

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE**MIKESS****Haftarah: Amos 2:6–3:8**

**Hanukah begins on Tuesday night, December 12 and ends on Tuesday, December 19.
Rosh Hodesh Tebet will be celebrated on Monday & Tuesday, December 18 & 19.**

DECEMBER 16, 2017 28 KISLEV 5778**IN MEMORY OF: Aharon ben Olga - Aaron Levy A"H**

**Our condolences to his wife, Sara and his children whom we have known all our lives,
Odette Cohen, Eileen Cabasso, Elliott, Jody and his siblings: Benny, Albert, Sally**

"Imagine if your cell phone battery was on 10% and it lasted for 8 days. Now you understand Chanukah"

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EDITORS NOTES

I saw this short story posted and wanted to share it with you as we enter the period of the darkest and coldest nights of the year. .

In Crown Heights, there was a Jew, Yankel, who owned a bakery. He survived the camps. He once said, "You know why it is that I'm alive today? I was a kid, just a teenager at the time. We were on the train, in a boxcar, being taken to Auschwitz. Night came and it was freezing, deathly cold, in that boxcar. The Germans would leave the cars on the side of the tracks overnight, sometimes for days on end without any food, and of course, no blankets to keep us warm," he said. "Sitting next to me was an older Jew – this beloved elderly Jew - from my hometown I recognized, but I had never seen him like this. He was shivering from head to toe, and looked terrible. So I wrapped my arms around him and began rubbing him, to warm him up. I rubbed his arms, his legs, his face, his neck. I begged him to hang on. All night long; I kept the man warm this way. I was tired, I was freezing cold myself, my fingers were numb, but I didn't stop rubbing the heat on to this man's body. Hours and hours went by this way. Finally, night passed, morning came, and the sun began to shine. There was some warmth in the cabin, and then I looked around the car to see some of the other Jews in the car. To my horror, all I could see were frozen bodies, and all I could hear was a deathly

silence.

Nobody else in that cabin made it through the night – they died from the frost. Only two people survived: the old man and me... The old man survived because somebody kept him warm; I survived because I was warming somebody else..."

Let me tell you the secret of Judaism. When you warm other people's hearts, you remain warm yourself. When you seek to support, encourage and inspire others; then you discover support, encouragement and inspiration in your own life as well. That, my friends, is "Judaism 101".

You are the light, you are the miracle!**Archives 2016**

I often marvel at and how Ezra and those of the Great Assembly with Divine inspiration divided and scheduled the weekly portion we read each Shabbat and how each Parasha seems to synchronize so well with the time of the year. This week's portion, Miketz is almost always read during Hanukah. We must keep in mind that the Holiday of Hanukah is the last of our holidays and occurs about 200 years after Ezra, about 300 years after Esther and the Purim story and about 1000 years after the Torah was given. Still a quick search yields dozens and dozens of hints, some almost absolutely amazing. A few of my favorites are:

Throughout the Torah at the end of every perashah there is a note listing the number of verses in that portion. For some reason, at the end of the Parshat Miketz, in addition to giving the number of pesukim, we are also told that there are 2,025 words in the parshah. Why is it necessary to know the amount of words? The Vilna Gaon suggests that because one might wonder whether the words Poti Phera are a single or two words, the answer is given by summarizing the total. The Torah Temimah on the other hand suggests that these 2,025 words serve as a hint for the Holiday of Hanukah. The Rabbis tell us that beginning on the 25th we light candles for eight nights. The mitzvah can be fulfilled with only one candle each night for the entire

household. In Hebrew a word for candle is "ner" which has the numerical value of 250. Eight times 250 equals 2,000. And the rabbis teach that the event of lighting candles starts on the 25th day in the month of Kislev. Thus, 2,025 alludes to the 25th of Kislev and eight candles.

Upon giving advice to Pharaoh, Joseph suggest that Pharaoh appoint someone to prepare the land. He uses the word VeChimesh which some rabbis interpret as suggesting a tax of 20% (the word can also mean a fifth) over the course of the years of plenty to preserve something for the years of famine. But these letters Chet, mem and shin can also suggest something else. According to the Midrash, the Syrian-Greeks forbade the Jewish people from declaring Rosh Hodesh and using their calendar – virtually eliminating the holidays. They also prohibited milah — circumcision — and Shabbat. The word “chimeish” (חמש) — “prepare” — is an acronym for these three edicts. The “chet” is for “Hodesh” — month — the “mem” is for “milah” — circumcision — and the “shin” is for Shabbat. Why these three?

The Greeks believed in the perfection of nature and held the human body as a work of art as we see through their paintings and sculpture. Brit or circumcision says that it is up to man to take what G-d gives him and through his actions, man brings about perfection. To the Greeks there was no interfering with the system. The declaration of the new moon fits into a similar concept. The Greeks saw themselves subject to the stars, constellations and fate. Declaring a new moon meant it was in the hand of the Jewish people to determine which day fell when. More so, the declaration of a leap year adding a month meant that the Jews in essence saw themselves as above the stars and able to influence it. Finally Shabbat serves as a declaration that Hashem not only created the world, but continues to be involved with us on a moment by moment basis. The Greeks felt that there was certainly something to creation, but that creator set a system in place and moved on. Shabbat is Berit Olam LeDorotam – an eternal covenant through generations and declares the opposite.

(Keep in mind every time you tell someone Hanukah Sameyach or Happy Hanukah, the word Sameyach is formed from those same letters, reminding us of what the war was truly about, Shabbat, Milah and Hodesh – all attesting to man’s relationship with G-d and G-d’s relationship with man.)

At the beginning of the portion, we are told about Pharaoh’s two dreams. In his first dream he saw seven heavy and strong cows and seven thin cows. The seven emaciated cows swallowed the seven fat cows, yet still remained skinny as before. In the second dream Pharaoh saw seven full stalks of grain and seven withered ones. The wasted stalks swallowed the thick ones but remained thin and withered as before. Why couldn’t any of the professionals in Pharaoh’s court explain what to us seems obvious?

