

A TORAH PUBLICATION BY STUDENTS AND FACULTY

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Kayla Petrover ('15)

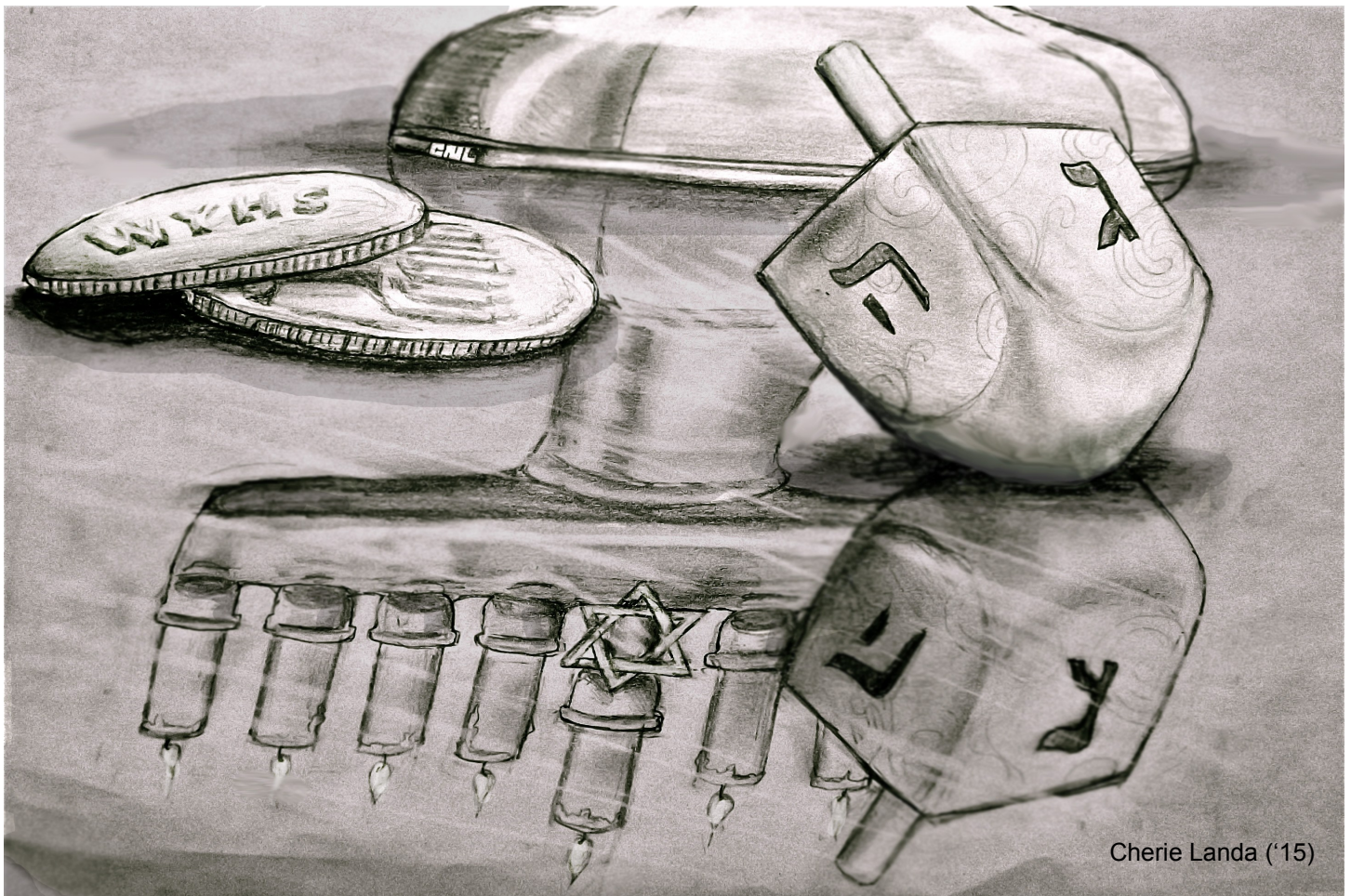
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Cherie Landa ('15)



EIGHT DAYS OF HALLEL

Bailey Frohlich ('16)

We say Hallel on all eight days of Chanukah. There are many opinions as to what miracles we are thanking Hashem for when we say these prayers. The Gemara Shabbat explains that we are thanking Him for the miracle that a small container of oil, meant for only one day, lasted for eight days. However, Rashi suggests that we are actually celebrating the victory of the battle of Chanukah—the battle of the few against the many, the weak against the strong.

