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# CHANUKAH III

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## It's All Up to Us – Spreading the Light

The first Morasha class on Chanukah discussed the nature of the conflict with Greece and the decrees they imposed. The second Morasha class addressed the nature, symbolism, and implications of the Chanukah miracles. This third and final shiur seeks to understand why God wanted the Temple's rededication to be accomplished through a miracle in the lighting of the Menorah, as well as what the Temple Menorah itself symbolizes. The class also addresses why and how we commemorate Chanukah today by lighting a menorah and by expressing Hoda'ah and Hallel – thanking and praising God in our prayers. Finally, we discuss the customs of eating foods containing oil and cheese, and playing dreidel.

This class seeks to understand:

- If the Chanukah miracles came in response to a small number of Jewish leaders, why is the mitzvah to commemorate Chanukah mandated for each Jewish person?
- Why did God select the Menorah as the source of the Chanukah miracle in the rededication of the Temple?
- What does the Menorah symbolize?
- How does our Chanukah observance demonstrate the essential role of Rabbinic authority?
- How do we commemorate the Chanukah miracles?
- What is behind the customs of eating latkes and spinning the dreidel?

**Class Outline:**

Introduction.	It's All Up to Us – Spreading the Light
Section I.	The Symbolism of the Menorah and its Light Part A. The Relationship between God and the Jewish People Part B. The Light of Torah Part C. The Oral Law and Rabbinic Authority
Section II.	Lighting the Menorah on Chanukah Part A. How to Light the Menorah Part B. Publicizing the Miracle Part C. Recitation of the Blessings
Section III.	Hoda'ah and Hallel – Thanks and Praise
Section IV.	Additional Traditions of Chanukah Part A. Chanukah Delights Part B. Dreidel, Dreidel, Dreidel

## INTRODUCTION. IT'S ALL UP TO US – SPREADING THE LIGHT

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We learned from Rabbi Chaim Friedlander in the first two Chanukah Morasha classes that the extent to which we prepare for Chanukah determines our ability to harness the tremendous spiritual energy that is available at this time. We understood from Rabbi Yitzchak Berkovits that the struggle between the ancient Greeks and the Jews at the time of the Second Temple is the same battle we face today. The forces of strictly academic intellectualism, without a Divine connection, undermines the ability to connect with God and develop spiritually as a whole human being. The confrontation today is between those who view Judaism as a “tradition,” something of sentimental value that contributes some meaning to life, but ultimately is not “real”; and in contrast, to those who see Judaism as a reality where each action has cosmic implications.

Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler taught us that the Chanukah miracles of the war and the oil were triggered by the unswerving determination of a small group of leaders. And thanks to them, the Jewish people overcame the Syrian-Greek challenge and Chanukah was established as a festival for all generations. Yet, after the dust clears, we're left with a fundamental question: If the Chanukah miracles were due to a relatively small number of Jews who served as leaders fighting for the very survival of Judaism, why is the mitzvah to commemorate Chanukah mandated to *every* Jewish person – man, woman, and child?! Why not require only the leaders of each community to light the menorah, symbolic of our ancestors?

As we will learn in this class, Chanukah, as in all mitzvot in Judaism, is about the ability and importance of each Jewish person, independent of one's stature, to participate proactively in Jewish life. During Chanukah, by lighting the menorah, we publicize the miracles of the war and the oil. By thanking and praising God, we acknowledge and express sincere appreciation that our existence and success is wholly dependent upon Him. We illuminate a planet darkened by the loss of clarity, and carry the Chanukah messages of the miracles of nature and daily life; Divine Providence; gratitude to God; and the extraordinary potential we all possess.

## SECTION I. THE SYMBOLISM OF THE MENORAH AND ITS LIGHT

The Menorah was one of the holy vessels in the Temple. While today it has certainly become the symbol of Chanukah, what did the Menorah in the Temple symbolize? In answering this question we will discover that the Menorah has far more to do with Chanukah than first meets the eye.

### PART A. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND THE JEWISH PEOPLE

In line with the theme developed in the previous Morasha Class on Chanukah, namely, that the Greeks sought to deny transcendence and any relationship with God, the Menorah is an apt symbol for everything the Maccabees stood to defend.

#### 1. Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud), Shabbat 22b – The Menorah represents God's Presence.

Aaron shall arrange (the Menorah) outside the curtain in the Tent of Meeting. [Vayikra/Leviticus 24:3] And does God need the light of the Menorah? Surely, all forty years in the desert the Children of Israel only traveled by His light. Rather the Menorah is testimony to the entire world that the Divine Presence rests on the Jewish people.

מחוץ לפרכת העדת באהל מועד יערך אתו אהרן...  
[ויקרא כד:ג] וכי לאורה הוא צריך והלא כל ארבעים  
שנה שהלכו בני ישראל במדבר לא הלכו אלא לאורו;  
אלא עדות היא לבאי עולם שהשכינה שורה בישראל.

Consequently, it is the Menorah, which represents God's Presence, that God chose as the vehicle to miraculously demonstrate His Divine Providence. Moreover, the Menorah also reflects that God seeks to build a relationship with the Jewish people.

#### 2. Midrash Bamidbar (Numbers) Rabbah 15:5 – The Menorah manifests the relationship of Israel with God.

The verse states, "For it is You who lights my lamp" (Tehillim/Psalms 18:29). Israel said to the Holy One, Blessed be He, "Sovereign of the Universe! Do you ask us that we should give light before You? You, surely, are the Light of the universe, and brightness abides with You, as it is written, 'The light dwells with Him' (Daniel 2:22)! Yet You say, 'The lamps shall illuminate the Menorah!'"

This explains the verse, "For it is You Who lights my lamp." The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Israel, "It is not because I require your service, but in order that you may give Me light, even as I have given you light. For what purpose? That you may rise in the estimation of the nations, who will say, 'See how Israel give light to Him Who gives light to the whole world!'"

