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Human Initiative and Divine Providence

Dr. David Berger on the Chanukah miracle:

Human Initiative and Divine Providence: A Hanukkah Sermon
David Berger

Parshat Miketz, which is regularly read on Hanukkah, begins with a reference to a two year delay between Joseph's request that the butler mention him to Pharaoh and the dreams that finally led to the activation of that request. We are told that the reason for the delay was Joseph's reliance on human intercession rather than providential intervention, in other words, his lack of bittahon. Because he used the verb *zakhor* twice in his request (*ki im zekhartani... ve-hizkartani*), he was punished by two additional years of incarceration. The butler did not remember him—and forgot him.

Click here to read moreThe disturbing character of this assertion was brought home to me with special force when I heard a *dvar Torah* built upon it. The speaker told a story of a European rabbi who was paid such a meager salary by his community that his wife and children were virtually without food and clothing. Despite his wife's increasingly desperate importuning, he refused to ask for an increase in salary because this would bespeak a lack of bittahon. Finally, however, he relented, and the communal leaders agreed to his request. Upon his return home, however, he was tormented by feelings of guilt, and so he prayed to God that his employers forget the conversation. In his mercy, God acceded to the request of this great *tzaddik*, leaving him and his family as destitute as they were at the outset.

I was so agitated by this supposedly inspiring tale that I said to the person next to me that the religion described in the story is not mine. Still, I had to deal with the rabbinic comment about Joseph, and I told myself that the rules for a man whose very epithet is *ha-tzaddik* and who had been granted prophetic dreams are not the same as those for ordinary people. Still, the Sages clearly intended to teach us something by this observation, and I felt considerably better when I heard a comment about it in the name of a major rabbi (R. Chaim of Brisk, if my memory does not mislead me). The rabbi is said to have asked how many years Joseph's liberty would have been delayed had he used the verb *zakhor* only once in his request for help. When the expected reply—one year—was forthcoming, he responded that this was a mistake. A request using that word once, he explained, was precisely

what God wanted, and it would have produced immediate results. Human effort is a necessity, but it must be exercised in a fashion that does not indicate exclusive reliance on other people and an absence of trust in God.

This is no doubt the meaning of Jeremiah's admonition, "Cursed is he who trusts in man, who makes mere flesh his strength, and turns his thoughts from the Lord" (17:5). The author of the *Sefer Nizzahon Yashan* argued that because everyone puts his trust in a prince or comparable figure, the verse must be a warning against trusting a human being as a deity, an interpretation allegedly verified by the end of the verse. While this is an acute point in the context of an anti-Christian polemic, the plain meaning is surely a warning against trusting a man so thoroughly that one turns away from God.

A key theme of both holidays originating after the time of the *humash* is the balance between human initiative and divine intervention in the salvation of Israel. Purim is the quintessentially naturalistic salvation, accomplished without overt miracles and recorded in a book omitting the name of God. A celebrated *gemara* says that because God coerced the Israelites into receiving the Torah by threatening to crush them beneath the mountain, the covenant was not fully binding until they agreed to its terms once again during the time of Mordecai and Esther. A particularly attractive interpretation of this *gemara* explains that the coercion in the first covenant, figuratively described by the metaphor of the mountain, refers to the impact of repeated, overt miracles experienced in Egypt, on the sea, and in the desert. After such experiences, the Israelites had no psychological choice but to accept. The miracle of Purim, however, which could have been attributed to naturalistic developments associated with the efforts of Mordecai and Esther, challenged an uncoerced Jewish people to recognize the hand of God. Since their efforts in this matter had always been predicated on divine aid—they fasted in the wake of Mordecai's reminder to Esther that she had been put in her position for this purpose—they readily recognized God's presence and accepted the covenant once again.

On Hanukkah, the tension and harmony between effort and providence are no less clear, even classic. There is the war, and there is the oil. Gedaliah Alon, in a classic article,^[1] provided arguments against the widespread view that Hazal intentionally obscured the memory of the Hasmoneans, but there is no question that throughout post-Second Temple Jewish history the oil predominated. Jews in exile did not fight wars, which were the domain of Esau, and the central ritual of the holiday commemorated the overt act of God rather than that of men.

And then came Zionism, which turned the matter on its head. The Zionist bias in favor of human heroism was reinforced by the thoroughly secular, even anti-religious orientation of the movement's dominant elements. This approach, to which I shall return, was further buttressed by arguments against the historicity of the miracle of the oil already raised in the nineteenth century. Both I Maccabees and II Maccabees, our earliest accounts of the Hasmonean revolt, say nothing of the cruse of oil, an omission that appears inexplicable if the miracle actually occurred.

This question has disturbed many religious Jews. In 1969, a student at Yeshiva University asked me whether the miracle was attested outside of the famous Talmudic account, and I replied that it was not. At the time, I did not have a satisfying explanation for this, and one individual took my response as a denial that the miracle occurred. This was not my intention, but this episode along with questions over the years from other Jews perplexed by the problem led me to struggle with it more than might otherwise have been the case. I now believe that I can propose an explanation that is absolutely convincing with respect to I Maccabees and reasonably satisfying with respect to II Maccabees.

1. A perusal of II Maccabees demonstrates that miracle stories regarding the Hasmonean revolt and the Temple circulated widely. It is virtually beyond question that the author of I Maccabees heard such accounts, and yet he records none at all. This means either that he did not believe them or that he excluded them as a matter of policy. In either case, the absence of a reference to the cruse of oil—which is troubling only because of the inference that the author never heard the story--

poses no challenge to one who believes the account of the miracle on the authority of Hazal. Given the author's consistent historiographic approach, we can be almost certain that he would not have recorded this miracle even if he knew about it.

2. In the case of II Maccabees, the argument proceeds not from the absence of miracles but from their prominence. Here the author presents various miracle stories so public and so impressive (including, for example, the public appearance of angels) that the miracle of the cruse of oil, which was witnessed by relatively few observers, pales into near insignificance, and he may well have chosen to omit it along with other "minor" miracles. II Maccabees is an abridgment of a five-part work by Jason of Cyrene which has been lost. The full work almost certainly contained miracle stories that were omitted from the abridgment. To us, the story of the oil looms very large. To Jason—or to the man who abridged his work—it may have seemed trivial, particularly since he had an alternate explanation for the decision to celebrate for eight days.

In sum, there are plausible grounds to argue that the authors of both I and II Maccabees could have known the story and nonetheless omitted it from their histories. The absence of a reference in Al ha-Nissim, which is a thanksgiving prayer, need not trouble anyone. The miracle of victory requires thanksgiving; the miracle of the oil does not, and it is appropriately omitted.

Setting aside the historiographical challenge, the deeper ideological issue was the appeal to Hanukkah and the Maccabees by secular Zionists to express disdain for the miraculous and glorify unaided human initiative. A striking, though not anti-religious, invocation of the Hasmonean heroes as a contrast to the pusillanimous Jew of the exile appears in Bialik's remarkable poem Be-Ir ha-Haregah, where he describes the cowering grandchildren of the Maccabees hiding in their holes as their wives and daughters are raped by pogromists. In his Meteiv Midbar, without reference to the Maccabees, Bialik specifically celebrated the defiant effort to conquer Israel whether God approved or not; if God does not want us to go, say his heroes, "then let us go up without him" (na'al na efo bil'adav). Modern Orthodox Jews, including myself ba-avonotay, continue to sing Mi Yemalleh, a Hanukkah song that is in its very essence an anti-religious composition and cannot be entirely purged of its ideology by one or two emendations sometimes inserted in Orthodox circles. Thus, "Who can recount the valiant deeds of Israel?" instead of the deeds of God mentioned in the original verse. "In every generation there arises the hero who is the redeemer of Israel [goel ha-am]... [Judah] Maccabee saves and redeems [moshia u-fodeh], and in our days all the people of Israel will unite, arise and be redeemed," clearly on their own. Most explicitly, there is the later Hanukkah song declaring, "We experienced no miracle; we found no cruse of oil."