As the Greeks after them, the Egyptians believed in the rule of nature where only the strong survive. They held

that according to the guidelines of reason and nature it is impossible for the weak to overpower the mighty or for the few to conquer the many. The magicians of Egypt were bewildered by Pharaoh’s dreams and were thus required to put forward poor explanations to make sense of the visions. Yosef explained that by man’s rules or nature, it was impossible to understand, but by G-d’s rules, even the impossible is possible and that the strong can be overcome by the weak, that the majority can be subordinate to the minority. Pharaoh admitted that Yosef was right. He praised Joseph for his interpretation and for introducing a new methodology of logic and reasoning. Pharaoh confirmed “There is no one so discerning and wise as you”.

We add to our amidah prayer and birkat Hamazon, the text of Al Hanisim which states that the miracle of Hanukah was that the many were delivered into the hand of few and the strong into the hand of the weak. This is the exact opposite of what the Greeks believed was possible. There are many others which can easily search for on line, but let me suggest a final comparison. The opening words of the portion are, "And it came to pass at the end of two years". The Midrash tells us that God "put an end to the darkness. A fixed amount of time was given to Joseph - a number of years in the darkness of the prison. When the time came for him to be redeemed, Pharaoh dreamed his dream..." The rabbis suggest that these last two years in prison were perhaps the most difficult and darkest for Joseph. After all he was instrumental in interpreting the dream of Pharaoh’s officers and asked the Sar HaMashkim to remember him. It would be only natural that Joseph could expect the favor to be returned. Yet, he sat and must have wondered. And it was only two years later, on Rosh Hashana, as Hashem sat on his seat of judgment that Joseph was summoned from the darkness of the dungeon and overnight advanced to the height of royalty and the bright lights of adulation. I can’t help but think of the words of King David, "Even though I sit in darkness, G-d is my light."

We call Hanukah, the festival of lights. Each evening we are commanded to light the menorah and the rabbis suggest that after lighting, one should ponder the flames, and view them as containing something of the mystical "Or HaGanuz" or the hidden light. We learn that on the first day of creation, Hashem created light, but on the fourth day, the sun. We are told that this primordial light was then hidden away. One place where we can access this all seeing and healing light is in the thirty-six primary candles of Hanukah. These thirty-six candles parallel the thirty-six hours during which the primordial Original Light served Adam before eventually being stored away. But it takes man’s actions, the action of lighting to reveal that light.

Let’s close with a final thought, one which really shows the difference between the Jewish people and the Greeks (and all mankind).

The Talmud teaches that Adam created in Late September noticed during the first three months of his life how the days slowly became shorter and shorter - He said: Woe to me, because of my sin the world is getting darker [as soon there would be no more light] and will return to a world of darkness and confusion. This must be my 'death sentence'. Instead of accepting this imminent fate, Adam overcame his depression and took upon himself to fast, pray and repent. After eight days, Adam noticed that the days indeed had begun to lengthen. Realizing that this is 'minhago shel olam' [the way of the world or nature], he made a celebration for eight days giving thanksgiving to the Almighty. The next year, he made these days holidays. The Rabbis explain that Adam had good intentions when making these holidays; however his offspring turned them into holidays of idol worship or better yet, nature worship. The Talmud tells us that this is the origin of Saturna and Kalanda which we explained eventually became Christmas and New Years.

The pagans celebrated this holiday as one of rebirth, of darkness into light and of the way of the world, of nature. This is the way of the world and this is reason to rejoice. We too celebrate a holiday of light, where the flame can pierce and break the darkness, but in our holiday it is man who contributes, it is man who lights the flame and celebrates not nature but the miracle.

The world celebrates nature where the strong defeat the weak and the many oppress the few. They celebrate a world created and abandoned to the laws of the stars and of nature. The Jew Celebrates a world where G-d is not only the creator, but he is intrinsically involved in our world. The Jew celebrates a world in which he is given a task and plays a role in perfecting it. The Jew celebrates his role in rising above the stars and the laws of fate. We must remember that the hidden light, the Ohr HaGanuz hidden in the candles we light is also hidden within us and it's our responsibility to shine for all the world to see.

Shabbat Shalom,
David Bibi

PS: For further study please visit

Aleph Beta – Rabbi David Fohrman

<http://www.aish.com/h/c/mm/Reindeer-and-Latkes-Arent-The-Winter-Holidays-Suspiciously-Similar.html>

Rabbi Lawrence Kelemen

<http://www.simpletoremember.com/media/a/Real-Story-of-X-mas-and-New-Years-b/>

Rabbi Menachem Leibtag

<http://www.tanach.org/special/chanuka/chanuks1.htm> and

<http://www.tanach.org/special/chanuka2.txt>

I was asked this week to repost an article included in the newsletter seventeen years ago in December of 2000. It was a written version of a devar Torah my son Jonah gave when he was thirteen. I located it this morning and re-read it.

Although we might want to change the reference from a Palm to say an Iphone X, it applies as much today. As we prepare for Hanukah and celebrate the victory of the Maccabees against the Hellenists, we must re-examine our own celebration. What would the Maccabees think seeing a Hellenized version of Hanukah develop?

What's it all about?

Jonah Bibi I December 2000

Ask any kid and he'll tell you, Its all about Presents – toys, games, and lots of stuff

We run into school the next day and say I got this or I got that and ask what did you get?

My dad always told us that when he was a kid, they really didn't give presents on Hanukah. The big holiday for his family was Purim. On Purim they would go to his grandparents house and collect from all their grandparents, great uncles, uncles, aunts and older cousins. And they had VERY big families.

Purim he explained is the holiday to celebrate the physical – our lives were saved from Haman and therefore we celebrate the physical with a Mishloach Manot, Matonot LaEvyonim and a Seudah with drinking and eating. Hanukah on the other hand celebrates the spirit. We light candles and publicize the miracle. My dad feels that gifts on Hanukah are to a certain extent an outgrowth of Hanukah being celebrated at the same time as Christmas .

The commercialization of Hanukah relates very much to the Gashmiut or physical attachment that our generation has to stuff. We need lots of stuff – new cars, cool clothes, new toys, bigger houses. We can never get enough stuff. We quickly get tired of the stuff we have and always want more.

