

# MOOR LANE MORE TORAH

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FROM THE MANCHESTER MONTEFIORE COMMUNITY KOLLEL

ISSUE 30

CHANUKA EDITION 5784



## KEEPING B.A.U. AT BAY: "Business As Usual..."

*By Rabbi Moshe Stamler*

Several months into Covid

someone once quipped, on hearing yet again the cliché 'unprecedented times', 'can we go back toprecedented times please now'?

Finally, just as Covid and its after effects seemed to be behind us, the war in Ukraine started. By the time that the drama of that war had somewhat settled down, we were thrown into an awful new situation by the events on and since Simchat Torah, which have forced us to reevaluate the position of the Jewish people wherever they are in the world.

Anyone who lives with belief will have the sense that B.A.U. is not something which G-d wants of us at the moment.

It is now nearly two months that this new reality has been with us, and many are finding it is hard to keep up the intensity in our prayers and the improvement in our behaviour for such a long time. Business as usual is beckoning. In this situation the message of Chanuka is very real: Chanuka is the chag of 'chizuk'.

The Chachamim saw the spiritual cause behind the decrees of the Assyrian Greeks as a weakness in our divine service. The Hebrew phrase used to describe this weakness could be translated as by rote performance, ineffective, or feeble. The Chashmonaim were the antidote. Hanukkah is the festival which marks a change in God's behaviour towards us when a small group of people strengthened themselves towards Him, invigorated themselves and fought against their dire situation with their very lives. And this equation is an integral part of the Chanuka story: our reinvigoration brought down from Heaven salvation from a dark, dark situation.

We have seen an amazing display of determined and fearless courage to fight back, of kindness, of unity, of generosity, of compassion, and of drawing closer to G-d and to each other as a result of the recent war. Hanukkah reminds us that the spiritual wheels behind the physical events are driven by our behaviour and that a strengthening of all which is good in us can bear

tremendous results. Now is not the moment for B.A.U.

At a time when we are being forced to ask what space we Jewish people can occupy in a hostile world, where are we safe, where can we guarantee our children will live with the security we crave for them, the words of G-d as spoken via the navi Zecharia from the haftara of Shabbat Hanukkah are most poignant and echo down from that dark time to this dark time: 'not through armies and not through strength but through My spirit, says G-d the Master of Legions'. Activating His spirit, making 'the great mountain into a plain' is up to us. ♦



# A Bright Light

By R' Meir Simcha Cohen



*It was Chanuka in Bergen-Belsen. The inmates, weary and hungry yet equally craving some spiritual nourishment, managed to scrape together a bit*

*of black dye intended for their wooden shoes that could be used in place of oil and a few threads from their clothing which were spun into wicks.*

That night they heroically conducted a secret minyan to pray and light their 'menorah'. Rabbi Yisroel Spira, the Bluzhever Rebbe, was honoured with leading the service and kindling the light. After doing so, a non-believing former Polish-Bundist leader named Zomatchkovsky approached the Rebbe and asked that whilst he appreciated his desire to do a mitzva, how could the Rebbe possibly say the Shehecheyanu blessing before the lighting, praising Hashem, 'Who has kept us alive, sustained us and brought us to this season'? "Isn't that making a mockery of our suffering", he asked? The Rebbe replied that he too had been hesitant to say the blessing for this reason but when he looked around at all those who had heroically gathered there yearning for another mitzva and a little more connection to Hashem despite the horrendous circumstances, when he saw the courage and strength of the Jew in galut who does not give up despite their suffering, "For that alone it is sufficient to thank the creator for giving us the privilege to be alive and to see the greatness of our people"! (Paraphrased from A Path Through The Ashes, Artscroll/Mesorah.)

When times are tough, a person can be forgiven for granting precedence to feelings of despair and anguish, perhaps even wondering what hope the future could possibly hold. This applies on both a



# in the Vast Darkness

personal as well as national level. It is in the most painful of episodes throughout our history, during times in which others have questioned the destiny – and perhaps even the very existence – of the Jewish people, that we have turned to the fundamental message of Chanuka's promise of our continued survival.

The long winter months contain only two festivals: Chanuka and Purim. Perhaps the most distinct inherent difference between the two is that Chanuka celebrates the miracle of our spiritual survival at a time when the Greeks wished to strip us of our mitzvot, beliefs and very identity, whereas Purim celebrates our physical endurance against Haman who wished to attack and decimate our physical existence. Hence it is very appropriate, notes the Chafetz Chaim, that it is during these winter months, dominated by the long, dark and dreary nights – reminiscent of the lengthy and often pain-filled galut in which we find ourselves – that we joyfully remind ourselves of the uplifting messages that these festivals contain.

