

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL

# CHANUKAH TORAH JOURNAL

MIRACULOUS LIGHTS

אורות ניסים



A publication of the  
Young Israel Council of Rabbis  
and Department of  
Synagogue Services

VOLUME 2, ISSUE 2

חג  
אורים  
שמח

5783  
תשפ"ג



## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### **RABBI DAVID WARSHAW**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF OCEANSIDE, PRESIDENT

### **DAVID SCHULTZ**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF CENTURY CITY/LOS ANGELES  
CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

### **HAROLD ASPIS**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF SCARSDALE  
1ST VICE PRESIDENT

### **CHARLES MILLER**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF WOODMERE  
2ND VICE PRESIDENT

### **ROBERT LEVI**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF SHOMRAI EMUNAH/  
GREATER WASHINGTON, TREASURER

### **ARI PEARL**

YOUNG ISRAEL HOLLYWOOD- FT. LAUDERDALE  
FINANCIAL SECRETARY

### **DAVID GROSS**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF PLAINVIEW  
RECORDING SECRETARY

### **JONATHAN ABBETT**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF BROOKLINE, ASSOCIATE VP

### **ADAM P. COHEN**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF GREAT NECK, ASSOCIATE VP

### **STEVE COHEN**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF OAK PARK, ASSOCIATE VP

### **ARYEH DAVIS**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF LAWRENCE/CEDARHURST  
ASSOCIATE VP

### **NAOMI KORN GOLD**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF SHARON, ASSOCIATE VP

### **ANDY GROSS**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF EAST BRUNSWICK, ASSOCIATE VP

### **OWEN RUMELT**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF WEST HEMPSTEAD, ASSOCIATE VP

### **MARK SEMER**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF NEW ROCHELLE, ASSOCIATE VP

### **ELIMELECH TENENBAUM**

YOUNG ISRAEL AISH, LAS VEGAS ASSOCIATE VP

### **MARK TRENCHER**

YOUNG ISRAEL OF WEST HARTFORD, ASSOCIATE VP

### **IRA STURM**

GENERAL COUNSEL

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT</b>	<b>3</b>
Rabbi David Warshaw	
<b>AN ENLIGHTENING CHANUKAH</b>	<b>4</b>
Rabbi Shlomo Hochberg	
<b>CHANUKAH AS A MODEL FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL</b>	<b>7</b>
Rabbi Heshie Billet	
<b>CHANUKAH AND YOM HA'ATZMAUT</b>	<b>10</b>
Rabbi Edward Davis	
<b>GOOGLES AND THUMBPRINTS</b>	<b>13</b>
Rabbi Dov Fischer	
<b>LIGHTING CHANUKAH CANDLES IN THE WHITE HOUSE: RECOMMENDED, PERMITTED OR FORBIDDEN?</b>	<b>17</b>
Rabbi Aaron E. Glatt, MD	
<b>CHANUKAH: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE OPTICS</b>	<b>22</b>
Rebbetzin Rachele Goller, OD	
<b>WHAT THE ENTIRE WORLD SHOULD KNOW</b>	<b>25</b>
Rabbi David Hellman	
<b>OUR DISTINCTIVENESS: ISRAEL AND OLIVE OIL</b>	<b>31</b>
Daniel "Mush" Meyer	
<b>CHANUKAH AND THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE</b>	<b>32</b>
Rebbetzin Yael Muskat, PsyD	
<b>RELIGION, NATIONHOOD &amp; UNIVERSALISM</b>	<b>36</b>
Rabbi Doron Perez	
<b>CHANUKAH MUSIC, REVISITED</b>	<b>41</b>
Rabbi Eddie Rosenberg	
<b>JUDGMENT SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED!</b>	<b>43</b>
Rabbi Daniel Rosenfelt	
<b>ISHTO K'GUFO AND THE INDIVIDUAL</b>	<b>44</b>
Rabbanit/Yoetzet Lisa Septimus	
<b>CHANUKAH: FESTIVAL OF THE HOME AND THE HOMELAND</b>	<b>47</b>
Rabbi Lawrence Teitelman	
<b>THE ESSENCE OF CHANUKAH: PASSING ON THE TORCH</b>	<b>51</b>
Rabbi Elisha (Rodney) Weiss	

**Rabbi Shlomo Hochberg - General editor**

**Rabbanit Rookie Billet - Content Editor**

*Rabbi Binyamin Hammer - Honorary Managing Editor*

*Rabbi Chaim Wasserman z"l - Honorary General Editor*

*Avi Frier, Director of Programming*

*Davii Mandel, Office Manager.*



## MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

DECEMBER 2022 / KISLEV 5783

Dear Friends,

As we celebrate Chanukah, commemorating rededication and renewal, I ask that you join me in celebrating the rejuvenation of our Young Israel Movement.

With more than 100 shuls and 25,000 member families, NCYI is built on a foundation of enhancing community unity and preserving our most sacred rights and traditions, and at a time of rising antisemitism and increased threats against the Jewish community and the State of Israel, the need for a strong and united synagogue organization has never been greater.

Over the past year and a half, we have focused on connecting with our branch leadership and membership through weekly briefings and newsletters, offering Divrei Torah in varying formats, including “Four Minutes of Torah” videos, providing redesigned and upgraded Parsha Nation materials to benefit our youth, and offering responses to critical halachic questions by Rabbi Mordechai Willig, Shlita. In addition, our series of Torah Journals has helped illuminate important and informative topics to thousands throughout the U.S. and Israel.

In confronting the massive challenges posed by the war in Ukraine, NCYI played a leading role in raising significant financial support for organizations engaged in supporting and saving Jewish lives. In addition, NCYI regularly provides our shuls with information on security-related programming, including

webinars, grant application seminars, and general security information.

In line with our mission of supporting and strengthening religious Zionism, we merged our “Young Israel in Israel” operation with World Mizrachi to serve both the existing Young Israel shuls and newer communities throughout Israel.

But all of this is just the beginning. The renewed sense of unity and closeness between the national organization and the local branches can and will be further enhanced in several ways.

Meetings between members of the National Board and local branch leadership will be arranged to discuss the needs and expectations of the shuls and how NCYI can address those concerns. On the rabbinic level, the Council of Rabbis will be increasing its activities and offering programming and events which will address issues and challenges faced by our rabbis on a daily basis. Services such as tech support, accounting, and joint purchasing will be offered to benefit all branches, regardless of size.

As we gather with our families and communities to celebrate Chanukah, let us join together in rededicating and renewing a united national organization that has played a vital role in the global Jewish community for over a century.

Wishing you a Freilichen Chanukah, Chag Urim Sameach.

*Rabbi David Warshaw*

*President, National Council of Young Israel*



# AN ENLIGHTENING CHANUKA

RABBI SHLOMO HOCHBERG

RABBI EMERITUS, YOUNG ISRAEL OF JAMAICA ESTATES



**“THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF LIGHT:  
THE LIGHT THAT ILLUMINES,  
AND THE GLARE THAT OBSCURES”**

James Thurber

**GREEK CULTURE** was considered to be the most enlightened society of its time. Why then did Chazal refer to Greece as the epitome of darkness?

In explaining the second pasuk in the Torah, וְהָאֲרֶץ הָיְתָה תוֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ, וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם, the earth was unformed and void, with **darkness** over the surface of the deep, the Midrash comments וְחָשֶׁךְ, זֶה גְלוּת - “And **darkness** - this is the kingdom of **Yavan/Greece**” (Midrash Rabbah Breishis) which darkened the eyes of Israel with their decrees, demanding of them - כְּתוּב עַל קַרְן הַשּׁוֹר - “**write on the ox’s horn** that you have no part in the God of Israel.”

Calling the Greek kingdom one of darkness is particularly difficult to understand, since Greek ideology loved and worshipped wisdom, and

much of our western thought, culture and academic disciplines have developed from its culture. Chazal respected wisdom, as they taught: חִכְמָה בְּגוֹיִים תִּאֱמִין - “wisdom can be found among non-Jewish nations.” Why then would Chazal call such an enlightened society חָשֶׁךְ - darkness.

Rav Moshe Chaim Luzzato (1707-1746, Italy and Akko, Israel) in commenting on the verse “You make darkness, and it is night” (Tehillim 104:20) cites the Gemara which says that the world is often analogous to night (Bava Metzia 83b). He explains that the darkness of night may cause one’s eyes to err in two ways. It may be so dark that a person cannot see at all what is before him. Or, darkness may deceive him, so he sees something before him, but he cannot discern what it is, so that a pillar appears as if it is a man or a man as a pillar. (Mesilas Yesharim - The Path of the Just, Chapter 3)

Greek wisdom was based upon a firm





belief that **כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה** – “All of human success is attributed to **my own wisdom and prowess.**”

Human intellect alone was needed, while divine power and wisdom was superfluous. This is the darkness of Yavan’s obscure “wisdom” which places man at the apex of the natural hierarchy. With happiness or well-being as the highest aim of their moral thought and conduct, human wisdom was comprised of seven secular disciplines. Numerous rabbinic scholars including Rabbeinu Bachya and the Gaon of Vilna proposed seven disciplines of wisdom as well, but with one stark difference. They all included God’s wisdom, the Torah.

Chazal thus appropriately dubbed Greek philosophy as **”חכמה חיצונית”** - exterior or superficial wisdom. This was expressed in the Greek disdain for both belief and reliance upon God, as well as the Divinely inspired **תורה שבעל פה** - Oral Torah, especially the **חוקים** - the supra-rational statutes. Hence, their goal was **להשכיחם תורתך ולהעבירם מחקיך** - **to force us to forget Your Torah** - and to turn us away from **those statutes which did not comply with their logic.**

To enforce their philosophy, Greeks prohibited public learning of **תורה שבעל פה**, the dynamic Oral Torah. But they also promulgated a more insidious decree - **“write on the ox’s horn that you have no part in the God of Israel.”**

Rav Yechezkel Abramsky (Dayan in

London & Jerusalem, 1896-1976) observed an exhibition at the British Museum of baby bottles from the Medieval Period that included ox horns. Rav Abramsky understood that the design of the Greek’s decree was for Jewish children to ingest their heresy by virtual osmosis with their mother’s milk, to foster an inherent disconnect from Hashem and the Jewish People in the most formative years. In contrast, we have a custom of **“Vacht Nacht”** the night before the bris, when we bring young children to recite verses including Shema Yisrael for the baby to imbibe loving devotion to Hashem at the earliest opportunity.

The response of the Chashmonaim after their military victory focused upon purging the Beis Hamikdash of Greek culture and influence. They zealously searched for **pure, undefiled oil** to light the Menorah, despite the halachic permissibility of using impure oil since **טומאה הותרה בציבור** - the rules against impurity are suspended in the case of communal need.

Why did the Chashmonaim direct their attention to finding pure oil to light the Menorah, rather than animals for sacrificial offerings, or **קטורת**, the incense for the spiritual offering?

The Menorah is symbolic of the authentic Jewish approach to wisdom. The Menorah-lighting mandated to Aharon was **אֵל מֹל פְּנֵי הַמְנוּחָה יֹאִירוּ שְׂבָעַת הַנְרוֹת** - that when kindling the lamps, the Kohen must point the respective

wicks on arms of the Menorah toward the center stem. All flames face the center flame, signifying the centrality of the Torah's light which nourishes all wisdom and enlightens the world. The six other disciplines serve as tools to enhance our understanding of the Torah, and they enable us to more profoundly appreciate the Torah's eternal lessons and their application to all aspects of Jewish life.

The Midrash tells us that Aharon felt dejected when the Mishkan was dedicated because he could not bring offerings along with the Nesi'im (Princes) of all the other twelve Tribes. So Hashem directed Moshe to tell Aharon that he is destined for something greater – for he will kindle the lights of the Menorah. While animal sacrifices are offered only when the Bais Hamikdash is standing, **“the lights are forever”** – הנרות לעולם יאירו – which refers to the kindling of the Chashmonaim, the annual commemoration every year at Chanukah and the eternal message which the Menorah proclaims.

There is no greater technique to properly differentiate between the various cultural mores and influences that confront us daily in our society. Hashem has gifted us the Torah as

His greatest treasure to illuminate our path. It is the lodestar which enables us to effectively navigate the subtleties of darkness and emerge triumphant in revealing our unique, diverse souls – כִּי נֵר ה' נְשָׁמַת אָדָם – for Hashem's lamp is the soul of man. (Mishlei 20:27)

**While animal sacrifices are offered only when the Bais Hamikdash is standing, “the lights are forever”**

I wish to express my deep appreciation to each of the authors who have contributed their thoughts, insights and time for this NCYI Torah Journal, confident that their Divrei Torah will indeed serve to illuminate and motivate.

My sincere thanks also to NCYI President David Warshaw for this and other meaningful initiatives, to Rabbi Binyamin Hammer for his ongoing support of our Rabbanim and Kehillot, and to Rebbetzin Rookie Billet for her many hours and exceptional skill in reviewing and editing the Divrei Torah for publication.

Best wishes for an enlightened, inspiring and joyful celebration of Chanukah. May Hashem bless all of our efforts with success, and may we be zoche to enjoy the final redemption and the dedication of the third Bais Hamikdash when Hashem's Word will illuminate the entire world.

B'yedidut, Shlomo Hochberg



# CHANUKAH AS A MODEL FOR THE STATE OF ISRAEL

RABBI HESHIE BILLET

RABBI EMERITUS, YOUNG ISRAEL OF WOODMERE



**THERE ARE TWO RABBINIC** holidays that are mainstays of the yearly Jewish calendar: Chanukah and Purim. One of the famous questions about Chanukah is why we have no canonical Biblical text about the holiday and no separate tractate in the Talmud dealing with these celebratory days. There are just a few pages in Tractate Shabbat of the Talmud about Chanukah. Purim, on the other hand, has the Biblical Megillat Esther and the entire Tractate Megillah in the Talmud.