In previous generations, kids hoped for a decent meal or warm clothes during the winter. Ask your parents to tell you stories of their grandparents. It was not too long ago that kids didn't get enough to eat, or shoes to wear or a warm bed at night.

Today we take it all for granted. For us being deprived is not having the latest Palm or the newest video game. For us it is hard to accept a break from school that doesn't come with a Caribbean vacation. We are a long way from our forefather Yaakov who prayed that Hashem give him bread to eat and clothes to wear.

My dad says that the challenge of our generation is the battle against Gashmiut – the battle against

wanting and constantly needing more and more stuff. None of us are immune. Did he really "need" that new convertible?

These days, Hashem really makes sure we get what we need and this should give us the time and the ability to focus on learning and chesed, but the Yeser harah tells us that we need more stuff. That's it, the Yeser harah is Stuff.

We don't realize that we are only here for a while. A story is told of an important English Jew who came to visit the Chafetz Chaim. The man was shocked when he saw the small shack with only a small table and a few rickety chairs. How could this be the home of the Gadol HaDor, the greatest Jew of the generation.

"Rabbi, where is all your furniture"? he asked

The Rabbi smiled and said to the man, "You are here with me. Where is all your furniture"?

"Rabbi", he answered. "My home is in London, I am just visiting"

To which the Chafetz Chaim replied, "I too am just visiting"

Sometimes we get so caught up in stuff that we don't realize that this place is not what it's all about. We can't take the stuff with us and it's better for us to train ourselves to remember that while we're still young. As we get older and allow the stuff to keep growing in importance we'll find it more and more difficult to to kick the habit.

There is a story told of a poor man who hears of an island where there are so many diamonds they are just there below the sand and ready for you to pick up. He decides to bid farewell to his wife and family and buys a ticket for the year long journey. He spends a year on the boat and finally arrives. As he steps off the dock he sees small diamonds along the sand, he kicks around some sand and finds even more. He starts picking up the diamonds, but all around him, the people are laughing.

Listen buddy that boat is going to take a year to go home and another year to get back. You've got 2 years until you'll be going back. In the mean time. You better start earning a living. You've got to figure out a way to feed yourself for the next two years.

He stuffs the diamonds in his pocket and the next day asks about what he can do to earn a living. What do the people need? What service or product can he provide?

He learns that on the island, there is a big demand for cooking oil and no constant supply.

He goes out into the jungle and a few weeks later returns with some plants, coconuts, bamboo and builds himself a hut and a Gilligan's island cooking oil factory. He can produce it and the people on the island are thrilled. He has orders for as much as he can make and hires many workers.

A year later he is the wealthiest man on the island. He owes all of it to cooking oil. And he has grown so accustomed to the values of the natives that he doesn't even think of diamonds.

Another year passes and his factory is running at top speed. An announcement is made that the boat from Europe has returned. He is so happy. He will return home a wealthy man. He tells his workers to quickly dismantle the factory and loads barrels of his valuable cooking oil and machinery onto the ship.

Two months into the voyage his cooking oil starts to smell funny. They try airing out the cargo hold, but it only gets worse. They realize that the oil has spoiled and they have no choice but to throw the hundreds of barrels overboard.

The journey finally ends and four years after leaving his family, he sees them all waiting for him at the dock. They have heard that he has become a very wealthy man and have brought friends and other relatives to greet him. And then as he sees the porters unloading his machinery, he realizes he was a fool. What worth is there in Gilligan's island factory equipment here in this industrial world. It's garbage.

At the plank as he thinks about what he has done, he faints. The family is so worried, they take him and carry him home.

A few days later wakes. His wife is right there with all smiles and tells him how happy she is that he is OK and has returned after having done so well.

"What do you mean?" he asks.

She replies, "I found the diamonds in the lining of your pocket. I sold them and with the money we will have enough to live for the next few years."

He then realizes that these were from his first day when he grabbed those few stones and stuffed them in his overcoat. The overcoat sat in a corner of his hut until it was time to return. The diamonds must have slipped through into the pocket lining.

He begins to cry. Had he spent more time doing what he was supposed to do and collecting diamonds, even a few minutes each day, he could have had enough for his entire life and his children and his grandchildren. Instead he worked for years for cooking oil that could do him no good here.

We need to compare this story to our lives. The diamonds are Mizvot. They are all around us. They are so easy to pick up. We think that they are worth nothing in this world, just like diamonds on the island. We waste our time with business of this world and gathering stuff – like the cooking oil. But when the time comes that we return home, to olam habah, olam HaEmet – the true world. The cooking oil – the stuff we have gathered here and spent time on is worthless. Only the Mizvot have value and how valuable each is. If we only spend more time collecting what is valuable, even a few minutes every day – how much will we have in Olam haBah.

So lets internalize the message. Lets try to reduce the value of stuff in our lives. Lets try to increase our Torah and Mizvot. And in merit of our attempts may hashem bring mashiach Bimherah Beyameynu Amen

THE FESTIVAL OF HANUKKAH

By Rabbi Elie Abadie, M.D.

The miracle of Hanukkah occurred approximately 22 centuries ago. When the Greek-Hellenistic Empire ruled over Israel. Antiokhos the Governor, decreed that no Jew be allowed to practice the Mizvot of the Torah. This decree meant that the Jews would not be able to keep Shabbat, eat kosher, circumcise their children, celebrate Pesah, Sukkot, Shabuot, Rosh Hashana Kippur, etc. Antiokhos wanted the total spiritual annihilation of the Jews.