Religious non-Zionists reacted to all this with a vigorous rejection of the entire movement as a rebellion against God. For them, the land of Israel would one day be returned to us through divine intervention alone. But religious Zionists would not be deterred by the exiling of God on the part of the movement's mainstream. Driven by the conviction, rooted in the fundamental approach of the Torah in numerous contexts, that divine providence and human initiative are properly conjoined, they embraced the opportunity to act without sacrificing the everpresent consciousness of God's hand. An awakening below would arouse an awakening above. In this ideological environment, Hanukkah can serve as an inspiration not by excising one of its two major components but by celebrating it in its fullness: the war and the oil, action and faith, human effort and the guiding presence of God. [1] "Ha-hishkiah ha-ummah va-hakhameha et ha-Hashmonaim?" Mehqarim be-Toledot Yisrael I (Tel Aviv, 1957), pp. 15-25.

Torah, Bridgeport, Conn.

Seven Fat Cows

By Rabbi Nissim E. Shulman

Our portion this week begins with the following words: "And after two years, Pharaoh dreamed, and behold, he is standing on the banks of the Nile. And from out of the Nile ascend seven fat cows, beautiful to see, and healthy. And after them ascend seven lean, scrawny cows . . ." And the Bible goes on to tell us that Pharaoh was sorely troubled by this dream. He sent for all the wise men and soothsayers of Egypt. And Eynposer osolepharoh, "no one could explain the meaning of the dreams to Pharaoh's satisfaction." Pharaoh sensed that there was something wrong about his dream, and he rejected every explanation his wise men gave.

Now we have all had dreams. We know that some dreams can be troubling. But it seems that Pharaoh was troubled to an unusual degree. What troubled him so about his dream? He did not see strange monsters. He did not feel himself personally in danger in his dream. What bothered him? Primitive superstition is easily allayed. The soothsayers' explanations were usually satisfactory. Yet Pharaoh was suddenly dissatisfied. His soothsayers could not allay his fears. Why did he reject all their explanations?

In Pharaoh's dream he was standing at the Nile. The Nile was the great provider of Egypt. Therefore, all Egypt worshiped the Nile, just as any primitive people would revere the cause of their sustenance. Just as the primitive peasant worshiped an earth mother, the symbol of fertility, just as the primitive hunter evolved the totem, with animals as objects of worship, so Pharaoh and all of Egypt bowed down to the Nile—their source of livelihood which for them was the great symbol of all the forces of nature. Now what disturbed Pharaoh most was the fact that the fat cows were devoured by the lean cows, instead of the other way around. According to the laws of nature, the strong devours the weak, and lo, in his dream, the weak devoured the strong. This was unnatural. It greatly disturbed Pharaoh. And his soothsayers were as puzzled as he was.

But then Joseph came before Pharaoh. And Joseph was from a different world. Joseph explained the dream. He said: "There is a G-d who causes and creates all things. As G-d wills, so shall a thing happen. He willed the laws of nature, and He can suspend them at will. Es asher HoElokim oseh higid lepharoh, that which G-d does, has he told to Pharaoh."

"G-d can strengthen the weak and pull down the strong; heal the sick and smite the mighty; He topples and He exalts. He gives the strong over into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few. This is the lesson of your dream." So Joseph taught Pharaoh. And then Joseph went on to tell Pharaoh what it was that G-d planned to do in the land of Egypt, and what steps Pharaoh should take.

How appropriate it is then to read this portion just at the time of Chanukah. For Chanukah is that holiday which repeats the lesson that Joseph taught Pharaoh. Chanukah is the reaffirmation of the truth of the interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams.

For on this day we celebrate, in the words of the Chanukah prayer, "the triumph of the weak over the strong, the few over the many, the pure over the impure, the righteous over the wicked, the followers of Torah over those who denied G-d." Chanukah is the celebration of the triumph of idea and ideal over the forces of power and violence.

So it has been throughout our history. Tyrants have risen, intending to destroy our people by force. And we have always kept faith and hope and acted according to the lesson we learned from Joseph: Es asher HoElokim oseh higid lepharoh. "That which G-d does has been told, and shown, and will always be shown, to all the Pharaohs of this world."

"Maoz Tzur," the beautiful song we sing on Chanukah illustrates this. In this song we retell a short history of our people. It begins with a beautiful hymn of praise to G-d, our saving stronghold, in whom alone we trust. Then, in the second paragraph, it retells the story of Pharaoh in Egypt and how G-d saved us from his slavery. Es asher HoElokim oseh higid lepharoh, "That which G-d shall perform has he told, and

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Seven Fat Cows - Rabbi Nissim E. Shulman - Congregation Shaare

shown to Pharaoh." The next paragraph tells how we ourselves forgot this lesson, and were punished by exile to Babylonia. But upon our return to G-d, He returned us to the Promised Land.

Then we sing about the happenings in Persia-where again a tyrant arose, Haman, and convinced the powerful ruler who governed all the lands where Jews then lived, to exterminate our people. And again the powerful were delivered into the hands of the weak, the wicked Iaman into the hands of Esther the queen. Es asher HoElokim oseh "That which G-d has done, was shown to the tyrant."

Finally we retell the story of Chanukah. How in this season, at that time, G-d delivered us from the hands of the many and of the mighty, once again. Es nsher HoElokim oser higid lepharoh. So end the original verses. Much later, an additional verse was added, when, from the agony of wandering and global persecution, our people looked to the Lord, confident that once more the story would be repeated, the stronger would fall before the weaker, the many before the few, the arrogant before the G-d-fearing servants of G-d.?

We have seen the beginnings of this new age in our own time. We are witnessing the beginning of the great triumph, the triumph of the reestablishment of the State of Israel. It has cost us much. We have sacrificed much. But now, as the Maccabean flames are rekindled, and heroic exploits of long ago and of today are told and ~.etold, once more we hear the echo: Es asher HoElokim oseh higid lepharoh, "That which G-d has done, has he shown to the tyrant." And our thoughts turn to those who still suffer in the dark lards of terror. We pray for their safety. And we dream of the day of their ultimate triumph over the forces of violence and evil. And as we pray, we grow confident that triumph will come-freedom shall be their reward, the reward of all men on earth. And the time shall soon come when once more Joseph's words shall come true, as he tells how real a dream can be, saying. Es aal-er HoElokim. oseh higid lepharol~, "That which G-d shall do will be told, and shown, to all tyrants."

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The Fragile Flame of Faith by Chief Rabbi Lord Sacks

As I light the Chanukah candles this year, I will carry with me an indelible memory of something that happened two years ago, a kind of Chanukah for our time. We had gathered, 274 rabbis from across Europe, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of Kristallnacht, the 'night of broken glass'. That night, 10 November 1938, Nazi fury broke out against Jews throughout Germany and Austria. 92 were killed. 30,000 were seized and sent to concentration camps. 7,500 thousand Jewish businesses were set on fire and destroyed. It was an ominous sign of what was to come.

It had another dimension too. That night 267 synagogues were burned. Thousands of Torah scrolls were desecrated and thrown into the flames. It became clear that the Nazis were intent not only on killing Jews. They sought to kill Judaism itself.

Hitler, in Mein Kampf, called conscience a Jewish invention. Throughout the Holocaust, the Nazis chose Judaism's holiest days for their most savage acts. At Auschwitz the notorious doctor Joseph Mengele joked that there he, not G-d, decided who would live and who would die.

Prague was the one major centre where synagogues were not destroyed. The Nazis intended to turn them into a museum of a dead civilization. So they still stand today. One of them, the Altneuschul, 'the old-new synagogue', is the oldest extant Jewish place of worship, dating from the thirteenth century. There we gathered, seventy years later, to say the evening prayer. What made it so moving was that many of the rabbis could tell a story of resurrection, of Jewish life brought back from death. Some came from lands in which most of the Jewish population had been deported and killed. Others from Eastern Europe came from places where the Soviets had ruthlessly suppressed the practice of Judaism.