A question arises: Normally, a full Hallel is said only when the day in question contained a unique event or miracle. But what NEW miracle happened on each day of Chanukah that warrants us saying Hallel on all eight days of Chanukah?

Rabbi Mirsky answers this question by connecting the two miracles of the oil and the battle. He writes that after the battle, Bnei Yisrael attributed their victory to their military strategy and did not recognize that it was because of Hashem's miraculous intervention. To remind Bnei Yisrael of His role, Hashem performed the miracle of the oil and used it as a metaphor for the miracle of the battle.

Since it is physically impossible for a small jug of oil to last eight days, it is clear that Hashem performed this miracle. Similarly, it is impossible for a small and weak army to defeat a big and strong army, regardless of how much effort is put into military strategy. The oil and the army both prevailed against all odds. Each day that the small amount of oil defied the natural and continued to burn, Bnei Yisrael realized more and more that the miracle of the war was supernatural and was the work of Hashem. Hallel is therefore said each day of Chanukah to remind us to understand and appreciate all Hashem does for us as well as to recognize both the clear and hidden miracles He performs.

LIGHT UP YOUR LIFE WITH GREATNESS

Bracha Brauser ('13)

Chanukah, although famously known for delicious doughnuts, long-awaited presents, and beautifully lit menorahs, is so much more than these outer displays of festivity. The holiday of Chanukah is meant to show us that greatness comes from within us and not from what is around us.

At the time of the Chanukah story, the Jews were oppressed, stripped of all Jewish traditions, and left with a lack of identity and felt the push to abandon Judaism. And so, under these circumstances, it was normal that many Jews panicked and abandoned everything Jewish in an effort to stay alive. Yet there was one small group of Jews called the Maccabees who were different—they were aware that Judaism was diminishing and they realized that they must do everything in their power to protect it. So they created an army and managed to liberate the Jews, fighting against an army much larger than their own, achieving one of the greatest military victories ever. When they arrived at the menorah, excited and ready to light it publicly for the first time in a while, they were dismayed when they found no oil. They finally found the one remaining container of oil and, with hope and excitement, placed it in the menorah. Hashem then took it from there.

What enabled this miracle? What allowed this small group of Jews to win against a huge army? We could chalk it up to pure kindness from Hashem, but it is really greater than that. The Maccabees fought back in the face of evil because they felt passionate that what they were defending was the truth. Even when no one cheered them on, they moved forward because they knew that what they were doing was right in the eyes of Hashem. The Maccabees realized something that takes most people a lifetime to realize: greatness comes from within. Once they realized their own potential

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SAME OR DIFFERENT

Mathew Silkin ('14)

Chanukah, as we all know, commemorates the miracle of a single day's amount of oil that lasted eight days. We celebrate this by spinning the dreidel that children used to throw the guards, well, off their guard. We also eat fried foods, and, most famously, we light an eight-branched *chanukiah* for eight nights, signifying the fact that the seven-branched menorah in the Beit HaMikdash stayed lit for eight days. But, would it not make more sense to construct the *chanukiah* that we light on this chag exactly the same way as the menorah was built—seven branches, not eight, so as to reenact all the details of the miracle? Why is there such a dramatic difference between the *chanukiah* and the menorah?

See, we are truly happy that the miracle happened. However, we no longer have a Beit Hamikdash where we can see this menorah lighting up each day. Therefore, we make the *chanukiah* different from the menorah to suggest to us that things today are just not the same—and we need the Beit Hamikdash to get everything right again.

This concept does not apply solely to the *chanukiah*. Whereas in Israel dreidels are made with a ה meaning “here,” here in America, we have a ה on our dreidels meaning “there,” constantly reminding us that the commemoration of the miracle is just not the same if we are not at the actual site where it took place.

But do not despair! We pray constantly for Mashiach to come so that we can light a seven-branched menorah once again!

AL HANISIM

Michali Mazor ('14)

The Chanukah prayer of Al Hanisim, which we say in Birkat Hamazon and Shmoneh Esrei during the days of Chanukah, gives a short summary of the Chanukah story. Why is it so important that we repeat this little summary each and every day and night throughout Chanukah? Is it merely a retelling of the story, or is there some educational value that is applicable to our lives?

