

**BNEI
AKIVA**
UNITED KINGDOM



CHANUKAT HABAYIT

DAILY THOUGHTS FOR CHANUKAH FROM BOGRIM AND MADRICHIM



Kislev 5779

Shalom Chaverim,

זמור שיר חנכת הבית לדוד (תהלים ל:א)

A psalm – a song for the dedication of the House – by David. (Tehillim 30:1)

When we think of the word תנכה, we think of menorahs, doughnuts, presents and dreidels. We think of how Antiochus outlawed Jewish religious practice in Israel, how he banned observing the mitzvot of Shabbat, the Chagim and Brit Millah. How he set up pagan altars in the Beit Hamikdash, renaming it for the Greek god Zeus. We recall how he gave our ancestors the terrible choice that has plagued our people throughout history: give up your way of life or be put to death. We remember the revolt, the Maccabees rising up and winning despite the overwhelming odds against them.

In later centuries, תנכה and the uprising of the Maccabees became synonymous with defiance (there is a well-known photograph taken in Nazi Germany of a menorah by a window. Through the window a banner bearing a swastika can be seen). But the literal meaning of the word תנכה is “dedication”, referring to both the physical rededication of the Beit Hamikdash after its desecration by the Seleucid-Greeks, and also the spiritual rededication of the Jewish People as they stood up to the idols and Hellenistic philosophies of their oppressors.

The root-letters of the word תנכה are נ (chet), נ (nun), and כ (kaf), the same root-letters which are used to form the word חינוך – “education”. This shared root is no coincidence, highlighting a deeper connection between תנכה and חינוך. The shared root of “dedication” and “education” brings out the beautiful idea that educating a child is the beginning of a process in which a child dedicates themselves to certain a task. As this process continues, it reaches a stage where the child can be seen to be educating themselves.

Ahad Ha'am is quoted as saying “The new generation, that was born and raised in freedom, and was educated (נתנך) from youth on the knees of the great Torah”. He hoped that the new generation would be able to combine both modern freedoms and knowledge of the Torah. Only with both of these would the youth be able to play their part in the continuation of the long and rich history of the Jewish People. By using the word נתנך he refers us to a realm shared by both חינוך and תנכה. The word תנכה refers to our ability as the Jewish People to continually dedicate ourselves to what we believe in. This continuity has always relied on the same three elements: remembrance, education, and resistance. Three elements that are synonymous with תנכה and everything it represents.

Since the days of Antiochus, תנכה has been about holding on to our roots. We light to remember, to learn, to honour the resistance shown, and to rededicate ourselves to our principles in a time when modern society can threaten us both physically and spiritually.

It is with this in mind that we present “Chanukat Habayit”: A collection of Divrei Torah from Bogrim and Madrichim with one Dvar Torah for each night of תנכה (follow the candles as a guide). Our educational publications are part of a broader effort to expand and develop the outlook of all those connected to the Tnuva, and to bring Religious Zionist ideals to the forefront of Anglo-Jewry. Through Chanukat Habayit, together with Shabbat Lashem and other publications we hope to produce throughout this coming year, we hope to create a rededication of Religious Zionism in the education of British Jews of all ages.

With thanks to our anonymous donors and all of our contributors for making this publication possible. Chanukat Habayit is dedicated לילוי nishmat פרידה חוה בת פרידה חוה.

We hope you enjoy learning “Chanukat Habayit” and we wish you all a Chanukah Sameach.

B'Virkat Shalom l'Torah v'Avodah,

Eli Maman
(Chinuch Worker)

Hannah Reuben
(Mazkira)

Rav Aharon Herskovitz
(Rav Shaliach)

HELLENISM & JUDAISM: WHERE IS THE GAP?

RAV AHARON HERSKOVITZ | RAV SHALIACH



Much of the discussion around Chanukah centres on the clash between Hellenism/Greek culture and Judaism. What was the conflict all about?

This question is especially relevant, given that the world we live in is still profoundly influenced by Greek culture. How do we differ?

Rav Aharon Lichtenstein zt"l suggested over the years that the main difference lies in how God (or gods, in the Greek case) is perceived, which affects both man's relationship with God, as well as man's place in the world. These differences profoundly affect a person's consciousness and belief system, and make the gap between Hellenism and Judaism much clearer.

