



Chanukah: Faith Over Fate

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Hershel Reichman

Chanukah celebrates the victory of faith over fate. When a small band of untrained Maccabees defeated the mighty army of Syrian-Greeks, it was clear to all that faith had won over reason.

The Greeks outlawed *brit milah*, Shabbat, and Rosh Chodesh. Greek philosophy idolized the human body as a symbol of perfection. In contrast, *brit milah* commands us to further perfect and elevate our body by removing the foreskin. *Brit milah* adds a spiritual quality to a Jew's body that goes beyond natural physical order. Shabbat too, goes against the natural social order of the world. The day takes on an extra divine like dimension defying logic and reason.

The Greeks banned Rosh Chodesh because the Jewish calendar also goes beyond physical nature. A girl's status in *halacha* changes from a *ketana* to a *gedola* on her twelfth birthday. If the Jewish court declared a leap year in her eleventh

year, she would not gain the status of a *gedola* until a month later, even though she may have already physically matured. This again brings faith and reality at odds, which is why the Greeks outlawed Rosh Chodesh.

Chodesh comes from the root word, *chadash*, newness. Rosh Chodesh is a spiritual arousal. It is not just another thirty days repeating itself but a new cycle where a Jew receives a spiritual injection of fresh energy every month. Similarly, Shabbat brings with it new spiritual power for the coming week. A sensitive Jew can plug into all this renewed energy and grow. The Shem Mishmuel explains that the Greeks were jealous of the Jews because the Greek system of nature was so unchanging and bound by fate that it stifled creativity. In Judaism, faith replaces fate. We believe that man can change fate and his personality through teshuva.

Chodesh Tevet corresponds to the tribe of Dan, which signifies judgment. The Midrash explains

that Rachel named Bilha's son Dan because, "Hashem judged me and found me guilty. He judged me and found me meritorious." Yaakov put on a show of cruelty for Rachel so that she would pray. He forced her to remove her faith in him and rediscover her faith in Hashem. This is the message of Chanukah. A small platoon of faithful soldiers toppling a massive well equipped world power could only have been accomplished with *mesirut nefesh*, prayer and faith.

The Shem Mishmuel, quoting the Avnei Nezer, emphasizes that reason can support faith but certainly does not replace it or precede it. This was the crux of the clash between Greek philosophy and Torah. Greek philosophy worships logic and nature. Judaism teaches that although human logic is important, it is only secondary to following Hashem's dictates.

The flames of the Chanukah candles contain the secret of Jewish survival. Our pure faith has kept us alive throughout our long and painful exile.

Chanukah: Revealing The Essence

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Mrs. Shira Smiles

On Chanukah we attain new dimensions of truth, awareness and clarity of vision. The Baal HaRokeach writes that the 36 candles we light on Chanukah correspond to the 36 hours during which the *or haganuz*, the hidden light, shone at the beginning of creation. With this otherworldly light, Adam was able to see from one end of the world to the other. The *or haganuz* had the power of revelation and, therefore, Hashem hid it for the *tzaddikim* in the eventual future. Kiselev stands for *Kis Lamed Vav* – the concealed thirty six, because the Chanukah lights contain a spark of this

ethereal light.

The message of Chanukah is *bitachon*, of realizing *Ein od milvado*. It is not enough to know "*Anochi Hashem*," the intellectual concept that Hashem created the world. A person must also internalize "*Elokecha*," that Hashem has a personal connection with each one of us. Chanukah is about rekindling that relationship with our Creator. Rav Wolfson explains that the small cruse of pure oil symbolizes the "*pintele yid*" within each of us that can never be profaned. Indeed, even the most estranged Jews feel a special affinity to Chanukah.

Rav Meisels quotes the Kedushat Levi that when we say, "*Bayamim haheim b'zman hazeh*," we should contemplate all the miracles that Hashem does for us every day. This should generate within our hearts so much joy, that to the extent that we believe in it, we will truly feel it.

This Chanukah, may we merit to break through the darkness of concealment and rediscover the glow of spirituality in our lives.

Chanukah: Sefas Emes Part I #2

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Tziporah Heller

In *Al hanissim* we say, “*L’hodot u’lhalel l’shimcha hagadol.*” These are special days of praise and thankfulness. Expressing gratitude and appreciation for Hashem’s kindness changes our consciousness. It helps us see the light of His caring and constant mercy. We all carry with us difficult memories of times when Hashem’s presence seemed hidden. But these memories can be transformed. We can dispose of all our negative baggage and develop a world within us in which there is goodness and light by being grateful for the kindness hidden in the suffering. During the Syrian-Greek rule, our enemies oppressed us and forced us to make choices. People had to decide whether to align themselves with Hashem or with the Hellenists. We must also ask ourselves, “Who do we really want to be?”

The verse in Tehilim says, “Hashem’s candle is the human soul, it searches man’s inner chambers.” Our souls never change, though our awareness may lessen. There is a part

within us that stays eternally lit no matter how hidden it may be. During the time of the *Beit Hamikdash* a person could sense the Shechina. People regularly felt the connection and inspiration that one only feels a few times in life. After the destruction, that light was dimmed.

The word *ner* (candle) is composed of the initial letters of the words *nefesh* and *ruach*, soul and spirit. *Nefesh* is related to *nofesh*, vacation. There is an aspect of the soul that rests within the walls of the body that we can only get at with the senses. When we hear or see something that inspires us, our *nefesh* is momentarily awakened. Above that is *ruach* (wind), the part of the soul that cannot be put into words, the part that moves us and brings us to tears. When we do a *mitzvah* with love and fear using our 248 limbs, the body itself becomes a candle illuminating the hidden *mishkan* within us. At the time of the Chanukah miracle, we lost some of the *ahavah* and *yirah*,

and with them the ability to be who we could be. But we still had the will to grow in Hashem’s ways and in this merit we found the pure cruse of oil. This is the miracle of Chanukah. Although our inner *ner* may be buried under layers of dross and sin, if we have the passion and desire to grow Hashem will give us the ability to find it.

The tool against *hergel* (habitual actions) is *sechel*. We should ask ourselves, “Will this action help me achieve my goals?” *Sechel* gives us the light to get past the dark parts of our personalities and to find our higher, truer selves. Goodness and hidden purity can be found in any aspect of ourselves, even within the physical parts of our body. On Chanukah we can find the light within our darkest place. We can yearn for the *Beit Hamikdash* to be rebuilt, not only in Yerushalayim, but within ourselves.