

Yeshiva University Center for the Jewish Future  
Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary

# To-Go™

## Chanukah 5772

This issue is published in recognition of Ira Mitzner's Honorary Degree at Yeshiva University's 87th Annual Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation



### Featuring Divrei Torah from

Rabbi Reuven Brand  
Dr. Louis H. Feldman  
Rabbi Dr. David Horwitz  
Mrs. Deena S. Rabinovich  
Rabbi Yonason Sacks  
Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Plus a collection of Chanukah activities for families from YU Teach, a project of Yeshiva University's Institute for University-School Partnership

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Dear Friends,

It is my sincere hope that the Torah found in this virtual sefer may serve to enhance your Chanukah and your *limud* (study).

We have designed this project not only for the individual, studying alone, but perhaps even more for a *chavruta* (a pair studying together) that wish to work through the study matter together, or a group engaged in facilitated study.

The learning in this year's Chanukah To Go has been dedicated in honor of Ira Mitzner in recognition of the Honorary Degree he received at last week's 87th Annual Hanukkah Dinner and Convocation. Ira's commitment to community on a local, national and international level is remarkable and a model for all of us.

In studying the dreams of Yosef, we recognize that one of the dreams focuses on the mundane, the binding of sheaves in the field, while the other dream of the sun, moon and stars is in the realm of the ethereal, the cosmos.

Often, leaders are great visionaries, and while they may have cosmic dreams have little ability to implement what is necessary for the dreams to be realized. Then there are others whose leadership skills focus on "*tachlitic*" details, the binding of the sheaves; but have limited capacity to articulate a grand vision. The greatness of Ira is his capacity to be a cosmic dreamer on behalf of our people while simultaneously blessed with the skill set to grasp the details necessary to implement the dreams.

He has been a true partner and mentor in the development of the CJF. We wish Ira, his wife Mindy, and their children Steven, Laura and her husband Steven, and Michael continued *nachat* and joy from each other. We pray that the charismatic patriarch of the family, David Mitzner, continues to be blessed with long years and productive days.

With this material, we invite you to join our beit midrash, wherever you may be, *l'hagdil Torah ul'ha'adirah* (to enjoy the splendor of Torah) and to engage in discussing issues that touch on contemporary matters, and are rooted in the timeless arguments of our great sages from throughout the generations.

Happy Chanukah,

**Rabbi Kenneth Brander**

The David Mitzner Dean, Yeshiva University  
Center for the Jewish Future

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# Not Just Another Winter Festival

Rabbi Reuven Brand

Rosh Kollel, YU Torah Mitzion Kollel of Chicago

For many uninitiated observers, the holiday of Chanuka can be a disappointment. Aside from the complicated pronunciation of its name, it is viewed by some as just another winter festival of lights like those of other cultures. Despite known historical accounts of its origins, an internationally renowned newspaper published an opinion claiming that Chanuka is “doomed to be forever the poor relation of Christmas,”<sup>1</sup> a statement that offended many people in the Jewish community. There are many diverse factors that contribute to this phenomenon, but perhaps there is one central reason for the denigration and lack of understanding. To discover this reason, all one needs to do is open a Tanach. A thorough search of all its twenty-four books reveals a startling fact- the absence of Chanuka in Biblical literature. Unlike all other Jewish holidays, Biblical or rabbinic, no mention of this event is ever referenced in Tanach because it occurred after the close of the Biblical canon. How could we expect people to appreciate a holiday that has no mention anywhere in the Bible?

## Halacha and Rabbinic Judaism

Our sages were acutely aware of this fact and addressed it in their analysis of the nature of the mitzvah of lighting Chanuka candles:

*What blessing should one recite? "Who sanctified us in his commandments and commanded us to light the candle of Chanuka" Where did He command us? R. Aviya said from the commandment "do not stray" [from the words of the rabbis]. R. Nechemiah said "Ask you father and he will inform you, your elders and they will tell you."*

**Shabbat 23a**

מאי מברך מברך אשר קדשנו  
במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של  
חנוכה והיכן צונו רב אויא  
אמר מלא תסור רב נחמיה  
אמר שאל אביך ויגדך זקניך  
ויאמרו לך.  
**שבת כג.**

This snapshot of the Talmud gives us insight into a crucial, fundamental aspect of Halacha and Jewish life: Rabbinic Judaism. Our Torah is comprised of two inseparable components: the written Torah- a Divine, static text- and the oral Torah- a dynamic system of interpretation and implementation of traditions and teachings. We recognize that Halacha, the framework which guides our life, is governed by that which appears explicitly in the sacred writings of Tanach, as well as the directives we receive from the oral tradition. This tradition includes Biblical

<sup>1</sup> "Hanukkah Rekindled" by Howard Jacobson was published by the New York Times on November 30, 2010.

mandates handed down verbally at Sinai, as well as rabbinic teachings, sanctioned and encouraged by the Torah.

The oral tradition has a specific set of principles and standard bearers. Rabbinic modes of interpretation and the mantle of rabbinic authority have been handed down from generation to generation in an unbroken chain since the revelation at Sinai. The Rambam dedicates the bulk of the introduction to his Magnum Opus, *Mishneh Torah*, to listing the names of the forty sages, the guardians of tradition that spanned the centuries from Moshe Rabbeinu at Sinai to Rav Ashi at the close of the Talmud. This tradition has continued through today, as the great sages of the generation apply our tradition, as Rabbi Joseph B. Soloveitchik wrote in a 1954 newspaper article:

*The interpretation of halakha must be accomplished in accordance with the methods, principles and categorical forms of the halakhic logic, which were hammered out by the sages of Torah, rishonim [early rabbinic period] and aharonim [late rabbinic period], Rashi, the Tosafists, Ramban, the Shakh, Rav Akiva Eiger, Rav Hayyim Brisker, etc. The substance of halakha is tradition. Not only the content and the text, but also the formal instruments of halakhic thinking have been handed down from generation to generation.*

**Community, Covenant and Commitment, pp. 147- 148**

The holiday of Chanuka is a prime example of our full commitment to this description of halachic Judaism; we observe these days due to the instruction of our rabbinic leadership that is empowered by the Torah itself. The brief statement of the Talmud we cited is teaching us that while Chanuka does not appear in the written Torah, it is binding as part of the oral Torah- the tradition.

Perhaps we can now understand the miracle and holiday of Chanuka in its historical context as well. All of our Yamim Tovim appear in Tanach, during a period of open revelation and providential clarity. The events that these days commemorate took place under the watch of prophets, whose clarity of spiritual vision interpreted them like an open book. The period of prophecy is akin to the written Torah itself - readily apparent and clearly understood. With the demise of prophecy during the second Temple era, the Divine hand gave the Jewish community a new focus, a new emphasis in our service of Hashem. The absence of the clarity of the prophecy- symbolizing the written Torah- directed us to a greater focus on and investment in the oral Torah. What had been clear oral tradition in the days of the prophets soon became the subject of debate and, ultimately, rabbinic resolution through the creative process of exegesis and analysis. It was specifically in this period that we witnessed the miracle of Chanuka.

The drama of Chanuka took place while the Greeks dominated the Beit Hamikdash long after the death of the last prophets, who had built it. The Midrash (Bereishit Rabbah 2) refers to the exile of Greece as “darkness,” perhaps because it was the first exile without the sunny, clear vision of prophecy to guide us. The establishment of Chanuka as a significant holiday was the first to be undertaken in the post-prophetic era. It embodies the sublimation and achievement

of the post- canon period: a rabbinic holiday.<sup>2</sup> This explains the confusion by so many about this mysterious holiday; they are unaware of our unwritten rabbinic tradition. Without the context of traditional rabbinic Judaism it truly is difficult to appreciate the celebration of Chanuka.

## Rabbinic Judaism: A Divine Embrace

Halacha reflects this concept of Chanuka as a celebration of rabbinic Judaism, the oral tradition. The language of the *bracha* for candle lighting expresses this idea, as the aforementioned Gemara explained. This concept also explains a unique facet of the performance of the mitzvah itself. Many have wondered: why did the rabbis create a mitzvah that has multiple levels of fulfillment and enhancement, known as *mehadrin* and *mehadrin min hamehadrin*? Although we have a general principle of *hiddur mitzvah* that charges us to enhance all mitzvot, this is a limited obligation that is not an inherent aspect of any specific commandment.<sup>3</sup> On Chanuka, we transcend the general concept of *hiddur* with two tiers of fulfillment that are presented as part and parcel of the obligation. The *Shulchan Aruch* goes as far as to ignore the basic Talmudic level of fulfillment of one candle per night and only records the level of enhancement:

*How many candles should one light? On the first night, one lights one candle. From then on, one adds a candle each night until there are eight on the last day.*  
**Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 671:2**

כמה נרות מדליק, בלילה הראשון מדליק אחד, מכאן ואילך מוסיף והולך אחד בכל לילה עד שבליל האחרון יהיו שמונה.  
**שלחן ערוך אורח חיים תרעא:ב**

This is understood in light of the idea that Chanuka expresses a rabbinic mode of Divine service. The Midrash teaches:

*The colleagues said in the name of R. Yochanan: the words of the rabbis are dearer than the words of Torah as it states "for your love is dearer than wine."*  
**Shir HaShirim Rabbah no. 1**

חברייא בשם רבי יוחנן חביבין דברי סופרים מדברי תורה שנאמר כי טובים דודיך מין.  
**שיר השירים רבה פרשה א**

Our Rabbinic Judaism is an expression of our love of Hashem that is appreciated even more than our fulfillment of the basic requirements enumerated in the written Torah. It demonstrates our interest in going above and beyond in our relationship with Hashem, beyond that which is scripted in a text. Hence, Chanuka, as the paradigm of this Divine service and commitment, contains within it the mechanism of going above and beyond in its fulfillment.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Regarding the issue of the limitation of rabbinic Mitzvot and their innovation vis-a-vis the establishment of Chanuka and other Rabbinic holidays, see *B'Ikvei Hatzon* no. 19 by Rabbi Hershel Schachter, shlit" a.

<sup>3</sup> Although one may suggest that the *hiddur*- enhancement of the mitzvah- becomes a part of the mitzvah itself, the source of the obligation is not from each particular Mitzvah, rather from an overarching principle of enhancement. For further exploration of this question, see *Shabbat* 133b, Rambam, *Isurei Mizbeach* 7:11, *Chidushei HaGriz al haRambam, Hilchot Chanuka*.

<sup>4</sup> We find that in rabbinic matters, Halacha often calls upon us to go beyond what the written Torah would demand as the Gemara observes several times (e.g. *Zevachim* 101) "חכמים עשו חיזוק לדבריהם יותר משל תורה" the rabbis strengthened their words more than they strengthened words of Torah."

## Rabbinic Life: Spiritual Light

There is also a profound spiritual dimension of this analysis of Chanuka as well. We find a profound teaching of the mystical work, *Sefer Habahir*, cited in the writings of Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin (1823-1900):

*In reality, the original light was stored. But where did God store it? In the oral tradition as it states in Sefer HaBahir.*

*In each generation, the light of the oral tradition is revealed to the scholars as the rabbis have stated that God stored for those who toil in the oral tradition the "light that was planted for the righteous" and revealed it to the sages.*

**P'ri Tzadik, Shavuot**

שבאמת אור הראשון נגנז. אך היכן גנזו הקב"ה בתורה שבעל פה כמו שכתב בספר הבהיר. ובכל דור מתגלה האור תורה שבעל פה לחכמים וכמו שאמרו שגנזו הקב"ה לעמלי תורה שבעל פה אור זרוע לצדיק ונגלה לחכמים.  
**פרי צדיק, חג השבועות**

We know that encountering Torah- Divine wisdom- is a spiritually ennobling experience. Yet, this teaching educates us that involvement specifically in the oral tradition, the rabbinic engagement with Torah, provides a unique illumination. Those who toil in the challenging, dialectical Halachic discourse of the oral tradition are rewarded with a Divine light at the end of the tunnel, according to this teaching.

Rabbi Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht, founding Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Kerem B'Yavneh (*Asufat Maarachot*, p. 89), sheds light on this unique insight, based on a Midrash:

*R. Levi said in the name of R. Zeirah: The light shone for thirty six hours, twelve on Friday, twelve on the eve of Shabbos and twelve on Shabbos.*

**Bereishit Rabbah, Bereishit no. 11**

ר' לוי בשם רבי זעירא אמר ל"ו שעות שימשה אותה האורה, שנים עשר של ערב שבת, וי"ב של לילי שבת וי"ב של שבת.

**בראשית רבה, פרשת בראשית פרשה יא**

According to this tradition, the number of hours that the original supernal light shone before Hashem hid it was thirty-six. It is more than a coincidence, according to the Rokeach, the 12<sup>th</sup> century German pietist, that the sum of our candles of the eight nights of Chanuka is thirty-six:

*We light thirty six candles on Chanukah to correspond to the thirty six hours that the light shone on Friday and Shabbat (of creation).*

**Pirushei Siddur L'Rokeach, Chanuka**

הנה מדליקין בחנוכה ל"ו נרות, כנגד ל"ו שעות ששימשה האורה יום ו' וליל ז'.

**פירושי סידור לרוקה, חנוכה**

It is this spiritual, hidden light- the light of our oral Torah and our rabbinic tradition- which shines forth on Chanuka in our homes. While Chanuka is not a holiday that is mentioned in Tanach, we, the bearers of Halacha, are aglow with the spiritual light of our tradition that is expressed in these magnificent eight days. Our lives are enriched by our enhanced relationship with Hashem that is enabled by a full halachic life, one of the text and the tradition, which radiates through the light of Chanuka.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Thanks to Rabbi Zvi Engel and Rabbi Menachem Rosenbaum for their helpful comments on this article.