Previous to the Greeks, the gods were perceived as being gods of fear, of disaster. Any horrible things that occurred to people were the result of the actions of capricious, incomprehensible gods. This created a strong sense of distance, of estrangement from the godly.

The Greek view of gods was an important historic development. Due to their humanism - their belief in the central role mankind played in the world - their gods were not distant and confusing, but were humanised. They were described in completely human terms, and this was how they were understood, with the same desires, emotions and drives as people. The difference between man and god was not **qualitative**, but rather **quantitative** - the gods simply had more power and more ability than humans, but they were fundamentally the same.

This allowed people to connect to the gods and relate to them. However, this was also the huge weakness in the Greek belief system; once god is basically a really impressive, very capable human, there is no concept of holiness, no sense of awe of God. Fear of God, as an expression of a sense of awe (and not fear of retribution) is no longer existent.

This is a concept that Judaism embraces so strongly: on the one hand we are commanded to come close to God and develop an emotional relationship with Him, but also to realise that God is **not** human, is not merely **quantitatively** different from us,

but **qualitatively** so. This allows us to feel a sense of awe and majesty, and strive to holiness, in our religious lives.

This differing conception of gods leads to understanding humanity's place in the world differently. Greek humanism means that people are entirely in the center. The world is a place of order, of rules, and since humankind is so central, we are able to completely understand the rules and the order of the universe. There exists **nothing** that is incomprehensible to us. If we are incapable of explaining something, of understanding something, we will be able to one day.

This difference between Hellenism and Judaism affects our sense of mystery and holiness. Once we are capable (at least potentially) of understanding everything, there is no more mystery - it's like a movie whose ending is known (at least in vague terms). With no mystery there is no holiness, no attempts to strive upwards.

Secondly, there is a difference in perspective as to the **goal** of this attempt at understanding. The Greeks believed that the understanding has **independent** value. In Judaism, the understanding is a method **through which** we can develop a relationship with Hashem. As Rambam says (Hilchot Deot 2), the way that we are able to achieve *ahavat Hashem* and *yirat Hashem* is through knowledge and reflecting on the world He has created. It is a means to an end, and not an end unto itself.

To summarise: Greek culture views the goal of understanding **all** aspects of the world as an **achievable** goal that has **independent value**. Judaism views it as valuable as a **means to knowledge of Hashem**, but one that will, by definition, **never be complete**. It is this "lack" of understanding that allows us to strive towards levels of holiness, to realise that not everything can be explained by our logical scientific minds.

To conclude with a quote from Rav Aharon zt"l: *"Judaism places Man at the center of creation as one who dominates the world, but both Man and his world are null and void in the presence of God and His universe, before the hidden and secret Being, in the face of He who remains unrevealed to our eyes. Religious Man experiences humility and insignificance in front of creation, both in the universe's grandeur and in its minutiae."*

SPREADING THE LIGHT

JODIE FRANKS | SHEVET AVICHAH



Lighting the Chanukah candles is, in my opinion at least, the most important part of the festival. This is a view also held

by Rabbi Yosef Caro. In the Shulchan Aruch, we read that one must be extremely careful with regards to the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles, so much so that even a poor person reliant on charity must borrow money, or even sell his clothing in order to buy oil to use for lighting the candles.

So what is it about the candles that make them so important?

We do not have permission to even derive benefit from the light of the candles. We are just meant to look at them. When our Rabbis decreed this, they did not mean for the looking at the flames to be simply an afterthought, or something we should take lightly. Rather, the reason for lighting the candles is in order to look at them, because they are an extension of the Menorah in the Beit Hamikdash.

It is written in Bamidbar Rabba (15:8), “Unlike the Korbanot, which were only offered while the Temple stood, the lights of the menorah will burn forever”. The Ramban explains that this midrash is alluding to the Chanukah lights, which are lit even after the Beit Hamikdash was destroyed and the Jews were forced into exile.

The candles remain a link between our ancestors, who fought for our nation’s right to survive, and our generation today, who are also striving for our Jewish community to flourish even more. The candles are there to serve as a beautiful reminder to us of Jewish continuity in the face of such

great oppression, a theme which, unfortunately, is ever prominent today.

