONAL AUTHOR, LECTURER,
BIBLIODRAMA FACILITATOR AND LIFE COACH

I HAVE A CONFESSION to make: in past years, I have been known to rant about the appearance, here in Israel, of sufganiyot in the stores immediately following Sukkot, a full two months in advance of Chanukah. I'd proclaim to anyone who would listen that the halacha recommends we start preparing one month before each holiday (Shulchan Aruch O.Ch. 429:1). If we start this custom too far in advance, then by the time Chanukah rolls around, the sufganiyot are passé and everyone's about ready for the Hamantaschen!

This year, however, I had a change of heart. I was actually delighted to see that tray of donuts show up in the supermarket two days after Sukkot, and this was due to what it represented for me: the anticipation of the joy of Chanukah.

We have to keep the light of the festivals burning during the routine periods that fall in between. While our physical

selves might sigh in relief on return to our regular schedules, on a soul level we are deeply nurtured by the Jewish festivals; just as our Shabbat rest informs our week, so too we take with us the holy uplifting festival atmosphere as we move through our ordinary days

Indeed, at that moment in the supermarket, I was actually still regretfully bidding farewell to Succot; and I felt genuinely comforted for Succot's waning light upon seeing that tray of sweet doughy balls, representing the first spark of the upcoming Chanukah illumination.

Nevertheless, I did not purchase that donut. Personally I still believe that eating sufganiyot properly belongs to Chanukah, prior to which I treat them as אין לנו רשות להשתמש בהן אלא לראותם בלבד. But if you want to start early, go ahead; it's a free country. The most important thing is to ensure that these foods give light and don't block light.



UNITING THE PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL ON CHANUKAH

Which brings us to the more important point, which is the risk of being submerged in physical aspects instead of being elevated through them.

Our religion does not take the abstinence route. It challenges us not to divorce ourselves from the physical, but rather use it as a conduit to the spiritual. While the Nazir's deprivations might make him more holy, he still brings, upon his inevitable return to the community, a sin offering (Taanit 11a).

This challenge is not an easy one. We need to be constantly vigilant if we are not to become entirely swept up in commercialization, shopping, and physical delights for their own sake; in all of this, the spiritual can get lost. And if you say, well then, let's focus on the spiritual aspects and not be distracted by the physical – let's spend Chanukah fasting all day – that's also not the right balance. Fasting is forbidden during the festival (Shulchan Aruch O.Ch. 288); feasts are not only permitted, but encouraged if they are elevated through songs and praise to Hashem, transforming them from מצוה to רשות (Shulchan Aruch O.Ch. 670). We cannot take the simple path. The halacha demands we face up to the complexity of the physical bound

up with the spiritual, as it says, “בכל דרכך דעוהו - In all your ways know G-D” (Mishlei 3:6).

The Almighty Himself taught us this lesson. Chanukah could easily have been exclusively a celebration of the astounding victory of the few Maccabees over the many Greeks. Did this not suffice? Why did Hashem feel the

need to provide another miracle, that of the oil, if there was already this meaningful victory to celebrate? At **יצאת מצרים**, G-d felt no need to provide any extra miracles. It seems unnecessary at first

the risk of being submerged in physical aspects instead of being elevated through them.

glance.

At second glance, though, we realise it's a tremendous gift. Human nature dictates that if a miracle occurs through human agency, it's very hard to see the hand of Hashem. We need something completely beyond our control, in the realm of the supernatural, to fully awaken in us love for and awe of G-d. Proof: many who witnessed the miracle of the Six-Day war simply took pride in human achievement or attributed it to lucky chance. Emunah requires eyes to see; we always have the choice not to. In the case of Chanukah, it was Hashem's kindness to provide an open miracle going entirely beyond human ability.



That way, we could not possibly forget Him. The miracle of the military victory juxtaposed to that of the oil together represent the physical standing side by side with the spiritual. They are inseparable.

Many mitzvot involve the embodiment of spiritual ideas within physical objects. We love our lulavim and our matzot. But there's a danger of focusing on the objects while forgetting their deeper purpose. So how do we apply this to Chanukah? We can go ahead and have fun comparing twelve different flavors of donuts, frying latkes, playing dreidel, visiting friends and family, and buying beautiful Hanukkiyot. Don't hold back, enjoy them to the maximum! But then take that pleasure and use it to elevate yourself and become closer to G-d.

Just as the Maccabees rebelled against Hellenism, let us too stand up

against any culture or ideology that wishes us to focus on our stomachs and forget the light; to fall asleep at the wheel. Let's follow the Maccabees' rallying cry of **מי לה' אלי**! Let's be holy rebels, fighting against the Western "consumerism for its own sake" in which we find ourselves immersed. While we fill our sufganiyot with sweet

substances, let's also fill ourselves with the sweetest of substances: joy at having arrived at another Chanukah alive and able to celebrate; humble gratitude at being part of **עם ישראל**; thanks and praise to our loving

Creator who gifted us with this festival and all this abundance.

Because, just as our bodies store fat in the cold months, our souls urgently need this spiritual light to carry us through the winter. So pile that soul food high!

***...our souls
urgently need
this spiritual
light to carry us
through the
winter.***

CHANUKAH WITH MODERN DAY MACCABEES

RABBI BINNY FREEDMAN

ROSH YESHIVA, FOUNDER, AND DEAN OF YESHIVAT ORAYTA

TO BE HONEST, that year, I wasn't particularly looking forward to Chanukah, and hadn't really had much time to think about it. Our armored battalion had recently come down from a few months up in Lebanon, and while I was thankful we would be spending the winter in Israel and not up in the freezing cold mountains of Lebanon, we were still in the process of overhauling the tanks, not a particularly enjoyable task.

We were so involved with the various procedures, lack of sleep, and greasy filth inherent in getting our company's tanks back on alert status on time, that it was only a few hours before Chanukah when I realized that, having given no thought at all to the holiday, I had no chanukiah, no candles or oil, not even a dreidel.

