

Chagim Chanukah 2014

1. Eiturai Torah, Rabbi Aharon Yaakov Greenberg (chelek 7 page 120) asks why the mitzvos of Chanukah specifically try to remember the oil miracle that occurred on Chanukah as opposed to the miracle of winning the war?

The Mateh Moshe answers that heretics will claim that other miracles that occurred weren't from Hashem, rather they just happened on their own. Dissimilarly, it is difficult to claim that the oil miracle was happenstance. Therefore, we specifically celebrate the oil miracle.

The Sfas Emes says that the oil miracle is very precious. Hashem performed the other miracles in order to save us. The oil miracle is different because we didn't need this miracle to live, and were technically exempt. But Hashem nevertheless performed this miracle. This miracle demonstrated Hashem's love for us because we didn't really need it! With this we can understand the Levush who says that unlike other holidays this holiday isn't about eating because whole miracle was in order to fulfill mitzvos!

2. Kemotzei Shlal Rav (page 265): the Gemara in Beitzah (4) relates the concept of ספיקא דיומא. (This literally means a doubt on the day. Meaning, in the diaspora we usually have an extra day of Yuntif.) The question arises; why aren't there nine days of Chanukah!?

The Avudraham answers that other holidays are subject to ספיקא דיומא since they are from the Torah! Conversely, Chanukah which is drabanan isn't subject to ספיקא דיומא.

The Re'am (Rav Eliyahu Mizrachi) asks on the Avudraham. This answer and reasoning is logical by Purim where the megilah says לא יעבור. Meaning, Purim cannot be celebrated later than the 15th of Adar. Therefore, if the megilah wouldn't have said לא יעבור, then Purim would have been two days. We should therefore have an extra day or Chanukah like Purim had the megilah not have said לא יעבור? The Re'am answers that by Purim, megilah Esther is written in Tanach and it's like Torah. Therefore, if we would have two days of Purim, everyone would know we are celebrating these two days because of ספיקא דיומא. Conversely, Chanukah is not written anywhere in Tanach. Therefore, people wouldn't realize why we are celebrating nine days. They would make a mistake and think the miracle was actually for nine days! Therefore, we only celebrate Chanukah for eight days, just like how the miracle occurred!

Another answer is as follows. The Meor v'ohalos and the Avudraham say that the word חנוכה is an acronym. It stands for ח נרות והלכה כבית הלל. Meaning, we light eight candles and we hold like Beis Hillel (who says to light in ascending order; one to eight)! Therefore, if we would have a ninth day, on the fifth day it would not be recognizable that the Halacha is like Beis Hillel because according to Beis Shamai on the fifth day we would also light five candles! Therefore in order to distinguish that the Halacha is like Beis Hillel there are only eight days of Chanukah!

3. Otzros Hatorah, Rabbi Eliyahu Chaim Cohen page 225:

It is customary to eat jelly donuts because they're made in oil. Therefore, jelly donuts remind us of the oil miracle. (This reasoning alone is inadequate because according to this reason one could eat anything fried in oil for example poppers and claim that they are eating that food item in order to commemorate the miracle?)

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Auerbach (Halichos Shalomo, Chanukah page 319.) offers a completely different answer. He explains that the Chashmonaim purified the entire Beis Hamikdash except for the stones of the מזבחה (Alter). They were upset that they didn't know how to purify these stones as stated in mesechas Avoda Zara (52b). They ended up hiding them. It is therefore customary to eat food items that an על המזבח is recited after consumption. The words על מזבחך are said in על המזבח. This alludes to the Chashmonaim's unhappiness due to their inability to purify the stones of the מזבחה. (This reasoning alone is additionally insufficient because according to this reason one could eat anything fried in oil that has an על המזבח as a bracha achrona, for example any other type of donut or eggroll and claim that they are eating that food item in order to commemorate the miracle?)