The Talmud teaches us that the Chanukah lamps should continue to shine their light “until the feet of the people of Termod have left the shuk” [Shabbat 21b]. We are also told that a non-Jew asked Hillel, “Why are the eyes of the people of Termod so narrow?” And he answered, “It is because they live in the sand.” [ibid. 31a]. It is therefore a kindness from Hashem to narrow the eyes of the people of Termod, so that the sand does not get in their eyes. However, the trait of having narrow eyes can also be used to describe someone who is stingy – someone who is reluctant to share what they have with others. The idea of keeping the lights burning until the people of Termod have left the shuk is in order to share the light with them, gradually removing stinginess from all our lives. Through the power of the candles of the menorah, we should aim to spread not only the miracle of Chanukah, but everything else we, as Jews, have to offer the world.

Both the menorah and the Chanukah candles will forever be a symbol of many people’s Judaism, and my hope is that we can take a moment to appreciate some of the deeper ideas behind the lights – that each one of us is part of the continuity of our people, and how much goodness we can bring into our world, and the worlds of those around us.

JODIE IS A NIVCHERET HANHALLAH 5779 AND WAS A MADRICHA ON BET BASE MACHANE 5778



THE SECRET FESTIVAL

NOAH HABER | SHEVET NA'ALEH



Chanukah is notable for in its lack of mention in both the written and oral Torah. There is no sefer about it in Tanach and other than brief cameos in Bava Kama and

referred to in the mishna in Bikkurim. It is not until the Gemara that it's actually discussed in, and even then it's only after being brought up as a side point to something else rather than having its own discussion. Several suggestions are given as to why there is so little written about Chanukah in our Torah sources. One approach is based in the relationship between Chanukah and the Oral Torah.

The Gemara in Masechet Megillah (9a) tells of how the Torah was translated into Greek. The Gemara records that "King Ptolemy once gathered 72 Elders. He placed them in 72 chambers, each of them in a separate one, without revealing to them why they were summoned. He entered each one's room and said: 'Translate for me the Torah of Moshe, your teacher.' God put it in the heart of each one to translate identically as all the others did." Megillat Taanit tells us that when this happened 3 days of darkness came to the world and a fast was instituted. Rav Tzadok HaCohen wrote that this translation triggered a series of negative events which ultimately culminated in the occupation and oppression of Israel by the Yevanim - (Seleucid Greeks).

Why was this translation seen as a bad thing? Surely the Torah being made more accessible to a wider audience should have been a good thing? Rav Yitzchak Mirsky explains that the reason Megillat Taanit considered this translation a bad thing is because King Ptolemy's motivation in having the Torah translated was to undermine the Oral Torah. The basis of much of the Oral Torah is the laws and ideas which Chazal derived from the written Torah. However, the methods which Chazal used for this can only work with the original Lashon HaKodesh text of the Torah. A translation, no matter how accurate, can only preserve the plain reading of the text while losing the masses of meaning beneath the surface, meaning which makes up much of the Oral Torah, and so this translation undermined the Oral Torah. Accordingly, there are various stories in the gemara of people in the times of the Yevanim disregarding the oral law.

In light of this, the victory of the Chashmonaim over the Yevanim can be seen in a way as a victory for the Oral Torah. Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach suggests that this can be used to explain why Chanukah does not have a sefer of Nach or a masechet of mishnayot of its own. He explains that the Written Torah is relevant for the whole world while the Oral Torah is supposed to be uniquely Jewish. As Chanukah is a celebration of the Oral Torah, it makes sense that it would therefore not have its own sefer in the Written Torah. Also, in order to keep Chanukah as Oral Torah focused as possible, even when a lot of the Oral Torah was written down as the Mishna, Chanukah was kept purely oral until the Gemara.

The obvious question on this is that if Chanukah is Oral Torah focused and therefore supposed to be kept uniquely Jewish then why is it one of the best known Jewish festivals? In fact, halachically, the mitzva of lighting the menorah is supposed to be done in a way that is conducive to "pirsumei nisa" - publicising the miracle! This emphasis on publicity doesn't sound like a festival which is so uniquely Jewish that isn't mentioned in the Written Torah?

One way to approach this apparent contradiction is to consider what, exactly, is being publicised. The Oral Law aspects of Chanukah - the halachot - aren't really publicised, they're just observed in one's home. The publicly visible part of Chanukah is the lights. This seems fitting given that the exhortation to be an Or Lagoyim - light unto the nations - comes from the Written Torah which is relevant to the whole world. In fact, it is an exhortation which must, by definition, be relevant to the whole world, and the publicly visible aspect of Chanukah is a display of light. This means that Chanukah could be seen as a model of the Jewish experience. We observe our specific laws and practices in a uniquely Jewish way, while at the same time we attempt to project our light onto the world.