Since Glasnost, Jewish life has slowly revived. Synagogues have been

restored. Jewish schools have been established. A new generation is learning about the faith the two great twentieth century tyrannies tried to obliterate. Never in all the centuries through which the Altneuschul survived had so many rabbis gathered in its narrow space to pray, and never was there a more unlikely story to tell, and thank G-d for, than this journey from death to new life.

For me, this was our European Chanukah. The Maccabees had fought and defeated the Seleucid Greeks who had tried to destroy the public practice of Judaism. The menorah they relit became a symbol of Jewish hope, as if to say that some things survive the worst tragedy, allowing us to rekindle the flame of faith. That is what I felt that night in the ancient synagogue of Prague. The two greatest tyrannies of the twentieth century, Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia, were thought by their followers to be invulnerable. Now they have gone while the Jewish people still survives, and prays, and gives thanks to G-d.

Faith outlives every attempt to destroy it. Its symbol is not the fierce fire that burns synagogues and sacred scrolls and murdered lives. It is the fragile flame we, together with our children and grandchildren, light in our homes, singing G-d's story, sustained by our hope.

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Lighting Chanukah Candles in Shul Rabbi Michael Taubes

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In formulating the mitzvah to light candles on Chanukah, the Gemara (Shabbos 21b) uses the term "ner ish u'beiso" meaning, in effect, that the basic requirement is to light one candle per home, as explained by Rashi (ibid. s.v. ner); the Rambam (Hilchos Chanukah 4:1) and the Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim 671:2) rule accordingly. The Gemara then explains that the candle must be placed outside the doorway of the house which opens to the street; again, the Rambam (4:7) and the Shulchan Aruch (671:5) rule accordingly. The Gemara later (23a) discusses the status of an achsenai, that is, one who is a guest at the home of another during Chanukah, and the Rambam (4:11) and the Shulchan Aruch (677) elaborate on the halachos which apply to such a person, noting, as the Gemara itself says, that there is significance to having someone light in one's home even if he himself will not be there. It is clear from these sources, among others, that the primary fulfillment of the mitzvah of lighting Chanukah candles is when one lights, or has someone else light, in one's own home. The Tur, however (OC 671), indicates that there is a practice to light Chanukah candles in Shul as well. The Shibolei HaLekket (185) also cites this practice, but he questions its validity, asking why it should be necessary to light in Shul when the fact is that the people in Shul all light in their homes anyway. He justifies the practice only if there are guests who sleep in the Shul, who would then have to light there because the Shul becomes like their home, or if the person in charge of maintaining the Shul lives there, in which case it is his home, but not if nobody lives or sleeps there. Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffmann (Teshuvos Melamed Leho'il OC 121) asserts that indeed none of the well known earlier Rishonim, such as the Rif, the Rosh, and the Rambam, even mention this practice at all. Other Rishonim, however, such as the Baal HaIttur (Part II Hilchos Chanukah 114b), do cite this practice without challenging it, and some offer suggestions as to its purpose.

The Kol Bo (44), for example, writes that the custom is to light Chanukah candles in Shul for the benefit of those who are not able or are not careful to light their own candles at home, as well as to enhance the overall mitzvah (the notion of hiddur mitzvah), to provide for additional publicizing of the miracle (pirsumei nisa), which the Beis Yosef, commenting on the Tur (ibid), says is a sanctification of Hashem's name when so many people can bless Him in public, and it also commemorates what used to happen in the Beis HaMikdash (zecher l'Mikdash), where lights 28 YESHIVA UNIVERSITY • CHANUKAH TO-GO • KISLEV 5771 were lit each evening. Similarly, the Sefer HaManhig (Hilchos Chanukah 148) writes that

there is a custom to light in Shul because a Shul is a Mikdash Me'at, a "miniature version" of the Beis HaMikdash, as stated by the Gemara in Megillah (29a), based upon a verse in Yechezkel (11:16), and it is therefore appropriate to commemorate this miracle which took place in the real Beis HaMikdash specifically there, especially since the miracle can be further publicized because so many people assemble in Shul.

The Rivash (111) states that the custom to light in Shul is an old one, and he mentions the idea of further publicizing the miracle, but he adds that since in his days, the Jews were living under the strong control of non-Jews and thus could not fulfill the mitzvah at home in the proper fashion, that is, by lighting the candles outside, as described above, the practice became to light the candles at one's home indoors, in which case the miracle could be publicized only to the members of one's household. In order, therefore, to have a more encompassing and demonstrative expression of the publicizing of the miracle, the custom was instituted to light in Shul as well. The Rivash also notes that the berachos over the Chanukah candles are recited prior to the lighting of the candles in Shul, even though this lighting is only a minhag, a custom, and not a real mitzvah. He explains that the usual halachah of not reciting a berachah before performing an act which is done only as a minhag applies specifically to less significant minhagim, but this minhag, which involves publicizing a miracle of Hashem in the presence of the community in Shul, is observed with the recitation of a berachah, similar to the practice of saying a berachah before the recitation of Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, although that recitation of Hallel is, as stated by the Gemara in Taanis (28b), only a minhag.

The Shulchan Aruch (671:7) thus rules that Chanukah candles are to be lit in the Shul, and that the appropriate berachos should be recited, and the reason given is in order to publicize the miracle; the Mishnah Berurah, in his Biur Halacha (671 s.v. ubebeis haknesses), notes that this is true regardless of how and where people are able to perform the mitzvah of lighting the candles in their own homes, apparently rejecting the reasoning cited above from the Rivash. The Ramo (ibid) then writes, quoting the Rivash, that one cannot fulfill his personal obligation in this mitzvah through the candles lit in Shul, because, as the Vilna Gaon (Biur HaGra ibid. s.v. v'ein) explains, the mitzvah is to light in one's home, and one must therefore light again at home; the Mishnah Berurah (671:45) adds that this applies even to the Chazzan who actually recites the berachah and does the lighting in Shul. He then asserts, though, as does the Shaarei Teshuvah (671:11), that on the first night, one should not repeat the berachah of Shehecheyanu at home if he recited it in Shul, unless he is reciting it on behalf of other members of his household; Rav Moshe Feinstein (Igros Moshe OC 1:190) however, appears to disagree, and thus rules that in any case, one should repeat all the berachos, including Shehecheyanu, when lighting candles at home.

The Chacham Tzvi (88) raises an interesting question on the decision of the Shulchan Aruch that Chanukah candles should be lit in Shul with a berachah. As mentioned above, the Rivash explains that although lighting in Shul is only a minhag, a berachah may nevertheless be recited, just as a berachah is recited before saying Hallel on Rosh Chodesh which is also only a minhag. See Tosafos ibid s.v. amar, Shulchan Aruch OC 422:1 with poskim there. 29 The problem raised by the Chacham Tzvi is that the Shulchan Aruch elsewhere (OC 422:2), following the position of the Rambam (Hilchos Berachos 11:16 and Hilchos Chanukah 3:7), actually rules that a berachah is not said before the recitation of Hallel on Rosh Chodesh; why then may a berachah be recited before lighting Chanukah candles in Shul? The Chacham Tzvi suggests that perhaps the Shulchan Aruch accepts the aforementioned view of the Kol Bo that lighting candles in Shul constitutes a kind of public sanctification of Hashem's name, and therefore a berachah is warranted, though he believes this answer is difficult, noting that there is no mention of this idea in the Gemara. He then proposes that perhaps the Shulchan Aruch accepts a combination of the reasons suggested by the Rivash and the Kol Bo, as presented above, but he leaves the matter in some doubt.

