



CHANUKAH: LIGHT UP THE NIGHT

SHMUZ SOURCE SHEET

Chanukah was instituted to commemorate the great deliverance of the Jewish People while under the persecution of the Greek empire. The lighting of the Menorah is one of the most popular Jewish observances, and most Jewish homes, regardless of how religious they are or not, light one. It's instructive to look at how the Rabbis describe the Chanukah miracle, to glean the most important aspects of the story, and how it pertains to us in our times.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE MIRACLE OF THE OIL

“What is (the miracle of) Chanukah? The Sages taught: on the twenty-fifth of Kislev, the days of Chanukah are eight (One may not eulogize on them and one may not fast on them).

When the Greeks entered the Sanctuary they **defiled all the oils** that were in the Sanctuary by touching them. And when the **Hasmonean family** (and eventual monarchy) **grew stronger** and **emerged victorious over them**, they **searched and found one jug** of oil that was placed with the **seal of the High Priest**, **undisturbed** by the **Greeks**. And there was **sufficient oil there to light** the Menorah for only **one day**. A miracle occurred and they lit the Menorah from it for eight days. The next year the Sages instituted those days and made them holidays with recitation of *Hallel* and special thanksgiving in prayer and blessings.

TALMUD SHABBAT 21B - THE MIRACLE OF CHANUKAH”

There is only one miracle **specifically** mentioned in the source, that of the one jug of oil lasting for eight days. However, a close reading of the Talmud may suggest several more that can teach us important lessons.

Question: How many miracles can you identify alluded to in the source?
(Hint: pay attention to the bold words in the second paragraph)

1. **Few in number** and **weak in military** might, a Priestly family of Jews (Hasmoneans) undertake to fight the Greek Empire and won. (A little light - Torah and Judaism - conquering vast darkness - the Greek absolute faith in Humanism without God.)
2. They were “**dedicated**” to their faith, and “**searched**” for pure oil. (All jugs were defiled and there was no reason to believe there existed any pure jugs.)
3. They actually **found one** jug, and **only one jug**. (If one contained the seal of the High Priest, isn't it logical to believe many more would have been found?)
4. That jug contained within it a remarkable ability to **transcend its natural limitations**.
5. The miracle of the oil “**Shines a Light**” upon the fact that the military victory and all the other less obvious miracles were no less miraculous than the nature-defying lights of the Menorah.

Question: What do these lessons have to say to us personally in our own lives?

On Chanukah we: 1) renew our “**dedication**” to our heritage, 2) reinforce our belief that **every one of us has a pure spiritual core** (our neshama) and that 3) once lit, has an **ever-expanding ability to grow**, 4) **overcome the darkness in one's life** and 5) use **this light to transform the world**.

LET'S GET PRACTICAL AND PERSONAL

These are the lessons of Chanukah that we learned above:

- Dig Deep and Find Your Light

Question: What actions have you taken to keep growing spiritually, and to discover your unique potential? What other steps can you take?

- Dedicate yourself to Nurturing It

Question: How dedicated are you to making your home one that's connected to Jewish Tradition. How does this dedication extend to your children and/or spouse?

- Know that this Light can Overcome all the Darkness

Question: What struggles have you overcome that give you confidence that anything is possible? How can you maintain this clarity in your life, particularly when things get tough?

- Shine Your Light in the World

Question: What is your approach to sharing your light with others? How can you up your game?

MYSTICAL INSIGHTS

The Jewish Way to affect the world is one Jew at a time, one house at a time. The first Rebbe of Gerrer extends this concept:

“ Chanukah signals the ultimate salvation and rededication of the entire world. Lighting the Menorah at the doorway demonstrates how the days of Chanukah are symbolically **“the door,” the beginning, of the ultimate redemption.** ”

SEFAS EMES

Question: Who will be at the forefront of this dynamic process?

“ In the merit of the righteous women that generation was worthy to be redeemed from Egypt. ”

TALMUD TRACTATE SOTA 11B

The famous kabbalist the Arizal extends this concept to the final redemption, which will also come in the merit of the righteous women.

With this as a backdrop, it comes as no surprise that women played such a pivotal role in the Chanukah story and have a special connection to the holiday.

“ And women have the custom not to do any work while the candles are lit. (Since the war was won specially through women...Yehudis sedated a Greek general and killed him). ”

CODE OF JEWISH LAW (670:1)

Question: Can you see a connection between the women's tie to empowering the redemption and why the mitzvah was created as a family mitzvah – one candle per household?

Question: In what ways do women hold the keys to the spiritual health and vibrance of the Jewish Family?

Perhaps the greatest lesson to learn is the war against darkness is fought here, in the house, day by day by lighting the flame of every Jew and nurturing it to grow in strength like the steady increase of candles added throughout the holiday.