NOAH WAS THE ROSH OF ALEPH CHALUTZI MACHANE 5778 AND A MADRICH ON ISRAEL MACHANE 5777



THE FINE DETAILS

LEORA BLITZ | SHEVET NE'EMAN



As I was growing up, I was taught that the story of Chanukah had two main parts. The first being the miraculous defeat of the Greeks by the small, yet, powerful and courageous Maccabees. The second being the miracle of the oil, returning to the Beit Hamikdash and finding one sealed jar of oil that lasted for the duration of eight days.

My family have the custom that all the children in the family light their own Chanukah candles. As nice a spectacle as it might be, I was also intrigued as to why we all light our own candles.

The Gemara in Shabbat (21b) asks the question: What is Chanukah? It answers by telling the story I was always told, the one of the small army of Jews defeating the mighty Greek army and finding the oil. However, within this story, there is no mention as to why women should be obligated to light the menorah. Where do we learn about this obligation?

The answer can be found with the Gemara in Shabbat (23a) where we are taught that women are obligated in the lighting of the menorah as they were included in the miracle of being saved from the decree of persecution (אשה ודאי מדליקה דא"ר יהושע בן לוי נשים). (חייבות בנר חנוכה שאף הן היו באותו הנס).

The same wording is used in regard to the festival of Purim. It says in the Gemara in Megillah (4a) that women are obligated in the reading of the Megillah as they were also part of the miracle of being saved from the decree of persecution (אריב"ל נשים חייבות במקרא מגילה שאף הן היו). (באותו הנס).

According to these two Gemaras, we learn that a women's obligation to light the Chanukah candles and to read the Megillah on Purim comes from being part of the miracle of being saved from an evil decree. This seems to be the only reason women are obligated to light the menorah, and why myself and my siblings have the customs to light our own candles.

However, based on the Gemara in Megil-

lah (4a), the Tosafot pick up on the part of 'women too were part of the miracle' 'שאף הן היו באותו הנס'. The Tosafot quotes the Rashbam who explains what it really means that women were part of the miracle. It states that the primary part of the miracle was performed by a woman. In Purim, Esther was the one who convinced Achashverosh to not enact the decree against the Jews, and in Chanukah, Yehudit killed the Greek general that started the uprising of the Jewish people against the Greeks.

So, why was I not taught about this part of the story in school? And, more importantly, why isn't there a mention of these two important components in the Gemara?

The answer I would like to suggest is that even though the stories of Esther and Yehudit are important to the story, they are not the main overview of what happened. When the Gemara asks the question about what Chanukah is, it presents an outline of the story. Similarly to Purim, when one is asked what Purim is about, a normal response would be that Haman wanted to kill the Jewish people but thanks to Mordechai and Esther the Jews were saved, not that Esther managed to persuade Achashverosh to retract the decree against the Jews.

The story of Yehudit, although not the focal point, is an integral part of the narrative of Chanukah. It was a key turning point in the Jewish revolt against the Greeks.

Now we can see the true reason why women are obligated to light Chanukah candles. Not just because they were part of the decree against the Jews, but because Yehudit initiated the start of events that saw the upturn in spirit and fortunes. The Chanukah story teaches us to not only focus on the larger overview but also the smaller, but no less meaningful events that shaped the history of the Jewish people.

LEORA WAS A MADRICHAH ON GIMMEL SUMMER MACHANE AND A ROSH AT KINLOSS SVIVA 5778



WHAT'S THE POINT OF CHANUKAH?

ADAM HERSZAFT | SHEVET EITAN



I'm going to start slightly controversially: growing up, I found it difficult understanding what the point of Chanukah was. To me, it almost seemed to be a 'frum' alternative

to other popular December festivities. After all, the similarities are uncanny: we light up candles, they light up trees. We eat excessive fried foods, they eat excessive roasted foods. We pressure our parents into buying us lots of presents, they too financially burden their parents with festive gifts. However, the most striking similarity to me, pointed out by Michael McIntyre, is that their festival is associated with a handful of overplayed songs: They play Mariah Carey's unnamed song on repeat whilst the Jewish shop next door plays Al Hanissim and the Maccabeats all day. Thus, a slightly strange question begs asking: what is the point of Chanukah? Although this sounds like a simple question, it's remarkable how many of us never fully move beyond our 'primary school' pshat of Chanukah as simply being a festive family time with fatty treats.