# The Maccabean Revolt: The State of the Question

Dr. Louis H. Feldman

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## Sources

Let us begin with our sources. There are two major sources--1 and 2 Maccabees--for the background and progress of the revolt of the Maccabees, plus a third source of lesser value, Josephus' *Antiquities* (12.234-13.214), which is clearly, for the most part, dependent on 1 Maccabees. These sources exist in Greek; but the original language of 1 Maccabees was Hebrew, and Jerome knew it thus. A medieval account in Aramaic, the Scroll of Antiochus, which tells the story of the origin of the festival of Hanukkah and of the miracle connected with it and which was apparently read in the synagogue in the Middle Ages, as we see from a remark in the thirteenth-century Tosafot of Isaiah di Trani,<sup>6</sup> is of questionable historical value, as we see from the mention of the (fictitious) twenty-third year of the reign of Antiochus IV Epiphanes at the beginning of the text, whereas the reign lasted only eleven years. We might have expected that the rabbis, who elevated Hanukkah to the status of a holiday, would have instituted the practice of reading the story of the holiday by requiring an account of the Hasmoneans similar to their instituting an account, namely in the book of Esther, of the background of the holiday of Purim; but all that we have in the Talmud is the very brief reference (*Sabbath* 21b), which alludes to the miracle of the oil. If we ask why the rabbis did not endorse the first book of Maccabees as the text to be read on Hanukkah we may suggest that they found the story of the history of the Maccabees and their descendants embarrassing.

## The Roots of the Maccabean Revolt

A major new inscription, now on permanent loan in the Israel Museum in Jerusalem, was published by Hannah M. Cotton and Michael Wöurle, "Seleukos IV to Heliodoros--A new Dossier of Royal Correspondence from Israel," *Zeitschrift für Philologica und Epigrafia* 159 (2007) 191-203. It sheds new light on the background of the Maccabean revolt. The stone stele on which an inscription in Greek is written is nearly 3 feet high. The bottom part of the stele has

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<sup>6</sup> Comments to *Sukkah* 44b.

broken off, but 23 full lines and a few partial lines have survived. It contains three letters, one from Seleucus IV (ruler of the Syrian kingdom) to his advisor Heliodorus (who three years later assassinated the king), a letter of transmittal from Heliodorus to Dorymenes (perhaps governor of the satrapy) and a final note from Dorymenes to his subordinate Diaphanes. The dates on the stele are quite precise, the summer of 178 B.C.E., ten years before the outbreak of the Maccabean uprising in 168 B.C.E. They are, in effect, political manifestos. Seleucus orders his predecessors to take charge of the sanctuaries in his newly-acquired territories of Coele-Syria (Palestine) and Phoenicia. His predecessor, Antiochus III, who reigned from 223 to 187 B.C.E., was constantly fighting with King Ptolemy IV of Egypt. By 198 B.C.E. the Jews of Palestine had become disenchanted with Ptolemaic rule, and they opened the gates of Jerusalem for Antiochus III. Antiochus rewarded the Jews by freeing them from taxes for three years and permitting them to have a form of government in accordance with the laws of their country and forbidding animals to be brought into Jerusalem that were forbidden for consumption for Jews.

The stele provides background for an episode involving a miracle that is recounted in 2 Maccabees 3.<sup>7</sup> Simon, the administrator of the Temple, quarreled with the high priest. Simon told an agent of the king, Seleucus IV, who ruled from 218 to 175 B.C.E., about the untold sums in the Temple treasury and said that it was possible for them to fall under the control of the king. King Seleucus chose Heliodorus to remove this wealth. When Heliodorus arrived, the high priest told him that the money belonged to widows and orphans. But Heliodorus had orders from the king that this money had to be confiscated. When Heliodorus arrived to seize the money, throngs of Jews were there calling for G-d's intervention. A magnificently decorated horse attacked Heliodorus with his hoofs and beat him mercilessly. Heliodorus' friends begged the high priest to intervene with G-d. Heliodorus recovered and offered sacrifices to G-d and reported all this to the king. He appointed someone to take charge of the sanctuaries in Palestine. Seleucus was murdered three years later (175 B.C.E.) and was succeeded by Antiochus IV. In 173 B.C.E. Onias III, the high priest, was replaced by Jason, who registered the Jerusalemites as citizens of Antioch. Jason was eventually outbid for the office of high priest by Menelaus, who sought to carry out the extreme Hellenization of Judea. Jason tried to reestablish his rule. On his return from Egypt in 168 B.C.E. Antiochus, convinced that a rebellion had broken out, stormed Jerusalem, killed thousands of Jews, sold thousands more into slavery, and walked off with the wealth in the Temple.

## The background of the revolt: Antiochus III

How shall we account for the persecution of the Jews during the reign of Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)? Shall we say that he inherited this attitude from his father, Antiochus III? The Syrians were incessantly involved in the struggle with the Ptolemies, the rulers of Egypt, and needed money to fight these wars. That money was to be found in the Temple in Jerusalem. But, after his conquest of the area (*Ant.* 12.138-146), Antiochus III issued proclamations that actually confirmed the rights of the Jews to practice their traditional customs and religion. Most scholars have accepted these decrees as authentic. Why is there such a contrast toward the Jews

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<sup>7</sup> For analysis of this story, see Elias Bickerman, *Studies in Greek and Christian History* (Leiden, 1980) 2.159-191; Jonathan Goldstein, *II Maccabees* (New York, 1983) 198-215.

in the attitude of his son, Antiochus IV (Epiphanes)? Shall we blame the Jews themselves and their leaders?

Seleucus IV gave financial support to the Temple. There was a whole complex of dichotomies at the time preceding the revolt: pro-Seleucid, that is, Syrian, and pro-Ptolemaic, that is, Egyptian, factions, namely, Tobiad (which brought about the displacement of the high priest Onias III and the appointment of the high priest Jason and later Menelaus) and Oniad families (though they were related through intermarriage).

## Antiochus IV's background

What caused Antiochus Epiphanes, who, we are told, was raised in an atmosphere, so typical of Greek and Roman culture, which was so permissive of minorities, to prohibit the practices of Judaism?<sup>8</sup> In his championing of Hellenism he reminded people of Alexander the Great. Yet, as Tcherikover<sup>9</sup> has stressed, the Seleucid rulers never intended to Hellenize the populations of the areas that they controlled but merely to transform them externally **politically** into Greek **poleis** (city-states) without abolishing the local religion or culture. Indeed, as Tcherikover<sup>10</sup> has remarked, after the defeat of Antiochus III in 189 B.C.E. by the Romans, his son, Antiochus Epiphanes, was sent to Rome as a hostage and remained there for thirteen years. That he was impressed by Roman (rather than Greek) culture may be seen in the fact that after he ascended to the throne he built a temple to Jupiter Capitolinus at Antioch, his capital, produced gladiatorial games on the Roman model, and introduced Roman political positions, actually seeking votes of the citizens for himself.

When he began his reign in 175 B.C.E., what did Antiochus do with regard to the Jews? He did nothing. Apparently, he was not particularly interested in the Jews. Soon, however, he was approached by Jason, brother of the high priest Onias III, who offered him 440 talents of silver if he would be named high priest in place of his brother. This would be supplemented by 150 silver talents, which would be used in establishing a gymnasium. This would put Jerusalem on the way to becoming a polis. It made no difference to Antiochus if the high priest was replaced by his brother, and so he accepted the offer. Troops were often hired, and it was important for rulers to offer mercenaries more than their rivals offered them. Schuerer<sup>11</sup> contends that Antiochus' Hellenizing policy explains his religious suppression. In the words of Tacitus, *Histories* 5.8.2: "After the Macedonians gained supremacy, King Antiochus endeavored to abolish Jewish superstition and to introduce Greek civilization." But, as Momigliano<sup>12</sup> has put it, "Such direct interference in the ancestral cults of a nation was unheard of in the Greek-speaking world from immemorial times." It would have contradicted the ideological, religious, social, and political principles of the Hellenistic world. In fact, as Uriel Rappaport<sup>13</sup> has stated, it would have

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<sup>8</sup> On Antiochus IV see O. Morkholm, *Antiochus IV of Syria* (Copenhagen, 1966).

<sup>9</sup> Victor Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1959) 180.

<sup>10</sup> Tcherikover, *op. cit.* 472 n. 10.

<sup>11</sup> Emil Schuerer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus*, rev. ed. (Edinburgh, 1973) Schuerer, 1.147-48

<sup>12</sup> Arnaldo Momigliano, *Alien Wisdom: The Limits of Hellenization* (Cambridge, 1975) 100.

<sup>13</sup> Uriel Rappaport, "Maccabean Revolt," *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (New York: Doubleday, 1992), volume 4, p. 437.

contradicted the basic principles not only of the Hellenistic world but also of ancient Middle East and Roman civilization. There is no evidence that Antiochus IV was a greater Hellenizer than his predecessors or that he actively promoted Hellenization for idealistic reasons. The number of Greek poleis organized during his reign was actually fewer than under his predecessors. Antiochus' father, Antiochus III, had resumed the practice, but rather had made refoundations of previous poleis. More importantly, the initiative always came from the natives themselves. They considered this an important privilege for which they paid well into the king's coffers.

Jerusalem was a polis from 175 to 168 B.C.E. with no religious overtones. To force new religious measures on the Jews would have been unusual because the native cults of other sacred Oriental cities were not disturbed when allowed to incorporate.<sup>14</sup> To force Hellenization would have been suicidal.<sup>15</sup>

According to 1 Macc. 1.41-43, Antiochus sent a decree to all his subjects to abandon their native customs, but there is no corroborating evidence that such a decree was issued. There is no reason to think that the various peoples in the Seleucid Empire, such as the Phoenicians, would abandon their local gods and customs more easily than would the Jews.

There were many Jews in the Seleucid Empire outside Palestine; yet there is no evidence that they suffered infringement or persecution.

A further argument often advanced for Antiochus' suppression of Jewish religious customs is that he promoted the cult of Zeus Olympius. It is true that Antiochus favored Zeus over Apollo, the latter having been the traditional patron of the Seleucid dynasty. The frequent assertion that Antiochus issued coins with his own visage imposed on the image of Zeus is to be doubted.<sup>16</sup> The ruler cult was practiced under Antiochus, but he did not originate it; he simply continued the custom of his predecessors. It seems at times to be tacitly assumed that Antiochus was attempting to set up some sort of pagan monotheism, but such an idea is anachronistic.<sup>17</sup> Above all, the god worshipped in Jerusalem was not the Greek Zeus but a Syrian god.

Was Antiochus' alleged persecution of the Jews in Palestine motivated by his aim of unifying his state through introducing one culture or religion, namely the worship of himself, as seen in the legend of his coins, "King Antiochus G-d Manifest"<sup>18</sup>? Or was it the result of his mentally disabled mind? Polybius, the second-century B.C.E. critical Greek historian (ca. 200-ca. 118 B.C.E.) of Rome, was a direct contemporary of Antiochus Epiphanes, who was taken captive by the Romans. It was he who invented the term "pragmatic" history, basing himself, wherever possible, on first-hand knowledge of events, and broadening the scope to include not only political but also military, economic, religious, and social factors, though occasionally biased, in his search, like that of his predecessor Thucydides, whom he clearly admired, for reasons for events.

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<sup>14</sup> Tcherikover 471 n.9.

<sup>15</sup> K. Bringmann, *Hellenistische Reform und Religionsverfolgung in Judaea* (1983) 103, 146.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 285-86.

<sup>17</sup> Tcherikover, 181-82.

<sup>18</sup> O. Morkholm, *Studies in the Coinage of Antiochus IV of Syria* (Copenhagen, 1963).

Polybius (26.1), who is generally regarded as a careful and fair-minded historian, has painted an extensive portrait of Antiochus as strange, unpredictable, tactless, and most unroyal-like in his behavior. He is said to have wandered through the streets and conversed with ordinary people. He poured perfumed ointment over the heads of ordinary people while they were taking baths and enjoyed the sight of people slipping. He was famous for the many gifts that he made to Greek cities and temples. He burst in on drinking parties. He participated as an actor in theater performances. Once he started dancing with performers on the stage. He was full of surprises, giving precious gifts to some and worthless objects to others. In his unpredictable bursts he behaved like the later Roman emperors Caligula and Nero. He campaigned openly for political offices, even though the offices carried little power in them, and struck some people as utterly insane, Epimanes ("insane"), as Polybius (26.10.6-8) termed him, rather than Epiphanes ("illustrious").

According to the first century B.C.E. historian Diodorus Siculus (34-35.1.1), in his universal history, when Antiochus was besieging Jerusalem, it was the majority of Antiochus' friends who advised him "to wipe out completely the race of the Jews, since they alone of all nations avoided dealings with any other people and looked upon all men as their enemies." It is the influence of these friends that impelled Antiochus upon defeating the Jews, to enter the temple in Jerusalem, where he found a statue of a bearded man, whom he supposed to be Moses, and whom he regarded as the person who had ordained for the Jews their misanthropic and lawless customs. Shocked by such hatred against all mankind and, again, at the instigation of his friends, he sacrificed before the image of the founder of the cult and compelled the high priest and the rest of the Jews to partake of the meat. Again, we are told that it was these friends who strongly urged Antiochus to make an end of the Jewish race completely or at least to force them to change their ways. Very significantly, however, according to Diodorus (34-35.1.5), Antiochus, being a magnanimous and mild-mannered person, took hostages but dismissed the charges against the Jews, once he had exacted the tribute that was due and had dismantled the walls of Jerusalem. Apparently, Antiochus himself did not succumb to this advice to unify his nation by imposing the practices of the Greek religion and thus to unify his state through one culture or religion.

Antiochus was no crusading ideologue but a practical politician who was beset by many problems and who was ambitious and who needed money.<sup>19</sup> He encouraged the rival bidding for the highpriesthood between Jason and Menelaus (2 Macc. 4:7-26) and allowed Jason's "Hellenistic reform" because it brought money for his expansionist plans<sup>20</sup> and because it seemed a way of resolving the intra-Jewish conflict between Onias III and Simon the Tobiad.

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<sup>19</sup> K. Bringmann, *Hellenistische Reform und Religionsverfolgung in Judäa* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1983) 111-140.

