

**BNEI
AKIVA**
UNITED KINGDOM



Chanukat Habayit 5780

Daily thoughts for Chanukah from Bogrim and Madrichim



Kislev 5780

בס"ד

Shalom Chaverim,

In the depths of winter, we are entering the darkest point of the year. To counter this physical darkness we light our chanukiot, a message that shines out clearly to the world: we are proud of the miracles that Hashem has performed for us! In the intense dark, the lights stand out particularly clearly.

“כי נר מצוה ותורה אור”

“For the mitzvot are a candle and the Torah is light” (Mishlei 6:23)

On a metaphorical level, light is symbolic of Torah. Like Torah, light cannot be seen itself, but it illuminates the world around us. At the beginning of Sefer Bereishit, God created light by speaking. Likewise, we can spread light and illuminate the world around us through sharing words of Torah.

‘Chanukat Habayit’ is a collection of eight articles written by madrichim and bogrim of Bnei Akiva, providing a short thought for each night of Chanukah (follow the candles as a guide). We’re continuing with our strong tradition of sharing the voices of our Chavrei Tnua and encouraging the whole community to engage in Limmud Torah from a range of perspectives. We hope that these words of Torah will light up your winter and enhance your Chanukah experience.

With thanks to all those who contributed to this publication.

We hope that you enjoy learning ‘Chanukat Habayit’ and we wish you all a Chanukah Sameach.

B’Virkat Shalom l’Torah v’Avodah,

Chana Bernstein
(Chinuch Worker)

BUILDING WITH LIGHT



RAV JOEL KENIGSBERG | RAV SHALIACH

35 years ago, a Jewish prisoner in the Soviet Union was brought into court for the day of his sentencing. For three months prior to that day he had been in solitary confinement, and even now, only his mother and his wife were allowed to be present. As the judge called out the sentence – three years of hard labour in Siberia – the Soviet officers surrounded the prisoner and began escorting him back to his prison cell. On his way out only one thought crossed the prisoner's mind. He lifted his head above the guards and shouted out to his wife – his last words to her for years – “which candle is it tonight?”

At first, his wife thought that her husband's sentencing had tipped him over the edge. It was only after he called out a second, and then a third time, “which candle is it tonight?” that she finally realised what he meant. “Tonight is ner sheni,” she replied – the second night of Chanukah. Years later, Yuli Edelstein, today the speaker of Israel's Knesset, recounted how that night in his cell he scraped together two matches, recited the brachot and held the lights for a few seconds until his fingers began to burn. “It may have been the shortest candle lighting in the history of Chanukah,” he said, “I don't even know if I fulfilled the mitzvah, but I know that for me that little light dispelled a great darkness”.

This story can help us shed light on a strange argument that takes place in the Gemara regarding how many candles we are to light throughout Chanukah. According to Beit Hillel, the principle is מוסיף והולך. We begin with one and as the nights go on, we increase until we end up with eight candles. Beit Shammai say just the opposite – פוחת והולך. According to their opinion we begin with eight and decrease the number of candles each night, until on the final night we light just one. What is behind this machloket?

Rav Shlomo Yosef Zevin explained that the candles we light on Chanukah have two different aspects to them, reflected in the words we use

to describe them. On the one hand, a candle has a flame which contains אש – fire. It burns. It consumes. Fire is a destructive element. But a candle also provides light – אור. Not only do candles burn up fuel, but they also spread light amongst the darkness. As the pasuk in Mishlei says, נר מצווה ותורה אור – the Torah is compared to a candle, not as a destructive force but as the glow which illuminates the world.

The battle that took place on Chanukah contained both of those elements. When the Chashmonaim launched their revolt against the Greeks they had a twofold job. One was to remove the defilement in the Beit Hamikdash – to eliminate a foreign culture and its influence which put Jewish life and Judaism itself at risk. But there was also a positive message that needed to be seen and heard. They needed to rekindle the lights of the menorah, as we say in Al Hanisim “והדליקו נרות בחצרות קודשך” – to spread the light and warmth and beauty of Torah amongst those who may have forgotten.

In those days, both methods were necessary. The question is which one do we commemorate for eternity? Beit Shammai emphasised the need to destroy that which is impure. Thus, they begin with the greatest fire on the first night. As the nights go on and the danger dissipates, so too do the number of lights decrease. But Beit Hillel said the focus needs to be not on אש but on אור, not on destroying but on building. We begin with one candle and day by day the light that we shine increases until it culminates on the eighth night.