The Beis Yosef, in his commentary on the Tur cited above, presents an

additional reason to light Chanukah candles in Shul, namely, that it is for the sake of the guests who stay in Shul because they have no home, which makes this similar to the practice instituted to recite kiddush in Shul on Friday nights for the sake of the guests who are staying there, as discussed by the Gemara in Pesachim (101a), and codified by the Rambam (Hilchos Shabbos 29:8) and the Shulchan Aruch (OC 269:1). The implication is that just as the practice to recite kiddush in Shul on Friday night remains (in some communities) even though guests no longer stay in the Shul, so too, perhaps, the custom to light Chanukah candles in Shul remains even without guests staying in the Shul. The Chacham Tzvi, however, notes that this will not really solve our question, because the Shulchan Aruch seems to prefer that kiddush should not be recited in Shul in our days, when no guests stay there; the Pri Chadash (OC 671:7), though, draws a distinction between the two practices, and says that one can hold that kiddush should not be recited in Shul, but that candles should still be lit in Shul. The Sdei Chemed (Asifas Dinim, Chanukah 24) discusses other questions raised on this viewpoint; he concludes that the primary reason to light candles in Shul is for the benefit of those less observant Jews who may not fulfill the mitzvah at their homes. It is worth noting that the Vilna Gaon (Biur HaGra OC 671:7) compares lighting candles in Shul to reciting Hallel in Shul on Pesach night for the sake of publicizing the miracle; the Shulchan Aruch (487:4) rules that this Hallel is recited with a berachah, although the Ramo disagrees with the entire practice, and thus it may be parallel to lighting Chanukah candles in Shul with a berachah. The Kaf HaChaim (OC 671:70) quotes this as well. Rav Ovadyah Yosef (Yabia Omer 7, OC 57:4) suggests another approach, pointing out that although lighting candles in Shul is a minhag, the notion of lighting candles on Chanukah (at home) is a mitzvah; it may thus be permissible to make a berachah before lighting in Shul since this is just an extension of an already existing mitzvah, unlike reciting Hallel on Rosh Chodesh, which is not a mitzvah anywhere. He also adds (ibid. 5) that the practice to light in Shul was a practice originated by the Chachomim and the Rabbonim, and thus can be accompanied by the saying of a berachah, as opposed to the recitation of Hallel on Rosh Chodesh which was instituted by the people themselves, and thus can not be accompanied by a berachah. He concludes (ibid. 6, 7) that it may even be permissible to light candles with a berachah not only in Shul, but at other public gatherings during Chanukah as well, because this too publicizes the miracle.

The Ramo (671:7) writes that the practice is to light the candles in Shul between Minchah and 30 Maariv; the Mishnah Berurah (671:45) explains that this is the time when everybody is assembled in Shul, and if we would wait until after Maariv, people would be detained from getting home to light their own candles. The Kaf HaChaim (671:77) quotes that this time is literally the very beginning of the next day. The Shulchan Aruch (ibid.) rules that the menorah in the Shul ought to be placed along the southern wall of the Shul because, as the Mishnah Berurah (671:40) explains, the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash was on the southern wall: the Baal HaIttur cited above writes that it should be in the middle of the Shul, while the Ramo, in his

Darkei Moshe on the Tur (671:6), quotes an opinion that it should be placed on the northern side. In the Shulchan Aruch, the Ramo adds that the candles should be arranged from east to west, as stated by the Terumas HaDeshen (104), quoted by the Beis Yosef on the Tur, although he writes that there are different practices about all of this, revolving around the dispute cited in the Gemara in Menachos (98b) about how exactly the menorah in the Beis HaMikdash was positioned and lit, and he actually concludes that one should follow the minhag of his community, a decision accepted by the Magen Avraham (671:9). Rav Dovid Tzvi Hoffmann, in his teshuvah cited above, as well as the Sdei Chemed cited above and the Pri Megadim (Eishel Avraham 670:2), among others, make reference to a custom to light Chanukah candles in Shul during the daytime as well; for this lighting, however, no berachah is recited, as stated in the Sefer She'arim Metzuyanim BeHalachah (139:19) and elsewhere.

Thanks to hamelaket@gmail.com for collecting most of these items.

From Destiny Foundation/Rabbi Berel Wein
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Subject Weekly Parsha from Rabbi Berel Wein

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CHANUKAH :: Rabbi Berel Wein

Now there is not much new or brilliant left to be said about the holiday of Chanukah, right? I think that maybe many old and grizzled rabbis like yours truly would probably agree with that statement. Over fifty years of writing and speaking about Chanukah should pretty much exhaust the topic, shouldn't it? But then again that would be selling Chanukah short.

There is always a different and new insight that illuminates all of the holidays of the Jewish year and Chanukah is certainly no exception to this rule. I was reminiscing with myself (something that us old grizzled rabbis do often) about my own life and past. I was amazed to again realize that somehow a lawyer from Chicago ended up being a rabbi in Jerusalem. How did this happen? And how did the Jewish state itself happen - not in terms of history, facts, personages, dates, places and wars - but in the amazing fact that such a state flourishes and progresses in spite of all odds, past and present, against its existence? The rabbis of the Talmud have taught us that people to whom wondrous things occur do not really recognize those events as being wondrous. It is part of the weakness of human nature to have such limited understanding. There has to be a flash of insight, a commemorative act, a tradition of being able to look past the trees to the forest, a spirit of almost childlike wonder in order for the amazing to truly be believable in the eye and mind of the beholder. And I think that this is essentially how we have to look at Chanukah - as the historical event, as the commemoration of that event and of the traditions and customs that so endear this eight day festival to all of Israel.

Jewish tradition and the rabbis of the Mishna took an amazing event that many people would look at as being ordinary or natural and restored it to its truly wondrous state. The story of Chanukah is that of a small and apparently weak nation overcoming a mighty army of a world empire.

It records a triumph of monotheism and Jewish tradition over pagan culture and practices, of the small, pure lights in the Temple that overcame the flaming torches that were far from pure, and of the vitality and resilience of Israel over those who would wish to snuff it out of existence. It is all wondrous but only if one views it all as being wondrous.

The rabbis in their holy perspective of Jewish life and events elevated the mundane and seemingly ordinary to the realm of miraculous and eternal. That is basically the main lesson that Chanukah teaches us - that we are a special people who live a miraculous existence with constant wonder surrounding us and yet it is all encrusted in seemingly natural and ordinary occurrences.

To de-legitimize the story of Chanukah and to treat as just another ancient war of the Grecian period is the same tactic that the world uses today to de-legitimize the State of Israel and our rights to our ancient homeland. If the wonder of it all is lost and forfeited then so is our struggle for existence and independence. Chanukah is pure wonder and hence its importance and relevance to us in today's world.

Perhaps more than other holidays of the Jewish year, Chanukah is a children's holiday. Tradition allows even the youngest to light the Chanukah candles, to play dreidel, to taste latkes and sufganyot, to have time off from school and to observe the holiday through the eyes and senses of a child.

Children still retain their sense of wonder and imagination. Their world is not usually bound by the practicalities, realism and sometimes pessimism of their elders. Everything in life is still new and unexpected, worthy of curiosity and examination. Theirs is yet a magical world, even a spiritual world, viewed from a different plane of perception and thought.

Therefore, Chanukah is the perfect holiday for children for it requires this perspective - to be made wondrous, miraculous and thereby meaningful and beneficial. Chanukah is not for the jaded and empty spirited. Its candles flicker only for those that see the fire of Torah, tradition and morality that lies beneath their small surfaces.

