

Chanukah 5769

Midreshet Yeud newsletter

Dear Yeud family,

Wow, the first third of the year has flown by so quickly; obviously time flies when you're having fun learning Torah and volunteering! We're so proud of our students for the way they balance their schedules so well!



Elul was a period dedicated to introspection, teshuva. The students began to get a feel for what the midrasha is all about and got to know each other. The madrichot ran fun activities called "Get to know you" and "Speed dating" for the whole midrasha (overseas and Israelis) to speed up the integration process. By now, many wonderful friendships have evolved!

After the chagim, we embarked on 8 solid weeks of learning and sherut leumi, with few interruptions. We have had several interesting guest speakers who spoke about many topics including personal stories of emmuncha, leadership and Jewish/Israel activism (in line with true Yeud spirit!).



We enjoyed a great Shabbat in Moshav Keshet in the Golan Heights and a 2-day tiyul in the mountains of Jerusalem and Gush Etzion. The tiyul was amazing and very ISRAELI! We left on foot from Yeud, backpacks and all! All of our students, Israeli and overseas, wandered the beautiful paths of the Jerusalem mountains and visited interesting historic sites and several water springs. We slept in a Bedouin tent and enjoyed a special night of songs and stories around the bonfire. We learned all about the courageous battles of

Gush Etzion in 1948, and even visited the famous Gush Yeshiva the next morning! The best thing about the tiyul was that all the hadracha (guiding) – navigation of routes, social activities and fun games, and teaching of various sources relevant to the tiyul – was all done by the students, for the students!



This week, a group of our students visited the local old-age home to celebrate Chanukah with the residents. One of our goals is to "adopt" the local Kiryat Hayovel community and take it under the wings of our various chessed options.



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This coming Shabbat will be held in Ofra, a beautiful community of 500 families nestled in the Benjamin Mountains, just north of Jerusalem. We like to take the girls out for some of the midrasha Shabbatot so that they get a wider variety of experiences during the year, along with the amazing tiyulim and their individual activities.

Our beloved MTA students – a group of 12 ladies from South Africa and Australia – will sadly be ending their year with us after Chanukah. They have made an enormous impact on our midrasha and formed wonderful bonds with rabbis, teachers and students. The Messibat Chanukah / Farewell Banquet will take place this Sunday night.



On that same Sunday, we will be having a Yom Iyun – a special day of classes dedicated to learning about the practical and spiritual meanings of Chanukah. There are many speakers and different programs available for the girls. Chanukah vacation begins Tuesday morning and ends the following Monday night at curfew time.

After that, we are looking at a few quiet weeks (including a trip to Eilat!) until the new group of MTA students arrive on February 1st.

In the next months...

Another exciting program that is drawing near is our annual trip to Poland. This is a program during which we embark on a week long educational trip to Poland, probably during the last week of February. We recently had the initial information session with the group and all are starting to prepare, mentally and physically for the journey ahead.

The Jerusalem Seminar

Mark your calendars! This summer we will be holding a three day seminar in Hebrew and in English for our alumni, parents and friends . The first day will focus on Jerusalem in the times of the Tanach, the second day will focus on Jerusalem in the times of the Mishna and Talmud and the third, Jerusalem today. Stay tuned for more details.

We are pleased to attach to this newsletter a collection of Divrei Torah for Channuka. With one staff and one student Dvar Torah for each night, we hope you will enjoy the Torah from our Beit Midrash.

We wish you a Chanukah Sameach!

Rav Yaacov Shapira
Rosh Midrasha

Rav Hillel Van-Leeuan
Head of Overseas Program

Shmil Atlas
Executive Director

Visit us on www.midreshet-yeud.org.il/eng/



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Ner Rishon

Rav Zvi Leshem

Chanukah, the last festival of Talmudic times, sometimes seems like the ultimate understatement. At night we light the candles and in the morning we recite the *Hallel* Psalms. In between we go to work as usual¹, with the occasional *latke* or doughnut the only reminder that we are in the midst of a holiday. There is not even a requirement to eat a meal (*Seudat Mitzva*)!² Yet a closer look will reveal the true depths of this awesome and holy *yuntef!*

In *Lekutai Halachot* Chanukah 1, Rebbe Nachman is quoted to the effect that lighting the first Chanukah candle represents the beginning (*chinuch*) of our Divine service, which begins after we succeed in shattering the power of illusions that distance us from HaShem. The rest of the candles each night represent higher and higher levels of *avoda* that we reach, taking one more step each night. The problem, he explains, is that every time we want to take one more step up the ladder of Divine service, our *yetzer hara*, in the guise of illusions, rears its ugly head and tries to stop us. The antidote is the recital of *Hallel* every morning, in which we praise G-d and reveal His greatness. Thus two seemingly minor rituals; lighting candles and reciting *Hallel*, create a special framework for each day of Chanukah. At night, as I enter the darkness, I light one more candle, illuminating that very darkness with the light of the Tora, and I ascend to another height of *avoda*. However, by the time that dawn rolls around I am in danger of falling once again and this time it is the recital of *Hallel* that fortifies my current position and enables me to stay strong through my day at work. I then return home to light yet another candle, ascending even higher, and begin the process anew.