The world, at times, can seem very dark. Sometimes it may seem easier to give up and despair. But throughout Chanukah we increase the light one candle at a time. Those candles are there to remind us of the light that shone in the Beit Hamikdash, to remind us of the lights that were bright enough to light up a Soviet prison. And to remind us that those lights, the lights of Torah, are bright enough to light up any darkness that we may encounter.

THE LIGHT OF CHANUKAH



JEMIMA ATAR | SHEVET TZION

The candles we light for eight days on Chanukah bear important symbolism. They remind us of the miracles which occurred in our Temple, when the oil lasted for eight days. The commentators ask an important question regarding this; why do we celebrate eight days of miracles, if technically the miracle only occurred on seven days? If the light that should have lasted for one day, lasted for eight, then what was miraculous about the first day?

Rabbi Sacks writes that perhaps the miracle was finding the oil itself. The notion that the little jar of oil remained untouched by the Greeks in their ransacking of the temple is remarkable. The Maccabees searched, despite the odds being against them, in an attempt to find that one jar. They searched because they hoped that something would be their light out of the tragedy, that something would survive amidst their deadly surroundings and good could come from evil. The miracle of the first night is this faith—a particular conviction that they would find a source to start something afresh.

This is the story of the Jewish people. Oppression and alienation are written into the Abrahamic covenant, yet our people seem to be gifted with the ability to never give up in despair. Through various destructions, pogroms, expulsions and massacres, Jews would gather whatever hope remained; they would rebuild their people and re-light their eternal light. This particular light is a 'light among the nations', displaying the power of the human spirit to overcome every tragedy and refuse to accept defeat.

Some Rabbis at the time believed that the festival of Chanukah should be abolished given that the victory over the Greeks did not last long, and soon again Jerusalem and Israel were under foreign rule and their temple destroyed. The Rabbis questioned why we would celebrate a lost freedom.

The answer is also given by the candle. The message of Chanukah is not the military victory or even the freedom, it is of the power of hope to prevail even in circumstances where the light cannot be seen elsewhere. Some see religion as a battlefield, or a war of holiness, whereby victory, in the name of faith, is won by force. In this case, other beliefs, and other faiths are the enemies to be conquered. But the story of Chanukah highlights how religion is a candle, a light to remove some of the darkness in the world. In this case, there is no limit to how many candles can exist in the world—the other sources of light may be different, but ultimately add to our general purpose. We celebrate the God of light on Chanukah as opposed to the God of war. The God of light can defeat the darkness in the world and within ourselves.

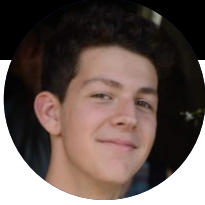
The miracle of the first night, of finding the oil and thus seeing the light in the darkest of times, carries on into the next seven nights, and continues to prevail to this day, as an essential essence of what it means to be a part of the Jewish people. From the fire in the burning bush which did not diminish the bush, to the story of the Maccabees finding oil to make a light, Judaism has been the everlasting light of humanity, which cannot be extinguished.



JEMIMA WAS A PARTICIPANT ON TORANI 5779

INDIVIDUALISM WITHIN THE COLLECTIVE: A LESSON IN REPETITION

SAM KUNIN | SHEVET MORASHA



Each morning of Chanukah we read a brief section from Parashat Nasso (which happens to be my barmitzvah portion!) detailing the offerings of each tribe's prince to the Mishkan for its sanctification. The parallels of this process with the festival of Chanukah, which in fact even translates to "sanctification", are many. After all, what better way to count through the eight days of festivity with the revival of the Beit Hamikdash than to read a record of the successive days sanctifying its prototype? However, what is interesting to note about these readings, (and what really gave me a helping hand in my barmitzvah!) is that on each day the Torah records the exact same gifts being given by each prince - a silver bowl, a silver basin, a gold incense ladle, and 21 animals of various species.