The Hashmonaim, a family of Kohanim, served in the Temple in Jerusalem at that time. They were not able to perform the sacred duties required. The duty to light the “Eternal Light” – the Ner Tamid was one of these, since the oil used to light the Ner Tamid had to have the seal of the High Priest and could not be touched by strangers. On the 25th day of Kislev 3591, the Hashmonaim with the help of the Almighty, overthrew the Greeks. They reconquered the Holy Temple and found enough “pure oil” to burn for less than one day. Miraculously though, it lasted for eight days, until the Kohanim were able to procure more “pure oil”. The miracle of the oil and the successful military triumph over the Greek empire confirmed the everlasting pact that exists between G-D and the Children of Israel, and restored their freedom to practice anew the Torah and their sacred religion. They rededicated the Temple and renewed Jewish sovereignty

over the Land of Israel. Once again the spiritual and physical survival of the Jews was assured for eternity. Our sages recognized the importance of this miracle and declared the eight days of Hanukkah as “Days of Praise and Thanksgiving to the Almighty,” and instituted that every Jewish household must celebrate Hanukkah by the lighting of the Hanukkiah (or Menorah) for eight days, symbolizing the eight days during which the oil burned miraculously.

Selected Laws of Hanukkah

1. How do we celebrate Hanukkah?

Every year on the 25th day of Kislev, the eight days of Hanukkah begin. These days are to be celebrated with happiness and joy, with praise and thanksgiving to the Almighty. Therefore, one may not eulogize, fast or show any sign of mourning during these days, even if it is a memorial day. While there is no obligation to make feasts or a commemorative dinner, it is fitting to sing pizmonim and zemirot during the meals on these days.

Some homes are accustomed to eat all kinds of pastries such as mamul, gheraibe, karabij, sambusak, (borekas), sufganiot, (fried donuts), etc. One may not engage in any activity one half an hour before Hanukkiah lighting time, such as eating a meal, studying, or any other activity that might distract one from lighting the Hanukkiah on time. It is customary for women to refrain from doing housework during the first and last day of Hanukkah and especially during Rosh Hodesh. It is also customary for women to refrain from doing any work during the first half hour in which the Hanukkiah is lit. Some say that even men should refrain from doing any work during that time, but one may be lenient for men when it is necessary. Hanukkah presents and gifts are not a Sephardic custom.

2. Who is obligated to light?

Men and women are obligated to light, but they may light for one another. It is the Sephardic custom that the father lights for the entire family. (In the absence of the father, the mother should take the responsibility upon herself to light.) Therefore, children even above the age of bar or bat mitzva should not light by themselves, although they may participate by lighting the additional candles of a given night (beyond the first candle). Children under five years of age may light only the “shamash” - the extra candle. Sephardic children in dormitories of high schools, colleges, universities or yeshivot, that are supported financially by their parents do not have to light their own Hanukkiah, and they can rely on the yeshiba or the Ashkenazi students. Those wishing to go beyond the required halakha, may light but without the blessings.

3. Where do we place the Hanukkiah?

The Hanukkiah should be placed in open view of as many people as possible. If possible it should be placed on the left side of the door from without; if that is not possible,

place it from within opposite the side where the mezzuzah is. If the door does not face the street where people walk, one may put it near the window. This also applies to people living in apartments above the first floor. However, for people living higher than the third floor - if the window is either not in the public view, or it is not possible to put it near the window, then the Hanukkah should be placed on the dinner table, where the family members will notice it. The Hanukkah must be placed at least one foot off, and no more than forty feet, above the floor.

All candles must be placed in a straight line, and should be at the same height, except the "shamash". Therefore Hanukkiot that are multi-leveled may not be used.

4. What kind of Hanukkah may be used?

An electric Hanukkah is not acceptable and cannot be used to fulfill the Mitzva of Hanukkah. If someone wishes to light an electric Hanukkah in addition to the regular Hanukkah, he may do so - but without the blessings. Any type of oil, wax, or fat may be used to light the Hanukkah. Olive oil, however, is preferred. All Hanukkiot should be cleaned every night after usage. Hanukkiot made out of glass, metal, or wood may be used. Hanukkiot made out of clay should be avoided.

5. How, and how many candles do we light?

When facing the Hanukkah, one should place the candles beginning from the right side of the Hanukkah and start lighting from left to right. When adding a candle each night, it should be added to the left of the candle of the prior day. Recite the blessings and start lighting the new candle. The lighting must take place where the Hanukkah will remain; it is not to be moved once lit.

On the first night one candle is lit plus the "shamash" (the extra candle). On each successive night another candle is added until the eighth night when eight candles are lit, plus the "shamash" for a total of nine. It is the custom of some Syrian Jews, descendants of the Franco-Spanish Jews, to begin by lighting the first night with two candles plus the "shamash" - for a total of three candles, and on each successive night another candle is added until the eighth night when nine candles are lit plus the shamash for a total of ten. It is a Sephardic custom to light the candles with an extra candle and to light the "shamash" last. One should be careful not to light the "shamash" first.

6. When do we light?

The proper time to light is by nightfall, which is 15 minutes after sunset, with the whole family gathered together. If by the time the whole family would be gathered is past the designated time to light, then the family should light with the blessings as soon as they can get together. The Hanukkah should contain enough oil, or wax to burn for 30 minutes after nightfall. On Friday evening, the Hanukkah should be lit before the Shabbat candles, thus the Hanukkah should burn at least for seventy minutes after the proper time for lighting. On a

Saturday night the proper time to light is after Shabbat's end, even though it is already after nightfall. In the Synagogue, the Hanukkah is lit prior to Haddala. At home the Hanukkah should be lit after Haddala.

The Hanukkah should burn for at least thirty minutes after nightfall. Therefore, if the candles blew out by themselves before the required 30 minutes after nightfall, one is not required to rekindle them, however one may re-light them by using the "shamash" or an extra candle only (though not from one of the other Hanukkah candles), without saying the blessings.

Since it is forbidden to use the light emanating from the Hanukkah even to learn Torah, it is therefore customary to have the "shamash" candle to serve that purpose, should it be necessary. If for a compelling reason one was not able to light the Hanukkah on time, or if no one lit the Hanukkah for him, one may light the Hanukkah throughout the night with all the required blessings.

7. What are the blessings?

On the first night, before lighting the candles one should recite the following berachot in the order:

1. Barukh Ata...Asher Kideshanu Bemissvotav Vessivanu Lehadlik Ner Hanukkah. (note: do not recite "Shel Hanukkah")
2. Barukh Ata...She'asa Nissim La'abotenu Bayamim Hahem Bazeman Haze.
3. Barukh Ata...Shehehiyanu Vekiyemanu Vehigianu Lazeman Haze.

