

מעני תורה

חנוכה

The Chanukah Version of Ve-Nahafoch Hu

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Principal

One of the experiences of the Jewish community during *galut Yavan* was the loss of *Torah* knowledge that was a result of religious persecution; in “*Al Ha-Nissim*,” we refer to this as “*le-hashkicham Toratecha*.” Rav Yitzchak Hutner, in his *sefer Pachad Yitzchak*, points out that one manifestation of this loss of *Torah* scholarship was the birth of *machloket* in *halachah*. The communal decrease in halachic knowledge led to greater scholarly disagreement in matters of *halachah*. For example, the Mishnah recounts a *machloket* between Rabbi Yossi ben Yo’ezer and Rabbi Yossi ben Yochanan (the leaders of the *Sanhedrin*) about the question of *semichah be-yom tov* (*Chagigah* 16a). A person who brings a *korban* must put his hands on the animal and lean on it with all of his weight, and the *machloket* between these two *Tanna'im* is about whether this may be done on *yom tov*. Rabbi Yossi ben Yo’ezer and Rabbi Yossi ben Yochanan lived during the time of *malchut Yavan*, and Rashi comments on this *mishnah* that this was the first *machloket* that existed among the *chachmei Yisrael*. Similarly, Rashi comments on *Temurah* 16a that until the *machloket* between Rabbi Yossi ben Yo’ezer and Rabbi Yossi ben Yochanan, there was no *machloket* among the *chachamim*, because it was only during the time of *galut Yavan* that the hearts of the *chachamim* were diminished and *Torah* knowledge was lessened.

Rav Hutner points out an ironic consequence of the diminishment of *Torah* knowledge that led to the proliferation of *machloket* among the *chachmei Yisrael*. While *machloket* was a result of the loss of *Torah* wisdom, it ultimately led to the flowering of new ideas and approaches within *Torah* scholarship. The theories and *piskei halachah* which were developed by the *chachamim* in an effort to recapture that which was lost comprise valuable manifestations of *Talmud Torah* in their own right.

In *Menachot* 99b, the *Gemara* introduces the concept that “*pa’amim she-bittulah shel Torah zehu yesodah*”—which, loosely translated, means that there are times that neglecting the *Torah* ultimately leads to a strengthening of the *Torah*. The *Gemara* gives the example of *shevirat ha-luchot*: Moshe

Rabbenu’s act of breaking the *luchot*, which seemed to represent neglect of the sanctity of the words of *Torah* inscribed on the *luchot*, ultimately led *Bnei Yisrael* to accept the *Torah* with greater commitment. Similarly, Rashi comments on the *Gemara* that a person who neglects his *Torah* study in order to fulfill the *mitzvah* of burying a dead person or of rejoicing with a bride is rewarded for upholding the values of the *Torah* as he would have been if he had continued his study.

Rav Hutner applies the concept of “*bittulah shel Torah zehu yesodah*” to the proliferation of *machloket* during the time of Rabbi Yossi ben Yo’ezer and Rabbi Yossi ben Yochanan. The loss of *Torah* scholarship that led to halachic *machloket* ultimately had the effect of creating new avenues within *Torah*, as the *chachamim* strove to regain the *Torah* knowledge that had been lost. Similarly, the *Gemara* recounts that 300 *halachot* were forgotten during the mourning period after Moshe *Rabbenu’s* death, and all of them were recaptured by Otniel ben Kenaz through his process of study (*Temurah* 16a). In both cases, the process of study and innovation led to even greater *Torah* knowledge than existed originally.

The concept of “*bittulah shel Torah zehu yesodah*” is fundamental to the meaning of *Chanukah*. *Chanukah* commemorates the unexpected reversals that characterize human experience—the victory of the few over the many, the longevity of a single cruse of oil, the flowering of *Torah* in the wake of religious persecution, the transformation of darkness into light. The religious significance and halachic observances of *Chanukah* center around the surprising and miraculous ways that Jewish destiny unfolds, and this concept of unanticipated salvation lies at the heart of “*bittulah shel Torah zehu yesodah*.”