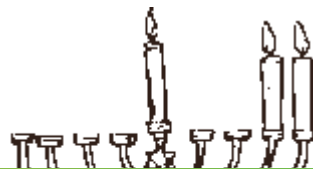
In commentaries to the Torah a key idea is often put forward - in a Divine text nothing is superfluous; every sentence, word or letter is there for a purpose. How then do we explain our readings for Chanukah with each day identical to the preceding, save for the name and tribe of each prince? The Midrash provides several beautiful explanations. To begin with, as in anywhere in Tanach where there's an abundance of numbers, the sages suggest deeper meanings. In this case, the same gift is given a variety of justifications. For example, though the weight of each donated basin was 70 shekalim, for Nachshon ben Aminadav (whose donation we read on day one of Chanukah) perhaps the reason for the gift was the idea of "The 70 Faces of Torah" whilst another prince, like Netanel ben Tsuar (from day two), perhaps thought of the 70 nations said to descend from Adam HaRishon or the years the Egyptians

mourned over Yaakov etc. This explanation provides an incredible message - though we may all act in similar ways it is not our actions that define our importance but rather our intentions that give what we do in this world its purpose.

The Midrash goes on to state that these offerings to the Mishkan are "as beloved as the song sung by the Jewish People at the Red Sea." This connection is justified using a linguistic similarity in the use of the word זָה ("zeh"); however the point, I believe, is much more profound. The Song of the Sea represents the collective outpouring of the Israelite people to God finally united as a nation leaving oppression. The sages describe a scene of the entire people joining together in spontaneous song - how much more united does it get than that? And yet what phraseology do we see?

עָזִי וְזַמְרַת־יְהוָה וַיְהִי־לִי לִישׁוּעָה זֶה אֱלֹהֵי וְאֶנְהוּ אֱלֹהֵי אֲבֵי וְאֶרְמָתְנָהּ

Hashem here is described not as **our** God ("Eleinu") but rather as "Eli" - **my** God. Though the Israelites are singing together and are united, it is the individual experience that is expressed. So too in Nasso and our daily readings this Chanukah. Though around the country, from our homes to Machane, people are engaging collectively in lighting candles, for each individual we are allowed and truly encouraged to relate to our Judaism on a personal level as well, with our own experiences, lives and prayers.



SAM IS A MADRICH ON ALEPH WINTER MACHANE 5780

THE MORALITY OF WARFARE

YONA DAVIS | SHEVET AVICHAJ



Two incredible, open miracles happened in the Chanukah story. But only one of them is truly celebrated. We light the chanukiah and we eat latkes and doughnuts in celebration of the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days. הללו is a song all about that sole miracle – the only mention of the battle is the line – ועל התשועות ועל המלחמות – “and on the deliverances and on the victories”. מעוז צור is a song all about the times we have been persecuted throughout history, and celebrates that we are still here. In the verse about the Greeks, the battle is not mentioned once. The only hint is the words מפוצו חומות מגדלי – “they broke down the walls of my towers”. The question we have to ask is why don't we celebrate the miracle of winning the war more?

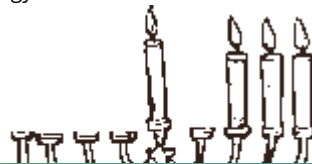
Before I answer this question, there is another that I would like to ask. How did the Maccabim know that fighting the Greeks was the right thing to do? In the past, whenever Bnei Yisrael were instructed to fight a war, the instructions would come from Hashem, through the form of a נביא. But the war with the Greeks was not instructed by Hashem. In Megillat HaChashmonaim, pesukim 49-50, it says: וַיִּבְאוּ לְמַצְפֵּה גִלְעָד אֲשֶׁר הָיָה יְשֵׁם פְּלִיטָה לְבֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּיַמֵּי שְׁמוּאֵל הַנְּבִיא: צוּם נָעֲרָו וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עַל-הָאֶפֶר לְבַקֵּשׁ רַחֲמִים מִלִּפְנֵי אֱלֹהֵי הַשָּׁמַיִם: – “When the five sons of Matityah heard this, they arose and came to Mitzpah Gil'ad, where Israel had won a great victory in the day of Shmuel, the prophet. And they decreed a fast day, and sat on ashes and prayed to the God of Heaven for mercy.” There was no נביא instructing them to go out and fight. How did they know it was the right thing to do?

To answer this question, the way that they knew what they were doing was right was because they did it in the name of Hashem. The

reason they went to war in the first place was because King Antiochus had defiled the Beit Hamikdash and the Kodesh Hakodashim, the places that were the most holy to our people. The Greeks caused a lot of Avodah Zarah and assimilation in their time, and they had banned a lot of things that are essential to our religion.