<sup>20</sup> True, as E. S. Gruen, "Hellenism and Persecution: Antiochus IV and the Jews," in P. Green, ed., *Hellenistic History and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 253, has noted, Antiochus had paid off an installment on his indemnity to Rome in 173, four years before his assault on Jerusalem, but that was only for that year; and, moreover, he remained ambitious to expand territorially. But Antiochus had been humiliated in 168 B.C.E. when he was forced to withdraw his army from Egypt when Popillius Laenas, the Roman leader of an embassy, drew a

## The role of the Jewish Hellenizers and, in particular, Jason

We know from a cuneiform tablet that Antiochus IV Epiphanes began his reign in September, 175 B.C.E. When he took the throne, what did he do with regard to the Jews?<sup>21</sup> Answer: nothing. Antiochus, a product of Greek education and a pupil of the Epicureans, could not have initiated the persecution of the Jews, since it meant the imposition of a new religious law which implied religious fanaticism. In the entire ancient world, as Tcherikover<sup>22</sup> stresses, there is no example of religious fanaticism, with the exception of the Pharaoh Akhenaton and in drama the invasion of Dionysus as depicted in Euripides' *Bacchae*. It was apparently not Antiochus but the Hellenistic reformers of Jerusalem, the high priest Jason and his rival, Menelaus and his group, who were the real initiators of the decrees. Shortly after Antiochus came to the throne, Jason, brother of the high priest Onias III, approached Antiochus and made him an offer that he could not refuse, 440 talents of silver, which he badly needed for feeding and paying his mercenary troops, in return for giving Jason the high priesthood. Antiochus' function was merely the abolition of the rule of the Torah in Judaea. Jason and Menelaus and their followers sought to abolish Jewish particularism and to come to terms with the peoples around them. They were influenced by Greek views, since in Greek eyes all exclusiveness was barbarism. Jason sought to make Jerusalem a Greek city with a gymnasium. What was the reaction of the Jews in Jerusalem? There were no riots, no demonstrations against Jason's plan. Only a few years earlier, when Heliodorus, the prime minister of the Emperor Seleucus IV, who ruled from 187 to 176 B.C.E., attempted to seize 400 talents of silver and 200 of gold from the Temple in Jerusalem, we are told (2 Maccabees 3:18) "people came teeming out of the houses in crowds to join in communal supplication because the Place, that is, the Temple, was in danger of being defiled." A horse appeared...Charging at full speed ahead, it plunged wildly at Heliodorus....All around, however, men were praising G-d, who had so miraculously glorified His own sacred Place." Rumors began to be spread about the stolen temple vessels. What was the reaction of the crowd to the theft? They rioted in the streets. A certain Lysimachus, who was deputy to Menelaus (2 Maccabees 4:29), who was away, came out with a large band of armed soldiers to attack the crowd. The crowd drove off the soldiers and even killed Lysimachus (2 Maccabees 4:42).

Were the Jews in Palestine already a part of the Hellenistic world and not significantly different from other peoples of the ancient Near East in the general process of Hellenization, which had begun with Alexander?

Were Jason's initial Hellenistic reforms met with enthusiasm by a significant (if minority) portion of the Jews of Palestine and were not actively opposed by the rest?

Is it true that Judaism as a religion was not impaired under Jason? Is it true that 2 Maccabees was written in the aftermath of the religious persecutions and the Hasmonean successes? Is it true

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circle in the sand and demanded that he signal obedience to Rome's demand before stepping outside of it, and he surely was determined to show his military strength elsewhere.

<sup>21</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, "The Hellenistic City of Jerusalem," in John R. Bartlett, ed., *Jews in the Hellenistic and Roman Cities* (Florence, Kentucky; Routledge, 2002) 8.

<sup>22</sup> Tcherikover, *op. cit.*, 183.

that the basic Jewish observances in and out of the temple continued and that there was no devotion to pagan deities or any blatant breach of Jewish law?

Jason introduced a gymnasium and the ephebate in Jerusalem, and he arranged for the registration of persons as "Antiochenes" in the city (2 Macc. 4:9). The fact that Jason had to draw up a list of the citizens suggests that not everyone was included. One would guess that the wealthy and the aristocrats were the first to be chosen. None of these measures involved elimination or alteration of religious rites. The priests did not give up the daily *tamid* offering because when it ceased a few years later it was an extremely traumatic experience. Nothing in the Hebrew Scriptures forbids gymnasia, military training for youths, or enrollment as citizens of a polis or politeuma. To be sure, athletic exercises were generally conducted in the nude, but Thucydides (1.6) remarks that even in his day many foreigners, especially in Asia, wear loincloths for boxing and wrestling. Moreover, although the author of 2 Maccabees brands the innovation as unlawful, he also provides material for his own refutation: the priests themselves welcomed the gymnasium and were eager to participate in exercises in the palaestra, but they evidently did not consider it inconsistent with their sacerdotal functions.<sup>23</sup> To be sure, when the quadrennial games were held in Tyre, Jason sent envoys, chosen as Antiochian citizens from Jerusalem, to carry 300 silver drachmas to be used for a sacrifice to the hero-god Heracles, but in that case (2 Macc. 4:18-20), we are told, the envoys thought it best not to use it for such a sacrifice, since they deemed it inappropriate, but to apply it for the construction of triremes. To be sure, the most damnable charge made against those who built the gymnasium is that they removed the marks of circumcision, a charge, by the way, that significantly is not mentioned at all in 2 Maccabees. Moreover, if we trust the description of the method of undoing circumcision found in the medical text of Celsus (7.25.1), it is such a gory operation that it is hard to believe that anyone would have deliberately undergone it in an era, of course, without anaesthesia. Finally, is it true that eventually Jason's actions were met with resistance from both the ruling council of the people and from the ordinary people who rioted and killed his brother Lysimachus?

Bickerman<sup>24</sup> puts the blame solidly on the "extreme Hellenists," i.e. Menelaus and the Tobiads. The Tobiad family appears to have been the main instigators of the Hellenistic reform in Jerusalem (Josephus, *Ant.* 12.239). The Hellenists were attempting to create an "enlightened" religion, in which the so-called degenerate and anachronistic accretions (e.g., circumcision, food taboos, purity regulations) would be removed and the pristine original could once more shine forth. Hengel views the Maccabean revolution as a civil war between Jews, rather than as a Jewish national uprising against a foreign occupant. The reformers attempted to integrate the national religion in the universal world of the Greeks. The reformed religion thus emerging was in many ways parallel with the Reform Judaism that arose in the nineteenth century.<sup>25</sup> Daniel 11:30 refers to those Jews who forsake the covenant, a statement paralleled in 1 Macc. 1:11: "At that time there came forth from Israel certain lawless men who persuaded many, saying, "Let us

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<sup>23</sup> Erich S. Gruen, "Hellenism and Persecution: Antiochus IV and the Jews," in Peter Green, ed., *Hellenistic History and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993) 238-239.

<sup>24</sup> Bickerman, *Gott der Makkabaeer* (1937).

<sup>25</sup> Bringmann, *Hellenistische Reform und Religionsverfolgung in Judaea* (1983), 110-11.

go and make a treaty with the heathen around us, because ever since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us." According to Josephus (12.385) it was Menelaus who "had compelled his nation to violate their own laws." 2 Macc. 13:3-8 also has Menelaus more or less putting Antiochus up to the religious suppression. Menelaus obtained the office of high priest by going to Antiochus and offering him 300 talents more than Jason did. There is even suspicion that he was not even a priest,<sup>26</sup> since we are told that he had a brother Simon, who, we are informed (2 Macc. 3.4) was of the tribe of Benjamin, and hence not a priest.<sup>27</sup>

Menelaus was interested in power, not in an idealized, syncretistic religion. He was not a sophisticated philosopher or historian of religion. The account (2 Macc.4:39-42) that associates him with temple robbery may contain an element of slander, but it suggests an individual more concerned with personal gain and advancement than with the ideals of religious innovation. We have no religious slogans connected with the reforms.

Why would Menelaus have created a religion that forced on the Jews practices that contravened such deeply ingrained elements of Judaism as circumcision and abstinence from pork? As for Menelaus, three years after the outbreak of the Maccabean revolt, Menelaus helped to arrange an amnesty for the rebels and to restore to the Jews the privilege of adhering to their dietary laws.<sup>28</sup> Apparently, Antiochus Epiphanes came to the realization that the policy of persecuting the Jews brought no advantage to the Hellenists; and so, Antiochus reverted to the previous tolerant policy of himself and of his predecessors; and Menelaus dutifully followed him.

## The role of the masses

Two centuries after the Maccabean revolt we have indications that the number of Jews living in Syria was over a million and that there were approximately three million living in Palestine.<sup>29</sup> Josephus (*War* 2.280) states that a crowd of no less than three million Jews implored the Roman governor Cestius Gallus, when he visited Jerusalem at Passover in 65 C.E. to have compassion upon them in view of the excesses of the procurator Florus. If they had been strongly motivated, surely a large number of Jews might have gathered to protest the attacks, whether by the Syrian rulers or by the high priests against Jewish tradition. But we hear of no such protests. Indeed, there is no evidence that the Maccabean resistance was a class war, i.e. a "peasants' revolt."

In fact, we read (1 Macc. 1.11) that at the time of the accession of Antiochus Epiphanes "there came forth from Israel certain lawless (παράνομοι) men who persuaded many (πολλούς), 'Let us go and make a treaty with the heathen because ever since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us.'" (1 Macc. 1.41). Then the king ordered all in his kingdom to become one people (1 Macc. 1.42) and that everyone should forsake his own laws. All the heathen acquiesced in the decree of the king (1 Macc. 1.43); even many from Israel consented to his worship and sacrificed to idols and profaned the Sabbath.

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<sup>26</sup> If Menelaus was, indeed, not a priest, we would expect bitter opposition and mass demonstration by the Jewish populace, and there is no indication of this in either of the two books of Maccabees.

<sup>27</sup> Simon, however, was captain of the temple, a priestly office (2 Macc. 3.4).

<sup>28</sup> Gruen (above, n. 23) 261.

<sup>29</sup> L.H. Feldman, "Conversion to Judaism in Classical Antiquity," in my *Judaism and Hellenism Reconsidered* (Leiden: Brill, 2006) 219.



Further (1 Macc. 1.12), we read: "The plan seemed good in their eyes, and some of the people went eagerly to the king, who gave them permission to perform the rites of the heathen. They (1 Macc. 1:14) [the Jews] built a gymnasium in Jerusalem in accordance with the rites of the heathen. They (1.15) also subjected themselves to uncircumcision and stood aloof from the sacred law. Many Israelites (1 Macc. 2:16) came forward to them [to renounce G-d] Thus they joined the heathen, and sold themselves to do evil." Nowhere do we find that the initiative came from the Syrians. Yet, significantly, we know of no riots or demonstrations against Jason's innovations.

To be sure, we do hear that when Menelaus stole some of the golden temple vessels (2 Macc.4.39), there was rioting in the streets. Apparently, the rioters were so numerous that they drove off the soldiers sent by Lysimachus, who was governing in Menelaus' absence and actually managed to kill Lysimachus himself. Moreover, after the riot was over, we hear that the *gerousia*, "the council of elders," sent a delegation to complain to the king (2 Macc. 4:4).

Moreover, and most remarkably (2 Macc. 12:39-40), when Judah the Maccabee in 164 B.C.E. was leading his warriors against the Syrian general Gorgias, and when, after the battle, Judah's men went to recover the bodies of those who had fallen in order that they might lie with their relatives in their ancestral tombs (2 Macc. 12.40), they discovered, under the shirt of each of the slain, consecrated objects of the idols of Jamnia, which the Law forbade to the Jews. It then became clear to all that this was the reason that these men had fallen. Apparently, many of the very soldiers in Judah's army saw no contradiction between their fighting against the violation of the Torah's condemnation of idolatry and carrying these idolatrous objects.

## Hasidim (Hasideans)

Tcherikover<sup>30</sup> argues that resistance to Hellenization had developed in Jerusalem, led by the Hasidim, who drove Jason out of the city and tried to restore the status quo that prevailed under Onias III. They were not, however, a separate organized group. This revolt caused Antiochus to sack Jerusalem on his way back from Egypt. Indeed, the Hasidim were the strongest defenders of the Jewish religious tradition. They were apparently the chief scribes and authoritative interpreters of the commandments of the Torah, but the identification of the Pharisees as heirs of the Hasidim is unfounded. According to 1 Maccabees 2:42, at the beginning of the revolt by Mattathias, a company of Hasidim joined Mattathias. They were an exceedingly forceful group, each one offering himself willingly in defense of the Law. Only after more than a thousand persons were burned to death in a cave because they did not wish to resist Antiochus, did the Hasidim see the folly of their policy and join the rebellion; but as soon as the Jews received religious freedom, the Hasidim withdrew from the Hasmoneans and refused to participate in the struggle for political independence. The fact that the Hasidim withdrew from the Maccabean fighters and regarded the struggle as a religious one only constitutes a fundamental split in the Jewish response to Hellenism and to the struggle for political independence, comparable to the attitude of Neturei Carta in Jerusalem in modern times.

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<sup>30</sup> Tcherikover (*op. cit.*) 186-203. Cf. Philip Davies, "Hasidim in the Maccabean Period," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1977) 127-140, who argues that the Hasidim were not a separate sect but rather all Jews who were concerned to preserve their law and traditions in the face of Hellenism.

## Conclusion

The most influential modern scholars--Elias Bickerman, Victor Tcherikover, and Martin Hengel<sup>31</sup>-- who have dealt with the Jewish revolt against the Syrian Greeks in the second century B.C.E. look upon it as a civil war between Hellenized reformed Jews, who sought to integrate the Jews in Greek culture, including Greek religion, and the traditional Torah-abiding Jews. In 198 B.C.E., when the Syrian king, Antiochus III, conquered Palestine, he established the policy of granting religious independence to the Jews. His son, Antiochus IV, in his financial need for money to maintain his continuous struggle against the Ptolemaic kings of Egypt, abolished these privileges and established a Greek gymnasium in Jerusalem. Since the ruler of the land had the power to appoint whomever he wished as high priest (Josephus, *Antiquities* 12.237), who in turn directed the religious worship in the land, Antiochus opened the high priesthood to the one who offered the most money, namely Jason, who, in turn, deposed the pious high priest, Onias, and abolished the traditional Jewish worship (2 Maccabees 4:11). That it was Jews who took the initiative to violate the traditional practices of Judaism is clear from the comment (1 Macc.1:11) that at the time when Antiochus became king "there came forth from Israel certain lawless men" (παράνομοι). That these lawless men were Jews may be seen from the statement that these men are contrasted with the non-Jews around them from whom they are separated, since we are told that they declared that they said, "Let us go and make a treaty with the heathen around us, because ever since we separated from them, many evils have come upon us." Some of these people, again clearly Jews, "went eagerly to the king, who gave them permission to perform the rites of the heathen." It is these people who built a gymnasium and subjected themselves to uncircumcision and disobeyed the law of the Torah. It is significant that the gymnasium was built in 175 or 174 B.C.E. and that almost eight years passed before Mattathias and his sons started the revolt (1Macc. 2:45). The cause of the revolt was Antiochus' attack on Jerusalem in 169-168 B.C.E. and his need for money to carry on wars and to pay his troops and the theft from the Temple by Jason and Menelaus in return for the high priesthood.