I think in order to answer our big question, we must first ask a few other questions: Firstly, it seems strange that the Shulchan Aruch (671:6) teaches that one should ideally light their menorah below 10 tephachim, given that Chazal teach us in Masechet Succah (5a) that the Shechinah (divine presence) only resides above 10 tephachim. In other words, why are we specifically lighting the menorah in a place devoid of Hashem's presence? Our next question comes from Rav Nevenzah! In Masechet Avodah Zarah, the gemara teaches that the actual menorah used in the Chanukah story was simple, wooden, and presumably tameh (43a). Why was Hashem not bothered about His great miracle manifesting itself via a cheap, bang average menorah? Our final question: My Rebbe, Rav Eisenstein points out that the psak of the Chacham Tzvi, quoted in the name of the Beir Heitiv seems strange. He explains that Chanukah must be a regular working day, and that we don't follow any minhagim suggesting that we should be jolly and having a chill day. Why was the Chacham Tzvi so against us having a cheeky Chol Hamoed outing during Chanukah?

Rav Meir Twersky gives a beautiful answer to our first question which perhaps in turn an-

swers questions two and three. He explains that the menorah is specifically lit below 10 tephachim to remind us of our unique ability to light up and elevate the mundane. This answer suggests that the primary tafkid of Chanukah is to find the Shechinah davka in places where one wouldn't normally associate it. Perhaps here lies the essence of Chanukah: these special days teach us that closeness to Hashem isn't limited to Shul or the Beit HaMedrash but can also be achieved at University and within the mundane parts of our daily routine. Maybe this is why the menorah was wooden and why we must carry on working as normal according to the Chacham Tzvi: the whole essence of these days is to internalise the tremendous opportunity we have to elevate the physical and experience closeness to Hashem in every aspect of our lives. Interestingly, it seems that Kislev is merely a synthesis of Tishrei (an overload of spirituality) and Cheshvan (an overload of the mundane). Kislev combines these two extremes, showing us that every facet of our lives; spiritual and physical, all facilitate our connection to Hashem.

This message seems to connect beautifully with the Sfat Emet's understanding of a gemara in Shabbat (21b). In discussing the latest time for lighting the menorah, Chazal teach us that one may light 'ad shetichleh regel min hashuk'; 'until the feet (of the shoppers) are no longer in the market place'. The Sfat Emet understands this on a deeper level: 'regel' besides meaning 'foot', could also be read as 'hergel', meaning routine. Thus, when do we light the menorah? When we are simply walking around the market, living our everyday lives by rote. The menorah being lit up shows us the ability we have to bring spirituality into our everyday grind. We must not allow ourselves to simply view Chanukah as a time of doughnuts and fun (which it is!), we must also internalise the deeper message, which shows us our tremendous potential to be a walking Kiddush Hashem, lighting up the mundane, and living with Hashem in all aspects of our lives. Chanukah Sameach!

ADAM WAS A MADRICH ON ISRAEL MACHANE 5778



WHAT THE CANDLES TEACH US

HANNAH SHERRARD | SHEVET EITAN



Rabbi Sacks teaches that there are three instances in the Torah where we are commanded to light candles. These times are to bring in Shabbat, at Havdalah and

to light the menorah.

The Shabbat candles are lit in the home, to represent Shalom Bayit. We light these behind closed doors because the light is the symbol of the soul of Judaism, the family unity, the sanctity of marriage and the inner peace of the home.

The Chanukah candles are meant to be lit on the outside of the home, so that we advertise and declare the miracle of Chanukah to the world. The only reason they were ever brought inside was due to fear of persecution.

And the Havdalah candle, which is made up of multiple wicks twisted together, links the inside and the outside. It represents the fusing of the one day where we keep our faith private and the days when we go out into public and show our pride in our faith and history.

With anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism being so prevalent, we should be living every day, proud and full of faith, just like the Chanukah candles. Rabbi Sacks explains that "Chanukah candles are the light Judaism brings to the world when we are unafraid to announce our identity in public, live by our principles and fight, if necessary, for our freedom."