This leads on to the answer to the original question of why the miracle of winning the war is not celebrated more. In Masechet Sanhedrin (Daf 39b), the Gemara asks: “what is the meaning of that which is written in the passage describing the splitting of the Red Sea: “And the one came not near the other all the night” (Exodus 14:20)? At that time the ministering angels desired to recite a song before the Holy One, Blessed be He. The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them: My handiwork (i.e. the Egyptians) are drowning in the sea, and you are reciting a song before Me?” Perhaps this is the reason that we do not celebrate the miracle of the battle on the same level that we celebrate the miracle of the oil. Hashem is not gladdened by the downfall of the wicked. After all, human lives – his creations – were lost. So why should we, as mere humans, be celebrating? In addition to this, the repeated theme in מעוז צור is thanks to Hashem for saving us from evil, not celebrating the wars we have won - Chanukah should be no different.

The key lesson I think we can take from this is that despite living in a world that is filled with apathy and sometimes even hate from people our own age, it is important that we stand up and we take action, Al Kiddush Hashem. We shouldn't stand idly by and let ourselves be swept away by the current. We should stand up and fight for ourselves, for our religion, and for our ideology.



YONA IS A HEAD COOK ON WINTER MACHANE 5780

SEEING THE SUPERNATURAL IN THE NATURAL

CASRIL LIEBERT | SHEVET TZION



What do many Jews consider to be the main miracle of Chanukah? Initially, most would respond that it's obviously the miracle of the Temple

oil lasting eight days, which explains why we eat oily doughnuts and latkes. However, within the blessing of Al Hanisim which we recite during tefilla and benching on Chanukah, there seems to be a different view. The blessing goes into much detail about the victory in battle to defeat the Greeks. A major question here is why is there such little emphasis on the miracle of the oil in Al Hanisim? Is it because the military success was an even greater miracle?

The Maharal explains that the military victory was more significant as it was a miracle in which everyone was affected, whereas the miracle of the oil was only witnessed by a handful of Kohanim in the Temple. The miracle of Chanukah is the entire Jewish nation witnessing God's hand as He caused a small group of Jews to triumph over the huge mighty Greek army with their sophisticated weaponry. This result is so unbelievable that the festival of Chanukah celebrates this clear Divine intervention and is why Al Hanisim and the Book of the Maccabees put emphasis on the miraculous war. On the other hand, if Chanukah essentially celebrates the main miracle of the war, why do we need the miracle of the oil too? Additionally, why is it that people relate to celebrating the miracle of the oil much more than the miracle of the war?

The answer is all about perspective. Undoubtedly, the war was the central miracle, but it was a miracle that Hashem played out through nature. Therefore, He followed this with the miracle of oil, which was so supernatural, nobody could deny that it was God who had caused all these great events to occur, even the war. Pirkei Avot 5:5 lists the ten miracles that used to occur in the Beit Hamikdash. All ten are miracles that people could tangibly experience and witness in the world as having a supernatural source. Does this mean that an event can only be called a miracle if it can be witnessed as a paranormal phenome-

non, as opposed to a natural event?

Rav Dessler would disagree with this approach. Rav Dessler defines nature in his book 'Strive for Truth' as a miracle that we have got used to. He elaborates to say that if a dead person laid and decomposed to dust in a grave, but then suddenly started growing until a human body reformed and jumped out the ground, anyone who witnessed this would undoubtedly say it's the miracle of resurrection of the dead. Rav Dessler asks why we don't view the same miracle in the growth of a seed or a baby developing in a mother's womb. He explains that these events are equally miraculous, yet the only difference is that we are used to growth of seeds but not used to growth/resurrection of the dead. In a world where the reverse occurred, growth of seeds would be deemed miracles. The same is true for Chanukah. We celebrate the phenomenon of the supernatural miracle of oil by eating doughnuts and latkes, whilst the main miracle is the war which occurred through an illusion of natural causes.

Miracles within nature will always be subject to dismissal of appreciating Divine intervention and people will justify their occurrence with other natural causes. The Yom Kippur War and Six Day War in Israel somewhat echo the themes of the victory over the Greeks. We were outnumbered and ill-equipped, yet we came triumphant and went on to flourish as a nation. When we light the chanukiah, we recite the blessing "blessed are You, Lord our God, King of the Universe who accomplished miracles for our ancestors in ancient days and in our times". These occurrences must be appreciated, and we should realise God's hidden hand at play in Jewish history and as well as nowadays. As Einstein put it, "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle".