A wave of depression swept over me, as I realized that I would be celebrating Chanukah all alone, surrounded by dirty, exhausted soldiers who didn't

place much stock in the holiday and at best could be expected to enjoy the movie night that week on the base. Worse, I found myself thinking that this year Chanukah was just going to be a big pain. We were on alert status in the Jordan valley, which was not a tense border, but as our tanks were charged with covering that area of the border, as the youngest officer, I had no hope of getting leave, even just to acquire some Chanukah candles; I knew I would have to scrounge around every day for enough candles to light each night.

As the sun set and the mountains of Jordan changed colors, my mood worsened; I remembered what Chanukah used to feel like, how much I had always looked forward to it, and how sad it was going to be to light a simple white Shabbat candle in a corner of the dining room.

It was at this point that a reserve duty soldier who was helping us overhaul



the tanks that week noticed that I obviously had something on my mind, and, to my surprise, wished me a happy Chanukah.

I guess he could see the surprise on my face, because he smiled and said:

“Mah’ ha’ba’ayah?
Atah lo rotzeh’ Chag
Sameach?”

“What’s the matter?
You don’t want a
happy Chanukah?”

At that point, I must have launched into a long-winded explanation of how depressing it was to be alone on Chanukah, especially since one of the major points of the Chanukah celebration is supposed to be Pirsumai Nisah’, or publicizing the miracle. At that moment, if my memory serves me, the fellow actually got annoyed with me, and said the only line from this entire experience that I remember with absolute clarity:

“Az poh ba’olam yesh makom yoter tov
la’chgog et ha’nes ha’zeh, me’asher
ha’makom ha’Zeh?”

“So where else in the world is there a better place than here to celebrate the miracle of Chanukah?”

The guys were all starting to leave the tanks and head into the dining hall for dinner, and he grabbed me and told me to follow him, and we walked down to the edge of the line of tanks where some spent 105mm shell casings were lying on the ground, waiting to be taken out to the ammo dump.

***What do you say
to two hundred
modern day
Maccabees,
defending the
borders of
Israel, after two
thousand years
of exile, in a
modern Jewish
state?***

He lifted a couple, gave me one, and started walking to the mess hall. Grabbing a shovel from the emergency fire stand, he started digging a small hole, then threw me a shovel, and as I dug, he shoved the empty tank shell casing into the edge of the hole; I did the same with mine. Then he started

shoveling some of the dirt into the shell casing, which was about waist-high, and by this time, I was grinning, having figured it out. When we were done, we had the largest makeshift menorah I had ever lit. We poured gun-oil on top of the dirt that was in each shell casing, and then topped it off with some flammable benzene (gasoline). And I grabbed a lighter and was about to light when he looked at me with horror, and said: “what are you doing?”

I guess he saw the confusion on my

CHANUKAH WITH MODERN DAY MACCABEES

face, because he said to me:

“Mah’ karah’ lecha’? Lech tikra’ le’kulam!”

“What’s the matter with you? Go call everyone out here!”

I went inside and made what I thought was a fairly weak announcement that we were lighting Chanukah candles outside, and that who whoever was interested should come join us. I figured it would actually be nice if a few guys decided to join us, but I never expected what actually happened. The battalion commander got up, looked around the dining hall, and strode outside to join us, at which point the entire base, at least a couple of hundred men, gathered with us outside.

Then this fellow hands me a stick with a rag dipped in the benzene he had put together, and says ‘go ahead and light’. But I refused to take it, feeling this was really his show, and he should absolutely have the incredible privilege of lighting the menorah he had created.

So he took the stick in his hand, and when everyone got really quiet, announced in a loud voice:

“Lifnei she’nadlik, Bini yomar kamah milim!”

“Before we light, Binny will say a couple of words!”

What do you say to two hundred

modern day Maccabees, defending the borders of Israel, after two thousand years of exile, in a modern Jewish state? Words definitely failed me that night, and to be honest, I don’t recall what I said, which is probably as it should be, because some experiences are not meant to be put into words.

I do remember looking over at my new-found friend, whose name I cannot even recall, and watched with some surprise as he took a Kippah (Jewish head covering) out of his pocket and put it on his head, just before he lit the candles. I remember being even more surprised as he recited all the blessings of the first night’s candle lighting from memory. I will never forget how someone started singing just then, and a few of the guys started dancing, all by the light of the Chanukah ‘candle’ in a 105mm tank shell casing, in the middle of an Israeli Army tank base, near the Jordanian border. Could you ever have a more meaningful Chanukah candle lighting?

Finally, when we were done, I went over to thank this fellow, who proceeded to thank me with the following explanation: He had been one of the original tank crews on the Suez canal on the infamous Bar Lev line, when thousands of Egyptian tanks and men crossed the canal into Israeli territory. He made it out of the first wave, and found himself, on the third day of the fighting with one of the tank units



attempting to counter-attack and regain lost ground.

Deep in the desert, the night turned into day as tanks all around him burst into flames. His unit, he told me, was at the mercy of the newest anti-tank missiles being fired from the dunes by Egyptian commandoes. The whole scene seemed to him like candles burning in the night, and, terrified that his tank was next, he found himself thinking of Chanukah and the menorah lights, which he had lit as a kid a good number of years earlier. Then and there, he made a deal with G-d that if he made it out of that inferno, that year, he would light candles with all the blessings and all the bells and whistles. And indeed, he survived, managed to accomplish his end of the deal, and had not missed a

night of Chanukah candles ever since.

Deep down, I will always wonder whether he survived his own personal hell only in order to share with a very lonely battalion, as well as a particularly depressed platoon officer, what was absolutely the most incredible Chanukah lighting I have ever had.

One thing I can say with conviction: I have never lit Chanukah candles in quite that same way ever since.