In summary, the Jews, as today, were divided: there were varying degrees of religiosity, some of whom identified with Menelaus or Jason in extreme admiration for Greek culture and Greek ways and the Greek language, some of whom had the political aim of a Jewish state, and, of course, there were the Asidaioi, the ancestors of the Neturei Carta.

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<sup>31</sup> Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974) 247-254.

# Intriguing Halakhot of Hanukah

Rabbi Dr. David Horwitz

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

*Note : the following presentation is based on various insights by R. Bezalel Zolty, zatz"l, the former chief Rabbi of Jerusalem who passed away in 1982, and taken from his work Mishnat Ya'avetz.*

## Hoda'ah and the Mitzvah of Ner Hanukah

The celebrated text in the Gemara concerning Hanukah, *Shabbat* 21b, concludes as follows:

*The next year, Hazal made the eight days yamim tovim accompanied with Hallel and **hoda'ah**.*

**Shabbat 21b**

לשנה אחרת קבעום ועשאום ימים טובים בהלל  
והודאה.  
שבת כא:

What is meant by *hoda'ah*? According to Rashi, *hoda'ah* signifies the recitation of the '*al ha-nisim* prayer during the *hoda'ah* blessing in *Shemoneh Esreh*:

*[These days] were only instituted to recite Hallel and to recite 'al ha-nisim during the hoda'ah blessing.*

**Rashi, Shabbat 21b**

שלא נקבעו אלא לקרות הלל ולומר על הניסים  
בהודאה.  
רש"י, שבת כא:

R. Eliyahu Mizrachi, in his commentary on the French medieval work by R. Moshe of Coucy known as *Semag* (the acronym of *Sefer Mitzvoth Gedolot*) at *Hilkhot Hanukah*, raised the following question: Why did the Gemara *only* mention Hallel and *hoda'ah*, thanksgiving, but not the actual mitzvah to light the Hanukah menorah?

In answering this question, R. Zolty, in *Mishnat Yavetz, Heleq Orah Hayyim, siman #73*, first notes the following: From many *rishonim* we perceive a connection between the mitzvah to light Hanukah candles and lights of the menorah of the Temple, the *Bet Ha-Miqdash*. Some sources, with the relevant examples that they point to, are as follows:

- (A) **Rabad, at *Hilkhot Berakhot* 11:15**. Since the rabbinic mitzvah of *ner Hanukah* is patterned after the biblical commands concerning *nerot she-be-miqdash*, Hazal made the parameters of the text of the blessing over *ner hanukah*, even though the mitzvah is only of rabbinic origin, as if it was a Torah law. That is why the blessing is "*le-hadliq ner*" and not "*al hadlaqat ner*." (The *Avnei Nezer* expands this notion to insist that certain *humrot* regarding the structure of the Hanukah menorah be adopted, in accordance with the structure of the menorah in the *Bet Ha-Miqdash*.)

- (B) **Rashi Shabbat 22b: *hadlaqah oseh mitzvah*.** This issue concerns the nature of the mitzvah to light Hanukah lights. Is the mitzvah to (actively and formally) *light* them, or only that “they should be lit” (passive)? (According to this second view, the active and formal requirement would then concern the *hanahah*, the placement of the lights, which does not concern us here.) The *reason* one would hold that with respect to Hanukah, *hadlaqah oseh mitzvah* is precisely because that is the nature of the law concerning the menorah in the *Beit Ha-Miqdash*.
- (C) **Ran (R. Nissim of Gerona):** How should one understand the Talmudic opinion that declares use of the light of the Hanukah menorah- even a mitzvah use- to be prohibited? The explanation is because this was the law concerning the menorah in the *Beit Ha-Miqdash*.

R. Zolty then concludes: Perhaps the nature of the rabbinic decree to light Hanukah candles was to promote a *zekher*, a remembrance of the *nerot* in the *bet ha-miqdash*. This concept was the basis of all the laws detailed above. Hence, as long as the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Beit ha-Miqdash* was standing, there was no need of any law *le-zekher nerot* in the *Beit ha-Miqdash*. At that time, although the commemoration of the restoration of the Temple by the Maccabees had already commenced, the only specific observances of the holiday of Hanukah were through the recitation of Hallel and *hoda'ah* (which is understood by Rashi, as we have explained, as meaning the recitation of *'al ha-nisim*). In sum, the Rabbis had not yet decreed that one should light *nerot* Hanukah, because there was no need to, as the Temple was still standing!

R. Zolty suggested that the decree to light Hanukkah candles occurred later, after the destruction of the Temple by the Romans. Thus, Rashi's mention *davka* (specifically) of insertions into our prayers as an expression of *hoda'ah* but not the mitzvah to light Hanukkah candles is, consequently, quite precise. The original Talmudic passage dealing with *hoda'ah* states *le-shanah aheret*: that is, the immediate year after the re-establishment of the *Beit Ha-Miqdash* by Judah Maccabeus and his colleagues. Only two hundred years later, after the *hurban*, did the obligation of lighting Hanukkah candles commence.

Can we point to any *rishon* who disputes Rashi and explicitly claims that Hazal had already decreed that every individual household should perform the mitzvah of *hadlaqat nerot Hannukah* while the *bet ha-miqdash* was still standing? R. Zolty points toward the Rambam:

For this reason, **the rabbis of that generation**, enacted that these eight days that begin on the 25<sup>th</sup> of Kislev are days of Joy and Hallel and that one should light candles each of the eight evenings at the entrances of the home to display and publicize the miracle. These days are called Hanukah and one is prohibited to eulogize or fast [on these days] just like on Purim. Lighting of the candles is a rabbinic mitzvah just as reading of the Megillah is.

**Rambam, Hilkhot Hanukah 3:3**

ומפני זה התקינו חכמים שבאותו הדור שיהיו שמונת ימים האלו שתחלתן כ"ה בכסליו ימי שמחה והלל ומדליקין בהן הנרות בערב על פתחי הבתים בכל לילה ולילה משמונת הלילות להראות ולגלות הנס. וימים אלו הן הנקראין חנוכה והן אסורין בהספד ותענית כימי הפורים. והדלקת הנרות בהן מצוה מדברי סופרים כקריאת המגילה.  
**רמב"ם הלכות חנוכה ג:ג**

According to the Rambam, however, the question of R. Eliyahu Mizrahi concerning Rashi re-emerges. Why did the original Talmudic Baraita not mention the issue of *hadlaqat ner Hanukah*?

R. Zolty answers this question by suggesting that Rambam interpreted the word *hoda'ah* differently than Rashi did. How did the Rambam explain what the word *hoda'ah* in the Baraita means? R. Isaiah of Trani, Italy, in his work *Piskei Riaz* interpreted *hoda'ah* with the following phrase: *modim 'al hanes shel Hanukah be-hadlaqat ha-nerot*. Evidently, he disputed Rashi's interpretation of *hoda'ah* as *'al ha-nisim* and explains that it refers to the actual lighting of the *nerot* Hanukah. Thus, the Baraita *does* mention the mitzvah of *nerot* Hanukah with its mention of the word *hoda'ah*. Do we have evidence regarding Rambam's stance concerning this *mahloqet* between Rashi and the *Piskei Riaz*? R. Zolty argued that we possess circumstantial evidence that he agreed with the interpretation of the *Piskei Riaz*. The evidence is as follows:

When the Rambam, in the aforementioned *halakhot* in *Hilkhot Hanukah*, records both circumstances that led to the holiday and the subsequent laws that Hazal established, he does *not* mention *'al ha-nisim*. Rambam only mentions the *'al ha-nisim* addition to our prayers in *Hilkhot Tefilah* (2:13). There he states that on Hanukah and Purim we mention *'al ha-nisim*. The very fact that he lumps Hanukah and Purim together, R. Zolty notes, is an indication that he did not see that there was a special, unique "Hanukah decree" (*takanah*) to recite *'al ha-nisim*. Rather, it was a *Hilkhot Tefilah* oriented *din* (law). That is, the category of this recitation is subsumed under a broader rubric of "prayers on rabbinic holidays."

Returning to the original Baraita, the language employed by the Gemara is *le-shanah aheret*, there was a *takanah* of *hallel* and *hoda'ah*. One can reasonably infer that Hazal instituted a specific *takanah* concerning Hanukah. If the above analysis is correct, how then did the Rambam interpret the word *hoda'ah*? He had to "fill it in" with some content! R. Zolty argued that it is appealing to claim, for this very reason, that Rambam agreed with the *Piskei Riaz* and interpreted *hoda'ah* *not* as Rashi did, but regarding the obligation to light Hanukah candles.

One might add to this by noting that the publicizing of the miracle (*pirsumei nisah*) that is entailed by lighting the candles represents a non-verbal *hoda'ah 'al ha-nes*.

R. Meir Simhah Ha-Cohen of Dvinsk, known as the *Or Sameah*, the title of his Maimonidean commentary, similarly points out that according to the Rambam, the mitzvah to sell one's clothing for *nerot* Hanukah applies even to the additional *nerot* one uses for *hiddur mitzvah*. Why? Because of the mitzvah to additionally *thank God* for the miracles that He bestowed upon us. Evidently, he also understands that the mitzvah of lighting *nerot Hanukah* is a fulfillment (a *qiyyum*) of *hoda'ah*. R. Zolty continues that this approach can be used to explain how the Rambam can interpret that in the immediate aftermath of the victory of the Hashmonaim, Hazal inaugurated the mitzvah of lighting candles. It is, according to this view, consistent with the Baraita, for according to the Rambam, *hadlaqat nerot Hanukah* is a non-verbal expression of the mitzvah of *Hoda'ah* that Hazal instituted.

R. Zolty admitted that one can still query why, according to the Rambam, the Baraita of "*le-shanah aheret*" did not explicitly use the term *hadlaqat nerot* Hanukah at all. Why did it instead employ the word *hoda'ah* which at best is only an *oblique* reference to the mitzvah of *hadlaqat nerot* Hanukah? He answered that question by first pointing to another famous crux in the Rambam's presentation of *Hilkhot Hanukah*. Why did the Rambam mention (*Hilkhot Hanukah* 3:3) that *hadlaqat hanerot* on Hanukah is a rabbinic mitzvah (*mi-divrei Soferim*) "just as *Qeriat*

*Ha-Megillah* (on Purim) is?” (The assumption of the question, of course, is that the Rambam was not just writing to buttress Rabbinic Judaism in contradistinction to the Karaites, but was emphasizing some legal, *halakhic* point.) To show how this fact is pertinent to the answer, some other factors have to be introduced.

The early Maimonidean commentator known by the name of his work *Maggid Mishnah*, among many other commentators upon the Rambam, discusses the internal contradictions of the Rambam regarding the question whether *kavanah*, intention, is a necessary prerequisite to fulfill a mitzvah or not. Regarding *matzah* (*Hilkhhot Hametz u-Matzah* 6:3), he says that *kavanah* is *not* necessary. Regarding *shofar* (*Hilkhhot Shofar* 2:4), he says that it *is* necessary. With regards to *Megillah* (*Hilkhhot Megillah* 2:5) he also says that *kavanah* is necessary, in line with his view regarding *shofar*. *Maggid Mishnah* (*Hilkhhot Megillah*, *ad loc.*) adds, however, an intriguing comment. Perhaps, he writes, everyone would agree that in the case of *Megillah* one needs *kavanah*. What does that mean? One might argue that, on the contrary, because the mitzvah to read the *Megillah* is only rabbinic, everyone would be more lenient! Indeed, the *Magen Abraham* on this score cites the *Teshuvot* of Radvaz who makes precisely this point.

Perhaps one could suggest that because *keriat ha-Megillah* only entails reading and listening and no other action (such as, e.g., *eating matzah*), one needs *kavanah* that “with this *qeria* (of oneself or of the *ba'al qeria* that one is listening to) he is fulfilling the mitzvah” in this case. (This would be in line with *Maggid Mishnah*’s own comments in *Hilkhhot Shofar* 2:4, where he suggests that as there is no *ma'aseh* in *hearing* the sounds of the *shofar*, one needs *kavanah*.) R. Zolty does not make that point, however, but goes in another direction. He suggests that it is the aspect of *publicizing of the miracle*, *pirsumei nisa* that *Qeri'at ha-Megillah* has that necessitates the requirement of *kavanah*. Now, *pirsumei nisa* means the public *hoda'ah* for the miraculous works of God. This is what must be done with *kavanah*.

With this background, R. Zolty continued, we can understand the legal ramification of the Rambam’s equation between Hanukah and Purim. With regard to both these holidays, we have exceptions to the general rule of *mitzvot ein tzerikhot kavanah*. Both of them entail the aspect of publicizing of the miracles of God, and *therefore* both the mitzvah of *hadlaqat ner Hanukah* and that of *qeria ha-Megillah* must be performed with *kavanah*.

R. Zolty continued even further. We can now also understand why the original “Hanukah Baraita,” in *Massekhet Shabbat*, *davka* used the phrase *hoda'ah* and did not directly mention *hadlaqat nerot*. According to the Rambam, the Baraita was also obliquely trying to teach this *din* that as *hadlaqat nerot* is *mishum hoda'ah*, that is, it is a *qiyyum* of *pirsumei nisa* in this fashion. An important corollary of this view is that if one lights the Hanukah lights without *kavanah*, then one has not fulfilled his *hiyyuv*, his obligation!