Reading these words made me think of a story from Yaffa Eliach. Yaffa was one of eleven survivors who were able to re-tell the story of Chanukah in Bergen Belsen in 1943. Living in such uncertain times and not knowing when their time would come, the Jewish inmates were determined to celebrate Chanukah in any way they could. Yaffa tells of the men and women saving their rations of butter and thread to create candles, and saving a potato and carving it to make a menorah, even dreidels were carved out of wood. The Rebbe conducting the service wept at the beginning of Ma'oz Tzur and cried out to Hashem. He asked if God could spare them the same courtes-

sy as the Maccabees and make them triumphant, so that the Jewish people will be able to celebrate Chanukah for years to come.

A year later, Rabbi Shmelke, another inmate at Bergen Belsen, saw his role as being responsible for keeping up the spirits in the camp. He began to ask everyone for oil in order to have enough to light the Chanukah candles. Rabbi Shmelke was a member of the Zonderkommando, meaning his job was to move dead bodies. He knew that there was no way he could find oil. But one day he was walking across the camp and his foot got stuck in a hole. As he lifted up his foot he saw a jar buried in the ground. It was a jar of oil, enough oil for Chanukah. As he undid the wrapping paper, he found eight little cups and strands of cotton. It was obvious that someone had buried the package for the sole purpose of observing Chanukah. That night, Rabbi Shmelke lit the menorah inside the barrack in Bergen Belsen.

Years later during a trip to the States, Rabbi Shmelke was meeting with Rabbi Yoel Teitelbaum. Rabbi Teitelbaum began telling of how he hid a jar of oil in a package with eight little cups and strands of cotton in the ground in Bergen Belsen. However, before he could use it, he was transported out and forever felt guilty that no one could benefit from the menorah. Rabbi Shmelke smiled at him and said, "Your menorah was used. It dispelled the darkness for hundreds of Jews and helped at least one of them survive the war."

Chanukah teaches us to be brave, to be fearless like the Maccabees, and to be hopeful like the inmates in Bergen Belsen. When things look dark and full of uncertainty, it is easy for us to hide away inside. But we should be like the Chanukah candles, bright, standing tall and outside for all to see.

**HANNAH WAS A MADRICHA ON ISRAEL
MACHANE AND H-COURSE MACHANE 5778**



SHABBAT CHANUKAH: “NATURAL” MIRACLES

ELI MAMAN | SHEVET NA'ALEH



Chanukah always falls around the time that Vayeshev and Miketz are read. Nothing in the world happens by chance, so there must be a reason for this. What

is the connection between these parshiyot and Chanukah?

There are many approaches to answer this question, one of which is based on the midrash on the beginning of Parashat Miketz. The parasha opens by saying that at the end of two years, Pharaoh had a dream. The midrash tells us that Hashem brought an end to the darkness; He set aside the amount of time that Yosef would be in “darkness” in jail, and when the end of that time arrived, Pharaoh had a dream. This midrash is teaching us that we must rethink our perceptions of cause and effect in the story of Yosef in Mitzrayim. When we read the Chumash, it seems like Yosef is in jail, Pharaoh has a dream, and that dream is the cause of Yosef getting out of jail. The midrash teaches us that the opposite is true. Hashem has a plan for the world. It was Hashem who decided that it was time for Yosef to leave jail that the time for the end of the darkness had come. That was the cause. The effect was that Pharaoh had a dream so that Yosef would be freed.

In general, Hashem does not intervene in the world in the manner of *neis nigleh* (open miracles). Instead, He governs world events through *neis nistar* (hidden miracles), working within the rules of nature. Hashem wanted Yosef to leave jail in a natural way, and He therefore caused Pharaoh to have a dream that would start the process. But the dream is not the **cause** of Yosef leaving jail; the dream is the **effect** of Hashem's decision that Yosef should leave jail. Hashem had a plan for Yaakov's family, and to make it happen, He made sure that Yosef would go down to Mitzrayim, spend time in jail, and end up as viceroy, so that he would be in a position to help his father and brothers. These “natural” events were all controlled by Hashem.

This, of course, is one of the main themes of Chanukah. Hashem governs world events. The commentaries explain that the miracle of the jar of oil is supposed to

teach us that all of nature and all happenings are controlled by Hashem, even when they appear to happen “naturally.” Events that occur through “natural” means, such as military victories, are, in reality, governed by Hashem. It is for this reason that *Al HaNissim* focuses on the “natural” miracle of the military victory. Even though military victories have natural explanations, we know that Hashem is the One who provides us with our victories, and we have to thank Him for these “natural” events. When a Jew experiences a *neis*, they must understand that all of nature is governed by Hashem.