Some comments in advance of an attempt to answer the question posed above: A Jewish State whose constitution is not based on compliance to Torah and Rabbinical Law poses an ideological challenge for halachically observant Jews. Over the course of the last century and more, there has been much discussion in religious circles over the relationship of Jewish law (Halacha) to the State of Israel.

Since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, there have been many adjustments to its relationship to orthodox Jewish law. Government institutions observe the Sabbath and the laws of Kashrut. On Passover for example, Israeli hospitals do not serve chametz. The kind of separation of church and state that American citizens are accustomed to is not practiced in Israel.

There are those who have argued that a believing Jew cannot be supportive of a secular Jewish state in the land of Israel. Therefore, there are many orthodox Jews who will not sing the anthem of Israel, will not serve in its armed forces, and will not celebrate Independence Day with (or without) religious services.

I would suggest that it is wrong to fail to celebrate a Jewish state in the land of Israel. Similarly, It is important to invest some religious ritual observance into that relationship! It is Mai-

monides, the Rambam himself, who presents the model for rejoicing over a Jewish state that is not fully observant of orthodox Jewish law. Joy and celebration mean including mention of the miracles associated with this state in our prayers, and even saying blessings over its miraculous existence.

In the Laws of Chanukah, Rambam (aka Maimonides) describes the terrible persecution that the Jewish people suffered under the Greeks during the second century BCE. Led by the priestly Hasmonean family, the Jews revolted, and against all odds, they were victorious, restoring an independent Jewish monarchy to the citizens of the Land of Israel. It endured for more than two hundred years, until the destruction of the second Temple in 70 CE. The quote below from the Mishneh Torah's Hilchot Chanukah recounts the military victory and the re-establishment of the kingdom

### הלכות חנוכה - פרק שלישי

א. וגברו בני חשמונאי הכהנים הגדולים והרגום והושיעו ישראל מידם והעמידו מלך מן הכהנים וחזרה מלכות לישראל יתר על מאתים שנים עד החורבן השני:

1. And the sons of the Chashmonaim (the high priests) overpowered them (the Greeks), killed them, and rescued Israel from their grip. They installed a Kohen as king and royalty returned to Israel for more than two hundred years until the destruction of the second Temple. (Laws of Chanukah, chap

3, halacha 1)

ג ומפני זה התקינו חכמים שבאותו הדור שיהיו שמונת ימים האלו שתחלתן כ"ה בכסלו ימי שמחה והלל ומדליקין בהן הנרות בערב על פתחי הבתים...

Rambam continues: As a result of these astounding events, the Torah scholars of that generation established the celebration of Chanukah with candle lighting and the recitation of Hallel. (Ibid., halacha 3)

Hence, we say blessings on candle lighting for eight nights. We also add the **על הנסים** prayer to the Amidah, we complete the entire Hallel and say the blessings at the beginning and conclusion of the Hallel.

From Rambam's perspective, we are not only celebrating the famous miracle of the cruse of pure holy oil that was deemed enough to burn for only one night, and yet lasted for eight nights. We are also celebrating the Hasmonean royal/priestly dynasty!

That is an incredible phenomenon from a legal Jewish point of view. On the phrase in Genesis 49:10 which states that "the staff of royalty should not leave the tribe of Yehuda," Ramban (aka Nachmanides) explains that the Chashmonaim who were Kohanim from the tribe of Levi were holy people. But by usurping royalty for themselves, they violated Yaakov Avinu's will that royalty shall not leave the tribe of Yehuda! Furthermore, Ramban's commentary continues that according to

the Talmud Yerushalmi, there is an additional prohibition that a kohen may not become a king. The kohen's sole job was to do the divine service (avodah) in the Temple.

ולפי דעתי, היו המלכים המולכים על ישראל משאר השבטים אחרי דוד עוברים על דעת אביהם ומעבירים נחלה... עברו על צוואת הזקן ונענשו בהם... וזה היה עונש החשמונאים, שמלכו בבית שני, כי היו חסידי עליון, ואלמלא הם נשתכחו התורה והמצות מישראל, ואף על פי כן נענשו עונש גדול, כי ארבעת בני חשמונאי הזקן החסידים המולכים זה אחר זה, עם כל גבורתם והצלחתם, נפלו ביד אויביהם בחרב... ואפשר גם כן שהיה עליהם חטא במלכותם מפני שהיו כהנים, ונצטוו (במדבר יח ז): "תשמרו

את כהונתכם לכל דבר המזבח ולמבית לפרכת ועבדתם עבודת מתנה אתן את כהונתכם", ולא היה להם למלוך, רק לעבוד את עבודת ה'. וראיתי בירושלמי במסכת הוריות(ירושלמי הוריות פרק ג הלכה ב):

אין מושחין מלכים כהנים. אמר רבי יהודה ענתוריא על שם לא יסור שבט מיהודה. אמר רבי חייא בר' אבא למען יאריך ימים על ממלכתו הוא ובניו בקרב ישראל, מה כתיב בתריה לא יהיה לכהנים הלויים

With all of this negative comment and concern, it is surprising that Maimonides explicitly extols the fact that Chashmonaim established an independent Jewish monarch led by Kohanim.

Rambam does not disagree with Ramban! The Chashmonaim were wrong. They sinned! Nevertheless, they also did a good thing by restoring an independent Jewish State. And we celebrate that, despite the shortcomings of the heroes of Chanukah. Jewish political independence in the Land of Israel is worthy of Hallel and blessings with G-d's name expressed.

***By usurping  
royalty for  
themselves, they  
violated Yaakov  
Avinu's will that  
royalty shall not  
leave the tribe of  
Yehuda!***

The Chanukah story is a perfect model for the modern State of Israel. Many of its pioneers, political leaders and warriors were not observant Jews. Its constitution is neither the writ-

ten Torah nor the oral Torah. Indeed, there is so much Torah study and observance in Israel. But Israel is not an orthodox religious state!

Nevertheless, just as we celebrate Chanukah in part because of a military victory that restored independent royalty to Israel "in those times" through the intervention of the Almighty, so too must we celebrate a (G-d assisted) military victory that restored an independent Jewish government in the land of Israel "in our days."

Hence, we can circle back to the question we opened with, about the

surprising lack of both scriptural and Talmudic material about Chanukah. Chanukah was indeed a great and miraculous victory for the Jewish people. But the miracle was brought about through the instrument of good, righteous people who did the wrong thing by crowning kings who were from the tribe of Levi and not descendants of Yehuda as the legacy of our father Yaakov had required. As such, a book in the canon of the Bible and a full tractate in the Talmud commemorating an event that has both joy and antinomian elements mixed in is inappropriate. But I do believe that the analogy between the religious celebrations of the miraculous Hasmonean victory and the equally miraculous victory of the fledgling IDF of 1948 against all the Arab armies of the day still stands!

# CHANUKAH AND YOM HA'ATZMAUT

RABBI EDWARD DAVIS

YOUNG ISRAEL OF HOLLYWOOD FORT LAUDERDALE

**THERE IS A FAMOUS** dispute between Beit Hillel and Beit Shammai regarding how we light the Chanukah candles. Beit Shammai embraces the opinion that on the first night of Chanukah we light eight candles; the second night seven candles; and so forth, in descending order. Beit Hillel favors the opinion that we start with one candle, and proceed in ascending order: the second night two candles, and so forth. I will not delve into the reasons supporting each opinion. What intrigues me more is the date of the dispute. The Talmudic disputes between Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel began in the first century C.E. That means that this discussion occurred a good 150 years after the historical events of the Chanukah story. That means that it was not decided how to celebrate Chanukah for at least 150 years after the event!?

We are on safe ground to assume that it took quite a while for Chanukah to secure a place on the Jewish calendar. The Ramban

comments on Chanukah in his commentary on Parshat Vayechi. Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi did not include any discussion of Chanukah in his Mishnah which is dated around the year 200 C.E. This, according to the Ramban, was due to the fact that the Chashmonaim overstepped the limits of their authority. The Chashmonaim were Kohanim. The political leadership of the nation of Israel belonged to the tribe of Yehudah. For Kohanim to take the leadership position of Israel was a transgression! Being a direct descendant of King David, Rabbi Yehudah HaNasi probably felt the transgression acutely. And therefore, he chose to omit Chanukah from the Mishnah.

A quick glance at the Chashmonaim family tree gives a further idea of how quickly the family succumbed to the Greek influence themselves. Mattityahu's sons all had Hebrew names. Two generations later the names of Hircanus, Antigonus, and Aristobulus appear, clearly indicating the decline of the Jewish influence and a growth in the Hellenistic world. When two Chashmonai brothers are in a dispute over who should rule the Jewish people, they invite the Romans to decide their dispute. Viewing the big picture, the Chashmonaim invited the Romans to

come into Israel, and ultimately hand the enemy information that would assist them to invade and conquer Israel. The Chanukah victory proved to be a short-lived victory in the long history of the Jewish people.

There is certainly a good deal of evidence to form a negative view toward the historical events of Chanukah!

***One physical  
miracle and one  
spiritual miracle.  
Both are heralded  
equally on the  
holiday.***

Chanukah possessed two miracles. One was the military victory, when the few defeated the many, namely the Jews were victorious

over the Greek-Syrians. The second miracle was the small amount of pure olive oil lasting eight days in the Holy Temple. One physical miracle and one spiritual miracle. Both are heralded equally on the holiday. The Rambam begins the Laws of Chanukah in his Mishnah Torah by recounting the historical events of Chanukah. The Mishnah Torah is not an historical book. The Halachah must be that we are required to review and to know these events as part of the celebration of the holiday.

In 1948, a military miracle occurred in Israel, when again, the few were victorious over the many, and the State of Israel was created. Now more than 75 years later, Yom Ha'Atzmaut is still



striving to secure its place in the Jewish calendar. But there is no corresponding spiritual miracle! My feeling is that this is not a concern. If Chanukah took at least 150 years to secure its place in the Jewish calendar, then there is plenty of time for Yom Ha'Atzmaut!

If one argues that the victory in 1948 was won by non-observant Israeli soldiers, I refer you to a classic essay by Rabbi Aron Soloveitchik where he cites the story in Kings II chapter 7, when 4 leprous men secured a redemption and saved a besieged Jewish city in Israel. Hashem can use whomever He pleases to secure a salvation of the Jewish people, even non-observant Jews.

I look upon the creation of the modern State of Israel as a true divine miracle in our time. And the story of Chanukah teaches me to be patient. Hopefully, the State of Israel will continue to thrive and develop and be the focal point of the Jewish people and the center of Jewish life, with a continued development of Yeshivahs and enhancement of Torah learning. Maybe that will be the accompanying spiritual miracle of a modern people. Chanukah teaches us to be patient. Stay the course and enjoy Hashem's blessings!

# NCYI Wants to Highlight YOUR Branch!

Publicize your branch and community  
in the NCYI weekly newsletter  
Find out more <https://tinyurl.com/uzyzp8ab>



# GOGGLES AND THUMBPRINTS



RABBI DOV FISCHER

YOUNG ISRAEL OF ORANGE COUNTY, CA

**I HAVE A CLOSE** non-Jewish friend. We feel comfortable being open and honest with each other. Neither of us fears insulting the other if we ask sincere questions to slake our curiosity. One year he asked me: “Dov, honestly, what’s with the Chanukah thing? With us, December 25 is a miracle birth; Easter is someone arising from the dead. Help me understand why you guys make such a big thing about — basically — a light bulb lasting an extra week. What’s the point?”

Here is why:

But, first, let us frankly recognize what Chanukah is not. It is not a holiday that celebrates “religious freedom” — not unless religious freedom includes Mattityahu ben Yochanan forcefully suppressing a Hellenized Jew’s desire to eat pork or ham or bacon. Not unless such freedom includes obliterating Greek idols and refusing to share space with others in the Beit HaMikdash. Secondly, Chanukah is not Ju-

daism’s entry in the Winter Solstice season, a variation on Christmas or Kwaanza, where the lessons are that it is useful to give presents before the tax year ends and is more blessed to kindle a light than to curse the darkness. Rather, I propose that Chanukah parochially celebrates the unique eternal love G-d has for the Jewish people, a love that He often reinforces by leaving behind His “thumbprint” as if to say “You may not have noticed, particularly amid your horrible travails, but I was here. I never left you.”

Not all miracles are publicly startling, impossible to miss. Yes, sometimes a Sea of Reeds splits before the eyes of our entire nation, saving us from cataclysmic horror. Sometimes a Jordan River splits so the nation can enter the Promised Land, a destination for which we have peregrinated through desert sun and sand for nearly forty years. (Yehoshua 3:14-16.) Sometimes the waters part miraculously — but more privately — to accommodate a



unique Tzadik. So they parted for Yaa-kov Avinu (Breishit 32:11) and for Eliyahu HaNavi Zakhur LaTov. (Melakhim Bet 2:8). However, many of HKB”H’s miracles are easy to overlook completely as He hides His face for His reasons.

Perhaps Megillat Esther is the quintessential example of G-d hiding His face while performing miracles-upon-miracles to save the Jewish people. It “just so happens” that a king gets so drunk at a major celebratory event that he makes a vile demand of his wife. It “just so happens” that, instead of her refusing in a private and genteel tone, she responds with a forthright rebuke intended for all the king’s highest echelon to hear:

Rava said: Vashti not only refused to come, but she also sent him a message by way of a messenger: “You, son of my father’s stableman. Belshazzar, my father, drank wine against a thousand men and did not become inebriated . . . but [you] have become senseless from [your] wine.” (See Daniel 5:1: “Belshazzar the king made a great feast to a thousand of his lords, and drank wine before the thousand.”)