I believe that we experience yet another manifestation of the principle of “*bittulah shel Torah zehu yesodah*” in our contemporary observance of *Chanukah*. Most Jewish holidays include an intrinsic connection to the concept of Jewish unity and *ahavat Yisrael*. *Pesach* celebrates the birth of Jewish nationhood, *Shavu’ot* commemorates the unity of “*vayichan sham Yisrael neged ha-har*” that characterized *Matan Torah*, and *Sukkot* contains elements that reflect Jewish unity, such as the well-known interpretation of the *ar-*

ba'ah minim as representing different kinds of personalities that are all linked in *avodat Hashem*. On *Rosh Hashanah* and *Yom Kippur*, we are encouraged to make peace with other people and we all experience the common fate of being judged as “*bnei maron*” (members of a flock). The *mitzvot* of *Purim* bring Jews together in celebration and in giving gifts to friends and to the poor, as we commemorate Esther’s command of “*lech kenos et kol ha-Yehudim*.” *Chanukah* stands alone as a holiday that does not have any direct connection to the ideal of *achdut* among Jews. In fact, there was tremendous infighting and divisiveness among Jews at the time of the *Chanukah* story; as much as *Chanukah* commemorates the battle against the *Yevanim*, it also commemorates the civil war between the *Chashmona'im* and the *Mityavnim* (those Jews who sought assimilation into Greek culture).

It is perhaps ironic, but also heartwarming, that in our own days *Chanukah* has become a holiday that unites Jews of different denominations in a way that no other Jewish holiday does. Jews of all stripes celebrate *Chanukah* in America, and in fact, *Chanukah* is the only holiday that Jews of different denominations celebrate in virtually identical ways: by lighting the *menorah* and by engaging in the *minhagim* associated with *Chanukah*, such as eating certain foods and playing dreidel. I think that this is a manifestation of the concept of “*bitulah shel Torah zehu yesodah*” that is so fundamental to the identity of *Chanukah*: just as the darkness and *Torah* ignorance associated with *malchut Yavan* ultimately paved the way for the flowering of new *Torah* wisdom and knowledge, the divisiveness among Jews at the time of the *Chanukah* story ultimately gave way to a holiday that brings contemporary Jews together in *avodat Hashem*.

As we enter *Chanukah* and celebrate the transformation of darkness into light, may we be privileged to see miracles in our days on the national level within *Medinat Yisrael*, and on the personal level as individuals. *Chag Urim Sameach!*

Eight Days of Miracles

By Michal Laub (‘14)

The *Beit Yosef* asks a very famous question regarding *Chanukah*: why is the holiday of *Chanukah* eight days long instead of seven? We know that there was enough oil to burn for one day, yet it miraculously burned for a total of eight days – seven days more than expected. Accordingly, the actual miracle seems to be only seven days, since the oil was supposed to last through the first day. Shouldn’t we be celebrating just those seven days?

There are two types of *nissim*: a *nes nigleh* and a *nes nistar*. A *nes nigleh* is an open or revealed miracle, such as the *makkot* in *Mitzrayim*, *kri’at Yam Suf* and *matan Torah*. It is

a miracle which everyone in the world can see and recognize; no one can overlook it or deny it. A *nes nistar*, on the other hand, is a hidden or concealed miracle. Although miraculous in and of itself, and perhaps just as great as a *nes nigleh*, a *nes nistar* is sometimes unrecognized or unappreciated. It can easily be overlooked or taken for granted. There are many *nissim nistarim* that happen every day around us, yet we forget to recognize them, or simply do not take the time to truly appreciate their greatness. Everyday occurrences such as the growth of grass and trees, the function of the human mind and body, and the development and birth of a baby are *nissim nistarim*. These miracles seem to merely blend into our everyday lives.

The fact that the oil burned on *Chanukah* at all is in itself a *nes nistar*. By nature, most liquids typically extinguish fires; they certainly do not fuel them. If you were to place a wick in a glass of water or juice and light the wick, the liquid would douse the flame. Oil, however, is different from all other liquids in that it facilitates the burning of fire and allows the fire to stay alive. The fact that oil, a liquid, actually fuels a fire instead of extinguishing it is supernatural; it is truly a miracle. Although a *nes nistar* is an occurrence that we take for granted, it is nonetheless a miracle of *HaShem*.

Chanukah is the holiday when we celebrate eight days of *nissim* related to oil. One day, the first day, is a celebration of a *nes nistar*— of oil being a fluid that is able to fuel flames instead of extinguish them. Then we celebrate seven additional days in commemoration of the *nes nigleh*— that a little bit of oil was able to keep burning and last a total of eight days. Therefore, there are indeed eight days of miracles to celebrate.

Sometimes we take life and our surroundings for granted, as we are surrounded by miracles that happen on a daily basis. The “big,” open miracles do not happen often and the “small,” hidden ones can easily be overlooked. Hopefully this *Chanukah*, we will merit to experience “great” miracles as well as become more cognizant of the daily miracles that we sometimes fail to recognize or appreciate.

May we be *zocheh* to soon experience the next and greatest *nes nigleh* with the coming of *Mashiach*.