Regarding the lack of required meals on Chanukah, the Rema adds a fascinating gloss. *We are accustomed to recite songs and praises at the meals we make and then they are transformed into Seudot Mitzva.*³ In other words, by adding a song, we can create a Halachic reality in which an “optional meal” actual becomes a “mitzva meal”. How does this work?

It seems clear that this itself is in fact the subtle message of Chanukah. On Shabbat and *Chag* we undergo a radical transformation of our usual lifestyle. Work is prohibited, special meals are enjoined, and we spend long hours in shul and the like. All of that is needed to remove us from our normal workweek consciousness and to elevate us to a higher spiritual plane infused with *kedusha*. On Chanukah that isn't necessary. And in fact the Tora is teaching us something very different. It is possible to experience a major religious awakening *within* the context of everyday life. Just as a song can transform an ordinary meal into a religious experience, so to the simple act of lighting a candle or the recitation of a few psalms empowers us to rediscover G-d's presence in the world, thus seeing the world in a new light. Just as the miracle of the oil served to illuminate the true nature of the miraculous military victory⁴, so to do our candles illuminate all of reality in a new light.

¹ See the *Mishna Brura* 670:5 that one shouldn't take vacation on Chanukah – it is appropriate to work!

² *Shulchan Aruch* 670:2.

³ See also *Mishna Brura* there, 8, regarding marriage.

⁴ Maharal, *Ner Mitzva*, page 22.



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May this Chanukah truly be the beginning of our rededication to Divine service. May we merit seeing all of reality the prism of the holy lights.
Chag Urim Sameach, Shabbat Shalom.

Dani Fraser, London, England

Why do we celebrate eight days of Chanukah?

From the twenty-fifth day of Kislev, eight days of Chanukah are observed. The reason for this is because when the Greeks entered the sanctuary, they defiled all of the oils used to kindle the menorah. Once the Hasmoneans had defeated them, they searched and found one jar of sealed oil. The jar only contained enough oil to burn for one day, yet a miracle occurred to make it last for eight. If the jar already had enough oil for the first day but lasted for an extra seven, should we not celebrate Chanukah for seven days seeing as only seven days of miracles occurred?

Many scholars have addressed this question providing us with some of the following answers: One explanation is that when they discovered the oil, they divided it into eight parts to last for eight days; they intended to use the oil to ensure the menorah was lit for at least part of the evening but miraculously the eighth they poured in each evening, was sufficient to allow the menorah to burn for the entire night.

Another explanation tells us that all of the oil was poured into the menorah on the first day but even after burning all night, it still remained full, thus giving enough oil to burn for eight days.

When the jar of oil was found it was bearing the seal of the Kohen Gadol, this itself provided a miracle for Chanukah and provides us with another day of Chanukah to celebrate.

Many scholars also found that an extra day of Chanukah must be celebrated to commemorate the miraculous victory that we defeated the Greeks. Just as Purim commemorates the day the Jews rested from doing battle, the same is done for Chanukah.

Other scholars believe that one of the decrees from the Greeks was to forbid all circumcision in order to destroy all covenants between man and G-d, once the Hasmoneans had prevailed against their enemies, they celebrated over the renewal of the covenant which takes place on the eighth day of a child's life, therefore declaring an eighth day to the festival.

The fact that the Jews used all the oil on the first night, knowing that they would not have enough for the remaining seven nights is in itself a miracle. Had they worried what was going to happen to them the next night, they would have never survived, instead, they put all their trust in G-d knowing that He would fulfill His will and live by His word, showing us another miracle of Chanukah.