The Jewish people living in Israel under the Greek rule are still considered in exile even though the Beit Hamikdash still existed. This demonstrates that “exile” does not necessarily signify the physical location of the Jewish people; rather, it also refers to spiritual dislocation, such as that which occurred during the Hellenistic times. What is the purpose of exile then, if it is not just intended to uproot us from our homeland?

The following *mashal* can clarify this for us: A man finds his son smoking and says: “If you like smoking so much then let us smoke.” The father lights one cigarette after another and hands them all to his son to smoke. Before long the son begins coughing, his chest hurts, and, contrite, the son resolves never to smoke again.

We, the Jewish people, while living in Israel under the Greek rule, were attracted to the Hellenistic culture and adopted it to a degree. We became more involved in Hellenism as our admiration for the culture increased, and we began losing sight of our spirituality and found it hard to distinguish right from wrong. Hashem, reacting to our behavior as a loving Father who wishes to teach His children proper conduct, metaphorically tells us, “If you like Hellenistic culture, I’ll give you Hellenistic culture.” Indeed, the Greeks forced their culture on the Jewish people, and those who refused it suffered persecution. At the end of the Chanukah story, we, the Jewish people, learned a valuable lesson and resolved to never embrace the Hellenistic culture again.



A LITTLE LIGHT

Gabby Mizrahi ('13)

One of the bywords of Jewish tradition is that a little light can overcome a great deal of darkness. The rabbis taught us that the power of good is many times greater than the power of evil, even if we are unable to witness that phenomenon as being abundantly present in our daily and national lives. This power of good is expressed through the little light that exists that has the ability to dispel a great deal of darkness. It is therefore no wonder that the rabbis, in their wisdom, chose to commemorate the great victory and redemption of Chanukah by having us light little lights rather than by other more dramatic and grandiose rituals and programs.

The symbol of the little light is a powerful message that communicates the optimism and resolve of the Jewish people to overcome the forces of evil in our lives no matter the difficulties and challenges of that task. And this little light is not meant for us alone. It is to be made public, lit for all to see and observe. As long as people are still in the street, as long as there still is a public presence and discourse, we are bidden to light that small light to dispel that great darkness that otherwise may engulf us. Our little lights have been lit in almost every corner of the world over the past millennia. They have survived despite all of the dark forces that threatened to annihilate us. They have proved true the adage that a little light truly can overcome a great deal of darkness.

Many have ornate silver menorahs to hold those little lights. Others will make do with more simple and modest candleholders. No matter, for it is not the candleholder that is the main object in the lighting of the Chanukah fires—it is the little light itself that carries all of the weight and importance of the holiday and its holy meaning. It is, after all, the little lights

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SHABBAT LIGHTS

Gabriella Sobol ('13)

The mishnah discusses that certain wicks and oils are not allowed to be used for Shabbat lights, as they may burn unevenly. However, on Chanukah these restrictions do not apply. Why does this distinction between the Chanukah and Shabbat lights exist?

Rav Kook explains that Shabbat lights must be of the best quality to prevent someone from being tempted to fix a light that went out, thereby breaking Shabbat. But on Chanukah this is not an issue; if the lights go out they do not need to be relit, and since they are not being used for reading or any other purpose it is unlikely one will relight them.

Rav Kook goes further and expounds that this represents the nature of the Maccabean struggle against the Greeks. The Torah's eternal wisdom is represented by the Shabbat lights—those that require pure oil that burns clear and bright. However, throughout history there have been many instances where Jews have been attracted to other nations' ideologies and beliefs, especially when in exile and under the rule of another nation. Hashem therefore provided us with rabbis who were able to defend the Torah using these very theories—for example Maimonides and Aristotelian theory.

These foreign philosophies lack the eternality of Torah, and therefore they only last temporarily. Using these foreign ideas to support Torah ideas is like lighting Chanukah candles that do not burn evenly and brightly. Yet these ideas can still be popular, and Jews are very attracted to them. So instead of rejecting them entirely and risking Jews completely abandoning Torah, these ideas are allowed to be somewhat aligned with Torah, represented by the Chanukah candles, though they will not burn evenly and completely like pure Torah would. However

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Michali Mazor continued

But have we learned from history? We are in the last exile prior to the building of the third Beit Hamikdash, praying for our redemption and our return to Eretz Yisrael. But, like our brothers and sisters in the days of the Hellenists, we may be embracing a culture that is antithetical to the values that will bring the geulah, the final redemption. And though we may be charmed and tempted by the cultures surrounding us, it is crucial to stay true to our Judaism. The daily repetition of Al Hanisim during Chanukah reminds us of the reason we are in exile, and that we must set things right. We must adhere to Torah values so that we merit the coming of Mashiach, *bimhera beyamainu*.

