

DIVREI TORAH FROM INTERNET

CHANUKA - 5756

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Date: 12/20/95 4:49pm
Subject: YomTov - "Mehadrin" : An Understanding of the Concept

YomTov, vol. I, # 62
Week of Parshas Miktetz/Chanukah
Topic: "Mehadrin" - An Understanding of the Concept

In # 60, we mentioned that there are three levels on which the Mitzva of lighting the Chanukah candles can be fulfilled. After the basic level, which is one person lighting one light each night, there are two greater levels - the next one is referred to as "Mehadrin" and the greatest level as "Mehadrin min HaMehadrin." I would like to thank Rabbi Eli Shulman (shulman@yu1.yu.edu) for preparing the discussion that follows on the concept of "Mehadrin," and for making it available to the YomTov subscribers.

On Mehadrin

i. The Gemara in Shabbos, 21b, contains the following passage: "Our Rabbis taught [in a Baraisa]: The [basic] mitzvah of Chanuka is [that one should light] one candle for each household; those who [wish to] embellish (mehadrin) [the mitzvah light] one candle for each person; and those who [wish to] especially embellish (mehadrin min hamehadrin) [the mitzvah do as follows:] Beis Shammai say that the first day [i.e. night] he lights eight [candles], and from there on he decreases [the number of candles by one each night], but Beis Hillel say that the first day (i.e. night) he lights one [candle], and from there on he increases [the number of candles by one each night]."

ii. A homeless person is not obligated to light Chanuka candles. Someone who does not own his own home, but lodges at the home of another person, is obligated; he can, however, discharge his obligation by becoming a partner in his landlord's candles by paying him some token amount for a share in them. The same applies to a traveller who is away from his own home. The Gemara (ibid, 23a) records the following teaching: "Rav Zeira said: Originally, [before I was married], when I was a lodger [during the time that I studied] at the Academy I would participate with a perutah [a small coin] with my landlord. After I married I said: Now I am certainly not required to do so, since [my wife] lights for me at home.

iii. From Rav Zeira's teaching it emerges that someone who is away from home and whose wife lights on his behalf at home has fulfilled his obligation. Now, as we have already seen, those who wish to embellish the mitzvah (mehadrin) are enjoined to have a separate candle for each and every

B'S'D' member of the household. The question arises: If someone is away from home and his wife lights for him at home, but he wishes to fulfil the embellishment of the mitzvah of mehadrin, should he light a candle for himself at his place of lodging?

[We assume, for simplicity's sake, that the traveller is only interested in fulfilling mehadrin, but not mehadrin min hamehadrin; thus, at most, he would light a single candle for himself. Obviously, if he wished to fulfil mehadrin min hamehadrin too he would also have to light additional candles for each of the nights of Chanuka that have gone by.]

This question is raised by Resp. Terumas HaDeshen (101, cited by Beis Yosef, Orach Chaim 677), who quotes an anonymous "great man" to the effect that the traveller need not light a candle for himself; indeed, if he does so the candle that he lights does not have the status of a Chanuka candle at all (and he would not be allowed to recite the blessing on it). This authority, writes Terumas HaDeshen, reasoned that mehadrin must be governed by the guidelines set forth in the Gemara; since this form of mehadrin finds no precedent in the Gemara it is not considered a valid expression of mehadrin.

Terumas HaDeshen himself disagrees with this ruling and holds that the husband ought to light his own candle in order to fulfil mehadrin. Beis Yosef sides with the anonymous "great man"; Rema (ibid:3) holds with Terumas HaDeshen.

iv. The view of this anonymous authority and of Beis Yosef seems difficult. Were the husband at home presumably he and his wife, if they wish to fulfil mehadrin, would each light their own candle. Why shouldn't they do the same when the husband is away from home? On the contrary, the fact that the husband is away should all the more mandate that he light for himself; in any event, there certainly doesn't seem to be any less reason for him to light.

Furthermore, the rationale offered by this authority, that this type of mehadrin finds no precedent in the Gemara, is difficult as well. Surely the Gemara need not enumerate every possible situation in which the members of the household may find themselves; it should suffice that the Gemara says that every member of the household lights.

v. Pri Megadim (Mishbetzos Zahav, ibid, 1) suggests that this authority exempted the husband from mehadrin not because he is away from home but because a husband and a wife are deemed a single entity (ishto ke'gufo) and are not reckoned as separate members of the household. According to this interpretation, the husband and wife would share a single candle even when they are both at home.

Although this is, indeed, the view of Mahrshal (Resp. 85), it does not seem to be a satisfactory explanation of the view of Terumas HaDeshen's "great man". This authority argued from the fact that this form of mehadrin is not mentioned in the Gemara; but a husband and wife are simply an instance of two members of the household and should not need a special mention in the Gemara.

vi. From the language of the Gemara ("one candle for each person") it is not clear whether mehadrin means that each member of the household should

light a candle himself or, rather, that whoever is lighting (usually the head of the household) light as many candles as there are people in the house. For example: If there are five people in the household, does mehadrin require that each person light one candle or that the head of the household light five candles?

Rambam's position on this question is quite clear: "One who seeks to embellish the mitzvah lights as many candles as there people in the house" (Hil. Chanuka 4:1). This could not be more explicit; according to Rambam, one person lights all the candles of mehadrin.

However, Rema (Orach Chaim 671:2) writes that every member of the household should light on his/her own. The commentators discuss why Rema differs with Rambam on this point. (See Beis HaLevi, Kuntres Chanuka, 23a; Chidushei HaGriz, Hil. Chanuka; Aruch HaShulchan, ad loc.)

vii. Rambam's view seems somewhat difficult. If mehadrin means that every person lights his own candle, then one can easily understand why this is deemed an embellishment of the mitzvah; the very fact that the mitzvah is not delegated to one person but is performed by each and every person on his/her own is an embellishment of the fulfilment of the mitzvah. But if the head of the household lights all the candles anyway, as Rambam holds, then what embellishment is there in having the same number of candles as there are people in the house; why is this something desirable?

The obvious answer would seem to be that the element of embellishment here lies in the multitude of candles; there is a greater "pirsumei nisa" (publication of the miracle) in having many candles than in having only one. But then why stop at the number of people in the house? Why not simply light as many candles as one can afford? What reason is there to peg the number of candles at the number of people in the house?

viii. Apparently Rambam holds that while it is desirable to have many candles, it is necessary that all the candles have standing as Chanuka candles; otherwise the additional candles are mere decoration and have no halachic significance. In order to have standing as a Chanuka candle, a candle must serve to discharge a halachic obligation. The maximum number of candles that can be said to do this is the number of people in the household.

The logic of this limit is as follows: Each member of the household is by himself sufficient to obligate the house in one chanuka candle. Thus, if there are five persons living in the house, there are five obligations, each one for one chanuka candle. Of course, all these five obligations can be discharged with a single candle; indeed, that is the basic mitzvah: "One candle for each household". Still, the fact remains that the house carries five obligations. Therefore, up to five candles can have standing as chanuka candles; each candle then discharges one obligation. Any candles beyond that number are halachically meaningless.

The logic of Rambam's position is thus apparent. Mehadrin consists of having as many candles as possible. But the maximum possible number of candles is the number of people in the household, since that is the maximum number of candles that have can have standing as chanuka candles.

(The careful reader may object that the Gemara allows for more candles than there are people in the house, in the fulfilment of mehadrin min hamehadrin, in which one adds a candle for each night that has gone by. How do these additional candles have standing as Chanuka candles? The answer is that these candles publicize the fact that the miracle grew greater each night; thus, each additional candle serves as a "pirsumei nisa" (a publication of the miracle) in its own right. Since "pirsumei nisa" is the very essence of the obligation to light Chanuka candles these additional candles automatically have the status of Chanuka candles.)

ix. We are now in a position to understand the view of the "great man" of the Terumas HaDeshen. From our analysis of Rambam's view it emerges that the idea of mehadrin is not that each person should light on his own but, rather, that there should be as many candles as possible; a blaze of light, rather than a single gleam. Therefore, reasons this authority, mehadrin is only fulfilled when all of the candles are lit in a single home, forming one pageant. But if a traveller's wife lights for him at home and he lights again for himself at his place of lodging, each candle stands alone; this, in his view, is not mehadrin at all.

x. There remains one problem to be addressed. Granted that, according to the this view, the traveller cannot fulfil mehadrin by lighting a candle in his place of lodging; as we explained, since his candle and his wife's candle are in different houses they cannot form the single pageant that is mehadrin. But let the traveller fulfil mehadrin by having his wife light two candles: one for herself and one for him? After all, Rambam states clearly that all the candles of mehadrin are lit by one person; although this is usually the master of the house, there is no reason that it could not just as well be the mistress of the house or, for that matter, any member of the household.

Furthermore, from the fact that Terumas HaDeshen takes issue with this anonymous authority and rules that the traveller is obligated to light a candle of his own in order to fulfil mehadrin, it seems that he too accepts the premise that it is the traveller who must light the candle of mehadrin for himself; his wife cannot light an extra candle for him.

We must conclude that, in fact, both the Terumas HaDeshen and his "great man" do not follow Rambam; in their view, each of the candles of mehadrin should be lit by the member of the household whom it represents, not by the head of the household. Thus, this responsa of the Terumas HaDeshen is a source for Rema who, as we have seen, also differs with Rambam on this point and rules that, in order to fulfil mehadrin, each member of the household should light his own candle.

This does not contradict our premise that the Terumas HaDeshen's "great man" agrees with Rambam that the idea of mehadrin is to have as many candles as possible. This authority, however, holds that since, in the final analysis, each candle represents the obligation of a different member of the household, as we explained earlier, it is that person's obligation that is being discharged with that candle and he should light it himself, rather than delegate the lighting to the head of the household, under the general principle that a mitzvah should not be delegated, where possible (see Kidushin, 41a). Rambam apparently holds that the entire household's obligation is discharged collectively with all of the candles.

xi. Rema (671:7) rules that, for reasons unrelated to our discussion, it

is preferable that each member of the household light in a different place in the house. In the light of the above, this ruling is consistent with the fact that Rema himself (677:3) holds with Terumas HaDeshen that a lodger should light a candle on his own in order to fulfil mehadrin; in this view, mehadrin can be fulfilled with candles that are distant from each other, or even in different houses. But, as we have seen, in the view of Beis Yosef and of Terumas HaDeshen's anonymous great man, all of the candles of mehadrin need to form a single spectacle and cannot be lit in separate houses; it seems logical that, in this view, the candles of mehadrin should lit together.

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Have a Happy Chanukah!
R' Yehudah Prero

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Date: 12/18/95 11:06am
Subject: Chanuka Package Part 1

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH
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Special Chanuka Package

- 1) Shiur on the Maharal's "Ner Mitzva," by HaRav Yehuda Amital
- 2) Judaism and Greek Culture, by Mark Smilowitz,
based on a speech by Harav Aharon Lichtenstein shlit"a
- 3) "The Once and Future Festival," by Asher Meir

Shiur on the Maharal's "Ner Mitzva" / HaRav Yehuda Amital

In his work, "Ner Mitzva," the Maharal actually says very little about Chanuka. Rather, the uniqueness of "Ner Mitzva" lies in the broad perspective which it gives to the festival, and its significance for us. As a background to his analysis, he makes use of the midrashim which deal with the "four kingdoms", as embodied in the 'chayot' (creatures) in Sefer Daniel - Babylon, Persia, Greece and Rome.

The principal problem facing us is, what is the nature of the miracle of Chanuka?

A preliminary and simplistic explanation might focus on the historical episode - danger and salvation. On one hand, the Greek conquest and desecration of the Temple; on the other, God's salvation by means of miracles and wonders. The question, however, remains: In what way was Knesset Yisrael enriched by the whole danger-salvation episode of Chanuka? The same problems existed in Egypt - from whence we were redeemed by God with signs and wonders. But who put us there in the first place? God! And why? "Because of our sins... (mipenei chata'einu)". This is true, but it doesn't fully answer the question.

The sojourn in Egypt, the struggle to leave and the redemption itself are understood in our tradition as a crucial stage in the development of Knesset Yisrael. This period consolidated us, made us pass through the crucible, and thus Knesset Yisrael was formed. If we relate to the Exodus as merely a period of suffering and redemption, we miss the full significance of the event. For this purpose, several midrashei Chazal come to explain the additional status which Knesset Yisrael attained in the Egyptian suffering-redemption. This extra dimension - enrichment of the nation - is dealt with by the Maharal in the context of the salvation of the Chashmona'im. The conflict with Greece has special significance. "God shall enlarge Yefet (referring to Greece), and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem - the beauty of Yefet in the tents of Shem."