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Ner Sheni

Rav Hillel Van Leeuwen

JEWISH VALUES OR HELLENISTIC VALUES? [BASED ON THE MISHNA IN TRACTATE "AVOT", 4:1]

	HELLENISM	JUDAISM
WHO IS WISE?	ONE WHO IS ABLE TO OUT-ARGUE OTHERS IN PUBLIC DEBATE.	ONE WHO CAN LEARN FROM ANYBODY.
WHO IS A HERO?	ONE WHO IS ABLE TO WIN A WRESTLING MATCH OR CAN KILL WILD BEASTS.	ONE WHO IS ABLE TO SUPPRESS HIS OWN EVIL INCLINATION.
WHO IS WEALTHY?	HE WHO CAN BUY ANYTHING HE WISHES, LIVES IN A CASTLE & HAS MORE MONEY THAN BILL GATES.	ONE WHO IS SATISFIED WITH WHAT HE CURRENTLY HAS.
WHO IS RESPECTED?	ONE WHO IS FEARED BY THE ORDINARY CITIZEN, AND THEREFORE TREATED WITH DUE RESPECT. ONE WHO EVERYONE WISHES TO BE NEAR TO.	HE WHO TREATS EVERYONE ELSE WITH THE UTMOST RESPECT.
JUDAISM		HELLENISM
1) ADEQUATE ATTIRE SHOULD COVER THE BODY. BEING MODEST IS A VALUE.		THE BODY IS AESTHETIC AND SHOULD THEREFOR BE SHOWN OFF.
2) BEFORE EATING, ONE SHOULD BLESS G-D, TO AKNOWLEDGE THAT WE EAT IN ORDER TO LIVE, NOT LIVE IN ORDER TO EAT.		PARTIES, CARNIVALS & FEASTS ARE A MAJOR GOAL IN LIFE. WE EAT TO ENJOY LIFE BETTER.
3) MAN NEEDS TO TAKE CARE OF THE ANIMALS, AND TO PROTECT THEM.		CIRCUSES & GLADIATORS ARE DESIGNED TO PLEASE & ENTERTAIN THE AUDIENCE.
4) MUSIC & SONGS ARE FOR POSITIVE RELAXATION AND FOR PEACE OF MIND.		MUSIC = PASS TIME. IT HELPS PEOPLE "PASS THE TIME". AFTER ALL, LIFE IS SO BORING...
5) SPORTS ARE MEANT TO STRENGTHEN THE BODY & ENABLE US TO LEAD A HEALTHY LIFE.		WE DEVELOP THE PHYSIQUE & SHAPE-UP OUR BODIES THROUGH SPORTS. THE THRILL OF THE COMPETITION & THE CRAZED AUDIENCE ADD FUEL TO THE "EGO" BURST.
6) BEAUTY IS IMPORTANT, <u>ONLY</u> IF IT COMES AS AN ADDITION TO MEANING. "EMOTY " BEAUTY IS MEANINGLESS & CONSEQUENTLY WORTHLESS.		BEAUPTY IS A VALUE IN IT'S OWN RIGHT.
7) LARGE, SPACIOUS HOMES & EXPENSIVE FURNITURE ARE USED TO PROJUDE US WITH COMFORTABLE SURROUNDINGS IN WHICH TO LEAD OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES.		ART & STRUCTURAL DESIGN SERVE AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW OFF YOUR RICHES.
8) WE BELIEVE IN ONE G-D, A G-D WHO IS SPIRITUAL & ABSTRACT.		WE BELIEVE IN MANY GODS. WE ATTRIBUTE HUMAN TRAITS TO THEM & SERVE EACH GOD DIFFERENTLY.
9) HUMAN LIFE IS A TOP VALUE. IT SHOULD ALWAYS BE GUARDED & UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES MAY IT BE TERMINATED.		IN ORDER TO PLEASE THE AUDIENCE, WE SOMETIMES KILL PEOPLE AS A FORM OF ENTERTAINMENT. (GLADIATORS).
10) BATHING IS FOR PERSONAL HYGIENE OR FOR SPIRITUAL CLEANSING (MIKVA).		PUBLIC BATHING IS A CHANCE TO ADMIRE THE HUMAN BODY. A WHOLE SOCIAL EVENT WAS FORMED ARUOND THE LEISURE BATHING.



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Abi Saffer, Leeds, England

A lesson from Yehuda HaMacabee:

Admiration is due to Yehuda HaMacabee who in the face of the utmost persecution from the Greeks was able to stand out from everyone and build an army small in size but true in nature – this was the key to their success. Their story of victory of the weak over strong is not new to our history, we've seen David beat Goliath and others aside. However with Yehuda HaMacabee we see that there was no prophetic inspiration telling him what to do but rather he set out with only his faith alone believing that it was better to die in war fighting for a cause that is true and noble. Indeed this led to the war and downfall of the Greeks.

Chanukah, as we know, is the 'Festival of Lights'. Yehuda HaMacabee was truly a light unto his nation, bringing to life the notion of faith in Hashem and truly making it real. Without leadership like his our people would still be stuck in Egypt working as slaves.