The Mishna in Sotah (48a) quotes Rabbi Yehoshua who says from the day the Beis Hamikdash was destroyed the taste of fruits were taken away. (רשב"ג אומר, העיד ר' יהושע מיום) (שחרב בהמ"ק אין יום שאין בו קללה, ולא ירד הטל לברכה, וניטל טעם הפירות.) The Gemara (49a) quotes Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar who says that once the laws of purity and impurities no longer applied then the fruits lost their taste. What is the explanation of this statement? What does the laws of purity and impurities have to do with tasty food? Rashi explains that since everyone treated the fruits with care, therefore, Hashem also treated the fruits with care making sure that they didn't smell and taste bad. (הפירות וריחם שמתוך שהיו טהורים ונוהגין בטהרה.) (אף הקדוש ברוך הוא מטהר פירותיהן מריח רע ומטעם רע.) However, once the Jews were no longer obligated to treat the fruits carefully, they didn't. Consequently, Hashem didn't protect the fruits from bad smells and tastes. This is why we specifically have jelly donuts as opposed to other fried foods. Jelly comes from fruit. Eating jelly donuts will remind us of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash.

Thus, we specifically eat jelly donuts because they are unlike all other food. There are numerous reasons why we eat jelly donuts on Chanukah. It is something that is fried in oil, which will remind us of the oil miracle. Additionally, the על המזבח that we recite after consumption will remind us of their inability to purify the stones of the מזבחה.

Lastly, jelly donuts come from fruit; this will remind us of the destruction of the Beis Hamikdash. This is how the custom of eating jelly donuts resulted. (It also says in על המזבח: על: על המזבח (let us eat from its fruit.)) See also last page in Kemetzei Shlal Rav.

As a side point one would not recite a בורא מיני מזונות on jelly donuts if one made המוציא, even if they are eaten as a desert.

It is also permissible to heat up jelly donuts on Shabbos, even though there is liquid inside of them. (See Halichos Shalomo, Chanukah pages 319-320 for an elaboration of why this is permissible.)

Lastly, Rabbi Aharon Marcus (Halacha 24/7/12 page 347) says that one who is on a diet doesn't need to eat jelly donuts.

4. Bnei Yissoschor maamar beis os alef:

The miracle of Chanukah isn't written anywhere in Tanach. The Gemara in Yuma (29a) asks; why is Esther compared to the morning? Rabbi Asi answers just as the morning is the end of night, so too Esther, is at the end of all the miracles. The Gemara asks what about

Chanukah!? The Gemara answers we are talking about the miracles that were written in Tanach. Esther was the last miracle written in Tanach.

The Bnei Yissoschor says Chanukah is the quintessential Yom Tov of Torah shebeal peh (oral Torah). It doesn't even have its own Mesachta. Nevertheless, Chanukah is hinted to in the Torah. A hint can be found in the word בראשית itself! It stands for יהושע רבה תהיה בזמן שימלוך אנטיוכוס. A great salvation will happen at the time of the ruling of Antiochus (The evil Greek ruler that suppressed the Jews.). בראשית can also stand for ישועה רבה תהיה שינצחו בני אהרן. The great salvation that will occur due to the victory from the Kohanim (Chashmonaim)! The Rokeach (siman 225) suggests an additional illusion from parshas Emor. The pasuk in Vayikra (23, 44) states "And Moshe declared the appointed holidays of Hashem to the Jews." The following pasuk (24, 2) says "take for you pure olive oil, pressed, for illumination, to kindle a continual lamp." (The simple explanation is that these pesukim are referring to the oil in the Beis Hamikdash, however) The Rokeach says these pesukim are alluding to the olive oil that was used on Chanukah! The Gemara in Shabbos (23a) quotes Yehoshua Ben Levi who says it's preferable to use olive oil!