Strengths are discovered in different ways. A person must reveal the physical and spiritual powers which exist within him. An individual may live through years of routine, and suddenly a war may put him in exceptional circumstances, placing difficult and rare challenges before him. It is at that time that man discovers many of his hidden strengths. For a person who comes face to face with death, the palpable feeling of danger brings hidden abilities to the fore. From here resources, leadership etc. - which never showed themselves during his routine life - are derived.

There are those who discover God at a time of great activity, to others God is revealed in redemption and salvation, and some come to recognize their Creator through elevated states of faith. This applies both to individuals and to the community. Suddenly we are faced with a show of heroism and self-sacrifice, spiritual and intellectual powers are revealed, and there is even a war against foreign ideologies. And when there is no salvation at the end of the war, there is a great danger that all those self-discoveries will fade away. Human nature is such that man needs a period to assimilate what has happened, and the salvation itself is what brings about this opportunity. It allows for the sudden

illumination to be translated into a way of life.

Such an understanding of salvation provides an added perspective: the nation of Israel needs to experience a series of preparations in order to be ready to welcome the Mashiach.

The war of Chanuka - and the ensuing salvation - was not merely a great historic event. It was also an important milestone in the building of the nation. It was another stage in our journey towards perfection. In "Ner Mitzva," the Maharal gives Chanuka a universal and eternal dimension, and that is how we should regard Am Yisrael as well. The building of malkhut Yisrael consists not of relegating the Gentiles to unimportance, but rather in imbuing the course of history of the whole of mankind with significance.

From here we can proceed to the Maharal's thesis in "Ner Mitzva" and its bearing on Chanuka: The world was originally created imperfect, and therefore it must undergo a process of completion. This state of imperfection finds expression in the course of human history, in the four kingdoms which reflect different ideologies, each one an assault on the unity of God. This basic thesis is rooted in the midrash, which the Maharal introduces at the outset:

"'And the earth was without form... and a wind from God moved...'" (Bereishit 1:2) - Reish Lakish explained this as referring to the kingdoms: 'And the earth was without form' - this refers to the kingdom of Babylon, as it is written (Yirmiyahu 14): 'I have seen the earth and behold, it is without form'. 'And void' - this refers to the kingdom of Media, as it is written (Esther 6): 'And they hurried (va-yavhilu) to bring Haman'. 'And darkness' - this refers to the kingdom of Greece, which darkened the eyes of Israel with its decrees, for they used to say to them, 'Write on an ox's horn that you have no portion in the Lord of Israel'. 'On the face of the deep' - this refers to the kingdom of wickedness (Rome) which cannot be fathomed, like the deep. Just as this 'deep' is unfathomable, so are the wicked. 'And a spirit from God moved' - this refers to the spirit of Melekh Ha-mashiach."

The beginning of the world is characterized by lack of completion; the end - by Melekh Ha-mashiach. Between the beginning and the end there is a historic process which brings perfection to the world. This process involves encounters between the four kingdoms - which symbolize imperfection - and Israel. Each kingdom represents a culture, a spiritual approach, which stands in opposition to the eventual perfection. By means of the battle with Israel the ideologies and paths are gradually consolidated into a perfected world.

Against this perspective, the Chanuka lights illuminate the progress towards the perfection which follows the battle between Israel and Greece. The kingdom of Greece and its culture, which emphasized various values which were adopted by and had an influence on human culture, bears witness to its strong spiritual foundation. This spiritual foundation was incomplete, and here we find the task of Knesset Yisrael - the assimilation of the positive spiritual forces in their proper place within the service of God. By removing imperfections from the world, by removing the four kingdoms and their imperfect cultures, the world will reach unity-perfection.

In order to understand the miracle of the cruse of oil,

we must examine the period in which it took place within a universal dimension. For this purpose we need to understand Israel's war with the nations, or - more precisely - the issue of the four kingdoms, which the Maharal sees (based on Chazal) as central points in human history. Babylon - the first of the four kingdoms - represents power of the will to control everything, domination for its own sake (=nefesh). Persia, the second of the kingdoms, pursues greed, desire for its own sake, the will to 'grow great and cumbersome like a bear', in the words of Chazal (=body). Greece, the third, did not represent nor fight for issues of spiritual tendencies nor for matters of physical desire, but rather for intellect, wisdom. Their war was an ideological one. And the kingdom of Edom includes within it all those aspects of war embodied by its predecessors, and for this reason the war with them is the most difficult.

According to Maharal, the kingdom of Greece, which fought for matters of wisdom and ideology, grew out of a Jewish influence. Intellectual development in Greece took place by means of Judaism, and it was specifically for this reason that the battle with them was so difficult. During the periods of Babylon and Persia, Judaism established itself inwardly and had not yet begun spreading its light outwards to others, to the nations of the world. The battles which took place were against external forces. During the period of the Greeks, Judaism began to fulfill its purpose - the spreading of God's light in the world. It was against this backdrop that Greek culture flowered. Hence the battle was difficult and also very costly: many were lost to Hellenism, to the Greek influence, and all because there were points of light upon which Greek wisdom was based. Perhaps Greek culture was better than ours, and if so then why propagate the light of Torah in the world?

This was the special significance of the miracle of Chanuka: the emphasis that there was a cruse of oil stamped with the seal of the kohen gadol, an internal point untouched by outside - Greek - influence, from which a great light could be created, to illuminate the darkness of the Gentile world, even though it was filled with Hellenism. A miracle occurred, the laws of nature were changed, in order to show that Israel's path is indeed necessary, crucial, and will prevail. The masses must be taught - until the very last one, until the habits and routines disappear from the world and the holy light, the light of God, is spread throughout the world. That light shines forth from the inner point, and if the inner point is cared for properly, it will indeed shed its light. 'In times of danger we place the Chanukia on our table (and not in the window)." R. Tzadok Ha-kohen of Lublin explains that in times of danger, when the light cannot illuminate the darkness, then we must work within and among ourselves, we must care for and enlarge the inner light, and when it is ready it will shine far into the distance, and all will recognize that "Torah will come forth from Tzion and the word of God from Yerushalayim."

JUDAISM AND GREEK CULTURE

by: Mark Smilowitz

based on a speech given by Harav Aharon Lichtenstein shlit"a

In general, we tend to view Greek culture as corrupt and sinful. Traditionally, Judaism and the Torah have waged war against it in full fury. What is the argument about? What is the basis of this war?

One formulation is that we argue about the unity of God. We believe in monotheism, and they believed in polytheism or pantheism. This dispute is not merely a quantitative one, a question of one or many. It is a qualitative dispute, about how to worship, and how to attain holiness and purity. However, there was a tendency among Greek philosophers to believe in one God. Evidently, though monotheism is one aspect of the argument, the argument goes far beyond this lone issue.

A different formulation of the argument focuses upon the subject of aesthetics. Judaism opposes the Greek notion of the supremacy of beauty and aesthetics. In a word, Judaism rejects the holiness of beauty and embraces the beauty of holiness. To the Greeks, even within their lofty system of ethics, concern with aesthetics dominates. But this still is not the prime point of dispute.

Another aspect of the dispute is the role of the intellect. The Greeks emphasized the intellect and negated emotion. They favored the cold mind over the warmth and depth of the heart. The Kuzari, in the fourth chapter, contrasts the closeness and warmth of the God of Abraham with the distance and remoteness of the God of Aristotle. To this day, especially within Chassidut, there are those who see intellect versus emotion as the main dispute between secular society and religion. However, this view of the dispute is inaccurate, for, as Nietzsche points out, there were two trains of thought in Greek philosophy: the Apollonian, which focused on the intellect, as well as the Dionysian, which emphasized passion and emotion. Apparently, even among the Greeks, there existed approaches which did not accept the supremacy of the intellect.

A different view of the dispute pits intellect against will. Intellect is static; it never ventures beyond the internal world of the mind. Will, on the other hand, is a desire to do. It stems from thought, but translates into action. Whereas the Greeks emphasized thought and understanding, Judaism focuses on will and action, the dynamic of doing. "Anyone whose wisdom exceeds his good deeds, his wisdom will not endure" (Avot 3:12).

All of these points are true, but each one is only a small part of a larger picture. In general, it is difficult to talk of Greek culture because there is much dispute about its nature, but two characteristics stand out.

A. The Greeks believed that existence in its totality is comprehensible and conquerable. The universe contains no mystery, reflects no greater power. Man can master all creation. Today's conception of mastery is different; we think of dominating the world in the physical sense, to harness the universe's power and use it to produce. But the Greek conception of mastery meant domination through conceptualization and categorization, fitting the universe into the confines of cognition. Their purpose was understanding purely for the sake of understanding.

The Greeks asserted that the task of mastering the world was achievable. This meant that there was nothing in the universe which was beyond comprehension. The Greeks were forced to believe that the cosmos embodied order and beauty, because order allows understanding. Everything in the universe has its exact place, and thus man may decipher the laws of nature. To summarize, the Greek outlook on the universe was:

1. That which is revealed and perceptible is all there is.
2. All is within man's grasp to understand.
3. Creation contains law and order, harmony and beauty, which give man the ability to conquer and dominate the universe with his intellect.

B. The second pillar of Greek culture was the centrality of man in the universe. Sophocles' *Antigone* is a song of praise to mankind, whose actions raise him above nature. The Greeks studied nature from an anthropocentric viewpoint; nature existed only as it related to man. Although from Socrates and on, the study of nature shifted to viewing nature as an independent entity with its own internal workings, nevertheless, man remained at the center of all, and he received most of the attention.

These two aspects of Greek culture present man against nature as the ruler against the conquered, man enveloping creation, standing apart from it and distinct from it. The Greeks placed intellect and beauty at the center of their thought so that they could grasp, capture, and control the world. Given the cosmological order, and the intellect within man, man was aptly empowered to extend his control over the universe. In sum, the essence of Greek culture was man grasping and controlling the universe; all other factors which characterized Greek culture were merely outgrowths of this one point.

This principle of man controlling the universe is also found within Judaism. "You have placed all under his feet" (Psalms 8:7). Is this value of Greek culture, man's mastery and power over creation, completely invalid, or is it redeemable? The Talmud chastises one who neglects the study of astronomy (Shabbat 75a). And the Bible declares, "Not for desolation was [the world] conceived, [but rather] for habitation it was created" (Isaiah 45:18). So why did our forefathers fight so strongly against Greek culture?

There is evil which is pure evil, and must be totally uprooted from the world. There is also evil which presents partial truth as if it were the whole truth. The Greek viewpoint presents only half the picture as if it were complete, and here lies the root of its villainy.

Judaism places man at the center of creation as one who dominates the world, but both man and his world are null and void in the presence of God and His universe, before the hidden and secret Being, in the face of He who remains unrevealed to our eyes. Religious man experiences humility and insignificance when confronted by creation, both in the universe's grandeur and in its minutiae. Maimonides teaches that we can learn love and fear of God through observing nature. That technique is not only a strategy toward loving the Creator, but also a way to view our own environment. Do we feel domination and mastery over everything, or insignificance and meagerness in a world shrouded in mystery? Paradoxically, the Torah wants man to work

on nature and improve it, to conquer the earth and understand it, but at the same time to recognize that the world remains in its hidden and obscure state, thus maintaining man's lowliness and humility.

The Greek stance was immoral not in and of itself, but rather in the priorities it set. Greek values were not completely wicked; rather, they were flawed, incomplete, and imbalanced, to such a degree that they became totally corrupt. The dominion of man and his mastery over nature can be part of worship of the Creator, but man's greatness can become so central that it becomes a religion in and of itself. Toynbee holds humanism as Greece's central iniquity, seeing man as the sole center of the universe, as a god of the cosmos. The problem with Greece was not the belief in multiple deities, but rather the deification of man.

The dispute between Judaism and Greek culture is not limited to these two societies. The same dispute exists between all religious goals and cultural goals. Culture aims to supply man with all his needs - from the physical to the spiritual to the emotional. It sees the world in man and not man in the world. It constricts all life and reality into an existence that is both conquerable and controllable.

Judaism demands from those who inhabit this world that the center of all reality be the Creator, and we realize that we are here to serve Him. All is dependent upon Him, secondary to Him, and there would be no existence without Him. All of the power we exert on the world is for His sake, and it is from God alone that we draw our life and our strength.

(This based on a speech Rav Lichtenstein on Chanuka 5735, which was summarized in Alon Shevut no. 12.)

