

SHABBAT SHALOM FROM CYBERSPACE

MIKESS - Haftarah: Zechariah 2:14-4:7
NOVEMBER 29-30, 2013 27 KISLEV 5774

Many people are traveling for the holidays and we really need help with daily minyan.
Please make an effort to join us and let Rabbi Colish know which day or days you can commit to
We had been doing very well, but had a problem on Monday and Wednesday of this week

Rosh Hodesh Shebat will be celebrated on Tuesday & Wednesday, Dec. 3 & 4.
Begin saying Barech Alenu on Wednesday night, December 4 in Arbit.

Hanukah begins tonight, November 27 through Wednesday, December 5.
Thursday morning Thanksgiving Hanukah – Tefilah at 8AM
Thursday morning Thanksgiving Football

This week's newsletter is again dedicated by Abraham J. Jerome of TD Bank. I've known Abraham my entire life. Give him a call and let him be your Personal and Commercial Lender. 329 1st Avenue in Manhattan, Please email him at abraham.jerome@td.com I am sure he can help!

Candles and Mincha: 4:11 PM – From now til spring, Mincha is at candle lighting
Communal Dinner for those with confirmed reservations tonight following services

SHABBAT 9:00 AM - Please say Shema at home by 8:37
New Shabbat Morning Children's Program with Morah Avital. For children ages 0 to 5. 10:30 to 11:30 in the playroom. We are looking at putting together a new program for the older girls.

KIDDUSH: We need a sponsor ... please let us know
Mincha at Noon – Amidah not before 12:07

Shabbat Ends – 5:11 PM
Return for Arbit – 5:30 PM / Havdalah – 6: 00 PM /
No kids program Saturday night because people have Chanukah parties.

WEEKDAY TEFILLA SCHEDULE
Shaharit Sunday 8:00, Mon-Fri at 7:00 (6:55 Mondays and Thursdays)

WEEKDAY TORAH CLASS SCHEDULE
Monday Night Class with Rabba Yenai – 7PM –
Daily class with Rabbi Colish at 6:30AM

Family Chanukah Party

Please join us Sunday Morning December 1st for a Family Chanukah Party with Games, Prizes, Music, Latkes, Bagels, Doughnuts and more! 9:30 AM - 11:00 AM. Please speak with Rabbi Colish for more details.

. SATURDAY NIGHT, - DECEMBER 7TH AT 7:30
FOR A VIEWING OF - THE DOCUMENTARY

PUNK JEWS

“Profiling Hassidic punk rockers, Yiddish street performers, African-American Jewish activists and more, PUNK JEWS explores an emerging movement of provocateurs and committed Jews who are asking, each in his or her own way, what it means to be Jewish in the 21st century. Jewish artists, activists and musicians from diverse backgrounds and communities are defying norms and expressing their Jewish identities in unconventional ways.”

at the THE SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION OF LONG BEACH Lafayette Blvd & Penn Street
Discussion & Refreshments to follow
SPONSORED BY THE SEPHARDIC CONGREGATION & LIDO SYNAGOGUE

Dr. Reeva Simon - Whose Jerusalem? The role of religion and politics in the history of Jerusalem. Motzeh Shabbat - Saturday night, December 14 at 7:30pm.

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Daily Minyan Mon – Thurs at 979 Third Avenue, 17th Floor, Artistic Frame at 4PM – Please join us! 212-289-2100

Editors Notes

I find it interesting that the holiday of Hanukkah always coincides with the portions that tell over the story of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt. Although there are many lessons that the rabbis derive in classes that often mention both, two events this past week brought to mind a glaring difference.

On Tuesday, I attended a coming together of Sephardic Jews from all across America in celebrating 360 years on these great shores. We celebrated the great nation we live in and the contribution our people have made over the centuries. I believe that in putting this event together, Yehudah Azoulay hoped to set in motion a medium to promote unity and cooperation among the various Sephardic communities in the United States. The second event stands in contrast.

We often speak of the benefits of unity and the cost of disarray. The rabbis teach us that one of the reasons we ended up as slaves in Egypt was due to the disunity of the brothers leading to the sale of Joseph. There are reminders throughout the Seder that allude to this event. The dipping of Karpas (See Megilat Esther - Karpas hints at the special coat Jacob made for Joseph) recalls the dipping the coat into blood. We sing the song Chad Gadya and again recall dipping the blood, in some ways suggesting a connection. Rabbi Abittan z'sl would remind us on Pesach that once can't celebrate an Exodus from Egypt without recalling what got us there in the first place.