*Wishing you all a wonderful
Chanukah full of light and joy.*

From Jerusalem,

Binny Freedman

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL



CHANUKAH TORAH JOURNAL

dedicated in memory of

HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

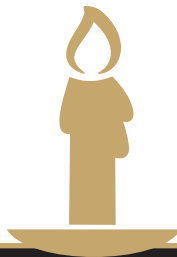
הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

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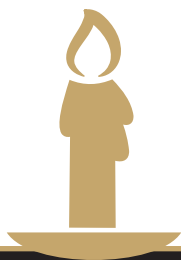
MESSAGE FROM RABBI JOSH GOLLER

Rabbi, Young Israel of West Hempstead

AT THE END OF THE special paragraph which we say on Chanukah in Shemoneh Esrei and in Birchah Hamazon, we state “והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך”—and they lit the candles (מנורה) in the courtyard of the Beis Hamikdash. Courtyard? Anyone who knows the story of Chanukah will know that the miracle of the jug of oil and the lighting of the Menorah took place in the Menorah’s proper home: in the Kodesh, across from the Shulchan. In fact, if one looks at the halachos which govern the use of the vessels of the Mikdash (see Rambam) it would even possibly be prohibited to perform the lighting of the Menorah outside the confines of the Kodesh.

There are many answers to this question. However, let’s share a truly unique and beautiful piece of Torah from Rav Yekusiel Yehuda Halberstam זצ”ל, the Klausenberger Rebbe.

The Klausenberger Rebbe suggested that after their victory over the Greeks, the Jews gathered in the courtyard and lit a candelabra outside. It was a cold, windy night in the dead of winter. When they saw that despite the harsh conditions the candles stayed burning, they realized ה' was with them. So with that in mind, they were then inspired to light the מנורת המקדש, which of course became the miracle of Chanukah. But the miracle first started in the חצר and only then did it transfer to the Kodesh; the actual Menorah. And so, we sing/daven about the lighting of the נרות בחצרות קדשך; the candles that were lit in the courtyard because that lighting paved the way for the kindling of the actual Menorah. The elevation experienced in the court-



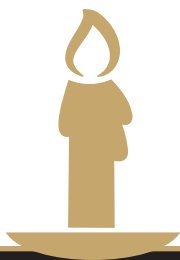
HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

yard, translated into a transformative and everlasting one in the sanctuary.

Of the many truly exemplary middos of our beloved and saintly Rav, Rabbi Kelemer zt”l, one unique one was the way he elevated every situation. He knew how to give comfort, listen, encourage, inspire and uplift every person with whom he came in contact with. Every interaction outside of shul where he gave of himself to others, translated into an elevated experience for those who then were privileged to spend time with him in the shul sanctuary. He ignited their neshama outside, enabling them to transform their tefillos inside. Rabbi Kelemer’s warmth and inspiration left an indelible impression in so many, who continue today to live meaningful and passionate lives in the sanctuary, as a result of his kindling their Neshamos in the “Courtyards” of their lives.

May all of the impassioned davening and learning in the sanctuaries of our shuls and yeshivos continue to be inspired by Rabbi Kelemer’s righteousness and its impact on our lives.



HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז”ל

WORDS OF PRAISE BY ARTHUR COOPERBERG

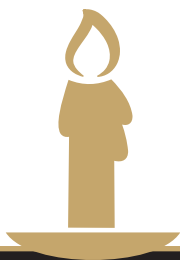
President, Young Israel of West Hempstead

WE ARE APPROACHING THE first Yahrzeit of our beloved Rabbi Kelemer zt”l. It has been a long year of many “firsts” without Rabbi Kelemer. His presence and guidance have been missed by our entire kehilla and beyond. He left us bereft but strong. We were united in our grief and now we are drawing on the lessons he taught us to forge forward with achdus.

The following is the hesped I gave at the levaya almost a year ago. The words and sentiments are still true today.

“Ohr Zaruah La’Tzaddik” are the words we sang four years ago when Rabbi Kelemer ZT’L our Rabbi, our Rebbe, our leader, our teacher, our friend, finished his Aliya for the first time back in Shul after his accident. How I wish we were singing those words today. Instead, I stand before you as a shaliach; a humble and grieving messenger of the kehilla of the Young Israel of West Hempstead.

Yesterday we read in Parshas Shemos, Perek Beit, Pasuk 11: “Va’yehi ba’yamim ha’hem, va’yigdal Moshe, va’yetzei el echav, va’yar be’sivlotam.” “It came to pass in those days that Moshe grew up, and went out to his brothers, and looked at their burdens”. Rabbi Kelemer once explained this exact pasuk to us in the name of his dear Rebbe, Rav Chaim Shmulevitz, as follows: The Torah teaches us “va’yar b’sivlotam,” Moshe saw his people’s suffering, he felt their pain, and he lived their anguish. Rashi states, “natan einav v’lebo l’yot metzar alehem”, [Moshe] applied his eyes and his heart to see their suffering



HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

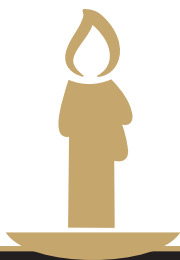
הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

and grieve with them. Rav Chaim Shmulevitz explained that one vital thing a leader must understand, before he can show compassion and consolation, is “natan einav.” First is va’yetzei; a person must decide to go, next is va’yar he must see, and only then can he identify b’sivlotam. This is the essence of who Rabbi Kelemer was to us all, and it captures so well how our dear Marah de’Asrah lived his life. How many miles did our beloved Rav travel to be with us in our time of need; how many nights did he come to us, to be by our side in health and in illness; how many hours upon hours in the 38 years did he reach out to daven with us, to teach us, to speak with us, to be with us, to console us, to dance with us, to celebrate with us, and to mourn with us?

This would not have been as possible without the dedication and commitment of his wonderful Rebbetzin and their children who so generously shared the Rav with the community.