THE ONCE AND FUTURE FESTIVAL by Asher Meir

I. The Mystery of the Missing Festival

All of the festivals mentioned in the Torah have a "tri-partite" character: they have historical, agricultural, and Temple-ritual aspects. For instance, Pesach is simultaneously the commemoration of the Exodus, the time of the

bringing of the Omer to mark the beginning of the grain harvest, and the time of the bringing of the Paschal lamb in the Temple.

Purim, the Rabbinic holiday described in the Book of Esther, lacks this multifaceted nature. It was instituted at the initiative of the Jewish people in commemoration of a particular historical event, the rescue of the Jews of Persia from Haman's wicked machinations, but its celebration does not have any agricultural or Temple-ritual connection.

Chanuka, like Purim, is the commemoration of a historical event, one which is not even mentioned in our sacred writings. Yet even though Chanuka could be seen as a purely commemorative holiday, our Sages seem to have done everything possible to bolster its status by giving it agricultural and

ritual significance.

One example from the agricultural realm is that bikkurim - the first fruits - can be brought until Chanuka. Chanuka thus marks the official end of the fruit harvest, and this is inferred in the Sifri from the precise text of the first-fruit declamation quoted in the Torah!

Since bikkurim are brought to the Temple altar, this particular agricultural rule carries with it a Temple-ritual significance. Additionally, Chanuka - literally "inauguration" of the Temple - is suffused with symbolism connected to the holy Temple, such as the Chanuka menorah which memorializes the menorah which stood in the Temple sanctuary.

The effort to make Chanuka into a quasi-festival is most understandable. There seems to be a festival "missing" right around Chanuka time. The Torah endows every "tekufa" (solstice or equinox) with a festival - except that of the winter solstice! Pesach marks the beginning of the vegetable and grain harvest, and Sukkot its end; Shavuot marks beginning of the fruit harvest, but where is its conclusion? It is not surprising that more than one Jewish studies researcher has had a hunch that Chanuka predates the Maccabees' victory and rededication of the altar.

II. As Old As Creation

A midrash seems to suggest that Chanuka's standing as a holiday is as old as the human race, on the same footing as the other, Torah-prescribed, pilgrimages.

"R. Eliezer says, the world was created in Tishri; R. Yehoshua says, the world was created in Nisan. According to the one who says the creation was in Tishri, Abel lived from Sukkot until Chanuka; according to the one who says the creation was in Nisan, Abel lived from Pesach until Shavuot."

The midrash refers to the verse which states that the altercation between Kain and Abel took place "miketz yamim" - "at the end of some days" (Bereshit 4:3). The root "ketz" or "katze" - "end" is understood in several places in the midrash to indicate a festival - as opposed to Chanuka (for example, Sifri on Devarim 14:28). Yet, here, it is specifically used to include Chanuka! This is a further hint as to the ambiguity of Chanuka's status.

III. Waking Up Just in Time

If Chanuka has such an ancient heritage, why did the other three holidays become part of the Written Torah, and Chanuka only part of the Oral Torah, after a wait of about a thousand years?

Before Rosh Ha-Shana we gave a conceptual explanation of the positions of R. Eliezer and R. Yehoshua regarding the date of the world's creation: R. Eliezer says the world - and man - were created at the twilight of the year; as man's light shines, his surroundings darken, symbolizing man's existential state as one of conflict against nature, until the time of the redemption. R. Yehoshua says man was created in Nisan, the dawn of the year; man blossoms and develops in harmony with his surroundings.

Everyone must agree that the winter solstice is the low point of the year. It is true that autumn is a time of decline, but some good days remain - there are final fruits to

be harvested, and some warm days of Indian summer. The onset of winter is the end - no more fruit left to harvest, and the shortest and coldest days arrive. All one can do is hunker down with the resources that have already been gathered and wait for better days to come.

The spring of Jewish history is undoubtedly the national birth at Pesach, which always falls in the spring. What period in Jewish history is evoked by Kislev's solstice? The "winter" of our national history certainly dates from the time of the destruction of the Second Temple: no more sovereignty, no more Temple worship, no more centralized Torah authority.

The same period also marks the ethical nadir of our national life. Our Sages inform us that the destruction of the Second Temple was due to baseless hatred within the Jewish people. It may well be that the attribution of the fratricide of Abel by Cain to the beginning of the winter hints at the fratricidal behavior at the beginning of the cold, dark winter of our collective national life.

Many Jews must have questioned whether our depleted spiritual resources were sufficient to survive as a united people through a prolonged exile - something that no other nation has managed even to this day.

The miracle of Chanuka was that the one remaining cruse of oil with the seal of the Kohen Gadol burned for eight days - enough time to press more ritually pure oil. The message is that even a tiny bit of holiness, if its sanctity is carefully guarded, can miraculously sustain our service of God until all of the material infrastructure that is normally required can be assembled. This is exactly the message that was needed for the generation which witnessed the unprecedented disintegration of our national institutions at the beginning of the current exile and diaspora.

Not only the need for a festival was immanent in the period of the winter solstice, the message of such a festival was also embedded in its chronological placement. This time of year is fitting for a festival which will sustain the people through a prolonged period of isolation and desolation. During the time of our collective national life in the land of Israel, and even during the Babylonian exile which was not a dispersion and which was limited in duration, there was no need for such a holiday.

However, on the historical eve of our national winter, the holiday of Chanuka was established "just in time" - the Holy One, blessed be He, kept it in store until His people were in need of it. They could face the desolation of exile with the confidence that the seemingly meager spiritual resources that they had managed to save from the ravages of external persecution and internal strife would miraculously be able to sustain the light of the Jewish people - a light unto the nations - until the full renewal of our national and religious life.

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Publication of Student Organization of Yeshiva University
Chanukah

Legacy of Sinai
by Rabbi Mordechai Willig

The Midrash (Tanchuma Naso 29) proves that Hashem affirms rabbinic mitzvot, such as Ner Chanukah, from the Chanukah Torah reading which describes the Nesi'im's offering of Korbanot. Yaakov Avinu blessed Ephraim before the older Menashe. Hashem confirmed this priority by commanding Ephraim's representative to bring his offering on the seventh day, before Menashe's representative brought his on the eighth. Similarly, Hashem also affirmed our obligation to light Ner Chanuka, which was enacted by Chazal.

This Midrash can be explained through an examination of EphraimEs and MenasheEs roles. Yaakov placed his right hand on Ephraim, but placed Menashe on his right knee. Why, asks the Netzi"v (48:14), didn't Yaakov place Ephraim on his right knee? The Netzi"v answers that the knee represents the physical. In worldly matters, Menashe, who served as the court interpreter, was indeed superior to Ephraim (Rashi 42:23). Gideon, a descendant of Menashe, excelled in warfare and represented the greatness of Menashe (Rashi 48:19).

In spiritual matters, however, Ephraim, who learned Torah daily with his grandfather Yaakov (Rashi 48:1), was greater than Menashe. His illustrious descendant, Yehoshua, was the bearer of the Torah tradition from Moshe Rabbeinu, and symbolized the greatness of Ephraim (Rashi 48:19).

Therefore, concludes the Netzi"v, Yaakov insisted that his right hand be on Ephraim's head, which indicates his primacy in spiritual matters, while Menashe was on his right knee because of his more advanced state in worldly matters. Moreover, Yaakov emphasized that Ephraim be placed before Menashe (Rashi 48:20), because spiritual values are more important than material ones.

A basic distinction exists in our orientation with respect to these two realms. In worldly affairs, constant change and innovation are central for success. Gideon succeeded because of the element of surprise alluded

to in the expression "Lech BeKochachah Zeh" - "Go with your own power" (Shoftim 6:14). He would not employ the same strategy a second time. Weapons of a generation ago are obsolete.

This point holds true in diplomatic, as well as military, affairs. Foreign policy must be regularly reevaluated, based on changing realities and alliances. So, too, technological advances and new economic situations demand ongoing revisions in these areas.

The spiritual, Torah world is completely different. A great Torah leader does not wish or need to innovate in the manner of a general, politician, scientist, or entrepreneur. Yehoshua merited his position because he served Moshe loyally, arranging the Beit Midrash (Bamidbar Rabba 21:14). His face is compared to the moon (Bava Batra 75a) which merely reflects the great light of Moshe's sun-like face.

Indeed, the very names of Menashe and Ephraim, the respective progenitors of Gideon and Yehoshua, hint to this dichotomy. Yosef called his eldest son Menashe, thanking Hashem for enabling him to forget the difficulties of his personal life and his father's home (41:51). In the worldly precinct of Menashe, forgetting the old and introducing the new is critically important.

Ephraim's name, on the other hand, expresses thanks to Hashem for making Yosef fruitful (41:52). Good fruits taste the same as those of thousands of years ago. So, too, in the spiritual Torah world, we crave to master the tradition of Sinai, to study ancient precepts and live by them, even if we do so with new methodology and technology.

This idea, derived from the names of Ephraim and Menashe and the roles of their most illustrious descendants, explains the traditional role of Torah leaders as guardians of the faith, reflecting the wisdom and outlook of the past. It is precisely this conservative bent which gives the rare innovations of Chazal greater credibility. The Sages can not be accused of instituting new mitzvot merely for the sake of change.

This, then, is the meaning of the Midrash. One dare not fail to perform the mitzvah of Ner Chanuka on the grounds that it is of human, not divine, origin. Hashem confirms the innovations of Chazal because He knows that they are made, despite the Rabbis' resistance to change, for the sake of Heaven.

The Midrash proves this point from Yaakov Avinu. He, too, made a drastic change by placing Ephraim before Menashe. He did so to emphasize the primacy of spiritual endeavors over physical ones. Hashem supported his decision by ordering Ephraim's offering to precede that of Menashe. So, too, He undoubtedly commands us to light the Ner Chanuka, a change that Chazal, like Yaakov Avinu, enacted for the sake of Hashem.

The emphasis on Ner Chanuka, the spiritual aspect of the miracle, over the physical, military victory, reflects the very primacy of Ephraim over Menashe in Yaakov's blessing and the dedication of the mishkan. In fact, the greatest accolade given to Aharon, who lit the menorah in the mishkan, was that he did not change anything (Rashi Bamidbar 8:3).

As we celebrate Chanukah, in a world which emphasizes the physical and in which innovation for its own sake has gained acceptance in the spiritual realm, let us rededicate ourselves to the timeless,

unchanging priorities and ideas of our holy Torah.

High Impact
by Naftali Bodoff

Al HaNissim, the Chanukah supplement to the Amidah, praises Hashem for the great miracles He performed for our ancestors. It speaks of Hashem's great miracle of delivering "the mighty into the hands of the weak and the many into the hands of the few." However, the passage also describes the miracle of Hashem delivering "the impure into the hands of the pure and the wicked into the hands of the righteous." When a few weak fighters defeat many mighty warriors in battle, the event is certainly a miracle. What, though, is so miraculous about the righteous defeating the wicked?

We must first analyze what type of event constitutes a miracle. First, the event must defy the order of nature; for example, the splitting of the Red Sea was clearly a supernatural occurrence. If the Red Sea, though, would split today, would it be considered a miracle? Obviously, the supernatural is not necessarily miraculous; only in the context of the Jews' desperate struggle to survive the Egyptian advance was the splitting of the Red Sea a miracle. Thus, the second characteristic of a miracle is that it must have impact, a consequence of considerable importance.

We can now answer our question. Al HaNissim wishes to articulate the two components of the miracle of Chanukah. First, Hashem altered the natural course of events: the few and weak defeated the many and mighty. Still, though, it must convey the second element of any miracle, that there was much at stake here. Thus, the passage relates that the righteous were in danger but emerged victorious over their impure, wicked enemies.

Furthermore, perhaps the above concepts can help us develop a compelling answer to the famous question of the Beit Yosef. Since the Jews discovered enough oil to light the menorah for only one day, the Beit Yosef points out, the total of eight days of light implies a miracle of only seven days! Why, then, is Chanukah celebrated for eight days, not seven?

The Ramba"m (Hilchot Chanukah 3:2) states that after the Jews entered the Beit Hamikdash and found it desecrated, they needed eight days to obtain pure oil with which to light the menorah. In the interim, they found a small flask of pure oil that would fuel the menorah for only one day; miraculously, the oil lasted the entire eight days until the new, pure oil arrived. Thus, with the lighting of the small flask of oil, the Chasmonaim reinstated the continuous lighting of the menorah. Now, if the small flask of oil had lasted only five days, this occurrence would certainly still have defied the natural order. The achievement of reinstating the continuous lighting of the menorah, however, would not have been accomplished.

