

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

MIKESS / Zot Hanukah
Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7
Rosh Hodesh is Friday December 30th

DECEMBER 31, 2016 2 TEBET 5777

DEDICATION: In memory of our aunt Rachel Sutton, Rachel Bat Victoria 2 Tebet

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Editors Notes

You are the light, you are the miracle!

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 Perasha 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 the entire world to see.

Shabbat Shalom,

David Bibi

PS: For further study please visit
Aleph Beta – Rabbi David Fohrman
<http://www.aisch.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>

Obama's Betrayal of Israel at the UN Must Not Stand

President Barack Obama's ill-advised decision to order the U.S. to abstain on a United Nations resolution condemning Israeli settlements breaks with past U.S. policy, undermines a vital ally and sets back the cause of Middle East peace. Yet it also offers Democrats and Republicans a chance to unite around a more realistic approach to resolving one of the world's most intractable conflicts.

The resolution, passed last week, says Israeli settlements built on land occupied since the 1967 war have "no legal validity." It thus brands the one-tenth of Israel's Jews who live in East Jerusalem and the West Bank as residential outlaws, and could thereby strengthen the effort to sanction or boycott Israel, or even sue it in international bodies.

Previous U.S. administrations have vetoed such resolutions for just that reason, and for undermining the course of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. As Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer correctly noted in condemning the administration's decision, the "fiercely anti-Israel" UN is "the wrong forum" for Israel and the Palestinians to settle their differences.

By abandoning past U.S. practice, Obama is encouraging the Palestinians in their belief that they

can leverage the UN in their effort to achieve statehood. If anything, his decision is a failure of diplomacy and is likely to backfire. It runs the risk of increasing domestic pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, thereby fortifying his resolve to move ahead with settlements. Indeed, the wind is already blowing in this direction, with the Israeli government signaling Tuesday that it may escalate construction projects.

If the Palestinians want a lasting peace based on a two-state solution, they must accept that Israel, not the UN or the "international community," is their negotiating partner. That means negotiating in good faith, not embracing empty resolutions that ignore agreements they have already reached to redraw Israel's borders. It also means ending the "stabbing intifada," condemning and fighting terrorism, and upholding their security obligations. Netanyahu, in turn, must be willing to uproot settlements that even Israeli law deems illegal, to trade land for peace, as Israel has done in the past, and to meet its security and economic obligations to Palestinians if they meet theirs.

Israeli Settlements

The U.S., as the world's only superpower, has already walked away from its responsibility to save hundreds of thousands of Syrian lives, and it permitted a refugee exodus that is destabilizing Europe and may lead to the end of the European Union. To walk away from an ally critical both to U.S. security and to that of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates is ill-advised. To abandon a friend -- a lawful, stable democracy with a dynamic, innovative, outward-looking economy -- is inconceivable.

Fortunately, the bipartisan uproar sparked by Obama's UN decision provides an opportunity for Democrats and Republicans to rally around a more constructive policy. They should start by agreeing to President-elect Donald Trump's plans to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem -- a step envisioned but never taken by presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush. That would provide a powerful reaffirmation to Israel -- a nation born after the slaughter of six million Jews, and under siege since its birth -- of the U.S.'s enduring commitment, and to the world of Israel's right to exist. That reaffirmation, in turn, is essential in providing Israel with the confidence to move ahead with a two-state solution. The U.S. will continue to play a crucial role in helping both sides choose the best way forward. In the choice between terror and peace, and democracy and repression, there can be no room for impartiality, let alone abstention.

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Summary of the Perasha

Miketz - Yosef becomes viceroy. The brothers come down to Mitsrayim

- 1- Paroah has 2 dreams. Yosef is called up from jail to interpret the dreams.
- 2- Yosef interprets the dreams.
- 3- Paroah appoints Yosef as the viceroy. The good years begin and Yosef amasses grain. Yosef gets married and has Efrayim and Menashe.
- 4- The hunger begins. The brothers go down to Mitsrayim to get food. Yosef accuses them of being spies.
- 5- Yosef keeps Shimon and sends the brothers to bring back Binyamin
- 6- The brothers return to Yosef with Binyamin
- 7- Yosef finds the cup in Binyamin's sack