Va’yetzei el echav; the Torah tells us that Moshe went out. Our leader, our Rav, never stopped going out to us, and he never stopped doing for us. Time and space seemed irrelevant to him. His days would start early and as we all know would typically end with a meeting called for well after midnight. I could never understand how he seemed to be at two places at one time. We will each cherish our memories and we will each forever be grateful for our loving Rav, who was always out doing for his people.

Rabbi Kelemer had a unique ability to make everyone feel like they were special and important to him. He was such a Tzaddik that he was able to treat and relate to everyone at their own level. He never judged anyone or made anyone feel inferior. He



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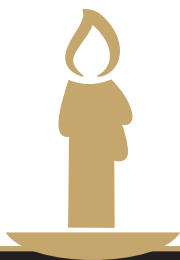
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made us all feel better about ourselves after being with him. He made our family members feel welcomed and part of our Shul. It is why we feel like we have lost a member of our own families. He had the capacity to anticipate everyone's needs and the wisdom to know how to help. His sweet nature and quick wit endeared him to all of us, but it was his sharp intellect that guided us and gave us answers to our questions, large and small. Every family has their private stories of time spent with Rabbi Kelemer that they will cherish forever. We all felt such a tremendous closeness to him. What an immense privilege!

Rabbi Kelemer explained many times before a Yizkor service that we say the words *avi mori* - my father, my teacher. He was emphatic that we should remember the mesorah of our parents and grandparents and what they taught us. Mesorah was very significant to him; how many times did he tell us to follow the ways of our parents and use their experiences to guide us. We will remember Rabbi Kelemer as a father figure and as our spiritual leader and teacher. We must follow his mesorah, which he taught us over the last 38 years, to treat every Jew equally, to treat every person with dignity.

Our Rabbi had the amazing ability to be able to fulfill the mitzvah of greeting everyone with a smile; he looked at every person he met as being created *betzelem Elokim*. He lived his days with *mayim metukim*, a pure sweetness. He led with the highest level of humility as well as unparalleled enthusiasm. His chessed and modesty was such an inspiration that it seeped into the very fiber of our kehilla. It is what West Hempstead is known for - and he is the reason why.

Rabbi Kelemer came to this community 38 years ago. At his



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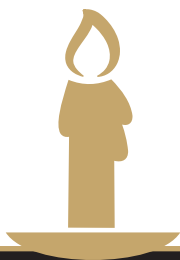
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installation he alluded to the fact that part of a rabbi's job is to help grow a community. Well, 38 years later our Young Israel is the second largest Young Israel in the country. Our community is bursting at the seams. There are so many second generational families that have moved back into this community to be part of Rabbi Kelemer's kehilla. Rabbi Kelemer told me how proud he was of our kehilla. He appreciated the amount of talent we have in our neighborhood. He would mention how we have wonderful baalei tefillah and baalei kriah. There were times I would hear humming during davening and I would look over and it was Rabbi Kelemer enjoying the niggunim. We discussed the caliber of some of our members who could give inspirational dvrei Torah and shiurim. Rabbi Kelemer was impressed with the amount of chessed and tzedekah that our kehilla could be counted on to provide. He had confidence in us and now it is our charge to live up to his expectations and make him proud.

Rabbi Kelemer always enjoyed a good Gematria, so please allow me to leave you with this. The Gematria of Yehudah Kelemer comes to 400. 400 is also the Gematria of haNeshama. Rabbi Kelemer was the Neshama of our kehilla.

To the Rebbetzin, to the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren: our community and Klal Yisrael mourn with you.

On behalf of the entire West Hempstead community, we collectively ask for mechillah for anything we may have said or done to cause the Rav pain or upset, or if the Rav in any way felt he was ever taken for granted. We have always known how exceedingly fortunate we were to have had him in our midst.

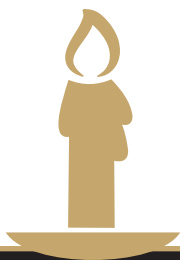


HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

May he be a gitta oysbayter, a meilitz yosher for his family, our kehilla and all Klal Yisroel. With our eternal gratitude and reverence, we pray that Rabbi Yehudah Kelemer's neshama should have an Aliyah.

Arthur Cooperberg
President, YIWH



HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

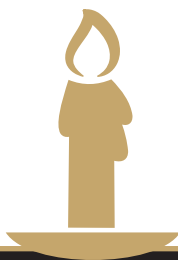
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TRIBUTE TO RABBI KELEMER BY RABBI MENACHEM BRICK

IT IS NOW ALMOST a year since the death of our revered teacher Rabbi Yehuda Kelemer ZTL. The wounds left with his petirah are as open today as they were that day. That day the angels from On High escorted him to the heavenly abode to reside amongst his peers, the gedolim and tzadikim of our past. When Jacob left his parents' home and went to Charan, Rashi tells us that a great emptiness was felt. The Amudei Aish understands Rashi as telling the reader that every tzadik is unique and his Torah is unlike any other, a loss which is irreparable. This never felt truer than as it applies to Rabbi Kelemer. Rabbi Aryeh Leibowitz said it best, "He was a tzadik who walked among us as if he was one of us". Humble, loving, caring, warm, filled with ahavas Hashem and ahavas habriyos. His life was dedicated to helping others, without any care or concern to his own health.

I thought it appropriate that the week's parsha of his petirah was Parshas Shmos. As one gazes inside the Sefer Torah you see a huge space between the last parsha and the current one. It was indeed a message to all that a tzadik was taken from us, whose essence can never be replaced. Since the beginning of time, the word of the Almighty filled every column, and now there is a vacuum. Just for a few lines, but nevertheless a void was created. That indeed was the meaning of the Amudei Aish.

I still find myself asking, how can I move forward? How does our community move forward? How do we live in a world without Rabbi Kelemer? Whenever I was lost before, I could call Rabbi



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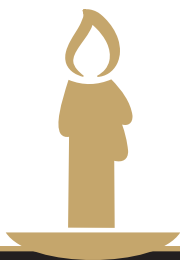
הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

Kelemer, any time of day, and he would provide the derech. Without him, I feel lost.