On subsequent nights one should recite only the first two blessings. However, if someone forgot to recite the third blessing on the first night, he may recite it on the second, or any subsequent night. When someone has finished lighting the first candle, he may not recite the blessings any more for that night. After reciting the blessings and lighting the candles it is customary to recite "Hanerot Halalu" and "Mizmor Shir Hanukat Habayit L'David".

8. What do we pray on Hanukkah?

During the entire eight days of Hanukkah, one is obligated to recite the full Hallel with its blessings. "Yehi Shem" is recited in both Shahrit and Minha; Tahanun is omitted. The paragraph of "Al Hanissim" continuing with "Bime Matitya" is added during the Amida in the blessing of "Modim" and in the Birkat Hamazon in the blessing of "Nodeh". If Al Hanissim is omitted one does not go back.

The Patient Menorah

One morning during Chanukah of 5773 (12/72), a group of junior yeshiva students including Shmuel Lipsch set out to the Golan Heights to bring the light of Chanukah and other mitzvot to the residents of many of the small scattered communities there. After a long afternoon and evening of hard work and bright

success, when they finally departed for home it was nearly ten o'clock at night.

As they approached the highway exit to the town of Hatzor - 15 minutes before Tsfat - they decided to detour to the large shopping center near the exit, to spread the light of Chanukah there too. As they went from one shop to another, they came upon a store where positioned on a shelf near the plate-glass window was a Chanukah menorah, set up with the proper number of candles for that night, but as yet unlit, as if it were waiting just for them.

The students entered together. Immediately the shopkeeper approached them and welcomed them with great joy. "I was praying you would come. I know that the Chanukah lights bring blessing to my business. I would never let the menorah go unlit, not even one night" she added enthusiastically.

The teenage boys were puzzled. "It's already quite late at night. Why did you wait for so long for someone to come? Why did you not just light the candles yourself?"

"Because," she smiled, "I am not Jewish.

"I am a Druise woman," she continued. "I live in the Druise village of Tuba az-Zanghariyya."*

Not only were the boys surprised by her answer, they were more confused than before. "Why are the Chanukah lights of such significance to you if you are not Jewish?"

She related to them at length and with great sincerity why the lighting of the Chanukah menorah was so important for her. From the content of her words the yeshiva students grasped instantly that the lights were not just an "aid" for her business; it was clear that she was well aware that the fulfillment of a commandment brought an increased relationship to the Commander, to the Creator of All.

Indeed, the spiritual sensitivity revealed in her reply led the boys to suspect that perhaps she had a connection to Judaism beyond the mitzvah of Chanukah. They began to question her about her background.

It did not take more than a minute to verify their hunch, as in answer to their first question, about her family, she innocently revealed that her mother was Jewish! (In the Muslim world, religious status follows the father, so she never had a clue that she herself is Jewish according to Torah law.)

The young boys explained that through her mother she too possesses inside her the unique G-dly soul of a Jew, and therefore she is 100% Jewish. It must be, they added, that her strong commitment to having a lit menorah on the eight nights of Chanukah each year was caused by her divine Jewish neshama-soul burning within her, seeking to express itself.

Her reaction was pure happiness. She asked to clarify whether her sisters and brothers are Jewish too. With great emotion she proclaimed that she would tell all her siblings that she is Jewish and that they are also. She thanked the boys profusely.

That night the menorah of the store was lit and the blessings were said by a proud Jewess, newly ready to take her part among the Jewish people.**

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Source: Translated and adapted by Yerachmiel Tilles from an article by Rabbi Yitzchak Lipsch (the father of Shmuel in the story) published in "Lubavich": the weekly newsletter of the Chabad community in Tsfat (Dec. 12, 2012).

\*\* R. Lipsch's note: The boys too were proud (including my son Shmulik); they had been instrumental in bringing one more lost soul back to its roots, their mission as young chasidim of the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

## Summary of the Perasha

1st Aliya: The year is 2229 and Yoseph has been in prison for 12 years. Pharaoh has two similar dreams and demands their interpretation. The wine steward remembers Yoseph and his gift for dream interpretation, and Yoseph is rushed into Pharaoh's presence.

2nd Aliya: Yoseph interprets Pharaoh' dream and suggests to him how to best administrate the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine. (The extent of Yoseph's brilliance will first be revealed in next week's Parsha.)

3rd Aliya: Yoseph is appointed viceroy over Egypt, and puts into effect the plan that he had outlined to Pharaoh. He marries the daughter of Potiphar (the daughter of Dina) and has two sons, Menashe and Ephrayim.

4th Aliya: The seven years of famine begin, and the only food available is in Mitzrayim. Yoseph, unrecognized by his brothers, recognizes them when

they come to buy food. He accuses them of treachery and imprisons them for three days.

5th Aliya: Yoseph demands that Binyamin be brought to Egypt and keeps Shimon as a hostage. The brothers relate their adventure to Yakov who refuses to send Binyamin. The increasing famine forces Yakov to concede to Yehuda's guarantee that Binyamin will be safe, and the brothers return to Egypt.

6th Aliya: The brothers are reunited with Shimon and invited to eat at the table of Yoseph. All appears to be forgiven and Yoseph sees Binyamin for the first time in 22 years.

7th Aliya: Yoseph hatches his final plot against his brothers. His famed chalice is planted in the Binyamin's saddlebag forcing the brothers to return to Mitzrayim and a confrontation with Yoseph. The year is 2238.

Zechariah 2:14 - This week's Haftorah relates to the theme of Shabbos Chanukah. At the end of the Babylonian exile, 9 years before the story of Purim (3390-371 b.c.e), 40,000 Jews, lead by Zerubavel and Yehoshua the Kohen Gadol, returned to Israel. They began to rebuild the Bais Hamikdash, but Cyrus withdrew his permission and the construction was halted. Following the story of Purim and a prophecy from Chagay, the rebuilding resumed 18 years later (3408-353).

