

## Hidden Heroines of Chanuka

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Dr. Esther Shkop

In her writings, Sara Schenirir tells how when her family fled to Vienna from eastern Poland, she attended a lecture on *Shabbat Chanuka* in a *Yekkishe* shul. The Rabbi spoke about the heroism of Yehudit which lit a fire in her heart. Sarah Schenirir discovered that she knew so little about Judaism and its meaning and about the role of the Jewish woman. With conviction she set out to learn and later founded the legendary *Beit Yaakov* movement.

*Chanuka* is the youngest of our holidays. And while we say full *Hallel* and *Al Hanissim* and give credence to *Zot Chanuka* almost akin to *Yom Kippur*, we have nothing written about it in *Tanach*. Unlike Purim where we have Megilat Esther, there was nothing canonized about *Chanuka*. The only sources we have is from the *sefarim chitzonim*, the Apocrypha, the writings that were not included in the *Tanach*. The primary external sources we have are the books *Maccabean I* (also known as *Chashmonaim I*) and *Chashmonaim II*. *Maccabean III* and *IV* are not given much credence.

*Chashmonaim I* was written in Hebrew shortly after the rebellion against Antiochus Epiphanes. We no longer have the original text. It was translated to Greek and Latin and later included in many of the Catholic holy writ. *Chashmonaim II* was written in Greek shortly thereafter, apparently in Egypt. These two texts are considered the most reliable sources on the story of *Chanukah*.

A lot of what is written there is corroborated by the writings of Yoseph ben Matisayahu (Josephus) who himself was controversial and was viewed as a collaborator of the Romans.

He wrote about the history of Jewish life during the Second Commonwealth from the 5th century BCE till the destruction of the second *Beit Hamikdash* in 70 AD. He indicated that there was a *Megilat Chashmonaim* that was read on *Chanuka*. We assume that he refers to *Chashmonaim I* which was read publicly and continued to be read under a different name, *Megilat Antiochus*, up until about the 11th century. Many Middle Eastern Jewish communities would read it after the haftorah on *Shabbat Chanukah*.

There's very little else written about *Chanuka* except for what is recorded in the Talmud. There's a lot of discussion about the meaning of the holiday, not so much about the war, but about the miracle of the cruse of oil that lasted for 8 days. It's also discussed in *Masechet Shabbat*, *Masechet Gittin*, *Midrash Eicha*, and *Yalkut Shemoni*.

Let's explore some historic background on the state of affairs in *Eretz Yisrael* at the time. The resettlement of *Eretz Yisrael* began in the 5th century BCE when permission was given to some of the Babylonian Jews to return. Only a mere trickle went back. During most of that era we were under the thumb of the Persians and were not independent. It was not until about 370 BCE under the *Chashmonaim* that an actual commonwealth was established.

Alexander the Great expanded the Hellenistic empire and there were great wars between the Persians and Greeks. Not long thereafter, the Greeks dominated the entire civilized world including Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Egypt. At that point, the Hellenistic empire split and the Talmis ruled the south while the Seleucids ruled the north. The capital moved from Athens

to Antioch, which is today Turkey. When we speak about Yavan, we are really speaking about the Syrian Greek Empire. They were not natives but Hellenists that settled and took complete dominion of the area. There was a whole series of emperors until Antiochus Epiphanes came to power. He's called Epiphanes (from the root word, epiphany, a divine manifestation) because he viewed himself as a deity.

At the time, the Jews lived in a relatively small area of Yehuda which comprised Yerushalayim and its surrounding territory. It was dominated first by the Persians, then by the Egyptian Pharaohs, then by the Seleucid Empire and finally by the Romans who ultimately destroyed it all. The Jews lived relatively peacefully until Antiochus came to power. Judaic and Greek historians record how he burned *Sifrei Torah*, ripped out *mezuzot*, forced Jews to participate in pagan Hellenistic holidays and eat of the sacrifices brought to their deities. He also forbade the observance of *Shabbat*, *Rosh Chodesh*, and *brit milah*. Women who defied the decree and circumcised their sons were hanged publicly with their infants.

The Jews were commanded to engrave the names of idols on their oxen. According to the *Torah*, using an animal dedicated to idolatry is forbidden and as a result the Jews couldn't work their fields and hunger set in.

It is recorded that the daughter of Yochanan (or some say Matisyahu) *Kohen Gadol* who was to be married, and according to the law would have to be turned over to the local governor, aroused Matisyahu to get up and go to battle against the Syrian Greeks.

## Benefitting from Chillul Shabbat Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rabbi Shimon Isaacson

The Mishna Berura cites the Magen Avraham who quotes a Rashba that one may not benefit from an *issur melacha*. For example, if a Jew violated an *issur d'orayata* and cooked water on *Shabbat*, if it was unintentional, then according to the Gra one may be lenient and benefit from it on *Shabbat* if it is needed. However if it was done intentionally, then

according to the Rashba, not only does the water become prohibited but so does the pot which becomes *treif*, transforms into a *cheftzo shel issur*, and may not be used again until it is kashered.

