Chanukah: The Battle Over the Oral Torah
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Although Chanukah is a holiday that was established by the sages, it is hinted to in the Torah. The verse in the beginning of Parshat *B'ha'alotcha* states, "*B'ha'alotcha et haneirot*." This comes right after the chanukat hanesiim at the end of Parshat Naso. Rashi explains the connection. He says Aharon felt bad that he had not taken part in the inauguration. Therefore, Hashem promised him, "Your portion will be greater than theirs. You will kindle the lights of the menorah."

The Ramban asks, Aharon performed many rites in the Mishkan, not just lighting the menorah. Why did Hashem appease him specifically with this *avoda*? He answers that Hashem placated him by telling him that his descendants would light the neirot Chanukah and bless the people with *birchat kohanim*. How did this make up for *chanukat hanesiim*? In addition, if Aharon wanted to participate in the *chanukat hanesiim* why didn't he just join? It was a voluntary initiative of the tribes.

Thirdly, in Al Hanisim we say, "*L'hashkicham toretecha ul'haviram me'chukei retzonecha*." The Greeks wanted the Jews to forget the Torah and transgress the will of Hashem. Why is Torah mentioned separately, isn't it part of the will of Hashem? In addition, the Mirash Tanchuma on Naso says that one must heed the sages institutions. What does this have to do with Chanukah?

The Gemara in Shabbat asks about the blessing we say before lighting the menorah. How can we say *"v'tzivanu* – that G-d commanded us," when we light the Chanuka lights. Isn't it a rabbinic *mitzvah*? G-d did not command us to light the *menorah*. The Gemara answers that we have a *mitzvah* to listen to the rabbis. This question can be asked about all rabbinic commandments. Why does the Gemara specifically ask this question about Chanukah candles?

The Greeks fought a special war against the oral Torah. The Rambam explains that a prophet only knows what Hashem tells him, but the sages can intimate Hashem's will. By absorbing vast amounts of Torah, they can deduce Hashem's desire. They have an invisible connection to Him. The Greeks, who denied anything intangible, fought fiercely against this.

Chanukah is about connecting to what's beyond the physical. This is the essence of the Oral Torah. Therefore, the Midrash Tanchuma connects Chanukah with the oral Torah. This why the gemara asks its question about *vi'tzivanu* specifically about the Chanukah candles. This is also why Torah study is specially mentioned in *Al Hanissim*. Torah study gives us the ability to intuit G-d's desire. The Greeks wanted to destroy this ability.

The Rambam says that there will be a *chanukat hanesiim* when Mashiach comes. Through their own inititative, the *nesiim* were successful in understanding what Hashem wanted. Aharon decided not to join them because he had questions on what they were doing. But in the end Hashem agreed with the *nesiim*. Aharon was upset that he wasn't successful in figuring out *ratzon* (will) Hashem. Hashem appeased him with *birchat kohanim* and ner Chanukah. When the kohanim bless the people, Hashem says, "*V'ani avarachem,*" meaning, I too will bless them. Similarly, the essence of ner Chanukah is the ability to be *m'chaven* (deduce) the *ratzon* Hashem. This compensated Aharon for missing out on *chanukat hanissim*.

Our challenge on Chanukah is to work on ridding ourselves of the Greek mindset. We have a natural tendency to value tangible things over intangibles. May the sanctity of these eight holy nights strengthen our faith in the Creator and His Torah.