The queen’s tone and method of responding frontally prompted the king’s anger to erupt. Mesekhet Megillah 12b. And thus it “just so happened”

that the king decided to replace his queen by conducting a beauty contest, and it “just so happened” that a Jewish lady won after being assigned a night in the cooler weather of Tevet (typically January) rather than an uncomfortably sweaty season to meet the king, a “happenstance” that enhanced rather than doomed her candidacy. (Id. at 13a). And her uncle

***The miracles  
are there to see;  
you just need  
the goggles.***

“just so happened” to be within earshot when two conspiring Tarsian assassins openly were plotting regicide, talking in a foreign language that no one nearby possibly would under-

stand. But it “just so happened” that the Jewish uncle was a member of the Great Sanhedrin, a unique body of Torah leaders and scholars who each was fluent in seventy languages including Tursi. (Megillah 13b). So Mordechai exposed the conspiracy. It all “just so happened.”

For G-d fearing and G-d loving Jews, we gain by developing a skill of seeing G-d’s least manifest miracles. Did Purim’s story “just so happen”? Actually, the Gemara tells us that, by calculated design, HKB”H caused a master (Pharaoh) to become infuriated with two of his servants (the wine steward and the baker), and He caused two servants (Bigtan and Teresh) to become infuriated with their master (Achashverosh) — all for the sake of advancing the des-



tiny of Klal Yisrael, the Jewish people.

Back in 1991, during Operation Desert Storm, the war in which America amalgamated an international alliance to push Iraq's Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait, major news media "embedded" their journalists to accompany the troops. In the black of night, when no one naturally could see much ahead, the advancing troops indeed could see clearly through the piercing darkness, and the television journalists even could transmit midnight news footage, albeit tinted green, home to American viewers because they had the benefit of specially manufactured night-vision goggles.

We should challenge ourselves to emulate them, instead by evolving within ourselves the ability to see G-d's hidden miracles by dint of what I call the "Green Goggles of Faith." The miracles are there to see; you just need the goggles. Thus does our history of faith reflect.

For example, there was another famous candle that miraculously remained aflame seven days longer than the laws of nature can explain: Sarah Imeinu's Shabbat likht, the candle she lit in her tent to welcome each week's Shabbat observance. Her candle remained kindled all week until lighting time the following Friday evening. When she died, her tent went dark. And then Yitzchak Avinu married Rivkah. When Rivkah lit her Shabbat candle, the miracle revived. Once

more, the tent remained miraculously lit all week. Breishit Rabbah 60:16 on Breishit 24:67. A candle that lasted seven days longer than can be explained by science.

What was that about? For those with green goggles of faith, it was not a necessary miracle like a sea splitting just before Pharaoh's army could wipe us out or take us back to Egypt as slaves. It was not a necessary miracle to clear a path for Yaakov Avinu, Yehoshua, a wandering nation, or Eliyahu and Elisha to get to the other side. It simply was Hashem leaving His "thumbprint": "I am here."

One of the most horrific tragedies in our history was the fall of Beitar, Shimon Bar Kochba's final fortress in the 132-135 C.E. war with Rome. When Beitar fell, all fell. We would be exiled for the next two thousand years. It was our last stand, some sixty-plus years after the fall of Masada. This time the Romans were determined to destroy our spirits and gut our hope that we ever again would be sovereign in Israel. Not only did they change the name of our land of Israel to "Palestina," reverting to the long-since-removed Philistines, but they viciously ordered that the bodies of all Jewish soldiers who had fallen be piled outside to rot publicly. They wanted the remaining Jewish survivors to see the rot, smell the stench, and infer that the G-d of Israel was not with them, perhaps never had been. Alongside destroying us physically, the Romans thereby

would crush us spiritually.

But something inexplicable unfolded. The bodies did not rot. The corpses did not smell malodorous. Rather, they remained fresh. Instead of the mounds of corpses testifying to G-d's absence, those bodies came to evidence His miraculous presence among the Jewish people, even in the depths of catastrophe. This miracle – thousands of piled corpses that would not decompose – gave so much hope to our defeated people and revived our spiritual strength so robustly that Chazal composed an additional brakhah for bentsching, the fourth one in Birkhat HaMazon. (Mesekhet Berakhot 48b.) Yes, Rome had crushed Beitar, but HKB”H left His thumbprint – “I am here with you” – visible with the green goggles of faith.

All of which returns us to Chanukah, the menorah, and the miracle of the cruse of olive oil that barely would last for one day but miraculously remained aflame seven additional days. (Mesekhet Shabat 21b.)

Still, as my non-Jewish friend respectfully asked: “What’s the point?”

The point is that we had been persecuted by the Greeks. They had subdued us, Hellenized too many, conquered our Beit HaMikdash. Where was G-d? And then, the Hasmonean dynasty – the Maccabees – rose up in revolt, drove them out, and eradicated Greek perversions from the Temple.

Had that victory been a purely military win, the result of better training, more intense fierceness, more skilled generals? Indeed, in our lifetime, we saw many interpret the miracles of the 1967 Six-Day War that way: “Israelis are better soldiers than Arabs. American weapons are better than Russian materiel. Jews are smarter than Arabs.” And then the 1973 Yom Kippur War humbled those misconceptions. The victories of 1967 – and of 1973 – indeed had been miracles.

Thus Chanukah. We were not smarter than the Greeks who gave the world Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. Our military skills and weapons were not keener, nor our men braver, than those of a Greek empire that dominated the world. Rather, HKB”H had been with us all along, through the persecutions and through the ensuing victories. It was not we but He who drove out the Greeks and restored the Heikhal when the apt moment arrived on His timetable. He left behind His thumbprint, in this case a candelabrum whose flicker, by all rules of physics, should have extinguished after one day but instead lasted an extra week. The “thumbprint” on the menorah (so to speak) could be discerned clearly with the green goggles of faith: “I am here with you, My people. I was here with you. I always will be with you, My people. No matter how joyous or bleak certain times may be, know that I always am here with you.”

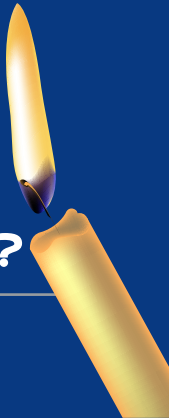


# LIGHTING CHANUKAH CANDLES IN THE WHITE HOUSE:

## RECOMMENDED, PERMITTED OR FORBIDDEN?

RABBI AARON E. GLATT, MD

YOUNG ISRAEL OF WOODMERE



**THE EARLIEST MAJOR** public Chanukah menorah lighting in the United States in a major city or public venue occurred in 1974. The great (last) Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menahem Mendel Schneerson, zt”l, in his classical and inimitable style, had previously urged the distribution of small tin menorahs to Jews all across the country so that even non-observant Jews could participate in the great mitzvah of menorah lighting on Chanukah. This certainly was not at all controversial. However, with his full imprimatur, one of his talmidim (students), Rabbi Abraham Shemtov, in 1974 publicly lit a large Chanukah menorah at the foot of the Liberty Bell in Independence Hall in Philadelphia. Again, at the Rebbe’s urging and with his approbation, this spurred many future such public lightings in subsequent years, to the extent that then President Jimmy Carter publicly participated in 1979 in the lighting of a Chabad menorah. Indeed, since 1979, there has been a “National Menorah”

outside the White House in celebration of Chanukah every year. Indeed, President Ronald Reagan wrote to Rabbi Shemtov: “May the light of the menorah always be a source of strength and inspiration to the Jewish people, and to all mankind.” While certainly a beautiful display of Jewish pride, was this halachically sanctioned?

Furthermore, in recent years, an annual **indoor** Menorah lighting **inside** the White House, attended by the President of the United States and numerous other high ranking public officials and Jewish leaders from across the country has been held every Chanukah. I had the distinct honor and pleasure of being invited to the White House for Chanukah 5782 (December 2021) to participate and light one of the candles inside the White House on the 4th night of Chanukah. All of those participating in the actual ceremony were Jewish, including the Second Gentleman, Mr. Douglas Craig

## LIGHTING CHANUKAH CANDLES IN THE WHITE HOUSE

Emhoff, and the Senate Majority Leader, Charles “Chuck” Schumer. Again, while this was certainly a very wonderful Jewish event taking place in a “medinah shel chessed” (kind and gracious country), the question remains: Is such a Menorah lighting in the White House consistent with good halachic practice? Are lighting Chanukah candles in the White House, with or without a bracha, recommended, permitted or is it forbidden?

The Mechaber, Rabbi Yoseif Karo, in the beginning of Orech Chaim Siman 671 Seif 1, quoting the Mishnah in Pesachim (99) and the Rambam (4th perek Hilchos Chanukah), writes: One must be very careful with the lighting of the Chanukah lights. He then provides great detail as to the optimal way to light the menorah and candles **in one's house**.

In Seif 7, the Mechaber adds that there is also a custom to light a menorah in the shul, and one can even make a bracha on this lighting because of “pirsumei nisa”, publicizing the miracle. The Chofetz Chaim (Mishnah Brurah 671:44) notes that even though it is only a custom to light in the shul or Beis Medrash, the Mechaber paskens that we can still recite the blessings there, even though some poskim disagree. The Mishnah Brurah concludes it is similar to the fact that (Ashkenazim) make a blessing when they recite Hallel on Rosh Chodesh even though that is also only a minhag (custom)

to say Hallel on Rosh Chodesh. The Chofetz Chaim in his commentary Biur Halacha adds that this custom was prevalent even in places where they would light the regular house Chanukah candles outdoors, in front of one's house, a custom still prevalent in Eretz Yisroel, but not routinely done in “Chul” (Chutz L'aretz, outside of Israel). The rationale being that even though the candles are already being lit outside one's house, a shul lighting would publicize the miracle in a more dramatic public fashion (“b'rabim”) than even an outdoor house lighting. And this is the commonly accepted halacha - we light a Chanukah menorah in shuls across the world with a bracha in the evening (and some light again in the morning but without a bracha).

The Shulchan Aruch and the primary commentaries do not discuss what is nowadays an extremely common event in the United States and worldwide - the prominent festive public lighting of Chanukah menorahs in major secular venues, such as statehouses, malls and even in the White House. While this is a very public demonstration of pride in our Jewishness, certainly very inspiring and emotional, especially for people subjected to anti-Semitism daily, it begs the question. Are such lightings even permissible, never mind recommended, or do they constitute a blessing said in vain if a bracha accompanies such public displays of menorah lightings.





To understand the question fully, we must understand why the Rabbis instituted shul Chanukah candle lighting. If the mitzvah to light Chanukah candles is only in the house that you live in, what possible purpose could there be, what mitzvah do we accomplish, by lighting Chanukah candles in a shul?

All agree that one is **not yotzei** (one **does not fulfil**) the obligation of lighting the menorah when doing so in shul...

The Mor Uketziah,  
by Rabbi Yaakov

Emden, as quoted by the Sha'rei Teshuva and Biur Halacha in Orech Chaim 671, states that shul lighting is for the purpose of “pirsumei nisa” – a very public lighting to remind the masses of the Chanukah miracle. As such, Rabbi Emden contends (although others disagree) that shul lightings require 10 people to be present for adequate “publicization” to occur. Interestingly, as this is not “a davar shebekedushah” (a holy convocation that would require a minyan of 10 adult men), he argues it just requires that it be done in a public fashion, and indeed this could possibly be satisfied with women and children to satisfy this requirement of publicization.

Well, there certainly was much more than a minyan of Jewish people

attending the White House candle lighting ceremony. Does that mean that all agree that the menorah there could be lit, and with a bracha?

The great Sephardi poseik, the Kaf HaChaim, in Orech Chaim 761:65 states that candles are only lit in a public Beis Medrash (study hall) **if they**

**also daven there.**

This is also the opinion of many of the great Israeli poskim of the past generation, including Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach, Rabbi Yosef Shalom

Elyashiv and Rabbi Nisson Karelitz, all zt”l (see Dirshu Mishnah Brurah footnote 761:70 for the specific citations). it is not enough to have even a public gathering in a study hall to light the candles. Davening is an essential component of the custom.

Well, there was a Ma’ariv minyan outside the White House after the Chanukah lighting ceremony, but not in the White House itself, partially because of Covid restrictions. I doubt that would satisfy the Kaf HaChaim’s requirement...

In the sefer Tiferes Ephraim, written by my son, Rabbi Ephraim Glatt, he brings down numerous modern day poskim who contend that the practice established by the Lubavitcher Rebbi zt”l to recite a bracha at large public

***Does that mean  
that all agree that  
the menorah there  
could be lit, and  
with a bracha?***

## LIGHTING CHANUKAH CANDLES IN THE WHITE HOUSE

Menorah lighting ceremonies is not correct. Dayan Weiss, zt”l, the Minchas Yitzchok (Volume 6, 65:3) states: The practice of reciting a bracha on a menorah **even in shul** is not universally accepted, as brought down by the Rivash (Siman 111) and the Chacham Tzvi (Siman 88). Therefore, one is not permitted to

institute a new idea such as making a bracha on Menorah lightings in large public non-shul gatherings. The Tiferes Ephraim brings down many others who are of this opinion as

well, including the Tzitz Eliezer, Rabbi Eliezer m’Lunil, the Shibolei Haleket and the Birkei Yoseif. Dirshu Mishnah Brurah footnote 761:70 states this is also the opinion of Rabbi Auerbach and Rabbi Elyashiv, zt”l. . Finally, an esteemed colleague pointed out to me that it was the opinion of Rabbi Yosef Dov Solevetchik (“the Rav”) zt”l, as cited in Nefesh HaRav by Mori U’rabbi Rabbi Herschel Schachter, shlita, that a “Men’s Club Chagigah” did not qualify for Menorah lighting with a bracha. He also interestingly added that saying a bracha even without actual Shem Umalchus (even saying only “Hashem Elokeinu”) would constitute a bracha l’vatala.