Women and Chanukah

By Miriam Blum (‘15)

Women play a monumental role in the holiday of *Chanukah*. The *Talmud* explains why women are obligated in the *mitzvah* of lighting *Chanukah* candles, even though women are normally exempt from a *mitzvah asei she-ha-zeman grama*, a time-bound positive commandment. According to Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi in *Massechet Shabbat*, women are obligated in the *mitzvah* because they were an essential part of the

miracle of *Chanukah*. The *Tur*, Rabbi Yaakov Ben Asher, states that there is a tradition for women not to work when the lights are burning.

Rabbi Nissim of Gerona explains that the Greeks decreed when a Jewish woman got married, before she could have intimate relations with her husband, she was forced to have relations with the local governor of her town. He further mentions that the miracle of *Chanukah* was only achieved as a result of the actions of one woman: the daughter of Matityahu *Kohen Gadol*. Matityahu's daughter was engaged, and on her wedding day she tore her gown and said to all the men, "How dare you make my sisters suffer...stand up for *Klal Yisrael* and fight the Greeks!" All the men listened and went to war.

Another heroic woman who signifies women's importance in the story of *Chanukah* is Yehudit bat Be'ari. The Greeks destroyed the water supply in Yehudit's town and the leaders said, "Let us pray to *HaShem* for three days, and if He doesn't answer, then we will surrender." When Yehudit heard this, she became very angry. She said, "How dare you challenge *HaShem's* greatness? *HaShem* doesn't have to earn our allegiance, we have to earn His." The leaders asked, "What should we do?" Yehudit answered, "I have a plan." She dressed herself in elegant clothes and went with one of her maidservants to the camp of Holofernes, the Greek general. The guards were so overwhelmed by her beauty that they immediately let her in. Holofernes was also struck by her beauty and asked her why she had come. She explained that she was a prophetess and that she had given up her God and made a plan to annihilate the Jews. Yehudit told Holofernes that she would use her plan on one condition: she would be allowed to leave camp three times a day. Holofernes agreed. In reality, Yehudit's plan was to kill Holofernes, and she prayed to *HaShem* to help her succeed. She then gave Holofernes wine so that he would get drunk and cheese to make him thirsty. With the wine and cheese Holofernes fell into a deep sleep. Once asleep, Yehudit took a sword and chopped off his head. She placed the head in her basket and brought it to her people. The Greeks, having lost one of their top generals, surrendered and Yehudit was victorious.

Having proven the importance of heroic women for the *Chanukah* miracle, is a woman's status exactly equal to a man's when lighting *Chanukah* candles? The answer is both yes and no. It is equal in that according to most *poskim*, a woman can light on behalf of a man. If a man is travelling away from home his wife may light on his behalf. It is recommended that before a husband leaves, he request of his wife to light on his behalf. Other rabbis argue differently; they see it as preferable for the husband to light in the temporary place where he is. The reasoning of the second group

of rabbis is based on the Talmud, which says there is a greater level of religious enthusiasm when each person lights his or her own candles. On the other hand, although a woman is obligated, many communities have the practice of women fulfilling their obligation through their husbands or fathers.

Lastly, if women like Matityahu's daughter and Yehudit played such prominent roles in the miracle of *Chanukah*, why don't women share the same status as men when lighting *Chanukah* candles? Men are obligated to light, but women are encouraged by some *poskim* to fulfill their obligation through their husbands and fathers. The *Chatam Sofer* gives an answer which goes back to Talmudic times. When *Chanukah* candles were lit outside of homes (as most Israelis do even today), it was regarded as improper and immodest for women to light candles outside in the dark streets. Because this was the case, the men would light. This tradition of only men having a greater obligation to light candles still exists today, regardless of the fact that women do go out in the street, and the fact that most of us light the *menorah* inside the house. Women still are regarded as the major force in the miracle of *Chanukah*. If it weren't for Yehudit's bravery and Matityahu's daughter's courage, the miracles of *Chanukah* wouldn't have happened.

Source: 500 Questions and answers on *Chanukah* by: Rabbi Dr. Jeffrey M. Cohen.

A Supernatural Nation

By Tamar Fishweicher ('13)

In *Parashat Vayeshev*, which we always read around *Chanukah* time, the *pasuk* states in four different places, "*Va-yanas va-yetzei ha-chutzah* - Yosef fled and went outside" (*Bereishit* 39:12, 13, 15, 18). While Yosef was living in *Mitzrayim*, the wife of Potifar tried to seduce him. The *pesukim* describe how Yosef resisted her temptations by fleeing from her and not succumbing to immoral behavior. Later, the *midrash* poses a question about the splitting of the Red Sea: "*Ha-yam ra'ah va-yanos*' (*Tehillim* 114:3): *mai ra'ah*?" "The sea saw, and fled!" What did the sea see?" The *midrash* answers by saying that the sea saw the casket of Yosef, and then split. "*Bi-zechut Yosef, nas mipnei ha-nas*," the sea ran because Yosef ran away. In the *zechut* of Yosef running from immorality, the sea to split for the entire *Bnei Yisrael*.