One who is privileged and able to see the wonder of the events that occurred to us "in those days" will also be able to discern the wonders that we encounter daily here in Israel "in our time."
Shabat shalom & Chanukah sameach

From Rabbi Yissocher Frand ryfrand@torah.org & genesis@torah.org
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Rabbi Yissocher Frand - Parshas Miketz
The Essential Attributes of Being an "Ish Chacham v'Navon"

When Pharaoh's could not find a satisfactory interpretation for his dreams, Yosef was called from prison to interpret them. Not only was Yosef able to interpret the dreams, but he gave Pharaoh advice as well: "Now let Pharaoh seek out a discerning and wise man and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh proceed and let him appoint overseers in the land, and he shall prepare the land of Egypt during the seven years of abundance. And let them gather all the food of those approaching good years; let them amass grain under Pharaoh's custody for food in the cities, and safeguard it. The food will be a reserve for the land against the seven years of famine which will come to pass in the land of Egypt, so that the land will not perish in the famine." [Bereshis 41:33-36]. Pharaoh and all his servants were very pleased with Yosef's advice and Pharaoh appointed Yosef to fill the role of the "discerning and wise man" in his advice scenario. He became the second most powerful person in Egypt ("Only by the throne shall I outrank you.") In effect, Pharaoh created a new department of government (Food supply security) at that time. Normally, to run such a major government agency, one looks for an extremely organized person with bureaucratic skills. One would think that one would look for a person who has experience in agriculture, food storage, and food distribution. However, there is no indication that Pharaoh took any of these qualifications into consideration - either in Yosef's advice or in Pharaoh's appointment. The primary quality emphasized in the Torah's description of this new cabinet position is that it required a person who was extremely wise - ish navon v'chochom.

In Biblical and Rabbinic vocabulary, the words navon and chochom have specific implications. A chochom is not only one with a high IQ, but is one who foresees the future [Tamid 32b]. Likewise, a navon is not only a wise person but is specifically one who understands one thing from another (mayvin davar m'toch davar) [Chagiga 14a]. Yosef called for a person who had tremendous insight and tremendous foresight. Why was such a person necessary?

In times of plenty, it is extremely difficult for people to begin imagining what it is like not to have food. Thank G-d, in this country we have never experienced famine. I recently read a memoir of someone who lived in Vilna who recalled a famine that claimed the lives of 50 people a day. We cannot imagine such a thing!

The truth is that we do not need to experience famine to relate to this concept. At the end of the nineteen nineties, there was a tremendous economic boom. All of these high tech industries and "dot coms" sprouted up. Everyone thought that this was "the new economy" and that there would be no end to this prosperity. People were making so much money that they did not know what to do with it. The luxury car

dealers in New York City could not wait until December because that was when Wall Street gave out their bonuses and people were receiving seven figure bonuses. What happens to a 27-year-old person working on Wall Street who gets a million dollar bonus (on top of the good salary that he has been making all year)? What does he do? He goes down to his Lexus dealer or his BMW dealer and he puts down 90 or 100 thousand dollars on a car. It means nothing to him. People thought that there would be no end to the dot com boom and to the soaring stock market. People could simply not relate to what it would be like to be out of work. Last year he received a million dollar bonus and this year he should be concerned about having a job?

When the 7 years of plenty were occurring, with bounty crops year after year, people could not imagine that a famine would ever occur. During those years of plenty, the most important thing was for a leader to get people to pick up the scraps of grain that would have been discarded. Just as the person who receives the million-dollar bonus does not concern himself regarding the following year's livelihood, the farmers laughed at Yosef's government collectors, who were busy picking up the scraps of the bumper crops.

The Chacham – who foresaw the future – was able to imagine that a time would come when there would be no crops and the Navon saw the implications of that future situation such that every little stalk of grain would become valuable. They needed a person who would inspire the people and foster a mentality within them that the good times WOULD eventually end and that the bad times were just around the corner.

We can view this phenomenon as a parable for the dichotomy between this world and the next. As long as we are here and can fulfill mitzvos with very little cost or effort, people do not appreciate the time that they have in this world. Especially when people are young, it is hard for them to imagine that there will come a time when they will not be able to do this.

There is a famous story told of the Gaon of Vilna. On his deathbed, he picked up his tzitsis and noted that in this world, for a few rubles one could buy a garment with fringes and fulfill a great Biblical commandment. "I am soon going to a place now where this will no longer be possible."

We are living in the "years of plenty" in terms of spiritual opportunities. We do not realize that there will come "years of famine" as well, regarding opportunities to do mitzvos and earn spiritual reward. Putting this into more of a micro-context -- I teach boys in Yeshiva in their late teens and early twenties. They often treat their opportunity to learn and study Torah very casually. "We have plenty of time to learn all that we want to learn." These years pass by all too soon. That golden opportunity to learn a whole day will not return. It quickly slips away. One must be an "ish chochom v'navon" to appreciate what one has -- what one has while he is in Yeshiva and what he has while living in this world.

Rav Eliyahu Lopian gave a parable of a king who fought an extended war. He was unable to win the war until finally he appointed a new general who was able to turn the tide of battle and won the war. The king was extremely appreciative and in recognition of the accomplishment of the general, he offered to allow the general to go into the king's treasury house and spend an hour there taking out whatever he wanted for himself.

The general was thrilled. He prepared a large sack and waited anxiously for the day when the king would allow him to enter the vault where the king's wealth was stored. In the meantime, the king regretted his decision. While the king did not want to renege on his promise, on the other hand, he did not want to sit by and let the general clean out his most valued possessions. The king's advisors gave him a plan. The general had a passion for good music. The advisors told the king to place the greatest musicians in the country in the vault and have them play the world's most beautiful compositions. This would distract the general from despoiling the king's treasury.

Sure enough the plan worked. The music of the orchestra so mesmerized the general that each time the general told himself that he should be filling his bag instead of listening to the music, the musicians

began a more dramatic composition. The general became paralyzed and fixated with the music. By the time the general realized that he was losing the opportunity of a lifetime, the hour of opportunity had passed. He wound up with a few small items, but lost all that potential for riches because of his distraction with the orchestra.

Rav Eliyahu Lopian said this parable refers to this world. HaShem [G-d] puts us in this world and tells us to "grab the jewels", i.e. – do the mitzvos. However, at the same time, HaShem gives us all of the familiar distractions of life – both valid and invalid distractions. We become fixated with these distractions. There are times when we wake up and say, "Hey, life is passing us by" and then we are once again distracted with something else! One day, so meone taps us on the shoulder and says, "It is time to leave this world." We look back and bemoan the fact that we have missed our opportunity of mining this world for the spiritual treasures that were available to us. We leave the world empty handed or at best, we leave with our sacks half full.

When we have it so good, when the mitzvos are just there for our taking, it is hard to imagine that there will come a time that they will not be there anymore. That is why we need to have the attributes of ish chochom v'navon. We need to foresee the future and take the proper implications from that vision.

Transcribed by David Twersky Seattle, WA; Technical Assistance by Dovid Hoffman, Baltimore, MD

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Chanukah and a Jam at the Jaffa Gate Rabbi Meir Goldwicht (Yeshiva.org.il)

מוקדש לעילוי נשמת ר' אברהם בן ר' דוד

1. How are Sukkot and Chanukah related?
2. Chanukah Candles before Hillel and Shammai
3. Three Principles of Faith – Three Pilgrimage Festivals
4. Three Portals to Purgatory
5. Chanukah and Purim
6. What Did Herod Do?
7. The Great Light and the Small Candle
8. Uncovering God's Word in Everything

How are Sukkot and Chanukah related?

At the close of the chapters dealing with the Jewish Festivals, the Torah addresses the Festival of Sukkot. Immediately thereafter it discusses the laws of lighting the Menorah in the Holy Temple:

"Command the people of Israel, that they bring to you pure olive oil beaten for the light, to cause the lamps to burn continually. Outside the veil of the Testimony, in the Tent of Meeting, shall Aaron order it from the evening to the morning before the Lord continually; it shall be a statute forever in your generations. He shall order the lamps upon the pure lamp stands before the Lord continually" (Leviticus 24:2-4).

R' Eliezer Rokeach of Worms explains that the proximity of these two matters teaches us that there is a conceptual relationship between them: "The Torah put the issue of olive oil next to Sukkot in order to allude to Chanukah: Just as Sukkot consists of eight days during which we recite the full Hallel prayer, so Chanukah consists of eight days during which we recite the full Hallel prayer . . ."

There are other laws which point to a likeness between Sukkot and Chanukah. On Sukkot we leave our houses and go outside; on Chanukah too we light the candles by the entrance of the house outside. A Sukkah built higher than twenty cubits is invalid. A Chanukah menorah lit in a place higher than twenty cubits is likewise invalid. Here, then, are a number of laws which Sukkot and Chanukah have in common.