In the same way that this applies to the fundamental question of our physical and spiritual existence as a whole, so too this applies to our avodat Hashem in a more specific manner. "Ki ner mitzva ve'Torah ohr – For a mitzva is a candle and the Torah is light" (Mishlei 6:23), says Shlomo Hamelech, the Torah and its mitzvot are the guiding lights of our dark galut.

It further stands to reason, therefore, that we must strengthen our Torah studies and mitzva observance even when we feel disheartened or discouraged, be it due to personal or national circumstances. Indeed, in such situations it's precisely because of these difficulties that the value and due reward is immense.

**"During these winter months, dominated by the long, dark and dreary nights that we joyfully remind ourselves of the uplifting messages that these festivals contain."**



On Shabbat Chanuka this year, we will read Parashat Vayeshev. On the opening words, "Vayeshev Ya'akov – Ya'akov settled" (37:1), Rashi comments that Ya'akov wished to settle in tranquillity, and on some level this was in fact inappropriate, as the righteous will merit the World to Come and he therefore should not have desired peace in this world as well. Therefore, immediately following this, the Torah records Yosef's sale

and the resulting travails. However, this seems somewhat perplexing, as Ya'akov would have surely used any peaceful circumstances to enhance his avodat Hashem. In what way was this deserving of criticism?

Rabbi Yitzchok Zev Soloveitchik, the Brisker Rav, and Rabbi Ya'akov Neiman both explain that whilst of course all peaceful and pleasant situations must be utilised to their fullest, nevertheless when it gets difficult, it's precisely because of – not despite – this that the value and spiritual effects are so great and far reaching. Sometimes Hashem puts us into hard situations in which we may feel limited in our ability or desire to do what is being asked of us, yet the trick is to understand that it is exactly that – albeit small – achievement that we are looking for. It is precisely because of the vast darkness that these small victories spread so much light.

We are in the midst of yet another painful and tragic chapter of our long and dark galut. We may feel somewhat discouraged when we work on our emunah and mitzva observance and yet the light at the end of the tunnel seems so far away. Yet if we hold tight to the message of this very season and recognise the shining light of our own personal avodat Hashem as well as the light called the miracle of the Jewish people, we may then pray to see the light at the end of this long galut very soon. ♦



# The Chanuka Hotel

By R' Yishai Lister

After a long and arduous journey you've finally arrived at your dream hotel with your family in some faraway place, where you've booked your Chanuka get-away. As you walk down the magnificent corridor admiring the chandeliers and deep red carpets, not to mention the expensive antique paintings of some long-ago forgotten Sirs and Madams, your eye catches something which makes your heart sink- a sign which says "No naked flames on the premises. Offenders will be prosecuted". After the receptionist has called the managers and the request for special permission to light the menorah has been denied, the true gravity of the question sinks in...how will you light the Menorah this evening?

In a panic you call your Rabbi to ask what to do, but he is in a family simcha and he will not be able to pick up in the near future. All of a sudden you realise that B'siyatta Dishmaya the article you have in your hand is going to discuss what to do in this exact situation! Would an electric

menorah which can be purchased on Amazon for £35 with same

**"Would an electric menorah purchased on Amazon for £35 with same-day delivery be sufficient?"**



day delivery be sufficient to be yotze the mitzvah of Chanuka candles?

The Mitzvah of lighting the Menorah is a Rabbinic one, instituted mainly to show and publicise the Miracle that occurred in the Temple long ago, where one day of oil lasted eight (Gemara Shabbat 21). How does one publicise this miracle?

Chazal tell us that in order to publicise the miracle in the best way, one should light one single wicked candle (Shulchan Aruch 671:4) on the first day, two on the second, three on the third and so on for the eight days of Chanuka (Gemara Ibid.). There is also an extra candle each day called a Shammash which is used to light the other candles and left near them to avoid shailot of using the candles in an assur way. (Shulchan Aruch 673:1) Each candle must have enough oil/fuel to have a flame burning for at least half an hour (Shulchan Aruch 675:2). It must be lit in a way it will stay lit (for example, not in the rain, nor in a very windy place where one would expect it to go out (Mishna Berura 673:25)), in a place that it will be seen by the public (Shulchan Aruch 671:5) at twilight/evening/night (depending on Minhag of the person and place one finds oneself.) (Shulchan Aruch 672:1)

What about electric light bulbs?