This week's Haftorah is the prophecy of Zechariah which preceded the inauguration of the second Bais Hamikdash. It describes the status of the Kohen Gadol and the people as seemingly unfit to carry out the service. Hashem (G-d) relates to Zechariah that in fact, Yehoshua and the nation are ready to resume full service in the Bais Hamikdash. The prophecy includes a vision of the Menorah with a continuous supply of olive oil, reminiscent of the miracle of Chanukah.

### **Hanukkah and Qiddush Hashem Rabbi Meyer Laniado**

It is the year 166 BCE, and as you sit around the Shabbat table with your family, enjoying your meal, there's a loud knock at the door. You open the door to find Greek soldier's ordering you to worship idols on their altars. They are burning incense at your door, its odor filling your nostrils, and mixing with the aroma of your Friday night dinner. You are stunned, at a loss for what to do next. They have come to your home; you can no longer ignore them. They call out to you by name. They order you to come outside to

the town square. There, everyone from the community is standing and watching. They are waiting in anticipation of how you will respond. You walk through the crowd until you see before you a Greek general flanked on both sides by soldiers.

The general addresses you by name as you stand with your family before the assembled community.

"You are a respected leader in this town, and you have the support of your sons and relatives. Be the first to sacrifice to Zeus. If you do, you and your children will be honored with the title of Friends of the King, and you will be rewarded with silver, gold, and many gifts[1]."

How would you respond? Recognize that if you refuse to follow the Greek general's orders to sacrifice to the Greek god, you are refusing an order of the king, and would surely be put to death. You feel a rush of adrenaline, you feel the blood running through your body, your heart is pounding out of your chest, and you can feel the pulse of the veins in your temples. You know this is a make or break moment, not solely for you, but for your family and all of those watching. If you sacrifice to the Greek god, you will sacrifice all that your forefathers have stood for, but if you do not, you will have signed your own death sentence. What is the decision that you will make? This is exactly the qiddush Hashem scenario, and Mattitiah responds masterfully. He takes the opportunity to make a bold speech before his family and all of the people:

"My children, my relatives, and I will continue to keep the covenant that God made with our ancestors. With God's help, we will never abandon his Law or disobey his commands. We will not obey the king's decree, and we will not change our way of worship in the least[2]."

Mattitiah being a traditional Jew, views the scenario he is in through the eyes of the Tanakh and models Moshe's action at the golden calf. When Moshe saw the nation worshipping the golden calf he took action and proclaimed: "Whoever is for God, come to me[3]." Moshe then directs these Jews to draw their swords and fight against those have desecrated the name of God by worshiping the golden calf. Similarly, when Mattitiah finishes his speech and a Jew approaches the pagan altar sacrificing a pig to the Greek deity, Mattitiah draws his swords along with the family members who are standing beside him and kill the Jew along with the Greek general and his soldiers. He then proclaims: "If anyone is zealous for the laws of his country, and for the worship of God, follow me![4]" He runs to the hills with his family and



all those dedicated to Torah. They prepare themselves to fight, against all the odds, for the freedom to practice Torah and misvot, and reestablish proper worship of God in the Beit haMiqdash.

Mattitiah's response shows that he lives a life focused on sanctifying and glorifying God's name. His life goal is to make God's name distinct and known. This dedication to showing that our God is not like all of the other 'gods,' and serving Him is what our life is about, is the misva deoraita of qiddush Hashem[5]. When challenged to offer a pig to a pagan god, Mattitiah's entire life's purpose is being challenged. If he brings the sacrifice, he has thrown away his entire life, expressing the message that God is just like the other gods. This would be a hillul Hashem, a desecration of the distinctness of God. Mattitiah's only choice is to fight. Whether he wins or dies during this fight, he has conveyed the message to his children and all those who would hear about him that our God is the only God. That it is God who we live to serve, and that we are willing to put everything, including our life, on the line to achieve the goal of sanctifying His name. The question then is: What do we live for? Is there something we are willing to sacrifice our life for?

We use the expression 'giving it our all,' but in what situation are we willing to? Mattitiah was willing to dedicate his life for the Torah, and he instructs his five sons on his death bed to do the same: "...as to be ready, when it shall be necessary, to die for your laws (Torah)[6]." Mattitiah literally lived for qiddush Hashem, dedicating his life for the glory of God and his laws.

#### FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"When the evil Greek kingdom rose up against Your people Yisrael, to make them forget Your Torah." (Al Hanisim)

On Hanukah we add a paragraph known as Al Hanisim, in which we thank Hashem for the miracles of Hanukah. In this prayer we describe the threat posed to us by the Greeks. An attempt was made to cause us to forget the Torah and to deny us the ability to perform misvot. Although it is physically possible to prevent another person from doing misvot or engaging in additional Torah study, how is it possible to cause somebody to forget the Torah that he has already learned?

Rabbi Ozer Alport explains, that in their war against Hashem and His Torah, the Greeks

understood that it was impossible for them to delete knowledge from somebody's mind. So, in their wickedness, they instead developed and promoted a new culture and value system in which Torah has no significance, and by making it irrelevant, it would naturally be forgotten.

The Greeks' new value system was one in which only externality was important. The Greeks' approach was the opposite of our Sages' advice in Pirke Abot (4:20) not to look at the vessel but at what it contains inside. As the Jewish People became surrounded by this culture, it began to permeate their thinking and they slowly began to forget about Torah. The Torah revolves around the internals.

Sadly, the battle is not over, and these struggles continue today. Western culture once again attempts to entice us to abandon the internal world of spirituality for the pursuit of the temporal pleasures of the world.

As we light the Menorah we should remind ourselves of the flames' message. They represent the spiritual world that we hold dear.

Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

We are all familiar with the popular song Maoz Sur that we sing on the holiday of Hanukah. In the various stanzas of the song, we thank Hashem for the miracles He has done for us throughout the generations. We thank Hashem for taking us out of Egypt, for bringing us back from the exile of Babel, for saving us from Haman, and of course for the miracle of Hanukah. Rabbi Rachamim Aboud, in his sefer Divrei Rachamim, quotes Rav Nosson Wachtfogel zt"l who explains that Hanukah is a holiday of hallel v'hoda'ah – praise and thanks – as we mention in the Al Hanisim prayer. Therefore when we come to thank Hashem for the miracle of Hanukah, we must also give thanks for all the miracles he has done for us in the past up until the present day. The final stanza of the song then asks Hashem to bring the final redemption speedily, because whenever we give thanks for the past, we should also offer a prayer for the future.