Bracha Brauser continued

own potential and tapped into it, Hashem was willing to give them the extra push.

It is normal to base your self-worth on the outside world, to base your intelligence on your grades and scores, and to base your popularity on what people think and the amount of likes you get on Facebook. Often we feel held back and think of ourselves as too average to achieve greatness and too weak to do what is right in the face of what is wrong. The challenge for us is to realize that greatness is not what the world tells us but rather what we tell the world.

Chanukah is the last holiday in Jewish history and the oil burning for all eight days is the last overt miracle. Just like when a kid goes off to college his parents might give him a gift or a reminder of his potential, so it is with us and Hashem on Chanukah. Hashem gave us the miracle as a sign of His love and as a glimpse into our own potential. Chanukah is a metaphor for our lives—we must use whatever oil we have left and start lighting up the world with greatness. If we make that first effort, Hashem will take us the extra mile. After eight nights of lighting the menorah, do not stop there—continue to light up the world with your greatness.

Gabriella Sobol continued

when these ideas “burn out” like the Chanukah candles, they shall not be relit. We cannot permanently change the way Torah is observed based on these philosophies, as their “light” may not be used. This idea makes perfect sense at a time when the Maccabees are fighting the Greeks and their Hellenistic ideals.

Despite their shortcomings, these transient lights are holy, and we must recognize in them the hand of Hashem, that He made this path so people attracted to these cultures would not be totally lost.

Gabby Mizrahi continued

that count. It is they that drive away the hopelessness and pessimism that the darkness of the surrounding world thrusts upon us. Chanukah comes to reinforce the goodness that is found within each of us. It teaches us that nothing is impossible in God’s world and that evil will never prevail against us!

May we all continue to benefit from the light the menorah provides!

PIRSUMEI NISAH: IT'S IN YOUR HANDS

Yisrael Weiss ('13)

While the story of Chanukah is primarily focused on the war between the Greeks and the Jews, the Jews sadly faced an even greater opponent during the controversial time of reform and enlightenment under Greek rule: themselves. In addition to the retelling of the battle between the Jews and the Greeks, the story of Chanukah also includes the feud between, and eventual separation of, the religious and the secular Jews—those who adhered strictly to the laws of the Torah and those who compromised their ways until their ultimate rejection of *halacha*. This view of Chanukah is eye-opening in its application to contemporary issues as, sadly, the state of Israel is once again divided between the secular and religious sects, with issues such as duties in the army tearing the two sides further and further apart. Despite the fact that Chanukah's main themes involve the miracle of the oil burning and the triumph over the Greeks, we find small references to our own internal strife as a reminder of what we were going through before the war itself. A brief mention of Chanukah in Gemara Shabbat (21b-22b) includes a puzzling paragraph:

אמר רב כהנא, דרש רב נתן בר מניומי משמיה דרבי תנחום נר של חנוכה שהניחה למעלה מעשרים אמה - פסולה, כסוכה וכמבוי. ואמר רב כהנא, דרש רב נתן בר מניומי משמיה דרב תנחום: מאי דכתיב +בראשית לז+ והבור רק אין בו מים. ממשמע שנאמר והבור רק איני יודע שאין בו מים? אלא מה תלמוד לומר אין בו מים - מים אין בו, אבל נחשים ועקרבים יש בו. אמר רבה: נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה בטפח הסמוכה לפתח. והיכא מנח ליה? רב אחא בריה דרבא אמר: מימין, רב שמואל מדפתי אמר: משמאל. והילכתא - משמאל, כדי שתהא נר חנוכה משמאל ומזוזה מימין.

1. Said Rav Kahana: Rav Natan bar Minyomi taught in the name of Rabbi Tanchum: A Chanukah lamp placed above the height of twenty amot is invalid. 2. And said Rav Kahana: Rav Natan bar Minyomi taught in the name of Rabbi Tanchum: What is the meaning of the verse: "And the well was empty, it contained no water"? Since it says "the well was empty" did I not know that it contained no water? Rather, what does "it contained no water" teach? [The well] had no water, but it contained snakes and scorpions. 3. Said Rabbah, it is a mitzvah to place the Chanukah lamp in the tefach adjacent to the doorway. And where should he place it? Rav Acha the son of Ravva said: to the right. Rav Shmuel from Difti said: to the left. And the halachah is to the left, so that the Chanukah lamp is on the left, and the mezuzah on the right.