Why then, did the Rambam not explicitly mention that *ner Hanukah* is *be-khlal hoda'ah* mentioned in the Baraita? R. Zolty replied that he didn’t need to. He had already put the conceptual substructure into place. Since at *Hilkhhot Hanukah* 3:3 he had already equated Hanukah and Megillah, and this has been explained as referring to the issue of *kavanah*, and since he had already mentioned that the essence of the mitzvah of Hanukah is *pirsumei nisa*, that is, to make the Divine miracle, the *nes* known, and to increase the praise (*shevah*) of God and

thanks (*hoda'ah*) to Him, Rambam already implied the correlation between the formal mitzvah of *ner Hanukah* and the concept of *hoda'ah* mentioned in the original Baraita. All one has to do, is to put all the pieces together. That is indeed what R. Zolty did.

The Gemara (*Shabbat* 24a) has a query: should one mention Hanukah in *Birkat Ha-Mazon* (Grace After Meals) or not? On the one hand, the Talmud reasons, since the day is special in the Jewish calendar only on a rabbinic level, perhaps one should not have to. On the other hand, there certainly is the value of *pirsumei nisa*, which should mandate that we do indeed mention Hanukah in *Birkat Ha-Mazon* on Hanukah. The Gemara then writes that the law concerning *Birkat Ha-Mazon* is the same as that of *tefillah*, that is, one should mention it in *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

Rashi *ad loc.* writes that as the celebrated Baraita concerning Hanukah mentions *hoda'ah*, one certainly already knew that one should recite '*al ha-nisim* in *tefillah*. The question that this Talmudic passage subsequently raised only concerned the *Birkat Ha-Mazon*. Tosafot adds that since *tefillah* is public (*be-tzibbur*), there naturally is an element of *pirsumei nisa*. The Gemara had thought that *perhaps* since *Birkat Ha-Mazon* is recited privately, in one's house, one should not have to say '*al ha-nisim*, for there is no public *pirsumei nisa* involved. The conclusion, of course, is that even in one's home, there is an element of publicizing the miracles by inserting added paragraphs of praise to our *Birkat Ha-Mazon*.

But Tosafot goes on to wonder at the placement of this query. It is, as we mentioned, on *Shabbat* 24a. It should have been placed at the beginning of the Talmud's discussions concerning Hanukah, at the *sugya* (portion), at *Shabbat* 21b, immediately after the original Baraita. Moreover, one can ask a more general question: Why does the Gemara nowhere ask a similar question regarding the mention of '*al ha-nisim* during *Birkat Ha-Mazon* on Purim? Since, according to Rashi, the mention of '*al ha-nisim* is not, as the Rambam holds, a general "*Hilkhot Tefilah*" *takanah*, but a function of the specific "*Hanukah*" legislation, and we do not find any specific Purim legislation of additions to the *davening mi-shum hoda'ah*, one might have thought that one should *not* be required to say '*al ha-nisim* on Purim. Yet it seems that the obligation to say '*al ha-nisim* on Purim, on the other hand, is not doubted!

These questions add strength to the position of the Rambam, R. Zolty argued. That is, the original Baraita of *hoda'ah* does *not* refer to '*al ha-nisim*, as Rashi understands, but is itself an oblique reference to the mitzvah of *hadlaqat ner Hanukah*. The mitzvah to mention '*al ha-nisim*, on the other hand, reflects a law subsumed under the rubric of *Hilkhot Tefillah*, and naturally occurs *both* on Hanukah and on Purim. This is why the Rambam nowhere in *Hilkhot Hanukah* mentions the obligation to recite '*al ha-nisim* on Hanukah. Moreover, the Tannaitic source of this law is the Tosefta in *Massekhet Berakhot* (3:10), in the midst of other *Hilkhot Tefilah*, and which states that one must recite *me'ein ha-me'ora* (words that mention the events that caused us to celebrate this day) on Hanukah and on Purim. This law has as much to do with Purim as with Hanukah, and is not connected in any special or unique way to Hanukah.

According to the Rambam, one may understand the question of the Gemara regarding '*al ha-nisim* in *Birkat ha-Mazon* on Hanukah and its position at the end of the Talmudic passages regarding Hanukah in a new light. Based on the Tosefta in *Berakhot*, one can already infer that

one has a *Hilkhhot Tefillah* obligation to recite *'al ha-nisim* on Hanukah and Purim. The Baraita in *Shabbat 21b*, however, specifically discusses *Hilkhhot Hanukah* issues, topics that are conceptually specific to Hanukah. Only after discussing *Hilkhhot Hanukah* related to the Baraita, the Gemara proceeds to discuss other *Hilkhhot Hanukah* in the broader sense of the term, that is, those laws that are relevant during the *time period* of Hanukah but which conceptually are *Hilkhhot Tefillah*. Hence it raises only at that juncture the question whether or not the *Hilkhhot Tefillah* obligation to say *'al ha-nisim* also extends to *Birkat ha-Mazon* or not.

Moreover, when the Rambam in *Hilkhhot Berakhot* records the conclusion that one indeed does recite *'al ha-nisim* on Hanukah, he combines it with the obligation to recite *'al ha-nisim* on Purim as well. For according to the Rambam, both with regard to *tefillah* and with regard to *Birkat Ha-Mazon*, the obligations to add *'al ha-nisim* on Hanukah and on Purim remain one Halakah.

Finally, I think that it is important to note how R. Zolty's approach to the Rambam can serve as an example of a key rule of Maimonidean interpretation: the *placement* of certain *halakhot* in the *Mishneh Torah* of the Rambam (in this case, rules concerning Hanukah that Rambam places in *Hilkhhot Hanukah*, versus rules that he places in *Hilkhhot Tefillah*) can shine much light upon their conceptual nature. Both the mitzvah of *ner Hanukah* and the recitation of *'al ha-nisim* possess separate and distinct functions that supplement and complement each other on the holiday of lights.



# A Tale of Two Women

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*Through the merit of righteous women of the generation were the Israelites redeemed [from Egypt]*

**Sotah 11a**

בשכר נשים צדקניות שבאותו  
הדור נגאלו  
סוטה יא.

That our tradition has preserved the memory of Judith (Yehudit) and Chana, two women, as the heroines of Chanuka alongside the memory of Yehuda HaMaccabee and his family of warriors is quite natural, at one level. After all, we associate Esther alongside Mordechai with the holiday of Purim, the righteous women who kept alive the flame of Judaism along with Moshe and Aharon with Pesach, and Ruth, the convert whose descendant was King David, together with Boaz with the holiday of Shavuot, and we remember Sarah and Chana, the mother of Shmuel HaNavi, on Rosh Hashana.

And yet, perhaps the matter is not so simple. Who was Chana (or Miriam as she is sometimes called)? Her story appears in *2 Maccabees* 7 where she, along with her seven sons, has been arrested by the king's men and is being tortured in the presence of the king for refusing "to touch [!] the forbidden flesh of swine."<sup>33</sup> The mother, described as "awakening her womanly power with masculine fervor" (7: 21), encourages her sons to defy the king and offer their lives to preserve God's laws. Soon after her last son is murdered, she too dies. In going beyond- one might say overcoming- her role as mother and standing tall as a defender of the faith the "mother was exceedingly amazing and worthy of being remembered" (7:20). And remembered she is.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>32</sup> This verb is sometimes translated as to eat. Is this ambiguity in the Greek meant to recall Gen 3:3?

<sup>33</sup> Daniel R. Schwartz, *2 Maccabees* (Walter de Gruyter: Berlin, 2008), 7:1, page 296, and footnote on p. 300. Whatever historical memory of persecution by Antiochus is reflected here, the text, as Professor Schwartz and others have pointed out, seems to refer to Jeremiah 15:9 and the bereft mother who loses her seven sons in war, as well as the Song of Chana (the other Chana), in 1 Samuel 2:5 who speaks of a barren woman who finally gives birth to seven (that is many) sons. It is not impossible that the martyred mother over time became identified by the name Chana precisely because of the seven sons.

<sup>34</sup> Eleazar, whose heroic martyrdom is described in detail in Chapter 6 of *2 Maccabees*, is mentioned by name in the piyyut "Odekha Ki Anafta" by R. Joseph B. Solomon of Carcassone (11<sup>th</sup> century) (I. Davidson, *Otsar ha-Shir veHa-Piyyut*, (1970, Vol I, #1651) recited for centuries as a Yotzer for the (first) Shabbat of Chanuka. See *Sefer Maharil – Minhagim* Hilkhos Chanuka section 10. For the opening phrase compare Isaiah 12:1). His story is not as widely known as the story of the mother and her seven sons. This is all the more interesting in light of the Sigrid Peterson's observation that calling a person by name is reflective of the status of the person. The fact that Eleazar is given a name, and a priestly name at that, helps to demonstrate his elevated status. The mother, of lower societal status, remains anonymous. Peterson concludes that the two stories, found consecutively in *2 Maccabees* form an *inclusio* to describe acts of martyrdom from the highest members of society, to the lowest. See Sigrid Peterson, "Naming the Anonymous: HB/OT and Other Sources for Naming the Mother with Seven Sons of the Maccabean Martyrdoms." Paper presented to the PSCO, May 14, 2004.

Judith is, if anything, even more fierce and filled with “masculine fervor.” Since the *Book of Judith* is not part of the standard day school curriculum, it may be useful to summarize its contents. The story (and scholars have long debated whether it is entirely fictional or contains at least elements of historical truth) is set in Assyria<sup>35</sup> during the reign of its king Nevuchadnetzar (not to be confused, clearly, with the Babylonian Nevuchadnetzar, the destroyer of the [First] Temple in Jerusalem.) The time frame of the story is some point after the rebuilding of the Temple, and some scholars believe that the book was composed during the late Persian or more likely the Hellenistic period. Others believe it was composed, or at least revised, after the Maccabean revolt. The Assyrians, in any event, were engaged in a war with Arphaxad, the King of Medes, and Nevuchadnetzar demanded that various city-states send troops to support his war efforts. We are not told about any formal alliance requiring that such assistance be offered, or why he believed that he was entitled to this help. The putative allies, who we are told did not fear Nevuchadnetzar, ignored his command leaving the Assyrians to fight on their own. The Jews, inhabitants of Palestine, were among the many nations who failed to send help. Once the war with Medes was over, Nevuchadnetzar vowed to seek revenge against those who had not come to his aid, and sent his general Holofores to exact that revenge.

As Holofores made short work of the coastal (non-Jewish) cities, the Jews of Judea (here expanded geographically to include much of Samaria) fortified their cities and prepared for battle. They were worried that, having only recently returned from the Babylonian exile and rebuilt their Temple, will be exiled yet again. Hope is dimmed as Holofores besieges the city of Bethulia (a city unknown to history, although the name is suggestive) and cuts off its water supply. The leaders of the city, in desperation, call for five days of prayer. If God does not provide salvation during that time frame, the leadership would then surrender the city.

It is at this point that Judith is introduced. She is “of goodly countenance and very beautiful to behold” (*Judith* 8:7). She has been widowed for three years and but continues to wear her mourning clothes. Unlike the city leaders who have all but surrendered, Judith believes that God will help those who trust in Him and are willing to fight. Judith dons her “armor”- the fine clothing she wore when she was married- and prepares for “battle”.

Judith has lived her life to this point as an exemplary Jewish woman, and will return to the role of virtuous widow at the close of the story. With her city and her people in grave danger, though, Judith, like the mother of the seven boys, rises to the occasion. It is she, and not the male leaders, who develops a plan to save the city and the country.

As a first step, Judith offers a heartfelt prayer asking God’s help so that her mission will be successful. She then removes her widow’s clothes, bathes and perfumes herself, and puts on her finest clothes. Armed only with a basket of food, Judith and her maid pass out of the city and make their way to the enemy’s camp. She convinces the Assyrian soldiers that she has escaped

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<sup>35</sup> Assuming a Second Temple period setting for the story (as seems plain from the text, though not, apparently to all readers), Assyria is an anachronism since the Assyrian Empire weakened and then fell (to the Medes and Babylonians) in the final decades of the First Temple period. Historians have essentially thrown up their hands and the book is not viewed as being historically accurate.

from the city and that she has information (which she will only share with the general) that will enable them to capture the city.

Judith is permitted to enter and leave the city over the next several days having won the confidence of the Assyrians. Holofernes, whose passion for Judith has increased over the course of these days, arranges a small dinner party to which she is invited and slowly drinks himself into a stupor. Since Holofernes had arranged to spend the night with Judith, his servants have taken the night off and Judith and her maid find themselves alone with the sleeping general. Judith takes the general's sword, swings it with all of her might, and cuts off Holofernes' head. She and her maid then wrap the head, place it in her basket, and depart the Assyrian camp. At this point, they return to the city, show the Jewish leaders the severed head of the enemy's general and urge an attack against the enemy camp. In reality, by the time the Israelites arrive at the enemy camp they find that the Assyrians, upon discovering that their leader has been killed, have fled the scene. Having succeeded in her mission, Judith removes her festive clothing and resumes the life of the virtuous widow until her death at the ripe old age of 105. Chana, the martyred and heroic mother, and Judith, the clear-eyed and brave warrior, stand alongside- or perhaps behind- Judah Maccabee and his brothers as symbols of the story of Chanuka. But what sort of role models are these? Moreover, what are we to make of the fact that these characters emerge from extra-biblical or non-rabbinic sources?

The earliest source of the story of Chana is *2 Maccabees*, a work apparently written by a religious and passionate Jew living in the Diaspora shortly after Judah's victory over Nicanor and his army (and supposedly based upon an earlier work).<sup>36</sup> The original language of composition is thought by some to be Hebrew, but only the Greek version remains. Variations of the "Chana" story appear with certain modifications in three rabbinic sources- in the Talmud, *Gittin* 57b, and in the midrash, *Eicha Rabbah* 1 and *Pesikta Rabbati* 43. In *2 Maccabees*, the brave mother is known simply as a woman. She remains anonymous in the Talmud, and is referred to as Miriam in the two midrashim. Interestingly enough, the *Pesikta Rabbati* version is found in a discussion of *Shirat Chana* (from the *Book of Samuel*) on the phrase (Psalms 113:9) *moshivi akeret habayit*, (He restores the barren woman to her home) which likely explains how the name of the martyred mother morphed into Chana.