We compare Judah and Joseph and the divided kingdoms and the prophet longs for unity when two pieces of wood indicating the two monarchies merge into one. When we are one, then G-d can be joined to us. Separation, baseless hatred, lack of cooperation prevents the Mashiach from coming.

Then we celebrate Hanukah. We read of the war and the miracles and how a small band of righteous

priests overcame the greatest power in the world. We focus on the miracle of the oil, the aroma of jelly donuts, latkes frying on the stove top, dreidels spinning and the recent western adoption of eight days of gifts. In that we forget that the war Hanukah commemorates was in fact a civil war. It was fought between Hellenized or what we might call secular Jews and traditional Jews.

Here we are celebrating a holiday which in fact because of its close proximity in most years to Christmas has taken on many western or secular customs, when in fact Hanukah is all about rejecting those influences. I have written many times how Hanukah is meant to be the holiday of the spirit, the rising candle, of song and prayer, recalling the saving of the Jewish soul, for only the soul was threatened by the Greeks. This is in stark contrast with Purim where we celebrate the physical with gifts, food, drink and meals because on Purim it was our physical being that was threatened and saved.

This leaves me puzzled. Does Hanukah in fact celebrate disunity? Is there a point where we can't find common cause at the table?

On Wednesday, I ran across the street for a very quick meeting at UJA attended by clergy from across the Jewish spectrum. This was not merely Sephardim and Ashkenazim or Hasidim and Yeshiva Jews. This was not even the observant and non-observant. I sat in a room of brilliant and learned people, but as I remarked via text to Rabbi Elie Abadie who I thought would be there that day but who had pressing business in the UN where he has been diligently working for years on Justice for Jews from Arab Countries, I felt like a representative of the NAACP at a Ku Klux Klan meeting.

We were discussing the qualities needed in the new person to lead UJA and I mentioned that based on the divergent views of those present, that person had to be balanced enough to be able to walk a very tight rope with real diplomacy. I stressed that it was necessary to look at which parts of Judaism represented in this room were succeeding and which were not. Which Synagogues would merge their way into oblivion and which would grow, expand and create offshoots. It would be prudent for UJA to focus on those parts of the community that would be here a decade or two from now. My thoughts were echoed by one other rabbi in the room.

Many of the rest though seemed focused on a need to do three things:

1. Outreach to interfaith couples

2. Pressing the state of Israel to allow for religious pluralism
3. Steer money from Jewish day schools to synagogue educational programs

A few of these people declared again and again that these three points were obviously universal among all of us. Although I understood their motive and their needs, when they tried to include me, I laughed aloud and shook my head. "We come from different worlds", I noted. These are in fact the exact opposite of what we need to do if we hope to insure a Jewish future.

We criticize and blame the brothers for selling Joseph and for getting us into the mess which was Egypt. We applaud the Maccabees for entering into a civil war, for overcoming the secularists and Hellenists. Let us not forget that the price of returning to the Mikdash was a fratricidal conflict that lasted for 34 years and resulted in hundreds of thousands of deaths.

I must admit that I am torn. We all long for unity. There is a poem that tells of the Mashiah coming but he is rejected by the first Synagogue he enters because he lacks a hat. Given a hat, he enters the next Synagogue where he is given a knitted kippah to replace it. Leaving that Synagogue he comes to a third. They see his kippah and ask where his hat is. He dons the hat, but the rim is all wrong. With that he gives up and returns to heaven. Petty differences keep the Mashiah away.

But where do we draw the line?

There is a midrash that tells us that at the end of days, G-d will sit in the middle of a circle and the righteous will surround him. It seems like a scene from romper room. Are we meant to be playing ring around the rosy? But Rabbi Abittan explained that it teaches us that one Jew may have differences that puts him at the exact opposite of another. They are 180 degrees apart on that circle.

So, I asked the rabbi, does that mean there is room for everyone? And the rabbi explained that there was still a circle, and that circle is the circle of halacha. There may be differences and there may be disagreements, but as long as they all exist within the circle of Jewish tradition, there is a place. Unfortunately when one rejects tradition, when one rejects G-d, one rejects his place on the circle.