Today, we see a parallel in our world to that of Yehuda HaMaccabee's: assimilation is rife, and we still do not have prophetic inspiration showing us the way. We should learn from Yehuda and use our faith to lead the Jews in the best way we can, starting this Chanukah, one candle at a time, bringing light to an otherwise dark world.



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Ner Shelishi

Rav Eli Lewis

Even though it is a Halachic Jewish festival, Chanukah is observed by almost all Jews, also those far as anything from Yiddishkite or Frumkite.

Outside of Israel the reason for this phenomenon may be its juxtaposition to Christmas, Santa Claus and the flashy lights on the Christmas tree.

In Israel it is [among other reasons] the "Macabi" figure and what the early secular Zionists believed he stood for, the proud, strong, fearless Jewish freedom fighter, who would go to battle to save his country and people. "The new Jew" as they liked to call themselves, the one who left the Galut behind his back and is facing the new vision of freedom of secular Zionism.

I don't think they got it all right, but one thing I believe we should take with us back to where we live outside of Eretz.

That spirit of caring less of what the non-Jewish environment thinks of us and standing upright for what we believe in, and in particular – not being ashamed of our Chanukah candles, light them outside so everyone can see them, hold them at the window so all Jews and non-Jews would know that here lives a proud Jewish family

Chag Sameach

Tami Weiser, Sydney, Australia

It can be debated which miracle we celebrate on Chanukah. Is it the fact that the Greeks were defeated and we survived even though we were greatly outnumbered, or that we were lucky enough to find oil with the seal of the Kohen Gadol that instead of lasting for one day lasted for eight? One might think it is obvious that the answer would be the victory over the Greeks because if we did not survive we could not continue to learn Torah and do Mitzvot. But in actual fact the greater miracle is the oil lasting for eight days- the spiritual victory. Sometimes, in the depths of darkness it's the small light in the room that creates a sense of hope. So too after the destruction and devastation left by the Greeks, the Menorah staying lit for eight days was a clear sign from Hashem saying "don't worry, I'm still here watching over you".

Chag Sameach



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Ner Revii

Rav Shmuli Kagan

Our sages (Shabbat 23) ask *What is Chanuka?* and Rashi explains that they are searching for the miracle that marks the uniqueness of this special festival. The Gemara answers with a description of the phenomenon of the small quantity of oil being found and used to light the Menora and lasting eight days. It appears from this Gemara that the major miracle of Chanuka was Hashem's Chesed of allowing us to have the Menora lit for so much longer than expected! But there was another miracle of Chanuka and this we commemorate in the *Al Hanissim* Bracha we add in the Shmonei Esrei and Birkat hamazon- the remarkable, clearly supernatural victory of the few and relatively weak Kohanim over the mighty Greek army! Is *this* not the greater miracle of Chanuka, asks Rav Chaim Shmulevitz! This salvation gave us life and the ability for a whole nation to continue doing Mitzvot for generations to come? Why is Chanuka characterized by the seemingly less significant miracle of the *jug of oil*?

In *Parshat VaYeishev*, a parsha to which Chanukah often clings, we see a strange Chesed that Hashem did to Yosef after being sold to Arab merchants to be taken down to Egypt. Instead of the customary skins and terrible smelling materials that was normally carried by these people in those days, on Yosef's trip they *happened* to be laden with spices which smelt pleasant and rich. What is this *Chesed* of Hashem? What difference do the sweet smelling conditions make to a man who has suddenly fallen from such grace and success to a future which could only look grim and terrifying to say the least? If a police van transporting convicts to live out their life sentences in prison happens to have a delicious smelling air-freshener, do these bereaved men feel some what better?

Rav Chaim explains that sometimes miracles come in small subtle ways that are just there to uplift the person, revealing a deep love and concern Hashem has for the recipient. Amongst all the darkness and trepidation that Yosef was feeling, Hashem changed the natural way of the world to share with him a ray of light, a slither of hope. Yosef was on the level to see in this Hashem's Hand leading him towards Egypt which would eventually lead to a spectacular salvation for his Jewish people. Our task is to find and see these many miracles Hashem sends us, saving us from depression and loss of hope.

Love is found in the smaller details that often seem unnecessary and insignificant. Hashem saved us from the Greek army and this was obviously a great miracle but it was something that was necessary for Jewish survival. The longevity of the oil was something that wasn't needed to ensure Jewish continuity and in truth, if we couldn't find any oil G-d Forbid, we would have been patur (exempt) from this Mitzvah! Hashem gave us this *small* miracle to show us His special love He has for us. And it was the incredible love the Chashmonayim felt towards Hashem that drove their Mesirut Nefesh to risk their lives and be deserving of this unique phenomena.