This applies on a personal level as well. On this holiday of Hanukah, we should reflect on all the miracles and blessings that we have personally received from Hashem throughout the years. Let's appreciate all that we have, thank Hashem for it, and pray to Him that he should continue to shower us all with berachah and success always.

Shabbat Shalom and Happy Hanukah.  
Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

The Problem With Success

Sometimes success is the greatest deterrent to achieving a goal.

Success comes in stages. When you go on a diet to lose fifteen pounds, the first five melt away pretty quickly. When you commit to an exercise program – whether it involves running, cycling, or working with weights – the initial improvement in strength and stamina comes almost at once.

And that is the problem. That first jump in a positive direction can lead to complacency and sabotage the systematic progress needed to reach the ultimate goal.

It takes consistency to achieve a goal. It takes what our elementary-school teachers called “stick-to-it-tivity.”

The trick to success is to continue working on yourself even after seeing improvement. When you feel that you are better than you were when you embarked on a self-improvement project, don't stop. Don't slack off. Take that next step forward towards your objective, because methodical dedication to a goal until it is achieved is what yields success.

It only takes a minute of focus and evaluation, but that pause to reflect will jump-start you and boost you to the next level. (One Minute With Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

#### **RABBI ELI MANSOUR**

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[MishnaBerura.com](http://MishnaBerura.com), [LearnTorah.com](http://LearnTorah.com)  
The Source of Yosef's Strength**

After Yosef is released from prison and raised to the stature of second-in-command in Egypt, he gets married and has two sons. He names one son Efrayim, because of his declaration, “Hifrani Elokim Be'ereetz Onyi” – “G-d has made me fruitful in the land of my affliction.” Through this name, Yosef gives thanks to Hashem for granting him blessing and prosperity in Egypt. After having been driven away from his home and then imprisoned in Egypt, he achieved great success and prestige, for which he was grateful.

The name of Yosef's second son, Menashe, is more difficult to understand. The Torah says that Yosef chose this name because he said, “Nashani Elokim El Kol Amali Ve'et Kol Bet Abi” – “G-d has made me forget all my travails and the entire house of my father.” It appears that Yosef expresses gratitude for his being able to forget his past travails – which is certainly understandable – but also for his forgetting his father's home. The question is, why is Yosef proud or appreciative for forgetting his home? Didn't he want to retain his memories and emotional bond

with his father? Why would he celebrate his forgetting the nurturing home of Yaakob Abinu?

The answer to this question relates to another question, which was already raised by the Ramban. Why did Yosef not make any contact with his father after being released from prison and rising to power? Once he was in a position of authority, he presumably had the ability to at least send a letter. He knew Yaakob must have been suffering, thinking that he was dead. Why did he make no effort to contact Yaakob to tell him he was alive and well?

Some Rabbis answer that the dreams Yosef had dreamt of his family bowing to him had the status of a prophecy, and it was thus forbidden to interfere with the process of their fulfillment. Yosef knew that if he would immediately notify his family that he was the second-in-command in Egypt, they would not come and bow to him. He realized that he would have to wait until his brothers come and, without recognizing him, bow in humble submission before him. This was the only way for the prophecy to be fulfilled. While we do not necessarily understand why G-d wanted the events to unfold in this manner, we do know that Yosef felt bound to ensure the fulfillment of his prophecy. And thus, although it pained him knowing that his father was grieving, he had to conceal this information from his family.

This might be the explanation of Menashe's name. From where did Yosef derive the strength to keep the information concealed? He loved his father so deeply, and felt an overpowering desire to lift him from his sorrow and notify him that he is alive. How was he able to refrain from alleviating his father's grief? The answer is that he received this strength from G-d, who always provides us with the strength and fortitude we need to overcome life's tests. He therefore thanked G-d for allowing him to “forget” his father's home. This does not mean that he lost all mental and emotional bonds with his father. Rather, it meant that G-d gave him the strength to exert control over his natural desire to contact his father. Yosef recognized that this unimaginable personal strength was not his own, but rather came from the Almighty. And he therefore thanked and gave praise to G-d for enabling to carry out his duty, to keep his whereabouts concealed from his father so that the prophecy could be fulfilled.

#### **VICTOR BIBI SOD HAPARASHA**

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## Rabbi Wein JERUSALEM AND CHANUKA

The decision by Pres. Trump to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel has been received in dismay and anger by portions of the Arab and Moslem world. This is pretty much what could have been expected since portions of that society have never given up on the idea of the destruction of the Jewish state.

However, what is more troubling and disappointing, to me at least, is the reaction of the left wing, peace-loving, progressive minded, noise making, arrogant section of the Israeli media and public. To think that the leading Israeli newspaper and a Zionist political party would object to what Pres. Trump has done is really mind-boggling.

The founders of the state, many of who were as left wing as they come, defended Jerusalem as part of the Jewish state both physically and politically. No effort was spared to make Jerusalem a Jewish city and to make it the capital of the Jewish state. The government offices were moved from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the Knesset building was erected in Jerusalem and the governmental quarter housing the ministries of the government has steadily expanded in Jerusalem.

The world may not have been willing to grant us Jerusalem but the Jewish people knew in heart and mind that Jerusalem was ours and that it was the capital and the heart of any Jewish state. For a section of the Jewish society to turn its back now on Jerusalem indicates how far removed these Jews are from their heritage and history.

The holiday of Chanukah, which marks the triumph of the ancient Maccabees over the Syrian Greeks, the restoration of Jerusalem as the holy capital of Israel and the purification of the Temple, also records for us that a different and just as significant battle was fought at that time. That battle was against the Hellenistic Jews, who denied Jerusalem, profaned the Temple and attempted to assimilate Judaism completely into Greek paganism and culture.