Similarly, in *Parashat Lech Lecha*, Avraham cries out to *HaShem* for a child. In *Bereishit* 15:5, the Torah uses the same language as in *Parashat Vayeshev* and states, "*va-yotzei oto ha-chutzah*." *HaShem* told Avraham to "go outside." In the *Gemara Shabbat* 157a, Rabbi Yehudah says that Avraham stood in front of *HaShem* and called out, "I have looked into the astrology and it's showing me that I will not have a son." *HaShem* then replied to Avraham and commanded him to "go outside" the natural order of the world, the world of as-

tology. *HaShem* was telling Avraham to remove himself from this mindset because *Bnei Yisrael* will be a great nation that will experience miracles beyond nature. We learn that Avraham and Sarah finally have a son even though it defies all rules of nature. Just like the word “*ha-chutzah*” is used with Avraham signifying “outside the natural order of the world,” it is also used with Yosef in *Parashat Vayeshev* because he was also “*le-ma’alah min ha-teva*,” above nature, when he didn’t succumb to the wife of Potifar. His strength to behave above nature is what made the sea split many years later. Yosef’s “*le-m’aalah min ha-teva*” act led to another “*le-ma’alah min ha-teva*” act of God.

Of the 112 *pesukim* in *Parashat Vayeshev*, every *pasuk* starts with the letter *vav*, except for eight *pesukim*. The *Shemen Ha-Tov* quotes the *Sefer Ha-Pardes* who asks the question, “Why eight *pesukim*?” The *Shemen Ha-Tov* suggests that while reading through this *parashah* it seems like a story of natural occurrences. The repeated “*vav*’s” at the beginning of each *pasuk* essentially make the story sound like, “and this happened...,” “then this happened...” signifying the natural progression of historical events. In Judaism the number eight symbolizes “*le-ma’alah min ha-teva*.” The lack of a *vav* in these eight *pesukim* teaches us that *Parashat Vayeshev* is not a mere story; rather, it is a compilation of occurrences that are all miraculous parts of God’s plan.

Parashat Vayeshev is filled with occurrences that are *le-ma’alah min ha-teva*, such as Yosef’s unique success in Potifar’s house and Yosef’s resistance to Potifar’s wife. It is therefore no coincidence that the reading of this *parashah* coincides with *Chanukah*. The story of *Chanukah* was truly *le-ma’alah min ha-teva*. *Bnei Yisrael* only had enough oil for one day, but since *HaShem* blessed us from the time of Avraham that we would be a nation of *le-ma’alah min ha-teva*, we were able to overcome the incredible odds, and the oil lasted for **eight** days. In addition, the Jews, a small army, defeated the *Chashmona’im*, who had a large, strong army.

May we all be *zocheh* to live our lives knowing that *Bnei Yisrael* is an *am muvchar*, a chosen people, and just like *HaShem* promised Avraham that he would be *le-ma’alah min ha-teva*, we should all be *zocheh* to have faith in *HaShem* that our lives will be filled with not just natural events, but events that are *le-ma’alah min ha-teva*.

Chanukah: Physical War, Spiritual Battle

By Tamar Landsman (‘13)

Chazal instituted two *mitzvot*, *hadlakat nerot* and *kri’at Hallel*, to commemorate the two miracles of *Chanukah*. We light candles because the oil miraculously lasted for eight days, and we say *Hallel* to commemorate the victory of the

Chashmona’im over the *Yevanim*, the Greeks. There are two forms of *Hallel*: *Hallel shalem* (a full *Hallel*), and *chatzi Hallel* (an abridged version in which some *pesukim* are left out).

On *Sukkot*, *Hallel shalem* is recited every day, but after the first days of *Pesach*, only the abridged version of *Hallel* is said. This is because the *korbanot* offered on each day of *Sukkot* were different, but the *korbanot* offered on each day of *Pesach* were identical. For this reason, *Pesach* is viewed as one *Yom Tov*, deserving a complete *Hallel* only on the first days. *Sukkot*, however, is considered a new *Yom Tov* on each day because of the different *korbanot* that were brought, and therefore deserves a complete *Hallel* each day. *Tosafot* raise a question: why it is necessary to recite a full *Hallel* on each day of *Chanukah*. Why view each day as a separate entity? *Tosafot* suggest that it is because the miracle of the oil was renewed each day. Rabbi Tzvi Sobolofsky (in an article published on *Torahweb.org*) asks, however, why the miracle of the oil is relevant here. The miracle of the oil is commemorated by the *mitzvah* of lighting candles. *Hallel* is recited to commemorate the victory on the battlefield. And, if *Hallel* is said to commemorate the miracle on the battlefield, shouldn’t a full *Hallel* on the first day be sufficient? After all, we were only saved once.