Let me tell you just a few stories about who he was. It was a bitterly cold January evening in 1991. I had only moved to West Hempstead six months earlier, and was just let go from my position in a law firm. Needless to say, I was wrought with pain and worry regarding how to support my then young and growing family. That Friday evening there was a shalom zachor in the community. My heart was not in it, but I went. Sure enough, Rabbi Kelemer could see the sadness in my eyes. He didn't ask any questions. He simply walked me home and asked me to tell him stories about my time in the Rav's shiur (Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik ZTL). As we approached my home, I turned to walk Rabbi Kelemer back to his home. We each attempted to walk the other home. Each time Rabbi Kelemer refused to allow me to walk home alone, and I was similarly stubborn in return. After walking each other home three times that night, he accomplished one simple but profound chessed. He reminded me I was of worth and that I was needed in this world. How did he do that? By simply being there.

Upon the petirah of my father, the first individual to somehow find me in Brooklyn to help me through the most difficult time of my life was Rabbi Kelemer. He showed up without my calling him. He received word, dropped everything and made his way to comfort me. I embraced him, and at that moment, I let out a cry, my tears flowing down his shoulder.

The essence of Rabbi Kelemer can be seen in the words of the Nesivos Shalom. G-D appears to Moshe in a bush that does not burn. The message taught was that the fire represents the



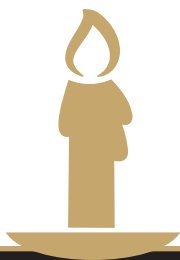
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Jewish soul, hidden inside and surrounded by an exterior fire, separating him from the Almighty. The rebbe must understand that the neshama in every Jew is calling out to his creator, but at times is smothered by his surroundings. Each and every Jew has an intrinsic purpose and kedusha. That was Rabbi Kelemer, who always saw the good in all of us, searching for any and all means to remind us of our greatness and uniqueness.

Before his petirah, I thought I had a unique relationship with Rabbi Kelemer. I really thought there was a relationship that I had with him that others did not. Since his untimely passing, so many stories have emerged about his acts of chesed that I realized that I wasn't unique. I was just like everyone else. He made every one of us feel unique. He made every one of us feel as if we were his best friend. Every one of us was special. Every one of us had a purpose in life.

For some years, I had the honor to learn with Rabbi Kelemer in the late hours of the night. We would review the questions posed to him that week. He would ask me how I would pasken, how I would approach the question. He would listen to my words intently, offer his opinion as if my opinion was of equal importance and correctness. Anyone who knew the Rabbi knew that total comprehension and knowledge of Kol haTorah Kula was at his fingertips. Yet he made me feel as if I possessed as much knowledge as the teacher. He referred to me as a chavrusa. I was forever his student. I was asked recently who I would choose as a chavrusa given the choice to choose from all of the gedolim, tzadikim, rishonim and achronim of the past. Without hesitation: Rabbi Yehuda Kelemer would be my choice. Besides, he would bring with him all of the gedolei hatorah from our glorious past.



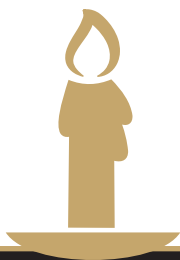
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One funny story should be told that highlights his personality. The two of us went to a funeral and on our way home I could see that the gas tank was just about empty, or it was already empty. I kept on telling Rabbi Kelemer that we needed gas, and finally on the Belt Parkway, we ran out of gas. The Rabbi pulled over. As he turned around to me seemingly about to apologize – as of course, I was in the back seat because the front passenger seat was in need of repair (this was the typical state of the cars he drove), he was interrupted before he could say anything. A woman pulled off the highway, walked up to the car, knocked on the door, “Good morning, Rabbi, how are you? You need another push to the gas station?” She helped us push the car into the gas station. As we got to the gas station, the attendant came out saying, “Ahh good morning, Rabbi, good to see you again.” Clearly, he was a regular here. So many stories of him running out of gas. His car ran out of gas. Rabbi Kelemer never did.

Our Avot had wells, the Talmud speaks of innkeepers and lodging, Chabad has their sacred rebbeim in prison stories. Rabbi Kelemer transformed gas stations into the location of holy stories.

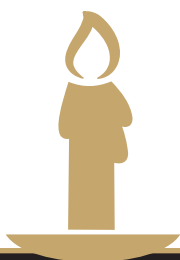
Another time at the gas station, he noticed a non-Jew who seemed to be exceedingly sad. He asked him what was wrong. The stranger responded that he lost his son. Rabbi Kelemer sat there for hours with him, giving him nechama. His care was for every human. He arranged for some time that members of the community sleep in a Christian affiliated homeless shelter to care for the homeless, none of whom were Jewish. They were in need of care and compassion and so we went.



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I could speak of countless stories about Rabbi Kelemer. In essence he was my rebbe, teacher and mentor, and yet I still claim, my chaver. He was my dearest friend and confidant. I miss his voice, his words, and his very presence. I truly feel the impact of our Yakov leaving our city, a void that cannot be filled. My only consolation is that I was privileged to be in his presence for almost 30 years, a zchus granted to me from On High, for which I thank the Almighty every morning.



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הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

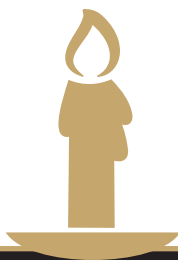
WE DID NOT DESERVE HIM...YET SOMEHOW, WE FEEL CHEATED NOT TO HAVE HIM

BY MICHAEL S. LEVINE

RABBI KELEMER, ZT"l was our Rav, our leader, our Posek, our living, shining example of how to act and our friend. As astonishing as it is to say, that is how the ENTIRE West Hempstead community of thousands felt. He was a diamond, with so many facets to him.