7 interesting and important Rashis on Parashat Miketz

- 41:55b- Yosef made the people do brit milah in order to get food
- 42:1b- The brothers really had food the whole time
- 42:13a/14a- The brothers were trying to find Yosef when they came down to Mitsrayim to get food
- 42:24c- Why Yosef chooses Shimon to lock up and not another brother
- 42:36- Yaakov suspected the brothers might kill Binyamin
- 43:7d- Rashi explains the word "kiy" has 4 different meanings. This is helpful to know as we when we see the word kiy in the Torah Rashi will typically point out which of the 4 meanings we are explaining like.
- 43:33a / 44:16a- Yosef made it like he had a special cup and that is why he knew everything about the brothers

FROM THE RABBIS OF THE JERSEY SHORE

"Yet the chamberlain of the cupbearers did not remember Yosef and he forgot him." (Beresheet 40:23)

Our parashah tells about Yosef's spectacular rise to power, to rule over Egypt. However, initially the wine-master forgot about Yosef, and only remembered later to mention him to the king. There is a true story about another Yosef who was forgotten, Rabbi Obadiah Yosef zt"l.

There was a shul in Yerushalayim called Bet Knesset Tziofiot. This shul had a great Hebrew library that contained many rare sefarim. Rabbi Obadiah Yosef, as a young boy, decided to study Torah there every Friday, due to the great wealth that was in that library.

It seems that the person in charge of the library was yet unfamiliar with the greatness of this young man, and so he was hesitant to allow him

complete access to these valuable books. One never knows, perhaps this student might walk off with some rare sefer. So the librarian agreed that young Obadiah could study there every Friday on condition that the librarian would lock him in, and would then let him out at the end of the day when Obadiah would finish learning.

One Friday, Obadiah was locked in and the librarian forgot about him ("And he forgot him") and didn't unlock the door. Young Obadiah was so engrossed in his studies that he didn't realize that Shabbat had begun and he was locked in! He had no choice but to yell out to people passing by to let him out. Eventually he was heard and he was let out.

When the great Rabbi, Rabbi Yehudah Sadkah zt"l heard about this, he convinced the librarian to give Obadiah a permanent key. Rabbi Reuven Semah

Though we Jews are only a small minority of the world's population, we have been assigned the formidable, seemingly impossible task of enlightening the entire world. The sages have given us a hint as to how this is possible. The halachah states that if a person lit the hanukah lights and the lights subsequently went out, he is not obligated to relight it (although it is preferable if possible). The reason is that vum'n vaug veksv - the kindling is the essence of the misvah. This symbolizes that we are charged with the responsibility to start the task of enlightening the world; G-d will see to its successful conclusion.

The lesson is that although we must do our share to promote and preserve Torah observance, and to be an example to the world, we need not be concerned if it seems that the task is not being accomplished. If we do our part, Hashem will intervene and He will see to it that the job is completed. Rabbi Shmuel Choueka

Momentum - (One Minute with Yourself – Rabbi Raymond Beyda)

The fans jumped to their feet as the sportscaster excitedly declared, "It looks like the momentum has turned back to the home team!"

"Joe's on a roll – he's really built up some serious momentum!" reported the sales manager to the vice-president in charge of sales.

"She is unstoppable. Everyone she calls agrees to contribute. She's got the momentum to bring us over the top," said the fundraiser to the CFO. Momentum. What is it?

The dictionary defines momentum as a strength or force gained by motion or through the development of events. Our Sages put it a little differently. They said, "Misvah goreret misvah" – a

misvah brings on another misvah. They also taught the converse: that a negative action leads to another bad deed.

If you have done something, how do you build it into positive momentum?

One suggestion is a simple matter of perspective. If you feel that life is a succession of days in which you have the opportunity to grow and improve, examine your reaction to yesterday's achievements. If what you did yesterday seems great, you probably haven't yet done anything worthwhile today. As you grow, you realize that what was great in the past is not even good for today. You will find it could have been better. This thought should stimulate the energy to improve today and will, if used daily, invoke a constant drive towards positive growth. Build up momentum.