זה שאמר הכתוב (תהלים יח) כי אתה תאיר נרי אמרו  
ישראל לפני הקב"ה רבש"ע לנו אתה אומר שנאיר  
לפניך אתה הוא אורו של עולם והאורה דרה אצלך  
דכתיב (דניאל ב) ונהורא עמייה שרא, ואתה אומר אל  
מול פני המנורה.

הוי כי אתה תאיר נרי, אמר להם הקב"ה לא שאני צריך  
לכם אלא שתאירו לי כדרך שהארתי לכם למה לעלות  
אתכם בפני האומות שיהיו אומרים ראו היאך ישראל  
מאירין למי שהוא מאיר לכל העולם.

God does not need the light of our menorahs. They are nothing compared to the sun and the millions of other stars in the sky. But God wants a relationship with us, and as such gives us ways to give back to Him. We light for the One Who lights up the world in order to manifest this relationship.

## PART B. THE LIGHT OF TORAH

Of course, the ultimate symbol of our relationship with God is the Torah that He gave us. The Menorah is a symbol of that too: the Menorah's function was to shine light, the light of the Torah.

### 1. Bereishit Rabbah 3:5 – The Torah is a form of light.

Rabbi Simon said, "The word 'light' is written five times [in the first paragraph of the Torah] corresponding to the five books of the Torah."

א"ר סימון ה' פעמים כתיב כאן אורה כנגד חמשה חומשי תורה.

### 2. Talmud Bavli, Ketubot 111b – The light of Torah is a life-sustaining force.

All those that utilize the light of the Torah – the light of the Torah sustains them.

כל המשתמש באור תורה אור תורה מחייהו.

### 3. Rabbi Aharon Kotler, Mishnas Rabbi Aharon, Vol. III, p. 68 – Chanukah teaches the value of Torah for all generations.

The miracle of Chanukah came to instruct the Jews for all generations before the start of the long exile ... for the Menorah and the candles symbolize Torah, as it says, "... and Torah is light."

...נס חנוכה בא להורות לכל ישראל לדורות, לפני הגלות הארוך, ... שהמנורה והנרות רומזים לתורה... (משלי ו:כג) "ותורה אור"...

### 4. Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, Sefer HaToda'ah, Ch. 10 – The Menorah is an allusion to purity and wisdom.

Whenever the Torah or the Sages refer to the oil used to light the Menorah, an allusion is intended to the wisdom of the heart and the thoughts of the mind. When the Greeks entered the Holy Temple and defiled the oil, they blemished the thoughts and feelings of the majority of the people of Israel, who began to accept that the wisdom of the Greeks contained enduring reality.

When the Hasmoneans came and entered the Sanctuary, they found one jar that contained pure oil, an amount sufficient for one day's lighting. Despite all that the Greeks had done to defile the thoughts of the people of Israel, there still remained a modicum of light in their hearts, a single spark of true wisdom, which enabled them to know that they were sacred and had been

כל מקום שזכר שמן בתורה ובדברי חכמים לענין הדלקת המנורה - רומז לחכמת הלב ולמחשבה שבמה. וכשנכנסו היונים להיכל, טמאו כל השמנים, כלומר פגמו בחכמה ובמחשבות הלב אצל רוב ישראל, שהתחילו גם הם נוהים בלבם אחר החכמה של היונים וחשבו שיש בה ממש::

וכשחזרו החשמונאים ונכנסו להיכל לא מצאו אלא פך אחד של שמן טהור שלא היה בו להדליק אלא יום אחד, כלומר, עם כל מה שפגמו היונים במחשבות הלב של ישראל קדושים, עדין מאירה בלבותם מחשבה טהורה אחת וניצוץ אחד של חכמת אמת, לידע שהם קדושים ובחירים מכל האומות וכל הגויים ילכו לאור ישראל, ולא ישראל ילכו לאורם.

chosen among the nations. The nations of the world were destined to follow Israel's light, rather than Israel following theirs.

### PART C. THE ORAL LAW AND RABBINIC AUTHORITY

If the light of the Menorah is the light of the Torah, how is it possible that we can kindle the lights of our own accord? Can the light of the Torah be lit with human hands? The answer is that yes, it can. This is the deep secret of the Oral Law, which forms a basic theme of the Chanukah festival.

Prophecy, which has served as the conduit to establish Jewish law from the time of Moshe Rabbeinu (Moses), ended by the time of the reign of Alexander the Great. The Sages then became empowered to legislate Jewish law: "From now on, bend your ear, and hear the words of the Sages" (*Seder Olam*, Ch. 30). After the weltanschauung of Greece conquered the world, words of Torah, coming from Above, emanated from the minds and hearts of the Sages. The entry of Divine light into our world, which is the theme of the Chanukah candles, is achieved by means of our own lighting.

#### 1. **Rabbi Gedaliah Schorr, Ohr Gedalyahu, Chanukah, p. 22 – The Temple contained holy vessels symbolic of both the Written Torah and the Oral Torah.**

In the Temple and the Tabernacle there were two special vessels among the others: the Ark containing the Two Tablets and the Menorah. The Ark, which was behind the curtain, inside the Holy of Holies, served as the foundation for the Written Law. All the prophecies that Moshe heard emanated from above the lid of the Ark, as it is written, "And I will meet with you there and I will speak with you from above the lid of the Ark, from between the two Cherubs." From there came the influence of the Written Law to the nation of Israel. Outside the curtain to the Holy of Holies was the Menorah, which was the source of influence of wisdom and the Oral Law to the Torah Sages.

A hint to the symbolism of the Menorah is cited by our Sages in the Talmud, "One who wants to gain wisdom should face [the Menorah] located in the southern part of the Temple" (Bava Batra 25a). The Menorah is associated with wisdom, and the influence of wisdom is through the teachings of the Jewish Sages.

בהמקדש והמשכן היו שני כלים, הארון שבו היו מונחין לוחות העדות, והמנורה, הארון שהוא לפנים מהפרוכת הי' יסוד של תושב"כ, וכל הנבואות ששמע משה הי' מעל הכפורת, כדכתיב (שמות כה:כב) ונועדתי לך שם ודברתי אתך מעל הכפורת מבין שני הכרובים, שמשם הי' ההשפעה של תושב"כ לכלל ישראל, ומחוץ לפרוכת הי' המנורה, שמשם הי' השפעת החכמה והתושבע"פ לחכמי התורה.

