

**See the Light**

*Why is did the Rabbis designate lighting the Menora as our performance of recounting the miracles of Channukah? Our military triumph was also miraculous! (See page 8)*



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*Dedicated to Scriptural and Rabbinic Verification of Authentic Jewish Beliefs and Practices*

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**IN THIS ISSUE:**

CHANNUKAH	1,6,7
THE CHANNUKAH STORY	1,3,4,5
THE SELLING OF JOSEPH	1,2
CHANNUKAH PHILOSOPHY	8,9
CHANNUKAH: TALMUDIC ANALYSIS	10,11
RINATREVIEW EXCERPTS	12-14

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## Channukah

**RABBI BERNARD FOX**

“What is Chanukah? Our Sages taught: On the twenty-fifth of Kislev Chanukah is observed. This is for eight days on which it is prohibited to eulogize or fast. For when the Hellenists entered the Temple they defiled all of the oil. And when the Hashmonaim rose to power and overcame them, they only found one container of oil sealed with the seal

*(continued on page 6)*

## MEGILAS ANTIOCHOS THE CHANNUKAH STORY

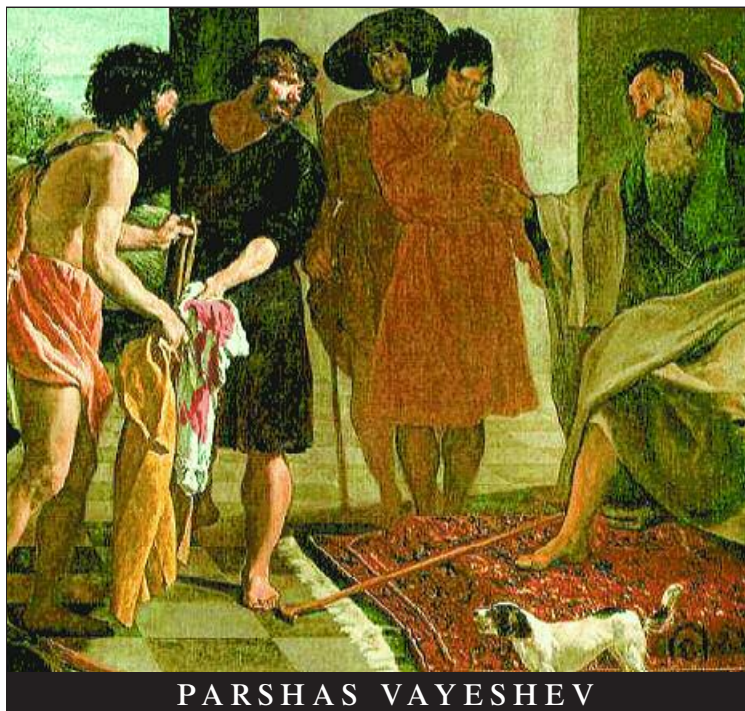
Introduction & Translation

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**



Upon hearing the threat of destruction of the Jewish nation, the five sons of Mattisyahu displayed much courage, although greatly outnumbered. They were inspired to battle against those who wished to strip them of their Jewish identity. The Greeks were intent on preventing Torah observance, and coercing idolatrous practice.

*(continued on page 3)*



PARSHAS VAYESHEV

## the SELLING of JOSEPH

**RABBI REUVEN MANN**

**Introduction**

The Torah in Genesis Chapter 37 describes in detail the manner in which Joseph was sold into Egyptian bondage by his brothers. After accepting the advice of Reuven not to execute Joseph but to place him in a deep pit they sat down to eat bread. Suddenly a caravan of traders enroute to Egypt appeared on the scene. Judah convinced his brothers to remove Joseph from the pit and instead sell him into slavery. The arguments employed by Judah to achieve his goal warrant careful study.

23. And it came to pass, when Joseph came to his brothers, that they stripped Joseph of his coat, his coat of colors that was on him; 24. And they took him, and threw him into a pit; and the pit was empty, there was no water in it. 25. And they sat down to eat bread; and they lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmaelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing gum, balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt. 26. And Judah said to his brothers, What gain will there

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VAYESHEV

# THE SELLING of JOSEPH

RABBI REUVEN MANN

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be if we kill our brother, and cover up his blood? 27. Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother, our own flesh. And his brothers agreed.

## The Difficulty of Judah's Statement

The statement of Judah contains two problems: 1) Judah seems to base his argument against killing Joseph on the factor of expediency. It is not profitable to kill him for then we will have to cover his blood i.e. endure the burden of maintaining a cover up. However, after proposing to sell him to the Ishmaelites (verse 27) he offers what seems to be a second reason. For he is our brother our flesh. We may ask: Was the proposal to sell Joseph based on the desire to avoid the practical consequences of hiding a murder, or on the moral prohibition of killing one's brother? These are two entirely distinct ideas and yet Judah utilized both of them. What is the underlying thread that unites these seemingly separate arguments?

2) There is a fundamental problem with Judah's argument about covering the blood. The simple interpretation is that the plan of selling Joseph would remove the need for a cover up. Yet it is clear from the story that such was not the case. After selling Joseph, the brothers dipped the coat in blood and presented it to Jacob, who concluded, a savage beast has devoured him. Thus they were forced to cover up the crime of selling Joseph. It is reasonable to assume that had they adhered to the plan of Reuven and left him to die in the pit they would have followed the identical procedure. In effect, they had to engage in a cover up whether they killed Joseph or sold him. However no one challenged Judah on his argument. It was accepted that his plan removed the need to cover the blood. Yet this is contradicted by the presentation of Joseph's bloody garment to Jacob. We must therefore ask: What did Judah really mean when he said, what gain will there be if we kill our brother and cover his blood?

## Who is Wise?

Who is Wise? ask the Rabbis one who foresees the future. This common translation is a bit misleading. For man, unless he has prophecy can not foresee the future. The Hebrew term used by the Rabbis in this teaching is *Nolad* which literally means something, which has come into existence. Thus, the wise person is one who can foresee the outcome of a scenario on the basis of the underlying causes that are already in existence (the *Nolad*). He can anticipate the inevitable results of his actions

because he does not flinch from confronting the consequences that are visible to those who have the courage to discern. The Wise person (Chacham) is not merely one who has intelligence; for many intelligent people walk in blindness. Their intelligence operates only in areas that are compatible with their feelings. The Chacham bases his entire life on wisdom and subordinates his emotions to the rule of reason. He foresees the outcome because he lives in accordance with the abstract reality though it is not apparent to his senses or pleasing to his feelings. For him the reality that is perceived by the mind is of paramount importance.

Most people err because they operate on the basis of certain false assumptions. This usually happens when they are under the sway of powerful emotions. When a person is in love or under the grip of a compelling fantasy he is convinced that the emotion will stay this way forever and that since it feels so good it is impossible that anything negative can be associated with it. Thus he is unable to anticipate the outcome.

Let us examine the state of mind of the brothers when they decided to destroy Joseph. These were great men who operated on the basis of wisdom. True, they were mistaken about Joseph but they deliberated in accordance with their understanding and found him guilty. The Torah indicates the psychological serenity of the brothers by recording that they sat down to eat bread (verse 25). The point of conveying this detail is to show that they were not in a state of emotional frenzy when they cast Joseph in the pit. In their own minds they felt confident that they had acted correctly in preventing Joseph from realizing his dreams of grandeur.

Judah dissented from the plan they had adopted. He asked: What will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? The key word is kill. Casting him in the pit where he will die naturally instead of directly executing him does not absolve you from murder, he argued. This may not bother you now but one who is wise anticipates all the consequences of his actions, physical and psychological, visible and hidden. At the moment you feel no guilt. You have entirely disassociated yourselves from Joseph and you imagine that you will feel this way forever. However there are psychological and emotional ties which can be suspended but not permanently broken. Thus we will always have to live with the knowledge that we killed our brother and because this is too painful we will have to repress it from our consciousness. Judah was not referring to a physical cover-up of the

murder but to a psychological repression of it when he said, what will we gain if we kill our brother and cover his blood? Verses 26 and 27 now flow smoothly. We can now understand the connection between the two elements in the argument of Judah. It is an impractical plan to kill Joseph, he said, for then we will have to repress the guilt that will surely emerge to haunt us. Let us, therefore sell him to the Ishmaelites for he is our brother, our flesh. This is the essence of his argument. The psychological ties that bind us can never be broken for he is our brother, our flesh. The words our flesh would, at first sight, seem redundant. Yet, they are necessary for Judah is seeking to convince them that such a powerful identification cannot be broken.

## The Lesson of Judah's Argument

Judah's brilliance consisted of his ability to foresee the hidden consequences of a self-defeating course of action. Most of the suffering people experience in the world is self-induced (see Maimonides: Guide for the Perplexed, Part III, Ch.12). A prime cause of sin is the inability of people to look beyond the immediate effects of their action. The anticipation of pleasure paralyzes the mind. Few people have the ability to think beyond the moment of pleasure and contemplate how they will feel on the morning after. Even those who think in terms of consequences usually can only deal with those that are very obvious. If Cain had known that he was destined to cry, my guilt is too great to bear would he have killed his brother?