Going the extra mile, being mahader min hamehadrin, focusing on the smaller details and doing acts that you are actually not obligated to do are all aspects of Chanuka and are all symptoms of real love and devotion we are meant to feel towards Hashem and our fellow Jews.

Chanuka Sameach!



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Leah Shohet, Herts, England

Money Money Money

I always wondered why we have chocolate gelt on Chanukah. Sure, it's another great excuse for food and it's fun to pretend that you're the chocolate king of the world but what's the reason behind it?

The Shulchan Aruch explains that one cannot derive any benefit from the Chanukah lights and an example used is using the lights to count money by. Therefore chocolate coins were given out to children to remind them not to use the lights and to make the whole Chanukah experience more exciting. This custom then led to the bigger and pricier gifts we are fortunate to receive today.

Another reason is to remind us that we should try and help out those in need. The Shulchan Aruch also states that a poor person who lives off charity is required to beg or sell his clothes in order to buy candles for Chanukah. This shows up the importance of the commandment of Chanukah and how we should be extra-generous at this time of year.

Happy Chanukah!



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Ner Chamishi

Mrs. Ilana Sober

Everlasting Oil

The gemara (Shabbat 21b) describes the miracle of Chanukah. The Greeks defiled all the oil in the Beit Hamikdash. The Chashmona'im found only a single flask of pure oil, not even enough to light the menorah for one day. Yet they were able to light the menorah from the oil in that flask for eight days.

Chanukah was not the only occasion on which the oil in the menorah miraculously burned for a long time. Every evening, seven candles were lit in the menorah. Six burned only until morning; the seventh - the ner ma'aravi - burned for 24 hours, although it held no more oil than the others (see Menachot 86b).

We know of several other miracles in which oil never ran out:

- Moshe Rabbenu prepared the anointing oil (shemen hamishchah), using only twelve logs (4-6 litres) of olive oil. This oil miraculously sufficed to anoint the Mishkan and all its vessels, Aharon and his sons for the seven days of dedication, as well as future gedolim and kings - and it still remains. It was never necessary to prepare more (see Shemot 30:22-31 and Horayot 11b).
- Eliyahu stayed with a woman in Tzarfat during a famine. Miraculously, her jug of flour and her flask of oil never ran out (Melachim I 17).
- A desperate widow turned to Elisha for help in paying her debts. She had nothing in the house but a jar of oil. He instructed her to borrow vessels from her neighbours and pour oil from the jar into them; the oil from that jar miraculously filled every container (Melachim II 4).

What is the connection between these miracles? Why does olive oil, specifically, seem to have special potential for the miraculous bracha of lasting far beyond what we expect? I haven't yet found an answer that satisfies me, but if you have an idea, or if you've seen an answer somewhere, please write me at ilanasober@gmail.com. Maybe I'll send out another Yeud email with some answers. Happy Chanukah!

Wered Filarski, Amsterdam, Holland

A year in Israel means change in a lot of ways. And now, with Chanukah on its way, we should start thinking about how to light our Menorah. So here are a few guidelines for anyone who might be traveling during Chanukah.

The mitzvah of lighting for Chanukah is to light a light at home. Strictly speaking, this would require only one Menorah per household. However, in order to make the mitzvah more beautiful, we all light our own Menorah.

This means it is always preferable to light at home. But what if you're not at home, but travelling, or staying at another house?

In order to do that, you should make the other place you stay at as if it is your home. A person who intends to sleep at home, must light there. If you're sleeping in a different place you are eating, it is preferable to light where you eat, unless that is too difficult.

If you are away from only for Chanukah or a part of Chanukah, a family member over bar mitzvah could light for at home, and strictly speaking you would fulfill your obligation by doing this. Custom is, however, to light yourself too. In this case, you can only say the bracha when you light earlier than the Menorah at home is being lit. If not, you should rather listen to someone else reciting the bracha.



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Also we differentiate between a man and a woman, since the strict obligation is only for the head of the household. A single man can light wherever he is sleeping, according to the mehadrin version. But a woman should become part of the family were she is lodging before she can light, and a man should too, according to the basic version of the mitzva. This can be done by giving a small amount of money to the host in order to acquire a share in the oil or candles. The host can also give a share as a gift, but in that case, the lodger should lift it up as an act of acquisition, or the host should give him a different amount of oil or longer candles than usual. If she is lodging alone, she can light anyway.