ורמז לדבר הוא מה שאמרו חז"ל (בבא בתרא כה) הרוצה להחכים ידרים וסימנך... ומנורה בדרום, שהמנורה היא ענין חכמה, והשפעת החכמה לחכמי ישראל..

The Menorah, rather than the Written Law, represents the Torah of the Oral Tradition.

2. **Rabbi Yisroel Gordon, Focus: A Chanukah Reader, pp. 42-3 – The Menorah represents the aspect of Torah that requires human involvement.**

The Holy Ark represents the Written Torah, but the Menorah represents the Oral Torah, the Sinaitic teachings which flow from and illuminate the otherwise impenetrable Torah text. This is indicated by the design of the Menorah itself. The Menorah has six branches that flow out of a central pillar – corresponding to the six orders of Mishnah which flow out of the Torah text. There is a fundamental difference between the Written Torah and the Oral Torah, and the Ark and the Menorah express this difference. The Ark is sealed in the Holy of Holies and is untouchable by man. The same can be said of the Torah text; its words are eternal and unchanging. When it comes to the Oral Torah, however, man has an active role to play. God gives man the sacred tasks of interpreting Torah verses within the framework of tradition and determining how to apply Halachic principles to the changing realities of life. Moreover, in order for a teacher to successfully transmit the Oral Torah to his students, contemporary and innovative language must be used. Using the Oral Torah, we bring Judaism to life.

In a similar sense, the miracles of Chanukah form the basis for the first festival that is transmitted solely in oral form. Unlike all other festivals, there is no mention of Chanukah in Scripture.

3. **Rabbi Yitzchak Hutner, Pachad Yitzchak, Chanukah, Ma'amar 1 – Why doesn't Chanukah have its own scroll?**

It is known that there are parts of Torah that are intended to be written down and there are parts that are not meant to be written down [and remain part of the Oral Tradition] as it is taught in the Talmud Yoma 29a:

Megillat Esther is compared to the morning: Just like the morning is the end of the night, the events of Purim were the last miracles. The Talmud asks, "What about the Chanukah miracles?" The Talmud answers, "We are referring to the events of Purim which are intended to be written in the Megillah." [On the other hand, the miracles of Chanukah were not intended to be written down, but to be part of the Oral Tradition.]

ידועים הם הדברים כי ישנם דברי תורה שניתנו להיכתב, וישנם דברי תורה שלא שניתנו להיכתב... אלא שיעויין יומא דף כט.

דנמשלה אסתר לשחר מזה שחר סוף הלילה אף אסתר סוף הנסים, ופריך והא איכא חנוכה, ומשני ניתנה להכתב קא אמרינן.

(Note: While there are several Books of the Maccabees, they were never incorporated into the canon of the Bible. Furthermore, most of them are of Hellenistic Greek origin and have little historical accuracy.)

So central is the concept of the Oral Law to Chanukah that the primary source for Rabbinic authority is based in a Talmudic discussion regarding the commandment to light the Chanukah candles!

#### 4. Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 23a – Chanukah is the quintessential Rabbinic mitzvah.

What is the blessing [recited upon lighting Chanukah candles]? One blesses, “[Blessed are You God, our God, King of the universe] Who has commanded us to light the Chanukah candles.”

Where is the Biblical source of this command? [Chanukah observance was legislated during the Second Temple period; how can there be a Biblical basis for its commemoration?] Rav Aviya said, “From ‘Do not swerve [from the things they tell you...]’” (Devarim/Deuteronomy 17:11). Rav Nechemiah said, “[From the verse] ‘Ask your father and he will tell you, [ask] your Elders and they will tell you’” (Devarim 32: 7).

מאי מברך? מברך אשר קדשנו במצותיו וצונו להדליק נר של חנוכה.

היכן צונו? רב אויא אמר: (דברים יז) מלא תסור.  
רב נחמיה אמר: (דברים לב) שאל אביך ויגדך זקנדך ויאמרו לך.

#### KEY THEMES OF SECTION I:

- ∞ The Menorah in the Temple is the ultimate symbol of mankind’s relationship with God: even though God does not need us to do anything for Him, He gave us the opportunity to light the Menorah in order to build a relationship with Him.
- ∞ The Menorah as a symbol of light represents the Torah and the inner purity of the Jewish people.
- ∞ More specifically, the Menorah is a symbol of the Oral Law, that element of Torah in which we ourselves participate. Rather than descending from the Heavens, the otherworldly light of the Menorah was kindled by human hands.

## SECTION II. LIGHTING THE MENORAH ON CHANUKAH

The main way in which the events of Chanukah are commemorated is by fulfilling the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah menorah.

It is striking that of all lights that we kindle throughout the year, including the candles we light for Shabbat and Yom Tov, only the Chanukah lights are considered “holy,” prohibiting us from deriving any benefit from them. In the words of the *Haneirot Halalu* song: “These lights are holy, and we do not have the right to use them, but only to see them.” Why is this so?

The answer to this follows from what we learned in the second Morasha class on Chanukah. The concept of the Chanukah miracle, and the corresponding commemoration of kindling the Chanukah lights, demonstrates the penetration of Divine light into the darkened world of the Greek empire. Throughout the year, the light is hidden; the miracles are concealed. On Chanukah, however, the very lights we kindle manifest the brilliant light of Divine intervention. Therefore, the light is holy, and we are only permitted to see it, to internalize the miracle of Chanukah, and the miracles that are with us always.

In this section we will analyze how the Chanukah lights are kindled, and strive to extract the deep meaning latent in their lighting.