## The Ultimate Consequence

Since man is a complex being no course of action is ever as simple as it appears. Sin carries many dangers, which are not apparent from the vantagepoint of the one who is in a state of lust. The ultimate effect is one that few people ever consider: the loss of one's relationship with God. This was clearly enunciated by Cain when he said: Behold you have expelled me from the face of the earth and from your face and will I be hidden (Gen. 4:14). The relationship will not be the same. And this relationship is man's greatest need. It is the whole point of his existence. Yet no one thinks about it. Every sin puts at risk one's relationship to the Creator. Cain described this truth after the damage was done. The Torah records his lament because we can profit from his mistake. The truly righteous people are not immune from desire. Their uniqueness lies in how they react to temptation. Jewish law trains one not to act instinctively but to subject our desires to the crucible of reason. This is the meaning of the injunction to circumcise one's heart. We are bidden to conquer and subdue the passions and redirect their energies to the service of our Father in Heaven. ■

# MEGILAS ANTIOCHOS THE CHANNUKAH STORY

Introduction & Translation

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

(continued from page 1)

However, Mattisyahu's sons displayed unwavering devotion to what their minds held as true. We read in verse 39, "we remember that which G-d commanded us on Mount Sinai." They were convinced of the reality of G-d's revelation, His existence, and His commanding us in His Torah at Mount Sinai. No enemy could erase G-d's revelation, or the truths contained in His Torah. Without Torah observance, one's life is meaningless. Mattisyahu's sons took it upon themselves to fight to preserve Torah at all costs.

We must take this lesson to heart, as this is the sole reason for our celebration of Channukah: to proclaim G-d's performance of miracles and intervention when we adhere to His word. Conversely, our current leaders omit G-d from all political considerations, as if our history is false. We are attacked daily by venomous Arabs, but our leaders abandon Torah as a guide for their reactions. To them, world opinion and foreign dollars outweigh human life and Torah truths. These leaders possess no regard for G-d's word, nor the courage befitting a true leader, as displayed by Mattisyahu's sons. This devotion to G-d's word earned the Jews of Channukah their salvation. But our leaders do not learn from history, and keep Israel under the sword. As long as G-d's word is not the essential consideration for all of their actions, G-d will not assist them. Their stubbornness is disturbing, and the silence of world Jewry compounds this crime.

Our leaders' reality is dichotomized; they celebrate Channukah, a publication of G-d's intervention when Torah is upheld, yet, they do not uphold the Torah. By our very act of lighting the Menora with our families, we testify to G-d's intervention, saving those Jews who followed Him by risking their lives. Those of us today cowering from following G-d's Torah due to political pressure, violate G-d's will. It is clear from the Channukah story recorded below, that G-d would have let die those with no devotion. It was not until the five sons of Mattisyahu risked death for Torah, that G-d stepped in. The abandonment of G-d and

His laws makes life worthless. Until the Jews demonstrated their devotion, there was no divine intervention. Once these five, brave souls declared the essentiality of Torah adherence through action, G-d protected them, and gave "the many into the hands of the few, the wicked, into the hands of the righteous." Today we are slaughtered a great slaughter at the hands of those like Antiochos. Children of Israel, soldiers of the IDF, and leaders of the Israeli people must wake up. Our history and our very celebration of Channukah attest to G-d's ability to enable five brothers to defeat the armies of our enemies. G-d is not sleeping. G-d is not weak. He sees our travail at this time too. G-d's word and history attest to the fact that He saves those who follow him. Until you follow His Torah, until you see with clear conviction that not based on military tactics alone will we be saved, but with Torah as our guide, we will continue to suffer. Our nation must no longer deny G-d's ability to save us. See your contradiction, as you light the Menora, while you abandon so many historical events instructing us how we must now act. Have you forgotten Abraham defeating tremendous forces with just a few men? Or Jacob's salvation from his twin Esav? Recall the Ten Plagues, the Manna in the desert, and the splitting of the Red Sea, where every Egyptian perished. And recall this: our claim to Israel is from no other source than G-d's Torah - His promise to Abraham. Yet you refuse His Torah, but desire His land?

We do not rely on miracles, this is against Judaism, and not what I suggest. Living by Torah ideals is the best life, and we do not uphold Torah simply to remove our current pain. But as the Torah is absolute truth, we must be frightened by G-d's promise to abandon us if we abandon Him. But G-d also promises His protection when we live according to His word. In line with this promise, we may seek His assistance. We live by G-d's word as it is absolute truth, which enables our best existence. When living in line with G-d's word, He has many vehicles to protect us. But as the Shema says, He certainly will not shield us when we abandon His word. Of course it is preferred that we attach ourselves to the truth of Torah when prompted by its perfect and pleasing laws, not because we need salvation. But many times G-d removes His protection to instruct us to return to Him. Now may be such a time.

Remember Channukah. Remember and proclaim it not just with your Menora, but with your daily actions. As someone wishing salvation for yourself and your fellow Jews, act now in accordance with G-d's law. As Mattisyahu's sons lived, and were saved by the Torah, with G-d's help we too can triumph over our enemies. But any leader wishing to lead based solely on political considerations, denying these truths, history, and G-d's abilities, is destined for failure. Follow His laws, and even the few will be victorious over the many.

*Megillas Antiochos was found in an old edition of a siddur printed in Solonika, Greece. Otzar HaTfilos refers to it as a "precious letter". (Arbitrary paragraph breaks have been added every 10 verses for ease of reading. These breaks do not exist in the original.)*



## MEGILAS ANTIOCHOS

1. And it was in the days of Antiochos, king of Greece, a great, mighty king was he, and he was strong in his reign and all kings listened to him. 2. And he conquered many cities and mighty kings, and he destroyed their palaces and their temples he burned with fire, and their men he imprisoned in jails. 3. From the days of Alexander the king, there arose no king like him on all sides of the river. 4. And he built a great city on the sea shore to be his house of kingdom, and Antiochos called the city by his name. 5. And also his second in command Bagris built another city next to it and Bagris called it by his name, and so is its name until this day. 6. In the twenty third year of his reign, it was the two hundred and thirteenth year of the building of the Temple, he gave face to ascend to Jerusalem. 7. And he answered and he said to his officers, "Do you not know that there is the Jewish people in Jerusalem amongst us? 8. To our god they do not sacrifice, and our religion they do not practice and the king's decrees they forsake, to do their religion. 9. And they also hope for the day of the dethroning of the kings and rulers and they say, "When will our King rule the seas and dry land, and the entire world will be given to our hand?" 10. It is not honorable to the kingdom to leave them be on the face of the earth.

11. And now let us come and we will ascend on them and nullify their treaty that was cut with them concerning Sabbath, the new Month and circumcision. And the matter was good in the eyes of his officers and in the eyes of his entire army. 12. At that time, Antiochos the king arose and he sent Nikanor his second with a great army and many people and they came to the city of Judah, to Jerusalem. 13. And they slaughtered a great slaughter and built an altar in the Temple in the place where the G-d of Israel said to His servants, His prophets "Where I will cause to dwell My manifested presence eternally", in that place, they slaughtered the pig and they brought its blood to the sanctified

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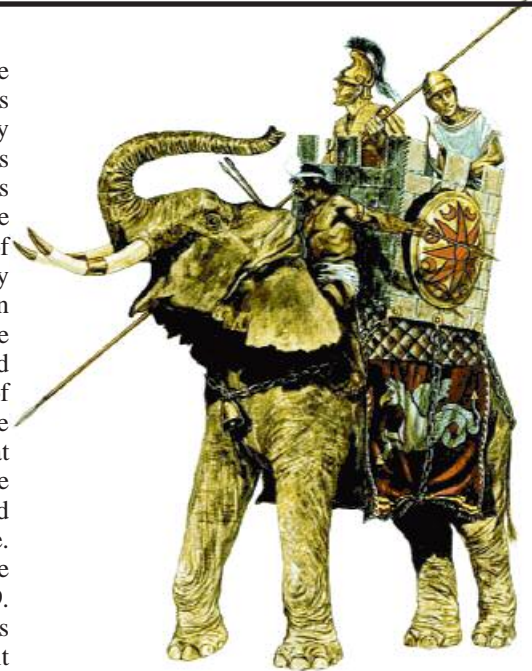
courtyard. 14. And as this occurred, when Yochanan son of Mattisyahu the High Priest heard these doings occurred, he was filled with anger and rage, and the countenance of his face changed, and he counseled in his heart what should be done on this. 15. And then Yochanan son of Mattisyahu made himself a sword two spans long, one span wide, covered under his clothing. 16. And he came to Jerusalem and stood in the gate of the king, and he called to the gatekeepers and he told them "I am Yochanan son of Mattisyahu, I have come to come before Nikanor." 17. And then the gatekeepers and watchers came and told him the High priest of the Jews stands in the opening, and Nikanor answered and said to them, "Let him surely enter." 18. And then Yochanan was brought in before Nikanor and Nikanor answered and said to Yochanan, "Are you one of the rebels that rebels against the king and desires not the peace of his kingdom?" 19. And Yochanan answered before Nikanor and said, "I am he, now I come before you, that which you wish I will do." 20. And Nikanor answered and said to Yochanan, "If as my will you will do, take a pig and slaughter it on the altar and robe in the king's clothing and ride of the king's horses, and as one of the kings beloved you will be."

21. And as Yochanan listened, he responded a thing, "My master, I fear from the children of Israel, perhaps they will hear I have done so and they will stone me with rocks. 22. Now let all men leave from before you, perhaps they will make the matter known." Then, Nikanor caused all men to leave from before him. 23. At that moment, Yochanan son of Mattisyahu lifted his eyes to the heavens and assembled his prayer before his G-d and he said, "My G-d and the G-d of my fathers Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, please do not give me into the hand of this



uncircumcised, because if he will kill me, he will go and praise in the house of Dagon his god, and say "My god has given him to my hand." 24. At that moment, he stepped towards him three steps and plunged the sword into his heart, and he threw that corpse into the sanctified courtyard. 25. Before the G-d of heaven, Yochanan answered and he said, "My G-d, do not place on me sin that I have killed in the sanctified (area), now, so also give all the people that come with him to pain Judah and Jerusalem." 26. Then went out Yochanan son of Mattisyahu on that day and warred with the people and slaughtered in them a great slaughter. 27. The number of the slain that he slayed on that day was seventy two thousand seven hundred that were killed these to these. 28. On his return they built a pillar on his name and called it "Maccabee Killed the Mighty". 29. And it was that king Antiochos heard that his second in command Nikanor was killed, it grieved him much, and he sent to bring Bagris the wicked that mislead his people. 30. And Antiochos answered and said to Bagris, "Do you not know, have you not heard what the children of Israel have done? They killed my army and looted my camp and my officers?"