RABBI ELI MANSOUR
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Setting an Example

The Torah in Parashat Miketz tells the story of Yosef's brothers who come to Egypt to purchase grain. Unbeknownst to them, Yosef, whom they had sold as a slave many years earlier, had risen to the position of Egyptian vizier, and when they come before him to purchase grain, they did not recognize him. Yosef accused them of coming to Egypt as spies, and imprisoned them. Three days later, he released them, and informed them that he had changed his mind. He would keep one brother in prison in Egypt while the others return to Canaan to bring the youngest brother, Binyamin, and this would prove that they are not spies.

When Yosef approached them after the three-day imprisonment to inform them of the change in plans, he first said, "This is what you shall do and thereby live; I am God-fearing" (42:18). Why did Yosef tell the brothers that he is "God fearing"? Rav Shimon Schwab (Germany-New York, 1908-1995) offers a brilliant explanation of Yosef's intent in these words. The defining characteristic of a God-fearing person is his ongoing self-evaluation. Somebody who truly fears God is constantly reexamining his conduct and lifestyle to determine what needs to be corrected or improved. He never feels completely comfortable and at ease with himself; he is always questioning and reexamining so he can continue to grow. This is what Yosef was telling the brothers: "Because I am God-fearing, I reconsidered my decision, and concluded that I should let you free."

Rav Schwab noted that this insight also explains the brothers' reaction to Yosef's new decision. The

Torah says, "They did so" (42:20), which, at first glance, means that Yosef's new decision was implemented, and one brother was imprisoned while the others returned to Canaan. However, the Torah explicitly records this happening several verses later, indicating that "They did so" refers to something else. Rav Schwab explained that the phrase "They did so" introduces what the Torah writes immediately thereafter – that the brothers expressed remorse over the sale of Yosef, and realized that the tribulations they were experiencing in Egypt were a punishment for what they did to their brother. In other words, the brothers learned from Yosef's example. Seeing how Yosef reconsidered his decision out of his fear of God, they, too, "did so" – they followed his example, and they looked back at their past deeds and reexamined their conduct. They were inspired by the Egyptian vizier, who treated them harshly but then reconsidered and changed his mind, and they, too, revisited their decisions of the past. And they realized that they acted wrongly in the way they treated Yosef, and that they were now being punished for their wrongdoing.

One lesson we can learn from this insight is the influential power of setting a personal example. Yosef taught by example the critical lesson of self-examination, and it had a profound impact upon the brothers. If we wish to influence the people around us, especially our children, the most effective way of doing this is by setting a personal example, by modeling the kind of behavior we want others to embrace. It worked for Yosef – and it can work for us, as well.

VICTOR BIBI
SOD HAPARASHA

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Rabbi Wein

CHANUKAH

There probably is no other holiday on the Jewish calendar that has had as much material written about it than the Chanukah festival. There are many causes and reasons for this seeming anomaly of a relatively minor rabbinic holiday receiving so much attention. The fact that by the nature of the calendar it falls in the month of December, and especially this year when it actually coincides with the holiday of the majority culture in the Western world, is part of the reason that it has achieved such notoriety and attention.

Jews never want to be left out of a celebration and thus we have created our own – gifts and all – and this allows us some latitude in participating in the general atmosphere of the month. All of this is perhaps true only on the subconscious level, as it is likely that none of the great scholars of Israel would countenance such an approach publicly. But nevertheless, realistically speaking, one cannot help but feel the resonance of the general culture, at least in the Jewish societies of the Western world.

As such, Chanukah been portrayed in a more universal sense than its original commemoration perhaps warranted. In my youth, the general Jewish representation of the holiday was that it was a battle and a triumph for religious freedom. As such, the mainstream Western Jewish society presented it as a victory for democracy over totalitarian rule and completely universal in its message and content.

This was at a period of time when being Jewish, certainly publicly Jewish, was fraught with financial and social pitfalls in the general society. Even observant Jews did not wear distinctive garb or head covering publicly and therefore displaying the lights of Chanukah in our front windows was to convey a universal idea and not merely a Jewish commemoration.

Again, in my youth, no one placed their Chanukah candles outside, near the door to their residence. The admonition of the rabbis of Eastern Europe as recorded in their halachic works, that one should not antagonize the general population by a public display of Jewish commemoration held true even in the land of the free and the home of the brave.