## PART A. HOW TO LIGHT THE MENORAH

1. **Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b – There are two approaches in how to fulfill the mitzvah of lighting the Chanukah candles.**

The Rabbis taught: The mitzvah of [lighting the] Chanukah [menorah] is [one] candle for a person and his home. Beautification of this mitzvah is [to light] one candle for each member of the household. The School of Shammai said that the most beautiful way to perform the mitzvah is to light eight candles on the first day of Chanukah and decrease [on each successive night]; and the School of Hillel said to light one candle on the first night and increase [on each successive night].

תנו רבנן מצות חנוכה נר איש וביתו והמהדרין נר לכל אחד ואחד והמהדרין מן המהדרין בית שמאי אומרים יום ראשון מדליק שמנה מכאן ואילך פוחת והולך ובית הלל אומרים יום ראשון מדליק אחת מכאן ואילך מוסיף והולך.

Jewish law follows the opinion of Beit Hillel (lighting an extra candle each day), and such is the practice with which virtually everyone is accustomed.

An extra, ninth candle, is lit as a *shamash*. It ensures that we derive no direct benefit from the Chanukah lights themselves, for, as noted above, we are prohibited to benefit from them.

2. **Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, Sefer HaToda'ah (Book of Our Heritage), Ch. 10 – The procedure for lighting the menorah follows the opinion of Beit Hillel.**

One candle is lit on the first night, and an additional candle is added each night; on the eighth night, eight candles are lit.

If one has a fixed menorah of eight lights, he lights the outer light on the right side of his menorah on the first night of Chanukah. On the second night he first lights the candle that is to the left of the first night's candle and then lights the one from the night before as well. This is done on each subsequent night, always adding the new candle to the left of those lit previously, then going back to light the remaining candles from left to right.

It is customary to light an additional candle each night as well as the Chanukah candles. This candle is called the "shamash," which indicates that it is permissible to use its light and to light the other candles from it. The Chanukah lights themselves are not allowed to be used for light the whole time that they are burning for the purpose of the mitzvah. Therefore, we light the shamash in order that we should not benefit from the [lights of the] mitzvah but only from that shamash candle.

לילה הראשון מדליק נר אחד, ומוסיף בכל לילה נר אחד, ובלילה השמיני מדליק שמונה נרות.

היתה לו מנורה קבועה של שמונה נרות, בלילה הראשון מדליק את הנר הקיצוני שבצד ימין. למחרת מוסיף עליו שכנו משמאל ומדליק אותו תחילה, ופונה לימין ומדליק זה של אתמול. וכן בכל לילה, שמוסיף תמיד מצד שמאל ובו מדליק תחילה והולך ומדליק משמאל לימין:

נוהגים להדליק בכל לילה נר אחד נוסף על נרות חנוכה והוא הנקרא 'שמש', כלומר, נר זה מותר להשתמש בו, לראות לאורו, להדליק ממנו לאחרים וכיוצא באלה. ואילו נרות חנוכה אסור להשתמש לאורם כל זמן שהם דולקים למצוה. לפיכך מדליקים את השמש כדי שלא יבוא להנות מן המצוה, אלא ממנו בלבד.



The Talmud offers the following rationale for the view of Beit Hillel, which we follow.

### 3. Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b – We increase the lights as we increase in holiness.

The reason behind the [opinion of the] School of Hillel is that we seek to elevate our level of holiness and do not look to decrease it.

וטעמא דבית הלל דמעלין בקדש ואין מורדין.

“Elevating our level of holiness” means a continual process. The first night of Chanukah teaches us of the great miracle that occurred. On the second night, we deepen our awareness of the miracle, and allow its light to infuse our own lives. On the third night, we follow this path a step further, deepening our appreciation of the miracles that are with us always. And so on. The days of Chanukah present an opportunity to build a spiritual edifice within our own lives.

### 4. Rabbi Yaakov Astor, Reality and Potential, from [www.aish.com](http://www.aish.com) – Beit Hillel teach us to build on our spiritual potential.

The Sages of the Talmud record a classic dispute concerning the Chanukah menorah ... Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler in *Michtav M'Eliyahu* (Vol. II, pp. 120-122) uses this as a springboard for a deeper understanding of Chanukah. He begins with a parable:

Imagine two friends. One of them goes to the store to buy a lottery ticket. The next day he finds that he has the winning ticket and in his great excitement tells his friend. We can imagine the joy of both of them, the friend who won the lottery as well as the one who did not. Sometime later, the winner buys another ticket. As luck would have it he wins again, and again he can't wait to tell his friend. The friend rejoices with him, but not quite as much. He might even feel a little resentment that his peer is winning so much money and he is not. Once again the wealthy friend buys another ticket, and once again he wins! In utter amazement he runs over to his friend to tell him the good news. By now his friend is terribly jealous; it's becoming too much to bear. To the person who keeps on winning, though, each ticket only adds to his excitement and happiness. Let's imagine this happening a fourth and fifth time, and so on. To the friend who's accumulating all this wealth, each winning ticket is an accumulation of joy from the previous win. On the other hand, his friend's happiness diminishes more and more.

Rabbi Dessler explains that this discrepancy also exists in how people experience the joy of Chanukah. Most people can experience the initial joy that comes along with lighting the menorah. By the second day, for many of us, the flush of the experience is not as intense. By the third day, it is even less so, and keeps on diminishing with each ensuing day. But for others, whose spiritual sensitivity is deep and internal, they experience the joy of the festival in an ever increasing fashion, with the last day being the climax.

This distinction encompasses a larger question that relates to the way in which we live our lives. Should I live my religious life as I presently feel it? Or should I act as if I live on a higher level in the hope that I will eventually live up to it?

There is a valid reasoning for each one. The first approach is valid because one doesn't want to be a hypocrite. We don't want to make ourselves out to be more than we really are. The drawback of this life philosophy is that there is a danger of accustoming oneself to a mediocre standard. We may not reach the heights because we don't ever strive for them. We have boxed ourselves into a self-fulfilling prophecy based on our limited perceptions of ourselves.