CASRIL WAS A MADRICH ON BET CHALUTZI MACHANE 5779

THE SONG OF MANY MYSTERIES

MIA GRAY | SHEVET NE'EMAN



One of my earliest memories is of standing around a chanukiah at my grandmother's house on the first night of Chanukah, singing Maoz Tzur with my family. The candles flickered as we sung, and although I never really knew the words past the second verse, I mumbled along happily. However, thinking back, I don't remember ever being taught what Maoz Tzur actually meant. Even now, I would struggle to translate it accurately. This is perhaps due to its complex nature: It skips centuries between verses, changes tense twice, and the pronouns are constantly changing. All in all, it's a hard narrative to follow.

But some of the greatest mysteries of Maoz Tzur can be accredited to their historical context. Written, most probably, in the 13th century, Jews were under a time of immense stress. Christianity in Europe was widespread, and amongst other factors, caused many problems for Jews at the time. In that period of fear and uncertainty, the Jewish people needed something to give them hope: A modern-day Vehi Sheamda. In fact, in the first letters of the opening words of the final stanza, you can find an acrostic containing the word "chazak", or "strength". This message was clear: be strong because one day redemption will come.

Of course, the whole story of Maoz Tzur is about Hashem helping the Jewish people to rise up against their enemies and prevail in the face of terror, but the hidden meanings perhaps portrayed that message in a more relatable way. While the final verse of Maoz Tzur refers to "Admon" or "the Red Ones", this is commonly read to be a pseudonym for Christianity at the time of writing. Christianity was born in Rome which in Biblical Hebrew is called "Edom", so it's likely that when the final verse calls for the

destruction of Admon, this refers to Christian persecution during the Middle Ages. Although this could not be written in a more straightforward way due to fear of further persecution, it hints at a time when Christianity no longer oppresses Jews, and Jews will prevail against their subjugation.

This verse also brought hope to Russian Jews living under communism in the early 1990s. Red being the colour associated with the communists persecuting Jews in the Soviet Union, the final verse of Maoz Tzur was usually removed during that time so as not to cause trouble with the communists. However, the idea that it carried, that Jews will always prevail against our enemies, was one that lived on in the minds of Russian Jews and gave them strength.

Today, in the UK we are faced with another group of "the red ones". UK Jewry is again facing the Admon. By now, I'm sure that everyone is aware of the statistics and reports: the Jews considering emigrating, the convincing articles written by the Chief Rabbi and the Jewish Chronicle, the opinion pieces and surveys published in every Jewish media outlet, and Facebook feeds full of Jews who took to social media to call out antisemitism. Yet again it seems as if the final stanza of Maoz Tzur is relevant to many of us.

But my message is ultimately one of hope. This Chanukah, loudly sing the five verses depicting how Jews have survived persecution after persecution to only rise up stronger. And as you do, know that this time again, we will prevail. Let hope overcome fear, because after all, that's what the festival of light is all about.



MIA WAS A MADRICHA ON GIMMEL SUMMER MACHANE 5778

CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHANUKAH AND MIKETZ

DAVID SHAHAR | SHEVET OROT



must be some links between Miketz and the themes of Chanukah.

On Chanukah we insert an additional prayer to the Amidah and to benching, this is of course that of על הנסים. The wording of על הנסים describes in depth the miraculous military victory of the Maccabees. The prayer finishes by saying that we light candles for eight nights. However, this falls short of actually talking about the miracle of the oil! Nowhere does על הנסים mention the miracle of one bottle lasting eight nights, which is the story we all grew up with from primary school or cheder. So, where do we find the miracle of the oil? There is a well-known Gemara (שבת כא) which discusses the miracle of the oil. The Gemara describes how there was one bottle of oil with the munach b'chutmo (seal) of the Kohen Gadol; the bottle only contained enough oil to last one day but miraculously it lasted for eight. So the obvious question is: why does על הנסים not discuss the miracle of the oil and why does the Gemara not discuss the miracle of the military victory?

Perhaps one answer could be that miracles can only be categorised into two categories; natural and supernatural. An example of a supernatural miracle would be the splitting of the Reed Sea (Kriyat Yam Suf), this is an undeniable and blatant miracle. A natural miracle is something that we see or experience every day, such as waking up, going to the toilet, being able to walk, being able to breathe – the list goes on and on. These are all miracles but we are so acclimatised to them we don't really see them as miracles. On Chanukah, the miracle of the oil is obviously supernatural due to divine intervention, whereas the miracle of the military victory was natural. Unfortunately, it is very easy to negate the

presence of Hashem when it comes to natural miracles such as rain and food etc. Therefore we have to mention the military victory of the Maccabees in על הנסים otherwise one may chas v'shalom forget or refuse to recognise that Hashem was behind that miracle. על הנסים is inserted between רצא and מודים in the Amidah and after נודה in Benching because in מודים and נודה we are thanking Hashem for the daily natural miracles so the miracle of the military battle fits in perfectly here!