The entire difficulty raised by the Beit Yosef rests on the assumption that in commemorating the miracle of the oil, we are interested only in representing the supernatural element of the miracle. However, this assumption fails to take into account the second element of the miracle - its impact. If we highlight the impact of the miracle, the

focus shifts to the result that the menorah was lit for those eight crucial days. Thus, this formulation of the nature of the miracle underscores not the seven extra days but the total of eight days, justifying the eight day duration of Chanukah.

Scholarly Sons
by Joseph J. Sussman

The Gemara (Shabbat 23b) states:

Rav Huna Says: One who always lights candles
will have scholarly sons.

What connection exists between the mitzvah of lighting candles and the reward of scholarly sons?

Rash"i explains that "lighting candles" refers to the lighting of candles for mitzvot - such as Chanukah and Shabbat. The Ramba'm (Hilchot Chanukah 3:1) relates the story of Chanukah and the reason for the holiday. He states specifically, "U'Bitlu Datam V'Loe Hinichu Otam La'asok BaTorah U'BaMitzvot." - "They [the Greeks] prohibited them [the Jews] from practicing their religion and from involving themselves in Torah or mitzvot." The mitzvah of Milah, circumcision, the most obvious way of identifying a Jew, was forbidden. During the time of the Greeks, many people participated in activities unclothed because they worshipped their bodies, and a Jew could easily be identified by his Milah. In fact, one of the many reasons given why we celebrate eight days of Chanukah is the miracle of oil was truly only seven days is "L'Zecher Y'mei HaMilah. - "to commemorate the [eight] days before Milah." Because the Greeks forbade circumcision, we celebrate our victory and the reinstatement of the mitzvah of brit milah.

Now we can answer why one who always lights Chanukah candles will merit having scholarly sons. Two of the major mitzvot prohibited by the Greeks were Talmud Torah and Milah. Hence, lighting candles reaffirms our commitment to these two fundamental principles of Judaism. Therefore, one who is Ragil B'Ner Chanukah will merit not only sons (representing the mitzvah of milah) but sons who are Talmidei Chachamim (representing the mitzvah of talmud Torah).

Deciding How to Show Off
By Ari Segal

A classic halachic debate has Beit Shammai and Beit Hillel disputing the procedure of lighting the Chanukah candles. Beit Shammai contend that one should kindle the candles in descending order; one begins by lighting eight candles and the number gradually diminishes. Beit Hillel, however, maintain that one should begin with a single candle and increase their number until eight. One possible explanation of these opinions, offered by the Talmud, bases their argument on the halachic precedent of the Parei HeChag the sacrifices brought during the holiday of Sukkot. Beit Shammai believe that the candles should be lit in a manner reminiscent of those sacrifices one should begin with many and slowly decrease. Beit Hillel, however, disagree about Beit ShammaiEs use of the Parei HeChag as a valid archetype. Instead, Beit Hillel base their opinion

on the principle of Ma'alim BaKodesh V'Ein Moridin - one should rise in holiness, never descend.

Why do Beit Shammai choose to use this case of Parei HeChag as a halachic precedent; what similarities between Sukkot and Chanukah motivate their opinion? Additionally, exactly what analogy do Beit Shammai make between the two to derive their halachic relationship? Moreover, upon what do Beit Hillel base their contention that the two actually differ?

Perhaps Beit Shammai base their opinion on a central theme present in both holidays. We find the idea of Hiddur - enhancing a mitzvah - throughout Sukkot and Chanukah. During Chanukah, we detect an underlying ideal of Mehadrin and Mehadrin Min Hamehadrin. The actual halacha requires only the lighting of a single candle each night. Yet, we enhance the mitzvah both by lighting many candles and by encouraging each member of a household to kindle his own candles. Analogously, on Sukkot, one must ensure the four species are Mehudarim - beautiful. This fundamental similarity between the two holidays allows Beit Shammai to compare them.

Beit Hillel, however, argue that we must probe deeper to find the actual reasons behind the mitzvot and show how these principles manifest themselves in our application of the concept of Hiddur. An analysis of diverse Hiddurim might shed light on the relationship between the two holidays. The Talmud maintains that a soiled candelabra may not be reused on Chanukah (Masechet Sofrim 20:3). What is the nature of this halacha? It certainly does not mandate Hiddur for the candle itself; this halacha only applies to an external object. Additionally, another application of Hiddur by Chanukah is the halacha of Mehadrin, which has every member of the family lighting a candle every night of Chanukah. This type of Hiddur applies not to the candles themselves but to the number of candles we should light; it is an external example of Hiddur.

During the holiday of Sukkot, however, we apply the concept of Hiddur to the objects themselves they must be intrinsically beautiful. The Talmud asserts that one may not use any of the four species which is not Mehudar. In fact, the Torah calls the Esrog itself beautiful; it is a "P'ri Etz Hadar" (Vayikra 23:40). In contrast to Chanukah, the ideal of Hiddur now applies to the very articles used to perform the mitzvah. Therefore, Beit Hillel do not accept Beit Shammai's comparison.

Perhaps we may understand these differences in halacha from the perspective of the holidays themselves. Chanukah is the holiday of resolution of conflict within Judaism. During the Chanukah era, Hellenized Jews disputed our ancient traditions. Thus, to end this friction, we must go out of our way to reveal the beauty and truth of our traditions. We must present our ideals in an externally pleasant fashion. Sukkot, on the other hand, is a holiday when the nations of the world come to examine our ideals. We have no need to initiate additional Hiddurim, but must expose our innate beauty.

The Light of G-d
by Nasanayl Braun

The Midrash, (Breishit Rabba 84:3) commenting on the juxtaposition of the list of the kings of Edom (Breishit 36:31-43) and Yaakov's residence in Eretz C'na'an, relates two analogies. The first

analogy compares Yaakov's dwelling in the midst of Esav's camp to a traveler who met a pack of wild dogs and despite his fear sat among them. The second analogy compares Yaakov and Yosef to a blacksmith and his son. Just a few sparks from the blacksmith can destroy many bundles of thorns. Similarly, Yaakov and Yosef can destroy Esav's kingdom with two sparks, as it is written "V'Haya Beit Ya'acov Eish U'Veit Yosef Lehavah U'veit Eisav LaKash" - "The house of Yaakov will be a fire, the house of Yosef a flame, and the house of Esav straw (Ovadia 1:18).

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein explained that this Midrash provides two distinct approaches for dealing with Esav. The first approach calls for peaceful coexistence. You must dwell with Esav, amongst the pack of wild dogs, and attempt to influence him. If he remains unaffected, however, then the second approach must be implemented; Esav must be confronted and "burned."

Although a powerfully constructive force, fire also has the potential for mass destruction. "Burning" Esav unnecessarily is both destructive and counterproductive. Attacking Esav can only be a constructive, viable option if there is no alternative. To effectively function as an Or LaGoyim - a guiding light to the nations of the world, it is essential to initially attempt the peaceful, influential method.

This message is particularly relevant during the time of Chanukah. Our Chanukah celebration revolves around our military victory over the Y'vanim - the Greeks. However, there is a second more important aspect of this holiday: the miracle of the Pach Shemen - the pitcher of oil. The ideal situation is the pitcher of oil, with its potential to give light, more light than thought possible. It represents the "light of G-d" that must be spread throughout the entire world.

They're Not Lost
by Zev Reichman

The Midrash in Breishit says that the period of Syrian-Greek rule over Israel was infamous for the many terrible decrees against Judaism. Specifically, the Midrash singles out one extremely onerous decree: The government would command them to write on an ox's horn that they repudiate the G-d of Israel. (Breishit Rabba parasha 2)

This Midrash is mystifying. First of all, why did the Greeks insist that our forefathers author this blasphemy specifically on the horns of oxen? Furthermore, our tradition remembers the many anti-religious laws passed by the Greeks. They forbade Shabbat, milah, and many other mitzvot. Why was this decree - of scrawling on the horns of oxen - singled out for this dubious distinction?

Rav Moshe Wolfson, in Emunat Itecha, offers the following explanation. Our forefathers reached the highest levels of holiness at Mount Sinai. The Midrash says that at one point they were so pious that even death could not wield its power over them. Had they remained on that spiritual plateau they would have lived forever. Unfortunately, in a base act of rebellion, they worshipped a golden calf. This sin caused our ancestors to fall from their high level and is therefore remembered as especially abhorrent.

Since the golden calf was one of Jewry's worst failings, we often find oxen and calves symbolizing sin. The Greeks understood this imagery and, accordingly, insisted that the Jews blaspheme upon the horns of oxen. They were sending a particular message: the Jews were repudiating G-d because of oxen - because of their sins. They were emphasizing that Jewry's iniquity had caused irrevocable damage. Am Yisrael was too far gone to ever return to Hashem.

We can now understand why Chazal felt that this decree was most onerous. It sought to dishearten Israel, to discourage them from ever repenting. Convinced that they had no hope, they would continue in their evil ways.

By saving us from the Greeks, G-d taught us to reject their philosophies. We must reject the message of the horns. They are wrong! A Jew can never cross the point of no return.

Unfortunately, in our times, many of our bretheren do not appreciate Torah and mitzvot. Chanukah must remind us to never write them off, for no matter how low they have fallen, they can and, B'Ezrat Hashem, will return.

VeChol Mi She'Oskim Bezarchei Tzibbur Be'emuna

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wishes everyone Chag Chanukah Sameach
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The Talmud in Tractate Shabbos asks: What is Chanukah, meaning, for what miracle was the holiday established? The answer given is the popular story of how the victorious Chashmonoyim entered the Temple, and found only
one

sealed, undefiled container of olive oil from which to light the Menorah. Each container held a one day supply, and a miracle occurred, and they lit the menorah from that container for eight days. The obvious question is why is this the reason for the establishment of the holiday? Why is the military victory omitted from this statement in the Talmud? Furthermore, when we recite "al haNissim" the prayer of praise and thanksgiving, any mention of the miracle of the oil is left out. Instead, the military victory is emphasized. It appears from the Talmud that the miracle of the oil is most critical, but in our prayers we thank G-d only for the military victory, and at best we only allude to the miracle of the oil.

This can be understood in the following way. There are many miracles retold in the Torah. Many not found explicitly in the verses of the Chumash (Five Books of Moses) can be found in the Talmud, midrashim, and commentaries. Among these miracles there are two kinds. One kind of miracle is done to help its recipient. The other kind is meant as a lesson to mankind. The miracle of the oil is of the latter kind.

G-d could have just as easily caused eight containers of oil to be found, but He chose to perform an obvious miracle. The reason for this is that the victory alone could have been attributed to the bravery and self sacrifice of the warriors. The hand of G-d is not as clearly seen in that setting. Don't we see nowadays that many people take countless miracles for granted? Think of how many miracles go into the seemingly simple repair of a

cut! Blood coagulation. White blood cells race to the cite to prevent infection. Cell reproduction! Repair of nerves and capillaries. Amazing!?! Miraculous!?! Many dismiss it as "nature"; chance.

The miracle of the oil is a lesson to all generations that even an occurrence that can be viewed as natural, or man-made, such as a victory on the battlefield has the hand of G-d behind it. Even nature is just a series of miracles that were set into constant motion. We take them for granted, but they are no less miraculous than miracles that happen only once. Either is just as easy for G-d to perform. That is why the establishment of the holiday is based on the miracle of the oil. It teaches us that the victory that won the Jews of those times their sovereignty was only with G-d's help. However, now that we understand that point, we thank and praise G-d in our prayers for the victory which He gave us, giving the miracle of the oil a secondary position in terms of what we owe our thanksgiving for.

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Ma'oz Tzur Rabbi Y Grunwald - Pinner Synagogue

The poem of Ma'oz Tzur has been sung in homes throughout Ashkenazi communities for the last 800 years, but not among the Sephardim and Yemenites. According to Leopold Zunz, the great historian of Jewish Literature, it was composed before the year 1250.

On the basis of the initial letters of each of the first five stanzas, it is clear that the name of the poet was Mordechai. Some identify him with Mordechai ben Itzhak Halevi who also wrote a well known Zemer for Shabbat whilst others identify him with one of the Tosaphists mentioned in the commentary to the Niddah page 36a.

One of the most interesting questions about Ma'oz Tzur is whether it originally consisted of five stanzas or six? Linked to this question is the fact that the two editions of the Singers Prayer Book are different in this respect. The earlier edition, compiled in 1890 and then revised in 1962, has only 5 stanzas. The latest Centenary Edition, however, has all six, as

does the Artscroll Siddur.