The second approach, on the other hand, has the advantage of opening us up to our inner potential that we otherwise may not have ever known ... Jewish law is in accordance with Beit Hillel. We light one candle on the first night and continue increasing and building our potential to the eight candles lit on the last night. Thus, according to this perspective, the law tells us that our first responsibility is to strive for the heights. Mediocrity as a predetermined lifestyle is unacceptable.

## PART B. PUBLICIZING THE MIRACLE

The mitzvah of lighting our menorahs is intended to publicize the miracle of the Menorah that happened in the Temple. The mitzvah intrinsically expresses our desire for the Divine intervention of Chanukah to permeate our world as much as possible. This goal helps to determine when and where we light the menorah.

### 1. Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 21b – The placement of the menorah is designed to publicize the miracle.

The mitzvah of the Chanukah light is to place it on the outside at the entrance of one's home ...

#### Rashi

This is in order to publicize the miracle.

נר חנוכה מצוה להניחה על פתח ביתו מבחוץ...

רש"י

משום פרסומי ניסא.

### 2. Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, Sefer HaToda'ah, Ch. 10 – The entrance to the home is the optimal place to light one's menorah.

Our Rabbis established that we should leave the Chanukah lights at the entrance of our homes adjacent to a public thoroughfare. The menorah is placed on the left side of the entrance with the mezuzah on the right side [symbolic that we should be surrounded by mitzvot] ... This is done in order to publicize the miracle; the mitzvah of the Chanukah lights are more obvious when left at an entrance where the public can see them; and where they are not too low down nor too high up.

In recent times many people customarily leave the Chanukah candles on a windowsill overlooking a public thoroughfare. One should not leave them on his table, etc. as this does not publicize the miracle, but rather appears that he is lighting the candles to light up his home.

תקנו חכמים להניח נרות חנוכה בפתח ביתו הסמוך לרשות הרבים מבחוץ, ובצד שמאל של הפתח, מזוהה בימין ונר חנוכה בשמאל... וכל הדברים האלה מפני פרסום הנס, שנפרת יותר המצוה אם נר חנוכה ליד הפתח הפתוח לרשות הרבים ואינו מונח נמוך מדי ולא גבוה יותר מדי:

ובדורות האחרונים נהגו רוב העולם להניח נרות חנוכה על החלון הפונה לרשות הרבים. אבל לא יניחם על שלחנו ולא על כיוצא בו לפי שאין בזה פרסום הנס, שכן נראה שהדליק את הנר למאור וכדו':

Nevertheless, in places where one is afraid of vandalism and anti-Semitism, it is permissible to light indoors. Such practice has become common outside the land of Israel.

3. **Shulchan Aruch, Hilchot Chanukah 672:1-2 – The timing for lighting the menorah is also designed for maximum publicity.**

One lights the Chanukah lamp from sunset onward. If one did not light at sunset, one should light as long as people are returning from the marketplace, which is approximately one-half hour [after sunset] since this is the optimal time to publicize the miracle ... If this time period has passed and one has not lit the lamps, one may light the entire night.

אין מדליקין נר חנוכה קודם שתשקע החמה.  
שכח או הזיד ולא הדליק עם שקיעת החמה מדליק  
והולך עד שתכלה רגל מן השוק שהוא כמו חצי שעה  
שאז העם עוברים ושבים ואיכא פרסומי ניסא... אבל  
אם עבר זה הזמן ולא הדליק מדליק והולך כל הלילה...

As expressed in the sources below, publicizing the miracle is not limited to the public sphere; one can also “publicize” the miracle to one’s own family.

4. **Mishnah Berurah, ibid. – One can publicize the miracle to one’s own family.**

If one arrives home before the first light of dawn and finds the members of his household asleep, it is acceptable to wake them in order to light with a blessing.

ואם בא לביתו קודם עה"ש ומצא ב"ב ישנים מן הנכון  
שיקיצם כדי שיוכל להדליק בברכה:

5. **Rabbi Shalom Brezovsky, Nesivos Shalom, Chanukah, p. 57 – The purpose of publicizing the miracle is to instill faith.**

“Publicizing the miracle” is not specifically to show others; it is also for each person and his family – to impress upon oneself and one’s family the clarity of Jewish faith.

ופרסומי ניסא אינו בדוקא לאחרים, אלא נר איש וביתו,  
בו בעצמו ובתוך ביתו את בהירות האמונה.

**PART C. RECITATION OF THE BLESSINGS**

1. **Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, Sefer HaToda'ah, Ch. 11 – On the first night we add an extra blessing.**

On the first night three blessings are said before lighting the candles (see source #2 below) ...

And on all other nights the first two blessings are recited but the blessing of “Who has kept us alive, sustained us, etc.” is not recited.

לילה הראשון, קודם שמדליק מברך שלש ברכות...

ובשאר הלילות, מברך שתי ברכות הראשונות בלבד  
אבל אינו מברך 'שהחנינו'.

2. **Siddur – The blessings recited when lighting the Chanukah candles.**

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His mitzvot and commanded us to light the Chanukah candles.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם אשר קדשנו במצותיו  
וצנינו להדליק נר חנוכה:

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who performed miracles for our fathers in those days at this time.

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Who has kept us alive, sustained us, and brought us to this season.

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שעשה נסים  
לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה:

ברוך אתה ה' אלהינו מלך העולם שהקינו וקיימנו  
והגיענו לזמן הזה:

What is meant in the second blessing by saying that God “performed miracles in those days at this time”? As we explained in the introduction to the second Morasha class on Chanukah, the spiritual energy from the Chanukah miracles is rejuvenated annually.

### 3. Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Sifsei Chaim, Vol. II, p. 53 – How can we absorb the spiritual energy of Chanukah into our lives?

In the prayer of “Al HaNissim” it says: “[For the miracles] that You performed for our fathers in those days at this time.” Jewish holidays are not simply days of historical significance commemorating past occurrences. Rather, all that transpired then – the salvation and abundance of spiritual and physical blessings, are re-established annually at the anniversary of the holiday.