Rabbi Sobolofsky suggests that in *Tosafot*’s view, the two miracles of *Chanukah* are not separate from one another. The two can be linked through gaining a better understanding of the battle between the *Chashmona’im* and the *Yevanim*. The battle was actually fought on two fronts: there was a physical war that occurred between the armies on the battlefield, and there was a battle between two different ways of life. The profligate, impure lifestyle embodied by the *Yevanim* clashed with the *Chashmona’im*’s pure devotion to a *Torah* lifestyle. This dual battle is expressed in *Al Ha-Nissim*. Not only do we mention the victory of the few over the many, but we acknowledge the defeat of the wicked and impure at the hands of the pure and righteous.

It was clear after the culmination of the war that the *Chashmona’im* were physically victorious, but the uncertainty remained over the victor in the spiritual arena. *HaShem* performed a second miracle to prove that the spiritual battle had also been won by the *Chashmona’im*. *Chazal* relate the light of the *menorah* to the light of *Torah*. If the oil could burn for eight consecutive days even though the *Yevanim* defiled the *Beit HaMikdash*, the light of *Torah* had come out victorious from the darkness of *Yavan*. The miracle of the oil is therefore not distinct from the miracle on the battlefield; instead, it is a completion of the physical struggle that occurred. When we say *Hallel* on *Chanukah* we celebrate both miracles of *Chanukah*. Lighting the *menorah* commemorates the victory in the spiritual war, which merits the recitation of

Hallel just as the victory of the physical battle does. Although the physical victory on the battlefield would have merited the recitation of *Hallel* at least once, the spiritual victory of the *Chashmona'im* and a *Torah* lifestyle was renewed each day of *Chanukah*, which is why we recite a full *Hallel* each day. As we recite *Hallel* each day of *Chanukah*, we should acknowledge the victory of the renewal of *Torah*, which is the true cause of our celebration.

David Rottenstreich *a"h* also comments on the double faceted battle in his book, *Yad Dovid*. He concurs with the idea that we light the *menorah* to commemorate the spiritual victory against the *Yevanim*, and adds a beautiful idea. A *midrash* on the *pasuk* in *Bereishit*, “*ve-choshech al penei tehom*,” explains that the *choshech*, darkness, is analogous to *malchut Yavan*, the reign of the Greeks. The Greek philosophy at the time was focused on one’s self, rather than on other people. Fulfilling one’s own desires and enhancing one’s self were the main concerns. This is considered “darkness” because in order to fulfill one’s own desires, one does not need any light; one knows what he is lacking regardless of the amount of light available. However, in order to assist and care for others, one must have light to properly “see” others. There is an opinion in the *Gemara* that R. Meir’s name was not actually R. Meir, but that he was called this for his quality of being “*me’ir*” others, or enlightening others with his own light. This should be our goal while fulfilling the *mitzvah* of *hadlakat nerot*.

There is an *issur* to derive any benefit from the *Chanukah* candles, which directly contrasts with the purpose of *Shabbat* candles. The reason for this is because we do not want to emulate the self-centered, egotistical qualities of the Greeks at the time. We light for others to see. As the *halachah* states, the candles must be lit “*Ad she-tichleh regel min hashuk*,” until people stop walking in the marketplace. A man who, for whatever reason, is unable to light *Chanukah* candles, has the ability to make a *birkat ha-ro’eh* by merely observing a *menorah* and making the *brachah*, “*She-asa nissim la-avoteinu...*” This *Chanukah*, let us make it our responsibility to go out and help others, whether it be by donating gifts to a toy drive or volunteering after Hurricane Sandy. Performing altruistic acts of *chesed* and portraying devotion to our fellow Jews is the epitome of why we light the *menorah* on *Chanukah*.

The Kashrut of Artistic Chanukiyot

By Keren Schwartzman (‘16)

On *Chanukah*, it is typically assumed that menorahs must be created so that the candles are in a straight line. Is this true? Can a person be *yotzei* the *mitzvah* of lighting the *chanukiah* using an artistic or innovatively shaped *chanukiah*?

There is no basic description of what the required format of a *chanukiah* must be. Although many people believe that the candles must be in a straight line, the purpose of that format is merely to prevent problems. The *Gemara* in *Massechet Shabbat* 23b offers a possible explanation for this custom. The *Gemara* explains that if the wicks are sharing the same power source from a bowl of oil, it can be perceived as a bonfire rather than distinct lights. Some *Rishonim* elaborate on this opinion and say that it is satisfactory to have the extent of a finger between the wicks. The Rama explains that it is acceptable to use a candelabrum because in a candelabrum each candle can be seen distinctly. According to these opinions, *chanukiyot* that are not in a straight line are fine as long as the lights are far enough from each other.