31. Now, on their money you are trusted or their houses are yours. Come, and ascend upon them and nullify the treaty which was cut with them (by) their G-d, Sabbath, the New Month and circumcision. 32. Then Bagris the wicked and all his camp came to Jerusalem and slaughtered in them a great slaughter and decreed a complete decree on Sabbath, the New Month and circumcision. 33. When this occurred that the matter of the king was urgent, there was found a man who circumcised his son and they brought the man and his wife and they hung him in front of the child. 34. And also the woman who bore the son, after her husband died and circumcised him at eight days, she went up to the walls of Jerusalem and her circumcised son in her hands. 35. And she answered and said, "To you, Bagris the wicked, you intend to nullify from us the treaty that was cut with us, the treaty of our fathers will not be nullified from us, Sabbath, the New Moon and circumcision from our children's children, it will not be removed." 36. And she dropped her son to the ground, and she fell after him and they both died together. And many of the children of Israel that did similarly in those days, and they did not veer from the treaty of their fathers. 37. At that time, the children of Israel said, "These to these, let us go and rest in the cave, lest we desecrate the Sabbath day, and they slandered them before Bagris. 38. Then Bagris the wicked sent men girded for battle and they came to the opening of the cave and said to them, "Come out to us, eat of our bread and drink of our wine



and our actions you shall do." 39. And the children of Israel answered, "These to these, "we remember that which G-d commanded us on Mount Sinai, 'Six days you shall work, and do all your labor, and on the seventh day rest'. Now it is better for us that we die in this cave than desecrating the Sabbath day." 40. When this happened that the Jews did not come out to them, they brought wood and burnt it at the opening of the cave and there died like a thousand men and women.

41. Afterwards, there came out five sons of Mattisyahu, Yochanan and his four brothers and they warred with the people and slaughtered a great slaughter and drove them to the isles of the sea because they trusted in the G-d of heaven. 42. Then Bagris entered one ship and fled to king Antiochos and with him were men, escapees of the sword. 43. And Bagris answered and said to king Antiochos, "You the king, placed a command to nullify from the Jews Sabbath, the New Month and circumcision, a great deceit and rebellion in its midst. 44. That when there went all the people and nations and languages, they could not defeat the five sons of Mattisyahu. From lions they are stronger, and from eagles they are more swift, and from bears they are more quick. 45. Now king, I offer you good counsel, and do not war with few men, for if you war, you will be embarrassed in the eyes of all kings. 46. Therefore, write and send books in all cities of your kingdom, that there come officers of war and not leave one of them, and also elephants wearing armour with them." 47. And the matter was good with king Antiochos, and he sent books to all cities of his reign, and there came officers of all the people and kingdoms, and also elephants wearing armour came with them. 48. A second time Bagris the wicked arose and came to Jerusalem, he broke

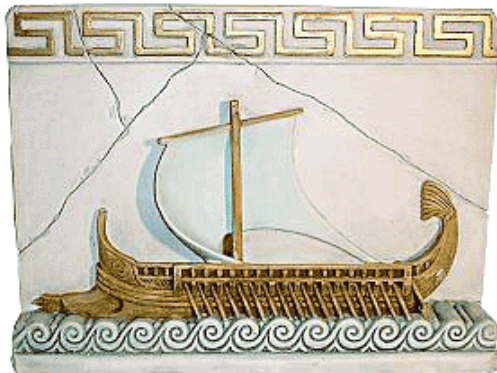
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the wall, and he cut off the water supply, and he broke in the Temple thirteen breaches and also from the stones he broke until they were like dust and he thought in his heart and said, "This time I will not be overtaken because of the numbers of my army and might of my hand". But the G-d of heaven did not think so. 49. And when the five sons of Mattisyahu heard, there arose and came to Mitzpeh Gilead, that were there the remnant of the house of Israel from the days of Samuel the prophet. 50. They decreed a fast, and sat on ashes to seek out mercy from before G-d of heaven.

51. Then there fell good counsel in their hearts, Judah the firstborn, Simon the second, the third Yochanan, the fourth Yonasan, the fifth Elazar. 52. And their father blessed them and so he said, "Judah my son, I liken you to Judah son of Jacob who was equated to a lion. 53. Simon my son, I liken you to Simon son of Jacob who killed the inhabitants of Shechem. 54. Yochanan my son, I liken you to Avner son of Ner, officer of the army of Israel. Yonasan my son, I liken you to Yonasan son of Saul, who killed the Philistine people. 55. Elazar my son, I liken you to Pinchas son of Elazar who was jealous for his G-d and saved the children of Israel. 56. On this, there went out the five sons of Mattisyahu on that day, and warred with the people, and slaughtered in them a great slaughter, and there was killed from them Judah. 57. At that moment when the sons of Mattisyahu saw that Judah was killed, they returned and they came to their father. 58. And he said to them, "Why have you returned?" And they answered and they said, "On account that our brother was killed who was equated to all of us." 59. And Mattisyahu their father answered and said to them, "I will go out with you and I will fight with the people, lest the house of Israel perish, and you are frightened on your brother." 60. And Mattisyahu went out on that day with his sons and fought with the people.

61. And G-d of heaven gave all the mighty of the nations into their hands. And they slaughtered a great slaughter, all who seized



the sword, and all who drew the bow, officers of war and the seconds in command, there was not left one remnant, and there fled the rest of the people to the cities of the sea. 62. And Elazar was involved in killing the elephants and he was submerged by the chariots of the elephants, and when they returned, they looked for him among the living and among the dead, and they could not find him. And afterwards they found him that he was submerged by the chariots of the elephants. 63. And the children of Israel were gladdened that there was given to their hands their enemies. From them they burned with fire and from them they pierced with the sword, and from them they hung on trees. 64. And Bagris the wicked that misled his people, the children of Israel burned him with fire. 65. And then, Antiochos the king heard that Bagris the wicked was killed and all officers of war with him, he entered into a ship and fled to the cities of the sea, and it was that each place he came to there, they mocked him and called him "the runaway". 66. Afterwards, the children of the Hasmoneans came to the temple, and they built the broken gates and they closed the breaches, and purified the courtyard from the casualties and from the impurities. 67. And they searched for

pure olive oil to light the candelabrum, and they did not find but one canister that had the seal of the ring of the High Priest and they knew that it was pure, and it contained a measurement to light for one day. 68. And G-d of heaven Who causes to dwell His name there, gave a blessing and they lit from it eight days. 69. Therefore there established the children of the Hasmoneans a fulfillment, and they forged a law, and the children of Israel with them as one, to make these eight days days of drinking and happiness as the appointed days written in the Torah, and to light on them lights to make known what was done to them (by) the eternal G-d of heaven. 70. And on them, one may not eulogize, nor to decree fast days, or have a fast, except if it was accepted on it prior to this and pray before their G-d.

71. But the Hasmoneans and their children and their brothers they did not decree on them to nullify service of work. And from that time, there was no name to the kingdom of Greece. 72. And there received the kingdom, the children of the Hasmoneans and their grandchildren from that time until the destruction of the Temple two hundred and six years. 73. Therefore, the children of Israel from that day in all their exiles guard these days and call them days of drinking and gladness from the twenty fifth day of Kislev, eight days. 74. From that time and eternally, there should not be removed from them, that were in their Temple, priests, Levites and their wise men who established upon them and upon their grandchildren eternally.

Other prayer books add these verses:

"And these days, they arose and accepted on themselves and on their children and on their grandchildren eternally, the priests, Levites and wise men that were in the temple, and they were not removed forever. The G-d that did with them a miracle and a wonder, He should do with us miracles and wonders and sustain with us the verse that was written as the days of your Exodus from the land of Egypt, I display wonders, Amen." □



(continued from page 1)

# Chanukah

RABBI BERNARD FOX

of the Kohen Gadol. It only contained sufficient oil for one day. But a miracle was performed with this oil and they lit from it for eight nights. In a different year they established and made these days a festival with Hallel and giving thanks." (Tractate Shabbat 21b)

This is the Talmud's discussion of the source of the Chanukah celebration. The Talmud explains the miracle of the oil. The Sages also describe the festival of Chanukah. However, the comments of the Sages are not easily understood. The Talmud tells us that the celebration was established as a result of the miracle of the oil. However, in its description of the celebration the Talmud does not mention the lighting of the Chanukah lights! We generally regard the lighting of the Chanukiyah – the menorah – as the most fundamental observance of the festival. Yet, in the above description of Chanukah, the Talmud does not mention this observance. Furthermore, if we consider the context of the above text, this omission is even more bizarre. The section of Talmud, in which the above quote is found, is discussing the various laws governing the lighting of the Chanukah lights!

Maimonides, in his Mishne Torah, provides an important hint towards answering these questions. Maimonides begins his discussion of Chanukah with a review of the historical events underlying the celebration. He discusses the oppression of the Jewish people by the Hellenist Assyrians. He then describes the triumph of Bnai Yisrael. Finally, he discusses the miracle of the oil. Then Maimonides writes, "And for this reason the Sages of that generation established that these days, beginning with the 25th of Kislev, should be days of happiness and Hallel. We light



Photo from Moshe Levine's book, "The Tabernacle", Soncino Press, Bkln., NY

candles on these days, at night, at the doors of the homes, on each night of the eight nights, in order to show and reveal the miracle." [1]

Maimonides always chooses his words very carefully. Therefore, it is appropriate to consider every nuance of his wording. The Rav – Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik Zt"l – makes an important observation based upon this wording. Maimonides did not write that the Sages established Chanukah as days of happiness, Hallel and lighting candles. Instead, he wrote that these days were

established as days of happiness and Hallel – and that we light candles on these days. The implication of this wording is that the lighting of the Chanukah lights was not part of the original enactment of the Sages. Originally, the Sages established Chanukah as a time of happiness and Hallel. At some latter point the practice of lighting candles was established.