The brother's error was in thinking that Joseph rejected his place on the circle when he did not. They made a mistake and their children paid the price. The

Maccabees strength lay in realizing that the Hellenists did leave the circle and leaving the circle is tantamount to spiritual suicide as history has taught us again and again. Those who leave the circle assimilate until they are swallowed up by the nations around us.

The Maccabees weren't perfect. Let us remember that with the conquest of Jerusalem and the annihilation of the Hellenizers 22 years later, the lone surviving brother, Shimon the Maccabee, stood widely recognized as leader and high priest of the first independent Jewish state in 440 years. But here too his progeny and descendants refused to follow the letter of the law took on the kingship while they should have been happy with the priesthood. They too eventually rejected the circle and were all but eliminated by Herod a couple of hundred years later.

There is room at the table. There is room on the circle. We should be unified regardless of our differences. All of us have a place as long as we don't reject that circle, and as long as we don't reject tradition. For those that who have left the circle; those who still identify themselves as Jews, the key question is, how can we get them back to the circle? Kol Yisrael Arevim zeh Lazeh, all of Israel are connected to each other. Let us not forget that. Let us open our homes and our hearts and show them there is a path.

None of us is perfect, yet we admit in some way, at least to ourselves, when we are wrong. The danger is when we do wrong and preach that what was wrong is now right and bend the rules to accommodate us. This was the sin of the Hellenists. They declared a new age Judaism, one that mixed a little from here and a little from there and wrote their own rule book. Let us pray that their sin is not repeated in our day.

Shabbat Shalom

David Bibi

The following was written for the Jewish Voice this week

Supportive voices in Washington, beyond the President and Secretary of State

There are voices in Washington, powerful voices, voices who echo our sentiments and feelings and who are unafraid to declare their support for the Jewish people in the state of Israel. Last Wednesday, November 20 2013, I flew down to Washington together with my friends to take part in The Inaugural Tribute Luncheon Honoring the

Contributions of Sephardic Jewry in America. While I personally knew most of the participants, it was a great pleasure to hear from our representatives in the Senate and House who take a different view from the one presented by the Secretary of State and the president.

The luncheon celebrated the first American Jews who were Sephardic. We also remembered the life and contributions of Emma Lazarus (1849 –1887) who passed away 126 years ago on November 20th. Emma Lazarus is famous for her well-known poem "The New Colossus", written in 1883, five verses of which are engraved on a bronze plaque in the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty placed in 1903. Few know that she too was a Sephardic Jew.

The event honored my good friend Rabbi Dr. Elie Abadie, Rabbi of the Edmond J. Safra Congregation, NY, Jacob Abecassis entrepreneur and founder of SCOT (Sephardic Community of Toronto), Mr. Daniel J. Harari, founder of SAM (Sephardic Academy of Manhattan), and Mr. Raymond Saka who is the vice president of Sakar International and co- founder of "The Saka Edition- Hebrew/English Yalkut Yosef."

We were privileged to take part in the launching of two books, copies of which were distributed to all participants. The first was 'The Sephardi Journey – Sephardi Contributions Throughout History' authored by Dr. Sarah Taieb-Carlen and published with the assistance of Yehuda Azoulay, founder of Sephardic Legacy Series. The second titled, "The Legacy of Maran Hacham Ovadia Yosef". And we heard from Raymond Saka about their project to complete the printing of expanded English version of Yalkut Yosef over the next fifteen years bringing access to thought out halacha to all.

I think though that my greatest pleasure was in hearing from the senators and representatives from across our great nation.

Senator Deb Fisher of Nebraska told of her trip to Israel and how she was so impressed with the resolve, the commitment and the courage displayed by the people of Israel. She told of a tour with a military guide who pointed across into Lebanon and explained that 40,000 rockets were pointing their way and to the north east was Iran working on nuclear weapons and her commitment as part of the Senate in backing a loyal ally.

Senator Mike Lee of Utah applauded the Sephardic Jewish Community who contributed to the nation from the very onset of the Republic. He told of the strong connections between the Mormon community

and the Jewish community in America. He understood oppression and he understood resolve. He pledged his support to the Jewish state and the Jewish people.