While sources may allow for the use of innovatively shaped *chanukiyot*, the standard practice is that people light in a straight line. Therefore, lighting irregularly shaped *chanukiot* is discouraged.

This *halachah* applies to the idea of beautifying the *mitzvah* of lighting the *chanukiah*. Many Judaica stores boast elaborate menorahs with intricate designs and many colors. While these *chanukiyot* may be beautiful, this *halachah* acts as a reminder that we must remain true to the core of the *mitzvah*. Regarding lighting candles, the *kavvanah* put into the *mitzvah* is key. It is not necessarily the outward beauty of the *chanukiah* that creates a truly beautiful *mitzvah*. While it is nice to have a pretty *chanukiah*, if the *mitzvah* itself is not done with correct *kavvanah*, the *mitzvah* loses some its value. This *Chanukah*, we should all be careful to beautify the *mitzvah* in the best way possible by having proper *kavvanah*.

Source: *Living the Halachic Process- Questions and Answers for the Modern Jew* by Rabbi Yosef Carmel and Rabbi Moshe Ehrenreich, Eretz Hemdah Institute.

A Chanukah Miracle In The Midst of Darkness

By Julie Schwartz (‘13)

It was *Kislev* 1944 in the Bergen Belsen concentration camp. Rabbi Shraga Shmuel Schnitzler, known as Rabbi Shmelke, vigorously tried to keep the spirit of the Jewish prisoners alive. When the month of *Kislev* arrived, Rabbi Shmelke was determined to get oil for the lighting of the *menorah*. He tried asking the kitchen staff if there was any way to get a bit of oil, but to no avail: the answer was always no.

One day, Rabbi Shmelke was doing his assigned job in the camp when he stumbled over something buried in the ground. He looked around, making sure no one was watching, and knelt to see what it was. Rabbi Shmelke pulled out a small jar of oil, eight little cups, and thin strands of cotton

for wicks. He was thrilled that his prayers were answered and that there would be a *menorah* for *Chanukah*. But something troubled him: to whom did this treasure belong? The next day, Rabbi Shmelke asked around, "Did you bury the oil?" but the answer was always no."

The next night, which marked the first night of *Chanukah*, the Jews returned to their barracks after roll call and found something incredible. The *menorah* that Rabbi Shmelke had found buried in the ground days earlier was standing on a bunk. Even greater, one cup was filled with oil. Rabbi Shmelke said the *brachah* and lit the cup of oil. The Jews huddled around and watched in silence. Some smiled while others cried. The routine was repeated every night of the holiday.

A few months later, Germany surrendered and the war ended. Rabbi Shmelke survived the war and returned to Hungary. Many years later, he made a visit to the United States and met with the Satmar Rebbe, who revealed that he too had been a prisoner in Bergen Belsen. "I was there a year before you," said the Satmar Rebbe. "I was rescued on the 21st of *Kislev*, four days before *Chanukah*. I had bribed several camp officials and put together a package of oil, cups, and wicks, which I then buried in a field." All those years, Rabbi Shmelke had wondered who it was that had brought the lights of *Chanukah* into Bergen Belsen. These lights brought hope to the prisoners of Bergen Belsen. It was hope that their loved ones were safe, that the war would soon end, and that most of all, miracles could still happen.

Based on "Chanukah in Bergen Belsen" by Libi Astaire.

The Chanukah Miracle

By Tamar Mendelson ('15) and Esther Alexander ('15)

What is the miracle of *Chanukah*? If the miracle of *Chanukah* is that oil enough for one day burned for eight days, why do we celebrate *Chanukah* for eight days – if the miraculous use of the oil was only for seven days?

There are many options for what the miracle could be. One option is that the jar of oil lasted for eight days when it was only supposed to last for one. After the *Maccabim* won against the Greeks, they entered the *Beit Ha-Mikdash* and saw that it was destroyed. After searching, they found one jar of oil that was still sealed with the seal of the *Kohen Gadol*. Finding a pure jar of oil in the midst of impurity is itself a miracle.

One may ask, why then in *Al Ha-Nissim* is there no mention of the oil jar? The only miracle mentioned was that *Bnei Yisrael* were victorious in battle! Another option for the miracle that generates the extra day of *Chanukah* is that despite *Bnei Yisrael* being the smaller nation, they won the battle against the Greeks. On the other hand, we believe that the true miracle of *Chanukah* is the jar of oil that lasted for

eight days, because it is possible for a small nation to overtake a larger one, even if it may not be so common. To find a jar of oil that is only enough to last for one day but lasts for eight instead, is a true miracle from *Hashem*.

