

Points to Ponder
Chanukah 5775

- 1) **Rav Pam ztl.** notes that the Miracle of Chanukah is an example of the Hashgacha Peratis of Hashem working hard to give the Jewish people the opportunities to grow from the moments of challenge. Citing the **Ramban** (Berashis 48:10) who explains that had the Chashmonaim not been there, the Jewish people would have forgotten Torah and Mitzvos. The profoundly deep plan of Hashem in history is to put the right people there in the right moment to be the inspiration for a nation. (He uses Yosef – and the 4 Shevuiim in the Geonic era -- and Rav Shraga Feivel Mendelowitz of modern times as other examples.) Rav Pam explains that in every generation, every Jew must do what s/he can to ensure that Torah survives and flourishes among the Jewish people.
- 2) The next year they established the holiday – **Rav Chaim Yaakov Goldvicht ztl.** used to remind us that the military victory was not the reason to regularly celebrate the holiday. Rather, after the miracle with the oil, wherein there was indication from Hashem that there was something extraordinary going on in these times, that needed to be recalled forever, then the holiday was established as an ongoing message to the Jews not to forget until the time of the ultimate Geulah.
- 3) The Achronim ask why the whole miracle of the oil was needed if, after all, Tumah Hutra B'Tzibbur – so why the oil miracle? Furthermore, we refer to the period as Galus Yavan – the Greek exile yet the miracle took place in Eretz Yisrael and the Greeks did not seek to remove the Jews from there. Why is it called an exile? **Rav Asher Weiss Shlita** noted that the Greek exile is not a Churban Shel Bayit. It is a Churban B'Toch HaBayit. They didn't destroy the oil in the Beis HaMikdash – they defiled it. (Bau Bah Pitizim V'Chilliluha) <the 13 pirtzot can refer to the 13 Ikkarei Emunah>. In essence the Greek Galus was from doing things with any spiritual content attached. The antidote to this Galus is not B'dieved – it is living a L'Chatchila life. Hence applying Tumah Hutra would merely have been an extension of the Galus.
- 4) **Rav Shlomo Wolbe ztl.** notes that while Pesach revolves around Yetzias Mitzrayim and Shavuos around the giving of the Torah and Rosh Hashana around Yirah and Yom Kippur around Tahara and sukkos around Simcha, what is the uniqueness of Chanukah? He answers that the theme of Chanukah is Chizzuk – strengthening our Avodah. Citing **the Bach**, he notes that the Kohanim had been lax in their Avodah performance so the Greeks forbade Avodah. Only after the Chizzuk came the return and rededication to finishing the job correctly. Rav Wolbe explains that for that reason one who learns with extra concentration or davens with more energy during this time is really lighting up the Chanukah night.
- 5) The Gemara (Shabbos 22a) notes that the proper location for the menorah should be on the left so that in the doorway he has his mezuzah on the right and his menorah on the left. **Rav Avraham Yofen ztl.** explains that although the Greeks are descendants of Yefes who was promised beauty – it is beauty that must have substance to it. Without it, there is no beauty to Greek culture. This was the challenge that faced even the Jews – some of whom became Hellenized at the time. The placing of the Menorah opposite the Mezuzah reminds man that the beauty of the world is only relevant if it is predicated on Torah based substance – the Ohel of

Shem – one who is surrounded by Mitzvos (See Menachos 43b) does not forget the main substance.

- 6) We recite the Beracha of Sh'Asa Nissim LaAvoseinu. But how many Nissim were performed? The **Imrei Emes** explains based on the writings of **the Baal HaTurim** that the well Rechovot refers to the Greek challenge that disallowed Tevilah and a miracle happened and Mikvaos sprung forth in each home (See also Midrash Chanukah) highlighting the many miracles of Chanukah. The Imrei Emes adds that for this reason we light in a mehadrin and mehadrin min hamehadrin way – in the Rechovot – where we expand the glory of Hashem U'Farinu BaAretz.

- 7) **Rav Schlessinger Shlita of Gilo** commented that the contrast of the spiritual peril of Chanukah which was ended with a war to that of Purim where Mordechai ended a physical threat of annihilation by bring the people together in learning, prayer and Teshuva is stark. He understands that the reason is clear. On Chanukah a Jew must set out to realize that his very existence is being challenged when his Yiddishkiet is challenged. It is worth it to go to war to save life not worth living and a non-Torah life is not worth living. Purim, on the other hand highlights the understanding that it isn't the Jew who is threatened in perilous times – it is Jewish existence that is threatened in those times. If it was true then – under harsh conditions. It is true more so now.

- 8) **Rav Soloveitchik ztl.** noted that while during Chanukah we lain from the Chanukas HaNesiim – we conclude with the reading about Aharon's Neiros. Why? He explained that the Nasi has a tough position – as political leader, his battles are always waged on the socio-political field in the public eye. Thus, at every ceremony the political leader is present – to lead the public. But Aharon represented the traditional Jew. The one who demonstrated leadership not only in the times that big leaders are called for, but also in the day to day dedication symbolized by the lighting of the menorah. If not for Aharon's dedication to the Neiros, there would not be dedication of the Nesiim to the other Keilim. The candles are lit even well after the Korbanos are gone – and hopefully they lead to a rededication of a new building V'Nizkeh Kulanu miheira L'Oro.