The Divrei Yetziv, the halachic responsa

authored by Rabbi Yekutiel Yehudah Halberstam, the Klausenberg Rebbe, zt”l, similarly states: Especially in our times, when many people go and do whatever they wish to do, we should not deviate at all from the words of Chazal. We should not add or subtract one iota from what was previously

decided as established religious practice. Rabbi Shmuel Vosner, zt”l, in his work Shevet HaLevi (Volume 4, Siman 65) adds that the custom of lighting in shul was to remind us of the lighting

in the Beis HaMikdash. Thus it can **only** be done in a shul, the Mikdash Me’at (small Temple). Therefore, if / when done outside a shul, a Menorah **cannot** be lit with a bracha. Rabbi Vosner is of the opinion that “we do not have the power to add a new custom”. And he adds: “I know, yes I know, that there are those who do recite a bracha when publicly lighting at these gatherings - but who knows if this is something that the Rabbis are happy with...”

The Tzitz Eliezer, Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg, zt”l, (Volume 15 Siman 30) goes a step further and prohibits **even lighting** at such assemblies outside of a shul. He certainly does not sanction making a bracha at such ceremonies.

***We should not add or subtract one iota from what was previously decided as established religious practice.***



He writes: “It is clear and obvious that we do not have the power to add a new custom of lighting and making a bracha at such public gatherings, **and we should stop this practice**”. Indeed, if a bracha is said, Rabbi Waldenberg considers it a “bracha levatala” (a bracha said in vain).

While I am unaware of a teshuva written by the Lubavitcher Rebbe zt”l to explain his approbation of such lightings, he presumably would have been in accord with the sefer Az Nidberu (Volume 5, Siman 37 and Volume 11, Siman 32), written by Rabbi Binyomin Zilber, zt”l, who was a member of the Moetzet Gedolei Hatorah in Bnei Brak. Rabbi Zilber unequivocally writes that it is permitted and appropriate to light at such celebrations, because in this way one fulfils the essential original intention of Chazal to publicize the miracle outdoors. I would suggest that the lighting at the White House, while indoors, was seen by many more people via streaming than an in-person outdoor event, and thus would qualify under this aegis as fulfilling the principle of “pirsumei nisa”. Finally, the late great Sephardic Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, zt”l, in his magnum opus Yabia Omer, brings the sefer Minchas Yaakov, written by Rabbi Jacob Back (Backofen) Reischer, (author of the Shevus Yaakov) who permits one to even make a bracha in such a setting, **even more than lighting in a shul**, as this is a bigger pirsumei nisa! This

opinion is brought down as well by the Piskei Teshuvos (761:15, and in footnote 66), who adds that it is especially acceptable to recite a bracha if there are people there who would not be lighting at home.

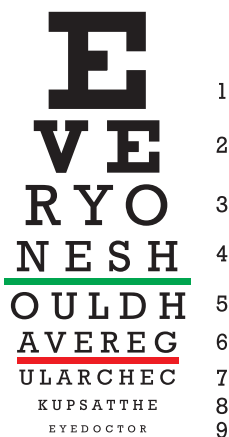
So what did I do? Fortunately, I was not asked to make a bracha, just to light the candle after someone else made the bracha. I discussed my participating in this event with Moru Rabbi, HaRav Mordechai Willig, shlita, who said it would be a kiddush Hashem to go and light, but I should not make a bracha. BH, it was a very special evening for my wife and I personally, and hopefully, it was a kiddush Hashem. However, I did note the following night when I lit in our shul at the Young Israel of Woodmere, that it was a bigger mitzvah according to (almost) all opinions to light there with a bracha than even at the White House.

May we all merit to be at the next public Menorah lighting in the rebuilt Beis Hamikdash, b'mehaira beyameinu!

# CHANUKAH: IT'S ALL ABOUT THE OPTICS

REBBETZIN RACHELLE GOLLER, OD

YOUNG ISRAEL OF WEST HEMPSTEAD



**WHEN I STARTED** practicing as an eye doctor over 15 years ago, I used to laugh to myself when describing to patients their presbyopia (defined as “Progressive loss of near focusing ability of the eye due to aging”). “That’s so far off” I thought, “Difficulty reading up close is an old person’s problem”. Well, here I am, no longer laughing as I needed to hold my machzor fur-

ther away on Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur this year, in order to read the words comfortably.

Whereas I deal with these vision issues for my patients every day at work, the philosophical concept of seeing clearly what is “up close” is particularly relevant to all of us during the upcoming holiday of Chanukah. The גמרא שבת תנו רבנן: מצות חנוכה נר איש וביתו teaches:

**Sight Gags** by Scott Lee, O.D.



The basic level of lighting the Chanukah candles is one light (each night) for a man and his entire household. Aside from the simple meaning, this can, homiletically speaking, be understood as saying that the focus of the Chanukah candles is seeing what is in our close vision, what is in our house, namely our families. Let’s explore this point a bit deeper.

Many of us grow up learning that the Mitzvah of the Chanukah candles is פרסומי ניסא, publicizing the miracles that Hashem performed. The Gemara (Ibid) states

תנו רבנן: נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ

“The requirement is to place the Chanukah light by the doorway of one’s house outside.” (Although halachically not required today, some are careful to fulfill this by lighting the Menorah in a glass case outside the home, as seen often in Israel). We may think from this wording that the Menorah is meant only to publicize the miracle to the people outdoors. However, in order for the impact to be made outside the home, the inspiration must come from within our homes as well. We must all recognize the miracles which Hashem performed for the Chashmonaim against the Greeks and the miracles He continues to do for us as a family, each and every day. We can see this further from the phrase that follows in the Gemara

ובשעת הסכנה - מניחה על שלחנו, ודיו.

“And at a time of danger he should place the light on his table and that is sufficient for him (to fulfill the Mitzvah)”. The obligation to publicize the miracle would not be fulfilled at all if the Menorah was placed on a table inside the house if advertising the Neis was meant only for those outside. Therefore, it must be that we can fulfill Pirsumei Nisa even by discussions with our own family inside our home. As the Aruch Hashulchan O.C. 671:24 states

כיון שהיכר הוא רק לבני הבית ואין היכר לבני ר"ה כלל אין לחוש כל כך אם אין מדליקין בטפח הסמך לפתח

“Because the recognition is ONLY for those who live in the home, therefore we all light inside the house.” What a powerful statement.... Nowadays, the Menorah must only be seen and the miracles discussed inside the home. (This has practical ramifications in halacha as well. If our teenage son comes home at 11 pm after a Chanukah Mesiba at Yeshiva, he can still light his Menorah with a Beracha, even though it’s unlikely anyone outside would walk by and see it that late at night. Because his lighting is publicizing the miracle for his parents and siblings who are still awake inside the house).

I believe that this statement also has profound meaning for our understanding of Chanukah’s message as a whole. There are most certainly miracles that Hashem performs all over the world for us to take note of. However, Chanukah reminds us to stop and recognize the miracles that are inside our home, namely, our family. The health, happiness and even the mere existence of a loving family should not be overlooked. We should utilize every day of Chanukah to appreciate the miracle that Hashem sustains ourselves and our families. We should take the time on Chanukah, no matter what age or stage of our lives we are in, to focus up close ... to cherish, treasure and respect those closest to us. We should look closely, with clarity at the wonders which Hashem provides us and be grateful for the many

blessings in our home.

A similar idea can be gleaned from the way in which the holiday of Chanukah was established. While the historical origins of Chanukah are found in the rededication of the Beis Hamikdash, the holiday's significance continues even after it is destroyed, when the Jews are dispersed throughout the world in Galus and are surrounded by values that are so different from our own. As Rav Soloveitchik is cited as saying in Days of Deliverance (Essays on Purim and Chanu-

kah page, 13) "If the Halacha chose to establish Chanukah as a holiday to be observed whether or not the Temple stands, that is a sign that Chanukah exists for generations, (and like Passover), holds within it the secret of the eternity of Israel". Whereas Chanukah was originally a holiday observed in the Beis Hamikdash—and logically should be commemorated in shul, our miniature Mikdash—the rabbis understood that in the new reality, the menorah would have to be lit in each and every home. Our sages ordained that we take the light of the menorah, light being the symbol of Torah, and place it in our homes. The values of the Jewish family are to illuminate our homes

so that we can properly interact with the world around us. The candles thus remind us to teach our family to learn from the conflict with the Greeks. As the Rav continues (Ibid page, 131) "The Greeks hated the Jews' spiritual essence, their worldview, their peculiarity, their being different—in short, their

Torah...They began to meddle with the intimate realm of human life, the Jewish people's connection to God." We must prove every day of Chanukah that we have defeated the Greeks by maintaining a sanctified home and family.

***This was because  
the Greeks  
realized that  
the source of  
strength of the  
Jewish people  
was the family  
and the home.***

Chanukah has a very special family connotation. The entire family gathers around and together lights the candles. This takes place every evening for 8 days, often accompanied by a celebration and a family meal. There is a very good reason for this, since the Greeks attempted in a very forceful manner to disrupt the Jewish home and the Jewish family. The רמב"ם (Rambam's Iggeret Ha'Shemad or Ma'amar Kiddush Hashem, p. 43) tells us that one of the decrees that the Greeks imposed upon the Jewish people was that they were never allowed to lock the doors of their homes. This was because the Greeks realized that the source of strength of the Jewish people was



the family and the home. By leaving their doors open, the home became vulnerable to any outside influence, in particular the powerful Hellenistic philosophy, which was sweeping through Am Yisrael. In addition, the Greeks banned the observance of Shabbos and Chodesh, meaning all the Jewish holidays. This also constituted an attack on the entity of the family and the home, for Shabbos and the Chagim are very much a family experience. Therefore, each day of Chanukah, let us remember the sanctity of the Jewish home and the importance of meaningful Shabbos and Yom Tov observance. In this way, we can each publicize that the Jews were not defeated but stand strong to this very day.

In conclusion, there is a strong and integral link between the נרות חנוכה and our near vision. The mitzvah requires us to focus on our family and the daily miracles which Hashem provides. May we all merit an uplifting, meaningful Chanukah with the clarity to have the proper Hakaras Hatov to Hashem Yisbarach for the family that surrounds us.

בימים ההם, בזמן הזה!!!

# WHAT THE ENTIRE WORLD SHOULD KNOW

RABBI DAVID HELLMAN

YOUNG ISRAEL OF BROOKLINE

**WHILE THE CONCEPT OF** pirsumei nisa, publicizing the miracle for which we are thankful, is an aspect of several mitzvot, it is especially crucial in fulfilling the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah. Originally, the practice was to light the menorah outside of the home, and even today, when many light within their homes, it is still preferable to light next to a window so those passing by will be able to see it. Indeed, this goes beyond reading the megillah on Purim or drinking four cups of wine at the seder, which are also defined as mitzvot of pirsumei nisa. With those mitzvot, we publicly recount the miracles of our salvation within our shuls and homes, but we do not attempt to make them known even in the street!

Furthermore, some halachik authorities argue that the enhancement of pirsumei nisa of Chanukah lights includes the facilitation of non-Jews to see and understand our menorahs. This is based on the formulation of the Talmud (Shabbat 21b) that our Chanu-



kah lights should burn sufficiently into the night until the “Tarmudi'im are no longer in the marketplace.” Rashi explains that the Tarmudi'im were a non-Jewish ethnic group that lived among the Jewish communities in Talmudic times.

Certainly, there is no mitzvah to read the megillah or drink the four cups of wine in the presence of non-Jews! So why did the Sages instruct us to light our menorahs out-

side, or at the very least by our windows, so that both Jew and non-Jew alike would see and witness our thanksgiving for the miracle? Why is *pirsumei nisa* so important on Chanukah?

Before suggesting an answer to this specific question, it is important to note that we do not merely light a menorah to commemorate the miracle of the oil lasting eight days on the year that the Maccabees reclaimed the Temple Mount. Many sources explain that our menorahs today are modeled after the lighting of the menorah in the Beit Hamikdash, which occurred every day for centuries. As an example, the Shulchan Aruch (677:4) rules that any oil left over in the menorah remains prohibited for general use even after the eighth day of Chanukah. For just about any other mitzvah, once its ful-

filment is complete, the item, according to the letter of law, becomes permitted for general use. Thus, a shofar can be used after Rosh Hashana to carry water, and an etrog after Sukkot can be eaten. However, the oil of

a Chanukah menorah is different, and the commentaries explain that since the oil of the Beit Hamikdash menorah was *hekdes*h, holy property of the Temple and forbidden for any non-ho-

ly use, so too the oil of our menorah carries the same restrictions. In other words, the menorah of Chanukah is modeled after the menorah in the Beit Hamikdash, and it is as if we are still lighting the Temple menorah today in our homes.