Senator Ted Cruz of Texas compared his family's experience to that of the Sephardic community; how his family faced oppression in Cuba and how they achieved freedom in America. He suggested that perhaps his family descended from those who fled Spain in 1492. After seeing the media attempt to portray Mr. Cruz as a right wing lunatic, I found him to be a brilliant man, an amazing orator and a man of principle. He connects to people in a special way. He reaches out and touches your heart. It will be interesting to see how he fares in the march towards the presidency in 2016.



Congressman Louie Gohmert of Texas focused on the unique friendship of the US and Israel. He spoke of his confidence that Israel would always be and that the best course of action for America would be to support Israel. His job is to seek that which is in the best interests of the United States and in doing that job he apologized to his counterparts in Israel because they in fact were defending us and not the other way around.

Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen of Florida quoted Emma Lazarus, whose famous poem "The New Colossus" can be seen today on a bronze plaque of the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty. "Give me your tired, your poor, Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free".



Congresswoman Michele Bachmann of Minnesota praised the ideals to be privileged to have a voice to stand up for Israel and the need to strengthen the sanctions on Iraq.

Congresswoman Grace Meng of New York underlined that coming to a new world is not easy, that the early Sephardic Jewish immigrants paved the way the tolerant, open and pluralistic society we all cherish. Ms. Meng represents many of us in New York and promised to be committed to assisting the community in any way she could.

Representative Frank Pallone of New Jersey, whose district includes Deal, praised the Sephardic community for its role in the development of the Deal economy. He too committed to assisting the community in any way he could.



Senator Chuck Schumer of New York is a tremendous orator and quite entertaining. He spoke to us of his own family's experience arriving at Ellis Island. He told how his name Schumer came from

the word Shomer – to watch and he understood the responsibility that came from his name. He is obviously very connected to the community representing us for over 39 years from when he was first elected to Congress. And although he represented the Democratic Party he pledged that he was committed to support Israel and the Jewish people and was taking his argument to both the Senate and the Secretary of State.

I am indebted to Yehuda Azoulay for putting this event together. He is young in years, but wise beyond them. He brought together representatives from the Sephardic world from all across our great nation. He reminded us of our history on these shores, but more important, of our potential. He hopes to continue his effort in better unifying us. He clearly showed us that our voice means something; that powerful people want to hear what we have to say and that those same people will support our efforts. We live in a great country, a representative democracy, where we can choose to speak up or to bury our heads. The lesson to all of us is to get involved and get others involved.

We helped found this country. We supported it. We fought for America and we helped build it. Let's continue to be a part of the process. Let us accept our responsibility and our duty. And let us join together in our efforts, because our strength multiplies exponentially when we are united.

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 Mitzvot 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 missva 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 yeshiva 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 Hanukkiah should be placed on the dinner table, where the family members will notice it. The Hanukkiah 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 Hanukkiah may be used?

An electric Hanukkiah is not acceptable and cannot be used to fulfill the Missva of Hanukkah. If someone wishes to light an electric Hanukkiah in addition to the regular Hanukkiah, he may do so - but without the blessings.

Any type of oil, wax, or fat may be used to light the Hanukkiah. 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 Hanukkiah, one should place the candles beginning from the right side of the Hanukkiah 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 Hanukkiah 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 sun- set, 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 togeth- er. The Hanukkiah should contain enough oil, or wax to burn for 30 minutes after nightfall. On Friday evening, the Hanukkiah should be lit

before the Shabbat candles, thus the Hanukkiah 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 Hanukkiah is lit prior to Habdala. At home the Hanukkiah should be lit after Habdala.

The Hanukkiah 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 Hanukka candles), without saying the blessings.

Since it is forbidden to use the light emanating from the Hanukkiah 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 Hanukkiah on time, or if no one lit the Hanukkiah for him, one may light the Hanukkiah 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 berakhot in the order:

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

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 light- ing the candles it is

customary to recite "Hanerot Halalu" and "Mizmor Shir Hanukkat 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.

Summary of The Weekly Torah Reading:

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.