However, this unique form of Divine influence and elevation can be attained for each Jewish festival and is dependent upon the degree to which one had adequately prepared in advance, devoting time to reflect on the essence of the holiday and thus gaining the spiritual strengthening which inevitably follows. Similarly, the same is applicable concerning the days of Chanukah. As such, we need to understand the essence of the Greek exile in order to awaken ourselves to mend its harmful consequences, and through doing so we will be able to receive the influences [inherent in the holiday], which illuminate every year anew.

בתפילת על הניסים נאמר: “...שעשית לאבותינו בימים  
ההם בזמן הזה.” כל המועדים והימים הטובים שיש  
לנו אינם חגים היסטוריים לזכר העבר שחלף, אלא כל  
האירועים, הישועות והשפע הרוחני והגשמי שהיה,  
מתעוררים ומתחדשים מדי שנה בזמניהם....

אך מידת ההשפעה וההתעלות המיוחדת לכל מועד  
שמקבל כל אחד מהשי"ת, תלויה במידת ההכנה  
שלו, ההתכוננות במהות היום וההתחזקות הבאה  
בעקבותיה. וכן הוא בימי החנוכה, א"כ עלינו להבין מה  
היתה גלות יוון, כדי שנתעורר לתקן את קלקוליה ועי"כ  
נחזק את שפע גאולתה המאיר בכל שנה.

#### KEY THEMES OF SECTION II:

- ⇒ We light the Chanukah menorah by adding one more light for each additional night. The idea behind this practice is to strive for greater spiritual achievements.
- ⇒ The menorah is lit in public view and at a time when people are commonly in the streets in order to publicize the miracle of the Menorah.
- ⇒ The purpose in publicizing the miracle is to instill faith. The otherworldly light of Chanukah pervades our world, instilling within us faith in the constant guidance and supervision of God over His world.

## SECTION III. HODA'AH AND HALLEL – THANKS AND PRAISE

Lighting a Chanukah menorah is the most famous mitzvah of Chanukah, but there is one other principal mitzvah of the festival – expressing our thanks and praise to God for carrying out the miracles of the war and the oil.

### 1. Rashi, Shabbat 24a – Chanukah was established so we can develop the trait of gratitude.

Chanukah was established entirely for the sake of gratitude.

כולה מילתא דחנוכה עיקרה להודאה נתקנה.

The theme of thanks and praise is expressed most explicitly in the additional prayer inserted in both the Amidah prayer and Birkat Hamazon: Al HaNissim (See Chanukah II, Section I. Part B. Source 2 for full text.)

### 2. Al HaNissim Prayer – Our special prayers on Chanukah express thanks and praise.

And [we thank You] for the miracles, for the redemption, for the mighty deeds, for the saving acts, and for the wonders which You have wrought for our ancestors in those days, at this time...

In the days of Matityahu, the son of Yochanan the High Priest, the Hasmonean and his sons...

על הנסים ועל הפורקן ועל הגבורות ועל התשועות ועל המלחמות שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה:

בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן כהן גדול חשמונאי ובניו...

This theme is also expressed in the special prayer recited over the lit Chanukah candles: *HaNerot HaLalu*.

### 3. HaNerot HaLalu – While gazing at the Chanukah menorah we thank God for the miracles.

We kindle these lights [to commemorate] the saving acts, miracles and wonders which You have performed for our forefathers, in those days at this time, through Your holy priests.

הנרות הללו אנו מדליקין על הנסים ועל הנפלאות ועל התשועות ועל המלחמות. שעשית לאבותינו בימים ההם בזמן הזה. על ידי פהגניך הקדושים.

Moreover, we praise God each day of Chanukah by reciting the Hallel prayer during the Shacharit (Morning) service. But why are thanks and praise so central to celebrating Chanukah?

### 4. Bach, Commentary on Tur, Orach Chaim 670 – The miracle transpired as a result of a change of attitude, hence the celebration is conducted in a way that is reminiscent of this transformation.

When the Jews repented and began to wholeheartedly dedicate their lives to the service

וכחזרו בתשובה למסור נפשם על העבודה הושיעם ה' ע"י כהנים עובדי העבודה בבית השם. על כן נעשה

of God, He saved them through the Kohanim, who performed the service in the Temple. This is why the miracle was done with the lights – since the Jews risked their lives for the sake of performing the Temple Service [which included lighting the Menorah]. Therefore, these days were instituted solely for celebration with thanksgiving and praising God, which is a function of the heart.

הנס ג"כ בנרות תחת אשר הערו נפשם למות על קיום העבודה, ולפיכך לא קבעום אלא להלל ולהודות שהיא העבודה שבלב.

The Service in the Temple is called *avodah* and so too is prayer. Therefore, the way to commemorate the dedication to that Service, and the miracle that happened in order to facilitate it, is through our own prayer service.

5. **Rabbi Chaim Friedlander, Sifsei Chaim, Vol. II, pp. 25-26 – The Al HaNissim prayer links the military accomplishment back to God.**

The focal point of Chanukah is giving thanks, as Rashi states: “Chanukah was established entirely for the sake of gratitude.” Our Sages therefore inserted the prayer of “Al HaNissim” in the Amidah blessing of Thanks. The word *hoda'ah*, meaning thanks, can be understood in two ways: (1) to acknowledge the truth, and (2) to give thanks. These are both connected: Mankind, who receives life, health, sustenance, and all our other needs from God, must acknowledge the truth that everything we have is in fact a gift from God.

This is very difficult for a person to do, as it seems to him that he is the one in charge and he often thinks to himself that it is “my own strength and the might of my hand that brings me victory.” Even when man contemplates and realizes that it is God Who gives him the strength to be successful [or at times when he cannot attribute his gains to his own talents or abilities] – nevertheless, he still thinks to himself that although God gave it to him he deserves it because of his good deeds. Or he thinks that just like other people receive everything, why should he be any different to them. Therefore, he thinks that he does not have to feel indebted and thank God.

Man is therefore obligated to toil and to ingrain in his soul to recognize, admit, and be grateful that everything he has he receives from God as free kindness; thereby he will reach the level of giving thanks to God.