This equation can help explain the centrality of *pirsumei nisa* in the mitzvah of the Chanukah menorah, because our Sages saw the menorah of the Beit Hamikdash as a symbol that was meant to publicize and share a fundamental message of the Torah to the broadest audience possible. The Talmud (Shabbat 22b), commenting on the verse, “Outside of the curtain of the Testimony, Aharon should arrange [the menorah] from evening until morning” (Vayikra 24:3), explains that the menorah is meant to bear witness and give testimony to the covenant

***So why did the Sages instruct us to light our menorahs outside... so that both Jew and non-Jew alike would see and witness our thanksgiving for the miracle?***

between Hashem and the Jewish people. As the Talmud puts it, “Does Hashem need a light? Rather it is to be testimony to all humanity (literally: all who pass through the world) that Hashem dwells among the Jewish people. What is the testimony? This is the western candle” that would miraculously burn the entire night and never go out. Jews and non-Jews visited the beit hamikdash, and through the windows they saw that the light never went out. It was a miracle that proved Hashem’s presence.

***It declared to  
the outside  
world the  
private bond  
between  
Hashem and the  
Jewish people***

Now, the true symbol of the covenant between Hashem and the Jewish people was the luchot held in the ark in the Holy of Holies, and, on the most straightforward level, this is why the verse refers to the curtain as the “the curtain of Testimony,” for the curtain protects and shields the ark and the luchot. However, that representation of the covenant is private, and hidden behind the curtain, such that no one can see it. Our Sages understood that the menorah, which stood in front of the curtain, outside of the Holy of Holies, was meant to be the public declaration of that covenant. The western candle, which miraculously burned longer than it should have, in particular, was a testimony for all humanity that Hashem dwelled among His cho-

sen people, Israel.

The miracle of the oil of the Maccabees only furthered the meaning and symbolism of the menorah. The western candle always (when the Jewish people merited it) burned beyond the time that nature would allow. With the Maccabees, that miracle was multiplied and magnified by having all the candles burn for an extra seven days. Similarly, the miracle of the western candle was

always meant to be a way for Hashem to communicate and publicize his presence within, and love for the Jewish people, to the entire world. So too, when the oil lasted eight days, Hashem used the menorah to make sure that everyone knew that He was present during the war with the Greeks, He still loved the Jewish people, and that He had never left them, despite what others thought.

As explained above, our menorah is a miniature of the menorah of the Beit Hamikdash, which, as our Sages understood, was meant to be a public testimonial to the covenant. It declared to the outside world the private bond between Hashem and the Jewish people, represented by the luchot in the hidden and private Holy of Holies. So too, our Sages sought to stress in our menorah of Chanukah

*Continued on page 30*



**NATIONAL COUNCIL  
OF YOUNG ISRAEL  
GRATEFULLY ACKNOWLEDGES  
OUR JOURNAL SPONSORS**

THE ESTATE OF  
REB NISSEN KRAKINOWSKI

J. GREENSTEIN & CO.

MARK TRENCHER

YOUNG ISRAEL OF CENTURY CITY

YOUNG ISRAEL OF  
LAWRENCE-CEDARHURST

YOUNG ISRAEL OF OAK PARK

YOUNG ISRAEL OF OCEANSIDE

YOUNG ISRAEL OF PLAINVIEW

YOUNG ISRAEL OF  
WEST HARTFORD

YOUNG ISRAEL OF WOODMERE



*NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL PRESENTS:  
MENORAH BUILDING CONTEST*

1. BUILD A FUNCTIONAL & CREATIVE MENORAH
2. SUBMIT YOUR PICTURES TO US BY  
MONDAY, DECEMBER 26, 2022
3. SHARE THE LINK ON YOUR SOCIAL MEDIA FOR  
YOUR FRIENDS TO VOTE FOR YOUR MENORAH!
4. DETAILS & ENTRY FORM ARE AT  
[YOUNGISRAEL.ORG/CONTEST](http://YOUNGISRAEL.ORG/CONTEST)

**Sponsored by:**



**J GREENSTEIN & CO, INC.**

Buy, Sell your antique Judaica with us!  
[www.jgreenstein.com](http://www.jgreenstein.com)



*[YOUNGISRAEL.ORG/CONTEST](http://YOUNGISRAEL.ORG/CONTEST)*

## WHAT THE ENTIRE WORLD SHOULD KNOW

that it also should be a public witness to the miracle of the holiday. Through it, we should declare our thanksgiving even in the street so that “all who pass through the world,” Jew and non-Jew alike, might see it and understand.

The lesson of these ideas and a theme of the holiday of Chanukah is that Hashem not only loves us, but wants us, and others as well, to know that. In general, love should always radiate outward and cannot be sealed in a closed bottle. When it comes to our families and those closest to us, it should be clear to all that we care for them. While our most intense feelings will be shared privately, if we have to hide our love or are embarrassed to express our closeness in front of others, there is something deficient in

the relationship. In the same manner, we have a special bond with Hashem that is held privately in the Holy of Holies, within the ark and inscribed on the luchot, but Hashem also always wanted to have a public symbol of His

love for the Jewish people and that was the menorah. It shined brightly and miraculously beyond the curtain and its rays emanated outward through the windows and into the world for all to see. The miracle of Chanukah was a

further, public declaration of the covenant. Hence, we reciprocate with our own menorahs, lighting them outside or by the window, so that everyone, Jew and non-Jew, can see the symbol of Hashem's presence in our homes and in our hearts. We love Him and want everyone to know that.

***The lesson of these ideas and a theme of the holiday of Chanukah is that Hashem not only loves us, but wants us, and others as well, to know that.***

# חנוכה שמח

## Young Israel of West Hartford

Rabbi Tuvia Brander, Mara D'atra  
Shayne Green Kesler, President



<https://www.youngisraelwh.org/congregation>

# DISTINCTIVENESS: ISRAEL AND OLIVE OIL



DANIEL "MUSH" MEYER

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, YI - ISRAEL REGION

**THE SFAS EMES** זצ"ל (Poland: 1871-1905), the second Rebbe of the Gerrer Chassidim, wrote and taught profusely about the Festival of Chanukah. He shared a vort on why we use שמן זית - olive oil to kindle the lights of the Menorah.

Why, asks the Sfas Emes, use שמן זית to kindle the Chanukah lights? He answers: because of two distinctive characteristics of olive oil that the Jewish people also possess: 1) Olives only produce their oil after considerable processing (crushing with a heavy weight) 2) Oil never dissolves or blends with another substance, it floats and remains suspended on top. The Jewish people, writes the Sfas Emes, 1) Only give forth their finest produce after severe persecution and 2) No matter how hard other nations try to assimilate them, they, like the oil, refuse to blend with the gentile world.

We can see the examples of these two characteristics in the time of the Cha-

nukah miracle. The oppressive Greeks were relentless in their persecution, yet the Jews refused to succumb and assimilate, just as oil does not blend. Further, the greatest accomplishments of Am Israel occurred after the oppression of the Greeks. The Mishna and Gemara and the vast majority of Torah Shebe'al Peh was accomplished after the Chanukah miracle.

As we look at the Chanukah lights and bask in their warmth, let's take a moment to not only reflect on the miracles that happened בימים ההם, but also those that have happened in very recent Jewish history, and dwell on the fact that עם ישראל is once again a sovereign entity in the land where the battles of the Maccabees took place, where the Chanukah miracle took place and where בע"ה בקרוב בימינו we will be zocheh to see the Kohanim once again kindle the Menorah.



# CHANUKAH AND THE GIFT OF GRATITUDE

REBBETZIN Yael Muskat, Psy.D

Young Israel of Oceanside



**IN THE LATE FALL**, as the weather gets colder and the days get shorter, there is excitement in the air. Everyone is talking about the traditions they love and the delicious foods they are cooking in anticipation of the holiday of gratitude that comes around as if on cue, when we all need a break. Yes, the holiday of Chanukah brings warmth, light, festivity and delicious oily foods, and it has gratitude at its very core.

The Chashmonaim initially founded Chanukah as a holiday of gratitude. This is evidenced by a passage in the Al Ha-Nissim prayer, “And they (your children) established these eight days of Chanukah to thank You and praise Your great name” and a passage in the Gemara (Shabbat 21b) “the Sages instituted these days and made them holidays with Hallel and thanksgiving.” The Zohar also emphasizes that Chanukah is connected to the sefira of Hod, or appreciation, which again connects this holiday to gratitude.

This connection always seemed straightforward to me, and I never gave it much thought, until I recently read something that sparked my interest. There are two words in the English language that people say much less than they think they do and those words are “Thank You”. People may feel appreciation on some level, but they don’t express it so often. Why is increasing gratitude especially relevant to us today? During this period of inflation and looming recession, gratitude is one of the best investments that you could make. It is by far the most bang you can get for your buck. Gratitude deepens the experience of joy. Therefore, simple appreciation, saying and hearing “thank you” can make you a much happier person, improve your relationships and bolster your health. The holiday of Chanukah can help us focus on gratitude and teach us more about what it has to offer and how we can practice it.

Every holiday has a symbol or a mitzvah that helps us internalize its core





message. Matzah, with its flat and hard texture, clearly brings to mind the hardship of slavery, and the fragile nature of the sukkah clearly brings to mind the tenuous existence of the Jews in the desert. Certainly, the doughnuts and gifts associated with Chanukah can make us feel grateful, but the lights of Chanukah, the beautiful flames that we light each night, highlight many of the lessons that research has uncovered about the power of gratitude.

### GRATITUDE IN OUR OWN LIVES:

The first and easiest place we can increase our gratitude is in our own lives by simply noticing what we already have. The attitude of gratitude is developed, not by inventing something new, but by shedding light on things that are already present, just as a candle brings light to a darkened room, showing anew what has been there all along. The Beit Yosef asks a famous question. If the holiday of Chanukah is celebrating that the light of the oil found in the Beit Hamikdash lasted eight days instead of one day, why do we light eight candles? Isn't the miracle only the seven extra days, since the oil would naturally have been enough for one day. The equally famous answer given by the Alter of Kelm is that there is no natural order; rather, everything in nature is a miracle and act of God, but one we take for granted. Thus, the first candle highlights that events that we take for granted are also worthy of gratitude.

The first light, the one that seems extra, is sending an emphatic statement about noticing and appreciating what we take for granted.

Furthermore, the Maharal (Chiddushei Aggadot, Shabbat 21b) explains that the miracle of the lights served the purpose of clarifying that just as God miraculously caused the oil to last, He miraculously caused us to defeat the Greeks militarily. As such, the candles that we light help to clarify the role of God in our lives, even when it's not so clear.

The same is true when it comes to gratitude. In his fascinating book, "The Happiness Curve," Jonathan Rauch makes the case that "life gets better after the age of 50". He explains that people start to become more grateful as they get older, and that helps them consciously and unconsciously shift their priorities and goals to the things that give them meaning, like family and spirituality. This reduces the "urge to obsess and pour over regrets, jealousy and disappointments" and direct attention to the positive. In short, he says, gratitude helps people clarify their priorities.

In our own lives, Chanukah lights remind us, hopefully before the age of fifty, to regularly appreciate all the things we take for granted, recognize God's role in our lives and continually use gratitude to help us focus on the meaningful aspects of our lives.



### GRATITUDE IN RELATIONSHIPS

The second way in which gratitude improves our lives is its impact on social, familial and workplace relationships. The Chanukah lights can provide inspiration about this as well.

I have often wondered about the nature of the Shamash. While there is a clear halachic purpose to the shamash, that of ensuring that we don't use the light of the Chanukah candle for mundane purposes, the symbolism of the Shamash, going from one wick to the other, lighting it and then humbly moving to its rightful place in the menorah, is compelling.

Like the Shamash whose light is not diminished when it "shares" its flame, when a person says thank you, the benefit goes both ways. The person showing appreciation and the person receiving appreciation both feel happier and both feel more connected with one another. Research studies show that when couples are asked to express gratitude whenever they feel it, they end up wanting to spend more time with each other and see each other in a more positive light. In friendships as well, myriads of studies show that expressing gratitude creates stronger bonds. The feeling of being

appreciated and not being taken for granted is a natural boost for any relationship. (Algoe, et al. 2016.)

Additionally, the symbol of one light specifically lighting another and then another also symbolizes the multiplying effect of one small flame and the contagious aspect of light, how easily it spreads from just one source. Gratitude has this effect on relationships as well. Not only do both parties in each gratitude interaction benefit, but witnesses of gratitude benefit, as well. In an amazing study, it was found that people who simply saw someone send a "thank you text" or a "thank you video" began to say thank you more themselves. (Algoe et. all, 2020.)

***Not only do both parties in each gratitude interaction benefit, but witnesses of gratitude benefit, as well.***

More than just creating positive feelings, gratitude can spark action. Like a flame, gratitude has the power to ignite and activate, to initiate chain reactions that go further than the eye can see. In another fascinating experiment done in the workplace, two groups of people helped another person, "Eric," with a task. Some received thank you notes, and some did not. Those who received the thank you notes were far more prone to helping the next person, actually twice as



much! Receiving a thank you caused people to be far more generous to another person. (Grant and Gino, 2010)

The reciprocal nature of gratitude and its multiplying effects are just some of the many benefits of practicing gratitude in relationships, and the Chanukah lights can remind us that if we express gratitude to others in our lives, then we will all benefit.

### GRATITUDE IN ACTION

Thirdly, the candles can help us learn how to fine-tune our gratitude. Is there a right way to say thank you?

The quick answer to this question is no. And this is important, because research indicates that one reason people don't say "thank you" enough is that they are scared to do it the wrong way. The benefits of gratitude are present for all of its expressions, big or small. That being said, on Chanukah, we try to observe the mitzvah of kindling the Chanukah lights in the most mehadrin, or enhanced way possible. Similarly, there are enhanced ways to express gratitude, as well.