His breadth and depth of knowledge was stunning. He was someone who learned b'chavrusah with the likes of Rav Mordechai Gifter, zt"l and Rabbi Avigdor Nebenzahl, shlit"a (though when I asked him in about it, he claimed to have no idea, other than compassion, why Rav Nebenzahl had included him in those chavurosos). Rabbis from communities far and wide, many of whom are well known Rabbanim, would tell us that Rabbi Kelemer was the Rabbi's Rabbi, whom they would ask their own questions to.

As a young adult, I had the chance to give a shiur to the community and decided to give over a compendium of sources dealing with the notion of chavrusas. When I finished, Rabbi Kelemer complemented me before the Kehillah on my words of Torah, more than I deserved, as he always did to everyone, and then proceeded to floor me. He told us all, as a "parenthetical" (one of his favorite words that still makes me smile just to say it), that for the sake of completeness (because he was Yashar in every way) that there was one source I had missed, and he then quoted verbatim, the Pnei Moshe on the Talmid Yerushalmi on the subject!



HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

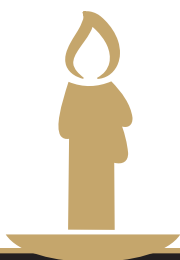
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As a Gabbai I had the opportunity weekly to ask him questions that arose relative to the minyan and to witness his ability to pasken instantly and with sensitivity. Recently, I told another gabbai a halacha and he asked, "Do you know the source?" and I sheepishly responded "Rabbi Kelemer" as I did not remember where he had quoted it from and that ended the conversation. He was our Shulchan Aruch.

He was a man who was indefatigable, who would meet with any of us at any hour and I mean that literally. My wife had a critical medical question relative to one of our grandparents and we called him at 3 AM without leaving a message (it was life and death and yet it still felt like a chutzpah to call). Five minutes later he returned the call as usual with, "Hello, I just missed a call from this number," and proceeded to give us the needed guidance.

His modesty was unparalleled and so genuine. A long-time, wonderful member of the community, Bernie Kesselman, once chanced upon Rabbi Kelemer while walking and told him, "Rabbi, I have been reading a story on Rabbi Aryeh Levin, A Tzaddik in Our Time." He told the Rabbi, "As I read it I could not help but think how it reminded me of you." The Rabbi broke out with a hearty laugh, with his beautiful, warm smile and said, "I think that is the funniest thing I ever heard. I cannot wait to get home and tell that to Rochi so we can have a good laugh together."

When a yeshiva bachur would return from learning and ask Rabbi Kelemer a question and then would say "What does the Rav think about such and such?", he would respond wryly, "Why don't you ask him?". He would not tolerate being spoken



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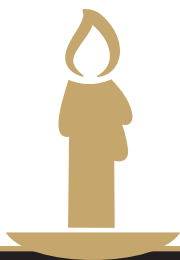
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to in the third person even though he undoubtedly did so when addressing his own Rabbanim.

He was a man who would do for all and never tell a soul or seek credit, he just led by example. One Yom Kippur, my grandfather passed out in shul during Mussaf. He was rushed to Mercy Hospital in Rockville Center with my mother accompanying him. The rest of the family members were all nervously davening for him. The Rabbi being who he was, did so much more. With no fanfare, he walked along the highway to the hospital to visit and comfort him, without saying a word to anyone. Then he walked back in time to lead us all in Neilah.

He led by example but also guided us with quiet, sincere words. He was always calm, never displaying anger (amazing for any community Rav, with all they must deal with) and always spoke with supreme sensitivity. No topic was too trivial for him, nor any individual. He was equally comfortable with Chasidim, the Modern Orthodox, Charedim, the not-yet-affiliated - each felt loved by him. At the Shiva house, someone expressed that he had the unique ability to make each person feel that he related to them.

He would take many of the boys out to dinner when they returned from Israel, to speak with them about their experiences. Many could not wait for the opportunity for one-on-one time with the Rav. Others were in awe and insecure about meeting with the Rabbi, feeling intimidated in their learning level next to that of the Rabbi's. One such boy recounted to me that it was anything but stressful once they met. Rabbi Kelemer spent the first half hour or more asking him about the restaurants in Israel, the trips he had gone on, and even questions about his



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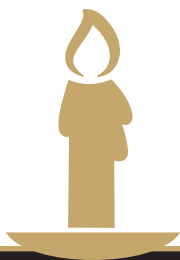
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roommates. It was only towards the end that the Rabbi casually started discussing his learning. It was all about connectivity with the Rabbi and everyone left his presence feeling great about themselves. The Rabbi had the unique ability to see the good in all and made sure to comment on it. No one left the Rabbi without seeing themselves in a whole new, positive light.

This giant of a man was known to put aside world issues he was dealing with, even for a baby who didn't know the difference. It was legendary that he would give candies to the young children at shul. If he ran out, he would walk to the child's home and knock on the door to startled reactions of the parents and say, "I told your child I would give them a candy and I ran out of it in shul." Even when the child was only a year old and could not have known that he never delivered the candy, he nevertheless did so, because that was Emes and Rabbi Kelemer was Emes through and through.

He imparted messages in a gentle, loving manner daily, but never expressed anger or lectured. Personally, I was fortunate to make a Siyum recently that I was quite excited for and proud of. The Rabbi reminded me in his nurturing way (I am omitting some personal comments of chizuk he made), "Remember Michael, the Siyum is not about you. It is a chance for you to tell others about the many available resources that helped you achieve your goal and that it will only be a successful Siyum if someone leaves and decides to take on more learning as a result." I understood and changed my whole speech and thought process.

He had a unique, but profound perspective on Torah and how to present it. He started daily and weekly classes in our shul



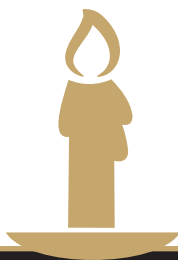
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for many people with varying backgrounds. He imparted to us that for learning to be successful it shouldn't be a one-time shiur presented by the most popular Rav or Maggid. Rather, that true, authentic Torah would be captured more by "meaningfulness" than by "excitement." He said, "Excitement passes, meaningful remains and perseveres." With that, he would continue giving Shiurim attended by hundreds, but also ones attended by just a few.