Judith's story is even harder to find in rabbinic sources. There is no mention of Judith in the Talmud and in the classic Midrashim (though there are several versions of her story in midrashim written in the Middle Ages.) One should also note that the *Book of Judith* is not set during the Hasmonean period and there is no obvious connection between the narrative of *Judith* and the narrative of *The Book of Maccabees*. As we shall see momentarily, though, later versions of the story transport her to the time of the Maccabees and from Bethulia to Jerusalem.

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<sup>36</sup> See Professor Schwartz's introduction to his edition of *2 Maccabees* (footnote 2) for his view that the original intent of the book was to celebrate "Nicanor day" and that the book was reorganized and supplemented at a later point so that it now appears to celebrate primarily the cleansing of the Temple. An extensive bibliography is appended to the introduction. For an alternative view of *2 Maccabees*, and how its perspective and attitude differs from those of *1 Maccabees*, see Joseph Efron, "The Hasmonean Revolt in Modern Historiography," in his *Studies on the Hasmonean Period* (Brill 1987), pp.14-20.

From the time of the rishonim on, we see numerous references to the two women especially in halakhic literature, but also in late midrashim, discussing the laws and customs of Chanuka. For example, there are versions of the Judith story found in J. Eisenstein's *Otzar Ha-Midrashim* (New York, 1915)<sup>37</sup>, which place Judith as living in Jerusalem during the Greek siege of the city, and transforms Holorfornes into a Greek general. There is also some development in Judith's role during the feast itself – in *The Book of Judith* it appears that Judith herself consumed the food that she brought from home (kosher food being in short supply at the Assyrian camp), whereas the extended version that Eisenstein quotes (p. 207) from *Hemdat ha-Yamim* has her giving him milk from her goatskin container. (Some halakhic sources mention cheese rather than milk). This seems clearly to echo the story of Yael and Sisrah (*Shoftim* 4:19) where Yael indeed fed the fleeing general and gave him milk from a goatskin (*nod ha-halav*). There is also a reference to her in *Sefer Kol Bo*, a frequently cited (anonymous) halakhic work from 13th-14th century Provence,<sup>38</sup> which identifies Judith as the daughter of Yochanan, the High Priest (cohen gadol) (thus elevating her social status – see footnote 3, above). These listings, and others,<sup>39</sup> either help to explain the custom of eating dairy during the holiday of Chanuka or to explain why women refrain from doing *melacha* (labor) on Chanuka, especially while the candles remain lit.

The emergence of the stories of these women in later literature intensifies the original question- why resurrect the stories of these women? Why specifically connect them to the holiday of Chanuka? And why, by highlighting them, downplay the military victory won by the Maccabees? (As is well known, Chaza"l also downplayed the role of the Hashmonaim – see the primary Talmudic sugya dealing with Chanuka, discussed by others in this publication). Perhaps a look into the biblical figures that Chana and Judith most parallel may help us find the meaning that our ancestors identified in these stories.

Chana, as the mother who witnesses the brutal death of her seven sons, resembles Avraham when he went to perform the *Akedah* on his son. Indeed, in *Gittin* 57b a conversation is recorded between the mother and her youngest son, just prior to his demise, in which she instructs her son to deliver the following message to Avraham. You, Avraham, had only one son to offer; I had seven. Your son was spared at the last moment; mine were not. The implicit message is that the service of God is not without sacrifice or pain.

For the story of Judith there are many biblical parallels. Like Devorah, Judith sends men out to battle the enemy (although Judith herself, unlike Deborah, has already struck the key blow). Like Miriam, Judith leads the women in song and dance after a military victory. Like the

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<sup>37</sup> See under Yehudit, pp. 203 and ff.

<sup>38</sup> *Siman* no. 44, *Din Hilchot Chanukah veDin ha-Tefillah*.

<sup>39</sup> See also *Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 670:2, where the custom of eating cheese is mentioned in the gloss by Rav Moshe Isserles, known as the Ramah, and in the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* 139:3. The custom is not found in the *Mishneh Torah* or the *Shulchan Aruch*, both primary sources of halakha for the Sefaradic communities. This is interesting in light of a comment made by Leora Eren Frucht, in "Letter from Modi'in: Hanukka With Two Genders", December 2009/January 2010 Vol. 91 No. 3, that in previous centuries many Sefaradim would set aside one day of Chanuka, often Rosh Chodesh Tevet, for the celebration of women, and that in some communities the deeds of Judith would be recalled.

<http://www.hadassahmagazine.org/site/apps/nlnet/content2.aspx?c=twl6LmN7IzF&b=5724115&ct=7809843>

daughter of Yiftach, Judith spends the rest of her life alone- with no husband and no children. Like Yael, Judith kills the opposing general (although Sisrah is killed after the battle, Holofernes in the midst of the siege and prior to the final battle of the campaign). But perhaps the story that offers the most compelling parallel is one involving Yonatan, the son of Saul (Shaul ha-Melekh). In I Samuel 14, Yonatan is seen as taking matters into his own hands. Frustrated with the cautious battle plan adopted by his father against the Plishtim, Yonatan concludes that if God is on his side, it does not matter if the group of fighters is large or small. Yonatan, with only his apprentice to assist him, creeps into the Plishti camp and waits for the sign that God is going to help. When the sign comes, Yonatan proceeds to attack and in a very short time, manages to kill 20 Plishtim which causes great panic in the Plishti camp and leads to the enemy's full scale. The essence of the character of Judith and Yonatan is the same- they are guided by belief in God, and an unflinching willingness to risk everything for one's people. Their bravery – acting alone against overwhelming odds – leads to the salvation of the nation.

Even after looking at the biblical parallels, we are still left with unanswered questions. The common theme between the two stories of women is that both women exhibit an unswerving belief in God. One dies along with her children as a result of her belief and her refusal to compromise her principles. The other risks her reputation as a God fearing woman in her desire to save her people. But do we wish to elevate martyrdom to be an *a priori* life choice? And do we wish to demonstrate that placing one's life and reputation at risk is admirable? Is that why the stories retained or regained popularity in the Middle Ages and into the modern period? (One might argue that in a sense Chana and Judith drew opposite lessons - would Chana, in Judith's position, have either thought of or have been willing to carry out the bold plan involving, or at least feigned, seduction and abandonment of chastity? Is Chana a religious martyr and Judith a nationalist heroine?)

The holiday of Purim, it is often pointed out, celebrates our physical freedom. There was a decree to kill every Jewish man, woman and child, and through the efforts of Esther and Mordechai and through God's hidden hand, the decree was annulled and the Jews were able to fight off their enemies. Chanuka, on the other hand, celebrates our freedom from religious persecution. But the redemption is not so clear cut. Antiochus (or the Hellenizers) took away our rights to practice mitzvoth, and after Chanuka we were once again able to observe the laws. But even after the wars fought by the Maccabees, many Jews of the time continued their Hellenizing ways including, eventually, members of the Hasmonean dynasty itself. Rabbinic attitudes to the reign of the Hasmoneans - at least those that strayed from traditional practices – may have been impacted by the tradition, later emphasized by the Ramban, that kings of Israel should descend from the tribe of Yehudah.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the authors of *The Book of Judith* and of *2 Maccabees* wished to highlight that yes, there are times when great risks or great sacrifices and martyrdom are justified. And perhaps, a millennium and more later, the rishonim, facing similar choices of martyrdom and risk to reputation sought to find reassurance in the decisions they had to make as well. Either way, these two stories of women have entered into the mainstream Jewish literature and highlight, above all, that women played a key role in the redemption of the Jews during Chanuka.

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<sup>40</sup> See Ramban to Gen. 49:10, "*Lo yassar shevet mi-Yehuda*".

# Hiddur Mitzvah

Rabbi Yonason Sacks

Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS

Adapted from Rabbi Sacks' *Yemei Temimim* on *Pirkei Avos*

*Rebbi stated: What is the just path that a person should choose?*

*Anything that brings glory to oneself and glory from others.*

**Avos, 2:1**

רבי אומר, איזו היא דרך ישרה  
שיבור לו האדם כל שהיא תפארת  
לעשיה ותפארת לו מן האדם  
**אבות ב:א**

Rabeinu Yonah writes that the performance of mitzvos glorifies both HaKadosh Baruch Hu and those who perform them, and is therefore man's ultimate glory. Man should accordingly always strive to fulfill the precept of "*hiddur mitzvah*" by beautifying the mitzvos, as for instance, by buying a beautiful *lulav*, *tallis*, etc.

The Rashbatz, *Magen Avos* 2:1, contends that one may perform a mitzvah in a manner that is a credit to himself, but for which he receives no credit from others, such as if he performs a mitzvah at a time that people consider inappropriate. On the other hand, a person may fulfill a mitzvah in a manner that brings credit from others, but no true credit to himself, such as a person who performs a mitzvah without the proper intent, but in a manner designed to win the approval of others. Our Tanna therefore teaches that mitzvah performance should be both externally as well as internally glorified. Citing the Gemara (*Shabbos* 133b) that recommends building a beautiful *sukkah*, buying a beautiful *lulav*, *shofar*, *tzitzis*, etc. based on the *possuk* (Shemos 15:2) of "זה קלי ואנודהו" (this is my G-d and I will glorify Him) the Rashbatz writes that this is the way to gain the esteem of both one's Maker and one's fellows.

While the above Gemara makes clear that the precept of *hiddur mitzvah* applies to the beautification of a *chefetz shel mitzvah* --the *object* with which one performs a mitzvah, numerous sources appear to extend the concept of *hiddur* -- adornment, to the *manner* in which a mitzvah is performed (*ma'aseh mitzvah*) as well. For example, the Mishnah in *Meseches Pesachim* (99b) teaches that it is forbidden to eat on Erev Pesach from the time of Mincha and beyond. As Rashi and the Rashbam explain, this restriction serves to whet one's appetite for *matzah*, so that its consumption will be performed with a stronger desire, thereby fulfilling the precept of *hiddur mitzvah*. Although Rashi and the Rashbam are referring to the improved quality of an *action* (i.e., the act of eating *matzah*) as opposed to the improved quality of an *object* (i.e., such as purchasing a better quality *matzah*) they nonetheless apply the concept of *hiddur mitzvah*.

Similarly, Tosafos (*Sukkah* 38b, s.v. *Sh'ma*) extend the concept of *hiddur mitzvah* to the mitzvah of *tefillah*, which inherently lacks any physical *chefetz shel mitzvah*. Tosafos deal with the case of an individual who is in the middle of his personal silent recitation of the *Amidah* when the *shliach tzibur* reaches the communal *Kedusha*. While such an individual is halachically

prohibited from *verbally* responding to the *shliach tzibur's Kedusha* (such a response would constitute a *hefsek*, or interruption, of his own silent *Amidah*), the question arises as to whether he has any other options. Tosafos cite the opinion of Rashi in the name of the BaHa"G, who suggests that one should temporarily stop his own prayer and listen silently with the intent to fulfill the obligation of *Kedusha* vicariously through the *shliach tzibur*. By employing the halachic vehicle of "*shomei'a k'oneh*," which posits that listening (to a *beracha*) is considered tantamount to actually reciting the *beracha*, one can fulfill the mitzvah of *Kedusha* without physically uttering a word, thereby avoiding the problem of *hefsek* in his own *Amidah*. Once *Kedusha* concludes, he may continue his own silent *Amidah* from where he left off.

Tosafos themselves, however, question this ruling, citing the Gemara in *Berachos* (21b) that requires one to time the beginning of his silent *Amidah* in a manner that will enable him to have finished by the time the *shliach tzibur* reaches *Kedusha*. According to Rashi, ask Tosafos, why can't one simply begin his *tefillah* at any time, stop and listen attentively when the *shliach tzibur* reaches *Kedusha*, and then resume his prayer? Tosafos therefore disagree with Rashi's suggestion, maintaining that even the mere employment of *shomei'a k'oneh* without any verbal participation constitutes a *hefsek* of one's silent *Amidah* as well. Accordingly, one who finds himself in such a situation would have no option other than to ignore the *shliach tzibur's Kedusha*, and simply continue reciting his personal *Amidah*.

In the course of their analysis, Tosafos parenthetically mention that even if the mechanism of *shomei'a k'oneh* serves to create a virtual halachic equivalency between listening and responding to *Kedusha*, it is nonetheless halachically preferable to verbally respond, as the actual physical involvement in reciting the *Kedusha* constitutes "*hiddur mitzvah*" (see the parallel Tosafos in *Meseches Berachos* 21a s.v. *Ad*). Although the Mitzvah of *Kedusha* clearly does not involve any physical object or *chefetz shel mitzvah*, Tosafos nonetheless apply the concept of *hiddur mitzvah*. Apparently, *hiddur mitzvah* extends beyond the mere beautification of an object used for a mitzvah to include even the *manner* in which the mitzvah is performed.

The *Avnei Nezer* (433) extends the concept of *hiddur mitzvah* of *ma'aseh mitzvah* to the context of the *arba minim* of Sukkos. Citing Rashi, the Ra'avad, and the *Yereim*, the *Avnei Nezer* notes that one fulfills *hiddur mitzvah* by completely binding the *lulav*, *hadasim*, and *aravos* together. "Beautification" in this case is a function of the manner in which one takes the species, as opposed to the actual quality or appearance of the species themselves. The *Avnei Nezer* cites the *Yerushalmi* (*Sukkah* 3:7), which notes the absence of a conjunctive "ו" between the mention of *esrog* and *lulav* along with the presence of a conjunctive "ו" between the mention of *lulav*, *hadasim*, and *aravos* in the *possuk*:

*And you shall take for yourselves on the first day, the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook...*

**Vayikra 23:40**

ולקחתם לכם ביום הראשון פרי עץ הדר  
 כפת תמרים וענף עץ עבת וערבי נחל ...  
 ויקרא כג:מ

From this difference, the *Yerushalmi* derives that the *lulav*, *hadasim*, and *aravos* must be taken together ("*lekicha achas*") in one hand. Given this requirement, binding these three species

together tightly in order to ensure an even greater fulfillment of *lekicha achas* constitutes an act of *hiddur mitzvah*.