This provides a partial answer to our questions. The Talmud is explaining the original enactment of Chanukah. The initial response of

the Sages to the miracles of the victory and oil was to establish a celebration of Hallel and thanks. It did not include a requirement to light the Chanukah lights. This was a latter development. However, we are left with a new question. Why was the lighting of the Chanukiyah not included in the original enactment. Furthermore, why was this practice latter added?

The Rav suggests that the lighting of the Chanukah lights was established after the destruction of the Bait HaMikdash. Prior to this time, the Menorah of the Mikdash existed and the practice of lighting the Chanukah lights did not exist.

Why was this practice established only after the destruction of the Temple? Nachmanides explains, in his commentary on the Chumash, that the Chanukah lights recall the Menorah of the Temple.[2] The Rav explains that any practice designed to recall the Temple cannot coexist with the Bait HaMikdash. Such practices only become meaningful after the destruction of the Temple.[3]

**"For this reason the Sages of that generation established that these eight days.... should be days of rejoicing and Hallel. And we light on them candles, at night, at the doors of the homes each night ... to demonstrate and reveal the miracle."** (Mishne Torah, Laws of Megilah and Chanukah, 3:3)

Maimonides explains that the celebration of Chanukah is observed through rejoicing, the recitation of the Hallel prayer and the lighting of candles. There is no requirement of indulging in elaborate meals. In this respect Chanukah differs from Purim. On Purim, the holiday meal is central to the celebration. In fact, many of the Purim obligations including sending gifts to friends and to the poor are related to the holiday

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# Chanukah

RABBI BERNARD FOX

meal! Why is Chanukah different?

Mishne Berurah quotes the response of Levush to this question. He comments that the distinction between Chanukah and Purim can be explained through understanding the circumstances of each celebration. Purim commemorates the deliverance of the Jewish people from Haman. Haman attempted to annihilate Bnei Yisrael. The salvation of Purim was from this physical destruction.

Chanukah recalls a different form of deliverance. The villains of the Chanukah episode were Assyrians, committed to Hellenistic culture. Their primary aim was not to cause physical harm to the Jewish people. Instead, their intention was to wipe out observance of the Torah. This would encourage assimilation into the Hellenistic culture. The salvation of Chanukah was essentially of a spiritual nature. Therefore, it is fitting that the Chanukah celebration emphasizes the spiritual character of the redemption. To create this emphasis the celebration is overwhelmingly spiritual in character. There is no requirement of an elaborate holiday meal. Instead, the Hallel prayer is recited. A section of praise – Al HaNissim – is added to the Amidah and Birkat HaMazon. Candles are lit to recall the miracle of the re-establishment of service in the Temple.[4]

**“How many candles should one light? On the first night one should light one flame. From that point onward, he should add one flame each night until the last night on which there will be eight flames.”** (Shulchan Aruch, Orech Chayim 671:2)

Shulchan Aruch describes the procedure for lighting the Chanukah candles. The first night one candle is lit. An additional candle is added each night. Finally, on the eighth night eight candles are lit.

This law is derived directly from

the Talmud in Tractate Shabbat. The Talmud explains that the obligation of lighting the Chanukah lights can be fulfilled on three levels. On the basic level, it is sufficient to light a single candle for the entire household, regardless of the night. In other words, one candle is lit the first night. A single candle is lit the last night. At the next level, the mitzvah is enhanced. The number of candles lit each night corresponds with the number of members in the household. A household of four would light four Chanukah candles each night. The optimum performance of the mitzvah requires that the number of candles correspond with the night. This is the level described by Shulchan Aruch. The first night one candle is lit. By the eighth night, eight candles are kindled.[5]

A comparison of Shulchan Aruch to the Talmud suggests an obvious question. According to the Talmud, there are three levels of performance for the mitzvah of the Chanukah lights. Shulchan Aruch does not mention the two lower levels. Only the optimum method is described in Shulchan Aruch. Why are the two lower levels deleted?

The discussion in the Talmud also presents a difficult problem. The Talmud is describing a basic performance of the mitzvah and enhancements of the performance. The Talmud in Tractate Baba Kamma discusses the issue of enhancements of mitzvot. It discusses the amount one should spend in order to enhance a mitzvah. The conclusion is that one should only spend up to one third of the value of the basic mitzvah.[6] An example will illustrate this rule. Assume a person wishes to buy a mezuzah. A kasher – fit – mezuzah can be purchased for twenty dollars. However, the purchaser wishes to buy a better mezuzah. How much should the buyer spend for a finer mezuzah? According to the rule in

the Talmud, the maximum the person should spend is \$26.60.

This rule obviously contradicts the discussion in Tractate Shabbat. The basic mitzvah of Chanukah only requires the lighting of a single candle each night. The enhanced and optimum levels require far more than a one third increase in expenditure. For example, by the last night the optimum method of lighting requires kindling eight lights. The basic level would only require a single light.

These two questions seem to indicate that there is a basic difference between the enhancements of the Chanukah lights and the enhancement of other mitzvot. Let us consider the general concept of enhancement. In most cases a mitzvah is performed in its entirety without the enhancement. In our example of the mezuzah, the mitzvah is performed perfectly with the twenty-dollar mezuzah. However, there is a separate obligation to enhance one's performance of all mitzvot. This is the obligation one fulfills through purchasing the better mezuzah. In regard to this obligation to enhance all mitzvot, the Talmud establishes a spending ceiling.

Shulchan Aruch does not mention the subsidiary levels of performance of the mitzvah of Chanukah. This indicates that, according to Shulchan Aruch, we are obligated in the optimum method. The implication of this statement is clear. Enhancement of the mitzvah is not merely required because of the general obligation to enhance all mitzvot. Instead, enhancement is an essential component of the mitzvah of the Chanukah lights. This mitzvah is only performed properly when the optimum method is used. In other words, one who lights a single candle, rather than eight, on the last night has not merely failed to fulfill a general obligation to enhance all mitzvot. The performance of the mitzvah of the Chanukah lights is

incomplete.

It follows that the spending ceiling for enhancements does not apply to the Chanukah lights. That limit is applied to the general obligation to enhance all mitzvot. It does not apply to the Chanukah lights. Here, enhancement is not an extraneous obligation. Enhancement is fundamental and required for the proper performance of the mitzvah of the Chanukah lights.

We can also understand the Shulchan Aruch's reason for deleting any mention of the subsidiary levels of the mitzvah. The Shulchan Aruch posits that the Talmud is not suggesting that we use the most basic method or even the enhanced method of lighting. We are obligated to use the optimum method. However, the Talmud is required to define the subsidiary methods of performing the mitzvah. Optimum is a relative concept. For a performance to be defined as optimum, other lower levels of performance must exist. The creation of an optimum performance requires, by definition, the creation of lower levels of performance. The Talmud establishes these lower levels of performance in order to provide a basis and meaning for the optimum level. The Talmud does not intend for these levels to be used. ■

[1] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Maimon (Rambam / Maimonides) Mishne Torah, Hilchot Chanukah 1:3.

[2] Rabbaynu Moshe ben Nachman (Ramban / Nachmanides), Commentary on Sefer BeMidbar 8:2.

[3] Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik, “Notes on Rambam's Hilchot Chanukah,” Mesora, Adar 5757, pp. 17-18.

[4] Rav Yisrael Meir Kagan, Mishne Berurah, 670:6.

[5] Mesechet Shabbat 21b.

[6] Mesechet Baba Kamma 9a.



# Channukah

## PHILOSOPHY

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

When studying the sources dealing with Channukah, there are many questions which surface. I will first outline those questions, and then offer possible answers.

1) The Al HaNissim prayer of thanks included in our daily prayers and Birchat HaMazone primarily discussed the war. And at the end it makes mention of our kindling the lights, but does not mention the miracle of the oil. Does this mean that war is the essence of the day? What was the essential element in Channukah the Rabbis deemed worthy of being instituted as a holiday? Was it the miracle that a few Jews overtook the myriads of Greeks in battle, the duration of the oil, both, or some other factor?

2) What was the purpose in the miracle of oil lasting 8 days? The principle of "ohness rachmana patreh" - one forced by situation is exempt - rendered the priests innocent for not being able to light the Menorah. Since they were exempt from the obligation to light the Menorah until they pressed new oil and were cleansed of tuma from the casualties, why did God create this miracle of the oil's duration?

Can we suggest that the miracle of the oil is to reflect upon the war, that it was won via miracles? If so, why then does Rambam state that we won due to God's salvation, even before discussing the oil? It would seem that Rambam held that the Rabbis understood our military victory to be caused by God. In such a case, the oil would be superfluous for teaching this. Unless we suggest that the military victory - although executed by God - was not an overt miracle, and itself would be no cause for a holiday. It would be no different than wars won by Joshua for example, when conquering Jericho. A day around which, the Rabbis did not create holiday. What then was so different about the battle of the Macabees or that entire event in general, that God decided to underline that event by the miracle of the oil, showing thereby such significance? There were many battles in which God made us victors. Yet in those many wars, God did not create an overt miracle after the

fact, as is the case with Channukah.

Additionally, in his Mishneh Torah, Rambam indicates that until the miracle of the oil, the Rabbis would not have instituted the holiday based on military success alone. According to Rambam, what is it about the oil - or the war upon which it reflects - which demanded that Channukah be established as a holiday?