The growing strength and intensity of Orthodox Jewish life in the United States and the great amount of acceptance and tolerance that the Jewish community has achieved over the past half-century has altered this behavior pattern. Most American Jews feel comfortable – except perhaps on the college campuses of the country – in asserting their Jewishness publicly and unabashedly.

Here in Israel, which, all rumors to the contrary notwithstanding, is a very Jewish state, Chanukah mainly has returned to its original format and meaning. It represents the struggle against false gods, Hellenistic misinterpretations of Judaism and a desire to purify the people and the land through our actions and the Divine miracles that are omnipresent in our personal and national lives.

Chanukah here does not stand for pluralistic Judaism, concern for the environment or any of the other new false gods that so invest Western society today, and in parts of the Jewish world as well. The Hasmoneans fought against foreign oppression of Israel and paganism and for Jewish sovereign independence and Torah observance. And that battle has not yet ended.

The miracle of Chanukah is an earned miracle, so to speak. There is rabbinic tradition that all of the miracles that appear in the Bible were built into nature, again so to speak, at the inception of the process of creation. Not so the later miracles that have occurred to us after the closing of the canon of the Bible.

Those miracles had to be earned by the sacrifice and actions of the Jews themselves in opposing evil, wrongdoing and paganism. This is an important lesson for us in our times. Though we do not yet have the ability to purify the Temple or light its golden candelabra, the kindling of our small Chanukah lights symbolizes our determination and commitment to be a free, independent and holy people, devoted to our tradition and our Torah.

By doing so publicly, even in a society where the general culture stands against much of what we represent, we renew our purpose and mission in life. It is our actions that will bring about the necessary miracles that will be reflected in the Jewish story throughout the ages. We therefore thank God not only for the past miracles that Chanukah presents and commemorates but also for the current miracles, seen and unseen, known and unknown, that mark our current existence as well.

Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks 8 Short Thoughts for 8 Chanukah

INSPIRED BY FAITH, WE CAN CHANGE THE
WORLD

Twenty-two centuries ago, when Israel was under the rule of the empire of Alexander the Great, one particular leader, Antiochus IV, decided to force the pace of Hellenisation, forbidding Jews to practice their religion and setting up in the Temple in Jerusalem a statue of Zeus Olympus.

This was too much to bear, and a group of Jews, the Maccabees, fought for their religious freedom, winning a stunning victory against the most powerful army of the ancient world. After three years they reconquered Jerusalem, rededicated the Temple and relit the menorah with the one cruse of undefiled oil

they found among the wreckage.

It was one of the most stunning military achievements of the ancient world. It was, as we say in our prayers, a victory of the few over the many, the weak over the strong. It's summed up in wonderful line from the prophet Zechariah: not by might nor by strength but by my spirit says the Lord. The Maccabees had neither might nor strength, neither weapons nor numbers. But they had a double portion of the Jewish spirit that longs for freedom and is prepared to fight for it.

Never believe that a handful of dedicated people can't change the world. Inspired by faith, they can. The Maccabees did then. So can we today.

THE LIGHT OF THE SPIRIT NEVER DIES

There's an interesting question the commentators ask about Chanukah. For eight days we light lights, and each night we make the blessing over miracles: she-asah nissim la-avotenu. But what was the miracle of the first night? The light that should have lasted one day lasted eight. But that means there was something miraculous about days 2 to 8; but nothing miraculous about the first day.

Perhaps the miracle was this, that the Maccabees found one cruse of oil with its seal intact, undefiled. There was no reason to suppose that anything would have survived the systematic desecration the Greeks and their supporters did to the Temple. Yet the Maccabees searched and found that one jar. Why did they search? Because they had faith that from the worst tragedy something would survive. The miracle of the first night was that of faith itself, the faith that something would remain with which to begin again.

So it has always been in Jewish history. There were times when any other people would have given up in despair: after the destruction of the Temple, or the massacres of the crusades, or the Spanish Expulsion, or the pogroms, or the Shoa. But somehow Jews did not sit and weep. They gathered what remained, rebuilt our people, and lit a light like no other in history, a light that tells us and the world of the power of the human spirit to overcome every tragedy and refuse to accept defeat.

From the days of Moses and the bush that burned and was not consumed to the days of the Maccabees and the single cruse of oil, Judaism has been humanity's ner tamid, the everlasting light that no power on earth can extinguish.