There are conflicting views with regard to the origin of this final stanza. Some scholars say that it is an authentic part of the poem, whereas others maintain that it was added later in the 16th century. The first view helps some historians to date the poem because it seems to refer to a specific Medieval tragedy. Accordingly, the last sentence "repel the Red One" "Deche Admon", refer to Frederick, the First, Barbarosa (Latin for 'red beard'), and who organised the Third crusade against Jerusalem, together with Richard

I, the Lion Hear, King of England, and Philip Augustus, King of France. On the way these three kings caused fear and trembling throughout the Jewish communities in Germany. The second view seems to be reinforced by the fact that the name Mordechai only consists of five letters which begin each stanza.

Whatever the origin of the last stanza, it was omitted completely, or its wording radically altered, because it contained sentiments hostile to Christian neighbours. For a similar reason, one edition of the Siddur, which was published in 1845, had the Hebrew word for Greeks, Yevanim, replaced by the word Yehirim, which means arrogant ones.

It is noteworthy that, although the poem is sung on Chanukah, only two of its stanzas relate to it, the first and the fifth. The first is a plea to the Almighty, the mighty Rock of my Salvation, to rebuild the Temple which the Paytan, poet calls Bet Tefillah, House of Prayer. The fifth speaks about the Greek persecution of the Jewish people and the victory of the Chashmanim, the Hasmoneans. The other three stanzas, however, are devoted

to other great miracles in Jewish History which preceded the events of Channukkah, the redemption of Egypt, the Return to Zion from Babylon, after 70 years of exile, and the miracle of Purim in Persia. According to Rabbi Yisacchar Jakobson, this is an important characteristic of a number of prayers of thanks in the Siddur. Instead of expressing gratitude just for the miracles relevant to the festival, it broadens its scope to include thanksgiving for other outstanding events. In this sense, it is similar to the Grace After Meals which expresses gratitude not only for the food which we have just eaten, but also for the land of Israel, for Zion and Jerusalem and for God's goodness in history.

Like other Piyutim, Medieval religious poems, Ma'oz Tzur contains a few allusions to older midrashic interpretations. Thus, for example the fourth stanza refers to 'berosh', which means a cypress. The cypress is identified, in the Talmud, with Mordechai. It is based on the verse in Isaiah (55:13) which reads: "Instead of the brier, a cypress shall rise. Instead of a nettle, a myrtle shall rise". The Midrash explains that this verse is an allusion to the story of Purim. Mordechai is the breosh which means both head and spices. The word Mor also means spices. Therefore, Mordechai is described as the head, the best of all spices, the best leader who replaced the worst, Haman.

It is one of the paradoxes of Jewish History that, although Chanukkah is the Festival which stresses most of all the dangers of assimilation, the tune of Ma'oz Tzur is based on a medieval German folk song which was also adopted by Luther to sing a famous German hymn which starts with the words "Now rejoice you Christian community".

Nevertheless, the poem, together with its tune, have become inspiration for courage and heroism. In his essay "Lights are kindled in Bergen Belsen", Philip R Alstat tells the story of the kindling of the lights in Barrack 10 on the first night of Chanukkah 1943. "The Blazhever Rebbe was to conduct the ceremony. He inserted the improvised candle into the improves Menorah and, in a soft voice, began to chant the three traditional blessings. On the third blessing, in which G-d is thanked that 'He has kept us in life, and preserved us and enabled to reach this time' the Rebbe's voice broke into sobs, for he had already lost his wife, his only daughter, his son in law and his only grandchild.

Then he began, together with all the assembled inmates, who had also lost their dear ones, to chant Ma'oz Tzur which proclaims steadfast faith in G-d, the Rock of their strength. The singing gave the Rebbe the strength to regain his composure so that he was able to conclude the service".

I feel that we should sing the last sixth stanza, particularly because its final line is so beautiful, its words "Raise for us the seven shepherds" express our Messianic hope for the Redemption. We pray that we should again be guided by the principles and ideals which seven shepherds of the past; David in the centre, with Adam, Seth and Methuselah on his right side, and Abraham, Jacob and Moses, on his left side. It is a request to the Almighty to renew our days as of old.

CHANUKAH

"Mai Chanukah? What is Chanukah? Our Rabbis taught On the 25th Kislev are (begin) eight days on which one may not mourn or fast." (Shabbat 21b). Then follows the miracle of the oil and the fixing of Hallel and Thanksgiving (Al Hanissim). Thus the Talmud traces the origin of the festival to the miracle of the oil at the time of the Maccabean re-dedication of the Temple. The source of the Talmud is the Megillat Taanit, an early historical and halachic work dating to the 1st-2nd century CE which states that on the 25th Kislev it is forbidden to fast. The Megillah in fact contains 36 occasions when it is forbidden to fast, as those days commemorate victories and happy events. The Talmud and allied works say little of Judah the Maccabee and his victories, possibly, because the later Maccabees/Hasmoneans as priests assumed the title of king. Maoz Tzur (see back page) and the Talmud in Shabbat are basically concerned with the halachot of lighting the Chanukiah.

The Josippon, a medieval summary of Josephus, refers to the act of the re-dedication of the altar and related matters, but refers to the festival as the Festival of Lights.

Josephus gives a detailed account of the events leading to the re-dedication, basing himself on what he found in the Apocrypha, in 1 and 2 Maccabees. The two books complement each other, where they overlap, but there is no mention of the oil, except perhaps obliquely at the beginning of 2 Maccabees. This same book also links up the eight days with the celebration of Sukkot, which the Jews had been unable to celebrate properly during the period of the persecution of Antiochus IV. It finishes with the victory against Nicanor, celebrated on 13th Adar as a festival mentioned in Megillat Taanit. 1 Maccabees starts the story briefly from Alexander the Great who introduced hellenism and concludes with the death of Simon the

last of the Maccabean brothers. Whilst Chanukah marks victory, it also raises the subject of martyrdom produced by Antiochus' Edict of Intolerance, which prohibited Judaism. It resulted in mothers who circumcised their sons and died for it, in Eleazar the Priest who died because he refused to defile himself with food, and in the story of the mother and her seven sons (Hannah or Miriam according to some).

Let the Hallel and Prayer of Thanks reflect each year our survival of the many subsequent Edicts of Intolerance.

Typeset in-house and published by United Synagogue Publications Ltd.

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From: "Rabbi Yissocher Frand <ravfrand@torah.org>"
To: CSHULMAN, "ravfrand@torah.org"
Date: 12/13/95 10:53pm
Subject: Rabbi Frand on Parshas Vayeishev

Medrash Compares Reuven to Flowers; Ner Chanukah to Fruit

In this week's portion, the Torah recounts the infamous incident of the sale of Yosef. The Sages tell us that when the brothers saw Yosef approaching, they convened a Beis Din and concluded that Yosef had the status of a Rodef -- he was trying to endanger their lives -- and therefore, based on Halacha, they determined that Yosef was deserving of death.

The verse continues (37:21-22) "And Reuven heard and he saved him from their hands and he said, 'Let us not smite him mortally ... throw him into this pit ... but don't send forth your hand against him' in order that he (Reuven) might save him and return him to his father." Reuven's plan fell through when he returned to the pit and Yosef was not there, having already been sold.

There is a famous Medrash on the verse in Shir HaShirim (7:14) "The mandrakes (Dudaim) yield fragrance; and at our doorsteps are all precious fruits -- both new and old -- I have stored away for you, my Beloved". The Medrash says the expression "The mandrakes yield fragrance" refers to Reuven who tried to save Yosef from the pit and the expression "at our doorsteps are all precious fruits" refers to Ner Chanukah. In other words, Reuven's act is equated with a pleasant smelling flower and the Ner Chanukah is equated with delicious fruits.

All the darshanim try to interpret this Medrash. Rav Schwab ZT"L, gives a beautiful interpretation to this Medrash. What is the difference, he asks, between pleasant smelling flowers and delicious tasting fruit? The answer is that a flower may have a beautiful smelling aroma, but it doesn't leave one with anything lasting or permanent. One smells it,

enjoys it, and then it is gone. Eating fruit, on the other hand, provides a much more substantial and lasting pleasure. One eats it, tastes it, is provided nourishment and sustenance with it, and it takes away one's hunger.

This is what the Medrash is trying to say -- what Reuven did is like the sweet smelling flower. He had noble intentions and he wanted to do the right thing, but unfortunately he stopped short. What was required was to stand up and take firm action and to directly tell his brothers "We absolutely cannot do this!" But for some reason, he did not have that tremendous moral power necessary to stand up firmly for what is right. Therefore, his act, remains only like a flower that provides a fleeting pleasant smell with no lasting benefit.

However, when people are able to stand up and be moser nefesh, those acts bear lasting fruit. That is what happened at Chanukah time: A small band of people had the strong moral fortitude and strength and mesiras nefesh to stand up against overwhelming odds. The result of that mesiras nefesh was -- fruits on our doorsteps -- something everlasting: A rebirth and a regeneration of the service in the Temple that saved the Jewish people.

Rav Tzadok offers a beautiful insight into the Chasmonians' mesiras nefesh. He instructs us to examine the names of the heroes of the Chanukah story: Yochanan and Matisyahu. Yochanan means Kah Chanan (G-d gave a present). Matisyahu means Matas Kah (A gift of G-d). People who realize that all they have in this world -- their strengths, their talents, their material possessions -- are merely gifts of G-d, can rise to the occasion and be moser nefesh. Such people realize that all they have are merely Matas Kah -- gifts from G-d -- which must be used for G-d's service. Such recognition generates the mesiras nefesh necessary for producing "lasting fruits".

Assaults on the Household Lead To "Household Oriented" Mitzvos

Among the Gezeiros enacted by the Greeks against the Jews were a number of strange decrees:

- * Houses that have beams in them should be destroyed.
- * Virgins need to have relations with the higamon before marrying.
- * Write on the horn of your oxen 'I have no portion in the G-d of Israel'.

What is the meaning of this strange set of rules?

Rav Mordechai Ilan suggests a beautiful interpretation to explain all of these decrees. The Talmud (Pesachim 88a) quotes the verse (Isaiah 2:3) .."And many nations will go and say 'Let us go up to the Mountain of Hashem to the House of the G-d of Yaakov...". The Talmud then asks, "Is it only the House of the G-d of Yaakov and not also the House of the G-d of Avraham and of Yitzchak?" The Talmud answers "Not like Avraham who called it a 'mountain' and not like Yitzchak who called it a 'field', but like Yaakov who called it a 'House'." In other words, there were three stages in the development of the patriarchal relationship with G-d.

Avraham viewed monotheism as a great mountain, that no one else had climbed. His contribution was to take this great obstacle to belief in

One G-d, which had been like a mountain, and "level it". As a result, the mountain no longer stood in the way of others seeking to gain this belief. Abraham made belief in One G-d like a field -- available for others to access more easily.

After the mountain was leveled, Yitzchak could come and plow the field, in order to make it fertile. He was able to deal with belief in G-d as a field (sadeh). But a field is still subject to the winds and the whims of mankind.

It took a Yaakov Avinu to establish what was needed for the Jewish People. He called it a "House". The Bais Hamikdash is called after Yaakov's name, because he succeeded after the groundwork of his grandfather and father to make Judaism what it is today: The House of the G-d of Israel.

The foundation of Judaism (Yiddishkeit) is based today on Batei Yisroel -- Jewish Homes. Yaakov was the first of the Patriarchs to erect what is known today as a Jewish Home. Throughout history we have found different attacks on the Jewish home and the cure that was called for was the rejuvenation of that Jewish home.

When Klal Yisroel (the Nation of Israel) went down to Egypt and lived like slaves for 200+ years, that exile had a terrible effect on the "Bais Yaakov" (the Jewish Home). What we know as the Jewish Home effectively became destroyed as the Jews were turned into slaves.

What was required? A Mitzvah that is almost unique. A mitzvah that an individual Jew does not perform himself, but can only be performed in the context of a house: "And you should take for yourselves a lamb for each family unit, a lamb for each household". The Jewish people had to, at that time, resurrect and make strong again the Bais Yaakov. They did this by bringing the Korban Pessach that was dependent on the family unit. The blood of that offering had to be spread on the door posts and on the lintel of that house -- as symbols that it was the "House" of Yaakov that needed to be strengthened.

The Greeks knew that the strength of the Jewish people depends on the holiness of the Jewish House. The way to destroy Jews, they understood, was to destroy the Jewish Home.

This is the meaning of the decree "Any house that has a beam should be destroyed". They weren't interested in razing houses, they were saying that the way to defeat Klal Yisroel is to destroy the family unit -- the moral fiber of what Jews are all about.

Therefore, they decreed that every virgin would first have to have relations with the higamon before marrying. The way to corrupt the Jewish family is to corrupt its sexual morality -- make every Jewish woman have an illicit relationship with a Gentile. That destroys the Jewish house.