3) The Megilla - the letter - is read on Purim as our halachik observance. The reasoning is that this specific element was the catalyst for the Jew's salvation, as the Talmud in Megilla 12b states, "had it not been for the first letter, not one remnant or escapee of Jews would have survived". Meaning, since the Persians disqualified King Achashverosh's credibility based on a previous letter which was foolish in their eyes, they showed little respect for the Kings subsequent decree to destroy the Jews.

Following this template for establishing a holiday, if Channukah was established by the Rabbis based on the success of the war, why is there no mention of the Channukah battle as part of our halachik performance? Lighting oil or candles is divorced from the battle. Why are these lights selected by the Rabbis as the performance of the halacha, and not something germane to the war, like carrying a sword or the like? Purim's laws were organized around elements which caused our salvation. Why are Channukah laws centered around a miracle subsequent to our salvation?

4) What is the concept of having "mehadrin" - the concept that there are multiple levels of fulfilling the obligation of Channukah flames, each more preferred than the previous? We do not see this concept in connection with the Megilla. Additionally, why focus on the 8 day element, to the point that 8 days became an essential aspect of our halachik performance, as we light for 8 days, but only read the Megilla on one day? Additionally, why does a single Channukah Menorah satisfy an entire household's halachik obligations, whereas this does not work in the case of Lulav? Here, each member must have his own four species?

Although possible to enact a miracle in the war itself, God chose to enact a miracle in the lights to emphasize our adherence to the Torah commands as the essence of that event, not mere bodily rescue. Life alone is not the goal for man. It must be a life of understanding and adherence to God's Torah. Without Torah, our lives are meaningless. Perhaps for this reason the Rabbis understood the oil miracle in this light, and sought to build the laws of Channukah around this reuniting of the Jews to their laws, illustrating thereby that the initial act of Torah adherence - lighting the Menorah - was the goal of the victory.

This follows well with Purim, as we state therein, "kimu v'kiblu mah shekiblu kvar", "they (the Jews) rose up and accepted that which they previously accepted", i.e., the Torah. Purim was an event where the Jews saw that a life permeated with wisdom proved to be the source of their salvation, as Mordechai's and Esther's cunning saved the Jews. The statement of "kimu v'kiblu mah shekiblu kvar" displays again that mere victory is not the goal, but rather, the highlight of that military success was the reacceptance of Torah.

Channukah is therefore celebrated via lights (the goal of the victory) which was the reestablishment of the laws of the Temple.

The talmud in Shabbat asks, "what was Channukah established upon?". Meaning according to Rashi, "upon which miracle". Answering our question, that without a miracle, military success would not qualify as a holiday. Only through the event of the miracle of the oil did the Rabbis deem Channukah worthy of institution as a holiday, and did so via lights as this was the goal of the victory.

The essential miracle was the war, as it was the catalyst for our adherence to Torah. So when offering thanks, we thank God for the success of the war, but not the lights, as lights are not grounds for thanks. But in recalling the goal of the day through observance generation after generation, we make recourse to lights to pronounce the goal.

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# Channukah

## PHILOSOPHY

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

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So what was present in Channukah which surpassed the battle at Jericho for example? Or when God stopped the Sun and Moon in Gibeon and Amek Ayalon respectively? All had miracles! Why then was Channukah established as a holiday, but not Jericho or other events which included miracles?

The answer could be the following: The miracle of the oil was subsequent to the war when we were already victors. All other wars which had miracles, only had miracles for the sake of winning the war. The fact that God enacted a miracle unnecessary for salvation may have been perceived by the Rabbis as a Divine indication that Channukah was different, and worthy of institution as a holiday. A difference was discussed by a Rabbi, that during Channukah, the Greeks sought to strip us of our Judaism, not so in other wars, where the enemy simply was fighting for land.

The elements of a subsequent miracle (not necessary for salvation) compounded with the fact that we were saved from oppression (not mere military victory) were recognized by the Rabbis as grounds for instituting Channukah as a holiday. That special quality of God's salvation from oppression, enabling us to follow the Torah also existed during Purim.

Therefore we have only two holidays subsequent to the giving of the Torah; Purim recalls our bodily salvation, whereas Channukah recalls our religious salvation.

While discussing this further with Rabbi Mann, we came to the observation that "holiday" means that which is instituted for generations to observe. This needs explanation, as it would have sufficed to celebrate Channukah just that one year. The concept of a perpetual celebration must be adding another point. That is that the future celebrants have what to celebrate, somewhat on par with those who actually experienced the salvation so long ago.

What do we - the future celebrants - have in common with the Jews alive at that event? It is that our existence and ability to practice our

laws is a direct result from the miracles of Channukah. As we are direct beneficiaries, we must also show thanks to God for these acts of kindness. This also explains why Passover has two modes; "Passover of Egypt", and "Passover for Generations". We see this idea is consistently part of our laws.

The concept of mehadrin teaches us that there are levels of fulfilling the obligation of Channukah. The reason mehadrin exists for few commands is as follows: When a Torah obligation deals with qualitative act, such as donning tefillin, one either dons them or does not. There is nothing more to be added after one has put on tefillin - you cannot wear tefillin more, once they are on. A quantitative increase is impossible, you either wear them or you don't.

The same applies to kosher, either one eats kosher or he doesn't.

But an act which is of a quantitative measure is different. Such acts as discussing the Exodus, Channukah lights, and purchasing a finer Esrog, all lend themselves to quantitative increase. One may discuss the Exodus until morning, or buy a better Esrog, or light multiple candles. But there still must be sound reasoning behind such increase.

The fact is that there is one goal with the lighting of the candles, that is to publicize the miracle to others. There are two ways in which we can increase this publicity: 1) By having



more individuals spreading the story through multiple Menorahs, and 2) By increasing the content of the story publicized, which is achieved by increasing the number of lights each night. This teaches a passerby that there were a number of days which the miracle lasted, thus, teaching a new element. By lighting only one candle each night, all one knows when he passes by your house is that there was a miracle of Channukah. But if he sees five candles on the fifth night, he now learns something new, that there were many days to the miracle. This increases the content of the story taught through the lights. □

# THE LAWS of CHANNUKAH

## A Talmudic Analysis

RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM

Talmud Shabbos 21a:

*"The Rabbis learned: the command of Channukah is "a single light for a man and his household" (i.e., one light each night - regardless of the number of household members). A greater beautification of the command is each house member lights one light each night. And a beautification of even greater quantity; Bais Shammai says; the first day one lights eight lights, and then progressively decreases one light each day. And Bais Hillel says; on the first day one light is lit, and from here forward, one progressively increases one light each day. (Author's note: This is our custom, that all household members light one candle on day one, two candles on day two, etc.)"*

*Ulah said, two Amoraim (Rabbis) in the West argued on this dispute between Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel. They were Rabbi Yosef son of Avin, and Rabbi Yosef son of Zveyda. One Rabbi said, Bais Shammai's reasoning is to correspond to the number of days of Channukah yet to come about, and a reason for Bais Hillel, corresponding to the number of days that have passed. The other Rabbi gave a reason for Bais Shammai, that we correspond to the number of sacrifices (there commenced 8 oxen, and they decreased one ox each day) and a reason for Bais Hillel, that we ascend in sanctity, and do not descend."*

A number of questions must be addressed:

1) What is it that demands that the fulfillment of Channukah lights for the entire household, may be achieved by one person, the house head? Tefillin, prayers, and other commands are obligated equally upon each Jew. And generally speaking, one does not satisfy his obligation by another person's performance. Why then is the command of Channukah lights different, that it was formulated that one person's lighting satisfies the entire household? Is this merely another example of the principle, "Shomayah K'Oneh", that is, "One who hears is equivalent to one who answers" (i.e., "performs")? For example, all must recite the

Sabbath Kiddush (sanctification over wine). However, one person may recite it on behalf of all present, and everyone thereby equally fulfills their obligation. The principle of "One who hears is equivalent to one who answers" renders all present as if they in fact recited Kiddush. Is this how the Channukah lights by the one house head renders all as if they performed? Or, perhaps, this principle is inapplicable with regards to Channukah. Is Channukah formulated - by its very design - as a 'group' performance? If so, what demands such a formulation?

2) What is the definition of the command of Channukah lights, that more lights creates a "greater beautification" of the command?

3) What is the dispute between Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel, whether we count down, or up?

4) Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel appear to agree on one point; that one may not light eight candles each night. (Or any identical number each night.) There must be a difference in the number of lights each night. What is their one theory of mutual agreement which demands this to be so?

To answer these questions, we must first understand the basic command and purpose of lighting Channukah lights: The Rabbis teach that our goal is to proclaim the miracles of G-d's salvation during the Greek empire. The Greeks defiled the Temple, intent on forcing the Jews to abandon Judaism, and accept their Greek religion. The five sons of Mattisyahu did not tolerate this possibility and immediately commenced a revolt to salvage Judaism and the Jews. They were successful. Upon their triumph, they entered the Temple to sanctify it, and found but one canister of pure olive oil, bearing the High Priest's seal. This meant it was not defiled. However, this canister would not last the eight day duration required to press new oil - it contained a quantity of oil for just one day's burning. Miraculously, this one day's supply endured for the entire eight days. This was significant not only of G-d's providence over the oil, but of the military victory. The Channukah holiday was thereby declared. The purpose in our lights during this holiday is to proclaim G-d's miraculous salvation, throughout all generations. The original miracle was through lights, so we

commemorate G-d's miracle with lights.