עיקר מהות חנוכה היא ה"הודאה" כמש"כ רש"י (שבת כד. ד"ה מה) "כולה מילתא דחנוכה עיקרה להודאה נתקנה." ולכן תיקנו חז"ל את תפילת "על הניסים" בברכת הודאה (גמ' ורש"י, שם). ל"הודאה" שני מובנים: א. מודה על האמת. ב. נותן תודה. ושניהם קשורים זה בזה: ראשית צריך אדם המקבל חיים, בריאות ופרנסה ושאר צרכיו מה', להודות על האמת שכל מה שיש לו – מתנה היא מאת השי"ת.

דבר זה קשה מאד לאדם, כי נדמה לו שהוא בעל היכולת, וחושב בלבו פעמים רבות "כוחי ועוצם ידי עשה לי את החיל הזה", ואף כאשר מתבונן ורואה ומכיר שהשי"ת הוא הנותן לו כח לעשות חיל [או במקרים שאינו יכול לתלות את הדבר בכשרונותיו ויכולתו], עדיין חושב בלבו, אכן הקב"ה הוא הנותן, אבל "מגיע ליי" עבור מעשי הטובים, או, כשם שכולם מקבלים ואני איני שונה מאחרים, לכן אינני חייב להכיר טובה ולתת תודה להשי"ת.

על האדם מוטלת החובה לעמול ולהשריש בנפשו, להכיר ולהודות שכל מה שיש לו הוא מקבל מהשי"ת בחסד חינם, ועי"כ יגיע למדרגה של נתינת תודה להשי"ת.

This is the point of saying Al HaNissim: to contemplate and truthfully admit that the victories came from God and not through the might of the Hasmoneans, thereby thanking and praising God.

זהו הענין של אמירת "על הנסים", להתבונן ולהודות באמת שהישועות היו מאת השי"ת, ולא בגבורת החשמונאים, ומתוך כך לתת להשי"ת שבח והודיה על שהיטיב עמנו.

## 6. Mishnah Berurah 670:2 - Unlike Purim, when the threat was physical, Chanukah is a time for thanking God for saving us from a spiritual threat.

The Rabbis did not establish Chanukah as a holiday of feasting; rather, it is dedicated to praise and thanks to God. The reason seems to be that on Purim the decree was to destroy and wipe out the physical existence of the Jews, which is a negation of joy and feasting. The Persians were not interested in destroying their souls, as we know that even had the Jews converted they would not have been spared. Thus when God saved them, the Rabbis established that we celebrate it with feasting and joy.

However, regarding Antiochus, he did not decree that they be killed; rather, he decreed oppression and hardship in order to cause them to abandon Judaism ... Therefore the Sages established the festival of Chanukah as a time of praise and thanksgiving exclusively. This is meant to express that we are thankful, that in spite of the fact that they tried to prevent us from following Judaism ... with His help their plan failed ...

Hence we are thankful and we praise God for intervening and not abandoning us so that we may continue to serve Him.

שלא קבעום למשתה ושמחה - אלא להלל ולהודות. ונראה הטעם דלא קבעו כאן לשמחה כמו בפורים כי בפורים היה הגזירה להשמיד ולהרוג את הגופות שהוא בטול משתה ושמחה ולא את הנפשות שאפילו המירו דתם ח"ו לא היה מקבל אותם לכך כשהצילים הקב"ה ממנו קבעו להללו ולשבחו ית' ג"כ ע"י משתה ושמחה.

משא"כ במעשה דאנטיוכוס שלא גזר עליהם להרוג ולהשמיד רק צרות ושמדות כדי להמיר דתם ... לכך לא קבעום אלא להלל ולהודות לבד כלומר כיון שהם רצו למנוע אותנו מזה לכפור בדתו ח"ו ובעזרתו ית' לא הפיקו זממם...

לכך אנו מודים ומשבחים לו על שהיה לנו לאלהים ולא עזבנו מעבודתו:

### KEY THEMES OF SECTION III:

- ☞ Central to the observance of Chanukah is the expression of praise and thanks to God for bringing about our salvation through miracles.
- ☞ It is important to express gratitude since it develops the awareness that our existence and successes are attributable to God.

## SECTION IV. ADDITIONAL TRADITIONS OF CHANUKAH

Celebrating Chanukah extends beyond the mitzvot of lighting the menorah and expressing thanks and praise to God in our prayers. It is also commemorated through food (no surprise) and even in “play.”

### PART A. CHANUKAH DELIGHTS

While the Chanukah celebration does not center around a festive meal, as does Purim, nevertheless Chanukah is not bereft of its own gastronomical delights. For various reasons certain foods have become traditional on Chanukah.

#### 1. Rabbi Eliyahu Kitov, *Sefer HaToda'ah*, Ch. 11 – Fried foods recall the miracle of the oil.

It is proper to eat foods fried in oil on Chanukah in remembrance of the miracle of the flask of oil.

וכן מקובל לאכול בחנוכה מאכלים מטוגנים בשמן  
לזכר פך השמן שנעשה בו נס.

For this reason potato latkes fried in oil and doughnuts (called *sufganiyot* in Israel) have become favorite Chanukah treats.

It is also customary to eat dairy products, which derives from the story of Yehudit (see *Otzar HaMidrashim*, Chanukah, p. 192).

#### 2. Rema, *Shulchan Aruch* (Code of Jewish Law) 670:2, with commentary of *Mishnah Berurah* – The success of Yehudit was accomplished with dairy products.

Some say that it is proper to eat cheese on Chanukah to remember the miracle which occurred with Yehudit who fed the enemy dairy products [in order to make him thirsty].

##### **Mishnah Berurah**

She was the daughter of Yochanan the High Priest. Since there had been a decree that every bride must first be given to the Greek governor, she fed the enemy chief cheese (and wine) in order to deepen his inebriation. She then decapitated him and they all fled.

יש אומרים שיש לאכול גבינה בחנוכה לפי שהנס  
נעשה בחלב שהאכילה יהודית את האויב (כל בו ור"ן).