That too, is what the third decree means. "Write on the horns of the Ox 'I have no portion in the G-d of Israel.'" I once heard from Rav Kulefsky who heard from Rav Leib Gurvitz, a Rosh Yeshiva in Gateshead (England), that he once visited the British Museum and saw that in the historical period of the Chanukah story, the horns of oxen were used as baby bottles. Thus the decree means -- put into your infants, with their mother's milk, the idea and the concept that 'I have no portion in the G-d of Israel'.

The way to destroy the Jewish people is to destroy the holiness of the

Jewish people. That is what the miracle of Chanukah was all about. Therefore, when the Sages gave us the mitzvah associated with Chanukah, they gave us a virtually unique ritual -- similar only to Korban Pessach -- that requires fulfillment based on a family unit: Ner Ish U'Beiso (A Candle for each person together with his household).

According to the basic law, each individual does not have to light Chanukah candles. Fundamentally it is the "house" that lights, rather than the individual. Why? Because the assault of the Greeks was on the "House of Israel" (Bais Yisroel) -- the holiness of Israel. Therefore, the antidote ('tikun') was to have a strengthening of the house of Israel, so the mitzvah was formulated in terms of 'Ner Ish U'Beiso'.

The Greek Assault on the Jewish Household is Being Repeated Today

If, at that time, there was an assault on Bais Yisroel, then today in the times that we live in, we must say that there is an equally fierce assault on the 'House of Israel' and on the 'holiness of Israel'. True, we live in a country where they don't make decrees about circumcision or mikveh or decrees as we found instituted by the Greeks. But there is a much more effective way of destroying Kedushas Yisroel and that is the permissive and sexually depraved society that we live in today.

There was a study done in the 1940s of the 8 most severe problems faced by the public schools in the United States. They included the following (starting with the most severe): Talking in class, chewing gum, making noise, running in the halls, getting out of line, wearing improper clothing, and not putting paper in the waste basket.

A parallel study was done 40 years later and the most severe problems faced by the public schools today are drug abuse, alcohol abuse, pregnancy, suicide, rape, robbery, and assault.

Look where we have gone in the last 40 years! One would have to have their head in the sand to think that this change in the society around us has not taken a toll on the holiness of the Jewish people. As happens with the Gentiles, so too happens with the Jewish people. In a smaller measure, all the major problems that are occurring in the larger society are happening in Jewish homes as well.

This is an assault on the holiness of the Jewish household that is as equally destructive as what happened in the time of the Greeks. When we say at the blessings over the Chanukah candles "In those days at this time" -- it means that "time" is not a "time-line" but a "time-spiral". What happened then is happening now. At the time of the Nes Chanukah, the strengthening of Kedushas Bais Yisroel, the strengthening of family life, the strengthening of parent-children relationships and of husband-wife relationships were all necessary and they helped strengthen the sanctity of the Jewish Home. This too is exactly what is needed for our time.

It is at this time of the year, that we need to strengthen those matters. Everyone knows -- based on their individual situation -- what that requires and what that means for him. That's what Chanukah has to be today -- a strengthening of Man and his household (Ish u'Beiso) in the holiness of the Jewish Household -- the foundation of the Jewish people since the times of Yaakov Avinu. This is the spiritual elevation we should seek to take out of the holiday of Chanukah.

Personalities:

-
- Rav Schwab -- (died 1995) Rabbi of Kehal Adath Yeshurun, Washington Heights (NYC), formerly a Rabbi in Baltimore, MD.
- Rav Tzadok (HaCohen) -- (1823-1900) author of Pri Tzadik; Chassidic sage and thinker.
- Rav Mordechai Ilan -- author of the Mikdash Mordechai

Transcribed by David Twersky; Seattle, Washington twerskyd@scn.org

This weeks write-up is adapted from the hashkafa portion of Rabbi Yissocher Frand's Commuter Chavrusah Torah Tapes on the weekly Torah portion (#34). The corresponding halachic portion for tape #34 is: Chanukah Licht on Erev Shabbos.

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From: "DaPr@aol.com"
To: CSHULMAN, " yomtov@torah.org"
Date: 12/13/95 3:49am
Subject: YomTov - Chanukah: Performances and Customs

YomTov, vol. I, # 60
 Week of Parshas VaYaishev
 Topic: Chanukah - Performances and Customs

The guest contributor to this issue is R' Chaim Glazer.

The Lighting of the Menorah

As mentioned in #57, one of the miracles of Chanukah occurred through the lighting of the Menorah. We therefore light a Menorah to remind us of this great miracle. Our sages have written that "All who are careful with the lighting of the Menorah will merit having sons who will be Torah scholars.

The performance of this Mitzvah on the most basic level involves the head of each household, who is to light one light for the entire household each night. A more preferable form of performance is that everyone in the household should light one light each night of Chanukah. The most preferable form, the Talmud tells us, is that the head of the household should light one light the first night, and on each additional night, one light should be added. The purpose of this is twofold: we add to the holiness of the lights by increasing their number, and by having the lights correspond to the

number of days, we increase the publicity and awareness about the miracle of Chanukah.

A question is raised about the performance of this mitzvah. By all other performances, the obligation to perform the commandment is on the individual:
 Each person needs to take the Four Species on Sukkos, and eat Matzo on Pesach. However, on Chanukah the obligation is on the head of each household, and not on all individuals. Why is there this difference?
 The answer lies in what the reason is behind why we light the Chanukah Menorah. The main reason why we light the Menorah is so we can publicize the great miracle that occurred on Chanukah. This goal can be accomplished by having only the head of each household lighting the Menorah. Once a Menorah is lit in each household, and all members of the household observe these lights, there is no longer any need for anyone else to light, and therefore there is no obligation for anyone else to do so.

Foods Associated With Chanukah

There is a custom to eat dairy products and cheese on Chanukah. This custom stems from the heroism of Yehudis, of the Chashmonean family. Yehudis, a beautiful women, was taken by the leader of the Greek troops. While she was with the Greek officer, Yehudis fed him a dish cooked with cheese so he would become thirsty. Once he became thirsty, she gave him wine to drink so he would become drowsy. When he fell asleep, she took his sword and beheaded him. She then carried his head back to Jerusalem and displayed it, so that the Greek troops would become demoralized. Her plan worked, and the troops retreated.

There is a custom as well to eat foods cooked in oil. The reason for this custom is because by eating these foods, we are reminded of the miracle that occurred with the oil. Two of the most common foods associated with this custom are "Latkes", potato pancakes and "Sufganiot," which are doughnuts (or flour pancakes), both of which are fried in oil.

The Draidel - The Chanukah Top

On Chanukah, there is a custom to play with a four-sided top. (For the roots of this custom, look in the Special Edition, which you will be getting soon). There is an interesting contrast between the Draidel and the Gragger, the noisemaker used on the holiday of Purim. Both of them operate through spinning a handle. The Gragger, which has the handle on the bottom of the toy, signifies that an outpouring of prayer from below caused an uproar in the heavens above which averted the decree of destruction against the Jews. The Gragger signifies this by being a toy which is spun by us on the bottom, and makes noise up on top. On Chanukah, G-d in heaven saved the Jews out of His mercy, even though the nation of Israel had not properly repented. We therefore have a toy which we spin from the top to show that the victory occurred only because of the One above, not because we below did anything

to
merit the salvation.

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From: "DaPr@aol.com"
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Date: 12/14/95 5:12pm
Subject: YomTov - SPECIAL EDITION:CHANUKAH

YomTov, vol. I, # 61
Week of Parshas VaYaishev
Topic: SPECIAL EDITION - Chanukah

The guest contributor to this issue is R' Baruch Pesach Mendelson.

Many questions were posed, and hopefully those questions will be answered here.

One reader wanted to know about the nature of Chanukah. This reader understood that there was a large amount of assimilation at the time of Chanukah. He was under the impression that the Jews who revolted against the Greeks revolted against the assimilated Jews as well, who were then killed as part of the war waged against the Greeks. If that was the case, the reader wondered why we celebrate such a "bloody" holiday.

The answer lies in understanding that the situation was not exactly as this reader thought. The battle was not one between Orthodox and non-Orthodox, although there was a fear of mass assimilation. It was rather a fight against those who sought to insult, disrupt and destroy any and all elements of Judaism completely - the Greeks. This fight was waged on the battlefield. The only incident in which we see a Jew killed by another Jew was one involving Matisyahu. The act involving Matisyahu, while Halachicly justifiable, is still nevertheless difficult to understand, but we can at least put it in perspective by examining the scene surrounding it. The Greeks were attempting to convince Matisyahu to offer a sacrifice to their gods, which he refused to do. One Jew then publicly offered, in front of Matisyahu who was the well accepted elder and leader of the generation, to bring this sacrifice. Such an open rebellion could have swayed the entire Jewish people into following the Greeks and the Jewish religion may have then moved into oblivion. As the leader of the generation, Matisyahu understood his great responsibility and realized the utterly disastrous consequences of passivity. He therefore felt that a very strong statement had to be made. His plan was not to sway people through fear - no one was threatened further. Matisyahu showed that the Jewish people were strong and united and ready to defend the most important thing to them - their religion. In no way can that dramatic scene be equated to any modern day political assassination. When celebrating Chanukah, we should be proud of the fact that we are celebrating the continuity of our religion. Matisyahu accomplished his victory by successfully battling the Greeks on the

battlefield, not by oppressing or killing those of his brethren who sided with the Greeks. Indeed, even after Matisyahu and his men were victorious, Hellenistic Jews still remained and were still vocal. Our celebration of Chanukah is a celebration of perseverance against religious persecution by our enemies - those who wished to rid the world of a religion we know as Judaism.

On to some more "technical" questions...(Some of these questions and answers

are merely illustrative of general issues that arise and possible solutions. Please ask your local Rabbi for answers to your specific, and possibly fact-dependent, personal questions. -YP)

-Are women obligated to light the Chanukah Menorah/Chanukiya?

As a general rule, women are exempt from all time-bound positive commandments. Nevertheless, by Chanukah, since women were deeply involved in the miracle (as Yehudis, of the Chashmonean family, fed cheese and wine to a Greek governor and then killed him), they are also required to participate in the celebration. Wives, however, are exempt because we consider a husband and a wife as one, and therefore the wife's obligation is discharged when her husband lights. There are authorities that feel that girls, once their mother is not lighting, should not light as well out of respect for their mother. Rabbi M. Feinstein felt that girls should light for themselves.

-If one is not going to be at home when the time for lighting arrives, what should one do?

When one works and comes home later than the best possible lighting time but before his family goes to sleep, it is best for him to light upon arriving home, with a blessing.

-Where does the custom of distribution of Chanukah "Gelt" (money) come from?

This customs probably stems from the same source as the "draidel," the Chanukah top. During the Greek persecution, children were prevented from studying the Torah. While the children were hiding and studying the Torah, they kept a "draidel" (top) and money handy so, in the event they were discovered by the Greeks, it would appear as if they were only playing games.

-A reader remembered learning that the war for Israel lasted for some years after the Temple was dedicated. If that was the case, why do we celebrate the military victory on Chanukah?

The purpose of the war was to achieve religious independence. This goal had been accomplished when the Temple was recaptured, and therefore we celebrate this victory. The battles that continued after that time were defensive in nature, to prevent any relapse. Therefore, they are not celebrated.

-What is a proper greeting to use to a fellow Jew on Chanukah?
Two traditional greetings are "Chag Sameyach" and "A freilichin Chanukah."

- Why does it seem that Chanukah is not considered as one of the more

important or significant holidays?

The holidays mentioned in the Torah (Rosh HaShana, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, Pesach, and Shavu'os) are regarded as more important than those holidays which are Rabbinically prescribed, of which Chanukah is one.

- What do the letters on the Dreidel stand for?

The letters will vary depending on where you are. In the Diaspora, the letters are "nun" "gimel" "heh" "shin" which stands for "Nes gadol haya sham"- "A great miracle happened there." In Israel, the "heh" is replaced with a "peh" which stands for "poh," so that the sentence reads "A great miracle happened here." Some say that the four sides represent the four great powers that subjugated Israel: Babylon, Persia, Greece, and Rome.

- What makes a Menorah/Chanukiya "kosher?"

A Kosher Chanukah Menorah should have eight branches with the candle/oil holders on one level in a straight line. The Shamash, the candle used to light the others, should either be out of line or on a different level than the other eight candles. It is preferable for the Menorah to look nice (and therefore a Menorah made out of a material which soils and looks unpleasant after one use should preferably not be used) and the nicer the better!