We now understand the basic reason for lights. But why is there a dispute as to whether we ascend or descend in the number of lights each night? And why must there be eight days of lights? Well, we can say that 'eight' days signifies the number of days which the miracle lasted. But why not light eight candles on 'one' day, as the entire fulfillment? We must keep the purpose of the law in mind; to proclaim the miracle. What was the miracle? It was a duration of eight days that the oil lasted. Each day included a new miracle - it was not simply one miracle for eight days. Evidently, we must display this miracle's duration through the medium of "days". So Channukah was defined by the Rabbis to be a celebration lasting eight days. But if this is so, where is there room for the Rabbis to say that we may 'add' to the basic law, and allow an increase or decrease of lights each night? Understanding that the basic law is to 'proclaim the miracle', we may answer as follows.

Since the miracle was not a one day affair, the Rabbis decreed that by lighting a "different number of lights" each day, those who see our lights realize a new concept each day: that there was a new miracle each day. The same number of lights each day does not impart the next day's miracle. But when we see a different number of lights each day, the lights thereby imbue the onlooker with the realization of a new element of miracle, which did in fact take place each day. Seeing a new number of lights each day, the onlooker learns of a new miracle, unseen in the previous day's lights. Bais Shammai and Bais Hillel agree that an additional proclamation of the original miracle may be gained by differentiating each night's number of lights.

Why does Bais Shammai light eight lights on day one, and decreases one light each day? The Talmud said it was done so as to count the days yet to enter. Bais Hillel said we start at one light and ascend to eight on the eighth day. He counts the days of Channukah that have passed. What is the theory of each side? Again, we keep in mind that the lights are to remind us of G-d's providence and salvation. Using this information, think about each Rabbi's view

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# THE LAWS of CHANNUKAH

## *A Talmudic Analysis*

**RABBI MOSHE BEN-CHAIM**

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before reading further. The purpose of learning is to delve into an analysis of theories, so do so before continuing.

It appears that Bais Shammai's theory is that we are to count the days of G-d's providence, yet to occur. The lights are to make us mindful of G-d's "continual" providence, which is the providence yet to happen. This is why, I believe, Bais Shammai says we count the days yet to come. On day 3, we light six lights, as we have this day, plus five more yet to come, which is six total. We count down, and become mindful of G-d's providence yet to come. Conversely, Bais Hillel says we count the days of providence that G-d has already enacted for us. This he feels is what we are to be mindful of through the Channukah lights. G-d "has" performed miracles for us, and we are to be thankful for His already enacted kindness. The dispute between these two Rabbis is whether we are to focus on G-d's "continual providence", or on His "performed providence". My friend Howard suggested that the number of eight lights is to demarcate the day when the temple was back in order, to the degree that the oil's miracle was no longer required. The Jew's perfection depends on the functioning Temple, which took place in part by the eighth day. This is the focus of the eighth day, and why we have eight lights. (It took eight days to press new oil.)

Let us address our first question - the formulation "a single light for a man and his household". We asked, "Is this yet another case where "One who hears is equivalent to one who performs", similar to the Sabbath Kiddush? Is this how the Channukah lights by the one house head renders all as if they performed? As I suggested in the question, I believe Channukah is formulated - by its very design - as a 'group' performance. Let us consider: the Jews were spared through G-d's miracles. Thereby, they were enabled to retain, and sustain their Judaism, of which the Greeks wished to strip them. How is Judaism transmitted? Through each family, the father - the house head - transmits his learning to his children. Perhaps for the purpose of focusing on this factor, the Rabbis ordained that Channukah be celebrated by the household, i.e., via the unit through which

Judaism is transmitted. Judaism was spared, and the Jews resumed to transmit it through new families, all due to G-d's miracles. The very unit through which Judaism was proliferated - the family - was defined as the vehicle through which G-d's miracles are conveyed. Judaism as a religion was threatened, so the holiday which celebrates the salvaged, continuance of Judaism, is embodied in Jewish law, by this very unit - the household. We then conclude that Channukah lights performed by one for the many, is not a case of "One who hears is equivalent to one who performs". Truthfully, Channukah's very design was formulated - from the outset - as a group (family) performance.

This reasoning also answers why there is a "beautification" of the miracle, when all household members are represented through additional lights. Not only is the "family" represented, but each individual's representative light proclaims a greater effect of the miracle: all these family members benefited from G-d's miracles. However, this is not the highest degree of miracle proclamation. The highest level is when there is an increase of one candle each night. Why is this most preferred? It is because in this manner, the number of days of G-d's miracle are now displayed. Lighting four candles each night, when there are four household members, only tells the onlooker that there were four people who benefited. But adding a candle each night displays a new element: G-d's degree of miraculous salvation, i.e., the miracles lasted eight days.

We learn that the greater fulfillment in these lights, is the praise of G-d. When recounting - through additional lights - that G-d's miracles were so extensive, greater appreciation of G-d is thereby achieved. Praise of G-d's actions far outweigh the effect that more people were saved. This sounds like it degrades Jewish life. However, when studying Talmud, we are intent on defining the phenomenon at hand. We see a clear distinction between a medium level of fulfillment, and the highest level. Since the highest level depicts G-d's miracles more clearly, we understand that this element - praise of G-d's acts - outweighs how many were saved as a result. The Talmud is to impart ideas based on truths, and is not

contingent on our subjective, moral estimations. We must learn the Talmud and change ourselves based on the Rabbis teachings. Not the opposite. When our personal feelings conflict with our studies, we do not prioritize our subjective preferences. We change to be in line with the truths of the Talmud - the Torah's Oral Law.

This Channukah, do not simply light the lights, but understand what they represent. Let us deepen our true appreciation for our lot, that we have the freedom and ability to study Torah, the most enjoyable and meaningful pursuit. We must be appreciative and thankful to G-d, in enabling mankind to possess the intellect, the only tool for understanding truths. In contrast to what many people focus on in their daily activities, we are not born, to die rich. Our intellect is proof that man was gifted with a distinct and superior role over all Earthly creation. Time flies quickly. Do not forfeit your one opportunity here on Earth, to use your minds and arrive at the numerous, profound insights enclosed in G-d's creations, and His Torah. Start now,...dedicate the majority of your day to study, and minimize your work, as Rabbi Mayer said in Ethics, "Minimize your involvement in worldly pursuits, and indulge in Torah". (Ethics of the Fathers, 4:10) G-d has many messengers through which He can assist us financially. He desires that we pursue Torah study over all else, even over other commandments. (Talmud Moade Katan 9b) Therefore, He will surely give a satisfactory lot to those who truly "remove from their necks the yoke of monetary calculations which the masses follow", engaging in Torah study as their primary pursuit. (Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Laws of Shmita and Yovale, 13:13)

Comprehend the majesty of G-d's creation displayed in the universe, composed of billions of galaxies. It is therefore an 'easy thing' that He can provide sustenance for us, on but one, small planet. Do you believe He can?.....do you believe His word?.....then act. If however, your conviction lacks, then study until you are convinced of G-d's abilities. G-d controls all. Let this guide your beliefs and actions.

A joyful Channukah to everyone. ■

## SHABBAT TableTalk

PARSHA QUESTIONS

RABBI REUVEN MANN

1) Why did Yaakov love Yosef so much more than his brothers? 2) What does the story teach us about parental love? 3) The Torah tells us that Yosef brought back "evil reports" about his brothers. Was this simple gossip or did Yosef have a higher, though misguided purpose? 4) Why did Yosef relay the dreams to the brothers? 5) Both dreams indicate that Yosef would rule over the brothers. What was the difference between the dreams of the bundles and that of the sun, moon and stars? 6) Why were the brothers angered by the dreams; if they regarded them as prophecy then they should have accepted their message; if they regarded them as meaningless why did they get angry at Yosef-is a person morally at fault for having megalomaniacal dreams? 7) What was the "straw that broke the camel's back" in terms of determining the brother's decision to kill Yosef? 8) Reuven convinced his brother's to refrain from killing Yosef directly and instead to cast him into a pit. Are you less of a killer if you cast a person into a pit from which there is no escape than if you directly execute him?

## HALACHA Review

CHANUKAH

RABBI REUVEN MANN

1) When the Macabees cleansed the Temple a jar of oil sufficient for one day was found. Miraculously the flame burned for eight days. It would seem that since there was enough oil for one day the miracle only endured for seven days. Why then do we light for eight? 2) If the miracle of Chanukah was that of the lights why is no mention made of this in the "Al HaNissim" prayer whose purpose is to express gratitude for the miracle of Chanukah? 3) It is commonly assumed by many American Jews that the Macabees were fighting for the principle of "religious freedom". Do you agree? How can you disprove this? Does 4) Judaism believe in the ideal of "religious freedom"? What were the Macabees fighting for? 5) What is the purpose of the shamash? If there is an electric light in the room does one still need

a shamash? 6) On Friday, which is lit first, the Shabbat light or the Chanukah light? On Motzei Shabbat what comes first Hadlakat HaNerot or Havdalah? Explain the reason for both cases.

## ISSUES of the WEEK

### Downfall of the Wicked

*A Tyrant Humbled*

by, *Ralph Peters*

December 15, 2003 -- 'LADIES and gentlemen, we got him!' Those words may go down as the most memorable line of Iraq's liberation. The outburst of cheers and applause that followed Paul Bremer's remarks echoed around the world. And a myth as old as humankind collapsed.