The Kaf HaChaim (673:19) discusses this exact question and



writes that the miracle occurred through a fuel and wick system, whereas electricity has neither. Furthermore, the Menorah needs to be lit through a human putting a flame to the candle, not through flicking a switch which seems to be more indirect. Additionally, the electric light is not considered one single wick: it is as if the whole bulb is filled with light and is more similar to a bonfire which is not allowed. (Shulchan Aruch 671:4)

Rav Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Sefer Me'Orai Aish 5:2) adds on two other potential issues. Firstly, at the time of lighting, the candle must have enough fuel within it to last half an hour. Electrical appliances work with a constant flow of energy into it, but at each given moment only has enough energy to last a few milliseconds. Therefore, it does not fulfil this criterion either. Secondly, the miracle was that a finite amount of oil lasted longer than it should have. In order to properly emulate the miracle, a finite fuel should be used, not electricity which can seemingly go on forever and ever.

However, bearing all these problems in mind, if one has no choice, Rav Shlomo Zalman writes that one can light and even make a bracha on an electric Menorah so long

as it is battery powered and has enough battery to last half an hour and is visibly for Chanuka, not just a usual light in the room (Halichos Shlomo Chanuka 15 Dvar Halacha 3). Rav Benzion Abba Shaul (Ner Letzion 5:5) writes that even an electric Menorah which may be used even if it is powered through a socket. Rav Elyashiv (Peninei Chanuka 7 page 146) writes that if it is not possible to do so in a way that it is visible that it is for the mitzvah, one may light as is, similar to one who cannot light his regular Menorah by the window for fear of anti semitic gentiles.

However, on the other hand, Rav Nissim Karelitz writes (Piskei Shmo'os Chanuka page 107) that one may only light electric lights as a 'zecher lenes', a reminder of the miracle rather than the actual mitzva, and one is not yotse with this lighting and he may certainly not make a bracha.

If one wanted to go above and beyond to avoid entering a situation of halachic dispute set above and be yotze in the best possible way, different lodging arrangements should be made in a more Chanuka friendly place where a regular Menorah can be used. ♦



# Chanuka Question & Answer

1. *There is a hint to the victory of the חשמונאים against the Greeks in the Torah. What is it? [Apart from the famous one that the 25<sup>th</sup> word in the Torah is אור]*

רמב"ן: There is a well known מדרש that when אהרן saw all the נשיאים bringing the dedication קרבנות [end of פרשת נשא] he was upset that his שבט had no share in this. ה' comforted him: your share is greater: you will light the מנורה. Hence the פרשה of מנורה at the start of בהעלתך right after the end of נשא.

רמב"ן asks: what is so special about the מנורה? Why not comfort him that his שבט brings קרבנות and קטורת?

He answers that the מדרש is referring to the victory of the חשמונאים against the Greeks, when the whole עבודה was stopped and the חשמונאים started a war and brought it back and had a נס of the נרות. This will be the great share of שבט הלוי.

Now we can appreciate how this REDEDICATION is a comfort to אהרן who was upset at his שבט's absence from the dedication קרבנות of the משכן: It was not just a great מצוה as a compensation for another; it was a חנוכה in place of another חנוכה.

Not only that; it was a greater חנוכה because it lasted longer: 'They dedicated the משכן, but during the חרבן there will be no עבודה. Your offspring will rededicate the בית המקדש and will be the cause of a new מצוה of the נרות חנוכה which will give light even in times of גלות.'

2. *Where does the name מכבי come from?*

Some say from מי כמוך באלים ה', some say from מתתיהו כהן בן יוחנן; others have the spelling מקבי and say it means a hammer, because of the bravery of Yehudah, or the last letter of the names of the אבות.

### 3. Chanuka: A battle of world outlook- does it matter what a few people think?

[Based on an essay by R Aharon Kotler זצ"ל]

The battle of Chanuka was not just a physical battle. It was as much about the purity of השקפה [outlook] in the Jewish people. The one pure jar of oil is a symbol for the future: the מנורה is the symbol of Torah. A handful of people who stick to the true השקפה can be the 'pure jar of oil' who can give the light to the rest of כלל ישראל.

We have seen this in the history since the 2nd World War. After the war many people thought it would be the end ה' of what they call 'orthodoxy' because so many people from the frum world had died, so many had lost their faith in the destruction, and the חינוך system had been so disrupted. Compared to the European קהילות before the war, only a small fraction of dedicated Torah true people were left who had the true השקפות and the right understanding of the value of learning Torah and keeping מצוות.

From this 'pure jar of oil' has grown so many tremendous קהילות which we see today.

### 4. How come there is a whole משנה of מסכתא about מגילה, but חנוכה hardly gets a mention in the משניות?

The חתם סופר: After winning the war, the חשמונאים later took on the role of kings, taking it away from the tribe of Yehuda. רבי יהודה הנשיא who compiled the משנה came from the tribe of Yehuda and the royal line. He felt he had a duty to protect the כבוד of his family by minimising the importance of the חשמונאים.