-Why is there no Megillat Chanukah (in Navi) or a Mesechet Chanukah (in Talmud)?

There is a Megillas Chashmonaim which tells about the story of Chanukah. However, the miracle of Chanukah occurred after the close of the era when books were still added to the Navi. There is discussion of Chanukah in the Talmud. However, it is so small that it would get lost. (It was for this same concern that T'rai Asar, the book in Navi which really consists of 12 small books, was grouped together.) Therefore, the discussion of Chanukah was placed in the tractate of Shabbos, in the chapter concerning the Shabbos "candles."

-Does Chanukah end the night that we light eight candles?

As with other "day" dependent observances, we say that night proceeds day. Therefore, on the last night on Chanukah, we light eight candles, and then the next day until sunset, we continue to celebrate Chanukah by saying Hallel in the morning services and saying the special "Al HaNissim" prayer in Grace after Meals and in the Shemoneh Esrai prayer.

-How was the Menorah lit in the Temple?

The Menorah in the Temple had seven branches (lights). All lights were lit each time the Menorah was lit.

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From: "listserv@lubavitch.chabad.org (W-2 LIST

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To: CSHULMAN
Date: 12/10/95 9:37pm
Subject: Torah Studies-Vayeishev/Chanukah

B"H
Torah Studies
Adaptation of Likutei Sichos
by
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Chief Rabbi of Great Britain
Based on the teachings and talks of the Lubavitcher Rebbe
Rabbi Menachem M. Schneerson on the weekly Torah Portion

Vayeshev
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CHANUKAH

In this Sicha, the Rebbe explains the mitzvah of the Chanukah lights, and concentrates on two of their features, that they are to be placed by the door of one's house that is adjacent to the street, or the public domain, and that they must be placed on the left-hand side of the door.

These features have a deep symbolism:

The "left-hand side" and the "public domain" both stand for the realm of the profane, and by placing the lights there, we are, as it were, bringing the Divine light into the area of existence which is normally most resistant to it.

The Sicha goes on to explain the difference between the positive and negative commandments in their effect on the world, and concludes with a comparison between the Chanukah lights and tefillin.

THE CHANUKAH LIGHTS AND THE MEZUZAH

The Mitzvah of the Chanukah lights is similar in two respects to that of the mezuzah: Both have to be placed by the side of the door of a house or a courtyard, and both must be set on the outside. But there are also two significant differences between them.

The mezuzah must be fixed on the right-hand side of the door, and the Chanukah lights set on the left. And though both are placed outside, in the case of the mezuzah, this is only to signify where the house or the courtyard begin - to mark the entrance. On the other hand the Chanukah lights are intended specifically to illuminate the outside, the public domain.

The mezuzah, as it were, points inward while the Menorah shines

outward.

These two points of difference may be connected. For the "public domain" (reshut ha-rabim; literally, "the domain of the many") suggests the idea of multiplicity or lack of unity; and the "left-hand side" is the name for the source of that life in which there is separation and disunity.

"Public domain" and "left-hand side" are therefore related by being symbolic names for the dimension of division and alienation from G-d.

The Mezuzah and the Other Commandments

The precept of mezuzah is said to be equal in importance to all the other Mitzvot together: It is said to include them all within itself.

So we would expect to find them all sharing the two features which characterize the mezuzah - the idea of the right hand, and of being directed inward rather than towards the outside. And almost all of them do.

Most have to be performed with the right hand. Indeed, burnt offerings were vitiated if they were not offered with the right hand. Also, certain commandments must be performed indoors, while those which may be done outside have no integral connection with the idea of the "public domain," since they may also be performed indoors - in short, they have no connection with place at all.

It follows that the Chanukah lights - which occupy the left-hand side, and are intended for the outside - have a different character to almost every other precept in Judaism.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE COMMANDS

This difference between the mezuzah (and all other Mitzvot) and the Chanukah lights is analogous to another distinction - between the positive and negative commands.

The positive commands (can only be performed with objects which belong to the domain of the permitted; the negative to the (non-performance of the) forbidden.

Every performance of a Mitzvah brings spiritual life to the world - in the form of "Divine light." And the light which is drawn down by the fulfillment of a positive command is of the kind that can be internalized in the act, "clothed" or contained within it. The act "clothes" the light in the same way as the body "clothes" the soul.

But a Divine light which can be contained in such a way is finite, taking on the character of that which contains it. It cannot descend to the realm of the impure or forbidden, for the character of the forbidden is that of a negation of G-d's will, and this is a character which a light which emanates from G-d cannot take on.

On the other hand, the light which inhabits this and which is released by the fulfillment of a negative command, is infinite. It cannot be contained by the forbidden (or indeed by any) act, nor does it share its character, and so it can be released not by performing it, but only by refraining from it. Indeed, only an infinite light could descend this far into impurity, being, as it were, undimmed where it

shines.

And the Chanukah light is of this infinite kind, because it brings light to the "left-hand side" and the "public domain" - both symbols of impurity and alienation from G-d.

In fact the Chanukah light goes beyond the negative commandment for it is, in itself, a positive command. Refraining from a forbidden act may negate it. But the Chanukah lights do not negate but illuminate and purify the world of "outside" - just as a positive command purifies the world of "inside" (i.e., the permitted).

And this is the connection between the Chanukah lights and the Torah, which is itself called a "light." For the Torah also concerns itself with (specifying) the acts which are forbidden and the things which are impure. And through studying the Torah, the sparks of holiness embedded in the realm of the forbidden are released and elevated.

The Chanukah Lights and Tefillin

It is known that the seven commandments which the Rabbis instituted, one of which is the command of the Chanukah lights, derive ultimately from commandments to be found in the Torah. So there must be amongst the Torah commandments one which is an analogue of the lights of Chanukah, one which brings the Divine light into the "left-hand side" and the "public domain." And this is the Mitzvah of tefillin.

For, the hand-tefillin are worn on the left arm (the weaker arm, i.e., the left if the person is right-handed), and the reason is, as explained in the Zohar, that the "Evil Inclination" (the "left side of the heart"; the voice of emotional dissent to G-d's will) should itself be "bound" into the service of G-d. And the head-tefillin must be worn uncovered and exposed so that "all the people of the earth shall see that the name of the L-rd is called upon you; and they shall be in awe of you."

Its purpose, then, is to reveal G-dliness to "all the people of the earth" and to cause them to be "in awe." So it is, that the tefillin, like the Chanukah lights are directed to the "left-hand side" and the "public domain" - towards that which lies "outside" the recognition of G-d.

In the light of this we can understand the Rabbinic saying that "the whole Torah is compared to (the commandment of) tefillin." The tefillin have, like Torah, the power to effect a purification even in the realm of the profane.

The Mitzvah of Tefillin

On Chanukah one has to give an extra amount of charity, "both in money and in person," both material and spiritual charity. And since the Mitzvah of tefillin has, as we have seen, a special connection with the lights of Chanukah, Chanukah is itself a particularly appropriate and pressing time to devote to the work of the "tefillin campaign," helping as many other Jews as possible to participate in the Mitzvah. And when one brings it about that another Jew fulfills the Mitzvah of tefillin, then, as it is recorded in the Mishna, "a Mitzvah draws another Mitzvah in its train."

If this is true for any Mitzvah, all the more is it true of tefillin to which are compared all the other Mitzvot. And so from the seed of this single observance will grow, in time, the observance of all the others.

The miracle of Chanukah is apparent not only in the fact that "for Your people Israel You worked a great deliverance and redemption as at this day" - a deliverance from a people who were "impure," "wicked" and "arrogant," and despite their being "strong" and "many"; but also in the result that "afterwards Your children came into Your most holy house, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, and kindled lights in Your holy courtyards."

And so it is with tefillin. By the observance of this Mitzvah, not only is a "deliverance and redemption" achieved from "all the people of the earth" - for since they will be "in awe of you," they will no longer stand in opposition to Israel, but will be as if "our hearts melted, and there was no courage left in any man because of you."

But also, and as a consequence of the Mitzvah, "Your children (will come) into Your most holy house" - into the Third Temple which will be revealed speedily on earth, as a sign of the Messianic Age.

(Source: Likkutei Sichot, Vol. V pp. 223-7)

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From: "Project Genesis <genesis@j51.com>"
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Date: 12/22/95 12:36am
Subject: * PG LifeLine - Chanukah

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"It is a tree of life to all who cling to it."
D'var Torah and News from Project Genesis - learn@torah.org
Volume III, Number 12 Chanukah

Please pray for the speedy healing of
Ya'akov Re'uvein Ben Eeta and Chizkiyahu Yonasson Aryeh ben Leah
Esther Miriam Bas Aliza Geula and Nosson ben Pessa Ella

In the prayer "Al HaNisim" [for the miracles] that we add during Chanukah, we read that G-d's miraculous deliverance included "the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the provokers into the hands of those who involve themselves with Your Torah."

Rabbi Shlomo Brevda shlit"a, one of the current leaders in the promotion of Jewish ethics, offers an explanation by Rabbi Yechezkel Levinstein zt"l (of blessed memory) of the progression from pure, to righteous, to involved with Torah. Rabbi Levinstein explained that the entire battle was spiritual - it

may have looked like a war, but the battle was supernatural, and depended upon spiritual levels rather than physical strength. Thus each level of evil, as embodied in a Greek soldier, could only be overcome by a Jew with a corresponding level of holiness.

The average soldier was not truly evil, but was merely dominated by the impure practices and beliefs of the Greek oppressors. To rebuff him, a Jew merely needed to avoid these impurities - and thus the battle brought "the impure into the hands of the pure."

There were other Greeks who were indeed evil (who helped to set up idols in the Temple and force Jews to abandon their faith). Such soldiers could only be beaten by those who were not merely free of Hellenist beliefs, but had dedicated themselves to observe Mitzvos even when self-sacrifice was involved - meaning it had to be "the wicked into the hands of the righteous."

Finally, there were those Greeks who were "great in their wickedness," those who enacted the decrees to separate the Jews from G-d and Torah. These individuals could only be countered by those great Jews who were totally involved with the study of our Holy Torah - and thus "the provokers" could only fall "into the hands of those who involve themselves with Your Torah."

What goes around, comes around, and there is little doubt that our current society is in the midst of a moral decline. In last week's "RAVFRAND" class, the Rabbi quoted a study of the top ten problems in the public schools forty years ago versus today - and the comparison was mind-boggling: forty years ago, gum-chewing in the halls was a problem; today, kids and teachers must watch out for knives. So many good people ask, what can I do to reverse this? How can I make an impact?

Rabbi Levinstein provides us with one answer. The Torah and its commentaries

are repositories of ethical teachings and works of spiritual improvement. The more Torah that a person knows, the greater the "soldier" in society's spiritual battles. And the use of the various techniques and advice can indeed bring a person to a more ethical and spiritual level. The battle begins at home, or more accurately within oneself. One needn't be a great scholar, or even totally righteous - one merely needs to be free of a particular ill to be able to combat it. But the greater the person, the greater his or her impact.

4900 SUBSCRIBERS: Yes, it's true, we're close to breaking 5000. A Jewish date for this would be nice - "Zos Chanukah," for example, the final day of Chanukah, is this Monday. Otherwise it's likely that we'll pass this milestone before January 1.

Our Director of Technology wants to know when our subscriber base will pass the Dow Jones Average....

QUOTE OF THE WEEK: "This has been the best use of my computer and time... thank you personally, and for my students who say I am receiving support and inspiration thru your service!"

MENORAH UPDATE: I made a minor change to avoid "Erev Shabbos confusion" for those on the East Coast of the United States. The Menorah on our Home Page now changes over at 4 p.m. EST.

See our Menorah at <http://www.torah.org/>

With this message, I depart for Palo Alto for a week that is half vacation, half teaching and making presentations on behalf of Project Genesis. I will be speaking about Project Genesis at the Palo Alto Orthodox Minyan on Sunday evening, and doing a live "tour" on Wednesday at the South Peninsula Hebrew Day School. I believe both are at 7:30 p.m., but you can call either

location to confirm.

If you are in the area and would like to be in touch, I am always delighted to meet subscribers (and others). You can leave a message for me at (415) 494-2732.

Next week's LifeLine Dvar Torah will be written by Rabbi Yehuda Prero, who teaches our "YOMTOV" class.

Good Shabbos and a very Happy Chanukah,
R. Yaakov Menken

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From: "Yeshivat Har Etzion <yhe@jer1.co.il>"
To: CSHULMAN, NDIAMENT, " " Gemara methodology shiur...
Date: 12/27/95 10:27am
Subject: Methodology - Chanuka

YESHIVAT HAR ETZION VIRTUAL BEIT MIDRASH
PROJECT(VBM)

TALMUDIC METHODOLOGY

by Rav Moshe Taragin

THIS SHIUR IS DEDICATED IN MEMORY OF HARAV YEHOShUA
PESACH BEN

HARAV CHAIM YAACOV AVRAHAM.