Parashat Miketz starts off where Parashat Vayigash ended, with Yosef in Pharaoh's prison after Yosef told the butler to remember him when he sees Pharaoh. The butler forgot Yosef, which caused him to remain in prison for another two years, until Pharaoh had a dream and Yosef was released in order to interpret it. As we know, everything has a cause and effect. In this case, Pharaoh had a dream and was told the interpretation two years earlier. Rashi writes that he forgot the interpretation and then eventually Yosef interprets the dream. However, the Beis Halevi disagrees with this explanation and goes on to explain the cause and effect differently. He explains that everything is orchestrated by Hashem. Hashem needed Yosef to stay those extra two years in prison and at the end of the two years, Hashem made Pharaoh all of a sudden remember this dream and need it to be interpreted there and then. This is obvious from the wording of the first pasuk of the sedra: וְיְהִי מִקֵּץ שְׁנַיִם יָמִים וּפְרָעָה חֹלֵם וְהִנֵּה עֹמֵד עַל-הַיָּאֵר: - "After two years' time, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile" (Bereishit 41:1). The pasuk doesn't make sense in the simple understanding, the Beis Halevi would learn it as: "it was after two years (Yosef had to come out now), Pharaoh dreamed he was standing by the Nile".



DAVID WAS A MADRICH ON ALEPH CHALUTZI MACHANE 5779

IN EVERY GENERATION

LAWRENCE SHENKIN | SHEVET HINEINI



People often point out the differences and similarities between Chanukah and Purim. Chanukah is observed to be a case of an attempt at a spiritual destruction, whereas Pu-

rim is observed to be a case of an attempt at a physical destruction. While these differences are interesting to point out on an individual level, it's interesting to look at the wider implications, as we say in the Haggada:

“בכל דור ודור עומדים עלינו לכלותינו”

“In every generation they are strategizing how to wipe us out.”

So one can assume that history not only repeats itself in the sense of constant attempts at wiping out the Jews, but also in how they go about it. For example, some parallels can be drawn between the Purim story and the horrors of Nazi Germany. In both cases a possible member of *עמלק* tried to absolutely annihilate us, so surely this is physical destruction.

Similarly, a more recent attempt at spiritual destruction can be seen in Soviet Russia, with state-imposed atheism drawing parallels with the Greek culture forced onto the Jews in the Chanukah story.

But what is most interesting is the response to these attacks on Judaism. In the case of Purim, a physical suppression, the Jews fight back in a spiritual way, fasting, going to shul and learning Torah. Whereas, in the case of Chanukah, a spiritual oppression, we fight back in a physical fashion. Why do we fight back in the opposite way in these cases?

Furthermore, when the other nations of the world fight on our behalf, they fight back in the same way. In the case of Nazi Germany, the Allies fought back in a physical fashion through WWII. But in the case of the Soviet Union, America destroyed them mentally, almost ‘spiritually,’ through the Cold War. So why when others fight on our behalf do they fight back in the same way?

To answer this, we need to distinguish between

the significance of a spiritual test and a physical test. Reb Elchonon Wasserman suggests that a spiritual test comes from the *יצר הרע*, but a physical test comes directly from Hashem. In the Chanukah story, Hashem was testing our will as a people, whether we would assimilate and Hellenise. We responded to this physically to destroy the physical source provoking the *יצר הרע*. In the case of Purim, Hashem was sending us a sign to tell us to stop assimilating and to unite as a people. To fight back physically would defeat the whole purpose of the sign; while sometimes physical combat is acceptable, sometimes it can take away from the unity of the Jewish people. Hashem used this to push us to be more spiritual and stop the rampant assimilation of the time.

Similarly, despite the horrors of Nazi Germany, the aftermath allowed us to come out stronger and more united as a people. The Nazis didn't care if you were Reform or Orthodox or had a Jewish grandparent that you weren't even affiliated with; if you were a Jew, you were a Jew. And although they used this as a negative, we can use this as a positive and show how we are all one.