Our first question is, what is the nature of this inner relationship between Sukkot and Chanukah which our early authorities sought to

teach us?

Chanukah Candles before Hillel and Shammai

The discrepancy between the schools of Hillel and Shammai regarding the lighting of Chanukah candles is well known. Do we start with one candle and finish with eight, or the opposite? This disagreement did not arise until approximately one hundred years after the Hasmoneans recaptured the Holy Temple. What happened during these hundred years? Did people not light Chanukah candles?

Three Principles of Faith – Three Pilgrimage Festivals

In order to answer these questions let us begin by turning to the Maharal in his work "Gevurot HaShem" (ch. 4). Maharal directs our attention to three places in the Torah where it is written that the People of Israel had faith.

The first is when Moses brings tidings of the coming redemption: "The people believed. They accepted the message that God had granted special providence to the Israelites" (Exodus 4:31). Another occasion is at the parting of the Red Sea: "And they believed in God and in Moses His servant" (Exodus 14:31). And the third time is when the Children of Israel received the Torah: "I will come to you in a thick cloud, so that all the people will hear when I speak to you. They will then believe in you forever" (Exodus 19:9).

Maharal explains, "One should know that there are three principles which act as the pillars of [our] religion, and if, Heaven forbid, one of them should fall, [our] religion as a whole would likewise fall.

"The first is Divine Providence, the belief that God governs the earth. God did not, as the heretics claim, abandon the world, for if this were the case there would be no reason to worship Him. [Why worship God] if He does not extend His providence over mankind and hold us responsible for our actions?"

"The second principle is that everything is in God's hands and that there exists no other such force. This is known as 'faith in God's existence.' Certainly all admit that God "exists"; what is forbidden is to say that God is not really omnipotent and it is possible to escape His dominion . . .

"The third principle is that God speaks with man and has given him the Torah. This is known as 'faith in the Torah's divinity.'

"Therefore, when Moses came to redeem [the Children of Israel] and God noted their oppressed state and did not abandon them, it says that [the Children of Israel] believed that God had granted special providence to his nation and took note of their oppression, and this is faith in Divine Providence.

"At the parting of the Red Sea they became aware of the truth of God's existence, that there is no matter that escapes Him and that all is within His authority and His capacity because He transformed the sea to dry land. Therefore it says, 'And they believed in God.'

"Regarding the Giving of the Torah it is written, 'They will then believe in you forever' – the third principle of faith. And so, with the Exodus, God wished to instill in them all of the true beliefs, and the main reason for the miracles which God performed in Egypt was in order that they become convinced of all the true beliefs."

Maharal, then, teaches us here that the Exodus clarified three principles of faith. The first is the Torah's divinity – "They will then believe in you forever," the second is that no other power contends with God, and the third is Divine Providence.

These principles are given expression in Israel's three pilgrimage Festivals. Passover, whereby we joyfully commemorate the Exodus from Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea, gives patent expression to our faith in God's omnipotence; Shavuot gives expression to our faith in the Torah's divinity; Sukkot – our faith in Divine Providence, as it is written, "Your garment did not grow old upon you, nor did your foot swell, these forty years" (Deuteronomy 8:4). The Jewish people walked with God in the desert, and this was felt by all on a personal level. How wonderful, writes Maharal, that these three Festivals are termed "regalim" ("legs"). Indeed, they are the "legs" of our religion, upon which all of Judaism stands. When Balaam rode upon his female

donkey, on his way to curse the Jewish people, she lay down and Balaam beat her. Then she opened her mouth and said, "What have I done to you that you beat me these three 'regalim' "? Why is it not written three "pe'amin" ("times")? The Midrash (Yalkut Shimoni ad loc.) explains that she is hinting to him: You seek to destroy a nation which celebrates three "regalim" a year? You wish to pick on the Nation of Israel who believes in the all-powerful God, Divine Providence, and the divine Torah? You haven't got a chance!

Three Portals to Purgatory

Based upon these three principles, Maharal explains the words of the Talmud (in Erubin 19a)

"R' Jeremiah ben Eleazar further stated: Gehenna has three gates; one in the wilderness, one in the sea and one in Jerusalem. In the wilderness, since it is written in Scripture: 'So they, and all that appertain to them, went down alive into the pit.' In the sea, since it is written in Scripture: 'Out of the belly of the nether world I cried, and You heard my voice.' In Jerusalem, since it is written in Scripture: 'Saith the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and his furnace in Jerusalem,' and the school of R' Ishmael taught: 'Whose fire is in Zion' refers to Gehenna, 'And His furnace in Jerusalem' refers to the gate of Gehenna."

We received the Torah in the desert. Korach stands in the place where we received the Torah and undermines the faith in Moses as the giver of the Torah, and, consequently, that the Torah comes from God.

Therefore, he finds himself at the entrance to Gehenna.

Pharaoh undermines the faith that God is omnipotent. After all the miracles and plagues that he witnesses, he continues to chase the Children of Israel. Therefore he runs to the entrance to Gehenna at the sea. The sea represents power. No force can stand before the sea as it assaults the dry land.

Millions of pilgrims make their way up to Jerusalem during the Festivals. Seeing all this, a Jew is liable to think, "Of what importance am I? What does one more transgression or one more good deed matter amongst this great throng of people?" In this manner, a person effectively devalues vice and virtue. Therefore, in Jerusalem of all places, there is a danger that a person will lose his faith in personal Divine Providence and this is what the sages mean when they say that the entrance to Gehenna is in Jerusalem.

Chanukah and Purim

On a parallel with the Three Pilgrimage Festivals there are two rabbinic holidays, Chanukah and Purim. On Purim it became clear to the Jewish people that God is all-powerful. According to the laws of nature, the Jews had no chance of escaping destruction – "The decrees which are decreed in the king's name, and sealed with the king's ring, no man can revoke" (Ester 8:8) – nevertheless, God reversed everything. Another thing which took place on Purim was that the Jewish people accepted the Torah anew, as the sages say, "They accepted it anew in the days of Ahasuerus." On Purim, the faith in God's omnipotence and the divinity of the Torah were revealed. On Chanukah the faith in personal Divine Providence was revealed: God delivered the many into the hands of the few, and in this lies the inner bond between Purim and Chanukah.

What Did Herod Do?

When Herod reigned as king in Jerusalem, he sought the priesthood for himself on the grounds that he was married to Miriam of the Hasmonean family. His first step, then, was to kill the entire Hasmonean family, with the exception of his brother-in-law, Aristobulus, whom he appointed High Priest.

During the Yom Kippur service, the congregants see Aristobulus acting as High Priest and recalled his grandfather. Unable to control themselves, they evince an extraordinary fondness for him. They forget, however, that Herod's men are present, and these servants are quick to inform the king. "You have no chance of ruling," they tell him, "until you kill Aristobulus; the people are drawn to him, not you."

So, after Sukkot, Herod invites Aristobulus to an event in one of his

palaces. In the palace there is a large pool which people dip in from time to time in order to cool off. Herod suggests that Aristobulus take a swim in the pool. Aristobulus enters the water, but Herod's agents are waiting there and they promptly drown him. The public understands what has happened and with this the Chanukah celebrations came to an end. Having liquidated the entire Hasmonean dynasty, Herod announces that there will be no more Chanukah.

At this point, the schools of Hillel and Shammai announce that Chanukah is moving out of the Holy Temple and into the private home of each Jew. During the first hundred years, Chanukah celebrations were played out in Jerusalem and the Holy Temple. Now, public celebration moves Sukkot, and Chanukah is celebrated privately in the homes, each person with his own candle.

Regarding R' Shimon ben Gamliel, the Talmud relates that when he took part in the Celebration of the Water Drawing ("Simchat Beit HaSho'eva"), he would juggle eight torches at once, exactly the same number as the Chanukah candles. He did this in order to teach the people that the festiveness of Sukkot can dovetail with the festiveness of Chanukah. Both are expressions of personal Divine Providence.