In a similar fashion, the BaHa”G explains that one who holds the *arba minim* in an inverted fashion (i.e., not in the manner in which they grew on the tree) does not fulfill his obligation because he has not fulfilled the precept of *hiddur mitzvah*. Although the quality and appearance of the *arba minim* themselves in such a scenario is not at all deficient, the *manner* in which the mitzvah is performed, i.e., in an inverted fashion, does not bring splendor or beauty to the mitzvah.

R’ Asher Weiss (*Minchas Asher*, Shemos 25) further extends this concept to the mitzvah of *bris milah*. *Bris milah* requires that the complete foreskin (*orlah*) be removed, but given the halachic principle of *rubo k’kulo* -- the greater part of something is considered the Halachic equivalent of the entirety, a *milah* which simply removes the majority of the *orlah* is nonetheless considered valid, though not “*mehudar*” (optimal/beautified). *Hiddur*, in the case of *bris milah*, is thus fulfilled through the removal of the entire *orlah* as opposed to the mere majority. R’ Weiss notes that this type of *hiddur* is not simply a beautification of the object of the mitzvah of *bris milah*, but rather an enhancement of the *manner* in which the mitzvah of *milah* is performed, as one conducts a complete cut as opposed to a minimal cut. Because a complete removal of the *orlah* enhances the *manner* in which the mitzvah is performed, removal of any remaining *orlah*, even after the majority has already been removed, may be performed on Shabbos (i.e., at the time of the *bris milah*), since such an action is considered a part of the perfected action of the mitzvah, subsumed within the mitzvah itself. If this *hiddur* was merely a beautification of the object of *milah*, however, R’ Weiss suggests that it would not be permitted on Shabbos.

R’ Weiss cites the mitzvah of *kiddush hachodesh* (Beis Din’s sanctification of the new moon) as another example of *hiddur mitzvah* that pertains to a *ma’aseh mitzvah*. Even if the new moon is clearly visible and the members of Beis Din have seen it for themselves, *hiddur mitzvah* requires that witnesses attest to having seen it, even though the lack of witnesses would not be invalidating. Here, again, there is no physical *chefetz shel mitzvah*, but the concept of *hiddur mitzvah* nonetheless applies.

R’ Weiss adds that, in contrast to the aforementioned examples, *hiddur mitzvah* would *not* apply to the mitzvah of *shechita* (ritual slaughter). Although Halacha’s encouragement of severing the entire windpipe and esophagus – as opposed to the minimally required majority of the two – sounds like a form of *hiddur mitzvah* (i.e., reminiscent of the case of *milah*, in which removing the entirety of the *orlah* as opposed to relying on the majority, constituted *hiddur mitzvah*), this requirement is actually quite different from the aforementioned cases of *hiddur mitzvah*. Rather than “beautifying” or “enhancing” the object or act of the mitzvah, the encouragement of a complete cutting for *shechita* is simply a precautionary measure, in order to keep one from accidentally cutting less than the majority, a situation which would entirely invalidate the *shechita*. R’ Weiss explains that the concept of *hiddur mitzvah* is inapplicable to *shechita* because, as opposed to *milah*, *shechita* is considered to be a “*matir*”- *permit*, as opposed to a classic mitzvah. While all Jewish males are automatically obligated in the mitzvah of *milah* regardless of personal preferences or situations, only one who desires to eat meat must perform *shechita*,



simply in order to render the meat permissible for consumption. Because *shechita* is not a classic “obligation” but rather a “permit,” it is not subject to the principles of *hiddur mitzvah*.

The *Pri Megadim* (O.C. 656:1, M.Z. n. 1) writes that the notion of *hiddur mitzvah* extends even to the fulfillment of a mitzvah in a manner that satisfies the stringencies of all major opinions. For instance, although an *esrog* with a blemish might have been ruled halachically acceptable, *hiddur mitzvah* would still demand that one spend up to a third more to buy an *esrog* that satisfies all opinions of kashrus (see *Be’ur Halacha* there). Similarly, because the *Shulchan Aruch* (O.C. 473:5) rules that the preferred form of *maror* is *chazeres*, romaine lettuce, the *Chok Yaakov* (ibid., n. 22) notes that one should spend up to a third more to buy this preferred form of *maror*.

As a final note, R’ Asher Weiss adds that the concept of *hiddur mitzvah* extends to the person performing the mitzvah as well: by troubling to perform the mitzvah in a beautiful manner and with a beautiful item, a person actually adorns *himself*. This concept is beautifully illustrated by Rashi in *Meseches Yoma* (70a). There, the Gemara describes that after the Kohen Gadol’s public Torah reading on Yom Kippur, every person who had brought a *sefer Torah* to the *Azarah* (i.e., before the start of Yom Kippur) read from it “*l’haros chazuso larabim*” – in order to display its beauty to the masses. Rashi explains:

*To display the beauty of the script and the splendor of its owner who toiled to become beautiful through the mitzvah as it states (Shemos 15:2), "This is my G-d and I will glorify Him," be comely with mitzvos- a beautiful lulav, a beautiful sefer Torah with beautiful parchment, beautiful ink and an expert scribe.*

**Rashi, Meseches Yoma, s.v. L’Haros**

להראות נוי של ספר תורה, ותפארת בעליה שטרם להתנאות במצוה, שנאמר (שמות טו), זה אלי ואנוהו - התנאה לפניו במצות, לולב נאה, ספר תורה נאה, בקלף נאה, בדיו נאה, בלבלר אומן.  
רש"י מסכת יומא ע. ד"ה להראות

Beyond the beauty of the actual scroll, the owner himself is beautified through his meticulous attention to the enhancement of the mitzvah. Indeed, the *Midrash HaGadol* comments on the same *possuk*:

*Be comely with mitzvos, for adorning the mitzvos beautifies a person.*

**Midrash HaGadol, Shemos 15:2**

היה נאה במצוות שהוא נוי לאדם שמהדר במצוות.  
מדרש הגדול, שמות טו:ב

Accordingly, as our Mishnah hints, beautification of the mitzvos is most certainly a “תפארת” “לעשיה”, as it in turn brings glory and beauty to the person who does so.

# Who will Build the Menorah of Mashiach?

Rabbi Mordechai Torczyner

Rosh Beit Midrash, Yeshiva University Torah Mitzion Zichron Dov Beit Midrash of Toronto

עלו ההר והבאתם עץ ובנו הבית וארצה בו ואכבד אמר ד'  
*Ascend the mountain, take wood and build the house,  
and I will desire it and be honored by it; so G-d has spoken.*<sup>41</sup>

## Zecharyah's cryptic vision

Our prophets were often couriers conveying Divine instructions, but they also played a broader role. From the days of Moshe, Aharon, and Miriam, through the first generations of the second Beit HaMikdash, these great men and women heartened the despondent, engaged the disengaged, and rallied the scattered. In the final era of biblical prophecy, Ezra, Nechemiah, Chaggai, Zecharyah and Malachi were charged with inspiring a ragtag group of 42,000 refugees to restore Jewish community, re-establish a Jewish commonwealth, and rebuild the Beit HaMikdash.

Each Divine messenger played a unique part in this mission, and it was Zecharyah's role to be a seer of visions. Whether because of a decline in the level of prophecy<sup>42</sup> or because of an opacity inherent in the distant events he foresaw,<sup>43</sup> the bulk of Zecharyah's canonized chapters consists of fertile images but sparse explanation. One of the best-known of these images is his vision in the third and fourth chapters of his *sefer*, part of which serves as our *haftorah* for the first Shabbat of Chanukah. The message was calibrated for the needs of Zecharyah's generation – but the sentiment it conveys is most relevant for our own day, as well:

*Listen, Yehoshua, the High Priest: You and your colleagues who sit before you, men of wonders, for I will bring My servant, Tzemach. The stone I have placed before Yehoshua, there are seven eyes on the one stone. I will engrave its engraving - this is the word of G-d, Lord of multitudes - and I will remove the sin of that land in one day...*

*And he [a malach] said to me: What do you see? And I said: I have seen a menorah formed entirely of gold, with its bowl on its head and seven lamps upon it, seven and seven*

שמע נא יהושע הכהן הגדול אתה ורעיך  
הישבים לפניך כי אנשי מופת המה כי  
הנני מביא את עבדי צמח: כי הנה האבן  
אשר נתתי לפני יהושע על אבן אחת  
שבעה עינים הנני מפתח פתחה נאם ד'  
צבקות ומשתי את עון הארץ ההיא ביום  
אחד:....  
ויאמר אלי מה אתה ראה ו[י]אמר ראיתי  
והנה מגורת זהב כלה וגלה על ראשה

<sup>41</sup> Chaggai 1:8

<sup>42</sup> Moreh haNevuchim 2:44; Ibn Ezra's introduction to Zecharyah

<sup>43</sup> Abarbanel to Zecharyah 1:8

channels to the lamps upon its head, and two olive trees upon it, one on the right of the bowl and one on its left...

And I declared and said to him: What are these two olive trees, to the right and left of the menorah? And I declared a second time, saying: What are the two olive branches beside the two spouts of gold, which empty the gold [i.e. oil] from themselves? ... And he said to me: These are the two sons of the oil who stand upon [i.e. to serve] the Master of the entire world.

**Zechariah 3:8-9, 4:2-3, 4:11-14**

ושבעה נרתיה עליה שבעה ושבעה  
מוצקות לנרות אשר על ראשה: ושנים  
זיתים עליה אחד מימין הגלה ואחד על  
שמאלה: ...

ואען ואמר אליו מה שני הזיתים האלה  
על ימין המנורה ועל שמאלה: ואען שנית  
ואמר אליו מה שתי שבלי הזיתים אשר  
ביד שני צנתרות הזהב המריקים מעליהם  
הזהב: ... ויאמר אלה שני בני היצהר  
העומדים על אדון כל הארץ:

**זכריה ג:ח-ט, ד:ב-ג, ד:יא-יד**

This vision begs an explanation. Who is Tzemach? What is the symbolism in a seven-eyed stone? What is the message of a menorah which is fed not by reservoirs atop its branches but by independent olive trees?

## Zechariah's message: The future is in your hands

The answers to our first two questions depend upon which era Zechariah was addressing – his own day, or an ultimate messianic time. "Tzemach", meaning *growth*, refers to a leader whom G-d will aid and enlarge; this may refer to Zerubavel,<sup>44</sup> the Jewish political leader of Zechariah's day, or to a later Mashiach.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, the seven eyes refer to sevenfold growth of the glory of the second Beit HaMikdash<sup>46</sup> or of the third.<sup>47</sup>

The olive trees which feed the menorah add a third dimension atop the growth and glory represented by Tzemach and the seven eyes. These trees represent our human contribution to that envisioned future.

Per Rashi,<sup>48</sup> these olive trees represent our righteousness, which generates the radiance of the second or third Beit haMikdash:

*The two sons of the olive are the good nature, and the evil nature converted to good in the merit of Torah.*

**Rashi, Zechariah 4:14**

שני בני היצהר. יצר טוב ויצר הרע מתהפך  
לטוב בזכות התורה.  
רש"י, זכריה ד:יד

Alternatively, the sages suggest that these trees which feed the menorah in tandem represent the joint and cooperative leadership of our kohanim and kings, again generating the radiance of the second or third Beit haMikdash:

*'These are the two anointed ones that stand by the Master of the whole earth' - This refers to Aharon and Mashiach.*

**Avot d'Rabbi Natan 33**

אלה שני בני היצהר העומדים על אדון  
כל הארץ זה אהרן ומשיח  
אבות דרבי נתן לג

<sup>44</sup> Rashi to Zechariah 3:8

<sup>45</sup> Abarbanel to Zechariah 3:8

<sup>46</sup> Rashi to Zechariah 3:9, and see Radak to 3:9 in the name of his father

<sup>47</sup> Abarbanel to Zechariah 3:9

<sup>48</sup> Perhaps building on Mishnah *Berachot* 9:5. Rashi's view of the timeline for the future of the yetzer hara as described in *Succah* 52a is unclear.

Whether one adopts the former explanation or the latter, Zecharyah's menorah conveys a potent message: If you wish to achieve the growth of Tzemach and the glory of the seven-eyed stone, you must be the ones to fuel the menorah.<sup>49</sup>

## Is Zecharyah speaking to us?

This message of a human-engineered redemption has been at the heart of much debate throughout Zionism's modern renaissance. Is Zecharyah's summons addressed to us? Alternatively, are we meant to wait, as may be inferred from other prophetic passages?<sup>50</sup>

Long before the rise of modern Zionism, though, this was a matter of debate. Rashi claimed that the third Beit HaMikdash would descend from Heaven:

*The future Beit HaMikdash, which we anticipate, will be revealed and arrive from Heaven already built and perfected, as it is written, 'The Mikdash, G-d, Your hands established.'*

**Rashi Succah 41a s.v. Iy Nami**

מקדש העתיד שאנו מצפין בנוי ומשוכלל  
הוא יגלה ויבא משמים, שנאמר מקדש ד'  
כווננו ידך.  
רש"י מס' סוכה מא. ד"ה אי נמי

On the other hand, a passage in the Talmud Yerushalmi seemed to say that the Beit HaMikdash would be built even before Mashiach could arrive:

*R' Acha said: This teaches that the Temple will be built before the throne of the house of David.*

**Talmud Yerushalmi Maaser Sheni 5:2**

אמר רבי אחא זאת אומרת שבית המקדש עתיד  
להיבנות קודם למלכות בית דוד  
ירושלמי מעשר שני ה:ב

Rabbi Yechiel Michel Tukaczinsky suggested a compromise view, which retains the drive for human action ordered by Zecharyah's menorah while still honoring Rashi's vision:

*Logically, the Temple will be built by human beings. Certainly, if the construction will precede the appearance of Davidic kings then it will be built by human beings. But even should we merit, speedily in our days, the appearance of a reigning king before construction of the Temple, it would still be logical for the Temple to be built by human hands, for the mitzvah of 'And build a house for Me' is fulfilled only if the Jews build it. Granted that Rashi and Tosafot wrote that in the future it will be built by Heaven... still, the initial action and construction will be via human beings, as Moshe initiated the erection of the mishkan when he stepped forward to put it up, and then it was erected as though on its own. The Tiferet Yisrael said further that Rashi and Tosafot meant that G-d would help, in a miraculous manner...*

**Ir haKodesh v'HaMikdash 5:1:4**

מסתבר שעכ"פ יבנה ביהמ"ק ע"י בני  
אדם. לא מיבעיא אם בנין ביהמ"ק יהי  
קודם הופעת מלכי בית דוד שודאי יבנה  
ע"י בני אדם, אלא אפ"ל לכשנזכה בב"א  
להופעת מלך המשיל קודם בנין הבית  
מסתבר ג"כ שיבנה בידי אדם דמצות  
"ובנית לי בית" מתקיימת רק אם בני  
ישראל בונים אותו. הגם שכתבו רש"י  
ותוס' דלעתיד לבוא יבנה בידי שמים...  
עכ"פ הגישה ותחלת הבנין תהא ע"י פעולת  
האדם על דרך הקמת המשכן בידי מרע"ה  
שהוא נגש להקים את המשכן והוקם כמו  
מאליו. והתפארת ישראל בריש מס' מדות  
אומר עוד יותר שכוונת רש"י ותוס' היא  
שהקב"ה יסייעם בדרך נס...  
עיר הקדש והמקדש ה:א:ד

<sup>49</sup> The menorah is a particularly worthy emblem of our contribution to the relationship between G-d and the Jews; consider *Shabbat* 22b, in which HaShem chose a menorah, fueled and kindled by human beings, as demonstration of His relationship with us.