The Bnei Yissoschor says that the gematria of "צו את בני ישראל" ($96 + 401 + 62 + 541 = 1100$) mentioned in the aforementioned pasuk equals 1100 which is the same gematria as בימי מתתיהו בן יוחנן ($62 + 861 + 52 + 124 = 1099$), with the kollel rule! The explanation of this is the light during the time period of Mattisyahu was from the original light created at the time of creation! This light is really hidden in the Torah! Therefore, light alludes to the Torah. The Greeks wanted to annul this light! Therefore the miracle happened on Chanukah with oil to allude to the light which is hidden in the Torah! The Gemara in Tanis (7b) explicitly says that light refers to the Torah as stating in Mishlay (6, 23) "For a commandment is a lamp and the Torah is light." (כה נר מצוה ותורה אין אור אלא תורה שנאמר "כה נר מצוה ותורה" (אור)). Also layhudim Haisa ohra vsimcha vsason vikar. (See also Megilah (16)). The Gemara in Shabbos (23b) says one who is regular with a candle will have children who are Talmedai Chachamim. The original light from the time of creation is hidden in the Torah. Tzaddikim are able to access this light. The Greeks wanted to destroy this light, which is the Torah. That's why the miracle happened through light, which is Torah. This is also why the miracle happened with a jug that had the seal of the Cohen Gadol! The Cohen Gadol had a lot of Torah knowledge! The miracle also happened in the month Yissochor was born. Yissochor was the one who learnt Torah full time. One of the main decrees of the Greeks was that they didn't want us to learn as the Rambam states (hilchos Chanukah perek gimal). The Maharal (Ner Mitzvah page 11) explains that since they knew that the Torah wisdom is greater than their wisdom and all other human wisdom, they therefore tried to nullify Torah wisdom by prohibiting us from learning it.

In conclusion, the light that was used at the time of Chanukah was the light from the creation of the world which is the light of the Torah. The Greeks wanted to take the light of the Torah away from us. It is for this reason that the miracle occurred specially through light! The Gemara in Menachos (85) states that wherever you have olive oil, you have wisdom! Also, the miracle happened through the menorah because the Gemara in Baba Basra (25b) says that one who wants to become wise should face south. The menorah is in the south! The Gemara (ibid) also says that the southern side is always lit up, whether in summer or winter.

5. The question is where does the custom of giving gifts on Chanukah come from?

a) The Sukas chaim, Rav Lundinsky (page 361) quotes the Emes Leyaakov (on Shulchan Aruch siman 670 footnote 583) who says (An elaboration of this is brought in the sefer called Inside Chanukah pages 150-151) that since the Torah was saved from being forgotten on Chanukah, therefore Chanukah is a time when we increase our emphasis on learning. **It therefore became customary to show appreciation to our Torah educators during this time. Parents would therefore send money to their children's Rabbeim and teachers on Chanukah. They would do this by sending the money with their children, and the children would thus learn to appreciate the value of the Torah and those who teach it. Eventually from this practice it became customary to give the children money as well to demonstrate to them how much their parents valued their Torah learning. This is something the goyim took from us. They are copying us, we are not copying them!**

(Additionally, this is not subject to Torah prohibition of “ובחוקתיהם לא תלכו” “do not follow in their traditions.” (Vayikra (18, 3)) The shalos ve teshuvos Avnay Yispa (chelek alef siman 129 os beis) quotes the shalos ve teshuvos Maharik (siman 88) (the Rama says this in yora daya siman 178 sif 1 as well), who explains that a קק is a mitzvah that we do without knowing why. When this type of mitzvah is similar to something that the goyim do then it is subject to “do not follow in their traditions.” Conversely, a mitzvah that we know why we are performing isn't subject to “do not follow in their traditions.” Thus, it is completely permissible to give money to children on Chanukah. The Rambam says this explicitly in hilchos Yom Tov perik vav Halacha 18. The Shulchan Aruch says this in siman 529 sif 2; he writes there that we give the children types of nuts and sweets. Therefore in conclusion, we know why we give the children money on Chanukah; it's in order to make them happy. Since we have a legitimate reason, we do not need to worry that the goyim give gifts as well.)