If a husband and wife are going away together during Chanukah, they can light together in the place they are staying. Other family members remaining at home should light for themselves. In the end, these are the conditions you must fulfill in order to light away from home: You need to have a bed to sleep in. You must be paying for the journey. You are not holding the Menorah in your hands, but you are putting it down somewhere, and there is no fire hazard in doing that. If these conditions are not met, you are exempt from lighting.

If you fear you have to extinguish the candles within half-an-hour, you can light, but without saying the bracha.

I based this dvar torah on a little book called Guidelines by Rabbi Elozor Barclay and Rabbi Yitzchok Jaeger.



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Ner Shishi

Mrs. Aliza Abrahamovitz

Why is this holiday different than all other holidays?

What's so special about Channuka? It seems that every religion has some sort of holiday which is meant to bring light, warmth and a spirit of giving during the darkest, coldest point of the winter. If Channuka is meant to be a holiday where traditional Jews fought and won against Hellenism and assimilation, then why celebrate in a way that is just like all the other religions? Why does the world need another festival of lights?

The midrash (Avodah Zara 8a) describes how Adam first established a winter holiday. When the days became shorter, Adam assumed that they would continue to do so until the world would be completely dark, at which point it would return to its original state and he would die. However, after the winter solstice the days grew longer, and Adam, thanking Hashem, created a holiday. In Massechet Shabbos the Gemmara asks "מאי חנוכה?" - "what is Channuka?" The answer given there is the story of the miracle of the oil. The Gemmara finishes off by explaining that it is for that reason that "in the following year they established and rendered these days as festival days for praise and thanksgiving." Later on the Gemmara discusses the order of priority with regards to certain mitzvot. If a man had enough money to either perform the mitzvah of Shabbat candles or Channuka candles, he is to light Shabbat candles because of *shalom bayit*. If he only had enough to perform one mitzvah - either Shabbat candles or Kiddush wine, for the same logic he is to light Shabbat candles. But if he had only enough for Channuka candles or Kiddush wine, he is to light the Channuka candles for the Channuka candles publicize the miracle that Hashem performed for His people (*Shabbos 23b*). From this we can learn how important the publicizing of the miracle is. But why?

It seems quite natural, based on the first midrash regarding Adam, that all people would create some sort of holiday following the winter solstice. Man is afraid of dark, and when the days become long again, man naturally celebrates the end of those dark days. And thus, most religions have some sort of winter festival involving light. But Channuka is not just another festival of lights. It is a time of praise and thanksgiving to Hashem. And unlike other festivals, such as Purim, which are days of festivities and joy (ימי משתה ושמחה) Channuka is a time of "praise and thanksgiving" "להודות ולהלל". And how do we praise? By lighting the Channuka candles. And by doing this act, we are publicizing the miracles of Hashem. We are not only telling the world that over 2000 years ago He performed a miracle in the Beit HaMikdash that caused oil to burn for eight days when it was only meant to burn for one day. We are announcing to the world that Hashem exists, that His hand is involved in this world, that He created it and that He takes care of it. We are publicizing the miracle of nature and telling the world that there is nothing natural about nature. The miracle of the oil is as equally miraculous as the miracle of the existence and continuation of the world. May we give praise and thanksgiving to Hashem for the miracles He brings forth each and every day.

Lauren Hertan, NY, USA

In thousands of homes all over the world, as families sit watching the Chanuka candles burn, a game of dreidel is played, whether it is the classic version played for pennies, or new games like who can spin the most dreidels at once. But where does the dreidel come from? Is it more than just a game?



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It is said that when the Greek Empire ruled over Israel they prohibited Jews from studying Torah on penalty of death. In order to hide their Torah study, whenever a group of people came together to learn, they always brought along spinning tops. In the event that they were caught by soldiers they said, "We're just playing a game. No Torah learning here." The dreidel served as a very good decoy.

Today's modern version of the game comes from a European gambling game. The German version was called "drehen", meaning to spin. The game of dreidel is said to be a Judaicized version of "drehen". The letters on each side of the toy stand for the rules of the game. The Hebrew letters seem to directly correlate to the German letters: Nun for "Nisht", or none, Gimmel for "Ganz", or all, Hey for "Halb", or half, and Shin for "Shtel", or put. Our rules of the game are based on this.

The letters on the side of the dreidel, Nun-Gimmel-Hey-Shin, also stand for "Nes Gadol Hayah Sham." ("A great miracle happened there.") The Chashmonaim won the war against the Greeks and the oil of the menorah burned for 8 days. But there is an even deeper symbolism here. The gematriya, or numerical value of these four letters is 358. The Hebrew words "nachash" and "mashiach" both share this numerical value. "Nachash," or "snake" symbolizes the evil that wants to destroy the Jewish people. But when we spin the dreidel and see it topple over and fall, we know that eventually evil stumbles, and has its downfall. When it does, we can return to G-d and be redeemed. This is what we are reminded of on Chanuka.