EXCERPTS FROM THE JERSEY SHORE TORAH BULLETIN

Afterwards Your children entered the Holy of Holies of Your Temple. They cleared Your palace; they purified Your sanctuary." (Al Hanisim)

The Rambam describes the misvah of lighting the Hanukah lights as a "misvah that is very beloved." This is a description that was never used by the Rambam concerning any other misvah. What is the reason for this?

In the song Maoz Sur the Macabees are described as "b'nei binah – sons of understanding." Usually the term binah refers to knowledge that is learned from something else. When it comes to serving Hashem, binah is when someone does the will of Hashem without being explicitly commanded. Binah is to figure out what Hashem truly wants from the explicit command from Hashem.

Rabbi Avraham Schor explains that really the Hashmonaim were permitted to light the Menorah even with impure oil. That is based on a rule that a communal service in the Temple, such as lighting the Menorah, can be done even in the state of ritual impurity. However, the Hashmonaim were on the level of using binah to figure out that Hashem really wanted pure oil; therefore they struggled and searched all over until they miraculously found one jar of pure oil. Therefore they are called b'nei binah, children of understanding; they understood the true will of Hashem.

It's interesting to note that this point is hinted to in the wording of Al Hanisim. At first the people of Israel are referred to as "Amcha Yisrael, Your nation of Israel," and later it says "ba'u banecha, Your children came." There is a vast difference between a servant and a son. A servant only does what is required of him. But, a son wants to do the will of his father to please him. Therefore the act of purifying the Temple and using pure oil was the act of a son to the father. It is also possible that the word "binah is a derivative of the word ben, a son.

This could be the meaning of the Rambam referring to Hanukah as a misvah so beloved, because this was a case of the Jews showing their love to Hashem and Hashem returning that love by making a miracle of the oil lasting eight days. So for us the major lesson of Hanukah is that we should want to fulfill Hashem's will with desire and it's not just enough to get by with the minimum obligation but not more. There are many things we don't understand in the Jewish law and sometimes this leads to us being lenient when we shouldn't.

Sometimes it's because we don't know the true will of Hashem. We should be like children that want to purify our homes as the Macabees did. If we act as children of Hashem, then Hashem will act towards us accordingly, as it says in the Torah, "Veshabu banim legbulam, and the children will return to their boundary (in Israel)," and then we will have the opportunity to dedicate the new Temple soon, as the Macabees did then. Happy Hanukah and Shabbat Shalom. Rabbi Reuven Semah

RABBI ELI MANSOUR Visit DailyHalacha.com, LearnTorah.com Cause and Effect

We read in Parashat Miketz of Yosef's sudden rise to power from the lowest depths of despair. After spending years in an Egyptian dungeon, he is suddenly brought before Pharaoh to interpret his mysterious dreams, and he impressed Pharaoh to such an extent that he was named the country's vizier.

The Zohar, commenting in this Parasha, briefly cites the verse, "Ketz Sam La'hoshech" – "He made an end to the darkness" (Iyob 28:3). Clearly, the Zohar refers here to the "darkness" of Yosef's imprisonment. He languished for many long years in a dark, dreary dungeon, until finally this period of darkness ended and gave way to the light of redemption. The question, however, arises, what message does the Zohar seek to convey by citing this verse in reference to the story of Yosef? What does this Pasuk add to our understanding of the story?

The Zohar here is teaching us the proper perspective on the "cause-and-effect" processes in life. We generally tend to assume that our success or failure is the result of the circumstances that unfold. A businessman finds large quantities of merchandise for a terrific price, buys it, sells it for a very large profit, and becomes wealthy. If we would analyze this series of events, we would instinctively say that the man became wealthy because he was fortunate enough to find low-cost merchandise. But from a Torah perspective, the precise opposite is true. Hashem decreed that the man should earn money, and therefore He orchestrated events in a way that led to that outcome. The man did not become wealthy because he found cheap merchandise; he found cheap merchandise because it was time for him to become wealthy.

This is the Zohar's intent in citing the verse, "Ketz Sam La'hoshech." Outwardly, it appears that Yosef was freed and rose to power because the butler and

baker who were with him in prison had dreams which he successfully interpreted, and then Pharaoh had an unusual dream that needed an interpretation. The Zohar teaches us that it was just the opposite. G-d decided it was time to bring an end to Yosef's darkness, and He therefore had this series of events unfold to achieve that objective. Yosef's release from the dungeon was not the result of these events; it was the cause of these events.