This struggle continued long after the military victory against the Syrian Greeks. It raged throughout Second Temple times and continued in various forms throughout Jewish history till our day. Within Jewish society there is always an anti-Jewish ideal on the agenda. It is always cloaked in piety and righteousness and represents itself as being progressive and tolerant when in reality it is neither.

Many times in Jewish history this insidious element has gained ascendancy in power and influence. But its accomplishments and triumphs never lasted. They were proven wrong by outside events as well as by the internal wisdom of Jewish society, which eventually rejected these ideas and plans.

The small lights of Chanukah have certainly outlasted the blazing temporary glory of Greek culture and Hellenistic Jewish imitators. But the struggle always continues and apparently is an eternal one. Perhaps that is why one of the blessings over the candles of Hanukkah refers to those days but also to our time. And we are witness to this by the events and reactions at this time regarding the recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel by the President of the United States.

The Balfour Declaration, with all of its ambiguity and unfulfilled promise, opened the door for the eventual creation of the Jewish state in the land of Israel. The recognition by the United States of Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel may or may not be followed by other countries doing so. But that is only a short-term and immediate view of the matter.

Just as the Balfour Declaration had a long-term positive effect and revitalized the Jewish people in their attempt to gain independence and stature in the world, so to this declaration of Jerusalem as being the capital of the state of Israel has the potential for long-term positive change of attitude towards the Jewish state in world society.

The Talmud teaches us regarding personal probity and holy intentions that "if you will open your heart to me only as wide as the head of a pin, I will eventually open it as wide as the grand entrance to the Temple." What we are witnessing is only a pin prick in the anti-Israel movement that has pervaded the American State Department for so many decades.

The previous president broke long-standing American policy by allowing America to facilitate the resolution in the United Nations against Israel. This new president has also broken long-standing American policy by recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of the state of Israel. We should appreciate the moment even though the future consequences are still not known

### Rav Kook on the Perasha

Before lighting the Chanukah lights, we recite the blessing, "Who sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us to kindle the Chanukah light."

Why does the blessing refer to a single light - 'the

Chanukah light'? We light several candles each night; why not say 'the Chanukah lights'?

Chanukah and Chinuch: The word Chanukah means 'dedication,' referring to the re-dedication of the Temple after its desecration by the Seleucid emperor Antiochus IV. Chanukah shares the same Hebrew root as chinuch — 'education.' But chinuch is the masculine form of the word while chanukah is the feminine form. Why?

Rav Kook explained that the goal of education is to nurture the student to grow and develop by inculcating good habits and proper conduct. Education develops their innate talents and natural integrity, and has a positive influence over the years to come. Therefore the word chinuch is in the masculine form, as it indicates a process of striving and developing inner potential. [The Kabbalists described the active sephirot as 'masculine,' and the passive or receptive sephirot as 'feminine.']

The dedication of the Temple, however, was a greatly different situation. From when it was first established, the Temple already encompassed all of its greatness and holiness. Future times will merely reveal the holiness that it always contained. Thus the Temple's dedication is called chanukah. The feminine form of the word is used, denoting a state of intrinsic holiness and completeness.

The Lights of Israel: The lights of Chanukah are a metaphor for the blessings of enlightenment that the Jewish people bestow to the world. All of the nation's potential spiritual gifts are included in the dedication of Chanukah: Torah and wisdom, prophecy and morality, justice and compassion, and so on. Like the Temple, these are qualities inherent in the people of Israel — so the word chanukah is appropriate.

Sometimes these 'lights' emphasize their distinct nature in order to make their full contribution, even at the expense of other ideals. Such divisions, however, can lead to internal strife. Those who stress one particular ideal may look upon those who promote other ideals as detracting from a more important value. In truth, when each individual advances that light that corresponds to the inner makeup of his soul, the entire people of Israel is enriched.

But these conflicts will not exist forever. As long as there is strife and dissension, holiness cannot be properly established. In the future it will become clear that all of the different lights share a common root, and are really one single light. Therefore, the blessing of Chanukah, which also encompasses the future potential, speaks of a single 'Chanukah light.'

(Silver from the Land of Israel, pp. 118-119. Adapted from Olat Re'iyah, pp. 433-435.)

### AS HEARD FROM RABBI AVIGDOR MILLER Z'TL

"The cornerstone which was despised by the builders, became the top (exalted) of the edifice" (Tehillim 118:22).

This week we say the complete 'Hallel' for the full eight days of Chanukah. David Hamelech included this principle in the wealth of thoughts of praise, gratitude and excitement found in Hallel.

Yosef Hatzadeek was at the most desperate point in his career. He was sold into slavery, taken to a foreign land, unjustly accused and thrown into jail for 12 years. "The cornerstone which was despised by the builders." referring to Yosef who was also rejected by his brothers.

Now Pharaoh does something unprecedented, irresponsible and unexpected. He could have just given Yosef a great reward for interpreting the dreams. Pharaoh takes the King's ring off of his finger and puts it on Yosef!! This evokes feelings of wild excitement in us. Yosef is King of Egypt!!

Just like the elation experienced by our Nation at Chanukah when the single flask of oil miraculously stayed lit for 8 days. And also when we saw that suddenly Haman was hanging on the tree and the King's ring was placed on Mordecai's finger. All of these revelations by Hashem are indications that: "Hashem is with His Jewish People."

The next verse of the Hallel reveals the true purpose, that of gaining Emunah. "This (unexpected surprise) is from Hashem, it is (meant to be) a wonder in our eyes." (ibid.188:23) Hashem operates the world utilizing 'surprises' throughout history in order to reveal that it is He who manages the affairs of the world with His Providence.

Some examples are, Yishmael was older but Yitzchak was chosen. Esav was the first born but Yaacob was the chosen one. Yosef was younger and despised by the Brothers yet through it all Yosef was chosen. David was the youngest and his lineage was suspected however he became King David. The Jewish nation is the most despised and very small in numbers yet we are the Chosen of Hashem and will become "the top of the edifice" at the end.

Shabbat Shalom From your friends at Yeshiva Gedolah Bet Yisrael Founded by R' Avigdor Miller ZTL