b) Its written in Kobatz Mevakshe Torah (Chanukah chelek alef page 89) (Also in Berchas Yabetz chalek alef page 158) in the name of Rabbi Dovid Cohen based on the Magen Avraham (beginning of siman 670) who says **the custom is poor people go around on Chanukah to collect money. Based on this Magen Avraham we also give money or gelt to children. We give to all children and not exclusively poor children in order not to embarrass the poor children and the poor people who are collecting money.**

Similarly see Inside Purim (page 55), Purim is a day dedicated to giving tzedakah and helping the poor who may be embarrassed to ask for money. When the poor put on disguises so that they cannot be recognized it is easier for them to request and receive tzedakah. (Therefore it became customary for everybody to dress up in order not to be able to distinguish who is poor and who isn't.)

c) Similarly, but with a different twist it is written in the sefer Ohr haganuz (pnini hamoedaim page 127) (Also in Berchas Yabetz chalek alef page 158), the Shulchan Aruch (siman 671) says that **even a poor person must borrow money or sell his clothing in order to purchase oil to light with on Chanukah.** (The same halacha applies to the four cups on Pesach. What is the reason for the discrepancy regarding these two halachos as opposed to all other mitzvos where the Halacha does not require us to sell our clothing in order to fulfill that particular mitzvah? The Gemara in Berachos (page 6a) and Shabbos (63a) says that if one wanted to perform a certain mitzvah and an extenuating circumstance occurred which rendered it impossible for him to fulfill that mitzvah it is as if he performed it (חשב אדם לעשות מצוה ובאנס ולא עשאה מעלה עליו הכתוב כאילו עשאה). This statement applies to all mitzvos except for Chanukah and the four cups on Pesach. If these mitzvos aren't

physically performed, then credit isn't given. The reason for this stringency is פרסומי ניסא (publicizing the miracle). The main purpose of both Chanukah and the four cups on Pesach is to publicize the miracle. This being so one didn't gain anything if the actual mitzvah wasn't performed. **In order not to embarrass poor people who cannot afford oil, it became customary to give money to everyone.** (An elaboration of this is brought in the safer called Inside Chanukah (page 151). The Belzer Rebbe says we give Chanukah gelt to children (and others) on Chanukah is in order to create a blurring of who is receiving money for what purpose. In other words in order to avoid embarrassing the poor, Chanukah gelt is distributed to everyone in order that it will be unclear who is receiving the money as tzedakah.)

d) An additional answer is brought by Rabbi Aryeh Pinchas Strickoff in his Inside Chanukah (pages 151-152). Money represents potential. For example, by giving a few coins to a hardware dealer in exchange for a hammer, you have turned the money into a hammer. But before you went to the store you did not have a hammer. **When Yaakov was preparing to meet Eisav on his way back to Canaan he moved his family to the other side of the river for protection. He then went back across the river on his own to retrieve a few small jars that he had left behind.** (See Bereishis 34, 24) Regarding this incident the Gemara in Chullin (91a) tells us that Yaakov's return for those small jars indicates that tzaddikim consider their possessions dearer than their own bodies. (See footnote 135, Rabbi Matisyahu Salomon explains a tzaddik knows that every penny he earns is a gift from Hashem and understands that his money and possessions are only there to help facilitate his service of Hashem.) Additionally, the Midrash Tzeidah LaDerech states that Hashem said to Yaakov 'For endangering yourself for a small container, I myself will repay your children with a small container (of oil) to the Chashmonaim (at that time of Chanukah).' (See footnote 136, the pesukim describing this event hint to Chanukah "And he (Yaakov) took them (his family) and crossed them over the river (נהל) and he sent over his possessions." The word נהל is an acronym for נהג, להדליק, נר הנוכח.) From this incident we see the lasting effect of Yaakov's seemingly small act of caring for the gifts that Hashem gave him. This teaches the tremendous potential that each of us has to cause great and lasting effects with our actions. **If Yaakov's simple act of caring for his possessions had the potential to effect the Chanukah miracle, who knows what a simple act that we perform l'sheim shamayim (for the sake of heaven) could accomplish. By giving Chanukah gelt, something that has great potential in that it can be transformed into anything, we recall that the miracle of Chanukah that was facilitated through Yaakov's actions with his gelt and thus teach our children and ourselves to reflect on the infinite potential of their efforts and our own when done l'sheim shamayim.** (Rabbi Shimon Apisdorf, in his article 'Got Gelt'.)