Ner Shevii

Mrs. Lia Taragin

Yearning with Your Eyes Open

Chanuka. What an amazing Chag... It seems to me that Chanuka is one of the Chagim that everyone just loves. It may seem obvious; yet, I would like to raise the question: why do we love Chanuka so much?

In the next few sentences I will try to propose one of the reasons that I love Chanuka so much...

Mey Hashiloach, Rav Yosef Lainer from Izbitsza, differentiates between a candle and a light:

"מאי חנוכה? כתיב, 'נר לרגלי דברין ואור לנתיבתי' (תהלים קיט, קה).

נר לרגלי, היינו שה' יתברך הנחיל דברי תורה אשר בכל פרט מעשה יוכר כי מלכות ה' בכל משלה.

ואור לנתיבתי, היינו שבכלל האיר ה' יתברך גם כן, הכרה מיוחדת כי המלכות שלו היא, כי נר הוא דבר פרטי, ואור הוא כללי". (מי השילוח, ליקוטי הש"ס, שבת, ד"ה מאי חנוכה)

According to Mey Hashiloach, a candle represents the recognition that in every action that a person does he acknowledges that Hashem is everywhere. This is a very specific recognition. In contrast, as represented by the light, there is a general recognition - the recognition that The Kingdom of God exists in the world. These two different representations, can, in my opinion, refer to two different aspects of faith – which can generate two very different types of religious lives. One type is a life in which a person acknowledges God's existence – but does little else. This is a very beautiful recognition but it also a very general one. The second type refers to a person who acknowledges the existence of God in every single detail of their life. It seems to me that these two different types of faith can evolve into two very different types of lifestyles. In one, a person is aware of the existence of God but this "knowledge" does not occupy his whole life, he knows it but little effect is manifested in his daily life. In the other, a person is aware of Malchut Hashem in every aspect of his life and that God is participating in every part of his seemingly mundane life. The existence of God, for him, is not just another piece of "knowledge" but a factor that influences his whole entire life.

It seems to me that often, the "light" type of faith may be the beginning of a path. Knowing that God exists is a very important, very general recognition, a recognition that can "light" up your whole life. However, the capacity to light a specific candle, to use the recognition that God exists to light your own candle - that is the second level that we should all be aspiring to.

Finally, I would like to share a beautiful idea from Rav Avraham Iger. We tend to think that we yearn with our hearts... But, according to Rav Iger, there can be something more profound – yearning eyes... Normally, when you yearn with your eyes there is a need to close them - because when you open your eyes you are distracted by seeing what there is. Therefore, when you are yearning for something that does not exist, you must close your eyes. On Chanuka, Hashem shows us things that we are yearning for. How?

I will share a secret with you – Hashem shows us via the Chanuka candles. Why does the candle tremble? A candle shows us all the things that we are yearning for, and this is so profound and so deep that the candles tremble... And thus we are yearning – with our eyes open. Similarly, when two people love each other, their eyes are open - but you can see the yearning.



Chanukah 5769

When two people love each other, despite being in love, they still want to get closer, to love even more... so, they look deep into each other's eyes, a look filled with yearning.

I don't know what you are yearning for. But, I do know that I am yearning to feel Hashem in every moment, every action and every word. I would like to wish all of us, that we should be zoche to acknowledge the light, the beautiful, magnificent, sweet light. Further, I hope and pray that we should not only have the ability to yearn for the light but that we should each succeed in yearning for more – and perhaps even create our own candle.

I love Chanuka because it is suffused with yearning. Holy yearning.

Lianna Brenner, NY, USA

Rav Kook (z"l) teaches that on Chanuka, we are granted a glimpse into the higher-level time of the future. Chanukah shares a root with the word "Chinnuch," meaning education; just as we educate to ensure and pave the way for the future, so, too, does Chanukah help us understand the direction in which we should be going. What sort of future, however, does this mean? Rav Kook explains that Chanuka, perhaps in a Kabbalistic way, emanates all the "lights" of the future – values such as Torah, mitzvot, chesed, tzedakah, prophecy, etc. – that will be realized at some later time.