<sup>50</sup> See *Yirmiyah* 27:22, *Ketuvot* 111a and *Mishneh Torah, Hilchot Melachim* 5:12

In effect, if not in origin, the debate regarding the construction of the third Beit HaMikdash is identical to the debate regarding Zechariah's target audience. Perhaps the prophet was speaking to the Jews of his day, but our generation is not intended to provide this light on its own. On the other hand, perhaps Zechariah was speaking to us, and we are meant to fulfill this mission ourselves.

## The answer of Chaggai and the Chashmonaim

In our prophetless era, we cannot resolve the question of Zechariah's intent on its most practical level; his words alone cannot justify storming Har HaBayit with spade and plumb line in hand. However, we may still apply the prophet's fundamental message, the importance of human initiative, in fulfilling other missions assigned to us by prophets long ago. Learning, teaching, giving, joining hands with other Jews, are eternal assignments which need not wait for a Zechariah.

We receive similar inspiration from a contemporary of Zechariah, the prophet Chaggai. Addressing the impoverished Jews of his and Zechariah's time, who had despaired of being able to build a glorious Beit HaMikdash, he instructed,<sup>51</sup> "Ascend the mountain, take wood and build the house, and I will desire it and be honored by it; so G-d has spoken." Rather than worry about their sufficiency, they should build.

A later generation of leaders implemented Zechariah and Chaggai's endorsements of human initiative in their own circumstances. The Chashmonaim lacked great wealth, but they re-built their menorah with the materials they could muster:

*It was made of iron spits, covered with tin. When they became wealthier they made it of silver. When they became still wealthier, they made it of gold.*

**Rosh HaShanah 24b**

שפודין של ברזל היו, וחיפום בבעץ. העשירו -  
עשאום של כסף, חזרו העשירו - עשאום של זהב.  
ראש השנה כד:

May we build and fuel our own menorot in our own homes and in our own communities and across the Jewish world, whether of tin or silver or gold, and may these human actions bring about see the growth of Tzemach and the glory of the seven-eyed stone.

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<sup>51</sup> Chaggai 1:8

# Chanuka Activities for Families

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## **Eight Conversations for Eight Nights**

Shira Heller

*Project Manager, YUTeach Fellowships at Yeshiva University*

*Educator, Manhattan Jewish Experience*

*It has often been observed that Chanuka shares a root with chinuch (education). In fact, the stories and halachot of Chanuka are rich with opportunities for robust educational conversation both in school and at home.*

*Each night, families have a tremendous “teachable moment” while sitting by the chanukia. Conversations about themes in Chanuka can help families address topics and share values that sometimes get neglected in the rush of day-to-day life.*

### **1. Making the Effort**

After the Maccabees defeated the Syrian-Greeks, and wanted to rededicate the Beit Hamikdash, they famously discovered that they only had enough oil to last for one day, when producing more oil would take eight days. Though the oil was not enough to last, they lit the menorah anyway. They did the best they could.

- Have you ever started something that you didn't think would succeed?
- Why should we try our best if we are sure that we will not succeed?

[Rabbi Tarfon] used to say: "It is not your responsibility to finish the work, but you are not free to abstain from it either." (Mishna Avot, 2:16)

- How does Rabbi Tarfon's wisdom apply to the Maccabim?
- If we don't finish the work, who will? Who “finished the work” of keeping the menorah lit?

### **2. Miracles in our Day**

On Chanuka, we remember and express our gratitude for two miracles. The miracle of the oil—one day's worth lasting for eight days—was an act of Hashem suspending the laws of nature. The miracle of the military victory—the few defeating the many—was within the laws of nature.

- Do we still experience miracles today? If so, are they supernatural, or within the laws of nature?
- Do you think the establishment of the State of Israel was miraculous? Why or why not?
- Did you ever have a personal experience that felt miraculous? If so, what was it? Did you express gratitude?

### **3. The Few Against the Many: Overcoming the Odds**

The story of the war between the Maccabim and the Syrian-Greeks is an illustration of how a few brave and strong people, with the help of Hashem, can defeat an overwhelming force.

- Do you ever feel like the odds are stacked against you? To whom do you turn for help?
- What characteristics do you think the Maccabim had that helped them defeat the Syrian-Greeks?
- Have you ever overcome a challenge? How did you do it? How did it feel?

### **4. Counting Up: Chanuka as a Model for Growth**

The gemara relates that Hillel and Shammai argued over the correct method for lighting the chanukia. According to Shammai, one begins with eight candles, lighting one fewer each night. According to Hillel, one begins with one candle, lighting one more each night. One reason given for Hillel's position is that we should increase in holiness.

- If you were deciding how to light the chanukia, what are some different ways you might do it and why?
- What message do you think it would send if we decreased the number of candles each night? How would that change our Chanuka celebration?
- What does it mean to “increase in holiness” and how can we do it?
- How could our method for lighting the chanukia be a model for personal growth?

### **5. Resisting Peer Pressure: How the Maccabim Embraced Being Different**

The Syrian-Greeks sought to destroy the Jews by outlawing Jewish practices. Many Jews assimilated, becoming indistinguishable from the Greeks around them. The Maccabim resisted tremendous pressure to conform, and retained both their Jewish practice and their Jewish pride.

- When it seems like everyone is doing the wrong thing, how do you do what's right?
- What are some things that we might be pressured to do even though we know they are wrong?
- How can we be prepared to respond to peer pressure?

### **6. Pirsum HaNes: Being a Show Off**

The Rambam teaches in Hilchot Chanuka that we should light our chanukia in a window or doorway since its purpose is to publicize the miracle.

- When do we want to attract attention and show off? When not?
- What are the right things to show off? What should be kept more private?
- Have you ever felt reluctant to advertise your Judaism?

## 7. All those Presents!

Recently, exchanging gifts has become an important part of many families' Chanuka celebration. Sometimes, this results in excitement and joy. Sometimes, it causes jealousy and greed.

- Why do we give gifts on Chanuka?
- How can we make gift-giving part of the spiritual message of Chanuka?
- What is the best gift you ever received?
- If you could give a gift to your whole family/school/community, what would it be?

## 8. Enjoying the Moment

We are halachically forbidden to *use* the lights of the chanukia for anything. We may not use them to do homework, check a Blackberry, or wash dishes. We are supposed to enjoy their light. There is a widespread custom (especially among women) to refrain from work for at least the first half hour that the chanukia lights burn.

- As a family, do we find enough time to stop and enjoy? Are we too busy?
- Does everything have to have a "use" or is it good to have things just to appreciate?

## Eight Nights of Gratitude

Jessica Tabak

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Chanuka is a time of joy and singing Hallel. One way to help children (and adults!) tap into that joy, on a personal level, is to create an awareness of the *brachot* in our lives for which we can feel grateful. The activity that follows is designed so that children and parents take the time to think about and articulate their gratitude, not only for the gifts that they may receive on Chanuka, but also for the many intangible gifts that permeate their lives.

This activity is designed for grades 4-6, but is easily adaptable for both older and younger children.

**Materials:** Poster paper, Construction paper, Markers, Scissors and Glue

### Discussion

What are we grateful for? Ask children to share both tangible and intangible things. Encourage them to use descriptive language to flesh out their responses. For example, instead of "I am grateful for a house and my family," they can articulate "I am grateful for a warm, safe home, and for the love and care of my family." Parents are certainly welcome to articulate their gratitude as well.

### Activity

- 1) Families should draw a *chanukiya* on the poster board, leaving room for the flames on top. Make your *chanukiya* as elaborate or as simple as you like.
- 2) Children cut eight "flames" out of construction paper, and write one thing for which they are grateful on each. (The *shamash* can be illustrated as a flame, or can carry the title of your family project).
- 3) Each night of Chanuka, a member of the family chooses a flame to read and add on to their *chanukiya* poster. The family can discuss the subject of gratitude together.



# The Hidden Miracles of Chanuka

Rabbi Ouriel Hazan

YU Teach Fellow, Maimonides Academy, Los Angeles, CA

Many teachers and parents tend to focus their attention on the miracle of the oil lasting for eight days, with seemingly good reason. The story of the Chashmonaim finding the one, lone kosher jug of oil which then lasted eight days, is a story filled with wonder, excitement, drama and hope. However, by focusing our children's attention on the outward miracle of Chanuka, we are neglecting an important aspect of Chanuka. By simply refocusing their attention to the hidden miracles of narrative of Chanuka, we can expose them to a new and profound message.

[We thank you also] **for the miracles, the redemption, the mighty deeds, and the victories in battle which you performed for our ancestors in those days, at this time.**

*In the days of Mattityahu, son of Yochanan, the High Priest, the Chashmonai, and his sons, the wicked Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Israel to make them forget Your Torah and violate the decrees of Your will. But You in Your great compassion stood by them in time of their distress. You fought their battles, judged their claim, and avenged their wrong. You delivered the strong into the hands of the weak, the many into the hands of the few, the impure into the hands of the pure, the wicked into the hands of the righteous, and the arrogant into the hands of those who were engaged in the study of Your Torah. You made for Yourself a great and holy name in Your world, and for Your people Israel You performed a great salvation and redemption to this very day. Then Your children entered the holiest part of Your House, cleansed Your Temple, purified Your Sanctuary, kindled lights in Your holy courts, and instituted these eight days of Chanuka for giving thanks and praise to your great name.*

על הנסים, ועל הפרקו, ועל הגבורות, ועל התשועות, ועל המלחמות, שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה. בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול, חשמונאי ובניו, כשעמדה מלכות יון הרשעה על עמך ישראל להשכיחם תורתך, ולהעבירם מחקי רצונך, ואתה ברחמיך הרבים עמדת להם בעת צרתם, רבת את ריבם, הגנת את דינם, נקמת את נקמתם, מסרת גבורים ביד חלשים, ורבים ביד מעטים, וטמאים ביד טהורים, ורשעים ביד צדיקים, וזדים ביד עוסקי תורתך. ואתה עשית שם גדול וקדוש בעולמך, ולעמך ישראל עשית תשועה גדולה ופרקו כהיום הזה. ואחר כן באו בגיד לך ביר ביתך, ופנו את היכלך, וטהרו את מקדשך, והדליקו נרות בחצרות קדשך, וקבעו שמונת ימי חנכה אלו, להודות ולהלל לשמך הגדול.

## Questions for family exploration and discussion

1. What is the miracle of Chanuka described in this *tefilla*?
2. Why do you think the miracle of the oil lasting eight days is not mentioned?
3. How do we know that it is miraculous that we won the war? (Hint: Look at the underlined section.)
4. Can you think of another instance in Tanakh when the weak defeated the strong?

## Activities

Families can choose from a number of activities to help visualize the war and reinforce the scope of the miracle.

### I. Visualizing the Setting

#### Supplies:

Computer with internet access

Activity:

Google images of Yehuda and Shomron (Judea and Samaria). Notice how the area is full of hills and valleys, nooks and crannies. How might this make fighting a war harder? Easier?

## **II. The Many vs. The Few**

Supplies:

- Bag of marbles or Israeli couscous
- Kitchen tongs
- Ramp/ sloped surface (such as a binder)

Activity:

Families can discuss how difficult it would be for a few Chashmonaim to defeat a large army. To reinforce this idea, parents should equip their child/ren with kitchen tongs, and release bags of marbles representing the many Greek soldiers down the ramp. Children must try and catch as many of the “Greek” marbles as possible as they come tumbling down the ramp. The children will see how difficult it is to catch marbles during the onslaught and will understand how improbable the odds of 1-1000 were. Parents and children can then switch roles, and see if the parents can do any better at catching marbles!

## **III. Surprising Victory**

Supplies:

- Gallon size Ziploc bag
- 1 cup water (representing the Greeks)
- 1 tablespoon olive oil (representing the Chashmonaim)

Activity:

Children should predict/hypothesize what will happen when the amount of water is mixed with the small amount of oil. Children can start with the Chashmonaim symbolized by the olive oil, poured into the bottom of the bag. Parents should explain that the olive oil at the bottom of the bag represents the Jews in Israel before the Greeks took over. The water that will be added to the bags represents the onslaught of Greek military presence in Israel. Children can then be instructed to add the water and shake the bag, observing the tumult the oil undergoes. At the end, parents and children will be able to observe and discuss that the Chashmonaim, like the oil, were able to rise together, victoriously, to the top.

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