היא היתה בתו של יוחנן כ"ג והיתה גזירה שכל ארוסה  
תבעל לטפסר תחלה והאכילה לראש הצוררים גבינה  
לשכרותו וחתכה את ראשו וברחו כולם:

Eating dairy products is a way of commemorating this incident, which served as one of the catalysts for the revolt against the Greeks.

### PART C. DREIDEL, DREIDEL, DREIDEL

#### 1. Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf, *Dreidel Secrets*, from [aish.com](http://aish.com) – The dreidel is a symbol of Jewish defiance.

In Judaism, even something as simple as “spin-the-top” is really not as simple as it appears. During the time of the Maccabees, Jews were imprisoned for the “crime” of studying Torah. While in



jail, these Jews would gather together to play dreidel. Under the guise of idling away their time, they would engage in Torah discussions and thus defy the enemies of Judaism.

Every dreidel has four sides with one Hebrew letter on each side. Each of these letters begins a word. The four letters are:

- Nun – the first letter of the word *nes*, which means “miracle”
- Gimmel – the first letter of *gadol*, which means “great”
- Hey – the first letter of *haya*, which means “was,” and
- Shin – the first letter of *sham*, which means “there.”

When taken together, these letters proclaim “A great miracle happened there.” Until today, the “game of dreidel” reminds us of our eternal defiance of anyone who tries to stand between a Jew and the Torah.

The custom of spinning a dreidel has deeper Kabbalistic imagery as well. In a way, the dreidel sums up what Chanukah is all about.

2. **Rabbi Avraham Yitzchak Sperling, Ta’amei HaMinhagim 859, citing Korban Ani in the name of HaRitza – There is a profound difference between spinning a dreidel on Chanukah versus a gragger on Purim.**

The reason we play with a dreidel on Chanukah and a gragger on Purim is because on Chanukah there was only a Heavenly awakening, as the Jews as a nation did not respond properly in teshuvah. God saved them in His mercy. This is symbolized by the fact that we hold the dreidel by its top. On Purim, the Jews awakened themselves by fasting and mourning, and therefore we hold the gragger by its lower end.

מעם שמשחקין בדרעדיל (סביבון) בחנוכה, ובפורים בגראגער (רעשן), דבחנוכה לא היתה התעוררות מלמטה, רק מלעילא, כי לא עשו תשובה כהוגן, רק השם יתברך ברחמיו, לכן משחקין בדרעדיל ואוחזין אותו מלמעלה. ובפורים שגזרו צום ושק ואפר יוצע לרבים והיתה התעוררות מלמטה, על כן אוחזין מלמטה (קרוב עני בשם הריצ"א זצוק"ל).

We learned in Chanukah I and II that the tremendous dedication of a small group of Jews catalyzed the Chanukah miracles. According to the HaRitza, since the *majority* of the Jewish people did not mobilize against the Syrian-Greek threat to Judaism, the primary spiritual awakening for the entire Jewish nation is viewed as originating in Heaven.

**KEY THEMES OF SECTION IV:**

- ∞ While eating is not the main event of this festival, it is still customary to eat food fried in oil and dairy food to commemorate the events of Chanukah.
- ∞ Aside from eating latkes and dairy foods, playing with a dreidel is a favorite Chanukah pastime. More than just a toy, the dreidel is a symbol of Jewish defiance and Divine assistance.

## CLASS SUMMARY:

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### IF THE CHANUKAH MIRACLES CAME IN RESPONSE TO A SMALL NUMBER OF JEWISH LEADERS WHY IS THE MITZVAH TO COMMEMORATE CHANUKAH MANDATED TO EACH JEWISH PERSON?

Chanukah, as in all mitzvot in Judaism, is about the ability and importance of each Jewish person, independent of one's stature, to participate proactively in Jewish life.

By lighting the menorah on Chanukah, we publicize the miracles of the war and the oil and affirm what is precious to us. We illuminate a planet darkened by the loss of clarity, and carry the Chanukah messages of the miracle of nature, Divine Providence, and the extraordinary potential of each person toward himself, his family, his community, and the entire world.

### WHY DID GOD SELECT THE MENORAH AS THE SOURCE OF THE CHANUKAH MIRACLE IN THE REDEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE?

It is the Menorah, which represents God's Presence, that God chose as the vehicle to miraculously demonstrate His Divine Providence. Moreover, the Menorah also reflects that God seeks to build a relationship with the Jewish people.

### WHAT DOES THE MENORAH SYMBOLIZE?

The Menorah as one of the holy vessels in the Temple was a symbol of Torah, wisdom, and the Oral Law.

The human involvement in lighting its lights for the sake of God is symbolic of the way God gives us an opportunity to have a relationship with Him.

Light shows us what is there; the Menorah shows us that God is here.

### HOW DOES OUR CHANUKAH OBSERVANCE DEMONSTRATE THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF RABBINIC AUTHORITY?

After Greek philosophy conquered the world, words of Torah, rather than coming from Above, emanated from the minds and hearts of the Sages. The entry of Divine light into our world, which is the theme of the Chanukah candles, is achieved by means of our own lighting.

The Torah itself empowers rabbis in legislating law, which is cited by the Talmud (Talmud Bavli, Shabbat 23a) in the establishment of Chanukah.

### HOW DO WE COMMEMORATE THE CHANUKAH MIRACLES?

The main way by which we commemorate the Chanukah miracles is by lighting the menorah, which brings a "holy light" into our world. We do so publicly, preferably right outside our doorways, in order to publicize the miracle to others. In so doing, we negate the Hellenistic worldview whereby there is no connection between our world and the Divine.

We also commemorate Chanukah in our prayers by thanking and praising God for saving us from the threat of the Greeks.

#### **WHAT IS BEHIND THE CUSTOMS OF EATING LATKES AND SPINNING THE DREIDEL?**

Eating food cooked in oil on Chanukah is another way of celebrating the miracle that occurred with the oil. Spinning the dreidel reminds us of the defiance of the Maccabees and makes us aware of God's helping hand from above.