This is one of the many explanations of the connection between Chanukah and the story of Yosef – events that appear to be “natural,” like Yosef's rise to power in Mitzrayim and our victory on Chanukah, are all part of Hashem's plan and are governed by Hashem.

Along the same lines, Rav Nevenzahl comments on the fact that Yosef keeps mentioning Hashem's name in his discussions with Pharaoh, this even though no one else in the country believes in Hashem. Yosef not only believed in Hashem's ultimate control, he taught others about it, he was performing *pirsumei nisa* – publication of the miracle. This is also one of the reasons that we light the Chanukah candles in a public place, we are meant to be publicising the miracles that Hashem has done and continues to do for us.

We always hear people say, or say ourselves, “*Baruch Hashem*” when something good happens, or “*Be'ezrat Hashem*” when planning on doing something. But most of the time it is habitual and we don't really think about it. When one looks at the nerot Chanukah, they should focus on thanking Hashem and publicising His involvement in all the daily “natural” miracles He does for us. Through this will hopefully give more meaning to the phrases we use to recognise Hashem's involvement in our lives.

ELI IS CHINUCH WORKER 5779



THE POIGNANCY OF THE CHANUKAH BATTLE

GIDEON DAVIS | SHEVET MORASHA



The Chanukah battle story is one that we are told right from the beginning of our Jewish education in nursery and it is repeated to us

every single year through school. But unfortunately there is very little nuance added to the story as we grow up.

Here is the story as it is told in nursery (although with a bit more detail): The Jews were living in Eretz Yisrael with the Beit Hamikdash and were living quite happily by themselves. There was a Seleucid king who came along called Antiochus III who was very kind to the Jews and Josephus seems to present him as both benevolent and cognisant of the Jews' loyalty to him. However, his son, Antiochus IV, was not so kind and oppressed the Jews, not in a genocidal manner but rather ideologically, by imposing the ideals of Hellenism and shallow hedonism onto the Jewish people. These ideas were, and still are, totally antithetical to the Torah way of living, and Antiochus imposed them through harsh legislation that made Brit Milah punishable by death and by setting up an altar to Zeus in the Beit Hamikdash that had swine sacrificed on it in order to cause the maximum offence possible to the Jewish people at the time.

As we all know this then led to a war against the great army of Antiochus IV which the Jews miraculously won even though they were untrained, and the opposition even had elephants in order to intimidate the Jews.

This story is not wrong; however, it also fails to explain the whole story in its poignantly relatable completeness. The truth is that it was not just the Hellenists who were forcing their ideology onto the Jews but it was also Jews themselves imposing this evil ideology onto other Jews. In fact, it is even suggested that some of the Jews cooperated in setting up the altar to sacrifice swine

to Zeus. This is suggestive of the state of Jewry at the time, people were disengaged and assimilating, the institutions were corrupt and Jewry was split along ideological lines that caused immense tension until eventually it led to a war that many have suggested was more like a civil war (consisting mainly of guerrilla warfare) between the traditionalists and those who had accepted Greek culture upon themselves.

So why have I described this as poignantly relatable? The reasons I feel this applies to our lives today so much are: because we also live in a time when world Jewry does indeed have corrupt institutions; today just as in the time of the Chanukah story there are high rates of assimilation; and most sadly we are divided along ideological lines. Charedim label Modern Orthodox Jews as heretics, religious Jews label non-religious Jews as traitors, Zionist Jews label anti-Zionist Jews as immature and blind to the redemption taking place before their eyes – the accusations are endless and the in-fighting is brutal.

The truth is that we all must grow up. We all need to engage in baseless love in order to combat the hatred around us. Discussion is good and strengthens Judasim (anyone who has engaged in Talmudic learning or learning in a chavruta knows this), but in-fighting and wild name-calling weakens the social fabric that holds us together.

Be'ezrat Hashem, we can all learn to live and love together and hence merit to see the rebuilding of the Beit Hamikdash, speedily and in our days.

**GIDEON IS A SGAN AT MILL HILL SVIVA 5779
AND WAS A MADRICH ON ALEPH CHALUTZI
MACHANE 5778**



THE POWER OF LIGHT

GEMMA DENBY | SHEVET TZION



As Leo Tolstoy wrote, 'The Jew is the emblem of eternity ... neither slaughter nor torture of thousands of years could destroy.' The fact that we are here to celebrate Chanukah is proof that nothing can defeat us. We as a nation are an everlasting fire that doesn't burn out and the fact that we exist as a nation testifies to the truth of Torah and of Judaism.