The Great Light and the Small Candle

It often happens that during the period when we celebrate Chanukah, non-Jews are celebrating their holidays too. A person who does some traveling abroad, outside of Israel, will notice that at this time of year the streets are rife with festive holiday lights, on the trees and the houses. Only on the seventeenth floor does one find a small Chanukah menorah burning in the window. It looks hapless amidst all the bright and flickering lights. One thing should be remembered, though. When there is a power failure, it is the Chanukah menorah alone that continues to burn and give off light. All of those flashy bulbs represent power, yet the power of today is not the power of tomorrow. By contrast, self-sacrifice endures forever.

King Solomon, the wisest of men, compares man's soul to a candle. "The soul of man is the candle of the Lord" (Proverbs 20:27). Most of us, however, would probably liken the soul to light, which is more sublime than a candle. Why, then, does King Solomon liken the human soul to a candle?

Indeed, light has an advantage over a candle. Light illuminates a room and allows us to enter and walk about without stumbling. It allows us to do as we please. However, the light does not illuminate the corners, or under the beds. The candle represents the capacity to check those places where ordinary light falls short.

This is the advantage of the soul as well. It reaches every corner – even those corners which seem low and small. The body symbolizes the light. When the Almighty expelled Adam from the Garden of Eden, He made "garments of leather" for him. The sages say that in Rabbi Meir's personal Torah scroll it was written "garments of light." The Almighty is saying to Adam, "Return to your sources. You do not need a garment to cover your body, for the body itself already covers the soul. The body represents the light, and the soul represents the candle, the fine details and nuances."

Uncovering God's Word in Everything

In the State of Israel there is an unwritten law which says that we do not invite foreign prime ministers during the intermediate days of a Festival (Chol HaMoed). Such a visit disrupts the traffic flow, and during the Festivals families want to travel and make their way to Jerusalem. This year Israel accidentally invited the President of the Soviet Union during the intermediate days of Passover, and in the course of his visit he traveled to the Russian Church in East Jerusalem. For this reason the Old City was closed off completely for a period of time. I myself was amongst those who stood by the Jaffa Gate unable to enter, as everybody shouted and complained about the situation.

While standing there, I said to myself, "God, You must be trying to tell us something. What is this visit supposed to be teaching us?" Here is what I thought: This president was once a leader of the KGB, and it was his task to wage a fierce battle against the Jews of the Soviet Union.

One of the symbols of Jewish resistance to the Communist regime was matzah bread on Passover. Lubavitch Chassidim sacrificed themselves greatly for the sake of baking such matzah.

So, I said to myself, God must be telling this leader: Not only in your country will the Jews eat matzah. You yourself will visit Israel during the Passover Festival and you eat kosher food. Even if you want to eat bread, you will not be able to. They will say to you, "We are sorry, there is only matzah."

After sharing this thought with the people around me, they had more patience to wait . . . the Jews had sacrificed themselves, and here was another expression of the great victory. Therefore, this year too they will light Chanukah candles before the Kremlin, because this small candle stands tall in the face of Stalin, Trotsky, and Lenin. It stands tall and succeeds. All of those flashing lights eventually go out. Only the candle remains forever.

If we station ourselves firmly upon faith in personal Divine Providence, if we truly sense that everything around us happens through God's providence, we shall certainly merit, by virtue of this faith, to see the High Priest light the candles of the Menorah in Jerusalem's Holy Temple.

Some of the translated biblical verses and translated Talmudic sources in the above article were taken from, or based upon, Davka's Soncino Judaic Classics Library (CD-Rom). Other translated biblical verses were taken from R' Aryeh Kaplan's "The Living Torah" (Moznaim).

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Rav Kook List

Rav Kook on the Torah Portion Chanukah: The Hellenist Challenge

"When the Greeks entered the Temple, they defiled all of the oils. After the Hasmoneans defeated them, they searched and found but one cruse of oil, untouched and sealed with the seal of the High Priest. The cruse had only enough oil for one day, but a miracle occurred and they were able to light from it for eight days.

The following year they established these days as a holiday for praise and thanksgiving." (Shabbat 21b)

We may ask a number of questions on the Talmudic account of Chanukah:

The Jewish people have fought many battles in their long history. Some of these battles were accompanied by miracles, such as the walls of Jericho that fell and the sun that stood still during the battle at Givon. Why was only the Hasmonean victory chosen to be commemorated as a holiday for future generations?

Why celebrate a military conflict in which the Temple was defiled and many Jews were lost to a foreign culture?

Why is there no mitzvah to celebrate Chanukah with a festive meal, unlike other holidays? Why only "a holiday of praise and thanksgiving"? What is the significance of the miracle of the undefiled cruse of oil?

Culture Clash

The military victories of the Greek empire brought about the spread of Greek culture and philosophy, and the superficial charm of Hellenism captured the hearts of many Jews. These new ideas undermined fundamental teachings of the Torah and central mitzvot. The danger was so great that this clash of cultures could have caused permanent damage to the spiritual state of the Jewish people.

The Talmud emphasizes the significance of the small cruse of oil in the rescue of the Jewish people. The sealed jar of pure oil is a metaphor for the kernel of pure faith that resides in the depths of the Jewish soul. It was this inner resource of pure holiness that guarded the Jewish people in their struggle against Hellenism.

The Sages understood that Chanukah needed to be established as a permanent holiday. They realized that the battle against an overwhelming foreign culture was not just the one-time struggle of the Hasmoneans. All generations require the strength and purity of inner faith to protect the Torah from the corrupting influences of foreign beliefs and values.

The Contribution of Hellenism

The Sages also realized that this conflict with Hellenism, despite its disastrous short-term effects, would ultimately bestow great benefits. This is a basic rule of life: those challenges that confront us and threaten our beliefs and way of life will in the end invigorate the sources of truth. Greek wisdom, after it has acknowledged the Divine nature of Torah, will serve to further honor and strengthen the Torah and its ideals. Therefore it is fitting to celebrate these days, despite the trauma of the Hasmonean period.

Significantly, the festival of Chanukah is celebrated without feasting and wine. There were two sides to Hellenism: its intellectual aspects – Greek philosophy, literature, and so on – and its popular culture of physical pleasures and crass entertainment. One might mistakenly think that Hellenism's positive contribution also includes its hedonistic delight in wine, parties, and naked wrestling matches. Therefore we specifically celebrate Chanukah with spiritual rituals – lights and Hallel, praise and thanksgiving. For the true contribution of Hellenism is its intellectual side, that which posed such a grave challenge to the Torah in the times of the Hasmoneans. It is this aspect of Greek culture that will defend and enhance the Torah in the future.

(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 109-111. Adapted from Ein Eyah vol. III on Shabbat 21b (2:13).)

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Weekly Halacha **by Rabbi Doniel Neustadt** **Parshas Vayishlach** **Shabbos Chanukah: Laws and Customs**

Lighting Chanukah candles on erev Shabbos and on motzaei Shabbos entails halachos that do not apply on weekday nights. The following is a summary of the special halachos that apply to Shabbos Chanukah. Preparations

If possible, one should daven Minchah on Friday before lighting Chanukah candles.¹ There are two reasons for davening Minchah first: 1) The afternoon Tamid sacrifice, which corresponds to our Minchah service, was always brought before the lighting of the Menorah in the Beis ha-Mikdash;² 2) Davening Minchah after lighting Chanukah candles appears contradictory, since Minchah “belongs” to Friday, while the Chanukah candles “belong” to Shabbos.³ But if no early minyan is available, then it is better to light first and daven with a minyan afterwards.⁴

The oil or candles should be able to burn for at least one hour and forty-five minutes.⁵ If the oil and candles cannot possibly burn that long, one does not fulfill the mitzvah even b'diavad, according to some opinions.