Rabbi Reuven Margolis does not find this reason acceptable, and answers that there was a political reason. The Roman powers in ארץ ישראל had made it very hard to keep Torah. רבי יהודה הנשיא compiled the משנה after he managed to achieve better relationships. The story of Chanukah is of how the Jews in ארץ ישראל threw off a foreign power and celebrate this achievement. To put it in the משנה might be seen by the Romans as if he was encouraging the Jews to rebel against them.

### 5. What are some of the messages we can take out of חנוכה?

1. That 'ה' is looking after us even in dark times.
2. מעט אור דוחה הרבה חושך A little light dispels a lot of darkness. A little purity dispels a lot of darkness. See number one above about how a few people can save the day.
3. מסירות נפש from us in serving 'ה' brings about a tremendous response from 'ה'
4. 'עבודת ה' in חיזוק: The decree came about because התרשלו בעבודתם; they became lazy in serving 'ה'. The משועה came about when there was מסירות נפש.
5. Even טבע is the will of 'ה' and can be changed when He wishes. Seen both in the נס of the נרות and of the war.



# Chanuka & 'Gelt'

By R' Yakov Salamon



The Rambam at the beginning of Hilchot Chanukah (3:1) writes "In the time of the Second Bet Hamikdash, the Greek government made decrees against Israel and tried to abolish our religion. They did not permit them to learn Torah or perform the mitzvot, and they sent forth their hands against their property and their daughters

Let us consider this list: They nullified our religion, they did not let us learn, they did not permit us to do mitzvot, they took away our money and our daughters. Money may be important, but should it be listed in the same breath as the others? Should the Rambam be equating taking our money with taking our daughters (and not only that, the Rambam mentions money first!)?

Many people have the custom, on Motzei Shabbat, to say a Pizmon which begins with the words "HaMavdil bein Kodesh L'chol, chatotenu Hu yimchol" - He who distinguishes between that what is holy and that which is not holy, will forgive our sins. The poem implies that we sin because we do not appreciate the difference between that which is Sacred and that which is mundane, spending our time and efforts on foolishness and failing to understand what is Kodesh and what is Chol. We ask Hashem, Who does have the ability to distinguish between Kodesh and Chol, to please forgive our sins.

The Pizmon continues, "Zareinu v'chaspeinu yarbeh ka'chol," which means: "May our children and our money increase like the sand." This,

in itself, the lumping of children and money in the same breath, seems difficult to comprehend. But, moreover, we just finished saying that we are inadequate for not being able to distinguish between Holy and mundane, and now we go ahead and make the same mistake all over again, equating that which is Holy (children) with that which is mundane (money)! This is like praying Arvit immediately after Yom Kippur, without having the proper Kavanah: we have just finished confessing our sins for improper thoughts during prayer, and then we turn around and do it all over again! Here too, we have just confessed our failure to properly set priorities, and then we lump children together with money.

Rav Shimon Schwab offers an insight both into the Rambam and into the Pizmon. He says that what the Rambam means by saying the Greeks took away our money and our daughters, is that the Greeks knew how to destroy us. If we are to succeed with our children and with our religion, we need money. In order to have yeshivot, shuls, communities, etc. one needs funds. Money is a wonderful thing. Let's not kid ourselves. We can do tremendous things with money; without it we cannot exist. But money corrupts, sometimes... maybe most of the time. However, money, in and of itself, can be the greatest tool that there is. The Midrash says that when Hashem showed Moshe Rabbeinu a Half-Shekel coin, He showed Moshe a 'coin of fire.' The reason is because that is what money is. Money can

be terribly destructive, like fire. But without fire there would be no heat, no light, nothing. Money is similar: if one handles it correctly, it can save him; if one handles it wrong, it can destroy him.

This, the Rambam says, is what the Greeks understood. When they wanted to take out the foundations of the Jewish people, they sent forth their hands against their money and their daughters. Take away their money; do not let them have Yeshivot, don't let them have Torah educators: that is how the Jewish People will be destroyed. The Rambam has his priorities very straight. The Greeks knew how to wage a war. This too, is what we say on Motzei Shabbat: If we want to be successful with our children, then we also need 'our money to increase like sand.'

Imagine! Money like sand, unlimited funds! Consider what that would mean. What would the face of Torah education look like? Shuls, Yeshivot, schools, etc. We could do amazing things. The Jewish People would be a different nation if our children and our money were 'increased like the sand.'

It is our tefilah that not only should our money and children increase like sand but we should know what is holy and sacred, what is mundane and profane, and may we see what money can truly do and merit to do the right things with money.◆