The jar of oil that was found should have only lasted for one day, but the miracle is that it lasted for seven more days. Another answer to this question of why we then celebrate for eight days is found in the word "*shemonah*" itself. "*Shemonah*" is the Hebrew word for "eight," and when the letters are rearranged, they spell *shemen vav hey*. *Shemen* means oil, but what is the significance of *vav hey*? In *HaShem's* name, *Yud Kay Vav Kay*, the *Yud Kay* represents something that is hidden. The *Vav Kay* represents something that was shown. After *Bnei Yisrael* won the battle and found the oil that lasted for eight days, it was revealed to *Bnei Yisrael* that *HaShem* was on their side. Everything that happened was a miracle directly from *HaShem*. Therefore, the miracle is celebrated for eight days, a reflection of the "*shemonah*" – the *shemen* that revealed the presence of *HaShem*.

Remembering Milestones

By Nina Miller ('16)

There is a famous *machloket* between *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel* when it comes to lighting *Chanukah* candles. *Beit Shammai* says that on the first night, eight candles should be lit, and from that night on, the number of candles should be reduced by one, whereas *Beit Hillel* says that on the first night one candle should be lit and on each subsequent night, a candle should be added.

There is a difference of opinion between two *amora'im* regarding *Beit Shammai* and *Beit Hillel's* reasoning for their opinions. One *amora* states that *Beit Shammai* is focusing on the days yet to be celebrated and *Beit Hillel* is focusing on the days already celebrated. Another *amora* says that *Beit Shammai* bases his opinion on the way we bring the bull sacrifices on *Sukkot*, reducing in number each day, whereas *Beit Hillel* bases his opinion on the statement that we always ascend in *kedushah* and never descend (Chabad.org).

There are deep messages in both of these methods, and although we follow the opinion of *Beit Hillel*, *Beit Shammai's* method is also important. By adding one light each day, we are recognizing and appreciating every day and thanking *HaShem* for the constant daily miracles He gives us. We focus on each day's milestone, the small steps we take daily towards our goal. By contrast, by lighting eight candles, we are recognizing the big miracle; the oil was able to last for eight days until we made more oil!

Both outlooks are important and connected. We must recognize and appreciate each small step, while keeping in mind the big picture – where we are headed. Learning the alpha-

bet, receiving our first *siddur*, and learning how to add are small but important milestones in our lives and we must never forget them. However, if after learning the difference between A and B, or after the excitement of our *siddur* play we never learn to read, or learn the deeper meaning of davening, these first steps are nothing. Only when we keep in mind the greater picture, the full eight days that the oil lasted, do we begin to appreciate the importance of the baby steps that we have taken and continue to take to reach our ultimate goals.

Two Kinds of Light

By Tova Sklar ('15)

On *Chanukah*, there is a *mitzvah* for a person to light candles on the *menorah* each night. However, *Chanukah* is not the only time that the Jewish people are required to light candles. We are also obligated to light candles before *Shabbat*. *Perek Bet* of *Massechet Shabbat*, *Bameh Madlikin*, discusses the practical differences between *Shabbat* candles and *Chanukah* candles.

Firstly, the two types of candles serve different functions. In the case of the *ner Shabbat*, a person is supposed to gain from the light of the candles. Having light in the house on Friday night is meant to enhance a person's *oneg Shabbat* and bring about *shalom bayit*, a peaceful household. Before electricity, the *ner Shabbat* was often the only light in the house. Without light, a person cannot see where he is going and what he is doing, creating chaos and difficulty. Therefore, the *Shabbat* candles are extremely important and useful.

Shabbat 21a-b states that the light of the *ner Chanukah*, unlike the light of *ner Shabbat*, cannot to be used for any useful purpose. In *Ha-Nerot Halalu*, a song that is sung every night after the *Chanukah* candles are lit, it says: “*ve-ain lanu reshut le-hishtamesh bahem ela lir'otam bilvad* - And we do not have permission to make use of them; all we can do is look at them.” This line is in accordance with the opinions of many *poskim* who say that it is prohibited to use the light of *ner Chanukah* even to help perform another *mitzvah*.

The *rishonim* offer two reasons why we are prohibited from benefitting from the candles of the *menorah*. According to the *Rashba* and the *Ran*, the reason one cannot make use of the light from the *ner Chanukah* is that the *menorah* that we light represents the *menorah* that was used in the *Beit HaMikdash*. Because of the sanctity of the *menorah* in the *Beit HaMikdash*, one was not allowed to benefit from it and its light. Therefore, we are prohibited to use the light from our *menorah* as well.