The most enhanced way to kindle the Chanukah lights is to add another light each night. Why don't we light all eight candles every night? Wouldn't this bring additional light into the world and thank Hashem properly for the incredible miracle of having eight days of light?

I think that the reason why we add one light each night is because it shows

us that we must focus on the process and not simply the end result. Each day of Chanukah was its own miracle, in addition to the fact that there were eight days of light in total. When we say thank you, we must focus on the process, together with the end result. For example, when giving a gift, the effort that was put in and the thought involved are often even more special than the gift itself. When possible, the more specific and broken down the thank you is, the more appreciated the person feels.

The lights of Chanukah provide us with infinite lessons and spiritual gifts. This year, let us pay attention to the messages they inspire about gratitude and the ways in which increasing gratitude towards Hashem and towards others can profoundly elevate and improve our lives.

Algoe, S. B., Dwyer, P. C., Young, A., & Oveis, C. (2020). A new perspective on the social functions of emotions: Gratitude and the witnessing effect. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 119(1), 40-74

Algoe, S. B., Kurtz, L. E., & Hilaire, N. M. (2016). Putting the "You" in "Thank You": Examining Other-Praising Behavior as the Active Relational Ingredient in Expressed Gratitude. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 7(7), 658-666.

Grant, A. M., & Gino, F. (2010). A little thanks goes a long way: Explaining why gratitude expressions motivate prosocial behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 98(6), 946-955.

Rauch, J. (2018). *The happiness curve: Why life gets better after 50*. St. Martin Press



# RELIGION, NATIONHOOD & UNIVERSALISM: AVRAHAM AVINU, RAV KOOK AND THE CHANUKAH LEGACY

RABBI DORON PEREZ

EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF THE MIZRACHI WORLD MOVEMENT



## COULD THE REAL ABRAHAM PLEASE STAND UP!

Who is the Founding Father of the Jewish People and what was most important to him?

He seems to be a person of great contradictions! Was he the devout knight of faith and religious fundamentalism prepared to sacrifice his son in the name of absolute obedience to G-d?

Was he perhaps an uncompromising nationalist prepared to declare war on other nations in order to save Lot - to kill others for the sake of one member of his tribe?

Was he perhaps a great humanist prepared to pray for the good of the despicably immoral Sodomites?

A strong case could be made for all three.

## RELIGIOSITY

Avraham is the consummate am-

bassador of religious faith and the ultimate man of G-d. We are first introduced to him when Hashem commands him to leave his country, land of birth and father's house - to leave behind everything familiar and to embark on a Divinely ordained religious odyssey to the unknown. He follows without question. We are privy to many more Divine commands and conversations throughout his life. We encounter a man deeply connected to G-d, commanded by Him and absolutely obedient to Him. Nowhere is this obedience clearer than in the perplexing command to sacrifice his beloved son Yitzchak, an impossible task in itself, yet made even more challenging by G-d's earlier promise that Yitzchak would be the forebear of a great nation. Nevertheless, Avraham does not deviate in his adherence to what he perceives as the will of Heaven. He unquestioningly marches with his beloved son to Mount Moriah knowing full well that he has been called upon to kill him on the altar of religious



faith. Is there a greater act of religious fervor, Divine dedication, and commitment than this in all of Tanach?

### NATIONALISTIC

Avraham is also the epitome of acting on nationalistic impulses. His entire life revolves around journeying to the specific land G-d showed him, the Land of Canaan, settling in different parts of that Land and being repeatedly promised that G-d will bless him to be a *גוי גדול*, a great people, with a particular task, in this very Land.

Nowhere is this nationalist impulse clearer than in his desire to save his errant nephew Lot. As soon as he hears that Lot has been taken captive, Avraham springs into action, takes up arms and is prepared to fight against regional powers to do whatever it takes to rescue him. Nowhere does G-d command him to do so - it is his own personal decision. He is prepared to sacrifice everything - his life, his spiritual mission, and the lives of every one of his followers in order to save one member of the tribe. Not to mention that Lot chose to part ways with Abraham and seek out his own destiny, choosing to live amongst the perverse Sodomites. Yet Avraham unflinchingly gathers every able-bodied man in his household - all 318, - prepares them for a military mission and leads them into battle against a coalition of major regional powers for the sake of his wayward nephew? All for

one [member of the tribe] and one for all, no matter what the price.

### UNIVERSALIST

Avraham is also a humanist par excellence as is clearly evidenced by two remarkable acts in Parashat Vayeira.

Firstly, his *הַכָּנָסֶת אוֹרְחִים* - hospitality - to unknown pagan travelers is unmatched. In great pain after his circumcision at the advanced age of 99, he runs out in the heat of the desert sun to welcome idolatrous guests - later to be revealed as angels - into his home and hosts them with a lavish meal as if they were royalty.

Although he thought these people were the ideological antithesis of everything he stood for - he was teaching monotheism and belief in a purposeful and personal G-d, and they were espousing paganism, idol worship and the belief in many impersonal amoral gods - he had no hesitation in welcoming them into his home.

These were the same men whose ideology, according to Midrashic tradition, Avraham was going out of his way to fight and destroy. He was a renowned and revolutionary idol-basher, committed zealously to his monotheistic religious beliefs. Yet, without hesitation, Avraham welcomes them into his home, washes the dust of idolatry off their feet<sup>1</sup>, finding a way to bridge the boundaries and sit together.

<sup>1</sup> See Rashi, Bereishit 18:4.

Secondly, when G-d informs Avraham of His plan to destroy Sodom, Avraham does everything in his power to prevent it. Although their actions were abhorrent, he loved all of humanity and impassioned G-d not to destroy His creatures. He cries out in protest to G-d

‘האף תספה צדיק  
עם רשע’

...will indeed  
the righteous die  
amongst  
the wicked?  
(Bereishit  
18:23)

Surely, G-d  
will not wil-  
ly-nilly cause the death of innocent  
individuals among the other wicked  
practitioners in the city, protests Avra-  
ham.

### THREE WHICH ARE ONE

Which of these three tenets - religio-  
sity, nationalism or universalism - rep-  
resents the real Avraham Avinu?

He is of course a blend of all three -  
the staunch advocate of faith, the  
proud nationalist and the ardent hu-  
manist devoted to all people created  
in the image of G-d.

The more he searched for G-d, the  
more he found his fellow man.

The core principles that he stood for

formed the authentic blueprint for Ju-  
daism and the spiritual mission of the  
Jewish people.

In a groundbreaking way, he was able  
to blend the religious, the national  
and the universal into one complete  
whole.

***He is of course a  
blend of all three -  
the staunch advocate  
of faith, the proud  
nationalist and the  
ardent humanist  
devoted to all people  
created in the image  
of G-d.***

### RAV KOOK'S FOR- MULA FOR JEWISH UNITY

Remarkably, it is  
precisely these  
three elements  
that Rav Kook  
identifies in his  
sefer Orot Techiya  
when describing  
the ideological  
battles raging in

the early 1900s in pre-State Palestine.

To me, this was one of the most bril-  
liant and insightful essays that I'd  
ever encountered and the most inge-  
nious spiritual recipe and philosophi-  
cal framework for creating a unified  
meeting of minds and hearts of the  
different ideological camps in Israel.  
It gave me a fresh perspective from  
which to view Jewish unity and a  
fresh lens through which to relook at  
Avraham as the founder of the Jewish  
people.

Rav Kook writes that the tenets that  
we highlighted regarding Avraham  
are the very same fundamental issues  
at the ideological heart of all societies  
in general and Jewish society in par-

ticular. He maintains that these three issues have divided states and societies along political and cultural fissures since time immemorial. This was certainly true regarding the fledgling Zionist enterprise at the turn of the last century and equally true in Israel today.

As Rav Kook says:

‘שלשה כחות מתאבקים כעת במחנינו...הקודש, האומה, האנושיות, - אלה הם שלשת התביעות העקריות, שהחיים כולם, שלנו ושל כל אדם, באיזו צורה שהיא, מורכבים מהם...’

‘Three forces are wrestling with each other at this time in our midst... The holy, the national and the universal - these are the three principal demands that life, in general terms, of our own and of all people, in one way or another, are composed ...’ (Orot HaTehiya, 18)

Without understanding these concepts, there is no real way to fathom the underlying fault lines in order to build an inclusive and unified Jewish society. These three ideological underpinnings are indeed not contradictory but complementary. They all have a basis in Torah and form parts of the Torah’s spiritual vision for Jewish and human life.

Although written over a century ago, these thoughts could not be more relevant today, especially in light of the

ongoing elections and the divide in Israeli society. Many of the issues which divide us today are the same that existed in Rav Kook’s time. They are a reflection of the deepest human and Jewish yearnings - spirituality, nationhood and universal morality. Rav Kook highlights how each one represents part of the whole truth of what Judaism is about and argues that a complete understanding of the Jewish mission must incorporate all three.

## CHANUKAH

Interestingly, these same three prisms shape the way exponents of different ideologies tend to relate to the story of Chanukah.

Religious people tend to interpret Chanukah exclusively as a fight for the primacy of Torah and Mesorah, our Jewish beliefs and traditions in the face Hellenization. People from a national-religious background tend to agree with this basic premise, but laud the additional component of the political and military leadership role adopted by the Hasmoneans and the restoration of Jewish sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

People from the nationalist camp view the Hasmoneans as the military-oriented Maccabees who stood up to defend their people and fight for independence, while liberals read the story as a fight for religious tolerance.

<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the Rambam (Laws of Chanukah, 1:1) mentions both these achievements of the Hasmoneans. Salvation from the Greek regime at the time reversed the oppressive decree against Torah observance and restored Jewish sovereignty for over 200 years until the destruction of the Second Temple.



The oppressive Hellenist regime was discriminating against the Jews and so they had the right to fight for their freedom.

Whose reading of history is accurate? Undoubtedly, all have elements of truth.

All capture a part of what the Chanukah legacy is and how the flames of the re-kindled Menorah represent the contrasting yet complementary torches of our collective Jewish mission.

### COMPLETE JEWISH LIFE

Jewish life is rooted in our belief in G-d and Torah. Without belief in G-d and acceptance of the moral and spiritual laws revealed at Sinai, we miss the mark of Jewish destiny. At the same time, the godliness revealed to Avraham very clearly and profoundly in-

cludes both a national and a universal ethos.

The principle of Am Yisrael, our collective responsibility and destiny, is critical to the Jewish story. G-d revealed himself to one man, who became the founder of a singular people given a particular land and a distinct set of laws to fulfill their purpose in this world.

***At the same time, the godliness revealed to Avraham very clearly and profoundly includes both a national and a universal ethos.***

Jewish particularism and peoplehood are at the heart of Judaism. One cannot separate Judaism from the Jewish people.

At the same time, G-d demanded that Avraham be a source of blessing and moral light to all--to love and respect all those created in the image of G-d and to be a proactive force for the greater good of all of humanity.

May we collectively live up to this noble and all-encompassing mission.

# CHANUKAH MUSIC, REVISITED

RABBI EDDIE ROSENBERG

YOUNG ISRAEL OF SAN DIEGO



**MUSIC CREATES A MOOD.** Ever since recorded music, most of us have been reaching out, struggling to find the right melody, tune, and words to match the feeling we have (or want to have) in a particular time and situation.

Recently, I stumbled upon a song with such a powerful, hauntingly introspective melody, it got me thinking about the music we play on Chanukah. It is a song by Israeli musician Yoni Ganut (יוני גנוט). Originally from Bnei Brak, he lives with his family on a Mizrahi moshav called Tarum in Beit Shemesh. “Higaleh Na,” his third and most recent album, released in October of this year, contains 13 beautiful, soul-stirring songs, one of which is “Ka Hatzel” (י-ה הצל). The words are taken from an ancient anonymous piyut sung traditionally by Iraqi Jews for Chanukah, long before they ever encountered “Maoz Tzur.”

Here are the lyrics of the piyut:

י-ה הצל יונה מחכה.  
ודמעתה לך מפכה.  
ותשמח בך אתה מלכה.  
בשמונת ימי חנוכה:

Hashem, save the dove that waits.  
And her tears pour out (possible play on the word “pach,” the cruse of oil found by the Chashmonaim) for you.  
And she will rejoice in you, her King.  
Through the eight days of Chanukah.

הודו לנאה על גאים	דרשו לא-ל כל לכבות
ונורא על כל נוראים	כי גמל עלינו טובות
הציל את נין חשמונאים	שמחו בנים עם האבות
מיד צר כי בהם הנה:	בדת מני ים ארצה:
ותשמח בך אתה מלכה	ותשמח בך אתה מלכה
בשמונת ימי חנוכה:	בשמונת ימי חנוכה:
ושירו עמך שירות	הא-ל ימינו יחדש
וזמירות מפי יקרות	וצר להריגה יקדש
בהדליקם את הנרות	ישלח עזרך מקדש
בשמונת ימי חנוכה:	ומציון יסעדך
ותשמח בך אתה מלכה	ותשמח בך אתה מלכה
בשמונת ימי חנוכה:	בשמונת ימי חנוכה:

## CHANUKAH MUSIC, REVISITED

Ultimately, the theme of the piyut is connecting two conflicting themes: the difficulties experienced by the Jews during the Greek influence over our philosophy and the occupation of our land with the ultimate redemption we will experience (bimheira biyam-einu) with the future geulah (redemption). Hashem's mercy over our pitiful condition will spur Him on to rescue us.

The singer wrote to me in a correspondence that he was not familiar with the piyut growing up. When he was "exposed to it about two years ago," he found most of its traditional melodies too "gleeful." The introspective nature of the lyrics inspired Ganut to sing them in a gentler melody, one that he feels "connects to the intimate and homey warmth of lighting the Chanukah candles."