Enough oil (or long enough candles) to burn for at least one hour and forty-five minutes must be placed in the menorah before it is lit. If one neglected to put in enough oil and realized his error only after lighting the menorah, he may not add more oil. He must rather extinguish the flame, add oil, and then re-kindle the wick. The blessings, however, are not repeated.⁶

One who does not have enough oil for all the wicks to burn

for an hour and forty-five minutes must make sure that at least one light has enough oil to burn that long.⁷ [If, for example, Shabbos falls on the sixth night of Chanukah, and there is only enough oil for five lights to burn for the required length of time instead of the six that are required, most poskim maintain that only one should be lit, while a minority opinion holds that five should be lit.⁸]

The custom in many homes that children under bar mitzvah light Chanukah candles should be observed on erev Shabbos as well. Preferably, the child's menorah should also have enough oil (or long enough candles) to burn an hour and forty-five minutes. If, however, it is difficult or impractical to do so, many poskim permit a child to light with the blessings even though his lights will not last for the full length of time.⁹

The menorah should be placed in a spot where opening or closing a door [or window] will not fan or extinguish the flame.¹⁰

A guest who is eating and sleeping over lights his menorah at the home of his host even if his own home is in the same city. Preferably, he should leave his home before plag ha-Minchah.¹¹ The time of lighting on erev Shabbos

All preparations for Shabbos should be completed before Chanukah candles are lit so that all members of the household – including women and children – are present at the lighting.¹²

There are two points to remember about lighting Chanukah candles on Friday afternoon: 1) Chanukah candles are always lit before Shabbos candles; 2) Chanukah candles are lit as close as possible to Shabbos. The procedure, therefore, is as follows:

L'chatchilah, Chanukah candles are lit immediately before lighting Shabbos candles. B'diavad, or under extenuating circumstances, they may be lit at any time after plag ha-Minchah.¹³ Depending on the locale, plag ha-Minchah on erev Shabbos Chanukah is generally a few minutes less or few minutes more than an hour before sunset.¹⁴

In most homes, where the husband lights Chanukah candles and the wife lights Shabbos candles, the correct procedure is to light Chanukah candles five minutes or so¹⁵ (depending on the number of people in the house who are lighting Chanukah candles) before lighting Shabbos candles. As soon as Chanukah candles have been lit, the wife lights the Shabbos candles.

If many people are lighting and time is running short, a wife does not need to wait for everyone to finish lighting Chanukah candles; rather, she should light her Shabbos candles immediately.¹⁶ [If sunset is fast approaching, the wife should light Shabbos candles regardless of whether or not the Chanukah candles have been lit by her husband. If she sees that her husband will not light his menorah on time, she should light the Chanukah menorah herself, followed by Shabbos candles.]

In a home where the man lights both the Chanukah and the Shabbos candles [e.g., the man lives alone; the wife is away for Shabbos], the same procedure is followed. If, by mistake, he lit Shabbos candles before Chanukah candles, he should light his Chanukah candles anyway [as long as he did not have in mind to accept the Shabbos].

In a home where the woman lights both Chanukah and Shabbos candles [e.g., the woman lives alone; the husband is away for Shabbos], she must light Chanukah candles first. If, by mistake, she lit Shabbos candles first, she may no longer light Chanukah candles. She must ask another person – a man or a woman – who has not yet accepted the Shabbos to light for her. The other person must recite the blessing of lehadlik ner shel Chanukah, but she can recite the blessing of she'asah nissim [and shehecheyanu if it is the first night].¹⁷

If, after lighting the Shabbos candles but before the onset of Shabbos, the Chanukah candles blew out, one must re-kindle them. One who has already accepted the Shabbos should ask another person who has not yet accepted the Shabbos to do so.¹⁸ On Shabbos

The menorah may not be moved with one's hands for any reason, neither while the lights are burning nor after they are extinguished.¹⁹ When necessary, the menorah may be moved with one's foot, body or elbow²⁰ after the lights have burned out. If the

place where the menorah is standing is needed for another purpose, a non-Jew may be asked to move the menorah after the lights have burned out.²¹

If Al ha-nissim is mistakenly omitted, the Shemoneh Esrei or Birkas ha-Mazon is not repeated.

Children should be discouraged from playing dreidel games on Shabbos, even when playing with candy, etc.²² A dreidel, however, is not muktzeh.²³

Oil may be pressed out of latkes on Shabbos, either by hand or with a utensil.²⁴

Chanukah gifts may not be given or received, unless they are needed for Shabbos use.²⁵

On Motzaei Shabbos

Candle lighting must take place as close as possible to the end of Shabbos.²⁶ Indeed, some have the custom of lighting Chanukah candles even before havdalah, while others light them immediately after havdalah. All agree that any further delay in lighting Chanukah candles is improper. Therefore, one should hurry home from shul and immediately recite havdalah or light Chanukah candles.

A Shabbos guest who lives nearby and must go home immediately after Shabbos is over, should light in his home.²⁷ If, however, he does not leave immediately after Shabbos, he should light at the home of his host.²⁸ Preferably, he should also eat melaveh malkah there.²⁹

1 Mishnah Berurah 679:2. Many people, though, are not particular about this, since it is difficult to arrange for a minyan on such a short day.

2 Sha'arei Teshuvah 679:1, quoting Birkei Yosef.

3 Sha'ar ha-Tziyun 679:7, quoting Peri Megadim.

4 Birkei Yosef 679:2; Yechaveh Da'as 1:74.

5 See Beir Halachah 672:1. The breakdown [in this case] is as follows: 20 minutes before sunset, 50 minutes till the stars are out, and an additional half hour for the candles to burn at night. Those who wait 72 minutes between sunset and tzeis ha-kochavim should put in oil to last for an additional 22 minutes at least.

6 O.C. 675:2 and Mishnah Berurah 8.

7 Mishnah Berurah 679:2.

8 Mishnah Berurah 671:5 (based on Chayei Adam and Kesav Sofer) maintains that when the "correct" number of candles is not available, only one candle should be lit. See also Beis ha-Levi, Chanukah. Rav E.M. Shach (Avi Ezri, Chanukah), however, strongly disagrees with that ruling.

9 Based on Igros Moshe, O.C. 3:95, Y.D. 1:137 and Y.D. 3:52-2. See also Eishel Avraham (Tanina) O.C. 679 who permits this.

10 O.C. 680:1.

11 See Chovas ha-Dar 1:12.

12 Mishnah Berurah 672:10. See also Chovas ha-Dar 1:10.

13 See Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:62.

14 Note that only on erev Shabbos is it permitted to light this early; during the week, plag ha-Minchah should be figured at about an hour before tzeis ha-kochavim, and not one hour before sunset.

15 For one half hour before this time, it is not permitted to learn or eat.

16 Ben Ish Chai, Vayeishev 20.

17 Mishnah Berurah 679:1.

18 Mishnah Berurah 673:26, 27. [Concerning asking a non-Jew to light; see Rambam (Hilchos Chanukah 4:9), Ohr Gadol (Mishnah Megillah 2:4), Da'as Torah 673:2 and Har Tzvi, O.C. vol. 2, pg. 258.]

19 O.C. 279:1.

20 Mishnah Berurah 308:13; 311:30; Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:22-6. Chazon Ish O.C. 47:13, however, does not agree with this leniency.

21 Mishnah Berurah 279:14.

22 See Mishnah Berurah 322:22.

23 See Igros Moshe, O.C. 5:22-10.

24 Mishnah Berurah 320:24, 25.

25 Mishnah Berurah 306:33.

26 Those who wait 72 minutes to end Shabbos all year round, should do so on Shabbos Chanukah as well; Igros Moshe, O.C. 4:62. But those who wait 72 minutes only on occasion should not wait 72 minutes on motzaei Shabbos Chanukah; Rav S.Z. Auerbach and Rav Y.S. Elyashiv (quoted in Shevus Yitzchak, pg. 75).

27 Chovas ha-Dar 1, note 65.

28 Rav S.Z. Auerbach (quoted in Piskei Teshuvos, pg. 498). See also Orchos Rabbeinu, vol. 3, pg. 28.

29 Emes l'Yaakov, O.C. 677, note 590.

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