Rashi's explanation is that these candles were set aside for *pirsumei nissa*, publicizing the miracle, and not for general

household purposes. The rabbis were concerned that if the light of *Chanukah* candles was permitted to be used for other things, people would assume that they are lighting for their own benefit and not for the purpose of fulfilling the *mitzvah* of lighting the *Chanukah* candles.

Another practical difference is the type of oil that a person can use for both *mitzvot*. Since the *ner Shabbat* is meant for practical use, the *Mishnah* in *Bameh Madlikin* requires that we use only high quality oils that burn nicely. The *Gemara* explains that a person must use that type of oil because of the concept of *shema yateh* –some inferior oils cause the fire to flicker and somebody using the light of the candles might come to adjust the flame and violate the *av melachah* of kindling a flame. In the case of *ner Chanukah*, however, since the main *mitzvah* is one of *hadlakah* only, and we are not concerned about the light it gives off, any type of oil can therefore be used for *ner Chanukah*, even one that does not burn well.

Another difference between *ner Shabbat* and *ner Chanukah* that existed during the time of the *Gemara* is that the *ner Shabbat* must be lit inside the house, whereas the *ner Chanukah* had to be lit outside of the house, by the front door, as it says in *Shabbat* 21: “*ner Chanukah mitzvah le-hanichah al petach beito* - the *mitzvah* of *ner Chanukah* is to be performed by placing the candle outside of the entrance to house.” However, the *Gemara* says there are exceptions to the rule: “*U-besha'at ha-sakanah manichah al shulchano* - In a time of danger one may light the *ner Chanukah* on a table inside of one's home.” Today, all of the *poskim* hold that it is permissible to light inside the home regardless of whether it is dangerous to light outside.

These differences are important in helping us understand the *Gemara* in *Shabbat* 23b: The *Gemara* describes a situation in which a person can only afford to buy a single candle and must choose between using it for *ner Shabbat* or *ner Chanukah*. According to Rava, *ner Shabbat* is preferable because it is necessary for *shalom bayit*, peace within the household. Therefore, someone faced with this choice must purchase a candle for *ner Shabbat* and forego lighting the *ner Chanukah*.

According to Rava in the *Gemara*, it is impossible to use a single candle as both a *ner Shabbat* and a *ner Chanukah*. There are two approaches to understanding Rava's opinion. The *Vilna Gaon* in his commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* says that the *mitzvot* of lighting these two types of candles cannot be performed with one candle because each *mitzvah* has a different function. The *ner Shabbat* is meant to provide light, whereas the *ner Chanukah* is exclusively to publicize the miracle and cannot be used even for another *mitzvah* such as *shalom bayit*. According to the *Vilna Gaon*, if a candle cannot be set aside exclusively for *pirsumei nissa*, then one cannot fulfill the *mitzvah* of *ner Chanukah* with such a candle. That is why the *Gemara* assumes that a candle could never serve as a *ner*

Shabbat and a *ner Chanukah* at the same time.

The *Magen Avraham* in his commentary on the *Shulchan Aruch* has a different approach. He says that the reason that Rava does not suggest using one candle for both is because in the time of the Gemara, it simply was not possible, since the *ner Chanukah* had to be lit outside and the *ner Shabbat* was lit inside. Today, however, because we light *ner Chanukah* inside, one can, if there is no other choice, use the same candle for both. Having one candle for *ner Shabbat* and *ner Chanukah* is allowed in this case despite the prohibition of using light of the *ner Chanukah* for something else. While it is clearly preferable for the *ner Chanukah* to be set aside and not used for any other purpose but *persumai nissa*, if you only have a single candle, it is better to make it a *ner Shabbat* and a *ner Chanukah* than not to light a *ner Chanukah* at all.

What is clear from both of these approaches is that the way we perform the *mitzvot* of *ner Shabbat* and *ner Chanukah* has changed over the years in a way that has made it harder to tell the difference between the two. During the time of the *Gemara*, when *Shabbat* candles were lit inside to light up the house and *Chanukah* candles were lit outside to be *mefarsem ha-nes*, it is difficult to imagine someone confusing the two *mitzvot* or suggesting we use the same candle for both. Over the years, the two *mitzvot* gradually became more similar in practice and their uniqueness faded. *Chanukah* candles have moved indoors because of the possible danger they may cause, and *Shabbat* candles are no longer the primary source of light on Friday night because we have electricity. Today, there would be nothing halachically wrong with lighting *nerot Chanukah* and *nerot Shabbat* next to each other, and it may even be permissible today to use the same candle for both. However, one should avoid using the same candle for both *mitzvot* to maintain a physical and mental separation between the two. This will help us remember the different purposes of these two *nerot shel mitzvah* and will allow us to perform each of these *mitzvot* the way Chazal intended.



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