Despite the intense media coverage of Saddam's capture that greeted us as we woke on Sunday morning, Americans can't quite grasp the psychological power this event holds for Iraq, for the Middle East - and for the world. We take our freedom for granted. Much of the world has had to take oppression for granted. For thousands of years. Now America and her allies have changed the rules. Even after Saddam's statues tumbled, even after his monstrous sons were killed, and despite the presence of Coalition troops in their midst, fear lurked in the mind of every Iraqi: Like a creature of legend impossible to slay, the tyrant who had ravaged their lives for decades might return. The myth of Saddam wasn't only about the strength of one man. He drew his power not only from the gun and the noose, but from the long tradition of cruel sultans and dictators, of rulers so strong that common men and women could do nothing. Defeatism and apathy have haunted the Middle East for countless centuries. Now, with the capture of an unwashed old man in a hole in a shabby farmyard, the myth of the mortal god on a throne that prevailed since the days of Nebuchadnezzar has been revealed as a lie no one need believe. Saddam, who admired Stalin and emulated Hitler, did not go down in a violent blaze of glory. He didn't fire the pistol he carried or even make a fist. He cowered below the earth until our soldiers dragged him out. Even as dismayed pundits struggled to find a dark lining in this enormous silver cloud, the people of Iraq erupted in cheers. To the horror of their European colleagues, Arab journalists could not stop shouting, "Death

to Saddam!" as the monitors in Baghdad showed a broken prisoner having his scalp inspected for lice. The capture of Saddam marks the real birth of the new Iraq. But thousands of miles from Baghdad, hundreds of millions of other human beings instinctively understood the importance of the event, even if they could not articulate all they felt. The myth of the invincible dictator ended in a farmyard. Bashir Assad, Kim Jong-Il, Robert Mugabe, the old mullahs in Teheran, the Saudi royal family, the already cowering Moammar Khadafy - and that would-be caliph of all Muslims, Osama bin Laden . . . all of the dictators, authoritarian rulers and terrorists-who-would-be-king saw their own faces in the place of Saddam's. We put fear into the hearts of the men who thrived by striking fear into helpless millions. Media coverage will focus on short-term events. If there is a spurt of attacks on Coalition forces as psychologically castrated hardliners struggle to prove that they remain capable and determined, we'll hear no end of analysis suggesting that Saddam's capture, while dramatic, wasn't so important, after all. But it was important. Vitaly important, in ways too great to quantify or fully describe. The effects will reverberate for decades, if not far longer.

Stand back and consider anew the greatness of what America and her partners have done. For the first time, the forces of freedom refused to wait for a dictator to strike again, whether against us or against his own people. Defying former allies comfortable with the old pattern of embracing cooperative tyrants, we changed the global rules. And freedom won. Yet even this huge milestone is only a beginning. The hardest of the hard-core militants, the Ba'athist thugs who've lost everything, will continue to annoy us for months to come - although their strength will dwindle. Terrorists will continue to try to turn back the clock. But the people of Iraq now know that they truly are free, that their future is theirs to decide. And other degraded populations in the Middle East now see that they, too, can be free. As the image of a humbled Saddam flashed on millions of screens, thousands of years of the armed few tyrannizing the suffering masses came to a symbolic end. And America stood taller than it has since the spring of 1945. Now we must go forward without hesitating. President Bush's historic speech of Nov. 6 acknowledged that, in the distorted strategic environment of the Cold War, the United States made

grave errors by supporting dictators and authoritarian regimes, imagining that such men and their acolytes guaranteed stability. Instead, the strongmen brought only misery to their people and crises to the rest of us.

One dictator who received a measure of American support was Saddam. Our president faced up to that responsibility, and now we have paid our debt to the people of Iraq. But in the months to come, we'll face another challenge as the Iraqi people bring Saddam to trial. We need to live up to our president's own words, to show the world further proof that America has forever moved beyond her brief tolerance for tyrants, that our actions in Iraq were neither selfish nor an exception. When Saddam raises - as he will - the support Americans once provided to him, we should go him one better and make every record available to the court. We Americans must always have the courage to stand up and admit it when we've made mistakes. We must resist the temptation to classify the details of this long-ago visit by special envoy X or that covert aid during the Iran-Iraq War. Just tell the truth. The short-term discomfort will be minor compared to the enduring force of our example. Let those Europeans who assured Saddam that they'd save him stand beside him in the court of world opinion. Let every detail come out. Hide nothing. Create such shame that even the French will think twice before coddling another dictator. The capture of Saddam was a far greater matter than any image can capture or any words can suggest. This was a turning point in human history. Ralph Peters is a retired Army intel officer and the author of "Beyond Baghdad." Copyright 2003 NYP Holdings, Inc. All rights reserved.

### The Triumph of U.S. Intel

by, *Ralph Peters*

December 15, 2003

In peacemaking operations, you need to have adequate forces to do the job. But no matter how many troops you send, you can't win if you lose the intelligence war.

Yesterday morning, the world awoke to hard evidence that we're winning on the silent front in Iraq. They saw a disheveled, captive Saddam undergoing a dental exam. It was an irrefutable image of success.

But the revealing story is how we're succeeding. Back in April, as our troops stood in triumph amid the wreckage of Saddam's regime, our intelligence files on

everything from mid-level Ba'athist officials to the condition of oil refineries were inadequate. An over-reliance on high-tech intelligence collection systems, coupled with a long neglect of deep analysis and human intelligence - the spies and agent handlers - had left us with abundant satellite maps of the terrain, but with only the vaguest maps to the labyrinth of Iraqi society. In the best American tradition, our intel personnel on the ground rolled up their sleeves and began to fix the problem. Laboriously, they built detailed files on our enemies and dubious friends.

On Saturday night, their work paid off in the courtyard of a farmhouse near Tikrit, when our soldiers found a very special holiday present under the palm trees. The commander of our forces in Iraq stated that "great analytical work led to [Saddam's] capture." Tip-offs likely helped, too. But whatever the details of nabbing the Grinch of Baghdad may be, our intelligence operations remain a success story. Behind the headline attacks on our soldiers and Iraqi civilians, we've been killing 50 to 70 hardcore terrorists and renegades each week, while arresting hundreds. We've busted more and more key Ba'athist officials. Now Saddam's going to have to celebrate New Year's Eve without a single bottle of Dom Perignon. How have we done it? The old-fashioned way. By datamining the enemies of our enemies. By listening to all sides and testing their claims against each other. By exploiting captured files. By appealing to both selfish and selfless interests. By exploiting family and tribal connections. And by laying down hard cash. Our greatest advantage has been the one the media ignore: Few Iraqis wanted the Ba'athists back. As they began to feel more confident of American resolve, they offered ever more tips about hide-outs and arms caches, sometimes for money, sometimes because they believed in freedom - or just because they didn't want combat in their neighborhoods. In not a few cases, the undiminished arrogance and brutality of the thugs who remained at large made them their own worst enemies. As we wait for the details behind Saddam's capture, want to know why we got Uday and Qusay? The reward was tempting. But the deciding factor for their unhappy host was more visceral: Saddam's boys smacked around his wife. At that point, our money and the promise of relocation abroad became irresistible. Uday and Qusay signed their own death warrants with a temper tantrum. Reports out of Iraq last week

also suggested that our troops arrested a number of the terrorists involved in the recent ambush of Spanish intelligence operatives. You rarely just get lucky in such a case. It's usually about the locals having more confidence in you than fear of your enemies, about whispered tips and exploited rivalries. The volume of information Iraqis volunteer to us is a fundamental metric of success. It was already soaring before we grabbed Saddam. Now it's bound to turn into a deluge. Our intel hands, so often criticized, deserve an enormous pat on the back for this one. Even if a tipster turned the tide. Meanwhile, there have been many other encouraging details the media ignored. In that devastating attack on the Italian police, the terrorists had to expend more resources than previously. Heightened security didn't stop the attack, but it raised the price. The bomb-laden vehicle didn't carry a single suicide bomber. There were four terrorists inside, one to drive and three to shoot their way through the guards and barricades. May not sound like much, but that means one suicide attack instead of four. Even in the Middle East, there isn't an unlimited supply of young men willing to blow themselves up. The cost of terrorism continues to rise for our enemies. When suicide bombers tried to penetrate U.S. Army compounds over the past few weeks, alert guards stopped them short every time. Out on the Iraqi roads, we've been ambushing our ambushers. Now we've captured Saddam. Yet, it won't be long before we hear the tired old cries of "intelligence failure!" over some brief setback. No one should mistake our enemies' desperation and imagine it signals strength. We've gained the upper hand. And we're not going to relinquish it. Terrorists and renegades will still achieve some successes, which the media will magnify. But thanks to the determination of our president, the quality of our troops and the dedication of our intelligence professionals, our accomplishments to date have been remarkable. Just ask Saddam. Copyright 2003 NYP Holdings, Inc. All rights reserved.

## What do You Think?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS BY

**RABBI REUVEN MANN**

1) How do you feel about the capture of Sadaam Hussein? Do you think it is appropriate to rejoice at his downfall? 2)

Should you authorize any type of method necessary to extract information of vital concern to our war against Terrorism-including torture? 3) Is he entitled to a "fair trial" with all the rights and defenses we associate with "due process"?