His love for Eretz Yisroel and its inhabitants was palpable. He spent every week scouring the news the rest of the world had not heard that week, because it had not made headlines, about any tragic happening to our brethren in Israel and made sure to share it with us with his supreme empathy. He would weave his majestic words of Torah around the circumstance to ensure that we would each learn sensitivity on some greater level for our brethren in Israel.

Rabbi Kelemer had the unique skill set of making every question by every congregant sound like the most profound question. With his mastery and knowledge of all sources (he literally would quote from approbations to Sefarim), he could turn good questions or even poor questions into great ones. A long-time childhood friend of mine (who is another example of multiple-generation families, like mine, that moved back into our wonderful community to be near Rabbi Kelemer) reminded me of such an example. Once a member in an open forum asked, "Rabbi, what do you think about the Greenhouse effect from a halachic perspective?" The entire assembled group burst out in laughter at the question. Not our Rabbi, he responded by comparing it to the machlokes between the Ramban and the Ohr HaChaim in Parshas Noach. All laughter ceased.

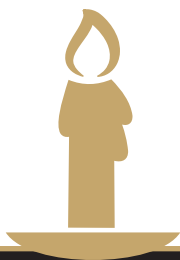


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In my own family Rabbi Kelemer is held in the highest esteem. My parents, who I have the privilege to live with in the same community, have always counseled me to follow the Derech Hayashar (the straight path). The one place they assured me that I could always rely on finding that path, outside our home, was in Rabbi Kelemer's footsteps. My wife, Simcha, and I have consulted with Rabbi Kelemer at our happiest moments and our most challenging times, always receiving pearls of wisdom mixed with compassion. My eldest son Reuvy, who had the Zechus as we did, to be married by Rabbi Kelemer, while not shy by any means, is generally uncomfortable paying shiva calls. Nonetheless, he came from the city to be Menachem Avel at the Kelemer's. After an hour and 15 minutes I told him I was leaving and he said, "I will walk home on my own. I want to stay a little longer." He simply could not bear to say goodbye to Rabbi Kelemer and all that he represented. When my daughter, Ahuva married, her husband's Rebbe was the Mesader Kiddushin. She agreed on two conditions: 1) That Rabbi Kelemer would have the next biggest honor and 2) That he privately give them a bracha under the chupah. She could not bear to enter marriage without his blessings. My youngest son, Chaim, said to me the other day that he cannot imagine not having the Rabbi at his wedding someday. Parenthetically, (there it is again), all of our community remembers with a smile how after the Rabbi was in a major accident four years ago, he continued to attend weddings. He would transform himself, despite the physical limitations of a walker, and dance with the chasan and was generally the most energetic, vibrant dancer there, jumping around like someone 40 years younger.

Please allow me to share a favorite personal P'sak Halacha I



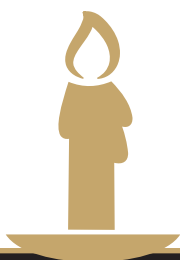
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received from the Rav, as it captures his broad shoulders in Paskening, his sensitivity to all, and his on-the-spot genius. My wife, Simcha, and I were engaged to be married and went to meet the Rabbi for a pre-marriage meeting. The Rabbi asked, "Are there any problems?" I quickly answered "No". To my surprise, Simcha responded, "Well, one little one." I whirled around, shocked. The Rabbi deftly asked, "What is the issue?" Simcha responded, "It's not that big of a deal, but my parents really don't want me to walk around Michael under the Ch-upah."

The Rabbi responded, "It is a strong Ashkenazi Minhag, you must," and we moved on. Well by "we" I mean Simcha and I, but not Rabbi Kelemer. Later in the conversation, he suddenly said, "Simcha, how strongly do your parents feel about you not walking around Michael?" She conveyed to him that they felt very strongly about it. He asked why and when we did not know the answer, he insisted we call them on the spot.

My mother-in-law explained that where they come from, "We only walk around a Meis (a decedent)." The Rabbi turned to us and said "Simcha will not circle you, Michael." I protested, "Rabbi, I am okay with whatever you say, but we can try to make it work with my in-laws and still follow what you said was a strong Ashkenazi Minhag." He smiled ever so gently and softly responded, "Michael, it is a strong Ashkenazi Minhag but now we know it is an equally strong Sephardi Minhag not to. From the moment she walks around you has the marriage really taken place yet? No. Therefore she is still a Sephardi at that point. Under these circumstances the correct halacha is that she should not walk around you."



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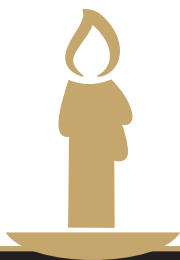
הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

My in-laws were happy, my wife was happy, and I left happy that this was actually the higher level, to have the wedding with a pristine psak behind it. As always, he had raised us to the high level he lived on, if only for a moment.

As my friend Howard Bressler wrote, “While we might never know who thirty-five of the lamedvavniks are, we knew one of them.”

After writing all this, I now realize that while we did not deserve him, and we still may feel cheated not to have him, maybe we can comfort ourselves when we reflect on how much he imparted.

May we continue to bring honor to him by observing the immeasurable lessons he taught us



HARAV YEHUDA KELEMER

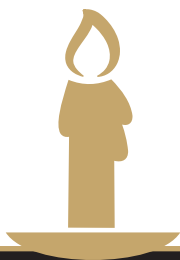
הרב יהודה בן דב בער ז"ל

**MEMORIES OF RABBI YEHUDA KELEMER
FROM BROOKLINE
BY REUVEN BRAUNER**

AFTER AN EXTREMELY ARDUOUS and frustrating process of finding a replacement for Rabbi Saul Berman who left our Young Israel in Brookline in 1971, a young Rabbi Yehuda Kelemer was finally elected rabbi on December 25, 1972 by a vote of 37 for, 11 against, and 7 abstentions. He would assume his new position on March 1, 1973. Were the vote for him taken when he resigned ten years later, he would have won unanimously.