e) Another answer: the Sifsei chaim (modern chelek beis page 134) quotes the Ponovzhir Rav who says that **the decree of the Greeks was that the Jews are not allowed to learn. When the Jews were victorious, the children still didn't want to learn. In order to get the children to learn they bribed them by giving them money! The Gra says that it's better for them to learn not for the sake of heaven than not to learn at all. This is as explicate Gemara in Pesachim (50b). The Gemara says that one should learn and perform mitzvos not leshma (for the sake of heaven), because he will eventually end up performing mitzvos and learning leshma. (אמר רב יהודה אמר רב לעולם יעסוק אדם בתורה) (ובמצות אף על פי שלא לשמה, שמתוך שלא לשמה בא לשמה.)** To commemorate this we still give

children money!

An elaboration of this is brought in the safer called Inside Chanukah (page 150). On Chanukah, Yavan almost succeeded in tearing the Torah away from us. The Kedushas HaLevi (Al HaTorah, Derushim L'Chanukah) says that since Hashem saved us from that fate, it is most appropriate to celebrate this time with increased diligence and focus on learning. We therefore not only redouble our learning efforts on Chanukah but also increase the honor of Torah by encouraging our children to learn as well. The Rambam (Hilchos Teshuvah 10, 5) teaches that the way we begin teaching children to love and fear Hashem and to love Torah is to initially train them to do so for a reward. Eventually the children will learn to love and fear Hashem and the Torah for His and its own sake. At the beginning, when they are young, the teacher should say to them read (a little) and I will buy you nice shoes or precious clothing... (And when they are a bit older) the Rebbe should tell them learn this parsha or that chapter and I will give you a dinar or two. (Rambam peirush HaMishnayos) We therefore give money to our children on Chanukah, in order that they will be encouraged to learn and love Torah. Eventually the Chanukah gelt giving practice expanded to include other types of gifts as well. (Rabbi Shmuel Pinchas Gelbard)

-The custom of giving Chanukah gelt to children was observed by many amongst the gedolei Yisrael. A few examples: **The Lubavitcher Rebbes would give Chanukah gelt to their children, even after their children were married.** The Emes Lyaakov (on Shulchan Aruch footnote 583) quotes that Rabbi Yaakov Kamenetsky would only give money on the fifth day of Chanukah. The Stiepler had this practice as well. (Orchos Rabbeinu chelek gimmul amud alef os gimmul, Derech Sicha parshas Mikeitz page 187.) The explanation of this practice is as follows; the fifth day never falls out on Shabbos! This practice was also followed by the Vizhnitzer Rebbe (the Imrei Chaim) and the Kaliver Rebbe. **The Chasan Sofer was known to give Chanukah gelt even to his students.** (The Neti Gavreyal (Chanukah perek 51 footnote 7) explains this was done in order to publicize the miracle.)

-Does one need to give masar money from the Chanukah gifts one receives? Rabbi Yisroel Harfenes (shilos veteshuvos Mekadesh Yisroel Chanukah siman 7) says **one needs to give masar from the money received on Chanukah, even a Yeshiva bachor. There is a machloes if one obligation to give maasar for gifts he received. The custom is to be lenient.**

That's why we give gifts on Chanukah!

Thank you Yair Moshe Ausabel for typing this up.