Why, in the middle of discussing the height and placement of the menorah, does the gemara reference a seemingly random midrash? Why is the story of Yosef being thrown into the pit by his brothers recorded here in the midst of a discussion of the menorah?

Within the wording of the gemara we find the answer to the mysterious placement of the midrash, along with an important message. In addition to the midrash of the well cited in the Gemara, the midrash mentions another, less known teaching about the well:

The answer to this question is found within the wording of the gemara itself, along with an important message. In addition to the midrash cited in the gemara above, the midrash mentions another, lesser-known teaching about the pit:



Yisrael Weiss continued

והבור רק אין בו מים [אין בו דברי תורה]. ואין מים אלא תורה, שנאמר הוי כל צמא לכו למים (ישעי' נה א), מלמד שמרוב הצרה שכח תלמודו

"And the well was empty, it contained no water" – [it contained no words of Torah]. For "water" can only refer to Torah, as it is written, "Let all who thirst go to the water." (Isaiah 55:1). This teaches us that out of great anguish [Yosef] forgot his [Torah] studies.

This midrash illustrates that the brothers did not throw Yosef into just one pit, but rather condemned him and cast him down two separate times. The first time they tossed Yosef into a pit it was a physical pit, a well in the ground to keep him hostage until they decided what to do with him. However, when the brothers sold Yosef to be a slave in Egypt, they doomed him to life in a far emptier pit than the first: the pit of Egypt. While this pit was not devoid of food or water, it was devoid of the spirituality and Torah that Yosef had been surrounded by his whole life. The midrash explicitly points out the danger of this emptiness, the absence of Torah. The lack of Torah is illustrated by the "snakes and scorpions" that lived in the pit; the only thing that will "replace" Torah will be bad, harmful forces.

Egypt, a place without Torah, spelled great danger for Yosef, just like the danger his descendants faced during the time of the story of Chanukah—for the gap where Torah should have been was not filled with the positive aspects of Hellenism such as the philosophy, science, and progress, but rather the negative forces such as hedonism, materialism, and self-gratification.

This insight helps us understand the first passage of gemara: the best place to put the menorah is in the doorway on the left side (when entering) so that, with the *pesukim* of Torah in the mezuzah on the right and the strong Jewish spirituality represented by the menorah on the left, the doorway will be surrounded by mitzvot. For hundreds of years, Jews have lit the menorah in their windows and not in their doorways because they had no choice—they had to keep the light of Chanukah to themselves because they had to protect their homes from all the physical and spiritual dangers of the outside world.

Nowadays everything is different. Today we need not hide behind the protection of our doors and keep our mitzvot secret for fear of an attack. Perhaps nowadays we should purposely light in the doorway and not the window, like the Shulchan Aruch suggests. By lighting the menorah in an open door we are faced with a powerful decision. The doorways of our homes act as barriers between what we allow inside the house and what we choose to keep out. We need to ask ourselves what values we are allowing to pass through our barriers. Are they values we cherish, guided by Torah and mitzvot, or influences that will be detrimental to our Jewish homes? There is no better time to reflect on this matter than when lighting the menorah in the doorway, seeing all that lies beyond the walls of our homes between the candles of our *chanukiot*.

GAME SECTION:

N	I	H	A	C	R	A	T	N	S	I	C
S	O	B	S	O	A	A	M	S	L	Z	L
M	U	F	G	A	H	N	E	A	N	C	S
I	R	F	N	A	M	E	D	C	S	U	S
M	A	L	G	R	B	A	H	L	H	H	H
A	E	S	E	A	U	A	H	C	E	L	N
S	N	N	C	D	N	Z	O	S	C	S	A
D	E	C	O	U	I	I	T	N	E	L	R
M	A	K	K	R	T	E	Y	Z	I	C	N
M	H	A	T	N	A	L	R	O	O	C	T
O	H	C	A	A	K	H	E	D	T	A	L
A	C	S	I	A	L	T	H	G	G	O	M

Chanukah
Maccabees
Dreidel
Oil
Shamash

Maoz Tzur
Latkes
Menorah
Antiochus
Candles
Sufganiyot