CHANUKAH IN OUR TIME

Back in 1991 I lit Chanukah candles with Mikhail Gorbachev, who had, until earlier that year, been president of the Soviet Union. For seventy years the practice of Judaism had been effectively banned in communist Russia. It was one of the two great assaults on our people and faith in the twentieth century. The Germans sought to kill Jews; the Russians tried to kill Judaism. Under Stalin the assault became brutal. Then in 1967, after Israel's victory in the Six Day War, many Soviet Jews sought to leave Russia and go to Israel. Not only was permission refused, but often the Jews concerned lost their jobs and were imprisoned. Around the world Jews campaigned for the prisoners, Refuseniks they were called, to be released and allowed to leave. Eventually Mikhail Gorbachev realised that the whole soviet system was unworkable. Communism had brought, not freedom and equality, but repression, a police state, and a new hierarchy of power. In the end it collapsed, and Jews regained the freedom to practice Judaism and to go to Israel.

That day in 1991 after we had lit candles together, Mr Gorbachev asked me, through his interpreter, what we had just done. I told him that 22 centuries ago in Israel after the public practice of Judaism had been banned, Jews fought for and won their freedom, and these lights were the symbol of that victory. And I continued: Seventy years ago Jews suffered the same loss of freedom in Russia, and you have now helped them to regain it. So you have become part of the Chanukah story. And as the interpreter translated those words into Russian, Mikhail Gorbachev blushed. The Chanukah story still lives, still inspires, telling not just us but the world that though tyranny exists, freedom, with God's help, will always win the final battle.

THE FIRST CLASH OF CIVILISATIONS

One of the key phrases of our time is the clash of civilizations. And Chanukah is about one of the first great clashes of civilization, between the Greeks and Jews of antiquity, Athens and Jerusalem.

The ancient Greeks produced one of the most remarkable civilizations of all time: philosophers like Plato and Aristotle, historians like Herodotus and Thucydides, dramatists like Sophocles and Aeschylus. They produced art and architecture of a beauty that has never been surpassed. Yet in the second century before the common era they were defeated by the group of Jewish fighters known as the Maccabees, and from then on Greece as a world power went into rapid decline, while the tiny Jewish people survived every exile and persecution and are

still alive and well today.

What was the difference? The Greeks, who did not believe in a single, loving God, gave the world the concept of tragedy. We strive, we struggle, at times we achieve greatness, but life has no ultimate purpose. The universe neither knows nor cares that we are here.

Ancient Israel gave the world the idea of hope. We are here because God created us in love, and through love we discover the meaning and purpose of life.

Tragic cultures eventually disintegrate and die. Lacking any sense of ultimate meaning, they lose the moral beliefs and habits on which continuity depends. They sacrifice happiness for pleasure. They sell the future for the present. They lose the passion and energy that brought them greatness in the first place. That's what happened to Ancient Greece.

Judaism and its culture of hope survived, and the Chanukah lights are the symbol of that survival, of Judaism's refusal to jettison its values for the glamour and prestige of a secular culture, then or now.

A candle of hope may seem a small thing, but on it the very survival of a civilisation may depend.

THE LIGHT OF WAR AND THE LIGHT OF PEACE

There is a law about Chanukah I find moving and profound. Maimonides writes that 'the command of Chanukah lights is very precious. One who lacks the money to buy lights should sell something, or if necessary borrow, so as to be able to fulfill the mitzvah.'

The question then arises, What if, on Friday afternoon, you find yourself with only one candle? What do you light it as — a Shabbat candle or a Chanukah one? It can't be both. Logic suggests that you should light it as a Chanukah candle. After all, there is no law that you have to sell or borrow to light lights for Shabbat. Yet the law is that, if faced with such a choice, you light it as a Shabbat light. Why?

Listen to Maimonides: 'The Shabbat light takes priority because it symbolizes shalom bayit, domestic peace. And great is peace because the entire Torah was given in order to make peace in the world.'

Consider: Chanukah commemorates one of the greatest military victories in Jewish history. Yet Jewish law rules that if we can only light one candle — the Shabbat light takes precedence, because in

Judaism the greatest military victory takes second place to peace in the home.