Once a year for eight days and nights, we celebrate the power of light. There is a law regarding the menorah itself- 'It is forbidden to use the lights of the menorah, only to gaze upon them'. This means that we cannot use the lights of the menorah for mundane purposes such as for heat or light. However, this suggests that we need to use the Menorah for other, more meaningful and productive purposes.

I am going to focus on just a few of the many messages that we can take away from the Chanukah story. A little light can go a long way. The light that is created by the candles can be seen to represent the light of God that shone through the whole of the Chanukah story and is the reason that we are able to stand in our homes lighting the menorah today. A little light in a room dispels darkness, Chanukah is an opportunity for us to see the light even if we are experiencing darkness in our lives. When the menorah is lit, it is vibrant, it stands out and we go out of our way to make the menorah visible, for example by placing it on our windowsills. Furthermore, this teaches us that it isn't enough for us to just

be a Jew at heart, we must shine outwards and take pride in our Judaism and do our utmost to shine outwards into the world.

"It is not enough for you to be My Servant, ... I will also make you a light for the nations, that you may bring My salvation to the ends of the earth" (Isaiah 49:6).

We should not be ashamed to perform Mitzvot, we should all be like a menorah and proudly stand out with radiance and pride for everyone to see.

The miracles that Chanukah celebrate are, the victory of the Jews over their persecutors, and the ability of the oil to remain lit in the temple for eight days. Today, the Jews are faced with persecution, enemies, trials and tribulations, Chanukah is one of the many living lessons proving that we are eternal and no matter how many times other nations try to wipe us out, we are God's chosen people and are not going anywhere. The mere fact that we are celebrating Chanukah is a miracle in itself and it proves that we are God's chosen people.

"For you are a holy people to Hashem your God, and God has chosen you to be his treasured people from all the nations that are on the face of the earth." (Devarim 14:2)

GEMMA IS ON HACHSHARAT TORANI AT MIDRESHET HAROVA AND WAS SGANIT AT EDGWARE UNITED SVIVA 5778



BEFORE LIGHTING, RECITE:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר (של) חנכה

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שעשה נסים לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה

ON THE FIRST NIGHT RECITE:

ברוך אתה ה' אלקינו מלך העולם שהחיינו וקיימנו והגיענו לזמן הזה

AFTER LIGHTING, RECITE:

הנרות הללו שאנו מדליקין, על הנסים ועל הנפלאות ועל התשועות ועל המלחמות, שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה, על ידי כהניך הקדושים. וכל שמונת ימי החנכה הנרות הללו קדש הם ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם, אלא לראותם בלבד, כדי להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול על נסִיך ועל נפלאותיך ועל ישועתך.

מעוז צור

כרות קומת ברוש, בקש אגני בן המדתא
ונהיתה לו לפח ולמוקש וגאותו נשבתה
ראש ימיני נשאת ואיב שמו מחית
רב בניו וקניניו על העץ תלית

יונים נקבצו עלי אזי בימי חשמנים
ופרצו חומות מגדלי וטמאו כל השמנים
ומנותר קנקנים נעשה נס לשושנים
בני בינה ימי שמונה קבעו שיר ורננים

חשוף זרוע קדשך וקרב קץ הישועה
נקם נקמת דם עבדיך מאמה הרשעה
כי ארכה לנו השעה ואין קץ לימי הרעה
דחה אדמון בצל צלמון, הקם לנו רועה
שבעה

מעוז צור ישועתי לך נאה לשבח
תכון בית תפילתי ושם תודה נזבח
לעת תכין מטבח מצר המנבח
אז אגמור בשיר מזמור חנפת המזבח

רעות שבעה נפשי ביגון כחי כלה
חיי מררו בקושי בשעבוד מלכות עגלה
בידו הגדולה הוציא את הסגלה
חיל פרעה וכל זרעו ירדו כאבן במצולה

דביר קדשו גביאני וגם שם לא שקטתי
זבא נוגש והגלני. כי זרים עבדתי
ויין ועל מסכתי כמעט שעברתי
קץ בבל, זרבבל, לקץ שבועים נושעתי