Special Chanuka Edition:

One of the salient but often neglected components of the Chanuka miracle was the repurification of the Beit Ha-mikdash - ve-tiharu et mikdashhekha. This assumes, of course, that the Temple had been contaminated by the idolatrous worship of the Greeks. Although from a phenomenological/metaphysical standpoint the very entry into the mikdash and the vile actions committed therein constituted a pollution of its kedusha, the question still remains: Al pi halakha - was the kedusha actually compromised and were the stones and utensils prohibited for re-use? We are, after all, aware of the halakha "ein adam osser davar she-eino shelo", a person cannot impose a prohibition upon something which he does not own. For example, I cannot, through neder (a halakhic oath), confer an issur upon someone else's item. Similarly, by worshipping someone else's animal, a person cannot confer upon it the status of "avoda zara" and its concomitant issurim. How could the invading Greek armies have imposed a prohibition upon that which they didn't own. This, then, becomes the principal hurdle to overcome in terms of understanding how the Greeks defiled the Beit Ha-mikdash by imposing upon its utensils an issur of avoda zara.

The gemara itself implicitly asks the above question but its answer, rather than clarifying, stirs a large debate among the Rishonim. In Avoda Zara (52b) the gemara bases the decision of the Chashmona'im to "bury" the stones of the mizbei'ach after they returned upon a pasuk in Yechezkel 7. The prophet predicts (v. 12) the Babylonians entering to the mikdash during the destruction of the First Temple, writing "U-va'u bah peritzim ve-chileluha" - scoundrels will enter and profane the mikdash. The Chashmona'im extrapolated from this reference that when Gentile assailants enter the mikdash and avail themselves of its utensils for their ritual worship, the

utensils become forbidden and the kedusha is halakhically compromised. What the pasuk does not address, however, is the halakhic mechanism by which the kedusha is affected. This task is left up to the Rishonim. After all, ein adam osser davar she-eino shelo!!!

Rashi in Avoda Zara (52b) provides the key toward solving this problem. He asserts that once the Gentiles entered the mikdash all its utensils LOST their kedusha; automatically, then, they became hefker - the property of no one. The Yevanim obtained ownership (by seizing the hefker), and through worshipping avoda zara with these utensils they imposed the status and the issurim of "avoda zara". Rashi is alluding to an interesting condition regarding the monetary status of hekdesh. The ba'alut (proprietaryship) upon hekdesh is a FUNCTION of the kedusha. Since we are not dealing with OWNERSHIP by a particular person but rather an ASSOCIATION with a particular institution, the ownership is atypical. Said otherwise, there exists no objective or intrinsic monetary ownership of hekdesh. Rather, there is a status of "hekdesh" which mandates certain halakhot and also associates the item with a particular entity which "possesses" that item - i.e. the institution of hekdesh. Once the item loses its kedusha and its status, it is no longer OWNED by hekdesh, since its ownership in the first place was only a consequence of its halakhic status and the attendant kedusha. (See Afterword for parallels of this concept.) Rashi explains that the Gentiles were able to impose the issur of avoda zara because they were considered the halakhic owners of these items. What Rashi does not address is why exactly the kedusha disappeared immediately upon the entry of the Greeks. What mechanism dismantled the kedusha?

To skirt the issue of Rashi, the Tashbatz (Volume III Responsa 5) maintains that when the Greeks entered the mikdash the Jewish authorities actually were mafkir the utensils (renounced their ownership), actively creating a state of hefker and allowing the Gentiles to assume possession and prohibit these items through their pagan worship. This position is historically suspect and somewhat hard to imagine, but the very fact that the Tashbatz felt compelled to adopt it indicates his uneasiness with Rashi's principle of automatic loss of kedusha and consequent hefker.

To return to Rashi's position, how exactly did these items forfeit their kedusha? Remember, once they lost their kedusha, Rashi maintains, they were automatically hefker and at the disposal of the Greeks. We must now investigate the exact mechanism by which the halakhic kedusha of these utensils was removed by the marauding Yevanim. The Mishna La-melech (in his Sefer Parashat Derakhim) and the Maharit (at present I cannot find the exact teshuva), both posit a very interesting concept which has halakhic and even theological import. Any utensil of halakhic kedusha which lies in the possession of a Gentile automatically loses its kedusha. Once it is bereft of its kedusha, according to Rashi, its legal ownership fades and the Greeks may take possession.

The Shita Mekubetzet in Bava Metzia (24b) cites a teshuva

of the Maharam Me-Rotenburg which applies a similar principle in a more limited scope. Mere possession of an item by a Gentile does not suffice to dispossess it of its kedusha. However, any time one of these items is plundered as part of a general despoliation, its kedusha is automatically surrendered. Possession alone does not inhibit kedusha, but the state of being pillaged is antithetical to the prospect of kedusha. A third solution to this problem is offered by the Tashbatz. He affirms that the state of ruin (even if prompted by natural causes) revokes the kedusha of an item or, interestingly enough, a site. This has critical ramifications for batei kneset and batei midrashot which have fallen into deterioration.

There are, however, two additional routes toward the resolution of this question. Each suggests that what removed the kedusha was the very usage of these utensils and the benefit thereby received - in short, the halakha of me'ila. Generally, if a Jew derives benefit from something of hekdesh he commits the sin of me'ila (see the masekhet named for it). Aside from the various punishments he receives, the object loses its kedusha and becomes chulin (without holiness). Quite possibly, the loss of kedusha alluded to by Rashi was a product of me'ila - the use of these utensils for profane purposes. This solution, however, raises an additional problem. Generally, the laws of me'ila do not apply to Gentiles; hence, a Gentile who derives benefit from an item of hekdesh does not perform an act of me'ila, does not receive the punishment for me'ila, nor does he divest the item of its kedusha. How, then, did the Greeks manage to compromise the kedusha?

Here we arrive at two possible approaches. We might succeed in locating Jewish violators who committed the sin of me'ila and caused the items to lose their kedusha. Alternatively, we might maintain that the Greeks themselves, despite the fact that they were Gentiles, succeeded in creating a scenario of me'ila.

The Ba'al Ha-ma'or in Avoda Zara (52b) presents a novel and somewhat radical position which captures the tragic circumstances prior to the nes (miracle) of Chanuka. The "peritzim" who entered the mikdash and defamed it were not the Greeks but the Hellenist Jews. These Jews - peritzei Yisrael - were capable of me'ila, and it was their act of me'ila which destroyed the kedusha. Without kedusha the very ownership of hekdesh faded - based upon Rashi's formula - allowing the Greeks to acquire possession and impose the issur of avoda zara through their idolatrous stunts.

The Ramban strikes the Ba'al Ha-ma'or's position with the following question, based upon a Tosefta in the second perek of Megilla which asserts that a mizbei'ach can never be redeemed through the process known as pidyon. From this law he infers that the mizbei'ach has the status of a "kli sharet" - the actual utensils used in the mikdash as part of the ritual ceremony. Klei sharet never lose their kedusha; neither me'ila nor pidyon - the process of redeeming an item of hekdesh by offering hekdesh money in exchange, succeeds in

stripping them of their kedusha. Me'ila, even when perpetrated by Jews, would have no deleterious effect in removing the kedusha of a mizbei'ach, since it is considered a kli sharet.

To defend the Ba'al Ha-ma'or, we might scrutinize the various assumptions underlying the position of the Ramban. Firstly, he assumes that indeed a mizbei'ach has the status of kli sharet. This, the Tosefta does not clearly state - it only mentions that pidyon is impossible upon these stones. Does that necessarily imply that the mizbei'ach is a utensil and not simply part of the architecture of the mikdash? Secondly, he assumes that the same status which applies to the mizbei'ach as a distinct functional instrument of the mikdash would also apply to STONES which have been detached from that mizbei'ach. The Yevanim evidently removed stones which they used for their own heathen purposes. It was these dismantled stones, not the entire altar, which were buried by the Chashmona'im. Possibly the Ramban is correct in regarding the mizbei'ach as an entity which can never lose its kedusha because it is considered a kli sharet. The constituent stones, however, when disjoined, may lose their kedusha. Finally, the Ramban takes no notice of the special circumstances of this episode. A kli sharet might retain its kedusha eternally because of its utility - it always has a valuable use in terms of facilitating the service of the Beit Ha-mikdash. What happens when the Beit Ha-mikdash itself is dominated by invading pagans and the service is suspended? Do the utensils still retain their kedusha despite their current inactivity? Or might we maintain that me'ila in THIS context can potentially damage the kedusha?

Below is a brief list of sources regarding these three assumptions of the Ramban. A more detailed elaboration is beyond the scope (and the length) of this article.

I. General status of mizbei'ach:

Zevachim (27b); Rambam Sefer Ha-mitzvot positive commandment 20; Ra'avad in his Hasagot to the Ramban's short list of mitzvot (contained in the beginning of the Mishneh Torah) - in his comments on positive commandment 20; Minchat Chinukh to mitzva 95. Whether the presence of a mizbei'ach is me'akev, Rambam Beit Ha-bechira 1:1; 1:13; 2:1.

II. Possible distinction between the stones themselves and the mizbei'ach:

1) What money of hekdesch was used to pay for the stones? See Ketubot 110b, Yerushalmi Shekalim perek 4, and the Rambam Shekalim perek 4. See also the Minchat Chinukh in his additions to mitzva 40 regarding the mizbei'ach of Ya'akov.

III. Status of kli sharet after the avoda in the mikdash has been suspended:

Me'ila (20a), Rashi and Rabbenu Gershom ad locum. See also Or Samei'ach Hilkhos Akum 8:1.

A final option which will be considered is suggested by the Ra'avad (in his commentary to Avoda Zara as well as in his

commentary on the Rif known as "Katav Sham") who writes; "The Torah gave the Gentiles the ability to prohibit these utensils (stones) through me'ila, even though normally a Gentile is not a 'candidate' for me'ila." The pasuk in Yechezkel informs us of a special category of me'ila which was operative during the entry of these Gentiles to plunder the mikdash. Indeed, even a kli sharet, which under normal circumstances cannot relinquish its kedusha, fell prey to this me'ila cum destruction. By isolating this case the Ra'avad is able to solve two questions at once: How can a Gentile execute me'ila and how can me'ila wrest kedusha from a mizbei'ach which apparently is a kli sharet.

Methodological Points:

1. When confronted with a halakhic problem, one has two general options. First of all one might apply conventional categories (possibly in novel ways) to explain the current phenomenon. Alternatively, many times conventional models cannot properly explain the case and there is a need for the development of new halakhic constructs. For example the Ra'avad developed a new paradigm of me'ila which operates under completely different laws from the standard model. Alternatively, to explain the manner by which the ba'alut of hekdesch was removed several mefarshim developed overall concepts of what sustains the kedusha of hekdesch. In short: first try to solve a dilemma through something "old"; if that fails search for something "new".

Afterword:

The classification of the legal ba'alut of hekdesch is a central question of halakha. For amplification, see Chidushei Ha-grach al Ha-Rambam, Hilkhos Me'ila 2:5.

Machshava:

Several important issues were considered. The incompatibility between the Gentile world and the world of kedusha was reflected in the Maharit's statement that Gentile possession of a davar she-bikdusha suffices to dismantle that state. There are indeed several religious states of which a Gentile is capable: piety, morality, selflessness, justice, and even saintliness. Kedusha in the transcendent sense, in the manner in which we apply it to Ha-kadosh Baruch Hu - Kadosh Kadosh Kadosh - has little meaning to a Gentile world which has sacrificed the transcendence of G-d in order to humanize the Divine Principle. For a fuller exposition on this matter see the opening sections of Halakhic Man. (Reading Rudolph Otto's "The Idea of the Holy" would also be helpful.)

From the teshuva of the Maharam Mi-Rotenburg we can infer that kedusha comprises "sovereignty" and when the items in question are pillaged by others the kedusha automatically ceases to exist. From the Tashbatz, we may infer that for kedusha to be sustained (at least in terms of kedushat cheftetz - holiness of object) there must be active involvement in the

world of ritual performance. Kedusha cannot exist in a vacuum. once the site has become desolate and no longer active it forfeits its kedusha.

The Ba'al Ha-ma'or once again reminds us that so often we are our own worst enemies.

May we be zocheh to once again rededicate a mikdash and actualize the notion of kedusha in our lives.

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