The Biur Halacha cites the Chaye Adam that perhaps one could argue that the *issur* of

*maaseh Shabbat* only applies when as the result of the *melacha*, the object becomes transformed. For example, before the *melacha* was done, the food was raw and inedible and now its cooked. The new entity that was created as a result of the *melacha* is *ossur b'hanaah*. But if nothing new was created, let's say you transported an object from one

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place to another, one could argue that there would be no *kenas*. Still the final ruling of the Chaye Adam is that one should be stringent especially when it involves *Torah* prohibitions. The Mishna Berura explains that when we speak about *issur hanaah* it refers to direct benefit from the actual act. For example, if someone cooked food on *Shabbat*, eating it would be deriving direct benefit from the act. However, if someone violates the *melacha* of *koreah* and tears open an envelope in order to take out a letter, that would be considered indirect benefit which is not part of this *kenas*. Direct benefit would be tearing open an aerogram where the letter was written directly on the envelope.

If one violates a Rabbinic prohibition unintentionally, the *halacha* is like the Gra that in a place of need one can rely on the leniency of Rabbi Meir. However, there are three exceptions to this rule- *shehiya*, *chazara*, and *hatmana*, which don't fall under this leniency because they can so easily be violated.

There's another principle called *safek plugta*. If there is a disagreement about something

and *halacha* rules stringently, one may rely on the lenient opinion *b'dieved* and the *kenas* would not apply. For example, if food was cooked 60% before *Shabbat* and on *Shabbat* it was placed on the fire *b'issur* and cooked completely, then according to the Rambam one violated *bishul d'orayata*. The Rashba says, "*Ein bishul acher bishu* (There's no cooking after cooking), for *machal ben drusoyoi* (partially cooked food) and one can rely on this and benefit from the food.

If someone took soup on *Shabbat* day out of the fridge and put it on a cholent pot so that it would cook on *Shabbat*, we rule like the *Rosh*, "*Yesh bishul achar bishul b'davar lach* (There is cooking after cooking for a liquid)." It's considered *bishul d'orayata*. However, a person could claim to follow the opinion of the Rambam that, "*Ein bishul achar bishul b'davar lach*," and it would be permitted. The principle of *safek plugta* would permit eating the soup.

But if the person put the soup on the blech directly then there's the *issur* of *bishul* and *chazara* and the prohibition of *chazara* itself would prohibit the consumption of the soup. It's only for the *issur* of *bishul* that one could

rely on the principle of *safek plugta*.

A classic example, not uncommon, would be an electric outage on *Shabbat* in Israel. If Jewish workers fix it on *Shabbat* it would be considered a *melacha b'meidid* by a Jew for a Jew. Here, even Rabbi Meir would agree that it's prohibited to benefit from it on *Shabbat*. You can stay in the house, but you can't benefit from the lights. Anything you could have done with the lights off you can continue doing, like using the facilities or eating and drinking. But reading a book or learning would be considered getting benefit from *issur melacha*. To avoid such issues many communities in Israel use generators on *Shabbat*.

There is however a ruling in *Shemiras Shabbat K'hilchata* that if it's a global outage one could argue that perhaps one could benefit because there are sick people who need the electricity and one may do *melacha* for an ill person in danger and others may benefit if it doesn't involve extra work. However, if the outage only affected a small area which had no sick people, then it would be prohibited to benefit from the *issur melacha* until after *Shabbat*.

## Travelling through Life Accompanied by Tehillim Part III

Based on a Naaleh.com shiur by Rebbetzin Leah Kohn

"Therefore, the wicked shall not be vindicated in judgment nor the sinful in the assembly of the righteous." A time will come when the difference between the righteous and the wicked will become clear. "For Hashem knows the way of the righteous and the way of the wicked shall perish." In the *Torah*, the term *l'daat* means to be attentive, caring, and loving. In this context it means that Divine Providence rests on the righteous person who chooses the *Torah* way of life and works hard to fulfill his mission in life. Hashem is with him on the journey. He protects him and observes his progress and evaluates what he will need to get to the next step. Sometimes taking

away from the righteous is an opportunity for growth. Hashem directs thing in a way that we can best accomplish our purpose.

It might look like to us as if the wicked are walking on a very stable path. They might have what they want, people might give them honor, but it's all meaningless. All the fleeting desires they pursued will die in the grave with them. The verse tells us, their way will be destroyed. It does not refer to reward and punishment on a superficial level. What it means to infer is that only the righteous will merit true fulfillment.

*David Hamelech* began *Tehillim* with *Ashrei*

and Chazal tell us that Moshe Rabbenu completed the *Chumash* with, "*Ashrecha Yisrael...- Happy are you Israel, who is like you, a nation whose salvation is Hashem..."* Our salvation is our relationship with Hashem. This is what makes us happy. Chazal say, in the place that Moshe completed, *David Hamelech* began. But he doesn't only start with *Ashrei* he ends with it. The last six chapters of *Tehillim* beginning with *Ashrei* are considered one unit. *David Hamelech* begins *Tehillim* with *Ashrei ha'ish* and ends with *Ashrei yoshvei beisecha*. When a person constantly places Hashem as his guiding force in life, he finds true meaning.