### Interfaith Dialogue

Modern-day Disputation  
by David Klinghoffer

DECEMBER 12, 2003-One of the most haunting images in the Torah, found in this week's parsha, casts a startling light on a question that's roiling the Jewish religious world at this moment. The issue is interfaith dialogue. I know, I know, it's one of the more sleep-inducing items on the official communal agenda. Those two words conjure images of professors droning on endlessly about the need for tolerance, but there really is a new and exciting possibility wrapped in that soporific expression. Well, not "dialogue" exactly, but debate. The image from the parsha, "Vayishlach," is of the patriarch Jacob wrestling successfully with an angel. The story in Genesis explains that this is how the people Israel got their name. After the wrestling match, the angel tells Jacob he will be renamed "Israel" because "you have striven with God and with man and have prevailed." The rabbis note that this angel was the guardian spirit of Jacob's troublesome brother, Esau. They also note that this same Esau is identified with the founding of Rome - therefore of the Roman church, and by extension of Christianity in general. We are called "Israel" because we wrestle with and prevail over the spirit of Esau, of Christianity. Here's what I propose. Not dialogue, where namby-pamby compromise is the objective, but formal, public debates in appropriate settings. Like the 92nd Street Y. The participants: rabbis and Christian clergy or informed laymen. The subject: Is the Torah eternal? Was Jesus the Messiah? You often hear it said that Jews - unlike, say, Evangelical Christians - have never relished the opportunity to point out to adherents of other religions that their faith falls short of the truth. Not so! Traditionally we Jews have indeed believed in using rather aggressive methods of weaning non-Jews from their false gods - see, for example, Maimonides's alarmingly frank comments on this in his Mishneh Torah, which I hesitate to quote because they are so aggressive (Hilchot Melachim 8:10, 9:1). Another medieval sage, Sfomo,

wrote that being a "kingdom of priests" (Exodus 19:6) means "to instruct all of mankind to call in unison on the Name of the Lord and to serve Him with one accord." The intent of these great scholars was not that all humans convert to Judaism, but rather that they become believers in the God of Israel as Gentiles - as Noahides, guided in their lives by the seven fundamental moral imperatives associated with the descendants of Noah (namely, all humanity) and outlined in the Talmud's tractate Sanhedrin. In the 12th and 13th centuries, medieval Jews put this into practice. Sometimes they were forced by Christian authorities to engage in public "disputations." Other times, the Jews eagerly sought out such opportunities. So the historian David Berger makes evident in his wonderful book "The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages." The Jews composed a delightful literature of polemical books gathering arguments together to beat Christian debaters. The author of one of these advised, "When you speak to them, do not allow your antagonist to change the subject... He does not continue to stick to the point, for when he realizes his inability to verify his statements, he begins to discuss other matters. One who argues with them should be strong-willed... Then, you will find the Gentile thoroughly embarrassed." In other words, give him Hell! The most famous of the disputations, at Barcelona in 1263 - pitting the sage Nachmanides (Ramban) against a converted Jew, Pablo Christiani - was not optional for the Jews involved. King James I commanded it. But in another good book on the subject, Hyam Maccoby's "Judaism on Trial," the Ramban's "joy in combat" comes out clearly. In religious circles, this idea may at first elicit little Nachmanidean joy. Orthodox Jews are now engaged in an internal disputation of our own. One prominent rabbi, Eugene Korn, has been pushing for dialogue with Christians, but his colleagues point to a 1964 interdict against this, issued by the past century's greatest sage, Joseph B. Soloveitchik. Scholars of Soloveitchik's thought will have to decide whether he meant the ruling to apply only to dialogue per se, where the idea is that somehow the two faiths can be brought closer together. In fact, no such compromise can be possible for believers in Torah. But I trust that the most distinguished Soloveitchik experts, such as Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter of the Soloveitchik Institute, will find that the Rav

was not forbidding debate, where the objective is to win. Certainly our Christians friends will jump at the chance. For us, the advantages of debating them - in a cheerful, urbane, civilized way - would be threefold. First, intellectual battle sharpens your grasp of your own ideas. Nothing compels thought and reflection like being challenged to defend what you had previously taken for granted. Second, younger Jews need to understand that their ancestral faith is not all "Fiddler on the Roof" sentimentality, but rather a vibrant web of profound concepts that can be defended on the highest intellectual level. For their sentimental elders, Tevye the Milkman may be good enough, but not for us under 40. Finally, striving of this kind is our destiny. As God's priestly nation, we're called to an educational role in the world that must necessarily mean exposing other people to a critique of their faith - all offered, I again emphasize, in a good-natured, unthreatening and humble manner. This is why God gave us the title "Israel." If we try to live up to that name, like Jacob, we will prevail. David Klinghoffer is the author of "Discovery of God: Abraham and the Birth of Monotheism" and the forthcoming "Why the Jews Rejected Christ: In Search of the Turning Point in Western History" (Doubleday). (c) 2003 The Forward

population calling themselves "very happy" has declined from 7.5 percent to 6 percent today. Easterbrook notes that logically speaking, Americans should be happier - after all, income is up, deadly diseases are down and the average American thinks nothing of jetting around the country. While previous generations dreamed of a chicken in every pot, now we're striving for an SUV - or two - in every garage. So how to explain the fact that depression in Western nations is 10 times more common today than it was 40 years ago? Or that those on the Forbes 400 list of the world's richest people feel "only a tad bit more life satisfaction" than the average Joe? "If you sat down with a pencil and graph paper to chart the trends of American and European life since the end of World War II, you'd do a lot of drawing that was pointed up," writes Easterbrook. "But your graphs would lose their skyward direction when the topics turned to the inner self - the trend line for happiness has been flat for 50 years." For a long time, social scientists have focused on "reference anxiety" - that stressful striving to keep up with the Joneses - to explain the disparity. No longer. "Current research suggests that it is the trends in a person's own life ... that induce dissatisfaction, even when times are good," Easterbrook writes. "The essential element is an expectation of more." Competing with yourself, Easterbrook notes, is lonely. He cites research by University of Pennsylvania psychologist Martin Seligman, which argues that, sure, we're making more money, but we're often lonelier doing so - either because we've pulled up roots to get where we are, losing track of friends and family along the way, or perhaps because we're telecommuting. He compares modern life to finding yourself in a lovely hotel room - and not enjoying yourself because "no one else came along on the trip." Fifty years ago, 3 percent of Americans referred to themselves as lonely. Today, 13 percent do. On top of the loneliness, what Seligman calls the "self-esteem craze" has made us feel there's something wrong with us if we don't feel good about ourselves all the time. "Self-esteem emphasis has made millions think there's something fundamentally wrong if you don't feel good, as opposed to just, 'I don't feel good right now, but I will later,'" Seligman says. Another factor that gets some of the blame is the American obsession with

victimization. One study of college freshmen shows an increasing percentage describe themselves as not in control of their fate. Which begs the question: "If we're all victims, then who did the victimizing?" And when we all shop 'til we drop - and pay people to reorganize our closets to make room for all the new stuff we buy - it does nothing to make us feel better. There's such "a never-ending progression of new things to want ... that no one could keep up with it even if money were no object," says Easterbrook.

We even have a name for people who indulge in such rampant, mindless consumerism: shopaholics. They're treatable, Easterbrook notes, with the antidepressant Celexa, according to recent studies. "If an antidepressant relieves the condition, this tells us consumerism and depression are linked," he writes. "That is not good news for a society grounded in consumerism." Meanwhile, unipolar depression seems to be keeping pace with inflation - and then some. "The United States and European Union generate wealth to spoil their citizens with depression," Easterbrook writes. "Huge numbers of people in these places can, in terms of money, afford to feel badly."

Just how badly we can afford to feel depends on a number of things, marital status and age among them. Statistics show that married people tend to be happier than those who are separated or divorced. More surprising is Easterbrook's finding that elderly people, the disabled and even the chronically ill are happier with their lot than the young and restless - who tend to lack perspective and not appreciate just how good they have it, since they've known nothing but prosperity. Other countries seem better equipped at handling their new-found prosperity. Easterbrook quotes a study citing the Netherlands, Iceland, Ireland, Denmark and Sweden as the world's happiest countries - perhaps, he speculates, because nearly everyone in Scandinavia is middle-class and has the same things (or, as he puts it, in American terms: a three-bedroom house and a Honda Accord).

And while Ireland's per-capita income is less than half our own, it has what Easterbrook calls a "count your blessings" culture. Japan, on the other hand, is facing tougher times after unbridled progress and prosperity - which may be why the Japanese surveyed described themselves as "abjectly miserable." One wonders where New Yorkers would rate

on the happiness scale. Easterbrook - who lives in Bethesda, Md., and drives a Honda Accord - said last week that "a lot of what's exciting about Manhattan is its department store windows and extravagant shops of things you find hardly anywhere else in the world. "But the psychological research clearly shows that the wonderful things for sale in the stores will not make anyone happier," he continues. "Poverty makes you miserable, but once you have the basics, the ability to buy fancy things or go to the theater has nothing to do with whether you're happy or not." Indeed, one study cited in the book argues that happiness drops off in diminishing returns after one makes more than \$10,000. "Go into the most expensive restaurant in New York, and you may not see all that many smiling faces," Easterbrook says. Move to a better address, his books says, and it "may only serve to instill an insidious new form of dissatisfaction ... you are immediately confronted by all kinds of pricey stuff that even the well-off have trouble affording."

The answer, he says, is to build on happiness from within. "Psychological research shows that people who are grateful, forgiving and optimistic are much more likely to be happy than those who aren't," Easterbrook says. A higher minimum wage and universal health care wouldn't hurt either, he contends, though that's bound to raise prices, making it harder to afford, say, that SUV. Then again, if what Easterbrook says is true, having one would only drive you to despair. Copyright 2003 NYP Holdings, Inc. All rights reserved.

## What do You Think?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS BY

RABBI REUVEN MANN

1) What do you think about interfaith dialogue? 2) Does Judaism ascribe validity to other religions? 3) Should we engage in theological debates with the aim of disproving Christianity and teaching the truths of Judaism?"

### Is Wealth Depressing?

Paradise Lost in Depression  
by, Barbara Hoffman

December 14, 2003 -- Is the American dream dead? Despite years of rising prosperity, cases of depression have exploded, and the average American is only "slightly satisfied," says author Gregg Easterbrook in "The Progress Paradox: How Life Gets Better While People Feel Worse" (Random House, \$24.95, 376 pages). Since 1960, the percentage of the

## What do You Think?

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS BY

RABBI REUVEN MANN

1) Why is it that people who achieve their most powerful dreams become depressed? 2) Where is this idea alluded to in the Torah? 3) Are people chasing illusions or is there some reality to the object of their strivings? 4) Can material wealth make one happy? 5) What does the Torah have to say about the "pursuit of happiness"? 6) What is the aim of the Torah life? Does Judaism promise happiness in this world? (Or is the prime focus the realm of eternity)? 7) Are you capable of being happy? 8) What would it take to make you happy?