Our first impressions of him were of a dynamic Talmid Chochom of the first order. He not only knew “how to learn,” but he knew how to teach. He was courteous to everyone, showing Kovod to all. He knew how to listen, how to give advice, and how to persuade without pressure. He spoke in a soft voice, and always intelligently, to the point, and with meaning. He was Yeshivish, personable, smart, and loved. He personified “Mensch”.

Over the course of the next five years, Rabbi Kelemer became my Rebbe Muvhak. I religiously attended his unique, weekly 1½ hour Sanhedrin Gemara Shiur. He was brilliant. As a true Yekke, I would always be the first in the Beis Medresh and Rabbi Kelemer would tell me which Gemaras to take down from the shelves. “Tonight, we need Succah, Baba Basra, Ksuvos and Chullin”. I would pile all the books up on the table. His method was to follow the trail, that is, in order to comprehend our specific Sugya, as a prerequisite, we had to learn whatever Sugya was referred to here, which in turn led to another Sugya elsewhere. We went as far back as we had to until we finally, really khopped our Gemara. I remember once that it took three Shi-



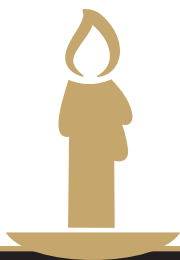
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urim (or about 4.5 hours) just to understand one Tosefos! Torah is deep and an organic whole. It makes perfect sense once you see how all the parts fit together.

Rabbi Kelemer had seemingly endless energy. He worked tirelessly for the needs of the community, even late into the night. He was the ideal community rabbi. Anyone with a problem or question was attended to. I remember once while driving with Rabbi Kelemer from Boston to New York, about an hour into the trip, he began nudging me to let him drive. He couldn't sit still. Although I hesitated (he wasn't noted for his careful driving) I succumbed to his demands and, after all, how can one refuse a "request" of his rabbi? We switched seats and I let him drive the remainder of the way. He was a very happy camper. I am still nervous.

Back in the 1970s, Boston was graced with three outstanding, world-class Torah personalities. We had the charismatic Rabbi Levi Yitzchok Horowitz, the Bostoner Rebbe, the great Gaon Rabbi Mordechai Savitsky, and the incomparable genius, Rabbi Yosef Dov Halevi Soloveitchik, the Rov; each with his own Derech in Yiddishkeit. The Bostoner was a classic Chossid in thought and action. Rav Savitsky was a premier Litvishe Talmid Chochom, a remnant of the lost pre-WWII class of superior Torah sages. And the Rov was our greatest, most brilliant, Jewish philosopher and thinker. Rabbi Kelemer bonded with all three. But, it is one thing that you respect Gedolim. It is another when Gedolim respect you. And they all respected Rabbi Kelemer.

Rabbi Kelemer invited me to be an Eid for Gittin on numerous occasions, 22 to be exact. Our Misader Gittin in Boston was Rav Savitsky, so I got to know him quite well during those days and



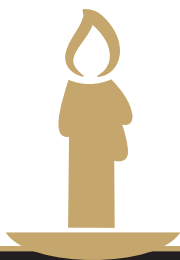
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spoke with him on a variety of issues. We met at the old Boston University Hillel House which was literally located “Al Nahar Charles”, on the banks of the Charles River. The Halakhah requires the place where a Get is written to include this sort of description. On one occasion, I went to Rabbi Savitsky’s home in Newton to ask him about the “rumor” that he had ruled that swordfish was kosher. He confirmed this. I returned to Brookline and told Rabbi Kelemer who simply said, “In America, we go by Rav Moshe.”

In the summer of 1973, I planned a trip to Israel by myself. Rabbi Kelemer told me that I had to look up his brother-in-law, Rabbi Chaim Walkin, the Rebbetzin’s brother, in Jerusalem. “He is a real Masmid. He sits all day in the Beis Medresh of The Mir. I am sure that he will invite you for Shabbos meals.” And he did! Years later, I met Reb Chaim at a wedding in Bnei Brak. He was now the Mashgiach at Yeshivas Ateres Yisroel in Bayit Vegan. He wore a long, black frock and sported a long, white beard. “I didn’t recognize you with the beard and coat,” I said. “I need it for my job,” he told me.

I mention this because Rabbi Kelemer married into a family of great Jews, and the Rebbetzin carried on her family traditions. The Walkins (at least Chaim) did not only have a sense of humor, but were also Talmidei Chachamim, Roshei Yeshiva, and Tzadikim. Rav Shmuel Walkin, Rabbi Kelemer’s father-in-law, rescued Jews during WWII and cared for refugees in Shanghai. Yichusdikke families like these are very careful about whom they let their daughters and sisters marry. You have to be someone special, and Rabbi Kelemer was extraordinarily special. They loved him, too.



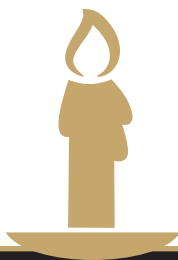
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After coming on Aliyah at the end of 1978, I lost direct contact with Rabbi Kelemer for many years. In fact, I met with him but once, after 24 years, at 12:00 pm, Tuesday, June 4, 2002 for half an hour at his office in the Young Israel of West Hempstead to catch up on our lives. As soon as we met, I asked him a Shaila. Can I make the appropriate Brochos? He understood and said "Sure", and I said both Sh'hechayonu and Michaya Hamaisim.

In some way, both Brochos are still applicable for him today. Yehi Zichrono Boruch.

*Reuven Brauner
Raanana, Israel*



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