In today's world, each individual or group of individuals tends to be drawn to a different one of these "lights." One person may feel very strongly that the light of chesed "outshines" all others, promoting social justice at the expense of any alternative, while another may value strict adherence to the halachot, while yet another may decide that giving tzedakah, or speaking kindly to peers, or keeping with traditions, or saving the earth (the list goes on...) is the most effective way to reach that higher-level future. Needless to say, these "lights," these different values, are often seen as standing alone. Each of us might pick the one that rings truest in our minds and say, "That's it! This light shines brighter than the rest." The chosen "light" of another person or group thus comes into conflict with our own, leading to fighting, bad-mouthing; ultimately, anger and hatred toward our fellow Jew.

Rav Kook teaches that the blessing of our future will be peace, *shalom*; when the lights of each individual will not conflict but complement one another. Because in reality, these seemingly distinct "lights" are really all part of one big light. This is one of the many messages of Chanuka, found in the bracha over lighting the Chanuka candles. Instead of saying "lehadlik *nerot* shel Chanuka," we say "lehadlik *ner* shel Chanuka." We speak only of *one* light, the light that encompasses all others; the light of our future. May we be blessed to be a part of that future, and in the meantime, to appreciate the distinctive "lights" that too often draw us apart; for it is the strength of each of these lights individually that is necessary to bring the ultimate, all-encompassing light of Chanuka into our lives always.

Chag Sameach.



Chanukah 5769 Ner Shemini

“Nes Pach Hashemen” – Shmil Atlas, Executive director

When my kids returned home from kindergarten yesterday, they started to argue about "Nes Chanukah". My son, Avraham, claimed that we celebrate Chanukah because Hashem made a big *nes* (miracle) and the small group of fighters, the Maccabim, won the war against the strong Greek army. My daughter, Maya, on the other hand, argued that we celebrate Chanukah because Hashem made the big *nes* of finding the small jug of oil that allowed the Maccabim to light the *menorah* for 8 days. They were both very upset when they came to me to "judge" who is right. What did I tell them? They're both right!

When looking at these two miracles, one can understand the need for a miracle in fighting the Greek army. But when we look at *Nes pach hashemen* - "The miracle of the jug of oil", one wonders, why did Hashem create this miracle? We all know that "*ones rachmana patreih*" meaning, when a person is constrained, and not able to fulfill a *mitzvah*, the All Merciful One frees him (from any punishment). So hypothetically, if the Maccabim don't find any oil with which to light the menorah, they haven't done anything wrong. They have just been through a war and the Greeks made sure to make everything in the Beit Hamikdash impure. It was almost impossible to find any pure oil. Surely they are *patur* (exempt) from this *mitzvah*? Why did Hashem create this miracle?

The *Sfat Emet* explains that *Hashem* created *Nes pach hashemen* to show great affection to his followers. We need to understand that usually miracles are created in order to save the Jewish nation from trouble. *Nes pach hashemen* is different. It comes to teach all Jews a lesson - there is a right way, and there is a wrong way!

The Maccabim fought two wars: a physical war and a cultural war. Cultural, in that they had to combat not only the Greeks but also the *mityavanim* - Hellenized Jews. These were Jews who were sucked into Greek culture and accepted the Greek way of life. Today we call this assimilation.

They thought that the Maccabim were wrong. They thought that their zealotry and their efforts to keep the ancient tradition did not fit with the modern world.

With *Nes pach hashemen*, Hashem made it obvious that he wants us to continue doing *mitzvot* and even if "*ones rachmana patreih*" and the Maccabim are exempt from lighting the Menorah, we received a miracle to show that Hashem wants and expects right deeds. This shows the world that there is a right way and a wrong way. The Maccabim were right, and the Mityavanim were wrong.

And every year when we light the *chanukiah* in public view, we remind everyone of the right way. Chag Sameach!

Taryn Seeff, Johannesburg, South Africa

Our Jewish tradition is rich with customs that teach us much about the festival to which they are linked.

Purim and Hannukah are often connected due to the fact that both stories occurred after the destruction of the 1st Beit Hamikdash. When looking at the minhagim of both festivals, we are able to gain an insight to the deeper meaning of the chag.



Chanukah 5769

On Purim, we have the custom to spin a graga to block out the name of Haman; it is an instrument which needs to be propelled from below. On hannukah, it is common practice to spin the dreidel; this is set in motion from above. These customs hint seem to hint at Ha-shem's involvement in the events; during Purim, Ha-shem concealed His presence, He worked from "below" – His name cannot even be found in Migilat Esther. Contrasting to this, Ha-shem's involvement in the Hannukah story is obvious, the fact that the army of the Maccabi's triumphed over the Mighty Greeks and that one days worth of oil lasted for another 7 days is truly divine. May Ha-shem remain a guiding light in our lives and continue to be present whether He lifts us up from below or sends miracles from above that allow us to follow His ways and reach our personal Yeud (destiny).
Chag Sameach.