This is a fundamental lesson in Emuna that we must all learn and internalize. No matter what happens, there is always only a single cause – Hashem's will that it should happen. And the circumstances that allow that to happen are only the effect triggered by the Divine Will. We read in Parashat Miketz of Yosef's sudden rise to power from the lowest depths of despair. After spending years in an Egyptian dungeon, he is suddenly brought before Pharaoh to interpret his mysterious dreams, and he impressed Pharaoh to such an extent that he was named the country's vizier.

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Rabbi Wein PROMISES

There was recently a fairly bruising primary election here in Israel for leadership of the Labor Party, the main current opposition faction in the Israeli Knesset. As is always the case in electioneering, the two candidates made many solemn promises to their voters. "Vote for me and I promise you that I will do great things for you and for our party," was their mantra.

Of course we all know that it is apparently impossible to be elected if one has not strewn the electoral landscape with promises. But by now any voter with a modicum of sense knows or should know not to believe in the promises of political candidates.

As the cynic so wisely noted, promises are made in order to be broken. Rabin was elected because he promised to smite the PLO "foot and thigh." Instead, he brought them back from Tunisian exile and installed them in corrupt power until today. Peres promised us a new Middle East, a veritable Garden of Eden. But it is the old Sunni-Shiite Middle East that still confronts us and the rest of the Western world.

Sharon promised to defend Israel's right to build anywhere in the Land of Israel and instead evacuated Gaza causing wars, deaths and untold privations to thousands of innocent hapless Israeli citizens. Obama promised Americans that under his health plan law they could keep their current health insurance policies. That has been proven to be blatantly untrue.

The elder George Bush promised not to raise taxes – "read my lips," he famously said – but when in office he did raise taxes no matter what his lips said. The

list of broken diplomatic, military, legislative and governmental promises made and broken is endless.

Our prime minister now promises us that he will not allow Iran to obtain nuclear weapons. I hope and pray that he is able somehow to keep that promise. But I am wary of any human promises. Humans are oftentimes unable to fulfill their promises, no matter how well intentioned they were when first proposed.

The Talmud warns against making a promise to a child and not fulfilling that promise - thereby teaching the child that it is acceptable to lie. So, great caution should be employed when making promises. The observant Jew always qualifies one's stated commitment to others with the statement bli neder, (without a vow intended) which, in effect, softens the promise and weakens the commitment.

It at least allows for the entrance of unforeseen circumstances that may not allow the promise to be actualized. This is not meant as a cunning loophole to escape the fulfillment of one's word. Rather it is an admittance of human frailty and impotence in the face of the unknown and ever changing future.

Who truly knows what tomorrow may bring. The Psalmist had it right when he wrote "There are many plans in the hearts of humans but only God's plan will truly arise." We are always thwarted by uncertainty and unpredictability.

All of this should engender within every one of us, and especially in those that purport to be our leaders, a sense of humility and caution. That is one of the ideas that lies behind the words of the rabbis that "the words of the wise should be said softly."

The wise have also too often been found to have been mistaken in their assessment of the future and even in their own capabilities to influence that future. I am always skeptical of those who claim that they can somehow read God's mind, so to speak.

Caution in behavior and in speech always pays dividends. Promises easily made are a sign of arrogance and hubris. Great people who assume leadership roles must have some smattering of arrogance within them. The Talmud allotted to them one-sixty-fourth portion of arrogance in their personality makeup. But, that is a limitation that few in political leadership can confine themselves to.

It is arrogance that leads to scandal and criminal behavior amongst the high and mighty. One views one's self as being above the law. And this is in the main due to the attempt to fulfill unattainable goals

and foolishly made promises. In England's darkest hour, Winston Churchill promised his people only blood, sweat and tears.

That promise was fulfilled but it was the promise that brought victory to the Allies in World War II. Hitler promised a thousand year Reich. Khrushchev promised that the Soviet Union would bury the Western democracies. As is true in most areas of human life less is more – as it is with promises as well.

Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sacks

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 civilisations. And Chanukah is about one of the first great clashes of civilisation, between the Greeks and Jews of antiquity, Athens and Jerusalem. The ancient Greeks produced one of the most remarkable civilisations 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 fulfil 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 symbolises 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.

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.

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