With the communists, that was merely a spiritual test of the Jewish people to see if we would persevere and we passed with flying colours, with countless stories of the lengths Jews would go to retain their Yiddishkeit, most prominently Rabbi Yosef Mendeleovich, who fought defiantly just for the right to wear a kippa, and was even imprisoned for eleven years for his expression of religion, yet he persevered and was eventually released thanks to mass waves of complaints coming from fellow Jews. This story really shows the strength of the Jewish people to get through hard times, and our unity and how we care for every single fellow Jew.

Whereas other nations of the world who fight fire with fire, only bringing more destruction to the world, the Jews rise above the challenge and show we are better than those who oppress us.



LAWRENCE WAS A PARTICIPANT ON ISRAEL MACHANE 5779

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBER EIGHT

NATALIE EZRA | SHEVET MORASHA



The number eight is central to the festival of Chanukah, and yet typically in Judaism it is the number seven that we think of as especially significant. So what is the meaning of the number eight? There is no doubt that the number eight permeates this chag, both in its celebration and its origin. When we think about why we celebrate for eight days, the fact that this is how long the oil found in the Mikdash lasted for (when in fact there was only enough for one) comes straight to mind. Yet, the importance of this number goes beyond this physical miracle of light. For Jews, the numbers six, seven and eight symbolise progression. The number 6 represents the physical world: north, east, south, west, as well as both upwards and downwards (as demonstrated on Succot with the shaking of the lulav). The number seven combines this physicality with spirituality, as on the seventh day God rested from creating all our material world and so gave us Shabbat. The number eight, bigger than both six and seven, goes beyond this, and thus, transcends the natural world and order. Eight symbolises the supernatural, the incomprehensible.

The Greeks were a people of physicality and the sciences, who believed that the human brain surpassed all. There was no belief in God as the creator as God was unable to be understood fully by the human mind, and thus for them could not be believed in. The philosophy of the Jews is the antithesis to this: Na'aseh V'Nishmah (Shemot 24:7) is central in Judaism – we will do, THEN we will understand. We may not necessarily un-

derstand all the mitzvot or the Torah, yet we still act in accordance with them, only to truly understand later. For the Greeks, this ideology went beyond the natural order and any human understanding. Ironically, those mitzvot not fully understood were seen to make man 'submissive' rather than the dominant character they saw man to be, whilst for the Jews, mitzvot are empowering as they elevate our neshama. The mitzvot the Jews were not allowed to keep were those unreasonable and incomprehensible to the Greeks. For example, crucially, they were unable to perform a Brit Mila, a mitzvah linked to the number eight in terms of when performed (on the eighth day) and the supernatural, and thus 'beyond human intelligence'.

Not only is the number eight central to the chag, but it is what Chanukah is all about. The duality that the number symbolises was the true conflict of values between the Maccabees and the Greeks: the physical world vs. connection and belief in the beyond. Subsistence vs. elevation. Understanding vs. belief. It was a battle of the number eight, a battle over the supernatural. The victory of the Jews was not just a physical win, but also a spiritual win. And so, the miracle of the oil lasting eight days was deeper than merely giving physical light, but marked the triumph of spirituality in a physical world.



NATALIE IS A PARTICIPANT ON HACHSHARAT KIVUN 5780

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 ADD:

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

AFTER LIGHTING RECITE:

הנרות הללו אנחנו מדליקין, על הנסים ועל הנפלאות ועל התשועות, שעשית לאבותינו על ידי כהניך הקדושים. וכל שמונת ימי החנכה, הנרות הללו קדש הם. ואין לנו רשות להשתמש בהם, אלא לראותם בלבד, כדי להודות לשמך על נסידך ועל נפלאותיך ועל ישועתך

מעוז צור

כרות קומת ברוש בקש אגגי בן המדתא
ונהיתה לו למוקש וגאותו נשבתה
ראש ימיני נשאת ואויב שמו מחית
רב בניו וקניניו על העץ תלית

יוננים 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 רועים שבעה

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

רעות שבעה נפשי בוגון כחי כלה
חיי מררו בקושי בשעבוד מלכות עגלה
ובידו הגדולה הוציא את הסגלה
חיל פרעה וכל זרעו ירדו כאבן מצולה

דביר קדשו הביאני וגם שם לא שקטתי
ובא נוגש והגלני כי זרים עבדתי
ויין רעל מסכתי כמעט שעברתי
קץ בבלי, זרבבל לקץ שבעים נושעתי