Indeed, the music, starting in the first beat with an organ in a minor key, and Ganut's echoing falsetto voice, with acoustic guitar and drums coming in at the second stanza, creates the sensation of the familiar, sentimental warmth the singer intended. The song is contemplative in a sort of prayer-like meditation seen recently in the stream of Jewish music popularized by such artists as Yosef Karduner, Aryeh Kunstler, and Ishai Ribo.

But this feeling need not necessarily be gloomy and brooding. The music has the power to uplift us, as may be the main point of Chanukah. After all, when the Shulchan Aruch rhetorical-

ly asks the identity of Chanukah's essence, he answers, "d'lo mispidei bei" (not to eulogize on it). The implication is that the main focus of the holiday is to push back against the surrounding darkness. The Chanukah miracle was actually the continuity of the Jewish people despite both the insurmountable military challenge of the Greek Empire occurring at the same time as the growing apathy and ignorance within the holy camp of the Jewish people.

"Bayamim hahem, bazman hazeh." - In those days, as well as in this time.

What was true for the Maccabees/Chashmonaim then is still true for us today! The Jewish people confront so many challenges: national, local, personal, emotional, and otherwise. They may seem infinitely overwhelming. Staring at the burning candles of our chanukiot, we have the opportunity to see how holiness and introspection can effectively push away that darkness. We can revitalize the confident knowledge that Hashem will take pity on the tears we've spilled into countless cruses of oil. Should we not have a song that aids us in seeing that very hope take flight?



# JUDGMENT SIGNED, SEALED AND DELIVERED!

RABBI DANIEL ROSENFELT

YOUNG ISRAEL OF KEW GARDENS HILLS



**IF I WERE TO ASK**, which of the Jewish Holidays is most similar to Chanukah, I think most of us would say Purim (the only other חג that is דרבנן). However, the Kedushas Levi (early 19th century Ukraine) in דרושים לחנוכה actually suggests that Rosh Hashanah and Chanukah have something very exclusive in common. While all the other Yom Tovim take place towards the middle of the month when the moon is full; only Chanukah and Rosh Hashana are celebrated when the moon is at its weakest and smallest point, as part of Chanukah also takes place on the first of a month.

I believe, however, that there is another connection between these two Yom Tovim.

When do the Days of Repentance conclude? You probably want to respond by saying on Yom Kippur. There are those who say these special days when Hashem is near and the time is ripe for teshuva stretch into Sukkos -

even until Hoshana Rabba! However, the Bnei Yissachar (Rabbi Tzvi Elimelch of Dinov- early 19th century) suggests that the gates of teshuva are opened "עד זאת חנוכה" until the end of Chanukah! As the Arizal writes, "עיקר, סוף גמר החתימה הוא חנוכה."

The final judgment of Rosh Hashana goes through many phases. It begins during Elul, as the shofar is sounded daily to remind us of teshuva, and culminates on Yom Kippur when the judgment is sealed. However, these verdicts can still potentially be modified with sincere teshuva. This additional period of consideration continues through Hoshana Rabbah when the sealed document is actually delivered. But as we have seen, the good news for us is that our judgment continues, and can still be changed throughout the days of Chanukah.

So even if one has ignored all the other זמני תשובה, it comes out that the gates of teshuva remain open until the end

of Chanukah!

I saw in the forthcoming Sefer published by Mosaica Press, written by Rabbi Moshe Taub (Young Israel of Holliswood), that the Gemara in Bava Kama (112b) says that a lender has ninety days to prove a loan document fictitious or paid-up. Failure to prove this within that time frame allows Beis Din to demand that the creditor take assets away from the lender. Rav Yosef Chaim Sonnenfeld (passed away in Yerushalayim in 1932) is quoted as teaching that this Gemara alludes to Chanukah being the end-game of these days of judgment. Rav Yosef Chaim explained that just as the lender has ninety days to prove the veracity of the loan document, there are ninety days from Rosh Hashanah until the last day of Chanukah, during which we too have that same time to prove the verdict wrong!

As we welcome the eight days of Chanukah, let us remember to use these holy days of Din properly and be sure that a successful judgment is definitely delivered!

# ISHTO K'GUFO AND THE INDIVIDUAL: WOMEN AND CHANUKAH LIGHTING

RABBANIT/YOETZET LISA SEPTIMUS

YOUNG ISRAEL OF NORTH WOODMERE

**THERE IS A DISCUSSION** about how to light Chanukah candles in Masechet Shabbat 21b. The basic requirement of the mitzvah is that each household lights one candle for each of the eight nights. The mehadrin, those who beautify (or chase after) mitzvot, have each member of the household light one candle. The mehadrin min hamehadrin – the uber-mitzva-beautifiers (or uber-mitzva-chasers) – light one candle the first night and add another candle each night (according to the view of Beit Hillel).

Medieval commentators and halakhic authorities dispute the gemara's intent in describing the mehadrin min hamehadrin. Rav Yosef Karo, the author of the Shulchan Aruch, rules (O"Ch, 671:2) that this highest level performance of the mitzvah entails a single family member lighting for the entire household – one candle the first day, two the second, and so on. However, the Rema rules that every household member must have



his or her own menorah and light one candle the first day, two the second, and so on.

Practically speaking, in most Sephardic homes (where Rav Yosef Karo is the ultimate authority), the head of the household lights for everyone; whereas in Ashkenazic homes (where the Rama's rulings take precedence over those of the Rav Yosef Karo), each family member lights his or her own Chanukiah. It might then seem curious that in many Ashkenazic homes women do not light. However, the reason is clear:

the Mishnah Berurah rules (O"C 671:9) that a married woman can fulfill her mitzvah through her husband's performance. Following the Pri Megadim, he applies the Gemara's concept of ishto k'gufo, the concept of a wife being seen as an extension of her husband, (see, for example, Berachot 24a and Bechorot 35b). Interestingly, this principle is applied in the Gemara to situations of personal status (can one spouse fulfill a vow made by the other). The application of the principle to apply to fulfillment of mitzvot represents a step beyond the Gemara's use of the principle.

The extension of this principle by the Mishnah Berurah should motivate us

to examine the significance of the application of ishto k'gufo, not only to the performance of mitzvot but more broadly as well. As women, should we embrace the moments of our own personal obligations? (When it comes to Chanukah candles the Gemara states quite clearly that women are obligated; the question here is simply whether a married woman fulfills her obligation

through her husband.) Should we be finding our own individual paths toward fulfillment in life? Or does such seeking threaten the ultimate bond between husband and wife – the

bond expressed in principles like that of ishto k'gufo?

When people unite for any type of goal, a certain level of personal autonomy is always sacrificed. The group must find and emphasize commonalities and formulate a vision based on those common goals. In the case of the ideal marriage, a couple works toward formulating a shared set of values that they communicate, with much help from God, to their children. When couples differ over any number of those values, compromise sometimes requires the sacrifice of one's individual inclinations for the greater good of the family. Nevertheless, as in any true collaboration, each mem-

***When people unite  
for any type of  
goal, a certain  
level of personal  
autonomy is  
always sacrificed.***

## ISHTO K'GUFO AND THE INDIVIDUAL

ber of a couple should be seen as an individual.

Each distinct personality must be celebrated. The strengths of each member must have room to flourish. And the dreams and interests of each individual should be recognized. Not just because every human being deserves this, but because the partnership, the family unit, and the marriage benefit from it.

The concept of *pirsumei nisa* applies not only to the lighting of Chanukah candles but also to the reading of Megillah and to the four cups of wine on the seder night as well. With regard to all of those mitzvot, not only are men obligated but so are women and children. *Pirsumei Nisa* is about increasing and “publicizing” the miracle by having everyone in the community participate in the mitzvah. In order for the miracle to be experienced to the fullest, every person – man, woman, and child – must be a part of it. This is partially because for any partnership to flourish, alongside the development of a united voice, the individual voices must be preserved and appreciated. Even women who choose to follow the simple reading of the Mishnah Berurah and to fulfill their mitzvah through the principle of *ishto k'gufo* must not forget that they too are obligated in the mitzvah. That for some the mitzvah is fulfilled most ideally when husband and wife fulfill the mitzvah as a unit cannot negate each individual's obligation. And regardless of whether in

a given scenario husband and wife function separately or as a unit, both are important. A couple thrives when two thriving individuals are able to thrive additionally as a combined unit.

I came across a blog written in TheYeshivaWorld.com, claiming that, in the last years of her life, Rebbetzin Kanievsky began lighting her own Chanukah candles. She lit the Chanukiyah that had been in her husband's family for many years, since her husband now uses one that was given to him as a gift. Rav Kaneivsky didn't want to give up lighting his family Chanukiyah, so his wife did it for him. What a fascinating and inspiring application of *ishto k'gufo*. She performed the mitzvah on her own rather than through her husband, and yet through that act they were united as couple – helping each other fulfill the mitzvah in the most ideal fashion. Every human being is created in God's image. And every human being – man or woman – realizes that image partially through self fulfillment, through taking his or her God-given talents and maximizing them as an individual. When each member of a couple finds individual self-fulfillment, they are then better positioned to thrive as extensions of one another.

Chanukah Sameach.





# CHANUKAH: FESTIVAL OF THE HOME AND THE HOMELAND

RABBI LAWRENCE TEITELMAN

YOUNG ISRAEL OF NEW HYDE PARK



**IN THE INTRODUCTION** to his Nitei Gavriel on Hilkhoh Chanukah, Rabbi Gavriel Zinner writes (translated from Hebrew):

The laws of Chanukah are among **the most difficult fields** because of the various legal distinctions, such as the obligation to light for guests, travelers, etc.

Rabbi Zinner's assessment of Hilkhoh Chanukah is quite remarkable, especially when one considers the range of questions that, as a prominent posek in the Charedi and Chassidic communities, must get addressed to him on a regular basis. Indeed, his Nitei Gavriel series - comprising over thirty volumes - includes some "high stakes" areas such as Shabbat, Yom Kippur, and Pesach from the Hebrew calendar, and Nissuin, Niddah and Avelut from the human one. Yet, it is the laws of Chanukah that he singles out for their complexity.

Truth be told, Chanukah - and, in particular, lighting the menorah on Chanukah - does bear a unique relationship to the home that presents challenges for those who are not in a home at all and even for those who are just not in their own homes at the time. While it is not our intention here to resolve the various Halakhic scenarios alluded to by Rabbi Zinner, and those that routinely emerge in practice, we would like to frame the domestic foundation of Chanukah in terms of the familiar "five W's" - the "who, what, where, when and why" of Chanukah lights.

**WHO** - Like most positive, time-bound commandments, men are obligated. Like most positive, time-bound commandments, women should be exempt, except - we are told - that "they too were included in the miracle" of Chanukah, and so they too are included in the obligation of nerot Chanukah (Shabbat23a). Following the usual principles of chinukh, children too are obligated, once they have reached an

age when they can appreciate and adequately perform the mitzvah.

However, it isn't that simple. Unlike matza or maror on Pesach, or megilla on Purim, wherein each individual must personally fulfill his/her requirement, the mitzvah of Chanukah is formulated differently: *ner ish u-veto* - "a light, person, and his home" (Shabbat 21b). A single lamp for the entire household collectively satisfies the individual obligations of its members. True, the Gemara then introduces "*mehadrin*" (a more optimal option) which multiplies the number of candles by the number of householders, but this is hardly restating the *de facto* individual obligation: (a) In some practices, it is a single individual who lights this composite number on behalf of the group. (b) Unlike most areas of Halakha where women cannot discharge their own obligation vicariously through their husbands, "*ishto ke-gufo*" is widely invoked and accepted in this context. (c) According to some opinions (e.g. Tosafot), the Gemara's subsequent "*mehadrin min ha-mehadrin*" (super-optimal option), which makes the number of lights correspond to the number of days, supplants rather than supplements the "*mehadrin*" option, linking it to the number of people. In other words, the mitzvah seems to be more an obligation on the home as a whole - albeit realized by its residents - than the standard personal prescription.

**WHAT** - As stated above, the mitzvah of Chanukah is *ner ish u-veto* - "a light,

person, and his home". The menorah is lit, and then it is hands off. Personal benefit is so proscribed that an additional lamp (*shammash*) is used such that any inadvertent benefit can be attributed to that one. Any remaining material (oil or wax) must be burned at the end of the holiday lest it otherwise be used for personal purposes. Notwithstanding the technical question of "*mitzvot lehenot nitnu*" - whether mitzvot should impute benefit - usually a mitzvah involves a physical connection. Even Shabbat candles, the most likely commitment for comparison, are vehicles of *kavod va-oneg* - honor and pleasure - which are decidedly not the objectives of *nerot Chanukah*. Like the "Who" of Chanukah, the "What" also is more about gracing the home than gratifying its inhabitants.

**WHERE** - Just a few lines later on the same page, the Gemara specifies the ideal placement of *nerot Chanukah* as "*petach beto mibachutz*" - "at the doorway of his home from the outside." If he lives on an upper floor (and doesn't have said doorway), he places the lights at the window. And if it is dangerous to place it at the doorway or window, it is sufficient to place it on his table. Again, the emphasis seems to be on the ideal location in and around the home, rather than its relationship to the resident who is lighting it. That the menorah is placed "opposite the mezuza" is additionally significant, not only to surround the passer-through with mitzvot, but in establishing an analogy to mezuza,

the most classical obligation devolving upon the home.