Why did Judaism, alone among the civilizations of the ancient world, survive? Because it valued the home more than the battlefield, marriage more than military grandeur, and children more than generals. Peace in the home mattered to our ancestors more than the greatest military victory.

So as we celebrate Chanukah, spare a thought for the real victory, which was not military but spiritual. Jews were the people who valued marriage, the home, and peace between husband and wife, above the highest glory on the battlefield. In Judaism, the light of peace takes precedence over the light of war.

THE THIRD MIRACLE

We all know the miracles of Chanukah, the military victory of the Maccabees against the Greeks, and the miracle of the oil that should have lasted one day but stayed burning for eight. But there was a third miracle not many people know about. It took place several centuries later.

After the destruction of the second Temple, many rabbis were convinced that Chanukah should be abolished. After all, it celebrated the rededication of the Temple. And the Temple was no more. It had been destroyed by the Romans under Titus. Without a Temple, what was there left to celebrate?

The Talmud tells us that in at least one town, Lod, Chanukah was abolished. Yet eventually the other view prevailed, which is why we celebrate Chanukah to this day.

Why? Because though the Temple was destroyed, Jewish hope was not destroyed. We may have lost the building but we still had the story, and the memory, and the light. And what had happened once in the days of the Maccabees could happen again. And it was those words, *od lo avdah tikvatenu*, "our hope is not destroyed," became part of the song, *Hatikvah*, that inspired Jews to return to Israel and rebuild their ancient state. So as you light the Chanukah candles remember this. The Jewish people kept hope alive, and hope kept the Jewish people alive. We are the voice of hope in the conversation of humankind.

INSIDE / OUTSIDE

There is more than one command in Judaism to light lights. There are three. There are the Shabbat candles. There is the havdalah candle. And there are

the Chanukah candles.

The difference between them is that Shabbat candles represent shalom bayit, peace in the home. They are lit indoors. They are, if you like, Judaism's inner light, the light of the sanctity of marriage and the holiness of home.

The Chanukah candles used to be lit outside — outside the front door. It was only fear of persecution that took the Chanukah candles back inside, and in recent times the Lubavitcher Rebbe introduced the custom of lighting giant menorahs in public places to bring back the original spirit of the day.

Chanukah candles are the light Judaism brings to the world when we are unafraid to announce our identity in public, live by our principles and fight, if necessary, for our freedom.

As for the havdalah candle, which is always made up of several wicks woven together, it represents the fusion of the two, the inner light of Shabbat, joined to the outer light we make during the six days of the week when we go out into the world and live our faith in public.

When we live as Jews in private, filling our homes with the light of the Shekhina, when we live as Jews in public, bringing the light of hope to others, and when we live both together, then we bring light to the world.

There always were two ways to live in a world that is often dark and full of tears. We can curse the darkness or we can light a light, and as the Chassidim say, a little light drives out much darkness. May we all help light up the world.

TO LIGHT ANOTHER LIGHT

There's a fascinating argument in the Talmud. Can you take one Chanukah light to light another? Usually, of course, we take an extra light, the shamash, and use it to light all the candles. But suppose we don't have one. Can we light the first candle and then use it to light the others?

Two great sages of the third century, Rav and Shmuel, disagreed. Rav said No. Shmuel said Yes. Normally we have a rule that when Rav and Shmuel disagree, the law follows Rav. There are only three exceptions and this is one.

Why did Rav say you may not take one Chanukah candle to light the others?

Because, says the Talmud, ka mach-chish mitzvah. You diminish the first candle. Inevitably you spill some of the wax or the oil. And Rav says: don't do anything that would diminish the light of the first.

But Shmuel disagrees, and the law follows Shmuel. Why?

The best way of answering that is to think of two Jews: both religious, both committed, both living Jewish lives. One says: I must not get involved with Jews who are less religious than me, because if I do, my own standards will fall. I'll keep less. My light will be diminished. That's the view of Rav.

The other says No. When I use the flame of my faith to light a candle in someone else's life, my Jewishness is not diminished. It grows, because there is now more Jewish light in the world. When it comes to spiritual goods as opposed to material goods, the more I share, the more I have. If I share my knowledge, or faith, or love with others, I won't have less; I may even have more. That's the view of Shmuel, and that is how the law was eventually decided.

So share your Judaism with others. Take the flame of your faith and help set other souls on fire.

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