**WHEN** - Earlier on that page, the Gemara identifies the time for Chanukah lights as “mishe’tishaka ha-chama” - “when the sun sets”. Assuming this term is to be taken at face value, it is rather unexpected, because in most other areas of Halakha, the preferred time for nighttime mitzvot is not at sunset but at nightfall - i.e. upon the emergence of three stars (tzet hakokhavim). Performing nighttime commandments upon sunset is usually only a fallback plan (bediavad). In particular, with respect to lights, there is an additional consideration, “shraga be-tihara mai ahania” - “a candle during the daytime is of what use!?”, and so lighting would ordinarily be deferred until relative darkness. Here too, the usual parameters are not applicable as it is not about technical performance as much as it is about having the menorah make its mark.

**WHY** - We take for granted that Chanuka entails lighting the menorah in the home. In reality, that locale is rather surprising. Ask someone who has received a Jewish education what we celebrate on Chanuka, and he/she

is likely to mention a pair of miracles: an unexpected military triumph over the more mighty Greco-Syrian army or the supernatural endurance of a small flask of pure oil for seven additional days. Granted, it is unlikely that the ordinary individual has access to a battlefield in which to publicize the former miracle. However, the synagogue - the

“mikdash me’at” - should have been the natural setting in which to commemorate the latter one. And while we do light a menorah in shul, we jump through Halakhic hoops trying to justify saying a berakha,

when that is the more intuitive setting in which to celebrate, not the home.

Rambam, in his opening paragraph of Hilkhos Chanukah, provides historical background for the holiday and its observances. This is highly unusual; as systematic as this “Gedol Hamech-abrim” was in his Mishneh Torah code, Rambam rarely provides this sort of historical introduction, even in the most obvious candidate, Chanukah’s “older sister” holiday of Purim. However, even before describing the enemy’s adverse impact on the Heikhal (Beit Hamikdash), and the subsequent salvation, Rambam mentions “the Greek rulers issued decrees on the Jews, annulled their religion, did not permit

**According to this summary, the primary attack was, at least initially, on the Jewish home**

them to engage in Torah and Mitzvot, appropriated their money and daughters, ..." Only then does Rambam proceed to the more familiar events in the Beit Hamikdash proper. According to this summary, the primary attack was, at least initially, on the Jewish home, and it stands to reason that the primary remembrance be instituted in the Jewish home.

Notwithstanding its relationship to the home, there is another dimension to Chanuka that is worthy of consideration.

The Talmud (Megillah 14a) famously wonders why we don't say Hallel on Purim. After all, if Hallel is said on Pesach upon redemption from slavery to freedom, we should certainly say Hallel upon delivery from imminent death, as in the Purim story. In the first of several responses, the Talmud asserts that we don't say Hallel on a miracle occurring outside of Israel. While at one time, all lands had the potential for warranting Hallel, that changed once the Jews entered Israel. Chanukah is the only holiday of antiquity that originated in Israel! All of the formal Moadot are already prescribed when the Jews were making their way through the Wilderness. Pesach and Sukkot are explicitly associated by the Torah with the exodus

and journeys, and Shavuot is linked, at least in our lore and liturgy, as commemorating Matan Torah. Purim, for its part, celebrates salvation in Persia. Chanukah is unique in terms of its foundational affiliation with Israel, the land that is endowed with the capacity for Hallel. Strikingly, in arranging his

Mishneh Torah, Rambam postpones the laws of Hallel from several logical candidate contexts - Hilkhot Tefillah, Hilkhot Berakhot, and Hilkhot Yom Tov (both generally and the individual instances of Hilkhot Pesach

and Sukkot), and instead treats them only later in Hilkhot Chanukah! For it is Chanukah that not only is an occasion of "Hallel and Hodaah" - praise and thanksgiving - but also uniquely manifests the mandate of a miracle in Israel.

Mah tovu ohelekha Yaakov mishkenotekha Yisrael: It is the goodness of the Jewish homes coupled with the Divine presence in Israel that bestows upon us a timeless and time-honored blessing. And it is the festival of Chanukah that uniquely manifests this partnership of the Jewish home and the Jewish homeland.

***it is the festival  
of Chanukah that  
uniquely manifests  
this partnership of  
the Jewish home  
and the Jewish  
homeland.***

# THE ESSENCE OF CHANUKAH: PASSING ON THE TORCH

RABBI ELISHA (RODNEY) WEISS

MERKAZ YISRAEL OF MARINE PARK



**IF WE LOOK AT THE** commercialization of Chanukah and the sale of sufganiyot, we are given the false impression that Chanukah is about presents and eating, albeit while lighting the candles. This perspective leads to a false understanding of a Yom Tov that is deeply rooted in Kedusha.

To begin to understand the Yom Tov of Chanukah, we have to understand the season, the meaning of its name and why Chazal decided to highlight these miracles above others in our history. The Maharal comments that Chanukah comes at the time of the year that the natural light in the world starts to increase. According to the Maharal this physical phenomenon is referring to overcoming the darkness that had overtaken the Jewish people led by the Hellenists in their attempt to rid the Jewish world of Torah and its sacred observance. To understand this idea, we must look at one mitzvah whose observance the Greeks decreed must cease, the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh.

At the beginning of Chumash Bereishit, Rashi calls this Mitzvah מצוה ראשונה שנצטוו בו ישראל. Perhaps Rashi is teaching us that this Mitzvah demonstrates the uniqueness of the Jewish people. The ability to understand and calculate time and the סוד העיבור (the secret of how to reconcile the lunar year with the solar year) was a characteristic that non-Jews marveled at-- גמרא מגילה הזה. רק עם חכם ונבון הגוי הגדול הזה. The King describes how when Vashti refused to come to Achashverosh, the king first turns to the חכמים יודעי העתים, whom the גמרא identifies as the members of the Sanhedrin who knew how to calculate time, to help him navigate this awkward situation. The King understood very well the uniqueness of people who understand time. And it was this very characteristic that the Greeks were trying to eradicate.

A second idea about the significance of this Mitzvah is based on the comments of the Sfas Emes. Rosh Chodesh is not simply a time for the physical

## THE ESSENCE OF CHANUKAH: PASSING ON THE TORCH

renewal of the moon; it is a time of spiritual renewal as well. We recite the words **זמן כפרה לכל תולדותם** on every Rosh Chodesh, which is a time of Atone-ment almost like Yom Kipper, a time to do Teshuva and evaluate our relationship with the **בורא עולם**. We are charged to introspect, to take an accounting of our actions of the past month and project forward to achieve an even better bottom line in the coming month. Permit me to suggest that this self-evaluation was the greatest fear of the Hellenists! When Rosh Chodesh arrives, it is not simply about personal introspection, but about connecting to a Mitzvah that reminds every Jew where he comes from. The juxtaposition of this mitzvah to the story of the Exodus from Egypt will remind a Jew of the miracle of the Exodus, lead him away from the Hellenists' mission and cause him to spread Torah observance among our people.

An additional idea: Rosh Chodesh reminds us of the eternity of the Jewish People (**נצחיות של עם ישראל**). Chazal compare the Jewish people and the Kingdom of the House of Dovid to the moon which waxes and wanes but never fades away entirely. The message of this imagery is that even though the moon seems out of sight, it comes back again and reaches its peak. This is the story of our people! Despite the declines that characterize our history, the rise of the Jewish people is guaranteed. Seventy-eight years after the liberation of Auschwitz, there

are more people that study Torah daily than ever before in Jewish History. We have a thriving State of Israel that provides a home for all our people. It is this message which is embedded in the mitzvah of Rosh Chodesh that the Greeks tried to halt and remove from Jewish practice.

The renewal of the spirit is front and center of the name Chanukah. Each morning we proudly proclaim the words of Dovid Hamelech: **מזמור שיר תנוכת הבית**, today is a new day of potential for growth in spirituality. The essence of the Yom Tov of Chanukah is the reconnection with Hashem and the new opportunity to connect to the Torah and the Bais Hamikdash. The Kedushas Levi explains that the miracle of Chanukah reveals to everyone how the world has been renewed. To paraphrase the words of Koheles, at the end of the day, fear of Hashem and observance of His Torah are paramount. It is this light that the Maharal reminds us of. After spending weeks in darkness, the symbolism of Chanukah is that both the physical and spiritual lights have been reignited.

The word **תנוכה** is rooted in the concept of **חינוך**, which means education. The concept of education means we are passing on our tradition to the next generation so that our progeny can both maintain and also renew our commitment to the Torah. In the words of Chazal: **אין העולם מתקיים אלא מתוך הבל של תינוקות של בית רבן** - the world is only being sustained by the flame of



Torah of the children who study it. It is interesting to note the role of fire in this example. The flame of Torah is not only sustaining the world, but building the world of the future. When children study Torah, there is a **התחדשות**, a renewal, that is taking place that impacts future generations. This essential concept is inherent in the name Chanukah.

The name Chanukah also teaches us the importance of the Mesorah. There is a famous question that is asked on the miracle of the oil. The **גמרא** tells us

that **טומאה הותרה בצבור**, which essentially means that if the majority of the people are **טמא**, ritually defiled, then we are permitted to offer **קרבנות** and perform other practices in the Beis Hamikdash that normally require a state of purity. If this is so, why do we emphasize that our ancestors found a **פך שמן טהור**, a pure cruse of oil? Even if they hadn't, they would have been permitted to light the menorah in the communal state of impurity. A suggested answer might be that the battle that the **חשמונאים** fought was a battle to protect the purity of our Mesorah. In every generation, there are many Jews who

say that our traditions are archaic and irrelevant, and the time has come to move past them. The **חשמונאים** stood up against this idea and inculcated in the Jewish world the importance of remaining true to our traditions. The Ramban in his praise of the **חשמונאים** says that without their heroism the entire Torah could have been tragically

lost forever. In **על הנסים**, we mention **כשעמדה מלכות יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל**, **להשכיחם את תורתך**, that the evil Greek regime stood up to make Israel forget its Torah! Based on this, we see that although from a technical Halachic perspective, the Jews of the time of Cha-

nukah could have used impure olive oil, but it would have been antithetical to the battle they were fighting which was to preserve our Mesorah. The finding and use of the pure olive oil was crucial to this mission!

We are all familiar with the disagreement between Bais Shamai and Beis Hillel, whether to light one candle on the first night and add one each night (Bais Hillel), or light eight on the first night and subtract one each night (Bais Shammai). The Halacha and accepted practice is to follow Bais Hillel in general, and specifically here! The

***The Jews of the time of Chanukah could have used impure olive oil, but it would have been antithetical to the battle they were fighting which was to preserve our Mesorah.***



## THE ESSENCE OF CHANUKAH: PASSING ON THE TORCH

word חנוכה is a famous acrostic for 'ח נרות והלכה כבית הלל. Although this fits in nicely with the word חנוכה, why is it important to emphasize the Halacha is decided in favor of Bais Hillel? Based on our discussion, the answer may be the passing down of the oral tradition through the Mishna and Gemara

came with specific rules how to determine the Halacha and one of the messages of Chanukah is that those rules are not to be changed. The גמרא tells us on many occasions, אין בית דין יכול לבטל את דברי חבירו אלא אם כן גדול ממנו בחכמה

ובמנין, the rules established by previous generations cannot be changed unless there is a new group of sages that are greater and more numerous than those of previous times. The victory of Chanukah as indicated in על הנסים preserved our unique identity through our connections to the Torah and oral

tradition and sent a message that our adherence to it is eternal. By using the acrostic of the word חנוכה to establish the Halacha, we are accentuating that the battle was for the preservation of the oral tradition and our strict compliance to it.

***Chanukah is a Yom Tov that reminds us of where we coming from and of the importance of lighting the fire of Torah for the next generation.***

In sum, Chanukah is a Yom Tov that reminds us of where we are coming from and of the importance of lighting the fire of Torah for the next generation. Other than Purim, no victory or miracle symbolizes this idea more. The

lighting of the candles in its pure form sends the message to the world that the flame of Torah continues to burn brightly and is constantly being rekindled for generations to come.



## NATIONAL COUNCIL OF YOUNG ISRAEL

*Wishes You*

חג אורים  
שמח!



50 EISENHOWER DRIVE, SUITE 102 | PARAMUS, NJ 07652  
212 929 1525 | [INFO@YOUNGISRAEL.ORG](mailto:INFO@YOUNGISRAEL.ORG)  
[WWW.YOUNGISRAEL.ORG](http://WWW.YOUNGISRAEL.ORG)

# **CERTIFIED KOSHER SEFER TORAHS FOR SALE NEW AND USED. READY TO USE**

**EACH WITH COMPUTER CHECK AND LETTER OF  
KASHRUTH FROM THE SOFER STAM THAT  
RESTORED AND WAS MAGIYAH IT.**

**PRICES START AT \$13,500 FOR USED SEFERS.  
BAIS YOSEF AND ARI'ZAL  
CURRENTLY AVAILABLE**



**TEHILLIM ON  
14" KLAFF  
HAND WRITTEN  
BY EXPERT  
SOFER STAM  
AVAILABLE  
STARTING AT  
\$20,000**

**SELL YOUR ANTIQUE  
JUDAICA WITH US**

**Email Pictures to:  
[Jonathan@jgreenstein.com](mailto:Jonathan@jgreenstein.com)**

**WE BUY  
SEFER TORAHS  
KOSHER &  
PASUL**

**CALL JONATHAN  
917 797 0239 OR EMAIL [JONATHAN@JGREENSTEIN.COM](mailto:JONATHAN@JGREENSTEIN.COM)  
J GREENSTEIN AND COMPANY, INC  
417 CENTRAL AVENUE, CEDARHURST NY 11516  
[WWW.JGREENSTEIN.COM](http://WWW.JGREENSTEIN.COM)**